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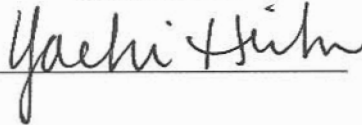
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IS *SOUTH PARK* REPUBLICAN?

Is *South Park* Republican?

Social and Political Attitudes in *South Park*

Yachi Hiehle

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A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College

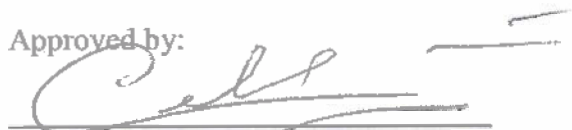
In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors Degree with Honors in Sociology

SOC 498H: Honors Thesis

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

South Park is a hit cartoon series on a cable network, Comedy Central. Since its beginning in 1997, the program has gained high rating drawing millions of viewers each week. Many scholars are also interested in *South Park* and debate whether *South Park* has attitudes leaning towards Republican or Democrat. The purpose of this research is to conduct a pan-series analysis of *South Park*'s social and political beliefs and attitudes using the ethnographic content analysis method to find out whether the underlying social and political attitudes lean towards Republican, or rather more in the middle as some scholars believe. My research shows that *South Park* demonstrates Republican attitudes and beliefs more frequently than it does Democratic attitudes and beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

A cartoon show that is rated as TV-MA (for mature audiences); a cartoon show that opens each episode with a disclaimer advising viewers the show “should not be viewed by anyone” (South Park Studios): that show, is *South Park*.

South Park is a cable network program, Comedy Central’s hit cartoon series, and it has been a great success for the network since the program started. The instant success of the show’s premiere and the subsequent episodes’ constant high ratings in the first season not only made the show one of the top rated shows on Comedy Central, but this program is also often credited as the source that made Comedy Central one of the most popular cable networks that we see today (Johnson-Woods, 2007).

Since its launch in 1997, *South Park* has kept coming back to the eager viewers with much humor, controversies, and topical issues. In each season, the creators of *South Park*, Trey Parker and Matt Stone, have produced somewhere between thirteen to seventeen episodes, though the fourteen episode per season has been the standard for the past six seasons. At the time of this writing, *South Park* is airing its fourteenth season, and celebrating the broadcast of its two hundredth episode. The show’s main selling point is its often scatological humor, and the most salient appeal of *South Park* is its vulgarness and use of offensive language and material.

While *South Park* is frequently described as disgusting, vile, and as a cartoon that you don’t want your children to watch, there is a surprising amount of academic discourse on *South Park*. There are numerous journal articles by sociologist, educators, religious scholars and political scientists, as well as books written by such scholars. Their focus ranges from the analysis of *South Park*’s scatological humor as carnivalesque (Halsall, 2008; Johnson-Woods, 2007; Larsen, 2001), race and ethnicity in *South Park*, and ethics of *South Park*, to the analysis

in the discourse of popular culture influence and homosexuality. One such discourse that received much attention was introduced by Andrew Sullivan, who coined the word “South Park Republican” (Becker, 2008), and Brian C. Anderson (2005), who wrote a book called “South Park Conservatives.” They argue that although *South Park* was initially thought to depict more liberal attitude, South Park is indeed expressing more conservative and Republican attitudes. This idea is based on the frequent use of topics that satirizes liberal and Democratic beliefs and attitudes, such as mocking of an environmentalist (“Rainforest Schmainforest”) or more recently the topic of legalization of marijuana (“Medicinal Fried Chicken”). Other books and journal articles also mention the argument of South Park being conservative and Republican; however, other writers do not necessarily confirm this idea, and rather emphasize that South Park is an “equal offender” to both liberal Democrats and Republican with conservative beliefs and attitudes, citing episodes in which conservative religious beliefs were mocked and the show being seemingly open to homosexuality. However, the articles that talk about South Park’s social and political attitudes tend to rely on isolated episodes, and no research, so far, has confirmed the show’s social and political identity on a broader scale.

BACK TO BASICS

A typical episode of *South Park*, following the tongue-in-cheek disclaimer, begins with a cheery theme song that invites the viewers to an imaginary town of South Park, Colorado. The mountains in South Park are permanently snow capped, and children are in winter gear. Most of the incidents occur in this frozen, weather-wise and time-wise, little town. The main characters of *South Park* are four fourth-grade (since Season 4) children named Stan, Kyle, Kenny, and Cartman. Heffernan (2004) compares these four *South Park* children to Charlie Brown and other

children in "*Peanuts*" and states "where the 'Peanuts' children were sad, the kids in South Park are furious and vengeful."

Stan is a typical "Average Joe," who throws up every time he is about to kiss his girlfriend, Wendy. The show's co-creator, Trey Parker, who is also Stan's voice-over actor, admits that Stan is modeled after himself.

Bomber hat-wearing Kyle is the most ethical and moral of the four children. Growing up in a Jewish family and raised Jewish, he frequently finds himself wondering about his Jewishness and religious activities. The show's other co-creator, Matt Stone, is the model for Kyle, and provides a voice-over for him. Stan and Kyle, as best friends among the four main children, is a reflection of the relationship Parker and Stone have in real life as best friends who met in college. The personality traits of Stan and Kyle are mostly interchangeable.

Parka-hooded, poverty-stricken Kenny was killed gruesomely in every episode in earlier seasons, and came back to life in the next episode without mention of his previous death. Because of his parka hood, his dialogues are muffled and inaudible. Young (2007) states that "for things that really *shouldn't* be said, Kenny says them in a muffled way, and the other boys comment on it" (p. 14). In addition, he is the most sexually mature and knowledgeable of the four children.

Cartman, called by his last name, is probably the most important character of *South Park*. Carman is an obese, self-centered, cunning, anti-Semitic, business-savvy, and antagonist. Johnson-Woods (2007) describes Cartman as "both a cartoon character and a poster child of misguided prejudice" (p. 30). Raised by a single-mother who greatly spoils him, Cartman gets whatever he wants, and if he can't get it, he will make it happen, using any means necessary. Johnson-Woods (2007) sums up that Cartman's acts are "malicious and only serve to further him

or his desires” and that “his badness is manifest in his bigotry, his rudeness, his vitriol, his selfishness, and his greed” (p. 169). Cartman is a crystallization and exaggeration of society’s evil, purposefully created by Parker and Stone as a tool to illustrate such evil and the danger of accepting stereotypes and hypocrisy at face value. While Stan and Kyle are better natured, courageous, and conscientious, Cartman is the antithesis against Stan and Kyle, as well as the antithesis to society’s hypocrisy and political correctness. As an ultimate hate-to-love, “bad-ass” character, Cartman was ranked number ten on TV Guide’s top 50 cartoon characters of all time (NPR, 2008b).

