Athabasca University Master of Arts - Integrated Studies

IN SEARCH OF THE FUTURE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE *STAR TREK* FRANCHISE AND ITS POTENTIAL CULTURAL EFFECTS

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Abstract

In this paper, I explore what the *Star Trek* franchise attempts to teach us about ourselves and our culture, by identifying and evaluating the messages it sends to audiences. My ultimate goal is to determine whether or not creator Gene Roddenberry's "vision" of a united, liberal-humanistic future is one we should strive to emulate in the real world. My analysis is structured around the potential future of four major topics: 1) Education (focussing on delivery methods, the role of the teacher and academic honesty); 2) Gender (in particular, characterization and the issue of inequality); 3) Race Relations (focussing on racial inequality, the alien "Other" and examples of blatant prejudice and racism); and 4) Globalization (examining the rise of English as a global language, as well as the potential loss of both language and culture).

Although *Star Trek* is an American franchise, its lessons are arguably applicable to all human beings, and its popular appeal makes it a perfect vehicle through which to explore our potential future. By incorporating the perspectives of educators, language experts, philosophers, gender specialists, and key *Trek* scholars, as well as my own observations into my examination, I have created an interdisciplinary project that encompasses several points of view. Although this paper is primarily exploratory in nature, I do draw conclusions about possibilities for the future based on my research, which uses the *Star Trek* universe as a means of unification. While the franchise does send some mixed messages, particularly about gender and racial equality, its underlying themes are generally positive, hopeful, and in many ways, inspirational. Overall, this paper shows that the narratives of *Star Trek* can be valuable tools to challenge the ideals and views held in popular culture.

In Search of the Future: An Exploration of the *Star Trek* Franchise and its Potential Cultural Effects

"The Federation was founded not by force, nor by expediency, nor in response to an outside threat. It was founded on a dream – a dream of greater goals and greater good, of common purpose and cooperation, but beyond all else, it was a dream to know more, a dream to explore to the farthest limits and then go beyond" (Reeves-Stevens 2).

1. A Quest for Knowledge

Because television and film are reflections of the societies that create them, and also serve to challenge the ideals and views held in popular culture (Porter and McLaren 1), it is through study of the *Star Trek* franchise that I choose to develop my final project. In this paper, I will build on the research I have done previously in the area of Gender Studies and expand my focus to include three other major areas of study (i.e. Education, Race Relations and Globalization), using *Trek*[1] as a means of unification and exploration. I have titled this project, "In Search of the Future", for two reasons. First of all, the stories of the *Trek* universe have a futuristic setting. However secondly, and more importantly, I am hoping to discover what our own, real future might potentially look like, especially when it comes to important issues such as education (in particular delivery methods, the role of the teacher and academic honesty), gender inequality, racism and racial inequality, and globalization (specifically concerning matters of culture and language loss). Using the narratives of *Trek* as a springboard for discussion, I plan to

examine such issues in detail, and evaluate the messages the franchise has sent and will continue to send to audiences around the world.

This project should be thought of as a sort of quest, not only for the "future" but also for knowledge. Like every member of the fictional Federation, I too have "a dream to know more, a dream to explore to the farthest limits and then go beyond" (Reeves-Stevens 2). It is crucial to note that because the primary purpose of this project is exploratory – not expository or argumentative (though of course, there will be explanations made as well as arguments throughout, as I take particular positions on the issues I am discussing) – the result is not known at the outset[2]. While it is inevitable that I approach this project with personal biases and particular expectations in mind, which will influence the outcome to a certain extent, every effort has been made to let my resources guide me as naturally as possible to the conclusions I will finally draw.

2. Operational Definitions

Before my exploration can begin, it is necessary to operationally define my terms, as they are quite broad in scope. When I refer to the "future", this begs the questions of whose future am I speaking and what particular aspects of that future are of interest in this project. In terms of whose future, it is my intention to be as inclusive as possible, just as *Trek* attempts to be all-inclusive in its vision of a united future. Therefore, I speak of myself in my search for the future, along with North Americans in general. Because *Trek* is an American franchise, at first glance it may appear that its lessons cannot extend any further than this. However, I do believe that the four major issues I will be discussing the futures of, namely Education, Gender, Race Relations and Globalization, are applicable to all human beings. Further, the popular appeal of *Trek* makes

it a perfect vehicle through which to attempt an exploration of what I will be referring to from now on as "our" future. As Eberl and Decker claim in *Star Trek and Philosophy: The Wrath of Kant*, "Rather than mere escapism, all the incarnations of *Star Trek* ought to be seen as an entertaining, edifying preparation for thinking through the problems that the future will undoubtedly throw at us" (xvi). Because *Trek* is a worldwide phenomenon that is set in our fictional future, the messages the franchise sends can be useful not only to North Americans but potentially to all of humanity.

3. Major Assumptions and Themes

Since I am attempting to survey the *Trek* franchise as a whole, this implies that I believe there are commonalities between the five series and eleven feature films[3]. While I acknowledge that contradictions do exist, an inevitability given the plethora of writers, producers and creators involved in the making of each episode and the sheer amount of canonical material available, I am assuming that there are common themes running throughout the franchise as a whole. As Lincoln Geraghty observes, these include "utopia and community" (12), themes which are relevant to my analysis as well. Further, the issues of equality and diversity come up repeatedly throughout the franchise, as I will discuss.

I am also assuming that *Trek* has both been influenced by our culture and that it has the power to affect our culture. This is an assumption that is also held by most (if not all) of the countless academics who have researched and written about *Trek* before me. While that fact alone, of course, is not enough to justify why I hold this view, I do believe that it will become clear by the end of this project that both of these assumptions are valid, and that study of the *Trek* franchise is worthwhile, especially for the purpose of reflecting upon our future.

4. Key Issues and Topic Breakdown

This paper will address the questions of what *Trek* attempts to teach us about ourselves and our culture, and evaluate whether or not such attempts are successful. My ultimate goal is to determine what messages *Trek* sends to audiences, and whether or not this fictional future is one we should strive to emulate. Throughout this project, it is crucial to keep in mind series creator Gene Roddenberry's "vision"[4] of a united, liberal-humanistic, and in many ways utopian future, because this vision is what drives *Trek* and unites fans around the world.

My analysis will be structured around the potential future of four major topics: 1) Education (focussing on delivery methods, the role of the teacher and academic honesty); 2) Gender (in particular, characterization and the issue of inequality); 3) Race Relations (focussing on racial inequality, the alien "Other" and examples of blatant prejudice and racism); and 4) Globalization (examining the rise of English as a global language, as well as the potential loss of both language and culture). I will incorporate the perspectives of educators, language experts, philosophers, gender specialists, and key *Trek* scholars, as well as my own observations into my examination, in order to create an interdisciplinary project that encompasses several points of view.

5. Roddenberry's "Vision"

In "The Study of Science Fiction: A Modest Proposal", Frederik Pohl notes that while "it would be very useful to have an agreed definition of what science fiction is, exactly" (11), attempts at finding such a definition "haven't done the job" (11). Pohl goes on to quote Tom Shippey, who, in an attempt to explain why it is so difficult to accurately define science fiction, observes that "as science fiction is the literature of change, it changes even as one tries to define

it" (qtd. in Pohl 11). I believe that the same could be said of the *Trek* franchise, whose roots most certainly stem from science fiction literature. That is, *Trek* is also a text of change – hopefully for the better, as originally imagined by series creator, Gene Roddenberry, though this is not always the case as we will see in the sections that follow.

Much speculation and scholarship has been devoted to Roddenberry himself and his involvement in developing what has arguably become the most successful and widespread science fiction franchise of all time, and for good reason. It is Roddenberry's "vision", as it is so often called, of an equal and united future, that fans around the world associate with and love about the *Trek* franchise. Dave Hipple offers one such account of Roddenberry's involvement in "The Accidental Apotheosis of Gene Roddenberry, or, 'I Had to Get Money from *Somewhere*'", in which he paints quite a negative picture of Roddenberry as a man who became "increasingly unreliable and distrusted" (38) throughout the production of *Trek*. Maintaining that "Roddenberry had had minimal creative influence upon *Star Trek*'s continuations" (27), Hipple explains how "Roddenberry's *name* was retained for subsequent films" (27) because it held (and continues to hold) a great deal of power for audiences who associate(d) him with *Trek*. This power is due largely to Roddenberry's vision, which has become so much more than anyone could possibly have imagined. After all, as Robin Roberts declares, for *Trek*'s "devotees, it is a way of life, a passion" (1), the truth of which can be seen in the countless conventions, clubs, fan fiction and numerous other forms *Trek* fandom[5] takes.

Regardless of Roddenberry's actual level of involvement in the production of *Trek*, his original vision has taken on particular significance to fans. Hipple refers to "The Roddenberry myth and the *Star Trek* legend" (27), fitting terms given the incredible popularity and influence of both the man and the franchise he created. Whether or not Roddenberry is personally

responsible or deserving of credit for incarnations of *Trek* beyond *TOS*, what matters is that his vision has grown to epic proportions. This vision, often described as "liberal-humanistic" by scholars, imagines the future as a sort of utopia. Lincoln Geraghty explains that:

> Utopia in *Star Trek*, means the doing away with ethnic conflict, bigotry, cultural power struggles and racial prejudice, and is encapsulated in the phrase 'Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations.' For fans, *Star Trek*'s vision of the future is utopian by the very fact that Roddenberry wanted to show humanity had progressed and people had found a way of living together without killing each other. (12)

Throughout my exploration of *Trek* and its relation to the future of Education, Gender, Race Relations and Globalization, it will become clear that, as "Hills correctly points out... the utopianism portrayed in the series has limits and these limits detract from its humanitarian ethos" (Geraghty 12).

However, the extent to which Roddenberry's utopian vision is successfully conveyed, and perhaps more importantly, the effects that this has on audience perception, is a matter of debate. For example, Geraghty observes how his view differs from that of Daniel Bernardi, noting that "While Bernardi believes that *Star Trek* continues to perpetuate an exclusive view of the future, I believe its text provides fans with unlimited freedom for their imaginations, fulfilling their own dreams, desires and fantasies" (12). In the sections that follow, I will consider Roddenberry's vision in detail as I conduct my analysis of our potential future, and attempt to determine how closely it may resemble the future seen in the *Trek* universe.

6. The Future of Education

The first major area of the future that I would like to discuss is Education, focussing on delivery methods, the role of the teacher and academic honesty. In today's world, the field of distance education is growing rapidly, and is likely to continue expanding as more and more online education programs continue to be implemented. The increasing availability and quality of online courses make learning from home an attractive option to many, and the benefits of this method of delivery are numerous, as I will outline in the pages that follow. In comparison, face-to-face instruction at traditional "brick and mortar" facilities may seem inadequate in certain aspects. However, there is still much to be said for learning in a physical classroom setting, as it offers advantages that online delivery methods may be incapable of providing. Overall, I believe that each of these delivery methods possess both positive and negative qualities, the importance of which it is up to each individual to decide for himself or herself.

In this section, I will examine some of the attributes and limitations of online delivery methods and face-to-face delivery methods of education. Next, using the observations of "Aca-Fan"[6] and *Trek* scholar, Henry Jenkins, as a springboard for discussion, I will analyze the ways education is depicted in the fictional future of the *Trek* universe, specifically in the latest film, *Star Trek* (2009). I will reflect on possibilities for the future of education in our real world, based upon the messages sent by the *Trek* franchise. In particular, I will consider the role of the teacher, as well as the effects this may have on the role of the student and the subject of individual vs. group delivery methods. Further, I will pose the suggestion that Constructivism may solve problems with learning design. Finally, I will consider the issue of academic honesty by discussing the famous example of James T. Kirk's solution to the Kobayashi Maru test, referenced in both *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* and *Star Trek* (2009).

7. Delivery Methods of Education: Online vs. Face-to-Face Learning

There are many reasons why an online learning environment is an attractive option for potential students. One of the main draws is the flexibility that it offers, in terms of scheduling, completing readings, assignment due dates and submission of discussion board postings, among other areas. Online courses offer the benefit of working not only when it is most convenient for the student, allowing courses to be completed while still maintaining responsibilities like attending a day job or raising a family, but also (hopefully) when the student is at his or her peak. Given that some people are naturally early risers and others are night owls, it is valuable for students to have the opportunity to work when they feel at their best, which online learning allows. Typically, face-to-face learning occurs during the daytime, leaving those who work best at night at a disadvantage. Although evening courses do exist at brick and mortar institutions, in my experience, they are offered far less frequently. Participation in grouped study courses is also much more flexible online than in a physical classroom setting. However, it must be noted that the spontaneity of a face-to-face debate is something that cannot be captured properly on an online discussion board, unless all of the participants are responding in real time (though perhaps not even then) – an unlikely occurrence given the varying schedules and time zones of each student[7].

