

Punching, kickin', drinkin' and talkin' shit:
The four essentials of being a superheroine.

Representation of female characters in
Marvel's *Jessica Jones*

Master's thesis

Iida Rautiainen

University of Jyväskylä

Department of Languages

English

August 2017

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kielten laitos
Tekijä – Author Iida Rautiainen	
Työn nimi – Title Punching, kickin', drinkin' and talkin' shit: The four essentials of being a superheroine. Representation of female characters in Marvel's <i>Jessica Jones</i> .	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Pro Gradu
Aika – Month and year Elokuu 2017	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 127
Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Tämän tutkielman aiheena oli tarkastella naishahmojen representaatioita sarjakuvajätti Marvelin televisiosarjassa <i>Jessica Jones</i>. Tarkoituksena oli tutkia, kuinka naishahmot esitetään dialogin, ulkonäön ja käyttäytymisen keinoin, sekä hahmojen fyysisten ja juonellisten kontekstien kautta. Tarkastelun kohteena olivat sarjan neljä keskeisintä naishahmoa, ja aineistona käytettiin sarjan ensimmäistä kautta, johon kuului yhteensä 13 jaksoa.</p> <p>Tutkimus perustui pääasiassa laadulliseen analyysiin, jota varten sovellettiin aiempaa naisrepresentaatioiden tutkimusta sekä Pearsonin (2007) hahmonrakennusmallia, joka sisälsi kuusi keskeistä hahmonrakennuksen osa-alueita. Jokaista hahmoa analysoitiin kuuden kategorian osalta, joita olivat: 1) hahmohistoria, 2) ulkonäkö ja visuaalinen konteksti, 3) psykologiset piirteet, tavat ja suhteet muiden hahmojen kanssa, 4) kielenkäyttö, 5) ympäristö, sekä 6) roolit juonen kannalta ja hahmonkehitys. Tavoitteena oli tarkastella kutakin hahmoa monipuolisesti ja syväluotaavasti. Analyysin aikana erityistä huomiota kiinnitettiin niihin representaation osa-alueisiin, jotka aiempi tutkimus on osoittanut usein ongelmallisiksi naishahmojen kuvaamisen kannalta.</p> <p>Tutkimus paljasti, että naishahmot esitettiin suurimmalta osin varsin erilaisina ja moniulotteisina hahmoina, jotka tekivät aktiivisia ja juonen kannalta merkittäviä päätöksiä toimintansa suhteen. Naishahmoja ei juuri seksualisoitu ulkonäön tai visuaalisen kontekstin kautta, mutta joidenkin hahmojen viehättävyyden merkitystä korostettiin dialogin kautta. Osa hahmoista myös esitettiin supersankarigenrelle tyypillisissä rooleissa pelastamista vaativina uhreina, mutta yhtäkään hahmoa ei esitetty niin yksipuolisessa valossa kuin aiempi tutkimus olisi antanut odottaa. Sarjan päähenkilö Jessica Jones osoittautui perinteisiä naissankarinormeja monin tavoin rikkovaksi kompleksiseksi hahmoksi, joka toimi usein miespuolisille sankareille perinteisesti varatuissa pääsankarin ja suojelijan rooleissa. Kaiken kaikkiaan tutkimuksen tulokset viittaavat naisrepresentaatioiden kehittymiseen monipuolisempaan suuntaan supersankarigenren osalta.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords representaatio, naishahmot, televisio, supersankarit	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

Table of contents

1	Introduction	5
2	Theory and context.....	8
2.1	Gender studies	8
2.1.1	Films and television through the lens of feminism and gender studies	10
2.1.1.1	Representation of women on film and television	12
2.2	Women in the superhero genre.....	14
2.2.1	Women in superhero comics	15
2.2.2	Women in superhero films and television shows.....	23
2.3	Characterization.....	28
2.3.1	Modelling characterization.....	28
2.3.2	Constructing a character	30
2.3.2.1	Pearson’s key elements for character construction.....	32
2.3.3	Characterization and superheroes.....	35
2.3.3.1	Marvel superheroes	37
3	Set-up of my study	39
3.1	Aims.....	39
3.2	Data.....	40
3.2.1	The TV series Jessica Jones and its female characters.....	40
3.3	Methods of analysis	42
4	Analysis.....	45
4.1	Jessica Jones	46
4.1.1	Character biography	46
4.1.2	Visual appearance and context.....	47
4.1.3	Psychological traits, habits, and interaction with other characters	50
4.1.2.1	Relationships.....	58

4.1.3	Speech	67
4.1.4	Environment	69
4.1.5	Function in terms of the plot and character development	71
4.1.6	Summary	73
4.2	Trish Walker	74
4.2.1	Character biography	74
4.2.2	Visual appearance and context	74
4.2.3	Psychological traits, habits, and interaction with other characters	76
4.2.3.1	Relationships	82
4.2.4	Speech	85
4.2.5	Environment	86
4.2.6	Function in terms of the plot and character development	87
4.2.7	Summary	89
4.3	Jeri Hogarth	90
4.3.1	Character biography	90
4.3.2	Visual appearance and context	91
4.3.3	Psychological traits, habits and interaction with other characters	91
4.3.3.1	Relationships	96
4.3.4	Speech	98
4.3.5	Environment	99
4.3.6	Function in terms of the plot and character development	100
4.3.7	Summary	100
4.4	Hope Shlottman	101
4.4.1	Character biography	101
4.4.2	Visual appearance and context	102
4.4.3	Psychological traits, habits and interaction with other characters	102

4.4.4	Speech	106
4.4.5	Environment	106
4.4.6	Function in terms of the plot and character development	106
4.4.7	Summary	107
5	Concluding discussion.....	108
5.1	Summary of the main findings	109
5.2	Findings in relation to previous research.....	112
5.2.1	Representation of women and the findings of this study	112
5.2.2	Jessica Jones in relation to superhero traditions.....	115
5.3	Concluding thoughts.....	118
6	Bibliography.....	121

1 Introduction

In recent years, superhero films have become incredibly popular. When Marvel Studios released its ensemble superhero movie *The Avengers* in 2012, it became the fifth highest grossing film of all time (Box Office Mojo 2016). After *The Avengers*, superhero films have essentially dominated the box office with big blockbusters released every summer. So far, the popularity of these films does not show any signs of abating. Four out of the ten most financially successful films that came out in 2016 were superhero films (Box Office Mojo 2016), and several major film studios have plans for upcoming movies in the next couple of years (Faherty 2016). Following the success of the film industry, superheroes have also recently moved to the realm of television. The trend was started by a DC adaptation *Arrow* that first aired in 2012, and there have been several superhero television shows made after *Arrow* (Tassi 2016). It is, therefore, safe to say that the superhero genre has become an important part of popular culture, and it will most likely continue to be so for years to come.

The most influential entertainment company of the current superhero trend is, no doubt, Marvel Entertainment, LLC. In 2015, the Marvel Cinematic Universe, known as MCU, became the highest grossing film franchise in the world, surpassing such famous franchises as Harry Potter and James Bond (Holmes 2015). The MCU is a shared fictional universe, which means that all of Marvel's films and series take place in the same universe (Siede 2015). The first installment of the MCU was the 2008 *Iron Man*, and the universe has expanded to include 14 films and 5 television series (Marvel 2016). The MCU will continue to expand in the coming years, since Marvel already has plans for several films and television series (Marvel 2016). Although Marvel's main rival DC Entertainment will bring such famous names to the big screen as *Wonder Woman* and *Justice League* in 2017 (Koch 2016), Marvel will most likely continue to be the most prominent company within the genre.

Due to the massive popularity of superhero films, many fans and critics have paid attention to the way they portray women. Comic books, movies, and television all have long histories of representing women in questionable ways, which I will review in later chapters, and modern superhero films seem to have inherited many of the problems of these mediums. The problem that has probably received most attention is the under-representation of female characters. There are significantly fewer female characters in the MCU than there are male characters. For example, only two out of the eleven characters that form the two most well-known superhero

teams in the MCU, the Avengers and the Guardians, are women. In addition, Marvel does not yet have any female-lead movies in their universe despite producing 14 movies. The demand for more female superheroes is evident from the countless posts that fans have written on the internet, criticizing Marvel and other companies for the lack of female characters. In 2014, Marvel's decision to not give a prominent role to a well-known character called Janet Van Dyne, AKA the Wasp, in their new movie *Ant-Man* sparked a social media campaign protesting the decision (McMillan 2014c). Following the online outcry and long-term calls for a female-led superhero movie, the president of the Marvel Studios addressed the lack of female leads and expressed hope for such a movie in the future (McMillan 2014b). Marvel has also received criticism for sexualizing female characters and injecting sexism into their movies (Baker-Whitelaw 2014). In addition, the existing female characters have sometimes been omitted from official movie merchandise by Marvel's parent company Disney. For instance, the omission of the lead female character Gamora from *Guardians of the Galaxy* merchandise inspired fans to start a Twitter campaign #wheresgamora to bring awareness to the lack of female superhero merchandise (Pahle 2014). Despite these problems, Marvel movies have also received praise for subverting comic book tropes and portraying female characters as competent and strong (see e.g. Shepherd 2015 and Heroic Hollywood 2015). In addition, Marvel has released two female-lead television series and the company revealed this year that they plan to release their first female-lead movie, *Captain Marvel*, in 2019 (Eisenberg 2016).

Awareness of the representation of women within the superhero genre is very important due to the genre's considerable cultural impact. Films and television play an important role in shaping people's perceptions and attitudes in western countries, and the gender representations that people are exposed to through popular media affect their views on gender. The way men and women are portrayed are, for instance, highly likely to affect our gender identities (Gauntlett 2008:1) The ideologies that are represented on popular media influence people's beliefs about how men and women should look like and how they should behave in different situations and social relationships (see Gauntlett 2008:2-3 and Bogarosh 2016: 4-5). Superhero films and television series are no exception even though they usually portray unrealistic super humans. Seeing sexualized superheroines, for example, can lead to lower body esteem and more rigid gender role beliefs in women (Pennell and Behm-Morawitz 2015). Although gender representations on film and television have been studied quite extensively, superhero films and especially television series starring superheroes have received less scholarly interest. Since the superhero genre has become increasingly popular in recent years, especially among women, it

is important to examine how women are depicted within the genre. Guardians of the Galaxy drew in an audience that was 44% women (ComicBook.com 2014), and women comprise roughly half of all comic con attendees and comic book fans on Facebook (MacDonald 2014 and Graphic Policy 2014). The way superheroines and other female characters are portrayed, therefore, affects a very large number of people and merits inspection.

The purpose of this study is to examine gender representations in Marvel's web television series *Jessica Jones*, which follows the story of a former superhero who works as a private detective in fictional New York. The show is based on a Marvel Comics character who first appeared in 2001 in a comic book series called *Alias* (Comic Vine 2015). The television series first aired in November 2015 on Netflix, which is a popular American Internet television network. According to the company's profile (Netflix 2016), Netflix has "over 86 million members in over 190 countries" so the network reaches a very wide audience. *Jessica Jones* has received positive feedback from both critics and viewers, with some critics hailing it as one of Marvel's best creations so far (see e.g. Hughes 2015 and Yeoman 2015). At the time of writing, the series had received a score of 93% on Rotten Tomatoes and a rating of 8,2 on the Internet Movie Database. *Jessica Jones* is Marvel's second series with a female lead, and the first one to have a female lead with superpowers, which makes it especially interesting in terms of gender representations.

The overall goal of my study is to examine how the main female characters in *Jessica Jones* are portrayed. In more detail, I am going to take an in-depth look at six central characters and how they are represented through speech, behavior, and appearance. In addition, I am going to take into account the context of the characters and their function in the story in terms of the plot. The theoretical framework of my analysis will be mostly based on characterization studies that have been carried out in the fields of literary studies, discourse analysis and media studies. I will also complement my analysis with insights from gender studies and feminist film criticism. At the end of my analysis, I plan to compare my findings to previous research to see if they give any indication about the development of female representations. By focusing on a single series, I hope to provide an in-depth case study of gender representations that can be used by future researchers who are interested in similar issues.

2 Theory and context

2.1 Gender studies

This study falls within the scope of gender studies since the focus is on the representation of women. Gender studies is an interdisciplinary field of study dedicated to analyzing and theorizing issues relating to sex and gender in society. Gender studies encompasses both women's studies and men's studies, as well as queer studies. The focus on gender can be applied to a very large number of disciplines, and gender studies has, for example, often been paired with such fields of research as language, literature, history, sociology, anthropology, cinema, and media studies. Since gender studies is such a vast field of research, I will concentrate on giving a short description of the history of the field and its most relevant concepts in terms of my research.

Arguably, the most important concepts in gender studies are the concepts of sex and gender, which need to be clarified before introducing the field in more detail. In short, the term sex refers to the biologically determined male/female dichotomy that is based on the chromosomal, hormonal or physical differences between men and women (Benshoff 2016:148). Gender, however, is a more complicated, and contested, concept. In everyday language gender is often used as a synonym for the term sex, but within the field of gender studies it is used to refer to the characteristics and behaviors that are considered to correlate with the biological categories of men and women (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:56). Benshoff (2016:148) remarks that "gender refers to the complex and diverse ways that people are treated (or choose to behave) based on their biological sex". According to this view, gender is a social construct and the characteristics that are used to define men and women are culturally determined (Sunderland 2006:28). According to Pilcher and Whelehan (2004:59), gendered behaviors, characteristics and even objects are a result of active "social processes that produce and reproduce distinctions between women and men". Instead of something fixed and predetermined, gender can, therefore, be regarded as something that is performed or created in interaction (see Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:58 and Coates 2012:96). The way gender is constructed and viewed depends considerably on a myriad of cultural variables, such as region, class, history and religion (Benshoff 2016:149). The assumptions and processes that guide the construction of gender are so widespread that they usually are invisible to people or seem unquestionably natural (Davis, Evans, and Lorber 2006:2). My study subscribes to the notion of gender as socially constructed and negotiated phenomenon.

Gender became a topic of academic inquiry during the 1960s when proponents of second-wave feminism began to draw attention to the topic (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:ix). The emergence of gender as a worthy subject meant that the existing gender inequalities in various aspects of life from personal to political became subjects of academic research and critique in ways they had not been before. Since women had previously been largely excluded from academic disciplines, feminist scholars advocated paying attention to women's experiences, accomplishments, and identities, which led to the development of women's studies (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:176). In recent years, scholars have also begun to study men and develop theories on the construction of masculinities in addition to the research that has concentrated on women and the construction of femininity (see e.g. Hearn and Kimmel 2006: 53-70). While women's studies and gender studies have much in common, the two disciplines are not completely interchangeable in terms of their focus. Davis, Evans and Lorber (2006:2) summarize the distinction between the two fields by noting that gender studies is more "focused on the way the organization and structure of society itself and its cultural and knowledge productions are gendered". Gender studies has, therefore, a wider viewpoint than women's, or men's, studies. All in all, the field has expanded hugely into various disciplines since its beginning in the 1960s.

The issues that gender studies examines are varied, but they usually relate to the ways in which gender is either learned, expressed, experienced or represented. The fact that gender studies is an interdisciplinary field means that it can be utilized in relation to a multitude of contexts and disciplines, each with an emphasis on different aspects of gender research. Discourse analysis, for example, has examined the construction of gender identities through language use very closely (see e.g. Litosseliti and Sunderland 2002). Theoretical frameworks on children's gender acquisition have been developed especially in the field of psychology (see Leaper and Friedman 2007). The most relevant research in terms of this study, however, concentrates on the topic of gender representations. In essence, representation refers to "the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way" (Oxford Dictionary of English 2016). In terms of films and television, representation refers to the way characters, for example, are portrayed through various multimodal means. The language, sounds and images that are chosen to create a representation communicate beliefs and attitudes (Ott and Mack 2014:14), which means that representations convey and construct meaning. Due to their ability to convey attitudes and evoke feelings through images, text, and sounds, media representations have been a popular topic of research in recent decades. In the next section, I will introduce some the ways in which

the representations of women on film and television have been analysed from the point of view of gender studies.

2.1.1 Films and television through the lens of feminism and gender studies

Film and television have been a topic of interest within the field of gender studies roughly from the beginning of the discipline. In the 1960s, the developing film studies were influenced by feminist writers and scholars, and feminist research on television was not far behind (Benshoff 2016:151). The interest in examining films and television has been motivated by the ideological power that these two media possess. Films and television are two very powerful distributors of ideas and beliefs, especially in western societies. Benshoff (2016:150-151) describes film and television as “ideological state apparatuses that work to maintain the status quo of dominant ideology; in the case of gender, much film and television tends to uphold the dominance of patriarchy”. In feminist theory, the term patriarchy usually refers to a social system in which women are subordinate to men, and thus disadvantaged in terms of social power (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004: 93). Movies and television programs that propagate patriarchy will, therefore, likely emphasize that men and women are fundamentally different and they should express their gender in certain distinct ways (Benshoff 2016:150). Since film and television have been considered influential in terms of promoting or challenging the existing social order, they have continued to be widely studied subjects in gender studies.

The portrayal of gender is an issue that has likely received the most attention in gender studies in terms of film and television. A considerable amount of research has been dedicated to examining how men and women are represented in various genres, and whether those representations critique or support existing gender norms (Benshoff 2016:152-153). In addition to analyzing representations in individual movies, television shows, or even genres, some researchers have aimed at examining possible patterns in gender representations on a larger scale. For example, one influential strand of research from feminist scholars has concentrated on revealing recurring patterns in Hollywood films through a method called image analysis (Benshoff 2016: 153). Image analysis has revealed that Hollywood tend to portray female characters in certain recurring ways (Benshoff 2016: 153). One example of these recurring patterns is the virgin-whore dichotomy, which refers to the division of female characters into good women and bad women who often suffer violent fates based on whether they exhibit sexual behavior or not (see e.g. Benshoff 2016: 152-153). These kinds of repetitive ways of portraying women are usually considered stereotypical, which means that they are a “a misleading and simplified representation” of women (Ott and Mack 2014 :196). The frequently

recurring patterns on film and television are also known as tropes, especially if they are considered overused or clichéd. Since tropes are usually familiar and easily convey plenty of recognizable information for viewers, they are used because to make story-telling easier (TV Tropes 2017). There are a host of gender specific tropes in films and television that relate to the portrayal of both male and female characters and their roles in different genres.

One of the most discussed pattern regarding the representation of women on film and television is the pattern of objectification: representing women as sexual objects. The dynamics of objectification in films were theorized by Laura Mulvey in an influential essay called *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, which was originally published in 1975. Mulvey bases her theory on psychoanalysis, namely, Freud's concept of scopophilia which refers to the pleasure received from looking at others as objects, and argues that part of the allure of cinema is that it satisfies the desire for pleasurable looking (Mulvey 1990 [1975]:30-31). In her essay Mulvey (1990 [1975]:33) introduces the term male gaze to refer to a way of depicting, or seeing, female characters as titillating objects on display for heterosexual male viewers:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.

Mulvey (1990 [1975]:39) notes that the mechanisms of cinema contain three different types of looks or gazes, which are the look of the camera that films the actors, the look of the characters within the story, and the look of the spectator who views the final product on screen. She argues that the spectator of the final product is usually assumed to be male and wanting to identify with the male (main) character in the story. The different looks are, therefore, combined so that female characters are portrayed as erotic object both for the male characters within the story and the male viewers in the audience. This is achieved by using cinematic codes, which include such aspects of filmmaking as, for instance, lighting, editing, framing and camera movements. Filming female characters from the point of view of male characters blurs the line between the male characters and the spectator. (Mulvey 1990 [1975]:33-39). Since (heterosexual) men are the target audience, the camera focuses on aspects that are considered pleasurable for the assumed viewers, such as close-ups of a woman's body. Although Mulvey focuses on classic Hollywood films in her analysis, the concept of the male gaze has been applied to other types of media as well, such as television shows and advertisements. All in all, it has proven a useful

conceptual tool for examining the portrayal of women, especially when analysing films and television.

In general, the most prominent achievement of the feminist approaches to film and television has likely been the heightened awareness of the gender representations that are constructed in these forms of mass media. Scholars in gender studies have emphasized the importance of scrutinizing the ways in which gender is portrayed, and they have provided tools and concepts for such analysis that have become relatively widespread. Some of those tools are useful for my study of the representation of female characters in *Jessica Jones* because they serve to highlight the issues that have frequently been noted as problematic by previous researchers. I will include the concept of the male gaze, for instance, in my analysis because I want to examine whether the way female characters are represented in a modern superhero series follows the tradition of depicting female characters in an objectifying manner. My purpose is, therefore, to examine whether any progress have taken place regarding the representation of women. In the next section, I will present some further findings that previous researchers have discovered about the representation of women on the areas that are relevant for my research, namely, films and television.

2.1.1.1 Representation of women on film and television

The ways in which women have been portrayed on film and television have often been quite stereotypical. Gauntlett (2008:50-51) gives a summary of the representation of women in popular films from the 1950s to the 1980s, in which he notes that films from this era were usually very male dominated. He notes that Hollywood movies almost always had male protagonists, and female characters were in a definite minority. Female characters were also depicted as weaker and more passive than male characters, who were usually portrayed as more assertive and intelligent than the females. Gauntlett (2008:50) does identify some strong and capable female characters from films that were created in the 1970s and 1980s, but these characters were in a very small minority. Television shows have not been much better than films in terms of representing women. From the 1950s to the 1970s, female characters comprised only 20 to 35 percent of all television characters, and they were mostly portrayed in domestic roles (Gauntlett 2008:47). Women were usually defined in terms of their roles as mothers and wives, and if they successfully worked outside of home, they were often depicted as unhappy (ibid.). Just like female characters in films, they were also much less likely than men to give orders and behave assertively (ibid.) During the 1990s, the representation of women on television did become somewhat less stereotypical, since most female characters worked

outside of home and they were more likely to be portrayed as independent and assertive than before (Gauntlett 2008:63-64). They were, however, still very underrepresented. For example, only 38.8% of all speaking roles in prime-time television went to women in the 1992–93 season (Elasmar, Hasegawa, and Brain 1999:27). All in all, it seems that the representations of women stayed very similar in American movies and television shows from the 1950s to the 1980s, and then started to develop into a more equal direction during the 1990s.

Today, the way women are portrayed in movies and television shows continues to be a topic of controversy. Despite the improvements that have taken place since the 1980s and 1990s in the representation of women, female characters are still often underrepresented, stereotyped and sexualized in these two media. In 2013, Smith et al. published a report examining gender representations in 500 popular films from the years between 2007 and 2012. They discovered that roughly 30% of all speaking characters in popular movies were women between 2007 and 2012, and the number of movies with gender balanced casts had decreased 5% from 2007 to 2012 (Smith et al. 2013:2-3). They also examined the sexualization of characters by counting the number of male and female characters that were referenced as physically attractive or shown in sexy (i.e., tight or alluring) attire or partially naked (i.e., exposing at least some skin in the breast, midriff, or high upper thigh area). The results were that female characters were considerably more likely to be sexualized in these ways than male characters were. In addition, 56,6% of female characters who were 13–20 years old wore sexy or revealing attire, compared to only 16.4% of female characters who were 40–64 years old. (Smith et al. 2013:5). In 2014, Smith, Choueiti and Pieper released a report that analysed gender representations in 120 films produced in eleven countries. The results were that women were twice as likely to be thin, partially or fully naked, and wearing revealing attire than men, and the appearance of female characters was commented on five times as frequently as the appearance of male characters (Smith, Choueiti and Pieper 2014:8). The prevalence of female characters in movies also depends on the genre, and the report discovered that action/adventure films had 10% fewer female characters than movies on average (Smith et al. 2014:5). In a report that examines 100 films from the year 2015, Lauzen (2016b:1) notes that the number of female characters with speaking roles has increased 3% from the previous year, but concludes that gender representations in movies are still quite stereotypical:

Gender stereotypes were prevalent in the top grossing films of 2015. Moviegoers were more likely to know the occupation of male characters than female characters, and more likely to know the marital status of females than males. In addition, moviegoers were much more likely

to see male characters at work and actually working than female characters.

Television has similar problems as films in terms of gender representations. When Lauzen, Dozier and Horan (2008:208-2010) examined prime-time programs from six American broadcast networks, they discovered that female characters were more often represented in relation to their interpersonal roles and male characters in terms of work roles. In the 2015–2016 season, 39% of all speaking characters in American prime-time programs were women (Lauzen 2016a:2), which is a higher portion than the average for movies. In addition, 38% of all major characters on broadcast network, cable programs and streaming programs were women (ibid.). Female characters on television are less likely to be depicted in leadership positions, or working in general, than male characters, and they are still more often defined in terms of their marital status (Lauzen 2016a:3). This inclination towards domesticity is also emphasized by the fact that they are more often depicted having personal goals that relate to romantic relationships, or other interpersonal relationships, than male characters, who have more work-related goals (ibid.). Both male and female television characters are usually under 60 years old, but females tend to be notably younger than males. Most female characters are usually in their 20s and 30s, whereas most male characters are in their 30s and 40s (Lauzen 2016a: 6 and 10). The sexualization of female characters seems to also be prevalent on television. Smith et al. (2012:12) analysed 275 prime-time shows and discovered that 36.2 % of female characters wore revealing clothing, 37,5% were thin, and 11.6% were explicitly coded as physically attractive.

In summary, women are often represented as more passive, younger, and sexualized than men on films and television shows. Female characters tend to have less speaking roles than their male counterparts, and they are more often portrayed in relation to their interpersonal roles than work roles. However, the portrayal of women seems to be slowly improving as the number of female characters is increasing and gender representations are becoming more diverse.

2.2 Women in the superhero genre

Superhero fiction as a genre is very diverse, since it can feature any type of media that includes stories that have superheroes. Superheroes are commonly described as people with inhuman capabilities that are on some type of a mission to fight evil. Kaveney (2008:4), for instance, defines superheroes in the following way:

A superhero is a man or woman with powers that are either massive extensions of human strengths and capabilities, or fundamentally different in kind, which she or he uses to fight

for truth, justice and the protection of the innocent. A substantial minority of people without powers as such share a commitment to the superhero mission, so they are generally regarded as superheroes in spite of the absence of such powers.

Superheroes have been a prominent part of popular culture for decades. They first appeared on the pages of comics strips and books in the 1930s, and they have made several appearances, with various degrees of success, on film and television screens over the decades. For a long time, superheroes were considered a form of trivial entertainment that was mostly meant for children, until the in the 1980s and 90s comic books started to become a subject of academic research (Johnson 2012:2). Today, superheroes have permeated the American society and culture, and subsequently other westerns cultures, so thoroughly that they have become dominant cultural icons (Johnson 2012:1). Superheroes and their adventures can be considered modern day mythologies that are told on screens and on the pages of comic books. Superheroes serve the function of entertaining readers and viewers, but they can also help people to explain the world and their roles in it. Myths contemplate the big ideas that are an important part of any culture, such as the concepts of morality, justice, and love (Stuller 2010:3), and superhero stories achieve just that. Myths are also used to convey information about what cultural values are desirable or undesirable (ibid.), which has been a prominent feature of superhero comics as well. Throughout their history, superheroes have both reflected changes in American society and influenced American culture considerably (Johnson 2012: 1-2). The fact that superhero comics and other adaptations are products of their time and culture means that they often reflect the prejudices and biases of the American society. In terms of the representation of women, this means that they have often been portrayed in stereotypical and sexist ways.

In the next sections, I will present the most salient aspects of the history of female representation in superhero comics from the birth of the genre to modern day. After the comics section, I will examine how comic books have been adapted to film and television in recent years, and how women are represented in these relatively modern films and television shows.

2.2.1 Women in superhero comics

The era of superheroes began in the late 1930s when Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster created Superman. Superman first appeared in an issue called Action Comics #1, which was released by DC Comics in 1938 (Johnson 2012:7). By the time of Superman's debut, comic books starring detectives, magicians, masked heroes, and many other kinds of protagonists were becoming increasingly popular (Madrid 2009:3). Superman set itself apart from these previous heroes by combining many of the elements of traditional science fiction, pulp, and fantasy into

one superpowered crime fighter (Johnson 2012:11). The character quickly became popular and the hero received his own comic in 1939 (Johnson 2012: 11-12). The reason for Superman's popularity can be traced back to the economic and social troubles that faced America at the time. The 1930s were an era of Great Depression, marked by high unemployment, poverty, and social unrest. In a time when Americans had lost their faith in the government and economic institutions, Superman provided readers a hero who battled familiar social ills, punished wrongdoers and protected the innocent. In short, he provided wish-fulfilment and escapism in a time of suffering. (Johnson 2012: 7-13). Superman's popularity meant that a host of new superheroes were soon created to capitalize on the new trend (Johnson 2012: 27). Some of these heroes, such as Bob Kane's Batman, would continue to capture readers for decades to come, but most of the early superheroes faded into obscurity relatively quickly.

The first female superheroes, or superheroines as they are often called, were created a few years after Superman's debut. The Woman in Red, Fantomah, and Red Tornado appeared in 1940, and they were vigilantes with secret identities, just like most male superheroes (Madrid 2009:4). Madrid (2009:6-16) divides the superheroines of the early 1940s into two rough categories: The debutantes and the partners. The debutantes were usually women from rich and affluent families who, purposefully or accidentally, adopted secret identities to fight crime. Famous debutantes included, for example, such heroines as Phantom Lady, Miss Fury, and Lady Luck. Adopting a secret identity allowed the debutantes to gain excitement into their privileged but often boring lives, and to obtain a level of freedom and independence that was not otherwise possible for them due to the gender norms of the era. In contrast, partners were women who were introduced to crime fighting by the men in their lives, and who usually acted as assistants to their vigilante boyfriends or husbands. The partners were generally portrayed as less powerful and competent than their male counterparts, who were often forced to rescue their well-meaning but ineffectual partners from various villains. While the tradition of portraying female heroes as assistants to male heroes often relegated them to the status of second-tier superheroes, it did ensure that they continued to exist in comic books.

When the United States joined the Second World War, superheroes were adapted to support the war effort. They became a propaganda tool designed to promote patriotism and appropriate American values (Johnson 2012:37-38). New patriotic superheroes were created, and vigilantes who had previously been fighting government corruption became law-abiding citizens who encouraged people to support the servicemen and to change their lifestyles according to government recommendations (*ibid.*). Female superheroes were also used to increase support

for the war effort and to lift public morale. Women of various backgrounds were depicted defending the American democracy by battling foreign armed forces and exposing spies (Madrid 2009:16-21). The most famous of these heroines was Wonder Woman, who was created in 1941 by Dr. William Moulton Marston (Stuller 2010:15). At the time of her debut, Wonder Woman was in many ways exceptional in terms of the portrayal of women. Wonder Woman is an Amazon Warrior, who comes from a matriarchal society and believes in the values love and equality, and who is committed to “never submit to the authority of any man” (Stuller 2010:15-16). Her comics featured an abundance of women, and she often relied on a group of female friends called The Holliday Girls to help her on difficult missions (Madrid 2009:46-47). While Wonder Woman comics often featured some mixed messages about female submission and the role of romance in women’s lives, they offered readers positive representations of both self-reliant women and female friendships (Madrid 2009:45-47). All in all, women were depicted as competent and tough in American media during the 1940s, and comics were no exception (Stuller 2010:23). The independent and patriotic superheroines were reflections of the American society during the time of war, since women were encouraged to work in factories and in other public positions while men were fighting at the front (Madrid 2009:17). This era of relative independence and depictions of strong and capable women was, however, short-lived.

When men returned home after the war, women were expected to return to their roles as mothers and homemakers, since their increased self-sufficiency was treated as a “wartime aberration” (Johnson 2012:72). Comics quickly started to reflect this shift towards more traditional gender norms. Looks had been important for superheroines before and during the war, but after it they became their defining factor. Superheroines became increasingly sexualized: their curves were emphasized, they wore more revealing clothes and were portrayed in suggestive poses (Madrid 2009:22-23). In other words, superheroines were drawn in a style that was similar to the style of pin-up models (ibid.). Looks almost became a superpower for these characters, since they were usually portrayed as ordinary women from all social classes who turned into stunning beauties that could enthrall all men (Madrid 2009:23). Their adventures often revolved around romance, and many of them adopted superhero identities because they wanted to protect their love interests, but had to do it in secret (Madrid 2009:24). The end of the war also meant that interest in superhero comics among adult readers decreased quickly when soldiers returned home and things returned to normal for Americans (Madrid 2009:28). By the end of the 1940s, most superhero comics, including most of the comics that featured superheroines, had been

discontinued, and the remaining titles soon became aimed at younger audiences (Stuller 2010:25).

