Nikko Markakos

Professor Mangini

English Composition I

5 May 2019

<div align="center">The Media Divide</div>

Kids and young adults nowadays practically live on their phones. Media consumption is at an all time high. People are always being bombarded with media. It is our primary source of information, so it inevitably plays such a large role in our lives. Because young people are especially impressionable, exposure to certain media can be harmful long-term. Young women in particular are impacted negatively by misrepresentation in the media. As portrayed in the documentary "Miss Representation" the media's view on women revolves around sex and has a severe lack of women shown in positions of power.

Gender bias in the media can be traced all the way back to when girls were children. In the early 2000s Disney movies for example, female characters were depicted as dainty and helpless and male characters were huge and muscular. The media is already instilling gender stereotypes when girls are incredibly young, and this pattern progressively gets worse as girls grow older and can conceptualize a wider range of media bias. When we walk through a mall, we see posters of women with no physical flaws. When we turn on political news almost everyone they're talking about is male. In school, history and science is completely male dominated. Women are told at a young age that they are inferior, and that men will always be in power because the media hammers that perception into their heads. Overall media bias plays a significant role in preventing girls from believing they can achieve the same as men. Because

there is a severe lack of respectable representation of women in our society, they are forced to face the consequence of not believing in themselves.

   According to the documentary, self-esteem is at an all-time-low and media consumption is at an all-time-high. About 53% of thirteen year old girls are unhappy with their bodies, and these same vulnerable girls consume around 10 hours and 45 minutes of media per day. Because of modern day technology the standard of beauty, once conceivable with makeup, is now digitally altered with programs like Photoshop. These images are manipulated to a point where even the models don't see themselves in the billboard. This idea of extreme perfection carries over to those same 13-year-old girls, whose low self-esteem rates increase to 78% by age 17. This media portrayal also affects men's view of women. They are given the message that a woman's youth and beauty is paramount to her other qualities.

   A woman's sex appeal is an aspect of perfection that the media most emphasizes. For example, social media sites such as Instagram and Snapchat are littered with bikini and underwear models, and younger girls aspire to achieve the same standards. However, this is also affected by Photoshop, as most of these photos are digitally altered. In addition, women are given one dimensional roles in television, mostly portraying the love interest to the multi dimensional male star. Oftentimes, the most pronounced traits of these female characters are their youth and sexuality and only serve to further objectify women. Women between the ages of 20 and 30 make up 71% of female roles on television despite only representing 39% of the population. This supports the idea that women are only seen as valuable during the time when they are able to reproduce. Even in reality television they portray women as catty and on display for male judgement. Through these portrayals on television and in movies, boys get the message

that they should be in control, emotionless, and that they are entitled to treat women like they are objects.

When taking politics into consideration, our society has dictated that the male is the only voice of importance. For hundreds of years, our society has suppressed the female voice, resulting in a total lack of representation. Specifically talking about young female students, they are not able to see their gender as successful. This instills the idea that the only voice that matters in politics (and society in general) is that of the male. And because males dominate politics, it instills the idea in them that it is a "man's job" which is why there is so much harassment and gender bias. when young girls see strong female government officials, they believe they can accomplish the same.

"Miss Representation" exposes the harsh truth of sexism in the media, and how it reflects on the youth in our consumerist society. The representation of women in the media has taken a toll on the self esteem of young girls in America. The biggest culprits of this misrepresentation include social media, television, and the news, and are consumed by everyone in our society. In these forms of media, women are depicted as flawless, perfect beings that exist only to serve the male appetite. This sends the message to young women and men alike that the role of women in our society is less valued than the role of men. It emphasizes that a woman's value lies in her sex appeal rather than her intelligence and wits, and subsequently discourages women from pursuing leadership positions.