

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF HOUSEWIFERY: LUCY GETS THE BALL ROLLING

by

EUNICE A. OGLICE

(Under the Direction of Dwight Brooks)

ABSTRACT

The 1950's was an era that welcomed Lucy Ricardo into their homes. The comedy *I Love Lucy* premiered on Oct. 15, 1951, on CBS. This study seeks to demonstrate and illustrate how Lucy Ricardo battled patriarchy, which was common among TV sitcoms of the era. Primarily, this study aims to analyze Lucy Ricardo's role as a woman who pushes the limits of patriarchy in *I Love Lucy*, by examining her dual roles of someone who defies patriarchy, yet show's allegiance to it as well. A textual analysis of 14 *I Love Lucy* episodes will address the established mode of domesticity in *I Love Lucy*, as well as opportunities for challenges that Lucy takes advantage of. This study reveals a woman who denied her husband's wishes to control her. Lucy stepped outside of the typical portrayal of married women who were supposed to submit to their husbands and follow their every wish.

INDEX WORDS: *I Love Lucy*, Feminist theory, Patriarchy, Masculinity, Femininity, Sitcom, The 1950s, Housewifery, Ethnicity, American culture.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wonderful parents who continue to be an inspiration to me. Mom and dad, you are my best friends and are Christ-like examples that amaze me each and every day. Your selfishness and love for people shines through and I thank you for everything you have done for me.

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Without God I am nothing. I thank God for my inspirations and the opportunity to share them with the world. Thank you God for my fun-loving family that refuses to take themselves too seriously, enjoys life to the fullest and manages to have me laughing when I need it most. I thank you God for giving me thoughtful and loving friends who entertain my ideas and always stand beside me. A special thank you goes to Dr. Dwight Brooks for his creativity, enthusiasm and help. I also thank all the women in this world that have motivated me to stand tall and not only reach for the stars, but grab them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I Love I Love Lucy: My Connection with Lucy

Some say love conquers all, but in my family humor does. Humor is not only a disposition but rather an attitude that changes one's outlook on life. As kids, my brother and I were brought up to see the good in people and situations. If someone told us we were incapable of doing something, we were taught to laugh; not at the person but at the situation itself. When we traveled from country to country every summer to help our parents with missions, the thought of not being able to accomplish something never crossed our minds. So what if Romania was communist and didn't accept us because of our faith. Dictators weren't going to keep us out of the very same country my parents grew up in.

Waiting up to 14 hours to cross the Hungarian-Romanian border wasn't painful to us because we were too busy playing what our parents called "the see how long you can stay quiet and win \$5 bucks game." When the secret police searched our van and slashed the top of our car while searching for Bibles, my brother and I giggled. "What are they looking for?" we would ask our parents. For years we didn't know that we were in danger. For my brother and me, everything was a game and our goal was to find a scheme to get ourselves out of any given situation.

It is because of this optimistic outlook on life that it was natural for *I Love Lucy* to become a family favorite. Growing up, *I Love Lucy* was more than a humorous anecdote; it was a family bonding experience and of course, a reason to get cable television. Lucy (Lucille Ball)

and Ricky Ricardo (Desi Arnaz) weren't simply just characters on a television sitcom, but rather people we could relate to. Lucy, like us, was witty, inventive and always getting herself into trouble. Lucy laughed in the face of obstacles just as we often did. No one could tell her what to do and she did as she pleased.

Ricky, like my parents, was from a foreign country, spoke in a distinct accent and embraced traditional values. Roars of laughter could be heard from our living room when Ricky would say things like, "Lucy, you've got some *esplanen* to do." His abrasiveness reminded us of Romania and its former communist rule. Ricky continuously tried to hold Lucy back and tell her she couldn't be a performer. Lucy's job, according to Ricky, was to set aside her own goals and purely be a wife and a mother.

Each time I viewed the show I questioned the way Lucy was treated by her husband Ricky. Ricky routinely tried to control her by telling her what to do and endlessly tried to hold her back. Despite this, Lucy's character was vivacious and full of spirit. She incessantly went behind her husband's back and schemed her way into things, of course always to be found out in the end.

It was precisely this part I had difficulty relating to. I didn't understand why Ricky wouldn't let Lucy be a performer. He could have easily helped her get into the entertainment business, yet he never did. Sitting on the floor with my brother, I remember looking up at my mother and father. My father, who fluently speaks five languages and is a pastor, writer, teacher and translator, has never been threatened by my mom. Instead, he encouraged her and never told her she should just be a housewife.

To put the word “housewife” and my mother, who is a public speaker, translator, teacher, published author, cosmetologist and leader of numerous woman organizations, in the same category seems obsolete. My mother has always been a fighter for women around the world, and this support for women and their rights was passed on to me as a child. As I intensely watched Lucy, my eyes getting wider with each action she took, I rooted for her as she plotted around her husband’s orders. To me, Lucy was a fighter as well. Although she almost never succeeded in her schemes, she never gave up, and I surely wasn’t going to give up on her either. It is because of this close connection and passion I have concerning the text I am studying, that I intertwine my own personal experiences with what I analyze.

More than just a wife and mother, Lucy is a strong and courageous character who pushes the limits of patriarchy. This thesis develops a textual analysis of *I Love Lucy* using feminist theory of patriarchy. This study also discusses the established mode of domesticity in *I Love Lucy*, as well as opportunities for challenges that Lucy takes advantage of.

More Than a Simple Sitcom: An Overview of *I Love Lucy*

The comedy *I Love Lucy* premiered on Oct. 15, 1951, on CBS. The idea for the show came from Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, who were married at the time. It starred Lucille Ball as Lucy Ricardo, Desi Arnaz as Ricky Ricardo, William Frawley as Fred Mertz and Vivian Vance as Ethel Mertz. The premise is a wacky American housewife married to a Cuban bandleader, making television’s first sitcom of such great magnitude (www.tvguide.com, May 9, 2003).

The characters are many times inseparable, yet each carries unique characteristics that set them apart. Lucy is the wacky, care-free red-head who dreams of being a performer. Self-

confident and determined, she takes on various roles, such as dancer, singer and actor, in an attempt to become the success she has always dreamed of. Her character is not defined by her role as a wife and mother, but rather on her tendency to get herself into mischief.

Lucy's husband, Ricky, is a successful bandleader who wishes his wife could be content with being a stay-at-home wife. Originally from Cuba, Ricky speaks muddled English and often mixes up American phrases and slang. Upset with Lucy's frequent misbehavior, Ricky frequently screams at her in Spanish and forbids her to take part in performing roles at the nightclub he works at.

Ethel, Lucy's best friend and neighbor, is often her partner in crime. Just a little heavier than Lucy, she is frequently the butt of fat jokes made by her husband. Unfazed, Ethel's character blows off his comments and reciprocates with witty comebacks. Frequently the voice of reason, Ethel usually needs some convincing before she joins Lucy in her schemes.

Ethel's husband, Fred, is an "old" tight-wad who frequently cuts down his wife and refuses to buy her things Lucy might have. Stubborn and spend thrift, his attempts at saving money regularly get the gang into trouble. Although grumpy and bald, Fred, who is also the landlord of their apartment building, often gives into Lucy's schemes and joins her and Ethel on their regular adventures.

I Love Lucy is named by *TV Guide* as one of the "greatest shows of all time." It was a pioneer for being filmed before a studio audience with multiple cameras, and after 180 half-hour episodes, when 'Lucy' aired for the last time on CBS in 1957; the show was still a top-rated show on TV according to *TV Guide*. The episode "Lucy's Italian Movie" was named by

TV Guide as one of the greatest episodes in TV history. *TV Guide* also named Lucy Ricardo (Lucille Ball) one of TV's greatest characters (www.tvguide.com, May 9, 2003).

I Love Lucy did wonders for CBS. In the six seasons it ran, the show ranked first in the Nielsen ratings four times, second once, and third once (Baughman, 1997). Initially the show was filmed or shot live every week in front of studio audiences (Haralovich, 1989). In fact, it was the only series at that time to have been shot in front of a live audience (Kanfer, 2003). As the series progressed, CBS rebroadcast several episodes and received strong ratings, thus encouraging the network to begin airing more reruns (Baughman, 1997). This demonstrated that a show did not have to be broadcast live or be a new episode every week to be successful (Baughman, 1997). Arnaz and Ball's resistance to move from California to New York to tape the shows also set in motion the move from New York City to California as the center of television production (Baughman, 1997). This had an enormous impact on the network. By 1953, CBS opened an "eight-square-block Television City" in Los Angeles, California (Stempel, 1992, p. 53).

Within the conventional framework, the dynamic of the show comes precisely because Lucy, continuously refuses to recognize the patriarchal limits laid down for her (Davidson & Lytle, 1992). The writers of the show, Madelyn Davis and Bob Carroll Jr., had to ask themselves two important questions each week: "What does Lucy want this week? What does she want to do and who's going to keep her from getting it and what's she going to get into?" (Stempel, 1992, p. 29). It is precisely this dynamic way of thinking that allowed for the portrayal of a woman who refused to fit in a limited box that was prescribed to her by her husband.

Lucy Ricardo was the primary character and the show revolved around her own actions rather than her husband's or child's. More so, *I Love Lucy* proved to be successful, amazingly before Lucy Ricardo gave birth to her son on the show. Unlike other 1950's sitcoms, such as *Leave it to Beaver*, which focused on children and their relationship with their parents, *I Love Lucy* centered in on Lucy Ricardo, and was a hit before she was a mother. After only one year of being on air, 10,000 homes welcomed the show, making it the first regularly scheduled TV program to ever achieve such a vast audience (Kanfer, 2003). Even though she later had a child on the show, her portrayal as a mother was relatively unconventional (Davidson & Lytle, 1992). Lucy Ricardo never stopped pursuing her dream of becoming a performer and she remained the central focus of the show. This was uncommon in 1950s sitcoms and helps demonstrate how a show can depart from traditional forms and still be successful (Davidson & Lytle, 1992).

“The meaning of childbirth and motherhood are defined by the culture in which they occur, and interlinked with wider social attitudes towards women” (Carby, 1993, p.182). Lucille Ball's first child, Lucie Arnaz, was born in July of 1951, only two months before the filming of *I Love Lucy* began (McNeil, 1996). Two years later, Ball gave birth to her second child, Desi Arnaz IV, which was coincidentally the same day Lucy Ricardo went into labor with her first child, Little Ricky, on the show (McNeil, 1996). Lucy Ricardo's popularity with the show's audience increased when she became a mother, and fans of the show showed their support by making *I Love Lucy* the top-ranked show on television (McNeil, 1996). Little Ricky Ricardo's birth was witnessed by one of the largest television audiences in history (May, 1988) and made headlines around the United States, often overshadowing news coverage of the presidential inauguration of Dwight Eisenhower (McNeil, 1996). Forty-four

million people tuned into the show, which was reportedly twice the number of people who watched the presidential inauguration the very next day (Halberstam, 1993).

Lucille Ball's real life pregnancy demonstrated that having a baby didn't mean giving up working (Kaledin, 1989), and it was her idea to carry the pregnancy over from her real life into the show's script (Halberstam, 1993). At first, CBS and the two main sponsors of the show, The Milton Biow advertising agency and Philip Morris cigarettes, were uneasy about showing a pregnant woman on network television (Halberstam, 1993). Although pregnancy had been a story line in other shows, such as *One Man's Family*, this would be the first time a woman would play a pregnant mother-to-be (McNeil, 1996). Lucy was persistent about the issue and Jim Aubrey, the president of CBS at the time, accepted the idea with one exception. The word *pregnancy* was never to be used and the word "expecting" was considered more appropriate (McNeil, 1996), thus showing patriarchy's power in the show's plot. While Lucy was allowed to carry her pregnancy onto the show, probably because of patriarchal thinking which teaches that women are meant to be mothers, her inability to use the word "pregnancy" implies that the beautiful process of pregnancy is something vulgar. To be completely safe concerning the appropriateness of Lucy's portrayal as a pregnant woman, it has been reported that a Catholic priest, a Protestant minister and a rabbi read the scripts (Stempel, 1992).

Although Lucy was the producer of the show, advertisers had an influential say in the sitcom (Halberstam, 1993), which was common for shows at that time. When the sponsor of the show, Philip Morris cigarettes, became unhappy with its stale sellings of cigarettes, they dropped out of the show when their eight-million dollar contract came to an end in 1955 (Morella & Epstein, 1973). It's understandable that they dropped their sponsorship because

although Ricky and Lucy frequently smoke in the episodes, sellings of Philip Morris cigarettes did not significantly increase (Morella & Epstein, 1973).

Still, advertising clearly went hand-in-hand with show. At the time, Proctor and Gamble, as well as General Foods, were co-sponsoring the show (Morella & Epstein, 1973). In the 50s, sponsors of shows, particularly independent ones such as *I Love Lucy*, were trying to advance their consumers by convincing them they needed more products (Barnouw, 1978). So, Lucy Ricardo's public persona as a housewife was connected to the multitude of products advertised in the series, (Landay, 1999) such as cigarettes, food and household appliances. Her portrayal as a good-looking housewife was essential for sponsors because they preferred attractive people to help them convey the message of "upgrade" to the consumers (Barnouw, 1978).

