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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Communicative Resilience in Virtual Worlds: Responding to Marginalization through Counter-Narratives

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**ABSTRACT:** In contemporary society, marginalized communities are increasingly utilizing video games as decentralized spaces where counter-narratives are constructed against dominant disinformation flows. Despite of the increasing emergence of these practices, academic inquiries remain relatively limited. Given this academic deficiency, we compared the institutional framings with communicative practices of game players about the Black Lives Matter protests in *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* and the Civil Rights Movement in *Fortnite*. To enhance the effectiveness of the analysis and the depth of the interpretation, this study adopts methodological triangulation. The approach incorporates LDA thematic model analysis, NVivo-based content coding and ELAN multimodal analysis. Our findings indicate that through semantic fragmentation and affective domestication, institutional discourse reframes the public subversions. This transformation thus reduces political urgency into symbolic commemoration. Relatively, marginalized players build a counter-narrative structure by using the game affordances, spatial symbolism and collective rituals of the game mechanism. They redefine citizen participation as an evolving negotiate process that actively challenges the dominant narrative boundaries. These practices expand the theory of communication resilience proposed by Buzzanell (2010), revealing that resilience is reflected through both daily adaptive interactions and multimodal strategic interventions. Finally, this study emphasizes the potential of digital games as a space for intellectual struggles. In this context, marginalized communities use symbolic powers in a creative way, they challenge the information exclusion mechanisms and reshape citizens' memory while negotiating social and political visibility.

**KEYWORDS:** communicative resilience, triangulation methodology, video games, game affordances, counter-narrative, institutional narrative, civic issues

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## 1. Introduction

Within contemporary sociotechnical information society (Lal 2016) that allows individuals to seamlessly engage with information flow (Ntorukiri, Kirugua, and Kirimi 2022), scholars are increasingly concerned that the information mechanisms deviate from factual accuracy. They categorize these disruptions under the broader concept of information disorder (Wardle 2018; Frau-Meigs 2019) manifested in the forms of misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation (Wardle 2018; Frau-Meigs 2019). All of them manipulate the public narrative mechanism and undermining social trust towards legacy media (Wardle 2018; Frau-Meigs 2019). To be specific, misinformation refers to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, or the absence of fact-checking without intentional harm. Whereas disinformation involves deceptive knowledge manipulating public perception. Among them, malinformation is the most deliberate as it abuses structural information vulnerabilities (Wardle and Derakhshan 2017; Baines and Elliott 2020; Santos-d'Amorim and De Oliveira Miranda 2021).

Varied forms of content distortion are intensified by algorithmic amplification and the strategic deployment of digital propaganda, reinforcing affective engagement at the expense of fact deliberation (Monsees 2021; Kandel 2020). The normalization of 'alternative facts' not merely disfigures the reality but also actively harasses political discourse, marginalizing critical debate and destabilizing democratic processes (Monsees 2021). Burkle (2019) points out that information disorder is a political strategy to legitimize human rights violations. Through strategic exploitations of biased information environments, autocratic actors erode democratic consolidation by fostering political indifference and ideological fragmentation (Hansson, Orru, Torpan, Bäck, Kazemkaityte, Meyer, and Pigrée 2021; Ruggiero 2017).

Accordingly, in response to drastic consequences, modernistic scholars have theorized how correlative civic counternarratives have been adopted to resist the social destabilization. Within governance frameworks, governments introduce electoral regulations and media policies to preserve democratic representation and mitigate the impact of disinformation on public discourse (Tenove 2020).

Despite much of current research focuses on the grassroots democratic and social counternarratives in the public sphere, there remains under-exploration of marginalized communities' digital resistance movements, particularly within non-traditional digital spaces represented by video games. While research on social media platforms as sites of information warfare is extensive (Zelenkauskaitė and Balduccini 2017; Golovchenko, Hartmann, and Adler-Nissen 2018; Prier 2020), limited attention has been given to the role of interactive and participatory digital environments in fostering counter-narratives. At the same time, marginalized communities including racial minorities, political dissidents, and activist groups confront with systemic barriers to participation in mainstream media discourse. This situation leads to the strategic use of an alternative digital space for political expression. Gaming environments provide an interactive, less regulated, and highly participatory medium where these groups can engage in counter-storytelling that subverts dominant narratives. Nevertheless, few studies have explored the constructive process of subversions against the hegemonic information disorder.

In current research, we conceptualize that in video gaming context, both gameplay and symbolic narrations constitute the narratives countering hegemonic information flows (Bamberg, 2004). In detail, this study focuses on gameplay symbols, player comments, and community-mediated discourse across institutional news and game practices.

Grounded on the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in video game *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* and the Civil Rights Movement in video game *Fortnite*, we delve into how virtual environments decentralize online protests. The voices excluded from mainstream public discourse are amplified in virtual space, this phenomenon leads us to explore whether gaming-based counter-narratives can challenge the authority of

dominant media in new forms of political solidarity. Ultimately, this study advocates a re-examination of civic information systems and intervention strategies.

Before deeply analyzing the counter-narrative process of the selected case, we will first sort out the relevant understanding of the two conceptual combinations of "communicative resilience" and "counter narratives".

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### *2.1 From Informational Exclusion to Counter-Narrative Articulation: A Communicative Resilience Framework*

The term "marginalization" originates from a sociological study and describes a condition of conflicting cultural identifications that trigger a "divided self" (Park 1928). From the perspective of symbolic processes, Hunter (2016) analyzed how marginalized individuals are embedded in community dynamics, emphasizing the role of social capital in reconnecting civil relations.

Accordingly, based on the position of social justice, Bernt and Colini (2013) pointed out that contemporary marginalization reflects the suppression of power and inequality among political, social and economic groups. This structural imbalance is manifested in the exclusion of culture and information, especially the limited access to digital tools and trusted information, which further exacerbates the imbalance between participation and visibility. This echoes the digital exclusion faced by marginalized groups in the process of information acquisition (Du, Xie, and Waycott 2020). In this sense, information disorder is reshaping the exclusion experience in non-institutional spaces (such as cafes, libraries, parks and digital forums) and deepening the marginal situation (Littman 2021).

Therefore, more studies (such as Kunst and Sam 2013; Cuellar, 2016) use a relational perspective to try to explain the coping mechanism when information disorder causes marginalization. These studies examine interrelated dimensions such as socio-economic status, race, policy and spatial organization, which together shape the accessible social resources of marginalized groups. With the advancement of the social embedding process, marginalization is reflected through public accessibility, visibility and epistemic agency (Hunter 2016; Littman 2021; Du et al. 2020).

Under the double pressure of information inequality and institutional alienation, marginalized groups can transcend isolated individual experiences and transform them into emerging forms of public existence through the mechanism of "communicative resilience" (Buzzanell 2010; Bronstein 2020; Tenove 2020; Damasceno 2021).

The communication resilience framework proposed by Buzzanell (2010) points out that the construction of resilience is a dynamic and situational process, which relies on communication practice to promote rhetorical regeneration and revival while coping with adversity. This theory situates resilience in daily communication behavior and believes that individuals achieve adaptation, reintegration and the construction of the "new normal" through continuous communication process (Hall 2016; Scharp, Kubler, and Wang 2020).

While communicative resilience refers to the process and relationship of adaptive meaning-making, counter-narratives can be understood as symbolic strategies that emerge from specific sociocultural contexts that resist dominant discourses.

