

Does Everybody Love Patriarchy?

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*Does Everybody Love Patriarchy?*

People of all ages use television programs as a way to be entertained and also as a way to learn the social norms that they are expected to follow. The situational comedy about the family has been around for about as long as the television, but the relationships portrayed in those families have certainly changed over time. Programs that showed the traditional patriarchal family have gone by the way side. These were the families that had dinner ready on the table when Dad came home and the woman had to answer to the man about any blunders she may have made, like the Ricardo's on *I Love Lucy* and the Cleaver's on *Leave it to Beaver*. So when these shows went away new ones moved into these time slots and these families seem to be a bit less sanitized. These are the families that yell "shut up" at each other and are disrespectful to their elders. So do these new shows, with all of their sass indicate the end to patriarchy being represented in family situational comedies? While some of these new shows have kept within the social norms (*The Cosby Show*) other shows have you wondering who wears the pants in this family.

This new trend in family comedies, where the roles of the mother and father seemed to have flipped, has gotten some notice. Kimberly Walsh, Elfriede Fursich, and Bonnie Jefferson have observed that the new television families have a fat, lazy, and incompetent husband and a feisty strong wife (123). Women are now shown to have it altogether while the man acts as if he is still evolving. John Tierney writes that the father is portrayed as a bumbling idiot for a few reasons but that "the most obvious is that the television audience has splintered along gender lines, and sitcoms are now a female domain. Four out of five viewers of network sitcoms are women, and they apparently like to see Mom smarter than Dad" (Tierney). With more women watching it would seem like the writers of these shows would want to empower women and

make them equal to their counterparts. “Many television scholars have argued that in a sitcom the power is with those who make the jokes; the characters who are laughed at hold the undesirable position or function as scapegoats” (Walsh, Fursich, and Jefferson 123). Women used to hold the unfavorable position, Lucy was scolded by Ricky, but now women are portrayed as the smart ones who have to put up with their inept husbands. This change in who is laughed at would imply that the woman has more power in the show but “humor does not become an emancipatory force with the power to undermine sexism. Instead, comedy is used to mollify patriarchy and trivialize everyday moments of feminist empowerment” (Walsh, Fursich, and Jefferson 123). While it seems like this change in roles would be a boon for the feminist movement it could just be keeping with the status quo of patriarchy. Women are not shown as equals in the household, it seems like they are only continuing their role as a nagging mother or wife.

*Everybody Loves Raymond* is a modern situational comedy that can make a person question if television is supporting or rejecting patriarchy. This family seems to fit into the patriarchal norms in some ways, both women in the show are/were stay at home moms with a working husband who is more interested in sex and sports than building relationships with their family. However, it does display aspects that move away from patriarchy, such as the wife talking back and having control over sex and Ray’s mother having control over her grown son’s lives. The main character of *Everybody Loves Raymond* is played by Ray Romano who was a comedian who caught the attention of David Letterman. Letterman decided that he wanted to develop a family situational comedy that centered on Romano. The show won many awards including two Emmy’s for Outstanding Comedy Series. It was watched by 18-49 year olds and it had an average of “16.7 million viewers tuning in” (Kerris) each week. Taking a closer look at

this sitcom is important because a whole generation watched how this family worked and could have been influenced by their presentation of family norms. Moreover, it is not just important how a joke/storyline is delivered but what that communication implies about gender and relationships.

I will go over some of the history of *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Then I will go into how feminist theory was developed and how that ties into the show. Next I will examine an actual episode of the show to find out if it supports patriarchy. Finally I will share my conclusions based on the analysis of the episode and what shows of today may represent.

### *Background*

*Everybody Loves Raymond* is a show based on the comedian Ray Romano's life and it aired from September 1996 until May 2005 on CBS and it still runs on syndication on other networks. The episodes center on Ray Barone (Ray Romano), a sportswriter for a newspaper, and his family. Ray is married to Debra Barone (Patricia Heaton). Debra is a homemaker who takes care of her and Ray's children, a girl and two twin boys. She is also in charge of running the household and keeping Ray from getting into trouble when she can. Ray and Debra live across the street from Ray's parents, Marie (Doris Roberts) and Frank (Peter Boyle), who are always making unwanted house calls on Ray and Debra. Marie is what one would think of as a "traditional" Italian mother; she is constantly butting into the lives of her two sons and spends the rest of her time making large home cooked meals for her husband. Frank is a crotchety old man whose one-liners are usually put-downs to his wife. His only real interest is in television and sports. Robert (Brad Garrett), Ray's older and jealous brother, is a New York police officer who envies Ray's life and clear favoritism from his mother. He also has the habit of stopping by unannounced and sometimes lives with Frank and Marie. While the show does have children in

it, the storyline generally does not include them because the relationships that make up the story are between Ray and Debra and Ray's mother, father, and brother.

