

# Arguing Progressivism in a Movie Theater Far Far Away

By Michael Wheeler

## **Abstract**

*The purpose of this paper is to analyze feminism as it pertains to the Star Wars film series. After examining the opinions of other authors and analyzing scenes from the film, can the female characters be considered progressive as it pertains to feminism? Various authors of other scholarly articles as well as novels, which contain collections of scholarly articles, were used to add ethos to the argument. Biographies and scenes from the Star Wars films themselves were analyzed to gather information on specific female characters from the film and to analyze their actions and personas. Per these sources, there is high praise for the female characters in Star Wars. Characters, both in the foreground and the background of the films, have different stories and attributes that make them strong as characters. These strengths and the characters' abilities to react to new challenges result in them being deemed progressive by modern society. It will be a pleasure seeing how the series continues to move forward and how it will continue to experiment with the characters and what challenges the characters will face.*

## **Introduction**

Due to the prominence of the male Jedi within the Star Wars film series such as Obi-wan, Yoda, Luke, and Mace Windu, it might seem like the female Jedi are non-existent or rare. However, there were a fair number of female Jedi represented within the Star Wars film series. There were Depa Billada, Aayla Secura, Shaak Ti, Adi Gallia, Luminara Unduli, and many more (Sansweet, 2008; Hidalgo and Beecroft, 2016; et al). During the Clone Wars, they fought alongside the Clone Troopers and demonstrated skill, both in combat and in their ability to wield the force. The female Jedi were not the only ones to show impressive aptitude. Let us not forget the progressivism of characters in the foreground of the film series. Leia Organa demonstrated leadership when she acted as a commander for Rebel forces against the Galactic Empire and later with her Resistance forces against the First Order, Padmé showed great political prowess as she worked within the senate on Coruscant, and Rey demonstrated her cunning and ability against the First Order.

Despite their background and status within their respective films there is an argument whether their portrayal in film is progressive or just an illusion with underlying gender stereotypes. For this report, progressive is defined as not being confined to stereotypes such as the damsel in distress, being incomplete without a man, or giving in to overwhelming odds. The young girls that watch these characters might wish to emulate them due to their success or attributes. Most people that have been to a fan convention will agree that people of any age also emulate these characters. This makes the analysis of their progressivism important because, if they are to be considered role models for children, adults, or society itself, they need to be worthy of their ranks and titles.

To this end, I examined prominent female Star Wars characters depicted throughout the film series as well as their extended stories into other works of popular culture such as television, video games, and comic books. Fan websites such as starwars.com and Wookieepedia were included to add background information about the characters. Ethos was added to my paper through the opinions of other authors who have studied the Star Wars franchise. Their research explained their perspectives of the films and of the female characters' success and/or failings as role models. I focused on characters specifically depicted in the film franchise because the films are the primary segment of the Star Wars franchise. Every comic, novel, and video game stemmed from *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope*, the very first Star Wars film.

Based on information gleaned from both the Star Wars franchise and the opinions and insights of other authors, as a whole the female characters within Star Wars have earned their praise as progressive role models for women within society. This paper recognizes that some of the female characters within the Star Wars series have shown weakness or displayed stereotypes. However, based on the characters, it appears that their strengths outweigh their shortcomings. A summary of my examination will be discussed. Then it will be connected back into my arguments of the subject. The counterclaims of other respective authors will be included to provide insight on the opposition's standpoint. Later insights will be used to rebut the counterclaim.

### Background Information

Information about the female characters of the Star Wars series was gathered from novelists, character biographies, and the films. This allowed an in-depth focus on the characters that will be analyzed. Two primary authors that I gathered opinions and information from were Diana Dominguez and Jeanne Cavelos, published authors who researched the Star Wars franchise.

Princess Leia Organa receives mixed reviews as a feminist icon. Diana Dominguez (2006) argues that Leia is very progressive due to her outspoken personality and her authority within the Rebel Alliance. She supports her argument by referencing the scene from *Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope* when Leia tells Luke, "Aren't you a little short to be a Stormtrooper?" (Kurtz & Lucas, 1977; Dominguez, 2006). There is also support to her authority in *Episode V* when she orders the evacuation of Echo Base and *Episode VI* when she chokes Jabba the Hutt using her own chains (Dominguez, 2007; Cocca, 2016; Et. al.). Dominguez (2007) also argues that Leia is the rescuer rather than the damsel because she rescues others from the Empire (Nulman, 2014). In the film series, she saved Luke and Han's lives when she masterminded their escape from the prison block, and she saved Luke's life again in *Episode V* when she prevented Luke from falling to his doom in Cloud City (starwars.com, 2016; Hatton, 2007). There was also a spin-off comic about Princess Leia within which she rescues and reunites the citizens of Alderann that did not perish in the planet's destruction (Waid, Dodson, Et. Al., 2015).

