# THE IMPACT OF SOAP OPERAS
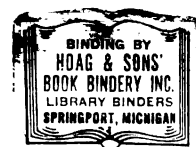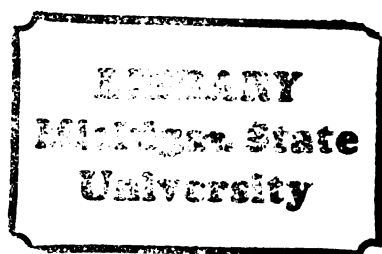## ON VIEWERS

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
MITZI BOND
1975

THESIS

‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖‖
3 1293 10422 8550

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF SOAP OPERAS ON VIEWERS

By

Mitzi Bond


The purpose of this study was to examine viewers'
and nonviewers' perceptions of the reality of soap opera
characters and content, to explore viewers' degree of
interaction, identification, and involvement with soap
operas, and to identify functions satisfied by watching
daytime serials.

Four hypotheses were tested concerning the rela-
tionships among ten variables.  The independent variable
was viewing; the intervening variable was perceived reality;
and the dependent variables were knowledge of program con-
tent, involvement, interaction, identification, companion-
ship, escapism, boredom, and social utility.

The following are hypotheses tested in this study:

$H_1$:  The higher the amount of viewing, the
greater the perceived reality.

$H_2$:  The higher the amount of viewing, the
more knowledge the viewer will have
about program content.

$H_3$: The higher the amount of viewing, the greater the viewer's involvement, inter-action, and identification.

$H_4$: The higher the amount of viewing, the more functions watching soap operas will satisfy.
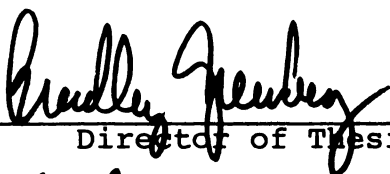
A telephone survey was conducted in Lansing, Michigan, in August, 1974. Five hundred fifty numbers were randomly chosen from the Lansing telephone directory and questionnaires were completed by 272 respondents.

Hypotheses were confirmed for the following cri-terion variables. As the amount of viewing increased, (1) perceived reality increased, (2) knowledge of soap opera content increased, (3) involvement increased, (4) identification increased, (5) interaction increased, and (6) social utility increased.

As an intervening variable, perceived reality shows that as the amount of viewing time increases, and perceived reality increases, the viewer will have (1) more interac-tion with soap opera characters and content, and (2) more relief from boredom from the serials.
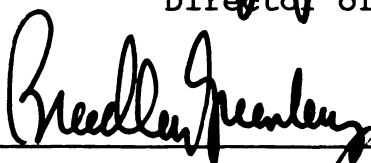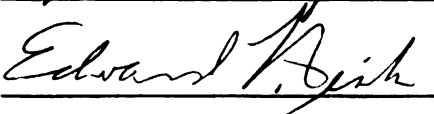
Hypotheses were not confirmed for an increase in companionship, escapsim, and relief of boredom as viewing increased.

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of
Communication, College of Communication Arts, Michigan
State University, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Master of Arts degree.

_____
Director of Thesis

Guidance Committee:    _____, Chairman

_____

_____

THE IMPACT OF SOAP OPERAS

ON VIEWERS

By

Mitzi Bond

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Communication

1975

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont'd.)

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF TABLES (cont'd.)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Soap operas are the literary products of the electronic media. They are simply literature to be seen and not to be read. These serials have central characters with whom the viewer can often identify, whose life could be followed, whose problems could be seen, and with whom the viewer could establish something like a friendship. Their attraction or addiction is based on audience curiosity about and interest in what will happen to the various characters.

James Thurber's definition of soap operas is perhaps the one most often quoted:

> A soap opera is a kind of sandwich, whose
> recipe is simple enough, although it took
> years to compound. Between thick slices
> of advertising, spread twelve minutes of
> dialogue, add predicament, villainy, and
> female suffering in equal measure, throw
> in a dash of nobility, sprinkle with tears,
> season with organ music, cover with a rich
> announcer sauce, and serve five times a
> week.

The dictionary yields a more precise definition:
"soap opera--a radio or television serial drama performed
usually on a daytime commercial program and chiefly char-
acterized by stock domestic situations and often melodra-
matic or sentimental treatment."

However, soap operas really need no definition.
Any television viewer and most nonviewers are familiar
with the daily daytime dramas portraying domestic dilemmas.

## TV Soap Opera History[1]

This study is concerned with the television serials,
the first of which was introduced in 1946. A single epi-
sode of Big Sister was televised and a full-scale serial,
A Woman to Remember, aired in 1947. Both failed. Three
years later CBS experimented with The First Hundred Years.
It missed its mark by 99 years.

There were many obstacles that denied success to
the early television soap opera. First there was cost.
Producing a serial for television was more complicated
than producing one for radio. The weekly cost of producing

---

[1]Madeleine Edmondson and David Rounds, The Soaps:
Daytime Serials of Radio and TV (New York, 1973), pp. 130-
140.

a fifteen-minute daily television serial was $8650, as

opposed to $3500 for a radio serial. Production also pre-

sented problems. Places and people were now right there

on the television screen, so sets had to be built and

actors appropriately costumed. All props mentioned in

the script actually had to be on the set.

TV soaps were too expensive to produce until CBS

experimented with a new length--the half hour. Production

costs for one half-hour episodes were far lower than those

of two fifteen-minute episodes for different shows, and the

amount of time available to be sold for commercials was un-

changed. Lengthening the soap episode therefore made sense

for the network, and it turned out to have a delightfully

unexpected side effect as well--viewers approved the new

length.

The very early television serials were almost in-

distinguishable from radio serials. The visual aspect of

the new medium turned out not to be as crucial as had been

feared. Soaps had always been largely domestic so it was

possible to limit most of the action to easily-built indoor

sets. Early television soaps even kept the announcer, that

useful intruder who was so helpful in commenting on the

action and directing the attention of the audience to the most fruitful themes of future interest.

## Production Costs[2]

The average soap opera in 1973 cost about $60,000 a week to produce (The Young and the Restless is the most expensive at $70,000) compared to an average $100,000 for a single half-hour in prime time. To update Thurber's definition of soaps, the serials consist of 22 minutes of dialogue (with the exception of Another World which expanded to 60 minutes 6 January 1975). The director of a solid running TV soap makes $2000 a week and the head script writer makes about $3000 a week.

In 1970, CBS's two-decade hold on daytime TV ratings was an accepted fact of life supported by the Nielsen ratings. That year CBS racked up $162 million in daytime sales compared to NBC's $100 million and ABC's $85 million. However, during the next three years, NBC and ABC introduced new soaps of their own and turned the competition into a three-way race. From January to May 1973, CBS

---

[2]"Real Drama in Daytime: The Networks' Battle for Dominance," Journal of Broadcasting, 2 July 1973, p. 17.

chalked up $68 million in daytime sales, NBC $61 million, and ABC $47 million. (One of the reasons for ABC's relatively poor showing is that it only sends out five hours of daytime programming, whereas NBC and CBS each sends out six hours.)

The cost-per-minute figures (i.e., how much an advertiser must pay for a one-minute commercial) depend on the ratings of the soap opera and on the demographic breakdown of those ratings. By 1973 the most lucrative serial on the air was CBS's As the World Turns, now in its twentieth year, which was priced at $19,600 a commercial minute. NBC's Another World, The Doctors, and Days of Our Lives were priced at $13,600 a minute, $12,400, and $12,200 respectively. For ABC, General Hospital costs $12,400 a minute compared to $11,200 for All My Children and $10,800 for One Life to Live. Advertisers have to pay more to get their messages on soap operas than on game shows because the serials attract a higher percentage of women between the ages of 18 and 49--the most desirable demographic target for daytime sponsors (and for nighttime sponsors).

## Literature Review

One of the earliest studies concerning soap operas was conducted by Herta Herzog (1942) in Iowa, New York, and Pittsburgh. A preliminary study based on 100 intensive interviews suggested three major types of gratification experienced by listeners to daytime serials: 1) emotional release--the chance to cry because of happy or sad events in the characters' lives; 2) wishful thinking--the listeners "drowned" their troubles in listening to the events portrayed in the serials; and 3) sources of advice--the serials teach the listeners appropriate patterns of behavior and how to handle situations that may turn up in their own lives. Herzog found that the less formal education a woman has, the more she is likely to consider these programs helpful and that less-educated women have fewer sources from which to learn "how to win friends and influence people" and are therefore more dependent upon daytime serials for this gratification.

Sociologist Nora Scott Kinser (1973) attempted to dissect soap opera characters to show why viewers get mesmerized. Millions are intimately involved with the lives and problems of their favorite assortment of soap opera

heroes, heroines, villains, and villainesses. They write letters to fan magazines anxiously inquiring about the personal lives of the stars, threatening mass defection should Mark marry Susy and leave Mamie, weeping over the death of a special character, and pouting about an actor who has been replaced. Sometimes their passions even spill over into real life. Eileen Fulton, who plays Lisa Shea of As the World Turns, once fled in terror from the appliance section of a large department store after watching a taped segment of her show and listening to women customers mutter how much they hated Lisa and wanted to kill her. On another occasion a woman asked her if she was Lisa Shea. When she said "yes" and began searching for a pencil to write an autograph, the fan began cursing Lisa and beating her with a purse.

How do the soap operas entice such audience involvement? To answer this, Kinser developed a typology of soap opera characters. Kinser typology:

|  |  | characters | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | good | bad |
| characters | good | good-bad | good-bad |
|  | bad | bad-good | bad-good |

In most soap operas the good-good is usually a motherly-grandmotherly type to whom all the other characters tell their respective tales of woe. The typical bad-bad is an out-and-out thoroughly mean witch who always causes trouble and ruins the lives of the other characters. The good-bad is a baddie who turns out to have a good side while the bad-good is a goodie with a bad side. Part of the fun of soap operas lies in the fact that the audience usually knows that the supposed bad-bad is really a bad-good or a good-bad long before the good-goods realize what is happening. But the immense popularity of the soaps is a complex affair. While their lusty plots titillate fans' daydreams, their chaos and affliction make the viewer's dull life seem well-ordered and safe by comparison. Is it any wonder fans shrieked when the Senate Subcommittee on the Watergate preempted their soaps?

LaPota and LaPota (1973) suggest the study of the soap opera in the classroom as an attempt to broaden the spectrum of teaching and learning strategies and to promote the discovery of a whole new vein of human skills. The daytime serial is a true literary product of the electronic media. Some authorities believe the soap opera is already the literature of millions of Americans. Estimates run

from 10- to 30-million viewers in the United States who daily watch one or more daytime serials. That is a very respectably sized audience that depends on nonprinted material to experience another man's version of the human experience. And that is what literature basically is.

LaPota and LaPota make three functional observations about soap opera content.

Values perceived in the soap opera.--(1) It reflects a particular aspect of contemporary American life: primarily the white, Protestant, middle to upper middle class life style. (2) It is valid to say there is no "typical" soap opera viewer because of the wide spectrum in age group, education, and economic standing represented in the audience. (3) The traditional values of the American democracy are upheld. Reliance on the judicial system, stress on law and order, belief in free enterprise, and duties and responsibilities of citizenship are reflected frequently in the episodes. Any character who breaks the law is eventually punished. (4) The American Judaic-Christian moral values are mirrored. Sin is to be avoided, but if that is not possible the commission of sin is always punished in some way; virtue is rewarded in the long run.

(5) The economic value system in the soap opera is a distorted picture of the American world of work.

The soap opera as a tool for social and political change.--The soap opera has been a demythicizer and breaker of subject matter taboo. Apparently producers and writers of soaps are making conscious efforts to explore objectively certain conservative political and social convictions (e.g., abortion, atheism, alcoholism, sex discrimination). Characters with points of view and attitudes in opposition to the conservative are presented as sincere, thoughtful people operating from their own individuality, rational convictions, and value systems.