The specific episode that I will be looking at is called "What Good are You?" and it originally aired January 8, 2001. This episode begins with Debra choking on a piece of orange and when she is finally able to cough it up she accuses Ray of being useless because instead of helping her, he just turned up the television's volume so that he could drown out her coughing. Ray is disturbed by her accusation and seeks the opinion of other family members to see if Debra is over reacting. When he is told that he is indeed useless and then compared to his police officer brother, Robert's helpfulness, Ray sets out to show that he can be someone to depend on in an emergency. I chose this episode because in it Ray examines his ability to protect those he cares about. This need to protect tends to be a more masculine attribute but Raymond always seems to have difficulty fulfilling that role and this episode highlights that fact. If he is unable to perform this essential masculine duty then it could be that this sitcom goes against the norms of what role the man is supposed to fulfill. Although, Ray's inability to be a "strong" man does not necessarily mean that he does not perpetuate patriarchy. This episode is typical for *Everybody Loves Raymond* because throughout the series Ray tries constantly to prove himself as a "true man" to his family while Debra is pointing out his inadequacy.

Although the men in *Everybody Loves Raymond* are always shown as bumbling idiots and the women are forever trying to "fix" their men, these characters have the ability to appeal to an array of audiences. Women can enjoy watching the show because it makes them feel empowered since they are shown as the only ones with common sense. It also shows them as the ones who are keeping the family together. Men on the other hand can enjoy the capers that the male characters on the show get into. It tells them that men do not have to grow up but that they

can get into the same sort of scraps that they use to get into when they were kids and that responsibility can still be pushed off for another time. Even if this portrayal of the man on television is not accurate Tierney says in his article that it does not matter how a real father acts because “he'll remain a doofus on television, and not just because he's a safe target and makes the female sitcom audience laugh. He makes men laugh, too - the men who watch him and the ones who create him.” Men and women alike want to live vicariously through these characters because they make light of the hardships that a real marriage involves.

### *Feminist Criticism*

The women characters in *Everybody Loves Raymond* could be seen as good role models just because their image is out there. Television viewers are presented with the lives of fictional women whose exploits could be taken as normal expectations for real women. These messages might be sending the wrong idea to the viewers. To accurately examine how *Everybody Loves Raymond* presents women we first need to have a better understanding of the feminist movement. Foss says that “although *feminism* has negative connotations for many people, the term is much more complex than the negative connotations suggest because many kinds of feminisms exist” (151). Feminism is generally split up into three “waves.”

The First wave started in the early twentieth century and was begun by suffragists. Suffragists were women and men who were fighting for woman's right to vote. This was a movement that was not limited to the United States but was a global movement. Their goal was clear and when the right to vote was achieved many of the feminists stopped protesting and went back to their normal lives.

Then in the 1960's the Second wave of feminism started. This group was not as unified over one goal as the first wave and so tracking their success is more difficult. Some women

wanted to be paid equally, some wanted to change the roles of women in the home and others wanted a sexual freedom. The one belief that did unify them was that patriarchy was no longer acceptable in their eyes. The feminist believed that women should no longer be under the thumb of men and that they needed to be seen as equals. While some believe this wave ended in the 1980's with the rise of the Third wave, others believe this fight is still on going.

The Third wave of feminism grew out of the need for all types of women to be given a voice. Until the 1980's feminists were thought of as white, middle-class and straight. Women of different races, social-economic groups were not considered during the first two waves. The Third wave feminist wanted to challenge that thought and bring the rest of women to the surface. This movement also lacked a clear goal but took on many forms and is still on going even today.