Jeanne Cavelos (2006) argues that after *Episode IV* Princess Leia begins to become less empowered. Cavelos (2006) supports her argument by referring to *Episode V* when Leia stays in her room worrying about C-3PO instead of looking for him herself or expediting the repairs on the Millennium Falcon so that they can signal the rebellion. In *Episode VI* Leia's rescue of Han Solo fails, resulting in Leia being degraded to scantily clad (Cavelos, 2006). When the chance for escape did come, she was reduced to a minor foot soldier in Luke's rescue plan further demonstrating her disempowerment (Cavelos, 2006).

Similar views to Cavelos (2006) are provided on a podcast about Leia's slave girl outfit. According to the podcast "Episode 29: Slave Leia," posted on *Imaginary Worlds Podcast* and hosted by Eric Molinsky (2015), there is controversy revolving around her Slave Leia outfit today. The actress Carrie Fisher (Princess Leia) told actress Daisy Ridley (Rey) that Daisy needed to fight for her outfit and not be a slave like Carrie was (Molinsky, 2015). Donna Dickens (2015) thought it was unlikely that Jabba the Hutt would have made Leia a slave girl because she thought it was unlikely that Jabba would be attracted to a human. Therefore, she thought the portrayal was more for the audience (Dickens, 2015). She considered Leia's silence while she was chained by Jabba to be a weakness because she was normally very outspoken and defiant (Dickens, 2015). Another interviewee, Alyssa Rosenberg (2015), thought that Leia was empowered as a slave because she strangled Jabba using her own chain.

Comparatively, Padmé's feedback is much less positive. Many of the authors describe Padmé as weak or less empowered. Beginning with *Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, Karen Hurley (2008) from *The Ecofeminist Journal* describes Naboo itself as a matriarchal society that needed to be rescued from

the Trade Federation by the patriarchal society of Coruscant. Nulman (2014) argues that Padmé attempted to convene with the senate to save her planet, but the senate refused to help. The events of *Episode III* receives poor reviews from many feminist authors. Dominguez (2007) describes Padmé as the stereotypical Juliet that dies from a broken heart after losing the one she loves. Dominguez (2007) supports her own argument by comparing Padmé's death and funeral to that of Elaine of Astolot. Elaine died of a broken heart after being rejected by Lancelot and was later sent down the river in a flower strewn boat similar to Padmé's casket and funeral march (Dominguez, 2007).

Rey, the main heroine from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, receives rave reviews from fans and journalists. She is praised by Ann Larabee (2016) from *The Journal of Popular Culture* for her mechanical, combat, and survival skills. Nicole Sperling (2016) adds that Rey also possesses compassion and patience traits that Rey demonstrated before she was thrown into the Resistance's war with the First Order. Sperling (2016) supports her claim by referencing when Rey saved BB-8 from being taken by another scavenger and when Rey refused to give up BB-8 in exchange for a bounty of food that could have prevented her from starving. Larabee (2016) adds that Rey is the personification of the hero's journey. Parts of the hero's journey include the call to adventure, the First Order attacks Jakku; meeting with the mentor, Han Solo; and crossing the threshold, going to Maz Kanata's castle (thewritersjournal.com). Sperling (2016) adds that Rey's wardrobe is also progressive in the fact that it is more messy, simple, and realistic for an adventurer when compared to the princess gown that Princess Leia wears.

There is not much opinion about Captain Phasma and Maz Kanata from *The Force Awakens* by respective authors because they are background characters. However, their actions can be used to support or refute their progressivism. Per Gwendoline Christie, the actress that plays Captain Phasma, Phasma makes a huge impact through her actions and the way she presents herself: a symbol of authority (Ortiz, 2015). Not only is she the first female Stormtrooper, but she is also the primary drill sergeant in charge of training The FN Corps of the First Order (Hidalgo & Beecroft, 2016; Ortiz, 2015). She believes that real soldiers are created outside simulators in the thick of combat where bravery is a necessity (Hidalgo & Beecroft, 2016; starwars.com, 2016). She is a firm believer that the First Order needs to be strong, and that anyone or anything that might weaken it should be left behind (Wookieepedia, 2016).