In addition to the products advertised in the series, the show's use of humor illustrated the conflicts and anxieties about consumption and domesticity in that era (Landay, 1999). Lucy and Ricky constantly quarreled over money issues. Lucy Ricardo often asked her frugal husband for a raise, as if she worked for him, because she needed the money to buy more fashionable clothes, beauty products and accessories. (This scenario, in which the man is the sole provider, is common among patriarchal households.) Ironically, Ricky often told her to find a way to make her own money, although he discouraged her from becoming a performer. Despite this conflict, the two withheld the norms of other fifties sitcoms by working things out within the thirty minutes allotted to their show and often kissing or embracing by the end of each episode.

Lucille Ball and Desi Arnez's well documented relationship with one another was much more turbulent, and their real-life problems weren't as easy to solve. Ball told people

that if she allowed herself to be mad at everyone her husband had an affair with, then there would be a lot of nice girls she would have to hate (Morella & Epstein, 1973). Even so, Ball did not let her personal life interfere with her work. She knew her audience well and realized kids, women and older men were her fans (Morella & Epstein, 1973). Most importantly, she understood why her show was such a success. “One of the reasons I’m still working is that people seem grateful that Lucy is there, the same character and unchanging view. There’s so much chaos in this world, that’s important” (Morella & Epstein, 1973, p.276).

In 1957, after *I Love Lucy* ended, thirteen hour-long shows known as *The Lucy-Desi Comedy Hour* and *The Lucille Ball-Desi Arnaz Show* were filmed until 1960, and concurrently marked the end of the Ricardos as well as Arnaz and Ball’s marriage (McNeil, 1996). Lucy bought out Desi (Kanfer 2003) and became the head of Desilu Studios after the divorce was final in 1962, and in 1967 the studio was sold to Paramount (McNeil, 1996). America had trouble saying goodbye to the concept of Lucy and Desi and to Ball’s surprise, she received thousands of letters from her fans, each urging her to reconsider (Kanfer 2003). Unlike fictional families on sitcoms, this real-life couple had concrete issues and even the best of writers couldn’t keep them together. After 19 years of marriage, the couple’s relationship was over (Kanfer 2003).

Although their marriage came to an end, Lucille Ball’s career was far from over. She went on to star in two sitcoms similar to *I Love Lucy* and the shows, *The Lucy Show* and *Here’s Lucy*, together lasted 12 seasons (McNeil, 1996). Ball also shined in movies like *The Long Lost Trailer* with her ex-husband Desi, *Facts of Life* with Bob Hope and the Broadway musical *Wildcat* (Kanfer 2003). Despite her failure in many ventures, such as the radio show *Let’s Talk to Lucy*, Lucy pressed on to become president of a smaller company than Desilu

Studios, Lucille Ball Productions (Kanfer 2003). Her second husband, Gary Morton, served as vice president of the company (Kanfer 2003).

Ball also appeared in sitcoms such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, while keeping a close friendship with Desi until his death in late November, 1986 (Kanfer 2003). Ball turned to her children for comfort, and they were there to support her when she was inducted in the Television Hall of Fame (Kanfer 2003). It was her second husband and daughter who rushed her to the hospital after she suffered from severe chest pains, less than one month after Ball presented at the Academy Awards along with Bob Hope. After being operated on for nearly seven hours of open-heart surgery, Ball bounced back and was moved from the intensive care unit to a private room after only eight days. She received bouquets and flower baskets, and over five thousand calls from people across the U.S., Europe and Australia. Ball was thrilled with the attention she received from her fans and her children left the hospital comforted that their mother was doing better. The next morning, Ball's aorta ruptured again and although more than a dozen emergency doctors and nurses were at her aid, Lucille Ball was pronounced dead on April 17, 1989 (Kanfer 2003).

This was the same year I turned ten. Ironically, Ball's death doesn't stand out in my mind. My memory of Lucy has always been of her alive. When I turn on the TV, I frequently see her smiling back at me. Her comedic face and gestures stare me on as I take her in both as a character on a loved television series and as what I have always felt was like a friend of the family. Rarely does anyone think on an icon's death when remembering him or her and I, as well many others in this world, have refused to do so with Lucy.

Intent of Study

This study seeks to demonstrate and illustrate how Lucy Ricardo battled patriarchy, which was common among TV sitcoms of the era. Primarily, this study aims to analyze Lucy Ricardo's role as a woman who pushes the limits of patriarchy in the *I Love Lucy* show, by examining her dual roles of someone who both defies patriarchy and shows allegiance to it as well. My textual analysis of 14 *I Love Lucy* episodes will reveal a woman who denied her husband's wishes to control her. Lucy Ricardo stood up for what she believed in and rarely listened to her husband's orders.

Patriarchy has been the dominant social/cultural paradigm for many centuries. Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as, "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (p.20)." Using feminist theory of patriarchy to study this comedy contributes to a better understanding of how women were portrayed in television sitcoms in the fifties. It is beneficial to be aware of the implications of such portrayals. The study will unveil the boundaries of housewifery Lucy was pushing, despite a patriarchal family model. Lucy stepped out of the typical portrayal of married women who were supposed to submit to their husbands and follow their every wish. By going against these principles, she challenges the boundaries of housewifery.

Justification

Examining 14 episodes of *I Love Lucy* is beneficial to scholars because of the show's success and its ability to tell us about the limits and power of patriarchy. When typing in the words *I Love Lucy* at the Yahoo Web site, 879,000 sites came up (www.yahoo.com, May 9, 2003). Fifty-three years after its premier, the show continues to air in syndication.

Researching this successful sitcom is essential because Lucy's portrayal as a wife and mother has been viewed by millions of people around the world. More so, Lucy Ricardo has served as a role model for many women around the world and her portrayal as a wife and mother served as an example for women in the 1950s to motivate them to stand up for themselves.

Examining the way in which Lucy was portrayed as a stay-at-home mom is vital.

“Often what seems most valuable about the women of the 1950s is the way they manage to escape conventional definitions, not only by being active at all ages but by redefining a role or profession in some more socially useful way –outside the system...”(Kaledin, 1984, p.31).

Despite hardship and poverty, Lucy became the first woman to have major economic power in postwar Hollywood and became a feminist icon when she became president of Desilu (Kanfer, 1984). Even so, Lucy maintained humility.

“I am not funny,” Lucy once said. “My writers were funny. My direction was funny. The situations were funny. But I am not funny. I am not funny. What I am is brave . . .” (Kanfer, p.8).

It is this courage and spunk that helped her capture such a large audience. Lucy was more than just another pretty face. She was a woman who pushed boundaries, touched hearts and made people laugh. Ball and Ricardo's roles as women who test the limits of patriarchy got the ball rolling and opened the door for other women today in acting fields and media management positions.

As viewers and participants of entertainment and media, it is crucial to be aware of the paradigms that continue to be forced upon society. It is important to study the patriarchal system that continues to be depicted in media, as well as take notice of female characters that

triumph over a structure that was created to dominate them. It is through these characters that women can envision themselves as overcoming patriarchy as well.

This thesis is organized into five chapters. The second chapter focuses on the theoretical and contextual dimensions of this research, thus explicating the 1950s, feminist media studies and feminist theory of patriarchy. The third chapter provides a literature review of relevant academic studies and period-contemporary books. The fourth chapter is a discussion of the method and the textual analysis of the series conducted for this research. Chapter five is a discussion and conclusion of this study on *I Love Lucy*, directions and implications for future research, and limitations of this thesis. The purpose of these five chapters is to show Lucy's ability to push the limits of patriarchy, as seen through feminist theory of patriarchy, the shows I analyzed and the positive impact she has made on men and women.

CHAPTER 2

1950's, FEMINIST MEDIA STUDIES AND FEMINIST THEORY

The 1950s

An overview of 1950's culture is important in understanding the era in which *I Love Lucy* came to exist and be so warmly welcomed. The 1950s was a time when women were expected to take on the role of mother and wife and men were to be the sole breadwinners. Lucy and Ricky fit the model perfectly. Ricky went to work everyday and Lucy stayed behind to cook, clean and take care of little Ricky.

In the 1950s, people migrated to their homes in an effort to avoid the dangers of the outside world (May, 1988). Politically, Americans wanted to be the “policemen of the world,” but didn't want to involve themselves in expensive foreign wars. (Halberstam, 1993). As a result, nuclear weapons were being tested around the country and Americans wanted their troops to come home (Halberstam, 1993). This focus on home and safety greatly influenced family life. Americans married at a higher rate and at a younger age than Europeans from the 1940s through the early 1960s (May, 1988). Furthermore, the fertility rates increased in the late fifties (May, 1988).

Since motherhood was an expectation for women, they were scrutinized if they maintained careers. Just as women were beginning to have jobs based on their individual abilities, they were expected to “give back” their working positions to the men who came back from fighting in World War II (Friedan, 1963). The 1955 Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS) found that wives who said they abandoned their careers favored marriage over work,

which implied that the pursuit of both was not feasible (May, 1998). KLS respondents turned to the home, rather than other venues, to find personal fulfillment (May, 1998). The same study found that 49 percent of wives never worked for pay and only 3 percent of the husbands were unemployed (May, 1998).

While women were encouraged to find fulfillment at home, many found themselves depressed and without a sense of identity. Betty Friedan's (1963) Feminine Mystique, focused on American women and their need for a new image to help them find their identity. Friedan, a feminist and journalist, interviewed 200 women and asked them about their problems and satisfaction with life. What she found was highly different from what media portrayed women to be and this is what she calls the feminine mystique.

“The feminine mystique says the highest value and only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity. Women's mistake was that they envied men and tried to be like men, instead of accepting their own nature, which can be found only through sexual passivity, male domination and nurturing maternal law” (Friedan, 1963, p.43)

Thus the feminine mystique teaches women that the only occupation they should ever have in life is that of a housewife (Friedan, 1963).

These teachings were enforced in various forms of media. Friedan (1963) writes on the public image of women in the fifties, through magazines and television, to be that of women who are consumed with cake mixes, deodorants, detergents, rejuvenating face creams and hair tints. She writes that because American women did not know who they were, they were in need of a new image to help them find their identity (Friedan, 1963).

This was echoed through depictions of women on TV series. Television was the most consumed mass medium in America by the late 1950s (Baughman, 1997). Thus, it had significant power in reaching millions of people with a specific message. Many of the shows

portrayed people as having idealized values (Davidson & Lytle, 1992), such as perfect marriages with little or no conflict. These new images, and unrealistic approaches, that were largely created by male editors and writers, (Friedan, 1963) began to hit a cord with American women.

If we look at media history, however, we find contradictory evidence of what is expected and reality. Popular culture in the 1950s implied that most women were housewives, but in reality there were women, like Lucille Ball, who were making great advancements in media leadership positions. Even so, show's like *I Love Lucy*, although owned by Lucille Ball by the late fifties, maintained codes of patriarchy.

Ricky consistently shaking his finger at Lucy in the show enforces the traditional belief that the man should be the head of the household. Like a child, Lucy is expected to do as he says. Although Lucy is constantly asking for his permission to do things, she almost never listens to him or follows his commands. This is a critical aspect of the show and demonstrates that Lucille Ball's character, Lucy, is pushing the boundaries of housewifery and thus patriarchy. More than just disobedient, Lucy defies patriarchy in that she doesn't let Ricky control all of her actions. Her goal on the show is not to be the best wife and mother she can be, but rather to be a successful performer.

Although Lucy is indeed pushing the boundaries of housewifery, she also shows allegiance to patriarchy in that she frequently asks Ricky for permission before proceeding with her intended plans. She can't completely break free from patriarchy because the premise of the show, which portrayed Ricky as the successful performer who wanted his wife to be satisfied with being a wife and mother, would not allow it. Lucy must consistently battle

between her own desires and her husband's wishes in order to maintain the conflict that is needed to keep a sitcom successful.

Shows like *I Love Lucy* reinforced the belief that the husband's place is at work and the wife is to stay at home. In fact, many people in the fifties frowned upon women who chose to pursue a career. Lucy promotes this ideology when she relates to a successful actress in an episode and says she too gave up her career to have a family. Farnham and Lundgren argued on the importance of housewifery in Modern Women: the Lost Sex. They "claimed that most of society's problems – alcoholism, teenage hooliganism and even war – were because of women following careers instead of being housewives and mothers"

(www.learnhistory.org.uk/usa/women1950s.htm, May 9, 2003).

These same values of women as the homemaker could be seen in other forms of media as well. Advertising slogans around the country reflected America's thoughts on family and mothers. The focus on family was more than something that Americans valued at home. It was also the focus of advertisements and businesses. When McDonalds opened its doors in Chicago in the 1950s, its main slogans were "Give Mom a Night Out" and "Give Mom a Night Off" (Halberstam, 1993, p.163).

Those who did choose to pursue a career usually sought jobs as librarians, teachers and nurses (Kaledin, 1984). In fact, 70 percent of all women were in these positions (Kaledin, 1984). "Women who did not have to work were beginning to see themselves not as neglecting their families by working outside the home, but as helping them by raising their standard of living" (Kaledin, 1984, p.64). This new shift in female workers was largely a cause of consumerism.

More so, as a result of government policies during and after World War II, the dominance of commercial television was established (Lipsitz, 2003). Government sponsored research concerning television technology and federal tax policies toughened its economic foundation. As a result, Americans began to make purchases on larger items such as houses and cars. The marginal tax rate for most workers increased from 4 percent to 25 percent, which made home ownership more appealing and resulted in 30 million new housing units constructed from 1940 to 1960. Similarly, consumer spending on private cars jumped from \$7.5 billion per year in the 1930s to almost 30 billion in 1955 (Lipsitz, 2003).

