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Expectation Versus Reality: Star Trek, Nyota Uhura, and the Female Role

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ii

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Table of Contents

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Abstract

In a media saturated world, there is an abundance of stereotypes perpetuated for women. Since the late 1960's, however, *Star Trek* has been one example of how television and film can challenge stereotypes and what is considered normal. This study sought to understand the extent of change in how women's physical and role representations are presented through the artifact of Lt. Uhura in the 1979 film *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* and the 2016 film *Star Trek: Beyond.* Using feminist theory as a lens to conduct a content analysis of these films, this study used frequently identified "feminine" characteristics in media studies to collect and thematize data. Findings showed there has been progress in how Uhura's character is presented physically in that she is given greater visibility by being more prominently placed and is presented much more active, implying women are being given more visibility and preference in film. Costuming choices of the 2016 film are similar to those of the original series (1969), and 2016 Uhura's physique is very thin when compared to her 1979 representation. This implies there is more value being placed on thinness, while also leaving the question of whether viewers will acknowledge the historical component of her costume without sexualizing her form. Intersectionality of gender and race played a more substantial component in role representation findings. Although total word count was down in the 2016 film, the content of Uhura's dialogue was more impactful and important to the plot of the film. Additionally 2016 Uhura is frequently taking an active role, or one in which she is placed in a position of power or knowledge. This implies not only are women acknowledged for having power and knowledge, but importantly, stereotypes commonly attributed to Black women, and also women in general are being renegotiated in modern film.

Expectation Versus Reality: Star Trek, Nyota Uhura, and the Female Role

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the opener of every original *Star Trek* episode we hear the words, "Space, the

final frontier," spoken in a tone which elicits adventure, uncertainty, and bravery.

Evoked through colorful dialogue and imagery, a generation was introduced to a new

genre of entertainment, but more importantly, encouraged to further question equality

and diversity, and power and control. Today, we continue to question these things.

Feminism, race, and the discussions surrounding these remain strong as women

continue to advocate for equality at work and in life. These discussions are happening

all around us and in many ways. Some occur with our friends and family, some we

engage in through various social media platforms, and some are being subtly or not so

subtly played out in film and on television.   Through these conversations we are able to

immerse ourselves in cultures and lives that are not our own, opening us to the

possibility of gaining new perspective. Armed with perspective, we may be better

prepared to correct harmful stereotypes of women in order to more accurately represent

the infinite capabilities of women.

In terms of creating and perpetuating personas, whether positive or negative,

media in the form of film and television are among the most influential to viewers. Sink

and Mastro (2017) sight several studies (Scharrer, 2005; Ward, 2002; Davies, Spencer,

Quinn, and Gerhardstein, 2002) which provide evidence that exposure to media is linked

to negative perception outcomes such as acceptance of toxic hypermasculinity,

acceptance of dysfunctional relationship attitudes, and the minimization of women's

personal and professional aspirations. This exposure and link to perception is also visible in the intersectionality of race and gender (Alarcon, 1990; Collins, 2009; Crenshaw, 1995; Scodari, 2012) where we can examine the relationships between these intersecting oppressions. Cultivation theory further explains the phenomenon of link between media exposure and perception (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002), positing that long-term exposure to these messages can and does shift viewers' perception of reality, including the perception of what is or is not common and acceptable by either gender. Additionally, the extent of worldview shifting is positively related to length of viewing time: heavy viewers will experience a greater reality shift than light viewers (Gerbner et al., 2002).

In an age where Netflix, Hulu, and countless other streaming and viewing platforms reign supreme by offering a plethora of movies and TV series for viewers' pleasure, viewers are exposed and introduced to more messages than ever before. With the prominence of these platforms, the messages film and television spread are also more influential than ever before. They too often promote harmful stereotypes, or generalizations applied to people on the basis of a perceived group membership (Donelson, 1999; Lauzen, Dozier, and Horan, 2008). These generalizations then maintain the power of in-groups while reinforcing the marginalization of out-groups (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, and Glick, 1999; Lauzen et al., 2008). Stereotypes of both women and/or race are unapologetically portrayed all over film and television, as is the case in numerous reality TV shows like *Real Housewives of* (insert any of their many franchises here), and are equally prevalent in series such as *Sex and the City*, *House of Cards*, and

Orange is the New Black to name a few. In each of these cases women of every race and creed are ascribed very specific roles such as the trophy wife, loud and exaggerated friend, mother or caregiver, cook or servant, or other limiting and/or offensive roles.

Conversely, series and films such as *Grace and Frankie*, *Wonder Woman*, and *Black Panther* are a few examples of media that attempt to resist harmful stereotypes. These films and series generally include more diverse casting and place women in roles representative of power and agency, and more importantly, place women in roles which contradict stereotypes. These examples of positive representation, many of which are or have recent versions, suggest there is progress in gender and racial equality, and diversity in film. The extent of this progress, though, is what needs to be examined more thoroughly in order to provide us better understanding of how stereotypes continue to be represented, potentially affecting the perception of women.

The *Star Trek* franchise is yet another example of media that attempts to open its viewers' mind and question feminist issues such as equality and diversity, and power and control. The original series gave its viewers a diverse bridge crew, including officers who were both male and female, and cast from several nationalities and races, such as African American, Asian American, Russian, European American, and Vulcan. It goes without saying that "Vulcan" is of course not a real race, however, the inclusion of a main character that is not human, nor considered "White" is important because it shows an additional level of diversity and inclusion. *Star Trek* became a platform to challenge what was considered normal and socially acceptable in the late 1960's, and that includes questioning humanity's sole ownership over knowledge.

More pertinent to humanity's own interest in civil rights, though, *Star Trek* did not hesitate to explore the specific intersectionality of race and gender by including a woman of color as a bridge officer, Nyota Uhura. Uhura was a pivotal character creation in promoting positive gender and race representations, and she is the focal point of this research project. The character creation of Uhura was a break-through in television and media as her character did not portray a stereotypical "Black role." Her character was intelligent and highly educated. Martin Luther King Jr. emphasized the uniqueness of Uhura's character while urging Nichelle Nichols to continue playing Uhura. He said, "Don't you understand? For the first time, we're seen as we should be seen. You don't have a Black role. You have an equal role" (NPR.org, 2013). Uhura's character is truly unique in that she broke both gender and racial barriers within popular television and film, and did so during a time when civil rights were of high importance.

Uhura's character became even more iconic after the airing of the November 22, 1968 episode, "Plato's Stepchildren," considered iconic to avid followers and others. During this episode Lieutenant Uhura and Captain Kirk, a White male, shared what is considered to be the first interracial kiss aired on television. This kiss made waves across the world. In the United States, some stations in the south refused to air the episode (O'Connor, 2012). In the United Kingdom, the BBC claimed the violent treatment being portrayed was not appropriate for its evening timeslot, and similarly did not initially air the episode. This is just one example of how the *Star Trek* series positioned itself for civil rights.

A more detailed description of Nyota Uhura's biography from *Star Trek's* character biography shows Uhura's date of birth being 2239 in the United States of Africa, Earth. She attended Starfleet Academy from 2257-2261 and progressed through the ranks of Communications officer to Lieutenant Commander, then to Commander over the next ten years. Her name is of Swahili descent, with Nyota Uhura translating to "star freedom," an appropriate name for a character who is breaking gender and racial stereotypes. She is considered a skilled linguist, and a diligent and efficient officer, respected highly by her colleagues.

Uhura's character is originally played by Nichelle Nichols. Nichols portrayed Uhura in 69 episodes of *Star Trek* (1966-1969) and each of the six subsequent *Star Trek* films involving the original cast. Nichols also voiced her character in 22 episodes of *Star Trek: The Animated Series* (1973).

The creation and development of Uhura's character was both symbolic of the change occurring within this country, and is an icon and role model for actors and professionally employed individuals alike. Whoopi Goldberg, for example was inspired by Uhura's character and Nichol's portrayal of the character, commenting in an interview, "You could see Black people on television, but you never saw Black people in the future until Gene Roddenberry put a beautiful Black woman on that show. And not just a beautiful Black woman, but a beautiful Black woman who was the communications officer. She wasn't cleaning house" (Kooser, 2016). Roddenberry's creation of Uhura moved Goldberg to pursue and join the cast of *Star Trek: Next Generations*. In this series, her character, Guinan, is a 600+ year old female of the long-living El-Aurian race,

invited to be the civilian hostess of Captain Picard's U.S.S. Enterprise. Her character is considered very intelligent, wise, and well respected. In another example, NASA Astronaut Mae Jemison, the first African-American woman to go into space, noted she too was inspired by Lt. Uhura while growing up in Chicago in the 1960's (Jackson, 2013).

Uhura's recent depictions have since been taken over by Zoe Saldana in the revival films (Abrams, 2009; Abrams, 2013; Abrams, 2016). Because her character was so groundbreaking at the forefront of *Star Trek*'s creation, and remains an active and loved character of the revival films, she is an excellent character to analyze in terms of role representation and change over time of women, and at a higher level, to analyze the change of representation of Black women in film.

Uhura's character, an intelligent, brave, woman of color, gives women agency and representation. This study aims to understand the extent of the representation of how women's gender roles, and how those of Black women, are represented through the artifact of Lt. Uhura. It seeks to understand how her gender role is represented, how it has changed over time, and how this can potentially translate into perception of women. The consistency of portrayal of Uhura is what allows us to examine her character over time. By focusing specifically on this one character and her longitudinal representation, there is an opportunity to understand how representation of women may have changed, providing us insight into how the perception of women and Black women has also changed.

Rationale

The American Time Use Survey revealed television and film are so heavily valued by Americans that nearly 96% of viewers over the age of 15 years are spending, on average, two and half hours per day watching television (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The Nielsen Company reports this number is as high as almost five hours per day with users 18 years and older (2017). Additionally, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA, 2018) reports more than three quarters of the U.S./Canada population, or 263 million people, went to the movie theater at least once in 2018. This is up from 2016 when the MPAA reported only two-thirds of the U.S./Canada population, or 246 million people went to the movie theater at least once in 2016. The MPAA (2018) also reports that while 80% of U.S. adults watch movies and TV via traditional TV services, the number of online video streaming subscriptions has increased from 2017 17% to 186.9 million. With these numbers it is difficult to deny messages and symbols from media can and do weave their way into our individual social groups and personal lives, affecting and shaping our perceptions of ourselves and others.

Despite the strong feelings these statistics may induce, media exposure does not automatically equal negative perception. Research by Sink and Mastro (2017) and Dill and Thill (2007) indicated that through media exposure, individuals are exposed to the behaviors and rules others perform and follow. These may lead to the creation of either negative or positive perceptions. Through repeated exposure to media messages, individuals then begin to form or adapt their perception of gender identity. Based on the assumptions of Cultivation theory (Gerbner et al., 2002), over time then, there can be

changes in perception, potentially encouraging us to contradict harmful stereotypes, thereby decreasing marginalization of others. This positive change can only occur, of course, if gender representations are being portrayed realistically.

In supporting the movement to promote positive changes in representation of women, Nichelle Nichols is often quoted as being asked by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to remain on *Star Trek* as Nyota Uhura. He asked her to remain in order to promote this positive change in mindset. Using the depictions of Uhura's character then, feminist media studies allow us to examine depictions of gender in media, and how they have changed over time, as is the goal of this thesis. By addressing the question of how the portrayal of Lt. Uhura's persona has changed in this franchise, there is an opportunity to see a glimpse of how the representation of women has changed over the past 40 years. This is significant because, as Cultivation theory suggests, representations in media are often what influence social norms pertaining to these expectations of women and their roles in real life. We may then be able to address patterns of media influence. Of course, one character can never represent all women, but using this one character does allow for a unique study of how stereotypes change, as there are very few examples of reoccurring characters portrayed across several decades.

Focusing research on one significant female character, who is present in both an early film and the most recent reboot will add a necessary thread of consistency and allow for the observation of characteristic changes and trends over time. By examining how Uhura's character changes from her debut film appearance in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979) to her most recent appearance in *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016), this study is able to compare a number of attributes to see how media have adapted her image. This is

presumably done with the assumption the media are aiming to appeal to current popular ideologies surrounding the expectations of women, both physically and socially.

Like other scholars who have analyzed characters using a longitudinal perspective (Bradshaw, 2010; Garland, 2009; Levine, 2008), this study enters into their discussion. This study aims to expand understanding of how media representations of female personas change. More importantly, how are these changing representations indicative of changing perceptions of the public?

In my exploration of Uhura's character, I am specifically engaging in feminist critique by acknowledging the often narrow and limited representations of Black women, and of women of all races. Since early film days, Black women have been type casted and placed in roles of the "mammy" and "maid"—think Hattie McDaniel in *Gone With the Wind* (1939); loud angry Black woman—*Diary of a Mad Black Woman* (2005); unhealthy fat Black woman—Tyler Perry's popular Madea character; jezebel; Black Barbie; and gold digger to name a few. These stereotypes, hurtful at a minimum, and harmful over time are commonplace even today and are most often portrayed at extremes.

Scholars (Alvararez-Hernandez, de Garay-Dominguez, & Frutos-Esteban, 2015; Consalvo, 2004; Dove-Viebahn, 2007; Lauzen et al., 2008; Levine, 2008; Scodari, 2012) have found female characters as a whole are often stuck in "feminine" roles such as "the mother" or "the lover." Lauzen et al. (2008) specifically refers to these roles as being the "social roles," whereby individuals partake in the things that are normal in a day-to-day life, such as domestic chores, or other caregiving duties. Additionally, Vande Berg and Streckfuss (1992) compiled a list of "female behaviors" often enacted on prime-time television in the 1990's, including motivating, socializing, counseling, and other

relationship-enhancing actions. Furthermore, female characters engaged in "fewer decisional, political, and operational actions" (p. 205) than their male counterparts. When looking at this research through the lens of Cultivation theory (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli, 1986), the implication is that writers, producers, directors, and even viewers are guilty in perpetuating gender role and racial stereotypes. While the creators are indeed guilty in the creation of such limiting storylines, viewers are not entirely without fault for consumption of these characters and stories, and the more these stories are consumed, the more inclined viewers are to relate and apply the messages seen to their own lives.

Although each of the above roles is important in its own regard, we see overwhelming unevenness in who projects these personas. More importantly, the true complexity of these roles is often minimized and made into a hyperbolic version of each: the mother is unable to do anything other than be "mother", and the lover must ooze sex appeal. If any of these roles are anything other than perfectly performed to their given expectation, the woman is often considered fundamentally flawed. My hope is to add to this discussion and provide deeper insight into why unrealistic depictions of women continue to be problematic in our Western culture. With this in mind, I seek to understand the extent of these stereotypes, and if change in stereotypical roles can be seen over time in a character that is beloved by many who are fans of the Star Trek universe. In other words, are recent representations of Uhura less stereotypical (i.e. less sexualized) and in some small way, proof of progress in equal representation both racially and in gender?