The soap opera as an art form.--(1) The structure of the soap opera is that of continuing episodes without beginning, middle, and end. It maintains its unity through a rather permanent cast of characters, permanent settings, and a theme or variations of one theme. (2) The form of the soap opera is unique in three ways: the emphasis on dialogue instead of action, the "slower-than-life" pace and movement, and the reviewing of what-happened-yesterday that often occupies as much as five of the approximate 22 minutes of plot time. (3) Because of its leisurely pace, the soap opera is allowed time for detailed development of

characters, numerous subplots and incidental action, and
the minutiae so often found in real life. (4) Conflict in
all ranges of human problems and emotions keeps the plot
and subplots constantly at a boil. (5) The standard lit-
erary devices most frequently used in the soap opera are
the flashback, interior monologue, and dream sequence.
Figurative language is confined mostly to dramatic irony.
(6) There is little humor in the lives of the characters.
Although tragedy does occur, the survivors usually manage
to work out satisfactory lives eventually.

Katzman (1973) examined the size and characteristics
of the soap opera audience, the situations the soaps
portray, and the characters that populate them, and dis-
cusses some potential implications of all those.

On the average, every adult viewer in the United
States sees two hours of soap operas every week. The
growth in viewer-hours can be explained almost totally as
a function of the steady growth in the number of homes with
television and the growth in the number of minutes of
serials broadcast each day. This indicates an "elastic
demand" for soap operas: as the population grows and the
number of homes with television increases, a fairly stable
proportion of the new potential viewers will turn to the

daytime serials. As new soap operas are added to daytime schedules each one seems able to attract an audience without taking viewers away from other serials. This elastic demand appears to hold even when the networks schedule three serials in the same time period. Sometimes when three soaps compete with each other, they reach 30 per cent of all households with television, a rating as high as the highest rated prime time program.

Katzman found 71 per cent of the serial audience composed of adult females. Education of the head of household was inversely related to the tendency to watch soap operas; the serials were most popular among the low-income, low-education groups. The most typical viewer of daytime serials was a southern or midwestern woman from a large household with relatively low educational and income levels. The almost-realism of the characters and themes, the repetition due to slow pace, and the extremely large number of hours spent viewing soap operas indicate that these shows have great potential power. They can establish or reinforce value systems. They can suggest how people should act in certain situations. They can legitimize behavior and remove taboos about discussing sensitive such topics as drugs and premarital sex.

Edmondson and Rounds (1973) looked at the soap opera viewer. They found that in 1972, 96 per cent of all American households had television sets and 53 per cent of them were color. Thirty per cent of all television house-holds watch daytime television with 18.6 million viewers tuned in. Chances were four to one that the viewer was a woman since fewer than 20 per cent of daytime viewers are men. Seventy-six per cent of nonworking women watch TV in the daytime and 54 per cent of the working females still find time to view the set during the day. Sixty-five per cent of all women watch some daytime television--a per-centage that has remained quite constant since 1968.

The "average" woman watches television Monday through Friday between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. for an average of over seven hours each week. Women between 18 and 50 prefer soap operas to game shows, and they watch them a little over three times a week, more in the fall, a little less during the winter, and the least during the summer.

There has been no consistent mode of studies on soap operas. It is a much unexplored field. The only viewer-sample study was done by Herzog over 30 years ago. The Katzman study was solely a content analysis of char-acters and content. The other studies and articles were

simply discussions by sociologists and psychologists about some aspect of the serials.

## Soap Opera Reality and Gratifications

Dr. Louis I. Berg, a New York psychiatrist and writer, was a man who hated soap operas. His crusade against them began in 1941, when he developed the suspicion that certain symptoms manifested by his patients, certain disturbing relapses, might have their origin in addiction to radio serials. Setting out to test his hypothesis that such symptoms as tachycardia (rapid pulse rate), arrhythmia (distorted heart beat), emotional instability, and vertigo (fear of heights) might be produced by soap operas, he found just what he had set out to look for. After a daily dose of two leading exemplars, Right to Happiness and Women in White, Dr. Berg tested his own blood pressure and found it rising. Serials, he concluded on this evidence, are dangerous, especially to the middle-aged woman, the adolescent, and the neurotic. They furnish to those unfortunate addicts "the same release for the emotionally distorted that is supplied to those who derive satisfaction from a lynching bee, who lick their lips at the salacious

scandals of <u>crime passionnel</u>, who in the unregretted past cried out in ecstasy at a witch burning."

The subject of all this tempestuous verbiage was then, as now, a humble art form, meek and unconfident, looked down upon by the cultivated and even sometimes by its own creators. But though it has often been snubbed and publicly humiliated, it has always been beloved by millions who have found it indispensable to their private well being.[3]

What is it in soap operas that can arouse such loyalty from their audiences and such opposition from their critics? What is the secret of their addictive powers that cause viewers to become so involved in the lives of the characters and their problems? Such questions as these will be partly explored in this study.

The specific purposes of this study were to examine viewers' and nonviewers' perceptions of the reality of soap opera characters and content, to explore viewers' degree of interaction, identification, and involvement with soap operas, their knowledge of program content, and to examine four functions (companionship, boredom, escapism, and

---

[3]Edmondson and Rounds, p. 15.

social utility) possibly satisfied by watching daytime serials.

The amount of viewing is the independent variable in this study. The dependent variables are knowledge of soap opera content; interaction--stimulation of the viewer by characters and/or content of the programming which motivates the viewer to make a response, comments on or discussion of the program with others; identification--imagining oneself in the place of a soap opera character; and involvement--how important watching soaps are to the viewer. Four other variables are possible functions satisfied by watching soap operas: companionship, relief of boredom, escapism, and social utility. Perceived reality (the extent to which the viewer thinks that program content and characters resemble people and events in real life) is the intervening variable in that it may affect the relationship between the independent and certain dependent variables.

Perceived reality is a variable explored to determine its potential impact on the viewer. According to Greenberg and Reeves (1974), general use of television is strongly related to general measures of perceived reality of television. One may anticipate that people who watch the medium with some regularity will generate stronger

estimates of perceived reality. This media realism has

been researched in connection with television impact on

children (Greenberg, 1973; Reeves, 1974; Greenberg and

Reeves, 1974; McLeod, Atkin and Chaffe, 1971; Ward, 1971;

Greenberg, 1971; Greenberg and Dominick, 1970) adults

(Dervin and Greenberg, 1973; and Greenberg, Vlahos and

Ericson, 1971), aggression stimulation (Feshback, 1971),

and violence (Gerbner, 1969; Dominick, 1972; and Clark and

Blankenburg, 1971). The bulk of this research was con-

cerned with the effects of prime time programming.

Identification, interaction, and involvement are

three variables postulated by Rosengren and Windahl (1972)

as important in examining mass media consumption and mo-

tives. They examined mass media content, identification

with the content, and interaction (imaginary) with the same

content. Identification and interaction take place between

the individual and a media character. Identification is

defined as "imagining oneself in the place of another

person," and interaction is defined as "mutual stimulation

and response." The relation between interaction and iden-

tification defines the degree of involvement (with mass

media content). The authors argued that the need for

interaction may be satisfied by almost any type of media

content. They divided media content into (1) fictional and (2) as supplying explicit and concrete information (factual). Any media content can be either or both or none. The cross-break between factual and fictional content yield the values of another variable--degree of reality proximity of media content. Their findings supported the following hypotheses: 1) There is a positive correlation between the degree of involvement and amount of consumption; and 2) a high degree of involvement will tend to go together with preference for and consumption of content with low degree of reality proximity (where identification and interaction are easier to establish).

Functions satisfied by soap opera viewing introduced here are relief of boredom, escapism, social utility, and companionship. Danowski ("Functions and Gratifications of Soap Opera Viewing: Some Operationalizations," 1973) discussed operationalizations of nine functions and gratifications of soap opera viewing. The four functions presented here are taken from Greenberg, 1973 (learning, relief of boredom, relief of stress habit, identification, social utility, stability, arousal/emotional release, and para-social interaction) and from the eight clusters of

responses as to why people watch television also demon-
strated by Greenberg (1973).

Knowledge of program content and characters has
been a sparsely researched variable. Questions of this
nature have usually been reserved to measure perceived
reality of a specific character, mentioning the character
by name, but not asking specific questions about characters
and events in programming.

Perceived reality is dependent upon viewing for its
existence and measurement. We posit that it determines how
susceptible the viewer is to interaction, identification,
and involvement. The closer to reality the viewer be-
lieves the content and characters to be, the more the
viewer will become involved with the programming. Perceived
reality also determines how likely one is to feel some type
of gratification through exposure to the medium. Therefore,
viewing predicts the seven variables as mediated by per-
ceived reality.

The following are original hypotheses for this
study.

$H_1$:    The higher the amount of viewing, the
         greater the perceived reality. The
         greater the amount of time and the more
         repeated the exposures, the more likely

the viewer will see the medium's content
as being very much like real life.

$H_2$: The higher the amount of viewing, the
more knowledge the viewer will have about
program content. The greater the length
of time the viewer is exposed to soap
operas, the more familiar he/she will
become with the content.

$H_{3a}$: The higher the amount of viewing, the
greater the viewer's involvement.

$H_{3a_1}$: The greater the perceived reality, the
greater the viewer's involvement.

$H_{3b}$: The higher the amount of viewing, the
greater the viewer's interaction.

$H_{3b_1}$: The greater the perceived reality, the
greater the viewer's interaction.

$H_{3c}$: The higher the amount of viewing, the
greater the viewer's identification.

$H_{3c_1}$: The greater the perceived reality, the
greater the viewer's identification.

As the viewer spends more and more time watching
the serials, he/she will develop more and more interest
(becoming more curious) in the lives of the characters and
their situation, empathizing to the point of placing one-
self in similar circumstances and discussing such events
and alternatives with others who share the same curiosity
about soap operas.

$H_{4a}$: The higher the amount of viewing, the
more companionship the viewer will seek
from soap operas.

$H_{4a_1}$: The greater the perceived reality, the more companionship the viewer will seek from soap operas.

$H_{4b}$: The higher the amount of viewing, the more the viewer will seek escapism in soap operas.

$H_{4b_1}$: The greater the perceived reality, the more the viewer will seek escapism in soap operas.

$H_{4c}$: The greater the amount of viewing, the more relief from boredom the viewer will seek from soap operas.

$H_{4c_1}$: The greater the perceived reality, the more relief from boredom the viewer will seek from soap operas.

$H_{4d}$: The greater the amount of viewing time, the more social utility the viewer will find in soap operas.

$H_{4d_1}$: The greater the perceived reality, the more social utility the viewer will find in soap operas.

As the viewer becomes addicted to the serials, he/she will retreat to them as a break in the daily routine, to replace absent company, and to observe social behaviors.

| | perceived reality | companionship<br>boredom<br>escapism<br>social utility<br>(functions) |
|---|---|---|
| | | interaction<br>identification<br>involvement |

amount
of
viewing

knowledge
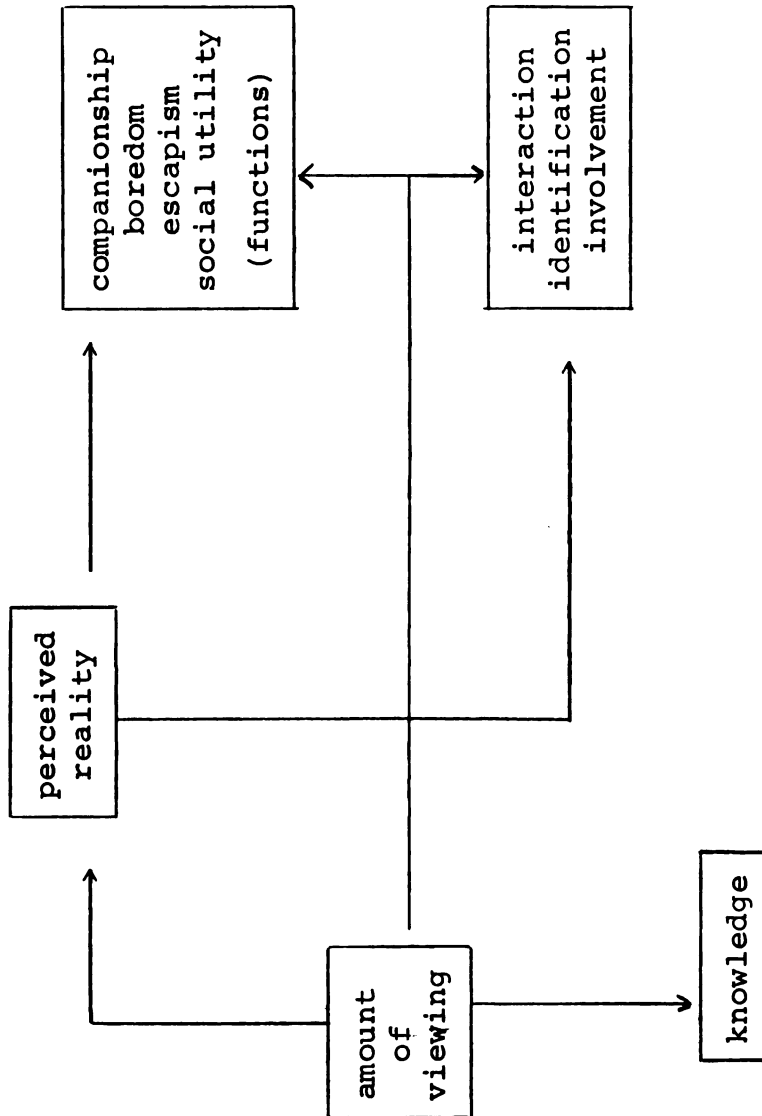
Hypotheses Diagram

(Note:  Arrows only indicate that a correlation exists between variables.)

