

"An umbilical cord that cannot be severed": Israeli media sustaining Israeli migrants' identity

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Abstract

This study examines the various roles Israeli media play in the lives of Israelis who live in northern New Jersey and explores the ways in which consuming these media have become interwoven into their daily routines. The symbolic and practical meanings that are attributed to this consumption were also studied. 117 adults completed a questionnaire and were then interviewed in order to understand their media consumption patterns and how they perceive their experiences. Analysis reveals that Israeli media can be conceived as an identity prosthesis: Not only does it manage to ease homesickness, but it has become a vital device in sustaining and even empowering native identity. Consuming Israeli media on a regular basis enables these migrants to live as if they never really left home, nourishing the belief that they are wholly Israelis notwithstanding the geographic distance. Paradoxically, diasporic life can be indefinitely extended because these media afford this illusion. The importation of culture, politics, and gossip from Israel soothes the migrants' uneasiness of being away from their native soil, and thus they can prolong their stay in the USA.

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From a slight smile to scathing sarcasm: Shades of humor as means of criticism in Israeli photojournalism

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Abstract

The paper looks into various expressions and shades of humor as means of conveying social and political criticism in press photos, and examines this phenomenon as it is manifest in print and online Israeli photojournalism. The complex Israeli reality as well as the nature of the objects of representation and the intended audience of the photos, lends particular sharpness and complexity to the epistemological questions raised by the photos. Concentrating on shades of humor in the work of well-known Israeli photographers such as Pavel Wolberg, Alex Levac and Micha Kirshner, the ways in which the humorous message of each photograph are encoded, and the range of possible interpretations by the viewers are investigated using epistemological, social and cultural tools. By highlighting traces of various humoristic genres, from caricature and grotesque to satire and parody, the photographs' dual position as witnesses to an era ironically depicts the blurred borders set between amusement, shame and self-criticism.

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"Objective" and "subjective" accuracy in Israeli crime news

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Abstract

This study is an initial exploration of the standards of accuracy in Israeli news in an attempt to determine whether the "popular" press is less accurate than the "serious" press and whether online news is less accurate than print. The study focuses on crime news given its sensitivity to the differences between the studied organizations. 24 police investigators involved in the investigations of the stories that were studied evaluated a cluster of items that were published by different news organizations by completing a standard questionnaire used in American accuracy studies. The questionnaire tapped the levels of "objective" (aspects regarding concrete facts) and "subjective" accuracy (the ways in which information was presented). The serious press was found to be more accurate than the popular press and print media were more accurate than online news. In three-quarters of the items there was at least one mistake, compared to 40%-60% in US studies. While these findings seem as an initial cause for concern, further study with other news beats is needed to establish whether the Israeli press is indeed less accurate than the prevailing US standards.

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A question of trust: The perceived contribution of the media to the declining trust in the Israeli justice system

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Abstract

Criminal issues are widely covered in Israel as in other countries around the world. Since the majority of the public lacks unmediated experience with the criminal justice system (CJS), it was hypothesized that the media are instrumental in shaping public perceptions and knowledge about it. This study explores the perceptions of different groups in society regarding the impact of media coverage of the criminal justice system on the reported decline in public trust towards it. Focus groups and in-depth personal interviews were conducted with groups intimately familiar via first-hand professional experience with the CJS – judges, prosecutors, police-officers, prisoners, defenders and legal reporters – as well as with members of the public who presumably rely mostly on the media. The discussions revealed a broad spectrum of opinions concerning the contribution of the media to the public's trust in the CJS. It was found that among the groups who are professionally familiar with the CJS, the media are perceived as affecting the CJS and damaging the criminal process. Possible implications on the rule of law as well as on the society are discussed.

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