Sasaki and Baba (2024) emphasize the subjectivity of marginal groups and describe how they develop counter-narrative strategies from their own cultural reserves. Based on the resilience process, these narrative actions enable individuals to negotiate meaning, restore coherence and resist symbolic erasure. As an important symbolic mechanism to cope with cultural marginalization, narrative allows individuals self-reshaping by

returning to their own community, showing their own cultural position, and openly subvert the legitimacy of mainstream culture in the form of counter-narrative (Allen 2018; Sasaki and Baba 2024).

Through participations and the cultivation of shared meaning, marginalized groups conceive sympathies, thus resisting invisibility and re-establish their existence belonging in the public sphere (Littman 2021). Counter-narrative practices from marginalized communities respond to global issues such as extremism, authoritarianism, displacement, and isolationism (Sasaki and Baba 2024). These revolutionary movements are increasingly dependent on the supportive digital platforms, and social media plays a key role in the strategies of both protesters and authorities (Kidd and McIntosh 2016).

Therefore, counter-narrative reflects adaptability to hostile or indifferent informational ecologies (Bronstein 2020; Tenove 2020). When supported by multimodal literacies that combine critical reflection, functional navigation, and ethical expression, such narrative engagements reconfigure the relationship between marginality and inclusion. So that, emerging actors can intervene in the formation of shared public dialogue (Damasceno 2021).

## *2.2 Constructing Protest in Progress: The Discursive Evolution in Virtual Platforms*

Virtual spaces create new opportunities for marginalized communities to craft counter-narratives utilizing multimodal representations (Curwood and Gibbons 2009). Currently, counter-narratives exist as discourses that unfold across traditional and social media, adapting to varying contexts while maintaining coherent resonances (Mauro 2020). While physical spaces might provide avenues for political reclamation, counter-narratives online resist hegemonic representations and reconstitute symbolic agency through personal memories (Mowafy 2022). Consequently, counter-narratives act in opposition to conventional authorities of cultural interpretation, subverting systems of control and meaning-making (Curwood and Gibbons 2009; Frith and Richter 2021).

Disadvantaged adolescents manipulate visual symbolism, textual rhythm, and embodied expression. These counter narrative practices criticize Eurocentric, heteronormative, and racially exclusionary ideologies embedded in dominant media and institutional spaces (Curwood and Gibbons 2009; Damasceno 2021). On university campuses, participants recast erased histories onto physical locations by annotating buildings, streets, and memorials using locative platforms, transforming public space into contested terrain for cultural memory and political visibility (Frith and Richter 2021).

Despite of the prominent role of the young generations in educational and civic counternarrative production, these practices transcend from youth-centered realms to varied social marginalized groups. As an illustration, racialized athletes have turned to personal media platforms to contest hegemonic framings of national belonging. By leveraging image, language, and cultural reference, Mario Balotelli and Mesut Özil construct alternative narratives that disrupt dominant media discourse (Mauro 2020). Contending with orientalist representations, Muslim women resort to non-traditional media channels namely TED and YouTube to reframe stereotypical identities through culturally embedded testimonies that restore symbolic agency in hostile media ecologies (Mowafy 2022). Alienated parents deconstruct internalized narratives of self-blame, reframing their identities through shared narratives of loss and resilience (Scharp et al. 2020).

As such, virtual spaces articulate marginalized identities, disrupt structural exclusions and reclaim visibility. What has been neglected in this growing field of scholarship is virtual spaces offered by video games as counter-narrative arenas (McKenna 2019). This neglect is surprising, particularly since video games have long been implicated in the hegemonic cultural production of dominant narratives, such as those tied to militarism and counterterrorism, yet are still largely under-examined in terms of media discourse analysis (Schulzke, 2013).

Through in-game tools, such as protest symbols, simulated parades, and gameplay collaboration toward unity goals, players express themselves participatively, diversely, and with intensity that eschews dominant cultural practices. These playful strategies are within communicative resilience that coveted ultimately as they produce alternative meaning-making. They engage in discursive interactions and unsettle hegemonies through participatory cultural production (Buzzanell 2010; Curwood and Gibbons 2009; Frith and Richter 2021).

These oppositional expressions are structurally emergent in tensions with dominant narratives, particularly as players define their identity positions in counter-narrative productions (Bamberg, 2004). McDowell-Smith, Speckhard, and Yayla (2017) argue that emotional contents are more persuasive when composed via immersive digital forms that disrupt radicalized contents. And, given the interactive affordances and multimodal forms, video games create a distinctive space for counter-narratives. These counter-narratives are performative and participatory in nature, structured through procedural rhetoric, spatial simulation, and immersive interaction (Söderberg 2013).

In this article, we elaborate on this discursive potential that draws on these symbolic practices, spatial performances as entry points for reconfiguring dominant cultural logics, and for performing situated multimodal civic expressions.

### 3. Methodology

Our research is developed upon two global cases: the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* and the Civil Rights Movement in *Fortnite*.

In our study, the methodology framework covers qualitative methods of content thematic coding and multi-tiered video annotation, while the quantitative approach is topic modeling as an unsupervised machine learning technique (Lund 2011).

#### 3.1 Data Extraction

Textual data was collected performing targeted keyword searches across Reddit and Google News platforms. For the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, keywords are “BLM Animal Crossing” and “Black Live(s) Matter(s) ACNH”. Searching results of Reddit posts and media news published between June 2020 and January 2021 are documented and sorted in Microsoft Excel, and the period corresponds to the highest community activity.

For the Civil Rights Movement event in *Fortnite*, searches included terms “Fortnite civil rights”, “March Through Time Fortnite”, and “MLK Fortnite”. Similarly, we focused on materials published in Reddit and Google News between August 2021 and December 2021, during which this protest received the crowning attention.

In parallel, player-generated video content was manually selected from YouTube based on both the identified keywords and visibility, thematic relevance, and symbolic density. These videos that document protest-themed gameplay or commemorative interventions, were incorporated into the audiovisual corpus for subsequent multimodal annotation. Detailed information of data for analysis is presented below by Table 1.

**Table 1 – Outline of all data sets, including events, data sources, data types, and the count of analyzed units (with the total number of extracted units).**

<i>Events</i>	<i>Data Sources</i>	<i>Data Type</i>	<i>Count of Analyzed Comments (Extracted Units)</i>
The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in <i>Animal Crossing: New Horizons</i>	Reddit	Comments	1221 (1716)
	Google News	Articles	208 (263)
	YouTube	Videos	39
The Civil Rights Movement in <i>Fortnite</i>	Reddit	Comments	1369 (1695)
	Google News	Articles	98 (137)
	YouTube	Videos	26

**Source:** Collected by researchers from publica data sources indicated in Table 1.

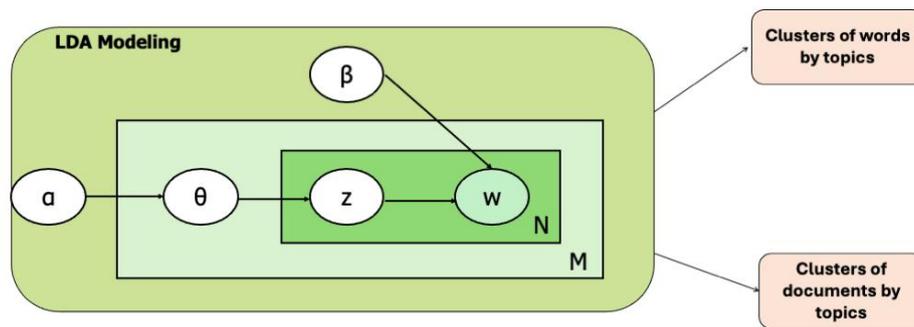
### 3.2 Procedures for Heterogeneous Data

