In this, Buffy and the Scoobies are the only ones truly fighting the good fight—fight against the forces of patriarchy and domination. And in this, the Buffyverse is different from every other superhero saga—including Hamilton's Anita Blake. Whether they cannot or will not, it never occurs to them to try to change the rules of the game. It occurs to Buffy both to try to share herself completely with the world (itself an amazing epiphany that goes against everything else in the world) and to succeed in what others would have thought impossible, thus overcoming the First Evil—the evil of domination and control.

The similarities between Anita and Buffy are striking. Both are women fighting the forces of darkness, averting one apocalypse after another, protecting their friends and taking the fight to the bad guys. But, more importantly, their difference is critical. Anita is a female patriarch. She has accepted the "system" and fights within it. The system shapes her, and she attains great power, but it is *she* who has it. The vision of the empowerment of women we find in Hamilton's creation is no more than a female in the role of heroic despot. On the other hand, within the universe created by Whedon, we have a truly powerful story of the feminist vision of shared power, of an empowerment that elevates all rather than trading subjugation to a villain with subjugation to a benevolent dictator. Anita Blake is an entertaining character, but the tales do little to present anything resembling a new vision of how power might be exercised in the world. Buffy, Willow, Giles, Xander, and all the rest are radical characters; radical because they stand as a threat to the status quo and because they are representative of the true feminist vision of power.

Buffy Never Goes It Alone
The Rhetorical Construction of Sisterhood in the Final Season

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In the final season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Buffy faced her most challenging adversary. In order to emerge victorious, and to subsequently save the world, she needed more resources than she alone could muster. Buffy sought help from the ancient Shadow Men, a group of elders responsible for creating the Slayer lineage. However, when the Shadow Men tried to force their power on her, Buffy rejected them. In the end, an ancient woman named She, a powerful scythe that She helped create, and the abilities of Buffy's friend Willow, a witch, provided Buffy with the resources that she needed to conquer evil. Furthermore, Buffy realized that with these resources, she had the power to change the rules of the Slayer lineage and end the tradition of a single Slayer by empowering all of the potential Slayers simultaneously. The joint effort of the newly empowered Slayers combined with the legacy of ancient women enabled Buffy to defeat her enemies and to save the world. The ideas of cooperative action and self-empowerment embody many of the central tenants of feminist thought. As such, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* can be understood as an exemplar of contemporary feminism.

In this essay, we argue that popular culture texts, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, can enhance feminism by making it accessible to a larger audience. While definitions of feminism vary, it can broadly be defined as a social movement that strives for social, economic, and political equality for women and men (Baumgardner & Richards 2000). Sonja K. Foss (1996) suggested that despite differences in definition, there are basic principles with which most feminists agree. One such principle is the belief that people are oppressed by the patriarchy. The patriarchy is "a system of power relations in which men dominate women so that women's interests are subordinated to those of men,

and women are seen as inferior to men" (Foss 166). Thus, a prevailing goal of feminism is to change or unseat this patriarchal power structure.

Similarly, the concept of sisterhood has been an integral part of the feminist movement since its beginning. While there are variations in meaning, sisterhood recognizes the common oppression that women face in a patriarchal society, and suggests that strength can be found in unification. Keith E. Melder (1977) discussed the impact of sisterhood on the early women's movement of the 1800s and early 1900s, which is now referred to as the first wave: "Sisterhood strengthened women's collective identity.... From their active, collective enterprises, women gained a sense of power" (48). The strength of sisterhood generated dramatic changes for women's rights. By working together, the women of the first wave were able to accomplish many goals, including winning the right to vote. During the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, sisterhood was again a unifying force. According to Ruth Rosen (2000), the concept gained popularity during the second wave via the 1968 slogan "Sisterhood is Powerful." Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1999) explained that sisterhood was generated through consciousness raising: "meetings of small, leaderless groups in which each person [was] encouraged to express her personal feelings and experiences" where the goal was to make "the personal political: to create awareness (through shared experiences) that what were thought to be personal deficiencies and individual problems [were] common and shared" (128). Sisterhood generated "a widespread optimism about the ability of the women's movement" (Farrell 1998, 71). Gloria Steinem, a leader of the second wave, used the concept of sisterhood as a rallying point by emphasizing "the bonds and the sexual oppression that transcend differences of race, economics, religion, and all other social categories" (Farrell 71). Sisterhood, once again, produced political and social changes for women. Currently, the women's movement is in its third wave. Critics argue that today's feminists are too individualistic, and that the movement is all but dead (Baumgardner & Richards). Those involved directly in the third wave strongly denounce such claims, and argue that the movement is indeed alive and active, and that sisterhood is still an important part of its survival (Baumgardner & Richards). A criticism of the second wave was that it spoke primarily to middle to upper class white women (Baumgardner & Richards). The third wave strives to include more diverse voices, including those of men (Digby 1998) and those of non-white heritage (Hernández & Rehman 2002). Consequently, sisterhood for the third wave truly means the unification of all and the oppression of none.