The literature specifically examining Lt. Uhura's character in any film or series is unfortunately sparse. Scodari (2012) examined her character in the renewed *Star Trek 2009* film in terms of intersectionality on gender/race and sexuality/nation, while Tudor and Meehan (2013) examined Uhura's character alongside other female characters in the same film. Neither study, however, compared Uhura's modern representation with a former representation from the original series or film franchise. Therefore, there is a gap in the literature that if filled would allow us to compare and contrast the gender representation of Lt. Uhura past and present. This tracking of character representation offers one depiction of how the perception of women has changed over time.

The objective of this research project was to explore the representation of Uhura across *Star Trek* films over time, and the potential for such representations to affect real-life perceptions of women. This study sought to observe cultural trends in film and how these representations are translated over time. When one is able to observe, acknowledge, and learn from the past, one may be better able to adapt his or her own mindset.

Using feminist media studies, cultivation theory, and related research through the lens of intersectionality of race and gender as a framework, both physical artifacts and roles of Uhura were examined. This study notes the physical changes in Uhura's character between her *Star Trek—The Motion Picture* (1979) and *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016) portrayals to observe ways one may potentially emphasize or deemphasize perceived roles. It also observes the apparent role expectations of Uhura's character in *Star Trek—The Motion Picture* (1979) in comparison to her character in *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016), and how these potentially perpetuate or combat stereotypes of women.

In paying close attention to differences of apparent role expectations and physical appearance, this study explores how these expectations of physical being and role fulfillment may play into each other, ultimately affecting the self-perceptions of women. Using Uhura's character as a starting point, the following questions have been explored.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do the perceptions of Uhura's character change over time?

RQ1a: As represented through Uhura's character, in what ways have physical representations of women changed?

RQ1b: As represented through Uhura's character, in what ways have role representations of women changed?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Examining gender expectations as represented within film and television is by no means a new idea. A number of studies performed content analyses to look specifically at gender and/or race issues within the *Star Trek* universe (e.g., Consalvo, 2004; Scodari, 2012; Dove-Viebahn, 2007; Tudor and Meehan, 2013). Other studies have performed similar content analyses on additional films or television series (e.g. Bacon-Smith, 1992; Lauzen et al., 2008; Levine, 2008; Lotz, 2001). It is helpful to review both sets of studies in order to see how others have examined gender issues within not only the *Star Trek* universe, but also within other films and television series. Looking at how these authors set up their studies provides a foundation from which to build a new study to explore gender construction.

Examining gender expectations of women in terms of physical appearance and role representations is, in large part, how one can come to understand changes of these representations over time. Through the exploration of these variables, there is an opportunity to understand the interplay of each and how the resulting character representation becomes a symbol of current popular ideologies. Feminist media studies then allow us to frame this study around the question of *how* women are depicted in terms of gender and racial stereotypes through physical appearance and role representations.

Physical Representations

Previous research uses similar categories, such as physical representations, to examine varied components of how women are depicted in terms of gender stereotypes. Consalvo (2004), Levine (2008), and England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek (2011) in

particular take note of hyper-sexualized representations of female bodies in film and television. These hyper-sexualized representations are often expressed in accentuating typically feminine physical traits such as breasts and thin waist, and generally reveal more exposed skin, in areas such as legs, waist, or décolletage (England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek, 2011). This exaggerated sexual expression of the female body perpetuates lasting ideas of what is considered socially accepted and preferred by repeating unrealistic standards over and over again. Even more problematic, it is through the expression and exaggeration of these hyper-feminine traits where women are often able to successfully perform or complete jobs, especially when these jobs are traditionally considered "masculine" (Consalvo, 2004; Levine, 2008).

The original *Star Trek* series, filmed in the mid to late 1960's is an excellent example of how the female body is often overtly sexualized. Influenced heavily by popular styles of the mid-late sixties, we see women in very short dresses, thin fabrics clinging to the female form, and hair and make-up styles used to accentuate facial features, with the presumed intention of attracting or pleasing male counter parts. Uhura's character is one such character dressed in revealing clothing, with the "typical" female officer uniform including a short miniskirt-jumper, the hem hitting just inches below the hip (Roddenberry, 1966; Scodari, 2012). Although modern audiences may consider this overt sexualization to be extreme or even offensive, audiences and especially women of the sixties and early seventies considered the mini-skirt empowering. Nichelle Nichols commented during an interview with BBC Online saying,

"I was wearing them on the street. What's wrong with wearing them on the air? I wore 'em on airplanes. It was the era of the miniskirt. Everybody wore miniskirts."

Looking at other episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (TNG) (Berman & Roddenberry, 1987)*,* producers seemed to have, for the most part, ditched the short-skirted uniforms. Instead, we most often see the use of tight body suit costuming, especially in the case of Deanna Troi, a key female character who is famously known to be an "empath" and acts as the ship's counselor (Roberts, 1999; Consalvo, 2004). In this iteration of a female Starfleet officer, we are at least given varying degrees of her costuming. On some occasions Troi is dressed in an official appearing uniform. This uniform is essentially a pant-jumpsuit with a loosely tailored leg and well-fit top. In most ways, this uniform is like a male officer's, with the exception of a tightly cinched waist. This welcomed change to women's attire within the franchise does seem to indicate there is a shift in the value placed on equality of the body. Equality of the body in this case meaning women and men alike are allowed to cover themselves both modestly and attractively. On other occasions, her uniform is a tightly fitting jumpsuit, revealing more curves and accentuating cleavage. In both cases, the differentiation of the tightly cinched waist in comparison to the male version of the uniform, or the tight jumpsuit which accentuates cleavage is an example of how costuming is used to place women in another class apart from men, using their bodies as indicators of this difference.

The use of tight body suits is taken to a more extreme level in the series *Star Trek: Voyager* (Berman, 1995), where the character Seven of Nine regained her humanity through the aid of the first female captain, Captain Janeway. Seven was unique

to the *Star Trek* franchise as she was a Borg-Human hybrid who was "saved" from the Collective then took the role as the science officer aboard the starship Voyager. Although the *Star Trek* brand made huge progress in representing a diverse crew by introducing Captain Katherine Janeway, the series still fell flat in representing Seven's pivotal character (introduced during season five of the seven-season series). Seven's character became iconic, in-part, due to her perfectly fitted body suit, leaving nothing to the imagination in terms of her physique (Consalvo, 2004). Viewers rarely saw Seven dressed in anything other than a skin-tight onesie, and hair pulled neatly back. This strict, unchanging appearance in conjunction with her seemingly emotionless demeanor gives viewers the impression Seven is relentlessly professional, despite her contradicting attire. In fact, viewers very rarely see Seven with hair down, and when they do, it is when she is in a situation that is emotionally charged, often with a romantic twist.

Unlike Deanna Troi and Seven, Captain Janeway was refreshing because she did not express many of these overtly feminine traits so often played up in popular film and television (Dove-Viebahn, 2007; Consalvo, 2004; Levine, 2008). Dove-Viebahn specifically discusses the ways Janeway's character blurs gender lines by often appearing asexual, wearing the same style uniform as any male counterpart on her bridge. Despite the seemingly asexual appearance of Janeway's uniform, however, we also see a contradiction with her hairstyle in the earliest season of *Star Trek: Voyager.* Earlier seasons show Janeway with almost matronly hair, pulled back into a loose bun, reminiscent of the late 1800's to early 1900's. The hairstyle seems old-fashioned and contradictory to what one would expect any captain to wear. Was this a poor costuming

choice by producers and the costume department, or is the old fashioned hairstyle just another symbol of patriarchal oppression? The message potentially being, "Women can be captains too, but they invariably have old-fashioned or modest approaches to leadership." Interestingly, by the end of the series' run, Janeway is shown wearing a clean-cut, chin length bob, just ever so slightly curled under, making Janeway appear modern and up-to-date. The visual transformation is obvious mid-way through the series and does seem to suggest Janeway is going through a psychological transformation. What male captains however, or simply, what other pivotal male characters have themselves undergone physical transformations to depict mental and psychological transformations? Of the series and films discussed thus far, none.

This inequality in the need to *physically* transform women, while allowing men to remain physically unaltered, is fundamentally problematic. Similarly, the expectation of women to conform to unrealistic physical stereotypes is equally problematic. Research suggests over and over again that it is women who, if they do not already conform to societal norms, must alter themselves in order to fit within certain physical parameters (Dove-Viebahn, 2007; Lazar, 2006; Scodari, 2012).

Role Representations

Besides physical representations, feminist scholars are frequently concerned with understanding role representations, seeking to find common themes in the portrayal of women and men. Several authors provide content analyses which examine just that, not only in film, but also in television and advertising (e.g. Consalvo, 2004; Dove-Viebahn, 2007; Lauzen et al., 2008; Lotz, 2001; Scodari, 2003; Scodari, 2012; Signorielli and

Kahlenberg, 2001; Tudor and Meehan, 2013). Common to many of these studies were findings indicating that female characters, even pivotal female characters, reflect one of two primary categories: caregiver or support to men. Female characters either act as the maternal and family-oriented character, offering emotional support and guidance, or act in support of male character goals (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Dove-Viebahn, 2007; Scodari, 2003; Scodari, 2012; Tudor and Meehan, 2013). It is also common for female characters to use their hyper-sexualization to achieve some goal (Alvarez-Hernandez, Gonzalez de Garay-Dominguez, and Frutos-Esteban, 2015; Consalvo, 2004; Garland, 2009; Levine, 2008). Using the categories of mother or lover to contain women and their representations leaves little room to show the true spectrum of variability of women's interests, goals and ambitions, likes and dislikes, and countless other attributes. This compartmentalization ultimately reinforces harmful stereotypes.

Looking specifically at the intersection of race and gender introduces an additional layer of criticism to the accuracy and portrayal of realistic characters, especially those of Black women. Entman and Rojecki (2000) note the differences of language used by Black and White characters. Specifically, Black characters frequently use more profanity and less grammatically correct speech than White characters. J. Fred Macdonald (2009) then discussed the fine line Black characters and their actresses/actors must walk to be successfully embraced by mainstream audiences. He describes the critical barrier these characters must often overcome is to not be "too accepting of White social dominance," while also not appearing "too bourgeois and unsympathetic to inner-city 'brothers' and 'sisters'." Additionally, he notes if these characters and shows

portraying these characters involve no racial politics, their characters may then be dubbed not "Black enough." Conversely, Black characters *also* face the opposite potential criticism. For example, if the show and characters are especially critical of social injustice, these characters could also be accused of being too radical or even hostile.

Two shows Macdonald (2009) does condone as being successful in balancing this tricky dichotomy during the late 1960's include *Julia*, airing 1968-1971, and *Star Trek* (1966-1969), the object of focus in this project. Julia's character from *Julia*, although often considered controversial because of the above mentioned dichotomies, remains an example of a Black woman in a positively portrayed role. As Whoopi Goldberg mentioned of Uhura's character, Julia was another example of a Black woman who did not perpetuate the role stereotypes of mammies and maids. Julia's character was independent and self-supporting as a professional nurse, raising her son in a comfortable home environment. Even with perpetuating a positive perception of a Black woman, many did criticize her character as being unrepresentative of social reality during the civil rights movement. Others felt the show was intended to appease White consciences or promote conforming to the "system." These opinions aside, it is undeniable that Julia's character was one more step towards positive role representations of Black women.

Scholars who look specifically within the *Star Trek* franchise to understand the extent to which stereotypes permeate the sci-fi genre similarly find there is little variation in how feminine roles are represented (Consalvo, 2004; Henderson, 1994; Roberts, 1999; Scodari, 2003; Scodari, 2012; Tudor and Meehan, 2013). In all series associated with *Star Trek*, viewers are sure to see reoccurring female roles that hold some sphere of

influence and power. This power, though, is often expressed within interpersonal roles centered on medicine or healing, easing communication, keeping the crew/ "family" together, or in some capacity supporting male characters.

Tudor and Meehan (2013) and Scodari (2012) for example, look at Uhura's portrayal in the 2009 film reboot. Both authors similarly report instances where Uhura's character is hidden by objects or subjected to a passive role through plot dialogue. "More important" roles and dialogue, pivotal to the plot, are then given to key male characters. Viewers are keen to absorb the passive roles to which Uhura has been subjected. Viewers who then engage in Mary Sue writing affirm how problematic over-representation of stereotypes can be (Scodari, 2003).

In her 2003 study, Scodari specifically explores viewer-based fan fiction and discusses how viewers can perpetuate these stereotypes through the development of "Mary Sue" characters to support male character's goals. In her findings from her *Farscape* and *Stargate SG-1* content analysis, she noted slash writers of these series often wrote fan fiction in ways perpetuating hegemonic ideologies, referencing the "Mary Sue" identity (Bacon-Smith, 1992). In "Mary Sue" fiction, writers produce female characters who fit perfectly within the "masculine American culture" (p. 102). Fitting within the frame of "Mary Sue" means the character is willing to minimize her own importance and value, while using her expertise and skills to the benefit of men.

The irony of fan fiction portraying Mary Sue characters, thereby promoting hegemonic ideologies, is that Gene Roddenberry's liberal views and inspiration for *Star Trek* were meant to express an idyllic point in human progress where traditional

hegemonic ideologies no longer exist (O'Connor, 2012). Roddenberry charged the

original series with often fantastical ideas (for the time), promoting equality as best he

could in an era where civil rights were a hot topic. Adding to the highly liberal tone of

Roddenberry's creation, O'Connor (2012) acknowledges that Roddenberry's humanistic

approach to this series also revealed a constant thread supporting and promoting racial

equality alongside clear opposition to segregation. Quoting Stephen Whitfield's and

Gene Roddenberry's optimism for a brighter, equal future, O' Connor (2012) quoted

"Intolerance in the 23rd century? Improbable! If man survives for that long, he will have

learned to take a delight in the essential differences between men and between

cultures…" (Whitefield and Roddenberry, 1973). This idea of creating an environment

where diversity is a cornerstone to the success of the "crew" is evident in *Star Trek*'s

casting of actors and actresses. The *Enterprise* crew, both past and present, share not

only a Black female officer, Lieutenant Nyota Uhura as the communications officer, but

also include an ethnically diverse crew: Mr. Chekov, a Russian as the navigation officer,

and an Asian man, Mr. Sulu, as the helmsman. Both past and present series' also include

an alien officer, Commander Spock, metaphorically underscoring the idea that diversity

and inclusion goes beyond humanity.

The women of *Star Trek*: Lieutenant Uhura, Nurse Chapel, Deanna Troi, Seven of

Nine, and Captain Janeway, to name a few, in many ways represent progress in that we

are beginning to see the expansion of roles for women in power. However these

representations are sometimes underpinned with some of these hegemonic ideologies.

Uhura, Chapel, Troi, and Crusher's character are examples of women being given screen

time. Their screen time, however, often limits them to interpersonal roles associated with

women, such as the role of mother, lover, or caregiver.

Uhura, for example, is the Enterprise's communications officer, tasked with

knowing and understanding a variety of languages and communication styles. She is

seen, in both the original series and reboot films, deciphering vague or hard to understand

messages. In the original series, this skill is adapted further into a hobby and shows

Uhura's like for music and signing. Another frequently occurring female character to the

original series, Nurse Chapel took on the care giving role as nurse of the Enterprise and

assistant to Doctor Leonard McCoy. In *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, viewers see two

more women placed in similar roles. Counselor DeAnna Troi is the ship's counselor and

uses her empathic abilities to sense the true intentions and feelings of others. Troi's

character is also associated as a past love interest of Commander William Riker. The two

are occasionally seen discussing their past and why they did not work out. In several of

these situations, Troi puts on her counselor hat and provides guidance or support to Riker.

