

# RACHEL KOWERT, PHD

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Facilitating global policy development with non-profit, governmental and governmental agencies for 15+ years through data-driven research focused on mental health and trust and safety in digital games

## CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- **Internationally-recognized Subject Matter Expert for mental health and games**, including topics relating to addiction, violence, and parenting in the digital age.
- **Groundbreaking the field of games and extremism** as PI on the first project examining this intersection funded by the Department of Homeland Security.
- **Internationally-recognized research portfolio**, 100+ scientific publications in outlets such as Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, Computers in Human Behavior, and Frontiers in Psychology
- **Prominent media figure in the field**, with 100+ appearances across national and international outlets, such as NBC, CBC, NPR, New York Times, Washington Post, Wired Magazine, Wall Street Journal, and The Atlantic.
- **Invited speaker** for the United Nations, US State Department and members of US Congress to speak about mental health and trust and safety challenges in gaming spaces

## LEADERSHIP

- **Established the research department at Take This and served as its first Research Director.**
  - Developed, managed, and fundraised 1M+ research portfolio, including day-to-day operational and management processes. Worked with the team to distill learnings and feed them into future strategy and grantmaking decisions.
  - Stakeholder management across sectors (tech, academic, governmental and NGO) around issues relating to mental health, digital safety and digital literacy.
- **Influential voice around issues relating to trust and safety and digital technology**, consulting with policy stakeholders on emerging regulatory issues, with groups such as the United Nations, US State Department, Christchurch Call, Ofcom, ESA, UKIE, and GIFCT
  - Consulted with members of OfCom on issues of stakeholder management in relation to the implementation of the Online Safety Act in game and game adjacent spaces
  - Briefed US policymakers and government agencies to better prioritize legislative efforts around trust and safety regulation in online gaming spaces
- **Keynote, panelist, guest speaker** at events hosted by United Nations, Sesame Workshop, ESA, and VOX Pol, and conferences such as SXSW, GDC, G4C, and National Communication Association (NCA)
- **Mentored academic and industry professionals** ranging from junior to senior in expertise, providing career coaching, research consultation, and general mentorship. This includes serving as external supervisor and external examiner for several PhD projects.
- **Guest lecturer** for more than a dozen universities, including American University, New York University, University of California Irvine, and University of Pennsylvania.

## STRATEGY

- **Contributed to strategy, development, and execution for a research portfolio of more than \$4M**, including projects funded by Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Action, Department of Homeland Security, and Canadian Resiliency Fund.
  - Gant writing, research framework development, project development (including budgets), implementation, analysis, presentation of findings, and project management (including workflow development).
- **10+ years' experience serving on private and public sector advisory committees and boards**, including United Nations Global Mental Health Task Force, GIFCT, Mental Health Foundation (UK), Extremism in Gaming Research Network (EGRN)
  - Led a needs assessment and development of best practice guidelines for policy in gaming spaces to address the terrorism and violent extremism for GIFCT. This included project development, stakeholder management, report drafting and presenting.
  - Developed strategic partnerships to build organizational expertise and growth for IGGI initiatives through cross-sector engagements between the gaming industry, academia, and non-profit stakeholders.
- **Collaborated with a range of policy stakeholders for digital wellness initiatives and digital regulation** with governmental and NGO groups, including the US Congress, OFCOM, Digital Wellness Lab at Harvard, Stanford Center for Youth Mental and Well Being, Mental Health Foundation (UK), Roblox, and Ubisoft.
- **Worked closely with legal, product, and executive teams** to design and deliver collaborative projects across public, private, and government organizations. Partners include, Allianz, Nielsen, Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), Modulate, Ubisoft, Roblox, and k-ID.
  - Produced a global communication campaign about online safety and the metaverse for Allianz for their 125M customer base across 70 countries.
  - Identified, monitored, prioritized policy trends in relation to online safety and mental wellness for members of US Congress, Department of Homeland Security, and US State Department
  - Curated strategic relationships with industry partners to amplify research and advocacy around trust and safety in gaming spaces, including a series of white-papers co-developed with industry partners including Nielsen and Modulate
- **Fostered strategic collaborations with university partners**, including The University of Cambridge, New York University, The University of Texas, Concordia University, and The University of York.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