Buying modern luxury items was a new concept for most Americans. Their parents and grandparents had brought them up to buy only what they needed and could afford. Advertisers recognized this “conflict between pleasure and guilt” and aimed to persuade Americans that they deserved these new products (Halberstam, 1993, p.507). They realized that to overcome consumer resistance, Americans would have to be encouraged into accepting the growth of their country and its economy. Advertisers achieved this goal by associating new products and styles of consumption with traditional, historically acceptable practices and behaviors (Lipsitz, 2003).

Americans soon weren't worried about spending too much (Halberstam, 1993). The credit card was invented and this allowed for more spending on home furnishings (Kaledin, 1985). Consumerism directed towards home-makers, ironically, often motivated women to leave their homes in search of more money so they could buy new things. Television shows weren't teaching women how to lessen their loads. Instead, shows, which depicted women as housewives who had everything, taught women to get out of the home to attain supposed “luxuries.” (Kaledin, 1985).

These luxuries were in essence a burden in that they reinforced the ideology that a woman's place was in the home and her responsibilities rested in cooking, cleaning and doing laundry more efficiently. It is precisely this manipulation that is at the core of patriarchy. Women are exploited because in this power structure of hegemony they are deceived into believing that a patriarchal society is looking out for them when in reality it is controlling them.

Evidence of this can be seen in *I Love Lucy* episodes. Ricky consistently tells Lucy that the only reason he forbids her to do what she wants to do is because he is looking out for her. This reminds me of my own views of Ricky as I was growing up. Even though I always challenged Ricky's motives for holding Lucy back, I never hated him. Just as a patriarchal society deceives, *I Love Lucy* cheated me into thinking that Ricky really did care for Lucy. It was clear in my mind that he was demanding and unfair but I never doubted his love for her. To this day this thought overwhelms me because of its irony. I know now that if someone truly loves me they won't hold me back, however, this show had me thinking, as a child, that it was possible to love someone and still do so.

Growing up in a Patriarchal Society

Girls are expected to wear skirts, the shortest being two inches above the knee. Boys are to be clean cut, their hair hitting no longer than the tip of the collars of their shirts. These are the dress code instructions that I remember being placed upon me by my school in first grade. I never questioned these rules when I was young. So what if I had to wear a skirt? Nothing was going to stop me from hanging off the monkey bars, running loose at recess or even having to get 12 pebbles tweezed out of my knee from falling in the unpaved parking lot.

No talking in class. This is another rule I vividly remember. When I did, my teacher made me sit by boys. My teacher was sure a girl wouldn't talk to boys, at least not in third grade. I never did understand this punishment. My brother and father were two of my best friends. When this didn't work my teachers would take away my recess time. This didn't stop me either. I wasn't going to show anyone that they could take away my fun.

As I grew up, however, the restrictions placed upon me became more of a burden. By the time I was in 10th grade I was fed up with the rules. I refused to wear long skirts and the principal and I soon got to know each other on a regular basis. This never seemed fair to me. Boys talked in class all the time. In fact, they were encouraged to do so. When my best guy friends broke the dress code and showed up at school wearing skirts and wigs, pretending to be cheerleaders, the teachers just laughed. "Oh, boys. They're always goofing off," they said. My crime was talking and wearing skirts above the knee. They told me they were disciplining me for my very own good, but I wasn't having it. What they wanted to do was control me. The ideology of patriarchy might have been foreign to me in the form of words and definitions but I knew something was wrong and I was going to fight it. I am sure that if Lucy Ricardo had been in my class growing up, we would have been partners in crime. Lucy appears to fit the code of femininity but in reality she defies it.

Feminist Media Studies

My career as a journalist and my life as a writer and investigator has opened my eyes to the importance of media studies. From a young age, radio, television and books served as agents of entertainment and information. What I didn't learn from my parents and friends, I learned from media. I was blessed with a family that taught me how to think critically and not

believe everything I saw or heard. Even with a critical outlook under my belt, it was hard for me to separate myself from media outlets I knew portrayed women in a negative light. Torn between what was right and that which entertained, I gave into what many other women have torn sentiments about as well. While romance novels never appealed to me, my eyes often wandered past politically-correct magazines and television shows and went directly towards that which I, as a feminist, felt was considered wrong. Fashion magazines and so-called frivolous articles on clothing and beauty, music in which women are objectified, and television shows that many times depicted women as creatures who are only concerned with looks and boys, oddly caught my attention. Like a deer trapped in headlights, I couldn't understand why the very things that harmed me were so appealing to me. It is because of this "conflict of interests" that I have grown to appreciate the importance of media studies.

It is only when we analyze media content that we can answer the questions that puzzle us most. Studying media provides us with vital information needed to understand the culture we live in and what messages media are giving. Today, media studies is a complex field, and the social movement that has been said to have influenced media studies the most is the women's movement (Dines & Humes, 1995). Feminist media scholars concentrate most on: patriarchy and representation, in analyzing media industries and their ownership, analysis of male bias in the field of study, bringing cultural entertainment forms that target women audiences to the center as valid areas of study, examining women's experiences as consumers of media, and reassuring female media producers on the importance of experimentation with new approaches and themes (Dines & Humes, 1995).

Critical media theorists view the study of ideology to be connected to the study of media texts, because of their role in generating and regenerating ideologies (Dines & Humes,

1995). One important ideology reinforced by media text can be seen through 1950's sitcoms. Lipsitz argues that these sitcoms served as a major factor in transforming a traditional and ethnic immigrant ideology into an American dream ideology. (Lipsitz, 2003). Shows like *I Love Lucy*, which featured a Cuban immigrant striving to fit in a country that promotes consumerism and success, reinforced this ideology.

Issues of femininity, masculinity and hegemony can also be seen through sitcoms that aired 20 or more years after *I Love Lucy*. Shows such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *One Day at a Time*, *Designing Women*, and *Murphy Brown* have been analyzed by feminist scholars to express the concern for how text limit, and neglect, aspects of feminist ideology, while stressing the importance of others. (Dow, 1996). As feminist television criticisms continues to grow, feminist scholars have come to value the insights television text provides concerning the beliefs and assumptions about women in our society (Dyer, 1987). They also merit the importance of critically analyzing text to determine the messages they enforce and what they mean in terms of patriarchy and the oppression of women, as well as their ability to transcend patriarchy.

Feminist Theory

As a feminist scholar, my goal is to make others aware of the restrictions of patriarchy as well as their ability to triumph over them. Walby argues that patriarchy is composed of six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions (Walby, 1990). She also considers the household as a form of oppression on women (Walby, 1990).

This particular form of oppression, one that tells women that her place is in the home, discourages women and robs them of their ability to express their creativity, as well as their emotions. Patriarchy embraces the man as the one with greater power in society. Thus, the woman is expected to submit and cooperate with the man in order to survive. Within this ideology, Dench (1996) argues that, “a woman can expect a certain amount of help from a man if she accepts the main responsibility for caring activities while he is defined as pursuing material supports within the male-oriented public realm located on the margins of the moral community” (p. 83-84). So, the community is assumed to have morals that recognize the woman as a caring and loving mother and the man as the sole provider.

Patriarchy goes beyond the “real world” and into entertainment as well. Laura Mulvey, (1992) a feminist film theorist known for identifying the “male gaze” in Hollywood cinema, describes different modes of looking for the film viewer in her essay, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.’ One of them, known as voyeuristic looking, involves a controlling gaze and Mulvey argues that this has associations with sadism: ‘pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt - asserting control and subjecting the guilty person through punishment or forgiveness’ (Mulvey, 1992, p.29). In *I Love Lucy*, Ricky Ricardo asserts control over his wife Lucy by making her feel guilty when she disobeys him, often by punishing and forgiving her. Mulvey asserts that in patriarchal society ‘pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female’ (p. 27).

Feminism is an ongoing process against patriarchy (Ebert, 1991), and other discourses that embody gender. Different feminisms, from liberal to cultural and radical feminism, try to define women’s position in society, as well as the reason for women’s oppression and the plan of action for change (Ebert, 1991). In this action for change, terms such as “mother” are

redefined. While the patriarchal model tells mothers that their job is to stay at home and be a housewife, feminists encourage mothers to be responsible for their children, as well as maintain their own personal identity.

Ruddick (1989) writes that a mother is someone who is committed to meeting demands that define maternal work, as well as an individual who is not defined by her work. This focus on individuality greatly differs from that of the obedient mother in a patriarchal family.

Adrienne Rich argues in Of Woman Born, a book of essays, that men try to control women by instructing them on what motherhood is, and telling women that their worth in society is dependent upon their bearing children. She adds that, “[T]he language of patriarchal power insists on a dichotomy: for one person to have power, others—or another—must be powerless” (Rich, 1976, p.67).

The way Lucy (Lucille Ball) was treated by her husband Ricky Ricardo (Desi Arnaz) on *I Love Lucy* embodies this model of patriarchy. In the *I Love Lucy* episode, ‘The Fashion Show,’ Lucy begs Ricky for an expensive \$100 dress, only to find out the dress actually cost \$500. To get the dress for free, Lucy must take part in a fashion show. The only problem is that she has severe burns from being out in the sun. Lucy had originally sun burned her skin to receive sympathy from her husband when she broke the news to him about spending \$500 on a dress.

Lucy Ricardo’s concern with her fair skin and inadequate clothes demonstrates her desire to be attractive and physically pleasing to those around her. She is willing to do anything it takes to look like she belongs in Beverly Hills. Her goal is to get a tan and buy a designer dress. When she asks her husband for money for the dress, Ricky says, “Yes, but only one.” Then he shakes his finger at her to make sure she gets the message. Later, when

Lucy discovers she spent \$500 on the dress instead of \$100, (she agrees to buy the dress and alter it without knowing how much it cost) she considers jumping off the balcony instead of telling Ricky the truth. Instead, she decides to get sun burnt because she figures he'll be less likely to hurt her if she is already in pain. When Lucy finally tells Ricky the truth, he vigorously shakes his finger at her and screams in Spanish.

Despite this patriarchal control Ricky asserts over Lucy, she shows signs of resistance. When Ricky tells her to spend only \$100 on a dress, Lucy spends \$500. When he tells her to return the dress, she participates in a fashion show to keep the dress. Finally, when Ricky apologizes and gives her a \$500 check, she pockets the money instead of telling Ricky the truth. This particular episode stands out in my mind because the fifties was not a time to go against one's husband's wishes. Lucy, however, does just that. Not only does she not tell Ricky that she was able to keep the dress for free, she keeps the \$500 without any remorse.

Patriarchy's restricting presence can also be seen through Lucy Ricardo's way of dress. Lucy frequently wore formal dresses and skirts on the show, and usually accentuated her outfit with a hat and heels, thus revealing her femininity. Feminist Susan Brownmiller (1984) writes, "Feminine clothing has never been designed to be functional, for that would be a contradiction in terms. Functional clothing is a masculine privilege and practicality is a masculine virtue. To be truly feminine is to accept the handicap and restriction and to come to adore it" (p.86). Like most other housewives in 1950s sitcoms, Lucy dressed conservatively. This opens the door for a possible connection with the audience.

Lucy's criticism of her pale skin and unfashionable clothes exhibits the concept of femininity in 1950s sitcoms. Ricky was never seen complaining about his appearance or wanting more clothes. Ricky didn't have to try impressing others through his way of dress.

Unlike Lucy who felt she had to look a certain way in order to be accepted by others, Ricky expressed himself through his talents. He was a man and therefore masculine. Patriarchy tells us that men are too smart to worry about frivolous things such as looks. Men are judged according to their capabilities and genius, while a woman's value is based on her outward appearance.

Women often learn what is expected of them from society as well as the media. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (1997) defines *masculine* to be, "manly: of, relating to, or constituting the gender that includes most words or grammatical forms referring to males. The same dictionary defines *feminine* to be, "of the female sex; also; characteristic of or appropriate or peculiar to women: of, relating to, or constituting the gender that includes most words or grammatical forms referring to females (p.280 & 453)." Thus a man is given the title of masculinity by being who he is, yet a woman is only feminine when she has the characteristics that are considered appropriate for women.

Feminists, such as Casey Miller and Kate Swift, recognize this duality as unjust and stress the importance of the relationship of language to culture. They conclude that society identifies males in terms of human qualities and females in terms of qualities (Miller & Swift, 1976). Society's definition of men and women is communicated through the mass media (La FRANCE, 1995) and in the fifties, these codes of masculinity and femininity could be seen in popular television series such as *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best* (Douglas, 1994). These shows contributed to society's beliefs that a woman's place was in the home and her husband's was at work. Men, such as Ricky Ricardo, were portrayed as the father and provider, whose main responsibility was to protect and provide for the family (La FRANCE, 1995).

