LOST IN MASULINITY

LOST IN MASCULINITY:
A CRITICAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF
THE TV SERIES LOST

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes the hit television series Lost and how the characters Kate Austen and James ‘Sawyer’ Ford negotiate their gender performance on and off the island. From a critical rhetorical standpoint, this study further examines the stereotypical depictions of masculinity that are perpetuated through the media and how these depictions are either negated or adhered to by the previously mentioned characters. Overall, the major themes of masculinity that were found were the correlation between muscul arity and masculinity as well as the display of aggressive and violent behavior to exert dominance. Ultimately, I argue that the gender performances of both Kate and Sawyer only serve to reinforce the heteronormative societal ideal that we are more uncomfortable with women who deviate away from expected gender performances than we are with male deviation.
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Chapter One

On September 22, 2004, America turned on their television sets and watched as passengers on Oceanic Flight 815 traveling from Australia, experienced turbulence, and crash landed on a deserted island. Characters like Jack Shepard, Kate Austen, and James ‘Sawyer’ Ford demonstrated survival skills and drama which immediately drew in audiences. The cultural phenomena that surrounded ABC’s hit television show Lost could not have been predicted. Following the completion of its first season, Lost was nominated for 12 primetime Emmy awards and won six of those 12 awards. Lost went on to air for six seasons, concluding on May 23, 2010. Arguably, it is one of the most successful contemporary television series. Its flame has still not diminished. Almost three years later, Lost is still a relevant cultural reference with a fan base that is forever faithful.

Given the impact that Lost has had on popular culture it is not surprising that many have speculated what factors have contributed to the success of the series. One of the major factors that is used to explain the show’s popularity is the diverse cast of characters who evolved over the show’s six season run. While the show aired, there were more than 48 characters that viewers grew to know, love, and hate. Those characters were a constant source of conversation for popular culture outlets. An Entertainment
Weekly feature stated that Lost characters are all part of an intricate plan by the producers of the show. Specifically, the characters are, “connected to a series that raises more questions than a philosopher on speed. Are they all dead? What's up with the black and white stones?” (“Almost paradise”, 2004). The series is suspenseful and was designed with plenty of character development to get viewers hooked. Show creator Damon Lindlof states, “The flashbacks [to characters’ pasts] serve as a great conduit to learn more about these characters, but that's not all they're there for. The idea that these people—way before they got on this airplane—have interacted with each other either directly or through third parties is one of the cool pieces of tapestry of the show” (“Almost paradise,” 2004). Put simply, the characters on Lost are complex and unforgettable and the plot of the show is designed to show them off.

This thesis analyzes some of the most influential Lost characters. In particular, I analyze the gendered performances of Kate Austen and James ‘Sawyer’ Ford. From a critical rhetorical viewpoint, I investigate how the characters demonstrate their masculinity. Because gender is typically viewed through of a two-part system, I analyze their feminine and masculine characteristics, which combine to portray an academic concept of female masculinity. Given my interest in the gender system as a whole, I ask the following questions:

*RQ 1: How is masculinity enacted by the character Kate Austen?*

Further, as I will show, much of the literature surrounding masculinity in the media centers on the notion of hegemonic masculinity and society’s discomfort for masculine performances that go against the heteronormative expectation of what it means to be masculine. Therefore, I also pose the question:
RQ 2: How is masculinity enacted by the character James ‘Sawyer’ Ford?

To answer these questions, this thesis proceeds as follows. I provide a rationale for utilizing *Lost* as a text in this introductory chapter as well as provide background information about Kate and Sawyer and the main characters with whom they interact. Chapter Two discusses the literature surrounding masculinity, female masculinity, and masculinity in the media which reveals the necessity for this study. In Chapter Three, I explain the theoretical orientation that I utilize to analyze the gender performances of Kate and Sawyer. In Chapters Four and Five, I analyze the characters Kate Austen and James ‘Sawyer’ Ford respectively. Finally, in Chapter Six I discuss the conclusions and overall implications of this project.

Within the analysis chapters, I investigate how both Kate and Sawyer’s gender performances are viewed by themselves as individuals and also how their gender performance is impacted by the other survivors on the island. Both characters depicted dominant and readable representations of masculinity. By this I mean that both characters demonstrated the gender performance of masculinity that was recognizable for the viewer. Both Kate and Sawyer perpetuated the notion of muscularity equating masculinity as well as the performance of aggression and in ability to be emotionally vulnerable. These themes, as well as how Kate and Sawyer’s gender performance are viewed individually and by the other survivors, are all further unpacked in Chapters Four and Five.

**Rationale**

This analysis of the hit television series *Lost* is important for several reasons. The first is that it is pertinent that scholars analyze mediated texts. To ignore the impact the
media has on society is to ignore a major sphere of influence. Second, the television series was a hit from the time it first aired until the series finale. Third, which is perhaps less tangible but just as culturally significant, the series introduced fans to a wide variety of diverse characters with in-depth character development and back stories. This diversity is one of the reasons the series was so well received by critics and viewers alike. Finally, this analysis is important because of the discussion or lack thereof, by scholars and the public alike of the characters gender performances. Thus, this study seeks to combine previous scholarly work in the analysis of the series and turn the conversation in an entirely new direction. The following justification section will expand on why *Lost* is a significant marker in our popular culture and why it is important to analyze it from a scholarly perspective.

Before discussing the specific implications of *Lost*, I want to stress the importance of studying mediated texts in general. Many rhetorical scholars have already made note of the power that mediated texts—including television—hold over society. The media creates and reinforces the hegemonic ideologies of society, and without critics questioning these ideologies, they will continue to dominate our culture’s way of thinking. Feminist media critic Bonnie Dow (1996) echoes this notion by stating, “I can assume that television operates hegemonically at a broad level” (p. 21). Some examples of hegemonic ideologies that are re-appropriated through television programming include messages related to race, religion, and gender. Specifically, in his 2008 study, Phil Chidester analyzed the popular sitcom *Friends* and the notion of whiteness. He states, “*Friends’* popularity is rooted not only in the program’s value as a source of entertainment, but in its efforts to defend whiteness’s hegemonic privilege in
contemporary America” (Chidester, 2008, p. 160). Further, Erika Engstrom and Joseph M. Valenzano (2010) investigated the television drama *Supernatural* and they claimed that the religious hegemonic ideal of Christianity and specifically Catholicism is reinforced through this show. They state, “Though it holds the potential to introduce other religions, it still conveys the implicit acceptance of the familiar, through repeated Catholic images and references, and perpetuates the dominant view of that tradition” (Engstrom & Valenzano, 2010, p. 81). Lastly, the hegemonic notion of gender is perpetuated throughout the media as exemplified through Kherstin Khan and Diane M. Blair’s (2013) study of Bill Clinton. In their investigation of the media portrayal of Bill Clinton during Hillary Clinton’s primary campaign, they state, “Traditional gender scripts function to reinforce hegemonic discourses about groups that already occupy positions of political power and dominance” (Khan & Blair, 2013, p. 57). In short, the power the media holds over society is exponential. Not only do mediated sources tell society what is dominant and popular, but reinforced those notions, ensuring the longevity of hegemonic ideals.

While seeing familiar identities on television can be refreshing, change bay not occur through passively viewing. Critics need to expose and push against the boundaries in which the media operates for progress to occur. Therefore, the expectations of this study are to understand how society constructs the concept of masculinity, how that concept is perpetuated through a popular television series, and how the media’s definition of masculinity speaks to the over-arching ideals that our society holds.

This project then seeks to reveal the symbolic activity that is represented in *Lost* and how that speaks to society. Dow (1996) challenges scholars to dig deeper into media
texts when she states, “In addition to revealing something interesting and useful about the text itself, reveal something interesting and useful and the kind of symbolic activity that the text represents” (p. 5). So for Dow, texts utilized for rhetorical criticism are an extension of societal views and beliefs. Instead of simply investigating why the individual text is intriguing, scholars must also discover the significance that a particular text holds in society. Further, what does the message in the text reflect about society?

This project seeks to expose how masculinity is depicted in a media text on a popular, prime time, critically acclaimed television series. While a rhetorical critic’s job is not to make a cause and effect argument, I do examine how that depiction invites viewers to see gender limitations and possibilities. Given the extensive body of work on gender expectations provided in the literature review, I am able to speculate about the underlying ideology surrounding society’s understanding of masculinity and the “real world” implications of perpetuating these ideologies in a mediated context.

Because of the impact that mediated content has on societal ideologies, the television series *Lost* is an excellent candidate for analysis because of its cultural relevance. In short, a show as popular as *Lost* has a great chance at influencing cultural understandings of particular ideologies – like gender identity. On September 22, 2004, the broadcast network *ABC* aired the pilot of the television show *Lost*. The show, created by J.J. Abrams, Jeffery Lieber, and Damon Lindelof, gained an average of 15.69 million viewers per episode in the first season (ABCmedianet.com). The show hooked viewers with the two part pilot with “Part 1” gaining 18.65 million viewers and “Part 2” hitting 17.0 million viewers (ABCmedianet.com). *Entertainment Weekly* reviewed the pilot and gave the episode a grade of an “A.” Reviewer, Ken Tucker, was wary at first glance, but
after giving the show a chance, he along with the rest of America, realized that *Lost* was like no series he had seen before and he wanted to take the time to invest in what it had to offer. He states,

But as far as I'm concerned, Abrams and Lindelof have created one of only two new shows this season at the end of which I was yearning to see a second hour right away. I was tempted to hedge on my final grade, because *Lost* is the kind of show that could go anywhere. Then I realized that's exactly why I should commit to the ride. (Tucker, 2004)

*Lost*, which was the product of ABC Studios Touchstone Television, Bad Robot, and Grass Skirt Productions, became a cultural phenomenon in America and gained a cult following airing a total of 121 episodes over six seasons. *Entertainment Weekly* also later reported that, “Despite having all the makings of a noble TV failure, *Lost* drew 18.7 million viewers, making it the most-watched drama debut at 8 p.m. in five years, and proving that a killer high-concept series can be king” (“Almost paradise”, 2004, p. 3). The show’s popularity carried throughout its six seasons. The sixth and final season had an average of 11 million viewers per episode (ABCmedianet.com) with the finale, “The End,” which aired on May 23, 2010, bringing in 13.5 million viewers (Flint, 2010). The show still maintains its cult following with dedicated fans uploading information to the Internet and still theorizing about the shows deeper meaning.

The complex characters and plot lines won the attention of anyone who gave the series a chance. In a feature published in *Rolling Stone* on March 3, 2010, before the series finale, critics hailed the series for being able to maintain this cult following. The cultural critic, Rob Sheffield (2010), describes the show as “having a soul” (p. 30). He
argues that the uniqueness of the show played a large part in the series success. He states, “Lost is ridiculous on a grand scale that nothing else on the tube can match. Even if you're not a Lost fan, you'll miss it when it's gone” (Sheffield, 2010, p. 30). His claim that even viewers who are not fans of the series will still mourn its end attests to the impact that Lost has had on popular culture. Furthermore, Sheffield and his reminder that the show is “ridiculous” and on a grand scale provides additional credence to the idea that Lost consistently defied viewers’ expectations. If this is the case, it is reasonable to assume that the show offered a progressive, but unexpected, portrayal of gender as well.

Obviously, those who did watch the show did so with mild obsession. Fans rallied around the series, creating blogs and websites dedicated to the show. Top fan sites created about the show include sites such as Lost-tv.com, Lost-media.com, Lostpedia.wikia.com, and Lost.com. Fans created each of these sites for fellow fans and included a discussion board aspect which still populates conversation about the series, almost two years after the final episode aired. The creators of these sites are dedicated to providing fellow fans with as much information about the series as possible. There are also sections discussing the theories surrounding Lost, episode recaps, and even episode transcriptions. The creators of these sites update and still maintain them. Even though the series is no longer airing on major broadcast networks, fans are still searching for information. Lost captured the attention of society and established the series as something important.

Additionally, the importance of Lost did not go unnoticed by major entertainment media outlets, which provided insider information and reviews of the series for viewer consumption. Magazines and newspapers reported on the series for six years providing
features on the actors, behind the scenes scoops, and reviews of the episodes. Several
entertainment outlets dedicated whole sections of their websites to Lost. EW.com, the
official website of Entertainment Weekly, created and maintains a portion of the
magazine’s website dedicated to Lost. The “Totally ‘Lost’” section provides fans with
photo galleries, videos, Lost theories, show recaps, and a column on the television show
authored by Doc Jensen which discusses all of the previously mentioned facets, providing
more detail and analysis. The cast of Lost also graced several covers of Entertainment
Weekly throughout its six year run. Characters Jack and Kate won the first Lost centered
cover, appearing on the December 3, 2004 issue. The magazine called the show the
“most addictive thriller on TV” (“Almost paradise,” 2004). The feature applauded Lost
for the success gained in its first season. According to the article, “The nebulous,
foreboding drama has fast become one of the year's most talked-about shows. It has
attracted 17.6 million viewers, making it the No. 2 new series of the season” (“Almost
paradise,” 2004). In summation, Lost was a series that demanded viewership.

Other popular magazines that gave the television series considerable attention
include publications like Rolling Stone, Time, and People. In a November 8, 2004 article,
Time magazine featured the series and the success that it had garnered in the shows first
season. The show was praised for the originality that it brought to the small screen.
Another major entertainment media outlet E!, also praised Lost for the impact the series
had on popular culture. E!’s television branch, Watch with Kristin named Lost the
number one television show of the past 20 years. Other popular shows included on the
list were Friends, Seinfeld, and The Office. Kristin justified her choice by stating, “Cause
from where I'm sitting, Sunday's Lost series finale was the most brilliant work of
television of all time” (Dos Santos, 2010). Fans and media alike recognized the power and potential of *Lost*.

*Lost* was a hit not only with fans and popular media outlets, but with critics as well. During the six seasons it was on air, the show received 262 award nominations, winning 55 of those nominations. Included in those awards are ten Emmy wins including the Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series in 2005, Best American Import at the British Academy Television Awards in 2005, the Golden Globe Award for Best Drama in 2006, and a Screen Actors Guild Award for Outstanding Ensemble in a Drama Series, also in 2006 (“Awards for lost,” 2012). The complex characters and intriguing plot lines garnered the attention viewers willing to give the series a chance.

Not surprisingly, the cultural popularity has led to increased scholarly interest. In particular, some scholars have suggested that the show’s popularity and significance is partially due to the diverse cast. Scholars have recognized the impact the show had on society and anticipated the importance of studying such a unique popular cultural text (Clarke, 2010; Lain & Treat, 2010; Porter & Lavery, 2007; Tian & Hoffner, 2010). Several themes and contexts analyzed by scholars include character stereotypes and the impact of the series on a post 9/11 America.

Media scholars, Qing Tian and Cynthia Hoffner (2010) argued that *Lost* should be studied because of the complexity of the characters and plot. In line with the goals of my study, they argue that, “*Lost* was chosen for this study because it features more than 15 regular characters with diverse personalities and backgrounds, which makes it one of the largest casts in American prime-time television” (Tian and Hoffner, 2010, p. 257). The large and diverse case presented on *Lost* cannot be ignored.
The show’s complexity also assisted Lain and Treat in studying *Lost*. They state, “By examining fragmentary extratexts, the flash forward technique, and textual practices of fandom, we show that *Lost* is an instructive synecdoche for exploring the anxiety-inducing rhetorical contingencies of post structural narrative” (Lain and Treat, 2010, p. 281). The scholars claim the complex plot and characters make *Lost* a text worthy of analysis, while the popularity of the series implies the research can potentially impact society. Because *Lost* was both embraced and consumed by viewers, critics, and scholars, the themes, plot, and characters penetrated society with underlying messages. However, these scholars do not examine the cultural meanings present in the gender performance of the characters. Lain and Treat do, however, recognize the rhetorical significance of *Lost*,

This complex negotiation between author and reader, media commodity and consumers, vying for control or mastery of the *Lost* text itself connected to the co-narrative process of audience-participants who also find themselves ‘lost’ within a decontextualized situation and an indeterminate social scene. (Lain & Treat, 2010, p. 286)

This study follows the lead of Lain and Treat and investigates the narrative of the show, but rather than analyzing the post 9/11 impact, the masculine development of the characters pre and post island is examined.

Given everything previously mentioned, *Lost* is undeniably worthy of and begging for scholarly attention. Indeed, the very success of the show may mirror the impact on society. ABC primetime entertainment vice president, Stephen McPherson said, “They are singular shows, I don’t think imitating them will be successful” (P, J.
The fact that Lost is such a complex and original show is what made it a hit with fans and critics. The originality of the show makes it unlikely another show could replicate Lost. So many fans and critics loved the show because of the complexity that if another show were to attempt to mimic Lost, similar success would be unlikely. This uniqueness attests to the impact that the series had on popular culture.

Characters on the Island

On a list of the top ten characters on Lost, the LA Times ranked Sawyer at number five (‘Lost’s’ Top 10 Characters, 2010). Kate was also listed as part of one of the show’s top duos because of her relationship with Jack Shepard on EW.com’s ‘Lost: ’10 Dynamic Duos (Vary, 2010). Kate and Sawyer are part of the original cast who make appearances in all six seasons. Not only are they original plane crash survivors, but they each play an integral role in the evolving plot of the show and without them, the series would suffer in complexity. Given the crucial roles that both Kate and Sawyer play in Lost, each of these two characters appears worthy of an in-depth analysis. Arguably, they are two of the most prominent characters in the large Lost cast. Because of the extensive cast and intricate plot in the show, I provide a brief explanation of the major characters that interact with Kate and Sawyer and may impact their gender performance. This description will also be helpful in setting up both analysis chapters.

Kate Austen Kate Austen is a criminal on the run. She was being escorted back to America by a U.S. Marshal who caught her in Australia. She is on the run for murdering her stepfather by blowing up the house he was asleep in. Throughout her time running from the law she also engaged in several other criminal activities. While on the
island, Kate forms a bond with both Jack and Sawyer, which ultimately results in a complicated love triangle between the three.

**Jack Shepard** Jack is a doctor who quickly evolves as one of the major leaders on the island. He is the first character the viewer’s get to know. He also immediately takes charge and begins to administer first aid to the injured survivors. Because of this, he quickly rises to power in the eyes of the other survivors. They go to him with issues and turn to him in times of crisis. As Kate’s character develops, she forms a strong alliance with Jack and a romantic relationship between the two blossoms. Given their closeness, Kate either benefits or suffers from how Jack is received by the rest of the island and how he reacts to her.

