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The Origins of the Star Trek Phenomenon:
Gene Roddenberry, the Original Series, and Science Fiction Fandom in the 1960s

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Dedication

Mom, you are the only one that has been there for me through thick and thin consistently in my life. Without you, I would not have been able to attend graduate school and write this thesis. Thank you for all your support. I love you always.

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Abstract

Star Trek became one of the most popular television series, not only in the United States but the world, in the latter half of the twentieth century. The original series aired from 1966 to 1969, a momentous time of change in American history. During the middle to late sixties, American society was responding to recent civil rights legislation, underlying Cold War tensions (especially those associated with Vietnam), and evolving gender roles. Even though the accepted notion that the series embraced progressive thought drawn from Lyndon Johnson's ideals of the Great Society and one of racial, gender and economic equality, *Star Trek's* plots and scripts often contradicted this ideology intentionally and unintentionally. *Star Trek's* inconsistency, to some degree, stemmed from some of its writers immersion in conventional points of views as evidenced in the scripts they wrote. However, some of the most glaring inconsistencies came from Roddenberry's influence on the series.

Over the development of the series, the meaning and liberal-humanist elements within *Star Trek* were initially contributed by others on the production team; then fans took those messages and created a worldwide phenomenon that celebrated those ideas. Ultimately, it was the fans who infused *Star Trek* and the series fan community with their collective hope and optimism for the human race.

Keywords: Gene Roddenberry, *Star Trek*, Science Fiction, Fandom, 1960s, History

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Introduction

Star Trek became one of the most popular television series, not only in the United States but the world, in the latter half of the twentieth century. The original series aired from 1966 to 1969, a momentous time of change in American history. During the middle to late sixties, American society was responding to recent civil rights legislation, underlying Cold War tensions (especially those associated with Vietnam), and evolving gender roles. *Star Trek* was unique among television series for using these main issues of the sixties as themes in a science fiction format. The original idea for the series came from Gene Roddenberry who had been marginally successful in the television industry as a freelance scriptwriter and the producer of a short-lived 1963 series called *The Lieutenant*. Roddenberry started working on the original concept for *Star Trek* in the early sixties with the goal to make a name for himself as a successful producer and writer in television.

Star Trek's basic premise was that the Earth of the twenty-third century had evolved into a utopia where all bigotry, discrimination, poverty, and conflict between nations were eliminated. This harmonious utopian society, in turn, enabled Earth's inhabitants to focus their resources and energy on traveling and exploring the galaxy. Some of the series' plots compared Earth of the future to other planetary societies that were depicted as either more advanced or less developed. Yet, many other episodes in *Star Trek's* repertoire contrasted the advanced culture of future Earth with its past, often that of the 1960s when world societies were purportedly in their infancy.

Many scholars and public figures have argued that *Star Trek* reflected the influence of real world 1960s progressive thought. Viewers and some analysts have

insisted that *Star Trek* portrayed a future in which the notions of tolerance, equality among humanity, and peaceful coexistence were completely embraced by all on Earth. Subsequently, the achievement of humans evolving into a more mature race of beings enabled them to move past unproductive behaviors and focus on the noble mission to "seek out new life and new civilizations" and "to boldly go where no man has gone before."¹

Even though the accepted notion was and still is that the series embraced progressive thought drawn from Lyndon Johnson's ideals of the Great Society and one of racial, gender, and economic equality, *Star Trek's* plots and scripts often contradicted this ideology intentionally and unintentionally. *Star Trek's* inconsistency, to some degree, stemmed from some of its writers immersion in conventional points of views as evidenced in the scripts they wrote. However, some of the most glaring inconsistencies came from Roddenberry's influence on the series.

Despite his reputation as an unconventional liberal, Roddenberry held orthodox views on women, racial minorities, and the United States' involvement in the Cold War. Nevertheless, even though there are numerous examples in the series that contradict progressive ideologies of the sixties, Roddenberry and the series are still remembered by the fans and the general public as championing 1960s liberal-humanist ideals.

This thesis argues three points. One, that Roddenberry has been erroneously given credit by some in both academia and fandom as the creator of a utopian liberal-humanist doctrine within the series. In reality, Roddenberry's influence was the main source of conventional messages in the series. Second, existing research on

Roddenberry, *Star Trek* and fan culture has only narrowly focused on certain elements such as the Vietnam War, race, or fan culture as examples. However, this thesis will reveal how historical context--Roddenberry, the collective talents of the *Star Trek* production team, traditional themes borrowed from literary science fiction, input from well-known science fiction writers, collaboration with the scientific and defense communities, and interaction with literary science fiction fandom--were interrelated and how they all contributed to the resulting *Star Trek* mythology and phenomena. The third is that many fans of *Star Trek* both mentioned a faith in the utopian liberal aspects of *Star Trek* and criticized its shortcomings in this area. In short, it was not Roddenberry's visionary take on the future, but other creative contributors that initially infused the series with some liberal-humanist concepts; then it was the fans who focused on these ideas and subsequently gave *Star Trek* its liberal-humanist reputation.

The *Star Trek* episodes that originally aired from 1966 to 1969 were shaped by and tried to address controversial issues of that time period which, in turn, made *Star Trek* a reflection of the tensions in the 1960s. For the most part, *Star Trek*, whether speaking about technology, cultural, or political attitudes, only reflected what was currently present in society and combined these contemporary elements with themes from literary science fiction that had existed for decades before *Star Trek's* 1966 première. While the popular myth perpetuated the idea Roddenberry had a unique vision that motivated him to create *Star Trek*, it is clear the series owed its origins to a multitude of factors.

Nonetheless, the moniker “creator,” which Roddenberry claimed for himself, led some fans to envision him as the sole creative genius behind *Star Trek*.

Furthermore, as Henry Jenkins, a scholar of fan studies, asserts “As the fans shifted their focus from literary to television science fiction, they were already accustomed to discussing works in terms of their authors and tended to view Roddenberry’s job as television producer in similar terms.” Jenkins concludes that fans, “acknowledge the collaborative aspects of the production process while ascribing primary inspiration to a single author, Roddenberry, and his very ‘very personal’ philosophy.”² After the original *Star Trek* series ended, the more dedicated fans made a philosophy out of *Star Trek* and credited Gene Roddenberry as the lead visionary whose sole motivation for creating the series was to depict a positive future to uplift viewers and give them hope for a better tomorrow.

An example of this view of Roddenberry was conveyed by *Star Trek* fans Jacqueline Lichtenberg, Sondra Marshak, and Joan Winston who collaboratively wrote *Star Trek Lives!* in 1975. These three fans collectively felt that “*Star Trek* began with *saying* something--something which had profound meaning to one man, Gene Roddenberry, and came to have deep meaning to the other creators and then to the viewers.”³ From *Star Trek*’s first run until present, this characterization of Roddenberry became generally accepted among fans and non-fans alike.

As far as Roddenberry was concerned, his initial and main motivation was to become successful in the television industry, first as a writer and later as a producer. Roddenberry was an ambitious businessman interested in promoting his product to the public. In his early television career in the 1950s, Roddenberry was a part-time,

freelance scriptwriter who actively pursued opportunities to move into the industry full-time. Once he secured steady work as a scriptwriter, he then focused on becoming a successful producer. By the early sixties, all of his attempts to produce a network series, with the brief exception of *The Lieutenant*, had failed. When Roddenberry finally succeeded in getting *Star Trek* into production and televised, he continued to look for new opportunities to further his career and improve his financial situation. As Herb Solow, the executive in charge of programming at Desilu studios where *Star Trek* was filmed recalled, “Once he got *Star Trek* on the air he was anxious to move on to another show, and then another and another.”⁴

Still, Roddenberry and the *Star Trek* team were determined to see that it contained some kind of message. As Roddenberry stated, “Making *Star Trek* happen was a bonecrusher, and unless it also ‘said something’ and we challenged our viewers to think and react, then it wasn’t worth all we had put into the show.”⁵ Script consultant Dorothy Fontana, however, affirmed that a specific message was not their focus. She recalled, “You know, we didn’t care what the message was just as long as there was one.”⁶ Overall, the *Star Trek* team simply wanted to make a television product that drew successful ratings, regardless of the philosophy.

After the first season, when Roddenberry was most deeply involved in production and writing, his direct involvement declined and many of the series episodes hailed as pioneering can be attributed to others. Out of seventy-nine aired episodes, Roddenberry only authored four scripts and six story outlines.⁷ Most of the original scripts, regarded by many as the most “thought provoking,” came from freelance writers and the staff involved with the production.

In the beginning, Roddenberry had enormous influence during the conceptual stage and “closely supervised all postproduction tasks” for the “first five or six shows” but then had to focus on rewriting scripts.⁸ Roddenberry left the postproduction tasks to Associate Producer Robert Justman. Additionally, in August 1966, one month before *Star Trek* premiered, writer Gene Coon was brought on staff because “Roddenberry, whose long suit had never been stamina, was running out of gas.”⁹ The series needed a “writing machine” and Gene Coon “became *Star Trek’s* savior.”¹⁰ Coon took over the task of rewriting the scripts and Roddenberry quickly moved on to the Executive Producer position. As Dorothy Fontana recalled:

Over the years a lot of people have swallowed the line that Gene Roddenberry was the sole creator of *Star Trek*. And it’s not true. If you look at the development of the scripts along the way, you see all the elements that were contributed by other writers.¹¹

As a result, Roddenberry’s authorial and creative influence on *Star Trek* episodes greatly diminished over time.

Looking at the entire repertoire of *Star Trek* episodes and production documents, the aspects defined as visionary by fans, viewers, and the media came from these other contributors to the series. The inconsistencies in *Star Trek’s* social commentary and depictions of the future can mostly be attributed to Gene Roddenberry’s story outlines/teleplays or the managerial decisions he made as Executive Producer.

The initial reception of *Star Trek* by fans in the sixties was varied. Some felt it was consistently good and seemingly did not notice or chose to ignore deficiencies. Others felt it had an equal mix of highs and lows. A number of viewers merely felt it

was a step in the right direction toward more intelligent, forward-thinking programming. Nevertheless, even when taking into account the differing readings of *Star Trek* on its first run, fans have mostly been vehemently loyal to the *Star Trek* franchise over the long term. On the one hand, interpreting *Star Trek* as a more mature contribution to television programming in the 1960s was not untrue. Yet, on the other hand, those who viewed it as the epitome of visionary forward thinking, attributed solely to Roddenberry, were not well informed.

The dual nature of *Star Trek*, simultaneously innovative and mature science fiction with a message while at the same time strewn with conventional plot devices and concepts, has made it somewhat of an enigma. This conundrum, along with its remarkable popularity, has inspired scholars to research *Star Trek* in more detail. *Star Trek* has become a mystery to be unraveled and has led many scholars to attempt to analyze the meanings conveyed in the series, to explore Roddenberry's motivations, and to try to discover the factors that have contributed to the fans' intense devotion to the show. *Star Trek* has been analyzed through the lens of many disciplines; though, rarely through the lens of history.

Historians have not examined how the intertwined factors of the historical context of the sixties, Roddenberry, the production team, and the established literary science fiction community worked together to shape *Star Trek*. The historians who have focused on *Star Trek* are Daniel Bernardi, Nicholas Sarantakes, Bruce Franklin and Rick Worland. All have discussed the original series in the sixties; however, they only examine *Star Trek* through individual historical aspects. Worland, Franklin, and Sarantakes focus on *Star Trek's* depictions of the Cold War, Vietnam, and U.S.

foreign relations whereas Daniel Bernardi examines race and diversity within *Star Trek*.

In the Cold War, Vietnam, and U.S. foreign relations camp, Rick Worland and H. Bruce Franklin argue in their respective articles “Captain Kirk: Cold Warrior” (1988) and “*Star Trek* in the Vietnam Era” (1994), that *Star Trek*’s depiction of the Cold War and Vietnam were inconsistent with the progressive humanitarian vision for which *Star Trek* has been known.

Worland argues that over the course of the three seasons of *Star Trek*, it more frequently highlighted story premises that were analogous to contemporary American Cold War ideologies with a pro-U.S. stance. As Worland notes, “*Star Trek* took on a somewhat different emphasis in its second and third seasons, owing primarily to the invention of ‘The United Federation of Planets,’ a large and powerful socio-political system linking many worlds into a pluralist democracy” in which “Kirk and company were repeatedly locked in Cold War struggle with, yes, an evil empire, the Klingons.”¹² H. Bruce Franklin asserts that between 1964 to 1968, the public view on Vietnam changed from being a necessary war the U.S. would soon win to one of disillusionment with and growing opposition to it.¹³ Franklin ultimately argues that *Star Trek* was influenced by trends in public opinion on the war when creating episodes. In Franklin’s view, early episodes portrayed war as an unpleasant bump in the road to utopia. Whereas later episodes insinuated that conflict overseas and domestically needed to end in order to reach the orderly peaceful realm of the future where Americans could feel comforted to know their cultural ideals and way of life had overcome contemporary struggles and ultimately become triumphant.¹⁴

Two factors are not focused on in depth by Worland or Franklin. The first is practical consideration of the production process. Story outlines are submitted well in advance of an aired episode and the rewrite and filming process takes months. So the fact that certain episodes aired concurrently or in proximity to changing public opinion or events in the real world is more coincidence than actual intention. The second more decisive element that neither Worland nor Franklin thoroughly address is the influence of writers' personal views on war in general or specifically Vietnam. There were some writers who were more inclined to a dovish stance and others, such as Roddenberry, who were predisposed to a hawkish position as revealed in their story treatments and scripts.

Nicholas Sarantakes in his article "Cold War Pop Culture and the Image of U.S. Foreign Policy: The Perspective of the Original *Star Trek* Series" (2005) argues against Worland and Franklin's assessment of *Star Trek* with regard to Cold War and Vietnam. Sarantakes objects to the fact Worland and Franklin used only the aired episodes as sources rather than the archival letters, memos, and scripts. Sarantakes feels that their interpretations, which suggested *Star Trek* had an inconsistent track record of depicting a liberal-humanist vision with regard to the Cold War and Vietnam, were incorrect. Sarantakes asserts, "The production documents leave no doubt that the makers of the series constantly tried to offer a thoughtful critique of U.S. involvement in international affairs."¹⁵ Certainly, the production documents uncover more about the thought processes and differing points of view of the *Star Trek* production team, but to dismiss televised episodes narrows the evidence too much. The televised episodes are the final product that results from the behind- the-

scenes creative production process and on some occasions episodes are clearly slanted to a more pro-U.S./ war point of view.

The second historical camp that examined *Star Trek* did so through the lens of racial diversity. Daniel Bernardi in his article “*Star Trek* in the 1960s: Liberal-Humanism and the Production of Race” explores the portrayal of racial minorities within *Star Trek* and asserts:

Contrary to what is commonly said about this science-fiction series, I will argue that *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.”¹⁶

Bernardi feels that the popular perception of *Star Trek* as the epitome of a liberal-humanist vision is incorrect. In his book, *Race-ing Toward a White Future* (1998) he expands his investigation of how races were depicted in the sixties original series, to feature films, and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in the eighties and early nineties. His study reveals a lackluster track record depicting minorities in significant roles in the original series and shows how race is articulated differently in each successive incarnation of *Star Trek* reflecting the historical era in which it appeared.

Other scholars have focused on the cultural impact of *Star Trek* instead of the content of the actual series. These scholars from various disciplines have examined *Star Trek's* mark on popular culture and audience reception through the context of their own specializations including cultural studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and communications. However, most of these scholars have focused on the fans and the general reception of the series after *Star Trek* had already become the popular culture icon. Some of the more recent scholarship on *Star Trek* fandom

comes from either a media or cultural studies standpoint. Both Lincoln Geraghty and Henry Jenkins are media scholars and are advocates for fan culture with Henry Jenkins stating his advocacy outright.

Lincoln Geraghty, a film studies scholar, in *Living with Star Trek: American Culture and the Star Trek Universe* (2007), both traces the utopian setting of *Star Trek* back to American Puritanism and attempts to explain why messages in the series resonate with audience members. Geraghty asserts:

Star Trek's vision of an American utopia is part of this tradition and therefore shares many of the same themes associated with bringing "heaven on earth" and having faith "in the perfectibility of mankind." However, one must remember that Roddenberry's utopia is also determined by humanity's willingness to change for the better and the desire for self-help.¹⁷

Ultimately, he contends that the series speaks to fans because, "As such, one can see *Star Trek* as speaking to the inner life-addressing the individual on a personal and private level allowing them to relate to its overall utopian message."¹⁸ Furthermore, Geraghty uses the term "Roddenberry's utopian future" and also states when describing the first pilot episode "The Cage" that, "Roddenberry wanted to emphasize diversity within a community" on *Star Trek*.¹⁹ Looking at Roddenberry's career long repertoire of work, both before and during *Star Trek*, it is clear that it was not his priority to depict a utopia that would "emphasize diversity."²⁰ Lastly, Geraghty overgeneralizes audiences and fandom, implying that all who watched *Star Trek* resonated only with the program's "utopian message" and the subsequent hope it inspired for some people. In reality, audiences enjoyed the program for a multitude of reasons other than just its optimistic portrayal of the future and, for some viewers of the

1960s, they either overlooked or did not notice *Star Trek* was a flawed version of utopia.

Another scholar who is a fan advocate is Henry Jenkins. He admits in *Textual Poachers* (1992) that, “When I write about fan culture, then, I write both as an academic (who has access to certain theories of popular culture, certain bodies of critical and ethnographic literature) and as a fan (who has access to the particular knowledge and traditions of that community).”²¹ Jenkins acknowledges possible critics of his work on fandom by openly conceding that being a fan might color his study, but feels that his role as an academic and fan can challenge previous academic accounts that are “sensationalistic and foster misunderstandings about this subculture” and can “encourage a greater awareness of the richness of fan culture.”²² Ultimately though, Jenkins’ advocacy should not overshadow his larger and useful conclusions.

Jenkins added to the scholarship by illuminating many important factors that shaped the landscape of fandom. One was that media fans of the 1990s, when he wrote, were predominantly female.²³ This was the result of a long-term shift from predominantly male to female fans that had been occurring decades before. Women were not in the majority in the science fiction community in the sixties; but comprised some of the most active members who wrote general science fiction and *Star Trek* fanzines, spear-headed the “Save *Star Trek* Campaign,” participated in organizing the first *Star Trek* convention, and started to publish more professional science fiction literary works from the late 1960s onward.²⁴

Unfortunately, other aspects of Jenkins' research are limited in scope. Jenkins focuses on specific case studies of a small minority of fandom who actively participate in fannish activities and does not take into account the wide spectrum of fandom. Nor does he address the historical context for his case study groups. Jenkins generally feels that, "such a culture can be glimpsed only through local details rather than measured in its entirety."²⁵ On the one hand, it is accurate to say, there are so many varieties of fans and fandom communities that it would be unfair to lump all into broad categories. However, the historical context could prove useful in understanding, at the very least, each generation of fandom and how they are influenced by their own period in time.

As far as *Star Trek* is concerned, Jenkins looked at fandom after the series had become a phenomenon and therefore all aspects of his research may not necessarily apply to this study. However, Jenkins noted some cultural elements that shape fandom and have transcended time. Literary science fiction fans have a long history of turning "the reception process into a social interaction with other fans."²⁶ Science fiction aficionados wrote letters to pulp magazines in the twenties, which in turn, started the science fiction fandom community. By the thirties, the culture grew and they established the annual World Science Fiction Convention for fans to gather and discuss science fiction works. Fans have also participated in writing fanzines that delve into details and invent aspects that are not in the main text for a large part of its history. Then, during the television age, fans were vocal in their opinions to networks and producers about programs they enjoyed. The "Save *Star Trek*" campaign is one example and indicative of fan activism that has continued onward

in this subculture. Many of the cultural characteristics that were observed by Jenkins date back to the very beginning of science fiction community and have become defining traits of the subculture over time.

Textual Poachers was published in 1992 and since then fandom studies have evolved. The advocacy of Jenkins has been replaced by an acceptance and understanding of the value of fan culture. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss and C. Lee Harrington in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (2007) give an assessment of fan studies today. These scholars acknowledge and recognize that over recent decades, fandom has transformed from being viewed as a marginal and negatively stereotyped subculture to a loyal niche market which is “now wooed and championed by cultural industries.”²⁷ These scholars also take notice of the historical trend in fan culture acceptance by mentioning, “none of the high-profile fan cultures in recent years—from X-Files via Eminem fans to *Sex in the City* enthusiasts—had to endure the derogative treatment of *Star Trek* fans.”²⁸

The scholars Jon Wagner and Jan Lundeen are similar to Geraghty and Jenkins in that they are academics and fans of *Star Trek*; however, their analysis is broader and more balanced. Jon Wagner and Jan Lundeen’s *Deep Space and Sacred Time: Star Trek in the American Mythos* (1998) explored *Star Trek*’s place in American myth and analyzes particular episodes and films that either confirmed or contradicted *Star Trek*’s attempt at depicting a liberal-humanist utopia.²⁹ Their strategy was to examine *Star Trek* through larger universal concepts such as gender, religion, and the human condition. Wagner and Lundeen recognized throughout their work, *Star Trek* was influenced by both longstanding American myths and

some humanist ideals.³⁰ Therefore, this analysis was a far more even account of *Star Trek* from the original series through the fourth spin-off *Star Trek: Voyager*, than specific case studies or earlier research that only focused on one aspect of *Star Trek* such as politics or racial diversity.

In addition to these monographs, there are numerous articles pertaining to the cultural impact of *Star Trek* that have specifically dealt with fan culture. Unfortunately, these articles also were written after *Star Trek* had become a cultural phenomenon and also focused on very narrow aspects of fandom. A brief sampling of articles indicates the wide range of academic work from other disciplines on *Star Trek's* influence on popular culture and its fandom. "The American SF Subculture" by Linda Fleming was a 1977 sociological overview of the science fiction community that includes various subgroups such as *Star Trek* fans. "*Star Trek* Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon" by Michael Jindra in 1994 demonstrated religious parallels within the fan culture of *Star Trek*. "Gender by Type: Interaction Effects: in Mass Media Subcultures" by Gayle Stever in 1995 described the psychological personality differences between female and male *Star Trek* fans. "The 'I' of Enthralment" by Peter Stromberg in 1999 gave an anthropological analysis asserting that Western religion and the subsequent narrative forms that developed in the 18th century was an explanation for fan involvement in science fiction and fantasy. "Utopian Enterprise: Articulating the Meanings of *Star Trek's* Culture of Consumption" by Robert Kozinets in 2001 was an intensive case study of *Star Trek* fans and their devotion to the franchise that described fans' own personal investment in the *Star Trek* fan culture and their opinions and attitudes toward the

commercialism of *Star Trek*. These articles are examples of the disparate elements in academic scholarship on the subject of *Star Trek* and its fan culture. Mostly, academic scholarship has been limited to isolated aspects of *Star Trek* depending on the scholar's area of expertise.

There are a few general overviews of science fiction, Roddenberry, and *Star Trek* that are in an historical vein although the authors are not in academia. Some of the non-academic works include Brian Aldiss' *Trillion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction* (1986), Joel Engel's *Gene Roddenberry: The Myth and the Man Behind Star Trek* (1994), and David Alexander's *Star Trek Creator: The Authorized Biography of Gene Roddenberry* (1994). Aldiss' book was a comprehensive account on the history of science fiction which began in the literary genre.³¹ His work is extremely relevant in placing science fiction literature, the fandom that arose from the love of science fiction works, and its offshoot of *Star Trek* fandom into the larger historical trends of that genre.

Additionally, the two biographies of Gene Roddenberry are useful in illuminating the man and his motivations for creating *Star Trek*, although it must be noted that both biographies have downsides that makes the veracity of some information dubious. David Alexander wrote the authorized biography. The book has a strong tone of hero worship and seems to lack balance.³²

Joel Engel's biographical take on Roddenberry comes from the other side of the spectrum. It is a highly skeptical and critical analysis of Roddenberry. Engel's biography also lacked detailed citations that make it impossible to verify research and sources.³³ Therefore, all biographical information from Engel, Alexander, and other

sources in this study was compared to check for consistency. Whenever possible, this research draws from primary sources over secondary materials.

Ultimately, this research will offer a more accurate account of Roddenberry's career, the neglected aspect of the formative years of *Star Trek*, the origins and content of the series, and the fans' role in the transformation of *Star Trek* into a worldwide popular culture icon. Chapter One offers a brief biography of Roddenberry and his start in the television industry in the fifties as a scriptwriter to his emergence as a producer in the early sixties. Chapter Two discusses the science fiction literature and real world science as the foundational building blocks for the series. Chapter Three provides a brief description of historical events that shaped the mindset of American society in the sixties and then examines how views on gender and racial diversity were depicted within selected episodes of *Star Trek*. Chapter Four provides an overview of the Cold War and Vietnam and of how United States foreign affairs were portrayed in selected *Star Trek* episodes. The fifth chapter chronicles a brief history of the science fiction fan community, the relationship Roddenberry established with the "SF" culture, how these fans lent their support to *Star Trek* and helped save the series from cancellation that, in turn, gave *Star Trek* the opportunity to become an astounding media success.

Endnotes

¹ StarTrek.com, "Star Trek," *Where No Man has Gone Before*, http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/EejMPRywrHVovUSpGuZJdr3RmZm01JPC (accessed April 6, 2012).

² John Tulloch and Henry Jenkins, *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching Doctor Who and Star Trek* (London: Routledge, 1995), 188.

³ Jacqueline Lichtenberg, Sondra Marshak, and Joan Winston, *Star Trek Lives!: Personal Notes and Anecdotes* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), 37.

⁴ Joel Engel, *Gene Roddenberry: The Myth and the Man Behind Star Trek* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 73.

⁵ Stephen Whitfield and Gene Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), 112.

⁶ YouTube.com, "Dorothy Fontana- Archive Interview part 2 of 7," Archives of American Television 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQYz3KZjX4w&feature=related> (accessed February 14, 2009).

⁷ Herbert F. Solow and Robert H. Justman, *Inside Star Trek: The Real Story* (New York: Pocket Books, 1996), 388-390. Roddenberry's involvement in the series during the research stage and first season was as a hands-on producer and rewriter, but his involvement steadily declined over the remaining two seasons. By the third season, he had already moved on from the series and was only Executive Producer in name. For a list of writers for episodes see David Gerrold, *The World of Star Trek: The Show the Network Could not Kill!* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 127-153.

⁸ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 195. In the beginning of the first season, Roddenberry had to shift his attention from being a producer overseeing production tasks to temporarily supervising the rewrite process. As Associate Producer Robert Justman recalled, "Roddenberry was a terrific rewriter—so good, it was almost as if rewriting were something he was born to do. In fact, many agreed he was better at rewriting scripts than at writing his own originals." However, even with Justman's assessment and contrary to Roddenberry's belief that "great writers are great rewriters" in which he felt he rewrote many story outlines which significantly improved the final product more credit can be given to others on the production team.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 204, 205.

¹¹ Engel, *Gene Roddenberry*, 88.

¹² Rick Worland, "Captain Kirk: Cold Warrior," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 16, no. 3 (Fall 1988): 110.

¹³ Bruce H. Franklin, "Star Trek" in the Vietnam Era," *Science-Fiction Studies*, no. 1 (March 1994): 27. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240304> (accessed February 8, 2009).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁵ Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, "Cold War Pop Culture and the Image of U.S. Foreign Policy: The Perspective of the Original *Star Trek* Series," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no.4 (Fall 2005): 77. http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_cold_war_studies/v007/7.4sarantakes.pdf (accessed March 19, 2010).

