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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Level Up! Priming Hobbyist Political Identity Using Survey Experiment

Pavel Bačovský

Department of Politics, Bates College, Lewiston, ME, USA
Emails: pbacovsky@bates.edu; pavel.bacovsky@gmail.com

Abstract

Recent research suggests that a strong identity attachment to leisure activity affects the hobbyists' political preferences and behavior. This paper further evaluates the claim that hobbyists – in this case, gamers – react differently to political stimuli that directly involve their hobby of choice. Using original survey experiment data, this paper shows that gamers become more interested in foreign trade policy when presented in the context of video games. This finding indicates that even seemingly apolitical identities matter in framing political behavior. Aspects of hobbyist identities seep into political attitudes, even if preferences in the strictest meaning of the word may take longer to form.

Keywords: political engagement; leisure activities; video games; survey experiment

Video games are integral to both global and U.S. popular culture (*see* Entertainment Software Association, 2022). In 2008, Barrack Obama used video games to advertise his presidential campaign to potential young voters (Otenyo, 2010), a clear example of micro-targeting (Sides and Karch, 2008). The 2020 U.S. General Election campaign involved the digital gaming environment, as the Biden-Harris team utilized Nintendo's *Animal Crossing* to advertise (Gallucci, 2020), and the congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) used the streaming platform Twitch.tv and the social deduction game *Among Us* for voter outreach (Carras, 2020). Even the finance world was not spared, as Reddit users – many of them avid gamers – organized to mass-purchase stocks of video game retailer GameStop (Grant, 2021).

This article has earned badges for transparent research practices: Open data and Open materials. For details see the Data Availability Statement.

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These events generate an intriguing question: Can participation in nonpolitical leisure activities – such as regularly playing video games – influence hobbyists' political behavior? This study expands on previous research (Bacovsky, 2021a; Licari, 2020) that suggests so. It investigates whether interest in politics among gamers[1] grows after encountering a story that frames a contentious political debate in the context of their hobby versus a story that does not include any reference to gaming.

To explore this puzzle, I designed an online survey experiment in which research participants were randomly assigned one of two modified newspaper vignettes: one that discusses the U.S. tariffs on China without explicitly mentioning any industry affected by the trade restrictions (the control manipulation), and another that mentions gaming explicitly as being negatively affected (the treatment manipulation). If a strong hobbyist identity affects political attitudes, the gamers whose identity was just primed with the treatment manipulation should display a higher degree of political engagement.

Analysis of an online sample of adult Americans supports the hypothesis. Gamers appear more interested in the issue of foreign trade if the topic is framed as affecting their hobby of interest. In that sense, gamers in my sample resemble a "primordial" issue public that has experienced some preference consolidation and whose hobby identity can be linked to political topics through specific framing and primes. We cannot take identity for granted. Even seemingly irrelevant identities might affect political attitudes and mobilize political interest. As previous research illustrates, identity shapes political engagement and preferences (Ekstrom and Federico, 2019; Fish et al., 2021). This is especially relevant for systems that allow for the rise and success of clearly defined single-issue parties (e.g., the Swedish Pirate Party discussed by Bacovsky, 2021a).

Progressing from play to political preferences

Most people lack a cohesive political belief system (Converse, 2006; Sears and Funk, 1991) but adopt distinct policy positions when personally relevant issues are involved. Membership in "extracurricular" activities – e.g., faith-based groups, labor unions, ethnic minority organizations, and neighborhood associations – is one of the central explanations for political engagement and attitude formation (Coleman, 1988; Djupe and Grant, 2001; Jacobs and Tillie, 2010; Kerrissey and Schofer, 2013; Lin, 2001; Pattie and Johnston, 2000). Talò et al. (2014) show that a strong sense of community, derived from membership in these "extracurricular" groups, promotes members' political engagement. Similarly, Fagan et al. (2019) draw explicit connections between parties and civil society groups, showing that political parties frequently utilize close ties to pull interest group members into political activities.

The traditional forms of sociopolitical engagement dominate the academic discourse due to their apparent connection to politics. Considerably less attention has been directed toward studying the role of leisure-based identities in shaping political behavior, despite Putnam's (2000) note about the role of bowling leagues in fostering social capital. Hence, much of this work is still exploratory and unsettled

[1]Individuals with a strong affinity for video games and the video game culture.

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regarding the effects' exact nature and direction (*see* Ibsen et al., 2019 and Van Ingen and Van Eijck, 2009 for competing arguments). This is unfortunate. After all, people internalize the preferences and behaviors of their peer groups and the consumed media, and leisure activities and hobbies are essential sources of informal community building (Riesman et al., 2001; Riley et al., 2013). Furthermore, leisure is a universal phenomenon, ubiquitous to all cultures and societies (Chick, 1998). My research aims to contribute to this debate by exploring how engagement in the hobby community potentially shapes political behaviors, even in subtle ways.

