

## **Extract from Chapter 2: She's more than a woman. She's a man.**

The 1990s marked the beginning of a new revolutionary feminist wave that would continue into the 2000s; the third wave. Social values had shifted from masculinity in women, to overt sexuality and femininity as a symbol of strength and power<sup>46</sup>. Sociologists and authors Bruce Brockett and Laura Brunell, state that feminist values in the 1990s and early 2000s, and ideas of 'strong women' included assertion, intelligence and independence, but above all, control over one's own sexuality<sup>47</sup>. Intelligence, an internal marker of power, was new to the list of 'what constitutes strong women', given Monet's claim that these were ignored in the second wave<sup>48</sup>. However outward expressions of 'strength' were still just as significant, as "revealing clothing, designer-label stiletto heels, and amateur pole dancing represented true sexual liberation"<sup>49</sup> and were a means to empower; labelled by author Ariel Levy as *Raunch Culture*; characterised by 'shocking' overt sexuality.<sup>50</sup> This is supported by the 29% of Generation Y Questionnaire respondents who chose 'physically attractive' as a quality of strong women, and the further 80% who stated intelligence, compassion and emotional sensitivity (all associated with traditional femininity) defined strong women<sup>51</sup>. However, upon analysing the films *Terminator 2: Judgement day (1991)*, *Contact (1997)*, *Alien Vs Predator (2004)* and *Serenity (2005)*, it was gathered that the science fiction genre did not reflect third wave feminist ideals, but still possessed a delayed reaction to society's shifting values, as late second wave values were still being reflected. This is evident through the 37% of the time when the female protagonist exhibited masculine characteristics and behaviours such as swearing, using a weapon or engaging in other physical, 'masculine' behaviours.<sup>52</sup> For instance, Sarah Connor, the savagely violent and domineering protagonist from *Terminator 2: Judgement Day (1991)* spent 31% of the movie swearing and using a weapon, and was dressed in masculine military-style attire 99% of the time; as evident in Figure 1.02.<sup>53</sup>

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Linda Napikoski. (2017, March 18). *Ten Important Feminist Beliefs of the 1960's and 1970's*. Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/important-feminist-beliefs-3529003>.

<sup>45</sup> Focus Group, Generation X response to question 2, section 2, 3rd April 2018

<sup>46</sup> Bruce Burkett & Laura Brunell. (2017, December 28). 'Feminism'. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism/The-third-wave-of-feminism>

<sup>47</sup> Bruce Burkett & Laura Brunell. (2017, December 28). 'Feminism'. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism/The-third-wave-of-feminism>

<sup>48</sup> Dolores Monet. (2017, July 27). 'Clothing History- Fashion and style in the 1970's'. Retrieved from <https://bellatory.com/fashion-industry/Clothing-History-Fashion-and-Style-in-the-1970s>.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce Burkett & Laura Brunell. (2017, December 28). 'Feminism'. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism/The-third-wave-of-feminism>

<sup>50</sup> Ariel Lvey. (2005). *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women And The Rise Of Raunch Culture*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster New York

<sup>51</sup> Questionnaire Generation Y results, Question 9, 9th March 2018

<sup>52</sup> Content Analysis results, April 2018

<sup>53</sup> Content Analysis results, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day (1991)*, April 2018

This does not reflect Brockett and Brunell's research stating that overt female sexuality and femininity were the socially deemed qualities of strong women; proving the significant inaccuracy with which the female protagonist was represented, within science fiction films during the third wave feminist movement; acting as agents



Figure 1.02: Sarah Connor, Terminator: Judgement Day (1991)

of oppression, when considering the values of the time.<sup>54</sup> The one science fiction film which strongly adhered to the social values of the time, however, was *Serenity* (2005). Within this film, female protagonist Rain spent 34% of the film engaging in physical combat whilst clad in revealing attire; allowing the 'male gaze' to make its presence known (High kicks were not as painful for the male audience, than they were for her male opponent).

Therefore, the 1990s and 2000s proved largely inaccurate in their portrayal of the 'strong woman' when aligned with social feminist values of the sociocultural context in which they were birthed, and contradict Bruckett and Brunell's research. This is further evident through Andi Zeisler's, author for feminist media organisation *Bitch Media*, conclusion that the third wave's youth was marked by the manipulation of second wave's 'not all rape is intercourse, but all intercourse is rape' ideology, into a line of empowerment for women to take control of their own sexuality, and hand it to society on a silver platter.<sup>55</sup> Of the female-led science fiction films, 80% did not reflect this; nor did focus group members, who favoured the female protagonists who were "less gendered",<sup>56</sup> "masculine"<sup>57</sup> and "muscular".<sup>58</sup> Thus, proving science fictions film industry as being an agent of gender-based oppression, as it strayed from contemporary values and lagged far behind.

<sup>54</sup> Bruce Burkett & Laura Brunell. (2017, December 28). 'Feminism'.

<sup>55</sup> Zeisler, A. (2008). *Feminism and Pop-Culture*. Berkeley, California: Seal Press.

<sup>56</sup> Generation Y Participant answer to Focus Group Question 1, Section 2, 3rd April 2018

<sup>57</sup> Generation Y Participant answer to Focus Group Question 1, Section 2, 3rd April 2018

<sup>58</sup> Generation Y Participant answer to Focus Group Question 1, Section 2, 3rd April 2018