"I'LL MAKE A MAN OUT OF YOU[1]": STRONG WOMEN IN SCIENCE

FICTION AND FANTASY TELEVISION

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Abstract

Heroic women in science fiction and fantasy television shows have done much to represent strong, successful women in leadership positions. However, these female roles that are viewed as strong and empowered embody many masculine identified traits, maintaining a patriarchal division of gender roles. This paper analyzes strong female characters within nine television shows by deconstructing their stereotypically "masculine" and "feminine" gender specific attributes and cross referencing how they play within and against traditional archetypes.

Employing texts from cultural criticism and feminist theory, I explore how representations of groups in popular culture and mass media messaging uphold structures of power by giving higher value to masculine attributes as observed in patriarchal discourse. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of why it is critical to foster television media that supports feminist ideals and breaks out of traditional oppressive gender binaries in order to promote, encourage and envision a just future society.

Acknowledgements

This project began as I was watching TV and found myself identifying with and rooting for the strong female heroes. As I looked critically at their roles, I noticed that many of them were replicating the traditional male hero archetype and 'masculine' defined values. I wanted to explore what this meant for women's representation and the impact it has on the existing patriarchal division of gender roles.

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Introduction

Popular stories rely on archetypes to draw viewers in, to create something recognizable, and often quickly 'readable'. Most science fiction television programming is heavily based in action; nearly every week there is an evil villain to combat, and the shows that aren't action-based seem to always include physical brawls. The women that are identified as strong and tough, nearly always possess physical strength, rarely ask for help, and hardly ever show emotion unless forced. Strength remains a central attribute to female characters, and is seemingly highly valued both by society and within fandoms. For example, fans rave about how Buffy Summers is the strongest woman in Sunnydale, how *Farscape*'s Aeryn Sun will go in guns a-blazing without ever batting an eye, and how *Battlestar Galactica*'s Starbuck is being a smart ass even when she doesn't know if she's going to win the fight. These characters triumph on-screen, but is their physical prowess the only determinant of strength? While there are instances of female 'braniacs' and scientists, and of sensitive women who help devise plans, or are good wives, daughters, mothers or teachers, these traits are often reserved for supporting characters, not starring roles. The strength in these women is displayed through loyalty and courage, but the hope they provide is nearly always trumped by those who can throw a serious punch. Heroic women in science fiction and fantasy television shows have done much to demonstrate women's capabilities to play strong, successful leading characters. In fact, as Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) demonstrated back in 1979, strong and brave female leads are very much archetypal characters that North American (and other) audiences connect to (Gallardo & Smith, 2004).

For the past few years I've been actively seeking out television shows with strong female leads, with female representations that I could bear to watch and I did find some shows with wonderful, complex and rich characters. I especially gravitated towards science fiction and fantasy programs because as I was attempting to imagine a future economic and social system that is rooted in social justice values, I anticipated that science fiction was a place that would portray futuristic societies with different values. Unfortunately, I did not find much of this: many futuristic shows still identify with the same value systems that western countries have today such as individualism, hierarchal institutional and political structures, meritocracy, and most often still exist in a capitalist economic system. I also began to notice that I identified with and enjoyed watching the women who I was viewing. They have many commonalities: they were strong, in charge, capable, confident and intelligent. As much as I admired many of these traits I realized that if these characters had been men, I would have been bored and would feel like the story was the same old heroic masculine tale. Even today it is still exciting to see strong women taking control and kicking butt, but that role isn't really very different from their male counterparts. Strong women are indeed sexualized and "feminized" in sometimes degrading ways, but generally the aspects that are viewed as positive such as leadership, courage, and independence are deeply identified as masculine. [2]

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[2] Why are women still poorly and underrepresented in fictional media? And is it even reasonable to ask this considering how women are represented in the real world: epidemic levels of sexual abuse, child abuse, under pay, feminization of poverty even the legitimate fear that women might have their reproductive rights taken away? Of course the media is not solely responsible for these things but the cumulative and long term affects of women's poor representation does play a role and could be used as a force for positive change in women's lives. In 2009, I was at a science fiction convention listening to Kate Mulgrew speak about playing Captain Kathryn Janeway on *Star Trek: Voyager*. This show has long since ended but fans, especially *Star Trek* fans still admire and feel deeply connected to these characters. In the audience there was a woman who told her story of entering the field of science and literally becoming a rocket scientist because of seeing Janeway's character on *Star Trek*. This might seem silly to some people but Mulgrew corroborated that she had heard this same story many times.

Female roles in science fiction and fantasy television that are viewed as strong and empowered embody many masculine identified traits, maintaining a patriarchal division of gender roles. For example, values adopted by female characters in the television shows I will examine in this major research paper maintain that traditionally masculine attributes such as rationality, cool-headedness and physical strength are superior and preferred over traditionally feminine attributes such as cooperative decision making, and being emotionally expressive and empathetic. For the purposes of this paper, I will examine female characters in nine popular television shows and compare them with traditional masculine and feminine value systems.

Feminist Theory and Visual Culture

There has been much written on women in science fiction/fantasy television and films. Ripley from *Alien* was a representation of a strong woman that got much attention in the academic world as she was considered the first instance of a female action hero in a mainstream movie. A second prominent lead female role went to Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) in *Terminator* who played the hero in two blockbuster movies. Buffy Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar) of the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer (BTVS)* has her own field of study and an academic journal. Xena (Lucy Lawless) was celebrated as a feminist and queer[3] icon. But newer shows like *Battlestar Galactica (BSG)*, the *Terminator* television series *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles (TSCC)*, and *Lost* haven't received as much attention. There are certainly articles published about particular characters but there aren't as many full texts or anthologies that directly address women in science fiction as a

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[3] I am using the term "queer" as opposed to gay and lesbian to signal gender/sexuality that is not heterosexual including gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, and intersex.

whole. I will attempt to continue the conversation about women's representations in

speculative fiction television and expose the ways in which our society is influenced

by how female characters are written, cast and developed.

Representations of gender on television are still clearly binary with very little

blurring. This is disappointing considering that for over a century-and-a-half feminist

theorists have highlighted how what we now call 'gender' is not biologically

determined but rather socially constructed as Patricia Hill Collins points out in *Black*

Feminist Thought, and Sojourner Truth raised this issue in her famous 1851 "Ain't I a

Woman" speech (200, 14-15). In Anne Fausto-Sterling's (2000) *Sexing the Body:*

Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality she discusses the difference

between sex and gender:

> Feminists argued that although men's and women's bodies serve different
>
> reproductive functions, few other sex differences come with the territory,
>
> unchangeable by life's vicissitudes. If girls couldn't learn math as easily as
>
> boys, the problem wasn't built into their brains. The difficulty resulted from
>
> gender norms—different expectations and opportunities for boys and girls.
>
> (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 4)

Gender theorists have continued to argue for disrupting the traditional gender

binary theories, putting into flux essentialist understandings of masculine and

feminine. bell hooks (2000) observes however that even efforts to dismantle gender

roles have not overturned the way patriarchy instills a system of social values, and

women are still socialized into a particular power structure:

> Women, though assigned different roles to play in society based on sex, are
>
> not taught a different value system. It is women's overall acceptance of the

value system of the culture that leads her to passively absorb sexism and

willingly assume a pre-determined sex role. Although women do not have the

power ruling groups of men often exert, they do not conceptualize power

differently. (hooks, 2000, p. 87)

I borrow from hooks' elucidation of gendered value systems to observe how even if

gender roles are swapped (e.g. women adopting typically masculine heroic roles)

women's representations on television still uphold patriarchal values. hooks' theory

is further illuminated by Laura Mulvey's work on the "male gaze" (which has played

an important role in feminist film theory). Mulvey (1973) explains:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split

between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects

its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. In their

traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and

displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so

that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (Mulvey, 1973)

This text was written in 1973 and still has relevance when analyzing films and

television today. Some contemporary female characters are more than simply

passive, but even in their active roles they are still created and cast for "erotic impact"

and "to-be-looked-at-ness". Even when representations of strong women use

traditionally masculine archetypes as sources of strength, they are still subject to the

male gaze and usually the heterosexual male fantasy. The relevance of the male gaze

on strong female characters is pronounced in action films such as *Charlie's Angels* or

Lara Croft: Tomb Raider where the protagonist's ultimate role is to have "erotic

impact" and be hypersexualized as opposed to carrying on a genuinely interesting

storyline. *Alien*'s Ellen Ripley and *Terminator*'s Sarah Connor are two of the most

notable strong female action heroes who attempt to subvert the traditional male gaze

by becoming the traditionally male hero, but as Diana Dominguez (2005) observes

they, "…eventually repudiate the feminine, becoming, in effect, sexless and less

'human' mirrors of male action heroes" (Dominguez, 2005, para. 6) instead of fully

complex female action heroes.

In "Gender and the Action Heroine: Hardbodies and the Point of No Return,"

Jeffrey Brown (1996) argues, "The development of the hardbody, hardware, hard-as-

nails heroine who can take it, and give it, with the biggest and the baddest men of the

action cinema indicates a growing acceptance of nontraditional roles for women and

an awareness of the arbitrariness of gender traits" (Brown, 1996, p. 52). While these

female action hero roles are welcoming over the 'damsel in distress', placing women

in traditionally masculine roles without disrupting the male value systems associated

with them maintains male dominance. Female action heroes, although not helpless,

are still subject to the male gaze in a way that male heroes are not. Placing women in

these non-traditional roles makes it more acceptable for women to emulate masculine

power dynamics, not necessarily a positive step towards solid, complex and positive

representations of women. Lara Croft, for example, is the star of a video game and

movie series who emulates masculine behaviours through violent conflict resolution

and a tough emotional exterior. So while there are now female heroes that fit within

patriarchal norms and adopt masculine traits, it is still not acceptable to have a

situation wherein feminine qualities can be transformed as heroic characteristics.

