

Social Impacts of LGBTQ+ Representation in Television on Children

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Abstract

Representation of different marginalized groups in television has been an important part media history. The LGBTQ+ community is one of these groups that has had varying depictions and representations of themselves from their first introductions to now more contemporary programming. With increasing characters and storylines that include the experiences and personalities of queer people, there begs the question: How are people, especially children, socially affected by this content? Children act as the voices of every coming generation, and their exposure to different minority groups at young ages may have an impact on the decisions they make as teens and adults. This paper looks into what makes the contemporary queer character in analysis of stereotypes and tropes, current children's content with inclusion of queer characters, and how intersecting media, such as social media, affects children and tween's perception and reaction to these characters.

Introduction

Television as a media phenomenon has been consistently adapting since its “at home” model invention in the 1920’s. It soon sped through countless technological advancements, from the introduction of color filtering screens to the first internet streaming service. Coinciding with the television’s evolution is the evolution of American society, more specifically within the LGBTQ+ community. The difference between social attitudes towards those within these subgroups from the time of the invention of the television to now has radically changed, and much of that influence comes from the inclusion those within the community in the media lens at large. Television acts as a heavy player in this regard through their use of characters and storylines of popular programs, thus growing their inclusion of minority groups. The integration of all minority communities, not just the LGBTQ+ in particular, provides a societal impact, whether positive or not. This involvement also helps educate people of all ages about the lives of those within these communities, and the struggles and triumphs they face. With further education comes the expansion and evolution of our social culture at large, as well as helps encourage those who do identify with those in the subculture to find a place they belong. Bringing these parts of life onto screens, especially with the growing of new media (i.e. the internet, social media), can impress people of all ages, especially children. Studies have shown that when exposed to different elements, such as languages, at young ages, children absorb their teachings rapidly and accurately, thus providing the potential to have social impact on individual generations now and in the future.

This paper looks into what kind of social impacts can be made when children are exposed to television content that features the LGBTQ+ community. Is there a positive or negative impact

on the audience's perception of the queer community? Are those who are exposed to these programs more likely to accept those in the queer community, including themselves? What content exists currently that pertains to this issue, and what do studies show about their relationship with each other?

I hypothesize that with the increase of television content that features LGBTQ+ storylines and characters, comes with an increased viewership of these programs and specific episodes focusing on this community, as well as brings an overall positive impact on society's views on the subgroups.

I will test my hypothesis by analysing studies and articles that look into specific programs, queer representation at large and within television, and what the statistics are for viewership of programs that feature queer storylines. I will then compare these results to the corresponding historical elements of American society, to see if the rate and representation amounts correlate with the accepting or rejecting of the existence of the LGBTQ+ community.

There are a multitude of different variables that will be discussed during the research. My independent variable is the social impact, and that is interconnected with many dependent variables. Some include children of the audience's ages, children's television channels, adult television programs, child-targeted television programs, time periods, previous education/exposure, and historical impact. Since this analysis will not be including an experiment, there is not a control variable.

The independent variable that I will be assessing, the social impact, very much intersects with the dependent variables that I have compiled. I believe that social impact directly relates to

time periods and historical impact, since the exposure that we as individuals experience throughout our lifetimes not only impacts ourselves, but those around us and the people we will interact with and have impressions on in the future. The actions that our ancestors and past generations made still greatly affect our society today. Without the strides that they made to evolve, we would not have the current state to further evolve on ourselves.

Another relationship that I will be looking into is through the social impact and both children and adult targeted television programs. Although this paper looks specifically at the social impacts on children, there is still the possibility of those of that group being exposed to television content that isn't specifically written or advertized for them. If parents are exposed to the queer community through their programs, they may pass on their impressions upon children that they know, or perhaps ones of their very own.

Lastly, the relationship between previous education/exposure, children's ages, and social impact is one I hope to learn more about. More specifically, I hope to find more information about children roughly from the ages four to twelve, and how they feel about the gay community. Through the education that the children of this age range experience, I hope to find out what some children might already know about queer people outside of their television exposure.

I plan on testing my hypothesis, as well as the relationships between the variables I will test, through extensive article analysis. I will review a variety of articles that primarily look into queer representation in the media and television as a whole, and see how that compares to that influence on children who watch such programs mentioned. Although the articles that I have

found are not all of those that may apply to this research, I hope that they are diverse enough to help answer the questions I am proposing in this paper.