**James ‘Sawyer’ Ford** Kate’s relationship with Sawyer is equally complicated. If Jack is considered the hero and leader among the survivors, than Sawyer is the anti-hero. He antagonizes the other survivors and gets into several physical fights. There are many instances in which he blatantly contests Jack’s position of power and is painted as a character that is shady and untrustworthy. However, despite this initial portrayal, the viewer sees Sawyer evolve as a character the more he begins to bond with Kate.

**Juliet Burke** Juliet is an “other,” or a person who was already on the island before the plane crashed. Among the others she is a respected doctor and one who aids Benjamin Linus, who is their leader. Because Juliet is an “other,” Jack, Sawyer, and Kate do not initially trust her because she aids in the kidnapping of the three. As the show progresses, her role among the main characters become more pertinent and she serves as a character foil to Kate. She also becomes a love interest of both Jack and Sawyer, complicating Kate’s position as a person of interest between the two men.
Chapter Two:
Review of Literature

In order to understand the implications of *Lost* on notions of masculinity, I first need to understand the academic research regarding the media and masculinity. Given the complex representation of the male and female characters and their potential to diverge away from expected gender performances, I investigate literature that delves into the study of masculinity. I utilize this literature to gain a working definition of masculinity. I then look at the concept of masculinity further by expanding my review to include female masculinity and then masculinity as it is portrayed in the media. Based upon the knowledge of important scholars, I argue that masculinity is a key academic concept that is both under researched and misunderstood. As a result, my project will help further the discussion about the real world implications for a public understanding of masculinity.

**Masculinity**

It is important to first understand what is implied when scholars use the word masculinity and what scholars mean when they study the concept. In his book, *Media and the Models of Masculinity*, cultural critic Mark Moss (2011) defines the concept as the following.

Masculinity refers to socially fabricated patterns or positions embodied by men.

In essence, masculinity is a ‘social construct’ which can stand alone from male
biology. This is why forces and cultural trends can have such an enormous impact on masculine interpretations, both personal and public. (p.1)

So for Moss and other scholars, masculinity is a socially constructed behavior that can extend outside of biological functions. Further, popular culture has a tremendous impact on how masculinity is received for society individually as well as the expectation that is set for the public as a whole.

Scholars Chesbro and Fuse (2001) also investigated what the study of masculinity should look like. For them, the interrogation of masculinity can be defined as the following:

The study of the discourses and the effects of the discourses generated by men, unifying men, and revealing the identity and characteristics men ascribe to themselves, others, and their environment…the study of ideological and political systems that masculinity has spawned which accordingly can include examinations of patriarchies, male bonding, warfare, territorial expansions, specific forms of aggression as well as a host of terms. (p. 203)

Scholars have conducted various studies to help break down this notion of masculinity. Sociologist R.W. Connell is a leader in this type of research. Through his various studies and books, he established the idea of studying ‘masculinities’ versus masculinity as a singular notion. As Connell (2008) points out, it is important that scholars begin to broaden and deepen their view of masculinity. In America’s multi-cultural society, it is limiting to view the concept as linear as it constrains men and women to stereotypical roles and expectations. Instead, scholars must begin to study not masculinity, but masculinities. By broadening our view of masculinity, scholars need to consider what it
is in our society that formulates the construction of our view of what is classified as masculine. Connell (2000) states, “Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct gender differently” (p. 10). For Connell, there is not a singular thing that determines gender and how it should be constructed, which in turn translates to the notion that masculinity is not a one dimensional concept. It should be viewed as complex and complicated with multiple factors to consider in determining what is masculine. With these ideas, Connell reveals the idea that there is more than one type of masculinity, and that society subscribes to several different depictions of masculinity. In order to understand masculinity, scholars need to consider the different aspects of society that shape the public’s understanding of masculinity.

Connell’s work in masculinity has paved the way for many other scholars who have taken up his call to expand upon the concept and complete more comprehensive research on the subject. Through various studies, scholars have attempted to break down the binary of masculinity and femininity and to expose the constraints that society places upon both. Michael Moller (2007) accepts Connell’s challenge for a more comprehensive study of masculinity by iterating that “masculinity studies need to become more interested in the dynamic nature of gendered power relations” (p. 267). For Moller then, the study of masculinity should not be constrained by only looking at the effects it has on men as it applies to women as well.

Katie Gibson and Amy Heyse (2010) answered Connell’s call for more scholarship in masculine studies that reflected a feminist perspective. They expanded upon Connell’s notion that “hegemonic masculinity is the culturally idealized form of masculine character that has connected toughness and competitiveness, the subordination
of women, and the marginalization of gay men” (Gibson & Heyse, 2010, p. 237).

Through their study they attempted to expose the binary that was placed upon Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin during the 2008 election. Within the media, Palin was expected to adhere to feminine societal norms given her attractive appearance. Instead, Palin exhibited qualities of a “pit bull” through her verbal attacks against Barack Obama. This created discourse within the media because Palin’s physicality did not align with gender performance. Because of this, Palin was forced to re-assert her femininity which in turn, diminished her masculine performance. Their study reveals that the binary is complicated, and that Palin could not move from masculine to feminine without compromising what society’s expectations were. Gibson and Heyse (2010) further explore this notion by stating:

In stark contrast to such claims, our analysis demonstrates that Palin’s speech enthusiastically endorsed traditional gender scripts. Although she might have usurped some of the ‘muscular’ rhetoric of hegemonic masculinity, she did so through the degradation of the feminine, and in the end, the undermining of her own maternal persona. (p. 251)

There is a blatant distinction in society between what is masculine and what is feminine. When someone attempts to blur those lines, as Palin did, the public becomes confused and does not know how to handle it (Gibson & Heyse, 2010). Palin was a public figure who attempted to take on a masculine stance and still remain feminine, however, instead of contesting the gender binary the public disciplined Palin’s gender performance. This example reveals the necessity for scholars to consider how women factor into the study of masculinity, and more specifically the notion of female masculinity.
Female Masculinity

As evidenced above, it is difficult to discuss masculinity without also talking about femininity. So in order to understand masculinity as a whole, it is essential to also understand the concept of female masculinity, which was pioneered by Judith Halberstam (1998) in her book *Female Masculinity*. Halberstam sought to challenge the notion that masculinity is solely a male behavior and give positive attention to masculine women. She calls for society and scholars to accept masculinity as a fluid concept and to analyze masculine women. Her research paved the way for and encouraged scholars to take up her cause in expanding the ways they view gender. In this section, I investigate the impact Halberstam had on the study of masculinity as well as explore the work of scholars who answered her call. I argue that female masculinity makes society uncomfortable as demonstrated through the works of several scholars. I also argue that there is a need to study female masculinity in the mediated context of a critically acclaimed prime-time television show to understand the impact the gender performance of key characters has on society and our understanding of gender as a whole.

For Halberstam, the concept of female masculinity has gone unnoticed by scholars for quite some time. Masculinity scholarship has primarily centered on the concept as it is portrayed by men, and not women. She argues that in order to fully understand masculinity as a theoretical concept, scholars must also investigate female masculinity. In order to accomplish this, Halberstam urges scholars to discuss masculinity as found in males and masculinity as found in females. Halberstam claims that society cannot shy away from what makes us uncomfortable, which in this case, is female masculinity.
Because female masculinity makes society uncomfortable, there has not been much scholarship or attention paid to the concept. By stimulating discussion and creating more ease with the concept of female masculinity, scholars and in turn society can also start to understand gender on a larger scale rather than confining it to two linear categories. Halberstam states, “Female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity. In other words, female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing” (Halberstam, 1998, p. 1). According to Halberstam, scholars must expose the other side of the coin of gender and masculinity to understand the dominant ideologies that control society when it comes to our views of masculinity. Studying masculinity as a male concept alone is not enough. The conversation and analysis must broaden to include females and female masculinity. She goes on to say, “The suppressions of female masculinities allows for male masculinity to stand unchallenged as the bearer of gender stability and gender deviance” (Halberstam, 1998, p. 41). Because of the gender binary that exists in our society, female masculinity is often depicted as the “other” and thus is not accepted as normal. Halberstam (1998) explains our gendered expectations as the following:

We still script gender for boys and girls in remarkably consistent and restrictive ways, and we continue to posit the existence of only two genders. Gender outlaw Kate Bornstein refers to this practice as a kind of compulsory gendering that leaves out all kinds of gender perverts who do not clearly identify as male or female or even as a combination of the two. (p. 118)
Dominant society views individuals who do not neatly fit into one of the two categories of gender as an “outlaw.” The binary that exists in society is restricting and confines us to only subscribe to set and narrow gender expectations.

Halberstam further exposes the pressure that society places on the gender binary when she discusses the role female boxers play in the world of sports. In a sport that is outwardly aggressive and categorized as “masculine,” women are still afraid to accept their masculinity. Halberstam states, “Even women who are involved in the most masculine of activities, such as boxing or weight lifting, attempt to turn the gaze away from their own potential masculinity” (Halberstam, 1998, p.270). The “manly art” of boxing is a space where female masculinity should be welcomed. However, the boxers are still encouraged to maintain their femininity by society, their coaches, and their parents. While the female boxers view their sport and performance as a divergence from the typical feminine expectation that society has placed upon them, Halberstam sees it in a different light. She says, “But masculinity is completely factored out of the equation between women and boxing, and we are left with a formulation of female boxing as an expression of true femininity” (Halberstam, 1998, p. 271). For Halberstam, the view of the female boxers is not a performance of female masculinity. Instead, it is another form, or an amplification of femininity, which is not an exposure of the gendered notion of masculinity. The female boxers featured in the chapter do not embrace their skill as an expression of their masculinity. They view it as an extension of femininity because being considered a masculine female is not acceptable in our society. They demonstrate this by growing out their hair, making sure it is styled, and by applying make-up. These are all things that arguably, enhance feminine traits. By embracing their aggressive sport as
something that is feminine, these female boxers are only reinforcing the notion that
women cannot be female and masculine. Instead, they must justify their masculine
performances in a way that society is able to understand and accept.

Further, according to Halberstam, the only time that society is able to accept a
mediated depiction of female masculinity is if the female is adhering to the “butch”
stereotype understood in popular culture. She iterates this notion by citing specific
examples throughout the Hollywood film industry. In particular, she discusses the film
Aliens, and more specifically the character Vasquez. Halberstam (1998) states, “Vasquez
displays her butch iconicity in this film through an elaborate ritual of physical
prowess, smart talk, and her ability to handle firearms” (p. 181). Not only does Vasquez
physically embody the butch stereotype, but she demonstrates behavior in line with a
soldier to confirm her physicality. While this depiction is accepted and aligns with
societal expectations, Halberstam (1998) argues that it “hints at an ‘alien’ logic of gender
within which masculinity is as much a production of ethnicity as it is of gender and
sexuality” (p. 181). So for Halberstam, Vasquez’s masculine performance only serves to
reinforce the gendered distinction between femininity and masculinity because the film
presents Vasquez as abnormal. Ultimately, Halberstam’s (1998) goal is to utilize
Hollywood and mediated depictions of gender in general to “queer supposedly
hegemonic and traditional depictions of masculinity and femininity” (p. 185). Media has
the position and opportunity to break hegemonic expectations of gender.

Throughout her book, Halberstam challenges and exposes the ideologies that
place gender expectations on women, especially masculine women who are
misunderstood by society. According to Halberstam, the idea of female masculinity is a
“queer notion.” Halberstam, rhetorical critic John M. Sloop, and other prominent gender scholars consider the idea of queering as performing gender outside of the binary expectations set forth by society. Further, any performance or act that defies society’s preconceived notions of masculinity and femininity would be considered “queer” behavior. Sloop iterates that the queer performers can be categorized as gender outlaws “sidestepping or utilizing the boundaries of masculinity and femininity, creating an identity inside or outside those categories” (Sloop, 2004, p. 9). Brenda Cooper (2002) further expands upon the notion of the queer by stating that “…queerness—in any form—should work to complicate the ways gender and sexual categories are understood and how they function in culture and society” (p. 48). In the spirit of the bar these scholars have set, this project seeks to take a broad, and perhaps queer, approach to the portrayal of masculinity in a mediated context by looking at characters with a variety of gender identities and behaviors.

Because female masculinity is a queer notion, Halberstam attempts to expose American society’s inability to cope with women who push through the gender stereotypes and present a new version of masculinity. Halberstam challenges scholars, and in turn society, to break through the patriarchal system that confines women to the feminine behavior and roles and to broaden the discussion of gender. She dares scholars directly by stating, “I firmly believe that a sustained examination of female masculinity can make crucial interventions within gender studies, cultural studies, queer studies, and mainstream discussions of gender in general” (Halberstam, 1998, p. 2). In short, Halberstam believes that a further investigation of female masculinity will broaden
several aspects of critical and cultural scholarship, which in turn, will also change the popular discussion and depiction of gender.

In his book, *Disciplining Gender: Rhetorics of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture*, John Sloop (2004) justifies the study of female masculinity arguing, “…we learn something about the assumptions that protect the link between masculinity and males, femininity and females, gender and heterosexuality, as well as between men, women, and positions of power” (p. 107). For Sloop, scholars have the opportunity to broaden America’s definition of what gender is and break down the existing binary by studying female masculinity. Through several case studies, Sloop exposes how the discussion of gender in the media highlighted society’s clear inability to cope with anything that went against the norm. He states, “Significantly, one finds assumed (and not necessarily spoken) within these discourses a series of binary roles and behaviors which ultimately constitute the very notions of male and female, masculinity and femininity, hetero-and homosexual” (Sloop, 2004, p. 2). In particular, his case study on Janet Reno provides an in-depth view of the media’s failure to handle women who violate the typical feminine performance, especially with their physical appearance.

Sloop argues that Reno’s physicality drew the attention of several media outlets, creating a controversy surrounding her body and her violation of femininity. In particular, her lack of a typical female body was read as a lack of femaleness. Reno, who stands at 6-feet, 2-inches tall, blatantly challenges this notion with her height alone. Her physicality is reminiscent of that of a man’s. When this was coupled with her position of power and her unwavering cold attitude, the media did not know how to respond. Sloop claims that her height made the media and the public uncomfortable because “such
descriptions function as metaphors for the power Reno is seen as wielding over others” (Sloop, 2004, p. 108). Sloop further discusses why Reno’s physical traits, and more importantly the discussion and media’s obsession surrounding her physical appearance are so disturbing. He demonstrates this by stating, “The reaction to Reno’s height illustrates the very real ideological and economic danger faced by women who are literally or metaphorically ‘excessive’ and hence are anxiety-producing in terms of the expectations of dominant U.S. gender norms” (Sloop, 2004, p. 109). Sloop’s exposure of society’s struggle to accept women who embody more masculine traits further demonstrates society’s need to break through the existing gender binary.

In a later work, Sloop (2012) examines the media’s reaction to track star Caster Semenya and the controversy that surrounded her gender testing requirement. Again, the physicality of Semenya made many people uncomfortable on an international level, and her accusers as well as the media claimed her masculine appearance and tendencies contributed to her success. However, while the public openly questioned Semenya, Sloop revealed that her family and those closest to her never doubted her sex. For Sloop, gender-testing Semenya because of her success highlighted a larger problem in the world of sports. Often, female athletes must provide the media with a reason or excuse for their success. He continues,

Not only is the bifurcation of gender affirmed in sports, but females are under relatively constant suspicion. The notion of the female athlete has at worst been seen as oxymoronic and at best a dim reflection of male athletes. As a result, any ‘overly’ successful female becomes singled out for gender suspicion. (Sloop, 2012, p. 83)
This is especially troubling because it reveals society’s belief that sports are strictly masculine. When females over-perform or perform above the expectation and demonstrate masculine tendencies there must be an explanation. Unfortunately, the obvious explanation is that they are inherently not female. His study further challenges society’s notion that masculine behavior should be found in males only. Demonstration of masculine behavior by females makes society uncomfortable, especially if there is not a clear explanation to ease the discomfort. Gender is a complicated notion; however, society fails to see it that way.

What is even more troubling about this case study is how the media justified or compensated for Semenya’s masculine appearance. Semenya posed for a makeover in a magazine and was “not only made over, but she also wore a skirt and traditional female clothing” (Sloop, 2012, p. 87). Because Semenya’s physicality and athletic performance challenged her gender, society needed to be quelled in some way. The media’s answer to this disturbance was to dress Semenya like a “real” woman and publicize her transformation. Semenya is even quoted in the article as saying things like, “Now that I know I can look like this, I’d like to dress like this more often” (p.87). The superficial cosmetic transformation served to alleviate some of the discourse surrounding Semenya’s masculine appearance which further attests to both Sloop and Halberstam’s claim that society and the media are uncomfortable with anyone who challenges the binary of masculine and feminine, demonstrating the further need to investigate the concept of female masculinity.

Another prominent case study dealing with the concept of female masculinity is the Brandon Teena case and the movie, *Boys Don’t Cry*, which resulted from the tragedy,
both of which, Sloop and other scholars have investigated. This case study is pertinent in revealing the media and society’s inability to cope with gender differences. In this case, Brandon Teena, who was born as a biological female, identified as a male, and lived a masculine lifestyle, which ultimately resulted in his rape and murder. Sloop (2000) and Cooper (2002) further expose the implications this had on society’s heteronormative construction of gender. Society and media could not handle the disruption in the gender norms that Brandon Teena caused. First, biologically he was female but identified as a male, which inherently goes against his “nature” in turn going against the disciplined norm of enacting the gender of the sex with which you were born. Second, he was more successful in enacting masculinity than the other men in his cohort. This factor alone caused much controversy. It was hard for his friends and those in the media to believe that a biological female could be seen as more masculine than the other men with whom he interacted. However, what the media and his friends failed to take into consideration was that Brandon Teena was not enacting male masculinity or even female masculinity. Brandon Teena adopted his own concept of masculinity and enacted behaviors that best suited his situation. For Sloop, the media’s obsession with Teena’s physical body and his performance of masculinity is the root of concern. Teena embodied society’s ideal man, but when his friends discovered that he was biologically a woman, it was hard to digest. Sloop states, “because Teena’s behaviors and appearance are illustrated as strikingly and familiarly masculine, the behavior of the women attracted to him can be configured as a ‘normal’ expression of healthy heterosexuality” (Sloop, 2000, p. 170). The discovery of Teena’s biological sex disrupted the norm society constructed around him. Sloop claims that by “pointing out the genitalia that made Teena ‘really’ a woman
and the activities that made Teena ‘appear’ to be a man, the signifiers of masculinity and femininity are reified, the binarisms held intact” (Sloop, 2000, p. 173). According to Sloop then, masculinity is not defined by biological sex organs. Instead, masculinity is enacted or performed and not something that is determined by biology.