The shift towards younger audiences meant that comics came under scrutiny, because parents and authorities became worried about the messages that they were sending young readers. The late 1940s and the 1950s were a time of relative prosperity and stability in America, at least for many white Americans (Johnson 2012: 71). They were also a time of conservative values, consumerism, and conformity. The new social order demanded that people subscribe to appropriate values, roles, and behaviors, and behavior that was deemed outside of those appropriate norms led to social ostracism. (Johnson 2012:71-72). Comics had received criticism for depicting so called immoral content ever since their creation in the 1930s, but concern over their influence on young reader grew when mental health professionals expressed worry for young readers after the war (Nyberg 2017). The most influential of them was psychiatrist Dr. Fredric Wertham, who in his book *Seduction of the Innocent* linked comic books to illiteracy, juvenile delinquency, and sexual deviance in children (Wertham 1954). Wertham's book and subsequent governmental inquiry into the effects of comic books forced comic book publishers to form a regulatory organization and to adopt a restrictive regulation code known as the Comics Code (Nyberg 2017). The Comics Code included restrictions concerning the depiction of sex, violence, profanity, and other controversial topics (ibid.) This meant that portrayals of female characters were restricted as well. The original Comic Code from 1954 states the following about the representation of women:

Nudity in any form is prohibited, as is indecent or undue exposure. Suggestive and salacious illustration or suggestive posture is unacceptable. Females shall be drawn realistically without exaggeration of any physical qualities. (Madrid 2009:29).

The Comics Code became extremely influential for decades, until the code was finally abandoned by all the major comic publishers in the 21st century after the development of specialty comic book stores and independent comic publishers (Nyberg 2017).

Even though the Comics Code curbed some of the objectification of female characters, the 1950s were a time of restrictive gender norms for women in comics. The fact that they could no longer be used as sex appeal meant that most of the existing female characters were simply left out of comics altogether (Madrid 2009:58). Those that continued to appear on comic books were usually cast in the roles of girlfriends for male superheroes, even if they were superheroes themselves. Even crime fighting superheroines were portrayed wanting to find the right man and settle down to raise a family, conforming to the expectation that once a woman marries,

she must abandon her career in favor of motherhood (Madrid 2009:57). Even the once exceptional Amazon warrior Wonder Woman became primarily interested in romance and marriage, and her origin story was modified so that she had a mother and a father (Stuller 2010: 23-24). Originally, Wonder Woman was formed out of clay and only had an adoptive mother, which was probably considered inappropriate. Most female superheroes were also depicted as somewhat incompetent sidekicks, who were often patronized and treated in a very sexist manner by the superior male heroes (Madrid 2009: 59-64 and Stuller 2010:24-25). The following summary by Stuller (2010:24) encapsulates the portrayal of female characters in the late 1940s and in the 1950s:

During this backlash to the empowering images of Wonder Woman and Rosie the Riveter, women in comics were often little more than simpering girlfriends who shopped, fainted, cried, and were obsessed with marriage.

During the 1960s, superhero comics became more popular again when the major publishers created several new male superheroes that captured readers' interest. New superheroines, such as the Invisible Girl and the Wasp were also created, but they were mostly secondary characters that were either sidekicks or belonged to a team of superheroes where they performed less challenging tasks than the male members of their team (Donaldson 2013:142-143). In the battlefield, they settled for distracting the enemy, and at home they took care of appropriate domestic tasks, such as cooking, sewing, and decorating the team's headquarters (Donaldson 2013:144 and 149). In addition to being given less important tasks than men, female characters were trivialized in many ways. In terms of numbers, female superheroes were very underrepresented, since men usually outnumbered women four to one in superhero teams (Donaldson 2013:143). They were also usually given quite passive powers, such as mind reading, shrinking or invisibility, whereas male superheroes were given powers that had more useful offensive applications, such as super strength or flame throwing. Due to their more ineffective powers, female superheroes usually ended up needing to be rescued by their male teammates or partners. (Donaldson 2013:143-145). In addition to their power levels and team roles, the characterization of superheroines was influenced by sexist notions about women. They were frequently portrayed as one-dimensional characters defined by excessive emotionality and romantic impulses (Donaldson 2013:146-147). Despite these problems, there were some positives in the representations of female characters as well. For example, many of the girlfriends of superheroes were portrayed as having successful careers (Madrid 2009:104). In addition, the 1960s were a time of political movements that changed the American culture

in profound ways (Stuller 2010:30), and some of those changes were about to once again be reflected in comics.

In the 1970s, many of the problematic aspects of female representation persisted in comics, but the effects of second wave feminism brought more variability and depth to female characters. In addition, the comics industry went through changes as the genre grew more diverse and many retiring writers and artists were replaced by younger creators, who were more interested in making superhero comics grittier and more grounded on the real world (Madrid 2009: 151). The result was that female superheroes started to become more competent and self-sufficient. They were shown choosing career over romance and contemplating the implications of their new liberated roles for themselves and their loved ones (Madrid 2009: 156-159). The behavior of female characters was no longer motivated solely by the men in their lives, since they could decide to become crime fighters for their own excitement (Madrid 2009:156). Comics did not, however, unanimously embrace feminism. Some stories treated women's liberation as a passing trend or even as a dangerous upheaval of the natural order of gender relations (Madrid 2009: 153). The fact that the both the target audience and the creators of most comics were men meant that feminism was sometimes a difficult subject for comics even if they tried to embrace its values. For example, writers sometimes ended up creating characters that just seemed mean and condescending when they tried to make confident and outspoken women (Madrid 2009:166-167). At the same time when female characters were becoming more independent, the archetype of femme fatale returned to comics. The Comics Code had ensured the absence of sexualized female characters for over two decades, but the creation of Vampirella in 1969 ushered in a new era of sexual revolution in comics (Madrid 2009:147). The creators of comics started to draw superheroines in much more revealing clothing than before. The new sexier superheroines did reflect the sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s in America, but they were mostly used to attract male viewers. Madrid (2009:155) claims that the increased sexualization of female characters can be connected to the advancement of feminism since it made male readers more receptive to the new competent and self-sufficient superheroines. She argues that "A liberated heroine who still looked sexy would be less threatening to the male readers of comic books". Despite these concessions, the 1970s started a slow and often rocky process towards more equal representation for female characters.

The 1980s, and especially the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, represented a return to the values of fiscal and military conservatism and individualism for America (Johnson 2012: 126-128). Combined the general distrust of governmental authorities and a growing fear of crime, these

values led to a time of so called ultra-conservatism (Johnson 2012:148-149). Superhero comics had already become grittier during the 1970s, but the new decade marked a turn towards darker comics as both superheroes and villains became considerably more violent and individualistic than before (Johnson 2012:130-147). The world of superheroes became a corrupt and crime filled place, where justice could only be served through violence (Johnson 2012:131), which meant a grim time for superheroines as well. Many superheroines were either killed off or faced various violent hardships, such as rape, domestic violence and permanent injuries (Madrid 2009:221-222). It is worth noting that although male superheroes have certainly not been exempt from violence and death, female superheroes seem to be victims of brutality more frequently and for different reasons than their male counterparts. In fact, the phenomenon of violence towards women is prevalent enough in comics enough to be a trope. In 1999, Gail Simone coined the term “women in refrigerators” to describe a list of female characters in comics who have been “depowered, raped, or cut up and stuck in the refrigerator” (Simone 1999). The term was inspired by a Green Lantern comic from 1994, in which Green Lantern finds her girlfriend strangled to death and crammed inside a refrigerator (Vanier 2014). Since then, the term has evolved to describe the phenomenon of using violence towards female characters as a plot device to further the story of male characters (Venier 2014). Venier (2014) notes violence in comics is not problematic itself, but the fact that is used differently for male and female characters:

The problem is that a disproportionate degree of violence – especially sexual violence – is leveled at female characters, and that it is seldom in the context of furthering the mythological development of those female characters.

In addition, male characters who are victims of violence are often restored to health fairly quickly, whereas female characters are not (Vernier 2014). While the role of female characters is still often that of a victim, they can be quite violent themselves. The development of violent heroes in the 1980s included the creation of several morally ambiguous superheroines. (Madrid 2009:225-232). Additionally, the first ever all-female superhero team, Femforce, was created in 1985 by AC Comics (TV Tropes 2017).

During the 1990s, the sexualization of female characters and the trend towards more violent superheroes led to the development of so called Bad Girls. Bad Girls were ruthless heroes, or anti-heroes, who looked like supermodels and fought crime in extremely revealing costumes (Madrid 2009:281-284). The increased sexualization of female characters was also not restricted to just these bad Girls, since many superheroines of the time received a make-over to

increase their sex appeal (Madrid 2009: 274-281). The new superheroines had lither bodies, longer legs, bigger breasts, and rounder buttocks that they readily displayed in various modelling poses (Madrid 2009: 274). These pin-up heroines were very popular in the 1990s when the comic book industry was experiencing a period of prosperity, but most of them disappeared when the 90s approached their end and the comic book market crashed (Madrid 2009:285).

The last decade and a half has had both positives and negatives in terms of the representation of women. One positive development is that the amount of female characters in comics has been slowly increasing, although women still comprise less than a third of all DC and Marvel characters (Hickey 2014). However, women are still often depicted in sexualized poses and costumes, despite the criticism that they have received. One of the most egregious examples of the objectification of women is the Milo Manara's Spider-Woman cover from 2014 where the heroine is depicted climbing wall in a pose that highlights her posterior. The drawing received so much criticism that the Marvel editor in chief apologized for the message that the cover sends readers (McMillan 2014a). The overly sexualizing poses of superheroines have inspired comic book fans to create the Hawkeye Initiative to highlight the ridiculousness of such poses (Nerd HQ 2012). The Hawkeye Initiative is a popular Tumblr blog where people post drawings or pictures of the male superhero Hawkeye, or other male characters, posing in similar positions as various female characters in order to "illustrate how deformed, hyper-sexualized, and impossibly contorted women are commonly illustrated in comics, books, and video games" (The Hawkeye Initiative 2017). Superheroines still also frequently wear revealing and unpractical costumes, but newer redesigns are more likely to address this issue. For example, creators of the DC Comic Bargirl revealed the heroine's new sensible look that consisted of combat boots, long pants, and a leather jacket (Schedeen 2014). The increased pressure from readers has, therefore, influenced the way female characters are represented in some cases. Since female readers comprise an increasing portion of comic book audiences (see e.g. Macdonald 2014 and Graphic Policy 2014), it is likely that the representation of female characters continues to develop in a more diverse direction as the issue receives continued attention from critics and fans.

In summary, superhero comics first became popular in the 1930s after the creation of Superman. Superheroines have been a part of the genre since 1940, but the way they and other women have been portrayed in comics has changed repeatedly over the decades depending on societal trends. Some eras have been more restrictive in terms of the portrayal of women than others.

One common trend that has continued since 1940s, however, is that women are routinely underrepresented in comics, which means that they are few in numbers and usually have smaller roles than male characters. Female superheroes usually have more passive powers than male heroes, and they are depicted as weaker and more one-dimensional characters than their male counterparts. Since the 1970s female characters have also been frequently sexualized and used as eye candy for male readers. Some aspects of common female representations have been so stereotypical that they have developed into tropes, such as the trope of women in refrigerators. Even though the representation of female characters in comics has a somewhat problematic history, the representations are luckily getting increasingly diverse and complex as time goes on.

2.2.2 Women in superhero films and television shows

The adventures of superheroes have been adapted into films and television shows with various degrees of success for decades. The tone and style of these adaptations have varied considerably depending on their source material, target audience, and budget, as well as the media trends of their time. Even adaptations that depict the same superhero can be very different. The 1960s television show *Batman*, for instance, is famously very humorous and campy, whereas the Batman films of the 2000s, known as The Dark Knight Trilogy, are a very dark and gritty take on the same caped crusader. In addition to adapting existing superheroes from comics, new original superheroes have been created for the purposes of films and television shows. Since the superhero genre is so diverse, it is no surprise that the representation of women in these movies and shows varies substantially. Some works have been hailed as feminist classics, whereas others have been criticized as profoundly sexist. There are, however, some clear trends regarding the portrayal of women in these works, which I will examine next.

Superhero films have traditionally been quite problematic in terms of portraying women. The issue that has probably received most criticism is the lack of female characters in these movies. Between the years 2003 and 2014, 6-10 superhero movies were released each year (Liam 2015:113). However, only two movies that feature female superheroes as their leading character have been released in that time: *Catwoman* in 2004 and *Elektra* in 2005. These movies were critically and financially unsuccessful, which was most likely caused by their low budgets, poor writing, and inadequate marketing (Gauntlett 2008:79). There have been multiple other superheroines on the big screen since *Catwoman* and *Elektra*, but they have been members of bigger superhero teams instead of solo leads. In the 2016 movie *Captain America: Civil War*, the Avengers, arguably the most popular superhero team at the time of writing, consisted of

two female members and 4-6 male members depending on who one qualifies as an active member. Looking at the cast of the film on IMDb reveals that out of the 22 characters that are prominent enough to have a name, 16 are men and only 6 are women (IMDb 2017). Even the background characters in crowd scenes are usually male dominated in superhero films. In *the Avengers*, for instance, females make up 39% of the background characters at best (Graves 2014:3-4). It is, therefore, safe to say that women are very underrepresented in the superhero movie genre. Female characters in superhero movies are usually relegated to supporting roles, and even in the category of supporting characters and sidekicks they are significantly outnumbered by male characters.

In addition to the lack of women, superhero films, and action movies in general, have been criticized for portraying female characters in very sexualized and stereotypical ways (see e.g. Stuller 2010:56-60 and Brown 2004: 47-70). In the next sections, I will present some of the most frequently occurring tropes and conventions that previous research has identified in relation to the representation of female characters in superhero movies and television shows.

The one aspect of action and superhero films that has probably received the most criticism concerns the objectification of women, since action and superhero movie genres have tended to portray women in very sexualized manner to cater to male audiences. For example, Heldman, Frankel, and Holmes (2016) examined the sexualization of female protagonists in action films by examining 1,387 action films from the 1960s to 2014. They used the term “hypersexualization” to describe the phenomenon of portraying women in a manner that explicitly highlight their sex appeal, and classified the female characters as hypersexualized if they were “scantily clad,’ partially or fully nude, and/or presented as “sexualized body parts” through selective camera angles, during any scene in the film” Heldman, Frankel, and Holmes 2016:4). What they discovered was not only that female leads were very uncommon in these movies, but also that there was a trend towards increasingly sexualization of female leads in newer films compared to the older ones. While Heldman, Frankel and Holmes’s study did not specifically examine superhero films, it is reasonable to assume that similar trends have taken place in superhero movies as well, since they can be considered a subgenre of the larger action genre. The two superhero movies with female protagonists that have been made in the recent fifteen years have certainly been problematic in terms of sexualization of the female leads, since both Catwoman and Elektra wore highly revealing costumes. A more recent study that focused specifically on the representation of women in superhero films was conducted by Kinnunen (2016), who examined five superhero films that were made between 2012 and 2014. Kinnunen

(2016:112-113) discovered that the level of sexualization in terms of clothes and camera angles varied considerably from one character to the next, but most characters were not particularly sexualized in terms of their clothing, which suggests that the portrayal of female characters in the genre has evolved to some extent in recent years. The female characters in Kinnunen's study were, however, all presented having a very similar body type, which was slim, curvy and not very muscular, and their physical looks were commented on quite often both implicitly and explicitly by other characters (Kinnunen 2016:112-113). These findings reveal that the attractiveness of female characters still plays an important part in how they are represented, and a certain body type is being promoted as ideal in these types of films.

In addition to being sexualized, female characters have traditionally been represented in very stereotypical ways in the superhero genre and the wider action genre. One of the most common tropes regarding the role of female characters in these types of movies is that of the damsel-in-distress, which refers to female characters who have to be rescued by men from peril. The damsel-in-distress trope was especially prevalent in superhero films that were made during the first decade of the 2000s. Bogarosh (2013) touches on superhero films in her analysis of women's roles in popular films and notes that the main female characters in six popular superhero movies from the early 2000s (*The Spider-Man* trilogy, *The Dark Knight*, and *Iron Man 1* and *2*) all had to be rescued by the male protagonists at some point. Bogarosh specifically mentions Mary Jane from the *Spider-Man* trilogy as a particularly glaring example of the trope, since she must repeatedly be rescued by the male hero from various perils, such as falling from great heights and being crushed to death (Bogarosh 2013:45). The trend of using the main female characters as damsels-in-distress is also present in other superhero movies of the era, since Gauntlett (2008:79) notes that the leading female characters of such movies as *Batman Begins*, *Superman Returns* do not actually do much in addition to needing to be rescued by the male protagonists. Another recurrent trope that closely relates to damsels in distress is the broader convention of portraying female characters mostly as plot devices. The phenomenon was documented, for instance, by Stoltzfus (2014) in a study that examined the ten most successful DC and Marvel movies that were released between 2002 and 2013. Stoltzfus (2014:89) argues in her analysis that the female characters in those films are frequently used as plot devices to further the stories of the (male) main characters, and she encapsulates their function in the movies with the following statement:

Women are assistants to men—they are used to help the male leads reach their full potential, whether by being kidnapped and needing rescue or by encouraging the men to pause and

reflect on their actions.

The problem with these prevalent tropes is that female characters are regularly written so that they are rather insignificant in terms of contributing to the plot beyond serving as objects and rewards for the male heroes to rescue and receive. They, therefore, presents women as secondary and even expendable characters, and portrays them as weak, passive, and one-dimensional. They also routinely portray them as helpless victims of violence, since female characters are often hurt or threatened by the villain(s) in an effort to compromise the hero. The passiveness and submissiveness that often characterizes women in films is also emphasized by the fact that they are rarely shown in leadership positions or inhabiting other positions of power (see e.g. Bogarosh 2013: 67-70).

A recurring pattern in superhero films regarding the representation of women is also the virgin-whore dichotomy, which has been prevalent in films in general (see e.g. Benshoff 2016: 152-153). Within the superhero genre, this dichotomy has often manifested as two types of female characters: the innocent damsels and the femme fatales, who use their sexuality to manipulate men to achieve their own goals. Stoltzfus (2014:81-83) notes that while the femme fatale characters have more agency than the damsel characters, their agency and power is based on their ability to influence men, which makes such women dependent on the male characters. In order to achieve a happy ending, femme fatale characters have to change so that they can become more like the damsel characters and thus win male characters' loyalty (Stoltzfus 2014:84).

Despite the prevalence of problematic tropes in superhero films, the stereotypical way of portraying women might luckily be slowly changing. The representation of women in these films has garnered a lot of attention, and newer superhero films seem to give female characters somewhat more active and complex roles than the older ones. Kinnunen's (2016:116-118) research, for example, revealed that the female characters in five more recent films demonstrated diverse behavior patterns including ingenuity and leadership. In comparison to the male characters, however, the women were still noticeably disadvantaged in terms of power and leadership (Kinnunen 2016:117). Even though the female characters in Kinnunen's study were victims of violence and had to occasionally be rescued by male heroes, they also demonstrated physical aggression themselves and most of them got to rescue male heroes as well (*ibid.*). The characters did not, therefore, fit into the stereotypical damsel-in-distress trope, and their roles and functions in terms of the plots were more multidimensional than serving as passive objects. A final point regarding Kinnunens's research that is worth mentioning is that

three out of the five characters she examined went through noticeable character development during their films, which makes them more complex characters, whereas the other two characters stay quite flat and one-dimensional (Kinnunen 2016:119-120). All in all, the representation of female characters in superhero films, therefore, seems to be slowly changing in a more varied direction.

On television, the representation of female characters seems to have been more diverse for a longer time than in films. There have been several shows that have garnered positive feedback on their female characters. During the 1970s Wonder Woman had her own show that depicted the superheroine as both competent and compassionate (Stuller 2010:42-43). In the 1990s and early 2000s, two series with female leads that can be classified as superheroines became cult classics. They were *Xena, Warrior Princess* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. *Xena* was originally a Hercules spin-off, and it follows the female warrior Xena, and her friend Gabrielle, on a quest to redeem herself after a murky past. The show has been praised for portraying a strong and respectful female friendship between the two main characters, and for depicting a female character dealing with themes of redemption and bravery in ways that have been usually reserved for male heroes (Stuller 2010:72-73). *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* follows the story of a teenaged vampire slayer who battles forces of evil. Buffy was created by Joss Whedon, who wanted specifically to create an empowering female character (Stuller 2010:74). The end result was a strong and complex female character, and a series that is entertaining and topical (Stuller 2010:75-78). It is worth noting, however, that both *Xena* and *Buffy* depend on the attractiveness of their female leads to attract (male) viewers (Stuller 2010:77-78 and Brown 2004:70-71). Action heroines on television are usually less sexualized than their movie counterparts due to content restrictions on prime-time television, but a great deal of value is still placed on their sexual attractiveness (Brown 2004:70-71). However, the serial nature of television shows often decreases the impact of the sexualization of female characters, because it allows them more time to develop into complex characters than the two hours that most movies have (Brown 2004:71). Even though television has a somewhat better history of representing superheroines compared to films, gender stereotypes are still prevalent in many superhero shows. For example, the science fiction drama *Heroes* portrays male and female characters in very stereotypical positions of protector and protected. The show first aired in 2006, and it follows a group of ordinary people who develop superpowers. The female characters in the show tend to develop powers that are either unstable or not suited for offensive purposes, and, therefore, end up as victims that need to be protected by the male heroes (Stabile 2009:89).

Altogether, superhero films and television shows have many of the same problems as comics. They are often very male dominated and portray female characters in secondary roles. Female characters are often quite insignificant for the advancement of the plot, and they usually have to be rescued by male characters at some point. Their attractiveness is also often emphasized, although the level of sexualization differs depending on the restrictions of the medium. Despite these issues, the genre already has several examples of multifaceted and active female characters. On the whole, the representations of women in superhero films and shows seem to be developing into a more diverse direction.

2.3 Characterization

The objects of this study are fictional characters, which means that it is relevant to examine how previous researchers have approached the study of such characters. Since fictional characters are carefully crafted portrayals instead of real people, analyzing them requires awareness of how they are constructed and interpreted through a process of characterization. In this section, I will introduce the concept of characterization and the ways in which it can be studied in further detail. Firstly, I am going to present how previous researchers have modelled characterization and how characters can be viewed from different theoretical perspectives. Then I will examine how characters are constructed and introduce Pearson's taxonomy of six key character elements as a framework for analyzing television characters.

2.3.1 Modelling characterization

In broad terms, the concept of characterization consists of two components: the construction and the interpretation of characters. Characterization refers to both the ways in which writers use various discursive means to create characters with recognizable personalities and the ways in which readers interpret those discursive means to form impressions of said characters (Bednarek 2010: 98). According to Culpeper (2001:24-25), characterization is a process in which the speaker, the hearer, the utterance, and the context interact to construct character traits and identities. Characterization has been a topic of interest in various fields of study. Researchers in literary studies, stylistics, narratology, and media studies have studied characters from different perspectives and for different purposes (Bednarek 2010: 98). Many of the approaches to characterization have focused on creating character typologies for the purposes of classifying characters into different roles and types (Bednarek 2010: 98-99). One way of categorizing characters is the flat/round distinction. Culpeper (2001: 56-57) presents the flat/round distinction as a scale where characters fall based on the following factors:

complexity, change, conflict, and inner life. Round characters usually have complex personalities, accessible thoughts and they develop as characters as their stories unfold. Flat characters, however, are often simple, unchanging and used as plot devices. The flat/round distinction is a useful tool for my analysis, and I will return to it when I discuss the representation of women on film and television.

For most people, the term character itself is probably relatively straightforward. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2016), for instance, offers the following definitions for *character*: “one of the persons of a drama or novel” and “the personality or part which an actor recreates”. Among literary critics, however, the concept of character has been somewhat controversial. According to Culpeper (2001:6-9) there are two competing approaches to characters, which are called the humanizing approach and the de-humanizing approach. The critics who favor the humanizing approach view characters as representations of real people, whereas those who support the de-humanizing view do not see characters as anything other than textual. Proponents of the humanizing view might be interested in examining such factors as character motivations, beliefs, and histories, but supporters of the de-humanizing approach prefer to concentrate on analyzing just the actions of characters instead of their psychology (Culpeper 2001:6-9). Culpeper (2001:9-10) criticizes both approaches to for taking a one-sided view on characters and advocates a mixed approach that considers both the real-life knowledge that people use when they interpret characters and the textual elements that influence their interpretations. Culpeper (2001:28) states that “one’s impression of a character is formed in the interaction between the text and the interpreter’s background knowledge”. In other words, people form impressions of characters based on the complex social knowledge they have about real people, but they are also aware that the characters they see or read about are not actually real people and take that into consideration while forming their impressions. The mixed approach probably is, therefore, closest to the way most people interpret and understand characters, and it is also the approach that this study will subscribe to. I agree that the interpretation of characters depends on our knowledge of real life but find the idea of interpreting fictional characters similarly to real people implausible, since characters, for example, frequently behave in ways that are deemed acceptable in a fictional setting but would seem quite bizarre in the real world.

The mixed approach proposed by Culpeper (2001) emphasizes a cognitive view of character formation. In order to create coherent character impressions, people utilize stimulus driven bottom-up cognitive processes and concept driven top-down processes (Culpeper 2001:28). The top-down cognitive processes rely on the prior knowledge that an individual has about real

people and fictional characters (Culpeper 2001:36). Within cognitive psychology, a common concept used to describe the ways in which knowledge is organized within the human brain is called a schema. According to Eysenck and Keane (2000:276), a schema is “a structured cluster of concepts; usually, it involves generic knowledge and may be used to represent events, sequences of events, percepts, situations, relations, and even objects”. Schemas guide the way people comprehend the world around them, since they, for example, guide our expectations and inferences of people, events, and objects (Eysenck and Keane 2000: 277-278). The accumulated knowledge that people have about other people and social situations in general is organized into social schemas, which link social categories together (Culpeper 2001:76). Perhaps the most prominent feature of social schemas and social categories is that they enable us to categorize other people easily and, therefore, make navigating the world relatively simple. Social categories are variable and often overlapping, but they can be divided into three broad groups that are called personal categories, social role categories, and group membership categories (Culpeper 2001: 74-76). Categorizing someone as a woman, for instance, might activate a gender schema that includes not only the group membership category of sex, but also personal categories and social role categories, such as kinship roles, traits, and occupational roles, that are usually associated with women in one’s culture (Culpeper 2001:77). Social schemas also include evaluative beliefs about social categories that determine whether the categories are considered positive, negative or something in between (Culpeper 2001: 77-78). It is reasonable to claim that these complex schemas guide people’s interpretations of fictional characters as well as real people. However, people also have schemas about fictional characters that include, for example, knowledge about genre conventions that guide their expectations and inferences (Culpeper 2001: 36). In the case of film and television characters, knowledge about genre conventions can, for example, include information about such aspects as common character traits, plot devices, narrative structures, and dialogue features. Characters are, therefore, often analysed in similar ways as real people, but the process is not identical since analysing fictional characters requires knowledge about their context as fictional characters.

2.3.2 Constructing a character

People form character impressions based on various cues that they believe to reveal something relevant about a character’s identity. In fact, people can be quick to make inferences and judgements about a fictional character based on factors that would not be sufficient to evoke character judgements in real life. This close attention to characterization cues is caused by the assumption that the creators of characters are deliberately trying to construct their characters so

that their every action reveals something important about them. Culpeper (2001:145) states that “any character behavior is part of an act of communication between the playwright and the audience/reader, and as such we can assume that character behavior has additional significance or relevance”. Although Culpeper is talking about characters in plays, the same principle applies to movie and television characters. Since characters are scripted, it is justifiable to assume that character behavior is designed to reveal something about them. Kozloff (2000:14), for example, notes that scripted dialogue is purposefully “designed to communicate certain information to the audience”. As characters communicate with each other, they also communicate something to the audience.

In the case of film and television characters, dialogue is especially important for characterization. Kozloff (2000:33-44) states that dialogue is deliberately designed to carry information about characters and lists anchorage of the diegesis and characters and character revelation as two of the six main functions of television and film dialogue. At its simplest, dialogue is used to make characters distinguishable from each other by giving them distinctive ways of speaking (Kozloff 2000:43). On a more complex level, however, the most important function of dialogue in terms of characterization is to reveal something about the characters’ thoughts. Kozloff (2000:43) asserts that dialogue serves to create substantial characters by giving at least limited access into their minds. Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi (2011:5-8) also argue that the way characters talk to each other allows viewers to gain insight into their inner lives. Characters can explicitly reveal information about themselves or others in conversations, but often character revelations, such as their attitudes or interpersonal relations, have to be inferred from the dialogue (Kozloff 2000:44-47). This means that viewers can interpret a piece of dialogue in very different ways because they have different background knowledge (Bubel 2006:56). However, film and television dialogue usually aims at representing real life discourse conventions (Piazza, Bednarek and Rossi 2011:9), which means that the viewers and creators of characters often share enough cultural background knowledge to make roughly similar inferences from character dialogue. All in all, dialogue can reveal something about characters through its content and its form.

The concrete characterization cues that people utilize to create coherent character impressions involve the speech, behavior, appearance, and context of characters. Culpeper proposes a range of textual cues that are important to characterization in plays (2001: 163-234). The textual cues can be divided into explicit and implicit cues, so that explicit cues refer to information that is provided by characters about themselves or others and implicit cues refer to information about

characters that must be inferred (Culpeper 2001:167-172). The implicit textual cues consist of a range of textual features concerning character speech, visual features and context features. Another way to approach characterization is Pearson's (2007:43) taxonomy of six elements that constitute a televisual character. Pearson (2007:43) emphasizes the "quasi-human status" of television characters, and notes that instead of conducting a close textual analysis to study characterization, it is useful to identify and analyse key elements for character formation that are "abstracted from the design of the text and existing in the story". Pearson's (2007:43) framework for analyzing characters consists of the following elements: psychological traits/habitual behaviors, physical characteristics/appearance, speech patterns, interactions with other characters, environment, and biography. Pearson's and Culpeper's frameworks have many similarities and they can be considered complementary. Next, I will introduce Pearson's taxonomy and research that supports it in more detail.

2.3.2.1 Pearson's key elements for character construction

The first elements in Pearson's taxonomy are psychological traits and habitual behavior. Characters can be viewed as collections of interactive character-traits, which are either explicitly stated by characters or have to be inferred from their speech and behavior (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:61). In Culpeper's (2001:75) theory of the three social category groups, personal categories include features that fit Pearson's category of psychological traits and habitual behavior, such as people's preferences, habits, personality traits, and goals. In addition, Culpeper (2001:223) notes that characters can exhibit habitual emotions that become one their defining characteristics. Character traits, such as their personality traits and intelligence, can be inferred from their actions in addition to dialogue (Kozloff 2000:44). Those actions can be performed or they can be acts of omission or contemplated acts (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:63). The actions that label characters can be both habitual and individual, since one-time actions can have a significant dramatic impact and, therefore, reveal something crucial about a character (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:63). Psychological traits and habitual behavior reveal what characters think, believe, and behave.

The second element in Pearson's framework consists of the physical appearance of characters. Pearson (2007:44) demonstrates that the way character is dressed, for example, can emphasize or reveal something about a character's inner life. Culpeper (2001: 221) also states that visual features are a crucial part of constructing a character. He divides visual cues into kinesic features and appearance features. The former refers to body movements, such as gait, facial movements, and body language, whereas the latter category includes various salient appearance

features, such as clothing, stature, and physique (Culpeper 2001:222-225). Especially those appearance features that can be considered to be within characters' control, such as clothes and hair styles, can communicate information about them (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:67-68). Character's appearance can, for example, reveal their social status, occupation, interests, and values.

