What's in a name (order): Linguistic and Extralinguistic Constraints in Fandom Ship Names

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1. Introduction

One day, while reading a Chinese online novel, I came across a particularly striking comment in the story. A fictional forum post declared that when shipping a certain fictional male celebrity, his name must always appear first in the ship name, regardless of who he is paired with. Why? Because, the commenter claimed, he is the "ultimate top[1]".

This caught my attention. Was there something about name order in a ship name that reflected relationship dynamics, in this case, sexual position? This made me wonder whether the linguistic structure itself, the order of character names in a blend (i.e., a word formed by merging parts of two or more other words), might do more than reflect aesthetic or phonological preferences. Could it also encode ideological assumptions about gender roles, sexual dominance, and relationship hierarchy?

Not long after, I encountered Kaixuan Zhang's (2019) thesis on fan practices surrounding a male-male ship on the Chinese social media platform Weibo. While the study's focus was on lexicon, multimodal discourse, syntagmatic ordering, and hashtags, one passing comment in the thesis stood out to me: many of the hashtags used by fans used the ordering of names to signal gendered roles (masculine/feminine) within the pairing. The character name that corresponded to the first part of the hashtag indicated a more masculine role in the imagined relationship, while the character name that corresponded to the second part of the

[1] A 'top' is a label for a person who prefers to or exclusively takes on a penetrative or insertive role during sexual intercourse. This term is generally used in reference to sexual positions in queer relationships, especially in queer relationships between men (Moskowitz et al., 2008; Reilly, 2016).

hashtag indicated a more feminine role. The encoding of gender role assignment via name order in the ship name mirrors the top/bottom dynamics relayed through ship names that initially caught my interest.

In this context, 'ship names' are not the names of vessels for deep-water navigation, but rather proper nouns created by fans to refer to a romantic or sexual pairing between two beings, real or fictional, regardless of whether any sort of relationship exists between the aforementioned beings.

The ideological implications of name order observed in the Chinese-language context, particularly in signaling sexual positions or gendered roles, immediately raised the question of whether similar dynamics are at play in English-language ship names. I am especially curious about English-language ship names that are created through the blending word-formation process as the structure of blends is known to be subject to specific linguistic constraints. Existing research on the structure of fandom ship names, such as Cara DiGirolamo's (2012) paper on fandom pairing names, examines the phonological and orthographic constraints shaping the formation of blended ship names(e.g., *destiel* = *De*an + *Castiel*, or *percabeth* = *Percy* + *Annabeth*). However, much less has been written about potential extralinguistic (sociocultural or ideological) motivations factoring into blended ship name structures. As such, I put forth the following questions: Beyond the morphology and phonology of the origin language, in this case English, why might a certain name appear first or last in a blended ship name? What kind of underlying hierarchies might be reflected in the structure of blended ship names?

In this paper, I focus on English blended ship names of fictional characters across six fandoms of American media, to explore if the ordering of names in blended ship names reflects underlying notions of character importance, gender ideologies, and fandom norms, and how this might differ between heterosexual and queer ship pairings. I compiled a dataset of blended ship names from major platforms documenting fandom and fan activity and analyzed it using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach integrates corpus-based linguistic analysis with interpretive qualitative analysis of fandom discourse, allowing me to examine both structural patterns and ideological implications of ship naming practices.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows: an exploration of relevant background and literature in Section 2, an outline of my data collection methodology in Section 3, a description of my data analysis and results in Section 4, and a discussion of the broader implications of these findings and future research directions in Section 5.

2. Background and Literature Review

2.1 Fandom and Shipping: Definitions and Context

2.1.1 The Evolution of Fandom: From Fanzines to Digital Communities

We begin by introducing the topic. Broadly defined, ‘fandom’ refers to a community or subculture of individuals formed around a shared interest in something, be it a particular piece of media, a sports team, or some object like a stamp collection (Fiske, 2002; Grossberg, 2002; Pustz, 2016; Jurida & Hadžibeganović, 2020). The colloquial use of the term, however, often refers to a

community formed around a piece of pop culture, typically a piece of media or a celebrity. The focus of this paper is media fandoms, in which the object of shared interest can be anything from a book to a television series to a video game.

Early fandom grew out of clubs centered around science fiction in the late 1920s, relying on printed fanzines[2] and letters pages[3] in publications to share essays and correspondence with authors and other fans (Hellekson, 2015; Pustz, 2016). These early practices reflected the technology of the time, print production and postal mail, and largely involved commentary on existing source literature (Hellekson, 2015; Pustz, 2016). Fandom of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, saw the introduction of new practices, largely centered around core fandom values but expressed in different manners as in-person conventions, cosplay[4], and fan-created and fan-sung songs rose in prominence (Hellekson, 2015). Such activities established fandom as a culture distinct from capitalist consumption, often operating under a "gift economy[5]" where fan works are exchanged for free for the purpose of bridging differences and building community (Pearson, 2010).

As technology evolved, so too did the mediums and manners of fandom, and the advent of the digital age had a profound impact on this community by

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[2] Originally known as 'fan magazines' or 'fan mags' for short, 'fanzine' is a blend of the phrase and was not coined until the 1940s. Fanzines were made from letter-sized paper stapled together, occasionally folded in half, with a page left blank to be stamped and addressed for postal mail (Hellekson, 2015).

[3] Also known as letter columns, 'letters pages' are columns of feedback and commentary published in most comic books from the 1950s to the 1990s. They often included the address of the fan who penned the letter, allowing for correspondence within the community (Hellekson, 2015; Pustz, 2016).

[4] A blend of the phrase 'costume play', 'cosplay' took center stage at many fan conventions and showcased fans' dedication to fandom (Hellekson, 2015; Pustz, 2016).

[5] The idea of a 'gift economy' came about when scholars made the claim that fandom ran on a regime different from capitalism driven by community-building as opposed to profit. This is the idea of fans giving, receiving, and reciprocating fan creations to build up social networks within fandom (Pearson, 2010).

facilitating the growth of the participatory culture. The development of technologies like the VCR and later the Internet increased fans' agency, allowing them to more easily access, produce, and share content, leading to an explosion of practices like writing fan fiction, vidding[6], and fansubbing[7] (Hellekson, 2015; Pearson, 2010). Moreover, modern online platforms, such as Tumblr, have furthered the visibility of fanworks and fan creations, effectively serving as a new medium for the fanzines of old. These platforms create an environment where fans from all walks of life can interact, brought together solely by their love of a source media, fostering a culture of conversation and exploration (Klink et al., 2025).

2.1.2 Shipping: Imagining and Interpreting Character Relationships

These fandom communities engage in creative and social activities to connect, share knowledge, and create content that expands, reinterprets, and reimagines the source material (Hellekson, 2015). For fans, the source media functions as a form of "investment", a focal point around which they construct identities and create emotional narratives (Grossberg, 2002).

A central practice within many fandoms is shipping. According to Aja Romano's (2016) glossary for Vox, 'shipping' is a term derived from the word 'relationship' and refers to the fan practice of imagining and supporting a romantic or sexual relationship between two (or more) characters, regardless of whether such a relationship exists in the official source media (Gonzalez, 2016; Romano, 2016; Parry, 2019). Fans of celebrities might also ship their favorite artists together

[6] 'Vidding' is a fandom artform pioneered by Kandy Wong where creators make film snippets into a slideshow, overlaid with a popular fandom-related song (Hellekson, 2015).
[7] 'Fansubbing' is the act of fans producing and disseminating subtitled versions of films and TV shows (Hellekson, 2015).

regardless of whether the two people are in a romantic relationship, but in this paper, we are only interested in shipping fictional characters. The imagined romantic pairing of characters is called a 'ship', also derived from the word 'relationship', and the name fans use to refer to that pairing is called a 'ship name' (Bothe, 2014; Parry, 2019).

As a major aspect of fandom, shipping is closely tied to the emotional, interpretive, and often transformative nature of fan communities. As Victoria Gonzalez (2016) discusses in her exploration of a ship with the ship name *swan queen* from the TV series *Once Upon a Time*, shipping can serve as a space not only for fantasy but also for negotiating identity, subverting heteronormativity, and challenging dominant narratives within media. This is particularly evident in the slash (fans of male/male pairings) and femslash (fans of female/female pairings) communities, which use same-sex character pairings that often do not exist within the source media to rework cultural narratives about sex, gender, and power (Busse & Lothian, 2017). Lothian et al. (2007) similarly note that fandom focusing on same-sex pairings creates a space where participants explore the meanings of queerness and femininity, challenging fixed identity categories through creative production and exchange. These perspectives indicate that shipping is not a neutral activity, but rather one that is embedded with continuous ideological negotiations.

A product of shipping, ship names can take many forms, appearing as compounds or clipped compounds (*worfdeanna* for *Worf* and *Deanna*), descriptive or metaphorical phrases (*wiseheart* for *Will Byers* and *Mike Wheeler*), or initialisms (*tnt* for *T'Pol 'n' Trip*). The most common form of ship names, and the focus of this paper,

is portmanteaus, or blends, words formed by combining the sounds and meanings of two source words (DiGirolamo, 2012; Romano, 2016). In this case, the source words are the names of the characters in the ship, which blend together to form a new lexical item — the ship name — that represents their pairing (e.g., *charlena* = *Charles* + *Silena*).

These blends serve as a form of shorthand as well as a linguistic symbol through which fans can recognize and rally around their favorite ships, in a way marking affiliation and community through a shared interest and investment in the character relationships. The blended ship names circulating within fandom communities can also be interpreted as linguistic reflections of these negotiations, reflecting how fans position characters — and themselves — within wider cultural systems of gender and power. Thus, because the practice of shipping is, at its core, impacted by ideological values of the corresponding fandom community, the resulting linguistic artifact — the blended ship name — serves as a site of intersecting cultural values and linguistic rules in the form of word-formation.

2.2 Existing Research: Linguistic Constraints on Blend Formation

As stated in the introduction, the word-formation process of blending is one governed by many linguistic constraints — phonological, morphological, and orthographic. Blending creates new lexical items by combining parts, both sound and meaning, of two or more source words (Beliaeva, 2019; Jurida & Hadžibeganović, 2020). ‘Source words’ are those whose parts are being combined, and ‘blends’ are words that form as a result of the combination. Blended ship names, though different in that the source words and resulting blends are often proper nouns, are

still a category of blends and presumed to follow similar rules. To situate blended ship names within the broader context of blending and word formation, it is important first to establish the linguistic constraints that govern all blended words in English.

2.2.1 What is a blend?

Let us begin by differentiating blending and similar word-formation processes, namely compounding and clipped compounding, as all three are common in the fandom community and in the formation of ship names (DiGirolamo, 2016). It is especially important to distinguish between clipped compounding and blending, as both processes involve the truncation and concatenation of source words.

Linguists differentiate between blending and compounding primarily based on the resulting word's prosodic structure. In his cross-linguistic analysis of English, German, and Dutch blends, Hamans (2021) distinguishes between clipped compounds[8], words created by truncating the final segments of source words (e.g., *modem* from *mo*dulator and *dem*odulator), and blends[9] (e.g., *brunch* = *br*eakfast + *l*unch). Unlike compounds, which often preserve the rhythm and stress patterns of two separate elements, true blends are characterized by a single prosodic word — a unit of speech that behaves as a single cohesive "chunk" in terms of rhythm and stress. Specifically, a 'prosodic word' is defined by how it sounds rather than its spelling or meaning; it is the smallest unit of sound to which phonological rules,

[8] Hamans terms clipped compounds as stub compounds since stubs are mainly bound elements whereas clippings may appear as free forms (Hamans, 2018; Hamans, 2021).
[9] Hamans terms blends as true blends (Hamans, 2021).

such as stress assignment or intonation, apply (DiGirolamo, 2012; Hamans, 2021). For example, a clipped compound like *biopic* retains two prosodic words (i.e., *bio* from *biographical* and *pic* from *picture*), while a blend such as *frappuccino* merges the source words *frappe* and *cappuccino* into a single prosodic word that follows the stress pattern of a single word. This prosodic constraint forces the loss of segmental material from the source words, necessitating systematic structural rules to ensure the blend is well-formed.

The distinguishing factor of blends being a single prosodic word also helps explain why compounds often preserve whole morphemes from each source word (e.g., *sitcom* from *situation* and *comedy,* and *froyo* from *frozen* and *yogurt*), while blends tend to overlap phonemes or syllables (e.g., *smog* = *smoke* + *fog*, and *malware* = *malicious* + *software*). Hamans (2021) focused on two factors: stress patterns, which refer to the emphasis placed on a syllable of a multi-syllable word, and segmental overlap, which refers to a segment in the blend that exists in both source words. His analysis shows that even though blends do not always neatly conform to morphological categories, they follow systematic phonological rules governing stress patterns and segmental overlap, further supporting this structural distinction.

2.2.2 Constraints and the Principle of Source Word Recoverability

As noted by multiple studies on blends, the systematic rules governing the blending word-formation process are primarily motivated by the goal of recoverability: ensuring the source words can be recognized within the blend (Gries, 2004; Beliaeva, 2014; DiGirolamo, 2016; Hamans, 2021). As there is nothing less recognizable than a neologism, a newly created word, it is paramount that users of

the language recognize from where the blend stems to understand its meaning and usage (DiGirolamo, 2012). Existing research highlights two key constraints that maximize recoverability: structural asymmetry and the role of proper nouns.

Blends display a structural asymmetry where the second source word tends to contribute more phonological material to the resulting blend. Gries's (2004) quantitative analysis of English blends established this pattern, where he found that the second source word is usually longer, either in number of letters or syllables, and often contributes more material. This pattern aims to maximize the recoverability of the second source word within the blend. Similarly, Beliaeva (2014) provides evidence that this tendency serves to preserve the prosodic structure of the semantic head of the phrase (the second source word), which further enhances recoverability. This is further reinforced by the finding that the stress pattern of the resulting blend often matches that of the second source word (Hamans, 2021). Collectively, these findings create a structural preference for combining the initial segment of the first source word with the final segment of the second, thereby establishing a default word-order for successful blend formation in English.

Beyond the structural constraints contributing to recoverability, existing research has also explored how different types of source words, specifically contrasting proper and common nouns, shape the word-formation process of blending. Broad et al. (2016) demonstrated that when a blend is created using a proper noun and a common noun, participants in their study consistently preserved more of the proper noun's structure. The results suggest that proper nouns carry greater linguistic weight, possibly because of their role in identifying specific

entities, and may sit higher in a hierarchy of rules and constraints that influences how blends are formed. This finding is particularly relevant to the study of blended ship names, which often combine two proper nouns — the names of characters. When the hierarchical playing field is leveled because both source words carry the same linguistic weight, the question of which source word is prioritized may shift from one of purely linguistic constraints to one colored by extralinguistic factors.

Understanding how fans navigate phonological constraints, prosodic features, and name recognition when forming these blends offers a new perspective for investigating both linguistic processes and fan cultural practices.

2.2.3 Fandom Blends: Orthography and Phonotactics

Continuing from the linguistic constraints on common noun blends, we shift into the realm of research on blends formed in fandom spaces, where source words are typically proper nouns. Even in contexts known for their creative practices like fandom, the process of blending remains fundamentally constrained by these systematic rules of the English language. Thus, the concept of a well-formed blend in fandom, one that has high acceptability within its community, depends on how well the ship name conforms to constraints related to spelling and perceived pronunciation. DiGirolamo's (2012) analysis of blended ship names[10] explores this phonology-orthography interface in fandom naming practices, describing the specific linguistic constraints governing the creation of well-formed, acceptable ship names within the community. She centers on two key linguistic constraints that

[10] DiGirolamo terms blended ship names as fandom pairing names (FPNs) (DiGirolamo, 2012).

determine the structure and order of blended ship names: stress match and onset conservation.

DiGirolamo identifies stress match as a key constraint on blended ship names. Unlike blends formed from common nouns that usually match the stress of the second source (Hamans, 2021), blended ship names often merge the source words' stress patterns. Most importantly, she determined that the stress pattern of the resulting blend also indicates the splice point where the first and second source words join. This subsequently dictates the relative contribution of each source word and influences the overall blend order.

DiGirolamo also identifies onset conservation as a linguistic factor that determines the structure and order of blended ship names, with this factor being more directly related to name order. Her analysis indicates that the source word with the more complex onset is often ordered first to preserve that complexity within the resulting blend. That is, a syllable without a consonant onset would take on the other word's onset (*paayla* = *Padme* + *Aalya*), an onset of a consonant cluster would replace that of a single consonant (*wrati* = *Wren* + *Hati*), and onsets of the same complexity can be swapped both ways (*bean* = *Benny* + *Dean*, *denny* = *Dean* + *Benny*). This constraint is motivated by the desire to retain as much recognizable material from each source word as possible.

Together, the factors of stress match and onset conservation directly influence the recoverability of the source words and the acceptability of the resulting blend. DiGirolamo's study uses two linguistic criteria to measure the ultimate success of blended ship names: phonotactic acceptability and orthographic

transparency. ‘Phonotactic acceptability’ evaluates how well a sound sequence conforms to the typical phonological rules of English, while ‘orthographic transparency’ determines how predictably a word’s spelling corresponds to its perceived pronunciation. In sum, DiGirolamo’s findings suggest that while the process of creating blended ship names can appear idiosyncratic, it is ultimately a word-formation process governed by consistent and predictable linguistic rules that aim to maximize source word recoverability and blend acceptability within the fandom community.

2.2.4 Research Gap and Rationale

Existing research has established, in no small detail, that the formation of blended ship names is governed by linguistic constraints focused on source word recoverability and overall blend acceptability. These constraints include the single prosodic word structure, the structural asymmetry favoring the second source word, and the stress pattern that merges that of both source words, and the preservation of the more complex onset. The literature has also confirmed that even blends of two proper noun source words are subject to these predictable, systematic linguistic processes (DiGirolamo, 2012).

Despite that, it is important to remember that fandoms are inherently a type of in-group community. Participants in any given fandom can reasonably be assumed to be familiar with the characters, especially the main characters, and would thus be more likely to recognize these characters’ names. Pair these presumed familiarity with the characters’ names along with blended ship names, a linguistic phenomenon that appears under very specific contexts, there is a

possibility that recognizability of source words is less important of a factor than the acceptability of the final blend. As fans are presumed to encounter such ship names in fandom contexts, and they are presumed to be familiar with character names, it may be safe to thus presume they would be able to make a guess at which characters are involved in the ship name even if less material is contributed from that name through context clues or from recognizing a single unique feature from the character's name.

However, less attention has been given to how non-linguistic factors might also shape the structure of blends, interacting with and potentially overriding known linguistic constraints. Since blended ship names involve the blending of two proper nouns, the structural preference for prioritizing one name over another (Broad et al., 2016) may be impacted by extralinguistic factors such as perceived character importance, relationship dynamics, or fandom community norms. This gap in research is the focus of the current study and asks: Beyond the phonological, morphological, and orthographic constraints of the English language, are there other extralinguistic factors, such as character importance, gender ideology, or fandom community values, that influence the name order of character names in blended ship names?

2.3 Broader Context and Contribution

This study is an intersection of the following fields: phonology, morphology, sociolinguistics, and fan studies.

This project contributes to the fields of phonology and morphology, specifically in regards to word-formation processes, by focusing on a category of

blends formed by two proper nouns within a certain context: blended fandom ship names. By analyzing blended ship names, this project tests the robustness of established linguistic constraints and determines the extent to which extralinguistic factors impact or potentially override them. If extralinguistic factors truly override the linguistic constraints that govern the blending of common nouns, this indicates that under specific, fandom-related contexts, the blending word-formation process may not be purely rule-driven, but also contextually motivated.

Furthermore, this project contributes to sociolinguistics and fan studies by potentially providing another manner in which scholars can analyze ideological encoding within online communities. The order of names in a blended ship name may serve as linguistic markers of perceived gender hierarchy and narrative importance. Should this be proven true, the analysis of such patterns across ship names just might provide a different perspective on how community values and beliefs are internalized and reflected in linguistic practices.

2.4 Extralinguistic Factors

While phonological and orthographic constraints (prosodic structure and segmental overlap) greatly influence the structure of blends, this study proposes that sociolinguistic factors, such as gender ideologies and fandom community norms, also play a significant role in determining the order of source words, which contributes more material, and the level of recognizability of each component in the resulting blend. Ship names are neologisms born from specific language environments (fandoms) and serve as a site to investigate how community norms and cultural beliefs intersect with linguistic structure. The following section

introduces the specific extralinguistic factors selected for investigation, explaining their relevance to ship name structure.

To begin, the importance of a character within a fandom's source media may influence which name is prioritized for ordering or recognizability in a blended ship name. The audience often dedicate the most attention and emotional investment to protagonists and main characters, leading to an inclination to center ship names around such figures, perhaps by pulling more material from their names to enhance recognizability. The analysis will test whether maintaining the recognizability of a protagonist's name structurally overrides established linguistic constraints.

Beliefs about gender are another extralinguistic factor that can influence the formation of blends. In many linguistic and cultural contexts involving a male-female or masculine-feminine dichotomy, prioritizing the male or masculine counterpart is quite prominent, as seen in binomials such as "husband and wife" or in cases where masculine forms serve as defaults. This reflects sociocultural norms that frequently associate firstness with prominence, and it is plausible that this priority carries over into ship name formation. This study will investigate whether biases such as masculine-first pairings is a consistent pattern. Furthermore, comparing these findings with queer pairings further reveals how gender ideology interacts with linguistic constraints in contexts where a traditional masculine default is absent.

The formation of ship names is likely also shaped by individual fandom norms. Different communities often develop their own traditions, including distinct linguistic practices. Given the prominence of shipping in fandom spaces, it comes as no surprise that naming customs tend to arise from these practices, whether

through long-standing conventions, the influence of early ships, or collective stylistic preferences. In some cases, fans intentionally deviate from expected structural patterns for extralinguistic reasons to avoid spoilers, taboo pairings, or unwanted associations. This project explores explicitly the non-standard blend *annacy* (*Anna*beth + *Per*cy) that exists alongside the more conventional *percabeth* (*Perc*y + *Ann*abeth), as well as deviations from the norm like *everlark* (*Ever*deen + *Mel*lark) and *odesta* (*Od*air + *Cr*esta). As these norms spread naturally within a community, oftentimes with no linguistic goal or intent, they may override phonologically or morphologically motivated predictions. Therefore, investigating community norms may offer extralinguistic explanations for the cross-fandom variations observed in this dataset.

Finally, ship names may reflect wider sociolinguistic tendencies regarding ordering and social hierarchy. Research on binomials[11] (pairs of words linked by conjunctions) shows that English speakers order elements based on a multitude of factors, including but not limited to the phonology of the words, personal familiarity, and perceived social power (Mollin, 2012; Iliev & Smirnova, 2014; Von Koevering et al., 2020). In scholarly works, the order of prestige, beginning with the first or last author, varies across fields. In film credits, actors with greater fame or those who play characters of greater narrative importance are often listed first. These examples suggest that ordering conventions are highly context-dependent and culture-specific, and if such conventions carry over into fandom activities, fans will prioritize whichever source word (first or second) they associate with prominence.

[11] A 'binomial' is a phrase linked by conjunctions (e.g., and, or). It can be static, where the order of the words is irreversible, or it can be dynamic, where the order of the words is flexible (Mollin, 2012)

As such, the structure of blended ship names, impacted by linguistic constraints as they may be, may also stem from the extralinguistic beliefs born and internalized from broader cultural contexts.

Given the extralinguistic factors listed above, I hypothesize that while morphological and phonological constraints play a key role in the formation of blends, extralinguistic factors — specifically, a character's narrative importance and beliefs about gender and power — also influence name order within blended ship names. The goal of this project is to conduct an investigation of the intersection of linguistic and extralinguistic factors to test whether such ideological encoding appears in the word-formation processes of English-language fandoms. The following section outlines the methodology used for selecting data, categorizing ship names, and analyzing name order patterns in relation to both linguistic constraints and extralinguistic factors.

3. Methodology

This paper asks: Beyond the phonological, morphological, and orthographic constraints of the English language, are there other extralinguistic factors, such as character importance, gender ideology, or fandom community values, that influence the name order of character names in blended ship names?

To answer this question, this study employs a corpus analysis methodology to examine patterns in ship name formation and ordering across multiple fandoms of character ships. Data collection was carried out using both automated and manual methods, and was compiled into a spreadsheet for analysis. The focus of this paper is on ship names from American media fandoms to control for linguistic and cultural

variation in ship-naming conventions. For this study, ship names must be a single, blended word composed of the names of two fictional characters.

3.1 Data Sources and Fandom Selection

I collected my data from three platforms: Fandom (specifically the Shipping Wiki), Fanlore, and Tumblr. These sites provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into shipping and ship-naming practices within fandom communities. With over 17,000 pages as of October 23, 2025, Fandom's Shipping Wiki offers an extensive collection of ships and ship names, occasionally providing explanations for the origins of some names. Fanlore contains similar databases, contextualized with fandom histories and fan activities. As a central hub of fan activity, Tumblr allows for detailed observation of ship and ship name popularity via post count and post engagement. Furthermore, each platform is publicly accessible, even to users without an account, and blogs and pages can be browsed easily by anyone on the internet.

3.1.1 Fandom

Founded in October 2004 by Jimmy Wales, co-founder of Wikipedia, and Angela Beesley Starling, a British web entrepreneur, Fandom is the largest fan wiki platform in the world, featuring over 40 million content pages in more than 80 languages across 250,000 wikis[12]. According to traffic tracking and analysis platforms *SimilarWeb* and *SemRush*, Fandom ranks within the top 50 most visited websites in the world as of September 2025 (SimilarWeb, 2025; Semrush, 2025).

[12] A 'wiki' is a type of publication on the internet built on a system of inter-connected and cross-referencing hyperlinks, collaboratively edited and managed by its audience (*Oxford University Press, n.d.*).

Due to the wealth of fandom-related content on the platform, I chose Fandom as a source for ship names.

Specifically, I referenced one of Fandom's many wikis, the Shipping Wiki. I visited the sites of six fandoms and collected the ship names listed on the page. The Shipping Wiki site for *Star Wars* can be seen below in Figure 1:

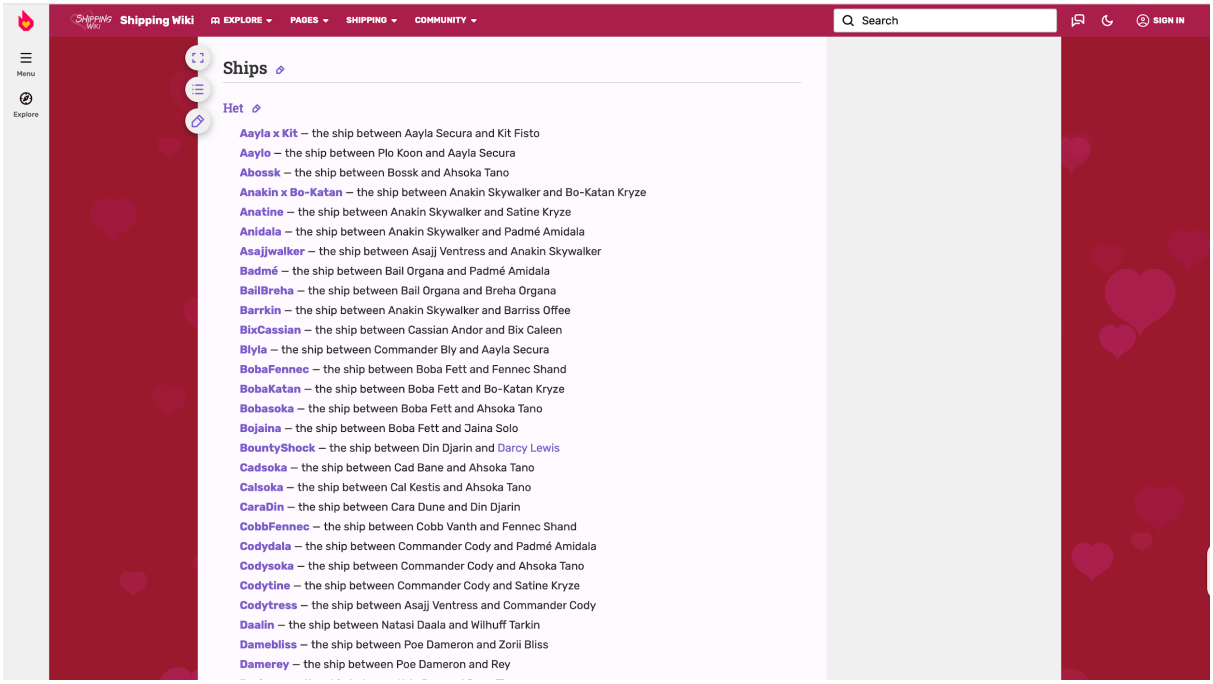


Figure 1: Shipping wiki page listing various ships between *Star Wars* characters.

Ships with enough shipping content have pages of their own, detailing interactions between the two characters and beliefs about the ship that are prominent in the fandom. The threshold of "enough shipping content" varies by ship and is determined by the greater fandom community. Some ships between main characters will have near never-ending amounts of information on their page, while other ships may have only a paragraph or two. Examples of individual ship pages are

displayed below in Figure 2, one with an abundance of shipping content and the other with scarcely a scene of two of interaction between the characters:

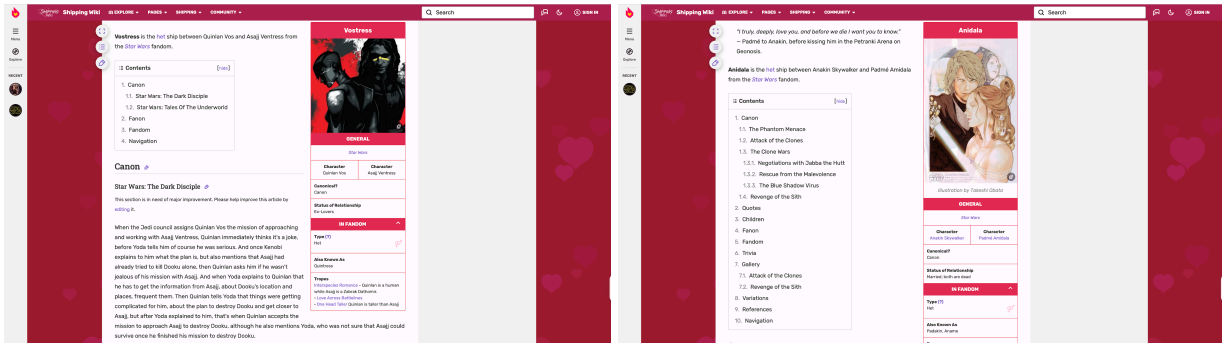


Figure 2: Shipping wiki pages for the pairing between Quinlan Vos / Asajj Ventress (left) with less content and Anakin Skywalker / Padmé Amidala (right) with more content.