While the children in *South Park* are frequently portrayed as socially concerned and moral, the town’s adult residents, including the children’s parents, are often inconsiderate, easily manipulated or influenced by the media, quick to jump at fad phenomena, going above and beyond rationality, and are ultimately the source of the town’s disarray. Because of others’ irrationality, the children are often forced to act rationally, and adults often learn lessons from the children (Rennie, 2008). As Rennie (2008) states, the discordance between adults’ behaviors and children’s experiences is a part of *South Park*’s comedy.

Although the four children are the main story tellers in *South Park*, the show’s involvement of the whole town of South Park gives a grand theater for the creators to depict a wide range of events. Gournelos (2009) asserts that “*South Park* is about a town, not a family or a school and unlike similar programs like *The Simpsons* or *Family Guy*, it can thus discuss the ways in which contemporary politics work within a social system without a traditional episode framework or a return to normalcy within each episode” (p. 147).

The town of South Park has been overrun by hippies (“Die, Hippie, Die”), homeless people (“Night of the Living Homeless”), and Guiney pigs (“Pandemic”). In various episodes,

the residents of the town have been divided into pro-wars and anti-wars (“I’m a Little Bit County”), ate food from anus and excreted feces from their mouths (“Red Hot Catholic Love”), and were randomly combusted (“Spontaneous Combustion”). These examples clearly confirm Gournelos’s (2009) conclusion that *South Park* is not necessarily the stories of the four children, but about the town. Such inclusion of the entire town gives the creators unlimited possibility of topics with which they can play. In the very two-dimensional cut-out world of *South Park*, the town itself adds a certain depth to the show.

The town of South Park provides a traditional, in a way, old-fashion, American rural community with “good old American values” (Gillespie & Walker, 2006, p. 60), and as Nixon (1999) describes, “characters are in many ways stereotypical” (p. 12). Except for the only black kid in school named “Token” and a soulful school cafeteria chef called “The Chef,” most of South Park’s residents are Caucasian. Children go to a public elementary school by school bus. Most of the business establishments are on the town’s main street, and cookie-cutter houses are located in the residential area. Children play outside, including basketball, street hockey, or sometimes pretending they are Star Trek characters. In recent seasons, children are frequently involved in more indoor play, such as playing Guitar Hero. Children go out and about both the residential area and the town’s main street on their own, without any adult supervision, but this is not because they are delinquent, but rather because they are safe to do so. Children know the adults in the town, including the police officer, town’s mayor, pharmacist, school cafeteria chef, Catholic priest, and ultimately, Jesus, and these adult residents in South Park watch over the children. Therefore, the town provides not only what the viewers are familiar with, but also a sense of nostalgia.

In contrast, *South Park* is also well equipped with some oddball characters. One such

character is Mr. Garrison. As the children's third- and fourth-grade teacher; glass-wearing, bold headed with grey hair on the sides of his head, Mr. Garrison is seemingly a normal middle-age male teacher. However, throughout the series, Mr. Garrison has had complex sexuality issues. Initially in denial of his homosexuality, Mr. Garrison was rather homophobic. He then admitted to the town that he is gay, and he underwent a sex change operation. Transsexual "Mrs." Garrison turned into a flaming feminist, had homosexual relationships with women, and underwent yet another sex change operation to go back to a male body. Mr. Garrison's sexuality issue is one of the rare occasions that are continuous throughout the series. Other oddball characters include Mr. Hankey the Christmas Poo, Jesus who lives in South Park and has a public access TV show, and homosexual Saturn in hell.

South Park's source of parody arises from this apparent incongruity between traditional town's setting and atmosphere and oddball characters and incidents treated as normalcy: for example, Kenny being killed in every episode and then coming back to life in the next episode without any mention of his previous death, the town's never ending chaos, frequent visit of UFOs and extraterrestrial life, Jesus having a television talk show, and a school teacher going under multiple sex change operations. *South Park* in this way represents "the fundamental inconsistencies and hypocrisy of life in the United States" (Bruna, 2004, p. 6983).

TOILET HUMOR, BLASPHEMY, AND OFFENSIVENESS

After being on the air for fourteen years, *South Park* is still attracting millions of viewers each week. The show was originally targeted to young, male adults in their twenties, about the same age as the creators themselves. A driving force of *South Park's* comedy comes from its scatological humor. Often called "toilet humor," *South Park* frequently depicts vomit, feces

coming out of people's mouth, a singing "poo" dancing around leaving brown marks all over the place, and Stan's father Randy taking the world's biggest crap. Although in recent years the production of *South Park* has taken up a more computer-generated, three-dimensional drawing style, the show's aesthetic is still a very two-dimensional, construction paper cut-out-like world. The creators of *South Park* are, however, very aware the effect of such two-dimensional, flat drawing, and they utilize it as an advantage when it comes to depicting lower body excrement. Somehow in this cut-out like world of *South Park*, a piece of brown matter coming out of a character's mouth feels very real. *South Park* also riotously parades around its vulgarness and frequent use of offensive, controversial, and sexually explicit topics. As with the scatology, swearing is also as if a necessary condition of *South Park*. As a reaction to the media hype of the hit television show, *Chicago Hope*'s use of the word "shit," *South Park* used the word 162 times in an episode, "It Hits the Fan" (Gillespie & Walker, 2006).

Many scholars compare *South Park* to Russian literary critic; Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of Rabelaisian carnival to explain *South Park*'s use of scatology as humor (Halsall, 2008; Johnson-Woods, 2007; Larsen, 2001). Halsall (2008) rationalizes that *South Park* "interweaves levels of parody and satire to mock many of the figures and symbols that are iconic of American culture" and that "through the carnivalesque principles of *South Park*, its interrogation of language, its use of grotesque realism, Parker and Stone construct a transformative vision of the world that 'excrementalizes' the U.S. sociopolitical landscape" (p. 23). *South Park*, through its vulgarity, causes one to think (Bruna, 2004).

South Park's low body humor does not end with simple fecal matters. One of *South Park*'s most controversial episodes, "Bloody Mary," is a blasphemous depiction of Mother Mary. In the episode, a statue of Virgin Mary begins to bleed from her rear, and people around the

world come to worship the statue and wait in line for their turn to bask in her blood and her miraculous power to heal and ease their misfortune. At the end of the episode, however, then newly elected Pope Benedict pays a visit to the bleeding statute and after being showered by Virgin Mary's blood on his face, pronounces that, "chicks bleed out their vaginas all the time" ("Bloody Mary"). Though disgusting and controversial, such blasphemy has "one positive direct consequence," as Murtagh (2007) explains: "many people find blasphemous humor funny" (p. 35).