Maz Kanata is a generous, legendary pirate who lives at her castle estate on the planet Takodana in the Outer Rim (Hidalgo & Beecroft, 2016). She provides new smugglers with credits, weaponry or tools, and connections with outlaw organizations (starwars.com, 2016). She only has one rule at her castle estate: no fighting (Kennedy and Abrams, 2015). Violators receive a range of punishments from being imprisoned in her dungeon to being taken into space and ejected out the air lock (Wookieepedia, 2016). Even though she is normally an isolationist, she recognizes that a battle must be fought to keep the spreading shadow of the First Order at bay (Wookieepedia, 2016; Kennedy & Abrams, 2015).

Authors have also analyzed the standing of female characters in the Jedi Order. Karen Hurley (2008) briefly describes the Jedi Order as patriarchal. However, the Jedi Council was not only male. There were four female Jedi masters that presided over the Jedi High Council: Shaak Ti, Depa Billaba, Adi Gallia, and Luminara Unduli (Hidalgo & Beecroft, 2016; Wookieepedia, 2016). Some of them have distinguishing characteristics and abilities, such as Shaak Ti's hollow montrals, cone-like horns on top of the skull (Wookieepedia, 2016), which allow her to move quickly during combat and Adi Gallia whom is known for her diplomatic ties (Hidalgo & Beecroft, 2016). There are also female Jedi Knights and Padawans, such as Aayla Secura and Barris Offee. Aayla Secura was an inspiration to her troops. A soldier in the 501st clone regiment said that if she had not been on Felucia with them they never would have made it out with their lives or their sanity (Pandemic Studios, 2005).

## The Lone Princess

It seems appropriate to begin this argument with the original Star Wars feminist, Princess Leia. She is a major figure in the founding of the Rebellion and bringing it to fruition.

In some ways, Leia reminds me of female marines today that serve as generals and soldiers. She fought against the Imperial Stormtroopers, both in the thick of combat and from the command center of a Rebel base. She not only fought alongside men during the gun fights in *Episode IV*, but she did it with the same skill and accuracy that they had (Dominguez, 2007). Being a general, she also had the respect and support of the Rebel troops. In *Episode V*, when she commanded two starships to accompany each of the transport shuttles while they escaped off Hoth there was protest at first, but the pilots did not disobey her orders and did as they were told (Kurtz and Kershner, 1980). This showed respect to her rank as their commanding officer. She showed willingness to make the tough decisions when she ordered the Rebel forces to close the hanger door despite Han and Luke not returning to the base before the blizzard (Merlock, Merlock-Jackson, 2012). As a general, she carried more than just two lives in her hand. Her progressivism is outlined in this paragraph by her leadership, authority, and support for the Rebellion.

Her imprisonment on the Death Star in *Episode IV* did not fit with the stereotypical 'princess locked in the castle against her will by the villain' motif either. The scenario usually depicts the princess being held against her will and waiting for her Prince Charming to come and rescue her such as in *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, or the Oswald the Lucky Rabbit short "What a Knight". When Leia was captured she annoyed Vader to the point that he raised his voice and yelled at her, breaking that usually calm, serious demeanor that he constantly demonstrates when in the presence of his troops (Justin, 2016). She also showed great courage when she was tortured by Vader and the mind probe. She resisted both the probe and Vader's force powers, and managed to not give up any information about the Rebel Alliance, not even when she was faced with the possible destruction of her home planet, Alderann (Cocca, 2016). Such strength in the face of adversity is worth respect and recognition in the eyes of feminists worldwide.

When Leia was freed by Luke she stated during this supposed fairy-tale meeting, "Aren't you a little short to be a Stormtrooper?" (Kurtz & Lucas, 1977). She does not show a break in her strong, defiant demeanor even towards her own rescuer. In some ways, it seems like Han and Luke merely opened the door for her. After that, she took over her own rescue operation. When they were pinned down by enemy troops she was the one who masterminded their escape from the prison complex by jumping down the trash chute, something that Snow White would not have done considering how tidy she liked to keep things (Kurtz & Lucas, 1977). To further support her authority in her own rescue operation she told Han, "I don't know who you are or where you came from, but from now on you do as I tell you, okay?" (Kurtz & Lucas, 1977). Leia did not step aside and let Han and Luke do all the work. She jumped into the fray with them and asserted her authority.

