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The Women of *Father Knows Best*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *Julia*

Abstract: *Father Know Best*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *Julia* enforced traditional gender roles through their depiction of women as a mother, wife or an object to admire. Focusing on the themes of motherhood, women's roles in society, women in the professional world and portrayal of race within the episodes, this paper discusses how the shows limited women's roles on television to traditional gender norms of women as domestic beings.

“I wish there was some way I could tell the kids not to believe it. The dialogue, the situations, the characters, they were all totally false. The show did everyone a disservice.

The girls were always trained to use their feminine wiles to pretend to be helpless to attract men. The show contributed to a lot of problems between men and women that we see today... What we did was a hoax. “Father Knows Best” purported to be a reasonable facsimile of life.”

-Child actor Billy Gray about sitcom *Father Knows Best*¹

Sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s gained popularity because they portrayed an idealized version of American life. By focusing on the perfect nuclear family, a small southern-whitewashed town, or a black single mother who challenges racist stereotypes, sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s created a perfect world that viewers of today often look back upon with a sense of nostalgia. While some viewers may reflect on these shows as “the good old days,” these shows do not accurately represent life in the 1950s and 1960s. Instead, they highlight a fictional American society of the 1950s and 1960s envisioned as the ideal family or American community. These fictional sitcom societies undermined female characters by restricting the characters as domestic beings whose self worth resided in their beauty, male approval and domestic ability.

This paper examines female roles in three popular 1950s and 1960s sitcoms: *Father Knows Best*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *Julia*. The paper first describes the backdrop of each show, and then considers the sitcoms depiction of female gender roles through the

¹ Billy Gray. Interviewed by Howard Stern, *The Howard Stern Show*, 1983 about his portrayal of Bud Anderson on *Father Knows Best*.

themes of motherhood, women's roles in society, women in the professional world and portrayal of race within the episodes. This paper then transitions to compare and contrast the three shows. The compare and contrast review focuses on the approaches each sitcom undertook to limit female characters to traditional gender roles, a perception made popular by post war American society. These traditional gender roles portrayed on television shows became extremely prevalent in the years following World War II, as America emerged as a world superpower through both its military power and financial growth. The Servicemen Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the GI Bill, created a surge of white men accessing a college education, fostering the rise of the middle class and the growth of the suburbs. This rising middle class excluded many black Americans and promoted segregated living communities. The increase of college educated men and their increased earnings, resulted in the exclusion of many women from the labor force, especially with the family's ability to live comfortably off one family member's salary.

To encourage women to follow society's preferred role of staying at home and out of the labor force, American society propagated the importance of a nuclear family that consisted of a working father and a stay at home mother. As Americans became obsessed with reconstructing the family and traditional gender roles,² television shows of the 1950s and 1960s reflected this obsession by showing women as "happier married and at home, despite the growing numbers of women in the workforce."³ Television played a major role in America during the 1950s and 1960s. Although it was invented in 1927, its popularity soared in the 1950s and by 1960 almost 90% of all Americans had at least on television in

² Lynn Spigel. *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2010), 2.

³ Lynn, Spangler, *Television Women from Lucy to Friends: Fifty Years of Sitcoms and Feminism* (Connecticut, 2003), 25.

their house.⁴ Television popularity can be attributed to sitcoms like *The Andy Griffith Show*, *Father Knows Best*, and *Julia* because the idea of family, which these shows portrayed, “is the one experience to which virtually all viewers can relate.”⁵ Sitcoms portrayed family life in an idealized way that creates a virtual world with characters relatable to the viewer. These relatable characters lived a more “perfect” life than the viewers, and this relatable perfect fictional world, provided viewers with an escape from their realities for the duration of the show.

Historians have focused on television producers in the 1950s and 1960s implementing similar approaches to their shows as they “stuck to a very few tried-and-tuned program formulas and confined characters within those formulas to behavior and attitudes guaranteed to be approved by a majority of the American people.”⁶ These similar approaches or universal “scripts,” utilized by most producers, further restricted the portrayal of women’s roles to the expected and accepted traditional gender roles. The success producers would experience from using these scripted roles prevented producers from risking their show’s success by branching out against societal norms. Even sitcoms of the 1970s, while they veered away from the perfect family concept, continued to generally portray very traditional gender roles. The accepted “script,” created, a sense of security for both the viewers and the sitcoms’ producers. Viewers and sitcoms producers knew what to expect from the characters of their shows. Viewers expected and more importantly accepted these limited female roles, which resulted in a sense of security for the viewer.

⁴Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 1.

⁵ Mary Dalton and Laura Linder, *The Sitcom Reader: America Viewed and Skewed* (Albany: State University of New York 2015), 49.

⁶ Kathryn, Weibel, *Mirror, Mirror: Images of Women Reflected in Popular Culture* (Anchor Books, 1977), 50.

One might describe it as a security blanket, built around the viewer's ability to relate their own lives to the lives of the female character. This security blanket promoted traditional gender roles that would continue to dominate women's portrayal in programs during the first twenty years of television programs.⁷

Background on the Shows:

Father Knows Best: Aired from October 1954 – May 1960

Father Knows Best was a family favorite sitcom of the 1950s. The show captured the daily life of the Anderson Family and gained popularity for its simple and presumably relatable storylines about school dances, baseball games, and family life in the suburbs. The Anderson Family lived in a midwestern town called Springfield. They were living the new American dream of the 1950s, which was located in the suburbs with families that were exactly like them.⁸ The Anderson family consisted of father Jim, mother Margaret, eldest child Betty, son Bud, and youngest daughter Kathy. Episodes often unfolded in the Anderson's house with Jim in the living room reading the newspaper and Margaret making dinner. One of the children, usually Betty, would burst into the house with a problem that they needed help solving. By the end of the half an hour episode Jim would find a solution, sometimes with the help of Margaret, but usually father knows best, hence the title of the show, and fixes all the problems. This framework was used continuously through the six seasons of the show.

