Student Example
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SOC 306

Media Paper
 The first form of media I chose to discuss is video games. Ninety-nine percent of the time videogames portray women, both dead and alive, in a disgraceful and over sexualized manner. The majority of the time, non-playable female characters are displayed as objects and or property who are there for the convenience and pleasure of men rather than an actual person. These women are used and abused and then discarded. Take Grand Theft Auto for example, you can have sex with a prostitute, then kill her to get your money back. Even if the female character is playable and competent, like Laura Croft in Tomb Raider, she is completely over sexualized. She has incredibly oversized boobs, a small waste, and explores Egyptian tombs and such while wearing shorts so tight and short that in real life they would be clear up her butt by the time she got them buttoned.
 Ian Coppock stated that, “I conducted a ton of research on a bunch of different games and gaming magazines from all genres and publishers. […] I could only find two female characters that were not portrayed in a sexualized or demeaning manner, out of the 150 games or so I have in my apartment. Portrayals in magazines were similarly disappointing: female characters were either portrayed in skimpy clothing or as subservient and shielded by a strong male character. Case in point: Bioshock Infinite. Note how the female character seems helpless, scared, and almost childlike, cowering behind the male character. […] Even if certain games have strong or interesting female characters, they are still demeaned through the outfits designed for them.” (Coppock) I.e. Laura Croft. While I lean more to the side that says violent video games don’t make kids shoot up schools, I do believe that objectifying, demeaning, and assaulting women as well as treating them as if they were inferior to men in video games does cause boys and men to do this in real life. I also believe the same goes for music that’s derogatory towards women. To me there is a bit of a difference between mass murder and treating a woman like crap or using her for the sole purpose of benefiting a man or men. If it doesn’t help lead to this, it certainly doesn’t help stop it. It desensitize men so that they won’t think twice if they overhear it.
 “I think part of the issue is that the gaming industry is overwhelmingly male. Designers, composers and programmers are almost always men.” (Coppock) This definitely needs to change, not just because of how female characters are portrayed (but that is my main issue) but it’s been noted that women pay attention to different aspects of detail. Like we discussed in one of the past chapters dealing with sexual fantasies, the men pay attention to what the people are doing and what they look like but the women pay attention to scenery and detail. When you actually have women working as designers, composers, and programmers, you get an amazing result. Not only do you have more realistic detail in the scenery, like how the elements effect everything from trees blowing in the wind to water looking lifelike, you also have more realistic detail in the characters. The characters are much more lifelike in pretty much every way possible - from clothing actually fitting the weather and situation to facial expressions, like people squinting when a light is shined in their eyes, and involuntary actions such as moving their hand up to block the light. Also, actions based off of emotion are different. A few examples of this are: a non-playable female character shooting a guy because he was threatening her and calling her derogatory names, as opposed to cowering and taking it, a young girl stealing a horse and running off because someone she considered to be a friend started treating her like property, last, a young teen making snarky or sarcastic remarks to adults. When you put all of this together you get something like *The Last of Us*, which is what the descriptions above were based on. In the very beginning you are playing as Joel’s daughter, then you play as Joel for the majority of the game, BUT during this time the female characters are not helpless; they hold their own and are just as brave and resourceful as the male characters. Later on you play as Ellie, another main character who is a 14 year old girl, and she takes on all of Joel’s responsibilities when he is injured.
 Another example of a popular game with a strong female character is *Half-Life 2* whose main character is a woman named Alyx Vance. *Half-Life 2* is, “[…] One of the biggest-selling games in history, has a legion of bloodthirsty fan boys, and produced a character who’s received dozens of accolades, including a spot on numerous gaming magazines’ lists of top 10 characters: Alyx Vance. Alyx is a strongly written character who’s not sexualized, and the fans absolutely love her.” (Coppock) Sadly, even after asking a friend,these are the only two games we came up with that have strong female characters who are not sexualized.
 “According to the Entertainment Software Association, as of 2012, 47% of all video game players are women and girls. […] There are more 18-and-older women playing games than boys 17 or younger.” (Coppock) Two years later another study was done and the amount of female players is still increasing. According to The Daily Dot, “A new study released by the Entertainment Software Association has revealed that adult women now occupy the largest demographic in the gaming industry. Women over 18 made up a whopping 36 percent of the gaming population, followed by adult men at 35 percent. Teenage boys, who are often stereotyped as the biggest gamers, now lag far behind their older female counterparts, making up just 17 percent of the gaming demographic.” ([Romano](http://www.dailydot.com/geek/adult-women-largest-gaming-demographic/)) This leaves the remaining 12 percent to be girls under 18. Despite these numbers, a lot of video games still perpetuate the culture of misogyny and sexism, not just in the game but also in real life with the way female gamers are treated.
 Anita Sarkeesian, a media and video game critic talks about the disgusting way women are treated in video games in her video “Women as Background Decoration.” She defines sexual objectification as, “The practice of treating or representing a human being as a thing or mere instrument to be used for another’s sexual purposes. Sexually objectified women are valued primarily for their bodies, or body parts, which are presented as existing for the pleasure and gratification of others.” And notes that for the past 43, starting clear back in November of 1971 with the first commercially sold video game, scantily clad women have been placed beside games presenting both themselves and the game as toys to be played with by men and boys. She defines women as background decoration as, “The subset of largely insignificant non-playable female characters whose sexuality or victimhood is exploited […]” and notes that non playable women characters have little to no individual personal identity or personality and are used as everything from decorative elements and furniture to sex objects to be used and abused. This is because the men in the games are seen as the sexual subjects and the women are seen as nothing more than sexual objects. Video games encourage players to directly participate in the objectification of women as opposed to just watching (like TV. or movie) or to go from passive looking to active looking. She also discusses the direct aspects of objectification which are: instrumentality, commodification, interchangeability, violability, and disposability, and how all of these aspects are all usually imbedded in programed behaviors of NPCs making it seem as if female sexuality as something that belongs to others. She also makes a very good comparison when she stated, in slightly different words, that women serve the same purpose as a vending machine. Women are just vending machines that dispense sex as well as other goods and services. They are designed to be expendable, used up, and tossed out – just like a can of soda. One other very important point Sarkeesian makes is that, “When men are depicted as using female NPC as tools or commodities, their actions are portrayed as part of what makes them powerful and by extension part of what makes the player feel powerful. These interactive algorithms transmit cultural messages of near constant affirmation of male heterosexual dominance, while simultaneous reinforcing the widespread regressive belief that women’s primary role is to satisfy the [sexual] desires of men.” Women NPCs are nothing more than, “sexual playthings and the perpetual victims of male violence.” (Sarkeesian)

