

Sitcoms factors. one of the biggest factors being

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Sitcoms and their portrayal of children and families has changed over time due to multiple factors.

One of the biggest factors being society, as well as culture, fashion, and morals/values. *Leave It to Beaver*, *What's Happening*, *The Wonder Years*, and *Malcolm In the Middle* are all family based even though they are all different in their own right. As you watch the sitcoms through the different decades, not only do you see the fashion change but you see the change in culture, the change in the way families interacted with each other, and gender roles. *Leave It To Beaver* was one of the first sitcoms to be told from the child's perspective while also representing an elevated likeness of suburban charm. It was a show with stereotypical Baby Boomer stories, complimenting the honor of hard work and marriage. The suburban lifestyle was a new concept to see on television. *Leave It To Beaver* is a very old sitcom therefore it adapted to a lot of traditional features and ideals of what the American family was considered to be. Watching such an old sitcom allowed me to see how different television sitcoms are today and in terms of what we see in the media.

The classroom scene, if filmed today would not be so controlled, children were trained to be more respectful in a school environment and almost 'parented' by the teacher as they had lots of power over the children. This painted a picture to other American families and it shows children were always disciplined at home and at school. Also it showed how society was very different back then because back in those times people believed in the motto "It takes a village to raise your children". Teachers and neighbors were actually able to help discipline the children, if they saw you doing

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wrong they were able to discipline you and tell your parents. Once your parents find out you'd probably get punished again by your parents.

There were features shown in the sitcom that shaped the what the American Family was supposed to look like. They were an Upper-Middle class family, which was traditional for sitcoms at that time, whereas today sitcoms can vary in the statuses of the families shown. The mother was nicely dressed and the father was seen as the one that held the most power in the household. The mother was a housewife which would be the expected role of a woman at that time. The mother and father were always shown together in every shot. This conveys the idea of every marriage is considered happy and helps boost the idea of a strong family component. The children are dressed sophisticated in the scenes and they are presented as young men, which is something that would be typical of that time because the children had to match the parents.

Another tradition that was shown was the family sitting at the table as a family meal at dinnertime. This is still used in some sitcoms today to display the family dynamic to the audience and to show how the family interacts with each other. What's Happening displayed a different culture. It displayed a low income home ran by a single black mother. Although she only had two children, the son played a lot of roles. Roger, the son played the role as the son, the man of the house and a brother. Even though the daughter was younger than Roger, she had more power than he did.

She was "the mother" when her mom was at work, they had to fend for themselves when she was not there. Dee, the daughter was treated more

like an adult than a child. This shows that because of how Dee's mother was raised, she expected to be able to fulfill the same roles at a young age.

These images have not really changed because there are many single parent households in these days and times.

A lot of the times the children are expected to fend for themselves and take care of the home while their parents are out working. The children in *What's Happening?* Aren't actually children but "miniature adults". They had time to hang out with their friends at the diner but they also knew that they had to return home at a certain time to fulfill their "adult" duties. *The Wonder Years* is from a twelve year old point of view, who attempts to get through his teen years, survive the suburbs and get through the cultural transition from the '60s to the '70s. The show highlighted the distinct fear of school and friendships, love and lust. It showed the fear that comes with not knowing who your parents really are and the terror that follows when you start to understand them.

The Wonder Years was all about dealing with confusing emotions during the madness of puberty, the fear of midlife, and every age in between. This show was not always funny, instead this show brought deeper messages to society. It focused on realistically portraying the details of an everyday life.

The Wonder Years' pilot perfectly grabs the complete chaos that the youth goes through. The Arnold family helped America make sense of the violent late 1960s by looking back at the time, 20 years later, through the eyes of a suburban 12-year-old. Throughout the series' the world followed, and identified the most with, Malcolm. Malcom was the middle child of five and

he grew up in the crazy household consisting of his bossy mother, and sweet but useless father. Malcolm In The Middle shares a lot of characteristics with The Simpsons. It's about a lower middle class family with three children at home, a childlike and emotional father, and a mother who has to take on the role of authority figure.

"The best part about childhood," Malcolm says in the open of the pilot, "is it ends." Malcolm In The Middle presents a childhood that basically sucks.

Bullies rule the school, teachers are indifferent, and being smart is similar to being dangerous. Actually, it's not just childhood that's rough. This is a theory that Malcolm fully embraces and it advances the series to an unexpected sadness. We see it in Hal and Lois' rise to poverty, we see it when the children get rewarded for bad behavior and punishment for trying to do the right thing. Malcolm In The Middle indicates that the world is confusing and meaningless, but you still have to follow along.

This understanding helps explain why Malcolm is the way he is. As a kid, it's possible to see it as a show about some wild children trying to escape bossy parents. As an adult, it looks like the story of two parents trying desperately to control a zoo.

Both views are simultaneously valid: Malcolm knows what it's like to be young, desperate for independence and disappointed by rules. He also knows what it is to be grownup, desperate for stability and disappointed by life.