The third element in Pearson's taxonomy consists of characters' speech patterns that indicate psychological traits (Pearson 2007:44). Culpeper (2001: 182-22) presents a list of other relevant textual cues concerning speech patterns that includes the following elements: lexis, syntactic features, accent and dialect, verse and prose, and paralinguistic features. Since Culpeper bases his analysis on Shakespearean characters, some of these proposed textual cues, like verse and prose, are not relevant for film and television characters. However, other cues, such as the paralinguistic features of speech (speech tempo, pitch, loudness, and voice quality) are relevant for film and television characters, since people often associate particular voice qualities with particular social groups or personality types (Culpeper 2001:215-221). Kozloff (2000:95) also mentions the significance of an actor's vocal performance for character construction, and identifies pace, intonation, and volume as important vocal features for expressing emotions. In addition to the phonological elements of speech, verbal competence is also a salient element in characters' speech, since their vocabulary and overall eloquence allows viewers to make inferences about their intelligence, social competence, and sincerity (Kozloff 2000:77-79). The way characters speak can, therefore, convey information about their personalities, emotions, background, and social status.

The fourth element in the taxonomy, interaction with other characters, is crucial for defining a character (Pearson 2001:76). In real life, people tend to classify others into social categories based on their relational roles, kinship roles and occupational roles (Culpeper 2001:76). It is justifiable to argue that similar social categories are also used to classify and define characters. Interaction with other characters is strongly linked to characters' speech since most of the interaction between characters is achieved through dialogue. Culpeper (2001:172-173) examines how conversational structures influence characterization by revealing the power relations between characters. He states that analyzing such aspects of conversations as frequency of turns, volume of talk, turn allocation, interruptions, and topic control can expose the distribution of power between characters. Power relations can be connected to social roles and personality traits. Kozloff (2000:73) encapsulates the importance of analyzing conversational structures by noting that "much of what we intuit about character psychology

and motivation comes from our instinctive analysis of their behavior as conversational partners”. How characters negotiate turn-taking and whether they conform to common conversational rules or not communicates information about characters’ relations and personalities (Kozloff 2000:73-77). Common conversational rules generally include, for example, being cooperative and polite. The conversational rules for being cooperative are summarized in the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner in Grice’s Cooperative Principle, which state that one’s contributions to conversations should be appropriately informative, true, relevant, and clear (Grice 1975: 45-46). Being polite in conversations includes avoiding or mitigating face threatening acts, such as criticism, orders, and insults (see Brown and Levinson 1987).

The last two elements in Pearson’s taxonomy are the environment and biography of a character. The environments in which characters spend their time influences the viewers’ perception of them. Like real people, characters are usually shown behaving in different ways depending on whether they are, for example, at home or at work (Pearson 2007:46). In addition, a character’s physical and human surroundings can tell viewers a lot about that character’s personality and social roles (Culpeper 2001:226). Places of work, homes, and favorite hangouts give insight into characters’ lives. Culpeper (2001:226) also remarks that the settings a character chooses to spend their time in can express their emotional state. Lastly, the sixth element of the taxonomy, a character’s biography, serves to flesh out character traits and create plot lines for them (Pearson 2007:47). Knowing the biographical details of a character often makes them more relatable and lifelike.

The six elements introduced above interact to create complex and convincing characterizations. In the case of film and television characters, scriptwriters and production crews work to combine the elements so that they create characters who seem like real people (Pearson 2007:48). It is worth noting that this process of creating (and interpreting) characters is heavily influenced by the culture in which they are created. Character construction often relies on “readily available cultural tropes” that are shaped by cultural ideologies (Pearson 2007:48). Constructing a character is, therefore, a process that depends on a wealth of individual and cultural knowledge about both real and fictional people. For the purposes of this study, Pearson’s taxonomy and the supporting research on character formation provides a template that guides my analysis of the characters in *Jessica Jones*. Being aware of the elements that combine to form believable characters makes it possible to analyse them thoroughly. It enables one to examine what kind of choices the creators of such characters have made and what kind

of characters are achieved with those choices. In addition, understanding how people usually interpret characters helps to guide the focus of my analysis to those aspects of character formation that are especially relevant in terms of the character representations that come across to the viewers of *Jessica Jones*.

2.3.3 Characterization and superheroes

Like many literary and cinematic genres, the superhero genre has traditional ways of portraying characters that are in some way distinctive from the character traditions of other genres. These traditions have led to well-established character types that keep reoccurring within the genre. Superheroes do not, of course, exist in a vacuum, and the character types that are common within the genre are constantly influenced by other genres. Superhero comics have been heavily influenced by various myths and literary traditions throughout their history, and superhero films and television series have adopted many character traditions from the action and science fiction genres among many others. The superhero genre is, therefore, extremely large and varied, but there are some typical trends regarding characterization that can be identified. In this section I will examine some of the characterization trends of the superhero genre. I will begin by introducing some of the common themes and character tropes that have historically defined superheroes. After presenting the most common character features of a superhero, I will examine how one of the biggest comic publishers, Marvel, has approached their characters.

The superhero genre has several well-established ways of constructing characters that relate to the various aspects of building a character. In other words, the genre has a plethora of frequently used character tropes that together form characters that are considered typical for the genre and, therefore, easily recognizable as superheroes for readers and viewers. These character tropes relate to characters' motivations, behavior, interactions, biographies, and visual appearance.

A central theme in the superhero genre is the fight between good and evil, and superheroes are portrayed in terms of this struggle. Superheroes are usually motivated by a devotion to justice and a desire to help the innocent (Gaine 2011:113 and Kaklamanidou 2011:62). Most of them dedicate themselves to crime fighting and protecting other people from various evil forces. A devotion to justice is not, however, always depicted in terms of a devotion to the law, since a significant portion of superheroes operates outside the law even if they strive to uphold both the law and the proper social order (Gaine 2011:113). For many superheroes, the dedication to justice is caused by some transgression that happens to them and makes them desire revenge (Burke 2015:100). Especially in superhero films, the protagonists are often depicted as people

who first suffer some type of an injustice and then become the only person who is capable of exacting revenge for that injustice due to their skills or abilities (Burke 2015:101).

Another major theme that is important in terms of the characterization of superheroes is their distinctiveness from other people and the world around them. Gaine (2011:114) considers the exceptional nature of superheroes one of their defining characteristics and argues that superhero characters “must operate on the borders of society” to uphold their exceptionality. Superhero characters are usually set apart from society and the people around them due to their abilities or skills. They are often given character biographies that emphasize the fact that they have been distanced from society from a young age. For example, such a great number of superheroes have backstories that include losing their parents that the orphan hero character has become a common trope within the genre (see e.g. Gaine 2011:113). Even though superheroes characters are portrayed as somehow distinct from others, they are not usually depicted as complete outsiders. Superheroes often operate to uphold a peaceful social order, and they have friends and loved ones that connect them to society and the audience. For instance, a significant portion of superheroes have supporting characters that could be described as sidekicks, who are the heroes’ loyal friends and helpers that are often used as foil characters to highlight the hero’s flaws and strengths (TV Tropes 2016). If the hero is presented as a distant or otherwise unlikable character, the sidekicks also serve to provide an emotional connection between the hero and the audience that makes the heroes appear more sympathetic (Emkay 2016). Since heroes are distinct but not isolated from society, they must navigate both the normal world and the abnormal “super” world that their powers open up to them, which means that they exist between two spaces in what Gaine (2011:114) call a “liminal state”. This liminality, alternating between the ordinary and the extraordinary in terms of identity and actions, is central to many superheroes, and it often provides opportunities for creating narrative tension (Gaine 2011:123). A common way to symbolize the alternation between the two states is to have the superhero character adopt an alter ego for crime fighting that is usually named after their abilities.

A very recognizable visual cue is commonly used to signify the superhero character’s transition from the mundane to the extraordinary, and that cue is the superhero costume. The routinely theatrical costumes have become a symbol of the genre, and they serve as a distinct visual way of marking a character as a superhero. Most superheroes wear some type of costumes to signal the transition from their everyday personas to their work personas (Gaine 2011:123). Even those superheroes who do not have alter egos to protect their real identities usually put on some type of costumes when they fight crime, because the costume serves as a visual signal that the

character has assumed the role of a hero (ibid). The costumes have been a visible part of the superhero genre since the first appearance of Superman in comics, and modern adaptations of the genre have continued to depict superheroes in crime fighting outfits. Both male and female superheroes wear costumes, but the typical visual appearance of superheroes differs considerably depending on whether they are male or female. Both male and female heroes are often depicted in terms of physical superiority, but that superiority is portrayed according to different standards for the two sexes. The defining physical feature for male superheroes is strength, but for female heroes it is sex appeal (Gray 2011:78). In comics, heroic men are usually drawn with square jaws and large muscles, and the same muscular physiques are achieved in movies either through training or computer-generated imagery (Burke 2015: 252-254). In contrast, female superheroes in comics and movies are often depicted having very slim figures and little muscle definition (see e.g. Gray 2011 and Kinnunen 2016). Their physical superiority is portrayed as a thin but curvy figures and alluring outfits (Gray 2011:78).

2.3.3.1 Marvel superheroes

Aside from these very general themes that are extremely prevalent within the superhero genre, it is difficult to make generalizations about superhero characters due their sheer number. Marvel alone has well over 16,000 characters in their current comic universe (Hickey 2014), and that number most likely includes heroes of every imaginable personality and background. Instead of trying to make any detailed claims about the specific collections of character traits that form typical Marvel heroes, I will examine some of the general trends regarding character features and storytelling that characterize Marvel heroes.

In terms of storytelling, Marvel comics have been influenced by melodramatic traditions, which affect how their characters behave and interact. Marvel stories include such melodramatic elements as conflict between moral polarities, excessive expression of emotions, pathos, and increasing suspense (Bainbridge 2009:68). Influences from television and radio storytelling have also affected Marvel characters by inspiring the writers to frequently create large and varied supporting casts for their heroes that resemble the casts of television serials (ibid.). Regarding the roles that these characters play, Bainbridge (2009:68 -69) argues that there are six different roles that Marvel uses in their stories that originate from melodrama: the protagonist, the helpers, the villain, the henchmen, the judge/father figure, and an authority figure. I will next examine in more detail a few general trends that characterize Marvel protagonists and their relationship with the villain.

Marvel protagonists are usually superheroes, but they are not necessarily the only superpowered individual, because Marvel characters frequently work as a part of larger team of superheroes (Bainbridge 2009:68). Wolverine, for example, is a famous Marvel character that is the protagonist of several X-Men movies, who works as a part of a well-developed superhero team. Marvel protagonists are often characters who have some sort of personal flaws and problems that they must struggle with (Bainbridge 2009:69-70). A good example of a character who goes through personal struggles both in comics and movies is Tony Stark, AKA the Iron Man. Towards the 1970s, Marvel published a nine-issue story arc called “Demon in a bottle” that depicts the character dealing with alcoholism (Comic Vine 2014). In the 2013 movie Iron Man 3, the character is also shown struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of a near death experience. Many Marvel stories also have the lead characters experience some problems with learning to use their powers (Bainbridge 2009:69). The most extreme example of a Marvel superhero that is forced to struggle with his powers is Bruce Banner, whose superpower turns him into a perpetually angry and virtually uncontrollable green monster called The Hulk. Marvel protagonists are not, therefore, usually depicted as paragons of virtue and wisdom or as embodiments of justice. Instead, they are often people with familiar seeming flaws and various problems that are exaggerated for dramatic effect. They can often even be morally shady characters, who question traditional portrayals of justice and heroism and could, therefore, be labelled antiheroes (Bainbridge 2009:70). One of the most famous Marvel antiheroes, for instance, is a character called Frank Castle, AKA the Punisher, who has been a part of the comic universe since 1970s, and who recently appeared on the second season of Marvel’s popular Netflix series Daredevil. The Punisher is a vigilante who does not shy from torturing and murdering criminals, and he, therefore, walks the line between heroism and villainy.

The protagonist’s relationship with the villain is an interesting point to consider because it is used in narratives to characterize protagonists as sympathetic and to construct them as heroes. Marvel protagonists have often been portrayed in opposition to villains who are more powerful than them, whether it is in terms of political, physical, or financial power (Bainbridge 2009:69). At the beginning of comic narratives, the protagonist is often depicted as a passive victim whose happy existence is threatened by a morally corrupt villain acting on some negative motivation (Bainbridge 2009:68-69). The protagonist must go through various challenging trials and endure suffering due to the actions of the villain (Bainbridge 2009:69). Depicting heroes as innocent victims is meant to make the readers and viewers feel compassion for the heroes and dislike for the villains. When the narrative proceeds, the protagonist eventually transforms from

passive victim to active character who manages to use their skills and powers to beat the villain, who, in turn, usually receives some sort of a comeuppance at the end of the narrative (Bainbridge 2009:70). In addition to making the audience feel positive emotions towards the protagonist, the struggles they go through serve to portray their advancement from regular people to heroes. Bainbridge (2009:70-71) excellently encapsulates the Marvel approach to heroism by stating that “Marvel heroes must work through their heroism—a heroism which is based in ideas of individual advancement, of enduring trials and emerging, virtue restored, at the other end.” In other words, heroism in the Marvel universe emerges from overcoming adversity.

3 Set-up of my study

3.1 Aims

The purpose of this research is to examine how female characters are constructed and represented in the television series *Jessica Jones*. My analysis will focus on examining the representations of female characters, but the concept of character construction is crucial for this study because it relates closely to representations. The elements that are used to construct a character form the representations that are conveyed to the viewers, so paying attention to the different aspects of character construction can help to form a more detailed analysis of the aspects that also significantly affect the constructions of representations. I chose this particular topic due to the attention the series has received for its portrayal of women. *Jessica Jones* has been praised for subverting stereotypical ways of portraying female characters, with many online writers complimenting the series for depicting multiple complex and meaningful female characters (see e.g. Ganesan 2016 and Williams 2015). Since the series is relatively new, it has not yet received much scholarly attention. I wanted to take the opportunity to have a closer look at the construction of female characters in the series to reveal how the characters are really represented. *Jessica Jones* is a series that is heavily influenced by action, detective, and superhero genres, all of which have often underrepresented and stereotyped female characters. It is, therefore, interesting to examine how the female characters are constructed and to evaluate whether those constructions form stereotypical ways of representing female characters.

The overall goal of my study is to answer the following question:

- How are the female characters represented in the television series *Jessica Jones*?

In order to be able to answer this main question, I have a more detailed research question to guide my analysis, which is as follows:

- What is the male to female ratio in the series, and how are the major female characters portrayed through dialogue, behavior, appearance, and context?

My analysis will include a very small-scale quantitative inquiry regarding the number of male and female characters with speaking roles because women have been significantly underrepresented in the superhero genre, and in television and movies in general, in terms of giving lines to female characters (see e.g. Graves 2014, Lauzen 2016, and Smith et al. 2013). *Jessica Jones* is already an exceptional superhero show due its female lead, but examining the male-female ratio regarding speaking roles will reveal whether it also takes a more equal approach on the number of male and female characters than previous adaptations in the genre. Then I am going to analyse the four most central female characters in more detail to form a general view on the construction of the most important female characters in the series. The characters were chosen either due to their status as main characters or due to their salience in terms of the plot. All of the four characters appear in at least half of the episodes that comprise the first season of the series.

3.2 Data

My data consists of the first season of *Jessica Jones*. The season has thirteen episodes and each of them has a run time of roughly 50 minutes. The episodes are available on Netflix for all members, and I accessed them via the streaming service for the purposes of this study. The series has only one season so far, and the second season is rumored to come out on 2018, which means that my analysis will be limited to the 13 existing episodes. The main character, Jessica Jones, appears in all thirteen episodes, and the number of episodes that the other three characters appear in ranges from twelve to seven. In practice, I conducted my analysis by viewing the 13 episodes repeatedly and making notes about relevant aspects in terms of my research aim. I first watched the series to get a very general view of the female characters and their storylines, and watched it several times more to make detailed notes about each character and their relationships with other characters. My analysis will be based on these notes and it will include transcribed parts of the dialogue to support and demonstrate my arguments.

3.2.1 The TV series *Jessica Jones* and its female characters

In terms of style, *Jessica Jones* blends together elements from the superhero genre, the film noir genre and detective shows. The main plot of the series focuses on Jessica trying to bring a

superpowered villain to justice, which is a very common theme within the superhero genre. In addition to her superpowers, however, Jessica uses her skills as a private detective to achieve her aim. The show also utilizes plot devices that are common in film noir, such as voice over and flashbacks, to make the show look like a detective series that just happens to have a superhero as the detective protagonist. In this section, I will briefly introduce the main storyline of the first season and the four female characters that I will be examining in my analysis.

The series begins with Jessica Jones working as a private detective in New York, which mostly consists of taking pictures of cheating spouses and uncovering compromising information about people. Jessica has super strength and limited flight abilities, which she sometimes uses while gathering information for her cases. In the first episode, Jessica is hired by Bob and Barbara Shlottman to find their missing daughter Hope, who has been acting strangely recently. While searching for Hope, Jessica finds out that she has been taken by a man called Kilgrave, who can control people's minds by simply giving them verbal orders. Before becoming a private detective, Jessica spent a period of time as Kilgrave's personal slave and only managed to escape during a bus accident that supposedly killed him. Finding out that Kilgrave is alive, therefore, shocks Jessica, and she seriously considers leaving New York to get out of his reach. Instead of immediately escaping, however, Jessica decides to find and rescue Hope before fleeing the city. She tracks Hope down to a nearby hotel and takes the young woman to her parents, unaware that Hope has been ordered by Kilgrave to kill them. Hope ends up shooting her parents in an elevator at the end of the episode, which prompts Jessica to stay in New York and start bringing Kilgrave to justice.

The rest of the season focuses on Jessica's attempts to catch Kilgrave in order to prove his mind control powers and thus release Hope from prison. Kilgrave, on the other hand, is obsessed with Jessica and getting her to admit to having romantic feelings for him. Since Jessica has become immune to his mind control powers, he executes grand manipulative schemes to win her compliance and kills everyone who gets in his way (or even mildly inconveniences him). As the season progresses, it becomes apparent that getting Kilgrave imprisoned will be impossible, and Jessica is finally forced to kill him to prevent him from hurting more people.

In this study, I will examine the four most prominent female characters of the series. The majority of my analysis will focus on Jessica because she is the most important character in the series as its name suggests. As the main character, she is at the center of the show and the events are mostly portrayed from her point of view. As the first modern Marvel superheroine to receive her own television adaptation, Jessica also presents an interesting topic of analysis regarding

the representation of female superheroes. In addition to Jessica, I will be examining three other characters that I chose based on their screen time and salience in terms of the plot: Trish Walker, Jeri Hogarth and Hope Shlottman. Trish Walker is Jessica's closest friend and adoptive sister, and she is the second prominent female character in the series. Jeri Hogarth is a successful lawyer who acts as Jessica's employer and law contact in the show. Finally, Hope Shlottman is a young woman who kills her parents under mind control and who Jessica tries to rescue from a life in prison. The three female characters besides Jessica were included in this analysis because I wanted to conduct a more inclusive examination of how the series represents its female characters than what focusing solely on Jessica would achieve. In other words, including more than one character provides a more comprehensive view of the overall way the series treats women.

3.3 Methods of analysis

I will analyse my data by focusing both on the visual and dialogical aspects of character construction. To transcribe the dialogue between characters, I will use the English subtitles that are provided for the show on Netflix as an aide. I will aim to make relevant observations about the characters' speech, including the speech of the four central characters that I am analysing and the speech of other characters when it is relevant for the construction of those central characters. In addition to the dialogue, I will analyse the character's actions and how they are constructed visually through their appearance, body language and surroundings. Lastly, I will pay attention to the camera angles that are used to portray the characters to see if they are used to present the characters as sexualized objects. I will include relevant examples of my data in the analysis through transcribed pieces of dialogue.

My analysis will mostly be a qualitative and interpretative one, although I will include a small-scale quantitative inquiry on the number of female characters in speaking roles compared to male characters in speaking roles. The framework of my study is mainly based on Pearson's (2007) taxonomy of character construction, which identifies six central aspects of character formation. Since Pearson's taxonomy identifies several different aspects that influence the way characters are formed, it highlights the various aspects that can affect the way the characters come across to the viewers. It, therefore, provides a useful tool for forming a multifaceted view of the characters, because it serves as a guide for examining the characters in a very detailed and comprehensive way. I will also use information based on Culpepper's (2001) theory on textual cues in characterisation and Kozloff's (2000) research on film dialogue to complement Pearson's taxonomy. Kozloff (2000) and Culpepper (2001) identify several salient aspects of

character construction that can clarify the traits that Pearson's broader categories entail. Culpepper and Kozloff's research can, therefore, be used to further elaborate on the relevant aspects of character construction and to guide the analysis into a more detailed direction. In addition, I will integrate elements from previous findings on the representation of women on comic, television and film into my analysis. My aim is to pay attention to the aspects of female representation that have been criticized by other researchers, namely, the prevalence of female characters, the sexualization of female characters and stereotypical ways of portraying female characters in terms of their relationships and roles (see e.g. Smith, Choueiti and Pieper 2014). My methods will, therefore, be based on an eclectic approach that combines salient elements from studies that have examined character construction and the representation of female characters in comics, films and television. In practice, my analysis will focus on the following aspects of characterization that influence the portrayal of the characters:

- 1) psychological traits/habitual behavior
- 2) visual appearance and context
- 3) speech characteristics
- 4) interaction with other characters
- 5) environment
- 6) character biographies
- 7) the characters' function in terms of the plot and character development

Next, I will clarify what type of topics these seven analytical categories will include in my analysis.

The psychological traits and habitual behaviors of a character are often intertwined. Pearson (2007:154) summarizes the relationship between the two by noting that "actions and psychological traits are two sides of the same character: traits motivate actions, and actions connote traits". This idea is somewhat supported by Kozloff (2000:44), who notes that character traits can be inferred from both from dialogue and a character's actions. In my analysis, I will, therefore, pay attention to the both the behavior of characters and the identified and implied character traits that arise from the characters' speech. The psychological traits and habitual behaviors that I will be observe include such factors as personality traits, attitudes, morals, habits, and broader behavior patterns. The category of psychological traits is very closely tied to the fourth category that includes interaction with other characters because the characters'

personalities are mostly formed when they interact with others. The kind of relationships that they have and the behavior patterns that they exhibit in interactions really form the viewers' impressions about the characters' personalities. I will, therefore, combine the two categories in my analysis to achieve a more comprehensive view on how the characters are portrayed regarding their personalities.

The physical characteristics that I will be considering in terms of the characters' visual appearance includes their body types, attractiveness, and clothes. My goal is to examine what kind of traits or allusions the characters' appearances evoke. In this category, my analysis will also pay close attention to those aspects of female representation that previous research has regularly found to be problematic: sexualization of female characters and highlighting their attractiveness. Female characters in films and television have historically been more likely to be sexualized than male characters via clothes and visual context, and significantly more emphasis has been put on their attractiveness compared to men (see e.g. Heldman, Frankel, and Holmes 2016 and Smith et al. 2012). I will examine whether the four characters in *Jessica Jones* are portrayed in ways that highlight their sex appeal by focusing on how they are dressed and filmed. According to my criteria, a character is portrayed in a sexualized manner if she wears sexy or revealing clothes and/or if she is filmed so that the camera depicts her as an object on display for heterosexual male viewers. In principle, a character's clothes will be categorized as sexy if they are tight and alluring, and they will be considered revealing if they expose her breasts, midriff, or upper thighs. In practice, however, clothes and possible nudity will be analysed in relation to context because exposed skin does not automatically equate with objectification. I will also include the concept of the male gaze into my analysis by looking at whether the way the camera shots are framed and angled accentuate the female characters' bodies. Camera angles will be considered objectifying if they highlight characters' body parts in ways that can be viewed as titillating. In terms of highlighting the characters' attractiveness, I will pay attention to whether their looks are explicitly or implicitly commented on by other characters in the show.

In terms of the speech characteristics category, I will examine features that Kozloff (2000:95) and Culpeper (2001:182-22 and 215-221) have identified as relevant regarding characterization, which include character lexis and character voice. I will also pay attention to the conversational structures of character dialogue, because both Culpeper (2001:172-173) and Kozloff (2000:73) highlight the importance of examining how characters behave in conversations to infer personality traits and power relations between characters. My aim is to see what kind of patterns

these conversational factors form, and how they contribute to the formation of the characters' personalities. In terms of character environments, I will look at the places where the characters spend most of their time and analyse what kind of impressions those places form about them in relation to their psychological traits. Character biographies are also briefly examined to see how they contribute to characterization.

Lastly, I will look at the characters' function in terms of the plot and whether they go through any character development during the season. The purpose of this is to pay attention to the broader character roles and behavior patterns that characterize the central ladies of *Jessica Jones*. I included this aspect in my study because I wanted to see whether the characters are portrayed in terms of the common roles and tropes that have dominated the portrayal of women in comic adaptations and action films, such as the role of the damsel-in-distress. In this category, I will also look at such aspects as the characters agency and development, which affect how round or flat the characters seem. All in all, the goal of my analysis is to construct a comprehensive view of how the characters are portrayed.

4 Analysis

As a foreword to my main analysis, I will first very briefly introduce my findings regarding the overall male to female ratio regarding speaking roles in the series. In terms of the number of speaking roles, *Jessica Jones* turned out to be surprisingly equal between male and female characters. The criteria that I used to define a speaking role was that the character has to say something recognizable so that it is clearly possible to tell who said the line. I, therefore, did not include those instances where someone says something unintelligible on the background or the person whose line is heard is not possible to identify certainly. I chose not to include such unclear instances in my analysis because it was not always possible to accurately tell whether the character who is speaking is male or female. According to my criteria, the first season of *Jessica Jones* features altogether 250 characters with speaking roles. Out of those 250 characters, 133 are male and 117 are female. The gender ratio varies between episodes so that some episodes have more men speaking and others more women. Overall, however, female characters comprise 46.8% of all characters with speaking roles, which means that the gender divide is very small even if there are slightly more men than women speaking. According to my brief analysis, *Jessica Jones*, therefore, fares well in this aspect of female representation even regarding the minor and background characters.

In the next sections I will present my detailed analysis of the four most prominent female characters using the methods discussed in the previous section. I will first analyse each character individually in terms of their appearance, behavior, speech, and context within the show. I will begin the analysis of each character by presenting their biographies in order to introduce them to the reader. After the character biography, I will analyse the character's visual appearance and context, which will then be followed by an examination of the character's psychological traits and habits. Because interaction with other characters is crucial for the formation of characters' personality traits, I will include the analysis of character interactions in the same section with psychological traits. In addition, I will take a look at each character's closest relationships at the end of the that section. After psychological traits and relationships, that I will analyse relevant character formation features in the following order: speech, environments and characters' function in terms of the plot. Throughout my analysis, I will use transcribed excerpts from the characters' speech as examples to support my findings. The result will be a thorough examination of who the characters are and what kind of roles and functions they play in the series.

4.1 Jessica Jones

Jessica Jones is the protagonist of the show and, therefore, the most important character in the series. She is played by Krysten Ritter, who is a white American actress in her mid-thirties. Jessica's age is not mentioned in the first season, but she is most likely meant to be somewhere in her early thirties or at least in her late twenties.

4.1.1 Character biography

The essential aspects of Jessica's background are revealed via dialogue and flashbacks during the first season. She was a normal child until she lost her parents and her little brother in a car accident that put her in a coma for a while. While in coma, a woman called Dorothy Walker adopted Jessica as a publicity stunt to advance the public image of her famous child actress daughter Patricia. Jessica and Patricia, or Trish as she likes to be called, were classmates before the accident, and Dorothy believed that adopting an orphaned acquaintance would be good publicity for her daughter's career and the Walker brand. After Jessica woke up from the coma, she went to live with the Walkers and discovered that she had developed inhuman strength that was most likely somehow caused by the car accident. Trish found out about Jessica's abilities almost immediately but promised not to tell anyone about them if Jessica kept the fact that Trish was being abused by her mother as a secret. Despite her promise not to try to save Trish from

her mother, Jessica ended up intervening one time when Patricia abused Trish, and the two girls became close friends.

As an adult Jessica bounced from one job to another, usually quitting or getting fired quite quickly due to the fact that she had no real interest in any of the jobs. Trish kept telling Jessica to use her powers for helping others, but Jessica remained skeptical about the idea until she one day saved a little girl from being hit by a car. She then started helping people, and one evening Kilgrave happened to witness as she beat two men who were trying to mug and kill a man. Kilgrave became instantly infatuated by Jessica and her powers, and he ordered her to come with him, declaring that the two would make a great pair. Jessica essentially became Kilgrave's slave and was forced to carry out his wishes until one night he ordered her to kill a woman called Reva to protect his own secrets. Jessica carried out the order but wandered onto a road in a daze after killing Reva, which led to Kilgrave getting hit by a bus as he tried to follow her. Jessica thought that Kilgrave died in the accident and tried to move on with her life by abandoning the idea of being a hero and becoming a private detective.

Jessica's character biography is very typical for Marvel superheroes and superhero characters in general. She is another example of the "orphan hero" trope and the way she receives her powers in a freak accident is also a very common backstory element for these types of characters. Growing up without her parents sets her apart from the rest of the society, and, therefore, establishes her existence in the liminal state that is characteristic of superhero characters (Gaine 2011:113-114). Jessica is not outside of society since she is adopted to a new home, but as the following statement by Dorothy shows, she does not really belong in her new home: "This is family business. You're not part of any family".

4.1.2 Visual appearance and context

Regarding visual appearance, Jessica is a very slender, medium height woman with long black hair. Even though her main super power is super strength, she is not very muscular. In terms of her body type, Jessica's visual appearance therefore follows the tradition of favoring female leads who conform to a very specific slim but curvy body type that is considered attractive and non-threatening (source). Overall, Jessica is conventionally attractive and several other characters make explicit approving comments about her appearance. For example, her love interest Luke calls her "hot" and Kilgrave praises her looks the first time he sees her even though he is not impressed by her sense of fashion:

Example 1 (episode 4)

Kilgrave Come here, let me look at you. Come on. Jesus, you're a vision. Hair and skin. (Looks down at Jessica's clothes) Appalling sense of fashion, but that can be remedied.

Jessica mostly wears slightly torn jeans paired with various t-shirts and tops. When outside she usually wears either a leather jacket or a longer black coat, leather boots and big scarves. Her clothes are often dark or grey in color. It is also worth noting that her clothes sometimes look worn out; her jeans and scarfs, for instance, have visible holes in them. The impression that Jessica's wardrobe gives is that she either does not have the money to buy new clothes when they become worn out or does not simply care to do so. Her clothing choices seem, in fact, to be a combination of these two factors. She is portrayed as having little money since she lives in a small and shabby apartment, buys the cheapest possible alcohol and struggles to afford to fix her door when it gets broken. However, she is shown as a teenager wearing clothes that look quite similar to the ones she wears as an adult, which suggest that she simply prefers the slightly alternative style that could be described as grunge. She certainly seems to express a distaste for very feminine clothes, since she makes a face of disgust at her clothes when she has to wear soft pink scrubs with hearts in them in one episode. Jessica is also depicted wearing purple and bright yellow dresses, but only when she is mind controlled by Kilgrave, who likes to make his women dress according to his own taste. Jessica's aversion to very feminine items of clothing suggest that she does care about the clothes she wears and her clothes are, therefore, also a matter of taste as well as financial status.

