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Sofia Freedman April 11, 2025

From Manhattan to Mayberry: How CBS Perpetuated Dominant Ideology Through *I Love Lucy* and *The Andy Griffith Show*

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An abstract of a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Film and Media Studies

2025

Abstract

CBS captivated American audiences during the 1950s and 1960s as they mastered the emerging television genre, situational comedy. Two of the network's most highly rated sitcoms, *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957) and *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968), while seemingly opposite in their representation of middle-class American life, soared in the ranking and were beloved by households nationwide. Through compiling research that explores the intersection of CBS's internal leadership, American social attitudes, and current events, this thesis will expose why, in just a few years, the network's most successful show went from portraying an urban multi-ethnic household with a female protagonist to an ethnically homogenous rural environment with a male protagonist. At its core, the content reflected in these sitcoms demonstrates the network's intrinsic motivation to maintain cultural relevance by telling stories that alleviated the current social anxieties through a depiction of human life that reassured mainstream American audiences. Current events inherently impacted the topics requiring reassurance in the 1950s and 1960s, such as World War II, the Cold War, and the Civil Rights movement. These historical events altered how American audiences perceived race, gender, economy, and nationality, evident through the angle CBS employs when depicting American middle-class life in each of these programs. My process will begin by discussing the network's history and values, providing an idea of existing patterns that correlate with content produced and how that content reflects social attitudes impacted by current events. After providing this context, I will discuss *I Love Lucy* from the perspective of 1950s current events, social attitudes, and the internal social and operational dynamics within the network's staff. I will then apply those same avenues of thinking when analyzing *The Andy Griffith Show*. This comparison will demonstrate that the network's shift in top-grossing sitcoms suggests that the identities represented in CBS sitcoms result from each decade's underlying social tensions rather than a drive toward thinking through those tensions using innovation or creativity. In the 1950s, social and political tensions related to immigration and the role of women, but the changing social climate of the 1960s provided new diffused social tensions, non-nuclear families, and the glamorization of white rural America. Recognizing the impact current events have on shaping the attitudes of network executives and American audience members is imperative as this notion is not unique to the mid-twentieth century but is a universal truth consistent amongst all mainstream sitcoms.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking my incredible advisor, Dr. Smith-Shomade, for all her advice and insights throughout this entire process. I also would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to my entire committee for your guidance over the last several months. Additionally, thank you to all my family and friends for your unconditional support, and of course, thank you Dr. Allison and the rest of my thesis cohort for making this process so enlightening and transformative.

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Introduction

It is no secret that in this day and age creating film and television based on current trends is a cornerstone of mainstream media practices. Employing this approach provides networks with security in terms of gaging a work's possible perception. Television network, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) abided by trends in order to maximize capital. This thesis will follow how CBS abided by the television trends of ethnic comedy in the 1950s and rural comedy of the 1960s as a tactic for attaining their goal of financial gain. I will highlight the juxtaposition of a show during the ethnic comedy era, *I Love Lucy* (1951-1958), contrasts with a rural rural comedy, *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968*)*.

During the 1950s and 1960s, CBS Presidents William Paley and James Aubrey employed a purely capitalistic mindset concerning their television programing.The comfort and escape audiences felt from watching CBS programing was artificially devised to alleviate the most prevalent worries felt by viewers to ensure their consumer loyalty, which increase the network's revenue. While the company created content with the intention of alleviating public anxieties, at the presidential level the opportunity to use the network's platform for media that sparks critical thinking, discourse, or offers innovative content was consistently surrendered. With capital being at the forefront of the network's motivation, all programing regurgitated a dominant ideology to ensure the content would be positively received by as many people as possible.

Television has the capacity to make people think and reflect about the world around them through stories that highlight issues evident in society, but when audiences are only exposed to ideas that reiterate the narratives the government and major corporations want told, they are deprived of gaining a full understanding of the world around them. The desire for capital drove CBS, by default, toward censored media, depriving audiences from experiencing content that exposed multiple issues or perspectives; CBS refused to greenlight anything that they did not

think would generate unanimous support or did not directly support the dominant ideology backed by the U.S. government.

CBS thrived on the security of television cycles which gave them insight as to what content was in highest demand by the largest demographic. With the predictability and inevitably of television cycles, it is imperative to uncover the root causes of how social tensions and political movements molded a mainstream audiences' content cravings. The sensibility that derives from current events impacts television content because networks must develop shows that indulge the dominantly heled belief for the sake of ensuring financially successful programing. Ethnic and rural comedy were each a television cycle, and their growth and decline reflect the investment network television is willing to allot given the current social landscape. Networks recognize their need for profit and exploit the audience's fears and desires accordingly.

The fact that the 1950s was dominated by the working-class ethnic sitcoms and replaced by suburban family sitcoms in the 1960s demonstrates how the turn of a decade can provide a stark contrast regarding the network's perception of public interest (Johnson 78). Two of CBS' most successful shows from each of these cycles are *I Love Lucy* and *The Andy Griffith Show*. *I Love Lucy* tells the story of housewife Lucy Ricardo (Lucille Ball) and her Cuban immigrant husband, Ricky Ricardo (Desi Arnaz) while *The Andy Griffith Show* tells the story of a single father and small-town sheriff, Andy Taylor (Andy Griffith) who uses his logic and sensibility to maintain order in his fictional North Carolina town called Mayberry. While incredibly opposite in their depiction of middle-class American life, both demonstrate that CBS remained complacent. Abiding by these television cycles emphasizes CBS' pattern of avoidant content and strategically engineering all content to avoid displeasing or offsetting the state of the dominant ideology.

CBS has maintained this framework since William Paley first attained ownership over the network and exerted his belief in producing media that was nonpartisan. The content that fit this mold shifted in conjunction with what Americans embraced as the dominant ideology, as Paley's values entailed emphasizing whatever was most popular with mainstream audiences, regardless of what that content entailed.

CHAPTER 1: Developments Fostering CBS' Capitalistic Foundation for Entertainment

Major television networks maintain recognition and status by pushing content with tangible mainstream appeal. Recognizing and capitalizing on what attracts the widest demographic correlates with the social attitudes molded by the dominant ideology people are encouraged to embrace. However, with perpetual changes in ideologies promoted by political and social policy, networks recognize the social manifestation of these shifts and must revise their content to maintain cultural relevance amidst an evolving socio-political atmosphere.

Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) is a network that employs extreme caution when handling the delicacies of appeasing the American public and inevitably trivializes the outcome of an event by prioritizing financial gain over providing a clear picture of what is happening in the world. This angle was not unique to CBS, as it was initially coined by NBC, America's first major television network (Ponce de Leon). As stated by NBC founder, David, the network viewed their television content as "a mighty window, through which people in all walks of life, rich and poor alike, will be able to see for themselves, not only the small world around us but the larger world of which we are a part," (Ponce de Leon). ABC differed from the other two major networks because it was not founded until the 1940s and relied on gossip-based entertainment to attract audiences (Ponce de Leon).

For almost a century, a cornerstone of CBS' reputation resides in its consistent avoidance of partisan issues, masked as a desire to promote impartial and inoffensive programming. Not synthesizing information leaves the network responsible for casting a mirage over the state of the country. Avoiding discussion surrounding the gravity of events impacting the United States does not establish a neutralizing perspective but a tainted perception of reality. A publicized commitment to creating unbiased and neutralizing content drives how CBS presents its news and depiction of American life in its scripted programing. Each program details topics or situations

that embrace the currently adopted dominant American ideology, stifling media as an outlet for social change and education.

Offering what the network deemed politically neutralizing content allowed the company to excel financially and avoid personal backlash from morally offended audience members. However, embracing this mindset forced CBS to partake in media trends out of fear, as opposed to a genuine desire for offering novel or insightful entertainment for viewers. All works produced by CBS in the mid twentieth century required evidence and research proving there was no substantial chance of mainstream backlash, the biggest fear for CBS founder William Paley.

1.1 Acquiring CBS

Upon graduating from The University of Pennsylvania in 1922, Paley's only job prospect entailed working at his father's cigar company, Congress Cigar Company (Paper 12). Despite rising in the ranks and gaining the title of Vice President in 1927, Paley lacked fulfillment (Paper 13). Eventually, he approached the Philadelphia-based radio station WCAU and inquired about an on-air advertisement for Congress Cigar Company, a transaction that ultimately catalyzed the establishment of his own media empire, CBS (Slater 10). Paley's initial encounter with WCAU entailed immense risk for many reasons. The first was that Congress Cigar Company had no prior experience with radio. The second factor was, for Paley to go through with the ad, he would have to go against his father's wishes. Previously, WCAU, an affiliate of United Independent Broadcasters Inc (UIB), asked Paley's father to consider purchasing an ad for the cigar company on the channel, which he refused (Slater 10). When his father went on vacation, Paley used this absence to his advantage and approached the station, purchasing a radio ad for the cigar company (Paley 1:15). This brief experience with the media industry made Paley realize that "[broadcasting] interested me not only as an investment but as a career" (Paley 3:33). With this mentality in mind, Paley left his father's cigar company to pursue a career in broadcasting.

Paley infiltrated the industry through his material wealth. Paley sought ownership of UIB, using 400,000 dollars' worth of his cigar company stock funds (the equivalent of about 7.43 million dollars in 2025), and enlisted the help of his family in attaining another 100,000 dollars to purchase 50.3 percent of UIB's stock, a deal finalized on September 19, 1928 (Slater 19). Lacking any professional experience or education in broadcasting, Paley ran the business using a capitalistic as opposed to artistic mindset. He was fascinated by the novelty of broadcasting as opposed to its craft. Shortly after acquiring primary ownership of UIB through stock, Paley took the title of network president on September 26, 1928 (Slater 12).

Over time, IUB evolved into CBS, and radio became accompanied by network television. However, despite a change in name and medium, Paley's entertainment philosophy remained persistent, along with his goal of financial gain. While CBS started in radio and journalism, the network decided to pivot and follow the precedent set by NBC and invested in the television industry in 1939 (Paper 110). As a businessman, Paley recognized the importance of following market trends, prompting his embrace of the medium his competition was infiltrating.

1.2 Network Philosophy

During his time as network President, Paley stressed impartiality and accessibility. He associated ratings with success and deemed it essential that all of CBS' journalistic content would regurgitated facts and avoid additional analysis. However, Paley's view of what constituted as impartial was inherently influenced by what American culture embraced as the dominant ideology. Paley did not fight against the status quo; he amplified it, knowing it would satisfy the masses. He developed his understanding of attaining mass viewership by calling for educational and cultural programming that captivated audiences through emotional appeal, maximizing intrigue from audience members of different educational backgrounds (Paper 30). His concern for maintaining an impartial approach to journalism and television, regardless of the

issues impacting the country, is a mentality that remained essential in the network's operations during his presidency.

