qwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmrtyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmrtyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmrtyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmrtyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmrtyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmrtyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmrtyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnmqwertyuiopasdfghjklzxcvbnm

|  |
| --- |
| *STEREOTYPES & FAMILY GUY*  Mass Media & Pop Cultures  5/13/2015  Francy Rios |

*'Family Guy' has this weird thing of attracting people. People either hate it or can't get enough of it. There's really no one in between.*

- Seth Macfarlane

For over fifteen years, the adult sitcom *Family Guy* has been setting controversy. As creator and producer Seth Macfarlane stated, a lot of people have a love and hate relationship with the show. The show was produced to bring comedy to the crowd, yet many do not find the show “funny.” Although the show is brilliant in many ways by winning multiple Annie Awards and Primetime Emmy Awards, there are a lot of people who have tried to pull the show from the air because of what it portrays of the American culture. The audience that does not like the sitcom would say that the find the show rather offensive. “Racial stereotypes, pedophilia, infanticide, rape, degenerative disorders, disabilities, the Holocaust… A large part of the point of watching the program is gasping in shock with your hands clasped to your mouth, unsure if you’re stifling a cry of horror or a laugh.” (Walker) The sitcom Family Guy exploits the American culture by promoting stereotypes of religion, race, sex, and society and due to this it has caused much controversy because of the hegemonic perspective it takes.

*Family Guy* was created by American comedian Seth Macfarlane. The show was originally produced in 1998 for the Fox Broadcasting Company. During the first couple of years, the show hit rock bottom causing its cancellation from Fox. Yet, its high DVD selling rates and continuous runs on Cartoon Networks’ late night programming, Adult Swim, the show was put back on air two years after its cancellation. Critics typically compare *Family Guy* to the sitcom ‘The Simpsons,’ given that they are both very similar in concept. The only difference between *Family Guy* and The Simpsons is that *Family Guy* is directed towards a more mature audience as opposed to The Simpson which is directed to a younger audience. *Family Guy* is based on the adventures of a family named The Griffins, who live in a fictional suburban city named Quahog in Rhode Island. The Griffins family consists of Peter the father, Louis the mother, Meg the teenage daughter, Chris the middle child, Stewie the baby, and Brian the talking dog. As the adventures the family encounters are in many cases vulgar, the sitcom is rated TV-MA. “It is important to put *Family Guy* under a critical lens so that we may understand not only the cultural impact the program has on viewers but also the ideological impact as well.” (Danowski, 50) The Griffins are not your typical ‘everyday’ American family. Peter is a middle class, white, working man whom is the provider of his family; he is considered to be “stupid” because of the things he does and says. Louis is a stay at home, red head mom whom is typically taking care of the house and picking up after her family. Many believe that Louis is considered the “normal” one of her family, yet given that she married to a man like Peter shows the contrary. Meg is a typical, yet not typical, teenager; a senior in high school who gets bullied everyday by the popular kids, yet tries very hard to be recognized. In the show, Meg is the least favored child. Chris is Peter’s favorite child because in many ways they are very alike. Like his father, Chris is considered to be “stupid” because in many cases they do not use common sense. Stewie is a talking baby genius who hates his mother Louis and is constantly trying to kill her. In the show, Stewie is portrayed to be smarter than everyone in his family. One unusual thing about Stewie’s character is that the only person who can understand him is the dog, Brian. Brian is the pet of the family, as well as Stewie’s best friend. Brian is the only character in the show that seems to have some moral common sense.

