

Television media analysis: the cosby show

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



These important interpretations can help individuals make wise decisions about what they should watch, read, listen to and rely on for information and entertainment (Barman and Davis). Although many people now rely on sources such as the Internet and smartness for breaking news stories, television still remains a major source for information and entertainment for many individuals and families. This paper will attempt to present a model for television media analysis using Art Silversmith's keys to media analysis.

The TV show that will be analyzed is regarded as one of the most famous television programs in history, "The Cosby Show". Silversmith's keys for interpreting media messages as well as critical thinking skills will be incorporated in this selection analysis. In 1939 when television began, blacks were projected as mere servants and simple-minded people. Blacks and whites were certainly depicted as inherently different beings. Early sitcoms in the 1950s such as Amos n Andy continued with negative portrayals of black people which depicted mostly lazy, loud, uneducated blacks as the stereotype for their race.

Then in the 1980s other sitcoms followed along the same lines such as Sanford and Son and Good Times (Cesareans). The Cosby Show, which first aired in 1984, was the most popular television program in the nation for four consecutive years and remained a favorite show for a total of seven years. This important show effectively functioned to change the way Americans would view the roles of race and gender on television forever. The Cosby Show was a sitcom on NBC about a successful black American family. Cliff, the father, was an obstetrician and his wife Clair was a successful attorney.

The story was about their daily lives and challenges of raising five children in a very busy household. The show offered a different theme when compared to all other shows being televised at that time. The Washable family was an upstanding upper-middle class black family who offered sharp contrast to other programs that portrayed blacks as stereotypical low-income, uneducated hustlers (White Racism). Bill Cowboys and script consultant Alvin Postnasal functioned as media communicators as they shared the common purpose of incorporating humor as a means to help project a more positive image of the black American family.

They purposefully avoided overt racial issues but chose to use a softer approach such as referring to the names of black colleges instead of predominantly white colleges. One of the episodes showed the Washables celebrating Martin Luther King's birthday as they discussed his famous "I Have a Dream" speech (Cesareans). The use of nationally broadcast television allowed the subtle content of the show to reach a majority African American audience. In the post-civil rights movement era was a perfect time to provide a more diverse ethnic awareness for the American public. The intended audience for this show included both white and black American families.

Overt racial issues were avoided in an effort to avoid making the audience uncomfortable. Family values as well as current social issues were common themes on the program. The father, Cliff, also overtly supported his wife's feminist stances on some episodes, which was also not common in the media during that era. This was truly the first family of television for many years.

The scripts were constantly screened to make certain that no humor would be demeaning. The show really acted as a catalyst for changing how television portrayed black Americans.