*Everybody Loves Raymond* began airing during a time when women started to argue about the stigma of being a stay-at-home mom. Second wave feminism fought for women to be able to work outside of the home and many women seized that opportunity and began working full time. Although not every woman went out into the work force, some decided to continue being a homemaker and a rift began to develop between the two types of moms. Feminists like Gloria Steinem found the idea of becoming a homemaker something to shun. In "What it Would be Like if Women Win" Steinem called homemakers "inferiors," "parasites," and "dependent creatures who are still children" (22, 24). This was the idea of stay-at-home mom's in the 1970's and in the 1990's those same feelings were still there. At Judge Ginsburg's nomination for Associate Justice of the Supreme Court in 1993, she said, "I pray that I may be all that [my mother] would have been had she lived in an age when women could aspire and achieve" (A24). She implies homemakers could not achieve and that raising a family was not an accomplishment. There was concern from some women that being a stay-at-home mom would mean that they

would not have much status in the eyes of the world. Other women felt that becoming a homemaker was not something to be ashamed of but that it was the greatest endeavor that a woman could hope to achieve. In *The Housewife Pariah*, Carolyn Graglia questions our country's hypocritical beliefs about our children:

A child's well-being, we believe, depends on undivided responsiveness to the child's needs and continuing, loving interaction with one to whom this child is uniquely precious. What this child does is, in our eyes, happening for the first time; it is incomparably important because we think it so. Such a reaction to a child is unlikely to come from any worker in a daycare center or an average nanny. This reaction cannot be taught and can rarely be bought. And even if it could be, why should society decide that a paid worker should have the joy of overseeing her child's development, while the mother who would prefer to be at home must, instead, help turn the wheels of commerce?

Graglia says that being ashamed of your role as a homemaker is ridiculous because being a mother is the one role in which you are irreplaceable.

While this exchange was going on *Everybody Loves Raymond* aired with a stay-at-home mom who was running the household and telling everyone that she should be respected because she had a job that never ends. Both sides could relate to this role because it spoke to those who felt like they needed to be in control and have status and the others who felt that staying at home is a valuable and difficult job.

The trends for women characters on television have changed over time but Michael Elasmir, Kazumi Hasegawa, and Mary Brain found in their study, *The Portrayal of Women in U.S. Primetime Television*, that the portrayals of women have not gotten significantly better. While roles have increased the roles were still low-status and minor. Forty percent of women

were shown to be either non-workers or that their jobs were unknown compared to men's 25% this leads to the conclusion that women with jobs/roles outside the home were not as important. They found that almost 70% of the major roles that women have are in domestic comedies. There was very little diversity of female characters because 85% were European-Americans. Of the females that were shown with jobs, most had blue-collar positions (19.1%). The marital status of the female was found to have an influence on the type of job that she held and only 12.6% were married. Females that were unmarried were more likely to hold a white-collar job. 33.3% of unmarried women had no clear job and 13.5% of married women were housewives (if they were unmarried they would be given the description of no job as well). The majority of major roles were played by unmarried women (32.7%). The second highest was played by formerly married women (30.8%). Since there are less serious roles for married women it suggests that working mothers and wives are taken less seriously. The women characters in *Everybody Loves Raymond* were not typical because Elasmr, Hasegawa, and Brain's research showed that "the woman on prime time TV in the early 1990's was young, single, independent, and free from family and work place pressures" (10). The characters of Debra and Marie did not fit into what was normally portrayed on television at that time. They were women that were married, over 35, and had to depend on their husbands for financial support.

Using the feminist criticism method I will go over a specific episode of *Everybody Loves Raymond*. First I will reveal the construction of gender by looking at how each of the characters are represented and then how the characters interact with one another. After each reconstruction I will evaluate whether or not the sitcom supports patriarchy. I will argue that while on the surface *Everybody Loves Raymond* wants to imply that it does not support patriarchy, that in reality, the show is supporting and promoting patriarchy.

*Gender Construction**Orange or Sex*

The episode of “What Good are You?” starts in Ray and Debra’s house with both of them sitting on the couch. Ray is watching TV when he looks over at Debra who is eating an orange. He asks her for some orange and when she refuses to hand some of the fruit over he comes up with a way to get what he wants. Ray looks at Debra and says “I was just thinking that right now I could go for some orange or for some sex.” Debra promptly hands over a piece of orange. Ray feels that he has the right to demand one of these and Debra gives into his command. By submitting to Ray she is validating his belief that he can demand sex or anything else whenever he chooses.