Hobby and fan culture attachments influence this process through "fan citizenship"[2] (Hinck, 2019), especially among young people (Jenkins et al., 2016; Riley et al., 2013).[3] Fan citizenship manifests across a wide range of hobby identities, and although it is primarily performative (Hinck, 2019, p. 163), evidence of fans' deep and active engagement exists. Dessewffy and Mezei (2020) illustrate that Harry Potter fans are remarkably interested in politics and politically active, even in illiberal states such as Hungary, and participation in interest-driven online activities appears positively related to online and offline political participation (Kahne and Bowyer, 2018). Hence, we must apply our knowledge about political socialization to these new environments.

Research on the interaction between political behavior and sports – especially soccer – fan identity is the most advanced. Alrababa'h et al. (2021) show that soccer fans modified their perceptions of religious minority groups based on favorable experiences with their favorite players. Rosenzweig and Zhou (2021) connect soccer fandom, nationalism, and attitudes toward refugees. Bertoli (2017) highlights the link between nationalism fanned by a soccer World Cup and interstate conflict. Soccer hooligans – a group whose identity is strongly tied to their chosen club – influenced events leading up to and during the War in Yugoslavia (Mills, 2018), and the Arab Spring protests in Egypt (Zirin, 2013).

I focus on the video game hobby identity for several reasons. One, gaming is one of the most ubiquitous pastimes, and the size of the video game market has long since eclipsed both the film and music industries (Entertainment Software Association, 2022; Morris, 2016; Nath, 2016). Two, video games have increasingly been used as platforms for political speech and campaigning (Bogost, 2006; Otenyo, 2010; Steiner, 2020). Three, a burgeoning literature exists on the relationship between playing video games and political engagement. Some scholars suggest gamers become more prosocial due to their pastime (Molyneux et al., 2015; Steinkuehler and Williams, 2006), while others are less optimistic (Bacovsky, 2021b). Meanwhile, Zhao and Wu (2021) demonstrate that Chinese gamers are politically active and efficacious, and Bacovsky (2021a) suggests that Swedish gamers show signs of being a "primordial" issue public with political preferences

[2]Fan citizenship is understood as a public engagement that emerges from a commitment to a fan-object" (Hinck, 2019, p. 6). Video games, sports teams, musicians, sitcoms, or fantasy books and movies present just a handful of fan-object examples. Past research shows how involvement of celebrity opinion leaders can shift public awareness to specific policy issues (Atkinson & DeWitt, 2019).

[3]While much of the present discussion is focused primarily on the younger demographics of fans, there is no reason for the fan citizenship trends to be restricted solely to the teens and young adults. Indeed, Hinck (2019, Chapter 2) and scholars focusing on sport and politics demonstrate that people of all ages can participate in fandom-related civic activities.

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different from non-gamers.[4] Finally, a better understanding of the political attitudes of the gaming community has normative implications due to the increasing incidence of politically extreme actors recruiting followers in the context of the gaming spaces (Al-Rawi, 2018; Koehler et al., 2022; Lakomy, 2019; Massanari, 2017).

If gamers really are an emerging issue public with distinct patterns of political behaviors and preferences (Bacovsky, 2021a; Licari, 2020), news and events that merge their hobby and politics should inevitably pique their level of political engagement. This expectation rests on political psychology research. Affect-free hot cognition in the context of political information processing is exceedingly rare and even apolitical primes may significantly impact political evaluations (Taber and Young, 2013, pp. 538–540). Once a prime activates a specific concept in a person's mind, this concept will influence all downstream information processing and subsequent decision-making (Förster and Liberman, 2007). Research on football fans' shows that mixing sports fandom and political primes can shift attitudes toward marriage equality (Harrison and Michelson, 2016). In the gaming realm, Shackford and Ekins (2014) report results of an opinion survey in which gamers displayed a high degree of suspiciousness of anyone who interferes with how they live their lives and enjoy their hobbies. Therefore, I propose and test the following hypothesis:

> Gamers exposed to a story about U.S. foreign trade policy in the context of a gaming hobby will be more interested in the political topic than gamers exposed to a story without the gaming language. Non-gamers will be least interested.