In addition to Troi, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* includes another woman in a healing

capacity, Doctor Beverly Crusher. Crusher is also mother to another crewmember aboard

this version of the *Enterprise*. Creating the added responsibility of mother for Dr.

Crusher's character, underscores this "mother to all" stereotype of women.

Recent literature involving film and television has begun to explore

intersectionality of characters in terms of gender/race, sexuality/nation, and

gender/sexuality (Consalvo, 2004; Lotz, 2001; Levine, 2008; Scodari, 2003; Scodari,

2012). Looking at the 2009 depiction of Uhura, Scodari (2012) went so far as to examine

Uhura's character in terms of the intersectionality of gender/race and sexuality/nation.

Scodari wished to answer which intersection proved to be most critical in the 2009 film

adaptation of *Star Trek*, then examined slash fan fiction and varying online discussions in

regards to Uhura. Scodari observed many commenters were supportive of this

reimagining of Uhura and her relationship with Spock. Although some commenters were

critical of Uhura's lack of sexual representation in the original series, her study ultimately

found Black female fans felt the love arc between Uhura and Spock contested stereotypes

of Black women as "lacking romantic agency." This particular finding (Scodari, 2012) is

encouraging in that we are beginning to see increasing conversation around intersections

of gender/race and gender/sexuality (Consalvo, 2004; Lotz, 2001; Levine; 2008; Scodari,

2012), specifically regarding women in general and women of color, and how these

intersections play into role representations of women (Dove-Viebahn, 2007; Lauzen et

al., 2008; Levine, 2008). Assuming the increasing dialogue around the intersections of

gender/race and gender sexuality is not merely a trend, I am expecting to see parallels and

similar findings in my study as those of scholars such as Scodari (2012) and Levine

(2008).

Chapter 3: Methods

Most research pertaining to content and questions revolving around *Star Trek*

and its related films and series is completed using unobtrusive measures through

qualitative content analysis. This is the case in Scodari's (2012) examination of

Uhura's character in terms of intersectionality of gender/race and sexuality/nation.

Other film and television studies, such as Alvarez-Hernandez et al.'s (2015), Lauzen et

al.'s (2008), and Sink and Mastro's (2017) studies used quantitative measures to show

statistical ratios of female versus male gender stereotypes.

Methodologies Used to Assess Physical Representations

Scholars engaging in gender stereotype discussion frequently look at how one or

both genders are physically represented in film and media. Scholars such as Levine

(2008) and Tudor and Meehan (2013) use qualitative methods, specifically content

analysis, to take note of and categorize certain physical traits of characters within film.

Often they are paying close attention to body stature, wardrobe and costuming choice,

and character positioning in regards to other male characters. Tudor and Meehan's

(2013) study is especially specific in describing how they have categorized such physical

characteristics as they examined Uhura's recent depiction alongside other female

characters in the 2009 *Star Trek* film. Their methodology was useful in that it showed

female characters were often presented in a certain physical light, supporting the idea

gendered stereotypes are still being perpetuated. Each of the three primary female

characters in the 2009 *Star Trek* were represented as having a thin and frail physique,

shown in undergarments or lingerie at some point, and uniforms remain the iconic mini-

skirt reminiscent of the original series. Additionally, they are often physically placed in less prominent positions, ending up partly hidden by objects.

The limitation of this methodology is that Tudor and Meehan failed to provide an older comparison of their main character, Uhura. Although they successfully acknowledge *some* of the costuming choices of her new representation are reflective of her original appearance in the sixties and seventies, such as makeup and mini-skirt, they do not provide a more thorough comparison of other physical transformations she may have undergone since then. For example, no comparison is given to modern costuming appearing more or less sexualized when compared to her earlier representation. Addressing comparisons such as these would provide greater insight into trends for gender representation and visibility, and how stereotypes continue to be represented.

Levine's (2008) study proves useful in addressing comparisons of characters portrayed in different decades. Her qualitative study on *Charlie's Angels* provides a longitudinal exploration of another groundbreaking set of women. Levine's content analysis focused on two categories: the comparison of physical characteristics of *Charlie's Angels* circa 1970's versus 2000's, and role comparisons of the same media artifacts. Using these categories as a framework allowed her to effectively compare how the *Charlie's Angels* representations have both changed and remained the same over the decades. Levine's longitudinal approach revealed there has been little change in the roles *Charlie's Angels'* women play in film. In this case, the leading actresses continue to exude sex appeal in order to accomplish their sleuth tasks, but remain under the direction of a male authority figure. Using the same longitudinal approach in this study's content

analysis of Uhura's character will provide additional insight into how feminism and femininity are portrayed and change over time, adding to the dialogue on how femininity is perceived.

Methodologies Used to Assess Role Representations

There are numerous studies that analyze physical representations of gender in film and media, and there are as many scholars who examine role representations of either or both genders. Alvarez-Hernandez et al. (2015) and Lauzen et al. (2008) provide two different approaches to looking at how feminine roles are frequently represented. Alvarez-Hernandez et al.'s study explored gender representation in contemporary Spanish teen films between 2009 and 2014, examining rhetoric, character's objectives, stereotypes, and clichés. Similar to authors such as Bradshaw (2010), Lauzen et al. (2008), Levine (2008), and Tudor and Meehan (2013), Alvarez-Hernandez et al. identified characteristics that typically signify a gender stereotype. Unlike many of these authors however, they then generated data organizational charts which allowed them to count number of scenes where these characteristics were displayed. Using an inductive content analysis coding process, several categories were then broken down into smaller sub-categories. Many of these categories are reflected in my own Table 1 and Table 2. These include role traits such as passive versus aggressive, defined objectives or goals versus undefined objectives or goals, and hyper-sexualized versus not hyper-sexualized. Characters' traits were coded according to their data organizational charts. The greatest benefit to counting number of occurrences of characteristics such as these is the data provides a hard number to compare across films. The limitation of this method, though,

is it requires attention to be paid only to these categories, without the option of addressing other potentially critical themes or addressing the context of the situation.

Lauzen et al. (2008) also looked at gender role stereotypes. Using a stratified random sample of prime time television episodes from six major broadcast networks between 2005 and 2006, 124 programs were observed. Coders analyzed characters who spoke at least one line, then determined whether the character was either major or minor. A character was major if he or she was considered essential to the plot. Through this process coders inductively identified four social role categories typically enacted by characters, essentially falling into either an interpersonal role or a work role. Interpersonal roles included roles such as a familial relation (sibling, grandparent, etc.), romantic relation (wife, husband, girlfriend, boyfriend), and friend. Work roles were very broad, including "white collar, blue collar, service, and professional" (p. 208). Coworker was also considered a work role.

Methodology for Current Study

This study blended approaches of the above mentioned scholars alongside Elo and Kyngas (2008) deductive content analysis process, using the categories of Table 1 and Table 2 as a starting point to guide my observations. Elo and Kyngas' (2008) deductive process is recommended for researchers who wish to test previously established categories and concepts of other researchers. Because Alvarez et al. (2015), Lauzen et al. (2008), and other researchers of female representations in media have established similar categories from their own analyses, this research project has provided a deductive test to these categories.

According to Elo and Kyngas (2008), once the unit of analysis was selected, in this case the films *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979) and *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016), the next step was to develop a categorization matrix (Tables 1 and 2). Categories of these tables draw from Alvarez-Hernandez et al. (2015), Bradshaw (2010), Lauzen et al. (2008), Levine (2008), and Tudor and Meehan's (2013) research on frequently identified "feminine" characteristics in media. This study created a hybrid structured-unconstrained matrix for Table 1. Structured matrices (Sandelowski, 1995; Polit and Beck, 2004; Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) are used when a study is being based on prior research, while unconstrained (Elo and Kyngas, 2008) allow for the creation of new categories, following an inductive content analysis process. Creating this hybrid matrix allowed me to test and use the categories of scholars before me, while also being able to then note pertinent findings of my own.

Feminine characteristic categories have been divided into two tables by "physical" (Table 1) and "role" (Table 2) characteristics, as seen on page 30. The data was then coded according to these categories. In the case of "physical" characteristics, traits have been sub-divided into commonly discussed categories by scholars of this topic. Additionally, an "other" column and row was created to allow for other frequently occurring themes that do not fit within the existing framework. The addition of this column allowed expansion into new or conflicting categories. One such "other" finding recorded within the "physical" characteristics table was the first and last moments when Uhura's character was seen in each film. An additional, and substantial "other" column of the "role" characteristics table resulted in the transcription of each Uhura's dialogue.

This transcription also reported audio only dialogue and the total word count for each Uhura. Including this additional information allowed for a more in-depth comparison of the context and content of each Uhura's voice and the extent to which that is heard in each film. Each film was further reviewed for content that corresponds to the identified categories of both the "physical" and "role" characteristics. Separate tables were kept for each film so comparisons could be easily identified. Findings of "physical representations" for 1979 and 2016 Uhura can be referenced in Appendix A, Tables 1a and 1b respectively. Findings of "role representations" for 1979 and 2016 Uhura can be referenced in Appendix B, Tables 2a and 2b respectively.

The films were compared and contrasted for frequency of recurring themes, abstracting meaning in the analysis. The symmetry of data collection between physical and role traits allowed for more symmetrical analysis between physical and role traits. Additionally, by narrowing the observations to the two categories of "physical representation" and "role representation," I followed a frequently used categorization of many scholars before me. This similarity in research design allowed me to engage in their dialogue using vocabulary and concepts known to the field, while also testing the validity of their findings.

Table 1—Physical Representations of Feminine Traits in Western Film and Television

Physical Traits			
	Revealing Flesh	Fit of Clothing	Other
What evidence is there of hyper-sexualization			
	Decoration	Status Symbol	Other
How are ornamentation and/or accessories used?			
	Thin/Weak	Muscular/Strong	Other
How is the character's physique portrayed?			
	Background	Foreground	Audio
Where is the character often placed as compared to objects or characters of the opposite gender?			
Other Notes			

Table 2—Role Representations of Feminine Traits in Western Film and Television

Role Traits	
How does the character show emotion?	
How does the character express intelligence/experience?	
How does the character motivate others?	
How does the character counsel others?	
How does the character define objectives or goals?	
How does the character express passivity/aggression?	
How does the character express power?	
Other Notes Total Dialogue: Word Count Audio only=**Bold**: Word Count	Transcription of Uhura's dialogue in this column

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Upon completing the content analysis, the results showed some expected and surprising findings in both the physical and role representation categories. This chapter discusses those findings and the associated discussion of physical representations and role representations of Nyota Uhura's character to answer the original research questions:

1. As represented through Uhura's character, in what ways have physical representations of women changed?

2. As represented through Uhura's character, in what ways have role representations of women changed?

Physical findings indicate, generally, Uhura's present character has undergone physical representation changes in more of a screen "placement" and visibility sense, rather than a significant costuming or styling change.   Wardrobe wise, 2016 Uhura's costuming remains reminiscent of 1960's Uhura and more "risqué" by current standards. It is safe to assume, however, this 2016 iteration of Uhura's costume is to create nostalgic ties to the original series; not to promote sexualization of her character's physical being. The significance of this differentiation in finding is there has been *positive* change in how much visibility this female character is experiencing over decades of her portrayal. This indicates there is a conscious decision being made to showcase strong women in an extremely popular and well-known film franchise.

These findings are arguably more important when looking through the lens of intersectionality of gender and race. Uhura's character represents more than a positive

change in physical representation of women in general. Her 2016 representation takes an already respected and loved Black female character and amps up her presence to be more visible and impactful on the screen when compared to her 1979 iteration. This change from 1979 Uhura to 2016 Uhura gives Black women greater positive physical representation, when there are still so few examples of strong Black women as compared to representations of White women.

In response to RQ2, "As represented through Uhura's character, in what ways have role representations of women changed," this is perhaps where the most significant findings occur. 1979 Uhura's representation clearly indicated a degree of respect and intelligence, however it is her 2016 representation which shows a substantial *positive* shift in the complexity of her role. This was achieved by showing her actively participating in pivotal scenes, taking on roles which historically are considered generally masculine, and even within the *Star Trek* universe, had been previously been given to a male counterpart. Additionally her character spoke more complex and meaningful dialogue throughout the 2016 film. Like physical representations, this indicates there is a conscious decision being made to positively showcase strong women, and specifically strong Black women. These findings are discussed in greater depth throughout the following sections.

Physical Representations

In attempting to answer the first research question, "As represented through Uhura's character, in what ways have physical representations of women changed," three key findings were exposed. The first is Uhura's visibility in terms of how much she is

seen on the screen. Her visibility has increased substantially. Additionally, her character

is both seen earlier in the 2016 film, and heard and seen later in the same film as

compared to the 1979 film. Related to Uhura's character in terms of how much we see

her on screen, she is also more consistently and prominently placed in scenes in the 2016

film compared to the 1979 film. A second key finding indicates that Uhura's 2016

character is physically much more active throughout the film compared to 1979 Uhura.

While 1979 Uhura is often seen in a sedentary state, 2016 Uhura is just the opposite,

often running, fighting, and actively engaging in physically demanding scenes. The third

key finding within physical representations indicates Uhura's costuming in the 2016 film

has not progressed in terms of less sexualization of female representation as compared to

costuming in the 1979 film, but in fact has reverted to match Uhura's uniform from the

original series of the late sixties.

Visibility and Physical Placement

Uhura's character circa 2016 was not only more visible in terms of her own

placement within scenes, but she was also introduced substantially earlier in the film. To

be precise, we see her 1979 character introduced in the film at 0:22:55 minutes, whereas

her 2016 character is introduced at a much quicker 0:04:38 minutes.

1979 Uhura's last appearance is at 2:10:42 and lasts merely a second. The

characters Kirk, Bones, and Spock are the last seen or heard characters of this film just a

minute later. In contrast, her 2016 character is not only shown alongside Kirk and the

other key members of the Enterprise bridge crew during their last scene, but she is also

the last voice to be heard of any character in *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016). Uhura is heard

narrating the final sentence of the famous Kirk quote, which has acted as an opener for nearly all Star Trek series,

> *"Space the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Its continuing mission: to explore strange, new worlds. To seek out new life. And new civilizations. To boldly go where no one has gone before."*

In the above-mentioned sequence, we hear each key crewmember (Kirk, Spock, Bones, Scotty, Sulu, and Uhura) say a line. Uhura is the last heard voice before the closing credit sequence, speaking arguably the most famous line of the quote, "To boldly go where no one has gone before." This is incredibly significant because speaking these words is a first not only for her character, but also a first for *any* female character of the franchise.

