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Ahmad Ali

Dr. Robert Leston

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Choosing a topic for this project was something that I put a fair bit of time into. It’s easy to choose to talk about something that you are well versed in, but I chose to go against my usual grain and speak about rape culture. Not just in the third world, which is an easy point to argue, but in the first world. The effect that rape culture has on society is widespread, across many fields, and isn’t focused on people from any particular walk of life. When a woman feels endangered simply because of her gender and the way in which she is dressed, there is a clear and distinct problem with the way in which men are viewing woman overall. One of the reasons that this sort of issue exists in the first place, is that the media, and people in society in general perpetuate rape culture and all of the things that go along with that. Why does the media do this though, what is the motivation, and well while it can’t be directly proven, I would say that the media profits financially from the perpetuation of rape culture, if not directly, then indirectly. The people who are being exploited seem to very clearly be the woman of our society, although the exploitation isn’t limited to woman. The solution isn’t obvious and won’t be something that is easy to achieve, but it is something that can be done, and through discussing various things, I hope to be able prove that the rape culture does in fact exist in our society, and then go on to speak about the way in which we can combat this seemingly impenetrable enemy.

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***Follow the Money***

The way in which pop culture and mass media benefits from the extension of a rape culture in the first world isn’t a very direct or clear thing to speak about. However one of the ways in which women are very clearly objectified and needlessly sexualized in pop culture, are in video games. In the owner and proprietor of the “Feminist Frequency” website Anita Sarkeesian’s video *Damsels in Distress: Part 1 - Tropes Vs Women in Video Games*, Sarkeesian speaks heavily about the ways in which women are put down, and used as objects, simply to garner the attention of a male audience, that they feel will be attracted to a game that puts forth a sense of misogyny (Sarkeesian, 15:18). The video game industry had been notorious for things of this nature. In fairly recent news this was brought to the attention of the general public through what would later be known as, “Gamergate”. Gamergate spoke about the way in which women are treated poorly by those people who are immersed in the gaming community. While this point may be disputed, as a person that is fully immersed in the gaming community, there are a fair number of people who do identify with many several sexist points of view in the gaming community. While this may not directly attribute to a rape culture it can be argued that instilling the idea that women are less than that of men at a young age, which is the target demographic for the companies that publish most games, can lead to a rape culture as those boys develop with a mindset such as that. With the gaming industry estimated to “hit $93 billion by 2019” (Sinclair, 1), the money can be followed easily, and the perpetuation of a rape culture can be easily identified.

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***Follow the Exploitation***

The people who are being exploited through this crude, “cash grab” mentality, are women all over the world. They’re being exploited in many ways, some of which I hope to clearly highlight. The obvious one is that they are being sexualized and viewed as objects, which has a clear link with men thinking that rape simply isn’t something that is a major issue. Harming and object isn’t viewed as so awful, and when a person is treated as a trope, the actions that people take against them will reflect that. A very clear example of this can be found by looking to a piece called *What I won’t do in pixels: Examining the limits of taboo violation in MMORPGs*, by Monica T. Whitty, Garry Young , and Lewis Goodings. In this paper, they speak about the taboo practices that people carry out in the virtual worlds of Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG’s). One particular example that is spoken about very heavily, is rape, and how rape is something that is frequently carried out, and normalized in many modern video games (Whitty, Young, Goodings, 1.3). The exploitation of women, and the clear perpetuation of rape culture are apparent in this example. The media has a very particular message to get across to its viewers. Thusly, when the media portray women as tropes, things to be won, and constantly sexualize them, they help promote the rape culture. The media often fails to instill a sense of strength in girls, the way it does in boys, at a young age. It is also commonly stated that in the 21st century, that women have reached absolute equality with men, but that simply isn’t true. The simple right of feeling safe is something that many women are deprived of, is that isn't a social injustice, then I don’t know what is. Women are led to believe that, the

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Only women that are raped are those who are subjecting themselves to danger by being alone at night and such. Not only is this not true, but an absurd statement in and of itself. Why should women not be able to do anything that a man can do? Also, rape seems to be belittled as a concept by the media in many ways. As Alyn Pearson speaks about in her article from the *Off Our Backs* academic journal, *Rape Culture: Media and Message*, “The term “date rape” is often mocked...as a creation by sexually insecure women.”(Pearson, 13). The sheer concept that date rape is something that is mocked by people, and that it’s considered socially acceptable by some to do so, is proof in and of itself of the rape culture and the way in which it leads to social injustice. “To be a young woman today means to live with the rape culture in all its subtleties.”(Pearson, 14). This quote speaks volumes to me, and is my main argument, as well as that of the article itself. You may be intelligent, educated, and self-confident, but the people of the rape culture don’t care. They view women the way that they are told to view them, based off the message of the media, and they perpetuate all of what is wrong with the media itself. There are many ways in which I feel that rape culture is perpetuated in this country, as well as all over the world. One of which is, that many people still don't seem to take rape seriously as a concept. When a rape occurs, most people are outraged, naturally, but what about the things that caused that rape? Why did the rapist do what they did? How did they feel that, carrying out that action was the correct choice, and at the time, an okay thing to do? There is a reason that people do the things that they do, and in many cases, I feel that society has rationalized rape to some people, the way in which they have done this is some cases are through pop culture mediums such as video games, as well as through the sheer equalization of women in popular

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Culture on a whole. The reason for it? While not clear, it can be inferred, for financial gain, and to tap into the minds of customers, without regard for the consequences.

***Solution***

The solution to a problem of this magnitude isn’t ever going to be a straightforward one. This problem has to be attacked from many different angles, and by many different types of people. “There is an average of 293,000 instances (victims age 12 or older) of sexual assault each year” (RAINN). A number this high is just absolutely ridiculous for a nation as advanced as The United States of America. In a society where “68% of sexual assaults are not reported to the police” (RAINN) and “98% of rapists will never spend a day in jail” (RAINN), a rape culture is clearly present. The first step to reaching a solution is recognizing that there is a problem in the nation in the first place. Once most people have come to realize that this issue exists in our country as well as other first world nations we can start to approach a solution as a society. The start of the solution would be simply to educate the young about the severity of the issue and to try and instill a strong sense of morals in the children of our country. Well educated people are more aware of the issues that their society face. A more educated society also tend to grasp aspects of media in a better and more cognitive way. Those who are aware of what they consume won’t absorb the negative aspects of the media. A fully aware society will hopefully put an end to the perpetuation of rape culture and once sexual assault ceases to be normalized by society, the rape culture will begin to fade away, ideally.

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*Works Cited*

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