

Theorizing Homebrew Through Aabria Iyengar's DMing on *Dimension 20*

“Homebrew” is never explicitly mentioned in *Dungeons and Dragons 5E*, but it is difficult to imagine any TTRPG without some element of homebrew. Since the 1940s, “homebrewing” has referred to the use of homemade material “designed by a user as an alternative or adjunct to a proprietary product” (OED). Within *D&D* fandom, homebrew has been in popular usage since at least 2003, and *AD&D* (1989) even encourages players to “Add, create, expand, and extrapolate” from the core rule set, i.e. homebrew. Homebrewing has become increasingly popular with the rise of Actual Plays with Matt Mercer’s “Blood Cleric” subclass, Brennan Lee Mulligan’s “rolling with emphasis,” and *The Adventure Zone*’s “Flaming Poisoning Raging Sword of Doom” inspiring many home game DM’s to incorporate ambitious homebrews into their own games. TTRPGs are in the age of the homebrew, and Game Studies scholars must theorize “homebrew” given its increasing importance to TTRPG culture. This presentation seeks to theorize homebrew by situating the concept within the border history of “white geek masculinity” that Aaron Trammell (2023) has powerfully suggested is embedded within hobby gaming culture. By connecting TTRPG homebrewing to the Homebrew Computer Club and similar communities, this presentation will highlight the racial and gendered inheritances of homebrew culture. After establishing a theory of homebrew, the presentation will offer a case study of Aabria Iyengar’s homebrewing in *Dimension 20* by exploring her incorporation of homebrew elements in *Misfits and Magic*, *A Court of Fey and Flowers*, and *Burrow’s End* and their differing receptions. Iyengar’s homebrewing in *MaM* and *ACoFaF* was positively received because these elements did not challenge the foundational value systems embedded within *D&D* while her homebrewing in *BE* was more tepidly received because it forced viewers to confront the “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (bell hooks) that informs *D&D* and TTRPG culture.

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