

on glorifying unhealthy working conditions. Chess defends their stance on bringing feminists into game spaces despite the typical toxicity found in these spaces. For the industry to change, there needs to be more diverse gamers, and feminist gamers could have a hand in remaking game spaces into spaces of equality.

Chess's book is an accessible look into the importance of play and the usefulness of video games. While some of the points seem obvious and terms may seem over-explained to scholars, the book's reach and accessibility makes this approach necessary. The book is not just for game scholars, feminist scholars, and gamers. It is for anyone interested in the topic. This broad target makes Chess's book a greater contribution to the field than its arguments alone. Introducing more people to both feminism and play can help to strengthen both. *Playing like a Feminist* is an engaging and informative read that will have readers looking to go play!

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—Steffi Shook, *Manhattanville College, Harrison, NY*

### **Making Games for Impact**

*Kurt Squire*

Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2021. Contents, introduction, coda, acknowledgments, references, and index. 252 pp. \$30.00, paper. ISBN: 9780262542173

Beginning with the assumption that games are effective learning tools and that a market for games designed for nonentertainment purposes exists, Kurt Squire's

*Making Games for Impact* pairs a practical account of the author's experiences directing the Games + Learning + Society + Center (GLS) at the University of Wisconsin—Madison with broader discussion of designing games for social impact in general. In doing so, Squire situates social-impact games at the intersection of bureaucracies, epistemologies, and industries, taking care to describe the unique constraints that learning objectives and research agendas create for productions. The result is a must read for designers and administrators interested in integrating commercial game production into institutional research agendas.

Chapter 1 begins by outlining the common problems that designers of social impact games face, such as a lack of what commercial designers refer to as “polish” (p. 8). Chapter 2 describes how the Game + Learning + Society set out to address these problems by forming a unique design team (featuring artists, stem-cell researchers, and students) for the purposes of creating a competitive strategy game in which viruses combat the human immune system (Virulent). Chapter 3 charts the GLS's venture into the under-examined subgenre of knowledge games, which are games designed to teach science. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the institutional constraints that emerged when the GLS set its sights on commercial markets. Chapter 6 explores the GLS's work on games and mindfulness. Chapters 7 and 8 provide an in-depth look at the day-to-day operations of the GLS, and chapter 9 concludes with advice for setting up GLS-inspired development teams in institutional research settings.

For those unfamiliar with the field of

social impact games, chapter 4 provides an interesting discussion of the cultural and institutional constraints that a research environment places on a design team that fits nicely within current conversations about the difficulties associated with AAA (big budget) and Indie production. Chapters 7 and 8 get bogged down in the minutia of projects that did not work out but should still be of interest to readers intent on pursuing similar research objectives.

More attention to inclusivity and diversity in the field of social-impact games would have been a welcomed addition to the book. And there are times when Squire slips into a futurist rhetoric that focuses on where games designed for learning could be (as opposed to where games designed for learning are at). But these speculations are accompanied by frank and honest appraisals of the difficulties that his design teams faced—difficulties ranging from engaging students (chapter 3) and targeting commercial markets (chapter 7) to convincing risk-averse administrators that a game design team deserves continuous financial support (chapter 4). Overall, it is the discussion of these difficulties that makes the book stand out, especially for a broader audience interested in production histories and cultures in general.

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—David Murphy, *Toronto Metropolitan University, Toronto, ON, Canada*

**Free-to-Play: Mobile Video Games, Bias, and Norms**

*Christopher A. Paul*

Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press,

2020. Introduction, conclusion, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, and index. 512 pp. \$30.00, paper. ISBN: 9780262539418

In *Free-to-Play: Mobile Video Games, Bias, and Norms*, Christopher A. Paul takes both academic game studies and lay gaming culture to task for their endemic dismissiveness of the increasingly important world of free-to-play (F2P) mobile games. Unsatisfied with game journalists' and fans' claims that F2P monetization leads inevitably to poor game design, Paul sets out to diagnose the deep-seated bias running through the heavily—but subtly—freighted evaluative norms by which gamers and reviewers elevate premium, pay-once experiences and denigrate the conspicuously feminized world of F2P gaming. Paul reveals these biases by juxtaposing core gaming culture's ostensibly rational oppositions to F2P games with its other, more credulous treatments of more familiar pay-once game objects. What emerges from the book's surprisingly diverse set of case studies is an image of F2P skepticism informed less by concerns about exploitative monetization practices or predatory marketing models as by “a bit of snobbery and gate-keeping” by an “old guard . . . defensive about sharing their hobby with games they don't understand and gamers they don't recognize” (p. xxv). By “giving context to the norms and values that underlie perceptions of core gamers, journalists, developers, and game scholars” (p. xxxvi), Paul's book provides a much-needed surface on which game studies scholars can trace a more nuanced, more gradational aesthetic map to the increasingly diverse world of F2P games.