

Women at Warp Transcript: Episode 37: Incoming Transmissions

Sue: Hi and welcome to Women at Warp. Join us as our crew of four-women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name is Sue and I'm here today with the entire crew. We have Grace.

Grace: Hey, everybody. Did you miss me?

Jarrah: Yes.

Grace: Please do you miss me, otherwise my self-esteem will plummet.

Andi: We missed you like Dr. Crusher in season 2. As much as we love Pulaski, we still really miss Dr. Crusher in season 2 of *The Next Generation*.

Sue: That is a pretty accurate statement.

Grace: Well, I don't think I could be the Dr. Crusher of this crew. I think that role's taken already. [Sue laughs] We all know by who.

[laughter]

Sue: Wow, I'm flattered. [laughs]

Andi: She means me, Sue.

Sue: Damn it. [laughs] And that would be Andy.

Andi: Hi, everyone.

Sue: And Jarrah.

Jarrah: Hello.

Sue: And today we are going to be reading your comments and emails and blog comments and Facebook posts and responding to them. But first, we have some housekeeping to take care of. First things first, that is Women at Warp is supported by listeners on Patreon. At Patreon, you can pledge anywhere from \$1 on up. And that helps us to do things like upgrade our equipment and host our own website and create printed materials for conventions and sometimes even travel to conventions.

And that leads us into Star Trek Las Vegas. The entire crew will be in Las Vegas early in August. So, come find us, come hang out with us, say hi. And we will be hosting a Women at Warp meetup somewhere on the convention grounds, but outside the ticketed area. So, you can come even if you don't have con admission. And for updated information on the date, time and location, check out our event on Facebook.

Other than that, we have some other conventions for some of our crew coming up. I will be at 50-Year Mission Cherry Hill at the end of August, and then at Dragon Con at the beginning of September and then at New York Comic Con in October. And that is the same weekend that Grace and Andi will be at GeekGirlCon in Seattle.

Grace: Woohoo.

Andi: Very exciting.

Grace: Love me some GeekGirlCon.

Sue: Do you have any cons coming up, Jarrah?

Jarrah: I don't. I just got back from Montreal Comiccon, so if you missed that, we released audio from that last week so you can catch up and hear some of the highlights and lowlights, shudder, from Montreal Comiccon. [laughter] Vegas is really my big one for this year, so pretty excited about that. I did want to just mention though, before we get into the topic, that I just finished reading *The Fifty-Year Mission*, which is a new book out by Edward Gross and Mark A. Altman who are responsible for those. *The Captain's Logs*, sort of unauthorized guides to Star Trek. And *The Fifty-Year Mission* is a two-part series. The first volume is out now covering the first 25 years of *Star Trek*. There was a lot of buzz about it when it was first announced, so I asked for a review copy. Just finished reading it.

I did post a full review on Trekkie Feminist, but I just want to say I think it's a pretty cool book. It's like a super panel in that the entire book starts every chapter with a topic like *Wrath of Khan* and then the whole chapter will have just quote after quote from their decades of interviews with different people. So, behind the scenes on camera and then media commentators. And some of the super fans as well like Bjo Trimble. So, it's kind the ultimate panel that you always wanted but couldn't actually make happen.

But it was a little weird. There was, I thought, a dearth of women interviewed. Given that they added new people like these media commentators and academics and things like that, I thought there was opportunity for more women. But I will say it does have a really interesting chapter on fandom and particularly interviews a lot of women who were instrumental in the first conventions and fanzines and fanfiction and stuff like that. So, I'd recommend it for that reason as well as just it's an interesting look and it's a fairly easy read given the format.

Sue: That sounds awesome.

Grace: Yeah.

Sue: All right, well, let's jump into it then. I assume we're just going to go around and take turns reading comments.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: Let's do it.

Sue: Alright, so we got a Facebook message from Clara in the UK who said, "Hi, Women at Warp Crew. I hope your week's going well. I've just finished listening to your latest podcast and I was wondering if you produce any Women at Warp merchandise like t-shirts or tote bags? If not, would you ever do so? And would you put any quotes from your podcast show or favorite Star Trek lines on them?"

Grace: Good question.

Jarrah: Trek.fm does have a store on Redbubble and we have one shirt there that has Erin Harvey's awesome graphic of Never Forget Pulaski Banged Draker's Dad. There's also a ninja cat shirt that comes from a quote from Andi on another show. And there's a word cloud shirt that has names of a bunch of different shows on the network and we're in that and so you can get those. Not just shirts, the designs are available on mugs and tote bags and all kinds of things. For us, it's something we've thought of, but it would be good to know if there's going to be more demand. And we would want to be choosing a site or supplier that had more diverse sizing than we can currently get on some other sites.

Grace: There are two that I would really like to do. One is Sue's Science Corner. The other is a band shirt for Songs to Pon Farr too.

Jarrah: Yes. [Sue laughs] Yes. Yeah. We also talked about the Spock's World, Amok Time, Excellent, *Wayne's World* parody. There's some potential there. So, yeah, I mean, if you have ideas for things you'd like to see and if you can help us see that there's a demand for it. Well, something that we can definitely look at further.

Grace: Tell us what you want, what you really, really want.

Jarrah: What quotes would you want?

