

Palgrave Studies in Cyberpsychology

Series Editor
Jens Binder
Nottingham Trent University
Nottingham, UK

Palgrave Studies in Cyberpsychology aims to foster and to chart the scope of research driven by a psychological understanding of the effects of the 'new technology' that is shaping our world after the digital revolution. The series takes an inclusive approach and considers all aspects of human behaviours and experiential states in relation to digital technologies, to the Internet, and to virtual environments. As such, Cyberpsychology reaches out to several neighbouring disciplines, from Human-Computer Interaction to Media and Communication Studies. A core question underpinning the series concerns the actual psychological novelty of new technology. To what extent do we need to expand conventional theories and models to account for cyberpsychological phenomena? At which points is the ubiquitous digitisation of our everyday lives shifting the focus of research questions and research needs? Where do we see implications for our psychological functioning that are likely to outlast shortlived fashions in technology use?

More information about this series at
<http://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14636>

Rachel Kowert
Editor

Video Games and Well-being

Press Start

palgrave
macmillan

Editor

Rachel Kowert

Take This

Seattle, WA, USA

Palgrave Studies in Cyberpsychology

ISBN 978-3-030-32769-9

ISBN 978-3-030-32770-5 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32770-5>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2020

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Palgrave Pivot imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

FOREWORD

It's late morning on a cloudy Saturday morning and my daughter is solidly into hour two of iPad time—this morning it's *Roblox* (Roblox Corporation, 2005). I might feel guilty, but it's early and I'm tired. Also, she's got something she *really* wants me to see, and then she wants to show me the rest of her world (which usually involves wings, water, and home furnishings). Three days later, she's got out our old Nintendo DS and is playing *Animal Crossing* (Nintendo, 2001). When I come to her to tell her to get off, she stops me, saying,

“Wait, momma, do you want to see all the things I've built in the town?”

And so I take a deep breath and sit down to look over her shoulder at a bad angle and see what she's made. In five minutes she'll transition to practicing her ukulele and I'll sit on the couch playing *Alphabeat 2* (Spry Fox, 2018) on my phone and listen to her awkwardly work through a new set of chords.

My daughter gets the same sense of mastery, the same creative experience, in all three of these settings. And, as this book notes, so do many, many other people. Digital games are new(ish) cousins to board games and playground games and theater games all alike, with both similar and totally new ways of providing players with a range of opportunities to develop skills, explore their inner and outer worlds, and see models for human interaction. What this book does so masterfully is to consider these models through careful parsing of the real evidence out

there—instead of descending into a moral panic about screens, digital content, and online interaction.

In my work, I'm constantly talking to people who live and breathe games, and for whom digital gaming worlds are full of joy, fun, and delight. And so often, these loves exist alongside passions for gardening, or skiing, or theater, or bodybuilding.

We need good guidance, backed by good science, on how to help everyone—parents, kids, adults—understand what games can and cannot do, what they do and do not offer in terms of skill building and learning, and how they speak to and shape cultural norms and conversations. For example, in my work in the field of mental health there is fascinating early evidence about the role of games in supporting the development of skills and enabling a sense of value, achievement, and satisfaction among people with few other opportunities—not to mention the sheer joy people experience while playing.

Play has always been an essential element of human life—let's catch up to our use of it in a digital context. It is time we recognize, understand, and celebrate the ways in which games add to cultural conversations, promote play, mastery, and creativity, and help people enjoy their lives. I'm probably going to stick mostly to my cooking and yoga and backpacking, but you'll find me to be a longtime devotee of a couple of games (and a loyalist to the ones my husband makes!) and an avid watcher of the games my husband and daughter like to play.

Seattle, USA

Eve Crevoshay
Executive Director, *Take This*

REFERENCES

- Nintendo. (2001). *Animal Crossing* [Video game]. Nintendo Co.
 Roblox Corporation. (2005). *Roblox* [Video game]. Roblox Corporation.
 Spry Fox. (2018). *Alphabear 2* [Video game]. Spry Fox.

Eve Crevoshay is the executive director of Take This, whose mission is to decrease the stigma, and increase the support for, mental health in the game enthusiast community and inside the game industry. She is a 15-year veteran of the nonprofit sector, with a focus on fundraising and executing strategy. Her background spans education, social services, and the arts. She's also a yoga teacher, avid gardener and cook, and gamer. She lives in Seattle area with her husband, daughter, and two dogs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who helped bring this project to life. Your hard work has provided a solid first step in shifting the focus away from whether or not video games *harm us* and towards how and why video games *help us* grow, learn, and thrive.

CONTENTS

1	Digital Games and Well-Being: An Overview	1
	Felix Reer and Thorsten Quandt	
2	Press Reset	23
	Chelsea Hughes	
3	Explore the Map	37
	Shane Tilton	
4	Oh Me, Oh My! Identity Development Through Video Games	49
	Sarah Sawyer	
5	Forever Questing and “Getting Gud”	65
	Jamie Madigan	
6	Positive Psychology and Gaming: Strength and Resilience +1	77
	Ryan Kelly	
7	Gaming the Mind and Minding the Game: Mindfulness and Flow in Video Games	97
	Mark D. Cruea	

8	Follow the Trail of Enemies	109
	Emory S. Daniel Jr.	
9	You Are the One Foretold; Finding Yourself Through the Journey	125
	Megan Connell and Kelli Dunlap	
10	Extra Lives	141
	Raffael Boccamazzo	
11	Concluding Comments	159
	Rachel Kowert	
	Index	165

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Raffael Boccamazzo, Psy.D. received his doctorate in clinical psychology from the Washington State School of Professional Psychology in 2013, having completed his predoctoral internship at the Monroe Correctional Complex for the Washington State Department of Corrections. Since January 2016, he has been the clinical director of Take This—a national mental health nonprofit destigmatizing mental health challenges in the game industry. Additionally, he trains clinicians and teachers on the applied usage of role-playing games such as Dungeons & Dragons and co-founded, is an autism advocate, and is the administrator for a geek-centric psychology practice in Seattle, Washington: Save Point Behavioral Health.