Even though Jessica is very clearly coded as attractive, she is not generally portrayed in a very sexualized manner when it comes to her visual appearance. Her regular clothes are not very revealing, since she is always wearing jeans and her shirts and tops do not reveal any cleavage. She sometimes wears shirts that are short enough to reveal some midriff when she moves, but instead of looking like they are designed to be sexy, they just seem like regular shirts that sometimes happen to ride up a little like clothes often do. Her shirts are also quite tight, but since they are plain cotton t-shirts and tops, it is justifiable to claim that they are not designed to be especially alluring. Jessica is shown in various states of undress during the show when she is doing such activities as getting to bed, showering, and having sex. For example, Jessica is shown in her underpants in a couple of scenes when she is going to bed at night and when she has a wound in her leg that is getting treated. When she has sex, viewers see her naked back in one scene and the silhouette of one of her buttocks in another. One could argue that these scenes are not strictly necessary and serve to sexualize the character, but the way the scenes are shot prevents them from appearing gratuitous. Firstly, Jessica is never shown fully nude or even

mostly nude, and she only undresses in situations where it makes sense in terms of the actions that she is engaging in. When Jessica is in the shower, for example, the shot is framed so that only her shoulders and a bit of her chest are visible. Therefore, the scene does not actually reveal much of Jessica's body even though the implication is that she is fully naked considering the situation. Secondly, the scenes are usually filmed so that the camera stays stationary instead of panning her body. In the first episode, for instance, viewers see Jessica removing her jeans and going to bed to get some sleep. The scene is filmed so that the camera films the room from the doorway as Jessica walks in and takes off her jeans and then films from the opposite side of the room as she goes to bed and gets under the covers. The fact that the camera stays stationary makes the shot seem like the camera is simply documenting the event instead of highlighting the character's body. Thirdly, Jessica does not in any scene pose in ways that could be considered gratuitous and meant to simply appeal to the "male gaze". In the aforementioned bedroom scene, for instance, Jessica undresses by unceremoniously showing her pants down and shuffling them off by lifting her legs. She does not bend in ways that would highlight parts of her body to the camera or stop to pose in ways that would accentuate her curves. Viewers also only see her in her underwear for only a very short time, so her state of undress is not emphasized in terms of time either. All in all, Jessica is depicted partially nude in several scenes, but the nudity is quite limited and can be considered appropriate for the context. Seeing Jessica in situations that are a normal part of life such as showering and changing clothes can even serve to add to the feel of realism and relatability for viewers, so such scenes can be considered an important part of character construction instead of means to sexualize the character, although the alternative view would not be completely baseless either.

The last point regarding Jessica's visual appearance that is worth pointing out is her lack of superhero costume. Jessica always wears her regular clothes and reveals her face when she is investigating and using her powers, which makes her a quite unusual character in the superhero genre in terms of appearance, since most superheroes no matter the medium have some kind of costumes that they wear when they assume the identity of their alter egos. In the original *Alias* comic, Jessica is shown wearing a very tight and revealing white superhero costume, but the television Jessica balks at the idea of wearing something so revealing and flashy. The question of a superhero costume is addressed in a hilarious scene where Trish tries to present Jessica with a costume that closely resembles the one Jessica used to briefly wear in comics. Jessica firmly refuses to even consider wearing Trish's suggestion, and she comments on the costume by stating that "the only place anyone is wearing that is trick-or-treating or as part of some

kinky role-playing scenario” and “if I wear that thing, you're gonna have to call me Cameltoe”. This scene makes fun of the flashy outfits that superheroes wear, and it can be interpreted as explicit criticism towards the genre’s tendency to portray female heroes wearing highly sexualized costumes that are also quite impractical and unrealistic as Jessica’s comment about a “cameltoe” points out. With this scene, the series quite explicitly aims to distance itself from the conventions of hypersexualization that have long dominated the visual representation of female characters in superhero and action genres. This non-stereotypical approach regarding the visual representation of female characters seems to be applied to Jessica’s visual appearance in practice as well, since she does not seem to be sexualized in terms of her clothes or suggestive camera angles.

4.1.3 Psychological traits, habits, and interaction with other characters

The character traits that form Jessica’s perceived personality arise from the ways in which she behaves when she is alone or interacting with other characters. The format of the show, thirteen 50 minutes long episodes, allows the construction of a very multifaceted but still consistent character personality. During the first season of the show Jessica is portrayed as a person who has many character flaws and personal struggles, but who is ultimately a good and self-sacrificing person.

One of the defining features of Jessica’s personality is her quite cynical attitude towards other people and life in general. She often believes the worst of people, and does not appear to have much sympathy for people she does not care about, which includes most people she meets. Her cynicism becomes evident right from the beginning of the first episode, when she describes her job as a private investigator in a voiceover sequence:

Example 2 (episode 1)

Jessica New York may be the city that never sleeps, but it sure does sleep around. Not that I’m complaining. Cheaters are good for business. A big part of the job is looking for the worst in people. Turns out I excel at that. Clients hire me to find dirt. And I find it.

These are the first words that viewers hear from Jessica so they are important in terms of providing the first impression of who Jessica is as a person. The voiceover serves two functions: it establishes Jessica’s profession and reveals Jessica’s attitude towards her clients and other people in general. She is someone who is good at finding the worst in people, and whose job has most likely made her rather cynical towards others. Her rather negative attitude towards others is further affirmed when she later remarks that she usually simply avoids other people altogether due to their flaws:

Example 3 (episode 1)

Jessica People do bad shit. I just avoid getting involved with them in the first place. That works for me. Most of the time.

If operating on the borders of society in a liminal state is central to superhero characters like Gaine (2011) argues, then Jessica's job as a private investigator is certainly a suitable profession for achieving just that since her job reveals the hidden underbelly of the society. Jessica's targets have their regular, socially acceptable lives, and then they have their hidden lives filled with unsavory secrets. Jessica moves between these two states, the public and the hidden, as she uncovers people's secrets.

In addition to having a cynical attitude towards other people, Jessica is also often quite rude when she is interacting with people she does not care about. She does not have much of a filter when it comes to her words, actions, or facial expressions, and lets people know exactly what she thinks of them (which is usually something negative). The first episode, for example, has a scene that encapsulates how Jessica interacts with people she finds annoying. When Jessica is investigating Hope's disappearance, she goes to interview Hope's best friend to gather information about Hope's past actions. Hope's friend, however, is living with a male roommate who is filming everything that happens to him with a go pro camera that is attached to a headband. Jessica dislikes being filmed and resorts to forcibly taking the camera away from the roommate when he does not stop filming:

Example 4 (episode 1)

Jessica	Stop shooting.
Roommate	I'm making an experimental time lapse film of a year in my life, so...
Jessica (sarcastically)	Riveting.
Hope's friend	I found him on Craigslist. I suddenly needed a roommate, so... (Turns towards roommate's camera) Thanks a lot, Hope.
Jessica	You're pissed at her. (Turns to look at filming roommate) Seriously, lose the camera, Coppola.
Roommate	I can't, it's a continuous shot. That means that there's no cuts. (Jessica snatches the camera from the roommate's head and throws it away)
Jessica	Look at that, I found a cut.
Roommate	Oh! You destroyed my art!
Jessica	Mercy killing. Where's Hope's stuff?

Jessica clearly has no qualms about being assertive and giving orders to other people. Instead of asking the roommate if he could stop filming her, she simply tells him to stop shooting and to lose the camera. She also does not hesitate to inform the roommate that she finds his hobby

stupid by making sarcastic comments about it. When she takes the camera and throws it away, Jessica demonstrates that she has little regard for other people's possessions and time if the actions of those people irritate her. Another example of Jessica's rudeness is the way she treats her neighbor Ruben, who she finds weird and annoying. Ruben is an eccentric young man who lives with his sister above Jessica and who has a crush on her. Whenever Ruben comes to talk to Jessica, she makes confused and disgusted faces and refuses to talk to him beyond a few words even if Ruben is being quite polite. For instance, when Ruben comes to knock on her door to bring banana bread and to check if she is alright after hearing commotion from her apartment, she is very short with him and takes the bread without thanking him:

Example 5 (episode 5)

(Ruben knocks on Jessica's door)

Jessica Who is it?

Ruben Your neighbor, Ruben.

(Jessica goes to open the door)

Ruben I heard a crash and got worried about you. Everything okay?

Jessica I'm fine.

Ruben Oh... Me and my sister have been baking all day. I brought you some banana bread. Don't tell her, okay? (Offers the bread to Jessica) Do you like banana bread?

Jessica No.

(Jessica takes the banana bread and shuts the door to Ruben's face)

All in all, these interactions demonstrate that Jessica does not seem to follow the politeness norms that usually govern social interactions. She gives orders instead of asking, frequently makes very derisive comments about other people and refuses to give more time than is, in her opinion, strictly necessary to interacting with people who she does not care about. Her attitude and actions distance her from most people and, therefore, portray her as detached from society to a degree, which further establishes her as someone who exists and operates on the borders of society.

As the previous examples demonstrate, Jessica has a quite aggressive style of interacting with others, and she often demonstrates physical aggression as well both alone and with others. She has a temper and when she is alone she sometimes reacts to frustration by throwing and smashing things, such as bottles and shoes. Due to her strength, the effects of such gestures are more dramatic than usual, and Jessica ends up accidentally damaging her apartment and her belongings a few times. Jessica is also quite willing to engage in physical altercations, and she behaves in a physically aggressive manner many times during the show. Some of these instances of physical violence can be considered justified according to the conventions of the

superhero genre, such as beating various criminals, defending her friends and intimidating people who have threatened her. Others, however, are more unusual for superheroes, since Jessica sometimes resorts to violence for more selfish and morally questionable reasons. For instance, she gets annoyed with her noisy neighbors and uses her strength to physically intimidate them to be quiet by roughly shoving her neighbor against a wall. She also threatens Jeri's wife Wendy by dangling her over the rails in a subway station while drunk because she promised Jeri to make Wendy sign their divorce papers. These instances portray Jessica as impulsive and morally shady, since she is willing to use her powers to scare others so that she can get her way. Superheroes using their powers in morally questionable ways is not of course a completely new phenomenon for Marvel, since they have several characters who use their skills and abilities for more controversial or frivolous actions than giving concussions to bad guys. For example, Tony Stark uses his armored suit for party tricks in *Iron Man 2*, and the Punisher kills criminals the second season of *Daredevil*. In the grand scheme, Jessica's habit of physically intimidating other people for very minor transgressions is, however, quite unconventional for a superhero. Overall, Jessica's willingness to escalate situations to a point of physical violence also portrays her as very confident in her own abilities. She knows she is stronger than everyone else so she has no reason to shy from physical confrontations. Interestingly, she is not a very skilled fighter since she has no training, but her strength allows her to win most confrontations rather easily anyway.

In contrast to her confidence when dealing with physical altercations, Jessica suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and seems to have very low self-esteem. Due to experiencing traumatizing mind control and sexual violence in the hands of Kilgrave, Jessica regularly has panic attacks and nightmares about him. Whenever a nightmare or a flashback triggers a panic attack, Jessica repeats street names from her childhood to calm herself down. While she intellectually understands that the things Kilgrave forced her to do are not her fault, she still carries tremendous guilt over killing Reva. As Kilgrave starts hurting people during his quest to get closer to Jessica, Jessica also seems to hold herself partly responsible for the fate of those people. Jessica's guilt becomes evident, for example, from a dispute between her and Trish that takes place after Kilgrave murders one of Jessica's neighbors. In response to the murder, Jessica concocts a risky plan to take the blame for the murder in order to get out of Kilgrave's reach, and Trish tries to talk her out of it by proposing a different course of action:

Example 6 (episode 7)

Trish I know how to find Kilgrave. I have a lead. I was waiting to tell you until...

Jessica You are looking for him?

Trish Simpson is. I found Kilgrave's new security team.

Jessica No. You tell Simpson to back off. He's gonna get himself killed.

Trish He'll call us in when he finds Kilgrave, just let us handle it until...

Jessica Until what? Until I come home and find my landlady choked out in my bathtub? Or I find you bludgeoned to death with my vacuum cleaner?

Trish We both know you don't own a vacuum cleaner. I won't let you go to prison. You're not a murderer.

Jessica Yes, I am.

Trish You're still punishing yourself for that woman's death?

Jessica And now more people are dead. Hope Shlottman's parents, Ruben, Reva, and someone has to give their families closure. And until the real killer shows up, that's gonna be me. I have to pay.

The fact that Jessica states that she is a murderer and indirectly gives an affirmative answer to Trish's question about punishing herself shows that she thinks she is at least somewhat culpable for the death of the woman she was ordered to kill. While she understands that Kilgrave is "the real killer" she also thinks that she should shoulder the blame for the deaths of Kilgrave's victims until he is brought to justice. Jessica's guilt also manifests in self-loathing comments, such as such as seriously describing herself a "piece of shit" a couple times:

Example 7 (episode 7)

(Jessica is thrown out of a bar due to being too drunk)

Jessica Get off me!

Bartender You're cut off!

(Jessica falls on top a pile of trash bags)

Jessica I was just leaving. You didn't kick me out, I left.

Homeless man You stink.

Jessica Well, I'm a piece of shit, and shit stinks.

Although Jessica's quilt manifests as self-loathing, it still also serves as a positive characteristic in the sense that it depicts her as a good person. Even though Reva's death was by all rational accounts her fault, Jessica still feels extremely bad that she played a part in an innocent person's death.

Jessica mostly seems to deal with her trauma and guilt by consuming copious amounts of alcohol. She is shown drinking whiskey or other alcoholic drinks in ten out of the 13 episodes, and her place usually has several empty or half-full bottles in various places. Out of the three episodes where she does not drink on screen, she is still visibly drunk in one episode and opens a bottle to of liquor in another. Jessica's drinking is clearly maladaptive, which is highlighted

especially well by a scene in episode six where Jessica sits alone on the floor of her apartment drinking from a bottle while repeating street names. Since repeating street names is a technique she uses to calm herself down during a panic attack, the fact that she drinks at the same time strongly suggests that drinking alcohol is another coping mechanism for her. Jessica herself admits she has a drinking problem, and says to Kilgrave at point that “it's the only way I get through my goddamn days after what you did to me”. Although flashback scenes show that Jessica’s has always been somewhat confrontational, her trauma has also increased her asocial behavior. Trish, for instance, notes that Jessica has a habit of intentionally driving people away from her when she discusses Jessica’s plans regarding her love interest Luke:

Example 8 (episode 12)

Trish	Look, he obviously has feelings for you, and you definitely have feelings for him.
Jessica	I do not.
Trish	Please, the chemistry was jumping off of the two of you. And you can't say he's not hot.
Jessica	Fine, he's hot. And if Kilgrave weren't trying to kill me...
Trish	You'd push him away like everybody else.
Jessica	I can't think about that right now.
Trish	Okay. But just... When this is over, when you win this thing, I... I hope you finally allow yourself some happiness.

Trish’s comment about Jessica allowing herself some happiness suggests that Jessica has been distancing herself from relationships due to guilt. Jessica’s rudeness and cynical attitude towards other people is, therefore, portrayed as a coping mechanism for her negative emotions and not just a personality trait.

Despite being generally quite self-deprecating due to her emotional problems, Jessica is proud of one thing, which is her ability to be a good private investigator. Jessica is an excellent private investigator in terms of getting results and she does not shy from stating it to others. When Jeri tells Jessica in the first episode that her law firm has hired another private investigator due to Jessica refusing a full-time position, Jessica states confidently that “whoever he is, he's not as good as me.” Later during the same episode Jessica introduces herself to Luke for the first time, and the two have a conversation where Jessica says that her job is the only thing she really excels in:

Example 9 (episode 1)

Luke	You're a P.I.?
Jessica	I'm just trying to make a living. You know, booze costs money. Usually.
Luke	There's better ways to hustle than digging in people's business.
Jessica	It's the only thing I'm good at.

Luke How good?
Jessica A natural.

These exchanges establish Jessica's job as an important aspect of her identity early in the series, and her job continues to play a significant part in the series in terms of character construction throughout the first season. The way she investigates cases for her clients or follows leads to find Kilgrave reveals a lot to viewers in terms of Jessica's morals and personality traits. Firstly, she is willing to use illicit and otherwise shady means if they help her investigations. She repeatedly uses her strength to break into various places, such as buildings and lockers, when she thinks it is necessary to access those places. She also lies to get information about people, and sometimes pretends to be a whole another person to achieve her goals. For example, she steals a nurse's scrubs and pretends to be a new employee in a hospital to gain access to their patient records. When she is hunting Kilgrave, she resorts to even more drastic measures since she thinks they are justifiable due to what is at stake. She uses her drug addicted neighbor and friend Malcolm to steal a surgical anesthetic from a hospital because the drug can make Kilgrave unconscious and thus shut down his powers. Jessica says to groggy Malcolm that she is taking him to the emergency room, but then uses him as a distraction to gain access to the drugs. Even though Jessica and Malcolm are not very close, the action shows that she is ready to sacrifice one of her very few friendships in her quest to bring Kilgrave to justice. Secondly, Jessica is very smart and resourceful, since she comes up with inventive ways of doing research and adapts to changing situations very quickly. In order to find a missing young man, for example, she goes through his trash bin and upon finding lottery tickets she calls the man's number leaving a voicemail that says he has won an Xbox One that need to be collected soon. She then stakes out the collection spot and follows the man who shows up for the prize to find the missing person. Jessica's ability to come up with quick solutions even in very stressful situations is demonstrated especially well when Kilgrave sends a mind controlled police officer to kill Trish. She tricks the officer into thinking he has managed to kill Trish by injecting Trish with a surgical anesthetic that she stole and then plants her phone on the officer so that she can listen to what he tells Kilgrave while she follows him. The fact that Jessica is able to form a plan to find Kilgrave's location while her best friend is almost murdered depicts her as someone who is able to think on her feet. Jessica utilize every opportunity that she encounters, sometimes even selfishly like when she accepts bribe money form a night club owner when she pretends to be licensing inspector.

Even though Jessica's characterization depicts her as a very tumultuous person, she is still portrayed having some personality traits that are more positive and characteristic of traditional superheroes. She uses to her powers to help people multiple times during the season even though she does not specifically dedicate her time to it. For instance, she saves a little girl from being hit by a car and intervenes physically when a passerby harangues her friend Malcolm. Despite her multiple comments about disliking people and her generally unsympathetic attitude towards others, Jessica seems to take pleasure in actually helping others in concrete ways. When Jessica saves the little girl, for example, she smiles happily after the girl thanks her. An interaction with Kilgrave where he asks Jessica why she intervened in a mugging illuminates Jessica's motives for taking action:

Example 10 (episode 5)

Kilgrave Tell me, did you enjoy beating those thugs?

Jessica Yes.

Kilgrave Yeah? Why?

Jessica Because I helped someone. I made a difference.

Since Jessica is compelled by Kilgrave's mind control to tell the truth during this exchange, her comment about enjoying beating the robbers because it helped someone suggests that she wants to use her powers for good and enjoys doing so. Her traumatic experiences might have drained some of that desire to help from her, but Jessica's actions during the season indicate that even when she does not enjoy it, she feels she must help others if her powers make her uniquely qualified to do so. She tries to bring Kilgrave to justice mostly by herself even though she is afraid of him because she thinks she is the only person who can actually do it. When she is offered help in the final confrontation against Kilgrave, for instance, Jessica states that she "can't risk another person getting controlled" and that it's the only things she is sure of. Jessica's story arc, therefore, follows the typical superhero film formula where the protagonist suffers some injustice at the hands of a villain and then becomes the only person who can stop that villain. Being the only one with the ability to stop Kilgrave is what pushes Jessica into heroic actions as well. She is willing to risk her own freedom and possibly her life to protect other people from Kilgrave, which proves that she can act extremely selflessly when it is needed. The fact that she keeps going after Kilgrave even though she goes through severe mental anguish and moments of self-doubt also portrays her as incredibly determined and resilient. The people closest to her recognize these positive character traits even when Jessica herself does not. Malcolm, for example, says to Jessica that she is "a good person" and tells another character that he thinks Jessica has the potential to be a hero:

Example 11 (episode 13)

Malcolm Jessica's got it in her, you know? And she may well never find it, but it is in there.
 Claire An alcoholic?
 Malcolm A hero.

The question of whether Jessica qualifies as hero or not is pondered throughout the season by various characters. While Jessica never really embraces the idea of being a hero who helps others, her final words in the last episode show that she has started to warm up to the idea: “Maybe it's enough that the world thinks I'm a hero. Maybe if I work long and hard... maybe I can fool myself”.

4.1.2.1 Relationships

4.1.2.1.1 Jessica and Luke

Luke Cage is Jessica’s love interest in the first season, and the husband of the woman that Kilgrave forced Jessica to kill. Luke has superpowers as a result of some unspecified experiment. Like Jessica he has super strength, but he also has what is called an “unbreakable skin”, which makes him nearly invulnerable to physical injury. Jessica and Luke’s relationships is understandably quite complicated, and it reveals both negative and positive aspects of Jessica’s personality.

During the early stages of their relationship Jessica acts very selfishly and in morally questionable ways towards Luke. Before the couple meets face-to-face, Jessica follows Luke and photographs him secretly in order to keep tabs on him. Her motivation is not exactly clear, but she probably wants to find out how the man whose life she unwillingly changed forever is doing. Even if she originally had innocent intentions, however, continuing to follow Luke and take photos of him crosses the line into obsessive and arguably creepy behavior. When Jessica and Luke meet properly, the two have chemistry and Jessica very straightforwardly makes her interest in Luke known to him:

Example 12 (episode 1)

Jessica But you also like women. Temporarily, at least. (Smiles) And they like you.
 Luke See, now that sounded like flirting to me.
 Jessica Again, I don't flirt. I just say what I want.
 Luke And what do you want?

(The scene cuts to the two of them having sex in Luke’s apartment)

While Jessica is not shown telling Luke that she wants sleep with him, the scene is cut so that it is suggested very strongly that she does so. Sleeping with Luke is a morally problematic act

since Jessica has not yet told him about Kilgrave and her own role in the death of his wife Reva. Jessica seems to feel guilty about it afterwards when she comes across Reva's photo in Luke's bathroom cabinet, and she leaves in hurry. She tries to distance herself from Luke for a while, but the two end up sleeping together again when they find out about each other's powers and get excited about them. Afterwards they go on a date, and Jessica continues to associate herself with Luke without revealing her past to him. Eventually she is forced to tell Luke about herself and Reva when he tries to get revenge on an innocent man he erroneously considers responsible for Reva's death. Luke is shocked by the news and admonishes Jessica for pursuing an intimate relationship without revealing the truth to him:

Example 13 (episode 6)

Luke You slept with me.

Jessica (crying) I didn't plan that. It just happened.

Luke You made me think... I could get past it. Did Kilgrave force you to do that?

(Jessica shakes her head)

Luke You let me be inside you. You touched me with the same hands that killed my wife, while you knew.

Jessica I'm so sorry.

Luke If I never found out about Charles, would you have ever told me the truth?

(Jessica is silent for a while and then closes her eyes)

Luke I was wrong. You are a piece of shit.

While Jessica apologizes for her actions, she does not really own up to her mistakes since she defends herself by saying that her actions were impulsive. The fact that she does not answer negatively to Luke's questioning about telling the truth suggests that she would have kept her secret indefinitely if she was not forced to do otherwise. Jessica's action after the confrontation show that while she behaved selfishly, she recognizes her actions as wrong and feels incredibly guilty for them. Her guilt unfortunately causes her to behave in erratic ways, such as getting drunk and threatening Wendy while revealing her self-disgust to her:

Example 14 (episode 7)

(Jessica grabs Wendy by her labels)

Jessica Do you know what shame feels like, Wendy?

Wendy Of course.

Jessica No, I mean real shame, Wendy. You know, when you've done something... You've hurt, disgusted someone so completely... that you can see it in their eyes. The black, oozing shit inside you. You sweat it through your skin but it keeps spreading... until you would do anything... not to feel it. Anything.

Wendy You're crazy.

Jessica and Luke's relationship does not end in the grand reveal, because Luke goes after Kilgrave by himself and ends up mind controlled and used to lure Jessica to Kilgrave. Before Jessica finds out Luke is mind controlled, the pair grow closer together again. When Jessica meets Kilgrave the next time, he orders Luke to kill Jessica when he realizes he cannot mind control her even though he has grown stronger. Luke attacks Jessica, who is forced to fight for her life against another superpowered person. In the end, Jessica is forced to shoot Luke with a powerful gun under his chin. Jessica only shoots Luke when it becomes clear that it is the only way to save her own life, and afterwards she reacts with horror when the shot knocks Luke unconscious. Unable to let doctors help him in a hospital due to his powers, Jessica takes Luke home and convinces a nurse to help him. While Luke is unconscious, Jessica must continue the fight against Kilgrave, but lays down next to him for a moment and tells him that he is special to her in terms of romantic relationships before leaving for the final fight against her nemesis:

Example 15 (episode 13)

Jessica I thought about you. I mean, I knew it would never happen. But I couldn't help... picturing us. Like, on an actual date. Bowling. Normal shit. You're the first person I ever pictured a future with. You're also the first person I ever shot in the head. If you... When you wake up... I'm not gonna be around to screw up your life anymore. Probably because I'll be dead. But maybe Kilgrave will be dead, too.

This instance reveals that Jessica has developed deep romantic feelings for Luke, which is apparently uncharacteristic for her. She does want a future that is more normal than her current situation in life, but she does not think such a future will be possible. Jessica is, therefore, depicted having romantic goals, but they play quite a small part in her life and do not define her as a character, which is often the case regarding female television characters (see e.g. Lauzen 2016a). Even though her feelings for Luke are as deep as she admits, Jessica puts her mission before him and leaves him in the hands of the capable nurse.

Jessica and Luke's relationship is interesting in terms of characterization because Jessica's actions towards Luke show a more romantic and caring side of her, but they also portray her as profoundly selfish. Jessica searches for Luke to make sure that he is alright after his wife's death, and does her best to protect him when he is in danger. However, she also pursues a physical relationship with him while withholding crucial information and acts in ways that occasionally put Luke in danger. All in all, her relationship with Luke depicts Jessica as a person who mostly has good intentions, but who also has deep seated emotional problems and sometimes acts in terribly inconsiderate ways.

An interesting aspect of Jessica and Luke's relationship that is worth consideration is how their superpowers compare to each other. Female superheroes have a history of being given more passive or ineffective powers than male superheroes (Donaldson 2013:143-145), and Jessica and Luke both subvert and follow that trend. They both have super strength, which is a power that is highly useful in terms of fighting. It is suggested that they are roughly equal in strength, and Jessica is able to restrict Luke's movements when they playfully test their powers on each other for the first time. Whenever they fight, however, Luke seems to have the upper hand both in terms of strength and vulnerability. Jessica is not helpless in fights and can hold her own against Luke for a while, but Luke's invulnerability means that he will eventually win in physical confrontations. While Jessica's ability to fly for short distances is useful, Luke's unbreakable skin is more a more applicable power in terms of fighting. Jessica does have better endurance and healing abilities than normal people, but she can still get hurt whereas Luke usually cannot. In addition to being unable to really hurt Luke, Jessica seems to have to exert more physical effort in fights than Luke does. She has to use both hands to block Luke's one-armed swings and skids backwards when Luke pushes her. Jessica does throw and kick Luke through walls, for example, but she looks to be struggling with it more than he does. A part of Jessica's slightly weaker powers can be attributed to her getting injured before fighting Luke, but she seems to be in a weaker position even in a confrontation that takes place before her receiving any major injuries. All in all, while Luke and Jessica's powers are in many ways similar, Luke's superpowers seem a bit stronger and they have more useful offensive applications than Jessica's, which continues the trend of male superheroes having more aggressive powers than their female counterparts.

4.1.2.1.2 Jessica and Kilgrave

Jessica and Kilgrave's relationship is very abusive from Kilgrave's part. He used to mind control Jessica and force her to do his every bidding while pretending that they were in a mutually romantic relationship. In addition to psychologically tormenting her, Kilgrave used his powers to physically abuse Jessica. He forced Jessica to sleep with him and impulsively ordered her to physically hurt herself by when she displeased him. When Kilgrave lost control of Jessica, he became obsessed with gaining his control over her back. Since Jessica has become immune to Kilgrave's powers, he tries to get her to comply by emotionally manipulating and blackmailing her. He hurts people around Jessica to pressure her to behave like he wants and tries to make Jessica feel responsible for the fate of those people. He even tries to make Jessica

feel guilty for the death of Reva, whom he himself ordered Jessica to kill when he still could control her:

Example 16 (episode 9)

Kilgrave You have feelings for me, Jessica. If you didn't, I'd be dead.
 Jessica There are worse things than death.
 Kilgrave Don't be melodramatic.
 Jessica Like being the slave to a sociopathic killer.
 Kilgrave I've never killed anyone. Can you say the same?

Kilgrave's statement about never killing anyone is only true in a very literal sense, since he can simply order people to kill themselves or others without getting his own hands dirty. His question to Jessica is meant to imply that she the real murderer, even though she only acted under his orders without the ability to refuse them. He is, therefore, trying to shift the blame from himself to Jessica on a basis of technicality because he knows she already feels guilty about the event.

The way Jessica behaves when she interacts with Kilgrave portrays her as courageous and resolute. Jessica is very clearly terrified of Kilgrave, since she has nightmare about him and panics when she finds out he is alive. Even though she is scared of him and the things he can do, Jessica refuses to placate him when the two interact. She frequently insults him to his face, calling him a "prick" or other derogatory names, and she repeatedly draws his attention to the unacceptable things he has done. For example, she does not hesitate to tell him that the sexual aspects of their previous relationship were non-consensual and damaging due to her being mind-controlled:

Example 17 (episode 8)

(Kilgrave puts his hand on top of Jessica's while the two sit at a table)

Jessica (pulls her hand away) I told you not to touch me!
 Kilgrave For God's sake. Come on, Jessie.
 Jessica Do not call me that.
 Kilgrave We used to do a lot more than just touch hands.
 Jessica Yeah. It's called rape.
 Kilgrave What? Which part of staying in five-star hotels, eating in all the best places, doing whatever the hell you wanted, is rape?
 Jessica The part where I didn't want to do any of it! Not only did you physically rape me, but you violated every cell in my body and every thought in my goddamn head.
 Kilgrave That is not what I was trying to do.
 Jessica It doesn't matter what you were trying to do. You raped me. Again and again

and again!

This example demonstrates how Jessica refuses to let Kilgrave spin his version of the events by adamantly challenging his delusions about their shared romance. Jessica does not let Kilgrave emotionally manipulate her into doubting her own experiences. She knows that the things he did to her were wrong and tells him exactly that, which is brave considering how traumatizing the events were for her. Jessica only gives in to Kilgrave's demands in interactions if other people's lives are in immediate danger. When Kilgrave has four hostages standing on a table with nooses around their necks, for instance, Jessica agrees to follow his commands to save the lives of the innocent people:

Example 18 (episode 10)

Jessica Your father is here. Now give me the girl.

Kilgrave (to the hostages) Step forward.

(The hostages take a step towards the edge)

Jessica Stop this!

Kilgrave Don't bark orders at me. Say you're sorry.

Jessica (reluctantly) I'm sorry.

Kilgrave About hitting me.

Jessica Yes. All of it.

Kilgrave (to the hostages) Stay.

(The hostages stop)

Even when Jessica agrees to apologize, she is curt and uses a tone of voice that communicates her disdain for Kilgrave. She refuses to grovel and does only the bare minimum of apologizing that gets Kilgrave to stop threatening other people.

When Jessica realizes that she has become immune to Kilgrave's powers, the power balance between the two shifts in Jessica's favor. She becomes less fearful of him and starts behaving even more brazenly than before. Jessica threatens Kilgrave verbally and physically to express her hatred of him and to get him to behave how she wants. After Jessica shoots Luke, she has the following confrontation with Kilgrave that demonstrates the shift in power between them.

Example 19 (episode 13)

Kilgrave I certainly regret meeting you.

Jessica Oh, good, then we finally have something in common. Regret. And hatred. Let's not forget about that one. Fortunately, for you, we're already at a hospital, so when I rip your tongue from your skull, it'll be a short trip.

Kilgrave You really are a little anal crumpet, aren't you?

Jessica does not seem very scared of Kilgrave anymore since she makes bold threats about physically injuring him. Jessica's increased boldness causes Kilgrave to give up on trying to manipulate Jessica, and he starts simply attacking her verbally like he does in the previous example. The role reversal between Kilgrave and Jessica becomes complete when Kilgrave is forced to run from Jessica, who decides to kill him when it becomes apparent that he cannot be brought to justice. In the end, Jessica manages to get near him and breaks his neck, killing him instantly.

The power dynamics between Jessica and Kilgrave are quite typical in terms of Marvel's villain-hero relationships. The villains are often more powerful than the heroes (Bainbridge 2009:69), and Kilgrave is certainly depicted as more powerful than Jessica for most of the season. While he is physically weaker than Jessica, Kilgrave can control everyone around him effortlessly with a single word, which makes him an incredibly powerful villain and extremely difficult to fight. He holds mental power over everyone else, which allows him to control everyone physically as well until Jessica becomes the exception. In her antagonistic relationship with Kilgrave, Jessica is the underdog who must beat unfavorable odds to win.

4.1.2.1.3 Jessica and Trish

Jessica and Trish share a very close bond as friends and sisters. They have shared history and they know all of each other's secrets, which means that they can be more relaxed around each other than around any other character. Their relationship does have its problems since they occasionally bicker and fight, but it is made clear that they love and respect each other very much.

