

Brookfield further explores the brand incorporating postmodern theories of nostalgia and the meanings of objects. She finds that many of the women who played with American Girl Dolls as children have come to understand the irony of nostalgia and materialism.

From discussions of Barbie and Modular to Black Barbie and Nicki Minaj, the second set of essays examines doll productions and performances. “Homemade Identities: Girls, Dolls, and DIY” by April Renee Mandrona was one of the more compelling pieces. Mandrona uses textuality (the study of the relationship between material culture and social meaning), integrating her girlhood self, to examine the doll-making activities of girls. In providing a brief history of craft movements, she reminds readers that the making of handmade items provides women with a “form of self-determination that could be achieved through physical labor of all sorts, and a newly discovered malleability of the corresponding feminine identities of various domestic items” (p. 97). This is a perspective remarkably different from the mentalities of the evolving middle class in nineteenth-century America. Doll making was a means of domestic economy and morality, especially as parents felt these values at risk with the rise of commercially manufactured fashion dolls. Mandrona’s research suggests that “through the making of handmade dolls, girls can be brought more fully into production of knowledge at the level of object creation” and this might “enable girls to be repositioned as more active participants (cultural agents) in the creation or re-creation of meanings enacted by dolls and, ultimately, girlhood identities” (p. 99).

The DIY movement serves as a source of empowerment.

I was hesitant to read, “An Afternoon of Productive Play with Problematic Dolls: The Importance of Foregrounding Children’s Voices in Research” by Rebecca Hines because the introduction discusses Bratz, a line of fashion-forward rebel dolls by MGA Entertainment. Since their introduction twenty years ago, when Bratz dolls successfully rivaled Barbie, the American Psychological Association accused the dolls of being “associated with an objectified adult sexuality,” and Professor of Law Orly Lobel wrote *You Don’t Own Me: How Mattel v. MGA Entertainment Exposed Barbie’s Dark Side*. What more could be said about Bratz dolls? Hines successfully expands the conversation about girls and Bratz dolls by examining how Black girls in her study used Bratz dolls to explore race and history.

The addition of a study that incorporates LGBTQI resources in relationship to dolls may have enhanced the discourse. Still, overall, Forman-Brunell organized a valuable collection of essays that demonstrate the emerging scholarship in girlhood studies. Dolls play a significant roll in the lives of girls and young women and are an artifact rich with meaning.

—Michelle Parnett-Dwyer, *The Strong*, Rochester, NY

Who’s in the Game: Identity and Intersectionality in Classic Board Games

Terri Toles Patkin

Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company,

Inc., 2021. Preface, introduction, chapter notes, bibliography, and index. 273 pp. \$55.00 paperback. ISBN: 97819476676913

Contemporary academic work focused on today's "board game renaissance" often examines what Stewart Woods (2012), in his book *Eurogames*, calls hobby board games—"radically different" games that have "evolved outside of the mass market" or are considered "specialist" (p. 20). This is, perhaps, not surprising, given that any academic field (especially ones like game or media studies; see my own 2021 *Board Games as Media*) concentrates on exemplars that reflect key advances in the field rather than more popular fare: for example, we write about the TV series *Mad Men* as television par excellence instead of *Two and a Half Men* as television par common. Is it any wonder that hobby games like *Catan* or *Pandemic* become fodder for new academic work on board games? They demonstrate groundbreaking game play and exemplify the field.

But games and media scholars should not throw out the mass market for the specialized, as Terri Toles Patkin's *Who's in the Game?* articulates: "If you want to understand a culture," she writes, "take a look at the games people play" (p. 19). Using research undertaken with the Center for Popular Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University as well as The Strong National Museum of Play, Patkin argues that "board games are texts through which we express our culture" (p. 2). Using mass-market board games—and, specifically, the historical shifts in game art across different iterations of *Candy Land*, *Chutes & Ladders*, *Clue*, *Guess Who*, *The Game of Life*,

Monopoly, *Operation*, *Payday* and other common games—she "concentrates on games as material objects" (p. 3). And the games that most people play are not hobby, specialized, or eurogames—they are big box store, mass-market board games.

Who's in the Game ultimately does exactly that: it examines how shifting representations in mass-market board game art reflect (or do not reflect) changing paradigms of identity and culture over the past hundred years. Patkin's expertise in rhetorical analyses of popular culture is in full effect. After the first chapter, which uses the term "Gameland" to describe the connection between board games as a popular medium to changes in cultural ideology, chapters tend to focus on one particular aspect of identity: gender (chapter 2), sexuality (chapter 3), race and ethnicity (chapter 4), religion and morality (chapter 5), age (chapter 6), ability (chapter 7), and social class (chapter 8). Chapter 9, on "Intersectionality and Identity," brings everything together in a "multidimensional intersection of those facets of ourselves" (p. 197). Minus the first and last, each chapter follows a similar structure: it opens with a short description of why each identity facet is important and how it has changed over time. The chapters then offer example after example that demonstrate how mass-market board game art reflects this identity facet. The focus in the book is centered entirely on the game aesthetics themselves, not game play, game players, or game designers.

This dedicated focus is both a strength and a challenge of the book. On the one hand, Patkin's deep dive into the historical development of game art is incredibly instructive: the chapter on race and eth-

nicity, for instance, is (predictably, sadly) horrifying for both the images that used to grace the art of our most popular games but also for how far we have yet to come with truly equitable representations. Chapters on gender and sexuality are equally shocking (and equally predictable, for cultural studies scholars). I could imagine pairing the bulk of the chapters in this book with more contemporary versions of these games in the classroom as a discussion tool or having students engage in similar rhetorical analyses of the mass-market games they have in their own homes. As ever, it is important to reflect on the way particular representations affect people, and Patkin's discussion over a range of identities helps reinforce the influence that any popular culture product—mass-market board games included—can have on players' conceptions of themselves.

On the other hand, the narrow focus on game art often remains (if you will pardon the pun) superficial, and at times I wonder how some of the claims would stand up under ethnographic methodologies. Do players always play games the way the box art intends? Popular culture studies argues that readers are always active, creating their own meanings from their experiences with popular culture. So, while *Mystery Date* undoubtedly presents a sexist, outdated image of girlhood, sexuality, and dating, do its players always unconditionally accept this type of play? I suspect there is more player resistance than what *Who's in the Game* assumes.

The exception to this critique is the final chapter 9, which contains the meat of the book's analysis. Tying together the different "identity" areas from the other chapters, "Intersectionality and Identity"

delivers a thoughtful, nuanced inquiry on social identity, marketing, popular culture, sociology, and play. While it concludes the book, readers would benefit from reading it first and then going into each middle chapter for specific examples of topics that particularly interest them.

Finally, the book would also have benefited from some images, especially when discussing the specifics of game characters' changing over time (I suspect this largely falls on the publisher rather than the author). However, the wealth of materials that Patkin was able to examine is a boon for game and media scholars, and her tireless focus on the importance of mass-market games—the most popular and most played games in our history—in the cultural landscape is a crucial step forward in developing an understanding of this board game renaissance.

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The Race Card: From Gaming Technologies to Model Minorities

Tara Fickle

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Tara Fickle's *The Race Card: From Gaming Technologies to Model Minorities* unearths the ludo-Orientalist logics that structure not only Asian racialization, but game play itself. Fickle defines ludo-Orientalism as