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# Parsing the Paramour: How Players' Sexuality, UDO, and Motivation Influence their Romantic Subplot Decisions in Western RPGs

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# Agenda

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Background
- ▶ Data Collection & Methodology
- ▶ Statistical Results
- ▶ Analysis
- ▶ Limitations & Future Research
- ▶ Conclusion
- ▶ Appendix

# Introduction

## Game Industry Framework

- ▶ “Western” Roleplaying Games
  - ▶ Romance in RPGs (“Romantic Subplot Decisions” = RSDs)
  - ▶ Sexual and emotional intimacy with NPCs
  - ▶ Critical Narrative Path
- ▶ Massive RPG Market (est. \$98.72 billion in 2027) [1]
- ▶ 17% gamers identify LGBTQ+; 19.7% adult Gen-Zers identity LGBTQ+ [2,3]
- ▶ High cost of writing diverse romance (BioWare EP Mark Darrah) [4]
  - ▶ The Documented Problem with LGBTQ+ Representation [5,6,7]



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## Layers of the Study

- ▶ **Game World Behavior** - Motivations of Play survey by Nick Yee [8]
- ▶ **Real World Behavior** - Universal-Diverse Orientation (UDO) scale by Miville et al. [9]

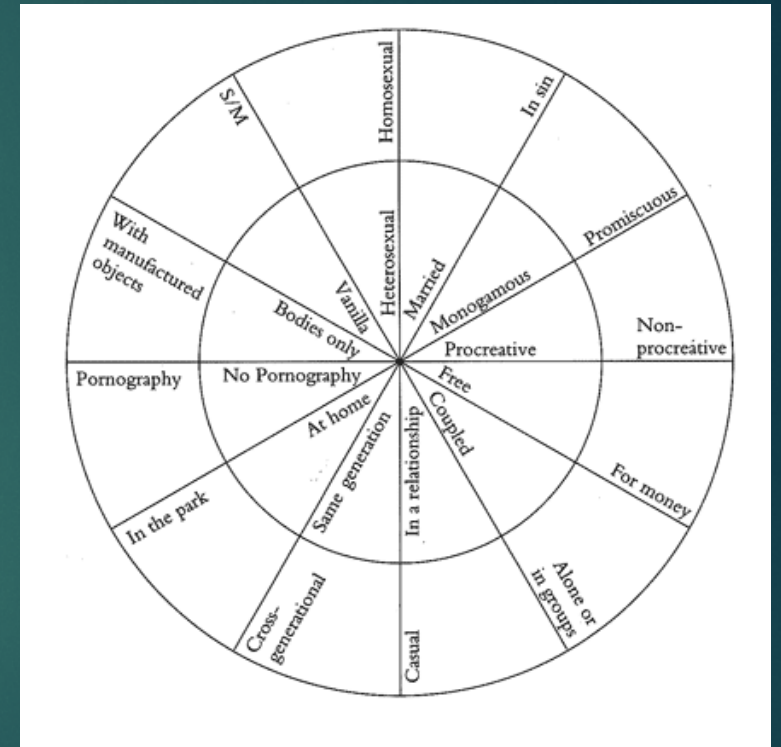


# Research Questions

1. Does a player's sexual orientation strongly affect their romance choices in Western RPGs?
2. Do players feel their sexual orientation is accurately represented in Western RPGs?
3. Do players feel that queer romance options fit within the critical narrative path of gameplay?
4. Is there a relationship between players' UDO scores and their romantic choices in Western RPGs?
5. Is there a relationship between player motivation types and players' romantic choices in Western RPGs?

# Games Industry Background: Critical Analysis of Queer Romance in RPGs

- ▶ “Fixed” Sexuality vs. “Player Sexuality” [4]
  - ▶ BioWare games → Fixed Sexuality characters
  - ▶ Larian games → Player Sexual\* characters
    - ▶ \*Dated phrase?
- ▶ The theory of “Compulsory Sexuality” in Games [7]
  - ▶ Evolution of “Compulsive Sexuality” [10]
  - ▶ Incorporates Charmed Circle theory [11]
- ▶ Existing literature on queer romances along the “Critical Narrative Path” [6]
  - ▶ Analysis of BioWare titles released 1998 – 2017



The Charmed Circle [P8]



# Real-World Diversity Related Behaviors Background: Universal-Diverse Orientation

- ▶ Foundation: Straight players are open to non-straight romances in games [5]
- ▶ UDO = measurement for positive social attitudes an individual has toward those of different backgrounds
  - ▶ Relativistic Appreciation (RA)
    - ▶ Appreciation of differences and abilities [12]
  - ▶ Diversity of Contact (DC)
    - ▶ Frequency and quality of interactions with those different than yourself
    - ▶ Higher correlation of having LGBTQ+ friends [12]
  - ▶ Sense of Connectivity (SC)
    - ▶ Connection to individuals of different races [12]
- ▶ Miville Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale (M-GUDS)
  - ▶ M-GUDS-Short Form
    - ▶ 15 Questions [12]



Comfort with  
different  
ethnic groups



Comfort with  
different  
sexualities

# Game World Behaviors Background: Player Motivations from Nick Yee

- ▶ Within the “Game World”
- ▶ Heightened self-awareness among experienced role players [13]

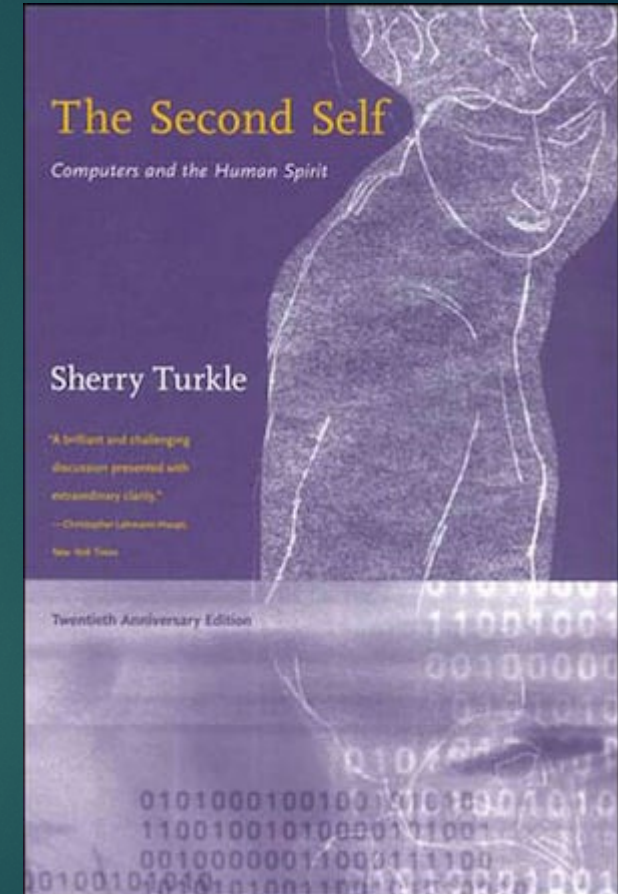
Immersion	Achievement	Social
Roleplaying Escapism Customization Discovery	Advancement Mechanics Competition	Socializing Relationships Teamwork

- ▶ Proven relationship between Immersion characteristics and RPGs [14]



# Digital Media Background: *The Second Self* by Dr. Sherry Turkle

- ▶ Initially published in 1984 by Psychologist Sherry Turkle
- ▶ Influenced the organizational structure of the study
- ▶ Games as digital media: using technology to express, explore, and grow one's identity
  - ▶ “Identification through action” [15]
- ▶ Video games as a means of discovering sexual orientation and experimenting with sexual orientations beyond one's own