Data and methodology

The data for this study were collected via the Lucid Marketplace and Qualtrics platforms. A total of 1,175 research participants were recruited via the Lucid Marketplace platform in early February 2020. Built-in Lucid quota tools were utilized to produce a sample that was as close as possible to a representative sample of the U.S. public.[5] The sample size of roughly 1,000 respondents was chosen since this is the gold standard in survey-based research that aims to produce results that

[4]Libertarian political values find purchase among younger people (Gamber-Thompson, 2016), and gamers embrace "cyber-libertarianism" because they value autonomy and individualism provided by the new technologies (Dahlberg, 2010). They believe that the Internet is an egalitarian realm and a place of social techno-revolution (Dahlberg, 2010; Evans, 2011). Libertarian values also play an important role in the emergence of the "pirate culture" – a culture of freely sharing copyrighted intellectual property online – which many gamers readily embrace (Bacovsky, 2021a; Burkart, 2014; Evans, 2011; Jutel, 2017; Lobato, 2011). Gamers were previously involved in heated debates around fair use (Ore, 2017; Sterling, 2016), predatory microtransactions in video games (Anderton, 2018; Sterling, 2018, 2019), and toxic masculinity in gaming (Glennon, 2021). Gaming also features a plethora of opinion leaders who engage in various form of "political entrepreneurship." A few examples of these are Jim Stephanie Sterling, Laura Kate Dale, Natalie Wynn, Hasan "HasanAbi" Piker, and Seán "Jacksepticeye" McLoughlin.

[5]A complete outline of the survey instrument and a discussion of the sample's demographic statistics measures are included in Online Appendices 1 and 2.

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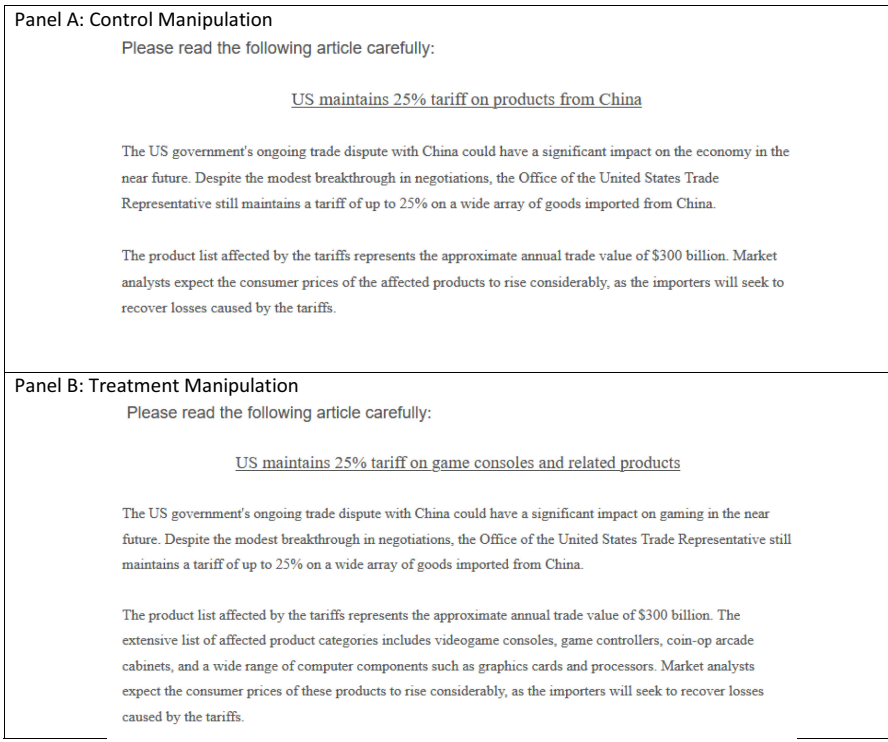


Figure 1. Experimental manipulations.

are generalizable to the wider population.[6] The sample resembles the U.S. population regarding age, gender, ethnicity, education attainment, employment status, and annual income. This matches the observation of Coppock and McClellan (2019) about the properties of the Lucid Marketplace sample. My sample departs from the national averages in partisanship and ideological leaning measures, where it leans more liberal and Democratic.

Research participants were randomly assigned one of two vignettes (*see* Figure 1). Both vignettes were based on a moderately altered version of a *GamesInsdustry.biz* article (Sinclair 2019). The article, focusing on video game goods impacted by the tariffs placed on China, was chosen to represent a piece of media that the users (especially gamers) might randomly encounter while browsing the Internet. The specific goods in question represent the "most likely" research scenario under which I will most likely see the hypothesized relationship (Levy, 2008). In future iterations of this project, more "neutral" goods will be used to explore the limits of the

[6]Sample size formulae for estimating proportions ($n = \pi(1-\pi)\left(\frac{z}{M}\right)^2$) and means ($n = \sigma^2\left(\frac{z}{M}\right)^2$) suggest that my analysis would work even with a smaller sample (between 300 and 400 research participants). However, those calculations expect true random sample, which online convenience samples usually are not (Mullinix et al., 2015). Thus, I opted for the more conservative count of 1,000 respondents.

