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Melissa C. Scardaville Date

A Voice In The Room:
The Evolution of Economic and Aesthetic Legitimacies
for Daytime Soap Operas in the United States, 1930-2009

By

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Doctor of Philosophy

Sociology

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Abstract: While soap operas have obtained *economic* legitimacy by being widely seen as acceptable commercial products, they have not achieved such widespread *aesthetic* legitimacy because they are generally not seen as works of art. This dissertation explores the factors that promoted the economic legitimacy of the soap opera in the United States and the factors that enabled and constrained the diffusion of a legitimating ideology for the genre. It finds that, after their innovation in 1930, daytime soap operas quickly became a viable way to conduct business in the media industry in the United States in part because they were reliable sources of income during the Great Depression. The foundings of soap operas follow patterns similar to other organizations as outlined by population ecologists. Density and density squared are significant, but the effects of density become more pronounced once policy changes are taken into account. The dissertation also finds that a nascent aesthetic legitimating ideology – "emotional authenticity" – appeared in the *New York Times* as early as 1934 and as late as 1995, but it never coalesced into a unified discourse. The dissertation concludes with the argument that the failure of an aesthetic legitimacy to take hold for daytime soap operas paved the way for their current economic decline.

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Table of Contents

The average woman lives by a schedule in which no element changes from one day to the next… The accomplishments of such days may be great in their value to humanity, but the hours are – or were, in the past – long, empty, and deadly dull. But now a new thing has happened.

There is, or can be, a voice in the room. A friendly, unhurried, likable, listenable, neighborly voice that is created by the turning of a dial…

The housewife turns on her radio. She goes here and there, into her living room, upstairs to make the beds and clean the bathroom, out in the yard to hang up the washing, back in the kitchen to prepare lunch for the children…

She knows, without thinking much about it, that the voice in her room tells her what is being heard by other women like herself. Therefore, she is a member of a great group….

She is grateful, because in the world at least she has at least one neighbor, who is many voices in one, who talks to her all day long every day. And it is talking, the sound of a voice, not music or a joke, that must be thought about or drama so artistic that she must sit down to listen to it, that the woman wants to hear. That is what she is grateful for: the voice in her room.

Robert Hardy Andrews. "A Voice in the Room," (1949)
adapted from *Legend of a Lady: The Story of Rita Martin.*
New York: Coward-McCann, pp.111-112.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

During the 2009 Daytime Emmys award ceremony, Best Actor winner Christian LeBlanc, who has appeared on the soap opera *The Young and The Restless* for almost two decades, used his acceptance speech to compare soap operas to art. "There's a great closing line in a Lily Tomlin play describing Andy Warhol: Is it soup or is it art?" he explained. "This is soup," LeBlanc noted as he gestured to the stage. Pointing to the audience, a community of daytime television professionals and fans, he announced, "And that is art." The fervent applause that followed underscored a perspective shared by many in the soap opera industry: sometimes lightning strikes and an episode or storyline transcends its commercial intents and transforms into a work of art that can be valued aesthetically.

For decades, the soap opera – a serialized narrative drama created in the United States in the 1930s – has been a viable way to conduct business in the global media industry (Bielby and Harrington 2008). *Santa Barbara*, a soap opera that aired in the U.S. from 1984 to 1993, was the first American program to air in post-Soviet Russia (Matelski 1999). Another American daytime soap opera, *The Bold and the Beautiful*, is currently the most watched drama in the world, with 26.2 million viewers tuning in daily across the globe (*New York Post* 2008). In fact, almost all countries have used the American daytime soap opera template to launch their own television serials, the most popular being Latin America's *telenovelas* (Allen 1985; Bielby and Harrington 2008). Even as daytime soap operas in the United States have slipped in popularity in recent years, the serialized, relationship-oriented way of telling stories on television has exploded in other American genres ranging from news to reality game shows (Wittebols 2004). The soap opera

paradigm, as Wittebols coins it, offers a powerful way to make money across the globe. That is, soap operas are economically legitimate.

Legitimacy can be defined as "the construal of a social object as consistent with cultural beliefs, norms and values that are presumed to be shared by others in the local situation and perhaps more broadly by actors in the broader community (e.g., organization or society)" (Johnson, Dowd, and Ridgeway 2006: 57). While soap operas have obtained *economic* legitimacy by being widely seen as acceptable commercial products, they have not achieved such widespread *aesthetic* legitimacy because they are generally not seen as works of art. That assertion that the general public does not consider U.S. soap operas to be art seems to require no further explanation. Art and money have historically had to occupy or appear to occupy disparate realms in order for aesthetic legitimacy to flourish (DiMaggio 1982). Moreover, the very name of "soap opera" is, at best, a term rooted in marketing and, at worst, a pejorative term that is often invoked to signify "anti-art" (Allen 1985). The apparent divide between economic legitimacy and aesthetic legitimacy for American soap operas lessens, however, when we turn to the body of literature in sociology on aesthetic mobility and the legitimization of cultural objects.

Sociologists assert that artistic worth is not simply inherent in cultural objects but is assigned to them through a social process (Becker 1984; DiMaggio 1982). Great works of art are not recognized as much as they are created, and their status as masterpieces must be actively maintained. In this view, almost any cultural product (e.g., song, book, television show) has the potential, at least theoretically, to become art. The process through which they attain this status is aesthetic mobility. This mobility entails a cultural

object's journey from a low status form of mass entertainment to a high status position where the genre that contains the cultural object is widely seen as capable of producing works of art that have intrinsic, non-economic value (Baumann 2001, 2007). For example, once "base" cultural objects like jazz are now seen as art (Lopes 2007).

Some have sought to legitimate soaps as art. Selected writers in both the popular press and the academic literature have argued that soap operas are modern literary classics and / or feminist art (Brunsdon 1997; Jacobs 1983; LaGuardia 1974, 1983; LaPota and LaPota 1973; Modleski 1979). American Studies professor Robert C. Allen (1985,14) notes in his seminal book, *Speaking Of Soap Operas*:

> If the soap opera had been merely one of the legion of marketing innovations to arise from the economic vicissitudes of the Depression, the term "soap opera" would probably never have left the pages of *Variety* and the parochial discourse of the advertising industry. But the daytime dramatic serial represented not only a new vehicle for extolling the virtues of soap powder but a fictional world into which millions of listeners plunged every day. The fictional world was one constructed by writers, articulated by actors, and governed by the principles of dramatic logic and narrative progression. Thus because it shared, however superficially, certain qualities with existing aesthetic forms (the theater, the novel and films), the soap opera entered aesthetic discourse as well.

Claims regarding the aesthetic merits of soap operas resonate with arguments about the artistic worth of television in general. Primetime television (i.e., shows that air between 8 pm and 11 pm eastern standard time) has experienced a recent influx in scholarship that examines the medium's aesthetic potential (Bielby, Moloney and Ngo 2005; Grindstaff and Turow 2006). Arguments about the artistic value of soap operas, however, have occurred only within select groups and have not translated into general artistic validation of the genre. Thus, we can say that soap operas may have attained a limited type of aesthetic legitimacy within certain localized circles but not across the general public. Therefore, if we think of legitimization as a social process that begins

with validation by local constituencies and can eventually culminate in general acceptance (Johnson, Dowd and Ridgeway 2005), then American soap operas become an interesting case study. What social factors enable and constrain a cultural object's move toward legitimization – be it economic or aesthetic legitimacy?

If we bring aesthetic mobility and legitimization scholarships together, we see that there are two dimensions to a cultural object's peripatetic journey to higher status. The range of its acceptance across aggregated groups connotes its economic and aesthetic legitimacy, while its movement up and down the ladder of artistic worth speaks to aesthetic mobility. This dissertation aims to look at both in regards to American daytime soap operas. In particular, this dissertation is guided by two questions:

1. What factors promoted the economic legitimacy of the soap opera in the United States?
2. What factors enabled and constrained the diffusion of a legitimating ideology for U.S. daytime soap operas?

This dissertation will proceed in the following manner. In Chapter 2, I outline the concept of "legitimacy" and the "legitimization process" in order to set the stage for their treatment in the following chapters. Also in Chapter 2, I describe the history of soap operas in the United States in order to offer a general overview of the genre's evolving economic and aesthetic legitimacies. In Chapter 3, I address the economic legitimacy of U.S. daytime soap operas. I do so by drawing on two theoretical perspectives from organizational sociology, population ecology and neo-institutionalism. With a database I have created of all U.S. radio and television daytime soap operas from 1930 to 2009, I will trace daytime soap opera foundings (operationalized as a soap operas's broadcast debut year) to examine which factors encouraged and which factors impeded foundings.

This chapter will show that the soap opera format quickly proliferated from its creation in 1930 and maintained its economic relevancy well into the present day. Chapter 4 addresses the evaluative process of aesthetic legitimacy of American daytime soap operas by taking a qualitative longitudinal analysis of the content about soap operas published in the *New York Times* newspaper from 1930 to 2009. This qualitative approach provides rich illustrations of the changing trends in discourse about soap operas and speaks to why aesthetic legitimacy has not been established for soap operas. Finally, in Chapter 5, I tie together the discussions from the previous chapters to examine why soap operas achieved economic legitimacy but not aesthetic legitimacy. As this dissertation will show, daytime soap operas prove to be a rich field in which to explore the legitimization process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Historical Overview of U.S. Daytime Soap Operas

At the heart of the argument concerning the economic and aesthetic trajectories of American daytime soap operas is the concept of legitimacy. Important to note is that legitimacy is not simply an outcome to be observed but a multistage process. Legitimacy, or the generalized acceptance of the "rightness" of a cultural product, – be it a customary greeting among business colleagues or the artistic standing afforded to motion pictures – must be constructed by the few, distributed to many and ultimately maintained, consciously or not, by most. Legitimacy, therefore, is not a static ahistorical concept but the result of dynamic exchanges between individuals, groups, industries, cultures and nations unfolding over time.

As noted in Chapter 1, daytime soap operas in the United States achieved one type of legitimacy: economic. Thus we can say that adopting the soap opera format as developed by American daytime dramas is a valid way to conduct business in the global media industry. The pathways for aesthetic legitimacy were less fruitful. Aesthetic legitimacy coalesced at a local level as many participants in the industry identified the soap opera form as capable of producing art (see Scardaville 2009 and Scardaville 2010). Diffusion of this perspective occurred as soap operas began to garner positive academic and mainstream attention in the 1970s through the 1990s. Yet the diffusion process never completed. The general public does not consider soap operas to be an artistic medium even if some with ties to the industry retain that conviction.

This chapter has three aims. First, in order to get a more complete picture of what we mean by legitimacy and the legitimization process, I turn to the rich body of literature in sociology of culture and organizations to explicate these concepts. Next, I will outline

the history of American daytime soap operas in terms of their economic and aesthetics paths. Finally, I will explicitly tie this soap opera history to the theories about the legitimization process as way of illustration. Together, these three sections provide the historical and theoretical framework for the rest of the dissertation.

LEGITIMACY CONSIDERED

Types of Legitimacy

Legitimacy is not a singular concept nor does it exist is any *apriori* fashion. There are different types of legitimacy, such as economic and aesthetic, and an object's legitimacy in one social setting does not automatically imply that it retains that legitimacy in all arenas. For example, organized crime is a "legitimate" way to conduct business in certain localized circles although the activity itself is illegal (Jepperson 1991). Although all legitimated objects or practices appear to be "natural," this "naturalness" is not universal. The handshake may be a naturalized and legitimate greeting in the United States, but it does not retain that "naturalness" in introductory interactions across the globe. In sum, there are many levels (local versus general, for instance) at which an object can be legitimized and different types of legitimacy (economic versus aesthetic) that can be conferred.

From the organizational perspective, the "taken-for-granted" aspect of legitimacy has been stressed. For example, Meyer and Scott (1983: 201) define legitimacy as "the degree of cultural support for an organization, the extent to which the array of established cultural accounts provide explanations for its existence, functioning and jurisdiction, and lack or deny alternatives. ... In such an instance legitimacy refers to the adequacy of an

organization as theory. A completely legitimate organization is one where no question could be raised." Scott (1995: 45) emphasizes that legitimacy is not "a commodity to be possessed or exchanged but a condition reflecting cultural alignment, normative support, or consonance with relevant rules or laws." In that sense, the more an object is in line with current norms, the more natural or taken-for-granted that object becomes. Suchman (1995) later takes this conceptualization of legitimacy and divides it into two general types: cognitive, which focuses on the frameworks that shape which particular norms, values and rules are followed, and socio-political, which looks at how the public views the social object in question in light of those existing norms and values. In other words, we can ask what enables certain norms, rules and values to take center stage, which then defines what objects can become legitimated. Additionally, we can look at the audience to see how they adopt existing norms and values in order to evaluate an object's claim of legitimacy.

Suchman and Scott (1995) build on this conceptualization to formulate numerous dimensions of legitimacy in order to capture the various conceptual levels (i.e., exchange, procedures, plausibility) of legitimacy. Deephouse and Suchman (2008) continue this refinement by differentiating legitimacy from status and reputation. They define legitimacy as dichotomous (an institution either has legitimacy or it does not), non-rival (legitimated institutions benefit from ties to other legitimate institutions), homogenizing (legitimate products resemble other legitimate products) and political (legitimacy is linked to authority and permission to act). Status, on the other hand, focuses on the honorific aspects enjoyed by an object. High status is defined, in part, against objects that do not possess it, thus status always invokes hierarchy. Reputation focuses on the unique

qualities of a particular object. Reputation becomes a proxy for the object's exchange value, meaning the higher the reputation, the more economic value it possesses. By separating legitimacy from status and reputation, the authors argue that the actual functions of legitimacy – a taken-for-granted form of authority – become untangled in the related processes of status and reputation Not all scholars agree that legitimacy is dichotomous (see Johnson, Dowd, and Ridgeway, 2006), but Deephouse and Suchman's approach – and their departure from other's conceptualization – shows the richness and variation in how scholars conceptualize legitimacy.

Pierre Bourdieu (1993) also puts forth a typology of legitimacy from a cultural perspective. This approach highlights the role that particular groups can play in legitimating certain cultural objects over others. Here, the type of legitimacy conferred to a cultural object is determined by the authority that bestows it (Bourdieu 1993). Thus, there is bourgeois legitimacy, which is conferred by elite institutions in power such as academia and certain mass media outlets such as elite newspapers. There is specific legitimacy, which is the recognition bestowed to players in a particular cultural industry by other members of the community, for example industry award shows like the Oscars or the Grammys. Finally, there is popular legitimacy, which comes from the general public who laud certain cultural products over others. Allen and Lincoln's (2004) study on the retrospective consecration of American films – which past films are currently seen as superior – illustrates these three types of legitimacy. For bourgeois legitimacy, the authors looked to critical recognition, inclusion in top ten best films list by *The New York Times*, the National Board of Review; and the NY Film Critics Circle. For specific legitimacy, they examined peer and professional recognition in the form of Academy

Award nominations. For popular legitimacy, the authors used box office revues to measure audience interest. The authors find that critical discourse, or bourgeois legitimacy, most strongly influences which films are retrospectively consecrated.

This dissertation will draw on these various and nuanced ways that legitimacy has been conceptualized. As the organizations and cultural sociology literatures show, legitimacy is a multidimensional concept that is better understood when the different types of legitimacy are delineated. Thus, this dissertation will help to refine theory on legitimization by offering a more complete model of what social factors enable and constrain the emergence of two different types of legitimacy, economic and aesthetic, using the case of American daytime soap operas.

The Legitimization Process

A focus on types of legitimization runs the risk of devolving into a proliferation of distinctions and sub-types. Fortunately, some scholars have sidestepped this risk by examining how legitimization actually occurs. For instance, scholars have repeatedly shown that at least a triad of factors – opportunity space, institutionalization of resources and legitimating ideology – are necessary mechanisms by which an object achieves aesthetic legitimacy (Baumann, 2001; Becker, 1984; DiMaggio, 1982). Opportunity space emerges when the cultural object in question can favorably compare itself to a newcomer product. These fresh ways of thinking about the cultural object in question must find home and channels through which the emergent paradigm can reliably be distributed (institutionalization of resources). As critics and others discuss these new ideas about the cultural object a legitimating ideology takes shape. Taken together, we see

that great art does not naturally rise to the top but attains its distinction through social processes. Thus, the legitimization of any cultural object is process that unfolds over time and involves different players.

Shyon Baumann (2001, 2007) has empirically demonstrated and theoretically elaborated these factors that underlie aesthetic legitimacy, focusing especially on the historical process through which film became legitimized as an art form. For instance, with the advent of television, films could favorably compare themselves to this new medium in order to increase celluloid's aesthetic appeal (opportunity space). Television's mass audience siphoned off members of the film audience, leaving behind a smaller yet more educated film follower. An increase in academic film programs and film festivals aided the survival of motion pictures (institutionalization of resources). The rise in intellectualized discourse about film, especially *auteur* theory, by academics and critics created a legitimating ideology about the artistic merits of film – an ideology that could be maintained and diffused through institutional channels like universities (see also Hicks and Petrova 2006). In summary, Baumann (2007: 60) argues that "discrete areas of cultural production attain legitimacy as art, high or popular, during periods of high cultural opportunity through mobilizing material or institutional resources and through the exercise of a discourse that frames the cultural production as legitimate art according to one or more preexisting ideologies." By extrapolating from empirical studies across a range of sociological areas, Baumann makes a case that the mechanisms of aesthetic legitimacy operate in a similar fashion across many fields of cultural production.

The process of unfolding is not limited to aesthetic legitimacy but also occurs for economic legitimacy. In a vein similar to Baumann (2001, 2007) , Johnson, Dowd, and

Ridgeway (2006) argue that legitimization can operate similarly across diverse realms (e.g., art, education, business) and levels of analysis (e.g., small groups, economies), thereby offering a complement to Baumann (2007) and bridging multiple perspectives from organizational to cultural to social psychological. To that end, the authors offer a four-stage model through which a social form – be it a handshake, motion pictures or an entertainment industry – can achieve legitimacy: innovation, local validation, diffusion, and general validation. Innovation occurs when external societal factors prompt the creation of new social forms – as in the late 1800s, when the Boston elite created non-profit arts organizations to insulate European high culture from the influence of outsiders. Local validation happens when participants within the particular field (or organization or group) believe the form in question fulfills its goal, and they are able to link it to already legitimate cultural forms. For instance, local validation of the non-profit occurred as elites came to view this type of organization as superior to other forms for offering art rather than entertainment. Diffusion is the transport and translation of the local legitimate product into other settings. The non-profit model spread to other U.S. metropolises and became the standard practice for disseminating art in the U.S. General validation is the widespread agreement (tacit or explicit) that a particular form is generally accepted as superior and/or correct. The non-profit model is now the legitimate way to support the fine arts in the U.S. By focusing on the legitimization of social forms across diverse realms, Johnson and colleagues remind us that the legitimization of an economic endeavor – which can be evidenced by the proliferation of particular types of businesses (e.g., motion picture companies) – is distinct from the legitimization of aesthetic goods (such as the critical appraisal of motion pictures). Consequently, the type of legitimacy

tied to the establishment of a given cultural industry (e.g., motion pictures, soap operas) and its attendant players (e.g., trade journals, critics, professional associations) is distinct from the legitimacy that can flow to the aesthetic merit of its products (see Allen and Lincoln, 2004).

For this dissertation, I bring Baumann (2007) and Johnson, Dowd, and Ridgeway (2006) into dialogue. With Baumann, I pursue an historical focus on legitimating ideology and its relationship to aesthetic mobility. With Johnson, Dowd and Ridgeway, I concentrate on the linkage between local and universal validation. They argue that validation is a process through which shared beliefs create expectations about certain social forms. What often ties localized shared beliefs and expectations together are external forms of validation. Implicit in their argument is (a) validation on the local level does not guarantee widespread validation and (b) the factors that help a social form achieve local validation may or may not solidify general validation. Simply put, many groups proclaim the merits of their particular cultural objects; after all, that is the hallmark of subcultures, such as science-fiction or comic book fans. Both Baumann (2007) and Johnson et al (2006) arguably focus on how things move from local to universal, in other words, the success stories. I offer a story of partial success, where widespread legitimation occurred economically but not aesthetically. To make this story clear, I now offer a historical outline for the reader.

SOAP OPERAS AND THEIR EVOLVING LEGITIMACY: AN HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Although serialized and psychologically-driven storytelling has roots in English

literature, most notably Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* (Hayward, 1997; Simon, 1997) and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, the soap opera is an American creation. A relative latecomer to radio programming, the first soap opera, *Painted Dreams*, debuted in 1930; the term "soap opera" was not coined until 1938 or 1939 (Allen, 1984). During commercial radio's early years, station owners initially rejected programming specifically targeted at women, concerned that it would distract women from their domestic duties (Simon, 1997). As the number of local and national radio stations proliferated in the late 1920s, however, the need for programming increased, especially ones geared to a national audience (Cantor and Pingree, 1983). Mirroring wider cultural shifts in gender ideology, those businesses that would advertise their products on the emergent radio industry began to see women as the ones who were in charge of household related purchases. Advertising was then seen as a "magic bullet" whereby exposure to a product would directly lead to its purchase. The housewife became the primary focus for advertisers because, with less discretionary income due to the Great Depression, she would presumably seek more product information before purchasing, meaning advertisers had a prime opportunity to direct how those dollars would be spent. Additionally, business had the thorny task of convincing families to purchase mass produced personal items that historically had been produced within one's community, such as body soap or laundry detergent. Advertising became a necessary practice and the way that companies could personalize their products to create a more intimate connection with consumers.

In 1926, General Mills, in an attempt to encourage sales for their home care products, created "Betty Crocker," a fictional homemaker who offered daily suggestions about the domestic realm to female listeners (Simon, 1997). Although successful, other

large sponsors like Colgate and Procter & Gamble were hesitant to invest in women-centered programming, especially on a national level, until radio stations offered substantial discounts to companies if they would purchase an hour block of programming (Cantor and Pingree, 1983). By the 1930s, several large corporations accepted the offer and divided their discounted nationally broadcast hour into four 15 minute blocks, each highlighting a different company product and paired with a particular serialized narrative (Cantor and Pingree, 1983). This commercialization was, in part, an attempt to counteract the faltering economy of the Great Depression (Lavin, 1995).

Innovation: The creation of a genre

The literal and figurative headquarters for radio was New York City mainly because Manhattan was the cheapest place from which to originate national programming due to the location of telephone wires, the early carriers of radio signals. Although central to programming distribution and expansion, New York was rarely the birthplace for new radio genres (LaGuardia, 1983). Instead, in the instance of soap operas, Chicago had the honor. Situated in the industry periphery, Chicago radio stations welcomed innovation because they had hours of airtime to fill and inexpensive local talent at hand. Whereas New York often employed already established – and pricey – Broadway actors, Chicago hopefuls saw radio as a gateway into show business and thus often worked for free and were given more freedom to showcase their own particular talents (LaGuardia, 1983). Such was the case for teacher turned actress Irna Phillips, who was noted for her improvisational skills during Chicago station WGN broadcast *Thoughts for a Day* in 1930. In desperate need for daytime programming (most scripted programs then aired in

the evening), station executives hired Phillips to write a 10-minute daily show to be modeled off of the successful evening serials, *The Gumps, Amos 'n' Andy* and *Claire, Lu and Em*. In the fall of 1930, Phillips and WGN delivered what is now considered to be the first soap opera, *Painted Dreams*. Due to the program's popularity, WGN enticed a Chicago meatpacker to sponsor it, which also resulted in a substantial salary increase for Phillips (Lavin, 1995). Marilyn Lavin (1995: 78) argues that the sponsorship and Phillips' subsequent pay raise "occurring in the depth of the Depression, suggest that Phillips had developed a commercial daytime format capable of attracting and sustaining the interest of the daytime housewife audience." Others, most notably the Hummerts and Elaine Carrington, began to produce financially successful daytime radio dramas. Frank Hummert, an advertising executive, and his personal assistant and wife Anne, became the most prolific creators, creating over 125 radio serials from the 1930s to the 1960s.

Local validation

The number of daytime serials exploded in the 1930s, and by 1940, the airwaves were home to 64 serials and generated 26.7 million dollars ($365.2 million in current dollars) in sales for CBS and NBC (Cantor and Pingree, 1983). The sheer number of soap operas indicates that as a business form, soap operas had become legitimated (see Hannan and Carroll, 1992). Importantly, soap operas, first on radio and later on television, generated relatively stable windfall profits for the networks. The money earned in daytime regularly offset losses incurred in primetime. Given the uncertainty of success and the high risks involved with failure in television, soap operas provided networks financial security (see Bielby and Bielby, 1994). Whereas primetime television made

money over years through syndication deals and re-runs (Bielby and Harrington, 2008), soap operas needed to profit from the initial air show. Thus, their financial success was much more immediate. Soaps' longevity and economic success positioned the genre to be the financial workhorse and scapegoat for the television industry.