Sue: Or just the logo on a tote bag? Something that simple.

Grace: Yeah. We need to know there's a demand before we try and make a market.

[laughter]

Andi: Yeah. Is that one of the Ferengi Rules of Acquisition?

Grace: Yeah, might as well be.

Jarrah: Yeah. In this case, females in finances do mix.

[laughter]

So, the next comment we have is from Kae on Facebook. I say this because we have different Kays in this mailbag. And Kae says, "Hey, Women at Warp fan. I'm looking for your ideas. Some of my favorite episodes of *Star Trek* are the ones that demonstrate the supportive work environment that encourage personal growth, that is Starfleet. Some of my faves of those are *TNG*, *The Arsenal of Freedom*, *Lower Decks* and *Voyager*, *Parallax* and *Enterprise Minefield*. Any other good ones in that category?"

Sue: Full episodes don't come to mind, but what immediately comes to mind for me is the scene at the end of *Loud as a Whisper* when Picard makes it a point to tell Troi how appreciative he is of her work.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure.

Andi: That was the first one that came to mind for me too.

Grace: I love that *Star Trek* is just peppered with these little scenes every now and then where you get to see people just be like, "Hey, you, you do good work." Those are always a great little thing to see because feels like watching your best friend get a pat on the back.

Sue: Yeah. I think it also comes across in the relationship, or really all of the relationships in *Lower Decks*, but especially the one between Crusher and Ogawa.

Grace: Yeah. And there is a *Voyager* episode that's fairly similar to *Lower Decks* called *Good Shepherd*. I don't think it works quite as well, but it definitely has those same messages. And there's some nice scenes about Janeway supporting three lower decks-ish crew members who have fallen down on the job in various ways and helping them realize their potential. So, that's a pretty cool one. There's a lot of examples in *Voyager* because Janeway is so much of a mentor mother figure. Tons of examples of episodes with her and

Seven of Nine helping. We get to see Kes supporting the Doctor. There's a lot of great relationships and characters who undergo personal growth.

Grace: And it's a good part of emphasizing with *Voyager* how it's like, "Well, this is the crew we're stuck with. We can't swap you out. We got to make do." [Sue laughs]

Jarrah: Like, *Year of Hell* is another example where they're in just like the worst situation imaginable and people are really just pulling together to help each other. Everyone, B'Elanna, Kim, they're all just doing their utmost in that situation. And Tuvok and Seven of Nine form a close, supportive relationship as well. That's cool to see.

Sue: I think there are also several examples of Sisko going out of his way to support Kira, especially.

Jarrah: And Rom and Nog.

Grace: Yeah,

Sue: Yeah. But also, O'Brien supporting Rom when he begins to work in the engineering crew. Spoilers, Andi.

Andi: It's okay. There's a very specific scene where-- I can't even remember the episode right now but--

Sue: It's *Dax*.

Andi: *Dax*. Thank you. There's a very specific scene in *Dax* where somebody's talking to Sisko and Kira starts to take over the conversation and ask questions, and he dismisses her, and he's like, "No, I'm talking to the Commander." And Sisko literally steps behind Kira and says, "No, you're talking to my first officer now." And I'm just like, "Yay, Sisko."

Jarrah: Nice.

Andi: Best boss. I just love the physicality of it. He literally has her back. He walks behind her to show his support, but also that she's going to be taking point. It's very cool.

Grace: And I also love that Sue knew exactly what I was talking about with zero context.

Sue: We talked about that recently too. [laughs] All of these episodes I've recently covered on from there to here.

Andi: Next up, we have a comment from Kay, which is, "I've just been listening to your episode on Kirk's love interests, and the point you made about the trope of women using sex as a weapon got me thinking. I'd be really interested in your opinions on the *Voyager* episode, *Counterpoint*, and whether you think Janeway plays up to this or not, it is a very well-liked episode generally, I believe, and Kate Mulgrew states it as her own favorite. But I find that whilst I like it, the niggle about her behavior is definitely there. I'd also love to know your more general thoughts on the representation of women's sexuality and sexual agency in *Trek*. A mixed bag in my opinion, but there's some good stuff in there as well as the cringe worthy."

Grace: Boy, that could be a full episode there, couldn't it?

Jarrah: Absolutely.

Andi: It really could.

Jarrah: Gosh. Super, super generally speaking, on the broader question, I would say that I think that the high point for women's sexuality in *Star Trek* is first, have them having agency and being able to express desire and also negotiate meaningful relationships. *Deep Space Nine*, I think Kira and Dax both have good examples of that. I think that it's a little bit more fraught in the other series.

Andi: When you brought up *DS9*, one episode that comes to mind is *Playing God* in which Dax apparently hooks up with what looks like a space biker and the Trill initiate that she's supposed to mentor slut shames her for it and she just leans back on the couch and takes-- like literally sips tea. I was like, "I'll do what I want." I love that. I love Dax.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Andi: He really was wearing an interesting outfit though.

Grace: Interesting is where we get our fun though, as far as costuming on *Star Trek* goes.

Andi: Oh, my gosh, there's this-- Okay, so when the Trill initiate kid-- when he comes to the door and the door is opened by space biker, it's like the two extremes of *Trek* fashion. One being beige spandex and the other being he has kind of cornrows and then a patterned vest with no shirt underneath it. It's all very strange.

