

Situation Comedy, Character and Psychoanalysis determines that in the sitcom there exists three main personality “types”: the narcissistic character (who has power and knows it), the “echoistic” character (who has no power and does not know it) and the key character who has elements of the psychology of both narcissus and echo, the myth from which Freud analysed the narcissistic personality type.

Approach: This book sets out to understand what makes this form of comedy “tick”, in particular those aspects that enable repeatability and entrapment of the characters in a “situation”- the defining aspects of the TV sitcom. In doing so it examines the nature of personality and in particular theories of personality that “entrap” characters in dynamics that are disempowering. Freudian, Lacanian and Kohutian theories of narcissism are brought together as a framework through which to observe the behaviour and relational dynamic of characters that inhabit the sitcom.

Main themes and objectives: The central argument of the book is that the sitcom is a form of comedy derived from the Aristotelian mode of comedy, rather than as a genre, in that the narrative is structured in such a way that enables comic performance. In doing so it connects character to the narrative to explore the nature of power and the themes of powerlessness and disempowerment. The sitcom is at its heart about the voice of the disempowered struggling to be heard.

The premise of the book is to analyze the character and their relationship to the narrative and resultant behaviour that maintain them in a state of “entrapment” from which they seek to (unconsciously) escape in order to understand the psychological interrelationships between the characters within a ‘situation’ and more importantly how is that entrapment maintained. *On the Couch* enables a ‘reading’ of the sitcom through relationships between the characters and unpacking the nature of those relationships as well as character motivation.

Three Australian texts are used for close analysis and in doing so the study uncovers a fourth finding that emerges in terms of how those texts are positioned in relation to (or not) the hegemony and discourse of multiculturalism, underscoring the sociological debates proffered by authors such as David Marc (USA) and Brett Mills (UK).

Topics include: the character, their relationships, the echo character (such as Manuel in *Fawlty Towers*, Sharon in *Kath & Kim*, Ethel in *I Love Lucy*, Georgette in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* or Robert in *Everybody Loves Raymond*), the comic character’s engagement with the narrative and the relationship between hegemonies and discourse with the key character’s view of the world, in turn enabling comic performance.