Many female television viewers long to see more strong women in our media

landscape and cling to the few representations provided even if they subscribe to a

patriarchal model. For example, Ariel Levy's introduction to *Female Chauvinist Pigs*

(FCP) (2005) provides a landscape of some of the backlash the feminist movement has received. She finds that FCP are those women who "get it" and who can be just as raunchy as "one of the guys." They can objectify women at strip clubs while simultaneously creating a sexualized cartoon like persona of themselves. Levy argues that these women behave like their counterparts, the "Male Chauvinist Pig" because doing so provides them with a sense of power, albeit a pseudo sense of power that is rooted in exploiting their own as well as other women's sexuality (Levy, 2005). Not all the examples in this paper are of "female chauvinist pigs," however the underlying premise of Levy's theory is that women replicate masculine behaviour in order to attain power. Strong women on television are acceptable to networks, advertisers and audience members because they subscribe very closely to traditional power dynamics. Usually strong female characters can be put into something leather, revealing, or otherwise "girlie" which grounds their identity as essentially feminine and thus makes it acceptable for them to exude a masculine attitude without challenging their sexuality.

Feminist Theories on Patriarchy

Most feminist critique isn't merely about "women's issues" but it is largely concerned with social justice generally. As bell hooks (2000) calls it "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" along with sexuality and ability can all intersect with one another to create complex sites of both privilege and oppression simultaneously. Allan G. Johnson's (2005) systemic model of understanding privilege and oppression is a useful tool to investigate how these representations are at work in a fantasy world such as scripted television and also how they reinforce patriarchal values.

Johnson (2005) defines patriarchy as a society that "promotes male privilege by being male dominated, male identified, and male centered. It is also organized around an obsession with control and involves as one of its key aspects the oppression of women" (Johnson, 2005, p. 5). When these four tenets work simultaneously, they reinforce patriarchy and the effects are widespread and reoccurring. This is often observed in news media, where there is a lack of coverage of specifically women's issues such as reproductive rights or sexual harassment and assault. Even women who do attain positions of power such as politicians are subject to overt sexualization in a way that their male counterparts typically are not[4] (Wakeman, 2008). Women are statistically underrepresented as guests on news debate shows ("Who Makes the News", 2010), and anecdotal evidence suggests that when they do rarely appear, they are interrupted more often and given less time to speak. Jennifer L. Pozner, founder and executive director of Women In Media & News (a media analysis, education and advocacy group), has experienced this treatment firsthand and found that the majority of her experience appearing on popular news networks such as Fox News, MSNBC and CNN, she has been the only women on a panel of all men. And while she is often introduced last and given less time to speak she is, "…typically interrupted with more frequency than the male guests, sometimes within mere seconds of answering [her] first question," (personal communication, May 14, 2010).

In entertainment media, men are the heroes and stars, the stories are about them and their lives. Women, people of colour, queer folks, and those with disabilities are relegated to the love interest, the sidekick, or just background. As

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[4] See the "Hilary Clinton Nutcracker" (http://gizmodo.com/302358/hillary-clinton-nutcracker-teaches-those-republican-nuts-a-lesson) or "Not Sarah Palin blow up doll" (http://www.topcosales.us/press.asp?CatID=0&PRID=292) or "Sarah Palin Action Figure" with Catholic School Girl outfit (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/09/09/sarah-palin-action-figure_n_125071.html)

Johnson (2006) observes, men and men's stories are valued in our society and this is apparent in the films that win best picture at the academy awards from 1965-2003. The strong majority of them are about white men, only four are female centered and the few films about people of colour always has a white man sharing equal importance. He states:

> The closest that people of color get to powerful roles is as sidekicks to powerful whites in "buddy" movies… And in a heterosexist culture, a powerful gay man is a contradiction in terms, and powerful lesbians are often dismissed as not being real women at all. (Johnson, 2006, p. 95)

Although Johnson notes that there are examples such *The Color Purple* and *The Manchurian Candidate,* that these are exceptions that occur rarely.

Patriarchy coupled with race and class is used as a lens through which institutional oppression can be understood. Institutional oppression is the way in which people are subjected to widespread and systemic oppression as opposed to an individual model that places blame on singular selves. Television reflects these structural phenomena through its representations, or lack thereof, of social groups. For instance, people of colour and queer people have a far higher chance of being killed than their white counterparts (see appendix). It is not just coincidence that writers and/or directors decide to kill off the oppressed characters, it is the *exception* that they survive, and are considered good and noble. Additionally people of colour and queer people are hardly ever chosen to star in heroic roles.

A recent study done by the UK based Research Communication Group (2010) found that men still outnumber women by a two-to-one ratio in television roles, despite the fact that population statistics show women in the majority (Thorpe, 2010).

Even though this study only focused on one category of oppression—namely male privilege—without looking at the intersections of privilege, it proves that women as a group are still actively underrepresented in visual culture.

A key aspect of patriarchy is maintaining the illusion that men and women fit within predetermined gender norms and that these norms are biological and fixed (Johnson, 2005). Stereotypical gender-specific attributes are often identified in opposition to one another with the "masculine" traits valued over "feminine" traits. For example, masculine identified traits such as being *strong* and *in control* are valued and feminine identified traits such as being *weak* and *out of control* are devalued. These essentialist gender stereotypes of men and women have been discredited by gender theorists but are still maintained in mainstream television. Even though men and women in reality are far more complex than a list of traits, television show writers and viewers still celebrate "masculine" values as positive and tend to be dismissive of those deemed to be "feminine." For the sake of clarity, I will identify these categories as "masculine" and "feminine" although I do not believe these are essentialist or biologically determined. However, much of western society and specifically our media place men and women into these categories. Regardless of how much they are disrupted it is generally believed that men and women encompass particular personality traits the other gender does not.

Female Representation in Television and Film

Although in the real world men and women are more complex then a simple binary of gendered traits, television characters tend to be more static and traditional. The male dominated television industry introduced (pseudo) tough female characters because it opened up another profitable market of potential consumers. To maintain

ad revenue, they created the "empowered woman" that would appeal to women desiring female characters beyond housewives and maids and also to male viewers by putting the characters in sexy outfits and giving them fancy weapons. Women would be happy to see a butt-kicking badass on TV each week and men could ogle the "hot chick" in skimpy clothes. Although, superficially there may be some subversiveness to the gender reversal, the basic patriarchal value system remains unquestioned through most of this television programming.

For instance, in a recent study Jennifer Kesler (2008) exposed how film school actually teaches students that audiences want "white, straight, male leads" (Kesler, 2008) and other characters including women and people of colour could be included but could not be the hero. She was informed by her professor that "The audience doesn't want to listen to a bunch of women talking about whatever it is women talk about," (Kesler, 2008). This reveals that women (and allied men) cannot create the empowered and complex characters that many fans want to see even if they do break through the glass ceiling.

A recent study done by Neely Swanson (2010) investigated the number of women writers in the 2010 pilot pickup season. She observed:

> …a high of 20% involvement by women when writing alone and/or with men; and just 11% when written by women without male participation. A closer look at the all the names will reveal one writer of Hispanic origin, three Asian-Americans and an entire absence of African American writers. (Swanson, 2010)

Swanson questions the lack of outcry and claims, "This isn't a glass ceiling, it's a White Boys' Club brick wall" (Swanson, 2010).

Even with all the impediments of women in the television industry, tough women are becoming more common in the pop culture landscape, taking on the action hero roles as Sherrie A. Inness (1999) in *Tough Girls: Women, Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* points out. However, she observes that the role reversal remains too shocking, that tough female characters possess attributes that remind the viewer that these tough women are still women after all. Inness argues that tough women who become the heroes are often still represented at some point in the narrative as feminine, whether it's through hair and clothing, or displays of nudity or motherhood. Although she does not argue that fully "masculine" women are the solution to the lack of strong women, she does identify these "feminine" markers as problematic. Buffy Summers, for example, is a typical high school student with blonde hair, "girly" clothing, and boyfriend problems yet she is the hero, endowed with super strength. She is an example of the complexity and fluidity of gender traits that is often missing from strong women.

When Inness wrote *Tough Girls* in 1999 she declared Xena to be "a tough girl for a new century," and without argument Xena is an iconic figure when discussing heroes and women. However, Inness was quick to herald her as a celebratory female icon. Television has seen many strong women since Xena aired in 1995, but has the representation of these characters changed or improved? Strong, tough female characters have become more serious, more common and more accepted, but still possess many of the same qualities Inness outlined. Starbuck on *Battlestar Galactica*, for instance, is a fully realized strong, complex character on a dramatic series as opposed to Xena who is placed in a historical context filled with campy dialogue reminding the viewer that she isn't real. Both characters still perform "masculine" acts in terms of conflict resolution and general interpersonal relations. Both Starbuck

and Xena solve most of their problems using violence: Xena's character is structured around being one of the strongest warriors of her time and Starbuck is a military pilot who is tougher than most of the men on the crew, using intimidation and threat of physical harm to her advantage. They also both have difficulty expressing emotion and have very limited interpersonal relationships.

A good example of how the masculine warrior trope might be enacted differently is Buffy's character, which Sara Buttsworth (2002) discusses in "'Bite Me': Buffy and the penetration of the gendered warrior-hero". Buttsworth states that, "If warrior identity is simultaneously a quintessentially masculine identifier, and one of the core expressions of 'innate' masculinity, then the biggest transgression of warrior iconography posed by *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is Buffy's gender" (Buttsworth, 2002, p. 185). Buttsworth discusses how Buffy blurs gendered boundaries, providing a space to discuss what is possible with female identity in the real world. Because, "soldier identities are 'embodied' by, and embody, heterosexual masculinity—an embodiment whose integrity depends upon the externalization of the feminine" (Theweleit, 1987, as cited in Buttsworth, 2002, p. 8) it is subversive to place a physically feminine character such as Buffy into a warrior archetype. Buffy embodies heterosexual masculinity in order to be deemed a warrior and the taken-for-granted masculinity inherent in this role is played with and even pitted against traditional military structure during the fourth season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

This portrayal of female characters is also evident in children's cartoons. For example, Baker and Raney found that although female superheroes were portrayed in less stereotypical "feminine" ways in some cartoons, they have adopted still more "masculine" traits in others. The authors were testing male and female representations against previous studies conducted over the past forty years that found female

cartoons were portrayed in stereotypically "feminine" ways. In "Equally Super?: Gender-Role Stereotyping of Superheroes in Children's Animated Programs," Baker and Raney (2007) further observed "[that] females must compensate for being portrayed as strong and powerful by emphasizing other traditional feminine traits unassociated with power is not exclusive to children's animated programming" (p. 37). These findings have also been proven by Inness in representations of tough women in film and television.

