



Mediaversity-Inspired Review
Technical Merit + Gender Representation
+ Race Representation
Star Trek: The Next Generation
Season 4, Episode 2: “Family”
Episode 3: “Brothers”
Episode 4: “Suddenly Human”

Credits:

Reviewed by: Jose Chavez

Film/Show Reviewed: *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Season 4, Episodes 2, 3, and 4

Creators: Gene Roddenberry/ Maurice Hurley/ Michael Piller

1) Technical Merit: 4/5

Thesis Statement About Technical Merit: This show is a breath of fresh air for sci-fi television that revolves around genuine characters— who feel like they develop with the story. The technical abilities that were present in the production of this show carry the show above many other sci-fi shows that tried to copy the same formula.

Analysis/Detailed Examination of Technical Merit:

Character

This show entirely revolves around the ‘nuclear’ family of the show— the Enterprise crew. The main crew that works on the spaceship's bridge is a family that has been thrown together like any other, and they have been through hell and back. For example, in Episode 2: “Family,” the show was able to temporarily separate all of the prominent crew members and place them in situations that they felt both comfortable and uncomfortable— with their families. In this episode, Captain Jean-Luc Picard decides to go home after 20 years to relieve the severe emotional and physical trauma he gained in earlier episodes. He is met with the loathsome eye of his brother, who feels he was ‘left behind’ by Jean-Luc. The creators use this situation to almost deepen the physical and mental trauma that wounds the captain, then somehow turn it into a redemption story where

he can take back control of his mind and feelings. This story helps develop the character of the captain, who is usually the epitome of being mentally fit and emotionally secure. Still, he then was shown as vulnerable and just as troubled as everyone else. He couldn't be the 'perfect' captain anymore that everybody thought he was, but he actually could— only if he could stitch up old wounds that still leak. In Episode 3, one of the prominent crew members, Data, is an android who has to confront his yearning for human emotions and his twin android brother, who was coincidentally the only one inserted with human emotions. This goal and dream that an android has in the show can pull at people's heartstrings by using a machine and giving him genuine intentions. They provide this android the inability to feel like a human, but they give him the ability to offer genuine human emotions to others. In this episode, Data is confronted with the death of his creator at the hands of his evil brother, Lore. This death throws the raw human emotion of grieving directly in Data's face, but it lets us know that even though he can't technically feel emotions, he will be able to mourn the death of his father in his way. His father tells Data that he will have his ways of grieving and reminds the audience that this character is much more than just circuits and wires. In episode 4, a young human boy who was left for dead on a space outpost is found after many years, and an alien race seemingly adopts him. This episode touches heavily on Jean-Luc Picard again and further elaborates on the story of the occasional mistake the person in charge might make. The captain faces a situation torn between taking a human back to Earth or leaving him with his adoptive Father. The issue of pulling a child from an adoptive Father, but this so happens to be a specific war-time adoption that was based on the father killing the boy's biological parents. The display of genuine love and care within the adoptive Father for his adopted son is adamant from the beginning. The father threatens to start a war with the Enterprise over his adopted son, and this shows the captain that this man indeed does have a love for this kid. The captain is again forced to make a tough decision and change his mind on what he initially believed, which is a sign of developing further the leadership that Jean-Luc Picard exhibits.

Mise-en-scene

The design in the show is beautiful and transcendent for the era in which the show was made. The sci-fi elements in this show have led to color-coded uniforms that signify position and department. These uniforms are only one of the brightly colored costumes that litter the show and build the validity that this type of show needs. The characters that appear throughout these episodes vary from regular-looking humans to more alien-like characters that deepen the sci-fi elements present in the show. The crew members are all wearing the usual *Star Trek* uniforms, and that has left other characters, like Jean-Luc's brother, to wear Earth clothes that are reminiscent of something you'll see now. The settings in which these episodes happen are very relevant to the more profound message of each episode and seem to display the connection between the usual comfort of the Enterprise and the discomfort of being practically anywhere else. In episode 2, the setting is based in the Enterprise and also jumps to a French cottage on Earth to show the glaring difference between the eras. The characters on Earth all look much more active and a bit dirty from being physically on Earth, while the Enterprise is spotless and leaves the crew members just as clean. In episode 3, the setting is pulled from the ship to the hideout of Data's creator. Data was seemingly programmed and hacked to take control of the boat by his creator and led directly to him. This showed the weakness that many of the other characters would have if Data decided to take over the Enterprise. The hideout looked in shambles and had data scrambled around, like the prototypical scientist.

2) Gender/Women's Representation: 2/5

Does it pass the 60-second Bechdel test? NO.

Thesis Statement About Gender Representation: The female characters in these episodes swing from genius, mystical women to women who want to get back with 'that' guy. The show doesn't know whether to be stereotypical or to try at least to carve out female characters that have more to say or do.