¹⁶ Daniel Bernardi, "Star Trek in the 1960s: Liberal-Humanism and the Production of Race," *Science-Fiction Studies* 24, no. 2 (July 1997): 211, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240604?origin=JSTOR-pdf> (accessed March 19, 2010).

¹⁷ Lincoln Geraghty, *Living with Star Trek: American Culture and the Star Trek Universe* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), 8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2, 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹ Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1992), 5.

²² *Ibid.*, 5, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁴ Tulloch and Jenkins, *Science Fiction Audiences*, 196.

²⁵ Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 278.

²⁷ Jonathan Gray and others, *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁹ Jon G. Wagner and Jan Lundeen, *Deep Space and Sacred Time: Star Trek in the American Mythos* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998).

³⁰ American Humanist Association, "Humanist Manifesto I,"

http://www.americanhumanist.org/Who_We_Are/About_Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_I (accessed October 29, 2011). There are fifteen points made in the first Humanist Manifesto. The fifteenth point: "We assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from them; and (c) endeavor to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few. By this positive morale and intention humanism will be guided, and from this perspective and alignment the techniques and efforts of humanism will flow." This encapsulates the humanist ideals that *Star Trek* attempted to portray, although was not always successful. Roddenberry later became recognized by the Humanist community as a person who believed in these concepts.

³¹ Brian W. Aldiss and David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (New York: Atheneum, 1986). *Star Trek* avoided cancellation through the assistance of veteran literary science fiction fans and newcomers to science fiction fandom, known as neo-fans, which experienced science fiction for the first time through *Star Trek*. Many of the *Star Trek* neo-fans subsequently became a subgroup of the larger science fiction fandom community.

³² David Alexander, *Star Trek Creator: The Authorized Biography of Gene Roddenberry* (New York: Roc, 1994), xviii. Even though Alexander stated that, "Gene Roddenberry was my friend. He chose me to tell his story, his charge being to 'write an honest biography,' he also noted that, "Had he lived a thousand years ago, Gene would be revered by society then as he is today, for his special genius would have been recognized in any culture, in any time." In addition to clearly naming Gene Roddenberry a "special genius," the interview David Alexander conducted with Gene Roddenberry in 1991 for the magazine "The Humanist" shortly before Roddenberry's death continually referred to Roddenberry as a "philosopher." David Alexander, "Gene Roddenberry: Writer, Producer, Philosopher, Humanist," *The Humanist*, March/April 1991, 17.

³³ Engel, *Gene Roddenberry*, 265. Engel stated in his methodology and sources that he obtained his information through "a variety of sources" that included personal letters and memos. Unfortunately, Engel did not choose to use scholarly citation methods and his endnotes of the personal letters and memos do not give a specific indication regarding the source.

Chapter One

Roddenberry's Brief Biography and Television Work Leading to *Star Trek*

Gene Roddenberry's road to becoming a television writer, producer and creator of *Star Trek* was indirect. Roddenberry was willing to either experiment with new occupations or took jobs for solely economic reasons. However, ultimately he kept his sight on the goal of being successful in the television industry.

Roddenberry's previous occupations influenced his body of work as a writer for television, but more significant is what his early scriptwriting reveals about his views on race, gender, and political thought. His tenure in the military and in the L.A.P.D. gave him ideas for the stories he wrote for various television programs from the 1950s onward. Roddenberry wrote for a variety of genres in television in the fifties, but the bulk were scripts for police, legal, and western television programs. An examination of his early television pieces reveals he was slightly more open to the ideas of racial equality; however, Roddenberry had conventional views on gender roles and political ideology. Ultimately, the viewpoints and structural elements found in his early scriptwriting and producing career greatly influenced the initial concept for *Star Trek* and appeared in the scripts he wrote for the series.

Gene Roddenberry was born on August 19, 1921 in El Paso, Texas.¹ Despite suffering childhood ailments, Roddenberry was considered healthy enough to join the military and become a B-17 bomber co-pilot in World War II.² After the war, Roddenberry became a third officer for Pan American Airlines, but left his position after a harrowing crash that occurred over Iraq and resulted in "killing seven crew members and seven front passengers."³ With the consideration of the support of his

growing family as a determining factor, in August 1948, Roddenberry moved to Los Angeles with the hopes of becoming a successful television writer. It was risky; television was a new medium and Hollywood was competitive. Roddenberry quickly discovered that he needed a steady job and income to provide for his family, so in 1949 he joined the Los Angeles Police Department. During Roddenberry's five years on the police force, he not only served as an officer, but also honed his skills as a speech writer for Chief William H. Parker. According to biographer David Alexander, "Gene threw himself into police work wholeheartedly, retaining in reserve an ambition to write for television. He did not shortchange the department in time, effort and enthusiasm, but he also looked for opportunities to advance himself. Gene was ambitious, smart, and clever at working within institutions."⁴

Roddenberry got his first break as a television writer while working in the L.A.P.D. In the early fifties, Jack Webb's production company, Mark VII Limited, paid one-hundred dollars for each story for the popular series *Dragnet*. Roddenberry seized this opportunity and made an arrangement with his co-workers on the force to tell him their stories which he would write into a "sellable form."⁵ Roddenberry continued to educate himself on the art of writing and eventually, in 1953, started to send out "query letters and treatments to producers all over town."⁶ From 1953 to 1956 Roddenberry had sporadic work writing for mainly police dramas and sold one science fiction script "The Secret Defense of 117."⁷

By 1956, Roddenberry had become successful enough in the television industry as a writer that he left the police department and went into full-time writing.⁸ During the remainder of the 1950s, in addition to *Mr. District Attorney* and *Highway*

Patrol, Roddenberry worked steadily in the television industry as a freelance script-writer doing work on over twenty-one television programs with *Have Gun Will Travel* as his main focus during the 1950s and early 1960s.⁹

Have Gun Will Travel had an unconventional flair in comparison to other 1950s standard Westerns because the series centered on the highly “cultured” main Western character Paladin. *Have Gun* was unusual with an erudite hero, although at the same time the series still generally conformed to prevalent norms in media’s depiction of machismo violence, minorities and women. Although Roddenberry later inflated his contributions to *Have Gun Will Travel*, he only wrote twenty-four episodes out of a total of two-hundred and twenty-six episodes from 1957 to 1963.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the scripts he did write offer a glimpse into his writing style and worldview before *Star Trek*. Roddenberry garnered a Writer’s Guild of America award “for best-written script for a TV Western,” in 1957, the only one he would ever win.¹¹ The winning story was “Helen of Abajinian,” from the series’ first season.

In “Helen of Abajinian,” Helen leaves her family farm to follow her love, a cowboy named Jimmy O’Reilly. Helen is portrayed as a swooning naïve schoolgirl in pursuit of her cowboy. O’Reilly is depicted as a nervous schoolboy resistant to women whom he feels are intimidating, unpredictable and calculating creatures. Helen’s father hires Paladin to return his daughter and the cowboy to the farm so they can marry and preserve Helen’s and the family’s honor according to Armenian custom. Paladin eventually finds Helen and Jimmy in the backcountry. After initially resisting, Jimmy eventually agrees to return to the Abajinian farm with Paladin and Helen.

Throughout the remainder of the episode, Paladin, the astute intermediary, tries to resolve conflict between Jimmy and Helen's father and convince Jimmy to marry Helen. Using reason and reciting lines from poetry to explain the beauty of love to Jimmy, he tries to convince the callow young man to marry Helen. The wise Paladin knows Jimmy does have feelings for Helen and at the end of the episode mentions the traditional wedding dance Helen is about to perform just might be too much for the inexperienced Jimmy to handle. Paladin explains to Jimmy, "The origin of their dances is lost in antiquity. The flavor of Greece, Persia and perhaps even Minoa. But those dances, O'Reilly, are a language. The most compelling, understandable, universal language of mankind."¹² Helen comes out to perform an Armenian dance and Jimmy's eyes open as wide as saucers; he slowly gulps with his mouth agape and is completely entranced with her dance. After seeing Helen's hypnotic seductive dance, Jimmy decides to stay. Paladin then wraps up the loose ends of the episode by negotiating with the father to give a dowry to Jimmy for marrying Helen. Her father concedes to a generous compensation package and the episode ends with all parties content.

Overall, this episode was thoroughly replete with degrading stereotypes common for the era. Armenians were portrayed as foreigners having thick accents, peasants with a domineering patriarch as head of household, and as shrewd businessmen who insisted on wheeling and dealing for the best bargain in a negotiation. As far as the main story arc, it also conveys conventional gender expectations, portraying Helen as fixated on falling in love with the man of her dreams and using whatever means necessary to entrap him. Unconvinced by Paladin's

reasoning and poetry, it was the insinuation of sex through Helen's dance that convinced Jimmy to marry her. Looking at Roddenberry's work as a whole, it was interesting that a strikingly similar seductive dance that Helen performed to tantalize Jimmy would later be seen in *Star Trek's* pilot episode "The Cage."

Despite the conventional depiction of immigrants and women in "Helen," Roddenberry did explore racial inequality in one *Have Gun* episode of 1959. In his "Charlie Red Dog," a young Native American wants to become a lawman and receives a degree from a correspondence school to certify him to be an official Marshal of the United States. Paladin encounters Charlie while riding through the backcountry. Charlie confidently introduces himself as a U.S. Marshal, but Paladin is unconvinced this sincere, yet naïve, young man is truly an official officer of the law. When Charlie proudly proceeds to show his paper degree, Paladin realizes that Charlie was cheated by the school. Paladin decides to help the innocent and trusting Charlie become a legitimate lawman.

The following day Paladin convinces the townspeople of Santa Maria to give Charlie a chance to serve as their U.S. Marshal. Almost immediately an outlaw strolls into town testing Charlie's bravery and fortitude. Paladin, the more experienced gunslinger, offers to face down the villain, but Charlie knocks Paladin unconscious and reaffirms the oath he took, "To uphold the law, so help me God. I did not mean that lightly."¹³ Charlie successfully outguns the desperado in a shootout and Charlie tells Paladin he knew the correspondence school degree was probably fictitious but, "It gave me a direction. A simple Indian boy needs direction, Mr. Paladin, almost as much as he needs respect." Paladin responds, "Respect is important to all men. Some

will even risk death for it.” Charlie replies, “And some just give it to others. I thank you for that.”¹⁴ Even though Charlie referred to himself as simple, the overall idea of giving equal respect to everyone regardless of their station or racial background reveals that Roddenberry had somewhat absorbed some of the ideology of Civil Rights. However, it was also apparent that Paladin and the townspeople of Santa Maria, all of whom were white, were the superiors offering to a “simple Indian boy” an opportunity to be in a position of leadership. Overall, “Charlie Red Dog” indicates Roddenberry held some conflicting beliefs regarding racial equality.

For Roddenberry, “Charlie Red Dog” was an anomaly; his scripts for *Have Gun* were typically formulaic and very conventional. For example, in the episode “Les Girls” (1959), Roddenberry portrayed women as frivolous, shallow and only concerned with landing a man in marriage, much like he had done with “Helen of Abajinian.” In this episode, a shrewd mail order bride merchant, Madame Chalon, is on an expedition to take three beautiful young women to Bend in the River, Oregon and deliver them to lonely ranchers. On her journey, Madame Chalon’s wagon breaks down and Paladin comes to her rescue. Paladin joins them to ensure the women arrive safely to their destination. During the trip, Chalon instructs the young women to maintain their appearances in order to look appealing when they meet the young ranchers. Paladin also lectures the young women that the frontier is a rough environment and that while important to look beautiful, it is equally imperative to have farming and homemaking skills that will make them useful to their soon to be new husbands. They all arrive safely to Oregon and meet the ranchers wanting brides. Immediately the young men are infatuated and the women are fawning and giggling

over their newfound rugged ranchers. Even the widowed father of the younger men finds the older Madame Chalon to his liking and asks her to stay with him. All parties are satisfied with one another and Paladin rides off into the sunset feeling content he completed his assignment. Ultimately, the episode fell in line with the common characterizations of women found in *Have Gun* and Roddenberry did his part to continue the pattern.

On the one hand, a woman in the mid-1800s, the era of *Have Gun*'s setting, did not have many options apart from becoming a wife for financial security and support. This particular episode of *Have Gun* was at least congruent with the age it depicted. However, Roddenberry also reinforced 1950s conventional notions about women's domestic roles, a theme common to his scripts that dealt with women.

Roddenberry continued working on *Have Gun* as a freelance writer sporadically from 1959 to 1963. By the beginning of the 1960s, however, according to William Shatner, "Gene's familial commitment, coupled with his own growing dissatisfaction in regard to a writer's career instability and frustrating lack of creative control, prompted him to begin actively working toward attaining more job security." He began writing and producing original pilots hoping to sell them as series.¹⁵ Roddenberry primarily concentrated on selling pilots such as "333 Montgomery Street" and "APO-923."¹⁶

Overall, "333 Montgomery Street" a legal drama, lacked originality by using tired plot devices and stereotyped characters. It seemed to resemble a poor imitation of *Perry Mason*.¹⁷ Therefore, it is not very surprising that the network decided against

making this one *Alcoa Theatre* teleplay into a full series. Roddenberry, however, pressed on and in 1962 made a pilot entitled “APO-923: Operation Shangri-La.”

“APO-923: Operation Shangri-La” was set during World War II in the South Pacific. Some premises of this pilot can be seen as both influences deriving from Roddenberry’s past as well as laying groundwork for *Star Trek*. The three main characters are a bomber pilot named Captain Phillip Pike, a gunboat sailor Lieutenant Edward C. Jellicoe, and an infantry soldier Lieutenant James T. Irvine.¹⁸ The plot simply involves Irvine having feelings of guilt over killing Japanese soldiers. When he does not report for duty, his commanding officer Colonel Crowe, and his two friends Captain Pike and Lieutenant Jellicoe grow suspicious that he might be deserting the military. However, James T. Irvine is the consummate hero in the story and, just as the later James T. Kirk in *Star Trek*, is the ultimate problem solver and leader.

After Irvine does not report for duty, Pike and Jellicoe decide to find him. The two friends finally catch up with Irvine and he explains that he did not leave to abandon the military, but to flush out the Japanese soldiers hiding in the mountains. After a combat scene that involves the trio, a few Chinese villagers fighting on the side of the American soldiers against the Japanese, Irvine almost single handedly takes out the enemy Japanese soldiers by ambushing them in the jungle. In the end, Lieutenant Irvine is the unequivocal hero of the day and Pike and Jellicoe are relieved Irvine is not a deserter but instead a loyal soldier doing his duty. They also discover the added bonus of a village where beautiful single Chinese women are gushing over them. Roddenberry in this pilot clearly drew on his experiences in World War II in

the South Pacific for story material. He also started to formulate a prototype structure that would later be seen in *Star Trek* of three heroic male leads and the friendship and loyalty they have for one another in a military setting. Overall, “APO-923” seemed more akin to a rough draft of *Star Trek* on some levels rather than a viable work that could stand on its own as a series.¹⁹

Ultimately, none of the networks picked up “APO-923;” however, Roddenberry stayed with the military theme and finally sold a series to NBC entitled *The Lieutenant* for the 1963-1964 season.²⁰ *The Lieutenant’s* premise centered on Lieutenant William Rice as a Marine Corps officer in charge of a platoon at Camp Pendleton. *The Lieutenant* “examined social questions of the day in a military setting” but also glorified the military and servicemen as the ultimate embodiment of duty, honor, and courage.²¹ *The Lieutenant* was used as evidence by a PBS documentary, *Pioneers of Television: Science Fiction*, of Roddenberry’s proclivity toward writing and producing television programs that tackled racial issues.

Unfortunately, the PBS documentary is misleading. By using selective excerpts from an interview with Nichelle Nichols and *The Lieutenant’s* episode “To Set It Right,” the documentary portrayed Roddenberry as a person who consistently championed stories about racial equality. First, it uses Nichelle Nichols’ comment “you could see where Gene Roddenberry was coming from” and then shows a poignant excerpt from “To Set It Right” about race inequality.²² Then it immediately cuts back to Nichols saying, “It could have been any two Lieutenants. But he [Roddenberry] made one black and one white.”²³ The narrator follows up with, “The network thought race was too hot a topic in the early 1960s and fought Roddenberry

over nearly every episode” and “increasingly frustrated, he let the series die.”²⁴ The editing choices led the viewer to believe that the entire *Lieutenant* series focused on racial issues, that the series had a black Marine throughout its run, and that it was Roddenberry’s decision to cancel the show. However, this is entirely inaccurate. The episode “To Set It Right,” was written by Lee Erwin, not Roddenberry.²⁵ In addition, the series focused on a variety of stories, the regular cast was all white, and it was the network’s decision to cancel the program.

An alternative explanation given for its cancellation according to a conversation between an NBC executive and the Executive Producer of the series, Norman Felton, was “there’s a lot of discussion, as you know, about what the army is doing over there in Vietnam. A lot of people don’t like it and are not happy with this show.”²⁶ It is true that *The Lieutenant* tackled controversial issues in some episodes. Yet, just as in *Star Trek* later, these stories came from other contributors to the series. When it came to Roddenberry’s originally authored episodes the content remained fairly conventional. The last installment of the series was Roddenberry’s episode “To Kill a Man,” which focused on Lieutenant Rice heading to Southeast Asia on a classified mission.

This episode is indicative of Roddenberry’s more conservative political leanings that highlighted a pro-democracy and anti-communism viewpoint in regard to the escalating quagmire in Vietnam. The plot for the episode “To Kill a Man” sends Lieutenant Rice to a fictitious country in Southeast Asia, (representing Vietnam), to transport classified specifications for an improved radio locator transmitter for use in the field, but the mission goes awry. After arriving, Captain

Myang Dee posing as a South Vietnamese soldier loyal to the United States greets Lieutenant Rice at the airport. Rice and Dee proceed to the helicopter awaiting them to take the classified specifications to the command base in the field, but the helicopter is shot down by pro-communist rebels.

In the evening while they wait for rescue, Rice and Dee begin to build a friendship. Dee still posing as a loyal South Vietnamese soldier tries to gain Rice's trust by recounting his miserable childhood, explains that a missionary from the U.S. saved him from a tragic existence, and taught him about the greatness of American ideals of "liberty and independence."²⁷ Dee continues later on in the conversation, "Of course, I tell myself I'm going to be the Thomas Paine of my country, or the Jefferson, or the Benjamin Franklin, or Nathan Hale. Well, if you could see a way clear to be Lafayette, I might even try for George Washington."²⁸ After this friendly exchange between the two, enemy soldiers ambush their position. Ultimately, Rice and Dee are left to fend for themselves in a territory swarming with communist soldiers. Captain Dee and Lieutenant Rice from this point on spend the rest of the episode finding a way to survive, elude capture, building more of a friendship, and culminates in a long exposition about democracy, America, communism and the current situation in Vietnam.

Nearing the end of the episode, after traveling in circles in the jungle, Rice realizes Captain Dee is actually working for the communist rebels. Rice feels betrayed and is incensed Dee lied to him about his political beliefs, which leads to a heated ideological argument between the two. Rice bitterly says, "Since when is friend a word in your dictionary? I thought the word was comrade."²⁹ Dee then tries

to persuade Rice of the justness of his position as a communist rebel by saying he only wants, “Peace, security, comfort,” as he saw in America.³⁰ Dee argues that only a unified people can accomplish these goals.

Rice unconvinced retorts, “You left out one word my friend. A unified FREE people.”³¹ Dee blurts out angrily, “By which Americans always mean ballot boxes!”³² Dee points out, “there are other kinds of freedom” besides the right to vote that are more important to poor people such as “freedom from hunger” and disease.³³ Rice counters, “And under communism?”³⁴ Dee tries to defend his position again by using words from the Declaration of Independence saying, “Whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it” and then asks, “Does your own Declaration of Independence lie?”³⁵

Rice responds that it also states all men are created equal and that governments derive their power from the consent of the people and quips, “Quote it all Dee. Not a part of it.”³⁶ Dee, feeling as though he is losing his argument counters with, “The Asian mind is different.”³⁷ Rice again unconvinced snidely snaps, “Oh come on now, a man is a man.”³⁸ Dee tries again to prove his position by arguing, “A strong central government suits the will and the need of my people. You cannot have government by simple farmers.”³⁹ Rice sarcastically retaliates with, “Well we did. That’s what you said was so great. Or did I, did I misunderstand you Mr. Washington?”⁴⁰

The grand political debate in the middle of the Southeast Asian jungle is interrupted when American helicopters come to the rescue. Rice flees into the jungle and Dee pursues him. After a cat and mouse chase in the jungle, Rice is forced to kill

Dee. The episode ends with Rice mournful he had to kill Dee, but also knowing he did what he had to do to survive.

The episode “To Kill a Man” written by Roddenberry clearly illustrates his political point of view where Americans and its democratic form of government are preferable and superior to communism. Even though Roddenberry presented both sides of the argument in this episode there was not any doubt that Rice would win the argument with Dee. Through the political dialogue and quoting excerpts from the “Declaration of Independence” it is evident Roddenberry was both nationalistic and anti-communist in his views. Furthermore, even though the dialogue did not outright state that U.S. involvement in Vietnam was the correct course of action; it was advocating democracy and freedom. Bringing democracy and freedom to other countries while at the same time curtailing communism was the justification for Cold War ideology and was the impetus for ensuing conflicts that arose from that doctrine. At the very least, Roddenberry endorsed the ideology that was the basis for the Cold War. Lastly, the political ideas and the superiority of the United States demonstrated in this episode appear later on in Roddenberry’s story outline and script “The Omega Glory” and teleplay “A Private Little War” he wrote for *Star Trek*.

The examination of Roddenberry’s earlier work illustrates important trends that would later shape his work on *Star Trek*. The overview shows he was not the pioneering author who penned unconventional scripts that challenged the status quo as he was later characterized and remembered in popular culture. In actuality, he wrote scripts that were imbued with many conventional concepts about gender and politics prevalent in both the fifties and sixties society and television. Furthermore,

the issue of racial equality, the one area he did seem to explore a bit more, was still somewhat conventional in its message as evidenced in the episode “Charlie Red Dog” from *Have Gun*.

The Lieutenant was Roddenberry’s first series that was bought by a network, but it only lasted one season. Roddenberry, after a few failed pilots and a short-lived series, was not deterred from trying to become a successful television producer in Hollywood. In 1964, the same year that *The Lieutenant* ended, Roddenberry started working on his pilot script “The Cage” for *Star Trek*. Ultimately, his views on race, gender and political ideology in these previous programs followed through in his creation, authorial contributions, and producing duties in *Star Trek*.

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- ⁴ David Alexander, *Star Trek Creator: The Authorized Biography of Gene Roddenberry* (New York: Roc, 1994), 108.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 123. As Alexander explained, "The stories originally came from the files of the L.A.P.D., but as the show progressed, most of the stories came from the officers and detectives who lived them."
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 134, 135.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.
- ⁹ Alexander, *Star Trek Creator*, 555-564. Television programs Roddenberry wrote for in the fifties and sixties were, *Dr. Kildare*, *Naked City*, *General Electric True*, *Target: The Corruptors*, *Shannon*, *Two Faces of West*, *Bat Masterson*, *The Virginian/The Men from Shiloh*, *The DuPont Show with June Allyson*, *The Detectives Starring Robert Taylor*, *Jefferson Drum*, *Harbor Command*, *Boots and Saddles*, *Jane Wyman Presents The Fireside Theatre*, *The West Point Story*, *The Kaiser Aluminum Hour*, *Dr. Christian*, *Chevron Hall of Stars*, and *I Led 3 Lives*.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 561.
- ¹¹ Ann Farmer, "Gene Roddenberry," Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, <http://www.emmys.tv/hallfame/2010/gene-roddenberry> (accessed November 15, 2010) and Engel, *Gene Roddenberry*, 43.
- ¹² *Have Gun Will Travel: Helen of Abijinian*, directed by Andrew V. McLaglen (1957; Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2004), DVD.
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- ¹⁶ Engel, *Gene Roddenberry*, 17.
- ¹⁷ *Alcoa Theatre: 333 Montgomery Street*, directed by Paul Wendkos (1960; Culver City, CA: Screen Gems) Moving image materials viewed at Archive Research and Study Center (ARSC); UCLA Film & Television Archive
- ¹⁸ The main character in "APO-923" shared the same first name and middle initial with the more famous James T. Kirk. The last name Pike was also used as the last name for the Captain in the *Star Trek* pilot "The Cage."
- ¹⁹ *APO-923: Operation Shangri-La*, directed by George Sherman (1962; Culver City, CA: Screen Gems in association with CBS) Moving image materials viewed at Archive Research and Study Center (ARSC); UCLA Film & Television Archive
- ²⁰ Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network T.V. Shows: 1946-Present* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), 347.
- ²¹ Susan Gibberman, "Gene Roddenberry," The Museum of Broadcast Communications, <http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=roddenberry> (accessed March 6, 2011).
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²⁷ *The Lieutenant: To Kill a Man*, directed by Vincent McEveety (1964; MGM presents an Arena production) Moving image materials viewed at Archive Research and Study Center (ARSC); UCLA Film and Television Archive

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

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³¹ Ibid.

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Chapter Two

Science Fiction and Fact that Influenced *Star Trek*

By 1964, *The Lieutenant* was cancelled and Roddenberry was out of work. During the same year, Herb Solow who had recently resigned from NBC, was offered a job by Desilu President Oscar Katz to oversee “development deals and pilots” for the studio and became Vice President and the executive in charge of production.¹ Desilu had been in decline, but was in the process of revitalization and Solow was looking for writers to create pilots. He called the Ashley-Famous talent agency, which represented both Desilu studios and Roddenberry, for candidates to interview. In April 1964, Roddenberry arrived at Solow’s office to pitch his idea for *Star Trek*. Roddenberry’s original framework for the series centered on a space ship from Earth patrolling the galaxy to ensure, “earth security,” “scientific investigation,” and “any required assistance” including the enforcement of laws and trade regulations to Earth colonies.² Solow felt, “it wasn’t a totally new kind of television series,” yet still thought “the concept and characters he’d created...were compelling” and decided to enter into a development deal with Roddenberry.³ Entering into an agreement with Desilu was only completing half the journey. The next step to making *Star Trek* a reality was to sell the idea to a network.

Pitching a television concept to a network was and is not an easy task and it was not easy for Roddenberry to sell his idea of *Star Trek* either. In 1964, Roddenberry and Oscar Katz originally pitched the idea to CBS; however, that network had their own space themed series, *Lost in Space*, in development.

Eventually, through the continued assistance from Oscar Katz and Herb Solow, Roddenberry secured an audience with NBC network brass to try to sell *Star Trek*. According to Solow during the pitch meeting, NBC executives Grant Tinker and Jerry Stanley were intrigued, but still wary of the concept. They wondered if there was enough of an audience base for “this mixture of science fiction and fantasy.”⁴ The network asked for a number of story ideas “before one of them was chosen as the basis for the pilot script.”⁵ The first story outline chosen by NBC for the pilot was “The Cage.” With the green light given to develop a pilot, Roddenberry started to focus his attention in earnest on conceptualizing what would eventually become *Star Trek*. He commenced with his own research, consulted and recruited science fiction writers, and searched for technical advice, which eventually led to Harvey Lynn at the RAND Corporation.

Roddenberry’s previous attempts at devising ideas and writing pilots for television were based on law enforcement or military themes that he was well acquainted with from his former occupations. However, he was not as familiar with science fiction and not well-informed on science in general. He conducted research on both the genre and the latest developments in real world technology in hopes of making a product that networks would be interested in buying. As a result, he relied heavily on others in both science fiction literary circles and the scientific community, which was rapidly expanding on account of Cold War funding. These two components laid the basic foundational elements for the series.