One of the most controversial aspects about Princess Leia is the slave girl outfit that she wears in *Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*. Referring to Dickens' (2015) doubts of Jabba finding Leia attractive because she was human, Jabba had females of many shapes, sizes, and races in his court, which he commanded to dance for his amusement. This fact refutes Jabba being favorable towards one race as slaves or sexual objects. He is an equal opportunity pervert. The scene where Leia choked Jabba with her own chain seemed symbolic because Leia used the very chain that was used to bind her to free herself (Rosenberg, 2015). She did seem tamer after she was chained by Jabba. Although, the fact that she used the opportunity to free herself the moment Luke sprung up from his diving board can also give the interpretation she was biding her time for the perfect moment to free herself. She then jumped right back into the fray at The Battle of Endor, demonstrating that she is just as empowered and progressive no matter how she was dressed.

### **Padmé Amidala: The Matriarch of Naboo**

Padmé Amidala has been the most controversial female character within the film series. Because of Anakin succumbing to the dark side, she lost the will to live and died after giving birth to their twins. This is perceived as one of the most disappointing moments for feminist fans of the film series (Dominguez, 2007). The fans describe it as being catapulted back in time when females were incomplete without their male counterparts (Dominguez, 2007). Padme served to assist Anakin's character development while her character disappears (Cocca, 2016). However, does that mean that everything she did prior to that one event should be forgotten?

Padmé made her first debut in *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* when her home world, Naboo, was threatened by the Trade Federation. There is controversy to whether her matriarchal society was in fact a damsel in distress due to its inability to save itself (Hurley, 2008). They did attempt to fight back, but the blockade and surprise attack from the Trade Federation prevented them from marshaling an adequate defense. Although, she demonstrated intelligence by setting up a decoy in order to mislead the Trade Federation. Also, when she failed to get help from the Senate on Coruscant, she returned to her home world and resolved the situation herself. She marshaled her forces, received aid from the Gungans, and fought alongside her subjects to reclaim her planet for all the creatures of Naboo. The fact that she could free her planet herself and never stopped trying to free her people from oppression shows great leadership in the face of adversity.

Granted she did not accomplish this on her own. She had help from the Jedi and the Gungans. She went to Boss Nass and begged for his help and cooperation. This might seem weak, but through humility, she received the aid of an army, restored order to her planet, and fostered peace between the Gungan and the Humans. Her cooperation with the Jedi allowed her to defeat Darth Maul and capture Nute Gunray so that he could answer for his crimes. Though her humility and cooperation might have seemed like weakness, it fostered strength and peace which further demonstrated her capability as a competent leader. Leaders need to be strong, but they also need to be humble.

In *Episode II: Attack of the Clones* her bravery and idealism is tested further. Zam Wessell, the first female villainess in the Star Wars film series, was hired by Jango Fett to kill Padmé due to Padmé's refusal to support a military bill in the senate. Even when members of Padmé's court were killed during an assassination attempt at the spaceport or when Zam attempted to kill her directly, Padmé remained adamant that what she was doing was right. Padmé believed that if a military bill was enacted it could have resulted in marshal law across the galaxy or worse: galactic civil war. Padmé demonstrated courage in the face of adversity, thus supporting her progressive attributes.

Padmé also demonstrates skill in combat and as a rescuer. When Obi-wan was kidnapped by the Separatists in *Episode II* she and Anakin tried to defuse the situation. However, they were both captured and put into the Geonosian arena to be executed. She picked the handcuffs to her shackles and used them to reach higher ground on the pillar to avoid the savage animals below. When one of the creatures started climbing the pillar she used the chains to defend herself by swinging across the pillar and kicking the animal, causing it to plummet to the ground (McCallum & Lucas, 2002). Like Leia, she used the chains that bound her as a weapon. She also mounted a creature pulling a Geonosian chariot during the arena battle between the droids and the Jedi, and she rode the creature into combat. This valor and complex problem solving in the middle of combat makes her progressive as a female soldier and a survivalist.

However, when *Star Wars Episode III: The Revenge of the Sith* was released her prior bravery and progressivism seemed to be forgotten. Most authors and fans were disappointed that Padmé lost the will to live and died. However, she was under tremendous emotional duress at the time. In one day, everything that she loved and believed in was taken away: a government that supports liberty, the Jedi which sought to keep stability in the galaxy, a loving husband. She also endured childbirth that

came with its own emotional and physical stress. Granted Leia had lost things that she too held precious: her planet, her husband, her son. She survived and kept moving forward. However, there are limits to what some individuals can bear and Padmé reached hers. “I don’t know you anymore. Anakin, you’re breaking my heart. You’re going down a path I can’t follow” (McCallum & Lucas, 2005). Those were Padmé’s exact words to Anakin when she confronted him in *Episode III*. Padmé did not have the same emotional strength as Leia, but she was not weak. She was very passionate about her ideals, and she was willing to fight for what she held dear. She should not be disparaged for dying.

