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Editorial: Negotiating Gamer Identities

Sarah Evans Ph.D.

Molloy College, sevans@molloy.edu

Matthew Barr

University of Glasgow

Landon Kyle Berry

Mahli-Ann Butt

Daniel Joseph Dunne

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Sarah Evans Ph.D., Matthew Barr, Landon Kyle Berry, Mahli-Ann Butt, Daniel Joseph Dunne, Charlie Ecenbarger, Lorraine Murray, Michael James Scott, and Lars de Wildt

Editorial

The term 'gamer identity' is hotly contested, and certainly not understood as a broadly accepted term. From the outdated stereotype of white, heterosexual, teenage boys playing Nintendo in their parents' basement to the equally contested proclamation that "'gamers' are over" (Alexander, 2014), the current game culture climate is such that movements as divisive and controversial as #gamergate can flourish.

For this latest special issue of Press Start, we invited submissions regarding the recent controversies surrounding the notion of player identities, with the aim of receiving papers from different viewpoints on gamer identity and culture. The call for papers was announced online with varying responses from across the gaming community. From an editorial perspective, we are, in a sense, 'damned if we do, damned if we don't,' as we can only publish those articles which we receive, and which meet our editorial criteria. Therefore, if we receive only one submission from what might be viewed as a pro-gamergate perspective, and it fails to fulfil these criteria – as was the case here – we appear to be exhibiting the very bias which some gamers perceive to be the case in the academic establishment.

However, while our call for papers may have failed in its aim to be as inclusive as possible – and we must accept that this is, to some degree, a failure on our part – we are delighted with the range of thoughtful and engaging pieces of work that we did receive.

In this issue, our authors come at the question of gamer identity from a variety of perspectives, employing a range of methods that demonstrates the richness of the work being carried out in our field. Gender is, perhaps understandably, the prevalent theme of the issue, with Vermeulen et al., Maclean, Assunção and, to some extent, Euteneuer, examining the experiences and representations of women in game culture. Elsewhere, a broader view of under-represented or otherwise maligned groups is taken, with considerations of race and sexuality. For the most part, the picture painted by these works does not reflect video game culture at its most salubrious – and it is important that the challenges at hand are openly documented and discussed – so it is a welcome relief to read the relatively optimistic and non-toxic experiences documented by Adams in an examination of the online community that surrounds *Super Smash Bros*.

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References

Alexander, L. (2014). "'Gamers' don't have to be your audience. 'Gamers' are over." *Gamasutra*, August 28, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/224400/Gamers_dont_have_to_be_your_audience_Gamers_are_over.php