When it comes to being simply offensive, there seems to be no limit for *South Park's* targets. For example, Cartman is anti-Semitic. Not only does he repeatedly curse at Kyle's Jewishness in numerous episodes, he allures townspeople who have just rediscovered their faith in Jesus Christ after watching "The Passion of the Christ" into marching down the town's main street chanting an anti-Semitic phrase in Germany ("The Passion of the Jew"). Many celebrities are often preys of *South Park* ridicule as well. In earlier seasons, Barbra Streisand was repeatedly made fun of, and was turned into a "mechastraisand" which is a Godzilla-like giant monster who destroys the town ("Mecha-Streisand"). Mel Gibson, while worshiped by Cartman, is often depicted as a lunatic ("The Passion of the Jew"); Tom Cruise was portrayed as hiding in the closet, implying that he is a closet-gay ("Trapped in the Closet"); Paris Hilton was depicted as a whore ("Stupid Spoiled Whore Video Playset"); and the list goes on.

Because of this vulgar, blasphemous, and offensive nature of the show, *South Park* was initially criticized for being nothing but a vile trash by many conservatives (Anderson, 2005). Nixon (1999) describes the show as "when translated literally, much of South Park must at best be described as nonsensical and in extremely bad taste" (p. 15). Bozell (1998) called *South Park* "filth and toxic sewage." How, then, has a cartoon show that parades around its toilet humor

been drawing 2.6 million viewers each week (Hancock, 2006) for fourteen years? A few years after the conception of *South Park*, scholars and critics began the discourse on this program, analyzing the show from various disciplines and approaches. A philosophy professor, Robert Arp (2007), edited a book entirely about how philosophy plays out in *South Park*. English professors, Leslie Stratyner and James Keller (2009), also edited a book, compiling articles whose topic ranges from depiction of youth sports (Kitteredge, 2009), Chewbacca Defense (Johnston & McAvoy, 2009) to Shakespeare (Gossage, 2009) in *South Park*. A professor at Brooklyn College, Brian Dunphy, even created a course called “South Park and Political Correctness” (NPR, 2008a).

The next section illustrates what lies beneath toilet humor in *South Park* that draws the attention of critics and academic scholars.

SOUTH PARK MAKES YOU THINK

The creators of *South Park* are always trying to find the fine line between what is ethically acceptable to broadcast nationwide (and worldwide, eventually) and what is not, while pursuing the most radical way to make viewers laugh, regularly pushing the envelope of discourse on various social issues within *South Park*. Underneath its offensiveness and foul language, *South Park* hides true the intension of Parker and Stone; its intellectual edge. Johnson-Woods (2007) summarizes that “the show blended a guffawing toilet humor, zany plotlines, and crude animation with biting social satire and taboo topics. The mix was confronting, humorous, offensive, and thoughtful” (p. 75). As evidenced by the amount of scholarly work done about the show, *South Park* is unmistakably one of the most phenomenal shows in modern television history.

One salient feature of *South Park* is its embodiment of popular culture and its intertextuality. Many previous studies focused on the show's use of popular culture. Weinstock (2008) describes that the value of analyzing *South Park* academically is "the fact that the program is hyperaware of itself as participating precisely in a debate about the value and influence of popular culture." Johnson-Woods (2007) considers *South Park* as "truly a pop-culture phenomenon" (p. 2), and that "part of its success is its infusion of popular culture into its episodes" (p. xi). Ash (2000) portrays that *South Park* "is not 'intensely realistic' but it is a deconstruction of the reality of American construction of media, fame, and all aspects of pop culture" (p. 748). Most of the celebrity bashing in a form of parody is not necessarily targeted at the celebrities themselves, but rather it is the alarming bell to society where bizarre and normally condemned behavior of celebrity are accepted and glorified. Sturm (2008) puts it this way: "Rather than 'celebrating' celebrity, however, South Park undoes or dismantles celebrity in relation to elements of production, circulation, and consumption in American culture" (p. 209). Paris Hilton was parodied in "Stupid Spoiled Whore Video Playlist" precisely as a stupid spoiled whore. At the beginning of the episode, several girls in *South Park*, except for the class president, Wendy, are excited to see Paris Hilton at the grand opening of her new clothing store at the local mall. Not knowing who Paris Hilton is, Wendy asks other girls why Paris is so famous:

Wendy: Who's Paris Hilton?
 Girl 1: "Who's Paris Hilton?"
 Girl 2: You don't know?
 Announcer: Hello, everyone! The Guess Clothing Company is pleased to have as its new spokesperson model, a woman all you young ones can look up to, Ms. Paris Hilton.
 Girl 3: Wow, that's really her! Paris! Over here!
 Wendy: I don't get it. What does she do?
 Girl 2: She's super rich!
 Wendy: But what does she do?
 Girl 1: She's totally spoiled and savvy.
 Wendy: What does she do?!

Man: She's a whore.

As this dialogue illustrates, what *South Park* is parodying is not Paris Hilton per se, but the process of this “celebrification” (Sturm, 2008) when we are not quite sure why we are paying attention to what party a wealthy girl went this past weekend. Celebrity ridicule in *South Park* is not meant to injure someone's fame, but it is intended to mirror the “national pathology” (Parker, quoted in Zeinder, 2000) of celebrity worship and celebrities' abuse of their status.

Use of real life celebrities, athletes, and other well known people in the show is only one way for Parker and Stone to demonstrate their deep understanding and familiarity of other popular culture phenomena. The intertextuality, referencing other popular cultural material in the show whether as a target of ridicule or as out of respect, is crucial in *South Park*. Popular culture savvy viewers find layers upon layers of humor hidden under the face value of scatological, carnivalesque, and violent graphics. Underneath its face value, there are numerous references to movies, cartoons, television shows, actors and celebrities that are depicted with graphics, tag lines, and formulaic episode composition. As Sienkiweicz (2009) states, “instead of depth, the show achieves its complexity through a wide and far reaching web of connections to other medial text and, crucially, the larger discourses with which these other texts are engaged” (p. 6). A recent episode of *South Park* embodies this intertextuality of referencing different media phenomenon. In “Dances With Smurfs,” Cartman, who was newly appointed to the school's morning announcement personnel, intentionally makes false accusations of the class president, Wendy, on the radio. Cartman goes on to make up false allegation and describes how he became part of a Smurf tribe in “Smurfland,” fell in love with “Smurfette,” slowly gaining trust from the Papa Smurf, only to find that Wendy came to destroy Smurfland for money. While this main plot parodies a conservative political TV/radio commentator, Glenn Beck, Cartman's fictitious story

of Smurfette is clearly a parody of the movie “*Avatar*,” with little blue creatures from a cartoon series “*The Smurfs*,” and as the title of the episode indicates, the movie “*Dances With Wolves*.” *South Park*, as “Dances With Smurfs” illustrates, is packed with references, and as Johnson-Woods (2007) states, “the fullest appreciation of *South Park* comes from understanding its subtle and its scathing parodies” (p. xi).