This ideology was common among families in the fifties both on and off screen. Lucy, however, maintains courage in that she consistently goes against her husband's wishes. To go against one's husband's orders was not encouraged among females in the 1950s on TV or in society. Patriarchal society encourages women to stay at home but doesn't provide any comfort for those who find themselves unsatisfied with being just a housewife. "Patriarchal society cripples and distorts women's innate capabilities –which they share with men-and denies women their 'natural rights' to fully develop their reason and achieve 'self-fulfillment'" (Ebert, 1991, p.890). Just the same, Lucy didn't find complete satisfaction with staying home all day. She wanted to be more than just a housewife. She wanted to be a performer.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

I Love Lucy Research

In the first chapter, I discussed research, provided by scholars such as Davidson and Lytle, which discussed Lucy Ricardo's role as a defiant of patriarchy on *I Love Lucy*. After summarizing 1950's history, feminist media studies and feminist theory, it's valuable to examine other studies that analyze *I Love Lucy* in relation to other sitcoms. In looking at these studies, it is apparent that scholars have focused on the issues of maternity, the portrayal of family relationships and consumerism. While in some ways similar to other sitcoms of that era, *I Love Lucy* clearly stands apart. This chapter addresses this issue and provides research concerning the similarities and differences of sitcoms in the fifties, as well as the depiction of mothers in these shows.

Judy Kutulas (1998) research on the issue of maternity and child birth in situation comedies on television compares *I Love Lucy* to more recent shows like *Step by Step* and *Mad About You*. This study focused on the portrayal of males in these sitcoms and looks at the reflection of social changes in these comedies. Kutulas argues that Lucy Ricardo's pregnancy "did not quell her rebellion...(but) gave voice to postwar anxieties about women's alleged appropriation of men's roles in the preceding decades by depicting what social analyst Philip Wylie called 'momism'" (Kutulas, 1998, p.15). She also found *I Love Lucy* maternity episodes to be reinforcing the idea that men and women were in a constant gender war.

"Motherhood helped rebalance the dynamic in the Ricardo family because, while stories of failed attempts by a housewife to escape domesticity served as a kind of social safety

value the role of mother was too inviolable to challenge”(Kutulas, 1998, p.15).

Jude Davies and Carol R. Smith focused on the issue of maternity in situation comedies on television in their research as well. Davies and Smith compared this issue with political debates former presidents made in reference to shows like *Murphy Brown*. They name *I Love Lucy* and *Murphy Brown* as “the most spectacular American media representations of pregnancy of the last fifty years” (Davies and Smith, 1998, p.34). They found that behind the two show’s dynamics “lies an explicitly politicization of notions of femininity .. (and)..emphasizes the importance of women’s movements and those who oppose them in producing overtly politicized discourses of gender” (Davies and Smith, 1998, p.51).

Although Lucy endorsed many products in her show, such as Jell-O, her portrayal went far beyond cooking and cleaning (Morella & Epstein, 1973). William Douglas and Beth Olsen (1995) examined the portrayal of family relationships in domestic comedy by analyzing spousal and parent-child relationships in television comedies that took place between 1952 and 1992. In their study of audience reception they found that random participants believed the parent-child relationship to be less important in *I Love Lucy* and *Bewitched* than in all other programs. While participants did rate the husband-wife relationship in the show to be very central to the presentation, they rated the relationship to be extremely negative. This extreme negative value “reflected a relationship in which partners feel more threatened and are less likely to express their opinions and feelings in straightforward ways” (Douglas and Olsen, 1995, p.7).

Similarities and Differences of Sitcoms in the 1950s

Although *I Love Lucy* was a prominent sitcom in the fifties, there were many other shows that shared the same themes. “The suburban middle-class family sitcom of the 1950s and 1960s centered on the family ensemble and its home life – breadwinner father, homemaker mother, and growing children placed within the domestic space of the suburban home” (Haralovich, 1989, p.61). Even so, there was a huge shift in the comedies from the early fifties to the late fifties (Leibman, 1995).

In the early fifties, shows like *I Love Lucy* and *Burns and Allen* portrayed the central characters as victims of difficulty and the jokes were usually slapstick (Leibman, 1995). Other shows, however, like *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* shifted the basis of comedy to the nuclear family (Haralovich, 1989). Instead of gags and funny incidents, these shows focused on the modern American suburban family (Haralovich, 1989). “These families were optimistic. There was a conviction, unstated but always there, that life was good and was going to get better” (Halberstam, 1993,p.511.) In these families, the male was the head of the house. Dads were predictable characters who symbolized a secure world (Halberstam, 1993). The man found his identity through fatherhood and exercised authority at home (May, 1988). The focus was not on where these men worked or what their occupations were, but rather on their masculine role in the home. “Viewers never saw the father of *Father Knows Best* at work or knew the occupation of the Nelson’s lovable dad, Ozzie” (May, 1988, p.146). Their jobs didn’t seem to be relevant to their character until they had children (May, 1988).

Similarly, the portrayal of the mother as the housewife was an essential part of 1950s sitcoms. “The middle class homemaker was an important basis of this social economy – so much that it was necessary to define her in contradictions which held her in a

limited social place” (Haralovich, 1989, p.61). They represented comfort and perfection (Halberstam, 1993).

By the late 1950s, more than 60 percent of family comedies were portrayed as middle-class and suburban (Leibman, 1995). The shows’ messages were a result of American’s need for security. “An ideal white middle-class housewife was a primary means of reconstructing and resocializing the American family after World War II (Haralovich, 1989, p.61-62). Thus, the family was marketed on television to be received by the entire home (Leibman, 1995). Producers and advertisers alike were targeting an audience that was searching for answers to everyday problems.

Instead of focusing on these problems, shows portrayed the American family as being flawless (Halberstam, 1993). None of these families experienced class divisions, economic crisis, divorce, serious mental illness or ethnic divisions (Halberstam, 1993). “There were no Greeks, no Italians, or no Jews in this world, only Americans, with names that were obviously Anglo-Saxon and Protestant; it was a world of Andersons and Nelsons and Cleavers... with the exception of Desi Arnaz/ Ricky Ricardo....” (Halberstam, 1993, p.509), and *The Goldberg’s*, starring Molly Goldberg, a Jewish mother who lived with her family in the Bronx (McNeil, 1984).

Since the shows usually lasted 30 minutes and aired once a week, any problems that came up in the sitcom had to be resolved quickly (Leibman, 1995). Unlike movies, which enforced that a successful family life is hard work, television sitcoms provided solutions on a much smaller level (Leibman, 1995). Moms and Dads never yelled at each other or stopped loving one another (Halberstam, 1993). Despite the situation, they worked together to come to a happy agreement.

Depictions of Mothers in 1950s Sitcoms

The show dialogues enforced the ideology that women get married and then men take responsibility for their actions (Leibman, 1995). Women were defined as homemakers (Haralovich, 1989). As homemakers, their portrayal as women did not rely on their individual accomplishments, but rather their depiction as good wives and mothers. By insisting that their status resides in being housewives and mothers, their power and importance to the outside world is taken away from them (Leibman, 1995).

While television programs in the fifties portrayed mothers as having misjudgments, they didn't depict the mother as the enemy (Leibman, 1995). Shows like *My Three Sons* consistently had remarks that depicted females as being conniving, silly, over-bearing, severe or thoughtless (Leibman, 1995). Others, such as *Father Knows Best* and *The Donna Reed Show*, criticized the men but still made sexually cynical comments about women (Leibman, 1995).

In *The Burns and Allen's Show*, which aired from 1954-1962, Harry Morton's wife, Blanche, was depicted as being ditzy (Davidson & Lytle, 1992). When the husband announces to his wife that he has a new job, she asks him when she can wear it (Davidson & Lytle, 1992). Similarly, the value of the mothers in *Leave it to Beaver* and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* are based on the meals they prepare and how clean their houses are (Leibman, 1995).

In general, mothers were not central characters who maintained power. *Father Knows Best* had many episodes in which women were taught to subjugate themselves (Leibman, 1995). In the show, Margaret, the mother, gets ridiculed for being just a housewife but if she

tries to be anything else, her family does not support her (Leibman, 1995). In a sense, it is a no win situation for these mothers. In *Father Knows Best* and *The Donna Reed Show*, the mothers are encouraged to do their best at keeping a neat home, yet are also expected to be humble and focus the praise on their husbands (Leibman, 1995).

This theme of selflessness is recurrent among the portrayal of mothers in 1950s sitcoms. The title *Father Knows Best* sums up the ideology. Fatherhood implied true authority and masculinity (May, 1988). The man is portrayed as the smart one, while the woman is known to be knowledgeable only in her own realm. “Warmhearted, attractive, submissive, competent only within the sphere of her limited domain, she (Margaret) is the fifties housewife personified” (Davidson & Lytle, 1992, p.313).

Harriet, of *Ozzie and Harriet*, fit the same role of the happy wife. She didn’t work and always tried to do the appropriate thing. If she did do something wrong, it was only because she ventured into her husband’s terrain (Halberstam, 1993). June Cleaver, of *Leave It To Beaver*, prepared two hot meals a day for her family that always ate together (Halberstam, 1993). Beaver Cleaver once told his mother:

“You know, Mom, when we’re in a mess, you kind of make things seem not so messy.”
 “Well,” answered June, “isn’t that sort of what mothers are for?” (Halberstam, 1993, p.512).

This literature led to the following Research Question:

To what extent does Lucy Ricardo succeed in overcoming patriarchy and what enables her to do so? How does she fail in her attempt to push the boundaries of housewifery?

CHAPTER 4
METHOD AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS
Cultural Studies and Text

In this chapter I will briefly discuss cultural studies, and provide an overview of textual analysis. A brief synopsis of cultural studies is needed in order to explain its place within textual analysis as a qualitative approach. Before discussing the actual analysis of this study and providing my own personal experience with patriarchy to communicate my connection with Lucy Ricardo, I will clarify the steps I took in analyzing *I Love Lucy* episodes and the tools I used to do so.

Cultural Studies demands culture to be studied “within the social relations and system through which culture is produced and consumed” (Kellner, 2003). To study culture is to understand the messages culture embody, and cultural studies developed in Great Britain illustrate how culture formed diverse styles of identity (Kellner,2003). Analyzing how identity is formed in society is beneficial because in doing so we are able to trace back to the sources that trigger power in society.

One of the foundations on which power is based is language and many prominent cultural theorists, such as Hall, consider the use of language to be within a framework of power, institutions, politics and economics (Kellner,2003, & Hall, 1997). Cultural studies recognizes language as a powerful tool that should be analyzed. Studying how language is used not only provides useful information concerning the of extent of one’s power, but also offers insight into the meanings society enforces.

In studying culture, many British scholars also combine the use of psychoanalysis and neo-Marxist beliefs about society and politics, and relate it back to feminism as a basis for analyzing cultural rules, roles and ideas marked in text (Berg, Wenner & Gronbeck, 1997). Feminist scholars, like myself, aim to explain why dominant groups, such as men, are able to dominate. It is important to understand power structures, such as those seen in patriarchy, to understand the extent of language's power.

Like feminism, cultural studies also place attention on the representation of race, gender and class, and criticize ideologies that encourage different forms of oppression (Kellner, 2003). The representation of race, gender and class are central in this specific study of *I Love Lucy*, because of Ricky's ethnicity and his inability to completely dominate Lucy. In analyzing these representations it's important to avoid limitations, such as narrowly centering on one aspect of a study, like setting or dress, that may occur (Kellner, 2003). One of the approaches Kellner advises cultural analysts to do to prevent this, is to engage in textual analysis (Kellner, 2003). He writes that what arises because of media culture needs to be analyzed through a close analysis of the text (Kellner, 2003).

Textual Analysis

A text is anything that generates meaning and is ambiguous because one's reality differs from another's (Berg, Wenner and Gronbeck, 1997). Fiske argues that there are conflicts within text "between their forces of production and modes of reception" (Fiske, 1987b, p.14). What a TV program might have intended may not actually be the message the audience receives (Berg, Wenner & Gronbeck, 1997). For example, my view of 1950's sitcoms focuses on the existence of patriarchal oppression, whereas another scholar might conjure up nostalgic

memories concerning 50's sitcoms. There are clearly polysemic messages a television show can convey and from a cultural perspective *I Love Lucy* constitutes as a text.

Television criticism, in the form of textual analysis, continues to be popular and productive (Berg, Wenner & Gronbeck, 1997). Textual analysis is an interpretive method used to generate different meanings and many feminist scholars, such as Bonnie Dow, analyze television sitcoms to better understand how television programming has contributed to cultural conversations about feminism (Dow, 1996). Dow stresses the importance of historical context when analyzing television. It is only after we place the text in its social, historical and cultural context (Hall, 1997), that we can copiously understand the strength of its meanings.

Since textual analysis is not concerned with counting but rather analyzing text, my analysis of *I Love Lucy* primarily focuses on the television series itself, and patriarchy in the text. Unlike a content analysis, which is focused on surface material, textual analysis pays close attention to hidden, in-depth meanings. Alan McKee argues that we analyze and interpret texts in an attempt to make sense of reality (<http://www.enhancetv.com>, May 8, 2003). In doing so, it is important to reflect on the previous chapters which provided information on feminist theory, the 1950s and sitcoms in the fifties, which were derived from books and previous research, and relate it back to *I Love Lucy*. By placing *I Love Lucy* within historical context, previous research and feminist theory, we can understand the limits and power of patriarchy. Thus, a better sense of reality can be made.

Design of Study

A sitcom, also known as a situational comedy, is the most popular form of programming on television (Taflinger, 1996). For the purpose of this research, I will examine one of the types of sitcom, one that is based in the family (Taflinger, 1996). One of the criteria that makes the domestic comedy *I Love Lucy* stand out from other family sitcoms is that it primarily focuses on Lucy instead of the family as a whole.

