



# 6

## Mainstreaming Misogyny: The Beginning of the End and the End of the Beginning in Gamergate Coverage

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While reboots are a common phenomenon in Hollywood, the 2016 remake of *Ghostbusters* garnered a remarkable amount of criticism before viewers had even seen the movie. As early as January 2015, Donald Trump, then a reality TV star and real-estate mogul, posed one of his signature rhetorical questions during a “TrumpVlog”: “... and now they are remaking *Ghostbusters* with only women! What is going on?” (Trump 2015). Trump’s seemingly off-the-cuff question about the proper role of women in popular culture would be a harbinger of things to come. In the months leading up to the summer release, online commenters started collective campaigns to downvote the *Ghostbusters*’ trailer online. Journalists and pundits pointed out that the vile concoction of misogyny and racism, primarily aimed at the all-female leading cast, certainly had not come out of nowhere. This is how *The Atlantic*’s culture critic historicized the events:

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“Ghostbusters... has become a rallying cause for a swathe of fans who are beginning to resemble a movement not unlike the Gamergate nightmare that continues to plague the world of video games” (Sims 2016). After *Ghostbusters’* launch, one of the movie’s main protagonists, African-American actress and comedian Leslie Jones, was singled out by anonymous trolls in a stream of online harassment and racist attacks culminating in her personal accounts and website being hacked (for an in-depth analysis of Leslie Jones’ harassment and misogynoir, see Chap. 4). Again, a critic writing for *Vox* pointed to Gamergate to contextualize the online onslaught befalling Jones, framing it as “the first major battle of the emerging subculture war” (Romano 2016). For mainstream U.S. journalists, Gamergate—a niche misogynistic online movement primarily targeting female game developers and critics—has become synonymous with, if not a benchmark for, mediated misogyny.

As Gamergate is considered paradigmatic of a recent wave of online hate against women and underrepresented groups, this chapter aims to answer two sets of questions. First, how is the Gamergate movement rooted in game culture’s history and what do the movement’s online origins tell us about mediated misogyny? To answer these questions, our chapter starts by situating Gamergate within the wider ambit of game culture, which has battled gender-based intimidation since industry codification in the 1980s. Gamergate acted as the tinder that inflamed the systemic online harassment of women, a fire that has been smoldering for years. We argue that Gamergate can be seen as “the beginning of the end” of an era in the history of digital games. For decades, the game industry’s dominant masculine identity has been influential in shaping game culture, dominant game genres, practices, and discourses (Kirkpatrick 2013). However, audiences, mainstream journalists, critics, and large segments of the industry have recently become more vocal and successful in championing for greater diversity in terms of players, games and developers.

Second, given that mainstream newsmakers invoke Gamergate as a major battleground for a new form of virulent sexism, how are journalists making sense of the movement’s emergence and evolution? While Gamergate initially targeted a relatively isolated group of game aficionados (Mortensen 2016), the movement’s profile broke into the mainstream, to

the surprise of many. Consequently, Gamergate has become a catalyst to discuss a broader set of Internet phenomena that signal “the end of the beginning”: a new era in which online misogyny is increasingly recognized, scrutinized, and criticized by leading news organizations. Our chapter addresses this second issue empirically; we compiled, coded, and performed both discourse and content analyses on a corpus of U.S. mainstream media covering Gamergate over the last two years. We included both legacy publications (e.g., *The New York Times* and *Time*) and digital news platforms (e.g., *Vox* and *Slate*). It is this *process of mainstreaming*—the normalization and subsequent citation of Gamergate events and related actors in widely read print and digital outlets—that makes our argument particularly topical.

Not only are Gamergate supporters still active, but its most visible advocates also seem to be thriving in the age of President Trump. While Trump by no means started the harassment surrounding *Ghostbusters* and Gamergate, key people in his orbit were instrumental in both cases. Breitbart News Network and affiliated authors such as Milo Yiannopoulos played an important role in guiding the harassment of Leslie Jones and whipped up support for the Gamergate cause. The appointment as the White House’s chief strategist of Steve Bannon, Breitbart’s executive chair who had previous business ties to the game industry, even led a few journalists to label Trump as “the Gamergate president.” Seen in this light, Trump’s election serves to validate and legitimize the institutionalization not only of mediated misogyny, but also anonymous digital harassment as a tool to suppress rational discourse, fact-based journalism, and progressive ideals.

