

1) OBJECT OF STUDY/BACKGROUND: For my project, I want to investigate the relationship between queer gamers and the larger LGBTQ social movement in the United States. I plan to use as my object of study the event GaymerX (formerly known as GaymerCon), the nation's first "gaming and geek lifestyle convention with a focus on LGBTQ culture." The event's planners, according to their Kickstarter campaign and their website, envision GaymerX as a safe space that supports "an inclusive group spanning all orientations, ethnicities and gender expressions in the gaming community." Their hope is to "educate and inform the gaming community of the presence and importance of sexuality and gender diversity in people's digital lives and promote acceptance and social change through bettering the gaming experience."

GaymerX is the brainchild of Matt Conn and a team of gamers and geeks based in and around San Francisco. Using the slogan "everybody games," the event organizers stress solidarity and inclusivity in their literature. They say, "We want to be clear this isn't just for gay white dudes either. We want all genders, races, and sexual identities including our straight friends and allies to come together and have a gay, geeky good time. We believe very strongly that creating a space like this is not only important for building a strong community, but also showing new generations of gamers that there are others like them out there, they are not alone, and there is a welcoming place for them, not just at GaymerCon, but as part of the larger gaming community."

2) QUESTIONS OF STUDY: I am interested in exploring GaymerX's politics of inclusivity in part through the images they use to promote the convention as well as through their stated intentions for the event. Using Anna Tsing's discussion of collaboration, I plan to explore how the convention's self-promotion and events will provide (if they do) information and inspiration that encompass myriad social agendas (gay, lesbian, transgender, feminist, etc.). And I plan to question the technology itself to understand how, in Rosemary Coombe's words, "the cultural politics of recoding commodified cultural forms" works to advance the GaymerX agenda of inclusivity. I also want to utilize Tsing's notion of scale-making to discover how GaymerX and all of its actors (human and technological) fit into the larger LGBTQ social movement and to discover what frictions are produced, developed, elided or negotiated.

Thus far, the majority of images used to promote the event do seem to be geared toward a gay male sensibility. I will need to explore further in order to assess whether the con emphasizes games traditionally marketed toward male gamers (first-person shooter games are one example). The significance of this assessment is that the focus on images and technology traditionally marketed to men (no matter their sexual orientation) may work to exclude players who identify as women, even though many of those women choose to play those games anyway. Thus, despite a romantic notion of solidarity, ideological rifts may still exist even though the con organizers have an awareness of those rifts.

3) ARGUMENT: Another potential source of friction that must be explored is the tension between queer gamers and the larger corporate gaming industry that has largely excluded them. At least two major corporations have verbally spoken in support of this event, and I am expecting that they will also have a presence at the con itself. Considering the continued lack of support overall for addressing LGBTQ issues in any productive sort of way in the gaming community, does GaymerX serve as an actual collaborative relationship in addition to it being a PR move designed to help solidify relations with this neglected consumer base? What does the queer gaming community have to gain by attracting this corporate attention? I believe that sponsoring this event (or at least having a presence), while undoubtedly part of an attempt to heighten brand consciousness in queer gamers, may also bring awareness and sympathy for the exclusion of queer gamers among those who were formerly unaware or apathetic.

METHODOLOGY/STAKES: My methodology involves creating an ethnographic snapshot via documentary and using it to illustrate not only the potential challenges, successes and productive failures of the con itself, but also perhaps to make a statement regarding the challenge of using film ethnography when the filmmaker is coming from an emic point of view. As a queer gamer, I am very interested in seeing this convention be productive, and I am exploring the possibility (and the challenges) of placing myself in the project so as to allow for reflexivity as well as to lessen the distance between myself and those with whom I am participating. I would like to insert myself into the action of the film in addition to providing the traditional elements for this kind of project: background information about the con, interviews with event organizers and eventgoers, and footage of the floor action and panel talks.