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Editorial: Conflicts

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Editorial

Nobody will have missed that, while we were preparing this issue, the world has changed. In July's issue, we collected work on themes related to gamer identity, which inevitably saw authors seek to address 2014's #Gamergate Alt-Right harassment campaign. Back then, Gamergate—as widely documented from [Boston Magazine](#) to the [New York Times](#) and analysed by the vast majority of academics (c.f. [Chess & Shaw 2015](#); [Massanari 2015](#); [Golding & Van Deventer 2016](#); [Kafai et al. 2016, 3-4](#); [Butt & Apperley 2016](#))—denoted a conflict over the gamer identity, in which a hegemonic culture felt threatened by what the hegemony perceived as an intrusion of women, feminism, cultural Marxism, and 'political correctness' propagated by Social Justice Warriors.

Last month, we saw the same sentiment in a broader context: the U.S. presidential elections. As Matt Lee noted in the Guardian at the beginning of this month, ["the culture war that began in games now has a senior representative in The White House"](#). It might serve as a reminder to the general public that any 'culture wars'—specifically in this case between a radically inclusivist Left and the nativist conservative movement called the Alt-Right—is fought in large part through the production of popular culture. Academics studying culture have a duty to spot such conflicts as they arrive, in order to make sense of the ways in which the social and political are produced, take shape and find conflict in the cultural products we consume. Perhaps unsurprisingly to our readership, those cultural products include games.

In the issue you have before you, we observed that same theme of 'conflict'. Matthew Hudson's contribution 'Non-Serious Serious Games' overturns the idea that serious games present the only type of gameplay that can impart benefits to players. Hudson determines that although toxic gaming communities may gain more traction in news media, gaming communities have the potential to provide many social benefits to the players involved. On the 'prosumer'-side of gaming, we feature an insightful piece by Eirik Jungar regarding the conflict—lawfully, financially—inherent to streaming video games. When are 'Let's Plays,' broadcast tournaments and other video-streams a creative expression of free speech, and when are they a matter of copyright infringement? Aditya Deshbandhu investigates the fracturing of gamer identity as one of the issues that lead to #Gamergate. Through ethnographic research on players, Deshbandhu provides a framework through which future game studies scholars might better understand the

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complex, messy, and often conflicting role gameplay plays to influence understandings of the self. Conor Patrick McKeown reviews a book on what is already a classical methodological conflict within game studies: *The Play Versus Story Divide*. Finally, in his review of *This War of Mine* titled "In War, not Everyone's a Soldier," Charles Ecenbarger analyzes the multi-sided nature of war, as a conflict not just between countries and ideologies, but between survival and death; between soldiers and citizens; between citizens and citizens; between the player's enjoyment and empathy.

Each of these papers takes note of types of conflict ranging from visceral warfare to corporeal depictions involving copyright and gamer identities. Each work depicts multiple sides to each conflict, attempting to inform their audiences in a critical and well-balanced fashion. This collection of work has provided a platform which allows for discussion and understanding of these conflicts to occur. We hope that through these works we offer a space for our readers to explore different positions through rigorous scholarship.

On this positive note, we take it as our duty as a student-lead, student-focused journal to help shape the future of gaming the *Press Start* community wants to see. In supporting student led work through reviewing, editing and publishing, *Press Start* strives to enhance game studies as much as it supports early researchers. The only way to achieve this is by becoming involved; not only by writing and publishing as academics do, but by discussing and contending perceptions of the status quo in everyday life. *Press Start* is an inclusive community that aims to develop its members' skills whilst exploring new ideas. We—the Editorial Board—believe these aims to be part of a movement towards positive change and greater inclusivity within academia as a whole. For many early academics, the notion of having their research published can be a daunting prospect; therefore *Press Start* aims to embolden its members and give them a platform to share their ideas and arguments, thus allowing them to gain confidence in their writing and ability to critically analyse the work of others. To quote Esther MacCallum-Stewart from a recent [Press Start AMA](#):

My advice is more to the community as a whole than individuals, because I really think that without a group effort we are not going to [...] overcome things like institutionalised prejudice. This includes being proactive about aspects such as inclusion and encouraging diversity / parity at conferences and other events, about being respectful and inquisitive, and also about recognising that alas, it would be great to be on a magic playing field where we're all equal, but we really aren't right now.

Press Start hopes to contribute to the 'pushback' against exclusionary movements that has spread from #Gamergate straight into politics by offering support to disenfranchised student authors and providing

spaces in which discussion is welcomed and the status quo challenged. Paradigm shifts are unsettling, since they remind us of the precarity of our futures. In these uncertain times, we at *Press Start* believe that it is imperative to continue fostering our community of early career researchers, through a network of support and integrity in our research. This is an opportunity to collaborate and publish the next generation of original voices and critical thinkers—to help carve out spaces for upcoming scholars, and in turn, progress into a more welcoming future together.