# Thesis Research: A Framework for Categorizing Romance Options

- ▶ NPC Romances (as hardcoded by the developers):
  - ▶ Heterosexual (Male → Female, Female → Male)
  - ▶ Homosexual (Male → Male, Female → Female)
  - ▶ Bisexual (Male → Male/Female, Female → Female/Male)
  - ▶ Pansexual (NPCs romance the player regardless of gender)
- ▶ Largely considered “Courting” NPCs (e.g., companions)
- ▶ Critical Narrative Path (CNP) = Accompanying the Player Character on Missions
  - ▶ Some game-to-game variance (Partnered vs Sexual)



# Thesis Research: Breakdown of Games Studied

# BiOWARE<sup>®</sup>

[P10]

Title	Year	Total Romances	CNP Romances	Non-CNP Romances
<i>Mass Effect Legendary Edition (ME:LE)</i>	2007-2012 (2021)	<b>17</b>	<b>9</b> (7 Straight, 2 Bisexual)	<b>8</b> (2 Straight, 4 Bisexual, 2 Homosexual)
<i>Mass Effect: Andromeda (ME:A)</i>	2017	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b> (2 Straight, 3 Bisexual)	<b>5</b> (3 Straight, 2 Bisexual, 2 Homosexual)
<i>Dragon Age: Inquisition*</i> (DAI)	2014	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b> (3 Straight, 1 Pansexual, 2 Homosexual)	<b>2</b> (1 Straight, 1 Bisexual)



# Thesis Research: Breakdown of Games Studied

# BiOWARE®

[P10]

Title	Total	CNP Romances	Non-CNP Romances
Mass Effect Legendary Edition (ME:L)		11 (1 Straight, 10 Bisexual)	8 (2 Straight, 4 Bisexual, 2 Homosexual)
Mass Effect: Andromeda (ME:A)		5 (3 Straight, 2 Bisexual)	2 (2 Homosexual)
Dragon Age: Inquisition* (DAI)		3 (2 Straight, 1 Homosexual)	2 (1 Straight, 1 Bisexual)



\*DAI, in particular, is lauded example of fixed sexuality representation [16]



# Thesis Research: Breakdown of Games Studied



Title	Year	Total Romances	CNP Romances	Non-CNP Romances
<i>Divinity: Original Sin II</i> (DOS)	2017	7	6* (6 Bisexual)	1 (1 Bisexual)
<i>Baldur's Gate 3</i> (BG3)	2023	11	9 (Pansexual)	2** (Aromantic)

\* Impossible to have all six companions in a single DOS Playthrough

# Thesis Research: Breakdown of Games Studied



[P12]

Title	Total Romances	CNP Romances	Non-CNP Romances
<i>Divinity: Original Sin II</i> (DOS)	7	6* (4 Heterosexual, 1 Bisexual)	1 (Bisexual)
<i>Baldur's Gate 3</i> (BG3)	9	9 (8 Heterosexual, 1 Romantic)	0



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[P14]

\* Impossible to romance multiple companions in a single DOS

\*\* Included two characters from BG3 that don't fit the hardcoded, traditional romantic gameplay mechanics but inspired player intimacy (Post-Pilot Study)



# Data Collection and Methodology

- ▶ Anonymous Qualtrics XM Survey distributed online and at SMU Guildhall
  - ▶ r/DragonAge, r/MassEffectAndromeda, r/DivinityOriginalSin, r/BioWare, r/Gaymers
  - ▶ BioWare Nexus Discord Server
  - ▶ Anonymous QR Code posted throughout Gerald J. Ford Hall (SMU)
  - ▶ “Snowball Sampling”
- ▶ Survey = 85 (logic branched) Questions across Five Sections:
  - a) Sexuality Orientation Identification (1 question) [17] (See Next Slide)
    - ▶ Operationalized to include “Unlabeled” as a category [18]
  - b) Influence of Player Sexuality on General Game Decisions (4 questions)
    - ▶ 5-point Likert
  - c) Influence of Player Sexuality on Specific Game Decisions (25 questions)
    - ▶ 5-point Likert
  - d) M-GUDS-S (15 questions) [12]
    - ▶ 7-point Likert ( $\alpha = 0.7588$ )
  - e) Nick Yee’s Motivations of Play Survey (40 Questions) [8]
    - ▶ 5-point Likert ( $\alpha = 0.8339$ )



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# Data Collection and Methodology (cont.)

- ▶ N = 1,001 Participants (majority non-straight)

Self-Reported Sexuality	# of Survey Participants
Straight or heterosexual	453
Gay, lesbian, or homosexual	117
Bisexual	220
Queer	47
Pansexual	50
Asexual	54
Question/unsure	30
Unlabeled	8
Other	22

Game Studied	# of Surveyed Players
<i>Dragon Age: Inquisition</i>	845
<i>Mass Effect: LE</i>	771
<i>Mass Effect: Andromeda</i>	592
<i>Baldur's Gate 3</i>	495
<i>Divinity: Original Sin II</i>	367

Study participants had to play  
*at least one of the games*



# Player Sexuality Hypotheses Results

H.1. Player sexuality influences the romantic subplot decisions players make in Western RPGs.

H.2. Non-straight players are more likely to believe their sexuality is not well represented in Western RPGs.

H.3. Non-straight players are more likely to believe their sexuality does not fit within the critical gameplay path of Western RPGs.

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Analysis Type	Result
H.1.	Player Sexuality	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Chi-Square	Supported (p<0.001)
H.1. (Post-Hoc)	Binary Categorized Player Sexuality	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Linear Regression	Supported (p<0.05)
H.2.	Binary Categorized Player Sexuality	Perceived Representation of Player Sexuality	Linear Regression	Supported (all titles, p<0.001)
H.2. (Post-Hoc)	Player Sexuality	Perceived Representation of Player Sexuality	Chi-Square	Supported (all titles, p<0.001)
H.3.	Binary Categorized Player Sexuality	Belief that Sexuality fits on CNP	Linear Regression	Partially Supported (only <i>ME:LE</i> , p<0.001)
H.3. (Post-Hoc)	Binary Categorized Player Sexuality	Belief that Sexuality fits on CNP	Chi-Square	Partially Supported (all but <i>DOS</i> , p<0.05)
	Player Sexuality	Belief that Sexuality fits on CNP	Chi-Square	Partially Supported (all but <i>DOS</i> , p<0.05)

# Real World Behaviors Hypotheses Results

H.4. Players who score higher in Relativistic Appreciation (RA) are more likely to let their sexuality influence the romantic subplot decisions they make in Western RPGs

H.5. Players who score higher in Diversity of Contact (DC) are more likely to let their sexuality influence the romantic subplot decisions they make in Western RPGs.

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Analysis Type	Result
H.4.	Summed RA Scores	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Linear Regression	Not Supported ( $p > 0.1$ )
H.4. (Post-Hoc)	Categorized RA Scores	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Chi-Square	Weakly Supported ( $p < 0.1$ )
H.5.	Summed DC Scores	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Linear Regression	Not Supported ( $p > 0.1$ )
H.5. (Post-Hoc)	Categorized DC Scores	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Chi-Square	Not Supported ( $p > 0.1$ )



# Game World Hypotheses Results

H.6. Players who score higher in the player motivation subcomponent of roleplaying are more likely to let their sexuality influence the romantic subplot decisions they make in Western RPGs.

H.7. Players who score higher in the player motivation subcomponents of escapism are more likely to let their sexuality influence the romantic subplot decisions they make in Western RPGs.

