Life, Love, and Hegemony on Daytime TV: A Critical Analysis of Three Popular Soap Operas

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Abstract
This study examined the worlds of three popular soap operas: Days of Our Lives, General Hospital, and Young and the Restless. Someone who has not watched the three soap operas examined for this study might think that soap operas are all alike. Yet this study has demonstrated how different they really are. These soap operas are created by different teams of writers, producers, and editors—different real authors. Days of Our Lives, General Hospital, and Young and the Restless are really distinct and different from each other in a number of ways. These programs depict different classes of people with different personal goals and rules for behavior; they differ in loyalty to family and differ in attitudes about wealth and power.

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In most soap operas, everything is magnified. Statistics are clearly out of line with real life in most ordinary residential settings. In a soap, your chances of meeting a grisly end are hugely amplified when compared with true-life data. Accidents and illness may take away some of our favourite characters, but surely it has to be the chance of getting bumped off by murder that is the most unrealistic statistic of all. Most people's 'real-life' would not be deemed interesting enough to air on television several times per week, year after year. Soap operas are pretty popular in the US, too, although there are fewer than there used to be as talk shows seem to have taken over daytime TV. I watched Days of Our Lives with my mom when I was a kid, and I still get hooked on it now and then through the years.