Diffusion and general validation

The American soap opera format diffused to other countries. In Cuba in the 1930s, soap companies such as Colgate-Palmolive sponsored serialized radio dramas called *radionovelas* (LaPastina and Rego, 2007). It was not until the early 1980s, however, that U.S. soap operas achieved international recognition when American primetime soap *Dallas* became a hit in over 90 countries (Ang, 1985). Soon, U.S. daytime soap operas began to air in other countries. For example, *Santa Barbara* was the first Western television program to be broadcast in Post-Soviet Russia. In the 1990s, U.S. daytime soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful* became an international success as it developed a dedicated viewer following in multiple countries (Bielby and Harrington, 2008). Currently in the United States, the soap opera industry increasingly focuses on international sales in order to off-set production costs. In the global television market, serials from various countries are now the most exported television product in the world (Bielby and Harrington, 2008).

In the United States, the success of *Dallas* spurred a flurry of nighttime soap operas, e.g., *Dynasty* and *Knots Landing*, and later *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Melrose Place.* Moreover, the serialized narration and plotting of fiction and non-fictions became a storytelling paradigm that spread throughout the domestic mass media industry

(Wittebols, 2004). Whereas episodic drama – narratives with storylines that resolve in a single episode and have little character evolution over time – previously dominated the primetime schedule, most television shows, regardless of genre, now adopt a more serialized model. This shift, which began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, exploded in the 1990s and has continued to grow rapidly into the 21th century (Wittebols, 2004). Wittebols argues that business-oriented professionals whose main concern was the bottom line dramatically increased their direct influence in television programming and content as the number of media companies shrank. This consolidation also brought formerly disparate divisions – news, sports, daytime, primetime – under the same leadership (Wittebols, 2004). Thus, soap opera storytelling, already a legitimate business model in the daytime sphere, diffused into other divisions. Unlike other television genres, soap operas were created specifically for niche audiences, i.e. middle class women. Hence, as demographics became key in the late 1970s, soap opera storytelling was an established successful model known to reach particular audiences, a vast departure from the "all shows needs all viewers" approach that had dominated primetime. The subjects of soap opera storytelling changed – from housewives to politicians, entertainment figures and sports stars – in order to reach new niche audiences but these events were increasingly told in serialized and relationship-oriented format.

Turning specifically to Johnson, Dowd and Ridgeway (2006), we can see their four-step process of legitimization in action within the mass media industry: innovation, local validation, diffusion and general validation. Soap operas were created as a business strategy in the 1930s and quickly gained acceptance as a legitimate way to garner women's advertising dollars in the radio and later television industry. Diffusion of the

business model occurred in a domestic and international context. In the United States, the "soap opera paradigm" of storytelling shaped the kinds of shows that aired in primetime as well as the content of established genres like news and sports. On a global scale, countries, particularly in Latin America with *telenovelas*, made their own versions of American soap operas. Starting in the 1980s and rapidly increasing in the 1990s, countries began to import American daytime soap operas, allowing the U.S. daytime soap opera model to diffuse even further. Currently, the serialized format dominates the television market both domestically and globally. Soap opera storytelling has become an internationally economic legitimate model in the mass media industry.

The recent cancellations of long-terms soap operas *Guiding Light* (1937-2009) and *As The World Turns* (1956-2010) paradoxically illustrates this point. Soap operas are such a successful economic enterprise that they cannot be contained to a niche or specialized audience. The soap operas is everywhere from reality television to news coverage to primetime and cable dramas. The diffusion is so complete, the media industry has so fully adopted the soap opera paradigm, that soap opera can no longer be produced or discussed in traditional ways. Ironically, the demise of the daytime soap opera may be the very pinnacle of its economic success.

As we will see in Chapter 3, radio affiliates espoused the daytime soap opera in the United States in the 1930s. Local validation came quickly and diffusion of the form was rapid. To illustrate the economic legitimacy of soap operas, I now turn to the Hummerts.

Frank Hummert, a successful advertising executive, and Anne Hummert, his wife and personal assistant turned business woman, created the most financially successful

model for radio soap operas. Most famous for their long-running serials *Ma Perkins* (1933-1960), *Romance of Helen Trent* (1933-1960) and *Stella Dallas* (1937-1955), the duo developed over 60 soap operas during their tenure on radio, netting at least $300,000 annually by the early 1940s (Cox 2005). In 1944, they established the production company Air Feature Incorporated. Their Manhattan-based office, often called "the Hummer salt mines," further streamlined soap opera creation by housing editors, writers and typists who sat row upon row in an assembly-line effect that was often compared to General Motors (Cox 2003). The Hummerts demanded strict creative control over all aspects of production but delegated the execution of those tasks to others. Their way of creating a daily script (i.e., different employees overseeing different aspects of the script) became an efficient and rationalized model that was later adopted for all scripted television shows (Cox, 2003). The Hummerts employed many techniques such as these to maximum profits and ensure minimal artistic impact. Rehearsal and show times were closely monitored so those working on a show would take home exactly $11.88 per week (Cox 2003). Similarly the Hummerts mandated that only five characters could be heard on one soap opera on a given day thereby reducing fees paid to actors (Cox 2003). Maintaining low costs, standardization and specialization allowed the Hummerts to amass personal millions.

That so many of the Hummert programs sounded alike was not a by-product of this standardization but an aggressive goal: the Hummerts actively tried to make their shows indistinguishable from one another. Writers could not add their names to the credits; actors were discouraged from becoming too identified with one role. Anne routinely reassigned writers to different shows so no show would develop a unique voice

(Cox 2003). Directors and actors also operated under strict mandates to adhere to specific rules. Radio historian Jim Cox recounts:

> An actress who played in dozen of Air Feature dramas shared a few of the common practices: "The directors were not allowed to introduce 'art effects' effects – unessential sound, background music – that might obscure one word of the dialogue. An actor needed a formidable technique to play a hysterical scene to suit the Hummerts. They demanded excitement and pace but each vowel and consonant had to be enunciated with painful precision. For two characters to overlap speeches was absolutely forbidden." As for the writer, he had a typed list of regulations to guide him – all aimed at insuring that the listener knew at every moment who was talking to who and about what. This meant frequent character identifications and plot "recaps" (Cox 2003, 36)

In many ways, the Hummerts' approach embodies the economic legitimacy of soap operas. Their radio soap operas were assembled and distributed by the lowest cost possible in order to reap the most economic benefits for themselves and the advertisers. In this sense, the Hummerts were the driving force behind establishing soap operas as a viable way to make profits in the media industry. That many of their routinized procedures such as specialized writing teams and daily plot recaps remain in the daytime industry speak to the power of these innovations and their deep roots in the economic legitimacy of the genre.

Aesthetic discourse of American soap operas

Aesthetic evaluation of soap operas had a different track than economic legitimization. As we will see in Chapter 4, soap operas received no negative publicity in *The New York Times* until 1937, seven years after their debut. In fact, the term soap opera, a derogatory play on the term horse operas (now known as Westerns), did not exist until the late 1930s. Until the 1940s, discourse about soap operas ranged from enthusiastic

endorsements to benign neglect. Among their detractors, soaps were considered to be mildly annoying, while their supporters saw daytime serials as promoting "an understanding in public welfare, child psychology and modern psychiatric knowledge" (Thurber, 1948: 53). This approach to soap content changed in the early 1940s as the United States inched closer to war. Citing a unified and strong America as an important weapon against Fascism, educators, psychologists and cultural critics turned their attention to soap operas, which they saw as weakening society's moral fabric through their deleterious effect on female listeners (Simon, 1997). In 1942, psychiatrist Louis I. Berg published a study where he asserted that listening to soaps posed a significant health risk to women and that the repetitiveness of the serials were akin to Nazi propaganda (Simon, 1997; Thurber, 1948). Berg's findings triggered a landslide of public debate that played out in the popular press. Subsequent studies, typically sponsored by the networks or government, found that soap operas posed no health risks (Allen, 1985; Herzog, 1944; Thurber, 1948). Researchers concluded that the soap opera may be a simplistic, overemotional genre, but it certainly was not dangerous, and by 1945, at war's end, public scrutiny mostly abated.

Soap operas only sporadically garnered mainstream attention during the 1950s and 1960s, despite their growing popularity and transition to television. In a cover story about soap operas in a 1961 *TV Guide*, the author contrasts current attitudes to those of the 1940s. "Today, it would appear that psychologists and intellectuals have other fish to fry and nobody is exercised about the menace, if any, of TV soaps. 'I think the intellectuals just got bored,' Jack Gould, critic for *The New York Times*, has said. He feels that soaps are a 'basic narcotic' which don't do any great harm" (Grafton, 1961: 10).

This view of soap operas as benign yet silly entertainment would continue until the late 1960s.

Changing opportunity spaces and legitimating ideology

Beginning in 1968, *TV Guide*, which had previously disdained daytime serials, began to publish stories on the social relevance of soap operas and the quality of the acting found on the shows (LaGuardia, 1974). This change of perspective fits with the rising critical evaluation of television in general that began to emerge in the 1970s (Bielby et al., 2005). Developments beyond the U.S. also played a significant role for the rising status of soap operas. The British mini-series *The Forsyte Saga,* which had been embraced by British audiences and later aired in the United States, helped American critics see soap operas in a new light (*Times,*1971). Although a soap opera, *The Forsyte Saga* had what American serials did not: high-status patrons (the Ford Foundation sponsored its initial US release) and critical success (four awards from the British Association of Film and Television Artists). In 1972, the Canadian imported daytime serial of re-created therapy sessions added legitimacy to the daytime genre. The show, *Paul Bernard, Psychiatrist* was sanctioned by a professional organization, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and the serial's content was framed as information not just entertainment. As a *New York Times* writer states, "What self-respecting subscriber to *The New York Review of Books* would publicly confess that she fights her preschooler for control of the television dial every morning to see if the kid gets to watch the 11:30 cartoons or she gets to see 'Love of Life'... But Dr. Bernard has made it possible to come out, to declare ourselves. Who could be ashamed of watching television in the middle of

the day if the show is certified by the Canadian Mental Health Association?" (Harrington, 1972: D17).

Five years after the U.S. release of *The Forsyte Saga, Days of Our Lives* became the first soap opera to grace the cover of a mainstream news-oriented magazine, *Time.* In its cover story, the author argues that soap operas were reaching a new age.

> After more than 40 years of near invisibility, soaps are gaining academic attention. Colleges are offering courses on them. They are being claimed as heirs to the 18th century tradition of the picaresque romantic novel. Others think Daniel Defoe started it all with Moll Flanders. This week, the soaps receive what intellectuals might consider the ultimate accolade: a serious parody [*Mary Hartman! Mary Hartman!*]. (*Time*, 1976: 47)

Whereas psychiatrists and academics once disdained soaps, some now embraced soaps' realism, edginess and multiple opportunities for women characters (*Time*, 1976). Robert LaGuardia (1974) noted that, in the early 1970s, no nighttime show featured women as prominent professionals whereas soap operas had female doctors, lawyers and businesspersons. These events resonate with Baumann's argument for legitimization – the role of academia, the importance of an educated audience, and the linkage of soaps to established art forms – and they speak to soap operas potentially undergoing aesthetic mobility. "Potentially" is the operative word, however, as the potential for aesthetic mobility is not always realized.

Widespread attention that extended beyond the usual fan base culminated in the early 1980s with the Luke and Laura saga on *General Hospital*. A wildly popular and controversial couple (Luke had raped Laura prior to their courtship), their romantic adventures helped catapult *General Hospital* to number one in the ratings, with a 32 share (i.e., 32% of active televisions during that time period were tuned into *General Hospital*). Four factors enabled mainstream press and new audiences to turn their attention to

General Hospital: innovations in production at *GH*, a shift in the perception of the audience from primarily housewives to students at elite colleges, the actors' strike of the late 1970s, and the primetime soaps, *Dallas* and *Hill Street Blues.*

In 1978, in a last-ditch effort to save the low-rated *General Hospital* from cancellation, ABC hired former primetime television director, Gloria Monty to produce the show. Monty increased the number of scenes, shot them out of sequence, then edited them together to create a faster paced show similar to primetime (LaGuardia,1983; Schemering, 1985). Monty also updated the show's lighting, music and sets to resemble those found on contemporary primetime dramas (Schemering, 1985). An ABC executive directed Head Writer Doug Marland to write for young adults after she found that her daughter preferred *The Doctors* to *General Hospital* because the former focused on younger characters. Soap operas, already popular on college campus, continued to gain young, educated viewers exponentially (LaGuardia, 1983; *Time*, 1976). In July 1980, unionized actors began a boycott of primetime television over videocassettes and rerun revenues. Since soap operas air episodes only once, daytime actors were exempt from the strike. With no primetime shows to cover, entertainment journalists turned to daytime, particularly *General Hospital*. Actress Lieux Dressler explained, "The media didn't have anything to write about, and they looked around and here we were" (LaGuardia, 1983: 184). In 1981, *Newsweek* put *General Hospital* on its cover, declaring it "America's Hottest Show." In contrast to the *Time Magazine* cover story a decade earlier, the *Newsweek* article shied away from literary criticism or feminist readings of content. Instead, journalists highlighted the audience, calling them "cultists" and "junkies" (*Newsweek*, 1981). Unlike the 1970s jump into mainstream popular culture, soap operas

in the 1980s now had a frame through which non-daytime soap viewers could understand its content. In 1980, the nighttime soap opera *Dallas* gained international success with the "Who Shot J.R." episode commanding a 76 share, and 83 million viewers in the United States alone. Given the audience's new understanding of soaps and the primetime-esque production values of *GH*, new viewers were able to adapt to the genre's format.

The serialized way *Dallas* presented its stories influenced the creation of another notable primetime series, *Hill Street Blues*. As *Dallas* creator David Jacobs observed in 2005, "[serialization] was in the air in the seventies, but it took hold and stuck on *Dallas*; and because *Dallas* was such a huge success, proving that the audience would accept and probably from now on expect evolution in the definitions of characters, it changed almost every television program that came after it" (quoted in Curran 2005: xiii). Originally, Jacobs had intended to create a highbrow, intelligent drama reminiscent of Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage* (Curran, 2005). Producers, however, had other ideas. Jacobs explained, "I wanted to do art. [The producer] wanted to do trash, and between us we made television" (Curran, 2005: 4). *Hill Street Blues*, on the other hand, was developed with little network involvement and strived from the outset to be then-low rated NBC's "prestige program," a television show aimed, not to garner high ratings, but at increasing the status of a network's line-up (Thompson, 1996). While *Hill Street Blues* is credited with introducing many innovative techniques to primetime television, its serialization and soap opera storytelling originated with *Dallas*. Robert Thompson (1996: 70-71) writes,

> One can't help but wonder if [*Hill Street Blues* creators Bochco and Kozoll] would have come up with the idea of continuing stories, or f NBC would have accepted it, if they had not been developing the show on the heels of *Dallas's* success. Without the soap opera structure, of course, *Hill Street Blues* would have

been a very different series.

The storytelling link between *Dallas* and *Hill Street Blues*, however, is typically made only by academics and those in the media industry. Mark Tinker, executive producer of award winning shows such as *St. Elsewhere*, *L.A. Law* and *NYPD Blue* acknowledged that *Hill Street Blues* "took the soap opera and elevated it to an art form" (Thompson, 2006: Y05). More typical of mainstream press was to hail *Hill Street Blues* as a unique critical success whose narrative format was akin to great literature, never seen before on television (Thompson, 1996). Comparisons to the soap opera genre were generally absent. For instance, American novelist Joyce Carol Oates wrote a cover story about *Hill Street Blues* for a 1985 *TV Guide*, comparing the television series to classic English novels, stating that it was the only show she and her Princeton colleagues watched (Curtis, 2005; Thompson 2006). *Washington Post* television critic Tom Shales (1987: D01) eulogized the series' finale:

> We usually think of a masterpiece as something that hangs from a wall or rests between covers or occupies a couple of hours on a stage or a screen, not something that unfolds over the course of 146 installments. But put them all together, and masterpiece is just about what you've got. The fate of *Hill Street Blues* is sealed. It came through the fire like a champ. Connoisseurs of television will never forget it.

In academia, however, beginning in the late 1970s, scholars started to consider daytime soap operas as worthy of serious inquiry. Nathan Katzman (1972) observed in *Public Opinion Quarterly* that virtually no empirical work on soap operas existed in 1972 despite the genre's mass popularity. Ten years later, over 76 scholarly works had been published about soap operas (Allen, 1985). The mid-1980s onward saw an even greater academic attention toward soap operas. Indeed, over 75% of the academic scholarship about soap operas has occurred since 1986, over 55 years after *Painted Dreams*, the first

soap opera, premiered. Moreover, these academic works tended to avoid the previous era's moralistic tone. Instead, they focused on unique aspects about the soap opera genre, content of the shows themselves and/or how soap opera viewers watch and interpret the shows.

Returning to Johnson, Dowd and Ridgeway (2006), we see that, in terms of aesthetic legitimacy, local validation has occurred. There has been some diffusion – others outside of the soap opera industry claim the genre has artistic worth – but this discourse appears not to have the breadth needed for sustained conversation. Why, then, did wide scale diffusion not occur? For one possible answer, we look to Baumann's argument on legitimating ideology and its role in aesthetic mobility. Many elements were in place for aesthetic mobilization: (1) competition between the new, hip soaps (e.g., *Young & Restless*) versus outdated ones (e.g., *As The World Turns*), (2) mainstream press and burgeoning scholarship provided a roadmap for interpreting the narrative structure of and viewer response to soap operas, and (3) the wide scale success of *Dallas* provided a frame through which daytime could be understood. In terms of legitimating ideology, however, two dominate discourses had emerged. Beginning in the early 1970s, soap operas were often analyzed through feminist or literary criticism frames. With the success of *Dallas* and *General Hospital*, mainstream analysis and some academic discourse shifted to critiques of the audience. What was noteworthy about soap operas became who watched and why (themes reminiscent of the earliest publications on radio serials). Ideology that could support aesthetic legitimacy – soap operas as literary text or feminist spaces – was confined to the halls of academia, thinly spread over various disciplines, never coalescing into a field of study. Given the way sexual violence was

presented in *General Hospital* with Luke and Laura, one of the more likely homes for soap opera scholarship – women's studies – did little with the genre. Instead, soap operas were seen as the opiate of housewives and antithetical to the feminist movement (Brunsdon, 2000). The content of soap operas did not make this track inevitable. For instance, in 1979, *Guiding Light* featured a groundbreaking story about a woman prosecuting her husband for marital rape. That same year, *General Hospital* had Luke rape Laura. At the time, the ratings for both shows were comparable (both had a 28 share 1978-1979); *General Hospital's* substantial increase in viewers did not occur until well after the assault. It was *General Hospital*, however, that gained the national spotlight and thus set the general discourse about the content of soap operas.

The very frame that helped daytime serials become understandable to popular culture at large also helped block the diffusion of the genre's aesthetic legitimacy. Instead, soap operas' nascent aesthetic legitimating ideology was adopted, in part, by supporters of *Hill Street Blues*. Many of *Hill Street Blues*' innovations had, in actuality, been defining characteristics of daytime soap operas for decades. Given that network executives and show producers explicitly worked to make *Hill Street Blues* a high status show, it is likely that serialization could not be tied to the low status genre of soap operas. Due to *Dallas'* success, more people knew what soap operas were, and even the *Dallas* creator himself contends that *Dallas* was not art; it was television. That said, *Dallas* and *General Hospital* were very profitable television. None of the shifts in the legitimating ideology in the 1970s and 1980s contradicted the genre's economic legitimacy. If anything, their increased ratings further cemented them as the economic model. Thus, the economic legitimacy attained in previous decades was maintained. In contrast, local

validation of soap operas as art never fully diffused, hampered by the absence of legitimating ideology and the broader devaluation of television in general that thwarted the genre's trajectory of aesthetic legitimization. To illustrate aesthetic legitimacy in soap operas, I turn to two of the genre's creators, Irna Phillips and Elaine Carrington.

As noted earlier, Irna Phillips was a Midwestern schoolteacher and aspiring actor whose scripted drama *Painted Dreams* (1930) is considered by media scholars to be the first American daytime soap opera. Elaine Carrington, a former magazine writer, penned such long-running programs as *Pepper's Young Family* (1936-1959) and was dubbed by critics in her day to be "the most literate of soap writers" (Cox 2005).[1] While the Hummerts relied on teams of writers to create the shows' daily scripts, Phillips and Carrington typically assumed complete creative control penning most of the dialogue for their shows. Both Phillips and Carrington encouraged longer rehearsal times for the daily serials and rewarded the creative personnel much more generously than the Hummerts (Cox 2003). Phillips and Carrington actively valued aesthetic criteria. Phillips, for instance, insisted on authenticity in her scripts, retaining doctors and lawyers on staff for their expertise to add depth and realism to the daily dramas (Schemering 1985). Carrington personally dictated every word of her dramas so she could more effectively create a nuanced and complex fictional world (Cox 2005). Both women considered their soap operas to be more than a financial venture. Their programs provided a cathartic and community-building experience. As Carrington noted, "The daytime serials fill a tremendous hole in lonely people's lives. Listeners take the characters to heart and suffer, live, love and laugh with them" Cox 2005, 56).

The creator/writer is paramount in Phillips and Carrington productions where the

[1] The literary achievements of soap opera writer Sandra Michaels will be discussed in Chapter Four.

women strived to create a unique identity and voice for each of their shows. While the Hummerts developed soap operas strictly to generate revenue, Phillips and Carrington eschewed larger profits and used financial gains to bolster the creative resources for the shows themselves. The Hummerts considered themselves to be business professionals; Phillips and Carrington identified first as creative forces. In this sense, modern soap operas reflect both the economic and aesthetic logics as manifested through the Hummerts, Phillips and Carrington. (For more on current soap operas and aesthetic legitimacy, see Chapter 4).

CONCLUSION

Legitimacy – the general acceptance of the "rightness" of a cultural product – is not simply an outcome to be observed but a multistage process that is embedded in particular socio-historical contexts. That said, products that are universally viewed as legitimate follow a similar course in order to achieve this distinction: innovation, local validation, diffusion and universal legitimacy.

As we can see in this chapter, the American daytime soap opera quickly attained economic legitimacy. What began as an innovative way to occupy radio air time rapidly diffused as the way to construct financially successful daytime programming. Today, the ''soap opera paradigm'' continues to be a fruitful way to do business in the mass media industry. Although the ratings for daytime U.S. soap operas have declined, soap opera storytelling is abundant in almost every genre from sports to primetime comedies. When we take a global view, we see soap operas, both American-made and those developed in other countries, proliferating around the world.

In contrast, local aesthetic legitimization for soap operas has not translated universally. In particular, sustained diffusion of aesthetic legitimating ideology has not occurred. In this chapter, I argue that the frames that allowed widespread understanding of soap operas to occur in the 1980s in the United States – soap operas as larger-than-life melodramas – were at odds with the genre's nascent aesthetic legitimacy. Further discussion of the development of aesthetic legitimacy can be seen in Chapter 4. From a local perspective, however, we can see that the idea of soap operas as artistic creations has long been accepted within the industry. Thus, from this historical overview, it appears that diffusion and maintenance of the legitimating ideology are where the roadblocks for aesthetics occurred. In other words, the absence of universal legitimization for American soap operas is not because a legitimating ideology does not exist. It is that the legitimating ideology as it is formulated has not been diffused to mainstream organizations such as newspapers or universities.

The tension between economic and aesthetic legitimacy for soap operas is writ large in the history of the genre's creators, the Hummerts, Irna Phillips and Elaine Carrington. The Hummerts embody the economic approach to soap opera creation where trimming budgets, mass production and the bottom line are paramount. Phillips and Carrington, on the other hand, represent the artistic aspects of the medium where creativity, authenticity and uniqueness are valued. In that sense, current soap operas are rooted in both economic and aesthetic legitimacies.

In order to see how these economic and aesthetic legitimacies formed, we turn to the population of daytime soap operas in the United States since the genre's inception in

1930. In the next chapter, we will explicitly examine the trajectory for the economic legitimacy of soap operas by analyzing the foundings of soap operas over time.