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theorized relationship. The respondents were then given three manipulation check questions to ensure that research participants received the treatment.[7]

To avoid the danger of the results being skewed by bots that populate online survey environments (Dennis et al., 2019) or by inattentive survey-takers (Abbey and Meloy, 2017), I include two additional "safeguard" questions that help facilitate response quality (*see* Online Appendix 1, pages A1.4 and A1.7). Then, I calculate a response quality index, which is a mean index derived from the correctness of the answer to the manipulation check and safeguard check questions. The value of this index in the whole sample was 0.760 (s.d. = 0.009, N = 1,124). I then filtered out respondents with response index of less than 0.600, which resulted in the working N of 898 that was used as the sample for analysis reported in this manuscript.[8]

Independent variables

I utilize a four-question battery to measure respondents' gamer identity based on a novel approach stemming from social identity research (Bačovský, 2024). Table 1 presents the survey questions, and Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of respondents' answers. Next, I utilize the three variables coded on the 4-point scale to construct a mean index of gaming identity (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.940$). The mean index value for the control group is 2.085 (s.d. = 0.896, N = 443), and the treatment group records 2.049 (s.d. = 0.949, N = 422). As an additional measure of gamer identity, I include time spent playing video games as well.

Dependent variables[9]

The relevant dependent variable in this study is the interest in U.S. foreign trade with China, where most of the video game hardware is manufactured. Therefore, the topic can become salient for gamers. A series of three prompts measures this concept. The first prompt was presented before the experimental manipulation and instructed respondents to do the following: "On a scale from 1 to 10, please indicate your general interest in the U.S. foreign trade policy." After reading the randomly assigned vignette, the respondents were asked the remaining two prompts. The question stem was: "Think about the article you just read. On a 10-point scale, where 1 = Strongly Disinterested and 10 = Strongly Interested, please indicate ...." Then the respondents were queried about "[their] general interest in the U.S. foreign trade policy" and "[their] interest in the specific U.S. foreign trade policies discussed in the article." Figure 3 visualizes the distribution of the respondents answers.

[7]Figure A2.8 in the online appendix demonstrates that most research participants passed the manipulation check stage, and Tables A2.3 and A2.4 show that balance tests were passed.

[8]There appears to be no correlation between any of the key dependent and independent variables, or any of the control variables. Additional analysis conducted on the whole sample does not produce results that differed in terms of substantive or statistical significance from those reported in the manuscript or the online appendices. While the responses to the manipulation check questions were among the components in the response quality index, the bot check question accounts for the highest amount of variance (Eigenvalue of 2.110 versus the average Eigenvalue of 0.057 for the manipulation check questions).

[9]The survey instrument includes additional outcomes in addition to the foreign policy interest. These are not reported in this manuscript because of space constraints and the need for additional analysis due to the inconsistency of the results. I encourage all readers to keep an eye out for future publications on this research agenda.

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Table 1. Gamer identity measures

Question	Answer options
How important is being *gamer* to you?	1 = "Not important at all" 2 = "Not very important" 3 = "Very important" 4 = "Extremely important"
How well does the term *gamer* describe you?	1 = "Not at all" 2 = "Not very well" 3 = "Very well" 4 = "Extremely well"
When talking about gamers, how often do you use "we" instead of "they?"	1 = "Never" 2 = "Rarely" 3 = "Some of the time" 4 = "Most of the time" 5 = "All of the time"
To what extent do you think of yourself as being a *gamer*?	1 = "Not at all" 2 = "Very little" 3 = "Somewhat" 4 = "A great deal"

Results[10]

The analyses presented herein support the hypothesis that gamers who received the treatment manipulation would be more interested in U.S. foreign trade policy than gamers who received the control manipulation and non-gamers.[11]

General interest in the U.S. foreign trade policy

The average pre-manipulation general interest score for gamers is 7.043 (s.d. = 2.314, N = 300), while the average post-manipulation general interest score for gamers is 7.168 (s.d. = 2.176, N = 304). The average pre-manipulation score for non-gamers equals 5.958 (s.d. = 2.545, N = 571), and the post-manipulation score is 5.952 (s.d. = 2.500, N = 582). Focusing only on treated non-gamers, we see that the average post-treatment general interest equals 6.202 (s.d. = 2.380, N = 297), a figure that drops to 5.691 (s.d. = 2.598, N = 285) among treated gamers. Control group gamers recorded an average post-treatment general interest of 7.089 (s.d. = 2.343, N = 146), while the average general interest among the treatment group gamers increased to 7.241 (s.d. = 2.014, N = 158). Table 2, in conjunction with Figure 4, demonstrates that treated gamers became more interested in U.S. foreign policy in general than gamers who were sorted into the control group. Among non-gamers, the direction of the effect was the opposite.

