Evolving Gender Hybridity in the Crime Solving Partnerships of 'Bones' and 'Castle':

A Study of the Move Away from Gender Binaries in Media and Society

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This thesis titled

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A Study of the Move Away from Gender Binaries in Media and Society

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ABSTRACT

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Evolving Gender Hybridity in the Crime Solving Partnerships of 'Bones' and 'Castle': A Study of the Move Away from Gender Binaries in Media and Society

Director of Thesis: Joseph Slade

The crime solving genre provides a perfect venue for study of the changing expectations of gender shifts in society. The two programs which provide the best examples are Castle and Bones. In each of these television shows, there is a male-female crime-solving dyad which reflect social and economic trends in the larger culture. In both, different gendered behaviors are blended to create a new type of character—more interesting than the stereotypical crime-solver of the past. This gender ambiguity can be viewed as the basis for hybridity. Although it is important to identify trends of change, neither society as a whole nor television programming are ready to abandon traditional male-female pairings. Males and females still respond to each other in sexual ways, regardless of their changing gender hybridity. The expression of these changes enables us to view the new characters and their roles as more interesting than they once were.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Primetime television dramas have been revitalized in the last decade by law, medicine, and crime programs (Longworth, 2000) that have introduced a fresh brand of characters who can no longer easily be categorized as conventional males or females. Characters of both genders now exhibit aspects of both traditional masculinity and femininity in their onscreen portrayals, most obviously in deliberately scripted gender partnerships that uphold expectations. While not as evident in programs which prominently feature only male or only female leads, this revised dramatic partnership exhibits overall evolution of gender roles in the larger society.

Of the different types of gender-inflected genres, crime shows perhaps best illustrate the gender hybridity that results from constant renegotiation of masculinity and femininity. Crime shows have often highlighted partnerships; the good cop/bad cop trend of investigation is a staple. More recently, however, this dyad has been replaced—and possibility transformed—by a partnership of male and female investigators, both of whom bring strengths and weaknesses to crime-solving. As often as not, the strengths and weaknesses invert gender expectations: the good cop may be the male partner, for instance, while the female may be more aggressive. Considering some examples of primetime crime programs can reveal a good deal about shifting gender terrain.
A Hegemonic Understanding

A great deal of television criticism in the last two decades has incorporated the assumption that masculinity exercises hegemonic force in American culture. Theorists from John Fiske to Harry Brod have adopted Michel Foucault’s insights in ferreting out and identifying hegemonic representations and practices on the small screen. And, to be sure, evidence of a dominant masculinity is still to be found on broadcast and cable. Hyper-masculinity is particularly obvious in shows focused on professions, and nowhere more so than in action and crime programs. Here protagonists tend to be traditionally-conceived males. As Harris describes this character, the male lead is “calm, cool, self-confident and emotionless,” possessing “developed muscles and a full head of hair,” “more adept professionally than in a domestic setting,” and recognizable by his “insensitive nature and lack of interpersonal tact” (Harris, 2004, pp. 60-62). Fischer (1996) defines males as associated with the mind while females are more associated with the body. Fiske (1997) also notes the attributes of female and male stereotypes, dividing them into oppositions: sensitive-tough, domestic-professional, private-public, indoors-outdoors (p. 221).

Just as scripted television programs create gendered characters, so too the sports industry shapes images, sometimes in ultra-masculine versions. Trujillo (1991), for example, looks into the idealized form of baseball player Nolan Ryan. He notes five prominent areas of masculinity associated with Ryan: 1) the use of physical force and
control, 2) achievement in the workplace, 3) familial patriarchy, 4) white rural cowboy, and 5) heterosexuality (p. 291). These areas nicely complement the traits listed by Harris. Both would agree that ideal television males exhibit control and achievement, qualities linked to professionalism.

Others agree: the epitome of ideal masculinity lies with the “unwavering dedication to the professional realm” (Feasey, 2008, p. 93), dedication that can carry over into personal life, so that males can seem on duty 24 hours a day. Characters on television are often defined by their occupation to showcase masculinity. Feasey’s analysis of the television show 24 notes that the protagonist makes decisions which sacrifice aspects of his social life, underscoring the belief that obsessive professionalism is “a standard of masculinity to which men are said to aspire” (Feasey, 2008, p. 93). Roth (1995) even suggests that maleness arises from the innate desire to seek out and withstand pain.

It should also be understood that the concept of a hegemonic masculinity largely applies to white men and has over time (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). No matter what specific character traits are associated with hegemonic masculinity, the larger structural patterns of physicality, detachment, self-centeredness, and professionalism form a strong matrix. These four categories are common throughout deconstructions of masculinity (Lotz, 2007), but because none of these categories in themselves are specifically masculine, they can be appropriated for women. The issue is not whether masculinity is still dominant in society, but that it seems to be a lot less hegemonic due to changes made by women in both social and economic realms.
The Potential for Change of Hegemonic Norms

Common academic terms once met with complete acceptance are beginning to lose their status; society has found new clusters of attributes which are no longer set in stone for either men or women. Masculinity as it relates to the male sex role is said to have been “discovered, rediscovered, theorized…dislocated, unwrapped, unmasked, understood, embodied, fashioned, molded, changed and put in perspective” (Whannel, 2002, p. 20). One’s profession is no longer genderized, but may present opportunities for both men and women. Families have been reconstructed as well, opening up society’s acceptance of males as the primary caretakers for children and of women as the breadwinners. These alterations are reflected in current media in shows like Sex in the City and Firefly. Subtle shifts in today’s environment have brought about the redefinition of the ideal man (and woman) in media, thus making “it difficult for a hegemonic masculinity to persist” (Lotz, 2007, p. 2).