Testing Against Archetypes

I began this research project because I noticed a scarcity of queer characters, representations of disability, and women of colour in television, and when they did appear they were more often villainized, demonized and killed than their white, straight, female counterparts. Wanting to find evidence for my observations, I watched and thematically categorized the female characters in eleven prominent science fiction/fantasy television shows (see appendix A). First, I began by finding all the female characters who appeared on the show in three or more episodes, tracked their intersections of privilege, identified whether they were evil (and if so, whether they were eventually redeemed) and if, when and how they died. My results (see appendix) corroborated my casual observations, that when women of colour and queer women are represented in television they die more often than white women. This lead me to wonder, how far have women's representations really come?

While deeply immersed in this categorization process, I noticed recurring tropes in these female characters that are both degrading and troubling. In many cases, women are often violated, have their bodies taken over by an alien life form or are forcibly impregnated. They are infantilized and/or made to be a 'damsel in

distress'. They are 'women in refrigerators'[5]--characters who die a brutal death only for the purpose of promoting revenge by the typically male hero. I began to be curious to understand what specific qualities in female characters fans are drawn to, and support (Jenkins, 2006). Most often the female characters that are celebrated as empowered are physically strong, embodying the typically male hero archetype.

The sample for this study was taken from widely popular and cult classic speculative fiction shows from the 1990s and 2000s. The characters chosen for analysis were either stars of the show or have a significant and memorable role for at least four episodes. All of the shows that I will discuss here aired for at least fourteen episodes. Since most of the starring roles were white heterosexual women, the representation of queer or women of colour played an important role in the analysis of those few characters. The shows and characters researched were: *The Sarah Connor Chronicles*: Sarah Connor, *Firefly*: Zoe Washburne, *Farscape*: Aeryn Sun, Xhalax Sun, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: Buffy Summers, Faith, *Dollhouse*: Echo, *Star Trek Voyager*: Captain Kathryn Janeway, *Battlestar Galactica* (2004): President Laura Roslin, Kara "Starbuck" Thrace, Admiral Helena Cain, *Lost*: Ana Lucia Cortez, *Angel*: Jasmine.

The unit of analysis for this comparison was an individual female character on a speculative fiction television show that is commonly considered "strong" to a North American audience. A strong woman usually embodies certain traits (see Inness, 1999) but does not need to encompass all of them. For example, the strong female character would have an aesthetically strong appearance through demonstrable

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[5] "Women in Refrigerators" is a term coined by Gail Simone (1999) when she noticed that many female super heroes in comic books, "…are either depowered, raped, or cut up and stuck in the refrigerator" (Simone, 1999). The term originated from the comic Green Lantern #54 where the hero's girlfriend was murdered and shoved in a refrigerator. It was used as a plot device to motivate the male super hero to seek revenge. The term has also been applied to film and television.

muscles, be physically fit, and have a particular physical style that may include a
leather warrior outfit or a military uniform. Strong characters demonstrate leadership
or a dominant, independent attitude.

The strong female characters I focused on were compared against a list of
stereotypically "masculine" and "feminine" gender specific attributes. I adapted
stereotypical gendered traits from previous studies to create a chart (see Table 1) as
have been identified in feminist texts and previous studies of gender representation on
television (Baker & Raney, 2007 & Johnson, 2005).

Masculine		Feminine	
Rational	Physically and verbally aggressive	Intuitive	more likely to show affection
Emotionally Inexpressive	more frequently rewarded	Emotionally Expressive	more likely to emphasize relationships
Strong	showed more ingenuity	Weak	more helpless
Cool Headed	asked and answered more questions	Hysterical	more likely to ask for advice or protection
In Control of Themselves	emphasized more tasks	Lack Self Control	Passive
Independent	Violent	Dependent	selfless in situations of forced submission
Active	threatened others more frequently	Passive	Materialistic/prone to attachment
Objective	keen minds and problem-solving abilities	Erratic	Unaggressive
Dominant	muscularity and strength	Submissive	Shy
Decisive	resourceful	Indecisive	Cautious
Self-Confident	Daring	Lacking in Self Confidence	Cooperative
Not nurturing	Competitive	Nurturing	

Table 1: Gender Specific Values

After I categorized the characters with the gender specific values chart, I identified

commonalities between them using historic archetypal figures. Archetypes and tropes

are character and narrative devices used to further stories. Many of them are so

familiar to audiences that their use can avoid excessive back stories or historical

contexts, but also makes stories obvious and easy to decipher. Archetypes date back

to Greek mythology and these character traits are still very similar in contemporary

stories. The hero is one of the most common archetypes and can be identified in

nearly all Hollywood films. Since many of these archetypes predate any feminist

analysis, they were typically written specifically for men and it is not surprising that

nearly all the identifiable strong women seem to be written within the masculine

boundaries of the hero and the villain. I've identified four archetypes that strong

women fit into, sometimes haphazardly: Warrior, Leader, Anti-Hero, and Villain. I

created these categories from a cross analysis of characters who embody specific

archetypal qualities, coupled with traits from the gender norms chart which I created

to identify how strong women are represented and where they diverge from a more

traditional archetypal representation. In the next section, I will look at strong women

characters in various television shows and identify their archetypal structures, and

what gendered values the characters are assigned. I will conclude with a broader

analysis of these representations and provide a chart of value assignments as a step in

creating a feminist archetype of the strong woman.

Warrior Archetype

The hero archetype is probably the most common historical character

appearing in many of the most popular films of all time. Joseph Campbell

(1949/2008) traces the patterns of the hero in "A Hero with a Thousand Faces." In

that work, he identifies what the archetypal heroes go through on their journeys

including being called to adventure, refusing the call, having supernatural aids and receiving a boon that assists in finally completing the goal. In contemporary films and television, writers still rely on the heroic journey Campbell documents. The warrior is identified by his/her physical strength and use of brawn to solve conflicts and like the traditional hero s/he is fighting for a noble and selfless cause.
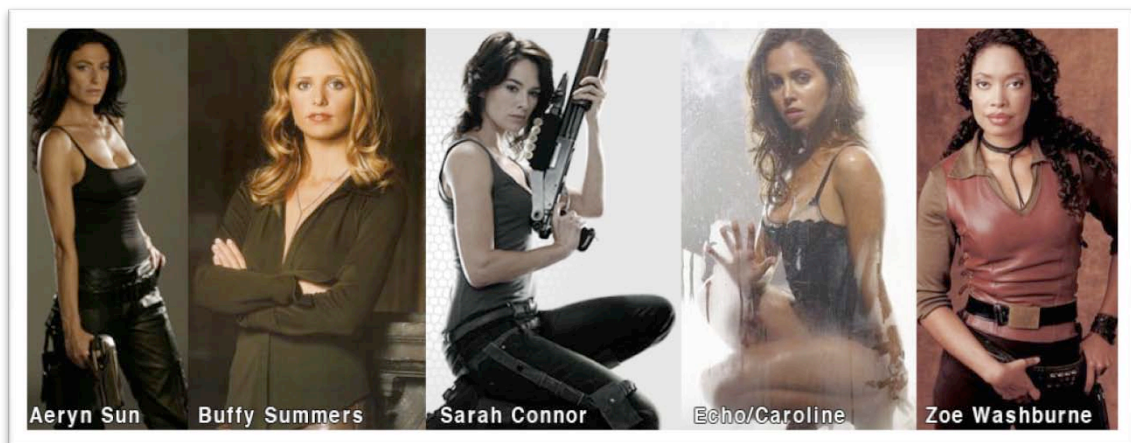
Figure 1: Warrior Characters

Sarah Connor, Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles

In *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles,* the two starring women are easily identified by their good looks and their physical strength. Cameron, played by Summer Glau, is a cyborg who has come from the future in the body of a teenager, to protect John Connor. John's mother, who we've previously been introduced to in the *Terminator* movies, has spent the majority of her adult life training to kill robots in order to protect her son. Sarah (John's mother), played by Lena Headey is calm, reserved and nearly always stoic. During the episode "What He Beheld" John Connor and Derek Reese are sitting in a car having a conversation that epitomizes the strength of these two women:

Derek Reese: Remind me again, why are the boys out here and the girls in

there?

John Connor: Because [...] one of the girls is harder than nuclear nails.

Derek Reese: And the other one's a cyborg. ("What He Beheld")

Sarah Connor has been resuscitated from her movie role in the first two *Terminator* films to star in a television show that follows her difficult path of protecting her son and trying to avert an apocalypse. Connor is an exemplar of the traditionally male warrior archetype with the courage and strength to fight evil. The story is the same as the films: Connor must destroy the artificial intelligence, Skynet, that will in the future destroy the world. The introduction to the television series has a voice over by Connor telling the audience that she is engaged in a war. She says, "Today we fight to stop Skynet from ever being created, to change our future, to change [John Connor's] fate, the war to save mankind begins now."

Warriors are primarily unwavering in their goal of destroying evil and restoring justice; they are clear on what is right and wrong and will use their physical strength and command of weaponry to accomplish their task. Typically, warriors did not choose to be heroes and often are reluctant to follow the path at first but the narrative clearly shows that they are the only ones who can stop the evil/monster/robot/demon/all-around bad guy.

Throughout the two seasons that the television show aired, in over thirty-one episodes, Connor shows very little emotion other than concern for her son's life. The audience is introduced to the television version of Connor when she leaves a man she is engaged to in order to continue her life's mission to protect her son ("Pilot"). She is most often cool-tempered, speaks very little, and is suspicious of everyone. She embodies many of the masculine traits commonly associated with a male hero. Her warrior tenacity is epitomized when, in the episode "Earthlings Welcome Here,"

Connor goes on a quest to find out what a particular symbol means. She keeps seeing the same three dots in many different places and she believes it has to do with the cybernetic organism that will bring about the apocalypse. None of the other characters support her quest but she decides to continue looking. She finds a suspicious warehouse that she believes will provide her some answers but she is shot in the leg by a security guard. This mini story arc demonstrates how daring, aggressive and independent she is by risking her life in order to save the world. Sarah Connor, in true warrior fashion, will never stop fighting.

The warrior's physical strength and resilience is how s/he perseveres. Connor's combat training, stockpile of weapons, and shots of her cleaning and reorganizing guns all position her as knowledgeable, capable and ready to fight her war. Since terminators are sent back from the future with the sole purpose of killing her son, the story immediately removes diplomatic means of conflict resolution. This 'kill or be killed' thematic approach in TSCC makes for some enjoyable fight scenes but further supports militaristic and therefore masculinist modes of behaviour.