When it comes to a lot of music, women are not really treated any better. I have personally heard many more examples of rap music being derogatory towards women compared to other types of music. However, there definitely examples of this in other types of music as well. I picked two examples by different artists and I censored them to make the derogatory/disrespectful words stand out more. One example of rap music that is derogatory toward women is by Dr. Dre and Snoop Dog is, some of the lyrics (lines separated by a dash) are, “B\*\*\*\*\*\* ain't s\*\*\* but h\*\*s and t\*\*\*\*s - Lick on these n\*\*\* and suck the d\*\*\* - Get the f\*\*\* out after you're done - And I hope in my ride to make a quick run.[…] We flip flop and serve h\*\*\* like flap jacks – (But we don't love them h\*\*\*) B\*\*\*\*, and it's like that - This is what you look for in a h\* who got cash flow - You run up in them h\*\*\* and grab the cash - And get your dash on […]So I head down the street to long beach - Just so I could meet, a freak - To lick me from my head to my feet - And I'm here, now I'm ready to be done up - But I'm from the pound and we don't love them h\*\*\* - How could you trust a h\*\*?  - Why? 'cause a h\*\*’s a t\*\*\*\* - We don't love them t\*\*\*\*\* - Why? - 'cause a t\*\*\*\*'s a b\*\*\* - And my d\*\*\*\* constantly in her mouth And turnin' them t\*\*\*\* a\*\* h\*\*\* the f\*\*\* out - […] See my girl's house, Dre, pass the glock - Kick in the door, I look on the floor - It's my little cousin Daz and he's f\*\*\*\*\*' my h\*\*, yo – B\*\*\*\*\*\* ain't s\*\*\* I uncocked my s\*\*\*... I'm heart-broken but I'm still locked - Man, f\*\*\* a b\*\*\*\*!” (Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg)

