

An experimental exploration of the effects of humiliation on enjoyment of reality shows

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Abstract

Reality shows have been received with great popular success in Israel as in the rest of the world. These shows feature tough, sometimes fierce, competitions over prizes, titles or desired jobs, during which participants are often required to reveal their private feelings and thoughts. Winners are celebrated and losers are publicly humiliated. The frequency and centrality of humiliation in reality shows can be gleaned from the many public complaints of angry viewers who find fault with such behavior. The humiliation takes on many forms: It includes personal insults and harsh criticisms by judges, exposing the agony of defeat, the public airings of people's troubles and defects, making people survive by eating otherwise inedible foods, etc. The present study questions the underlying assumption held by the producers of reality shows that humiliation serves to enhance audience enjoyment. The study was designed to experimentally test the association between perceived humiliation in reality shows and the enjoyment derived from them. The design included a between-subject factor manipulating the type of humiliation (insult and degradation), a within subject factor manipulating the level of humiliation of the scenes (presented in either an escalating or decreasing order), and the measurement of enjoyment of the various scenes as a dependent variable. The findings were contrary to the theoretical expectations and the common assumptions: As humiliation increases enjoyment decreases. Furthermore, as humiliation increases displeasure increases. From a closer look at the data it seems that this relationship is not linear and it is only the intense humiliation that harms enjoyment.

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Textual mechanisms for rich the representation of Israeli identity in the "*Sof Ha-Derch 2*" (End of the Road 2) reality show

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Abstract

Reality television is a popular televisual forum for the exploration of identity. Previous research on this genre has revealed an inherent tension between the representation of diverse identities, which may promote pluralism, and the reliance on stereotypes, which limits this positive potential. The present study examines the negotiation of this tension in a unique case study: "*Sof Ha-Derech 2*" (Channel 2, Reshet, 2005), a reality gamedoc produced in cooperation with an organization explicitly dedicated to promoting tolerance and dialogue within the Jewish-Israeli society. Each team included two participants, one religious and one secular. Textual analysis revealed three mechanisms for rich identity representation on the show: (a) emphasizing diversity among religious contestants, thus demonstrating the complexity and flexibility of religious identity; (b) structuring events using a narrative formula of gradually moving from a simplistic starting point to a more complex understanding; and (c) highlighting the importance of the intersection between religiosity and other identity components, most notably gender. The application of these mechanisms is paradoxical: on one hand, it allows at times the complex representation of Israeli identity, and religious-Jewish identity in particular; on the other, it often involves drawing on stereotypes as an easily available and effective textual resource. However, this reliance sometimes forms the basis for reversing stereotypes or presenting them humorously. This pattern demonstrates the centrality of playfulness and reflection as practices for identity construction in contemporary culture and for rich identity representation which complies with the popular entertainment context of reality television.

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Trapped between police drama and cultural melodrama

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Abstract

The article discusses an Israeli police blunder that quickly became a media event. On a Friday morning in November 2006 Israeli radio stations and television channels broke the news about the escape of a sadistic serial rapist from his jailors as he was being brought for a hearing in the central Tel Aviv court building. The depiction of the event evolved according to the terms of popular culture and as such, not only dictated how information should be provided to viewers, but also that events changed the clock from calendar time to time based on the expected progression of the event. And then, during prime time on a Friday night, following two weeks that focused almost entirely on this single event, the media broadcasted the long anticipated news that the criminal had been caught in a town close to the Lebanese border. During those moments, the relief changed the image of the police from losers into heroes, while at the same time live images of the rapist in humiliating positions were aired with no criticism. Pierre Bourdieu's critique as well as the theoretical approach to the analysis of "disaster marathons" were used to explain not only the long and continuous public anxiety and interest in the incident, but also the interest dictated the immoral ending and the ethical dilemmas it created.

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The right to know vs. the need for solace – Journalists and physicians between professionalism and patriotism: Covering Prime Minister Sharon's illness in the Israeli press

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Abstract

This study of Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's hospitalization in 2006, first due to a minor stroke and subsequently a debilitating stroke that left him comatose, demonstrates how Israel's media, and its written press in particular, react to national crises involving medical issues of its leaders and not the usual political, economic and public policy topics. The study examines how, in this case, the media were quick to abandon the role of the purveyor of accurate reporting and truth in order to convey and reflect the more emotional messages of sympathy and concern over the fate of this previously seemingly indestructible leader. Pretty much ignoring all rational medical concerns during Sharon's first hospitalization, and largely influenced by Sharon's personal advisors, the printed media focused on conveying a message of reassurance to the Israeli public that everything was alright, back to normal and functioning as usual. The use by the media of medical experts, who normally shy away from the limelight, transformed doctors into media stars even when no real medical information was being provided. Instead of focusing on these events as the advent of a political crisis of tremendous proportion, the media focused almost exclusively on the personal nature of the incident and seemingly ignored the more lasting ramifications of losing a national leader.

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