While Uhura is not literally visible while speaking this most iconic quote, she is given the last word of the film and additionally being given ownership over words that are loved and valued by fans across the world, and there is power in words. It is also important to note had Uhura been given another, less familiar portion of the quote, say, "And new civilizations," her voice may have felt minimized, or even forgotten within this scene. Because Uhura is now the voice of one of the most quoted *Star Trek* lines, she is now in some ways also an authority on courage, as this quote is fundamentally grounded in the idea of "it takes courage to do new things." When thinking of the many stereotypes women have been ascribed, not often is "courageous" one of them. By her speaking this line, there is a renegotiation of who can be courageous and have courage,

and importantly women are a part of redefining what and who they are, and how they are portrayed.

In terms of physical placement within scenes, there are stark differences in the placement of Uhura's character. A scene comparison tallying 1979 Uhura's placement in scenes revealed she is shown in the background nearly as often as she is shown in the foreground. Specifically, she was shown in the background approximately 33 times, while in the foreground 38 times. 1979 Uhura was heard only as audio 6 times, with no visual component. Of the times she is seen in the background, other characters or equipment often obscure her character, and she is often in a lesser-lit area. This is especially true if her background appearance is much farther off. For example, in scenes where Kirk is standing near the center of the bridge and actively doing something, Uhura's character may be visible in the back depending on the angle of the camera. Although she can be spotted, her area of the bridge is dimly lit to keep the attention on Kirk and the primary focus of the scene. Because of the neutral, flesh tone coloring of the uniforms in this film, she and any character's visibility is diminished when they are located in the background.

In scenes where 1979 Uhura is a topic of the foreground, her character is quite often siting at her station. As her station is designed, even when she is a main character in a scene or camera shot, she is often initially identified with her back to us. Then, before she engages in an interaction with another crewmember, or prior to speaking a line, she will swivel her chair so she is seen in profile. In these scenes arms are open and taking up space. For example, one arm is often placed on the communication control

panel, while the other is resting on her lap table or on her communication earpiece. This is the most frequently recognized position for her. Fans of the original series can easily recall this representation of her, as it is such a frequently repeated stance by Uhura's character.

By contrast to the 1979 film, 2016 Uhura is identified in the foreground far more often than in the background. She is seen in the foreground approximately 106 times, while in the background approximately 70 times. 2016 Uhura was heard via audio only 9 times. By this numbers comparison it implies we see her 2016 character a great deal more than her 1979 character. The larger numbers may in part be due to strong compositional difference between the two films though. The difference being that scenes in the 2016 film are often switching back and forth between different angles of characters involved far more often than in the 1979 film. Additionally, most of the scenes where she is placed in the background are also alternated with her being in the foreground in an immediately following and related scene. Again, this seems to be a directorial visual preference throughout the film, and this tactic is not limited to her character alone.

There is an added layer of visibility to 2016 Uhura's physical representation, as compared to 1979 Uhura, at play as well. In most of 2016 Uhura's background scenes she is easily identifiable by her uniform. The color choices play a significant role in how easily visible her character is. This is especially true in situations where there are larger bodies of characters gathering in scenes. Because her uniform is a bright red color, rather than the neutral beige color of the '79 film, the sheer color contrast of her brightly colored uniform against often dark or blue-grey backgrounds helps her 2016 character

stand out. This is most obvious in scenes when her character is on the antagonist's planet where the majority of scenes she is present are overwhelmingly grey and blue. Her costuming selection for street clothes is equally vibrant. The end sequence is an example of this. In this scene sequence she is again easily spotted wearing a bright orange-coral colored summer dress, and most others are wearing less vibrant or less saturated colored clothing. These significant color contrasts seem to be very intentional as 2016 Uhura is now much more easily located compared to 1979 Uhura.

2016 Uhura has two additional levels of "visibility" that are not applicable to her character in the 1979 film. The first is that 2016 Uhura is mentioned in conversation 5 times by other crewmembers in scenes where she is neither physically present nor present via some audible communication link. 1979 Uhura is never discussed by any crewmember. The content of these scenes typically involves Spock discussing his prior relationship with Uhura, and his reasons for breaking up with her. For the curious minds and those unfamiliar with the revived *Star Trek* films, in a previous *Star Trek* film Spock's planet, Vulcan, was destroyed along with nearly his entire race. Spock then began to feel it was his "Vulcan" duty to have a Vulcan partner for reproductive reasons and consequently broke up with Uhura.

The second level of visibility in the 2016 film is that we also get to see a picture of ALL the original bridge crew actors from the original series aged about 20 to 30 years from how they are portrayed in this film, including Nichelle Nichols' portrayal of Uhura. Without going into detail and spoiling how this even makes sense for us to see an original image of Uhura from decades ago when she is only mid-thirties in this film, again seeing

her original character's representation in dress uniform alongside her originally casted

bridge-mates creates a nostalgic feeling for those who have followed the original cast.

By sharing this image of Uhura and the original bridge crew, there is a significant level of

respect being paid to all of these characters. This respect extends to not only

acknowledging the original characters and their achievements and legacy, but gives

viewers something real to see and hold on to that is from past decades. By showing

Uhura's original representation and the others', viewers are, in a sense, connecting with

the past and seeing how not only the characters have progressed, but also to some degree

how civilization has progressed.

Activity Level

2016 Uhura is also portrayed significantly more active in her foreground scenes,

as compared to 1979 Uhura. The first example we see of this is not long after Kirk calls

to abandon the Enterprise when it is attacked and boarded by intruding aliens. We almost

immediately see Uhura engaging in hand-to-hand combat with two intruders. In one such

scene she is shooting an intruder with a large gun; in another scene she is once again

fighting hand-to-hand. The intruders are obviously large, bulky, and highly mechanized

and armored. Their large, intimidating stature is undeniable when compared to her small,

thin stature. Despite the size difference though, she is victorious by her own skill. Just a

few short minutes later, we again see 2016 Uhura intentionally place herself in danger in

order to salvage part of the Enterprise and disconnect the main saucer of the ship. After a

couple of more quick scene changes, Uhura then ejects the escape pod she and the main

antagonist (also large and imposing in stature) end up in, ultimately placing herself in

seemingly grave danger. Unlike 1979 Uhura's character, 2016 Uhura is repeatedly shown in situations where she is actively engaging in some important side mission to support the main goal of the Enterprise crew. In many of these scenes she is actively working against the main baddie, or is in some discussion or argument with him.

This physically involved representation of Uhura is a far distance from the "mammies" and "maid" representations of Black women from early decades. While Black women characters of film and television past often encompassed these "domestic" or caregiving acts stereotypes, 2016 Uhura successfully rebukes them. In these powerful scenes her character proudly shows viewers Black women are equally strong and as capable as her male counterparts. This same scene is also careful to not place Uhura's 2016 character within the spectrum of the "angry Black woman" stereotype. Although she is indeed fighting, she does not appear to be emotionally charged in the sense she is trying to get even or react in an over-the-top manner normally ascribed to the "angry Black woman". No, again, we see her being portrayed in a realistic manner, paralleled to that of other female and male characters of this scene sequence.

Of the times her 2016 character is in the background, she is often standing or performing an action such as running or fighting. Few of her background scenes have her placed in a seated position, as is often seen in the 1979 representation. Other findings indicate that Uhura's character circa 2016 is very often standing, running, or engaging in hand-to-hand combat, while 1979 Uhura is often seen to be much more sedentary— sitting at and operating her communication station. Additionally the comm station 2016 Uhura is most often seen at while on the bridge of the U.S.S. Franklin places her front

facing the camera, so she is visible anytime the entire bridge is being shown. It should be noted here, the plot of *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016) does not take place as much on the U.S.S. Enterprise as it does in other locations, one of which includes the Franklin. Although in these scenes she is admittedly in the far back row, she is placed in the same horizontal plane as other key Enterprise crew, including Spock. This is a stark contrast to the placement of her comm station of the Enterprise in the 1979 film, where the camera would have to intentionally pan or switch scenes to look specifically at her, or to catch just a small glimpse of her.

Costuming

Noticeable physical differences are seen in the costuming. Surprisingly, Uhura's 1979 wardrobe has shifted from the mini-skirted uniform, iconic to the original series, to a very neutral and plain polyester/Spandex pantsuit-tunic in the 1979 film, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. The questionable-at-best uniform design is explained by Gene Roddenberry and costume designer Robert Fletcher's wish to avoid military comparisons with the 1979 uniforms (Empireonline.com, 2013). Furthermore, given this film was produced at the close of the 70's, there was a strong desire to eliminate any hint of sexism, i.e. the miniskirt uniform. The tunic hits at the hip and covers both arms and legs. Both women and men wear this style uniform, or slightly varied versions of it.

Overall, Uhura's physique is not accentuated more than any other crewmember's. Ornamentation is by and large minimal for men and women alike, with both genders seen wearing a watch-like communication device and the standard Starfleet insignia on their upper left chest. Uhura is also shown wearing gold earrings. Her nails are maintained a

long length and natural color. Makeup for Uhura's character for the most part is kept

simple, with the exception of neutral colored metallic eye shadow adorning her eyes. She

is often seen wearing a slightly shiny lip-gloss. Makeup and other trendy stylistic choices

such as these of the 70's are common in nearly all film and television series, regardless of

the decade of production. Uhura's 1979 physical depiction parallels that of other women

in the film, including that of White women. These costuming parallels again help rebuke

stereotypes of common hyper-sexualized portrayals of Black women in film. This is

even truer due to the fact that both her, and other women's uniform, and that of the men's

uniforms are also so similar.

2016 Uhura sees a shift in costuming much more reminiscent of the original

series. Seen again are the bright colors of the different Starfleet departments: bright red,

gold, and blue. Additionally, there is the return of the mini-skirted dress uniform worn

by most female crew. There are a few instances where women are shown wearing a pant

uniform and tunic, implying women can choose which uniform they wish to wear. In the

mini-skirted rendition of the uniform, the dress appears to hit a bit lower on the thigh as

compared to that of the original series. Legs remain by and large uncovered, revealing a

good deal more flesh than her 1979 character. Arms are covered in their entirety, and the

neckline is a mock-turtle neck. Women's uniform dress color is dependent on the

department she works in. As Uhura is assigned to the communication department, she

wears red.

Men wear a pant-tunic uniform similar in styling to the original series, including a

black pant, and long sleeve tunic. The tunic color, like the dress color, is dependent on

the department for which he works. Similar to the women's dress uniform, the men's tunic shares a mock-turtle neck. Like 1979 Uhura, Uhura circa 2016 is also adorned with a relatively simple drop earring. She is also in possession of a necklace given to her by ex-boyfriend Spock, although it is only seen twice in the film—once when Uhura is attempting to return the item to Spock, and when she is seen in street clothes in an end scene. The necklace also acts as a means to geographically locate Uhura and the other missing Enterprise crew later in the film, ultimately reuniting the split parties of the Enterprise.

Role Representations

Beyond the physical representation of Uhura's character, it is important to examine the similarities and differences in how Uhura's role is represented between the 1979 and 2016 films. In attempting to answer research question 2, "As represented through Uhura's character, in what ways have role representations of women changed," again three key findings came to light. The first finding was substantial in that Uhura's total word count throughout the 2016 film has surprisingly decreased from the 1979 film. The decrease in word count, however, seems less significant when the context of her dialogue is considered. With the content of Uhura's commentary and dialogue proving to be more substantial in 2016, the second finding indicates Uhura's role representation has deepened how she expresses professional experience and intelligence. Finding three similarly indicates the representation of how she is motivated and exhibits emotion has also become more complex and realistic. These findings, together, positively support

there is progress in the representation of women in popular film, and are discussed in greater depth throughout the following sections.

Word Count and Dialogue Content

Perhaps one of the more interesting findings in examining Uhura's role was the added observation and determination of her character's total word count in each film. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979) included a total of 362 words of dialogue. This includes any dialogue spoken by Uhura's character, including audio only. Surprisingly, *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016) included only 297 words of total dialogue by Uhura, including audio only.

Differences in the content of Uhura's rhetoric and commentary were evident. Initial role findings showed the majority of 1979 Uhura's dialogue centered specifically on communication or her bridge duties. Her character often spoke using affirming phrases such as "Aye, sir" or "Bridge to Captain." Despite the lesser total word count, however, 2016 Uhura's dialogue proved to be much more complex and meaningful to plot development. Examples of this, Uhura 2016 often spoke phrases indicating a specific action or command, such as "They're jamming us" or "We have to get closer." Additionally her character engaged almost equally in either friendly banter with crewmembers, or intense philosophical debates with antagonists. In one such debate with the main baddie, Uhura argues, "You're wrong, there is strength in unity." Commentary of this complexity spoken by Uhura was incredibly limited in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979) as compared to that spoken by Uhura in 2016.

Although Uhura's word count in the 2016 film is down when compared to the 1979 film, the progression and complexity of her dialogue circa 1979 to 2016 was exciting. Having her character participate in key plot moments, such as the above mentioned debate with the main antagonist is a strong example of how the representation of Black women is being given more thought and realistic consideration. These important moments for Uhura's character, such as speaking firmly with conviction to the antagonist, raise her character to being more than a communications officer, and raise her up beyond the stereotypes of "mother," "lover," and "angry Black woman." In these moments she is portrayed as smart, strong, and eloquent.

This example, when comparing the 1979 film to the 2016 film, shows Uhura's character is clearly more developed in terms of dialogue content. That being said, 1979 Uhura must still be appreciated for going beyond the stereotypes of "mother," "lover," and "angry Black woman." It was her character which laid the groundwork for the next generation of "Uhura", and introduced another positive Black female character to help change the narrative of what is expected from Black women and that of women as a whole.

Expression of Experience and Intelligence

Within Uhura's dialogue, viewers are able to better understand the extent of her experience and intelligence. It is important to note here, a great difference in the plot of the 2016 film compared to the 1979 film, is the primary Enterprise characters we have become familiar with (Kirk, Spock, Bones, Sulu, Chekov, Scotty, and Uhura) are separated from each other for a significant part of the film. The separation ultimately

leads to greater visibility of each individual character. This plot set up does not minimize Uhura's role by any means though. In fact, the greater visibility Uhura experiences in the 2016 film places her quite often in significant contact and conflict with the main antagonist: almost as much as Kirk. Because of this exposure, Uhura's 2016 role is tested in terms of her expression of intelligence and experience more frequently than 1979 Uhura.

Looking at how 2016 Uhura expresses intelligence and experience, the role indicator which consistently stood out as being most different, 2016 Uhura is more challenged in her technological and professional expertise. We see many more examples of how she can use her professional abilities, outside of controlling a communication station on a bridge. In several instances of the 2016 film, Uhura is confronted with opportunities to tap into and analyze other tech and communication devices in order to provide valuable insight and intel into their present situation. One such example is when Uhura and Sulu break away from their captors to do reconnaissance. In this scene, Uhura seizes her first opportunity to look into the antagonist's computer in order to assess his communication system and gain insight into his overarching plan. This scene shows viewers she is technologically skilled in assessing not only present Starfleet systems, but also alien technology. Equally important, this scene shows Uhura does not hesitate when being confronted with a task that could be difficult, scary, or dangerous; that she is as capable as any male counterpart during these circumstances, and furthermore does not require a man's help to accomplish said task.

