#INeedDiverseGames: How the Queer Backlash to GamerGate Enables Nonbinary Coalition

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ABSTRACT

GamerGate, the online hate campaign that violently threatened and harassed prominent feminists in gaming, claimed that feminists were destroying gaming culture through their alleged influence on game journalists and industry professionals. We position GamerGate as an incendiary reaction to the changing (no longer overwhelmingly white, cisgender, heterosexual and male specifically) demographic of game players. We argue that GamerGate supporters operated under a false binary of identity: either one is a true gamer (male, masculine), or one is a feminist woman trying to be a gamer. Yet myriad intersectional identities continue to queer game space, and we propose that the hate campaign #GamerGate is an acknowledgement of and reaction to this queering of game spaces, not just feminist criticism. Tweets using anti-GamerGate hashtags, such as #INeedDiverseGames evidence the many identities that came together in solidarity, resisting GamerGate harassment. To examine the resistive solidarity of anti-GamerGate backlash, we draw upon feminist, queer, social movement, social media, and gaming literatures to cultivate a theory of nonbinary coalition, and argue that this is a tool for agents of change in gaming culture.

In August 2014, Eron Gjoni, ex-boyfriend of game designer Zoe Quinn, posted a sequence of blog posts claiming that Quinn had had sex with journalists, executives, and producers in order to secure publicity and accolades for her free indie game, *Depression Quest*.[1] Although proven false within hours, the accusations became a rallying point for anti-feminist backlash against women working and playing in video game spaces. In the months following the slander of Quinn,

a full-fledged anti-feminist hate campaign ensued, called by those supporting the movement #GamerGate.[2] With attacks on Quinn and others taking place largely online, GamerGate tactics included doxing,[3] murder and rape threats, and incessant harassment across Internet platforms including Twitter, Reddit, 4chan, and 8chan. Supporters of the grassroots movement GamerGate allege to fight for improved ethics in gaming journalism, despite their most well-known "accomplishments" being the flight of three notable women in gaming from their homes due to bomb, rape, and death threats; the cancellation of a keynote address by longtime feminist games critic Anita Sarkeesian due to mass murder threats; the ambivalent attention of the mainstream media, including coverage by CNBC and Fox News among scores of others; and the withdrawal of feminist critiques by several scholars from academic journals and conferences.[4] Through their public attacks on women, the GamerGate movement's supporters, hereon called GamerGaters, exposed the typically hidden or ignored harassment faced by women involved in all facets of gaming culture.[5]

Women are not the only victims of frequent harassment and discriminatory practices in gaming culture. If anything, GamerGate's tunnel vision on feminist women in gaming reifies the invisibility of other marginal identities in games. GamerGaters were (and are) primarily young, male, self-identified gamers asserting that feminists are destroying games and game culture through their alleged influence on game journalists and industry professionals.[6] They lashed out against vocal feminists, especially those acknowledging the broadening demographics of players. One article that gained particular attention proclaimed the gamer identity to be "dead," and GamerGaters interpreted this as an explicit attack on their privileged position.[7] In fact, the article argued that "gamer" (formerly connoting abrasive, close-minded, white men) no longer accurately represents the game-playing population; we suggest that this explosion of the game player identity represents a queering of game spaces. As more nonmasculine, nonwhite, nonhetero players claim expertise and status in gaming, and as these players more vocally demand representation and acknowledgement, they subvert, tweak, and play with norms and expectations in both game spaces and gaming culture generally.

GamerGaters packaged their fear of this queering of video game spaces into one manifestation, ever the foe of gamers: the feminist. As the controversy played out, it only became clearer that GamerGaters used the guise of investigating breaches of ethics in games journalism to veil their attempts at protecting the masculine privilege of video game spaces by punishing vocal feminist activists.[8] They did so primarily by operating under a false binary of gamer identity: either one is a true gamer (male, masculine, heterosexual), or one is a feminist woman

trying to be a gamer. This binary excludes myriad constellations of complex, intersectional identities of game players, and enables the violent attempts to eradicate feminists and, ultimately, all transgressive identities from gaming culture. The underlying logic seemed to be: *if we could just get those feminists out of our apolitical space, gaming would be safe for us again.* Feminists became the scapegoats of GamerGate, representing the larger trends of growing diversity and queerness in gaming that can no longer be denied or ignored.

GamerGaters envisioned an apolitical gaming culture characterized by (among other things) the prohibition of games criticism based on issues of representation or social injustice. Their strategies consisted of violent silencing tactics, consumer boycott campaigns, and conspiracy theories that degraded feminists while greatly exaggerating their (feminists') clout in the games industry.[9] In the space between GamerGaters' demands and their actions, the core issue was revealed to be one of identity politics: Who can rightfully level critiques on video games, and what kind of critiques can be leveled by whom? Who should determine the content and character representation in games? Who is welcome in game spaces? And, significantly, who can and cannot be a "real" gamer? Thus, we position the hate campaign #GamerGate as an acknowledgement of and reaction to the queering of game spaces by nonmasculine identities, the aftermath of which opens space for new potential coalitions.

GamerGate was unique among misogynist gaming practices for several reasons. It was remarkably public in its uptake both online and in the mainstream news media, it housed seemingly overblown and violent tactics that became media spectacles, and it began and thrived online. Notably, the countermovement to GamerGate is just as remarkable, and will be as much our focus in this article as GamerGate itself. Soon after incendiary GamerGate tweets began appearing on Twitter, diverse voices called for various forms of inclusivity in games and their aggregate voices forged what we understand as an (albeit unofficial and undefined) *coalitional* anti-GamerGate movement. People who care about inclusivity in games came together, largely without fabricating hierarchical demarcations between variously identitied players. Tweets using anti-GamerGate hashtags, such as #INeedDiverseGames (which we examine in depth below), evidence the myriad identities that came together in solidarity, resisting GamerGate harassment.[10] Although Twitter's affordances are partially to credit for the strength and diversity of the anti-GamerGate movement, the emergent resistance to GamerGate was coalitional and resisted binary constructions of identity from its inception.

To examine the resistive solidarity of anti-GamerGate backlash, we draw upon feminist, queer, social movement, social media, and gaming literatures to culti-

vate a theory of nonbinary coalition, and then we describe how this will ultimately be a tool for agents of change in gaming culture. We try to attend to more issues of intersectionality than sex and gender; age, class, race, religion, ability, and more are all vital considerations in the pursuit of nonbinary coalition. The scope of the article, however, precludes a full development of these and other important themes. Instead, we start where GamerGate started: the binary distinction between women and gamers. Then we move into the nascent coalitional movements and argue that we can explicitly build upon this foundation to benefit all game players, not just those invoked by GamerGate.