Another example is by Akinyele, some of the lyrics include. “You know I break a b\*\*\*\* neck! [This is repeated 5x] I can't stand a b\*\*\*\* […]so I just f\*\*\* 'em like I hate 'em - H\*\*s wanna oppose, like they know me or they knew me - But b\*\*\*\* you never blew me, so don't say a f\*\*\*in' thing to me[…] B\*\*\*\* runnin' off for the track - Then a b\*\*\*\* got it slapped -So don't be a n\*\*\*\* sex-slave b\*\*\*\* -Don't try to be brave b\*\*\*\* - You be a dead b\*\*\*\* in the grave b\*\*\*\* […] B\*\*\*\* I slap your motherf\*\*\*ing teeth out […] Yo, beatin' b\*\*\*\*es up ain't nothing new to me […] I make, b\*\*\*\*es panick and sweat for their life - It's bad that b\*\*\*\*es mostly get Stabbed to death with they own knife - I cruise around town, cruise their ass with a .22 (B\*\*\*\*) […] Oh shut the f\*\*\* up b\*\*\*\*! - You don't get no respect, hell no!” (Akinyele) The topics that would sum these songs up would be: disrespect, objectification, victimization, abuse, and murder strictly of women. Oh and also male bonding.
 Between video games and music alone it’s no wonder the gender equality gap is as big as it is. Kids grow up listening to this garbage and interacting with it (in video games) like it’s no big deal. So a lot of them probably don’t even think twice about it when they see or hear their piers disrespecting women; sadly, they are probably more apt to encourage this behavior than say something about it. There’s not much of a step from saying you treat women badly to actually doing it, especially when your pears support and/or encourage it.
 On top of video games and music, we have magazines that continue to further the equality gap. Men have magazines like Playboy and Hustler that once again turn women into objects. Whereas women have how to bake and please your man, which once again makes it appear that women are only here to support and sexually satisfy men. This is why I usually don’t read magazines, on occasion I do pick up a copy of Import Turner or Super Street but usually there is a scantily clad women blocking the car in the picture. I honestly can’t think of one magazine directed towards men that I have picked up that didn’t have some half clothed girl in it.

All three forms of media I chose to discuss treat men as the subject and women as the object. Men are portrayed as being strong, dominant, and in power, while women are treated as weak, helpless, subservient, less than men, and sometimes not even treated as people but as mere objects for the benefit of men. The purpose of these stereotypes is for the benefit of men, and while benefiting men it puts women at a disadvantage. It maintains the gender system by making it seem that women are less than men, not equal to.
 What I have learned from our text and this class that helps me understand the consequences of stereotyping in the media, is that the media, at least in the US, tries to put everyone in a box even if they don’t fit. If someone doesn’t fit the criteria of that box, they are overlooked or told they are wrong. I now have an even deeper understanding of how hard it can be for someone who doesn’t fit the social norm or the gender binary system. This class has helped me understand that gender, race, class, and sexual orientation are all interlocking systems of oppression because people do gender differently depending on these things. Different cultures have different traditions or rituals boys and girls go through to become a man or woman. Also, being a woman or man can mean two completely different things depending on culture because each culture has their own set of norms. I also learned that if you are not a straight, Christian, white male, you are probably being oppressed in some way or another. I do think of gender in a more complex way now understand the difference between gender and sexuality better. Thanks to the Genderbread man, I can now explain things better and in an easier manor to others. I also learned that even if you try your best to not do gender, people will do it for you.

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