Occasionally, the page also includes passages discussing the emergence and development of the ship throughout the history of the fandom. To ensure I collected as many ship names as possible, I visited each ship page and documented the other names the ship is also known by. These extra ship names can be found under “Also Known As” in the column of information, and an example is included below in Figure 3:

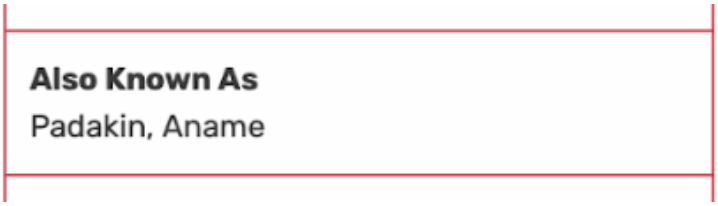


Figure 3: Other ship names for the ship Anakin Skywalker / Padmé Amidala.

I collected 1,170 ship names from Fandom, 235 of which were also present on Fanlore, which will be discussed next.

3.1.2 Fanlore

Fanlore is a multi-authored site powered by the MediaWiki software used by Wikipedia and Fandom, and is a project under the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW). Much like other wikis, Fanlore is a place for users to create and edit pages with a focus on fandom and fan-related activities (svmadelyn, 2008). Born out of an idea to preserve fannish[13] history and fannish lore[14], Fanlore is a site dedicated to collecting fan works, documenting fan activities, and noting down fan terminology. The focus of the site is on fandom itself rather than the source media and since its launch in September 2008, Fanlore has amassed well over 80,000 articles.

Not only does Fanlore contain information about fandoms and fan communities, but the platform also documents well-known ship names for popular ships, making it a great resource for collecting data on ship names. Much like Fandom, Fanlore also contains pages documenting fan-related activity for popular ships, which includes a section for other names the ship may be known by. Below in Figure 4 is an example of a ship page from Fanlore, displaying a summary of the characters' relationship in the source media, and the ship names for the ship can be found under the heading "Alternative name(s)":

[13] 'Fannish' is a term describing something related to fandom (Romano, 2016).
[14] 'Fannish lore' refers to the lore of, or the information about, a fandom and its activities.

Pairing	
Pairing:	Dean Winchester/Castiel
Alternative name(s):	**Destiel** (common), Casdean, Deancas
Gender category:	Slash, M/M
Fandom:	Supernatural
Canonical?:	Yes (one-sided as of season 15)
Prevalence:	Very Popular
Archives:	
Other:	

Click here for related articles on Fanlore.

Figure 4: Information about the ship between Dean Winchester and Castiel with ship names listed under “Alternative name(s).”

I collected 509 ship names from Fanlore, 235 of which were also present on the platform discussed above, Fandom.

3.1.3 Tumblr

Tumblr, pronounced [təmblɻ] like the English word *tumbler*, is a social media and microblogging[15] platform, boasting around 140 million users monthly in 2025 (Connell, 2025; Sam, 2025). Since its founding in February 2007 by David Karp, Tumblr has been a platform popular amongst younger generations, with 40% of its user base under 25 years of age and 30% in the 25-34 age range (Kumar, 2025). The platform is known as a home base for several prominent subcultures, but Tumblr is especially well-known as a site where a significant portion of the platform’s blog activity centers around fan communities, including fanfiction, fan art, discussions about fandom, and shipping culture. In fact, 18 of the top 24 most popular topics on Tumblr in 2024 had some relation to fandom or fan content

[15] ‘Microblogging’ is a form of blogging with size or space constraints, such as a limit on the number of characters a user can blog at once (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

(fandom, 2024). The popularity of Tumblr as a base for fan communities is a major factor in choosing the platform as a data source for this paper.

One key feature of Tumblr posts that plays an important role in my data collection is the platform's tagging system. Users can tag their Tumblr posts with tags ranging from a single letter to complete sentences. An image of a Tumblr post is shown below in Figure 5:

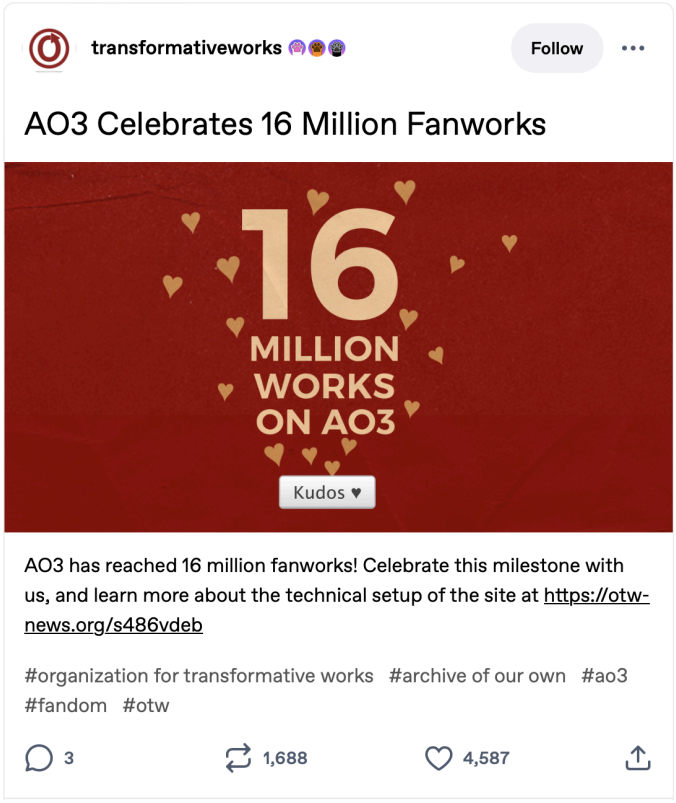


Figure 5: Example Tumblr post by @transformativeworks celebrating a milestone for one of its projects.

As shown in Figure 5, the tags are displayed at the bottom of the post and list topics related to the post's content. This allows users to not only organize their posts but also to search for related content on the platform. Tumblr's tagging system works like a filter and search system, letting users personalize their feed by blocking or

following tags of interest. When users post about fan-related content, they will similarly tag their posts with related topics such as the source media, character names, or ship names. During the data collection process, I used the tagging system on Tumblr to collect data on the ship names gathered from Fandom and Fanlore.

3.1.4 Fandom Selection

My dataset contains ship names from six American media fandoms, selected based on their popularity on Tumblr and my level of familiarity with the source media. Like many other topics on Tumblr, fandom names often appear at the bottom of posts as hashtags, and I made use of the number of followers a fandom name tag has to determine a fandom's popularity on the platform. The six fandoms are as follows in Table 1, along with their corresponding fandom name tags, the number of followers each tag has as of October 23, 2025, and the start and end years of the source media.

Media Fandom	Fandom Name Tag	Number of Followers	Duration
Camp Half-Blood Chronicles	#percy jackson	421,000	2007-Present
Star Trek	#star trek	66,000	1966-Present
Star Wars	#star wars	1.8 million	1977-Present
Stranger Things	#stranger things	2 million	2016-2025
Supernatural	#supernatural	1.7 million	2005-2020
The Hunger Games	#the hunger games	507,000	2008-Present

Table 1: Contextual information on the six fandoms I collected data on.

I chose *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* and *The Hunger Games* due to personal familiarity with the fandom and source media, as well as the fandoms' popularity on Tumblr. Though I have no extensive experience with the fandoms or media of *Star Wars*, *Stranger Things*, or *Supernatural*, they were selected due to their extreme

popularity on the platform. *Star Trek* was likewise selected despite my lack of personal familiarity, due to its historical significance in the origins of fandom shipping culture, particularly for queer ships (Lothian et. al, 2007; Boulware, 2017).

3.2 Dataset Creation and Cleaning

The goal of the dataset is to identify patterns in the structure and formation of ship names that may reflect extralinguistic influences, such as character importance, gender ideologies, and fandom community norms. To this end, I collected a large dataset of ship names from a small subset of fandoms, gathering data in an open-ended manner to assess whether any patterns might emerge.

To build my dataset, I compiled all the ship names found on Fandom into six separate spreadsheets, being sure to gather not only the ship names on the main page, but also those listed in the individual ship pages. Switching to Fanlore, I gathered the same type of data, the ship names listed on the main page and those found in individual ship pages. As I had already collected ship names from Fandom, I made sure to avoid collecting the ship name a second time when gathering data from Fanlore. Along with the ship names, I also documented the names of the involved characters and the fandom the ship is from.

I wrote a simple script in Python to help me automate the data collection, and though it was only somewhat successful, it helped tremendously in speeding up the process. The script helped me gather the ship names listed on the main page of Fandom and Fanlore, but I had to manually click into the individual ship pages and gather the alternative ship names.

Then, I proceeded with my data cleaning: fixing, standardizing, and deleting ship names.

First, I reviewed the dataset to ensure that character names were spelled correctly and that each character used the same name throughout the spreadsheet. As I sourced the data from sites built and maintained by a large community, misspelling of character names was a possibility. There were also several instances where my script failed to collect part of a character's name, usually the character's last name. Furthermore, several characters often go by nicknames or other aliases. As such, this first round of data cleaning was to make my life easier and so that I can search through my dataset.

Second, I deleted all ship names that were made up of multiple words, were pairings of real people rather than fictional characters, or were duplicates. Multi-word ship names existed across several fandoms, usually appearing as *name/name* or *name x name*, such as *Pike/Vina* or *Sarah x Charlie*. *Supernatural* had several ships of actors who play prominent characters in the show, and since my focus is on character ship names, I removed them from the list. Despite my best efforts to avoid duplicate ship names during the collection process, *Star Trek* still had several duplicates due to numerous spin-offs featuring the same characters.

After the initial round of cleaning, the number of ship names I deleted from each fandom is as follows: 5 from *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles*, 86 from *Star Trek*, 27 from *Star Wars*, 87 from *Supernatural*, 15 from *Supernatural*, and 0 from *The Hunger Games*. The total count of data collected after the cleaning process is listed below in Table 2:

Media Fandom	Fandom	Fanlore	Both	Total
Camp Half-Blood Chronicles	178	54	47	279
Star Trek	160	23	32	215
Star Wars	331	133	93	557
Stranger Things	139	5	23	167
Supernatural	85	57	29	171
The Hunger Games	42	2	11	55

Table 2: Number of ship names gathered and their respective sources.

3.3 Qualitative Data Collection

Once I had a dataset of ship names, I developed a detailed codebook to ensure consistency and transparency in data collection and coding. The codebook defines the dataset's columns of information, provides example values, and includes notes on coding decisions and exceptions. The finalized codebook is available as a supplementary CSV file[16].

For each ship name, I collected and standardized the following information:

- Ship Name and Fandom. Each ship name was recorded in all lowercase for consistency, alongside the fandom from which it originates.
- Character Names. I recorded the names of the two characters in the ship under the columns *character a* and *character b*. *Character a* refers to the character whose name corresponds to the first portion of the ship name, and *character b* refers to the character whose name corresponds to the latter half. I ensured the use of canonical name spelling and included the full name whenever available.

[16] Codebook.

- Gender Presentation. Each character's gender presentation inferred from Fandom or Fanlore pages is categorized as *man*, *woman*, or *other*.
- Character Narrative Importance. Using a combination of factors, I filled these two columns with either *yes* or *no* depending on whether the corresponding character is a protagonist in their respective source media. In fandoms where there are multiple media forms, such as the various films and TV series in *Star Wars*, I selected *yes* for the characters who are protagonists in at least one media form, even if they are background characters in another.
- Ship Type. Based on the characters' gender presentations, I assigned every ship name a ship type category: *f/m*, *f/f*, *m/m*, and *non-binary*. Ship names of the *f/m* ship type refer to ships involving a woman and a man, the *f/f* ship type refers to ships involving two women, the *m/m* ship type refers to ships involving two men, and the *non-binary* ship type refers to any ship involving at least one character whose gender presentation falls outside the gender binary of male and female.
- Canonicity. The canon column identifies the corresponding ship's status relative to the source material. This column has four categories: *canon*, *semi-canon*, *fanon*, and *ambiguous*. 'Canon' ships are pairings of couples that exist in the source material; 'semi-canon' indicates implied or one-sided romantic feelings in the source material; 'fanon' ships are entirely fan-imagined; 'ambiguous' ships are those whose depictions vary across different versions and forms of the source material (e.g., the ship is canon in the book but does not exist in the movie).

- Crossover. This column indicates whether or not the ship involves two characters from different fandoms.
- Source. As I gathered data, I noted down where each ship name was collected from. Each ship name's source is documented as *fanlore*, *fandom*, or *both*.

The next few categories are hand annotations I made to analyze the data collected.

- Name Order Split. This column details my best estimation of where the ship name is split, or the splice point, between the two characters' names. For example, given the ship name *everlark* for *Ever*deen and *Mel*lark, the column value would be *ever / lark*.
- Split First and Split Second. The next two columns document the part of the character's name that makes up the ship name in the order they appear. Continuing with the example of *everlark* from above, the first part *ever* comes from *Ever*deen and the second part *lark* comes from *Mel*lark. As such, column *split first* would have *everdeen* and column *split second* would have *mellark*.
- Split First Syllables and Split Second Syllables. The next two columns document the number of syllables of each source word (*split first* and *split second*). Following from the example above with *everdeen* in *split first* and *mellark* in *split second*, *split first syllables* would hold value *3*, and *split second syllables* would hold value *2*. These two columns are used during data analysis.
- Split First Contribution and Split Second Contribution. These two columns document the number of letters each source word contributes to the resulting blend (*split first contribution* and *split second contribution*). Take, for

example, the ship name *borgati*, a blend of *Borg* and *Jurati*. *Borg* is the first source word, and all four of its letters appear in the blend, while *Jurati* is the second source word, and only three of its letters appear in the blend. As such, the two columns would have the values *4* and *3* respectively. In cases where there is overlap, such as in *crobby*, for *Crowley* and *Bobby*, the overlapped letter is counted once for each source word. As such, the columns for *crobby* would have the values *3* and *4* respectively.

- Split First Origin and Split Second Origin. These next two columns document from which part of a character's name their contribution to the ship name stems. The possible categories are *given* for given name, *family* for family name, *alt* for alternative names (e.g., nicknames, titles), *full* for full names, and *none* for none of the above. While the *given* category is for characters' given names, if there is a nickname that the character is consistently addressed with within the source media, this is deemed the character's given name (e.g., Mike for Michael, Will for William, Nico for Niccolo). The *alt* category is reserved for nicknames that are used interchangeably with the character's given name, job titles (usually in military contexts where characters are often addressed by rank), or aliases.

  Take *henderhop*, a blend of *Henderson* and *Hopper*, for the characters Dustin Henderson and Jane Hopper. As the ship name blends the family names of the two characters, these two columns would both hold the values *family*. Consider, again, the ship name *caralorian*, a blend of *Cara* and *Mandalorian*, for the characters Cara Dune and The Mandalorian. While Cara's

name origin is self-explanatory (*given*), The Mandalorian's is less so. The character The Mandalorian's real name is Din Djarin, but he is also known by his title. Thus, the value for his *split second origin* column would be *alt*.

- Name Order Tag and Order Columns. The next three columns of *name order tag*, *order first*, and *order second* were filled in using Google spreadsheet formulas for a uniform, machine-readable tag detailing what order the character names appear in the ship name. The column *name order tag* lists out the characters' full names divided by a forward slash; *order first* holds the name of the character who appears first, followed by the number one; *order second* holds the name of the character who appears second, followed by the number two. Take *stamber*, the ship name derived from *Stamets* and *Culber*, for example. The three columns would be filled as follows:
    - Name-Order Tag: *Paul Stamets / Hugh Culber*
    - Order First: *PaulStamets-1*
    - Order Second: *HughCulber-2*
- Gender Order. This column documents the gender of the characters in the order their names appear in the ship name. For example, the ship name *kanera* stems from *Kanan* and *Hera*, where Kanan is a man and Hera is a woman. Thus, the value in the *gender order* column for *kanera* would be *man / woman*. In contrast, for the ship name *jopper* that stems from *Joyce* and *Hopper*, where Joyce is a woman and Hopper is a man, the value in the column would be *woman / man*.

- Name Origin Order. This column documents the values of *split first origin* and *split second origin* in relation to each other. Continuing on with the ship name example used to describe *split first origin* and *split second origin*, *henderhop*. As this ship names stores *family* in each of the split origin columns, it would thus store *family / family* in the *name origin order* column.
- Word Length Order. This column documents the lengths of the source words relative to each other in the order that they appear. If the values in *split first syllables* and *split second syllables* are equal, the column stores *equal*, otherwise the column stores *short / long* or *long / short* depending on which of the values of the syllable count columns is longer. Consider the ship name *winchambers*, which combines the source words *Winchester* and *Chambers*. *Winchester* has three syllables, and *Chambers* has 2, so the resulting value in this column for *winchambers* is *long / short*.
- Contribution Length Order. This column documents how much each source word contributes to the resulting blend in relation to each other. Take, for example, *haysilee*, a blend of *Haymitch* and *Maysilee*. As *Haymitch* contributes three letters, and *Maysilee* contributes six letters, the value stored in this column would be *short / long*. Other possible values include *long / short* and *equal*.
- Stress Match. This column documents whether the ship name matches the stress pattern of the first, second, neither, or both source words and has the following options: *first*, *second*, *neither*, and *both*. The ship name *chackson*, for *Chase* and *Jackson*, matches the stress pattern of its second source word

Jackson, and is thus assigned the value *second* in this column. As a participating member of several of these fandoms, I personally determined the stress placement of the characters' names and their subsequent ship names. For fandoms I am not a member of, I consulted the source media for pronunciations and made my best judgment from there.

- Complex Onset Preservation. This column stores whether the blend preserved the more complex onset of the two source words, *yes* or *no*. For example, *dash* for *Dean* and *Ash* preserves the more complex onset and will store *yes* in this column.
- Blend Type. Finally, I also determined the blend type of each ship name, identifying the morphological word-formation process. The categories in this column are as follows: *onset swap*, *onset merge*, *onset + nucleus*, *syllable one*, and *syllable two*.

    Onset swap occurs when the blend is a result of replacing the onset of one source word with that of the other (*jercy* for *Jason* and *Percy*). *Onset merge* is when the onsets merge together and attach to the rest of a source word (*swesson* for *Smith* and *Wesson*). *Onset + nucleus* involves taking the onset and the first vowel sound of one source word and integrating it with the other (*saileen* for *Sam* and *Eileen*). *Syllable one* is when the entire first syllable of a source word attaches to the other (*byclair* for *Byers* and *Sinclair*). Likewise, *syllable two* occurs when the first two syllables of a source word attach to the other (*alexabeth* for *Alex* and *Annabeth*), and *syllable three*

occurs when the first three syllables of a source word attach to the other (*elevex* for *Eleven* and *Max*).

3.4 Quantitative Data Collection

Along with the qualitative annotations, I also gathered quantitative data from Tumblr using Python scripts to create additional columns in my data spreadsheet titled post count, engagement density, and popularity metric.

- Post Count. The post count documents the total number of posts tagged with each ship name between July 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025.
- Engagement Density. For ships with at least 50 posts during that period, I calculated engagement density as the average number of notes on the top 50 posts under each tag. Notes are Tumblr's combined metric for post engagement: likes, reblogs, and comments. The number 50 was an arbitrary selection that I landed on as I was unsure what threshold would provide a reasonable amount of data to work with. Setting the threshold at 50 left me with exactly 200 points of data, which I found satisfying. This number will decrease as I continue cleaning the data, leaving what I consider a reasonable number of data points to analyze.
- Popularity Metric. To create a single, interpretable measure of a ship name tag's popularity, I combined the two quantitative values of *post count* and *engagement density* using the following formula:

  $$\textit{popularity metric} = \log_{10}(\textit{post count}) + \log_{10}(\textit{engagement density}).$$

  Take the ship name *valgrace* for *Valdez* and *Grace* for example. It has a post count of around *2,025* and an average engagement density of around

2,344.34. Inputted into the formula produces a popularity metric of *6.68* for *valgrace*.

This logarithmic approach reduces the influence of extreme outliers and makes popularity more easily comparable across ship names with wildly different levels of post count and post engagement. The resulting value provides a balanced indicator of a ship name tag's frequency and engagement and can be used as a ranking metric such that a higher popularity metric indicates a higher overall popularity.

I also normalized the popularity metric to a 0-100 scale using the following formula where MIN is the smallest popularity metric value, and MAX is the largest popularity metric value: $100 * \frac{popularity\ metric - MIN}{MAX - MIN}$. Consider again, *valgrace*. Given a MAX value of *8.87* and a MIN value of *0* in the dataset, inputting the popularity metric of *valgrace*, *6.68*, into the formula produces a normalized value of *75.30*.

- Rank. This value is calculated using Google spreadsheet formulas and is dependent on the popularity metric of the ship names. If two ship names have the same popularity metric, they also have the same rank. As such, the ship names rank from 1 through 549; and just to satisfy any curiosity, *valgrace* sits at rank 18 in the dataset.

3.4.1 Limitations

Despite the extensive data collection from Tumblr and subsequent calculations, all data derived from the platform should be interpreted as estimates rather than definitive values. There are strict limitations when writing scripts to work

with Tumblr, and the platform cannot provide a set of fully representative data due to post deletions, privacy settings, NSFW content restrictions, and other inconsistencies in how posts are stored and archived. Additionally, fandom culture varies in how often fans post, which platforms they are most active on, and the degree of explicit content they produce, meaning visibility on Tumblr, or the lack thereof, does not directly correspond to overall fan interest.

Furthermore, the ever-fluctuating nature of fandom activity further complicates these measurements. Each of the six fandoms in this study emerged at a different point over nearly fifty years, with characters being introduced at varying times. Several of the source media have long stopped producing new content, while others are gearing up for the release of a new film or season. As such, the level of fan activity within a given fandom on Tumblr fluctuates considerably, and ship popularity also evolves as time goes on. A ship that was once extremely popular may decline in popularity due to its source material coming to an end, while another may see a sudden resurgence due to fans' anticipation of new source material or broader cultural shifts. Essentially, ship popularity on Tumblr, whether in terms of post count or engagement density, is ever-changing and can be influenced by a range of unpredictable or external factors that cannot be controlled within the scope of this study.

4. Analysis and Results

This next section investigates the core research question of the paper: whether extralinguistic factors, such as character gender, narrative importance, and fandom norms, also influence the ordering of source words in blended ship names,

alongside the phonological, morphological, and orthographic constraints documented in the existing literature on blending. If extralinguistic factors play a role in blend formation, their influence should be reflected in systematic ordering preferences within the data that cannot be fully explained by linguistic constraints alone. Consider the current factors being analyzed — character gender, narrative importance, and source word origin — such influence may surface as patterns of the protagonists' names preferentially appearing second within the blend, or male characters' commonly occurring first regardless of whether this ordering aligns with the established linguistic constraints. The presence of such patterns would suggest that extralinguistic factors exert a degree of influence on the structure of blends independent to that of linguistic constraints, potentially contributing to or even overriding what is considered well-formed.

To evaluate these possibilities, I performed a combination of statistical analyses on the entire dataset and qualitative analyses on focused subsets of data. The statistical analysis reveals overall patterns by examining linguistic structural factors (syllable length of source words, stress pattern match, and onset complexity) alongside extralinguistic variables (character gender, narrative importance, and source word origin). The qualitative analysis delves into the reasoning and motivations behind the patterns identified during statistical analysis. Together, the quantitative and qualitative analyses allow me to evaluate not only whether patterns of ordering factors exist, but also why they may arise, whether due to linguistic constraints, extralinguistic factors, or the intersection of both.

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Before examining the dataset through a series of data visualizations, I cleaned my dataset once more to ensure that I was working only with ship names that matched the definition of blending established in the literature. From the original 1,444 ship names, I deleted 17 ship names that either did not result from some form of truncation and concatenation or whose source words could not be identified. Take the ship name *joannael*, for example, for the pairing of Jo Harvelle and Anna Milton. The ship name can be broken down into three parts as follows: *jo* from *Jo*, *anna* from *Anna,* and *el* from *Harvelle*, where Anna's name is sandwiched between Jo's first and last name. Though the word-formation process bears some resemblance to blending, the literature I read makes no mention of this alternating pattern of concatenation. As such, *joannael* and other ship names structured similarly to it were deleted. On the other hand, I could not identify potential source words for the ship names, such as *coyote*, a pairing between Spock and Leonard McCoy, and it was likewise removed from the dataset. Finally, I filtered out ship names that were not blends: compounds, clipped compounds, and other ship names of unclear word-formation origins.

This final step left me with 1,135 blended ship names that I worked with for my quantitative analysis. The breakdown of ships across fandoms before analysis can be seen in Table 3 below:

Media Fandom	Number of Ship Names
Camp Half-Blood Chronicles	262
Star Trek	179
Star Wars	384
Stranger Things	142
Supernatural	119
The Hunger Games	49

Table 3: Number of ship names across Fandoms (N=1135).

With the dataset finalized, I began my statistical analysis with several graphs that describe the overall distribution of ship names across fandoms and ship types. These plots are more for characterization than analysis, and they help establish context by providing a visualization of the dataset and illustrating how values vary by fandom.

First up, the distribution of ship names across fandoms is shown below in Figure 6. As some fandoms contribute larger amounts of ship names, patterns observed in cross-fandom analyses may be influenced by these larger fandoms.

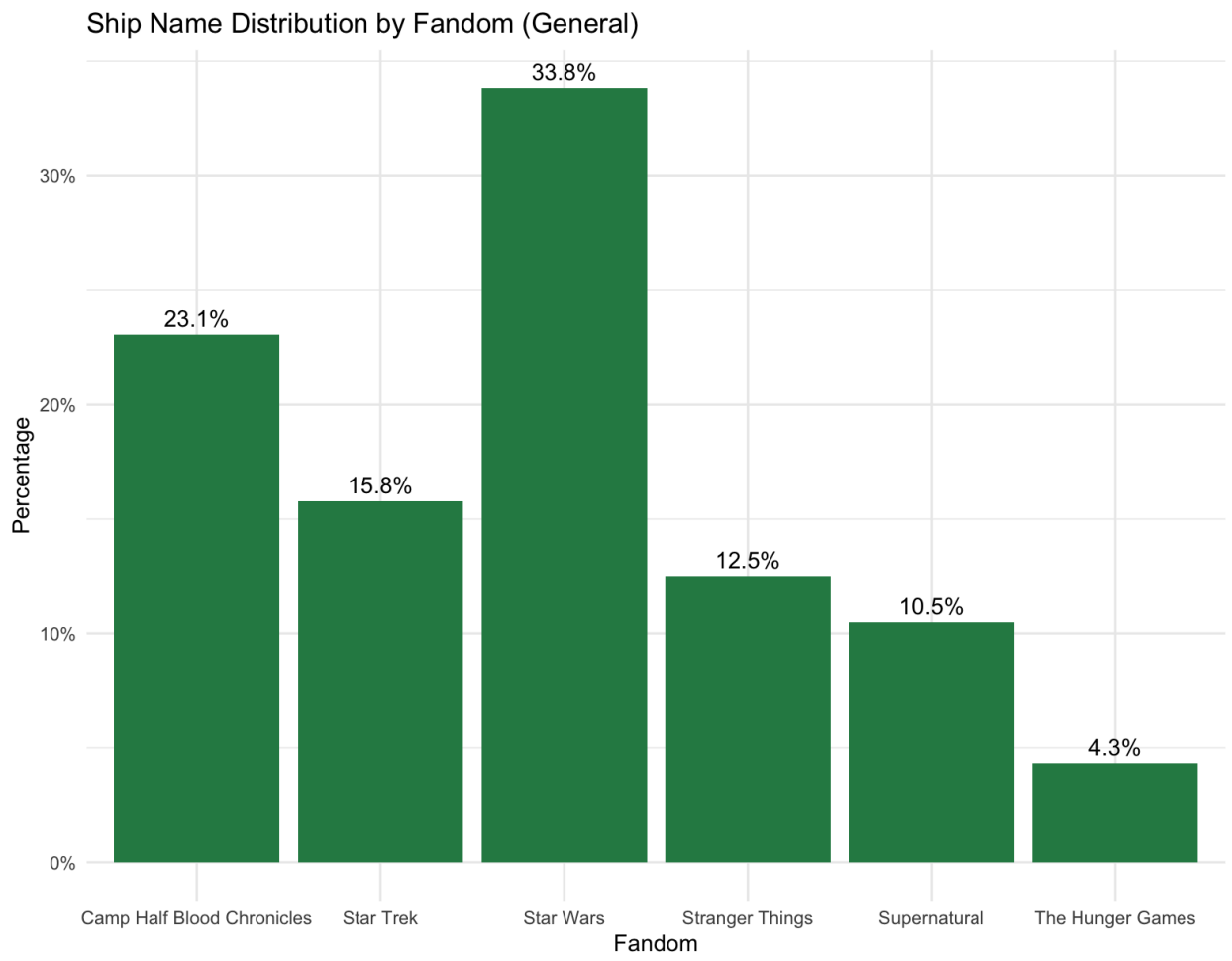


Figure 6: Frequency distribution of ship names across Fandoms (N = 1135).

As can be seen in Figure 6, *Star Wars* contributes around a third of the ship names in the dataset at 33.8%, which is just 10% greater than the contribution of the fandom with the second highest number of ship names, *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles,* at 23.1%. Moreover, at only 4.3%, the number of ship names from *The Hunger Games*, the fandom with the lowest number of ship names, makes up around 12% of those from *Star Wars*. This uneven distribution is not unexpected, given the varying sizes of fandom communities and the varying amount of source media (*The Hunger Games* is a book series with five published novels, while *Star Wars* has three separate film

trilogies, nine animated television series, and several more live-action series, to name a few). It also highlights the importance of analyzing patterns both across and within fandoms to avoid biasing trends toward those of larger fandoms.

Next up, Figure 7 displays the distribution of ship names across the ship type categories in the dataset: F/M, F/F, M/M, and Other[17].