[10]Additional robustness checks and statistical tests are included in Online Appendix 3.

[11]For the purpose of the calculation of means and additional sub-sample analysis presented in the manuscript and online appendices, individuals with the gamer identity index greater that 2.5 are considered as gamers.

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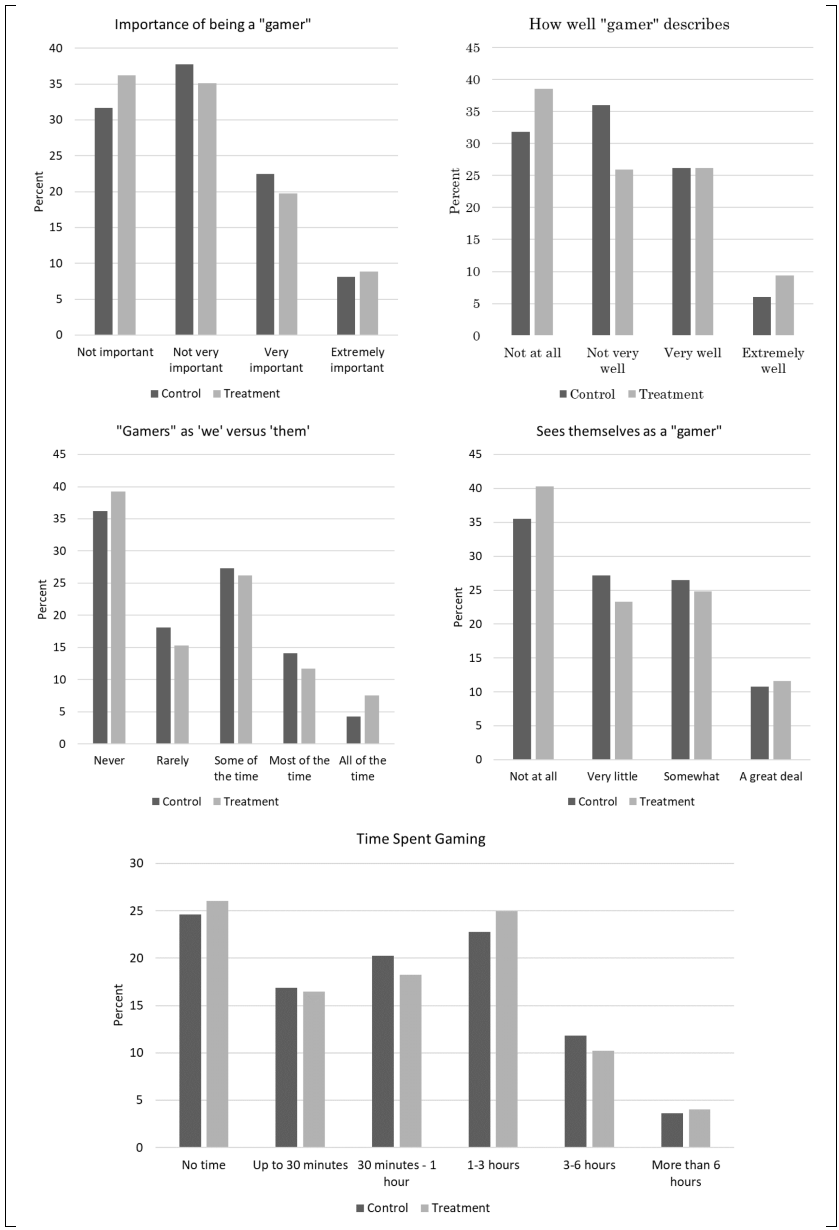


Figure 2. Gamer identity measures.

Interest in the U.S. foreign trade policy discussed in the article

Non-gamers record a mean specific interest score of 5.529 (s.d. = 2.609, N = 573). The average interest score in the particular policy for gamers equals 7.207 (s.d. = 2.137, N = 299). When looking only at treated gamers, this figure increases

