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The Online State of Hate: Analyzing Right-Wing Extremist Rhetoric among Gamers on Reddit

Research Report

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the prevalence of homophobic, misogynistic, and racist tendencies among gamers on Reddit. It reveals a notable support for right-wing rhetoric and gaming-based movements, specifically Gamergate, within these communities. The increasingly widespread presence of video games has made them an object of study of scholarly research on online radicalisation, and questions regarding whether video games play a role in the radicalization process is complex and contradictory. This report discusses the discourse surrounding the perceived oppression that right-wing gamers believe they experience, their attempts at gatekeeping their games from what they perceive to be “woke threats”, as well as various extremist narratives and themes that are present within Reddit gaming communities. Recommendations for police agencies and countering violent extremism programs, as well as directions for future research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, there were an estimated 2.58 billion gamers in 2024, making gaming one of the most popular pastimes (Clement, 2024a). Additionally, in Canada, 77.1% of internet users between the ages of 16 and 64 reported playing video games on any device in the first quarter of 2024 (Clement, 2024b). Online gaming and gaming communities have become an integral part of society, and a major means of interaction and community for likeminded individuals worldwide who otherwise would not be connected.

Video games have become an increasingly important form of experimentation for many. Social isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic sent many socially isolated youth and adults into the world of online gaming (Blazak, 2024). While video games provide a sense of connection and community to combat isolation, research has also found that many youth have experienced increases in stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness while playing video games during the COVID-19 pandemic as well (Pallavicini, Pepe & Mantovani, 2022).

Similarly, Jagoda (2020) argues that video games offer a testing experience to try out alternative worlds and realities, to cultivate one's political self, and enact what they would not be able to do in society (such as participate in wars overseas or crash cars). Many mainstream Westernized video games reflect the inherent inequity of society where non-white, non-masculine persons are often presented as outsiders, which in turn incites harassment and the normalization of white supremacy and

misogyny (Wells et al., 2024a). Conversely, video game developers from the Middle East are challenging the Western monopolization of video games by modifying and producing their own video games, such as Daesh's version of Grand Theft Auto (GTA), called Salil el-Sawareem (Saber & Webber, 2017). Therefore, there are multiple different types of worlds and realities that gamers can choose to immerse themselves in.

In a systemic review of the literature on the impact video game intervention has on radicalisation, Lopez Naranjo and colleagues (2024), found that virtual experiences in video games can reduce fears of 'the other' and increase empathy towards out-groups. Including those of different ethnicities as characters in video games decreases discrimination and can help develop positive attitudes towards different groups in the real world. Although video games can have a positive impact on gamers, they can also have negative impacts. Violent threats online were common during the Gamergate controversy that began in 2014, which saw female gamers, developers, and reviewers threatened with misogynistic calls for violence, and allowed extremist groups to invade gaming forums (Dodds, 2022). Extremist groups have also gone as far as creating their own games or modifying existing games to spread their hateful ideologies by allowing their audience to participate in violence virtually and not simply be observers (Schulzke, 2014).

Video games can foster the spread of extremist ideologies through the creation of communities and the strengthening of bonds between likeminded individuals. There is, however, limited evidence to suggest that radicalization and recruitment to extremist movements are the goals of these spaces (Davey, 2022). Radicalised individuals' bonds are strengthened through video games and their respective communication platforms, and reaching new audiences is a "seen as a 'bonus' rather than the chief objective" (Thomas, 2023, p. 8). The creation of extremist ecosystems by fostering community is the main objective radical groups using video games.

The report offers a qualitative analysis of extremist content across three subreddits that are affiliated with gaming and right-wing discourse; r/KotakuInAction2, r/AntiWokeGaming, and r/GGDiscussion. This report examines various extremist narratives and themes present within online gaming communities, including the influence of Gamergate on online discourse, and how narratives shift to avoid moderation and bans from Reddit.

Reddit Platform Overview

Gaming and gaming-adjacent online platforms are used to purchase, play, and communicate about gaming content. Gaming subreddits are forums which provide a space for members of gaming communities to connect and discuss

upcoming gaming content and the broader gaming ecosystem. Posts within these communities, comments to posts, and replies to comments were analyzed within this research. This section provides an overview of Reddit, the three subreddits included in this analysis, and the role that these communities play in online gaming ecosystem.

Reddit is an American forum-based social network founded in 2005. Content is submitted to the site through posts, links, images, and videos. These posts are then viewable to anyone on the internet, but only reddit users can engage with the content. Within Reddit, posts are organised based on "Subreddits", which are subjects or topics created by users as boards that contain an area to share posts and engage in discussion on a certain topic. The posted content can be voted on (with upvoted content appearing near the top of the discussion, and downvoted content being moved to the bottom) and commented on by other users.

