In August of 2014, an ex-boyfriend of a video game programmer named Zoe Quinn wrote a long, detailing, and scathing blog post about his relationship with Quinn. Among the various accusations and complaints the ex-boyfriend had about their relationship, the accusation that stood out was that Quinn had cheated on him with a numerous amount of people, including video game journalists. As it so happens, these same video game journalists gave Quinn good reviews on her video game, Depression Quest.

At first glance, this situation may appear as a simple journalistic ethics issue. Who cares if she slept around with journalists? If the accusations were true, then the journalists should receive criticism, but the opposite was true.

There was massive backlash against Quinn, and it divided the entire gaming community. Her personal information was leaked, she received death threats, and she was constantly harassed by members of the video gaming community, who simply could not stand for what she had done.

Again, if these accusations were true, Quinn is not at fault here: the journalists are. If Quinn did in fact contact these journalists, the journalists could have said no, but they decided not to. People use shady tactics to get ahead in life, that’s simply how life is.

Would this same backlash have happened if a male video game programmer slept with female journalists for good reviews? Would that male video game programmer have received death threats and have his entire private life available for all to see on the internet? I personally do not think so, but an event such as this has not happened yet.

Women in the video game community are often criticized more often than the men in the video game community. Around and during the time of Zoe Quinn incident, dubbed “GamerGate”, there were multiple incidents involving the woman in the gaming community. According to Kyle Wagner of Deadspin, the events around and during this time were: “Anita Sarkeesian releases a video about the sexualization and use of women as props in games; she becomes involved as a matter of course; Sarkeesian is harassed and threatened to the point of filing a police report with the San Francisco Police Department and leaving her home due to the severity of threats; Quinn produces logs of chatrooms and posts from Reddit and 4chan that show gamers planning to carry out hacks on her personal account and create fake account to “speak out” against harassment;…”

There are many more events involving women in the gaming community mentioned by Wagner, and they all have a common theme: sexism.

When Anita Sarkeesian criticized the sexualization of women in video games, the backlash she received was absurd and unnecessary. She has a point as well, that all of her critics seemed to miss: women are sexualized in video games.

There are plenty of video games released within the past few years where the lead female character is wearing a skimpy top, has an unnecessarily good looking body, among other forms of sexualization. Sarkeesian was simply trying to say “Hey, maybe we should change that” and she was ridiculed mercilessly by the video game community.

Men between ages of 18-35 make up a large percentage of gamers, and an even larger percentage of the gamers that actively engage in in the gaming community. I have noticed throughout my college career that a large percentage of my classmates also play video games. I’m also making an assumption that a large percentage of my classmates actively engage in the gaming community, because I have noticed various forums and websites involved with gaming pop up on the majority of my classmates laptop screens.

I often wonder if those who criticized Zoe Quinn and Anita Sarkeesian and my classmates who actively participate in the gaming community overlap. If so, what would be the causes of this? Could this explain the alleged sexism that occurs in STEM?1

Marwick, Alice Emily. Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age. N.p.: n.p., n.d. 167+. Print.