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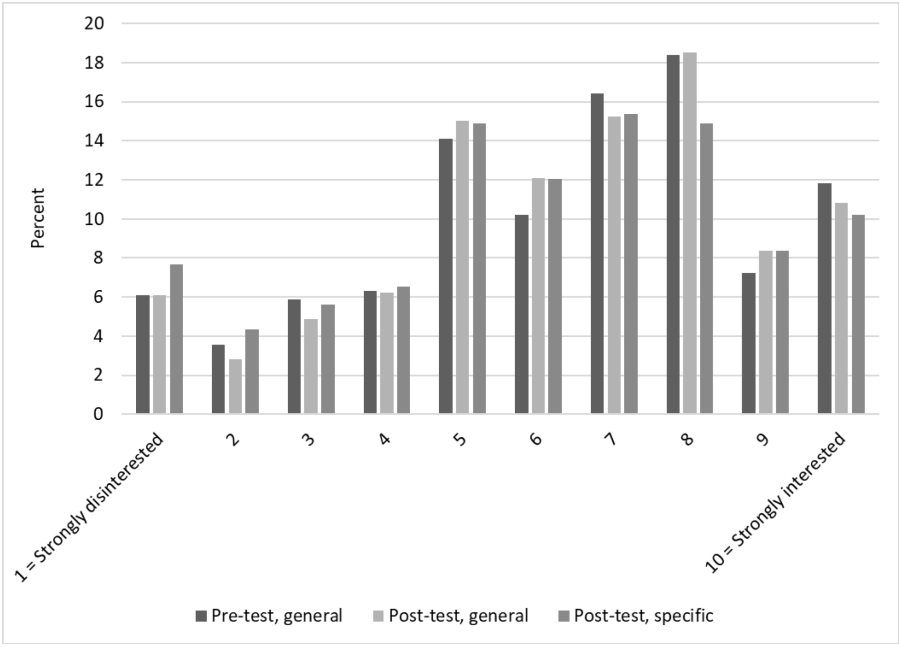


Figure 3. Interest in the U.S. Foreign Trade Policy, breakdown.

to 7.529 (s.d. = 1.900, N = 157). Meanwhile, control group gamers only recorded an interest value of 6.852 (s.d. = 2.328, N = 142). Treated non-gamers record a mean specific interest score of 5.691 (s.d. = 2.598, N = 285), and control group non-gamers record 6.202 (s.d. = 2.381, N = 297). In brief, gamers are more interested in the article than non-gamers, treated gamers are more interested than control group gamers, and treated non-gamers are less interested in the topic than control group non-gamers.

Regardless of the gamer identity measure, the effects lean in the expected direction (*see* Table 3 and Figure 5). Treated gamers were likelier to say they were interested in the policy. Conversely, control group gamers were less interested in the policy. Using the "importance" operationalization of the independent variable translates to the predicted increase in interest of 1.345 (13.45 percentage points). Moreover, the effect of receiving the treatment version of the vignette among those who do not see themselves as a gamer is equally strong. Seeing an article that discusses the impact of the trade war on the video game industry decreases the respondent's likelihood of saying that they are interested in the U.S. foreign trade policy. As a result of receiving the treatment, non-gamers' estimated interest score dropped by 1.477 (or 14.77 percentage points).

The gaming-foreign trade frame triggers a greater degree of interest in the topic among gamers but not among non-gamers. Conditional treatment effect plots presented as Figures A3.7 and A3.8 in the online appendix further substantiate these results. As noted, gamers have previously been targeted by political advertising on social media and in the context of the games themselves (Carras, 2020; Gallucci,

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Table 2. Receiving the treatment vignette increases respondent's general interest in the U.S. Foreign Trade Policy among gamers but not among non-gamers. Models demonstrate robustness to the operationalization of gamer identity

	Importance of being a gamer			How well gamer describes			Gamers = Us		
Predictor	Coeff.	S.E.	P>|t|	Coeff.	S.E.	P>|t|	Coeff.	SE	P>|t|
Key independent variable	−0.022	0.076	0.770	0.060	0.078	0.441	0.012	0.058	0.839
Received treatment	−0.733	0.237	0.002	−0.573	0.235	0.015	−0.384	0.209	0.066
Key IV * treatment	0.315	0.105	0.003	0.232	0.103	0.024	0.123	0.079	0.117
Pre-test measure of DV	0.776	0.020	0.000	0.770	0.020	0.000	0.780	0.020	0.000
Constant	1.571	0.201	0.000	1.439	0.202	0.000	1.476	0.183	0.000
Number of Obs.	857			857			860		
R^2		0.658			0.663			0.656	
Adjusted R^2		0.657			0.661			0.654	
	Gamer Self–Image			Gamer Identity Index			Time spent gaming, daily		
Predictor	Coeff.	S.E.	P>|t|	Coeff.	SE	P>|t|	Coeff.	S.E.	P>|t|
Key independent variable	−0.016	0.070	0.815	0.004	0.079	0.959	0.009	0.048	0.844
Received treatment	−0.502	0.226	0.026	−0.634	0.244	0.010	−0.541	0.218	0.013
Key IV * treatment	0.192	0.096	0.045	0.262	0.107	0.015	0.156	0.067	0.019
Pre-test measure of DV	0.781	0.020	0.000	0.775	0.020	0.000	0.782	0.020	0.000
Constant	1.530	0.195	0.000	1.524	0.205	0.000	1.460	0.195	0.000
Number of Obs.	855			849			851		
R^2		0.655			0.658			0.660	
Adjusted R^2		0.653			0.657			0.659	

Note: Ordinary Least Squares regression estimates.