In other scenes where Uhura is alone with other male crewmembers such as Sulu or Kirk, she is quick to seek the answers or accomplish goals while, again, not necessarily waiting for a "man to take the lead." A strong example of this is the first significant fight scene where Kirk and the main antagonist are engaged in hand-to-hand combat. She quickly, and without being told to do so, takes over the task of attempting to separate the Enterprise's saucer from the remainder of the ship to aid the crew in their escape. This scene again underscores Uhura's confidence and capability to quickly and successfully accomplish tasks.

In yet another scene, she is quick to clarify Spock's convoluted and complicated answer to a question from Kirk. This scene is significant in that it shows viewers multiple layers of Uhura's intelligence and abilities. First, 2016 Uhura is shown being very aware of nonverbal cues—namely Kirk's confusion by Spock's complicated answer—and is seemingly more aware of his confusion than many of the other characters, most of which are men. Secondly, Uhura is also shown as highly intelligent and able to solve critical problems quickly, arguably more so than Kirk in this instance. This is evident because she is not only understanding the complicated terminology Spock is saying, but also then proceeds to simplify his words and relay them back to Kirk in terms he understands easily.

In each of these situations Uhura is energetic, quick to act, and does so with precision and accuracy. Not only are these examples contradictory to characters frequently portrayed by Black women, but they are also contradictory to how women in general are portrayed. Far too often women are shown needing supervision, clarification,

or assistance to accomplish a task, where their intelligence and abilities are rarely more than their male counterpart's. Furthermore, beyond acknowledging 2016 Uhura is given more opportunity to showcase her experience and knowledge, the context of how she is using her knowledge and experience in the 2016 film is significant. While it is clear she is intelligent, her 2016 character could have been shown as expressing this intelligence in less impactful ways. For example, had her character been shown translating, as is common in earlier depictions of Uhura, including 1979 Uhura, viewers would not be encouraged to appreciate her talents as fully. The progress in development of 2016 Uhura is important in that the experiences she is a part of are concrete, significant moments which are pivotal in relaying key plot points to the viewer.

Unfortunately for 1979 Uhura, there are not the same quantity or quality of examples which allow us to see her true abilities. Because of the limiting plot line Uhura's 1979 character follows, she is rarely placed in a position where she can command and control the situation. In contrast to 2016 Uhura, we even see a situation when 1979 Uhura is essentially shown-up by Spock's telepathic abilities. In this scene Spock has recently joined the Enterprise en-transit to their final destination. While attempting to make contact with the anomaly that has been wreaking havoc, Uhura says she is not receiving a response. Spock chimes in and says the entity *has* contacted them, telepathically. Her reaction is surprise and a greater level of alertness. In this situation Spock has essentially replaced Uhura in her role as the main communicator. Despite the previous example, her character still shows great confidence, speaking calmly and using

deliberate tones with quick action responses to commands throughout the film. Her

vocalics will be explored more in depth in the following section.

Expression of Motivation and Emotion

In both films we see Uhura's character showing motivation and ability to work

efficiently under pressure. By and large her reactions and emotions are similar to those

of other crewmembers, men and women alike, regardless of the film of discussion. Her

expression of motivation, like her expression of experience and intelligence however, is

far more developed in 2016 Uhura's depiction.

In terms of expressing emotion and reactions, Uhura often uses staunch,

deliberate tones, and responds with haste. These vocalics are evident in nearly all scenes

where she is speaking. One such occurrence in the 1979 film is when an Ensign

questions one of Kirk's early commands. Uhura quickly, deliberately, and respectfully

informs the ensign, "The possibilities of our returning from this mission in one piece may

have just doubled." In later examples she maintains her calmness under pressure, at one

point informing the captain their frequency is jammed due to a "wormhole effect." In

each of these examples, and more, 1979 Uhura exudes conviction and confidence in her

abilities.

In the 2016 film, one of the first scenes where Uhura responds to Kirk, she says,

"No response. I am picking up some kind of signal." Her words are similarly concise and

deliberate to those of 1979 Uhura, just as her response is swift, and tone exudes

confidence. This confidence is emphasized in a later scene when Uhura engages the

main antagonist in conversation, questioning him and challenging his motives. While the

antagonist responds to her sternly and with a threatening tone, she responds with an equally stern tone. Using this same example, her body language mirrors the antagonist's: straight posture, body is squared with his, head is high, and eye contact is strong. The "equality" in representation of strength through emotion for Uhura to the antagonist is critical for the viewer to see. This is because she is portrayed as having equal conviction to the antagonist and she is refusing to back down from his imposing demeanor and his own body language. In this example, the viewer is able to feel her power and confidence as a Black woman who refuses to be silenced or pushed to a lesser or subordinate level by a dominating force.

In cases of more extreme emotions such as fear, surprise, or anger, her vocalics and facial expressions show she is clearly tense and/or upset. 1979 Uhura can be seen showing surprise equal to that of her fellow crewmates in a tense moment on the bridge. In this scene the Enterprise has entered the mysterious cloud that has been destroying all starships which have come into contact. As the Enterprise enters and proceeds deeper into the cloud, the camera pans across each bridge crewmember and shows their reactions. Some men and women appear in awe or surprised, with mouths gaping and eyes wide. Uhura's character is one of these individuals. Other characters, such as Captain Kirk and his commander seem less impressed and show little emotion. Because Uhura's character is one of a handful of characters, female and male, who react to a higher degree when compared to the reactions of Kirk and his commander, it is more likely the viewer would attribute Uhura's surprise in this situation to her being more novice rather than being female.

In a tense moment with 2016 Uhura, she exclaims, "No...NO!" when the main antagonist electrocutes two crewmembers. Her exclamation grows increasingly loud and tense as the scene intensifies. Her body language similarly intensifies as her pitch increases, when she ultimately lunges at the main antagonist, but is held back by a crewmember as the antagonist electrocutes her crewmates. While Uhura's reaction was loud and reactive, it was equal to that of other crewmembers in other similarly intense scenes. For example, Sulu responded almost identically when a crewmember was being threatened with her life for not giving up valuable information to the antagonist. He yelled loudly, and likewise lunged to try and stop the harassment. He too was held back from a physical altercation by a crewmember.

This parallelism in representation of female and male reaction to tense and upsetting situations is again a positive movement in how women are portrayed in emotionally charged moments, as both are responding in a manner which seems realistic. The parallelism in female and male representation is even more significant, though, in terms of how Black women are portrayed in film and television. Looking at how often Black women are portrayed as loud, fiery, and combative, seeing a Black women respond in a realistic manner to a tense and upsetting situation helps to reconstruct the normalized expectations of how Black women react and respond in these and other emotionally charged moments.

If Uhura is happy, this too is evident, but it is no more exaggerated than any other character's expression of the same emotion. In the 1979 film, Uhura is seen reacting to the happy surprise of Captain Kirk stepping onto the bridge to take command of the

Enterprise for the upcoming mission. Based off of her reaction and many of the other crew on the bridge this is clearly a welcome moment. Uhura, Chekov, Sulu, and others are all shown with large smiles as Kirk greets them. Both Uhura and Sulu are shown with a toothy grin. Looking at this example, the viewer senses the strong positive feelings each of the crewmembers are experiencing for Kirk, but no one character is noticed as overpowering the scene or reacting in an exaggerated manner. While Uhura is clearly not shy to show her appreciation for Kirk's presence, her reaction is equal to that of her peers.

Perhaps the best example of 2016 Uhura emoting happiness is one of her last scenes, one of which is shared between her and presumed again-boyfriend, Spock. In this scene she teases Spock about attending Kirk's surprise birthday party. Uhura says, "I thought you had to finish you mission report." To which he responds, "I do. But I thought it would be more pleasing to engage with you socially." While Spock maintains his cool and level demeanor, Uhura replies in a calm yet playful manner, "You old romantic." Although Uhura's teasing is clearly playful in nature, her tone is by no means over-the-top or syrupy. Nor is it excessively loud and exaggerated, as is frequently the case for Black female characters. In fact, she teases Spock in a calm tone, with a knowing smirk.

In too many depictions of women during heartfelt and happy moments, women are frequently represented as being "sappy," while Black women are often being presented excessively exaggerated in their happiness and excitement. Both 1979 Uhura's similar level of happiness to that of other visible characters on the bridge, and 2016

Uhura's calm tone and smirk rebukes these stereotypes of Black women, and women as a whole.

In terms of emotional exaggeration, there is one specific scene in the 1979 film where we see Uhura's emotion veer to a seemingly more exaggerated limit as compared to her 2016 representation, and other characters of the 1979 film. In the scene, the bridge crew are told to leave the bridge. We see Uhura and many others exit the bridge and enter the turbo-lift. Upon entering the lift, the ship is hit by a weapon. Uhura initially braces herself in the entryway, then again on Sulu, seeming to hide behind him in fear. She is the only woman on the lift in this scene, and all of the men are standing tall, straight, and without fear. Because her body language is in such contrast to that of the men in the lift, the scene does imply she is less in control and more powerless than those she is next to. In an immediately following scene she straightens herself, and once again her body language and that of the others on the lift are similar.

In the 2016 film, there is one which stands out as being a bit more "gendered" in nature. Early in the film Uhura is attempting to return the aforementioned necklace to Spock—remember they were previously an item in earlier 2000's *Star Trek* films. In this exchange, Spock rejects the return of the necklace, saying it is not a custom of Vulcans to receive gifts back that had already been given. Uhura appears touched by Spock's rejection and gives him a kiss on the cheek as thanks. The gesture of thanks stands out even more so when compared to Spock's generally cool and always logical demeanor.

Both of these examples do not necessarily do Uhura or women as a whole any favors. The example from the 1979 film unfortunately reaffirms the stereotype of women

as being weak or easily frightened. The example from the 2016 film is also harmful in that it suggests women are more sentimental than men, and because Uhura's gratitude is compared to Spock's flat emotionless logic, it only amplifies the "woman is emotional" stereotype.

Looking at the results as a whole paints a picture that while there is generally progress in terms of visibility, such as more prominent placing and an increase in physical activity, a question remains on whether the costuming choices of the 2016 film can be considered proof of progress in physical representation. Similar to physical representation, results suggest there is generally progress in how women's roles are represented through Uhura's character. This is seen through more complex dialogue given to Uhura's 2016 character, greater involvement in pivotal plot moments by 2016 Uhura's character, and generally more realistic expression of emotion. The implications of these findings are discussed in the following section.

Chapter 5: Implications

Uhura's character is undeniably groundbreaking when considering historical context of the racial climate of society during her early representations, including that of 1979 Uhura in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. Seeing then how her character has in many ways remained the same, and in others changed with her most current representation in *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016) is enlightening and promising.

Physical Representations

When comparing this study's findings of 2016 Uhura to 1979 Uhura, to those of scholars such as Tudor and Meehan (2013) and Scodari (2012) who conducted studies on Zoe Saldana's 2009 representation of Uhura, this study finds positive changes in Uhura's overall visibility. Both Tudor and Meehan (2013) and Scodari (2012) found Saldana's 2009 representation of Uhura often obscured by items or set objects. While perhaps the greatest limitation of their study was that they did not compare the new representation of Uhura to her past representation by Nichelle Nichols, this study has answered some questions pertaining to whether or not Uhura's physical representation and visibility has been consistent or changed over time. It is through this observation the study has been able to draw some conclusions on these types of representations and the stereotypes that may be reinforced or reshaped.

Looking at how the physical representation of women has changed through Uhura's character, it was quickly evident that although viewers will see and recognize 1979 Uhura in her film, she was indeed often placed in less conspicuous locations, similar to Tudor and Meehan (2013) and Scodari (2012) findings. 1979 Uhura was

hidden from view and overall given less visibility compared to 2016 Uhura. So although Tudor and Meehan (2013) and Scodari (2012) found the 2009 Uhura representation as being hidden behind items, 2016 Uhura shows much greater visibility compared to her 1979 character. For viewers to see 1979 Uhura easily, most often the camera would need to intentionally pan to her station, AND she would need to physically rotate her body to be seen in at least profile view. 2016 Uhura was much more visible. Either because her clothing color stood out against the background, or because she was placed more prominently in the scene—frequently in line with other important bridge members. In terms of activity, 1979 Uhura was most often in a seated position at her station while 2016 Uhura was often running, fighting, investigating, or actively participating in a scene—either through conversation or nonverbal cues pertinent to the scene.

In regards to stature, both Uhuras were physically fit, although 2016 Uhura is portrayed much thinner. Additionally, costuming showed significant change. 1979 Uhura was covered entirely, as were nearly all crewmembers, female and male. 2016 Uhura's costume reverted to the short mini-skirt popular of the 1960's, however the costuming choice is most likely chosen as a nod to the original series. Studies conducted by Consalvo (2004), Levine (2008), and England, Descartes, and Collier-Meek (2011) had found that female characters are often portrayed in a hyper-sexualized manner—especially in terms of accentuating "female" traits such as thin waist with greater skin exposure. This study may support these scholars' findings.

In terms of physical representations of the woman's body, because the costuming choices for 2016 Uhura reverted back to the original mini-skirt, two conclusions may be

drawn. First, the mini-skirt of the original series was considered empowering to women

of the 60's, and with it being brought back for these films, the choice of 2016 Uhura's

mini-skirt could also have been selected to reflect that power in choice, with viewers

hopefully receiving that message. Notable feminist, Gloria Steinem, suggests women

dress as they wish and who, herself, sported the mini skirt in the 70's to prove a woman

can be strong while wearing feminine clothing.

Notable feminist icons aside, hope is not enough to refute such strong sexualized

stereotypes. The second implication and the possible concern of leaving the mini-skirt

by-and-large unaltered, however, is that modern viewers, especially those who are

unfamiliar with the history of the mini-skirt may overlook the symbolism of the skirt and

the power women have over their bodies. Instead viewers may simply see the short skirt

as it is, short, and unintentionally or intentionally sexualize Uhura's character,

unfortunately reinforcing sexualized stereotypes of women, and perhaps even infer she is

less competent. Supporting this concept, scholars such as Smith et. al (2018) found

correlations that when a women is viewed in a sexy outfit where sexualized body parts

are more visible, those viewing the woman perceive her as being less knowledgeable or

able to perform tasks.

When looking at the extreme thin-ness of Uhura's 2016 character, it can also be

implied there is greater value being placed on the thin, almost frail looking physique of

women. In Western media, prime time television is trending this increasing thinness of

women, and going so far as to present overweight characters as being less articulate or

intelligent (Mastro and Figueroa-Caballero, 2018). This "thinning" of Uhura's body

supports this negative implication and reinforces the stereotype of women as needing to be thin and physically fit to be attractive, and even successful.

Role Representations

Like physical representation, this study also sought to answer the question, "In what ways have role representations changed for women?" Comparing this study's findings with those of scholars such as Dove-Viebahn (2007), Lauzen et al. (2008), Levine (2008), and Scodari (2012), this study reinforces the conclusion there is a positive shift in the roles women play. Additionally, the findings of this study suggest and align with conclusions of Tudor and Meehan (2013) and Scodari (2012) in that Black women are being given more agency and visibility in film and television. The increase in visibility and agency is critical in helping to renegotiate the perceptions of not just Black women, but all women.