The show *Family Guy* has entailed the perspective of its creator. Seth Macfarlane is known for his spontaneous and outrageous way of thinking. The sitcom has caused quite a controversy because of the way the show is produced and because of what the show entails in its scripts. It is not a surprise that because of the nature of the show Fox has been sued many times. According to Gerstenberger, in an interview Seth Macfarlane stated “when we get sued, it’s usually because people are cranky.” *Family Guy* is known for mocking celebrities on their defects. It is actually a surprise that Fox has only been sued four times because of *Family Guy.* The first time Fox was sued because of *Family Guy* was by Carol Burnett Lawsuit in March of 2007. American actress Carol Burnett sued Fox for $2 Million dollars for being features in one of the episodes named “Peterorica.” In this episode, Burnett is portrayed as a janitor in an adult porn shop wearing her trademark outfit. Burnett claimed that she did not give permission to Fox to use the character that she had created decades before. Burnett also claimed that the 18 second scene violated her publicity rights and misappropriation of her name. Carol Burnett failed to win her case against Fox based on the ruling that the parody is protected by the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of speech. “*Family Guy* is a postmodern television cartoon comedy because it takes its culture within the program and extends it to a larger world market. More specifically, *Family Guy* uses real life cultural norms to represent the culture within the program and uses that culture to capitalize on profits and out cultural norms throughout the rest of the world.” (Danowski, 47) According to Gerstenberger the judge that was in charge of the Carol Burnett versus Fox acknowledged that many public figures are targets of such crude humor. *Family Guy* has caused many lawsuits over copyright issues since the show was first produced. Luckily, Fox was able to win every lawsuit. One of the most controversial episodes in *Family Guy* is “Screams of Silence: The Story of Benda Q.” In this episode the audience meets Quagmire’s sister, Brenda, who is in a physical and metal abusive relationship with a white man. Brenda is frightened and terrorized by her partner, Jeff. In a moment of desperation Brenda reveals that she is pregnant and engaged to Jeff. Even after revealing that she was pregnant, Jeff continues to physically abuse Brenda in the show. Brenda’s character is portrayed as a woman who is poorly dressed and usually walks around with one black eye and blood dripping on the side of her mouth. Such an image can be very offensive and can trigger emotions to any viewer who is a victim of domestic violence. In this episode, Quagmire begins to get affected by the relationship his sister is in; thus resulting in a plan to murder Jeff. After Quagmire gets rid of Jeff, he writes a fake letter to Brenda from Jeff giving the impression that Jeff has ran away and left her. One of the most controversial parts of this episode was when Quagmire says to his sister, “The person I see before me right now is just a punching bag. And I call you "person," not "woman," because a woman is a strong, beautiful vibrant creature. Sadly, the fact that you are with Jeff proves to me that you have made a choice to make your life worse.” This specific episode has caused a lot of controversy since it was aired. A lot of people were enraged because they felt that *Family Guy* has crossed the line with this episode. But who says there is a line? *Family Guy* has and will continue to controversy without any boundaries. Many believe that the episode was very insensitive to how offensive this episode is to those who are victims of domestic violence.

Cultural hegemony plays a major rule when examining the different families in the show. The creators of the show only give the viewers their perspectives of family life. “The notion of viewing media as every day or common sense, it is important to understand when one considers *Family Guy*. As stated by Lull (1995) dominant powers perpetuate their own philosophies, cultures, and morality. It is possible the hegemonic forces between *Family Guy* are being viewed as everyday reality or common sense.” (Danowski, 34) Those who understand the show basically use ‘common sense’ and thus they are not offended. The fiction city in which the show takes place is a figment of Seth Macfarlane’s imagination. Quahog, Rhode Island is a typical American society according to Macfarlane. Quahog is a city where there are middle class working families of various different races. Besides the Griffin family there is the Brown family, which is African American, the Swanson family, which is a full Caucasian family, the Goldberg family, which is the Jewish family, and then there is Quagmire, who’s a 40-year-old single man. “Within *Family Guy*, othering could be an explanation for the binaries and stereotypes created for the program. The depictions of minorities can be seen from the perspective of the dominant culture; in this case the straight white male executive producers of the programs. Recognizing will create awareness of the stark binaries and stereotypes and create a discussion as to what realistic representations should be.” (Danowski, 42) The society in *Family Guy* is portrayed to be a normal and typical American society. Where the Brown family has a ‘typical’ dominating black mother, the Swanson family head of household is the father who is a cop, and the Goldberg family is known for being selfish and money hungry. Quahog can be believed to be a real city; there is a mayor, Mayor Adam West, a local bar which Peter typically goes with his friends, local celebrities who are known for being anchors of the towns News Channel 5, and there is a High School which is where Meg & Chris attend. These depictions of the characters take away from the culture by only showing us the negative aspects of each culture.