Jim Anderson was the perfect sitcom father of the 1950s, he was the modern husband of the time who "was involved in family life, helping out by occasionally drying the

⁷ Dalton and Linder, *The Sitcom Reader*, 49.

⁸ David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (Ballantine Books, 1994), 511.

dishes, playing with his children, and modeling appropriate gender roles for his son.”⁹ Interviews with women who grew up in the 1950s watching *Father Knows Best* express how the shows shaped their idea of family as well as the role of parents. One women interview discussed how *Father Knows Best* was her favorite show because her own father had left when she was little and she often fantasized about having Jim Anderson as her Dad.¹⁰ Margaret, who was played by real life mom and actress Jane Wyatt, was the perfect compliment to Jim. She was the steady figure of the family who kept everyone’s lives in order and made sure the household was running smoothly. One woman interviewed expressed how she “used to wish that [her] mom would, when I got home from school, would have snacks for me. I remember that, ‘cause they always did on television.”¹¹ Viewers saw Jim and Margaret as the perfect parents and often wished to have them as their own parents.

The three Anderson children had the picture-perfect 1950’s childhood. Betty was fortunate to be beautiful, athletic and smart. Her days were full of beauty competitions, potential beaus, being valedictorian, and stumbling upon her hidden athletic talents. Bud was witty and a skilled athlete who portrayed the normal gender roles that was expected of boys at the time. Kathy’s character provided comedy relief for the show. Kathy did not have many storylines of her own and the show molded her character to blend with the other character’s storylines. The three children never kept secrets from their parents, and their “tight, loving unit represented by Jim, Margaret, Betty, Bud and Kathy made the Andersons

⁹ Dalton and Linder, *The Sitcom Reader*, 51.

¹⁰ Andrea L. Press, *Women Watching Television: Gender, Class, and Generation in the American Television Experience* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 161.

¹¹ Press, *Women Watching Television*, 160.

truly an idealized suburban family of the sort that viewers could relate to and wish to emulate."¹²

The Andy Griffith Show: Aired from October 1960 to April 1968

The Andy Griffith Show was one of the highest rated programs in the CBS lineup and never dropped below seventh in the Nielsen Rating.¹³ Its popularity can in part be attributed to the setting of the show in the whitewashed southern town of Mayberry, full of quirky yet lovable characters. The show centers on local sheriff Andy Taylor, played by Griffith, his son Opie, deputy Barney Fife, and Andy's Aunt, Aunt Bee. The Taylor family, unlike the Anderson's, was not made up of the traditional family. Andy's wife died and Andy raises Opie with the help of Aunt Bee as well the entire town of Mayberry, which acts as the extended family. Aunt Bee, the mother figure, is an important example of roles that women can be portray outside of marriage. While Aunt Bee is not married, she is still portrayed in the expected and traditional gender roles, as a selfless and loving maternal aunt.

The Andy Griffith show made "Mayberry come alive as an ideal of traditional family and civic life in a period when both institutions were increasingly strained by the social and political upheavals of the 1960s."¹⁴ In order to maintain a traditional family and civic life, Mayberry excluded itself from creating storylines that would include the social movement of the time as well as minorities. Instead, the show included scenes of the Sheriff, in uniform, finding the time to go fishing with his son and enjoy a laid back afternoon without obligations, something that many fathers of the 1960s did not have the similar privileges of.

¹² Deborah G. Felder, *A Century of Women: the Most Influential Events in Twentieth-Century Women's History* (Citadel Press, 1999) 199.

¹³ Dalton and Linder, *The Sitcom Reader*, 73.

¹⁴ Dalton and Linder, *The Sitcom Reader*, 73.

Andy Taylor, a sheriff who did not even carry a gun, was able to use his own wisdom and charisma to keep the people of Mayberry safe, as well as show visitors the charm of living in a small southern town.

Deputy Barney Fife, played by Don Knotts, was the necessary trusty sidekick to Sheriff Taylor. Knotts, who earned 5 Emmy's for his performance as Deputy Fife, brought his character to life with his constant use of comedy. He played his role so well and had such good chemistry with Griffith that it often left little room for women on the show. After the first season of *The Andy Griffith Show*, actress Elinor Donahue, Andy's on screen girlfriend, who also plays Betty in *Father Knows Best*, left the show due to a lack of chemistry between her and Andy, as well as the frustration she experienced when many of her lines were given to Knotts. The Archive of American Television interviewed Donahue and she explains that many of her lines were given to Knotts because she was told "she wasn't funny,"¹⁵ Donahue was also the only woman to get her name featured in the theme song until season six when Knotts left the show and Francis Bavier, who plays Aunt Bee, was featured. Even though both Taylor and Fife dated on a regular basis, the show is primarily based on the male bonding experience. Griffith later said that "they had a hard time writing for women on the series"¹⁶ which can be seen in Donahue's decision to leave the show after one year into her three year contract.

Julia: Aired from September 1968 until March 1971

¹⁵ Elinor Donahue, "Women in the Box: Ellie Walker, *The Andy Griffith Show*," interview by Sabienna Bowman, *Flipping Through TV's Past*, August 9, 2012.

<https://thiswastv.com/2012/08/09/women-in-the-box-ellie-walker-the-andy-griffith-show/>

¹⁶Spangler, *Television Women from Lucy to Friends*, 97.

Unlike *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Father Knows Best*, *Julia* only aired for three seasons and is much harder to find today, either as reruns on television or to stream. The episodes are not archived in a way that is easy to access, it is so scarce that I could only access seven episodes, three from season 1 and four from season 3 at The Paley Center for Media in New York City. While the selection of episodes to review were limited, especially compared to the other two shows, I still included *Julia* because it was the first show to feature a black woman on television not in domestic employment.¹⁷ *Julia* is a single mother working as a nurse to support herself and her son Corey. The show revolves around *Julia* working with white doctor Dr. Chegley, and her friendship with Marie, the downstairs white neighbor and stay at home mother Marie.

