



Metonymic Morality: Attributing Value & Fetishising Failure on 'Reality TV'

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Western Tower Seminar Room

Drawing on research from our ESRC project 'The Making of Class and Self through Televised Ethical Scenarios' I examine the increased opening out of subjects through the dramatisation of intimacy on 'reality' television, of how the evaluation of practices (emoting, performing, speaking, telling) establishes value in the person, displays embodied morality, and divides people into categories of good and bad. I explore how this opening out of intimacy is paralleled by other structures (such as law and social policy) by which power is re-organised to deal with social changes (such as increased divorce, increased management of dispersed family, increased infidelity) and how order is maintained through the opening out of personhood and its reorganisation across a range of sites, of which 'reality' TV is the least subtle and most visual.

The process of opening out subjects is not just a matter of governance but produces economies of affect and actual economic profit based upon the exchange value of intimacy and emotion, made visible through showing, telling and dramatisation on TV. Yet despite what appears to be a concerted campaign to incite the self to govern its soul, audiences respond differently. It is this gap between incitement and response that illustrates how the current economy of personhood is both being made and understood.

Bev Skeggs published *The Media* (1992, with John Mundy), *Feminist Cultural Theory* (1995), *Formations of Class and Gender* (1997), *Transformations: Thinking Through Feminism* (2000, with Sara Ahmed, Jane Kilby, Celia Lury and Maureen McNeil); *Class, Self, Culture* (2004), *Sexuality and the Politics of Violence and Safety* (2004), with Les Moran, Paul Tyrer and Karen Corteen) and *Feminism After Bourdieu* (2005 with Lisa Adkins). She is a series editor of the *Transformations: Thinking Through Feminism* book series (with Routledge).

Hosted by the Gender & Cultural Studies Dept, MECO and SOPHI. All welcome