Jessica is significantly closer to Trish than any other character in the show including Luke. Trish is Jessica's only long-time friend in addition to being her adoptive sister. She is also the only person who Jessica seems to feel truly comfortable with. The pair jokes a lot when they interact, and Jessica is shown hanging out with Trish in a more relaxed manner than with other characters in terms of body language. In a couple flashback scenes Jessica is shown smiling widely while she makes jokes with Trish and lounging relaxedly on Trish's couch while the two characters banter back and forth. Jessica and Trish also show physical affection to each other that shows they are close. For example, when Jessica gets injured, Trish tends to her injuries and then covers Jessica with a blanket as she lays on a couch. The pair also hugs whenever one of them is worried about the other. While Jessica is usually reluctant to talk about her emotions to anyone, she does tell Trish how important she is to her by making statements

that indicate that she important to Jessica. In the final episode, Jessica also tells Trish that she loves her when the two wait in a car and get ready to confront Kilgrave:

Example 20 (episode 13)

(Jessica opens her door to get out of the car and Trish starts to follow)

Jessica Trish, don't!

Trish I'm finishing this with you.

Jessica I was gonna say, wait until I call for backup. Teamwork, right? I read about that somewhere.

Trish Okay, I'll wait here. Just... text me.

Jessica You won't know if I'm a minion of evil.

Trish Well, we need a signal. Something you would never say, like... "sardines" or "pickle juice." You say it, you're still you.

Jessica Something I never say... like, "I love you."

(Jessica gets out of the car)

Trish (to herself) That'll do.

The conversation suggest that Jessica is not completely comfortable with discussing such deep feelings, even with Trish, because she gets out of the car before Trish has time to react to her statement. Her actions give the impression that she forces herself to tell Trish that she loves her because she wants to make her feelings clear in case the confrontation with Kilgrave ends badly for her. While Jessica definitely cares for other people besides Trish, Trish is the only one she admits to loving.

Due to their closeness, both Jessica and Trish act quite protective towards the other. Jessica protected Trish from her abusive mother as a teenager, and as an adult she tries to do her best to keep Trish safe from Kilgrave. In the first episodes of the season, Jessica tries to distance herself from Trish because she believes it will prevent Trish from catching Kilgrave's attention. The following exchange between them shows that Jessica literally believes that being around her will endanger Trish's life.

Example 21 (episode 2)

Jessica I'm life-threatening, Trish. Steer clear of me.

Trish I don't do that.

Jessica Please. I can't risk you.

Jessica's answer to Trish also portrays Trish is as someone special to Jessica, since she cannot risk losing her and is willing to plead for her to stay safe. During the season Jessica protects Trish in physical ways as well, saving her from people who are trying to hurt her. Trish, in her part, is protective of Jessica as well, although her protectiveness manifests more in in terms of

defending her verbally when other characters make unflattering remarks about her. A conversation with she has with her new boyfriend Simpson when he tries to pry information about Jessica illustrates Trish's protectiveness:

Example 22 (episode 5)

Simpson So, uh, she get her powers in that car accident? What exactly can she do?

Trish You won't find that on Wikipedia.

Simpson Well, you know, she's strong, that's for sure, and I'm guessing she has other powers?

Trish If you want to know about Jessica, why don't you just talk to Jessica?

Simpson I don't think she likes me very much.

Trish She's protective. She doesn't like any of the guys I date.

Simpson Right. And you approve of all of her boyfriends?

Trish They never stick around long enough for me to form an opinion.

Simpson Yeah, she probably scares guys off.

Trish You should stop there.

Firstly, Trish refuses to reveal much information about Jessica to someone she has only known for a short while even though she that someone is a good person. Secondly, she very quickly puts an end to Simpson's musings about Jessica's relationship struggles by indicating that he should stop talking about Jessica in a rude manner. In addition to defending Jessica in conversations, Trish protects her in a physical manner as well, when Jessica is injured and incapable to fight against an attacker. She risks her life by taking a drug that enhances her fighting abilities, so that she is able to defend Jessica against her attacker. Despite their protectiveness, both Jessica and Trish also trust each other's abilities. Trish, for example, encourages Jessica to stay in New York and save Hope from Kilgrave by stating to her that "you are far better equipped to deal with that animal than some innocent girl from Omaha". After Jessica's attempt to distance herself from Trish fail, she treats Trish as a partner in her quest to bring Kilgrave to justice. In the season finale, Trish even participates in the last fight against Kilgrave, which suggests that Jessica knows she need Trish's help and trusts her ability to defend herself from Kilgrave's minions.

A noteworthy aspect of Jessica and Trish's relationship is Trish's tendency to consistently call Jessica out on her self-destructive or otherwise ill-advised behavior. Trish acts as a voice of reason when Jessica pushes herself too far, reminding her that "you're strong, but even you can break". As the following example demonstrates, Trish also does not tolerate Jessica trying to isolate herself in an attempt to handle everything by herself:

Example 23 (episode 2)

Trish You were headed out of town.
 Jessica Something came up.
 Trish I saw on the news. I'm scared for you.
 Jessica Don't... have feelings, okay?
 Trish Not okay. You need help.

Jessica's ways of dealing with difficult situations are quite often unhealthy, and Trish does not hesitate to tell so to Jessica. Even though Jessica often end up going against Trish's advice, she recognizes that they are often reasonable. In fact, Jessica looks up to Trish quite a lot, and she comes to her for advice when she encounters a particularly difficult problem with Kilgrave:

Example 24 (episode 8)

Jessica: I need to run something by you. I'm having a "What would Trish do?" moment. Actually, I ask myself that a lot.

Jessica's comment reveals that she holds Trish's opinion in high regard and even considers Trish morally superior to herself.

Overall, Jessica's relationship with Trish reveals a more loving and social side of the character than her interactions with other characters do. It portrays her as capable of a close and equal relationship on the long term that includes healthy emotional intimacy.

4.1.3 Speech

Jessica's speech is usually quite direct and harsh. In other words, she says whatever she wants and does not bother to mince her words. Moreover, Jessica's language can be rather crude since she uses a wide variety of swear words to emphasize her words and to convey her emotions to the viewer. Jessica's speech is also the main way for her to express her sense of humor, which usually takes the form of various sarcastic quips.

The most distinctive aspect of Jessica's speech compared to other characters in the show is no doubt her frequent use of expletives. According to my calculations, Jessica swears on average roughly 13 times per episode, but the number of expletives varies considerably between episodes. Jessica swears most frequently in episode six where she curses 24 times, and her language is the cleanest in episode 12 where she only utters seven swear words. Jessica uses swearing most often as a response to sudden or unpleasant events, such as things breaking or someone else doing something unexpected. She swears both when she is alone and when she is interacting with other people. In fact, Jessica uses expletives to give emphasis to her words so often that they are a natural part of her language use. Her most commonly uttered expletives are different variations of *shit*, *damn/goddamn*, and *asshole*, all of which appear multiple times

on nearly every episode. Jessica's vocabulary also includes the frequent expletives *Jesus Christ*, and *hell*, as well as various other less commonly occurring swear words. It is noteworthy that Jessica's swearing occasionally gets quite creative, especially when she is swearing at other people. A good example is when she tells her screaming neighbors to be quietly by stating the following: "Now, I don't give a bag of dicks what kinky shit you're into. Just be into it quietly."

In addition to swearing, Jessica's language is generally characterized by a very direct speech style. She favors casual language and her speech turns are usually very short and simple. Her speech contains a lot of direct statements, and she often gives commands to other people and even verbally threatens them. Jessica consistently talks in this manner in most situations and only noticeably changes her speech style when she is impersonating someone else. For example, when she pretends to be a secretary looking for information about her employer's schedule, Jessica speaks in a higher pitch and with a cheerier intonation than she normally does. Jessica does not usually bother using politeness strategies to soften her speech, or uses them in a very limited fashion. As an example, she does not use polite phrases, such as "excuse me", when asking for directions, nor does she give a sincere thank you when she gets them:

Example 25 (episode 2)

Jessica	Hey, uh, if I get hit by a bus, where's the closest hospital?
Mechanic	Stay on sidewalk, you don't get hit by bus.
Jessica (annoyed)	Thanks, I'll find out myself.
Mechanic	Hey, uh, everyone go to Metro-General. Six blocks that way.
(Jessica turns to walk in that direction)	
Mechanic	Hey, you're welcome. Rude girl is lonely girl!
Jessica	Countin' on it!

As the mechanic's reaction indicates, people Jessica interacts with usually find this behavior quite rude.

A part of Jessica's rudeness also stems from her sense of humor, which plays an important role in the way she interacts with other people. Jessica's humor can be quite sarcastic and crude, and it very often manifests in biting quips that are probably meant to be entertaining for the viewers. Jessica makes these kinds of retorts frequently and in various situations during the first season. Whether she is talking to repairmen about her broken door or getting ready to kidnap Kilgrave, Jessica makes retorts when she thinks others say something stupid.

Example 26 (episode 3)

(Two repairmen assess the damage to Jessica's broken door)

Repairman	This is a very broken door.
-----------	-----------------------------

Jessica Thank you for the diagnosis.

Example 27 (episode 5)

(Jessica prepares to kidnap Kilgrave with the help of a policeman called Simpson)

Jessica It's time. If Kilgrave gets me...

Simpson I'll take you out.

Jessica I was gonna say, "Dart gun me." But sure, shoot me in the head.

While Jessica delivers sarcastic comebacks no matter who she is talking to, her quips are more biting and personal when she talks to or about people she greatly dislikes. Her comments are, therefore, most scathing when she talks about Kilgrave. For example, when she finds out that Kilgrave is trying to increase his powers to be able to control Jessica again, she retorts that “you can't improve on an asshole by making it bigger”. Despite the sarcastic nature of her humor, Jessica is not always biting when she makes humorous remarks. She also engages in self-irony and makes more lighthearted jokes like when Jeri accuses her of acting paranoid about a client and Jessica answers with a joke about her paranoia:

Example 28 (Episode 4)

Jeri You need to pull yourself together. You are coming across distinctly paranoid.

Jessica Everyone keeps saying that. It's like a conspiracy.

All in all, Jessica's way of speaking portrays her as someone who is very honest about her thoughts and emotions to a degree that is socially unorthodox. While her language use is very crude, her quick retorts and creative insults also depict her as quite intelligent since they demonstrate verbal competence even if that competence manifests in a rather hostile manner.

4.1.4 Environment

During the first season, Jessica is shown in various environments in New York ranging from upscale apartments to dirty back alleys. The majority the locations that Jessica visits are shown once or twice, but there are a few central locations that she spends more time in. My analysis will mostly examine a few more long-term environments that are important to Jessica, but I will also take into brief consideration the various changing locations she visits.

The environment where Jessica spends most of her time is, unsurprisingly, her apartment. She lives in a small, one-bedroom apartment in a block of flats somewhere in New York. The building is not in a very good shape, since the hallways have dents in the walls and the doors are flimsy. The apartment itself is also quite shabby: there are tears in the wallpapers, the paint on the door frames is chipped and a cockroach even crawls out of the bathroom sink at one

point. Jessica does not keep the place very tidy either, since there are dirty dishes in the kitchen and empty bottles in various places all over the apartment. What Jessica's apartment reveals about her is that she is most likely relatively poor and does not have the interest or energy to keep the place in a good condition. If the apartment reflects her mental state then she is not in a good place emotionally, which is likely given her nightmares and panic attacks. She also does not care about keeping up the appearances, since she receives clients in an "office" that consists of a table and a desk in the living room of her apartment. As the season progresses, Jessica's apartment gets increasingly damaged due to fights that happen there so that the place is completely trashed and riddled with holes towards the end of the season. The fate of her apartment can be considered a reflection of the turmoil that Jessica herself goes through as she tries to catch Kilgrave. The events that she goes through cause her to become increasingly stressed until she is close to the end of her rope, so to speak, towards the end of the season, and the destruction of the apartment can be viewed as a visual metaphor for her state of mind.

In addition to her apartment, Jessica is shown spending some time in Trish's apartment and Luke's bar, both of which differ from Jessica's own place in significant ways. Trish's apartment is very carefully furnished, cozy, and located in an upscale building. While Luke's bar is not a fancy place, it is well organized and inviting due to warm lights, laughter, and music. Jessica is shown having a good time in both places, and they seem to represent safe and pleasant environments for her. They are places where she likes being but does not really think she belongs to. These places also highlight to the viewers how bleak and uninviting Jessica's own apartment is in comparison.

The fourth location that is significant for Jessica is her childhood home, which is a two-story house in a nice suburban area. The house is spacious and tidy, and it reveals that Jessica spent her childhood in a comfortable middle-class environment. The difference between her childhood and current home also highlights that something very bad happened to Jessica for her to have gone from such well-kept house to her shabby apartment. In essence, the house represents a happy childhood, and it holds a lot of dear but also painful memories for Jessica. It also serves to represent the depth of Kilgrave's obsession with Jessica, because he buys the house and refurbishes it to look like it did in Jessica's childhood all the way down to the smallest detail. For a while, Jessica ends up essentially being a prisoner in her childhood home that looks like it did in the past but does not feel like home anymore. In the end, the cozy little house ends up becoming even more distressing environment than her dingy apartment.

During the season, Jessica also visits a wide variety of urban environments. She is shown walking the busy streets, taking the subway, and going to shops and bars. During her investigations she also visits hospitals, morgues, parks, abandoned buildings and many other places. She is shown sitting on fire escapes or climbing the side of buildings a couple of times to spy on people through windows both for work and for personal reasons. Jessica manages to talk her way into places where she should have access and breaks into places where she cannot talk her way in to. The fact that Jessica goes into environments that could be potentially dangerous, such as abandoned buildings, reveals that she feels quite safe even in those places. All in all, the changing locations, and the ease that Jessica navigates those environments with, show that the city and its streets are her workplace just as much as her office is.

4.1.5 Function in terms of the plot and character development

As a protagonist, Jessica is quite exceptional among female Marvel heroes since so few of them have received their own films or television shows. Since Jessica is the protagonist of the series, she is unsurprisingly crucial for the development of the plot. The events are mostly shown from her point of view and her decisions affect the other characters and push the story forwards. She makes the key decisions in the series, such as deciding what to do with Kilgrave and how to proceed with the process of bringing him to justice. Most the supporting characters also center around her and exists mainly in relation to her so that they usually only meet each other due to their connection to Jessica.

Jessica's trajectory in terms of agency roughly follows the common Marvel formula of evolving from a more passive victim to an active agent who takes control of their destiny. When Kilgrave first starts tormenting Jessica, she becomes a victim of his schemes for a while. While Jessica very quickly decides to fight against Kilgrave, he clearly has the upper hand for a while and Jessica is forced to endure one blow after another, unable to predict Kilgrave's schemes let alone stop them. As the season progresses Jessica starts to become increasingly able to actively fight Kilgrave, and by the last episode she is the one in control. In a true superhero fashion, her actions and ingenuity eventually defeat the villain.

Even though Jessica suffers due to Kilgrave's actions, she is by no means presented as a damsel-in-distress even when Kilgrave still has the upper hand in their relationship. She is not rescued by male characters even once in the show, even though a couple of them try to. When she is forced to momentarily live with Kilgrave in her childhood home, for example, Trish's boyfriend Simpson tries to rescue her from the house as he plants a bomb there to kill Kilgrave. However,

Jessica rejects Simpson's rescue attempt and informs him that she is using her captivity to gather important information that can help her to get Hope released from prison. She then sends Simpson away and gets rid of the bomb because she does not want Kilgrave to die before getting him to confess to his crimes. Jessica also rescues several people herself during the first season both in the physical sense and a psychological sense. In addition to saving people from physical dangers, such as moving cars and mind controlled attackers, she, for instance, finds a way to inspire Malcolm to endure drug withdrawal and consequently become sober. As Simpson's rescue attempt demonstrates, Jessica also shows a significant amount of leadership during the first season. Even though she is not an official leader in any way, many of the supporting characters follow her lead when it comes to fighting the villain. Trish and Malcolm especially trust her expertise regarding Kilgrave and look to her for guidance. Even characters who are less willing to trust Jessica's abilities, such as Hope and Jeri, often end up following her commands and requests. Hope, for example, declines a plea bargain when she is in prison because Jessica assures her she can get Kilgrave to confess and tells her to "not let him off the hook for what he did".

In terms of character development, Jessica goes through some changes during the season. She transforms from frightened to more confident as Kilgrave's hold over her diminishes. She also appears to learn to express her feelings to her friends and loved ones slightly more freely, since she tries to drive everyone away at the beginning of the season but confesses her sisterly love for Trish and romantic feelings for Luke towards the end of it. Mostly her personality traits, habits and attitudes stay the same however. The biggest character development that takes place for Jessica is her transformation from someone who is willing to leave an innocent girl to Kilgrave's mercy to someone who puts her mind and life on the line to protect others from Kilgrave. Marvel heroes often have to achieve the status of a hero by going through trials and suffering, and Jessica is no exception. She goes through adversity and along the way accepts the fact that stopping the villain is her responsibility. The first and final scenes of the series excellently demonstrate her transformation to a hero. The first time when viewers see Jessica is when she is being berated by an unsatisfied customer in her apartment. In contrast, the last time when viewers see her, she sits at her desk with Malcolm by her side listening to her answering machine that is filled with messages from people who hail her as a protector and want her help with various problems. She has gone from an outcast to a publicly recognized hero with friends.

4.1.6 Summary

The different aspects of character construction combine to create a very complex character in Jessica's case. Her biography gives enough information about the character to create the impression that she has a life history, which deepens the character. In terms of superhero genre conventions, Jessica's backstory is quite typical, since it includes losing her parents and receiving her powers in a vague car accident. Jessica's appearance, however, both follows and challenges the traditional ways of depicting women both in the context of the superhero genre, and in the larger context of television and films. She is portrayed as a very attractive woman whose attractiveness is implicitly and explicitly highlighted by other characters, which emphasizes the importance of her looks. She also has quite typical body type for a female superhero, which is very slim but soft and curvy. Jessica is not, however, sexualized much in terms of her clothes and she outright mocks the idea of wearing a skintight superhero costume. While she is also depicted partially nude a couple times, the nudity is appropriate for the context and it is not emphasized with suggestive camera angles.

Jessica's personality is depicted as very multifaceted and even conflicting at times. She has a very cynical attitude towards life and other people, which often results in some very rude behaviors when it is coupled with the fact that she has no filter regarding her words, actions, and facial expressions in interactions. Jessica's often abrasive behavior is amplified by her speech style, which is very direct and contains a lot of swear words and biting sarcastic remarks. In contrast to her usually bold behavior Jessica is depicted suffering from low self-esteem and post-traumatic stress disorder, which have resulted in an alcohol problem and sometimes erratic behavior. On top of these somewhat questionable character traits, Jessica's morals are also quite lax since she is repeatedly shown breaking the law and behaving in otherwise questionable ways in her interactions with other characters. The result of all these traits is a character that seems quite dysfunctional and asocial, or as Luke puts it "a hard-drinking, short-fused, mess of a woman". Even the environment where Jessica spends most of time serves to strengthen the impression of her inner turmoil. To counteract her less virtuous character traits, Jessica is shown acting in very selfless and determined manner when she tries to help Hope and stop Kilgrave. In addition, her relationships with Trish and Luke are also used to reveal a softer side of her, which makes the character appear much more complex. Jessica is a character who behaves differently with different people, and alternates between confidence and fear. She could be summarized as a character who has a tough exterior that hides a more caring and vulnerable side of her.

Finally, Jessica is highly important for the development of the plot because she makes most of the important decisions that propel it forward. All in all, Jessica's personality, motives, and other features are delineated comprehensively during the first season, and she goes through some character development as the season progresses. She is, therefore, constructed into a multifaceted and round character.

4.2 Trish Walker

Patricia "Trish" Walker is Jessica's best friend and adoptive sister, and the main supporting female character in the first season of the show. The character is played by Rachael Taylor, a white Australian actress and model. Taylor was in her early thirties when the show was filmed, and her character is supposed to be the same age as Jessica so it is likely that Trish is somewhere around 30 years old.

4.2.1 Character biography

Like Jessica's background, Trish's biography is constructed both through dialogue and flashback scenes that show her adolescence. She grew up with a single mother, Dorothy Walker, who worked relentlessly to promote her daughter's acting career from an early age. The pair lived on a small income, until Trish's career as a child actress started to take off. When Trish got her own television show called *It's Patsy*, she became so popular that she became the "highest paid child star in television history", which meant that she and her mother could afford a much more luxurious life style. Trish did not, however, like playing the Patsy character because her mother demanded that she essentially had to always pretend to be the character when in public. All in all, Trish's relationship with her mother was very problematic since Dorothy was abusive and highly controlling towards Trish. Trish ended up developing a drug and alcohol problem, which Dorothy tried to hide from the media by adopting Jessica and focusing the media's attention on that. After Trish and Jessica became friends, Trish at some point publicly and privately cut contact with her mother and worked to establish her own career away from her mother's influence. She worked hard and managed to get her own radio talk show *Trish Talk* which became very successful. Throughout this time, Trish and Jessica maintained a close friendship, and Trish is aware of both Jessica's powers and the things that happened to her with Kilgrave.

4.2.2 Visual appearance and context

Regarding visual appearance, Trish has long blond hair and a tall, slender figure. Trish is very attractive according to conventional beauty standards. Her looks are not commented on as

explicitly by other characters as Jessica's looks are, but there are instances where her appearance is the topic of conversation, such as when a fan tells Trish that he misses her red hair from the time when she was a television star. During another, more inappropriate fan encounter, a man tells her that he used to masturbate to her television show as a teenager by stating that "Patsy taught me how to hold a remote with one hand, and box the bald-headed bishop with the other". These comments demonstrate that Trish has been objectified by some of her fans from a young age and continues to be objectified as an adult. However, the commentators are presented in a quite negative light, which highlights their inappropriateness. The man who talks about masturbating to Trish, for instance, is called an asshole and made to apologize by Jessica.

Trish's outfits usually look quite expensive and elegant. She dresses more casually at home, but most of the clothes she wears when she goes out are very stylish, professional looking, and appear to be made from high quality materials, such as silk. She usually has some simple piece of jewelry, such as a necklace, as a part of her outfit. In contrast to Jessica, who always almost wears black or other dark tones, Trish favors white and bright colors, such as red and blue. She only dresses in all black clothes when she participates in a scheme to kidnap Kilgrave and, therefore, wants to look inconspicuous and unidentifiable. In addition to her clothes looking expensive, Trish's wardrobe seems to also be rather sizable, since she is shown in more varied outfits than the other female characters. All in all, Trish's clothes indicate wealth, professionalism and a distinct sense of style that serves as the character's trademark.

In terms of sexualization, Trish is obviously portrayed as a very attractive woman but she does not seem to be objectified much by her clothes or the way she is filmed. Since the style of Trish's usual clothes could be described as business casual, they are not very revealing or alluring. They fit her body well but are not overly tight, and her shirts, for instance, often have long sleeves and moderate necklines. The most revealing outfit that Trish is shown wearing is a silk nightgown that reaches her mid-thigh and is most likely meant to be alluring, but the nightgown is worn in only one scene and the camera in that scene is positioned so that Trish's thighs are not visible for most of the time. Trish is also shown in a state of undress twice during the first season when she has sex with her love interest Simpson, and one of these scenes provides an interesting topic of analysis in terms of objectification. In one sex scene, Trish is mostly covered with a sheet, but in the other viewers see her naked back and glimpses of her breast. On the one hand, such a revealing scene is not really necessary even in terms of showing that sex is happening, so one could argue that the scene depicts Trish in a gratuitous way.

However, the scene has two things in its favor that challenge that assertion. Firstly, the camera does not focus alone on Trish or her body during the scene. Instead it includes more views of their hands and of Simpson than it does of Trish. In fact, the camera focuses on Simpson's face for an equal amount of time during the act than it does on Trish's body or her face, roughly 15 seconds for both characters. The scene also includes Simpson lounging on the bed shirtless so that the focus is on him, so the level of depicted nudity is quite equal between the two characters. Overall, the scene is filmed so that it assumes both Simpson and Trish to be the focus of the viewers' attention instead of just Trish's body. Secondly, it can be argued that the scene serves to tell viewers something about Trish's character, which is mainly that she is confident and assertive in this area of her life as well as others since she takes control of the situation. The scene, therefore, performs a part of character construction instead of just serving as titillation for viewers. All in all, while Trish is depicted experiencing objectifying in the series, the series does not itself portray her in an objectifying manner.

4.2.3 Psychological traits, habits, and interaction with other characters

As the main supporting character, Trish gets a considerable amount of screen time, and she is, therefore, developed in to a quite round character personality wise. Trish is generally portrayed as a very good and confident person, who strives to help other people. She is an intelligent and capable woman with a flourishing career and a desire to turn the world into a better place. However, she also has her faults and problems arising from her abusive childhood, which makes her a more complex character.

Trish is portrayed as an overall very moral person, and one of the core aspects of Trish's character is her desire to do good. Whereas Jess reluctantly helps others because she feels she must, Trish is the kind of person who would want superpowers just so that she could make a difference. In fact, when Jessica uses her powers on rather trivial things, Trish tells Jessica that she would become a superhero immediately if she only could:

Example 29 (episode 5)

(Jessica and Trish sit in a bar talking)

Trish You could use your abilities for something more useful. I mean, you can fly...well, jump.

Jessica It's more like guided falling. Hey, I have an idea. Why don't you put on a cape and go run around New York?

Trish You know I would if I could.

Jessica I don't get you. You have money, looks, a radio show, creepy, if not adoring, fans and you're a freaking household name. What more do you want?

Trish To save the world, of course.

Jessica You wanna be a hero? I'll show you how to be a hero (raises her voice) Shots on Trish Walker, everybody!

While Trish's retort about saving the world is somewhat humorous in this exchange, it does reveal her desire to be able to change things for the better. She already has a lot of good things in her life, but she is not satisfied with just enjoying them, she wants to fight for something. Trish has strong moral convictions and she stands by them passionately when they are challenged. For instance, she is willing to participate in kidnapping Kilgrave to get him to confess his crimes, but adamantly refuses the idea of killing him for the greater good when Simpson brings it up:

Example 30 (episode 7)

(Trish hands Simpson a bunch of photographs)

Trish Kilgrave's new bodyguards.

Simpson And how do you know?

Trish I went to all the top New York security firms, told them... an old stalker of mine was back... that I was in the market for a new protection detail. After that, it was just a matter of getting the right people to talk.

Simpson No way. The first rule of personal security is to keep your clients secret.

Trish I give good talk.

Simpson Oh, clearly. So, we follow these guys, maybe they lead us to Kilgrave.

Trish We stake him out. Call in Jess, she tosses him in that hermetically sealed room you set up.

Simpson Oh, Trish... some people need to be removed from this Earth, and Kilgrave is one of 'em.

Trish We don't get to decide that. Killers decide that. That's what makes them killers.

Simpson That is naive...

Trish And idealistic, and futile, but I want justice for my friend. For that girl in prison. For you and me. I want Kilgrave to live long and alone and despised until he wants to die, but can't. Because that's justice, and I'll fight like hell for it.

Simpson Wow. You just need a flag and a horse.

Trish I'd look goddamn good on it.

Simpson Mmm-hmm.

This example demonstrates that Trish is aware that her ideas about justice and morality are sometimes idealistic and incompatible with the real world, but she is confident that she knows what is the right thing to do and is willing to fight hard for it. She does despise Kilgrave and wants him to suffer for what he has done, but she wants to get revenge in a way that she thinks is moral and just. During the season, Trish also insistently persuades other people to behave in ways that she thinks are right. For example, she chides Jessica for planning to steal drugs from a hospital:

Example 31 (episode 3)

Jessica I really need to get some drugs.

Trish Uh, graduating from alcoholism?

Jessica They're for Kilgrave. Surgical anesthesia knocks out his powers.

Trish Okay, that is huge. How do we get some? I mean, it doesn't sound like something your average drug dealer would have.

Jessica Sufentanil is only available in hospitals, so unless you know any morally compromised doctors...

Trish All the doctors I know save small villages.

Jessica Figured. I got it handled.

Trish You mean you're gonna steal it.

Jessica I prefer "redistribute it."

Trish Come on, Jess, you're better than that.

Trish agrees with the idea to use the drugs on Kilgrave because deactivating his powers is something they must do, but expresses displeasure at the idea of stealing them. This indicates that Trish is willing to adjust her morals to reality when it is needed, but wants to avoid doing anything amoral or illegal if it is not necessary. The fact that she knows several doctors, but they all “save small villages” also suggests that Trish likes to surround herself with people who also strive to help other people. Trish’s willingness to bend her morals if it is absolutely necessary is proved when she ultimately helps Jessica to kill Kilgrave after realizing that there is no other way to stop him.

Trish is not only confident in her moral convictions but her capabilities as well, and she is portrayed as a very intelligent and inventive person. Other characters comment on Trish’s intellect in a positive manner a few times during the series. Jessica, for example, calls her “savvy” and Trish’s mother calls her “smart” and “incisive”. One proof of Trish’s smartness is that she has built herself a very successful career as a radio host after her tumultuous youth. At one point, Trish notes to Jessica that people trust her and her show because she backs up her claims, which suggests that Trish works diligently to make sure her talk show meets her high standards. Trish is also depicted behaving in a quite resourceful manner in the series as example seven demonstrates. The dialogue in the example indicates that Trish has firstly inferred that finding people who are close to Kilgrave will lead to finding the man himself, and secondly she has used her celebrity status and persuasion skills cleverly to find his body guards. In addition to being resourceful, Trish is shown acting very quickly and smartly under pressure. When she is locked inside her gym room, for example, she stays calm and quickly starts using her dumbbells to break the hinges off the door. In another example, when Malcolm shows Trish the body of Jessica’s murdered neighbor without telling her what she is about to see, Trish is

shocked but promptly takes a gun from her purse to point it at Malcolm in case he is the murderer. These instances portray Trish as someone who can think quickly even when she faces surprising or shocking situations. She is perceptive as well, since she notices very quickly when, for example, her love interest Simpson starts acting out of the ordinary due to using drugs or when Jessica is trying to lie to her. Since she is confident in her abilities, Trish does not like when other people doubt them. Simpson, for example, expresses doubt at the idea of Trish being able to act as a getaway driver when kidnapping Kilgrave, and Trish curtly informs him that she does not want his input on the topic:

Example 32 (episode 5)

Simpson	Wait, Trish is the driver?
Trish	I'm in.
Simpson	No, no, no. One of my boys from my old unit will drive.
Jessica	The hell he will!
Simpson	But we need someone who's trained, not a talk radio host.
Trish	Hey, last night was fun, but that doesn't mean I want your opinion.
Jessica	I know I don't.
Simpson	You're right, I'm out of line. I'm sorry.

Trish's willingness to act as a driver indicates that she thinks she is good enough for the job, and her curt retort to Simpson suggest that she does not like being patronized, especially when Simpson has never seen her drive and bases his opinion on assumptions. Trish is smart, knows her worth, and does not tolerate her abilities being unjustly questioned.

Despite her general confident attitude towards life, Trish is depicted having some underlying fears that stem from her past. They become evident from an exchange between her and Jessica in episode three, when Jessica visits Trish's apartment and discovers that Trish has taken up self-defense as a hobby and changed her apartment into a safer place:

Example 33 (episode 3)

(Jessica and Trish walk into the living room. Trish takes her sweater off, revealing large bruises)

Jessica	Jesus Christ, Trish!
Trish	Oh! It's nothing.
Jessica	Who's doing that to you? Is your mom back?
Trish	Just calm down, will you?
Jessica	Okay, is this why you have the video surveillance and the steel-reinforced door?
Trish	And bulletproof windows, a safe room. I made some upgrades.
Jessica	You... What you made is a fortress. Trish, what are you afraid of?
Trish	Not much, anymore. Except clowns. But that's just common sense.

(Trish and Jessica enter Trish's gym room)

never do something like that again, Trish refuses to apologize and stubbornly maintains that she did the right thing because Jessica herself would just let the door stay broken. Trish's stubbornness and inability to realize that her actions caused Jessica unnecessary stress even if they were logical and smart leads them to have a bad argument. These events show that Trish's confidence sometimes turns from an asset to a problem.