An examination of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* final season reveals the presence of both patriarchal and feminist metaphors. Although metaphor was once viewed merely as a decorative linguistic device, rhetorical scholars have argued that metaphor constructs reality in powerful ways (Burgchardt 2000; Foss 1996; Ricoeur 1993). While feminism is negatively represented in many contemporary media outlets (Faludi 1991), texts such as *Buffy* construct feminism as an empowering critical perspective. The dialectical tension between the patriarchal metaphors and the feminist metaphors in the program rhetorically construct sisterhood as an agent of social change. In order to better understand how feminism is constructed in *Buffy*, we begin with an overview of the series and previous scholarly work that it has generated. A brief discussion of the nature of metaphor and its role in rhetorical criticism is then offered. We then provide examples of patriarchal and feminist metaphors present in the final season of *Buffy*, and discuss the implications of bringing these concepts into conversation with one another. We end the essay by reflecting on the ways that this research enhances the field of communication.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

The television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* began airing in 1997. The show's creator, Joss Whedon, consciously set out to turn the tables on the typical horror scenario in which a beautiful, blonde girl is always attacked and killed (Wilcox & Lavery 2002). Although Buffy may have a silly name, and may look like the typical blonde victim, she is the Slayer; "In every generation there is a Chosen one. She alone will stand against the vampires, the demons, the forces of darkness. She is the Slayer" (as cited in Wilcox & Lavery xvii). Ancient men, known as the Shadow Men, created the Slayer tradition and lineage, and proclaimed that the Slayer must always be female. If the Slayer dies, a new girl becomes the Chosen one.

Buffy lives in Sunnydale, California. The town looks pleasant on the surface, but in fact sits over the Hellmouth, a demon magnet. While Buffy confronts various forms of evil during each episode, each season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* has its own "big bad" villain who dominates throughout the season. The power of the "big bad" always threatens to end the world, but Buffy ultimately overcomes him or her in the season finale. Although the legend of the Slayer states that the Chosen one will stand alone, each Slayer has a Watcher who trains and guides her. Giles, Buffy's Watcher, trained and fought by her side for years. Other than her Watcher, Slayers are discouraged from maintaining friendships and family relationships. Buffy has always eschewed this rule, and has come to rely on a group of close friends nicknamed "the Scoobies" for support.

On May 20, 2003, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* came to an end. Over the course of seven seasons, the show reached cult status and garnered critical

work of I. A. Richards (1950) has been deemed a "pioneering job ... [that] cannot be overestimated" (Ricoeur, 1993 76). Richards recognized that metaphor was more than mere ornamentation, and his work set out to "put the theory of metaphor in a more important place than it has enjoyed in traditional Rhetoric" (95). He argued, "Metaphor is the omnipresent principle of language.... We cannot get through three sentences of ordinary fluid discourse without it" (92). Richards stated, "In the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction" (93). Richards introduced the concepts "tenor" and "vehicle" to identify the two thoughts being brought together by metaphor. Max Black (1962) elaborated upon Richards' work and developed the interaction theory of metaphor. Black suggested that the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor, although not superficially connected, are in fact related by a "system of associated commonplaces" (40) consisting of shared characteristics between the two. The commonplaces of the two terms, taken together, create the metaphor. The vehicle may impact the perception of the tenor so much that other information pertaining to the tenor is filtered out and alternative interpretations are suppressed. Kenneth Burke (1968) described this type of phenomenon in terms of "terministic screens," which "direct the attention into some channels rather than others" (45). For example, the use of a particular metaphor to describe a person may eventually dominate perceptions of the person and consequently filter out any information to the contrary.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) also argued that metaphor is more than just a decorative device. They stated, "Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (3). Lakoff and Johnson's theories of metaphor are similar to those of Black (1962). They identified several different types of metaphors, including structural and orientational. For Lakoff and Johnson, "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (5). Lakoff and Johnson, like Black, also acknowledged that metaphors highlight certain relationships between two concepts while simultaneously hiding others.