Megan Connell, Psy.D. is a board-certified clinical psychologist whose practice encompasses a wide variety of topics and approaches. Her work with girls, geeks, and gamers has garnered her national attention, particularly for her work in applied role playing games such as Dungeons & Dragons. She has appeared on Geek and Sundry to talk about the interface of gaming and psychology and regularly speaks at major gaming conventions.

Mark D. Cruca, Ph.D. is an associate professor at Ohio Northern University. His research interests draw from a variety of perspectives including critical theory, political economy, reader-response theory, and feminist theory. His most recent book chapter focused on how the video game industry's business models impact the environment.

Emory S. Daniel Jr., Ph.D. is an assistant professor at Appalachian State University. His research specializes in parasocial relationships/interactions, gaming, and strategic communication. His research has been published in outlets: *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, *Communication Research Reports*, *Journalism Studies*, *Internet and Higher Education Journal*, and *Journal of Advertising Education*.

Kelli Dunlap, Psy.D. is a psychologist and award-winning game designer who leverages her expertise to advocate for and advance the intersection of games and mental health. She has been recognized internationally for her work in the games and psychology space and is an outspoken advocate for mental health in and through games. Kelli earned her master's in game design from American University and her doctorate in clinical psychology from the American School of Professional Psychology. She is an adjunct faculty at the American University Game Lab and Director of Mental Health Research and Design at iThrive Games. In her spare time, she volunteers at a local animal rescue as a foster mom.

Chelsea Hughes, Ph.D. is an Insights Researcher at Riot Games. Her history of research has focused on social behavior in gaming, with specific focus on pro-social behaviors. Prior to her work in the gaming industry, she worked as a mental health practitioner specializing in college populations. She has presented about geek culture and the promotion of healthy gaming habits at universities around the world. In addition to her industry work, she frequently speaks at major gaming conventions; provides D&I education and consultation for the gaming industry; and is an award-winning cosplayer.

Ryan Kelly, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist with a diverse practice, but with a specialty in using geek culture, tabletop games, and video games to improve therapeutic outcomes. He has published several articles and book chapters in the field of mental health and gaming. He is the co-founder of the geek-psychology media company Geeks Like Us, as well as the author and co-illustrator of *Max Gamer*, a strength-based graphic novel for Aspies. He regularly speaks at major gaming and comic conventions, institutions, and TV spots on topics like superherology, D&D and e-parenting.

Rachel Kowert, Ph.D. is the research director of *Take This*. She holds a doctorate in Psychology from the University of York (UK) and a Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology from Santa Clara University. She has

published several books and scientific articles relating to the psychology of games and, more recently, the relationship between games and mental health specifically. Her most recent book, *A Parent's Guide to Video Games*, won an INDIES award in the science category.

Jamie Madigan, Ph.D. is an industrial-organizational psychologist with over 20 years of experience helping make people and workplaces better. He currently works at LeaderAmp.com as the head of product development. Dr. Madigan is also a nonfiction author and podcaster who seeks to popularize the use of psychology to understanding video games and gamified systems. He writes and podcasts at www.psychologyofgames.com and is the author of the book *Getting Gamers: The Psychology of Video Games and Their Impact on the People Who Play Them*.

Thorsten Quandt, Ph.D. is the professor of online communication at the University of Muenster, Germany. His research and teaching fields include online communication, media innovation research, digital games, and VR/AR. His work was published in leading communication and psychology journals, including *Addiction*, *Computers in Human Behavior* and *Journal of Communication*. He is co-editor of *The Video Game Debate*, *Multiplayer* and *Multiplayer 2*. He is the founding chair of the Digital Games Research section at the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA).

Felix Reer, Ph.D. is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Communication at the University of Muenster, Germany. His research interests include media psychology, psychosocial aspects of online communication, effects of digital games, and the use of highly immersive media technologies, such as VR and AR. He is vice-chair of the Digital Games Research Section of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA).

Sarah Sawyer, Psy.D. is a licensed mental health counselor, associate clinician, and postdoctoral fellow at Sound Psychopathology and Assessment in Seattle, Washington. She specializes in integration of geek culture in the therapeutic setting, working with adults and youth, and the application of favored fictional anthologies as a therapeutic technique via role-modeling and analogous experience discussion. She has authored a clinical article for iThrive Organization, spoken on multiple academic panels, and is a moderator of the compendium library for the Geek Therapy Network.

Shane Tilton, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at Ohio Northern University. He was awarded the 2018 Young Stationers' Prize and the 2015 Outstanding New Adviser from the Society for Collegiate Journalists. His published works include the role of journalism in society and the pedagogy of gaming. His work on social media and university life earned him the BEA 2013 Harwood Dissertation Award.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	The Big 5 Personality Traits	26
Table 6.1	Relationship between subjective well-being and psychopathology	80
Table 6.2	<i>Dark Souls</i> classes and attributes	83
Table 6.3	Top rated builds from MugenMonkey character building	85
Table 6.4	Dynamic profile of strengths and weaknesses in <i>Dark Souls</i> character building	86
Table 6.5	Cloud's dynamic strengths and weaknesses profile	86
Table 6.6	Cloud's profile determined by environment	87
Table 6.7	Dynamic profile of strengths and weaknesses across diagnoses	88