- **Founded Psychgeist**, a multimedia content production studio for the intersection of science and games, which includes Psychgeist YouTube channel (200+ videos), Most Recent Save podcast, and The Psychgeist of Pop Culture book series (20-book deal) published by ETC Press.
- **Consulted, designed, and/or executed on 100+ projects** on topics relating to mental health, digital literacy, and uses and effects of games.
- **Developed and administered 100+ workshops** in university, public, and online settings. Workshop topics include hate and harassment of game makers, video game effects, and inclusive design.
- **Developed and managed a team of 150+ authors and 15+ editors** for the Psychgeist of Pop Culture book series
- **Co-designed, facilitated, and participated in engagement events alongside key community partners**, including ActiveFence, Modulate, and Keywords Studios.
  - Key partner in establishing and launching the Gaming Safety Coalition in 2024, which aims to establish new benchmarks in content moderation, technological innovation, and mental health advocacy.
- **Founding editor ACM games research and practice**. Responsible for developing the publication pipeline, project management, and communication with authors for quarterly publication of viewpoint articles.

## SELECT WORK EXPERIENCE

### Research Director, Take This

2019-2024

- **Founded, developed, and led the Research Department of the organization.** Fundraised and oversaw 1M+ research portfolio and ran day-to-day operational and management processes. Worked with the larger team to distill learnings and feed them into future strategy and grantmaking decisions.
- **Developed and supported community projects and partnerships,** including administration and logistics, with external stakeholders such as Anti-Defamation League (ADL), GamerSafer, International Game Developers Association (IGDA), Modulate, Nielsen, and Safe in Our World.
- **Consulted with and led workshops for industry partners** including Activision/Blizzard, Bethesda, Double Fine, Electronic Arts, Innersloth, Iron Galaxy, Keywords Studios, Microsoft Gaming/XBox, Mojang, Niantic, Riot, Roblox, Sony, and Ubisoft.
- **Developed and led advocacy campaigns** as part of the Raising Good Gamers initiative with Games for Change

### Independent Consulting

2014 - present

- **Project consultation and support.** Created project plans by defining scope, identifying deliverables, and setting project milestones for a range of research projects and content collaborations. Examples of this work include:
  - **Project lead** Gaming as a Community of Practice working group funded by GIFCT. Lead strategy and approaches for summative report and communication strategy.
  - **Project lead** for ISGA annual global report for organizational members. Including the analysis, drafting, and creation of the final summative report.
  - **Project consultant** for Gaming Ecosystems as a Multi-Layered Threat (GEMS) project funded by HORIZON EU grant. Consultation on research pipelines, best practices for assessment approaches, and communication strategy.
  - **Project consultant** for Socialization as a Nexus for Radicalization funded by Canadian Resiliency Fund grant. Contributed to grant proposal, assessment and analysis approaches, technical writing, and communication strategy
- **Subject-matter expert consultant** for Fortune 50 and Fortune 500 companies. Consulted on issues relating to digital well-being and consumer safety. This has included drafting expert opinion reports for litigation.
- **Subject-matter expert brand collaborations.** Worked together with brands to create content and communication strategy. Clients include Allianz, Curry PC world, k-ID, Dark Crystal Games, and Tales of Us.

### Fellowships

- Research Fellow, Center for Digitized Societies (2024), University of Muenster
- Honorary Visiting Professor, University of York (2023 - present)

### Awards

- Global Community Award (finalist), University of York Alumni Association, 2024
- Video Game Awards Future Class inductee, 2021
- Hermes Award, Best communication Pandemic Response, 2021
- Telly Award, Best Branded Campaign, 2021
- Game Developer Conference, Top Presentation Award, 2020