Jarrah: Oh, gosh.

Andi: But I love the juxtaposition [laughs] of the two of them as *Star Trek* fashion at its best. Completely ludicrous and completely boring.

Grace: I like to think that after that experience, neither of them was ever quite the same. fashion wise-- [laughter] Biker guy's like, "Should I be wearing more beige?" And beige guy's more like, "Should I be wearing more vests? [laughter] I could get cornrows."

Andi: No, you should not really.

Jarrah: Don't, don't really.

Andi: That guy definitely should not get cornrows.

[laughter]

Jarrah: So, *Counterpoint* is a really interesting question though about that. And so, for anyone who doesn't remember, *Counterpoint* is the episode where Voyager is smuggling telepaths through this area of alien space. And Kashyk is an inspector for this alien species, and he keeps coming on board to conduct these inspections to make sure they're not hiding telepaths. So, Janeway and him are playing this game of counterpoint where they're both using seduction and intrigue and misdirection to mislead the other one. And Janeway and he seemed like they maybe have a romance of some kind, but it's not really clear whether that was just part of her ploy to convince him that she was a friend instead of someone that he should suspect. So, yeah.

I generally don't see it as problematic as what we talked about in the Kirk episode, which is women who show up with their sexuality and men literally can't handle themselves and the women take advantage of that situation. For me, this situation is because she is using her brains more than her body throughout the whole thing, it doesn't really bother me.

Grace: Frankly, I think that's what gives the episode-- I know this is going to be debatable, but I feel like that adds a definite level of sexiness to it. The fact that they're both just playing this long, drawn-out mind game and that they're both totally aware of how intelligent the other party is.

Jarrah: Yeah. And because they are both on more equal footing, it's not that because he might be kind of attracted to her, it doesn't make or break the plan. But definitely an interesting question.

Grace: I think also if we could follow that up with another Janeway episode where she's seductive, as-- I'm trying to remember, it is the one with Joel Gray as the guest star though. And there's just-- [crosstalk]

Jarrah: Oh, *Resistance*.

Grace: Yeah. We're out of nowhere she's going to dress up as a prostitute to try and get past the guards. And her prostitute costume just involves taking her hair down and putting on a scarf.

Jarrah: Yeah, it's definitely-- That one's more problematic because it really does use sex work as kind of a prop and that Janeway just takes on this identity in order to confuse a guard. And that one is definitely a bit more of an issue.

Grace: It really is. I remember seeing that episode for the first time and just the moment where she comes out of the shadows and is like, "Boys." I'm like, "Really? Wow." And I was even more surprised that the guards went for it. It was just very obvious. Does this never happen to them before? Ah, man.

Sue: And Janeway isn't the only character we've seen do something like that. We have Uhura's fan dance. We have Crusher performing [unintelligible 00:15:42]. I think that's in *Chain of Command*.

Andi: Luxana performing [unintelligible 00:15:51].

Sue: Mm-hmm.

Jarrah: Doesn't Ro insinuate that she might be a sex worker in *Gambit* or one of those other ones where she's undercover-- not *Gambit*, but she's undercover, and she kind of makes out with Picard.

Sue: She fakes it with Picard in pre-emptive strike so they can talk.

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean, that's a different situation. But again, it doesn't invite us to understand or appreciate real stories of sex workers, and it just kind of makes it a cheesy plot device. So, Grace, do you want to read the next comment from Eric?

Grace: From Eric, we got a comment on our website saying, "It would be really interesting if you did an episode comparing *Star Trek* to other sci-fi shows and how they portrayed women. Big task which requires a lot of research, of course, but I would imagine that *Babylon 5*, probably my favorite sci fi series, with *TNG* on a strong second place, would be worth talking about in that regard, as would *Stargate* and the new *BSG*. My gut feeling says that all three of these would probably score better on the Bechdel test than *TNG*. Don't know about *DS9* or *Voyager*, as I haven't finished watching them yet. Actually, your podcast

is what got me thinking about this though, and it's very interesting and a real eye opener. Keep up the good work."

First of all, thank you. Good to hear. And secondly, we do a small amount of comparison to other sci-fi series. Every now and then, we'll bring up a really obvious parallel, won't we?

Jarrah: Absolutely. You're right though, Eric. It's a huge topic. This is something we actually get a number of requests for, and it's always just been how do you even break it down? But I can answer your question on the Bechdel test. I don't know how the other series do, but I actually Bechdel tested all of *Star Trek*, so I can let you know that *Original Series* 8.8% of the episodes pass. *Next Generation*, 44.9% of the episodes. *Deep Space Nine*, 57.8%. *Voyager* is by far the highest, obviously, with 87.5% of the episodes passing the Bechdel-Wallace test. And 39% of the episodes in *Enterprise*.

Grace: We do get into some comparisons with other sci-fi characters in our Feminist Super Crew episode, just in the fact that we talk about some of the other cool sci-fi characters that would be awesome on a starship like Kaylee from *Firefly* and stuff like that.

Sue: And you talked about it a little bit with the *Star Trek Las Vegas* panel from last year, right, Jarrah?

Jarrah: Yeah, absolutely. Last year at Star Trek Las Vegas, we did a panel comparing the women of *Voyager* to women in sci-fi synths.