Cooper furthers the discussion of problematizing masculinity and femininity in the Brandon Teena case with her analysis of the movie, *Boys Don’t Cry*. She states, “The narratives of *Boys Don’t Cry* expose the bigoted mechanisms that perpetuate and maintain dominant heteromasculinity, effectively dismantling the ideals of normative masculinity and making heterosexuality—instead of transgressive sexuality—appear strange” (Cooper, 2002, p. 53). Once exposed, Teena’s portrayal of masculinity was problematic to society and to his “friends” because his brand of masculinity was favored over the masculine behaviors demonstrated by the biological males in his life. Cooper goes on to state, “Brandon’s articulation of manhood effectively mocks sexist masculine ideals and appropriates the codes of normative masculinity” (Cooper, 2002, p. 53). Because Teena was biologically female but was able to portray heteronormative masculinity so well, he was problematic and could not be placed into either binary, which ultimately is what caused so much controversy.

The scholarship concerning the Brandon Teena case explicitly answers Halberstam’s call to create a broader understanding of masculinity. Both Sloop and Cooper utilize Brandon Teena as an example of masculinity performed by an individual who biologically was female. Teena troubled the gender binary which in turn created discourse in the media. This discourse mirrored the public’s inability to cope with the performance of female masculinity. The media did not know how to respond or even
discuss Brandon Teena. By analyzing this case and the mediated response, Sloop and Cooper sought to create a space where discussion could take place concerning the violation of the gender binary.

Scholars have mostly accepted Halberstam’s call as a request to analyze media responses to masculine females; however, my project seeks to accomplish something different, yet still in line with Halberstam. The purpose of this project is to analyze the performance of masculinity—female or not—in a mediated text. What I mean is that, like Halberstam, I too will examine a masculine female. That female will be a mediated character, but I argue that her “performance” is still a way to understand complicated gender identity. While I may, at times, pull in fan responses to the female characters, that is not the central point of this analysis. Instead, I am interested in how the characters on Lost are liberated or constrained based upon their performance and depiction of masculinity. My project seeks to somewhat mirror the approach that Claire Sisco King (2010) took in her analysis of The Brave One in her essay, “The Man Inside: Trauma, Gender, and The Nation in The Brave One.”

Through her work, King analyzes the character portrayed by Jodie Foster in the film The Brave One and how her enactment expands and restrains the concept of female masculinity. King claims that while Foster’s character is operating and performing in a masculine space, her performance is still justified in some way. She states, “In contrast, TBO offers a gender (and genre) reassignment. But, as a woman inhabiting a traditionally male-populated space, Bain/Foster does not walk alone. Rather she is haunted by historical traces of other women that have taken up the (alleged) work of men during times of war” (King, 2010, p. 122). For King, the masculine performance is not
liberating. Because Foster’s character is operating in a post-traumatic time (post September 11), it is historically more acceptable for women to adapt those roles given that majority of the time, the men are either away at war or are incapable of fulfilling those roles.

However, King does comment on Foster/Bain’s physicality in the movie. While describing Foster/Bain, King (2010) writes,

Her physical appearance also begins to take up characteristics traditionally understood as masculine. Her clothes become darker; her once soft and curled hair becomes straighter, jagged; she trades skirts for pants and a black leather jacket; and she darkens her eyes with black eyeliner so thick it almost resembles war paint. Bain’s fear transforms into aggression, her passivity into agency. (p. 122)

For King, Foster/Bain’s embodiment of the character and the traits that she is demonstrating can be seen as a positive thing. She is no longer the passive female who cannot take care of herself. Her physical transformation begins to align with her performance of masculinity, which is not necessarily a negative thing. King believes Foster’s depiction of a female masculinized character complicates the notion of masculinity. She states, “Although Foster may seem to be a far cry from such cinematic bastions of traditional masculinity as Eastwood and Bronson, her star persona uniquely enables her to occupy masculine spaces and revise narratives about national masculinity” (King, 2010, p. 123). Foster depicts a female character who adopts masculine behavior, but it is only acceptable within the film as a message about “national masculinity” and patriotism.
Masculinity in the Media

Now that I have covered the concepts of masculinity and female masculinity, I turn my attention to the discussion among scholars about masculinity, as portrayed in mediated texts. This section is necessary for this project given that my artifact is a critically acclaimed mediated text with complicated “masculine” characters. In this section, I investigate the masculine ideal that is typically portrayed in mediated texts as well as how the masculine characters in television and movies are analyzed by scholars. Perhaps not surprisingly, scholars often claim that there are hegemonic ideals and characters that dominate mediated texts. I examine these notions of masculinity with the intent of opening up the discussion about all the possibilities for analysis of the Lost characters.

Men in the Media

It is not a secret that the majority of Western society’s media is dominated by males; from the production of media down to who stars in mediated contexts, the world of media is arguably, a very masculine space. In his book, *The Media and the Models of Masculinity*, Mark Moss (2011) emphasizes this point by stating, “Whether it is in films, on television, or from magazines, the media provide surrogate examples of the many variations of masculine experiences through templates that straddle numerous tropes” (p. 21). In order to understand how the media has shaped society’s notion of masculinity, I first turn my attention to the history of men in the media, and how the media has shaped society’s ideal archetypes.

More often than not, the media dictates to society what is normal and what is abnormal by glorifying men who depict the “normal” and by othering or ignoring men
who do not fit the norm. In the case of masculinity, the media has told society what it means to be a man, and what the traits are of the different types of men that are seen and that are accepted.

The first of those molds or archetypes have been set by Hollywood and what are now considered to be classic film stars. Moss (2011) states, “A cluster of films from the 1950s starring Marlon Brando, James Dean, and Montgomery Cliff all had enormous influence on the style and look of masculinity” (p. 24). Men could either be tough and rugged or smooth and carefree, all the while charming women. Because Hollywood deemed these depictions as masculine and glorified, society also adopted the tropes set forth by these actors and the characters in which they played.

According to Moss, some of the perpetrators of the masculine archetypes are John Wayne and Elvis Presley. While the two men are a stark contrast of one another, they still put forth two distinct molds of masculinity. For Moss (2011), Wayne represented a type of masculinity that was “silent, stoic, and one who would not get gregarious or open his mouth at the wrong time” (p. 38). Wayne’s counterpart, Presley, depicted a different aspect of masculinity. Moss describes Presley’s brand of masculinity as opening the gateway for men to be able to exhibit emotion. He states, “Emotions were something that could finally be revealed, and longing and desire, thanks to Presley, could now be exhibited. The model was broken after Presley took vulnerability and detachment to new, dangerous places” (Moss, 2011, p. 39). Even though Presley broke away from the mold set by Wayne, the notion that there were only two types of masculinity was still perpetuated by media, which in turn, still forced men to fit into pre-conceived molds.
However, Presley’s association and capability to display emotion paved the way for another archetype of masculinity that is acceptable in the media. In the 1980s and 1990s, Moss claims that there was a resurgence of the depictions of the emotional male, a precedent that was set forth by Presley. Moss (2011) states, “A plethora of television shows attempted to recalibrate masculinity by imposing a form of masculinity that was influenced both by feminism and the rise of ‘touchy feely’ men’s movements” (p. 37). Mediated examples of this would be the main character, Charlie, from *Party of Five* and the characters Dylan and Brandon from the original *Beverly Hills*. These characters were depicted as emotional and sensitive. According to Moss (2011), “The emotionally sensitive man and the caring boy who always does the right thing—and who are capable of ‘talking’—were noticed as characters and popular, especially with female viewers” (p. 37). While these men were allowed to have emotion, it came at a price. The characters that were emotionally sensitive were also depicted as unstable, crazy, and dysfunctional, which inherently reinforces that men cannot and should not connect with their emotions. Moss (2011) iterates this notion by saying, “Trying to be a ‘new man’ had dire consequences. One panacea to it all may have been the attempt to imprint purely masculine role models that had staying power” (p. 37). While the portrayal of emotional men appears to be a step in the right direction, in reality, it may have propelled masculine archetypes in a backward motion.

Stemming from the mold set forth by Wayne is the idea of heroic masculinity and a fearless leader. One particular example that Moss focuses on is the main character in the film *Gladiator* starring Russell Crowe. According to Moss (2011), the depiction of masculinity in this film resonates with the masculine ideals of unwavering loyalty,
commitment, and “above all, conforms to ideals and morals thought to be lost in contemporary society” (p. 28). As society progresses forward, our mediated depictions of masculinity tell us that we still value traditional roles for men, as is exemplified through Crowe’s character. Not only does Crowe’s character symbolize revered masculine traits, but his physicality also displays what it means to be man. According to scholar Julia Wood (2003), “Television programming for all ages disproportionately depicts men, particularly White heterosexual men, as serious, confident, competent, powerful and in high-status positions” (pg. 265). For Wood and Moss, this power is demonstrated through physical strength and confidence in that strength.

Action films like *Gladiator* serve as a guide for men to determine what it means to be masculine. In their project, Morrison and Halton (2009) iterate that, “Mass media including film constitutes a potent source of references for constructing a repertoire of acceptable codes and signifiers of masculinity. Thus the media can be said to function as a manual on masculinity” (p. 70). One thing that this guide reveals is not only how men should act, but also how they should look. In particular, the correlation of muscularity and masculinity is a message that is overly stated in this genre of films. In their study of action movies, Morrison and Halton (2009) found that there is a positive association with the depiction of muscular action stars and masculinity, echoing Moss’s claim that action films help to define society’s archetypes of masculinity. One trait in particular that has evolved from the depictions of masculinity as portrayed by John Wayne is the notion that masculine men are emotionless. Morrison and Halton (2009) state, “We observed that masculinity is presented as revolving around one particular discourse of male sexuality: the desirability of sexual relationships with no emotional ties” (p. 68). A masculine trait
that was displayed by one prominent actor, once replicated by other men in popular films, perpetuates the notion that emotion is not something to be experienced by men.

While Wayne and Presley set an initial standard of masculinity within the media, they are not the only perpetrators of this notion. Some of the pressure put on men to subscribe to a certain type of masculinity can be attributed to the action movie craze and the actors who starred in those films. Stars such as Jackie Chan made other men feel that in order to prove that they are masculine, they had to do it in an aggressive and blatant manner. In his essay, David Hansen-Miller (2010) iterates the importance society places on action stars when he states, “The Hollywood action hero offered audiences an overstated masculinity that not only conquered but also gloated over its victims with amusing one-liners” (p. 34). In order to be considered masculine, men must speak directly and to the point. Masculinity, as it is portrayed by “Hollywood action heroes,” is emotionless, assertive, and to the point.

Another action hero who has formulated another mold for men is James Bond. While he breaks the mold of the tough and rugged male that is often depicted by the characters John Wayne plays, Bond still exhibits a strict code of standards when it comes to masculinity. Bond serves as a tie between the archetypes set forth by Presley and Wayne, and is arguably one of the most prominent depictions of masculinity in the media. The Bond movies have been created and repackaged throughout the decades to adapt to society’s current standards, all the while maintaining Bond’s “cool as a cucumber” demeanor. Moss (2011) writes, “He is positively cool as a masculine character and can be endlessly repackaged to reflect changes in society” (p. 41). Bond’s depiction of masculinity is something that has resonated with males for years, and
media’s ability to keep the character relevant in society only adds to the sustainability of this masculine archetype. Bond is tough and embodies the physicality that is portrayed by the Wayne and action hero archetype, yet he is still refined, classy, and can tune into his emotions like the Presley archetype. Bond is the total package and one of the ultimate depictions of masculinity. The archetype of Bond takes masculinity to a new level, encompassing more than physicality and emotion. He is a refined character who shows interest in more than guns and women. Moss (2011) states, “He dressed well and owned nice things; he knew about wine and food—all while having a robust masculine essence” (p. 42). His ability to have other interests and maintain a “robust masculine essence” demonstrates how the Bond archetype is the bridge between Wayne and Presley. The initial depictions are not what initiated the perpetual influx of masculine archetypes. However, in the nature of Hollywood, the reproduction of the same notions of masculinity—emotionless, strong, heterosexual—are what caused the archetypes to stick and become a hegemonic part of society’s ideology.

Now that I have examined dominant archetypes of masculinity established by Hollywood, I turn my attention to scholarship that exposes specific instances of hegemonic masculinity in the media. This scholarship investigates notions of hegemonic masculinity that appear in popular television shows as compared to hegemonic masculinity displayed by well-established movie stars or prominent figures of popular culture. The previously examined archetypes merely serve as the molds in which mediated characters must fit, and what characteristics must be portrayed, which in turn, becomes the dominant ideal of masculinity.

**Hegemonic Masculinity**
Masculinity, as depicted in the media, gives Western society a very limited view of what it means to be a man. The dominant ideology of Western culture, that has previously been discussed, dictates what is cultivated, produced, and then distributed through the media. What is intriguing and somewhat troubling about these masculine tropes, is that they not only are prevalent in dominant media figures like Presley and Wayne, but they have also seeped into the small screen and all areas of media. Dominant masculine ideals are no longer confined to the silver screen. Advances in technology and media have allowed these tropes to seep into all aspects of media and popular culture. The tropes of masculinity that society can take away from the media are the ideals of being White and being a “man’s man.” These tropes at first glance appear to be depicted in a diverse and progressive way; however, after taking a deeper look, it is easy to see the underlying hegemonic ideology. To further interrogate the hegemonic ideals that are perpetuated, I will now turn my attention to scholarship that has investigated the concept of White hegemonic masculinity.

Through his scholarship and research, Robert Hanke has questioned the notion of hegemonic masculinity in American media. He states, “Hegemonic masculinity thus refers to the social ascendancy of a particular version or model of masculinity that, operating on the terrain of ‘common sense’ and conventional morality, defines ‘what it means to be a man’” (Hanke, 1990, p. 232). For Hanke, hegemonic masculinity refers to the rise of a particular version of masculinity within society. These “common sense” notions become prevalent in society as they are portrayed through mediated texts. In his other work, Hanke (1998) iterates this notion when he states,
Mediated masculinities construct figures to identify with and places to occupy within gender order. For the former, the emphasis on popular representations (figures) producing and circulating common-sense notions, so that hegemonic masculinity is won not only through coercion but through consent, even though there is never a complete consensus. (p. 189)

According to Hanke, the representations of hegemonic masculinity are cyclical in nature in the sense that the media depicts what is “masculine,” we as a society digest and consume those ideas, and then society becomes compliant in the ideologies that have been set forth.

The depiction of hegemonic masculinity is prevalent throughout media and media scholarship. Case studies have examined the characters on situational comedies like *Home Improvement* and *Two and a Half Men*, as well as popular films like *Fight Club* and finally, through the mediation of sports stars like Nolan Ryan. While the case studies investigated all differ in the particular text, the themes that were found are overwhelmingly similar. Throughout the essays, it was iterated over and over that hegemonic masculinity derives from the notion of power and that the characters that were examined depicted either a struggle to obtain or a struggle to maintain that power (Hanke, 1990, 1998; Hatfield, 2010; King, 2009). The text that was studied determined how that power was depicted. In *Fight Club*, Claire Sisco-King (2009) argues that the Narrator copes with his maintenance of power and masculinity by ultimately destroying Tyler, his alter-ego. Both are white men who are dominant figures within the club who are grappling with the need to demonstrate their masculinity. King (2009) states,
What appears to be a tale about the reintegration of masculine subjectivity and the expulsion of femininity reveals itself to be, in actuality a story about masculinity’s ‘want’ and need for the abject, a fact that operates as one of this text’s (and hegemonic masculinity’s) most open secrets. (p. 378)

The idea that masculinity in itself holds power over the characters just attests to the magnitude of significance that society gives the concept of masculinity. This struggle with power is something that is prevalent in other research as well.

Through his analysis of situational comedies, Hanke also exposes how the characters he analyzed dealt with the grapple for power. Hanke claims that the appropriation of the hegemonic masculine roles that are depicted in television shows such as Home Improvement, Coach, and thirtysomething “secure the dominance of some men (and the subordination of women) within the sex/gender system” (Hanke, 1990, p. 232).

In Home Improvement, Tim Allen’s character is constantly making a spectacle of himself in an attempt to re-assert his masculine presence and power over his family and counterpart. According to Hanke (1998), this power is “realized through control over the joke-telling form which has traditionally made women and/or other marginalized groups its targets” (p. 87). By demeaning others and actually situating them as the “other,” the dominant male ideal of masculinity is realized and accepted. With the dominant male ideal of masculinity being from a male-centered, heterosexual, often White, point of view, there is little room for other depictions of masculinity.
Chapter Three: Theoretical Orientation

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical concepts that drive the analysis of this project. I first explain the necessity of critical rhetoric for media and gender scholarship. I then define the texts that I utilized for analysis in this project. By taking this specific critical approach, I will be able to elucidate the following research questions:

*RQ 1: How is masculinity enacted by the character Kate Austen?*

*RQ 2: How is masculinity enacted by the character James ‘Sawyer’ Ford?*

**Critical Rhetoric**

The field of rhetorical scholarship has recently turned its attention to address texts and conduct analysis in a way that breaks away from traditional examinations of public address. In his essay, Raymie McKerrow (1989) states,

> A critical rhetoric seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power. The aim is to understand the integration of power/knowledge in society—what possibilities for change the integration invites or inhibits and what intervention strategies might be considered appropriate to effect social change. (p. 91)

Critical rhetorical scholarship needs to explore and expose the power structures that exist and then speculate and suggest the impact these power structures have on society while offering up a solution for change. The impact of power on society is especially important in this project. When considering the power that the media has over society and how that
ultimately influences peoples’ ideologies and notions of “normal” masculinity, it is my intention to “unmask or demystify” that power in the context of *Lost*.

Michael Calvin McGee (1990) also sheds light on the new direction that rhetorical scholarship has taken and the path on which it needs to continue. He draws upon notions that were first explained by McKerrow (1989) and ultimately calls for scholarship that forces scholars to “reverse their roles” (p. 93). This statement iterates that the text, and it’s obvious message, should no longer drive the analysis. Instead, critics need to seek out multiple texts, piece them together, and search for the discourse that is unspoken. Scholars should no longer search for the obvious discourse that is caused by a speech. McGee (1990) states, “The rhetor understands that discourse anticipates its utility in the world, inviting its own critique (the interpretation and appropriation of its meaning)” (p. 279). Instead of allowing the text to control and illuminate the notion of power, it is now the responsibility of the rhetorical critic to seek out the underlying notions of power and the impact that it has on society. McGee is calling for scholars to take their scholarship a step further, dig deeper, and interrogate things that are not obvious.