## The Beginning of the End

In the slow news month of August 2014, the Gamergate controversy demonstrated what can happen when a male-dominated subculture feels itself under siege. For the uninitiated, Gamergate is best understood as a self-organized, largely anonymous group of “hooligans” engaging in “leisure-centered aggression” against a small group of women and their

supporters (Mortensen 2016). The movement's inception was a seemingly quotidian affair: a vengeful boyfriend trying to hurt his former girlfriend by posting hateful diatribes online. The subsequent series of events are "torturously complex" to recount (Burgess and Matamoros-Fernández 2016, p. 79) and Gamergate's agenda is frustratingly incoherent and contradictory. Clearly, gamers felt that their domain was under attack by unruly women and "Social Justice Warriors" who were perceived as trying to take their games away (Braithwaite 2016). The movement was born and raised online, with social media and message boards serving, ironically, as a safe space for male gamers to congregate and share a perplexing sense of victimhood anonymously.

For a short while, Gamergate coverage was relegated to niche game publications whose authors were intimately familiar with the historical trajectory of game culture. In what seemed to gamergaters like a coordinated effort among games critics and journalists, the "beginning of the end" was announced in a string of blog posts and opinion pieces. Collectively, the articles declared "gamers are dead" (Mortensen 2016), thereby questioning the dominance of the hypermasculine nature of the gamer identity. Instead, a more diverse group of players, playing a more diverse set of games on a wider array of platforms would be the new norm. Under the banner of "ethics in games journalism," Gamergate proponents used this series of progressive proclamations as a battle cry to foment support and lash out against a small group of female developers and critics—Brianna Wu, Anita Sarkeesian, and Zoe Quinn—as well as their supporters. What made mainstream journalists pay attention to Gamergate's emergence may have to do with its particularly aggressive and admittedly effective tactics. Ultimately, Gamergate supporters created "a campaign of systematic harassment" (Massanari 2015, p. 2), and, as Burgess and Matamoros-Fernández (2016) found when "issue-mapping" over 230,000 tweets, they were "absolutely not concerned only or even primarily with 'ethics in games journalism'" (p. 92).

In this chapter, our interest lies with how mainstream journalists discursively shaped and framed Gamergate once it reached the homepages of their digital news platforms. As Braithwaite (2016) notes, Gamergate made "this kind of 'ordinary' harassment newsworthy, calling our collective attention to the sustained abuse many people endure in order to

participate in online spaces” (p. 7). Studying mainstream coverage is not only instructive because it taps into a number of media frames about geeks, anonymous trolls, and gamers, but also because it offers clues to the larger question of how similar instances of mediated misogyny are, and might be, constructed by mainstream journalists.

Gamergate’s tropes and tactics can be seen as the unholy matrimony between two overlapping subcultures, each with its own history and discursive practices. On the one hand, there are those who put the “gamer” in Gamergate; a group for whom the self-identified moniker of being a “real” (i.e., male) “gamer” not only holds great subcultural value, but who use that identity to aggressively police others. Seen in this light, the events of August 2014 were “unsurprising” to those studying the intersection of game culture and gender (Chess and Shaw 2015). Physical and virtual game spaces, from industry gatherings to the online chat rooms on Xbox Live, have been traditionally unwelcoming to women (Consalvo 2012; Taylor 2008). As the ultimate prelude to Gamergate, one of its most high-profile targets, media critic Anita Sarkeesian, faced sustained threats and harassment throughout 2012 when “online gamers (presumably male)” reported her online accounts as terrorism and sent her “pornographic images of her being raped” (Mantilla 2013, p. 567). In Gamergate, many of the aggressors found their scapegoat to direct an existing campaign of hate, with the ultimate goal to silence women for having the gall to profess their opinions on video games.