))) GamerGate in (Literature) Review: Binaries, Intersectionality, and Coalition

As cisgender women, feminists, academics, and game players ourselves, we (the authors) felt a certain heralding in the wake of GamerGate. Women we identified with, whose stories felt familiar in some ways to our own, were harassed and threatened, forced to flee their homes, and publicly ridiculed personally and professionally. GamerGate misogyny, at once unique in its harrowing focus on particular feminists and yet generic in the overworked anti-woman tropes of gaming culture, looked immediately like a feminist object of study to us. Yet after this initial reaction, we began to reevaluate what was at stake by applying an academic lens to Gamer-Gate—as Shira Chess and Adrienne Shaw did in their analysis of academia's role in GamerGate—and as we're sure many other academic game players also did.[11] We wondered if we worked only within feminist literatures, could we fully capture the way that GamerGate is so much more than a backlash against women? While in conversation (over a game of *Project Zomboid*) we started to talk about GamerGate in queer theory terms, something clicked.[12] Queer theory provides a necessary lens for understanding GamerGate and the countermovements that emerged in response, fundamentally altering notions of resistance and coalition. By combining feminist and queer theory literatures, and more important, by understanding the intersectional (though not identical) nature of feminism and queer theory, we hope to provide a more nuanced and meaningful analysis of (anti-)GamerGate.

Queer theory resists definition, and is left open for redefining and remolding—a queer ethic substantiated. Although queer theory has grown and continues to grow out of explorations of sexuality and gender, Mimi Marinucci writes that "it is not necessarily limited to sexual contexts. Indeed, it is queer to do philosophy without making arguments. It is likewise queer to live in ways that

challenge deeply held assumptions about gender, sex, and sexuality."[13] In fact, Anne Emmanuelle Berger argues that as feminist thought has turned increasingly to questions of *gender* as opposed to *sex*—a turn that gained momentum especially with Judith Butler's theorizing of *doing* gender and performativity—the lines between feminist theory and queer theory are blurred or even broken. Berger states that "trouble in gender necessarily reveals or produces trouble in sexuality, if not sexual orientation," highlighting how the move to gender performance as a central focus in feminism is in fact a queering of feminist thought processes.[14] Finally, Jenny Sundén proposes, "[q]ueer is often used as shorthand for multiple ways of positioning and orienting oneself as non-straight, and simultaneously as a way of rendering problematic every fixed definition."[15] Using queer theory to look at the resistance that occurred in GamerGate helps us understand why GamerGaters responded so violently against the bending and problematizing of what they viewed as a "fixed definition" of gamer identity. It also suggests that the countermovement enacted queer resistance in multiple forms by avoiding definition while also forming around a nonbinary understanding of identity, contrary to the rigid framing set up by GamerGater discourse.

However, queer theory cannot be reduced to simply imagining queerness as the resistance to norms. Nikki Sullivan traces a history of queer and feminist scholarship that points out how this simplistic understanding of queer theory privileges the identity of white gay men and is often anti-feminist.[16] Likewise, Cathy Cohen writes that queer theorists too often prioritize sexuality as the key defining factor and thus ignore and exclude examples of nonhegemonic gender among heterosexual people (e.g., single mothers, women of color).[17] This line of feminist questioning asks queer theorists to open an understanding of power beyond a dichotomy of heterosexual/queer that when taken to its full extent opens the possibility for coalitions to form. A benefit of this model of queer theory is the radical inclusion it begets. Karma Chávez imagines coalition as "a possibility for coming together within or to create a juncture that points toward radical social and political change. We can identify this possibility when two or more seemingly different and separable issues or groups come in such contact. These moments reveal and build alternative parameters for politics, belonging, and being."[18] Through urging people to "come together at the roots of their interlocking oppression," every person's solidarity is rendered meaningful in this mode of coalition—though certainly all solidarity is not rendered identical.[19] Privilege, complicity, and policing masked as utilitarian ethics do not disappear because of theoretical gymnastics; rather, this work opens the space for finding ways to confront and, in an ideal world, dismantle regimes of domination as enacted by one person (one gamer, perhaps) at a time.

As a primary tool within GamerGate's regime of domination, GamerGaters performed their activism in a binary us-against-them manner. Binary identity constructions have several key dimensions. They revolve around some sort of primary term and its opposite, and the primary term is defined as the negative of its opposite. Masculine is Not Feminine; Man is Not Woman; Heterosexual is Not Homosexual; White is Not Black.[20] The same is true for Gamer/Nongamer identities as constructed by GamerGaters. GamerGaters operated under a binary understanding of gamer identity that positioned feminist woman as the polar opposite of "real" gamer.[21] This binary construction, like binary understandings of gender, sexuality, race, and other identity markers, precludes coalition by demarcating identities and making culture seem a zero-sum scenario of gaining and losing power. By GamerGate standards, if women and feminists in games and games journalism are allegedly gaining and asserting their power in games culture (despite feminist content reportedly comprising 0.41% of articles), this naturally means "real" gamers must be losing hegemonic power and being silenced.[22]

Another effect of the primary/opposite configuration is the question of what can and cannot be debated within the binary schema. Riki Wilchins suggests that "if you look closer, most binaries look suspiciously like covert extensions of the series 'good/bad.'"[23] The good, primary term (e.g., Man, Heterosexual, Cisgender) "acts as a center that is insulated from being questioned. Thus, we endlessly debate the meaning of woman but not man, homosexuality but not heterosexuality."[24] GamerGaters, as people who occupy the insulated and "good" identity term in their gamer/feminist binary sought to buttress their privilege by violently punishing members of the "bad" identity term, especially those who sought to redefine the gamer side of the binary. This serves to highlight the erasing nature of identity binaries, suggesting that the only two identities of consequence are those sitting at the opposite ends of the spectrum, when in fact a spectrum abjectly fails at encompassing the intersectional and infinitely complex nature of identity. As Rusty Barrett puts it, "gender binary is . . . a form of normativity that forces individuals to fall into one side of this binary and marginalizes those who fail to adhere to normative assumptions about gender [or other] oppositions."[25] It is this prescribed categorization and marginalization that often impedes attempts at more inclusive community configurations, whether gaming communities or otherwise.

Feminists, queer theorists, and feminist queer theorists have discussed various ways to subvert or avoid binary constructions of gender and sexuality. The idea of multiplying gender—that is, naming and identifying many genders rather than only masculine and feminine—is one approach.[26] Making more categories so that all gender identities might fit is a knee-jerk inclination in many cases.

This, however, resembles the aforementioned "gender spectrum" that ultimately still orients us towards Male and Female as opposites with a sliding scale between them for everyone else. Gender identities have also begun to be tied to sexuality paradigms; whereas the old paradigm was to set gay or lesbian at an opposite end to heterosexual, academics and activists have opened the sexuality binary up to include not only bisexual, but also transgender, queer, questioning, skoliosexual, pansexual, intersex, and others. Marinucci suggests that this is a paradigm shift wherein the sexuality and gender binaries were combined as an attempt among the queer community to keep up with changing politics and coalition.[27] However, when we recognize how rapidly the complex intersectionality of identity expands this list, a cohesive moniker would either have to have some kind of catch-all letter—problematic for what should be obvious reasons of marginalization—or an ever-growing combination impossible to operationalize.