A white liberal Democrat, Hal Kanter, created *Julia* in response to the civil rights movement of the time. He did so in a way that “gave viewers a fully integrated, middle class Negroes seeming to bear out the promise of Martin Luther King’s vision of a color-blind society in which blacks had achieved true equality and freedom.”¹⁸ Critiques of the show complained that the portrayal of *Julia* basically made her white and that characters in the show were either portrayed as too black or too white and many black viewers could not connect with any of the characters. White viewers on the other hand were able to identify with *Julia* and one viewer expressed her love for the show because the show allowed “the world to realize that the Negro is just like everyone else, with feelings and habits as the Whites have.”¹⁹ Kanter was so careful with race and the way that he portrayed *Julia*’s

¹⁷ Denise, Lowe. *Women and American Television: An Encyclopedia* (ABC-CLIO,1999), 199.

¹⁸Aniko, Bodroghkozy. “Is This What You Mean by Color TV?: Race, Gender and Contested Meanings in NBC’s *Julia*.” (*Private screenings: Television and the female consumer* (1992), 183.

¹⁹ Bodroghkozy, “Is This What You Mean by Color TV? 189.

blackness and yet there was so much blatant sexism in the portrayal of women throughout the three seasons. During the episodes I watched, if Julia was discriminated against it was not due to her race but her gender.

Motherhood

The portrayal of motherhood throughout these shows can be segmented into three parts: motherhood as a job, the sacrifices of motherhood, and mother figures questioning their roles. Margaret, the mother in *Father Knows Best*, was an example of a mother who “vacuums in her pearls when she isn’t puttering around the kitchen containing enough starch to feed her entire sitcom neighborhood.”²⁰ Aunt Bee was positioned as the motherly figure in a show that was written without a mother, creating an “asexual, nonprocreative model of family life based in extended kin relations and affective commitments of choice rather than in institutionalized sexual and marital relations.”²¹ Julia, unlike both Aunt Bee and Margaret, spends her days employed and working outside the household. She appeared to be career oriented; however, it was more out of necessity than choice, because her husband died fighting in Vietnam. Motherhood is a central part of all three of these shows and can be seen throughout the following episodes.

Motherhood is portrayed as a full time job in both *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Father Knows Best*, but not in *Julia*. Margaret and Aunt Bee’s first and foremost priority is maintaining life at home. As the mother figure, their day consist of completing all the

²⁰ Jeremy Butler, “Redesigning Discourse: Feminism, the Sitcom, and Designing Women,” *Journal of Film and Video* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 14.

²¹Patty, Sotirin and Laura L. Ellingson. “Rearticulating the Aunt: Feminist Alternatives of Family, Care, and Kinship in Popular Performances of Aunting” *Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies* 7.4 (2007), 445.

domestic chores and maintaining their households. Throughout both shows Margaret and Aunt Bee are the only ones who consistently prepare meals, clean dishes, and perform household chores. Andy or Jim will occasionally help dry dishes. Being a “mother” is a full time job that receives little praise or appreciation, and yet both of these women are grateful for the opportunity to perform these domestic tasks for their families.

The storyline of the premier episode of *The Andy Griffith Show* begins with, Rose, the Taylor’s housekeeper, resigning from her duties and departing from the Taylor Family to get married. Andy contacts his Aunt Bee to replace Rose; much to Opie’s dismay. Opie hopes Rose might resume her old job after her marriage, even though Andy informs Opie that Rose no longer needs a job now that she is married. This very small part of the storyline, this subtle action by Rose to resign from her employment, illustrate to the viewers that married life and maintain the family household takes priority over forms of employment for female characters. Opie wants to prove to Andy that they do not need Aunt Bee by attempting to make breakfast and clean dishes. Opie’s attempts are rather unimpressive, especially his attempts at being a chef, which seems reasonable for a six year old. Andy reassures Opie that he will like Aunt Bee and that they need her because two men cannot make their own meals or take care of the house. Aunt Bee arrives and thanks Andy for sending for her, telling him that “all the youngins I raised all grew up now and when you called I just thanked heaven I had a place to go and something to do.”²² As an aunt figure Aunt Bee has lived and cared for different families, fulfilling the demands of domestic chores and childcare. With no children of her own, Aunt Bee’s life revolves around maintaining the household and raising the children of other family members. Before Andy

²² “The New Housekeeper.” *The Andy Griffith Show*. Writ. Jack Elinson and Charles Stewart. Dir. Sheldon Leonard. CBS, 1960. Netflix.

requested Aunt Bee to live with him and Opie, Aunt Bee descried her emotional state as feeling unimportant and useless. Aunt Bee reveals that she is extremely grateful for Andy's invitation to perform the mother job in his household and position herself, once again, as useful. Throughout the eight season of *The Andy Griffith Show*, Aunt Bee is seen more in the kitchen preparing meals than in any other scenes throughout the show.

Similar to Aunt Bee, Margaret finds fulfillment in her job as a mother and in her daily responsibilities maintaining the household. She cooks dinner, cleans the house in her pearls and high-heeled shoes and does all the family shopping. During her time away from domestic chores, Margaret can be found knitting or sewing next to Jim as he reads the newspaper. In the episode "A Medal for Margaret,"²³ the Anderson family decides to set up a trophy case to display all of family's collection of trophies. However Margaret, to the astonishment of her family, does not have any trophies to contribute. Margaret perceives her inability to contribute a trophy to a family project as being less than a perfect mother, and so she secretly signs up for fly-fishing lessons and enters a competition. The day before the tournament, Margaret falls, breaks her wrist and cannot compete in the competition. The accident revealed to Margaret's family that she intended to enter the competition to earn a trophy, and that she is devastated by the lost opportunity. Margaret's family rallies around her and comforts her with assurances that she does not need a trophy to be a perfect mother. They blanket her with compliments of being a wonderful mother, an acknowledgement not seen often on the show. The episode highlights the Anderson family's mindset that motherhood itself is a trophy. The episode concludes with Margaret

²³ "A Medal for Margaret." *Father Knows Best*. Writ. Roswell Rogers and Ed James. Dir. Peter Tewksbury. CBS/NBC, 1958. Hulu.

realizing that she possess everything she needs to be fulfilled and complete at home through her job as the mother of a household. .