Reddit's environment and moderation policy offers individuals an environment where they can openly express far-right views under a certain threshold. User-created rules for all three analyzed Subreddits can be found in Appendix 1. These rules were designed to moderate what is allowed in the Subreddits and what was not to avoid Reddit removing the Subreddit from their platform for having too extreme of content. These rules also give

moderators the capacity to manually remove posts and members from Subreddits.

r/KotakuInAction2

KotakuInAction2 was chosen as it is the successor to the original KotakuInAction, which was briefly banned during the period this project covers. The latter has been reinstated with a warning section for its to avoid automatic moderators. KotakuInAction2 is one of the main platforms known to engage in misogynistic harassment related to Gamergate, and has over 29,000 followers. This Subreddit operates with rules, defined topics, and moderators, which establish limits on what is acceptable behaviour within the Subreddit to avoid being banned and operate within the community guidelines on Reddit (Potts, Small & Trice 2019).

r/AntiWokeGaming

Although less popular with only 111 followers at the time of analysis, r/AntiWokeGaming, was included in this study for its posts targeting developers and gamers who choose to play “woke” games. The Subreddit was established in December 2024 to discuss “how woke western gaming had become” and predominantly uses visual media content.

r/GGDiscussion

Created in 2015, this Subreddit claims it is an “open and civil environment” for discussing any ideas about Gamergate with honest discussion. It has a membership of 5,800 Redditors and has active members regularly posting written and visual media content.

METHODS

I collected data from online gaming or gaming-adjacent spaces on Reddit and tagged them for Extremist Right-Wing (ERW) indicators. This research only used English-language posts in publicly accessible spaces across the identified Subreddits and only examined content that is both extremist and gaming-related in nature. Therefore, general gaming-related subreddits were outside the scope of this analysis.

First, I identified relevant gaming and gaming related eco-chambers where ERW or Incel content was being shared. This resulted in the r/KotakuInAction2, r/AntiWokeGaming, and r/GGDiscussion subreddits being analyzed. These subreddits were chosen because they facilitate publicly accessible gaming communities and discussion forums, show evidence of extremist discourse within these gaming communities, and have an accessible Application Programming Interface (API) that enables computational methods for data collection. An overview of the analyzed subreddits used can be found in Table 1.

Next, I collected original posts, comments, replies, and the votes they received on the analyzed gaming subreddits. The data was collected via API crawling tool to structure the data based on key terms used between November 6th, 2024, to February 14th, 2025. The dates were chosen based on the

start the date being the American Presidential election results and the end date being Sony's State of Play event.

Once the API was produced, I transformed the content from JSON to create a dictionary of key terms, as well as regular expressions (regex), to look for specific phrases in posts, comments, and replies. I collect the data from python as transcripts and presenting the key words and phrases into themes. These themes were analyzed qualitatively and presented.

Extremist Right-Wing (ERW) Indicators

To determine which posts had ERW indicators this report first sought out what defines right-wing extremism in the context of this research.

Key pillars of ERW are often descriptive based on ethnic and gendered to preserve heritage and values. Jamin (2013) indicates that ERW rhetoric entails the following components:

- 1) The valorization of racial, ethnic, and gender inequality and hierarchy.
- 2) There is emphasis on a mono-racial community.
- 3) The radical implication is the means of achieving aims and defending an imagined community.

Table 1. Platform Selection

Subreddit	Timeframe	Total Posts Containing ERW Indicators	Total Comments Featuring ERW Content from Identified Posts
r/KotakuInAction2	November 6th, 2024 to February 14th, 2025	68	91
r/AntiWokeGaming*	December 22nd, 2024 to February 14th, 2025	8	3
r/GGDiscussion	November 6th, 2024 to February 14th, 2025	34	70

* The r/AntiWokeGaming subreddit was established on December 22nd, 2024, after its predecessor was banned which resulted in a shorter timeframe of analyzed posts.

Miller-Idriss (2022) conceptualizes that ERW embeds “beliefs that are antidemocratic, antiegalitarian, white supremacist, and embedded in solutions like authoritarianism, ethnic cleansing or ethnic migration, and the establishment of separate ethno-states or enclaves along racial and ethnic lines” (p. 18). Scrivens’ (2023) notes multiple online indicators of right-wing extremism ranging from conspiratorial posts and the inferiority of non-straight non-white males to the superiority of a male Christian identity. I have built on this and included support for Gamergate as an indicator of ERW in gaming communities. These indicators used in the present study are depicted in Figure 1.

For each category data, were collected based on keyword searches of both general and derogatory terms associated with each category. As posts were identified containing extremist right-wing content, new terms were added to the

search list throughout the project. A list of all identifying words and phrases can be found in Appendix 2 below.

For identifiers based on race, references of a synagogue, mosques, the Torah, the Quran, and names of popular Black, Muslim, or Jewish characters in games (such as Musa from Kingdom Come Deliverance 2) were searched for. In terms of discourse related to White Supremacy and neo-Nazi support, mentions of Donald Trump, oppression, Nazi, Hitler, communism, and the left. This category often overlapped with the support for Gamergate and conspiratorial categories, which I identified throughout the research and added it to the codebook. What differentiated between the conspiratorial and Gamergate posts and comments was that discussion surrounding Gamergate mentioned future threats as a result of contemporary issues and policies. Any mention of the “woke message”, “woke

disease/infection”, “USAID”, and/or “ANTIFA” were categorized in as conspiratorial. Conversely, discussion of Gamergate catered more towards praising and glorifying the events of Gamergate and any mention of Anita Sarkeesian, Zoe Quinn, and Brianna Wu (who were the targets of the 2014 and 2015 harassment campaigns).

Sexual or Gender based discourse also overlapped with almost every identified

category. Key terms searched for were related to calls for sexual violence (public shaming, lynching, and calls for harassment), “murdering of unborn children” (as opposed to saying abortion), inferiority of women and gay men, and any mentions of the sexuality or gender of protagonists in games. Many iterations, variations, and codes for these words were also included based on their use to bypass moderators on Reddit.