In terms of accessing technical support or getting assistance from an instructor, there are both advantages and disadvantages to online learning and face-to-face delivery methods as well. Students can send in requests or questions via e-mail or discussion boards at any time in an online learning environment, which is useful for those who tend to work better in the evening or overnight. However, getting a response may not occur immediately, especially when it comes to interacting with an instructor who perhaps schedules a specific time of day, or specific days of

the week to monitor and respond to e-mails and discussions. It is not possible for a professor to be online 24/7 to assist students, and delay in response time is a reality that must be dealt with, no matter how urgent an issue. Not all online learning facilities provide 24/7 technical support services either, with support being especially limited during weekends and evenings. Of course, this is a difficulty that can occur in a face-to-face environment as well, as students enrolled in brick and mortar schools are also free to e-mail professors or technical support staff for help, whenever it is needed, outside of class. However, these students may have the additional option of seeing a professor in person, during office hours, to discuss questions or problems one on one.[8]

Other key aspects of distance learning that make it attractive to prospective students are features such as cost (which is typically far less than comparable programs at brick and mortar schools) and convenience (not just in terms of scheduling, but also in the fact that courses can be completed from practically anywhere with an Internet connection, eliminating the need for commuting back and forth to school which saves both time and money). For some, the benefits of flexibility, lower cost and convenience that online education makes available outweigh the drawbacks. Others prefer the personal interaction and debates that face-to-face learning allows, and the sense of connection that may only be possible in a classroom environment. While neither online nor brick and mortar schools are flawless, I believe that it is fruitless to argue about which is “better”.

Such an effort is comparable to the present debate which sets traditional printed books against the rising e-book. Neither is “better” than the other – they are simply different. Perhaps more important, the resolution of such a debate is extremely unlikely, if not impossible. Those who love turning the pages of a physical book will never be convinced that e-readers are better,

even if they acknowledge the merits of such technology, and those who have embraced the novelty and convenience of an e-reader will not be persuaded that carrying around a heavier version of the same story is worthwhile, even if they acknowledge the nostalgic value of "real" books. Similarly, those who believe that learning must take place in a face-to-face environment will not be convinced that online learning is better, even if it is less expensive or more flexible, and those who love online education because of such attributes will never be persuaded that learning must take place in a classroom, even if it can inspire a greater sense of connection and community.[9] Each delivery method offers advantages, though there are potential problems inherent in both methods as well. What matters most is coming up with possible solutions to the issues discussed above, and others that may negatively affect students. This should be the goal of comparisons between the two methods, as I hope such an analysis may inspire.

8. Education and the *Trek* Franchise

It is at this point that we must turn our attention to *Trek*, and Jenkins's observations about the way learning is presented in *Star Trek* (2009). In his weblog post, "Five Ways to Start a Conversation About the New Star Trek Film", Jenkins discusses "the image of Vulcan educational practice". Noting that it "is consistent with previous representations (most notable of Spock retooling himself in *Star Trek III*)", Jenkins explains that this depiction "also gave us new insights":

> Vulcans seemingly learn in isolation yet immersed in a rich media landscape. Each climbs down into a well surrounded by screens which flash information, allowing them to progress at their own rate, dig deeper into those things which interest them, and at the same time, develop a certain degree of autonomy from

> other learners. There are no teachers, at least none represented in the segment we are shown here, but rather the individual learner engaging with a rich set of information appliances.

The teacher, as Jenkins observes, is notably absent from this equation. The typical group classroom setting has been replaced with a singular learning pod. This method of education focuses purely on the individual, and consists only of a single student and a computer. Jenkins claims that "In some ways, this is the future which many educators fear – one where they have been displaced by the machine. In other ways, it is the future we hope for – one where there are no limits placed on the potentials of individual learners to advance". This view sums up much of what is so frightening yet simultaneously exciting about a *Trek*-like future: technology may advance to the point where it replaces the need for people to fulfill certain functions, but the potential this may unlock is boundless.

Jenkins poses an important question regarding the way this educational facility is structured, pointing out that "if learning is individualized, why do people come together into what can only be described as a school"? He also muses, "Why not locate the learning pod in each home? Why have a structured school day" (Jenkins)? I must admit that I too wonder what benefits there might be for creating a meeting place such as this one, if students are not meant to interact with one another. Logically, this suggests either that at some point, the students do get together (perhaps to share knowledge or ask questions), or quite simply that the creators of the film did not consider this very carefully.

Another possibility is that having a school environment serves to further the plot of the film, as the half-human, half-Vulcan Spock is shown to be bullied by two other Vulcan children in one key scene:

> Young Spock: I presume you've prepared new insults for me today.
>
> Vulcan Bully #1: Affirmative.
>
> Young Spock: This is your thirty-fifth attempt to elicit an emotional response from me.
>
> Vulcan Bully #2: You're neither human nor Vulcan, and therefore have no place in this universe.
>
> Vulcan Bully #1: Look. He has human eyes. They look sad, don't they?
>
> Vulcan Bully #2: Perhaps an emotional response requires physical stimuli.
>
> [shoves Spock]
>
> Vulcan Bully #2: He's a traitor, you know. Your father. For marrying her. That human whore.
>
> [Spock beats up the bully]

Spock is traditionally known for controlling his emotions and acting in a calm, rational manner. He usually does his best to suppress his human side, favouring logic over emotion and impulse. This scene shows an uncharacteristically violent outburst, provoked by the bullies' cruel insults of both Spock's humanness and his parents. Jenkins offers the explanation that "...it is as if there is a system of ritualized bullying designed to test and toughen each student" built into Vulcan education. This, he suggests, may be the reason why the learning pods are located in a group setting, rather than in individual homes:

> What if bullying was incorporated into the pedagogical regime as it is more or less in several other educational systems on our planet? Certainly the content of the insults would be different in each case, but the logic of ritualized insults as a way of developing emotional control is not actually alien to the way Earth cultures operate". (Jenkins)

Although this is certainly a plausible theory, I tend to disagree with Jenkins on this point. I think Spock is singled out by the other boys specifically because he is different – he has a human mother, and for this, he is often stigmatized, even by the adult Vulcans who should supposedly know better and have a more evolved attitude toward mixed races. We see evidence of this later in the film, when an older Spock is granted acceptance into the Vulcan Science Academy:

> Vulcan Council President: You have surpassed the expectations of your instructors. Your final record is flawless, with one exception: I see that you have applied to Starfleet as well.
>
> Spock: It was logical to cultivate multiple options.
>
> Vulcan Council President: Logical, but unnecessary. You are hereby accepted to the Vulcan Science Academy. It is truly remarkable, Spock, that you have achieved so much despite your disadvantage. All rise.
>
> Spock: If you would clarify, Minister. To what disadvantage are you referring?
>
> Vulcan Council President: Your human mother.

The pure-blooded Vulcans on the Council are blatantly racist toward Spock, considering him as having a "disadvantage" for being half-human. This remark is clearly not intended to help Spock develop "emotional control" (Jenkins), but is simply an example of prejudice. It is no

coincidence that this is the precise moment Spock decides to reject the offer of entry to the Vulcan Science Academy and instead pursue a career in Starfleet. I question whether such a practice of bullying, as Jenkins describes it, is really necessary in the supposedly united and equal future of the *Trek* universe. Roddenberry's liberal-humanistic vision would certainly have us believe otherwise. Given this depiction of Vulcan education in *Star Trek* (2009), we must now consider whether the future of our real education system will resemble this representation and explore how the roles of teacher and student may change as a result.

9. Education and Our Real Future

It should be noted that although Vulcan children were shown to learn independently, without the assistance of teachers in *Star Trek* (2009), education on Earth is depicted quite differently in the film. Starfleet Academy much more closely resembles the kinds of brick and mortar universities we have today. It is described on the official *Star Trek* website as follows:

> The Federation's primary academic and leadership center of higher education for its Starfleet officer corps is based at San Francisco, Earth, adjoining Starfleet Headquarters in a complex near the landmark Golden Gate Bridge. Founded in 2161, the same year as the Federation, the Academy bears the motto "Ex Astra, Scientia" – "From the stars, knowledge" and its cadets wear a uniform similar to but distinctive from the current Starfleet design. Aside from its beautifully landscaped oceanside campus, the Academy can operate via satellite starbases around the Federation, such as Relva VII, and operates spacebound facilities for training like the Saturn flight range. A training program for enlisted personnel is also offered. The campus is overseen by a Starfleet officer dubbed a

> "superintendent", usually an admiral, although the term "commandant" has been used in the past. It offers a full four-year curriculum of traditional higher learning as well as the cultural, scientific, personal development and strategic needs required for future Starfleet officers. A newspaper, yearbook, sports teams (including wrestling, boxing, precision flying, track and field, and Pareses squares) and other extra-curricular activities typical of universities are all offered. Typically, cadets also undergo a field training assignment in their second year. Admission is open to any Federation citizen, or non-citizens by sponsorship of a Starfleet command-level officer; minimum entry age for humans is 16. Admission tests are required for final consideration but may be taken remotely; a psych test is also required, and may be administered at satellite centers or any Starfleet base upon arrangement.

This passage could be describing nearly any present-day North American university, with the slight modification of a few details. So which educational facility presents a more accurate picture of our future? I would argue that the learning pods we see on Vulcan may be an extension of the online delivery methods we have today, in certain respects. The highly individualized nature of learning, paired with the use of technology, could be seen to reflect our somewhat isolated and computerized online learning programs, or at least, what they may one day become. In contrast, the group atmosphere of Starfleet Academy may be a reflection of our future brick and mortar universities. Teachers are still an important part of education at Starfleet Academy, as we see throughout the *Trek* franchise[10]. Perhaps both of these methods of delivery will still exist, and continue to evolve, in our real future.

I believe that elements of each will continue changing and adapting to meet the needs of students, as years pass. While the role of the teacher may eventually be handed over to computers, I still see this as a possibility that will be quite far in the future. Even if we do get to such a point, people cannot be taken completely out of the equation. After all, computers cannot program themselves. Further, humans will still need to be involved in the process of selecting and defining curriculum, and possibly in evaluation as well. What I find far more likely is that the role of the teacher will change, to become more of a facilitator of knowledge. Consequently, the role of the student will be forced to adapt as well, taking on more responsibility and becoming more actively involved in choosing what to learn about.

In a course I took on Gender Issues in Distance Education, I worked on a collaborative project with a fellow student titled "Learning Designs and Support Systems"[11]. In that paper, we discuss Constructivism, that is, as Hein defines it, "the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves" (qtd. in Ferguson and Gillespie 6), and propose it as a possible solution to problems with learning design. Further, we observed that:

> This method might be difficult for some educators to adjust to, since it is completely different from traditional ways of teaching that typically place the instructor in an authoritative position, focused on the delivery of information. However, the placing of professors in the role of *facilitators* of learning may be precisely the kind of change that is necessary to make distance education more effective and equitable. (Ferguson and Gillespie 7)

I believe that such a conscious shift in approach may be necessary if we are to continue having human teachers in the future, rather than replacing human teachers with computers. The role of

the student must change as well, to become more like the independent Vulcan student we see depicted in *Star Trek* (2009). As technology becomes more advanced, and learning methods continue to evolve to meet the needs of the student, we must also re-examine and redefine our ideals of what a teacher is, what a student is, and how we develop curriculum.

10. The Kobayashi Maru and Academic Honesty

We come now to the issue of academic honesty, a topic of critical importance as it relates directly to values such as integrity and honour that are highly prized in the *Trek* universe. First made famous in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* and shown again in *Star Trek* (2009), the Kobayashi Maru simulation is an example of a "no-win scenario". The test is given to cadets at Starfleet Academy, in an effort to measure how they react when faced with death – a possibility that starship commanders may encounter on any number of occasions. In the simulation, the cadet plays the role of captain and must answer a distress call from a ship called the Kobayashi Maru. While in the midst of a rescue attempt of its crew, several Klingon ships surround and attack both vessels, forcing the cadet to make an impossible choice: continue the rescue of the Kobayashi Maru and be killed by the Klingons, or attempt to fight back against the Klingons, allowing the crew of the Kobayashi Maru to be destroyed. Either way, death is an inevitability.

In *The Wrath of Khan*, a young Vulcan cadet named Saavik takes the test and fails, as has every other student before her, save one. She proclaims that the simulation is "not a fair test of [her] command abilities...because there was no way to win". James T. Kirk evidently felt the same way when he took the test, years earlier, and as a result, made three separate attempts to pass. On his third try, Kirk came up with an innovative solution to the Kobayashi Maru simulation, as is revealed later in the film:

Saavik: Admiral, may I ask you a question?

Kirk: What's on your mind, Lieutenant?