TIMELINE

1920s:	Precursors to soap operas such as *Moonshine and Honeysuckle* and *Claire, Lu and Em* air on local radio stations
October 20, 1930	First soap opera *Painted Dreams* created by Irna Phillips airs on a local Chicago station.
1931	Frank and Anne Hummert hire Robert Hardy Andrews to write a drama-by-installment *The Stolen Husband.*
1932	Elaine Carrington debuts the serial *Red Adams*, which later evolved into Pepper's Young Family.
1934	*New York Times* favorably critiques radio serials
1934	First *New York Times* article about radio serials in other countries (Venezuela)
1937	Soap operas receive their first negative mention in *The New York Times* in a news story about a Westchester, NY women's group.
1939	Pejorative term "soap opera" first printed in *New York Times.*
1939	Seventy-six (76) soap operas air this year, the highest for radio or television
1940	Soap opera content peaks on radio at 256,770 minutes allotted per year.
1940	First negative mention of soap opera appears in *Times'* book review
1941	Dr. Louis Berg publishes findings that soap operas have a deleterious and harmful effect on female listeners

1942	Soap opera *Against The Storm* wins Peabody Award for Excellence in Radio Drama
1943	American Broadcast Company (ABC) forms
1943	*NYT* first mentions Latin American *radionovelas* (precursors to *televnovelas)*
1948	First NYT description of soap operas as art.
1949	*Today's Children*, the first television soap opera on a major network airs
1960	All radio soap operas cease to air
1962	Mary Stuart (Jo, *Search For Tomorrow*) becomes the first daytime performer to be nominated for an Emmy. She competes against primetime competition Mary Tyler Moore and Shirley Booth.
1964	Primetime soap opera *Peyton Place* debuts
1968	*TV Guide* begins to publish stories on the quality and social relevance of soap operas.
1969	The highest number of television soaps air this year with 18 shows.
1971	*Days Of Our Lives* appears on cover of *Time Magazine.*
1972	British soap opera *The Forsyte Saga* airs on American television to critical acclaim
1972	Discourse linking soap operas to feminism appears in the *Times*
1972	A separate Emmy awards show is created for daytime programming.
1974	Ingmar Bergman's *Scenes From A Marriage* airs on American television
1975	*Another World* becomes the first 60-mintue soap opera.
1979	*General Hospital* airs rape storyline
March 21, 1980	J.R. shot on *Dallas.*
July – Oct 1980	Primetime season delayed; mainstream coverage of

	soap operas increase
Summer 1980	New viewers flock to GH. No idea about Laura's rape by Luke.
1981	Soap opera content on television peaks with 168,000 minutes of programming this year.
Sept 28, 1981	*Newsweek* magazine cover of Luke and Laura
Nov7, 1981	Episode of Luke and Laura wedding becomes the highest rated episode in soap history
Nov 21, 1981	Viewers learn who shot J.R
March - Aug 1988	Writer's Strike
1994	*New York Times* publishes article on academic and soap operas
1995	Fin/Syn rules governing ownership of programming are abolished.
2000	Last televised *Soap Opera Digest* award show.
2005	Last *Soap Opera Digest* award given.
2009	Daytime longest running serial, *Guiding Light*, is canceled.
2010	*As The World Turns* leaves the airways and former daytime giant Procter & Gamble divests of all soap opera programming.
2011	*All My Children* canceled
2012	*One Life To Live* canceled

Chapter 3: The Evolution of Economic Legitimacy for U.S. Daytime Soap Operas

As we saw in Chapter 2, legitimacy is a complex multilayered concept. That said, scholars have put forth a general theory about the legitimatization process that describes a pathway for legitimacy regardless of field or type. In this model, a cultural product is created and, over time, local constituents come to see this product as a valid way to conduct business. This locally legitimized product is transported outside of the original community and is adopted by others. As more and more communities begin to accept this cultural product, it becomes recognized as legitimate, meaning it is considered by most to be a "natural" course of social action. It is important to underscore that the maintenance of that legitimacy does not rest on certain individuals or particular communities. Instead, complex organizations such as mass media are purveyors of this legitimating ideology. Innovation may be the work of individuals; maintaining the status of legitimacy is the work of organizations.

This chapter looks at the economic legitimacy of American daytime soap operas. I begin by presenting the factors that organizational sociology, specifically population ecology and neo-institutionalism, posit as influential in the development of new organizations. Second, I outline the data collection and methods I use in this chapter to assess how daytime soap operas became a viable way to conduct business in the media industry in the United States. Next, I present results from both the descriptive findings and the regression models used to test my hypotheses. Finally, in light of these results, I discuss the factors that affect economic legitimacy of radio and television daytime soap operas.

ECONOMIC LEGITIMACY IN ORGANIZATIONS

Population Ecology

Population ecology is a theoretical perspective that posits that organizational environments at large can affect the survival of individual organizations. In this tradition, organizational legitimacy is seen as density-dependent, meaning that as the total number of organizations in a particular population increases initially, legitimacy of that organizational form also increases (Hannan and Freeman, 1977; Carroll and Swaminathan, 1992). The effect of density is conditional. When density is low, legitimization drives changes in the population as foundings increase and failures decrease. When density is high, competition drives changes in the population as foundings decrease and failures increase (Hannan and Freeman, 1977). Thus we can say the number of organizational forms in a population affects the number and rate at which new organizational forms are established or cease to operate. In terms of the legitimization process, population ecology predicts that an innovative organizational form arrives, proliferates, and then diffuses as it tries to become the institutionalized and legitimate model (Hannan and Freeman, 1977). Once all available resources are being consumed by the current organizational population, the remaining organizations, now legitimized, fight among themselves for scarce resources. As competition intensifies, the number of foundings decreases. Simply put, density impacts the founding and failures of organizations.

To population ecologists, legitimacy is an achievable goal. Visually, if we plot this proliferation of new organizations over time, we will see an inverted U-shaped curve, meaning the relationship between new organizations and density is curvilinear. The

upward slope denotes the organizational field's quest for legitimacy while the downward slope indicates competition. Therefore, according to population ecologists, an organizational form's decline in numbers is not the result of being delegitimized but the inevitable consequence of competition over scarce resources. Carrying capacity is the point at which density begins to have a negative effect. When a particular population reaches carrying capacity is of great theoretical interest. Of note is not simply the number of organizational forms needed in order to obtain legitimacy; it is the rate of its ascension. The shape of that trajectory gives insight into the organizational form's path toward legitimacy. In terms of the legitimization process, we could say that carrying capacity is the point at which universal legitimization is achieved.

Organizational form does not apply strictly to organizations but to other entities as well. Ecologists argue that all markets can only support a certain number of entities given finite resources. What constitutes an entity may apply to many things from railroad firms (Dobbin and Dowd 2000) to musical performance acts (Dowd 2004). The focus for ecologists are the patterns that emerge as the entity proliferates within a particular market and how these patterns, such as density-dependence, develop in similar and disparate ways across different environments and resources (Hannan and Freeman, 1977, 1989; Hannan and Carroll, 1992). For instance, Perretti, Negro and Lomi (2008) uses television stations as the unit of analysis to evaluate how density affects entry into the marketplace. Haverman (2004) traces the relationship between governmental policies and the development of the American magazine industry. Sorenson and Audia (2000) look at footwear in the United States, conceptualizing the shoe as the organizational form and consumers and factories as the population's environment. In short, organizational

literature is rich with studies that apply the term "organizational form" to diverse market-based creations as small as the high heeled shoe and as ephemeral as a Top 40 song.

To illustrate the ecological approach, I outline Carroll and Swaminathan's seminal study on microbreweries (*American Journal of Sociology* 2000). The authors look at how density (i.e, the number of microbreweries in operation in a given year) affects how many microbreweries begin operation (e.g., foundings) or end operation (e.g. failures) in a given year. The relationship between density and foundings is curvilinear, or as noted earlier, an upside down U. Density has a positive effect on foundings – the number of new organizations each year increased – until the microbrewery population reached carrying capacity, in this case 1,731 breweries. At that point, microbreweries compete amongst themselves for limited resources, and density begins to negatively affect the number of new organizations that form per year.

In order to see the effect that density itself has on foundings and failures, the authors include prior foundings and prior failures in the analysis. This addition allows the authors to specify that it is *density* that is driving change, not the total mass of the population, because the latter's influence have been subtracted from the equation. Like the density hypothesis, the effects of previous foundings and failures on current foundings and failures may be conditional and curvilinear. As an entity initially proliferates, previous foundings can signify a hospitable environment for subsequent foundings. At a certain point, when available resources become scarce, too many foundings in one year can hinder subsequent foundings. Likewise, previous failures may bolster additional foundings by freeing up resources for new entities to form. However,

too many failures in a single period may signify that the organizational form is not yet legitimate and thus actors are discouraged from pursuing that organizational form.

In terms of microbreweries, the authors theorize that, initially, microbrewery owners had to convince the public that they were a legitimate way of doing business. Over time, as more microbreweries were established, the more the organizational form of a microbrewery became an accepted practice. Once the population of microbreweries reached its carrying capacity, however, the presence of new microbreweries did not further legitimate the form. Instead, microbreweries competed amongst themselves to secure the needed resources (suppliers, clients, etc.).

Looking at other market environments, many scholars have found that density impacts foundings and failures in the same curvilinear fashion across numerous industries, from labor unions (Hannan and Freeman, 1987) to newspapers (Carroll, 1987; Carroll and Hannan, 1989). In total this research shows that the relationship between density, foundings and failures is not unique to certain industries but may apply to numerous populations of organizations and other entities.

Drawing on population ecology, I make two hypotheses about the economic legitimacy of soap operas:

H1a: The number of new soap operas founded in one year will increase as the total number of American daytime soap operas that are broadcast in that year increases. That is, density will have a positive effect on organizational foundings until carrying capacity is reached in the population.

H1b: The number of new soap operas founded in one year will decrease as the total number of American daytime soap operas that are broadcast in that year increases after the market becomes saturated. That is, density will have a negative effect on organizational foundings after the carrying capacity is reached in the population.

H2a: The number of new American daytime soap operas founded in a previous year will positively affect the number of new American daytime soap operas founded in the subsequent year prior to the market reaching carrying capacity. That is, as legitimacy of American daytime soap opera increases and resources are plentiful, previous foundings stimulate the environment for more foundings.

H2b: The number of new American daytime soap operas founded in a previous year will negatively affect the number of new American daytime soap operas founded in the subsequent year after the market reaches carrying capacity. That is, as competition increases and resources become scarce, previous foundings hinder subsequent foundings.

Neo-Institutional Organizational Theory

When Hannan and Carroll first proposed population ecology theory forty years ago, it stood as a competing explanation to what would eventually be coined "neo-institutional theory" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Over time, however, the antagonistic strains of these discourses mellowed, and the two theoretical perspectives joined forces to offer complementary perspectives on the lifecycle of organizations. For instance, early incarnations of population ecology tended to equate rising density as being equal to rising legitimacy. As the theory evolved, rising density was later cast as a proxy for legitimacy (see Hannan and Carroll 1995 and Baum and Powell 1995 for more). Both population ecology and neo-institutional theory assume that organizations can take a variety of forms (commercial, artistic, governmental) yet the trajectories of these diverse forms follow similar paths and are affected by similar environmental factors (Gieryn 2000; Hsu and Hannan 2005; Ruef 2000; Romanelli and Khessina 2005). As noted earlier, Haverman's (2004) study on the early magazine industry in the United States highlights the interplay of variables rooted in population ecology (e.g. density) with those stressed by neo-institutionalists (e.g. federal laws). Likewise, in his work on the early commercial radio industry, Lippman (2007) shows a

strong relationship between federal regulations and station foundings. Government is not the only type of influence, of course, In their study on which television pilots were broadcast, Bielby & Bielby (1994) found that pilots associated with successful past producers were more likely to be added to the networks' season line-ups, even though past success had no significant impact on future success. In this case, the perception of success or a right course of action had more influence on which pilots aired.

In this sense, population ecology and neo-institutional theory do not differ so much on fundamental theoretical building blocks. Instead, each theoretical perspective tends to emphasize different aspects of an organization's environment. While population ecologists tend to look at how populations of organizations change over time (i.e. foundings and failures), neo-institutionalists are interested in why so many organizations tend to look alike over time. Neo-institutionalists argue that organizations resemble one another, not simply because they adopt the bureaucratic ideals of competition and efficiency, but because organizations actively pursue legitimacy. For example, the lack of a relationship between past and future success did not stop television networks from using former accolades to guide present decision-making (Biebly & Bielby 1994). Thus, organizations adopt certain practices over others not simply because they work but because they are the taken-for-granted way of doing business. This adoption process occurs through isomorphism, where disparate organizations begin to closely resemble each other in structure and form regardless of product (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977). In a pivotal article, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) put forth the three conceptual distinct but empirically linked types of isomorphism: coercive, mimetic and normative. Coercive isomorphism stems from political influence and problems with

legitimacy. It can result from formal or informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations. For instance, the laws in existence when an organizational form develops directly impact how that form proliferates. Mimetic isomorphism is driven by uncertainty; when pathways to success are unclear, organizations tend to adopt business strategies or symbolic rituals that mimic other organizations. In other words, actions are taken, not necessarily because they work, but because they are seen by other organizations as legitimate courses of action. Normative isomorphism relates to professionalization, typically through educational credentials or professional networks and recognition, like awards.

Therefore, when coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphisms are taken into account, scholars see that organizations do not adopt other organization's business strategies because they are the right and productive avenues to take. Organizations also engage in these actions because doing so confers legitimacy. Whereas population ecologists discuss competition as the mechanism through which organizational isomorphism occurs, neo-institutionalists stress institutional legitimacy as driving organizational isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Hannan and Freeman 1977). Legitimacy is not just the result of the proliferation of a particular organizational form, but strategies that organizations actively pursue. This chapter specifically examines coercive isomorphism operationalized as governmental policies.

Some organizational scholars have found that governmental policies do not have the predicted effect until other variables such as density are controlled. For instance, Dobbin and Dowd (1997) demonstrate how government policies (i.e. coercive isomorphism) directly shape the establishment of new railroads. They argue that

organizations adopt different business strategies at different periods in time because legitimate courses of action are, in part, shaped by context. In the United States, the railroad industry operated under three distinct policy regimes: public capitalization (1825-1871), pro-cartel (1872-1896) and anti-trust (1897-present). The different polices shaped the landscape of competition. The first two public policies increased the number of railroads founded by increasing available resources and lessening competition. Under an Anti-Trust regime, foundings decreased because resources were funneled to existing firms, not to the establishment of new ones. In this way, governmental policies had a profound impact on foundings and failures. Therefore Dobbin and Dowd (1997) find that ecological variables such as density affect foundings in ways consistent with population ecology theory only once governmental policy was controlled. In other words, which government policies were in effect affected the rate at which railroads formed. Thus, both ecological – density, previous foundings and previous failures - and neo-institutional predictors - governmental policy practices - affected railroad foundings.

Drawing on neo-institutional theory and population ecology on organizational legitimacy, I make three hypotheses about the economic legitimacy of soap operas.

Hypothesis 3: I predict different policy regimes will affect daytime soap opera foundings. I will look at two policies in particular. First, in 1943 the Supreme Court ruled that NBC had violated anti-trust law and was forced to sell one of its networks. The result was the creation of the American Broadcasting Network (ABC). The sale closed on October 12, 1943. The effect of this ruling could be either positive or negative. Governmental involvement may have damped foundings because it forced the networks to adhere to federal regulations and programming and ownership. Additionally, the sale of

the NBC Blue network included licenses for three only stations (affiliates). Therefore, ABC may have channeled money into acquiring more stations as opposed to developing programming. On the other hand, the birth of essentially a new network may have spurred soap opera foundings as ABC sought to obtain legitimacy through populating its airways with programming that had been proven to be viable business model for radio.

H3: The rate of foundings for daytime soap operas will be significantly affected in years after 1943.

Hypothesis 4: Second, the 1988 Writers' Strike deeply affected daytime. The longest Writers' Strike to date, writers who were members of the Writers' Guild during 1988 could not legally write for daytime soap operas (or any other shows) for five months. Adopting the argument that television is a writer's medium (Bielby, Moloney and Ngo, 2005) and that soap operas are often developed by writers, I predict that this legal environment will negatively impact the founding of soap operas.

H4: The rate of foundings for daytime soap operas will significantly decline after the 1988 Writers' strike.

Hypothesis 5: The Financial Interest and Syndication Rules (known as Fin/Syn) grew out of governmental concern over media monopoly and lack of program diversity on television. Established in 1970s, the rules endured bitter battles with media producers. The rules were relaxed at several points in the 1980s and 1990s before they were abolished completely in 1995. The soap opera industry changed in its wake. The parent company of ABC now owns all soap operas that air on ABC. I predict that this change

would stimulate foundings as networks gained a new reason to create new programming in which they were directly financially invested.

H5: The rate of foundings for daytime soap operas will significantly rise after the abolishment of the Fin/Syn rules.

Hypothesis 6: Similar to Dobbin and Dowd (1997), I predict that the environmental factor governmental policy will become significant once the population ecology variables are controlled.

H6: H1 and H2 will receive strong support once H3-H6, are controlled in the model.

DATA AND METHODS

For this dissertation, I constructed a data set of all radio and television daytime soap operas that aired in the United States from 1930 to 2010. To collect data, I relied on six encyclopedias by leading radio and television historians: *Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio* (1998) by John Dunning, *The Soap Opera Encyclopedia* (1987) by Christopher Schemering, *The A to Z of American Radio Soap Operas* (2009) by Jim Cox, *The Handbook of Old-Time Radio* (1993) by Jon Swartz and Robert Reinehr, *The Encyclopedia of Daytime Television* (1997) by Wesley Hyatt *and TV Guide: Guide to TV* by TV Guide (2005). From these sources I was able to cull: the name of the soap opera, the month and year (and many times the day) of the show's first and last broadcast, the network or networks on which it aired, the length of each program, the

days of week that the program aired, time slot, plot synopsis, creator, sponsors. Information in each category was not available for every soap opera. If no year was listed, I consulted other radio and television histories and if that failed, the radio broadcast schedules published in *The New York Times*. Through this system, I located the year a soap opera debuted and the year it was canceled for all programs. In total, I identified 484 soap operas to include in the database. For a subsection of programs (124 soap operas), the months of the first and last broadcast were not available. If one or more historical sources indicated that the program aired less than year, the program's broadcast time was calculated as 6.5 months, which was the average time span for soap operas airing less than one year where months and years were available.[2] Thus, by being able to calculate how long a program aired, I could multiple that by the number of days of the week it aired and the length of each daily broadcast to determine how much air time soap operas could claim per year. For instance, if a show broadcast 15 minutes a day, five days a week for one year, the total amount of air time for this soap opera is 3,900 minutes. Important to note is that this number does not take into account how much actual soap content was broadcast. In the days of live radio, broadcasting mistakes were bound to happen and television soap operas often face pre-emption. In our current economic climate, television soap operas have decreased the show's daily runtime in order to air more commercials, which means that content has decreased even when network time allotted has not. Thus, number of minutes per year should not be taken as definitive proof of actual broadcasting content but an estimation comparable across years of broadcast

[2] I calculated the average length of time by taking the averaging the months on the air for all the soap operas for which month and year were known.

time networks allotted for soap opera content. It is the maximum time networks allotted for soap operas.

The question still remains: What is a daytime soap opera? For television, the answer was straightforward. All authors of the above cited texts uniformly agreed on which shows could be identified as daytime soap operas. I included all programs they listed as soap opera with the following exceptions. I excluded soap operas that originated in other countries but aired in the United States (such as the U.K.'s *EastEnders* and Latin American telenovelas). I also excluded programs that only originally aired primetime (such as *Dallas*) or only aired on the Internet (e.g. *Venice The Series*).[3] I also excluded soap operas that only aired on cable outlets such as SoapNET's *Night Shift* and TBS's The *Catlins*. I do this because soap operas that are not featured on broadcast networks draw from a different pool of resources and are accountable to different standards both in terms of audience requirement and content restrictions. Following these guidelines, I identified 93 television shows that could be classified as daytime soap operas.

Radio soap operas were another matter. First, historians who collect data on old radio shows often rely on trade publications like *Variety* to identify the genre of particular programs. Because the term "soap opera" was not in use regularly until the 1940s, many radio shows that aired in the 1930s were not categorized by some historians as soap operas even though they were structured in form and content like later radio soap operas. Thus, the encyclopedias did not always agree, especially when shows aired prior to 1940, as to what was and was not a soap opera. Therefore, I devised the following system to

[3] One exception to this rule was a Canadian-based serial *Paul Bernard, Psychiatrist* because, based on *New York Times* reporting, the show was covered by the mainstream press as if it were based in the United States.

determine whether or not a radio show could be classified as soap opera and should be included in the database.

First, if the show was labeled by at least one of the before mentioned historical texts as a soap opera and that classification could not be contradicted by another source (i.e. it was not listed in another text as belonging to another genre), I included it in the database as a radio soap opera. If one text listed a show as a soap opera but another text categorized it in a different genre, I would read the character and plot outlines of the show to determine whether or not the program was a soap opera. Additionally, I would consult other soap opera histories to see if they identified the program as a soap opera. For example, *One Man's Family* was listed as a drama in one radio encyclopedia but I include it in this database because other radio encyclopedias and soap opera texts consider it a soap opera. If the show aired at least twice a week, the plot centered upon the domestic sphere and appeared to target an adult female audience, I included it in the database as a soap opera. For example, *Lil Orphan Annie* was considered to be a serial in some radio encyclopedias but given the target audience (children) I did not include it in my database. In addition, I added seven shows to the database that only aired once a week, but they were categorized by the majority of the sources as a soap opera and their content and target audience were more in line with soap opera than other types of programming. Also to be included in the database, the show had to air on a radio or television station at least once, therefore satisfying the definition of being broadcast (audition tapes did not count). With these search parameters, I identified 391 radio shows that could be classified as soap operas.

Another challenge lay in deciphering what counted as a new program. For television, there was no ambiguity; it was clear when a show debuted on television and when it was canceled. Radio soap operas had a different trajectory. Very often a historian would record that a show left the airways only to have it reappear with new episodes several weeks later. Other times a show would disappear and reappear under the same name a decade later. A show occasionally changed names. I constructed the following guidelines to determine if a show counted as a new program.

If a radio soap opera was off the air for more than three months, unless there was historical documentation indicating that it was on hiatus, I considered the show to be canceled.[4] Any subsequent program with the same name was counted as a new show. I counted these programs as new shows because for this study I conceive of each soap opera as a discrete organization. Organizations are dependent on resources. Once a radio show is disbanded, they lose actors, directors, rehearsal space and an audience. In order for a show to return to the airways, new resources are needed. For descriptive purposes, I labeled these soap operas – shows of the same name that aired at subsequently different times – "revivals." 75 radio and 6 television soap operas fit those criteria. I considered a name change to be the creation of a new soap opera if the title and the show's content significantly changed. I do this because, drawing on organizational theory, I see an organization's name as a resource. Most people do not watch television (or in the past listen to radio) by time slot but by program. The shows themselves recognize the power of the title when rebranding a show. For example, in order to reinvigorate the television soap opera *Loving*, ABC changed its name to *The City.* Name change becomes an

[4] I determined three months to be the cut-off point because some serials like *One Man's Family* had summer breaks where another serial appeared in its time slot for three months giving the producers of the original program a hiatus but never officially canceling the show.

important way to give the show a new identity and typically new characters and settings follow. Thus, for this database, I consider *Loving* (1983) and *The City* (1995) to be separate foundings.

That said, small titular changes like adding or dropping of articles (the, a, an) or the ordering of words were not considered to be new shows. In 1977, *The Guiding Light* dropped the "the" but I do not count the rebranded *Guiding Ligh*t as a new show A title change before a show aired also does not constitute a new soap opera (e.g. *The Secret Storm* was known as *The Storm Within* while in development, but I do not consider them two separate foundings) . Often, a title change signified a type of programming called a spin-off where a handful of familiar characters from the parent soap opera would be given their own show and separate storylines. Spin-offs are considered separate foundings, for example I count *Texas* (1980) a separate soap opera from *Another World* (1964), even though it was a vehicle for one of the original soap's main characters. (*Another World* had the most spin-offs of any radio or television soap opera with four.) Overall, I identified 13 radio and 13 television soap opera spin-offs for a total of 26 spin-offs. Along similar lines, if a soap opera was broadcast on both radio and television, I counted each broadcast as a separate program. For instance, in this database, *The Guiding Light* on radio and *The/Guiding Light* on television are considered separate programs. In total there were five soap operas that aired on both radio and television.

The last term to be clarified is "daytime." Again, the distinction was clear cut in television. Soap operas that aired in the late morning to late afternoon are considered daytime soap operas. Television had the advantage of inheriting broadcast scheduling logics that radio invented. "Daytime" and "primetime" were set conventions by 1949, the

year the first television soap opera debuted. For radio, I considered all programming before 8:00 pm at night to be "daytime." Reading the history of American soap operas and the radio industry convinced me that advertisers did not initially know when women were most likely to listen to the radio. Was it 5:30 pm as they were making dinner? Was it 8:30 am after the kids had left for school? As a result, women's programs aired at all times during the day for decades as the radio industry figured out what was the most profitable and most feasible. In all, I classified 369 radio shows as daytime soap operas using these criteria.

Additionally, I added 22 shows to the database that aired after 8:00 pm or on the weekend but I argue still fit the definition of a daytime soap opera. First, shows considered by scholars to be soap operas (e.g. *One Man's Family*, *Ma Perkins*) once aired late at night before moving to a more familiar daytime time slot. Also, almost all of the "primetime" radio soap operas aired in the 1930s and 1940s for 30 minutes once a week, usually on a Sunday afternoon. I argue that these shows did not constitute a different genre but was an alternative model competing with the five-day-a-week, fifteen minute framework that eventually came to dominate radio. Additionally, at least one of the historical encyclopedias had also categorized these shows as soap operas. Examples of this soap operas would be *Dangerous Paradise* (1933) or *Crossroads* (1940).

Even though the database contains information on 484 radio and television soap operas from 1930-2010, my N is 80 because I am interested in the effect of organizational conditions on the growth of soap operas per year. In other words, the unit of analysis for this study is not the individual shows but how many shows were broadcast in a given

year. I start with 1930 with *Painted Dreams*, which is considered by most scholars to be the first soap opera, and I continue until 2010.