Religion in *Family Guy* is stereotypical because of its representation of religious figures and ideas. It is also geared towards the typical religion of these in power. The characters representing Jesus Christ and God are very recognizable in the show. Jesus portrayed as a mid –aged white man, which long brown hair and a brown beard, wearing a white bath robe. God is portrayed as an old, white man, with long white hair, wearing a long white dress. Jesus knows for showing off his “magic,” and God is known for having “power.” “*Family Guy*’s approach to Protestantism is simple: They want to make God and Jesus look as silly and ridiculous as possible” (Batdorf) God and Jesus Christ are mocked whenever they appear in the show. Not only is their image mocked, but also what the Bible says is mocked as well. The creator of *Family Guy*, Seth Macfarlane, admits that he is indeed an atheist, which explains why religion is taken as a joke in the show. In the episode “Blind Ambition,” God approaches a girl and lights her cigarette with his finger saying, “Yeah. I got the magic fingers.” Then, God points and winks, setting her on fire. In response, God screams, “Jesus Christ!” and Jesus appears; God then says, “Quick, get in the Escalade; we’re out of here!” “While there may be a few groups that are very upset by the mockery of God, Jesus, or Christianity on *Family Guy*, there has been no effort to remove the show, nor has there been any shortage of the amount of puns intended toward God.” (Batdorf) Many Christians find this immensely offensive and not funny at all, yet no one has many an effort to get it pulled off the air. Unfortunately, there are no laws that can protect religion from mockery; as well as any other person or situation that is mocked and made fun of in the show. In addition to God and Jesus Christ, there is a character in the show that is supposed to be the representation of Death. Death is usually a skeleton dressed in an all-black robe with a hoodie; also known as the grim reaper. There is not much talk about after life in the sitcom, yet what seemed to be heaven was briefly shown in an episode where God was laying in his large bed next to multiple naked women. “One could easily argue that *Family Guy* shows America to be more Protestant, as jokes towards other religions are definitively used less frequently, mainly because people are nervous or uncomfortable about laughing at a group that they are not a part of because they do not want to offend someone. Therefore, the constant mockery of God displays that *Family Guy* is continuing its strategy of allowing people to laugh at themselves, and, thus, shows America to be truly Protestant.” (Batdorf) Many would agree with Batdorf’s conclusion, yet many may disagree. The reason why people find this mockery funny could be because they are in denial of their own religious identity, or it could be because people have already identified themselves religiously, yet still find the show funny.

The way Family Guy represents different races is very stereotypical and limited. It shows the view of those in power over minority groups in America. “As *Family Guy* takes on a different approach in portraying the family, one must question why so many people find it humorous. Do people laugh at the show’s constant mockery of minorities and social misfits, such as homosexuals, minority races, especially Blacks and Hispanics, and the mentally disabled, or is there a broader approach to what *Family Guy* is trying to appeal to in popular culture?” (Batdorf) Almost every race in *Family Guy* has been made fun of. From Asians not being able to drive, Asian children as “nerds,” Jewish people as money hungry, and even black women as gossipers. One of the most known characters is the Griffins house keeper, Consuela. Consuela is a Hispanic old woman who does not speak English; Consuela is known for only being able to say “no” in English. It is very stereotypical for the producers of the sitcom to have the house keeper be an old Hispanic woman who does not speak English. Another stereotypical character from the show is Mort Goldman, the father of the Goldman family. Mort is known for always being tight with money, cheap, and greedy. One of the reasons why many people get offended by the show is because it brings out many key characteristics that are appointed to a specific race by stereotyping. For example, given that most house keepers in the USA are of Hispanic decent, typically from Mexico, in the show housekeepers are portrayed as old Hispanic women with a Mexican name, such as Consuelo’s. Another example of racist identification was in episode “Peter’s Daughter”, where an airplane bomber was automatically known to be Arabic because of what he was wearing and especially because of the Keffiyeh on his head. In the show, the viewers see the characters in only one way, when each minority group is actually very diverse.