Roddenberry, over the years, became synonymous with being an expert and pioneering creator of television science fiction. However, when he was devising the

Star Trek concept he was not proficient in this genre and consulted with established science fiction authors. What led to the fans believing he was well-versed in science fiction was Roddenberry's ability to sell himself.

An example of Roddenberry pitching himself as a knowledgeable science fiction aficionado was evident in a letter he wrote in 1966 to Ben Jason, the chairman of the Twenty-Fourth World Science Fiction Convention, in which he claimed, "You're quite right in that I am a sf buff from way back, love the field, the people in it."⁶ Yet, Bjo Trimble, a long-time and well-known member of the science fiction fan community, constantly teased Roddenberry in her letters to him, calling him a "neo-fan," a designation given to people new to the SF community.⁷ In addition, Jerry Sohl, an accomplished science fiction writer noted in his first meeting with Roddenberry, "He didn't seem to know an awful lot about science fiction, and he confessed he didn't. That's why I was there. He was going to pick my brains and, quite frankly, find out what I thought of the series he had in mind, and whether I'd be available as a writer."⁸

As *Star Trek* became more of a reality than just an idea, the word about the series spread from professional science fiction writers to the larger science fiction community. Roddenberry's contact with Jerry Sohl in the conceptual stage of *Star Trek* where he was gathering ideas, background information on science fiction, and recruiting science fiction talent to write scripts for *Star Trek*, eventually led him to meeting Harlan Ellison. They became friends and Ellison enthusiastically promoted Roddenberry and *Star Trek* within the science fiction community up until the two had a falling out over the *Star Trek* script entitled "City on the Edge of Forever."⁹

As far as what is known about Roddenberry's literary influences before he consulted with SF authors, he mentioned, "I always enjoyed Jonathan Swift, the lands he went to and the characters he invented."¹⁰ Swift's work was not science fiction, but this does indicate Roddenberry was interested in adventures to unknown lands. In Alexander's biography, he noted that one of Roddenberry's favorite characters from literature was Horatio Hornblower, and he supposedly also read science fiction authors Robert Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke, and Isaac Asimov.¹¹ Yet, if Roddenberry was as well read in science fiction as Alexander claimed, he probably would not have needed guidance from Sohl about whom would be good options for writers from the SF genre for *Star Trek*.

Roddenberry also mentioned in a 1967 letter to *Alpha* fanzine's Edward Smith, his experiences with the science fiction genre and the road he took bringing *Star Trek* to the airwaves. He told Smith, "The person who loaned me my first science fiction magazine, a copy of *Astounding Stories* as I remember, was a rather sickly, but highly brainy young classmate" and "I tried never to miss a science fiction motion picture."¹² All that can be said with some degree of certainty was Roddenberry read some science fiction and watched SF movies at some point in his lifetime. Hence, Roddenberry sought to tap the expertise of well-known science fiction authors and some of these SF authors would also later write scripts for *Star Trek*. Since these authors were steeped in the literary traditions of the genre, many common themes from SF made its way into *Star Trek* stories.¹³

Many scholars debate the origins of science fiction.¹⁴ Regardless of when "true" science fiction emerged, some notable themes have certainly been present from

the 1800s onward. Fantastic voyages to new worlds, utopias, dystopias, humans celebrating or fearing technology, and space flight are some of the major staple themes of the science fiction genre. All of these themes have endured over the decades and were used in *Star Trek*.

The theme of utopias predominated in the science fiction genre before World War II, but after the war and with the rise of the Cold War, the genre took a new turn and focused on dystopian stories. In the years before Roddenberry developed *Star Trek*, the genre was rich with science fiction novels that centered on a cynical, skeptical, and sometimes terrifying portrayals of the future.¹⁵ Science fiction pulp magazines also followed this trend.

The magazine *Astounding Stories* published stories that reflected a more pessimistic outlook after World War II. According to science fiction author Brian Aldiss, “the writers and readers--to say nothing of its editor--were digesting the implications behind the nuclear bomb, its unlimited powers for greatness and destruction. Many stories were of Earth destroyed, culture doomed, humanity dying, and of the horrific effects of radiation, which brought mutation or insidious death.”¹⁶ *Star Trek*, in the midst of the 1960s Cold War, certainly followed in the footsteps of these literary works with episodes that portrayed other cultures that were in the grips of a dystopia or the aftermath of a world holocaust. Dystopian representations were portrayed in episodes such as “A Taste of Armageddon,” “Return of the Archons,” “Mirror, Mirror,” “Patterns of Force” and the result of a world holocaust in “Miri.”¹⁷

The aforementioned themes are only the broad strokes when discussing historically prevalent topics and there are many other staple concepts science fiction

is well-known for using. However, *Star Trek*, for the most part, utilized the most common science fiction themes because it was not designed to appeal to specific and remote SF tastes, but rather was an attempt to appeal to the largest audience possible. Even though *Star Trek* was not original in its themes or concepts, what *Star Trek* did do was disseminate these imaginative original concepts from literary science fiction to the larger mass television audiences more so than were reachable through books.

The other side of the coin was the science fact behind the fiction. *Star Trek* was not only borrowing from literary traditions. The 1960s also had many technological advancements, especially space travel, and the public was fascinated by these new developments. In turn, Roddenberry capitalized on the public interest and infused *Star Trek* with what he learned from research and consulting scientific experts.

In the beginning of the sixties, President Kennedy laid out a plan for the United States that had ramifications and influence for years to come. One of the significant components to Kennedy's vision was the country as a world leader in successful space exploration. The Soviets had achieved the first manned space flight placing cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin aboard the Vostok 1 on April 12, 1961 that reached orbit around Earth. The United States followed suit, successfully launching Alan Sheppard in the Freedom 7 three weeks later.¹⁸ Nevertheless, once again, the U.S.S.R. attained another first in space as they did with Sputnik in 1957. The United States was second in the Space Race and this subordinate status increased the urgency to have a first in this competition. Thus, Kennedy addressed Congress on May 25, 1961 and enumerated many long-term goals including landing a man on the moon by

the end of the decade.¹⁹ The Cold War animosities and rivalry between the United States and the U.S.S.R. impacted the world and the Space Race that ensued was just another facet of the conflict between the two nations and their ideology.

Setting the United States on a course to the moon certainly put outer space in the minds of the general public and *Star Trek's* space drama later benefited from this national interest. Roddenberry recognized this public enthusiasm as an important selling point for *Star Trek*. In a letter describing the journey he took to bring *Star Trek* to primetime, Roddenberry noted:

My first speculative script was a science fiction story, the secret defense of "One of Seven" which was sold to the Four Star Group and produced on Chevron Theatre with Ricardo Montalban in the lead. At about that same time I began [sic] thinking about the possibility of a science fiction series. Much less luck in this area. Talked to all the networks at one time or another and could not attract any interest at all. After the Russians put up the first Sputnik and when it became apparent there would be a space race, I turned my attention to a science fiction format again and came up with the STAR TREK idea.²⁰

Thus, Roddenberry realized he needed to be fluent in science in order to make a believable science fiction program.

The drive for new technologies not only pertained to space flight. New inventions and products could also be found in almost every area of everyday life and it led to a fascination by the public for anything new in scientific progress. As historian Timothy Moy noted, "Quarks. Quasars. Lasers. Apollo. Heart transplants. Computers. Nylon. Color TV. Pampers. The Pill. LSD. Napalm. DDT. Thalidomide. Mutual Assured Destruction. *Star Trek*. Dr. Strangelove, The Sixties had them all."²¹ Roddenberry was highly aware of these trends. This led him to enlist the assistance of specialists in the scientific field during the conceptual stage of *Star Trek* in order to

make a scientifically more interesting and accurate television program. The technology seen in *Star Trek*, that later many credited the series with foreseeing or creating, already existed or was in development during the 1960s.

During Roddenberry's initial formation of the concept of *Star Trek*, he tapped numerous sources for scientific and technological information. In 1964, he requested guidance from Colonel Donald I. Prickett who worked at the Weapons Effects and Test Group Headquarters for the Field Command Defense Atomic Support Agency. Roddenberry and Colonel Prickett became friends over time through correspondence.²²

Roddenberry was seeking individuals who could give him insight into the latest technological developments. In one of Roddenberry's initial letters to Prickett he mentioned that one of his concerns for *Star Trek* was plausibility and felt, "I have always thought that it is sufficient that the tools and methods be at least theoretically possible and look as if it can do what the story says it does."²³ He asked Colonel Prickett if he knew of experts he could speak with who would be willing to assist him. Prickett wrote Roddenberry a very supportive letter and said, "To answer your query, instead of trying to be an expert in your business, let me assure you I will be only too happy to put you in touch with personnel from RAND and/or the Space Technology Labs or the AF Space System Division."²⁴ Roddenberry followed up on those leads and eventually was also in continuous correspondence with Harvey Lynn of the RAND Corporation, originally a U.S. military think tank founded after World War II, which by the sixties expanded into other areas such as the space program, digital computing, artificial intelligence, and social policy planning.²⁵ In 1964, Lynn

offered his expertise providing detailed comments to insure the scientific plausibility and accuracy on *Star Trek's* pilot story outline "The Cage." Lynn later continued to serve as a technical consultant during the first year of the show's production.

Lynn and Roddenberry seemed to have a congenial working relationship. During the development stage of *Star Trek*, Lynn was an informal technical advisor. In 1966, after *Star Trek* was sold as a series to NBC, Lynn was still eager to offer his assistance and wrote to Roddenberry after missing a chance to talk with him on the set one day. Three months before *Star Trek* premiered, Lynn was concerned that Roddenberry might not need his services any longer and wrote a letter reminding Roddenberry that a technical advisor was useful to *Star Trek*. Lynn was deferential and did not insist that Roddenberry use his services, but noted:

A person who makes it a point to read a variety of scientific literature might be able to come up with novel ideas which you could use. I know that you don't want STAR TREK to turn into a parade of scientific gimmicks, but if the proper situation should present itself you might want to cause the viewer to comment, My, my, what won't they think of next?²⁶

Lynn continued in the same letter to make his case for Roddenberry's need for a technical advisor by mentioning various cutting-edge developments. Lynn described, "It is now possible to telephone a computer and get a verbal answer to questions originating at more than 100 remote points."²⁷ Not only was a speaking computer possible in 1966, but also furniture that could read vital signs similar to the "biobed" later seen in *Star Trek*. Lynn explained, "There has been developed an instrumented chair that monitors the vital functions of the body – pulse rate, respirations, heart sounds and impulses- with no sensors attached to the person."²⁸

At first, Roddenberry resisted, but then changed his mind. In a letter dated June 24, 1966, Roddenberry explained to Lynn that *Star Trek* was focusing more on the characters than scientific aspects, but said at the end of the correspondence, “I will take advantage of the kind offer in your letter. And, likely, we will have specific scripts which definitely need technical help and in that case we can be getting together properly on them.”²⁹ By the end of the summer in 1966, Roddenberry decided to keep Lynn on staff as a consultant in case the need for technical expertise arose and sent a company memo to the production team formalizing Lynn’s status as technical advisor.³⁰ Lynn’s knowledge about the latest developments in scientific research definitely enabled *Star Trek* to showcase technology that was not widely known to the public.

In addition to Lynn, Roddenberry also had at his disposal the services of Kellam DeForest Research Company. This one-man operation provided consulting services for various television productions and analyzed all aspects of a script for consistency in factual, artistic, and scientific concerns.³¹ Roddenberry, however, did not just rely on others for input. He also continuously stayed abreast of the latest science and technology, both during *Star Trek*’s inception and throughout its run, by reading scientific periodicals, newspapers, magazines, and requesting government documents pertaining to the space program. Some of the scientific publications in Roddenberry’s files were the *Ordinance Weapons for National Defense Nov. /Dec. 1963*, *Space Digest September 1962*, and *Telephone News August 1964*.³²

Roddenberry also gathered numerous clippings from various sources to glean ideas for his futuristic television program. A few examples of articles Roddenberry

accumulated were “The Health Engineers: A Strong Business Pulse: Medical Electronics Seen Getting Big Assist from Medicare: Medicare Could Prove Big Boost for Medical Electronics Industry” and “Computer Enters Dockers' Lives: Keeps Work Records of 22,500 Covered by Pay Guarantee.”³³ “The Health Engineers” showed an artist’s rendering of a futuristic operating room and some elements were incorporated into Dr. McCoy’s sickbay on the Enterprise. The article “Computer Enters Dockers’ Lives” had an accompanying photograph that showed a computerized time clock that was very similar in appearance to the computer terminals eventually depicted in *Star Trek*.

In striving to conduct thorough research, Roddenberry also wrote to the U.S. Superintendent of Documents in May of 1966 and requested NASA’s “Summary Report of Future Programs Task Group 1965,” the National Research Council’s report “Space Research Direction for the Future-1965” and any other documents they had available on the space program.³⁴ The reports he requested were not found among his papers, but after *Star Trek* began its run the National Space Club, NASA, and the Smithsonian, were very interested in the series. Roddenberry and these national entities developed a reciprocally amicable relationship while *Star Trek* aired originally, which especially with NASA, lasted well after it was cancelled.³⁵

The space program’s admiration and recognition of *Star Trek* resulted in the National Space Club inviting William Shatner and Gene Roddenberry to the Goddard Memorial Dinner in 1967. In February of that year, Alberta Moran, Chairman of Special Events for the National Space Club sent Roddenberry a letter explaining that the affair was prestigious and provided a mutually beneficial publicity opportunity for

both *Star Trek* and the agencies involved in the space program.³⁶ Neither Shatner nor Roddenberry was able to attend and Leonard Nimoy went in their place. The event resulted in not only providing publicity for *Star Trek*, but also a special honor for the series.

In a follow-up letter to Nimoy after the event, Moran remarked, “If you will recall, during the lecture you talked with someone from the Smithsonian Institution relative to an interest in obtaining perhaps a pilot film from *Star Trek* to be placed in the Air and Space Museum.”³⁷ *Star Trek*’s episode “Where No Man has Gone Before” did end up in the Smithsonian and the cooperative relationship between the space program, Roddenberry, and the series continued.³⁸

In 1968, Roddenberry wrote an appreciative letter to NASA Administrator James Webb:

I have never received friendly and efficient cooperation anywhere near that provided by your Agency. This has been proven almost daily during the two years of production of STAR TREK, and especially so recently when making our final episode entitled “Assignment: Earth”...Thanks and congratulations for the quality of NASA people ...³⁹

NASA’s Audio-Visual Officer Walter Whitaker responded, “Your letter to Mr. Webb was forwarded to me. I appreciate very much your kind words, and I hope we can be of further assistance to you in the future.”⁴⁰ Nichelle Nichols, who later appeared at NASA events, recalled and summarized the relationship well saying, “In the hearts of those who cared about the space program there existed a bond between Starfleet and NASA.”⁴¹ Overall, the 1960s was NASA’s zenith of popularity and the public interest in science, technology, and space travel was reflected in the entertainment industry with the appearance of more science fiction programs.

Not only was Roddenberry aware it was great timing for a science fiction space-themed series in the sixties, but the networks were too. In the early sixties, *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits* were popular science fiction series, yet both had an eerie or sometimes outright nightmarish quality. These two programs were cancelled in 1963 and 1965, respectively. By the mid-sixties, new science fiction programs appeared with a suspenseful, yet hopeful quality to them. CBS premiered *Lost in Space* in 1965; ABC's *Time Tunnel* and NBC's *Star Trek* debuted in 1966 on their prime time line-ups.⁴² Thus, Roddenberry continuously extolled the relevance and marketing appeal of science, technology and the space program with regard to *Star Trek* when pitching his idea initially and to save it from cancellation later.

The importance of scientific accuracy and innovative technology to Roddenberry was clearly evident in a memo from Roddenberry to NBC's Vice President Grant Tinker. Roddenberry, always business-minded, was consciously attuned to marketing trends that served *Star Trek's* promotion and later survival. He told Tinker that the younger generation was "space-wise" and they would know rockets would not be sufficient for galaxy travel, but felt, "one answer is suggested in the Journal of the British Interplanetary Society, an article by Dr. I.E. Sanger, 'Some Optical and Kinematical Effects in Interstellar Astronautics.' (Impressed? I wasn't kidding about research.)"⁴³ Later when *Star Trek* was in production, in order to convince network executives of the future financial viability of *Star Trek*, Roddenberry exalted the uniqueness of his series by playing up the parallels between cutting-edge developments in science, technology, the space program, and *Star Trek*.

In a letter to NBC Executive Herb Schlosser in 1968, Roddenberry claimed most television programs exhaust new ideas for stories after a few years, but that:

STAR TREK, on the other hand, receives a new story from almost every edition of the local newspaper. It is in the enviable position of having a hundred thousand scientists around the world working to provide new story material plus also providing a form of promotion for STAR TREK with each press release about a new scientific discovery.⁴⁴

Roddenberry's plugging of *Star Trek's* edge over other programs had an ulterior motive. Certainly, there were not scientists around the world literally dedicated to providing new ideas for *Star Trek*. The agenda for this letter was clear, taking into account it was sent precisely at the height of the second "Save *Star Trek*" campaign to prevent the program's cancellation.

Yet, since *Star Trek* was made in an era of aggressive scientific research and discovery and used some of these ideas for creative material, the series was instrumental in popularizing cutting-edge technology. However, over the years the series has been mistakenly credited with conceiving these ideas first.⁴⁵ These technologies either were already envisioned or invented years before or happened to be developed during the same years Roddenberry was creating and producing *Star Trek*.

For example, the communicator that also served as a universal translator the Enterprise crew used drew from old walkie-talkie technology and a language translation machine was not new in the science fiction genre.⁴⁶ In addition, a communication device that could interpret languages was developed while the program was on air. A two-way radio (Handie-Talkie SCR536 Radio) was invented by Motorola for use by soldiers in World War II.⁴⁷ Cell phone technology was the

next step in two-way communication building upon Motorola's innovations.⁴⁸ The walkie-talkie and the mobile/ cell phone concept was developed years before *Star Trek* ever aired and, as columnist Francis Murphy commented in *The Oregonian*, "*Star Trek* is just able to keep slightly ahead of the universe of fact. For example, the *Star Trek* crew has a walkie-talkie called a 'communicator' which instantaneously interprets the language on any planet they happen to visit. But scientists in the real world already have announced invention of a small automatic interpreting machine."⁴⁹

Another technology that *Star Trek* has been erroneously credited with creating was the "hypospray."⁵⁰ Just as with the cell phone concept, this was also invented years beforehand. In actuality, the idea for jet-injection devices, known as "hyposprays" in *Star Trek*, also came about during the 1940s. Jet-injections were developed in the 1940s and were then adapted by the military. Dr. John Grabenstein described the early versions used in the military as, "needle-free, multiuse-nozzle jet injectors capable of 600 or more subcutaneous injections per hour."⁵¹ Later in the 1960s, Aaron Ismach and Abram Benenson improved on the technology by developing, "a nozzle for intradermal vaccination" and were used in "civilian mass smallpox immunization campaigns."⁵²

The electronic writing tablet that Captain Kirk so often signed orders on in *Star Trek* episodes also predated the series. According to a 2005 article in *Invention and Technology*, "In 1964, RAND's 'digital tablet' allowed users to write with a penlike stylus and have the writing converted into electronic text. They could also draw simple graphics and edit their work. While limited in its capabilities and far too

expensive for commercial use, the RAND Tablet nonetheless showed the way for the Palm Pilots and Tablet PCs of today.”⁵³ Since Roddenberry was in direct contact with Harvey Lynn of RAND in 1964, it is very possible he got the idea from him.

Roddenberry’s files included many sources of scientific information that he gathered during the development of the series and through *Star Trek’s* three years on air. Roddenberry was certainly consistent in his striving for scientific accuracy and relevancy in *Star Trek* by researching and staying up to date with ongoing scientific discoveries and breakthroughs occurring in the 1960s. Therefore, neither Roddenberry nor the *Star Trek* staff were visionary in the areas of science and technology. Instead, they were taking what was already there and utilizing it to give *Star Trek* a credible, futuristic, space-age feel.

Overall, Roddenberry did his homework when initially developing the concept for *Star Trek* and continued to stay abreast of new developments while the series was in production. He consulted with experts in both science fiction literature, the scientific community, and gathered information on his own. Thus, Roddenberry was not so much a futurist, but rather more a dedicated researcher who borrowed from the past and present to create a fictional future.

Endnotes

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- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 20. See pages 13 though 21 on the full details, according to Herb Solow, on selling *Star Trek* to a network.
- ⁶ Gene Roddenberry to Ben Jason, 2 March 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 30, Folder 11, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁷ Bjo Trimble to Gene Roddenberry, August 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 28, Folder 2, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁸ Joel Engel, *Gene Roddenberry: The Myth and the Man Behind Star Trek* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 44. This account of the minimal level of expertise in science fiction and Sohl's assistance was corroborated in a letter Roddenberry wrote to *Galaxy* magazine editor Frederik Pohl. He mentioned that Sohl, "at the beginning of STAR TREK he was kind enough to give us names of people he considered good possibilities as writers." Gene Roddenberry to Frederik Pohl, 25 January 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 30, Folder 11, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁹ Engel, *Gene Roddenberry*, 44.
- ¹⁰ David Alexander, "Gene Roddenberry: Writer, Producer, Philosopher, Humanist," *The Humanist*, March/April 1991, 10.
- ¹¹ David Alexander, *Star Trek Creator: The Authorized Biography of Gene Roddenberry* (New York: Roc, 1994), 188.
- ¹² Gene Roddenberry to Edward R. Smith, 21 June 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 28, Folder 2, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ¹³ David Gerrold, *The World of Star Trek: The Show the Network Could Not Kill!* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 127-153. Literary Science Fiction authors and the respective scripts they wrote for *Star Trek* were: Richard Matheson, (*The Enemy Within*) Robert Bloch, (*What Little Girls Are Made Of?*, *Catspaw*, and *Wolf in the Fold*) Jerry Sohl, (*The Corbomite Maneuver*) Theodore Sturgeon, (*Shore Leave* and *Amok Time*) Harlan Ellison, (*City on the Edge of Forever*) Jerome Bixby, (*Mirror, Mirror, By Any Other Name*, *Day of the Dove*, and *Requiem for Methuselah*) and Norman Spinrad, (*The Doomsday Machine*).
- ¹⁴ Brian W. Aldiss and David Wingrove, *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (New York: Atheneum, 1986), 28. Brian Aldiss argued in *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction*, the roots of science fiction more or less began with Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. Some say the genre of science fiction originated with Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* from 1926 onward. Others feel that the seed of science fiction can be found stemming back to Greek classical literature of "Lucian of Samosata" in the second century C.E.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 243. Examples of dystopian novels that emerged after World War II are "George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and *1984* (1949), George R. Stewart's *Earth Abides* (1949), Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1952), David Karp's *One* (1953), Evelyn Waugh's *Love Among the Ruins: A Romance of the Near Future* (1953), Pohl and Kornbluth's *The Space Merchants* (1953), Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953)...Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Wanting Seed* (1962), and Norman L. Knight's *A Torrent of Faces* (1967)."
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.
- ¹⁷ StarTrek.com, "Star Trek," *A Taste of Armageddon*,
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http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/gyaKakUgWb3WF81BotoU7H0JsI_YIfA1 (accessed May 3, 2012).; StarTrek.com, “Star Trek,” *Mirror, Mirror*,
http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/70tL15eqAZzSXA6lYNZ_aqqVsYYjicL1 (accessed May 3, 2012).; StarTrek.com, “Star Trek,” *Patterns of Force*,
http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/wHQ8I3qDWaONOOyDbEDRVgB2MlwZA3V8 (accessed May 3, 2012).; StarTrek.com, “Star Trek,” *Miri*,
http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/iyDXLQoIOrOB19jSghXmEyu5QTVFFewW (accessed May 3, 2012).

¹⁸ BBCnews.com, “Timeline: Space Flight,” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/6996121.stm> (accessed September 21, 2011).

¹⁹ John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum Historical Resources, “Special Message to the Congress on Urgent National Needs, 25 May 1961,”

<http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKPOF-034-030.aspx> (accessed April 17, 2009).

²⁰ Gene Roddenberry to Edward R. Smith, 21 June 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 28, Folder 2, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

²¹ Timothy Moy, “The End of Enthusiasm: Science and Technology,” in *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s* by David Farber and Beth Bailey (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 305.

²² Gene Roddenberry to Colonel David R. Jones, 18 June 1964, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 1, University of California at Los Angeles Library. Roddenberry introduced himself to Colonel Jones as a friend of Colonel Prickett and Jack Whitener of the RAND Corporation.

²³ Gene Roddenberry to Colonel Donald I. Prickett, 28 May 1964, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 27, Folder 17, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

²⁴ Colonel Donald I. Prickett to Gene Roddenberry, 25 May 1964, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 27, Folder 17, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

²⁵ Rand.org, “History and Mission,” <http://www.rand.org/about/history.html> (accessed January 5, 2012).

²⁶ Harvey Lynn to Gene Roddenberry, June 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29 Folder 1, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Gene Roddenberry to Harvey Lynn, 24 June 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29 Folder 1, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

³⁰ Gene Roddenberry to Gene Coon and Robert Justman, 15 August 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29 Folder 1, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

³¹ The Internet Movie Database, “Kellam DeForest,” <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0208417/> (accessed October 1, 2011) and Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 142.

