

As children, role models play a large role in our lives, they to help guild us and inspire us.

Role models can come from a wide verity of places, they can be our parents, teachers, international icons such as singers or sports players, they can be literary or movie characters.

They affect how we live our lives, and through us, effect society around us.

Since the 2012, when both The Hunger Games and Disney's Brave franchise came out, the number of girls participating in national archery completions has doubled.

Consider the effects great novels have had on the world when they were the dominate media.

How Huckleberry Fin, effected our views on race, or on a more personal note, many people have specific songs, books or movies that they will tell you had great effect on their lives. Which is something I can speak to personally, Irrational Game BioSchock infinite is a personal favorite of mine, I felt it enriched my critical mind.

In 2008 Pew Research found that 97% of American teens, ages 12-17 play some kind of computer, console, or mobile games,

**with nearly one-third** of teen gamers play games **every day,**

and another one in five or 21% play games three to five days a week.

All of which is to say that nearly the entire rising generation are being increasingly influenced by what they see in the video game industry. You yourself probably find enjoyment in some kind of video or mobile game.

Video games are an incredible, and immersive art form.

If you are playing a story based game, with a leading character, you are that character, it isn't Benedict Cumberbatch, or Jennifer Lawrence, or Chris Pratt, making the decisions and going through this quest or ordeal:

You are.

Due to their rising importance in our culture, it is important that games display diverse, complex and positive role models for players. The same way it is important for book, and movies, and even sports to display all races and genders equally.

Which is why it is so disheartening to me when a study Robinson et al. study done in 2008 found that in video games "male characters outnumbered female characters 3 to 1." And when they are included, woman are very rarely leading roles.

When looking into why this discrepancy existed, I found the best explanation I found was that:

“In the first three months of availability, games with only a male hero sold around 25 percent better than games with an optional female hero. and **Games with exclusively male heroes sold around 75 percent better than games with only female heroes.**”

This would seem to be explanation enough for an industry out to make money. Except that according to Pew research, women and men are equally likely to play video games, and that on average, the industry gives female-led games 40% of the marketing budget that male-led games receive. This inequality in media coverage is not dissimilar to the lack of marketing and coverage of women's sports.

Now by a show of hands, how many of you have heard of the Grand Theft Auto Games?

The latest game in the Grand Theft Auto series, Grand Theft Auto 5 had a marketing and development budget of **\$265 million**, currently the most expensive video game ever produced.

With so much money behind it, it has everything: intuitive and immersive gameplay, rich open world, fantastic graphics, a **Technical** masterpiece from a programming perspective.

For the story however is somewhat lacking. Objectively speaking main the characters are terrible people, horrid role models for anyone. The three male leads are a bank robber, a common crook, and an ex-gangster.

For female Characters:

You have a spend-a-holic wife who cheats on her husband, a (Jane wrote show on screen) government agent whose sole purpose in life is to give directions until she has to die, and a blond daughter... There really isn't that much more to her.

But to me, the thing that bothers me most, is that while all the characters are terrible people, the men are the only ones that get a chance to redeem themselves, are shown with any depth or diversity.

The Women are stagnate. Stuck forever in their cut and past roles.

Now, that is just one example of a sexist, but it's an important one.

Even people not involved in gaming have at least heard about it. The same way everyone heard about The Hunger Games movies through some way or another.

So, I would like to let's see how aware you are of non-sexist portrayals of woman in gaming:

By a show of hands, how many of you have heard of the characters I am about to list, know them by name rather than franchise:

Don't worry, I picked really recognizable names, from popular games:

Lara Croft (Tomb Raider)

Zelda, (Legend of Zelda,)

Liara T'Soni (Needs work saying name) (Mass Effect)

Cortana (Halo)

Undyne (Undertail)

-Nods, Make brief comment-

All of these Characters are interesting dynamic women, who play either a leading role, or an important secondary role in their games.

Now some of you may not know who any of these woman are, but then you aren't gamers.

*But most of you have heard of Grant thief auto five, and anyone remotely connected to the gaming world heard about it.*

All of which is to say that, Young people growing up with video games, are not seeing the same diversity in female characters, that they do in male characters, which has an effect on how they see themselves, and each other.

(pause)

This inequality needs to change, it is not fair to girls who do like games, and it this lack of representation in the gaming industry, pushes away a untapped market of woman and girls.

Many of whom see Video game's interactive and immersive art form as a pass time for guys who want to blow things up, when they are as of yet largely untapped trove of creative expression waiting to happen.

This lack of representation, and diversity needs to change, woman need greater and more diverse representation in gaming, more heroines, and more complex woman.

And while There will always be a place for side characters, comical characters, Caricatures, forgettable characters, army hordes of Nazi Zombies for the main character to plow through, and even Love interests in need of rescue. They must be balanced out in our games.

I will be the first to say: There is nothing wrong with having a damsel in distress characters, or sexy warriors: *But that can't be all we see.*

Young girls and guys, who play games, and see others playing video game need to a diverse cast of characters. Heroes, and villains, and everything in between, with a mix of Muscle and brains, Male and female, Pretty and Ugly, so that they know there is a place for all of them.

(Call to action!)

We need to make a stand for Woman in media, and games are just one step in that process.

Those who play games, post a post about how you would like to see this change, like an article or a video you might see on this issue, I have some if you are interested.

If you see games that are sexist towards Woman, Or Men, you should say something, even if it is a small polite comment. Make a point to recognize and criticize games that do this.

Find a way to act, if you want to see this change, if you really do care, you have act on it. That is a fact. A fact that may affect what games you do or do not buy.

Because when you do act, when you make even a small push, you help steer the world. And in this case teach the rising generation that they can be anything. Help spark a passion.

(Bow and arrow pose) Thank you. (little Bow)

## References

- Chambers, B. (2012, 11 23). *Why Games With Female Protagonists Don't Sell, and What It Says About The Industry*. Retrieved from The Mary Sue: <http://www.themarysue.com/why-games-with-female-protagonists-dont-sell-and-what-it-says-about-the-industry/>
- Geena Davis institute & on Gender in Media. (2016). *Research*. Retrieved from SeeJane.org: <http://seejane.org/wp-content/uploads/hitting-the-bullseye-reel-girl-archers-inspire-real-girl-archers-short.pdf>
- Hilmy, M. (2014, 8 18). *Why Games With Female Leads Don't Sell*. Retrieved from Shout Out UK: <http://www.shoutoutuk.org/2014/08/18/games-female-leads-dont-sell/>
- IGN. (2014, 11 18). *Characters - GTA 5 Wiki Guide*. Retrieved from IGN: <http://www.ign.com/wikis/gta-5/Characters>
- Pew Research Center. (2015, 12 15). *Gaming and Gamers*. Retrieved from Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/12/15/gaming-and-gamers/>