While Paley's business model always emphasized impartiality, he received additional governmental pressure to maintain this approach. The Communications Act of 1934 stated that broadcast licensees had to serve the "public interest, convenience, and necessity," which Paley embraced by producing programs that were dense with information at the expense of commercial value (Paper 31). One of these programs was *The Radio Voice of the Crusaders* (1934 – 1935), a weekly program broadcasted across seventy-nine CBS affiliates and had the mission of opposing "all forces destructive to sound government" (Fones-Wolf 230). Eventually, he realized this was beginning to compromise the company's financial growth because the content only appealed to a small demographic, and modified CBS' incorporation of the act by adding more commercial content to the line-up, overtaking NBC in the ratings during the 1936 – 1937 season (Paper 31). Striking a balance between intellectual value and escapist programing ensured that CBS content would remain accessible to the mainstream American audience while abiding by federal regulations. Generating content that did not require an intellectual mindset, but still mentally stimulated people of different backgrounds allowed CBS to maintain mass viewership. Successfully sustaining viewership presented CBS as a desirable partner for advertisers who knew their product would gain valuable exposure from the network's vast audience. The more desirable CBS presented itself to potential advertisers, the more money they could acquire through purchased add time. Paley was no longer aiming to please one specific market in the way he had when filling the network with dense news. He wanted everyone to find the network's content approachable because that was the most promising manner for ensuring financial success. Paley's leadership approach eventually entailed discerning if a program could attract a

large enough audience to justify its production time and expense rather than if he enjoyed the program (Paper 31).

This specific mentality proved persistent, defining Paley's leadership and decisions throughout his time as President. Regardless of the year or social climate, Paley stressed that CBS must avoid taking a political stance on current events or presenting information in a way that privileged the journalist's personal perspective. In effort to appear as nonthreatening to the American social order as possible, Paley actively avoided innovative ideas, and according to Mike Dann, who worked in development for CBS in the 1950s and 60s, "Paley was not innovative. He was not a gambler. He was interested only in building a better mousetrap. He knew what was a proven hit- and that's what he wanted for his network," (Paper 40). What began as a desire to maintain impartiality in the news, quickly grew to consume the company and influence its creative programming.

All CBS content catered to Paley's objective of avoiding subjects that could warrant dispute, sequestering the American people from media that challenged or deepened their worldview. Regarding journalism, this approach manifested as offering a purely fact-based account of world events and communicating information free of personal analysis to avoid offending anyone based on different personal interpretations or beliefs. When applied to television and radio, this philosophy meant that no show would depict a situation that would upset the dominant ideology persistent in American culture at the time. While Paley intended to remain impartial and not upset audiences by providing partisan content, the very act of perpetuating the dominant ideology is not impartial. Forgoing any moral sensibility to illustrate the effects of current events on the world's long-term future or using media as a platform for educating people in a philosophical way that challenges their thinking, illustrates that the network was a purely for-profit operation consumed with generating capital above all else.

Paley wanted his company's work to be well-received by as many people as possible. This goal became incredibly evident as World War II began. On September 1, 1939, when England declared war on Germany and World War II commenced, Paley required that all CBS journalists abstain from giving any personal analysis of the war in their work (Paper 76). Despite Paley's opposition to the war and the German regime, he feared that if his views were publicly known it would jeopardize CBS' reputation (Paper 76). Although the majority of Americans did not support Germany and even eventually entered the war to combat them, Paley felt compelled to ensure that the language and content associated with his company's journalism did not reflect a preference for either side. Paley's interpretation of the public interest was extreme and consistent. He never allowed himself or his own biases to appear in the programming, fearing he would ostracize audiences and diminish CBS' viewership numbers. Paley's impartiality did not come from indifference but from financial motivation.

1.3 Advertising and Acquisitions

Early into his presidency, Paley established a strict advertising policy that ensured the simultaneous generation of network revenue and national recognition. The strategy entailed eliminating the former protocol where advertisers paid for 10 hours of weekly airtime and replacing it with a new policy granting advertisers 20 hours of commercial airtime per week, with the first five hours being free (Paper 25). This framework incentivized advertisers to favor Paley's network above its competitors because CBS could double the frequency of an advertisement for less than double the price. Paley also required that upon entering an agreement with CBS, all advertisers were prohibited from working with any other network (Paper 25). Devising and adopting this financially motivating marketing strategy reiterates Paley's financially calculated sensibility, as his interests resided in the strategy behind the network operations, not a passion for the content produced. He recognized radio's potential to captivate

people and capitalized on this connection, knowing there was financial gain in Americans' growing desire for entertainment. Implementing this advertising model furthered Paley's goal of developing the company and remaining distinct from competitors without offending the audience who sustained his financial gain. As spoken by Paley's son, William Paley, Jr, "he [William Paley] loved access, power, luxury, and speed" ("The Eye of CBS" 15:05). Expanding influence through advertising accomplished these very desires by maximizing network reach.

Paley continued searching for opportunities that maximized CBS' financial growth and eventually infiltrated southern radio. Reaching out to network representatives in the South to grow what was initially a northern-concentrated audience base was financially advantageous for CBS. Gaining associates in the South before their competitors increased CBS' presence within the industry. On January 8, 1929, Paley announced on air that CBS had the largest number of affiliates, 49 stations in 42 cities (Slater15). His devotion to advertising as a means of growth allowed the company to produce the capital that afforded them over 49 affiliates. Expanding his mid-Atlantic concentrated network by developing affiliates in the south increased the network's awareness and promoted affinity as CBS attached themselves to the stations southern communities trusted.

1.4 Mitigating Risk

Media cycles and trends shape the industry by indicating what type of content will receive the most widespread appeal. An eagerness to meet audiences' demands motivates networks, like CBS, who want to capitalize on a trend because it provides a secure way to attain mass viewership and financial gain. Paley's obsession with neutral content made CBS highly receptive to embracing these trends because they emphasized ideas already embraced by the majority of viewers. The network invested in creating more content that appealed to mainstream interests while remaining as socially and politically distant as possible. Media trends are

embraced because the industry facilitates competition between networks and accepts the recycling of ideas, allowing studios to replicate each other's formulas in generating greater competition to capitalize on the audience's expectations (Wallin 84). Producing content and meeting the audience's demands more efficiently than its competitors was essential because CBS wanted to preserve its spot as a leading entertainment provider and modify its content to fit the audience's immediate desires.

Abiding by trends relating to narrative or style, was essential as technology evolved immensely during the twentieth century. Technological advancements made way for the growth of television, which achieved significant involvement in American life at the end of World War II. After the war, the public no longer privileged the communal media viewing experience of movie theaters because people no longer felt the need to latch onto physical outlets of community as a means of experiencing unity, the same way they did when the country was at war (Golden Kellem). By 1951 Americans were spending 22 percent more on entertainment, but theater receipts had dropped 21 percent since 1946 (Golden Kellem). This developing culture that privileged watching content from the home made networks recognize the financial growth that investing in this medium provided and they modified their content accordingly.

A desire to lead the industry by emerging dominant against competing networks took on a new shape during the 1940s. CBS, alongside NBC and ABC, earned the title of the "Big Three" from the 1940s through the mid-1970s. These three networks achieved market and cultural dominance while promoting postwar content, encouraging the embrace of a national industry (Johnson 8-9). CBS catered to the nation at large, specifically during the post-war era. The network became cognizant of how people's emotions based on the state of the country would impact their taste in television, and when coupled with maintaining dominance against the other two "Big Three" networks, it is no surprise that they participated in trends and embraced

narratives that fueled dominant ideology. The political incentives for creating content consistent with the current government's ideology were not coincidental. The consolidation of power that occurred under the classical era's "big three" was established in conjunction with political regulatory policies that established a climate of corporate citizenship where networks were encouraged to cooperate with the government regarding their programing (Johnson "Classical Network" 97). With these factors molding narrative content, the network not only thought about how they could outperform their competitors, but also faced the challenge of upholding political agendas while appeasing the masses.

Developing content in conjunction with what the majority of Americans supported fueled CBS' relevance as they generated programs that echoed popular preexisting ideologies. During the 1950s and 1960s, CBS sponsored content that balanced regional ideologies with the national dominant ideology (Johnson 23). Considering CBS wanted to attain national recognition and had already taken steps to do so through their advertiser and local network subsidiaries, they needed to continue producing television that would not isolate audience members or make them feel detached from the programming.

A way networks ensured consumer loyalty entailed capitalizing on stardom. The most successful shows during early television were live dramas, coined by CBS as "spectaculars" with major stars from the NBC or ABC networks (Johnson 65-66). CBS relied on preexisting television trends while indulging in the safety that casting a major star provided a program because they could ensure that people would tune into their program, at least initially, to support their favorite stars. Paley cared a tremendous amount about the status of his performers and wanted to maintain their loyalty because of the guaranteed success and viewership their loyalty ensured (Paper 235).

1.5 Political Ties

The pressure Paley felt to uphold dominant ideology was in part caused by his close relationship to republican politicians, especially former president Dwight Eisenhower. Paley's close friendship with President Eisenhower, began as early as the 1930s when the two would vacation together in Augusta, Georgia (Paper 193). When Paley accepted President Truman's offer to serve as Chairman of the President's Materials Policy Commission in 1951, it was Eisenhower who he turned to for advice before accepting the role (Paper 146). Paley's connection with the former president also included Jock Whitney, Paley's friend and husband to his ex-wife's sister, who served as Eisenhower's finance chairman through his presidency (Paper 165). This deep personal friendships with Eisenhower inherently impacted Paley's programming because he was in direct communication with the president who was not afraid to criticize Paley's programing if it diverted from the ideology he was trying to perpetuate.

Eisenhower and Paley had a dispute over an episode of a CBS documentary radio show called *See It Now*. Ed Murrow, a long-time trusted CBS journalist lead the program. However, on March 9, 1954, Murrow put out an episode responding to and condemning Senator Joseph McCarthy's communist conspiracies (Paper 169). This program took an active political stance, which was almost fully forbidden under Paley's leadership. Paley allowed the program because of his trust in Murrow and declaration that he would remove himself from any involvement with the program to maintain his own reputation of impartiality (Paper 169). Despite his attempted avoidance of the situation, Eisenhower relayed his concerns about the broadcast and anger that CBS allowed McCarthy time to respond to the program and subsidized 25,000 dollars in production costs for him to issue a reply (Paper 171). Eisenhower relayed this disappointment in a letter to Paley who stood by the network's decision telling Eisenhower, "because of the potential power of radio or television to do evil as well as good, we have always maintained a

policy of fairness and balance" (Paper 171). Considering that the president had a direct and personal line of communication to Paley, it is not shocking that this broadcast was an anomaly in terms of disobeying the president' ideology and any more attempts at such a controversial stance would risk damaging a very mutually beneficial relationship, where Paley had access to the highest power political official in the nation, and Eisenhower had connection with the president of one of his nation's leading news and media networks.

Lucky for Paley this disagreement did not stifle their friendship. The relationship between the two was instrumental in Paley having a trustworthy avenue to pitch his idea for an on-camera interview conducted by Walter Cronkite and produced by Fred Friendly where Eisenhower traveled to Europe and relived his experience of the D-Day Landing in honor of its twentieth anniversary (Paley 226). This broadcast was unlike any other produced by the network's competitors, validating Paley's political connections as it bought him power and influence within his own industry.