³² *Ordinance Weapons for National Defense Nov./Dec. 1963, Space Digest September 1962, and Telephone News August 1964*, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 36 Folder 3, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

³³ Robert E. Nichols, “The Health Engineers: A Strong Business Pulse: Medical Electronics Seen Getting Big Assist From Medicare: Medicare Could Prove Big Boost for Medical Electronics Industry,” *Los Angeles Times*, 3 July 1966, and Thomas O’Toole, “Computer Enters Dockers’ Lives: Keeps Work Records of 22,500 Covered by Pay Guarantee,” *The New York Times*, 21 April 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 36, Folder 3, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

³⁴ Gene Roddenberry to Superintendent of Documents, 13 May 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 27, Folder 17, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

- ³⁵ Many sources reveal the long-running amicable relationship between Roddenberry and NASA. The positive relationship with NASA also involved regular cast members after the series was cancelled as well. A brief sample of sources on this topic are: Nasa.gov, "NASA Presents Public Service Medal to Gene Roddenberry," <http://www.nasa.gov/home/hqnews/1993/93-019.txt> (accessed March 9, 2012).; Nasa.gov, "Proving Grounds: Enterprise Validated Shuttle Concepts," http://www.nasa.gov/centers/dryden/news/XPress/shuttle_tribute/proving_grounds.html (accessed March 9, 2012).; Nasa.gov, "Science-Fiction's Most Famous Comm. Officer Visits Goddard," <http://www.nasa.gov/centers/goddard/news/features/2012/nichols-visit.html> (accessed March 9, 2012).; Nasa.gov, "Star Trek's George Takei Beams Down to Goddard," http://www.nasa.gov/centers/goddard/news/topstory/2008/takei_feature.html (accessed March 9, 2012).; Joel Engel, *Gene Roddenberry: The Myth and the Man Behind Star Trek* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 199, 200.; Nichelle Nichols, *Beyond Uhura: Star Trek and Other Memories* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1994), 212-225.
- ³⁶ Alberta C. Moran to Gene Roddenberry, 21 February 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 6, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ³⁷ Alberta C. Moran to Leonard Nimoy, 22 March 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 6, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ³⁸ Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Film Archivist Mark Taylor, e-mail message to author, October 12, 2011.
- ³⁹ Gene Roddenberry to James E. Webb, 16 March 1968, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 6, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁴⁰ Walter E. Whitaker to Gene Roddenberry, 4 April 1968, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 6, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁴¹ Nichols, *Beyond Uhura*, 219.
- ⁴² Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network T.V. Shows: 1946-Present* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), 359, 630.
- ⁴³ Gene Roddenberry to Grant Tinker, 31 July 1964, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 7, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁴⁴ Gene Roddenberry to Herb Schlosser, 1 February 1968, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 7, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁴⁵ A simple internet search with the words "Star Trek Inventions", "Star Trek Innovations", or Star Trek Technology" will retrieve numerous results. A few websites as examples are: Michael Cooney, "The Top 10 Real-Life Star Trek Inventions," http://www.pcworld.idg.com.au/slideshow/198968/top_10_real-life_star_trek_inventions/?image=1 (accessed April 10, 2012).; Reed Farrington, "Treknobabble #50: Top 10 Star Trek Inventions in Use Today," <http://www.filmjunk.com/2009/01/21/treknobabble-50-top-10-star-trek-inventions-in-use-today/> (accessed April 10, 2012).; Guardian.co.uk, "Science Fact: The Tech Predicted by Star Trek," <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/gallery/2009/may/15/star-trek-technology> (accessed April 10, 2012).; StarTrek.com, "Star Trek Innovations," <http://www.startrek.com/boards-topic/33343115/the-star-trek-innovations> (accessed April 10, 2012).
- ⁴⁶ In Murray Leinster's 1945 science fiction short story "First Contact" he described a language interpreting machine for communication with aliens. Murray Leinster, "First Contact," in *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame: Volume One, 1929-1964*, ed. Robert Silverberg (New York: Tor, 2003), 264, 265.
- ⁴⁷ Motorola.com, "Handie-Talkie Radio," <http://www.motorolasolutions.com/US-EN/About/Company+Overview/History/Explore+Motorola+Heritage/Handie-Talkie+Radio> (accessed January 7, 2012).
- ⁴⁸ Tom Farley, "The Cell-Phone Revolution," AmericanHeritage.com, http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/it/2007/3/2007_3_8.shtml (accessed March 15, 2009). In an overview of the history of cell phone technology Tom Farley noted, "America's mobile phone age started on June 17, 1946, in St. Louis. Mobile Telephone Service (MTS), as it was called, had been developed by AT&T using Motorola-made radio equipment, and Southwestern Bell, a subsidiary of AT&T, was the first local provider to offer it." The idea for cellular phone service was

proposed the following year. In December 1947 Donald H. Ring proposed in a company memo that “a large city would be divided into neighborhood-size zones called cells or cell sites.” The most significant reason cell phones were not available between the forties and fifties was mainly due to “the lack of computing power.”

⁴⁹ Francis Murphy, “Behind the Mike,” *The Oregonian*, 4 September 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 36, Folder 4, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

⁵⁰ YouTube.com, “Dorothy Fontana-Archive Interview part 2 of 7,” Archives of American Television 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQYz3KZjX4w&feature=related> (accessed February 14, 2009). This misperception is so pervasive that even Dorothy Fontana, who worked on *Star Trek*, stated in a 2003 interview for the Archive of American Television, “So you know, our technology, I think we put ideas in peoples’ heads and let them run with it.” Fontana gave the example of the “hypospray” and noted, “And how about Dr. McCoy’s, ah you know, shot. Which just pssh (making an air pressure noise) and you’ve got all your shots, right. What do they do now? Pssh, you’ve got all your shots. Before it used to be needles.”

⁵¹ John D. Grabenstein and others, “Immunization to Protect the US Armed Forces: Heritage, Current Practice, and Prospects,” *Oxford Journals Epidemiologic Review*, <http://epirev.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/full/28/1/3> (accessed April 17, 2009).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Virginia Campbell, “WHY JOHNNIAC CAN READ,” AmericanHeritage.com, http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/it/2005/1/2005_1_55.shtml (accessed March 15, 2009). See webpage: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_memoranda/RM4122.html and access pdf file for full description of The RAND tablet.

Chapter Three

Equality, Gender and Race in *Star Trek*

In 1964, Roddenberry was diligently working on developing *Star Trek's* pilot "The Cage." Roddenberry had the basic framework, characters, artistic designs and scientific aspects formulated. Yet, this was just a foundation. Once *Star Trek* was sold as a series in 1966, over the next three years it would evolve. Roddenberry's original vision for the program was merely a science fiction action-adventure series that utilized the traditions of literary science fiction and real world technology to provide the series with a solid basis of credibility and plausibility. However, once it was in full-fledged production, various writers and the production team created scripts that reflected contemporary societal developments and issues of the 1960s. Over the course of its run, the series increasingly referred to twenty-third century Earth as a utopia where a highly scientifically advanced society based on the promise of equality had been created.

The sixties certainly was a monumental decade of change. The historical events that influenced and reshaped American attitudes and social norms were numerous. This overall transformation of society provided a more welcoming environment for a television program such as *Star Trek*. The shift toward a more progressive mentality subsequently influenced the television industry and facilitated a feasible opportunity to do a science fiction television program that attempted on some levels to highlight both an optimistic future along with showcasing real world issues.

Roddenberry made a minor attempt to infuse the series with some sense of equality within a community, reflecting the eras push toward a more equitable society, by adding women and one Hispanic as regular characters in the pilot. However, Roddenberry's overall contribution to *Star Trek* continued the patterns formed in his earlier work. Despite the remarkable societal changes taking place in the real world, he was only slightly more open-minded on the issues of racial equality, but still held fairly conventional notions on gender roles.

Societal Context in the 1960s that Shaped *Star Trek*

While Roddenberry was struggling to advance his career from a freelance scriptwriter to a successful television producer in the first four years of the sixties, society at large was also changing significantly. During the years between 1960 and 1964 a more, if not entirely equal, society was starting to become a reality. Certainly civil rights and equality were not new issues in the United States. Minor headway was made here and there through grassroots activities and legislation. After World War II the struggle for equality accelerated aided by the desegregation of the military with Executive Order 9981 in 1948 and *Brown v. Education* in 1954. Unfortunately, these achievements still did not make significant progress in ending actual discrimination of minorities and women within the United States. The 1960s was the beneficiary of previous accomplishments in the Civil Rights cause, which culminated in a substantial strengthening of grassroots action and ultimately landmark legislation.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the Civil Rights cause was noticed in earnest in the White House. President Kennedy appointed top members of his Cabinet to work on specific civil rights issues. Yet, change was still slow. During the same years,

grassroots organizations diligently worked for civil rights to speed the pace of change. Numerous protests, freedom rides, sit-ins, and voting rights registration campaigns were occurring and ultimately forced the White House to commit more fully to the Civil Rights cause. By June 1963, Kennedy addressed the nation calling for support for civil rights.¹ Unfortunately later in the same year, Kennedy was assassinated and his successor Lyndon Johnson had to take on the enormous task and responsibility of making civil rights a reality. The year of 1963 also marked the publication of the influential book *The Feminine Mystique*, by Betty Friedan that argued women wanted more in life than just a husband, children and role as a homemaker.²

The following two years saw an onslaught of landmark legislation to secure equal rights for minorities and women. Legislative action such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, The 1965 Voting Rights Act, the 1965 Immigration Act, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Medicare and Medicaid programs, the establishment of National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts were all created to “lead America to a new age” and fulfill President Johnson’s vision of the Great Society.³

By 1965, as Johnson promised, the Great Society was taking shape and becoming a reality. The progressive mood during this time eventually found its way to the television industry as a whole, and on some levels, in *Star Trek*. The Great Society concept manifested itself in individual episodes within the series and overall the program has been remembered in popular memory as embodying these ideals, closely tied to concepts of liberal-humanism.

***Star Trek's* Pilot: "The Cage"**

Roddenberry's first pilot gives insight into his intentions, mindset and beliefs as *Star Trek* was in development. With the exception of some science advice, Roddenberry authored the script alone. Significantly, Roddenberry's initial story outlines for "The Cage" had nothing to do with either diversity or equality of races and genders. Typically, stories are reworked many times before making it to the air. However, in the case of Roddenberry's "The Cage" almost all of the concepts from the initial story outlines followed through unaltered to the final cut. The only aspect of the draft script that was deleted was the opening scene introducing the main characters. The essence of these characters and their personalities that was described in the original opening scene, however, did remain in the final product and was comprised of stereotypical generalizations about gender, race, and nationality.

For example, in Roddenberry's original conception, he described the ship's navigator, Jose Tyler, as being descended from a "Boston astronomer father and a Brazilian mother" who "inherited his father's mathematical abilities but also inherited his mother's Latin temperament."⁴ In addition, Roddenberry characterized Jose Tyler as "young enough to be painfully aware of the historical repute of Latins as lovers- and is in danger of failing this challenge on a cosmic scale."⁵ Despite the fact the character Lieutenant Jose Tyler was described in the story outline as being of half Hispanic descent, this was not emphasized in the final produced pilot. Jose Tyler was played by the Caucasian actor Peter Duryea.⁶ Thus, the Hispanic ethnic origin of the character, besides his first name, was completely lost.

However, Roddenberry's description of Jose Tyler reveals his mindset. Roddenberry conformed to stereotypical notions describing Tyler's character. The mathematical, rational and logical side came from his white American father, but his passionate and unpredictable side came from his Brazilian mother. Furthermore, Roddenberry characterized Latino males preoccupied with success as Latin lovers. Roddenberry described other main characters in his story treatment in equally conventional terms.

The stereotypes did not stop with Hispanics. Roddenberry's characterizations of women were just as, if not more, disparaging. Ironically, throughout Roddenberry's career as the creator of *Star Trek* he was continuously praised for his progressive act of casting a woman in the pilot as the Enterprise's Executive Officer Number One. However, in reality the character Number One was created by Roddenberry to employ his mistress, Majel Barrett. Herb Solow remembered Roddenberry confiding in him that, "I'm suffering from pillow talk," "severe pillow talk" and that Barrett "wasn't coy about insisting Gene make her a regular in the series."⁷ Barrett was a little known actress who used her relationship with Roddenberry to land an acting opportunity. She recalled that, "I had wanted the role so badly, and it was everything that I'd wished for...I mean, Gene wrote it for me, for God's sake."⁸

Even though this may have been a coveted role for a woman at the time, the descriptions of Number One and the other main female characters were conceived of in a fairly conventional manner. The story outline described the female Executive Officer as "an extraordinarily efficient ship's officer, she is almost glacier-like in

her imperturbability and precision. We'll wonder how much female exists under that icy façade.”⁹ The other female officer, Yeoman J.M. Colt, was characterized as “about twenty, has a strip-queen figure which the knit uniform only emphasizes.”¹⁰ Women were portrayed as objects of fantasy and visual pleasure for men that were either a challenge (to get past icy facades to reveal their “true” feminine side) or eye candy.

The white males also did not escape stereotypical generalizations. After the “strip-queen” figured Yeoman J.M. Colt has reported for duty, the story outline described the reaction of two male officers as she was leaving, “Neither Boyce, still amused, nor April, [the Enterprise’s Captain], can resist a glance at the stern view of the departing Yeoman.”¹¹ Roddenberry portrayed men as sex obsessed people desperately wanting to be successful with women as a gauge of their own worthiness and unable to refrain from gawking at the “stern view” of a young woman. The tone revealed in Roddenberry’s character descriptions continued onward into the rest of the story treatment.

The premise for “The Cage,” and what eventually brings the Enterprise to the planet Talos IV, is the predicament the native inhabitants are facing. The Talosians, after a terrible war on the surface of the planet, have moved underground to wait until the environment restored itself naturally. Thousands of centuries have passed and the planet has finally come to the point of being able to support life again. However, during their underground isolation, the Talosians’ mental capabilities evolved, and now they solely live through and have become addicted to mental recreations. They have forgotten how to maintain their machines underground and the basic skills they

need to survive on the surface. The Talosians are in search of a species intelligent and adaptable enough to rebuild a society on the planet surface and to serve them as engineers and artisans. Subsequently, the Talosians have accumulated a zoo comprised of many species from the galaxy, but none has demonstrated the ability to serve their needs. The last hope they have is the human race. Thus, the episode starts with the Talosians luring the Enterprise to Talos IV with a distress signal.

Captain Pike [in the original script Captain April] and a landing party go to the planet's surface and believe they have found survivors of a crash from a spacecraft from Earth. One of the survivors is a beautiful young woman named Vina who Captain Pike finds very attractive. Unfortunately, the landing party does not realize that all of the survivors, with the exception of Vina, and their makeshift camp are Talosian mental projections. The Talosians' hope is to lure a human male to mate with Vina to create servants for them. Consequently, Captain Pike is abducted and imprisoned in the zoo. Yet, even though all of the Talosians' zoo specimens are held against their will, they still want their captives to happily cooperate with their plans.

The Talosians use their superior mind power to create fantasies for Captain Pike both to entice him to be willing to stay, but also to force him to remain if he is uncooperative. As Roddenberry describes in his original story treatment, the Captain's psychological dilemma is, "Imagination is superior to real life, there is no flesh and blood to be hurt; he can even relax and delight in those secret evil things which lurk in the back of every man's mind" which would be "the male dream image of a woman, one who cannot resist."¹²

Various illusions present Vina as the helpless damsel in distress, the seductive exotic dancer, and the wholesome doting good wife. Captain Pike continuously tries to resist sexual temptation in each fantasy. However, the Talosians by tapping into the Enterprise's historical library computer banks, decide that humans have a fierce hatred of captivity no matter how pleasant and conclude that the species is "too violent and dangerous" to suit their needs.¹³ They free Pike and the Enterprise leaves as the episode closes.

Star Trek's first pilot "The Cage" was rejected by NBC. Herb Solow's explanation was:

The NBC party line was that "The Cage" was too "cerebral"...The unspoken reason, however, dealt more with the manners and morals of the mid-1960s America. NBC was very concerned with the "eroticism" of the pilot and what it foreshadowed for the ensuing series. Their knowledge of Roddenberry's attitude toward, and relationship with, the fairer sex didn't help.¹⁴

Yet, the network executives were still intrigued overall with the concept, so they requested that another pilot be made.¹⁵ The second pilot was the episode "Where No Man Has Gone Before." NBC was satisfied with the second pilot and they picked up the series for the 1966-1967 season. Some changes were made in cast and set design; however, the undercurrent of gender attitudes remained and "The Cage" set the framework for the portrayal of gender roles during the series' entire run. In numerous later episodes such as "Shore Leave," "City on the Edge of Forever," "The Paradise Syndrome," "Wink of an Eye," "Elaan of Troyius," "Requiem for Methuselah," and "The Mark of Gideon," Captain Kirk could not seem to fend off sexual temptation and ended up having trysts with women across the cosmos. Though the main character of Captain Kirk was not always a fair depiction of men, women were

portrayed in an even less flattering light. Women, especially aliens, were portrayed as sex objects, overly emotional sycophants, or conniving villains devising nefarious schemes to gain power. As for female Enterprise officers or other professional women, they were generally depicted as ancillary, sometimes as stolid ice queens hiding their “feminine” emotional side, and many times more concerned with their love interests rather than their work duties. These portrayals of women occurred consistently throughout the seventy-nine episodes of *Star Trek* and fell in line with conventional notions about women both in the public and private spheres of the era.

Views about women in general and in the work place in the 1960s were indicated by a survey of men’s opinions of women in *The New York Times* article in 1962. Women were characterized as follows: “Their main interest is in landing a husband who’ll give them babies and a split-level house” and “the gals who want to get ahead generally make one of two mistakes-both fatal to their progress. Either they try to use their sex appeal with utter ruthlessness, or they go to the other extreme and try to act like men.”¹⁶ By the mid-sixties, the real world tension of women’s traditional roles and evolving “prefeminist aspirations” were found in various television programs as discussed by media scholar Susan Douglas.¹⁷ The negative generalized perceptions of women in the 1960s were being challenged in society and depicted on the airwaves; yet *Star Trek* continually insinuated that women were consumed with man hunting, utilizing over-the-top sex appeal, or overcompensating by trying to act like men.

The Depiction of Gender in *Star Trek*

This trend was seen in the second pilot that Roddenberry closely oversaw and produced “Where No Man Has Gone Before” (1966). This episode was written by Roddenberry’s former colleague and friend, Samuel Peeples. In the episode, Lt. Commander Gary Mitchell makes a snide comment calling Dr. Elizabeth Dehner “A walking freezer unit.” Later Dr. Dehner, who falls in love with Lieutenant Mitchell, confirms, “Women professionals do tend to overcompensate.”¹⁸ This episode is indicative of the overall depiction of professional women in *Star Trek*. The series generally did not emphasize women’s intelligence and professional skill. Rather professional women were depicted as either driven and defined by the love of a man or, on many occasions, merely ancillary and unimportant. Three episodes later in *Star Trek*’s 1966 season, “Mudd’s Women” aired and also highlighted other conventional notions about women.

In “Mudd’s Women” (1966), which was a rewritten version of Roddenberry’s original script “The Women” (recycled from the “Les Girls” episode from *Have Gun Will Travel*), Harry Mudd is delivering three beautiful women to men who have purchased mail order brides.¹⁹ The Enterprise is in pursuit of Mudd’s cargo ship, but the chase wrecks Mudd’s ship and depletes the Enterprise’s power source. Kirk has to reroute to a mining colony on Rigel XII to replace their lithium crystals. In the meantime, Harry Mudd is excited about the change of destination. He feels that lonely miners are even better prospects than the three original brides’ purchasers, since the crystals that they mine are rare and make these men incredibly wealthy.

The parallels of the story elements between the *Have Gun* episode “Les Girls” (1959) and *Star Trek’s* “Mudd’s Women” are numerous. The only difference between “Les Girls” and “Mudd’s Women” is the question of whether the women are interested in staying with the men. In “Les Girls,” there was not a question at all of whether the young women would stay with the ranchers. However, in “Mudd’s Women,” there is one objector named appropriately Eve.

Out of the three women transported to the mining colony, only Eve has a dissenting voice. She objects to being treated as if she is merchandise instead of a human being. After Ben, one of the miners, finds out that the three women are made beautiful by an illegal substance provided by Mudd, he feels he has been duped and sold a false bill of goods. At the end of the episode, Eve incensed with Ben’s attitude, takes a handful of the drug and transforms from the ordinary woman she is without the drug to the voluptuous enchantress she was when they first met on the Enterprise. Eve asks Ben, “Is this the kind of wife you want Ben? Not someone to help you. Not a wife to cook, sew, cry, need. This kind? Selfish, vain, useless. Is this what you really want?”²⁰ After Eve poses those questions, Kirk gives the standard moral to the story speech that was frequently found in *Star Trek*. Kirk insists to Eve a woman’s true beauty and desirability does not come from a drug but that, “There is only one kind of woman. You either believe in yourself or you don’t.”²¹ Kirk’s lecture is intended to boost Eve’s confidence about her real appearance and desirability. On the one hand, this comment challenges traditional notions that women need to be consumed with their looks and Ben’s shallowness.

Yet, the episode's main message was not about beauty, but rather stated that women's true value lay in domestic services Eve could provide to Ben. Overall, despite the fact women were depicted in professional positions when the series came to air, the overriding emphasis was on women's subservient status attending males on the Enterprise or in a domestic capacity shown in "Mudd's Women." The domesticity of women was the central theme in this episode. Never once did the intelligent and wise Eve entertain any other life choice besides being a wife and homemaker. In essence, *Star Trek's* "Mudd's Women" portrayed many conventional norms of women's roles within contemporary society during the sixties.

Roddenberry was not the only one who conformed to conventional notions of women's roles. Other writers also perpetuated long-standing views of women and the episode "The Enemy Within" (1966) written by Richard Matheson, went further into the realm of sexual exploitation. Even though Roddenberry himself did not personally write this episode, he was the producer for this episode who had the final say over its production.

In this episode, Captain Kirk, through a transporter accident, is split into two separate people identical in appearance; but one personality is good and the other is evil. The imposter evil Kirk attempts to sexually assault Yeoman Rand. At the end of the episode Spock comments on the events that transpired while Kirk was split and says to Rand, "The imposter had some interesting qualities wouldn't you say, Yeoman?"²² Spock then raises his eyebrow with a smirk on his face and looks at Yeoman Rand with a playful twinkle in his eyes. In response, Yeoman Rand's eyes

widen as if in some kind of agreement, but then walks away with a look of annoyance.

This scene insinuated that attempted sexual assault gave the perpetrator “interesting qualities.” Even worse, it implied that a woman would think that an attempted violent act committed against her would imbue the culprit with an element of desirability. The scene also made sexual assault into a joke with Spock uncharacteristically teasing the Yeoman. As for the overall subtext, this episode was similar to “The Cage” by insinuating all men have an evil dark sexual side as part of their basic nature.

The episodes “Where No Man Has Gone Before,” “Mudd’s Women,” and “The Enemy Within” were some of the earliest episodes produced during the first season of *Star Trek*. Roddenberry was more hands-on during the first season than in later seasons of the series. He oversaw various aspects of the production process including re-writing. Furthermore, as George Takei recalled about Roddenberry’s personality, “He was a fighter” and “he could become as fierce as an enraged lion protecting his cubs, as cunning and full of guile as a fox scheming to outwit a pack of baying hounds.”²³ Thus, if Roddenberry, who called himself the “Glorious Rewriter” and “Glorious Leader,” felt something was important, he made his opinions and objections known and changes were made to comply with his wishes.²⁴ Fair and progressive portrayals of gender roles were clearly not a priority and this trend continued up until the very last aired episode.

Even though he was not as directly involved in the series later on, Roddenberry still made contributions. For example, one episode he authored,

“Turnabout Intruder” that was *Star Trek’s* final aired episode in 1969, was filled with negative images and concepts about women. In the story outline for this episode, Roddenberry revealed stereotypical thoughts he held regarding women.

In the original story outline, the main guest character, Dr. Janice Liset (later renamed Lester), was described by Roddenberry as, “obviously a strong-willed woman, mid-thirties, probably very much the shrew we had expected from Kirk’s comments about her.” Roddenberry continues later on in the outline, “We have established by now that Kirk knows the woman scientist, had some unexplained trouble with her in the past. Obviously considers her a driven, too-ambitious woman.”²⁵ The implications are that Dr. Lester, being strong and careerist, is mean-spirited and undesirable. It is later revealed, Dr. Lester is not satisfied with being a scientist and desires above all else to be a Starship Captain.

The bitterness and resentment of not having the opportunity to become a Starship Captain and the obsessive desire to take over Kirk’s position is the main psychological motivation of Dr. Lester. The plot device used was to have Captain Kirk and Janice Lester switch consciousness through the assistance of an ancient device found on the planet named Camus Two. As Roddenberry explained in his story outline, “in this device Janice has the opportunity to place herself in Kirk’s body, take over not only the strong masculine form of a man she has always envied, but also at the same time to exchange her life as an unimportant, middle-aged female archeologist for the exciting and varied life and considerable prestige of a Starship Captain.”²⁶

However, the main premise of the story was to highlight psychological and behavioral differences between men and women. The overarching goal of the episode, as Roddenberry wrote in his story outline, was:

Important—our emphasis is a female mind inhabiting Kirk’s body and our story is action-suspense, not a story of our Captain swinging his hips and exhibiting female mannerisms. Any low burlesque can do this--The challenge here to our star and guest star is to interpret the subtle but very basic differences between male and female mind.²⁷

These basic elements were incorporated into the televised episode.

In the final on-air version, Captain Kirk and the landing party arrive on Camus Two answering a distress call. Dr. Lester pretends to be very ill from radiation poisoning. Previously, Captain Kirk and Dr. Lester, while they were in Starfleet Academy, shared a romance. Dr. Lester is still bitter about how it ended, but is more indignant about the fact Starfleet does not allow women to become Captains of Starships. As Roddenberry explained in his story treatment, the Captains of Starships were “only fourteen men, an elite group” and this concept is carried over to the on-air version.²⁸ She laments to Captain Kirk, “The year we were together at Starfleet is the only time in my life I was alive.” Captain Kirk responds, “I never stopped you from going on with your space work.” Dr. Lester resentfully reminds him, “your world of Starship captains doesn’t admit women. It isn’t fair.” Captain Kirk agrees, “No, it isn’t,” but he does not seem overly concerned about her unhappiness.²⁹

After this conversation between them, Captain Kirk curiously inspects the ancient apparatus in the room. Lester activates the machine that pins Kirk against his will to the device and they swap their minds into each others’ bodies. The rest of the episode centers on highlighting the supposed “very basic differences between the

male and female mind” and how Dr. Lester is obsessively consumed with maintaining her longed for position as a Starship Captain.

Dr. Lester’s confiscation of Kirk’s body and position as a Starfleet Captain is doomed from the start because she cannot refrain from revealing her irrational and overly emotional “female” psyche. However, Kirk’s mind while trapped inside Lester’s body is used as a juxtaposition. Kirk/Lester is consistently calm, cool, and collected even in the face of what Roddenberry conveyed in his story outline as, “a special kind of ‘horror’ which would occur in a virile male mind under such circumstances.”³⁰ The “horror” of being a woman is expanded upon in the on-air version through a spiteful rant Dr. Lester says to Captain Kirk after the mind swap occurs. Lester/Kirk gloats, “Now you will know the indignity of being a woman.”³¹

From the point of the mind swap, Roddenberry, in the story outline, characterized Janice Lester’s mindset and behavior as “Although she has Kirk’s body and voice, Janice does not have the ability to coolly handle strong subordinates.”³² The inability to stay calm in the face of stress, deal with strong subordinates, and the increasingly erratic emotional behavior of Dr. Lester is portrayed consistently from Roddenberry’s story outline to the final on-air episode.

Later, both in the story outline and the on-air version, Spock points out an error in command procedures to Lester/Kirk and s/he snaps at him for calling attention to the mistake. The original story outline detailed Spock’s reaction as, “And he is a bit surprised when Kirk retorts sharply, a bit more than usual, of hysterical (almost female) anger in his voice and actions.”³³ In the on-air version the “hysterical (almost female) anger” is what prompts Spock and McCoy to become suspicious that

something was amiss with Kirk. The suspicions ultimately lead to Spock believing Kirk is indeed trapped in Janice Lester's body. Spock sides with Kirk/ Lester, which results in charges against Spock for mutiny.

Roddenberry painted the subsequent court scene in his story outline as, “A taut, fast scene of question, order, counter-question, counter-order--and Janice in Kirk’s body begins to show some of the strain of the situation.” Eventually, “Janice finds herself in danger of being backed down by those who should be her loyal subordinates and finally in anger she goes female hysterical, even her words and movements going female, to the surprise of the Bridge Officers.”³⁴

By the end of the court hearing in the on-air version, Lester in Kirk’s body cracks under the pressure of cross-examining witnesses and Spock’s defiance. S/he goes into an emotional tizzy, displaying stereotypical “female hysterical” behavior. Similarly, in both the story outline and on-air version of the hearing Kirk in Lester’s body is again depicted as calm, rational, and strong. Lester/ Kirk’s irrational behavior in the court hearing prompts McCoy and Scotty to side with Spock.