Figure 1. Extremist Right Wing (ERW) Indicators



RESULTS

The discussions on the analyzed subreddits reveal a strong sense of identity formation and “us vs them” mentalities within discussions of Gamergate, characterized by shared history, vilification of opponents, and reliance on conspiracy theories. These dynamics foster group cohesion and motivate collective action against perceived threats to gaming culture. These perceived threats to gaming come from diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) based on race, sexual and gender orientation and identity, as well as the belief that right-wing gamers being perceived as a targeted, oppressed group. A summary of key themes is presented in Table 2.

Sexual or Gender Identity Based Discourse

This section provides an overview of the narratives identified across the Subreddits based on sexual or gender identity. There were sixty-three posts and comments that represented misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic content.

Misogynist Content

Many posts across the analyzed Subreddits focused on the struggles that white men face in modern gaming and how women, especially feminists of colour, are the main cause of their problems. One of the most top-voted comments was that the only way to true equality would be to “either have to

improve men’s lives and health dramatically or drastically reduce women’s”. One of the most discussed themes was that men were being targeted and only some were “still being kept around likely for breeding”, with various conspiracy theories over why this is happening.

Posts often criticized women for their choice of “smutty novels” and described these novels as being equivalent to male gamers sexually exploiting females in videogames. Users believed that male gamers were “legitimately more oppressed than all non-whites, women, and LGBT” groups. Targeting of female journalists in the gaming industry was also prevalent with one post referring to how “women on TikTok continually talk about poisoning, shooting, and killing men after the election” and one member replied how feminists are “advocating for eugenics and genocide”. The common theme among the Redditors was that feminism “champions the erasure of male spaces” and how women are “celebrating murdering their unborn children (especially [because] they are boys)”.

Some of the comments were discreet in their calls for action against female journalists, however, one Redditor called for bringing “public shaming back, [be]cause clearly society would benefit greatly from them.” Another comment, replying to a pro-Gamergate post, stated that they would like to see one female journalist “publicly humiliated and forced to apologize” and another requesting video proof of Zoe

Table 2. Extremist Right-Wing (ERW) Discussion Themes

ERW themes across *r/KotakuInAction2*, *r/AntiWokeGaming*, and *r/GGDiscussion*.

Sexual or Gender Identity Based Discourse	Most posts on the analysed Subreddits contained negative comments and slurs based on gender and sexuality, especially when discussing games with female leads or members of LGBTQ+ community. This anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-feminist discourse was also directed towards gaming journalists. Posts targeted “unattractive women” and those supporting “woke” gaming, including violent fantasies and advocating for the public humiliation of female journalists.
Discourse based on race	Race-based discourse primarily focused on the inability to do harm to minority groups in games. Gamers were frustrated at developers for their insertion of black and Asian playable characters and non-playable characters (NPC). Sandbox games ¹ were criticized for not offering the ability to enact violence against these characters. However, modifications were created and shared with users to enact alternative realities and engage in this violence.
Oppression of Right-Wing Gamers	Users justified their behaviour and comments due to their perception of being oppressed in a “woke” world. Many replies and comments to posts discussed how gamers are the most oppressed group that were forced into a culture they disliked. Replies in various posts also included the support for Donald Trump as the saviour of their livelihood and a means to undoing the corruption brought on by the Democrats. Various posts included defending Nazis and their right to freedom of speech and representation in video games.
Woke Conspiracies	Various criticisms of “woke” culture in gaming industries can play a role in extremist rhetoric and conversations, which then transformed into racist, homophobic, antisemitic, and misogynistic comments. Rhetoric shifted to discussing “woke as a disease” and corruption which led to increased “woke” content in gaming spaces.
The Gamergate “War”	A recurring theme across posts was the reference to Gamergate as never-ending and the need to continue the “fight”. There were various calls for a third Gamergate, since they were “right about everything”. The narrative from Gamergate often acted as a gateway to more extreme discourse, often involving racist, homophobic, antisemitic, and misogynistic rhetoric.

Quinn, a victim of Gamergate, being sexually assaulted, and another insisted that he would “deface her out of spite”.

Many of the posts and comments were referring to “inferior females” and how “unattractive women are not wanted” and “do not sell” like their attractive counterparts, such as the oversexualized women in the Stellar Blade video game. A game with a female lead is only considered a success and supported within these online communities if they are attractive and white. One Redditor commented “Ugly chick as MC [Main Character]? Pass.” Comments were arguing that unattractive female characters were the reason games were failing. One post expressed that “the replacement of body types to include gender caused Lords of the Fallen sales to exceed expectations”; the game does not have a gendered character creation option as there is only one protagonist for the game. The post reflects a broader trend where game design decisions are politicized, and discussions about inclusivity or representation are framed as regressive and attributing sales to the absence of a female body. This claim, however, is likely correlation without causation, as the sales spike coincided with major seasonal discounts, including Steam’s Autumn discounts. The point of reference was the increase in number of sales on the gaming platform Steam, and when some members referred to the ongoing holiday sale was told they were on the “Social Justice crusade”.

