

“This industry has ruined me”: categorizing the experiences of Brazilian feminist gaming streamers through an intersectional approach

Beatriz Blanco

Centro Universitário Senac São Paulo

beatriz.blanco@senac.sp.br

Keywords

Streamers, labor, gender, feminism, digital platforms

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

It is largely documented and analyzed how the mainstream gaming industry is centered on male, white, cisnormative, and heteronormative experiences (Burrill, 2008; Donovan, 2010; Goulart & Nardi, 2017; Shaw, 2014) and how this context is challenging for women working in it (Bulut, 2020). From the center to the margins of the global gaming market, female workers are expected to manage a complex mix of vulnerabilities, ranging from being targeted by misogynist harassers to structural labor precarity. Even though gender unevenness in gamer culture is spread throughout the world, women working in the Global South gaming industry face additional challenges to occupy a smaller and more precarious market. And their struggles are amplified if these workers choose to work as public figures, such as influencers, journalists, and streamers.

So, what happens if these professionals – Global South women working as public figures in the gaming industry – decide to openly call themselves feminists? Does this public position bring them some type of advantage, such as niche audiences and commercial opportunities? How do they manage their activism in order to keep an audience, sponsors, and good performance on social media metrics? And what is the most effective communication approach to address feminism to gamer audiences? These questions motivated this study, which focused on Brazilian feminist gaming streamers. Through a methodological approach combining narrative interviews (Rosenthal, 2018), extended narrative analysis (Webb & Mallon, 2007), and framing analysis (Creed et al., 2002; Goffman, 1974), I have listened to the personal experiences of seven Brazilian female streamers from multiple ethnicities and locations in the country, whose ages range between 20 and 45 years old, and audiences varying between 100 and 50,000 followers.

These meetings resulted in six hours of interviews and 140 pages of transcriptions, coded through a categorization of each interview narrative segment (Webb & Mallon, 2007). Then, the identified categories were grouped by their similarity in topics and

Proceedings of DiGRA 2026

© 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.

juxtaposed with the most frequent framings deployed by streamers when addressing each of them, as shown in the table below.

Topic	Framings
Professional insertion	Fan labour COVID-19 pandemic Between labor and leisure Inspirations and aspirational jobs
Labor market and career	Discrimination in the labor market Loneliness
Self-image and aesthetic pressure	Feelings of inadequacy and comparison Beauty standards Objectification and fear of harassment Overcome the women's place
Emotional labor and well-being	Acting as a friend Exhaustion and self-care
Safety	Unsafety and neglect on digital platforms Co-opting engagement dynamics Emotional distancing and restriction of communities
Communication strategies for addressing feminism	Didacticism and non-conflictual approaches
Digital platforms	Status-quo reinforcement Ambivalence concerning metrics
Gamer community	Discrimination against social minorities
Fan's community	Safe space due to moderation
Female colleagues	Competitiveness Informal alliances End of collectives
Brands and gaming companies	Cause marketing is not trendy anymore

Table 1 - Categorization of streamers' narrations in topics and framings

Despite the categorization drawing from similarities between the streamers' narrations, this study aimed to balance ambivalences between general experiences, mostly consequences of the gaming industry's structural aspects, and each streamer's individual identity and life story. So, the interviews were contextualized through two intersectional frameworks: the intersectional roulette, systematized by Fernanda Carrera (2021), for showing, through a visual tool, entanglements and overlays between streamers' experiences and their identities concerning race, gender, weight, location, disabilities, age, sexuality, and class; and the matrix of domination proposed by Patricia Hill Collins (2000), which differentiate structural and personal aspects of

the streamers' experiences. The table below shows the previous categorizations distributed on the matrix of domination.

<p>Structural domain of power: <i>(Social institutions, law, and policies)</i></p> <p>Between labor and leisure Discrimination in the labor market Cause marketing is not trendy anymore</p>	<p>Disciplinary domain of power: <i>(Organizations and authorities that enforce the laws and policies)</i></p> <p>Unsafety and neglect on digital platforms</p>
<p>Hegemonic domain of power: <i>(Ideology and culture)</i></p> <p>Beauty standards Objectification and fear of harassment Status-quo reinforcement Discrimination against social minorities</p>	<p>Interpersonal domain of power: <i>(Lived experiences by individuals)</i></p> <p>Loneliness Feelings of inadequacy and comparison Overcome the women's place Acting as a friend Exhaustion and self-care Co-opting engagement dynamics Emotional distancing and restriction of communities Didacticism and non-conflictual approaches Ambivalence concerning metrics</p>

Table 2 - Narratives' framings classified according to the matrix of domination

This distribution shows that most framings are concentrated on the interpersonal domain of power. It happens because the seven streamers' narratives converge heavily on the same trajectory and issues: they have started working as streamers because of their passion for video games, then have built communities aligned with their personal values through intense moderation. But, despite working in an industry that they love and holding job positions that they often consider their dream jobs (Bulut, 2020; Cote & Harris, 2021), all the interviewees recognized that discrimination against people from minority groups, including women, is heavily spread in the gamer audience. Also, platforms do not provide sufficient protection against harassment and tend to favor groups more aligned with the status quo through their curation and engagement metrics. In addition, they realized that addressing feminism in marketing campaigns is not so trendy today as it was a few years ago. Considering this scenario, these streamers feel lonely and unempowered, relying on individualistic approaches to face their challenges and feeling more intensely the effects on the interpersonal sphere. One participant even stated that "this industry has ruined me", expressing how draining the emotional labor of managing all these levels of vulnerability is.

Concerning the strategies deployed by the streamers to talk about feminism to their audiences, the didacticism and non-conflictual approach is justified by the vulnerability and loneliness experienced by them on digital platforms. They feel unsafe to adopt more assertive strategies, since it could expose them to retaliation practices such as cyberbullying and mass reports targeting their channels. So, they

prefer teaching instead of fighting because they believe that this approach makes them look nicer and, consequently, safer.

Despite the limitations expected in a local study like this one, I propose this categorization, aiming to contribute to future exploration of the experiences of female content creators concerning feminism and gaming audiences.

REFERENCES

- Donovan, T. 2010. *Replay: The History of Video Games*. Lewes: Yellow Ant.
- Burrill, D. A. 2008. *Die tryin': Videogames, masculinity, culture*. Bristol: Peter Lang.
- Goulart, L. Nardi, H. C. 2017. "Gamergate: cultura dos jogos digitais e a identidade gamer masculina." *Revista Mídia e Cotidiano*. (11) 3, 250-268.
- Bulut, E. 2020. *A Precarious Game: The Illusion of Dream Jobs in the Video Game Industry*. Ithaca: ILR Press.
- Carrera, F. 2021. "Roleta interseccional: proposta metodológica para análises em Comunicação". *E-Compós*. (24) 1. <https://doi.org/10.30962/ec.2198>.
- Collins, P. H. 2020. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Cote, A. C. Harris, B. C. 2021. "The cruel optimism of 'good crunch': How game industry discourses perpetuate unsustainable labor practices". *New Media & Society*, (25) 3. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14614448211014213>
- Creed, W. D. Langstraat, J. A. Scully, M. A. 2002. "A picture of the frame: Frame analysis as technique and as politics." *Organizational research methods*. (5) 1. 34-55.
- Goffman, E. 1974. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Nova York: Harper & Row.
- Shaw, A. 2014. *Gaming at The Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Videogame Culture*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Rosenthal, G. 2018. *Interpretive social research: An introduction*. Göttingen: Göttingen University Press.
- Webb, B. Mallon, B. 2007. "A method to bridge the gap between breadth and depth in IS narrative analysis". *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, (8) 7.