

Lesson 5: Nickelodeon

- Nickelodeon’s brand image was based on the idea of rebellion and an us vs. them attitude, yet it still managed to speak to a large audience that consisted of children and adults because of the double coding featured in cartoons.
- This lesson was what sparked my interest in this class, because prior to this lesson I was very skeptical as to what I could learn from a class that had to do with TV. This lesson taught me about things like double coding and other techniques used by show creators, something that I didn’t give much thought to prior to this lesson. It gave me new insight and perspective into how I view programming, where I will now notice things that I didn’t really give much thought to prior to learning about things like double coding. Something that really stuck with me in this section and discussion wasn’t only the “us vs them” attitude Nicktoons preaches; it was brought to my attention that different shows are made with different purpose, where these cartoons are creator-driven, unique and artistic, or simply fodder or ways to sell a product. Nickelodeon set the stage for the rest of the networks, choosing to gamble and produce creator driven shows as opposed to toy-based programming, and this gamble has paid off.

Lesson 9&10: Orange is the New Black

- It is important for us to evaluate this show (and all shows) in terms of the truth being told. What is the producer’s intended message? Does that intent matter? In what ways is the producer, the actors, the network, the audience influenced by major identity factors like gender, race, sexuality, class, ability, age etc?
- Orange is the New Black was definitely a show that I knew would show up at some point in this class because of the messages and type of programming it presents to it’s audience. Analyzing the show and its elements was interesting, along with the different discussions this program brought forth. A couple of questions I found myself asking was “Does this show do a good job in representing the harsh realities of the mass incarceration system? Are the groups in this system properly portrayed by the show’s producers?”. This show empowers the minority in the sense that it does its best to cover the struggle faced by those in the incarceration system; with today’s media outlets, a show like Orange is the New Black can be produced in whatever fashion seen appropriate, giving the creators artistic freedom to talk about all the issues presented to their audience in whatever fashion they see fit. This freedom allows the episode to flow in a coherent way, adding layers to audience understanding.

Lesson 18: Representations of Disability – It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia

- Always Sunny is a dark comedy. It often makes viewers uncomfortable, particularly in terms of the language and the types of jokes, which are often at peoples’ expense. It is important, especially when dealing with comedies, and with dark comedies, that we establish what the intended message is. Is it satirical? If so, what is the issue it is bringing to light and what is it saying about that issue? If not, what are the implications of this kind of representation?
- This was a show I was not expecting to cover in class due to its raunchy nature and it being a dark comedy. This was a lesson that stuck with me and stood out, because disabilities are represented in programming, however I never really stopped to analyze how different shows represent the nature of disabilities. It is of the utmost importance to represent these characters with disabilities as people who can live, learn and grow from living their lives, portraying that these characters can take control of their lives just like how any other character can do the same. This show however portrayed the complete opposite idea, where the creators bring up the idea of framing in which the characters of the show “frame” how we should feel and react to the idea of disability. *It’s Always Sunny* is a dark comedy, meaning that they will exaggerate scenarios and focus it’s comedy at the expense of others. A show like *It’s Always Sunny* depicts disability as very visible and exaggerated (hands, speech, drool, special, lives with mom, strength etc.), compared to a show like *Glee* where the disabled characters harness their difference as a strength; this depicts the crucial contrast between how different shows depict disabilities.

Lesson 20: Representations of Race - Black-ish

- Not seeing color is a tricky idea. In theory, it is beautiful – to accept all humans as human beings and to allow each individual human to be true to his or her self. However, claiming to not see color is not necessarily a good thing. What are the implications of ignoring racial identity, yours or someone else’s? It might be a beautiful thought to envision a world in which there is no race, gender, sexuality, etc. But the fact of the matter is there is difference and we cannot simply ignore it, in fact, we may want to celebrate it.
- This lesson brought up a crucial debate needed with today’s limitless and ungovernable programming; the representation of stereotypes and the lengths a show takes said stereotypes. *Black-ish* conveys stereotypes given to the black race as normal, with the creators of the show heavily enforcing this narrative through comedic cutaways, inner monologues and stereotype embracement exhibited by the characters of the show. The kids in the show however are blind to race, an idea that struck me as odd and something I was looking forward to discussing in class. While not seeing race may be “open minded”, this causes a number of complications. Not seeing race is denying history and culture, whether that history may be of rich or poor manner. Our heritage and the heritage of

others is something we must be considerate of, something that the pilot episode of *Black-ish* preaches through the character of Dre.

Lesson 23: Reality Television Ethics - Toddlers and Tiaras

- Reality television shows are edited to create a specific narrative and persona. Children have no control over that image. Also, children cannot conceptualize or understand that their person/self and persona are being merged or that this blurring of person and persona, especially for children, can establish audience feelings about the real person that may be inaccurate and damaging to the individual.
- This lesson only made me realize how much I despise shows and programs that label itself as “Reality”. Producers and creators of these shows create narratives and script every aspect of the “reality” programming to appeal to audiences and create a storyline worth keeping up with for some. These reality shows do in fact have a large cult following, with many die hard fans to such “reality” programs as *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* or *Toddlers in Tiaras*. The impact these producers and show creators leave on the images of their characters is by far the worst price to pay for this type of programming. Children who cannot even comprehend or conceptualize who they are and what type of persona they have are put into whatever character the producers of reality television see fit, ultimately doing these children more harm than good in the long run. There is nothing real about “reality” television, as none of it is real, and the characters involved in these shows are given fake life stories to make them relatable to the viewer. Because of this scripting, the characters involved are misjudged and thus have their image damaged, as these shows do nothing to portray the REAL characters and choose to use scripts.