For McGee, the key to reveal hidden ideologies is to no longer look at a singular text, but to instead piece together a pastiche of texts to utilize for analysis. McGee (1990) states,

By contrast, with rhetoric as a master term, we begin noticing that rhetors make discourses from scraps and pieces of evidence. Critical rhetoric does not begin with a finished text in need of interpretation; rather, texts are understood to be larger than the apparently finished discourse that presents itself as transparent. (p. 279)
McGee believes it is necessary for critical rhetoric to push the limits of what is considered a text and to consider the overall impact this insight can provide.

For example, Mazzarella (2008) utilizes *American Chopper* as the mediated text for her analysis. However, because it is a television series, she is forced to look at several episodes and focus on each persona individually. By fragmenting the series, she is able to later piece everything together to investigate the themes of working class masculinity. She is utilizing one mediated text, but not treating it as a singular text. Instead, she breaks it down by episode and character to interrogate the underlying themes. Her ultimate goal of discovering the notions of working class masculinity as they function within the show are in the spirit of McKerrow and McGee.

**Media & Gender Critique**

Mediated texts are necessary to investigate given the power that the media holds within Western society. The media is not only consumed on a daily basis by most individuals, while also shaping and re-enforcing the dominant ideals of society. Celeste Condit (1989) emphasizes this point when she says,

> Mass mediated texts might be viewed, therefore, not as giving the populace what they want but as compromises that give the relatively well-to-do more of what they want, bringing along as many economically marginal viewers as they comfortably can, within the limitations of the production teams’ visions and values. (p. 110)

The media perpetuates the values of Western society by creating texts that align with the dominant ideals that are accepted and expected by viewers. McGee (1990) also iterates this notion when he states,
The public’s business is now being done more often via direct mail, television spots, documentaries, mass entertainment, and ‘quotable quotes’ on the evening news than through the more traditional media (broadsides, pamphlets, books, and public speeches). A central requirement of our new circumstance is simply finding a place to start thinking about it. (p. 286)

The public now has a great many more outlets from which to receive information which in turn leads to more outlets that are able to influence ideologies. McGee and Condit are calling for scholars to take this into consideration and to form a new approach in which to study the overwhelming new amount of texts. This project will answer that call in several ways. First, I will not be looking at traditional mediated outlets such as newspapers or televised news broadcasts. Instead, I will be analyzing a fictional, prime-time television series. Second, I will attempt to reveal the dominant ideology concerning masculinity that is perpetuated through the series and speculate the impact it has had on viewership.

Addressing Condit’s call to develop more scholarship utilizing mediated texts, Bonnie Dow (2006) furthers the notion that this scholarship should also investigate the depiction of gender within the media. Dow (2006) claims that the media complicates society’s notion of gender when she states, “It complicated it in useful ways, revealing the complexities of mediated depictions of gendered identity and the need for critical analysis that investigates their potential meanings” (p. 264). For Dow, the complications of gender within the media are begging for investigation and scholarship. She goes on to state that “critical work on gender and media has at its base some level of commitment to gender justice; that is, to working toward a world in which definitions of gender are not
used to create and preserve social inequities” (p. 266). Dow’s work is in line with McKerrow’s idea that critics should not only interrogate the structures of power and demystify them, but also expose them in the hope to work toward change. In particular, Dow argues that uncovering how gender is defined and depicted may disrupt the system that promotes gender discrimination and inequalities.

Sloop is another media critic who analyzes fragmented mediated texts with gendered implications, as in his case study of Janet Reno. When justifying his selection of texts, Sloop (2004) states,

I have chosen to look instead at a large number of newspaper articles that appeared throughout Reno’s tenure as attorney general and during her Florida gubernatorial campaign. That is, rather than explicating focus on gender trouble, such news reports and personality profiles claim to provide an “objective” description of Reno, and in the process, reveal underlying cultural anxieties and assumptions about gender performance through overt descriptions of her body and metaphoric descriptions of her actions. (p. 106)

By analyzing multiple mediated texts, Sloop was able to expose the underlying discomfort the public was experiencing with Janet Reno and her behavior. Gender is a complicated topic to analyze and what is even more complicated is society’s view and understanding of it. To fully grasp the complexities of gender, multiple texts are necessary, especially when attempting to unpack the long standing ideologies that are rooted in society.
**Texts Used for Analysis**

In this project I looked at *Lost* as the major text. With McKerrow and McGee’s philosophy in my mind, I did not treat the show as a singular text. Instead, I look at a variety of characters, plots, scenes, dialogues, and images. Specifically, this project analyzed the characters Kate Austen and James ‘Sawyer’ Ford. I interrogated the depictions of female masculinity demonstrated by Kate, the notion of physicality and bodily labor as a symbol of masculinity in Sawyer. While conducting my analysis, I recognized that gender categories are fluid and I found that particular archetypes of masculinities apply to a variety of characters throughout the show. The episodes that I utilized spanned all six seasons that originally aired on *ABC* in order to get a well-rounded grasp of each character, their history as it is displayed on the show, the evolution each character undergoes on the island and how that impacts their depiction of masculinity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Episode Number</th>
<th>Episode Name</th>
<th>Feature Character</th>
<th>Used for Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pilot, Part 1</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pilot, Part 2</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tabla Rasa</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Confidence Man</td>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Whatever the Case May Be</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Outlaws</td>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Do No Harm</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Born to Run</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Exodus, Part 1</td>
<td>Kate and Sawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>What Kate Did</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Long Con</td>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>I Do</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Every Man for Himself</td>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To begin my analysis, I critically watched each episode sequentially while taking notes on any dialogue, interactions with other characters, or visual aesthetics that I believed would be helpful in understanding a performance of gender. I also consulted show transcripts found on [http://lostpedia.wikia.com](http://lostpedia.wikia.com). I watched each episode dedicated to Kate and Sawyer through the flashback technique, critically looking for any instance of masculine or feminine behavior and coded those instances. The total number of episodes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Left Behind</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Eggtown</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>There’s No Place Like Home, Part 1</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>There’s No Place Like Home, Part 2</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>There’s No Place Like Home, Part 3</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Little Prince</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>This Place is Death</td>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>La Fleur</td>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nameste</td>
<td>Kate and Sawyer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Whatever Happened, Happened</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Incident, Part 1</td>
<td>Kate and Sawyer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>The Incident, Part 2</td>
<td>Kate and Sawyer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>LAX, Part 1</td>
<td>Kate and Sawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>LAX, Part 2</td>
<td>Kate and Sawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>What Kate Does</td>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Recon</td>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Last Recruit</td>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>What they Died For</td>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>The End, Part 1</td>
<td>Kate and Sawyer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>The End, Part 2</td>
<td>Kate and Sawyer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
viewed was 33. Some of the feature episodes that were of particular use were, “Tablua Rasa,” “Born to Run,” “The Long Con,” and “La Fleur.” These episodes were particularly rich and readers will note that I reference them extensively during the analysis. All of the episodes dedicated to revealing the back story and on island interactions of Kate and Sawyer were utilized to complete a thorough and comprehensive analysis of character development.

Upon completing my viewing of the episodes, I began to code my notes as well as the transcripts for themes of masculinity. While viewing the series, it became evident that due to the complexity of the plot as well as the extensive amount of episodes that were watched, that some data and episodes would not be included for analysis. For example, the episodes towards the end of the series were not considered for analysis because they took place in an implied sideways world that speculated what the characters’ lives would have been like if they had not crashed on the island. These episodes were not included because I did not believe that they would enhance the analysis of how Kate and Sawyer evolved in their gender performance on the island.

In addition, I looked at blogs and popular press articles dedicated to Lost fans to analyze how each character was received and how that reception changed as each character evolved on the show. The analysis of blogs and mediated responses to the characters was necessary to understand the overall impact the characters had on the public and ultimately, how this impact influenced fans’ notions of gender and masculinity. Through a gendered media critical rhetorical analysis, I explicated the following questions:

*RQ 1: How is masculinity enacted by the character Kate Austen?*
RQ 2: How is masculinity enacted by the character James ‘Sawyer’ Ford?
Chapter Four:
Kate Austen Analysis

In an article in *Elle* magazine, author Andrew Goldman (2006) states,

At first blush, Kate is the picture of moral rectitude, a real good camper. She seldom complains and, despite not having much to do besides pick fruit and get abducted by the occasional armed horde, resists passing any of that free time horizontally with either of her gorgeous suitors. Then we find out that pre-crash, Kate robbed a bank and killed at least one guy. (p. 2)

The article features Evangeline Lilly, the actor who portrays Kate Austen on *Lost.* Goldman accurately summarizes the complexity that is Kate’s character. Like many of the characters on the show, Kate is not one dimensional. She gives new meaning to the saying, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.”

As evidenced by the quotation above, Kate’s gender identity is complex and becomes even more so as the show evolves. In this chapter, I interrogate how Kate adapts and compromises her gender performance based upon how she thinks she will be perceived by others. To accomplish this, I analyze Kate’s identity from two different perspectives, how Kate views and portrays herself and how her identity is impacted by the rest of the survivors on the island, in particular through Jack and Sawyer. Because *Lost* features flashback and flash forward techniques, the viewer, the character, and the collective population of characters all have different ideas of each other’s identity. Given
the analysis from these points of view, in this chapter, I argue that Kate’s gender identity is complicated, and, it seems, she is aware of this complication and tries to take control over how the other survivors interpret her gender. The show depicts Kate as having agency over her gendered identity, which could be viewed as progressive, but this agency only occurs when interacting with other female characters. When Kate is depicted with male characters, her agency is compromised.

Kate’s Individual Identity

“She don't care about nothin' or nobody but herself.” –Sawyer, “Born to Run.”

This analysis investigates Kate’s gender performance along with her interactions with other characters, both male and female, on the island. To look at her performance as systematic, collective, and impacted by the societal expectations established on the island is in line with other gender scholars. Judith Halberstam (1998) states, “Gender conformity is pressed onto all girls, not just tomboys” (p. 6). While I understand that Kate is a fictional character, I believe that her performance is riddled with gender expectations but could also serve as a model of gender that breaks the mold. I undertake this chapter with Halberstam’s (1998) desire in mind. She states, “I want to carefully produce a model of female masculinity that remarks on its multiple forms but also calls for new and self-conscious affirmations of different gender taxonomies” (Halberstam, 1998, p. 9). Using Halberstam’s ideas, I argue that Kate’s gender, and therefore her identity, is a complicated performance that is impacted by the different perspectives in which her character is portrayed. To further this notion, I examine how Kate seems to view her own gender and identity as it may suggest the type of self-conscious affirmations that about which Halberstam speaks. To do this, in this section, I only
examine episodes that are dedicated to Kate’s story via the flashback technique utilized by the show.

It is clear from the start that Kate knows she has to manage her complicated gender identity to survive on the island. As such, Kate constantly negotiates her competing backgrounds and experiences within her role as a contributing member on the island. Kate knows the knowledge of her criminal background will impact how the others view her and treat her. Because of this, she works to maintain the image of an ideal female who, for Kate, is someone who is trustworthy and peaceful. To do this, Kate hides her violent and criminal past and, in turn, downplays any and all knowledge she has about weapons, survival, and general resourcefulness. Halberstam attests that these are traits that contribute to a “butch” or masculine gender performance. She states that the “ritual of physical prowess, smart talk, and ability to handle firearms” are all attributes that further a butch persona (Halberstam, 1998, p. 181). These characteristics, while linked to Kate’s criminal past, could help her survive on the island. But instead, Kate chooses to outwardly illustrate typical performances of femininity and only allows a few slippages into her old ways. Kate constantly negotiates between her masculine and feminine gender performance.

This negotiation is evident in several episodes throughout the show. In the episode, “Whatever the Case May Be,” (1.12) through a flashback sequence, Kate is shown in a bank talking to a manager negotiating the terms of a loan. While she discusses this with the manager, three robbers enter with guns and hold the bank up. One robber named Jason harasses the manager for the key to the money cage. During the hold up, another bank patron attempts to attack one of the robbers and knocks his gun away.
He yells to Kate to grab the gun, turn off the safety and shoot the robber. Kate fumbles with the gun and says, “I don’t know how to use a gun.” Because of this interaction, the main robber, Jason, grabs Kate and takes her to the back to interrogate her. However, once they are out of vision of the bank patrons, Jason (the robber) laughs, kisses Kate, and says, “I don’t know how to use a gun? That's classic.”

That Kate can operate a gun is an important piece of information that the show uses later. In the episode “Tabula Rasa,” (1.3) Kate takes a gun off of Sawyer during a hike and claims to not know how it works. On this hike, the group (Sawyer, Sayid, Boone, Charlie, and Shannon) is attacked by a polar bear, which Sawyer shoots with a gun. The other survivors learn that Sawyer took the gun off of the body of a U.S. Marshal and that the Marshal was escorting a convict on the plane. Because of this information, Sawyer and Sayid begin to argue and accuse one another of being the convict on the plane. During this scuffle Kate physically takes the gun from Sawyer, and asks how to use it, feigning knowledge of how a gun works. Sayid tells her that she should not use the gun and she replies that she wants to know how to take it apart. Sayid then talks her through the process of disarming the gun Sawyer brought. Obviously the viewer knows that this is something that Kate did not need help figuring out given her role in the bank robbery. However, because initially Kate wants to maintain a peaceful and innocent “female” image, she pretends to not know how guns operate, which eases the minds of the others on the island. The other islanders buy into the lie and express their comfort with Kate and tell her that she should be the one responsible for the gun, not Sawyer or Sayid. Because Kate is ignorant when it comes to guns, she is the best candidate to maintain possession because seemingly, she is not capable of doing anything
violent with the gun. The other islanders are comfortable with Kate’s innocent female image and trust her.

As I argued above, this was a significant milestone for Kate and her view of herself. However, this interaction is significant for several additional reasons. First, once the survivors realized that there was a convict on the island, they automatically assumed that the convict was male. This is evident in how quickly they believed that the convict was either Sawyer or Sayid, both males, and did not offer up the suggestion of any of the female survivors as a possibility. While the survivors were clearly upset by the revelation that there was a convict on the island, they were not surprised at the suggestion of Sawyer or Sayid being the convict. A male who is aggressive and violent does not violate their expectation of gendered performance. Kate recognizes this and does not correct the survivors. Instead, she plays upon the assumption of the survivors and pretends that she does not know how to use a gun. She does not want to complicate the gendered implication that the convict on the plane was a male. She also does not want to complicate the notion that the other survivors have formed of what it means to be a female. As I will discuss later, it becomes clear through her interactions with the others on the island that they are uncomfortable with conflict and dominance when it is not demonstrated by a male character.

Her sordid past seems to play a part in another interesting aspect of her identity, specifically her ability to interact with other females on the island. Because of her life on the run, Kate does not trust others easily, especially those who have the potential of being a threat. She has grown accustomed to being the person in control and being the sole person on whom she can rely. Because of this, she does not trust others who attempt to
gain control over her or take control from her. Throughout the show, her inability to trust others seems to only manifest in her relationships with other females, especially in her relationship with Juliet. Being one of the few females on the island, Kate enjoys the power in her femaleness. Because she is one of the few females who appears to be capable, she is trusted among the other survivors. In addition, Kate’s femaleness and apparent trustworthy qualities makes her Jack’s go to person, giving her power over the others. Juliet is not only someone that Kate does not trust, but she also poses a threat to Kate’s power.

In the episode, “Left Behind,” (3.15) Kate interacts with two women. In the scenes that take place in the present day, she is with Juliet and in the flashback scenes she is with a woman named Cassidy. Through the nature of the show and camera angles, it is implied that the viewer experiences the events through Kate’s perspective. The women that Kate is associated with juxtapose each other and reveal the complications Kate has when it comes to befriending other females. Cassidy is someone that Kate can relate to because she has an equally complicated past. Cassidy is a con-woman who is also trying to make it on her own. Kate sees herself in Cassidy. Cassidy was conned and betrayed by the man she loves and Kate feels betrayed by her mother because she turned her in for the murder of her stepfather. Kate explains to Cassidy that her stepfather would drink and beat her mother up, so she took the liberty of blowing up their house. However, before doing this Kate took out an insurance policy for the house that would have taken care of her mother for the rest of her life. Because of this, Kate cannot understand why her mother turned her in, why she betrayed her. Both Kate and Cassidy have baggage which Kate views as equality, and in turn, not a threat. Juliet on the other hand is the
opposite of Cassidy which makes her serve as the opposite to Kate. She is a doctor, so she is well educated, unlike Kate. She also has the potential to threaten Kate’s relationships with Jack and Sawyer. The contrast of the two women provides different lenses for Kate to view herself.

Juliet is the polar opposite of Kate from looks to personality. Juliet is blonde with blue eyes and is soft spoken. Kate is a brunette and brown eyed and is not afraid to speak her mind. In the episode, “Left Behind,” the women are even dressed in stark contrast to each other. Kate has her hair pulled back in a messy ponytail and is wearing a dirty t-shirt with the sleeves rolled up, which exposes her muscular arms. Juliet is shown with her hair partially down with only part of it pulled back. She is also wearing a clean light blue sweater with long sleeves. The modesty of not exposing her arms seemingly implies her feminine characteristics, because compared to Kate, she is not as muscular. Kate’s muscularity and comfort in the display of her physique serves to assert her masculine gender identity. Because Juliet is posed in the same scenes as Kate and is dressed the opposite of Kate, it aids the show in exposing how Kate does not view herself as the ideal female when compared to Juliet. Juliet’s contrast to Kate helps Kate to see the “lack” of femininity in herself.

