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Legitimizing Television explores the increasingly prevalent idea that TV has gotten better. This notion, circulating in the popular press, the TV industry, and media scholarship, typically references shows like *The Sopranos* and new technologies like DVRs and HDTV sets. Across these sites, the cultural legitimization of television highlights the medium's rise in status from its previous reputation as the "idiot box" to a more respectable level, especially among cultural elites. But there are troubling ideological implications to this, as the upgrade of television's status comes at the expense of forms of TV deemed unworthy. These delegitimated forms are associated with audiences characterized by femininity and lower class status.

By locating the upgrade of television's cultural status within the context of media convergence, *Legitimizing Television* historicizes this development. It denaturalizes the discourses of television's legitimation, revealing their underlying significance. In analyzing the iterations of television's improvement, *Legitimizing Television* considers the history of Quality TV, the rise of the showrunner-auteur, the sitcom and prime time drama, and the emergence of digital TV technologies such as flat-panel sets, DVDs, and DVRs. It calls for a critical engagement with discourses of legitimation rather than a naive acceptance of television's natural progression toward cultural respectability.