



Rapporteur: Zack Gold

On May 18, 2022, CNA held its fourth Inclusive National Security event of the year (@InclusiveNatSec on Twitter), continuing the focus on the relationship between gender and national security. This month's event ([recording here](#)), "Inclusivity in Wargaming and Impacts for Defense Planning," reflected on opportunities for women in game development and play, as well as the importance of diverse perspectives in wargames. The event featured a discussion with Dr. Yuna Wong, a defense analyst in the Joint Advanced Warfighting Division at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), and Dr. Margaret McCown, deputy division chief of the Studies Analysis and Gaming Division in the Joint Staff J8. The event was moderated by Catherine Lea, a senior research scientist on the CNA Wargaming Team.

Reflections from Dr. Yuna Wong and Dr. Margaret McCown:

- There are fewer women and girls in two of the more traditional paths into the gaming field: growing up playing strategy boardgames and roleplaying games and military planning, especially in combat arms. This limits the pipeline and outsider understanding of the wargaming community as more experienced game designers look to mentor "people who look like them," and younger people interested in this field are more often men.
- Inherent to a successful game is making sure the necessary perspectives are at the table. Game designers sometimes think about this for game *play*, but game *design* can also be skewed with "groupthink" if the design team is not diverse and inclusive. In some instances, women on the design team may be limited to notetaker or support-type roles, whereas men on the team may have easier opportunities for mentorship and direct game design experience. Even among experienced wargame designers, women are more likely to be assigned the "political-military" games not the operational games.
- Wargaming inclusivity is not just about the game players but the game designers. Inclusive team practices make for more inclusive design teams. Instead of the senior designer being the central figure, the game lead can be more collaborative to develop the skills of the team. It makes a big difference to have a flat office, not just "senior" and "junior" designers. By developing a mix of experiences among the staff, the team can chip away at preconceived notions of what women can and cannot do in game design and implementation.
- Commitments to diversity in wargaming, like the Derby House Principles, are an important first step. There is pent up demand in the field for doing better at diversity and inclusion, and that results in frustration when expectations are not immediately met. However, the starting point is to put others on notice that "diversity and inclusion are core values," which pushes back against opposition to change.
- The Department of Defense (DOD) being a major consumer of wargames provides an opportunity to initiate faster change in gaming norms and culture. DOD personnel are a little younger than in other federal agencies and there has already been change regarding seeing more women in uniform in the Pentagon. Additionally, leadership roles rotate out more quickly in DOD than in the external wargaming community. Efforts should be made to make sure similar changes ripple out to the professional wargaming community.
- Key recommendations for women new to gaming are to: have an explicit conversation with management about career goals, leverage your different experiences as a team asset, seek out opportunities to build game design experience, and find established game designers to be your champions among their more skeptical peers.

To join our mailing list and hear about upcoming events, please register [here](#).