While they are sitting on the couch there are some differences between the two characters that become obvious. As Ray and Debra eat the orange pieces Debra is sitting up straight with a plate and a napkin on her lap. Ray on the other hand, is sprawled all over the couch and uses his sock as a napkin. They also dress differently. Debra is wearing nicer cloths and has make-up on. Ray is not dressed as well and does not look like he put much effort into looking attractive.

After Debra chokes on a piece of orange and Ray does nothing to help she asks him “Is it too much to ask for you to save my life once and a while? I mean it’s the least you can do around here.” Debra believes that Ray has a duty to protect her. He may not do any housework or take care of the children, but he has one duty that he must fulfill and that is shielding his family from any harm. Since he failed to protect his wife from choking he botched his one job. Debra is expected to keep the household together with little or no help from Ray. Debra seems frustrated at the lack of help she receives from Ray and this would imply that she did not want to be put

into that position but that his actions lead to her being in charge of the domestic side of their lives.

Ray tries to defend himself by saying that he is really a man that Debra and the family can depend on.

Ray: Hey, come on. You know that you can always count on me.

Debra: Oh, I can? When?

Ray: When it counts. Everybody knows that. I'm the "chips-are-down" guy.

Debra: Oh really? Well, where was the "chips-are-down guy" when the squirrel got in the house the other day? Hmm. I believe he was in the closet screaming, "Get it out! Get it out! It's after me!"

Ray's weak attempt at explaining his usefulness backfires on him when Debra comes up with another example where he was not "manly" enough for her. Debra expects more out of the man that she is with and Ray is failing her. Debra tells Ray that he is "useless in an emergency" and that comment seems to really bother him. Ray claims that Debra was not really choking and if she was that he would know what to do.

Debra: What would you do?

Ray: I would have done the maneuver thing.

Debra: Yeah? How do you do the maneuver thing?

Ray: (stammers) you- get around behind them...and you... Listen, my specialty happens to be mouth-to-mouth (leans toward her suggestively).

When Ray is unable to come up with even the name of the Heimlich maneuver he has to resort to deflecting by making sexual advances on his wife. Perhaps he hopes to defuse the situation with sex which he thinks will be a sure way to calm her down. He may also be making reference to

sex because it is tied to manliness. Ray might worry that he will not be seen as manly if he does not know how to perform a life saving maneuver and so he brings up one area that he knows will remind Debra of his manliness. Debra is not distracted from the issue by Ray's suggestive remark about sex but carries on with the original subject until Ray leaves.

*Don't be Sensitive*

After his conversation with Debra, Ray goes over to his parent's house. As soon as he walks into their kitchen the camera pans over to his mother Marie making sandwiches.

Ray: Hey, Ma.

Marie: Hello, Raymond. You want something to eat?

Ray: No, I'm not hungry.

Marie: You'll have a sandwich.

Since she is the mother she feels that she always knows what is best for her son even if he tells her otherwise. She is in control of her sons' lives even though they are fully grown men with families of their own. Marie seems to think that because she is the matriarch she should have power over the lives of everyone in the family. The kitchen is also the only place that we ever see Marie in this episode. She is often seen working by herself in the kitchen and Frank is never shown to make his own meal which implies that the kitchen is Marie's domain.

When Marie is finished making a sandwich, she picks up a pickle jar and Ray assumes she wants help with opening it. After struggling with the jar he is finally able to open it only to be told by Marie that she had just closed it and wanted to put it away. This is supposed to be funny because as a woman she is believed to be much weaker than a man.

Marie sets the sandwich on the table and when she sees that Ray is acting glum she asks him about it.

Marie: What's wrong Raymond? What did she do?

Ray: Nothing. She's mad at me. She was...eating an orange and she started coughing and...but not big coughing, you know? And I guess I should have done something or something...

Marie: Is that what she said?

Ray: No. She said she was choking and I should have saved her life.

Marie: Well, you know Raymond, I've always found Debra to be very demanding.