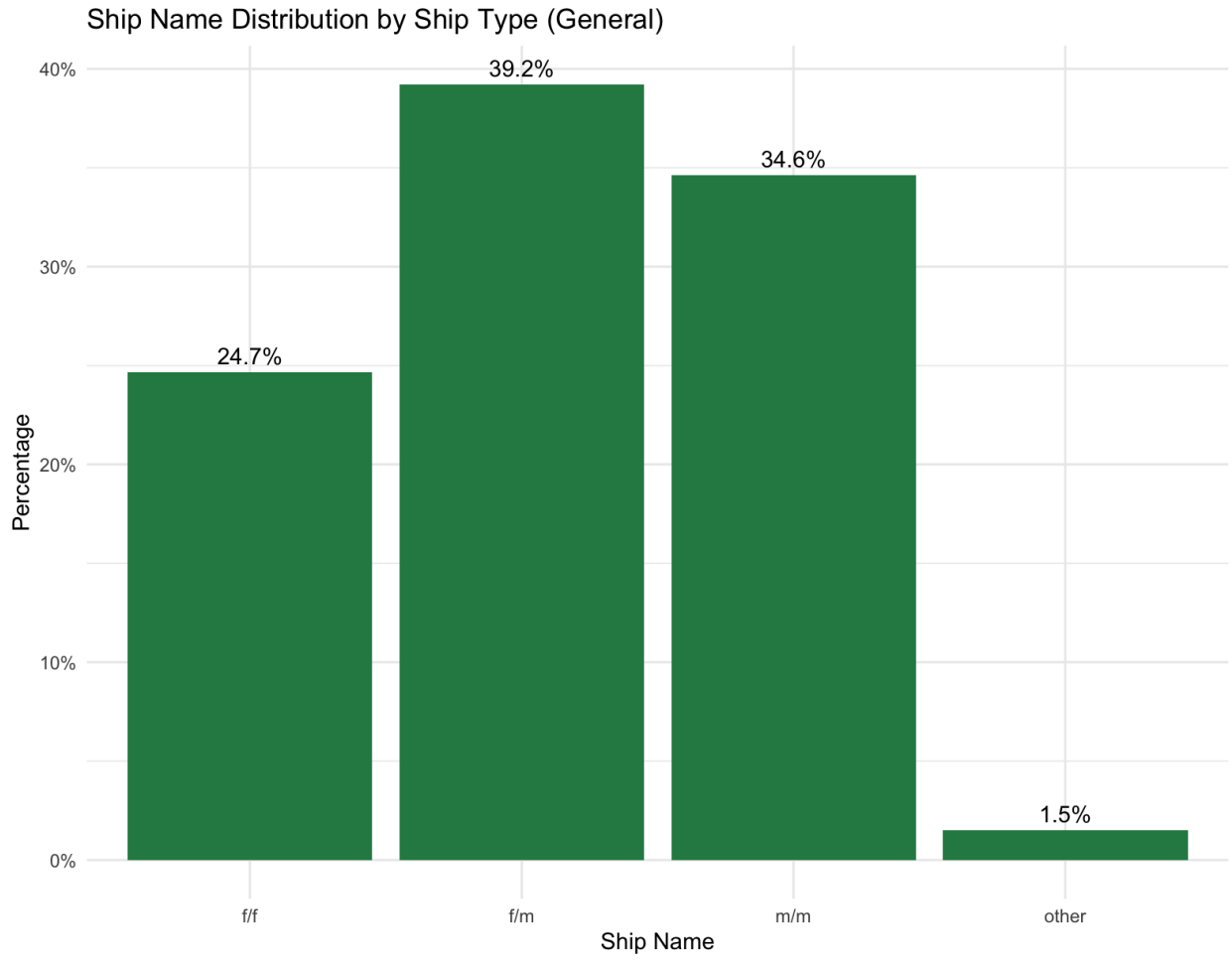


Figure 7: Number of ship names across Ship Types (N = 1135).

As can be seen, F/M ships are the most prevalent in this dataset, followed closely by M/M ships, with F/F ships lagging a little behind, and Other ships appearing far less

[17] Earlier when I first defined *ship types* in Section 3.3, I stylized the categories (*f/m*, *f/f*, *m/m*, and *other*) in all lowercase. I switched to using uppercase here for more legibility and so the spellcheck stops marking the ship types as incorrect.

frequently compared to the other three. This distribution is to be expected as it mirrors longstanding observations of fandom shipping patterns, where F/M and M/M pairings typically dominate. It also highlights the underrepresentation of F/F ships in fandom activity and the near nonexistence of Other ships, which is not only a meaningful topic in its own right but also constrains the extent to which quantitative comparisons can be made and balanced across ship types.

While Figure 7 provides an overall view, Figure 8 below breaks down the distribution of ship names for each ship type across fandoms.

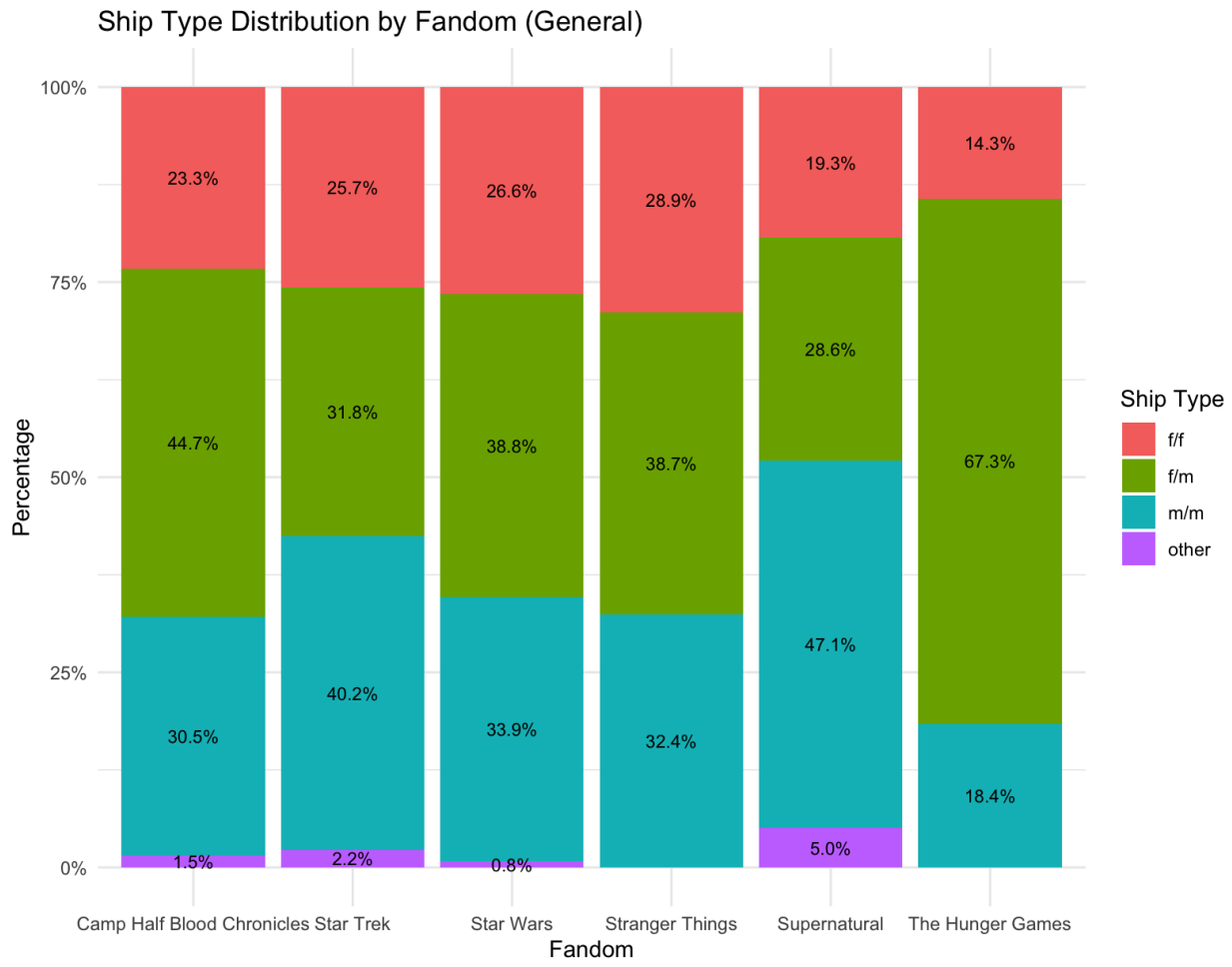


Figure 8: Distribution of Ship Types across Fandoms.

The pattern observed in the cross-fandom plot of Figure 7 generally persists within individual fandoms, as seen in Figure 8 above, where F/M and M/M dominate. *Supernatural* diverges slightly from this trend, displaying a much higher proportion of M/M ships (47.1%) than F/M ships (28.6%), a reversal of the trend found in other fandoms. This exception likely reflects the gender makeup of the main characters in each of the source media. The plot of *Supernatural* centers around two male protagonists and a recurring cast of primarily male characters, whereas the other fandoms in this study feature an ensemble of characters of greater gender diversity.

Following an overview of the dataset, I examined the relationship between the order of names in blended ship names and various linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The linguistic factors include:

- Word Length Order: the relative length in syllables of the source words
- Contribution Length Order: the relative contribution length in number of letters of each source word in the resulting blend
- Stress Pattern Match: whether the blend matches the stress pattern of the first or second source word
- Complex Onset Preservation: whether the blend preserves the more complex onset of the source words.

The extralinguistic factors include:

- Gender Order: the gender pairing of the characters
- Importance Order: the narrative importance each character holds within their respective source media

- Name Origin Order: from which part of the character's name does their corresponding source word stem from

For each factor, I analyzed data both across the entire dataset and within individual fandoms to determine whether patterns are consistent, variable, or community-specific.

4.1.1 Linguistic Factors

This section analyzes the influence of key linguistic constraints — relative length of source words, stress pattern match, and preservation of onset complexit — on the formation and structure of blended ship names within the dataset.

4.1.1.1 Relative Length and Contribution of Source Words

Mentioned previously in Section 2.2, Gries (2004) and Hamans (2021) highlight consistent asymmetries in the relative syllabic length of source words and how much each source word contributes to the blended form. Their findings show that the second source word tends to be longer and often provides more phonological material, a pattern that Gries attributes to increasing the recognizability of the second source word as the semantic head of the blend. To determine whether such structural asymmetries also arise in blended ship names, this section examines the relative length in syllables of the source words in the dataset alongside the relative contribution length in number of letters of each source word in the resulting blend in the following subsection.

First, the relative length of the source words themselves. This is determined by comparing the number of syllables in each source word. The following plot in

Figure 9 shows, respectively, the number and distribution of ship names that correspond to each word length order (*short / long*, *long / short*, or *equal*) in the dataset.

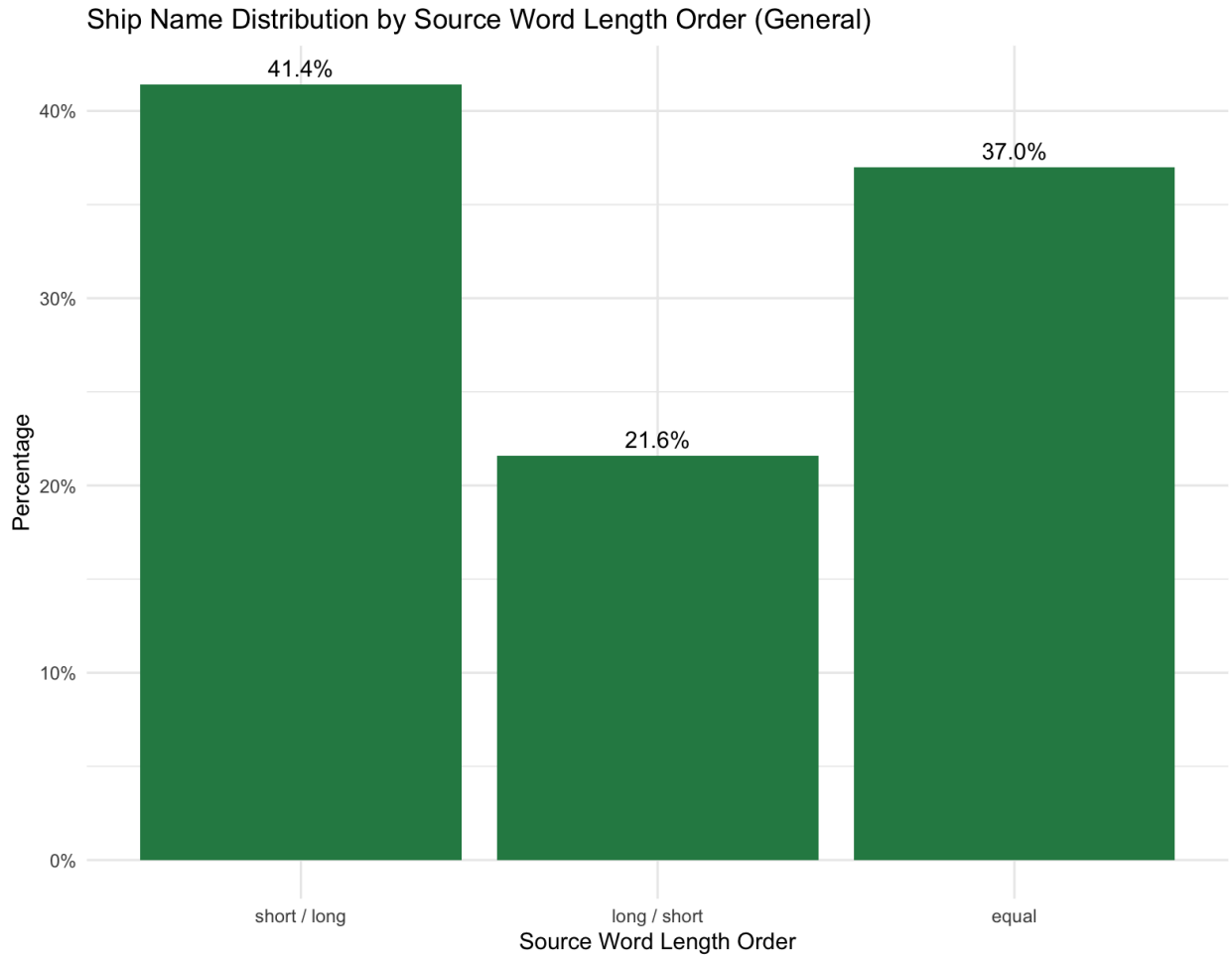


Figure 9: Distribution of ship names across Source Word Length Order (N = 1135).

As shown, the relative length in number of syllables between the two source words predominantly follows the orders of *short / long* (41.4%) or *equal* (37.0%), with the *long / short* (21.6%) length order occurring less commonly. According to Hamans (2021) and Gries (2004), the pattern of blends following *short / long* order is to be expected. In the context of blended ship names, this result suggests that fans

might, consciously or unconsciously, follow linguistic structural patterns that favor longer second source words, potentially for the same reasons Hamans and Gries put forth: to maximize recognizability of the second source word and better fit the prosodic structure.

However, this does not account for the number of blended ship names that follow the *equal* order, and the minor difference of 4.4% between the *equal* and *short / long* length orders indicates that the length of a source word alone cannot fully account for name ordering in blended ship names, and in blends in general. As Hamans (2021) notes, the length of source words is only one of several structural constraints shaping blend formation, and other factors may override its influence. DiGirolamo (2012) identifies onset complexity as a relevant factor in fandom-specific blends, as preserving the more complex onset between source words boosts recognizability. These findings, along with the data, suggest that multiple factors interact to influence blend structure. Although having a longer second source word in terms of syllable count is clearly an important consideration, as *short / long* ship names outweigh *long / short* ship names, it is not determinative on its own.

In fact, let us examine whether this length-based pattern observed in the overall dataset holds consistently within fandom-specific contexts. Consider the plot below in Figure 10 displaying the distribution of ship names by length order within each fandom:

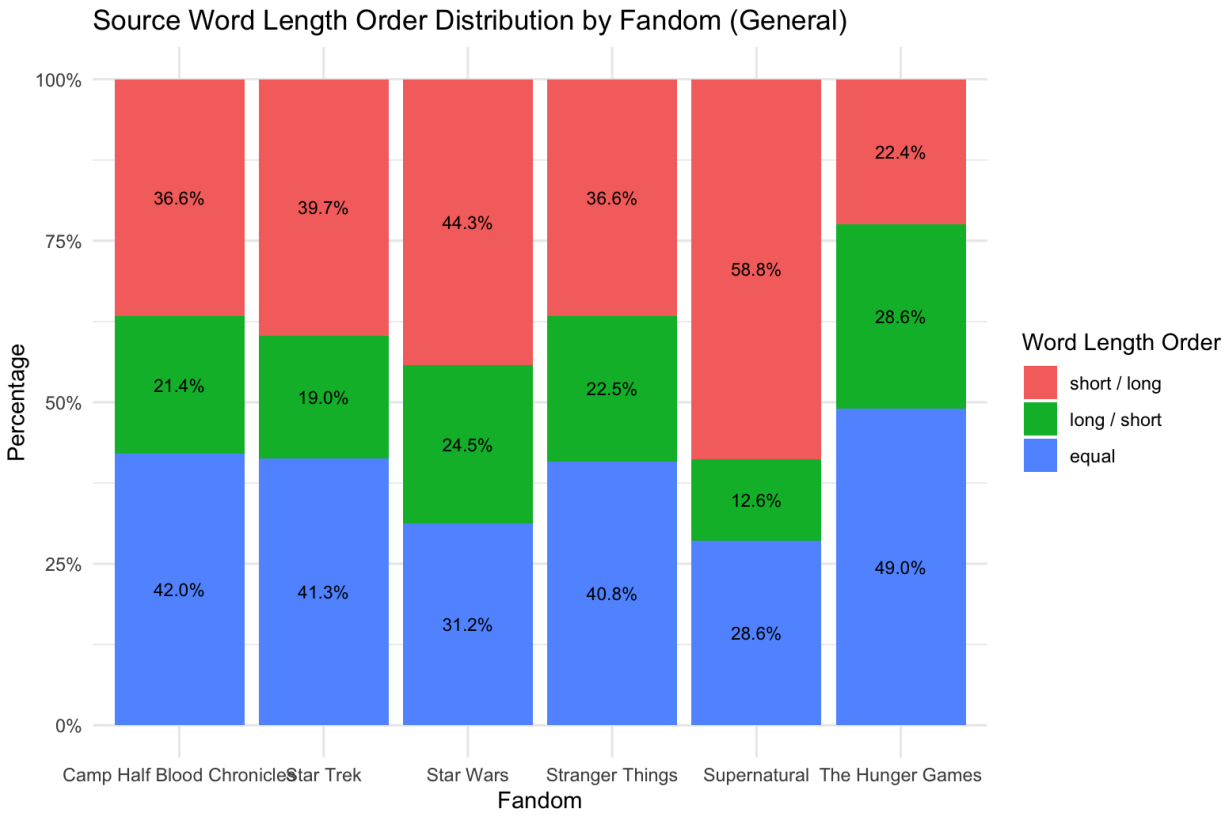
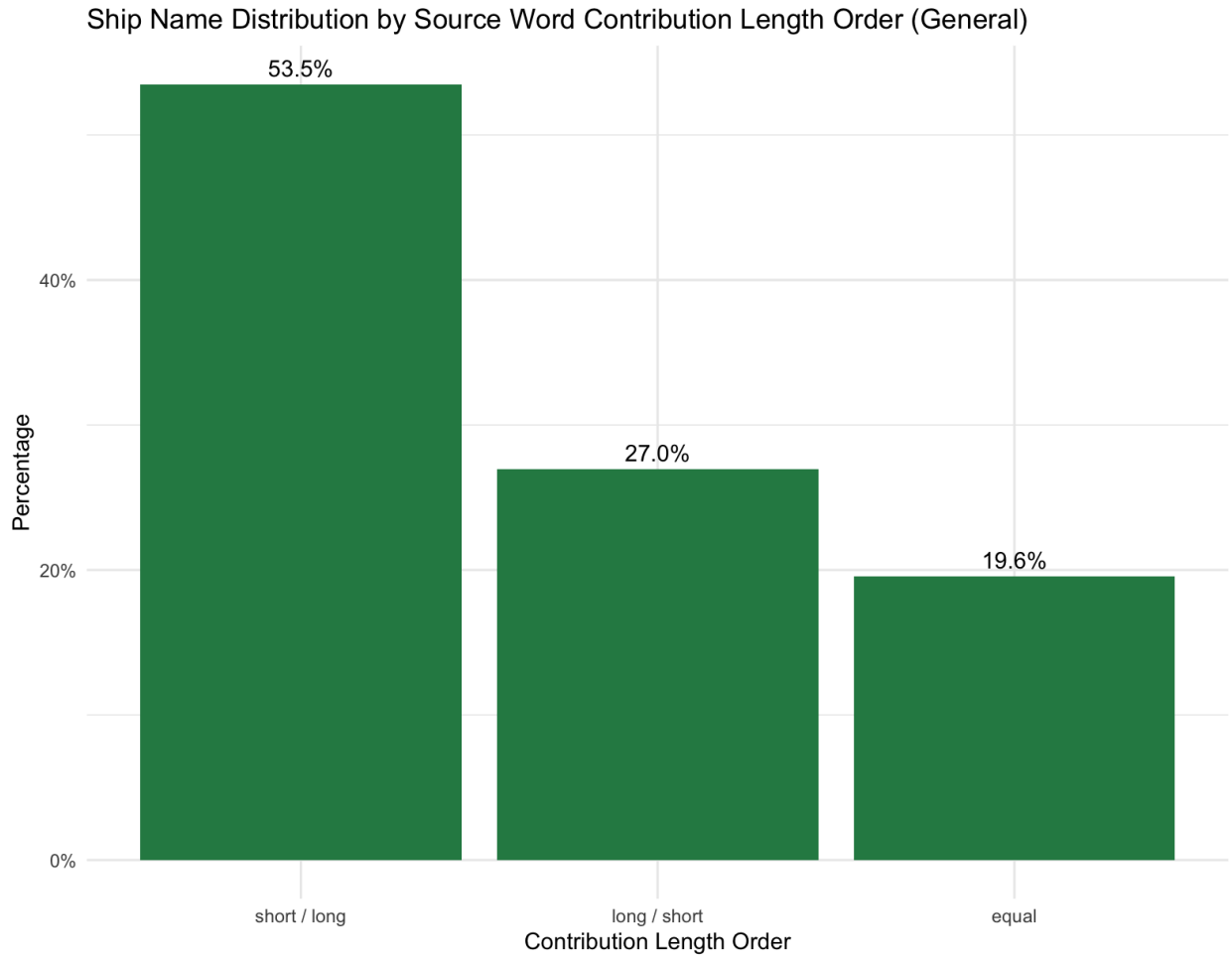


Figure 10: Distribution of ship names by Source Word Length Order across Fandoms.

Interestingly enough, the pattern of most ship names following a length order of *short / long* does not persist across all fandoms. While this is the case for *Star Wars* (*short / long* at 44.3%, *equal* at 31.2%) and *Supernatural* (*short / long* at 58.8%, *equal* at 28.6%), more ship names follow the length order *equal* to *short / long* in the remaining four fandoms. This variation suggests that the asymmetries identified by Hamans and Gries interact with fandom-specific or other linguistic and extralinguistic factors. In situations where the character names have the same number of syllables, or where other rules come into play, the *short / long* length order may be overridden. These differences reinforce the need to consider the

intersection of multiple factors to examine how interacting constraints influence name order in blended ship names.

Now, the relative contribution length of each source word. This is determined by how many letters each source word contributes to the ship name, and in cases of overlap, the letters are double-counted, once for each source word[18]. The distribution is presented Figure 11 below:



[18] For example, *winchambers*, a blend of *Winchester* and *Chambers*. The letters *c* and *h* stem from both *Winchester* and *Chambers*. As such, *Winchester* contributes 5 letters and *Chambers* contributes 8 letters even though *winchambers* only has 11 letters. This ship name would be classified as *short / long*.

Figure 11: Distribution of ship names across Source Word Contribution Length (N = 1135).

In stark contrast to the results for syllable length (the values in Figure 9), there is a distinct peak in the *short / long* (53.5%) length order for source word contribution length. This value is nearly double that of the next most frequent length order, *long / short* (27.0%). Compared to the length of the source word, the blended ship names in this dataset have a stronger tendency to follow the linguistic constraint of the second source word contributing more material to the final blend, aligning with Hamans's and Gries's observations.

Notably, this tendency holds across the individual fandoms. Consider, now, the following Figure 12:

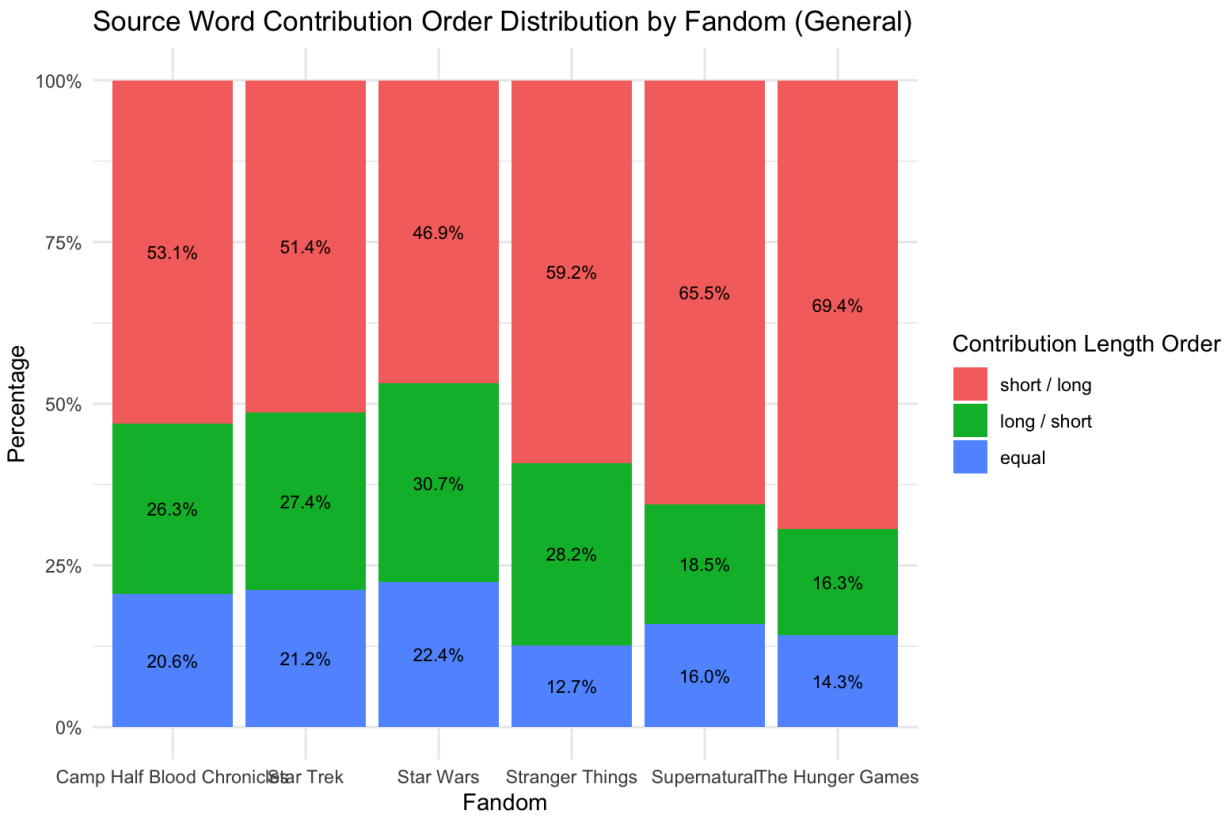


Figure 12: Distribution of ship names by Source Word Contribution Length Order across Fandoms.

Even across fandoms, the the *short / long* length order dominates, indicating that more of this dataset adheres to the linguistic constraint of source word contribution length than just source word length.

4.1.1.2 Stress Pattern Match

Stress assignment based on the stress pattern of source words also plays a key role in blend formation. Hamans (2021) notes that blends typically match the stress pattern of the second source word, particularly when it is longer, aligning with the general tendency for the second source word serving as the semantic head of the blend. However, he also observes counterexamples to this rule: when the second source word is shorter, and especially when it is monosyllabic, blends may instead match the stress pattern of the first source word. DiGirolamo's (2012) study of fandom ship names further complicates the picture, showing that the stress pattern of blends often reflects a combination of those of both source words rather than straightforward copying from one or the other.

This subsection examined the stress patterns of blended ship names to see whether they matched that of one, both, or neither source word(s). Consider the plot in Figure 13 below, showcasing the distribution of ship names by stress match across the dataset.