Dependent Variable

My dependent variable is the number of foundings per year. A soap opera is considered to be founded the year it began to broadcast its first episode. For example, *Another World* debuted on NBC-TV on May 4, 1964, so it was founded in 1964. Failures are recorded as the year the soap opera ceased to be broadcast. *Another World* left the airways on June 25, 1999, so 1999 would be its death. Likewise, the announcement of a cancellation is not a death, but the actual removal of the show from the airways is. For example, if a network announced in 1984 that a soap opera would be canceled, but it did not go off the air until 1985, the date of death would be 1985. In short, a soap opera is founded the day it debuts on radio or television and fails when it ceased to broadcast any new original episodes.

Independent Variables

Population Ecology

As noted earlier, population ecologists posit that the prevalence of one type of organizational form impacts the growth of organizations sharing that form. In terms of this study, I am interested in how density – the number of soap operas on the air – affects the foundings of other soap operas. I calculate density by taking the number of soap operas broadcast in a given year, add to it the number of soap operas that debuted then subtract the number of soap operas that went off the air. Density is then lagged by one year because it is a predictor variable. For example, soap opera density in 1938 (the number of soap operas on radio in 1938) should have an effect on soap opera density in

1939. Since the relationship between foundings and density is curvilinear – density encourages foundings to a point then acts as a barrier to new entrants into the field – I include density squared lagged for one year. Density squared is density at time multiplied by itself. Also in line with population ecologists, I include in the regression models previous foundings, previous foundings squared, previous failures and previous failures squared. Previous foundings refers to the number of new soap operas that debuted one year prior, while previous failures refers to the number of soap operas that went off the air one year prior. By controlling for the number of existing organizations, we can see if organizational environment, or density, affects soap opera foundings. Additionally, given that this data set includes 15 minute radio serials and hour-long daytime dramas, I include a measure of minutes per year of allotted broadcast time for soap opera content. This allows me to be more confident that any increase or decrease in foundings is not solely the result of shorter shows. Put another way, there is an automatic decrease in foundings on television starting in the 1970s as networks expanded the daily broadcast time of soap operas rather than create new programs. While these expanded programs do not count as new foundings, it may artificially exaggerate the difference between foundings on radio and foundings on television.

Neo-Institutional

Neo-institutional scholars argue that other factors such as governmental regulations affect organizational foundings. To test these hypotheses, I look at three important time periods: post 1943 (anti-trust Supreme Court decision), post 1988 (writers' strike) and post 1995 (abolishment of syndication rules). Each is coded as a

dummy variable, 0 indicating that it is not after the defined time period, 1 indicating that it is after the defined time period. For example, 1930-1944 are coded as 0, while 1945-2010 are coded as 1. 1944 is coded as 0 because environmental conditions of 1943 predict foundings in 1944 so it is not until 1945 that the previous year (1944) falls after 1943.

Demand

An alternative explanation is that the radio and television industry were simply responding to demand. The more radio and television stations, the more opportunities there were for broadcasting soap operas. To address these factors, I add to the regression model: number of radio and television stations, number of radio affiliates, number of television affiliates, number of cable stations and number of cable subscribers. These numbers are taken from the United State's Historical Census, *The Cable and Television Factbook* (1983-2009) and *Electronic Media* (1982) by Christopher Sterling. Important to note is that radio stations and affiliates after 1960 are coded as 0 even though radio stations and affiliates continued to exist. The reason is there exists a definitive cut-off date for radio soap operas. On November 25, 1960, called "Black Friday" by radio historians, any remaining radio soap operas were discontinued and all future programming was geared toward television (Cox 2006, 63). Therefore, actual radio stations and affiliates existed past 1960 but the probability that an original soap opera would broadcast on that medium was effectively zero. The number of television affiliates for 1989, 1999 and 2003 are estimates; the remaining years are actual numbers.

Given that this dissertation looks at soap operas as economic entities, a direct measure of their monetary earnings would be ideal. Unfortunately, no such data exists for the shows across years. One possibility would be to compare ratings of programs (i.e number of people listening/watching a program) because ratings are the primary means by which advertising prices are set. Although the media industry regularly sought this information as early as the 1930s, ratings are not comparable year to year due to methodological changes. Yearly ratings do become comparable in 1960 (A.C. Nielsen ratings standardized the measurement process), so all television programs after that point can be compared via Z-scores.[5] For the current project, this would yield a too small sample since only about 11% of all daytime soap operas were founded after 1960.

Methods

I use Poisson and negative binomial regression to model the yearly number of foundings of U.S. daytime soap operas. Researchers use Poisson to model count data where the dependent variable (in this case foundings) is meaningful only as an integer. For example, with other techniques, it may be statistically possible but not theoretically meaningful to have an outcome of 1.5 foundings.

Poisson relies on the assumption that conditional variance and the mean of the number of events (the dependent variable) are equal.

$$\mathrm{Var}(Yt) = \mathrm{E}(Yt) \qquad (1)$$

This assumption, however, is often violated because there is more variation in the actual data than the Poisson distribution assumes. Thus, when the conditional variance exceeds the mean, coefficients may appear significant when they are, in fact, not. In other

[5] The base unit of number of households changes over time, so a rating of 4.7 in 1970 does not equal the same audience of a 4.7 rating in 1980. Thus, television ratings would need to be standardized over time.

words, we incorrectly reject the null hypothesis for a particular β by falsely concluding that a nonrandom relationship exists between the independent and dependent variable. This error occurs because of overdispersion, i.e. the observed variance is greater than the theoretical variance, which leads to underestimated standard errors. In these cases, negative binomial regression can correct for overdispersion because it takes the Poisson distribution as a random variable and adds another estimating parameter.

$$\mathrm{Var}(Yt) = E(Yt) + \alpha E^2(Yt) \qquad (2)$$

We can test for overdispersion with a t-test of the hypothesis that α (the overdispersion parameter) in Equation 2 differs significantly from zero (Barron 1992, 211). I use LIMDEP to derive Poisson and negative binomial models and to test for overdispersion. When alpha is significant at $p < .05$ meaning overdispersion is present, I rely on a negative binomial model to estimate coefficients. When alpha is not significant at $p > .05$, I rely on the Poisson model. If tables report an alpha, then it was significant and negative binomial was used for that particular regression model.

Both Poisson and negative binomial models are generated via maximum likelihood estimates. Therefore, we can compare the goodness-of- fit between two regression models by using their log likelihoods to generate a Chi-square statistic (Barry and Feldman 1985).

$$-2 * [(\text{log likelihood of Model A}) - (\text{log likelihood of Model B})] \qquad (3)$$

Model B is considered a better fit if the result of Equation 3 is less than the Chi-square statistic that corresponds to the degrees of freedom determined by the number of unique regressors to Model B as compared to Model A. In other words, if Models A and B each

had five independent variables and share three in common, then the degree of freedom for the Chi-square statistic would be 2.

RESULTS

Before turning to the regression analysis, I offer descriptive results to illustrate key economic aspects of the radio and television soap opera industry (see Table 1). As we can see, the soap opera was a popular genre on radio and television. From 1930 to 2010, there were 391 radio and 93 television soap operas. A program's length of time on the air ranged from as little as ten days to as long as 57 years. A sizeable number (228 for radio and 36 for television) never reached their one-year anniversary. If a show did manage to escape cancellation during its first twelve months, it tended to stay on the air for a significant time – averaging almost three years for radio soaps to over seven years for those on television. Interestingly, time allotted to soap opera content was higher during their days on radio. On radio, soap opera content averaged about 2,103 hours per year; for television, the number drops to 1,705. This finding suggests that, even though soap operas' daily broadcasts were longer on television, typically 30 minutes to an hour, soap operas were still more plentiful during their time on radio. Measured either by number of programs or hours of content, soap operas flourished more vibrantly on radio than television.

While daytime serials are most closely associated with soap, and hence the term "soap opera," the companies that sponsored the radio programs actually sold a variety of household goods: Wrigley's Gum, Calumet Baking Powder, Welch's Grape Juice, Wesson Oil, Coca-Cola and Listerine. Occasionally other types of companies (e.g. Philip Morris,

Kroger grocery store, J.C. Penney) or government offices (i.e. United States Office of War Information) sponsored a program but these relationships were rare. During soap operas' earliest days on radio, a company like Procter & Gamble would sponsor a program for a period of time, then its sponsorship was taken over by another large corporation like Colgate-Palmolive. By the 1940s, it was far more common for one or two products from a single company to act as the sponsors of a particular program. For example, in a 1950 episode *The Guiding Light*, an announcer proclaims that the day's episode was brought to the audience by Duz (a detergent from Procter & Gamble).

This trend of product sponsorship continued onto television, although most companies that underwrote serials during their radio tenure did not extend this relationship the new medium. The exception was Procter & Gamble. The corporation routinely sponsored daytime programming and later came to own several soap operas, including *Guiding Light* (1952-2009), *As The World Turns* (1956-2010) and *Another World* (1964-1999). By the 1970s and 1980s, soap operas were often owned or co-owned by the production companies that had originated the series (*Young and Restless* [1973] with Bell Productions) or independent distributors (*Santa Barbara* [1984] with New World Distributors). This arrangement changed for ABC soap operas in the 1990s. The corporate mergers of Disney and ABC led to the media conglomerate to acquire all soap operas that aired on its network, a relationship that continues to this day. The new arrangement spurred other networks to invest fully or partially in the soap operas they aired. For instance, NBC partly owned its last two soap operas, *Sunset Beach* (1997) and *Passions* (1999). Neither relationship with NBC lasted long. Both were off the airways in less than ten years. By 2010, the once dominating Procter & Gamble had divested of its

last soap opera – *As The World Turns* – and left the business of soap opera production. Current soap operas are either owned outright by the network (ABC's *General Hospital*) or owned in part or full by the company of the show's originator (e.g. *Days of Our Lives* and Corday Productions).

Another trend that changed with the move from radio to television was the practice of soap operas moving across networks. Television soap operas rarely switched networks during its original broadcast run. Occasionally, a program was canceled by one network, and then picked up by another for a brief run. For instance, when CBS-TV canceled *Search For Tomorrow* in 1982, it jumped to NBC-TV where it aired for another four years. A handful of shows were rebroadcast on cable stations years after their cancelation (NBC's *Generations* and BET) while ABC shows enjoy same-day repeats on the ABC-owned cable channel SOAPNet. No television soap operas, however, ever aired simultaneously on two or more major networks.

Radio soaps had a different path. Sixty-three radio soaps (16%) began broadcasting on one network and aired its last episode on another network. Radio soap operas tended to take one of three paths. One, it debuted on a small local station and later received national coverage through a major network. The long-running *One Man's Family,* for instance, began on a regional West Coast station in 1932 and later began broadcasting nationwide on NBC. The second more serpentine path can be illustrated by *Ma Perkins*. It debuted on a local Cincinnati station in 1933. Throughout its 27 year run, it appeared on NBC-Red, NBC-Blue, CBS and Mutual, and was broadcast for several years on multiple networks simultaneously. The third trajectory most prevalent from the mid-1940s onward as seen with the long-running *Lorenzo Jones* became the model of

television soap operas. A soap opera debuted on one national network and later was canceled by the same network.

Early Popularity

The highest number of soap operas ever broadcast on radio or television was 76 serials in 1939. As shown in Table 2, the genre's popularity spread quickly after its inception in 1930. In less than ten years after the soap opera's debut, the number of soap operas broadcast increased over 2,000%. Casting this trajectory in terms of the legitimization process, we can see that once innovation occurred, local validation and diffusion of the form quickly followed. Returning to our historical chapter, this quick pace is likely due to the rapid proliferation of radio stations in the 1930s, which in turn, generated an increased need for programming that had already proven to be profitable. Stations needed programming and the newly innovative soap opera fit the bill.

Television soap operas did not see the same rapid rise in its numbers at its onset. Instead, it took two decades for the genre to see its peak on television with 18 shows on the air in 1969, a far cry from soaps' radio days. Part of this inertia is attributable to the fact that radio created the broadcasting model on which television was later based. Experimenting with genres, time slots and length of programming had already occurred as the radio industry formed. Television inherited radio's successes, learned from its failures and adopted its format. In other words, innovation, local validation and diffusion occurred during soaps' radio days, and as such, we can look to television as signifying universal validation. It appears that one way to become a legitimate broadcast network was to air soap operas in the daytime. Each of the major radio and television networks -

ABC, CBS, DuMont, Mutual and NBC – broadcast at least one daytime soap opera early in its entrance to radio or television. With DuMont's exit from the television world in 1956, the remaining three continued to program a strong daytime line-up well into the early 2000s. Given this, we can argue that daytime soap operas were integral to a network's programming strategy and perhaps its identity as a major network.

The exception that proves the rule about the universal validation of soap opera is FOX. When FOX entered the television industry in 1986, it purposefully broadcast under the number of hours required to meet the definition of a network by the FCC. In that sense, when FOX received its start in the 1980s, it was not a network in a traditional or legal sense. Rather it was a group of stations loosely affiliated that broadcast a handful of hours of similar content. That content focused exclusively on sitcoms, late-night talk shows and episodic dramas. In the early 1990s as FOX officially became a television network, its primetime programming switched to heavily feature soap operas such *Beverly Hills 90210*, *Melrose Place*, *Party of Five*. That these soaps aired in primetime and not daytime will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. What this broadcasting strategy does suggest is that adopting the soap opera paradigm is closely related to network programming on the national level. Successful networks must, in some way, adopt the soap opera format.

Time Slots

Another reason for the sharp differences between the number of radio and television soap operas is the change in preferred format. 54% of radio soap operas aired five days a week, with the majority of them allotting 15 minutes per broadcast. In

contrast, almost all television soap operas were packaged as 30 to 60 minutes programs. That networks and production companies decided to increase the length of already existing soap operas as opposed to creating new programs explains part of the decrease in the number of television soap operas. To better compare radio to television soap operas, we can look at the number of broadcast minutes allotted to daytime soap operas. As Table 3 shows, however, the genre still hits its peak around the same time frame, with 256,770 minutes in 1940 or 16.5 hours per day dedicated to soap operas. In contrast, television soap operas hit their maximum coverage in 1981 with 164,700 minutes, or 7.5 hours per day.

As we can see, the airways saw the most soap operas (76 in 1939) and most time allotted to soap opera content during its radio years. How can this be if most soap operas ran as 15 minutes serials as opposed to the common hour long format of today? The answer: time slots. When soap operas aired on radio, a larger portion of available airtime was dedicated to soap operas. During their radio days, soap operas could be heard from morning to night. Whereas game shows and syndicated programming now compete with current television soap operas for daytime air, radio soap operas, especially in the 1930s and 1940s, almost singularly dominated the airways. As shown in Table 4, while television networks concentrated soap opera programming from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm, radio soap operas literally aired throughout the day. [6]

[6] Time slots here refer to the time the network assigned for each soap opera to air. Affiliates may choose to broadcast the show at another time or not at all. Therefore this chart should be interpreted as scheduled time slots as opposed to actual airtimes. No information was found for 156 radio soap operas. This suggests that the range is likely accurate but a true mode would be difficult to establish due to the large percentage of missing data.

One argument against this conceptualization is that those shows that air outside the afternoon hours are not truly daytime soap operas. In other words, one could argue that my finding that soap operas were more plentiful during their radio days is an artifact of operationalization. In fact, the reverse is true. It is not the features of what defines soap opera that changed. It was that the industry changed how it used daytime soap operas. The main difference between time slots for radio and those for television is that radio soaps broadcast morning, afternoon and evening, while television soaps aired morning or afternoon or evening. On radio, if one soap broadcast at 10:30 am on CBS, almost certainly did a different soap opera air on CBS at 3:00 pm. In contrast, if a television network airs a soap opera in the morning, it is to free up a time slot in the afternoon for non-soap opera programming. One example is *Guiding Light*. On radio, when the show aired at 11:45 am, other soap operas filled the afternoon and evening time slots. On television, when *Guiding Light* aired in 14 television markets at 9:00 or 10:00 am, another non-soap program was aired in the afternoon. Moreover, almost all radio soap operas that aired after 8:00 pm, what we now consider to be primetime, occurred in the 1930s as radio experimented with program and scheduling. Almost all of those programs also aired, at one point during their runs, during traditional daytime hours. Therefore, one cause of the decline in the number of soap operas foundings over time is that television also relied more extensively other genres such game shows, talk shows, legal shows and syndicated programming for its daytime line-up.

Another cause for more soap operas on radio is likely the difference start-up resources needed for radio and television. The amount of money needed for a 15-minute radio program is drastically smaller than the amount needed for an hour television show.

The descriptive statistics support this conclusion. An average radio soap opera aired for 34.1 months. For television, that number more than doubles to 88.4 months. Additionally, more than half (58.3%) of radio soap operas lasted less than a year, while that number drops for television to 38.7%. From an economic perspective, it makes sense why radio soap operas dominated the airways in a way that television soap operas did not. If a radio soap opera was not economically successful, it would be more advantageous for a sponsor to drop that program and create another one. Risk was lower for radio, which helped foster innovation and diffusion.

Overall, the descriptive statistics suggest that soap operas were a prevalent form of programming on radio and television but particularly thrived in their aural form. While much soap opera scholarship has focused on their tenure on television, this research points to their radio days, especially in the 1930s and early 1940s, as incredibly important in understanding their viability as an economic product. To further that analysis, we now turn to the regression results.

Impact of Density

Table 5 contains the regression results for the hypotheses tested. Model 1 addresses the effect of density and other population ecology variables on foundings. Model 1 finds support for Hypotheses 1a, 2a and 2b. Density, previous foundings and previous foundings-squared have significant effects on foundings. With density, the positive finding (.0630) suggests that legitimacy has the predicted effect: soap opera foundings spurred the development of other new soap operas on both radio and television. Each one-unit increase in density raises the subsequent number of soap

foundings by .063%. Model 1 also finds support for the predicted conditional effects of previous foundings. Initially, the proliferation of new soap operas created a hospitable environment for others to develop, thus paving the way for legitimacy of the form. For each one-unit increase in foundings that occurred during previous year, new soap operas increased at a rate of .2355%. However, when the field becomes saturated and the soap opera form already legitimated, previous foundings had the predicted negative effect on soap opera. At this point, each one-unit increase in previous foundings *decreased* the founding of new soap operas by .0043% the subsequent year. In Model 1, density, previous foundings and previous foundings- squared all have the effect predicted by population ecologists. Density-squared, previous failures and previous failures, on the other hand, affect foundings in the predicted direction but their results are not significant. Thus, H1b is not supported with this model.

Model 2 addresses the neo-institutional variables. It finds support for H3, H4 but not H5. H3 hypothesized that the rate of foundings for daytime soap operas will be significantly affected after 1943 when the U.S. government broke up the monopoly of NBC and the ABC network was created. I find that after 1943 the rate of soap opera foundings significantly decreases 1.811%. It appears that governmental intervention changed the trajectory of the media industry by regulating the parameters of what constitutes a network. In that sense, the 1943 decision helped to solidify the idea of a network as a large, centralized and most importantly national organization. Affiliates became outposts for networks, not a patchwork of loosely bound local stations who partnered with networks to get programming. Power, at this point, shifted toward the networks. ABC channeled its resources into obtaining new stations. It continued to air

soap operas that previously had been broadcast on NBC-Blue, but it was not as quick to create new programs.

We can see this shift illustrated in programming decisions. After 1943, no soap operas aired on multiple networks simultaneously and only two programs debuted on one network and ceased to air on another.[7] Although not outright owned by the network (yet), soap operas became more identified with the network on which it aired after the creation of ABC. What we see here is the beginning of the very paradoxical role for soap operas. Soap opera programming was national programming whose organizational beginnings were rooted in local communities. In this sense, soap operas became national forms of localized programming. We can say here that the economic legitimacy of soap operas may be tied to their broad reach. If so, this would help explain why soap operas never achieved aesthetic legitimacy (value as an art form) because they were too associated with mass culture even though soap operas are, ironically, specialized programming. This theory will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Hypothesis 4 states that the rate of foundings for daytime soap operas will significantly decline after the 1988 Writers' Strike. Model 2 supports that claim. Post 1988, soap opera foundings significantly declined by 2.964%. This finding lends support to the idea that soap operas, although highly valued economic creations, are specifically tied to the creative process. When that creative process is hampered, soap operas, at least their foundings, are thwarted as well.

Hypothesis 5, however - the changing Fin/Syn rules – did not garner significant support. Daytime soap opera foundings were not affected by these legislative changes. On the one hand, this makes sense because the Fin/Syn rules applied only to primetime.

[7] The soap operas are *King's Row* (1951) and *Whispering Streets* (1952).

On the other, the lack of relationship may underscore how separate the daytime industry is from the rest of television. It suggests that, by the mid-1990s, the television industry operated more in isolated segments, meaning that legal and technological changes may not have the same impact on daytime as they do for primetime. This is noteworthy because most mainstream publications cite the reason for daytime's dwindling of soap operas to be the same causes that have affected primetime such as the proliferation of cable. The lack of support for H5 hints that the same factors may have different consequences in daytime as opposed to primetime.

If we combine the population ecology and the neo-institutional variables (Models 1 + Model 2), we see that density and density squared become more significant while Post 1943 and Post 1988 remain significant (Model 4). This finding gives strong support for H6: that density receives stronger support once the neo-institutional hypotheses about foundings are controlled. Given this, we can say that the effect of density on soap opera foundings is not fully pronounced until we control for the legal environment. As Dobbin and Dowd note in their piece about early American railroad foundings, much ecological research looks at a field where legal conditions do not vary. When examining a population that produces under different legal environments that context must be taken into account. For radio and television, like in railroads, the historical time period matters. This does not mean that all history matters. A dummy variable for World War II was created and run with the models but the author found no effect. Instead, this points specifically to government intervention or coercive isomorphism as playing a key role in foundings. Also in Model 4, previous foundings and previous foundings-squared lose significance, while previous failures and previous failures squared remain insignificant.

This relationship suggests that, once governmental intervention is controlled, density, not total mass of the population of soap operas, drives foundings. For every one-unit increase in density, foundings increased by .0843%. Like in Model 1, legitimacy has the predicted effect. As the environment became more populated with soap operas, the soap opera form gained legitimacy. Once neo-institutional variables are taken into account, the conditional effect of density emerges. After legitimacy is achieved and competition sets in, each one-unit increase in density decreases soap opera foundings by .0008%. Moreover, for both density and density squared the size of the effect grows once legal conditions are controlled (.0630 vs .0843 and -0006 vs -.0007 respectively). Comparing the log-likelihood of Model 1 (population ecology only) to Model 4 (population ecology plus neo-institutional variables), we see that Model 4 provides a significantly better fit at the .001 level.

Model 3 addresses the issue of demand. Perhaps the growth of soap operas was simply a result of having more airtime over the years. Several economic variables were tested. GNP (standardized to 2011 dollars), number of cable subscribers, number of cable channels, percentage of households with radios and television did not yield significant relationships. The lack of a significant negative relationship between cable and soap opera foundings is notable, given that cable is cited by mainstream press outlets as a major reason for the downfall of daytime soap operas. What is significant in Model 3 is the number of television stations, lagged one year. Ironically, the relationship is negative, meaning that for every one-unit increase in soap opera foundings the number of television stations decreases by .0035%. This, of course, is the opposite of demand. As available airtime increased, the number of daytime soap operas actually decreased.

What happens to density once neo-institutional and demand variables are controlled? Model 5 offers those results. We can see that density and density squared remain extremely significant. According to this model, the number of television stations and the percentage of radio stations that are affiliated with a network both have negative significant results. I am cautious about the interpretability of this model. First, Model 5 contains 12 regressors for a sample that contains 80 observations. It appears that too many independent variables are available to explain their relationship with foundings. In other words, there are too many cooks in the kitchen. A related concern is the high correlation between independent variables (see Table 7): The post-1943 effect loses significance in Model 5, but this may be due to the addition of the highly correlated variable "percentage of network television lagged" (83.2% correlation). The same case applies to post-1988. It loses significance in Model 5 perhaps because of the addition of the variable "number of television stations, lagged" (76.6% correlation).

Given the problems with interpreting Model 5, I created two new databases to test the demand variables against the organizational theory hypotheses. One database contained only radio soap operas from 1930 to 1960 and the corresponding independent variables and the other database contained only television soap operas from 1949 to 2010 and the corresponding independent variables. This split meant that density and related variables were unique for the smaller databases for the period of 1949-1960 because, unlike in the main dataset, I am focused here on foundings across only one medium. Table 6 reports those results.

Radio (Model 1) contains the population ecology and the neo-institutional variables. As we can see, density and density-squared remain significant. In fact, in this

model no population ecology variable is significant until we control for the creation of ABC (post 1943). In Model 2 for radio, density, density-squared and post-1943 remain significant even when we control for the number of radio stations and affiliates. The demand variables are significant but do not support the idea that more airtime equaled more radio soap operas. The negative relationship between the demand variables and foundings suggests that something other than sheer supply and demand drove the establishment of soap operas.