Zoe Washburne, Firefly

Sarah Connor's warrior nature is occasionally made more complex through attention to character development: she begins to care for those she loves, she fears dying from cancer, she worries about pushing away her son, and she suffers mental anguish after murdering another human being. These instances of emotional growth somewhat expand Sarah Connor's character out of the limited, masculine warrior archetype, allowing her character some complexity. Unlike Connor, Zoe Washburne (Gina Torres) of *Firefly* does not have this complexity. The pilot episode ("Serenity") of *Firefly* shows scenes from the "Unification War" with Zoe on the front lines.

When the show returns to present day, Zoe is second in command on the starship captained by Malcolm Reynolds (Mal), Zoe's commander during the "Unification War." During the single season *Firefly* was on air, Zoe is hardly seen outside of the rigidity of the warrior, except when her heterosexual identity is reinforced in sex scenes and even then, arguably, she is still playing the warrior.

Zoe's military training is apparent in her clear respect for hierarchy, her emotionless and cool-headed appearance as well as her highly competent skills in battle. Zoe is clearly the "muscle" on the ship. Zoe and Mal (the captain) were on the losing side of the war and thus have committed their lives to evading the conquerors (the Alliance) and making money however they can. It is clear that Zoe agrees with Mal's deep resentment and hatred for the Alliance and quickly they are established as heroes trying to make it in a world that hates them. Zoe is a warrior in a very militaristic sense: she takes and executes orders and uses her physical strength to protect her crew when necessary.

Aeryn Sun, Farscape

Unlike the seriousness of *TSCC* and *Firefly, Farscape* uses humour and hyperbole to ridicule the American military. In *Farscape,* the military is run by an alien race called Sebacean who look identical to humans. They call themselves the "Peacekeepers" because at one point in history they were the guardians of an ancient race. Overtime the Peacekeepers became an imperialist force of oppression. Through the course of the show the inner workings of the Peacekeepers are revealed through the character Aeryn Sun (Claudia Black). Aeryn was born on a military ship and raised to follow rules and obey orders. Since she knew no other way of life, Aeryn was an exemplary soldier: cold, lack of emotional expression and highly trained in

combat. It isn't until she became a fugitive on a ship of escaped prisoners that she learns compassion and friendship. Aeryn's physical military training sets her up with the skills of a warrior, and although she struggles against her military training throughout the series, she remains loyal to her friends and fights against those that would harm them.

The caption under Aeryn's photo on the *Farscape* wiki says, "Tough chick with a gun," which is an appropriate description for a strong female hero, but Aeryn's character is surprisingly and refreshingly complex due to her strong character development. As stated previously, her character begins by embodying the rigid, highly masculine structure of the military and is characterized by many masculine traits such as aggressiveness, daring, rational, emotionally inexpressive, cool-headed, pretty much all of the traits listed on the chart. But throughout the series Aeryn learns how to be emotionally expressive, dependent on others, nurturing and not always in control.

Although the show ends with Aeryn still embodying many of the masculine characteristics, her growth is notable. The show is written to elevate cooperation and emotional expression over the cold militaristic style and this sort of growth in Aeryn sets her apart from other strong women. Aeryn is not positioned as a woman who needs to be "tamed" or is ridiculed for showing emotion but she is celebrated for the small steps she takes and the audience is carried along her personal journey.

Buffy Summers, Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Perhaps the most well-developed female warrior character that moves beyond the masculine anchors seen in Sarah Connor, Zoe and Aeryn is Buffy Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar) from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (BTVS). Buffy embodies nearly all

the warrior hero traits. She is fighting a nightly war in which she uses her super strength to triumph over evil. In each season, the evil villain becomes stronger and tougher to beat, but Buffy knows that she is on the side of good and that she must keep fighting, although, in typical hero fashion she occasionally questions her powers and her mission. Like Sarah Connor, Zoe and Aeryn, she is highly trained and competent with weapons, using physical violence to resolve conflicts. She knows what side she is on and she does not waver in her goal.

What sets Buffy apart from other strong women is that Buffy is the every high school girl: blonde, petite, cheerleader, stylish and popular, but one day finds out that she has been chosen. As the show's introduction states, "In every generation there is a chosen one, she alone will stand against the vampires, the demons and the forces of darkness. She is the slayer" ("Welcome to the Hellmouth"). Joss Whedon, creator of the show, said that he wrote Buffy because:

> I'd seen a lot of horror movies which I'd loved very much, with blonde girls getting themselves killed in dark alleys and I just germinated this idea about how much I'd like to see a blonde girl go into a dark alley, get attacked by a big monster and then kill it! (Whedon, 1998, qtd. in Buttsworth, 2002)

> BTVS has been the site of much academic and feminist inquiry and remains a

large cult classic (Wilcox & Lavery, D, 2002); South, 2003; Levine & Parks, 2007). Buffy is petite, blonde, sarcastic and just wants to have fun (but hardly ever gets to). There is nothing about her appearance that marks her as hero or warrior, which is part of the fascination and exceptionalism of the show. Although she is feminine in appearance, she is not sexualized: "Unlike many of her predecessors (or contemporaries) Buffy, although 'sexy', does not use her sexuality as an artifice or a weapon, nor does it detract from her ability as a warrior" (Buttworth, 2002, p. 190).

Buffy breaks out of the traditional warrior mold in appearance and personality, even if she does possess many of the archetypal traits. The show was dynamically written to allow Buffy the emotional space to make mistakes and learn from them. She draws from both masculine and feminine categories more than most other female characters on television. While the show does rely on violence to solve nearly all the major conflicts, similarly to *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles,* it takes the death of humans seriously ("Consequences").

Echo, Dollhouse

Of the eleven series I examined, one notable exception to the stereotypical warrior was a character (Echo) in the series *Dollhouse.* I briefly outline that character here, as a woman who has been coerced into signing her life away to be used in a futuristic brothel. *Dollhouse* was a controversial and short-lived two season series. According to the futuristic vision of the show, technology has been built so a human brain can be "wiped clean" (much like a hard drive) and alternative personality traits and memories can be programmed into it creating "dolls" that are living and breathing play things. This technology is used on individuals living in a secret location so they can be rented out to the rich for many purposes, though primarily for sexual fantasies. In many ways, the show is conceived of as a playground/dollhouse for the rich. The series opens with a woman who has been coerced into signing her life away to become an "active" (a programmable doll in the house), and is renamed Echo (Eliza Dusku) to signal her transition and her status as a doll. During the show, the story line revolves around her consistently being rented out (programmed) for the pleasure of men, mostly for sexual fantasy but occasionally as a high tech thief or a kidnapping negotiator. While there is no discussion about the dollhouse being a glorified brothel that coerces individuals to contract out their life for the sexual gratification of rich

men, Echo is being violated both mentally and physically in each episode. She is portrayed as a strong character both in terms of being programmed physical strength, but as the story progresses viewers see her emotional development as "Echo" comes to know herself and her past self (Caroline).

Just to be very clear, *Dollhouse* is about rape even if the creators deny such allegations. Coerced consent is not in fact consent and therefore renting the bodies of the actives/dolls is not merely prostitution but also rape. Echo is a part of this list of strong women because she is often physically and mentally commanding, strong, and in control but she is primarily a glorified prostitute. Although the creators have developed a sympathetic character in Echo it is clear in the marketing campaign for the program that Echo's strength is not as important as her body (See Figure 2). This is apparent through Fox's advertising that includes images of Echo nearly naked lying down seductively or fully naked covered with Polaroid photos. The image of a strong woman is ultimately a façade because during most of the show she is little more than a toy to be rented out. Joss Whedon, creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, has been widely celebrated for creating strong female characters, even winning a woman's human rights award from Equality Now, but even NPR noted the irony of his latest show in a radio segment titled "Welcome to the 'Dollhouse': Meet the Anti-Buffy" ("Welcome To The 'Dollhouse: Meet The Anti-Buffy", 2009).
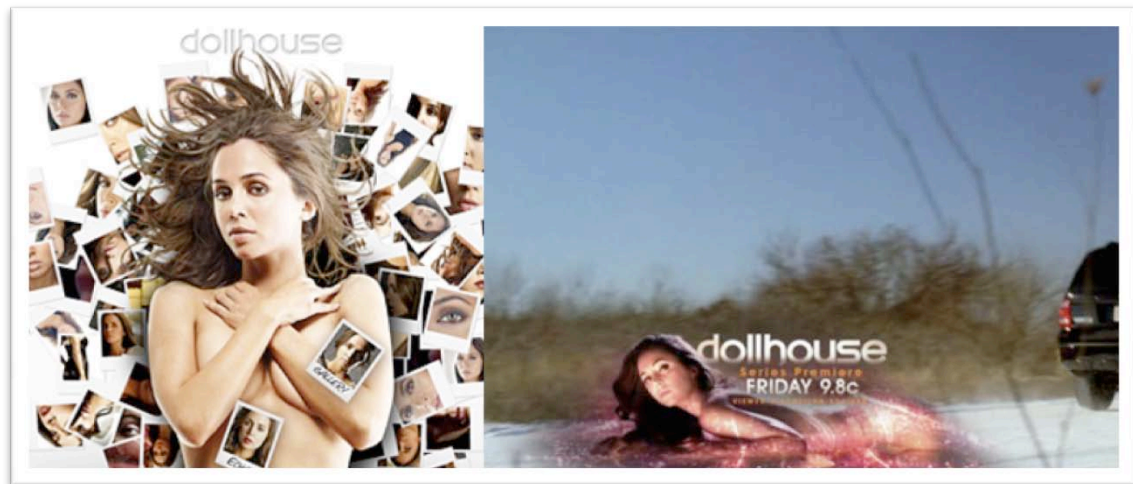
Figure 2: Dollhouse Advertising and Promotion

Leader Archetype

Authority is the strongest signifier of the leader archetype. A leader is characterized by his/her commanding position, forcefulness, perseverance, rational attitude and ability to make decisions under pressure. Leaders are traditionally men in high positions of power such as a president or a military commander. Although in reality more women have attained these prestigious positions of power such as politicians and CEOs, men still control 485 of the fortune 500 companies ("Women CEOs", 2009) and all three branches of government ("Senators of the 111th Congress" & "Representative Offices", n.d.). The science fiction landscape is ideal for introducing competent and intelligent women in leadership positions due to its futuristic nature. *Star Trek* finally placed a woman as the captain of a starship on *Star Trek: Voyager* and *Battlestar Galactica* introduced a female president with the character of Laura Roslin. In this section I will examine the first female captain of a *Star Trek* series with an analysis of Captain Kathryn Janeway, and contrast that with the leadership role of President Laura Roslin in Battlestar Galactica.