Mothers are also portrayed as the family figure who is responsible to remind or “nag” other family members about their responsibilities. In addition, mothers were usually positioned as the “bad guy,” the family member who would constantly reprimand their children to complete task or some responsibility they had forgotten to complete. Aunt Bee, unlike Julia and Margaret, does not assume the nag or bad guy role, instead she allows Andy, as Opie’s parent, to provide that oversight role. Julia, unlike Margaret, is more successful enforcing rules in her household because she has no husband to turn to and Corey is young and compelled to follow his mother’s instructions. Sitcoms often emphasize the lack of female character’s authority by writing scripts that state, “wait till your father hears about this.”²⁴ These statements illustrate that a mother cannot actually enforce the family rules in her own household, but is dependent on the strong male character, the father, to enforce the family rules. These sitcoms positioned the father’s role as the authority figure and rule enforcer while the mother’s role was subservient and a nag. The sitcoms broadcasted a gender role distinction that emphasized women’s role in society as more submissive, deferential and reliant on their husband.

In episodes “Close Decision”²⁵ and “Margaret Disowns Her Family”, Margaret badgers her family members to comply with the family rules, and by end of the episode she finally relents, allowing the family members to not comply with the family rules. In

²⁴ Mock, Erin Lee. “The horror of” honey, I’m home!”: The perils of postwar family love in the domestic sitcom.” *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies*41.2 (2011): 35.

²⁵ “Close Decisions.” *Father Knows Best*. Writ. Ed James and Roswell Rogers. Dir. William D. Russell. CBS/NBC, 1955. Hulu.

the “Close Decision” episode, Margaret is frustrated with Bud for not cleaning his room, not completing his chores nor memorizing a poem for church. After a week of requesting Bud to perform his responsibilities, Margaret prohibits him from playing baseball until his chores are completed. Jim is initially compelled to support Margaret; however, he changes his position quickly after stopping by Bud’s baseball game to learn that Bud’s team is losing. Instead of including Margaret in the decision to allow Bud to play, Jim decides it would be more beneficial to undermine Margaret’s authority and sneak Bud out a window. Margaret catches them, and instead of reacting with disappointment says “I hate being the villain all the time but we can’t let him run wild.” Margaret states she hates her role as the bad-guy in the family but is compelled to monitor her children’s actions.

Margaret, in the episode “Margaret Disowns Her Family,”²⁶ becomes increasingly frustrated with her family as they leave messes around the house for her to clean up and expect her to make them breakfast without offering to help. Bud will not hang up his coat even though Margaret has already reminded him several times. Margaret attempts to sell an old crib from their attic that a young pregnant mother wants to purchase. The pregnant mother is worried about starting a family and confides in Margaret her desires to leave town. The discussion, with the scared pregnant mother, causes Margaret to realize how rewarding her life is with her family. Margaret concludes she is fortunate to have her own family and that all of the little day-to-day troubles are irrelevant, because having a family is so much better than not having a family. The episode ends with Margaret succumbing and picking up Bud’s coat off the ground and laughing about her children’s actions. The episode began with Margaret disappointment in her family’s actions and her role as the unwanted

²⁶ “Margaret Disowns Her Family.” *Father Knows Best*. Writ. Ed James and Roswell Rogers. Dir. William D. Russell. CBS/NBC, 1957. Hulu.

overseer of family chores and responsibilities. The episode concludes with Margaret realizing how fortunate her life is because she is a mother, and if compromising with the children meant a happy family, then she was willing to compromise her authority.

The sitcom *Julia* had to implement a slightly different script for Julia's because this sitcom did not have a father role to position as the authority figure. The sitcom's messages about women's roles had to be conveyed differently than the power dynamic messages that were conveyed through the Anderson's or Taylor's house households. The sitcom *Julia* included Julia's neighbor Marie who is the mother of Earl, Corey's friend. Corey and Earl refer to their mothers as the meanest mothers in the world because they will not buy their sons a toy in the episode "Am I, Pardon the Expression, Blacklisted?"²⁷ After Marie tells the boys they must earn their own money to buy the toy, Earl informs Corey "mothers always say no." Julia and Marie insist the boys work for the toy themselves, positioning the mothers' as bad guys who are attempting to instill strong work ethics in their children. Julia had to be the "bad guy" out of necessity, in the episode "Essay Can you See."²⁸ Corey continuously whines for a color TV, but Julia cannot afford one. Unlike Margaret, Julia must sometimes say no to her child for economic reason and she cannot support the same lifestyle as the Andersons. Sitcoms send opposing messages about the role of mothers, sometimes they are positioned as the bad guy, the nag, and at other times they relent their authority, according to Margaret Anderson, because "nothing is more worthwhile than a

²⁷ "Am I, Pardon the Expression, Blacklisted?" *Julia*. Writ. Robert Goodwin. Dir. James Shldon. NBC, 1968. The Paley Media Center for Media, New York.

²⁸ "Essay Can You See?" *Julia*. Writ. Blanche Franklin. Dir. Ezra Stone. NBC, 1970. The Paley Media Center for Media, New York.

family.”²⁹ The mother as the “bad guy” is a recurring theme that can be seen in modern sitcoms and in both shows with two parents as well as single mothers.