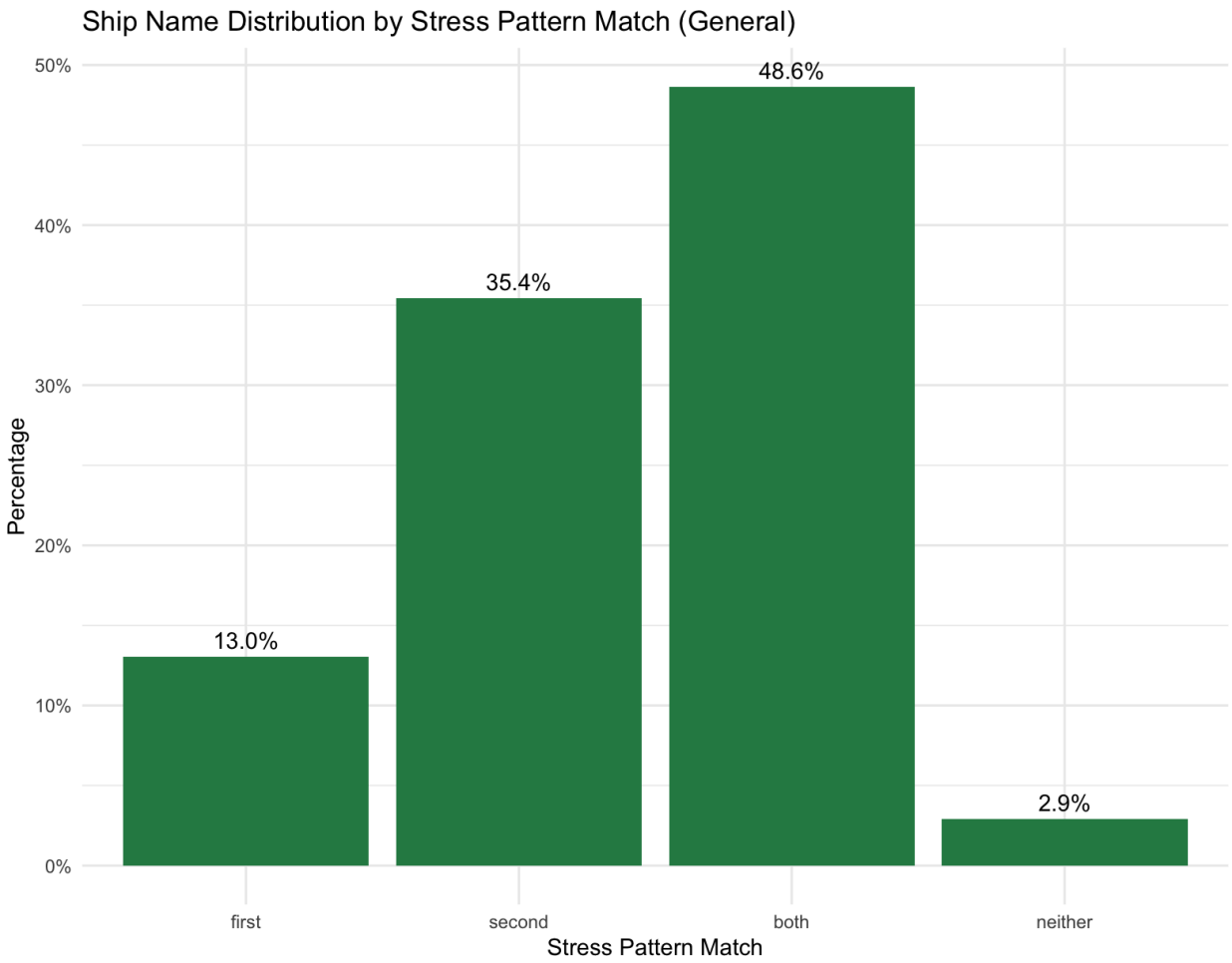


Figure 13: Distribution of ship names across Stress Pattern Match (N = 1135).

Figure 13 indicates that both Hamans's and DiGirolamo's claims about blends' stress patterns hold in the current dataset. The ship names that follow the stress pattern of both source words dominate (48.6%) with those that follow that of the second source word (35.4%) also taking up a sizable portion of the dataset. Ship names that follow the stress pattern of the first source word or neither source words number far less in comparison.

Variations in this trend, however, make an appearance when the constraint is examined across fandoms. Consider, now, Figure 14:

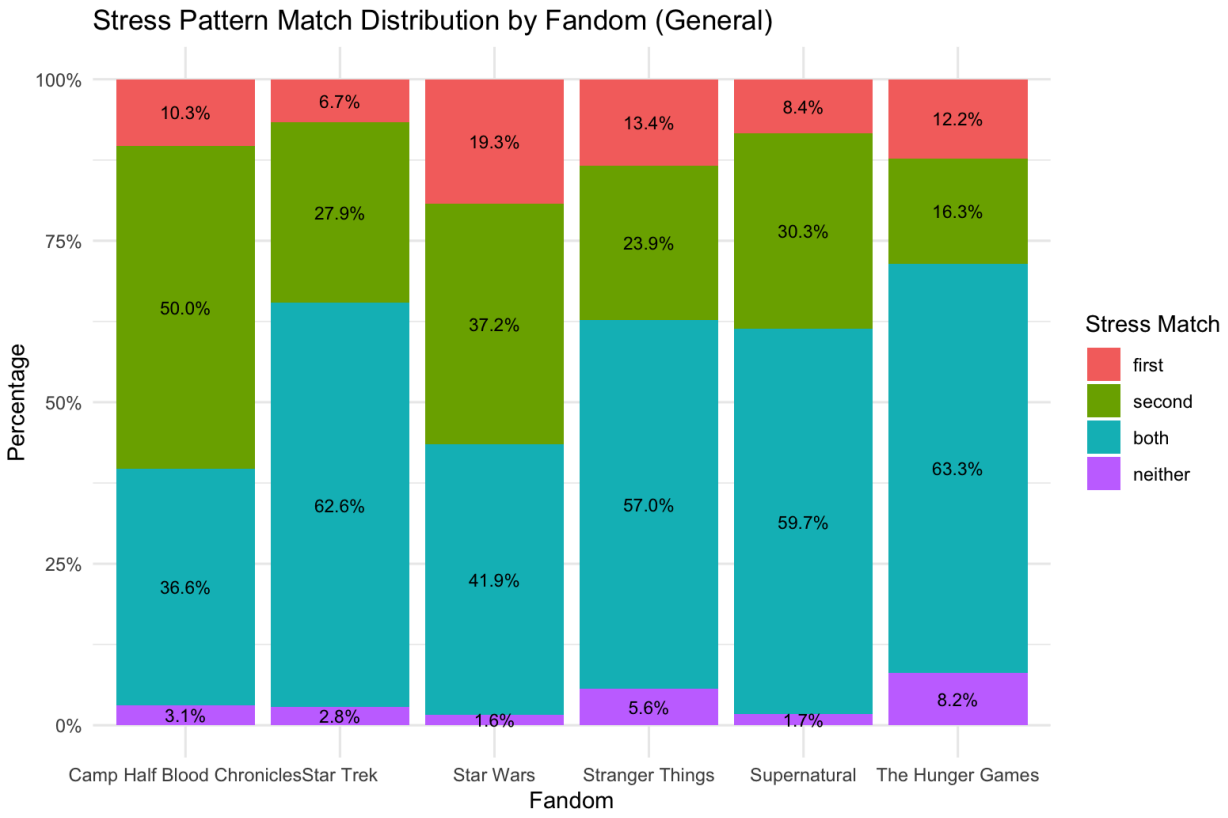


Figure 14: Distribution of ship names by Stress Pattern March across Fandoms.

While most fandoms follow the general trend seen in Figure 13 with the ship names that blend the stress pattern of both source words dominating. However, there is a notable deviation in the *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* fandom with 13.4% more ship names following the stress pattern of the second source word than those that blend the stress patterns of both source words. A quick look at the data reveals that a large portion of the ship names in this fandom are various pairings of deities of Greek, Norse, and Egyptian Mythology. Compared to the vast majority of the dataset that is composed of names with American-English pronunciations and stress patterns, as all source media are American media, the names of mythological beings from other parts of the world tend to behave a little differently. As such, it is to be

expected that there is a deviance from the norm when these names are in an abundance.

4.1.1.3 Complex Onset Preservation

Another linguistic factor that influences blend formation, and one that DiGirolamo (2012) argues is the primary determinant of name order in blended ship names, is onset complexity. Her findings show that blends typically preserve the more complex onset (i.e., a consonant cluster over a simple consonant, or any consonant over a vowel-initial syllable) to increase recognizability of source words. In the case of two source words with onsets of similar complexity, either onset may be preserved. To investigate whether blended ship names in this dataset preserve onset-complexity as observed in previous work, I analyzed the onset of the source words and determined whether this influences the structure of the resulting blend.

The frequency distribution of whether blended ship names preserve the more complex onset is shown in Figure 15:

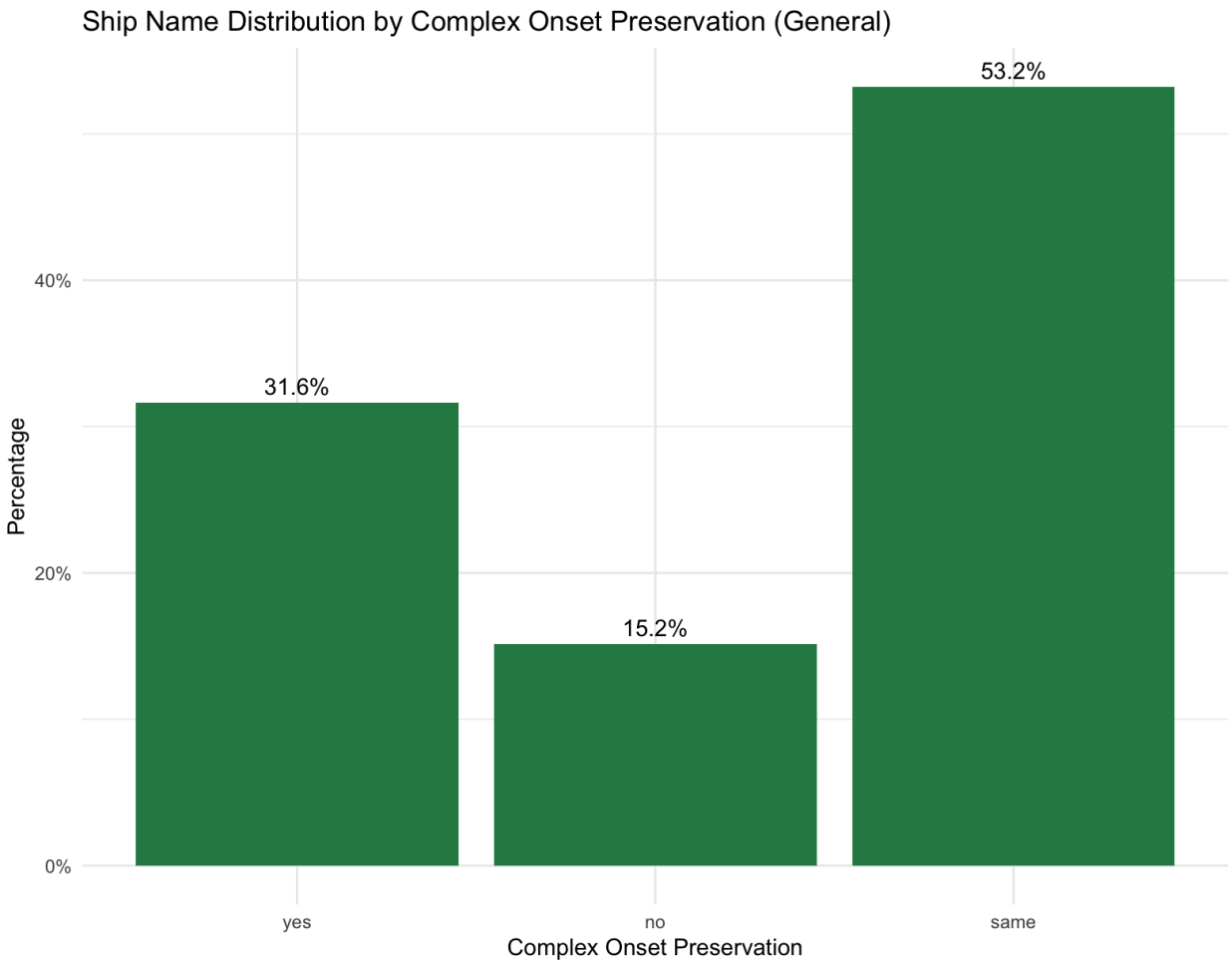


Figure 15: Distribution of ship names across Complex Onset Preservation (N = 1135).

A large number of ship names in the dataset fall into the category *same* (53.2%), such that the source words have similar onset complexity. For a more focused analysis, the remainder of the section examined only ship names where a choice was made: preserving the complex onset (*yes*) or not preserving it (*no*). The frequency distribution of the filtered dataset is displayed in Figure 16:

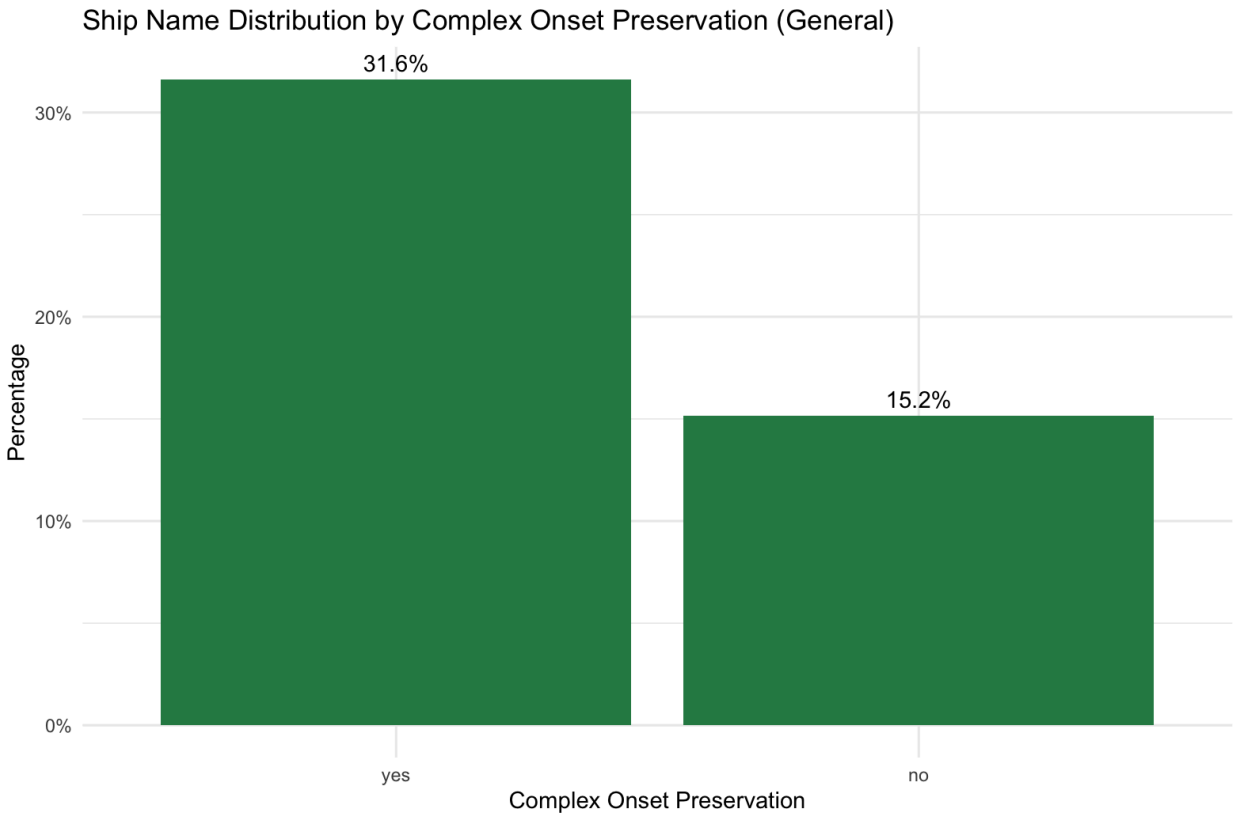


Figure 16: Distribution of ship names across Complex Onset Preservation filtered for *yes* and *no* (N = 531).

As can be seen, Figure 16 showcases how the number of ship names that preserve the complex onset (31.6%) when possible is more than double the number that do not (15.2%). This indicates that complex onset is a rather prevalent linguistic constraint actively followed within the fandom community. The consistency of this tendency across individual fandoms can be seen in Figure 17:

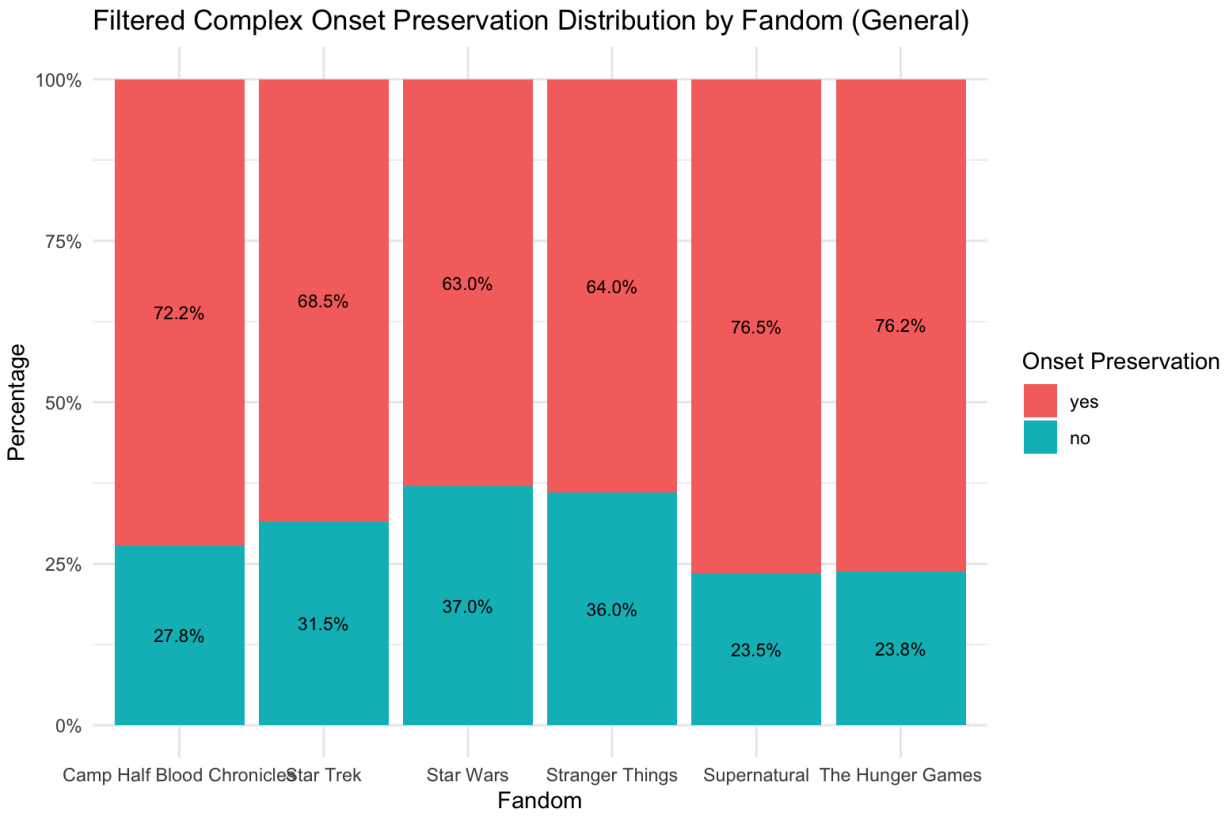


Figure 17: Distribution of ship names by Complex Onset Preservation across Fandoms filtered for *yes* and *no*.

This tendency to preserve the complex onset holds up consistently across fandoms, indicating that the dataset appears to align closely with DiGirolamo's observations of complex onset preservation. The cross-variable analysis in Section 4.1.3 examines what factors contribute to the minority percentage of ship names that override existing linguistic constraints and do not preserve complex onset.

4.1.2 Extralinguistic Factors

After examining a series of linguistic factors that contribute to the structure of blended ship names, this next section dives into several extralinguistic factors:

character gender, narrative importance, and from which part of the character's name their contribution to the blended ship name stems.

4.1.2.1 Character Gender

We begin with an investigation as to whether patterns based on the gender of characters impact the structure of blended ship names. To do so, I focused on the categories in the *gender order* column that pair characters of different genders: *woman / man*, *man / woman*, *woman / other*, *other / woman*, *man / other*, and *other / man*. In the following subsection, I examined the count and distribution of blended ship names and considered how these distributions may reflect broader sociocultural norms of gender. Consider the plot below in Figure 18, which displays the frequency distribution of ship names by gender order:

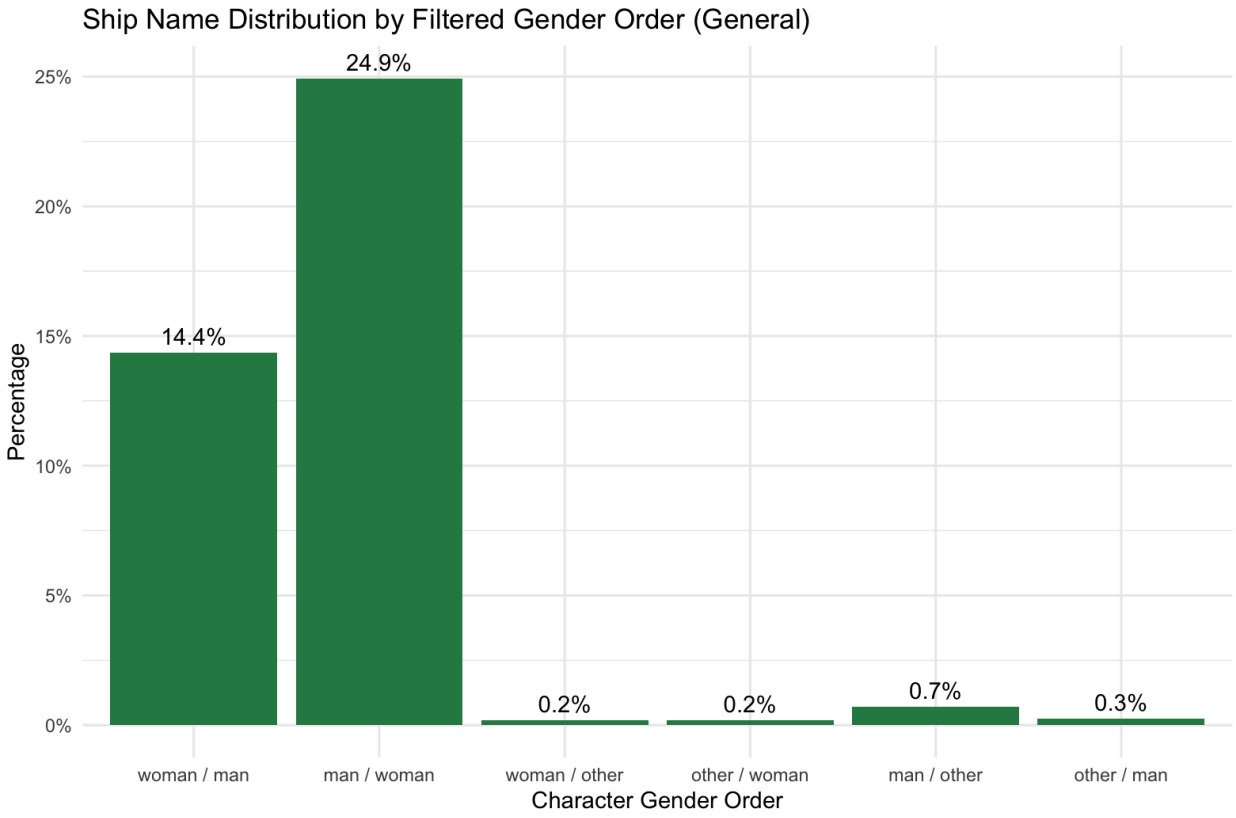


Figure 18: Frequency Distribution of ship names by Character Gender Order filtered for pairs of different gender (N = 461).

For the most common pairing shown in the table, heterosexual ships, there is a notable difference in the ordering distribution: the number of ship names that follow the *man / woman* order (24.9%) being 10% higher than the amount that follow the *woman / man* order (14.4%). This asymmetry suggests that there is a tendency toward masculine-first ordering in the realm of F/M ship names, but this may not necessarily reflect a prioritization of male characters.

The existing literature on blend formation has noted that holding the initial position as the first source word can indicate prioritization, such as preserving a more complex onset. At the same time, final positioning as the second source word can also indicate prioritization, such as providing more material or serving as the semantic head. Therefore, while there is a slight tendency for male-first ship names, whether this truly reflects a prioritization of the male character in the couple is difficult to determine based on this graph alone. As these possibilities prioritize different source words, the data will have to be examined alongside other factors to determine if the masculine-first ordering genuinely prioritizes the male character's name in the blended ship name.

Despite the uncertainty, it is still important to consider how this pattern holds within each fandom as shown in Figure 19 below.

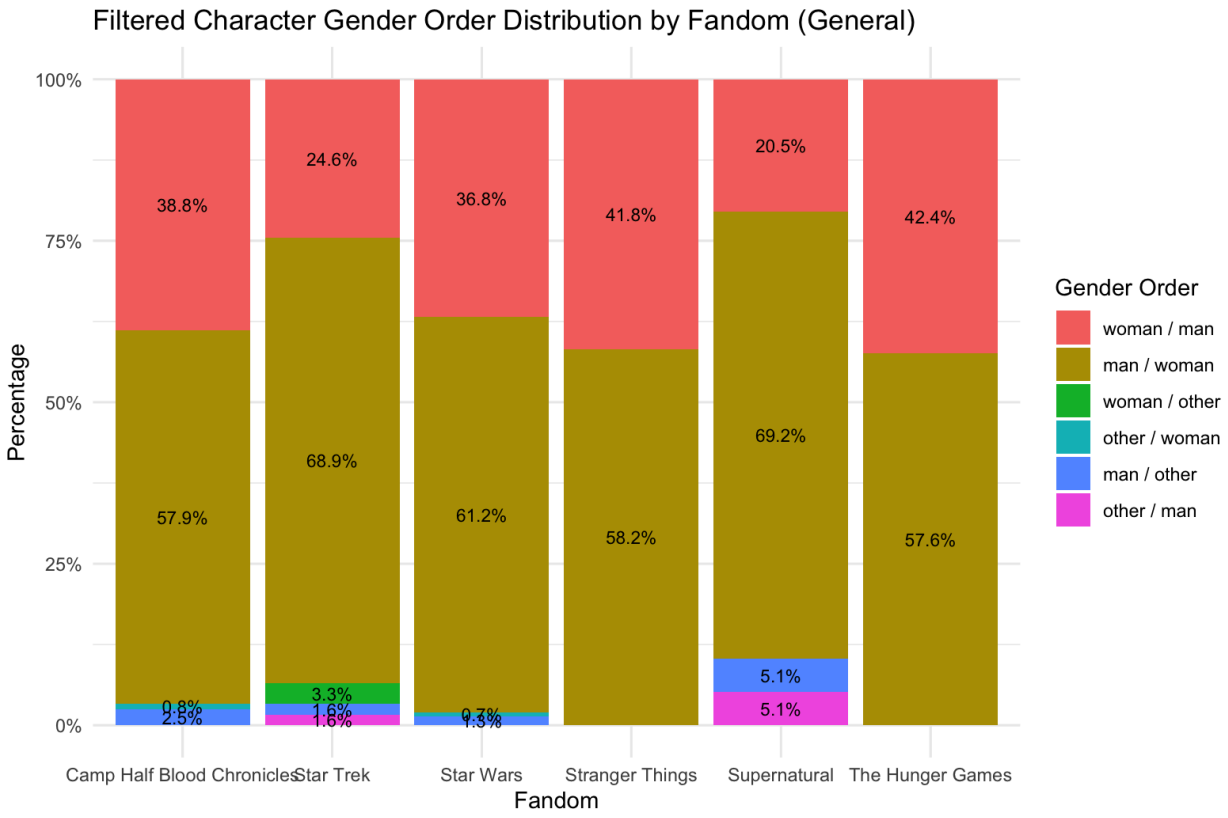


Figure 19: Frequency Distribution of ship names by Character Gender Order across Fandoms filtered for pairs of different gender.

As can be seen, the pattern of ship names following the *man / woman* order outweighing the ship names that follow the *woman / man* order is consistent across individual fandoms. Of the ship names that make up pairings of different genders, the distinction between those that follow the *man / woman* order and the *woman / man* order is especially notable in *Star Trek* (*man / woman* at 68.9%, *woman / man* at 24.6%) and *Supernatural* (*man / woman* at 69.2%, *woman / man* at 20.5%). Both fandoms have a difference of at least 40%, which is much higher than the other fandoms.

In *Supernatural*, a variety of factors come into play. First, the main characters of *Supernatural* are both men with monosyllabic names, Sam and Dean. When taking into consideration the linguistic constraints described in Section 4.1.1 by Hamans and Gries, where the shorter source word is often placed first, it is to be expected that their names are more often relegated to the initial position. Second, as protagonists of the show, it is also to be expected that the names of the two characters are often blended with many others, leading to an influx of ship names that reinforces a masculine-first ordering.

Star Trek features military or rank-based addresses, and the captain, often a man, is arguably the most recognizable element of the television series. Paired with the fact that *Star Trek* is a much older fandom, it may more strongly reflect a societal norm where the male character's name is placed first by default.

4.1.2.2 Narrative Importance

The narrative importance of a character within a fandom's source media may also influence the structure of blended ship names with fans finding ways to prioritize or center the names of protagonists or characters with more screen time. The following subsection considers whether the order of names correlates with the narrative centrality of a character, examining whether fans implicitly encode character importance into the structure of blended ship names.