1.6 Development of Ethnic and Rural Comedy

While stardom remained an impactful factor in the development of television and radio programming, the television shows that arose during the late 1940s and 1950s provided narrative content that catered to a specific American ideology. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, networks created some of the most culturally diverse programming schedules that had ever existed (Eskridge 15). The establishment of ethnic comedy was rooted in a developed perception of American identity that took shape after World War II. The nation united during the war under a common side, making the network more open to portraying narratives that did not center around white, American-born Christians, assuming that they still demonstrated devotion to the United States.

Ethnic comedies took shape in the 1950s. The genre consisted of sitcoms depicting characters living in urban areas who identified in a way that differed from being Christian or native-born American. One particular CBS ethnic comedy that came to dominate the genre is *I Love Lucy.* The show tells the story of a New York City housewife, Lucy Ricardo (Lucille Ball), and her Cuban husband, Ricky Ricardo (Desi Arnaz). The show ended in 1957 and illustrates the network's eventual forfeited investment in ethnic comedy and embrace of a new growing genre, rural comedy.

As the nation restabilized after World War II, the social climate shifted again as the Cold War and the Civil Rights movement advanced. Eventually, ethnic comedies began participating in a trend where characters from rural environments made guest appearances. These characters represented a strong sense of patriotism and loyalty to their hometowns. In 1954 and 1955, Tennessee Ernie Ford made guest appearances on *I Love Lucy* as Lucy's bumpkin cousin from Bent Fork, Tennessee, providing a stark juxtaposition of a man content with his technologically-delayed rural upbringing against the contentment Lucy and Ricky felt for their cosmopolitan and culturally diverse New York City lifestyle (Eskridge 43). This pattern signifies a developing social dynamic as a response to the elevating social tensions caused by a changing climate. The nation began diverting from privileging the narratives present in ethnic comedy as it served as a reminder for the difference in cultural background and experiences Americans possessed, which was no longer what audiences craved, as the nation became divided during the Civil Rights movement. The late 1950s marked the beginning of a trend where viewers craved nostalgia and peace which they found in content that featured stories and characters from white, rural environments. By August 1959, half of the Nielsen Top 10 shows were westerns, alluding to the nation's craving for rural comedy (Eskridge 37). Rural comedy depicted small, southern, and rural towns with almost total racial homogeny amongst the cast, and all conflict was satisfyingly

solved within the constraints of the episode. One rural comedy that became adored by CBS viewers was *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968), which depicted sheriff and single father Andy Taylor (Andy Griffith) as he worked hard raising his young son, Opie (Ron Howard), and maintaining the peace in a fictional North Carolina town called Mayberry.

The reason for this shift in content comes from the changing social climate from the 1950s to the 1960s. During the 1950s, Americans were reviving a national identity following World War II and emphasizing patriotism as the Cold War began. However, in the 1960s, the Cold War remained apparent, but the simultaneous rise of the Civil Rights movement sparked political action in the South. The events taking place in the South made many viewers fearful and in need of programming that combatted these worries with Southern-centric programming depicting the South as tranquil and free from any substantial conflict.

Meeting the demands of its audience is a skill CBS fulfilled by recognizing their immediate needs and adjusting their programing accordingly. While the network was not known for taking risks, they were always cognizant of emerging trends and participated in them, recognizing its potential for financial gain.

CHAPTER 2: *I Love Lucy,* The Product of Molding Creativity with Commercial Strategy

The 1950s were a time of change. The country was still recovering from World War II and entering the Cold War with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republicans (USSR). Wartime ideals became ingrained into society as they had consumed American daily life for the last decade, subsequently impacting public perception and tolerance for social matters. Recognizing this shifting landscape was necessary for CBS and other television networks who were determined to maintain prominence, meaning modifying content to mirror these newly embraced post-war ideals was a necessity. *I Love Lucy* was one of CBS' most successful shows that tackled this very issue: creating television catering to the new demands of a postwar American audience.

2.1 Developing *I Love Lucy*: in pre-pre-production

Lucille Ball was instrumental in creating *I Love Lucy* as she eventually convinced the risk-averse Paley that Americans would watch a show featuring a white American woman married to her Cuban immigrant husband. Even though Paley initially rejected her proposal, Ball was ultimately right, and *I Love Lucy* became a national success. The concept for the show stems from a 1948 radio program called "My Favorite Husband" that Paley and Harry Ackerman, a CBS producer, wanted to air starring Lucille Ball as a housewife (Ball 173). Ball appeared receptive to the role, but made the request that her husband, Desi Arnaz, play her on-air husband in the radio show, hoping that spending more time together would help resolve their marital issues (Paper 179). Ball was passionate about her career and was eager to advance it through this role but still valued her marriage and wanted to find a way to prioritize both. Ball's demand was not outrageous considering Arnaz was an actor and musical performer with an impressive resume and Broadway credits, but her ask was not well received by Paley (Arnaz 88). Paley rejected Ball's propodeal again, noting it was a large ask to request Arnaz who was Cuban and spoke with a heavy accent play her husband (Paper 179). Paley said the pair did not make a

believable couple, even though they were married in real life, which Ball argued would make their on-air chemistry stronger and more believable (Ball 172). Paley was unwilling to initiate a test screening or gather more market research before making his call, highlighting his intense risk aversion, which he prioritized over his relationship with Ball. In Paley's eyes, these factors indicated that a show starring the two of them would not get views, because protagonists in an inter-ethnic relationship were not present in any other ethnic comedy. While ethnic comedies highlighted narratives of historically marginalized groups, the genre's emphasis on nuclear family inherently emphasized the idea what within that nuclear environment everyone has a similar background, which Ball and Arnaz did not (Lipsitz 365). Without the guarantee of viewership, Paley did not see the program as worthy of his investment because limited viewership would not advance his credibility with advertisers. In the end, for the sake of advancing her career, Ball did the radio show with a white American-born actor, Richard Denning, playing her husband (Ball 173).

Ball did not let the potential for a show staring her and Arnaz subside. Ball rejected Paley's risk aversion, not taking his refusal as the defining answer to the prospects of a show staring her and Arnaz. She was confident in their potential and eager to prove that there was demand for a program featuring her and her husband. After being told their relationship was not believable enough for mainstream television, Arnaz and Ball took matters into their own hands. Together, they developed a vaudevillian act featuring the two of them as husband and wife and took it on a national tour, which became a great success (Slater 146). They knew that greenlighting a program featuring the two of them as a married couple entailed quantifiable data to convince Paley that the public would have a positive response to their relationship. Together, they thought creatively and gained power through the proven triumph of their vaudeville act. This act helped ensure the show's success because it gave them exposure in terms of what jokes

or gags audiences would enjoy the most and provided an idea of how a national audience would react to their relationship.

The fact that there was no mainstream representation of an inter-ethnic couple on television made Paley weary of taking on this project. Despite Ball and Arnaz's public relationship and stardom that endowed them with a preestablished fanbase, Paley's reservations highlighted his reluctance to develop any personal investment in a program that he was not completely positive would mirror the dominant ideology. After confronting the undeniable success of their vaudeville act, Paley eventually agreed to greenlight a situational comedy where Arnaz would play Ball's husband under the following circumstances: Ball and Arnaz pitch a show that they would make under their own newly formed production company, Desilu Productions, allowing CBS to avoid total accountability if the show failed (Paper 179). While the show's ratings clearly illustrate its mass appeal, the content itself was more innovative than CBS had previously taken on, partially because CBS did not have total ownership of the program.

I Love Lucy was pioneering in its representation of Latinos and normalized an inter-ethnic relationship on television while simultaneously amounting to the highest quantifiable success of any television show at the time. In 1952, the American Research Bureau reported that *I Love Lucy* was the first television show seen in ten million homes (Paper 180). This groundbreaking number proved the show fulfilled Paley's wish of creating content that appealed to the masses and demonstrated that there was a large market that would be receptive to a comedy featuring a white woman married to a Latino, as *I Love Lucy* remained at the top of the charts its entire run.

Table 1:

I Love Lucy's Ratings During the Show's 6 Year Run From

	1951-1952	1952-1953	1953-1954	1954-1955	1955-1956	1956-1957
#1	*Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*	*I Love Lucy*	*I Love Lucy*	*I Love Lucy*	*The $64,000 Question*	*I Love Lucy*
#2	*Texaco Star theater*	*Arthur Godfrey and His Friends*	*Dragnet*	*The Jackie Gleason Show*	*I Love Lucy*	*The Ed Sullivan Show*
#3	*I Love Lucy*	*Dragnet*	*Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*	*Dragnet*	*The Ed Sullivan Show*	*General Electric Theater*

Source: (Brooks et all 1565).

I Love Lucy's widespread appeal, despite Paley's initial reluctance to greenlight the program, is a direct result of the changing postwar social climate and the network's adoption of a new television trend, ethnic comedy. While the show did not have the reassurance of other successful programs featuring an inter-ethnic couple to justify its creation, granting authority to people such as Ball and Arnaz who were involved with the performance aspect of the entertainment industry, as opposed to purely the business side, endowed the network with greater insight as to what content would generate success. Diversifying the perspectives of those with input on programming proved advantageous for Paley as Ball and Arnaz provided an artistic perspective that Paley could not capture. With Ball and Arnaz playing a major role in developing the show, the program diverted from the typical CBS show because it was sustained by people who wanted to nurture its narrative and commercial potential.

I Love Lucy thrived in part because it aired during the height of ethnic comedy. The genre flourished in the years following World War II because Americans were newly unified as the country found itself in an economic boom and the collective efforts from people of all backgrounds to better the standard of living was achieved (Lipsitz358). The collective efforts of the nation meant that the majority of people had built up a tolerance for people and, consequently, shows depicting a life that was not consumed by Christian, white, and native-born American protagonists. With American loyalty occupying everyone's mind, audiences became more consumed with how characters prove their patriotism to the United States than their

original country of origin. However, after the country came together during the war, through the rise of women in the workplace and a strong national identity that spurred from combatting a common enemy, there was a more open-minded opinion of what it meant to be American. This deeply held appreciation for the country itself manifested as World War II ended and the Cold War (1947-1989) began. During the Cold War, believing in American democracy and rejecting communism were essential ideals all were encouraged and expected to embrace.

Narratively speaking, while a shifting post-war mentality and Arnaz and Ball's vaudeville act proved the potential success of the show, there was another CBS program that helped show Paley that a program with a non-American-born lead could generate mass appeal. Through the success of CBS' television adaptation of the radio program *The Goldbergs* (1949-1955), the network received the clarity necessary to recognize the vast and growing market for ethnic comedy. The post-World War II climate where *The Goldbergs* existed as a television show was a precursor to *I Love Lucy*. The show had a dominant female protagonist who had a life outside the home but ultimately prioritized her family above all else. The show followed a housewife, Molly Goldberg (Gertrude Berg), and the various comedic situations she and her family found themselves. Molly Goldberg was a mother, wife, and Jewish. The show never hid her identity, and it was integrated into the show to demonstrate how their ethnic and religious identity impacted her and her family's daily lives (Doherty 37). Despite the widespread antisemitism during World War II, T*he Goldbergs* attained substantial viewership and helped create tolerance during a time of prejudice (Doherty 38). The show succeeded because it depicted Jewish life in a way that felt non-threatening, similar to how *I Love Lucy* portrayed Arnaz's Cuban identity. Molly is not a native English speaker or American, but her children were and fully assimilate to traditional American ways, making the family feel aligned with the dominant American ideology. Providing a representation of immigration that supported American culture and

emphasized American loyalty, alleviated the worries of skeptical audience members who feared that the influx of immigration would offset American culture and patriotism. The Goldberg family accepted mainstream culture, worked hard to integrate themselves into their American neighborhood, and always approached a situation with the good of their family and friends at heart. National acceptance for this family demonstrated that the American public now valued patriotism over all else, meaning they would find comfort in a character as long as they shared their common value for trust in the United States.