The models for television are difficult to interpret. No variable is significant until we control for number of minutes. Unlike radio where most programs began and ended as 15-minute broadcasts, a single television soap opera could air anywhere from 15 to 90 minutes per day. Thus, we cannot even see the impact of density until we take the change of size into account. Even with that addition, most variables are not significant in the television models. These lack of findings do not mean these factors are not correlated with foundings. Instead, these models coupled with the radio results suggest two points. First, it suggests that the way to do the business of soap operas was already established by 1949. The environment that drove foundings occurred prior to television. Second, there may not be enough variation in foundings during the television years to detect any statistical significance. For example, the 1988 Writers' Strike is no longer significant once we look only at television likely because there are so few television foundings on television after the 1970s. Given these models, I would argue that demand does not adequately explain what drove soap opera foundings. Instead, I find support that density, density squared, the creation of ABC in 1943 and possibly the 1988 Writers' Strike drive soap opera foundings on radio and television.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I discuss the factors that affect economic legitimacy of radio and television daytime soap operas. We can see that soon after their innovation in 1930, daytime soap operas quickly became a viable way to conduct business in the media industry in the United States. One reason economic legitimacy may have been achieved so rapidly is that they were reliable sources of income during the Great Depression. Budgets allowed less room for experimentation so once a successful model of programming developed, it made financial sense to continue it. In general, radio was an especially vibrant time for soap operas.

This chapter also finds that the foundings of soap operas follow patterns similar to other organizations. Density and density squared are significant, meaning the density has the conditional effect predicted by population ecologists. Similar to institutional ecologists, the effects of density become more pronounced once policy changes are taken into account. Density and density squared have a greater effect and become more significant once I controlled for the creation of the ABC network (1943) and the 1988 Writers' Strike. The development of a new network hampered foundings because ABC had to expend its resources gathering stations to expand its audience. Although already established soap operas continued, the development of new programming was put on hold. The significant and conditional effect of density after the 1988 Writer's Strike highlights the tension between economic and aesthetic legitimacy of soap operas. As these results show, soap operas are clearly economic creations that reap economic rewards. They are, however, intimately tied to the creative process and disruption in that

process appears to affect soap opera foundings. More of the relationship between economics and aesthetics will be discussed in Chapter 4.

It is incredibly interesting that, in terms of foundings and allotted broadcast time, soap operas enjoyed their heyday before they were categorized as soap operas. In the 1940s with the development of the soap opera label and the demarcation of primetime, foundings of soap operas were dampened. Competition between already existing soap operas certainly played a role in hampering foundings after the 1940s, but this turn of events must also be examined in light of the discourse that surrounded soap operas in the mainstream press. To look at the ways in which economic and aesthetic legitimacy played out in *The New York Times*, we go to Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Aesthetic Legitimacy and Daytime U.S. Soap Operas

Chapter 3 outlined the trajectory of economic legitimacy for American daytime soap operas. We saw that soap operas proliferated during the radio era, especially prior to 1940. The foundings of soap operas follow a trajectory similar to that for other organizational foundings: density becomes significant once other variables are taken into account. The creation of the ABC network in 1943 and the Writers' Strike in 1988 were significant factors that depressed the number of soap opera foundings. I argue that these findings suggest that while soap operas are clearly economic products, they also have strong ties to the creative process.

This chapter examines the aesthetic legitimacy of daytime soap operas in the United States. I begin by reviewing the literature about critical discourse and the creation of a legitimating ideology. Second, I outline how I derived my sample of articles from *The New York Times* as well as the coding scheme employed. Third, I argue that two related aesthetic ideologies emerged as legitimating frames for daytime U.S. soap operas – emotional authenticity and the importance of social issues. I also make the case that two delegitimating ideologies – soap operas as anti-art and soap opera audience as deviant – appeared consistently in the *Times* over the decades. Finally, given this evidence, I theorize why daytime soap operas had not attained aesthetic legitimacy in the United States.

CREATION AND DIFFUSION OF AESTHETIC LEGITIMACY

The process through which a cultural product becomes legitimate art is termed aesthetic mobility and, as noted earlier, has three main components: opportunity space, institutionalization of resources and a legitimating ideology (Baumann 2001, 2007,

Becker 1982, DiMaggio 1982, Peterson 1994). Key to the development and maintenance of a legitimating ideology are critics. Scholars have repeatedly found that critics play a central role in identifying what cultural objects should be lauded and the development of the discourse needed to frame such objects (Baumann 2001; Bourdieu 1984; Hicks & Petrova 2006; Shrum 1991, 1996). This dissertation chapter builds upon that literature by analyzing the legitimating ideology for American daytime soap operas. In particular, I am guided by two studies: Baumann's (2001) historical analysis of the critical discourse about film, a place where aesthetic legitimacy clearly took root, and Bielby, Moloney and Ngo's (2005) work on the aesthetic evaluation of television, where aesthetic legitimacy continues to unfold.

To capture how film critics evaluated motion pictures, Baumann developed two coding schemes. The first was drawn from the high art terminology used in reviews of classical music and paintings published in the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker* and *Time Magazine* in 1925.[8] Baumann collected which descriptive terms appeared most often across the three publications in critical reviews of classical music and paintings. He then divided the critics' terminology into two groups in order to capture the evolution of discourse about the aesthetic legitimacy of a cultural product. The first group was a collection of high art terms: art, brilliant, genius, inspired, intelligent, master and work (he later added -ian and -esque). Second was a collection of critical terms that referred to cultural products being interpreted as texts. The terms were: composition, genre, irony, metaphor, satire, symbol and tone. Baumann used these groups as a coding scheme for film reviews. Using the find feature in Microsoft, Baumann searched for high art and

[8]By that year, the genres he selected had already been codified as high art so the way in which critics spoke about them provided a template for how critics talk in general about high art genres.

critical terms in 468 film reviews from 1925 - 1985. Looking at the high art and critical terms longitudinally, he found that there was a statistically significant pattern toward the increase in both kinds of terminology in film reviews. Baumann argues that this increase indicates the development of a legitimating ideology – or frame – through which film could now be viewed as art. The legitimating ideology was auteur theory, which states that film must be actively interpreted (not passively enjoyed) and the director is considered the author of the film.[9]

Given auteur theory and the rise of high art and critical terminology in reviews over time, Baumann argued that film was increasingly interpreted. Thus, he analyzed the text of the reviews to see how critics interpreted the films. He found eight techniques used by all film critics: the presence of positive and negative commentary, named director, comparison of directors, comparison of films, film is interpreted, merit in failure, art versus entertainment, and the critique that the film is "too easy to enjoy." Baumann then ties these interpretation techniques to auteur theory and shows how this legitimating ideology was mostly likely being disseminated through newly established university film studies departments and film festivals. In the population of motion pictures, the aesthetic legitimacy has firmly taken root, aided in large part by academics and critics.

Bielby, Moloney and Ngo (2005) also look at critics, specifically television critics, to see if they draw upon an established set of aesthetic criteria in order to judge the artistic merits of television. To that end, they analyze 540 television reviews from television critics at six newspapers, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *Washington*

[9]Hicks and Petrova (2005) offer an excellent overview on auteur theory and its introduction in the United States.

Post, *Boston Globe*, *Seattle Times* and *USA Today,* at five points in time: 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000. Given that the authors were generating theory, they employed the inductive approach of multidimensional scaling in order to see how critics evaluated television and how those critiques changed over time. One result is a conceptual break from traditional film reviews. While film reviews focused on directors and direction, Bielby, Moloney and Ngo find that television reviewers pay more attention to writers/writing and actors. This finding supports the idea that, in television, writers are key to the creative process (Cantor 1971).

After seeing what words or phrases appeared in the reviews, the authors grouped these variables into seven conceptual categories: cultural agents or producers, comparison to film or television, popular culture aesthetic, episodicity, genre-related comments, novelty and boundaries of television quality. After mapping what concepts appeared over time, the authors detect two important clusters, i.e. words that tend to appear together in reviews. The terms in the first clusters were frequently employed over time by various critics, thus suggesting that these attributes can be thought of as "a repertoire" that speaks to shared understandings about conventions and quality. Terms from the first cluster are: writers/writing; acting/cast; comparison to other television shows, prediction of audience response, genre comments, prediction of ratings, use of news as part of review, comparison to film, producer/production, the ongoing/episodic nature of the show, consistent across time, tentativeness/speculation about the future and funniness. Within that cluster appeared two conceptual categories that Bielby, Moloney and Ngo define as the popular culture aesthetic: prediction of audience response and funniness. The other

terms indicating the popular culture aesthetic are: fun, entertaining, emotional authenticity and scary.

A second cluster of terms appeared in 2000, one that spoke to high art evaluative criteria: directors/direction, complexity/ambiguity, production values, formal elements, constraints of the television medium, transcendence of genre conventions, and quality representativeness of the genre. Taken together, the authors note that a "popular culture" aesthetic, which speaks to a show's entertainment value, is developing concomitantly with a high art aesthetic, similar to what was seen in Baumann's analysis of film reviews. In other words, one type of aesthetic does not have to displace the other. Moreover, 2000 appearance of high art terms suggests that a aesthetic legitimating ideology is developing for television. Television is beginning to be considered a genre capable of art. This study identifies a repertoire of terms upon which television critics draw and demonstrates how television criticism is fertile ground on which to explore the evolving evaluative process of different aesthetics.

A cultural product can be described as emotionally authentic when the feelings it invokes in the audience resonate as genuine. In this sense, key underlying concepts to authenticity are believability and originality (Peterson 1997). Like legitimacy, authenticity is not an ahistorical concept but one embedded in a large social context. What is considered authentic changes over time and is "continually renewed over the years" (Peterson 1997, 220). Yet what resonates with an audience is not simply a matter of personal preference. Certain culturally constructed frames help people decipher what is and what is not "real." For example, Peterson (1997) finds in his study of country music two contrasting ideologies both of which denote what is authentic country music. On the

one hand, authentic country music is folk music that describes everyday events of a difficult life lived off the land. On the other hand, authentic country music is Nashville-produced stars with cowboy hats and Southern accents who can stir the hearts of massive crowds. According to Peterson, the industry, the fans and the performers themselves help shape the parameters that define what is currently authentic country music. In their study on rap music, Cheynne and Binder (2010) focus on the role elite newspaper critics play in delineating authenticity. They find that critics interpret hip-hop and rap that are produced in other countries as more deeply rooted in place, personal ideologies and experiences and therefore more authentic. The authors note that "elite critics' preferences for foreign rap operate as a strategy of distinction, signaling that it is acceptable to like rap when it is produced in the right places for the right reasons" (358). Whereas critics see American rap as too entwined with commercialism, international rap is considered to be free of these capitalistic restraints. Likewise, Grazian (2003) in his study on Blues musicians in Chicago showed that the race of the performer and the location of the performance shaped audience perception. In this case, authentic jazz was the creation of black musicians in South Side clubs. Musical content is secondary to socio-demographic characteristics in determining what is authentic. Just as race played a pivotal role in Grazian's study, Schmutz and Faupel (2010) argue that a musician's gender can affect which performers critics label as superior. While the pathways to valorization were generally more difficult for women, they were more likely than male performers to receive legitimacy because of emotional authenticity. Here, critics favored female performers who sang about raw emotions and identity struggles because reviewers interpreted these types of performances as genuine reflections of the musician's

personhood. Unlike Cheynne and Binder's study, commercialism was positively associated with authenticity. If a female artist's songs were deeply personal and emotional and her albums enjoyed commercial success (e.g. Joni Mitchell, Alanis Morissette), then her music must sincerely strike a chord with the audience. Popularity, then, becomes one indicator of emotional authenticity.

As we can see, newspaper discourse plays a significant role in shaping dialogue about cultural products. Critics can determine which phenomena need attention and how they should be evaluated. The legitimating ideologies that critics put forth are created in a very particular socio-historical contexts. Race, gender, class and nationality may all play a role in determining what gets legitimized. Concepts such as "high art" and "emotional authenticity" may be applied to one medium during a certain time frame and not in another with no relation to changing content . In this way, these critical discourses becomes a powerful, ever evolving tool that helps determine which cultural products are conferred what kind of legitimacy.

DATA AND METHODS

To systematically assess the discourse about American daytime soap operas, I examined articles about soap operas that appeared in *The New York Times* from 1930 to 2010. I assembled the sample by searching for the term "soap opera" in the New York Times Historical Database (1930-2003) and the New York Times Database (2004-2010). For years 1930-1942, I also searched for the terms "daytime serial" and "radio serial because the term "soap opera" did not come into play until the late 1930s. In all, the searches yielded 12,248 articles. I then excluded all articles that had payment as a requirement for publication: classified ads, advertisements, marriage announcements and

obituaries because I wanted to analyze articles that were published solely for journalistic not monetary reasons. I also excluded the table of contents because they were only references to articles, not actual articles with content. Applying these parameters I eliminated 1,094 articles, leaving a sample of 11,154 articles. Figure 1 shows the distribution of these 11,154 articles over, including articles that only used "soap opera" as an adjective.

Give that for this dissertation I am interested only in actual soap operas, I excluded all references that compared soap operas to any non-mass media phenomena – e.g. politics, sports, royal couples. For example, an article whose only reference to soap opera used the term to describe labor negotiations for the Yankees would not be included. An article that described how a baseball player had a guest appearance on a daytime soap opera would be included. Once these articles were excluded, the sample became 5,862 articles. I then scanned the 5,862 articles to determine the contexts in which discussions of U.S. daytime soap operas occurred. After reading them, I divided the articles into six general categories. An article was either 1) a feature article about daytime U.S. soap operas. 2) a media or entertainment feature article where daytime U.S. soap operas were one of many genres mentioned 3) an article about local people or events where a person involved happened to be affiliated with a U.S. daytime soap opera 4) an actor's past career with U.S. daytime soap operas is mentioned as part of the larger actor profile 5) a U.S. daytime soap opera is mentioned as a minor point in news or major non media or entertainment related article or 6) a critic compared a cultural product (e.g. motion picture, concert, book, art exhibit) to a soap opera. If I identified an article as belonging to the first or second category (a media-related feature that contained at least one

reference to an actual daytime soap opera), I included it in my final sample. Category 1 and Category 2 articles totaled 1,058. I called these groups "Entertainment Feature Articles".

Although 1,058 articles is substantial, if that remained my only sample, over 80% of *The New York Times* discussions about actual soap operas would not be analyzed. Therefore, I decided to include and code articles that I had placed in Category 3 through 6 for the first five years of each decade. In other words, all articles that discussed actual soap operas no matter the context and all critical reviews that used "soap opera" as a comparison category were added to the sample and coded if they fell between the years: 1930-1934; 1940-1944; 1950-1954; 1960-1964; 1970-1974; 1980-1984; 1990-1994; 2000-2004. This added 1,471 articles to the sample. If I had placed an article in Category 3-6 and it was not published during the first five years of each decade, it was not included in the sample. Articles that had a good deal of content related to soap operas and thus fell into Category 1 or 2 were included in the sample regardless of what year the article appeared. Filtering the sample in this way allowed me to trace trends in discourse over time, while maintaining a more manageable sample. Table 8 shows the breakdown of these articles. Table 9 contains example text from *The New York Times* and indicates whether or not they would be included in the sample. In total, I used 2,253 articles from *The New York Times* for my analysis.

I uploaded a PDF of each article in the sample to the qualitative software program PDF MaxQDA. Using the Variable feature, I labeled each article with its date, its category, the soaps mentioned in the texts, if any, and which foreign countries were mentioned in the text, if any. After all articles were labeled, I began reading each piece

and highlighting the sections of texts that offered theoretical insight into my research question. Based on the historical research in Chapter 2 and my literature reviews, I devised an initial coding scheme: academics, art, audience, authenticity, feminism, money/finances, ratings soap opera effects and social issues. Over repeated coding sessions, I developed several more codes: charity, industry difficulties, power differences, schedule, soap opera magazines, soap opera paradigm, technology and what women are like/what women want. Definitions of the codes can be found in Appendix A. In all, I developed 38 codes and subcodes for a total of 7,194 coded segments of texts. After coding was completed, I used the Text Retrieval function in MaxQDA to analyze which codes overlapped in which articles. This technique allowed me to see specifically what the discourse was and how it changed over time. I compared and contrasted themes over the years to develop an argument about the creation and maintenance of a legitimating ideology for daytime soap operas.

RESULTS

Results section is divided into four main sections. First, I present a narrative overview that illustrates how daytime soap operas were presented in *The New York Times* articles from 1930 to 2009. Next, I give evidence for two related legitimating ideologies that emerged over the years about the artistic value of American daytime soap operas. Third, I outline how newspaper content also proffered delegitimizing ideologies that may have hampered aesthetic ideologies from receiving wide scale validation in the United States. Finally, I compare this coverage of U.S. daytime soap operas to how the *Times* discussed the soap opera form on a global scale.

Historical Overview of U.S. Daytime Soap Opera Coverage in The New York Times

In the 1930s, discourse about soap operas, or as they were then called "radio serials," focused on their popularity. Articles were neither positive nor negative and mainly served to inform readers about the development of new serials or changes to the broadcast schedule. Interestingly, what media historians now call the first soap opera – *Painted Dreams* – was never mentioned in *The New York Times* during this time frame. Its debut in 1930 was publicized in another newspaper, *The Chicago Tribune* (the serial aired in the Windy City), which gives credence to the idea that soap operas began as local creative innovations and only later grew into national marketing platforms for corporations. This theory is also supported by *The Times'* placement of early articles about daytime soap operas. Non advertising content about these serial dramas appeared almost exclusively in the Radio or Entertainment sections until 1939 when an article in the Business section explicitly tied Procter & Gamble to soap operas' economic capacities.

The first negative critique of soap operas appeared in 1937. During an annual conference, the Westchester County Federation of Women publically denounced daytime radio serials as "cheap" and "detrimental" to women and children (4/24/1937, 21). Two years later, in November 1939, famed film critic Bosley Crowther published the pejorative term "soap opera" for the first time in the newspaper. In discussing the serialization in motion pictures, Crowther noted "[Chapter thrillers] the elite think, went out with sound or at the least with radio 'soap operas.' Little would they suspect that the radio has actually contributed new life to the serial urge and that neighborhood houses all over are flashing 'to be continueds' regularly (11/12/1939, 139). Crowther also

disparaged the audience for movie and radio serials, chastening them for taking these works of light fiction too seriously.

Soap operas' potential negative effects on the audience continued to be the dominant trend in *Times* coverage in the 1940s. The study conducted by Dr. Lewis Berg, as outlined in Chapter 2, received much attention as did the responses by Lazerfeld and colleagues. Articles about the controversy state that "Dr. Berg finds a definite relationship between soap operas and a kind of narcotic stupor (11/29/1942, 12). Sociologist Dr. Herta Herzog concluded the opposite: soap operas can have a positive uplifting influence on the lonely housewife. By 1943,*The Times'* articles repeatedly state that soap operas are a harmless (and very profitable) form of mindless entertainment. From this point until the 1970s, however, articles about daytime programming are less about serial content and more about the audience. For the next thirty years, most articles contained some unflattering reference about the audience regardless of the piece's main point. In other words, an announcement in the 1930s about a soap opera leaving the airways would typically supply the reader with information about dates and times. From the 1940s onward, an article about a canceled soap would almost always contain a negative description of the audience. Soap opera listeners are not fans, but addicts, unable to function without their daily soap opera fix. The audience is frequently delusional and blur the line between fact and fantasy. For example, radio journalist John Hutchens noted how the networks and press handled the debut of a typical soap opera in 1944.

> Not for the first time these columns are moved to something approaching awe at the arrival of a new daytime serial, or in the vulgate, a soap opera. The awe is in direct ratio to the apathy that preceded the advent of one of these works, which have a curious way of creeping into Radio Row in a slightly shamefaced manner, as if they expected to be turned away at the door. Let a variety show with a

> "name" appear on the horizon and, though its prefatory aroma reeks of the smokehouse, optimistic listeners await it with fingers itching to turn to the dial to the station at which it will reside. Not so the lowly soap, whose author and leading player or players are seldom publicized either before or after they reach the air, perhaps in deference to the widely held notion that the serial audience chooses to believe the serial is not really written or acted but actually a slice of life that just happens to take place for a quarter hour every Monday through Friday at a given time on a given station. (7/9/1944)

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, entertainment critics pondered whether the demise of radio also meant the end of daytime soap operas. When that proved not to be the case, the newspaper shifted its focus to television soap operas, lamenting that they were no improvement over their aural counterparts. In a behind-the-scenes look at one of television's first soap operas, *The First Hundred Years,* the author described how everyone except the audience can comprehend the genre's ludicrousness.

> To prepare television's pioneer soap opera for exposure, if not consumption, the performers on *The First Hundred Years* have developed a process of self-immunization calculated to carry them through their five-year contracts. To protect themselves during rehearsal the thespians are even willing to violate their oldest traditions. Actors in these rehearsals are almost eager to offer cuts in their own speeches. They laugh at lines intended to draw audience sniffles and groan at sections suppose to draw laughs. Perhaps never has so much sweat been poured into so little script; so much fine craftsmanship into so much art. (12/24/1950, 13).

Primetime soap operas came to the fore in the 1960s with the televised adaption of the romance novel *Peyton Place*. Television critic John Gould announced its debut as "the most revolutionary innovation in programming" and noted that "if it succeeds in the ratings might usher in an era of nighttime soap operas" (8/30/1964, 15). While articles on daytime soap operas continued to be primarily focused on changes in the broadcast schedule, this decade also saw more interviews with actors who currently appeared on daytime soap operas. In 1961, *the Times* gave a full page interview to actor Mary Stuart

for her ten years spent on *Search For Tomorrow*. In the piece, Stuart spoke out against the stigmatization of soaps, explaining, "The daytime serial is a fascinating form of drama. The acting quality is generally better than in night-time television. There's a healthy stock-company relationship between the actors. They get something new and fresh every day with essentially repetitive material. It's quite a challenge" (5/7/1961, 15).

The Times coverage of daytime soap operas exploded in the 1970s. At least once a year, the newspaper featured an in-depth look into one or more current daytime dramas. Some writers argued that the audience for daytime soap operas were sophisticated and educated. Academic discussion about soaps returned but not solely in the negative form presented by Dr. Berg in the 1940s. Instead, more weight was given to daytime dramas as potentially positive spaced for strong women characters and the tenets of feminisms. *The Times* did not become a strong supporter of soap operas, but it did begin to give more equal space to positive and negative accounts of soap operas. For example, when *Times* writer Terry Ann Knopf criticized soap operas for failing to dramatize social issues realistically, the newspaper later featured a two-page rebuttal from Agnes Nixon, creator and writer of *All My Children* and *One Life To Live*. These discussions will be covered in more depth in Part II.

Increased coverage of daytime soap operas continued in the1980s, although explicit connections between feminism and daytime dramas decreased significantly. In the '80s, *The Times* featured stories such as African-American characters on daytime (7/4/1982), academic conferences about the soap opera *General Hospital* at Harvard (5/25/1981) and a day in the life on the set of the New York-based serial *Another World* (7/28/1985). The 1980s also saw the first sustained discourse about economic troubles

brewing within the soap opera industry. The network NBC in particular received notable attention for their lackluster line-up. As an April 3, 1983 article noted, "NBC's prime-time problems, in fact, pale in comparison with its daytime woes.... Viewers fled for more reliable networks leaving NBC with a lineup nobody wanted to see" and quoted an executive as saying " 'Daytime is the best place to have leadership and the worst place to be third'"

Academic discourse about daytime soap operas grew in the 1990s, this time emphasizing the medium's strength in educating audiences through the dramatization of social issues. These pieces about the viability of the genre stood in stark contrast to the numerous articles devoted to soap cancelations like *Generations* (1991), *Santa Barbara* (1993) and *Another World* (1999), all NBC shows. Economic troubles were no longer unique to NBC. After the O.J. Simpson trial (January to October 1995), several pieces discussed the dwindling numbers of women who watched daytime serials. Even with the coverage of the monetary woes, *The Times* continued to focus on other aspects of the genre, offering small articles about notable milestones such as *As The World Turns'* 40th anniversary and charity events sponsored by current daytime actors.

In terms of the sheer number of articles, the 2000s look similar to the '80s and '90s. In fact, the sheer amount of references made to soap operas was higher in the 2000s than the 1980s. Content wise, the difference is dramatic. Major events in the daytime world – the coming-out storyline on *All My Children* (2000), *Guiding Light's* 75th anniversary (2002), *As The World Turns* 50th anniversary (2006) – received no attention. What did get coverage almost always had tie-in with the local community. For example, four Daytime Emmy nominees were profiled in 2001 with the perceptive that all were

residents of the same Connecticut town. A feature on *Guiding Light* (2003) focused on a local youth baseball team who had been extras on the set. When *As The World Turns* and *Guiding Light* were canceled later that decade, the shows received less coverage than *Another World's* departure in 1999. The abrupt shift in the kind of coverage daytime soap operas received will be discussed in more detail in the Discussion section.

