



Social Issues in Television Fiction

By Lesley Henderson

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Why are some controversial issues covered in TV soaps and dramas and not others? How are decisions really made 'behind the scenes'? How do programme makers push boundaries without losing viewers? What do audiences take away from their viewing experience? Does TV fiction have a greater impact on public understandings than TV news? This exciting new book draws on unique empirical data to examine the relationship between popular television fiction and wider society.

The book gives lively and engaging insights into how and why socially sensitive story lines were taken up by different TV programmes from the late 1980s to the 2000s. Drawing on a series of case studies of medicine, health, illness and social problems including breast cancer, mental distress, sexual abuse and violence it comprehensively traces the path of storylines from initial conception through to audience reception and uses contemporary examples to link practice to theory. For the first time, this book addresses production and reception processes across a range of programmes and clearly demonstrates the ways in which television fiction plays a vital and powerful role in reflecting and shaping socio-cultural attitudes.

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Editorial Review

Review

This is a very important book and is a rare event in media and cultural studies since its conclusions are based on extensive empirical work. It shows very convincingly the processes which underpin the production of television fiction and the powerful impacts which such programmes can have on public understanding. -- Greg Philo, Professor of Communications, University of Glasgow At last a book that bridges the gulf between the study of political communication and television fiction, and between research into media production and audience responses. Lesley Henderson is both original and illuminating. -- James Curran, Professor of Communications at Goldsmiths, University of London Social Issues in Television Fiction demonstrates the value in adopting an empirical research methodology for studying social-issue storylines in television soap opera... provides a model for analysing television programmes, which might usefully be taken up with different social issues and other television fictions. -- Lez Cooke, Manchester Metropolitan University Critical Studies in Television A much welcomed contribution to contemporary television research... An outstanding piece of research on an important and somewhat ignored area of television today. -- Peter Dahlgren Publizistik This groundbreaking book crosses the boundaries between media communication, television fiction and reception. -- Jack Newsinger, University of Nottingham Journal of British Cinema and Television The book is clearly written, and represents a valuable contribution to work on media fiction... Social Issues in Television Fiction should also serve as an ideal means to prompt students to become more interested in the process through which such programmes are produced, as well as the importance of understanding how such 'issues' are incorporated into serial drama, and take the shape which they do. -- Joseph Burridge Critical Social Policy This is a very important book and is a rare event in media and cultural studies since its conclusions are based on extensive empirical work. It shows very convincingly the processes which underpin the production of television fiction and the powerful impacts which such programmes can have on public understanding. At last a book that bridges the gulf between the study of political communication and television fiction, and between research into media production and audience responses. Lesley Henderson is both original and illuminating. Social Issues in Television Fiction demonstrates the value in adopting an empirical research methodology for studying social-issue storylines in television soap opera... provides a model for analysing television programmes, which might usefully be taken up with different social issues and other television fictions. A much welcomed contribution to contemporary television research... An outstanding piece of research on an important and somewhat ignored area of television today. This groundbreaking book crosses the boundaries between media communication, television fiction and reception. The book is clearly written, and represents a valuable contribution to work on media fiction... Social Issues in Television Fiction should also serve as an ideal means to prompt students to become more interested in the process through which such programmes are produced, as well as the importance of understanding how such 'issues' are incorporated into serial drama, and take the shape which they do.

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(Greg Philo, Professor of Communications, University of Glasgow.)

About the Author

Lesley Henderson is Lecturer in Sociology & Communications at the Brunel University, West London

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