

# Tv show - seinfeld research paper examples

[Media](#), [Television](#)



## **Introduction:**

American culture is vast and diverse and the media brings together several facets of this in different guises. The TV Show which perhaps best encapsulates American culture is ' Seinfeld' whilst the film chosen is ' Bowling for Columbine' which personifies American fixation with guns. Finally the music styles chosen as representative of American culture is jazz with a civil rights angle.

Seinfeld is an intriguing TV show which examines the relationship between persons on a more moral and social level. The text will continue to analyze the show's facets and points with particular intensity. The main characters are analysed accordingly and the different facets of the show are also brought into perspective demonstrating the importance of its whole plot to the post modern genre of TV sitcom. The essay also focuses on certain aspects of the show with its positive looking aspects and lack of intrinsic emotions which make it very direct and popular

## **What does Seinfeld mean?**

Seinfeld is an American TV sitcom which has been running since 1989 to huge critical acclaim. It personifies the life of a small town American group of people very much in the American Dream mould and is based in the Upper west Side of Manhattan. Its huge popularity contributed largely to its phenomenal success on a worldwide level and brought the American sitcom much closer to the general public especially with its down to earth portrayal of proceedings (David, Seinfeld, 1989).

Seinfeld is also a sitcom in the mould of the Prince of LA where family

relationships are important but not paramount. Largely the sitcom focuses on a group of friends who come together and who live their lives in a genial and untroubled manner. Larry David and Jerry Seinfeld, the creators of the show focus primarily on Seinfeld's real life experiences and these become altogether more potent as time goes by and more heavily influential in the actual series.

The main theme of the TV show is to portray American life in all its simplicity apart from also being a warts and all scenario. There are several little nooks and crannies throughout the series, haunts such as restaurants and suchlike. The creators are trying to portray American life as being sedentary and intriguing apart from also being joyful and carefree. This is an angle which we find extremely often in such American sitcoms but this was actually perfected in Seinfeld.

The sitcom is also intriguing in the sense that it makes us pause for thought on several important issues such as life in general and how we should live ours. Although at face value, everything seems to be going smoothly, there are some problems in Seinfeld which appear to be there but which are not immediately apparent. Although Seinfeld is generally a positive show, one does detect certain areas of negativity especially with some characters and their scripts.

Another aspect which made Seinfeld extremely strong was its sense of continuity which shows that certain characters and elements of the plot return quite frequently and with regularity to paint a picture of relative calm and intrinsic momentum. Some characters such as the main ones are also imbued with goodwill and forward lookingness.

Obviously Jerry Seinfeld is the most important character here and he comes out as the voice of reason on more than one occasion. He is a standup comedian of some repute and also has some foibles such as being extremely neat and also very much afraid of germs. His romantic relationships appear constantly and consistently throughout the plot and we also have some quite stupid reasons for halting these relationships which perhaps are a pun on the shallow and intrepid American way of life (Gantz p 85).

The other main character in the series which is given some importance is George Costanza who is supposedly Jerry's best friend. Here we have a person who is a bit dishonest and who is most of the time envious of their people's achievements. He is generally portrayed as a sort of loser who is grossly insecure about what he can achieve apart from the fact that he is constantly lying about his profession and his relationships. This type of approach often gets him into a lot of trouble when the truth surfaces.

Another intriguing main character is Elaine Benes who portrays Jerry's former girlfriend who is on her part, attractive, intelligent and very assertive. Her foibles include being too honest, dating men who are completely incompatible with her and losing her temper quite easily and without provocation. She also has a number of interesting dance moves and a hatred for the film, *The English patient*.

Finally there's Cosmo Kramer who happens to be Jerry's neighbor. He is also quite eccentric dressing himself up in period costume although he actually has quite considerable insight into people's problems. He cannot seem to hold a job but is constantly inventing a number of schemes which are initially good but which usually end up in disaster. A lack of conscience and a sense

of appeasement is also very much part of his social decorum but he is a character which is very important to the show's dynamics (David, Seinfeld, 1989).

Although camera angle shots are important, they are not the be all and end all of Seinfeld. Obviously Jerry receives the lion's share of the episode's filming and the camera is often very much focused in close up on him although he shares a lot of it with others. The quaintness of the sets is also intriguing and very much in keeping with the show's themes.

Other important aspects of the show are its themes which usually break with convention especially a post modern interpretation of such. In fact Seinfeld has been compared with Monty Python in being the first Tv show to be culled with the label of postmodern. With a show typically consisting of conflicting characters there is very little emotion throughout the series even when someone dies. The roots and identities of the main characters are also pretty vague without much history. All this contributes to the post modern aspect which demonstrates that the show was highly original and although a comedy, real life situations were still very much in keeping with what went on.

Some quotes are interesting especially in Season One when Jerry focuses on life in general and comes up with the catchphrase; ' Not that there's anything wrong with that'. In Season Five we even had the Mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani who made a cameo appearance (David, Seinfeld, 1989).

The plots are also based on real life situations in Larry Seinfeld's life especially his direct experiences in Saturday Night Live and ' The Contest'. Each episode is informed with substantial variety all around and one only has

to analyze briefly to come up with some key plots. One can also detect rumours about gays and other minorities throughout but most of the time the plot is left to be quite superficial and everything comes together rather seamlessly. There is also influence from news stories and suchlike which also demonstrate the power of reverse chronology. More often than note, Seinfeld is replete with double meanings and hidden clues which make it all the more enticing for analysis (Ganz p 66).

Other issues include catchphrases which have become part and parcel of the shows jargon, words such as pretzels and spongeworthy. There is even a lexicon referring to words from the series which is almost a dictionary and all this indicates the cult status that Seinfeld has in the US. Books on humour have also sprung out of the series.

