

DiGRA 2019 Diversity Workshop Call for Papers: Social Justice Tactics in Today's LudoMix

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Participation in the workshop is open to all DiGRA participants. The workshop will be held across 6-hours, with a keynote (to be confirmed), 6 paper presentations and discussions. If you plan to attend the workshop as a participant (not a presenter), please register by 19 July by sending an email to the workshop organisers at digradiversityworkshop@gmail.com.

Keywords

Diversity, tactics, Japan, indie, DiGRA, marginalisation

In the wake of social movements such as #BlackLivesMatter, #SayHerName, and #MeToo, previously marginalised and silenced groups have found a surge in channels for their voices to be heard and to resist societal injustices. These movements have led to increasing critiques of racism, sexism, and homophobia within contemporary societies and efforts to challenge these (often institutionalised) forms of discrimination and harassment. In Japan, which has been described in terms of monoculture or historical separation, issues of diversity and inclusion are increasingly important, especially in light of current population and workforce participation issues (JapanGov). Although digital games have been a place which excludes the experiences of people of color and women (Williams et al. 2009, Passmore et al. 2017, Gardner and Tanenbaum 2018), gaming development practices have also reflected concerns about racism, sexism, and homophobia. As such, this workshop welcomes proposals which express how social justice is practiced in the ludomix of gameplay, game development, game production, and game studies.

Positive representation of race, region, class, gender, and sexuality within games appears—at some levels—to be growing, and implementing social justice tactics in their design. However, from a production-development perspective, there are still too few diverse viewpoints, prompting questions about the relationship between exclusions in production and the consequent lack of positive representations of women, people of colour, queer folks, and other marginalized groups in games (Brett 2018; McArthur et al. 2015; Plunkett 2014). Moreover, the proliferation of middleware and accessible development platforms (e.g. Unity, bitsy, Twine, Visual

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Novel Maker, and itch.io) has helped to demystify game production and support the formation of alternative communities of developers. Yet, this has not offered a convenient ‘fix’ (Harvey & Shepherd, 2016) as the cultural construction of indie as a sort of laboratory in which the videogame form participates in diversity is itself open to question if it ignores the unequal distributions of risk and the potential alibis it affords to establish interests (Harvey & Fisher 2013; Fisher & Harvey 2013, Passmore et al., 2018). Indeed, increased participation has led to concerns about an ‘Indieocalypse’ in which there are ‘too many games’ (Wright 2018), and that it is ‘time to stop encouraging indies’ (Warner 2018). Pushing back are arguments that highlight the cultural value of the form (Keogh 2018).

Research can play a key role in clarifying the issues and shaping diverse game production, highlighting activities that may be unacknowledged or even erased within other forms of discourse. As such, where the first DiGRA Diversity Workshop (Beavers & Jayemanne 2018) was largely oriented to *strategic* issues around Game Studies as a discipline, this call invites papers that address the *tactical* considerations surrounding diverse game production and the production of diversity within games, from cultural, media, and production studies perspectives. We as scholars, like those who develop games, should be aware of the stakes in our own *productions*. Just as diversity in games should be considered along various axes, which scholars we include in our conversations of games can exclude voices along racial, gendered, or regional and linguistic lines. We are particularly interested in including Japanese researchers to share their point of view, and extend our thanks to those who contributed to this call. No scholar can be responsible for knowing every source, or every voice relevant to games, but acknowledging and seeking out unheard voices in unfamiliar communities (whether disciplinary, or cultural) becomes a tactic for more inclusive and sensitive, and more rigorous, scholarship.

This DiGRA Diversity Workshop will explore these aspects of diversity and resistance from the perspective of game production, representation, and critical reception, and the interplay between these elements.

Submissions

Please send your extended abstract of 1000 words (excluding references) to Mahli-Ann Butt and Darshana Jayemanne at digradiversityworkshop@gmail.com by **June 1, 2019** at 17:00 CET (9:00 PST).

Please note this is an open paper format and you are not required to use the DiGRA template for extended abstracts. Abstracts will be subject to peer-review by the DiGRA Diversity Working Group.

Notifications of acceptance will be sent to participants on **June 22**. Camera ready abstracts for the workshop are expected by **July 15**.

Important Dates

Extended Abstract Deadline: **June 1, 2019, 23:59 AEST.**

Notice of Acceptance: **June 22**

Camera Ready Abstracts: **July 15**

Workshop Date: **August 6**

Workshop Format and Activities: (Location TBA)

12:00-12:30 Opening and Introductions

12:30-13:00 Designing Diversity Guidelines

13:00-15:00 Paper presentation – six papers, 15 minutes each and 5 minutes of question time

15:00-15:30 Break

15:30-16:30 Keynote

16:30-18:00 Co-facilitated Discussion

Call for Proposals

We welcome proposals for presentations that investigate questions and topics such as, but not limited to:

- How do we improve the relationship between production cultures and representation, workforce demographics and aesthetics?
- How are game production platforms taken up by/formative of communities of developers and players and how can they advance social justice?
- How do new perspectives being seen in games resist or differ from those seen previously?
- How do we examine the ways games appropriate—and monetize—diverse cultural influences?
- How do personal stories in games, or how players remix content to fit their own interests, resist or reinforce particular values?
- How do the paratexts created and consumed by fans and/or “Otaku” represent love for, but also resistance against, kinds of representation in the games they reference?
- How may alternative history games be more diverse and how far can they resist / glorify hegemonic discourse?
- How do games further engage with the legacies of colonialism and white supremacy?
- What are game developers doing to make a stronger move towards more inclusive representations in games? What are they doing well, and what more can be done?
- What responsibility do players, journalists, people in the public eye and academics have in speaking out on issues of diversity and inclusion?
- How do we responsibly and sensitively study the problematic uses of othered bodies (gendered, racialized, disabled, etc.) in both digital and virtual play spaces?
- How do we operate in political climates and the tensions amongst developers, players and the media in order to shape how (non-)diversity in games is represented and received?
- How can academia resist non-diversity? What is working and what else can be done?

- What are the current issues facing diversity in Japanese game studies, and what tactics are most promising given the cultural context?

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