Sue: But in terms of main podcast episodes, there's just so much material to cover within *Star Trek* that I doubt we will be stepping much outside it anytime soon unless there's something really specific, we decide we want to talk about maybe in a supplemental episode.

Grace: Yeah. Otherwise, there's just way too much to work with there.

Sue: [laughs] All right, so our next comment came from Zara, who writes, "I'm writing to request your advice. I have a 6-year-old daughter and I would like to begin showing *Star Trek* to her someday. I think that despite its many flaws, *Star Trek* at its best inspires a passion for exploration and learning, makes us confront current issues in an interesting way, encourages open mindedness, and shows that there are so many different possibilities beyond just the way things are now. I hope to hold back the more problematic episodes until she's old enough to at least begin deconstructing them in a way similar to what you do on your show. But how would you recommend going about introducing *Star Trek* to her? Which episodes do you think are the best to start children with, especially girls? And P.S., if you read this on your show, could you give a shoutout to my daughter, Freya?"

Grace: Hey, Freya.

In Unison: Hi, Freya.

Andi: The first thing that comes to mind for me is *Rascals* from *TNG*. I know that not everyone loves that episode, even though I love that episode. But the reason that I would say that it might be great for kids is because it's actually a celebration of childhood and what is good about being a kid. And I think that's valuable. So, I know that when I was a kid, all I wanted to do was grow up and so it's hard sometimes to realize that childhood is valuable and you don't want to rush it and stuff like that. So, an episode that explicitly has that message and I think that it's a fun one in general.

Grace: It definitely is a pretty cartoony premise that's really easy to understand what's going on, which is good for a younger person's attention span.

Jarrah: One of the ones that I thought of is the episode, *The 37s*, in *Voyager* where they run into their ancestors from Earth, including Amelia Earhart. As a kid watching that episode, it really inspired me to look up heroines in history as well as looking at these sci-fi characters of the future. It's a pretty fun episode. Yeah, and it generally just has this nice relationship between Earhart and Janeway and shows that even really strong women in command have doubts and fears.

Sue: Totally. For me, I started watching *Star Trek*, as far back as I can remember. So, as far as age appropriateness of episodes, I may not be the best judge of that. But maybe I would suggest, if you are interested in going through a series, maybe *Voyager* is the place to start. Because we've got, as we just talked about, the highest percentage of episodes passing the Bechdel test. We've got perhaps episodes written in a more modern way. But being in the Delta Quadrant, you've also got it separated from the other show that was airing at the same time, *Deep Space Nine*. So, you don't need the stories to interconnect with one another and it's self-contained in that way.

Jarrah: Yeah. And you also get Naomi Wildman, who I think is a pretty cool child character. She's definitely precocious, but no, yeah, adorably so. And she wants to be the acting captain. She wants to learn from other people and she reaches out to people who are different from her. So, I think *Voyager* is definitely a good place to start for a little girl. But we like this question so much that we're probably going to do a supplemental episode on this and get some people who actually have kids to comment as well.

Sue: We just have cats.

Grace: Yeah, my cats like all the episodes with Spot. [Sue laughs]

Andi: Another episode that I would recommend from *The Original Series* would be the tribble episode, *The Trouble with Tribbles*. That's just a super kid friendly episode, I think, and it is a good example of everything that is good about *The Original Series*. And I think--[crosstalk]

Grace: Yes, it's accessible. You don't need to have total background on all the characters to know what's going on. It's a good dropping someone into the series show.

Andi: Also, it's really fun. And yeah, I think if you're going to want to ease somebody, a kid into *TOS* and all that entails, that would be a good one to start with.

Grace: I'm just thinking about one of the earlier episodes I saw of *TNG* that was part of my exposure to it, and it's going to be weird choice. And that was actually *A Fistful of Datas*. But it's silly. It's action packed and there's a lot happening and it's very theatrical and very big concept, which I think kept me interested.

Sue: I would say most of the holodeck episodes, maybe even *Data's Day*.

Grace: Yeah, *Data's Day* is a fun one.

Jarrah: I definitely have issues. I mean, definitely, if you're trying to avoid problematic messages, I feel like there's a few in *Data's Day*, but there's some fun moments, for sure.

Sue: Yeah.

Jarrah: Obviously, there's some of these things that a is not going to pick up on that I did pick up on as a kid. One of the ones I was thinking about actually was *Disaster*, because there's the three kids that are in the turbolift with Picard. And as a kid, I really liked that episode. I also really liked *Thine Own Self* because I wanted to be like the little girl who was friends with Data in the place where they think that he's an Iceman. And yeah, those ones definitely, I think, are other ones that you could deconstruct more fully, but I think they're examples of episodes that do have role models for girls in them.

Andi: Here are two I'd avoid, *Imaginary Friend* and *When the Bow Breaks*. And also, definitely, definitely not that creepy kid one from *TOS*, which is the worst episode ever. What is that one?

Jarrah: *And The Children Shall Lead*.

Andi: *And The Children Shall Lead*. Ha ha, ha. Look at all the children crying over the death of their parent.

Jarrah: And not *Elaan of Troyius*.

Grace: It would be much easier for us to do an adult list.