On the other hand, the *Ghostbusters* controversy demonstrates that the Gamergate movement is far from unique in the context of digital culture. The tactics employed and the anxieties tapped into by gamergaters share a number of affinities with online subcultures that extend beyond the world of games. They include the “toxic technocultures” of message boards (Massanari 2015) and, more recently, the rise of the so-called “alt-right.” Disruptive, aggressive, and hurtful online behavior has a long and somewhat complicated history, which often is associated with subcultural movements. For instance, in her in-depth study of online “trolling,” understood as intentional disruptive behavior by anonymous antagonists, Phillips (2015) recognizes the prevalence of white males in the development of Internet philosophy (p. 124). She explicitly places maleness at the center of the trolling attitude and rhetoric. The misogynistic

point of view is discussed by trolls in competitive terms and signals a desire to “defeat one’s opponent” (p. 125)—a perspective that is strikingly similar to discourses surrounding digital play and resonates with Braithwaite’s analysis of Gamergate’s discursive traits. Phillips also describes online trolling’s origins within a hacker and geek culture that revolved around 4chan and similar online message boards (p. 122), whose anonymous members played a vital role in the ascendance of the Gamergate movement and its mythology.

Pointing toward Phillips’ earlier work, Mantilla (2013) offers the notion of “gendertrolling” as a specifically misogynistic subset of more generic forms of trolling. Gendertrolling is not only done for “fun,” but also comes from a set of “sincere beliefs” held by trolls about the position and place of women within society and (online) subcultures. Exactly because it is so heartfelt, gendertrolling is particularly vicious and destructive. It is one of the reasons why the Gamergate episode made for such an appealing story to cover for many mainstream reporters. As journalists were soon to find out, the Gamergate phenomenon converges eerily with Mantilla’s definition of gendertrolling as having an “unusual intensity and scope,” uttering “credible threats” and “gender-based insults” toward women speaking out. It was this amalgamation of online hate speech and gaming subcultures that mainstream journalists encountered and conveyed to the larger public.

## How to Study (Online) Hate?

In order to analyze the mainstreaming of online misogyny and the evolution of Gamergate coverage, we engaged in a multimodal analysis of mainstream news surrounding Gamergate. First, we conducted a content analysis of a corpus of mainstream U.S. publications. In order to construct this corpus, we selected all articles that explicitly used the term “Gamergate” from September 2014, when significant coverage of the movement began, through early June 2016.<sup>1</sup> Our publications were drawn from Pew Research’s top 45 online news entities from 2015 (Pew Research 2015). The list included both legacy publications, which provide digital and non-digital content (such as *The New York Times* and

*Boston Globe*), and digitally native news outlets, whose work only exists via online and mobile media (such as *BuzzFeed* and *Slate*). Our pool of publications also included magazines and more traditional daily news coverage, both of which are on Pew's list. Given the online roots of the Gamergate movement and its focus on a digital medium—games—we delineated between legacy and digitally native news in order to glean how publications without a digitally exclusive focus might differ in their coverage from their online-only counterparts. We did not study other English-speaking publications because we recognized that there are explicit historical differences between, and values present in, mainstream U.S. publications and news outlets worldwide (Schudson 2008). Along with a few publications that did not write about the events surrounding Gamergate at all, we were left with 1,283 articles from 37 outlets. The focus of our content analysis was to survey the position and timing of Gamergate coverage within a publication. To that end, we investigated the sections in which articles appeared, the dates the term was invoked, and which authors wrote the articles.

Second, a media discourse analysis was performed on six publications—*The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *Slate*, *Time*, *USA Today*, and *Vox*—chosen because they represent a variety of legacy and digital native media, magazine and newspaper-style content, and different kinds of readership. A total of 208 articles were coded as part of the qualitative analysis using NVivo software. In the first phase of open coding, both researchers individually analyzed the text for codes that stayed closed to the specific language of the publications. We then compared codes in a second phase to deduce several central themes. Finally, we selected the codes that were most relevant from those themes to formulate answers to our research questions.

Our discourse analysis primarily focused on how mainstream media framed Gamergate, or how journalists and other newsmakers constructed, promoted, and consistently relied upon singular narratives (Entman 2007, p. 164) surrounding the movement. Media frames shape both the actions of those framing and those framed. For instance, in his foundational work, Gitlin (2003) recognizes that the common media frames surrounding the Students for a Democratic Society—a leftist organization advocating for participatory democracy in the 1960s—both charac-

terized the social movement as radical, but ultimately also shaped the direction of SDS; more pacifist and moderate members left the organization, while media coverage attracted more extremist members. Framing may play a similar role in shaping the attitudes of Gamergate activists and activities, particularly as the subject of gaming moved from the purview of the enthusiast press to a wider public. Therefore, within our coding process, we narrowed our focus to examine how the movement and its specific actions were defined, covered, and utilized to describe wider cultural phenomena.

