

Abstracts

Christian Schicha: Entertainment from a Media Ethical Perspective – Reflections on Morally Questionable Program Formats in Private Television

The currently ongoing discussion regarding media-ethics in the entertainment sector is based primarily on real-life-formats such as “Dschungelcamp” or “Bachelor”. In Germany these formats are primarily broadcast by the private commercial television stations. These productions are motivated by commercial interests. The content is often criticized for lacking style or even injuring human dignity. However, few truly significant failings have been pointed out. Furthermore, both the protagonists as well as the viewers are obviously free to participate in or to consume these kinds of shows. Still, media accountability should be carefully mindful, that basic moral standards and human dignity are not violated.

Katrin Döveling/ Jana Fischer: The Big Cheese and the “Bitch”. Ambivalent De-construction of Stereotypes in Productions and the Adoption of Serial Entertainment Forms

If media ethics wishes to meet its core assignment in recognizing the normative structures and values in media systems and make an appeal to sensitively and responsibly acting media engagement on all sides (Funiok 2007), it has to grasp those current dimensions within media entertainment, such as the enormous popularity of daily serials like *Daily Soaps* and *Docu Soaps*, from a gender standpoint also. This article focuses not only on the display of mediated gender, but likewise on the inherent structures of media engagement. Portrayal and communicative patterns are revealed and diverse forms of framing are put into a context of media ethical analysis. Four case studies disclose characteristic patterns of mediated gender in portrayal and reception.

Ernst Fricke: The Relationship between Private and Public Spheres. Tabloid Media Caught between Legal Responsibility and the Seduction of Commerce

Portrayals which offend human dignity are prohibited for the media. Basic constitutional law as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union are meant to prevent offences against the inalienable and underivable personal sphere of others. There must be a fair balance in the legal consideration of each individual case, in order to determine whether human dignity has been violated. In any case, media law requires a substantial intensity regarding the violation in order to prevent with court assistance, offences against human dignity. “The law is the protection of the weak” must be the motto for the continuing development of legal practice in favour of the protection of the private sphere and protection against unwanted publicity.

*Friederike Herrmann: What we are Ashamed of.
Theses Regarding the Functions of Privacy in the Tabloid Press*

When speaking generally of privacy in the media, one tends to ignore how complex the concept of privacy actually is. The essay differentiates between three categories of privacy in the yellow press, using the example of the German newspaper “Bild”. The first one is unauthorized voyeuristic coverage that violates people’s privacy. This should be ethically disapproved of, as paragraph 8 of the German codex for the press quite clearly states. Articles of the second category are more controversial. They deal with subjects that are relevant in terms of social policy, still using details from the personal lives of the people concerned such as their private experiences and the feelings involved. These articles perform the traditional journalistic function of self-reflection and introspection in society or they have the purpose to advise and inform. This function can hardly be understood with a dichotomous model of society that splits public and private life into opposites. The third category of articles has not yet been examined properly. They deal with everyday events, which they hardly ever turn into scandals. And yet analyses have revealed that these articles often display feelings of shame and inferiority, showing the people concerned in embarrassing situations without suggesting identification. Possibly this helps the recipients to delegate shameful feelings of their own. From an ethical point of view such public humiliation should be firmly rejected.

*Ines Maria Eckermann: Happiness in the Media.
A Term between Fashion and Whateverism*

“Happiness is a fashion” – and a yearning as old as humanity. However, not so much the reflections of philosophers and the wise or undifferentiated scientific treatises are influencing the individual understanding of happiness today. Rather, the numerous attractions of the mass media characterize our understanding of happiness. Happiness is a commodity much in demand and, accordingly, a real big seller. The media associate and label a vast variety of concepts with „happiness“– a dopamine high, unlimited indulgence, or even just having fun. Accordingly, the term “happiness” becomes a lexical black hole: a word which assimilates countless meanings, individual ideas and associations. Thereby, the meaning does not become clearer or more distinct; it absorbs more and more meaning-matter, expands and becomes merely ungraspable. To inflate or reframe a term in favour of medial fashion hinders the meaningful conveyance of an allegedly familiar phenomenon.

Christian Klenk / Thomas Rinklake: Membership Magazine with a Circulation of Millions. A Nationwide Survey Provides First Comprehensive Data Concerning Parish Publications as a Medium of the Base.

Of all Church media, parish publications have the largest overall circulation. Approximately two-thirds of all Catholics read the notifications of their parishes regularly or at least from time to time. Despite this success, parish publication remain an inconspicuous medium. Based on a nationwide survey made of about 900 parish editorial offices conducted between January and March 2014, comprehensive data now exists regarding how parish publications in Germany are designed, based on form and content, how the often voluntary editorial teams are organized and equipped and how well the internet portal *Pfarrbriefservice.de* is accepted by decision-makers. The results of this study should improve the support of editorial offices.