

## Hardships of Women

by Blake Tisza

Every day, diversity is confronted among individuals. Most of us go about our daily activity's not even realizing it. However, it happens all the time. Subconsciously we also may not even see it. Think about a time you walked passed someone and you may have judged them by the way they look. You cannot deny the fact that you have never done this, because we all have. This necessarily does not have to be bad, it can be good judgements as well. For example, thinking someone is smart because they're wearing glasses. When doing this you may have inquired things that you may have learned about the perceptions of these looks. The point is that you're committing a gender bias of the representation of this individual. Sometimes even statistical facts can show a bias of the representation people may assume among that person, or it can be what society has created this perception to be. One particular case that highlights this is a game *80 Days*, by Meg Jaynanth. More specifically, Meg Jaynanth, shows many aspects of the representation of women within this in game. By looking at the many layers this game has to offer, you can see this representation in many different situations.

To begin, *80 Days* is an interactive video game from the novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne. This adaptation of Phileas Fogg and his servant Jean Passespartout attempt to travel around the world in eighty days. The game *80 Days* follows the same concept, but playing the game makes its own story from the interactive decisions made by the player which also creates its own story through the player's eyes. During the gameplay it prevents itself through a variety of different characters from many different backgrounds from all the places the two travelers visit during their quest to travel around the world in eighty days. Therefore, throughout the game, we learn about many different representations of characters.

Victorian Womanhood was a big part of the way society represented themselves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is also the era Jules Verne wrote her novel *Around the World in Eighty Days*. Victorian Womanhood began from the icon of Queen Victoria, which also created the political force upon the society. The Victorian era was during 1837-1901, which women represented a kind of femininity who was centered on the family, motherhood and respectability (Abrams 2001). Something interesting before this century is that women had been usual for working alongside their husbands and brothers as part of the family business (Hughes 2014). For the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was much different for women and the roles of men and women became much defined. Women were the ones to stay at home and manage the household. This included things such as cleaning the house, taking care of the children, cooking, and doing the laundry. The men were the ones to work and provide security for the household so they can have money to survive and live.

This Victorian era created many feminist concepts for women. Some of these bias were that women were considered physically weaker, but morally superior to men (Hughes 2014). Women were seen to be submissive and to be dominated by the husband. They had no say so in anything and had to do what they were told. Besides that women were not allowed to work, nor get an education to be able to. Their education was to obtain the knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and other modern languages, which were known as accomplishments (Hughes 2014). Besides all of that women had to possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, and her address and expressions (Hughes 2014). This created an image that women were to be this perfect image and could not act in any other way. This also led to a political forces that women could not even do things like the right to vote.

However, the game *80 Days* approach to this was quite different from the representation of what women were presented to be in the era of 1872. As for women, the game presents many women in positions of power and authority that could not possibly occur in the era of 1872. Since the game *80 Days* is created in our era of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is significant that these representation of women are seen throughout the game of its era of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even though women today are seen more differently they are still underrepresented among society. The creator Meg Jaynanth states in an interview, “*The Art of Fiction #2: Meg Jaynanth*” by Duncan Fyfe, “It was a real balancing act, because on the one hand, if you’re going to invent a world with robots and airships pirates, why doesn’t that world have female airship captains?” (Fyfe 2015). The take from this is that women are underrepresented and how Meg Jaynanth will show the representation of women in ways some people may not see them as. Also from the interview, Meg Jaynanth says “I didn’t want it to be just a straightforward power fantasy for underrepresented people. Because that does a disservice to the time, as well. And I wanted us to be able to talk about oppression without necessarily everyone being a victim. Even though they might be victimized in some ways, people have power” (Fyfe 2015). The argument that is prevented in what Jaynanth said is simply that she does not want to upset anyone, but make them aware of situation in way where these individuals can understand the oppression faced among these women. This has to do with many Bias society has made through the representation of women.

