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In celebration of Mother's and Father's Days, *Watch!* ponders how everyone's favorite TV kids would have turned out in real life

Parenting Prognosis

Golly! From Beaver Cleaver's perfectly proper progenitors on the 1950s-era *Leave It to Beaver* to Jake Harper's boundary-blurred bachelor dad on today's *Two and a Half Men*, TV parents and their child-rearing styles sure have changed over the decades. In honor of Mother's and Father's Days, *Watch!* dug out CBS' old family albums to reminisce about our favorite classic sitcom families. Purdue University psychotherapist and pop culture commentator Dr. Will Miller helps us predict which kids may not have recovered from the parenting to which they were subjected and which kids may be all right.



I Love Lucy (1951-'57)

PARENTS: Ricky and Lucy Ricardo

KID: Little Ricky

FAMILY DYNAMIC: Showbiz dad and wacky mom raise talented bongo-playing boy in New York apartment.

DR. WILL'S PROGNOSIS: Kids tend to attach their personalities more to one parent than the other. The impression you get when you see Little Ricky is that he's a little more Ricky than Lucy, so I think he would have gone into music. But in his rebellion years he could have gone bonkers and become totally Lucy with a yearning for showbiz. And one strong scenario would be that Lucy would try to live vicariously through Little Ricky, becoming a strong stage mother and pushing him into opportunities she could not avail for herself.

Leave It to Beaver (1957-'63)

PARENTS: Ward and June Cleaver

KIDS: Wally and Theodore (aka The Beaver)

FAMILY DYNAMIC: Doting mom vacuums in pearls; she and office drone dad dispense overly patient advice to wholesome sons.

DR. WILL'S PROGNOSIS

The Cleaver family dynamic was very rigid and formal—not only did the father wear a jacket and tie, but his coat was always buttoned. His name was Ward, as in "warden." I think Wally was able to conform, but I don't think doughy little Beaver eventually would have had what it takes. Of the two boys, one was a stud and the other wasn't—the Cleavers may as well have named their kids Wally and Not-Wally. But there's a clue in the name Beaver, too—he's the kind of kid who would have stayed home until he was 35, like a small animal gnawing at his parents.



Father Knows Best (1954-'60)

PARENTS: Jim and Margaret Anderson

KIDS: James (aka Bud), Betty (aka Princess) and Kathy (aka Kitten)

FAMILY DYNAMIC: Fully functional family (!) copes with fondness for cutesy nicknames.

DR. WILL'S PROGNOSIS: Ironically, it's TV's most allegedly "functional" family that may have been headed for the worst trouble. Bud had some of the sneaky, scheming qualities that indicate what we in therapy would call a "conduct disorder." He was showing signs of not having empathy, which is the stem that could eventually flower into a full-fledged sociopath.

My Three Sons (1960-'72)

PARENT: Steven Douglas, with help from Uncle Bub and Uncle Charlie

KIDS: Mike, Robbie and Chip, and later, Ernie.

FAMILY DYNAMIC: Widower and not one but two crotchety, housekeeping brothers-in-law raise '60s brat pack.

DR. WILL'S PROGNOSIS: The Douglas family was overtaken by Steve's severe grief, which posed the question: Does a family really need a woman? To emphasize that, the traditional housekeeping "woman's role" is held not just by a man, but by a cigar-chomping man's man. That certainly would have created some challenges as the boys began to date. Because the show ended up airing for so long, we already saw the sons choose women who were very bland and passive and submitted to the rigid masculine dominance of the house. I think it's in the next generation that rebellion would erupt—especially if they had girls.



Good Times (1974-79)

PARENTS: Florida and James Evans

KIDS: J.J., Thelma and Michael

FAMILY DYNAMIC: Economically challenged yet close-knit family loses taxi-driving dad in a car accident; Mom also disappears for a season or two.

DR. WILL'S PROGNOSIS: I wouldn't be surprised if the Evans kids went in and out of long-term relationships before finally entering therapy. They would be challenged by abandonment issues, which would make it difficult for them to trust that their partners wouldn't leave. I'd recommend that these kids do eHarmony, where their profiles would alert matchmakers to set them up with nurturing, reassuring mates.



One Day at a Time (1975-'84)

PARENT: Ann Romano

KIDS: Julie and Barbara Cooper

FAMILY DYNAMIC: Divorced mom relocates to Indianapolis, reverts to maiden name, discovers dating—'70s style. Teen daughters rebel.

DR. WILL'S PROGNOSIS:

The message of this show is "what's good for the mom is bad for the kids." In leaving whatever she found unbearable about her marriage, Ann has essentially erased the father of her children. Imagine the message that sends to the two girls about relationships. And worse, now the most steady man in their lives is Schneider—an intellectually limited maintenance man with machismo issues and sexual insecurity. I can't imagine Julie and Barbara growing up and not having at least two divorces apiece.



Murphy Brown (1988-'98)

PARENT: Murphy Brown

KID: Avery

FAMILY DYNAMIC: Prominent news anchor becomes a single mom after one-night stand with her ex-husband.

DR. WILL'S PROGNOSIS: I can tell you as a shrink, here's what protects kids: strong and decisive parenting, yet with the capacity to be nurturing. Murphy was intelligent, focused, strong-willed—but also had a very strong caring and loving streak. So despite Dan Quayle and his crusade for "family values," I think Avery had a better chance than most kids of growing up to be very healthy.



Everybody Loves Raymond (1996-2004)

PARENTS: Ray and Debra Barone

KID: Ally, Geoffrey and Michael

FAMILY DYNAMIC: Work-at-home dad offers no help around the house; harried,

hottie mom juggles three young kids while fending off meddling in-laws.

DR. WILL'S PROGNOSIS: There's no question that neither Ray nor his brother did a very good job of separating from their demanding mother, and Debra isn't strong enough to stand up to her, either. I think the Barone kids would grow up watching the constant battles between the adults in the family. And they'd begin to cope by becoming very immersed in school activities or hanging out with friends—anything to get out of the house. In all likelihood they'd apply with tremendous fervor to colleges three states away.



Two and a Half Men (2003-present)

PARENT: Alan Harper, with help (if you can call it that) from brother Charlie

KID: Jake

FAMILY DYNAMIC: Uptight dad still somehow manages to end up in raunchy dating situations. He and his preteen son share a roof with his wealthy playboy brother.

DR. WILL'S PROGNOSIS: Jake is going to grow up with the challenge of reconciling the two ways he's witnessed adult male behavior: aggressive and assertive versus passive and compromising. I wouldn't be surprised if he remains a bachelor for many years, like his uncle. But on the other hand, he might also become skilled at handling himself in a relationship, having witnessed what to do on either side of the equation. I think here we have a kid who, as a compromise position, might end

up getting a black belt in tae kwon do by age 15 because martial arts are all about expressing your explosive anger, yet in a totally disciplined and contained way.