

Maybe She can Save Herself: An Analysis of the Sexism in Virtual Worlds



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Abstract

Seemingly harmless, the way video game companies portray women feeds into their alienation and harassment. The correlation between the evolution of virtual worlds and gender stereotyping is significant. The causes of this sexism are discussed in order to move towards a solution. When the majority of popular video games has normalized the stereotypical “damsel in distress” or overly sexualized female characters, they are bound to cause the young men playing the games to normalize treating women as inferior or as sexual objects.



Introduction

With the revolution of online gaming and communication throughout the world, **the rise of online harassment has been directly proportional - specifically towards women.** Examples of the manifestation of this sexism have been documented as men accusing women gamers that they only have the desire to play the video games to appeal to men.

Examples

This sexism is specifically prevalent in video games such as

- *The Legend of Zelda*
- *Super Mario Bros*
- *Assassin's Creed*
- *Donkey Kong*
- *Grand Theft Auto*
- *Final Fantasy*
- *BioShock*
- *Custer's Revenge*

Look familiar? There is a good chance you yourself have played these incredibly popular games.

References

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4. [Author Removed at Request of Original Publisher]. "Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication." *10.5 Controversial Issues*. University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing Edition, 2016. This Edition Adapted from a Work Originally Produced in 2010 by a Publisher Who Has Requested That It Not Receive Attribution., 22 Mar. 2016. Web. 30 Oct. 2016.

Causes

There is sexism in many aspects of life. Gender-based discrimination is more of an issue in video games because

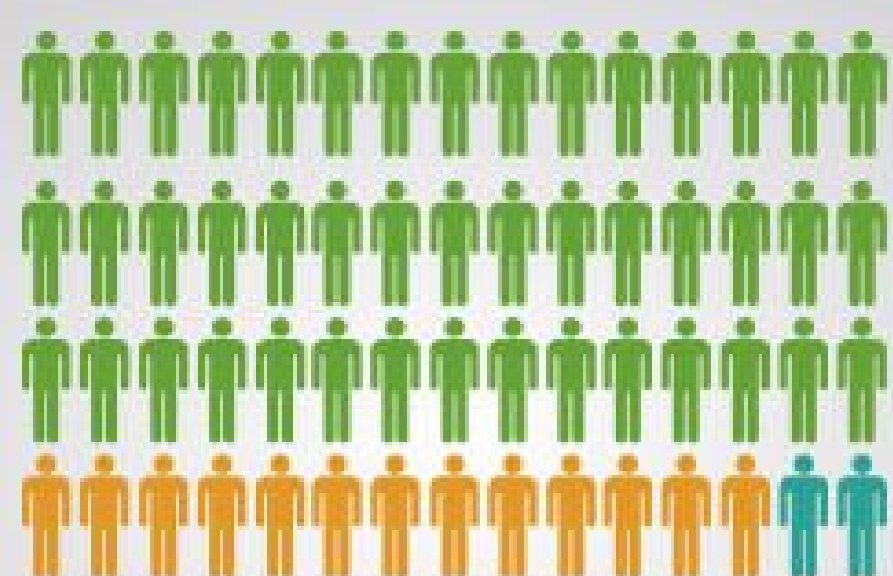
- Video game companies appeal to the young, male consumer
 - Companies over-sexualize female characters
 - Companies typically make the protagonist a male character
- Online worlds breed harassment due to the interconnections without showing your face or giving your name
- There is a prevalence of mob mentality - male users strive to achieve the most respect and admiration from other male users

Conclusion

- There should be limits to how much violence and gender-based discrimination is portrayed in virtual worlds
- Women should be encouraged to pursue male-dominated fields
- People need to be aware first and foremost that there is an issue

GAME DEVELOPERS AT A GLANCE 2014

Results from the IGDA's Game Developer Satisfaction Survey



Gender

Men: 76%

Women: 22%

Transgender/Androgynous: 2%