Jarrah: Actually, yeah, I think the harder part would be sorting out the ones in the middle, but anyway, I'm excited to do more of an episode on this, but I think we should probably move on to the next comment, which is from Rebecca, who says, "One thing I always wondered, which isn't addressed in *Amok Time*, but maybe is in *Spock's World*. Do Vulcan men have any right or recourse to divorce their wives? The marriages are arranged and neither the boy or girl have any say in who they are bonded to. But we see there is some path of recourse for the women. Or do we just assume that the men would never choose to otherwise because their Pon Farr brains just can't turn down the women they're bonded to?"

I always interpreted it that while men are dominant on Vulcan and women are property, women seem to have possibly more choice in the matter interesting contradictions. Also, most of Vulcan's problems seem to revolve around a puritanical view of sex. Or this could be a reflection of the writers. The equation of sex and violence also comes in *The Enemy Within*, when Kirk's violent, primitive side is also the sexual side."

So, I still haven't read *Spock's World*, but I have the book on my shelf. Does this answer this question?

Andi: It goes more into detail, into the marriage society, I guess. They do tackle it. So, the way that *Spock's World* is set up is, there is the primary story, which is Spock, Kirk and Bones trying to convince Vulcan not to leave the Federation. And then every other chapter is like a section of Vulcan history. And there is a chapter from the perspective of a matriarch arranging a marriage. But it's not super specific about all of the rights and stuff. It's more about how they use marriage as a way to cement political alliances and stuff like that. And it's a very interesting book. I guess I'm not surprised that Vulcans wouldn't be aromantic. I feel like they would take a very pragmatic, logical view of both sex and marriage.

Grace: As many cultures here on Earth have.

Andi: Exactly. But yeah, they definitely go more into it. I can't remember anything specific to the rights of men in marriage though.

Jarrah: Well, in *Enterprise*, it's implied that either side has the ability to dissolve the marriage. In *Enterprise*, T'Pol has a marriage and that ends up being- They say that it was

officially dissolved. So, to me, that implies that they're saying either side could end it. It's possible only he could end it. One of the things we see about the portrayal of Vulcan society, even in *Enterprise*, is that there is just so much incredible social pressure that even when there's no law against something, the social pressure might as well be. So, it might be that they're legally allowed to, but it's just like so incredibly looked down upon. And I mean, when Vulcans are unhappy, you know how they look. So, when they're unhappy, like, you really don't want to be in the way of that.

Sue: Yeah. I also want to address quickly the comment on the relationship of sex and violence also in *The Enemy Within*. Honestly, it's all over *Star Trek* and I still find that idea of them being so closely linked kind of problematic. And I even noticed it-- I'm only bringing this episode up again because I watched it this morning. I noticed it even in *Loud as a Whisper* with the Chorus that one of the members of Riva's Chorus states that he expresses lust and also aggression. And it just flips something in my brain that's like, "Oh, there it is again, that sex and violence are linked and considered part of the same, I guess, aspect of somebody's personality."

Grace: Which is pretty unfortunate.

Sue: Yeah.

Andi: I reject that.

Grace: All those in favor say eww.

In Unison: Eww, eww.

[laughter]

Andi: All right, next up, we have a comment from Maple. "Hello, my name is Maple and I'm an avid fan of Trek.fm and Women at Warp. I was wondering if there is a possibility of Women at Warp maybe doing an episode with the depictions of transgender people on *Star Trek*. I know the lack of LGB characters has been discussed on other *Star Trek* fan media, but not much focus has been focused on the T. There are tidbits here such as Data's line at Troi and Riker's wedding, several trans actors appearing in *Star Trek*, the episode *The Outcast*, which I do think is a symbol of trans rather than LGB themes, and various androgynous and multigendered species. I believe Odo species, the Changelings, can be seen as gender neutral if you look at it in the right way."

So, we're definitely going to do an entire episode on a lot of these issues.

Grace: There's a lot to bite into there.

Andi: Yes.

Jarrah: Yeah. One of the things I find most interesting about *Star Trek* is there are these characters like you mentioned, Maple, like Odo and the Changelings, that there's no reason that the writers had to give them gender except for to make them fit into boxes that the writers understood and that they thought the audience would mostly understand.

Sue: Also, because casting.

Jarrah: Well, yeah, but you put people under a ridiculous amount of makeup and also, I mean like a person, they can cast trans actors. Also, it can be valuable to disconnect the idea that the way that someone appears physically is necessarily a manifestation of their

gender. So, there's theoretically a lot more potential for gender fluidity than was ever really explored. I think, with Data, you can argue he was programmed by Dr. Soong, so he made him in his image. That makes sense. With Odo, you can argue he's raised by Dr. Mora. But then, why the female Changeling is in all of the credits listed as the female Changeling or the female shapeshifter and she's referred to as the female founder? Even though we never get to see Odo or her exploring what it would be like to live as a different gender and see if maybe that fits more of their identity. So, there's potential that didn't really get explored, but we're definitely going to do an episode more on LGBTQIAP issues and trans characters and gender fluidity. Whether or not that will be all one episode or a couple different episodes, we haven't really figured out yet, but lots to talk about.

Sue: I do want to jump in real quick and mention the offspring here though, because we do have a case where Data created a genderless android who could choose race and gender or nothing and chose to be a human female.