The mother figures in the show question their roles as mothers and the family dynamic they have created. This questioning of one's role within family is especially prevalent with Aunt Bee, because she is an extended family member. She often wonders if her own presence is keeping Andy from getting remarried and Opie from getting a “real” mom. Margaret questions her own life and purpose as a mother when frustrated with her children or tired of her domestic chores. Self-doubt is also prevalent in the sitcom *Julia*. Julia worries about Corey growing up without his father, and if she is able to be fulfill both roles as mother and a father. Andy Taylor appears less concerned than Julia regarding Opie's childhood with one parent. Aunt Bee fulfilling the role of mother appears to complete the family unit for Andy. Opie rarely references the fact that he does not have a mother, while it is a continuous theme for Corey in *Julia*.

In the episode “Wedding Bells for Aunt Bee”³⁰ and “Aunt Bee's Invisible Beau,”³¹ Aunt Bee questions her own role within the Taylor Family because “her presence unsettles the insularity and stability of the nuclear family.”³² In both episodes, Clara, Aunt Bee's friend, plants the idea that Aunt Bee's presence might be prohibiting Andy from getting remarried. In “Wedding Bells for Aunt Bee” the dry cleaner, Mr. Goss, takes interest in Aunt Bee and Clara convinces her that “when you reach our age you can't be choosey,”

²⁹ “Margaret Disowns Her Family.” *Father Knows Best*. Writ. Ed James and Roswell Rogers. Dir. William D. Russell. CBS/NBC, 1957. Hulu.

³⁰ “Wedding Bells for Aunt Bee.” *The Andy Griffith Show*. Writ. Harvey Bullock. Dir. Bob Sweeney. CBS, 1962. Netflix.

³¹ “Aunt Bee's Invisible Beau.” *The Andy Griffith Show*. Writ. Ben Joelson and Art Baer. Dir. Theodore Flicker. CBS, 1965. Netflix.

³² Sotirin and Ellingson, “Rearticulating the Aunt,” 445

encouraging Aunt Bee to date Mr. Goss. Mr. Goss proposes to Aunt Bee, who accepts after feeling pressured into saying yes. Andy tells her “getting married will give you a home of your own” further signaling that her place in the Taylor’s household is temporary and not her own home. The episode concludes with Aunt Bee admitting she does not want to marry Mr. Goss, and Andy reaffirming Aunt Bee’s role in his household, as the mother figure. Even after this affirmation, Aunt Bee, in the episode “Aunt Bee’s Invisible Beau,” is compelled to lie about having a boyfriend so Andy will feel comfortable getting married. Her pretend boyfriend turns out to be a married man, leading Andy to realize Aunt Bee was lying. Andy again reassures Aunt Bee that “you, Opie and myself are a family. If Helen and I ever decide to get married, everything will stay the same way they are.” Aunt Bee’s place in the Taylor’s family infringes on traditional definitions of the nuclear family resulting in Aunt Bee’s continuous doubt regarding the permanency of her role in the Taylor household.

Aunt Bee’s continued unease “calls to attention the emotional cost of the maternal ideal and gendered inequalities of caretaking and caregiving.”³³ While Margaret is also dependent on Jim, she never feels like she is intruding on a family like Aunt Bee does. By having the nuclear family dynamic, Margaret is firm in her belief as to what role she has within her family. Even though Margaret is aware of her role within her family she does questions her own role as a domestic mother in the episode “Brief Holiday.”³⁴ Margaret decides that she needs a day away from her domestic chores after she is given a list of things to do from her family as well as witnessing her family create and leave behind a mess as they go off to school and work. Before coming to this conclusion Margaret, washes

³³ Sotirin and Ellingson, “Rearticulating the Aunt,” 445

³⁴ “Brief Holiday.” *Father Knows Best*. Writ. Ed James and Roswell Rogers. Dir. Peter Tewksbury. CBS/NBC, 1957. Hulu.

the morning dishes and discusses with her neighbor Myrtle how their homemaking class did not prepare them for being housewives. Margaret tells Myrtle “I have a good husband who loves me, healthy children, a comfortable home, security, everything! So everything is alright but at the same time I want to go out and leave.” This quote expresses all the desires that women were supposed to achieve in the 1950s. Margaret has achieved these goals, yet she still feels a need to leave all of them. She spends the day shopping, having lunch outside the house, and sitting for a character sketch by an artist.

After Margaret’s outing, she comes home to her family wondering why nothing has gotten done at home. The morning dishes are unwashed, dinner was not cooked and none of Margaret’s domestic chores are completed. Margaret’s absence from her household duties for one day causes havoc for the Anderson Family. The episode ends with Margaret and Jim going out for dinner and leaving Betty to cook dinner at home. Jim informs Margaret she cannot deviate from her daily life task because she is the lighthouse that the family revolves around. For Margaret doing something besides her domestic task is just not permitted. While she was able to deviate from “normal” life for one day, she must return to her domestic role in order to maintain her life as a mother.

Julia questioned her ability to be enough for Corey as he grows up without his father. In the episode “Parents can be Pains”³⁵ Corey has to build a science project and Julia worries that all the other children are receiving assistance from their fathers, putting Corey at a disadvantage. Julia enlists the help of her boyfriend Steve to try and compensate for Corey not having a father figure. Corey wants to build the project on his own but this episode illustrates Julia’s feelings of inadequacy because she is a single mother. In the

³⁵ “Parents Can Be Pains?” *Julia*. Writ. Sidney Morse. Dir. Bernard Wiesen. NBC, 1970. The Paley Media Center for Media, New York.

episode “Essay Can you See,”³⁶ Corey writes an essay about his father being a hero who died in Vietnam and all of the life moments he would like to share with his dad if he had the chance. Corey tells Julia that his dad “had to be special because you married him and you wouldn’t marry someone who wasn’t special.” These moments show Julia’s strengths as a single mother and while she sometimes doubt herself being able to raise Corey alone, Corey’s unwavering love and support for his mother confirms that she does an amazing job. Motherhood in its different forms was a necessary component of television sitcoms in the 1950s and the 1960s.