The distribution of ship names based on the narrative importance of the two characters is shown in Figure 20:

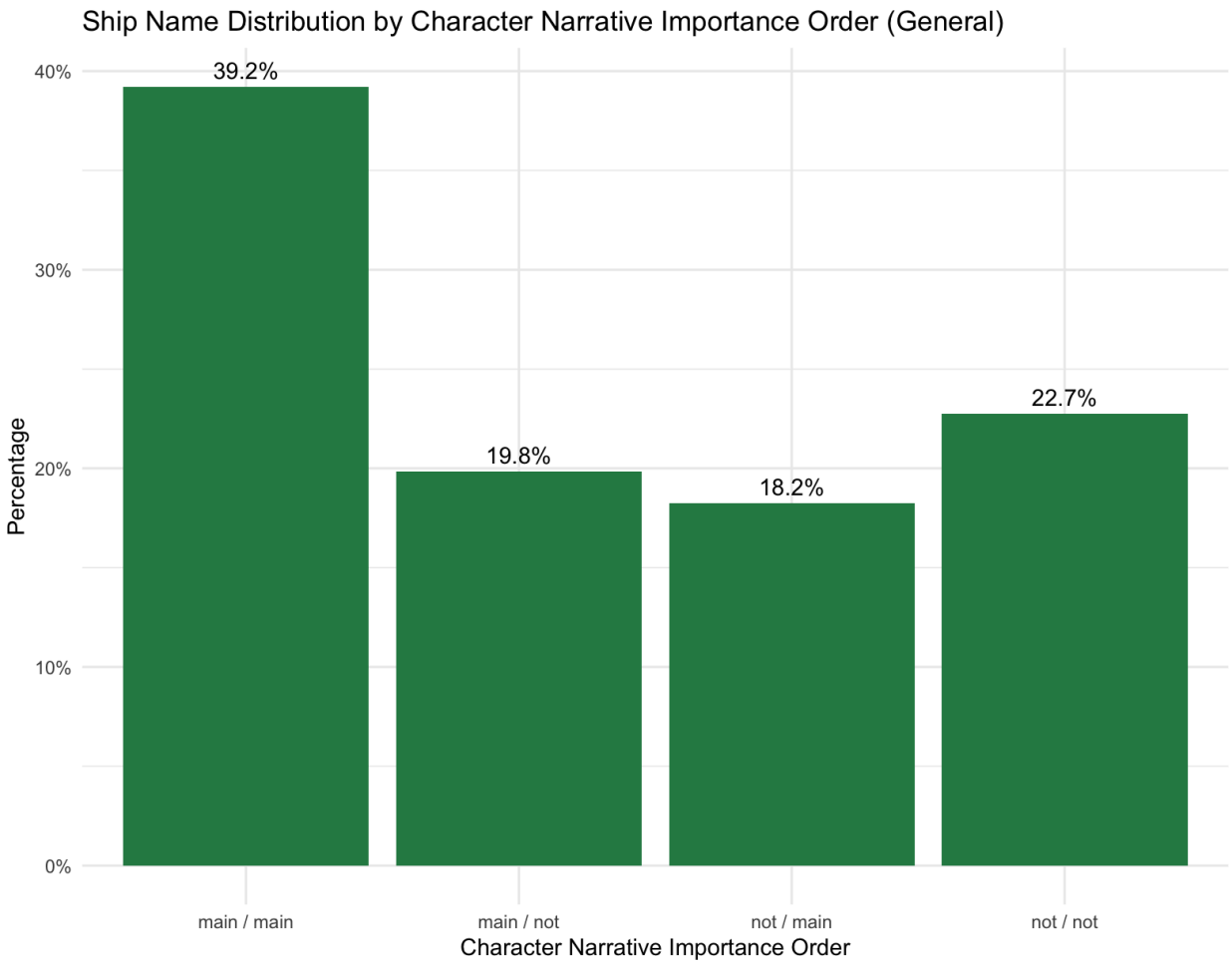


Figure 20: Frequency Distribution of ship names by Character Narrative Importance Order (N = 1135).

As can be seen in Figure 20, the distribution indicates that ship names composed of two main characters are the most frequent category (39.2%). The two categories that blend the names of main characters with that of other characters, *main / not* and *not / main*, are highly balanced at 19.8% and 18.2% respectively. As such, this graph shows that there is no significant overall preference for placing the protagonist's name first or last.

The pattern of ordering, however, is highly dependent on the context and narrative of each fandom as something slightly more interesting appears when taking a look at how this pattern falls across fandoms in Figure 21:

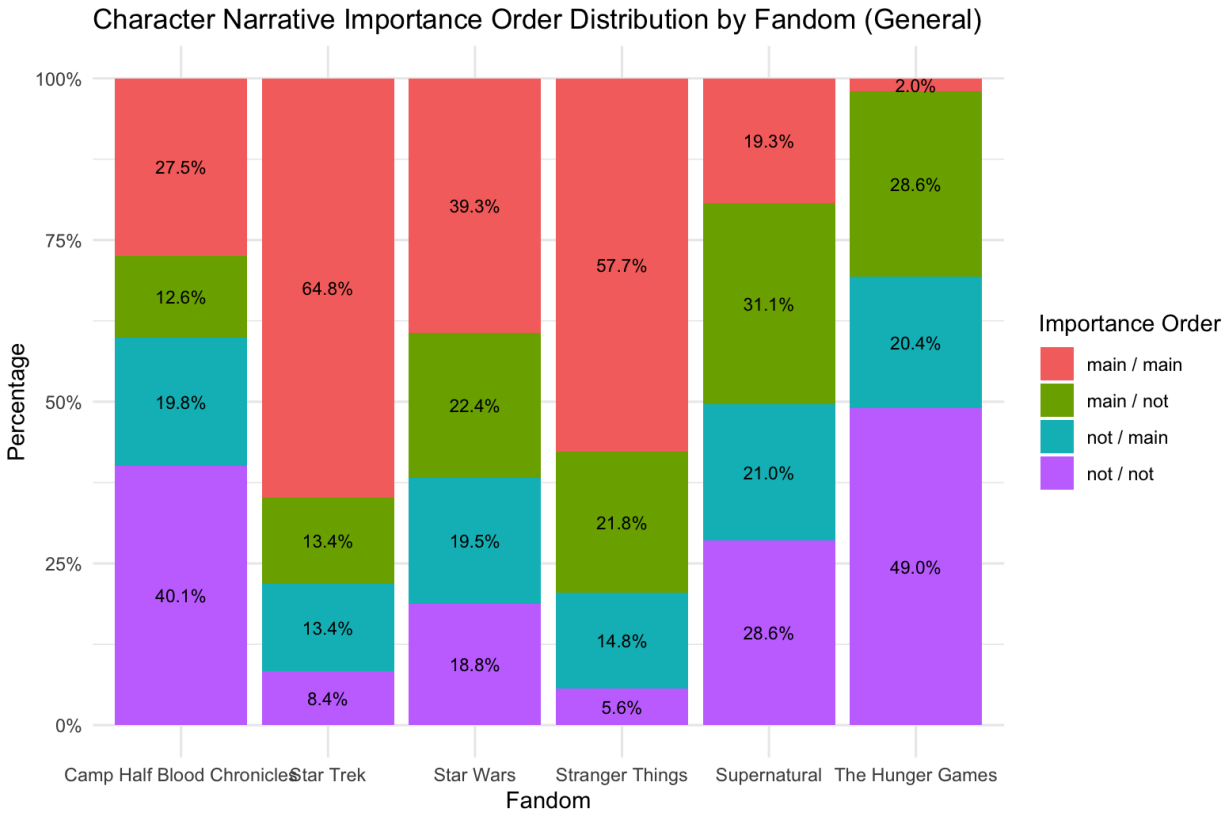


Figure 21: Frequency Distribution of ship names by Character Narrative Importance Order across Fandoms.

The pattern of pairings between main characters dominating the subset persists in the *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and *Stranger Things* fandoms. However, in the *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* and *The Hunger Games* fandoms, pairings between non-protagonist characters are most prevalent, while pairings between a main character and a non-main character is most common in the *Supernatural* fandom.

In *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, and *Stranger Things*, there are multiple seasons with extensive casts and a long list of main characters to pull from. This likely explains why these three fandoms re-create the pattern seen in Figure 20. The *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* fandom also has quite a few main characters, but not as many as the supporting characters, especially not when data sources seemed to delight in pairing every possible deity of Greek, Norse, and Egyptian Mythology with each other despite them playing predominantly supporting roles in the source media. As for *Supernatural* and *The Hunger Games*, the roster of main characters is very limited, with eight in *Supernatural* and three in *The Hunger Games*.

The absence of any distinction between the *main / not* and *not / main* categories in the overall dataset suggests that the narrative importance of a character alone is not a strong determinant of name order and structure in blended ship names.

4.1.2.3 Source Word Origin

While not an extralinguistic constraint I had initially planned to analyze, I observed a pattern in the dataset regarding the part of the character's name used in the blend. That is, whether the source word a character contributed was their given name, family name, some sort of alternative name (e.g., title, nickname), full name, or none of the above.

The distribution of ship names across various combinations of source word origin is displayed in Figure 22 below. The possible categories are: *given / given*, *given / family*, *given / alt*, *given / full*, *given / none*, *family / given*, *family / family*, *family / alt*, *family / none*, *alt / given*, *alt / alt*, *none / given*, and *none / none*. If there is a

combination of these categories that is not listed, that is because there were no ship names made up of that pairing.

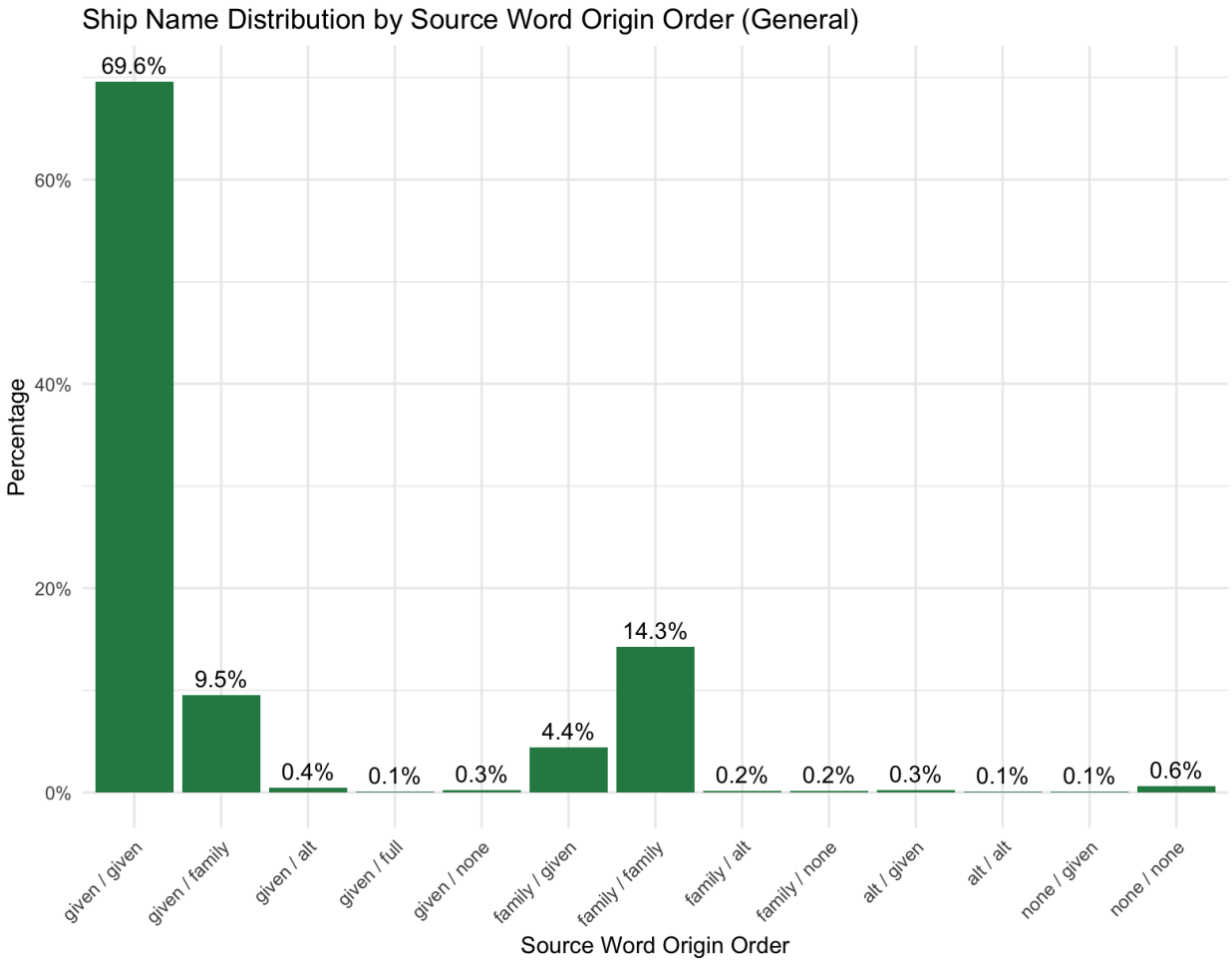


Figure 22: Frequency Distribution of ship names by Origin of Corresponding Source Word (N = 1135).

As shown in Figure 22, the data overwhelmingly aligns with the brief observation that sparked this analysis, though it exceeded my expectations by a large margin. Nearly 70% of all ship names are blends composed of the characters' given names (*given / given*), with all other combinations falling far behind. This graph showcases a

key convention in ship name formation: fans primarily refer to and associate characters with their given names, and this is reflected in the blending process.

Whether this pattern holds across fandoms is another matter entirely, and the distribution is showcased in Figure 23 below:

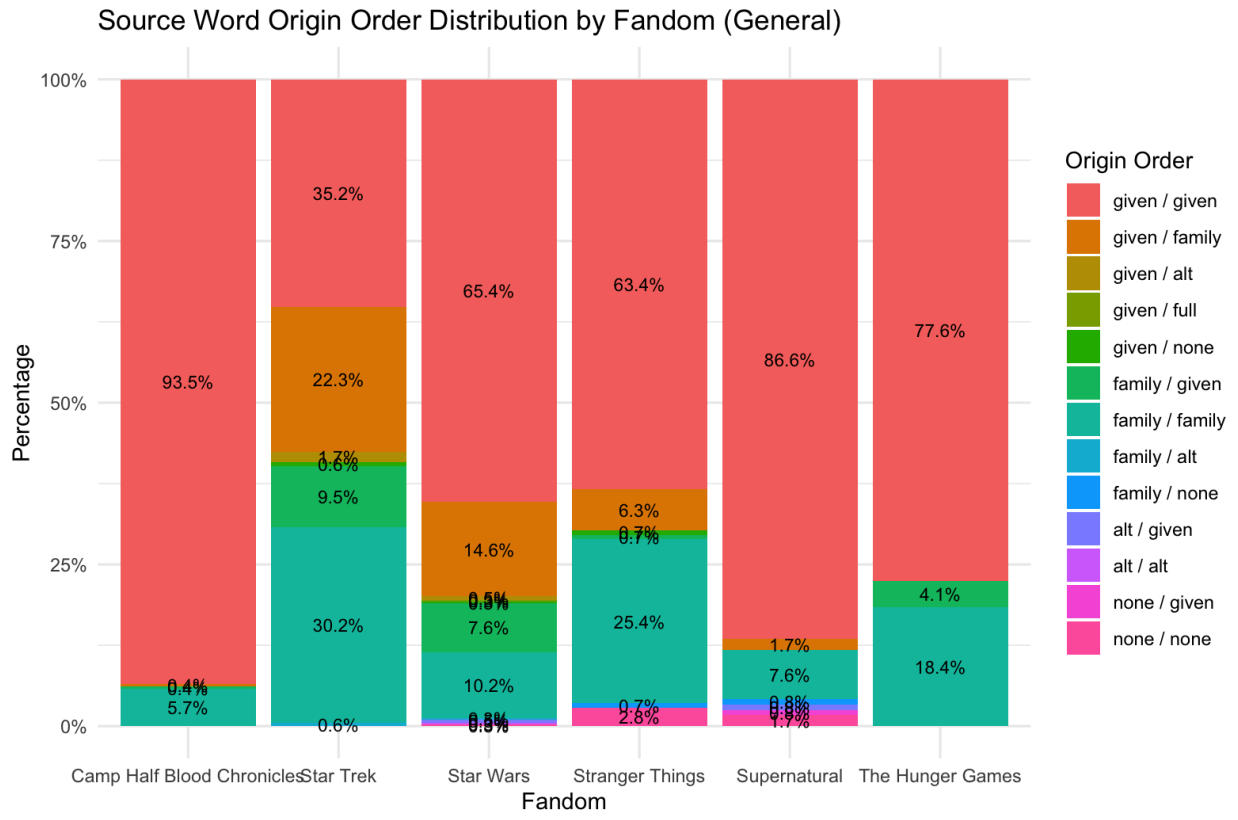


Figure 23: Frequency Distribution of ship names by Origin of Corresponding Source Word across Fandoms.

As can be seen, ship names formed from the characters' given names are prominent across all fandoms, with the exception of *Star Trek*. Interestingly enough, the amount of ship names blended from the characters' family names takes up a percentage greater than 15% in the *Stranger Things* (25.4%) and *The Hunger Games* (18.4%) fandoms as well.

In *The Hunger Games*, many popular pairings are blends of characters' family names, which may have set a precedent that evolved into a fandom norm. In *Stranger Things*, many main characters are addressed by their family name in everyday dialogue and key relationships are often defined by family units, further strengthening the family name as an associated identity.

Star Trek, however, was the most surprising of them all. Although the number of ship names following the *given / given* (35.2%) blend order is still the highest within the fandom, it is far lower in comparison to others. This may be due to how characters in *Star Trek* are commonly addressed by their family names, allowing this portion of their name to become their primary identifier.

The data and analysis in this section highlighted the strong preference for ship names formed from blending the given names of characters. As such, deviations from what could be a community norm are likely reflective of other fandom norms or the interference of other linguistic or extralinguistic constraints.

4.1.3 Cross-Variable Analysis

The graphs presented in Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 are largely descriptive, establishing a baseline for the prevalence of linguistic and extralinguistic factors in blended ship names. While those sections highlighted general trends and tendencies, they did not reveal much on how these constraints interact or which ones are prioritized when they conflict. As such, this section examines pairs of linguistic and extralinguistic factors to determine whether unique patterns of behavior arise for either category of factors. The following subsections investigate the intersection of each linguistic constraint across the selected extralinguistic

constraints with complex onset preservation in section 4.1.3.1 and 4.1.3.2, stress pattern match in section 4.1.3.3, source word length in section 4.1.3.4, and source word contribution length in section 4.1.3.5.

4.1.3.1 Onset Preservation x Narrative Importance Order

In this first subsection, I examined the intersection of the linguistic factor of complex onset preservation and the extralinguistic factor of character narrative importance, curious to see how they interact and whether one overrides the other. To focus on the specific conflict between the two factors, I filtered out the ship names where the source words had similar onset complexity as no constraint applies in those cases. The distribution of complex onset preservation (*yes* or *no*) across character narrative importance is shown in Figure 24:

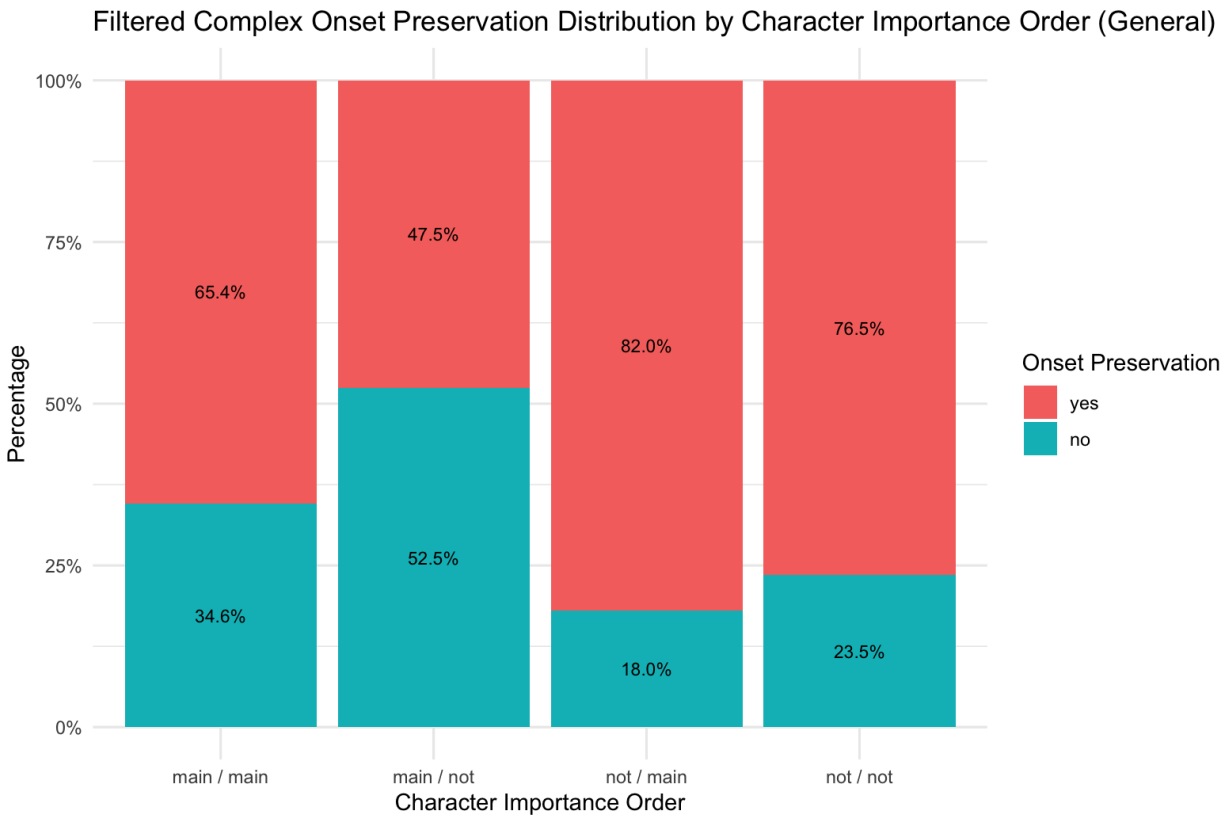


Figure 24: Distribution of Complex Onset Preservation (filtered by *yes* and *no*) across Character Importance Order[19].

As can be seen in Figure 24, the data indicates that in this dataset, the ship names largely adhere to the linguistic constraint of complex onset preservation regardless of the characters' narrative importance. In the *main* / *main*, *not* / *main*, and *not* / *not* categories, the percentage of ship names that preserve complex onset is higher than those who do not by at least 30%. This suggests that in cases where complex onset preservation is possible, this factor is a consistent, default constraint.

However, there is a slight deviation in the *main* / *not* category. In this category, there is a slight preference for not preserving the complex onset (52.5%) over preserving this feature (47.5%). This suggests there is some kind of interaction between complex onset preservation and character narrative importance, albeit very slight, where the extralinguistic preference of placing the protagonist's name first in the blend may occasionally override the linguistic constraint. In other words, fans may choose to order the blend in this manner even if it results in the loss of the complex onset.

To further investigate this interaction, consider Figure 25 below, which showcases a breakdown of ship names that do and do not preserve complex onset:

[19] The unabridged graph can be found in the Appendix in Figure A.1.

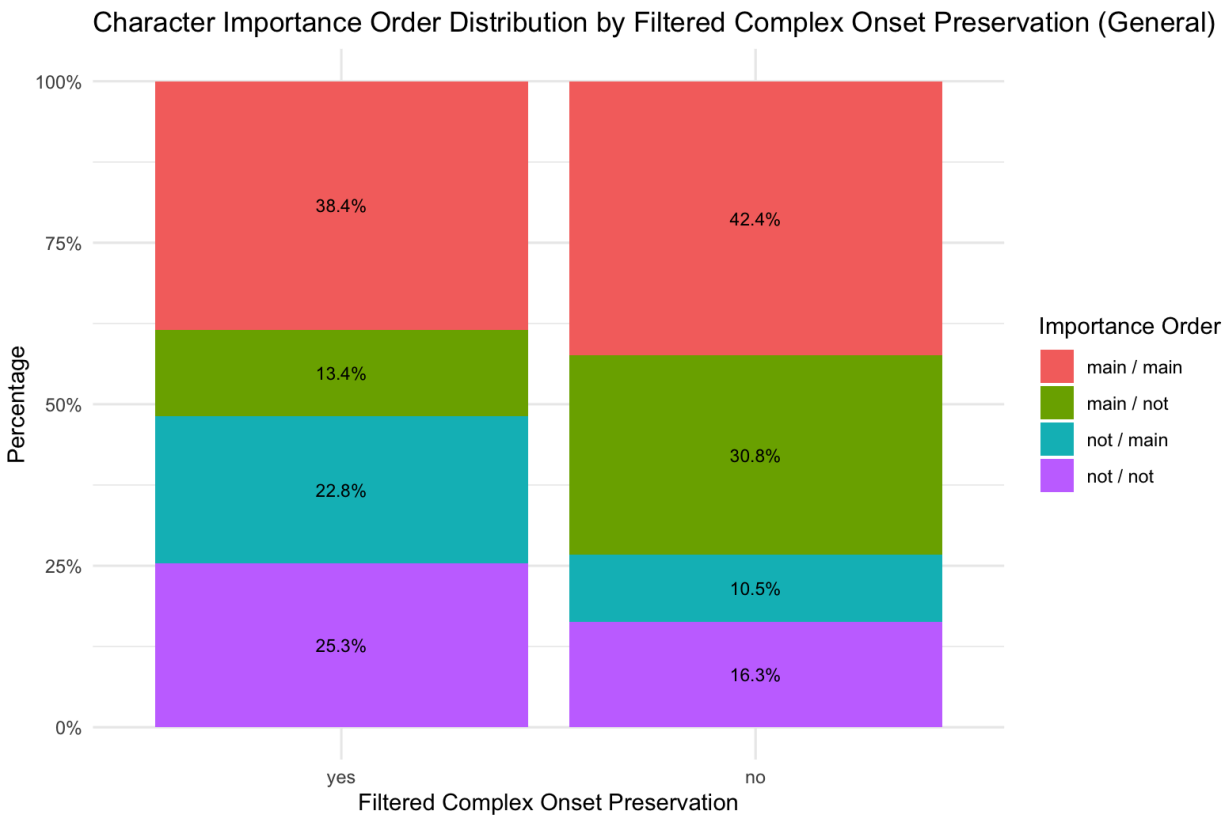


Figure 25: Distribution of Character Narrative Importance Order across Complex Onset Preservation (filtered for *yes* and *no*)[20].

The higher proportion of *main / not* ship names in the *no* category (30.8%) of onset preservation than those in the *yes* category (13.4%) supports the finding from Figure 24 above. Nonetheless, while this data does suggest a slight tendency to order the main character's name first despite violating the linguistic constraint, the minimal difference of 5% prevents a definitive claim from being made.

Moreover, this slight preference must be balanced against the consistency of the rest of the dataset. Recall the distribution of ship names by character narrative importance in Figure 20, reprinted below in Figure 26 for convenience:

[20] The unabridged graph can be found in the Appendix in Figure A.2.

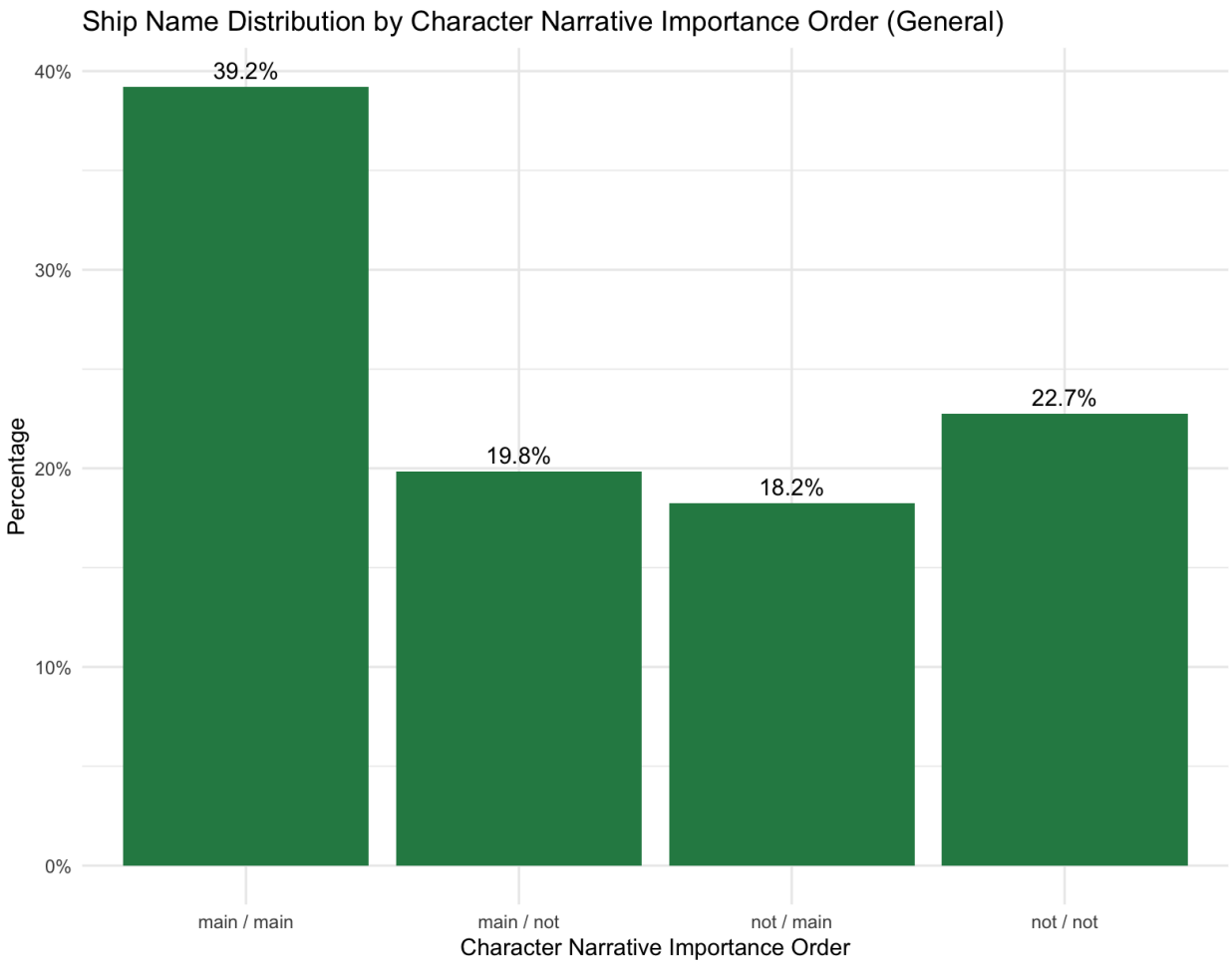


Figure 26: Distribution of ship names across Character Narrative Importance Order (N=1135).

There is a very minimal difference between the number of ship names in the *main / not* category (19.8%) and the *not / main* category (18.2%). Even if the ship names in the *main / not* category have a slight preference for preserving character importance order over complex onset preservation, there are nearly just as many ship names in the *not / main* category that consistently follow the linguistic constraint, despite this category also blending characters of different narrative importance. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the ship names adhere to

complex onset preservation demonstrates that the constraint remains the default, rarely impacted by narrative importance order.