I would also like to note that there are some limitations and aspects that I am taking for granted in my research. As a queer, transgender person, I am constantly exposing myself to media that is revolved around the LGBTQ+ community, so when setting out for my research, I knew the key terms and phrases that would most benefit me for my piece. I was not approaching this topic from a complete outsider perspective, and I believe that there could be some biases that come out while accumulating data for this work.

There are several components to how my paper will be outlined. I will begin with my introduction, which discusses the general purpose of this paper, as well as vaguely looks over the thesis and hypothesis that will be addressed later on in the paper. Then, I will have a literature review section, where I will look into the specific articles that I will assess, and explain how I believe they will benefit my research. Then, I will propose my thesis in more detail, and bring up a few questions surrounding that broad question and how they are important to my overall thesis. Next, in the method section, I will describe my data collection, which was through searching academic journal and literature databases. With those results, I conducted a qualitative research investigation. Afterwards, I will speak to the analysis of my findings, and the ultimate results that I have come up with. Within that I will see if my results supported or did not support my hypothesis. Finally, I will end off the paper with a conclusion, discussing my original argument, how it may have changed throughout the process, and what new questions I may have proposed

during my research. After the conclusion will be my bibliography of the articles I cited, for those who may be curious about learning more about this topic.

Literature Review

Queer Characters: Who are They?

One of the most important aspects of many of the articles I researched was the queer character. What are/were they like? What are their interests? How do they compare/contrast to other characters on the same shows, or different ones? What kind of representations are made? All of these questions are answered throughout various research approaches. In the seventies, eighties and nineties, when queer characters were first being introduced, their initial introduction paved the way for decades of gay characters to come. Although the representations of the time were seen as more politically correct for that society, many of them developed into stereotypes and tropes that would shape the community (from outsider's perspective) for years afterwards. The show "Soap" was the first show to introduce an openly gay character, which was monumental, especially for the time, and just a year later, in 1978, the first out lesbian was introduced.

The TV show *Will and Grace*, which was popular in the 90's but was recently rebooted in September of 2017, featured a prominent gay characters, Will and Jack. Although the show received positive reviews and high viewership throughout both the original and the reboot, the character of Jack has been scrutinized. He portrays the sassy, feminine stereotype of white gay men, which some people assume is how all cisgender, homosexual men are like. The friendship between Jack and his best friend Grace, a straight woman, emphasized and glamorized their

relationship to be what straight women should aspire to, having a gay best friend, or “GBF”. This trope has been used before in film, such as with the John Hughes piece *Sixteen Candles*.

The 90’s and early 2000’s acted as a pivotal turning point for queer representation. One significant example was the introduction of the first trans character through the day time “soap opera” *All My Children*. The show had already introduced the first same-sex kiss on daytime TV, so this character introduction was just another way to add shock value and gain their viewership numbers (Morrison, 651). An already occurring character named previously Zarf began her transition in 2006 into Zoe. Her character development was also tied into a love story with another character, Bianca, who was an out lesbian. Bianca’s tie-in is that when she begins dating Zoe before her transition begins, when she is still biologically a “man”, her sexuality is questioned. Although it can be concluded that Bianca is still a lesbian because she is dating a woman, since trans women are women, period, the audience of the time came to their own differing conclusions. It is unclear whether the writers knew that this kind of relationship could invalidate both trans people and those in the lesbian communities. If a trans person is not “passing” for the gender that they identify as, some people may assume that they identify as the gender commonly associated with their sex assigned at birth. To give a more specific example, if a transgender man, who was assigned female at birth, has not gone through medical transition, such as taking testosterone or having top and/or bottom surgery, some people may assume that they are a woman, since they do not look like a cisgender man. Although this brought more diversity to people’s screens, the writer’s poor storytelling and invalidation of both Zoe and Bianca’s sexual and gender identities stirred up controversy, which will be explained later in the section “Impact on Queer People and Queer Representation”.

