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Student B

Ms. O'Connor

English 12A

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<center>Behavior and Technology</center>

At a young age we are heavily influenced on others opinions about us. Even as we get older we still feel like eyes are prying at the back of our heads. But no matter the age, technology influences the way we view ourselves and how we act towards others. It can go so far as to encourage us to hate our bodies. The lack of representation in media can let young people think their bodies are not good enough. Video games can enforce the idea that girls' bodies are inherently sexual. We allow technology to enforce body dissatisfaction in men and women and encouraging violence against women through harmful stereotypes and sexual objectification.

From a young age it's difficult to be comfortable with our bodies and how we identify ourselves. We are heavily influenced by our environment – the media most of all. Media sets the standards. We allow and enforce it to tell girls they need to be small and submissive while boys need to be big and aggressive. Young girls compare themselves to the thin white actresses and models because it's the only thing they can see. Young boys overwork their bodies and reject femininity because it's the only thing they see. Young women have an "internalization of . . . distorted images" which can eventually "lead to body dissatisfaction, a key predictor of disordered eating" (Perloff). By default, we are surrounded by an unrealistic body type and therefore view ourselves in a harsher light. Our movies and TV shows are so congested with white male leading actors that we never see fat women who are not stuck as the comedic relief or see men and women of color as main characters. We watch a straight

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white man represent the struggle of LGBT women of color fighting for their rights (O'Hara). We let a

white women play the role of an Asian man. Our movies, our shows, all the content we consume is so

dominated by white men and women that it has become the norm, and we accept this without realizing

the impact it has on young people. Minority groups "report body dissatisfaction at comparable rates to

white young women" (Perloff) due to the lack of representation in media. Without proper inclusion of

minorities in our media, we allow young boys and girls to feel discontented with their own skin.

Young girls are often exposed to women in submissive and sexually objectified positions in

everything from video games, advertisements, and social media feeds. From a young age "girls and

women learn to self-objectify" and "are more attuned to appearance management to conform to

stereotyped physical attractiveness ideals" usually to appeal to men (even if they are lesbian or bisexual.

This mindset has been internalized from a very young age). Young girls inherit self-objectification, "the

process by which girls and women come to view their bodies as objects to be looked at" (Perloff). Which

leads to an internalization of dissatisfaction with one's own body. Self-dissatisfaction can result in

serious physical and mental health problems such as eating disorders.

Objectification of women is particularly prominent in video games. Too often do popular games

promote women in sexual clothing or positions. An example of this is found in the widely known Grand

Theft Auto franchise, in which "female characters are treated as sex objects rather than individuals

worthy of respect" (Gabbiadini et al. 2). The player has the option to kill a prostitute after paying her

and actively observe women NPCs (non-playable characters) in strip clubs – in which their only purpose

is to entertain the presumed straight male player. The game can even go so far as rewarding the player

for certain actions, such as getting their money back when killing a prostitute. This objectification of

women leads to men having less empathy towards women, resulting in more aggression towards

women. In in her "Women as Background Decoration" video, Anita Sarkeesian, a feminist media critic,

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discusses how women in video games are treated like sex objects, and it's affecting how men – as well as society as a whole – treat women. Some video games have regarded "women of color as mysterious and hypersexual creatures who exist as an "exotic spice" to be consumed by the white or western man", enforcing over and over that women, especially women of color, should be treated as sexual objects. The sexual objectification of women in video games enforces violence against women. If women are not seen has human beings, men will not treat them as such. So when video games enforce this mindset, men – especially young boys – will learn these violent and aggressive behaviors in life and direct them at others around him.

Male aggression and violence against women have extended far beyond the realm of coding and rendering. While most women can easily shrug off general abuse, sexual harassment sticks with them when they are offline (Grabmeier). Unsurprisingly, women will withdraw from a game they receive sexual harassment from on a daily basis. Not only is that an issue for game companies, but also how women are treated in society. Video games that objectify women and enforce violence (whether it be physical or harassment) reflect society's view on women, which leads to girls objectifying themselves from such a young age and boys applying aggressive behaviors towards girls. This is the power that technology holds on people. The power to enforce or change behaviors on oneself and others.

No one is saying we need to abstain from video games or social media entirely, but there is much room for improvement. Technology doesn't force us to behave a certain way; we allow it to enforce certain actions and mindsets. It's all in how we use it as individuals as well.

Since the beginning of time women have had to riot and protest for basic rights, and as new opportunities arise we are skeptical or ignorant of women's involvement. We assume the majority of video game players are men, when really the results are almost equal (Romano). We ignore the facts to support ingrained sexist mindsets.

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Men and women of color are vastly underrepresented in media. Our favorite TV shows and favorite movies are overwhelmingly white. The thin white woman dominates the images we see in advertisements and social media feed. But there is no such thing as a default. We should always strive for diversity. Otherwise we are taking the starring role in letting our children hate their own bodies because they never see themselves in the actors and actresses on stage. Media is enforcing body dissatisfaction in men and women through stereotypes and encouraging violence against women and their bodies.