The changes in Uhura's role representation were overall promising in that her 2016 character's significance and participation on pivotal plot moments has increased. It is especially promising that Uhura's character has been developed to show her engaging in plot moments such as battling alongside and participating in investigative actions with other crewmembers, women and men. The implication of these changes in role representation is that we are seeing greater thought given to how women are represented in the roles they play.

The intersectionality of race and gender added a critical layer in role representation and the perception of Black women. Specifically, neither 1979 nor 2016 Uhura are portrayed in "mammy" or "maid," "jezebel," "angry Black woman," or other

roles that perpetuate unrealistic, harmful expectations and non-realities. Instead both Uhuras are placed in power positions, albeit to different degrees. 1979 Uhura is indeed placed in a role which makes her the authority of communication. In relation to other research focused on female characters in the sci-fi genre (Consalvo, 2004; Henderson, 1994; Roberts, 1999; Scodari, 2003; Scodari, 2012; Tudor and Meehan, 2013), this finding is consistent in that female characters within sci-fi are too often placed in these interpersonal roles. From this perspective 1979 Uhura is an example, that although her character does not perpetuate some of the more racist stereotypes, she is still an example of women being pigeonholed in interpersonal roles.

This study finds growth and positive change, however, in 2016 Uhura's character from the above mentioned scholars. 2016 Uhura is given many more opportunities to showcase her knowledge and skills, and in varied context of the film, outside of interpersonal roles. Uhura's increase in visibility, in conjunction with the development of her involvement of substantial plot suggests women are being considered more valuable than they had in previous representations and are now being recognized as productive human beings, of equal value and skill to those of men.

Viewers are also treated to greater exploration of Uhura's complexity as a person in 2016 Uhura. For example findings showed that although 1979 Uhura spoke more dialogue, it was limited in content outside of "Aye, Captain" or other affirming phrases. The content of 2016 Uhura's dialogue, although having spoken 63 words fewer than 1979 Uhura, was far more important to the plot of the film, and engaged her in heavy philosophical conversation with the antagonist, or showcased her skills and abilities to a

greater end. Additionally, 2016 Uhura was seen and heard in multiple role capacities, including a motivated, hardworking bridge officer when on duty, and also a softer friend and partner when there is shore leave. Both Uhuras spoke with clarity and articulation. We saw 2016 Uhura, however, also adapt her vocabulary to accommodate different understanding levels between various crewmembers. When looking at this example compared to Entman and Rojecki's (2000) study, where they noted Black characters often use less grammatically correct speech and more profanity than White characters, again we are seeing improvement in how racial stereotypes are being negated.

Future Research

Although this study was useful and unique in analyzing one female character and the degree to which her representation has changed over several decades, there is room for expansion. To increase the breadth of data for the study's assessment on the degree of change in the physical and role representation of women, a future study, which focuses on multiple female characters of the 1979 and 2016 Star Trek films would be beneficial. Such a study could also look more specifically at the change of dialogue between other characters reoccurring in both films. For example, Captain Kirk, Spock, Sulu, Scotty, Chekov, and Bones are all characters seen in both the 1979 and 2016 films. While there is not a consistent leading female character between the two films, each film does have at least one additional key female. Their dialogue and roles are also an option for comparison. This broader study would not only increase the data pool, but also allow for comparison of other key female and male characters' representations, ultimately shedding greater light on the value being placed on women.

Conclusion

Through examples in this study, viewers are able to see a positive representation of a woman through Star Trek's character Nyota Uhura. Depending on the version of Uhura they watch, they will, however, see varying degrees of the physical and role representations she embodies. This study leans toward the conclusion there has, overall, been positive change in Uhura's, and therefore women's, representation over time. The change is most evident in terms of how much visibility she is given, and the role she plays within the context of plot. There are, however, still instances of hyper-sexualization of female characters. Translating the positive changes of increased visibility and more complex role representation into real life, if film and media are able to continue on a positive trajectory in which women are given more visibility, and more ownership over their physical and role representations, common negative stereotypes afflicting Black women and women as a whole will continue to breakdown.

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Appendix A

Table 1a—Physical Representations of Uhura in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979)

Physical Traits			
	Revealing Flesh	Fit of Clothing	Other
What evidence is there of hyper-sexualization	• No displays of "excessive" skin being shown	• Tan polyester/spandex pant, often covers/connects to shoes making them appear as one solid surface. Matching tunic hits at hip, covering arms/legs (same/similar to other workers on bridge, men/women alike) • Overall physique is not accentuated by uniform more or less than others'	• Nails are maintained a natural color, and long length • Long lashes and neutral colored metallic eye shadow • Slightly shiny lip gloss
	Decoration	Status Symbol	Other
How are ornamentation and/or accessories used?	• Ornamentation is limited other than gold earrings	• Standard "com badge"	
	Thin/Weak	Muscular/Strong	Other
How is the character's physique portrayed?	• Although her physique does not suggest she is weak, in one scene she leans on Sulu when thrown off balance during an attack. No others in the scene have the same balance issue	• Physique appears healthy; not underweight/not over weight.	
	Background		
Where is the character often placed as compared to objects or characters of the opposite gender?	• 33+ instances in background • Placed near/next to Captain Kirk 3ish times • Although placed in back in an assembly scene, she is located between Kirk and the masses of other, unidentified crew. In this case, she is identifiable along with the other bridge officers while the masses are not • Often seated in back of bridge, back to camera, center of screen; back, head, and left leg are all that is visible. She swivels chair when speaking to the crew allowing audience to see her profile • Seated at comm station, Kirk is the only other character in view, placed slightly forward but nearby, turns to face camera directly • Seated in back of bridge, back to camera, center of screen. 3 other bridge officers facing forward (2 male; Kirk & Sulu; 1 female (navigation officer), 3 others ((N/I Uhura: 2 female (unidentified); 1 male-former captain)) also facing back • Seated in back, back to camera, center of screen. 2 males (Kirk, Sulu) forward and front facing. 1 female (navigation officer) front facing. 1 Female screen left,		

	standing, back to camera (unidentified female).
	• Seated in back, facing us, holding on to console while others being thrown around during warp-drive malfunction. Others standing, also holding onto what they can
	• Screen left, side view of body, seated, looking towards view screen with rest of bridge crew. ½ standing, ½ seated also looking same direction.
	• During an intense conversation of Kirk's ego between Kirk and Bones, their conversation is interrupted by a comm call. At first we hear only audio of Uhura through the comm system, Kirk orders "view screen on." Camera switches to large view of Uhura, seated at the comm station on the bridge (only shoulders and up visible). Kirk is standing next to view screen, body turned towards screen, still allowing audience profile view of him.
	• Uhura is seen in the far background during the scanning scenes several times. Like the other crew in the scene (men and women), she is attempting to shield her eyes from the bright light of the plasma beam scanning the bridge. In these scenes the main focus is the plasma beam; all other characters seem to be background
	• Seen once very quickly in background as camera pans bridge crew in a tense moment where exec commander is questioning what to do
	• Seen once very quickly, full seated view, back is to us, arm is fully extended and working at dash. Two other men in view (1 standing at mid ground-unknown crewmember, 1 is Chekov, seated headshot).
	• We see Uhura seated in back while Kirk is deciding what to do. She is barely visibly, while Kirk is close up.
	• Uhura in far back, seated in dark. Only visible are shoulders and head, towards us. Kirk and Ilia probe are main focus-both standing. Ilia is profile view of shoulders/head, Kirk is front-facing shoulders/head. Additional unknown male barely visible in mid-ground, directly behind Kirk and Ilia.
	• Uhura is seen exiting the bridge alongside other crew. She stumbles in the lift entryway as Enterprise is hit by a weapon and braces herself-arms spread wide in the entryway. All are bracing (men and women). Uhura then braces herself on Sulu, seeming to hide in fear. The men on the lift are standing taller, and not afraid. She then straightens herself.
	• In related, immediate following scenes, only her forward facing head is visible on the lift. She is blocked by several other male crewmembers also on the lift. She is the only woman. (Men: Kirk, exec. Comm. Decker, Spock, Bones, Sulu, unknown male). Chekov is standing next to Uhura and is often less visible than her.
	• Shows fear on lift by placing hand on Sulu's shoulder.
	• After resuming stations, she retakes her comm station. Barely visible, lighting is very dim. She is seated, back to us.
	• In related scene, she is seated in the background next to a standing Bones
	• Kirk, Spock, and Bones triumphantly return to bridge, Uhura is back, stage right, seated initially, then stands to see them return. She is clearly happy at their return while many others maintain more serious expressions.
	• Comes forward to relay Starfleet info. She is technically in the background, however, the camera is focused on her. She is the most lit character, standing, confident posture (legs shoulder width). Sulu is seated, back to us, turned towards her, Chekov standing, but only torso is visible, unknown male is standing behind Uhura in shadows.
	Foreground
Where is the character often	• 38+ instances in foreground

placed as compared to objects or characters of the opposite gender?	• 1st appearance she pans in from left screen, sitting at a communication desk (standard comm desk location for her character)
	• Clearly at workstation in back of bridge, chair initially turned so her back is to us, then she swivels to address the crew, allowing full view of torso and face in a close-up.
	• Seated, swivels to share communication info/ship readiness
	• Seated, swivels to share comm info
	• Seated foreground, back to us. All other bridge officers also have backs to us
	• Screen left, back to us, being thrown around with other bridge crew during warp-drive malfunction
	• Screen right, close up profile while greeting Spock upon his surprise joining on the ship
	• Seated, slightly more forward facing profile view, arms take up space (one on her dash, the other resting on her thigh) while camera pans over her and other crewmembers (all one-by-one) during a tense engine check.
	• Seated at comm station, profile, hand on earpiece, serious
	• Seated at comm station, left profile, puzzled/confused at lack of response from alien cloud
	• Seated at comm station, left profile, hands on dash. In response to Spock's claim "we have been contacted" (telepathically), eyes are wide, perhaps puzzled why she hasn't heard the response
	• After ship is scanned, Chekov is wounded, medical team rushes in. Uhura directs the med team (1 woman, 1 man) to Chekov. She remains seated at comm station, screen right, however her attention is clearly shifted now to Chekov while directing the med team there.
	• Spock claims the entity has been trying to communicated, we very briefly see Uhura looking perplexed as she has yet to hear any comm from the entity herself
	• Seated at comm station, perplexed/curious/uncertain (same apparent emotions expressed as other crew who are also panned across, or shown in other immediate scenes). Arms are open, taking up space. One arm on dash, the other arm resting on her lap table
	• Quick view of her blinking rapidly while at comm station (headshot); in response to the bright flashes on the view screen. (All crew seen- men and women, have the same reaction and are shown equally fast)
	• Another quick headshot of her at comm station when crew are reacting individually to the view screen
	• Seated screen right as Bones and Chekov enter bridge. Both men look confused/concerned, while Uhura now seems amazed or awe-inspired. Arms/torso are wide open/taking up space (the visible arm is extended and firmly planted on comm dash, other is resting, out of camera shot)
	• Previous scene repeated moments later
	• Upon being prompted by Kirk, responds to his inquiry on outbound transmissions. Profile view, both hands seem diligently working/placed on dash. She responds in deliberate tones with haste.
	• Headshot of her seeming serious while viewing entity on screen. Her chin is held high ((camera is slightly lower than her shoulder, so it appears we are looking up at her), mouth is closed, brow moves confidently in response to others (audio only) comments))
	• Profile view of her seated, while the exec officer checks in with the transmission status. He is standing.

	• Headshot, side profile, but full-face view.
	• As Kirk enters bridge, Uhura swivels to face front of camera. Still seated, one hand on earpiece, other hand resting on armrest. Sulu is seen in background, standing at a diff. station
	• Camera quickly closes in on Uhura's head. Full face visible as she comments "it's decelerating". One hand visible and on earpiece. Kirk's torso is seen next to her on screen left.
	• Close-up headshot, one hand is slightly out of view, but implied it is on her dash. Other hand is on her earpiece. Two men visible in back (1 mid ground-standing; 1, Chekov, seated, slight side view of face, mostly back to us)
	• Close-up side view, with face turned toward us. Arm extended on dash. No others.
	• Very quick close-up of face while entity fires something at Earth. She seems in disbelief/concerned. Camera goes to exec commander, his reaction is similar, although he is standing but we only see his shoulders and face
	• Close-up side view, with face turned toward us. Hand on earpiece while delivering info.
	• Close-up side view, profile. One arm extended on dash. There is a railing blurred between us and Uhura, blocking her full side profile.
	• Camera pans from Chekov, to unknown standing male, to Uhura, and continues on to other bridge crew at consistent pace. Arms are fully extended on station. Seated. Torso/head view. This is where she says, "Starfleet has been apprised.."
	• Close-up of Uhura: shoulders/head, side view of torso, face turned toward us. Hand on earpiece, other arm (although out of sight) appears to be extended fully on dash.
	• As Kirk, Ilia, Bones, and Decker leave on lift, Uhura is shown by herself, seated front torso view. She appears uncertain, nervous.
	• As Kirk requests info, scene cuts to Uhura intently listening to Kirk's command. While she is receiving a command, Chekov and Sulu walk up behind her to listen (both standing, while she is seated at her station).
	• Side shoulder/head view, hand on earpiece as she relays info to Kirk. She is serious and intent.
	• Last appearance she visually responds to Kirk's statement, "they are not casualties, they are missing". She seems puzzled, but accepting of his statement. Torso/headshot view. Very brief.
	Audio Only
Where is the character often placed as compared to objects or characters of the opposite gender?	• Uhura is directly spoken to by Kirk in one instance, although we do not hear her response • Refer to Table 2a to read full transcript of 1979 Uhura's dialogue.
Other Notes	• First appearance at 0:22:55-0:23:00 • Last appearance at 2:10:42-2:10:43 • Last appearance of any character at 2:11:30-Kirk, Bones, and Spock.

