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### Morality Seen as Through a Musical

NBC's television program *Scrubs* focuses on the lives of a small group of characters, all of whom work at the teaching hospital Sacred Heart. The episodes last for thirty minutes each week and, generally, follow the formulaic structure of the sitcom genre. The episode "My Musical" features the cast singing and dancing throughout the show, which highlights specific aspects of the show's overall framework. The introduction, for example, prepares the audience for a comedy rather than a serious medical drama. The plot and subplots all continue to take a lighthearted approach to serious situations, including a patient's brain aneurysm, a style underscored by the musical numbers. Even the conclusion of the show fulfills the audience's desire for a satisfying and happy ending. As a whole, *Scrubs* presents a humorous and romanticized ideal of the medical profession. This demonstrates this culture's preoccupation with exaggerated situations, like a patient who only hears music, and relationship drama, such as an argument between a married couple, yet also displays a compulsive need for enjoyable resolutions. In this episode, the elements of framework combine to communicate the importance of valuing family, friends, and life itself.

Initially, the show's title prepares the audience to see the characters as imperfect individuals, rather than serious medical professionals. Although the term "scrubs" refers to the doctors' casual-looking uniforms, in this context, it also speaks metaphorically about their inexperience and foreshadows their casual attitudes. This sense of the characters' fallibility is underscored by the lyrics of the theme song that states, "But I can't do this all on my own/No, I know I'm no Superman." Therefore, the audience knows the program follows an illogical

premise, and it is intended to be humorous. In this case, they will not be shocked or upset at seeing narcissistic or cold, sarcastic doctors.

Before the opening sequence, *Scrubs* also includes a short clip of the show that gives the audience a glimpse into the central plot and the various sub-plots and, once again, helps to generate a sense of humor within the program. This episode begins with Dr. Turk's wife apprehensively deciding to stay home with their newborn daughter for a year, rather than returning to work at the hospital. Meanwhile, Dr. J.D. Dorian misses his long-distance girlfriend and is in desperate need of affection. Because of his loneliness, he begins to smother his roommate, Dr. Elliot Reid, and his clinginess eventually makes Elliot want to find her own home. While sitting in the park together at the beginning of the show, they rush to the aid of a woman, who mysteriously collapses and for some unknown reason, only hears things as a musical.

Although the plot and the sub-plots may seem drastically different, they all share common themes. Mrs. Turk, for example, does not know how to tell her husband that she actually wants to return to work as nurse instead of staying home with their baby. Dr. Elliot avoids telling J.D. that she has bought a house and plans to move out on her own. Lastly, diagnostics expert Dr. Cox must tell the woman who hears life through song that her condition is caused by a dangerous brain aneurysm. Essentially, these storylines all carry a message to the audience about the importance of honesty and communication to loved ones and friends as well as medical patients.

At the end of the show, each of these problems is resolved in the typical sitcom fashion. Even though they sometimes make no logical sense, each of the conflicts within the plot is solved with a relatively happy ending. Despite his earlier pleas for his wife to stay at home with the baby and her obvious apprehension to speak with him, Dr. Turk shows no disappointment or raises any objections to Mrs. Turk's decision. In fact, she ends up mad at her husband over some

disagreement about her ethnic origins, which has nothing to do with the actual plot, but they manage to work out their frustrations through a catchy musical number. J.D. also eventually accepts his roommate's plans, and the woman with the brain aneurysm lives and is, supposedly, completely healthy once again. In order to keep the audience entertained, the show ads in these sometimes artificial and unrealistic endings, sending a message that ultimately undermines the seriousness of the conflicts. From the Turks' interaction, for instance, the audience sees a one-sided view of marriage: the wife is always is always right, and the husband should never question her decisions. Marital discord is an easily solvable matter, and, in this show, is fixed through song and dance.

These conclusions also play an integral role in the process of character development. The end of the show includes camera shots of all the different characters involved in each plot line, while the narrator reveals the universal lesson learned: "Even though we never thought we would, sometimes, we wind up missing what we have left behind." Dr. Elliot misses her roommate, Mrs. Turk regrets leaving her baby, and the patient with the aneurysm can no longer enjoy the music to which she had become accustomed. Thus, the show illustrates the importance of never taking the simple aspects of life for granted.

Through its framework, *Scrubs* emphasizes the value of relationships as well as the importance of open and honest communication. Because the program is intended to be funny and entertaining, it has a simple conclusion, therefore perpetuating the notion that communication, as shown in the Turks' case, can solve almost any problem. In the end, however, the characters also learn about the unpredictable nature of life. Though they were sure their plans would make them happy, Mrs. Turk, Dr. Elliot, and the hospital patient all miss certain features of their lives, even if they know they ultimately made the right decisions.