## The End of the Beginning

Gamergate brings to the fore a number of important questions concerning journalism, misogyny, and gaming (Braithwaite 2016; Perreault and Vos 2016). Our particular interest surrounds the content of coverage. How did journalists discursively shape and frame the movement? The results of our content analysis reveal that Gamergate became a widely cited event for a diverse group of journalists in mainstream outlets as well as across many different sections of online publications. That being said, the events surrounding Gamergate and their high-profile targets became the beat of only a few journalists. For instance, at the *Los Angeles Times*, 44% of the 39 articles featuring Gamergate were written by a single author, Todd Martens (Fig. 6.1). Similarly, over 43% of coverage at digital native outlet *Vox* was written by two authors and 45% of coverage came from Caitlin Dewey and Alyssa Rosenberg at *The Washington Post* (Fig. 6.2); the publication contributed the third-highest number (along with *The Huffington Post*) of articles about the subject (106 in total) with 8.26% of the articles published overall.<sup>2</sup> This relatively small cadre of authors tended to already cover games and technology as part of their beat. For instance, much of Martens' work appeared on the "Hero Complex" blog, which reports on games, technology, and "geek culture."

Still, Gamergate permeated mainstream coverage, as demonstrated by the quantity of writers who invoked the movement from 2014 through 2016. For instance, while *Washington Post* reporters Dewey and Rosenberg undertook most of Gamergate news, the term was mentioned by 32 of their colleagues. The diversity of authors was even more noticeable at



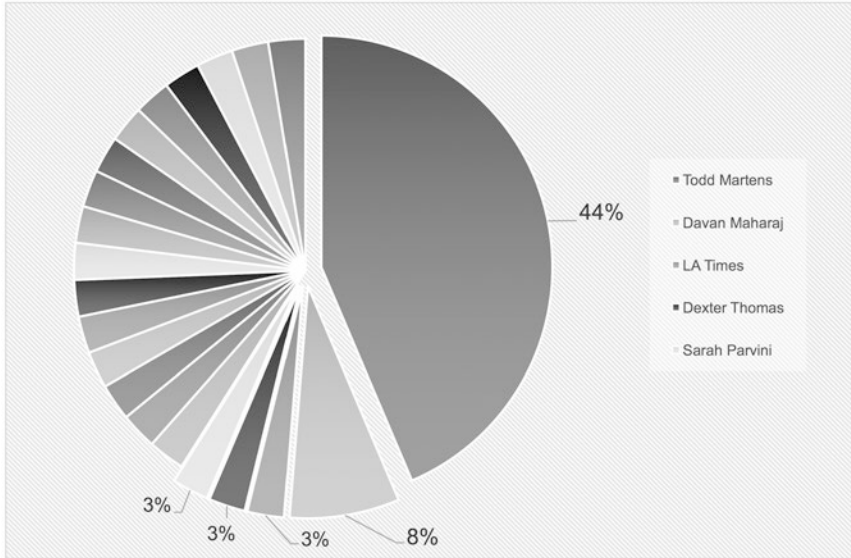


Fig. 6.1 Percentage of individual author contributions at the *Los Angeles Times*