# CHAPTER II

## METHODS

This study was drawn entirely from original data collected in August, 1974, in the greater Lansing, Michigan, area. The methods used in data gathering and analysis will be discussed in the following order: 1) pretest and questionnaire administration, 2) the respondents and their community, 3) operationalization of the independent variable, 4) operationalization of the dependent variables, and 5) statistical analyses.

## Pretest and Questionnaire Administration

Pretest telephone interviews were first conducted 7 August 1974. Twenty-five telephone numbers were randomly selected from the Michigan State University telephone directory. Eleven of the 25 completed interviews. Answers to questions concerning involvement, identification, and interaction determined the coding categories and wording

for the final instrument. The four functions measured in
the final questionnaire were those most frequently men-
tioned by respondents in the pretest (Appendix A).

The final questionnaire was administered 12-15
August 1974. Five hundred fifty names were randomly drawn
from the Lansing, Michigan, telephone directory. Nine
trained interviewers made calls from 12 noon until 4 p.m.
each day, amassing responses from 272 people, 157 of who
were viewers and 115 of whom were nonviewers.

Telephoning results were 272 completed calls (49%),
188 refusals (21%), 128 no-answers or busy signals (23%),
30 disconnected numbers (5%), and two miscellaneous.
Seventy-three of the 272 completed interviews were call-
backs of previous busy or no-answer numbers. There were
390 contacted respondents of whom 70% yielded interviews.

The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes for
completion and all questions were read to the respondent
and answers recorded by the interviewer. Only measures of
perceived reality and demographic information were obtained
from nonviewers. The first person who answered the tele-
phone was interviewed unless that person declined in favor
of someone else in the household who did watch soap operas.
After the interviewer read the introduction and the

instructions for question one, the respondent indicated whether or not he/she watched daytime television and/or soap operas.

The entire questionnaire is in Appendix B.

## Respondents and Their Community

The total sample consisted of 55 males and 216 females, ranging in age from the teens to the eighties with over half the sample in their thirties or younger.

All the respondents came from the Lansing, Michigan area, including East Lansing, Meridian, Haslett, and Okemos. People in the sample came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds with a fairly even spread among income and education.

Lansing is located in the central part of Michigan and has a large number of industries. Its suburbs offer faculty, staff, and students from Michigan State University and other professional people. Consequently, respondents come from a variety of backgrounds.

## Demographics and Viewing

Table 1 shows that both viewers and nonviewers in this sample were predominantly female (87% and 65%

TABLE 1.--Demographics of Viewers and Nonviewers
          (Chi-Square Test)

| | Total Sample | Nonviewers | Viewers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sex:** male | 55 | 36 | 19 |
| female | 216 | 79 | 137 |

$X^2$ = 14.96, p < .001, df = 1

| | Total Sample | Nonviewers | Viewers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Age:** teens | 41 | 8 | 33 |
| 20s | 79 | 32 | 47 |
| 30s | 36 | 16 | 20 |
| 40s | 29 | 19 | 10 |
| 50s + | 80 | 39 | 41 |

$X^2$ = 16.67, p < .01, df = 4

| | Total Sample | Nonviewers | Viewers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Education:** | | | |
| below high school | 64 | 14 | 50 |
| completed high school | 88 | 34 | 54 |
| some college | 55 | 28 | 27 |
| college degree | 35 | 25 | 10 |
| graduate or professional degree | 22 | 13 | 9 |

$X^2$ = 28.64, p < .001, df = 4

| | Total Sample | Nonviewers | Viewers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Income:** student | 26 | 6 | 20 |
| below $5,000 | 18 | 12 | 6 |
| $5,000-$10,000 | 33 | 15 | 18 |
| $10,000-$15,000 | 65 | 27 | 38 |
| $15,000-$20,000 | 35 | 15 | 20 |
| over $20,000 | 21 | 13 | 8 |
| retired | 34 | 11 | 23 |

$X^2$ = 13.11, p < .05, df = 6

| | Total Sample | Nonviewers | Viewers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Marital Status:** single | 93 | 37 | 56 |
| married | 158 | 69 | 89 |
| widow | 18 | 8 | 10 |

$X^2$ = 0.4329, p < .90, df = 2

respectively); 34% of the viewers completed high school compared to 30% for nonviewers; and 40% of viewers and 49% of nonviewers had incomes of more than $10,000. Half of the viewers and 35% of the nonviewers were below age 30, and 60% of both were married.

Table 2 indicates that the "typical" soap opera viewer is a female of no particular age group whose head-of-household is in the middle income bracket (between $10,000 and $20,000), and has a high school education. Katzman (1973) characterized the "typical viewer" as a southern or midwestern woman from a large household with relatively low educational and income levels. Size of household and area of the country were not examined in this study.

## Operational Definitions

The amount of viewing was used as a predictor for nine variables: perceived reality (which was also used as a mediator between the independent variable and seven other dependent variables), knowledge of soap opera content and characters, involvement, interaction, identification, companionship, boredom, escapism, and social utility.

TABLE 2.--Demographics and Amount of Viewing
(Chi-Square Test)

|  |  | 1-2 Shows | 3-4 Shows | 6+ Shows |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sex: | male | 10 | 7 | 2 |
|  | female | 45 | 48 | 44 |

$$x^2 = 4.54, p < .20, df = 2$$

|  |  | 1-2 Shows | 3-4 Shows | 6+ Shows |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age: | teens | 14 | 16 | 3 |
|  | 20s | 16 | 17 | 13 |
|  | 30s | 6 | 6 | 8 |
|  | 40s | 4 | 2 | 4 |
|  | 50s + | 12 | 13 | 16 |

$$x^2 = 12.36, p < .20, df = 8$$

| Education: | 1-2 Shows | 3-4 Shows | 6+ Shows |
|---|---|---|---|
| below high school | 14 | 19 | 17 |
| completed high school | 15 | 19 | 20 |
| some college or more | 23 | 15 | 7 |

$$x^2 = 10.25, p < .05, df = 4$$

| Income: |  | 1-2 Shows | 3-4 Shows | 6+ Shows |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Income: | student | 9 | 8 | 3 |
|  | below $10,000 | 11 | 3 | 10 |
|  | $10,000-$15,000 | 11 | 13 | 14 |
|  | $15,000 or more | 9 | 11 | 8 |
|  | retired | 8 | 8 | 7 |

$$x^2 = 13.65, p < .10, df = 8$$

| Marital Status: |  | 1-2 Shows | 3-4 Shows | 6+ Shows |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Marital Status: | single | 20 | 27 | 9 |
|  | married | 30 | 27 | 32 |

$$x^2 = 9.35, p < .01, df = 2$$

Demographic variables (age, sex, marital status, income, and education) were also examined as predictors of these dependent variables.

## Independent Variable

The amount of viewing time was measured by the number of different soap operas viewed per week and by the total number of episodes viewed per week. Respondents were asked which shows they watched and how many times a week they watched. This was done to establish a comparative frequency of how often each show was viewed weekly. (The correlation between watching shows and episodes is .77.)

Viewers were also asked "How long have you been watching soap operas?" to determine the amount of viewing in years. This correlated with shows and episodes as .24 and .27, respectively.

## Perceived Reality

Perceived reality was measured by reading the respondent nine statements to which he/she answered "agree, disagree, or not sure."

"Soap operas on TV tell about life the way
it really is."

"The same things that happen to people on
soap operas happen to people in real life."

"The places I see in soap operas are just
like places in real life."

"People in soap operas are just like people
in real life."

"Families on soap operas are just like
families in real life."

"Doctors on soap operas are just like doc-
tors in real life."

"Marriages on soap operas are just like
marriages in real life."

"Problems people have in soap operas are
just like problems people have in real
life."

"Is there any soap opera character who
reminds you of yourself?"

Scores for the individual items were summed for a total

perceived reality score. Measures were coded as

agree = 3, not sure = 2, disagree = 1.

The variable "character like self" was dropped

from the perceived reality index because of its poor

correlations with the other variables. The final index

was composed of eight variables.

Intercorrelations among perceived reality items

in the total sample (Table 3), viewers (Table 4), and

TABLE 3.--Perceived Reality Correlations
(Total Sample) (N = 272)

| | Events | Places | People | Families | Doctors | Marriages | Problems | Character Like Self | Total Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Life ($\overline{X}$ = 1.6) | .32 | .33 | .47 | .43 | .29 | .40 | .29 | .04 | .68 |
| Events ($\overline{X}$ = 2.2) | | .18 | .32 | .26 | .16 | .34 | .38 | .04 | .60 |
| Places ($\overline{X}$ = 2.0) | | | .38 | .41 | .29 | .22 | .21 | .08 | .60 |
| People ($\overline{X}$ = 1.9) | | | | .38 | .30 | .43 | .44 | -.01 | .75 |
| Families ($\overline{X}$ = 1.7) | | | | | .40 | .49 | .36 | .05 | .75 |
| Doctors ($\overline{X}$ = 1.5) | | | | | | .30 | .19 | .02 | .34 |
| Marriages ($\overline{X}$ = 1.8) | | | | | | | .36 | -.06 | .66 |
| Problems ($\overline{X}$ = 2.3) | | | | | | | | -.006 | .60 |
| Character Like Self ($\overline{X}$ = 1.2) | | | | | | | | | .15 |
| | | | | | | | | | ($\overline{X}$ = 16.2) |

TABLE 4.--Perceived Reality Correlations
           (Viewers)  (N = 157)

| | Events | Places | People | Families | Doctors | Marriages | Problems | Total Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Life | .34 | .44 | .42 | .44 | .24 | .31 | .33 | .70 |
| Events | | .25 | .36 | .29 | .16 | .42 | .50 | .61 |
| Places | | | .40 | .47 | .28 | .31 | .30 | .65 |
| People | | | | .56 | .24 | .45 | .39 | .72 |
| Families | | | | | .45 | .51 | .35 | .73 |
| Doctors | | | | | | .32 | .17 | .53 |
| Marriages | | | | | | | .38 | .73 |
| Problems | | | | | | | | .62 |

$(\overline{X} = 15.6)$

nonviewers (Table 5) are fairly consistent with the excep-
tion of the variable "doctors." This variable correlates
higher with the other perceived reality variables among
nonviewers than it does among viewers and the total sample.