#### *Textual Counter-Narratives: Extracting Discursive Themes through LDA and NVivo*

To begin with, quantitative topic modeling technique laid the interpretive process by offering thematic structures (Lund 2011; Castleberry and Nolen 2018). Among the various topic modeling options, increasing researchers identify Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) (Figure 1) as effective machine learning topic modeling technique to extract latent topic structures from the discourse analyzed and serve preliminary mapping of thematic clusters. LDA topic modeling is realized in Python environment. Data preprocessing, parameter selection ( $k, \alpha, \beta$ ), validation and reliability checks, and result interpretation are thoroughly processed, ensuring both transparency and analytical flexibility (Zou and Gómez 2024).

In parallel, NVivo established a systematic and complementary framework for methodological rigor. Through this tool, we have coded, retrieved and reflected data in an orderly manner. Based on the structured analysis process proposed by Bandara (2006), researchers first built a preliminary node framework, and then continuously revised and improved it through multiple rounds of evaluation of the data set. Its integrated functions - including word frequency query, node hierarchical tracking and recursive coding - jointly contributed to the transparent analysis and audit trajectory. In the process, interpretive reasoning and evolving thematic definitions were consistently documented and revisited.

**Figure 1 – The graphical modeling of Latent Dirichlet Allocation.**

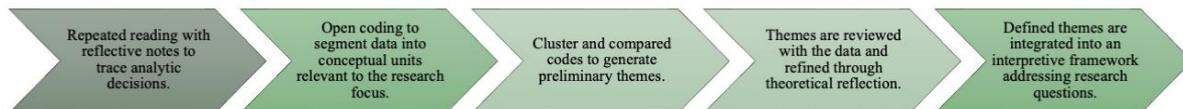


**Description:** LDA assumes that in a corpus  $M$  composed of multiple latent topics  $T$ , each word  $w$  is probabilistically assigned to a topic  $z$ . Topics are defined by word distributions, and the presence of certain words signals the likelihood of a document belonging to a specific topic. The Dirichlet prior  $\alpha$  governs the topic distribution  $\theta$  across documents, while  $\beta$  defines the word distribution within each topic. This nested structure results in two types of output: clusters of words grouped by topics and clusters of documents organized by their topic mixtures.

**Source:** Blei, Ng and Jordan, 2003; Jelodar et al., 2018.

Subsequently, internal validity was checked. This included regular revisits to early-stage coding, memo writing to track interpretive decisions, and ongoing refinement of node definitions to maintain consistency.

**Figure 2 –NVivo Methodological Flow.**



**Source:** Bandara, 2006.

Nevertheless, studies have shown that computational models based on probability distribution possibly fail to retain the referential relationship, which may lead to different degrees of semantic shift (Choi, Palomaki, Lamm, Kwiatkowski, Das, and Collins 2021). This concern is consistent with the meaning compression and context separation discussed by Canché (2023). In response, this study did not adopt LDA as an independent semantic basis.

In practice, LDA thematic codes were all grounded to the original contextualization following the above NVivo nodings. For contextual and semantic verification, each thematic cue was traced back to its reference-level text segment. This re-examination with human oversight thus improves accuracy of topic semantic tracking. By this means, the meaning shift induced by de-contextualization is minimized, and the interpretation is conducted in an integrated discourse context (Feng and Behar-Horenstein 2019).

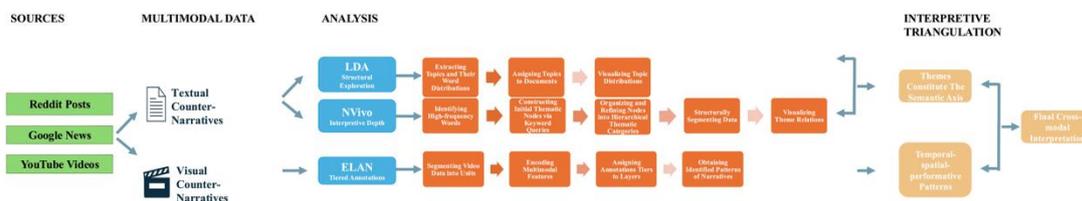
With this context reconstruction mechanism, the probability output of LDA can correspond to the original appearance of the corpus, thus minimizing the risk of misreading that the automatic model may occur in the absence of context (Canché, 2023).

### *Annotating Visual Counter-Narratives: Symbolic Acts with ELAN*

In the current research, we adopted ELAN software that receives increasing quotations for its capabilities in simultaneously annotating and cross-examining emergent language and embodied significances by annotations of verbal, visual, and acoustic symbols (Coelho and Da Silva 2016).

In sum, our analytical design adopts an interpretive triangulation strategy, through which textual and visual data were examined through distinct yet complementary methodological streams. Extensively, topics extracted via LDA modeling and thematic codes constructed in NVivo formed a semantic axis representing the discursive structure of counter-narratives in textual platforms Reddit and News media. Concurrently, observing visual, spatial, and performative cues, we conducted ELAN annotation to capture multimodal enactments in gameplay videos. Subsequently, they were integrated into interpretive triangulation. In this recursive interpretive process, patterns identified in gameplay were recontextualized through established textual themes, allowing for semantic coherence without collapsing modality-specific insights (Figure 3).