Figure 3: Leader Characters

Kathryn Janeway, Star Trek: Voyager

Captain Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew), leader of the crew and ship of Voyager is able to make and command decisions without hesitation, is capable in hand to hand combat, and remains cool-headed and rational under pressure. Janeway is the first female commander of a starship in the *Star Trek* television and movie series, where a future Earth is a post capitalist world with no money, no poverty and allegedly no racism or sexism. Since current society isn't this utopian world, having a female captain on a notable and respected television show is certainly significant. The normalization of her leadership role is apparent when the crew encounters a misogynistic alien race who attempt to undermine her authority. Members of the alien race comment, for instance: "You'll be given no more respect than any Kazon woman, now that your ship and technology are mine; I will tell you when you may speak" ("Basics Part 2"), and "That's what we get for having a woman in the captain's seat" ("Deathwish"). These alien beings are most often framed as unenlightened and

inferior. They also contrast with how much her crew respects her, and acknowledges her authority and position without hesitation.

What makes Janeway unique within this group of strong women is that her strength doesn't always come from physical violence. In true *Star Trek* fashion, she values diplomacy over violence and only uses force when she sees no alternative. What stands out with Janeway is that she is still feminine without being sexualized, she is a captain who happens to be female, not a female captain. The difference here is that strong women are immediately identifiable by very masculine traits and there is often a tension between the female body and the male behaviour/characteristics, whereas with Janeway, that tension is heavily minimized by her ability to adapt positive representations of both strength and nurturing. She is physically comforting with her crew in slight ways, occasionally she can be seen putting her hand on someone's shoulder or arm in a way that breaks out of the unemotional, uncaring convention of the strong character[6].

Janeway is a rare example of a strong woman who is relatively well-balanced in terms of polarized gender norms. She is commanding and independent but she also acknowledges that she needs her crew to help make informed decisions, and she does not rely on violence as the primary means of conflict resolution even though it is used on the show (this is due primarily to the fact that the writers have chosen storylines that can be solved diplomatically or with some form of non violent resolution that does not include photons and phasers). Janeway's representation is especially important for appreciating how much popular culture can affect real life. Many

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[6] At Dragon*Con 2009, the science fiction convention, I asked Kate Mulgrew if the writers intentionally wrote her to be physically affectionate in small ways and she said that small detail was her own addition.

female engineers, for instance, have credited Janeway's character as their inspiration for entering such a male dominated field, (Mulgrew, 2009).

While Captain Janeway trained and moved up the ranks in *Star Trek*'s military to attain her position as leader of a starship, in BSG, the character Laura Roslin became president literally over night. When the series begins, Roslin is the Secretary of Education at a time of massive human genocide inflicted by the cylons (an artificial life form), and as the highest ranking survivor, she assumes the role of president with much reluctance and nearly no support. Her journey on BSG explores a leadership role, and specifically a female leader in a traditionally male position.

Laura Roslin, Battlestar Galactica

I imagine it's somewhat controversial to add Laura Roslin (Mary McDonnell) to the list of strong women as she was generally used to amplify the male military leader Admiral Adama. She is worth examining for two reasons: a) as a female president and female leader she was portrayed with a very jagged form of the leader archetype reminding the viewer that women ultimately are not leaders, and b) that in order for Roslin to grow into a leader she eventually adopted traditionally patriarchal ways of commanding. Laura begins very unsure of herself, and there are continual references to the fact that a "school teacher" is now president ("Colonial Day", "Fragged", "Precipice").

Part of Roslin's process of becoming a leader is being able to make difficult decisions and see them through. Her apparent "toughness" is demonstrated in the way she deals with cylons. During the first season they identify a human-looking cylon and after a brief interrogation she decides to throw him out of the airlock ("Flesh and Bone"). As the show progresses, Roslin becomes more and more manipulative. This

manipulation is often performed through a very calm and rational exterior, telling someone she will do something while fully knowing that she does not intend to fulfill her promise. An example that couples her manipulation and her tendencies to play judge and jury with the enemy is found in "Home: Part 1". In this episode, a cylon returns to the ship voluntarily with two soldiers. Roslin promises that the cylon will be put in a holding cell with no harm done to her in order to calm down angry soldiers armed with weapons. As soon as all the guns are put down she yells, "Thank you, now put that thing out the airlock." Because the audience has followed the back story of this particular cylon and has grown somewhat empathetic to her, the audience breaks identification with Roslin's decision, and her character thus appears irrational. Typically, this cold, direct, and to-the-point behaviour is a trait that is considered positive and admirable in a male leader.

Roslin's growth into a leadership role is part of how she is framed as weak. Her leadership abilities are constantly put into question by herself and others. As she becomes more authoritative, she is often undermined by male leaders. Contrasting her with Janeway who has already gone through the training and established her form of management prior to her introduction on the show, Roslin appears somewhat ridiculous.

Anti-Hero Archetype

The anti-hero is a contemporary archetype that provides a bit of complexity to the firmly archetypal hero and villain. Although the anti-hero possess many traits from the hero and villain they are often more selfish and reluctant to help solve conflicts. Typically the anti-hero has little or no family, and they can often be identified as the tortured soul who feels like they have no home. In this section I will

examine three characters: Kara Thrace, Faith and Ana Lucia, specifically focusing on how they reaffirm or diverge from traditional masculine values through the anti-hero archetype.

Figure 4: Anti-Hero Characters

Kara Thrace, Battlestar Galactica

Kara "Starbuck" Thrace (Katee Sackhoff) from BSG begins as an anti-hero but becomes a hero by the end of the series. She might best be described as "scrappy": she is as physically and emotionally tough as any of the men on her ship but she is also unstable. Actor Katee Sackhoff, who plays Starbuck, described her as a character with "a lot of confidence and masculine energy" (Moore & Larson, 2003). She is an interesting character study because she embodies patriarchal masculinity, which gives her the air of toughness and strength, but she is framed as out of control, implying that she can't 'handle' a man's world. Her stoicism is looked down upon, even though this character trait is celebrated in patriarchy and she is instead framed as not being self aware and as emotionally unstable (e.g. decidedly female).

When Starbuck is first introduced in the BSG miniseries, the audience observes her punching a superior officer after a night of heavy drinking and poker-style card games. Despite her obvious strengths as the best fighter pilot, she often appears as rebellious and eccentric, constantly undermining authority and finding unconventional ways to get out of the near death situations she regularly finds herself in. In "Hand of God" Commander Adama brings Starbuck in to help plan a mission because he needs "some serious out-of-the-box thinking" and he explains, "All due respect, gentlemen, we're not as crazy as [Starbuck] is." She constantly disobeys orders and breaks the rules, actions which are often excused. In "The Captain's Hand" Apollo confesses that he has been angry and resentful of Starbuck because she is always getting away with breaking the rules and the one time he did it he, "almost lost everything."

Although Starbuck is arguably the strongest woman on BSG, her character's evolution actually becomes regressive in terms of positive representations of strong women. Her character falls victim to acts of gendered violence, and she is forced into submission. For instance, in "The Farm," cylon enemies attempt to forcibly impregnate Starbuck, and in "Occupation" she is forced to play the wife of her kidnapper. When Starbuck later realizes she is a messiah[7] and sets out to lead her people to Earth, she is forced to turn to her kidnapper and violator to help her find the way. Starbuck is perpetually violated and even worse the creators make her assailant be the only one who can "help" her in the end. Starbuck is again painted as out of control, unable to navigate her "destiny" and she needs guidance to help her find the

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[7] If it were not for the 'interference' by the kidnapper cylon who took a particular interest in Starbuck during various points in the television series, she would probably not have realized that she was in fact a messiah (and furthermore would not have been able to achieve her goal without his direct help), so while it might actually look like it is a subversive take on the traditional male messiah trope, it is presenting women as unable to fulfill such a critical role.

answers. I am quite fond of Starbuck and appreciate the strong and complex character development, but her representation embodies the worst of both masculine and feminism traits.

Faith, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Like Starbuck, Faith (Eliza Dushku), the "bad" slayer on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is tough: suppresses her emotions, she is endowed with the strength of the slayer, and she is promiscuous and emotionally detached when it comes to sex--all traits commonly identified as masculine. Very quickly we learn that Faith is selfish because of a rough childhood and absence of family support. These traits (disregarding the special powers) are similar to Starbuck and the traits of the anti-hero. Although Buffy and Faith are matched in physical strength it is clear that Faith is unable to control her special powers. Faith's emotional instability leads her to "switch sides" and join the evil that is trying to take over the world. Instead of using her superpowers to fight evil she becomes a hit wo/man and reaches a low point when she kills and saws off a man's hand in order to get handcuffs off of him ("Choices"). At this point in the story there is a clear binary between the two slayers, and what is interesting is that they both embody masculine traits of physical strength, aggression and independence. But viewers are reminded that Faith is unable to control her powers or emotions whereas Buffy, who possess the same traits such as brute force and independence, is framed as the "right" way to deal with strength because of her unwavering moral stance and confidence.

Faith's character diverges from Starbuck's representation through her decision to join forces with evil and become the villain. Although she clearly is fighting against all the warrior self-righteousness of Buffy, it isn't until Buffy defeats and

nearly murders Faith that she begins to realize the horrors of what she has done. In the end, Faith is redeemed and comes back to help save the day, though she is still morally shaky about what it means to fight for good and makes jokes about it, "I pull for the good guys now" ("Dirty Girls"). Faith's redemption is an example of how important emotional growth is on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Faith, despite all the horrible things she's done, is still able to learn and grow from her mistakes and make attempts at reconciliation with those she has hurt.

Ana Lucia, Lost

Faith's anti-hero status is informed by both her rough "outsider" personality and her predestined calling which endowed her with special powers to help her fight. Ana Lucia Cortez (Michelle Rodriguez) on the show *Lost* similarly becomes the anti-hero after being thrown into a situation that called upon her to use her skills. Although she was only on twenty-five episodes, she played a central role on the show during that time. Ana Lucia, a Latina woman, was a former police officer before she and the other passengers on an Oceanic flight crashed on a mysterious island. Because of her toughness and ability to suppress her emotions, Ana Lucia naturally became a leader to the shipwrecked passengers. Although she has many heroic traits, the writers utilized a familiar racist trope of the hot-headed Latina which helped position Ana Lucia's strength as unusually extreme, making her an anti-hero. Ana Lucia is framed as out of control and extreme when she accidentally shoots and kills an innocent person. Although she is slowly redeemed, Ana Lucia is eventually shot and murdered.