Kenneth Burke (1945) has also theorized about the function of metaphor and in fact considered metaphor to be one of the "four master tropes" (503). For Burke, metaphors offer a perspective on reality. He stated, "Metaphor is a device for seeing something *in terms of* [italics in original] something else. It brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this" (503). Like many other theorists, metaphors for Burke are much more than mere figures of speech, and may in fact help us to discover "the truth" (503). Rhetorical the-

orists have provided us with a rich definition of metaphor. There is now a greater understanding of the capabilities, functions, and effects of metaphor; clearly, metaphor is more than a mere ornament. Scholars who adhere to the broader definition of metaphor, as delineated above, have generated the metaphoric approach to rhetorical criticism and have adopted this critical perspective to reveal the social significance and implications of specific metaphors. Consequently, metaphor should be understood as a powerful mechanism for creating new ways of thinking and for constructing alternative realities.

Metaphors of Patriarchy and Sisterhood

Buffy the Vampire Slayer relies heavily on the use of metaphor to convey meaning to its audience. In this essay, we argue that the final season of *Buffy* utilizes metaphor in a way that constructs a positive image of feminist attitudes. Because metaphors help to construct reality, the use of this device to demonstrate feminist concepts in *Buffy* has a crucial impact on its audience.

The metaphors in the final season of *Buffy* can be divided into patriarchal and feminist metaphors.

Patriarchal Metaphors

In the seventh season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, three characters or groups of characters served as metaphors for the patriarchy. The First, Caleb, and the Shadow Men each functioned to construct a patriarchal presence in the show. The First was "the original evil ... the one that came before everything else" (Noxon, Petrie, & Grossman, 2). As the source of all evil, The First was Buffy's most challenging and threatening adversary. The First could not take corporeal form, and therefore could not physically fight, but it could assume the likeness of any dead person. The First employed powerful agents, both human and vampire, to perform physical tasks in preparation for its upcoming war. This battle was intended to destroy the known world. Success would ultimately allow The First to gain power and to take corporeal form by feeding on the energy of the surviving humans, which would in turn enable the purest form of evil to enter all of the remaining humans. The First knew that the Slayer was a threat to its victory, and systematically set out to destroy its lineage. Early in the seventh season, The First had the members of the governing body of the Slayer line, known as the Watchers Council, brutally murdered. As the Council was meeting to discuss a plan to resist The First, their headquarters were bombed and all of the Council members were killed, and their records, documents, and ancient texts were destroyed (Goddard & Solomon).

control the first Slayer. In season seven, they tried to use their power to control and dominate Buffy.

The First, Caleb, and The Shadow Men all function as metaphors of patriarchy by embodying misogyny and a desire to control women. Their hatred, as well as the insidious ways in which they extend their influence, serve as reminders that the world is often a dangerous place. Furthermore, the gendered nature of these battles as men against women functions as a metaphor for the ongoing struggle for equality, including an end to domestic violence and sexual assault. The patriarchal metaphors in the final season of *Buffy* are countered by an equally compelling set of feminist metaphors.