Saavik: The Kobayashi Maru, sir.

Kirk: Are you asking me if we're playing out that scenario now?

Saavik: On the test, sir... will you tell me what you did? I would really like to know.

McCoy: Lieutenant, you are looking at the only Starfleet cadet who ever beat the no-win scenario.

Saavik: How?

Kirk: I reprogrammed the simulation so it was possible to rescue the ship.

Saavik: What?

David Marcus: He cheated.

Kirk: I changed the conditions of the test; got a commendation for original thinking. I don't like to lose.

Saavik: Then you never faced that situation... faced death.

Kirk: I don't believe in the no-win scenario.

Instead of facing the test as it was originally intended, Kirk reprogrammed the simulation, making it possible to win. It is noteworthy that Kirk does not directly answer David's accusation that he cheated, suggesting that he may believe this himself, despite the commendation he received. This suggestion is confirmed after Spock sacrifices his life to save the crew, in a real-life no-win scenario, during an exchange between David and Kirk:

David Marcus: Lieutenant Saavik was right. You never have faced death.

Kirk: No. Not like this. I haven't faced death. I've cheated death. I've tricked my

way out of death and patted myself on the back for my ingenuity. I know nothing. Grieving the loss of his close friend, Spock, Kirk acknowledges that he has never really faced death before, implying that his reprogramming of the Kobayashi Maru simulation was, in fact, cheating.

In the 2009 film, *Star Trek*, we get to see Kirk's famous Kobayashi Maru test, as it is described in *The Wrath of Khan*. In the scene, Kirk nonchalantly eats an apple while executing both a successful rescue of the ship's crew and defeating the Klingons, as if the feat were not at all extraordinary. Knowing that he would be able to pass this time because he had reprogrammed the simulation earlier, Kirk is confident to the point of cockiness, claiming "that's okay" and "yeah, don't worry about it" in response to the news that the Klingons have locked weapons on his ship. Kirk also dismisses McCoy's suggestion that they fire back on the Klingons, giving the impression that he is not at all worried about the outcome of this serious situation. Although Kirk initially leaves his evaluators dumbfounded by his ability to beat the supposed no-win scenario, Kirk's actions are eventually discovered, prompting the following exchange:

> Admiral Richard Barnett: This is Commander Spock.[12] He is one of our most distinguished graduates. He's programmed the Kobayashi Maru exam for the last four years. Commander?
>
> Spock: Cadet Kirk, you somehow managed to install and activate a subroutine in the programming code, thereby changing the conditions of the test.
>
> Kirk: Your point being?
>
> Admiral Richard Barnett: In academic vernacular, you cheated.

As in *The Wrath of Khan*, Kirk is again accused of cheating on the Kobayashi Maru test, but this time there are more severe consequences. Disciplinary action is taken against Kirk and his career in Starfleet is put at risk when Spock, as the designer of the test, formally accuses him of cheating.

While *The Wrath of Khan* would ultimately have us believe that Kirk's actions in reprogramming the Kobayashi Maru simulation were, in fact, cheating, in *Star Trek* (2009), Kirk fights back by proposing an alternative view of the situation. When accused of cheating on the test, Kirk argues that "the test itself is a cheat" because it is programmed "to be unwinnable", echoing the sentiments Saavik expressed when she failed the simulation.[13] This sparks a debate between Kirk and Spock, who believes that Kirk has missed the point of the Kobayashi Maru test:

> Spock: Your argument precludes the possibility of a no-win scenario.
>
> Kirk: I don't believe in no-win scenarios.
>
> Spock: Then not only did you violate the rules, you also fail to understand the principal lesson.
>
> Kirk: Please enlighten me.
>
> Spock: You of all people should know, Cadet Kirk, a captain cannot cheat death.
>
> Kirk: I of all people...
>
> Spock: Your father, Lieutenant George Kirk, assumed command of his vessel before being killed in action, did he not?
>
> Kirk: I don't think you like the fact that I beat your test...
>
> Spock: Furthermore, you have failed to define the purpose of the test.
>
> Kirk: Enlighten me again.

> Spock: The purpose is to experience fear, fear in the face of certain death, to accept that fear, and maintain control of oneself and one's crew. This is the quality expected in every Starfleet captain.

Although it is up to the audience to decide for themselves who is right, and whether Kirk acted dishonestly or not, the film clearly tries to persuade us that his solution was justified. After all, the main plot of *Star Trek* (2009) is resolved due to Spock Prime's similar actions, as he also changes the conditions of a supposed no-win situation, by going back in time (albeit unintentionally). When Kirk observes that "going back in time, changing history [is] cheating", an obvious reference to his own Kobayashi Maru solution, Spock Prime responds, "A trick I learned from an old friend". Spock Prime does not pass judgement upon Kirk for altering the no-win scenario, but rather looks upon his solution as a useful "trick". In *The Wrath of Khan,* Spock refers to Kirk's solution as "unique", implying that he too is impressed with Kirk's ingenuity, even if he does not completely approve of his actions.

Kirk's attitude about the Kobayashi Maru test is representative of his worldview as a whole, which influences his approach to command. Because Kirk does not believe in no-win scenarios, he is always attempting to come up with new ways to cheat death, which are almost always successful. This is demonstrated time and again throughout *TOS* and the first seven *Trek* films, as well as in *Star Trek* (2009). His reputation for inventing unique solutions to difficult problems is well-earned, though it could be argued that his methods leave something to be desired. Consider, for example, his actions in L.A. Graf's novel, *War Dragons*[14]. When the Anjiri demand permission to pilot Kirk's ship back to their home world, without any members of Starfleet on the bridge, Kirk tells them to plot their course, promising that his crew will leave them in private (Graf 37-38). However, he plans to secretly observe their actions, before

deciding whether or not to allow the ship to follow the course the Anjiri plot (Graf 38-39). When Spock suggests that he has lied, Kirk claims that "'A captain never has to lie, Mr. Spock, as long as he's careful about the promises he makes'" (Graf 39).[15] Because he never actually came right out and said that he would not allow them to pilot the ship, or that he would not observe them from off the bridge, Kirk has not technically lied to the Anjiri. This may be perceived in two ways, as some may find Kirk's approach clever though others may say he is being dishonest. There is sometimes a fine line between cunning and deceit, and as with the Kobayashi Maru test, it could be argued both that Kirk is inventive and that he is a cheater. The two are not mutually exclusive, it seems, as there is evidence to support both points of view.

However, we must also take into account Kirk's motivations for committing acts with such a stigma as cheating or lying attached to them. Kirk withheld information from the Anjiri (i.e. that he would not allow their plotted course to be followed until he examined it himself) in order to ensure the safety of his ship and its crew. As the captain, this responsibility is one that Kirk takes very seriously, as well he should. For this reason, it could be argued that Kirk's purported deception is justifiable, because his responsibility to his crew outweighs his responsibility to be honest with the Anjiri. On the other hand, this explanation does not necessarily justify Kirk's actions in reprogramming the Kobayashi Maru test. In that case, no lives were actually at stake, as it was only a simulation. Eliminating the danger may also eliminate the possibility that one could "cheat" for a noble purpose. If the test itself was actually unfair though, a cheat in itself as Kirk claims it to be, then his actions could potentially be forgiven. Clearly, this is a complex issue and it is unlikely that total consensus can be reached, though I tend to think most people would agree with the message *Trek* attempts to send, that "cheating" can be the right course of action in specific circumstances.

These values of honesty and integrity are ones that we, as a society, generally attempt to uphold as well. Specifically, when it comes to education, the importance of academic honesty is self-evident. After all, in today's world, most (if not all) schools have policies in place designed to encourage and preserve academic honesty. Cheating in any form, be it plagiarism or something similar to Kirk's transgression at the fictional Starfleet Academy, is not tolerated. Failure to adhere to guidelines of academic honesty may result in punishments like suspension or even expulsion from a course, program or institution. Given that morally grey areas still exist in the future of the *Trek* franchise, even in a universe that often prides itself on taking the moral high ground, it is reasonable to expect that we will continue to face similarly ambiguous situations in our real future. The pursuit of academic honesty is a worthy cause, and as we continue striving to reach this goal, I suggest that it is critical for us to continuously re-evaluate our definitions of "honesty", "integrity" and what constitutes "cheating". We must also make room for the possibility that these concepts are not absolute, and that situations may arise in our future in which it is necessary to take action that may be controversial.

11. The Future of Gender

The next major area of the future that I would like to discuss is Gender, with particular focus upon characterization and the issue of gender inequality. Building on the work I did in my essay, "Exploring Female Characterizations in *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*", I will look further into the multifaceted characterizations of key figures in the *Trek* franchise. My analysis will include three case studies. Beginning with Captain Janeway (*VOY*) and Seven of Nine *(VOY*), I will discuss how gender inequality can be combated through strong female role models. By citing the work of Aviva Dove-Viebahn and Mia Consalvo, I hope to make it clear that these characters are much more than the sum of their (occasionally stereotypical) parts.

Further, I will prove that overall, Janeway and Seven serve as positive examples of empowered women in the *Trek* universe, who can be viewed as equals to men, rather than threats to patriarchy which must be vanquished[16]. Finally, my third case study will focus on T'Pol (*ENT*), inspired by the work of Geraldine Harris. In my analysis, I will discuss how T'Pol, in contrast to Janeway and Seven, is characterized in a much more stereotypical fashion, as an overly emotional sexual object.

12. Building on "Exploring Female Characterizations in *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*"

In "Exploring Female Characterizations", I examined the widespread effects of the *Trek* franchise and explained how *Trek* is still relevant today, as are the messages it sends to audiences. By comparing the character Uhura from *TOS* with the updated version of Uhura from the 2009 film "reboot", *Star Trek*, I discovered that these messages have begun to change, most likely in an effort "to suit the needs of a new generation of fans, while still maintaining a commitment to the original canon" (Gillespie 63-64). We see glimpses of such changes in later series like *VOY* as well, as I will discuss in the sections that follow. Drawing on the work of Robin Roberts, I also observed that female characters are often presented stereotypically in *TOS* and *TNG*, fulfilling roles like the woman ruler (who is usually a threat to the Enterprise and its crew, and moreover a threat to the patriarchal Federation) or the perfect mate (who is shown to be sexually attractive, passive, and often in need of saving somehow, as a sort of "damsel in distress" figure). Further, I looked closely at the ways in which *Trek* typically makes the female alien out to be the "Other", encouraging "analysis of feminine power, as well as the notions of women as sexual objects or commodities" (Gillespie 64). I will now build upon these ideas in my analysis of Captain Janeway, Seven of Nine and T'Pol.

13. Combating Gender Inequality through Strong Female Role Models

Despite Roddenberry's vision of an equal future for all people, it is clear that the *Trek* universe contains numerous examples of gender inequality.[17] However, as I have noted above, in recent years there has been a noticeable shift in the right direction, demonstrated especially in the depiction of Uhura in *Star Trek* (2009) as an intelligent, capable, assertive woman. Strong female role models like Uhura are one way to combat the inequality that exists, both in our real world, and in the fictional universe of *Trek*. Despite the sexual stereotyping and commodification of women that occurs often in depictions of the alien "Other", particularly in *TOS* and *TNG*, there are more positive characterizations of women in the *Trek* franchise as well. Perhaps the most well-known is Kathryn Janeway (*VOY*), the sole female starship captain among the other four series' leading men.[18] Another notable example is the half-human, half-Borg Seven of Nine, also from *Voyager*. In the sections that follow, I will examine both of these characters in detail. I will look at the dual roles Janeway plays, as both captain and parent, as well as the way she possesses both stereotypical "feminine" and "masculine" qualities. Next, I will observe how Seven is much more complex than she may at first appear, focussing on her struggle to "enact gender" (Consalvo 185).

14. Case Study: Captain Kathryn Janeway (*VOY*)

As Aviva Dove-Viebahn notes in "Embodying Hybridity, (En)Gendering Community: Captain Janeway and the Enactment of a Feminist Heterotopia on *Star Trek: Voyager*", Kathryn Janeway "embodies the position of an autonomous and heroic female Captain" (597). However, although it would be nice to believe that she is "unbound by conventional gender stereotypes" (Dove-Viebahn 597), this is not the case. Dove-Viebahn argues:

> Realistically...constructing a televised, or otherwise represented, female character unfettered by the dualism of gender is unfeasible, and so Janeway, too, must tread carefully between the possible indictment of mannishness on the one hand and the accusation of hyper-femininity on the other. (597)

Nonetheless, I maintain that Captain Janeway is perhaps the best example of a positive female role model that exists in the *Trek* universe. She is a competent leader – not just "for a woman", as may be silently implied in her comparison to so many male commanders, but standing on her own merits – a fact that has been confirmed many times throughout *Voyager*. Possessing a sharp intellect and strong sense of integrity, Janeway deservedly commands the respect and loyalty of her crew.