Jarrah: Yeah, that's right, yeah. And the cogenitor is another example of where I don't think the casting prevented the character from being understood as a third gender. It was just like the way that the characters relate to the cogenitor that made that character in a box even.

Grace: Even referring to them as an it a couple times.

Jarrah: Well, the problem actually is not that so much as when the Doctor refers to the cogenitor as it, but then they correct-- Tripp and Archer insist on calling the cogenitor she, even though they've never had any discussion about why it would be a she other than it's played by a woman. There's an actress under all that makeup. But even they choose the name, Charles, as their name. And I'm not saying that indicates gender, but it certainly raises the question of whether it's fair to assign a gender to the cogenitor.

Anyway, this is going to be a good episode when we get to it.

Grace: Yeah, yeah. It's going to be an intense episode.

Sue: So, Grace, do you want to take the next comment?

Grace: Sure. Our email from Sarah reads, "I recently realized when I happened to see episodes of *Voyager* and *TNG* with similar storylines, that despite all the medical advances in the *Trek* universe, one thing which was shown no advancement is that of pregnancy and giving birth. In the episode where Naomi Wildman is born, her mother almost dies before the doctor decides to transport her out, the only time when technology helps. Keiko gives birth with nothing but Worf telling her to push. I know they were in emergency situations, but she's still in the traditional position there to help doctors, not the mother. And there's no pain relief. How is it that in 300 plus years, we can bring people back from the dead but we can't make birth less painful? I thought it might be something to discuss as I'm sure you've got some really good insights into women in medicine."

Jarrah: This is another good question and I think it's another one we're going to do a full episode on. I'll say though, it's interesting you're referencing in *Disaster*, the traditional position because basically what you're referring to is the Keiko's on her back with her legs up. And indeed, that was a position that was developed by mostly male doctors to make it easier for them to see when traditionally before that most give birth squatting. Anyway, just interesting historical tidbit there.

But I think there are a couple interesting examples of *Star Trek* treating birth as something that is not painful and innately dangerous in all cultures. And one of those would be in *Deep Space Nine* with the birth of Kirayoshi O'Brien and the other one would be with the birth of

the child in *The Child*, as awful as that episode is otherwise. So, those are a couple examples. But you're right, part of the problem with the way that media portrays birth is it's always painful and it's always dangerous, highly dangerous and highly medicalized. And it takes the control away from the woman to have a birth plan and puts the control in the hands of the doctors to dictate, "I know what's best for your body." So, something that has been challenged and I think we get to see a Bajoran midwife. So, that's kind of cool. *Star Trek* occasionally does something cool but often they go into the pregnancy is highly, highly dangerous and painful situation even 300 years in the future.

Grace: Which is unfortunate because that really does add this level of othering to the portrayal of childbirth and motherhood in general, which is really unfair, especially if we're talking about wanting to further broaden the pictures of women in media. But this aspect of what we consider a huge part of this gender is icky and weird and scary.

Andi: I do think that there it'll be really interesting to not only get into childbirth but also other aspects of pregnancy such as birth control. There's some interesting messages in *TOS* when it comes to birth control.

Jarrah: Oh, in *Deep Space Nine*, which you haven't got to yet, I won't give it away. [laughs]

Andi: Okay. [laughs]

Jarrah: But there's also pregnancy and we also need to talk about male pregnancy, which is used as a joke and does really serve no one in *Enterprise*.

Grace: Yeah, that was a mess. Ugh.

Jarrah: Although there is a really great one. I think *The Darkness and THE Light* is an amazing example of like a pregnant woman being super powerful and just, yeah, overcoming the situation.

Grace: It is very cool to see that. I think I love the depiction of Kira when she's pregnant in general, for the sense of, "Well, I'm pregnant, I'm having a baby. I'm still going to do my job though. I'm not going to act like it's this massive debilitated for me, even though for some people it is. It's just me with the baby."

Sue: Well, in one of the post-*Nemesis TNG* books, Crusher is actually leading an away mission, a medical away mission that is several weeks long while she is several months pregnant. And there are several scenes of the same thing where people are telling her to slow down or worrying about her. And she's like, "I know myself, I know my body. I'm also a medical doctor. Let me do my job." And especially considering at that point, let's say her advanced age, [laughs] it is what we get of that story is a remarkably easy pregnancy, I would say. So, I guess that would be a positive.

Grace: Interesting. Anyway, look forward to doing an episode on that at some point.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Alright, so next up we have an email from Alex, who writes, "Really enjoying your podcast/ For a little while now, I've been thinking about Deanna Choi's role on the *Enterprise* and I was wondering if you all have any thoughts on this. I've seen a lot of people say that having a counselor as a major character and senior staffer and Picard's left-hand officer literally dates the show because it's kind of a new-agey concept that everyone will talk about their feelings and dance in a maypole circle or something. Regardless of Troi's sometimes

problematic portrayal, over the years I've been thinking maybe her position was actually really forward looking.

Just in the last 15 years, we've learned a lot about mental health, particularly among those serving in the military, aka Starfleet. Consider the difficulties we face with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among soldiers and people who suffer trauma. Look at the suicide rate among veterans. It seems to me that having someone dedicated to the mental health of a thousand people was actually rather prescient of the powers that be. And it would have made a lot of sense on *Voyager*, whose crew was trapped on the other side of the galaxy, completely cut off from the Federation and under frequent attack from unfriendly people. Who was in charge of their mental health? Did the Doctor have a therapy subroutine?"