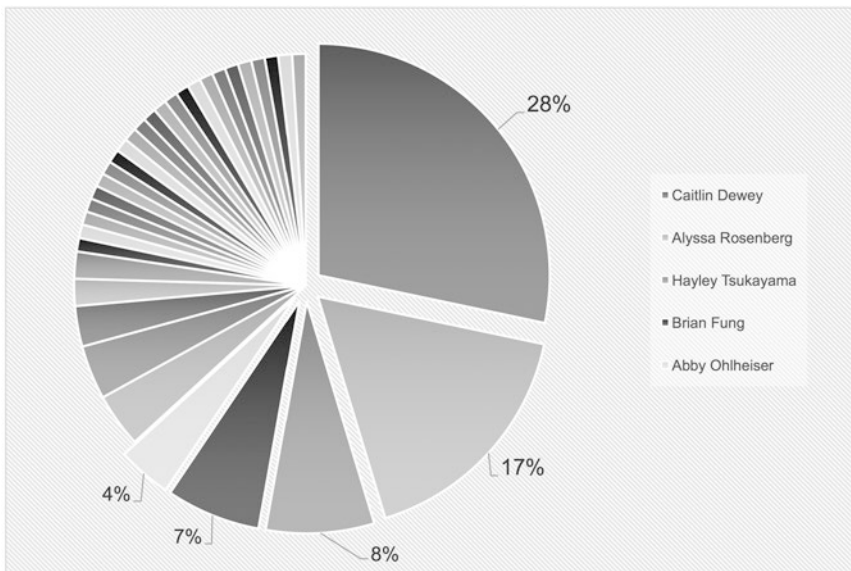
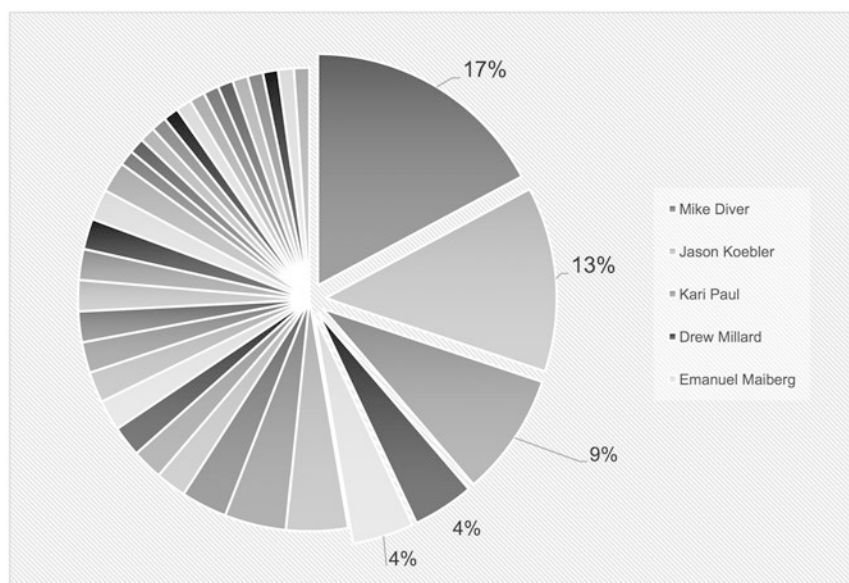


Fig. 6.2 Percentage of individual author contributions at *The Washington Post*

digital native outlets. For instance, *The Huffington Post* had 69 different writers mentioning Gamergate, whereas *Vice* had 76 authors who contributed to 135 articles (Fig. 6.3). Along with authorship, the subject of Gamergate was not confined to a single news section. While 18.5% of the articles were published in technology sections, similar numbers appeared in other areas of news websites: 8% of articles were published in entertainment sections, just under 7% in news, nation or world, and 4.6% in opinion.

Although evoked by newsmakers consistently over the term of our study, there were specific moments when Gamergate received intense scrutiny from the mainstream press. Two major periods provide a rough timeline to understand how journalists used Gamergate to weave the subject of online misogyny into mainstream coverage. October 15, 2014 to November 7, 2014 witnessed nearly 19.5% of the total coverage. This interval marked the start of mainstream reporting and details the initial threats against the three main women under attack: Wu, Sarkeesian, and Quinn. Digitally native outlets published twice as much as their legacy