Women’s Value to Society (Besides Motherhood):

The value of women in *Father Knows Best*, *Julia*, and *The Andy Griffith Show* are often established by their ability to find a husband or boyfriend, their beauty, their domestic skills and caretaking potential. Features such as attractiveness and femininity were valued more than qualities such as intelligence and athleticism. In the episode ‘Kathy Becomes a Girl,’³⁷ Kathy transitions from a tomboy into a more feminine version of herself to adjust to her junior high school experience. Margaret’s motherly advice for Kathy was “be a normal average girl” because “girls only like girls who act like girls.” The guidance that Kathy receives is to conform she will be liked when she wears a dress and acts “like a girl.” The episode revolves around Kathy’s transformation and her inevitable acceptance by both female classmates as well as her male classmates. Now the male classmates think more favorably of her and as one boy puts it, “gee Kathy, you have turned into a girl.” Kathy’s

³⁶ “Essay Can You See?” *Julia*. Writ. Blanche Franklin. Dir. Ezra Stone. NBC, 1970. The Paley Media Center for Media, New York.

³⁷ “Kathy Becomes a Girl.” *Father Knows Best*. Writ. John Elliotte and Ed James. Dir. Peter Tewksbury. CBS/NBC, 1959. Hulu.

transitions from a tomboy who wrestled with all of her male classmates, to a feminine girl who wears heels and experiences a slew of boys wanting to date her. Kathy conforms to societal standards regarding the appearance of a female teenager, and is rewarded with popularity and acceptance.

Betty, unlike Kathy, never went through a tomboy phase but she did excel in sports. Her athleticism was often overshadowed by the amount of attention given to her beauty. In “Betty, the Track Star,”³⁸ Betty gets nominated as one of the three finalists in a Flower Queen Beauty Competition for her college. The track captain, hoping to garner some publicity, asks Betty to take photos with the team. Betty reluctantly agrees, although she is concerned that wearing a track uniform will lessen her chance of getting voted Flower Queen. As she poses with one of the sprinters, she gets taunted for just dressing the part and both girls take off racing. Betty is such a natural athlete that she wins and is asked to join the team and run in a meet the same day as the Flower Queen Competition. Betty reluctantly to participate stems from her concerns about missing the Flower Queen Competition, but she is able to do both and ends up winning both the race and the Flower Queen competition.

For Betty, athletics are less important than her looks, she only entered the track meet because she felt like the other girls were counting on her and could not bear to let them down. In “Advantage to Betty,”³⁹ Betty’s tennis teams get their photos taken for the newspaper. Even though Betty is not the star player, the photographer likes the way she

³⁸ “Betty, the Track Star.” *Father Knows Best*. Writ. Ed James and Paul West. Dir. Peter Tewksbury. CBS/NBC, 1957. Hulu.

³⁹ “Advantage to Betty.” *Father Knows Best*. Writ Ed James and Roswell Rogers. Dir. William D. Russel. NBC. 1955. Hulu.

looks the best and puts her photo as the center of the article. Their best player, Eula, gets frustrated with her lack of acknowledgement which Jim says stems from Eula's lack of male suitors as her less attractive looks. This portrayal of athletic girls as ugly and needing sports to make up for their looks demonstrates that woman only take sports seriously if they have nothing else to offer. Girls who are pretty and have a lot of boyfriends, like Betty, do not need to turn to sports for approval.

Betty's beauty not only takes center stage over her athletic skills but also over her academic achievement and career goals. Betty, in "Betty, Girl Engineer,"⁴⁰ signs up to shadow an engineer through her high school career program. Upon telling her parents, Margaret responds "this isn't the sort of life for you" and Jim is "surprised they'd take a girl." Betty, despite her parent's reservations, still sets out to her first day excited to see what the life of an engineer is like. Doyle, the man Betty shadows, cannot believe that a girl is looking to be an engineer. He tells Betty "a woman's place is in the home" and asks her "why she didn't just stay home where she belongs?" Betty brings up that women have the right to vote and Doyle responds that women still wear skirts to the poll and do not go to vote until they have cooked their husbands' breakfast. Betty gets upset and goes home. Doyle later comes to the Anderson household. Betty comes downstairs in a dress and Doyle tells her that she looks more like a woman now and ask her out on a date, which she accepts. Doyle does not apologize for anything he said and Betty allows him to inform her of what roles, as a woman, she can take. This episode enforces traditional gender roles that pretty young woman, or really any woman, should be at home and not out working in a "men's job."

⁴⁰ "Betty, Girl Engineer." *Father Knows Best*. Writ. Ed James and Roswell Rogers. Dir. William Russell. CBS/NBC, 1956. Hulu.

Four seasons later, in “Betty’s Career Problem,”⁴¹ a similar storyline is developed. Betty is about to graduate college and is applying for a job but is up against Cliff, a boy from school who has been her academic rival for the past four years of college. During her interview, Betty is told by the manager that training pretty girls for careers jobs does not usually pay off because “beautiful girls usually end up at the alter at the time we put them at a desk.” This manager reaffirms the idea that women are suppose to get married so there is no point training or hiring them if they will just leave the workforce after marriage. Betty perseveres and continuously competing for the job against Cliff. Cliff confessing his love for Betty to which the manager tells her to choose between a job and a man. At the end of the episode Betty chooses the man, giving up the job because she decides that she would be happier as a bride. Betty has so many talents and gifts, but like so many other young women in the 1950s, decides that being a wife and mother is more important to her than pursuing a career. Once again this episode enforces that all young pretty girls should not pursue a career but rather a husband because that is what society expects of them.

