

Mitsos, T.  
WRT 150 CA  
10/30/2005

### Goin' Down to South Park

When many people think of the television show South Park, they think of foul-mouth fourth graders who get all of their laughs from swearing and/or raunchy jokes. Believe it or not, almost, if not every South Park episode has some sort of message in it. However, the creators use a different kind of way to express their message. If there is a controversial debate that is going on in the country, they will make the town of South Park go through the same debate, but incorporate comedy and satire into the script to make it more enjoyable to someone who may not normally follow the news. There is one episode of South Park that looks at one major recent issue that the country debated. It changed my opinion about the topic.

In early 2005, the debate of whether Terri Schiavo should be kept alive with a feeding tube was what everyone was talking about. "Schiavo experienced cardiac arrest and collapsed in her home in early 1990, incurring massive brain damage. She remained in a coma for ten weeks. Within three years, she was diagnosed to be in a persistent vegetative state (PVS) with little chance of recovery" (Terri Schiavo). Terri's husband, Michael wanted the feeding tube removed, however Terri's parents Robert and Mary Schindler fought to keep the feeding tube in. Eventually, the courts ordered that since Terri had no chance of recovery, she would want to no longer be on life support. On March 18, 2005, the feeding tube was pulled for the "third and final time", and she died on March 31, 2005 at the age of 41 (Terri Schiavo).

What does this debate have to do with South Park? On March 30, 2005, an episode of South Park aired as a parody to the Terri Schiavo feeding tube controversy. Instead of Terri however, the show was centered around one of the main characters, Kenny who was being kept alive with a feeding tube. Kenny has been chosen by God to lead the forces of heaven against Satan's army since he is very good at a game on the Playstation Portable or PSP. God's plans are foiled when Kenny is brought back to life with a feeding tube. Cartman, one of Kenny's friends wanted to have the feeding tube removed since Kenny put in his will that Cartman could have his new PSP. He would only get the PSP if Kenny died. Cartman was trying to persuade everyone that Kenny told him one time that he would not want to be kept alive on life support even though this never really happened and the real reason he wanted the feeding tube pulled was so he can have Kenny's PSP. However, Kenny's other two friends Kyle and Stan, and Kenny's family wanted the feeding tube in so their friend/son could stay alive. A lawyer had lost the page of his will stating what Kenny would have wanted had he ever be in a vegetative state. Throughout the episode, Cartman tries to get Congress to agree that as Kenny's best friend forever, he has the ultimate say in what happens to Kenny. Cartman does end up persuading the Supreme Court to remove the feeding tube. In the end, a lawyer finally finds the page, and it states that Kenny would never have wanted to be shown on national television in a vegetative state. The feeding tube is then pulled, and Kenny dies.

This episode is a very smart way of portraying this controversy. All of the characters in the episode portray a person in the real Schiavo case. Kenny is obviously Terri who is in the persistent vegetative state. Cartman is portraying Michael Schiavo, Terri's husband. Cartman is a very good choice for Michael because one woman who

Michael had relations with after Terri's 1990 collapse said that Michael "would whine all the time about how Terri's illness had ruined his life, and that he couldn't wait to collect the malpractice settlement" (What drives Terri Schiavo's husband?). Cartman is more or less doing the same thing. He wanted Kenny to die so he could have his PSP. He could care less about Kenny's health or desires. Kyle and Stan are portraying Terri's parents Robert and Mary Schindler. They want to keep Kenny alive, just like Terri's parents wanted to keep their daughter alive.

This episode has a very good point. Everyone was so worried about whether Terri should live or die, they completely forgot about how she would have felt being shown in that state in the first place. I am guilty as well of choosing what should happen to Terri. Only after watching this episode did I realize that there was an important point that was never taken into consideration. The creators didn't come right out and say, but their point is clear: Terri would most likely have never wanted to be shown on national television in a vegetative state. I hope after seeing this episode, viewers changed their minds—at least a little bit—about what should happen to people who become trapped in a vegetative state.

Works Cited

"Terri Schiavo." Wikipedia. 30 Oct. 2005. 31 Oct. 2005

<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terry\\_Schiavo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terry_Schiavo)>.

"What drives Terri Schiavo's husband?" MSNBC. 24 Mar. 2005. 31 Oct. 2005

<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7287950/>>.