In conducting this qualitative study, I am focused on the meanings of the *I Love Lucy* episodes I analyzed. I have chosen to analyze a total of 14 episodes. I analyze 10 *I Love Lucy* episodes that focus on Lucy's portrayal as a housewife and mother, in order to illustrate Lucy's ability to push the boundaries of patriarchy. I also analyze four episodes to show Ricky's portrayal as a dominating husband who has the ability to manipulate his wife. In doing so, I note patriarchy's demanding presence in the shows I analyze, as seen through imposed gender roles and stereotypical beliefs that recognize the man as the head of the household. By using this critical paradigm I am able to concentrate on the distribution of power (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003) and record Lucy Ricardo's ability to step outside of the patriarchal boundaries she resides in.

The episodes I analyzed were a sample selection of *I Love Lucy* episodes. While I have probably seen nearly every *I Love Lucy* episode, I have chosen to focus on 14 episodes. I analyzed episodes I own, ones that consistently air on TV Land and episodes I bought that specifically dealt with Lucy as a mother. *I Love Lucy* episodes are consistent in that each episode focuses on an internal conflict between the four main characters: Lucy, Ricky, Fred and Ethel. It is because of this consistency that a few random episodes can become representative of the entire series. I repeatedly watched the 14 episodes I analyzed, often

rewinding them to accurately note in a journal the the five main elements I focused on, which were dialogue, plot, setting, dress and gestures

In my first viewing of the episodes I analyzed, I focused on the dialogue between the main characters. I noted the dialogue, primarily between Lucy and Ricky, in order to paint a picture for the reader and to address the specific language used in the show. Looking at language is essential because it is a system “through which meaning is constructed and cultural practices (are) organized and by which, accordingly, people represent and understand their world, including who they are and how they relate to others” (Scott, 2000). In documenting the dialogue used on *I Love Lucy*, I show the discursive patterns that reinforce patriarchy and what words Lucy uses to push the boundaries of patriarchy.

While marking the dialogue in the episodes I analyzed, I paid attention to gestures, slang and tone. I frequently noted the tone in Ricky and Lucy’s voice, as well as their facial expressions, in order to express the significance of the situation and the meanings they enforced. Ricky’s accent is noted through the use of italics and miss-spelling, so as to denote his incapability to speak English correctly and Lucy’s power to make fun of him.

I then focused on the setting in each of the 14 episodes, as well as the character’s dress. For example, Ricky and Fred are often seen talking in the living room alone and Lucy and Ethel are frequently chatting in the kitchen. The men are also usually wearing suits and the women tend to wear feminine clothing, such as dresses, heels and aprons. I then related this information to feminist theory of patriarchy to demonstrate patriarchal codes of masculinity and femininity, as well as the limits and power of patriarchy.

Since there is no single reality (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003), I can’t make complete true or false statements. I will, however, discuss relationships and themes among *I Love Lucy*

episodes and look at the sometimes competing and contesting meanings and interpretations that a textual analysis may provide (Hall, 1997). A textual analysis of *I Love Lucy* episodes shows evidence of Lucy Ricardo's ability to push the boundaries of patriarchy.

I have documented Lucy Ricardo's actions, as well as her relationship to her husband and child. I have also recorded Ricky's ability to deceive Lucy, and his frequent portrayal as a foreigner who speaks muddled English. In doing so, I have related this information to patriarchy and feminist theory in order to determine Lucy Ricardo's ability to push the boundaries of patriarchy.

Textual Analysis of *I Love Lucy*

"Oh no you *dun't*:" Lucy Fights Back

A theme that is presented in *I Love Lucy* is Ricky's attempt to control Lucy by deceiving her into thinking he is protecting her instead. Lucy repeatedly falls for this scheme only to often realize she has been swindled. It is at this moment of realization that Lucy opens her eyes and fights back.

An example of Lucy's rebellion can be seen in the episode 'The Girls go to a Night Club.' The particular episode is the first *I Love Lucy* to air on TV and took place on October 15, 1951. In this episode Lucy and Ethel are determined to convince their husbands to take them out to a nightclub to celebrate Ethel and Fred's 18th wedding anniversary. The show begins with Lucy and Ethel in the kitchen, a room often associated with women. Lucy is appropriately wearing a house coat and Ethel has an apron tied around her waist. The two women also have their hair tied up in scarves. (After all, they are housewives.) As they wash

the dishes they begin to plot a way to convince the boys to take them to The Copa Cabana, a hot night club. The women decide to kill them with kindness.

Meanwhile, Ricky and Fred, both in button down shirts, ties and nice slacks, are in the living room, an area of the house which is frequently linked with men, talking about a boxing match they want to go to for *Fred's* anniversary. Similarly, the two men decide to be nice to the women and win them over to their idea of watching the fight.

Ricky: "Now everybody knows you can get around a woman with a little bit of sweet talk."

Ricky, sure of himself and his plan, convinces Fred that their scheme will work.

Lucy and Ethel walk in the living room and are soon flooded with compliments of beauty. The women reciprocate the compliments to the men and Lucy and Ethel end up sitting on their husband's laps, each gushing over their husbands. The four begin to discuss plans for Ethel and Fred's anniversary and end up arguing over what to do. Ricky, angry that Lucy won't back down, threatens her.

Ricky: "Don't push me. It's final! It's the fight or *nuthin*."

Lucy refuses to give in and insists that Ethel and she will go to the nightclub without them. More so, she tells Ricky they will get hot dates to take them to The Copa Cabana. Furious, Ricky and Fred leave and go downstairs to Fred's apartment.

Lucy didn't win the argument but she managed to infuriate her husband enough to leave his own apartment. Lucy, already showing signs of defiance in the first aired show, stood her ground and refused to budge. When Ricky threatens Lucy and tells her to have fun staying at home while Fred and he enjoy the fight, Lucy retaliates by saying that Ethel and she are going to the nightclub with dates. Ricky's threat didn't have an affect on Lucy and she makes it

clear that nothing is going to stop her from doing what she wants. She proves that Ricky's patriarchal power doesn't have complete control over her. While Ricky might have been used to sweet talking girls into getting what he wants, he's not able to trick Lucy.

Upset and worried, Ricky tells Fred he is worried the girls will have champagne with their dates and dance with them and then who knows what will happen. The men decide to get dates and spy on them. Fred tells Ricky to use his old address book to get them attractive dates. Ricky tells Fred he burned the book after he married Lucy because she had told him it was an American custom to do so. (A scheme that echoes Lucy's ability to deceive and poke fun at her husband). Ricky then decides to call Jenny Jones, a woman who is said to know every bachelorette in town, to arrange a night out with two good-looking women.

Lucy and Ethel, still in the living room, decide to call Jenny Jones and discover that Ricky has called her to locate dates as well. Lucy, her eyes sparkling with mischief, decides to teach the boys a lesson and tells Jenny to tell Ricky and Fred she has two striking women they can take to the club. The show breaks for a commercial.

When the show resumes, Ricky and Fred, both dressed in tuxes and bow ties, are seen fidgeting with their hands, nervous and anxiously waiting for their dates to arrive. When the door bell finally rings, Ricky goes to open the door and is completely shocked to find two hillbillies. The two red-necks are in fact Lucy and Ethel dressed up in costume. Lucy is missing teeth, has her braids in pigtailed and Ethel is dressed like an old woman. The two women (in disguise) aggressively throw themselves over the alarmed men that proceed to try and get away from them. The men frightened and put off by the untactful women; begin to make excuses as to why they can't take them out. As Lucy opens a drawer in the living room to take out some cigarettes and matches, Ricky realizes that the hillbilly is actually his wife.

To get even, Ricky and Fred decide to give them the same “woo treatment” and forcefully make passes at Lucy and Ethel. The two women become startled and head for the door, only to discover that the men had recognized who they were. The gang laughs and Ricky tells the women to get dressed and says he will take them out to celebrate Ethel and Fred’s anniversary. Lucy and Ethel, excited and surprised, get dressed in elegant dresses and put on their fur coats only to be taken to the boxing match instead.

Ricky even managed to trick me in this episode. I was surprised to hear him tell Lucy he would take them out and immediately assumed, as did Lucy and Ethel, that he would give in and take them to the nightclub. Ricky’s charm enables him to deceive. Outwardly we see a tall, dark and handsome man who appears to be looking out for his wife’s best interest. In reality, Ricky puts his own desires first. If he is unable to get his way he does whatever it takes to obtain what he wants. Yet even though he consistently puts his own desires first, Lucy is hopeful that he will change and do what she wants for once. Like Lucy, I am taken aback by my own naiveness. After growing up watching *I Love Lucy*, Ricky still has the power to trick me into believing him. Ricky, like an unwrapped Christmas present, is so attractively packaged on the outside that we are swindled into thinking the inside will be something pleasing and good for us. Thus, the cycle is able to continue episode after episode, with Lucy defying patriarchy and Ricky winning in the long run.

Another example is ‘Lucy’s Italian Movie,’ in which Ricky, Ethel, and Fred are crammed into a small compartment on a train heading to Rome, Italy, and Lucy is nowhere to be found. The three talk amongst each other and complain about their close proximity to one another. Just as Ricky slyly remarks that, “It’s not so bad now that Lucy is not here,” Lucy appears. She rushes into the compartment wearing a black dress, her white turtleneck tucked

neatly beneath. Her hair is perfectly tied back, her ears sparkle with elegant earrings and she fittingly holds a little black purse that accentuates her outfit. Frantic, she tells Ricky that a strange man was staring at her. Ricky, unalarmed, tells her she is always imagining things and proceeds to read his newspaper.

The strange man appears wearing a suit and tie just like Ricky and Fred. He introduces himself and the gang soon realizes that the man is actually a famous Italian film maker. He tells Lucy she would be perfect for his next film and asks her if she has ever considered acting. The gang screams in unison, “Has she ever considered acting?!” Ricky immediately changes from smiles to a stern face and gives a disapproving look to Lucy. The film director gives his card to Ricky and says to call him if Lucy wants to consider auditioning.

Already we see the code of femininity and masculinity. Lucy and Ethel are in dresses and heels and the men are all in suits. More so, the film director doesn’t regard Lucy as being able to take responsibility for her own actions. As he passes his business card to Ricky, it becomes apparent that it’s up to Ricky if Lucy can audition for the part or not, and Ricky’s disapproving face lets us know that he is strictly opposed.

Later (in Rome) we see Lucy reading an article on actresses that have worked for the Italian film maker. Lucy wants to investigate grape vineyards and learn about them.

Ricky: “Oh no you *dun’t*,” Ricky spouts. “Italy has enough problems already. I don’t want to worry about you *lousen* up the entire grape industry.” Sternly he shakes his finger and orders her, “No funny business. Promise.”

Lucy: “Alright, alright,” Lucy responds, annoyed with her husband’s orders.

Two seconds later, Ricky leaves the room and Lucy immediately turns to Ethel.

Lucy: “Come on, Ethel, let’s go.”

Ethel reminds her that she promised Ricky she wouldn't. Lucy denies it and says she only promised no funny business and tells Ethel the only reason Ricky doesn't want her to go to the vineyards is because he doesn't want her in show business. Ethel, worried, asks Lucy what she should tell Ricky.

Lucy: "I don't care, I have nothing to hide."

Ethel: "OK, I'll tell him the truth."

Lucy: "Don't you dare!"

(The show breaks for a commercial.)

When the episode resumes Lucy is in the town of Turo, pretending to be an Italian who works at the vineyard. Meanwhile, Ricky demands Ethel tell him where Lucy is. When he discovers where she is he goes into a rage and proceeds to yell in Spanish. Ricky tells Ethel he doesn't care if Lucy is in the movie and says he just didn't want Lucy getting into trouble. He also tells her that he has invited the Italian film maker to come over. After the film maker arrives, Lucy is nowhere to be found. Just as he is about to leave Lucy walks in the door completely covered in purple grape stains all over her skin and clothes. The film maker reveals that his new movie "Bitter Grapes" has nothing to do with vineyards, but that he can't use her in the movie because of her stained skin. The film maker hires Ethel instead. Upset that she doesn't get the part, Lucy mouths obscenities and the word "censored" is dubbed at the bottom of the screen.

O'Connor, author of Cuss Control: The Complete Book on How to Curb Your Cursing, says society's acceptance of cussing is the result of a turn away from the restrictiveness of the 1950s. Yet even in this restrictiveness Lucy has the courage to curse. Although we don't know what she is saying, it is understood that she is using profanity because of the dubbed word "censored" at the bottom of the screen. Today many people continue to view profanity as a masculine trait. Little girls are taught not to use bad words because it's unbecoming. I

know I was taught this very same thing. Her use of profanity gives her power. Lucy cursing fifty years ago not only displays her boldness but ultimately her sense of rebellion towards patriarchy's ultimate control over her.

Lucy also pushes the boundaries of housewifery when she defies Ricky and goes to visit a vineyard even though Ricky orders her not to. Although she tells Ethel not to tell Ricky, thus showing that she fears him, Lucy does as she pleases. Not only does she lie to Ricky but she doesn't tell him where she goes or when she'll be back.

This episode reinforces the patriarchal lesson which tells women that if they don't listen to their husbands they get punished. Ricky was supposedly looking out for Lucy and if she had just listened to him then everything would have been fine and she would have been able to make her acting debut. Instead, Ethel, the good wife who stayed at home and didn't get into trouble, gets the job.