**Figure 3 –Procedures of the methodological triangulation.**



**Source:** Zou and Gómez, 2026.

## 4. Results and Implications

### 4.1 Model and Methodological Optimizations for the Mixed Approach

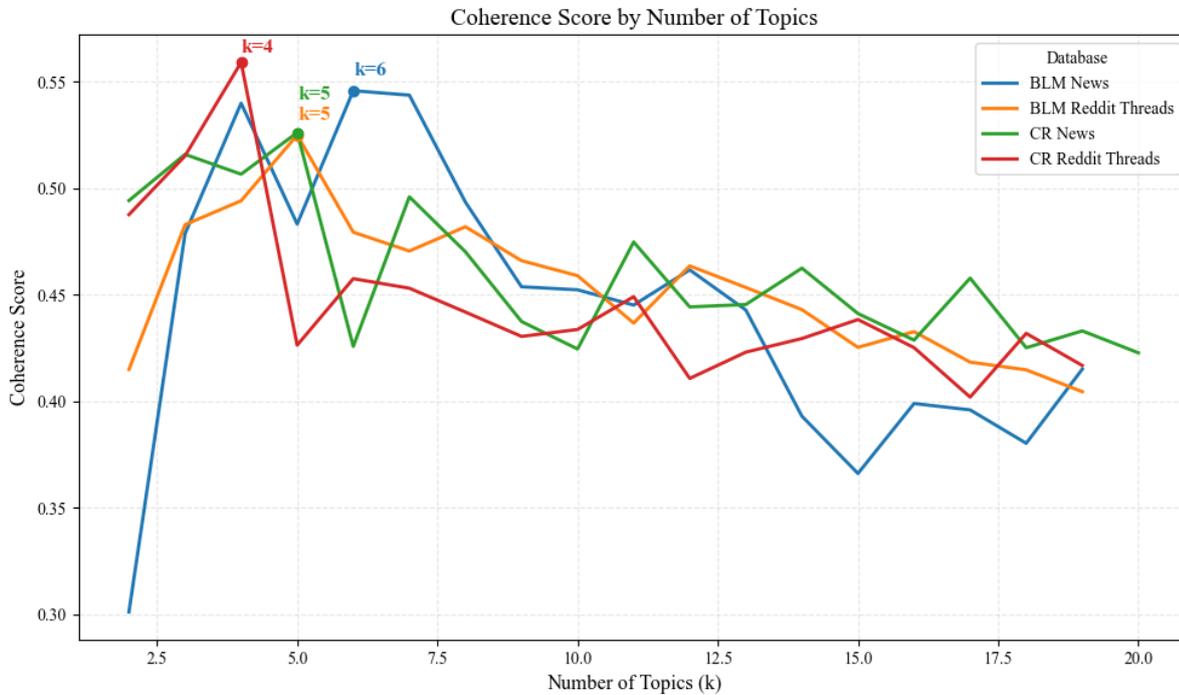
In LDA analysis, the interpretability and semantic consistency of topic modeling rely on rigorous parameter optimization (Jelodar, Wang, Yuan, Feng, Jiang, Li, and Zhao 2018). In this study, the number of topics ( $k$ ) was selected based on the coherence score rather than perplexity, since we focus on whether the resulting topics could be meaningfully interpreted in terms of semantic coherence and interpretability (Mimno, Wallach, Talley, Leenders, and McCallum 2011). After evaluating the corpus through both human judgments and LDA automated topic modeling, Mimno et al. (2011) concluded that coherence should be prioritized during model optimization as it captures the intuitive semantic relatedness of topic words on the basis of co-occurrence statistics.

Still further, the Dirichlet priors  $\alpha$  (document–topic density) and  $\beta$  (topic–word density) were optimized using Gensim’s built-in automatic inference mechanism. Setting  $\alpha$ =‘auto’ and  $\beta$ =‘auto’ adapts to corpus-specific distributions. As well, the number of passes was set to 20 to ensure model convergence and thematic stability, and each document batch was processed over 200 iterations during model training.

Above parameter optimization procedure was done for four data sets from Reddit and Google News of The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* and The Civil Rights Movement in

Fortnite (Table 1). The results of optimal topic numbers grounded in coherence score are detailed in Figure 4, each  $k$  value was indicated correspondingly.

Figure 4 – LDA Modeling Coherence Score by Number of Topics.

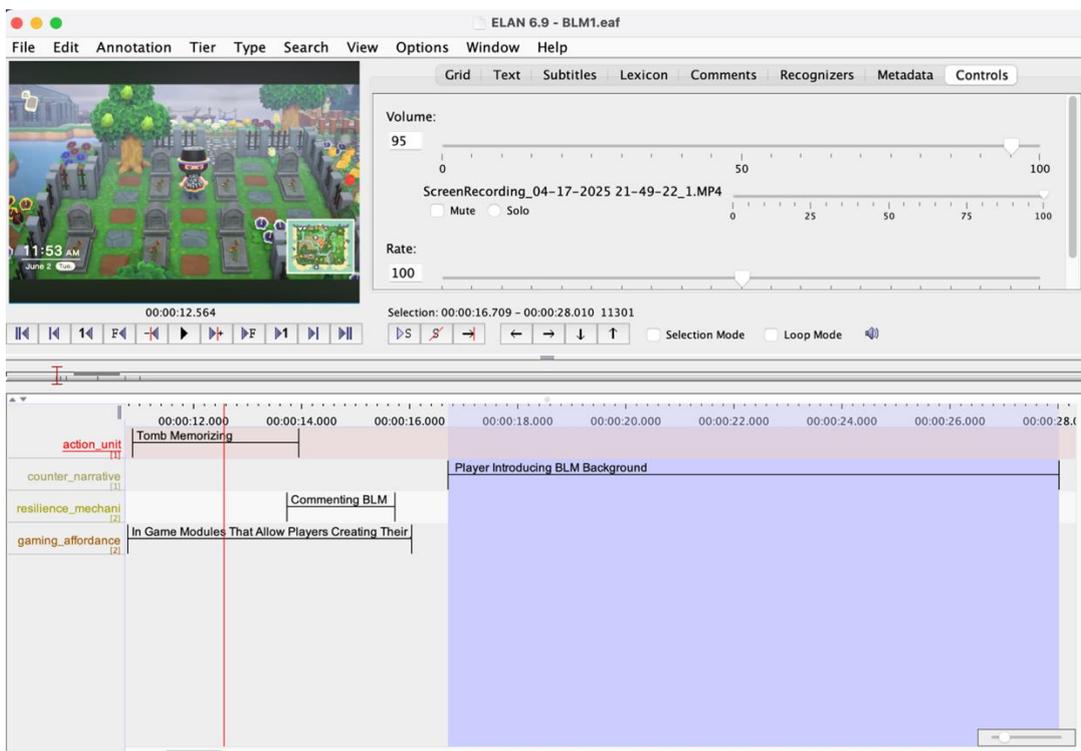


Source: Zou and Gómez, 2026.

Drawing upon predefined coding process in NVivo, we extracted the top 100 most frequent terms with a minimum word length no less than 4. During this process, stopwords were excluded meanwhile applying stemming to normalize inflected word forms (e.g., “playing”, “played” and “plays” were all reduced to “play”). In order to refine nodes, lexical synonyms (e.g., “island”, “town” and “village”) were merged to broader node categories according to the gaming context, avoiding thematic fragmentation. Furthermore, nodes with more than three references were reserved for higher analytical coherence.

While optimizing ELAN annotation, following previous studies by Coelho and Da Silva (2016) and Estrada, Hielscher, Koolen, Olesen, Noordegraaf, and Blom (2017), we categorized the visual and linguistic segments into preliminary tiers to enable simultaneous annotations across temporally aligned streams. Pre-defined analytical tiers were `action_unit`, `counter_narrative`, `resilience_mechanism` and `gaming_affordance`. These initial tiers were grounded in the theoretical intersections among information disorder, communicative resilience, and digital counter-narratives. At the same time, we continuously observed emergent symbolic articulations and discursive shifts during the annotation process, facilitating potential tier expansions in results interpretations.

Figure 5 – ELAN Analysis Interface for Preliminary Tiers.



#### 4.2 Contrasting Counter-narrative Patterns: Identifying Thematic Coding and Multimodal Patterns across Platforms

In line with corpuses around black life matters and civil rights both in forms of news and Reddit threads, the LDA topic modeling and NVivo tree map revealed an emerging discursive space where counter-narrative agency was reclaimed by varied patterns (see Figure 6, Figure 7). In the meantime, ELAN uncovers how players utilize spatial organization, symbolic embodiment, synchronized movement, and multimodal discourse to construct situated counter-narratives (see Figure 8).