Sex in the City is important because of “its ability to challenge social norms” (Southard, 2008, p. 149). Even though the characters’ professionalism is often more assumed than stated, the appeal lies in the show’s ability to enable viewers to feel empowered; thus, Sex in the City perpetuates the idea of combining a successful career, busy social calendar, and top-notch sex life—creating a new image of the modern, consumerist woman. The softer “new man” was perhaps created in reaction to feminist movements of the 1970s (Frederick, 2006) when the changing needs of society set new standards (MacKinnon, 2003). Postfeminist discourse brought with it a strong focus on female empowerment and individual identity, replacing the second wave focus on women
as victims of oppression (Southard, 2008; Hammers, 2005). Historically, “femininity” was a way to assess the worth of a woman, who was supposed to be domestic and quiescent; if she were not, she risked being seen as either promiscuous or masculine (Jamieson, 1995).

According to Hammers (2005) *Ally McBeal* promotes opposed views, cautioning women about professional norms (overtly masculine) and the danger of sexual power in the workplace. Given the progress that women have established in the workforce, such views now seem retrograde (Brunner, 2010; Feasey, 2008; Southard, 2008). By contrast, Malcolm Reynolds (played by Nathan Fillion) on the show *Firefly* claims that he believes in full equality for women, whether they are “whore, wife, mechanic, or soldier” (Feasey, 2008, p. 61). A new kind of masculinity is represented here, one that believes in a more fluid acceptance of gender positioning.

Social and economic changes mean that “[men] face a broader range of socially acceptable ways of being men than in the past” (Lotz, 2007, p. 23). Where television programs are concerned, new perspectives can be “positive because characters openly express emotion, encourage communication with and seek to strengthen their relationship with one another” (Frederick, 2006, p. 17). That seems to be the case even with what can be called an “alternative action hero” who is able to merge “feminine traits of emotionality, sensitivity and connectedness” with the more “traditionally masculine qualities of bravery, strength, and dominance” (Feasey, 2008, p. 67). In Disney’s Pixar films, for example, a male character makes a journey through maturation to acceptance of more traditionally feminine aspects (Gillam & Wooden, 2008).
Given the altered media landscape, it is obvious that different portrayals and levels of masculinity will follow, often in the same program (MacKinnon, 2003); for example, *Sex in the City*’s parameters of masculinity provide for one character who seems to be a classic, old-style phallic symbol and another character who personifies the new man, a “flawed hero of modern relationship myths” (Brunner, 2010, p. 88). These two character types are elements in a narrative articulating masculinity as non-linear and non-hierarchical, ultimately supporting the acceptance of multiple types of masculinity, rather than one ideal form (Brunner, 2010). While the masculinity of these men is in question, their heterosexuality remains central to the characters. This “new man” may be feminized to an extent, but he is distinctly positioned against gay sensibilities, making his character acceptable to a larger percentage of viewers (Shugart, 2008).

Television, as Joshua Meyrowitz has observed, may have been a major cause of gender upheaval; watching TV women learned that there was nothing special or difficult about the job that males did. Men are thought to have gone through a “crisis” when women were first granted access to the public spaces and professional lives (Lotz, 2007); however, a new relationship formed between masculinity and domesticity which challenges the dominant masculine form (Feasey, 2008). Stay-at-home fathers provide a sense of nurturance which was previously uncommon in mainstream masculine forms and “these narratives attempt to normalize and validate the experiences of these Dads and their families” (Vavrus, 2002, p. 368). Thus, men have seemed to become both progressive and patriarchal, challenging sexual stereotypes while expanding the range of characteristics deemed appropriate for an ideal man.
It is not possible to reference the ability of the modern man to play the role of father without speaking of the long-held position of patriarchy and power. Fiske (1997) describes the conditions of redefinition for masculinity as occurring in a capitalist patriarchy which ultimately helps “to disguise the masculine insecurity upon which it is based” (p. 202). This means that while males hold the power in many situations, they use it to hide their uncertainty or lack of confidence about an issue. For example, while the character of Firefly’s Malcolm Reynolds accepts different types of female roles, he is still very reserved and aloof when it comes to any emotional or interpersonal interactions (Feasey, 2008). The definition and nature of patriarchy have changed many times and are contingent on adapting to cultural factors and ever emergent in societal situations.

Not only have female roles changed with the environment (MacKinnon, 2003) but there is a new terminology that has evolved from constant redefining of gender norms. Women no longer look for control over men, but over their feminine passivity and the battle between emotion and achievement is not one based in stereotypical roles, but has become a broader battle in which both sexes participate (Fiske, 1997). Variation has occurred in today’s CSI, ER or Law & Order to suggest that male characters now display a more “fully realized new manhood that was far more uncertain in earlier new men” (p. 13). As concepts of hegemonic masculinity have faded, television critics need a new measure for understanding gender roles.
Crime Drama

Creating an Archetype

The year 2000 ushered in the so-called “Age of Drama,” television’s alleged seventh major era, where hour-long programs began dealing more specifically with women, relationships, politics, and dramatic action (Longworth, 2000). While science fiction and fantasy offered versions of the new sensitive masculinity, hospital and crime dramas at first clung to the more traditional, hard-working male (Feasey, 2008). More recently, gender shifts have become evident in crime dramas, which have loosened to include comic elements as well. The origin of these changes can be traced to shows in the 1970s and 1980s, which gradually began to feature women in important roles. This is significant in investigative police and crime drama because such shows dealt with the public sphere, a world of predominantly masculine professional roles and work. Since the crime show has been such a white, male, heterosexual domain, the introduction of a female officer to a program often produces a new dynamic focused on gendered crimes, domestic concerns, personal relationships, and other women’s issues (sexism, misogyny) at the same time allowing sexual tensions to develop between characters (Feasey, 2008). Male characters in the genre have traditionally focused more on solving the case, which privileges action rather than social concerns.