Content Directed Towards the LGBTQ+ Community

Extremist posts across Subreddits featured anti-LGBTQ+ slurs and narratives. There was specific focus on the inclusion of an optional side-quest in Kingdom Come: Deliverance 2 (KCD2), where the male protagonist can have a gay romance. Users frequently referred to the lack of sales and bad reviews of these types of games for their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) frameworks. Slurs were directed towards other members, characters in games, and game developers. This reflected the hostile culture created by gamers to gatekeep and keep enjoying their games. There was a clear normalization of the use of derogatory terms, despite the stated rules of the subreddits.

Developers were referred to as “trans-worshipping” and “revolting” for their inclusion of non-binary characters and optional non-straight relationships, referring to this inclusion as “a cancer”. Comments also included how the oppression of gamers forces them to play games they do not like “until they become gay”. There were various conspiracies being discussed that contemporary gaming culture is designed to force male gamers to say, “we’re gay”. Comments also alluded to supporting the “LGBTQ woke mafia” as having a severe mental illness. Posts also discussed how society is being led down a “Dystopian LGBTQ Utopia nightmare”. When one Redditor replied to these

comments as being conspiracy theories, they were told to “Go take the c**k out you’re a**”, a comment which received over one hundred up-votes.

There were also various slurs being used in the forums and purposeful misuse of terminology to mock members of the community. One post altered the acronym for the queer community to “LGHDTV”¹ while another referred to how “male bonding is toxic. Unless swallowing the D is involved”. The term “homo” was used frequently when referring to the gay characters from KCD2 and those who supported the game. Redditors on these forums expressed a zero-tolerance policy where any game with pronouns, “girlboss”, and “forced alphabet propaganda” will not be accepted. Some attributed to the increased number of LGBTQ+ members was due to funding and support from USAID, which in the Subreddit is referred to as “US-AIDs”. Members of the LGBTQ+ community were often referred to as “clowns”, and when one user commented “how 99% of LGBT people are undistinguishable from straight people on daily basis” they received hate ranging from homophobic and transphobic slurs to comments on them being “a clear supporter and pedophile”.

¹ This is a common code word and meme used to mock members of the LGBTQ+ community.

The common theme among the right-wing gaming communities on Reddit is the need to gatekeep gaming and protect protagonists. Similar to the theme of conspiracies elaborated on later in the report, much of the discourse on gender and sexuality focuses on conspiracies that DEI inclusion is turning men gay.

Subreddit rules were clearly not enforced by moderators and despite claims of keeping matters civil and respectful, members continued with sexist, homophobic, and transphobic slurs and comments were permitted. Community members were quick to insult those that defended the inclusion of DEI characters in games without any consequences from moderators. Rules were only upheld and used as threats as a means of gatekeeping.

Race-based discourse

Posts and comments focused on race centered around the inability to do harm to minority groups in games. In the identified twenty-one posts, gamers were frustrated at developers for their insertion of Black and Asian playable characters or Non-Playable Characters (NPC). Sandbox games were identified by gamers for not offering the ability to enact violent fantasies, however, in-game modifications were discussed and posted with links to enact alternative realities where this violence can occur.

The main target were the Jewish and Black characters in KCD2 and the inability to attack them with one user calling for “true equality is being able to kill everyone”. The comments continued and much of the hate was directed not at the inability to kill other NPCs but specifically at “Musa”, an NPC in KCD2, and those praying in the synagogue. Various hate and threats were directed at the game’s lead developer as players did not have the freedom to be racist towards or kill Musa. One subreddit, with over 140 replies, was expressing the frustration at “wokeism” for the inclusion of “blacks even when it's inaccurate, like in mediaeval Bohemia, and to always have them in interracial relationships with white women.”

One post took a comment by Avowed art director Matt Hansen out of context, when he offered support for Black artists who needed portfolio reviews or job advice over Twitter/X and framed it as “brazen

admission of discriminatory hiring practices”. One user pointed out that this was just the director was offering advice, and they received comments of being “woke people always defend yourself with ‘context’ bulls**t” as well as other slurs. Others called Hansen’s tweet a tool to “radicalize” against white men. The comments would continue to explain how the reason white men are not being hired because industries choosing to “exclude [white people] based off the color of their skin.”

Another main theme of the posts and comments in the Subreddits was the inclusion of Black female leads being “forced” into video game as protagonists and key NPCs, and how any criticism of these Black-focused narratives is seen as “a hate crime against non-whites”, attributable to poor gaming journalism. Similar to the discourse emerging from Gamergate, Redditors in these forums often blamed journalists for DEI games as they lacked ethics and morals, accusing them of pushing a political agenda rather than providing unbiased reviews and coverage. Others expressed their frustration at the inclusion of a black female NPC, and modded to either be able to kill her or turn her into a white woman. This sentiment echoes the broader Gamergate movement, which targeted journalists and developers advocating for diversity and progressive values in gaming.

There were some comments, however, that seemed to be pro-immigration and in support of foreign intervention from Asia and the MENA region, if it meant it could “save Sweden from this radical leftist LGBTQ/feminist bulls**t.” Comments continued to support how there needs to be more masculine men injected into some societies and that mixing races being a better alternative than having more “corrupt feminists”. Others rallied behind the Chinese government policies for opposing woke agendas in gaming.

The inclusion of Black leads – specifically Black female leads – in video games has sparked discourse within these Reddit communities. The posts and comments often discuss that the presence of Black protagonists was not originally integrated into the narrative but rather inserted to fulfill diversity quotas. The perspective is rooted in a resistance to DEI initiatives within the gaming industry.