Perhaps one of the reasons why Janeway is such a successful character is the fact that Voyager's mission is different from that of the Enterprise, or other similar starships. Dove-Viebahn explains that "Unlike all of the other *Star Trek* narratives[19], *Voyager* does not embark on a journey to explore space; rather, its adventure is one of returning home" (598). Such a mission may play to the strengths of a captain like Janeway, whose background in science "has given her a healthy dose of scepticism, which usually provides a command asset in dealing with new situations" (Official *Star Trek* website). Such "new situations" are frequently the norm for Voyager and its crew, as their unexpected journey into the Delta Quadrant has landed them 70,000 light years from home. Consequently, "The narrative of *Voyager* calls for a new conception of how community, family, gender, and race could function in a future world" (Dove-Viebahn 600).

Although other starship captains deal with unfamiliar species and surroundings on their missions of space exploration, Janeway's experience is unique in that she has fewer points of reference than most, since she is traveling through space completely uncharted by the Federation. Her ability to deal with each new adventure, as diplomatically as possible, demonstrates Janeway's patience and sensitivity. These are qualities that some of her male counterparts, especially impulsive men like Kirk (*TOS*) and Archer (*ENT*), are often lacking. However, Janeway also possesses the intelligence and resourcefulness that we typically associate with such powerful men, characteristics which are an integral part of her ability to command as well.

Characters such as Captain Kirk[20] (*TOS*) or Captain Picard[21] (*TNG*) occasionally take on a fatherly role to certain crewmembers, a fact that perhaps goes hand in hand with the rank of captain. For this reason, it is logical to assume that Captain Janeway may take on a sort of parental authority in addition to her position as captain as well. It is foreshadowed from the premiere episode of the series, titled "Caretaker", that this may occur. As Dove-Viebahn observes, this title has a double meaning referring both "to the alien who abducts *Voyager* and the Maquis" (602) and "to the new and atypical adaptation of the Captain's role which Janeway is obliged to enact" (602). Because of Voyager's uniquely isolated situation, the crew onboard is forced to become more like a family than is typical of a crew on a shorter term mission. As a result, Janeway does in fact play dual roles as both captain and mother-figure, to the crew in general, and in particular to Kes as we see in episodes like "Elogium" (Season 2, Episode 4) and later on in the series, to Seven of Nine.

However, this does not mean that Janeway is, as Dove-Viebahn puts it, "a negatively feminized subject – bound to nature rather than culture, passive, objectified, and dependent, as stereotypes might dictate" (602). On the contrary, "her character can and should be envisioned in

feminist, not feminine, terms" (Dove-Viebahn 602). Janeway is an incredibly complex character who exhibits both stereotypically feminine and masculine qualities, which Dove-Viebahn refers to as an "apparent contradiction" (603), yet it is exactly this combination of traits that makes her so intriguing. I agree with Dove-Viebahn's assessment that Janeway "is not either/or but both/and" (604) because Janeway "does not embody either masculine or feminine characteristics but is *both* 'motherly' and 'fatherly' while inhabiting both domestic and military space, not respectively or interchangeably, but *simultaneously*" (emphasis in original, 604-605).

She can be nurturing and also act as a disciplinarian (Dove-Viebahn 605), as we see throughout the series. And yet, despite her parental role (or perhaps because of it), Janeway is also a constant reminder of duty and reason – a stand-in for the Federation, as Dove-Viebahn puts it (605). Consider, for instance, her devotion to upholding the Prime Directive[22] at almost any cost. It is this commitment which ultimately results in Voyager's being stranded in the Delta Quadrant, when Janeway makes the difficult decision to destroy the Array that could help them get home, as per the wishes of the titular "Caretaker", in order to save the Ocampa from the Kazon (Season 1, Episode 1). Her sense of morality will not allow her to violate the natural order or put an innocent race at risk, even if it means that Voyager and her crew may never make it back to Earth. Because she integrates both the feminine and the masculine, and does so while maintaining dual roles as parent and captain of Voyager, Kathryn Janeway is one of the most important characters in the *Trek* universe. Although the franchise as a whole may not represent Roddenberry's vision of equality, Janeway does embody this spirit. We would be well advised to strive for such a future in which gender is not a limitation, where women like Captain Janeway lead the way.

15. Case Study: Seven of Nine (*VOY*)

Although perceived by some simply as a character "notoriously introduced into *Voyager* to boost viewing figures amongst young men" (Harris 131), I believe that Seven of Nine serves a more valuable purpose in the *Trek* franchise as a whole. Like Janeway, Seven is an empowered female character, or at least she becomes so over the course of *Voyager*. Mia Consalvo, author of "Borg Babes, Drones, and the Collective: Reading Gender and the Body in *Star Trek*", acknowledges that Seven was in fact "Brought on to boost ratings" (177). However, she goes on to say that "the spandex-clad actress...grew to become one of the most interesting characters on the show" (Consalvo 177). Because of her blonde bombshell appearance, it is easy to write Seven off as a sex object, but to really do her justice, it is crucial to look deeper, addressing questions such as those Consalvo poses:

> ...should we focus on her Barbie-like figure or her sexless personality? Is her intelligence and rationality a step forward for traditional female representations, or does her ambivalence about femininity bespeak a valorization of masculine norms of behaviour? (177)

However, perhaps most relevant to our purposes here, as we look to the future, is the issue of what "media representations Seven of Nine and the Borg Queen, and the Borg in general, reveal about ourselves as we potentially become posthuman" (Consalvo 177). Consalvo wonders, "Are they harbingers of our future selves – the results of biotechnological and robotic development mixed with the human and gone awry?" (177). I tend to believe that they are[23], in a way, though in my opinion such depictions are greatly exaggerated in order to function more effectively as a warning of what might potentially occur. That is, I do not think that humans are seriously in

danger of becoming like the fictional Borg to the extent that we will begin "assimilating" unwilling participants, or develop a hive mind mentality in which we are no longer able to think for ourselves. Nevertheless, the Borg can encourage useful reflection of what it means to be human – a necessary pursuit as we enter an age where technology is progressing at such a rapid pace. Further, I think that Seven is particularly inspiring in this respect, given that "she is born human, made into a Borg, and then re-humanized while retaining some Borg characteristics", as Robin Roberts observes (qtd. in Dove-Viebahn 607). Consalvo holds a similar belief, though her focus is slightly different, stating that the Borg "should give us pause, and lead us to more carefully consider our hopes and goals as we moved toward fuller integration of biotechnology and technology within our gendered bodies" (199).

Because the Borg are a supposedly genderless species[24], and Seven was assimilated into the collective at a young age, "she has not had to enact gender" (Consalvo 185). This makes her the perfect character through which to explore constructions of gender, as she endeavours to find her place in a gendered universe. Like Captain Janeway, Seven is a complex character full of contradictions. Consider Consalvo's astute description, which shows her to be both male and female, and yet neither:

> Seven of Nine is depicted as both the stereotypical 'tomboy' and the sexiest member of the crew. She is unparalleled in her knowledge of technology and her expertise is often called upon to save the day in *Voyager*. Her body is feminine in the excess, yet her personality lacks many traditional feminine markers (e.g. deference to men, interest in men, and a nurturing – or even caring – manner toward others). The character's central mission is to 'overcome' her Borg assimilation, yet she resists becoming fully human. (184)

Consalvo argues that because of Seven's "refusal to take on the traditionally gendered behavior of a human female, behaviors that are typically considered masculine are valorized" (186), citing examples of her physical strength and proficiency in technology (186). However, it is noteworthy that Seven also possesses stereotypically masculine qualities which may be, generally, less desirable, such as coldness and a lack of emotion. While these traits may be prized by species such as the Vulcans, they are not characteristics that are valued by humans, especially human females – which Seven is despite her resistance to feminine stereotypes. It seems as though, in order for Seven to embrace her humanity, she must also embrace her femininity. This is not to say that she should attempt to be something she is not, but simply that Seven needs to accept that she possesses both male and female attributes. As Consalvo notes, "Seven's resistance to this gendering process is futile" (187).

In comparison with the Borg Queen, whose "power lies mainly in her sexuality" (Consalvo 198), it becomes clear that Seven "is a different story" (Consalvo 198). She is a positive female role model because, although "she does exemplify current standards of physical female beauty, her character is much more complex than the Queen or other female *Star Trek* characters" (Consalvo 198). Seven proves that it is possible to be physically attractive and also possess "a powerful intellect, rational and cool demeanor, and forceful personality" (Consalvo 198) – traits that most of the one-dimensional beauties of the *Trek* franchise are not given an opportunity to develop. In a universe where sexually alluring women are typically seen as threats to the patriarchal Federation, Seven of Nine is the exception to the rule. I agree wholeheartedly with Consalvo's concluding statements:

> Thus, popular culture is important in helping us see how far visionary ideals can comfortably extend, at the current moment in time. While *Star Trek* is still no real

> utopia, *Voyager* did make some strides in that direction, at least through Seven of Nine's (high heel) shoes. (200)

There is much to be learned from Seven, and the messages she sends about blurring the lines of gender.

16. Case Study: T'Pol (*ENT*)

In contrast to the female role models we see in Captain Janeway and Seven of Nine, I would now like to examine a character who seems "regressive in terms of gender politics" (Harris 131). T'Pol (*ENT*) is a Vulcan woman who embodies the alien "Other", but in a slightly different way than most of the female aliens I discussed in "Exploring Female Characterizations". In *Beyond Representation: Television Drama and the Politics and Aesthetics of Identity,* Geraldine Harris declares that:

> In previous series, Vulcans, who are characterised by their dedication to rationality and the suppression of emotion, have usually been represented as ethical and trustworthy. However, in *Enterprise*, their role in the affairs of other planets is remarked as 'colonialist' and their spiritual beliefs are linked to their representation as deceitful, manipulative and patronising, in ways that indicate a return to the evangelical secularisms of *TOS* and *TNG*. (131)

This change in the characterization of Vulcans in general, and consequently T'Pol in particular, immediately sets her up as a potential threat, regardless of her gender. The fact that she is female becomes an additional disadvantage, on top of the fact that she is Vulcan, as she begins an "antagonistic" (Harris 131) relationship with the Enterprise crew, especially Captain Archer. Although T'Pol eventually "becomes integrated into the work family" (Harris 131) as the series

goes on, in order to do so, she "undergoes a process of humanisation" (Harris 131). It is only by becoming more human (i.e. emotional) that she is able to be accepted.

T'Pol's physical appearance resembles that of Seven of Nine, though actress Jolene Blalock's portrayal of T'Pol is noticeably different, as Harris observes:

> Not being part of Star Fleet, instead of a uniform both characters wear skin-tight body suits that reveal their impressively sculpted figures. Yet, whereas Jeri Ryan played (blonde) Seven as cool and logical, Blalock plays the supposedly logical (brunette) T'Pol as sultry and sulky, and seems far more of a sexual object. (131-132)

Seven's sexy appearance does not detract from her intelligence and technological skill, but T'Pol, despite her potential to be just as complex and strong a character as Seven, "seems far more of a sexual object" (Harris 132). Although Seven struggles to deal with both her humanity and her gender, she manages to retain a certain level of authority and respect. T'Pol, on the other hand, is not nearly so empowered. Her character development throughout the series is minimal, and as Harris notes, "in later seasons T'Pol simply becomes increasingly and often excessively emotional" (Harris 133).

One possible reason for T'Pol's characterization as a stereotypically irrational, emotional female (despite the fact that she is Vulcan) could be the fact that *Enterprise* is set before the other four series, even though it is the most recent in real life. Given this, sexist attitudes toward women on the show may be an attempt to keep continuity with the flow of "history". However, if so, I find this to be a completely irresponsible and unacceptable explanation. We have seen that female characters like Captain Janeway and Seven of Nine are capable of displaying both beauty

and brains, and it is a shame that this is not the case with T'Pol. Her inherently logical Vulcan outlook could have made her an equally strong female role model, and the fact the she is not is both a missed opportunity and a large step back from Roddenberry's vision of an egalitarian future.