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Analysis Type	Result
H.6.	Summed Roleplaying Scores	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Linear Regression	Inverse Supported (p<0.05)
H.6. (Post-Hoc)	Summed Roleplaying Scores of Straight Participants	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Linear Regression	Inverse Supported (p<0.05)
H.7.	Summed Escapism Scores	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Linear Regression	Supported (p<0.05)
H.7. (Post-Hoc)	Summed Escapism Scores of Straight Participants	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Linear Regression	Supported (p<0.05)
	Summed Customization Scores of Straight Participants	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Linear Regression	Supported (p<0.05)
	Summed Achievement Scores of Straight Participants	Frequency of Sexuality Influence	Linear Regression	Supported (p<0.001)

# Analysis Overview

Hypothesis Category	Hypotheses	Outcomes
Player Sexual Orientation	H.1. <i>Players' sexuality influences their RSDs</i>	Fully Supported
	H.2. <i>Non-straight players are less likely to feel their sexuality is well-represented</i>	Fully Supported
	H.3. <i>Non-straight players are less likely to feel their sexuality fits along the CNP</i>	Partially Supported
Player Motivation Types (Yee)	H.7. <i>High Escapism scorers are more likely to have higher FSI in their RSDs</i>	Fully Supported
	H.6. <i>High Roleplaying scorers are more likely to have higher FSI in their RSDs</i>	Inverse Supported
UDO	H.4. <i>High RA scorers are more likely to have higher FSI in their RSDs</i>	Not Supported
	H.5. <i>High DC scorers are more likely to have higher FSI in their RSDs</i>	Not Supported

Relationship between FSI & Game World Motivation

Perception of Player Sexuality

Relationship between FSI & Real-World Behaviors

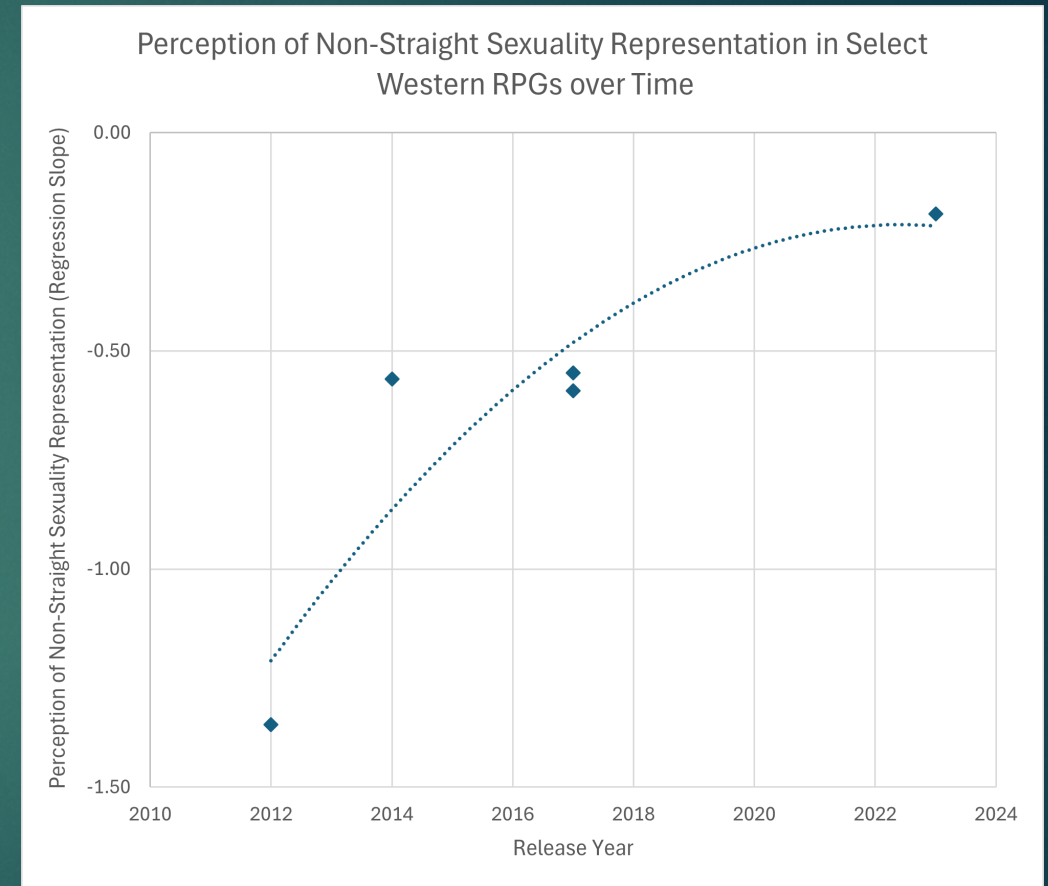


# Analysis: Perception of Players' Real-World Sexualities, in-Game (H.2.)

- ▶ H.2. (*LGBTQ+ Perception of Representation*) aligns with existing studies and expands upon previous analysis into LGBTQ+ representation in games.

Previous Case Studies	Included Games that Overlap this Study	Introduced Games in this Study
Adams (2015)	ME:LE, DAI	<b>DOS, BG3</b>
McDonald (2015)	ME:LE, DAI	
Dym (2019)	ME:LE, DAI, ME:A	

- ▶ Perception of representation has improved over time BUT remains an issue for non-straight players



# Analysis: Perception of Players' Real-World Sexualities along the CNP (H.3.)

- ▶ H.3. (*LGBTQ+ Perception of their Sexuality on the Critical Path*) is only supported for *Mass Effect: Legendary Edition*
- ▶ Non-directional relationships found in *Mass Effect: Andromeda* (2017), *Dragon Age: Inquisition* (2014), and *Baldur's Gate 3* (2023)
  - ▶ Product of the uniqueness of each game?
    - ▶ Hardcoded Homosexual relationships among CNP *Inquisition* companions
    - ▶ Plurality of Hardcoded Bisexual relationships among CNP *Andromeda* companions
    - ▶ Inclusion of Aromantic relationship options in the survey for *Baldur's Gate 3*
- ▶ Influence of the nearly unavoidable sexual encounter (and/or ability to have no companions) in *Divinity: Original Sin II* (2017) a factor?
- ▶ Remember: "Critical Narrative Path" was NOT defined for survey participants



# Analysis: Perception of Players' Real-World Sexualities along the CNP (H.3.)

- ▶ H.3. (LGBTQ+ Perception of their Sexuality on the Critical Path) is only supported for *Mass Effect: Legendary Edition*

- ▶ Non-directional (e.g. *Age: Inquisition*)

- ▶ Product of the game's design
  - ▶ Hardcode
  - ▶ Plurality of
  - ▶ Inclusion of



- ▶ Influence of the nearly unavoidable sexual encounter (and/or ability to have no companions) in *Divinity: Original Sin II* (2017) a factor?

- ▶ Remember: "Critical Narrative Path" was NOT defined for survey participants



# Analysis: The Influence of Player Sexuality on RSDs (H.1.)

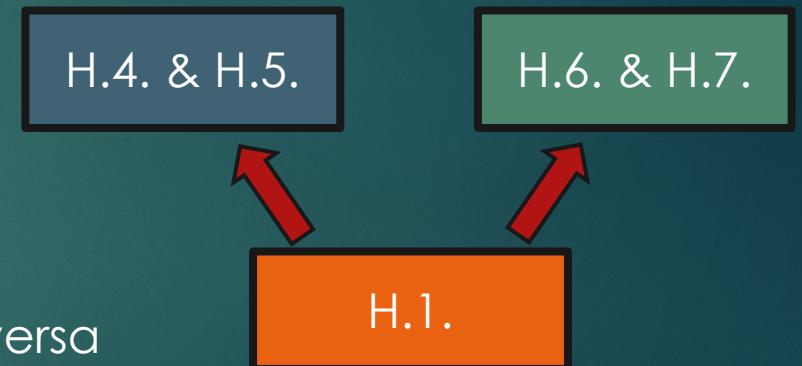
- ▶ Research supports the claim that player sexuality influences their RSDs
  - ▶ The statical association is there, but it is non-directional (Chi-square)
  - ▶ Using Turkle: Play within their sexuality and/or play outside their sexuality with *awareness of the deviation*

▶ New Variable: Frequency of Sexuality Influence (FSI)

▶ Permeability of the “Magic Circle”

- ▶ The “Real World” entering the “Game World”, and vice-versa

▶ The foundation for exploring the relationship between FSI and real-world behaviors (H.4. & H.5.) and FSI and game-world motivations (H.6. & H.7.)

