<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Inadequate = D (Below Standard) 60-69</th>
<th>Adequate = C (Meets Standard) 70-79</th>
<th>Above Average = B (Exceeds Standard) 80-89</th>
<th>Exemplary = A (Far Exceeds Standard) 90-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article Summaries</td>
<td>• Work does not meet standard in terms of the quantity or quality of summaries</td>
<td>• Work meets standard in terms of quantity but not quality, or vice versa</td>
<td>• Work meets standard in terms of quantity and quality</td>
<td>• Work meets standard in terms of quantity and exceeds standard in terms of quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>• Paper includes no discernible argument concerning the literature under review</td>
<td>• Paper includes faint traces of an argument concerning the literature under review</td>
<td>• Paper includes satisfactory argument concerning the literature under review</td>
<td>• Paper presents an eloquent and convincing argument concerning the literature under review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format (APA)</td>
<td>• Work demonstrates no application of proper APA format</td>
<td>• Work demonstrates little application of proper APA format</td>
<td>• Work demonstrates satisfactory application of proper APA format</td>
<td>• Work demonstrates excellence in the application proper APA format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSP</td>
<td>• Work is riddled with GSP errors</td>
<td>• Work has several GSP errors</td>
<td>• Work has a handful of GSP errors</td>
<td>• Work has no more than one or two GSP errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students will receive a grade for each of the 4 criteria, the average of which will result in an overall preliminary grade.
South Park: Homophobic, Racist, and Intolerant?

Millie Day

Texas Tech University
Introduction

Comedy Central’s hit cartoon sitcom South Park is known for its use of outrageous characters and topics that are considered off limits. Almost every episode of the massively popular cartoon features some element of homophobia, racism, intolerance, bigotry, sexism, and any other outlandish stereotype that comes to mind. While the creators of South Park may seem insane for putting such filth on television, it can be argued that the complete lack of tolerance seen in many episodes is actually the creator’s way of showing just how wrong intolerance is.

Literature Review

Marcus Schulzke points out some very interesting points in his literature review entitled Contentious Language: South Park and the Transformation of Meaning. Most notably, Schulzke focuses on one particular episode of South Park that delves into the meaning of the “F word.” In this controversial episode, the boys start using the term “fag” to describe annoying people who ride Harleys, and don’t understand why the meaning of the word is specific to the homosexual community. Because they really enjoy calling the Harley riders the “F word,” the boys set out to officially change the meaning of the word. While most people found that the episode was highly offensive and crude, Schulzke argues that the writers of South Park used this episode to contest word meanings with a very sophisticated strategy (Schulzke, 2012). While South Park is famous for undermining stereotypes and exaggerating anything and everything a person can possibly think of, the show has always shown obvious support for the Lesbian and Gay community. Because of this, one can assume that although the episode might seem extremely insensitive and inappropriate at first, the creators actually intended to portray a message of tolerance.
Schulzke very eloquently described South Park's strategy as "consistently promoting the elimination of categories that can be used as a basis for discrimination while still opposing the elimination of difference. 'The F word' and other episodes dealing with gay rights should be interpreted as being progressive in this Universal sense" (Schulzke, 2012, p. 26).

In addition to the gay community, South Park creators also focus on various minority groups throughout the series. In a study done by Matt Sienkiewics and Nick Marx entitled Beyond a Cutout World: Ethnic Humor and Discursive Integration in South Park, the authors have found that South Park portrays a certain amount of 'hyper-irony' which resonates especially in the show's racist episodes (Sienkiewicz & Marx, 2009). By depicting extremely racist and bigoted characters in South Park, this study argues that the sitcom "paradoxically testifies to the creator's ultimate lack of prejudice" (Sienkiewics & Marx, 2009, p. 5). One episode in particular proves this point successfully. "The Snuke" appears to be an extremely racist episode, especially considering the fact that this episode was released in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks. In the story, a new Muslim kid from Chicago is introduced to the class and Eric Cartman is convinced he is a terrorist. In short, Cartman is forced to look past Bahir's ethnicity. and admit that he actually saved the town of South Park, instead of terrorizing it. While the end result of the episode is a lesson of tolerance, the viewer can still see the episode as racist. Sienkiewics and Marx (2009) argued "by momentarily seeing the program as racist, the viewer is forced to confront his or her own assumptions and latent prejudices" (p. 8).
With neither homophobia nor racism being off limits for the creators of South Park, of course there is going to be blasphemous religious episodes as well. In a study done by David W. Scott entitled Religiosity in South Park: Struggles Over Institutional and Personal Piety Among Residents of a “Redneck Town”, the author argues that even though South Park pokes fun at all religions, the sitcom has an ideology that “resists institutional religion while encouraging personal spiritual religious practice” (Scott, 2011, p. 153). While the creators of South Park are clearly left-side liberals, it is apparent that their portrayals of religion are not as anti-religious as they seem. At first glance, the blasphemy of certain episodes is enough to make anyone uncomfortable. For example, there are many episodes in the series that feature an animated Jesus battling a misunderstood Satan, and in other episodes Jesus hosts his very own talk show. In this particular study, the author argues that it is not religion that the South Park creators are so adamantly against, but it is the idea of institutional religion which relies on marketing for financial gain that the show clearly has a problem with. In fact, it is made clear in a monologue by Stan in the episode entitled “The Super Friends” that all religions have some value if they do not seek to profit or make promises that cannot be validated in this life (Scott, 2011).

Conclusion

The crude, inappropriate, racist, blasphemous, and homophobic topics illustrated in Comedy Central’s hit cartoon sitcom South Park may portray the creators as ignorant bigots to some, but when one takes a deeper look into the meaning and lessons behind the outrageous episodes, it is easy to see a message of acceptance and tolerance. Whether Eric Cartman is spitting out racist slurs, or Stan Marsh is trying to “fix” his dog when he
thinks he’s gay, the underlying message of tolerance is always made clear by the end of the episode. It is easy to dismiss South Park as an irrelevant source of crude humor, but when delved in a little deeper, it is clear that South Park offers a great insight into the prejudices and behavior of Americans in today’s day in age.
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