17. The Future of Race Relations

The next major area of the future that I would like to discuss is Race Relations, focussing on racial inequality, the alien "Other" and issues of blatant prejudice and racism. I will begin my analysis by establishing creator Gene Roddenberry's liberal-humanist agenda, and the failure of *Trek* to accomplish its goals of equality for all people, citing the work of Daniel Bernardi. Next, I will discuss how *Trek* often depicts the alien "Other" as either inferior to the Starfleet crews – morally, technologically, or both – or hostile, threatening and prone to violence. I will explore the stereotype of what Bernardi refers to as the "noble savage" (218), by looking at the *TOS* episode, "The Paradise Syndrome" (Season 3, Episode 3) and the *VOY* episode, "Natural Law" (Season 7, Episode 22). In contrast to the noble savage, we see genetically engineered humans such as Khan from *TOS*'s "Space Seed" (Season 1, Episode 22) and *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, or the colonists in the *TNG* episode, "The Masterpiece Society" (Season 5, Episode 13). Although these people are seemingly more "evolved" than most humans, they prove themselves to be less than perfect in certain ways, lending support to Roddenberry's liberal-humanist vision. Finally, I will explore how racism still exists in the future of *Trek*, against characters who are "different", as seen in examples such as Odo from *DS9* ("A Man Alone", Season 1, Episode 3) or Spock, the "half-breed" from *TOS*, and the potential effects this may have on our real future.

18. *Trek*'s Liberal-Humanist Agenda

In his article, "*Star Trek* in the 1960s: Liberal-Humanism and the Production of Race", Daniel Bernardi argues that creator Gene Roddenberry, and the various other people involved in the making of *TOS*, were "intentionally involved in a liberal-humanist project" (210). This notion has been supported by Roddenberry himself[25], and many others, over the years. Bernardi goes on to define liberal-humanism and its aims:

> A value and belief system that espouses political equality and social egalitarianism, liberal-humanism emphasizes individual worth and freedom, racial and gender equality, and the importance of secular human values. It suggests that humans, with their rational minds, can comprehend all problems – earthly or galactic – by systematic action from within established institutions such as a united federation of states and paradigms such as liberal democracy. Progress...is determined by the extent to which the government, in this case the United Federation of Planets, and the people, in this case the crew of the U.S.S. Enterprise, serve to expand liberty and civility to all people and, as the case may be, to all aliens. (210)

While these goals of "expand[ing] liberty and civility to all people" (Bernardi 210) are admirable, what is truly important is how one goes about accomplishing them, and whether or not such efforts are successful. Unfortunately, despite claims to strive for "political equality and social egalitarianism" (Bernardi 210), *Trek* often falls short of achieving such equality. In fact, as Bernardi points out, "*Star Trek*'s liberal-humanist project is exceedingly inconsistent and at times disturbingly contradictory, often participating in and facilitating racist practice in

attempting to imagine what Gene Roddenberry called ‘infinite diversity in infinite combinations’” (210-211).

It is critical to note that Bernardi does acknowledge that “the relationship between the intent to imbed ideology *in* a text and the ideology *of* a text is never direct or without contradiction” (211). In other words, even the best intentions do not necessarily turn out as expected, as it is extremely difficult to “imbed ideology” (Bernardi 211). However, I believe that despite this, those who make such attempts (i.e. Roddenberry and his fellow *Trek* creators) must be held accountable for the ways they go about imbedding their ideologies into a text, and to an extent, for the results as well. While I grant that audiences play a key role in interpreting a text, as well as the fact that “Texts are more complex, made of multiple ‘writings,’ than simple reflections of authorial intent” (Bernardi 211), this does not absolve an author/creator of all responsibility. For these reasons, I concur with Bernardi’s assessment that “television ought to consider more fully the production process and thus the institutions and individuals responsible for helping to make race in American popular culture meaningful” (211-212). Let us now take a closer look at some specific examples of *Trek*’s perpetuation of racial inequality.

19. The Alien “Other”

In *Sexual Generations: “Star Trek: The Next Generation” and Gender*, Robin Roberts discusses the ways in which female characters are often portrayed as the alien “Other”, a strategy she refers to a “defamiliarization” (3). By “making the familiar seem new and strange, cognitively different” (Roberts 3), audiences are able to distance themselves from the alien “Other”, allowing for interpretations from new points of view. This same strategy is used in the *Trek* franchise to depict relationships between different races, often by placing minorities into the role of the alien “Other”. Typically, such alien races are shown in one of two ways: either

inferior, in terms of technology or somehow lacking moral values (or what *Trek* perceives as the "correct" moral values); or hostile, quick to violence and a threat to the Federation. In either case, the alien "Other" is usually seen as a danger to crew, in some way. It is clear that either representation is not only insulting, but further, outright racist. I will consider examples of each interpretation of the alien "Other" in the sections that follow, by focussing on select episodes from the *Trek* canon.

20. The Noble Savage Stereotype: Case Studies of "The Paradise Syndrome" (*TOS*) and "Natural Law" (*VOY*)

On the premiere episode of *Voyager* ("Caretaker"), when we first meet Neelix and Kes, they "come dangerously close to occupying the token and subjugated roles of 'native informants'" (Dove-Viebahn 606). However, Dove-Viebahn believes that they do narrowly manage to escape these roles:

> Neelix's ability to successfully admonish the Captain or disrupt important military maneuvers with 'morale-raising' snacks and humor and Kes' burgeoning telepathic abilities, which eventually render advanced scientific and medical procedures obsolete before her departure at the beginning of the fourth season, point to various ways even these characters are imbued with agency. (606)

Other characters in the *Trek* universe have not been so lucky. Examples of what Bernardi refers to as the noble savage stereotype (218) can be found in episodes like "The Paradise Syndrome" (*TOS*) and "Natural Law" (*VOY*). In the case of "The Paradise Syndrome", Bernardi observes how Roddenberry himself "participate[d] in and facilitate[d] racist practice" (218) in creating the episode, by ignoring factual errors in the script (221), and working to "[emphasize] the 'superiority' of whiteness" (221).

The stereotype of the noble savage, Bernardi claims, "functions as a sort of fetish" (218). Drawing on the work of metahistorian Hayden White, Bernardi explains how "The Paradise Syndrome" incorporates the three main aspects of this "noble savage fetish" (219):

> First, the Indians are associated with magical qualities, especially in the stereotypical representation of them as mysteriously connected to – "in complete attune with" – nature. Second, the representation of the Indians as existing in some pristine and unchanging condition – on another planet, no less – reveals an irrational devotion to a particular image of Native Americans as "noble," an image that is "fixed" in time like the fetish. This is perhaps most prominent in both the "super race's" efforts to "preserve" them and in Kirk's nostalgic longing to become one of them. Finally, the noble savage stereotype is strongly suggestive of a libidinal displacement, perhaps most clearly projected in the relationship between Kirk and the "squaw" – in which the Captain has nothing less than a "wild" time. (219)

Similar elements can be found in "Natural Law" as well, when Chakotay and Seven of Nine crash through a strange sort of barrier onto the planet Ledos, and end up stranded in the jungle. The indigenous people living within this barrier are known as the Ventu, and could be said to possess "magical qualities" (Bernardi 219) as they are able to heal Chakotay's leg wound without the use of any advanced technology. As well, they are also associated with nature and the land. The Ventu are able to find their way around in the wilderness with no difficulties, while Seven gets lost almost immediately in her search to find the shuttle deflector. It is only with the assistance of a young Ventu girl that Seven survives the night in the jungle and is able to find the deflector.

Like the Native Americans in “The Paradise Syndrome”, the Ventu are also represented “as existing in some pristine and unchanging condition” (Bernardi 219), due to the protection of a “superior” (i.e. more technologically advanced) race. In “The Paradise Syndrome”, it is revealed that aliens known only as the “Preservers” were responsible for transporting the Native Americans to this planet, in an effort to maintain their apparent innocence and purity. In “Natural Law”, the Ledosians’ ancestors created the mysterious barrier to shield the Ventu from the rest of the universe – presumably with similar motivations – positioning them as the noble savage as well. Although the third aspect of the noble savage fetish does not really apply to “Natural Law”, since there is no romantic relationship portrayed like the one between Kirk and Miramanee, it could be argued that the ways in which the Ventu imitate both Chakotay (by drawing tattoos on their faces, similar to his) and Seven (by strapping shuttle debris to their heads, similar to her Borg implants) are efforts to connect with them and establish a kind of relationship.

Bernardi argues that “The use of the noble savage theme in ‘The Paradise Syndrome’ ultimately has less to do with the lifestyle and customs of Native Americans than it does with the evolution of whiteness” (219). I suggest that this statement could be applied to “Natural Law” as well. After all, as White claims, the noble savage fetish “‘draws a distinction, in the nature of an opposition, between normal humanity (gentle, intelligent, decorous, and white) and an abnormal one (obstinate, gay, free, and red)’” (qtd. in Bernardi 219). As Bernardi goes on to explain, “Such an opposition thus becomes a way to define the ‘civility’ of whiteness” (219).

At the end of “The Paradise Syndrome”, Kirk’s Native American wife and unborn child are stoned to death by her own people, though he of course manages to survive the attack. Bernardi surmises that “the native girl dies so that Kirk, the white male hero, isn’t shown unheroically and immorally leaving her and their unborn baby behind; in other words, so that

Kirk can come off as a morally superior being" (221). This ensures that "the starship Captain is left unencumbered in his trek towards a liberal-humanist future" (Bernardi 221). The ending of "Natural Law" is similarly bleak, though the "heroes", Seven and Chakotay, are also able to leave "unencumbered" (Bernardi 221). Seven is able to temporarily lift the barrier, using the shuttle's deflector, which allows her and Chakotay to beam back to Voyager. However, this also lets the Ledosians into the Ventu's territory, which they plan to develop, completely changing the Ventu's way of life. Although the crew of Voyager manages to beam the Ledosians out of the Ventu territory and reseal the barrier before this can happen, Seven admits that the Ledosians might be able to find a way to lift the barrier again themselves, using the same deflector modifications she did to get them back to the ship. Had she and Chakotay stayed on the planet, the Ventu would have remained safe from any outside interference. Seven's actions may have caused the eventual destruction of the Ventu, as Kirk is ultimately responsible for the death of Miramanee. However, neither receives any blame, and in the end, both white (and therefore supposedly "superior") characters are free to continue their voyages through space, leaving behind the "inferior" noble savages.

21. Genetically Engineered Races: Case Studies of "Space Seed" (*TOS*), *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* and "The Masterpiece Society" (*TNG*)

While the Native Americans from "The Paradise Syndrome" and the Ventu from "Natural Law" exemplify the "inferior" alien "Other", the *Trek* universe also depicts characters at the opposite end of the spectrum: the genetically engineered super human. Seen in episodes such as "Space Seed" (*TOS*) and *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, as well as "The Masterpiece Society" (*TNG*), characters like these are assumed to be "evolved" to the point of being "superior" to the Enterprise crew, and as such, represent a threat that must be overcome in some

way. It is worthy of noting that the majority of these super human characters are portrayed by white actors[26], despite their ultimate exposure as less than perfect.

Let us first look to "Space Seed", and the inhabitants of the S.S. Botany Bay, an Earth ship that is found to have several people onboard in a kind of stasis. Among them is the famous Khan Noonien Singh, who is to become one of Kirk's greatest nemeses, as we see later in the film *The Wrath of Khan*. Khan is genetically engineered to be stronger and more intelligent than the average human, and eventually uses his power to take over the Enterprise, making him both "superior" and hostile. By the end of the episode, Kirk regains control of his ship and exiles Khan and his crew to a planet called Ceti Alpha V, demonstrating that despite Khan's genetically engineered abilities, he is no match for the Enterprise crew (and specifically, Kirk). The result is similar in *The Wrath of Khan* when the two foes meet again, and though his best friend, Spock, dies in the effort to save the ship, Kirk remains victorious over Khan. The fact that an "average" human can defeat a "superior" being like Khan – twice – shows how such super humans are not as perfect as they may at first appear. Even though he has extreme strength and intelligence, Khan suffers from an intense anger and need for revenge (as the title of the film suggests), which drives him until the end and is ultimately his downfall. His genetically engineered traits cannot save him from these faults, which lead to his death at the end of *The Wrath of Khan*.

"The Masterpiece Society", on the other hand, depicts an "evolved" race of humans who, while they do not pose a direct threat to the Enterprise crew, are still in need of having their flaws exposed, it would seem. Unlike Khan, the genetically engineered humans who have settled on Moab IV are not violent, though they are generally opposed to the presence of any outsiders, and in this respect could be considered hostile. Nonetheless, when their colony is endangered by a natural disaster, (most of) the inhabitants welcome the Enterprise crew, who have come to help

rescue them. Refusing Picard's offer to help them evacuate, the group's leader, Aaron Conor, explains that their genetically engineered colony cannot be moved anywhere else without devastating effects, most likely the destruction of their society. Instead, Conor allows Will Riker, Geordi La Forge and Deanna Troi to beam down, the only visitors that have ever been permitted to the colony.