More recent examples of queer characters have been abundant across daytime and nighttime TV, especially with teen, tween, and child-geared programs. Although there has been gradually increasing acceptance of those in the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, there are still misrepresentations, which are now further exposed and criticised thanks to the power of social media. One article, that looks into the representation of bisexual characters as a whole, investigates a program called *The 100*, based off of a young adult novel series that focuses on juvenile delinquents forced to test Earth's habitability some years after an apocalypse causes everyone to be deported from the planet. In one particular episode, Clarke Griffin, a bisexual woman, and Lexa, a lesbian, consummate their relationship after several episodes of sexual tension and "what ifs", and immediately afterward, Lexa is shot and killed, when the bullet was intended for Clarke (Waggoner, 1881-1883). Fans took their frustrations to the internet, and the exploitation of the "Bury Your Gays" trope within American television was brought more into light, which will be discussed in more detail later on in this paper.

There are a lot of examples of bisexual erasure specifically through these modern television programs, such as *Orange is the New Black*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *Lost Girl*. These pieces, like *The 100*, are targeted towards a young adult to adult demographic, but have been recorded to have a wide age range in regard to audience viewership. Each of these pieces feature prominent bisexual characters, which could be seen as positive, but all of them perpetuate harmful stereotypes about those in the bisexual, as well as generally queer, communities.

Sarah Corey goes into a deep investigation with all three shows, and points out a lot of important things about every instance. In science fiction based *Lost Girl*, the main character, Bo, is bisexual in her personal life as well as when she is "feeding" off of the life of other humans in

order to survive (Corey, 195). Her feeding practices involve trapping people in sexually vulnerable scenarios, so she gives off an impression that all bisexuals are hyper-sexual fiends (Corey 199). Separate from her supernatural urges, Bo is in two significant relationships in the show, with a man, Dyson, and Lauren, a woman (Corey, 195). *Orange is the New Black*, a non-science fiction show roughly based on a novel of the same name, looks into the life of Piper, a woman arrested for transporting drugs. At the time of her arrest, she is engaged to a man, but is reconnected with her lover Alex, a queer woman, who she was in a relationship with during her time working for the drug ring where Piper executed her crime. When Piper's family finds out about the relationship, her parents find it to be more shocking and shameful than the fact that Piper is in jail (Corey, 200). Another important point about Piper's character is that she never explicitly says in the series that she is bisexual, just that she's attracted to her partners through a person by person basis. As Corey points out, "Naming a sexual identity gives the identity credibility. Credibility and validity are important when discussing minority groups" (197). Lastly, *Grey's Anatomy* features a wide range of queer people, including a trans person in its most recent season, but its past introductions of specifically bisexual persons could be deemed as problematic. The primary bisexual character, Callie, is involved in relationships with multiple men and women, but doesn't explicitly say that she is bisexual after eight seasons on the show. Although she is a sexually active person, she fights the stereotype of the "sexual deviant" by never straying away or committing infidelity while in her two marriages, one to character George, and one to her wife Arizona (Corey, 201). However, the negative representation associated with her is through her relationship with her parents. Her father and mother initially take the news that she is bisexual terribly, and although her father does come around, her mother

takes on the stance that many real-life queer people do face, in relying in their religion to set their child straight. Some refer to this mode of action as “praying the gay away”, and some situations even become serious enough where minors are sent to conversion camps in order to “rid themselves of sin” (Corey, 201). Although Callie is a grown, independent adult in this program, it would not be surprising if the circumstances were more religiously scrutinized by her mother if she were much younger in age.

These examples then beg the question: If programs for older teens, young adults, and ages beyond perpetuate these harmful stereotypes, then what are American children being exposed to in regard to queer representation in shows specifically targeted towards them? Thankfully, with very recent television examples, there is hope.

Many networks focused primarily on children’s programming, such as Nickelodeon, the Disney Channel, and Cartoon Network, as well as online streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime, have introduced new shows and characters that provide positive representation of queer people in a subtle way, teaching young children that the characters they admire on television are just like the people around them, deserving of validation and acceptance.

One newly popular example of this is the recently released Netflix animated series *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*. The reboot of the classic 80’s cartoon follows a modern twist on the world of Etheria, where orphan Adorna stumbles upon a magical sword that passes down the powers of She-Ra, a mythical princess whose destiny is to save the world. Through the help of a group of princesses from other parts of the land and all with unique powers, they all

work together to fight against the Horde, the evil government that brainwashes their people into fighting for their selfish gain. Not only does the show include nearly all women/girl characters of different races and body types, the reboot's top producer and co-creator, queer artist and author Noelle Stevenson, works to include many queer characters and backstories into this fictional world. In *She-Ra* specifically, the last episode of the first season reveals two princesses, Spinnerella and Netossa, who whisper, closely embrace, and refer to each other as "darling" (Stevenson). It was also revealed at a convention panel this past year that Bow, one of the three protagonists, has two fathers, but they are not introduced in this season.