While this intertextuality is salient, *South Park* is not a mere pastiche of references and clichés. As Evans (2009) states, such intertextuality is only a means to voice their ideas. Through the use of popular culture material, such as media, fame, and consumerism, *South Park* deconstructs American society and presents it to the viewers (Ash, 2000). Simply put, *South Park* has received so much scholarly attention because the program makes one think (Bruna, 2004; Fallows, 2008; Groening, 2008; Gossage, 2009; Johnson-Woods, 2007; Murtagh, 2007; Thomas, 2009). The viewers, while laughing at the comedy of *South Park*, are made to think why it is funny and ultimately they are made to find the seat of social pathology illustrated by the ideological distortion. As Fallows (2008) describes, “the show raises a distorted mirror to exaggerate the questionable qualities of American culture to help us see these qualities more clearly as we encounter them in the nonanimated world” (p. 165).

South Park's edgy humor – or according to Yu (2007), it is another way of saying it's a little wicked – also comes from the topical use of current social and political news. In an episode titled “Best Friends Forever,” Kenny was hit by a truck and became a vegetated state. While he is kept alive by life support, the surrounding family, friends, and representative of the U.S. government argued over whether the feeding tube should be pulled. This episode, based on the real life controversy of Terri Schiavo, was aired in the midst of that controversy. The most notable airing of such topical issue was “About Last Night...,” which begins with half of the

South Park residents celebrating Barack Obama's victory in the presidential election (and another half being devastated for John McCain's loss). The episode was aired a day after the election itself. A typical *South Park* episode is created in just one week (Sienkiewicz, 2009). Scheduled to air on Wednesday night, Parker and Stone begin the production process on Thursday of the preceding week. This weekly production schedule is remarkably quick, especially when compared with nine months production time per episode for *The Simpsons* (Hancock, 2006); it "enables the show to circulate among contemporaneous political and cultural discourses in a manner unavailable to other prime-time animated sitcoms" (Sienkiewicz, 2009, p. 12); and it allows *South Park* "to achieve a level of currency generally only reserved for news programs" (Weinstock, 2008, p. 14).

South Park represents a textbook definition of mass culture. Dominic Strinati (1995) in his "An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture," defines mass culture as a "popular culture which is produced by mass production industrial techniques and is marketed for a profit to a mass public of consumers" (p. 10), and as "a standardized, formulaic, repetitive, and superficial culture, which celebrates trivial, sentimental, immediate and false pleasures at the expense of serious, intellectual, time honored and authentic values" (p. 14). While on a superficial level, *South Park* embodies such mass culture, at the deeper level, Parker and Stone deliberately utilize such formulaic and commercial orientation of mass culture to coat the intellectual quality of *South Park*. *South Park* requires active viewing of the viewers, which forces the viewers to look past mass culture references through the eyes of fourth graders and to see the hypocrisy of our society.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ATTITUDE OF SOUTH PARK

In the earlier seasons of *South Park*, the show was originally criticized by conservatives for its liberal attitudes towards certain topics. As Johnson-Woods (2007) explains, “because of the show’s acceptance of gays and blacks, its pro-drug and anti-hunting beliefs in the earliest episodes, viewers jumped to the conclusion that *South Park* was another leftie show” (p. 203). In some elementary schools, *South Park* t-shirts were banned and the show was attacked as “‘twisted,’ ‘vile trash,’ and a ‘threat to our youth’” (Johnson-Woods, 2007). However, as the viewers became more familiarized with the show’s dynamics of multi-layered meanings behind the vulgar, offensive, and scatological humor, some viewers began to notice *South Park*’s frequent parodying of other social and political attitudes, namely, liberal attitudes. After a few seasons, two notable writings opened the debate of *South Park*’s political identity among scholars. In 2001, political commentator and an Internet blogger, Andrew Sullivan, viewed the social and political attitude portrayed in *South Park* to be a new form of Republicanism, and coined a term “South Park Republican” to refer to those young viewers who hold attitudes similar to those portrayed in *South Park* (Becker, 2008). Following Sullivan’s comments on *South Park*’s social and political identity label, Brian C. Anderson expanded Sullivan’s idea of South Park Republican and warned Liberals of the emergence of “South Park Conservatives” (Anderson, 2003; Anderson, 2005).

In “South Park Conservatives: The Revolt Against Liberal Media Bias,” Anderson (2005) who lamented over the hegemony of liberal attitude in Hollywood and liberally-biased media, celebrates the emergence of a new generation of openly conservative and Republican opinion in the media. Anderson (2005) proclaims: “By no means, however, has the Right conquered popular culture; television entertainment, especially on the networks, remains mostly liberal in sensibility, and everyone knows where Hollywood stands politically. But its’ no longer a liberal

monopoly: A new post-liberal counterculture has emerged” (p. xv). Anderson (2003), while admitting that conservatives do get targeted by *South Park*'s parody, views the show as conservative and to the political right. His view is based on *South Park*'s repeated attacks on Hollywood celebrities who want to meddle in politics with their liberal attitude (Anderson, 2003). He attacks liberal attitude as “most hypocrisy and stupidity take place within the liberal camp” and states that *South Park* is conservative because of its seemingly anti-liberal attitude (Anderson, 2003). Anderson (2005) calls *South Park* “the most hostile to liberalism in television history” (p. 88). Cohen (2005) agrees with Anderson, stating that “South Park has not hesitated in making fun of conservatives on many issues, but the hit ration tends to be mostly on the liberal side.”

On the other hand, however, many scholars deny the notion that *South Park* is conservative, or it demonstrates Republican views, and instead, they argue that *South Park* displays a position in the political middle or a Libertarian attitude (Tierney, 2006; Stratyner & Keller, 2009; Rennie, 2008; Ott, 2008; Delashmutt & Hancock, 2008; Becker, 2008). Both Parker and Stone avoid labeling *South Park* as Liberal or Conservative (Stratyner, & Keller, 2009). Stone admitted that he was at one point a registered Republican, and Parker has openly admitted that he is a registered Libertarian (Johnson-Woods, 2007). Parker and Stone explained in an interview that part of the reason they create something of Conservative or Republican orientation is because “we've always been fuck-the-system punks...(a)nd the only way to be punk anymore is to go into a party and say, ‘George Bush fucking rules!’” (Hancock, 2006). Parker and Stone repeatedly emphasize their position as being in the middle and some critics also agree that *South Park* displays “equal opportunity offensiveness” (Groeing, 2008, p. 115), that it shows “little political consistency” (Rennie, 2008, p. 197), and that it is simply anti-extremist

(Johnson-Woods, 2007).