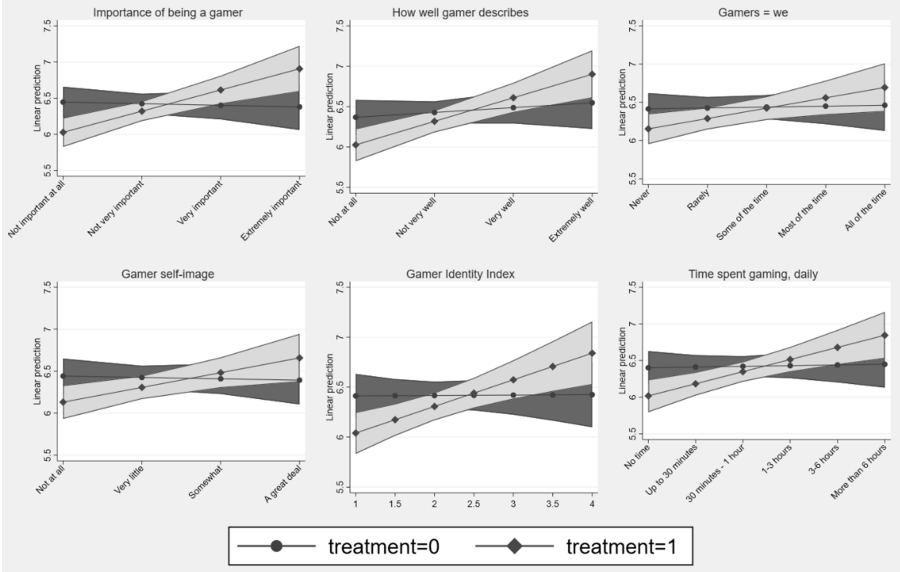


Figure 4. Predicted general interest in U.S. foreign trade policy based on experimental treatment status and moderated by gamer identity measures. Gamers who received the treatment are more interested than control group gamers and non-gamers.
Note: Visualization based on the linear Ordinary Least Squares model results from Table 2.
Shaded regions represent 95% confidence intervals.

2020; Otenyo, 2010; Steiner, 2020). Political entrepreneurs who engage in targeted advertising campaigns to reach gamers, sports fans, and other hobbyists may have the right idea. It appears that committed hobbyists can isolate policy issues from the vignettes and connect them to gaming, which sparks their interest in those topics. However, more work must be done to uncover whether interest translates into tangible forms of political engagement, such as voting.

One somewhat unexpected finding from this set of results concerns the negative effect of treatment manipulation on non-gamers. Although I expected that non-gamers would be the least interested, I did not hypothesize that their interest would decrease. I suspect that non-gamers who received the treatment manipulation interpreted the impact of the U.S.-China trade war as affecting only the gaming industry, lowering the issue's personal relevance. I am reluctant to go further in this line of reasoning at the risk of overindulging in post-hoc theorizing. However, these results present the exciting possibility that politicians who cannot correctly isolate the targets for their leisure-laden advertising might harm their appeal instead of boosting it. I invite other scholars to explore this intuition further.

Discussion and conclusion

In this experiment, I set out to investigate whether gamers become more politically engaged when presented with political issues framed in the context of their hobby versus a more general frame. The results indicate that gamers become more

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Table 3. Receiving the treatment vignette increases respondent's interest in the specific U.S. Foreign Trade Policy discussed in the vignette among gamers but not among non-gamers. Models demonstrate robustness to the operationalization of gamer identity

	Importance of being a gamer			How well gamer describes			Gamers = Us		
Predictor	Coeff.	S.E.	P>|t|	Coeff.	S.E.	P>|t|	Coeff.	SE	P>|t|
Key independent variable	0.423	0.123	0.001	0.493	0.126	0.000	0.411	0.095	0.000
Received treatment	−2.418	0.386	0.000	−2.331	0.384	0.000	−1.716	0.342	0.000
Key IV * treatment	0.941	0.171	0.000	0.865	0.168	0.000	0.501	0.129	0.000
Constant	5.487	0.280	0.000	5.354	0.283	0.000	5.419	0.248	0.000
Number of Obs.	869			868			872		
R^2		0.152			0.167			0.137	
Adjusted R^2		0.149			0.164			0.134	
	Gamer Self-Image			Gamer Identity Index			Time spent gaming, daily		
Predictor	Coeff.	S.E.	P>|t|	Coeff.	SE	P>|t|	Coeff.	S.E.	P>|t|
Key independent variable	0.360	0.114	0.002	0.466	0.128	0.000	0.156	0.080	0.520
Received treatment	−2.252	0.371	0.000	−2.566	0.398	0.000	−2.380	0.365	0.000
Key IV * treatment	0.825	0.158	0.000	0.990	0.176	0.000	0.643	0.112	0.000
Constant	5.611	0.268	0.000	5.394	0.290	0.000	5.906	0.261	0.000
Number of Obs.	866			859			862		
R^2		0.138			0.167			0.121	
Adjusted R^2		0.135			0.164			0.117	

Note: Ordinary Least Squares regression estimates.