Not only does Juliet highlight the lack of feminine qualities in Kate, but she also poses a threat to Kate’s relationship with Jack, and therefore Kate’s position of power on the island. In the same episode, Kate wakes up in the jungle handcuffed to Juliet. They have both been abandoned by the Others and have to find their way back to the village while handcuffed together. During this, the two women begin to bicker. Juliet tells Kate that she hopes Kate is not trying to go back to the village for Jack because he told her not
to bother. Kate becomes angry with Juliet and punches her in the face, twists her arm, and ends up dislocating her shoulder. Juliet later reveals that she knows a lot about Jack. She says,

I know where he was born. I know what his parents did for a living. I know that he was married. And who he was married to. I know why he got a divorce. I know how his father died. I know his height, his weight, his birthday, and his blood type. What do you know about him, Kate? (Juliet, Left Behind)

Kate is clearly upset by this revelation. This is implied through the camera angles that are utilized during Juliet’s line. The camera is looking at Juliet over the corner of Kate’s shoulder, and indicates that the viewer sees Juliet through Kate’s eyes. Kate pauses a long moment after Juliet’s question and refuses to make eye contact or answer Juliet’s question. She believed that she held the power because she had formed a relationship with Jack; however, Juliet reveals that is not the case. Kate feels threatened and resorts to physical violence, a way to show Juliet that she is the one in control and that she has power over Juliet. Arguably, this is a display of Kate’s dominant and violent identity, which supports my argument that Kate demonstrates female masculinity. Kate is comfortable with her physicality which is revealed through her physical attack. This is a concept that is iterated by Halberstam (1998) when she discusses the physicality of female boxers and states that they “lack none of the intensity or physicality of men’s boxing” (p. 270). Halberstam implies that female boxers are comfortable with their physical nature which in turn allows them to be as intense in the ring as male boxers. Halberstam then, would view Kate’s comfort with violence as a reflection of her comfort with her physicality. For Halberstam, aggression and violence is not something that is
explicitly male or masculine. Females are also able to express their aggression through violence. However, Kate’s comfort is complicated by the fact that the aggression and bodily confidence is inspired by heterosexual competition. Further, Kate’s interaction with Juliet shows Kate to be less feminine than Juliet. So, Halberstam, who viewed boxing as a performance of female masculinity, would critique this instance of aggression as it is juxtaposed with femininity. Instead of allowing Kate to demonstrate her comfort in being an aggressive female, the show punishes her display of female masculinity by presenting Juliet as the more desirable and inherently, more female character. Juliet embodies the traditional notion of femininity by being the less aggressive female, which in turn negates the possibility for Kate’s performance of female masculinity to be viewed as progressive.

Juliet’s presence and the idea that Kate has to compete for Jack’s affections reinforce the notion of heterosexuality on the island, which in turn solidifies Juliet’s femaleness. This reinforces the lack of femininity in Kate because it serves to emphasize that Juliet is the desired model of female. Given this, Juliet represents the model of femininity to which women are expect to comply, while this broadens the deviance of Kate’s gender performance. Because Juliet is meant to be Kate’s character foil, Kate appears to be even less female, especially given her aggressive and physical response to Juliet. Halberstam (1998) would see Kate’s need to resolve this issue with physical violence as a performance of her female masculinity. Halberstam (1998) states that the female boxers view their sport “as an expression of a true femininity” (p. 271). For Halberstam then, Kate’s need to demonstrate her physical power is something that is not uniquely masculine, instead, it can be viewed as an extension of her femininity. Despite
this, the show still positions Kate in a role where she is the masculine female, especially compared to Juliet who represents the ideal feminine woman.

While Kate demonstrates masculine traits, she also has a distinct feminine identity that is displayed in the episode, “Do No Harm” (1.20). In this episode, Claire, who was aboard the flight and is pregnant, begins to experience labor pains. Kate is the one who finds her walking in the jungle, and, ultimately, is the one that helps to deliver her son. It is interesting to note that Kate, seemingly, has no experience in motherhood as far as the rest of the survivors are concerned. She has no children and no experience is assisting in birthing children. However, the show seems to imply that all females, regardless of experience, have a natural instinct when it comes to childbirth.

This is exemplified when Kate finds Claire and delivers the baby without complication. Kate manages to comfort a panicked Claire and says things like, “I'm, I'm scared, too. But we're going to get through this together, okay.” She also makes statements such as, “Do you want this baby now? Hmm? Do you want it to be healthy and safe?” After Claire nods, Kate states, “Okay, then the baby knows that, too. You are not alone in this. We are all here for you. This baby is all of ours, but I need you to push, okay? Okay? Alright. 1, 2, 3, push. Good, push!” During this whole process Kate is emotional and on the verge of tears, which demonstrates her own fear but she is able to set it aside to support Claire.

This moment is meant to expose Kate’s femininity to herself and the viewer. Kate is depicted as nurturing and caring, traits that the other survivors expect and accept from her. Claire is at a vulnerable moment when she is giving birth and needs the emotional support that Kate provides; this reinforces the gendered norm that women
inherently are knowledgeable in birthing children (Sears & Godderis, 2011). Kate is also shown with her hair down and a white shirt further enhancing the notion of her femininity and innocence. The indication that white represents purity and innocence is a notion reinforced through Gary Sherman and Gerald Clore’s 2009 study. Sherman and Clore (2009) state,

> Although the metaphor of moral purity is well documented, this is the first demonstration that black and white, as representative of negative contagion (black contaminates white), are central parts of this metaphor. Sin is not just dirty, it is black. And moral virtue is not just clean, but also white. (p. 1024)

Kate being clothed in white only serves to further her pure and innocent feminine appearance. Also, Kate has a significant role in the process but is not the one giving birth, which demonstrates her connection to womanhood. This reinforces the aspect of her feminine identity and furthers the preference of her singular gender to the survivors rather than to advance her complicated and fluid gender. She secures her role as someone who can be trusted and also secures her role as a woman given that she was able to help Claire with no previous experience. According to this episode, the link of Kate to femininity may contest other aspects of her seemingly masculine gender performance. Halberstam (1998) states, “Presumably, female masculinity threatens the institution of motherhood” (p. 273). In order to combat the masculine gender performance that Kate demonstrates, the show places her in a situation that re-affirms she is a feminine individual. Kate’s complicated gender performance is further explicated both for herself and the viewer.

To summarize, Kate’s exchanges with Juliet and Cassidy attest to her female masculinity. Kate is able to demonstrate physical power and the desire to be dominant
when it comes to Juliet. And even though the show sometimes implies that this physicality is a bad thing, it could still be considered progressive in that it is an unexpected behavior for a woman. In regards to Cassidy, Kate is able to be vulnerable, form a relationship out of commonalities, and accept her help. Kate also furthers her performance of femininity by coming to Claire’s aid and assisting in birthing her baby. Female masculinity is not just a performance of femininity or masculinity. It is a blend of the two, which Kate demonstrates. It is implied, through the camera angles and dedication of these episodes to Kate’s story that the viewer is meant to see these scenes through Kate’s perspective. Kate sees herself as an individual who is not confined by society’s established gender binary. Instead, she is comfortable and able to exhibit both feminine and masculine qualities. When she has control over her negotiated identity, she adapts and utilizes a full gendered performance.

Kate with Jack and Sawyer

“I’m sorry that I am not as perfect as you!” – Kate, “What Kate Did.”

The two individuals who complicate Kate’s identity the most are Jack and Sawyer. Throughout their time on the island, the three develop a complicated and dynamic love triangle which typically places Kate in the middle. It is evident that both men are important to Kate given her interactions with them. Because she values their opinion so much, her view of her identity on the island is greatly impacted by the way they view her in each moment.

When it comes to Jack and Sawyer, Kate is dependent upon their view of her to determine her identity. Arguably, she is not able to be her own person within her relationships with the two. Through Jack and Sawyer, Kate is able gain a clearer view of
herself because she, or at least the show, contrasts her identity with their identity. When she interacts with Jack, Kate is more willing to take a less dominant role. She portrays more characteristics of the innocent and passive female. She is the female that is accepted in society and also on the island. In contrast to her identity with Jack, when Kate is with Sawyer her performance of self is more reminiscent of what I argue above is her individual identity. In short, it seems that Sawyer encourages a more fluid performance of her gender. To further unpack the implications of both male characters on Kate’s identity, I first look at Jack’s impact and then turn my attention to Sawyer.

One of the main factors that complicate Kate’s performed identity is the fact that Jack seemingly is the only character that knows about Kate’s status as a convicted felon. Arguably, Kate feels indebted to Jack for keeping this information from the other survivors. The revelation of this information will violate the innocent, peace-keeper image that Kate has been putting forth for the others on the island. To Kate, it is pertinent to maintain this image because it allows her to keep her past a secret and to remain in a position of power on the island. The other islanders trust her and because of this trust she is respected and given power. However, if her past were to be revealed, the trust and power that she had established would be broken.

This notion is supported in “Tabula Rasa” (1.3). In this episode, Jack discovers the truth about Kate. While he attends to the injured U.S. Marshal, the Marshal awakens and tells Jack, “She’s dangerous.” Jack pulls a wanted flyer from the Marshal’s pocket and sees a picture of Kate. While Jack garners this information, he withholds it from the other survivors so he does not incite panic. However, another survivor, Hurley, also sees the flyer, and obviously distrusts Kate when he states, “She looks pretty hardcore.” The
image of Kate on the flyer is black and white and shows her not smiling, with her hair down and wearing a seemingly dark colored t-shirt. To Hurley, Kate’s unsmiling face indicates that she is “hardcore.” This depiction violates the identity that Kate has worked to establish as a complacent and innocent female. The show implies that Kate understands that most characters would feel like Hurley about her past. Therefore, given her past, she seems to work harder to demonstrate feminine qualities that the survivors are comfortable with such as the notions of being innocent and a peace-keeper.

This point is further explored in the episode “Whatever the Case May Be,” (1.12) when Kate pleads with Jack to help her get a locked briefcase back from Sawyer. She tells Jack that he is the, “Only one who knows about me,” which indicates that he has kept her secret. Kate, who has proven herself as a trusted and contributing individual, relies on Jack to continue to keep this secret, and in turn gives him power over her. Thus, the tension in her gender identity is never clearer than when she interacts with Jack. Kate has a dangerous, criminal past, which runs counter to gender expectations. Yet, because Kate knows that Jack can reveal her past to the others, Kate performs a passive, complacent role with him. This passivity is an easily understood female archetype. Moreover, the show continuously juxtaposes Jack’s purity against Kate’s corruption. The juxtaposition between Jack’s goodness, especially given that he is a doctor and very successful, to Kate’s failures portray Kate as someone who is not good enough to live up to the male standard of goodness and perfection.

Not only does Kate not live up to the male standard of goodness and perfection, but Jack does not accept her dominant and masculine nature, and attempts to stifle it. In the finale “Exodus” (1.23), Kate volunteers to carry dynamite in her backpack. However,
Jack realizes what Kate’s intention is and attempts to convince her that she does not need to go to extreme measures to help on the island. Kate insists and he grows tired of arguing and allows her to believe that he put the dynamite in her pack. However, he does the opposite and instead, places the dynamite in his own backpack. By allowing Kate to carry the dynamite, Jack would give her power on the island since the dynamite is needed to help the rest of the survivors. If Kate carried the dynamite it would demonstrate her willingness to take a risk on behalf of the group and would display her as a leader among the survivors. It also would have been noted by the other individuals on the expedition, which would have resulted in the rest of the survivors learning about her attempt to help. She would be in control of providing the solution for the group, not Jack. While the show presented a possibility where the others could accept Kate’s identity, Jack is not comfortable with it and ultimately decides how she should be viewed by the others. Jack accomplishes the suppression of Kate’s masculine performance in the last episode of the first season, “Exodus” (1.23). In a way, by carrying the dynamite in his backpack, Jack stifles Kate’s comfort with her female masculinity. What this says is that the show wants Jack to be viewed as the risk-taker and person who provides primary care for the island community. Further, this behavior is only acceptable for males, and Kate, a female, should not participate in risk-taking behavior. While Kate’s view of her identity is progressive because she is willing to engage in risk-taking behavior, the show dismisses this desire and instead shows a male character taking the risk. In an instance where Kate had hoped to exert control over her choices, the plot does not allow the agency to take place. Seemingly, the only time Kate is able to take risks and be a leader on the island is
in the absence of Jack. In the face of male power, Kate loses agency over her gendered performance.

Ultimately, Kate learns that for Jack, her feminine performance is the performance that is preferred. Given Jack’s position of power on the island, it can be assumed that Jack’s preference is also the preference of those on the island. Therefore, no matter what Kate wishes to do, she is shown as inadequate in her interactions with Jack. She further illustrates her feelings of inadequacy when compared to Jack, the male ideal, in the episode, “What Kate Did” (2.9). She is upset and runs away from helping an injured Sawyer. Jack finds her in the jungle and yells at her which incites an angered and emotional response from Kate. She begins to cry and yells, “Yeah, I'm sorry. I'm sorry that I am not as perfect as you! I'm sorry that I'm not as good!” From this, it is clear that she holds Jack to a standard of perfection that she does not hold for herself. Her emotive release also contradicts and minimizes her strength. In turn, the fact that she is a leader among the other survivors and was helping Sawyer is also minimized. This further demonstrates the notion that the male (Jack) is superior and the female (Kate) is minimalized. She constantly tries to prove that she is just as good as he is, but to her, this is an unobtainable goal. All of her resolve and power dissolves in the face of Jack and she willingly assumes a submissive and less powerful role. Because of this, Kate cannot be both male and female. In terms of Jack, Kate’s gender is not fluid and she is not able to exhibit her female masculinity. She is confined to a feminine performance of herself.

Because Kate is confined to a feminine performance of herself while interacting with Jack, she seems to model this behavior again and again because she knows that is what is preferred by Jack and the other survivors. She is no longer her dominant and
aggressive self. Instead, she performs the role of the passive and submissive female. One can tell the distinction between this type of performance and the performance that is shown in the flashback scenes. This willingness to conform to Jack’s expectations is demonstrated on several occasions, the most prominent being when Jack accuses her of poisoning Michael, the survivor who is building the raft to escape. In the episode “Born to Run,” (1.22) Kate begins to badger Michael for a spot on the raft, which can only carry four grown adults. When working on the raft, Michael becomes ill and Jack learns that his water was poisoned to make him sick. In a confrontation with Kate, Jack accuses her of poisoning Michael. Kate is visibly disturbed by this accusation and asks, “Do you really think I'm capable of that?” Jack responds with, “I don't know what you're capable of.” Jack’s reaction demonstrates his expectations of Kate are to be innocent and passive, and if that expectation is violated, he becomes unsure and uncomfortable. While Kate has accepted her violent past and Jack’s knowledge of it, she still wants to maintain a peaceful persona. Jack’s accusation of her poisoning Michael threatens her feminine performance. Kate understands and accepts her complicated identity and gender, but knows that is not what is desired among the other survivors on the island. Jack’s allegations against her feminine performance threaten to expose her fluid gender, in turn violating the island’s expectation of her identity.

It is through Jack’s view of Kate that the other survivors are able to interpret Kate’s gender performance. Jack mostly trusts her which in turn means that the others trust her. Kate is respected and trusted because Hurley and Jack are still the only two survivors who know about Kate’s past. Kate has also continued her performance of her feminine self. In the eyes of the other survivors, she has maintained her prettiness and
femininity and has not violated their expectations of the typical female. However, that changes in the episode, “Born to Run.” In this episode, Kate’s violent past is revealed which results in discomfort among the survivors. They do not know how to process Kate’s complicated gender identity because they have grown to know and understand her singular feminine identity. The violation of the survivor’s expectation of her gender results in Kate temporarily being ostracized from the group.

A raft is being built in an attempt to escape from the island. While the raft is being built, Kate and Sawyer begin to argue because they both want a spot on the raft. After this argument, Michael falls down, apparently ill, and Kate runs to help him. After Jack tends to him, he reveals that Michael was purposely made sick, that someone put something in his water, and that his two suspects are Sawyer and Kate. In an attempt to clear his name, Sawyer outs Kate’s identity. He accuses her of wanting on the raft to escape and avoid being captured. He shows a passport of one of the dead survivors that Kate had been manipulating to reflect a new identity that Kate would presumably adopt. He accuses Kate of poisoning Michael to get what she wants and states she only cares about herself. Cornered, Kate reveals her past by saying, “Yes. I was on the plane -- with the Marshal. Yes, I was wanted and caught and being transported back. No matter what I say about what happened -- about what I supposedly did -- I'm going to jail.” She then turns to Michael and says, “But I didn't poison you.” After making her confession, the other survivors leave her as she falls to her knees, crying, wearing a white shirt with her hair pulled back in a ponytail.

Kate’s physical appearance and vulnerable state of emotional expression while kneeling serves to juxtapose the information of her past as a criminal and as being the one
that the U.S. Marshal escorted on the plane. While it is revealed that she is not who she had been portraying herself as, she is still shown with feminine qualities such as crying, in a submissive stance like kneeling, and wearing white to enhance the notion of her innocence. Her confession has revealed her violent past and complicated the survivor’s concept of her identity. She no longer is the trustworthy, innocent, peace keeper female. Now she also has a dark past and is capable of hurting others. Because of this, her gender identity becomes complicated on the island. No longer is Kate the trustworthy and innocent female. Instead she becomes the female that has violated the survivors’ gendered expectations by revealing her violent criminal past which also indicates her masculine qualities.

As stated before, Kate violated their expectations of her gender. An example of this is during her argument with Sawyer before he reveals her status as a convict. Sawyer is upset with Kate so he grabs her arm and starts yelling at her. The other survivors, who view Kate as feminine and innocent, attempt to come to her aid. Michael and Charlie yell at Sawyer to leave Kate alone and Jin pushes Sawyer away from Kate. However, once Sawyer announces that she was the one the Marshal escorted on the plane, Charlie, Michael, and Jin all back away from Kate and ultimately leave her alone on the beach. The other survivors were quick to help Kate when they believed she was feminine and innocent, but when the truth about her past and ultimately the truth about her gender performance are exposed, they no longer feel comfortable assisting her. Arguably, the others no longer view Kate as someone who needs assistance given her violent past. They acknowledge her complicated gender, but abandon her on the beach, which demonstrates their discomfort and inability to accept it.
Through this revelation, Kate has complicated the survivor’s notion of what they viewed as her femininity. For a moment, Kate has troubled her gender for the survivors through the exposure of her identity as the convict and as someone who was so wanted, that she had to be captured and escorted by a U.S. Marshal. By the looks of shock on the other survivor’s faces, it was clear that they did not think that she was capable of something that would warrant that type of lawful protection. The survivors were comfortable with the assumption that the convict on the island was a man, but with the revelation that Kate is the convict, their notion of her femininity and gender becomes blurred. They associate violence and aggression with men, not women. Kate has violated that association for them. However, juxtaposing the idea that Kate is dangerous and not to be trusted is how Kate is dressed. She is wearing a white shirt, a color that reflects purity and innocence. Again, the idea that white implies her purity is a notion supported by Sherman and Clore (2009). Even though her true identity and female masculinity is exposed, her wardrobe indicates that she is still intended to be viewed as feminine. In a way this liberates Kate. She no longer has to negotiate her past and female masculinity with her femininity. It is all out in the open to the other survivors and they can take it or leave it. Kate is comfortable with her complicated gender and the show provides the survivors the opportunity to accept that complication. However, instead of being progressive and accepting of a complicated female gender performance, the other survivors and seemingly society, reject Kate’s performance of female masculinity.