4.1.3.2 Onset Preservation x Other Extralinguistic Factors

In fact, a brief examination of the distribution of complex onset preservation across the other extralinguistic factors revealed that this linguistic constraint is a consistent default within this dataset. Consider, first, the distribution of the linguistic constraint across the extralinguistic factor of gender order in Figure 27:

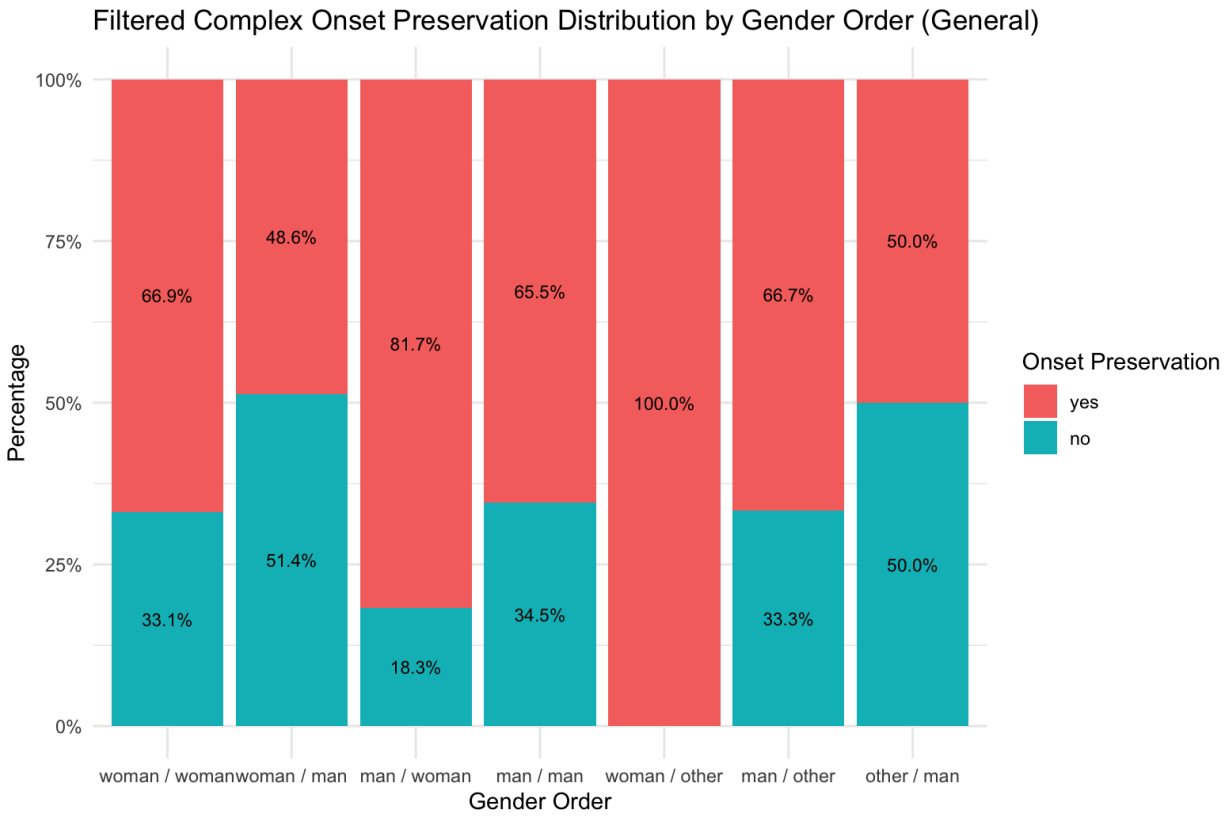


Figure 27: Distribution of Complex Onset Preservation (filtered by *yes* and *no*) across Character Gender Order[21].

When analyzed across various gender pairings, the data shows that ship names predominantly preserve complex onsets with one exception: the *woman / man*

[21] The unabridged graph can be found in the Appendix in Figure A.3.

gender order is the only category that shows a slight reversal, 48.6% of ship names preserve complex onset, 51.4% of ship names do not. Similar to the finding in Section 4.1.3.1, this reversal in expectations suggests a slight tendency of violating the linguistic constraint in this category. Given the less than 3% difference, however, this is not enough to establish gender order as having any impact in the hierarchy of constraints.

Another category, *other / man*, is also distinct in that it is split perfectly between the *yes* and *no* categories. However, Figure 18 in Section 4.1.2.1 shows that this category only holds 0.4% of all ship names in a dataset of 1,135 data points. This eliminates any sort of significance the balanced split may have held.

Consider, next, the distribution of the linguistic constraint across the extralinguistic factor of source word origin order in Figure 28:

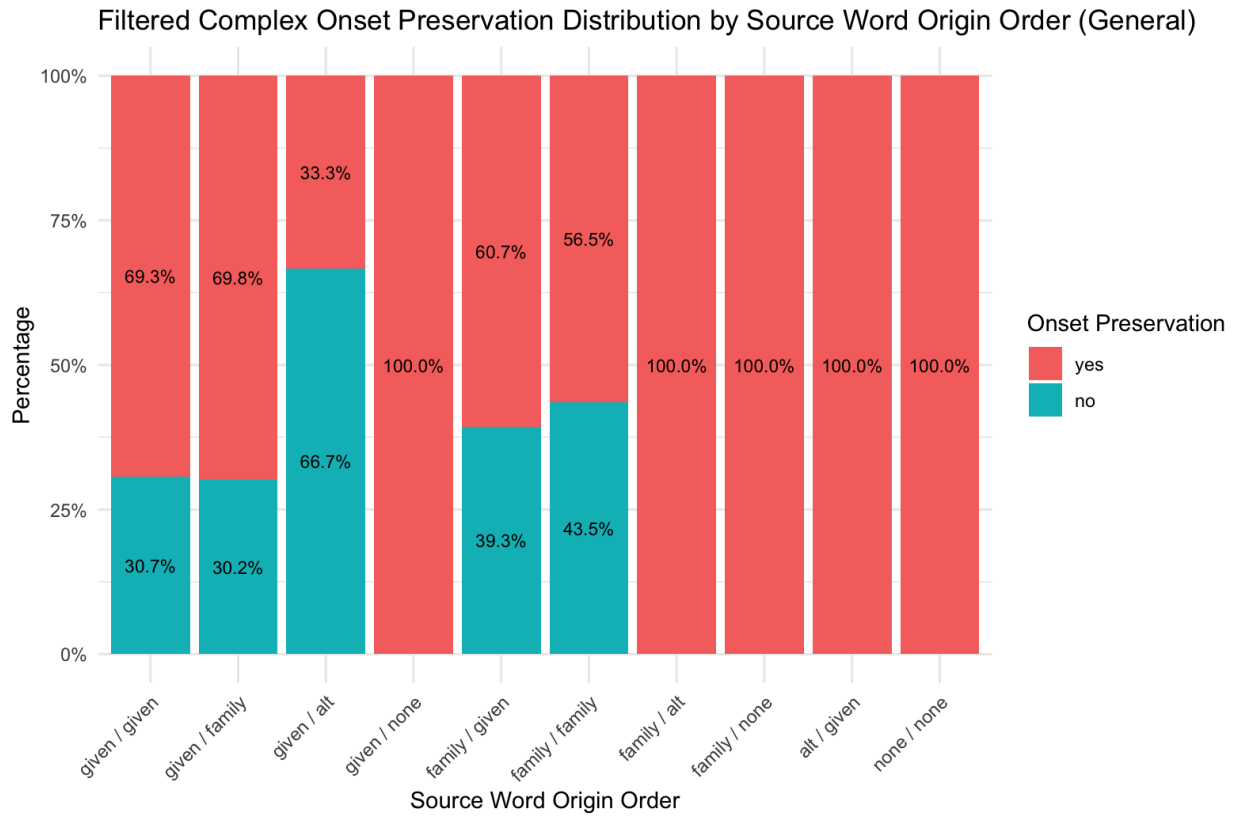


Figure 28: Distribution of Complex Onset Preservation (filtered by *yes* and *no*) across Source Word Origin Order[22].

Once again, the data shows that complex onset preservation dominates, with yet another notable exception: the *given / alt* category shows a rather significant reversal, 33.3% of ship names preserve complex onset, 66.7% do not. However, this category only accounts for 0.4% of the total dataset as seen in Figure 22 in Section 4.1.2.3, and all other categories follow the trend of largely preserving complex onset.

The consistent findings across the three cross-variable analyses (narrative importance, character gender, and source word origin) indicate that in this regard, the linguistic constraint of complex onset preservation heavily outweighs the

[22] The unabridged graph can be found in the Appendix in Figure A.4.

extralinguistic constraints examined in the formation of blended ship names. While there were minor deviations in several categories, they were not substantial enough to demonstrate that their respective extralinguistic factors consistently override the linguistic constraint. Instead, this analysis confirms DiGirolamo's (2012) assertion that complex onset preservation is a key constraint governing blended ship name formation and is rarely violated in favor of other ordering preferences.

4.1.3.3 Stress Match x Extralinguistic Factors

In this next subsection, I examined how the linguistic constraint of stress pattern match intersects with the three extralinguistic factors. Recall that Hamans (2021) observed that blends often match the stress pattern of the second source word, and DiGirolamo (2012) noted that blended ship names usually combined the stress patterns of both source words. This analysis determines whether fan preferences in the form of extralinguistic factors can override the linguistic constraint and disrupt the blended ship name's preferred prosodic structure.

To start, Figure 29 displays the distribution of the linguistic constraint stress pattern match across the extralinguistic constraint of gender order.

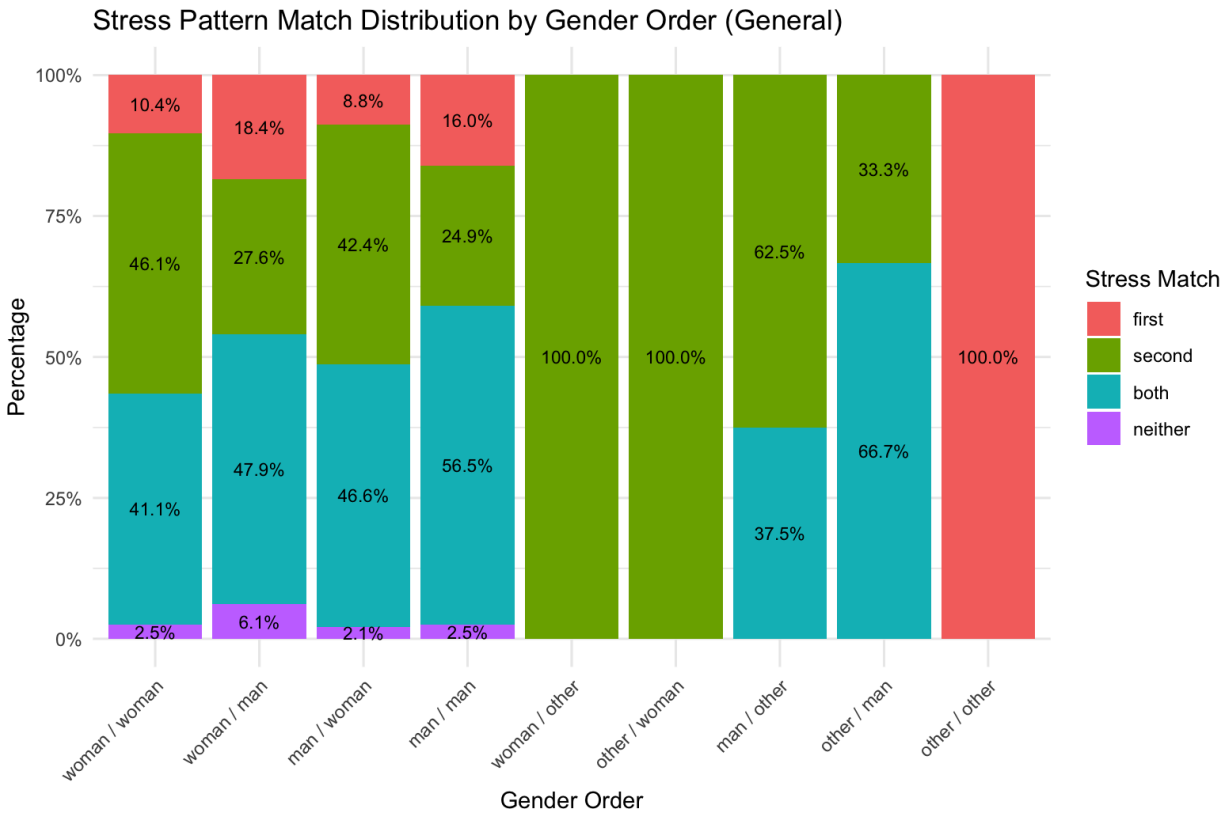


Figure 29: Distribution of Stress Match over Gender Order.

The data in Figure 29 showcases that the stress match categories of *second* and *both* dominate across the board, indicating that the ship names largely adhere to the linguistic constraint regardless of gender order. The single outlier in the *other / other* category is due to it holding less than 1% of all ship names. The analysis confirms that gender order does not override the need for stress pattern matching.

Next, in Figure 30, is the distribution of the same linguistic constraint over the extralinguistic constraint of character importance order:

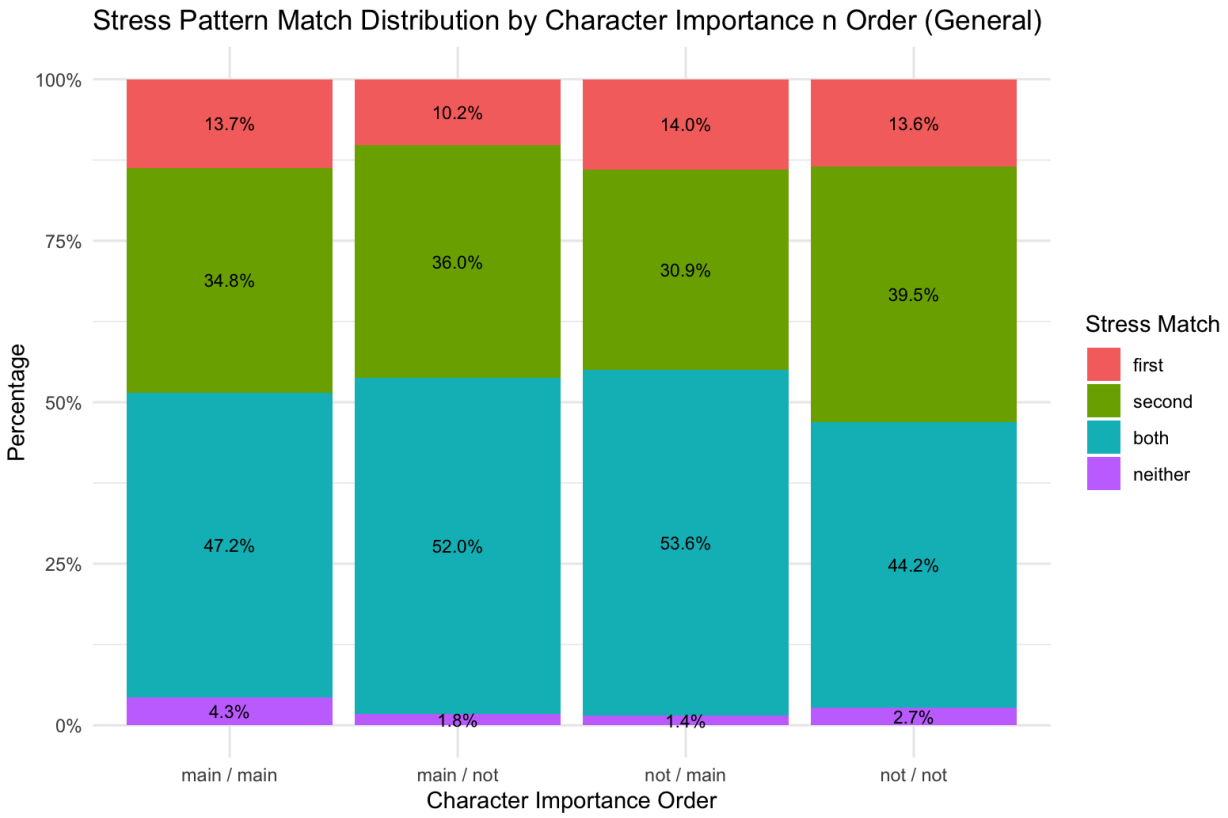


Figure 30: Distribution of Stress Match over Character Importance Order.

The distribution of stress pattern match by character importance order also displays a dominance of the *second* and *both* categories across the board. This consistency across all categories indicates that having a well-formed prosodic structure by adhering to the linguistic constraint of stress pattern match is prioritized over the extralinguistic constraint of narrative importance order.

Finally, consider the distribution of stress match over source word origin order in Figure 31 below:

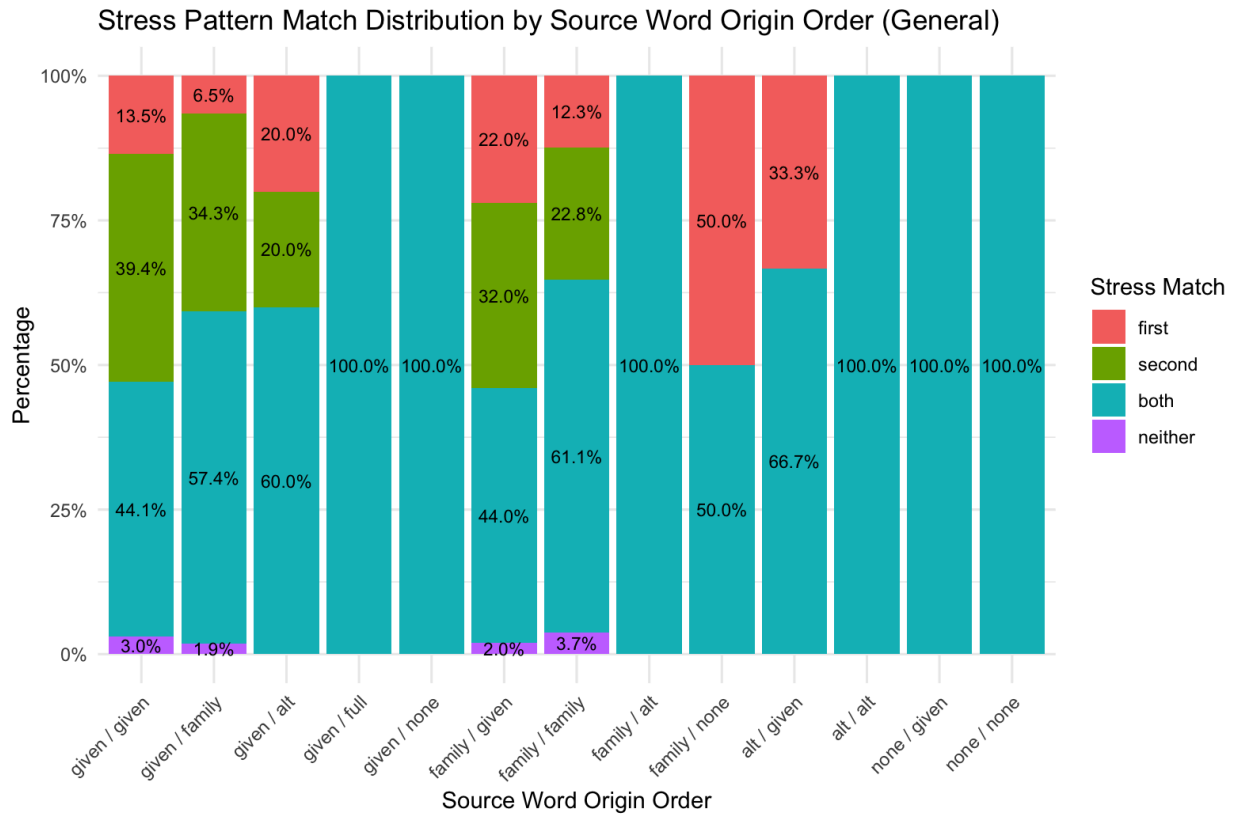


Figure 31: Distribution of Stress Match over Source Word Origin Order.

The data in Figure 31 showcases the prevalence of the *second* and *both* categories. The analysis once again demonstrates that the source word origin order does not override the linguistic constraint of stress matching.

Collectively, the findings across all three cross-variable analyses confirm that stress pattern match is a prominent linguistic constraint that the majority of the dataset adheres to, and that the structural integrity of the blend is rarely compromised in favor of the extralinguistic factors explored in this study.

4.1.3.4 Word Length x Extralinguistic Factors

This next cross-variable subsection examines the intersection of the linguistic constraint of relative source word length and the extralinguistic constraints of character gender, narrative importance, and source word origin.

Recall that Hamans (2021) and Gries (2004) noted that the second source word of blends tends to be longer, as it usually took on the role of semantic head. However, an examination of the distribution of ship names across word length order alone in Figure 9 of Section 4.1.1.1 did not reveal any significant trends as there were nearly as many pairs of source words that were equal in length as there were that followed the *short* / *long* length order. As such, I plotted the distribution of extralinguistic factors across word length order to see if patterns arise.

Consider the next three graphs in Figures 32, 33, and 34. They respectively showcase the extralinguistic factors of character gender order, narrative importance, and source word origin across the linguistic factor of source word length order.

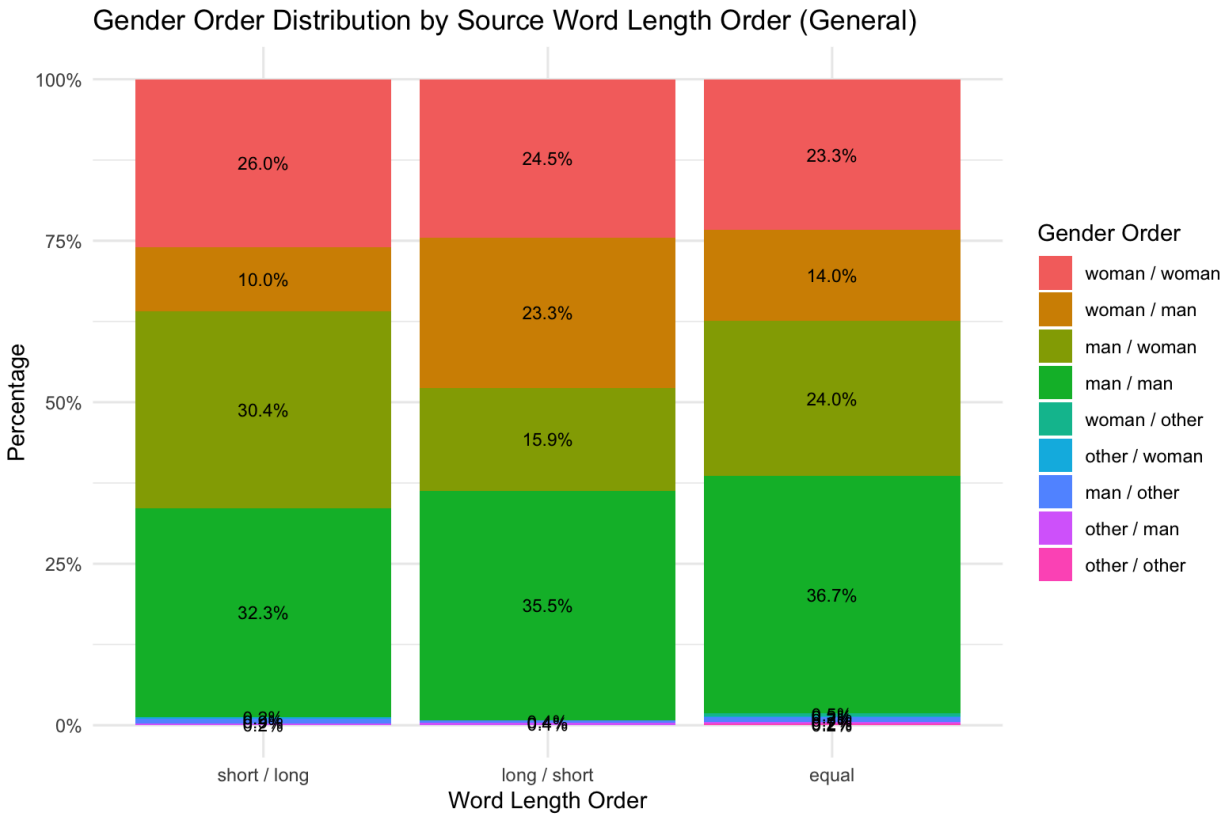


Figure 32: Distribution of Character Gender Order across Source Word Length Order.

As can be seen in Figure 32, the data is rather balanced across the graph with the sole exception of the *woman / man* and *man / woman* categories in the *long / short* column. This deviation suggests there is a preference for ship names of the *woman / man* category to follow the *long / short* length order. Notice, however, that while the *woman / man* category outweighs the *man / woman* category under the *long / short* length order, the opposite is true under the *short / long* length order. That is, the *man / woman* category outweighs the *woman / man* category under the *short / long* length order. As word length order refers to the length of source words relative to each other and source words in this dataset are largely the names of characters, this

graph suggests that there is a trend of women's names being longer than men's. Though this is an interesting sociolinguistic note regarding character naming conventions in the source media, this pattern does not reveal much in the context of blend formation.

Consider, then, the distribution of the extralinguistic constraint of character narrative importance across the same linguistic constraint in Figure 33:

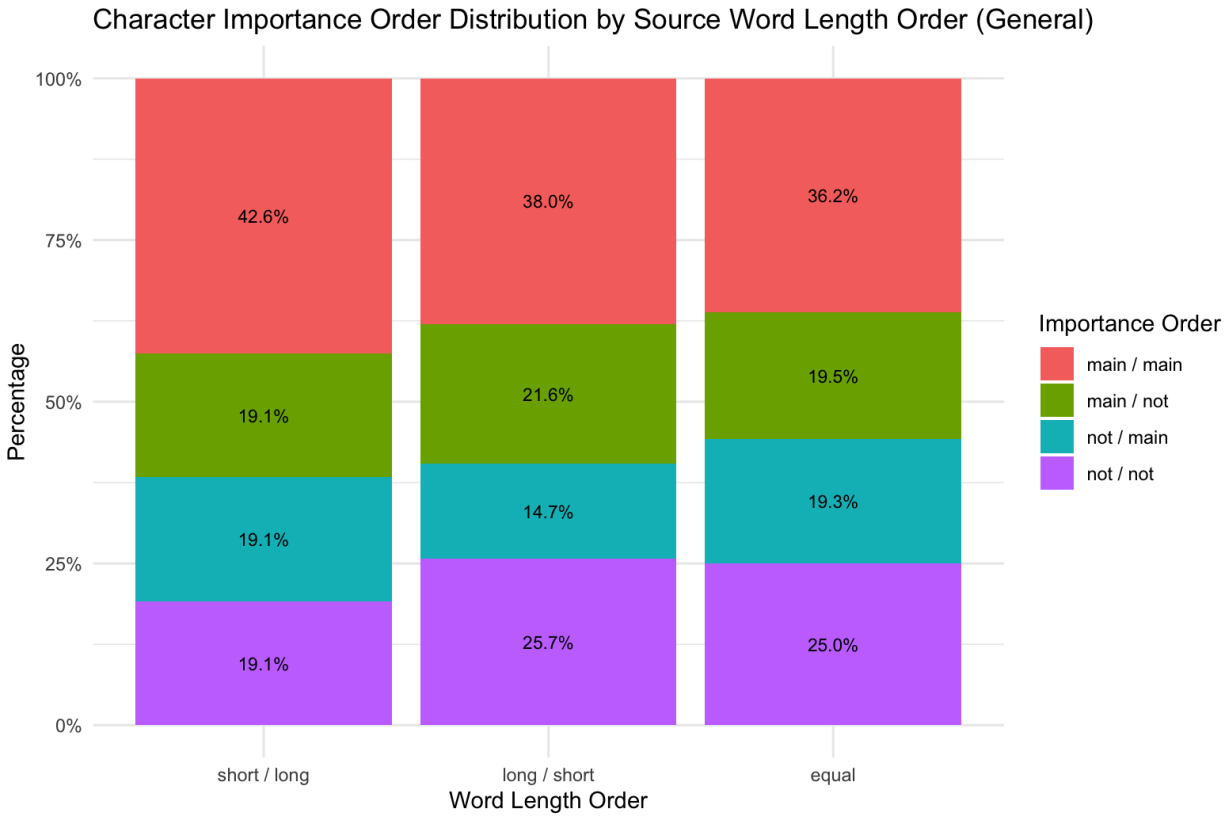


Figure 33: Distribution of Narrative Importance Order across Source Word Length Order.

The distribution of narrative importance order across the three word length order categories is largely balanced across the board, with only minor distribution differences of around 6% between the categories.

Consider, now, the distribution of source name origin across word length order in Figure 34:

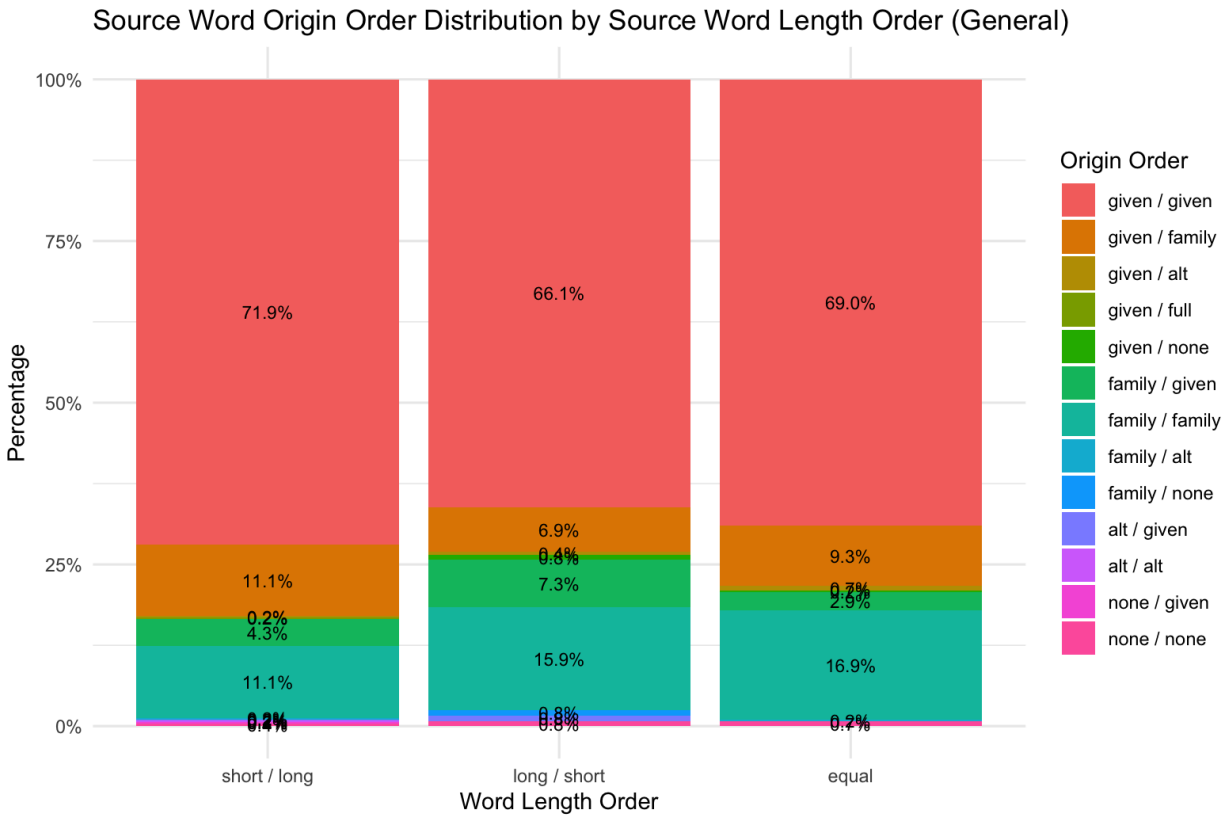


Figure 34: Distribution of Source Word Origin Order across Source Word Length Order.