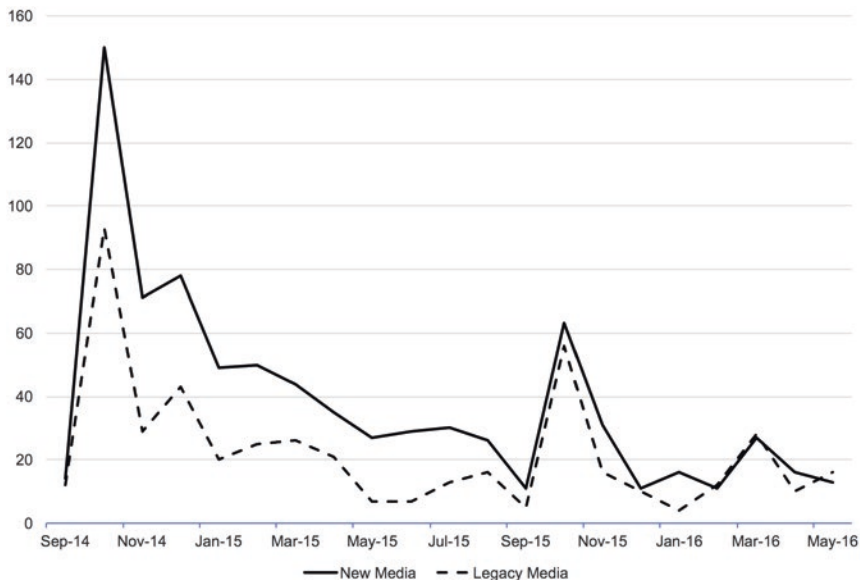
**Fig. 6.3** Percentage of individual author contributions at *Vice* (Not all single contribution authors are represented in figure for the sake of ease of viewing.)

counterparts within the first year: 604 articles compared to 312. The early wave of reporting concentrated on explaining both the attacks and the movement itself. For instance, a *Vox* article characterized Gamergate as starting “after indie game developer Zoe Quinn and gaming critic Anita Sarkeesian were both horribly harassed online” and also stated that gamergaters themselves represent “a substantial, vocal movement that believes the generally left-leaning online gaming press focuses too much on feminism and the role of women in the industry, to the detriment of coverage of games” (VanDerWerff 2014).

Such characterization persisted throughout the year and was reiterated when reporting on attacks by gamergaters on celebrities. For instance, in October 2014, when actress Felicia Day was “doxxed”—with personal information, such as her home address, being posted online—by Gamergate trolls, she was quickly aligned with the three figureheads. A *New York Times* opinion article described Day’s doxxing (without explicitly using the term) immediately after discussing Sarkeesian’s cancellation of a talk at Utah State University due to credible death threats made against her. The article concludes: “Other game designers, journalists and cultural critics have been threatened, or have faced hacking attempts on their online accounts... Video games are unquestionably poorer than they were two months ago when this strange and disheartening series of events began” (Suellentrop 2014).

Another widely reported instance arose when Ellen Pao resigned as CEO of Reddit after the site took down revenge pornography from its forums. A *USA Today* writer used Pao’s resignation as an example of the effects of Gamergate attacks: “The issue of online harassment extended beyond gaming, and nearly two years after the peak of #gamergate frenzy, it still continues for some women. Reddit CEO Ellen Pao resigned in July after she said she was harassed online, including death threats” (Snider 2016). Such quotes cemented the connection between Gamergate activities and misogyny online (Fig. 6.4).

A second major spike in coverage came one year later, when 84 articles were published in just over four days. These articles concerned the upcoming 2016 South by Southwest (SXSW) music and technology festival in Austin, Texas, where two panels on misogyny, trolling, and gaming were canceled due to Gamergate-related intimidation. The announcement of



**Fig. 6.4** Timeline of mainstream articles featuring Gamergate published from June 2014 to May of 2016

the cancellations saw the most articles published on a single day (34 articles on October 27, 2015). Legacy media slightly outpaced their online counterparts in SXSXW coverage, publishing 43 of the 84 articles. The festival provided an opening for wider media analysis. *The New York Times* wrote about the cancellations:

Other women in the gaming community have faced similar online harassment, which, they say, goes far beyond name calling and has moved into the realm of violent threats and rampant misogyny... Even events attempting to discuss and curtail the harassment of women online and in the gaming community are targets. (Dougherty and Isaac 2016)

This example highlights an elision between “online” and “gaming” activities, as the authors move between the two subjects and also write about the gaming community in the broader context of online misogyny.

## Gamergate as Shorthand

What our analysis reveals is how mainstream outlets utilized these two events—the initial attacks on game developers and the cancellation of the SXSW panels—to shed light on Gamergate’s evolution. The initial attacks provided a template for characterizing other modes of mainstream gender-based harassment, and the canceled panels tied those modes to the wider phenomenon of online misogyny and trolling as well as for an expansion and reintroduction of Gamergate. Thus, SXSW offered mainstream journalists a wider frame in which to encounter Gamergate, despite the fact that the movement was already a year old and individual stories of its targets had already been explored in depth. Gamergate became shorthand for broader instances of mediated misogyny.