From another perspective, the evolution in crime dramas has reflected successive stages of feminist movements. In 1973, TV Guide actually asked viewers “why can’t a woman be more like a man?” (Gross). Television viewers then saw females portrayed as silly, domestic housewives or as characters largely effaced. Women were often written
out of crime narratives with strong male characters because they tended to “signify sexuality, to flesh out male desire, and shadow male sexual fear” (Roth, 1995, p. 113). Despite classic works of fiction like *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Long Goodbye*, television detective stories were not considered love stories; female sexuality interfered with the process of investigating a crime.

A new crop of female writers found that it was possible to create a “hard-boiled female detective” who embodied newer conceptions of feminism. The fictional character of Sharon McCone (written by Marcia Muller in nearly 30 novels) responded poorly to authority, had unconventional sexual relationships, and maintained her individuality (Elliot, 2008, p. 13). Other versions began cropping up, such as Nancy Drew and Miss Marple, who helped to mold the new female detective archetype. Recently, crime novels have evolved from showing crime heroines as outsiders (Aisenberg, 1994) to depicting females in active crime-solving roles, equal to their male counterparts.

Even a partial adaptation of traditionally masculine characteristics has helped modern day female detectives win over television audiences. Fans of the television show *X-Files* said that Scully (played by Gillian Anderson) was well cast because she was a “strong, independent professional in the male-dominated role of the FBI [agent]” (p. 240) and “a female lead who wasn’t a bimbo” (Bury, 2003, p. 220). Restructuring the character type of female detective introduces more balanced traits; subordination of the female to the plot is no longer standard in either literature or television (Aisenberg, 1994).
Construction of Partnerships

The whole point of selecting a crime show is that it holds potential for fostering doubt (a mystery to be solved), highlighting character flaws (the stakes are high), and emphasizing the investigator’s vulnerabilities (failure is always lurking). This makes it the perfect genre for importing women as partners who can complement the males’ wrestling with a full spectrum mystery that involves criminal acts, unique places, and a variety of motives. If masculinity is always presented as impervious and immutable, audiences will not remain interested for very long. Ultra-masculinity will strike even the dumbest and most macho of males as limiting in a plot that generates exciting complexity—the hero must have a feminine side or he becomes so one-dimensional as to be cardboard—and the easiest way to compensate is to team him with a woman or to split the character in two. The only surprise is that it took so long for television executives to realize this tool. As a device, then, a male-female partnership offers ways to enrich story and relationships.

Early study of television crime drama identified the importance of interaction as a means of identifying the “associative power…as represented by the ways males and females in television drama defined themselves in relationship to each other” (Barbatsis, Wong, & Herek, 1983, p. 149). The beginning of this trend occurred as early as 1956 when *Vogue* and *Esquire* termed the “pal-girl” as a female who was not sexual, but instead sporty and wore little make-up (Roth, 1995). The 1980s made the macho hero the butt of humor by attempting to partner him with a feisty female character and the best example of this is *Moonlighting*. 
Television does not create stronger, more masculine female roles out of a vacuum, but shapes them to reflect social and economic trends in the larger culture. Previously, women suffered wage inequities: making 80 cents for every dollar men earned. But younger women are clearly reversing these decades of inequity, and those changes will impact on everything from marriage to economics and the military (Rosin, 2010). Television writers seize upon this trend and anticipate such characters who reflect these changes in gender roles.

Gender as a theme became prominent in Moonlighting, which helped to legitimatize a new relational dialectic by parodying traditional masculine values (MacKinnon, 2003). Moonlighting was the first program in the genre to focus more on the story than on solving the crime. Since then, crime drama has relied on dialogue rather than on physical action, which suggests the appropriateness of creating relational conflict (Barbatsis, Wong, & Herek, 1983). Moonlighting became known for the give and take between female private eye Maddie Hayes (played by Cybil Shepherd) and her partner David Addison (played by Bruce Willis). This pairing became the model for contemporary television and film romance (Marc & Thompson, 1992), even though it was previously thought that love and marriage were incompatible with the detective genre (Roth, 1995).

The transition from the traditional male/male pair of TV crime-solvers to a “male/female pair” was instituted by producers “attempting to extend the pleasures of a masculine narrative to female audiences” (Fiske, 1997, p. 222). The partners take turns making discoveries and continue their reciprocal partnership in their personal lives,
creating both economic and security advantages that a detective with no partner would lack (Aisenberg, 1994).

The program *X-Files* also exhibits this type of partnership, where viewers may cross-identify with the characters. One fan notes that female detective Scully is “the most intelligent, competent woman I had ever seen on a TV show and [it is because] her partner treated her as an equal. Which is also one of the reasons why I find Mulder so attractive” (Bury, 2003, p. 220). In deconstructing hierarchical social categories rife with inequalities, such a partnership may create new standards of gender acceptable in society (Aisenberg, 1994). The program is “gender-liminal,” crossing traditional male/female borders; Scully has a very rational world view, more often associated with males while Mulder has the intuition of women and continues to rely on supernatural explanations (Wilcox & Williams, 1996). This reconstruction of gender roles mixes the stereotypical traits of masculine and feminine to produce a new model: that of hybridity.

The Melting Pot of Hybridity

In an era recognized as post-feminist, it is also possible that a transition to post-gender has already begun. Gendered interpretations of power have been in constant flux and sexist stereotypes are constantly recycled (Stabile, 2009). Masculinity and femininity have to be static for contradictions to occur but we have learned that gender subjectivities are fluid. Fragmentation and ambiguity define categories of masculine and feminine. Dialectical relationships between hegemonic and subordinated masculinity, themselves unstable, will seek a balance or a blended model (Lindgren & Lelievre, 2009).
Homi Bhabha, well known for his studies of hybridity in relation to cultural, political, and especially linguistic forms, has jettisoned simple binaries in favor of embracing hybrid interdependence between cultures (1995). Since Bhabha’s deployment of hybridization, other studies have come to legitimize its use. The term itself has evolved; in 1828, Webster defined a hybrid as “a mongrel or mule; an animal or plant, produced from the mixture of two species” (Young, 1995, p. 6). Hybridity as a concept when associated with race became interchangeable with “mongrelity” (Young, 1995, p. 16); however a new cultural identity mixes “organic” or subconscious hybridity with intentional hybridity. The resulting hybrid blend has had a powerful influence on how we view gender roles in society today.