Despite the promise of multiple genders and inclusive spectrums, these configurations may still fail to accurately represent all instantiations of a gendered subject. For example, through autobiographical accounts of her life as a bisexual, transsexual, femme woman, Julia Serano finds much to want in existing feminist and queer movements that do not seem to have a place for a person like her: someone whose identity a binary spectrum fails to capture, someone whose ever-shifting intersection of positionalities perpetually places her at the bottom of hierarchies and lacking the legitimacies ingrained in each respective movement.[28] Similarly, Mattilda's (a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore's) anthology *Nobody Passes* includes several authors who explicitly criticize the way that gender and sexual identity definitions continue to fail them regardless of how "inclusive" the spectrum tries to be.[29] This could, tentatively, be extended into a dissolution of the gender binary or spectrum paradigm altogether, as well. However, through an analysis of online comments about gay pornography, William Leap warns against idealizing the dissolution of binaries because their successors may be equally as damaging.[30]

Another option is to "end" gender altogether. Postgenderists cite historical examples of the ways heterosexual monogamy is but a fairly recent social construction and can be deconstructed to help ease the effects of a gender binary.[31] Stevi Jackson argues,

> if we take seriously the idea that gender is fully social and that what we are as men and women is a social product, then in the absence of these categories we would be something very different. This wouldn't be simply man + woman = whole human being, or bit of man, bit of woman mixed in interesting combination = third, fourth or fifth gender.[32]

Thus, dismissing gender and its implicit binary as a relevant construct is more likely to succeed in dismantling the oppressions of the current patriarchal, heteronormative system than merely reworking the paradigm. Although there has not been a consensus on *how* to best engage in nonbinary identity politics, feminists and queer theorists alike call for us to look for alternatives.

So what can be done? At the very least we can conclude that binary constructions of identity are a tool of enforcing conformity and hierarchy, to the explicit benefit of those who occupy the privileged identity of the primary term. As such, we confidently endorse the resistance of binary constructions wherever they are present—a fundamentally queer form of resistance that problematizes and disrupts a fixed definition of what it means to be a certain type of person. A particularly useful tool for resisting binary constructions is acknowledging and foregrounding of the intersectional nature of identities. A binary construction essentializes identity at any given point; if a person is a Woman, all we need to know about her is that she is a Woman. Her ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality, ability, etc., are not relevant in this framework. Thus, we ought to radically contextualize her, and others, so she is not a Woman but a woman. A single working woman of color who uses the pronouns she/her/hers and supports her aging parents. A white transwoman who is differently abled and femme. We argue this ethic applies to gaming culture: A game player who is a cisgender man, a feminist, biracial, and of a privileged class background; a game player who is a woman, lesbian, butch, and Christian.

Although the focus of this article somewhat privileges gender (by nature of attending to GamerGate's focus), intersectionality seeks to comprehend subjects as whole beings comprised of intersecting, compounding, and contradicting characteristics and histories. Intersectionality is defined by Vivian M. May as

> an analytical and political orientation that brings together a number of insights and practices developed largely in the context of Black feminist and women of color theoretical and political traditions. First, it approaches lived identities as interlaced and systems of oppression as enmeshed and mutually reinforcing: one aspect of identity and/or form of inequality is not treated as separable or as superordinate.[33]

In other words, a person's identity ought not be parsed out into separate pieces but taken as a whole, a constellation of factors that combine and mesh together. The types of marginalization a person faces will "intersect with and compound each other," therefore to understand any particular instance of discrimination, minding that aggregate of one's identity characteristics such as gender, race, class, etc., is paramount.[34] To accommodate this point, May critiques incomplete

attempts at intersectionality that reify what it seeks to solve. She states viewing one's characteristics across a "single axis" and/or assigning them hierarchy are problematic.[35] The effective deployment of intersectionality aims to provide understanding of a person as a whole being, rather than a collection of separate traits.

Isaac West points out the ways that understanding trans identity in combination with other identity markers challenges the tendency of LGB and heterosexual people alike to speak *for* and *about* trans people without listening to or hearing from them. In fact, he argues that trans-identified people often find the most agency in battling transphobia and reclaiming their citizen status within a community or nation, when they emphasize the intersectional nature of their own identities, trans *and* disabled, trans *and* of color, trans *and* a parent, trans *and*.[36] From his exploration of intersectionality, we extrapolate that intersectional representations are the most productively challenging and disruptive forms, while also the most meaningful to queer and nonheteronormative gamers. Representations of queer characters, after all, are sometimes among the only access young gamers might have to models of LGBTQ people—a fact that underscores the importance of making sure these characters are nuanced, multifaceted, and realistic (well, realistic insofar as game characters are sometimes fantasy beasts, aliens, magic-wielders, etc.).

A queer form of coalition, then, must necessarily be predicated on a nonbinary understanding of identities. We (the authors) believe that coalition can be formed outside of identity binaries, and to do so creates a queer form of resistance to the systems of domination enacted by GamerGaters. We look to Karma Chávez's work on queer migration politics and coalition to explore the potentialities of a queered binary, or nonbinary sense of coalition. Chávez positions "'queerness' [as] a coalitional term, a term that always implies an intermeshed understanding of identity, subjectivity, power, and politics located on the dirt and concrete where people live, work, and play. By understanding queer as orienting not toward the 'not yet' but rather toward coalition, we find a vital alternative to both inclusionary and utopian politics."[37] Chávez's conceptualizations of both queerness and coalition highlight the terms' intersectional underpinnings and their resistance to being drawn into simplified binaries such as those present in Gamergaters' discourse. By positioning toward coalition rather than an idealized far-off future where everyone's enclaves exist separate but equally, Chávez emphasizes the boons of coalition to "utilize difference as a resource rather than a hurdle to be overcome."[38] And here is where the strength of coalitions lie.

Coalition work, by its very nature, is a conjoining of diverse groups working toward a shared outcome, despite fundamental differences individ-

ual members of the groups may have among them. This is not to say coalition comes easily in either theory or practice, or that it is free of internal strife. Aimee Carrillo Rowe's work on transracial alliances between academic feminists specifically outlines some of the difficulties inherent in coalition work such as unstated incongruent power dynamics, refusals to acknowledge privilege, and mismatched expectations of who wants/needs various forms of help and support.[39] These issues are not unique to transracial coalitions as they are endemic to any coalition work, which may account for its reputation as a sort of eleventh-hour tactic. Bernice Johnson Reagon illuminates this further when she describes how people who seek to foster coalition often do so out of necessity, rather than for pleasure or novelty.[40] However, even communities that one might think would desire coalition may have internal conflict that prevents this. For example, Serano's autobiographical work seeks to describe the benefits of a queer–feminist coalition. She describes a holistic feminism that urges for the fostering and acceptance of radical heterogeneity. Her ambitious framework asks for queer and feminist allies to embrace extreme intersectionality that would involve people with differences in body type, class background, ability, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.[41] Thus, we see that coalition is neither utopian nor impossible; when coalition is queer, it (like queer theory itself) leaves itself open to constantly being redefined and remolded by practitioners.

Chávez observes that coalition building often occurs behind the scenes and is therefore largely absent from social movement literature.[42] However, in a social movement like GamerGate, which exists almost entirely online, these "behind the scenes" formations become more visible. GamerGaters' communication and strategy are both observable and recordable by nature of existing primarily in online public forums such as 8chan and Twitter.[43] However, this case also holds true for organizational visibility of the loosely correlated anti-GamerGate movement and sets the groundwork for seeing their actions as coalitional.