2.2 Developing *I Love Lucy*: in pre-production

Much of the ingenuity that went into making the show comes from the fact that CBS only possessed partial ownership. The show became highly recognized for its unique filming style. With creative power at their disposal, Arnaz suggested filming in Los Angeles and in front of a live audience. This decision would ensure a strong tempo for their comedy, but received backlash when pitched to CBS. Arnaz eventually agreed to a $1,000-dollar weekly salary cut in exchange for complete ownership of the show (CBS initially owned half) to which they agreed, and he became the producer (Ball 187). This innovative decision led to success because it was more convenient for actors for various reasons: actors gained instant validation from audiences if a joke landed or not, performing on the same stage under the same circumstances every week made them more comfortable, and since they all already lived in Los Angeles, no one had to relocate (Ball 188). Allowing the actors and creatives to guide many of the decisions made in the show, reflected the needs and desires of the cast and crew in a way that Paley was incapable of doing because he lacked artistic experience.

The *I Love Lucy* crew experienced a setback when they realized there were no Hollywood studios large enough to accommodate an audience and provide a stage large enough to film the show organically without long breaks for changing decorations or changing the lights. Arnaz

tackled this obstacle by hiring Academy Award-winning cameraman Karl Freund to help devise a solution. Freund developed a revolutionary method, shooting the show with three cameras, capturing the actions from various angles simultaneously, giving the film editor three different shots of each action to choose from during the editing process (Ball 191). Strong collaborators improved the show because there was more acceptance for innovative thinking as the show reflected Arnaz and Ball's passion for creating a show that highlighted their relationship as opposed to one that was only meant to increase network revenue.

The personal and ideological influence Arnaz placed in the show, while not pioneering in its representation of women, it was instrumental in putting Latin narratives at the forefront of television. Arnaz insisted that to avoid offending audience members, the show should condition viewers not to laugh at people when ridiculed by others, and only Ricky could make fun of his accent because it is making fun of yourself (Arnaz 309). This attitude is essential in understanding the show's comedy because while it did not divert from talking about the character's respective cultures and using it as a comedic platform, it was never the culture that sparked the comedy. Comedy deriving from Arnaz' ethnicity entailed a comedy of errors where if his background were part of a joke, it was usually Lucy's mischief that was laughed at. Lucy's antics were known to Ricky, as well as to her best friend and neighbor Ethel Mertz (Vivian Vance) and her husband Fred Mertz (Willaim Frawley). Ethel supports Lucy in her various endeavors, while Fred validates Ricky and his frustrations when they arise. This dynamic is established in Season 1, Episode 1, "The Girls Want to Go to the Nightclub." After their husbands refuse to join them, Lucy suggests her and Ethel search through her address book to find dates who will accompany them to the Copacabana nightclub ("The Girls Want to Go to the Nightclub" 9:24). When Fred asks if Ricky has an address book, Ricky responds displeased, stating that he burned it because "I hadn't been in this country very long, and Lucy said that it

was part of the American marriage ceremony," to which Fred grants him a sympathetic glance ("The Girls Want to Go to the Nightclub"11:10). This joke highlights both Ricky's immigrant background and Lucy's trickery. The look Fred gives him highlights the sympathy because he recognizes that in this situation, Lucy is at fault for being misleading as opposed to Ricky for believing her. Arnaz's delivery of this line is sarcastic, noting that he understands that burning an address book is not an American marriage custom, highlighting that at the time the show is taking place, he is assimilated into American culture and knows he was tricked.

A similar dynamic of assimilating to American culture occurs in *The Goldbergs*. In the 1956 episode "The In-Laws" Molly's son, Sammy (Tom Taylor) states he purchased a washing machine on an installment plan. Molly is horrified because that is not a financial decision she is accustomed to as someone who grew up during the Great Depression (Lipsitz 22). However, after some explanation from Sammy that it is not as daunting as Molly initially assumes, and it is simply an American way of life, she changes her ways. In the 1957 episode, "Moving Day", Molly purchases furniture on an installment plan (Lipsitz 22). Molly's change of heart highlights her development and successful American assimilation, painting her as more relatable and less threatening to viewers.

2.3 Gaining National Appeal

I Love Lucy developed its mass following by addressing the public's desire for entertainment to a degree that no other show had. With the exponential growth of the middle-class following World War II, it makes sense that a show glamorizing middle-class life would appeal to the masses. Additionally, audiences felt that since the program showed Ricky and Lucy sharing a bedroom, there was a greater understanding of the social dynamics of their relationship because they were always seen making up before going to bed (Arnaz 322). People found Arnaz and Ball's performance relatable because they were interesting people and provided relief

through their adventures and ability to work through new challenging situations in each episode. In Season 3, Episode 13, "Ricky Minds The Baby," the couple get into a brief dispute about how Ricky should spend his week off from work. While it is his initial desire to take a hunting trip with his friends, Lucy reminds him about his lack of involvement in their son's life which he acknowledges and ultimately decides to spend the week at home to bond with his son ("Ricky Minds The Baby" 3:20). Within this episode, issues such as parenting, marriage, and career are discussed, adding a sense of normalcy and relatability as this struggle of maintaining balance between life's responsibilities is not unique to the Ricardo family.

2.4 The Role of Gender in Shaping Social Dynamics

The social customs deriving from World War II painted women in a new light. CBS embraced this trend by creating female-centric programming during the war, as most of the male population was in combat. In the year 1943 alone, CBS provided approximately 17,000 hours of war-related programs, such as: *They Live Forever*, dramas about the battles occurring overseas, and *Womanpower*, a program describing the role of women during the wars (Slater 95). The network began featuring female leads with grievances and thoughts beyond their home life because post-war mentalities made people more open-minded to the prospect of women taking authoritative roles in environments outside the home. This new development in the role of women changed the bounds of what womanhood meant and how it was represented in mainstream television.

Following this wartime representation of women, CBS maintained this perspective in their postwar representations. CBS recognized this changing understanding, revising their programs to feature female characters who thought for themselves, as it was realized many women had during the war with the men in their lives were away. However, the return of men from war modified this social understanding of what women could do and without scrutiny.

Ultimately, CBS took this to mean that women could act as they pleased as long as it aligned with their husbands' values, and if it did not, the woman had to be painted as the villain or fool. The social understanding of gender roles after the war established that women's interests can exist outside the home, but her home is her primary investment (Spigel 34).

This new understanding provided some flexibility in the representation of women, but as *I Love Lucy* proves, this flexibility is contingent on the woman returning and embracing her domestic role. If Lucy ever tried disobeying Ricky, there were consequences, and she eventually realized that he was always right, as illustrated in Season 1, Episode 16, "Lucy Fakes Illness." When Ricky tells Lucy she cannot be in his show, she fakes being ill to make him feel sorry for her. Ricky knows she is faking and decides to teach her a lesson by recruiting his friend, Hal March (Hal March), to pretend to be a doctor and diagnose Lucy with a fictional disease called "go-bloots." Upon receiving her fictional diagnosis, Lucy begins to panic, and Ricky reveals that he made the whole thing up ("Lucy Fakes Illness" 24:20). However, when she attempts to voice her frustration, he reminds her that she lied to him first and has no right to be upset with him, which she responds by saying, "I guess you're right honey" before the two embrace ("Lucy Fakes Illness" 24:39). This episode illustrates that despite Lucy's attempts at tricking Ricky, his superior wit always makes her the punchline of the joke that he is in on before she realizes.

There is a representational dichotomy taking place within *I Love Lucy* because while there is an inter-ethnic relationship that was the first of its kind on television, this progressive portrayal is supplemented with Arnaz's sexist rhetoric towards women. Arnaz was the first Latino to pay a leading role in a primetime televisions show, and therefore the first to be married to someone who was not from the same ethnic background (Vazquez 26). His worries about alienating audiences because of his ethnicity caused him to advocate for what he believed would be most digestible for the general American public, which included embracing various regressive

ideas, especially concerning women. While the CBS mindset and ideology played a strong role in dictating what content was deemed appropriate for audiences, another crucial factor was Arnaz and his artistic vision, which often upstaged Ball during the preproduction process. In its early stage, the show was intended to use Arnaz and Ball's real names and have episodic plots based on their real-life experiences. However, Arnaz vetoed this idea, deciding that to make the narrative more relatable to mainstream viewers, they should use different names and include another couple in the show, where the idea for Ethel and Fred originated (Arnaz 236). He maintained this level of artistic power by setting a foundation for his expectations of how the humor would play out in the show.

While it was ultimately Ball and her status that allowed the show to be picked up, Arnaz was domineering in ensuring that the show mirrored his creative visionin above all else. Arnaz insisted upon various nonnegotiable rules early on in the show's writing process: there would never be malicious humor; neither Ricky nor Lucy could ever flirt seriously with another character; mothers-in-law would never be the brunt of a joke; Ricky would never act as an incompetent husband; and the audience would never think of him as a fool; meaning he would always be in on the bit if Lucy tried tricking him (Ball 189). Arnaz used his power to put forth a status quo that privileges the experiences and egos of men above women. Arnaz advocated for placing the burden of idiocrasy upon Ball, demonstrating that despite the 1950s being a time of change, when women were able to take on a role that did not simply confine them to the home, they were still working amidst a climate heavily influenced by traditional gender norms. While Ball's plot lines are often surrounded by defiance, she is always reminded of her place residing within the home and the status quo. Since Ricky always convinces Lucy of her faults, which she acknowledges and apologizes for, her unruly behavior does not pose a threat to social order as it is depicted as a fault as opposed to an example for other women to follow. Abiding by Ricky’s

patriarchal mindset informs audiences that Lucy acknowledges her mischievous tendencies and realizes that in the end, it is best for her to follow her husband's wishes.

A mentality centered around giving women slightly more autonomy created female characters with greater emotional depth. However, while women were depicted as having motivations beyond domesticity, their complacency with patriarchy entailed that they never rejected their role as providers, caretakers, and homemakers. Ball reflects on this very idea and how abiding by this media trend impacted her, "All my life I'd been taught to be strong and self-reliant and independent" (Ball 119). This is not how Ball's character behaves as she is fully financially reliant on her husband and ultimately always abides by his wishes. Ball's perspective demonstrates that the portrayal of women in the show, specifically Lucy, was not a reflection of an evolving female psyche but a patriarchal representation of how women must behave. Many of the executives and creatives working on the show were men who wrote Ball's character in a manner that privileged their view of modern femininity over one that was authentic to her own.