When Trish is interacting with other people, she is usually very nice to them and often acts as a negotiator in conflict situations. She especially must act as a negotiator between Simpson and Jessica who do not like each other very much and make it known. When all three of them are in a van, for instance, getting ready to execute their plan to get Kilgrave, Jessica and Simpson start bickering and Trish has to end it quickly:

Example 34 (episode 5)

Simpson If anyone walks up, just pretend to be on the phone. Do not engage.
 Jessica She's a celebrity, she's used to dealing with weirdos. Usually.
 Simpson Yeah, well, she's dealt with you all these years, so...
 Trish Okay, let's go back to tense silence, I think.

Jessica's last word "usually" is meant to suggest that Simpson is a "weirdo" who Trish is not dealing with properly, and Simpson retaliates by suggesting that Trish has learned to deal with weird people by being around Jess. Trish ends the argument quickly with a humorous but blunt order about going back to silence, which achieves the task of preventing the argument from escalating without lecturing the pair while still making Trish's opinion about their behavior clear. Overall, Trish is usually the person who stays calm and collected when others around her starts losing their temper.

As Trish's way of diffusing tensions between Simpson and Jessica demonstrates, Trish also has a humorous side to her. Trish's humor is mostly presented through little jokes that she incorporates into her interactions with others. Most of her jokes take place in conversations with Jessica, such as when she makes a dig at a jewelry designer that is Jessica's client:

Example 35 (episode 4)

Jessica Look, I'm with a client right now. Sort of.
 Trish How can you trust any client after what happened with Hope's parents?
 Jessica I don't, which is why I've been following her since dawn.
 Trish Following who?
 Jessica A jealous wife.
 Trish Jess, come on, I need the distraction.
 Jessica Fine. A jewelry designer. Audrey Eastman.

Trish Overpriced, chunky enamel stuff? Well, if she is mind-controlled, that would explain some of her jewelry.

As the example shows, Trish's humor can be fairly snarky. It is not, however, nearly as biting as Jessica's humor tends to be, and Trish does not make this kind of snarky jokes to people's faces. Trish is also shown acting silly with Jessica when, for example, she tests the costume she bought for Jessica. Trish's sense of humor is, therefore, quite playful, especially when she is comfortable with the people she is interacting with. While Trish's humor is less forceful than Jessica's, it still works to make the character seem more lively.

4.2.3.1 Relationships

4.2.3.1.1 Trish and Simpson

Simpson is Trish's love interest in the first season, and the two share a rather complicated relationship. Simpson is a military veteran who is working as a police officer when Kilgrave randomly chooses him and orders him to go and kill Trish. Simpson nearly manages to choke Trish to death, and later returns to her apartment full of remorse to see whether Trish is alright. Trish forgives Simpson after initial doubts because she knows Simpson was mind controlled and, therefore, had no choice in his actions. The two soon begin a quite casual relationship, that has potential to develop further. However, as the situation with Kilgrave escalates, Simpson becomes convinced that he must be killed and starts secretly making plans to assassinate him with his old army friends while Trish and Jessica work to expose Kilgrave and send him to prison. Eventually Simpson starts taking combat enhancement drugs that he used to take in his army days and starts to act increasingly erratically. In the end he tries to kill Jessica because he thinks she is protecting Kilgrave, which forces Trish and Jessica to fight him. The relationships, therefore, ends as badly as it begins.

Trish's relationship with Simpson demonstrates that she is a rather forgiving person, but she still has boundaries that she will not tolerate being crossed. Despite almost dying, Trish forgives Simpson for attacking her because he was not himself while doing it. Trish also grows fond of Simpson quite fast, but does not seem to be in a hurry to commit, because their relationship stays quite casual. Trish proceeds slowly with the relationship, and does not make it her top priority. Her work and the quest to capture Kilgrave take precedence over a romantic interest so she is not defined by her romantic goals. When Simpson starts behaving aggressively in situations that do not warrant it, Trish quickly starts to distance herself from him. When Simpson will not take the hint, Trish does not hesitate to call him out on his behavior:

Example 36 (episode 11)

Simpson Hi.

Trish What are you doing here?

Simpson Uh, you wouldn't answer my calls.

Trish Because I don't want to talk to you.

Simpson I don't blame you. I was an asshole.

Trish Assholes are a nuisance. I deal with them every day. You were violent and scary.

Simpson I know. I... I am so sorry.

The fact that Trish does not let Simpson minimize his behavior shows that she has strict boundaries regarding violence in relationships that she will not let others to cross. When Simpson tries to kill Jessica, Trish is willing to fight Simpson, which implies that her feelings for him are not very deep. She is still willing to see the good in Simpson, however, since she says to Jessica that he is a good guy “before those drugs turned him into Godzilla”. Trish’s desire to believe the best of Simpson even if she does not tolerate his bad behavior portrays Trish as a quite optimistic person.

4.2.3.1.2 Trish and her mother

Trish and her mother Dorothy have a very difficult relationship due to Dorothy being emotionally and physically abusive when Trish was a teenager. In flashback scenes, Dorothy is depicted hitting Trish with a statue and forcing her to throw up after eating pizza.

Example 37 (episode 11)

(Dorothy is trying to force Trish to stick her fingers down her throat over a toilet)

Dorothy Come on.

Trish No, I don't wanna do this.

Dorothy Come on. Come on.

Trish No, I don't wanna do this!

Dorothy Well, you shouldn't have eaten all that pizza. Then we wouldn't have to do this.

Trish Stop it!

Dorothy The camera adds ten pounds. You know that. You want them to call you Fatsy?

The abuse ended when Jessica threatened Dorothy, and Trish cut contact with her mother sometime after that. Trish’s dislike for her mother becomes evident when Jessica makes a biting retort about Trish “turning into her mother” during an argument, and Trish reacts by accusing Jessica of going for the “low blow”. Trish’s abusive childhood seems to haunt her as an adult, and she is determined not to go through abuse again.

Trish comes into contact with her mother when she is hospitalized and Dorothy arrives to see her. She tells Trish that she was worried about her missing her show and praises her talents.

The conversation soon turns to their past when Trish reminds her mother that she is not her manager anymore:

Example 38 (episode 12)

Trish I'm not your client.
 Dorothy As you made abundantly clear years ago, to me, privately, publicly, internationally...
 Trish I didn't want you getting your claws into another starlet.
 Dorothy Fair enough. I was a god-awful mother back then.
 Trish And not now?
 Dorothy How would I know? You never gave me another shot at it.
 Trish I'd like you to leave now.
 Dorothy Fine. I'll just... scream at some nurses on the way out, to lift my spirits.

Dorothy admits that she was a bad mother to Trish, which suggest she feels guilty for the way she behaved towards her daughter. Her statement about Trish not giving her another chance, however, seems like it is meant to make Trish feel guilty about not wanting to be in contact with Dorothy. Dorothy is, therefore, trying to manipulate Trish to give her another chance at building a relationship, but Trish maintains her boundary and firmly asks Dorothy to leave. Despite Trish clearly indicating that she does not want see her mother, Dorothy later goes to Trish's apartment to give her some files that Trish is interested in:

Example 39 (episode 12)

Dorothy You're welcome to come home and go through all my files.
 Trish It's not home for me anymore.
 Dorothy Well, it is as far as I'm concerned. And besides, everyone would love to see you.
 Remember Sabrina? She just asked about you. In fact, she's looking for someone to endorse her bottled water division. And for every bottle sold, they give water to places that need it. One for one.
 Trish I'd forgot how good you were.
 Dorothy You also forget that one-room apartment we used to live in. You don't piss on money, Pats.
 It's an insult to those of us who had none.
 Trish Thank you for the information. I'd like you to go now.
 Dorothy The files will still be waiting for you.

Trish and Dorothy have a somewhat civil conversation, which Dorothy soon turns into an opportunity to advertise her friend's business to Trish. When Trish realizes that her mother is already trying to benefit from Trish, she calls Dorothy out on her manipulation, which leads to Dorothy angrily defending herself. Dorothy tries to use her poor past to excuse her behavior towards Trish and to admonish her for being ungrateful about the things Dorothy has done for her. Dorothy's behavior suggests that while she might actually regret some her actions in the

past, she mostly wants to repair her relationship with Trish because it would benefit her economically. Dorothy is a very manipulative person, but Trish recognizes her tactics quickly and refuses to engage with her past that. This indicates that Trish is not willing to forgive her mother as long as she continues to act in her old ways. Trish's firm treatment of her mother also reveals that she is not afraid of her mother as a person and knows that the power balance in their relationship has shifted in her favor since her childhood.

4.2.4 Speech

Trish usually speaks in a quite standard casual way when she is with her friends. She does use swear words occasionally to emphasize her words or express her emotions. Trish can be, for instance, heard uttering such expletives as "goddamn", "screw it", and "holy crap" when the situations calls for it. The use of such expressions is, however, relatively rare for her, and most of the time she speaks in a confident but calm manner. When she is at work, Trish adopts a somewhat more formal way of speaking that is suitable for a radio talk show host, including intonation and phrases that fit that position:

Example 40 (episode 11)

Trish We've been listening to Diane Masagi talk about her autobiography, *Behind the Scenes With a Rock Flautist*, and as a treat, Diane has agreed to give us a live sample of her work. Take it away, Diane.

A noteworthy aspect of Trish's speech is also that she can speak fluent French. In one episode, she makes a reservation to an upscale restaurant using only French. This skill is mostly likely meant to portray Trish as an educated and cultured person.

When Trish is dealing with her fans, she always talks in a very polite manner even if the situation is not very pleasant for her. For example, after she is attacked by mind controlled Simpson, she has to deal with an unwelcome fan encounter the next day. When Kilgrave's mind control wears off, Simpson thinks he has for some unfathomable reason killed an innocent woman and returns to check her apartment with another police officer, who turns out to be a fan of Trish:

Example 41 (Episode 4)

(Trish and Jessica open the door to the two police men bounding on it)

Officer Are you all right, ma'am?

Trish I'm fine.

Officer Any violent incidents we should know about? Anybody try to hurt you?

Trish I think I would know if I'd been attacked.

Officer We're real sorry for the disturbance, Ms. Walker. Uh, by the way, really big fan of your show

back in the day (starts singing the tune of Trish's television show) It's Patsy! I really wanna be your friend...

Trish That's sweet. Thanks for watching.

During this exchange, Trish is still reeling from Simpson's attack from the night before, but she has to lie that everything is fine due to the circumstances of the situation. Even though she is not happy to be dealing with a fan at that moment, Trish still politely thanks the officer for being a fan. In another unfortunate fan encounter before Simpson's attack, a man walks up to Trish from behind and grabs her shoulder to get her attention as she and Jessica are leaving her work place after Trish has lambasted Kilgrave on radio. Trish reacts by punching and kicking the man because she thinks he is one of Kilgrave's mind controlled slaves.

Example 42 (episode 3)

(The man writhes in pain on the floor)

Trish (panicked) He grabbed me.

(Jessica notices the man has Patsy Walker magazines and other fan merchandise)

Jessica Oh, shit.

Trish He's a fan?

Man Autograph?

Trish (mortified) You're a fan. Oh, I'm... Oh, my God, I'm so, so sorry.

Man I miss your red hair.

Trish Sorry, I...

Jessica Okay, come on, we have to go. Come on, we have to go.

Trish I gotta go, I'm sorry!

Trish is clearly mortified by her mistake and apologizes for it many times. Jessica has to remind her that they are in a real hurry to get to a safe place when Trish seems like she will stay and keep apologizing to the man. These encounters portray Trish as someone who values her fans and is courteous to them even when they come up to her at bad times.

4.2.5 Environment

The environment that is probably the most important to Trish is her apartment. She lives somewhere on the upper floors of a building that is upscale enough to have a doorman. Her apartment is fairly large, especially for one person, since it has at least five rooms in addition to a big kitchen and a spacious balcony. The place looks modern and it has been carefully designed and decorated. There are art works on the walls, the furniture looks new and comfortable, and everything is in its place. Trish is often shown in her state-of-the-art kitchen grabbing a drink or talking to people. The fact that her apartment is so big and upscale indicates that Trish is quite wealthy, which is not surprising considering her fame as both an actress and

a radio host. The level of detail that is put into the interior design of the apartment also suggest that Trish likes to make her home cozy and stylish. If Trish's apartment reflects her psychological state, then she is calm, organized and emotionally stable. There is, however, another layer to Trish's apartment, and that is all the security measures that is has. Trish has a fortified door, camera surveillance, a panic room and other security measures in place. Trish's apartment, therefore, serves as a literal safe haven from the outside world as well as a figurative one. It shows that Trish is afraid of being hurt and uses her home to fortify herself against any possible threats by making it a place where she can relax and train in peace.

Another environment where Trish spends a considerable amount of time is her workplace. As a talk show host, Trish's workplace is a radio station in a big modern building. Since Trish has her own show, she has her own studio with the name of the show, "Trish Talk", written on one wall with big illuminated letters. The studio is small but comfortable and professional looking. Trish's workplace highlights the notion that Trish is successfully building herself into a brand since her name appears on the wall and in various merchandise, such as coffee cups. The studio also has some of the same organized and comfortable style as her apartment with just more focus on function, which suggest that Trish is incorporating her own ideas and sense of style into her work. Given that Trish is depicted following her passion for helping others through her work, it makes sense that she would want to make on her mark on the physical environment of her workplace as well as the content of her work. All in all, Trish's studio suggests that she in an organized manner, and she wants to leave her mark on the world, both literally and figuratively.

4.2.6 Function in terms of the plot and character development

Trish's function as a character fits into the role of a supporting sidekick to Jessica. She aids Jessica in her quest against Kilgrave by providing goods and services to her. For instance, she uses her money to rent a van for Jessica when she needs it and acts as a getaway driver when they kidnap Kilgrave from a public space. Trish also provides emotional support and advice to Jessica when it is needed, encouraging Jessica to share her concerns when they clearly trouble her. Since Trish differs quite radically from Jessica in many aspects, she also serves as a foil character to highlight Jessica's character traits. Trish is rich, calm, idealistic and moral whereas Jessica is poor, short-tempered, cynical, and morally questionable. The two characters make a very contrasting pair from their visual appearance to their personalities, and the relationship between them makes both character's individual traits more pronounced. Since Trish is depicted as the one with superior personal principles, she serves as a moral guide to Jessica by trying to

influence her to make more altruistic and lawful decisions. She is not, however, always depicted as superior to Jessica in terms of making decisions, since her idealism and confidence occasionally leads to dangerous decisions that depict Jessica's cynicism as the more realistic approach. In addition to fulfilling the functions of providing material, physical and emotional help for Jessica, Trish also makes viewers feel a stronger emotional connection to the unsociable hero. Jessica has a host of character traits that probably make her seem very harsh and unapproachable to many viewers, but her close relationship with Trish shows a more likable and friendly side of her that gives a convincing reason to like her. Even though Trish fulfils the role of a sidekick, however, she does not just serve as Jessica's personal support. Trish's decisions during the season, such as independently finding Kilgrave and starting a relationship with Simpson, occasionally play an active role in developing the plot.

Whether Trish fits the damsel-in-distress trope is a very interesting point to consider. Usually the trope involves the damsel being rescued by a male hero, but in a broader application of the trope the rescuer can be a woman as well. Trish is rescued by Jessica several times during the season, first from her abusive mother and later from being attacked, which certainly places her in the damsel-in-distress category at least partially. That said, there are some positive aspects in these rescue scenes that keep Trish from being a stereotypical example of the trope. Trish is far from a helpless victim due to her self-defense training. When she is attacked by Simpson, for instance, she manages to disarm him and to fight back for a while despite him being much stronger than her. In addition, Kilgrave sends Simpson to kill her because Trish offends him personally, which is at least somewhat better than Trish being targeted just to hurt Jessica. Trish also gets to rescue Jessica once when she is injured and attacked by Simpson. Although defeating Simpson ends up ultimately being a joint effort, Trish saves Jessica with her bravery and fighting skills since Jessica has no hope of defeating Simpson by herself in her injured state. These aspects of Trish's characterization give her some agency that prevents her from appearing like a passive victim that is solely used as a tool for Jessica's heroics.

In terms of character development, Trish does go through some growth during the season. She begins the season as a very confident character. She could be described as over-confident because she underestimates Kilgrave and purposely angers him even though Jessica has made it clear to her how dangerous he is. Traumatic events and failures regarding Kilgrave cause Trish to lose her confidence in herself for a while, but she regains most of it back by the end of the season. She does, however, consider her and Jessica's plan in more detail than before and recognizes the danger that they will face, which suggests she has become somewhat more

careful and realistic person. As the season progresses, Trish also adjusts her morals to a degree. She comes to realize that sometimes hard decisions that go against her morals, such as killing Kilgrave, are necessary. She, therefore, develops from idealistic to a more realistic direction in terms of her personality, and adopts slightly more relativistic morals than before.

4.2.7 Summary

To recap, Trish's biography is developed almost as much as Jessica's, because the two characters have a shared history. Trish's background is interesting because it depicts the character in two opposing ways. As a child star, Trish lived a life of luxury and privilege, but she was also a disadvantaged victim of her mother's emotional and physical abuse. It also serves to show how much Trish has changed from her youth, since she has turned from a tightly controlled child star with a substance abuse problem to a well-adjusted and confident woman who has built herself a successful career. Trish's biography, therefore, reveals a significant amount of character development and makes her appear as a person with rich life history.

Trish is depicted as very attractive in terms of her appearance, and she has a somewhat similar slim but curvy physique as Jessica. Her clothes are usually not very revealing or alluring, and although she is shown partially nude in a couple scenes, she is not sexualized to a greater degree than the male character who she shares the scenes with. Trish also receives approving comments about her looks that highlight her attractiveness, but the more explicit comments about her appearance are depicted as inappropriate. Trish is, therefore, objectified by other characters, but that objectification is not endorsed by the show itself. Instead, it is portrayed as sleazy and annoying.

Regarding her psychological traits, Trish's personality is portrayed as very friendly and confident. She acts very polite even towards people who are bothering her at inconvenient times, and she always remembers to thank her fans for watching her television show. In arguments, she often tries to act as a negotiator and usually manages to stop the arguments from escalating without hurting anyone's feelings. While Trish likes to believe the best of people and is willing to go to great lengths for the people she cares about, she does not tolerate people crossing her boundaries in relationship whether they are Jessica, Simpson or her mother. When others behave poorly towards her or her loved ones, Trish does not hesitate to inform them that their behavior is not appreciated. In terms of her intellect, Trish is depicted as smart because she demonstrates ingenuity and quick thinking several times. She also has high morals, and she tries to steer others in what she thinks is the right direction. Even though Trish is generally

portrayed as very emotionally balanced, especially compared to Jessica, she has some deep-seated fears and insecurities that stem from her youth and manifest in the way she modifies her apartment. She can also be stubborn and impulsive in her actions. These problems and flaws add another layer to the character's personality and make her more relatable.

As a character, Trish fulfils the role of a supporting sidekick to Jessica. She provides emotional, physical and material help to Jessica, and mostly follows her plans and decisions regarding Kilgrave. She also serves to make Jessica's character traits more noticeable and to make her more likable to the viewers. Even though she could be characterized as a sidekick, Trish is also shown acting independently and her decisions and actions influence how the plot progresses. Overall, Trish is constructed as a complex character that undergoes notable development during the season. If she had some more screen time, she could even be described as co-protagonist.

4.3 Jeri Hogarth

Jeri Hogarth is a supporting female character who appears in ten episodes of *Jessica Jones*. She works as a lawyer for a firm called Hogarth, Chao and Benowitz, and hires Jessica to do various tasks for the firm. The character is played by Carrie-Anne Moss, who is a white Canadian actress. The age of the character is not specified, but she is most likely meant to be in her forties since the actress portraying her was in her late forties when the series was made.

4.3.1 Character biography

Not much is explicitly revealed about Jeri's background, but some aspects of her character biography can be inferred from the dialogue between her and other characters. It is revealed that she went to an unnamed law school and has since managed to build a very successful career as a lawyer in New York. She is married to a doctor called Wendy Ross-Hogarth, and it is implied that the couple has been together for a very long time since Wendy makes remarks about paying for Jeri's law school and having built their lives together. At one point Wendy states that she worked double shifts every day to pay for Jeri's school, which suggests that Jeri came from a family that was either unable or unwilling to pay for her law school. Wendy also reveals that Jeri bribed a juror during her first capital case, which implies that Jeri has used illicit means in addition to hard work to build her career. It is also worth noting that sometime before the events of the show, Jeri apparently fell in love with her secretary and began an affair with her. All in all, Jeri's background is kept quite vague, but it offers just enough information to give the viewer the impression that the character has some life history, which makes the

character appear more realistic and multifaceted. In addition, Jeri's biography serves to strengthen some of the character traits that are built throughout the series.

4.3.2 Visual appearance and context

In terms of physical appearance, Jeri has short, black hair and a curvy figure. Her body type is not as thin as Jessica's or Trish's, but she still appears to be quite slim. Jeri almost always wears black sheath dresses with long or short sleeves and dark high heels. Sometimes she also wears a beige or grey coat over her dress, but otherwise she favors black. Jeri's knee-length dresses are figure-hugging, but not overly tight, and they never reveal any cleavage. Jeri's clothes seem to be very high-end, and Jessica makes a couple disparaging comments about Jeri that highlight her fancy tastes. She, for instance, describes Jeri as "a sack of dark oozing shit in an expensive suit" and threatens to "kick her Armani-covered ass". Jessica's insults are the only time anyone comments on Jeri's looks during the show.

Jeri's visual appearance seems to be carefully chosen to emphasize two things: professionalism and power. The fact that Jeri is a successful and respected lawyer means that she has to dress the part. People's appearance is connected to their perceived competence since more attractive people are, for instance, often considered smarter and more disciplined than less attractive people (Rhode 2010:26-27). Being too attractive can, however, be detrimental since very beautiful or sexy women in upper-level positions are often considered less intelligent and competent due to their appearances (Rhode 2010:31). Jeri's dresses seem to achieve the balancing act of being flattering without being too sexy: they accentuate her figure but do not reveal too much to be considered in any way unprofessional. Wearing high heels is also a part of appearing like a professional lawyer, and expensive designer clothes work as status symbols that connote wealth and success. The color black is associated with powerfulness and high quality in many cultures (see e.g. Amsteus et al 2015), so Jeri's consistent use of black sheath dresses can be interpreted as a signal of her social and professional power. There were no instances of sexualizing Jeri either via or clothes the way she is filmed.

4.3.3 Psychological traits, habits and interaction with other characters

Jeri's personality is portrayed in a rather negative light throughout the series. She first appears at the beginning of the first season when Jessica goes to ask for a gig to earn some money. The scene consists of Jessica and Jeri discussing Jessica's employment while walking through the hallways of Jeri's law firm into her office. When Jessica asks Jeri if she has any gigs for her, Jeri expresses surprise and reminds Jessica about their troubled relationship:

Example 43 (episode 1)

Jessica Got anything for me?
 Jeri I thought you didn't like or trust me.
 Jessica Oh, come on, I meant lawyers in general.
 Jeri "Scumbag henchmen for corporate America."
 Jessica Well...

Even though Jessica claims that her mistrust of Jeri is based on her profession rather than personality, the exchange does tag Jeri as someone who is potentially untrustworthy. Jessica clearly has a very low opinion of Jeri, and since she is the lead character, viewers are likely to place value to her opinion when assessing who Jeri is. The conversation continues as the pair debates Jessica's working methods, and Jeri finally agrees to give Jessica a gig:

Example 44 (episode 1)

Jeri You know, it's really about professionalism. You are erratic and you are volatile.
 Jessica Effective. You've brought me eight jobs no one could deliver on.
 Jeri I did. And that is why I have overlooked several complaints, and have kept your methods confidential.
 Jessica You're not protecting me. You need my methods. I'm not gonna beg you for a case. I will ask you, though, very strongly.

(Jeri thinks for a moment)

Jeri I need a summons served to the owner of several gentlemen's clubs. His name is Gregory Spheeris. An exotic dancer fell off the stage when a pole came loose. Severe concussion, some permanent brain damage. Spheeris claims she was always that stupid.
 Jessica And you're repping who?
 Jeri The dancer, of course.
 Jessica (amused) The poor, brain-damaged dancer. And?
 Jeri Other parties interested in Spheeris' property.
 Jessica Phew. I questioned my whole worldview for a second there.
 Jeri Spheeris' bodyguards make him very difficult to serve. Your specialty.
 Jessica This has gone a long way toward me liking and trusting you.

This scene tells the viewers several things about Jeri's character. Firstly, she likes to at least appear professional, and disapproves of Jessica's abrasive manners, but is not morally opposed to Jessica's unconventional working methods. Jeri wants to keep up the appearance of a strictly professional lawyer but is willing to use shady methods to achieve her goals. Secondly, Jessica thinks that she is a self-serving and apparently not a very compassionate person, since she expresses disbelief and amusement at the idea that Jeri is representing the most likely poor dancer instead of the wealthy club owner. Jessica's assessment is proven right since Jeri admits she has ulterior motives for taking the dancer as a client. Lastly, Jessica's statement about the

summons going a long way toward liking and trusting Jeri reinforces the notion that Jessica ultimately considers Jeri untrustworthy and unpleasant.

As the season progresses, Jeri is depicted as an ambitious person who has very hard values. Her career is so important to her that her wife Wendy makes a biting comment to Pam about Jeri valuing her work over her own life or the lives of other people: “You threaten my life, I threaten your career. Which is more important to her than her life... or anyone else's”. Jeri also seems to have a habit of working in her free time at the expense of her romantic relationships. When she goes out on a date with Pam, for example, she keeps going over work related issues on her phone instead of focusing on her date:

Example 45 (episode 4)

(Pam and Jeri walk toward a restaurant)

Pam	It's an hour north of Rome. My sister said the views from the hotel are amazing.
Jeri (looking at her phone)	Unbelievable. Two more walk-ins because of that goddamn radio interview.
Pam	Can I have my Jeri back, please? I would love to have lunch without us bringing the office with us.

Later in the series Wendy reveals that when she took Jeri to Paris as an anniversary gift, Jeri “spent the entire time on the phone with a client”, which gives the impression that Jeri has a long history of prioritizing work over her personal life. The motivation for Jeri’s excessive working habits seems to be a rather selfish ambition to be successful. Jeri is not a lawyer because she wants to help people or right wrongs, she mostly just wants to win and chooses her clients accordingly. For example, she at first refuses to represent Hope after the murder of her parents because she thinks there is no hope for winning the case:

Example 46 (episode 2)

Jeri	There is a legal name for cases like hers.
Jessica	There's precedent?
Jeri	They're called losers, and I don't represent losers. I'll let you know if any work comes in for you. Until then, relax. Get a massage. I have a great Filipino woman who will walk all over your back.

The reason for refusing to represent losing cases is caused by Jeri’s desire to protect her reputation as an excellent lawyer. She does not seem to have much empathy for her clients, and mostly views them in pragmatic terms. When Jessica manages to persuade her to take on Hopes case, Jeri is still very careful to avoid publicly defending her client and damaging her reputation. For instance, she refuses to use her own name to find witnesses for Kilgrave’s powers:

Example 47 (episode 3)

Jessica Kilgrave leaves a trail of broken people behind him. Get some of them to testify.
 Jeri You get them, I will use them.
 Jessica I am busy trying to bring Kilgrave in. Change public perception and victims will
 come forward.
 Jeri If I go public, I undercut my credibility, which will hurt any argument I bring to trial.
 Jessica Oh, so you're a cheat and a coward.
 Jeri Careful, Jessica, because I am the only other person who is trying to save Hope's life.
 Jessica (sarcastically) Your compassion is overwhelming.

Jeri's ambition also manifests as determination to make things go her way even if it requires using illegal or deceptive means. In other words, when Jeri decides she wants something, she usually makes it happen. As a top lawyer, she demonstrates a significant amount of leadership and power by making her cases go as she likes. Jeri is described as smart and pragmatic by other characters during the season, and Trish at one point calls her "a force of nature". Jessica, in turn, describes Jeri as "One of New York's sharkiest lawyers" and "the best shark in town", which refer to Jeri's ruthless and efficient way of handling cases. Jeri is resourceful and intelligent, and she has no qualms about lying and manipulating other people to suit her own agenda. When Jessica pesters her about publicly defending Hope, Jeri agrees to set up a radio interview with Hope on Trish Talk to defend Hopes case, but then instead baits Trish into defending Hope's story on air so that she does not need to. When Jessica first tells Jeri about Kilgrave's mind control powers, Jeri remarks that "If there really was a man who could influence people like that, I would hire him to do all my jury selection." The statement is intended as a joke, but when Jeri later learns that Kilgrave can really control people's minds, her first idea is that she could use his abilities for her own gain:

Example 48 (episode 4)

Jeri Kilgrave wanted a leather jacket, live cello music, and the flattering smile of a pretty
 girl. What a waste. He could solve so many problems with his gift.
 Jessica Gift?
 Jeri I just meant, if... if he was on our side.

Later when Hope is pregnant with Kilgrave's child, Jeri assists Hope with getting an abortion, but secretly sends the remains of the fetus to be investigated in the hopes that Kilgrave's powers could be replicated and, presumably, used to benefit her. Jeri's actions show that she is very good at utilizing situations for her own benefit. She is also perceptive and recognizes how she can react to surprising situations quickly. When she first meets Hope in prison after agreeing to be her attorney, the two have the following short conversation about Kilgrave's victims:

Example 49 (episode 2)

Jeri Jessica Jones sent me. There is a possibility that your claims might be corroborated by another victim. Looks like you're a mascot for a macabre club.

Hope (surprised) There are others? Besides Jessica?

(Jeri is silent for a moment, looks to the side and down like she is thinking)

Jeri Why don't you walk me through it, yeah?

Prior to this exchange Jeri does not know that Jessica has history with Kilgrave, so Hope's comment that labels Jessica as one of his victims comes as a surprise to Jeri. She takes a couple seconds to think about the situation, but does not reveal to Hope that she has said anything remarkable. Then she directs the conversation so that she can get Hope to reveal as much as possible about Jessica and the situation with Kilgrave without revealing that she is giving Jeri new information. She is, therefore, able to use the situation to her gain without revealing her ignorance, which shows that she can think quickly and smartly.

Jeri stays calm and circumspect in most interactions with other people, but she does have a temper that appears when things do not go according to her plan. Frustration occasionally makes her say imprudent things that she quickly regrets since they usually hurt her position. One instance of such loss of control takes place when she is talking on the phone with Wendy about their divorce:

Example 50 (episode 9)

Jeri Wendy, even if you take all of my money, it will not change how I feel about Pam.

Wendy No... but it'll hurt. I won't be the only one left bleeding on the floor.

Jeri And you call me the heartless one.

(Wendy laughs disbelievingly)

Jeri Wendy, I'm sorry, I take that back. I know we can agree on a number...

(Wendy hangs up the phone)

Jeri Wendy?

Jeri's retort about Wendy's heartlessness is meant to be biting, but she instantly realizes that angering Wendy will only hurt her more so Jeri quickly tries to backpedal on her comment. The conversation demonstrates Jeri's instinct to lash out when her temper flares, but also her desire to protect herself over all else. She is willing to apologize, but her plead about agreeing on a number shows that her apology stems from a desire to improve her situation and not from actual guilt over saying something cruel.

4.3.3.1 Relationships

4.3.3.1.1 Jeri and Jessica

Jeri and Jessica share an unfriendly but mutually beneficial relationship. Jeri seems to associate with Jessica mainly due to her efficiency as a private investigator. Jeri provides Jessica with cases and legal help, and Jessica deals with clients and cases that are difficult to handle or other private investigators cannot solve. Neither really likes the other, however, since Jessica thinks Jeri is unpleasant and morally corrupt, and Jeri finds Jessica untrustworthy and ill-mannered. During the season, both characters do some questionable things to the other in an effort to help themselves. In addition to scheming with Hope's abortion and tricking Trish into defending mind control on radio, Jeri causes Kilgrave to escape from a cell that Jessica and her team have managed to capture Kilgrave in. She does not do it deliberately, but she has tampered with Kilgrave's cell after being swayed by his promises to help her and stays quiet about it, which eventually enables Kilgrave to escape and hurt other people in the process. Jessica is not exactly innocent herself, however, since she tricks Jeri into arriving into the building where Kilgrave is kept, therefore exposing Jeri's face to Kilgrave and forcing her to help her extort a confession out of him. Neither Jeri or Jessica have much reservations about manipulating the other if it is needed.