Martin Benbeck, another colonist, tells the landing party that his people have "evolved beyond" physical disabilities such as blindness, reasserting their superiority. He attempts to excuse the rudeness of this remark with a curt, "No offense intended," directed at Geordi, who is blind. However, it is clear that Geordi does take offense, as well he should. Later on, while working with a scientist named Hannah to find an alternative solution, Geordi raises the subject that he would not have been born in her world:

> Geordi: So I guess if I had been conceived on your world, I wouldn't even be here now, would I?
>
> Hannah: No.
>
> Geordi: No. I'd have been...terminated as a fertilized cell.
>
> Hannah: It was the wish of our founders that no one have to suffer a life with disabilities.
>
> Geordi: Who gave them the right to decide whether or not I should be here? Whether or not I might have something to contribute?

Geordi's questions demonstrate the prejudice of the supposedly "evolved" colonists, who would have denied him life simply because he is blind. This conversation also foreshadows what is to come, that is, the fact that Geordi certainly is a person of value with "something to contribute" – particularly in this situation.

Later in the episode, Hannah and Geordi discover a way to direct the stellar fragment away from the planet, using the same technology as his VISOR[27]. It is ironic that this technology is what saves the colony from destruction, as Geordi points out in an exchange with Hannah:

> Geordi: Oh, that's perfect.
>
> Hannah: What?
>
> Geordi: If the answer to all of this is in a VISOR created for a blind man who never would have existed in your society. No offense intended.

Geordi's half-sarcastic repetition of Benbeck's "No offense intended" emphasizes the fact that the colonists are not as evolved as they may like to think. Without his "disability", they would never have been able to save the colony. Frustrated, Hannah remarks that she "was born to be one of the best scientific minds of [her] generation" and yet her people have not invented anything like Geordi's VISOR, or any of the other impressive technology onboard the Enterprise, to which Geordi responds, "Well, maybe necessity really is the mother of invention". The fact that it took a blind man to see the answer to the problem exposes the weakness that exists, even in a super human race[28].

Contrary to the examples of the noble savage discussed above, these episodes support Roddenberry's liberal-humanist vision, since they show the dangers of believing oneself "superior" to others and emphasize the value of diversity. Because Kirk defeats Khan, and because Geordi's blindness is the key to saving the colonists, it can be argued that *Trek* does, in fact, advocate for equality. Though it is not always successful in this aim, and occasionally even reinforces racist messages, as we have seen, there is evidence that *Trek* also attempts to support values of social equality in its depictions of the future.

22. Blatant Racism: Case Studies of Odo (*DS9*) and Spock (*TOS*)

In the *Trek* franchise, there are admittedly certain cases of blatant racism, in spite of the accepting, tolerant future it purportedly seeks to portray. One of the most obvious examples that comes to mind is the treatment of Odo, a shapeshifter, in the *DS9* episode "A Man Alone". In this episode, a Bajoran man named Ibudan is apparently murdered while visiting Deep Space Nine. All of the evidence points to Odo as the most likely suspect, though he maintains his innocence. Not surprisingly, the space station's residents soon begin to demand "justice", though their methods leave much to be desired. Forming an angry mob outside of Odo's office, taunts of "Shifter!" (i.e. a derogatory form of "shapeshifter") fill the air as the crowd becomes violent, and attempts to attack Odo.

The mob's aggressive vigilantism is clearly unacceptable, regardless of their motivation, but what is perhaps most shocking about this situation is the fact that it is Odo's race that convinces them of his guilt, rather than the evidence against him, the details of which are unknown to most of the space station. Even when Sisko points out that if they really want justice they should let Odo be tried in a court of law, the mob still appears intent on attacking Odo, and Sisko is forced to call for more security to protect him. In the end, it is found that Ibudan is actually still alive, and that the murder victim was a clone of himself he had created and killed, in an effort to frame Odo. However, despite being cleared of the murder accusation, Odo does not have much cause for celebration. The racism of his fellow residents on Deep Space Nine remains disturbing, as is their willingness to judge and attack an innocent man, without any proof of his guilt. For inhabitants of a so-called "peaceful" and "equal" universe, these attitudes and behaviour are distinctly unevolved and racist.

Another major character who is subjected to outright racism in the *Trek* franchise is Spock, as I noted previously in the first section on Education[29]. In *Star Trek* (2009), the fact that Spock is half-human is referred to as a "disadvantage" by the Vulcan Council President, to which Spock clearly takes offense, since he declines admission to the Vulcan Science Academy as a result. However, this is not the first time that Spock is singled out for being "different". Throughout *TOS* and the first six films, an ongoing antagonism exists between Spock and Dr. McCoy. While their bickering is generally implied to be good-natured, occasionally McCoy crosses the line from friendly jabs to remarks that could be considered racist.

Unlike the Vulcan Council President, who finds fault with Spock's humanness, McCoy often focuses his insults on Spock's half-Vulcan heritage. Typically, McCoy asks Spock if he is "out of [his] Vulcan mind" or refers to him as "pointy-eared" or "green-blooded"[30], physical characteristics of his Vulcan side. Nonetheless, I would argue that while the Vulcan Council President was expressing a genuinely racist attitude toward Spock, McCoy's name-calling is not intended to be mean-spirited. At the heart of their relationship, the two men are truly friends, though neither may care to admit it. Consequently, Spock reacts much differently to McCoy's comments, usually brushing them off or ignoring them altogether. When he does respond, Spock tends to focus on McCoy's illogicalness, a sign that he is unlike Vulcans, which counters McCoy's attempts to make Spock seem unlike humans. Moreover, Spock spends most of his life endeavouring to be less human and as a result, may take McCoy's insults more as compliments.

These two examples show that racism clearly does still exist in the *Trek* universe, as it is experienced by both Odo and Spock. However, perhaps it is possible that attitudes toward race are slowly changing, as close friends such as Spock and McCoy are able to make comments to one another that may potentially demonstrate prejudice, without truly offending one another. On

the other hand, it may simply be that familiarity and intention play important roles in the acceptability of such remarks. In either case, I question whether friendly banter, like that between Spock and McCoy, has the ability to do more damage than it may appear on the surface. Though I do not wish to advocate unnecessarily strict political correctness, I wonder if using race as a source of humour may affect the existence of racist attitudes and behaviours, in both the imagined future of *Trek* and our real future.

23. The Future of Globalization

The last major area of the future that I would like to discuss is Globalization, focussing on two vital, closely related issues: language and culture. In *English as a Global Language, Second Edition,* David Crystal explains the inevitability "that a global language will eventually come to be used by more people than any other language" (6) and makes the bold claim that "English has already reached this stage" (6). Drawing on Crystal's work, I will examine the rise of English as a global language and the potential effects this may have on our chances for a united future, as *Trek* creator, Gene Roddenberry, envisioned. Further, I will analyze the use of the fictional Universal Translator device and its possible limitations, by looking at a passage from L.A. Graf's novel, *War Dragons,* the first of six books in *The Captain's Table* series. This will be followed by a brief overview of a few key episodes from the *Trek* canon that deal with the theme of (mis)communication. Because language and culture are inextricably linked, my exploration of language will naturally lead into a discussion of our cultural future. By examining the ideas of Payal Sampat and Luisa Maffi, I will look at the potential consequences that language loss may have on the loss of cultural and biological diversity. Finally, I will argue that Tove Skutnabb-Kangas's suggestion of multilingualism may be our best solution to the

disastrous problem of rapid language death. My main goal is to take *Trek*'s positive message of cultural diversity and relate it to our potential future.

24. The Rise of English as a Global Lingua Franca

In today's world, the need for translation and interpretation services has become greater than ever before. It seems we may all be approaching a critical time in history when it comes to the future of language, due largely to the incredibly rapid rate at which English is spreading across the globe. According to language expert David Crystal, statistics "suggest that about a quarter of the world's population is already fluent or competent in English, and this figure is steadily growing" (6).[31] Perhaps the most likely solution to the problem of translation on such a large scale is to find what he refers to as a "*lingua franca*, or 'common language'" (emphasis in original, Crystal 11).

Crystal observes that "[t]he prospect that a lingua franca might be needed for the **whole** world is something which has emerged strongly only in the twentieth century, and since the 1950s in particular" (emphasis in original, 12), only a decade before the appearance of *TOS*. He continues, citing as an example the United Nations[32] which "was established with five official languages – English, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese" (Crystal 12). Given the similarities between the real UN and the fictional United Federation of Planets[33], it stands to reason that such a need for a lingua franca also exists in the *Trek* universe. It would appear that English may fulfill such a role in this fictional future, as nearly every alien species Starfleet comes across seems to speak English fluently.

However, this perception that English is a universal lingua franca of sorts in the *Trek* franchise may simply be attributed to the existence of a piece of technology called the Universal

Translator. As its name suggests, this device is able to translate (almost) any language instantly, allowing the largely English-speaking, human crew members to interact effortlessly with aliens, who, although they appear to be speaking English as well, are actually speaking their own languages. Although it is rarely brought to the audience's attention in any of the *Trek* series, we are typically meant to assume that the Universal Translator is being used whenever an alien race is encountered. As the official *Star Trek* website explains, the Universal Translator "operates by scanning brain-wave frequencies and using the results to create a basis for translation". While such devices were originally handheld, as we see in *TOS*, the computer onboard the Enterprise of *TNG* has "translator capabilities built into its system software" (Official *Star Trek* website).

The practical reasons for the creation of such a device on a television show about space exploration are obvious, especially considering that the creators of the *Trek* franchise and its target audience are mostly native English speakers. Although the use of subtitles would allow the audience to understand what alien species were saying, this would be of no use to the characters onscreen, who would not have the benefit of such assistance. Without the Universal Translator, the characters of the *Trek* universe would be unable to understand one another – a major obstacle given Starfleet's main goal "to seek out new life and new civilizations"[34]. It would be nearly impossible to learn anything about such civilizations if verbal communication was not an option. As well, it would be time consuming and difficult for the writers to invent new languages for each alien species. Having everyone onscreen speak English is the most logical solution, while the Universal Translator easily explains that there really are different languages being spoken without actually having to create or film them.

If a global lingua franca existed in the future, be it English or any other language, there would be some obvious benefits. Perhaps the most notable of these would be the ability for all

people to understand one another, without the need for interpreters and the possible limitations or errors associated with translation. As Crystal notes, "[f]or some, such a world would be one of unity and peace, with all misunderstanding washed away – a widely expressed hope underlying the movements in support of a universal artificial language (such as Esperanto)" (15). This view reflects Roddenberry's idealistic vision of a united, peaceful future. However, while creating a global lingua franca may help to fulfill this vision, it is crucial to consider the potentially negative consequences that might arise as well:

> Perhaps a global language will cultivate an elite monolingual linguistic class, more complacent and dismissive in their attitudes towards other languages. Perhaps those who have such a language at their disposal – and especially those who have it as a mother-tongue – will be more able to think and work quickly in it, and to manipulate it to their own advantage at the expense of those who do not have it, thus maintaining in a linguistic guise the chasm between rich and poor. Perhaps the presence of a global language will make people lazy about learning other languages, or reduce their opportunities to do so. Perhaps a global language will hasten the disappearance of minority languages, or – the ultimate threat – make **all** other languages unnecessary. (emphasis in original, Crystal 14-15)

It is clear that the realization of any of these possibilities would stand in the way of preserving culture, promoting diversity or establishing equality for all, worthy goals to strive for, all of which *Trek* attempts to achieve. Rather than serving to unite humanity, a global lingua franca could encourage what Crystal refers to as "linguistic triumphalism – the danger that some people will celebrate one language's success at the expense of others" (15). Perhaps even more distressing is the notion that there are "mother-tongue English speakers who believe in an

evolutionary view of language (‘let the fittest survive, and if the fittest happens to be English then so be it’) or who refer to the present global status of the language as a ‘happy accident’” (Crystal 15). It would be impossible to have a truly equal future in a world where such views were held by native speakers of the global lingua franca.

25. Translation Devices

It is interesting to note that Crystal does suggest a possibility for the future other than the existence of a global lingua franca, claiming “that an alternative method of communication could emerge which would eliminate the need for a global language” (26). This alternative is strikingly similar to *Trek*’s Universal Translator, something Crystal refers to as “automatic translation (‘machine translation’)” (26). This imagined device would work in much the same way, with people being able “to communicate with each other directly, using their first languages, with a computer ‘taking the strain’ between them” (Crystal 26). Although this proposed technology does not use brainwaves, as does the Universal Translator, the principle idea is the same. Such a possibility is not as far-fetched as it may seem at first, given that:

> This state of affairs can already be seen, to a limited extent, on the Internet, where some firms are now offering a basic translation service between certain language pairs. A sender types in a message in language X, and a version of it appears on the receiver’s screen in language Y. The need for post-editing is still considerable, however, as translation software is currently very limited in its ability to handle idiomatic, stylistic, and several other linguistic features; the machines are nowhere near replacing their human counterparts. (Crystal 27)

Nonetheless, the mere fact that this kind of technology does exist, albeit on a lesser scale than the fictional Universal Translator, is incredibly exciting and encouraging. Despite implications that vast improvements in this technology will be made in the years to come, Crystal predicts that it will be a long time before such "automatic translation" (27) is "so globally widespread, and so economically accessible to all, that [it] poses a threat to the current availability and appeal of a global language" (27). I tend to agree with his hypothesis that English will continue to spread over this time, and that "the position of English as a global language is going to become stronger" (Crystal 27). Still, the future of language and translation is by no means guaranteed, and it is possible that either or both of these methods of communication – the rise of a global lingua franca (i.e. English) and/or the development of machine translation – could occur within the next century.