Jarrah: Oh, my gosh.

Grace: They probably stuck with Neelix on that front, weren't they? [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. Ouch.

Sue: They do tell us in *Caretaker* that everybody on the medical staff died, which is really unfortunate. I'm assuming that their counselor would be part of their medical staff.

Jarrah: You basically have Kes and then Paris. Paris gets a lot better, but I still wouldn't really go to him for counseling or the doctor, unless my issue was that I was a hologram.

Grace: If you have hologram-based issues, he's your guy. Otherwise, [unintelligible 00:39:32].

Jarrah: Yeah. I've been watching quite a bit of Season 7 of *TNG* recently and I'm really struck with how refreshing it is to have Troi being portrayed by that point as a competent counselor. You see in *Interface*, she counsels Geordi about his mother, she counsels Data in *Phantasms*. We see her having these appointments and being really calm and collected and helpful and that her role is valued. Picard's ordering Geordi to go see the counselor. So, I think that's a change that we see over the course of the series. That's really good to see because I agree with you that during the beginning there was a lack of respect for the importance of that role.

I think we've also talked about before how not just in *TNG*, but the role gets taken away by the bartender characters. So, there's Guinan, and then in *Deep Space Nine* we get Vic Fontaine. So, even when we do get a counselor in *Deep Space Nine* later, there are scenes where she could be used as a counselor, but instead Vic Fontaine is filling that role. And nothing against his character, I obviously love Guinan, but I think they couldn't really figure out how to have both of those characters filling that role in the series.

Sue: Yeah, I agree with everything you just said. [laughs]

Andi: [laughs] Cosigned.

Grace: And definitely, definitely, they need a counselor on *Voyager*. Like, yeah, there's so many cases.

Andi: And so many issues, where to begin?

Jarrah: Yeah, I mean, part of it comes from the Roddenberry ideal of the whole-- the Roddenberry vision, yeah, that everything will be better in the future where we will have no sickness including mental health issues. But certainly, the portrayal of Barclay is less than

ideal. So, we still get stuck in this idea of people with mental health issues as it's funny or it's something that will disappear by the next episode. We'll talk more about mental health in a separate episode and probably talk more about Troi as well.

Andi: Yes, I am quite looking forward to discussing mental illness on the Enterprise. I think it's a rich topic and one that needs to be discussed.

Grace: Yes, definitely.

Jarrah: So, we also have a question from Martina, who says, "You had a whole episode about your favorite women in the franchise, and I loved it. It made a lot of sense. It was a good introduction to sort of the topics you intended to tackle. In short, you had to make it. But who is your least favorite woman in *Star Trek*, assuming you even have one? You can take the question to mean anything, really. Your least favorite because of what she did or because you think she was badly written compared to others."

Sue: Vash.

Grace: Elaan of Troyius?

Jarrah: Yeah, I'd say Seska. I just feel like she didn't really do justice to being a great woman villain. Partly, the actress wasn't really told she was going to be a Cardassian spy. And so, she is kind of interesting at first. I think she could have been interesting staying on Voyager and fomenting dissent, but they felt like they had to resolve these issues with the Maquis. And then, she has all this gross praying mantis behavior where she steals Chakotay's DNA and impregnates herself. And she teams up with Maje Culluh, who's the dumbest thug villain in the Delta Quadrant, and treats her really badly because she's a woman, because the Kazon are super sexist. I just feel like she's a smarter character and a better actress than to get in this situation where she's playing this crappy personal politics. So, I don't like her because she was badly written and because of what she did.

Grace: I like parts of her. I just feel like, overall, she could have been done better.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: I liked her at the beginning.

Jarrah: Yeah, for sure.

Andi: Speaking of poor female villains, can I throw it out for Sela?

Jarrah: Oh, yeah.

Andi: They brought her in and she just never paid off and she just was so easily thwarted. Oh, yeah.

Jarrah: Like, let's put Spock and Data in a room with a computer and expect they can't hack it.

Andi: Yeah, that's just silly.

Grace: Nice work there, girly. Nice work.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: I just don't like Vash.

[laughter]

Andi: I love how Sue is like, "Vash is terrible." [laughs]

Jarrah: Yeah. Picard's love interest, there was also the woman from "we'll always have Paris" who is just really dull.

Sue: Yeah. I mean, that doesn't make me dislike. I actively dislike Vash.

Jarrah: Yeah.

Grace: Yeah, I've gotten that in action.

Sue: Not just because she's a Picard love interest, but I actually dislike the whole trope. Like, how she's trying to be this Indiana Jones character, but every time we see her, she's a slightly different character. And I just don't think that the writing was consistent or done particularly well.

Grace: They just didn't know entirely what they were doing with her, did they?

Jarrah: Yeah.

Sue: Yeah, I'm not a fan.

Jarrah: I definitely agree. I would say I really like her in *Captain's Holiday*, but I kind of fall off after that.

Sue: All right, and I think we've got one more question to address.

Grace: It's a good one, too.