Despite its rockiness, Jeri and Jessica's relationship provides an opportunity to redeem Jeri's character at the end of the season. After things go horribly wrong for Jeri, she helps Jessica to avoid a murder charge for killing Kilgrave in the final episode. This action is the only instance where she is shown genuinely admitting her mistakes and selflessly acting to help someone. It serves to tell the viewers that Jeri is not an evil person even though she is very selfish and exploitative.

4.3.3.1.2 Jeri, Wendy, and Pam

The love triangle between Jeri, Wendy and Pam lets viewers see both Jeri's cruel side and her softer side. Overall, Jeri treats her wife Wendy very coldly throughout the season. She takes a mistress and continues the relationship until Wendy finds out and only then starts divorce proceedings. When Wendy starts making the divorce difficult, Jeri gives Jessica the task of discovering some information about Wendy that can be used to force her to agree to the divorce. As the situations escalates, Jeri gives Jessica permission to do whatever it takes to get Wendy to sign the papers.

Example 51 (episode 6)

Jessica Look, I will get something on your ex, okay? I will make her sign those divorce papers if I have to dangle her off of a ledge. Is that what you want to hear?

Jeri Yes.

When Jessica does actually dangle Wendy over a subway ledge, Jeri condemns her actions as insanity, but does mostly to save her own face because the action has enraged Wendy. Jeri has not always been so callous towards her wife, however, since Wendy makes comments that indicate that Jeri has a kinder side as well:

Example 52 (episode 8)

Wendy Even when we were dating, everyone wanted to know what I saw in you.

Jeri Then why did you marry me?

Wendy Because you were kind to me. You were a bastard to everyone else, and you were kind to me. I was special.

Jeri Well, I liked you.

Wendy Mmm.

Jeri And I like you when you aren't trying to take my livelihood.

Wendy But you don't love me anymore.

This conversation gives the impression that Jeri is unpleasant to most people, but she has a softer side that she only shows to those select few that she likes enough. The current recipient of Jeri's affections is her lover Pam, whom Jeri treats nicer than anyone else. Jeri shows Pam physical affection by holding her and kissing her, tries to take her to a nice restaurant, and talks to her kindly. She eventually even buys a ring and proposes to Pam, eager to marry her even before her divorce with Wendy has been finalized. The only times when Jeri is shown smiling and looking genuinely happy all occur when she is with Pam. Jeri is, therefore, capable of love and kindness in her personal relationships but the number of people who get to see that side of her is exceedingly small. Jeri's actions towards her wife and her lover also portray her as very decisive in terms of her personal life. When she likes someone, Jeri acts to show her affection for them by giving them gifts and proposing to them. When she no longer wants someone, however, she does not hesitate to discard them. In the end, Jeri's relationships with both Wendy and Pam end poorly due to her personal flaws. Jeri's scheming eventually puts all three women in danger, and Pam becomes disillusioned with Jeri after realizing the extent of her lies. As Pam sees who Jeri really is as a person, she finds her abhorrent:

Example 53 (episode 10)

Pam So now that I understand your bullshit... it's all that I see when I look at you. You're repulsive.

All in all, the show portrays Jeri's personality as incompatible with happy and stable romantic relationships in the long run.

4.3.4 Speech

Jeri's style of speaking is very calm, assertive, and standard. She seems to measure her words carefully in most situations, and often takes little breaks to think about what she is going to say next. She usually speaks with a relatively low pitch and a calm voice even when she is being verbally attacked by Jessica or other characters. Jeri rarely uses expletives, mostly uttering them only when she is alone and frustrated with something. Her speech contains a great deal of legal jargon, which is not surprising since she is depicted working for most of her screen time. The effect of Jeri's speech style is that she comes across as quite authoritative and professional.

A noteworthy aspects of Jeri's speech patterns is her unwillingness to give straight answers when she is questioned about something. When Jessica, for instance, wants to know whether Jeri's firm represents a client that was referred to her, she has to probe Jeri for the answer:

Example 54 (episode 4)

Jessica	I need to know if your firm represents Audrey Eastman. She says she's with Desmond Tobey.
Jeri	Well, then you should be invading Tobey's office.
Jessica	I did. Are "attorney-client privilege" the only words that he knows? He wouldn't even tell me if he referred her to me.
Jeri	What's going on? You're on edge.
Jessica	The last people referred to me wound up dead in my elevator. If Audrey Eastman follows the same path, she won't be able to pay her legal bills.
Jeri	She is a client, I'll confirm that.
Jessica	And do you trust him? Tobey?
Jeri	He's a partner.
Jessica	That's not an answer.
Jeri	He's handling my own divorce, so yes, I trust him.
Jessica	Okay, good, that's all I need to know.

Jessica asks Jeri a very straightforward question, but instead of simply answering it Jeri redirects the conversation by making comments about her partner and Jessica's mental state. She agrees to give an answer only after Jessica explains her reasons for asking the question. Then she first gives a very vague answer to Jessica's another question, and Jessica has to challenge that answer to get the information she wants. This kind of pattern repeats in several other conversations that Jeri has with various characters during the season. It seems that Jeri is unwilling to reveal any information to anyone without first knowing why the information is

needed. This type of vagueness might be the result of her profession, since knowing how to manipulate and present information is critical for a top lawyer. It also portrays her as someone who likes to hold the power in conversations, since she boldly redirects conversations in directions that she finds favorable and refuses to give answers without knowing how they will be used by the other participant. The overall effect of this pattern is that Jeri comes across very calculating and perceptive.

4.3.5 Environment

The environments that Jeri is shown spending her time in are mostly related to her work. Jeri's office is a large room that is furnished in a very clean, modern, and minimalistic fashion. It has large windows overlooking the New York city so the office is located on the upper levels of the building. Jeri is often shown sitting on her desk working or looking out of her window while she makes phone calls. The modern look of Jeri's office is continued throughout the building, and Jeri is occasionally depicted walking the big hallways or sitting in conference rooms behind glass walls. All in all, Jeri's workplace signals success and professionalism. The interior design of the place looks simple but luxurious, and its size and location suggest that it is probably quite expensive. The premises, therefore, indicate that Jeri's law firm is a very upscale and most likely specializes in wealthier clients. The place is also very functional, which makes it look professional. While there are some art works on the walls, the place does not have much more extra decorations or furniture to clutter the space. It looks like it is a place that serves as an office and no more. The environment suits Jeri's character since she is portrayed as a very ambitious and even cold person. Jeri's workplace, especially her office, highlight the impression that Jeri is an efficient, highly-organized, and work oriented person. Her office desk does not have any personal photos, and there are not really any indications of a life outside of work in the physical environment where she spends most of her time in.

During the season, Jeri is also shown visiting some other locations, but they mostly relate to either work or the hunt for Kilgrave. Jeri is shown visiting Hope in prison, for instance, and going to a courthouse for a case. It is notable that Jeri's home is never shown or even really mentioned. Viewers get to see her wife's house where Jeri most likely used to live before the divorce proceedings, but there is no mention of where she lives currently. Jeri seems to mostly exist in relation to her work even in terms of the physical environments that she inhabits.

4.3.6 Function in terms of the plot and character development

Hogarth's roles in the series is mostly to act as a helper to Jessica. She provides cases and legal counsel to Jessica when she needs money or advice. She also manages the practical side of defending Hope and building a case against Kilgrave, which is beyond Jessica's expertise. Even though Jeri is Jessica's employer, the two do not have a traditional boss-employee relationship in terms of power relations. Jessica acts quite disrespectfully towards Jeri, who tolerates it to a degree due to Jessica's effectiveness as a private investigator. Jeri also follows Jessica's advice and decisions regarding Hope's defense by first agreeing to set up a public defense for Hope and later by agreeing to find more of Kilgrave's victims to act as witnesses.

Despite her compliance with Jessica's demands, Jeri is not a loyal or eager helper like Trish is. She repeatedly criticizes Jessica's decisions and expresses displeasure at having to deal with her and Hope's case. For instance, when Jessica repeatedly makes demands of Jeri without offering much in return, she finally snaps and tells her that "You know what, Jessica? I have problems of my own. I have a life." Jeri also has her own self-serving schemes regarding Kilgrave that she does not share with Jessica. Her actions and decisions significantly affect the development of the plot in the latter half of the season. As an example, she tampers with the cell where Jessica holds Kilgrave, which leads to his escape. Jeri is not, therefore, merely a passive supporting character.

In terms of her personality and morals Jeri seems to stay mostly the same throughout the season, but she does exhibit some character development in the last episodes. Kilgrave's escape results in a traumatic experience for Jeri that makes her realize that she has severely misjudged Kilgrave and his capabilities. In the last episode, she unselfishly defends Jessica from a murder charge and implicitly apologizes for her mistakes, which suggest she has developed into at least slightly more moral person.

4.3.7 Summary

In contrast to Jessica and Trish, little is revealed about Jeri's background so she is definitely a flatter character than them in terms of her character biography. Jeri's background is mostly constructed via her wife's comments about the life they have lived together, which reveal just enough information to give the impression that Jeri has a past.

Regarding her visual appearance, Jeri is depicted as an attractive woman, whose looks signal professionalism, high status, and power. She is older than the other female character that this analysis focuses on, and her physique is curvier than that of Trish's or Jessica's. She is not

sexualized through her clothes or camera angles, and the only instance when other characters make comments about her appearance is when Jessica mentions her expensive taste in clothes while insulting her.

Jeri's personality can be summarized as calculating and ambitious. She aims to be the best in her profession and assesses most situations with an eye toward the most beneficial course of action. Her speech patterns depict her as a person who wants to be in control of situations. When she wants something, she is very determined and works hard to get what she wants. Jeri can even be very ruthless when it comes to achieving her goals and she treats people who stand in her way, such as her wife, quite coldly. Jeri's life revolves exclusively around her work, both physically and mentally, which means that her personal relationships suffer. All in all, Jeri is portrayed as fairly cold and devious, but viewers get to see glimpses of her more tender and loving side when she interacts with Pam, which adds some more depth to the character.

For most of her screen time, Jeri serves to facilitate Jessica's actions and goals regarding Hope. Her function in terms of the plot is, therefore, largely to provide help to Jessica. Nevertheless, she is given her own motivations and her actions influence the plot notably. All in all, some aspects of character formation are not fully developed in Jeri's case, but she is still constructed as an active and complex character.

4.4 Hope Shlottman

Hope Shlottman is a supporting character, whose fate sets in motion the events of the first season. She appears in seven episodes, and she is played by an American actress Erin Moriarty. Since Hope is a college student, she is most likely somewhere around 18–20 years old.

4.4.1 Character biography

Hope comes from a happy family that included her parents Bob and Barbara and a younger brother Owen. Hope spent her childhood somewhere in Omaha, until she moved to New York to go to college. She was a gifted athlete who spent a lot of time practicing track and field in high school, and eventually received an athletic scholarship to New York University. In college, she lived with her best friend and was apparently an overall model student, spending most of time practicing. At some point she apparently ran into Kilgrave and, unfortunately, caught his eye, since he started controlling her. He forced her to tell everyone she was dating someone, and made her pretend like everything was fine. Hope's behavior, however, soon started to seem odd to her family and they became increasingly worried about her. When Hope called them to tell she was taking a break from college and then quit the field and track team, her parents

travelled to New York and ended up contacting Jessica. By the time Jessica found Hope, she had been controlled by Kilgrave for approximately a month, enduring similar physical, psychological and sexual abuse that Jessica suffered under Kilgrave's control. Her torment does not end in Jessica rescuing her, however, since Kilgrave uses her to lay a trap to Jessica. In the first episode, Hope shoots both her parents in an elevator under Kilgrave's orders and goes to prison with her life destroyed. Jessica's quest to bring Kilgrave to justice is fueled by her desire to prove Hope's innocence and save her from spending the rest of her life in prison.

4.4.2 Visual appearance and context

Hope is a very slender young woman with long blond hair. In the first episode Jessica goes through her old competition photos where she is wearing track and field clothing, and after being rescued Hope wears a long beige coat over jeans and a basic shirt. In addition, when Jessica rescues Hope, she finds her in a hotel room wearing a lace lingerie nightgown that is quite revealing. However, while Hope is shown wearing the alluring nightgown, the situation is not portrayed as enticing in any way. Hope is laying on the bed with a suffering expression because she has been ordered to stay still for more than five hours, resulting in her wetting the bed. Jessica has to physically force her to get up and carry her out of the room while Hope cries in panic that she cannot leave. The scene contains a lot of cuts and shaky movement from the camera, which emphasizes the physical struggle and together with sad music creates a distressing feel. Hope's clothing shows that she has been objectified by Kilgrave, who has ordered her to wear the nightgown for his pleasure, but the scene portrays that objectification in a very negative light and does not participate in it in terms of camera work. Due to her circumstances, Hope wears a prison uniform for most the other six episodes she appears in. The uniform is a dark green/gray jumpsuit with short sleeves that has a white shirt underneath and could only be described as drab. Overall, Hope looks quite disheveled while she is incarcerated since her hair is greasy and messy, and she has dark circles under her eyes. Her visual appearance gives the impression that she is very stressed and not taking care of herself, which makes sense given the inner turmoil the character is going through.

4.4.3 Psychological traits, habits and interaction with other characters

Before she met Kilgrave, Hope was a hardworking and ambitious young woman. Her mother notes to Jessica that Hope has "always been incredibly disciplined", and Jessica's investigation supports her assessment. She finds plenty of photos of Hope practicing her sports, and Hope's friend states that Hope's family mostly talks about her athletic career. She seems to have close

ties with her family, since they very quickly noticed when Hope started acting strangely, and they react with great relief when they see her again, calling Hope “sweetheart” and their “little girl”.

After the tragedy of killing her parents under mind control, Hope becomes very traumatized and depressed. For a while after going to prison, Hope is depicted crying and behaving erratically. She tells Jessica that the tragedy was her fault since she did not stay to make sure Kilgrave was dead after his bus accident. The accusation is somewhat irrational, and demonstrates that Hope is still in shock and lashing out at people due to her pain. Who she really is angry at is Kilgrave, and when she hears him call Trish’s radio show to threaten Trish, Hope screams and trashes against her restraints in rage and panic. As time goes on, Hope becomes quieter and very cynical about her situation. When others try to have conversations with her, she often looks out of windows, gives short answers to questions or does not answer at all. She does not really believe that Jessica will be able to help her, and treats her very curtly.

When she asks Jessica to bring her money, for instance, she refuses to answer her questions and demands Jessica to just give the money or leave:

Example 55 (episode 5)

Hope	Did you bring the money?
Jessica	You still haven't told me what it's for.
Hope	Candy, cigarettes. What do you care?
Jessica	I'll have Hogarth put money in your commissary account.
Hope	Did you bring the cash or not? 'Cause if not, visiting hours are over.
Jessica	Hey, I'm doing everything I can to get you out of here.
Hope	Just give it to me.
Another inmate	Hope-ster. Come on. Our show's coming on.
Hope	I'll be right there, Sissy. Please.
Jessica	I'm close, Hope, to getting him.
(Hope rolls her eyes and gets up to leave)	
Hope	I'll hold my breath.

Hope’s answers indicate that she is not interested in being Jessica’s friend, and turns to her for money simply because she does not really have anyone else she could ask. Hope’s curtness with Jessica is not just caused by her lack of trust in Jessica but also by the fact that she is incredibly stressed and has more pressing matters to think about than being polite. After spending a while in prison, Hope notices that she is pregnant with Kilgrave’s child and uses Jessica’s money to hire another inmate to beat her in the hopes that it will cause a miscarriage. The effort fails and Hope has to admit to Jessica why she ordered the beating:

Example 56 (episode 6)

Jessica You hired Sissy with my money to take you out. Fifty bucks and a pack of smokes.
 Hope Not to kill me.
 Jessica Then what? Are you punishing yourself? You can't pay penance for something you didn't do.
 Hope I'm not.
 Jessica God damn it, Hope.
 Hope I'm pregnant... still. I can feel it growing like a tumor.
 Jessica They have a doctor on call here.
 Hope Two months! That's the soonest the doctor can get to me.
 Jessica Hogarth will get the appointment moved up.
 Hope No, I'm not waiting. Every second it's there, I get raped... again and again. My parents are shot... again and again.
 Jessica One beating was more likely to kill you than cause a miscarriage.
 Hope It was worth the risk. It'll be worth the next risk. Whatever it takes.
 Jessica Jesus, Hope.
 Hope I want to live. I want to have children, but... I won't give life... to this... thing. I won't do it.
 Jessica Okay.

The conversation shows that while Hope is willing to go to great lengths to control the only thing she still can, which is whether she is pregnant or not. She does not apologize her decision, and she knows that she is the victim in the situation. Even though she is traumatized and faced with horrible circumstances, Hope demonstrates great determination in her way of dealing with the situation. Her statement about wanting to live also shows that she has not completely given up on her situation mentally even if it seems quite hopeless.

After Jessica helps Hope to obtain an abortion their relationship becomes a bit more warm, but Hope still remains skeptical about getting Kilgrave to confess his crimes. When she is offered a plea bargain that would mean spending the next 20 years in prison, Hope tells Jessica that she is going to take the deal because she is tired and does not want to die in prison. Jessica manages to talk her out of it by revealing that she has Kilgrave in custody and has a plan to get him to confess. While the plan goes awry, Jessica does manage to get Kilgrave to engineer Hope's release in exchange for his father. When Hope realizes that she is going to be free she expresses disbelief:

Example 57 (episode 10)

Jessica Hope, you'll be free tomorrow. Just think about that.
 Hope I still can't believe it.
 Jessica Believe it. I'm gonna pick you up tomorrow, take you to a great restaurant.

Hope A 5 Napkin Burger.
 Jessica Perfect. And then I'll take you to the airport and you'll fly home.
 Hope I don't have a home. They all blame me. They even told my brother that I was dead.
 Jessica Hope, think about the big picture. You're healthy. You're sane.
 Hope That's true. Sanity was touch and go for a while there.
 Jessica And you're gonna be free in a matter of hours.
 Hope Big picture.

Hope seems to have mixed feelings about getting out, because she is excited to be released but also worried about what she is going to do outside when everyone she knows back home think that she is a murderer. Her comment about sanity being “touch and go for a while” reveals how stressful her ordeal has been to her, but surviving such stress also shows how strong Hope’s character is.

In the end, Hope shows great determination and selflessness when Kilgrave kidnaps her again after she gets out of prison. Kilgrave tries to use Hope to control Jessica, and the three meet in a restaurant where Kilgrave taunts the two women. Hope urges Jessica to kill him even if it puts other people in danger, but Jessica is reluctant to end Kilgrave because she still thinks she can use him to clear Hope’s name. Kilgrave reveals Jessica’s motivations for not killing him to Hope by calling her the innocent victim that Jessica wants to save:

Example 58 (episode 10)

Hope Kill him or he'll keep hurting people!
 Jessica Let me handle this.
 Kilgrave She'll never kill me. Despite her calloused, hard-bitten, and, frankly, poorly styled facade, despite her several problems, she still hopes that, at her core, she might just be a hero. But only if she can save you. The ultimate innocent victim.

When Hope thinks she is the only thing stopping Jessica from ending Killgrave, she breaks a wine glass and stabs herself in the throat with the stem before anyone can stop her. She bleeds to death while pleading Jessica to finally end Kilgrave now that she is not in the way:

Example 59 (episode 10)

(Jessica holds Hope and tries to stop the bleeding)

Jessica Hope! Hope, why would you do this?
 Hope You can kill him now.
 Jessica Hope.
 Hope Tell me. Tell me! Tell me.
 Jessica I will. I'll kill him.

Hope clearly considers Kilgrave so dangerous that the only way to stop him is to kill him. She is willing to sacrifice her own life if it is the only way to get Jessica to act, and thus protect other people from Kilgrave.

4.4.4 Speech

Hope speaks with a casual and quite standard style most of the time. Swear words are not a part of her vocabulary since she does not use them even when she is visibly stressed. She usually speaks with a rather quiet voice, but raises it whenever she gets agitated or wants to emphasize her words. When she wants to get her point across, she uses very assertive language that includes direct orders to other characters. Overall, Hope favors relatively simple sentences, and her turns in conversations are usually quite short or even nonexistent if she refuses to answer the person who is talking to her. The way Hope acts in conversations suggests that she usually does not want to be talking to the other person. She does not use politeness strategies, and does not put much effort into managing conversations unless she has to. Hope's speech style highlights that she is traumatized and feels angry about the injustice that she has suffered.

4.4.5 Environment

The environment where Hope spends the most time is the prison where she awaits sentencing. The place has white-gray walls, bars on the windows, and very few pieces of furniture. The furniture that the place has is very basic and meant to suit the needs of a prison. For example, when Jessica visits Hope for the first time, Hope sits on a table that has a piece of metal on it where handcuffs can be attached. Later the two are able to meet in a more casual visitor's area, but the furniture is still very basic, and the area has multiple guards overseeing the prisoners and their visitors. The lighting in the room comes from old fluorescent lamps which emanate a yellow light that has a somewhat sickly hue. In summary, the prison is a very dreary and cold looking place. The environment that Hope inhabits looks, therefore, as hopeless as her situation, and it matches the gloomy attitude that she expresses to Jessica. The prison can also be seen as a metaphor for Hope's psychological state, since she is a prisoner in her own mind as well as the result of her trauma. She is trapped in a depressing environment that she cannot leave, and she is stuck in a limbo of uncertainty regarding whether she will be rescued by Jessica or not.

4.4.6 Function in terms of the plot and character development

Kilgrave calls Hope “the ultimate innocent victim”, and that label aptly describes her function in the show. Kilgrave hurts Hope as a part of his twisted mind games that he plays to gain control of Jessica, and her unfortunate fate serves as the primary motivation for Jessica to start

hunting Kilgrave. In other words, Kilgrave hurts Hope in the same ways that he hurt Jessica because he knows it will get Jessica's attention. Hope, therefore, exists only to be kidnapped by the villain and to give Jessica the pretext for her vengeful quest against him. For most of the season, she passively waits in prison for her fate to be decided by other characters' actions and only takes matters into her own hands with her abortion because it is the only thing she can influence from her situation. The only time Hope gets to make a decision that affects the plot in a significant way is when she decides to kill herself. However, even that act mainly serves to motivate Jessica to get revenge on Kilgrave. Since Jessica ultimately fails to save Hope, she does not fully fit the damsel-in-distress trope. Hope's character seems to be a combination of the damsel trope and the "women in refrigerators trope" that refers to female characters being hurt as a plot device to further the story of male characters (Venier 2014). Even though the hero in this story is a woman, Hope is still used as a plot device to further the hero's story and she can, therefore, be viewed as a new twist on the old refrigerator trope. On a more positive note, Hope is granted slightly more agency than many of the other female characters whose suffering have been used as plot device for heroes, because her life ends by her own decision and not the villain's.

4.4.7 Summary

In summary, Hope is given a very limited character biography that reveals some basic information about her, such as her family relations and life goal. The limited biography leaves her past as very shallow but it does deepen the character a little so that she is not just presented in relation to Kilgrave or Jessica.

In terms of appearance, Hope is a conventionally attractive young woman with a thin and athletic figure. She is shown in revealing lingerie nightgown in one scene, but the scene does not really sexualize her. Hope is never objectified via camera angles, and her clothes are not revealing or alluring at all apart from the one aforementioned scene.

Hope's personality in the show is mostly governed by the trauma that she goes through. She is depressed, anxious and cynical about her situation. Hope's speech and the prison environment where she spends most of her time highlight the negative emotions she goes through. She is not, however, portrayed as completely paralyzed by her trauma. Hope's mother's words reveal that Hope used to be an ambitious and determined person before the events of the show, and Hope's actions regarding her abortion and suicide show that determined side of her as well.

Altogether, Hope is depicted as a quite shallow character in most aspects of character formation, especially when she is compared to the other three characters. Her biography is very limited, and her personality, speech and environment form an impression of a rather one-dimensional character. Although Hope is granted enough screen time to give viewers a glimpse of who she is as a person beyond her role as a passive victim for Jessica to rescue, she is mostly used as a plot device to motivate Jessica. As a whole, she can be described as a flat character.

Hope completes my analysis of the four most prominent women of *Jessica Jones*. In the next section, I will present a summary of my findings in respect to my research question, and discuss how the findings relate to previous research. In addition, the next section will deliberate the implications and limitations of this study, and provide suggestions for possible future studies on similar topics or themes.

5 Concluding discussion

This study examined the representation of the four central female characters in Marvel's *Jessica Jones*. The aim of the study was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of each character by taking into account the different aspects of character construction that contribute to the formation of representations. The broader research question that my study aimed at answering was how the female characters are represented in the series. To guide my analysis, I also formulated the following more detailed research question:

What is the male to female ratio in the series, and how are the major female characters portrayed through dialogue, behavior, appearance, and context?

My data for this study consisted of the first season of *Jessica Jones*, which includes 13 episodes that each last roughly 50 minutes. In order to achieve an in-depth analysis of the characters, I adapted Pearson's (2007) taxonomy of character construction for my analysis. The analysis of each character was organized into six categories that examined their biographies, appearances, psychological traits/interactions, speech characteristics, environments, and their functions in terms of the plot, as well as character development. Dialogue was used as a target of analysis in the categories of psychological traits, relationships and, naturally, speech characteristics. The category of visual appearance accounted for the appearance section of my research question, and it also utilized dialogue in addition to focusing on the visual side of character representations. The categories of character environments, biographies and functions served to examine both the contexts where characters are physically depicted in and the broader context regarding the characters' roles and functions in the series. The category of visual appearance

also touched upon the topic of context, since it took into account the visual context of the characters by examining how they are filmed. Lastly, character behavior was a topic of interest in several categories from a more detailed level of psychological traits and interactions with other characters all the way to the broader level of character roles.

5.1 Summary of the main findings

In this section, I will recap the most central findings of my analysis regarding the portrayal of the four female characters. I will present the central findings categorically, and compare the portrayal of the different characters with each other in each category.

The extent of the biographies that the four characters were given varied considerably. Unsurprisingly, Jessica's background was developed the most given her status as the main character. Flashback scenes revealed glimpses of her childhood and the way she received her powers. Due to her shared history with Jessica, Trish's biography was almost as extensive as Jessica's. In contrast, very little was revealed about Jeri or Hope, since only basic information about their family relations and occupations were divulged.

To analyse the visual appearance of each character, I examined how they were depicted in terms of their clothing, body types, and attractiveness. The results of the analysis were that the appearances of the characters, especially their clothes, were used to communicate their social status and, to an extent, their personality traits. Jessica's leather jacket and worn clothes reflected both her poor socioeconomic status and her rebellious attitude. Trish's clothes, in contrast, signaled wealth, interest in appearing stylish and professional, and more positive attitude due to their light colors. Jeri's black sheath dresses and high heels connoted power and professionalism, and Hope's prison outfit reflected her trapped mind. Regarding their body types, the three younger characters all had very slim figures with some curves and little visible muscle mass. Jeri's body type was somewhat curvier than the rest's, but she was still depicted as slim. All characters can be considered beautiful according to conventional beauty standards. I also took into account the comments that the characters received about their looks as part of the analysis regarding their attractiveness. Both Jessica and Trish received implicit and explicit comments about their looks from other characters that highlighted their attractiveness, but Hope and Jeri's looks were not really commented on by others.

As part of the analysis regarding visual appearance, I also looked at whether the characters were portrayed in a sexualized manner. Characters were considered sexualized if they were filmed as titillating objects and if they wore alluring or revealing clothes, which according to the

criteria of this study meant clothes that revealed their breasts, upper thighs or midriffs. However, instances of partial nudity and revealing clothes were examined in relation to the contexts where they appeared in to determine whether they constituted instances of objectification. In summary, Jessica, Trish, and Jeri all wore form-fitting, even tight, clothes, but for the most part their clothes could not be categorized as especially alluring or sexualized. Jeri was not portrayed in a sexualized manner at any point during the show. Jessica and Trish, however, were portrayed partially nude or in revealing clothes in a few scenes, but they were not further sexualized via camera angles during those scenes. It can be argued that the scenes in question serve to add realism to the characters or to contribute to character construction, which means that the nudity in them is not really gratuitous, but that point is open to interpretation. Trish and Hope also turned out to be interesting characters in terms of sexualization, because both of them were depicted in situations where they were glaringly objectified by male characters. Trish had to deal with a grossly inappropriate fan making a joke about masturbating to her, and Hope was depicted lying on a bed in a revealing lace gown that Kilgrave had chosen for her. The way these instances were portrayed, however, depicted the objectification that the character went through as highly irritating in Trish's case, and downright horrific in Hope's case. The characters were, therefore, depicted experiencing objectification, but the series did not participate in it in terms of camera angles, and the objectification was portrayed as a highly unpleasant and unwelcome. Altogether, there were no glaring examples of portraying any of the female character in a highly sexualized manner via clothes or camera angles, but Jessica and Trish were depicted partially nude in a few scenes that could be considered unnecessary.

In terms of psychological traits and interaction with other characters, I analysed such aspects as personality traits, habits, behavior patterns and closest relationships. Jessica and Trish's personalities were constructed as multifaceted and even conflicting at times, which made them appear as very complex characters. Their morals, attitudes, habits, and close relationships were developed substantially, and the two characters exhibited both strengths and flaws. Jessica's actions and interaction style portrayed her as cynical, rude, emotionally tumultuous, and morally shady, but she also exhibited courage, selflessness, resiliency, and assertiveness. Trish was portrayed in an overall more positive light, since she was characterized as righteous, kind, and confident person, but she also demonstrated impulsiveness, stubbornness, and underlying anxiousness. Both Jessica and Trish had romantic interests that ended in unfortunate ways, but the most important relationship for them was their relationship with each other, and they also

put their mission before their romantic relationships. Compared to Jessica and Trish, Jeri was portrayed in a more one-dimensional way, since her representation emphasized her as a very ambitious, self-serving, cold, and calculating person. Jeri is not, however, depicted in a completely one-dimensional way since she exhibits tenderness in her relationship with Pam. All three characters, therefore, exhibited depth in terms of personality. It is also worth noting that all three of them demonstrated intelligence and quick thinking, and Jessica and Jeri also demonstrated leadership and power in their interactions with others. Out of the four characters of my analysis, Hope was clearly developed the least in terms of psychological traits and interactions. Her emotions and actions were mostly portrayed in relation to her trauma, which left her as a very one-dimensional character personality wise. The one positive thing about her representation regarding this category was the determination that she showed on a few occasions.

Regarding the category relating to speech, I analysed how the characters' speech characteristics contribute to their characterization. Overall, the way the characters talked emphasized and constructed the personality traits that were formed by their actions as well. Jessica's speech was characterized by heavy and inventive use of expletives, sarcastic humor, and a straightforward conversation style. These aspects emphasized Jessica's cynical and impolite attitude towards other people, but her sarcastic retorts and jokes also revealed a humorous side of her that her other behavior did not show. Trish's speech style contrasted that of Jessica's, since it was usually polite, calm and assertive in a more gentle manner, which depicted her as the more friendly and social of the two. Jeri's speech style was evasive, measuring and coolly calm aside from the few instances where she lost her temper, which suits her calculating personality. Hope had fewer lines than any of the other characters, and she usually spoke with a rather quiet voice and impolite manner that suggested she was not interested in conversations.

The environments that the four characters spent most of their time in reflected their personalities and emotional states. Jessica's apartment was in bad condition and falling apart much like she herself threatened to fall apart under the stress and trauma that she was forced to go through. Trish's apartment was clean and stylish, but hid excessive security measures that reflected her fear of being hurt again. Jeri almost exclusively inhabited environments that related to her work, which showed that her life revolves around her professional ambition. Lastly, Hope spent most of her time in prison as a captive of her trauma and uncertain fate.