Feminist Metaphors

After Buffy spurned the assistance of the Shadow Men, she found the strength to defeat Caleb and The First in the creation of a powerful sisterhood. There are a number of feminist concepts in the series, but this analysis will focus on sisterhood since it is often an integral concept for contemporary feminism (Morgan, 2003). The Scoobies, the Potentials, and She all functioned as metaphors for sisterhood in the final season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer consistently conveyed a "strength in numbers" ideology. Although the legend of the Slayer called for the Chosen One to act alone in the fight against evil, Buffy rejected such restrictions. Throughout the series, she relied on the Scoobies for support. While it was solely Buffy's destiny to protect the world from evil, she and her gang realized that their chances of winning were significantly increased by combining their powers and skills. Although each of the Scoobies contributed in the fight against evil in his or her own way, several of them, like Buffy, possessed superpowers. Indeed, four Scoobies with superpowers played integral roles in the defeat of The First in the final season. Willow was one of the world's most powerful witches. Faith was also a Slayer who was indirectly summoned as a result of Buffy's brief death in an earlier season. In addition, both Spike and Angel were vampires (all vampires possessed super strength) with souls (akin to a conscience). In the end, these four, along with the other Scoobies, gave Buffy the resources that she needed to defeat The First.

Over the course of seven seasons, several Scoobies came and went. Three of the original Scoobies, however — Giles, Willow, and Xander — remained with Buffy until the end. The importance of this core group was underscored in the final episode (Whedon, 2003). The entire group of Scoobies and Potentials had arrived at Sunnydale High School to open the Hellmouth to take on The First's army. As each member of the large group separated to take their designated positions for battle, there was a significant moment in which Buffy

and the three original Scoobies were left alone together. The directions in the script read, "There is a moment, all of them looking at each other, and we realize it's the original four: Buffy, Giles, Willow, and Xander. The camera slowly circles around them as they realize it, too, [and] look at each other with unspoken feeling" (Whedon 37–38).

The four of them each had different jobs for the battle, and would soon be separated. This made the moment especially significant. Facing uncertainty, they all realized that it might be their last time alive together. After seven years of fighting side by side, this was an especially important scene that emphasized the strong bonds between Buffy and the original Scoobies. Before going their separate ways, the four shared some casual banter about their plans for the next day. Not only did their conversation act to lighten the mood, it also demonstrated the confidence that the four had in each another. By discussing plans for the next day, they were communicating the faith that they had in one another as a team, that they could indeed pull together and win.

In *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, success came from the bond of sisterhood between Buffy and the Scoobies. Although the Scoobies were both men and women, they function as a recurring metaphor for sisterhood throughout the series, and especially in the final battle of the series. Sisterhood connotes shared interest, unification, and derived strength and is not necessarily gender exclusive. The Scoobies metaphorically represented all of these aspects of sisterhood in *Buffy's* final season. Additionally, because Buffy's group consisted of both female and male members, a new expanded definition of sisterhood is being promulgated.

The sisterhood metaphor was also evident in season seven by the addition of the Potentials. Buffy and the Scoobies first learned of the Potentials midway through the seventh season (Noxon, Petrie, & Grossman, 2002). Giles, who had been traveling, arrived at Buffy's house with three unfamiliar girls. Buffy and the Scoobies were understandably confused. Dawn, Buffy's younger sister, asked, "They're all Slayers?" (21), to which Giles replied, "Potential Slayers. Waiting for one to be called. There were many more like them, all over the world. Now there's only a handful, and they're all on their way to Sunnydale" (21). Giles then explained that The First was trying to wipe out the entire Slayer line. As more Slayers began to arrive in Sunnydale, Buffy made it clear that she did not merely plan to protect them. She intended to train them in order to join the fight. Although the young women did not yet have Slayer strength, as Potentials they possessed the Slayer instinct. Initially, the Potentials were scared, confused, and somewhat skeptical of their ability to defeat The First. They also had their doubts about Buffy's chances.

Buffy realized that in order for the group to work as a team, the Poten-

The interaction between the patriarchal metaphors and the feminist metaphors communicates several ideas to the audience. First, the patriarchal metaphors represented via the three sets of characters always depict the evil or antiquated approach to life. Never do the patriarchal characters embody a desirable viewpoint. The message that is communicated to the audience is clearly one of disapproval and/or disdain for patriarchal values. Conversely, the feminist approaches to problem solving are clearly depicted as the moral and successful methods. Buffy and her friends join together, make group decisions, share power and knowledge, and ultimately prevail. The audience is given a positive view of feminist values as an alternative approach to life, as well as a sense of hope that patriarchal oppression can be overcome.