Hybrid bodies are inscribed with gender ambiguity, variants of masculine or feminine traits. These marginal beings are seen as outside the normal, accepted type; they threaten “the orderliness of schematized reality” (Patel, 1997, p. 136). Binary oppositions are being pushed into a new realm of study where hybrids of masculine and feminine behavior can be examined. Johnson (2004) studied hybridity in the British television show *Queer as Folk*. Character Stuart Jones (played by Aidan Gillen) is simultaneously masculine and feminine in his performance. Analysis of the program found that he combined “elements of oppositional gendered behavior into something new and dynamic” (Johnson, 2004, p. 293). Gillen endows his masculine tendencies with a feminine edge to produce a more authentic character. Johnson’s study found that neither gender’s traits were more central to Jones’s identity but that both kinds of behavior worked together to ultimately define him (2004). Given obvious shifts in gender in the
culture at large, especially in the most recent generation, hybriditization foregrounds a more authentic character in television programming.

Hybrid genders have not been the focus of many studies, but they do provide the basis for further understanding of new stereotypes. The heterosocial relationship, defined for this study as a nonromantic relationship between persons of the opposite sex, aids in the rejection of simplistic binaries. Newer crime shows contribute to better understanding of hybridity.
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

As crime drama has come to emphasize investigation rather than the commission of the crime, it has also shifted from a largely masculine focus to one that centers on both genders. The investigative narrative, popular in the 1970s and 1980s, has returned to primetime television with conventional story arcs, such as the mystery-solving, research-oriented CSI, 24, NCIS, and Law & Order, and with less goal-oriented, more character-focused plots such as Castle, Bones, Fringe, and Lie to Me. While the more traditional, and thus more masculine, dramas still appeal to audiences, those with newer more interpersonal relationships are more intriguing.

Bones, which first aired on the Fox Network on September 13, 2005, has recently been renewed for its sixth season. Created by Hart Hanson, the series is based on the life of forensic anthropologist Kathy Reichs, who created the character of Temperance Brennan in her crime novel series. Dr. Temperance “Bones” Brennan (played by Emily Deschanel) is a forensic anthropologist working with human remains at the Jeffersonian Institute in Washington, D.C., as well as a bestselling novelist. She is logical and rational to a fault; although intellectually brilliant, her lack of social skills often provides humor for the show. FBI Special Agent Seeley Booth (played by David Boreanaz) is the intuitive humanist on the show, easily reading people’s emotions or motives, and is often left in the dark when it comes to technology and science. He is a former US Army Sniper now working for the FBI; in all the cases he is the agent in charge. Each episode, with few exceptions, looks at a different murder case where human remains are found;
however, the crux of the series can be found in the developing friendship and potential romance between Brennan and Booth.

*Castle* was aired on ABC on March 9, 2009 as a midseason replacement and has recently been renewed for its third season. Created by Andrew W. Marlowe, the series follows Richard Castle (played by Nathan Fillion), a famous mystery novelist initially called to help the NYPD solve copy-cat murders based on one of his novels. Castle lives with his socialite mother and his fifteen-year-old daughter, who is often more mature and responsible than her father. Castle meets NYPD homicide detective Kate Beckett (played by Stana Katic), who secretly admires Castle’s writing, and has gained a reputation as a straight-laced, first-class investigator who joined law enforcement after the unsolved murder of her mother. When Castle continues to work with Beckett after the copy-cat murderer is found, they are both hesitant about the continued partnership; however, over time they emerge as a good crime-solving team. Beckett and Castle work to solve a different murder each episode, but the real interest in the program lies with the evolution of their friendship and its flirtatious undertones.

In order to determine what these partnerships suggest about the hybridity of television masculinity and femininity, this study will analyze the episodes and surrounding elements to determine how people make sense of the world and their own identities; an assessment best evaluated using a textual analysis (McKee, 2003). There are many types of textual analyses: the two broadest types being that of the linguistic tradition, which perceives wording as an item of analysis itself, and the sociological tradition, which treats text as a window into human experience (Bernard & Ryan, 1998).
In either case, textual analysis is an educated guess made to help interpret reality and our
texts are nothing more than “something we make meaning from”; different
methodologies produce different kinds of information, even if analyzing the same
documents (McKee, 2003, pp. 3-4). Media texts provide these documents, which are
constructed from reality, allowing the producers’ interpretations to often differ from those
of their potential audiences. Textual analysis may be the best method of determining the
meaning of a program because it allows for multiple readings, just as the producers and
writers of these television programs recognize that there will be various interpretations
(Fursich, 2009).

