

# Nintendo says no to virtual equality in life game (Update)

May 7 2014, by Derrik J. Lang

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In this June 11, 2013 file photo, attendees play video games on the Nintendo 3DS at the Nintendo Wii U software showcase during the E3 game show in Los Angeles. The gaming company said Tuesday, May 6, 2014, it wouldn't bow to pressure to allow players to engage in romantic entanglements with characters of the same sex in the English version of "Tomodachi Life" following a social media campaign launched last month seeking virtual equality for the game's characters, which are modeled after real people. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, file)

Nintendo isn't allowing gamers to play as gay in an upcoming life

simulator game. The publisher of such gaming franchises as "The Legend of Zelda" and "Mario Bros." said Tuesday it wouldn't bow to pressure to allow players to engage in romantic activities with characters of the same sex in English editions of "Tomodachi Life." This follows a social media campaign launched by fans last month seeking virtual equality for the game's characters, which are modeled after real people.

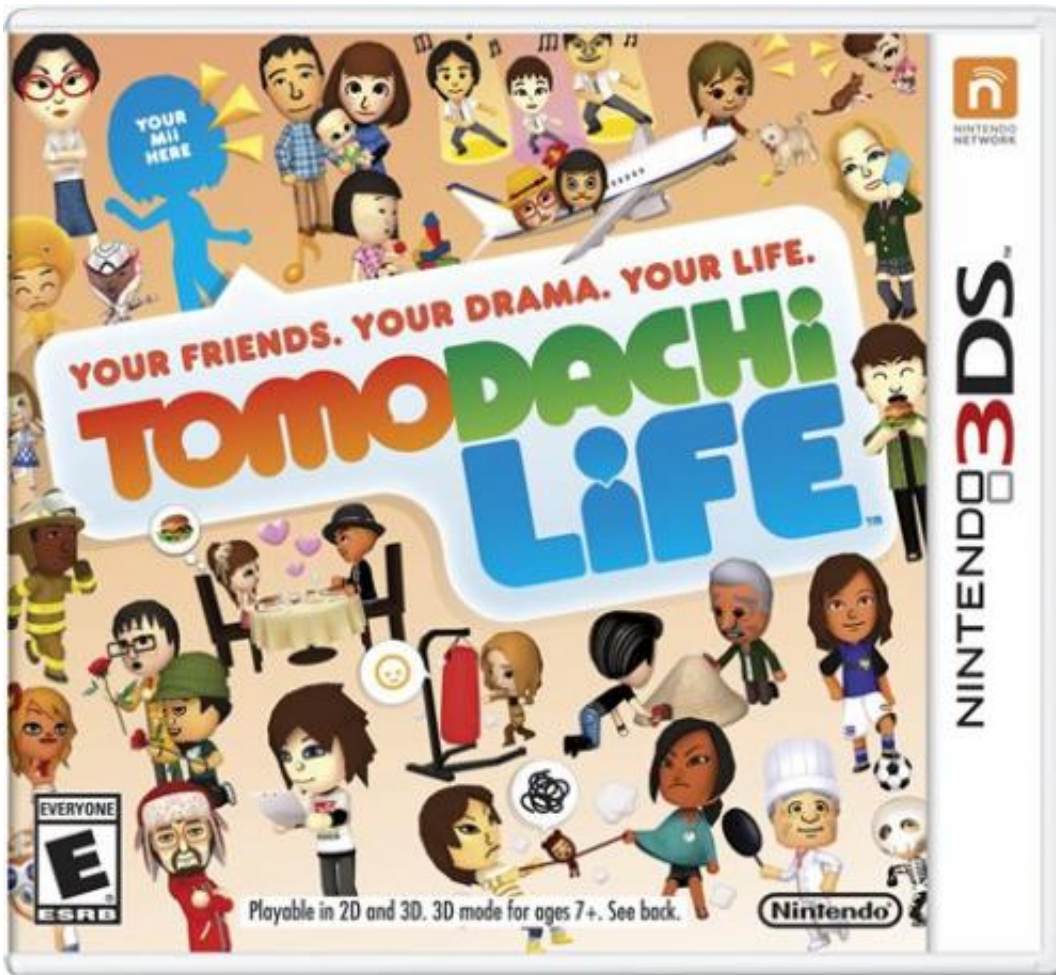
"Nintendo never intended to make any form of social commentary with the launch of 'Tomodachi Life,'" Nintendo of America Inc. said in a statement. "The relationship options in the game represent a playful alternate world rather than a real-life simulation. We hope that all of our fans will see that 'Tomodachi Life' was intended to be a whimsical and quirky game, and that we were absolutely not trying to provide social commentary."