As noted in the Data/Methods section, the term "soap opera" in *The New York Times* refers to two concepts 1) actual daytime programming and 2) a descriptive term used to convey the emotional tenor of an event. As noted earlier, Figure 1 illustrates these dual uses. Until the 1960s, when journalists spoke of "soap operas" they typically were discussing the shows themselves. However after 1960, articles containing the phrase "soap opera" were more likely to be describing a non-mass media phenomena such as labor negotiations, sporting events, political campaigns and high-profile couples. Still, discourse about actual soap operas also increased during this time period, hitting its peak in the 1990s. However, by the 2000s, 29% of the soap operas mentioned had been canceled in a previous decade. Thus, in the 2000s, we see a shift from coverage of soap operas as a viable to a moribund one. Critics began using the term "soap opera" in reviews to describe paradoxically flat or overly emotional content, first in books then diffusing to theater, motion pictures, music, art, dance and television. How this critical discourse impacted soap operas is discussed in Section III. Now, I use this brief historical overview to jump into specific discourse and time periods that address how a legitimating ideology for soap operas developed.

Legitimating Ideologies for the Artistic Value of U.S. Daytime Soap Operas

There were two related legitimating ideologies about U.S. daytime soap operas

presented in *The New York Times.* The first ideology emphasized the genre's capacity for emotional authenticity. Soap operas had an aesthetic value because they prompted true emotional cartharsis for the audience. Given the genre's lack of a central narrator and the multiple connections each character had to one another, supporters argued that soap operas could better capture the multidimensionality and complexity of real life. This storytelling technique became especially true for female characters. Soap operas showcased how a woman negotiated her multiple often conflicting societal roles. Although this discussion became prominent in the 1970s its beginnings are rooted in the earliest discourse about the genre in the 1930s.

The second ideology highlighted the genre's ability to portray social issues. This is related to emotional authenticity but in this later ideology authenticity could be tweaked without penalty in order to more accurately convey the nuances of a social issue. Social issue storylines began in the 1940s with the advent of World War II, but grew in importance in the 1980s and 1990s. In these decades, the discourse focused more on particular storylines and the medium's capability to be a medium for a message regardless of global location than on character studies.

These ideologies are not mutually exclusive. Over the years, they reinforced each other and created a larger discourse about the aesthetic value of daytime soap operas. The two ideologies of emotional authenticity and social relevance are present throughout the genre's history. In the 1930s through 1970s, daytime supporters stressed emotional authenticity while the genre's ability to tell socially relevant storylines was emphasized in later decades. Below, I will demonstrate these ideologies with select passages in *The New York Times*.

Role of Authenticity (1930s-1970s)

From soap opera's earliest days, supporters hailed the genre's capacity for emotional authenticity. In 1934, an executive for NBC theorized: "If a radio serial enjoys a long run, the only reason is that in some manner it meets some psychological requirement felt by a large portion of the public… It may be the personality of the artist or the novelty of the presentation or the human appeal of the message, but, whatever the quality of its components, the broadcast hits the spot with the average man or woman." Actors of radio and motion pictures cited that they preferred the "here and now" of radio to movie's "over rehearsed stiffness that masquerades as perfection on the screen" (4/25/1937). The first content review of soap operas appeared in 1934 and noted that "the homespun philosophies, the broadcast entwined with everyday life are the ones that are successful" (8/26/1934, 15). *The Goldbergs* creator insisted that any intended sound effect, like running water, was produced by the actual running of water not an actor. Frank Hummert, a leader in the creation of radio serials, explained why soap operas reflect a more accurate portrayal of real life than staged drama.

> The theatre and the theatre of the air are as far apart as the two poles…. When people go to the theatre, they are willing to accept things as they are, but in radio the characters become so close to the audience and so much a part of their daily life that they come to believe it is the real thing and not make-believe at all. They won't stand for the making of a hero into a villain or vice versa; the people must be uniformly consistent and high-principled, and if too drastic changes are made in a character the listener is quick to register a protest.

Interestingly at this point in time, psychological identification is perceived as a positive quality. The audience, which is comprised of both men and women, can be active and are vital to the long-term success of the show. Although not directly stated by

Hummert, what is perceived as blurring fact and fiction is really audience discernment between authenticity and falseness. Audience research during this time also suggested that daytime serials occupied both high and low status classifications. “The people who selected the loftiest types of musical program and decried “cheap” entertainment saw nothing unusual in picking as best non-musical program a sentimental daytime series. To some, Wayne King represents “serious” music and “One Man’s Family” is an educational broadcast” (5/31/1936, 10).

Legitimating ideology about soap opera’s emotional authenticity combined with the high art aesthetic in discourse about *Against The Storm,* a serial created by Sandra Michael that ran from 1939 until 1941. The show was lauded not just for its emotional authenticity but for its literary and intellectual merits. It won the prestigious Peabody Award for Excellence in Radio Drama in 1942 shortly before it left the airways purportedly because the network wanted more say in creative aspects. Radio journalist John Hutchens, never a supporter of daytime serials, lamented the demise of *Against The Storm*, noting “this five-a-week program which, for more than three years, has had something important to say, and has said it with great narrative skill, dignity, intelligence and a cast of living and literate characters” (11/29/1942). Even Dr. Berg praised *Against The Storm* and singled it out as high-quality drama that did not negatively affect the audience the way other daytime serials did (12/6/1942). However, once *Against The Storm* ceased to air, the high art aesthetic discourse disappeared. Some talk reemerged when other Sandra Michael’s programs debuted, but no daytime soap opera would receive critical praise again.

Although all types of commentary about daytime soap operas ebbed in the 1950s

and 1960s, developments in the primetime sphere during this time laid the groundwork for future changes in daytime. A fascinating 1962 news article entitled "Dramatist Plight Cited At TV Study: FCC Is Told Some Turn To Soap Operas" explained the crisis in the primetime. National Chairman of the Writers' Guild of America David Davidson testified at a hearing about creativity and network programming that he had been "hiding out" as a writer for a soap opera under an assumed name, a practice that had been adopted by many of his colleagues because network executives stymied the creative process in primetime dramas. These behind-the-scene changes speak to the creation of opportunity space as discussed in Chapter 2. There, I argued that the creation of "modern" soap operas in the 1960s enabled the genre to become differentiated in the eyes of critics. These new soaps in addition to the presumed increases in literary quality set the stage for legitimating ideology discourse to further develop.

In the 1970s, the long-standing legitimating ideology of emotional authenticity joined with the tenants of feminism. Many articles in *The Times* now considered daytime drama to be the most welcoming space in mass media for multilayered female characters. Lin Bolen, then Vice President of Daytime programming at NBC, explained that executives wanted to have soap operas reflect societal changes. " 'I don't think that great masses of women are women's libbers… but I do think the movement's values have affected most of them.'" Another article stated that "soap operas are the only programs on television that do not adopt a patronizing attitude toward women. There are more women doctors, lawyers, writers, judges, nurses, District Attorneys and corporation executives on daytime television that we ever dreamed of on primetime" (12/16/1973). The Times also featured an interview with a biologist, Byrna Laub, who quit her job to write a monthly

newsletter recapping plots for all broadcast soap operas. In the article she stated:

> The viewers, according to Mrs. Laub, are not the "uneducated poor" - they watch the game shows – but the more intelligent and educated. "I'm exactly the average viewer," she says. Furthermore, she says soap operas are one of the leading barometers what's happening in contemporary society, especially the changing position of women. In subtley and the use of controversial and provocative subject matter, they are more like adult movies than nighttime television.

Not everyone embraced the perspective that daytime soap operas accurately reflected important societal changes. As noted earlier, in an article published May 7, 1972, writer Terry Ann Knopf, criticized shows such as *All My Children* for its halfhearted depiction of relevant social issues such as Vietnam War protests. Knopf explained that "despite some creeping social relevance, the soaps have yet to come to grips with reality in any meaningful way; that for too long they have been perpetuators of outworn beliefs and values, reflecting a generally conservative bias; and that the networks presenting these shows still live in another world in which they have yet to appreciate their responsibilities." The criticism did not target the genre's ability to present this material. In fact, soaps needed to be criticized precisely because the medium did have the capacity to tell authentic stories. Indeed, Knopf ended her commentary noting that she was a fan herself. "No doubt these criticisms leveled at soaps will be greeted in some quarters with dismay. But the issue is not 'my soap right or wrong' or 'love it or leave it.' As soap addicts, we like our soaps and take them seriously. We merely want to see them improved." Unlike the critics of soap operas from earlier decades, the author here considers herself an insider who is invested in the genre's evolution. Soap opera creator and writer Agnes Nixon responded to Knopf's piece with specific examples of how soap

operas, particular *All My Children*, were committed to the authentic telling of relevant stories. What is notable about this exchange is that both authors see soap operas as capable of creating true and cathartic emotional responses from its viewers. They disagree over the success of certain storylines, a far cry from the medicalized discussions of the 1940s.

Discussions about feminism and authenticity in daytime soap operas continue through the 1970s. By the early 1980s, however, the discourse dwindles. As the decade continues, some articles suggest that soap operas have reverted to being hostile territory for women due to the genre's antiquated take on gender roles. By the 2000s, any discussion of soap operas and feminism effectively ceases. Soap operas' ability to be emotionally authentic is also downplayed in light of the emergence of a new legitimating ideology: soap opera's superior ability to dramatize social issues.

Importance of Social Issues (1980s-1990s)

Daytime soap operas have featured social issue oriented storylines since the 1940s. In 1942, the Office of War Information worked with existing serials to create plots where characters would discuss ways in which they could help the Allied war effort. In what is considered to be soaps' first storyline developed specifically to educate the audience, Agnes Nixon dramatized the importance of annual Pap smears with Bert Bauer's battle with uterine cancer on *Guiding Light* in 1962. By the1970s, social issues became closely tied to discussion of emotional authenticity. Thus, the development of social issues as a legitimating ideology in the 1980s and 1990s was not the creation of an entirely new ideology but a shift in emphasis. In earlier decades, supporters focused on soap operas' capacity to generate emotional resonance through characterization; starting

in the 1980s, daytime champions stressed the medium's ability to inform audiences through socially relevant storylines. In other words, "realism" was the goal under the legitimating ideology of emotional authenticity while "education of the audience" prevailed when social issue ideology was emphasized. For example, Nixon argued in her 1973 editorial that *All My Children* did not show anti-war demonstrations because these protests could not be replicated realistically given studio and budget constraints. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, realism could more easily play a secondary role to dramatization if the audience could be better educated through a more improbable scenario. For instance, three daytime soap operas in the 1980s featured women infected with HIV/AIDS who had not engaged in intravenous drug use or any at-risk behaviors. While critics lambasted the shows for painting an unrealistic picture of HIV/AIDS – "this dramatic license flies in the face of the latest statistics - soap opera professionals defended their decision, saying that the purpose was to educate their middle class female audience not accurately depict the AIDS epidemic (8/28/1988).

This shift from emotional authenticity to social issues most likely occurred as a way for daytime soap operas to define themselves against their primetime counterparts. The most popular primetime soap opera *Dallas* was lauded for its ability to instill within their audience deep emotional investment for the characters but was never known for its successful treatment of relevant social issues. Another reason for the change in focus may be the increased prominence of soap opera fan magazines. Although these periodicals appeared in the 1970s, the *New York Times* did not regularly include them in discourse about soap operas until the 1980s. During this decade, magazines became a conduit between show and viewer and an expedient way of gauging a storyline's impact on the

audience. Therefore, earlier soap operas may have tried to educate the audience, but then-modern shows were now better able to capture viewer response and gauge the effectiveness of a particular social issue storyline. Finally, network executives and sponsors eased the tight restrictions on content in the 1980s (particularly after the 1988 Writers' Strike), thereby opening the field of dramatic possibilities for writers. In an interview with actress Helen Wagner in honor of *As The World Turns'* 35th anniversary, *The Times* noted "The show has had its share of implausible daytime staples like long-lost twins and infants switched at birth. But it has also realistically tackled many social issues, including alcoholism, drug abuse, AIDS and incest. 'I think we've dealt with every taboo,' Miss Wagner said. "There is no longer the kind of censorship we used to have with Procter & Gamble, our sponsor'" (4/7/1991).

The importance of social issues in daytime soap operas manifested in two ways. First, discourse in *The Times* about soap operas focused less on character studies and more on larger social issues. For example, the debut of *Loving* was discussed in terms of which social issues (e.g. HIV/AIDS and homelessness) it would tackle not the familial ties between the show's main characters. While articles in the 1930-1970s were more likely to center on the state of the soap opera genre, articles in the 1980s and 1990s typically discussed soap opera's connection to social issues. The first inter-racial soap opera, Generations, aired for less than 24 months but received the lion's share of coverage in *The Times* in the early 1990s. Even soap opera critics, who never endorsed the argument for the genre's emotional authenticity, discussed how social issues had gained traction within the medium. In 1992, John J. O'Connor, a long-time television critic who despised soap operas, noted how current soap operas had changed.

> [There] is a new sophistication in both style and content. A broad range of serious issues are being tackled on soaps, and increasingly so…. On the soaps, the more sensational topics like rape and incest have never been in short supply. But the writers obviously read newspapers and watch talk shows, and their scripts now encompass other current concerns. The issue of illiteracy, for instance, surfaced this past year for at least two attractive characters, Dru on the top-rated *Young and Restless* (CBS) and Jason on *One Life To Live* (ABC). The problem of alcoholism is drawn in subtler strokes, seen primarily as a disease in the case of young Hayley on *All My Children* but perhaps growing into a character defect for Asa Buchanan on *One Life To Live.* As more black performers become contract players on daytime dramas – their numbers are still too relatively few but steadily improving – there has been a notable increase in interracial love stories. (7/19/1992)

The second way the importance of social issues appeared in the discourse was the idea that soap opera as a medium could act as a messenger for a cause and those associated with the program, especially actors, could become that cause's ambassadors. Starting in the 1980s, Times articles increasingly focused on actors and their charities. Some were tied directly to storyline as in the case *of One Life To Live* and the AIDS quilt (1992). Others were causes personal to particular actors such as *All My Children's* Julia Barr and Michael E. Knight for animal rights and environmental conservation. In fact, with the exception of some charity work publicized in the late 1930s and early 1940s, all over discourse about soap operas and charities are found after 1982. By the mid 1990s, one of the only avenues for a soap opera to receive coverage in The Times was through a charity event.

Conceptualizing soap operas as a means to communicate information to the audience has roots in the 1940s. Beginning in the 1980s, however, The Times discussed how organizations used the soap opera paradigm to educate. Banks promoted money saving strategies to the Latino community through corporate-made soap operas. The

Population Council spread information about family planning through storylines in domestic and foreign soap operas. The New York City Health department created a soap opera comic strip to inform people about HIV/AIDS. While emotional authenticity mattered, what triumphed was the takeaway message. Soap operas' power to educate served to legitimize them as a medium. Just as art can grapple with the social issues of the day, so too can soap operas dramatize community issues.

The *Times* discourse about soap operas points to two legitimating ideologies – emotional authenticity and the importance of social issues. That said, the content analysis of the articles also revealed two counter or delegitimizing ideologies – soap opera as anti-art and soap opera as deviancy and failure. These delegitimizing ideologies contributed to the fractured maintence and the lack of diffusion for either legitimating ideology about soap operas. While discourse about legitimating ideologies ebbed and flowed, with discussions of emotional authenticity peaking in the 1970s and social issues in the 1990s, the delegitimizing ideologies started in 1937 and simply continued to grow over time. In the next section, I will detail the content of these counter ideologies and theorize how their presence negatively affected the legitimating ideologies for soap operas.

Delegitimizing Ideologies for the Artistic Value of U.S. Daytime Soap Operas

Critical Reception and Soap Opera As Anti-Art

In Section II, Baumann (2001) and Bielby et al (2005) discuss the importance of critics in establishing and diffusing a legitimating ideology for motion pictures and primetime television as a way to attain aesthetic mobility for the genres. In *The New York Times*, daytime soap operas did not enjoy the same type of review process presumably because the shows are not discrete or temporally bound products in the same way as

books, art exhibits, dance performances and other artistic creations. In order to warrant a critical review, the cultural phenomena at hand must either have a certain amount of stability or replicability. Soap opera episodes, until recently, air only once, the day's content never repeated, thus creating conditions not amenable to critical reviews.

Despite these limitations, soap operas have played a large role in critical discourse about other mediums. Interestingly, the phrase "soap opera" appears in over 500 reviews from 1930 to 2004, none of them specifically about actual daytime soap operas. In these reviews, the critic typically compares a cultural product to a daytime soap opera in order to delegitimize the object of critical interest. In the same vein, some critics go to great lengths to explain why a certain valorized cultural object cannot be described as a soap opera. Thus, what we see in reviews is not a high art aesthetic discourse about soap operas, but critics using the concept of soap operas as a boundary marker in the high art aesthetic discourse about other cultural products. Thus, arguments in *The New York Times* are never about which soap operas are superior. Instead, a media product such as a motion picture, television show or book can be located within or outside of its genre's rarified canon based on that cultural product's affinity or dissimilarity to daytime soap operas. Repeatedly, in reviews about art, books, movies, dance, music and radio/television programming, "soap opera" is invoked to be the universal symbol of worthlessness.

Figures 2 and 3 show how the descriptive phrase of "soap opera" diffused through different types of reviews in *The Times* from 1940 to 2004. In the 1930s, critics did not compare books, other radio shows or motion pictures to daytime radio serials or soap operas. The first reference to a daytime soap opera in a review appears in a movie review

by critic Frank Nuggent.

> Enough's enough. We'll concede that the family is the foundation of society, but it does not follow that it should become the entire Hollywood structure. ... We will admit, for the sake of argument, that good movie folk are hard to come by and that a producer (or exhibitor) is understandably reluctant to discard a character-formula that has proven a success. But there is great danger now of the family and series films getting completely out of hand and reducing the screen to the level of newspaper comic strip or radio "soap opera." Both of these have their addicts, of course; but if the screen is placed too predominately at their service, millions of others, of less elementary taste, may forget they ever had formed the movie-going habit. (2/18/1940)

After the success of daytime serials on the radio, motion picture companies attempted to bring the formula to the big screen, a deplorable trend according to Nuggent. During this same time period, "soap opera" appeared in book reviews. In a 1941 review of the mystery novel Mansion House of Liberty, critic Kathryn Woods quoted another reviewer who had called the book "as artless as a radio soap opera and quite as tiresome" (3/23/1941). In 1944, critic Nina Lowenstein described the novel "Most Secret, Most Intimate" as compelling yet unsophisticated soap opera. In the review she wrote, "Unfortunately, a number of Maynard's secret moments are spent in perpetrating some of the most incredible love scenes to be found outside of soap opera...However, this is a fairly good book for the reader who is more interested in the rapid action and the involvements of espionage than he is in memorable characterization or skillful writing" (4/30/1944). This idea of soap opera as easy entertainment diffuses throughout all types of reviews. From the 1970s until the present, a reference to "soap opera" is found in seven types of reviews: art exhibitions, books, dance performances, motion pictures, music, radio/television and theater. For reviews of art, books and music, the number of references steadily increase each year until peaking in the 1990s. In contrast, references

in music, theatre and radio/television reviews rise and fall over the years. Movie reviews are unique in the sense that they are the only genre to have increased the number of soap opera references in reviews in every decade. Overall, the term "soap opera" appeared most frequently in book reviews, 311 reviews in total. The preponderance of a delegitimizing ideology in book reviews may have been especially damaging to soap operas because any attempts to create a high art legitimating ideology about soap operas was rooted in literature. Early supporters of daytime serials lauded the genre for being the aural counterpart to literature. Up until the 1990s, soap operas, especially from academics, could be compared to great English novels. For example, in 1980, an Assistant Professor in English argued that soap operas were the modern day equivalent to the 18th century "quasi-moral novel" (3/16/1980). Thus, any argument that soap operas are another form of great literature is difficult to maintain if book critics frequently invoke "soap opera" to denote bad books.

In general, a cultural product (book, movie, etc.) was described as a soap opera if it was "too easy to interpret," "lacked any depth" or was "overly emotionally." Ironically, some books and motion pictures were also dismissed as being "soap opera" if the plot was "too confusing" or dialogue was "emotionally flat."Although these may seem like paradoxical descriptions – can something both lack and overflow with emotion? – what lies at the core of the critiques is soap opera's lack of authenticity. Real emotions, real problems, life-like dialogue, realistic conclusions are, to these *Times* critics, the anathema of the soap opera genre. Within this discourse, soap operas become the "anti-art." They are mundane and anti-intellectual, and because of these ascribed qualities, they are handy comparisons to delimitate what can be labeled art. This negative type of discourse may

explain why soap opera references in critical reviews rose in the 1960s, then increased dramatically in the 1970s and again in the 2000s. It is during these time periods that cultural entrepreneurs pushed other genres – namely motion pictures and primetime television – toward aesthetic mobility. The concept of "soap opera" helped to differentiate and identify which were the quality movies and superior television shows. Soap opera could become anti-art, in part, because it was a universally agreed upon reference category. Like pornography, it may be difficult to describe exactly what makes something a soap opera but it is clear to the viewer when they see it. For example, one critic attempted to show why another maligned genre science fiction is actually a complicated artistic genre. In a 1983 review, book critic Gerald Jonas stated,"What pornography and soap opera have in common is that both offer fantastical heighted narratives of events that are, at root, familiar to everyone. By contrast, science fiction writers employ all sorts of narrative tricks to make their fantastic fictions seem plausible" (1/23/1983).

That soap opera became defined as anti-art was not inevitable. In the 1930s and early 1940s, daytime soap operas were considered as a subset of dramas. In this scenario, soap operas were a particular type of drama, one that centered on domestic concerns. Yet, over the years, dramas, if they wanted to become credible works of art, had to be defined as the antithesis to soap operas. This disavowal becomes especially difficult and important as motion picture content and television programming became driven by psychological and domestic concerns. This evolution can be epitomized by the 1970s debate in *The New York Times* about *Scenes From A Marriage.*

Scenes From A Marriage was an award-winning Swedish television mini-series by famed director Ingmar Bergman. In 1974, a shortened version of five hour program

was released in the U.S. as a film, while the mini-series was broadcast in its entirety on American television. Critics heralded the film and the mini-series for its bold tackling of domestic concerns, dramatic and unflinching camera close-ups, extended character-driven dialogue and deft handling of gender issues. *Scenes from a Marriage* possessed "ordinary grace" and any repetition or tedium in dialogue or plot were devices intentionally conjured by the skilled director. Film critic Vincent Canby explained that while Bergman's work may seem like a simple dramatic story about relationships (in other words, a soap opera) , it was, in fact, a masterpiece.

> Yet "Scenes From A Marriage" is such precise work, seemingly so uncomplicated, that it has the impact of one of those laws of physics that are so fundamental you can't understand why it was thousands of years before someone discovered it. One knows, however, that such a scientific breakthrough as the theory of relativity is no more an accidental discovery than is any great music, painting or film. Einstein worked very hard, very long, with immense discipline to discover it. (9/22/1974)

Critics who wanted to valorize Bergman's work were stymied by the fact that others during this time used these same accolades to praise daytime soap operas. Whereas soap opera supporters had seen "ordinary grace" in their programs for years, primetime television and film critics considered this technique to be an inspired Bergman invention. Precisely how and why this discourse on Bergman took shape is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For the purposes of this chapter, *Scenes From A Marriage* is discussed in terms of how critics viewed it as a new, emerging genre not an evolution of daytime soap operas.

Before the 1970s, dramas centered exclusively upon domestic concerns and gender roles were typically considered to be soap operas. After *Scenes From A Marriage* (and starting with Bergman's *The Lie* in 1973), domesticity and relationship issues were

viewed as fair game for any artist. If the creator dealt with these issues successfully, then the piece had potential to be a superior drama. Conversely, if the creator failed at effectively presenting these themes, critics could label the work as soap opera. Thus, in the 1970s the seeds were planted for soap opera \to be not a dynamic, ever-growing genre but a set of mechanical techniques. From this point in *Times* critical reviews, film and primetime critics began to consistently use soap opera as an adjective to delimitate the good drama about the human condition from bad soap operas.. Reviewer David Bromwich exemplifies this point in his review of *Scenes From A Marriage*.

> Many silly things will be said against this film, most of them ungrateful and wrong. But I suppose it is only fair to add that Bergman here shows himself much influenced by the psychology of encounter groups: the soap opera of the intelligentsia. He has imported the straight, barren and declamatory style of the genre from life into art. What makes the effort at once admirable and risky is that he works on a small scale with "the group," as Freud wonderfully said, "of two." Also, because he is an artist, his characters after every encounter still have authority and dignity. There does not come a time when we can say of any of them "He could not surprise me."(8/4/1974).

Almost 10-years later, in an interview unrelated *Scenes From A Marriage* with writer Sue Miller, she succinctly conveyed a central tenet for critical review: “When men write about the family, they're thought to be using it as a metaphor for something larger. Women, on the other hand, are seen as writing domestic soap opera." (4/11/1993) Critical discourse about media content transformed in the 1970s. A book, film or television show about the vagaries of home life and relationships no longer automatically belonged to the soap opera genre. Artists could use the home as a mirror into the human condition, while daytime soap operas were collections of trite tricks that did nothing to elevate the human spirit.

The Audience: Addiction, Deviance and Failure

In the 1940s, *The Times* began to refer to daytime radio serial listeners as "addicts". This nomenclature continued into the 1970s when "viewer" and "fan" also became familiar terms for the daytime audience. The idea of an "addict" never fully disappeared and the term resurged in popularity after 1993. The idea that soap opera viewing is somehow dangerous has roots in the 1941 Berg report, and this negative conceptualization may have certainly thwarted the diffusion on a legitimating ideology. Overall in *The Times*, if an article focused on daytime soap opera content, the tone of the piece could be positive or negative. If the soap opera audience was the primary focus, the article was almost always negative. In this sense, daytime viewers were not simply the lower status categories of "housewife" or "female." They were entities on the boundaries of "normal" society, medicalized subjects whose actions were driven not by logic or benign entertainment, but uncontrollable need.

