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Ms. Albert

Research, Genre, and Context

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### Project 3 Script

#### **Draft One:**

- Though a monolithic force in the entertainment industry, Video games, and video game culture, rarely bleed into the mainstream. few outside of gamer culture concern themselves with games, with the exception of...

#### (News Clips)

- Violent content in video games has been a source of debate for years, usually centered around first-person shooters like Call of Duty
- ...And as far as the news media, and most of popular culture is concerned, that's what video games are, shooters and more shooters, with the occasional mario, for "variety."
- Not to say that violent video game content isn't an important debate. It's a critical, psychological issue that affects our country's youth, and deserves careful analysis and research. But there are games other than shooters, and there are issues other than violence.
- Video game culture can be one of the most toxic spaces in regards to racism, sexism, and harassment fueled by the two. Most are unaware of the violent struggle between discrimination and equality in gaming spaces and the Identity-Based Discrimination that has become the norm.
- As is common knowledge, video games have a history of sexualizing and objectifying women. They also have a reputation for stories driven by a damsel in distress, a practice made into a cultural mainstay by the Super Mario Brothers Franchise.
- These virtual representations of women are largely ignored, seeing as they are reflexively dismissed as harmless...
- But research has proven otherwise. As logic would dictate, the presentation of women as passive, sexualized characters reinforces the idea that women are sexual objects, with the

sole purpose of straight male pleasure. Not only that, increased exposure to sexualization has been strongly associated with a more permissive view of sexual harassment and assault.

- The stereotyping and sidelining of women in video game stories has a similar effect. When female characters in video games are present almost exclusively as damsels-in-distress, or killed-off to jumpstart the plot, women are effectively reduced to mere plot devices, objects meant for the purpose of a male character's motivation or development, not as an independent character with their own humanity.

(Clip: Anita Sarkeesian "Tropes vs. Women in Video Games: Part 1")

- Meanwhile, Racial diversity is hardly ever represented in games, and even when it is, minority characters are reserved to stereotypical roles. Whether it be the black man as a criminal, the asian man as a martial artist, or any other offensive stereotype.
- Considering the modern cultural climate, writing practices that simplify and objectify groups of people are surprisingly common. The Grand Theft Auto series is one of the worst offenders in this regard, both with blatant racial stereotypes and pervasive objectification of women. It is as if video games are holding on to these antiquated, demeaning writing practices in fear of change.
- Many game developers, and a large portion gaming community, are clinging on to a way of doing things that has been proven to be harmful, tired, and uninspired; and they do so with a fervor that, more often than not, turns aggressive and violent the second their storied traditions are challenged.
- As the gamer community is traditionally seen as a "male-dominated space" the presence of female gamers is viewed as a threat to the status quo. The avg. female gamer encounters frequent harassment on a daily basis, whether it be sexual comments, stalking, spamming, or threats of death or rape.
- And any popular figures who speak out against gender discrimination in gaming are met with an even higher level of harassment. Anita Sarkeesian is one of these women, here's what she has to say...

(Clip: Anita Sarkeesian "What I Couldn't Say")

- Furthermore, gaming is not just viewed as a "male-dominated space," it is viewed as a *white* male space." Racism in America is as old as America itself, and it is almost no surprise that bigotry finds its way into gaming culture, and while most gamers will outright deny it, their language proves otherwise.

- The use of racial slurs and offensive language in general trash talking pretty frequent in online interactions. Interestingly enough, such language is typically used as a jab from one white person to another, turning racially signifying language into a generalized insult.
- What's even more disturbing is the recent succession of racism by popular gaming figures, including anti-semitism, ties to white supremacy, and disturbing amount of racial slurs in professional competition.
- identity-based discrimination ostracizes women and racial minorities, attempting to push them out of a space where they belong.
- The thing is, when video games first got big, they were marketed to families. All throughout the 70's and early 80's. No one questioned women's place in gaming.
- It was only with corporate marketing strategies in the 90's that turned video games into products geared towards white men.
- At the end of the day, video games are a powerful medium, capable of so much more than being a "boys club" full of copy/paste depictions of race and genders. Diversity makes games better. It forces writers to research, to use variety and creativity. And it creates a gamer community that is open to be critical of games, making them the best that they can be .

### **Final Draft:**

- Though video games are a pop-culture monolith, they are rarely discussed by the mainstream media, Few outside of gamer culture concern themselves with gaming issues, with only one exception.

### **(News Clips)**

- Violence in video games has been a source of debate practically since their conception, and the discussion is usually centered around whatever Call of Duty installment is released that year.
- ...and as far as the news media is concerned, video games are just that. You have your WWII shooters, your space shooters, your si-fi but not quite in space yet shooters, and your zombie shooters.
- Not so say that violent content in video games isn't an important thing to discuss. These games are being played by millions of our country's youth, and we *should* be concerned with how they're affecting the population. But in focusing so heavily on violence in game content, we have ignored other, possibly more pernicious aspects of video game culture in the U.S.

