



A timeline of family sitcoms (situation comedies)

A reflection of family, society and culture?

Television sets in the United States:

1947 – 44,000	1949 – 3.6 million	1951 – 15 million
1959 – 67 million	2006 – 285 million	

I love Lucy (1951-1957)

From Wikipedia: I Love Lucy was the most-watched show in the United States in four of its six seasons, and was the first to end its run at the top of the Nielsen ratings (an accomplishment later matched by The Andy Griffith Show and Seinfeld). I Love Lucy is still syndicated in dozens of languages across the world.

The show was the first to be shot on 35 mm film in front of a studio audience, won five Emmy Awards and received numerous nominations. In 2002, it ranked second on TV Guide's list of television's greatest shows, behind Seinfeld and ahead of The Honeymooners. In 2007 it was listed as one of Time magazine's "100 Best TV Shows of All-TIME."

Looking at the episode of *I Love Lucy*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a "regular" family in the 20th century:

What does a "normal" family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:



Leave it to Beaver (1957-1968)

From Wikipedia: One of the first primetime sitcom series written from a child's point-of-view, the show was created by the writers Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher. These veterans of radio and early television found inspiration for the show's characters, plots, and dialogue in the lives, experiences, and conversations of their own children. Like several television dramas and sitcoms of the late 1950s and early 1960s (*Lassie* and *My Three Sons*, for example), *Leave It to Beaver* is a glimpse at middle-class, white American boyhood. In a typical episode Beaver got into some sort of trouble, then faced his parents for reprimand and correction. However, neither parent was omniscient; indeed, the series often showed the parents debating their approach to child rearing, and some episodes were built around parental gaffes.



Notes:

Looking at the episode of *Leave it to Beaver*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 20th century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:



Brady Bunch (1969-1974)

From Wikipedia: The Brady Bunch is an American television sitcom starring Robert Reed, Florence Henderson, and Ann B. Davis, which revolves around a large blended family. The show originally aired from September 26, 1969, to March 8, 1974, on ABC and was subsequently syndicated internationally.

Notes:

Looking at the episode of *The Brady Bunch*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 20th century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:

Cosby Show (1984-1992)

From Wikipedia: The Cosby Show is an American television situation comedy starring Bill Cosby, first airing on September 20, 1984 and running for eight seasons on the NBC television network, until April 30, 1992. The show focuses on the Huxtable family, an affluent African-American family living in Brooklyn, New York.

Notes:



Looking at the episode of *The Cosby Show*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 20th century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations (*What do we do with a show like this knowing what we do about its lead actor Bill Cosby?*)

The Simpsons (1989-present day)



From Wikipedia: The Simpsons has won dozens of awards since it debuted as a series, including 27 Primetime Emmy Awards, 27 Annie Awards and a Peabody Award. Time magazine's December 31, 1999 issue named it the 20th century's best television series, and on January 14, 2000 the Simpson family was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The Simpsons is the longest-running American sitcom, the longest-running American animated program, and in 2009 it surpassed *Gunsmoke* as the longest running American primetime entertainment series. Homer's exclamatory catchphrase "D'oh!" has been adopted into the English lexicon, while The Simpsons has influenced many adult-oriented animated sitcoms.

Notes:

Looking at the episode of *The Simpsons*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a "regular" family in the 20th & 21st centuries:

What does a "normal" family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:

Family Guy (1998-present day)

From Wikipedia: Family Guy has been nominated for 12 Primetime Emmy Awards and 11 Annie Awards, and has won three of each. It has garnered three Golden Reel Award nominations, winning once. In 2009, it was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Comedy Series, the first time an animated series was nominated for the award since The Flintstones in 1961. Family Guy has also received criticism, including unfavorable comparisons for its similarities to The Simpsons.



Notes:

Looking at the episode of *Family Guy*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 21st century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:

Modern Family (2009-present day)



From Wikipedia: The half-hour series, which was created by Christopher Lloyd and Steven Levitan, is produced by ABC and largely presented in a mockumentary style. The story follows the families of Jay Pritchett (Ed O'Neill), his daughter Claire Dunphy (Julie Bowen), and his son Mitchell Pritchett (Jesse Tyler Ferguson) who live in a Los Angeles-area suburban community. Claire is a homemaker mom married to Phil Dunphy (Ty Burrell); they have three children. After splitting with his longtime wife, Jay has re-married with a much younger Colombian woman, Gloria Pritchett (Sofia Vergara), and is helping her raise her pre-teen son, Manny Delgado (Rico Rodriguez). Mitchell and his partner Cameron Tucker (Eric Stonestreet) have adopted a Vietnamese baby, Lily Pritchett-Tucker.

Notes:

Looking at the episode of Modern Family, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 21st century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:

This Is Us (2016- present)



From Wikipedia: The series follows the lives of siblings Kevin, Kate, and Randall (known as the "Big Three"), and their parents Jack and Rebecca Pearson. It takes place in the present and using flashbacks, at various times in the past. Kevin and Kate are the two surviving members of a triplet pregnancy, born six weeks premature on Jack's 36th birthday in 1980; their brother is stillborn. Believing they were meant to have three children, Jack and Rebecca, who are white, decide to adopt Randall, a black child born the same day and brought to the same hospital after his biological father abandoned him at a fire station. Jack dies when his children are 17.

Notes:

Looking at the episode of This Is Us, make a list of what the show likes to portray families in the 21st century:

What does a "normal" family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Are the above questions even relevant anymore? Are there other questions that we should be adding?