

National Academy of Sciences

April 3, 2019

SCIENCE OF

**STORYTELLING**

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**STORYTELLING**

OF SCIENCE

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*“As if there could be  
true stories: things  
happen in one way,  
and we retell them in  
the opposite way.”*

Jean-Paul Sartre



*“Physics must eventuate in predicting something that it testably right, however much it may speculate. Stories have no such need for testability.”*

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VS.



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# The New York Times

TELEVISION

## ABC Drama Takes on Science and Parents

By EDWARD WYATT JAN. 23, 2008



Jonny Lee Miller, left, as Eli Stone, with Laura Benanti as the mother of an autistic child, and William Topputo in "Eli Stone." Richard Cartwright/ABC

LOS ANGELES — A new legal drama making its debut this month on ABC is stepping into a subject that is the source of heated debate among some parents — the relationship between autism and childhood vaccines — and seemingly coming down on the side that has been all but dismissed by prominent scientific organizations.

The drama, "Eli Stone," scheduled to be broadcast at 10 p.m. on Jan. 31, centers on a lawyer who begins having visions that cause him to question

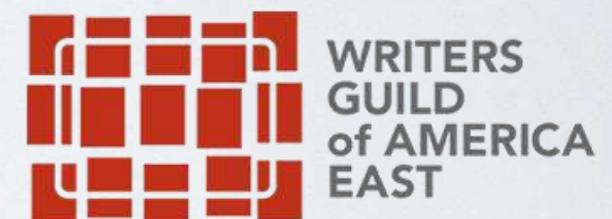
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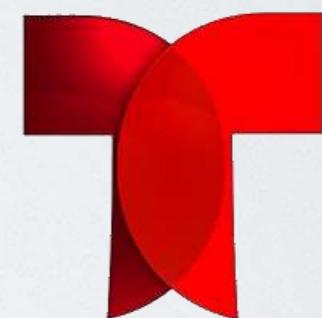
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Television  
Academy



Those aired storylines span hundreds of shows, seen on dozens of networks, cable and streaming channels



