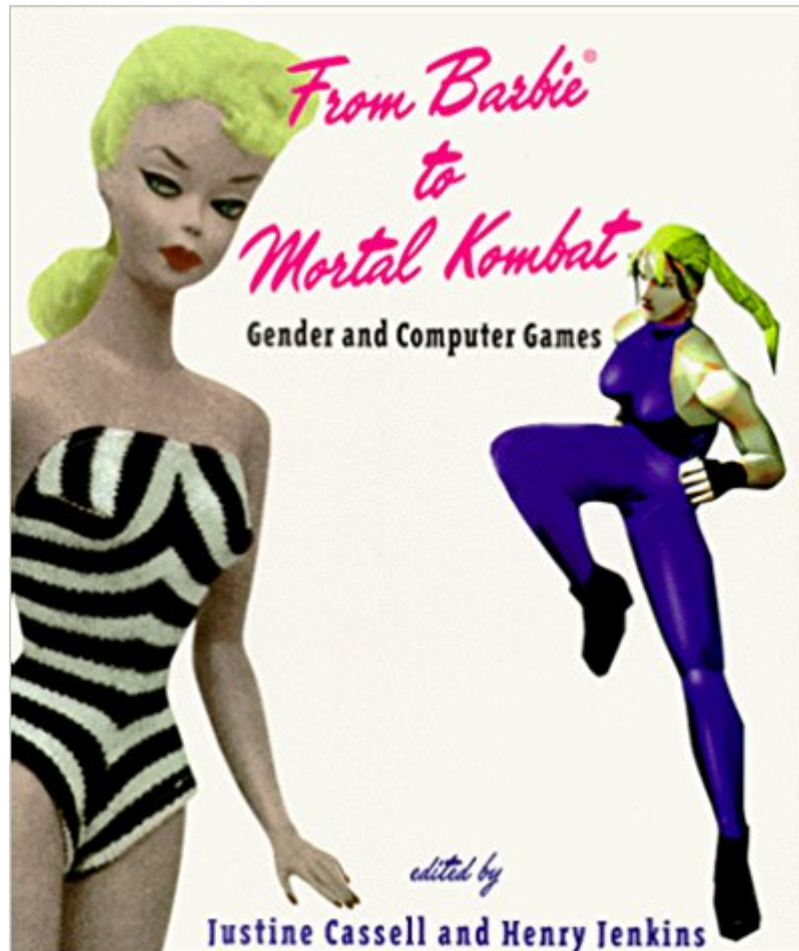


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# From Barbie To Mortal Kombat: Gender And Computer Games



## Synopsis

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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## Customer Reviews

If you have only boys in your family or have never put down money for a computer game, you

probably haven't kept up with the brouhaha that has been developing over computer games for girls that has appeared in the last four years. The focus on computer games for girls became an issue when it was noticed that while boys liked playing computer games and were more comfortable with computers; girls stayed away from these games. The result - girls would be computer illiterate and be unable to compete in the technical job market. The book is openly feminist, dealing with how girls and women are represented in computer games; bringing in academic research into gender play, and interviewing the women in the game companies who are designing and producing the games. The interviews with the women in the game industry offers outsiders the rare opportunity to hear the opinions of the designers and developers. Some explain how market research determines what they produce, others provide a more personal view of what moves them to design. The word "empowerment" appears repeatedly. The editors conclude with ideas for game play that gives voice and play space to both girls and boys. The book's inclusive points of view ends with a talk back piece by Game Grrls - women who enjoy playing action games to compete and win - often over men. The book provides a scholarly treatise on girls, computers, and society. Each of the academic chapters are followed by extensive bibliographies. For those who are interested in the subject it is extremely valuable to have everything in one place. Genevieve Katz ~ © 1999, Games4Girls

This collection is truly thought-provoking and insightful. It dares to tackle one of today's most challenging issues -- the relationship between gender and technology. The book is worth owning for the first chapter alone, Cassell and Jenkins' "Chess for Girls? Feminism and Computer Games." For video game programmers and toy designers, this book should be required reading, especially for those who wish to be conscious of their contribution to gender differences in society. And a must read for parents and video game enthusiasts alike.

I found the first few chapters very helpful when writing my final paper for a graduate class in computer games and simulations. I was surprised when I conducted a survey for my paper that very few of the mostly female respondents supported use of computer games designed for girls in the classroom. They thought software should be free of gender bias. Of course, they didn't realize that much of the software being used in the classroom now was designed for boys! Ann Williams

I read this book when it first came out and although I don't remember all of it, it left me with a good impression and I never regretted buying it. I wasn't even studying technology back then, so I bought it purely because I thought it would be interesting and was not disappointed.

What a pretty fine job! I'm compiling my thesis at university about the topic of videogames. Well, if you are in the same conditions of mine do not miss this book. It is not only a good example of understandable writing but it focuses on important topics too many times left in a corner. Of course, everyone who would approach a study of videogames phenomenon should consider that since they see the light, videogames were full of masculine points of view (and the relative effects whose they carry with them). Despite some relatively non fundamental mistakes, I think that the book hit the bull's eye: attracting the reader inside a new perspective by which he/her can consider the whole subject. The result, in my personal opinion, was a more complete and clear idea about videogames world. After I've finished to read the last line my feeling was the awarness that I didn't miss any aspect of a topic (which still complex, from a social-cognitive point of view). [p.s.: I hope my English is enough understandable]

Would that every game development professional would read this book! Well written, thought provoking and presented in a straightforward, non-confrontational manner. Thanks!

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