In contrast to this, Sawyer understands and accepts Kate’s complicated gender performance. In fact, he is romantically attracted to Kate. Kate views herself and
Sawyer as equals given their criminal backgrounds. Sawyer’s past as a con man will be discussed later, but it is clear to Kate from the beginning that Sawyer has a dark past to which she can relate. Also, within her interactions with Sawyer, Kate seems capable and comfortable taking a dominant, and some may say “masculine” role. With Sawyer, Kate is able to maintain more agency over her identity. She is able to be complicated in that she can demonstrate her violent and dominant past without violating Sawyer’s expectations of her identity. In fact, when in interactions with Sawyer, it is implied that he finds her attractive, which highlights both a masculine and feminine identity. With Jack, she has to hide this aspect of herself but with Sawyer Kate is able to be a more organic version of her identity and gender. Sawyer is not a depiction of the perfect male model, so Kate is more comfortable in the display of her gender contradictions.

This is demonstrated when the two go on an expedition to track down a boar that had been harassing Sawyer in the episode titled, “Outlaws” (1.16). The two begin to play a drinking game of “I Never” and learn more about each other’s past. Towards the end of the game Sawyer begins to ask Kate questions that reveal more about her, as well as the commonalities between the two.

SAWYER: I never cared about having carte blanche because I just wanted to spend some time with the only other person on this Island that just don't belong.

[Kate drinks.]

KATE: I never carried a letter around for 20 years because I couldn’t get over my baggage.

[Sawyer drinks.]
SAWYER: I never killed a man.

[Kate drinks. Sawyer drinks.]

SAWYER: Well, looks like we got something in common, after all.

Unlike Jack, whom Kate views as someone who is “perfect” and to whom she cannot relate, Sawyer is equally damaged. Sawyer understands and accepts Kate’s violent past and aggressive tendency which in turn normalizes her complicated gender identity. Sawyer’s view of Kate’s gendered identity differs from Jack because Jack views Kate’s aggressive tendencies as a violation of her identity. Sawyer’s view of Kate’s identity and gender is a moment of connection, which seems to create a space for female masculinity where there is not a definitive line of femininity and masculinity. The individual (Kate) is in control of the fluid performance.

Kate recognizes Sawyer’s comfort with her complicated and aggressive identity. There are several instances where she engages in sarcastic verbal exchanges with Sawyer and where she challenges his decisions. Because he seems to accept her and she sees herself as an equal of his, she has no problem interrogating his power as a man. In the same episode, “Outlaws,” Kate mocks Sawyer for being tormented by a boar and offers her help. She does this in exchange for access to his supplies without question and he only accepts because she knows how to track animals and he does not. Kate also demonstrates her physical prowess over Sawyer in the episode, “Whatever the Case May Be” (1.12). In a physical altercation over trying to gain possession of the brief case, Kate tackles Sawyer to the ground and head butts him several times. Kate’s willingness to physically and verbally engage with Sawyer demonstrates her comfort level in assuming
a dominant role in their relationship. She is not afraid to fight back and to exhibit her physical dominance, something that would never happen with Jack.

With Sawyer she is also able to be vulnerable and caring. When he is hurt, she helps to nurse him back to health. She is also an object of his desire. It is clear that the two care for each other and finally express this emotion in the episode, “I Do” (3.6). When both are captured by the Others, Kate allows herself to be taken away because it will save Sawyer’s life. When the two are reunited they spend the night together. Following this, Sawyer says to Kate, “Lemme ask you something, Freckles. When Blockhead was beating on me, and you said "I love you." That was just... to get him to stop, right?” In response, Kate kisses him and Sawyer responds with, “I love you, too.” This intimate moment reveals a softer side of Kate. This is a side that is only shown when she is with Sawyer. When Kate is with Sawyer, she is dominant and the object of desire. She is not shown as just feminine or just masculine. Sawyer’s acceptance of her complicated identity allows her to be both. In essence, Kate’s fluid gender identity is an extension of her tomboyism, something that Halberstam hails when it is not repressed in women. She states, “Very often it is read as a sign of independence and self-motivation, and tomboyism may even be encouraged to the extent that it remains comfortably linked to a stable sense of a girl identity” (Halberstam, 1998, p. 6). While tomboyism is typically disciplined in young girls, Kate’s identity through Sawyer creates a space where it is acceptable for women. In turn, this creates a safe space for female masculinity.

These examples further demonstrate Kate’s complicated gender identity. Kate and Sawyer understand the fluidity of her identity and create a progressive space for that performance. However, Jack, who arguably represents the view of the rest of the
survivors and the view of society as a whole, is uncomfortable with this fluidity. For Jack, Kate’s progressive gender violates his expectation of her. He either needs to view her as a feminine (innocent and passive) individual or a masculine (aggressive and violent) individual. The combination of both creates discomfort for him. Because Jack’s view is the dominant view, Kate’s complicated identity through her own view and through Sawyer’s view becomes lost.

Kate’s complicated gender performance on the show has the opportunity to create a space for female masculinity that Halberstam (1998) desires. However, this is only evident through Kate’s personal view of herself and through Sawyer’s view of her performance, which unfortunately, is not the dominant view shared on the island. The gender disciplining that Kate receives from Jack and the other survivors attest to the notion stated by Halberstam (1998) that, “Masculinity, one must conclude, has been reserved for people with male bodies and has been actively denied to people with female bodies” (p. 269).
Chapter Five: 
James ‘Sawyer’ Ford Analysis

In an interview featured in *Vanity Fair* with Josh Holloway, the actor who plays Sawyer on *Lost*, Jim Windolf (2010) manages to capture the essence of Sawyer’s personality in a few short sentences. Windolf (2010) writes,

In the show’s early years, he was the perfect foil to the more sensible and heroic Dr. Jack Shepherd, played by Matthew Fox, and he was just right as the bad boy in the ongoing Kate-Jack-Sawyer love triangle. Later on, Sawyer had a domestic phase, as the contented partner to Elizabeth Mitchell’s Juliet character, before returning to his angry-goofball-con-man roots. (p. 1)

James ‘Sawyer’ Ford is the lovable bad boy on the show, and at first glance, he appears to epitomize every stereotype associated with the concept of masculinity. However, after further investigation, I argue that Sawyer’s performance of gender has the potential to be fluid, but is ultimately disciplined to adhere to societal gender expectations.

Because Sawyer is a male that simultaneously portrays and defies gender expectations, he has the potential to break the mold of masculinity that has previously been set forth by other mediated figures. In this chapter, I investigate and expose Sawyer’s depiction of masculinity and how he adheres to and breaks away from previously established masculine tropes and archetypes. To accomplish this, I first look at Sawyer’s identity as he seems to view and portray himself in particular episodes that
are dedicated to revealing his backstory and insinuate to the viewer that we are seeing the island via his perspective. I then deconstruct his identity as it is impacted by the other characters on the island such as Jack, Cassidy, Kate, and Juliet.

**Sawyer’s Individual Identity**

“It’s not a good person, Charlie. Never did a good thing in my life.” Sawyer, “The Long Con”

It is clear from the first introduction of Sawyer as a character that he views himself as a masculine individual. His masculinity is defined by aggression and his physical body (Chesbro & Fuse, 2001; Moss, 2011). This is accomplished in several instances throughout the show. This section will outline the different ways Sawyer showcases his body and manages his emotions to present a comprehensive and fluid performance of masculinity. It will also address other stereotypical masculine tropes to which Sawyer adheres or violates.

The show often displays Sawyer shirtless, which showcases his bare chest and his muscles. Sawyer’s masculinity is portrayed through his body almost to remind viewers that he is, in contrast to Jack, a true man. This is exemplified in the episode “Confidence Man” (1.8). In this episode Sawyer is bathing in the ocean. When he sees Kate walking past him on the beach he emerges from the ocean naked. Kate makes a comment about him being cold without his shorts and Sawyer replies with, “You bet. How about you come a little closer and warm me up?” The emphasis on Sawyer’s body is an example of his masculinity while also asserting his heterosexuality and attraction towards Kate. His confidence in his sexuality and attitude towards women is another trope that furthers his masculine identity. Sawyer’s constant exposure of his body is something that fans also noticed and attributed to his sexuality. In an *NBC News* article, Ree Hines (2009)
articulates this when she writes, “Playing the part of habitually shirtless Sawyer on “Lost” made Josh Holloway a sex symbol, but the actor and former model finds that hot-bod status more of a burden than a boon” (p. 1). Sawyer’s consistently shirtless self asserts his sexuality not only to the other survivors, but also to viewers. The image of Sawyer shirtless is such a consistent trope that media outlets began to point it out as well. The amount of times Sawyer appears shirtless is further iterated in a compilation clip titled “Lost: Every Shirtless Moment,” which was created by Lane Brown (2010) and appeared on Vulture.com. In this clip that has a length of 1:19, Sawyer appears shirtless over 15 times, more than any of the other male characters featured in the video. The prevalence of Sawyer being shirtless demonstrates his confidence in displaying his muscular body, which alludes to the fact that he is primed and ready for sex. This confidence and overt sexuality reinforce his masculinity to characters on, and viewers of, the show.

Sawyer’s body and physicality as representations of his masculinity are coupled with the tasks and chores he does on the island. Jack, who is the leader on the island, is typically shown organizing the others and taking care of them medically. In contrast, Sawyer is often shown completing physical tasks such as chopping wood, helping to build the raft, and toting water through the jungle to the camp. This initial juxtaposition serves to set Sawyer and Jack up to continuously compete for leadership on the island. This tension and contention for power demonstrates Chesbro and Fuse’s (2001) definition of the study of masculinity, “The study of ideological and political systems that masculinity has spawned which accordingly can include examinations of patriarchies, male bonding, warfare, territorial expansions, specific forms of aggression as well as a
host of terms” (p. 203). The dynamic between Jack and Sawyer furthers the notions of “male bonding” or more specifically, anti-male bonding and the concept of aggression as it is constructed by men. It also furthers the notion that the island, as an extension of society, functions on a patriarchal system where one male needs to be in power.

Because of this, when interacting with Jack, Sawyer is often engaged in a power struggle which results in him demonstrating his aggression through verbal confrontation. Jack’s position as leader also forces Sawyer into the role of the working-class male, resulting in him being engaged in physically demanding tasks. It is through these activities that it becomes clear that Sawyer views himself as an individual who is capable of completing physical tasks. Therefore, he often takes it upon himself to complete them alone. For example, in the episode “Exodus,” (1.23) Michael and Jin are building a raft on which they hope to escape to find help. Unlike other episodes, this is not one that is dedicated to Sawyer and exposing his story. While this episode is not just about Sawyer, viewers are led to believe that the episode provides insight into Sawyer’s thoughts because several of the flashback sequences reveal Sawyer’s story. Through this, it can be assumed that several of the scenes, in particular the one described, is intended to be viewed from Sawyer’s perspective. During the building of the raft, the original mast is destroyed. While it took both Michael and Jin several days to build the original mast, Sawyer goes alone into the jungle and constructs a new mast in a day. Also, while Sawyer is building the mast, Jack finds him and talks to him. The stark contrast between the physicality of Sawyer and Jack is highlighted in this moment because Sawyer is shirtless and sweaty from chopping down bamboo whereas Jack is fully clothed and is about to lead an expedition to find dynamite on the island. In addition, Sawyer also
appears more rugged and raw than Jack given his longer, shaggy haircut and facial scruff. Jack on the other hand, has a cleaner buzz cut and a closely shaven face. Further, in the previously mentioned montage of shirtless men, Jack is only shown a meager five times compared to Sawyer’s 15 appearances. This serves to emphasize the show’s focus on Sawyer’s body and minimize Jack’s muscles. Because Jack is a doctor and presented as white collar he is capable of more cerebral tasks whereas Sawyer provides the brute force so commonly represented by the blue collar class.

The visual difference between the two furthers the emphasis that Sawyer’s body exemplifies his masculinity. Sawyer’s muscular stature promotes the notion iterated by Morrison and Halton (2009) and Moss (2011) that there is a positive association between musculature and masculinity. Sawyer’s confidence in his body demonstrates the confidence he feels in his masculine performance. His choice to work alone also establishes the concept of working class masculinity as stated by Fleras and Dixon (2011), “This heroic working-class culture is anchored in the ‘muscular’ values of virility, authenticity, autonomy, aggression, and esprit de corps” (p. 581). Not only does Sawyer recognize and highlight his muscularity, but by working alone, he demonstrates his independence or autonomy. Sawyer is not only confident in his physicality, but he also recognizes that he is capable of completing tasks on his own without the help of the other survivors. This depiction only serves to reinforce masculine tropes that are consistently perpetuated throughout society and the media. Just like in action movies, a male individual must appear muscular in order to appear masculine, creating little room for males who do not display a muscular stature.
However, even though the show attempts to portray Sawyer as the tough cowboy, John Wayne prototype, Sawyer violates this trope in many ways. It is clear through his Southern accent, gruff way of speaking, and stature that he is meant to adhere to Moss’s (2011) definition of the John Wayne type and be “silent, stoic, and one who would not get gregarious or open his mouth at the wrong time” (p. 38). But Sawyer quickly demonstrates that masculinity is not this one-dimensional. Instead, Sawyer does not hesitate to express what he thinks which typically results in him getting into trouble, especially because he usually blatantly contests Jack’s power. By doing this, Sawyer not only ignores the power that Jack demonstrates, but he also challenges the masculine ideal of the “strong and silent” type. His refusal to remain silent violates the trope of masculinity set forth by Wayne. Sawyer’s verbal responses also demonstrate “specific forms of aggression” as defined by Chesbro and Fuse (2001) who claim that these characteristics further the study of masculinity. Instead of demonstrating his aggression physically in these instances, Sawyer resorts to verbal aggression which perpetuates the ideal that aggression equates to masculinity. While at first glance it may seem like he betrays the strong, silent archetype, viewers quickly learn that instead, Sawyer provides another readable performance of masculinity, the aggressive fighter.

This notion is exemplified in the episode, “Confidence Man” (1.8). In this episode, Jack is shown looking through Sawyer’s tent for inhaler medicine for Shannon, another survivor who has asthma. Sawyer tells Jack that he does not have it. Later, when Jack sees Sawyer and asks him for the inhalers, Sawyer again refuses. Jack reacts by punching Sawyer. Instead of fighting back or telling Jack that he does not have the medicine, Sawyer responds with snarky remarks such as, “Well, it’s about time cowboy.
Been telling you since day one, we’re in the wild. Didn’t think you had it in you,” and “That all you got.” Later, in the same episode, Jack and Sayid decide to torture the location of the inhalers out of Sawyer. As Sayid shoves sharpened bamboo shoots under Sawyer’s fingernails, Sawyer shouts things like, “That's it? That's all you got? Splinters? No wonder we kicked your ass in the Gulf...” and “No. Don’t stop now. I think my sinuses are clearing.” Both of these instances exemplify the violation of the stoic John Wayne trope because instead of remaining silent in a time of crisis, Sawyer instead “opens his mouth at the wrong time.” This calls attention to the aggressive aspect of Sawyer’s identity, which further indicates his masculine self.

The tension between Sawyer and Jack also serves to reveal other tropes of masculinity that Sawyer demonstrates. In the episode, “The Long Con,” (2.13) Sawyer is back on the island after leaving on the raft to search for help. While he was gone Jack went through his stash of possessions and distributed all of his goods. However, Sawyer took back his stash which causes problems between him and Jack. Sawyer finds Jack rooting through his things and confronts him and says, “What the hell do you think you’re doing?” Jack responds with, “You stole these from the Hatch.” Jack is shown holding a prescription bottle and Sawyer says, “You stole them from me. They were in my stash when I left. I just took back what was mine.” Jack does not like Sawyer’s reaction and says, “These belong to all of us, Sawyer – to the group. You don’t have a stash anymore.” Sawyer feels threatened and says, “Seriously, Doc, you don’t want to do this. Just give me the pills. We’ll forget it ever happened.” Jack begins to sense the tension and asks Sawyer, “Are you threatening me?” Sawyer gives Jack a final warning with, “Last chance, Doc.” This argument not only demonstrates Sawyer’s verbal
aggression, but it also exemplifies the notion of “territorial expansion.” Jack exercises his “right” to look through Sawyer’s belongings, which indicates his position of power and violates any power that Sawyer holds. This demonstrates that Jack is not only the leader, but can be viewed as a father figure who cares for the other survivors while Sawyer is merely the misfit who needs to be reprimanded.

Because Jack constantly vies for power and ultimately undermines Sawyer’s masculinity, it becomes clear that Sawyer resents Jack. Jack threatens Sawyer’s masculinity and “territory” which results in Sawyer’s plan to overthrow Jack to reinforce his ability to be dominant and masculine. Again, this is shown in the episode “The Long Con” (2.13). Sawyer voices his resentment to Kate when they are discussing Jack’s plan to build an army against the Others that Jack plans. Sawyer says, “It looks like the good folks of Island Town are about to form a posse – get themselves armed up. Hell, I wouldn't be surprised if Jack didn't find that horse of yours and start leading the charge in a big white hat.” Later in the same episode there is a fight about the guns on the island. The dispute is between Locke and Jack over if they should be kept locked up or if everyone should have one for protection. Locke wants to keep them locked up; however, he knows that Jack wants to distribute them. Sawyer knows this, and goes to Locke telling him,

Seems Jack's on his way over here to open your little gun closet and take whatever he needs. You should know he's not alone. The whole camp's pretty shook up about what happened to Tokyo Rose. I'm guessing everybody's going to want to play Cowboys and Indians. And once those guns are out and about -- something tells me they ain't never going back in. (Sawyer, The Long Con)
Locke is surprised that Sawyer divulges this information and asks him why he is helping him. Sawyer responds with, “Because it’ll piss off Jack.” By thwarting Jack’s plan, Sawyer contests Jack’s masculinity and threatens his “territory.” Being the leader, the placement of the guns is something that Jack views as his responsibility. Sawyer wants to throw a wrench in Jack’s plan which will also challenge his territory and masculine performance.