The backlash against non-white leads and DEI initiatives in gaming reflects the deeper societal tensions that exist regarding race, gender, and representation. It underscores the challenges faced by the gaming industry in balancing diverse representation with community acceptance. Moreover, the criticism directed at gaming journalism highlights ongoing debates about ethics, bias, and the role of media in shaping cultures and narratives.

Oppression of Right-Wing Gamers

Users justified their negative behaviour and comments due to their perception of being oppressed in a “woke” world. Many replies and comments to posts discussed how gamers are the most oppressed group that were forced into a culture war. Replies in various posts also included the support for President Donald Trump as the saviour of their livelihood and a means to undoing the corruption brought on by the Democrats. Various posts included defending Nazis and their right to freedom of speech and representation in video games. Much of the content presented USAID and ANTIFA as corrupt organizations that stole money for their own agenda and to spread a “woke disease”.

A common theme among all Subreddits was how “Gamers [are the] most oppressed people”, and others called for protection of Nazis from people publicly wearing “I punch Nazis!” shirts. One Redditor replied to this thread by stating “I game and enjoy my second amendment rights” in response to how they overcome woke elements in games. Others discuss the discrimination they face due to there being “no AAA² games that represent us right-ring gamers”. Another complained “no one, not already firmly on the right is likely to ever hear about it”, referring to the oppression white gamers experience.

² A term used for big-budget and top-tier videogames that have high production values.

There was substantial discourse on the discrimination gamers face with a common theme of gamers being “oppressed” “by government entities no less”. Some commented that “Gamers have always been the most oppressed people” and how “due to the nature of video games being entertainment gamers are always complacent making them one of the easy marks to oppress”. This claim of a common identity by a group with little claim to documented repression reflects right-wing discourse. In their adoption of the language used by legitimately oppressed people, members of these forums sought restitution and protection similar other cases, such as Tesla owners seeking to be a protected class (Upton-Clark, 2025; Woodard, 2025).

One of the recurring themes was the presentation of President Donald Trump as an outcome of the marginalization gamers felt. One Redditor commented how “Trump 2024 could’ve been avoided if you just let us game 10 years!” Another user questioned whether “USAID was responsible for woke games and movies?” Responses included some saying they were “forced to choose the republican [sic] party... and stop this degenerate rainbow mafia propaganda from affecting every single piece of media” and “its so sad how the democrat party has been completely hijacked by the mentally ill LGBTQ woke mafia.” Another commented how “even if Trump rips apart the ENTIRE system that allowed this to happen, he’s only going to be in office for 4 years, god forbid

something happen to the man, and after that there’s no guarantee that his replacement won’t just start it back up.”

The discourse around gamers being oppressed by government entities and society reflects the broader narrative of victimization. This narrative is often characterized by claims that games are unfairly targeted and marginalized, despite the significant cultural and economic influence of the gaming industry (Al-Sibai, 2022). The rhetoric mirrors the language used by oppressed groups, thereby appropriating their struggles to validate right-wing gamers’ sense of victimhood. This framing can serve to galvanize the community, fostering a sense of solidarity against perceived threats. The adoption of victimhood language by gamers aligns with right-wing discourse, which often emphasizes the idea of being under siege by external forces, such as government entities or societal changes (GPAHE, 2024). This rhetoric is used to rally support and create a unified identity among members of these communities. By framing themselves as oppressed, gamers can justify their resistance to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, which they may perceive as threats to their cultural norms (Wells et al., 2024b).

This analysis reveals how the narrative of right-wing gamers as an oppressed group is constructed and maintained within these communities. It highlights the intersection of gaming culture with broader right-wing

ideologies and the ways in which these narratives are used to resist change in the gaming industry and society at large.

Woke Conspiracies

The idea that increasing “wokeness” in videogames is a sign of financial trouble was a recurring theme when referring to why a game or studio fails to make a profit. Twenty-two posts and comments were identified in support of conspiracy theories of an increasing “woke” threat.

Commenters who oppose “the message”³ are moderated⁴ and hate is expressed toward them. Comments discussed the corruption within journalism to promote the “woke ideology” to “get better credit score.” USAID was largely criticized for funding “nearly every woke organization... from Politico to all the BLM and Antifa joints.” When one Redditor called out members for overusing the “anti-woke” term, there were calls for them to be banned from the thread as well as being told to “F**k off commie”.

Another thread discussing the insertion of DEI in games had comments discussing how characters get “retconned”⁵ to cram in THE “optional” MESSAGE”. Comments included calling out journalists and discussing which ones need to be targeted, while protecting “People that stay true to defend our hobbies.” Streamers and game reviewers that gave good reviews to games classified as “woke” were deemed to “compromise on their morals, ethics and standards” and because they are “normies”

they will choose the “path of least resistance”. The “message” refers to the “woke” ideals, which some members were reluctant to use the word in fear of Reddit moderators.

Across all Subreddits, the term “woke” was often associated with being a “disease”. Others would respond how it is a “symptom” of a greater “culture war” that is ongoing, and how tolerating it is problematic; “Saying a little bit of woke doesn’t bother you at all is tantamount to me. saying a little bit of melanoma doesn’t bother me at all.” With one user describing that “No company that was infested with diversity have [sic] ever recovered, it’s a cancer that have [sic] no cure.” while others believe how “games are controlled by an abusive cabal” of woke people in the gaming industry. Conspiracy-promoting posters would continue to claim “SBI [Sweet Baby Inc.] was responsible for 9/11”. One reply contributed to the discussion with how “woke is the cancer eating away at escapism”, designed to destroy things that men enjoy.