In the on-air version Lester/Kirk subsequently sentences Spock, McCoy, Scotty, and Kirk/Lester to death for attempted mutiny. The two other bridge officers, Sulu and Chekov, protest this decision and eventually refuse to follow her orders as well. Their insubordination sends Lester/ Kirk over the edge and her excessive emotion starts to reverse the transference. By the end of the episode, one last intense neurotic moment from Lester/Kirk reverses the transfer completely. In the on-air closing, Captain Kirk, back in his own body, comments, “I didn’t want to destroy her. Her life could have been rich as any woman’s.”³⁵

The very old stereotype of women as the “weaker sex”--physically, emotionally, and lacking competency in leadership abilities--was repeatedly portrayed in this episode. Moreover, in the egalitarian future of *Star Trek*, women were allowed to do space work, become doctors of various disciplines, and serve in Starfleet as lower ranking officers, but the most elite of leadership positions were off limits to them. Furthermore, it was implied that women should not aspire to positions of power and that they should be content with what society does let them do, since having an ambition for something more will inevitably lead to an unfulfilled and miserable life.

Later, Roddenberry openly admitted struggling with his views about women and indicated he may have understood his limitations. In the 1991 interview with David Alexander, he stated:

In the early 1960s, I was much more a macho-type person. I was still accepting things from my childhood as necessary and part of reality--how men related to women, et. cetera. My assistant, Susan Sackett, used to say to me, You really put down women a lot for someone who is supposed to be thoughtful and liberal. I began listening to her and agreeing that she was right in her perceptions.³⁶

In addition, Majel Barrett, who became Roddenberry’s second wife, remarked that her husband accepted “the equality of women as long as it doesn’t interfere with his home life.”³⁷

The Depiction of Racial Diversity and Equality in *Star Trek*

Although Roddenberry maintained conservative attitudes about women, in both in his creative work and personal life, his attitudes toward race were more complicated. On the one hand, for the second pilot, the cast was diversified with the

addition of the Asian character, Lieutenant Sulu (played by George Takei), and an African-American character, communications officer Lieutenant Alden (played by Lloyd Haines).³⁸ Later, African-American actress Nichelle Nichols replaced Haines as the communications officer.³⁹ Yet on the other hand, over the course of the series, minorities, though physically present on a consistent basis, were depicted as ancillary ornamental props rather than fully fleshed out characters.

Roddenberry's *Star Trek* followed a trend in U.S. television. One year before *Star Trek* aired, a landmark occurred with regard to minorities in the entertainment industry. In 1965, African-American actor Bill Cosby costarred with Robert Culp in the popular action series *I Spy*.⁴⁰ Another groundbreaking television program, *Julia*, debuted in 1968 starring Diahann Carroll as an African-American nurse who was recently widowed and had to face the challenges of being a professional and single-mother simultaneously.⁴¹ Interestingly, three programs, *I Spy*, *Star Trek*, and *Julia* all aired on the NBC network, a reflection of company policy promoting diversity within productions affiliated with their network.

A company-wide letter dated August 19, 1966 from NBC executive Mort Werner to all producers, including Gene Roddenberry, spelled out corporate policy and what was expected of producers in the area of hiring minorities for their television programs. Werner stated:

NBC's employment policy has long been dictated that there can be no discrimination because of race, creed, religion, or national origin and this applies in all our operations. In addition, since we are mindful of our vast audience and the extent to which television influences taste and attitudes, we are not only anxious [sic] but determined that members of minority groups be treated in a manner consistent with their role in our society. While this applies to all racial minorities, obviously the principle reference is to the casting and

depiction of Negroes. Our purpose is to assure that in our medium, and within the permissive framework of dramatic license, we present a reasonable reflection of contemporary society.⁴²

NBC corporate acted at the highest ranks and promoted an African American, Stanley Robertson, who previously worked at NBC's Music Clearance Department, to the position of Program Manager.⁴³

Two years after this corporate policy was announced, progress in hiring minorities for television productions was continuing. As a *Newsweek* assessment of the 1968 television season commented, "Thirty Negro actors will be filling continuing roles on weekly series, and dozens more will be doing one-shots and commercials. Now it becomes a question of whether they appear as recognizable blacks acting within a recognizable black context or as just attractive ebony furniture."⁴⁴

Roddenberry's depiction of minorities in *Star Trek* was generally window dressing rather than dealing fully with their lives. *Star Trek* did the least to feature minorities and their capabilities compared to *I Spy* and *Julia*, in which two African-American characters were central to the series.

In defense of the claim that Roddenberry believed in and promoted racial equality on *Star Trek*, his personal life reflected slightly more of that conviction than did his actions and decisions regarding *Star Trek*. On the personal front, Roddenberry did have a romantic relationship in the sixties with Nichelle Nichols; according to her, they remained friends until his death. As Nichols recalled, when they discussed their relationship in the sixties, Roddenberry, "declared that what he did and whom he loved was nobody's damn business."⁴⁵ In addition, Roddenberry was involved in a charity geared toward the racially and economically disadvantaged Watts community.

Roddenberry informed the head of Desilu-Paramount's Publicity Department, Howard McClay, in 1967 that the funds from the "Date with a Star" raffle would go to the "Southwest Los Angeles (Watts Area) Youth Programs headed by Rev. Paul Martin of Project Vista."⁴⁶ Granted, the "Date with a Star" was used for publicity, but Roddenberry chose to have all funds from the raffle donated to the underprivileged youths of the Watts community.

Roddenberry did make decisions to hire and work with minorities on *Star Trek* as well. After Stan Robertson was promoted to NBC's Programming Manager position, he drew *Star Trek* as one of his series to oversee. However, since the production of *Star Trek* was a partnership of Desilu and NBC, Roddenberry's approval to have Robertson as Program Manager for the series was required. As Herb Solow recalled, after Roddenberry interviewed Stanley Robertson he "enthusiastically approved of NBC's new Program Manager" to work on *Star Trek*.⁴⁷ As far as depicting racial equality on *Star Trek* was concerned, the characters Uhura and Sulu did occupy positions of importance on the Enterprise, which went against the long-standing general trend of depicting minorities in menial positions on television. Juanita Coulson, a prominent fan of the science fiction community, recalled Uhura as a step forward in the portrayal of black women:

What she had was a token position. BUT IT WAS A POSITION BEING HELD BY A BLACK WOMAN, A POSITION OF AUTHORITY AND SKILL IN HANDLING FUTURISTIC TECHNOLOGY BEYOND THE REACH OF THE BRIGHTEST MALE TECHIE OF THE 1960S. That counted, HUGELY.⁴⁸

During this particular time in television history, depicting minorities in a positive and more equal light was only in its infancy. The mere fact an African-American woman

or Asian male was on the Enterprise and a part of the command structure seemed exceptional to many viewers. However, as already mentioned, other programs were doing more than putting minorities on display just to be seen. Unfortunately, once the characters of Uhura and Sulu were in place on *Star Trek*, their positions of importance were rarely highlighted.

In an analysis of a sampling of *Star Trek* episodes, historian Daniel Bernardi recognized the same trend.⁴⁹ For instance, Bernardi observed in the episode “Journey to Babel” that, “first, it keeps the cast of color, notably the black delegates and Uhura (Nichelle Nichols), the Swahili Communications Officer, in the background--visible but not essential” and “Sulu (George Takei), the Japanese-American Helmsman, is not in this episode.”⁵⁰

This lack of centrality was a consistent pattern throughout *Star Trek* and the two minority cast members were not pleased with the level of participation their roles afforded. George Takei, in his recollection of his years on *Star Trek*, said, “I was proud to be a part of it. But I wanted to be prouder; I wanted Sulu to be doing more. My ship may have been moving steady at warp three, but I wanted to do more than merely announce that fact.”⁵¹ Uhura was, on most occasions, portrayed no more than a twenty-third century telephone switchboard operator. Nichelle Nichols recalled:

It got to the point where I felt like somebody must be going through the scripts and just slashing every time they see the name “Uhura” above a line of dialogue. Finally, after a particularly brutal series of cuts and an episode where a guest actress was brought in to visit a planet while Uhura stayed at her post doing nothing for an hour, I went to Gene and complained. “Why is this happening?” I ask him. And Gene does his best to explain his point of view, and he's talking about staying true to the show, but by now I'm really angry and it actually gets to the point where I say to him, “That's it, I quit. I'm leaving.”⁵²

But a chance encounter with Martin Luther King Jr. at a NAACP event changed her mind. King observed, “Don't you know that the world, for the first time, is beginning to see us as equals? What you are doing is very, very important, and I'd hate to see you just walk away from such a noble task.”⁵³ Dr. King seemingly felt the mere fact Uhura was present on the bridge of the Enterprise was at the very least positive improvement.

Fans and SF writers also noticed Uhura's character was not doing much more than being stationed at her post. In “We're Getting a Message, Sir” in 1968 Shirley Meech wrote a poem in the fanzine *ST-Phile* observing:

Uhura! We see her lovely face
 Each week as the Enterprise sails through space.
 Communications her special skill;
 Her conversation – practically nil.
 The only line that we hear from her
 Is “Hailing frequencies open, sir!”⁵⁴

Science fiction writer Poul Anderson also wrote Roddenberry a letter and offered to write a script that would give, “Uhura a larger role than usual.”⁵⁵

Comments from Nichols, fans, and SF writers did not have an effect on Roddenberry's decisions with the character Uhura. Roddenberry clearly specified his vision for *Star Trek* in the “Writer/Director Information” booklet, also known as the “*Star Trek* Bible,” which mandated the parameters for the series for new writers and directors. Roddenberry's instructions were:

The stories, certainly for a series, certainly all the early ones, must be built strongly around the central lead character(s). The basic problem must be his and he must dominate the events and work out his solution. Considerable attention must be given to establishing and constantly examining his full character, giving him an interesting range of mixed strengths, weaknesses and

idiosyncrasies--and the net sum must result, must attract the audience and invite audience-identification.⁵⁶

Star Trek's emphasis as Roddenberry instructed remained for the entire series. The focus of each story was consistently built around the main characters Kirk, Spock, and McCoy, all white males.

In turn, none of the scripts authored by Roddenberry that became episodes in *Star Trek* addressed racial conflict. However, *Star Trek* did develop a reputation as progressive on racial issues. There were episodes, such as “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield” and “The Devil in the Dark,” that explored race and prejudice. Such episodes gave the series its notoriety as anti-racist and path breaking. These episodes were written by others; however, Roddenberry did have some input.

The first attempt to deal with racism on *Star Trek* was “Portrait in Black and White” written by Barry Trivers in 1966. The original story treatment was exceedingly daring. It focused on a parallel world that had reached the same stage of Earth’s nineteenth century United States and was embroiled in a Civil War. Only on this planet, the tables were turned. Blacks were the slave owners and whites were the slaves. This story unnerved many on the *Star Trek* production team for different reasons. Script Consultant Dorothy Fontana felt:

Much of the script is (a) dull, (b) platitudinous, (c) preachy and/or (d) offensive. This piece will have to be totally overhauled...restructured, rewritten...I strongly feel that you will have to completely redo the final draft Barry turns in if you are to have any chance at all of getting NBC to even consider it. This is a delicate and highly touchy subject with them...especially with Stan.⁵⁷

Associate Producer Robert Justman wrote to Roddenberry expressing his reservation, “I am afraid that this allegorical treatment will get resentment from all sides if it is ever shown on the air.”⁵⁸

Roddenberry’s response to Justman acknowledged there might be a problem with the story and how it would be received, but overall seemed to be sold on the concept. He replied:

If improperly handled, could bring forth both the white and black power advocates down on us with a vengeance. On the other hand, we could be in trouble with someone on any dynamic theme, i.e. union-labor, peace-war, utopia-individuality, etc...if handled intelligently, and it is our duty as producers to see that it is handled intelligently, can be highly provocative, entertaining, and revealing exercise in dramatic truths, making points via its sf approach that never could be made in a non-sf approach.⁵⁹

Others in the production team objected strongly. Eventually NBC executives elected not to put it into production, although they agreed to remain open to a story emphasizing contemporary racial conflict in the future. In a memo, Stan Robertson informed Roddenberry of NBC’s final decision with regard to “Portrait in Black and White”:

Per our conversations of today and yesterday, this is to confirm that, in its present form, the above story outline is unacceptable. We believe that this story does not fit into the STAR TREK concept. However, we would be delighted to re-evaluate it at a later date if re-submitted in a different form.⁶⁰

The window of opportunity left open by the NBC network eventually resulted in the episode “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield” which aired in 1969. However by 1969, Roddenberry had already mostly moved on from *Star Trek* and was basically Executive Producer in name rather than by deed. *Star Trek’s* third season was in the hands of Fred Freiberger who recalled, “Gene was hardly around at all.”⁶¹

“Let That Be Your Last Battlefield” was written by Gene Coon and became regarded as one of *Star Trek*’s most significant episodes. As Bjo Trimble recalled, “‘Let This Be Your Last Battlefield’ was considered far more devastating a statement about why wars start and how fruitless they are, as well as a racial statement, and fans reacted to that one more strongly than many other episodes.”⁶² It is likely that this episode contributed greatly to the series “liberal-humanist” reputation and allowed *Star Trek* to evolve from Roddenberry’s original conception.

This particular episode attempted to address the issues of white and black race relations in the 1960s. The story was “a parable about two races on an alien planet, each half black and half white, who annihilate each other in an increasingly violent struggle between oppression and revolution” and was clearly a commentary on the contemporary race struggles occurring in the 1960s.⁶³ This episode had three lengthy pieces of dialog that discernibly and powerfully discussed slavery, the absurdity of hatred based on skin color, and the unproductive pointlessness of bigotry.

In “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield,” the Enterprise is on a humanitarian mission to the planet Ariannus. The ship encounters a stolen Starfleet shuttlecraft that is badly damaged in space and rescues its pilot, an alien named Lokai. At first Kirk, Spock, and McCoy think his skin pigmentation, literally half-black and half-white, is a genetic anomaly. Soon Kirk and crew realize this is not an anomaly when Bele, Chief Officer on the Commission of Political Traitors from the planet Cheron, beams on board the Enterprise. Bele apprises Kirk that he is here to claim the criminal Lokai. Kirk informs Bele that no one claims anyone without due process, but does escort Bele to sickbay to see Lokai. Immediately these two men from Cheron are

exchanging vehement words with one another and it is obvious they are intense enemies.

The first exchange between these two aliens describes not only their planet's history, but also offers parallels to many similar incidents in United States' racial conflicts. Lokai announces to Kirk that he will not return to Cheron. Lokai exclaims, "He raided our homes, tore us from our families, herded us together like cattle, and then sold us as slaves!"⁶⁴ Bele calmly explains, "They were savages, Captain. We took them into our hearts, our homes. We educated them."⁶⁵ Lokai clarifies, "Yes, just education enough to serve the master race."⁶⁶ Lokai then mentions to Kirk they were slaves, but Bele insists Lokai's people were freed thousands of years before. Lokai, absolutely infuriated, exclaims they were legally set free, but not truly free to live their "lives in equality and dignity."⁶⁷ This exchange culminates with the two in a physical confrontation. Kirk breaks them up and sternly scolds, "this is not a battlefield!"⁶⁸

By the middle of the episode, Bele's source of hatred for Lokai is revealed. During a dinner with Kirk and Spock, Bele mentions that Lokai's race is an "inferior breed" because of their differing skin color.⁶⁹ Spock and Kirk realize that the hatred between the two all stem from racial bigotry.

Nearing the end of the episode, the Enterprise arrives at the planet Cheron and Spock gives a technical report that is completely shocking. Spock informs all on the bridge that:

Several very large cities uninhabited. Extensive traffic systems barren of traffic. Lower animals and vegetation encroaching on the cities. No sapient

life forms registering at all, Captain. There is no evidence of natural disaster, yet there are vast numbers of unburied corpses in all cities.⁷⁰

The entire bridge crew is stunned that all of the inhabitants of the planet are dead.

Lokai and Bele are stupefied and stricken with utter grief, which then quickly turns to blind rage. The two aliens transport down to the planet and remain forever engaged in their hateful struggle against one another until they can kill each other on a barren desolate planet.

The Enterprise crew is thoroughly bewildered at the reaction of the two aliens.

Sulu comments, "Their planet is dead. Does it matter now which one's right?"⁷¹

Spock responds, "Not to Lokai and Bele. All that matters to them is their hate."⁷²

Uhura wonders, "Do you suppose that's all they ever had sir?"⁷³ Kirk gravely

observes, "No, but that's all they have left."⁷⁴ The episode closes with Kirk looking entirely disappointed, hangs his head and orders to set course for Starbase Four.

"Let that Be Your Last Battlefield" had many messages drawn from the history and debates over racism and slavery that were taking place in the 1960s. The first exchange of words between Bele and Lokai in sickbay gave a history of their planet that was clearly reminiscent of African-American discrimination in the United States. The initial dialogue between the two also referred to the American form of chattel slavery and the argument from pro-slavery advocates during the 1800s that contended slavery was benevolent because it cared for the supposed child-like slaves. In addition, it alluded to the racial conflict of the sixties, where some African-Americans, even after the onslaught of legislation in the mid-sixties to rectify an unjust system of laws in the United States, were highly discontented with the slow

pace towards racial equality. Plainly portrayed as the villain in this episode, Bele used an argument common among white racists who resisted the legislative pace dedicated to racial equality. During the rabid exchange between the two aliens in the sickbay Bele argues, “He asks for utopia in a day. It can’t be done.”⁷⁵ However, in Lokai’s rebuttal the episode scoffed at the stance that change takes time, that it cannot happen overnight, and that discriminated people should be patient instead of disturbing the status quo.

Bele ultimately reveals that his basis for the hatred of Lokai’s people was skin color and his belief that his race is superior. The makeup for the two actors was overly obvious. However, the stark makeup of half-black and half-white divided vertically down the middle of their faces, with the coloring reversed on each character to denote a racial difference between the two, added another layer to emphasize the ludicrousness of prejudice based on skin color. The dinner conversation also demonstrated that Bele not only felt superior, but also had the opinion that his race was more capable of self-discipline than Lokai’s when he says, “you cannot expect Lokai and people like him to act with self-discipline any more than you can expect the planet to stop orbiting its sun.”⁷⁶ Bele was reinforcing his belief they are an “inferior breed” and reflected real world white supremacist attitudes reminiscent of the KKK or Nazis.⁷⁷

The episode culminated at the end with an intense appeal from Captain Kirk. He implored, “What is the matter with you two? Listen to me! You both must end up dead if you don’t stop hating.”⁷⁸ Kirk pleaded with these two men to let their hatred go. There was nothing left to fight for, since all the people of Cheron were dead and

their planet was laid to waste, still they could not see reason. The episode ends illustrating to the viewer that racial bigotry was a pointless, useless, and sad mentality and that blind hate could only lead to destruction and annihilation of life.

It was episodes like “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield” that contributed to *Star Trek’s* growing reputation as a pioneer in the depiction of race in 1960s television. Although the episode did not air until the third and final season, its author, Gene Coon, had been instrumental since the first season. He served as a writer for initial story treatments and teleplays, writing under his own name or the pseudonym Lee Cronin, and as producer for many episodes. As William Shatner insisted:

Gene Coon created many of the basic conceptual points upon which he'd ultimately construct some of our best episodes. The Klingons, the Organian Peace Treaty and the Prime Directive were all conceived by Coon...in the past, many of these specific contributions have generally been assumed to be Roddenberry's, and that's simply not true...Quite simply, Roddenberry created *Star Trek*, and Gene Coon made it fly.⁷⁹

Other notable episodes primarily authored or co-authored by Gene Coon were “The Devil in the Dark,” “A Taste of Armageddon” and “Errand of Mercy.” In these episodes Coon imbued *Star Trek* with the progressive notions of tolerance, emphasized the devastating impact of war, and contended that competing political ideologies need not be the basis for conflict all contributed to a gradual redefinition of *Star Trek* and its later reputation.

In the 1967 episode “The Devil in the Dark,” Kirk and a landing party arrive at the mining colony on Janus VI. The dilemma the characters face throughout the episode is dealing with the intolerant attitudes against the creature named the Horta. The creature is a silicon-based life form that looks more like a moving pile of rock

than what humans consider a sentient life form. By the time the Enterprise arrives, the Horta has been killing miners and sabotaging equipment. It is mistakenly believed to be a murderous “monster” by both the miners and the Enterprise landing party at the outset. Only through Spock’s rational scientific reasoning and his mind melding to communicate with the Horta is he able to ascertain the true motivation of the creature. Spock reveals to Kirk that the Horta race completely dies off every fifty thousand years except for one female who gives birth to a new generation, who is therefore merely a mother trying to protect her unborn young.

By the end of the episode, Kirk persuades the miners that they have misunderstood the creature and need to work cooperatively with her and the young that are about to hatch. The Horta naturally digests rock for nourishment and leave tunnels in their wake after eating. The Horta agrees not to kill more miners or sabotage equipment trying to protect her young. In return, the miners agree to leave the creature in peace and as a result realize they can use the Horta’s tunnels to reach ore that is difficult to access. Through communication and working to understand each other’s position, cooperation is achieved and the episode ends with all parties living together in peace.⁸⁰

The most significant messages of the episode were to not judge a book by its cover, that every life form had a right to survive, live in peace, and that these basic desires should not be denied because of intolerance or failing to try to understand another’s position. The episode was not as blatant in its allegorical treatment of prejudicial attitudes as it was in “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield.” However, the far more subtle message still addressed bigotry and narrow-mindedness as catalysts

for hate, which has repeatedly led to conflict throughout the ages. “The Devil in the Dark” advocated an approach that endorsed understanding, tolerance and cooperation as the method for a harmonious existence with others.

The members of the production team all believed “The Devil in the Dark” was a major contribution to the *Star Trek* repertoire. Robert Justman, Stan Robertson and Gene Roddenberry all felt this was a definite golden moment for *Star Trek*. Before filming, Robert Justman sent a memo to Gene Coon stating, “Have just read your latest creation and am very pleased. Please write the screenplay quickly.”⁸¹ Justman was not alone in his praise for this episode. Stan Robertson agreed and sent a supportive letter to Coon remarking, “Excellent story, Gene... the story is totally different than anything we have had to date. Good luck on the script.”⁸²

Lastly, Roddenberry chimed in with his comments after the episode was aired. He sent Coon a congratulatory memo:

Recently saw “THE DEVIL IN THE DARK” after having missed it on-air. I want to congratulate you on an excellent show, full of suspense, jeopardy, all the things that help bring us a mass audience, but yet maintaining good science-fiction elements. The “monster” was treated very well and given beautiful and heartwarming characteristics toward the end.⁸³

The memo shows Roddenberry was mostly interested in a “mass audience,” not necessarily the message. In fact, the rest of the memo was dedicated to production detail which included his fear about the use of the word “monster” to describe the creature. He noted it was possible that the “S.F. and intelligent audience, which has been so disappointed in monsters in the past, would turn the program off in irritation.”⁸⁴ Roddenberry’s comments were mostly of a technical nature and the memo indicates he had begun to surrender *Star Trek* to others who would imbue it

with new ideas and, as a result, help build its reputation, popularity, and critical acclaim.

The sixties was a turbulent time in United States history. The decade was rife with massive changes in society that enabled discriminated and marginalized Americans to have hope for the future. Both grassroots efforts and landmark legislation put the United States on a new path. The sixties was only the beginning of a “new age” as President Johnson declared, but it opened the door to equality and opportunity that minorities and women had not experienced before. The milieu of progressive trends and ideas seeped into the entertainment industry and then was transmitted to the mass audiences reinforcing these notions of equal rights. *Star Trek* was a product of this time and certainly was infused on some levels with these liberal-humanist concepts. Yet, the people who imbued the series with this essence were generally others on the production team and not Roddenberry. As for the depiction of women, it was mostly a continuation of the conventional stereotypes Roddenberry had used in the past. His production team did little to challenge the gender conventions that were set by the foundation Roddenberry established with “The Cage” and in the writer/ director information “Bible.” While his record on race was better, it took others to explore the issue of prejudice more fully. Despite some flaws in their portrayals, the production team was primarily responsible for the reputation gained by the series for its progressive vision of race.

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Chapter Four

United States Foreign Relations in *Star Trek*

At the same time the American home front was experiencing many developments that were driving toward a more equitable society, the U.S. was involved in an overseas conflict that ultimately proved to be a setback for the country. The Cold War was at its height and the ideology that the U.S. needed to promote democracy and thwart communism around the world led to America's involvement in the Vietnam War. *Star Trek* not only reflected domestic changes in the United States, but also the foreign relations policies of the country. However, once again, there was a divide on the production team over *Star Trek's* messages and content. Some of the group felt the episodes should reflect the idea of peace and cooperation. However, Roddenberry, influenced by his background in the military and law enforcement, clearly held faith in intervention through the use of force and used *Star Trek* to spread that notion.

The Cold War and the Vietnam Conflict in the 1960s

The United States foreign policy on communism was shaped by the Domino Theory. The basic argument was if one country fell under communist control, other nations in the region would also fall. When discussing the U.S. position on communism in a 1954 press conference, President Eisenhower explained, "You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly" and "Asia, after all, has already lost some 450 million of its peoples to the Communist dictatorship, and we simply can't afford greater losses."¹ The overall concern was if more nations turn to

communism it would upset the worldwide balance of power between democratic and communist nations, which in turn, would threaten the entire “free world.”

Thus, spreading democracy and keeping a balance of power were the two main U.S. justifications for the Cold War. In the 1960s, Cold War tensions involved many dimensions, including the fear of nuclear devastation, which were both legitimate and at the same time overemphasized to support United States national policy in Vietnam and the Space program. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 was a high point in the confrontation between the United States and the U.S.S.R. This incident which placed the United States teetering on the brink of a full-scale nuclear war with the U.S.S.R., only served to reinforce fears people already felt about nuclear warfare and helped etch into the minds and memories of people from that point forward the precarious nature of relations between the East and West.

The unstable situation between the East and West was magnified by the fact that the Cold War was not just an antagonistic relationship between the United States and U.S.S.R. On a larger scale, the Cold War was a conflict between the political ideologies of democracy and communism, with China yet another player in this worldwide conflict. The complicated nature of the Cold War was evident in a 1965 article about Vietnam. The assessment was:

The Soviet-American friction over Vietnam, Chinese-Soviet friction over the United States and over Vietnam, and the Soviet efforts to reassert Moscow's position in the international Communist movement have become a hopelessly intertwined tangle in which each tug at any one string causes immediate and incalculable dislocations all along the other strands.²

The international conflict of ideologies manifested itself in numerous ways, which included the Vietnam conflict. As far as the relationship between China and the

United States was concerned, China was a large thorn in the United States' side because of their involvement in the Vietnam conflict.

China's military strategy to promote communism and thwart the United States certainly did not help the success of U.S. military endeavors in Vietnam. An assessment of China's involvement in Vietnam in *The New York Times* from 1964 explained their strategy which was known as Revolutionary Warfare. Journalist C.L. Sulzberger explained:

Originated by Mao-Tse-tung and modernized by General Giap, aims at organized subversion of a designated area by coordinated guerrilla infiltration, persuasion, sabotage, and terror. It creates its own military and civil administration by clandestine "parallel hierarchies." A special apparatus (called Dich-Van in Vietnamese) combines friendship and brutality to undermine resistance and gain support of rural areas.³

China's activities in relation to the United States generally and, more specifically, in Vietnam were just another facet to the international Cold War hostilities that influenced the mindset of many during the 1960s. Roddenberry and *Star Trek* were not an exception in its pervasive Cold War concerns and fears.

