From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games

From The MIT Press

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Many parents worry about the influence of video games on their children's lives. The game console may help to prepare children for participation in the digital world, but at the same time it socializes boys into misogyny and excludes girls from all but the most objectified positions. The new "girls' games" movement has addressed these concerns. Although many people associate video games mainly with boys, the girls games' movement has emerged from an unusual alliance between feminist activists (who want to change the "gendering" of digital technology) and industry leaders (who want to create a girls' market for their games).

The contributors to *From Barbie® to Mortal Kombat* explore how assumptions about gender, games, and technology shape the design, development, and marketing of games as industry seeks to build the girl market. They describe and analyze the games currently on the market and propose tactical approaches for avoiding the stereotypes that dominate most toy store aisles. The lively mix of perspectives and voices includes those of media and technology scholars, educators, psychologists, developers of today's leading games, industry insiders, and girl gamers.

Contributors: Aurora, Dorothy Bennett, Stephanie Bergman, Cornelia Brunner, Mary Bryson, Lee McEnany Caraher, Justine Cassell, Suzanne de Castell, Nikki Douglas, Theresa Duncan, Monica Gesue, Michelle Goulet, Patricia Greenfield, Margaret Honey, Henry Jenkins, Cal Jones, Yasmin Kafai, Heather Kelley, Marsha Kinder, Brenda Laurel, Nancie Martin, Aliza Sherman, Kaveri Subrahmanyam.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
This book explores the complicated issue of gender in computer games-particularly the development of video games for girls. One side is the concern that the average computer game, being attractive primarily to boys, furthers the technology access gap between the genders. Yet attempts to create computer games that girls want to play brings about another set of concerns: should games be gendered at all? And does having boys' games and girls' games merely reinforce the way gender differences are socialized in play?

Cassell and Jenkins have gathered the thoughts of several feminist and media scholars to explore the issues from multiple perspectives, but this is not a work confined to ivory-tower theorizing. Alongside the philosophical explorations are pragmatic investigations of the hard-nosed, real world of computer-game manufacture and sales. Particularly enlightening is a section featuring interviews with several leading creators of games for girls. And while all agree that it's good to be past the days when women in computer games were limited to scantily clad background figures or damsels in distress, the visions of an appropriate future are both diverse and well defended. There is no pretense here of easy answers, but there are many excellent questions. *--Elizabeth Lewis*

From Publishers Weekly
In this intriguing anthology of essays, studies and interviews, voices from both academia and industry discuss what the experience of computer games is and should be for girls. While game creators have recently discovered the young female consumer, few of these authors are happy with the offerings, which tend to push domesticity and an obsession with looks. Almost all the contributors share some basic belief that the marketplace is dominated by games promoting bad values while shortchanging values identifiable as truly feminist. As Cassell points out, feminism in this context can mean values not pertaining exclusively to gender. The resulting proposals for video games are filled with such buzzwords as "subjective," "creativity," "community" and "collaboration" (all good) as opposed to "violent," "competitive" and "conquest" (all bad). It is always nice to see theorists come down from the clouds to enter into discussions of everyday-life subjects such as the ramifications of the Tomb Raider character Lara Croft's ample endowment. The best move of the editors is to conclude the volume with commentary by girl gamers, many of whom worry that the contributors' solutions will underequip girls for the ugly real world. Says one: "I don't want to be friends! I want to be King!"
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From **Booklist**
This book brings together the perspectives of feminist activists and media scholars in a thought-provoking discussion of the "gendering" of video games. Until recently, women have appeared in computer games mostly as eroticized competitors to the male protagonist, distressed maidens, or other victims or objects. Recently, the girls' games movement has taken the computer-game industry to task for the use of these misogynistic images. Contributors discuss this issue as well as myriad related concerns: the cultural definition of computer games as boys' toys; girls' access to the technology and interest in it; and the complications of creating gender-neutral play space. In addition, girl gamers have a chance to discuss factoring their interests into the development of action games. There are no simple solutions to the often troublesome relation between gender and technology, but this book's presentation of the problems and possibilities makes academic reading relevant again. *Philip Herbst*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Willie Davis:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Publication is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each book has different aim as well as goal; it means that book has different type. Some people truly feel enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They are really reading whatever they take because their hobby is definitely reading a book. How about the person who don't like reading through a book? Sometime, man feel need book after they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you should have this From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games.

Jeremiah Burroughs:

As people who live in the particular modest era should be revise about what going on or info even knowledge to make these keep up with the era that is certainly always change and move ahead. Some of you maybe may update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice in your case but the problems coming to you is you don't know what type you should start with. This From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games is our recommendation to cause you to keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and wish in this era.

Jesus Gilbert:

In this period globalization it is important to someone to acquire information. The information will make professionals understand the condition of the world. The fitness of the world makes the information quicker to share. You can find a lot of personal references to get information example: internet, magazine, book, and soon. You can see that now, a lot of publisher that will print many kinds of book. Often the book that recommended for your requirements is From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games this guide consist a lot of the information in the condition of this world now. This book was represented just how can the world has grown up. The dialect styles that writer use to explain it is easy to understand. The writer made some study when he makes this book. Honestly, that is why this book suitable all of you.

Dawn Williams:

A lot of people said that they feel uninterested when they reading a publication. They are directly felt it when they get a half parts of the book. You can choose the particular book From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games to make your own personal reading is interesting. Your current skill of reading talent is developing when you including reading. Try to choose straightforward book to make you enjoy to study it and mingle the feeling about book and looking at especially. It is to be first opinion for you to like to open up a book and examine it. Beside that the reserve From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games can to be your brand-new friend when you're truly feel alone and confuse with what must you're doing of the time.

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