In Amazon Prime's video options, they too offer an animated series that focuses on queer characters, theirs being named *Danger and Eggs*. The show was created by Shadi Petosky, a trans woman who has worked in children's media for many years, and works hard to include sexuality and gender diversity in her work. Although the vast majority of the show's characters are canonically queer, one episode in particular chooses to celebrate that, called "Chosen Family". The episode centers around the Chickenpaw Park's (the fictional town where the program takes place) Pride Day celebration. The episode features supportive families, gay parents, and introduces a new character Zadie, a newly "out" trans girl. They also introduce the term "chosen family", which means a group of people in one's life who treats them emotionally as a family member would (Petosky). This term is used often, especially in the LGBTQ+ community, by those who do not have a lot of, or any, familial support of their identities. By connecting more with those who do support them, people can find families in those with whom they do not share genes or upbringing with.

Cartoon Network, another animation-focused channel, has introduced two very queer inclusive shows in passing years. One is *Adventure Time*, which centers around human Finn and his dog Jake, as they go on adventures in a fantasy/science fiction realm, the Land of Ooo. Two of the female characters, Princess Bubblegum and Marceline the Vampire Queen, are confirmed as being in a relationship in the final episode of the show, after many seasons of hinting (Osborne). In previous seasons, Princess Bubblegum was also in relationships with men, leading that she is bisexual, and Marceline is a lesbian. Cartoon Network's other show, which focuses more on transgender and pansexual (when one's sexual attraction is not limited to any one sex or gender identity) characters. The program's protagonist is Steven, a young boy who is half human and half Gem. Gem "people" are space rocks that take pseudo-human form and use their supernatural powers to protect Earth as well as other planets. Although all of the Gems are drawn as feminine or having biologically female bodies, they are technically genderless. Steven is introduced to three Gem guardians, and we learn in the last episode of the first season that Garnet, one of his guardians, is actually made up of two different Gems (Sugar). In this universe, Gems can choose to participate in fusion, where they physically join together and take on another form in order to gain each other's powers and in a way, solidify their relationships in a more-than-platonic state. Garnet is made up of a lesbian couple named Ruby and Sapphire, and the audience sees examples of their relationship before they fused in flashbacks presented later on in the series. Other characters are identified in the show as pansexual and polyamorous, sexualities that are not as commonly spoken about in television-based literature.

Finally, which some deem most surprising of all, the Disney Channel has taken strides in introducing queer characters in their channel's programming. As a Christian company, Disney

has had some more conservative views in the past, such as making their live-action stars wear purity rings, as a way to shy kids away from exploring their sexuality. However, there seems to be a break in this discriminatory tone. In 2017, the channel aired its premiere episode of *Andi Mack*, a show about a tween girl of the same name and her friends figuring out who they are as they survive family, middle school, and other factors of life. The show is diverse in many ways, such as having a East Asian actress as the lead, and showing non-traditional family dynamics (Andi learns in the first episode that the woman she thought was her older sister is actually her mother, who gave birth to her as a teen), but its introduction of a secondary character's sexuality is what we'll focus on more in this paper. The show introduced its "coming out journey" story and character arch through character Cyrus Goodman. Cyrus realizes that he has romantic feelings for the same boy that Andi has a crush on, Jonah. Cyrus confesses to their mutual friend Buffy, and she supports him wholeheartedly (Minsky).

The queer character, across adult, teen, and children based programming, has certainly evolved over the years. Depending on the age group, the level of subtlety varies when it comes to whether or not it is explicitly said if a character falls within the LGBTQ+ community, but the children's programs previously mentioned show these people, out or not, as being positive role models with supportive friends and family, who accept and love them for who they are. The older-focused content seems to look more into the hardships of coming out and defining oneself as a queer person, but there are still glimmers of acceptance and validation sprinkled into story lines. It is good to see doses of reality that reflect "true-life" scenarios, but it seems that a lot of the adult-targeted programs push for hurtful stereotypes and tropes not only for shock value, but to reiterate what general audiences not closely connected to the community may already assume.