Interesting research was conducted by Lamarre, et al (2009) about the perception of liberal and conservative attitude in political satire. In their study, LaMarre, et al (2009) concluded that the individuals with strong conservative ideologies tend to view an ambiguous political satire entertainment show with bias and interpret the show's liberal-conservative orientation aligned with their own. Using Stephen Colbert's deadpan satiric comedy, they found that "individual-level political ideology was a significant predictor of perception of Colbert's ideology" (LaMarre, et al, 2009). Are Sullivan and Anderson finding the same bias that was found in LaMarre, et al's (2009) study? Why is there such a strong discrepancy in interpreting the social and political attitudes of *South Park*? If Parker and Stone would hail George W. Bush to be a punk, is it also possible that they simply decline to say whether they are liberal or conservative because of their unique generational tendency to avoid being associated with any institutionally established group?

In a recent episode titled "The Tale of Scortie McBoogerballs," Parker responded to this cultural debate over *South Park's* social and political identification. In the episode, Mr. Garrison assigns the children to read J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher In The Rye*. As Mr. Garrison hands out the books to the children, he explains that the book "has some very...risqué parts ...and strong vulgar language... and in fact many schools across the country still ban this book because it's thought to be so inappropriate." Children, who were so excited to read such a controversial book, become furious to find out that after reading the entire book, there was no such offensive material that they were expecting in the book, and they decide to write their own banned book. The four children's story, full of obscenity and inappropriateness, was found by Stan's mother, and thinking that they were in trouble for writing such offensive material, they told their parents

that it was written by their friend, Butters. To their surprise, their parents loved their story, *The Tale of Scortie McBoogerballs*, which makes everyone vomit profusely, and the book was published. The four children, furious after the book became a best seller and Butters received all the publicity and credit, appeal to an assembly to get this book banned.

- Stan: More and more of us are against this book every day! The author is cruel and offensive! And for these reasons, we demand this book be banned from all school, stores, and libraries! This book is nothing but smut and vulgarity purely for the sake of smut and vulgarity!
- Assemblyman 1: That's just because you're too young to understand the underlying themes.
- Cartman: There are no underlying themes! We know that for a fact!
- Assemblyman 1: You just fail to understand what the author meant.
- Kyle: The author meant to be as gross as possible because it was funny!
- Assemblyman 3: No, no no, that's such a simplistic view.
- Stan: Gooddamnit. There is no deeper meaning in this book! Read it again!
- Assemblywoman 1: Oh, so you're suggesting that the author just arbitrarily made fun of Sarah Jessica Parker for no reason?
- Kyle: Yes!
- Assemblywoman 1: But what would be the point?
- Cartman: There is no point! It's just because Sarah Jessica Parker is fuckin' ugly!
- Assemblywoman 2: No writer would take the time to make fun of Sarah Jessica Parker just because they think she's ugly.
- Stan, Kyle, Cartman: Yes, they would!
- Assemblywoman 2: It is because Miss Jessica Parker is a metaphor in the book for oppression felt by the low class.
- Stan: What? Due, that is not in the book at all!
- Assemblyman 2: Boys, this book is an important look at how liberals are hurting this country.
- Stan: What?
- Assemblywoman 2: Wait, *Scortie McBoogerballs* is the most conservative-hating liberal in literature!
- Assemblyman 2: What book did you read?!
- Stan: There's nothing about liberals or conservatives!

The creators try to avoid being labeled with certain institutionalized ideology. Without such denial, *South Park* may end up being part of the parody instead of satire. After all, any exhibition of beliefs and attitude that typify a certain established idea is what *South Park* targets as a source of parody. However, it is inevitable that *South Park* is a voice of the creators and the viewers see certain ideas advocated by this program. The main problem with previous writings

on *South Park* has been that most of them only discussed the show's social and political attitudes in isolated episodes. While some scholars point out anti-liberal and Republican attitudes demonstrated in *South Park*, others point out that conservative and Republican ideas are also laughed at, but there has not been a comprehensive study to compare the social and political attitudes illustrated in *South Park* in a pan-series scale. Thus, the purpose of this research is to perform a content analysis of *South Park* to determine the leniency of *South Park*'s social and political attitudes across seasons.

METHODS AND CONCEPTS

In order to systematically study *South Park*'s social and political attitudes, this paper used a content analysis method. Content is defined as “words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated” (Neuman, 2006). The advantage of content analysis is that it allows the researcher guffawing to compare the presence of targeted themes or phenomena across many documents (Neuman, 2006). The method is especially useful to “document whether your vague feeling based on unsystematic observation are true” and the method “yields repeatable, precise results about the text” (Neuman, 2006). Altheide (1996) defines document analysis as “an integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving, and analyzing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning” (p. 2). Altheide (1996) differentiates qualitative document analysis from quantitative content analysis, claiming the qualitative document analysis's “reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collection, and analysis” (p. 16). For a document like *South Park* which contains multi-layers of meaning, this emphasis of context is crucial, and therefore a latent coding, qualitative document analysis method is used in this

research.

In this research, my primary interest is documenting the Republican and Democratic beliefs and attitudes shown in *South Park* episodes instead of the liberal and conservative attitudes Anderson (2005) focused on. This is because the idea of “Conservative” and “Liberal” can only be applied to a specific sphere of social and political issues, and by applying the more blanket ideological system of Republican and Democratic concepts, we can see more clearly where *South Park* stands within the social and political discourse. The conservative and liberal attitudes, which are frequently used interchangeable with Republican and Democratic attitudes, are treated as part of the Republican and Democratic attitude scale in this study. Conover and Feldman (1981) suggests that “the meaning of ideological labels and self-identifications must be interpreted within the context of two liberal/conservative dimensions: one economic and one social” (p. 618). In this research, instead of evaluating *South Park*’s leniency toward Republican and Democratic beliefs in two separate spheres, the political and social beliefs were included into the typology, as part of the comprehensive saliency that Republican or Democrat typically demonstrate. Further, this study adapted a similar method used in Olsen (1962). Olsen (1962) evaluated people’s attitude crystallization (the phenomenon of consistency in attitude) on a six liberal-conservative scale: freedom of speech, international relations, domestic politics, racial integration, moral problems, and religious beliefs. Olsen’s (1962) created the attitude scale based on Kerlinger’ (1972) idea of different attitude domain. Kerlinger (1972) studied the social attitude referents between the conservative and the liberal, and stated that “for the conservative, for example, private property, religion, subject matter, and certain other referents are critical, while such referents as social change, civil rights, and children's interests, not usually critical to the conservative are critical to the liberal” (p. 614). His social attitude domain includes religious,

political, economic, social aspect and educational dimensions (Kerlinger, 1972). In order to evaluate *South Park*'s Republican and Democratic leniency, eleven domains were established: economy, education, environment, foreign relations, immigration, media, military, religion, sexuality, welfare and other social aspects.