- Video game culture can be one of the most toxic spaces in regards to racism, sexism, and generalized harassment. Most are unaware of the violent struggle between discrimination and equality in gaming spaces and the Identity-Based Discrimination that has become the norm.
- It is common knowledge that video games sexualize their female characters and use a damsel in distress to drive most of their stories, a practice made into a cultural mainstay by the Super Mario Brothers franchise
- These virtual representations of women are largely ignored, seeing as they are reflexively dismissed as harmless...
- But research has proven otherwise. As logic would dictate, the presentation of women as passive, sexualized characters reinforces the idea that women are sexual objects, with the sole purpose of straight male pleasure. Not only that, increased exposure to sexualization has been strongly associated with a more permissive view of sexual harassment and assault.
- The stereotyping and sidelining of women in video game stories has a similar effect. When female characters in video games are present almost exclusively as damsels-in-distress, or killed-off to jumpstart the plot, women are effectively reduced to mere plot devices, objects meant for the purpose of a male character's motivation or development, not as an independent character with their own humanity.

(Anita Sarkeesian "Tropes vs. Women in Video Games: Damsel in Distress Part 1")

- Meanwhile, racial diversity is hardly ever represented in games, and even when it is, minority characters are reserved to stereotypical roles. African-Americans are thugs, Asians are martial artists, and other races are a whole host of other offensive stereotypes.
- Considering the modern cultural climate, these writing practices that simplify and objectify groups of people are surprisingly common. The Grand Theft Auto series is one of the worst offenders in this regard, both with blatant racial stereotypes and pervasive objectification of women. Yet regardless, it is one of the most profitable video game franchises of all time.
- The gaming industry is clinging onto writing practices that are lazy uninspired, and ultimately, extremely damaging to the groups of people they represent. Despite this, the gaming community defends these clichés, and they even do so in ways that are aggressive, persistent, and even violent.
- As research has found, the gamer community is traditionally seen and desired as a "male-dominated space." Because of this, the presence of female gamers can be seen by some as a threat to the status quo, and these gamers will often respond by harassing female gamers either verbally or through chat programs. Such harassment usually consists of language that is sexually vulgar and violently graphic.

- And any popular figures who speak out against gender discrimination in gaming are met with an even higher level of harassment. Anita Sarkeesian is one of these women, here's what she has to say...

(Anita Sarkeesian "What I Couldn't Say")

- Furthermore, this violent exclusivity in gaming culture not only applies to gender, but to race as well. Racism in America is as old as America itself, so it's no surprise that bigotry finds its way into gaming culture, and while most gamers will outright deny it, their language proves otherwise
- The use of racial slurs and offensive language in general trash talking pretty frequent in online interactions. Interestingly enough, such language is typically used as a jab from one white person to another, turning racially signifying language into a generalized insult.
- What's even more disturbing is the recent succession of racism by popular gaming figures, including anti-semitism, ties to white supremacy, and disturbing amount of racial slurs in professional competition.

(eSports News Clip)

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- It was only with corporate marketing strategies in the 90's that turned video games into products geared towards white men.
- At the end of the day, video games are a powerful medium, capable of so much more than being a "boys club" full of copy/paste depictions of race and genders. Diversity makes games better. It forces writers to research, to use variety and creativity. And it creates a gamer community that is open to be critical of games, making them the best that they can be .

## **Rhetorical Rationale:**

Chosen Genre:

I chose to do a video essay because it is a better format to communicate my topic. The ability to have video clips allows me to show game content and news coverage, to help the viewer understand what is being reacted to and how culture is reacting. It also allows me to let those who have experienced harassment be front and center. Specifically with Anita Sarkeesian, who has a longer segment in my video due to the power of her words describing her experiences. I am trying to appeal to a broad audience. I wanted to create something that gamers could appreciate with contextual experiences, but so that non-gamers can understand and conceptualize what is really going on in gaming culture. That being said, the audiences I was most concerned with reaching were parents and developers. In my video essay, I had the opportunity to use a quote from my paper, because the quote was originally in video form. This helped give the words more meaning and context because they were spoken with purpose, and because the contextual footage helped demonstrate what the quote was trying to convey. Overall, I kept the rules of the genre, mainly narration with some intercuts of other clips. My only issue was it was shorter than most. In order to keep the video to a sensible length, I cut a lot of extra video of news coverage and female game developer/gamer interviews. A video essay is useful for longer essays because it turns a really long paper into a less daunting task for a reader.

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