**Figure 6 – Topics generated using Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA)**

Corpus	Topic	Description	Top Keywords*
BLM News	1	Land ownership and public access rights	land (0.026), public (0.017), area (0.011), blm (0.010), private (0.009)
	2	Player experience and game environment	player (0.016), horizon (0.010), villager (0.009), island (0.008), museum (0.007)
	3	BLM activism and rural land issues	blm (0.030), say (0.016), horse (0.016), land (0.011), wild (0.010)
	4	Pride protests and digital communities	protest (0.021), player (0.017), pride (0.017), world (0.011), virtual (0.009)
	5	Player experience, online harassment, and survey findings	percent (0.021), online (0.021), player (0.018), experience (0.016), harassment (0.015)
	6	Justice movements and systemic racism response	justice (0.030), march (0.025), black (0.023), community (0.020), solidarity (0.018)
BLM Reddit Threads	1	Representation and racial identification	black (0.021), blm (0.016), race (0.016), time (0.012), racist (0.009)
	2	Player reactions and controversial expressions	black (0.041), problem (0.013), fair (0.010), share (0.009), police (0.009)
	3	Gaming representations and engagement	hairstyle (0.023), black (0.020), hair (0.016), game (0.013), bun (0.009)
	4	Civil rights symbolism and players' community expressions	black (0.018), appearance (0.009), racist (0.008), twitter (0.008), race (0.007)
CR News	1	Player identification and interface aesthetics	skin (0.013), mode (0.012), movement (0.010), studio (0.009), emote (0.009)
	2	Design affordances and symbolic visuals	complete (0.016), image (0.013), feature (0.013), community (0.012), mode (0.010)
	3	Reflections on Black representation and content creation in game platforms	black (0.025), thing (0.011), say (0.011), know (0.010), give (0.009)
	4	Symbolic representation and civil rights narratives in the virtual experience	speech (0.020), tribute (0.018), museum (0.017), equality (0.016), virtual (0.015)
	5	Spreading public discourse and controversy surrounding MLK event via social media	twitter (0.026), emote (0.020), august (0.011), show (0.010), tweet (0.009)
CR Reddit Rhreads	1	Reactions to character identifications and appeal claiming	like (0.024), people (0.022), game (0.019), rick (0.018), thing (0.016)
	2	Gaming representations and engagement	fortnite (0.023), people (0.021), game (0.020), like (0.017), mlk (0.017)
	3	Commentary on representation, platform choices, and intent	fortnite (0.021), people (0.021), like (0.019), mlk (0.018), game (0.017)
	4	Tension between game mechanics and civil rights themes	game (0.026), like (0.018), people (0.017), right (0.016), mlk (0.015)

\* Footnotes: The Top Keywords column lists the top ten weighted terms that characterize each topic. Weights in parentheses indicate the relative importance of each term within the topic.

Figure 7 – NVivo Treemap of Thematic Distributions Across Data Sources



**Description:** The top-left quadrant visualizes themes from Black Lives Matter news articles (BLM News), the top-right from BLM-related Reddit threads, the bottom-left from Civil Rights Movement news articles (CR News), and the bottom-right from related Reddit discussions. Color-coded blocks represent major semantic domains, while the size of each block reflects the relative frequency and coding density of associated keywords.

Figure 8 – ELAN Tier Framework

Tier Name	Function and Definition	Examples from Analysis
action_unit	Marks temporal sequences of observable behavior such as marching, clapping, or silent pauses.	Timed sequences of clapping, lined formation, extended standing still.
counter_narrative	Tags any symbolic, visual, or spatial acts that challenge dominant narratives and express protest.	Signs at island entrances, symbolic floral paths, constructed monuments.
resilience_mechanism	Captures mechanisms of communicative resilience like repetition, silence, or ritualized expression.	Uniform dress, group silence, repeated emotional emotes.
gaming_affordance	Identifies how players leverage in-game tools (emotes, clothing, signs) for political or symbolic purposes.	Use of signage tools, avatar customization, in-game emote triggers.
ritualized_expression	Denotes group-synchronized ritual behaviors such as joint pausing, coordinated movement, or symbolic unity.	Players lighting candles together, coordinated parades, collective stillness.

### 4.3 Institutional Narrations of Protest Movements

#### *Institutional Narratives of BLM: Informational Neutralization, Mediatized Participation, Depoliticized Inclusivity, and the Marginalization of Systemic Racism*

In Black Lives Matter news, themes extracted via LDA demonstrate a consistent narrative displacement pattern: the urgency and seriousness of protest movement is reframed through archetypal institutional discourses. This observation corroborates Loseke’s (2007) claim that institutional narratives classify people into distinct identity types to rationalize social arrangements and normalize the uneven distribution of policy incentives and penalties. In this manner, when narratives are channeled through media or policymaking structures at the meso level, they reconceptualize identity by noticing individuals as symbolically and morally categorized sorts that uphold institutional legitimacy.

Among all topics, Topic 1 (“Land ownership and public access rights”) and Topic 3 (“BLM activism and rural land issues”) explicitly bear the institutional pattern. They furnish the movement with the semiotic field of rural simulation with terms like “land”, “hunter”, “wildlife”, and “plan”. The topic modeling bellows what Wardle (2018) terms informational reshaping, whereby politically disturbing content is located in ideologically neutral spheres. By doing this, the disruptive protest is represented by the discourses of environmental management and land use, excluding racial justice from its structural profundity.

Topic 2 (“Player experience in game environment”) and Topic 5 (“Online harassment”) imply the affective and operational facets of gaming. Protest discourses are rephrased into user satisfaction and platform efficiency narratives. Terms like “survey”, “percent”, “experience”, and “multiplayer” commodify collective action into consumer patterns. This lexical behavior is analogous to Bronstein’s (2020) soft contestation type, enabling symbolic resistance under administrative logics.

Topic 4 (“Pride protests and digital communities”) portrays the solidarity among marginalized groups. However, terms like “support”, “virtual”, “world”, and “community” indicate depoliticized inclusivity. These narratives address affective belonging and soften the rendering intersectional resistances into comforting and unthreatening communitarianism.

However, only Topic 6 (“Justice movements and systemic racism response”) denominates the systemic nature of racial injustice. Still, its marginal position in the topic model reflects a broader institutional tendency. And it is characterized with resistance to the symbolic recognition of structural criticism. Such asymmetries become the central tension of the communicative resilience (Buzzanell 2010). While the expressive practices of marginalized communities continue in mediated spaces, the narrative frames through which they are rendered visible often exhibit profound contradictions to the urgency they seek to convey.

To complement the topic-model tendencies above, the following NVivo codings examine how institutional discourse consolidates these themes through semantic and narrative recontextualization.

#### *BLM News: Environmental Relocation, Cooperative Framing, and Symbolic Commemoration*

The NVivo codings reveal a similarly lexical dispersion. Within the Gameplay Structure coding frame, the key dominant words “game”, “player”, “location”, “village”, and “site” relocate the protests to the aesthetic logic of Animal Crossing. As the protest is moderated in game-specific terminology, this semantic terrain evokes the rural simulation paradigm under LDA Topic 1 and Topic 3.

The Sociopolitical Participation that include Community Anchoring, Public Commentary, Social Movement and Civil Rights Memory likewise exhibits institutional recontextualizations. The underlying semantic codes “support”, “allow”, “help”, “develop” portray community anchoring of socio-political issues by communal regulations, emphasizing cooperative framing rather than structural critique. The presence of “public,” “share,” “state,” and “change” presents a behavioral visibility and affective alignment, aligning protest with collective optimism and symbolic citizenship. In the BLM Expressions subtheme, terms including “activism”, “issue”, “politic” and “police” are subdued by co-occurring with “include”, “update”, “community” and “able”, reflecting a narrative of symbolic inclusiveness over confrontational resistance.