Ricky and trickery run hand in hand and in 'Lucy's Schedule' he almost manages to have Lucy completely controlled. In this episode Ricky is furious and embarrassed after he and Lucy arrive at his bosses' house an hour late. Ricky lays down the law and orders Lucy to follow a schedule.

Lucy: "Now Ricky, Listen."

Ricky: "No, you listen to me. It's obvious you can not budget your time so somebody had to do it for you."

Lucy: "Well, I don't think I am going to like this. How does it go?"

We see patriarchy's control over Lucy in that she asks what the plan is even though she already knows she won't like it. When Ricky tells her she is to start on a schedule as of next morning, Lucy apprehensively agrees. She doesn't fight back, at least not just yet.

The next day Ricky meets with his boss and apologizes for his and Lucy's tardiness the day before. Ricky's boss tells him he would be perfect candidate for being a night club

manager except for the fact that he can't run his own home and get his wife to be ready on time. Ricky rolls his eyes and agrees, telling him not to worry because he now has his wife jumping around like a trained seal. The men, both in suits, start laughing, and the boss asks Ricky if he and his wife could come over to see that a house can be conducted on schedule.

Meanwhile Ethel tells Lucy to lose the schedule before Fred puts her on it as well. Lucy explains to her that she truthfully likes the schedule even though she hates to admit it. From this we see that Ricky has been able to trick Lucy into thinking he is looking out for her. Lucy is made to believe that her husband is not trying to control her but is merely trying to help her manage her time. The truth doesn't occur to her until the bosses' wife visits her and angrily demands to know some answers.

Bosses' wife: "Mrs. Ricardo. What are you trying to do to the wives of America?! We wives have been spending years persuading our husbands we haven't time for our work. Now if you go through with this you'll lousen it up for all of us."

Ethel agrees but Lucy sticks up for her husband and tells them that he is just proud of her for keeping to the schedule. The bosses' wife then tells Lucy that Ricky said he had her jumping like a trained seal. Lucy's becomes angry and tells them they are not going to see her bounce a balloon off her nose that night. She asks them for her help and the three agree to revolt.

Lucy: Trained seals of the world unite!

Ricky calling his wife a "seal" implies that she is similar to a playful animal that is easily controlled and manipulated. Lucy calling herself and other housewives trained seals, after she hears what her husband has said of her, denotes her ability to poke fun at her husband's antics. Lucy is at first doubtful of the other women's dislike of the schedule because she truly believes her husband is looking out for her best interest. When she discovers the harsh words Ricky has used to describe her, Lucy is determined to do something about it.

Later, when Ricky, Ethel, Fred, the boss and his wife come over for dinner, Lucy pushes and hurries them, often interrupting what they are saying and not giving them enough time to talk or eat. The boss tells Ricky he should stop cracking so hard on his wife and destroys the schedule.

Ricky's Boss: "Being a slave driver is no way to run a home.... But it is the only way to run a night club."

Ricky gets the job, everyone is happy and Lucy and Ricky embrace.

If Lucy was able to entirely overcome patriarchy she wouldn't have been deceived into thinking her husband's schedule was actually beneficial to her. Also, Lucy would have likely confronted her husband when she heard he laughingly called her a trained seal. While Lucy does not do these two things, she clearly challenges Ricky's private patriarchy, which is based on household production as the main setting for the oppression of women (Walby, 1990). Once her eyes are opened to Ricky's attempt to manage *her* as opposed to time, she becomes upset with her husband and decides to retaliate. In her world of private patriarchy, she agreed to the schedule because, like many women, she worked within the home for love, (Westwood, 1984) not thinking that Ricky was using her. She jeopardizes her husband's future job by putting on a show and coming up with her own antics to trick the men into thinking she hasn't time to anything because she is rushed by the schedule. Her goal to ruin the schedule is accomplished and when Ricky gets the job Lucy is happy for him. She is no longer angry or upset with how he has treated her and her focus once again selflessly begins to center on his happiness rather than her own.

In 'A TV Commercial,' a favorite among many *I Love Lucy* fans, (www.tvguide.com, Sept. 15, 2003). Lucy schemes her way into doing a television show even after Ricky tells her she isn't allowed to do it. In an attempt to perfect her performance for the

“Vitameatavegamin” commercial, she practices all day, taking a mouthful of the drink throughout the day. She ends up getting drunk (Vitameatavegamin was 23 percent alcohol) and ruining the commercial.

A noteworthy part of this show is when Lucy gets mad at Ricky for not letting her do the show and refuses to talk to him or make him breakfast. Ricky declares that he doesn’t care if she doesn’t speak to him. He just wants his breakfast.

Ricky: “What are you going to make me do? Starve to death?”

Lucy: “Would you please?”

Again, Lucy is pushing boundaries. Not only does she refuse to speak to him, but she refuses to cook for him as well. Her refusal to cook for Ricky, an act that is expected of her and other women in patriarchal households, demonstrates that Lucy is not concerned with pleasing him. She even sticks her tongue out at him and does the commercial even though he warns her not to.

A study of two-hundred Yorkshire women shows that women cook to please others, and often feel hurt and rejected if the food they offer their partners is rejected (Charles & Kerr, 1989). Thus, Lucy’s refusal to cook for her husband is not only an act of defiance, but a form of rejection. As a traditional man, Ricky expects a proper meal when he comes home from work (Charles & Kerr, 1989). Lucy refusing to do so depicts her as a woman who is fighting against patriarchy’s demands.

Lucy’s courage to defy her husband seems to increase as the show proceeds from one season to the next, and by the show’s seventh season Lucy appears to have more courage than ever.

In 'Lucy and the Loving Cup,' which originally aired on January 7, 1957, Ricky is excited about giving a trophy to a famous horse racer at a benefit. He gives Lucy money to buy a new hat and dress but makes fun of her new hat. He forbids her from wearing the hat and states that *his* wife is not going to look ridiculous in front of so many people. Ricky makes a remark saying that she would look half as funny if she wore the trophy on her head. So, Lucy does just that. The only problem is she can't get the trophy off her head. No matter how much Ricky made fun of her hat, Lucy stood tall and refused to let it get to her. Instead of crying she accuses him of not being "smart" enough to know what is in style. She even pokes fun at him when she puts the trophy on her head, thus showing that Lucy doesn't let her husband dictate every aspect of her life.

Lucy's refusal to dress the way Ricky wants her to is also an act of defiance. Women's bodies are often portrayed as objects that are valuable for men (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000). Middle-class women's bodies are often portrayed as ones for leisure, decoration and protection (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000). Lucy, a middle-class, white woman, doesn't care if Ricky doesn't find her hat attractive. Instead of buying a new one, to make herself more appealing to Ricky, Lucy accuses him of not knowing about style and blatantly pokes fun at him. She disputes patriarchy, but still has to pay the consequences. In the end she doesn't get to wear her beloved hat and is ultimately ridiculed.

In 'The Diet,' Lucy's body is once again at the center of the conflict. In the episode, Lucy insists she hasn't gained weight since her wedding day. Ricky forces her to weigh herself and Lucy realizes she has gained 22 pounds. Ricky tries to console her and tells her he likes the way she looks, but Lucy tells him she doesn't care about that because her concern is what she will look like on stage when she becomes a performer.

Ricky: “Now don’t start that again.”

Lucy: “I know you don’t want me in show business. Some day, in spite of you, opportunity will knock.”

Opportunity knocks before she knows it when Jo Ann, the girl who dances with Ricky, quits because she is getting married. (This act alone implies that a married woman has no place in the working world.) Lucy wants to take her place but Ricky tells her she is too fat. Ricky agrees to let her audition but says he will treat her like he would anyone else. At the audition Ricky humiliates her and makes her put on Jo Ann’s dress, which is too small for Lucy. Lucy rips the dress and all the other girls auditioning laugh at her while Ricky screams in Spanish.

Lucy begs Ricky for another chance and he tells her that if she loses 12 pounds in the next three days she can have the job. Lucy runs around the house, jump ropes, spends a day in a human cooker and eats a celery stick while everyone else, including the dog, eats steak. She manages to lose the weight and does a wonderful job in the show. Ricky has a surprised look on his face when she does well and even has trouble keeping up with her dancing at one point. The audience applauds and Lucy faints, only to be told by the doctor that she has malnutrition and can’t continue with the show.

Ricky wins in the end because Lucy is unable to continue performing in the show. Regardless, Lucy puts up an impressive fight and is determined to do anything it takes to get the dancing part. Throughout this episode Ricky humiliates her and gives her unrealistic goals to accomplish. He could have just made another dress for Lucy in her size and let her be in the show. Instead, he forces her to put on Jo Ann’s old dress and lose 12 pounds. Certain that she won’t succeed, Ricky gives the dancing part to another girl even though he promised Lucy the

part would be hers is she lost the weight. Lucy ends up gagging and tying up the hired girl and putting her in the closet so she could take her place.

Lucy is pushing the limits of patriarchy because she refuses to give up on her dream even though her own husband doesn't believe in her. She is willing to do anything it takes to get the part she wants and nothing, not even her dominating husband who repeatedly humiliates her, is going to stop her. She refuses to be selfless and obedient and literally does all her body will allow, so she can make her dream of being a performer come true. She ends up winning the audience's approval and proves that she can even out stage her husband in the show.

The Joke's on Ricky: Lucy's Ability to Poke Fun

Another common theme that resides in *I Love Lucy* episodes is Lucy's tendency to talk down to Ricky as well as make fun of him. Previously, we saw Lucy scheme her way out of Ricky's orders and trick him into believing Americans hold certain customs that they do not. In many *I Love Lucy* shows Ricky is the focal point of jokes and Lucy, Ethel and Fred are often surprised if Ricky is knowledgeable about a subject. Ricky usually ends up being wrong and the gang, along with Ricky; laugh at his inability to speak English correctly or be knowledgeable of American history and culture.

A perfect example is 'Lucy Gets Ricky on the Road.' In this episode Lucy, Ethel, Fred and Ricky decide to listen to the radio after their TV breaks. The gang stares at the radio and then laughs, realizing it's not like a TV, thus confirming that their generation is one that watches TV and doesn't listen to the radio. A game show is on the radio and as the host asks American history trivia questions, Ricky guesses each one correctly. Lucy is surprised and

can't believe her husband is familiar with American history. She asks him how he knew the answers to the questions.

Ricky: "Who do you think you married to, a country *pumpkin*? We have American history in Cuba too you know."

Lucy: "Well you are certainly a lot smarter than I' am. I've got all I can do to remember that there are 46 states.'

(The gang looks at her as if is she is crazy.)

Ethel: "48!"

Lucy: "Oh yea, I guess I forgot Alaska and Hawaii."

The two women then go to make sandwiches for their husbands, after Ricky's demands them to do so, and Fred tells Ricky he can't believe he knew all the answers to the questions on the radio, implying he didn't think Rick was smart enough. Ricky confesses to Fred that the show was a repeat and he already heard the answers.

The next day Lucy calls the radio show and arranges for her and Ricky to be on the Mr. and Mrs. Quiz Show. Ricky confesses the truth to Lucy and tells her that all he knows about American history is that Columbus discovered Ohio in 1776. In an attempt to not humiliate her husband Lucy steals the quiz show answers and memorizes them, only to discover that they changed the questions for the actual show. Ricky and Lucy get all three questions wrong on the Mr. and Mrs. Quiz Show and have one more shot at winning if they answer the \$500 bonus question correctly.

Quiz Show Host: "What did George Washington say while crossing the Delaware?"
(Ricky is upset that he doesn't know the answer.)

Ricky: "Please let me sit down. This is making me sick."

Quiz Show Host: "Correct!"

Surprised and relieved, Ricky and Lucy look at each other, jump up and down, embrace and kiss, as they receive the five-hundred dollars.

In this episode it is clear that Lucy, Ethel and Fred doubt Ricky's knowledge of American culture. They are baffled at Ricky's supposed knowledge of American history.

After all, Ricky is a Cuban with an accent. How would he know more about American history than them, even though Lucy herself doesn't even know how many states are in the United States. When he explains that he didn't really know the answers but just remembered hearing them, the gang is proven correct in believing him to be unfamiliar with American culture.

Lucy, afraid that others will discover her husband isn't smart, decides to steal the answers because she knows Ricky won't know the answers to the hard questions. Ricky himself tells her she better know the answers when they are on the quiz show or he will do something so bad to her it would be too horrible to talk about. In the end, Ricky accidentally gets the question right and fools his listeners into thinking he is smart. Lucy, Ethel and Fred know the truth, but because he wasn't publicly humiliated, and he won \$500, Ricky is satisfied and forgives Lucy.

In this episode, Lucy doesn't have to poked fun at Ricky for not knowing American history, because he does so himself. She can't laugh at him for not knowing the answers because she doesn't either. What she can attempt to control is the way others will perceive Ricky. Lucy isn't so much concerned with Ricky's lack of knowledge concerning American history, but rather with not humiliating him publicly. In the end, Ricky the radio listeners are fooled into thinking he is bright, but the *I Love Lucy* audience knows the truth; Ricky isn't exactly Einstein, and neither is Lucy.