Villain Archetype

Historic villains are notable for their mustache twirling, cackling laugh and generally suspicious demeanor. Contemporary villains are not always as cartoonlike but are identified quickly as the adversary and foil to the hero of the story. Often they are characterized as complete opposites to the heroes. Just as the strong female hero will be sexualized through revealing clothing, the female villain will often be framed as even more sexually suggestive and subversive.

Figure 5: Villain Characters

The strong female hero in television is nearly always represented as white and heterosexual. Women of colour and queer women are rarely empowered, and when they do appear in strong roles they are often villainous characters who ultimately die, are killed, or are greatly weakened to the point that their character becomes obsolete. These representations are visually obvious and the lack of self-reflection in television and character writing remains truly problematic. While not all of the characters I will talk about in this section are queer or are women of colour, it is worth noting that of

the four archetypes that strong female characters might fit into, the villain archetype

includes more queer women and women of colour than any other category.

Jasmine, Angel

Angel, a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* spinoff is similar to its parent show in that it

has few if any women of colour in main or supporting roles. The most prominent

woman of colour in *Angel* is a deity called Jasmine (Gina Torres). She is immediately

positioned as a villain even though she is presented as a warm, friendly and caring

person. Jasmine casts an enchantment spell to convince people to follow in her quest

for world peace. Under mind control, her followers admire her hypnotic beauty.

Upon meeting her, the male hero and star of the series, Angel, says "You're beautiful"

("Inside Out") and expresses that he is "unworthy" ("Shiny Happy People") (this is

unusual behaviour for the emotionally inexpressive star of the show). Everyone that

comes into contact with her expresses how beautiful and gorgeous she is and how

they feel fulfilled, no longer lonely and lost. However, the audience learns along with

one of the show's characters that Jasmine's breathtaking appearance is a ruse and she

is a rotting corpse with maggots coming out of her eyesockets and mouth.

It is rare that women of colour are portrayed as beautiful in popular television

without being hyper sexualized or stereotyped[8] and this case is no exception as

Jasmine is a woman of colour whose beauty is just a mask to cover her true self: a

grotesque, rotting corpse. This perpetuates the myth that women of colour are not

authentically beautiful, further pitting them up against the white heroes of the show

and demonstrating a clear good versus bad dichotomy (White = good, Black = bad).

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[8] Women of colour have historically and contemporarily been typecast into harmful racial stereotypes such as the 'jezebel', 'mammy', 'magical negro', "hot headed Latina" and Asian women are often framed as sexually submissive and fetishized.

During the DVD extras of *Angel*, the creator, Joss Whedon and the woman who plays Jasmine, Gina Torres congratulate the show for being so progressive and casting a woman of colour as a shiny, beautiful woman. Torres says:

> …and to be able to put me into this kind of a role where I basically don't, physically, don't follow any rules… she's so tall and she's so different looking and they just said, no we want you to be this image of this perfect woman and I think it would be great, to put that out there, as this woman of colour, this strong sort of woman of colour. (Norton, B. L., D. Straiton, et al., 2004)

While I agree having a progressive strong woman of colour character used to expand the notion of beautiful would be wonderful to have on television, they must have forgotten that Jasmine is an evil rotting corpse.

Helena Cain, Battlestar Galactica

Another example of the villain archetype that clashes appropriately with the white, heterosexual female hero is Admiral Helena Cain (Michelle Forbes). Cain was briefly on *Battlestar Galactica* and was a part of the main cast on the television film *Battlestar Galactica: Razor*. Cain embodies many of the militaristic masculine traits: tough attitude, strong physical appearance, decisive, emotionally inexpressive, and violent. Cain's representation has similar problems to that of Starbuck in that she possesses many of the valued masculine traits but Cain is also framed as out of control. Cain appears during season two and takes over command. At first she appears gracious but she becomes increasingly sinister and manipulative: ordering the deaths of entire families, leaving civilian ships to be captured or killed by the enemy, and shooting a man in the head when he disobeyed her orders.

In *Razor*[9], the audience learns that Cain was in a sexual relationship with her female cylon captive which is *supposed* to explain her vicious hatred of the cylon race. This positions Cain as a queer woman in high command, and if she wasn't framed as out of control and evil it would be impressive to see a queer woman in such a critical role. Instead, Cain's character is villianized and murdered instead of allowing an attempted redemption.

Discussion: The Dis/Empowerment of Strong Female Characters

The collection of strong women in this research varies significantly from empowerment to ridicule. Most of these characters are not merely women-in-drag, however the values associated with them are predominately masculine. While tracing the representations of each of these strong women I found that they do in fact embody many masculine traits, making them more pleasing to networks and advertisers. In patriarchal society, masculine traits are socially valued over female traits and so it follows that in order for a woman on television to appear strong and capable, she must embody these masculine traits. Many of these television writers are subscribing to the four archetypes so firmly that they are merely replicating patriarchy as opposed to transcending the masculine archetypes and re-identifying and imagining what a female heroic archetype might look like.

Through this examination, I found that even women who embody masculine traits sometimes appear disempowered, out of control and ridiculous, as if Hollywood is saying that women are not strong enough, capable enough or smart enough to be the heroes. These characters are paltry facsimiles being signified as strong through the

[9] It is perhaps worth noting that two prominent characters in the BSG universe were queer characters but they were not revealed as such on the television program, only in the miniseries and online in the webisodes.

validation of male-dominated archetypes, but at the same time diminished in this way so as to not appear equal.

This analysis of female representations is complex because I am arguing against women replicating patriarchal values in order to be empowered. Until those representations improve, I argue that women who do emulate traditional masculine behaviour should not be framed as out of control and foolish. Additionally, each of these shows constructs a different social and political landscape for the characters that live within them, which predictably limits the possibilities of relationship and character development. For example, *Farscape* has a strong overarching criticism of imperialism and military power, leaving potentially more room for politically progressive character development. But *Battlestar Galactica* sends clear pro-military messages with their storylines, celebrating the masculine values associated with political military regimes and leaving little room for criticism of patriarchal power[10]. These thematic messages can either enable or stunt transformative character development, because the characters can only grow within the boundaries of the series.

I also found that the series with the most progressive value systems tended to have the most complex, rich and interesting characters. Buffy and Janeway are two examples that begin to transcend some of the rigidity of the stereotypical gender binary and they also begin to promote a feminist character framework. A closer examination of the values of these characters in future television writing could even

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[10] It is also worth noting here that all the main human female characters die at the end of the show which is rather startling but not surprising when positioned within the heavy patriarchal values of the show.

help create a new archetype that can be used to identify the kinds of transformative

characters that might serve as anti-oppression role models in popular culture.

While a truly transformative and feminist character may not completely

transcend the categories of gendered stereotypes, it's crucial to look closely at what

traits help promote a better world with social justice values free of racism, sexism,

classism, homophobia and abilism. I have begun to create a chart that lays out

traditionally masculine and feminine traits and I've assigned a positive or negative

value system to them based on how they are framed in the media (see Table 2). To

begin envisioning a strong female (and progressive male) character, I have reassigned

traits based on anti-oppression and social justice values (see Table 3). Removing

gender stereotyping and applying feminist values is a step towards creating a strong

female archetype and possibly a step towards a more feminist society.

	Negative	Positive
Masculine		Rational Control of themselves Self Confident Objective Independent Decisive Daring Strong Active Violent Emotionally Inexpressive Dominant Not nurturing Competitive
Feminine	Shy Weak Lack Self Confidence Lack Self Control Indecisive Hysterical Submissive Cooperative Emotionally expressive Intuitive	Dependent (only in women) Passive (only in women) Nurturing (only in women)

Table 2: Gendered Traits Currently Valued on Television

	Negative	Positive
Masculine	Violent Emotionally Inexpressive Dominant Not nurturing Competitive	Rational Control of themselves Self Confident Objective Independent Decisive Daring Strong Active
Feminine	Shy Weak Dependent Passive Lack Self Confidence Lack Self Control Indecisive Hysterical Submissive	Cooperative Emotionally expressive Intuitive Nurturing

Table 3: Values for a More Feminist Television Landscape

Networks and Advertising

I've attempted to analyze popular female representations in order to create connections between popular culture representations and actual social phenomena. These characters and storylines do not exist in a vacuum, they are created by a team of people from the creators to the writers, producers and the directors. Clothing and appearance, casting decisions, names and backgrounds of characters, screenplays, lighting, set design, editing footage and camera angles are all chosen for specific reasons. It is easy to get caught up in the fantasy of the story and forget about the people behind the scenes. As Suzanna Danuta Walters (1995) puts it, "Even particular kinds of editing, shots, and staging devices are implicated in the process of making (patriarchal) meaning" (Walters, 1995, p. 69). She goes on to explain that:

> The use of continuity editing – the attempt to project a sense of continuity in space and time – makes editing appear 'invisible' so that the spectator is encouraged to read the film without effort. Continuity editing bridges time and space to create an illusion of events unfolding naturally. It is this

cinematic appearance of naturalness that, so often, serves to reinforce the

ideologies of "women's place" presented in films as somehow "natural," too.

(Walters, 1995, p. 69)

While editing reinforces "women's place" it simultaneous reinforces patriarchal and

other oppressive values as well.[11] In Jennifer Pozner's (2010) upcoming book *Reality*

Bites Back: The Troubling Truth About Guilty Pleasure TV she exposes the

intentional use of strategic editing in order to frame contestants as unintelligent,

pretentious, or bitchy (among many other stereotypes placed on women).

Furthermore, she found that strategic editing also reinforces racial and ethnic

stereotypes, thus perpetuating harmful typecasting and oppressive representations of

women, particularly women of color and low-income women (Pozner, 2010).

An important component to understanding women's representations and how

women remain trapped within the confines of a patriarchal structure is advertising

revenue and network decisions. How do networks decide which television shows to

air and which ones to cancel? It's a combination of how much the series will cost to

make, what the viewership of the show is[12] and, perhaps most importantly, whether

advertisers are interested.