During this exchange Marie made two digs at Debra for being too difficult. First she assumes that whatever is bothering Ray must be something that Debra did to him. The second cutting comment is about Debra being difficult because she expected her husband to save her from choking. Marie seems to think that as a woman Debra should be easier to get along with. Also Ray tries to play down the choking incident saying that Debra was just "coughing" and only gives up the full information after some probing from Marie. Hiding important details of the story makes Ray seem ashamed of what really happened. Ray might have gone to his mother with this problem because he knows that she is normally critical of Debra and felt that his mother would have supported him and might validate his actions.

Ray tries to get his mother to agree with him that he is useful to have around during an emergency but is disturbed when she answers "who else is around?" Marie says that she would rather have Robert's help and if he was not available then Frank. Ray seems to be surprised his mother's desire for his father's help and so Marie tries to explain her choice.

Marie: Say what you will about him but when it comes to something like this, he can be very impressive. I mean, he's a fighter. He's got that inner rage. Actually he's just looking for an excuse to use it.

Ray: And you like that? You're the one always complaining that he isn't sensitive enough.

Marie: You don't just want sensitive. I mean sensitive doesn't scare off a burglar or or or a peeping-tom!

This "inner rage" is portrayed as a good quality to have in a husband instead of something to be fearful of. While a man's ability to be sensitive is desired what Marie really wants is a man who can protect her from other men. She places herself as an object for the man to watch over and keep from others.

Frank walks into the kitchen and the first thing that he says is "How long does it take to make a freakin' sandwich?" Frank expects for Marie to wait on him like she is his servant and would never consider making the sandwich himself. When Frank joins them at the table he finds out what Marie and Ray are talking about and he finds it humorous that Ray believes himself to be tough. He laughs at Ray's assertion of toughness and when Ray questions Frank's reaction Frank takes it as a challenge.

Frank: All Right! Let's go!

Ray: What?

Frank: Come on, big shot! Arm wrestle!

Once again Ray has to test his strength. When Frank finds out that he is questioning his manliness Frank challenges Ray to arm wrestling as a test to his strength as a man.

Frank wants to prove what being tough really is by testing each other's upper body strength.

When Ray refuses to arm wrestle his father calls him "Sadie" and then Frank shakes his pinky finger. By calling him a woman's name Frank is implying that Ray is weak and fearful and by

shaking his pinky at him he is suggesting that Ray is dainty. Marie tries to come to her sons rescue by conveying an incident where Ray was in a fight and he won.

Marie: Look, remember that boy who was bothering you and you walloped him?

Ray: Oh yeah! That's right. Robert's friend Albert Gomez.

Frank: How old was this bruiser? 10?

Ray: For your information, Dad, I was 10, okay and he was 12...and half! He called me "Big Nose Barone," and I said "Stop." And he said, "Okay B.N.B" I knew what that meant. So I punched him in the stomach and he went down like a sack of doorknobs.

Yeah, it wasn't "Big Nose Barone" anymore. It was "Superpunch!"

While Marie brings up this event Ray quickly fills in the details to remind not only his parents but also himself that he is a strong man. He was pleased that his fight took place with a boy that was older than himself because taking on someone who might be bigger than him makes Ray feel even tougher. This fight reassures Ray that he is manly because it shows that he can be dominant over another person and so he accepts his father's challenge to arm wrestle. Ray loses the match and tells Frank "Come on, two out of three!" and immediately smacks his elbow on the table. While Ray is jumping around the kitchen complaining about hitting his funny bone Frank laughs reaching for Ray's plate and says "I'll take his sandwich too!" When Frank takes Ray's food it is as if he is saying "to the victor goes the spoils" and that, as the loser, Ray has to give up his belongings to the more dominate person, Frank.

### *Hairy Equals Manly*

Ray is next seen at Nemo's restaurant. He goes there to meet up with Robert and his friends Andy and Gianni. The restaurant is filled with women waiting on men. All of the servers

at the restaurant are women and the owner, Nemo, just reads the paper at the counter while they work.

Ray walks over to the table that Robert and his friends are sitting at and Ray points at Robert. He tells Robert that he is a bad brother and Robert explains to Andy and Gianni why Ray is calling him names.

Robert: Raymond's mad at me because I showed Debra the Heimlich maneuver.

Gianni: Is that that a euphemism?

Ray: You don't come into my house and try to show me up in front of my wife.