³ “The message” is in reference to the inclusion of DEI and ‘woke’ messages in games.

⁴ A moderated message is visible as a deleted message. Replies often remain visible also.

⁵ This means a revision of a piece of fictional work by introducing new information that offers a different interpretation of the events.

USAID was one of the main focuses of the conspiracy theories with one member labeling it “one head of the Hydra.” and how “FEMA and Veterans Assistance both doled out large aid to illegal immigrants.” There was association with how NGOs “give ANY amount to non citizen criminal entries”. One Redditor replied that “money was funneled into NGOs, who funneled the money into LGBTQ+ gaming spheres.” Others claimed that “there’s 1 enemy to defeat” and how the USAID was “WEAPONIZED”. There were expressions of how deep it goes when another stated “Imagine how much we are going to find as they keep digging. The Dems [Democratic Party] are in full panic mode now that their slush funds are getting turned off.” Other members were demanding arrests and reparations for the funding of these games that they could have benefited from, especially how “Using taxpayer money to fund political speech is a violation of the 1st Amendment.”

A redditor placed “the biggest piece of the blame, by far” on academia and more specifically arts and humanities. Universities and schools were labelled “woke echo chambers” that produce graduates that “infect their workplaces with ideology too.” Academia is presented as its own threat to right-wing gamers for producing “woke workers” to spread in companies.

The belief that gaming journalism is corrupt and promotes a woke ideology reflects a deep mistrust in media. The sentiment

echoes the broader Gamergate movement, which targeted journalists and developers advocating for diversity and progressive values in gaming. USAID is frequently targeted in conspiracy theories, accused of funding woke organizations and being part of a larger agenda to promote DEI initiatives. These theories often lack evidence and are rooted in a broader distrust of government and NGOs. The discourse in these communities reflects a deep-seated belief that DEI initiatives are harmful and must be eradicated; the comparison to diseases underscores the perceived severity of the threat (Tassi, 2024).

This analysis exposes the complex and multifaceted nature of the discourse around wokeness in gaming communities. It highlights the intersection of gaming culture with broader societal and political issues, including members’ mistrust in media, government, and academia.

Support for Gamergate

The primary Subreddit for this discussion was r/KokakuInAction2, and while there was not a lot of direct call for action from any posts, many of the comments and replies discussed the role of Gamergate in the larger “culture war”. Members had tags and affiliations with Gamergate and the role they played in it. Whenever the members that were directly involved in Gamergate replied to posts, they would receive praise for their honesty and defense of the gaming

world. These members were also the primary moderators of the Subreddit.

Across all analyzed Subreddits, moderators made it clear not to discuss certain issues. While some Redditors did post their thoughts, moderators quickly disclosed to them other websites such as DeepFreeze, which labels itself as a “Journalism corruption reference”. The website posts all the issues of various news journals and links to the archived GamerGate wiki page.

The common theme among all discussions of Gamergate was that it was a noble cause of “calling out villainy” designed to protect gaming from corruption in journalism and government funding. Many Redditors would reference r/Gamerghazi (a Subreddit that posts in opposition to Gamergate) as “the opposition”, “the cabal of corrupt journalists”, and a “woke pinko cult”. There was a common belief among those posting that anyone affiliated with r/Gamerghazi was morally corrupt. Users also shared that “we wouldn’t have Trump if we didn’t win that war” and the “failure of woke games” was their sign that Gamergate “unquestionably won”. By their logic, Trump’s presidency is their sign that they won a greater culture war. The Subreddits all discussed how anyone targeted by Gamergate “lost everything... All their credibility”. Among these comments were frequent replies and posts on how everyone who opposed Gamergate was doing so to “bury their history sexual assault, pedophilia, or outright rape”. One

Redditor took time to reply to explain what the cause of Gamergate was. They discuss how it “IS about ethics in journalism”. The constant emphasis on discussing Gamergate in the present tense shows how for some the movement is still an ongoing “culture war” to many members. Gatekeeping videogames from being “woke was not the fight of Gamergate. It's certainly our fight NOW, but ‘OUR’ means something different now, and maybe even GamerGate means something different now; I realize **We** are different now.” One reply to this message was that one individual “made real friendships through the movement” and others called it “personally rewarding”. This emphasis on the events being a win for all gamers and how everybody must still contribute is one of the many things most comments agreed upon.

Calls for rallying behind a “Gamergate 3.0” were frequent across the analyzed Subreddits. While many were simply replying to the posts and explaining the events of Gamergate, one comment called for the defunding of USAID for “funding the woke s**t”, with one replying how “Ten f***ing years after the thing, we were proven to be right even though anyone not dishonest or mentally disabled knew we were right.” However, many still believe the “greater culture war” is not over. Whether they were claiming that “The fight hasn't even started yet. The US still needs to clean house, and even then, Europe is the second base of operations for this woke

garbage.”, that they “haven’t won yet. Now this is the fun part”, “the war on art is just beginning”, or “We never won, its obvious for anyone looking at the wider picture. We also didnt lose either. GG halted a lot of the globalists agenda, which gave enough time for the war to swing in our favor.” While there was no clear agreement whether or not Gamergate was considered a victory in 2014, all replies in one thread agreed with one Redditor that “GG went from about games journalism to a wider culture war to what it is now, a last attempt to stop globalists from taking full athoritarian [sic] control of the west.”