The Cold War and Vietnam in *Star Trek*

The *Star Trek* team, and specifically Roddenberry, focused on the recurring theme of Cold War tensions. One of the sentiments Roddenberry expressed in *The Making of Star Trek* published in 1968 was, "We must learn to live together or most certainly we will soon all die together."⁴ This belief reflected Cold War friction and fear of nuclear devastation that was shared by many in society. In the same year, when discussing the future of the human race, Roddenberry commented, "He will learn that differences in ideas and attitudes are a delight" and "not something to

fear.”⁵ On the surface Roddenberry sounded anti-war and open-minded, but his scripts reveal the opposite. By the second season, a new crew member named Pavel Chekov was added to give an international dimension to the series. However, even though there was a Russian on board the Enterprise, he did not represent a Communist. Roddenberry’s original vision of Earth society explained in the “Writer/Director” guide was, “that Mankind has found some unity on Earth, perhaps at long last even peace. References by our characters to Earth will be simply a logical projection of current scientific and social advances in food production, transportation, communications, and so on.”⁶ The Enterprise’s mission was described as,

Something like that of, say, English warships at the turn of the century... [I]n those days vessels of the major powers were assigned sectors of various oceans, where they represented their government there. Out of contact with the Admiralty for long periods, the captains of such vessels had broad discretionary powers in regulating trade, bush wars, putting down slavery, assisting scientific investigations and geological surveys.⁷

Eventually developing over the course of the series, Earth was depicted as belonging to a “democratic” United Federation of Planets. As a result, the utopian future became one based on American political and, to some degree, economic ideals, one where the U.S. had triumphed long before over the U.S.S.R.

There were numerous allegories in *Star Trek* that represented the conflict between communism and democracy. As with race, the political tone of the series was uneven, in part as a result of differences between Roddenberry’s and the production team’s views. Some stories were progressive and others were conventional. *The Making of Star Trek* was published after the first season of the series was completed. The book described the production process of the series and

mentioned that, “every action adventure story must have conflict. Although this can be achieved in many ways, the type of story almost necessarily requires some combination of ‘bad guys’ in opposition to the ‘good guys.’”⁸ Thus, the Klingons and the Romulans were created to be the evil empires of the galaxy in opposition to the Federation. Akin to the communists of the Eastern bloc, the Klingons were described as follows: “their only rule of life is that rules are made to be broken by shrewdness, deceit, or power” and “all in all, the Klingons appear to have little (by our standards) in the way of redeeming qualities.”⁹ Furthermore, Gene Coon admitted, “We have always played them very much like the Russians.”¹⁰ The Romulans were another Federation adversary. The Romulan government was described as a “dictatorship” and they were characterized as “highly militaristic, aggressive by nature, ruthless in warfare and do not take captives.”¹¹

With these fictitious evil adversaries in place, many episodes with varying messages alluded to or overtly represented Cold War concerns and tensions.¹² Although *Star Trek* would later be heralded by fans and viewers for depicting international and galactic tolerance and cooperation, in reality the series gave mixed messages.

The teleplay for “A Private Little War” (1968) and the original story outline and teleplay for “The Omega Glory” (1968) were written by Roddenberry.¹³ Both of these episodes advocated a conventional U.S. Cold War viewpoint. “A Private Little War” supported the idea that sometimes violent conflict was necessary, echoing the United States’ justifications for the Vietnam War. Roddenberry’s story for the episode “The Omega Glory” expressly emphasized the superiority of democracy and

promoted an anti-communist stance that also depicted violence as a legitimate means to secure freedom and democracy.

However, not everyone on the production team completely fell in line with Roddenberry's stance. In contrast, other episodes such as "A Taste of Armageddon" (1967) and "Errand of Mercy" (1967) that can be attributed primarily to Gene Coon, highlighted the preciousness of life and denounced the wastefulness of violent conflict and war.

"A Private Little War," was intended specifically to be an allegory of the Vietnam conflict. This episode went completely against *Star Trek's* concept of non-interference with other cultures known as the "Prime Directive." Granted, most episodes violated the non-interference order for artistic purposes as well as to create more interesting drama. However, in this episode, the meddling of Starfleet mirrored and justified U.S. intervention into Vietnam since it advocated conflict as a method to maintain a balance of power.

In "A Private Little War," the Enterprise returns to a planet Captain Kirk visited as a young officer on his first command of a survey. Kirk, in his first report thirteen years before, noted that the inhabitants, brown haired villagers and the blond haired hill people, were technologically primitive, yet incredibly peaceful. The planet was also a treasure house of medicinal plants. Initially, the Enterprise has returned to take more samples of the plant life for further research, but not to contact the native people.

Unfortunately, just as Kirk praises the peaceful nature of the inhabitants, he sees a villager with a flintlock aiming at his old friend Tyree of the hill people and his

hunting party. After an altercation with the villagers and quick escape back to the Enterprise, Kirk decides to go back to the planet to investigate how the villagers have obtained flintlocks. Kirk feels this is suspiciously too far of an advancement to make in the thirteen years since he was last there. Kirk suspects the Klingons might have something to do with one group of natives possessing firearms, but needs evidence.

Kirk and McCoy beam down to the planet undercover dressed in native clothing to avoid tipping off the Klingons of their presence. They meet up with Tyree and they devise a plan to discover how the peaceful coexistence has been disrupted on this planet. The three proceed under the cover of night to the villagers' camp. They find out that the Klingons indeed supplied the flintlocks to the villagers. Kirk's solution to this follows the next day.

The episode cuts to daytime where Kirk is teaching the hill people how to fire weapons taken from the villagers the night before. However, McCoy is fuming at Kirk's actions. He angrily points out, "It's not bad enough there's already one serpent in Eden teaching one side about gunpowder! You're gonna make sure they all know about it!"¹⁴ Kirk answers:

Bones, Bones, [McCoy's nickname] the normal development of this planet was a status quo between the hill people and the villagers. The Klingons changed that with the flintlocks. If this planet is to develop the way it should, we must equalize both sides again.¹⁵

McCoy heatedly tells Kirk that he is condemning them to a "war that may never end."¹⁶ Kirk then tries to persuade McCoy with a history lesson from Earth.

Kirk recalls, "Bones, do you remember the twentieth century brush wars on the Asian continent? Two giant powers involved much like the Klingons and

ourselves. Neither side felt that they could pull out.”¹⁷ McCoy acknowledges, “Yes I remember. It went on bloody year after bloody year.”¹⁸ Kirk responds, “What would you have suggested? That one side arm its friends with an overpowering weapon? Mankind would never have lived to travel space if they had. No, the only solution is what happened back then. Balance of power.”¹⁹ McCoy then asks, “And if the Klingons give their side even more?” Kirk continues, “Then we arm our side with exactly that much more. A balance of power. The trickiest most difficult dirtiest game of them all. But the only one that preserves both sides.”²⁰

By the end of the episode, Kirk’s old friend Tyree, who was an ardent pacifist, turns to violence to avenge his wife’s murder by the villagers. Tyree demands that Kirk provide him with many “firesticks.”²¹ Tyree then orders one of the hill people to track the two villagers who escaped and says, “I will kill them.”²² McCoy solemnly remarks to Kirk, “Well you got what you wanted.”²³ Kirk explains, “Not what I wanted Bones. What had to be.”²⁴ The episode closes with Spock opening communication with Kirk on the planet. Kirk requests, “Ask Scotty how long it would take him to reproduce a hundred flintlocks.”²⁵ Scotty surprised inquires, “I didn’t get that exactly, Captain. A hundred what?”²⁶ Kirk reiterates, “A hundred, serpents. Serpents for the Garden of Eden.”²⁷

Many themes already seen in Roddenberry’s previous work manifested itself once again in this piece. Just as in *The Lieutenant’s* “To Kill a Man,” this *Star Trek* episode justified the interference in a foreign civilization. The dialogue in “A Private Little War” used the situation in Vietnam as a historical justification for interfering on Tyree’s planet. Similar to the debate between Lieutenant Rice and Captain Dee in “To

Kill a Man,” there was no doubt who would win the argument between Kirk and McCoy. Kirk was convinced that supplying arms to the peaceful hill people was appropriate to maintaining a balance of power, not only for the inhabitants of the planet, but also between the Federation and the Klingons. This episode clearly reflected and advocated the reasoning used by the U.S to fight a proxy war in Southeast Asia and thwart communism from spreading in the region. Roddenberry made a choice in the direction of this story. He could have followed the pre-established *Star Trek* guidelines of the Prime Directive and had Kirk follow the non-interference mandate; however, he did not. Roddenberry chose to write a teleplay that emphasized that intervention was something that “had to be” and was inevitable.

Not all on the *Star Trek* team agreed with Roddenberry’s treatment of the story. Associate Producer Robert Justman, objected strongly to the fatalism in the episode:

I realize that you are attempting to draw a parallel between this story and the Vietnam situation with respect to escalation and balance of power, but I don’t think that we are doing our moral position in Vietnam any appreciable good at all...Remember, ‘STAR TREK’ takes place hundreds of years in the future and from what is being said on these pages, the present viewing audience can have no expectation of a better life for succeeding generations.²⁸

Roddenberry, however, ignored the early feedback and proceeded with his pro-Vietnam War message. A fan commentary on this episode also indicated the message of “A Private Little War” was objectionable, but for a different reason. E.A. Oddstad, in the fanzine *Spockanalia*, commented:

In a recent incident, he [Kirk] gave guns to a primitive people so that they could defend themselves against their neighbors, armed by the evil Klingons, and, more important, so that they could defend the Federation against the Klingons. In justifying his action, Kirk referred to a similar situation in the

mid-twentieth century...The policies of that age are no model for a civilized people to follow.²⁹

Some of the production staff and viewers thought the message put forth in this episode went entirely against what they felt *Star Trek* was supposed to represent.

In the episode “The Omega Glory” (1968) Roddenberry addressed Cold War fears and inspired by the conflict in Vietnam. The plot revolved around a war between the people he labeled as “Yellows/ Kahms” and the “White/Yangs.” In Omega IV’s distant past, a conflict between communist Asians and democratic Whites ultimately resulted in World War III. Roddenberry’s original story treatment for “The Omega Glory” outlines the premise of the episode. Roddenberry describes the situation on planet Omega IV as:

Up until now they've considered Omega a case of similar evolution, but has it occurred to the Captain that this planet might be an even closer parallel with Earth than they suspect? Take the legends, with the existence of a white and yellow race, the fact they've noticed the villagers live a disorganized communal existence. Is it possible that the “Kahm” is a contraction of Communist? And the word “Yang” what does that suggest? Centuries ago could it have been "Yankee"? Although only half-human, Mister Spock knows Earth history intimately, points out that mankind once reached a place where war between white and yellow was narrowly averted.³⁰

The Kahms and Yangs were further described in excerpts:

Even the restricted view shows the savage whites are attacking and taking over the town. The yellows, confused and disorganized, are surrendering without much of a fight...a closer look at the dress and customs of the whites. Their clothing, weapons, and ornamentation, dictated by the desert environment, bears some resemblance with that of the American Continent Indian. But other customs more nearly resemble the history of the white race on the same continent. Both male and female are proud and independent, all with equal voices in tribal affairs.³¹

Unlike other writers' scripts that were extensively reworked, this general description of Roddenberry's was not significantly altered from its original tone, content and premise.

In the aired version, the Enterprise arrives at Omega IV and finds the U.S.S. Exeter already in orbit with the crew dead from a disease brought back from the planet. The last Exeter log entry implores anyone who finds their final message to go to the planet as soon as possible to avoid the same fate. The Enterprise landing party beams down to Omega IV and encounters the Exeter's Captain Tracey who explains the only way they could stay alive and keep from infecting the Enterprise crew was to remain on the planet which has a natural immunization agent in the environment.

The main dilemma for the first two-thirds of the episode is Captain Tracey's flagrant violation of the Prime Directive. Tracey's motivation for interfering with this civilization by fighting on the side of the "Yellow/Kohms" against the "White/Yangs" is greed. He wants to discover how the natives live incredibly long lives so he can sell a "fountain of youth" to the rest of the galaxy. However, McCoy's research on the disease reveals that the longevity enjoyed on Omega IV cannot be replicated and that their extended stay on the planet has neutralized the disease and they can return to the Enterprise anytime.

Even though Captain Tracey is informed there is no longer a benefit to staying on the planet he is still obsessed with fighting the Yangs. Thus, Tracey demands Kirk beam down more phasers and extra power packs to continue the fight, but Kirk does not comply and the two get into a fistfight. However, this time the Yangs arrive and

break them up. The Yangs then take Tracey, Kirk, Spock, and McCoy back to their camp as prisoners.

While sitting restrained in the main meeting room of the Yangs' compound, Kirk and Spock theorize that the civilization on Omega IV developed similarly to Earth, but Spock notes, "they fought the war your Earth avoided. And in this case the Asiatics won and took over this planet."³² Subsequently, their theory is proven correct when the American flag is brought into the room. Meanwhile, Cloud William, the leader of the Yangs, proudly proclaims they have achieved victory over the Kohms. He then faces the American flag and starts to recite the "Pledge of Allegiance" in a very garbled form.³³ Kirk finishes the pledge and Cloud William is highly curious why Kirk knows their "holy" words.³⁴ Meanwhile, Tracey knows he will face serious consequences for killing so many Yangs. In order to save himself, Tracey claims Kirk and Spock are the "evil ones."³⁵

The first test Cloud William uses to determine who the "good" is is to see who can recite a passage from the Constitution of the United States, which the Yangs also consider "holy."³⁶ Cloud William begins to recite a few lines, but Kirk cannot remember the exact words that follow. Kirk then suggests a fight to prove who is good and who is evil, pitting Tracy against Kirk in a fight to the death.

Just as Kirk subdues Tracey but refuses to kill him, Sulu and a landing party beams in and arrests Tracey. Kirk then explains to the Yangs they have forgotten the true meaning of the United States Constitution. With the flag displayed in the background, Kirk expounds:

Hear this! Among my people we carry many such words as this, from many lands, from many worlds. Many are equally good and are as well respected. But, wherever we have gone, no words have said this thing of importance in quite this way. Look at these three words, written larger than the rest with a special pride never written before or since. Tall words proudly saying, 'We The People!'³⁷

The episode closes with Kirk feeling satisfied he has reeducated the Caucasian natives about their heritage, gazes reverently at the American flag, and leaves.

This episode demonstrates just as "To Kill a Man" did years earlier, that Roddenberry was driven by patriotism and believed that American democracy was the paragon of justice, righteousness, and virtue. He also implied that the Asian "Kohms" needed to enjoy the benefits of democratic ideology because their communist mindset was an inherent failure.

In Roddenberry's conception, the "Yellows"/ "Kahms" (later changed to Kohms), were weak-minded and incompetent both in fighting and the general organization of their society. Roddenberry based the story on fears of communism and an imagined Asian determination to conquer America reminiscent of the "yellow peril" argument made by whites against Asians that began in the U.S. in the late 1800s.³⁸ In addition, the "White/ Yongs," were depicted as superior in both their fighting prowess and their American culture, combining the cliché noble savage with virtuous "white" democratic ideology. The superiority of the "American" culture was further portrayed when the American flag was represented as a sacred item to the Yongs and Kirk, at the end of the episode, passionately recites, "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure

the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution...”³⁹

This episode’s creative structure was weak. Many questions were left unanswered. Why was Captain Tracey, an elite Starship Captain, motivated by power and wealth in the first place? Later in the episode, McCoy informed Tracey that the biological agent that gives long life spans to the natives cannot be replicated. Thus, Tracey’s hope of becoming wealthy as a purveyor of a “fountain of youth” could never happen. Why one of the supposed elite fourteen men allowed to be Starship Captains did not see reason and wanted more phasers and power packs to fight the Yongs was never explained. Consequently, the motivation of the antagonist was entirely removed twenty minutes before the episode ended. However, Roddenberry sacrificed continuity to make his statement on the virtues and grandeur of United States democracy.

Roddenberry was so proud of this episode and its patriotism that he promoted “The Omega Glory” to NBC executives. In a memo to John Reynolds, he bragged, “I do think "THE OMEGA GLORY" may be worth a full page Emmy announcement in the Trade magazines a few days before it airs.”⁴⁰ Roddenberry followed up with a memo to Stan Robertson:

It's hard for me to be objective about this episode but Bob Justman and several others here think it is deserving of a bit of promotion because of its unusual nature and an unusual patriotic theme toward the end of it, plus an unusual aspect involving East-West conflict. And at this critical time in STAR TREK advertising purchasing for the new season, a little of chatter that we have a hot episode coming up wouldn't hurt us at all.⁴¹

Clearly, Roddenberry thought he had created something special in this episode. Yet, Roddenberry's anti-communist/ anti-Asian worldview was evident and contradicted what he said he believed about tolerance and diversity. An editorial in the September 1968 issue of *Spockanalia* documented the displeasure of fans with *Star Trek's* second season in which "A Private Little War" and "The Omega Glory" aired. The criticisms were about overall quality and commented, "The interplanetary Federation of sentient beings has become an Earth-dominated, U.S.A.-oriented colonial power...The universe has more to offer."⁴² As for "The Omega Glory" fans felt it was an unoriginal plot line asking:

And why must we be bombarded by planets identical with Earth "except for one little thing." This was handled very cleverly in "A Piece of the Action," but elsewhere is [sic] has varied between disappointing and utterly poor. We both nearly turned off "The Omega Glory" in the middle!...Please bring back your original standards...and let "Omega" be past.⁴³

"A Private Little War" was a clear indication of Roddenberry's support for the Vietnam War. "The Omega Glory" fell in line with the U.S. government's Cold War policies predicated on the idea that democracy was superior to any other form of government and communism was the ultimate threat to freedom and liberty.

In stark contrast, "A Taste of Armageddon" and "Errand of Mercy" heavily influenced or authored by Gene Coon, had liberal-humanist points of views at the forefront and gave *Star Trek* a much different reputation. The original story outline for "A Taste of Armageddon" (1967), written by Robert Hamner, was a standard love story with a unique idea imbedded within it. The Enterprise is in dire need of repairs after hitting a meteor shower and limps to the nearest planet, Eminiar VII. The planet's inhabitants try to turn them away, but the Enterprise is so badly damaged

they cannot leave. The story unfolds with a love triangle between MEA-348, her home world love interest SAR-627, and Kirk. However, as Robert Hamner wrote, the story had another plot line:

The Eminian system might have first been devised as a humanitarian scheme of things, but it has its one inherent evil-it has made wars too neat, too easy, too painless. One step into the anti-matter machine and- poof- it's all over. That's too easy. War should always have its full measure of pain and horror and desolation and destruction. That way, with all its nightmare qualities maintained, war will always be repugnant and the human condition will always fight to end it for all time. The horror should be kept intact as a reminder of the evil that must constantly be fought against.⁴⁴

This idea remained the main story arc into the final on-air version. The episode ultimately focused on the idea that peace is preferable to war.⁴⁵

Coon wrote a memo to Robert Hamner on September 15, 1966:

Your entire idea, Kirk's philosophy, that this war goes on only because it is so neat and clean and non-destructive, is intriguing and exciting...as is his hypothesis that making war horrible again, or the threat of war horrible again, would bring about peace. Let us use it.⁴⁶

Coon later in the memo added to the story by suggesting:

The problem, the main problem, with the story as presently outlined is that Kirk really accomplishes nothing, wreaks no changes, gives us no solution. Why not let him be the big hero? By threatening to bring down total war in all its horror upon them...a seemingly inhuman thing to do...he is in effect insuring the coming of peace and the settlement of the long dispute...And Kirk could be the motivating factor which solves the matter of war and peace by shoving them into a peace conference.⁴⁷

NBC's Programming Manager, Stanley Robertson, gave approval to move ahead with the story praising its potential to become, "one of our most outstanding STAR TREK teleplays." Robertson continued:

The point he sinks home, of course, is a very strong plea for the abolition of war. I would suggest that all of us who are so vitally concerned with telling

action-adventure stories which have some substance, carefully analyze this storyline and use it as a guide as to how we can achieve our goals...⁴⁸

Since approval was given by NBC to move forward with this story concept, others on the *Star Trek* team were now focused on reworking it again. Associate Producer Robert Justman, sent a memo to Coon on September 22, 1966 mentioning that the episode would violate the Starfleet mandate of “noninterference in another culture's internal affairs, natural development and progression,” the Prime Directive.⁴⁹ Justman presented the solution:

I do think we have established the fact that our Enterprise people are not to interfere with the culture of any civilization they come across. Since Kirk must necessarily interfere with the culture of this planet, it would be best if he was forced to interfere with it. He should not, therefore, start to do anything to change the course of this planet's civilization until the Enterprise and its crew are declared casualties of the war with the other planet. At that time, he can then proceed to take effective steps to save his ship and crew.⁵⁰

Discussions among the production staff continued over several months. Roddenberry did not weigh in until later in the process, almost four months after the episode had been proposed.

On December 5, 1966, Roddenberry sent a memo to Coon, Justman and Steve Carabatsos questioning various visual aspects of its production and some plotlines mentioning:

If you want to examine all this philosophically, their system may actually be superior to any he's [Kirk's] seen in space so far. It's certainly superior to 20th Century Earth's method of war. Somewhere in this script you've got to prove that their system is worse than ours. Either more people slaughtered over a given time, more destruction, more cruelty, or God knows something.⁵¹

Roddenberry's comment about the philosophical aspects of how war was conducted on Eminiar was not the main goal of the writers. The writers were not interested in

trying to debate which form of warfare was better or worse. They were only using the differing warfare systems to illustrate that a society that is not horrified by war will continue to be embroiled in violent conflict and that all types of war are harmful to societies. Roddenberry was looking at the story from a militaristic angle, whereas the writers were coming from a liberal-humanistic approach. Even with these comments from Roddenberry, what reached the air was an anti-war message created by others.

Another anti-war episode “Errand of Mercy” (1967), from *Star Trek’s* first season, was written and produced by Gene Coon. This episode had strong political overtones representative of Cold War-like conflict between the Federation and the Klingons, yet fully denounced violence and war. In this piece, he devised the Organian Peace Treaty that brought to a halt ongoing aggression between the Federation and the Klingon Empire. Out of all the seventy-nine episodes of *Star Trek*, including “Let That Be Your Last Battlefield,” “Errand of Mercy” was one of the best examples of liberal-humanism ideology within the series.

The televised episode begins with Kirk receiving orders from Starfleet command to prevent the Klingons from establishing a strategic base of operations in a disputed area of space. Organia is a peaceful planet the Klingons plan to use as their base and it is up to Kirk to make sure this does not happen.

Kirk and Spock arrive on the planet and are greeted by the Chairman of the Council of Elders, Ayelborne. Kirk immediately informs Ayelborne that the Organians are in great danger. They are brought to the council chambers and despite Kirk’s warnings that the Klingons are cruel dictators who will take away all freedom from Organia, the council seems entirely unconcerned.

Kirk cannot understand why the Organians are not terrified after hearing what the Klingons are like and why they refuse the Federation's help. Kirk then resorts to trying to sell the Organians on the Federation by listing all the benefits that come with an alliance. Even with all the information and offers of assistance Kirk gives, the Organians are still not interested.

By this point in the episode, the Klingons arrive and take over as the governing body. The Organians are compliant and refuse to challenge the Klingons or their commander, Kor, who is pleased the natives will not resist. However, Kirk and Spock are completely baffled by the Organian's passive behavior and decide to take matters into their own hands by sabotaging a Klingon munitions storage area. Eventually, the Klingons discover Kirk and Spock are Federation officers and were responsible for the sabotage. After a brief interrogation and incarceration, Kirk and Spock escape and infiltrate the Klingon headquarters to overthrow their control of the planet.

Just as a fight is about to ensue between Kirk, Spock and the Klingons in the headquarters office, everything on the planet and the spaceships in orbit becomes scalding hot. Simultaneously, all power is disabled on starships across the galaxy. Kirk, Spock, the Enterprise crew, and the Klingons are completely puzzled.

The surprise ending and the main idea to the story is revealed when Council members, Ayelborne and Claymare, casually stroll into Kor's office and simply inform everyone in the room they are putting a stop to this. Disbelief by Kirk and Kor quickly turns into anger that the Organians are meddling into their affairs and they vehemently defend their right to settle their differences through violence.

Ayelborne gently interrupts both men and asks if they have the right, “To kill millions of innocent people? To destroy life on a planetary scale?”⁵² Kirk, embarrassed, responds, “Well, no one wants war... Eventually, we would...”⁵³ Ayelborne as a wise parent stops Kirk in midsentence and informs him, “Oh, eventually you will have peace. But only after millions of people have died. It is true in the future you and the Klingons will become fast friends. You will work together.”⁵⁴ The Organians then kindly ask them all to leave and transform into their natural state of pure energy. Both parties realize that whether they like it or not, the incredibly advanced Organians have made sure there will not be a war between them.

The episode closes with Kirk confessing to Spock on the bridge of the Enterprise, “I’m embarrassed. I was furious with the Organians for stopping a war I didn’t want.”⁵⁵ Spock reassures Kirk not to feel too embarrassed since it took the Organians millions of years to become as evolved both in form and in ethical behavior. The episode fades out with Kirk seemingly reflecting on the events that transpired and leaving the viewer to contemplate the events of the fictional story as well.

“Errand of Mercy,” was not subtle in making an obvious parallel between the fictional Federation and Klingon Empire and the United States and militaristic totalitarian Communist countries. The messages may seem pro-U.S. on the surface. However, ultimately both sides were portrayed as bickering children in the eyes of the Organians. After Ayelborne comments the two want to wage war on a planetary scale he asks in a condescending tone, “Is that what you’re defending?”⁵⁶ The episode emphasized that one ideology alone was not inherently evil or more predisposed to

violence. Rather, people and their tendencies toward aggression were the true cause of violence and war, a point illustrated when Kor tells Kirk during the interrogation, “Come now Captain, I am not referring to minor ideological differences. I mean that we are similar as a species. Here we are on a planet of sheep. Tigers, predators, hunters, killers.”⁵⁷ Moreover, Kirk’s claims that the Klingons are horrible and that the Federation is a far better choice by offering foreign aid did not convince the Organians to take sides. The Organians were depicted as wise enough to know governments try to use bribes as persuasion and that while those involved in disputes over ideological differences may fervently believe they are in the right, convictions and circumstances can shift. Hence, the sagacious Organians knew not to choose sides and fall into the fray. Later in the episode, the Organians point out that the Federation and Klingons will become “fast friends.” Thus, the underlying message of the episode was that certain ideological viewpoints may seem urgently pressing and relevant at present, just as the Cold War mindset was in the sixties, but that situations change. Overall, the episode drove home the idea that, if it was possible enemies could become allies in the future, then what was the point of being enemies and having animosity in the first place.

Lastly, the overt message was a denunciation of violent conflict. The Organians repeatedly stated they abhorred all forms of violence, but neither the Federation nor the Klingons respected and heeded their wishes to desist because both governments believed war was a legitimate option to resolve differences. Thus, just as the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. escalated the Cold War in the real world, the Federation and Klingons in “Errand of Mercy” were equally complicit in adding to the hostilities and

tensions between them. Since neither the Federation nor the Klingons could admit a nonbelligerent coexistence was a better option, the Organians forced a cessation of hostilities and, in the process, pushed the message that peaceful relations was the most evolved, enlightened, and productive societal form. This episode's ideology was created by Gene Coon and eventually became accepted as the one of the main overarching elements of *Star Trek*.