Ultimately, Sawyer wants to overthrow Jack to gain power, which he does when he gains possession of the guns. The show is able to link the possession and control of the guns to masculinity. Not only that, but by usurping control of the guns, Sawyer also manages to violate what Jack believed was his territory. Because Jack blatantly contested Sawyer’s power and masculinity, Sawyer responds with an equally aggressive attack on Jack’s dominance. This demonstrates Sawyer’s attempt to outperform Jack and prove his masculinity to himself, Jack, and the others on the island. This also implies that Sawyer sees the island as a patriarchal system to which only one male can be the leader. Jack’s influence forces Sawyer into a stereotypical performance of masculinity where he exerts aggression and strives to be the alpha male. This notion is furthered at the end of “The Long Con” (2.13). After he captures all of the guns, Sawyer fires a gun into the air to get the attention of all of the survivors, including Jack, and says,

How about you listen up because I'm only going to say this once. You took my stuff. While I was off trying to get us help -- get us rescued -- you found my stash and you took it, divvied it up -- my shaving cream, my batteries, even my beer. And then something else happened, you decided these two boys here were going to tell you what to do and when to do it. Well, I'm done taking orders. And I don't
want my stuff back. The shaving cream don't matter. Batteries don't matter. The only thing that matters now are guns. And if you want one you're going to have to come to me to get it! Oh, you want to torture me, don't you? Show everybody how civilized you are. Go ahead, but I'll die before I give them back. And then you'll really be screwed, won't you? New sheriff in town, boys! You all best get used to it. (Sawyer, The Long Con).

While Sawyer becomes the one to possess power on the island, it is only through the manipulation of others and evolution to the villain. Sawyer reveals a complicated aspect of masculinity, but it is evident from his portrayal, in contrast to Jack, that Sawyer’s interpretation of masculinity is not the one that is desirable on the island. The island then, serves as an extension of society which indicates that society does not approve of gender performances that deviate away from expectation. So, society wants to see a masculine male but they do not want a male who is dangerous, rough around the edges or engaged in trickery. Because of this dishonesty, Sawyer’s gender performance is villainized on the island while Jack’s performance, full of concern for the other survivors and overall attitude of “do-gooder” is revered and rewarded with the power of leadership. Further, Jack’s masculine performance is similar to the trope set forth by James Bond. Moss (2011) states, “He is positively cool as a masculine character and can be endlessly repackaged to reflect changes in society” (p. 41). Jack’s “do-gooder” persona and cool attitude reinforces the notion that a recognizable and desirable masculine performance is preferred over an individual who digresses from the gendered expectation. Thus, Sawyer, who deviates away from the gendered expectation, is disciplined and portrayed as the other, less desirable masculine individual.
Another large part of Sawyer’s identity on the show is his past as a conman. This past, and the telling of it in episodes about Sawyer, reveals a struggle to viewers. The flashback sequences reveal his past and indicate that this is a part of his identity that he cannot forget. His past experiences shape how he interacts with the survivors and how he portrays himself to them. The conman storyline reveals both a damaged man – hurt by years of betrayal and an aggressive man – dedicated to a life on the run. Both result in Sawyer emotionally distancing himself from others and illustrates a familiar trope of an emotionally unavailable man. This furthers the idea that the expression of emotion is a quality that “real” men should avoid.

This is evident in the episode, “The Long Con” (2.13). This episode is centered on Sawyer and his past. During the scenes that take place on the island, Sawyer is shown plotting against Jack and ultimately, against the good of the group. In order to accomplish this, Sawyer manipulates several individuals on the island to gain possession of the gun stash that Jack has been keeping. After it is revealed that Sawyer is now in possession of the guns, Kate confronts him saying,

What kind of person do I think you are? I don’t think this has anything to do with guns, or with getting your stash back! I think you want people to hate you! Why do you have to do this? (Kate, The Long Con)

Sawyer responds to Kate by saying, “You run. I con. Tiger don’t change their stripes.” It is clear that Sawyer wants to adhere to his conman ways in an attempt to make people hate him. He asserts that he cannot change. Through this, he maintains an emotional distance from the others. This distance can be viewed as a tactic to help Sawyer preserve
his masculine performance, which further iterates the trope of men assuming emotional
distance as a way to assert their masculinity.

Later in the same episode, Charlie approaches Sawyer as he is drinking in the
dark. Charlie assisted Sawyer in the manipulation of the others which led to Sawyer’s
possession of the guns. Charlie questions Sawyer and says, “Sawyer, this idea – all of
this – what we did – what made you…How does someone think of something like that?”
Sawyer reiterates the notion that he does not view himself as a good person and states,
“I’m not a good person, Charlie. Never did a good thing in my life.” Sawyer does “bad”
things and distances himself from the rest of the survivors on the island in an attempt to
avoid forming relationships with them, which could result in developing feelings for
them. In a way, Sawyer’s constant antagonizing of the survivors and doing things to
reassert his “badness” is a way for Sawyer to preserve his masculinity. Sawyer’s lack of
friendships and the way that he talks about himself with the others allows the viewer to
associate Sawyer with a particular archetype of masculinity. Instead of allowing himself
to break away from the emotionally distant trope of masculinity, it appears as if Sawyer
clutches to it in a way that reinforces expectations established by society and through the
media. Just like with the emphasis on his body, in these moments Sawyer has the
opportunity to create a space for a masculine trope that embraces emotions and
relationships, but he does not.

While the scenes that feature Sawyer’s behavior on the island are telling in terms
of the model of masculinity he portrays, it is through the scenes that reveal Sawyer’s past
as a conman where a viewer begins to understand Sawyer’s views of women and
heterosexual relationships. Through the examples illustrated below, it is evident that he
sees women as disposable which allows him to maintain a position of power and
distance. This emotional unavailability is a concept that is stated by Morrison and Halton
(2009) when they state, “We observed that masculinity is presented as revolving around
one particular discourse of male sexuality: the desirability of sexual relationships with no
emotional ties” (p. 68). This is evident in the episode “Confidence Man” (1.8). In a
discussion of one of his cons with his boss, he refers to the woman he was sleeping with
and who ultimately he is going to con. He describes his relationship with her as, “Deal
closed today. See, women are easy -- a few Cosmos, a couple of stunts they haven't seen
between the sheets, and they think the scam's their idea.” To Sawyer, women only serve
to further his career as a conman. His intimate relationships with them are a mere tool to
get him to his ultimate goal which is the completion of the con. Sawyer’s indication that
women are easy to manipulate furthers the notion that his disposable sexual conquests
reinforce his dominance. This dominant behavior also serves to further his masculinity
because he remains distant and unattached to the women he is conning. Also, in the
episode “Outlaws,” (1.16) Sawyer admits to Kate that he has never been emotionally
attached in a relationship. Sawyer and Kate are on the hunt for a boar. At night while
drinking around a fire they begin to play “I Never.” During this game Sawyer says, “I've
never been in love.” Kate responds with, “You've never been in love?” To which
Sawyer says, “I ain't drinking, am I?” This furthers the notion that all of Sawyer’s past
interactions with women have been emotionless. Thus, in all conversations about love,
the show uses Sawyer’s emotional distance to portray his masculinity as stereotypical.

However, while Sawyer seems to view himself as masculine and unemotional,
there are moments where he allows the trope of unemotional masculinity to blend with an
aggressive display of emotion. Sawyer demonstrates a blend of media masculine tropes in a way that could be considered progressive and refreshing. He takes a note from the stereotype set forth by Elvis Presley. According to Moss (2011), “Emotions were something that could finally be revealed, and longing and desire, thanks to Presley, could now be exhibited.” (p. 39). This furthers societal acceptance of emotional displays, which creates a space for Sawyer to safely be an emotional male. He does not continue the binary of either being stoic and aggressive or expressive and emotional. Instead, Sawyer blends both tropes, creating a different depiction of masculinity. While Sawyer violates certain tropes of masculinity, he still presents a masculine performance that resonates with, and is accepted by, the viewer. In these moments, Sawyer has the opportunity to express emotions in a more progressive way and negate the existing masculine tropes, however, he does not. Despite this, these instances serve to foreshadow the masculinity evolution and actualization that Sawyer experiences later on in the series.

The notion of Sawyer expressing his emotions is demonstrated in the episode “Confidence Man,” (1.8) where Kate confronts Sawyer about the letter that he always carries with him and reads. At first, after reading the letter, Kate believes that Sawyer is the conman that caused a boy to lose his mother and father. However, after she talks to Sawyer, it is revealed that instead, he was the boy whose father murdered his mother because of a con. The contradiction of Sawyer’s physicality and stoic cowboy with his connectedness to emotion is in line with Sloop’s (2012) idea that nature is messy, and there should not be a binary to classify gender because nature does not lend itself to a categorical system. He claims that “gender is always a discourse, and we can learn to do
Sawyer troubles the notion of a stoic cowboy by blending his emotions in his response to Kate. He says,

It was his name. He was a confidence man. Romanced my momma to get to the money, wiped them out clean, left a mess behind. So I wrote that letter. I wrote it knowing one day I’d find him. But that ain’t the sad part. When I was 19, I needed 6 grand to pay these guys off I was in trouble with. So I found a pretty lady with a dumb husband who had some money. And I got them to give it to me. How’s that for a tragedy? I became the man I was hunting. Became Sawyer. Don’t you feel sorry for me. Get the hell out. Get out! (Sawyer, Confidence Man).

Sawyer’s outburst to Kate is aggressive and emotional and indicates that Sawyer does not see himself fitting into just one trope of masculinity. This instance demonstrates the evolution of Sawyer’s ability to find comfort in emotional expressions. Arguably, his comfort can be attributed to his connection with Kate. Regardless, this starts to show a shift from the aggression he previously displayed and works towards depictions of Sawyer embracing the fluidity of his performance. Sawyer’s view of his masculinity does not adhere to the singularity of the tropes previously mentioned. Instead, Sawyer portrays a complex masculine identity and negotiates how that is displayed to the others on the island.

While Sawyer attempts to distance himself from the group for most of the series, he eventually tries to “make nice” with the other survivors. Jack and Kate are not part of the group for a period of time and Hurley convinces Sawyer that he is now their leader in the episode, “Left Behind” (3.15). Hurley cons Sawyer into being nice which in turn, helps Sawyer see that he can display an adapted version of his masculinity that will allow
him to be viewed as the group’s leader. Previous to this, Sawyer viewed his masculine identity among the others on the island as distant and unemotional. However, through the interaction that Hurley forces him in to, he begins to realize that he can form relationships with others on the island which eventually helps him to evolve into a leader on the island. Hurley convinces Sawyer that he is the leader when he says,

Jack's gone. Locke's gone. Kate and Sayid. You're all we got. And Paulo and Nikki dying, we all looked to you. Then again, you totally tried to steal the diamonds, but we wanted to look to you. Look around, you made everyone happy. Just for today, they can eat boar, laugh and forget that they're totally screwed.

And you did that for 'em, dude. You. (Hurley, Left Behind).

This transformation into a leader also forces his perspective of his masculinity to evolve, allowing him to become more comfortable in the expression of his emotions in a non-aggressive way. This alteration also creates a space for a more progressive depiction of masculinity, one where Sawyer is both a (masculine) leader on the island and one who is comfortable showing emotion and his care and concern for the larger group. Sawyer is able to encompass several tropes of masculinity that have been previously established to create a blended notion of what it means to be a masculine individual.

After the other survivors escape off of the island, Sawyer becomes part of the Dharma initiative, which is the group that came to the island in the 1970’s to study the island, and is placed in a position of power. It is through this that Sawyer is able to exhibit his masculine dominance as a leader, but also as a masculine individual he is able to express emotion. This is displayed in the episode “LaFleur,” (5.8) where Sawyer is shown clean shaven and depicted wearing lighter colors which alludes to the goodness
that he now sees in himself. He also begins to go by his first name James, which indicates that he has left his conman persona behind and embraces his new role as a leader. It is in this same episode where Sawyer demonstrates his comfort with displays of emotion. Sawyer and Juliet have travelled back in time and are now part of the Dharma group. Because of this, no one knows that Juliet is a doctor. However, one of the women in the group goes into labor and needs assistance birthing her baby. Sawyer, who is in charge, gets Juliet to help. When the nurse tries to protest, Sawyer responds with, “I’m speaking for Horace [the woman’s husband] now, and I say she’s delivering this baby.” When the baby is born and healthy, Sawyer is clearly elated. Following that, Sawyer is shown picking flowers for Juliet. He also praises her on her successfully delivering the baby and says, “You were amazing today.” Sawyer’s role as a leader allows him to demonstrate a new brand of masculinity. He is in a position of power, however, instead of defaulting to aggression or being emotionless like other stereotypes, Sawyer is able to show compassion. He is able to emphasize his power but also exhibit emotion and support toward Juliet.

The show further reflects Sawyer’s masculine evolution in “The Last Recruit” (6.13). Sawyer seems to understand the transformation that he went through and makes a comment to Jack saying, “Didn’t think you’d show up, Doc. Taking orders ain’t your strong suit. Nice to see you finally came around.” Sawyer is eventually able to trump Jack in the area of leadership and power, but it is only after he adjusts his depiction of masculinity from one of manipulation and outright aggression to one that is more understanding and desirable. This demonstrates the notion of Sawyer’s gender performance being disciplined, especially through the masculine performance that Jack
exhibits. Because Jack adhered to a favorable model of masculinity, he was able to rise to power on the island. When Jack is no longer a factor, Sawyer adapts his masculine performance to be one that is reminiscent of Jack’s. This indicates that society only rewards certain performances of masculinity; in this case the reward is leadership and power. It was not until Sawyer adapted his masculine performance that he was able to experience power. Much like Jack representing the desired male model in comparison to Kate, he poses the same contrast in regards to Sawyer. Sawyer is only rewarded for his masculine performance once he conforms to the model that Jack sets forth.

Through Sawyer’s progression to a leader on the island we are able to see how his masculinity becomes disciplined. It is only when Sawyer adheres to favorable societal tropes of masculinity that he is able to possess power. This indicates through the selections the show makes that the producers assume society may only be comfortable with a certain brand of masculinity and any individual that violates that brand will be disciplined until they conform to societal expectations. I discuss character reception more in depth in the conclusion chapter.

**Sawyer’s Identity Through Women**

“I love you, too.” – Sawyer, “I Do”

Just as Kate’s identity and gender performance was impacted by her interactions with other characters on the island, the same analysis is applicable to Sawyer. In particular, Sawyer’s interactions with female characters like Cassidy, Kate, and Juliet also impact his masculine performance. The following section will detail the impact these particular characters have on Sawyer’s gender performance.
In contrast to the masculine performance Sawyer displays with Jack is his performance when it comes to forming relationships with women. While as a conman Sawyer fueled the notion that women are disposable and ultimately needed for sexual relationships with no emotional ties which demonstrated his male sexuality and masculinity (Morrison & Halton, 2009), when it comes to Kate, Juliet, and Cassidy, this notion is no longer applicable. Sawyer defies the trope of male sexual prowess through his relationships with the three previously mentioned women. Through them, Sawyer is able to extend his masculine performance outside of the preconceived notions and stereotypes associated with men in romantic relationships. This is demonstrated through several of his interactions with Cassidy, Kate, and Juliet.

The first example of this is in “The Long Con,” (2.13) where Sawyer is shown in the middle of conning Cassidy in order to get the $600,000 she won in her previous divorce. However, to do this he poses as her boyfriend and someone who is romantically interested in her. To his surprise, he does begin to develop feelings for her and he begins to see himself incapable of just using women as a tool in his cons. His partner calls him out on it and says,

You know what's making you stupid right now? It's your damn hormones. You think you're in love, but you're not. You know, a tiger doesn't change his stripes, James. You're a conman, just like me. And it's not what you do, it's what you are. Do I make myself clear? (Gordy, The Long Con)

While Sawyer was expected to remain distant and unemotional in order to accomplish the con like his past jobs, he instead violates this and develops feelings for Cassidy. Because
of this, his con job is compromised which indicates that the masculine trope of sex without emotions is also compromised and violated.

Sawyer further proves his violation of this trope in the episode “Everyman for Himself” (3.4). In this episode Sawyer, Kate, and Jack have been captured by the Others. Kate and Sawyer are being held in cages outside where their actions are monitored. Because Sawyer keeps causing trouble, the Others take him and put a pacemaker in his heart and tell him that his heart will explode if he gets too excited. However, they also threaten to hurt Kate to which Sawyer responds emotionally, which proves that he has formed an emotional attachment to Kate. The leader of the Others, Ben, antagonizes these feelings out of Sawyer when he says, “Because we’re not killers, James. Oh, and one other thing – Kate…” Sawyer responds to the threat by saying, “You touch her, I swear…” Ben continues to threaten Kate by saying, “You tell her what we did, what we put in you – that we’re watching you – you tell her any of these things – we’ll put one in her, too.” While Sawyer may be comfortable with his feelings for Kate, it is clear through this example that Ben and the Others utilize those feelings to their advantage.

This scene could invite the viewer to assume that because Sawyer violated the masculine expectation of not becoming emotionally attached, he is being punished. This punishment is demonstrated through the installation of the pacemaker as well as the threat to Kate’s life. Sawyer’s body, which previously represented his strength and masculinity, begins to let him down. The pacemaker represents a physical weakness that is instilled in Sawyer as a result of his feelings for Kate. While his physicality is an example of his masculinity, it is being compromised by the pacemaker and his feelings
for Kate. Instead of the creation of space for Sawyer’s emotional depiction of masculinity, it is clearly shown as a weakness.

Another instance that illustrates Sawyer’s emotional attachment to Kate is in the episode, “I Do” (3.6). In this episode Sawyer and Kate spend the night together in their cages. Kate manages to climb out of her cage and climbs into Sawyer’s cage. During this, Sawyer admits that he does love Kate, and in turn negates the notion that in order to be masculine, men view relationships with women as disposable and emotionless. After spending the night together Sawyer says to Kate, “Lemme ask you something, Freckles. When Blockhead was beating on me, and you said ‘I love you.’ That was just…to get him to stop, right?” Kate responds to Sawyer’s question by kissing him on the lips, to which Sawyer says, “I love you, too.” This also indicates that Sawyer chose to ignore the threat of violating the masculine expectation the Others placed against him. This in turn creates a new notion of masculinity in terms of sexual interactions with women. Sawyer violates the trope as it is iterated by Morrison and Halton (2009) and instead engages in an emotional and a sexual relationship.

Sawyer also develops a significant romantic relationship with Juliet. This is depicted in the episode, “LaFleur,” (5.8) where he is shown living with Juliet while they both work in the Dharma initiative. As previously mentioned Sawyer engages in thoughtful gestures such as picking flowers for Juliet and provides her with encouragement when she delivers the baby. In this episode, Sawyer says to Juliet, “You were amazing today,” as he presents her with the flowers he has picked. Juliet then says, “Thank you for believing in me. I love you.” Sawyer reciprocates the feelings by kissing her and saying, “Mmm. I love you, too.” Through Juliet, Sawyer is able to reach a
deeper level of emotion and experience a relationship that is not just based upon sex and the accomplishment of a con. He eventually embraces and depicts a type of masculinity where he can be in a leadership role, but also have a supportive and loving relationship with a female.