### **The Feminist Awakens: Progress in the Sequel Trilogy**

*Star Wars: The Force Awakens* received rave reviews and earned over 2 billion dollars worldwide in the box office (Box Office Mojo, 2016). It introduced Rey, who has been revered as one of the most progressive characters of the Star Wars franchise yet. It also introduced Captain Phasma and Maz Kanata, who also demonstrate progressive, feminist values.

Before Rey is thrown into the conflict between the Resistance and the First Order, she shows her compassion, resilience, and skill (Sperling, 2016). To survive she becomes a scavenger, salvaging wreckage from old Imperial and Rebel remnants left behind from the Galactic Civil War. Such machinery provides enough scrap for her to barter for food, thus demonstrating her survival skills. She also uses the junk for shelter. She found the hollowed-out leg of an AT-AT and repurposed it to create a makeshift home (Kennedy and Abrams, 2015). As mentioned before in the background information, she demonstrated compassion through her adventure with BB-8 and Finn and refuted common stereotypes such as hand-holding or needing a man to save her life (Sperling, 2016; Larabee, 2016). In fact, her demeanor towards Finn was like Leia’s demeanor towards Han and Luke when they came to rescue Leia.

After her refusal to sell BB-8, the First Order descended on her and Finn, thus throwing her into the thick of the galactic conflict. During her escape, she demonstrated her technical and piloting skills to the audience. Rey piloted the Millennium Falcon in a dogfight against First Order pilots, and she flew the ship like an expert. She utilized the wreckage of the Imperial star ship to outmaneuver most of the ships tailing them, and then helped Finn destroy the last First Order ship by flipping the entire ship upside down so that they could use the gun under the Falcon to destroy it (Kennedy & Abrams, 2015). Then she righted the ship narrowly avoiding a crash. Her piloting skills appeared to be on par with Anakin Skywalker, if not better. Her progressivism is shown through her superb mechanical and piloting skills, her ability to take care of herself, and her demeanor towards female stereotypes like hand holding or needing a man to save her.

Rey saved herself from the First Order after she was captured, and she managed to show great aptitude in the force that surpassed the main antagonist. She freed herself from her confinement by using a Jedi mind trick on her captor, which is even more impressive because she had no prior training in the force. She was also able to resist Kylo Ren’s ability to torture her when he reached into her mind using the force. Next, she single handedly backtracked the link that Ren had created and read his mind instead. She upstaged Ren, who has Anakin Skywalker’s blood and abilities in the force, without any prior training. Insult to injury, her swordsmanship upstaged Ren’s swordsmanship. She started on the defensive, but she utilized the force to turn the tables on the dark warrior, scarring Ren’s face and knocking him to the ground. In just one day of using the force, she freed herself, resisted Ren’s mind abilities, and managed to beat him in a lightsaber duel. Not bad for someone who is not even a Jedi yet.

Rey, although the most prominent example of progressivism, is not the only progressive female displayed in the film. Captain Phasma, the first female Stormtrooper, brings her own form of feminism to the picture. She is highly authoritative with her soldiers as displayed during her

confrontation with Finn, where she questions him like a drill sergeant questions a private. She prefers to fight on the front lines with her soldiers where she leads them and maintains her authority. She also has the same cutthroat demeanor as Tarkin. She executed the villagers on Jakku after the First Order's raid without hesitation or remorse (Kennedy & Abrams, 2015). Her abilities as a villainess and soldier make her progressive.

There is also the female outlaw and pirate, Maz Kanata. Maz owns a castle on the planet Takodana, where she is known for her hospitality. Her generosity towards total strangers is well known and admired. The fact that she owns such a large estate demonstrates her financial success as a smuggler. Although she is known for her generosity, she can also be very ruthless when she needs to be, referring back to what she does to violators that fight at her estate. She encouraged Han Solo, Rey, and the rest of the crew to fight back against the First Order and take the fight to them to keep their shadow from spreading across the galaxy (Kennedy & Abrams, 2015). She has authority, is willing to fight for her beliefs just like the characters at the forefront of the film series, and possesses financial success.