Meg Jaynanth provides many examples of the representation of women that may not be seen usual to the given time period in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which creates the oppression among women. For example, during the gameplay of the game it presents itself with a female steamship captain. The female captain’s name is Captain Hirose, who is captain of a steamship by the

name of Sugawara. The Sugawara is a Japanese steamship that Captain Hirosue sails from Yokohama to Manila. This is something that is not usual during the era at the time. Besides Hirosue being the captain of this steamship, she carries a Katana. Later in the game, the game player learns why she carries this sword. She was a woman who was born in a family of samurais, and women were not allowed to carry a Katana. Due to the fierce loyalty revolutionary forces in Japan, she fights against her own family. This also shows through its representation that since she is a woman she cannot carry one.

Another example of the representation of women presented during the game is the mysterious Al-Talib. Al-Talib is a brilliant inventor who is a woman that is not likely to be seen during that time period. She is such a brilliant inventor that an enemy tribe threatened to start war against her in order to claim her inventions. Her being an inventor also means that she is a scientist. Since she was threatened war against her she fled to a strange pyramid that she built a teleporter in. A teleporter is a device that can bring you to a different location around the world in the push of a button. Since this is something that has not been invented even in our era of the 21<sup>st</sup> century you can understand that this would be a world changer and her being a woman inventing it in the story is even crazier. What is significant about this is as Passeportout and Fogg journey in the Middle East, they find out that she is a woman and they are surprised that she is. This goes to show since Passeportout and Fogg are both men tells you what a man may think of a woman, which is not smart.

A third example of the representation of women presented during the game is another female captain by the name of Isabella Asisara. Instead of being a steamship captain she is captain of an airship called Bonaventura that travels between San Francisco and Acapulco. During the gameplay we learn that after her mother succumbed to the cholera amidst the cruel colonizing

actions of the United States is why she devoted herself to the life of an airship captain. This is significant because it goes to show that she is avenging her mother, but also that she is a female doing it.

A last example of the representation of women during the game when Passeportout and Fogg hire a private driver to take them to Berlin. This private driver they hired was a woman and on their journey to Berlin she was driving crazy. While Passeportout and Fogg were scared for their lives it was said to describe her crazy driving that the chassis of the car came off the ground approximately 20 times. Later as she continues to drive, Fogg is asked to drive to take them the rest of the way by which Fogg actually does take over from driving. This is significant because it goes to show that women cannot drive and a man had to take over to do the job right.

Through the many examples of the representation of women that Meg Jaynanth presented in the game *80 Days*, and the ones provided above, why even do this. This is because of the ongoing issues faced among women today. Women today are still faced with the Victorian era of what women are supposed to be. The era created stereotypes among women that a lot of men still acknowledge today. Women are more accepted today, and there are laws set in place to keep them equal within society but they still are faced with many issues within the things they are able to do.

One of the ongoing issues faced among women today is them getting paid less than men. Women in the United States are paid only 77 cent for every dollar a man makes (Chu & Posner 2013). A lot of this may have to do with the fact that employers may feel women need to prove themselves more than a man would have to. This does not sound fair, but the statistical facts show that men get paid more over a woman. In Vermont, women make on average 85 cents for every dollar a man makes and in Wyoming, women make only 64 cent on average for every dollar

and man makes (Chu & Posner 2013). This goes to show a more in depth examination of women's wages among the specific wages of states rather than just looking at the United States as a whole.

Another ongoing issue faced among women today is a women may be faced with hiring discrimination and job discrimination in the workplace. As for hiring discrimination a women may or may not be hired due to her physical appearance. An employer might hire an attractive women over other qualified candidates simply because the employer believes she is more likely to bring in more sales (Finn 2017). At the same time the employer may not hire the same women because the employer is afraid of a sexual harassment law suit based on the number of males in the workplace (Finn 2017). This goes to show how the creation of the physical appearance of a women has created problems for women in terms of gaining a job so they can also be successful as a man. An employer may also not hire a women due the fact that she might take something the wrong way and file a claim charge against the employer. The employer may want to avoid this as much as possible, because he may feel threatened that a women would want to obese her authority of the law and the employer may not want to lose his or her job for something that was taken the wrong way. For example, a woman not getting promoted due to the fact that she has been on leave for her pregnancy. She may feel that she deserved it over the male that got the position, but if think about the male may be putting more time into his job because he is at work more than the women. Besides that, in an article "*Corporations: Sued For Gender Discrimination Against Women and Men*" by Lahle Wolfe, jobs may be offered to less qualified male applicant just because he is a male (Wolfe 2017). This may have to with the fact that an employer may not want to have to pay for a women while they are on leave for their pregnancy.