Table 1b—Physical Representations of Uhura in *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016)

Physical Traits			
	Revealing Flesh	Fit of Clothing	Other
What evidence is there of hyper-sexualization	• Leg is exposed between hem of mini-skirt at mid-thigh and where her boot comes up at her mid-calf	• Red Starfleet uniform. Long sleeves, dress hits mid-thigh when seated.	
	Decoration	Status Symbol	Other
How are ornamentation and/or accessories used?	• Ornamentation is limited other than simple drop earrings worn throughout film • Necklace gift from Spock—seen only twice. 1st when she attempts to return the item at the colony (necklace is initially hidden under collar of uniform until she begins to pull out, but is stopped by Spock), 2nd in a closing scene at Kirk's birthday party (she is in street clothes and is wearing the necklace, now visible on top of her dress's neckline).	• Standard comm badge • Rank is shown as a band along the wrist band on her sleeves, as is other crewmembers	
	Thin/Weak	Muscular/Strong	Other
How is the character's physique portrayed?	• Physique is very thin, but she is not represented as weak	• Portrayed as strong when she is embattled with the enemy intruders	
	Background		
Where is the character often placed as compared to objects or characters of the opposite gender?	• Upon approaching the Yorktown star base, bridge crew assembles to look at the destination on the viewer. Uhura is seen standing in the back next to an unknown Starfleet female. Kirk is center screen, foreground. He is flanked by Spock on left and Bones on right. The men are conversing the destination, while the two women (Uhura included) remain silent in the back. • Camera shot switches to side view of Kirk and Spock up close, Uhura is barely visible behind the men • Camera angle changes again, now showing the bridge face on. This is the first scene where all of the familiar "standard" Enterprise crew are seen. Kirk, Spock (at ease), Bones remain as the focus of the scene standing. Chekov and Sulu are seated slightly forward at their stations-silent. Uhura and unnamed female are in farthest back, standing at ease-silent. • Camera shot switches, moves in to close up again. Kirk, Spock, Bones, are focus (headshots). Only Uhura's shoulder is visible • Scene changes, crew is disembarking Enterprise at the station. Uhura is far in the back and is seen beginning to run to catch up to Spock (front/center of scene) • Camera switches again, Spock is full head viewable, Uhura is seen from back		

- of head. They are still conversing.
- In a full, front facing view of bridge all of the crew are forward (camera facing). All members of bridge are difficult to see. Most are standing. Most of those standing appear to be male, with the exception of Uhura. She is more easily picked out of the crew because she is wearing red, while most are wearing blue or gold.
- Continued from Krall grabbing Sulu by hair scene. Many crewmembers are visible in this holding scene. Uhura is visibly very angry. She is yelling at Krall and physically trying to help detach him from Sulu. Many other visible female crewmembers are visibly shaken and upset, but seem more sad than angry. The men are for the most part just standing there. Only the male standing closest to Sulu seems visibly upset, but even his reaction is small.
- Camera changes as Kirk rides in on a motorcycle, creating his diversion, Uhura lunges forward to "try to get away", but she is stopped by the other alien. She doesn't struggle much. As Kirk rides circles around them, we quickly see her standing and looking on as though she is saying "save me". Her expression is a bit of concern mixed with powerlessness. Moments later we presume she escapes because Krall yells, "where is she!" Uhura is not to be seen anywhere.
- Upon Kirk and Jayla being transported to the safe ship, Sulu, Chekov, and Uhura (in that order) run to greet them. Uhura and Sulu inform the Abornath is a weapon. Sulu cuts Uhura off when she starts speaking and finishes the thought.
- The crew goes to the bridge, Uhura is seen in the back standing. Spock is farther back in the scene, also standing. Uhura's back is to us initially.
- In the immediate scene following she is facing forward, as are all other crewmembers. They are gazing out the view window, watching the swarm of ships depart. The camera pans out, we now see the entire main bridge crew; not just Uhura, Spock, Kirk, and Chekov.
- As Kirk asks Sulu if he is sure he can get the ship flying, we see a wider view of the bridge. Kirk is in the middle ground, seated. We see his whole body. Sulu is closest to us, brightest lighting, torso view only. Uhura is the only other member viewable. She is far back, seated behind a console. We only see her head.
- In a scene where see Spock prepping his station. He is close to us, torso view only. Uhura is at the console in the far back, but we see her side torso profile as she preps her station.
- In other similar shots of the bridge, we periodically see Uhura in the back as the camera pans.
- In any bridge scene where we see Kirk front and center, Uhura is visible at her console in the back.
- During scenes where Kirk and the crew are discussing the difficulty and how they will save Yorktown, we often see Uhura standing in the back by the screen where she announced the attack. Her red dress, again, is making her easier to pick out on the bridge, especially in dimmer lighting. We also see her arms stretch and move around, so although she is far in the back, her movement does help us to locate her easier.
- While prepping the VHF output receiver, the camera pans in an out, and around the bridge as crew scramble to get it hooked up. Uhura is still behind her console working, but she is standing as though she is connecting things. We also see Jayla yelling to let her connect it as Scotty is trying to control to situation. Uhura yells at Scotty to let Jayla connect it too. He complies after

	he gets a shock.
	• Uhura states the signal won't travel far and that they must get closer. Scotty, Jayla, Uhura, and Kirk are all visible. All but Uhura are fully visible. Uhura is the only one behind a console, however she is also the only one actively working on the situation. The others are waiting for direction/news.
	Foreground
Where is the character often placed as compared to objects or characters of the opposite gender?	• 32+
	• During the continued intro monologue by Kirk, the camera pans throughout the Enterprise. Characters, both familiar and unknown are panned over in varied lengths of time. Upon entering the bridge she is the first recognized bridge member that the audience recognizes. She is seated in a familiar fashion at her comm console. Side, seated profile view of full body is seen.
	• Uhura catches up to Spock and engages in conversation. She looks concerned/somber, while asking if he has a moment. Profile view headshot. Spock is full face view headshot
	• Camera angle switches, Uhura's headshot is now full view. Spock is recognized as being the one she is speaking to, with his back to us.
	• In response to Spock stating he won't accept her returned gift, Uhura gives him a kiss on the cheek and walks away.
	• Kirk prompts Uhura to open a ship-wide channel, Uhura responds promptly and operates some buttons/switches on her panel. Both are seated. Kirk is seen as closer, although Uhura is the focus of the shot. We see her primarily from the back, profile view, except for when she responds to Kirk directly.
	• In response to Kirk's command, Uhura hails unnamed ship. She is seated, right side profile view. One hand above on panel, the other hand operating the lower panel. Spock is seated as well-same body orientation (closer to camera, however he is not in focus).
	• Uhura is monitoring transmissions from unnamed vessel. She realizes they are jamming their signal and informs Kirk. She is shown initially as right side profile then turns head to face camera-essentially head on.
	• As Kirk initiates red alert, all crew take battle stations. Many are shown running toward weapons bays. Scene switches to Uhura as she watches with concern when Spock stands with haste and leaves the scene (presumably to help with the impending fight). Lighting is dark during the red alert. Uhura is seated in familiar seated profile view at her station looking concerned. Hands are on her station. Camera pans in closer on her face. Look of concern dissipates.
	• During "abandon ship" Uhura runs to side of fallen crewmember. It is dark, red alert, all are difficult to make out. She is kneeling, front-center of camera, while all others visible are standing and running.
	• Camera shot changes, camera is close up on her right side profile (she is still in shadow) while she is looking up towards Chekov, Sulu, and other unknown crew member at helm station (lighting is moderately better). Antagonist alien women is standing in far back- she is in shadows. All look concerned.
	• Camera shot changes again to very close up concerned expression of Uhura. Lighting is moderately brighter.
	• Scene changes, lift doors open, Uhura comes running out and engages two intruders in hand to hand combat. Camera angle changes a couple of times showing different angles of her throwing the intruders around. One angle she shoots an intruder with a large gun. Sometimes we see the back of her head,

with lots of large fighting gestures, sometimes it is face shots of her doing this. The intruders are very obviously large, bulky, and highly mechanized/armored, while she is only in her Starfleet uniform (red dress, mid thigh length, knee high boots). She is victorious, ultimately throwing them over a catwalk barrier. We see her pause for just a moment to catch her breath upon victory. Scene changes.

- After we see Kirk struggling to stand while the ship is careening out of orbit, camera pans up to the level above him, we see Uhura standing and bracing herself similarly, attempting to regain a solid footing.
- Seconds later, after a couple of scene changes, Uhura is seen running from screen left towards an unknown destination. Lighting is still dark.
- Scene changes a couple of times. Uhura arrives at her destination-a panel to disconnect the Enterprise saucer. She opens the console, and kneels down to operate something.
- Scene changes, showing Kirk is in hand to hand combat with the main baddie. They fall over the catwalk railing next to Uhura, still attempting to disengage the ship's saucer. We see Uhura raise an arm to cover her face/head when glass breaks all around her. She is still kneeling. Kirk and Krall remain engaged in fight. Lighting is dark.
- Scene changes, Uhura is now standing, but pressing herself up against the wall next to the console. Seeming to try and stay out of the way of the Kirk/Krall battle. Camera pans down and zooms in on her hand as she pushes buttons to close the hatch between Kirk one side of the escape pod door, and her and Krall on the other. Door closes. She ejects the pod with her and Krall stuck together. We see alternating close ups of Kirk and Uhura appearing concerned/disbelief for what she just did.
- Scene changes, Pod ejects from the ship. We see Uhura's face on one side of the window and Krall's on the other as the pod moves away fast. Lighting is bright.
- Scene changes. Camera zooms in on Krall as he opens artifact container. He realizes what he was searching for is not in the container now. He looks over to Uhura in a threatening/upset manner. Camera changes to Uhura. She looks at him. Seemingly confident in what she did, although cautious and concerned knowing she is now locked in a confined space with him.
- Now on the planet surface, pod hatch door opens. Camera focus on Uhura cautiously looking around as she exits the pod in an unknown area. She looks observant, but unafraid. She steps out slowly, but does so with conviction. Camera pans around to her back as she walks forward taking in the environment-a dark tall cavernous area. Other indigenous peoples (the antagonizers) are seen far off in the distance on bridges and other surfaces, working and walking around. She is the only distinguishable person.
- One of the baddies updates Krall. Krall approaches Uhura and asks her name in broken English. Camera changes to a close up of Uhura's face. She seems calm, collected, and serious. She spins around quickly and says, "How do you know our language?" Camera changes between Uhura and Krall a couple of times, going back and forth between close ups of their faces. Krall seems annoyed and temperamental. Uhura remains calm, however stern, serious, and all business. She uses stern tones, speaks with conviction.
- Camera angle changes, we see Uhura and Krall standing face to face-profile views, with an unnamed third alien facing us, standing slightly behind Uhura and Krall as they speak, watching them. Uhura and Krall continue their

conversation. Krall asking why she sacrificed herself for Kirk, she responds he'd do the same. She threatens he will return for them. Krall aggressively steps towards her and gets in her face, stating that's what he's counting on. Uhura seems moderately shaken at that statement. Scene changes.

- Scotty's work partner sneezes an acidic compound on a door lock. Camera pans out and we see Scotty, Uhura, Keinzer, Sulu, and an unnamed crewmember breaking into an off-limits area where they are being held.
- Sulu says, "we have 15 minutes until the next guard rotation, come on", Uhura and Sulu spring into action and hustle into the room. Sulu and Scotty hold the door up for Uhura to climb under first. Sulu leads he and Uhura deeper into the room. They both pause briefly as they wait to ensure no one is in there, or that they were caught. They continue. Both have similar body language-arms stretched out against walls when pausing to hide, similar pacing/speed, and facial gestures. The only notable difference is that Uhura always stops with knees together, while Sulu stops with legs shoulder-ish width apart (she is wearing a dress, while men are in pants).
- Upon entering the main part of the room, Sulu calls out a piece of technology the Federation uses, Uhura rhetorically questions why Krall would use it. Both seem equally puzzled and curious. Sulu thinks he hears somebody and rushes around the room to check through a hole in the wall. Uhura does not move, but only looks in the direction. They verify they heard someone coming and they both squat low as they attempt to sneak away.
- Camera shot changes and they are seen running across a yard, still checking out their captive's equipment/tech. Uhura runs to a console and begins to operate it. She seems focused and intent while Sulu is more cautious and uncertain. Sulu and Uhura exchange some dialogue on their situation and what Krall seems to have been up to, then they are caught. Their facial gestures and moods seem similar now-both concerned/caught.
- Sulu and Uhura are escorted with armed guard through a cavern. She is easily distinguished by her red uniform, as is Sulu with his gold uniform. Both seem small and weak compared to the aggressors. In the immediately following scenes camera angles switch between Sulu/Uhura and Krall. Sulu's gold is easier to focus on than Uhura's red. Similarly, Sulu is standing in a slightly more lit area than Uhura.
- Camera pans to a close up on Uhura and Krall, again face to face, nearly nose to nose as he makes a statement to her. She confronts him staying he is wrong. Again she expresses confidence and conviction while facing him head on. Her tones remain quiet, however stern.
- Krall goes over to two upside down hanging crewmembers and electrocutes them. Uhura has a big reaction: she tries to push forward to stop Krall; she looks angry and distressed. Sulu grabs her by the arms and holds her back. He is also bothered, but seems more concerned in holding Uhura back.
- Krall comes marching/ stumbling angrily outside to where the crew is being held. Uhura and Sulu are the primary focus in the scene. Both seem calm until Krall aggressively grabs Sulu by the hair demanding answers. Uhura becomes more of a background character→move to background notes.
- When being called out by Krall that unity is not their strength, but a weakness, camera pans to Uhura, Sulu, and other unknown crewmembers. Both Uhura and Sulu seem upset/angry. Sulu is closest to the camera, out of breath from his attack. Uhura is immediately next to him, standing calm.
- Krall explains the purpose/power of the Abornath to Uhura, Sulu, Syl (female ensign who hid the Abornath in her cranial spikes), and another

unknown crewmember. The camera pans away from Krall, whom we see from the back, and moves towards Uhura, Sulu, and Syl. Uhura is closest to us, Syl next to her. Sulu is farther back. All are standing, both are focused and paying close attention to Krall and what he is saying. The other crewmembers are mostly obscured from view during this camera pan. Other aliens like Krall are barely visible in the room as well.

- Krall finishes explaining the basic creation story of the Abornath, a door quickly closes, enclosing Uhura, Syl, and Krall in a room. The others are locked out on the other side. Uhura spins around to look at the door. She is surprised as is Syl. The brief moment we see Sulu's reaction, we see a similar look of surprise as the door closes right in front of his face. Uhura now appears more concerned as she recognizes something bad is probably about to happen. She collects herself quickly, regaining a calm, but serious expression, staring directly at Krall. Syl seems confused, looking toward Uhura as if to be comforted, but Uhura offers no emotion towards her.

- As Krall walks around the room, Uhura then looks at Syl as if saying, "I don't know what's about to happen, but it's not good."

- Camera angle changes to just Uhura walking around the room-arms at her side, following slowly behind Krall as he walks toward something. She seems studious, curious, and serious while listening to Krall drone on about his past/the Abornath.

- Camera angle switches, we see another alien, stationary, watching as Krall and Uhura walk around. This alien seems a little uneasy. Uhura maintains a composed, serious expression, arms still at her side. As the camera moves with Uhura and Krall walking, we now see Syl again. She is standing further from Uhura, remaining stationary. She is turned away from Krall (perpendicularly) while Uhura remains squared up on him, arms at her side. Syl's arms are bent with hands in front of her in a more protective stance.

- A door opens, Krall exits, Uhura follows quickly, but remains collected and serious. Syl remains where she is at, looking up at technology that has moved/changed from Krall's device.

- Uhura engages Krall in conversation now. Questioning his logic. The camera is focused on Krall and Uhura walking out of the room where Syl remains watching the device move. Uhura follows quickly, with purpose and calmness in her stride.

- Camera angle switches as she calls him out as having something dark/deep going on. Her expression is inquisitive and confident. The other alien closes the door behind them as they exit the room, leaving Syl in the room with the device. Both Krall and Uhura watch as the door closes. Syl now scurries to the door in concern.

- Camera angle switches. We are looking at Uhura from Syl's side of the door. Uhura walks quickly to the door saying, "Wait." She now looks concerned. Camera angle switches again to Uhura squaring up on Krall as he looks in the room with Syl. Uhura yells very angrily at him, "you already got what you wanted!"