As Ball's character is defined by her home life, Arnaz writes himself a character with a vibrant career. The root of Arnaz depicting the two of them as so, as said by Jess Oppenheimer, resides in the insecurity Arnaz had when told, "the success of the show was entirely due to her artistry" (Carini 51). Acting on his insecurity by belittling Ball in the show indicates the convergence of both Ball and Arnaz's artistic vision. Lucy Ricardo is a character that reflects Ball's success in making a show featuring her and her husband while also representing the resentment Arnaz felt, knowing that his wife's stardom was responsible for the show's creation and success. This is ironic given that Ball's character is an armature performer obsessed with performing and joining her husband in his artistic pursuits. In Season 2, Episode 29, "Ricky's Life Story," Ricky agrees to give Lucy a part in his show after she is upset that a photo of her was not included in *Life Magazine's* piece about Ricky ("Ricky's Life Story" 11:52). Depicting

Lucy as jealous of Ricky's success and Ricky being the person with the authority to grant Lucy roles when they arise poses a power dynamic that is the opposite of the one that played out in real life.

The environment the show created enforced a strict notion of gender. Establishing a media landscape that upholds social order meant that while Lucy does rebel at times, she ultimately will admit to her faults and abide by her husband's wishes, providing a patriarchal family message that continues supporting the accepted notions of the time. Paradoxically, Ball gave up any professional ambition when playing Lucy to partake in a project that advanced her career (Carini 43). Ball recognized the privilege she had by partaking in this project, and her willingness to reject a key trait in her real-life character illustrates her dedication to trusting her team in hopes of ensuring the show's success. The role Lucy employs, facilitates a lighthearted mindset where there is no disruption to the environment the characters find themselves in as they embrace the social and cultural systems in place. Emphasizing this dynamic distracts audiences from any perceived threats of denouncing American culture or ideals and provides CBS with relief that mainstream content is upholding the status quo.

2.5 Incorporating Pregnancy

When Ball received notice that she was pregnant and relayed this news to one of the show's producers, Jess Oppenheimer. She assumed CBS would cancel the show since no woman had ever appeared pregnant on television before, as it was considered sexual and inappropriate (Ball 197). However, due to the show's success, Oppenheimer devised a solution he believed would uphold CBS' belief in appealing to the masses while also ensuring that the show, which had proved a promising success, could continue. Oppenheimer's suggestion was shocking, as he proposed that Ball do something no other program had done up until that point, work the pregnancy and birth of the child into the show (Ball 197). CBS, still fearful of being a pioneer in

the industry, enforced a code of conduct that required that the show never use the word "pregnant" and instead use the term “expecting” to provide more subtlety (Ball 197). In efforts to abide by CBS' fear, the show had a minister, priest, and rabbi screen the episode for any possible violations of “good taste” (Ball 197). Maintaining this creative innovation while also abiding by the strict regulations CBS implemented demonstrates that upholding the network’s philosophy and developing unique content are not mutually exclusive.

While the show was already accustomed to advocating for its potential to appeal to mainstream audiences, pregnancy was an obstacle Ball and Arnaz did not expect would impact their show. Now, they were the ones who needed convincing, as they had to shift their initial perceptions and ideologies for the sake of trusting their team, who believed it was possible to incorporate Ball's pregnancy into the show in a way that appeased CBS and national interests. Ball's pregnancy entailed eliciting conversations of marital sexuality into a domestic space that CBS had spent its history avoiding (Berlant 133). After gaining the approval from executives to undergo this daunting challenge, the writers needed to find a way to talk about sexuality that was still easily digestible for family audiences who were not accustomed to seeing this theme unfold on primetime television. The show was cautious about the wording and phrasing of language surrounding the topic of pregnancy because it implied sex and intimacy, which was a highly regulated topic for mainstream media. The show announced Lucy’s pregnancy using a French term, enceinte, in the episode’s title, “Lucy Is Enceinte,” to emphasize the romantic aspect of pregnancy (Berlant 134). In the eyes of CBS, using a French word to illustrate pregnancy accentuates notions of propriety because French is a romance language, symbolizing elegance and affection for its American audience. This title deterred audiences from what is implied by a pregnancy, which the network wanted to gear away from as to not upset audience members or make them uncomfortable and, therefore, risk losing viewership.

Much of the public's acceptance of Ball's pregnancy came from the couple's preestablished public image. Ball and Arnaz were married in real life and publicly struggled with infertility for 10 years, making the moment in the show when Ricky is anonymously told to sing the song "Our Baby" and locks eyes with Lucy in the audience, realizing that the "baby" is theirs, is a tender moment for the audience as it highlights pregnancy as intimate and romantic as opposed to purely sexual (Berlant 136). Emphasizing the intimacy that brews from Ball's pregnancy made CBS comfortable with this portrayal as it became clear that audiences were willing to accept depictions of pregnancy as long as the subject was depicted as a romantic aspect of marriage. The show was inspired by Arnaz and Ball's real personal lives. Including this pregnancy fostered connection as the audience felt part of a life experience that extended beyond the show.

The portrayal proved successful and demonstrated that the role of women and gender had shifted as there was a growing tolerance for female sexuality under certain conditions. While convincing the network to incorporate Ball's pregnancy into the show, a key point of the argument was that being parents would make the couple more relatable as the show took place during the "baby boom" (Berlant 134). This argument highlights the consistent efforts on behalf of the show to mirror American middle-class life as much as possible. The birth episode had an estimated 50 million live viewers and got a higher rating than Eisenhower's inauguration, which took place the following day (Slater 146). The episode received a rating of 68.8, over triple what was considered a major success (Slater 145). The episode broke the charts as its viewership emphasized how strong the public's connection was to the show and how deeply critical it was that they experience the much-anticipated birth of the Ricardo family's child, more so than the inauguration of their president. Following the 1952 birth episode and an Emmy award, Ball's contract was revised, raising her salary to 8 million dollars, the highest television contract ever

signed at the time (Slater 147). This change proves public recognition for Ball's work as a performer because she was the branding of the show and essential in maintaining CBS' relevance and cultural involvement.

2.6 America's Misleadingly Tolerance

While World War II helped unify the country ideologically speaking, racism, sexism, and discrimination still defined much of the social climate, but it gradually began to normalize embracing more tolerant attitudes for formerly discriminated groups of white people (Jewish, Italian, Irish, etc.) (Lipsitz 357). The country grew accustomed to the wartime ideal of being a good neighbor in times of hardship, and this idea remained prevalent in society after World War II ended, granting greater tolerance for others. This shifting idea of what tolerance entailed created an audience who were ready to see and embrace an inter-ethnic relationship and give way to the rise of ethnic comedy, as long as it did not challenge their notions of American loyalty. While Ricky is Cuban, he appears fully assimilated into American life, showing no longing to return to his native country.

Patriotism continued unifying the nation during the Cold War, making the threat of communism and, consequently, betrayal of the American governmental system feared. *The Goldbergs* fell victim to the Red Scare, halting production. CBS dropped *The Goldbergs* after Philip Loeb, who played the father, Jake Goldberg, was accused of being a communist in 1950 (Doherty 43). Having a show with an actor who allegedly directly contradicted the American ideals associated with the time would not appeal to audiences and perform poorly, an unattractive business venture for CBS. CBS dropped the program, and NBC took advantage of CBS' reservations and picked up the show which remained on the air until 1955, casting a new actor in Loeb's role (Doherty 37). Despite this obstacle, *The Goldbergs* continued capturing the trust of the American public through their preestablished reputation from their roots in radio and

representation of post-war American life. The Goldbergs embodied white upward mobility as they eventually swapped their apartment in the Bronx for a spacious house in suburban Haverville, a popular practice for white families at the time (Doherty 47). This move demonstrates assimilation and whiteness as they fit a stereotypical model for white behavior at the end of the show, informing audiences that they have embraced and assimilated to the American ways, proving that diverse representation can be successful as long as the person embraces the dominant white American culture.

The looming fear of communism triggered by the Cold War resulted in the Red Scare, substantially impacting *I Love Lucy*, much like *The Goldbergs.* The show fell under greater pressure to ensure they were perpetuating patriotism and pride in American democracy, knowing that if they did not, the show could be labeled as communistic propaganda. This controversy took noticeable shape in the early 1950s when Senator McCarthy claimed he had a list of all the known communists shaping and working in the State Department, startling the country (Paper 161). This growing distrust in government was particularly impactful for CBS as public trust in the government weakened, and the dominant ideology came from the citizens. This conflict evolved into what became known as the Red Scare and lists with hundreds of members of the broadcast industry who were supposedly communists were publicized, one person on this list was Lucille Ball (Paper 163). Being on the list harmed Ball's reputation as she was accused of defying the country her show supposedly supported because of her former political affiliation with the Communist Party, which she subsequently rejected (Eskridge 26). This accusation was undeniable as there were government records confirming her prior affiliation. She overcame her accusations when Arnaz advocated for her. Desi Arnaz made an announcement before Season 3, Episode 2 of *I Love Lucy* where he famously denied these allegations on Ball’s behalf and said, "The only thing red about Lucy is her hair, and even that's not legitimate" and used his own

background as a Cuban who had escaped a communist regime to emphasize his patriotism and value for American democracy and successfully assured the country that Lucille shared these same values (Arnaz 225). As someone who had immigrated to the United States for the sake of escaping a communist regime, his experience held value to audience members who recognized that he understood the implications of what this party affiliation entailed from a first-hand perspective. Luckily for the show, the audience accepted Arnaz's words, and the show remained a hit. Recognizing how much faith the public had in Arnaz's moral character allowed him to continue her career despite facing accusations, something many other performers were not fortunate enough to experience. This scandal greatly impacted the show and made Paley more cognizant of the program's content as he knew that with these accusations becoming associated with his network, it was imperative that he ensure that the show had no possible interpretation of communist sympathy.

Growing access to media in the postwar age became essential in spreading a message to a large group of people. Regardless of the party it endorsed, media was crucial during the Cold War as it was prevalent in assuaging people to embrace a given ideology (Johnson 95). When a popular mainstream show was interpreted as supporting an anti-communist ideology, it received praise from the government and the majority of the country because the American population had become conditioned to support this dominant notion. Anti-communism became the dominant ideology, and an essential idea articulated through mainstream television trends.