TABLE 5.--Perceived Reality Correlations
(Nonviewers) (N = 115)

| | Events | Places | People | Families | Doctors | Marriages | Problems | Total Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Life | .29 | .15 | .55 | .40 | .40 | .26 | .21 | .61 |
| Events | | .12 | .26 | .21 | .19 | .25 | .25 | .53 |
| Places | | | .37 | .30 | .34 | .13 | .13 | .49 |
| People | | | | .60 | .41 | .43 | .51 | .80 |
| Families | | | | | .33 | .45 | .37 | .72 |
| Doctors | | | | | | .31 | .26 | .61 |
| Marriages | | | | | | | .37 | .63 |
| Problems | | | | | | | | .62 |
| | | | | | | | | ($\overline{X}$ = 14.2) |

Table 6 shows that viewers have high perceived reality (above the scale's midpoint) for problems ($\overline{X}$ = 2.5), events ($\overline{X}$ = 2.3), places ($\overline{X}$ = 2.1), and people ($\overline{X}$ = 2.0). Nonviewers have high reality perceptions for only events ($\overline{X}$ = 2.1) and problems ($\overline{X}$ = 2.0).

TABLE 6.--Perceived Reality Item Frequency
        Viewers (N = 157)
        Nonviewers (N = 115)

|  | Viewers | | | | Nonviewers | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 3 | 2 | 1 | | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
| Life | 37 | 31 | 88 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.7) | 18 | 19 | 80 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.5) |
| Events | 80 | 27 | 39 | ($\overline{X}$ = 2.3) | 51 | 28 | 36 | ($\overline{X}$ = 2.1) |
| Places | 69 | 32 | 54 | ($\overline{X}$ = 2.1) | 35 | 41 | 35 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.9) |
| People | 68 | 22 | 66 | ($\overline{X}$ = 2.0) | 34 | 26 | 55 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.7) |
| Families | 53 | 22 | 81 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.8) | 21 | 30 | 62 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.5) |
| Doctors | 30 | 28 | 98 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.6 | 10 | 42 | 65 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.5) |
| Marriages | 47 | 32 | 74 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.8) | 30 | 26 | 59 | ($\overline{X}$ = 1.7) |
| Problems | 99 | 31 | 26 | ($\overline{X}$ = 2.5) | 50 | 32 | 31 | ($\overline{X}$ = 2.0) |

Dividing perceived reality scores into Low PRTV
(range eight to 15) and High PRTV (range 16 to 24), Table 7
shows that 48 per cent of the viewers and 64 per cent of
the nonviewers fall into the low perceived reality cate-
gory. The mean perceived reality score for the two groups
is not statistically different, 15.6 for viewers and 14.1
for nonviewers.

TABLE 7.--Perceived Reality Score Frequency
          Viewers (N = 157)
          Nonviewers (N = 115)

| Total Score | Viewers | | Nonviewers | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| 8 | 10 | 6% | 7 | 6% |
| 9 | 5 | 3% | 6 | 5% |
| 10 | 8 | 5% | 4 | 3% |
| 11 | 8 | 5% | 6 | 5% |
| 12 | 22 | 14% | 18 | 15% |
| 13 | 7 | 5% | 11 | 9% |
| 14 | 6 | 4% | 12 | 10% |
| 15 | 10 | 6% | 13 | 11% |
| 16 | 12 | 8% | 12 | 10% |
| 17 | 13 | 8% | 4 | 3% |
| 18 | 9 | 6% | 6 | 5% |
| 19 | 5 | 4% | 3 | 3% |
| 20 | 11 | 7% | 1 | 1% |
| 21 | 8 | 5% | 5 | 4% |
| 22 | 10 | 6% | 4 | 3% |
| 23 | 5 | 3% | - | - |
| 24 | 7 | 5% | 3 | 3% |
| | $\overline{X}$ = 15.6 s.d. = 4.75 | | $\overline{X}$ = 14.2 s.d. = 7.94 | |

3

## Knowledge

  The variable knowledge about soap opera characters and content was measured by having respondents answer questions about the serials he/she claimed to watch. The questionnaire contained three questions about each of the 14 soaps. For example:

<u>02 The Young and the Restless</u>

1. Who is the father of Sally McQuire's baby?

2. Who is responsible for Leslie Brooks' emotional breakdown?

3. What is Brad Elliot's real profession?

<u>05 All My Children</u>

1. Who is the father of Tara Martin Tyler's son Phillip?

2. Who killed Jason Maxwell?

3. Why did Ann Martin abruptly leave Pine Valley?

<u>11 Another World</u>

1. Who caused Alice Frame's emotional breakdown?

2. To whom was Rachael Frame married when Jamie was born?

3. Why was Steven Frame sent to prison?

The possible range for correct answers per show was from 0 to 3. The possible range for total correct answers was from 0 to 42.

Table 8 shows that viewers averaged 2.1 correct answers per show with 72 per cent of the sample between two and three correct answers per show. The highest number of total correct answers was 30, by one viewer who watched 10 soaps. Forty-six per cent of the viewers answered 10 or more questions correctly but only 12 per cent correctly answered 15 or more questions.

## Involvement

Involvement was measured by asking the respondent the following two questions. An index was then formed by summing the two responses.

"How important are the soap operas to you would you say?"

    3  very important
    2  somewhat important
    1  not very important

"How involved do you get watching your favorite soap opera?"

    3  very involved
    2  somewhat involved
    1  not very involved

Intercorrelation among involvement items is .46 (Table 9); however, frequencies and mean indicate viewers have little involvement with the serials (Table 10).

TABLE 8.--Knowledge
         (N = 157)

| Correct Answers Per Show | Frequency | Total Number Correct Answers | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| .0 | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| .1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| .3 | 3 | 2 | 13 |
| .4 | 1 | 3 | 27 |
| .5 | 4 | 4 | 14 |
| .6 | 1 | 5 | 8 |
| .8 | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| 1.0 | 11 | 7 | 1 |
| 1.2 | 1 | 8 | 8 |
| 1.3 | 4 | 9 | 9 |
| 1.4 | 1 | 10 | 4 |
| 1.5 | 6 | 11 | 8 |
| 1.8 | 2 | 12 | 10 |
| 2.0 | 27 | 13 | 2 |
| 2.1 | 1 | 14 | 5 |
| 2.2 | 6 | 15 | 9 |
| 2.3 | 5 | 16 | 4 |
| 2.4 | 4 | 17 | 2 |
| 2.5 | 15 | 18 | 2 |
| 2.6 | 5 | 19 | 2 |
| 2.7 | 7 | 20 | 2 |
| 2.8 | 10 | 21 | 1 |
| 2.9 | 1 | 23 | 1 |
| 3.0 | 32 | 28 | 2 |
|  |  | 30 | 1 |

$\overline{X}$ = 2.1 (s.d. = 8.78)         $\overline{X}$ = 8.6 (s.d. = 9.16)

TABLE 9.--Involvement, Identification, and Interaction (Intercorrelations) (N = 157)

**Involvement**

| | involvement | watching | ID |
|---|---|---|---|
| importance | .82 | .46 | |
| watching | .88 | | |

**Identification**

| | imagine self as character | imagine self in similar situation | ID |
|---|---|---|---|
| be like character | .32 | .22 | .37 |
| imagine self as character | | .41 | .70 |
| imagine self in similar situation | | | .82 |

**Interaction**

| | written to network | talk to characters | worry about characters | INT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| handle problems | .68 | .32 | .26 | .69 |
| written to network | | .80 | .77 | .96 |
| talk to characters | | | .47 | .77 |
| worry about characters | | | | .72 |

Ide

wh

al

ti

In

We

i

i

## Identification

Identification was measured by three questions from which an index was formed (yes = 2, no = 1).

> "Are there any characters you would like to be like?"

> "Do you ever imagine yourself as one of the characters?"

> "Do you ever imagine yourself in a similar situation that a particular character faces?"

The mean for identification was 3.8 (Table 10) although it correlates well with involvement and interaction (Table 9), and very well among its separate items.

## Interaction

Interaction was measured by four questions which were also summed for an index.

> "Do you ever think about telling some characters how to handle their problems?"

> "Have you written to the network or any place about a show?"

> "Do you ever find yourself talking to the characters while the show is on?"

The interaction mean for viewers was 5.5 and interaction correlated well with both involvement and identification.

TABLE 10.--Involvement, Identification, and Interaction
         (Frequency) (N = 157)

| Involvement | $(\overline{X} = 3.5)$ |
|---|---|
| value | frequency |
| 2 | 50 |
| 3 | 31 |
| 4 | 37 |
| 5 | 22 |
| 6 | 14 |

| Identification | $(\overline{X} = 3.8)$ |
|---|---|
| value | frequency |
| 3 | 74 |
| 4 | 47 |
| 5 | 28 |
| 6 | 4 |

| Interaction | $(\overline{X} = 5.5)$ |
|---|---|
| value | frequency |
| 4 | 35 |
| 5 | 44 |
| 6 | 39 |
| 7 | 35 |
| 8 | 0 |

Correlations Among Indices

|  | identification | interaction |
|---|---|---|
| involvement | .37 | .50 |
| identification |  | .36 |

## Functions

The four functions were operationalized as follows and indices were formed for each. Response categories were coded as agree = 3, not sure = 2, disagree = 1.

Boredom--"Watching soap operas helps me to pass the time." "I watch soap operas because I have nothing better to do."

These two items correlate .15. The first correlates insignificantly with the boredom index (r = .09) and the second correlates highly .78. This index correlates with the companionship, escapism, and social utility indices .20, .18, and .55 respectively, indicating that viewers who seek relief from boredom from the serials are also more likely to find social utility in the soaps as well.

Companionship--"I watch soap operas when there's no one to talk to." "Watching soap operas makes me feel less lonely."

These two items correlate .43. The first correlates with the index .26 and the second .23. Companionship correlates with boredom, escapism, and social utility .20, .28, and .32 respectively (Table 11).

TABLE 11.--Functions
         (N = 157)

| Boredom | ($\overline{X}$ = 3.0) | Companionship | ($\overline{X}$ = 4.1) |
|---|---|---|---|
| value | frequency | value | frequency |
| 2 | 78 | 2 | 44 |
| 3 | 8 | 3 | 9 |
| 4 | 52 | 4 | 37 |
| 5 | 9 | 5 | 10 |
| 6 | 6 | 6 | 53 |

| Escapism | ($\overline{X}$ = 3.8) | Social Utility | ($\overline{X}$ = 2.6) |
|---|---|---|---|
| value | frequency | value | frequency |
| 2 | 57 | 1 | 5 |
| 3 | 10 | 2 | 100 |
| 4 | 36 | 3 | 21 |
| 5 | 14 | 4 | 13 |
| 6 | 36 | 5 | 15 |

Correlations Among Indices

|  | companionship | escapism | social utility |
|---|---|---|---|
| boredom | .20 | .18 | .55 |
| companionship |  | .28 | .32 |
| escapism |  |  | .21 |

Escapism--"Watching soap operas helps me to escape from my daily routine." "Watching soap operas takes me away for a little while."

These two items correlate .45 and with the index .29 and .24 respectively. Escapism correlates with boredom, companionship, and social utility .18, .28, and .21 respectively.

Social Utility--"Do you get any useful information from the soap operas you watch?" "Watching soap operas helps me to deal with other people." (The first question was coded as yes = 1 and no = 1; the second as agree = 3, not sure = 2, disagree = 1.)

These two items correlate .41 and .72 and .92 with the index. Social utility correlates with boredom, escapism, and companionship .55, .21, and .32 respectively.

## Analysis

All questionnaire data were transferred to computer cards for analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

In testing the hypotheses, four statistical analyses were used: the Pearson product moment

correlations, the chi-square test, partial correlations, and one-way analysis of variance.

# CHAPTER III

## RESULTS

The results of this study are presented according to each hypothesis.[4]

## Perceived Reality

$H_1$: The higher the amount of viewing, the greater the perceived reality.

Table 12 shows this hypothesis is confirmed. Overall perceived reality scores correlate positively with the number of different shows (.24), the number of episodes (.16), and the number of years the viewer has watched soap operas (.26).

All three viewing measures correlated consistently best with perceived reality measures of life ($r$ = .24, .29, and .28), people ($r$ = .24, .29, and .21), problems ($r$ = .22, .21 and .21), and families ($r$ = .19, .26, and .25).