Impact on Queer People and Queer Representation through Evolving Technology

One very important thing to remember when analysing the evolution of television is to consider the evolution of the other easily accessible technology at during the same periods. Since television's invention, devices like DVD's, VHS players and tapes, computers, and smartphones have come into the mainstream. With this, television shows can last for much longer than the time slots they originally air during, and be adapted to formats like physical CD's and through streaming services. Now, any show can be immortalized for generations to come, and those representations and tropes not only can act as a capstone of how those in underrepresented communities were treated at the time, but it can also influence how new, future audiences treat these groups. Through these kinds of opportunities, viewers can analyze the changing cultures and societal standards of decades before and compare them to representations today. This kind of technological advancement is what made a large chunk of this research possible, as streaming services gave me an entire world of television examples to use within this piece.

Arguably one of the most important elements of this "future of technology" is social media's role with television. When an audience consumes media, they can automatically bond with others over it, voice their opinions, and create content of their own related to what they just consumed and put it out on the internet for people to see. Another pro of social media that different marginalized groups, such as those in the LGBTQ+ community, have an opportunity to connect with those like them on a global scale, and talk about issues, opinions, and events that relate to their values and identities. "New media (i.e. the internet) was seen as a space for creativity and production because of ease of accessibility and opportunities for reciprocal interaction" (McInroy, 41). New media allows individuals to always contribute to the

conversation, and with such wide audiences, “trends” can bring a lot of societal pull. Members of these platforms can choose to engage at any time and any place, so the boundaries that they can confide themselves to, or break away from, are all possible on the internet, via cybersystems. Cybersystems are “a microlevel, cyber-based ecological subsystem where individuals engage and communicate in an environment of both risk and opportunity (Craig, 258). Another important aspect of these cybersystems and the people within them is that the age range they meet is very wide, with child, tween, and teen groups as well as adults.. A good example of social media’s relationship with teen-gear television is through the program *The 100*, which was mentioned previously in this paper. After the death of character Lexa, fans and critics of the show alike took social media by storm, voicing exactly how they felt about the fate of this plotline. Waggoner’s research of this particular influx of social media posting categorized the content found into four categories: finding hope within the community in regard to the fates of other characters, posts about headcanons (what the audience desires of the show/characters even if their opinions do not relate to the cannon), people fearing Lexa’s death (many of these posts occurred just weeks before the character’s removal from the show), and fourth, fans arguing over different fan couple pairings that they preferred more, especially ones that had the show’s main character, Clarke, with someone other than Lexa (Waggoner, 1882). Immediately after the broadcast of Lexa’s death, watchers instantly compared this event to other “Bury Your Gays” tropes that had littered television programs across decades, and it sparked a call for action for writers and producers to do better in the future (Waggoner, 1884). When viewers of traditional media move over to the accessible and full of open platform options new media, their scope of content immersion and analysis explodes to new heights, and gives viewers the opportunity to

praise or scrutinize the representations of those in communities they are apart of, and propose new ways to better reflect the real lives and experiences of individuals in those communities, more specifically in this case of *The 100*, the queer characters.

Thesis/Hypothesis

At the beginning of formulating this paper, the biggest question that I was trying to answer was “How are children socially affected by seeing LGBTQ+ characters and storylines in television?”. As I delved into my research and began coming across common topics, themes, and opinions, I was then able to break that thesis into two other, central questions: How are queer characters represented in television across all age groups?; and How does the intersection of modern media, such as social media, affect the reception of such inclusion in television?

The “image of the queer character” question is important because in order to interpret a character, one must see how it, and their story lines, intersect, compare, or contrast with others of similar identities. Not one person is the same, and neither should characters of any literature and/or medium. By looking to see if tropes, stereotypes, or cliches were common in these individuals, we could then conclude how the “average” character is represented, and thus how the audience seeing them could relate that to their opinions and experiences with “real-life” queer people.

Then, with the “modern media intersection” question, it is important to consider the growth of technology and its accessibility to the masses from the time the television was first invented. Since then, technology like computers, smartphones, and portable tablets have become available, as well as with the creation of the internet. The internet, and social media in particular,

connects people together like never before, and in the interest of content consumption, social media acts as an open forum of opinions, discussions, and dissections of the content the audience watches, and how they as individuals, and as a collective group, are socially, mentally, and in other ways affected by such programs. Also, with the increasing age range of those who have access to social media platforms, we can then see how younger generations react and connect with characters, thus affecting their social relationships with not only fiction, but those in reality who can be closely related to the subject matter.