### **The Female Jedi**

It is understandable that the Jedi Council is considered patriarchal due to the prominence of the Jedi that are at the foreground such as Yoda, Obi-wan, and Luke. However, there were many female members in the Jedi Council. They showed progressivism in similar ways to the aforementioned female characters. They also have characteristics that set them apart from the Jedi and the foreground feminists, and make them unique.

Like the aforementioned characters, the female Jedi were war heroes. They commanded battalions during The Clone Wars and fought to restore order to the war-torn galaxy (Litvack, 2010; starwars.com; Wookieepedia). Shaak Ti was the trainer for a Clone Trooper regiment on Kamino. She oversaw their training and determined if they were fit for combat (Litvack, & Filoni, 2010). She also demonstrated leadership when the base was invaded by Separatists, and she acted to defend the base while aided by Obi-wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker (Litvack, & Filoni, 2010). Aayla Secura fought on Felucia and other frontiers across the galaxy. She also demonstrated skill at both single-bladed and double-bladed weaponry in combat, which is a skill that few Jedi possess or demonstrate (Pandemic Studios, 2005). Luminara Unduli fought on Kashyyyk with Master Yoda to liberate the Wookiee home world when the Separatists invaded (McCallum & Lucas, 2005). All three were part of Mace Windu's Jedi strike battalion at the Battle of Geonosis, the prelude to the Clone Wars (McCallum & Lucas, 2003). Like the females in the foreground of the film, they fought in the thick of combat, inspired their troops, and demonstrated leadership.

These Jedi are also good teachers to both their fellow Jedi and the Clone Troopers. Shaak Ti taught the Clone Troopers teamwork. In the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* episode "Clone Cadets," she taught the clones Echo and Fives that, even though they can take care of each other as individuals, they also needed to learn to function in a larger group (Litvack, 2010). Aayla Secura taught Ahsoka, Anakin's Padawan, the dangers of personal attachments on Meridun when Anakin was injured in a crash landing (Lucas, 2009). Luminara Unduli trained a Padawan learner named Barris Offee in *Episode II*. They were known for their teamwork when they fought together in combat (Hidalgo & Beecroft, 2016). The ability to pass on knowledge is an invaluable asset and skill. It demonstrated their wisdom, making them worthy of their titles as Jedi.

An interesting aspect of progressivism that the female Jedi possess is individuality. Princess Leia, Padme Amidala, and Rey all share a similar profile: human, young, Caucasian, brunette. However, the females of the Jedi Council are much more individualized. Different species are enrolled in the council from Togruta to Twi'lek to Mirialan (Wookieepedia, 2016). Even the human Jedi have diverse origins. Depa Billaba is portrayed by a Turkish-Austrian actress of Indian descent

named Dipika O'Neill Joti, and Adi Gallia is portrayed by an American model named Gin Clarke who is African-American (Wookieepedia, 2016; Yatedo, 2016). Even Maz Kanata is individualized because she is portrayed by Mexican-Kenyan actress Lupita Nyong'o (Kennedy & Abrams, 2015). Granted, Maz is not a Jedi. However, she does possess a strong connection to the force and knowledge of the force like the Jedi (Hidalgo & Beecroft, 2016). Their individuality can be interpreted as progressive because it provides female heroes with multiple backgrounds which appeals to a larger audience, not just the Caucasian audience.

## Conclusion

People around the world need someone to admire. Some admire football players while others admire scientists. However, these role-models need to be worthy of the admiration they have received. The female characters within the Star Wars film series are no different.

Based on the films and the analysis of other researchers, these characters appear to be worthy of their titles as role models within their films and within the real world. They all demonstrate the will to fight for what they believe in and possess skills in their acquired fields such as weaponry, mechanics, and leadership, which proves that they are more than just eye candy. They are diverse which allows them to appeal to a larger audience. Some characters are royalty while others are scavengers. Some are smugglers and others are soldiers. More importantly, they rarely submit to stereotypes that would otherwise degrade their character. These women rarely play the damsel in distress nor are they displayed as powerless. There is more depth to their characters.

These insights can be applied to future events. There are new Star Wars films that will be appearing soon such as *Rogue One*, coming this December, and *Episodes VIII* and *IX* for the Star Wars sequel trilogy that will appear in subsequent years. As such, I believe there are going to be more characters like Rey, Maz, or the female Jedi that will appear. Will they be as progressive as their predecessors, or will they possess attributes that individualize them? Do they deserve praise from young girls and adults everywhere or are they stereotypes for this day in age? The answer to these questions matter to ensure that the world has female role models that we can admire and are worthy of that admiration.

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