))) Understanding Gaming Culture and GamerGate

It is telling that the *Gamasutra* article by games journalist Leigh Alexander, which garnered such a strong backlash from GamerGaters, indicated that the traditional gamer identity was no longer relevant.[44] Indeed, in a binary, zero-sum understanding of the world, any gain for a "nongamer" in gamer territory means a loss for the "real" gamers who spent years cultivating that exclusive identity. The rejection and harassment of nonnormative players embedded in games culture undoubtedly influences the many players who do not claim "gamer" as an

identifier because they do not identify with the prevailing values and practices associated with "gamers."[45] Alexander questioned the anchor term of the Gamer/ Nongamer binary, probing and redefining the center (masculine male gamer) rather than the derivative (feminine nongamer).[46] This subtle shift indicated a huge reimagining of the gamer identity for those who follow a binary understanding of the identity. "Gamer" had lost the strength of its position as the central, unquestioned, privileged identity, and GamerGaters read this not as a bursting of the binary but as a threat against something they held dear. The GamerGate reaction to this involved the violent, uncritical buttressing of the binary of Gamer/Nongamer identity.

As incomprehensible as GamerGaters' reactions and the effects of their campaign are, the cultural scene was primed for this reaction; after all, the hypermasculine, male privilege of video games has long been a defining characteristic of the genre. In terms of both general Internet usage and video gaming, the online world has traditionally been dominated by men, with video games especially considered a "boy domain."[47] Further, the "real" gamer identity is reified in the overwhelming number of popular games that feature a white, hetero, masculine, male protagonist. GamerGaters rely on the fallacious market-driven logic that if the majority of protagonists and agentive characters are repeatedly represented as a single identity, it must be because the market consists of consumers who identify with such a representation.[48] Mass-market game developers reinforce "real" gamer privilege as well, producing and marketing games that represent and cater to a hypermasculine audience. This invisible privilege provides a sort of validation to GamerGaters who claim their demographic deserves to have their preferences catered to.

This is unsurprisingly the same gaming culture in which game designer and writer Anna Anthropy "strain[s] to find any game that's about a queer woman, to find any game that resembles [her] own experience."[49] It is also the personal experience of both authors, as women who play video games, that video game culture can be stifling in its overt sexism, homophobia, and racism. Elyse has written on the ways sexism manifests in games explicitly, through the silencing and objectifying tactics used against women in online games,[50] and implicitly, with her narrative work on the manifestations of doubt during gameplay. In a reflective interview with Elyse about her first experiences with in-game harassment, Sarah explains, "[e]ventually I did [start playing online] and learned very quickly just to be quiet [during games] because you don't want them to know you're a girl."[51] Encountering objectification, unwanted sexual advances, and/or patronizing attitudes from other players, Sarah silenced herself to avoid these experiences and resisted playing the online multiplayer modes of games she

fiercely enjoyed. In sum, the misogyny and harassment in games is both a studied statistical phenomenon, and a lived experience of the authors, and still Gamer-Gaters claim victimhood at the hands of feminists who are unwarrantedly politicizing their hobby.[52]

This distaste for political discourse in or surrounding games can be viewed as an identifying feature of the "real" gamer, and especially GamerGater.[53] Gamer-Gaters directed a disproportionate amount of their energy at delegitimizing political criticisms in journalistic evaluations of games. Katherine Cross sums up their position when she notes, "crucially, in [GamerGaters'] view a proper games press would never criticise gamers, gamer culture, or their favourite games in anything except the most 'objectively' technical ways. Are the controls smooth? Are there any bugs? Are the graphics cool? Slap a score on it and tell the consumer whether or not to buy."[54] GamerGaters' misguided aim to reinvigorate games journalism ethics hinges on the idea that games warrant only "objective" criticism that focuses on issues of technical and aesthetic integrity, rather than "political" issues of gender, race, sexuality, etc. However, because most mass-market games reify GamerGaters' ideologies, they fail to see the politics embedded in them. Jay Hathaway, *Gawker* writer, paraphrases and contextualizes actual GamerGate tweets and reports "'[GamerGaters] just want to play games,' without complicating things by discussing how those games portray women and minorities, or how the industry treats those same groups. Those discussions are fine, they feel, but please don't force them to confront those inconvenient issues or 'shove them down our throats.'"[55] Although blatantly ignoring the innumerable examples of macho shooter titles that are released each year, GamerGaters maintain their games are at risk for censorship and are being ruined by a surplus of feminist ideology.[56]

Demands for better inclusivity via improved diversity in representation have been growing as the demographics of game players continue to expand. Inclusivity in game representations means that sometimes, hypermasculine, white, cisgender men will be asked to play as something besides a reflection of their own identity—a daily fact of game play for most everyone else. When a main character is a woman, developers often write in backstory of her victimhood so the (presumed hetero, presumed masculine, presumed male) players might feel like protectors or helpers in order to relate to them.[57] No such "help" in relating to male characters is given to other game players. Demands for inclusivity erode this privilege and ask men to confront the assumption that women must be victims to be relatable, but also to confront that singular representation is a form of violence and erasure—an inherent politic that they have been complicit in reifying and active in defending its innocuousness. When such demands gained

too much attention, the GamerGaters were there to champion the championed, defend the defended, and give voice to those whose privilege already insulates them from silencing.

A *Feminist Frequency* video/article, "Playing with Privilege: The Invisible Benefits of Gaming While Male," lists twenty-five things male gamers benefit from in the current norms of game design and culture, notably including, "I can look at practically any gaming website, show, or magazine and see the voices of people of my own gender widely represented."[58] And although this video does important work in revealing the invisible privilege of straight male gamers, it also conflates sex and gender to be one and the same. Here it is important to think about this conflation in terms of a post-GamerGate world and how to move forward toward nonbinary coalition in a productive way. Anita Sarkeesian and *Feminist Frequency* have done worthy critical work to bring attention to the disparity of treatment men and women face, and yet her work is subject to another version of the same underlying privilege she seeks to demolish. She often fails to be intersectional and is working within a masculine/man versus feminine/female gender/sex conflation and binary that excludes many identities that do not fit into this bifurcated construction.[59]

Taken together, the literatures on binaries, intersectionality, and coalition help us understand the way that GamerGate, feminists in gaming, and gaming culture at large enact or resist regimes of oppression. In the following section, we more explicitly delve into resistance and how we can apply these newfound understandings of how nonbinary coalitions that hinge on intersectionality might be operationalized to the benefit of marginalized identities in game spaces.