The judgment of whether a particular attitude shown in *South Park* demonstrates leniency towards a particular party was based on generally established ideas as well as the results of several studies. One way to construct identification of attitudes and beliefs was to use the General Social Survey (GSS). Party identification was cross tabulated with several other questions in the GSS that were relevant and selected the issues and attitudes that validated party difference. Another study that was adapted in this project was a typology research conducted by the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press (2005). The Pew Research Center (2005) conducted a telephone opinion survey in 2004 and a follow up telephone survey in 2005 and created a comprehensive typology of Republicans and Democrats. Although the survey results illustrated attitudinal and belief difference among party identification, and they consequently established three types of Republicans, two types of Independents, and three types of Democrats, this research was very useful in illustrating key attitudes, beliefs, and demographic characteristic of each party. Other researches I considered in constructing my coding are Olsen (1962), Conover and Feldman (1981), Swedlow (2008), and Treier & Hillygus (2009).

Of the thirteen completed seasons of *South Park*, totaling 195 episodes, my sampling frame was chosen as episodes aired between Season 4 through Season 13, eliminating 48 earlier episodes. This decision was based on the fluctuated ratings in the first three seasons, and the fact that the use of topical social issue in the episodes began in the fourth season. By eliminating the first three seasons, I believe my sampling frame is more representative to the current, established

ideology of *South Park*. Of the 147 episodes in my sampling frame, 3 episodes from each of the 10 seasons, or roughly 20%, were randomly selected and viewed. Altheid (1996) states that “virtually any statistics book can be consulted for a formula of how large the sample would be, but a good rule of thumb is 5% to 10%” (p. 36). Considering the small size of my sampling frame, 30 episodes should be the adequate sample size in this research.

The data were collected by a single coder, the author of this thesis. Since it was a single-coder study, there should be no issue regarding inter-coder reliability. However, one drawback of this qualitative document analysis is the difficulty of realizing reliability. Because of the unique nature of coding political identity in satirical humor, the coder’s reliable interpretation of the context was crucial. Having no affiliation with either political party, I hope I achieved objectivity and fair judgment in interpretation, and thus in the coding.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows the results of this content analysis. In short, *South Park* did demonstrate some kind of social and political attitude and belief in most of the episodes examined, and the results show that *South Park* exhibits more Republican attitudes and beliefs than Democratic beliefs and attitudes. Out of the 30 episodes examined, 22 episodes expressed either Republican or Democratic beliefs and attitude, and among those 22 episodes, Republican attitudes and beliefs were seen 23 times while Democratic attitudes and beliefs were seen only 14 times. Among the 9 domains which contained Republican or Democratic social and political attitudes and beliefs, a Republican attitude was dominant in four domains (economy, education, environment, sexuality); Democratic attitude was dominant in 2 domains (military, religion), and tied in one domain (other). It is notable to say that while *South Park* celebrates its intertextuality and

frequent use of references to other popular culture phenomena and shows bits and pieces of such references throughout the episodes, when it comes to social and political attitudes and beliefs, *South Park* devotes an entire episode to make a point. Only two episodes, “Goobacks” and “Major Boobage” showed several attitude and belief references in one episode. In other cases, one episode represented one theme of Republican or Democratic social or political attitudes, or expressed such attitudes in one incident within the episode. The 30 episodes examined did not express any attitudes or beliefs within the foreign relations and welfare domain. Among the other 9 domains, *South Park* exhibited beliefs and attitudes most frequently in sexuality domain, followed by the “other” domain and military domain.

Table 1.

Episode	Economy		Education		Environ		F.Relation		Imm		Media		Military		Religion		Sexuality		Welfare		Other		
	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	DEM	GOP	
0403				1																			1
0405																							0
0406																							0
0505						1																	1
0506		1													1								1
0513																						1	1
0603																							0
0612												1		1									2
0615																							0
0704												1	1				1						3
0705																							0
0713																						1	1
0807						1				1		1					1				1		5
0809		1																					1
0812																	1						1
0903																		1					1
0911																		1					1
0912																							0
1003																		1			1		2
1010																							0
1012															1			1					2
1101																						1	1
1107																							0
1109										1								1					2
1203												1						1				2	4
1210													1										1
1212																						1	1
1301															1								1
1306														1									1
1311												1	1										2
DEM Total	0		0		0		0		1		0		5		3		1		0		4		14
GOP Total		2		1		2		0		1		3		1		1		8		0		4	23

The next section discusses *South Park*'s exhibition of attitudes and beliefs in some of the notable domains.

Economy

South Park displayed a Republican attitude in the economic domain by illustrating that the capitalistic free market is inevitable in our society. In "Something Wall**Mart* This Way Comes," *South Park* celebrates its very first Wall**Mart* in town. Stan's father, Randy, becomes obsessed with Wall**Mart*'s low prices to a point that he would go to Wall**Mart* in the middle of the night. Stan's family dinner, which is usually depicted as a family dinner at the table having conversation, turns into a TV-dinner with plastic dinnerware on the couch in front of a TV thanks to Wall**Mart*'s low prices for everything. Randy rejoices: "Just look at the Marsh family, huh? Brand-new television, new plastic dishware and cups, and enough bulk-buy ramen to last us a thousand winters... It's simple economics, son. I don't understand it at all, but God I love it" ("Something Wall**Mart* This Way Comes"). Townspeople, too, become frequent shoppers at Wall**Mart* and consequently the main street of South Park becomes a ghost town. They gather around and discuss burning down Wall**Mart* to save the town:

- Gerald: Jesus! Look at us! We all don't like the Wall**Mart*, but we can't stop coming here.
- Jimbo: It's like some mystical evil force.
- Randy: Yeah. This place has a power over us we can't resist! We have to find a way to put the South Park Wall**Mart* out of business once and for all!
- Mr. Garrison: Let's burn it down!
- Chef: No, no, no. Let's freeze it!
- Stephen: I think it's best we try to reason with it.
- Kyle: No! All we have to do is not shop at Wall**Mart* anymore! If you want it to go away, all it takes is a little self-control and personal responsibility.

