The role of newsgroups in coping with the coming-out process of gay male youth

Avi Marciano[*]

Abstract

In light of the complex life experience of gay male youth and due to the crucial role the traditional mass media play in this experience, scholars and activists have devoted much attention to the liberating potential of the Internet. This potential, among other merits, finds expression in one of the most prominent on-line applications – newsgroups. The study examines Internet newsgroups as a potential mitigating tool in the complex coming-out process of gay male youth. Employing a qualitative discourse analysis of the messages, the research focuses on *Ga'ave Tseira* ("Young Pride"), an Israeli newsgroup that appeals to GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) youth and operates under the *Tapuz* portal. Findings indicate that the newsgroup functions as a social arena that offers its participants an embracing milieu, where for the first time in their lives they are free of moral judgment of their sexuality. Through four distinct yet interrelated ways, the newsgroup helps its participants to cope with one of the most significant milestones in a gay person's life – the coming-out process: (1) refuting prevalent stereotypes of homosexuality; (2) facilitating the acceptance of one's sexual orientation; (3) prompting its disclosure; and (4) creating social relations within and outside the virtual environment.

[*]   Avi Marciano (marcianoavi@gmail.com) is a graduate student in Communicaton at the University of Haifa.

The naked state: Eros, civilization, and the Naked Issue in Israel's *Pnai Plus* magazine

Gilad Padva[*]

Abstract

The first Naked Issue of the Israeli weekly TV magazine *Pnai Plus* ("Leisure Plus"), published in April 2008, is a relatively rare phenomenon in the Israeli media. This study, criticizing the texts and images of this nude project, is based on a revision of Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) that supports liberation of Eros and sexual desire from the capitalist bourgeoisie inhibitions. This article criticizes the diffusion of erotica and pornographic aesthetics into Israeli mainstream magazines, and examines the fetishization of the woman's body; the use of motherhood as an ethic and national justification for showing naked women; the complicated mechanisms of reproduction of the (hetero) sexual order; and the patriarchal stereotypization of the female body enforced by the local Culture Industry. This article focuses on the essential gap between sexual freedom according to Marcuse's emancipatory vision, and the problematic national, social, gender, sexual and ethnic characteristics of *Pnai Plus*, which is eager to determine new aesthetic and ethic standards of representation of nudity in the established Israeli media.

---

[*]   Dr. Gilad Padva (padvagd@bezeqint.net) teaches at Tel-Aviv University and at the Beit Berl College.

A forum of their own: Views about the Internet among ultra-orthodox Jewish women who browse designated closed forums

Azi Lev-On and Rivka Neriya Ben-Shahar *

Abstract

The ultra-Orthodox society in Israel is keen on preserving its character as an "enclave culture." But a key challenge that it faces is the penetration of new communication technologies of which the Internet is among the most controversial. Due to its character, there is a deep concern of exposing the ultra-Orthodox public to heresy, violence and sexually explicit speech. The article presents the perceptions of the Internet by 53 ultra-Orthodox women, members of closed designated forums who responded to an online questionnaire. The study sheds light on the phenomenon of ultra-orthodox women who use modern technology, in a space whose legitimacy is questionable in their society, and in which they can converse with other ultra-Orthodox women anonymously, on themes that are of common concern. Findings show that they view the Internet as having a significant impact on their private lives as well as a threat to their ultra-Orthodox way of life. They argue that rabbinical authorities enable the use of the Internet for work-related purposes only, but not at home. Still, they claim that the Internet enables them to feel empowered. They create online relationships, especially with other ultra-Orthodox women. Most women share their browsing patterns with their spouses, but not with their friends. The findings demonstrate ambivalence regarding the uses and abuses of the Internet. As independent women living in a community with strict supervision and enforcement mechanisms, they want to feel a part of the ultra-Orthodox community, while maintaining a forum of their own.

*   Dr. Azi Lev-On (azilevon@gmail.com) and Dr. Rivka Neriya Ben-Shahar (rivka. nbs@gmail.com) are both lecturers at the School of Communication, Ariel University Center of Samaria.

A self-portrait of Israeli journalists: Characteristics, values and attitudes

Oren Meyers and Jonathan Cohen*

Abstract

This study reports on a survey conducted in order to present a self-portrait of Israeli journalists. It maps the demographic make-up of this professional community, delineates journalists' perceptions regarding their social standing and identifies their attitudes towards some of the dilemmas central to their profession. The results of the survey, in which 333 journalists took part, show that Israeli journalists are satisfied with their work and most would like to continue working as journalists. They see journalism as a relatively respected occupation. In terms of the division between media, working for national print media, for radio and for television is perceived as most respected, followed by work for online media; finally, working for local and sectorial media is perceived as least respected. Journalists do not, as a rule feel inhibited to publish the information they gather, but those covering social issues (e.g., welfare) feel less free to do so than business reporters. Finally, the study discusses its findings within in the context of similar international surveys and previous studies of Israeli journalists.

*   Dr. Oren Meyers (omeyers@com.haifa.ac.il) is a Lecturer, and Jonathan Cohen (jcohen@com.haifa.ac.il) is a Senior Lecturer, both in the Department of Communication at the University of Haifa.