⟩⟩⟩ The Queer Resistance to GamerGate: #INeedDiverseGames and its Nonbinary Coalition

Like GamerGate, most of the anti-GamerGate movement occurred online. Whereas GamerGate used 4Chan and 8Chan for much of their communication, anti-GamerGaters tended to used Twitter as a place of community and resistance. Twitter has long been recognized as a tool for the organizing and mobilizing of social movements. For example, after the so-called Arab Spring of 2011, scholars have been investigating claims that Twitter was a key resource in aiding the peaceful revolutions throughout the Middle East, by providing a nonregulated platform for the organization of protests.[60] Those who studied the use of Twitter in the Occupy Wall Street movement report similar uses and constraints.[61] Although these claims are mostly considered exaggerated, there is

no denying that Twitter is used frequently as a means of communicating news and events in social movements. The eroding barriers between online and offline activism paired with the embodied consequences of GamerGate harassment tactics position both sides of the controversy as unique "technological phenomen[a]" that relied on—and benefitted from—the aggregative and net-working potentials inherent to the infrastructure of both Twitter as a platform and the movements themselves.[62]

Twitter and other social media also play an important role in identity forma-tion among youth, and can be a source of community and support for LGBTQ teenagers and young adults. danah boyd suggests that social media sites provide a unique space for identity experimentation because boundary definition is by nature fuzzy and difficult to control.[63] This fuzziness of boundaries allows test performances that can be used to find supportive groups, learn how others might react to certain gender performances, and to occupy undefined spaces rather than strict conformity that might be (or seem) necessary in nonmediated gender performances. Besides identity experimentation, social networks have also been successfully utilized for organization and mobilization of queer communities. The king of YouTube himself, Tyler Oakley, uses his Twitter account to organize fundraising events, the most recent of which saw thousands of LGBTQ youth and allies contribute to raise more than half a million dollars to be donated to the Trevor Project, a charity with the mission to prevent teen suicide among LGBTQ youth.[64] Oakley hosted the campaign for his birthday, and the hashtag #happybirthdaytyleroakley trended worldwide on Twitter.

Hashtags, the use of # at the beginning of a word or phrase, are a form of meta-data that originated on Twitter but have since been adopted on many social media sites (notably, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, among others). Hashtags are used as "para-social simulations of conversationality," either to indicate a category or topic, or to evaluate the content of a tweet.[65] Hashtags are also used to make a tweet "louder," that is, visible to communities of interest who may not include one's followers on Twitter by using a hashtag that links the content of the tweet to a larger discourse on Twitter.[66] Hashtags also "trend," meaning the most popular tags used in a given geographical location (from local communities to the entire world) are highlighted on the Twitter user interface. In the case of #happybirthdaytyleroakley, Oakley redirected the attention of the worldwide trending hashtag to the Trevor Project. This is just one example of activists successfully using Twitter as an advocacy, organizing, and fundraising platform.

Among GamerGaters and anti-GamerGate individuals, the hashtag "#GamerGate" was used almost exclusively by those who were pro-GamerGate as a categorizing and broadcasting tool. It allowed discursive

interchange (though not necessarily true interaction or conversation) to occur on Twitter among like-minded individuals who lashed out against a perceived feminist threat. On the other side, anti-GamerGaters were less likely to have one single unifying hashtag, but many frequently used #StopGamergate, #INeedDiverseGames, and because academia was also indicted, #AcademicandFeminist arose. Although the hashtag we focus on for the sake of coherence and scope is #INeedDiverseGames, a brief look at #AcademicandFeminist is worthwhile to bolster our point about the intersectionality these hashtags both allow and embody.

#AcademicandFeminist prominently highlighted the intersectional nature of the anti-GamerGate resistance through its linguistic makeup. This hashtag arose as a response to GamerGaters conspiracy theories concerning feminists in the Digital Games Research Association.[67] On the one hand, it did not define either academic or feminist in terms of gender or sexuality, despite both having certain gendered and sexualized assumptions among the general populace (academic or "professor" brings to mind an old white man in a tweed jacket; "feminist," a butch lesbian who hates men—equally nonrepresentative synecdoches). On the other, it highlights the fact that this particular intersection matters, that it brings together two identity markers that combine to form a unique perspective. Its appearance in context also brought attention to the fact that many who are academic and feminist are *also* game players, and therefore actively resisted the attempt by GamerGaters to polarize feminists as the opposite of a game player. The hashtag and people who used it called attention to the fact that the basement-dwelling, young man gamer stereotype of old has long since been put aside for a more realistic and inclusive set of game players.

A larger coalition formed on Twitter among those using the hashtag #INeedDiverseGames, but it was likely not seen by everyone who may have been interested. For proponents of any anti-GamerGate sentiment, hashtags brought certain like-minded people into the conversation and left opponents and others out—a normalized form of boundary definition that occurs on Twitter.[68] However, despite the way that hashtags can make conversations one-sided and facilitate seeing only what one already believes, they are a useful tool for coalition and organization. Alexandra Segerberg and W. Lance Bennett study the so-called "Twitter Revolutions of 2009" (this analysis deals with instances before the protests in Egypt), remarking that Twitter may not have been a primary catalyst for the protest movements, but it was certainly a tool for organizing that had some impact on the development of events.[69] They cite hashtags as a way for cross-cutting ideological movements to put people in contact with particular others who might know about local or topic-specific

issues. Yannis Theocharisa and colleagues have a similar prognosis of Twitter's role in Occupy Wall Street and two other movements.[70] They write that although calls for participation were relatively scarce on Twitter, it was an effective tool for sharing protest information and political conversation.

Most important for the present study, however, is the way Twitter can be used as a site of resistance. Beth Sundstrom, Rowenda Briones, and Melissa Janoske examine Twitter use by victims of anti-abortion terrorism, specifically as they were unified and supported online by nonprofit organizations.[71] The website became a space for victims to narrate their stories, provide emotional support, and call others to action against anti-abortion terrorism. Although the actual calls to action may have been only somewhat successful in new recruitment, the ritualistic nature of the discourse provided empowerment through increased access to support and advice on legal, protest, and economic action that might be taken. In this case and in many others, victims, organizers, protestors, and allies have found support and a platform for resisting dominant narratives or regimes on Twitter.

Twitter, as a technology, is neutral to social movements in that no singular group can monopolize Twitter's affordances as an organizing and idea-exchanging tool as solely their own. Case in point, pro- and anti-GamerGaters alike used the medium to organize and share ideas. GamerGaters used Twitter in a rather predictable way—defending the movement, spewing vitriol, calling other gamers to action, and covering up particularly bad instances of harassment. It was anti-GamerGaters who established a different sort of collaboration, using Twitter's affordances to not only band together in solidarity with the victims, but also to put forth collaborative, coalitional hashtags that brought a sharp focus on not only the harassment of GamerGate, but also the larger issue of exclusivity in game culture.

#INeedDiverseGames (INDG) became a popular anti-GamerGate hashtag. Although some GamerGaters tried to coopt the hashtag, the original user of the hashtag, game player and activist Tanya DePass, made it abundantly clear in her own tweets that INDG was not about GamerGate at all.[72] Adrienne Shaw, in a piece for her University of Minnesota Press blog, argues that although the two hashtag movements (#INDG and #GamerGate) began separately, they became irreversibly connected by content and Twitter users.[73] Considering GamerGaters often stated that questions of sexism, feminism, racism, homophobia, etc., do not belong in games journalism, it is not hard to see why calls for diversity in games and GamerGate became linked.

What stands out about INDG is that it resisted becoming a dumping ground for anti-GamerGate hatred. The hashtag remained true to its original intention,

stating reasons for why different people wanted to see diversity in games. Diverse people—from those most marginalized to those already in the mainstream by virtue of being cisgender, white, and male— chimed in to express their desire for diverse representation in games. In a true moment of nonbinary coalition, INDG brought many game players together in solidarity with reasons like "because [I'm] tired of emails that say next time, don't make your main character Black";[74] "because I am tired of unremarkable cishet white guy saves the world";[75] "becoz light skinned savior tropes in games shaped my childhood when I was an Asian child of color."[76] Despite GamerGaters focusing on anti-feminism, the INDG hashtag movement demonstrated that exclusivity in games extends far beyond the male–female binary.