During *Star Trek's* long run in popular culture, it generally has been remembered as a series that embraced the concepts of equality, tolerance, and cooperation, all resulting in a harmonious and productive society for humanity and others in the Federation. In reality, a closer look at episodes paints a different picture. Overall, the concepts of embracing diversity, tolerance and rectifying conflict by peaceful means seemed mostly only to apply to the internal affairs of Earth and other civilizations that were part of the Federation. These political attitudes and the series views toward diversity and equality highlight the difference between Roddenberry's beliefs and the other writers' and *Star Trek* fans worldview.

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Chapter Five

The Science Fiction Community's Involvement in *Star Trek*

From the beginning, *Star Trek* piqued the interest of long-time members of the science fiction (SF) community. Many SF professional writers and fans alike supported the series during its first run on-air. The SF community was an established subculture with devoted members and this solid base ultimately benefited Roddenberry and his series more than he could have ever anticipated when he started to develop the concept for *Star Trek* in 1964.

Roddenberry did have a desire to make a quality television program that a network would be interested in purchasing. Overall, Roddenberry was a savvy marketing manager. He actively pursued opportunities to sell *Star Trek*, protect it from cancellation, and profit from its merchandising. In addition, Roddenberry sought the advice and talent of professional science fiction writers not only to help him create a respectable version of SF for television, but also to cultivate some of these connections for marketing purposes. Roddenberry's relationship with respected SF authors led these writers to publicize the series to the general SF fan community. Once the SF community became aware of *Star Trek* and it received positive reaction from the fans, Roddenberry maintained a warm and amicable association with this group. The fans were appreciative of the respect Roddenberry showed them; in return, they backed him and the series. Ultimately, the fan support brought Roddenberry his fame and gave *Star Trek* its liberal-humanist reputation and long life in popular culture.

Brief History and Culture of the Science Fiction Community

Star Trek was not the beginning of science fiction fandom; however, it did generate a larger awareness of science fiction that resulted with many new fans becoming involved in the genre and the SF community. This subculture already had developed a unique group identity long before *Star Trek* appeared. The SF community began in the 1920s through correspondence from fans reprinted in the science fiction pulp magazines. Fandom grew and the first World Science Fiction convention held in the United States was in New York in 1939. Every year, with the exception of the war years from 1942 to 1945, the convention was held in various locations around the world.¹ Eventually local and regional conventions were held as well. Conventions remained into the twenty-first century a gathering place for science fiction literary, film, and television professionals to discuss the genre and allow fans to meet fellow enthusiasts. Worldcons had a program of events and activities that evolved over time. Juanita Coulson, a long time and prominent member of the community, described the conventions of the 1950s as:

Worldcons actually had some programming--all pros, either giving singleton speeches on a particular topic or panel discussions among authors or editors. (Artists had no input, yet.) There was a banquet. There was voting on where the next Worldcon would be held, which before the rotation system was inaugurated involved infighting and wheeling dealing to rival the major political cons. There was a small huckster room, of sorts. (So small I never found it at the '52 Worldcon, my first.) There was an attempt at a "dance" and the beginnings of a masquerade--catch as catch can, no prizes, no stage, just homemade outfits milling around among the uncostumed. There were room parties.²

Eventually more activities were added. Costume contests, science fiction based fashion and art shows, dances, and filking (which is folk music based on science

fiction media and includes parodies of science fiction themes) to name only a handful have become basic program events at most conventions as well.³

For most of the history of the science fiction community, this interest or participation in the community was not looked upon in a favorable light by mainstream society. As Henry Jenkins noted, “the term fan...never fully escaped its earlier connotations of religious and political zealotry, false beliefs, orgiastic excess, possession, and madness, connotations that seem to be at the heart of many of the representations of fans in contemporary discourse.”⁴ Thus, Jenkins concluded in 1992, “the fan still constitutes a scandalous category in contemporary culture, one alternately the target of ridicule and anxiety, of dread and desire...the fan remains a ‘fanatic’ or false worshiper, whose interests are fundamentally alien to the realm of ‘normal’ cultural experience and whose mentality is dangerously out of touch with reality.”⁵

Since historically there has been a negative perception about this culture, science fiction fans (just as some *Star Trek* enthusiasts later on) kept their interest in this genre mostly among themselves. They developed a tight-knit community, even if many relationships were remote, unified by the love of science fiction.⁶ Stemming from the discrimination they experienced in mainstream society and the acceptance found within the fan community, a general feeling evolved in their culture that they were “fandom” and the rest of the world were considered “mundanes.”⁷ Juanita Coulson’s assessment of the SF fandom community in the sixties and the subsequent view of fandom by the rest of society summed up this overall picture. Coulson remembered:

Somewhat like the gay community of that same era--most of us had to deal with mundanes in our “real” lives, and had found out the hard and painful way what the majority of mundanes thought of our taste in reading, movies, and TV, and judged us on that basis. Sometimes that judgment could cost you your job. You were regarded as too “weird.” So you learned to keep a low profile, and reveal your real self only to fellow fans, in letters, fanzines, and those rare times when you were able to meet them face to face at a con. Acceptance of our “strangeness” was never a given, so most of us opted to blend in, for economic and social survival in the mundane world. Just the way it was...and in some lifestyle tracks, still is.⁸

What differentiated fandom and prodom (professional science fiction writers) from the rest of society was the passion for one particular literary (and later film and television) genre that many outsiders regarded as obsessive or outright bizarre. An example of a science fiction “fannish” mindset, Juanita Coulson recalled attending science fiction films and later typing out the scripts from memory “because I thought fannish. If you really liked something, you absorbed it totally and let it play ‘what if’ games with your brain, happily.”⁹

By the mid-1960s, with the Space Race in full swing, the television industry started to produce more science fiction based programs to capitalize on the public’s interest in space. The fans of science fiction benefited from corporate interest by receiving more visual representations of their favorite genre even if most productions were considered poorly crafted and juvenile. When *Star Trek* aired, it increased science fiction’s fan base and these newcomers also developed a “fannish” mindset. They began to form groups to watch the program weekly, tape recorded episodes, and began publishing fanzines based on *Star Trek* that speculated on the history of characters, various cultures, and the meanings within particular episodes. Some fanzine authors eventually wrote books that expanded the *Star Trek* corpus. The

increased attention and participation in science fiction generated by *Star Trek*, in turn, produced more interest by mainstream media in both the series and the fans. The downside to the heightened attention by the media in science fiction and its community was the perpetuation of derogatory stereotypes of fans. According to Bjo Trimble (who led the campaign in 1967 to save *Star Trek* from cancellation), the news media had a strong hand in perpetuating negative images of both literary science fiction and *Star Trek* fandom. Trimble recalled her experience with news outlets and believed it was generally indicative of how they conducted interviews with fans:

When some of us were being interviewed by a well-known, snotty local news commentator/movie reviewer...we were asked about our “passions” concerning *Star Trek*... “Don’t you think it’s pretty abnormal for grown people to go around in costumes and be able to quote every word Mr. Spock ever said?” Richard Arnold asked causally “Do you like baseball?” The cameraman, who was wearing a baseball cap, enthusiastically replied in the affirmative. “Do you know how many home runs Babe Ruth hit?” Richard inquired. The cameraman quoted the statistics on Babe Ruth’s baseball career. “Don’t you think,” Richard said slyly, “that it’s pretty abnormal for a grown man to run around quoting something that happened nearly 50 years ago?”¹⁰

This type of perception about science fiction and *Star Trek* fans persisted. Derogatory attitudes and views of science fiction fans, however, did not deter fans from pursuing what they enjoyed. The result of this form of discrimination actually had a solidifying effect on fans and made some participants in the culture more determined to promote science fiction.

Roddenberry, *Star Trek* and the Science Fiction Community

Many fans and even casual viewers during *Star Trek*’s first run felt it was a quality program amidst a plethora of worn out and overused concepts that were far

from intellectually stimulating. As a result, the science fiction community, including both professional writers and fans, played a large part in keeping *Star Trek* on the air for three seasons and eventually turning it into a world phenomenon.

The partnership between Roddenberry and the science fiction community began well before the first episode aired on television. Roddenberry created relationships and faithful allies with the members and regularly called on their assistance to promote *Star Trek*. Generally, the reason fans offered support and actively advocated for the program was because they felt *Star Trek* was one of the first real attempts to making a mature science fiction television program that was imbued with some worthwhile messages.¹¹ For science fiction writers the program offered opportunities for employment and recognition of their genre. The first targeted promotion of the series to SF fans was at the World Science Fiction Convention in 1966. This event was the beginning of the amicable relationship between Roddenberry and the larger fan base.

By February 1966, *Star Trek* was sold to NBC for the Fall season line up.¹² The news spread from science fiction author Harlan Ellison to Ben Jason who was the Chairman of the Twenty-Fourth World Science Fiction convention held in Cleveland. The word was out that Roddenberry was producing a science fiction television program that had the backing of several professional science fiction writers. During the planning stage of the Twenty-Fourth World Science Fiction Convention, Ben Jason wrote to Roddenberry and said, “Harlan tells me that you will be presenting the two pilots for the proposed STAR TREK series at the Science Fiction Writer’s Association banquet on March 11th” and “he mentions that you will give a small talk

along with these films.”¹³ At the end of the letter Jason asked, “Is there any possibility that you could repeat this as part of the program at our convention?”¹⁴ Initially, Roddenberry would not commit. However, after learning from Ellison what a science fiction convention entailed, Roddenberry changed his mind. In March 1966, he wrote Jason saying, “Yes, I definitely plan to attend and will bring back both STAR TREK pilots.”¹⁵ Roddenberry, following the suggestion of Ellison, also offered “to be available for some seminar-type work on translating sf into film and television.”¹⁶

One month before *Star Trek* premiered on primetime, Roddenberry informed Howard McClay, Herb Solow, and others he would be attending the convention and that it was an opportunity to advertise *Star Trek* to a target audience and was possibly a venue to receive “nationwide coverage.”¹⁷ He further explained, “Since a good percentage of the nation’s top sf writers are fans of ours, consider our product the only true sf being made, they have put us in prime time and prime position, keep warning us ‘not to let a march be stolen on us.’”¹⁸

This convention was Roddenberry’s first immersion in the science fiction fan culture and his attendance was generally a success. Juanita Coulson recalled that “Roddenberry and a flack from ABC were both showing premiere films.”¹⁹ The crowd’s reaction to ABC’s *Time Tunnel* was negative, but:

When Roddenberry got up to introduce “Where No Man Has Gone Before” he was shaking so badly he had to cling to the podium for support, and apologized for the NBC ordered scale-backs in the script, almost with a “please don’t lynch me, I tried to do the best they’d let me” appeal. As a result, the audience was patient and decided “this isn’t too bad.” A number of science flaws, but all in all, a good effort.²⁰

As Coulson noted, the common stereotype of science fiction fans as fanatical obsessed dupes who would take any science fiction given to them was not the case.²¹ These fans sought high quality science fiction. The criteria for worthiness were influenced by many years of experience with the genre that allowed them to determine standards by which they judged science fiction as a success, failure, or at least a respectable attempt. At the time, *Star Trek* fell in the latter category for science fiction fans.

Even with the overall support from fans at the Cleveland Worldcon in 1966, from the very first season, *Star Trek's* ratings were low and it was in constant danger of cancellation. During this era in television, the Nielsen ratings were the definitive gauge of the success of a television program. Yet at the time, Nielsen ignored demographics to determine whether a program was worthy of staying on-air. *Star Trek* drew young adults in the age range of 18 to 35 who possessed significant spending power.²² However, during *Star Trek's* first run, the Nielsen ratings showed only that viewership was sluggish and thus it was not attractive to advertisers. After only four months on-air, Roddenberry was already calling for assistance from friends and supporters within the science fiction community to save his show.²³

By November of 1966, Roddenberry had enlisted the help of the science fiction community to save *Star Trek* from cancellation. Roddenberry requested help from the Science Fiction Writers of America (SFWA) and cautioned that, "Our name of course should not appear on it; it should appear to come from the organization itself."²⁴ SFWA's Lloyd Biggle, with a strong sense of urgency responded to Roddenberry that he would have a mailing out to the members within a few days and

“that these will include the majority of the fans who will be helpful to you. Most of the fanzine editors will be among them.”²⁵ Biggle also noted that, “no fanzine editor has reflexes that are capable of dealing with this kind of emergency,” but suggested, “If you add to your appeal, ‘Please pass the word to Science Fiction Fans everywhere,’ some might respond with a quick notice via their own mailing lists” and “this will be the quickest way to reach the most people.”²⁶ Roddenberry was grateful for the valuable fan connections provided by Biggle and the SFWA and sent a memo to the head of Desilu Publicity, Howard McClay informing, “Attached our latest letter from Lloyd Biggle, Jr. of Science Fiction Writers of America. As you can see, he is proving to be of much help...Do you think a gift bottle for him would be out of order at this time?”²⁷

The Science Fiction Writers of America was only one part of the science fiction community’s support of Roddenberry and *Star Trek*. Well-known science fiction authors created “The Committee” and included Poul Anderson, Robert Bloch, Lester Del Rey, Harlan Ellison, Philip Jose Farmer, Frank Herbert, Richard Matheson, Theodore Sturgeon, and A.E. Van Vogt. These authors gave their backing to *Star Trek* and used their influence in the science fiction community to send out the call for fan support of the program. Their plea to the fans in the fanzine *Yandro* in December 1966 was:

STAR TREK’s cancellation or a change to a less adult format would be tragic, seeming to demonstrate that real science fiction cannot attract a mass audience. We need letters! Your and ours, plus every science fiction fan and TV viewer we can reach through our publications and personal contacts.²⁸

The letter also encouraged viewers not only to write to the network, but also local and national media outlets. This appeal to science fiction fandom from the professional science fiction writers was the first “Save *Star Trek*” campaign. The second wave of the “Save *Star Trek*” campaign in 1967, included not only Roddenberry and professional science fiction writers, but also a major grassroots effort by the fans themselves. As Bjo Trimble recalled, “The first time was frankly pure self-interest” on the part of the professional science fiction writers because of their interest in the “potential sales of scripts.”²⁹ Roddenberry certainly was motivated by self-interest as well. However, the fan involvement in saving *Star Trek* according to Trimble “was entirely altruistic.”³⁰

Bjo and her husband John, spear-headed the second “Save *Star Trek*” campaign in 1967. Bjo Trimble had first met Roddenberry at the Cleveland Worldcon in September 1966 where she had organized a futuristic fashion show. Roddenberry asked Trimble if he could add three costumes from *Star Trek* into the program at the last minute. She agreed because Roddenberry offered to have one of his professional models as the starter for the runway. Roddenberry was grateful for Trimble’s assistance later telling her, “next time you are in Hollywood, give me a call and we’ll do lunch.”³¹

Trimble eventually took him up on that offer and while with her husband, who was on a business trip to Los Angeles, called on Roddenberry who invited her and John to the set. Trimble recalled her assessment about why Roddenberry was so welcoming to fans on the set:

The thing is, that nobody in Hollywood was betting this would last very long. They were all figuring, well this is another science fiction flash in the pan. And it'll turn dumb and then it'll go away. So Gene was thrilled that fans liked the show. And he was so thrilled, that if you showed up at Paramount, you got invited in, you got shown the sets. Sometimes props were given to people. That's how it got started.³²

From that point on the Trimbles, who made frequent trips to Los Angeles, would regularly stop by the *Star Trek* set.

The inspiration for the second "Save *Star Trek*" campaign occurred after one of their visits in its second season. While on the set, the production's caterers told the Trimbles, "Word has come down unofficially that this will be its last season."³³ On their drive back home John said, "I was really sad to see everybody that low-spirited. We ought to be able to do something about that."³⁴ Bjo agreed, and they worked out a plan to fight cancellation, but worried that "if Gene's throwing in the towel, there's no sense to going to all this work."³⁵ Bjo Trimble called Roddenberry and she recalled that he insisted that there had just been a staff meeting to discuss "if there was some way to reach the fans."³⁶ Roddenberry welcomed the Trimbles' assistance.

The Trimbles went into action and used their contacts in the science fiction community to call on the fans to save *Star Trek* with a letter writing campaign. In December 1967, the Trimbles, sent a letter rallying "STAR TREK fans, fanzine editors, and other interested parties":

We want to combat the good ol' traditional American attitude of "well, my one tiny vote won't count toward much..." because your one tiny letter just may be THE letter that topples the scales in the right direction. If thousands of fans just sit around, moaning about the death of STAR TREK, they get exactly what they deserve: GOMER PYLE! [Yetch!] But if thousands of fans get off their fat typers and W*R*I*T*E letters, and do it soon [like, NOW], it could happen that the man in charge of this sort of thing will be more impressed with our letters than with the damned Neilson ratings. We have to

show that there are more people who want STAR TREK than who don't really care, one way or another.³⁷

The fans did write letters, although the number of letters has been contested by various people over the years, ranging from one NBC's spokesman's estimate of 12,000 to Roddenberry's claim of over one million.³⁸ Regardless of how many pieces of mail NBC received, the letter writing campaign was an important factor in the second "Save *Star Trek*" campaign and according to Solow and Justman, "caught the attention of NBC."³⁹

Furthermore other members of the science fiction community and professionals in scientific fields contributed their clout in providing complimentary publicity for *Star Trek* in an effort to promote and save the series. In January 1968, John Campbell, editor of the science fiction magazine *Analog*, in a supportive letter offered an idea both to attract attention and to make a profitable merchandising product for *Star Trek*:

I'm joining in the campaign to promote "Star Trek," naturally—it's the world's first and only true science-fiction program, and it averages really high in quality...I'm writing a few letters—but also I thought of something that might help otherwise. Gimmick: Winter cap for boys, made of heavy black overcoat material (scraps and cuttings can probably be used) cut to match Mr. Spock's skull-cap style hairdo.⁴⁰

Other science professionals also lent their support. Roddenberry attempting to keep his involvement in the "Save *Star Trek*" campaign a secret informed Richard Hoagland of the Springfield Museum of Science "that we naturally cannot seem to be involved in a 'Save *Star Trek* campaign' ourselves since using our names results in the network's questioning the legitimacy of such a campaign."⁴¹ Later in the same

letter, Roddenberry mentioned, “Isaac Asimov came through in grand style too, sent over 200 letters to space industry brass regarding what is at stake.”⁴²

The letter writing campaign was a voluntary effort encouraged by Roddenberry and primarily funded by the Trimbles and contributions from many other fans. The only monetary support from Roddenberry was, as Trimble recalled, “at the very very last, we were down to a point where we desperately needed about a hundred dollars for postage and Gene gave us the money and at one point he sent over a luncheon for everybody.”⁴³ Yet, the letter writing campaign was only one component in the overall plan. Protests by fans outside of NBC’s Burbank studios along with a publicity stunt at the network’s New York office were also orchestrated by primarily Roddenberry with the Trimbles’ assistance.⁴⁴

As Bjo Trimble recalled, “John and I were sitting with Gene and his girlfriend, having a discussion about the ‘Save ST’ campaign.”⁴⁵ Roddenberry already had bumper stickers made with slogans such as “STAR TREK LIVES” and “I GROK SPOCK.” In their strategy session, “Gene commented that it would be a great idea to get the bumpers stickers inside NBC, where sympathetic employees might put them to good use.”⁴⁶ The Trimbles once again sprung into action and called on Caltech students to deliver bumper stickers to NBC Burbank.⁴⁷

Additionally, Roddenberry and the Trimbles decided that infiltrating NBC New York would be useful to get the attention of the network executives.⁴⁸ The Trimbles knew of a young woman, Wanda Kendall, who they thought might be willing to sneak into NBC New York headquarters and made a call to her. As Bjo recalled, “an hour later, Wanda Kendall was sitting with us, smiling shyly, and

agreeing with a gleam in her eye to fly to New York with a handful of our flyers on How to Write Letters to Save *Star Trek* and some bumpers stickers.”⁴⁹ Roddenberry bought an airplane ticket for Wanda and the Trimbles “a few hours later” drove her to the airport.⁵⁰ Kendall did make her way into NBC New York pasting bumper stickers on the executives’ limousines and handing out flyers to the employees.⁵¹ On the west coast, Caltech and other local college students picketed NBC Burbank.⁵² Ultimately, the protests were successful in amassing attention for *Star Trek* as well.

Roddenberry watched the Burbank demonstration on his motorcycle from a distance and in a letter to Isaac Asimov described it as, “rather exciting.” “The students were,” he wrote, “as one would expect from Caltech, very clever in their signs, music, and a proclamation which was handed over to NBC Program executives in a nice little ceremony.”⁵³ In closing, Roddenberry once again reminded Asimov that, “As with the student march and other things, naturally we have to stay out of the picture and plead total ignorance if confronted by our enemy the network. If they know we have any part in this, then the whole value of it is immediately lost.”⁵⁴ Herb Solow remembered at the time the interaction between the students and the network executives:

The meeting was never confrontational. If anything, it was more a love-in because the NBC Burbank Program and Press Department did, in fact, support renewal and had been urging top management in New York to give *Star Trek* another chance. Herb Schlosser and Grant Tinker had an expression to describe those series they wanted renewed, “p and p”- popular and proud. They both felt *Star Trek* was “p and p.”⁵⁵

The end result of the campaign was the series won renewal.⁵⁶ The Trimbles and fans across the country accomplished their letter writing mission with limited resources.

Interestingly, Roddenberry, who was far more financially secure, had the \$977.12, which included Kendall's airfare and other expenses that he incurred for the Save *Star Trek* campaign, reimbursed by Desilu. Even though he was trying to keep his involvement secret, he still left a paper trail at Desilu that clearly indicated his involvement.⁵⁷ Roddenberry certainly did benefit from his friendship with the Trimbles and the generous support from the science fiction community around the country.

This warm relationship between Roddenberry, the Trimbles, and others in the SF community put him in the good graces of fandom. Roddenberry was well aware this group was important to his career and he made sure he thanked them for their contributions. Roddenberry took the time to write many letters of gratitude to regular viewers and to government institutions such as NASA and the Smithsonian. The majority of his cordial letters though were to his loyal backers such as science fiction magazine editors, SF authors, and fanzine editors. Examples of good public relation skills on the part of Roddenberry were kind words to prominent science fiction members.

In a letter to Juanita Coulson, Roddenberry thanked her for a fanzine she dedicated to *Star Trek* and exclaimed:

Obviously the couple of extra months wait for ST-PHILES #1 was well worth it. For look what you've gone and done: You have put together the most intelligent, interesting, well written fanzine ever! I can't begin to tell you how proud I am of this and this feeling exists throughout the entire company... Thank you doesn't seem adequate—but it's the only word I can think of.⁵⁸

In another letter from Roddenberry to Shirley Meech, who created the fanzine PLAK-TOW, glowed once again with praise:

The pictures and especially PLAK-TOW are sensational: The production crew, cast and just about everyone around here has raved. You have proved your point; (although I had never suspected you of doing so). I know that you are not out to make “brownie points or a fast buck” off STAR TREK. We love you and your fanzine.⁵⁹

These are only a few samples of appreciative words Roddenberry wrote to science fiction members over the course of the first run of *Star Trek*. Juanita Coulson summarized the feelings of the SF fans toward Roddenberry well. She recalled, “When the *Save ST* campaign raged, he was warmly repaid by the SF community because he'd had the courtesy to treat its members as intelligent people, not mere Nielsen numbers.”⁶⁰

The motivation for the fans to save the series was because they felt it was a decent attempt at science fiction and had merit in some of its messages. However, it is important to remember that the view of Roddenberry and *Star Trek* evolved over time. In the beginning, the reading of the series by casual viewers and fans ranged from very positive to critical. This falls in line with Stuart Hall’s theory of encoding and decoding of media messages which describes the process of differing readings that occur with viewers. Hall’s theory illuminates the difference between the actual message transmitted to the masses and the message understood by an audience. Hall rejects the idea that mass media messages are always controlled from the top and that audiences absorb all the creator’s messages at face value. Hall argues that messages are sent out by mass media and the receivers reinterpret those messages by filtering them through their own personal ideologies and life experiences. This, in turn, enables audiences to assimilate mass media messages into their own personal life view. In essence, audiences derive meaning out of popular culture products just as

someone might interpret a work of art. Different aspects of a cultural product or art form will resonate with various people for different reasons.⁶¹

With regard to *Star Trek* audiences and fans, some gravitated to the ideals of equality or philosophies that addressed the human condition, others to technology or the military aspects, while women tended to focus on the character aspects of the production.⁶² As Juanita Coulson noted:

STAR TREK used a lot of the familiar plot lines from previously published science fiction. In many cases the plots were taken almost directly from the original stories. "Arena" immediately comes to mind. But by the time non-fan women watching TV saw "Arena" and other lifted-from-SF-classics plots on STAR TREK, they were already firmly addicted and fascinated by the main CHARACTERS. From there, they made the same step I had years and years earlier--they became willing to cope with all these new, star-ranging concepts and plotlines, because those were presented to them through the adventures of the CHARACTERS.⁶³

Hence, one reason for *Star Trek's* lasting power is that it has many diverse elements appealing to a wide range of individual interests and inclinations.

An example of a positive reading of *Star Trek* was in a letter the fan Ron S. sent to the *Akron Beacon* in 1967. He listed the criterion that he considered "good" science fiction and argued that *Star Trek* fit the bill. Ron S. felt:

[Science fiction] it should be adult. By adult, I mean it should not be a story aimed at kids and written with the regular stereotype characters that most low-class science fiction movies, television shows and stories use: the horrible adversary, whether he be human or monster; the goody-goody hero who always wins and strikes a blow for the safety of the world, and the pretty girl who always has to be saved. The number of good science fiction movies that have ever been made you could count on the fingers of your hands. The vast majority are quite poor. The same for the television shows. *Star Trek* is the only show that has made TV so far that fits the requirements. Let's keep on.⁶⁴

Interestingly, Ron S. seemingly overlooked the fact that *Star Trek* regularly employed the stereotypical plot devices he so detested. Additionally, throughout the seventy-

nine episodes of *Star Trek*, Captain Kirk was the epitome of saving the pretty damsel in distress, the “goody-goody” saving the galaxy from the “horrible adversaries” of the Klingons, Romulans, and villain of the week. Kirk also was continually promoting the “American Way” of democracy, individualism and freedom throughout the galaxy. Ron S. revealed in his comment that fans read the series based on their own personal values and viewpoints.