The common calls for violence were directed towards female journalists as mentioned earlier in this report, and many of these were calls for sexual violence against female reporters. Within the Gamergate discussions, many were calling for the continuation of the ongoing “culture war” as they frame it. Many members were quick to rally behind one Redditor who posted that the “war is just beginning [sic]” with comments such as “NEVER RELENT! NEVER SURRENDER! PURGE THE EVIL FROM THEIR THRONE OF LIES! We can DO it brothers and sisters! The tide IS turning! Do not give up NOW!” It is clear that, for many, Gamergate is not only a part of their group identity, but also how they perceive that they are resisting and protecting their games from a “woke cabal” that is ruining their games.

This analysis reveals how identity formation and ‘us vs them’ mentalities are deeply intertwined in Gamergate discussions. The strong sense of community, shared history, and common goals foster a cohesive group identity, while the vilification of opponents and reliance on conspiracy theories reinforce an exclusionary combative mindset. With regards to identity formation, members emphasized their shared history and experiences through the legacy of Gamergate and their own personal narratives, such as making friendships, and finding personal fulfillment to solidify this collective identity. These personal narratives reinforce the idea that being part of Gamergate is not solely about a political stance but also about personal growth and community. The use of tags and affiliations represent symbols of identity within these communities that distinguish members from outsiders; the maintenance of group cohesion through symbols reminds members of their shared cause. Finally, this reinforcement of Gamergate being a perpetual and ongoing struggle keeps members engaged and motivated, reinforcing their identity as warriors – with a sense of purpose and urgency – in a larger battle.

The formation of ‘us vs them’ mentalities is categorized by a series of factors. First, the opposition and disdain of woke ideals, framed them as a threat to their gaming culture. This opposition created a clear divide between those who support DEI initiatives and those who resist them. The

narrative describes woke elements as corruptive to gaming culture and reinforces the idea that the community must protect its 'cultural purity'. This mentality fosters an exclusionary environment where only those who align with the group's values are accepted. The vilification of opponents served to dehumanize the opposition and justify aggressive actions against them. Supporters of Gamergate were described as morally superior, and this sense of moral righteousness justified their actions. The selective calls for violence also highlights the extreme measures some members are willing to take to protect gaming identity and culture.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation of this report was inaccessible, and therefore incomplete data due to platform moderation. It is not possible to get access to data from banned subreddits. Various potential subreddits to analyze were identified prior to data collection, however, many subreddits and their content have been removed for being dedicated to shocking or highly offensive content, which violated Reddit's terms of service. Reddit's API agreement also prohibits the use of data from deleted and banned subreddits, which is why the posts from these subreddits could not be analyzed.⁶

Additionally, data may be incomplete due to the utilized keyword-tagging approach. The research primarily looked at keywords and phrases taken out of APIs. This is a limitation for two reasons. First, some of the terminology that was identified is based on what researchers and practitioners looked for, however, the posts and comments use more discreet terms to ensure avoiding being banned. The second issue is that much of the content, especially on r/GGDiscussion, is multimedia content; memes, videos, and links to other websites, which makes it difficult to collect the data using APIs and keyword tagging.

⁶ The following subreddits were of interest for the present research but were removed/banned for being "dedicated to shocking or highly offensive content":

r/UncensoredGaming, r/GamingMemes, r/TheRedPill, r/Rightgaming, r/Gamingmemes, and r/FreeGamingMemes

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This analysis highlights the complex nature of gaming ecosystems on Reddit and how extremist rhetoric is presented in these spaces. The findings of this study highlight a troubling trend of discriminatory behavior among right-wing gamers on Reddit, characterized by homophobia, misogyny, and racism. This behavior is further exacerbated by the growing support for right-wing ideologies and movements like Gamergate. These insights underscore the need for targeted interventions and policies to address and mitigate such harmful tendencies within online gaming communities.

These communities helped facilitate “us vs them” dynamics among posters based on the various themes outlined above. Identity formation and protection was very important for most members of the community. Additionally, many Redditors were associating whether a game meets its sales targets based on whether it fits with their traditional perspective of gaming. Gatekeeping in right-wing gaming communities serves to maintain ideological purity and exclude dissenting voices. This practice reinforces group cohesion and limits exposure to diverse perspectives.

These online gaming communities share violent narratives, as well as share discriminatory content based on race, gender, sexual orientation and identity. In

the, albeit short, timeframe analyzed, it was clear that some gamers use these Subreddits to express their right-wing conspiracy theories related to the corruption they believe influences society and how it has impacted their gaming experience, as well as what they believe the solutions to be. Many of the solutions were calling for a continuation of Gamergate, sexual violence, and deconstructing of any NGOs they deemed to be corrupt.

The following recommendations are influenced by the findings of this report and aim to inform policy and program priorities for countering radicalization to violence at the individual, group and societal level.