_____

[4] For viewers (N = 150, ± 5), correlations above .14 are significant at $p$ < .05 and correlations above .18 are significant at $p$ < .01. For nonviewers (N = 115) correlations above .18 are significant at $p$ < .05 and correlations above .20 are significant at $p$ < .01.

46

TABLE 12.--Viewing and Perceived Reality
            (N = 157)

| Perceived Reality | Viewing | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | shows | episodes | years |
| Life | .24 | .29 | .28 |
| Events | .11 | .06 | .12 |
| Places | .04 | .08 | .24 |
| People | .24 | .29 | .21 |
| Families | .19 | .26 | .25 |
| Doctors | -.02 | .03 | .10 |
| Marriages | .10 | .15 | .19 |
| Problems | .22 | .21 | .21 |
| Index | .24 | .16 | .26 |

Edmondson and Rounds (1973) found that the viewer spent seven hours a week with the serials. This study showed viewers watched an average of 3.8 different soaps a week and 14.0 episodes (seven hours), and had watched daytime dramas for over eight years.

Perceived reality was higher for older viewers (r = .25) and viewers of lower education (r = -.18). For nonviewers, perceived reality was higher for older viewers

(r = .34). There were no significant differences across

sex, income, and marital status for viewers and none across

sex, income, marital status, and education for nonviewers.

| Demographics | Perceived Reality Index | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | viewers | nonviewers |
| Sex | -.12 | .17 |
| Age | .25 | .34 |
| Marital Status | -.01 | .08 |
| Income | -.02 | .00 |
| Education | -.18 | -.11 |

## Knowledge

$H_2$: The higher the amount of viewing time,
the more knowledge the viewer will have
about program content.

This hypothesis is true for viewing time measured

by the number of different shows watched correlated with

the total number of correct answers (r = .47); and by the

number of episodes correlated with correct answers per show

and total correct answers (r = .20 and r = .44, respec-

tively. However, the number of years watching soap operas

correlates -.02 with average correct answers and .06 with

total correct answers--both insignificant.

| Demographics | Average Correct Answers Per Show | (r = .49) | Total Correct Answers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | .35 | | .25 |
| Age | .00 | | .00 |
| Marital Status | .07 | | .02 |
| Income | .07 | | -.03 |
| Education | .13 | | .14 |

Viewers who had more knowledge about program content were females with low perceived reality levels. There were no differences in age, income, marital status, and education.

## Involvement, Interaction, and Identification

H$_3$: The higher the amount of viewing, the greater the viewer's involvement, identification, and interaction.

Table 13 shows viewers who have higher amounts of viewing have greater involvement (r = .46, r = .46, and r = .13), identification (r = .19, r = .14, and r = .11), and interaction (r = .21, r = .28, and r = .02). Involvement was greater for lower-income (r = -.16) and lower-educated viewers (r = -.17). Identification was greater among males (r = -.15), single viewers (r = -.19), and viewers (r = -.25). Interaction was greater for single viewers (r = -.23), and lower-income viewers (r = -.16).

TABLE 13.--Viewing and Involvement, Interaction, and
Identification
(N = 157)

|  | Involvement | Interaction | Identification |
|---|---|---|---|
| Shows | .46 | .21 | .19 |
| Episodes | .46 | .28 | .14 |
| Years | .13 | .02 | .11 |

| Demographics | Involvement | Interaction | Identification |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | .02 | -.03 | -.16 |
| Age | -.03 | -.14 | -.09 |
| Marital Status | -.17 | -.24 | -.14 |
| Income | .00 | -.17 | -.22 |
| Education | -.17 | -.10 | -.10 |

Boredom, Companionship,
Escapism, and Social Utility

$H_4$: The higher the amount of viewing, the
more functions watching soap operas
will satisfy.

Viewers with higher amounts of viewing found grat-
ification for social utility (r = .20, .23, and .15), but
not for companionship, boredom, and escapism (Table 14).
Only less-educated viewers sought relief from boredom
through soap operas (r = -.25) and found social utility
in the soaps (r = -.25). Escapism seekers were older
(r = .31) and married (r = .18).

TABLE 14.--Viewing and Functions
       (N = 157)

|  | Boredom | Companionship | Escapism | Social Utility |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shows | .03 | -.02 | .11 | .20 |
| Episodes | .02 | -.03 | .13 | .23 |
| Years | .03 | .12 | .11 | .15 |

| Demographics | Boredom | Companionship | Escapism | Social Utility |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | -.10 | -.02 | -.03 | -.08 |
| Age | .03 | .06 | .32 | .15 |
| Marital Status | -.12 | .04 | .18 | .07 |
| Income | -.04 | -.03 | .05 | .04 |
| Education | -.25 | .04 | -.08 | -.25 |

Perceived Reality Correlations

Viewers were divided into two groups according to their perceived reality scores (range: eight to 24). High PRTV viewers (N = 81) were those whose scores were between 16 and 24 (Table 15). Low PRTV viewers (N = 76) were those whose scores were for eight through 15.

Viewers with high perceived reality of television had more knowledge of soap operas in terms of correct answers per show (r = .18 and .25) than did viewers with low perceived reality of television (r = .11 and .23). However, the latter group had better correlations between

TABLE 15.--High and Low PRTV
          (N = 157)

|  | Shows | | Episodes | | Years | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Hi PRTV | Lo PRTV | Hi | Low | Hi | Low |
| **Knowledge** | | | | | | |
| answers per show | .18 | .11 | .25 | .23 | .09 | -.02 |
| total correct | .31 | .77 | .29 | .72 | .02 | .15 |
| **Involvement** | .48 | .43 | .57 | .34 | .15 | .10 |
| **Identification** | .11 | .34 | .06 | .28 | .14 | .14 |
| **Interaction** | .23 | .28 | .27 | .28 | .01 | .14 |
| **Boredom** | .10 | -.07 | .08 | -.06 | .09 | -.10 |
| **Companionship** | .02 | .01 | .15 | -.14 | .19 | .08 |
| **Escapism** | .08 | .16 | .20 | .07 | .11 | .09 |
| **Social Utility** | .25 | .13 | .31 | .12 | .23 | .01 |

viewing and total correct answers across all shows with
$r = .77$ and .72 compared to $r = .31$ and .29 for the former
group.

High PRTV viewers found more involvement ($r = .48$,
.57, and .15), interaction ($r = .23$ and .27), companionship
($r = .15$ and .19), and social utility ($r = .25$, .31, and
.23) in soap operas. Low PRTV viewers found more identi-
fication ($r = .34$, .28, and .14). Boredom was insignifi-
cant for both groups while escapism was significant with
episodes ($r = .20$) for high PRTV viewers and with shows
for low PRTV viewers.

TABLE 16.—Perceived Reality Correlations (Shows-Episodes)
(N = 157)

| | Shows | | | Episodes | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Overall | Hi PRTV | Lo PRTV | Overall | Hi PRTV | Lo PRTV |
| Knowledge answers per show | .10 | .18 | .11 | .20 | .25 | .23 |
| total correct answers | .47 | .31 | .77 | .44 | .29 | .72 |
| Involvement | .46 | .48 | .43 | .46 | .57 | .34 |
| Identification | .19 | .11 | .34 | .14 | .06 | .28 |
| Interaction | .25 | .23 | .28 | .25 | .27 | .28 |
| Boredom | .03 | .10 | -.07 | .02 | .08 | -.06 |
| Companionship | -.02 | .02 | .01 | .12 | .15 | -.14 |
| Escapism | .11 | .08 | .16 | .11 | .20 | .07 |
| Social Utility | .20 | .25 | .13 | .15 | .31 | .12 |

This analysis provides support for perceived reality of television as an intervening variable. Respondents with greater amounts of viewing had higher perceived reality scores; high PRTV viewers found more involvement, companionship, and social utility in the serials. Thus, perceived reality mediates the relationship between the independent variable and four of the dependent variables.

## Partial Correlations

Variables examined were amount of viewing (separately for shows, episodes, and years), perceived reality (index), involvement, identification, interaction, boredom, companionship, escapism, and social utility. Table 17 represents analysis done by correlating viewing and perceived reality and partialing out the dependent variable. Table 18 represents analysis done by correlating viewing time with the dependent variable and partialing out perceived reality.

Table 17 indicates a fairly strong relationship between viewing and perceived reality, and that the other dependent variables have little effect on this relationship.

TABLE 17.--Partial Correlations
       (Viewing by Perceived Reality)
       (N = 157)

| Control Variables | Shows | Episodes | Years |
|---|---|---|---|
| Involvement | .26 | .05 | .33 |
| Identification | .31 | .14 | .25 |
| Interaction | .24 | .16 | .26 |
| Boredom | .24 | .16 | .27 |
| Companionship | .24 | .16 | .26 |
| Escapism | .23 | .14 | .25 |
| Social Utility | .19 | .09 | .23 |

TABLE 18.--Partial Correlations
       (Viewing by Dependent Variables, Controlling
       for Perceived Reality)
       (N = 157)

| | Shows | Episodes | Years |
|---|---|---|---|
| Involvement | .40 | .16 | .05 |
| Identification | .04 | .12 | .44 |
| Interaction | .09 | .07 | .05 |
| Boredom | -.04 | .06 | .07 |
| Companionship | -.04 | .11 | -.37 |
| Escapism | .10 | .19 | .11 |
| Social Utility | .13 | .19 | .11 |

Table 18 shows that perceived reality mediates the relationship between (1) viewing (years) and involvement; (2) viewing (shows and episodes) and identification; (3) viewing (shows, episodes, years) and interaction; (4) viewing (shows, episodes, years) and boredom; (5) viewing (shows and episodes) and companionship; (6) viewing (shows and years) and escapism; and (7) viewing (shows and years) and social utility. This analysis refers to the correlation between viewing time and each dependent variable after the portion in both that can be predicted from perceived reality has been eliminated. Thus, the above were no longer significantly correlated when perceived reality was removed.

As an intervening variable, perceived reality shows that as the amount of viewing time increases, and perceived reality increases, the viewer will have (1) more interaction with soap opera characters and content, and (2) more relief from boredom.

## One-Way Analysis of Variance

A one-way analysis of variance was done with two measures of viewing, the number of shows and the number of

episodes watched. Viewing was divided into low (1-2 shows or 1-7 episodes), medium (3-5 shows or 8-16 episodes), and high (6 or more shows or 17 or more episodes).

Table C1 (Appendix C) shows that among respondents who watched a greater number of different shows, perceived reality, knowledge of soap operas content, involvement, identification, interaction, escapism, and social utility were higher. There were no significant differences across boredom and companionship.

Table C2 (Appendix C) shows that among respondents who watched a higher number of episodes, perceived reality, knowledge, involvement, interaction, and social utility were higher. Relief from boredom was the same for medium and high viewers; identification was higher for medium viewers, and companionship was higher for low viewers.

TABLE 19.--Overall Correlations
(N = 157)

| | Shows | Episodes | Years |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Involvement** | | | |
| zero-order correlation | .46 | .46 | .13 |
| hi PRTV | .48 | .57 | - |
| lo PRTV | .43 | .34 | - |
| controlling PRTV | .40 | .16 | .05 |
| (perceived reality x involvement, r = .31) | | | |
| **Identification** | | | |
| zero-order correlation | .19 | .14 | .11 |
| hi PRTV | .11 | .06 | - |
| lo PRTV | .34 | .28 | - |
| controlling PRTV | .07 | .12 | .44 |
| (perceived reality x identification, r = .17) | | | |
| **Interaction** | | | |
| zero-order correlation | .21 | .25 | .02 |
| hi PRTV | .23 | .27 | - |
| lo PRTV | .28 | .28 | - |
| controlling PRTV | .09 | .07 | .05 |
| (perceived reality x interaction, r = .18) | | | |

59

TABLE 19.--(cont'd.)

| | Shows | Episodes | Years |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Boredom** | | | |
| zero-order correlation | .03 | .02 | .03 |
| hi PRTV | .10 | .08 | — |
| lo PRTV | -.07 | -.06 | — |
| controlling PRTV | -.04 | .06 | .07 |
| (perceived reality x boredom, r = .34) | | | |
| **Companionship** | | | |
| zero-order correlation | -.02 | -.03 | .12 |
| hi PRTV | .02 | .15 | — |
| lo PRTV | .01 | -.14 | — |
| controlling PRTV | -.04 | .11 | -.37 |
| (perceived reality x companionship, r = .07) | | | |
| **Escapism** | | | |
| zero-order correlation | .11 | .13 | .11 |
| hi PRTV | .08 | .20 | — |
| lo PRTV | .16 | .07 | — |
| controlling PRTV | .10 | .19 | .11 |
| (perceived reality x escapism, r = .18) | | | |
| **Social Utility** | | | |
| zero-order correlation | .20 | .23 | .15 |
| hi PRTV | .25 | .31 | — |
| lo PRTV | .13 | .12 | — |
| controlling PRTV | .13 | .19 | .11 |
| (perceived reality x social utility, r = .34) | | | |

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine viewers'
and nonviewers' perceptions of the reality of soap opera
characters and content, to explore viewers' degree of
interaction, involvement, and identification with soap
operas, and to identify functions satisfied by watching
daytime serials.