Gianni decides to make a sexual joke about Robert's explanation. All of the men at the table chuckle at this comment and are not at all surprised about it and Ray totally ignores it. Ray keeps his focus on Robert and says "my wife" and "my house" in the same sentence as a way of "marking" them as his objects. He says this to his brother and his friends as a warning to stay away but also as a way of showing his importance. Robert is not deterred by Ray's defensiveness and goes on.

Robert: He let her almost choke to death.

Ray: She was coughing on a piece of fruit! Only thanks to this "Boy Scout" she thinks I'm useless now.

Robert: I'd rather be a "boy scout" than a "girl scout".

Ray: What are you saying?

Robert: I'm saying ...I'll take a box of thin mints, sweetie.

Andy and Gianni: (Laughs)

All of the men recognized that this comment about girl scouts is an insult. The men do not want their actions to be associated with "womanly" attributes and to be compared to a little girl is even

more of an insult. Again women are made into an insult because they are perceived as weaker. The male characters in this show are laughed at when they show any female type tendencies.

Gianni adds to the discussion by telling Ray what is expected of him as a man and says: “Come on, Ray. Our bodies are covered in hair for a reason....because we are supposed to be men. And Ray, as your friend, I can honestly say, unless you can provide for and protect your woman, you should get out of the way and give me a shot.” While Gianni seems to be joking about taking Debra away from Ray if he does not do a good enough job Gianni is giving the viewer a model of what a “real” man is and does. He says that a “real” man has lots of hair and guards what is his or loses it to someone stronger. This tie in with what Marie was saying about Frank needing to protect her.

The men at the table then discuss, in front of Ray, which one of them Debra would like more based on facial hair, height, and sensitivity. Ray becomes frustrated with their conversation and gets up to leave but he feels that he needs to “mark” his territory once more. Ray says “I am going home to my wife okay. My wife! All right. And everything is fine in my house! I happen to be all the man that she needs.” Ray’s declaration about his wife and house shows that he believes them to be on equal standing as possessions of his and that it is his responsibility alone to care for those two objects. He begins and ends his conversation with them by doing this verbal marking.

### *The Chips are Down*

Ray is back at his house when Debra is shown just arriving from the grocery store. She is carrying two bags that do not seem too heavy for her to hold up but Ray feels that he needs to intercede. After Ray yanks the grocery bags out of Debra’s hands and sets them on the counter she asks him what he has been up to.

Ray: Just taking care of a few things. I checked the smoke detectors, I changed a light bulb. Squashed a bug. Uh...yeah...made a cracking noise, didn't bother me. What else, any bags left in the car?

Debra: Huh-uh.

Ray: Hey, how's the car driving? You want me to pop the hood and check under the, uh, thing?

Ray is now trying to prove his worth to his wife. The things that he lists, changing lights, killing bugs, and working on cars, he feels are tasks that as a woman Debra would either not know how to do or not want to do. He is able to do all of these "manly" things for her so he must deserve her.

When Debra tries to put a stool away and Ray wrestles it out of her hands she gets a splinter and Ray sees this as his opportunity to make up for his earlier failings. Now he can save her because as he sees it the "chips are down" moment that he had been waiting for.

Ray tells Debra that he will be able to get the splinter out and starts to search for tweezers. When Ray is looking for the tweezers he has to refer to Debra to find out where they are. He does not know his way around the kitchen because that is not his territory. The kitchen is Debra's domain.

Once Ray finds the tweezers he tries to get the splinter out of her hand but Debra wrestles free from his grasp and runs out of the room to try to take the splinter out on her own. Ray follows her out of the kitchen determined that he will be the one to save her from the splinter. After chasing Debra around the living room to pull her splinter out with tweezers Debra questions his motivation.

Debra: What, you want to prove you're a man by taking my splinter out?!

Ray: Just admit it that you *need* me!

Ray eventually wrestles Debra to the ground and pins her. As he is about to pull the splinter from her hand she stops him to try and reason with him.

Debra: Look-I know what you are trying to do but you don't have to do it. I mean, I think that I overreacted yesterday. And I am sorry if I did, Honey.

Ray: No...no you didn't. I should have done something. I screwed up.

Debra: No, you didn't. No—Honey, I think you're a wonderful husband

Ray: (groans) No you don't!