Within the Narrative Structures domain, symbolic representations dominate over political exigency. Under Symbolic Commemoration, “protest”, “world”, “social”, “life”, “pride” and “white” construct protest memory as a shared cultural indication that diverges from an urgent political discourse. Similarly, the Spatial Dimension illustrates the spatialization of dissent with keywords “Nintendo”, “area”, “create”, “percent”, “access”, “virtual” and “plan”, reframing resistance as symbolized experiences. Within institutional discourse, resistant actions are induced to neutralized activist movements for the illusive inclusion (Whelan and Lyons 2005).

Following the BLM findings, the CR corpus reveals parallel but distinct institutional framings.

### *CR News: Design Configuration, Identity Symbolization, and Algorithmic Visibility*

Extending the analytical progression, we turn to examine Civil Rights news. Topic 1 (“Player identification and interface aesthetics”) and Topic 2 (“Design affordances”) privilege the affordances of game design over political deliberation. Internal gaming elements including “skin”, “mode”, “studio”, “decoration” and “celebrate” belong to the customization that symbolize visual layering of protest. Nevertheless, the legacy of civil rights is rearticulated via aesthetic configuration and user interaction.

Topic 3 (“Reflections on Black representation”) reveals the discursive agency of protestors. However, the semantic focus still reinforces the platform-mediated frame of production, during which racial identity is commodified within boundaries of expression. The emphasis on “good”, “say” and “know” further strengthens the construction of opinion-centered identity political discourse. This strategy is in line with the “institutional narrative” pointed out by Loseke (2007) to classify and standardize identity through acceptable symbolic communication forms.

In contrast, theme 4 (“Civil rights narrative”) presents a stage shift, which clearly reflects the political demands of marginalized groups. Keywords such as “speech”, “tribute”, “equality”, “injustice” and “museum” evoke a sense of history and show an attempt to reintroduce civic meaning in the gamified space. At the same time, it is worth noting that the high-frequency appearance of words such as “experience”, “virtual” and “education” suggests the trend of instrumentalization of the discourse of justice - its function is more about communication and education than to stimulate action.

Finally, theme 5 (“Dissemination of discourse through social media”) shows how public controversy is absorbed by the communication mechanism driven by contemporary algorithms. Keywords such as Twitter, “emote”, “show”, “tweet” and “property” describe the process of collective memory gaining wider visibility, and this process also re-transforms controversy into quantifiable social indicators.

To refine above discoveries in LDA analysis, following NVivo codings illustrates how emotional resonance and symbolic remembrance are embedded within platform-regulated communicative structures.

### *Institutional CR Narratives: Emotional Resonance, Symbolic and Experiential Remembrance, Performative Platformization, and Algorithmic Mediation*

The structural analysis of Civil Rights news through NVivo coding reveals a discourse strategy with emotional resonance, symbolic memory and platform-regulated communication as the core. By inviting players to revisit Martin Luther King Jr. The classic speech "I Have a Dream", the commemorative activities in *Fortnite* reproduce the civil rights movement digitally. The discourse practice in this digital commemoration builds a bridge between historical significance and virtual emotional interaction.

In the Gameplay Structure theme, codes "fortnite", "experience", "epic", "studio" and "icon" embed the civil rights narrative within the design logic of entertainment platforms. These elements tailor civic issues to the communicative norms of both aesthetic and performative framings.

The Affective Engagement theme emphasizes figures like "martin luther king", "speech", "dream", "twitter" and "video". According to Whelan and Lyons (2005), such participatory gestures may direct to the "vener of inclusiveness" within consultative models of governance, concealing both the absence of systemic influence and the redistributed impact.

Within the Sociopolitical Memory theme, coexisting nodes of "march", "lincoln", "education", "exhibit", "quest", "mall", "share" and "virtual" construct a cognitive flow where history is transformed into interactive interface. In this sense, this memory is fundamental experience-based contribution with symbolic presence without durable authority. On this basis, engagements of marginalized communities are presented as recognitions of protests curated by institutional narratives, instead of dynamic decisions negotiated within such communities.

The Narrative Structures theme that including terms of "visit", "memory", "life", "creative" and "world" translates historical struggles into legacy substances to be experienced, remembered, and emotionally affirmed. This framework of replacing substantive political participation with symbolic visibility actually strengthens the passive recognition of citizen participation. As a result, the function of civil rights memory has also changed to commemorative consumption.

Finally, the theme of "Digital Mediation" ("news", "channels", "content", "point") reveals the algorithmic characteristics of citizen discourse. In this context, the spread of protests is more to expand the volume than to cause subversion. Whelan and Lyons (2005) criticized the structural misalignment of such governance frameworks, and their design is more inclined to interact with abstract "community" concepts, thus strengthening performances rather than participatory interactions.

#### *4.4 Civic Counter-Narratives in the Gameworld*

##### *BLM Gaming Thematic Counter-Narratives: Identity Assertion, Platform Conflict, Embodied Representation, and Community Deliberation*

In the Reddit discussion of *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, the player's discourse around the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement reveals a cultural criticism and performance. In particular, this study focuses on how marginalized groups consult, embody and finally reshape the counter-narrative of citizens in the digital public domain.

The LDA model identifies five main themes. Theme 1 (Representation and racial identification) highlights words such as "black", "blm", "race" and "movement", claiming the existence of black identity in the game context. The aggregation of "time", "want", "believe" and "understand" introspects the urgency of racial protests within marginalized communities. These interactions constitute the basic level of counter-narrative expression, in which marginalized identities try to gain their recognition and visibility.

Theme 2 (Player Reactions and Controversial Expressions) is dominated by words such as "problem", "fair", "police", "statement" and "americans", revealing the player's development of the BLM movement in the game. The high-frequency appearance of "black" shows that this debate is deeply intertwined in racial reproduction and social structure, which is consistent with the broader research results on discourse conflicts in the digital civil space (Sasaki and Baba 2024). In addition, the frequent appearance of the word "share" shows that players are negotiating political tension through positive exchange of views.

Featuring with "hairstyle", "hair", "afro", "bun" and "wear", Topic 3 (Gaming Representations and Engagement) represents embodied dimensions of racial identity expression. In this context, counter-narratives are visual elements of avatars that reflect black identity and life style. Notably, "twitter" and "post" indicate that these digital traces of avatar creation are publicly circulated transcending the game's borders. Thus, in-game protests become political affirmation and cultural recognition. These practices support that visual and symbolic practices enable resistance to dominant cultural narratives (Curwood and Gibbons 2009).

Topic 4 (Civil Rights Symbolism and Players' Community Expressions) contains symbolic keywords ("black", "appearance", "race", "character") and discourse markers of communal response ("post", "way", "game", "racist", "comment", "twitter"). They collectively indicate how civil rights solicitations are performed through individual actions in the meantime of co-constructing through community deliberations.

To complement the thematic patterns identified through LDA, the NVivo coding framework uncovers the structural communicative practices in the digital world.