On the other end of the spectrum, there were fans who felt *Star Trek* needed improvement. Not all fans and people in the science fiction community were abounding with enthusiasm and used a critical eye when viewing *Star Trek*. An example of fans complaining about inconsistencies and criticizing *Star Trek* was elaborated on in an issue of the fanzine *Spockanalia* in 1968. E.A. Oddstad, in the article “Man in the Hero Suit,” expounded on flaws of the series main character stating, “Although Kirk talks about the necessity of freedom, he does like playing God. He has reorganized a number of societies.”⁶⁵ Oddstad continued by noting:

James T. is apparently out to break Don Juan’s record. His women, almost without exception, nitwits. They’re no competition. He’s in control...Kirk’s morals are a set of words and actions imposed on him. They are not part of his character.⁶⁶

Juanita Coulson reiterated a similar sentiment on how women were portrayed in *Star Trek*. She recalled that in the sixties female fans, “knew that various aspects of ST and its attitude toward gender equality weren't up to our hopes. But they were so FAR above the general attitude of American society as represented on TV at that time that we were willing to put up with it.”⁶⁷

The depiction of women in *Star Trek* was not the only aspect that was criticized by some fans. The lack of racial diversity was noticed as well. In 1968, E.A. Oddstad noted in her article “Liberalism in Outer Space”:

Earthmen--or Terrans--are the Federation's master race...It is interesting to note that the Terrans are almost all white. The Chinese either all died or all stayed home and cultivated their gardens. There are too few blacks; and I remember seeing a couple of orientals, one Indian and no Amerindians. Even if the Service [Starfleet] has the same ethnic composition as Europe or the U.S. today (and why should it?) there are too many whites.⁶⁸

Later in the article, Oddstad details the problematic methods *Star Trek* used to solve social and political dilemmas. Oddstad observed:

Star Trek (as I've said before) goes in for speeches and parables about freedom. People must make their own decisions. At the same time, it uses supermen or dues ex machine. Star Trek sets up an interesting problem and then in the last act hauls in a superman (an Organian or Kirk or whatever) to solve the problem. This is not the way problems are solved in the real world.⁶⁹

Yet overall, even with these pointed criticisms Oddstad still felt, “I am willing to admit that there are t.v. shows more neatly put together than Star Trek and more carefully polished. But Star Trek has a secret ingredient: ideas...Star Trek, unlike other shows, not only reflects ideas but discusses them.”⁷⁰

Fans noticed the inconsistencies in *Star Trek*, but still decided to back Roddenberry and the series. The reasons for this vary, but there is one basic explanation for why fans resonated with the show overall. As Bjo Trimble noted, *Star Trek* put forth the message “the human spirit will prevail” and “*Star Trek* showed us a world where we had not managed to annihilate ourselves.”⁷¹ Juanita Coulson reiterated the idea of optimism and hope fans read in *Star Trek*. She recalled:

At the same time humans were expanding their imaginations they were reaching out physically, stepping off their own planet for the first time...made

countless useful spin-off discoveries in the process, and advanced the basic scientific knowledge of mankind in ways we can't yet completely fathom. If that isn't a real-life version of STAR TREK's optimistic universe, I don't know what is.⁷²

The reason Roddenberry was credited by many with giving the series liberal-humanist, hopeful, and optimistic dimensions was, in part, good salesmanship. He fashioned an image for himself, which later became part of the accepted canon and myth of the series. As Roland Barthes remarked, "the defining trait of myth is that it conceals the historical origin of human customs and beliefs, presenting them instead as expressions of immutable nature."⁷³ This definition is also true of the myth of Roddenberry and *Star Trek*. A succinct description of the myths that developed over the years in *Star Trek* fandom was clearly reflected in the program of events from the annual *Star Trek* convention in Las Vegas in 2011. The introduction was entitled, "Welcome to the Wonderful World of Gene Roddenberry's Vision." The first paragraph continued:

It's hard to believe that it was 45 years ago when *Star Trek* first blazed the air waves in the Swinging Sixties. We were a nation recovering from the loss of our President, poised on the brink of sending people on [sic] the moon, and rocking to the groovy sounds of the Beatles. Into this generation of introspection, revolution and transcendence came Gene Roddenberry's beautiful humanistic vision of our future, where the brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity were finally realized and we had moved deep out into the universe. *Star Trek* gave us real hope for the future, that we would transcend our own social and behavioral limitations and become something greater, a Federation of worlds where Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations unfolded.⁷⁴

This myth took many years to become "immutable in nature," but it started to develop from the first year *Star Trek* was on air.

Roddenberry at the Worldcon in 1966, initially sold himself as the creator of the series who was an auteur doing the best he could under the constraints imposed upon him by the network. Roddenberry maintained up until his death that the networks were consistently interfering with his production and thwarting his attempts to “say something” that might be deemed controversial. Thus, over time, this became *Star Trek* lore. Yet, Herb Solow recalled that Roddenberry “did not take responsibility for his own decisions and finding scapegoats to avoid confrontation” was common for him. Many times the scapegoat was the NBC network with regard to *Star Trek*.⁷⁵ Furthermore, as Associate Producer Robert Justman recalled:

Every story outline, every teleplay, every completed episode resulted in a memorandum from Broadcast Standards detailing items that had to be either changed or removed. Some of their admonitions were amusing, if not mind-boggling. While it occasionally steamed us, the fact was that *Star Trek* suffered no more than any other network show.⁷⁶

Justman’s description of the cautions as “amusing” or “mind-boggling” from NBC’s Broadcast Standards Department’s Jean Messerschmidt was completely accurate. A few examples of Messerschmidt’s comments from various episodes were:

Caution on the makeup used to denote Kirk’s wounds so they are not unnecessarily alarming or shocking to a viewer. Extreme care must be used when filming and editing the various fights... The fights must not be unnecessarily prolonged and not brutal. Caution to avoid the horrifying in the appearance of the creature. The men should not look like they were going to devour the women when they get within six inches of them.⁷⁷

The corrections suggested in memorandums by Broadcast Standards found in Roddenberry’s files were consistently trivial and there were not instructions that affected the substance of a story. Therefore, Roddenberry’s claim of censorship and the network hindrance to produce episodes that discussed compelling issues was

false. Yet, since Roddenberry consistently stuck to his story of an auteur struggling against censorship, the fans generally did not hold Roddenberry accountable for the more conservative episodes. They took the attitude he did the best he could in the face of network suppression, and some viewed him as a heroic man of integrity fighting for his beliefs.

Another circumstance that aided in the creation of Roddenberry's image and added to the *Star Trek* myth, was merchandising not only products, but eventually a consistent set of liberal-humanist ideas *Star Trek* purportedly represented and Roddenberry believed. After he became acquainted with the science fiction fan community, he started to realize what the consumers wanted. From the very first season, Roddenberry and other parties involved in *Star Trek* were looking for a way to make money off the *Star Trek* label. Desilu Business Affairs attorney, Ed Perlstein, started negotiations with Licensing Corporation of America in 1966 and continued to aggressively enter into contracts for a wide range of products.⁷⁸

In 1968, *The Making of Star Trek* was published that specifically catered to the fans desire for knowledge about the series and its creation.⁷⁹ This was the first book about *Star Trek*. It discussed the foundational ideas and framework of the series. In addition, Roddenberry used it as a vehicle to sell himself as a man who believed in tolerance, diversity, hope, and optimism for humanity. In an excerpt he stated, "Intolerance in the 23rd Century? Improbable! If man survives that long, he will have learned to take delight in the essential differences between men and between cultures... This is part of the optimism we built into Star Trek."⁸⁰ The *Star Trek* label went from merely selling novelty products to promoting ideas and a philosophy

because of Roddenberry. This book was one marketing venture by Roddenberry that started to build the myth of both the man and the series.

Later during *Star Trek's* third season in 1969, Roddenberry combined novelty products with philosophical ideas by creating the "Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations" (IDIC) lapel pin and insisted on a script change so that it would be worn and explained during the episode "Is There in Truth No Beauty?"⁸¹ The pin was sold through Roddenberry's merchandising company Lincoln Enterprises and the cast was not happy to be a part of, "Gene's rather thinly veiled commercial" as William Shatner recalled.⁸² Spock eventually wore the medallion in the episode and it was given a three-second tight close-up shot during a dinner conversation scene in which Captain Kirk explains it is the "most revered of all Vulcan symbols."⁸³ This was another marketing strategy to sell the fans on the philosophy that Roddenberry and, by extension *Star Trek*, encompassed.

Another aspect of Roddenberry's image creation was marketing himself as the definitive leader and creative force behind the program. As Herb Solow remembered, "I again marveled at the seemingly unending drive to fashion himself the single master, the absolute proprietor of *Star Trek*."⁸⁴ In Solow's opinion, Roddenberry's self-fashioning led fans to believe that he was "the unfettered, all-encompassing, see-all, hear-all, know-all Master of the *Star Trek* universe."⁸⁵

Interestingly, the event that was the most significant catalyst for creating the myth of Roddenberry and the *Star Trek* phenomena was its cancellation. Two important occurrences happened as a result of *Star Trek's* network demise. After the series was taken off the NBC primetime line up in 1969, it was broadcasted in

markets around the country, which gave it a new life. Instead of *Star Trek* locked into a once a week time slot on one network, it was now available to the viewing audience on various television stations at different times of the day. Thus, *Star Trek*, while in its first few years of syndication, attracted a much larger viewing audience, more recognition, and increased its fan base. The upsurge in viewers and fans led *Star Trek* on its path to becoming a worldwide phenomenon.⁸⁶

Roddenberry also benefitted from the fan base expansion. After the series was cancelled, he was unemployed and needed income. Luckily for him, he was asked to do speaking engagements. As Herb Solow recalled, a year after *Star Trek* was cancelled, “Roddenberry’s major income came from his appearances and the sale of ‘memorabilia’ and continued to be one of his main sources of income for many years.”⁸⁷

According to testimony in a later court case, from 1970 to the mid-1980s, Roddenberry “criss-crossed the United States, giving lectures (sometimes as many as 40-50 a year) at college campuses and other places about ‘Star Trek.’”⁸⁸ During these appearances, “he explained the *Star Trek* philosophy as one of ‘infinite diversity and infinite combinations,” a succinct slogan to represent the idea of acceptance and appreciation of individual and cultural diversity.⁸⁹ Thus, after the series ended production and throughout the seventies, Roddenberry’s career in the entertainment industry was marked with little success and he was grateful for the income the public appearances provided. As Roddenberry recalled in his interview with David Alexander, “I remember one of my first speeches — I got all of \$600 or \$700, which included the cost of the trip. I felt lucky to net the \$400 or \$500 that they paid for

me.”⁹⁰ Roddenberry knew the fan base and *Star Trek's* popularity was continually growing and was his only avenue to make a consistent living. By selling himself around the country as the creator of *Star Trek* who believed in a philosophy of tolerance, diversity, and optimism, Roddenberry ultimately cemented his image in popular culture and fandom. Eventually both Roddenberry and the perception of the series became synonymous with a liberal-humanist vision. Overall, Roddenberry's image creation resulted in his legendary status in *Star Trek* fandom and to some degree in popular memory.

Ultimately, as far as the association between Roddenberry and the science fiction community was concerned, it was not one-sided. All worked with one another to promote *Star Trek* for different motivations and benefited in varying degrees, although Roddenberry over the long haul received far more fame and financially lucrative rewards from the relationship. In the end, the congenial ties Roddenberry established with the science fiction community during the research and production stage of *Star Trek* in the sixties continued after the series ended and served him well over his lifetime.

The overarching impact of fan involvement in supporting, promoting and eventually saving *Star Trek* was not just that the program merely gained another season on-air. The long-term result of *Star Trek* running for a third season also meant it produced enough episodes to become a viable and profitable series in syndication. Thus, the initial syndication deal between Kaiser Broadcasting and Paramount, who had proprietary rights, led to *Star Trek* airing in reruns in major markets in 1969 and the popularity grew from there.⁹¹

Interestingly, even though many fans still put Roddenberry on a pedestal as the beloved creator of *Star Trek* who is admired for having a strong liberal-humanist vision, it was never him who truly internalized or pushed for those ideals. Fans over the years focused on the ideas of optimism and hope for the human race and as Bjo Trimble observed from her years in fandom, “though Roddenberry planted the seed, it truly was the fans who took it from there, and grew the tree.”⁹² Roddenberry merely created the basic framework of characters and setting. The meaning and liberal-humanist elements within *Star Trek* were initially contributed by others on the production team; then fans took those messages and created a worldwide phenomenon that celebrated those ideas. Ultimately, it was the fans who infused *Star Trek* and the series fan community with their collective hope and optimism for the human race.

Roddenberry certainly reaped numerous advantages from his connections with the science fiction community. Initially, Roddenberry gained an education from science fiction writers on the genre. Later his series benefited from the respectability that came from science fiction authors writing scripts for *Star Trek*. Then while *Star Trek* was on-air, he attained priceless support from the SF community that saved his program from cancellation twice. In addition, the insider knowledge of the community given to him by science fiction authors and fans enabled him to make money off merchandising *Star Trek* artifacts and products. However, the most profitable of all the products Roddenberry marketed was his image and the sale of the philosophy he and the series supposedly embodied. The promotion of these qualities eventually created the myth of the man and series.

End Notes

¹ Worldcon.org, “The Long List of World Science Fiction Conventions (Worldcons),” <http://www.smofinfo.com/LL/TheLongList.html> (accessed July 1, 2011).

² Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, February 7, 2011.

³ A simple internet search with the words “science fiction convention” will retrieve numerous results. A few websites for conventions that list their activities are: Creation Entertainment at <http://www.creationent.com> (accessed October 18, 2011).; Vulcan Events at <http://www.vulcanevents.com/events/orlando-2011.html> (accessed October 18, 2011).; World Science Fiction Society, World Science Fiction Convention at <http://www.wsfs.org> (accessed October 18, 2011).

⁴ Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1992), 12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶ Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, November 10, 2010. Juanita Coulson described the fan community and the members’ social contact with one another in the 1960s as: “Remember, there were no cell phones and no networks remotely like what we have now. Travel was expensive, and meeting fellow SF enthusiasts face to face depended heavily on where you were located geographically. If you could afford it, you MIGHT --if you could scrape up the money--travel to the annual SF Worldcon and MIGHT meet people you knew there--but in general you KNEW them through snail mail and the medium of the fanzine. It was a very, very different sort of social contact. You mention that the overarching amount of people involved--including peripherally--in any society today is so large that it's difficult to get to know anyone personally. The same applied in the 60's, but for the above reasons; contact was normally remote and often extremely slow. That's not to say you couldn't get to know people pretty well, even if you only met them a few times during your mutual lives.”

⁷ Juanita Coulson, email message to author, October 14, 2011. The term “mundanes” refers to non-fans of science fiction sometimes modified to friendly and unfriendly mundanes.

⁸ Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, November 3, 2010.

⁹ Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, December 13, 2010.

¹⁰ Bjo Trimble, *On the Good Ship Enterprise: My 15 Years with Star Trek* (Norfolk: Donning, 1982), 73.

¹¹ E.A. Oddstad (Eleanor Arnason), “Liberalism in Outer Space,” *ST-Phile*, no. 2 (reprint May 1976, originally printed 1968): 7. <http://laurajsweeney.com/LiberalisminOuterSpacebyE.A.Oddstad.pdf> (accessed October 21, 2011). This is an insightful overview of *Star Trek* by one fan.

¹² Herbert F. Solow and Robert H. Justman, *Inside Star Trek: The Real Story* (New York: Pocket Books, 1996), xv.

¹³ Ben Jason to Gene Roddenberry, 25 February 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 30, Folder 11, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Gene Roddenberry to Ben Jason, 22 March 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 30, Folder 11, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Gene Roddenberry to Howard McClay, Herb Solow and others, 24 August 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 30, Folder 11, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, October 2, 2010.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, October 2, 2010. Juanita Coulson explains the fans reaction to ABC’s *Time Tunnel* at the Cleveland Worldcon in 1966 as follows: “The ABC flack addressed a crowd of scientists and intelligent hobbyists as though we were idiotic children, assuring us after we saw the sample episode of TIME TUNNEL we’d all rush out and buy color TV sets because it was so ‘pretty.’ The episode featured Michael Rennie as the captain of the Titanic, with the intrepid time traveling hero yelling at him ‘you’ve got to turn the ship around! This is the Titanic!’”

Rennie had a beautiful ‘wait till I get hold of my agent’ expression in reaction, and the audience almost in unison called out, ‘Throw him over the side, Klaatu!’” Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, November 10, 2010. Coulson’s description of fan’s reaction continued, “The ABC publicity flack who had preceded him [Roddenberry] with an episode of ‘Time Tunnel’ had roused the audience to a nasty state of ‘we’ll show these media clowns we’re not the bunch of childish idiots they obviously think we are.’”

²² David Alexander, *Star Trek Creator: The Authorized Biography of Gene Roddenberry* (New York: Roc, 1994), 366.

²³ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 416. Discusses Nielsen ratings of *Star Trek*.

²⁴ Gene Roddenberry to Lloyd Biggle Jr., 18 November 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 30, Folder 11, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

²⁵ Lloyd Biggle Jr. to Gene Roddenberry, 25 November 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 30, Folder 11, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Gene Roddenberry to Howard McClay, 28 November 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 30, Folder 11, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

²⁸ Harlan Ellison, “The Committee,” *Yandro* #165, 8 December 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 30, Folder 12, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

²⁹ Trimble, *On the Good Ship Enterprise*, 25.

³⁰ Bjo Trimble, in discussion with the author, January 4, 2011.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Bjo Trimble to STAR TREK fans, fanzine editors, and other interested parties, 1 December 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 28, Folder 2, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

³⁸ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 379. Roddenberry told John Stanley, a newspaper columnist for the *Miami Herald Sunday Magazine*, in February 1968 that “we heard from a New York source that letters to the Network (probably counting too [sic] names on the many petitions received) passed the one million mark!” Leonard Nimoy claimed, “NBC reported receiving 114,000 pieces of protest mail.” Leonard Nimoy, *I Am Not Spock* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975), 56. Alan Baker the Director of Program Publicity for NBC said, “During the months of January and February, 1968, NBC’s *Star Trek* mail count totaled 12,000 pieces.” Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 380.

³⁹ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 380.

⁴⁰ John Campbell to Gene Roddenberry, 23 January 1968, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 28, Folder 2, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

⁴¹ Gene Roddenberry to Richard Hoagland, 17 January 1968, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 28, Folder 3, University of California at Los Angeles Library.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Bjo Trimble, in discussion with the author, January 4, 2011.

⁴⁴ Trimble, *On the Good Ship Enterprise*, 33.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵² Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 380-382.

- ⁵³ Ibid., 383.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 384.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 382.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 386. “For the second year in a row, in an on-the-air announcement, *Star Trek* fans were informed at the close of the March 1 episode, *The Omega Glory*, that *Star Trek* had been renewed for a third season.”
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 385.
- ⁵⁸ Gene Roddenberry to Juanita Coulson, 25 January 1968, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 28, Folder 3, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁵⁹ Gene Roddenberry to Shirley Meech, 19 January 1968, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 28, Folder 3, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁶⁰ Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, November 3, 2010.
- ⁶¹ Stuart Hall, *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 137, 138.
- ⁶² Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 96, 97.
- ⁶³ Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, October 12, 2010.
- ⁶⁴ Ron S., “Dick Shippy’s Mailbag,” *Akron Beacon*, 15 January 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 28, Folder 2, University of California at Los Angeles Library.
- ⁶⁵ E.A. Oddstad (Eleanor Arnason), “The Man in the Hero Suit,” *Spockanalia*, no. 2 (April 19, 1968): 32, 33. <http://laurajsweeney.com/TheManintheHeroSuitbyE.A.OddstadSpockanalia2.pdf> (accessed October 21, 2011).
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 31, 33.
- ⁶⁷ Juanita Coulson, e-mail message to author, November 4, 2010.
- ⁶⁸ E.A. Oddstad (Eleanor Arnason), “Liberalism in Outer Space,” *ST-Phile*, no. 2 (reprint May 1976, originally printed 1968): 8, 9. <http://www.laurajsweeney.com/LiberalisminOuterSpacebyE.A.Oddstad.pdf> (accessed January 21, 2012).
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., 10.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 7, 8.
- ⁷¹ Bjo Trimble, e-mail message to author, November 3, 2011.
- ⁷² Juanita Coulson, “Comments by the Publisher,” *ST-Phile*, no. 2 (reprint May 1976, originally printed 1968): 2. http://www.laurajsweeney.com/IntroductionbyJuanitaCoulsononST-Philesin1976IssueTwo_NEW.pdf (accessed January 21, 2012).
- ⁷³ Jon Wagner and Jan Lundeen, *Deep Space and Sacred Time: Star Trek and the American Mythos* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998), 16.
- ⁷⁴ Adam Malin, Gary Berman and others, “Creation Entertainment’s Official Star Trek Las Vegas Convention: Celebrating the 45th Anniversary, August 11-14, 2011.” Program of Events Pamphlet.
- ⁷⁵ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 152.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 200.
- ⁷⁷ Jean Messerschmidt to Star Trek Staff, 1 December 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 10, Folder 12, University of California at Los Angeles Library.; Jean Messerschmidt to Star Trek Staff, 27 December 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 11, Folder 8, University of California at Los Angeles Library.; John D.F. Black to Gene Roddenberry relaying comments by Jean Messerschmidt, 3 August 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 7, University of California at Los Angeles Library
- ⁷⁸ Ed Perlstein to Allan Stone, 16 November 1966, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 4, University of California at Los Angeles Library. For merchandising see also: Ed Perlstein to Herb Solow, John Reynolds, Emmet G. Lavery, Jr., Gene Roddenberry, Art Barron, Howard McClay, Shirley Stahnke, Howard Barton, 30 October 1967, Gene Roddenberry Star Trek Television Series Collection, 1966-1969, Box 29, Folder 4, University of California at Los Angeles Library. These products included, Enterprise model kits, board games made

by Ideal Toys, thermos and lunch kits produced by Aladdin Industries, and bubble gum trading cards issued by Leaf Brands. In a letter dated October 30, 1967, Perlstein gave an update to interested parties on the *Star Trek* team that informed, "I have just executed the approval of a contract between Hassenfeld Bros. and LCA. We are really moving and should make a whole lot of dough."

⁷⁹ Stephen Whitfield and Gene Roddenberry. *The Making of Star Trek* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸¹ William Shatner with Chris Kreski, *Star Trek Memories* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 9 and Joel Engel, *Gene Roddenberry: The Myth and the Man Behind Star Trek* (New York: Hyperion, 1994), 287.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ StarTrek.com, "Star Trek," *Is There in Truth No Beauty?*, http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/e5tlma9OxGvQt7g9yeW_tun7OGJEAHgT (accessed March 13, 2012).

⁸⁴ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 185.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Jeffrey Sconce, "Star Trek: U.S. Science Fiction," The Museum of Broadcast Communications, <http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=startrek> (accessed October 21, 2011) and Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 417, 418.

⁸⁷ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 416.

⁸⁸ *Roddenberry v. Roddenberry* (1996) 44 Cal.App. 4th 634 Briefs and opinion on case available at Greines, Martin, Stein & Richland LLP http://www.gmsr.com/practice_case.cfm?id_case=1041 (accessed January 21, 2012).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ David Alexander, "Gene Roddenberry: Writer, Producer, Philosopher, Humanist," *The Humanist*, March/April 1991, 27.

⁹¹ Solow and Justman, *Inside Star Trek*, 417, 418.

⁹² Bjo Trimble, email message to author, February 2, 2011.

Conclusion

In 1969, the original *Star Trek* experienced its on-air demise when it was finally cancelled by the network. Through the efforts of Roddenberry's self-promotion and the fans in subsequent years, the phoenix rose from the ashes. Roddenberry and *Star Trek* eventually became something so much more than just a television producer and series. Even though Roddenberry later espoused many liberal-humanist sentiments in interviews and personal appearances, his early television career and his initial vision and continued contributions during his tenure on *Star Trek* illustrate this was not what he completely believed. At least at the beginning, he had a much more traditional and conservative take on politics, gender, racial equality, and diversity.

In 1964, Roddenberry was unemployed, but persevered and sold the concept of *Star Trek*. Since he was not well-versed in science fiction or fact, he did extensive research in these areas. As a result, Roddenberry made valuable connections with both science fiction authors and the science community, which not only assisted in the creation of the pilot, but also served him well throughout his later career.

By the time *Star Trek* premiered in 1966, the basic foundational elements of the series were set in place. The initial *Star Trek* concept Roddenberry created was merely an action-adventure series in space. From there, the series started to evolve through the influence of others on the production team who did incorporate more of a liberal-humanist vision into the show. *Star Trek* over the course of its production developed into a program that on occasion sought to portray a hopeful and better

future. It succeeded at times through the efforts of unsung heroes on the *Star Trek* team.

As illustrated in this thesis, when *Star Trek* did offer a liberal-humanistic perspective, the episodes were created and influenced by contributors including Gene Coon, Robert Justman, Dorothy Fontana, and various freelance scriptwriters. Behind the day-to-day operations on the set, NBC, on many occasions, was supportive and even encouraged episodes that depicted diversity and meaningful messages about social issues. However, the one area in which *Star Trek* did not reflect liberal-humanist concepts was in the portrayal of women. None on the *Star Trek* creative team or the network went out of their way to champion a truly nontraditional depiction of women.

Yet, even though *Star Trek* had an uneven track record with the messages it sent to audiences, fans still backed the series and saved it from cancellation in the second season. *Star Trek* was cancelled in 1969, but it was immediately put into syndication, which led to a significant increase in the fan base. By 1972, only three years after *Star Trek* was cancelled by NBC, and was in continuous reruns around the nation, the first science fiction convention solely devoted to *Star Trek* was held in New York.¹ That was only the beginning, and the popularity of *Star Trek* and the size of its fandom have grown steadily every decade since *Star Trek* first debuted in the mid-sixties. Every incarnation of *Star Trek*, from the animated series in the early seventies to eleven feature films from 1979 to 2009 and four spin-off series from the 1980s to 2000s, continuously expanded the fan base for what grew into a franchise.

Overall, Roddenberry was excellent at recognizing his target market and advertising himself as the sole driving force behind the series. Roddenberry, spanning the years while *Star Trek* was in development through the period after the series had long been cancelled, hit the science fiction convention circuit to promote himself and the program. He also accepted public speaking engagements around the country long after the program left primetime.² During these appearances, Roddenberry reinforced fans' beliefs that he was the mastermind behind all the innovative ideas found in *Star Trek*. Gene Coon, who did create many of the liberal-humanist concepts and episodes, died in 1973 from cancer and was rarely credited for his contributions to the series.³ As *Star Trek's* popularity grew over the years, the perception Roddenberry was the source of the visionary concepts persisted as the series gained more popularity.

The perceptions about *Star Trek* and Roddenberry's involvement with the series have persisted because primary sources on the production of the series were and still are not readily available to the public. Thus, this thesis is based on primary source research that clearly demonstrates the collaborative nature of the series and reveals who was responsible for the liberal-humanistic and conventional messages within the *Star Trek*.

As far as the series is concerned, generally science fiction aficionados and casual viewers tended to concentrate on the few episodes and elements of the larger *Star Trek* corpus that were liberal and humanistic because it either resonated with their own worldview or it was at least comforting to see a future where humans finally reached a workable society. Compared with the sixties that embodied both progressive change for society and chaos, for some viewers, watching *Star Trek* gave

them a sense of hope and optimism that society would eventually work out its problems and reach a state of cooperation working in unison for the betterment of all humanity. Once the series ended, the fans of *Star Trek* took the series to a whole new level. They created a subculture that celebrated the hope, optimism, and liberal-humanistic ideas sporadically found in the series and this community eventually made *Star Trek* a worldwide phenomenon.

Many times, the lore of Roddenberry and the original *Star Trek* has replaced the actuality of the man and the program over the last forty-six years of *Star Trek's* history. Later incarnations of *Star Trek*, the majority not authored by Roddenberry, attempted to do a better job of portraying liberal-humanist concepts, which added to the franchise's reputation. But as far as the original series was concerned, even with minorities cast as regulars and a few episodes that were successful in portraying sixties progressive thought, the evidence illustrates Roddenberry was not, at least originally, a visionary that was able to effectively envision a series that conveyed tolerance, diversity and equality. From his early script writing in television to his involvement in *Star Trek*, the philosophy of "infinite diversity in infinite combinations" was not a consistent reality, which resulted in an uneven portraying of this concept throughout *Star Trek*.

Endnotes

¹ Joan Winston, *The Making of the Trek Conventions* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 10.

² Herbert F. Solow and Robert H. Justman, *Inside Star Trek: The Real Story*. (New York: Pocket Books, 1996), 416.

³ William Shatner with Chris Kreski, *Star Trek Memories*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 160, 161.

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