

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 So, while *Mystery Date* undoubtedly presents a sexist, outdated image of girlhood, sexuality, and dating, do its players always unconditionally accept this type of play?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

processes wherein “the design, marketing, and rhetoric of games shape how Asians as well as East-West relations are imagined and where notions of foreignness and racial hierarchies get reinforced” (p. 3). Tracing the history of ludo-Orientalism from nineteenth-century anxieties about Chinese American gambling to contemporary anxieties about Chinese “gold farming” in massive multiplayer online games, *The Race Card* dazzlingly explores the social and historical forces that have made “playing the race card” such a taken-for-granted concept in American culture.

In addition to offering an important corrective to the marginalization of play in Asian American studies, *The Race Card* shifts reigning paradigms in game studies by turning from racial representations to the deeper structures that connect games and race. Rather than simply critique Orientalist representations of Asian people in contemporary video games, Fickle explores how gaming is racialized even in the absence of racial representations. To illustrate, Fickle considers the example of *Pokémon GO*, an augmented-reality mobile game that enables players to catch imaginary “pocket monsters” on their phones. Not long after this game took off in summer 2016, its “lamination of virtual and real spaces” became entangled in the racial segregation of our physical geographies: people of color were racially profiled if they wandered into predominantly white neighborhoods, and white children were warned against playing in supposedly “dangerous” neighborhoods inhabited by people of color (p. 1). As Fickle points out, *Pokémon GO*’s first casualty was a Chinese American grandfather killed by an armed security guard while catching Pokémon

in a country club parking lot. In this way, although *Pokémon GO* features cute fantasy creatures and contains few readily identifiable racial markers, it illustrates how virtual and real spaces intersect in the operations of racial discrimination and violence.

Ludo-Orientalism is key to understanding the ties between gaming and racialization because Asian Americans have been integral to America’s self-conception as a nation built on fair play. Just as games of chance and skill often purport to provide equal opportunity to all players, the United States has imagined itself as a meritocracy in which race does not represent a significant barrier to upward mobility. Within this framework, Asian Americans have been cast as a model minority to augment the illusion of the United States as a place where anyone can figuratively win at the game of life. The stereotype of Asian Americans as champion gamers who pursue even their leisure activities with extreme dedication exemplifies this nexus. Accordingly, Fickle challenges game studies’ dominant approach of treating “gaming rhetoric as distinct from ‘real’ games” by putting these “real games” in conversation with the gamification of racial politics (p. 10). In doing so, she shows how play and games cannot be extricated from the histories of racial exclusion and global conflict that have shaped Asian American history. Further, she reveals how ludo-Orientalist fantasies say as much or more about the United States as they do about Asia.

In one of the book’s many acts of playful brilliance, *The Race Card* assumes the ludic order of a pair of six-sided dice in which opposing faces add up to the num-

ber seven: $1+6=7$, $2+5=7$, $3+4=7$. In other words, in a book that unfolds in a loosely chronological sequence, chapters 1 and 6, 2 and 5, and 3 and 4 each complement one another to demonstrate how ludo-Orientalism has reverberated across space and time. For example, chapters 1 and 6 together illustrate how Asia has long been associated with “the ‘dark’ side of gaming” (p. 178). In chapter 1, Fickle examines how gambling served as a device for framing Chinese Americans in the nineteenth century as threats to the ostensibly “honest” labor of the white working class. Chapter 6 identifies an echo of this history in the discourses surrounding Chinese gold farmers accused of undermining the putative fairness of massive multiplayer online games by playing for profit.

Similarly, chapters 2 and 5 serve as a complementary pair: Chapter 2 looks at how ludic metaphors of strategy and probability became rationales used to justify Japanese American incarceration, while chapter 5 studies how *Pokémon GO* transformed the threat of the Japanese empire into the soft power of a *kawaii* (“cute”) game based on virtual conquest. Finally, chapters 3 and 4 together form the heart of the book’s argument. In chapter three, Fickle illuminates how the same gambling logics that fed nineteenth-century Yellow Peril discourse helped construct the model minority myth in the midtwentieth century. During this time, the idea of Asian Americans as consummate gamblers was reworked into the myth’s glorification of Asian immigrants who “risk it all” to achieve economic success in a new country. If chapter 3 thereby reframes the model minority, chapter 4 reframes play theory by exposing its Orientalist founda-

tions. Here, Fickle casts light on how Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois relied on “Orientalist notions of the mystical East and rational West” to structure their theories of play as a “magical circle” marked off from everyday life (p. 25).

Altogether, *The Race Card* is a groundbreaking book that makes profound contributions to game studies, Asian American studies, and global Asian studies. Fickle reaches across wide-ranging historical phenomena to connect more obvious examples of ludo-Orientalism to instances in which the discovery of play proves far more surprising. For scholars of play, *The Race Card* models a unique method of analysis that attends to the specificity of distinct media forms while casting light on how they reflect surrounding cultural discourses. Moreover, given the prominence of Asia and its diasporas to the rise of gaming technologies today, this book is an important read for anyone desiring to understand better the racial politics in which games are necessarily enmired.

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Gamer Trouble: Feminist Confrontations in Digital Culture

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