Gamergate; Sexism in Gaming Culture
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When my girlfriend was around fifteen years old she went into a local game shop to look into getting new Gamecube games for herself. So when she walked in she approached the counter and asked where the Gamecube games were she was greeted with a condescending attitude towards her immediately. The employee smirked and told her that he'd set her up with some "simple games to start out with" and pointed her on her way. When she replied that she had grown up playing video games and was looking for a new Legend of Zelda game he scoffed at her and told her he didn't think that'd be her style. Afterwards he pointed her towards multiple simple puzzle, Barbie brand, and arcade classics saying "These would be better to start off with." This is but one example of the problems I believe the culture surrounding video games has towards women. Today I will be focusing though on not just examples that this problem exists, but rather digging to the possible root as of why it exists. I believe we as a whole are responsible for all the reasons that lead to this toxic subculture and I suggest that we as a culture rethink the way we both treat women in video games and the people that play these games.

The first subject I'd like to cover is the history of video game marketing and where we will most likely find the root of the problem I mentioned earlier. The core of the problem is that more modern games on gaming consoles were marketed primarily towards young males as toys. This marketing bred a couple misconceptions about video games that still stick around today, but mainly that video games are merely for little boys and aren't worth much else. There's plenty of stigma surrounding gaming itself with stereotypes of gamers being worthless, loser, virgin nerds that live in their mother's basement and the constant media pointing fingers at popular games like Grand Theft Auto and Doom as the secret culprits behind mass shootings. This effort mainly on the media's part to force conformation with traditional values led to blatant smear campaigns against video games. My personal favorite reading "Turn off the Gay-Station, and turn on the Pray-Station" suggesting video games corrupt youth by turning them gay. Obviously there are less far fetched ones you can find by simply looking up MAVAV, or Mothers Against Videogame Addiction and Violence. And yes, they spelled video game as one word. However this is very much so an old issue. Video games won this battle of constant lawsuits and people demanding to shut everything down and continued on to where they are today. If you look around you won't find very many of these "Mothers Against ect. Ect." anymore as they more or less became an

internet joke after a while. You see, the reasons a lot of these arguments die off is that many of the people fighting against video games were concerned parents worried about their child's future. And by now, those children have moved out, and even started their own families. But just because the industry won the battle doesn't mean the fear of losing our favorite pastime to "misunderstanding outsiders" hasn't stuck around in gaming culture.

Which brings me to my next point, you see people look at gamers as giant man-children very often because of how defensive they get over the tiniest details being threatened to be taken away in their games. But why do you care so much about pixelated blood Mr. GrownMan? Why are you throwing such a fit when it's not a big deal. Not like blood in Halo is a core game mechanic is it? See, where I agree with you on most of those points and plenty of the backlash from video game fans seems outrageous over the tiniest details and I completely agree. (We'll be covering GamerGate 2014 later in this paper) they come from a place of honest-to-God fear. Because people so viciously wanted to stop video games in previous decades, it's easy for a gamer to believe that removing blood or swearing or even something as ridiculous as breast physics is a slippery slope to taking away their games they cherish under guise of building a less "violent" culture. But now let's take a look at why those blood, guts, and boobs are in games in the first place shall we?

For a very long time men have been groomed to believe sexual feats are what make you a true man. Finding a woman to call yours and being big and strong. See, the stereotype of most video game nerds is just that, a nerd. Weak, small, smart but in the wrong way, and unattractive. Completely unmanly. And in recent years with the rise of gaming becoming more popular slowly but surely gamers were finding a way to not just fit back into this "masculine" definition but make up for their unmanly hobby. They became aggressive, defensive, and crude. What they lacked in the classical masculinity of their fathers they will make up for in the new masculine way, by being blunt, offensive, and crude. They become obsessed with the two things of the manly trifecta they can obtain. Sexual prowess and anger. And most of the time even in the broader culture, this is blended together. In the words of Jackson Katz on the subject "The clear and deeply   entrenched message to young men here, reinforced again and again over time, is that actually caring about girls and women is for pussies and fags." In this quote is he referring to the constant bragging seen in movies and the like about men talking to other men about how they 'banged' some girl and that's all they care about. This hyper-sexuality of gamers brought about by a culture obsessed with telling them they're going to die virgins is what brings about the portrayals of women in games being often scantily clad, boobs-a-bouncin' killing machines. Because men thought they needed to

enjoy that stuff to feel masculine, so therefor it sold. And because it sold game companies produced it. The reasons the gaming communities more often than not can get as toxic as a nuclear waste dump in Chernobyl is because that's where the other half of the broken Triforce of Manhood comes into play. They get angry.

The final subject I'd like to touch on is Gamergate, the namesake of this essay. Gamergate was a hashtag used back in 2014 by a group of disgruntled male gamers upset that scary feminists would want to complain about their favorite games. That's what the internet would tell you anyways. What actually happened was for a long time most high end gaming journalism focused on one thing and one thing alone, sexism. Many articles calling out popular games for being sexist, game reviews actually critiqued not for the gameplay or the design but simply getting low reviews due to what the "gamers" viewed as political reasons and not the marit of the game on its own. Now remember what I said previously about how some gamers feel the need to defend games to the death, and any change based on making things more "socially acceptable" meant the death of video gaming? That mentality reared it's ugly head on this one. Big time. I don't have much room left to explain in detail and I highly recommend looking into it yourself but the shortened account is as follows. Major games media "advocates censorship of sexual and 'sexist content' in video games" in the eyes of a subsect of gamers. They start to lose their minds. Things get out of hand quickly, much like many things on the internet, and soon death threats and bomb scares were happening a feminist talks around the US if they ever so much as mentioned video games. This obviously is bad, and the whole thing goes high-profile with major news outlets covering it.

And lastly, I would like to conclude with my proposal to stop all these issues listed above as with hundreds more. We need to stop treating gamers so badly. We need to show their hobby some respect, similar to the way sports is given respect or art. We need to stop advocating for the mass censorship of media of any kind. We need to stop teaching our boys that sexual experience is the only way to put a notch on your belt in the way of lifetime success. And lastly we need to stop treating women like they're the goals at the end of the rainbow that any strong, angry, well-endowed man can get to.