Andi: This comment is from Rick. "I love your show and have been on board since you first announced it was happening. But in these days of so much vitriolic misogyny online, have y'all had to deal with any butthurt fanboys crying about Women at Warp?"

Sue: You know, not really.

Andi: Not nearly as much as I thought there would be.

Grace: Not from our listeners, definitely not. I have had some people where I'm trying to talk about the show and in concept, they're just like, "Well, there can't be a lot to talk about there, can there?"

Jarrah: That's hilarious. Yeah, I definitely remember when we started this, there was some hesitancy. We were worried about getting trolls. But honestly, we've had a lot of really good experiences hearing from listeners who feel the show has challenged their way of thinking. And maybe they don't always agree with us, but right in saying, "I've been watching my *Star Trek* my whole life and I've never thought about these issues in this way. So, thanks for helping me see it differently." So, that's super cool.

Grace: It was part of our goal in the beginning.

Sue: In the rare instance that we do get a troll-ish comment, because we really haven't had any trolls, like hanging out on the page, oftentimes, our listeners, you guys there go and shut it down before we even see it, which is awesome.

Grace: It's fantastic. Again, you guys have got our back so good.

[laughter]

Jarrah: Overwhelmingly, the feedback has really been positive. Occasionally, we get people who accuse us of being too negative, which is funny-- [crosstalk]

Sue: We're watching with a checklist.

Jarrah: Yeah. We're sitting there with our diversity checklists.

Grace: We're just frothing at the mouth, waiting for something to get mad over.

Sue: Yeah. Must find something to be angry about.

Grace: Yeah, only function, brain.

[laughter]

Jarrah: It's obviously pretty silly. We, we all love Star Trek. We said this before, and we're not out there looking to be upset about things. We are out there looking to put a feminist lens, a women's lens, an equity lens that maybe isn't always getting applied to be like, this future, this utopian future, who is everyone really being included equally? And if we're going to be creating more media based on this and people are still coming to *Star Trek* today, want to make sure that it's been analyzed from different angles so we can say what might have been done better, even though we love so much of it.

Grace: We would not be putting this amount of time, energy and commitment into something we did not totally love.

Andi: The thing is too is- Gosh, I completely lost my train of thought. Give me a second. It's important. I want to say it. [laughter] Oh, and I think part of the problem when we do get, not necessarily trolls, but people who just get maybe defensive or a bit angry about the way that we analyze things is they feel like if we're saying, say, an episode that they love has sexism in it or has racism in it, that they feel that we are saying that they are sexist or racist for enjoying that episode, and that's not at all what we're saying. We're just trying to point out things that could have been done better and making sure that some of these issues get brought up. But you can still love things. And nobody on our show is trying to tell you can't love things.

So, I think that sometimes people have a tendency to- and I understand this because I do too. Like, when you love something, any criticism of it feels like criticism of you. But it's not personal. We want our show to be as good as it possibly can be. So, that's why that we do the kind of critique that we do.

Jarrah: Totally.

Sue: Absolutely. It's okay to love problematic things. Nothing is perfect. There's going to be a problematic aspect of pretty much anything. But it's just important to recognize what those things are. It doesn't mean you have to stop liking it.

Grace: Being able to recognize when something is problematic is an incredibly important step towards correcting problematic behavior, whether you know you have it or not.

Sue: Absolutely.

Andi: So, yeah, I feel like there's a certain amount of people that just have trouble with that first step and it's definitely the hardest one. So, once you start to open your mind to that kind of thing, it becomes easier and easier to see it and also distance yourself from getting defensive over it. But it is tough. So, I do understand why people get defensive and sometimes a little bit--

Sue: Alright, is there anything that anybody wants to add to this episode?

Jarrah: I guess I would just add that if people want to send us listener mail for a future mailbag episode or we sometimes get time to read them in our regular episodes, you can email us at crewatwomen@warp.com or post on our Facebook page. That's usually the best way.

Grace: And keep the feedback coming. We love to hear it. We love to know what you're thinking of what we're thinking.

Sue: Absolutely. And if you did send us an email or leave us a comment that we did not read on the show today, especially if you were suggesting an episode topic, please know that we have noted them. We have read everything and have tried to respond to everything. So, we're not leaving anybody out on purpose.

Grace: We didn't have time to read all of them out here, but we have read them.

Sue: All right. And that about does it for us today. Jarrah, where can everybody find you on the interwebs?

Jarrah: You can find me on Twitter [@jarrahpenguin](https://twitter.com/jarrahpenguin) or on [trekkiefeminist.tumblr.com](https://www.tumblr.com/trekkiefeminist).

Sue: Andi?

Andi: Easiest place to find me is on Twitter [@firsttimetrek](https://twitter.com/firsttimetrek).

Sue: And Grace.

Grace: You can also find me on Twitter [@bonecrusherjenk](https://twitter.com/bonecrusherjenk). I forgot how to spell for a minute there. I am also on Tumblr with [graceheartstartrek](https://www.tumblr.com/graceheartstartrek).

Sue: Fantastic. And I'm Sue. You can find me on Twitter [@spalltor](https://twitter.com/spalltor) or over at anomalypodcast.com. Thanks so much for joining us.

[Transcript provided by [SpeechDocs Podcast Transcription](https://speechdocs.com)]