Debra: No, yes! I do. You're a good man. (pats him on the side then leans up to kiss him)  
Come here.

Once Debra realizes that Ray is truly bothered by her accusation from the other day she tries to put him at ease. She says that she made too big of a deal over him not saving her from choking and that he was in fact a “good man”. While Debra’s complaint about Ray not bothering to save her seems justified, her apology is embarrassing. Instead of letting him deal with his dissonance, she jumps in and “saves” him from feeling disappointed in himself. Although Ray may be a “good man” he still was not concerned about her choking until Debra criticizes him about his lack of anxiety over the situation.

The final scene takes place later that night with the children gathered around Ray while he finishes telling them a fairy tale.

Ray: And then the beautiful princess said, “Oh brave and handsome knight, thank you for taking that painful wooden spike out of my hand. I *will* marry you! I'm *lucky* to marry you!” And the townspeople rejoiced. Except for the giant, evil cowardly bother, who was banished from the kingdom forever and had to live 1.38 miles away.

Debra: (The camera pans over to where Debra is sitting on a rocking chair smiling at Ray as the screen then fades to black.) My hero...

This story is told to his children to remind them that the man is supposed to be the protector and that the woman is expected to give into any man who can fulfill that role. Debra's comment could be taken in two different ways. While she could be making the comment to say that Ray is her "hero" because he had saved her from the splinter she could also be making a comment on his parenting. Ray is sitting with all the children telling them a story while Debra is able to sit on her own and relax. She could be seeing Ray as her "hero" because he is taking on responsibility for their children.

### *Conclusion*

After closely watching this episode it is not difficult to tell that *Everybody Loves Raymond* supports patriarchy. The men in this show clearly make themselves out to be the domineering ones through comments of physical strength and sexual jokes. The women are objectified even by themselves. Women are seen as objects who need to be taken care of and protected from other men. While the character of Debra is supposed to be strong and sassy she is still not the one in control of the relationship, her idiot husband is in that role. Even though women have been given stronger roles in situational comedies they have not been given equal roles. They are still shown as items who need to be taken care of rather than people who can hold their own lives together. The only power that women characters have is acquired through manipulating the men in their lives. It seems that men are being laughed at more but what is being laughed at is the man acting like a woman. Until sitcom writers can create women characters who do not need men to complete or take care of them, real women will be hard pressed to find a woman character that they can laugh with and not feel laughed at.

At this time the family sitcoms that are shown are along the same lines of *Everybody Loves Raymond*. A spin-off from *Everybody Loves Raymond* is the show *King of Queens* which definitely continues with the set up where the man is in charge and the wife, while portrayed as smarter, is still subordinate to him. There is a strange trend that Walsh, Fursich, and Jefferson mention in their article that the husbands in these sitcoms are getting heavier and lazier. It seems that instead of moving further and further away from patriarchy the shows are becoming more comfortable showing these sorts of families on television. A more recent show is the *Modern Family* which first aired on ABC in the fall of 2009. This show centers on a father and his two grown children's lives. The title of the show would imply that this sitcom is about how current families function. When you look at the families you can still see patriarchy. The women are shown cleaning and working around the house and men are playing games and not knowing how or wanting to connect with their children.

There are shows in the past that did not have an undercurrent of patriarchy but showed women who were strong and successful without the help of a man. Comedies like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Murphy Brown* were able to show that women could be more than a foil to their male counterpart. While these shows were more supportive of women's roles they were not sitcoms that center on families. If the family situational comedy did not support patriarchy they would look quite different. Men would not be solely in charge of the family finances or the sexual relationships. They would take women's concerns and desires seriously and promote success equally. Women would not be shown as passive characters that are powerless in relationships. They would be strong characters who feel comfortable with their own sexuality and abilities. The biggest change would probably be that jokes in these sitcoms would be aimed

at something else. Instead of laughing at the people in the show we would be laughing at the situation that they were involved in.

Perhaps the bigger issue behind the patriarchy found in television is that it is reflective of the patriarchy found in the home. What succeeds on television is whatever gets an audience. People choose to watch these shows because they enjoy seeing these sorts of interactions and can relate to them. Once patriarchy is less a part of our daily lives then we will see that change reflected on television.

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