In the documentary *Manufacturing Consent*, based on Noam Chomsky's book

of the same name, Chomsky explains, "What keeps the media functioning is not the

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[11] Political Video Remix artists have demonstrated this through reediting popular films to expose their heteronormativity such as Elisa Kreisinger's Queer Housewives of New York City (http://www.politicalremixvideo.com/2009/06/22/the-queering-of-bethenny-frankel) or to expose the romantic framing of problematic stories such as Becca Marcus' reimagining of Pretty Woman as a horror movie (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZ2H37m_Yt8)

[12] Notice how 4 million views on youtube is a highly successful viral video but 4 million views on an episode of television is a failure. Also the numbers that determine whether a show is viable or not does not take into consideration anything other than the show during that time, no Tivo, no Internet, no downloads or Hulu.

audience," (Achbar & Wintonick, 2002). The media corporations are creating a product that is attractive to advertisers by packaging audiences to sell to businesses. This is clear when observing which products are being sold during various programming times: Saturday morning cartoons are placed amid commercials selling children's toys and junk food, soap operas attract cleaning products and weight loss solutions, and sporting events are predictably accompanied by beer and car advertisements. In Susan Faludi's (1991) best selling book *Backlash*, she discusses the discrepancy between what female viewers actually want and the audience that advertisers seek:

> Female viewers consistently give their highest ratings to nontraditional female characters such as leaders, heroines, and comedians. But TV's biggest advertisers, packaged-foods and household-goods manufacturers, want traditional "family" shows that fit a sales pitch virtually unchanged in two decades. Advertisers prefer to reflect the housewife viewer because she is perceived as a more passive and willing consumer, because she is likely to have more children, and because they are simply used to this arrangement. (Faludi, 1991, p. 148)

Networks have started creating tougher male action heroes and while television executives claim that it is because viewers don't want to see "wimps" anymore, their only 'proof' is that there have been more macho movies (Faludi, 1991, p. 144). As Faludi says, this is "yet another case of the makers of one cultural medium invoking another's handiwork to reinforce the backlash" (Faludi, 1991, p. 144). George Gerbner (2010), founder of cultivation theory, identifies a similar occurrence that speaks to how systemic this problem really is:

[Media companies] have global marketing formulas that are imposed on the

creative people in Hollywood, and I'm in touch with them and they hate it.

They say, 'Don't talk to me about censorship from Washington.' I've never

heard about that, I get censorship everyday. I am told put in more action, cut

out complicated solutions, apply this formula because it travels well on the

global market. These are formulas that need no translation and [are]

essentially image driven and speak action in any language. And of course the

leading element of that formula is violence. (Earp, 2010)

Between intentional decisions by the networks and creators to manifest television

shows that are simultaneously of interest to audiences and advertisers (the latter being

the most important), patriarchal and other oppressive values are most often reinforced.

Conclusion: Making Sense of the Role of Women in SF/F Television Shows

According to the Neilson Company's findings in 2008, television viewing is at

an all-time high with the average American watching 151 hours per month

("Television, Internet and Mobile Usage in the U.S", 2009). Video viewership on the

Internet and on mobile devices has risen as well but is only at three to four hours a

month, leaving television still the most dominant audio/visual form viewed by a wide

margin. These statistics reaffirm how important it is to critically investigate and

systemically change the representations on television. Scripted television shows

provide entertainment and escape in a way that does not promote critical viewing.

Instead, it is so captivating that viewers begin to place themselves in heroic and

villainous roles and they become friends with the characters that they follow each

week. This form of entertainment and escapism is not necessarily bad but should be

simultaneous with critical media literacy (Jenkins, 2006).

Speculative fiction is a genre that prides itself on being cutting edge, pushing the limits of what audiences have come to expect in many mundane television shows but it's not pushing the limits on representations of women, or representations of queer folks, or representations of many oppressed peoples. These characters have not become role models but rather have been molded based on the ongoing systemic oppression of those who are most marginalized in America. These "strong" women and pseudo-feminist archetypal models cannot be all that Hollywood has to offer. Occasionally other pop culture mediums have created good examples of positive anti-oppressive, feminist work that explores a range of demographic representations and encourages progressive politics. For example, bell hooks authored a series of children's books to promote positive growth unconstrained by oppressive norms and many feminist artists such as Barbara Kruger attempt to disrupt sexism and the status quo through art. Even *Veronica Mars*, a three-season television show provided an unconventional female high school student who was intelligent, technologically savvy, and she solved problems each week without the use of violence but instead used her resourcefulness and prowess to bring a sense of poetic justice to each conclusion. There is not a lack of creative people making entertaining work that carries an anti-oppression message and if given the opportunity and resources could produce interesting, groundbreaking, cutting edge characters and stories for a mainstream audience.

A question I asked myself repeatedly throughout the process of researching this paper is "what does a female hero (and even a male hero) look like outside of patriarchy?" It's incredibly hard to visualize; it requires imagining what a world without patriarchy would look like from media personalities, to interpersonal

relationships, to advertising, to work and careers, to poverty and capitalism more broadly. It's nearly overwhelming to think about. I do, however, keep coming back to a few ways in which we can transform our strong female representations and television shows today in order to create a space for imagining a more equitable future.

First, violence sells and violence as a means of conflict resolution is easy, but in addition to the social arguments that can be made against an overabundance of violence, it becomes monotonous. Writers can begin to create alternative scenarios and break out of the villain and hero archetypes to create a variety of solutions, some of which can include diplomacy, communication and other creative solutions. Violence does not need to be eliminated from television altogether, however writers should begin utilizing fewer storylines that rely on violence and instead encourage scenarios that offer broader examples of real social and political conflicts.

Second, there always seems to be one hero and one villain but if fiction attempts to reflect the world (to some degree) then these characters should be represented in a more complex manner. In Ben Bova's tips for writers he states:

> In the real world there are no villains. No one actually sets out to do evil…
> There are no villains cackling and rubbing their hands in glee as they
> contemplate their evil deeds. There are only people with problems, struggling
> to solve them. (Bova, n.d.)

If writers break out of the archetypes, television could provide much more complex and interesting story lines. For example, many people could work together in order to 'save' the day through a process of collective decision making,[13] or the evil villain

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[13] While watching the last season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, I couldn't help but imagine what it would look like if all the potential slayers got to participate in decision making instead of Buffy taking command in a traditional military structure.

could be representative of the actual systemic problems that plague society as opposed

to the singular individual. The HBO television series *The Wire* attempts to destabilize

this rigid archetypal pattern by engaging with the systemic problems that cause people

to behave in certain ways. The show investigates the typically heroic cop and the

typically villainous drug dealers but manages to complicate each character through

elaborate personal development while also discussing the institutional pressures that

have positioned each individual.

Lastly, way too often stories revolve around a villain who caused global

destruction because they lost a family member. This story is rather absurd and often

relies on the women in the refrigerator trope. If television stories are supposed to

inspire and somewhat reflect aspects (even highly fabricated and augmented aspects)

of our society, shouldn't the villain not be one single bad person but rather

acknowledging that the root of our problems lie in institutional systems? It's not

about the singular evil corporation but the entire way corporations exist within

capitalism. I know these values of diplomacy, collective decision making and

systemic analysis is in opposition to the values that the media corporations and the

advertising firms want to promote but it's time that our media structures change in

order to promote the well being of people, not the profits of corporations.

Anti-racist activist and author, Tim Wise (2010) said, "If you believe the

system is broken, you clearly don't understand the system. After a while, certain

outcomes stop being evidence of failure, and become, instead, evidence of a most

disturbing and twisted form of success" (Wise, 2010). Feminists and media critics

ought to stop looking at these marginalized and underrepresented groups in our media

as something to be merely fixed by simply including them but to look at larger

structures and institutions that actively work to promote patriarchy and white

supremacy. Television and film stories are replicating the values in a social system that are far from equitable. As hooks (2000) states, "People are hurt by rigid sex-role patterns" (hooks, 2000, p.74) and television programming reaffirms and attempts to normalize gender and racial stereotyping.

Representations of women in the media have improved over television's history reflective of women's fight for equal rights, but the representations of strong, tough women provided in contemporary science fiction still carries with it a patriarchal value system. Social systems and individuals have a cyclical relationship, one cannot exist without the other:

> Like everything else in social life, privilege and oppression exist only through social systems and people's participation in them. People make systems and their consequences happen through paths of least resistance that shape who people are and how they participate. (Johnson, 2006, p. 90)

As feminists continue the fight for equal rights and an end to a patriarchal value system, the struggle needs to move against the paths of least resistance and refuse to accept the patriarchal status quo including the value systems ascribed to an essentialist gender (and other oppressive forms of) stereotyping. People gain power by "embracing, supporting and perpetuating the dominant ideology of the culture" (hooks, 2000, p.86) and large-scale resistance is a step to destabilizing and equalizing power. I hope that media's representations of women will reflect that struggle and strong female characters will develop and grow. As Levy (2006) concludes in *Female Chauvinist Pigs*:

> If we believed that we were sexy and funny and competent and smart, we would not need to be like strippers or like men or like anyone other than our own specific, individual selves. That won't be easy, but ultimately it would be

no more difficult than the kind of contortions FCPs are constantly performing in an effort to prove themselves. More importantly, the rewards would be the very things Female Chauvinist Pigs want so desperately, the things women deserve: freedom and power. (Levy, 2006, p. 200)

Story telling is an integral part of our society. It is how we communicate with one another, how we make sense of the world, how we express emotion and how we entertain. Narratives help us imagine a better, more just world and our media plays a role in determining what that looks like. Instead of using traditional archetypes and degrading stereotypes, media makers have the opportunity to resist the status quo and inspire new social norms. While we can use critical media literacy to resist degrading representations in television shows, movies, advertising, it is crucial that we hold the mainstream media accountable and demand stories that encourage cooperation, justice and democracy. We should have better representations but in our fight for media justice we have to push back against the social systems that maintain dominate cultural norms such as patriarchy, white supremacy and capitalism. Our economic system favours stories that reinforce the status quo and render oppression invisible. As mainstream media shapes the dominant culture, it generates a common language that allows us to communicate and connect with one another. Since this is a powerful socialization tool, it could also be used to visualize the change we want to see in the world. I dream of the day when it is common place for television shows to have strong women who don't subscribe to patriarchal values in order to be celebrated, when people of colour and queer people are not typecasted, stereotyped and killed off more often then their white counter parts, when media really starts giving us what we want: good quality, complex, non-oppressive, stories!