Despite the fact that the role of women and ethnicity evolved after World War II, the climate still privileged men and whiteness. Given this preference, ethnic comedies of the 1950s worked to de-ethnicize ethnicity. Making ethnicity commercially viable entailed emphasizing the role of family and tradition in relation to ethnicity, making the ideals of a non-American culture feel universal and similar to those of traditional American values (Kackman 82). Stressing the

similarities between formerly discriminated against white ethnic groups and those with a longer ancestral history in the United States allowed the genre to gain traction because people of different backgrounds were not depicted as threatening to the balance of American culture. Emphasizing similarities alleviated public anxieties about people from different backgrounds. *I Love Lucy* demonstrates this trend with the character Ricky Ricardo, who provides a comforting portrayal of Latinos for audience members skeptical of immigrants and their loyalties. Ricky embraces American culture, marries a white American woman, speaks English, and the only Latin community is the Cuban nightclub, Tropicana, where he works. Ricky's immersion in American culture, and Lucy's distance from Cuban culture is emphasized in the Season 4, Episode 8 entitled "Lucy's Mother-In-Law" where Lucy meets Ricky's mother (Mary Emery) for the first time. The episode begins with Ricky receiving a letter from his mother, stating that she is coming to visit. As Ricky reads the letter aloud in Spanish, Lucy stares confused, demonstrating that she does not understand the language ("Lucy's Mother-In-Law" 1:43). When Ricky's mother eventually arrives and attempts to have a conversation, Lucy responds by telling her, "me no hablo Spanish" ("Lucy's Mother-In-Law" 9:36). Despite being married to Ricky for several years and the mother of his child, the fact that she has never met her mother-in-law or made any effort to learn Spanish to communicate with her, emphasizes that the show privileges embracing American language and culture. The show uses misunderstandings, such as Lucy thinking that when Ricky's mother is asking about when she can see her "nieto" (grandson), she is asking Lucy to hang up her jacket, as humor as opposed to lesson for Lucy in making an effort to connect with her husband's family ("Lucy's Mother-In-Law" 9:55). This dynamic propels a narrative of assimilation as it is Ricky who has adapted to American culture, and Lucy who does not extend the same effort to his native culture.

2.7 Cold War Impacts

Embracing the systems in place and American culture was imperative for the show's success, as the Cold War fueled xenophobia and fostered the idea that the home represents a refuge from the anxieties and uncertainties of the outside world (Spigel 100). Given these fears, it was imperative that the show paint Lucy and Ricky as American loyalists who upheld the country's values and were good, proud citizens. The two lived on the Upper East Side of Manhattan and were involved in the city's art scene, productively contributing to their environment through culture. Depicting narratives of people who were content with their lives and were not trying to overthrow the systems in place for their own benefit sent the subtle message of acceptance, imploring audiences to take comfort in the structures in place for their own peace and benefit.

I Love Lucy depicts an ideology that is a product of censorship and a desire to ensure civil obedience during a time of high emotional conflict and tension. The government recognized the vast reach of television and per their agreements with the centralized network power made by the "Big Three," could ensure that the mainstream media reflected their values. Networks created shows that preached loyalty to the country and systems in place because they feared the looming counterculture movement and its potential for disruption. This disruption entailed the looming threat of endorsing communism over American democracy. Eisenhower was opposed to this idea and spent his presidency increasing defense spending to combat the Soviet Union and preserving American democracy (Eisenhower). CBS was particularly willing to abide by the government's agenda during the 1950s given Paley's close friendship with President Eisenhower. As good friends, it is no surprised that Paley (as an individual, not on behalf of CBS) financially donated to Eisenhower's campaign (Paper 160). Given this direct involvement and endorsement of Eisenhower's agenda, Paley was keen on honoring it through his network's programing.

Patriotism under a Cold War ideology entailed a devout rejection of communism and acceptance of faith in the current status and operation of the American government. The USSR, which spurred from World War II, instilled a nationwide fear of communism, as it symbolized support for the nation's enemy. Audiences crave television as an escape, and the escape they deem necessary is one that is in direct conjunction with the world around them. When audiences feared communism, they sought outlets that combat this insecurity and received this validation when watching *I Love Lucy* which, in part, allowed the show to flourish. Comedy is successful when it provides audiences with relief, giving them a space to let go of issues negatively impacting their lives. While there was an amusing conflict between characters, it never posed a fear of an uprising, as television has always depicted idealistic environments (Spigel 129).

The very concept of what comprised an idealistic environment in the 1950s was a direct result of the Cold War and what the government wanted CBS to promote to ensure the nation trusted the country's actions against the USSR. The Cold War impacted depictions of contentment in *I Love Lucy* because fears of communism and teenage rebellion loomed over the country. Networks neutralized this threat by distributing content depicting happy nuclear families, providing the characters with emotional stability and material wealth, alluding to a thriving country (Spigel 34). Avoiding any criticism of the United States and emphasizing patriotism provided audiences fabricated safety from the threat of communism. The absence of any triggers of fear gave audiences the comfort necessary to laugh and enjoy the content without worrying that they were subconsciously endorsing the national enemy.

When *I Love Lucy* came to an end, its satisfying conclusion entailed the Ricardos moving from Manhattan to suburban Connecticut. Through this move, Lucy and Ricky prove their allegiance to the dominant white social culture prominent in the 1950s. From 1950 to 1955 the suburban population of major cities grew seven times faster than in central cities (Tobin 1). With

the show ending in 1957, numbers of suburban residents were at an all-time high and therefore the Ricardo's move was very much in line with what many white Americans were doing. The Federal Housing Act of 1934 had a discriminatory manifestation as loans for home buyers were granted to white home buyers at a higher rate than people of color, essentially segregating U.S. residential neighborhoods with white families moving to the suburbs and families of color living in the city (Lipsitz 5). This is relevant to understanding how the show was meant to depict ethnicity because grouping the Ricardo family as following trends and communities that are not affiliated with communities of color, highlights them as white. Embodying the white American experience highlights Latin experiences and ethnicity as less intimidating to white audiences, showing that the two groups should be accepted as one. This is relevant to *I Love Lucy* and *The Goldbergs* because they both move to the suburbs and therefore become accepted as part of mainstream "white" America as opposed to their ethnic group. Abiding by larger social trends helped ensure the show's success and maintain viewership by painting the Ricardos as similar to any other white middle-class American family.

The Cold War contributed to the suburban sprawl as the use of atomic weapons became a harsh reality, meaning densely populated urban areas could be a key area of attack (Tobin 4). This fear facilitated the fast trend of moving to the suburbs, illustrating the impact of social attitudes during the Cold War on the show because the writers molded the narrative to fit with current social trends. Painting the Ricardo family as aligned with what most of the American public did, enhanced its messaging and provided a natural ending that fell within Paley's network philosophy of having content that regurgitates dominant ideology.

2.8 Retiring Ethnic Comedy

Eventually, the Red Scare began drawing connections between communism and people from Jewish and African American backgrounds, foreign cultures, and those involved with the

Civil Rights movement, motivating networks to halt their ethnic programming and prioritize content that depicted characters from Christian and white native-born American backgrounds (Eskridge 29). Many of the protagonists and identities of characters in ethnic comedies were the ones facing the most communist accusations. For the sake of ensuring that their television provided the relief intended, CBS began seeking talent that was not a part of these highly targeted groups. This change signified the decline of ethnic comedy and made way for the rise of rural comedy, launching a new television cycle. CBS had always been highly vigilant of their public perception, airing on the side of caution, and discontinued their ethnic comedies because it was no longer captivating the public and receiving the neutral perception it once received. This notion was enforced under Aubrey's leadership as he declared that the "content was out" causing the network to being embracing the next trend, rural comedy (Eskridge 28).

CHAPTER 3: The Andy Griffith Show, Promoting Escape Through Homogeny

The 1950s were defined by a country reestablishing its national identity after the war, and the 1960s brought its own set of events that shaped public attitudes. While the decade still faced challenges instigated by the Cold War, the Civil Rights movement took on a greater national role than the decade before. In response to this changing political atmosphere, CBS recognized that a nation experiencing a surge in partisan conflict required programming that did not exasperate national disputes. CBS took the route of avoidance, developing content that never brought partisan current events into the entertainment landscape. The network was not alone, as 1960s television became defined by rural comedies, privileging narratives taking place in white, homogenous, and rural environments such as in *Geen Acres* (1965 – 1971) and *Petticoat Junction* (1963 – 1970). *The Andy Griffith Show* highlights CBS' dedication to propagating this trend as the network invested in programming that gained appeal through its misaligned depiction of the American South. *The Andy Griffith Show* glamorizes a Southern monolithic community which trivializes the severity and mission of the Civil Rights movement by putting forth the idea that peace and contentment is achieved when everyone in a community embraces the status quo.

3.1 Recovering from The Quiz Show Scandal

Catering content that fit Americans' developing mentalities entailed investing in programs that refrained from identity-based discussions, politics, or patriotism because those issues were associated with polarizing current events. With financial gain at the forefront of Paley's decision-making, CBS began developing programming that abstained from mentioning these subject matters specifically through filling the network with formulaic quiz shows. These shows were reality programs where contestants competed for prizes, which provided a reliable structure and distraction from the events unfolding in the United States. These shows were only a

short-term fix because in 1958, a contestant on the CBS quiz show, "Dotto," alleged that the show was fixed, an accusation which proved true following an investigation (Paper 203). This allegation sparked national outrage as this scandal intensified preexisting public fears of corruption and distrust in corporations. With these emotions targeted at CBS, the network confronted the immediate and harsh reality of rebuilding its tarnished reputation.

The turn of the decade brought a change in executive leadership at CBS. In December 1959, James Aubrey assumed the role of president after Paley's retirement (Paper 216). Aubrey inherited a network in turmoil but rebuilt viewership and trust in the network following the quiz show scandal's aftermath. Aubrey's vision for restoring CBS' position as a leading network entailed reshaping the network's perceived character and avoiding subject matter that could spark any possible social tension, a mentality quite similar to Paley's. Aubrey embraced a purely commercial means of media making as president. Under his leadership, Aubrey attacked the challenge of changing the public's perception of CBS with aggression, remodeling the network's television line-up to mirror developing trends. This remodeling entailed alleviating public distrust and offering new programming that adhered to the new anxieties proposed by the Cold War and Civil Rights movement.

3.2 Launching Rural Comedy

For CBS, remedying Americans' fears by avoiding any mention of the subject matters creating disruption throughout the nation entailed capitalizing on an emerging television trend, rural comedies. ABC helped kickstart the trend by producing the first successful rural comedy, *The Real McCoys*, in 1957, the very year *I Love Lucy* ended (Bronstein 127). Rural comedies centered around families living in rural American towns and always assured audiences that any conflict depicted would always resolve itself within the thirty-minute episode.

As the Civil Rights movement generated greater national attention, viewers became confronted with the fact that the national identity and bliss for the state of the country expressed on television following World War II was obsolete as efforts to create a more equitable country came to the forefront of national news. The United States was no longer basking in the same praise they felt after World War II, as the country's faults were gaining greater national attention. The uncertainty for the long-term state of the nation caused viewers' stress, meaning that in order for television to provide the distraction and dissociation from reality viewers craved, programmers began greenlighting shows that completely erased these politics.

In addition to the Civil Rights movement, the Cold War was also a key source of tension. The fear of other nations that loomed during the Cold War made audiences more susceptible to rural comedies craving their homogenous and overly American-centric depictions (Eskridge 7). A growing fear of "foreigners" or change in American systems made audiences seek refuge in these shows that preached an American lifestyle that only highlighted white American-born narratives. All characters were content with their lives in the homogenous environments they inhabited and never tried to change anything about their situation.