Four original hypotheses were tested concerning the
relationship between amount of viewing time and perceived
reality, knowledge of serial content, involvement, identi-
fication, interaction, boredom, companionship, escapism,
and social utility. Correlations between the nine depen-
dent variables and demographic variables (sex, age, marital
status, and income) were also examined.

The Summary of Obtained Effects shows that hy-
potheses were confirmed for the following criterion vari-
ables. As the amount of viewing increased, (1) perceived
reality increased, (2) knowledge of soap opera content

increased, (3) involvement increased, (4) identification increased, (5) interaction increased, and (6) social utility increased.

Hypotheses for companionship, relief of boredom, and escapism were not confirmed. This indicates that the serials mainly provide information and advice that is useful to the viewer in helping him/her to deal with other people.

Perceived reality mediated only the relationships between viewing and interaction with partial correlation of $r$ = .09, .07, and .05 (viewing and interaction correlate .21, .28, and .02); and viewing and boredom with partial correlations of $r$ = -.04, .06, and .07 (viewing and boredom correlate insignificantly). Therefore, viewers do not depend upon media realism before becoming involved with soap opera characters and the events in their lives.

Respondents were asked to indicate their favorite soap opera and the overwhelming choice was "The Young and the Restless," a CBS production that first aired two years ago. This is the only serial filmed in Hollywood (the rest are made in New York) and it is the costliest soap produced. (Soap operas average a $60,000 weekly cost while CBS puts out $70,000 for this serial.) Fifty-six percent
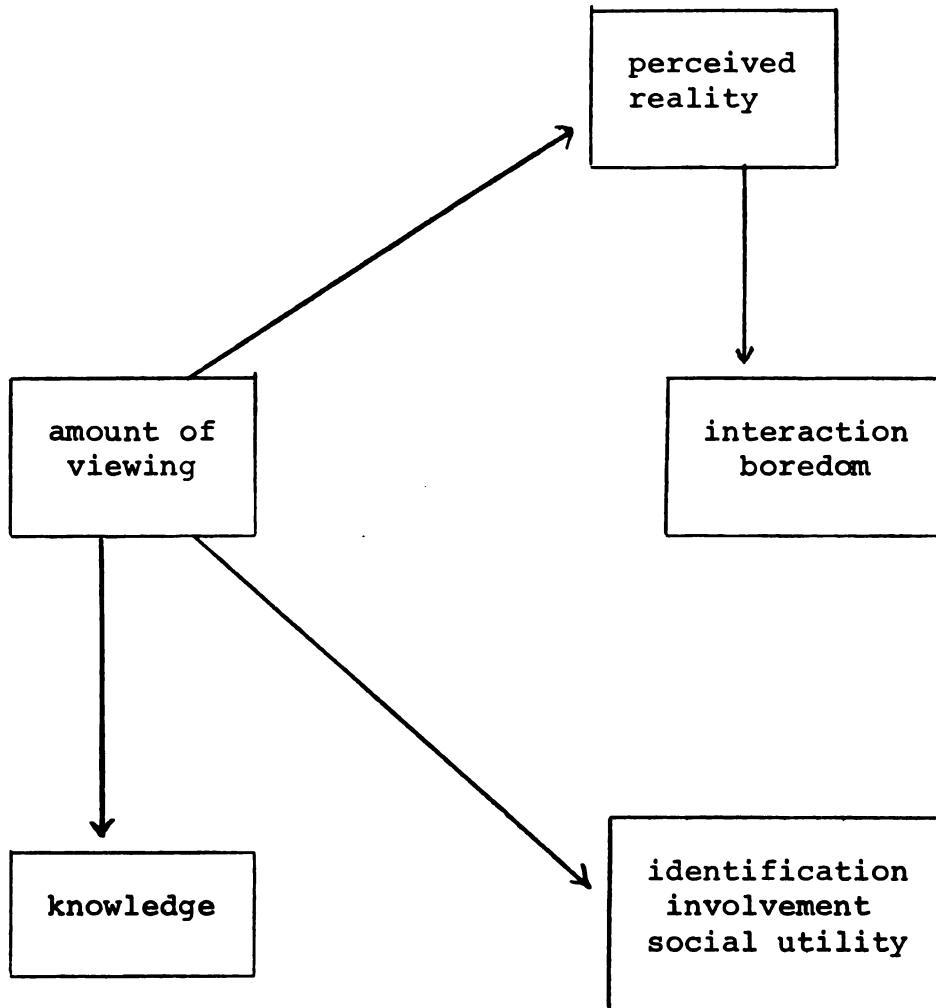
Summary of Obtained Effects


(Note:  Arrows only indicate that a correlation exists
        between variables.)

of the respondents chose "The Young and the Restless" over
the other 13 serials broadcast daily and 71 per cent watch
it each week (Appendix D).

What makes this soap opera so popular?  Fifty-three
per cent of this sample were below 30 years of age.  "The
Young and the Restless" has a cast mainly composed of young
people between the ages of 18 and 30 and most of the sub-
plots centered around their problems.  This serial has been
most prolific in demonstrating physical affection between
persons.  Intimate scenes are becoming more common to the
soaps now, but in the sixties, viewers were shocked to see
that Joanne Tate and her husband on "Search for Tomorrow"
in the same bed.

This study demonstrates that soap operas viewing
is no longer a common practice for only housewives or other
persons confined to the home during the day.  There is no
longer a "typical viewer."  People of all income levels
and of all educational backgrounds watch the soaps.  Why?
From habit.  Because their friends or relatives watch them.
Because the serials are the only thing on television during
the day.  Or simply because the soaps stimulate curiosity
and interest about other people's lives and problems that
let the viewer forget his/her own troubles.

(Nielsen ratings for the serials are also in Appendix D.)

## Study Weaknesses

Weaknesses in this study lay in the confined measures of perceived reality and gratifications. Respondents were offered simply a three-foil choice of "agree, disagree, not sure." A wider spectrum for responses was needed for a more discriminatory measure. For example:

"The same things that happen to people on soap operas happen to people in real life."

____ strongly agree
____ agree
____ not sure
____ disagree
____ strongly disagree

"Watching soap operas helps me to deal with other people."

____ strongly agree
____ agree
____ not sure
____ disagree
____ strongly disagree

Such operationalizations would have allowed for a finer discrimination of viewers' and nonviewers' level of perceived reality.

Directions for Future Research

There has been no consistent mode of studies on
soap operas. It is a much unexplored field with vast po-
tential. The only sample study of viewers was done by
Herzog over thirty years ago. The Katzman study was solely
a content analysis of characters and content. The other
so-called studies and articles were simply discussions by
social scientists about some aspect of the serials.

Millions of viewers subscribe to the literature of
one electronic medium. This vast addiction is worth in-
vestigating to find what gratifications come from a daily
dose of soaps, and how similar to real life viewers per-
ceive serial content and characters to be.

In January, 1975, NBC expanded "Another World" to
60 minutes. The network found that it is less expensive to
produce one soap for an hour than to produce two 30-minute
serials. This practice is a new trend worth investigating.
Because of success with the hour-long serial, in April, NBC
cancelled "How to Survive a Marriage" to expand "Days of
Our Lives" to an hour, and CBS plans to stretch "Search for
Tomorrow" and "The Guiding Light" to 45 minutes. What is
viewer reaction to the new serial length? Is the hour to

become the standard length for the daytime drama?  Will
viewers frequent the soaps less because of their extended
length?

The Herzog study examined only women who were con-
fined to the home with easy access to the soaps.  This
study found a large number of teenagers and young adults
(men and women) who were avid soap opera fans.  This is an
audience that has not been researched independently about
soaps and deserves to be.

Perceived reality of soap operas is a variable that
could be researched again.  A questionnaire completed by
the respondent could contain more in-depth questions and
provide for better measure of media realism.

A possible study would be to examine the same vari-
ables in this study among teenage viewers and viewers in
their forties and older and to contrast the results.  View-
ing and age correlated .03 for shows and .20 for episodes.
Age is insignificantly related to the number of different
shows viewed, but correlated more positively with episodes
because the older viewers have more time during the week
to watch while younger viewers have more outside activ-
ities, considering this study was done in the summer, in
the middle of August, the height of vacation season.

This study itself could and should be repeated.
One basic criterion for research is that it can be replicated and this study owes such clarification to the serials.
Viewer involvement and gratifications should be more deeply explored.

Prime time programming, news telecasts, cartoons, and children's programming are all media literature that have been researched for violence, news effects, information gain, and other concepts. The same courtesy and recognition should be extended to the serials.

## New Hypotheses

Four new questions for future research are presented here from which two new hypotheses are tested.

"Who is your favorite soap opera character?"

"Is this person just like someone you know in real life?"

    \_\_\_ strongly agree
    \_\_\_ agree
    \_\_\_ not sure
    \_\_\_ disagree
    \_\_\_ strongly disagree

"Which soap opera character do you like the least?"

"Is this person just like someone you know in real life?"

      \_\_\_ strongly agree
      \_\_\_ agree
      \_\_\_ not sure
      \_\_\_ disagree
      \_\_\_ strongly disagree

Hypothesis: Perceived reality will be greater for the viewer's favorite character than for the character the viewers likes the least.

"Is there any character who reminds you of yourself?"

"If so, who?"

"Do you think this person behaves very much like you do?"

      \_\_\_ strongly agree
      \_\_\_ agree
      \_\_\_ not sure
      \_\_\_ disagree
      \_\_\_ strongly disagree

"Is there any character who least reminds you of yourself?"

"If so, who?"

"Do you think this person behaves very much like you do?"

      \_\_\_ strongly agree
      \_\_\_ agree
      \_\_\_ not sure
      \_\_\_ disagree
      \_\_\_ strongly disagree

Hypothesis:  Perceived reality will be greater

for a character who reminds the viewer of him/

herself.

## Postscript

The grandmother of soap-opera scriptwriters is

74-year-old Irna Phillips.  She has been writing scripts

for 45 years, and like Homer and Shakespeare, is considered

a bard of the mythology of her times.

Mythology is the literature created by the nameless

and the illiterate (which is how some critics classify soap

opera writers), passed down from generation to generation

and altered within each.  Soap operas are American myth-

ology.  The Greeks followed the escapades of the gods and

goddesses of Olympus, recorded by the likes of Homer--the

Americans follow the heroes and heroines of the daily day-

time dramas created by the likes of Ms. Phillips.

APPENDIX A

SOAP OPERA QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A


Mitzi Bond
Soap opera questionnaire
August 1974


Date: _____ ID number: _____

        Hello, I'm _____ from the Department of
Communication at Michigan State University. We're doing a
study on daytime television and if I may have a few minutes
of your time, I'd like to ask you a few questions.