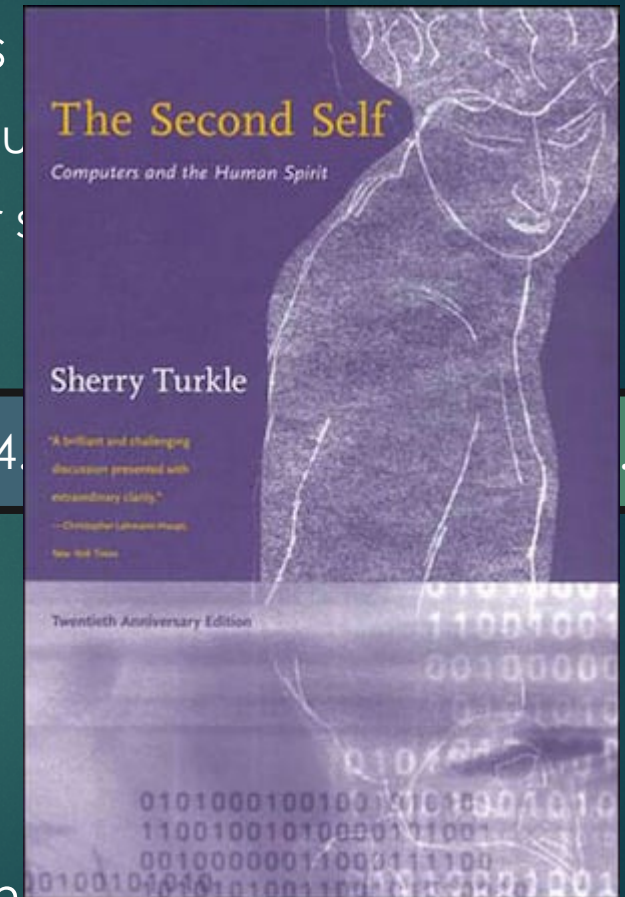




# Analysis: The Influence of Player Sexuality on RSDs (H.1.)

- ▶ Research supports the claim that player sexuality influences
  - ▶ The statical association is there, but it is non-directional (Chi-square)
  - ▶ Using Turkle: Play within their sexuality and/or play outside their sexuality is *not* an indication of awareness of the deviation
- ▶ New Variable: Frequency of Sexuality Influence (FSI)
- ▶ Permeability of the “Magic Circle”
  - ▶ The “Real World” entering the “Game World”, and vice-versa
- ▶ The foundation for exploring the relationship between FSI and real-world behaviors (H.4. & H.5.) and FSI and game-world motivations (H.6. & H.7.)

H.4.





# Analysis: Real World Behaviors Affecting FSI (H.4. & H.5.)

- ▶ H.4. (*Relationship between high RA scores and sexuality's influence*) was not supported, but a weak, non-directional relationship was found
  - ▶ High RA scores = higher level of self-understanding when appreciating differences [12]
- ▶ H.5. (*Relationship between high DC scores and sexuality's influence*) was not supported and no non-directional relationship was found
  - ▶ High DC scores = having more LGBTQ+ friends [12] does not relate to the possibility of selecting more queer romance options
  - ▶ Affect of limitations of survey question phrasing?
- ▶ In the case of UDO and Sexuality, the Magic Circle's barrier is rigid
  - ▶ Real-life Behaviors (UDO) →~~X~~ Sexuality Influenced Gameplay



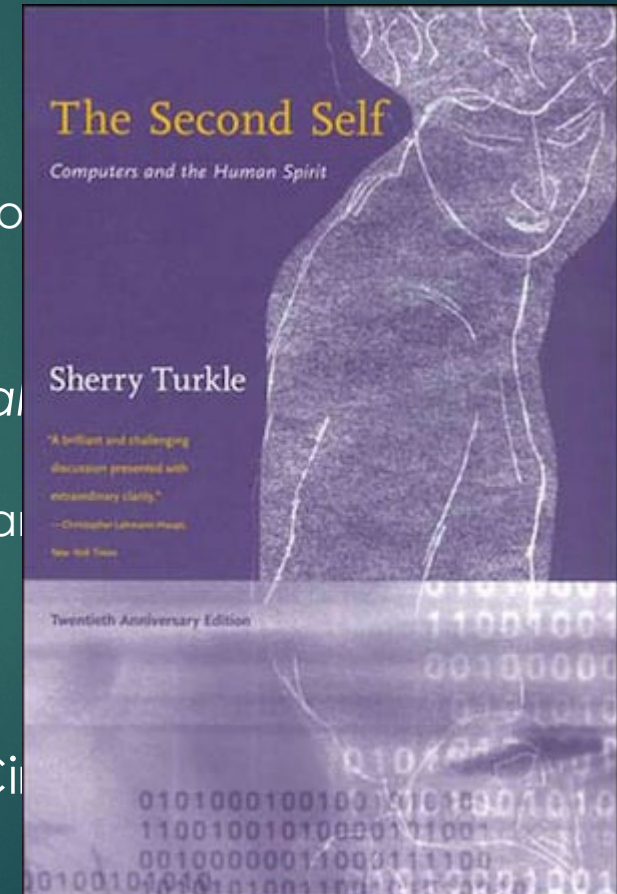
# Analysis: Game World Behaviors Affecting FSI (H.6. & H.7.)

- ▶ H.6. (*Relationship between high roleplaying scores and sexuality's influence*) was inversely supported
  - ▶ The higher the roleplaying score, the lower the FSI
  - ▶ Why roleplay? vs. What is roleplay?
  - ▶ Overreliance on literature about experienced roleplayers without measuring role-player experience
- ▶ H.7. (*Relationship between high escapism scores and sexuality's influence*) was supported
  - ▶ Aligns with existing observations into core RPG mechanics [8] and *Second Self-theory* from Turkle [15]
    - ▶ Games as a means of escape and exploration
- ▶ In the case of *Player Motivation and Sexuality*, the Magic Circle's barrier is passable
  - ▶ Player Motivations → Sexuality Influenced Gameplay



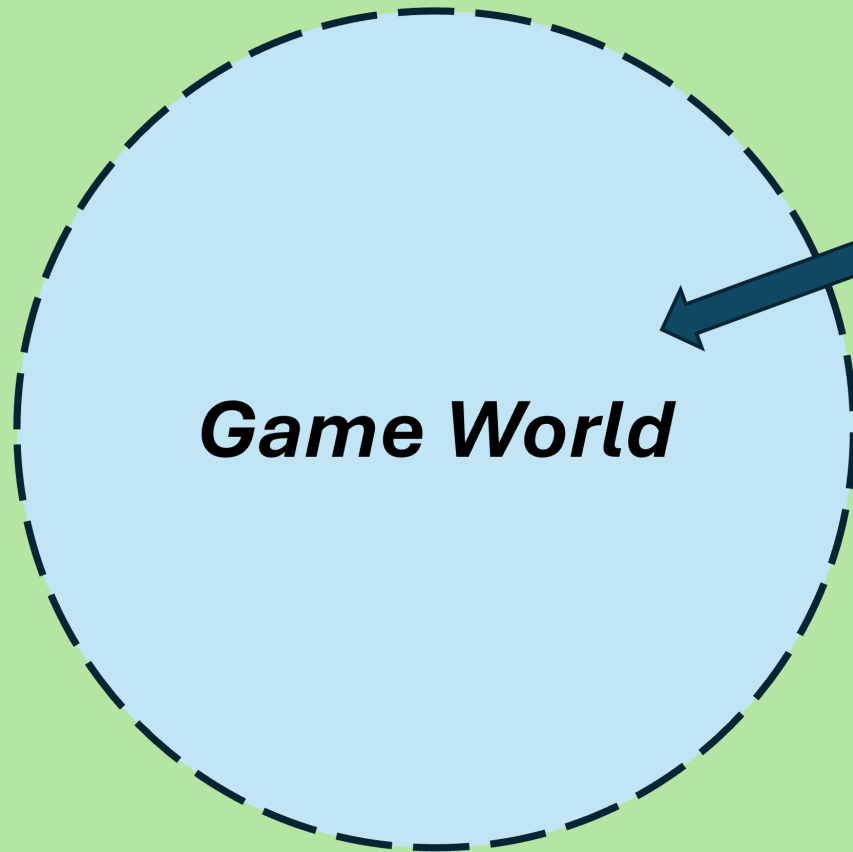
# Analysis: Game World Behaviors Affecting FSI (H.6. & H.7.)