### *BLM Gaming Dimensional Counter-Narratives: Participation, Cultural Politics, Civic Dialogue, and Sociopolitical Critique*

Analyzing the same corpus with the tree map of NVivo-coded structure, four interlinked domains including Gameplay Participation, Cultural Politics, Civic Dialogue, and Sociopolitical Critique collectively outline the semiotic and discursive terrain of counter-narrative formation.

The Game Participation under Gameplay and Interactive Media Context theme includes highly frequent terms such as "like", "just", "matter", "thing", "make", "think" and "want". These terms are characterized with reflexive and ambivalent negotiations. Besides, "race", "cop", "real", "game" and "problem" indicate that gaming space is discreetly transforming into sociopolitical integration.

In the Cultural Politics theme, nodings including "black", "hair", "afro", "wear", "skin" and "movement" confirm that avatar customization constitutes a critical component of counter-narrative expression. Through asserting visibility of marginalized appearance and representation, counter-narratives are challenging dominant aesthetic hierarchies. In line with this framing, Racial Identity that stresses "white" and "racist" present confrontational linguistic patterns that denotes the resistant actions derived from social contexts and situated interactions (De Kort and Ijsselsteijn 2008).

The Civic Dialogue encapsulates Opinion Terms and General Sentiment, being composed of "say", "comment", "call", "understand", "tell", "place", "fuck", "pretty" and "shit". This theme reveals that within a participatory communicative environment, players are conditioned to correlate in-game expressions with their practices within social justice movements. In this regard, co-presence builds sympathetic engagement for further robust protests.

The Sociopolitical Critique theme exhibits the ideological alignment of discussions. “Police”, “argue”, “try” and “politic” suggest that players critically engage with power structures. In particular, the coding Sociocultural Belonging containing “community”, “support” and “issue” demonstrates the importance of virtual interactions in constructing shared grievances and aspirations.

### *Spatial BLM Gaming Protests: Ritualization, Affective Engagement, and Symbolic Gaming Affordances*

Following tracing how meanings are negotiated verbally, ELAN facilitates the multi-modal analysis of YouTube videos depicting BLM protests in *Animal Crossing: New Horizons* upon the tiered annotation structure.

In videos, the action\_unit tier is frequently associated with the player’s bodily engagement with the situated virtual space. For instance, a player walked slowly through an island path with custom tiles covered with “Black Lives Matter” signs and roses colored black. Then, the resilience\_mechanism reinforces the non-verbal affirmations of grief and solidarity by uniformly dressing in black and clapping using gaming emojis. Throughout the process, players used spatially fixed expressions that transcends the conventional neutrality gaming symbols to express their historical and political urgency. During the counter-narrative practices, we could encounter with textual markers namely “Justice for George Floyd” and “No Police Brutality”.

By designing in-game elements such as dresses with protest slogans, flowers colored to themes of mourning and hope, the expressive potential of gaming\_affordance is fully leveraged. None of these actions are originated to the game’s narrative or reward structure. They were designed within rules to extend the symbols of protest into gaming visual and mechanical basis.

One representative ritualized\_expression occurred when players voluntarily formed a memorial ceremony. They gathered around a customized memorial wall to bow in silence for 30 seconds, after which virtual candles were presented. The sequence draws on affective density and collective timing to generate meaning. Next, the analysis now shifts to Civil Rights-related discussions.

### *CR Gaming Thematic Counter-Narratives: Identification, Engagement, Platform Intent, and Mechanics-Theme Tensions*

Reddit discussions surrounding the Civil Rights (CR) event in *Fortnite* reveal a discursive environment marked by negotiation, tension, and reflexive engagement. The LDA model extracted four major themes. They represent different dimensions about how users process representation, gameplay, and political content within a commercial gaming context.

Topic 1 (Character identifications) is featured with “like”, “people”, “rick”, “mlk” and “learn”, suggesting the active identification and emotional resonance. The co-presence of “MLK”, “rick” and “thing” illustrates a rhetorical convergence of moral value depending on the level of coherence between game avatar and platform persuasion. In essence, these reactions reflect a discursive struggle to decide who can define the symbolic weight. This negotiation aligns with Sasaki and Baba’s (2024) emphasis that representational legitimacy are socially constructed.

Topic 2 (Gaming representations and engagement) emphasizes terms as “fortnite”, “event”, “emote” and “kid”. The inclusion of “kid” and “good” indicates that this event involves with intergenerational expectations and evaluative frames. Further, the presence of “right” and “like” suggests the active assessments of players in evaluating the ethical alignments of medium content. Contextualizing that the civil rights movement is

endorsed by Epic Games, this topic resonates with the debate in whether the event successfully conveyed educational value or diluted its impact through game-native features.

In Topic 3 (Platform choices and intent), users engage critically with the event's design logic and production motivations. The prominence of "think", "don't" and "intent" depicts meta-level discourse querying the motivation of this event as well as the representation constructed. The convergence of "mlk", "event" and "platform" suggests a growing awareness about if platformized commemoration becomes a commercial-driven product.

Topic 4 (Tension between game mechanics and civil rights themes) is comprised of keywords including "game", "emote", "event", "know", "evoke", "right" and "think". These discussion posts criticize the mechanical mismatch in practice and reveal the conflict between the availability of the game mechanism and the solemnity of the civic theme. This contradiction is exactly the embodiment of the limitations of gamified memory pointed out by Schulzke (2013) and Söderberg (2013). Specifically, when procedural rhetoric collides with civic content, the participatory characteristics of the game promote meanwhile weaken the stability of political communication.

Moving beyond thematic clusters, the following section integrates CR event structural codings across layered communicative domains.

### *CR Gaming Dimensional Counter-Narratives: Gameplay Participation, Temporal Anchoring, Civic Discourse, Interpersonal Anchors, and Affective Engagement*

After NVivo coding analysis of Reddit discourse related to civil rights activities in *Fortnite*, five main themes were identified: Gameplay Structure, Narrative Structures, Sociopolitical Participation, Sociocultural Dimensions and Affective Response. Each theme reveals how players negotiate civil rights events at different levels.

In the theme of Game Participation, the analysis results of the context of game and interactive media show that keywords such as "fortnite", "event", "epic", "museum" and "march" indicate that comemory originates from the platform. The high-frequency appearance of "celebrate", "announce" and "collect" shows that the historical significance has been absorbed into the game mechanism; while "inform", "experience" and "use" describe the functional participations of players.

In the topic of Temporal Anchoring, high-frequency words such as "game", "time", "right" and "dream" and "say", "exhibit", "skin" and "royal" echoing each other shows that players try to interpret the history of citizens into a digital time experience. Correspondingly, the appearance of "play", "know", "video" and "come" shows that civil rights memory is a convertible experiential flow. At the same time, words such as "washington", "lincoln" and "state" in the Contextual Timing node show that players tend to participate in a broader historical context.

The topics of Civic Discourse include "martin luther king", "civil", "history", "emotion", "education", "important", "nation" and "movement". These words show that some players regard the civil rights movement in *Fortnite* as a cognitive opportunity to reflect on racial justice and democratic values. However, with the emergence of words such as "media", "virtual" and "community", these words are still limited to facial expressions, comment strings and propaganda frameworks.

In the theme of Interpersonal Anchors, words with emotional resonance such as "speech", "memory", "include", "allow", "icon" and "online" appear. Players perceive their sense of belonging and the legacy of civil rights movement upon these nodes. Terms embracing "create", "complete" and "life" support that civil rights memory is integrated into the gaming logic of *Fortnite*. Under this circumstance, counter-narrative is co-constructed by players negotiating inclusion, recognition, and affective resonance.