In 'Ricky Thinks He's Getting Bald,' Ricky is once again at the heart of all laughs. While Lucy is looking in the mirror she complains that she has crow's feet. Ricky thinks that is an absurd thing to say and tells her she doesn't. Lucy laughs at him, as she most often does, and tells him he doesn't even know what crow's feet are. Ricky assures her that he does and tells her they are like pigeons' feet. Lucy laughingly explains to him that they are wrinkles

around her eyes. She then tells him that she always knew the day would come when she would have crow's feet and he would have a receding hair line. Ricky alarmed by this, starts examining his loss of hair and begins wearing hats in the house and to work. At breakfast, Lucy puts on a hat as well, making fun of her vulnerable husband. Upset and worried about his appearance, Ricky tells her to stop joking about his hair line because it's a serious matter.

To make Ricky feel better, Lucy decides to surround him with bald men so he can realize how good he has it. Ricky calls Lucy and tells her he isn't going to be able to make it to the party because he is working late. Since plan A didn't work, Lucy chooses to go with plan B, which is the "torture system." Lucy treats Ricky like a child and tells him to sit down, while she puts oil, vinegar, eggs and mustard on his scalp. She massages the ingredients with different devices, such as a toilet plunger, and tells him to put a stocking on it. Ricky mistakenly places the stocking on his foot and says he doesn't get it. Lucy, like a parent, tells Ricky that the stocking goes on his head. Ricky, again, messes up and places the stocking over his face instead of his hair. She tells him they are to do this every other night for the next six months, hoping to discourage him from obsessing about his loss of hair. Instead, Ricky tells her they should do the treatment everyday to speed the process.

The show ends and the message that Ricky isn't so bright is given loud and clear. While Ricky is the man of the house, he isn't the smarter one of the two. His Cuban accent and lack of knowledge concerning American expressions and history prevents him from being an all-American. First he doesn't know what crow's feet are and then he is alarmed when Lucy makes a comment about his loss of hair. Gullible, Ricky falls for Lucy's made up treatment, allowing her to make a fool of him and tolerating her use of a toilet plunger to thrust his head. Ricky's unfamiliarity with hair-loss remedies enables Lucy to mislead him into thinking she

actually knows what she's doing. Lucy tells Ethel she wants to rid him of his self-consciousness' but in reality she is taking advantage of his gullibility. The tables are turned and instead of Ricky, who normally says *he* is doing something because he is just looking out for his wife, Lucy is the one who is misleading.

In 'Ricky Asks for a Raise' Ricky is portrayed as apprehensive and timid. In this episode Ricky is afraid to ask his boss for a raise. Lucy tells him not be bashful and tells Ricky he has to demand a raise if he wants one. She tells him to threaten his boss that he'll leave if he doesn't get a raise. Lucy then pokes fun at his accent, takes him by the hand, and leads him into the living room.

Later at dinner Ricky doesn't have the nerve to ask his boss for a raise so Lucy forces him to do it. When he does, his delivery is weak and his boss refuses to give him a raise. Lucy lies and tells Ricky's boss that he has many other offers that are willing to pay him triple the amount he is currently getting. Unfazed, the boss tells Ricky to quit.

Upset with the situation, Ricky tells his boss he will do just that.

Ricky: "I quit! K W I T!"

He spells it out, of course incorrectly, thus portraying him as the silly foreigner who can't be taken seriously.

Saddened that he lost his job, Ricky mopes around the house and then decides to go to the unemployment office. Ricky says he's an "ol so ben," and Ethel, confused, asks Lucy what that means. Lucy, corrects Ricky's muddled English, tells her he meant "a has ran," again showing that Ricky can't speak English correctly. Since Lucy feels responsible for her husband's unemployment, she decides to reserve the whole nightclub and then cancel the reservations so the new hired band won't have any customers and Ricky's boss will rehire

him. Lucy, Ethel and Fred dress up in different costumes, pretending to be new customers and walking out when they hear Ricky is no longer working for the nightclub. Frantic and desperate, Ricky's boss offers him his job back but Ricky refuses because he hears about his loyal fans. Of course, the loyal fans were really Lucy, Ethel and Fred and the show ends with Ricky unemployed and looking foolish.

This episode particularly stands out because it noticeably displays Lucy as being courageous and Ricky as being a coward. It is Lucy who demands her husband ask for a raise. Lucy is the one who brings up the issue with Ricky's boss and it is still Lucy who convinces his boss to rehire him. Ricky on the other hand is too scared to ask his boss for a raise because he doesn't know how to ask and is unsure he will get it, thus implying he either doesn't know how American's go about asking for a raise or he is simply a coward. Ricky is also deceived by Lucy's antics and actually believes he has fans loyal enough to walk out on a concert if he isn't performing. His pride gets in the way of seeing Lucy's scheme and as usual, Lucy ends up hurting her husband instead of helping him.

Again, in 'The Fur Coat,' Ricky is depicted as naïve. In this episode he brings home a \$3500 mink coat for a girl he is doing a dance number with in his show and Lucy mistakenly thinks it's a present for her. Ricky is afraid to tell her the truth because Lucy says it's their anniversary and he doesn't have another present to give her. Ricky comes up with an idea and tells Fred to pretend to be a burglar and "steal" the mink coat.

Fred: "Hey, you've got something going on up there."

(Pointing to Ricky's head) "How did you ever get an idea like that?"

Ricky: "It's easy. I think of it in Spanish and then translate it into English."

Fred is amazed that Ricky is able to come up with a good idea. Ricky isn't offended by Fred's astonishment and simply explains that all he has to do is translate his thoughts before

he expresses himself. This reinforces Ricky as the character whose friends do not expect to be knowledgeable because he is an outsider, in that he is both a Cuban and a minority.

In this episode, Lucy sleeps with her coat on and wears it while she is doing dishes. She is so attached to the coat that Ricky becomes concerned and asks Fred what to do. Fred says he will pretend to be a burglar that night. Meanwhile, an actual burglar comes into the Ricardo's home and Ricky, thinking it's Fred, offers to give him the mink coat. The real burglar, confused by the situation, leaves the scene.

The next day Lucy tells Ethel she's upset that her husband is a coward and Ethel ends up confessing the truth about the coat and the pretend burglar. Furious, Lucy tells her she will get even with Ricky if it's the last thing she does. She buys a cheap imitation coat and ruins it in front of him. Ricky faints and the show ends with Lucy receiving a news dress, hat and heels in exchange for the mink coat. Lucy laughs and tells Ethel it isn't even her anniversary and that she periodically tells Ricky it is so she can get stuff from him.

The joke's on Ricky and he doesn't suspect his wife's ability to manipulate him into buying her gifts. Ironically, although Ricky is portrayed as a foreigner who can't speak English correctly, he is still able to dominate his wife. Lucy pushes the boundaries of patriarchy in that she usually defies her husband's orders, but in the end it is Ricky who gains praise while Lucy is humiliated. If and when Ricky is at the center of a joke, it is only within the safe compounds of their home and relationship with Fred and Ethel. The audience might be aware that Lucy is able to poke fun at Ricky but the world Ricky lives in continues to praise and glorify him as the head of the household.

Lucy is not able to push the boundaries of patriarchy merely because her husband is Cuban. She is, however, able to poke fun at him. Ricky's ethnicity does not make him less of

a dominating husband. It is only because of his unfamiliarity with American culture and its language that Lucy is able to tease him and get away with things she might not have been able to had Ricky been an average American, traditional husband in the fifties. Despite this, Ricky maintains ultimate power in the relationship and although Lucy is able to periodically tease him, it is still he who makes the decisions in the house and who Lucy asks permission for before embarking on something.

Mommy Dearest, Lucy as a Mother

Lucy's portrayal as a comedienne whose crazy antics get her into trouble doesn't disappear when she becomes pregnant. Lucy is not regular stay-at-home mother. Her personality doesn't take a back seat and her dreams of becoming a performer don't fade away. Vibrant and entertaining, Lucy shines through her pregnancy and motherhood as well.

In 'Lucy is Enceinte,' *I Love Lucy* fans learn Lucy is pregnant. The episode begins with Lucy telling Ethel she feels lousy and doesn't know what is wrong with her. She decides she should probably go to the doctor.

Ethel: "Hey Lucy, you don't suppose?"

Lucy: "Don't suppose what?"

Ethel: "You don't suppose you are going to have a baby?"

Lucy: "Oh, of course not!"

Lucy laughs. The whole idea of her having a baby seems out of the question. She tells Ethel her notions are silly and ridiculous because she has been married to Ricky for 11 years. Lucy leaves to go see her doctor and comes back in the same door with a completely different disposition. Starry eyed and smiling, Lucy looks as if she is in a different world. She tells Ethel the news and the two women excitedly discuss Lucy's new role as a mother and Ethel's role as godmother.

Lucy doesn't tell Ricky because she wants to tell him in a special way.

Lucy: "All my life I have dreamed about how I was going to tell my husband that we were going to have a baby. I've know exactly what I was going to say to him. I've dreamed about it a million times and now it's a dream come true"

Heaving and sighing, Lucy is utterly delighted. She goes through the process of how she will share the good news with Ricky, and acts out an elegant and sophisticated scene for Ethel. When Ricky finally does come home, she has trouble telling him the news because the phone keeps ringing, Ricky is upset with work, and Ethel and Fred come to visit.

Ricky: "I don't mind to get you all involved in all of my affairs but you should be happy you are a woman."

Lucy: "Oh, I'am. I'am."

Ricky: "Well, you think you know how tough my job is but believe me; if you traded places with me you'd be surprised."

Lucy: "Believe me, if I traded places with you, you'd be surprised." (Laughs)

Lucy sits on his lap. Ricky, aware that Lucy is acting different, demands to know what she did wrong. Certain that Lucy has over drawn their account or purchased something she wasn't suppose to, Ricky questions her. Lucy insists she hasn't done anything wrong but is still unable to tell Ricky the news because the phone keeps ringing.

Later that day Lucy goes to the club to tell Ricky the news. Again she is interrupted and unable to tell him about the "blessed even." She begins to cry and runs out of the club. That evening, she goes back to the club and sits at a table near the stage. Ricky receives a note requesting him to sing "My baby and me." Ricky realizes the song is for his new baby and is in shock. Ricky takes Lucy by the hand and loving looks at her as she begins to cry.

Already we see Lucy in a different light from when she was pre-baby. Lucy isn't getting herself into trouble or talking too much. Sweet and in awe, Lucy is portrayed as the doting mother-to-be. Patriarchy recognizes men and women as having innate differences and this

episode screams of traditional roles of masculinity and femininity. Batting her eyelashes and staring off into space, Lucy is depicted as the “barefoot and pregnant” mother-to be. Similarly, Ricky is portrayed as the hard working male whose job consumes him.

Lucy forgets to think about how the new baby will affect her, aside from her new title as “mother.” Her only concern is to tell Ricky the news in a “perfect” way. Women, particularly in the fifties, were expected to welcome pregnancy and the role of motherhood, and to find contentment in this role (Friedan, 1963). Lucy tells Ethel she has always dreamed of this day. The same women who thought the idea of her being pregnant was once absurd, became so enthralled in the new found role of motherhood that she literally became speechless, a trait that is not often associated with Lucy.

Lucy doesn't remain speechless for long, because as the episodes progress after her pregnancy and birth of little Ricky, Lucy remains to be an unpredictable force. One prime example is in ‘Lucy and Superman.’ In this episode, Lucy ironically takes on the role of superman, and in essence, super mom, for little Ricky's birthday. The episode begins with father and son watching ‘Superman’ on television. Ricky has his arm around little Ricky, who is wearing a Superman outfit. Lucy, in a polka-dot dress and heels, tells her son to go to bed. She hugs him and then Ricky tucks him in.

A boy's masculinity is frequently based on his identification with his father or other adult males (Chodorow, 1974). Little Ricky carries the same accent as his father and the two seem to have a perfect father and son relationship. Ricky is surprisingly the one to tuck his son in and Lucy doesn't even have to ask him to do so. Later, when Lucy discovers her boring friend Caroline, who only talks about her son, is having a birthday party for little Stevie the same day as his best friend little Ricky, Lucy is determined to upstage her into changing the

date of her party. She remembers that Ricky knows the actor who plays Superman, and Ricky agrees to ask him to come to the birthday party.

When Lucy finds out that Superman can't make it to the party, she decides to dress up as him and courageously come in through the window, on the third floor of their building, to surprise little Ricky and his friends at the birthday party.

Lucy: "I would rather break my neck than break my promise to little Ricky."

Lucy, wanting to be the best mother, is willing to risk an injury. She says she wants to please her son for his birthday, but she is also trying to outdo the other mother, Caroline. The usually competitive Lucy isn't backing down and her role as a mother seems to have her more determined than ever. She tells Ethel she can tell Ricky anything she likes, except for the truth. This implies that she knows Ricky will disapprove but she does it anyway. Lucy doesn't ask Ricky for permission, as we have seen her do before, and thus, once again shows her defiance to patriarchy.

As with many other *I Love Lucy* endings, Lucy is reprimanded by Ricky. The real Superman ends up coming to the birthday party and Lucy is stuck outside, on the ledge, in the pouring rain. When Ricky sees her he screams at her in front of little Ricky, as Superman goes on the ledge to rescue her.

Ricky: "Are you crazy? What are you doing in that outfit? Come in here with an explanation. Come in here right now!"

Lucy: (turning to Superman) "Can you teach me to fly?"