26. Limitations of Universal Translation Devices

Given the likelihood that automatic translation will continue to improve over the years, it may be prudent to examine some of the potential problems with or limitations of such technology. An example of this can be found in L.A. Graf's novel, *War Dragons,* during a scene in which Captain Kirk recalls his first meeting with a reptilian race called the Anjiri, who have had their ship stolen by pirates. Using a handheld translator as depicted in *TOS*, Kirk attempts to communicate with an alien named Vissith. The quality of the translation is supposed to improve as more is said (Graf 31), indicating that the Universal Translator has the ability to adapt and learn new vocabulary and syntax if it is used more frequently. However, for reasons unknown to Kirk at the time, the translator seems to be functioning incorrectly, coming up with "bizarre word choices" (Graf 32) and often providing translation that is "garbled" (Graf 33). This makes it

extremely difficult to communicate with Vissith, and both men grow frustrated in this difficult situation. Kirk describes the encounter, in the following passage:

> Ah we got nothing from helping them. Yet from where I stood, we humans actually had a lot to gain – friendship with a new race, expanded knowledge about the galaxy we all lived in, maybe even some information that could help us ferret out any acts of piracy in this sector. Still, I wasn't sure how to explain all that to Vissith, especially through a communications device I wasn't confident could accurately translate our names. 'We call it kindness.' Could the translator convey the meaning of a smile? 'It's a human custom'. (Graf 33)

This particular passage is important for several reasons. First of all, it shows us Kirk's point of view, that although his crew had received nothing in return for assisting the aliens, in terms of material gains, that was not what really mattered. To Kirk, establishing a friendly relationship with a new race and gaining knowledge were far more valuable – ideals represented by Starfleet as a whole. However, perhaps more relevant to our purposes here, we see also how the translator may be unreliable, which calls into question the usefulness and limitations of such a device. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Kirk's musing of whether the translator could "convey the meaning of a smile" (Graf 33), which of course it cannot, demonstrates that there are other important factors to consider when it comes to translation, such as facial expressions and body language. These kinds of physical cues may not be universal, and misunderstanding them could have disastrous results.

When Kirk realizes that another approach must be taken, given that the translation device is insufficient, he tells Spock: "'I want a *new* translator – a living one. I want somebody who'll

take into account more than just what comes out of the Anjiri's mouths...We've got trained linguists in communications. I say we use them'" (Graf 35). It is at this point that Lieutenant Uhura is called upon, to attempt to communicate with the Anjiri using her skills in linguistics and translation. She explains that "'the inherent problem with all field-style translators is that they're almost entirely dependent on audio and electromagnetic input. There's *some* visual data collection, but the units don't allow for enough storage and processing to really make good use of it'" (Graf 35). After more than an hour of attempted discussion with the Anjiri, Uhura is able to make some progress, having discovered that the Anjiri language contains a physical as well as verbal component that the translator was unable to analyze correctly (Graf 35-36).

27. The Difficulties of Communication

Communication difficulties arise throughout the *Trek* franchise, for example in the *TNG* episode, "The Big Goodbye" (Season 1, Episode 11), in which Captain Picard must learn to recite a very precise and difficult greeting to a race called the Jarada, in their native language. Any minor mistake would be considered an insult to the Jarada, who would take offence to Picard's mispronunciation and refuse the Enterprise entry to their territory. Another notable example is the *DS9* episode, "Babel" (Season 1, Episode 4), in which an unusual aphasia virus spreads throughout the space station, affecting nearly everyone on board and rendering them incapable of speaking coherently. The virus becomes so dangerous that it threatens to kill anyone who has become infected, within a very short period of time. As well, in the *ENT* episode, "Fight or Flight" (Season 1, Episode 2), a misunderstanding caused by the Enterprise's inaccurate translation device causes an alien being to mistakenly believe that the crew murdered some of his people, putting the ship in grave danger. It is only when Hoshi attempts to communicate with the alien in his own language, as best she can without the aid of the translator, that the conflict is

resolved. This is similar to the passage described in *War Dragons*, as it is only through direct, personal communication (i.e. without the use of technology) that a hostile situation can be diffused[35].

Perhaps the most famous instance of language and translation issues in the entire *Trek* canon occurs in the *TNG* episode, "Darmok"[36] (Season 5, Episode 2), again featuring Captain Picard. The Enterprise encounters a race known as the Tamarians, about whom very little is known due to their perplexing language, which no one in the Federation has ever been able to understand. It is only when Picard is unexpectedly beamed down to the planet below, along with Dathon, the Tamarian captain, that he is able to begin deciphering the cryptic phrases spoken by the Tamarians. In time, Picard realizes that their mythology is a crucial part of the way the Tamarians convey messages to one another. However, this discovery in itself is not enough to help him communicate with them, as he is unfamiliar with their history. As Data explains, "The situation is analogous to understanding the grammar of a language, but none of the vocabulary". This is another example where the Universal Translator is of little use, as direct translation to English is impossible without prior knowledge of the people and places referred to in Tamarian myths. Put simply, "Without the details, there's no understanding" (Deanna Troi).

While the Universal Translator has yet to be realized in real life, and may never function exactly as imagined in *Trek*, the problems associated with this kind of technology are related to those that could occur in our real future. Subtle nuances such as tone of voice may not translate well, and it can be extremely difficult to get across ideas when sarcasm, humour or irony are used. Additionally, body language and facial expressions are crucial parts of communication that do not come through in strictly verbal translations. As well, metaphors and other imagery may be difficult to translate when the culture that inspires them is not shared by both parties. For these

reasons, it is not a stretch to believe that problems like those arising between Kirk and Vissith, or Picard and Dathon, could occur in real life, especially if automatic translation machines do not function exactly as desired, or if they have limitations similar to those of the Universal Translator.

28. Loss of Language, Loss of Culture

The spread of English may be on the rise, but this is not the norm for most languages. In fact, the opposite is often true. In the article “Last Words”, Payal Sampat lists many statistics that detail the frighteningly rapid rate of decline of many of the world’s languages, claiming that:

> At the current rate of decline, experts estimate that by the end of this century, at least half of the world’s languages will have disappeared – a linguistic extinction rate that works out to one language death, on average, every two weeks. And that’s the low-end estimate; some experts predict that the losses could run as high as 90 percent. (34)

The extent of the consequences that such large scale language death could have are immeasurable, but it is safe to say that the effects this will have on culture are potentially devastating. As Luisa Maffi observes in “Linguistic and Biological Diversity: The Inextricable Link”, “it is becoming increasingly clear that all forms of the diversity of life on Earth – linguistic, cultural, and biological – are intrinsically related and interconnected, and that they share a common fate” (17). Such a severe loss of language will most likely result in an equally significant loss of culture.

This loss of both language and culture is a matter which concerns us all, and future generations as well. Sampat explains:

> Language loss is obviously a form of cultural impoverishment, but the damage extends far beyond the communities immediately affected. There are several reasons why widespread linguistic decline is a matter of concern for all humanity. In the first place, there is the loss to linguistics itself – and to the other sciences that draw upon it, such as psychology and anthropology...A second general consequence of the declines involves our ability to understand our past. Languages hold important clues to the history of our species...Finally, by relinquishing our linguistic diversity, we are also diminishing our understanding of biological diversity. Native inhabitants of regions with high biodiversity have developed elaborate vocabularies to describe the natural world around them – collective "field guides" that reflect the ecological knowledge of, in some cases, hundreds of generations. (37-40)

Unless measures are taken to protect them, countless languages are in danger of becoming extinct, taking along with them important knowledge that we may never regain. It *is* possible to reverse some of the damage that is being done, as Sampat notes: "A few languages are slowly making a comeback, with the help of community groups, governments, and linguists" (40). However, these efforts alone will not be enough to preserve endangered languages.

Perhaps the best, and the most logical, solution is multilingualism. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas claims that "The fewer speakers a language has, the more necessary it is for the children to become high-level multilinguals, in order to be able to obtain the basic necessities needed for survival" (qtd. in Maffi16). While this makes sense, it is critical to note that language preservation is not only the responsibility of those whose language is in danger. Such a belief may be held by those Crystal refers to as "[believing] in an evolutionary view of language" (15),

but the fact is, native English speakers must also work to help solve this problem if there is any hope of success. Skutnabb-Kangas sums it up perfectly:

> Everybody, not just privileged elites or poor minorities, needs to be fluent and literate in at least two languages, preferably more. Everybody, not just minorities, needs to become aware of and acknowledge the importance of their ethnic and linguistic roots, in order to be able to develop, analyze, criticize, and reflect. Language rights for all are part of human rights. Language rights are prerequisite to many other human rights. Linguistic human rights in education are a prerequisite for the maintenance of the diversity in the world that we are all responsible for. (qtd. in Maffi 16)

Unless we all take an active interest in learning and preserving languages, we may face the alarming loss of language and culture predicted by Sampat, and others. This is a situation that a Universal Translator or similar technological device could not remedy, no matter how effectively it functions. The *Trek* universe attempts to promote a future where cultural diversity is highly valued, but we will never reach such a future without also valuing linguistic diversity.

29. Conclusions and Final Reflections

Perhaps the reason why Roddenberry's vision (and subsequently the *Trek* franchise) is so popular is because of its uniquely optimistic view of the future. Although I acknowledge that the messages *Trek* sends are sometimes mixed, particularly when it comes to gender and racial equality as we have seen, I do believe that the original vision that inspired the creation of the *Trek* universe is quite positive. A future "imagining an egalitarian Earth – absent of racism, sexism, and capitalism" (Bernardi 210) is relatively rare, especially among so many other

depictions of the future as bleak and depressing or outright dangerous, whether in literature, on television or in film.

Several imaginings of Earth's future are apocalyptic, due to any number of reasons ranging from environmental disasters to incurable viruses. Dystopias in which human activities are strictly regulated and controlled are also popular. Depictions of humans encountering extraterrestrial life often involve a fight to preserve Earth from some kind of hostile takeover, in the form of invasion or destruction. Aliens are typically seen as a threat, and their intentions are almost always harmful. Similarly, technology is frequently a source of chaos as humans are threatened by the possibility of nuclear war or killer robots. Given this plethora of negative possibilities, Roddenberry's vision is wildly different in comparison, and the thought of humans trying to work with alien races to create a diverse, united future, as in *Trek*, is refreshing and inspirational.

My search for the future of Education, Gender, Race Relations and Globalization has been an intriguing experience, and I have learned more than I am able to express in the limited pages of this project. I believe that examining these areas through the lens of *Trek* has offered a valuable perspective that depends heavily upon Gene Roddenberry's extraordinary vision of an equal, united future. I have also found that with each episode and written source I have examined, I come across more possibilities for future study.

Judith Barad, author of *The Ethics of Star Trek*, claims that "While our *Star Trek* heroes are far from perfect, they are nonetheless essentially decent beings whose interaction with 'new life and new civilizations' is always guided by nobility and morality" (xi). Although I do not completely agree with the absoluteness of this assertion, I do believe that Barad makes a good

point about the “essentially decent” (xi) nature of those she calls “our *Star Trek* heroes” (xi). She is referring, of course, to the fictional characters of the *Trek* universe, but I would like to suggest that this notion might also be extended to include the writers and creators of the franchise as well.

My exploration has found that in some ways, the fulfillment of Roddenberry’s vision is still very far away. However, we must remind ourselves that like the characters Barad speaks of as “far from perfect” (xi), so too are the creators of *Trek*, for the simple reason that they are also human. Yet if the examples of supposedly “perfect” beings such as Khan, the Borg, or the “Masterpiece Society” have taught us anything, it is that perfection is not the goal for which we should strive. While I acknowledge that there are flaws in the *Trek* universe, nonetheless, I believe that its narratives have much to teach us. Whether or not our real future will reflect the fictional future of *Trek*, the pursuit of Roddenberry’s vision is a worthwhile endeavour.