The music is also something which achieved cult status especially the main theme with its rollicking and catchy tune as well as the various songs and melodies throughout the show. Nationalistic themes are also interspersed in the show with a sitar being used to depict an Indian influence. Some musical parts were also tweaked accordingly and the originality of some aspects of the score have also remained in the memory of many.

### **Popularity:**

Seinfeld ended up as being one of the most popular shows during the period in which it was aired for a number of reasons. Principally it was due to the fact that it topped the Nielsen ratings for several times in succession and this meant that it appealed across a broad spectrum of all ages and also showed that it could create situations which were malleable and intriguing to say the least (David, Seinfeld, 1989).

The main characters such as Larry Seinfeld also had a certain level of appeal to the general public as perhaps they identified with some of the real life situations portrayed in the sitcom. Add to that, one could also perhaps empathise with other characters in the sitcom as the notion of hurt was clearly dispelled from all proceedings. The need for the American Dream to become real for some was quite succinctly portrayed in Seinfeld which also demonstrated its intrinsic popularity and directness in this respect.

### **Conclusion: Seinfeld as a role model**

Seinfeld remains one of the most popular American sitcoms ever coined and this is reflected in its continual popularity with several aspects of it being resurrected on a number of occasions. The real life intricacies and episodes featuring Jerry Seinfeld himself are an eye opener to many on perhaps the boring rigidity of their lives and Seinfeld explored this with a certain directness which was not clear beforehand. The originality of the characters as well as the plot intricacies also showed that Seinfeld was a different sitcom from what was to be expected in those days.

The popularity of Seinfeld led it to be described as the greatest sitcom ever although this is obviously debatable. It invites comparisons with other luminaries such as Two and a half Men and everybody hates Chris but at the end of the day, Seinfeld really has the top ratings. Perhaps it was the period in which it came out which was the late 1980's and early to mid 1990's when positivity was rather more the order of the day and the propensity to dream was that bit more possible. The fact that is associated with this period confirms the indissoluble appeal of Seinfeld which demonstrates that shows can achieve cult status as they freeze a particular moment in time without

much to commend them apart from that. With Seinfeld, all this is different and one has to go to the root of things to note that this is truly a sitcom which will continue to be talked about for many years to come.

Seinfeld teaches us several things about the American people but most of all it shows us the diversity of American society in its different aspects. It teaches us that American culture is diverse and tolerant and accepts several different forms of gender differences and equality.

## **Film- Bowling for Columbine**

Bowling for Columbine is a classic Michael Moore film which demonstrates the power of the game of bowling as an alternative for target practise. The Columbine High School massacre is the basis behind the film and Moore shows that the culture of guns in the US has ruined the fabric of this society. The film has various interviews with society leaders amongst them the President of the National Rifle Association who obviously speaks in favour of the proliferation of firearms all over the country. Moore is at pains to point out that the sale of firearms is without control and there are even cases when banks give away a free rifle if a deposit to an account is made – sheer madness if this is to be taken seriously (Scott, 2002).

‘ Bowling for Columbine’ also delves deep into the American mindset where there is a fixation that if you are protecting your First Amendment rights then you have to own a gun. It is quite a perverse indication of the state of society which has eventually led to the terrible massacres in various schools.

Moore uses very basic techniques in the film, this is no blockbuster epic. His interviews are frank and matter of fact and the responses are frequently



unedited – this adds to the feeling of authenticity throughout. The ‘ What a Wonderful World’ sequence is quite shocking as it shows several incidents from all over the world where the United States was the aggressor and there is also a link to the fabled ‘ weapons of mass destruction’ which institutionalises violence as a way of protection. Moore’s ‘ Bowling for Columbine’ is indeed very powerful and disturbing at the same time.

Music: "(Lonely Woman by Ornette Coleman)", "(Willisau Concert, Part 3 by Cecil Taylor)" and "(Ghosts by Albert Ayler)", The Civil Rights Movement had various standard bearers in the struggle for equal rights across the colour line but music perhaps is the least well known of these. Ornette Coleman’s ‘ Lonely Woman’ is a haunting piece containing several crooning sounds with the orchestral backing extremely effective. The woodwind and string sounds almost recreate the sounds of the Mississippi Delta where racial injustice was probably the most pronounced in the United States. Coleman’s voice contains typical African American tones which almost send a shiver down one’s spine. I felt very sad when listening to the music since it brought back the haunting memories of the violence which perpetrated the Deep South in the 1950’s and 1960’s and which ran unchecked with the complicity of local authorities. It is a powerful music statement full of compassion and at the same time, proud dignity.

Cecil Taylor’s work is similarly effusive and dramatic at the same time. The Willisau Concert uses the orchestral and jazz tapestry very effectively throughout with several instruments creating extremely haunting tones. The performance is very professional although the sound quality occasionally leaves something to be desired. Again it is a wonderful description of the

racial injustice which permeated the South in those heady years.

Finally, ' Ghosts' by Albert Ayler is similarly haunting and expressive. It almost makes you recall the ghosts of those who perished in the struggle for civil rights, personages such as Emmett Till and the three boys murdered in the dead of the night in Neshoba County, Mississippi. A powerful and at times deeply emotional statement indeed (Litweiler, 1984).

All three pieces are a testament to the struggle for justice in the 1960's and are essential for those who have this period at heart.

### **Works Cited:**

David L, Seinfeld L: Seinfeld; New York, Columbia Pictures Entertainment  
1989-1998

Gantz, Katherine. " Not That There's Anything Wrong with That": Reading the Queer in Seinfeld.

Scott, A. O. (October 11, 2002). " Film Review: Bowling for Columbine". The New York Times.

Litweiler, John (1984). The Freedom Principle: Jazz After 1958. Da Capo.  
p. 159. ISBN 0-306-80377-1.