With these questions still in mind, I incorporated my initial broad question into my thesis. However, I did want to take those other central questions and use them as a concentration, as they were discovered and then developed more once I started compiling research. Ultimately, my thesis then is: How does the representation of LGBTQ+ characters and their analysis via social media social affect the attitudes of children.

Method

This paper focuses heavily on a qualitative analysis approach, as I did not look into conducting experiments or designing surveys. Instead, I looked into grounded theory, literature review, and specific case studies, where other analysts and researchers have looked into specific television shows, interviewed members of the LGBTQ+ community, or analysed social media threads and hashtags to determine attitudes of larger groups.

When compiling data, I initially looked at online databases for books as well as scholarly articles for content related to my thesis. Through there, I was lead to outside, non-academic sources, such as queer magazines and video streaming platforms. In regard to streaming

platforms, I looked into quite a few in order to watch the episodes that I cited throughout this paper.

Analysis and Results

Once again, I wanted to answer the question of how children are socially affected by LGBTQ+ representation in television. Through a lot of the findings that related to social media reactions and overall reviews of character representation, I feel as though I was able to come to a steady conclusion. When LGBTQ+ characters and plot lines are written in a positive light, without depending on stereotypes or tropes, and are instead treated just as ordinary people who just happen to be a part of that particular community, they have a positive impact on the audience of all ages, not just kids. When a character's entire being or personality isn't focused around their sexuality or gender identity and instead their personality, hobbies, interests, beliefs, ultimately the characteristics that just make them a human individual, leaves a much more positive impact than when one specific aspect about them is their main definer. In the examples of children's specific programming, the episodes that I looked into did not make being queer such a central aspect of their pieces, but did acknowledge that acceptance and validity for those who are queer as being important. The characters in this community experience the same problems, events, and situations as straight characters, and they are none the wiser. The only example that I saw where the "queer" aspect of characters were more focused on was in the "Chosen Family" episode of *Danger and Eggs*. However, this episode specifically celebrated those who were a part of the community, as individuals and also more specifically, their talents, as well as how deserving they

are of love and acceptance. This kind of positive imagery can certainly rub off on receptive audiences, such as children.

I would say that the data I compiled definitely supports my hypothesis. Since my hypothesis didn't differentiate between "positive social impact" and "negative social impact", the fact that I was able to find examples for both sides helps support more specific aspects of my hypothesis.

Conclusion

Ultimately, I believe that since there are still negative tropes and stereotypes associated with the queer community that are still used in television, one of the most accessible and consumed forms of media, there should be more effort taken to include more realistic, inclusionary and valid aspects of LGBTQ+ life experiences that can provide better representation for the community as a whole. These kind of changes would be important because when wide audiences that perhaps do not have a lot of experience with the queer community see positive representation, they may change their perspective in regard to the LGBTQ+ people they may eventually cross in their lives, or be more supportive and aware of legislation or the politics surrounding cementing the civil rights of those within the community.

Within my findings, I think there was some limitations in the fact that the sheer number of recent television shows, especially ones for kids, that included queer characters was slim. Also, many of the studies that I found related to queer media did not focus on television specifically in regard to the visual arts, but rather LGBTQ+ representation in film. Since film has

been around for a bit longer than television, that industry is bound to have more examples of footage in general, especially with queer representation.

If I, or someone else, were going to look further into this discussion in the future, I would suggest looking into and proposing the questions of: “How does queer representation in film compare or contrast with representation in television?”, or “What representations of queer people have been proven to be the most successful, monetarily, viewership wise, or otherwise?”. I think it would also be interesting for someone not in the queer community to approach the topics addressed in this paper, to see if they would come to similar conclusions without a social bias possibly making an impression.

When any group of people is shown to an audience, their representation has an impact. By even being present and acknowledged, having that label, is enough to plant the tiniest seeds of validation and inclusion for those within those marginalized communities. Not only that, but those who may feel that they don't relate to the characters that they are exposed to *do* see someone who looks like them, identifies like them, has similar personality traits, that viewer then becomes so much more connected with the material, and ultimately has a much deeper connection to the content, and may continue to return to that program every time new content is released.

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