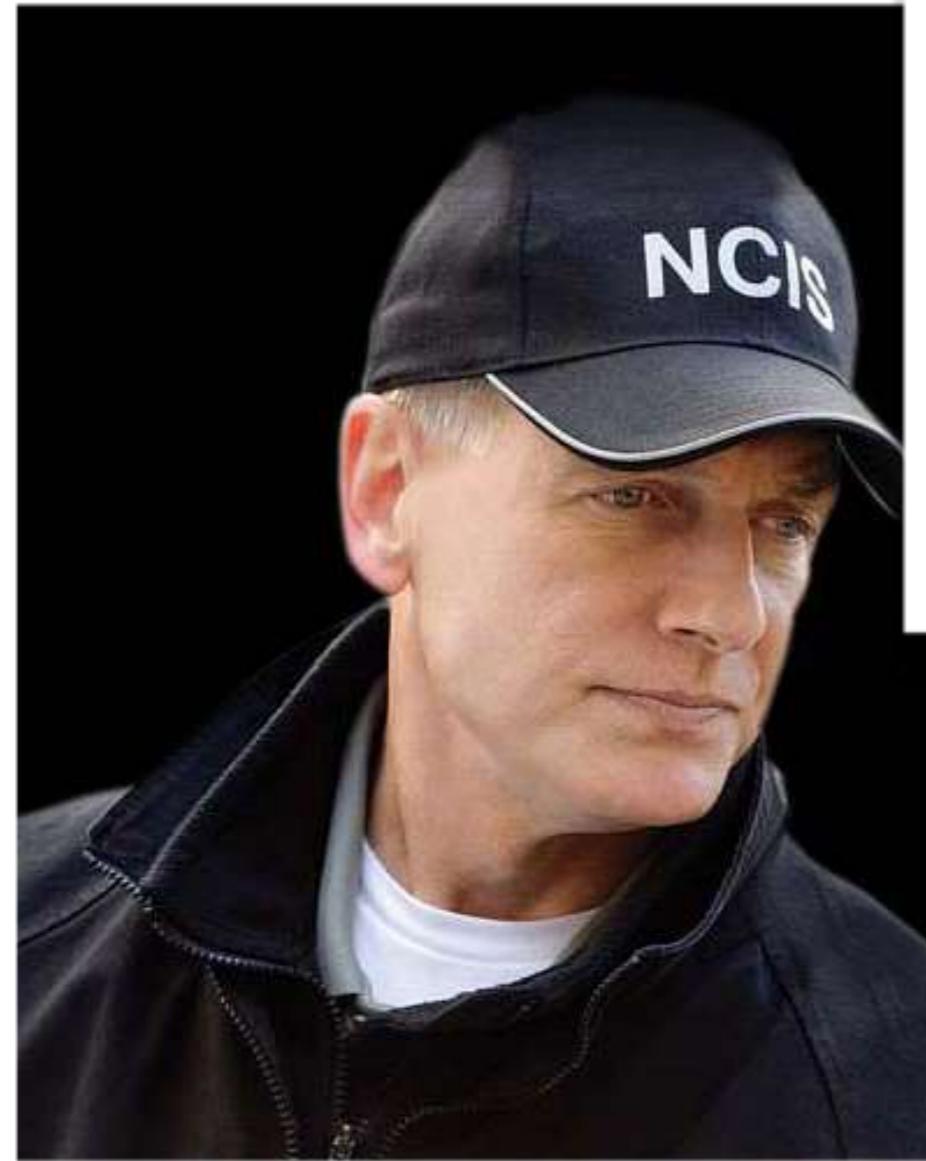
TELEMUNDO



UNIVISION



From 2012–2017 we consulted  
on more than 1,105 aired storylines



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“Eli Stone” (2008)

Approx. 8 million viewers: Nielsen

**For information on autism,  
please visit Centers for  
Disease Control and  
Prevention (CDC).  
[www.CDC.gov/autism](http://www.CDC.gov/autism) or  
call 1-800-CDC-INFO**

**“IT WOULDN’T BE ARTISTICALLY RESPONSIBLE TO LEAVE ROOM FOR, ‘OH WELL MAYBE IT’S OKAY NOT TO VACCINATE.’”**

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**DAVID GRAE,  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

# THE VERGE

SCIENCE ENTERTAINMENT TV SHOWS

## Why it matters that *Madam Secretary* is fighting vaccine misinformation

*The show's latest episode tackles a measles outbreak and the risks of vaccine hesitancy*

By Rachel Becker | Mar 26, 2019, 1:56pm EDT

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Daisy Grant (Patina Miller) looks on as her measles-infected daughter struggles to breathe. | Photo: Sarah Shatz/CBS  
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Measles appeared as the villain in the latest episode of the [CBS show \*Madam Secretary\*](#). The story arc captured the risks of vaccine hesitancy — and it showcases the power of a fictional TV show to communicate facts.

"*Madam Secretary*" (2019)