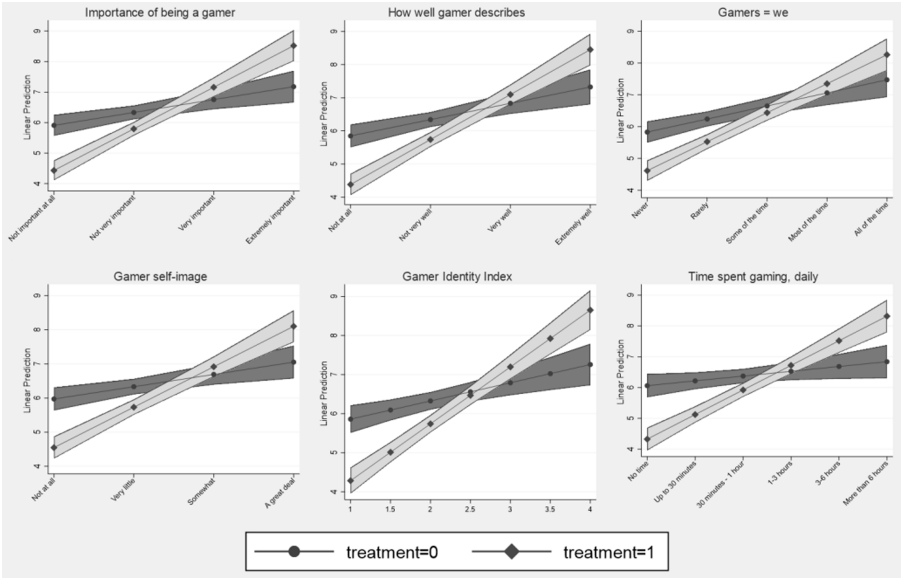


Figure 5. Predicted interest in the U.S. foreign trade policy mentioned in the vignette based on experimental treatment status and moderated by gamer identity measures. Gamers who received the treatment are more interested than control group gamers and non-gamers.
Note: Visualization based on the linear Ordinary Least Squares model results from Table 3.
Shaded regions represent 95% confidence intervals.

interested in U.S. foreign trade policies if those policies are presented in the context of their hobby. The topic's salience – mixed with the importance of one's hobbyist identity – in respondents' minds manifests in apparent shifts in both general and specific political interests.

The results align neatly with Licari's (2020) and Bacovsky's (2021a) quantitative findings and general qualitative observations of ardent gamers in different – but equally relevant – issue contexts. Indeed, gamers were previously involved in hotly debated issues of fair use (Ore, 2017) and predatory microtransactions (Anderton, 2018) in video games, and generally gravitated toward public figures aligned with gamers' interests. Thus, gamers can be understood as a burgeoning issue public whose curiosity is stirred when the hobby is mixed with political issues.

Apolitical identities may matter much more than we initially thought. We cannot take them for granted and consider them just another correlate of socioeconomic status or age. Aspects of hobby identities seep into political attitudes, even if preferences in the strictest meaning of the word develop more slowly. Indeed, the very stimulation of interest via the hobby prompt is a key component of motivating political participation (Jenkins and Shresthova, 2016, p. 269). Notably, the concept of fan citizenship is not restricted to just video gaming. There is no reason why the results presented in this paper shouldn't replicate in the context of other fandoms as well. Thus, scholars interested in linking hobbies with politics – primarily through targeted advertising (Sides and Karch, 2008) – should pay attention to how political actors exploit the linkages between leisurely pursuits and politics.

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Data availability. The data, code, and any additional materials required to replicate all analyses in this article are available at the *Journal of Experimental Political Science Dataverse* within the Harvard Dataverse Network, at: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/HETD4M.

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Ethics statement. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Colorado Boulder approved the final version of this human research study on January 24, 2020, under IRB record number 19-0376. I affirm that the research adheres to American Political Science Association's Principles and Guidance for Human Subject Research (https://connect.apsanet.org/hsr/principles-and-guidance/). For more details on the ethics of this research project, please review Online Appendices 1 and 4.

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Pavel Bačovský (PhD, University of Colorado Boulder) is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Politics at Bates College. He studies comparative political behavior in advanced democracies. His research explores the impacts of youth socialization, leisure activities, and new technologies on political attitudes, political engagement, and vote choice.

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