Some INDG tweeters referenced GamerGater arguments and defenses explicitly while still framing their tweets as reasons for diverse games. For example, Twitter user DragonReine wrote, "[j]ust because a game is well-loved, does not mean it is exempt from constructive criticism," responding to the frequent GamerGater argument that if a game is visually and mechanically "good" it should not be subjected to feminist or other critical standards.[77] Around the same time, Twitter user Emoroffle expressed the need for diverse games "because token characters with flat personalities are not examples of inclusion."[78] This rebuts the GamerGater tendency to list noncisgender, non-white, nonmale characters as examples of diversity while not acknowledging the overwhelming tendency for these characters to be token nods to diversity or represented in negative or demeaning ways, as is especially the case with trans characters.[79] The tweets here exemplify the way that INDG supporters can both reference common GamerGate arguments while also making sure the representation of women in games is not the sole focus of the countermovement.

INDG resisted being pinned to GamerGate while also explicitly resisting the misogyny and violence of GamerGate. The hashtag's users did not buy into the binary construction of identity; people of many and diverse identity categories opted in to INDG and expressed their desire for more inclusive games without drawing lines about what kind of inclusion was proper or unacceptable. Its amorphous, changing scope made it hard for GamerGate to target INDG. Proponents, sometimes playfully, sometimes seriously, answered and dodged GamerGate criticism, primarily because Twitter does not facilitate direct interaction well and the INDG tweeters could choose to deflect attention away from GamerGate and back to problems of minimal inclusivity in games. But most important, it brought together myriad identities in solidarity for diverse games.

Twitter was an ideal platform for this initial response to GamerGate. As a mediated communication platform, it provides a low-barriers space in which

anti-GamerGaters could quickly, unofficially rally. Because Twitter users tend to avoid using hashtags they ideologically disagree with, anti-GamerGaters could build coalition without GamerGaters gaining too much force in the INDG feed. This means that GamerGate's focus on women and feminism did not become the sole focus of the INDG and other anti-GamerGate hashtag movements. Moreover, because Twitter is not an ideal platform for large-scale conversations or debates, INDG became a place not to argue over *whose* representation needed improvement, but rather a gathering space for so many different and overall unchallenged claims.

Overall, INDG can be embraced as exemplifying a queer form of resistance. Its proponents ignored binary understandings of identity and brought together many justifications for a single cause. The INDG tweeters expressed outright criticism and alternatives to the dominant norms of gaming culture and problematized the way "Gamer" has been defined for so long, fitting with earlier stated markers of queer action.[80] Moreover, the INDG proponents banded together around not just sexuality, but also issues of feminism, anti-racism, gender, and more. In GamerGate, the INDG tweeters recognized that the attacks on feminists hid a greater exclusivity in game culture that protects the most privileged while erasing and demonizing the already marginalized.

⟩⟩⟩ Looking Forward: How We Can Continue the Nonbinary Coalition of INDG

Although it is an admittedly idealistic and optimistic outlook on the effects of GamerGate, we believe that to some degree, the forceful and public harassment of GamerGate did two equally important things. First, it gave a collective identity to those gamers most dedicated to policing game space against the queering of representation and gamer identity. Both GamerGaters and critics of the movement now identify these individuals as having a cohesive identity, making it easier to organize and index the tactics and beliefs of this hate group. Second, it catalyzed the coming together of people, moderate to radical, who support game inclusivity movements. Whereas before GamerGate, these voices tended to be marginalized and dispersed, the hashtag countermovements created a coalitional space for them to aggregate and bolster one another.

Looking to the future, however, coalition must move beyond existing coincidentally on Twitter in order to better facilitate deeper conversations and strategies toward creating more inclusive gaming culture. Twitter works well for a quick immediate response and for building a foundation for

discourse. But hashtag movements come and go, rise and fade, and people who months ago were tweeting about INDG and contributing their voices to a coalition among feminists, queer theorists, gamers, and anti-racists, may now no longer have an obvious place to join an inclusivity movement. But we cannot allow it to fade completely; GamerGate made it abundantly clear that those defenders of masculine privilege will not yield without hostility, hostility deeply entrenched in heteronormative understandings of binary identity schemata. There was no space in the hate campaign for alternative constructions of identity, and the binary under which GamerGaters operated erased myriad aspects of identity in relation to gamer status. These identifiers were invisible, nonsalient in GamerGate discourse when they are, in fact, integral to diversity needs in gaming culture.

Learning from this, we offer several conceptual and tangible courses of action. This is not an all-encompassing list but much like nonbinary coalition itself, a starting point. First, and most related to the intellectual work we've done in this article: instead of viewing gamers as a polar opposite to feminist women, we would be better served by thinking of game players holistically, as comprised of intersectional heterogeneous identities—a group that includes not only those whose politics we like but also those who lash out against inclusivity and feminism.[81] When a group is excluded or denigrated (as many are in the current landscape of gaming), this power share means we must rally together to right injustice. This is not to say that the ideal future of diversity in gaming is "blind" to issues of ability, class, race, gender, or sexuality, but rather that no individual person should be thought of as more or less a legitimate game player than any other based on such identity markers. Second, we can show solidarity and support for games journalists and indie developers who challenge the status quo by becoming their patrons (via platforms such as Patreon.com), reading their work (for journalists), purchasing their games (for developers), and spreading the word about their endeavors. Equally as fortifying, we can celebrate and draw attention to instances of mass-market game developers getting it right. For example, in an effort to prove they "are paying attention" to the diversity of players who enjoy their games, Blizzard Entertainment announced an *Overwatch* character to portray body diversity: Her name is Zarya and she is "a Russian soldier who is one of the 'world's strongest women.'"[82] And although this character may not be as revolutionary as we'd like, Zarya's inclusion indicates a shift, a movement within one of gaming's powerhouses toward rejecting binary constructions. Nonbinary coalitions provide fertile ground for seeing social change for more inclusive, positive representations of marginalized identities as a phenomenon that benefits all.

Power sharing in the construction of more inclusive games is not an easy goal to achieve. For one, we are calling for inclusivity that does not pit the Gamer-Gater against the anti-GamerGater. There is a place for outrage here; women ought not to be forced to flee from their homes in fear of their lives because of actively protesting the misogyny of video-game culture. No apologies should or can be made for the terrorism GamerGate enacted against feminist critics. But outrage cannot be our only response.[83] By using such extreme tactics, Gamer-Gaters accidentally brought widespread attention to the problematic nature of game culture. In so doing, opportunities for applying pressure on game designers and developers opened. We have an opportunity now that we did not have before, and forming a strong coalition among all who seek better inclusivity in games is more feasible than ever.

NOTES

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1. Jay Hathaway, "What is Gamergate, and Why? An Explainer for Non-Geeks." *Gawker*, October 10, 2014, http://gawker.com/what-is-gamergate-and-why-an-explainer-for-non-geeks-1642909080.