1. I will read a list of programs that are on television
   during the day. Please tell me which of the following
   shows you watch and about how many days a week you
   watch them.

| | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | Love of Life | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 02 | The Young and the Restless | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 03 | Search for Tomorrow | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 04 | Somerset | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 05 | All My Children | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 06 | As the World Turns | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 07 | The Guiding Light | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 08 | Days of Our Lives | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 09 | The Edge of Night | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 10 | The Doctors | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 11 | Another World | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 12 | General Hospital | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 13 | How To Survive a Marriage | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |
| 14 | One Life to Live | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ | __ |

70

Total number of shows viewed per week: _____

Total number of days viewed per week: _____

2. Which is your favorite soap opera?

I have a few statements here on which I would like your opinion. Please tell me if you agree, disagree, or are not sure about whether the statement is true.

3. Soap operas on TV tell about life the way it really is.

___ agree

___ not sure

___ disagree

4. The same things that happen to people on soap operas happen to people in real life.

___ agree

___ not sure

___ disagree

5. The places I see in soap operas are just like places in real life.

___ agree

___ not sure

___ disagree

6. People in soap operas are just like people in real life.

___ agree

___ not sure

___ disagree

7. Families on soap operas are just like families in real life.

      ___ agree

      ___ not sure

      ___ disagree

8. Doctors on soap operas are just like doctors in real life.

      ___ agree

      ___ not sure

      ___ disagree

9. Marriages on soap operas are just like marriages in real life.

      ___ agree

      ___ not sure

      ___ disagree

10. Problems people have in soap operas are just like problems people have in real life.

      ___ agree

      ___ not sure

      ___ disagree

11. Which soap opera character most reminds you of yourself?


I have a few questions to ask you about the soap operas you watch. (Only ask respondent questions about soap operas he/she watches. Refer to page 1.)

12. 01 Love of Life

    1. With whom is Jamie Rollins having an affair?

    2. Who was responsible for the attempts on Bruce and Vanessa Sterling's lives?

    3. What happened to Dan and Rebecca Phillips?

                    correct answers _____

13. 02 The Young and the Restless

    1. Who is the father of Sally McGuire's baby?

    2. Who is responsible for Leslie Brooks' emotional breakdown?

    3. What is Brad Elliot's real profession?

                    correct answers _____

14. 03 Search for Tomorrow

    1. Who is responsible for Doug Martin's car accident?

    2. With whom is Scott Phillips having an affair?

    3. To whom is Eunice Martin married?

                    correct answers _____

15. 04 Somerset

    1. Who did Tony Cooper marry?

    2. Who headed the syndicate operation in Somerset to try and gain ownership of Delaney Brands?

    3. Who shot Andrea Moore?

                    correct answers _____

16.  05  All My Children

    1.  Who is the father of Tara Martin Tyler's son Phillip?

    2.  Who killed Jason Maxwell?

    3.  Why did Ann Martin abruptly leave Pine Valley?

              correct answers _____

17.  06  As the World Turns

    1.  Who has custody of Emily Stewart?

    2.  Who was the father of Kim Dixon's child?

    3.  What is wrong with Jennifer Hughes?

              correct answers _____

18.  07  The Guiding Light

    1.  Who is Freddie Bauer's father?

    2.  Who killed Charlotte Bauer?

    3.  How many husbands has Leslie Bauer had?

              correct answers _____

19.  08  Days of Our Lives

    1.  Who is Dr. Tom Horton's daughter-in-law?

    2.  Who is Julie Bannings' grandfather?

    3.  How many children do Tom and Alice Horton have?

              correct answers _____

20. 09 The Edge of Night

    1. Who was the intended victim when Nicole Drake was killed?

    2. Who killed Babs Macelli?

    3. Who is working as an undercover agent in the syndicate for the Monticello police?

                    correct answers   _____

21. 10 The Doctors

    1. Who killed Dr. John Morrison?

    2. Who is Dr. Althea Davis' most recent husband?

    3. Who is Ann Larimer's former fiancee?

                    correct answers   _____

22. 11 Another World

    1. Who caused Alice Frame's emotional breakdown?

    2. To whom was Rachael Frame married when Jamie was born?

    3. Why was Steven Frame sent to prison?

                    correct answers   _____

23. 12 General Hospital

    1. Who is the father of Diana Taylor's baby?

    2. With whom did Teddy Holmes elope?

    3. Who married Dr. James Hobart after his car accident?

                    correct answers   _____

24.  13  How to Survive a Marriage

1.  How did David Bachman die?

2.  For whom did Larry Kirby leave his wife Chris?

3.  What is Dr. Julie Franklin's profession?

correct answers _____

25.  14  One Life to Live

1.  Who is the father of the child Cathy Craig is carrying?

2.  Why did Victoria Burke divorce her second husband, Steve Burke?

3.  With whom is Vince Wolek in love?

correct answers _____

Total number of correct answers (12-25): _____

26.  How long have you been watching soap operas?

27.  What is your favorite soap opera?
Why?

28.  Who are your favorite soap opera people?
Why?

29.  Which people do you like least?
Why?

30.  Are there any character(s) you would like to be like?
Who?

31.  Do you ever emagine yourself as one of the characters?
If so, which ones?

32. Do you ever imagine yourself in a similar situation that a particular character faces?

    Please give an example.

33. Do you talk about the soaps with

    friends              ____ yes ____ no

    relatives            ____ yes ____ no

    children             ____ yes ____ no

    spouse               ____ yes ____ no

    anyone else          ____ yes ____ no

34. Why do you watch soap operas?

    ____ to learn

    ____ to escape

    ____ to relax

    ____ to be aroused

    ____ as a habit

    ____ to pass time

    ____ for companionship

    ____ for entertainment

35. Why did you first begin to watch soap operas?

36. Why do you watch the particular soaps that you do?

37. Do you get any useful information from the soap operas you watch?

38. How is it useful to you?

39. Was the information you got socially useful?

40. Did any information or opinions you heard on soap operas change your opinions about any topic or issue? (Ask for examples.)

41. Do you sit and watch the stories or do you have the TV on while you do other things?

    \_\_\_\_ sit and watch stories

    \_\_\_\_ have TV on

    \_\_\_\_ other (specify:        )


I have a few more statements here on which I would like your opinion. Please tell me if you agree, disagree, or are not sure about whether the statement is true.

42. Watching soap operas helps me to pass the time.

    \_\_\_\_ agree

    \_\_\_\_ not sure

    \_\_\_\_ disagree

43. Watching soap operas helps me to escape from my daily routine.

    \_\_\_\_ agree

    \_\_\_\_ not sure

    \_\_\_\_ disagree

44. Watching soap operas helps me to learn more about people.

    \_\_\_\_ agree

    \_\_\_\_ not sure

    \_\_\_\_ disagree

45. I watch soap operas because I have nothing better to do.

    \_\_\_\_ agree

    \_\_\_\_ not sure

    \_\_\_\_ disagree

46. Watching soap operas helps me to deal with my own problems.

    \_\_\_\_ agree

    \_\_\_\_ not sure

    \_\_\_\_ disagree

47. Watching soap operas entertains me.

    \_\_\_\_ agree

    \_\_\_\_ not sure

    \_\_\_\_ disagree

48. Sex of respondent: \_\_\_\_ male      \_\_\_\_ female

49. What is your age? _____

50. What is your marital status?

    \_\_\_\_ single      \_\_\_\_ married

51. What is the approximate income of the head of your household?

    \_\_\_\_ student

    \_\_\_\_ below $5000

    \_\_\_\_ $5000-$10,000

    \_\_\_\_ $10,000-$15,000

    \_\_\_\_ $15,000-$20,000

    \_\_\_\_ over $20,000

52. What was the last grade of school you completed?

    \_\_\_\_ below high school

    \_\_\_\_ completed high school

    \_\_\_\_ some college

    \_\_\_\_ college degree

    \_\_\_\_ graduate or professional degree

APPENDIX B

SOAP OPERA STUDY

Mitzi Bond
Soap Opera Study
August 1974


Interviewer:_____ ID number:_____

Date:_____ Telephone number:_____

      Hello, I'm _____ from the Department of Communication
at Michigan State University. We're doing a study on daytime televi-
sion and if I may have a few minutes of your time, I'd like to ask you
a few questions.

1.  I will read a list of programs that are on television during the
day. Please tell me which of the following shows you watch and how
many days a week you watch each one.

| | | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | Love of Life | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 02 | The Young and the Restless | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 03 | Search for Tomorrow | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 04 | Somerset | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 05 | All My Children | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 06 | As the World Turns | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 07 | The Guiding Light | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 08 | Days of Our Lives | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 09 | The Edge of Night | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 10 | The Doctors | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 11 | Another World | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 12 | General Hospital | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 13 | How to Survive a Marriage | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 14 | One Life to Live | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |

Number of different shows viewed per week:_____

Total number of episodes viewed per week:_____

I have a few statements here on which I would like your opinion.
Please tell me if you agree, disagree, or are not sure about each
statement.

2. Soap operas on TV tell about life the way it really is.

     __3__ agree
     __2__ not sure
     __1__ disagree

3. The same things that happen to people on soap operas happen to
people in real life.

     __3__ agree
     __2__ not sure
     __1__ disagree

4. The places I see in soap operas are just like places in real life.

     __3__ agree
     __2__ not sure
     __1__ disagree

5. People in soap operas are just like people in real life.

     __3__ agree
     __2__ not sure
     __1__ disagree

6. Families on soap operas are just like families in real life.

     __3__ agree
     __2__ not sure
     __1__ disagree

7. Doctors on soap operas are just like doctors in real life.

     __3__ agree
     __2__ not sure
     __1__ disagree

8. Marriages on soap operas are just like marriages in real life.

       __3__ agree
       __2__ not sure
       __1__ disagree

9. Problems people have in soap operas are just like problems people have in real life.

       __3__ agree
       __2__ not sure
       __1__ disagree

10. Is there any soap opera character who reminds you of yourself?

       __3__ agree
       __2__ not sure
       __1__ disagree


I have a few questions to ask you about the soap operas you watch. (Only ask respondent questions about soap operas he/she watches. Refer to page 1.)