Appendix: Female Characters in Eleven SF/F Television Shows

This chart is a selected version of the original research I had conducted. It identifies the female characters on eleven different science fiction/fantasy television shows who appeared on at least three episodes. Most of the shows have been completed but for the two shows that are still airing (*True Blood & Heroes*) data was collected as of May 2010. This chart is not intended to be comprehensive but provide an overview of women's representation. There are many grey areas in terms of each character which is not accounted for on the chart due to its simplified form. Since each character that appeared on at least three episodes is included in the list, the statistical data does not account for the discrepancy between primary, supporting and background characters. Although the original chart included disability as a category it was removed due to its extraordinately low number. The intentional exclusion of disability should be recognized as a lack of representations of people with disabilites as a whole in the media and specifically in speculative fiction.

The categories are as follows:

Species: SF/F shows contain characters that are often other then human. Stories using aliens are often analogies to facets of the human condition and thus aliens are thought of as other. If the character is not human I have identified its race using the terms of the show.

Race: The race category has two entries: white or person of colour (POC). This category is divided up between white and people of colour because as a large category, people of colour are still a minority in the television landscape which privileges whiteness. This is based on the race of the actor (it becomes more

complicated when dealing with aliens or other fantastical beings which is not accounted for on this chart).

Sexuality: The sexuality category has two entries: hetero or queer. Similar to real life the world of television defaults sexual expression and relationships to those that are heterosexual. If a character's sexuality is not expressly stated it is just understood by the audience that she is heterosexual and exclusively interested in men. Characters that display an alternative sexuality are labeled queer, this includes but is not limited to homosexual, bisexual and transsexual. One exception is Inara from *Firefly*. I have labeled her as queer but not counted her towards the findings because there is only one episode in which she takes on a client who is a woman, and it is framed in terms of work, not in terms of her sexuality.

Role: This identifies whether a character is good or evil. This category has the most grey areas. If the characters role was unclear, the determination was made on whether the character overall acted as a foil to the protagonist(s), or in someway worked against the goals of the protagonist(s).

Redeemed: This identifies whether a character categorized as evil is redeemed by allying with the protagonist(s) or in some way helping the protagonist(s).

Status: This category shows whether the character dies or remains alive.

Angel

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Cordelia	Human/Demon	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Fred	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Lilah	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Kate Lockley	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive

Eve	Immortal/Human	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Uncle
Justine	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Jasmine	God	POC	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Nina Ash	Human/Werewolf	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Trish Burkle	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Virginia Brice	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Gwen	Unknown	White	Hetero	Both		Alive
Anne Steel	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Illeryia	Demon	White	Hetero	Evil/Good	Yes	Alive

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Buffy	Slayer	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Willow	Human/Witch	White	Queer	Good		Alive
Anya	Demon/Human	White	Hetero	Evil/Good	Yes	Dead
Dawn	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Joyce Summers	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Tara	Human/Witch	White	Queer	Good		Dead
Faith	Slayer	White	Hetero	Both	Yes	Alive
Drusilla	Vampire	White	Hetero	Both	No	Alive
Harmony	Human/Vampire	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Jenny Calendar	Human/Witch	White	Hetero	Good/Evil	Yes	Alive
Kennedy	Human/Slayer	POC	Queer	Good		Alive
Glory	God	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead

Amanda	Human/Slayer	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Maggie Walsh	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Amy	Human/Witch	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Rona	Human/Slayer	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Vi	Human/Slayer	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Halfrek	Demon	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Molly	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Darla	Vampire	White	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Dead
Chao-Ahn	Human/Slayer	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Kendra	Human/Slayer	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Katrina	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Olivia	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Shannon	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Veruca	Werewolf	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Caridad	Human/Slayer	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
1st Slayer/Primitiv	Slayer	POC	Hetero	Good		-

Firefly

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Zoe	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Inara	Human	POC	Queer (?)	Good		Alive
Kaylee	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
River	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive

Dollhouse

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Echo	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Sierra	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Adelle	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Alive
November	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Saunders/Whiske	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Ivy	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Loomis	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Bennet	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Dead
Cindy Perrin	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Kilo	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive

Battlestar Galactica

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Laura Roslin	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Kara "Starbuck" Thrace	Human/Angel	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Dualla	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Callie	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Ellen Tigh	Cylon	White	Hetero	Both	Yes	Alive
Sharon "Boomer"	Cylon	POC	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Dead
Sharon "Athena"	Cylon	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive

Gina Inviere	Cylon	White	Queer	Evil	No	Dead
Kendra Shaw	Human	POC	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Dead
Helena Cain	Human	White	Queer	Evil	No	Dead
Caprica Six	Cylon	White	Hetero	Both	Yes	Alive
Number 3 "D'Annas"	Cylon	White	Hetero	Both	Yes-ish	Dead
Number 6	Cylon	White	Queer	Both	Yes	Alive
Number 8	Cylon	POC	Hetero	Both	Yes	Alive
Elosha	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Louanne "Kat" Katrine	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Natalie (#6)	Cylon	White	Hetero	Good		Dead

Farscape

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Aeryn Sun	Sebacean	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Chiana	Nebari	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Pa'u Zotoh Zhann	Delvian	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Utu-Noranti Pralonatong Traskan	Traskan	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Sikozu Syala Sha Sugaysi Shanu	Kalish/Bioloid	White	Hetero	Both	Yes	Dead
Joolushko Tunai	Interion	White	Hetero	Good		Dead

Fenta Hovalis						
Mele-On Grayza	Sebacean	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Moya	Ship/Leviathan	-	-	Good		Alive
Ahkna	Scarran	-	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Xhalax Sun	Seacean	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Gilina Renaez	Sebacean	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Linfer	Relgarian	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Furlow	unknown	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Natira	Saltici	-	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Princess Katralla	Sebacean	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Jenavian Charto	Sebaean	White	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Alive
Elack	Pilot	-	Hetero	Good		Dead

Heroes

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Clare Bennet	Human+	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Niki Sanders	Human+	White	Hetero	Both	Yes	Dead
Tracy Strauss	Human+	White	Hetero	Bad/Good	Yes	Alive
Angela Petrelli	Human+	White	Hetero	Both		Alive
Daphne Millbrook	Human+	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Molly Walker	Human+	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Maya Herrera	Human+	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Elle Bishop	Human+	White	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Dead
Meredith Gordon	Human+	White	Hetero	Good		Dead

Eden McCain	Human+	POC	Hetero	-		Dead
Monica Dawson	Human+	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Alice Shaw	Human+	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Ishi Nakamura	Human+	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Gretchen	Human	White	Queer	Good		Alive
Emma	Human+	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Lydia	Human+	White	Hetero	Evil/Good	Yes	Dead
Sandra Bennett	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Janice Parkman	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Simone	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Jackie Wilcox	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Audrey Hanson	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Tina	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Vanessa	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Lauren Gilmore	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Candice Wilmer	Human+	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Yaeko	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Caitlin	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Lynette	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Kimiko Nakamur	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Amanda Strazzull	Human+	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Heidi Petrelli	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Nana Dawson	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Charlie Andrews	Human+	White	Hetero	Good		Alive

Rachel Mills	Human+	White	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Alive
Elisa Thyaer	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Alive
Debbie Marshall	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Rebecca Taylor	Human+	POC	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Virginia Grey	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Nurse Hammer	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Allison	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
May	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive

True Blood

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Sookie	Human/Telepath	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Tara	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Arlene	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Maryann	God	POC	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Lettie Mae	Human	POC	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Alive
Jessica	Vampire	White	Hetero	-		Alive
Pam	Vampire	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Sarah Newlin	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Daphne Landry	Shapeshifter	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Alive
Adele Stackhouse	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Miss Jeanette	Human	POC	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Amy Burley	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Maxine Fortenber	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive

Lorena	Vampire	White	Hetero	Evil	-	Alive
Dawn Green	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Nan Flanagan	Vampire	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Ginger	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Isabel	Vampire	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Jane Bodehouse	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Kenya	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Maudette Pickens	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Randi Sue	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Diane	Vampire	POC	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Cindy Marshall	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead

Star Trek: Voyager

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Kathryn Janeway	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
B'Elanna Torres	Klingon	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Seven of Nine	Human/Borg	White	Hetero	Evil/Good		Dead
Kes	Ocampa	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Naomi Wildman	Human/Ktarian	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Seska	Cardassian	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Samatha Wildman	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Susan Nicoletti	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Mezoti	Norcadian	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Borg Queen	Borg	White	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead

Deanna Troi	Human/Betazoid	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
T'Pel	Vulcan	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Ensign Kaplan	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Ensign Lang	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive

Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Sarah Connor	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Cameron	Robot	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Catherine Weaver	Robot	White	Hetero	Evil	Yes	Alive
Riley Dawson	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Jesse Flores	Human	POC	Hetero	Evil	No	Dead
Savannah	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Michelle Dixon	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Chola	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Greta Simpson	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Cheri Westin	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Kacy Corbin	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive

Lost

Name	Species	Race	Sexuality	Role	Redeemed	Status
Sun Kwon	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Kate Austen	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive

Claire Littleton	Human	White	Hetero	Both	Yes	Alive
Juliet Burke	Human	White	Hetero	Evil/Good	Yes	Dead
Shannon Rutherfo	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Ana Lucia Cortez	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Illana	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Libby	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Rose Nadler	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Charlotte Lewis	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Danielle Rousseau	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Alex Rousseau	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Nikki Fernandez	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead
Penelope Widmor	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Naomi Dorrit	Human	POC	Hetero	Unclear		Dead
Cindy Chandler	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Diane Jansen	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Sarah	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Carmen Reyes	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Nadia	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead
Eloise Hawking	Human	White	Hetero	Evil	Unclear	Alive
Cassidy Phillips	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Amy Goodspeed	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Bea Klugh	Human	POC	Hetero	Evil		Dead
Carole Littleton	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Alive
Zoe	Human	White	Hetero	Good		Dead

Mrs. Palk	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Alive
Nadia Jazeem	Human	POC	Hetero	Good		Dead

Findings

	Women	Dead	Percentage
Total	207	88	43%
White	153	53	35%
POC	53	19	36%
Queer	6	3	50%

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