Julia in “Mama’s Man”⁴² has a similar experience with an employer not wanting to hire her due to her beauty. Julia gets an interview for a nursing position and upon arriving the interviewer seems flustered to see Julia. Julia concludes that his surprised is due to her race but is informed that she is too beautiful for the position. The interviewer says hiring attractive nurses causes them to loose man-hours because of all the suitors these nurses attract. Julia, being so much more pretty than many nurses they hire, according to the interviewer, “might provoke a complete work stoppage.” Julia is getting punished for her

⁴¹ Betty’s Career Problem.” *Father Knows Best*. Writ. Ed James and Roswell Rogers. Dir. William D. Russel. NBC. 1960. Hulu.

⁴² “Mama’s Man *Julia*. Writ. Hal Kanter. Dir. Hal Kanter. NBC, 1968. The Paley Media Center for Media, New York.

beauty, which does not relate to her nursing abilities or how well she will perform her job. By today's standards, both what the interviewer said to Betty as well as what they said to Julia, would be considered sexual harassment and is shocking to see on television for a modern viewer like myself. Yet this was way women were portrayed on television, enforcing a society that had sexist views towards women.

Another important aspect of being a woman on a sitcom meant finding a husband. In *Father Knows Best*, "The Matchmaker,"⁴³ Margaret tries to get her cousin, Louise's, boyfriend Tom to propose. Louise shows Margaret her outfit for the night and Margaret tells her "if that has been the way you have been dressing for the last five years, no wonder Tom hasn't proposed... your trying to catch a man not a train." Margaret insist that Louise needs to dress a certain parts if she wants to get herself a husband showing woman that getting married all depends about the way you look. Marriage is also shown as a trap for men in this episode, Bud says that he wants to stay a bachelor and Jim responds telling Bud that every woman takes bachelors as an insult and want to trap them. The episode concludes with Tom and Louise getting engaged after they see the hectic but yet perfect life of the Anderson's.

Women in the Workplace

Women in the workplace can be seen in both *The Andy Griffith Show* as well as *Julia*. Even though these show depict professional woman, unlike *Father Knows Best*, they still enforce traditional gender roles. For example in "Ellie for Council,"⁴⁴ Ellie runs for council against the general wishes of the men of Mayberry, including Andy. Andy, upon first

⁴³ "The Matchmaker." *Father Knows Best*. Writ. Dorothy Cooper and Ed James. Dir. William D. Russell. CBS/NBC, 1955. Hulu.

⁴⁴ "Ellie for Council." *The Andy Griffith Show*. Writ. Jack Elinson and Charles Steward. Dir. Bob Sweeney. CBS, 1960. Netflix.

hearing about Ellie running, tells her 'Oh Ellie you don't want to concern yourself with government business, let the men worry about that. Worry your pretty little head about women stuff.' Having Ellie run for council is very progressive and enforces that woman can be involved in political life and hold important job positions. Yet at the same time the gender war that is created in Mayberry escalates as the men realize Ellie is running with the support of their wives. The men of the town, in an attempt prohibit their wives from voting for Ellie, cut off their charge accounts and the women retaliate by not cooking their husband's dinner. This power struggle and what each sex can withhold from each other, men control money and women control the domestic task of cooking food, show the proper roles of each gender while at the same time, allowing a woman to run for city council.

The gender war continues until Andy hears Opie say "we beat them females, we kept them in their place, us men folks don't want women running around town, do we Pa?" Upon hearing this misogynistic rhetoric from his son, Andy realizes that he made a mistake and tells the people of Mayberry that women have just as much right as men do to run for city council. Andy saves the day and allows Ellie the opportunity to be a councilwoman while maintaining traditional gender roles. Throughout the eight seasons of *The Andy Griffith Show*, Andy had a variety of different girlfriends after Ellie's departure in season one. All of these women had professional jobs but they are rarely ever discussed or showed as part of the show. They also usually were employed in job sectors that were considered more feminine, like as nurses or teachers. Ellie had the most non-traditional female job out of all of his girlfriends and she brought to the show a level of feminism that was not seen after her departure.

Julia is an example of a professional woman who works in order to support herself and her son. In the seven episodes I watched, working women only consisted of those not married and once these women did get married they quit their jobs. Marie, Julia's friend and neighbor, stays at home while her husband works as a police officer. Julia often relies on Marie to take care of Corey while she is at work, a privilege many single mothers' do not have access to. In "Ready Aim Fired,"⁴⁵ Julia's fellow nurse Hannah is getting married which allows her to leave the workforce. Julia likely would not have worked if her husband had not died in Vietnam. Unlike in *The Andy Griffith Show*, *Julia* had actual scenes of women working, making it seem like women in the labor force could be a normal occurrence. *The Andy Griffith Show* had professional woman but they often adhered to traditional gender roles and gendered jobs. *Julia* was similar, seeing that married women were rarely seen in the workforce. Both of these shows did a better job with professional women than *Father Knows Best* but were still able to have working women and yet enforce traditional gender roles at the same time.

Portrayal of Race:

Race was very much excluded from television shows of the 1950s and the 1960s and shows that did include race did so in either a harmful way or in an inaccurate depiction, which was, for some, the major problem of *Julia*. *Julia's* creation by a white man, even with four black writers as part of their team, allowed for black viewers to question if "the show's representation of blacks was realistic or whether it portrayed a white world for white viewers."⁴⁶ Black viewers felt as though they could not relate to any of the characters

⁴⁵ "Ready, Aim, Fired." *Julia*. Writ. Hal Kanter. Dir. Coby Ruskin. NBC, 1970. The Paley Media Center for Media, New York.