- ▶ H.6. (*Relationship between high roleplaying scores and sexuality's influence*) was inversely supported
  - ▶ The higher the roleplaying score, the lower the FSI
  - ▶ Why roleplay? vs. What is roleplay?
  - ▶ Overreliance on literature about experienced roleplayers without experience
- ▶ H.7. (*Relationship between high escapism scores and sexual*) supported
  - ▶ Aligns with existing observations into core RPG mechanics [8] and Turkle [15]
    - ▶ Games as a means of escape and exploration
- ▶ In the case of Player Motivation and Sexuality, the Magic Circle
  - ▶ Player Motivations → Sexuality Influenced Gameplay

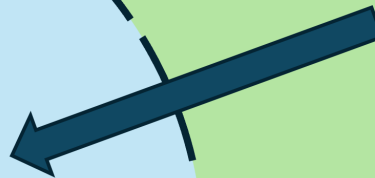




***Real World***

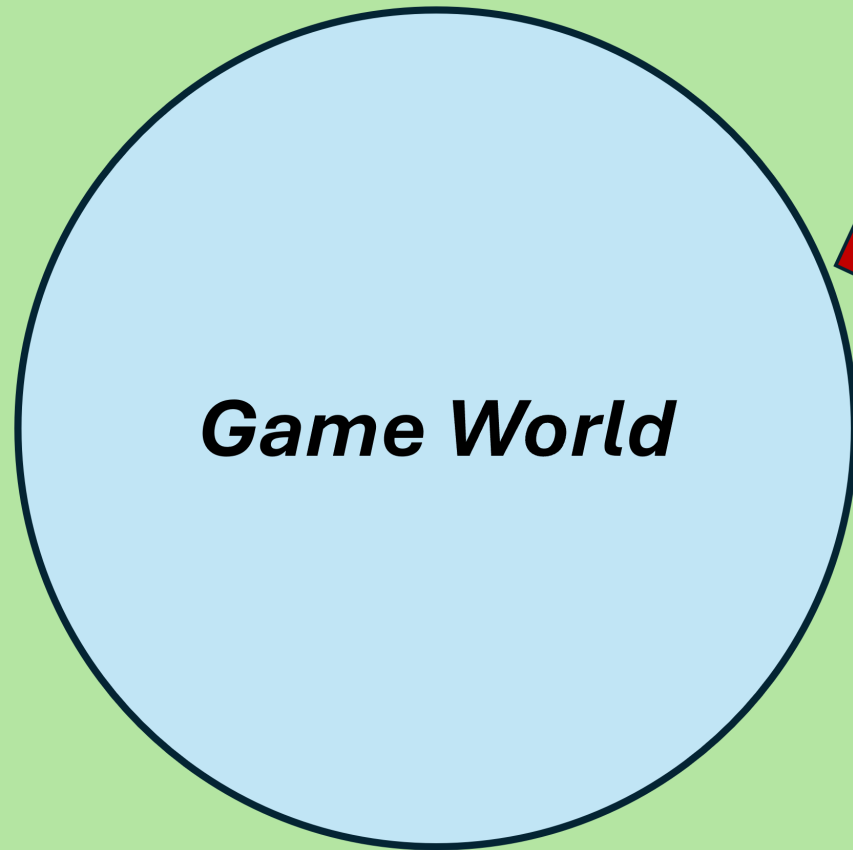


**Real Life Sexuality**



***Game World***

***Real World***

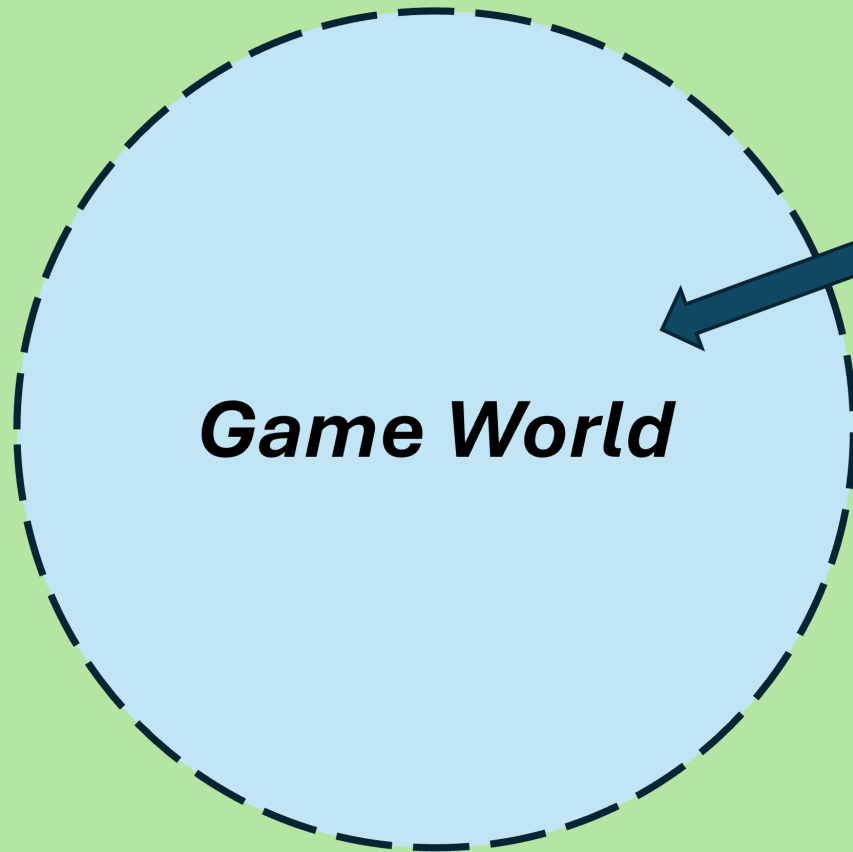


**Real Life Sexuality + Universal  
Diverse Orientation**

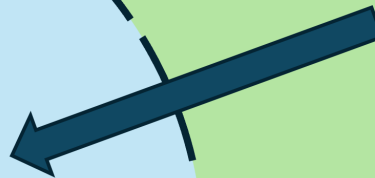




***Real World***



**Real Life Sexuality**



***Game World***

# Limitations and Further Research

- ▶ The living fluidity of sexuality in society
- ▶ The value of considering gender as a variable
- ▶ The appeal of non-human romances



[P17]

## In the Future...

- ▶ Include the entire Player Motivation survey
- ▶ Restructure questions for clarity
- ▶ Consider further qualitative analysis opportunities
- ▶ Expand the range of researched titles and genres



[P18]



# Conclusion

- ▶ Games are means for players to express and explore their sexualities
- ▶ RPG gamers are comfortable playing within and deviating from their sexual norms
- ▶ As far as sexuality is concerned, there is some permeability between the game world (player behaviors) and the real world (real-life sexuality)
  - ▶ Some real-world influences (UDO) don't permeate the game world
- ▶ LGBTQ+ representation in Western RPGs has improved but remains an issue
  - ▶ The majority of players are not straight, and they feel their sexualities aren't well represented when compared to straight players
- ▶ Yes, aligning game development timelines with evolving preferences is difficult, **HOWEVER**, our duty as developers is to match the need



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# Thank You!