Aubrey recognized the growing appeal of rural comedies and deemed it the path towards rebuilding CBS. Infiltrating the genre and reinstalling a legacy of avoidance of national issues became essential for Aubrey, molding his executive choices. With finances at the top of mind, his approach was simple and entailed developing content he deemed most profitable. At the time, there was a growing trend of western focused television, so Aubrey decided that he would develop a show that highlight aspects that were more southern than western (Eskridge 9). This method would differentiate CBS from their competing networks enough to ensure their programing did not feel overly repetitive of preexisting ideas while still catering to the themes evident in the present trend cycle. The show selected for this experiment was *The Andy Griffith*

Show. Established television producer, Sheldon Leonard, pitched the prospects of a show staring Andy Griffith to CBS (Eskridge 61). Leonard had directed six episodes of the ABC sitcom, *The Real McCoys*, making him an enticing candidate for Aubrey to entrust in bringing CBS back to the forefront of television by producing its first rural comedy (Eskridge 61). Aubrey accepted his proposal, and *The Andy Griffith Show* was born.

Aubrey's methods of abiding by the developing trends proved triumphant as *The Andy Griffith Show* became CBS' first successful rural comedy, playing a crucial role in rebuilding the network's reputation (Eskridge 57). The success that followed the show validated Aubrey's leadership as CBS regained legitimacy in the television industry. Aubrey's strategy concerned looking at what was currently doing well as opposed to Paley's strategy of looking at what had done well in the past. With this mentality at the forefront of his decision-making, Aubrey flooded the network with several rural comedies to bring the network out of decline (Paper 217). Deterring from Paley's initial strategy gave the network a new protocol, one that focused on trend forecasting above all else. The network would continue in its unwillingness to take risks, as they were now only seeking to capitalize on the growing American anxieties that paved the way for the rise of rural comedies.

In the 1950s, ethnic comedies aimed to remedy the doubts and biases of those skeptical of people from different backgrounds by leveraging media to normalize different experiences. However, with growing social tensions, this method would no longer receive the support it once did, and networks did not want to take on this new challenge. The show depicted rural America as funny, and focused on family and community (Eskridge 9). Highlighting positive qualities and associating them with quaint southern living provided an alternative depiction meant to alleviate anxieties brewing in audiences who were frightened by the uncertainty of the Cold War and the Civil Rights movement. America's changing social and political landscape is what CBS

capitalized on to maintain viewer engagement, and it was easier to speak to their anxieties by erasing racial conflict than confronting it. Aubrey engaged in the same mentality as Paley, producing content for purely commercial means as opposed to experimenting with the creative potential of the rising medium.

As realized in the 1950s, painting an environment that emphasized a believable yet idyllic setting for the majority of the American public was essential for immersing them in the world that would provide relief. In the 1960s, this environment catered to the public's growing need for escapism from the violence and conflict dominating the news. CBS and its competitors recognized this desire for escape and molded their shows to offer a homogenous and idealized reality. This method requires that audiences compartmentalize as the world they were taught to accept did not exactly mirror theirs because of its isolation from current events. During the rise of rural comedy, television became an escape from reality where viewers were encouraged to engage with an unattainable replication of reality. Using television as a means of distraction, as opposed to exploring relevant social conflicts, limits audiences from developing tolerant ideas because rural comedy demonstrates that tranquility only occurs through homogeny.

The tranquility depicted is rooted in nostalgia for an idealized and nonexistent time. Despite taking place in North Carolina, *The Andy Griffith Show* avoids any mention of the Civil Rights movement. Peaceful protests, such as the 1960 Greensboro sit-ins, that took place in North Carolina from February to July of that year had no effect on the town of Mayberry or CBS' sitcoms despite, illustrating how the network actively avoided bringing any mention about the Civil Rights movement to protest into the show (Kowal 151). Avoiding issues such as war and injustice lets viewers engage in an environment that physically resembles their own, but has a social dynamic that was not present in the American South at the time. Griffith described Mayberry as "like it used to be. We drive modern cars, dress modern, and stories take place in

the present but there are overtones of a past era" (Eskridge 63-4). This sense of evoking nostalgia through a program taking place in the present was intentional, as Leonard believed that the 1960s' social climate favored comedy that felt removed from reality (Eskridge 102). The show filled a void for audiences, depicting the existence in a town and people who lived their lives free of any serious distress. The show recognized that they were fueling this need for stability and molded their set accordingly. The show geographically fixed all the scenery, ensuring it looked exactly the same in every shot to provide audiences with the consistence they desperately craved (Hutchison 160). Additionally, the show filmed each episode using one camera in front of a studio audience, ensuring that the cinematography could capture and fabricate close and intimate shots of actors in multiple takes, which facilitated a sense of closeness for television audience members (Hutchison 160). The sense of security and consistency that were imbedded in the show provided audiences with a source of continuity and guaranteed normalcy during an uncertain time (Hutchison 163). The American need for consistency, hope, and avoidance is achieved through the show as its makeup intentionally equips audiences to feel immersed in Mayberry for each half hour episode. Even the fact that the show takes place in a fictional town provides an escape as it is not associated with the news or current events. Recognizing that the town and environment are removed from the audience's real life assists in compartmentalizing and accepting Mayberry as a consistent escape from anything happening in the current landscape.

Without acknowledging the racism that was impacting the country or the threat of a nuclear war, audiences could rely on *The Andy Griffith Show* as a source of distraction. The people of Mayberry thrived because they were not living with the fear of external forces permanently upsetting the balance of the community, instilling a sense of longing for viewers who craved an escape from the uncertainty associated with the events occurring in the 1960s.

This idealistic depiction further instills division during an already divided time by informing audiences that when communities remain homogenous, they are free from any pressing conflict. Additionally, without any notable fears infringing on the characters, the audience can laugh and release built-up tensions. The show's humor derives from its southern charm but maintained an average of 2.7 million viewers in major cities despite disproportionately appealing to rural Southerners (Eskridge 66).

3.3 The Andy Griffith Show as an Idealization of an Unattainable South

Contrasting the reality of civil unrest occurring in the South with its fictionalized antithesis alleviated audience anxieties because they could engage in television that did not echo the gravity of issues altering the American social landscape. As time progressed, efforts only increased as hundreds of thousands of people attended the 1963 March on Washington where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech and singer Bob Dylan performed his hit song "We Shall Overcome" which served as a call to against the Vietnam War and racial injustice (Cox 1). The vast unification of people in support of racial justice and CBS' willingness to distance themselves throughout the entire decade highlights their capitalistic mindset and refusal to use their narrative content as an opportunity to bring greater attention to the events that altered American history. Providing a representation of the South filled with idealistic bliss gave audiences the opportunity to take comfort in the programming, which depicted a poignant place of civil contention as peaceful and not discriminatory. Rural comedy never tackled issues of national relevance, only depicting generic and light-hearted events or easily solved conflicts. *The Andy Griffith Show* was not an anomaly in terms of CBS programming, as Aubrey insisted on producing several rural comedies: *Mr. Ed* (1961-1966), *Petticoat Junction* (1963-1970), *and The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-1971). His tactic worked, and CBS produced half of the top ten prime-time programs of 1962-63: *The Andy Griffith Show*

(1960-1969*), The Beverley Hillbillies* (1962-1971), *The Lucy Show* (1962-1968), *The Dick Van Dyke Show (*1961-1966), and *Gunsmoke* (1955-1975) (Brooks et all 1567).

Mayberry thrives on tranquility, homogeny, and capitalism, illustrating that when these notions are embraced, everyone gains fulfillment and order is ensured. While the town may mirror contemporary society in its physical appearance, it strays from reality with complacent characters who willingly accept all systems in place. Sheriff Andy (Andy Griffith) juxtaposed the current idea of southern law enforcement through his depiction of a safe brand of law enforcement that feels nostalgic for audiences fearing the civil unrest taking place in the 1960s (Bronstein 134).

Seeing a southern sheriff on television who is not violent and beloved by his town was reliving for audiences who attained a feeling of escapism and stability. Andy generates new ways of protecting the people of Mayberry. In Season 1, Episode 28, "Andy Forecloses." Landlord, Ben Weaver (Will Wright) asks Andy to issue a foreclosure notice on his tenants (Sam Edwards and Margaret Kerry) who are one month behind on rent. Andy ultimately convinces Ben that kicking a family onto the streets is unkind. Once Ben approaches the situation from Andy's perspective he eventually agrees to let the Scobey family stay, granting them an extension on their rent payment ("Andy Forecloses" 21:15). This portrayal instills the idea that law enforcement is good, as Andy goes out of his way to ensure everyone is happy. Recognizing the guaranteed contentment that the people of Mayberry feel at the end of every episode gave audiences relief. Andy Griffith implored audiences to look away from events impacting the country, a method that was profitable and financially sustained CBS during the 1960s. Supplementing the violence in the south with rural comedy assured CBS maintained relevance, capital, and reputation amidst a changing climate.

Maintaining an idealistic depiction of the South entailed ignoring the current racial conflicts impacting southern communities. Rural comedies, such as *The Andy Griffith Show*, avoid topics of race by never mentioning it or not featuring actors of color in major roles, allowing writers to deflect the sociopolitical issues taking place at the time (Eskridge 94). Embracing whiteness to avoid using media as an outlet for change or discourse inherently insinuates that conflict occurs when people are not from the same background. Despite the fact that the country was coming out of an era of ethnic comedies, which stressed the likeness of people from different ethnic backgrounds, events from the Cold War and the Civil Rights movement caused people to associate a lack of homogeny and complacency with conflict and the current state of the nation. This new mentality implored networks to structure their programming in a way that would not trigger these concerns. Networks took the approach of ignoring what was going on in the world as a means of ensuring their provided the escape and entertaining audiences craved during this changing time of unrest.

The obstacles facing the people of Mayberry were never unemployment, voter registration, Civil Rights, the Vietnam War draft, or risks of nuclear war, which were some of the actual issues consuming Americans during the 1960s (Vaughan 397). Removing any mention of these major issues highlighted the peace attained through the town's isolation, and they never needed to engage in dialogue surrounding these serious issues because it simply did not exist in this fictional town. Resisting a changing social climate and providing relief through rural comedies highlighted homogeny and complacency as the only way for a society to function without the disruption some Americans feared.

Seizing American anxieties as the basis for financial gain in the 1960s caused CBS to depict the instigators of conflict in their rural comedies as those who were not members of the town. Highlighting threats as externally facilitated xenophobic rhetoric. Within the context of

The Andy Griffith Show, CBS illustrated that peace is only secure when the town remains secluded from the infiltration of outsiders who upset the accepted social order. Throughout the show's run, one villain remains consistent, Ernest (Howard Morris), a man who lives in the mountains near Mayberry but occasionally comes into town to throw rocks at people and homes (Vaughan 408). Ernest threatens Mayberry by being disruptive and rude, demonstrating that outsiders pose a threat and will not accept the current social customs. Uniting audiences against Ernest and conditioning them to associate his arrival with chaos paints him as a mutual enemy for the viewers and the show's characters. This affinity causes audiences to view Ernest as threatening to the order of the fictional town they have come to cherish. This mentality normalizes division and the belief that those with opposing ideologies or backgrounds cannot coexist. The fact that Ernest is a reoccurring character who Andy cannot tame emphasizes his looming threat to Mayberry. Andy's inability to change Ernest and that fact that he is an outside perpetuates the idea that the combination, outsider and someone who behaves differently pose the most significant threat.

