

Before the Gamers Were Boys:
A Historical Analysis of the Gendering of Videogames and the Rise of the Alt-Right

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Abstract

This work argues that the rise of Neo-Nazism and White Supremacy was organized and resulted from the gendering of video games in the late 1980s and early 1990s. While White Supremacy and Neo-Nazism has always existed, radicalization of privileged white men on online and gaming culture was an important step in creating more mainstream Alt-Right politics and well-known figures in the movement. The paper will illustrate how, prior to the crash of the gaming market in 1983, video games were gender-neutral and rising developers included both men and women. When the market became flooded with cheaply made and poorly produced games, causing the market crash of 1983, the gaming world changed substantially in that it became marketed primarily to boys in the toy aisle, thus establishing nearly forty years of games made for boys and by boys. With technology and the development of MMORPGs (Massively Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Games) those groups of gamers—overwhelmingly white and overwhelmingly men—flooded the internet, created online spaces wherein marginalized and diverse communities were not welcome. And as feminist activism turned to the sexist and racist imagery in video games, those same privileged gamers organized to actively block any positive changes in the gaming culture. Threatened by changes to their “space,” alt-right leaders were to identify and organize those same men into alt-right establishments.