Beginning in the 1970s, *The Times* observed that the demographics of the daytime soap opera had changed. The paper reported that college students and other higher class patrons openly enjoyed soap operas in the afternoon. In a feature about the changing face of soap operas, journalist Anthony Astrachan wrote:

> Change and constancy, realism and fantasy all testify that soap opera makes up one of the main currents of American culture. So does their appeal to some of the feminists who have done so much to start society on the road to change. Some like the new ideas in daytime drama and don't like to see anything that appeals to millions of women treated as a joke. Further testimony can be found in the soaps' appeal to college students, professors and psychiatrists, and in the employment and training that the soaps give to scores of actors who also do "serious" films and theater.

Here, the audience made active choices to watch soap operas, their decisions driven not

by need but rationality.

Descriptions such as these faded away in the 1980s and 1990s, and the idea of the addict dominates again. That said, soap opera fan as addict does not tell the whole story about perceptions of the audience. As seen in Figure 1, the majority of the discourse about daytime soap operas is not about actual daytime soap operas. Just as soap opera was used in critical reviews to demarcate bad drama from good, so too was soap opera used in news and human interest stories to convey information about the people involved. We cannot ascribe motivation to the author for the inclusion of soap operas nor can we say with certainty what these mentions *mean.* We can say that including people's viewing habits in articles unrelated to mass media is *meaningful.* Journalists operate under strict deadlines and tight word counts. Why particular words and phrases are chosen is not available data but the fact that soap operas are included in irrelevant stories were paints a compelling argument for the soap opera audience as deviant. In reality, soap opera audiences are incredibly diverse (Harrington & Bielby 1995) but what matters here is the perception of who soap opera viewers are imagined to be.

Beginning in the late 1970s, news stories about welfare, crime, political dictators, educational failures, health care scares and the elderly would contain references to people watching soap operas. This study cannot say the frequency with which this occurred. These references are notable however because they occurred across time, subject matter and journalist. For example, in a news feature about a nanny who may have killed her infant in her charge, the journalist discussed how the suspect watched the soap opera *The Bold and the Beautiful* earlier in the day (4/18/1993). The show's inclusion in the text is interesting, given that television watching is essentially irrelevant to the murder case, and

that *The Bold and the Beautiful* was rarely mentioned by name in *The Times*.

In these news and human interest pieces, viewers of daytime soap operas were not housewives or women; they were people who had failed, who had given up hope, who were either deeply disturbed or destitute. In an article about elderly care, the writer described a patient facility. “The nursing home is very clean and cheerfully colored and there's a piano in the lobby for sing-alongs and a color television set for following soap operas (no one gets to stay up late enough for sitcoms) but none can sing and few can follow a plot and threading through the scent of puree food and talcum powder that palls the corridors is the faint, ineradicable sting of urine” (4/3/1980). Likewise, in a piece about homelessness in New York City, the author commented that homeless individuals live “in a world that is as boring as it is remarkable, with hours spent doing nothing but sitting, pleasure is measured in cigarettes and Styrofoam cups of coffee, diversion in bingo games and soap operas. Dreams and aspirations can seem at once humble and inaccessible” (1/30/1984).

Dire life circumstances may also prompt soap opera viewership. In a feature about rape, the author described how the subject, Shirley’s life has changed since the violent act. “Shirley doesn't work anymore. She had been between jobs at the time of the rape, and now she received Social Security disability payments. During the day she watches soap operas, and sometimes she goes out shopping. Before it happened she went dancing at Roseland; she doesn't like to go out anymore” (11-17-1982). After the military dictator of Panama, Manuel Noriega was arrested and detained in the United States, he needed new activities to occupy his time. “When not working on his case, General Noriega spends most of his time reading, writing letters or watching afternoon soap operas.

Sometimes, he snacks on Oreo cookies purchased at the prison commissary (10/26/1990).”

By far, the common consumers of soap operas, according to articles in *The Times*, are high school dropouts living off of welfare. Below is a sample of passages to illustrate this discourse:

> Elizabeth Feliciano… dropped out of school when she was 15 to have a baby and did not go back for five years. When Elizabeth decided to enroll at Erasmus, she was referred to Operation Success and, like Scott, is taking an equivalency course, and learning jewelry making. Otherwise, she is sure, "I'd still be home doing nothing - just watching soap operas."(6/19/1984)
>
> "For once, the Department of Social Services is doing something for us," said Bernitha Lopez, 34, of Mount Vernon, who is studying to be a respiratory therapist. "They're giving us the opportunity of a lifetime. You can either stay home and watch soap operas or you can come to school and get a career." (9/16/1990)
>
> But like most women who leave welfare for work, Ms. Baldwin still thinks it is in her interest to do so. She enjoys her job as a counselor in a youth program run by a nonprofit agency, finding its world of crisis intervention and staff meetings more interesting than the soap operas that consume her neighbors. (7/8/1992)
>
> After Alisa Campbell quit school in the ninth grade, she hung out at home with her grandmother, mother and sister, watched soap operas all day and lived off a welfare check. (2/17/1992)
>
> Ms. Young says she believes there are women who abuse the welfare system by having baby after baby. But she says she is not one of them. "Just let me get my education," she said. "Once I at least get established where I can function making a decent income, you can take the check. I'm not one of them women who likes to sit home and look at the soap opera all day or sit outside and gossip with the girls... I can't do it. I feel like I'm losing my life.” (12/5/1993)
>
> Once upon a time, there was a welfare mother living in the Bronx named Annette Williams. She had finished high school pregnant at 18, and gave birth to four children in four years. After they had gone off to school, Ms. Williams spent a lot of time watching soap operas. One day in 1989, Ms. Williams saw an advertisement on television seeking volunteers for local schools. Her daughter was struggling with reading - the teachers were talking about putting her in special-education classes - and Ms. Williams figured volunteering at school might help her own family and fill her yawning days. "I realized that this wasn't what I

> was suppose to be doing, sitting home, watching soap operas, contributing nothing, said Ms. Williams, now 39, reflecting recently. "We all need to be working. We all need to be giving something back." (2/2/2000)

Each reference by itself most likely has little impact. Their relevance comes through the repetition in numerous articles across time. Theoretically, a consumer of *The New York Times* may have never read an article specifically about daytime soap operas, but could still develop an idea of who is the typical or frequent soap opera viewer is through reading these news and human interest stories. If we look at this newspaper discussion of the audience as a delegitimizing ideology, then it becomes clearer why gender alone did not thwart the aesthetic mobility of daytime soap operas. Most likely, it was the combination of gender, class, deviancy and possibly race that knitted together to form a picture of soap opera viewership in the aggregate. Daytime soap operas failed to attained aesthetic legitimacy not because the audience was female or housewives, but because the audience were women (and men) who live at the margins of the sociological imagination, serving as emblems of a decaying society or warnings of a misspend life.

Critical discourse about cultural products such as motion pictures and books helped to create a perception of daytime soap operas as anti-art. Mentions of the soap opera audience as deviant helped to create the notion of a disfranchised aberrant audience. Together, these delegitimizing ideologies may have counteracted the arguments put forth by soap opera supporters that the genre. The ideas that soap operas are emotionally authentic and educators on social issues did not have enough force to overcome the negative discourse about the medium.

Soap Opera in a Global Context

As noted in Chapter 2, soap operas receive a different reception abroad than they

do in the United States. Soap operas enjoy immense popularity in numerous countries among men and women, young and old and people across the economic strata. Still, we do not know how that popularity is presented in *The New York Times*. What types of legitimating ideologies frame discussions about non-U.S. soaps?

Figure 4 shows the geographic breakdown of the countries mentioned in articles that pertained to soap operas. As you can see, approximately half of the discussion about soap operas abroad were located in two areas, specifically two countries – the Britain (44) and Brazil (42). Interestingly, the most popular soap operas, or telenovelas as they are called in Latin America, are not from a Spanish-speaking nation but from Brazil, which is the world's largest producer of soap operas. Typically, Brazilian soap operas are dubbed into Spanish (or other languages) by actors native to the country in which the telenovela will air. Brazilian telenovelas are exported all over the world from India to South Africa. Another means of soap opera production is for one country to create a telenovela and others to later develop their own versions, adding specific regionalisms to their own copy. One well-known example is *Yo Soy Betty, La Fea* (Ugly Betty), a Colombian produced telenovela that spurred dozens of versions worldwide including China, Russia and the United States. In general, the *Times* discussed Brazilian telenovelas in terms of their economic potential and their appeal across multiple nationalities and languages.

Moreover, telenovelas are portrayed as an integral part to a country's culture. The newspaper discourse consider the shows to be emotionally authentic in that the audience strongly identifies with the characters. As one Brazil executive explained, "In general the novela talks about things that are truly ours, and the people identify immediately with the

characters... The novela is part of the daily routine of the Brazilian people, and there is no way to deprive them of it" (8/27/2000). Telenovelas may emphasize glamorous or idealized elements of a privileged life but supporters of telenovelas stress that their popularity lies in the audience's ability to relate to characters and storylines. As one telenovela viewers stated, the programs had "touched her soul." Because of these personal connections viewers made with telenovelas and the wide spectrum of viewerships, Latin and South American countries, according to the *Times,* pride themselves in having a national dialogue about the programs. In cultures deeply divided by race, ethnicity, gender and class, telenovelas are conceptualized as a common meeting ground for all peoples.

British soap operas, specifically *Coronation Street*, received the most attention of any non-US soap opera in the *New York Times*. While discussion of Brazilian soap operas tended to focus on their global economic success, U.K soap operas were lauded for their authentic portrayal of the British class system. In 1962, the *Times* noted that *Coronation Street* had received both popular and critical exclaim. After explaining how this new show had become a ratings success, the *Times* observed that academics also respected the program: "Eggheads express patronizing approval. Richard Hoggart, the provincial university don who was a member of Pilkington Committee[10] and shared responsibility for the report that was highly critical of British commercial television, has said he is impressed 'by the force and truth that "Coronation Street" shows at some point in its installments" (11/25/1962). Whether British academics and critics consistently lauded these shows for their accuracy cannot be gauged from the *Times* articles. What we can

[10] A British committee established in 1960 to recommend future pathways for radio and television in the U.K. Among other recommendations, the committee said that Britons would not support lower class commerical television.

say is that American critics and viewers always consider British soap opears to be valid representations of class differences. In 1982, American critic William Borders noted why *Coronation Street* reverberated with audiences. "Unlike American soap operas, *Coronation Street* does not dwell on the seamier side of the lives of its inhabitants, though the serial does have its share of love affairs and such. Its characters are not glamorous, but simply ordinary people. Through a combination of believable scripts performed by a convincing cast, it becomes easy for a viewer to feel that these people are who they purport to be, in that pub talking about the same kinds of ordinary problems that concern everyone." (3/28/1982) Time and again, American journalists and critics frame British serials in a legitimating ideology that privileges authenticity and realism.

Why do non-U.S. soap operas not receive the same negative as their American counterparts? This may be, in part, the bias in American coverage that sees foreign cultural phenomena as exotic, special and inherently natural. According to the *Times*, telenovelas and other soap operas cannot be compared to American serials because they are, by their very nature, distinct and separate. This discourse is similar to Binder et al findings that *Times* critics praised foreign rap music as authentic regardless of how the music was received in its country of origin, In other words, the uncritical picture the *Times* has painted of non-U.S. soaps may be because they are foreign, "innately" different and therefore somehow more real. Delegitimizing ideologies about telenovelas and other non U.S. soap operas may exist in other sources but simply not afforded a platform in *The New York Times.*

That said, if we accept the assumption that other countries value their televised serials more than the U.S does its own soap operas, then we may still speculate on why

this is the case. Based on the discourse in the *Times*, the people who watch these shows appear to play a large role. In non-U.S. countries, the audience is perceived as diverse, and this diversity is an asset to the genre. Consuming programs such as telenovelas is an act of commonality rather than difference. To watch means to be included in the larger community and wider cultural discussions. Viewers express solidarity with an idea, a characterization or a country through watching. In contrast, when Americans watch U.S. soap operas, this act is perceived to sever one's ties to the community. Soap opera audiences in America are deviant. To watch means you are opting out of the collective experience.

The different perceptions of the audience suggests that time slots may play a role. In the United States, soap operas air during the day, while in most other countries they are broadcast in the evening. However, the argument that foreign soap operas have higher status because they air in primetime is backwards. These soap operas air in primetime *because* they already have a higher status. Of course, a high status time slot reinforces a show's prestige over time, but there is little evidence that broadcast time directly confers this status. Indeed, in the 1980s, when executives in some Latin American countries changed the broadcast schedule to eliminate telenovelas from the nightly line-up, audiences revolted and primetime was quickly given back to telenovelas. In contrast in the United States, primetime shows that were originally categorized as soap operas such as *Dallas* are now labeled in some current television encyclopedias as a drama and not a soap opera (Brooks and Marsh 1995). At least in regards to the discourse in the *Times*, it appears that in terms of establishing an legitimating ideology, the perception of the audience drives organizational decisions such as broadcasting times.

In sum, the *Times* discourse about non-U.S. soap opera demonstrates how cultural context plays a key role in the legitimization of a cultural object. The genre of soap operas does not have innate prestige nor is it incapable of generating higher status. Instead soap operas are a dynamic medium where critical and audience acceptance varies widely. This brief examination into American discourse about foreign soap operas suggests that this approach can yield valuable insights into the legitimization process. Here, it appears that the socio-demographic characteristics of the audience play an important role in legitimating or delegitimizing soap operas and their potential aesthetic value.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Finally, using the information presented, I will theorize why an aesthetic legitimating ideology has not taken root for American daytime soap operas. In surveying the history, there appears to be three points in time that are significant to the diffusion or the dissolving of an aesthetic legitimating ideology: the late 1970s/early 1980s, the early and mid 1990s and the 2000s. Below I will make a case why a legitimating ideology failed to emerge.

In the 1970s, feminism and the complex portrayal of women served as the frames to legitimize soap operas. As discussed in Chapter 2, *General Hospital's* 1979 storyline of Laura's rape by Luke and their subsequent courtship, science fiction adventures and marriage shattered these frames. At least according to the discourse in the *Times*, feminists distanced themselves from the medium and the legitimating ideology that soap opera were spaces where strong female characters could flourish. Other supporters who

had lauded soap operas for their realism and emotional authenticity could not say "it's only a soap" when defending *General Hospital's* outlandish storylines without undermining their own arguments for the genre's relevance. As discourse about the emotional authenticity of soap operas faded, the delegitimizing ideology that soap opera audiences are deviant increased. That the phenomena of Luke and Laura hurt daytime is not new (Liccardo 2010) but this chapter explicitly ties it to the undermining of an aesthetic legitimating ideology. Moreover, the saga of Luke and Laura planted the seeds for two other destructive pathways for soaps: the narrow focus on heterosexual coupling and the increased reliance on visual effects, or the shift away from a writer-centered product.

Soap operas, contrary to popular opinion, are not about sex. In fact, for most of their tenure, they assiduously avoided the topic. Heterosexual couples were very important to propelling storyline (witness *Days of Our Lives* Doug and Julie on the cover of *Time Magazine* in 1971) but these stories were never told in isolation. How immediate family, friends, workplaces and the community at large viewed and were subsequently affected by this coupling drove storyline. After *General Hospital's* Luke and Laura, writers on all daytime soap operas began telling stories about couples not communities. *The New York Times* illustrates this beautifully with an article about *All My Children* in the 1970s. Erica Kane, most famous for her sexuality and multiple marriages, is pictured next to her beloved mother. After the mid 1980s (the end of the Luke and Laura phenomena), AMC's Erica is almost always pictured with her husband de jour. Whereas pictures published from the 1930 to the mid 1980s about soap operas featured a variety of relationships (friends, sisters, parent and child), the majority of the artwork in later time

periods contains almost exclusively romantic-based images. This isolation matters because it undermines the core concept that the community is the star player in soap operas. Furthermore, this type of exclusive focus on couples and not how they are situated within a larger framework of relationships creates viewers who are not fans of the show but fans of a couple, audiences who have little reason to stay once their favorite characters leave.

Another effect generated from Luke and Laura was the increased reliance on special effects and visuals. This change in production strategy increased the everyday budgets for each show. Thus, in the 1980s, soap operas, which had previously been very cheap to produce, required more resources. This financial need weakened their economic legitimacy and over time their aesthetic legitimacy. As Schmutz and Faupel demonstrated with popular music, popularity often comes across in critical discourse as an indicator of authenticity. As soap operas needed more and more viewers to be economically profitable, the threshold of what was popular increased. Discourse, especially in the 1990s, attributes the dwindling number of soap fans to the fact that soap operas were losing their cultural resonance. Thus, losing economic legitimacy is tied to a weakened aesthetic legitimacy. Pundits in the *Times* attributed the fall in viewership in the late 1990s to interest in the O.J. Simpson trial and other "soap operas" of the world. Evidence suggests that viewership fell during the trial because networks did not consistently rebroadcast the soap's daily episodes. When viewers did not return after normal broadcasts resumed, articles in the newspaper suggested that this drop proved that daytime soap operas were out of touch with the average viewer. At this point, continuing with the discourse that started with *Hill Street Blues* (see Chapter 2), the frame of

emotional authenticity was transferred from daytime soap operas onto primetime and cable shows. This ideology stuck to primetime in part because primetime television as an artistic medium had gained traction among critics (Bielby, Moloney and Ngo 2005). In other words, daytime soap opera embodied the popular culture aesthetic long before a popular culture aesthetic was codified by critics. By the time it was, soap operas had lost too much economic and aesthetic legitimacy in the eyes of elite critics (and perhaps the audience) to claim this new frame.

The lack of substantive coverage of daytime soap operas in the 2000s is remarkable. Given the *Times'* past focus on All My Children as well as on social issues, it is surprising that the show's historic gay storyline in 2000 received no attention in the newspaper. Definitive reasons as to why this occurred are beyond the scope of this dissertation. The answers may lie in organizational changes at the *Times* and the newspaper industry, the critics' belief that daytime lacked social relevance, or the numerous soap cancellations in the late 1990s. What most likely plays a role is the delegitimizing ideology that daytime soap operas are anti-art. In much the same way that 19th century novels had to be "defeminized" before they could achieve serious recognition and status, so too did the conventions like "emotional authenticity" and "serialization" have to shed their ties to daytime in order to be positively associated with primetime television. It appears that a component of the legitimization process is not simply a movement toward universal acceptance of high status but universal agreement over what is worthless. In the case of primetime television, daytime soap operas played that role. While the legitimating ideologies of emotional authenticity and importance of

social issues emerged in *The New York Times*, the delimitating ideologies of soap operas as anti-art and the audience as deviant prevented them from taking root.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In 1967, *The New York Times* published an article about a mishap involving the daytime soap opera *Dark Shadows*. It read as follows:

> When an executive at the American Broadcasting Company decided the other day that too many old, unused sets were clogging the network's studios, he ordered some of them taken to the city dump for burning. One he ordered destroyed was the moldy set of an old house used for *Dark Shadows,* an A.B.C. soap opera starring Joan Bennett. When the error was discovered, a force of motorcycles was dispatched to intercept the truck. They were too late. When they arrived at the dump they found the scenery already in flames. (5/11/1967)

At face value, the article is simply a light entertaining blurb about network decision making. Metaphorically, however, it tells the story of daytime soap operas in the United States. This venerable genre was never truly understood by many in charge of the industry nor was it accurately viewed by outsiders. These groups saw desultoriness and decay where soap opera audiences saw complexity and history. In the end, daytime soap operas, much like the ill-fated *Dark Shadow's* set, were destroyed because they were misinterpreted as irrelevant. The 1967 blunder had a happy, albeit costly, ending – a new set was built overnight for $14,000. In the wake of the cancellations of *Guiding Light* (2009), *As The World Turns* (2010), *All My Children* (2011) and *One Life To Live* (2012), the fate of the daytime genre does not look as promising. Why the daytime soap opera industry is currently struggling is directly tied to soap opera's successful attainment of economic legitimacy coupled with its failure to obtain aesthetic legitimacy. In this concluding chapter, I will explain how these two legitimating ideologies helped to create this present scenario, discuss the ways in which my arguments in this dissertation add to our understanding of the legitimization process and suggest avenues for future research.

In Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, I argue that U.S. daytime soap operas have achieved economic legitimacy, meaning that the soap opera format is generally viewed as an profitable broadcasting strategy. I demonstrated this by showing how the organizational form proliferated over the decades: from its creation in 1930 to amassing 76 shows on the airways by 1939 to the genre's successful transfer from radio to television. In the notoriously fickle and unstable world of mass media, soap operas have been surprisingly consistent in delivering on their economic promise. The recent cancellations of several daytime dramas does not undermine this legitimating ideology of financial success. The soap opera paradigm has become such a viable way to tell stories that distinct hour-long dramas aired in the middle of the day are no longer necessary. Media executives can tell a soap opera tale more inexpensively through reality shows, cable dramas and news stories. To illustrate, as I write this chapter, the debt crisis in the United States is in the headlines. Yet the story is oddly not told from an economic perspective. In the mainstream press, it is framed as a saga about relationships – between President Obama and Speaker Boehner, the occasional interloper such as Congressman Paul Ryan or Senator Harry Reid and the "American People" whose Republican and Democratic affiliations (dramatized in the press as the Montagues and Capulets) determine who they view as a villain and who is deemed the hero. Defaulting on the national debt is woven into the story like a Friday cliffhanger. The media have generally covered this story by focusing on personality, people and relationships. Our national debt ceiling – will we or won't we default – has become a soap opera.

That our news stories read like larger-than-life soap operas was not inevitable. Ironically, soap operas, as discussed by the *Times* in the early years, began as intimate

community-focused dramas centered upon domestic, everyday concerns. Certain organizational factors played a role in shaping why soap operas became opulent frameworks customizable to any medium (see Wittebols 2004). Here, in this dissertation, I want to argue that the failure of an aesthetic legitimacy to take hold for daytime soap operas paved the way for its economic decline. Primetime television was successfully able to adopt such aesthetic qualities as emotional authenticity and psychological characterization because those attributes had never amassed into a cogent, universal ideology for daytime soap operas. In critical reviews, soap operas were described as a compilation of techniques - not its own unique genre. Thus, our current primetime dramas are not viewed as nighttime soap operas but as a medium that correctly employed devices misused by soap operas. It is not that people had more entertainment choices that drew them away from daytime. It is that soap opera was everywhere including daytime and daytime soap operas had to contend with tight budget and creative restraints not faced by cable outlets and news organizations. If daytime soap operas were able to maintain their identity as an unique genre, they may have fared better financially. Ironically, all genres but daytime soap operas benefit monetarily and/or artistically from soap opera storytelling.

Why did an aesthetic legitimating ideology not take root? As noted in Chapter 4, its failure to coalesce in the late 1970s and early 1980s is most likely due to the clash between feminist discourse and widespread popularity of Luke and Laura on *General Hospital*. Why an ideology did not take hold in the 1990s is less clear. Those in the industry often blame the O.J. Simpson trial (1995), arguing that people switched from watching soap operas to becoming “hooked” on the televised trial. However, the

newspaper articles included in this study suggest that blanket trial coverage was an effect not a cause of faltering support for the soaps. For example, in 1984 the networks discussed how to juggle their daytime soap opera line-up with coverage of Olympics. Executives took extra care to make sure that the soap operas aired consistently or were rebroadcast with plenty of time to alert the audience. Fast forward to 1994. Daytime audiences were growing. An ABC executive noted that in 1994 "there was a comparative 'bull market' in ad revenue for soap operas, adding that the network's daytime programming division had its most lucrative year since the early '80s" (5-8-1995). Yet, although soap operas were still a profitable medium, the networks took very little interest in preserving the soap opera line-up during the Simpson trial. Why? Given the *Times* articles, it appears that the networks strategies for dealing with pre-emptions had changed drastically from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s. In other words, the devaluation or reprioritizing of daytime soap operas had already occurred by 1995 when the Simpson trial aired. While this dissertation cannot definitely say what caused these shifts, the regression results in Chapter 3 may offer a clue. When looking at foundings of daytime soap operas, I noted there was that a significant and conditional effect of density after controlling for the 1988 Writers' Strike. While the *Times* had little coverage of the strike in terms of how it affected daytime programming, I suspect that the organizational changes that occurred during this time frame thwarted the genre's future chances at aesthetic legitimacy. As noted in Chapter 3, network and business executives played a more hands-on role in the day-to-day creation of soap operas after the '88 Strike. Future researchers should pay close attention to this time period and examine how the changes in the writing structure enacted during this strike affected future generations of soaps.

Likewise, analysis of the most recent Writers' Strike in 2007 may also yield fruitful insights into the genre's failure to achieve aesthetic legitimacy.