Sawyer’s deep emotional attachment to Juliet is further revealed in the episode “LAX” (6.1-2). The group has discovered a bomb on the island and is convinced that if they make it explode, they will go back to before the plane crashed and the explosion will prevent the plane from ever crashing. Juliet is the only one that can get to the bomb and kicks it to make it explode. By doing this Juliet sacrifices herself and is killed. However, the survivors quickly realize that the plan did not work, which sends Sawyer into a fit of rage. He exclaims, “You blew us right back where we started! Except Juliet’s dead. She’s dead, you son of a bitch, ‘cause you were wrong!” The loss that Sawyer suffers from Juliet’s death represents Sawyer’s punishment for the violation of the traditional tropes of masculinity in terms of relationships with women. He became attached to Juliet and expressed his love for her, but he still loses because she dies. This indicates that Sawyer’s depiction of masculinity does not send a positive message about gender. Those that violate expectations should expect punishment like Sawyer. He loses Juliet and never fully experiences love with Kate because he breaks away from the established mold of masculinity. The moral of Sawyer’s story is that we should not stray from societal gendered expectations, because if we do, we will only experience tragedy. No viewer or person would want to experience the hardship that Sawyer experiences throughout the show.
Sawyer’s performance of masculinity can be interpreted as stereotypical that adheres to pre-established tropes. In instances where Sawyer attempts to break away from the tropes set forth by society he is either punished or disciplined to perform his gender in a way that conforms to societal expectations. The same is applicable to Sawyer’s depiction of masculinity through Jack, Cassidy, Juliet, and Kate. Through these characters Sawyer is able to exhibit a more fluid performance of his masculinity, but that ultimately comes with a price. He never forms a serious relationship with Cassidy or Kate and Juliet dies. Even though Sawyer eventually becomes a leader on the island, it is only in the absence of Jack, which indicates that Sawyer’s depiction of masculinity is second best and only acceptable when the model or preferred masculine performance is not available.
Chapter Six:
Conclusions

The characters Kate Austen and James ‘Sawyer’ Ford on America’s popular television series *Lost*, both have the capability to push societal expectations in terms of gendered performance. I selected both of these characters because of the principal role they played in the series and because of their popularity (or lack of popularity) within popular culture discussion. My goal in this chapter is to first iterate my conclusions on both Kate and Sawyer and answer my research questions. Within that, I address the mediated response to both characters and imply if the positivity or negative that surrounded the character is because of their gender performance. Next, I discuss and compare Kate and Sawyer given my analysis and findings on both characters. Last, I offer suggestions for future research as well as highlight the contributions to the field provided by this project.

**Kate and Sawyer Conclusions**

In this section, I articulate the themes of masculinity that were depicted by Kate. I also describe the archetypes of masculinity that were emulated by Sawyer. Following that, I investigate fan and viewer responses to both characters gender performance. I then make my conclusions about both characters, and whether or not they create a progressive space for the depiction of gender.

**Kate and Sawyer’s Gender Performance**
Through the examples provided throughout the chapter dedicated to Kate, it becomes clear that Kate’s gender performance is complicated and one that cannot be confined in the binary that has been established for gender. Kate understands the privilege that she garners from her “feminine” performance, and utilizes that to her advantage. For example, when interacting with the other survivors, Kate emphasizes her femaleness because she knows that is the gender performance that is preferred. She does this in the beginning of the series when she withholds her criminal background and gun knowledge because she knows that it will violate the survivors’ feminine expectations of her gender. In her interactions with Jack, Kate also emphasizes her femininity in order to comply with his expectations of her gender. She allows Jack to take the lead in several instances, such as allowing him to carry the dynamite.

While Kate recognizes that her feminine performance is the preferred gender identity on the island, she is not afraid to contest that notion, especially through her interactions with Sawyer and Juliet. Seemingly, Kate and Sawyer view her gendered identity as complicated. They both understand it and more importantly accept Kate’s complicated gender performance. This is demonstrated through their verbal and physical quarrels. Sawyer understands Kate’s “tomboy” nature and seems to view it as a challenge which indicates that Kate is his equal. Further, Sawyer is attracted to Kate’s display of female masculinity and ultimately falls in love with her which in turn demonstrates an ultimate acceptance of her gender performance. Kate is also able to fully perform her complicated gender through her interactions with Juliet. She exerts her physical prowess over Juliet, but also is able to reveal her emotion when Juliet reveals that she knows more about Jack’s history than Kate. Kate’s interactions with Sawyer and
Juliet allude to the notion that there is a space for female masculinity and that women no longer are confined to either being masculine or feminine. Instead, gender performance is fluid.

Sawyer manages to both reinforce and contest archetypes and tropes of masculinity that have previously been depicted in the media. It is clear that he is an aggressive male who relies on his physical power, both tropes that as discussed before, emulate masculinity in today’s society. The focus on Sawyer’s body as a signifier of his heterosexuality reinforces the notion that masculinity is defined by the body. While Sawyer perpetuates certain tropes and archetypes, he also defies several and combines them to create his own depiction of masculinity. This is particularly evident through his relationship with Juliet. Sawyer is in a leadership and dominant role where he exerts his power and masculine performance, yet he is still able to express his emotions and love for Juliet. This blend of power and emotion negates the binary associated with masculinity where men are expected to either be strong and powerful or weak and emotional. Sawyer is capable of both, and in turn creates a space for men who are comfortable with emotional expressions, which indicates that to experience emotion is not classified as un-masculine.

Despite representing a different type of masculinity, Sawyer is still disciplined or punished for his portrayal. As stated before, he becomes trapped in a tragic frame where he finally becomes “good” and escalates to a position of power, but after this accomplishment he loses Juliet, the one he loves. This punishment indicates that men can break away from the stereotypical depiction of masculinity, but it will come with a price. In the case of Sawyer, the price he had to pay was his relationship with Juliet. Unlike
Kate’s gender performance, which arguably creates a safe space for female masculinity, Sawyer’s gender performance serves to reinforce gendered norms that surround men and masculinity. While Sawyer is able to break through some of the tropes at times, ultimately, he is still disciplined and is painted as the individual who viewers would never want to be. Because of this, his masculine performance is one that most likely would not be replicated in society.

**Fan and Media Responses**

While Sawyer and Kate accepted Kate’s complicated gender performance, viewers were not so receptive. Arguably, Kate’s popularity decreased because her depiction of gender and performance of female masculinity violated viewer expectations, making her un-relatable. The notion of Kate being un-relatable is articulated in one blog post in particular where blogger, Bruce Campbell, lists the top ten reasons why he hates Kate. On his blog, “Infinite Jester,” he articulates reasons why Kate is the worst character on *Lost*. One of the first reasons Campbell (2009) argues against Kate is that she is “fickle.” He states,

> We can never be sure whom she is going to sleep with this week or how her sexual escapades will end up because she is constantly changing her mind about what the hell she is doing using her sexual allure as like a female executive trying to sleep her way to the top. She makes out with Sawyer one minute and then beats him down with a suitcase or slaps him across the face or whatever. (Infinite Jester)

This statement indicates that Campbell is uncomfortable with Kate’s fluid performance of gender. She demonstrates feminine traits by “making out” with Sawyer. However, she
also "beats him down with a suitcase." In the eyes of Campbell, this makes Kate "fickle" and unlikable. Kate violates his expectation of how a female character should act. Kate’s ability to be both masculine and feminine creates discomfort for Campbell, which results in his dislike of her. For Campbell then, Kate’s fluid gender performance and fluctuation in identity is not as authentic as the performance of other characters, and as a result further distances her from positive viewer reception.

Campbell iterates that Kate’s complicated performance of gender is unreadable when he states that she tries, “to be the tough, strong, kick-ass-and-take-names female on the Island but then she does things like cry over a toy plane. It’s like we get it Kate, you are a fugitive, but that doesn’t make you a hard ass” (Campbell, 2009, paragraph 4). She presents both feminine and masculine aspects throughout the show, which violates the established gender binary. This creates discomfort for Campbell, which ultimately results in Kate being “annoying.”

Because Kate depicts such a fluid performance of gender, one would assume that her character would be well received in popular feminist media outlets. However, that is not what happened. Surprisingly, feminist media outlets such as Jezebel and Bitch Media were equally critical of Kate’s character. Bitch Media even went as far as to call Kate’s character “disappointing.” Jezebel author, Hortense Smith (2010), articulates the argument that was previously mentioned by Campbell. Kate’s character was too complicated. She states

But Kate Austen, who, as McCarthy James points out, was originally meant to be the main hero of the show, became the show’s Princess Leia, her ass-kicking and
bravery taking a back seat to the tension between the two male leads, who both clearly had feelings for her. (Smith, 2010, paragraph 4)

For Smith, Kate was supposed to demonstrate strong and dominant qualities, which would present Halberstam’s idea of a masculine female. However, what Smith negates and ultimately disapproves of is Kate’s romantic involvement with Jack and Sawyer which furthers her feminine performance. So again, for Smith, Kate needs to be either feminine or masculine. There is no room for her to be both because that is too complicated and un-relatable. Despite that, most of the hate that surrounds Kate revolves around her love triangle with Jack and Sawyer. Again, this just iterates the notion that fans expected Kate to be a masculine and powerful character, or a feminine and hopeless romantic character. The blend of both gender identities creates a disconnect with the audience – seemingly because in American society – there is not a safe space for female masculinity. This notion is furthered by Halberstam (1998) when she states in the Preface to her book, “In actual fact, there is remarkably little written about masculinity in women, and this culture generally evinces considerable anxiety about even the prospect of manly women” (preface). Women who demonstrate both feminine and masculine qualities disrupt the gender binary and cause discomfort. In the case of Kate, her fluid gender performance results in unpopularity among fans.

Despite all of the dislike that surrounds Kate, there are a few fans that recognize the power behind Kate’s gendered performance. On her blog, “The Beehive,” Lindsey Romain writes a post titled, “Keep Your Kate Hate Away from Me.” For Romain, Kate is relatable, and she even goes on to state, “I became something of a Kate crusader at the time. And I wear that badge proudly even today. Because here’s the thing with Kate: I get
her. I don’t love her. I wouldn’t be friends with her. But I get her “(Romain, 2013, paragraph 15). Further, Romain (2013) argues in Kate’s defense and states,

So yeah, Kate’s island romances are laden with twists and turns and constantly alternating feelings. But aren’t everyone’s? Of all the things that should be sympathetic about Kate, her inability to know with whom she should be in love is the most banally relatable. (paragraph 20)

The one thing that others critique about Kate is the one thing that Romain states make her relatable. Romain does not view Kate’s violation of gender expectations as something to hate. She defends it and in turn accepts Kate’s gender fluidity and female masculinity.

Given all of this, I believe that Kate’s gender performance is progressive and defies certain mediated expectations of masculinity. Kate is both masculine and feminine, and while this does not garner fan support, it does defy gendered expectations. Kate’s gendered performance demonstrates that a female can have both feminine and masculine qualities and cause a disruption in the current gender binary. While Kate’s gender performance is progressive and refreshing, the fan and media reception of her character indicates the opposite. Instead of accepting Kate’s complicated gender performance, the responses continue to discipline Kate, which forces her to either be masculine or feminine. There is no room for Kate’s fluid gender which ultimately reinforces the gender binary and society’s discomfort with female masculinity. In order for Kate’s gender performance to fully be viewed as progressive, she needs to be received as a positive depiction of female masculinity, which unfortunately, is not what happened. Kate’s deviation away from feminine or masculine expectations creates dissent among viewers where they peg her as “fickle.” Kate is expected to either be fully feminine or
fully masculine. Her blend of the binary creates complication for viewers and results in a “hate Kate” party. Additionally, Kate’s performance, arguably, is equally as fluid and complicated as Sawyer’s, however, while Kate is disciplined for this, Sawyer is well received by fans.

While Kate’s violation of gendered expectations caused discourse and resulted in her being hated as a character, Sawyer’s complications contribute to his popularity among viewers. In his analysis of Sawyer’s character, Tyler Gloe (2009) iterates Sawyer’s popularity in his article that appeared on helium.com. Gloe (2009) states, “Overall, James ‘Sawyer’ Ford is one of the most likable characters after you get to know him. He is very brave and has a determination to help the other castaways escape the island” (paragraph 3). Fans accept Sawyer’s complicated depiction of masculinity. In a blog post that appeared on LostBlog.net, it is stated that Sawyer’s faults contribute to his popularity. The article, “It’s Good to be Sawyer” (2009) states, “Not only that, but he has a very troubled past and is now involved in the main island love drama with Kate so we sympathize and feel for him because he is human and makes mistakes” (paragraph 4).

The one major reason that made fans dislike Kate provided the opposite effect for Sawyer. While the love triangle served to distance Kate from viewers, it is a tool that makes Sawyer popular and more relatable.

What’s more is that many fans have created compilations of what they attest to be Sawyer’s “best moments.” On ign.com, Chris Carabott (2010) claims that the top two Sawyer moments were when he shot the polar bear in the first episode and when he took control of the guns in “The Long Con.” Also on the list is the moment where Sawyer confesses his love to Kate and in “LaFleur” where he is shown settled down and
committed to Juliet. The favorable response to these episodes demonstrates the fans comfort with Sawyer’s different depictions of masculinity. Arguably, they favor his hyper-masculine performance of aggression as demonstrated through the killing of the polar bear. However, the inclusion of his affection for Kate and Juliet attest to the fact that overall, Sawyer’s fluid depiction of masculinity did not upset viewers. In fact, they welcomed it and ranked it as one of the reasons that his character was so well received and popular.

The ranking of Sawyer’s interactions with Kate and Juliet could just be read as an appropriate performance of heterosexuality. This indicates that while his masculine performance may have negated some stereotypes, he was still able to maintain heterosexual romantic interests. Sawyer may have violated viewers’ expectations of masculinity, but he was still able to adhere to societal expectations of sexuality. Sawyer is seemingly praised for his deviation away from gendered expectations. He is arguably one of the most popular characters on *Lost* which reflects societal acceptance of his masculine performance. This also indicates that society is more comfortable with a male who demonstrates all aspects of masculinity than a female who demonstrates both masculine and feminine qualities.

**Overall Conclusions**

Both Kate and Sawyer could be perceived as gender deviants at different times. They do not adhere to the established norms and expectations associated with their respective genders. Both defy the gender binary and perform masculinity in their own way. Kate embraces her female masculinity and Sawyer blends all different notions of masculinity to create his own portrayal. Despite their fluid depictions of gender and their
seemingly own comfort in these depictions, it is clear from viewer response that society is more comfortable with male violations of gendered expectations than female violations. Viewers’ acceptance of Sawyer serves to create a space for men who do not identify with or adhere to the stereotypical notions of masculinity. However, females are still confined to the gender binary. Women can either be “butch” and masculine or pretty and feminine. A blend of both or a fluid performance of gender is not acceptable for women.

Further, while Kate and Sawyer may have traits of both femininity and masculinity, neither could be categorized as “queer” as defined by Sloop (2004), Halberstam (1998), and Cooper (2002). What I mean is that both Kate and Sawyer are still portrayed in identifiable gender categories. Even though these categories may violate archetypes and viewer expectations, it is still a performance that is readable and recognizable in some way.

**Directions for Future Research**

Given the large cast and limited time for analysis, this project was only able to scrape the surface of the characters portrayed on the show. One contribution that escalated the show’s popularity was the large cast and deep character development. One area for growth of this project is to delve deeper into the character pool. One of the main characters not analyzed was Jack Shepard, the male protagonist. There are also several other male characters that possibly challenge the notions of masculinity who would be worthy of analysis. As stated before, Lost aired for six seasons and was overwhelmingly popular in American culture. The show is rich in analysis given the large cast and complex plot.
Additionally, Kate is the only major female character until the end of the first season. While the character Juliet has been mentioned and utilized as a lens for analysis of Kate and Sawyer, the character herself was not analyzed. Juliet manages to rise as one of the main characters throughout the seasons, so her gender performance and the impact that plays on the island would also be worthy of analysis. Further, as stated in the literature review, this project sought to further Halberstam’s (1998) call for an interrogation of female masculinity. However, unlike the cases analyzed by Halberstam, this project utilized the character proper as the text for analysis to understand gender identity. Given this, there is still room for analysis of mediated female characters in terms of furthering the notion of female masculinity, much like the project completed by Claire Sisco-King (2010) in her essay, “The Man Inside: Trauma, Gender, and The Nation in The Brave One.” This project has helped to create a space to utilize mediated characters and texts as an extension of how society understands and reads gender instead of simply analyzing mediated responses. It is important to acknowledge that popular fictional mediated characters have a great impact on society’s understanding of gender, especially given the fact that these characters are simply replicating the performances and ideals of the “real” world.

**Conclusion**

To conclude this project I return to my research questions. First, *How is masculinity enacted by Kate Austen?* Close analysis of episodes featuring Kate Austen reveals that she both violates and adheres to previously established masculine archetypes and themes. This includes her violent and aggressive behavior and the showcase of her muscular arms. However, for Kate, her female masculinity is often disciplined either by
other characters or by viewer responses. Kate’s violation of feminine expectations and depiction of fluid gender lead to her being one of the most unpopular characters on *Lost*. Seemingly, society is still unable to accept gender deviance from women. This leads to the answer to research question two, *How is masculinity enacted by James ‘Sawyer’ Ford?* In the case of Sawyer, he also manages to violate and adhere to masculine themes and archetypes. Like Kate, the themes that Sawyer demonstrates are aggression as well as an emphasis on his muscularity. However, unlike Kate, Sawyer’s performance of masculinity is well received by viewers, which indicates that society is accepting of males violating gender norms, as long as he is able to maintain some semblance of stereotypical masculinity. For Sawyer, his physicality and muscularity served to alleviate the tension caused by his violation of masculine behaviors. Because of this, viewers were more apt to positively receive his gender performance than Kate’s.

On a broader spectrum, one goal of this project was to assert the validity of reading mediated characters impact on society. Further, that mediated depictions have the opportunity to contest pre-established societal norms in a way that will cause viewers to become uncomfortable and contemplate that discomfort. While in the cases of Kate Austen and James ‘Sawyer’ Ford it seems that society was unreceptive to the violation of the norm, one can only hope that the continuation of characters that disrupt societal norms will hopefully penetrate society.

Also, this study further exemplifies how dominant ideologies, especially those concerned with gender and gender performance, are perpetuated throughout the media. Mediated sources only serve to replicate characters and norms associated with gender that will be well received. When a character begins to act outside of the expected gender
performance, that character typically will be disciplined in a way that makes them more readable to contemporary society. In order to break this cycle scholars, as well as general consumers of mediated messages, need to become critical consumers of mediated texts and demand a new normal, especially in regards to our understanding of gender performance.
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