

From Fortnite to Alt-Right | The New York Times

By Megan Condis

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Let's get one thing out of the way: No, the shooter who live-streamed himself killing 50 worshipers in two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, this month was not being serious when he wrote that "Spyro the Dragon 3 taught me ethno-nationalism" and "Fortnite trained me to be a killer." Rather, with this statement, the killer was ridiculing a trope that has circulated in the media increasingly since the Columbine killings in 1999: that video games are capable of brainwashing vulnerable teenagers and turning them into violent sociopaths. Some media outlets have described this section of the manifesto in particular as "trolling" or as "bait" — and it is both of those things, certainly.

And yet as a scholar who studies video game culture, I do want to talk about gaming. Because I think it plays a special role as a vector for spreading the messages of white supremacist ideology that lead to violence. And I think it's a conversation that we can have without taking the bait — because this is not about the content of the games themselves but about the way the culture that surrounds gaming provides particularly fertile soil for sowing the seeds of resentment that grow into hate.

Modern internet-based recruitment efforts are designed around the creation of a frictionless pipeline that slowly inoculates potential converts to hate — like putting a bunch of would-be Pepe the Frogs in a slowly boiling pot .

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