Another example to add to job discrimination among woman, is an employer might judge a woman's physical appearance not only on her attractive qualities, but also how physically strong the woman may look. Most construction and factory jobs that require hard labor and physical strength, an employer may view this women as not physically strong enough and hire someone else that looks physically stronger. Some individuals including women may not look as strong, but are pretty strong for themselves. Instead of the employer giving these individuals a chance they just ignore in hiring them for the job.

A third ongoing issue faced among women today are they may get blamed and shamed by something more over then a man would. For example, a women may be called slut-shaming things as a man normally would not. In other words, a woman may have been with many guys as a man may have been with many women and the woman be seen shamed upon as a slut. They may be seen nasty and dirty when they have really no differences to the many sex partners both sex has been with. Women may also be faced with victim blaming and rape-splaining. Rape-splaining is when an individual uses oppressive language in regard to terms of rape. Women may also not get many second changes as a guy would. Women are faced with proving themselves so much that an employer may automatically feel that after they made a mistake that cannot do the task they are supposed to do.

A final ongoing issue among woman today is the gap between the amount of women and men that have positions in the United States offices. U.S. Senators only make up 17.0 percent of women, members of the U.S. House of Representatives only make up 16.8 percent of women, state Governors only make up 12.0 percent of women, statewide elected officials only make up 22.4 percent of women, state Legislators only make up 23.6 percent of women, and Mayors of the 100 Largest Cities only make up 8.0 percent of women (Lawless & Fox 2012). This goes to

show that women do not even come close to being half of what the percentage of what men are in the United States office. Women are much less likely to think they are qualified to run for office (Lawless & Fox 2012). This may show that either women doubt themselves or they know they are not going to get the votes so why put all that effort into it if they're not going to have a chance. Look at Hillary Clinton that ran for president, she had the most popular, but lost due the electoral votes Trump had. Knowing where the electoral votes comes from shows the power of the United States offices.

The big issue of the representation of women in other video games throughout history is that women have been created to be this sex icon in video games. A compiled amount 571 playable female characters from 1989-2014 examined the signs of hypersexualization, which included nudity, over-enlarged breasts or hips and unrealistically narrow waist (Strum 2016). This creates even more of a problem for women since they are already faced with their sexual appeal among society. This shows society on women must be like this and people are going see this even though that it is a video game. They're going to find these characters highly attractive and then that may create judgements of women in the real world. There has been times where video games has even showed women as less dominant to men. Even though, women in some video games are seen more dominant to men they are still perceived in that hypersexual icon.

Some women in the United States that have gained power and authority in politics are former president candidate Hillary Clinton and Ivanka Trump who is the Senior Advisor in the White House. Some women from other countries that have gained power and authority in politics are Angela Merkel who is the Chancellor in Germany and Theresa May who Prime Minister in the United Kingdom. Some other women that have power and authority in CEO companies are chief executive officer Mary Barra for General Motors and Indra Nooyi for PepsiCo. Nooyi is



also the chairman for PepsiCo. This are just some of the many example whether women have gained power and authority, and shows that women have come a long way and will continue to grow through out time.

Some may think that the representation of women is all a man's fault, but both sexes are partially to blame. Women in history have allowed these representations to come too far and they have allowed themselves to accept it at one point. This made it harder for when women had enough to gain the power and authority as a man has. In our more recent era man have fought women rights, so it is not like men are not trying to help. This means you cannot blame all the men, because some see the qualities in women. In an article, "*Learn About Gender Discrimination in Society*" by Lahle Wolfe, stated that by blaming men for all the shots, we are also saying that women are powerless victims of society (Wolfe 2017). This shows women are subconsciously saying men have power over them instead of just taking action for yourself and doing what you need to do to achieve the specific thing.

Through all the representations of women from the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century show relevance for reason why Meg Jaynanth would place 21<sup>st</sup> century acknowledgements of women in a game that is from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Doing so Jaynanth wanted to show this representation of women as a way to show the oppression women are faced with. Not only does she show these representations in way to show women having power and authority as man, but she also gives some back story of how some of these women had less or no power or authority than man.

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