Although Family Guy is very open to discussing sex and sexual identification, it mocks the people of the LGBTQ community, and promotes pedophilia. For example in the episode “Quagmire’s Dad,” this ironically was humorously released on Mother’s Day. This episode is about Quagmire’s dad, who is a gay male who considers himself as a female “trapped” in a male’s body. Quagmire’s dad admits that he is undergoing a transgender operation and would like the support of his son. In desperation, Quagmire seeks support from his close family, the Griffins. This show was very offensive to those who consider themselves Queer because of all the offensive jokes that were made in that episode towards gay people. In this episode Lois and Peter remark that the whole thing seems “pretty gay” but that it is “obviously weird” and Lois finishes off by telling the two men that they should “enjoy the circus” referring to the hospital visitation. In the waiting room there is the talk of “he/she” and the “penis being chopped off” which an obvious disregard of using correct pronouns and propagation of the myth that transwomen remove their penis. One of the most known characters is John Henry. Herbert is known to be the neighborhoods pedophile. He has an unrequited love for Chris Griffin, though the Griffins and the other citizens of Quahog are either oblivious to this or indifferent because of his frailty. In the sitcom, Herbert neither denies nor admits his sexual preference, yet he openly expresses his sexual interest for Chris. The creators take the view of the majority of people in society by demeaning the LGBTQ community yet enforcing the idea of pedophilia.

The main purpose of this research is to show the ideology behind *Family Guy*. According to James Lull, ideology is defined as organized thoughts – complemented of values, orientations and predispositions forming ideational perspectives expressed through technologically mediated and interpersonal communication. In relation to Lull’s definition of ideology, *Family Guy* represents the way that the American culture identifies itself unwillingly. The main reason why the sitcom is as controversial is because it actually does influence the audience’s perspective. Regardless if a person likes or dislikes the show, upon watching it one can always relate. “Having a better understanding as to how the animated comedy perpetuates hegemonic and ideological forces can help further the conversation for the reasons those in power not only take part in hegemony but are also socialized to reinforce it. This will allow for audience members to use their own agency to dismiss binaries within *Family Guy* and establish a more realistic conception of society and culture.” (Danowski, 35) Ideology and hegemony go hand in hand when it comes to *Family Guy*. Hegemony is defined as the domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class, who manipulate the culture of that society. In *Family Guy*, the main character, Peter, holds a certain power over his own family and the rest of the characters only because he is the main character of the show.

The funny thing about the adult sitcom *Family Guy* is that many people enjoy it because many can relate to the show. The show explores the American culture in many different aspects that many feel that regardless of how offensive the show may be, it still attracts the audience attention. What is the best way to accept circumstances that are usually denied by society? *Family Guy* adds humor to the negative aspects of stereotypes making it more acceptable to the viewers.

**WORKS CITED**

Danowski, Justin, “Hegemonic Peter?: a critical analysis of hegemonic masculinity in Family

Guy” (2012) Masters Theses.

Walker, John. "Family Guy, And On Being Offensive." *John Walkers Electronic House RSS*. N.p., 17

Feb. 2010. Web.

Carson, Edward. "Family Guy and Jesus in Popular Culture by Turner Batdorf." *The Professor*. N.p., 02

June 2011. Web.

Gerstenberger, Tim. "The Three Family Guy Episodes That Got FOX Sued." *TVOvermind*. N.p., 21 Oct.

2014. Web.

Jefferson, Whitney. "Family Guy Hits Horrible New Low With Domestic Abuse Episode." *Jezebel*. N.p., 31

Oct. 2011. Web.