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# Appendix 1.1: Romanceable Characters in *Mass Effect Legendary Edition*

Character Name	Character Sexuality	Critical Path Romance?
Ashley Williams	Straight	Yes
Miranda Lawson	Straight	Yes (in <i>ME2</i> , No in <i>ME3</i> )
Jack	Straight	Yes (in <i>ME2</i> , No in <i>ME3</i> )
Thane Krios	Straight	Yes (in <i>ME2</i> , No in <i>ME3</i> )
Jacob Taylor	Straight	Yes
Garrus Vakarian	Straight	Yes
Tali Vas'Neema	Straight	Yes
Javick	Straight	No
James Vega	Straight	No
Kaiden Alenko	Bisexual (in <i>ME3</i> , Straight in <i>ME</i> )	Yes
Liara T'Soni	Bisexual	Yes
Samara	Bisexual	No
Morinth	Bisexual	No
Kelly Chambers	Bisexual	No
Diana Allers	Bisexual	No
Samantha Traynor	Homosexual	No
Steve Cortez	Homosexual	No

## Appendix 1.2: Romanceable Characters in *Mass Effect: Andromeda*

<b>Character Names</b>	<b>Character Sexuality</b>	<b>Critical Path Romance?</b>
Liam Kosta	Straight	Yes
Cora Harper	Straight	Yes
Avela Kjar	Straight	No
Plessaria "PeeBee" B'Sayle	Bisexual	Yes
Vetra Nix	Bisexual	Yes
Jaal Ama Darav	Bisexual	Yes
Reyes Vidal	Bisexual	No
Keri T'Vessa	Bisexual	No
Gil Brodie	Homosexual	No
Suvi Anwar	Homosexual	No

## Appendix 1.3: Romanceable Characters in *Dragon Age: Inquisition*

<b>Character Names</b>	<b>Character Sexuality</b>	<b>Critical Path Romance?</b>
Cullen	Straight	No
Cassandra	Straight	Yes
Blackwall	Straight	Yes
Solas	Straight	Yes
Iron Bull	Pansexual	Yes
Josephine	Bisexual	No
Sera	Homosexual	Yes
Dorian	Homosexual	Yes



## Appendix 1.4: Romanceable Characters in *Divinity: Original Sin II*

Character Name	Character Sexuality	Critical Path Romance?
Fane	Bisexual	Yes*
Ifan Ben-Mezd	Bisexual	Yes*
Sebille	Bisexual	Yes*
Lohse	Bisexual	Yes*
The Red Prince	Bisexual	Yes*
Beast	Bisexual	Yes*
Butter	Bisexual	No

(\* Depending on whether the character is in the player's party)

## Appendix 1.5: Romanceable Characters in *Baldur's Gate 3*

Character Names	Character Sexuality	Critical Path Romance?
Halsin	Pansexual	Yes
Astarion	Pansexual	Yes
Minthara	Pansexual	Yes
Lae'zel	Pansexual	Yes
Karlach	Pansexual	Yes
Gale	Pansexual	Yes
Wyll	Pansexual	Yes
Shadowheart	Pansexual	Yes
The Emperor	Pansexual	No
Minsc	Aromantic	No
Jaheira	Aromantic	No

## Appendix 2.1: Demographic Breakdown of Study Participants and how frequently their sexuality influences their RSDs

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>	
Straight or heterosexual	15	35	85	169	149	453
Gay, lesbian, or homosexual	4	3	20	41	49	117
Bisexual	10	15	46	76	73	220
Queer	1	5	9	15	17	47
Pansexual	2	3	13	16	16	50
Asexual	17	14	14	7	2	54
Question/unsure	1	6	9	13	1	30
Unlabeled	0	2	1	3	2	8
Other: [free-text field]	0	4	2	9	7	22
	50	87	199	349	316	1,001
p = 0.000						

(Categorized Straight, n= 453; Categorized Non-Straight, n= 548)



## Appendix 3.1: Detailed H.1. Results

Player sexuality influences the romantic subplot decisions players make in Western RPGs.

- ▶ Chi-square Analysis **supported hypothesis** ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $n=1001$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Player Sexuality
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Frequency with which Player Sexuality Influences RSDs
    - ▶ 5-point Likert Scale
- ▶ Post-hoc regression analysis **further supported this hypothesis** ( $\beta=-0.1720888$ ,  $p = 0.0161$ ,  $n=1001$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Categorized “Straight” and “Nonstraight” participants
    - ▶ Straight = “0”, Non-Straight=“1”
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Frequency with which Player Sexuality Influences RSDs



## Appendix 3.2: Detailed H.2. Results

Non-straight players are more likely to believe their sexuality is not well represented in Western RPGs.

- ▶ Linear regression across all five studied games **supported this hypothesis**
  - ▶ P=0.000 across all titles
    - ▶ *Mass Effect: Legendary Edition* ( $\beta=-1.356986$ ,  $p=0.0000$ ,  $n=771$ )
    - ▶ *Mass Effect: Andromeda* ( $\beta=-0.5917775$ ,  $p=0.0000$ ,  $n=592$ )
    - ▶ *Dragon Age: Inquisition* ( $\beta=-0.5645514$ ,  $p=0.0000$ ,  $n=845$ )
    - ▶ *Divinity: Original Sin II* ( $\beta=-0.549997$ ,  $p=0.0000$ ,  $n=367$ )
    - ▶ *Baldur's Gate 3* ( $\beta=-0.1864599$ ,  $p=0.0000$ ,  $n=495$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Categorized "Straight" and "Non-straight" participants
    - ▶ Straight = "0", Non-Straight="1"
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Perceived Representation of Players' Sexualities in each respective title
    - ▶ 5-point Likert Scale



## Appendix 3.3: Detailed H.3. Results

Non-straight players are more likely to believe their sexuality does not fit within the critical gameplay path of Western RPGs.

- ▶ Linear regression analysis only **supported this hypothesis** for *Mass Effect: Legendary Edition* ( $\beta=-0.359633$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $n=771$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Categorized “Straight” and “Non-straight” participants
    - ▶ Straight = “0”, Non-Straight=“1”
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Perception that a romance of Player’s sexuality lay on the critical narrative path of gameplay
    - ▶ 5-Point Likert Scale
  - ▶ All other games had a p-value greater than 0.10
- ▶ Post-hoc Chi-square analysis revealed **statistically significant relationships** for three more games
  - ▶ Same variables in linear regression
  - ▶ *Mass Effect: Andromeda* ( $p=0.036$ ,  $n=592$ )
  - ▶ *Baldur’s Gate 3* ( $p=0.033$ ,  $n=495$ )
  - ▶ *Dragon Age: Inquisition* ( $p=0.064$ ,  $p<0.10$ ,  $n=845$ )



## Appendix 3.4: Detailed H.4. Results

Players who score higher in Relativistic Appreciation (RA) are more likely to let their sexuality influence the romantic subplot decisions they make in Western RPGs

- ▶ Linear regression analysis **did not support** this hypothesis ( $\beta=0.0051607$ ,  $p=0.5156$ ,  $n=1001$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Summed RA Scores
    - ▶ 7-point Likert scale, 6 questions
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Frequency with which Player Sexuality Influences RSDs
    - ▶ 5-point Likert Scale
- ▶ Post-hoc chi-square analysis produced a **weak statistically significant relationship** ( $p=0.092$ ,  $p<0.10$ ,  $n=1001$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Summed RA Scores categorized as “High”, “Medium”, & “Low”
    - ▶ Low < 73 (25<sup>th</sup> percentile), Medium >72 & <78, High > 77 (75<sup>th</sup> percentile)
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Frequency with which Player Sexuality Influences RSDs
    - ▶ 5-point Likert Scale



## Appendix 3.5: Detailed H.5. Results

Players who score higher in Diversity of Contact (DC) are more likely to let their sexuality influence the romantic subplot decisions they make in Western RPGs.