The shift from covering Gamergate’s emergence to using Gamergate as shorthand serves a dual role. For reporters, this reframing allowed an assertion of public authority over the movement, which could now be explicitly understood as a mainstream, no longer solely a niche or “gamer,” issue. It also gave journalists a lens through which to speak about a wider culture of online misogyny in recognizable terms. Furthermore, for the victims of Gamergate, it situated misogyny as something commonplace—moving it from a singular set of events to the “end of the beginning”—a recognition of a mundane, yet reprehensible aspect of online culture.

Over the duration of our analyzed texts, we found a clear discursive shift in how Gamergate was defined. In the first phase of coverage, journalists were attempting to make sense of the verbal aggression: “[t]he #GamerGate movement... claims that women criticizing misogyny in video games will lead to the death of the gamer and that (largely young, white and male) gamers are under attack” (Dockterman 2014). The language surrounding Gamergate spotlighted what seemed to be a localized phenomenon, and its specific dangers involved issues of gaming. For instance, in an article about women abandoning the “gamer” moniker, a *New York Times* writer stated, “As harassment veered into threats of violence and rape, the controversy drew news media attention, and set off debates over how bad misogyny in gaming had become” (McPhate 2015).

Throughout, the Gamergate attacks were relegated to the subculture of “gaming,” which, because of its history of exclusionary practices towards women, was considered to be misogynistic in the first place.

Those who thought Gamergate would be a story of “a summer of hate,” or an isolated case of gamers gone rogue, soon found that the story had legs. Over the course of several months, the characterization of Gamergate began to veer from its focus on a localized series of events. Instead, the label was increasingly applied to describe a broad swath of sallies against women. For example, the word “toxic” was invoked in all six publications we discursively analyzed, which is particularly apt considering the ways in which game culture is described as toxic (Consalvo 2012) and online communities as “toxic technocultures” (Massanari 2015). Similarly, a *Time* article recalled the Gamergate attacks and those on Brianna Wu specifically to make a larger claim: “Any woman who is using the Internet for her professional life or for her personal life has come across that moment where there is all of the sudden a hateful or sexist comment coming back at you” (LaFrance 2016). In the end, the term Gamergate itself was redefined. Instead of referencing games journalism, “ethics,” and game culture—subjects which gamergaters put at the forefront of their movement—it became a moniker for harassment and online misogyny.

This transformation appears to be necessary for journalists to create both a cohesive and mainstream narrative of the movement. No longer a subcultural phenomenon, Gamergate has come to represent the greater issue of persistent online harassment. Consequently, the story of Gamergate was able to carry more mainstream appeal to readers who were not necessarily interested in games; the subject of online harassment involved a broad range of fields and industries, including business, technology, and culture, as well as the more pervasive issue of shameful treatment of women online (LaFrance 2016).

The discursive shifts in Gamergate coverage undertaken by mainstream journalists not only cemented their authority about the movement, but also established the meaning of the event to a wider public. Such a view is reaffirmed in Perreault and Vos’ (2016) study of Gamergate journalists. While their work primarily focused on the intent and reaction of authors from both the mainstream and enthusiast press, the authors provided

valuable insights into how journalists approached the subject of games. They described a “paradigm maintenance” and “repair” by games journalists surrounding Gamergate; newsmakers covering the movement saw themselves as mediators, translating the event between enthusiasts and the wider media (ibid.).

What is therefore surprising to those familiar with game culture, and slightly deviates from Perreault & Vos’ assertions on paradigm maintenance, is that the tendency to rescript Gamergate events to appeal to a greater audience superseded deeper investigations into gender issues within the subculture. Somewhat unexpectedly, given decades of negative reporting on gaming, journalists eschewed traditional frames surrounding mainstream games coverage. For instance, we found few examples of the traditional utopian (games are educational) or dystopian (games are a health hazard) constructs that tend to surround games according to previous assessments of mainstream game coverage (Williams 2003). While journalists covering the issue could have easily tapped into existing narratives by following the moral panic script that historically marked game-related news, they collectively chose to free themselves from such strictures. Alternatively, Gamergate coverage can be read as a demarcation of the beginning of the end of a decade-long struggle to mainstream game culture.