11. __01 Love of Life__

   1. With whom is Jamie Rollins having an affair?

     _____

   2. Who was responsible for the attempts on Bruce and Vanessa Sterling's lives?

     _____

   3. What happened to Dan and Rebecca Phillips?

     _____

12. 02 The Young and the Restless

1. Who is the father of Sally McGuire's baby?

_____

2. Who is responsible for Leslie Brooks' emotional breakdown?

_____

3. What is Brad Elliot's real profession?

_____

13. 03 Search for Tomorrow

1. Who is responsible for Doug Martin's car accident?

_____

2. With whom is Scott Phillips having an affair?

_____

3. To whom is Eunice Martin now married?

_____

14. 04 Somerset

1. Who did Tony Cooper marry?

_____

2. Who headed the syndicate operation in Somerset which tried to get ownership of Delaney Brands?

_____

3. Who shot Andrea Moore?

_____

15. <u>05  All My Children</u>

    1.  Who is the father of Tara Martin Tyler's son Phillip?

    _____

    2.  Who killed Jason Maxwell?

    _____

    3.  Why did Ann Martin abruptly leave Pine Valley?

    _____

16. <u>06  As the World Turns</u>

    1.  Who has custody of Emily Stewart?

    _____

    2.  Who was the father of Kim Dixon's child?

    _____

    3.  What is wrong with Jennifer Hughes?

    _____

17. <u>07  The Guiding Light</u>

    1.  Who is Freddie Bauer's father?

    _____

    2.  Who killed Charlotte Bauer?

    _____

    3.  How many husbands has Leslie Bauer had?

    _____

18. **08  Days of Our Lives**

   1.  Who is Dr. Tom Horton's daughter-in-law?

---

   2.  Who is Julie Bannings' grandfather?

---

   3.  How many children do Tom and Alice Horton have?

---

19. **09  The Edge of Night**

   1.  Who was the intended victim when Nicole Drake was killed?

---

   2.  Who killed Babs Macelli?

---

   3.  Who is working as an undercover agent in the syndicate for the Monticello police?

---

20. **10  The Doctors**

   1.  Who killed Dr. John Morrison?

---

   2.  Who is Dr. Althea Davis' most recent husband?

---

   3.  Who is Ann Larimer's former fiancee?

---

21. <u>11   Another World</u>

1.  Who caused Alice Frame's emotional breakdown?

    _____

2.  To whom was Rachael Frame married when Jamie was born?

    _____

3.  Why was Steven Frame sent to prison?

    _____

22. <u>12   General Hospital</u>

1.  Who is the father of Diana Taylor's baby?

    _____

2.  With whom did Teddy Holmes elope?

    _____

3.  Who married Dr. James Hobart after his car accident?

    _____

23. <u>13   How to Survive a Marriage</u>

1.  How did David Bachman die?

    _____

2.  For whom did Larry Kirby leave his wife Chris?

    _____

3.  What is Dr. Julie Franklin's profession?

    _____

24. <u>14   One Life to Live</u>

   1.  Who is the father of the child Cathy Craig is carrying?

     _____

   2.  Why did Victoria Burke divorce her second husband, Steve Burke?

     _____

   3.  With whom is Vince Wolek in love?

     _____

   Number of correct answers per show (11-24): _____

25.  How long have you been watching soap operas?

     _____ years

26.  What is your favorite soap opera? (Only one please.)

     _____

27.  How important are the soap operas to you would you say?

     __3__ very important
     __2__ somewhat important
     __1__ not very important

28.  How involved do you get watching your favorite soap opera?

     __3__ very involved
     __2__ somewhat involved
     __1__ not very involved

29.  Are there any characters you would like to be like?

     __2__ Yes              __1__ No

30.  Do you ever imagine yourself as one of the characters?

     __2__ Yes              __1__ No

31. Do you ever imagine yourself in a similar situation that a particular character faces?

    __2__ Yes                  __1__ No

32. Do you ever think about telling some characters how to handle their problems?

    __2__ Yes                  __1__ No

33. Have you written to the network or any place about a show?

    __2__ Yes                  __1__ No

34. Do you ever find yourself talking to the characters while the show is on?

    __2__ Yes                  __1__ No

35. Do you ever worry about the characters in between episodes?

    __2__ Yes                  __1__ NO

Total number of yeses (32-35): _____

36. Why did you first begin to watch soap operas?

_____

37. Why do you watch the particular soaps that you do?

_____

38. Do you get any useful information from the soap operas you watch?

    __2__ Yes                  __1__ No

39. How is it useful to you?

_____

40. When your stories are on, do you give them full attention or do you do other things at the same time?

        __3__ full attention
        __2__ some of both
        __1__ do other things

I have a few more statements here on which I would like your opinion. Please tell me if you agree, disagree, or are not sure about whether the statement is true.

41. Watching soap operas helps me to pass the time.

    __3__ agree
    __2__ not sure
    __1__ disagree

42. Watching soap operas helps me to escape from my daily routine.

    __3__ agree
    __2__ not sure
    __1__ disagree

43. I watch soap operas because I have nothing better to do.

    __3__ agree
    __2__ not sure
    __1__ disagree

44. Watching soap operas helps me to deal with other people.

    __3__ agree
    __2__ not sure
    __1__ disagree

45. Watching soap operas takes me away for a little while.

    __3__ agree
    __2__ not sure
    __1__ disagree

46. I watch soap operas when there's no one to talk to.

    __3__ agree
    __2__ not sure
    __1__ disagree

47. Watching soap operas make me feel less lonely.

    __3__ agree
    __2__ not sure
    __1__ disagree

48. Record sex of respondent:   __1__ male     __2__ female

Just a few final questions

49. What is your age? _____

50. Are you single or married?  __1__ single      __2__ married

51. What is the approximate yearly income of the head of your household?

    __1__ student
    __2__ below $5000
    __3__ $5000-$10,000
    __4__ $10,000-$15,000
    __5__ $15,000-$20,000
    __6__ over $20,000
    __7__ retired

52. What was the last grade of school you completed?

    __1__ below high school
    __2__ completed high school
    __3__ some college
    __4__ college degree
    __5__ graduate or professional degree


THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR HELPING ME!

APPENDIX C

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

TABLE C1.--One-Way Analysis of Variance
            (Viewing-Shows)
            (N = 157)

| | Low (1-2) | Medium (3-5) | High (6+) | F | P < | df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived Reality | 14.3 | 16.2 | 16.7 | 3.987 | .021 | 2/152 |
| Knowledge answers per show | 2.1 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 1.864 | .159 | 2/151 |
| total correct answers | 4.8 | 7.7 | 14.9 | 19.281 | .001 | 2/152 |
| Involvement | 2.8 | 3.7 | 4.1 | 16.736 | .001 | 2/149 |
| Identification | 3.5 | 3.8 | 4.0 | 3.280 | .040 | 2/148 |
| Interaction | 5.3 | 5.5 | 5.8 | 2.786 | .065 | 2/148 |
| Companionship | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.0 | .384 | .682 | 2/149 |
| Boredom | 3.1 | 3.1 | 3.1 | .014 | .986 | 2/149 |
| Escapism | 3.6 | 3.6 | 4.1 | 1.290 | .278 | 2/149 |
| Social Utility | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 2.988 | .053 | 2/149 |

TABLE C2.--One-Way Analysis of Variance
            (Viewing-Episodes)
            (N = 154)

| | Low (1-7) | Medium (8-16) | High (17+) | F | P < | df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived Reality | 14.4 | 15.5 | 16.9 | 3.812 | .024 | 2/152 |
| Knowledge answers per show | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 2.335 | .100 | 2/151 |
| total correct answers | 5.0 | 6.9 | 13.9 | 16.640 | .001 | 2/152 |
| Involvement | 2.7 | 3.5 | 4.3 | 22.809 | .001 | 2/149 |
| Identification | 3.5 | 4.0 | 3.8 | 3.692 | .027 | 2/148 |
| Interaction | 5.3 | 5.4 | 5.8 | 3.212 | .043 | 2/148 |
| Companionship | 4.2 | 4.1 | 4.1 | .051 | .950 | 2/149 |
| Boredom | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.1 | .083 | .921 | 2/149 |
| Escapism | 3.7 | 3.4 | 4.2 | 3.410 | .036 | 2/149 |
| Social Utility | 2.3 | 2.6 | 2.8 | 3.928 | .022 | 2/149 |

APPENDIX D

CURRENT SOAP OPERAS (JANUARY, 1975)

1973 NIELSEN SOAP OPERA RATINGS

TABLE D1.--Current Soap Operas
(January, 1975)

| Serial | Premiere Date | Network | Percentage of Sample Viewers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Search for Tomorrow | 3 Sept. 1951 | CBS | 37% |
| Love of Life | 24 Sept. 1951 | CBS | 39% |
| The Guiding Light | 30 June 1952 | CBS | 36% |
| As The World Turns | 2 April 1956 | CBS | 54% |
| The Edge of Night | 2 April 1956 | CBS | 50% |
| General Hospital | 1 April 1963 | ABC | 14% |
| The Doctors | 1 April 1963 | NBC | 12% |
| Another World | 4 May 1964 | NBC | 15% |
| Days of Our Lives | 19 Nov. 1965 | NBC | 17% |
| One Life to Live | 15 July 1968 | ABC | 10% |
| All My Children | 5 Jan. 1970 | ABC | 12% |
| Somerset | 30 March 1970 | NBC | 7% |
| The Young and the Restless | 26 March 1973 | CBS | 71% |
| How to Survive a Marriage* | 7 Jan. 1974 | NBC | 16% |

*Canceled in April, 1975.

TABLE D2.--1973 Nielsen Soap Opera Ratings

| Time | Serial | Rating** | Audience Share |
|------|--------|----------|----------------|
| 11:30 | Love of Life (CBS) | 6.9 | 31 |
| 12:00 | The Young and the Restless (CBS) | 5.2 | 21 |
| 12:30 | Search for Tomorrow (CBS) | 8.5 | 30 |
| 1:00 | All My Children (ABC) | 8.1 | 28 |
| 1:30 | As The World Turns (CBS) | 10.6 | 35 |
| 2:00 | Days of Our Lives (NBC) | 9.9 | 32 |
| 2:00 | The Guiding Light (CBS) | 8.3 | 28 |
| 2:30 | The Doctors (NBC) | 9.2 | 32 |
| 2:30 | The Edge of Night (CBS) | 8.0 | 28 |
| 3:00 | Another World (NBC) | 9.8 | 33 |
| 3:00 | General Hospital (ABC) | 9.6 | 31 |
| 3:30 | Return to Peyton Place (NBC)* | 7.2 | 24 |
| 4:00 | Somerset (NBC) | 6.8 | 21 |
| 4:00 | The Secret Storm (CBS)* | 6.5 | 21 |

*Canceled in 1974.

**The A. C. Nielsen Company is a research firm that conducts the audience-measurement research that is paid for by the networks, advertising agencies, and advertisers. The audience data comes in two primary forms: the rating and the share. The rating is a figure that indicates the percentage of all existing TV homes actually tuned to a particular program at a given moment. (Most soaps have a rating around 7.0 or 8.0 which means that seven or eight per cent of the homes equipped with television were tuned to that program.) The audience share is a figure indicating the percentage of all homes actually using TV at a given time that are tuned to a particular program. The Nielsen ratings come from viewing information provided by 3400 television homes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blumler, J., D. McQuail, and R. Brown, "The Social Origins of the Gratifications Associated with Television Viewing," in D. McQuail (ed.), Reader in Mass Communication, London: Penguin, 1972.

Clark, D. G., and W. B. Blankenburg, "Trends in Violent Content in Selected Mass Media," Television and Social Behavior, Vol. I, ed. G. A. Comstock and E. A. Rubinstein. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1971.

Danowski, James, "Functions and Gratifications of Soap Opera Viewing: Some Operationalizations" (1973).

Dervin, Brenda, and Bradley Greenberg, "The Communication Environment of the Urban Poor," East Lansing: Michigan State University, Department of Communication, 1972.

Dominick, Joseph, and Bradley Greenberg, "Mass Media Functions Among Low-Income Adolescents," Use of Mass Media by the Urban Poor, ed. Bradley Greenberg and Brenda Dervin, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970.

Edmondson, Madeleine, and David Rounds. The Soaps: Daytime Serials of Radio and TV. New York: Stein and Day, 1973.

Feshbach, Seymour, "Reality and Fantasy in Filmed Violence," Television and Social Behavior, Vol. III, ed. Murray, Rubinstein, and Comstock. U.S. Department of HEW, 1971.

Gerbner, George, "The Two Worlds of Violence: Television and Reality," Mass Media and Violence, ed. Lange, Baker and Ball. U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969.

Greenberg, Bradley S., "Gratifications and Motivations of Television Viewing for British Children" (1973).

Greenberg, Bradley and Joseph Dominick, "Television Behavior Among Disadvantaged Children," Use of Mass Media by the Urban Poor, ed. Greenberg and Dervin, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970.

Greenberg, Bradley, P. Ericson, and M. Vlahos, "Children's Television Behavior as Perceived by Mother and Child," Television and Social Behavior, ed. Rubinstein, Comstock and Murray, U.S. Department of HEW, 1971.

Greenberg, Bradley S. and Byron Reeves, "Children and the Perceived Reality of Television" (March, 1974).

Herzog, Herta, "Modivations and Gratifications of Daily Serial Listeners," Radio Research, 1942-1943, ed. Paul Lazarfield and Frank Stanton, New York: 1944.

Katzman, Natan, "Developmental Interactions with the Effects of Television" (1971).

Katzman, Natan, "Television Soap Operas: What's Been Going on Anyway," Public Opinion Quarterly, #36, 1972-73.

Kinser, Nora Scott, "Soap Sin in the Afternoon," Psychology Today, August 1973, pp. 46-48.

LaPota, Margherite and Bruce LaPota, "Studying the Soap Opera," English Journal, April 1973.

"Profile: Iona Phillips," Journal of Broadcasting, 6 November 1972, p. 75.

"Real Drama in Daytime: The Networks' Battle for Dominance," Journal of Broadcasting, 2 July 1973, pp. 17-19.

Rosengren, Karl E., "Uses and Gratifications:  An Over-
        view," Department of Sociology, University of Lund
        (mimeo), 1972.

Rosengren, K. E. and S. Windahl, "Mass Media Consumption
        as a Functional Alternative," in D. McQuail (ed.),
        op. cit.