The final category of my analysis examined the characters' functions regarding the plot and the development that they went through. As the protagonist, Jessica was the most important

character in terms of influencing the plot. She was granted a great deal of agency since her decisions propelled the plot forwards, and her trajectory during the story followed the traditional development of Marvel superheroes, which includes evolving from a more passive victim in the hands of a more powerful villain into an active hero who beats said villain. Trish's role in the series was to serve as a supporting helper to Jessica while also highlighting Jessica's distinct features in the role of a foil character. Trish at least partially fit the damsel-in-distress role since she was rescued several times by Jessica, but she was also depicted rescuing Jessica and somewhat successfully defending herself from physical attacks, which prevented her from being a passive victim. She also exhibited character development and her decisions occasionally influenced the plot, which increased her agency. Jeri's function in the series was also to act as Jessica's helper, although her role was a little more complex due to her reluctance and schemes, which ended up making Jessica's job more difficult for her. Jeri's character had her own agenda, and her decisions significantly affected the plot during the latter half of the season. The flattest character in terms of her function in the series was undoubtedly Hope, whose function was to serve as motivation for Jessica. My analysis revealed that Hope was a very passive character, and her role mostly fit that of the damsel-in-distress, whose suffering served to give the Jessica the motivation to take revenge on Kilgrave.

In conclusion, the dialogue, behavior, appearance, and context of each character was used to construct their individual personalities, preferences and life situations. The representations that were constructed ranged, however, from very complex to quite one-dimensional in Hope's case. The four women, therefore, formed a continuum from round to flat characters.

5.2 Findings in relation to previous research

In chapter two, I presented some relevant previous research on the topics of representation and characterization. In this section, I will examine how my main findings relate to that previous research. I will begin by comparing my findings to the studies that I presented in sections 2.1.1.1 and 2.2.2, which addressed the representation of women on film, television, and the superhero genre. Then I will briefly analyse how the main character Jessica compares to the traditions regarding Marvel heroes that were introduced in section 2.3.3.1. and some of the other traditions regarding female superheroes in general that were noted in section 2.2.1.

5.2.1 Representation of women and the findings of this study

One of the biggest issues that previous research has established as problematic regarding the representation of women is their frequent underrepresentation. Smith et al. (2013:2-3) examined

500 popular films and discovered that women comprised only roughly 30 % of all speaking characters. In American prime-time programs, the situation was slightly better but still unequal, since women comprised 39% of all speaking characters between 2015 and 2016 (Lauzen 2016a:2). The situation has been especially grim for women in the superhero genre since there are very few films or television shows that have female characters in leading roles, and women in superhero films are underrepresented even as background characters (see e.g. Graves 2014:3-4). Compared to these findings, *Jessica Jones* turned out to be surprisingly equal regarding the representation of male and female characters. Women made up 46.8% of all characters with recognizable and identifiable lines, which is much closer to an equal divide than the general gender ratios of films and television shows. Four out of the eight most important characters in the show are also women, and the two characters that have the most screen time are Jessica and Trish. In terms of numbers, *Jessica Jones*, therefore represents a huge leap forward for the representation of female characters.

Another big issue relating to the way women are portrayed was their sexualization and the emphasis that is placed on their attractiveness. Section 2.1.1 introduced the influential concept of the male gaze that has been used in gender studies to describe the way women are routinely depicted as titillating objects for presumed male audiences via cinematic codes that, for instance, highlight parts of their bodies (see Mulvey 1990 [1975]). The concept of the male gaze was incorporated into my analysis by examining whether the female characters were filmed with suggestive camera angles. Another common way of portraying female characters in a highly sexualized way includes alluring or revealing clothes. In addition to these aspects of visual representation, female characters attractiveness can be highlighted via implicit and explicit comments from other characters. Analyses of hundreds of popular films by Smith et al. (2013) and Smith, Choueiti and Pieper (2014) revealed that female characters in films are often shown in revealing and sexy clothes or even nude, and their appearances are commented on considerably more often than the appearance of male characters. Regarding action films, Heldman, Frankel, and Holmes (2016) noted a trend towards increased hypersexualization in terms of clothes and camera angles. Kinnunen's (2016) analysis of five recent superhero films, however, revealed less sexualization regarding female character's clothes, but still noted that some of the female characters were sexualized significantly more than others via clothes and camera angles. None of the four women in my analysis could be generally be classified as sexualized either in terms of their clothes or the way they were filmed. A couple of the characters did appear partially nude in a few scenes, but their nudity was quite limited,

appropriate for the context, and it was not emphasized disproportionately compared to the nudity of male characters. Two of the characters were also shown experiencing objectification from male characters, but that objectification was portrayed as highly negative. These findings seem to line with the positive development regarding female characters' sexualization in recent years, which was revealed by Kinnunen's research. My analysis did, however, reveal some less positive issues in terms of the characters' visual appearance. All four characters conformed to a quite specific thin but curvy body type, which research by Smith et al. (2012), Smith, Choueiti and Pieper (2014), and Kinnunen (2016) found to be the norm for female characters. Jessica's attractiveness was also commented on by several comments from male characters in the show, which emphasized the importance of her beauty.

In addition to underrepresentation and sexualization, previous studies have identified several stereotypical ways of portraying women that have been prevalent in films, television, and comics. One stereotypical way of depicting women that has long dominated all three media types relates to the traditional gender role that designates women as homemakers. Lauzen (2016a:3) discovered that women on television shows were often depicted in relation to their domestic roles and their romantic goals at the expense of their work-related goals. In comics, women have also frequently been portrayed in terms of their romantic roles as wives or girlfriends (see e.g. Madrid 2009). In my analysis, three of the four characters were shown having some type of romantic goals, but none of them were defined by those goals. Jessica and Trish had love interests, but their romantic escapades took second place to their primary goal of vanquishing the villain. It is also noteworthy that Jessica and Trish's bond was the most important relationship for both of them, so the series portrayed a deep and loyal female friendship. Out of the four characters, Jeri was most exclusively portrayed in relation to her romantic interests, since one of her main goals that motivated her actions during the season was to secure a divorce from her wife so that she could be with her girlfriend. However, Jeri's job was still presented as an at least equally important motivator for her than her personal relationships, and she was certainly not depicted as a homemaker but as an ambitious lawyer. Their work related roles were important for the characterization of Trish and Jessica as well. All in all, the three characters were shown having personal relationships that had varying effects to their characterization, but none of them were solely defined by their romantic goals.

Regarding the stereotypical ways of portraying women in superhero and action genres, section 2.2.2 introduced a few common tropes that are especially commonplace in those specific genres. Research conducted by Bogarosh (2013) and Gauntlett (2008) revealed that female characters

in superhero films that were made during the first decade of the 2000s were frequently depicted as damsels-in-distress. Stoltzfus's (2014:89) study of ten DC and Marvel movies argued that the female characters in those films were mainly used as plot devices to help the male heroes reach their full potential by either acting as assistants or damsels that need to be rescued. Stoltzfus's (2014:81-83) analysis also revealed the use of the femme fatal trope that depicts women as manipulative temptresses in contrast to the more innocent damsels. The result of these tropes is that female characters in superhero films have been portrayed in secondary roles and as passive and one-dimensional characters. As Bogarosh's (2013:67-70) analysis also revealed, female characters have, unsurprisingly, rarely exhibited leadership and power in these types of films due to their passiveness. My analysis mostly contradicted the previous findings, but there were aspects to some of the characters that also fit these commonplace tropes. The central roles of the protagonist and the protagonist's best friend/helper were both reserved for female characters, which is somewhat unconventional in the light of DC and Marvel films and television shows. All four characters demonstrated determination, agency and ingenuity at least occasionally, and both Jessica and Jeri demonstrated leadership and power; Jessica in relation to her mission and interactions and Jeri in relation to her work. None of the characters used their sexuality to manipulate men, even if Jessica had a few unethical sexual encounters with her love interest. Out of the four characters, Trish and Hope could be considered damsels-in-distress, but neither fully fit the trope. Trish was rescued multiple times by Jessica during the season, but she was also depicted as a complex and active character who made her own decisions that affected the plot. Hope was probably closer to a traditional damsel-in-distress since she was portrayed as quite passive and one-dimensional, but Jessica ultimately failed to save her. Since Hope's main function in the series was to serve as motivation for Jessica, she was definitely used as a plot device to help Jessica reach her main potential. Even though the hero Hope was used to motivate was a woman, the character was, therefore, still used in a very stereotypical way. However, even Hope demonstrated some significant agency during the season despite being generally portrayed as passive, so none of the four characters fully fit the stereotypical way of portraying women.

5.2.2 Jessica Jones in relation to superhero traditions

Since Jessica Jones is only the second female Marvel hero to receive her very own live-action adaptation, it is interesting to examine how she relates to some common superhero traditions. In addition to being the second female hero to get her own adaptation, Jessica is also the first superheroine whose adaptation has been critically acclaimed. The Marvel heroine Elektra did

receive her own film in 2005, but the movie was a flop both in terms of box office success and critical reviews. Analysing how Jessica compares to some of the common ways of depicting superhero characters is, therefore, especially fascinating because it can reveal whether her portrayal follows or challenges the traditions of the genre.

In sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.3.1 I presented some prevalent themes and features regarding the characterization of superheroes. Gaine (2011:113) and Kaklamanidou (2011:62) identified a devotion to justice and helping the innocent as superhero's main motivation that drives their actions. In addition, Burke's (2015:101) analysis of superhero films revealed that in movies the characters' devotion to justice usually begins from some kind of a transgression against them and evolves due to them being the only ones capable of exacting revenge for that transgression. Jessica partly follows these themes because she certainly suffers grave transgressions and witnesses an injustice happening to another character that motivates her to dedicate her time to bringing the villain to justice. She is also explicitly portrayed as the only one who can achieve the task due to her powers and immunity to the villain's powers. Jessica is, however, a somewhat more reluctant in her quest against the villain than traditional superheroes, and only seems to help others because she feels she must do so. According to Gaine (2011:114), a central characteristic of all superheroes is their liminal nature, since they operate on the borders of society and, therefore, move between different worlds. Jessica is no exception to this rule, since her backstory, powers, and personality all make her distinct from other people, and her job ensures that she frequently moves between society and its underside even if she is not acting as a superhero. In the light of the previous research regarding general genre conventions, Jessica Jones appears in many aspects to be a quite traditional superhero character.

Regarding Marvel traditions, the way Jessica is characterized follows some of formulas that Bainbridge (2009) identified as typical for Marvel superheroes. Marvel's stories have traditionally highlighted the importance of complex characterization and disadvantaged positions for the characterization of their heroes. Bainbridge (2009:69-70) noted that Marvel heroes are often depicted as complex people who have personal flaws and problems and who can even be very morally shady characters. Jessica's drinking problems, PTSD episodes and failings in personal relationships are not, therefore, unheard of among Marvel superheroes. Even her decision to kill the villain is not exceptional in the sense that Marvel has other characters that are willing to act in much more violent ways while fighting crime, such as the Punisher. Jessica's overall relationship with the villain also follows the Marvel formula of pitting their heroes against more powerful adversaries. Bainbridge (2009:69-71) argues that the

heroes in the Marvel universe often have to earn their status by going through significant suffering in the hands of their adversaries and by eventually triumphing against all odds. Jessica's story arc follows this formula, since she is first depicted as the underdog in the struggle between her and Kilgrave but manages to win against him in the end. In order to be recognized as a hero, Jessica must endure prolonged suffering and still be able to emerge victorious from her final fight with her adversary. It is worth noting here that Bainbridge's research did not touch upon whether the features he identified as typical of Marvel heroes were typical of both male and female heroes. It is, therefore, difficult to judge how traditional or uncommon Jessica's characterization in these aspects is compared to other female superheroes.

In terms of the biggest issues that have particularly affected the representation of female heroes in the superhero genre, Jessica is certainly progressive in many ways. Superheroines have often been relegated to smaller roles than male heroes (see e.g. Madrid 2009 and Donaldson 2013), but Jessica is the protagonist and, therefore, the most central character in the series. While violence is directed at her, it serves to further the development of the characters and does not, therefore, fit into the "women in refrigerators" phenomenon that was criticized by Vernier (2014). While superheroines in comics and comic adaptations have often been depicted in incredibly sexualized ways in terms of their clothes, poses and camera angles (see e.g. Madrid 2009 and Heldman, Frankel, and Holmes 2016:4), Jessica is not sexualized in any blatant manner. She even mocks the kind of tight and revealing superhero costumes that female characters in comics often wear and thus draws attention to the ridiculously sexualized way superheroines have often been portrayed in the genre. She also challenges the traditional gender norms that have depicted men as protectors and even superpowered women as the protected. Donaldson's (2013:143-145) and Stabile's (2009:89) research revealed that female superheroes in comics and television have frequently been given powers that are unstable or less suitable for offensive purposes than those of male superheroes, which has usually led to the female characters needing to be rescued by the more powerful male characters. The tradition of giving men powers that are more applicable for fighting is detectable in Jessica Jones to some degree, because Luke has abilities that make him nearly invincible in fights whereas Jessica can get hurt more easily. However, the two superheroes have roughly comparable levels of super strength, so Jessica is also given a power that is highly useful in physical confrontations. Jessica uses her powers to protect other people several times in the series, but she herself is rescued only once by her friend Trish. Jessica acts, therefore, much more in the capacity of a protector

than the protected, which somewhat contradicts the traditional way of portraying superheroines and female characters in general.

In summary, my analysis revealed that the four central women in *Jessica Jones* were depicted as very diverse characters. For the most part, the characters were represented in ways that did not conform to stereotypical portrayals of women. Most of the women demonstrated agency and none of them were portrayed in a considerably sexualized way. Each of the women had very different personalities, and three out of four were constructed as quite complex and well-developed characters. Even the characters that fit some of the stereotypical tropes regarding the representation of women, were depicted as new twists on such tropes. Kinnunen's (2016) study of five recent movies discovered that the female representations in superhero films had become more varied in comparison to previous films that had been released a few years earlier. In the light of my findings, it seems that *Jessica Jones* continues that trend towards more complex and diverse female representations in the superhero genre.

5.3 Concluding thoughts

This study aimed at constructing a rather detailed analysis of how the most central female characters were constructed and represented in *Jessica Jones*, but it had some limitations. I was originally planning to analyse the six most important characters in the series, but I had to limit the number to four in order to be able to conduct a more detailed analysis that more closely matched the scope of this thesis. The characters that I dropped from my analysis would have perhaps provided some differing representations than the ones I analysed. Since I aimed at taking all the various aspect that affected characterization into account, I was also not able to go into great detail regarding some of those aspects. It would most likely have been possible to construct a study based on just the dialogue and visual appearance of the characters.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study can offer new information about the representation of women in the superhero genre and the direction to which those representations are possibly heading in. *Jessica Jones* is the first successful female-led superhero live action series from Marvel, which means that it sets a precedent for future series and movies. My research can offer those who are involved in creating these types of shows and movies an in-depth analysis of characterization, which might help them to be aware of the factors that influence representation. Since my analysis also pays attention to those aspects of female representation that previous researchers have noted as problematic, it might a useful tool for them in terms of critically examining how they portray women in their works.

In terms of future research, this study and its findings can be beneficial for any researchers who might want to examine similar topics or to compare their results to mine. This study provides one example of how representations and their formation can be approached from a detailed case study perspective. My study also serves as an example of how the multimodal nature of representations can be taken into consideration, but a similarly multimodal approach could be achieved with other methods as well. Since the superhero genre and the ways in which it represents women are evolving rapidly, future researchers will hopefully examine new superhero films and series as they are released. The representation of women on popular media is an issue that merits recurring research to stay well-informed about developing trends. DC very recently released their first female-led movie starring Wonder Woman, and Marvel has plans for their own female-led films, which would present great subject for analysis. *Jessica Jones* alone could still provide several interesting topics for research that were outside the scope of this study. Since *Jessica Jones* has proven to be quite progressive in terms of representing women, it would be very interesting to focus on its male characters to see what kind of masculinities are constructed in the series. The series also features two female characters that experience sexual violence, and it would be fascinating to focus on how the violence and its consequences are portrayed. The character of Jessica Jones will also appear in Marvel's upcoming Netflix series *the Defenders*, which is scheduled to air in August 2017. In *the Defenders*, Jessica will appear as part of a street level superhero team with three male superheroes, which would undoubtedly provide a good opportunity to examine how her character is developed further and how she is depicted in relation to the male heroes she works with.

The representation of women in superhero movies and television series has been a topic of controversy during the last few years due to their popularity, which means that my research can benefit a broad group of people who are involved in the superhero genre outside the research community. The observations that I make in my analysis can be especially useful to those viewers and critics who already have an interest in the topic of gender representations in comics or comic book adaptations. It can provide them a close case study of the representation of female characters that can be used as evidence when evaluating those representations. My research can, however, also be helpful for those viewers who have not previously considered the portrayal of women in the genre.

It will hopefully prompt them to think about the gender representations that they are exposed to and to question those representations. Making people aware of gender representations makes

the representations visible, which is important since they otherwise usually go unnoticed and unchallenged. As the various social media campaigns demonstrate, the internet has given viewers the power to make their opinions clear to entertainment companies. There is still a lot of changes that should be made regarding the representation of both male and female characters within the superhero genre. Hopefully, more people voicing criticism of gender representations will increase the willingness of large companies like Marvel to pay closer attention to them in their works.

6 Bibliography

Primary source:

Jessica Jones. Season 1, 2015. Available on Netflix.

Secondary sources:

Amsteus, M., Al-Shaabani, S., Wallin, E. and Sjöqvist, S. (2015). Colors in Marketing: A Study of Color Associations and Context (in)Dependence. *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 6 (3), 32–45. http://ijbssnet.com/journals/Vol_6_No_3_March_2015/4.pdf.

Bainbridge, J. (2009). ‘Worlds within worlds’: the role of superheroes in the Marvel and DC universes. In A. Ndalani (ed.), *The Contemporary comic book superhero*. New York: Routledge, 65–85.

Baker-Whitelaw, G. (2014). “Guardians of the Galaxy” passes the Bechdel test, still fails women. http://www.salon.com/2014/08/06/guardians_of_the_galaxy_passes_the_bechdel_test_still_fails_women_partner/ (9 December, 2016).

Benshoff, H. M. (2016). *Film and television analysis: an introduction to methods, theories, and approaches*. New York: Routledge.

Bogarosh, N. (2013). *The Princess, The Damsel, and The Sidekick: Women as the “Other” in Popular Films (2000-2011)*. Doctoral Dissertation. Washington State University. <http://gradworks.umi.com/3598040.pdf>.

Box Office Mojo (n.d.). All Time Box Office. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/> (9 December, 2016).

Box Office Mojo (n.d.). 2016 Worldwide Grosses. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?view2=worldwide&yr=2016&p=.htm> (8 November, 2016).

Bednarek, M. (2010). *Language of fictional television: drama and identity*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Brown, J. (2004). Gender, sexuality, and toughness: the bad girls of action film and comic books. In S. Inness (ed.), *Action chicks: new images of tough women in popular culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 47–74.

Brown, P. and Levinson, S.C. (1987). *Politeness: some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bubel, C. (2006). *The linguistic construction of character relations in TV drama: doing friendship in Sex and the City*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Saarland University, Faculty of Philosophy.

Burke, Liam. (2015). *The comic book film adaptation*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

ComicBook.com (n.d.). (2014). Guardians of the Galaxy had highest percentage of female viewers

- of any Marvel Studios movie. <http://comicbook.com/blog/2014/08/04/guardians-of-the-galaxy-had-highest-percentage-of-female-viewers/> (10 December, 2016).
- Comic Vine (n.d.). (2015). Alias. <http://comicvine.gamespot.com/alias/4050-9452/> (11 December, 2016).
- Comic Vine (n.d.). (2014). Demon in a bottle. <https://comicvine.gamespot.com/demon-in-a-bottle/4045-56095/> (30 May 2017).
- Culpeper, J. (2001). *Language and characterisation: people in plays and other texts*. Harlow: Longman.
- Davis, K., Evans, M. and Lorber, J. (Eds.) (2006). *Handbook of gender and women's studies*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Donaldson, T. (2013). Ineffectual lass among the legions of superheroes: the marginalization and domestication of female superheroes, 1955–1970. In J. Chambliss, W. Svitavsky and T. Donaldson (eds.), *Ages of heroes, eras of men: superheroes and the American experience*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 139–152.
- Eisenberg, E. (2016). Captain Marvel's Movie: What We Know So Far. <http://www.cinemablend.com/new/Captain-Marvel-Movie-What-We-Know-So-Far-70431.html> (9 December, 2016).
- Elasmar, M., Hasegawa, K. and Brain, M. (1999). The portrayal of women in U.S. prime time television. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 43 (1), 20-34.
doi: 10.1080/08838159909364472
- Emkay, H. (2016). Character Archetypes–S for Sidekick. <https://hunterswritings.com/2016/07/15/character-archetypes-s-for-sidekick/> (27 May 2017).
- Eysenck, M. and Keane, M. (2000). *Cognitive psychology: a student's handbook* (4th edition). Hove: Psychology Press.
- Faherty, A. (2016). Marvel, Fox And DC Unite: Here Is Every Superhero Film Planned Until 2020. <http://moviepilot.com/posts/3869610> (9 December, 2016).
- Gain, V. (2011). Genre and super- Heroism: Batman in the new millennium. In R. Gray and B. Kaklamanidou (eds.), *The 21st century superhero: essays on gender, genre and globalization in film*. London: McFarland & Company, 111–128
- Ganesan, S. (2016). In “Jessica Jones,” how important is gender to the story?. <http://screenprism.com/insights/article/in-jessica-jones-how-important-is-gender-to-the-story> (13 December, 2016).
- Gauntlett, D. (2008). *Media, gender and identity: an introduction* (2nd edition). New York: Routledge.
- Graphic Policy (n.d.). (2014). Demo-Graphics: Comic Fandom on Facebook.

- <https://graphicpolicy.com/2014/12/01/demo-graphics-comic-fandom-on-facebook-5/> (10 December, 2016).
- Graves, S. (2014). "You really think I'm pretty?": The Problem of Gender Representation in The Avengers. [https://www.academia.edu/7800993/ You really think Im pretty The Problem of Gender Representation in Marvels The Avengers](https://www.academia.edu/7800993/You_really_think_Im_pretty_The_Problem_of_Gender_Representation_in_Marvels_The_Avengers) (13 December, 2016).
- Gray, R. (2011). Vivacious vixens and scintillating super- hotties: deconstructing the superheroine. In R. Gray and B. Kaklamanidou (eds.), *The 21st century superhero: essays on gender, genre and globalization in film*. London: McFarland & Company, 75–93.
- Grice, H.P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P.Cole and J.L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech acts*. New York: Academic Press, 41-58.
- Hearn, J. and Kimmel, M.S. (2006). Changing studies on men and masculinities. In K. Davis, M. Evans and J. Lorber (eds.), *Handbook of gender and women's studies*. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 53 –70.
- Heldman, C., Frankel, L. and Holmes, J. (2016). "Hot, Black Leather, Whip": The (De)evolution of Female Protagonists in Action Cinema, 1960–2014. *Sexualization, Media, & Society* 2 (2), 1–19. doi: 10.1177/2374623815627789.
- Heroic Hollywood (n.d.). (2015). Marvel VS. DC: A Representation Of Women. <http://heroichollywood.com/marvel-vs-dc-a-representation-of-women/> (9 December, 2016).
- Hickey, W. (2014). Comic Books Are Still Made By Men, For Men And About Men. <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/women-in-comic-books/> (9 January, 2017).
- Holmes, A. (2015). The Marvel Franchise Just Hit A Huge Milestone. <http://www.cinemablend.com/new/Marvel-Franchise-Just-Hit-Huge-Milestone-71264.html> (9 December, 2016).
- Hughes, M. (2015). Review: 'Jessica Jones' Is The Best Show On TV. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/markhughes/2015/11/21/review-jessica-jones-is-the-best-show-on-tv/#eaf04055b832> (11 December, 2016).
- IMDb.com. (n.d.). Captain America: Civil War. http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3498820/?ref=nr_sr_1 (9 January, 2017).
- Johnson, J. (2012). *Super-history: comic book superheroes and American society, 1938 to the present*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company.
- Kaklamanidou, B. (2011). The mythos of patriarchy in the X- Men films. In R. Gray and B. Kaklamanidou (eds.), *The 21st century superhero: essays on gender, genre and globalization in film*. London: McFarland & Company, 61–74.
- Kaveney, R. (2008). *Superheroes!: capes and crusaders in comics and films*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Kinnunen, J. (2016). *Badass bitches, damsels in distress, or something in between?: representation*

of female characters in superhero action films. Unpublished Pro Gradu Thesis. University of Jyväskylä, Department of Languages. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/handle/123456789/49610>

Koch, C. (2016). The Complete Marvel And DC Superhero Movie Release Schedule.

<http://www.techtimes.com/articles/122434/20160107/the-complete-marvel-and-dc-superhero-movie-release-schedule.htm> (9 December, 2016)

Kozloff, S. (2000). *Overhearing film dialogue*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lauzen, M., Dozier, D. and Horan, N. (2008). Constructing Gender Stereotypes Through Social Roles in Prime-Time Television. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 52 (2), 200–214. doi: 10.1080/08838150801991971

Lauzen, M. (2016a). Boxed In 2015-16: Women On Screen and Behind the Scenes in Television. San Diego State University, Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film.

<http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/files/2015-16-Boxed-In-Report.pdf> (13 December, 2016).

Lauzen, M. (2016b). It's a Man's (Celluloid) World: Portrayals of Female Characters in the Top 100 Films of 2015. San Diego State University, Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film. http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/files/2015_Its_a_Mans_Celluloid_World_Report.pdf

Leaper, C. and Friedman, C. K. (2007). The socialization of gender. In J. Grusec and P. D. Hastings (eds.), *Handbook of socialization: theory and research*. New York: Guilford Press.

Litosseliti, L. and Sunderland, J. (Eds.) (2002). *Gender identity and discourse analysis*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

MacDonald, H. (2014). Eventbrite Research: Younger con attendees 50/50 male to female.

<http://www.comicsbeat.com/eventbrite-research-younger-congoers-5050-male-to-female/> (10 December, 2016).

Madrid, M. (2009). *The supergirls: fashion, feminism, fantasy, and the history of comic book heroines*. US: Exterminating Angel Press.

Marvel (n.d.). All Movies: Marvel Cinematic Universe. <http://marvel.com/movies/all> (9 December, 2016).

Marvel (n.d.). Featured TV Shows. <http://marvel.com/tv/all> (9 December, 2016).

McMillan, G. (2014a). Marvel Editor in Chief on 'Spider-Woman' Cover: "I Apologize for the Mixed Messaging". <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/marvel-editor-chief-spider-woman-729245> (9 January, 2017).

McMillan, G. (2014b). Marvel Studios President Addresses Lack of Female-Led Movies.

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/marvel-studios-president-addresses-lack-722862> (9 December, 2016).

McMillan, G. (2014c). Where's Janet? Marvel's 'Ant-Man' Omission Provokes Online Outcry.

<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/heat-vision/wheres-janet-marvels-ant-man-722140> (9

December, 2016).

- Merriam-Webster: Dictionary and thesaurus (n.d.). *Character*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/character> (3 December, 2016).
- Mulvey, L. (1990 [1975]). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. In P. Erens (ed.), *Issues in feminist film criticism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 28–40.
- Nerd HQ (n.d.). (2012). The Hawkeye Initiative. <http://www.nerdhq.com/the-hawkeye-initiative/> (9 January, 2017).
- Netflix. (n.d.). Company profile. <https://ir.netflix.com/index.cfm> (11 December, 2016).
- Nyberg, A. (2011). Comics Code History: The Seal of Approval. <http://cblfd.org/comics-code-history-the-seal-of-approval/> (6 January, 2017).
- Ott, B. and Mack, R. L. (2014). *Critical media studies: an introduction* (2nd edition). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Oxford Dictionary of English (n.d.). *Representation*. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/representation> (30 December, 2016)
- Pahle, R. (2014). GotG Fans With Money to Spend Ask #WheresGamora In The Official Merchandise. <http://www.themarysue.com/wheres-gamora-merchandise-gotg/> (9 December, 2019).
- Pearson, R. (2007). Anatomising Gilbert Grissom: the structure and function of the televisual character. In M. Allen (ed.), *Reading "CSI": television under the microscope*. London, US: I.B. Tauris, 39–56.
- Piazza, R., Bednarek, M., and Rossi, F. (2011). *Telecinematic discourse: approaches to the language of films and television series*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Pilcher, J. and Whelehan, I. (2004). *50 key concepts in gender studies*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Rhode, D. (2010). *The beauty bias: the injustice of appearance in life and law*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rimmon-Kenan, S. (2002). *Narrative fiction. Contemporary poetics*. London: Routledge.
- Schedeen, J. (2014). Batgirl's Comic Get a Major Overhaul. <http://www.ign.com/articles/2014/07/10/dcs-batgirl-comic-gets-a-major-overhaul> (9 January, 2017).
- Shepherd, BH. (2015). Girls on Film: Marvel vs. DC. <https://litreactor.com/columns/girls-on-film-marvel-vs-dc> (9 December, 2016).
- Siede, C. (2015). A beginner's guide to the expansive Marvel Cinematic Universe. <http://www.avclub.com/article/beginners-guide-expansive-marvel-cinematic-univers-221909> (9 December, 2016).
- Simone, G. (1999). Women in Refrigerators. <http://lby3.com/wir/> (9 January, 2017).

- Smith, S. L., Choueiti, M., Prescott, A. and Pieper, K. (2012). Gender roles & occupations: a look at character attributes and job-related aspirations in film and television. Los Angeles: USC Annenberg. <https://seejane.org/wp-content/uploads/full-study-gender-roles-and-occupations-v2.pdf> (7 January, 2017).
- Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M., Scofield, E. and Pieper, K. (2013). Gender Inequality in 500 Popular Films: Examining On-Screen Portrayals and Behind-the-Scenes Employment Patterns in Motion Pictures Released between 2007-2012. Los Angeles: USC Annenberg. http://annenberg.usc.edu/pages/~media/MDSCI/Gender_Inequality_in_500_Popular_Films_-_Smith_2013.ashx (13 December, 2016).
- Smith, S.L., Choueiti, M. and Pieper, K. (2014). *Gender Bias Without Borders: An Investigation of Female Characters in Popular Films Across 11 Countries*. Los Angeles: USC Annenberg. <https://seejane.org/wp-content/uploads/gender-bias-without-borders-full-report.pdf> (7, January, 2017).
- Stabile, C. (2009). “Sweetheart, This Ain’t Gender Studies”: Sexism and Superheroes. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6 (1), 86–92. doi: 10.1080/14791420802663686
- Stoltzfus, L. (2014). *Keeping the 'He' in 'Heroes': A Feminist Political Economic Look at DC and Marvel superhero Film Adaptations*. Master’s Thesis. Florida State University, School of Communication. (Order No. 1559575). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1560291813). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1560291813>.
- Stuller, J. (2010). *Ink-stained amazons and cinematic warriors: superwomen in modern mythology*. London: I.B. Tauris.
- Sunderland, J. (2006). *Language and gender: an advanced resource book*. New York: Routledge.
- Tassi, P. (2016). Power Ranking All The Marvel And DC Superhero Shows Currently On Television. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/insertcoin/2016/05/03/power-ranking-all-the-marvel-and-dc-superhero-shows-currently-on-television/#3bbc61903e48> (9 December, 2016)
- The Hawkeye Initiative (n.d.). About THI and FAQ. <http://thehawkeyeinitiative.com/faq> (9 January, 2017).
- TV Tropes (n.d.). Comic Book / *Femforce*. <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/ComicBook/Femforce> (9 January, 2017).
- TV Tropes (n.d.). *Sidekick*. <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Sidekick> (29 May 2017).
- TV Tropes (n.d.). *Tropes*. <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Tropes> (1 January, 2017).
- Vanier, R. (2014). Women in Refrigerators. <https://modernmythologies.wordpress.com/2014/11/26/women-in-refrigerators/> (9 January, 2017).
- Wertham, F. (1954). *Seduction of the Innocent*. New York: Rinehart & Company.

- William, T. (2015). 5 Ways The Women Of 'Jessica Jones' Are Changing Women's Representation On Television. <http://thoughtcatalog.com/tasha-williams/2015/12/5-ways-the-women-of-jessica-jones-are-changing-womens-representation-on-television/> (13 December, 2016).
- Yeoman, K. (2015). Jessica Jones is Marvel's Most Compelling Series Yet. <http://screenrant.com/jessica-jones-season-1-review-netflix-marvel/> (11 December, 2016).