Similarly, the distribution of source word origin order across the word length order categories is rather balanced, with minor distribution differences of around 5%.

Ultimately, the lack of distinctions or correlations of any kind across examinations of all three extralinguistic constraints confirms that there is nothing of note to be found here. There is no indication that the extralinguistic variables override the linguistic variable of word length order, or any relation at that, suggesting that they have no influence in determining the structure of blended ship

names when the determining factor is the relative syllable count of the source words. At the same time, the lack of any relation in the data also shows that source word length is a rather weak linguistic constraint and is rarely a deciding factor in blended ship name formation.

4.1.3.5 Contribution Length x Extralinguistic Factors

This final subsection of cross-variable analysis examines the intersection of the linguistic constraint of source word contribution length and the extralinguistic factors. As noted in Section 4.1.1.1, the *short / long* contribution order, where the second source word contributes more material to the final blend, is a notable pattern in the overall dataset with 53.5% of ship names following this order. I analyzed the distribution of contribution length order categories across the extralinguistic constraints to determine if they have an impact on the previously established pattern.

Consider, first, the distribution of character gender order across contribution length order in Figure 35:

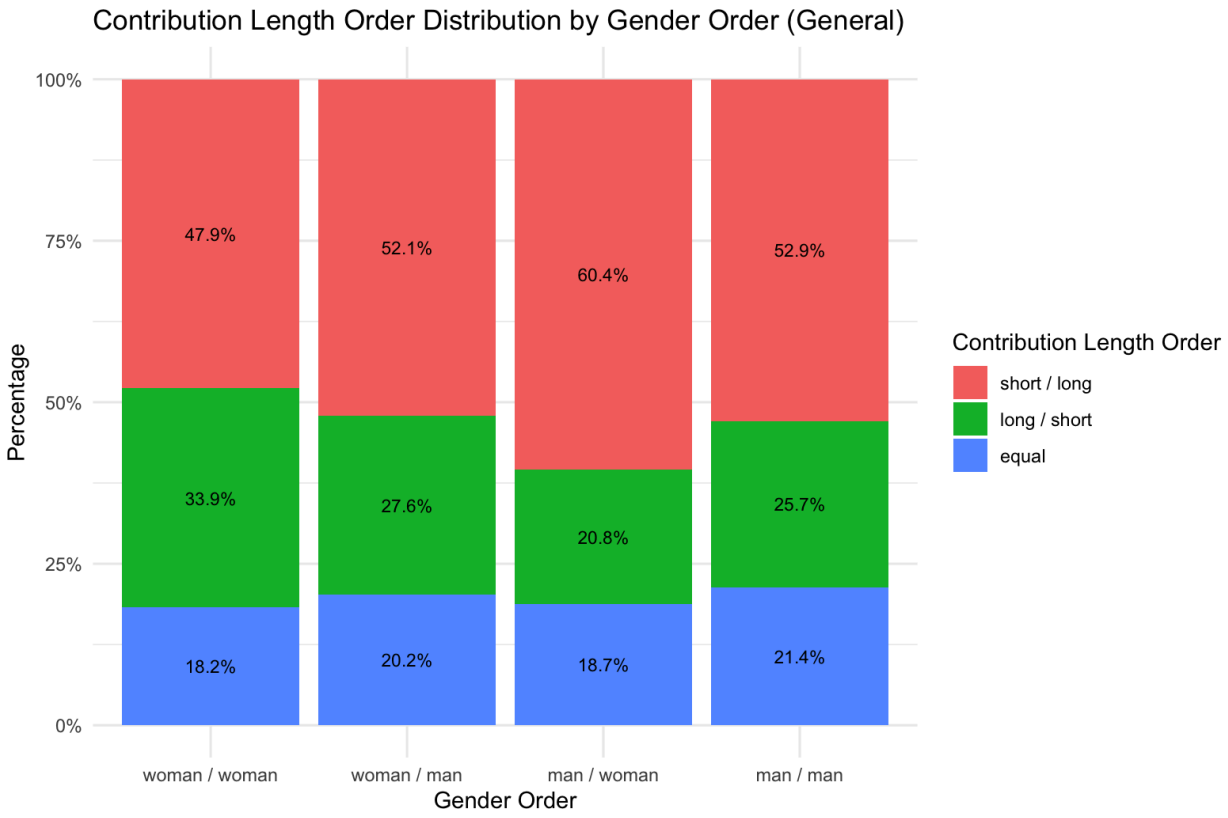


Figure 35: Distribution of Source Word Contribution Length Order across Character Gender Order filtered for gender categories holding more than 1% of ship names[23].

The graph in Figure 35 showcases data that is largely balanced across the board, with the *short / long* contribution order persisting as the most frequent category across the board. There is a notable peak of the *short / long* contribution order in the *man / woman* category (60.4%). While there are several gender order specific patterns, the overall tendency for the second source word to contribute more material (*short / long*) is maintained and remains largely unaffected by gender order.

Consider, next, the distribution of the linguistic constraint over character importance order in Figure 36:

[23] The unabridged version of the graph is in the Appendix in Figure A.4.

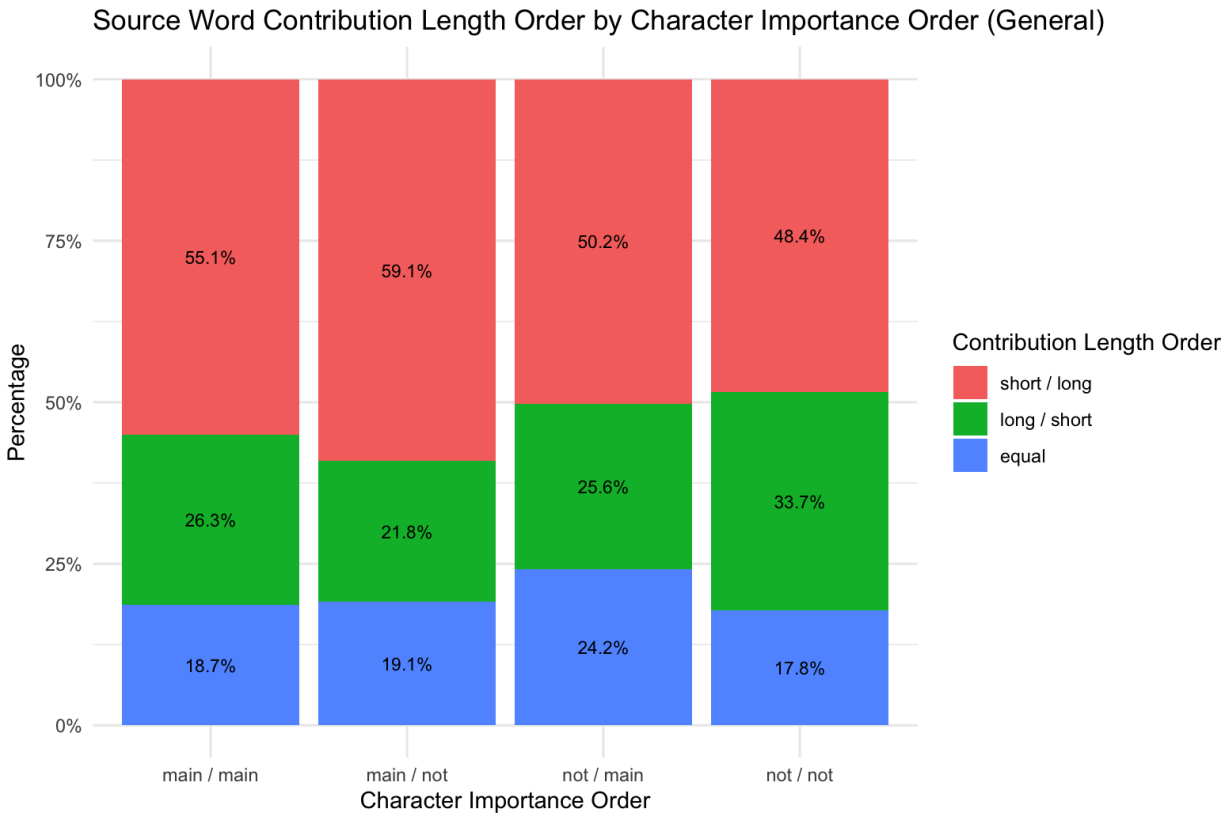


Figure 36: Distribution of Source Word Contribution Length Order across Narrative Importance Order.

The distribution of contribution length order is mostly balanced across the board, maintaining the prevalence of *short / long* contribution order in all character importance order categories, though there are several minor fluctuations. The *not / not* category contains the smallest share of the *short / long* order (48.4%) and the largest share of the *long / short* order (33.7%), suggesting that when two the names of two non-protagonists are blended, the ordering may be less constrained by the linguistic rule. The *main / not* category contains the highest frequency of the *short / long* order at 59.1%, indicating that when the protagonist is placed first, the secondary character is likely to contribute more material. Paired with the 50.2% of

ship names in the *not / main* category also following the *short / long* order, this confirms that the narrative importance of the characters has little to no impact on the relative contribution of either source word. Overall, the data reaffirms that the second source word generally contributes more material to the final blend, superseding the influence of the extralinguistic factor of narrative importance.

Consider, finally, the distribution of the linguistic constraint over source word origin order in Figure 37:

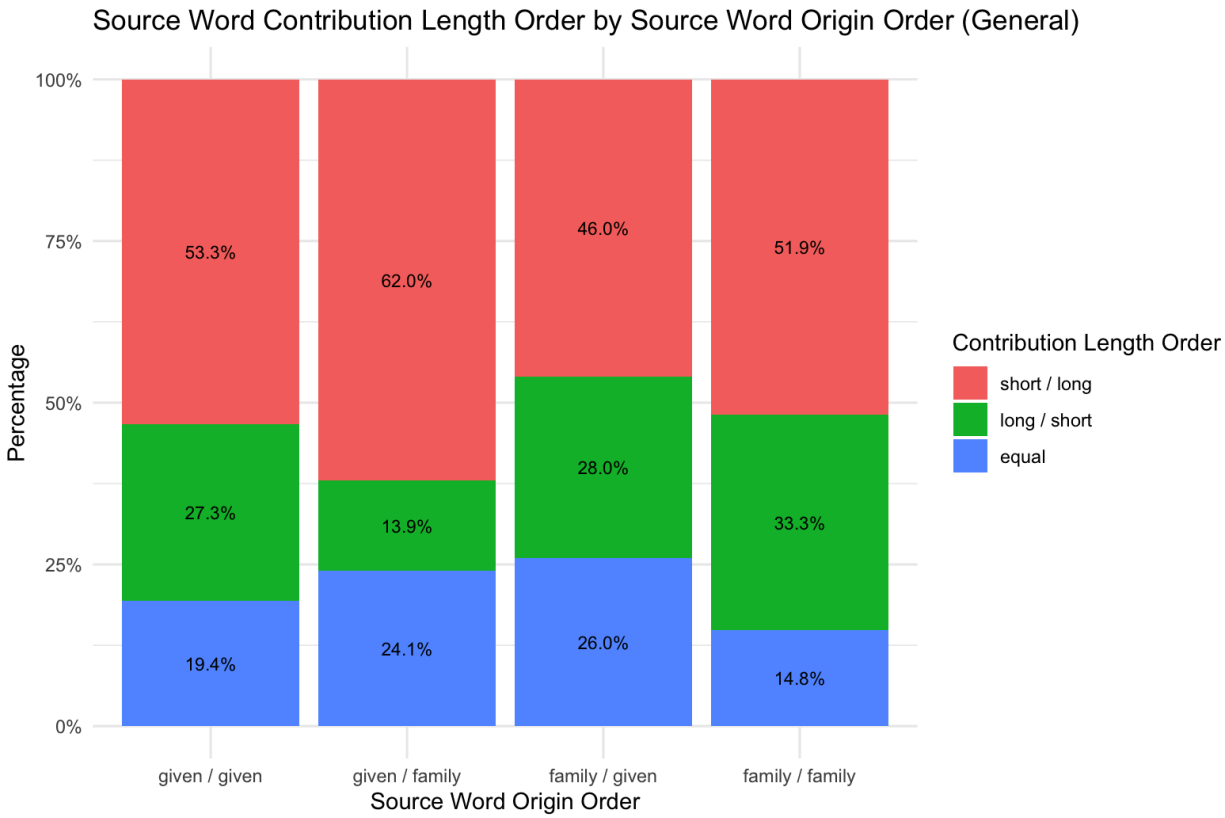


Figure 37: Distribution of Source Word Contribution Length Order across Source Word Origin Order filtered for origin categories holding more than 1% of ship names[24].

[24] The unabridged version of the graph is in the Appendix in Figure A.6.

Figure 37 also showcases the prominence of the *short* / *long* order across the board, with the contribution order peaking in the *given* / *family* category.

Regardless, the consistent preference for the *short* / *long* order across the board for all three extralinguistic factors confirms that source word contribution length is a robust linguistic constraint.

4.2 Qualitative Analysis

In this section, I analyzed several subsets of ship names, beginning with those that exhibit interesting structural characteristics and finishing with the most popular ship names in my dataset. The first set includes four of the most popular blended ship names from the *The Hunger Games* fandom. The second set contrasts a popular ship name from the *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles* fandom with one of its many blended alternatives. The final set explores the top ten most popular ship blended ship names in my entire dataset.

I examined the well-formedness of each ship name, determining whether they adhered to linguistic constraints, and if not, explored both linguistic and extralinguistic factors as potential explanations. A common feature I turned to throughout the analysis is the phonological and lexical neighborhood of a word. The 'phonological neighborhood' consists of words that sound similar to the word in question, while the 'lexical neighborhood' consists of words that look similar to the word in question (DiGirolamo, 2012).

4.2.1 The Fandom Norm and the Mockingjay Motif

We begin with the four most popular blended ship names from *The Hunger Games* fandom, *everlark*, *hayffie*, *haydove*, and *odesta*, and a bonus compounded ship

name, *snowbaird*. A detailed analysis of the two more structurally interesting ship names, *everlark* and *odesta*, reveals how linguistic constraints can be overridden by extralinguistic factors, such as fandom context and norms.

We begin with *everlark*, a blend of *Ever*deen and *Mel*lark. Linguistically, *everlark* is notable for violating the two key linguistic constraints as described by DiGirolamo (2016): combining the stress patterns of the source words for the resulting blend and preserving the more complex onset when possible. First, it violates the blending of stress patterns. *Everdeen* is stressed on the initial syllable like so [IPA], while Mellark is stressed on the final syllable like so [IPA]; the resulting blend, *everlark*, only retains the stress pattern of the first source word, *Everdeen*. Second, the ship name does not preserve the more complex onset of the source word, which in this case would be the onset of *Mellark*. When attempting to generate blends that preserve the complex onset, the following list is produced: *meldeen* (*Mel*lark + *Ever*deen), *meverdeen* (*M*ellark + *Everdeen*), and *mellerdeen* (*Mel*lark + *Everdeen*). Of these three possibilities, only *meldeen* exists in my dataset as an alternative blend despite it facing the similar struggle of blending the source words' stress patterns. In fact, *mellerdeen* serves as a more acceptable option when purely discussing blends under a linguistic lens, what with the preservation of the complex onset and a nice blending of the stress patterns. Regardless, the resulting alternatives are less popular, often phonologically awkward, or maintain the clashing stress patterns.

As *everlark* appears to violate these key linguistic constraints, we instead consider several extralinguistic factors to determine the motivation of the ship name

formation. The source words, *Everdeen* and *Mellark*, are the family names of the main couple, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark. As seen before in Figure 22 and reprinted below in Figure 38 for convenience, this use of family names for a blended ship name is a rare occurrence in the overall dataset, raising the possibility that this may be an intentional choice.

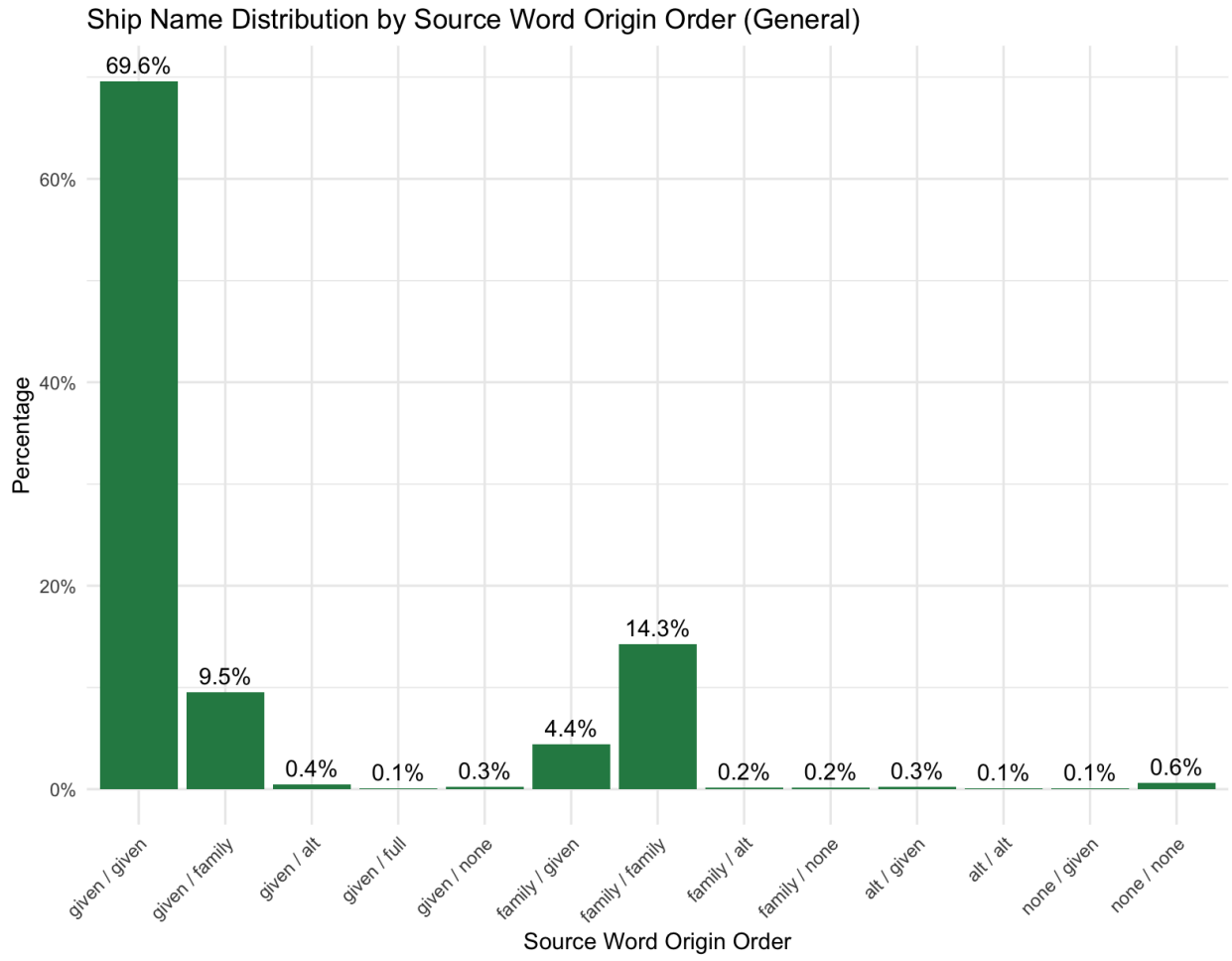


Figure 38: Frequency Distribution of ship names by Origin of Corresponding Source Word.

One cannot ignore the other potential reason for blending the characters' family names as opposed to their given names, that being blends of their first

names, Katniss and Peeta, are largely unappealing or even downright unacceptable. The potential alternatives in question are as follows: *keeta* (*Katniss* + *Peeta*), *katta* (*Katniss* + *Peeta*), *patniss* (*Peeta* + *Katniss*), and *peeniss* (*Peeta* + *Katniss*). The ship name *peeniss* aside, which despite its less-than-desirable phonological and lexical neighborhood is quite popular as a joke, the other three are largely acceptable as blends. Yet they seem to lose out in appeal when compared to *everlark*, despite its linguistic constraint violations, further suggesting that the popularity of the ship is likely supported by an extralinguistic factor. The ship name *everlark* also preserves the word *lark*, a word that evokes bird imagery, which is highly significant to the narrative of *The Hunger Games* and, in particular, is strongly associated with the main character, Katniss. Given that the given name blends are comparatively ill-formed, and that among the family name blends *everlark* fortuitously retains the word *lark*, the preference for this ship name suggests that preserving symbolic meaning can override linguistic constraints when no better alternatives are available.

Moving onto *odesta*, a blend of *Odair* and *Cresta*. While *odesta* blends the stress patterns of its source words, it, too, violates the constraint of preserving the more complex onset, as potential blends that do preserve the complex onset (e.g., *crodair* and *credair*) are less appealing. The initial syllable of *crodair* (*Cresta* + *Odair*) seems to suggest the word *crone*, and though *credair* (*Cresta* + *Odair*) appears fine, both ship names struggle to blend the stress patterns of their source words as *Cresta* is stressed on the initial syllable and *Odair* is stressed on the final syllable.

Most notable, however, is that *odesta* is also a blend of character family names for Finnick Odair and Annie Cresta. Of course, one must once again acknowledge that the ship names produced by blending the characters' given names are less than appealing: *fannie* (*Finnick* + *Annie*) and *finnie* (*Finnick* + *Annie*). *Fannie* is a homophone of the word *fanny*, and while there is nothing undesirable about its definition, there is nothing particularly meaningful either; *finnie*, in my opinion, sounds like a nickname for Finnick and would take a moment to be parsed as a ship name. This certainly provides enough motivation to blend the family names rather than the given names of the characters, and on its own, this may have been pure coincidence. However, paired with Figure 38 above and *everlark* potentially setting a precedent as the most popular ship name in the fandom, there may be something more in the blending of characters' family names. In fact, it may be a fandom norm to blend the family names of character pairings that exist in the source media.

Recall from Section 3.3 that canonicity indicates whether the relationship exists in the source media; canon pairings do, fanon pairings do not. The proposal I put forth about community norms of the *The Hunger Games* fandom is a difficult one to verify, considering only five or so couples are canon, but it is still one that can be considered by examining the blended ship names of two other pairings: *hayffie* (*Haymitch* + *Effie*) and *haydove* (*Haymitch* + *Lenore Dove*). Of these two pairings, Haymitch and Effie's relationship is of ambiguous canonicity, existing only in the movies and not in the books, while Haymitch and Lenore Dove's relationship is acknowledged in both the novels and the films. Both ship names are blends that

adhere to linguistic constraints, and most notably, both ship names are blends of the characters' first names, immediately contradicting the suggestion that it is a fandom norm to blend the family names of canon couples to make their ship names. However, there are several factors to consider. The character Effie from the pairing of *hayffie* does not have a family name, leaving no other choice than her given name. As for Lenore Dove Baird, another character with the same family name is introduced in the series before her, Lucy Gray Baird, and ship names for Lucy Gray and her canonical couple make use of her family name. In order to avoid confusion between Lenore Dove and Lucy Gray, they could only turn to one of her given names when it came to ship name creation. Haymitch Abernathy is introduced early in the series and has a family name, but given the circumstances surrounding either of his possible pairings and the prevalence of ship names formed from the two characters' given names as shown in Figure 38, it is not unexpected for ship names composed of his given name to become popular. Therefore, these two ship names neither support nor oppose the proposal regarding the potential *The Hunger Game* fandom norm of blending the family names of characters to make the ship names for canon pairings.

One final honorable mention: *snowbaird*. Not a blend, unfortunately, so this ship name was filtered out of the final dataset, but still a supporter of the proposal regarding family names being used as the source words of popular ship names for canon pairings. The ship name *snowbaird* is a compound of *Snow* and *Baird*, the family names of Coriolanus Snow and Lucy Gray Baird, yet another canon couple centered in *The Hunger Games*.

The analysis of these five ship names, four blends and a compound, I believe there is sufficient grounds to suggest that extralinguistic factors influence ship name formation, enough to override established linguistic constraints. The prevalence of *everlark* and *odesta*, alongside the existence of *snowbaird*, suggests a possible, albeit slight, fandom tendency to favor family names when creating ship names, a structured trend potentially sparked by the popularity of *everlark*, followed by that of *odesta* and rounded out by the introduction of *snowbaird*. While *hayffie* and *haydove* contradict this trend by being blends of characters' given names, their exceptions are explained by specific narrative factors: Effie's lack of a surname and the need to avoid clashing with an established character with the same family name. Ultimately, *everlark* and *odesta* serve as compelling outliers to the established overarching trend found in my dataset that directly align with my initial hypothesis that extralinguistic factors, in this case the preference for blending family names, can produce a ship name that violates linguistic constraints and still become highly popular in the fandom.

4.2.2 The Classic Blend and the Spoiler Tag

This next subset compares two blended ship names for the central couple of the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series from the Camp Half-Blood Chronicles fandom, Percy and Annabeth: the dominant ship name *percabeth* and its less-used alternative *annacy*. Both characters have significant narrative importance, with Percy serving as the main character in the first book series, and both characters sharing the main character role (through point-of-view chapters) in the second series.

First up, *percabeth*. This ship name is a blend of *Percy* and *Annabeth* and adheres to two key constraints for blended ship names, as discussed by DiGirolamo (2016). In regards to source word stress patterns, *percabeth* blends the stress patterns of the two source words, which is easily done as both source words are stressed on their initial syllables. In regards to complex onset preservation, the ship name preserves the more complex onset by attaching the initial syllable of Percy to the latter two syllables of Annabeth. Thus, the structure and formation of *percabeth* results in a blend with a clean phonological and lexical neighborhood that fans find more satisfying than the alternatives. The linguistic acceptability and adherence to linguistic constraints of *percabeth* likely contributed to the ship name becoming the longer-standing and dominant ship name for the pairing, having existed since the initial publication of the book series in 2007.

Next up, *annacy*, the alternative ship name that blends the two names in the opposite order: *Annabeth* and *Percy*. Though not a very popular ship name on Tumblr (in fact, *annacy* is ranked dead last at 549th alongside all the other ship names with no posts and no engagement in the set timeframe), there is a solid handful of users discussing the ship name itself when searched as a tag on the platform. This is where the Tumblr posts in the following section are sourced from.

Although the resulting blend is recognizable, as fans familiar with the characters can retrieve the source words, it violates one of two key linguistic constraints upheld by *percabeth*. Most notably, *annacy* does not preserve the complex onset, leading with *Annabeth* as opposed to *Percy*. While the ship name is mostly successful in blending the stress patterns by preserving the stress on the

initial syllable from both source words, it leans more toward the stress pattern of the first source word, *Annabeth*. Additionally, some fans note its less-than-desirable lexical and phonological neighborhood, pointing to potential confusion with the unintended, vulgar yet hilarious phonetic resemblance to *anussy* as seen in Figure 39.

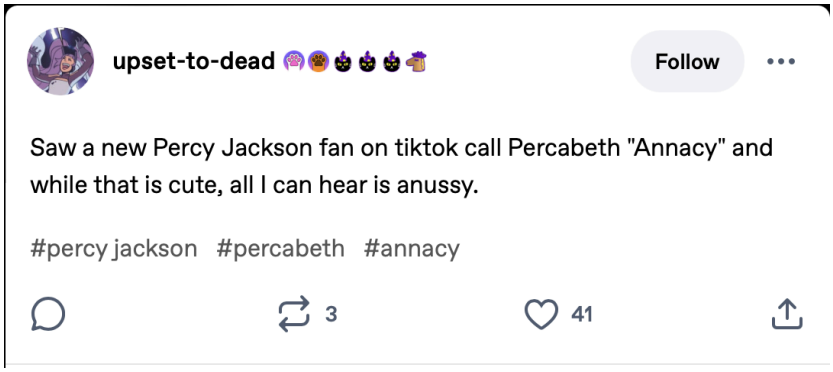


Figure 39: A Tumblr post providing a humorous but less-than-desirable example of a term from *annacy*'s phonological neighborhood.

Paired with the fact that *annacy* did not enter public eye until much later in the timeline of this fandom, fans seem to find the ship name far less satisfactory compared to the more popular *percabeth* as seen in Figure 40.

Figure 40: A Tumblr post expressing distaste for the ship name *annacy*.

Despite these drawbacks, *annacy* exists as an alternative that the fandom uses and the fandom talks about following the release of the 2023 television series adaptation. This rise is primarily attributed to an extralinguistic motivation: the intentional use of the less common ship name to avoid spoilers for new fans who have not read the book series and may be entering the fandom via the show as seen in Figure 41.

Figure 41: A Tumblr post discussing the emergence of the ship name *annacy*.

This section very nicely exemplifies the ultimate response to the research question posed at the start of the thesis. Under conditions that allow for the formation of a well-formed blend that adheres to linguistic constraints as expected and has the characteristics of source word recoverability and final blend acceptability, such a blend will form: *percabeth* = *Percy* + *Annabeth*. Under conditions where extra factors or circumstances unfavorable for creating well-formed blends come into play, it appears something else trumps existing

linguistic rules and motivates a blend different from the expected result, as in the case: *annacy* = *Anna*beth + Per*cy*.

This case study confirms that while adherence to linguistic constraints often dominate the structure and formation of blended ship names, fandom needs can motivate the intentional usage and adoption of a structurally less optimal alternative, in this case for the sake of avoiding spoilers. That is to say, at least in the case of *percabeth* and *annacy*, when community needs clash with English-language rules, extralinguistic factors can override linguistic constraints.