My study is qualitative: the object is to understand what hybrid gender means,
rather than to examine how many programs utilize this format. The writers of both Bones
and Castle have utilized the male/female partnership to reveal and examine how traits
and roles are negotiated when it comes to issues of gender. Thus, a specific type of
textual analysis, feminist criticism, will allow discovery of “the artifact [the two
television programs] present as standard, normal, desirable, and appropriate behavior for
women and men” (Foss, 1996, p. 170). This analysis will question whether the artifacts
make a judgment about the conceptions of masculinity or femininity and whether they
contribute to the transformation of previously accepted gender roles and stereotypes in a
popular medium. It should also be understood that the shows would not be popular if
they did not resonate with the audience’s perception that gender roles are shifting;
television does not lead cultural change so much as it reflects it.
With this in mind, I examined the available evidence at the time of the research to better understand the overall themes of the programs. Overall themes were uncovered in the initial screening, but it was the second and third viewings which really brought out the prominent examples expressed in this paper. Notes were taken on any actions, interactions, or events pertaining to the topic as well as the choices or creative decisions made by writing teams. Full transcriptions from a few particular scenes made interpretations easier. These transcriptions took extra time and viewings to fully explore, but were necessary to analyze and fully understand the meanings behind the text. Reviewing the five seasons (127 episodes) of *Bones* and one and a half seasons (56 episodes) of *Castle* provided for prominent examples of negotiation of masculinity and femininity between the characters. Examination of these episodes allowed me to identify and draw conclusions about the nature of gender hybridity.
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

The partnerships in the two crime programs being studied are best examined by moving away from conventional stereotypes of professional, physical, emotional, and social interactions / reactions. Instead, the framework of the traditional male-female dyad is best examined by looking at the personalities that have evolved through a combination of socialization and economics. The evolution of physical and emotional characteristics for the pairs, in the context of their ambitions and failures, combines with the expressions of their need seen through their effects on other people, most specifically their partners. The characters on their own would be less interesting when considered out of the context of these partnerships and there is a dynamic construct in progress wherein the gender descriptions of the characters are constantly evolving, making it essential to include observations from all four seasons of Bones and two of Castle. The hints of sexual tension in these programs continually shift the emphasis of these gender constructs and were this sexual tension to be realized in a physical relationship, the whole delicate balance within the partnerships would fall apart.

Professional Behaviors

Each of the characters in the partnerships in Bones and Castle is a professional, and each has some of the skills and traits considered ideal for the job. Bones focuses on a forensic scientist and an FBI agent constantly competing against each other in a variety of ways; one has a “doctor degree,” the other a badge and gun, but the real tension has to do with whether machines and hard data can be more accurate than a gut feeling. While
most crime shows feature men who are logical (Fischer, 1996), in this case Special Agent Seeley Booth works with his intuition or gut feelings, while his female partner, Forensic Scientist Dr. Temperance Brennan, is more analytical and often refuses to acknowledge anything but pure scientific facts. While the group of scientists who work with the two partners, known as “the team,” also exhibit some fluctuating gender markers, the show still casts Brennan as the brain and Booth as the heart.

At the beginning of their partnership, Booth explains to Brennan how “you have to offer up a little bit of yourself every once in a while” (1:1:20) because “partners share things; it builds trust” (1:1:34). This is the true start of their partnership, both in the workplace and in private. While the FBI Agent holds the gun, often he is constrained by legal restrictions and the more aggressive Brennan steps in to collect a piece of evidence or use physical force to compel a suspect or witness to divulge information. Their mutual respect grows over time as they see traits they admire in each other. In season four, Brennan tells Booth “I can handle myself,” an expression of independence and professionalism generally associated with males. In reply, Booth tells Brennan that partners look out for each other (4:5:6), a response more feminine in its assertion of connectedness (Feasey, 2008).

The respect they develop for each other as partners is a direct result of each learning from the other and adopting a changing dynamic. For instance, Brennan was raised in a foster home after her parents disappeared, never truly understanding where they had gone or why. This had made her much more closed off and protective of her emotions; they very rarely play a part in her work environment. However, when she
becomes emotional after her missing mother’s remains are discovered, Booth sends her home. Booth later brings her Chinese food and she opens up to him, talking about her parents. Brennan acknowledges, in what amounts to a coda to the episode, that “Booth is the intuitive humanist while I am the logical purist. Although recently, I have seen how destructive pure logic can be…. What I have learned from Agent Booth is that we scientists must arm ourselves with something other than pure logic” (4:1:1). Not surprisingly, this shift in professional roles changes the dynamic of their private lives, and provides a sexual and romantic tension as well.

The relationship of the writer and NYPD detective in Castle is less conflicted, but is still ruffled by what we suppose to be professional difference. NYPD Detective Kate Beckett puts her heart aside when she goes to work, focusing on the facts to find the killer. Rick Castle’s perspective on taking down murder suspects clashes with hers. In season one another NYPD Detective Esposito sneers at the proposed partnership: “a control freak like you [Beckett] with someone [Castle] you can’t control? …That’s gonna be more fun than Shark Week” (1:1:16). Beckett has always been a straight-shooter who takes her job very seriously and the unwelcome addition of this fiction writer as her new partner presents a challenge. She reluctantly admits he is good at solving murders, even though he approaches them differently.

Like Brennan in Bones, Beckett’s back-story helps to explain her masculine resolve. Beckett came to work at her job for emotional reasons, but refuses to let them get in her way. Her mother’s murder, an event which contributed to making her a good detective, has also kept her from making many personal connections due to mistrust. She
is known as the best on the force at what she does and while she is a fan of Castle’s writing, she guards her private life to make sure he never knows how much of a fan. Castle, on the other hand, brings his private life to work—constantly talking about personal experiences with his family, relationships, and writing. Castle’s private sphere, a domestic “feminine,” blends into his public life at the police station. His close private friendship with the Mayor and a few judges also helps when solving murders. While he is shallow enough to worry about how Beckett’s car looks to criminals, he also understands the need for trust between the two.

Loyalty slowly develops as each sees in the other certain qualities which make them good at what they do. This is especially apparent when Castle goes poking into Beckett’s mother’s murder case, despite her having asked him not to, finds new evidence, and tells her about it. This leads to finding the hired man who killed her, only to lose him again in a hostage situation. Castle takes the circumstances very personally, while Beckett focuses logically on the outcome:

Beckett: “It wasn’t your fault you know.”

Castle: “I overstepped. I came down here to say that I was sorry and that I’m through. I can’t shadow you anymore. If it wasn’t for me….”