The expansion of the definition of sisterhood is another idea that is conveyed by the metaphors in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. While the term "sisterhood" has traditionally referred only to the bonds between women, Buffy and her friends demonstrate this concept of sisterhood within a group of mixed gender. Although all of the Potentials, She, and many of the Scoobies are female, the men in the group are never excluded, but also never attempt to dominate. Buffy is clearly the leader, but it is acknowledged within this particular sisterhood that each and every member of the group, regardless of sex or status, is equally important for the overall survival of the group. They all work as a team, share the same ideological goals, and honor the bonds of friendship. *Buffy* not only communicates to its audience the possibilities available through sisterhood, but also broadens its very definition.

The importance of female history is also communicated via metaphor in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The character, She, provides Buffy with the crucial knowledge and power necessary to prevail in battle. It is evident that without She's information, Buffy may not have had the final resources necessary to defeat The First. To form a successful sisterhood, women must be aware of their history, and must initiate a dialogue between generations. The importance of this connection is communicated to the audience via Buffy's relationship with She.

In the final episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Buffy creates a new type of sisterhood between herself and the Potentials. Instead of keeping her power and uniqueness to herself, she chooses to share it by empowering the others. Although it is evident that Buffy needed the Potentials to become Slayers in order to defeat The First, her act was not a selfish act. By sharing, not only did she further ensure the group's survival, she also elevated the worth of the Potentials and further unified her group. Buffy's act can serve as a model for the empowerment of women by women. She demonstrates the significance and strength that comes with a sharing of power and talent. At the same time, Buffy and the Potentials defied the Shadow Men and the legend of the Slayer, which

allowed for only one Slayer at a time. In the final season of *Buffy*, Buffy and the Potentials rejected such restrictions and formed a new sisterhood of Slayers.

Ultimately, the final season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* uses metaphor to condemn patriarchal values, while at the same time presenting feminist strategies as viable alternatives. Audience members are exposed to the destructive nature of patriarchal oppression and dominance. Feminist approaches to life, particularly those demonstrating the benefits of sisterhood, instead offer hope. Expanded definitions of sisterhood are explored, and value is placed on the connections between generations and the sharing of talents and power. Significantly, Buffy and her allies do encounter difficulties, which demonstrate that sisterhood is not always easy. However, the feminist approach to life is valued and portrayed as the more desirable worldview.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer is an example of a text that serves to construct feminism in positive and empowering ways. This essay has explored the relationship between patriarchal and feminist metaphors in constructing a feminist popular culture text. In the final season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, metaphor played a critical role in the overall plot, and metaphors for the patriarchy contributed to the development of feminist metaphors. The dynamic between the patriarchal and feminist metaphors in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* seventh season demonstrates to the audience that adversity can be defeated. It also suggests that patriarchal knowledge and methods, represented via the Shadow Men, although usually the dominant paradigm in society, can be rejected and replaced with new sources of power. People, particularly girls and women, can find strength, knowledge, and power via feminist approaches to life, as Buffy did. Buffy and her friends also offer new perspectives on what it looks like to be a feminist. They defy the stereotypes, and make feminism young, attractive, and cool.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer's seventh, and final, season incorporated many metaphors, which can be viewed as representations for feminist concepts. When one subscribes to the belief that metaphors affect our view of reality (Foss, 1996), it becomes apparent that the analysis of the metaphors present in popular culture texts is important. The examination of metaphors that construct feminist concepts is especially significant to the movement, as these metaphors most definitely contribute to an audience's conception of feminism.

Feminism has suffered in recent years, and many young women today do not consider themselves feminists even when they share feminist ideals (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). We believe that in order for the movement to survive and to continue to gain advancements for women, covert examples of feminism should be examined for the positive effects that they may produce. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* does not overtly claim to be a feminist text, but a close analysis of its metaphors reveal that it is indeed championing

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