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DTC 101

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Major Authoring Project 2

The concept of feminism and gender equality has been a topic of debate throughout history. Predominantly in America, there have been three prominent waves of feminism that swept the nation. The first wave took place in the 1920s when women were striving for the political ideal of getting a right to vote in the election. The second wave took place in the 1960s and the 1970s where women started to question the cultural patterns of women's role in history. The third, and most recent, wave of feminism started in the 1990s and is still going on today. The main focus of this third wave is not very definable as of yet. This could be because the wave is still occurring and society is not yet able to reflect upon the entire wave to find a specific meaning or focus behind it. One piece that can be viewed within this wave is women in the gaming world which is predominantly seen as a male's realm (Fox). There are many people who explore and present their opinions on feminism and video games, such as Anita Sarkeesian who is considered an extreme gamer girl feminist. Sarkeesian has released a series of videos about the tropes of women in video games. These being the Damsel in Distress, Ms. Male characters, and Woman as Background Decorations.

The concept of the Damsel in Distress has been present throughout history dating back to some of the first stories told. For video games the Damsel in Distress is a plot device used that started with one of the first Mario video games where Mario has to save the princess after she is kidnapped by the antagonist. Since this game was released the Damsel in Distress has been used as a model for most video game's plots. As far as Sarkeesian's opinion on the usage of this plot

device she believes that it does not present a positive image of women in today's society. Women are perceived as being weak and being a prize to be won at the end of the game, incapable of taking care of themselves. Sarkeesian goes on in her video to explain that, "The Damsel in Distress is not just a synonym for weakness. Instead it works by ripping away the power from female characters. Even helpful or seemingly capable ones... Distilled down to its essence the plot device works by trading the disempowerment of female characters for the empowerment of male characters" (Sarkeesian, Damsel). She shows a number of examples to show this happening and the most capable female character that was continually being put as the Damsel was Zelda from the Legend of Zelda series. Throughout the series she helps the protagonist acting almost as a sidekick at times and even fighting in certain cases. But she is continuously put in the position of needing to be rescued from the hero. I agree with Sarkeesian in that I would like to see more strong female main characters. However I do not think that the Damsel in Distress storyline will go away anytime soon. It is just too wrapped into our cultural acceptance since the first stories were told.

Another topic that Sarkeesian discusses in her videos is what she calls the Ms. Male character. The Ms. Male character is a female character that was created based off of the original male design of the character. She refers to Ms. Pac-man as the first Ms. Male character because they made her by just adding stereotypical women accessories to the original Pac-man, like a bow and makeup. According to Sarkeesian, Ms. Male characters only exist because of the original male character and most always are made to have a close relationship with the original. The "male is associated with the norm while female is associated with the deviation of the norm" (Sarkeesian Ms. Male). She goes on to show how generally in video games when distinguishing what characters are male and female, the female is generally always the one that is marked in

some way to show that they are not male while the male remains unmarked (Ms. Male 10:05). This distinction separates the male and female groups and reinforces the norm to deviation of the norm argument. I personally do feel that this duplication of the main character to make new characters happens too much in video games. I believe that there should be more of an original design when it comes to new characters in games to create a unique personality and story for the new character, not just have the new female character as a side kick who tags along.

Both the Damsel in Distress trope and the Ms. Male character trope infringe on the potential for strong female leading characters in video games. While they are used as a simple story plot to keep the game going and to create fast female characters, I believe it is necessary to put a twist on these concepts of gaming. Sarkeesian's examples of modern day gaming feminism show that there need to be more strong capable female characters that can take care of themselves in the video game world. In addition to this characters should not be a female clone version of the main male character. There needs to be more of a strong independent role for female characters for female and male gamers to watch, play, and enjoy.

Works Cited

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