Beckett: “If it wasn’t for you, I would have never found my mom’s killer. And someday soon I’m gonna find the sons of bitches who had Coonan kill her and I’d like you around when I do. And if you tell anyone what I’m about to say there’s going to be another shooting, but I’ve gotten used to you pulling my pigtails. I have a hard job, Castle, and having you around makes it a little more fun.”
Castle: “Your secret’s safe with me.” (2:13:42)

The strength of their deepening partnership becomes evident when Castle invites Beckett into his home. While she remains closed off and never opens invitations to social events, at one point she allows him to sleep on her couch for protection. The series depends on the barrier separating her personal and professional lives remaining in place.

Both Beckett and Brennan are just as career focused, if not more so, as their male counterparts. Their mothers’ murders, while making them emotional for a time, have made them both stronger in their resolve to solve murders and catch their mothers’ killer. Being raised without the benefit of a guiding female role model has made both women strong, independent women. Neither Beckett nor Brennan goes by their first names very often and when they do it is to imply that they have switched over into their private life. Goal orientation in the workplace used to be purely masculine; however, the focus and drive these two women exhibit make it easy to understand how their professionalism equalizes gender roles.

Physical Traits

Competition makes this evident. In these partnerships, the individuals compete for control, authority, and power, especially in the physical realm. Brennan and Beckett find themselves constantly fighting against the stereotype of the helpless woman when they work murder cases and take down criminals. Physical force, long associated with masculinity, has informed traditional qualities of bravery, strength, and dominance (Trujillo, 1991; Feasey, 2008). The creators of Bones worked hard to dispel the helpless woman stereotype in the pilot episode when they had Brennan take down a security guard.
twice her size in an instinctual reaction. She is also shown beating up a gang leader, carrying a large gun, dressing up as Wonder Woman for Halloween, and constantly reiterating that she can take care of herself.

Agent Booth plays hockey and carries a gun, which immediately gives him the authority and dominance for which Brennan has to struggle. His dominance is highlighted by his ex-military status and “alpha male” behavior toward others. Others accept his controlling nature when he claims the bar area at his favorite restaurant as space where he is not to be disturbed. He also drives Brennan the majority of the time, maintaining control when traveling to crime sites. Brennan, however, has control over the body at the sites and often has the FBI move the bones back to the Smithsonian Museum where her team works from and will be able to ultimately solve the murder.

Even though Booth is controlling, he also exhibits characteristics which are not common in an alpha male. Brennan realizes this when she meets Booth’s brother and realizes how different the two are: “Anthropology may have it wrong. In working with Booth, I’ve come to realize that the quiet man, the invisible man, the man who is always there for friends and family, that’s a real alpha male” (4:9:38). One could hardly ask for a better definition of a hybridized masculinity, one that is increasingly accepted by the culture at large.

Castle also plays alpha male to his friends and family. While he is often told to stay in the car and is not allowed to carry a gun, Castle is qualified enough to shoot the inner ring of a target. He is wary of new men in Beckett’s life and is by her side if anything goes wrong. Their professional relationship fills in some of the gaps otherwise
fulfilled by a husband or wife. Even so, Beckett is the physically strong member of the partnership; she does not back down from a fight. Beckett often takes the offensive tack, a trait that Castle admires. He notes how odd it is that she has picked this type of career, observing that “most smart good-looking women become lawyers, not cops” (1:1:14). While Beckett represents physical power, Castle can become aggressive if the occasion calls for it. He mimics Beckett in taking a stance.

Crime-solving requires an authoritarian presence whether it is shored up by the credentials that Agent Booth holds, the intellect of Dr. Brennan, the rank of Det. Beckett, or the subtle abilities of Castle. Women still struggle to exhibit this kind of dominance and have their peers take them seriously; it is only recently that we are able to view these as valid traits for their gender.

Emotional Interaction

Both sets of partners have reversed the clichés that men operate with their minds, while women operate with their hearts. Brennan makes this clear in the pilot episode of Bones when she tells Booth “I am not a heart person; you’re a heart person. I’m a brain person” (1:1:26). This is re-emphasized throughout the series; Brennan always relies on her analytic skills to help her work through a situation. Her best friend Angela notes that “when things get too close to you [Brennan], you become all analytical” (1:16:14). Booth, on the other hand, consistently reassures her and talks about how he feels; when this happens, she immediately reverts back to being practical and logical. In later episodes, Brennan finds that she wishes she could put logic aside and believe in the same kind of love and intuition that all of her friends do. In relationships, Brennan assumes the
position of the stereotypical male when she is seen as “emotionally distant and cold” (1:1:20) and in one episode she has to deal with the social stigma associated with dating two men at the same time. Booth is shown as the connected and reliable one when it comes to long-term relationships. He is often seen dating the same person for extended periods of time, exhibiting the “feminine traits of emotionality, sensitivity, and connectedness” (Feasey, 2008), as well as loyalty and empathy.

What really solidifies their partnership through these disagreements is the protectiveness they show toward each other. Booth is the one who first exhibits this trait, making sure that the gang leader who put a hit on Brennan is restrained, the online dating she is experimenting with is secure, and the murder for which she is a suspect is solved. Brennan also stands up for Booth and takes an avid interest in his private life, even though she normally does not waste time on others’ personal lives. One night, when Booth has stayed at her house to protect her, he gets blown backwards when her refrigerator explodes. In the hospital, Booth is alone and in pain, so Brennan cancels her date to stay with him and watch TV. Since Brennan is such a strong character, the partnership frequently takes on protective aspects of male-male cop partnerships where each partner can rely equally on the other.