## Mainstreaming Misogyny

A jilted man harassing his ex is a fitting beginning for an incoherent movement that has one undeniable goal: to silence women and deny them their place within digital culture. *Slate* aptly identified the movement as an instance of “Cheeto-breath bigotry” (Waldman and Newell 2014). Yet, for its victims, and there are many, Gamergate was not a passing controversy, but the start of an ongoing culture war that extends far beyond the world of gaming and continues to the present day. For those who think that Gamergate is over, think again. It might not be receiving sustained coverage as it once did, but its infrastructure, ideology, and methods are very much intact; its members are primed to take on the next battle.



Mainstream journalists primarily frame the clash as one between a “movement of dead-enders” versus three outspoken feminists. Recent studies (Burgess and Matamoros-Fernández 2016; Massanari 2015), however, note the involvement of a much wider group of actors, including industry insiders, academics, advertisers, journalists, and platform operators (e.g., Reddit and 4chan). For all these groups, Gamergate should serve as a sobering warning sign. Studying the domain of popular culture comes with a new set of challenges, as entering the sphere of “geek masculinity” (Braithwaite 2016) means a potential engagement with a formidable opponent. We speak from personal experience when we say that the meritocratic ideals of intellectuals are no match for the conspiratorial logic of what Mortensen (2016) calls a “tempocracy”: an online subculture “controlled by those who have the most patience and time, strongest dedication to their own opinions, and most ruthless ways to silence their opponents” (p. 9).

Our analysis shows that, unlike countless other instances of mediated misogyny, which are either normalized or ignored in the context of mainstream media coverage, Gamergate not only received significant attention, but also acted as a platform for highlighting similar instances of misogyny online. Amid the initial confusion of what Gamergate stood for, it became immediately apparent to mainstream journalists that this was, to paraphrase Mantilla (2013), a phenomenon to systematically harass and silence women, and deny them access to what until recently was a male-dominated space. Paradoxically, by adopting Gamergate as a stand-in for online harassment, mainstream journalists were allotted a powerful new frame to express their opinions about the toxic quality of social media interactions. Such reframing may seem innocuous or even dilute the subject of Gamergate, but we found the opposite. Journalists were able to use the movement’s proponents and their alleged cause of games journalism’s ethics to expound on larger issues concerning online misogyny. The mainstreaming of Gamergate coverage exposed many of game culture’s underlying tensions for all to see, discuss, and ultimately contest.

The fact that Gamergate essentially became a meme is a double-edged sword. The mainstream coverage of Gamergate serves as an instructive



case study for activists and educators to help comprehend how news events evolve, how to contribute to them, and how to position oneself. It highlights the still-vital role of translation and interpolation that the mainstream media provides, and the interplay between new and old media outlets in shaping and reshaping discussions of online misogyny. Ultimately, Gamergate suggests the end of the beginning of a new era of online harassment, which leads us to our final, less encouraging point.

Despite Gamergate bringing to light and characterizing a wide variety of misogynistic activities, the solutions to address such activities go far beyond the tactic of exposure. As Mortensen (2016) notes: "... [Gamergate] taught us how technology designed for increased openness can be utilized to create echo chambers and to silence opposing voices" (p. 13). By invoking the right codes, for example labeling "opponents" as Social Justice Warriors, online hate mobs can be resurrected in a matter of hours. Seen in this light, Mr. Trump could indeed be considered a president befitting the Gamergate era, especially when one considers the way both the Trump campaign and his followers leveraged social media to spread disinformation and to aggressively police "political correctness." Thus, the spirit of the Gamergate agenda may very well thrive during the Trump presidency, whether it be through the online harassment tactics of a subset of his supporters worldwide, the president's own misogynistic remarks, or the strong connections between the movement and high-level White House confidantes such as Steve Bannon. The emergence and mainstreaming of Gamergate coverage, then, serves as a painful yet powerful historical marker in the mainstreaming of misogyny.

## Notes

1. To ascertain whether Gamergate was covered by a publication, we used internal search engines on a news outlet's website and searched the domain through [Google.com](https://www.google.com). We then removed any duplicates that were not syndicated across mainstream publications.
2. *Vice* published the most articles utilizing the term, with 10.5% of total coverage.

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