Another reason an aesthetic legitimating ideology failed to take root may be the emergence of primetime television as an art form. As noted in Bielby, Moloney and Ngo (2005), a legitimating ideology for primetime television began to appear in television critics' reviews in the 1990s, increasing significantly in the 2000s. This dissertation shows that the financial success enjoyed by daytime soap operas in the 1930s-1970s created a business model that was copied by primetime television. In the 1980s, primetime executives realized that they could capitalize monetarily using the soap opera paradigm (e.g. *Dallas and* Dynasty) as well as use the same model to carve out programming praised by elite critics (e.g. *Hill Street Blue*s and *St. Elsewhere*). Starting with *Hill Street Blues* in 1981, the elements on which primetime sought to elevate itself were classic features of daytime soap operas. Given that the critical discourse in the *Times* had situated soap operas as the anti-art (a delegitimizing ideology), primetime dramas could not be cast as "soap operas done right". Instead, primetime dramas had to be distinct from soap operas. For example, the Emmy-winning cable series *Mad Men* must be categorized as a drama not a soap opera in order to legitimately receive accolades. The aesthetic tenants, especially emotional authenticity, that could have provided a framework through which we understand soap operas, was a lens eventually adopted by primetime television critics.

The perceived composition of the daytime audience also played a large role in preventing soap operas from adopting any legitimating ideology. It was not simply that daytime audiences were supposedly female. It was that daytime audiences were deviant.

To me, this is one of the most interesting findings of the dissertation because it offers a mechanism through which status affects legitimacy. Previous research (DiMaggio 1982, Baumann 2001, Hicks & Petrova 2006) show that high status patrons have a direct effect on increasing a cultural product's legitimacy. What is less clear is how certain cultural products such as jazz (Grazian 2003) and country music (Peterson 1994) also receive some measure of legitimacy despite being attached to low status patrons. This dissertation helps explain that phenomenon. Often in the literature, lower status groups read as if they are undifferentiated masses – "women," "African-Americans," "working poor". Yet within these groups, hierarchies exist. Therefore, it is not low status patrons per se that affect the creation and maintenance of a legitimating ideology but how the low status patrons are situated vis a vis the entire group. This may be operationalized as deviance (prisoners who watch soap operas) or as an amalgamation of several low status groups (unmarried black women on welfare). In other words, the effect of gender is mediated by class, race and deviance. This finding strengthens the argument by Baumann (2001) that a college educated public played an important role in the legitimization of motion pictures. Thus, a systematic analysis of the academic discourse about soap operas would potentially offer intriguing insights into how and why a legitimacy ideology about the genre was not sustained. Of course, it is not simply the presence or absence of high status patrons that determine an object's legitimacy. This dissertation also shows how opportunity space (such as the creation of "modern soaps" in the 1970s) and legitimating discourses (such as feminism) play crucial roles in the legitimization process. Yet, this dissertation stresses the theoretical importance that the audience plays in the shaping of legitimating ideology.

In conclusion, this dissertation offers a better understanding of the economic and aesthetic histories of soap operas and how factors such as perceived audience composition affected the adoption of certain legitimating discourses. In the case of daytime soap operas, the two legitimizing ideologies operate independently as well as affect the trajectory of the other. Appendix A offers a timeline of historical events relating that development. Daytime soap operas may not be what they once were, but that is precisely why they are such a rich field to analyze the legitimization process.

Appendix

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Radio and Television Soap Operas

	Radio (1930-1960)	Television (1949-2010)
Number of programs	391	93
Time allotted to soap opera content per year (in hours)	2,103	1,705
Time allotted to soap opera content, total (in hours)	63,088	104,004
Longest running program (in years)	*Ma Perkins* (27), *The Romance Of Helen Trent* (27)	*Guiding Light* (57)
Shortest running program (in years)	*Mommie and The Men (.03)*	*Ben Jerrod* (.17), *These Are My Children* (.06)
Number of soaps airing on multiple networks throughout their run	96	3
Number of soaps that aired concurrently on multiple networks	20	0
Number of different sponsors*	80+	35+
Average length of time a program aired (in months)	34.1	88.4
% of soaps airing less than 12 months	58.3%	38.7%
If program aired for 12 months, average number of total months on air	73	140

*Information is not available about sponsors for all soap operas. Therefore, this number should be taken as the minimum number of sponsors active in the field.

Table 2: Total Number of Broadcasted U.S. Daytime Soap Operas

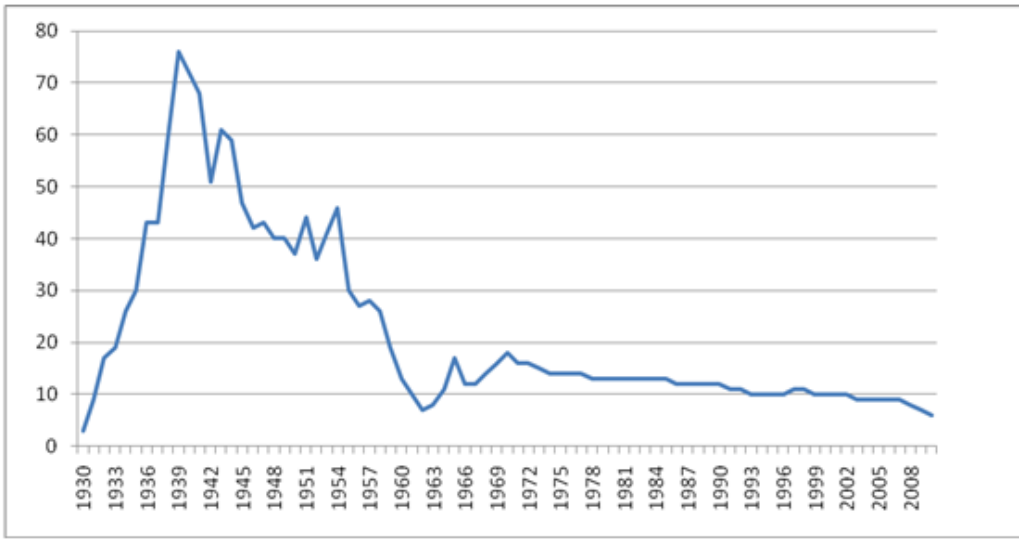

Table 3: Number of Broadcast Minutes Allotted to Daytime Soap Operas, 1930-2010

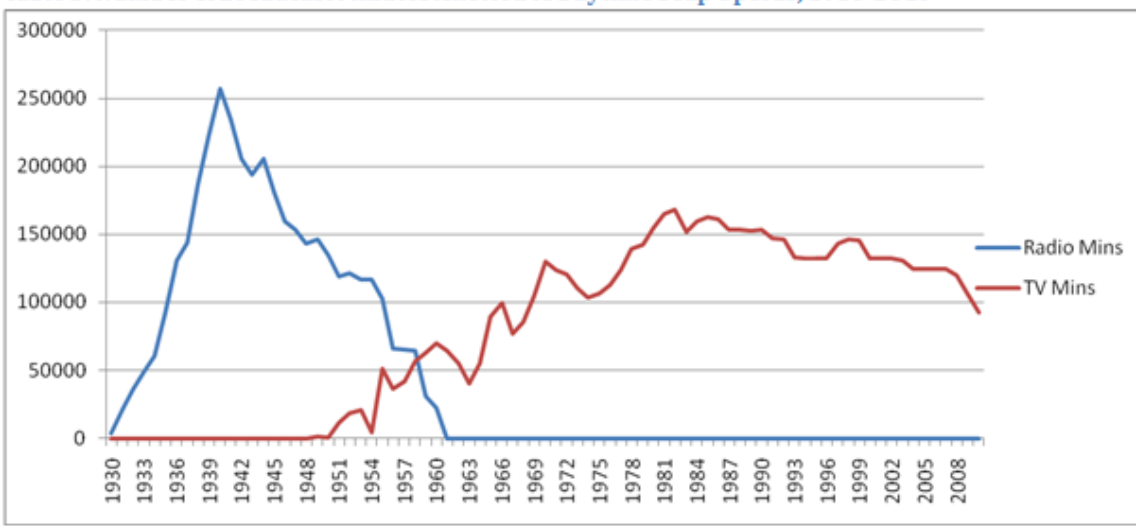

Table 4: Scheduled Time Slots for Radio and Television Soap Operas

	Radio, 1930-1960*	Television, 1949-2010*
8:30-10:59 am	68	4
11:00 - 12:59 pm	75	37
1:00 - 4:59 pm	133	94
5:00 pm-7:59 pm	56	5
8:00 pm -10:59 pm	16	1

*The number of soaps in each time slot is greater than the number of broadcast soap operas because most shows aired in more than one time slot throughout their runs.

Table 5 Negative Binomial and Poisson Regression Estimates for the Number of Foundings Per Year of American Daytime Soap Opera, 1930-2010

Variables	Models				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Intercept	-.3692 (.224)	3.037*** (.215)	3.444*** (.297)	1.607*** (.212)	2.916*** (.316)
Density	.0630* (.026)			.0843*** (.013)	.1148*** (.027)
Density^2	-.0006 (.000)			-.0007*** (.000)	-.0008*** (.000)
Previous Foundings	.2355*** (.049)			-.0162 (.030)	-.0667 (.035)
Previous Founding^2	-.0043** (.001)			.0003 (.001)	.0012 (.001)
Previous Failures	-.0578 (.059)			.0008 (.027)	-.0469 (.031)
Previous Failures^2	.0006 (.001)			.0001 (.001)	.0011 (.001)
WWII		.3891 (.388)			
Creation of ABC (post 1943)		-1.811*** (.249)		-1.546*** (.195)	-.2356 (.407)
Writers' Strike (post 1988)		-1.317** (1.03)		-2.113*** (.518)	-.1580 (.628)
No Syn/Fin Rules (post 1995)		.4055 (1.21)			
# Radio Stations, lagged			.8621^{-04} (.000)		.294^{-04} (.000)
% Network Radio, lagged			.0102 (.006)		-.0350** (.011)
# TV Stations, lagged			-.0035*** (.001)		-.0027*** (.001)
% Network Television, lagged			-.0040 (.004)		-.0057 (.005)
alpha	.4477*** (.132)	.5512*** (.152)	.1759** (.061)	.0911 (.050)	.0502 (.036)
Log-likelihood	-172.2822	-173.3075	-148.0481	-148.1533	-134.2843

Note: standard errors are shown in parentheses; N = 80;
p < .05 *; p < .01 **; p < .001 ***

Table 6 Poisson Regression Estimates for Number of Foundings Per Year of American Daytime Soap Opera, 1930-2010

	Radio	Radio	TV	TV
Intercept	1.883***	2.988***	1.192*	-.9506
	(.281)	(.444)	(.475)	(5.72)
Density	.0601**	.1065**	.3493*	.3317*
	(.019)	(.027)	(.146)	(.146)
Density^2	-.0006**	-.0009**	-.0062	-.0063
	(.001)	(.000)	(.005)	(.006)
Previous Foundings	-.0559	-.1173*	.0639	.0425
	(.043)	(.046)	(.129)	(.149)
Previous Founding^2	.0009	.0019*	-.0205*	-.0163
	(.001)	(.001)	(.010)	(.015)
Previous Failures	.0864*	.0495	-.2911	-.3272*
	(.034)	(.037)	(.155)	(.163)
Previous Failures^2	-.0002**	-.0009	.0256	.0286
	(.001)	(.001)	(.015)	(.015)
Minutes per Year			$-.604^{-04}$*	$-.535^{-04}$
			$(.25^{-04})$	$(.41^{-04})$
Minutes per Year^2			$.193^{-09}$**	$.179^{-09}$
			$(.25^{-04})$	$(.16^{-09})$
Creation of ABC (post 1943)	-1.943***	-.9202*		
	(.325)	(.456)		
Writers' Strike (post 1988)			-1.418	-.7971
			(1.08)	(.889)
No Syn/Fin Rules (post 1995)			.5767	
			(1.17)	
# Radio Stations, lagged		-.0006*		
		(.000)		
% Network Radio, lagged		-.0231*		
		(.010)		
# TV Stations, lagged				$-.426^{-04}$
				(.002)
% Network Television, lagged				.0224
				(.056)
Log-likelihood	-74.269	-68.935	-71.797	-71.741

Note: standard errors are shown in parentheses; $p < .05$ *; $p < .01$ **; $p < .001$ ***

Table 7: Correlation Matrix for Independent Variables, Radio and Television

	Post 1943	Post 1988	Post 1995	# Radio Stations, lagged	% Network Radio, lagged	# TV Stations, lagged	% Network TV, lagged
Post 1943	1.00000	.26591	.21212	.00323	−.01892	.60659	.83197
Post 1988	.26591	1.00000	.79772	−.33960	−.36967	.76653	.06595
Post 1995	.21212	.79772	1.00000	−.27091	−.29489	.66258	.03027
# Radio Stations, lagged	.00323	−.33960	−.27091	1.00000	.94700	−.47770	.16789
% Network Radio, lagged	−.01892	−.36967	−.29489	.94700	1.00000	−.58268	.04605
# TV Stations, lagged	.60659	.76653	.66258	−.47770	−.58268	1.00000	.46077
% Network TV, lagged	.83197	.06595	.03027	.16789	.04605	.46077	1.00000

Table 8: Distribution of Categories of *Times* Articles

	Entertainment Features (Categories 1 & 2)	Minor Mentions (Categories 3-5)	Critical Reviews (Category 6)	Most frequently mentioned soap
1930s	8	0	0	*The Gumps*
1940s	99	10	12	*Against The Storm*
1950s	60	61	26	*Love of Life*
1960s	66	69	44	*Ma Perkins*
1970s	125	178	48	*As The World Turns*
1980s	185	409	67	*All My Children*
1990s	287	358	143	*All My Children*
2000s	228	386	172	*All My Children*
Total	1,058	1,471	512	*All My Children*

Table 9: Inclusion Criteria For Sample

Line from *New York Times* Article *(Publication Year)*	Entertainment Features N=1,058	Minor Mentions N=1471	Critical Reviews N=512
"Ruth Warrick of All My Children visits the Carter White House." *(1977)*	Yes*	Yes*	No
"Ruth Warrick of All My Children visits the Carter White House." *(1980)*	Yes*	Yes*	No
"The inmates watched All My Children from their prison cells." *(1977)*	No	No	No
"The inmates watched All My Children from their prison cells." *(1980*)	No	Yes	No
"All My Children tackles a story about juvenile delinquency…." *(1977)*	Yes*	Yes*	No
"All My Children tackles a story about juvenile delinquency…." *(1980)*	Yes*	Yes*	No
"The movie was like a bad soap opera."*(1977)*	No	No	No
"The movie was like a bad soap opera." *(1980)*	Yes	No	Yes
"The Regan/Carter debate was a soap opera." *(1980)*	No	No	No

***** Whether an article was ultimately classified as an "Entertainment Feature" or a "Minor Mention" depended on soap opera content of the rest of the article.

Figure 1: Phrase “Soap Opera” In *New York Times Articles*, 1930-2009

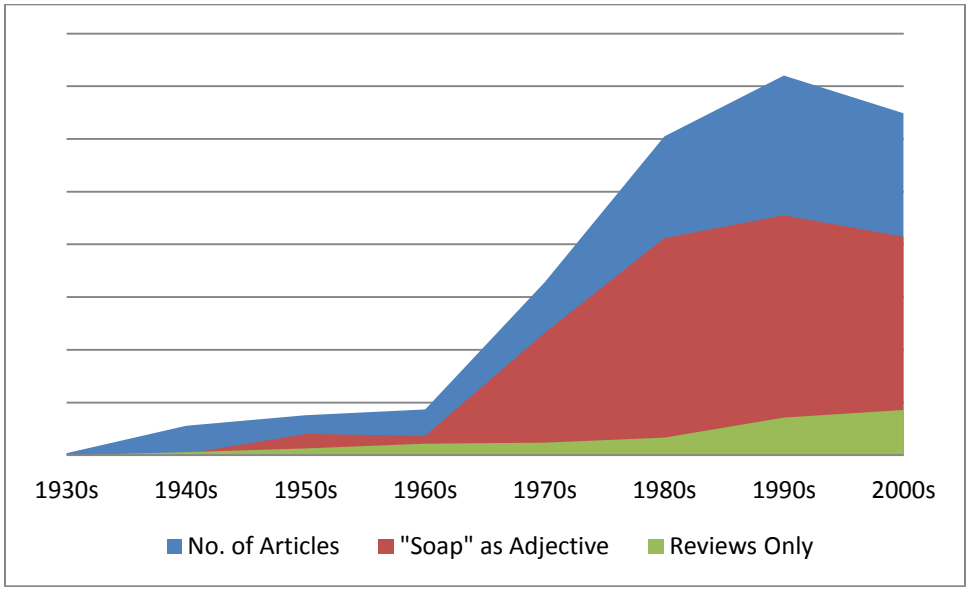

Figure 2: Number of Soap Opera References By Review Type

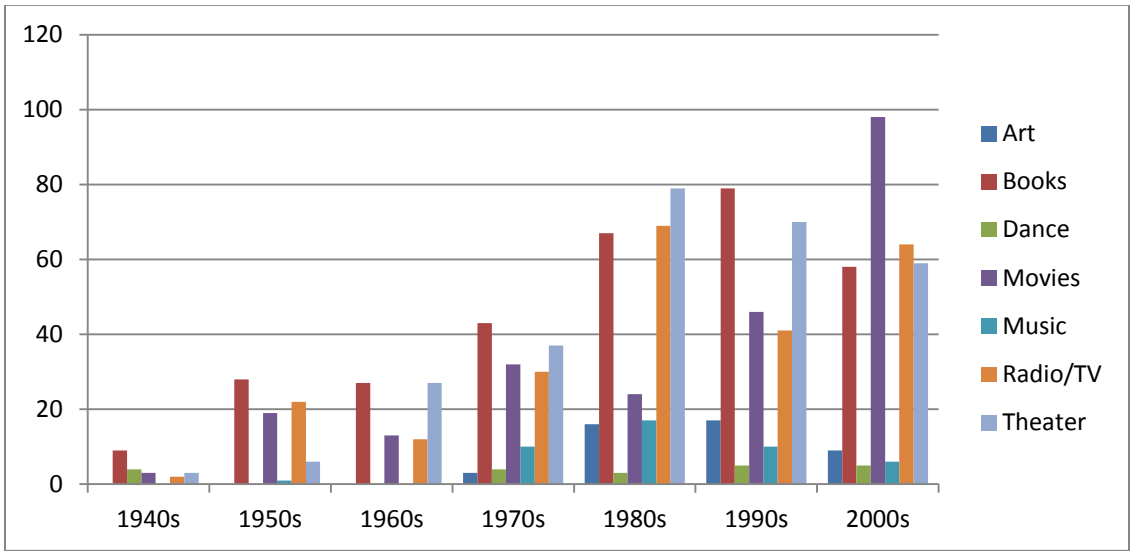

Figure 3: Diffusion of Term "Soap Opera" in Critical Reviews, 1930-2009

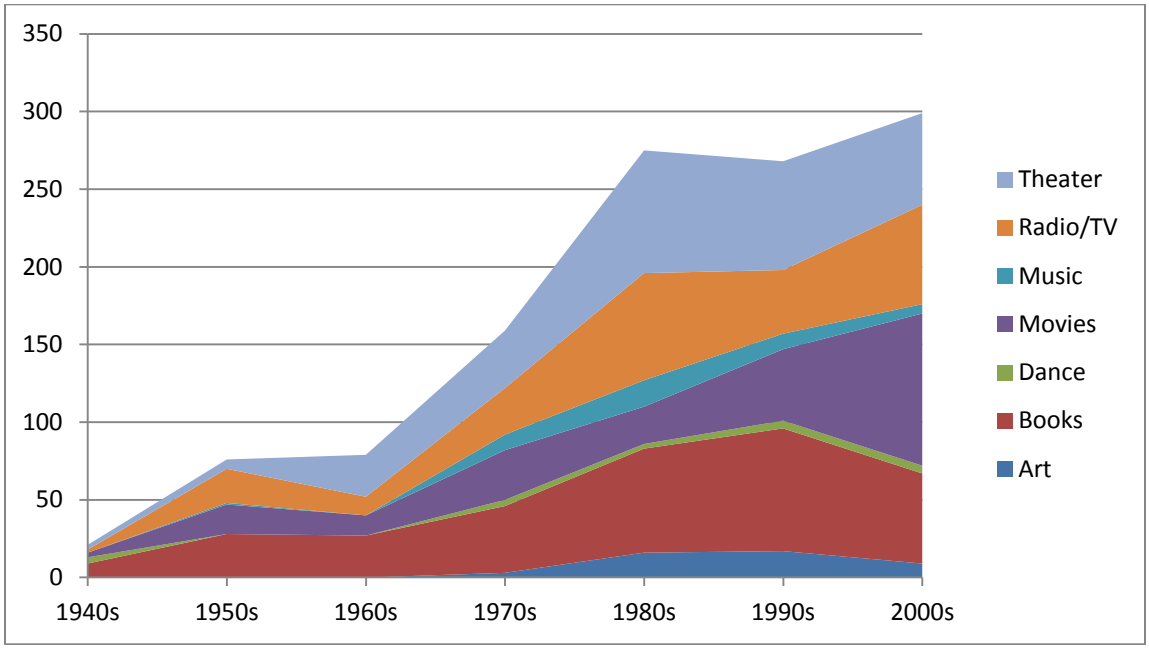

Figure 4: Distribution of "Soap Opera" By Geographic Region

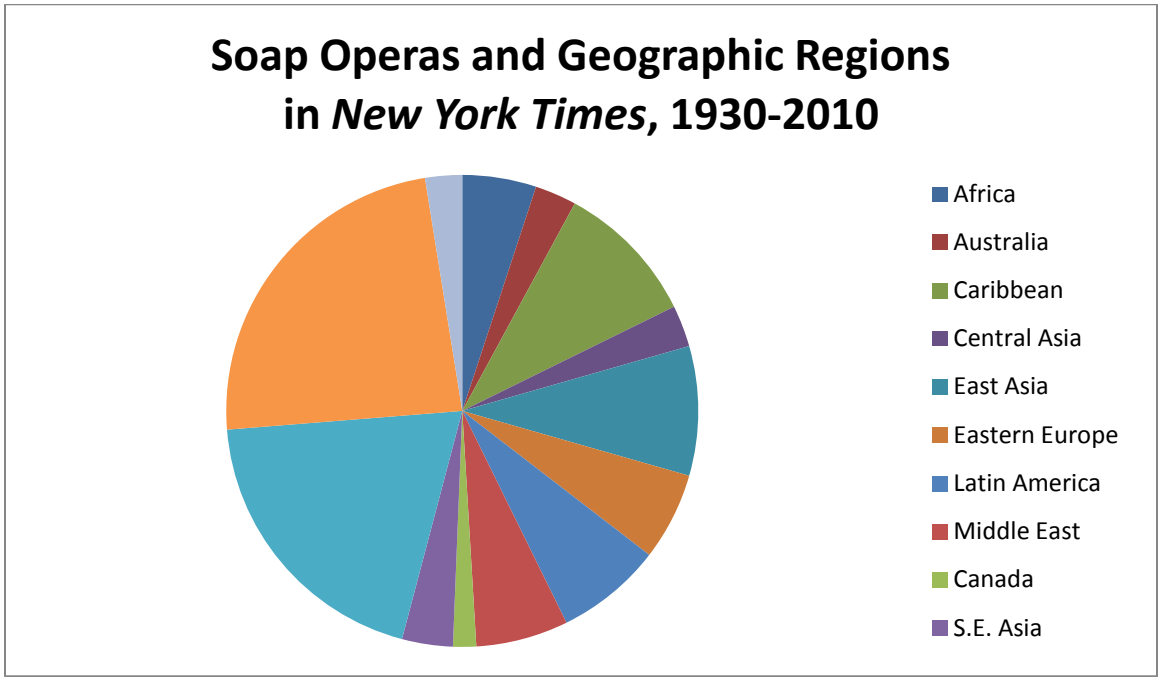

Figure 5: Code Definitions

Academics	discussion about soap operas within a higher educational setting; a professor or other PhD discussing an aspect of soap operas
Art	explicit mention of the link between soaps and art. Could be reference to how soap operas are artistic creation or how soap operas are not artistic products at all
Audience	any mention about who is watching daytime soap operas
Authenticity	discussion about what is real, genuine or true about
Charity cause	actors donating time and/or money for specific benefit or
Feminism	discussion about equal rights for women, complex and/or accurate portrayal of female characters; author mentions she/he is a feminist
Industry Difficulties	commentary about the declining state of the daytime soap opera industry , cancelations, loss of revenue
Money/finances	any discussion about soap opera finances, can be profit or losing revenue
Ratings	information about how many people watched a particular soap, numbers from A.C. Nielsen Rating system
Power Differences	discussion about a status hierarchy either among people, genres or networks,
Schedule	broadcast days and times of daytime soap operas
Soap opera effects	explicit references to soap opera content directly affecting the audience. Can be positive or negative behavior.
Soap opera magazine	any discussion of a U.S. soap opera periodical
Soap opera paradigm	what is and what is not a soap opera; opinions about makes something a drama and not a soap opera
Social issues	any discussion about topical, newsworthy issues in relationship to soap operas.

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