Analysis/Detailed Examination of Gender Representation

Gender in terms of Numbers:

According to the Numbers, this show does not do an excellent job of having female and male representation that displays a healthy balance. This show is supposed to be based far in the future but ceases to have an equal number of dynamic male and female characters. For example, the character of Guinan on the show is pretty much the 'witch' that dishes out golden information for the spaceship's captain to follow. This show has one main female character as a witch, one as a counselor, and one as a doctor. According to the Bechdel test, this show is subpar even when it abides by the low standard of having two females speak for at least 60 seconds about something other than a man. In three randomly chosen episodes, there is only one moment where two women talk, which is short and about men in their lives. As we saw in the UCLA Hollywood Diversity Report 2020, women have received more opportunities than in the past. Still, as displayed in this show, we can see the low number of prominent female characters they had back in the late 1980s.

Gender in terms of Depth:

The women in this show are represented in ways that would leave many women upset in the workplace. The main female characters that regularly appear are only present when a man in the show needs help. It would seem as if this could lean in a good direction, but it only leaves women as some therapists who have none of their feelings. In episode 2, Counselor Troi and Dr. Beverly Crusher speak about the family troubles that plague their lives and how unfortunate their respective situations are. On the other hand, they only talk about the men they love and how they could rekindle their relationships. They are given a span of maybe 3 minutes to recount the inner pain and loss that they have endured due to these relationships, but they are shoved to the side for the males' stories of their relationships.

Gender in terms of Positivity:

The women characters are shoved into subpar roles that leave them nothing to do but advise the men around them. Counselor Troi, for example, has an essential job on the ship due to her empathic mind powers. Unfortunately, this leaves Troi as another female who is pushed into the position of a stereotypical woman who is hung up on feelings all the time, and they understand how to decipher any emotion. Guinan, the ship's Bar witch, is the direct 'voice of reason' the captain looks towards for advice. Her purpose in these episodes is only to help Jean-Luc Picard advance his ambitions further— leaving Guinan's character entirely in the dark. Dr. Beverly Crusher is mainly confronted with the old trope of the widow who mourns her husband for

eternity, and sadly, that is her primary identity. As a doctor, she is shown to be incredibly competent, but she is never shown to confront her loss on a deeper level in these episodes.

3) Race/People of Color (POC) Representation: 3/5

How does the show/film do on the “Every Single Word” Test?

of minutes/seconds White People (WP) Characters speak: 131 minutes and 38 seconds

of minutes/seconds People of Color (POC) Characters speak: 5 minutes 27 seconds

Who speaks more, and by how much? White People Characters speak more in 126 minutes and 11 seconds.

Thesis Statement About Race/POC Representation: The representation of POC in this show seems to be relatively thin, considering that the show is supposed to be set after Earth had already solved its societal problems. One would think more POC would get the front stage, but alas, not on this spaceship.

Analysis/Detailed Examination of Race/POC Representation:

Race/POC Rep in terms of Numbers:

In my “Every Single Word” test, this show seems to go leaps and bounds to restrict POC from speaking on screen. White People characters in the show, through 3 episodes, spoke for 131 minutes and 38 seconds about things that seemed to push the story forward. POC characters only spoke for a mere 5 minutes and 27 seconds, and this conversation mainly revolved around helping the White characters. Through the three episodes that I randomly selected to review, White People characters spoke 126 minutes and 11 seconds more than POC characters. These numbers display the vast disparity between the POC characters on screen and POC in real life. The POC population is decently resembled in the show, as we learned from the census— POC accounts for about 40% of the general population.

Race/POC Rep in terms of Depth:

The POC characters in the show have stories that aren’t well fleshed out, and unfortunately, this leads to these characters being able to fall between the cracks. Furthermore, this has adverse effects on the way the characters get to be developed in the show. For example, Geordi LaForge is the chief engineer on the spaceship and one of the most intelligent people in the show. This character has the opportunity of being developed in such a way that could build on that educational background or perhaps venture into the story of his physical ailment, his blindness. Being blind gives Geordi—a pretty stale character— something to attach to, but the creators don’t want anything to do with him. Another example would be Guinan, the Bar ‘witch,’ a POC practically stuck inside the Bar for the three episodes. Her story isn’t touched much because she is from an ancient alien race that the creators saw no reason to explore.

Race/POC Rep in terms of Positivity:

In this show, stereotypes that are used heavily are the POC being ready for the Caucasian characters to come for help. The character of Guinan has been desexualized to represent the 'voice of reason' or the 'mammy' type token character. She is the one that everyone runs to when they have a problem or need to ask a question. Guinan is seen only as a source of information and care for the Caucasian characters, as she is the one who serves them their food and drinks as well. Another stereotype that may perhaps be present is the "ebony saint" character that lies within Geordi LeForge. His main task and reason in these episodes is to heed the call of the white man near him. He is always the character that gets the grunt of the physical and problem-solving work, but his story continually takes a backseat to the Caucasian characters.