Although smaller in density, the Emotional and Experiential Engagement node provides insight into how players process the event emotionally rather than rationally. Terms such as “dream”, “emotion” and “creative” suggest that participation is shaped through personal affect. This finding echoes Bronstein’s (2020) assertion that emotionally resonant expression may function as soft contestation that allows critiques in symbolic and experiential forms. Complementing the textual and structural analyses, the next section examines resistance presences through dynamic process.

### *Spatial CR Gaming Protests: Narrative Disruption, Controlled Atmospheres, Symbolic Interaction, and Regulated Presence*

Building upon the tiered annotation structure, ELAN facilitates the multimodal analysis of YouTube videos capturing the Civil Rights event in *Fortnite*. In the observed videos, the action\_unit tier is frequently represented by the avatar walking across a red carpet corridor bordered by virtual posters of Martin Luther King. While the majority of players adhered to this game designed pacing, others interrupted it with abrupt emotes or diversions, revealing friction between player agency and narrative choreography.

The resilience\_mechanism is embedded in environmental control. Unlike typical *Fortnite* play, the event disables weapons and restricts combat. In several videos, players quietly stood in front of the Lincoln Memorial replica while soft music and pre-recorded speeches played. Although these actions were not user-initiated, players’ stillness reflected a muted form of communicative resilience in a highly gamified space.

During the counter\_narrative moments, players in many recorded sessions deploy emotes such as dancing, clapping, or humorous gestures while voiceovers reference justice, resistance, and the legacy of MLK. This produces moments of rhetorical contradiction in which political solemnity is visually undermined by ludic expression.

Within the gaming\_affordance tier, customized MLK-themed loading screens and badge rewards for completing tasks like “visiting all four locations” are representative. These affordances enable symbolic interactions that reframe protest memory as a mission structure.

In ritualized\_expression, some videos show avatars involuntarily frozen in place during the central speech segment. While the pause is scripted, players stood shoulder to shoulder, facing the screen as the speech played in full. This moment simulated a virtual gathering visually reminiscent of ceremonial silence. However, the inability to modulate one’s response limited the spontaneous appearance of shared ritual.

## **5. Conclusion**

Based on the protest practices centered on racial justice and civil rights across institutional and participatory digital environments, this study explored how counter-narratives are mediated, reframed, and recontested in contemporary society.

Drawing from LDA topic modeling, NVivo content coding, and ELAN-based multimodal annotation, the research employed a triangulated methodological design that resonates methodological commonalities with computational grounded theory of Nelson (2017). This approach integrates inductive pattern discovery with interpretive contextualization across text and video, enabling a layered analysis of both linguistic content and embodied symbolic practice. On this foundation, we compared how institutional discourse structures protest into symbolic categories of civic inclusion, while marginalized communities reclaim protest through affective performance and spatialized expression.

In the first place, we suggest that institutional narrations regulate civic protest majorly through informational neutralization, depoliticized inclusivity, environmental relocation, and symbolic commemoration. This strategy aligns with Loseke's (2007) theory of narrative domestication and Wardle's (2018) informational reshaping, establishing the superficial inclusivity while neutralizing civic disruption. For instance, the Civil Rights commemorative content in *Fortnite* exemplifies how gamified mediation reframes and compresses grassroots struggles into affective commemoration instead of structural critique. In essence, activist subjects are misdirected by the deliberate governance, pursuing resituated objectives under the institutional supervision and direction (Whelan and Lyons 2005).

Subsequently, turning to the study focus on the virtual world. Counter-narratives constructed through player discourses and gameplay expressions convey a bottom-up paradigm from fundamental social force. Despite of the limitations of design mechanism, players still spontaneously constitute emotional solidarity ceremonies. These resistive actions allow us to re-examine the theory of communication resilience proposed by Buzzanell (2010). In this context, this study expands the theoretical framework and reveals that communication resilience can be strategically constructed in the digital environment through multimodal and symbolic intervention. We regard resilience as a positive and culturally embedded practical process. Specifically, marginalized groups re-establish narrative dynamism through platform-specific affordances. By this means, they resist symbolic erasure and re-consult their socio-political visibility in institutional marginalization.

In addition, this study reveals the structural asymmetry between protest as a designed experience and a meaningful participatory construction. This contrast arises a broader debate about mental governance in digital culture: whether collective memory is ritualized and recaptured interactively. By emphasizing this distinction, this study regards the game world as a field of intellectual struggle, not just a narrative container. In this sense, marginalized communities enhance symbolic authority through consultative visibility.

From an overall perspective, the digital counter-narrative in the game world can neither be simplified into symbolic aesthetics nor regarded as a surface visual display. They constitute a tensional space, in which institutionalized visibility and expressive dynamism collide. The emerging counter-narrative is constantly swinging between the empirical framework and the practical framework. Although the institutional framework provides formal citizenship, it rarely grants the right to real participatory creation. In contrast, the player community reinterprets the protest as a physical, spatial and interactive action through ritualized, emotional and multimodal intervention.

Lastly, an underlying epistemological tension emerges from comparing institutional framing and digital civic counter-narratives. It lies in the conflict between institutional narratives that integrate protest into social recognition and the participatory resistance involving game design, platform intention, and symbolic communications. Through this dynamic, counter-narratives challenge the mainstream media framework, break the logic of defining games as "non-politicized" and "de-historical" space. Specifically, even in decentralized digital space, meaning is still co-construction under political, social, and cultural basis.

Practically, the findings uncover how symbolic affordances mediate the emergent civic interactive resilience. This evolution accordingly requires more transparent and participatory forms of governance in politically charged environments. Moreover, as game-based environments increasingly function as critical sphere for fostering civic and media literacy, public institutions and activist organizations may benefit from exploiting collaborative frameworks that preserve political agency. Future research can extend to other emerging forms of digital protest, especially augmented reality context, mobile games, and metaverse environment. Following the academic trajectory, we can deepen understandings of how marginalized groups recode civic discourse against information exclusion in the virtual realm.

## 6. Limitation

Regarding the limitations of this study, there are still several aspects worth improving in subsequent research. First of all, the selected data corpus covers Reddit discussions, Google News articles and YouTube videos. The data is limited to English language and the visibility of the platform, which may affect the broader representativeness of ethnographic. Meanwhile, though the two cases selected in this study are representative in terms of visibility, participation and multimodal communicative expressions, broader cases beyond civic issues can be introduced. The inclusion will further understandings to the counter-narrative mechanism in various forms of interaction.

Additionally, although this study minimizes interpretive deviation through the triangulation mechanism of LDA, NVivo, and ELAN, the identification of emotions could serve as a complementary component in further studies. A quantitative emotional analysis could capture nuanced emotional tendencies, implicit attitudes, and pragmatic clues in the text.

Finally, this study mainly analyzes the practice at the player level from language, visual and performance clues. However, the research did not incorporate the perspective of the game development team, the platform or the relevant policy. Considering that game actions are intercorrelated with design logic, narrative structure and content governance mechanism, future research can expand on data sources. Introductions to in-depth interviews with relevant developers or companies, as well as combinative perspectives from political regulations could enrich comprehensions to the interaction between game design expectations, player practices and platform structure.

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