- ▶ Linear regression analysis **did not support** this hypothesis ( $\beta=-0.0003069$ ,  $p=0.9682$ ,  $n=1001$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Summed DC Scores
    - ▶ 7-point Likert scale, 5 questions
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Frequency with which Player Sexuality Influences RSDs
    - ▶ 5-point Likert Scale
  
- ▶ Post-hoc chi-square analysis **did not produce a significant relationship** ( $p=0.226$ ,  $n=1001$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Summed DC Scores categorized as “High”, “Medium”, & “Low”
    - ▶ Low < 58 (25<sup>th</sup> percentile), Medium >59 & <65, High > 64 (75<sup>th</sup> percentile)
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Frequency with which Player Sexuality Influences RSDs
    - ▶ 5-point Likert Scale



## Appendix 3.6: Detailed H.6. Results

Players who score higher in the player motivation subcomponent of roleplaying are more likely to let their sexuality influence the romantic subplot decisions they make in Western RPGs.

- ▶ Linear regression analysis produced a **statistically significant relationship** with a negative coefficient that **did not support** the hypothesis. ( $\beta=-0.0238427$ ,  $p=0.0038$ ,  $n=1001$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Summed Roleplaying Scores
    - ▶ 5-point Likert scale, 4 questions
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Frequency with which Player Sexuality Influences RSDs
    - ▶ 5-point Likert Scale
- ▶ Post-hoc linear regression analysis of exclusively straight survey participants also produced a **statistically significant relationship** with a negative coefficient ( $p=0.0091$ ,  $n=453$ ) that **did not support** the hypothesis.
  - ▶ Same variables as previous regression



## Appendix 3.7: Detailed H.7. Results

Players who score higher in the player motivation subcomponents of escapism are more likely to let their sexuality influence the romantic subplot decisions they make in Western RPGs.

- ▶ Linear regression analysis **supported the hypothesis** ( $\beta=0.0427663$ ,  $p=0.0038$ ,  $n=1001$ )
  - ▶ Independent Variable: Summed Escapism Scores
    - ▶ 5-point Likert scale, 4 questions
  - ▶ Dependent Variable: Frequency with which Player Sexuality Influences RSDs
    - ▶ 5-point Likert Scale
- ▶ Post Post-hoc linear regression analysis of exclusively straight survey participants also produced a **statistically significant relationship** ( $p=0.06464$ ,  $p>0.10$ ,  $n=453$ )
  - ▶ Same variables as previous regression
- ▶ Additional Post-hoc linear regression analyses of other motivation components produced **statistically significant relationships**
  - ▶ Customization ( $p=0.0374$ ,  $n=1001$ ) and Achievement ( $p=0.0001$ ,  $n=1001$ )

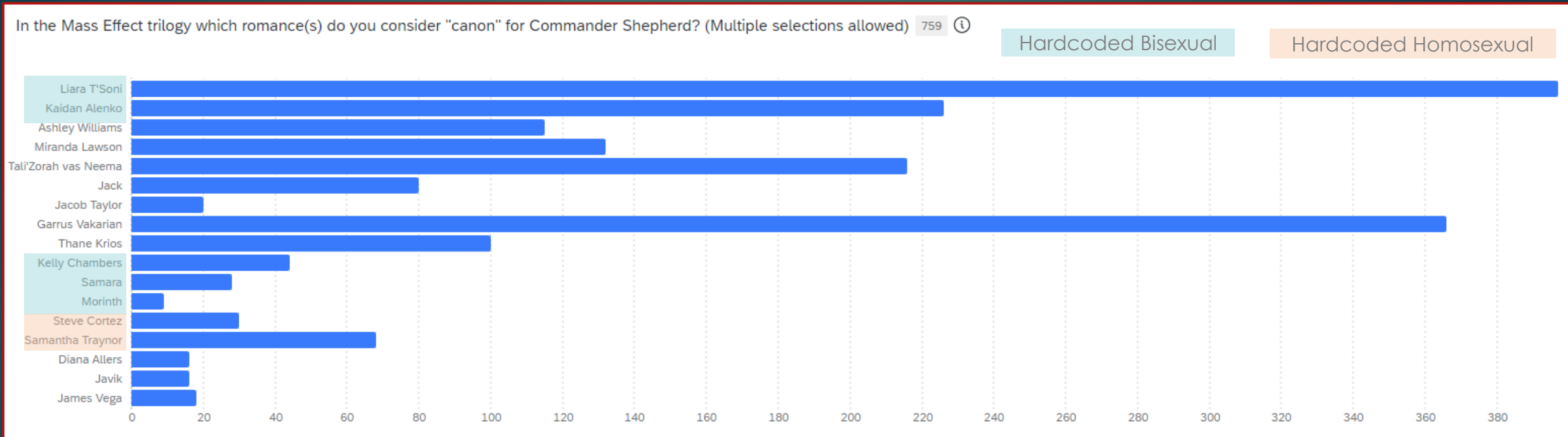
## Appendix 4.1: Comparison of Asexual Players' Average Representation Scores to the Non-Straight and Totalled Survey Pool



<b>Game</b>	<b>Asexual Players</b>	<b>All Non-Straight Players</b>	<b>All Players</b>
<i>Mass Effect Legendary Edition</i>	2.28 (n=45)	3.25 (n=398)	3.90 (n=771)
<i>Mass Effect: Andromeda</i>	2.61 (n=28)	3.71 (n=306)	3.99 (n=592)
<i>Divinity: Original Sin</i>	2.53 (n=15)	3.67 (n=193)	3.93 (n=367)
<i>Dragon Age: Origins</i>	2.72 (n=50)	3.83 (n=478)	4.06 (n=845)
<i>Baldur's Gate III</i>	2.44 (n=27)	4.24 (n=302)	4.31 (n=495)



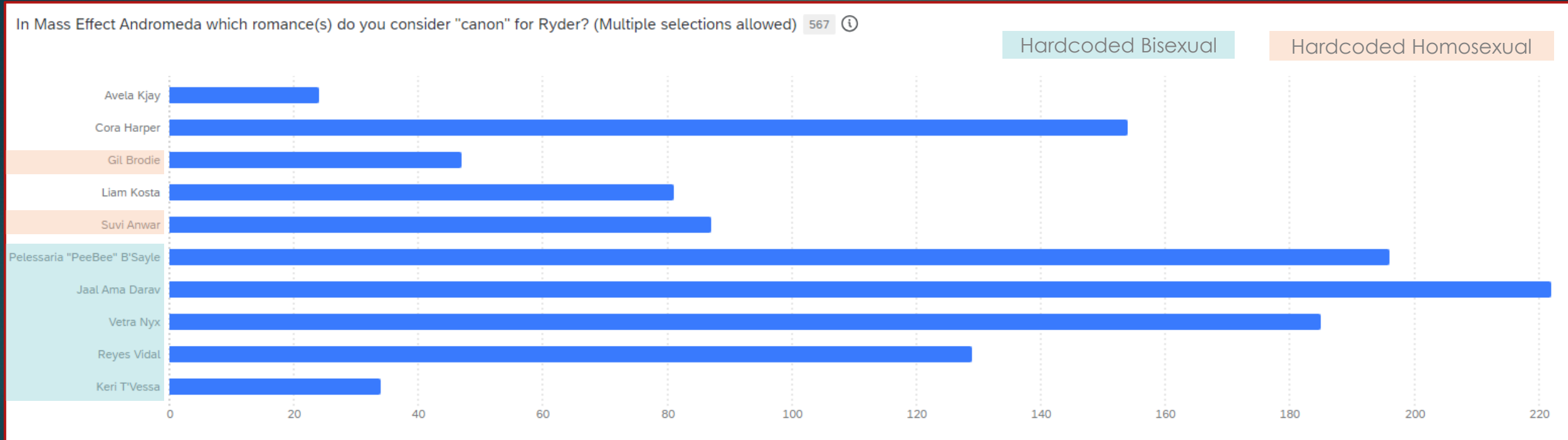
# Appendix 5.1: *Mass Effect: Legendary Edition* Characters selected as "Canon" by the Player