In Mayberry, outsiders do not have a full grasp of its inner workings and social dynamics, demonstrating that the town is better off when it is secluded and does not welcome foreigners who challenge its social balance. Maintaining this notion within a Southern setting insinuates and that Mayberry's utopia should remain untouched for fear of throwing off the equilibrated peace at an outside force could dismantle (Bronstein 136). This social dynamic capitalizes on American fear by glorifying an artificial town that captivated people by establishing a utopic sensation of peace and contentment. This consistent structure insinuates that conflict comes from change, a notion that equips audiences with an avoidant mentality as opposed to one that is critical and works to better develop the systems in place.

Despite Andy trying to teach Ernest manners in Season 4, Episode 17, “My Fair Ernest T. Bass,” it is clear that those who do not embrace the Mayberry way will always threaten society. The episode opens with Ernest throwing rocks at windows, his famous destructive habit, but Andy approaches him and offers to teach him manners so he can find a wife. After teaching him how to say please and thank you, and how to engage in polite conversation, Andy brings Ernest to a dinner party. However, he regresses to his old habits when the girl he wants to dance with, Ramona (Jackie Joseph), is dancing with someone else, causing Earnest to smash a ceramic flower vase over Ramona’s partner’s head in anger ("My Fair Earnest T. Bass" 21:19). This ending demonstrates that Earnest’s behavior cannot be untaught as it is in his nature to act destructively. This episode paints Andy as selfless for wanting to help Ernest, but ultimately the audience is reminded of why Mayberry does not have many guests, as anyone who is not a part of the town poses the threat of destruction.

Highlighting Andy's superior thinking occurs through his interactions with other characters as well. Ernest is not the only figure who demonstrate that they need his wisdom to play their role in maintaining the town's cohesion. Andy’s ethical character is emphasized by Barney (Don Knotts), a fellow sheriff, and Andy's comedic foil (Bronstein 135). Andy establishes himself as an ethical sheriff who maintains the order of his subordinates, specifically Barney, whose foolishness is harmless and an opportunity for Andy to further exercise his wits. If Barney cannot solve a problem, Andy breaks down the situation and explains it to him. In this scenario, audiences are relieved that they have a voice of reason in Andy as he ensures the two officers are on the same page. The dynamic established insinuates that there is unity in the systems that protect people because any miscommunication is dealt with immediately. Putting forth this representation of law enforcement was cathartic for audiences because it was the antithesis of what was happening in the South, providing them with an escape from reality. This

depiction was intentional and alleviated anxieties by fabricating an unrealistic and idealistic depiction of the environment. Neglecting the current state of southern law enforcement and pivoting from actually reckoning with what was happening in the world validates ignorance and reluctance to confront the state of the nation.

Barney as a character is not very reassuring for the state of law enforcement: he carries an unloaded gun and stores bullets in his pockets. The show gets away with this depiction because they paint these traits as a product of his lack of education, highlighting these qualities as just naiveté as opposed to ignorance. Barney's lack of education makes him nonthreatening, implying that people in law enforcement do not behave maliciously, and they are not the ones to blame for their behavior. They might have good intentions despite what their actions insinuate (Bronstein 135). In Season 4, Episode 10, "Up in Barney's Room," Barney had a gut feeling that his landlord, Ms. Mendelbright (Enid Markey) is being exploited by her fiancée and Mayberry's newest resident, Mr. Fields (J. Pat O'Malley), yet another threatening outsider. Barney grows suspicious when Ms. Mendelbright mentions that she has withdrawn $3,600 to give to Mr. Fields for a downpayment on a house she has never seen before ("Up in Barney's Room" 15:37). Andy and Barney act on their instincts, calling state police who inform them that Mr. Fields is convicted of extortion, meaning he was trying to swindle Ms. Mendelbright out of her money ("Up in Barney's Room" 21:09). This episode emphasizes that the police in Mayberry are always looking out for their fellow citizens and are willing to go through any lengths possible to protect them, even if they do not realize they need protecting.

Audiences recognize Braney's character as an opportunity for Andy to endow even more knowledge upon the people of Mayberry and keep everything at ease. This dynamic serves as a base for Andy to constantly prove himself trustworthy because while Barney never proves to be a threat to the community, Andy is always there to ultimately fix the problems Barney faces and

prove he is one step ahead of him. Andy's reliability informs the audience that they should never fear the consequences of Barney's actions because the actions from the top, head Sherriff, will ensure the safety of all. Andy at the top of the Mayberry hierarchy, people can trust the systems in place. While slow in his thinking, Barney is also depicted as having good intentions, and despite it taking him longer than most to decipher a situation, he is always looking out for the people of Mayberry as well.

3.4 Repercussions of Investing in Rural Comedy

With alleviating the worries of American audiences at the top of Aubrey's mind, *The Andy Griffith Show* maintains this objective through comedy. In addition to the contextual aspects of the show that distract from the reality of Southern law enforcement in the 1960s, the show ensures that comedic styles supplement this disassociation. The show's comedy comes more from the essence of character rather than written jokes. Relying on an understanding of the characters and feeling unthreatened by them to a point where laughter encourages audiences to picture the South as a light-hearted and harmless place. This tactic deters attention from the reality of what southern life in the United States looked like by capitalizing on a longing for peace. Recognizing the fear spreading amongst the country allowed CBS to find a way to alleviate fear and condition their viewers to seek refuge in their programs. The relationship audiences gained between themselves and the *Andy Griffith Show* allowed it to serve as a consistent outlet for avoidance in an increasingly polarized country. Using comedy as an angle to avoid confronting fear is strategic and dependable because viewers are more likely to accept information if it is met with laughter or a reward (Eskridge 69). Conditioning audiences to laugh while watching the show enables CBS to avoid criticism because it reminds viewers of the show's benevolence and entices them with its charm.

CBS was tactful in recognizing that a show depicting the South, a portion of the country that was receiving immense negative national attention and was therefore familiar to all, was a useful tool in establish a setting all views understood. With the South being prevalent in the media, networks fabricated a representation of the South that provided relief and a refreshing juxtaposition to viewers overwhelmed by the reality of the south that was apparent in the news. Audiences develop loyalty to the show, identifying with the protagonists who help condition the belief that outside forces pose the greatest threat to societal balance. Embracing this messaging makes audiences skeptical of "outsiders" because someone who does not interact frequently with the town presents the threat of disrupting the environment they find stable and comforting. Deepening this belief in a very prevalent fear amongst audience members demonstrates that the network took advantage of national uncertainty by reinforcing a negative notion of change that further divides a country during a time of conflict. This polarizes audiences, conditioning an association between change and a malicious desire for disruption. Rural comedy emphasized a Southern in-group mentality despite Southern states only making up 14.2% of the national market (Eskridge 97). While this population does not make up the majority of mainstream viewership, its nostalgia and tranquility simplified life as the town was isolated from the larger country. The relief this isolation provides enabled the show's mainstream appeal because everyone had anxieties, regardless of their geographic location, and the show relieved them by demonstrating the possibility of a town free from the issues impacting Americans at the time.

The Andy Griffith Show mirrored the tone of the rural comedy genre as a whole but contained subliminal messages that specifically emphasized complacency as a means of tranquility. The town's makeup was ethnically and ideologically homogenous, with no indication that anyone threatens the community's social operation from the inside, insinuating that embracing this perspective enabled tranquility. Mayberry is a capitalistic community, the town

consists of local businesses (Walker's Drug Store, Lunkin's Store, Floyd's Barbershop) and infostructure (schools and the police department) run by the town's residents, with very little variance in the economic status of the various characters and a neutral space where there is no effort to upset the current balance (Flanagan 312). The heavy association between this illusion of utopia and capitalism sends the subliminal message to audiences that their ticket to a climate of tranquility and bliss emerges when abiding by the systems in place, as opposed to challenging or working to better them. All conflict that occurs throughout any episode remains contained to the community and is solved by Sherif Andy's logical reasoning. Once Andy asserts his opinion and evaluation of a situation, any pushback he receives is soon discredited. This mentality conditions the audience to accept this logical breakdown of why the systems in place. Emphasizing a mentality centered around happy endings and lessons instantly accepted by the cast does nothing to help amend the tensions of a polarized country.

The world created allows Andy to appear heroic and ensure trust from the audience as he maintains composure and reliability when tending to the issues impacting Mayberry. Andy Griffith acted as a neutralizer in the depictions of the South going on in the news (Eskridge 69). Andy employs methods that contrast those most typically shown as used by southern law enforcement in the 1960s. The juxtaposition he provides allows audiences to trust the systems in place because Andy demonstrates an ability to uphold social order by verbally providing logical reasoning for why something is right or wrong, which the people of Mayberry accept as fact. His reasoning is embraced without question, implying that it is not the people in authority who are the problem but the citizens who are not compliant with them. He provides a jarring juxtaposition of what police in the South do to uphold the status quo because when he vocalizes that something is wrong, people are grateful for his help, and the town's bliss remains preserved. There is no violence in the show, and Andy's methods for upholding the law rely on helping

others approach a situation from his superior thought process, which they come to accept, allowing for a satisfying resolution to the conflicts at hand. Andy's reliability upholds faith in the current order because he proves to be a voice of reason who can protect the town and ensure a timely and effective resolution to any challenge that presents itself. Establishing this consistency and comfort gave the show the structure necessary to thrive during a time of national uncertainty.

Conclusion

As the 1960s and rural comedy ended, CBS began adopting its next trend, which entailed a greater tolerance for narratives featuring people from marginalized backgrounds. During the 1970s, particularly toward the middle and end of the decade, the network found itself in an emerging trend of highlighting African American narratives through shows such as *Good Times* (1974-1979) and *The Jeffersons* (1975-1985) (Kibler 80). Incorporating these shows in the 70s despite only privileging white narratives the decade before proves CBS only produces content that mirrors the nation's dominant ideology. Once the networks recognize the present ideology, all new work must preserve it.

The shift the network made during each decade highlights its malleable nature. The network itself does not possess a narrative style but an eagerness to observe the style of others and replicate it better than the competition. Embracing this approach is emblematic of CBS' sitcoms, as the network's roots reside in commercial interests rather than artistic ones. Creating media that highlighted new perspectives or offered a view that challenges social norms was, for the most part, absent from all CBS programming out of fear of disrupting the currently embraced status quo.

This route provides the network with the safety needed to maintain cultural relevance and financial success, as evident in their current programming. The network is cautious, as most of its key programming has already spanned several seasons. Currently, as of 2025, *NCIS* is on its twenty-second season, *Survivor* is on its forty-eighth, and *FBI* is on its seventh ("CBS Shows"). Additionally, last year, the network greenlit the first season of *Georgie & Mandy's First Marriage*. This show is a spin-off of the hit sitcom *Young Sheldon* (2017-2024), a spin-off of another hit sitcom, *The Big Bang Theory* (2007-2019). While *Georgie & Mandy's First Marriage* is only in its first season, the fact that the network has been using the same narrative

universe for the last eighteen years highlights their dedication and commitment to recognizing what generates viewership and capitalizing on it to any degree possible.

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