Notes

[1] Please note that throughout this paper, I will be using the following, generally accepted abbreviations to refer to each of the five television series: *Star Trek* (The Original Series) = *TOS*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation = TNG*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine = DS9*, *Star Trek: Voyager = VOY*, and *Star Trek: Enterprise = ENT*. Also, to avoid possible confusion, I will use the term *Star Trek* only in reference to *TOS*. When I am discussing the most recent film (of the same name), I will use *Star Trek* (2009), and when I am referring to the entire franchise as a whole, I will use simply *Trek*. Finally, when I speak of Voyager or Enterprise (i.e. not in italics), please note that I am referring to the fictional starship and not the television series of the same name.

[2] Because I do not want to drive my research to any foregone conclusions, I am attempting to keep an open mind as much as possible throughout the course of this project. I consider my approach to this paper to be similar to Derek Briton's *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: A Post-Modern Critique*, which he describes as a work of reflection. To explain this notion, Briton quotes Castoriadis: "'Unlike the work of art, there is no finished edifice here, nor an edifice to be finished; just as much as, and even more than the results, what is important is the work of reflection and it is perhaps mostly this that an author can make us see, if he can make us see anything at all'" (qtd. in Briton ix).

[3] *Trek* spans five television series, not including the animated series, and eleven feature films to date, as well as countless stories, merchandise, comics and novels – both official and unofficial. Because it is, as Matt Hills claims, "one of the longest running and most multifaceted programs in television history, it would indeed be surprising if the *Star Trek* franchise could ever be convincingly reduced to one coherent and comprehensive 'reading'" (qtd. in Geraghty 11).

For this reason, though I will of course attempt to make my analysis as thorough as possible, it should be noted that a complete examination of the entire franchise is impractical.

[4] See section 5. “Roddenberry’s Vision”.

[5] Study of *Trek* fandom is a continuously growing field of interest, inspiring much research. See especially the work of Constance Penley (e.g. “Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Study of Popular Culture”), Henry Jenkins (e.g. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*) and Lincoln Geraghty (e.g. “A Network of Support: Coping with Trauma Through *Star Trek* Fan Letters”).

[6] Jenkins defines this term on his weblog as “a hybrid creature which is part fan and part academic” (*Confessions of an Aca-Fan*).

[7] It should be noted that these kinds of difficulties are irrelevant in individual study courses, where students work independently (though supervised by a faculty member). However, it can be incredibly challenging to complete assignments in online grouped study courses, especially when collaborating with students who live in different time zones, to name just one obstacle.

[8] Of course office hours are often limited, and scheduling conflicts can occur between students and professors. In general though, I have found that most professors at both online learning facilities and brick and mortar schools make an effort to accommodate students when possible. This does not always depend on the delivery method, as much as the individual instructor.

[9] Please note that I am not attempting to link supporters of e-books with supporters of online education or claiming that those who love physical books will also love face-to-face education. I am simply pointing out that the debate between the inherent value of e-books vs.

books is similar to the debate over whether online education is "better" than face-to-face delivery methods. I am arguing that in either case, it is not worth worrying about value judgements and determining which is "better", because both have merits and pitfalls. This discussion has been focused more on identifying what these positive and negative elements of each delivery method may be, in an effort to inspire thought and possible improvements in either/both kinds of learning.

[10] For example, in *DS9*, Keiko O'Brien takes on the role of teacher and starts her own school, which Sisko supports.

[11] The course was MDDE 651, at Athabasca University, and my collaborator was Donna Ferguson. I have obtained her written permission to reference our paper in this project.

[12] This first meeting between Kirk and Spock in *Star Trek* (2009) diverges from the "real", canonical material of the *Trek* universe due to the fact that the film depicts an alternate reality. When Nero goes back in time to find Spock Prime, he disrupts the natural course of events, resulting in the death of George Kirk on the day of his son, James T. Kirk's birth. As Spock explains, "Nero's very presence has altered the flow of history, beginning with the attack on the USS Kelvin, culminating in the events of today, thereby creating an entirely new chain of incidents that cannot be anticipated by either party". In this alternate timeline, Kirk and Spock begin their relationship as enemies, though they do start to develop a friendship by the end of the film, suggesting that in future sequels, this element of the traditional franchise will be restored.

[13] It must be noted, of course, that although Saavik's failure of the Kobayashi Maru test is depicted onscreen in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* 27 years earlier than Kirk's successful attempt in *Star Trek* (2009), it has not actually occurred yet at the time Kirk is accused of

cheating. Kirk's words are reminiscent of Saavik's because this scene was filmed after *The Wrath of Khan*, but in the *Trek* canon, this incident predates Saavik's Kobayashi Maru test.

[14] The *Trek* novels are not usually considered to be part of the *Trek* "canon", which is typically restricted to the five television series and eleven feature films. However, I have chosen to include limited references to two *Trek* novels in this paper (i.e. *Prime Directive* by Judith and Garfield Reeves-Stevens and *War Dragons* by L.A. Graf). I have done so for two main reasons. First of all, although not part of the canon, the *Trek* novels are officially licensed by Paramount Pictures. Secondly, the excerpts to which I refer are relevant to my analysis, and serve as particularly good examples. The scene from *War Dragons* that I discuss here is examined in more detail in section 26. Limitations of Universal Translation Devices.

[15] Although generally portrayed as a more honest, morally just character than Kirk, there are occasions when Spock acts ambiguously as well. Consider, for instance, the way Spock Prime convinces Kirk that he must not tell Spock about meeting him in *Star Trek* (2009). When Spock asks, "How did you persuade him to keep your secret?", Spock Prime responds, "He inferred that universe-ending paradoxes would ensue should he break his promise". Upon hearing this, Spock states simply, "You lied". His perception of this action is more narrow than that of his older self, who protests, "I...I implied". This example demonstrates that even the most honest man may stretch the truth, "imply", or tell a white lie when the situation calls for it. A morally grey area, *Trek* seems to take the position that it is okay to be less than totally honest in certain cases, at least if there is a noble cause such as saving lives to justify the act.

[16] I discovered this idea, that powerful female characters often represent a threat to patriarchy that must be vanquished, while conducting research for my essay, "Exploring Female Characterizations in *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*". For a more complete

analysis, see Robin Roberts's *Sexual Generations: "Star Trek: The Next Generation" and Gender* and Karin Blair's "Sex and *Star Trek*".

[17] Mia Consalvo notes that much research has been done in the area of gender, and that "Other researchers have echoed [Roberts'] findings, suggesting that even as women characters have progressed beyond the 'space receptionist' role of Lieutenant Uhura, they must still adhere to traditionally feminine ideals of beauty, and are continually relegated to subordinate status" (180). For a more in depth analysis, see my paper, "Exploring Female Characterizations in *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*", which draws on the work of scholars such as Robin Roberts (to whom Consalvo refers in the above quotation) and several others.

[18] Namely, captains James T. Kirk (*TOS*), Jean-Luc Picard (*TNG*), Benjamin Sisko (*DS9*) and Jonathan Archer (*ENT*). It is noteworthy that the first officers of these five crews are also mainly male, with the exceptions of Major Kira (*DS9*) who serves briefly as first officer until Worf arrives and T'Pol (*ENT*).

[19] It could be argued, of course, that *DS9* has a different purpose as well, given that it takes place on a space station rather than a starship.

[20] For example, in "Charlie X" (Season 1, Episode 2).

[21] In particular, Picard acts as a father figure to Wesley Crusher throughout the series.

[22] The Prime Directive is also known as Starfleet's "rule of non-interference". It forbids Starfleet officers from disrupting the natural order of development, though this often raises complex moral issues. For instance, upholding the Prime Directive by not getting involved, instead of giving help to those who need it, may end up harming those the rule was designed to protect.

[23] Consalvo also believes that "the Borg and Seven appear to be harbingers – calling us to consider one potential future as we start to shape our posthuman potential" (199), as she states in her concluding section.

[24] Consalvo does argue, however, that the Borg are in fact gendered, claiming that "With no 'official' gender, the Borg defaulted to masculine stereotypes" (183). She notes the exception of the Borg Queen, who is overtly female (Consalvo 184). In my paper, "Exploring Female Characterizations in *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*", I argue that the Borg are gendered as well, but in contrast to Consalvo, I hold the belief that the Borg are feminized.

[25] Bernardi mentions a 1991 interview in which "Roddenberry acknowledges that he is both a humanist and a liberal" (213).

[26] A notable exception is Martin Benbeck from "The Masterpiece Society", who is played by an African-American actor named Ron Canada. However, it may be significant that Benbeck is the colonist who is most strongly opposed to the Enterprise crew's presence and assistance. Geordi La Forge is ultimately responsible for saving the colony from destruction by a massive stellar fragment, pointing to the fact that Benbeck's objections may have been unfounded (though there is doubt as to whether or not the colonists are actually better off, by the end of the episode).

[27] Blind since birth, Geordi uses a piece of technology called a VISOR to help him "'see' throughout the electromagnetic spectrum, from heat and infrared through visible light to radio waves" (Official *Star Trek* website).

[28] Perhaps the best example of a super human, genetically engineered race in the entire *Trek* franchise is the Borg. Part organic and part synthetic, the Borg are portrayed as one of the most evil, deadly enemies in existence, whose methods of "evolving" leave much to be desired. By

assimilating other beings into their collective, the Borg claim to be "evolving toward a state of perfection" (Borg Queen, *Star Trek: First Contact*). In reality, as Data points out, "the Borg do not evolve – they conquer" (*First Contact*). The Borg erase every trace of individuality when they assimilate someone, effectively eliminating diversity, though this is not the way they see it. Rather, the Borg believe they are adding each individual's distinctiveness to theirs (*First Contact*). Depicted as a terrifying threat, not only to the Federation but the entire universe, the Borg also reinforce Roddenberry's liberal-humanist vision by showing the extreme horrors of uniformity.

[29] See section 8. Education and the *Trek* Franchise.

[30] In *Star Trek* (2009), for example, the lines are actually "Pointy-eared bastard" and "Green-blooded hobgoblin" – phrases designed to provoke laughter from the audience, though more from McCoy's frustration than the actual derogatory implications of the insults.

[31] In 2003, when the Second Edition of *English as a Global Language* was published, Crystal cites this figure as "around 1.5 billion people" (6), a feat unmatched by any other language. To put this into perspective, he notes that "Even Chinese, found in eight different spoken languages, but unified by a common writing system, is known to 'only' some 1.1 billion" (6).

[32] At the time of publication (2003), Crystal notes that as many as 190 countries are represented in the UN during a single meeting. For this reason, "[t]he pressure to adopt a single lingua franca, to facilitate communication in such contexts, is considerable, the alternative being expensive and impracticable multi-way translation facilities" (12).

[33] The United Federation of Planets is described on the official *Star Trek* website as: "an interstellar alliance of more than 150 planetary governments, spread out over 8,000 light-years"

that is “united in various endeavors involving trade, exploration, science and defense”. Just as the Federation is made up of members from different planets, the United Nations is made up of “193 Member States” (official United Nations website) from around the world. The main purposes of the UN, as described on its official website, include the goals “To keep peace throughout the world” and “To develop friendly relations among nations”. As seen in the *Trek* franchise, the Federation strives to achieve similar goals by forging peaceful relations between alien races, whenever possible. As explained in the novel, *Prime Directive*, one of the most important “underlying principles” (Reeves-Stevens 32) of the Federation is “respect for life in all forms” (Reeves-Stevens 32).

[34] This quotation is taken from the famous opening narration of both *TOS* and *TNG*.

[35] In all of the cases mentioned above – Uhura (*War Dragons*), Captain Picard (“The Big Goodbye” and “Darmok”) and Hoshi (“Fight or Flight”) – it is the living translator who is able to most effectively communicate with an alien race. This demonstrates that, at times, human abilities are prized over technology in the *Trek* universe. As much as devices like the Universal Translator can be useful tools, it is crucial to keep in mind that technology can fail. This view is upheld throughout the *Trek* franchise, as we see many times in regards to all kinds of technology. Major characters even give their lives to save the lives of others when such technology fails, for example, when Spock sacrifices himself at the end of *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. Other notable examples include the (supposed) death of James T. Kirk at the beginning of *Star Trek: Generations*, the death of Data at the end of *Star Trek: Nemesis*, and the death of George Kirk at the beginning of *Star Trek* (2009).

This is especially interesting, given the fact that it is Starfleet’s technology which often positions them as “superior” to other, less technologically advanced races. On numerous

occasions throughout the franchise, we see a contradictory view of technology, where it is highly valued. The ability to travel at warp speed, for instance, is what leads to "first contact" with the Vulcans and consequently, humans exploring the universe and developing Starfleet.

[36] For a more detailed analysis of this episode, see Paul A. Cantor's chapter, "From Shakespeare to Wittgenstein: 'Darmok' and Cultural Literacy" in *Star Trek and Philosophy: The Wrath of Kant*, edited by Jason T. Eberl and Kevin S. Decker.

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