Although Jimbo describes the power of capitalism as "some mystical evil force" the point is not to blame capitalism, but to emphasize personal responsibility in dealing the situation. Later,

children learn that in order to destroy Wall**Mart* they have to destroy the heart of Wall**Mart*, and that the heart of Wall**Mart* is a mirror:

Stan: It's a mirror.
Wall**Mart*: Yes, don't you see? That is the heart of Wall**Mart*. You, the consumer. I take many forms. Wall**Mart*, Kay**Mart*, Target, but I am one single entity: Desire!

In this episode, *South Park* seems at first to warn against the Wal-*Mart* business model. However, as Kyle preaches to adults, and as the metaphor of the heart of Wall**Mart* being a mirror exemplify, the message is to take personal responsibility in this free market economy, and that regulation is not the answer.

South Park's attitude towards business is also seen in "Cartmanland" where Cartman inherits a million dollars from his grandmother and buys a theme park which has not been making a profit, only to close it down to the public so that he can enjoy the theme park all by himself. However, Cartman is forced to let a couple people in each day so that he can pay for security, another few people in to afford a maintenance crew, and at the end, Cartmanland is back to a full-fledged theme park. Although Cartman is often depicted as amoral and self-centered, he is also the most business savvy, and is to-the-point. When the town's drugstore goes out of business in "Something Wall**Mart*" being defeated by Wall**Mart's* low price, Cartman makes a comment saying "That's called progress."

On the outside of *South Park*, the creators' support for the free market is seen in the show's official website, Southparkstudios.com. The creators, instead of stopping *South Park* fans from downloading pirated copies of *South Park* episodes, bestow full access to past episodes on the website. The viewers can watch any full-length episode online the moment it is aired. *South Park* therefore embodies the Republican attitude of the free market, anti-regulation, and personal responsibility.

Environment

In two episodes, *South Park* manifested its Republican attitude towards environmental issues: *South Park* shows negative attitudes against environmentalists and furthermore is skeptic about the climate change that environmentalists allege. In “Goobacks,” so-called time immigrants come to South Park through a one-way time portal from an overcrowded future to look for a job. In order to stop such time immigrants to come to South Park to take their jobs away, residents discuss a way to stop the future from happening:

- Darryl: All right! so, any ideas how we can stop the future from happening?
 Chet: How about we cause more global warming, so that in the future, the polar ice caps melt, and it ushers in a new ice age?
 Darryl: How the hell is global warming gonna cause an ice age?
 Chet: Well, you know, the ... global warming could bring on like a climate shift or somethin’?
 Darryl: Chet, you are a fuckin’ retard, you know that?! Even if global warming were real, which all proven scientific data shows it isn’t, it would take millions of years for a climate shift to happen! You think an ice age can just happen all of a sudden-like?

In addition, in “Terrance and Phillip: Behind the Blow,” environmentalists who are having an Earth Day event in South Park were depicted as people who manipulate others’ mind with Jedi-like hand movement. From both explicit statements of disbelief in pending climate change and mockery of environmentalists as mind-altering evil Jedi, it is evident that *South Park* demonstrates Republican attitudes towards the environment.

Religion

South Park does parody religion from time to time but the way it parodies it varies. On one hand, it is described as “the most theologically profound television available today” (Delashmutt & Hancock, 2008, p. 173), it is also called “anti-god” (Horowitz, 1999). This

inconsistency was also observed in my study. One episode represented Republican attitudes towards religion (“Cartmanland”) and three episodes represented Democratic attitudes (“Ladder to Heaven,” “Go God Go,” “The Ring”). While religion, except for Scientology, was positively recognized (“Cartmanland”, “Ladder to Heaven”) in the town, South Park residents also established their non-belief in any god. In “Ladder to Heaven,” the boys build a ladder high enough to reach heaven so that they can see Kenny in heaven who has knowledge of where their winning ticket stub to a candy shopping spree is. The concept of heaven and hell is used in *South Park* frequently, and children encounter Jesus and Satan periodically. “Ladder to Heaven,” however, with a subplot of the defense race for which country will reach heaven first, ends with Japan broadcasting a fabricated news report from heaven, which is actually from a studio, and with a remark that heaven is maybe just an idea. The inconsistency in religious belief is prominent when “Ladder to Heaven” is compared with “Cartmanland.” At the beginning of “Cartmanland,” Kyle, looking at his friend but also his archnemesis, Cartman, owning a theme park while he is suffering from hemorrhoid, screams that there is no God and he renounces his faith. Kyle’s parents tell him a story from the Book of Job and give him a quote “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away” and try to teach him how Job kept his faith in God, only in vain. Kyle’s health deteriorates from an infection caused by his hemorrhoid. However, at the end of the episode, Kyle sees Cartman suffer from losing his theme park and the money he made, and he miraculously recovers from the illness. The episode’s last line is Kyle saying “You *are* up there!” with a smile.

Lori Lipoma (2009) noted that what is targeted in *South Park* is not necessarily religion, but “rather its human inclination toward unquestioning devotion to ideology of any kind” (p. 24) and “those who held ideological way over others” (p. 25). Although attitude with respect to

Scientology was not defined as either Republican or Democratic in this study, “Trapped in the Closet” and “The Ring” exemplify what Lipoma (2009) suggested. In “Trapped in the Closed,” Stan scores extremely high in Scientology’s personality test, and is believed to be the reincarnation of Scientology’s founder, L. Ron Hubbard. As Stan writes his book of prophecy, he finds out that Scientology is a total scam:

President of
Scientology: Yes... Yes, oh this is great, Stan!
Stan: I wrote that, um, our followers should’nt fly in DC-8s anymore because they’re too much like Xenu’s evil cruisers.
President: Yes, of course!
Stan: And I wrote that the evil Lord Xenu was recently broken out of galactic jail.
President: Yes, of course!
Stan: And best of all, I wrote that all the Scientologists should no longer have to pay money to belong.
President: What are you, stupid?! Then how do we make money from those people?!
Stan: Well, it's not about the money; it's about the message, right?
President: Waait a minute, whoa, whoa! You don't actually believe this crap, do you?? Dummy! Brainwashed alien souls?? E-meters and thetan levels?? Those people out there buy that crap and I thought YOU were smart enough to see what was really going on!
Stan: But you said that there were...
President: What's better than telling people a stupid story and having them believe you?! Having them PAY you for it, stupid!
Stan: But then, why me? Why do you need me to write something so badly?
President: Because if those people all think you're the reincarnation of L. Ron Hubbard, then they'll all buy your new writings, and you and I together will make three million dollars!
Stan: Three million dollars?
President: That's how the scam works! But this is a scam on a global scale! Do you fucking get me now?!
Stan: Yeah. Yeah, I get you.
President: Then keep writing, L. Ron! Your people are waiting.

