

DiGRA 2026 Workshop

Call for Participants: Towards a Comprehensive Paradigm of Gender and Gaming

Gender research is under pressure internationally, at a time where many cultural areas are facing increasingly gendered contestation. Gaming and game culture is one domain in which this is particularly evident, with issues relating to gendered practices of exclusion, harassment, and other forms of boundary keeping. As game culture participation often starts during young people's formative years and can become an important part of their identity, it is particularly important to pay attention to the gendered practices that are taking place in gaming.

As men and boys have traditionally been the dominating target group of gaming, gender perspectives have been a part of game studies since the early days of the field. Research has been invaluable in documenting especially the marginalized experiences of women (e.g. Chess & Shaw 2015; A. Salter & Blodgett 2017; Taylor, Jensen & de Castell 2009), and has in later years also expanded to include gender minorities and queer people (Rubert & Shaw 2017; Sunden & Svenningson 2012; Brenner-Levoy, 2021; Medina, 2021). In recent years, there has also been increasing attention to men's gendered gaming experiences (Taylor & Vorhees 2018; Maloney, Roberts & Graham 2019).

However, scholarship on gender and gaming remains fragmented, focuses on risk and problems, and has a tendency to lean on a set of theories that invite limited understandings of gender and gendered practices in the context of games and gaming (Meriläinen et al in press). There is a need for a new paradigm for scholarship on gaming and gender that acknowledges both the variation in gendered gaming experiences and the gendered power structures embedded in many game cultures. This new paradigm is a response to the fragmentation of the field and calls for an integrated approach to dismantling oppressive gendered power structures and proposes that people of all genders and sexual orientations work together to find solutions to make gaming a culture for inclusion rather than exclusion.

In this workshop, we invite scholars to a conversation about how we can reconcile and consolidate research on gender and gaming by acknowledging gendered experiences in a broader perspective, with the aim of developing new theories about gender, identity, and gaming with impact far outside the field of game studies. Organized by researchers associated with the newly established Interdisciplinary Network for Research in Gender and Games, funded by the Nordic Gender Fund, this workshop offers to expand the network into a global community for the development of a new research paradigm on gender and games.

DiGRA 2026 Workshop

© 2026 Authors & Digital Games Research Association DiGRA. Personal and educational classroom use of this paper is allowed, commercial use requires specific permission from the author.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We aim for this workshop to be deliberative and discussion-oriented with a focus on finding concrete ways forward to develop a new research paradigm for gender and gaming. We invite scholars to give 10 minutes lightning talks that present a key argument about how the field can consolidate a new paradigm for understanding gender and gaming.

Please submit an abstract for your lightning talk (maximum 300 words), along with a short bio (max 100 words) to Kristine.jorgensen@uib.no no later than **May 1, 2026**.

WORKSHOP ORGANIZERS

Professor **Kristine Jørgensen**, Center for Digital Narrative, University of Bergen

PhD fellow **Tom Legierse**, Center for Digital Narrative, University of Bergen, and co-founder of the Interdisciplinary Network for Research in Gender and Games.

Academy Research Fellow **Mikko Meriläinen**, Game Research Lab, Tampere University

Postdoctoral fellow **Maria Ruotsalainen**, Contemporary Culture Studies, University of Jyväskylä, and co-founder of the Interdisciplinary Network for Research in Gender and Games.

REFERENCES

- Brenner-Levoy, J. (2021). Playing with gender: Trans men's experiences playing with masculine characters, roles, and identities in online video games. *Visual Resources*, 37(4), 272–288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973762.2023.2282853>
- Chess, S. & Shaw, A. (2015). "A conspiracy of fishes, or, how we learned to stop worrying about #GamerGate and embrace hegemonic masculinity". *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 59(1), 208-220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2014.999917>
- Maloney, M., Roberts, S., & Graham, T. (2019). *Gender, masculinity and video gaming: Analysing Reddit's r/gaming community*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28262-2>
- Medina, C. (2021). *Experiences of Queer Black and Latinx Masculine Identifying Individuals in Online Gaming Spaces: A Narrative Inquiry*. PhD diss. University of Pennsylvania
- Meriläinen, M., Jørgensen, K., Ruotsalainen, M., & Bjørkelo, K.A. (in press). "Men and masculinities in gaming: A scoping review". *The Journal of Men's Studies*.
- Ruberg, B. and Shaw, A., ed. 2017. *Queer Game Studies*. Minneapolis, MN, USA: Minnesota University Press.

- Salter, A., & Blodgett, B. (2017). *Toxic geek masculinity in media: Sexism, trolling, and identity policing*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66077-6>
- Sunden, J., Svenningson, M. (2012). *Gender and Sexuality in Online Game Cultures: Passionate Play*. Routledge
- Taylor, N., Jenson, J., de Castell, S. (2009). Cheerleaders/booth babes/ Halo hoes: pro-gaming, gender and jobs for the boys. *Digital Creativity*, 20(4), 239–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14626260903290323>
- Taylor, N., & Voorhees, G. (Eds.). (2018). *Masculinities in play*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90581-5>