Intro:

I believe that technologies like the podcast provide compositionists with a unique chance to create academic work that also intervenes in the community. As research strategies like FRM become more popular, we begin to break down notions that we are separate from the environments we study. We are already a part of them, and we need to take every step to ensure that our involvement in communities is ethical and productive. For the past 2 years I have been a part of a podcast and blog Not Your Mama’s Gamer. This work has challenged every part of my scholarship, and I have had to resituate my beliefs about how communication works and how we as compositionists can intervene in communication. So in my talk today, I’m going to quickly touch on some of the theories that have emerged as important in my podcasting work, talk about some of the struggles I’ve had, and finish with some clips of pivotal moments that have emerged through the interviews we have conducted on NYMG.

Theory:

FRM:

Feminist research methodology is one thing that is foundational to both my academic and my community work. FRM, reductively, is an ideological position that asserts knowledge is contextual, situational, complex, and emergent. These theorists have worked to destabilize scientific research practices that have been used to disenfranchise women and others through supposed objective research practices.

While Haraway was a pioneer in the dismantling of “objectivity” through research methodology, theorists like Karen Barad have shown that feminist research methodology is often simply a better methodology than objectivity for the increasing complexity we are discovering underlies much of the physical world. She is heading up a movement among feminist epistemologists, scientists, and social scientists that redefine many of the ways we think about the world. Her theory, Agential Realism, is

an epistemological-ontological-ethical framework that provides an understanding of the role of human and nonhuman, material and discursive, and natural and cultural factors in scientific and other social-material practices, thereby moving such considerations beyond the well-worn debates that pit constructivism against realism, agency against structure, and idealism against materialism. Indeed, the new philosophical framework that I propose entails a rethinking of fundamental concepts that support such binary thinking, including the notions of matter, discourse, causality, agency, power, identity, embodiment, objectivity, space, and time (Barad, *Meeting*, 2007).

In other words, her work calls into question the assumptions on which much of science is based. But her theories, or more specifically her approach to research is very much in the vein of feminist research methodologists. Being part of the community through the creation of media artifacts is one way to undo this binary thinking.

Another important (possible) connection between public compositions like podcasting and Barad’s theories is the way she makes epistemologies and ontologies inseparable from ethics. Likewise, ethics is an inseparable part of public work. Our work can have direct consequences on the people in our communities. This demands a certain ethics that is always pervasive, which becomes particularly apparent when working with sensitive topics like sexual assault (which, when you’re doing the kind of work that I’m doing with women in technology-dependant environments, is a fairly unavoidable topic). Unfortunately, most popular theories of video games and other technologies rarely consider the ethical (not to mention material) circumstances of what they study. As if procedures and algorithms could somehow be aethical.

Similarly, Anne Balsamo’s work since the 90s has supported FRM, both directly and indirectly. In her recent work, *Designing Culture*, she writes,

“Equally significant other social elements that contribute the oral meaning of an innovation, including the social practices through which technologies take shape, the rituals and habits engendered by innovative devices, and the social structures that congeal through the use of machines, the consumption of products, imposition of laws, and the announcement of policy. This leads scholars in the social studies of science and technology to assert that every technology is, at most fundamental, the sociotechnical construction” (9)

Here she is talking about the intersections between orality, culture, technology, machines, humans, academic work, and the social. Podcasting in this sense is a way we can both create and experience the cultural/technological emergence of meaning and knowledge practices.

Balsamo writes, “We need new ways of thinking about technology, culture, education, and the multidisciplinary practices of cultural reproduction that take form as a media rich documentaries, public interactive, creative pedagogy’s, digital scholarship, and new technologies of imagination” (197). So what do these new ways of thinking look like? I think we can see evidence of it and traces of it all around this conference as well as in our journals. Edbauer’s work with Rhetorical Ecologies is one place that these new ways of thinking have seeped into our field. Work with indigenous methodologies, technologies of the body, feminist composition scholarship, and many others reflect the softening of the boundaries of technology, culture, and education with ethical lenses that challenge the way we think.

One way this manifests is through the way traditional scholarship has been challenged. We at NYMG have been criticized for being “too informal.” Our work, as it is collaborative and community-based, rather than philosophical and abstract, does not command automatic respect. Of course, not much of this counts toward tenure or can even make it on to a CV. However, much traditionally valuable scholarship has emerged because my colleagues and I have been open to questioning our own ideologies as well as relying on sources of knowledge that can only be found if we allow ourselves to become part of the communities we study.

Perhaps most importantly, this public work breaks away from the heavily ingrained notion in academics that fun is a fourth-letter word.

So I have a mashup of some of the community work we have done at NYMG through interviews. I hope you will be able to see the incredible value in them; they have certainly changed the way I think about my work and about academics in general. .