Later, when Stan announces his prophecies in front of the crowd of Scientology followers, he cannot resist his conscience and tells the crowd:

Stan: Look, everybody. We're all looking for answer, you know. We all want to understand who we are and where we come from, but... sometimes we want to know the answers so badly that we... believe just about anything...

I'm not the reincarnation of L. Ron Hubbard. And... Scientology is just a big fat global scam.

As this excerpt illustrates, what *South Park* is targeting is not religion per se; rather, it is targeting those people who blindly believe what the “church” tells them regardless of how outrageous it may be, and mostly, targeting organization that exploit such faith. The same theme flows in “The Ring,” where the Jonas Brothers are being used by Mickey Mouse to exploit faith to sell sex to young girls. *South Park* on one hand accepts faith in God, but on the other hand does not agree with “unquestioning devotion”(Lipoma, 2009, P. 25) and is disgusted by the way established churches and businesses take advantage of religious faith. In this view, religiosity in *South Park* is, albeit its antithesis against the way religion is used as a means to manipulate others, consistent with Republican attitudes towards religion.

Military

The results showed five incidents of Democratic attitudes in the military domain when there was only one incident of Republican attitudes, and the only one time the Republican attitude was asserted was in “I’m a Little Bit Country,” in which both sides of the argument of the war in Iraq were discussed in the episode. This result shows that *South Park* exhibits Democratic attitudes in the discourse of the use of the military. Mostly, such anti-military attitudes were indicated by the repeated mockery of excessive military use. In “Ladder to Heaven,” military force was deployed to compete against other foreign nationals from reaching heaven first; the Homeland Security armed forces were used to capture Peruvian pan flute bands in South Park. This frequent parody of excessive military use is consistent with Democratic attitudes towards the use of the military. One exception was “I’m a Little Bit Country.” In this episode, the town of South Park is divided between an anti-war, rational group of people and a

pro-war, patriotic group of people. While the townspeople argue over the war in Iraq, Cartman, having had a “flashback” of being in the Continental Congress assembly when the Declaration of Independence was being read, makes a speech on the stage where people of South Park are having pro- and anti-war demonstrations:

Cartman: I learned something today. This country was founded by some of the smartest thinkers the world has ever seen. And they knew one thing: that a truly great country can go to war, and at the same time, act like it doesn't want to. You people who are for the war, you need the protesters. Because they make the country look like it's made of sane, caring individuals. And you people who are anti-war, you need these flag-wavers, because, if our whole country was made up of nothing but soft pussy protesters, we'd get taken down in a second. That's why the founding fathers decided we should have both.

In this episode, the Republican attitude of favoring military use is considered a necessary evil, but not necessarily celebrating that idea. Therefore, as the results of the analysis show, it is consistent that *South Park's* attitudes in the military domain are more Democratic than Republican.

Sexuality

The Republican attitude of sexuality was seen in 8 episodes, and only one episode illustrated a Democratic attitude. This result shows that *South Park* has overwhelmingly Republican attitudes towards sexuality. The result is consistent with Evans (2009) who analyzed sexuality in *South Park* and stated that *South Park* “consistently supports a moderate, even conservative view on gay issues” (p. 98) and further stated that *South Park* demonstrates tolerance in homosexuality, rather than the acceptance that the Liberals are trying to advocate. In my study, the majority of sexuality issues arose from the sexuality of the third and fourth grade teacher, Mr. Garrison. As mentioned earlier, Mr. Garrison for a long time had an issue with his

sexuality, and during the course of the series, underwent a sex change operation to become a woman. When Mr. Garrison becomes “Mrs. Garrison,” however, he is still middle-aged, bald with gray hair on the sides of his head, and is anything remotely from feminine attractiveness. His breast implant surgery left him with scars and uneven breasts. When *South Park* laughs at Mrs. Garrison screaming, “I’m a woman!” while depicting her with exaggerated breasts with a man’s head, the attitude is clearly not positive. By having such an openly gay character, *South Park* does demonstrate its open attitude towards homosexuality. Evans (2009) states, “South Park advocates a compassionate conservative view towards the GLBT communities, arguing that the treatment of GLBT people with humanity is essential but giving them the same rights as heterosexual is not” (p. 109). My results fit Evans’s view of sexuality in *South Park*, showing a tolerance attitude of homosexuality consistent with the Republican attitude on this issue.

Other Issues

The study revealed a wide range of issues *South Park* covers, and its leniency to either party varies in each issue. Democratic attitudes were seen in four instances: favoring stem cell research, labor union, anti-censorship, and an optimistic outlook towards Obama administration. Republican attitudes were also seen in four instances: against anti-smoking legislation by Rob Reiner, parodying of New York City’s symbolic ban on the use of the word “nigger,” parodying of liberal favoritism of social change by legislation, and parodying of liberal attitude towards drug use.

CONCLUSION

To reiterate, the purpose of this research was to discover *South Park*’s leniency towards

Republican and Democratic attitudes and beliefs through a pan-series content analysis. While the scholarly debate over this issue is divided between those that assert *South Park's* Republican and conservative attitude and the ones that assert that *South Park* is merely an “equal opportunity” defender. The creators of *South Park* themselves responded to this discourse with an episode in which the main characters insist that there is no profound point in the show and that they arbitrarily make fun of people just for fun. Regardless of the creators’ intentions, their “points” in the episodes are indeed something worth noticing, and that is manifested by the attention the show is receiving by scholars. My research shows that *South Park* demonstrates Republican attitudes and beliefs more frequently than it does Democratic attitudes and beliefs. Specifically, the research revealed that *South Park* has Republican attitudes in the issues of economy, environment, media, and sexuality, and has Democratic attitudes in issues of the military and religion. The show also exhibited Republican attitudes by parodying the liberal tendency in regulation over personal responsibility, and exhibited Democratic attitudes in the issues of stem cell research, censorship, and the Obama administration.

Although it seems *South Park* is yet standing at the middle ground in this Republican-Democrat debate if one considers the inconsistency in attitudes seen in the “Other” social issues domain, however, using Olsen’s (1962) idea of attitude crystallization, having only two domains in which Democratic attitudes dominate out of 11 domains can be interpreted as having low attitude crystallization. Just like no one has a completely Republican or Democratic attitude on every single issue, *South Park* can be both liberal and conservative. However, what this study confirmed is that the attitudes were generally consistent within each domain, and that in the continuum of Republican and Democrat scale, *South Park* is rather on the right side of the scale towards Republican.

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