2. Actor Adam Baldwin was the originator of this hashtag. He used it to accompany two links to videos attacking Zoe Quinn. "First uses of #gamergate and #notyourshield hashtags," *Cathode Debris Tumblr*, September 4, 2014, http://cathodedebris.tumblr.com/post/96623884813/first-uses-of-the-gamergate-and-notyourshield.

3. Doxing is the gathering of various personal information of individuals (e.g., home address, telephone number, social media account passwords) and posting it indiscriminately around the Internet.

4. Jenn Frank, "How to attack a woman who works in video gaming." *The Guardian,* September 1, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/sep/01/how-to-attack-a-woman-who-works-in-video-games. The women who were targeted by these threats are the aforementioned Zoe Quinn, game designer Brianna Wu, and feminist critic Anita Sarkeesian; Nicole Arce, "Gamergate Continues: Female Video Game Developer Flees Home after Receiving Chilling Death Threats on Twitter," *Tech Times*, October 15, 2014, http://www.techtimes.com/articles/17901/20141015/gamergate-continues-female-video-game-developer-flees-home-after-receiving-chilling-death-threats-on-twitter.htm; Alex Hern, "Feminist Games Critic Cancels Talk after Terror Threat," *The Guardian*, October 15, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/oct/15/anita-sarkeesian-feminist-games-critic-cancels-talk; Shira Chess, Mia Consalvo, Nina Huntemann, Adrienne Shaw, Carol Stabile, and Jennifer Stromer-Galley, "GamerGate and Academia," *International Com-*

munication Association Newsletter 42 (2014): 9, http://www.icahdq.org/membersnewsletter/NOV14_ART0009.asp.

5. We understand that no coherent GamerGater identity exists as it is a leaderless movement made of individuals. However, for brevity we use GamerGater to describe those who post pro-GamerGate messages on Twitter and elsewhere on the Internet.

6. Hathaway, "What is Gamergate, and Why?"

7. Luke Plunkett, "We Might Be Witnessing the 'Death of an Identity,'" *Kotaku*, August 28, 2014, http://kotaku.com/we-might-be-witnessing-the-death-of-an-identity-1628203079.

8. Within this article we unequivocally treat GamerGate as a sexist movement and reject vocal followers' claims of it being an ethics movement seeking fairness in gaming journalism.

9. Hathaway, "What is Gamergate, and Why?"

10. Indeed, the white, hetero, cis male gamers were not excluded from participating in these hashtags.

11. Shira Chess and Adrienne Shaw, "A Conspiracy of Fishes, or, How We Learned to Stop Worrying About #GamerGate and Embrace Hegemonic Masculinity," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media.* 59 (2015): 208–220, doi:10.1080/08838151.2014.999917.

12. *Project Zomboid* is an open world, multiplayer, post-apocalyptic online survival game published in 2013 by The Indie Stone.

13. Mimi Marinucci, *Feminism is Queer: The Intimate Connection between Queer and Feminist Theory* (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 5.

14. Anne Emmanuelle Berger, *The Queer Turn in Feminism: Identities, Sexualities, and the Theater of Gender*, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 138.

15. Jenny Sundén and Malin Sveningsson, *Passionate Play* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 157.

16. Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction of Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 31–32.

17. Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" in *Black Queer Studies,* ed. E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 21–51.

18. Karma Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 146.

19. Ibid., 52.

20. Myra J. Hird, "Theorizing the End of Gender: A Conversation with Stevi Jackson (interviewed by Myra J. Hird, June 12, 2000)," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3 (2010), 266; Riki Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory* (New York: Riverdale Avenue Books, 2004), 36.

21. Binaries grounded in gender are so pervasive they can even be found in the foundations of many world languages. Ethnographic studies by Orit Bershtling,

Evelyn Blackwood, and Rudolf P. Gaudio found in Lal Zimman, Jenny Davis, and Joshua Raclaw's edited collection, *Queer Excursions: Retheorizing Binaries in Language, Gender, and Sexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) describe subversive tactics to resist gender binaries at the linguistic level.

22. Storify here, cited in Katherine Cross, "'We Will Force Gaming to Be Free': On Gamergate and the License to Inflict Suffering," *First Person Scholar*, October 8, 2014, http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/we-will-force-gaming-to-be-free/.

23. Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory*, 40.

24. Ibid., 41.

25. Rusty Barrett, "The Emergence of the Unmarked," in *Queer Excursions: Retheorizing Binaries in Language, Gender, and Sexuality,* ed. Lal Zimman, Jenny Davis, and Joshua Raclaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 210.

26. See Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 1998).

27. Marinucci, *Feminism is Queer,* 31–32.

28. Julia Serano, *Excluded: Making Feminist and Queer Movements More Inclusive* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2013).

29. Mattilda [a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore], *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity*, (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006), 30.

30. In this case, Leap saw unrestrained hypermasculine conquest as the result of subverting gender within the context of gay pornography comments. William Leap, "The Sex Machine, the Full-Body Tattoo, and the Hermaphrodite," in *Queer Excursions: Retheorizing Binaries in Language, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. Lal Zimman, Jenny Davis, and Joshua Raclaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 129–49.

31. See George Dvorsky and James Hughes, *Postgenderism: Beyond the Gender Binary*, Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies Monograph Series (March 2008), http://ieet.org/archive/IEET-03-PostGender.pdf

32. Stevi Jackson, in Hird, "Theorizing the End of Gender," 272.

33. Vivian M. May, *Pursuing Intersectionality, Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3.

34. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2008) as summarized in Serano, *Excluded.*

35. Ibid. As cited in Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139–67.

36. Isaac West, *Transforming Citizenship: Transgender Articulations of the Law* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 107–13.

37. Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*, 7.

38. Ibid., 7.

39. Aimee Carrillo Rowe, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

40. Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, ed. Barbara Smith (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 256–7.

41. Serano, *Excluded.*

42. Karma Chávez, "Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition Building," *Communication Quarterly* 59 (2011): 1–18.

43. The visibility of GamerGaters' machinations are evident in the fact that they moved their base of operations from 4chan to the even-less regulated 8chan because their content was being reported by other forum users (largely due to its terroristic nature) and consequently removed. 4chan and 8chan were/are primary platforms for GamerGate because they are online communities that center on anonymity and devotion to free speech. For an in-depth discussion of how 4chan's "anon culture" facilitated GamerGate, see Jay Allen's storify "How Chan-Style Anonymous Culture Shapes #gamergate" (December 3, 2014) at https://storify.com/a_man_in_black/how-chan-style-anonymous-culture-shapes-gamergate.

44. Leigh Alexander, "'Gamers' Don't have to Be Your Audience. 'Gamers' are Over," *Gamasutra*, August 28, 2014, http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/224400/Gamers_dont_have_to_be_your_audience_Gamers_are_over.php.

45. Adrienne Shaw, "Do You Identify as a Gamer? Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Gamer Identity," *Games and Culture* 14 (2012): 28–44.