The issue of family is also of importance. Booth’s relationship with his son reveals the depth of his character. While he does not have full custody, the boy spends holidays with him, and Booth often speaks of him. The first mention of Booth’s son occurs during a Christmas episode where the boy comes to visit. Booth, proud to be a father, in other episodes empathizes with grief-stricken parents and kids. His colleagues
are impressed by such concerns. Brennan, however, never really connects with kids until she is handed a baby to watch in season three. Brennan, raised by foster parents, is clueless where kids are concerned. Ironically, she toys with the idea of having a child in season four only because she decides it is illogical and selfish of her not to have a progeny. As she amusingly imagines consequences, parenthood would be easy because she is smart enough to deal with a child. Similar abstractions influence her suggestion that she use Booth’s sperm because he is attractive and “attractive people do better” (4:25:9). Perhaps because the show’s writer decides that they have milked this joke enough, they give Booth a brain tumor, where upon she drops the topic.

Amusing as this concept is, it cuts to the heart of Brennan’s gender. Her brain is ticking, not her biological clock. While Booth constantly views situations with an emotional eye, Brennan’s is much more logical and factual. This causes some turmoil in the relationship, but ultimately they are able to agree to disagree because of the high respect they hold for each other.

Beckett and Castle do not struggle quite as much to understand the other’s perspective on issues, but their relationship is based to an even greater degree on mutual protection. While Detective Beckett is much more able than Castle to protect herself in dangerous situations and does so regularly, he still strives to protect her by letting her win at poker, staying at her apartment when a murderer is after her, and being gentle with investigating her mother’s murder. Castle is much more adept at reading and interpreting emotions than Beckett. Though her professionalism masks her own emotional responses,
Beckett does feel in conventional ways, unlike Brennan, whose empathy has probably been stunted by her foster upbringing and her obsession with science.

When Beckett reconnects with an old romantic flame in one episode, and when she begins seeing someone from the office in another, Castle reacts jealously. When this happens, Beckett takes control of the situation, setting her own emotions aside, making sure the job gets done and the killer is caught. Her inner concern for Castle is illustrated by:

Beckett: “Be careful, OK?”

Castle: “Do I detect actual concern for my well being?”

Beckett: “Screw this up and I’ll kill you.” (1:9:29)

Castle vents his emotions in interactions with his daughter when he says “I have a deep-seated need for a hug” (1:9:16). He is the guardian of his daughter and his mother has recently moved back in with him, and the household could devolve into a comic Mr. Mom scenario. He is not a mom; he treats his daughter as a father would his son, teaching her poker, laser tag, fencing, and science experiments. Having his daughter as a big part of his life makes Castle much more sensitive emotionally and more attractive as a potential mate; a circumstance not lost on the audience, which must respond to the possibility of romance with Beckett especially as his prowess as an experienced father and husband makes him more attractive.

The partnerships in both *Bones* and *Castle* are rooted in a need for protection and mutual appreciation, as well as mutual curiosity about each other, and in the affectional satisfaction that derives from symbiosis. Over their time together, their strengths have
come to complement each other, making them able to operate as an effective team.

Camaraderie creates an emotional inter-dependence; as Castle says, “the heart wants what
the heart wants” (2:22:39). Whether they will openly admit it or not, heart is the basis of
their friendships and partnerships.

Social Connections

Another category of hybridization is the difference in male and female social
interaction. For the characters in Bones especially, their emotional prerogatives affect the
way in which they are able to interact with their peers and colleagues. Dr. Brennan’s
“most meaningful relationships are with dead people” (1:1:22) because it is often easier
for her to get information from them, as opposed to the living. Small talk is not her forte
either, and there are multiple times where she is rude to a Sheriff or other specialists she
feels are not doing their job to get to the truth. As an example, when delivering the news
of a death to a family, Brennan favors blunt delivery of the information, while Booth
understands the need for the family to come to terms with the death of their loved one as
a gradual process. Booth understands that “people are not [Brennan’s] strong point”
(1:5:33), and uses tact, sympathy, and diplomacy to smooth over the issues and feelings
she has not handled well.

Other characters notice Brennan’s lack of communication skills, especially in the
courtroom where a prosecutor gives her pointers on how to testify, saying “juries don’t
like you…. You come off cold and aloof. Try not interrupting: it makes you sound
arrogant. Don’t frontload your testimony with technical crap” (1:8:24). Another episode
begins with Brennan on a TV interview show to promote her book; she is made to look
socially inept and has trouble understanding why. In the following episode of the season, Brennan reads a book on how to get along better with coworkers, and in season four, an FBI psychologist begins teaching Brennan nonverbal communication so that she can be intuitive like Booth when it comes to reading people. Not without comic overtones, her inability to communicate socially and her lack of social graces serve to point out the re-gendering that is going on right in front of the audience.

Castle is also very good at patiently reading people even though he acts like a “9 year old on a sugar rush” most of the time (1:1:42). More important, Castle knows how to interact with people of varied social and economic levels because he has been in the public eye, a useful skill when he and Beckett interview different kinds of people. What makes their relationship work so well is that both are very observant; Beckett, as a detective, has been trained to ferret out discrepancies and find patterns, while Castle is always on the lookout for the small details because he is constantly collecting information for his storylines. While Beckett is excellent at her job, her personal life has suffered a great deal because she is always reading situations as a detective instead of relaxing. When she is asked to go undercover at a black-tie affair, she finds herself operating out of her element with no suitable dresses. Castle, being always the gentleman and understanding the situation more than anyone realizes, sends her a dress before the event that she will be able to wear. At these kinds of events, Castle fits in easily and is able to converse while continuing to observe; his personal life and professional life blend, while Beckett’s are totally separate. Their social contacts are varied as well and although
we do not see much of Beckett’s social life in the first season, this begins to change in the second as she starts dating and flirting easily with coworkers.