- 1) Ensure that law enforcement and policies on preventing and countering violent extremism consider the complexity of extremism in online gaming environments.** Moving forward P/CVE policies should incorporate a greater understanding of how video game communities’ continued gatekeeping of their games can lead to right-wing narratives and actions, as evident in the events of Gamergate and the continued support the movement receives. Despite many members not necessarily participating in Gamergate, most expressed their support for the movement and expressed how any media criticized

by the movement is unreliable. I recommend addressing what strategies have been effective in countering online extremism and applying similar strategies to gaming spaces. Community-led initiatives, such as education and collaboration with NGOs, play a role in combating extremism (Wallner, White & Regeni, 2025). With that in mind, PVE approaches must incorporate educational content directly into games and gaming forums that promote respect, inclusivity, and understanding in the face of popular games potentially fostering more toxic behaviour.

2) Identify alternative terminology used that would not be picked up or flagged by moderation systems.

Since Reddit uses a mix of automated and human moderators, members and Subreddit moderators have familiarized themselves with what they are able to post within the Reddit Terms of Service to not be banned or flagged. Members are using coded language, directing to other websites, and expressing caution when discussing certain issues to make sure their Subreddits are not removed like others. Although a difficult task, there must be some familiarization with how extreme right-wing narratives are framed and discussed, including keeping up to date with

current coded terminology, to remain on platforms such as Reddit.

3) Conduct thorough research into the prevalence of extremist narratives in gaming and gaming-adjacent spaces online.

To counter the challenges posed by online extreme right-wing narratives and calls or threats for violence, research must address the prevalence of extremist narratives in gaming and gaming-adjacent spaces. With there being a common theme of many believing that gaming has been infiltrated and the existence of groups purposely corrupting then, thorough research needs to consider how these narratives emerge and remain prevalent in gaming spaces. Many questions need to be understood about the prevalence and nature of extremist narratives:

- What are the most common extremist narratives found in gaming and gaming-adjacent spaces?
- How frequently do these narratives appear across different gaming platforms and communities?
- Which specific games or gaming genres are most associated with the presence of extremist narratives?

Further research must address the initial emergence of the extreme right-wing narratives such as:

- 1) How do extremist narratives initially emerge in gaming spaces?
- 2) What factors contribute to the development and spread of these narratives within gaming communities?
- 3) Do extremist groups exploit gaming culture and aesthetics to propagate their ideologies? If so, how?

Finally, research must explore the impact this has on gaming communities:

- 1) How do extremist narratives affect the behavior and attitudes of gamers within these communities?
- 2) What are the social and psychological impacts of exposure to extremist content on gamers?
- 3) How do these narratives influence the overall culture and dynamics of gaming communities?

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APPENDIX 1: RULES OF SUBREDDITS

r/KotakuInAction2 Prohibited Behaviour List

- 1) Wishing, cheering, or inciting violence/harm
- 2) Calls to action, "witch-hunting" or brigading
- 3) Personal information
- 4) Hostile IDPol
- 5) Untagged spoiler
- 6) Unarchived link to unethical or biased site
- 7) Violation of the secret rule

r/AntiWokeGaming Prohibited Behaviour List

- 1) Be civil: We all humans and we should stay civil, otherwise this sub at risk of being banned.
- 2) This is gaming subreddit: This is gaming subreddit, posts should be related to gaming or gaming community(ties).
- 3) No trolls/spam: We don't tolerate trolls and spam here. All trolls will be banned, all spam will be removed and user can be banned. Trolls that purposely make posts to ban this sub, will be **permanently** banned.
- 4) Reddit ToS: We don't take any chances on getting banned, so don't violate Reddit's ToS. Any post/comment that is violation it will be removed, any post/comment that may violate it can be removed.

r/GGDiscussion Prohibited Behaviour List

- 1) Rule Zero: Obey all sitewide rules
- 2) Be civil. Blatant name-calling, mockery, and egregious hostility towards other users are not permitted.
- 3) Behave in good faith. Do not bait or troll other users.
- 4) Do not brigade. Do not post or link to content from GGDiscussion elsewhere for the purpose of brigading, mockery or harassment. Do not use this subreddit to do the same to others either. Links to other subs must be no participation.
- 5) No lolcow farming. Participating in someone else's off-sub brigading, mockery, or harassment based on content posted or linked from GGDiscussion will also not be permitted.
- 6) To be on topic, a submission must be relevant to the current culture war in tech, media, and geek culture, not demonstrably false or egregiously misleading, and obey all previously stated rules.

APPENDIX 2: DICTIONARY AND CATEGORIZATION OF TERMS

Category	Identifying Terms
Sexual or Gender Identity Based Discourse	- Transgender - Trans-worshipping - Gay - Bisexual - Variations of LGBTQ+ acronym - Binary/Buynary gamers - Homo - Pronouns - Feminist - Gender equality - Abortion - Murdering unborn - Fag - Girl boss - Sexuality - Humiliate - Public shaming - Mentally ill men
Discourse Based on Race	- Mosque - Musa - Black - Nigger (or the use of N1663R) - Synagogue - Jew(ish) - Torah - Racist - Crusades
Oppression of Right-Wing Gamers	- First Amendment - Second Amendment - Nazi - Leftist - Commie - Liberal - Trump - Oppressed - Male bonding - Conservative men - Social Justice Warriors (SJW)
Woke Conspiracies	- Woke(ism) - Woke Infection - Woke Disease - Woke Cancer - Diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) - Corporate Espionage - USAID - ANTIFA - Pedophilia - Red pill - Deception - The Message
The Gamergate "War"	- Gamergate - GG - Culture War - Anita Sarkeesian - Zoe Quinn - Brianna Wu - Crusade - Journalism - Purge

About CANSES

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