4.2.3 Linguistic Conformity in the Top Ten

While a few ship names in the dataset violate linguistic constraints in favor of extralinguistic factors (e.g., *everlark*, *annacy*), a quick look at the top ten most popular ship names in the dataset reveals that most popular of them adhere to the linguistic constraints expected of blends, specifically regarding stress pattern blending and complex onset preservation (DiGirolamo, 2016). Though this may not provide much beyond highlighting the findings of my quantitative analysis, it is something interesting to note and may suggest that linguistic acceptability remains a potential prerequisite for a ship name to be popular in a fandom. The top ten ship names are as follows: *destiel*, *byler*, *steddie*, *spirk*, *everlark*, *vox*, *solangelo*, *percabeth*, and *obikin*.

- *destiel* = *De*an + *Castiel* : a very standard blend of the two characters' given names. As *Dean* is a single syllable name, the ship name automatically takes on the stress pattern of *Castiel* with an emphasis on the final syllable, in a way, merging the stress pattern of both words. The words *Dean* and *Castiel*

are of the same onset complexity, so it matters less in this regard the order of the names.

- *byler* = *By*ers + *Wheeler* : also a very standard blend, though this one is composed of the two charcters' family names, likely due to the characters' given names being monosyllabic, Mike and Will, which creates awkward blends like *wike* and *mill*. This ship name adheres perfectly to the linguistic constraints: both source words are stressed on their initial syllable, resulting in a blend that also has initial stress, and since *Byers* and *Wheeler* have similar onset complexity, there is no complex onset to preserve. In this case, the name order likely stemmed from an avoidance of unappealing ship names due to their less-than-desirable phonological neighborhoods had the source words been blended in the opposite order: *whyers* (*Wh*eeler + *Byers*) and *wheeyers* (*Wheel*er + *Byers*).
- *steddie* = *St*eve + *Eddie* : a very standard blend formed through onset swap to preserve the more complex onset. In this case, transplanting the onset of the first source word *Steve* onto the second source word *Eddie*. The stress pattern of the ship name automatically aligns with that of *Eddie*, stressed on the initial syllable, as *Steve* monosyllabic.
- *spirk* = *Sp*ock + *Kirk* : also a very standard blend, one that blends a character's given name with the other character's family name. Spock does not have a family name, and Kirk is James T. Kirk's family name, resulting in a blend with a rather uncommon combination of source words in regards to which part of a character's name it originates from. Regardless, the ship name preserves the

complex onset of *Spock*, and since both source words are monosyllabic, the stress patterns blend easily into one. The ship name *spirk* for the pairing between Spock and Kirk is also a rather foundational one, holding a special place in fandom history as one of the first popular queer ships (Boulware, 2017).

- *everlark* = *Ever*deen + *Mel*lark : analyzed above in Section 4.2.1.
- *vox* = *V*os + *Fox* : a very standard blend composed of the two characters' family names. It adheres nicely to the linguistic constraints as neither stress pattern blending nor complex onset preservation has a big impact on *vox*. The source words are of the same onset complexity, and both are monosyllabic. A thing of note, the ship name *vox* is not as popular as my data suggests. There exists a character with the name Vox from a television series called *Hazbin Hotel*, and nearly all the posts under the #vox tag on Tumblr is about him rather than the ship between Quinlan Vos and Commander Fox.
- *solangelo* = *Sol*ace + *Angelo* : also a very standard blend composed of the two characters' family names. The ship name successfully preserves the complex onset, attaching the first syllable of *Solace* to the front of *Angelo*, though it matches the stress pattern of the second source word *Angelo* rather than merging that of both. The stress falls on the initial syllable of both source words, which might suggest alternatives such as *solgelo* (*Sol*ace + *Angelo*) to better blend the stress patterns. However, my instinctive pronunciation of *solgelo* draws to mind the word *soldier*, not necessarily undesirable, but not

desirable either. The ship name *solangelo* is far more appealing in sound and appearance.

- *percabeth* = *Perc*y + *Annabeth* : analyzed above in Section 4.2.2.
- *obikin* = *Obi*-*Wan* + *Anakin* : a very standard blend of the characters' given names. This ship name is a little different from the others as both source words begin with vowels, but it follows the same pattern of words with similar onset complexity in that there is no need for complex onset preservation. The stress patterns of the source words also blend well, landing on the initial syllable of the final ship name.

The analysis of the top ten most popular ship names in my dataset largely confirms the findings of the quantitative section and the analysis of the qualitative section: while linguistic constraint violation in favor of extralinguistic factors is noted in very specific cases, the majority of popular ship names with high usage and high engagement largely adhere to the linguistic constraints expected of blends. Most of the ship names in the list above (*destiel*, *byler*, *steddie*, *spirk*, *vox*, *percabeth*, and *obikin*) near perfectly adhere to the linguistic constraints by merging stress patterns and either preserving complex onsets or involving source words where onset complexity is not a factor. Even for ship names that were not a perfect adherence to the linguistic constraints (*solangelo*), there were linguistic reasons as to why the constraints were violated. Therefore, the few ship names that violate the linguistic constraints without clear linguistic reasons for such a violation stand out as particularly unique cases where extralinguistic factors such as community norms and contexts must have provided the necessary motivation to clear the constraints.

4.3 Broader Implications

The analysis of blended ship names presented in this paper presents broader implications for both the study of word-formation processes and the understanding of fandom culture, specifically by examining the intersection of linguistic and extralinguistic constraints. The findings confirm that linguistic constraints, particularly those of the phonological kind, serve as a consistent default for blended ship name structure. The linguistic constraints of complex onset preservation and stress pattern match proved to be extremely prevalent, with large swaths of the dataset maintaining adherence regardless of which extralinguistic factor they were examined against. Furthermore, there appeared a tendency for the second source word to provide more material in the final blend, indicating that the structure blended ship names does the utmost to prioritize recognizability of source words, a key factor for determining the well-formedness of a blend.

The adherence to phonological rules suggests that while the fandom community may serve as a creative linguistic environment and the process of blend-formation holds a degree of creativity, word-blending remains governed by English phonological, morphological, and orthographic constraints. Any ideological encoding is subservient to the foremost requirement of creating a pronounceable, recognizable neologism.

However, the study also revealed that as prevalent as these linguistic constraints are, they are not absolute. There exist a few examples where extralinguistic factors serve as motivators for violating linguistic constraints. For instance, the popularity of *everlark* (*Everdeen* + *Mellark*) and *odesta* (*Odair* + *Cresta*)

demonstrates that certain extralinguistic factors, in this case elements within the source media and fandom community norms, can supersede the expected adherence to expected linguistic constraints. Moreover, the emergence of the alternative ship name *annacy* (*Annabeth* + *Percy*), one that clearly violates linguistic constraints, alongside the existing and commonly used *percabeth* (*Percy* + *Annabeth*) confirms that linguistically well-formed blends may be overridden in favor of another that caters to community need, such avoiding spoilers for new fans. This suggests that in very specific cases, blended ship name formation can and does disrupt the expectation of linguistic constraint adherence to satisfy other aspects of the fandom community.

5. Conclusion

This project set out to investigate the word-formation processes of blended fandom ship names, specifically testing the hypothesis that extralinguistic factors measure up to and potentially override established linguistic constraints. Ultimately, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of blended ship names across six popular fandoms of American media demonstrates that while a small subset of exceptions exist, the phonological structure remains the determining factor for well-formedness in blended ship name formation.

The analysis establishes, in broad strokes, a hierarchy of constraints that governs the formation of blended ship names, one that aligns near perfectly with DiGirolamo's (2012) findings. The evidence largely indicates that complex onset preservation and stress pattern match serve as default structural rules for blended ship names. Both constraints were followed consistently across all fandoms and

were not significantly overridden or influenced by the extralinguistic factors. Relative source word length and contribution length were found to have less influence than complex onset preservation and stress pattern match, though the data revealed slight trends, indicating some influence on blended ship name formation. Source word length in terms of syllable count was found to be an especially non-determinative factor in the hierarchy of constraints.

The qualitative analysis of the most popular, high-engagement ship names confirmed this hierarchy, as nearly all popular ship names adhered to these linguistic constraints. This suggests that the acceptability and well-formedness of a blended ship name may be a necessary prerequisite for a blended ship name to gain widespread use and acceptance within a fandom community.

5.1 Future Research

As this project comes to a close, it is interesting to consider directions it can take in the future.

First, the dataset can be expanded to include a broader range of ship names from a wider variety of fandoms and social media platforms. Incorporating fandoms from different genres, regions, and popularity levels will allow for more comprehensive analysis and more generalizable insights. Having the additional data will introduce new variables and exceptions, potentially providing clearer explanations for exceptions found in the current dataset. Additionally, exploring platforms beyond Tumblr, such as X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and Instagram, may provide access to different community practices and naming conventions, provided the data is publicly accessible.

Moreover, future work could explore a wider variety of ship names. While blended ship names are the most prominent in English-language fandoms, they are not the only kind in existence. It may prove to be interesting to be more intentional in the data collection and sort ship names by word-formation process, such as blending, compounding, and initialisms, as this could allow for more comparative analysis across structural types. This approach may help clarify whether certain structures are impacted by the extralinguistic factors this project had aimed to explore in blended ship names.

Furthermore, future research should investigate if similar hierarchies of constraints exist in non-English fandoms or in languages with different morphological processes. Certainly, different languages have their own rules and constraints, and blends may not be a viable word-formation process in some. I'm curious to see if the languages that allow the blending process have similar structures as ship names, and whether universal language constraints apply to these structures. I'm also curious to explore languages that have ship name like structures but do not allow for the blending word-formation process and how linguistic and extralinguistic constraints come into play.

It may be worthwhile to focus future research on media from different regions or genres, such as examining ship names in media from other parts of the world. Returning to the fictional commentary that initially inspired this project, it remains uncertain whether ship names in Chinese fandoms reflect more deliberate or systematic name ordering conventions beyond similar constraints to those found in English-language fandoms. However, the contrast is suggestive — something is

happening that merits further investigation. A promising next step could be to shift my research focus and explore these potential differences in a cross-linguistic or cross-cultural framework, comparing ship naming practices between English-speaking fandoms of American media and Chinese-speaking fandoms of Chinese media.

This project ultimately provides a novel quantitative model for analyzing the interaction between internal linguistic constraints and external extralinguistic factors composed of sociocultural beliefs, demonstrating that above all else, English-language blended fandom ship names must first satisfy the constraints of the language.

6. Appendix

Here is the codebook detailing the columns of my dataset Dataset Codebook.

Here is a subset of my data Thesis Dataset.

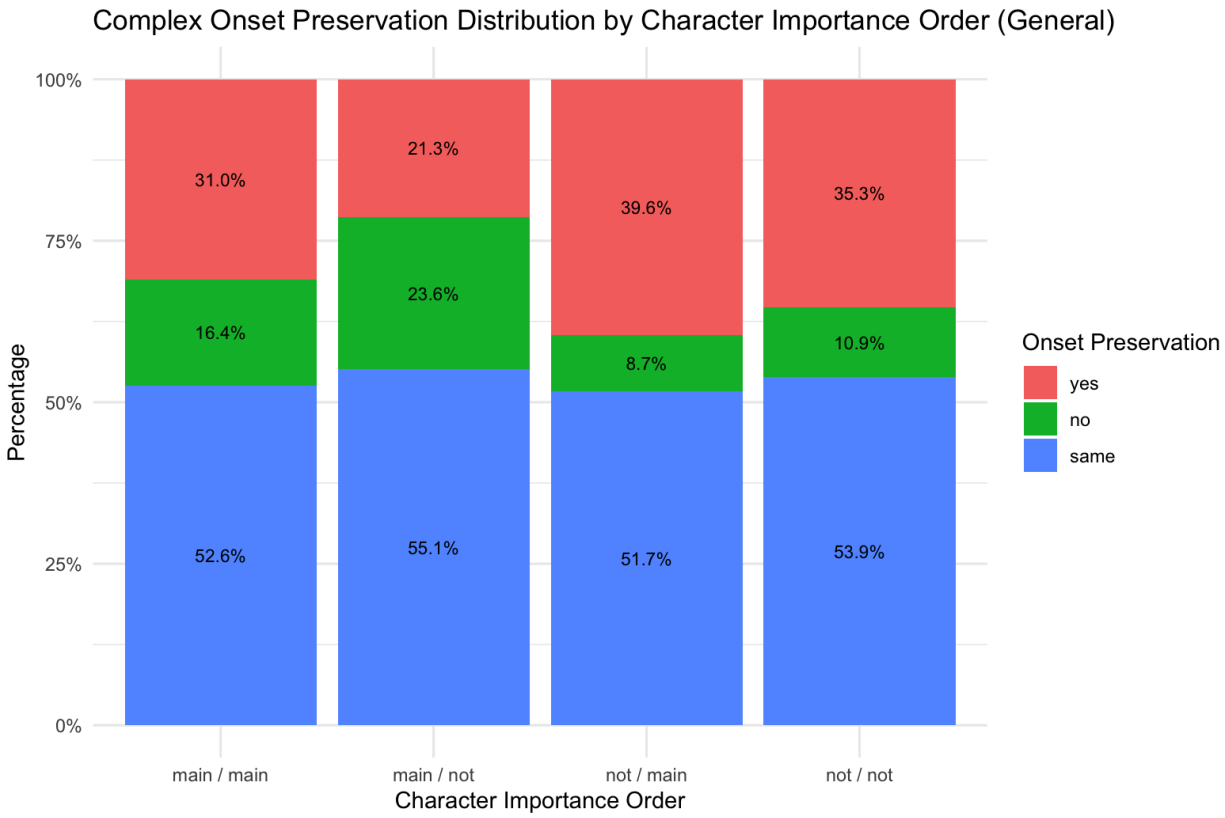


Figure A.1: Distribution of Complex Onset Preservation across Character Importance Order.

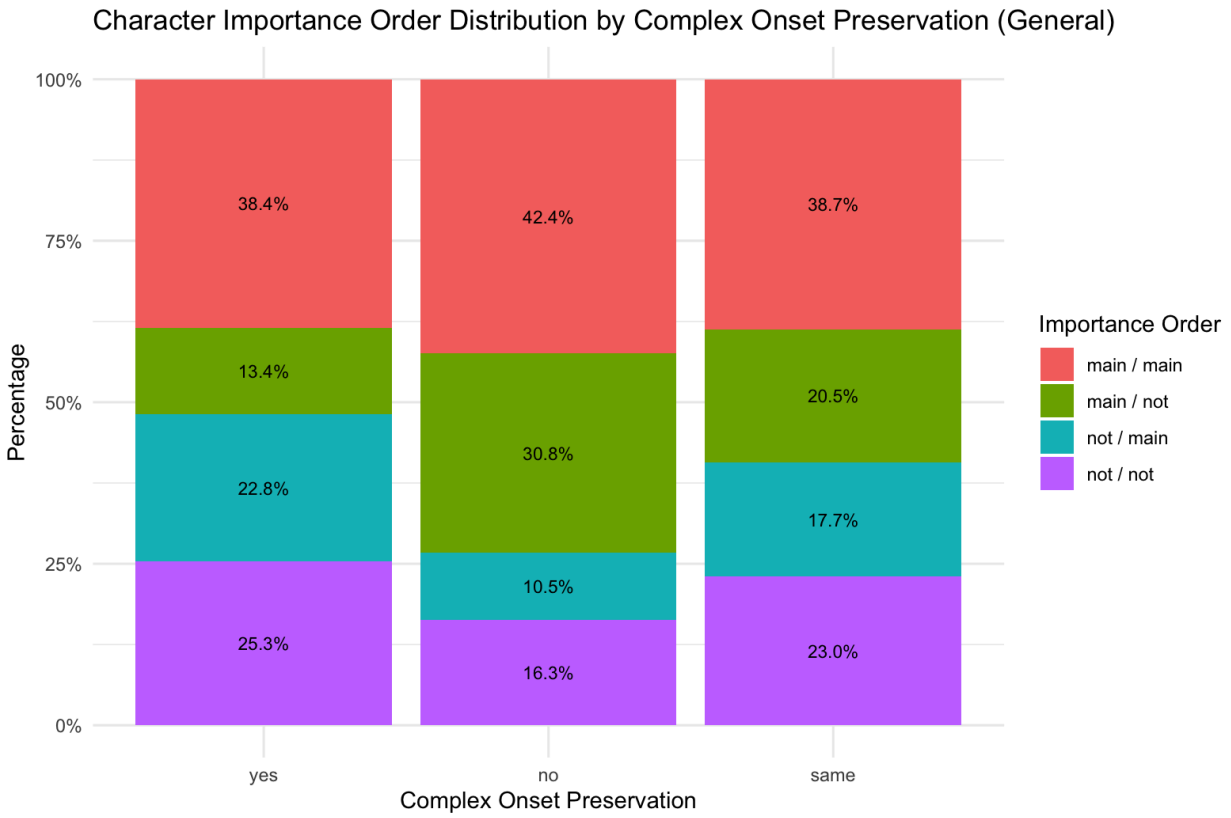


Figure A.2: Distribution of Character Narrative Importance Order by Complex Onset Preservation.

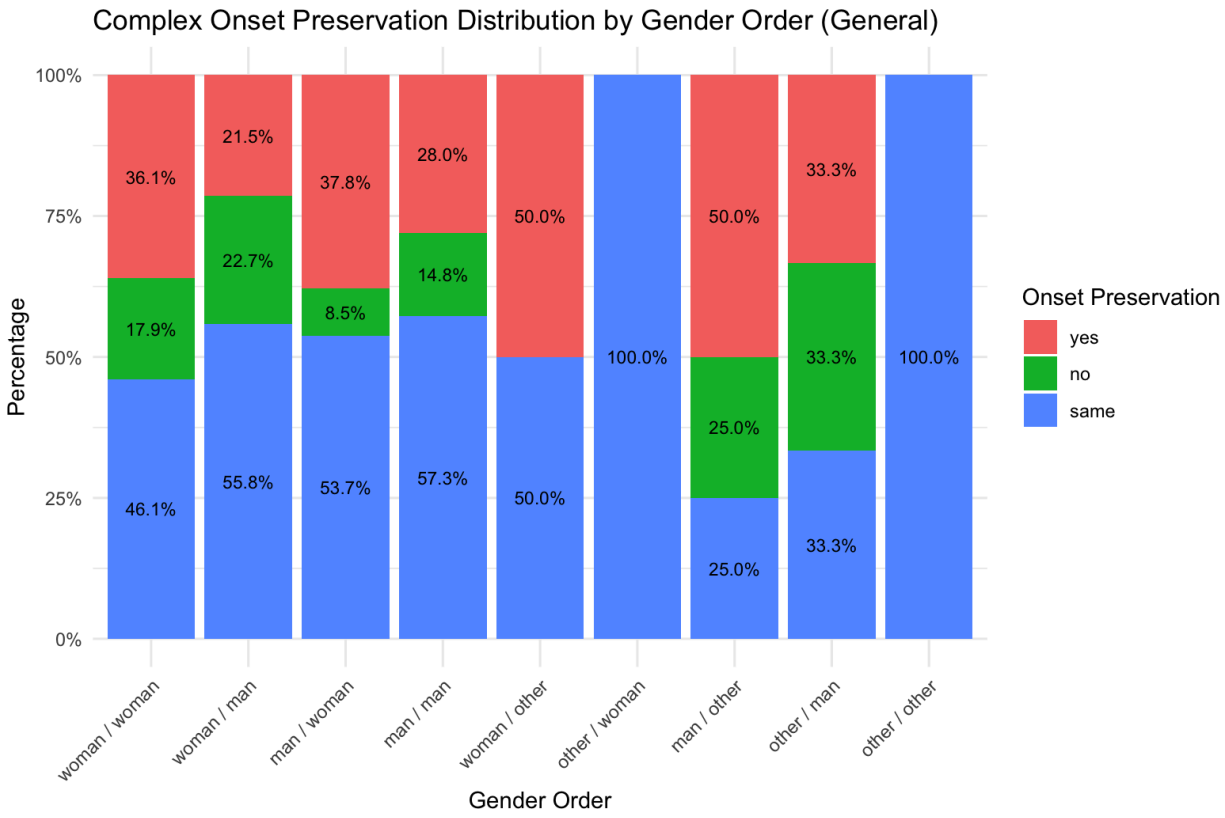


Figure A.3: Distribution of Complex Onset Preservation across Character Gender Order.

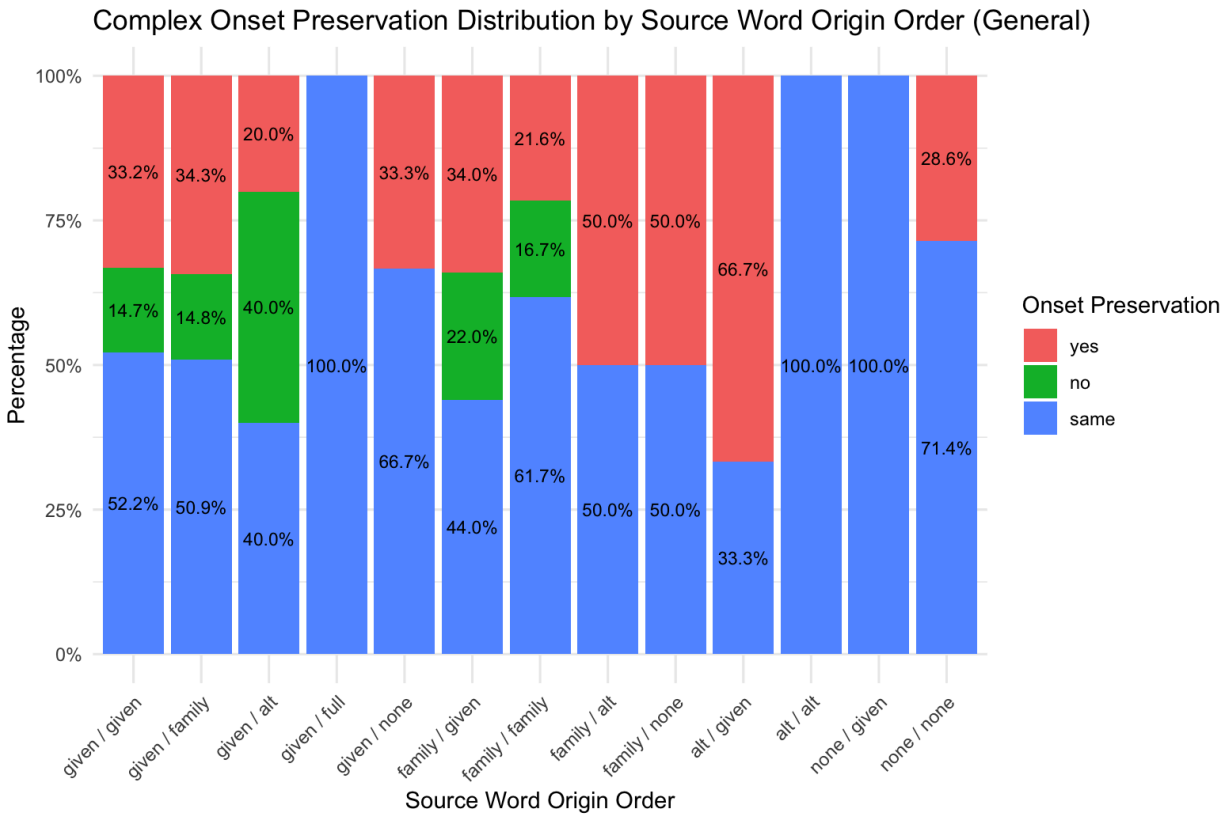


Figure A.4: Distribution of Complex Onset Preservation across Source Word Origin Order.

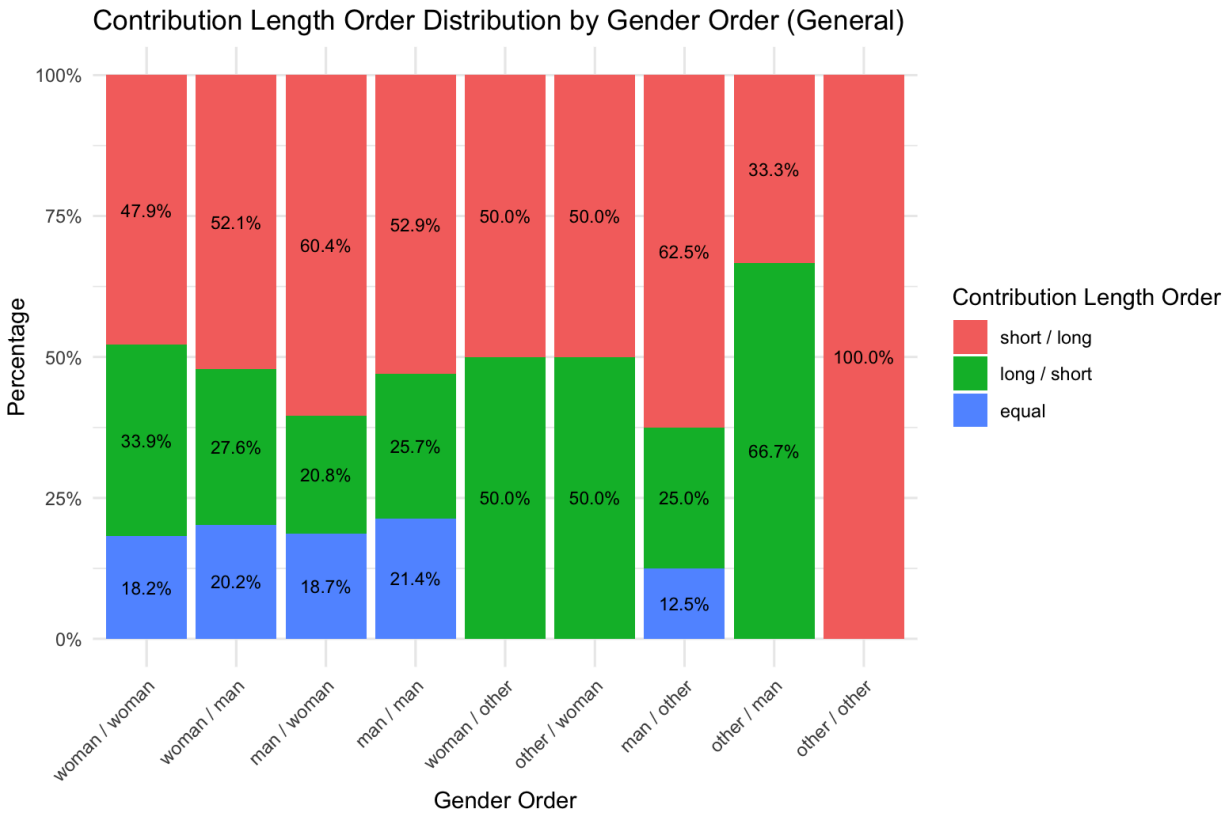


Figure A.5:Distribution of Source Word Contribution Length Order across Character Gender Order.

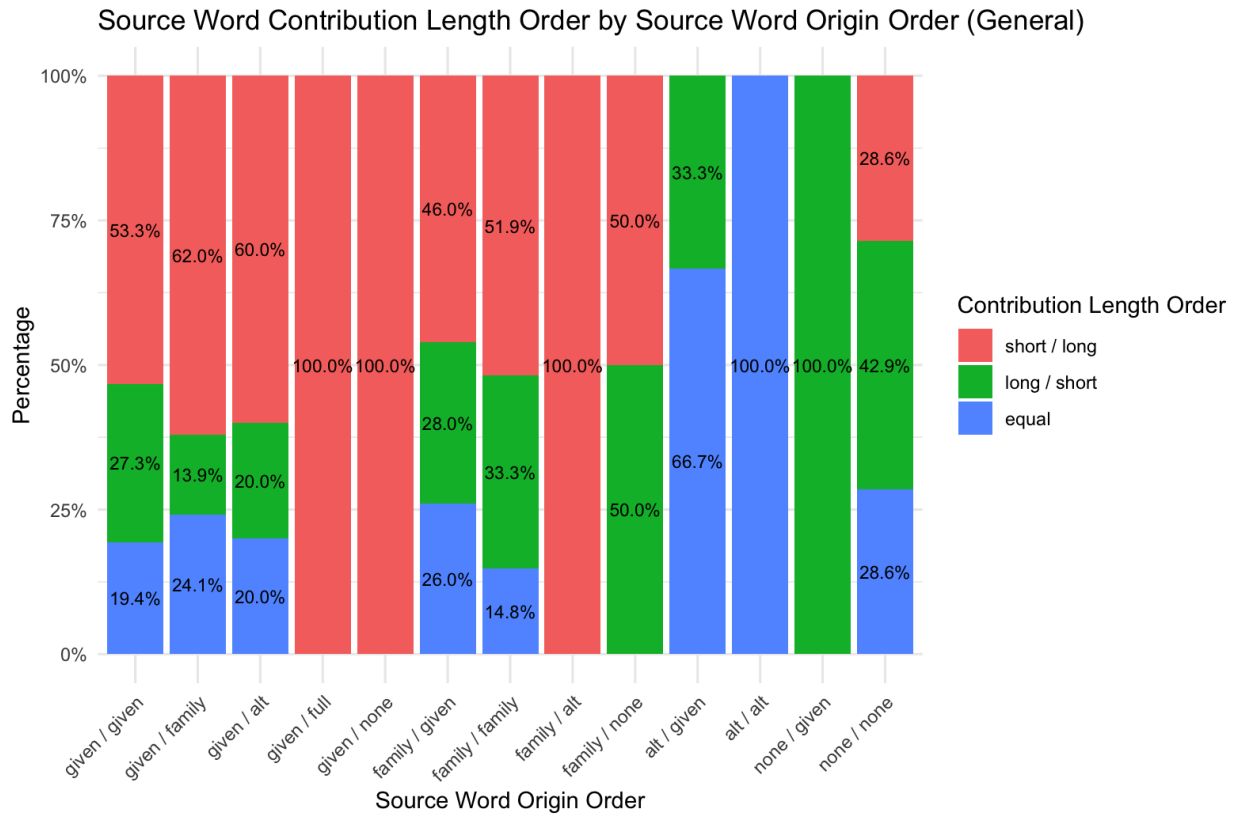


Figure A.6: Distribution of Source Word Contribution Length Order across Source Word Origin Order.

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