46. Ibid.

47. Mark Cruea and Sung-Yeon Park, "Gender Disparity in Video Game Usage: A Third-Person Perception-Based Explanation," *Media Psychology* 15 (2012): 44–67; Susan C. Herring, "The Rhetorical Dynamics of Gender Harassment On-Line," *The Information Society* 15 (1999): 151–67; Kristen Lucas and John L. Sherry, "Sex Differences in Video Game Play: A Communication-Based Explanation," *Papers in Communication Studies* 31 (2004): 499–523; Anastasia Salter and Bridget Blodgett, "Hypermasculinity and Dickwolves: The Contentious Role of Women in the New Gaming Public," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56 (2012): 401–16.

48. For an in-depth discussion of the relationship between gamers, identification, and representation, see Adrienne Shaw, *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Game Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

49. Anna Anthropy, *Rise of the Video Game Zinesters* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012), 2.

50. Elyse Janish, "The Samus Paradigm: The Closet in the Clubhouse" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Pop Culture Association/American Culture Association, Chicago, April 2014), http://pcaaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/conference_2014.pdf.

51. Sarah Beth Evans, interview by Elyse Janish, December 2014.

52. This discourse, of course, denies that the sexist and otherwise discriminatory nature of video game culture is already political, revealing once again the privilege of default masculinity among gamers.

53. For more evidence revealing gaming culture's intolerance for "political" content see Megan Condis, "No Homosexuals in *Star Wars*? BioWare, 'Gamer' Identity, and the Politics of Privilege in a Convergence Culture," *Convergence* (forthcoming); and Alexis Pulos, "Confronting Heteronormativity in Online Games: A Critical Discourse Analysis of LGBTQ Sexuality in *World of Warcraft*," *Games and Culture* 8, no. 2 (2013): 77–97.

54. Katherine Cross, "'We Will Force Gaming to Be Free': On Gamergate and the License to Inflict Suffering," *First Person Scholar*, October 8, 2014, http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/we-will-force-gaming-to-be-free/.

55. Hathaway, "What is Gamergate, and Why?"

56. As of 2014: "In the past eleven years, seven winners of *Spike TV*'s Video Game of the Year award were primarily shooter-type games. These include: *Grand Theft Auto V, Red Dead Redemption, Uncharted 2: Among Thieves, Grand Theft Auto IV, BioShock, Resident Evil 4, and Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*." It should be noted that all these games also featured male protagonists; Sarah Beth Evans, "Seeing Beyond Play: The Immersive Witness in Video Games" (master's thesis, Syracuse University, 2014), http://surface.syr.edu/thesis/22.

57. Jason Schreier, "You'll 'Want to Protect' the New, Less Curvy Lara Croft," *Kotaku*, June 11, 2012, http://kotaku.com/5917400/youll-want-to-protect-the-new-less-curvy-lara-croft.

58. *Feminist Frequency* is a not-for-profit organization developed and run by Anita Sarkeesian that critically analyses media with a specific eye toward representations of race, gender, and sexuality; "Playing with Privilege: The Invisible Benefits of Gaming While Male," *Feminist Frequency*, December 2, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E47-FMmMLy0.

59. Ria Jenkins, "When Will Gamers Understand that Criticism Isn't Censorship?" *The Guardian*, January 30, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jan/30/gamers-criticism-censorship.

60. See Ifran, "#Hashtags for Change: Can Twitter Promote Social Progress in Saudi Arabia," *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014): 943–61.

61. See Kevin M. DeLuca, "Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media: The Many Framings of the Birth of a Protest Movement," *Communication Culture & Critique* 5, no. 4 (2012): 483–509.

62. See Shiv Ganesh and Cynthia Stohl, "From Wall Street to Wellington: Protests in an Era of Digital Ubiquity," *Communication Monographs* 80, no. 4 (2013): 448.

63. danah boyd, "None of This is Real: Identity and Participation in Friendster," in *Structures of Participation in Digital Culture,* ed. Joe Karaganis (New York: Social Science Conference, 2007), 143.

64. Liz Ohanesian, "How Tyler Oakley is Using His YouTube Fame for Good," *LA Weekly*, March 31, 2015, http://www.laweekly.com/arts/how-tyler-oakley-is-using-his-youtube-fame-for-good-5455509.

65. Ruth Page, "The Linguistics of Self-Branding and Micro-Celebrity in Twitter: The Role of Hashtags," *Discourse & Communication* 6, bi. 2 (2008): 184.

66. Michele Zappavigna, "Ambient Affiliation: A Linguistic Perspective on Twitter," *New Media & Society* 13 (2011): 788–806.

67. Chess and Shaw, "A Conspiracy of Fishes."

68. Itai Himelboim, Stephen McCreerey, and Marc Smith, "Birds of a Feather Tweet Together: Integrating Network and Content Analyses to Examine Cross-Ideology Exposure on Twitter," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 18 (2013): 40–60.

69. Alexandra Segerberg and W. Lance Bennett, "Social Media and the Organization of Collective Action: Using Twitter to Explore the Ecologies of Two Climate Change Protests," *The Communication Review* 14 (2011): 197–215.

70. Yannis Theocharisa, Will Lowe, Jan W. van Deth, and Gema García-Albacete, "Using Twitter to Mobilize Protest Action: Online Mobilization Patterns and Action Repertoires in the Occupy Wall Street, Indignados, and Aganaktismenoi Movements," *Information, Communication, & Society* 18 (2014): 202–20.

71. Beth Sundstrom, Rowenda Lyn Briones, and Melissa Janoske, "Expecting the Unexpected: Non-Profit Women's Organizations' Media Responses to Anti-Abortion Terrorism," *Journal of Communication Management* 17 (2013): 341–63.

72. Tanya DePass, Twitter post, October 13, 2014, 7:04 a.m., https://twitter.com/cypheroftyr.

73. Adrienne Shaw, "#INeedDiverseGames and Why Representation in Games Matters," University of Minnesota Press blog, January 21, 2015, http://www.uminnpressblog.com/2015/01/ineeddiversegames-and-why.html.

74. Minority Media Inc., Twitter post, October 12, 2014, 11:00 a.m., https://twitter.com/we_are_minority.

75. Randi H, Twitter post, October 12, 2014, 12:27 p.m., https://twitter.com/TameCenobite.

76. Izzy FemShep, Twitter post, October 14, 2014, 11:45 a.m., https://twitter.com/Izz145.

77. Kerry Chin, Twitter post, October 12, 2014, 12:44 p.m., https://twitter.com/DragonReine.

78. Alexis Davila, Twitter post, October 14, 2014, 1:31 p.m., https://twitter.com/Emoroffle.

79. Adrienne Shaw, *Gaming at the Edge;* The Game Theorists, "GameTheory: Are Video Games Anti-LGBT?" *YouTube*, May 5, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdmJXHJLZ6M.

80. Smith, "What is This Thing Called Queer?"

81. For more on the role of heterogeneity and holistic feminism see Serano, *Excluded.*

82. Brian Crecente, "Overwatch Introduces Two Characters, Gunslinger McCree and Tank Zarya," *Polygon*, March 6, 2015, http://www.polygon.com/2015/3/6/8161497/overwatch-characters-mccree-zarya.

83. Mattie Brice, "On Anger," Blog, January 3, 2014, http://www.mattiebrice.com/on-anger/.

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