Approx. 8 million viewers: Nielsen

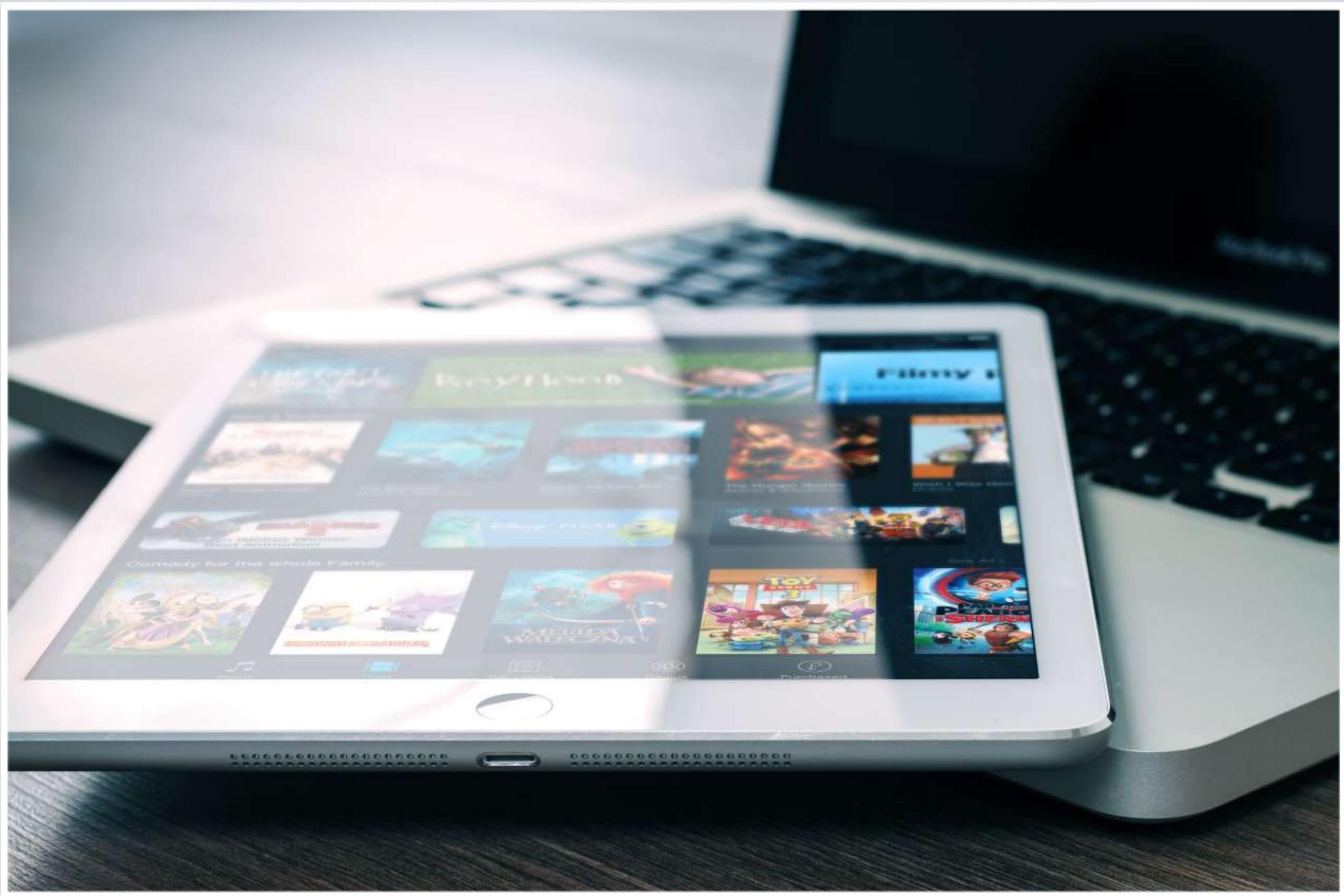


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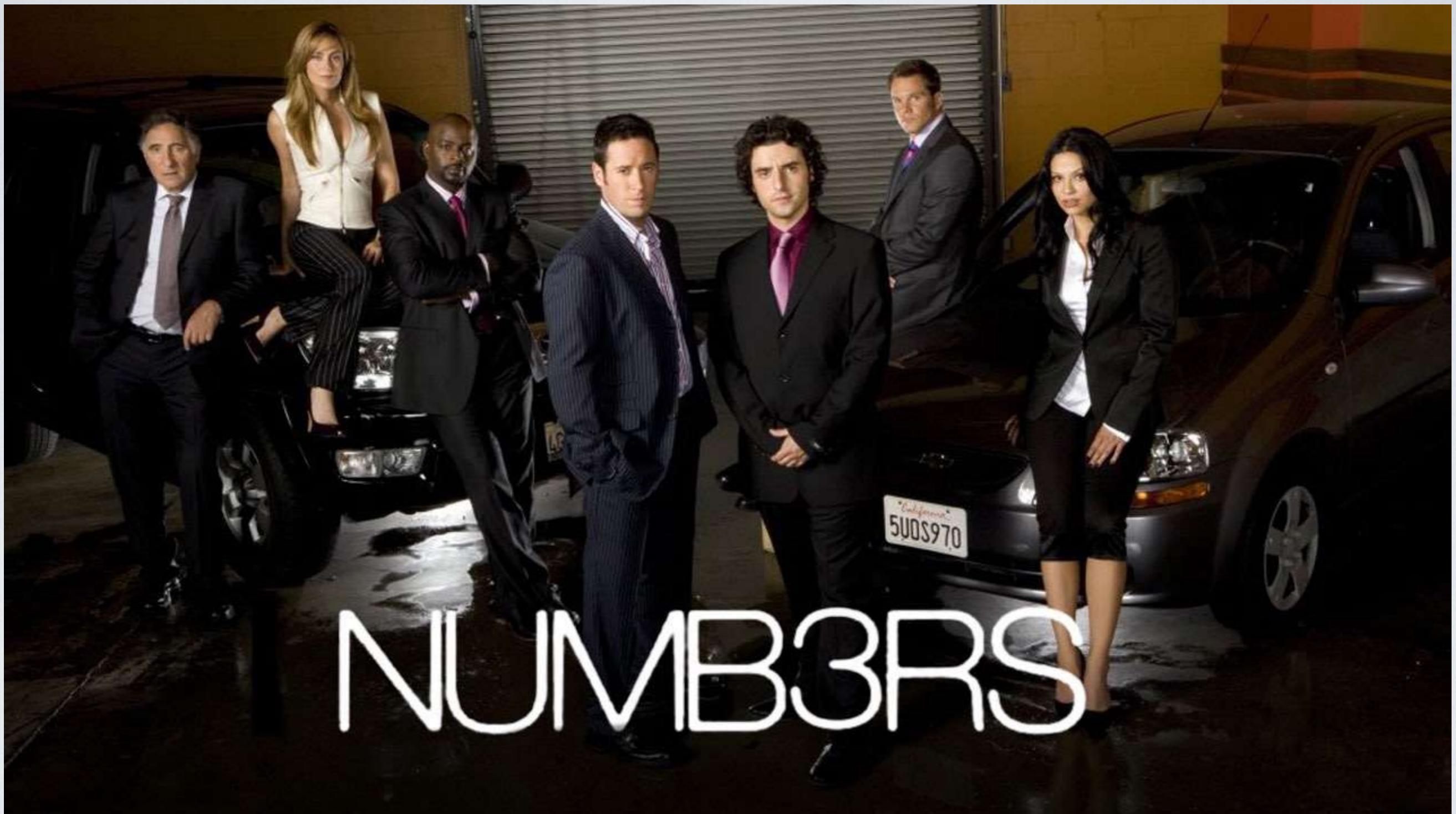






*“Perhaps this is why tyrants so hate and fear poets and novelists and, yes, historians. Even more than they fear scientists, who, though they create possible worlds, leave no place in them for alternative personal perspectives on those worlds.”*

Jerome Bruner



“Numb3rs” (2006)

Approx. 10 million viewers: Nielsen



“Numb3rs” (2006)

Approx. 10 million viewers: Nielsen



“Numb3rs” (2006)

Approx. 10 million viewers: Nielsen

# JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION

## **The Power of Narratives: The Effect of Entertainment Television Organ Donation Storylines on the Attitudes, Knowledge, and Behaviors of Donors and Nondonors**

Susan E. Morgan, Lauren Movius, Michael J. Cody

First published: 26 March 2009 |

### **Abstract**

*Drawing on theories of social learning, social representations and the organ donation model, online surveys were used to examine the impact of organ donation storylines of 4 U.S. television dramas (CSI: NY, Numb3rs, House, and Grey's Anatomy) on viewers' attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors. Results revealed that viewers acquired knowledge from the content of each drama, despite the fact that some content was inaccurate. Viewers who were not organ donors prior to exposure to the dramas were more likely to decide to donate organs if the drama explicitly encouraged donation, portrayed characters revealing how they had become donors and discussed the merits of donating. Viewers were also more likely to become an organ donor if they were emotionally involved in the narrative. Implications for using*

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