⁴⁶ Bodroghkozy, "Is This What You Mean by Color TV? 197.

on *Julia* especially because many of the supporting characters of the show were white. In “Paint Your Waggedorn”⁴⁷ both Julia and Corey have to deal with a racist neighbor who prohibits her granddaughter from playing with Corey. The racist grandma, Mrs. Bennet, tells the landlord “this place is turning into a ghetto, always happens when those people move in” regarding Corey and Julia. While this episode brings to the viewers attention how problematic stereotypes of race can be, it than offers an unrealistic outcome that changes Mrs. Bennet perspective of Julia as well as other black people. Julia saves Mrs. Bennet’s chocking granddaughter causing Mrs. Bennet to apologizes and inform Julia that she “has opened my eyes.” By dealing with race in a way that everything can be solved if people were just more open minded does not deal with the full extent of how deep racism runs in America.

Julia might not have dealt with race to the liking of all viewers but the show was a tremendous achievement for the late 1960s. The fact alone that a show about a single black working mother was able to gain enough popularity to last for three seasons at the end of the Civil Rights Movement is a great feat. Julia was an educated black woman working in a professional job that allowed herself and her son to live a comfortable middle class lifestyle. Even though the show surrounded Julia with white people, it still took into consideration racial issues of the time. In “Am I, Pardon the Expression, Blacklisted?”⁴⁸ Julia gets upset with Marie for allowing Corey to shine shoes with Marie’s son, Earl because there was a time when black men could only have jobs that were like shoe shinning. Julia wants her Cory’s opportunities to not be limited by his race like black men of the past.

⁴⁷ “Paint Your Waggedorn.” *Julia*. Writ. Harry Winkler and Harry Dolan. Dir. Coby Ruskin. NBC, 1968. The Paley Media Center for Media, New York.

⁴⁸ “Am I, Pardon the Expression, Blacklisted?” *Julia*. Writ. Robert Goodwin. Dir. James Shldon. NBC, 1968. The Paley Media Center for Media, New York.

Marie dismisses Julia's concerns by informing her of how far black people have come, citing that there is even a black Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall. Julia relents, deciding that Marie is right and Corey can shine shoes for now as a way to earn extra money. Racism is *Julia* is portrayed in this sort of bubble where things are never as bad as they could be and everyone ends up better off as they become more open minded thanks to Julia and Corey.

Julia, in comparison to *The Andy Griffith Show* and *Father Knows Best* does an amazing job discussing race primarily because *Julia* actually brings up race unlike the other shows. *Father Knows Best* takes place in an affluent suburbia, which many black families were excluded from in the 1950s explaining their lack of race as well as problems of segregation that still haunts America today. *The Andy Griffith Show* aired during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, which was able to publically broadcast the injustices faced by black people daily in the south. Instead of responding to the actual problems of small southern towns with white sheriffs, "Sheriff Andy presented a counterweight to that image [bad southern white men] during the bloodiest years of the civil rights struggle,"⁴⁹ showing Mayberry as an exception to the problems of the South. The Andy Griffith show portrayed the South as a pleasant place that welcomed the average white man and insulated itself from the major problems facing the rest of the country. This world that Mayberry created was possible through the lack of diversity as well lack of acknowledgement about the racism in America.

Conclusion:

⁴⁹Phoebe, Bronstein. "Comic Relief: The Andy Griffith Show, White Southern Sheriffs, and Regional Rehabilitation." *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 30.2 (89) (2015): 132.

Sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s portrayed women in traditional gender roles that encourage stay at home mothers, sexist stereotypes, and women's happiness being found through marriage. Motherhood was a major theme in *Father Knows Best*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and *Julia*. While the idea of what a mother figure could be changed, a mother was always portrayed in these shows with their children as their main priority. Aunt Bee and Margaret are examples of mother figures that reside in the domestic home and serve as a necessary fixture of their house and family life. Julia is forced to work outside the home with the death of her husband but the other women of the show are either out of the work force or leave their jobs once they get married, promoting this idea of a married woman's place as that in the home.

Women had a limited role in these shows outside of the dome of motherhood. While Julia was able to secure herself a job as a nurse, being a mother was still her priority. The Anderson sisters in, *Father Knows Best*, are examples of young women conforming to what society thought femininity meant. Betty's beauty overshadowed any of her other accomplishments. Her acceptance of gender norms that limited her opportunities based on her sex enforced that women did not need to break from traditional norms. Kathy finds herself not adhering to the normal standards for teenage girls and being ostracized for it. In order to fit in she changes herself to look like the other girls, resulting in regaining her female friends as well as getting potential male beaus. Julia was also discriminated based on her looks; being told she was too pretty for a job. These shows portray women as having a goal of getting married which can be seen when Margaret sets up her cousin with her future fiancé. If women's main goal was to marry and once they did marry they often did

not work, it is rationale that employers did not want to hire them, as what happened with Betty, but in order to break this cycle women had to get employed.

Women in the workplace were nonexistent in *Father Knows Best*. Both times that Betty attempted to get a job she ended up instead dating the boy who made her give up on the job, proving that women belonged dating men and not working besides them. Ellie in *The Andy Griffith Show* was the most career-oriented woman in Mayberry, but left after one season. Julia worked out of necessity and all of the other women in the show stopped working once they got married, again enforcing woman's place in the house, especially once married. *Julia* addresses race more than the other shows but is often criticized for making Julia "too white" in order to appease white audiences instead of correctly depicting black women. *Father Knows Best* had no minorities in their affluent white suburban town. *The Andy Griffith Show* took place in a white washed Southern town that should have had black people but instead largely ignored the Civil Right Movement of the 1960s as well as the possibility of minorities in Mayberry. Sitcoms in the 1950s and 1960s were incredibly popular. Viewers could resonate their own lives with what they saw on television. These sitcom families were the idealized version of American families of the 1950s and 1960s. They were able to maintain traditional gender roles even without portraying the perfect nuclear family. Women of these sitcoms were shown as dependent domestic beings whose priority in lives was their family. Julia, being released 10 years after *Father Knows Best*, begins to break away from traditional gender roles but still allows for sexism in the workplace. As child actor Billy Grey, who played Bud Anderson on *Father Knows Best*, expressed, these shows enforced problematic gender roles that have yet to be fixed today.

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