In one instance, Castle invites one of New York’s most eligible women out for dinner to preserve his reputation as a bachelor. In response, Beckett ends up going to the same restaurant with one of the Firemen featured in a hunky, New York Firemen calendar. The night of their dates they are in the middle of a case and spend much of the evening reviewing the clues instead of tet-a-tet with their dates. Castle mentally picks apart the threads of the mystery trying to reform them into pattern because he uses this process when writing a murder mystery. Beckett, on the other hand, reviews the evidence because that is the process she uses in her job. Both arrive at the solution simultaneously and rush off together, abandoning their dates but concluding the case.

Although the social interactions in these two partnerships differ in perspective, they are able to complement each other, forming a working team which is much more efficient at getting the job done. While both Brennan and Beckett are affected in their social lives by their occupations, their male counterparts respect them in the workplace because of it. They actually need the humanistic viewpoint that Booth and Castle bring. The balance of the masculine and feminine traits which the partners contribute to social situations enables them to be extremely effective in what they do.

It is clear from the examination of these two partnerships that gender is at least partially socially constructed. This is a new idea in which hybridized media continually evolves and television programming reflects this evolution which then creates further changes in society. This generates a balance between actual societal expectations and the
direction the media is taking them. Writers and directors pick up cues from society at large and incorporate them into their media presentations. The audience then finds them dynamic and interesting without realizing they themselves are also evolving in that direction.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Gender shifts in the greater society have obviously contributed to the popularity of stronger and more masculine leads in both *Bones* and *Castle*. Television programs merely reflect the social and economic trends in the larger culture, thus validating the new dynamics of crime drama partnerships apparent in these programs. It is evident from the previous section that professionally, the lead women in *Bones* and *Castle* are more goal-oriented and career-focused than their male counterparts. Both Brennan and Beckett are characterized by a strong physical presence, helping to equalize them especially in the eyes of their male peers and contributing to the loyalty and trust inherent in their partnerships. While these able women do not need protection, their partnerships give them a sense of insurance that they would not have if working alone. This insurance is more than just a sense of physical safety; it also represents emotional reassurance.

Since both Booth and Castle are emotionally drawn, they represent the heart, as opposed to the women partners who represent the head or the brain of the partnership. This difference in how men and women have been depicted is one of the chief examples of inevitable power shifts for men and women as well as a shift toward hybridity in the gender sphere. Younger women are working to reverse decades of inequality and in so doing have become more “masculine” in many of their characteristics. New studies find that more often women are providing for the family instead of being the caregiver, allowing men the chance to escape the pressure of past stereotypes. The very essence of what determines the gender binary of masculinity or femininity is upset by adaptations that present men as social and women as intellectual.
With these things in mind, we might say that society is making a transition to a state of post-gender, where a simplistic binary no longer applies. We have seen how many different gendered behaviors can be blended to create a new type of character, more interesting than the hard and fast stereotypical crime-solver of the past. This apparent gender ambiguity can be viewed as the basis for hybridity. Mixing the characteristics of what was once solely masculine or feminine can create more interesting and more real characters than were previously depicted.

The cliché holds that sex is between the legs, gender between the eyes. Even so, though female characters may change or re-adapt, innately feminine mysteries puzzle and intrigue their male counterparts, creating a sexual tension which makes the partnership more dynamic. For example, Brennan may be perceived as more masculine, but she is still beautiful and often takes pains to appear so—the contrast heightening her appeal. Without the sexual tension between main characters, the series would not attract audiences. The underlying question for the audience is not whether these male and female partners will sleep together, but whether they will revert to gender expectations in doing so. That uncertainty sharpens the viewer’s appreciation.

*Bones* and *Castle*, while appropriate for studying male-female crime-solving dyads, are only two of the many crime-solving programs. This study is limited in that neither of the shows has reached its scripted end, thus giving us merely a glimpse into the longevity of the characters and their potential evolution. Other types of television programs should be considered as foregrounding hybrid genders. The extent to which
hybridity has already taken place will be subject to change and re-adaptation, making it necessary to extend studies in virtually every direction.

Although upon examination it is obvious to identify trends of change, neither society as a whole nor television programming are ready to abandon traditional male-female pairings. Males and females respond to each other in sexual ways regardless of their changing gender hybridity perpetuating thoughts of hegemony. Although the biological imperative of the sexual attraction of these partnerships is still there, because of the individuals’ changing roles, they no longer always act on it in ways that they once did. Just the fact that there is a sexual tension simmering beneath the surface of these characters’ psyches causes us to become more involved, to see how these new character types deal with their personal relationships. Hybridity is becoming more prevalent because we are moving away from the pure forms of gender binaries and stereotypes of the past. We still have a lot of the characteristics of stereotypical males and females, but they are not as set in stone as they once were and it is because of this hybridity that we find our new characters and roles for the small screen much more interesting than they once were. The hegemonic masculinity which once dominated all prospects for men has been transformed and its dominant characteristics shared with women. Present-day society has provided a context for the expression of hybridity that was not acceptable previously.

Even though literature has only explored hybridity previously through a racial or ethnic lens, there is a trend toward the evolution of a concentrated academic review involving gender constructs. These lead us away from a hegemonic masculinity of the
past towards a “new man” type utilizing feminized characteristics to create a blended masculine type. Gender binaries are no longer as clearly defined in mediated texts or society and it is up to academia to discover just how far reaching these changes will become.

Considering the dynamics in these crime-solving partnerships merely provides an example of the larger changes inherent in all of society. Women have proven that they have what it takes to be strong, forthright, and valuable in the working world, enough so that they have begun to replace some of their male counterparts. While this has become a trend in the past few years, there is still the overwhelming sexual attraction between males and females and both genders still look for a partner exhibiting characteristics lacking in themselves. Power shifts in the culture are inevitable and will have lasting social and economic effects on interpretations of the gender binary. While Bones and Castle are merely a jumping off point for study of new hybrid genders, they hint at society’s shifting gender framework.
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