- As Syl disintegrates, the camera switches back and forth between looking at Uhura's reaction through the door and Syl's as she disappears. Behind Uhura is the other alien. He stands somewhat imposingly behind her, although he is not the focus of the shot. Uhura looks distressed, sad, angry-one hand on the door as she gazes in in disbelief.

- Scene changes, they are outside now. Krall continues to explain his POV on the Federation to Uhura. She follows behind him as he walks up a rock path.

Her red uniform is bright contrast against the all blue-grey rock outside environment. Even Krall blends in with the rocks.

- Angle switches. Uhura is gazing up at the structure they are walking towards. She is followed (presumably being kept in line) by the other alien. She seems a little awestruck.
- A few scenes later during the battle, we see Spock sneaking around looking for Uhura. He is surprised and attacked by a couple of aliens. Those aliens are then attacked. We see very quickly it is Uhura who has engaged the aliens and rendered them unconscious. Uhura ultimately saves Spock, although it doesn't seem she knew it was him when she was attacking the aliens. Uhura asks what he's doing there and he says, "rescuing you". She is clearly touched by this, but quickly helps him stand then says, "let's go."
- In a rescue beam-up, we see Scotty and a number other unnamed crewmembers waiting to be transported to the safe location. We then see Uhura running to meet them on the platform. She is being chased by a number of alien aggressors. Behind her we see Spock. He is farther back and much more difficult to see. Her red dress still stands out more than the other colored uniforms in these scenes.
- When running to the platform with the others, Uhura is at the front of the scene. She remains towards the front of the group of people as the camera pans around. We can also identify Spock and Scotty.
- Camera switches angles and scenes quickly as we see other crewmembers reactions. Only a few are zoomed in on closely. Uhura is one of these few.
- As the ship careens off the ledge, the camera changes views to show crew members reactions of the intense situation. Twice, the camera focuses on Uhura. This is a similar, if not greater amount of visibility as other bridge members. Her facial reactions are similar-tense.
- Next scene shows varied crew members sighs of relief when they survive the ship's jumpstart fall. Uhura, again is one of the members we see show relief.
- As we begin to hear distress signals from Yorktown, we then hear/see Uhura announce to the bridge she is picking up distress signals. She states Krall has begun his attack. The camera shows her first standing at a screen near her console. Then zooms in to show us a close-up head shot as she announces the attack. She is serious/tense. Similar to that of Chekov and Sulu in the next scene. Only Kirk seems truly calm.
- Spock has a realization about the nature of the swarm ships. He attempts to inform Kirk how to defeat them, but speaks too complicated/long. Uhura interrupts him and says hastily they can disrupt the swarm with a frequency and "kick its ass". This scene shows Uhura stand quickly and with haste as she walks over to Kirk.
- In related scenes, we see the camera change angles as it zooms in over members of the crew. Uhura, Kirk, Spock are all among the members who we see react. Uhura's expressions mirror those of the other members.
- We see a close-up headshot of Uhura as she realizes out loud that they weren't being jammed earlier, but they were hearing the swarm's signals when they were communicating. Her expression is serious, but calm, like an "aha" moment.
- When asked how close they must get to the swarm, the camera zooms close to Uhura (headshot), and she states very seriously "very". She speaks with tons of conviction, and deeper tones. Kirk takes her direction seriously and commands Sulu to put the ship in the center of the swarm wave.
- As the camera pans from a close headshot of Kirk, we begin to see Uhura's

	console come front and center. Jayla is in front of Uhura's console, but with her back to us, working. We see Uhura looking directly our way, clearly in control of the situation. Scotty is standing next to Uhura, but hunched and braced on her station. He is asking Jayla a question. • As the ship moves closer to the swarm, the camera changes scenes between Kirk, Uhura, then Scotty, showing their reactions to the mass of the swarm about to engulf them. Reactions are similar among all three. Camera angles are similar among all three.
	Audio Only
Where is the character often placed as compared to objects or characters of the opposite gender?	• 11 Instances of "audio only" representation—Refer to Appendix B, Table 2b for full dialogue transcript of 2016 Uhura
Other	• First appearance at 0:04:38-0:04:41, seated at console—non talking scene (see first foreground comparison) • Last appearance at 1:52:19-1:52:27 • Last appearance of any character at 1:52:27 • In one scene, while Uhura is not physically or audibly present, she and her relationship with Spock is the topic of discussion between Spock and Bones. There is not a moment similar to this in the 1979 film. • In a later scene, Nichelle Nichols portrayal of Uhura is visible in a photograph of the complete original Enterprise crew.

Appendix B

Table 2a—Role Representations of Uhura in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (1979)

Role Traits	
How does the character show emotion?	• Motivated: Busy, working under pressure, get-it-done tone, deliberate tones, responds or acts with haste • Happy: Obvious smiling, softer tone • Fear/disbelief/nervous: tense shoulders/neck, eyebrows slightly furrowed, more expressive facial movements, and hesitation to move. In another scene she seems to hide herself on Sulu when Enterprise is attacked. She is leaning on his shoulder, and behind. Lips parted slightly. • Fear: Tension in voice, rapid responses, tense facial gestures • Calm: Relaxed facial gestures, shoulders down, chin level to ground, hands/arms relaxed • Perplexed/Confused: Quieter voice, furrowed brow, chin down, eyes squinted • Surprise: faster speech, higher pitch tones. Often heard when delivering "surprising" communication transmission info. • Empathy: quiet tones • Amazement: brow is relaxed somewhat, while eyes are slightly squinted, lips parted, face appears less bothered and more accepting 1:08:26
How does the character express intelligence/experience?	• Confident tone while speaking to other officers • Speaks with seriousness, confidence, using lower/deeper tone/inflection when speaking to lower-rank officers • Speaks calmly, confidently, with respect to others • Appears perplexed/concerned when she is unable to hear/find the entity's communication to the ship • Deliberate tones, responds or acts quickly
How does the character motivate others?	• Uses confident tone, deeper inflection to emphasize seriousness/gravity of occasion to assure success of Kirk
How does the character counsel others?	• "It's how we all feel Mr. Spock". Quieter/softer tone used while trying to explain to Spock why he is welcomed back to the ship so enthusiastically • Indirectly tends to Chekov when he is wounded. Med team rushes in, Uhura turns from her comm station to point the med team to his location. She appears more concerned for Chekov, and distracted from her own duties.
How does the character define objectives or goals?	• Tends to wounded Chekov by directing med team before attending her own duties (although she did not appear to have any action items at the moment) • No other examples of definition of objectives/goals
How does the character express passivity/aggression?	• Passive: "yes sir" • Aggression: No examples of true aggression. Use of assertive tones, deeper tone/inflection
How does the character express power/lack of power?	• 14+ instances Controlling the communications station • Speaks with confidence, haste • Stands tall/erect, shoulders back, chin up • Arms loosely at her side • Confidence in duties/abilities • Upon hearing, from Spock, the entity has contacted the ship (telepathically

	0:59:17), she appears surprised/serious as she has not received any communications herself. Eyes are wide/ eye brows slightly elevated, lips parted slightly, however she remains seated normally at her comm station (hands on dash) if only a bit more alert
	• Spock essentially takes over her role of communicating to the entity, as he is the only one who can telepathically sense the entity's motives and communication to the ship. Uhura is not visible while he initiates contact.
	• Tone quiets and slows down when she is given a changing order on delaying a transmission
Total Dialogue: 362 words	I'll get somebody down there as soon as I can, sir.
	My people are all tied up right now.
Audio only=**Bold**: 68 words	Captain, Starfleet just sent over your transfer of command orders, sir.
	Aye, sir.
	Ensign, the possibilities of our returning from this mission in one piece may have just doubled.
	On viewer, sir.
	Transporter system fully repaired and functioning normally, sir.
	Aye, sir.
	Transporter personnel reports the Navigator, Lieutenant Ilia. She's already on board and en route to the bridge, sir. She's Deltan, Captain.
	Captain, Starfleet reports our last six crewmembers are ready to beam up, but, uh, one of them is refusing to step into the transporter.
	Dock control reports ready, Sir.
	Guard command signaling clear, Sir.
	Subspace frequency's jammed, Sir. Wormhole effect.
	Communications are normal, Sir.
	Bridge to Captain
	Signal from a Federation registered long range shuttle, sir.
	She wishes to come alongside and lock on.
	It's how we all feel Mr. Spock
	Bridge to officer lounge: Captain Kirk, revised estimate on cloud visual contact, 3.7 minutes
	Continued friendship messages on all frequencies, sir
	No response to friendship messages, sir
	Oh good, Christine. It's Chekov.
	Unable to make contact with Starfleet Captain. Any attempt to transmit out of the cloud is being reflected back.
	Ready to launch remote communications drone with complete ship's records, including our present situation, sir.

	Aye
	Captain, photic sonar readings indicate the aperture is closing. **Retract, sir**.
	Captain, Starfleet signals are growing in strength, sir. They still have the intruder on their monitors. It's decelerating.
	Bridge to Captain
	A faint signal from Starfleet, Sir. Intruder cloud has been located on the outer monitors for the past twenty-seven minutes. Cloud dissipating rapidly as it approaches.
	Captain! Starfleet is sending us tactical on Vger's position. Vger is transmitting, a signal.
	Sir, Starfleet computes the devices are proceeding toward equal distant positions. Orbiting the planet.
	Captain, I'm losing Starfleet. Interference from Vger.
	Starfleet has been apprised of our situation, Captain.
	Sir, I've located the source of Vger's radio signal. It's directly ahead.
	Aye, Sir.
	We have just received the response code, Captain.
	Transmitting.
	Word from Starfleet. They are requesting damage and injury reports, and complete vessel status.
	Aye, Sir.
	Aye, Sir.

Table 2b—Role Representations of Uhura in *Star Trek: Beyond* (2016)

Role Traits	
How does the character show emotion?	• Concern/Remorse (in regards to others' well being)-Concerned brow. Tense upper body language, intense stare in the direction of the threat or one she is concerned about. Mouth may be closed with slight purse of lips, or could be slightly gaped as though there is a hint of surprise mixed with the concern. Tone may be either stern or soft depending on if the concern seems to be of "grave danger" of someone, or just as "general concern" for a person's well being. • Concern (in regards to self-preservation)- Shows stern facial expressions, such as tense brow. May also use "longer" facial expressions when showing concern of defeat, such as closed lips, but jaw seems dropped a bit, furrowed brow, intense stare, but not necessarily with eye contact. Tone is staunch and she speaks very deliberately. • Thanks/Gratitude- Gives Spock a kiss when he won't accept his mother's necklace back. Shows soft facial gestures, such as a relaxed brow and subtle smile, and uses quiet tones and soft inflection.

	• Anger-reacts loudly and attempts to fight back.
	• Sadness-sadness over loss of fellow crewmembers or a member being mortally threatened often results in more of an anger reaction than an overtly sad visual reaction
	• Happiness-Happiness is evident by both the smile from her mouth and her eyes. Brow is soft, posture/shoulders are relaxed. Her movements seems softer and slower.
	• Confidence-head is held high, chin up slightly, strong eye contact, uses louder voice
	• Relief-mouth open, but smiling, slightly increased breathing rate, the smile is also reflected in her eyes, relaxed posture, loose movement from her shoulders as she breaths and looks at others to share in the group's moment of relief
	• Thoughtfulness (in regards to critically thinking)-head may tip from one side to other as she thinks hard, brow is tense and may be furrowed, mouth may be open slightly or closed, stare is intense as she is taking in information. She refrains from speaking until she comes up with the answer or has an "aha" moment. There is often a time constraint when she is thinking deeply. Her energy picks up substantially once she has the "aha" moment and speaks quickly.
How does the character express intelligence/experience ?	• When confronted with technology which shares information, she is often quick to engage with the devices in question. She does not hesitate when being confronted with a task, nor does she ask for clarification or aid. When it is her and another (often she is alone with another male) she is quick to seek the answers.
	• Uhura is quick to interrupt Spock when he speaks too complicated, and she tells Kirk very hastily what Spock means.
	• Uses energetic tones when she sees a solution
How does the character motivate others?	• She says motivating words ("Let's go!" or "Nice, job") and uses appropriate tones
	• Pushes others to move, or get going when necessary.
	• Uses energetic tones to motivate when she sees a solution
How does the character counsel others?	• Says reflective statements to the antagonist; asks questions
How does the character define objectives or goals?	• Shows objective "priority of preserving safety of others" by shifting her duties without an order when the Enterprise comes under attack
	• Continues to show this objective is of high importance by making decisions and taking actions which continue to preserve the safety of her fellow crewmembers
	• She volunteers her skills without hesitation to meet small goals which support the overall "safety of others" objective such as sneaking off with Sulu to do reconnaissance on their alien captors
How does the character express passivity/aggression?	• Visually becomes angry, and lashes out on more than one occasion when one of her crewmates is attacked/killed.
How does the character express power/lack of power?	• Shows power readily. Engages in hand-to-hand combat quickly and whenever necessary. Comes to the defense of others, men or women. Does not seem to consider her opponent's size or strength when engaging physically.
	• In showing mental power, asks reflective questions/says reflective

	statements to the antagonist • The word "no" is used frequently when she is upset about actions the antagonists are doing to her crewmates. The frequency, volume, and energy of the "no" gives a feeling that she is both confident enough in her voice to argue and express her dislike for the antagonists actions, but also lends the feeling she is powerless to do anything to stop them as the "no" often comes during or after a physical attack
Total Dialogue: 299 words Audio only=**Bold**: 75 words	Spock! Do you have a moment? I think you should have this back. After all, it belonged to your mother. Yes, Captain **Yes, Captain** **No response, I am picking up some kind of signal**. They're jamming us. How do you know our language? I am Lieutenant Nyota Uhura **Of the U.S.S. Enterprise, and you** have committed an act of war against the Federation. You attacked us. He would have done the same. **And if he made it off that ship**, he will come for us. Nice job, **Keinzer**. Come on. What's he using it for? He's been piggy backing the subspace links between the probes. I can try. It's sent. What? He's been watching us this whole time. You're wrong, there is strength in unity. NO! NO! No…NO! No Those are strong words. **You might even believe** them, but there's something else going on with you. Something underneath.

	Wait-
	What are you doing with her?
	You already got what you wanted! Let her go!
	Spock-what are you doing here?
	Let's go.
	Captain, this thing he has..
	I'm picking up distress signals from every frequency coming from Yorktown.
	Krall has already started his attack.
	What he's saying is that if we disorient the swarm, **we can kick its ass!**
	Spock you're still hurt.
	That's what that signal was. They weren't jamming us; they were talking to **each other**.
	Let her do it.
	But the signal won't travel far. We have to get closer.
	Very.
	Ready to broadcast at 57.7 Megahertz.
	It's Krall.
	We've seen him do this. It's some kind of energy transfer.
	It physically changes him.
	Captain! It's him.
	He needs a distribution system.
	Yes, sir.
	Happy birthday!
	I thought you had to finish your mission report.
	You old romantic.
	To boldly go, where no one has gone, before.