Tye Marini, a gay 23-year-old Nintendo fan from Mesa, Arizona, launched the campaign last month, urging Osaka, Japan-based Nintendo Co. and its subsidiary Nintendo of America Inc. to add same-sex relationship options to English versions of the hand-held Nintendo 3DS game.

The game was originally released in Japan last year and features a cast of Mii characters—Nintendo's personalized avatars of real players—living on a virtual island. Gamers can do things like shop, visit an amusement park, play games, go on dates and encounter celebrities like Christina Aguilera and Shaquille O'Neal.

"I want to be able to marry my real-life fiancé's Mii, but I can't do that," Marini said in a video posted online that attracted the attention of gaming blogs and online forums this week. "My only options are to marry some female Mii, to change the gender of either my Mii or my fiancé's Mii or to completely avoid marriage altogether and miss out on the exclusive content that comes with it."

"Tomodachi Life" has been a hit in a Japan, where Nintendo said last December it had sold 1.83 million copies of the game.



This photo provided by Nintendo shows the cover of the video game, "Tomodachi Life." The gaming company said Tuesday, May 6, 2014, it wouldn't bow to pressure to allow players to engage in romantic entanglements with characters of the same sex in the English version of "Tomodachi Life" following a social media campaign launched last month seeking virtual equality for the game's characters, which are modeled after real people. (AP Photo/Nintendo)

The English-language packaging for "Tomodachi Life"—"tomodachi"

means "friend" in Japanese—proclaims: "Your friends. Your drama. Your life." A trailer for the game boasts that players can "give Mii characters items, voices and personalities, then watch as they rap, rock, eat doughnuts and fall in love." However, only characters of the opposite sex are actually able to flirt, date and marry in the game, which is set for release June 6 in North America and Europe.

"It's more of an issue for this game because the characters are supposed to be a representation of your real life," Marini said Tuesday in a telephone interview. "You import your personalized characters into the game. You name them. You give them a personality. You give them a voice. They just can't fall in love if they're gay."

The issue marks not only a cultural divide between Japan, where gay marriage is not legal, and North America and Europe, where gay marriage has become legal in some places, but also in the interactive world, where games are often painstakingly "localized" for other regions, meaning characters' voices and likenesses are changed to suit different locales and customs.

"The ability for same-sex relationships to occur in the game was not part of the original game that launched in Japan, and that game is made up of the same code that was used to localize it for other regions outside of Japan," Nintendo noted in an emailed statement.

While many English-language games don't feature gay characters, several role-playing series produced by English-speaking developers, such as "The Sims," "Fable" and "The Elder Scrolls," have allowed players to create characters that can woo characters of the same sex, as well as marry and have children. Other more narrative-driven games, like "Grand Theft Auto IV," "The Last of Us" and "Gone Home," have included specific gay, lesbian and bisexual characters.



In this June 5, 2012 file photo, Scott Moffitt, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Nintendo of America, presents Nintendo 3DS at the Nintendo All-Access presentation at the E3 2012 in Los Angeles. The gaming company said Tuesday, May 6, 2014, it wouldn't bow to pressure to allow players to engage in romantic entanglements with characters of the same sex in the English version of "Tomodachi Life" following a social media campaign launched last month seeking virtual equality for the game's characters, which are modeled after real people. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, file)

"We have heard and thoughtfully considered all the responses," Nintendo said of the #Miiquality campaign. "We will continue to listen and think about the feedback. We're using this as an opportunity to better understand our consumers and their expectations of us at all levels of the organization."

Marini isn't calling for a boycott of "Tomodachi Life" but instead wants supporters to post on Twitter and Facebook with the hashtag #Miiquality, as well as write to Nintendo and ask the company to include

same-sex relationships in an update to "Tomodachi Life" or in a future installment.

He noted Wednesday in response to Nintendo's statement that excluding same-sex relationships in the game is a form of "social commentary."



This photo provided by Nintendo shows a screenshot from the video game, "Tomodachi Life." The gaming company said Tuesday, May 6, 2014, it wouldn't bow to pressure to allow players to engage in romantic entanglements with characters of the same sex in the English version of "Tomodachi Life" following a social media campaign launched last month seeking virtual equality for the game's characters, which are modeled after real people. (AP Photo/Nintendo)

"I would hope that they recognize the issue with the exclusion of same-sex relationships in the game and make an effort to resolve it," Marini

said. "Until then, Miiquality will continue to raise awareness of the issue."

**More information:** [www.facebook.com/miiquality](http://www.facebook.com/miiquality)  
[www.twitter.com/miiquality](http://www.twitter.com/miiquality)  
[miiquality.tumblr.com](http://miiquality.tumblr.com)

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