Ricky: "Lucy, of all the crazy things that you have done in the 15 years that we've been married, this has been the"

Superman: "Mr. Ricardo, do you mean to say you've been married to her for 15 years?"

Ricky: "Yea, 15 years."

Superman: "And they call me superman!"

Lucy's mouth drops and she looks surprised by what Superman says to Ricky. Upset, she turns around and faces the corner like a punished child. Male aggression towards women is a general type of behavior in a male dominated household (Sanday, 1981). Ricky fits the expectation that males should be brave, tough, and aggressive (Sanday, 1981). He yells at Lucy in front of their son and scolds her as if she were a misbehaved child. Lucy shows some insubordination in that she jokes about flying off in the middle of the scene, but she doesn't stick up for herself in the end.

Still, Lucy is pushing the limits of patriarchy because her character is not one that is defined by her maternal work (Ruddick, 1989). Lucy is much more than a mother, who cooks, cleans and takes care of her husband. She is both courageous and competitive, two characteristics that are often considered masculine. More so, she is a woman who ultimately laughs in the face of danger and does anything she puts her mind to.

In 'Bon Voyage,' Lucy once again finds herself in a predicament. The episode begins with Lucy, her mother, Ricky and little Ricky aboard "The Constitution." The Ricardos and the Mertzes are finally taking a trip to Europe, an excursion Lucy has often dreamed of partaking in. Ethel and Fred walk in and Lucy still has the ability to poke fun at her husband, who is now the father of their son. She laughs as she hears him mispronounce the word "manager."

Lucy: (Laughs) "Did you hear that? Your poppa has a band *Manayer*."

Everyone laughs, including Ricky, as they all look lovingly at baby Ricky.

In this episode Lucy has trouble saying goodbye to little Ricky. On the ship she waves to her son and mother, who are on shore. Lucy begins to cry and insists she must kiss little Ricky one more time. She gets off the ship, kisses little Ricky and gets her skirt caught in a

stranger's bike. She pulls off her skirt and attempts to get on the ship in her slip. The ship begins to move and she misses it. Ricky, instead of yelling at her, frantically tries to do everything possible to get her on the ship.

He pages Lucy, who begins to cry, and attempts to comfort her by telling her she can catch the pilot boat. She, of course, misses the boat and Ricky tells her the only option left is a helicopter. Lucy barely catches the helicopter and becomes frightened when she realizes she has to be lowered out of the helicopter onto the ship by a cable. Determined not to miss her beloved trip to Europe, she finally does it. Ricky, ecstatic to see her, greets her. Shortly after, Lucy faints.

In the beginning of this episode, Lucy is depicted as the loving mother who is attached to her baby and has trouble saying goodbye. Her role quickly changes and the minute she misses the ship, her thoughts center in on herself. Instead of embracing the facts and going home with her mother and son, Lucy refuses to give up a trip to Europe with her husband and friends. Unlike other mothers on sitcoms in the fifties, Lucy doesn't fit the typical dependent wife-mother role (Douglas, 2003). Although Ricky is clearly paying for her trip and thus depicted as the bread-winner, Lucy is not portrayed as the wife who silently stands by her husband. In reality, Lucy is often missing-in-action because she is on her own personal adventure. The cameras aren't focused on any other characters and without Lucy; the show would probably have been shelved.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Examination of the 14 *I Love Lucy* episodes indicate that Lucy did in fact push the limits of patriarchy. Although Lucy disrupts patriarchy, by the beginning of each, next episode patriarchy once again is in tact. In this chapter I address these findings and discuss their implications. I also write about Lucille Ball's, as well as her character Lucy Ricardo's, positive influence on women working in the media industry today.

The questions guiding this research were: (1) To what extent does Lucy Ricardo succeed in overcoming patriarchy and what enables her to do so? (2) How does she fail in her attempt to push the boundaries of housewifery? This study demonstrates that Lucy Ricardo was able to push some limits of patriarchy. Courage and determination serve as her foundation in pushing these limits and thus pursuing her dream of becoming a performer.

Lucy Ricardo often refused to cook, clean or listen to Ricky's orders. More so, she usually did as she pleased, doing things by herself, even when she is in a different country, like Italy, and doesn't know how to speak the language. Lucy isn't concerned about being in a strange place alone, and she also has the courage to curse. She defies her husband and often refuses to dress the way he wants her to. Instead of portraying her body as an object that is valuable for men (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000), Lucy pokes fun at her husband's lack of knowledge concerning style.

She pushes the limits of patriarchy because she refuses to give up on her dream even though her own husband doesn't believe in her. She is willing to do anything it takes to get any performing part she wants and nothing, not even her dominating husband who repeatedly

humiliates her, is going to stop her. She refuses to be selfless and obedient and literally does all her body will allow, so she can make her dream of being a performer come true.

Lucy pushes the limits of patriarchy because her character is not one that is defined by her maternal work (Ruddick, 1989). Lucy is much more than a mother, who cooks, cleans and takes care of her husband. Courageous and competitive, two characteristics that are often considered masculine, Lucy is a fearless woman who doesn't let her husband dictate every aspect of her life.

Ricky's lack of knowledge concerning American culture also enables Lucy Ricardo to defy her husband and poke fun at him. She often teases him and takes advantage of his unfamiliarity with American customs and slang. Ricky's gullibility allows her to make a fool of him and mislead him into thinking she actually knows what she's doing. Ricky's ethnicity does not make him less of a dominating husband. It is only because of his unfamiliarity with American culture and its language that Lucy is able to tease him and get away with things she might not have been able to had Ricky been an average American, traditional husband in the fifties.

Even so, Lucy Ricardo is unable to fully overcome patriarchy because of Ricky's ability to manipulate her into fearing him and as well as making her think he is doing what is best for her. Lucy frequently does as she pleases, but her courage doesn't remain in tact because she still shows signs of fearing her husband. Although she stands up to him, Lucy often keeps secrets from Ricky and begs their friends Ethel and Fred to not tell on her. She usually asks for his permission before doing something and normally has to face the consequences of disobeying her husband.

Despite this, her character is one that stands apart from others in 1950's sitcoms. Lucy Ricardo was a force Ricky had to deal with, and like the characters they played, Desi had to deal with the courageous Ball as well. Lucy Ricardo's depiction as a stay-at-home mom didn't prevent her from frequently defying Ricky and her character refused to be put into a box. Lucy Ricardo believed in herself and although Ricky often forbids her to do as she pleased, she fought back, often making witty remarks, and thus pointing the finger back at him.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study can tell us about Lucy's ability to push the boundaries of patriarchy, as well as her failure to completely defeat patriarchy, this study cannot tell us about the socioeconomic context in which *I Love Lucy* was created or how the show's audience receives its messages. Further research should address these issues because they are two other cultural approaches to media that help us understand a text (Dines & Humez, 1995). The examination of a television show can have a lasting and positive affect on audiences around the world. Thus, it's imperative that future research on *I Love Lucy* tackle these issues by looking at the political economy of the show, and conducting surveys, questionnaires or interviews, to understand audience reception.

Further research should focus on other aspects of the show as well. Lucy's interaction with her best friend Ethel, and Ethel's interaction with her husband Fred are two components of *I Love Lucy* that I did not focus on. Analyzing these relationships is beneficial because it could provide answers concerning Ethel's ability to push the boundaries of housewifery. Had Lucy been married to Fred, she might have not had the opportunities to push the limits of

patriarchy. Thus by comparing Lucy and Ricky's relationship to Ethel and Fred's, we can further discover the role ethnicity plays in patriarchal control.

Ball's portrayal as Lucy Ricardo, a woman who pursued her dreams, despite having a baby and being married to a domineering husband, demonstrates that women can be successful despite the patriarchal situation they might be in. Researching her portrayal is essential because Ball's example, as well as *I Love Lucy*, remains to be remembered as a fundamental breakthrough that continues to enable everyday women, as well as famous comedians and actresses, to maintain powerful voices in a male dominating world.

Celebrities Love Lucy

Ball's popularity, as well as the appreciation for the show, *I Love Lucy*, continues to grow and many celebrities give her credit for their success. Jennifer Aniston, primarily known for her comedic role as Rachel on the hit show *Friends*, praises Lucille Ball for being her own personal idol. In an interview with "Woman's Own," in October of 1998, Anniston confides that her heroes are none other than Ball and Carol Burnett (www.womansown.com, March 22, 2004).

Aniston is not alone in crediting Ball for her accomplishments. In fact, Ball's reputation is so revered that critics use her name to compliment actresses today. One example is the comedian Debra Messing. Critics around the U.S. have compared the red-headed *Will and Grace* star to the legendary Lucille Ball (www.debramessing.com, March 22, 2004). In recalling her own inspirations, Messing cites *I Love Lucy* as one of her favorite shows growing up. "I was always singing and dancing for my mother when I wasn't glued to the

television watching *I Love Lucy* or the *Carol Burnett Show*,” Messing told Complete Magazine in September of 1999 (www.debramessing.com, March 22, 2004).

Many argue that even the legendary Carol Burnett would probably not have been had there not been Lucille Ball to pave the way for her (www.fiftiesweb.com/lucy.htm, March 22, 2004). Burnett herself credits Ball for being her mentor after they met in 1959. The two worked together and Burnett made several appeared on The Lucy Show. Ball also visited *The Carol Burnett Show*, which aired for 12 years and began in 1967 (www.news-star.com/stories/070298/art_burnett.html, March 25, 2004).

Women are not the only ones who have benefited from Ball’s guidance and management. Ball’s willingness to take risks in her leadership allowed for many men to be successful as well. Without her approval, there reportedly wouldn’t have been a *Mission Impossible* or even *Star Trek* (www.fiftiesweb.com/lucy.htm, March 22, 2004).

Lucy, Then and Now

Ball’s legacy clearly keeps on growing. *I Love Lucy* continues to air in syndication on both basic and cable television, and both men and women tune into the series which portrays a woman who battles with patriarchy. By illustrating how Lucy pushes the limits of patriarchy, other women can better understand how they too can succeed in defying the reoccurring cycle of patriarchy’s oppression on women.

Although men are still more likely than women to have managing positions in media (Lauzen & Dozier, 2002), there are many women, like Lucille Ball, who have achieved high ranking and paying jobs in media. Lucille Ball owned fifty percent of *Desilu* while the show aired and had significant input in the making of the episodes (Kanfer, 2003). Ball was five

months pregnant when she signed the *I Love Lucy* contract (Kanfer, 2003), thus showing that even a pregnant woman can be successful in the fifties. As the show gained success, her husband Desi became jealous of the attention Ball was getting and was upset that Ball could not be dominated (Kanfer, 2003). Off screen and on, Lucy refused to be dominated and continued to push the limits of patriarchy.

Ricardo's new role as a wife and mother on *I Love Lucy* didn't cause her to abandon her dreams. Mrs. Ricardo frequently acted and talked as she pleased, a trait Ball was known to have as well (Kanfer, 2003). At a time when women were portrayed on TV as being expected to sit back and do nothing, Lucy Ricardo played a strong-willed woman who refused to be silenced. Like Ball, Mrs. Ricardo was ready to face the consequences of pushing the limits of patriarchy if she had to. (Patriarchy's power is so great that its oppression on women continues even when its limits are being pushed.) Even the consequences they faced had similarities in that they usually consisted of her partner, Ricky/Desi, being upset and angry.

As in the show, the real Ricky, which was Desi, often made demands and refused to do things he was uncomfortable with (Kanfer, 2003). Like Mrs. Ricardo, Ball often gave in to his demands and made compromises, (Kanfer, 2003) but eventually put her foot down. After all, it is Ball who filed for divorce and ended up buying out her husband in the late fifties (Kanfer, 2003). The power struggle between her and Ricky was evident and Ball's ultimate consequence of challenging patriarchy was her divorce. Even so, Ball's refusal to back down proves that women can be successful without compromising their power.

Ball got the ball rolling in that she opened the door for other women in media management, as well as actresses who want to portray strong and courageous women who laugh in the face of patriarchy. More so, Ball's onscreen and off-screen example has enabled

feminist, such as myself, to be confident in knowing that woman can in fact push the boundaries of patriarchy. Lucy Ricardo's character shows that women can step outside the limits of patriarchy and Ball's successful career demonstrates that woman have the power to maintain success in a patriarchal society.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF *I LOVE LUCY* EPISODES ANALYZED

1. 'The Fashion Show,' which originally aired on Feb 28, 1955.
2. 'The Girls go to a Night Club,' episode 2, first aired on Oct. 15, 1951.
3. 'Lucy's Italian Movie,' first aired on April 16, 1956.
4. 'Lucy's Schedule,' episode 33, first aired on May 26, 1952.
5. 'A TV Commercial,' first aired on May 5, 1952.
6. 'Lucy and the Loving Cup,' which originally aired on January 7, 1957
7. 'The Diet,' episode 4, first aired on Oct. 29, 1951.
8. 'Lucy Gets Ricky on the Road,' episode 32, first aired on May 19, 1952.
9. 'Ricky Thinks He's Getting Bald,' episode 34, first aired on Jan. 2, 1952.
10. 'Ricky Asks for a Raise,' episode 35, first aired on June 9, 1952.
11. 'The Fur Coat,' episode 10, aired on Dec. 10, 1951.
12. 'Lucy is Enceinte,' episode 50.
13. 'Lucy and Superman,' first aired on Jan. 14, 1957.
14. 'Bon Voyage,' episode 140.