## Interesting Observations:

- 2 of the Top 3 (Liara and Kaiden) Romance Options are Bisexual
- 3 of the Top 5 (Liara, Garrus, and Tali) Romance Options are Alien

# Appendix 5.2: *Mass Effect: Andromeda* Characters selected as “Canon” by the Player



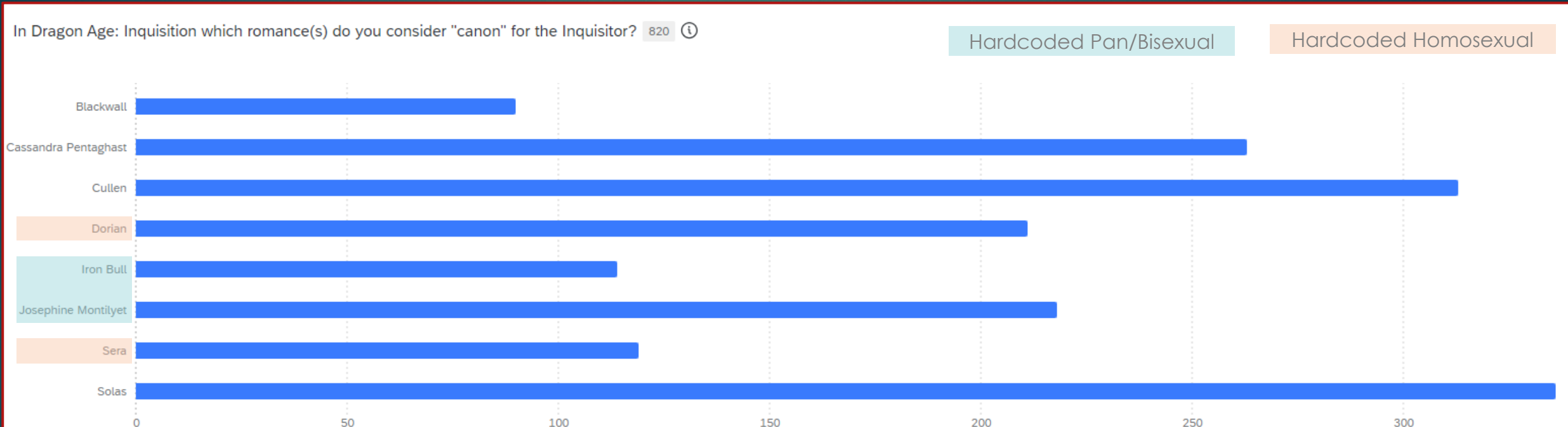
### Interesting Observations:

4 of the Top 5 (Jaal, PeeBee, Vetra, & Reyes) Romance Options are Bisexual

The Top 3 (Jaal, PeeBee, Vetra) Romances are Alien



# Appendix 5.3: *Dragon Age: Inquisition* Characters selected as “Canon” by the Player

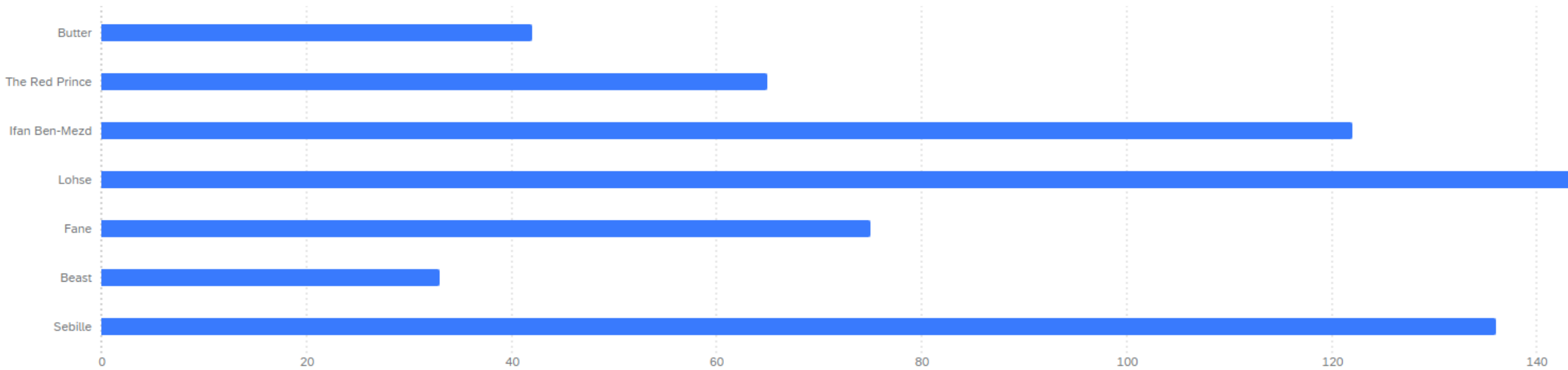


*Interesting Observation:*

Though lauded for its diverse sexual representation, *DAI*'s Top 3 (Solas, Cullen, and Cassandra) Romances are Heterosexual and Human or Near-Human

## Appendix 5.4: *Divinity: Original Sin II* Characters selected as “Canon” by the Player

In *Divinity II: Original Sin* which romance(s) do you consider "canon" for the player character? 315 ⓘ

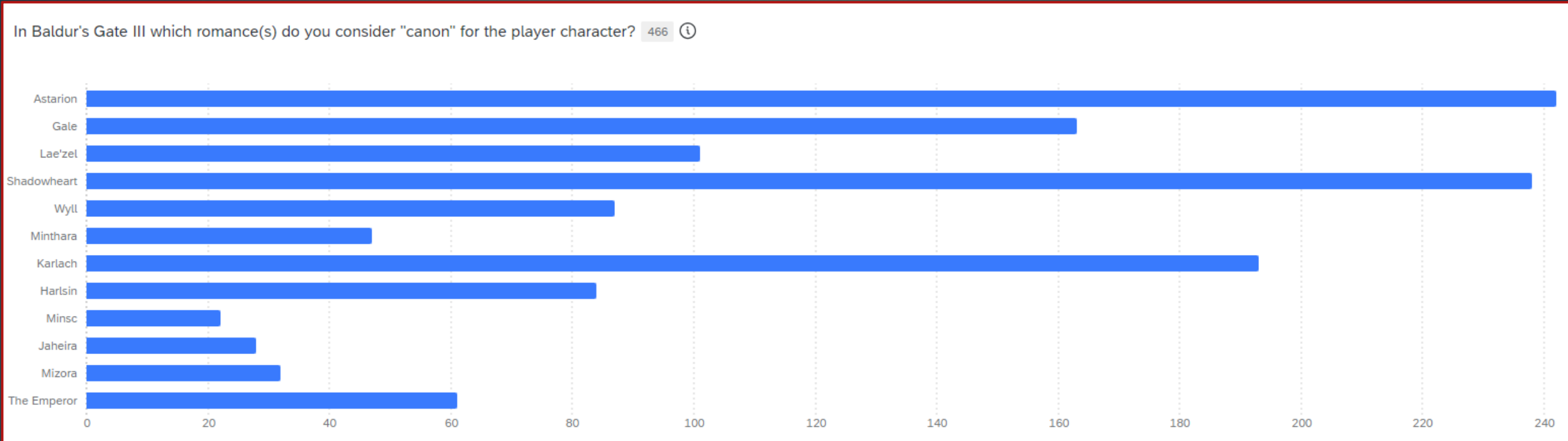


*Interesting Observation:*

The Top 3 (Lohse, Sebille, & Ifan) Romances are Human or Near-Human (Elf)



# Appendix 5.5: *Baldur's Gate 3* Characters selected as “Canon” by the Player



## *Interesting Observation:*

The Top 3 (Astarion, Shadowheart, and Karlach) are all Near Human but “different enough” (Vampire Elf, Elf, and Tiefling, respectively)