

Name: Kolchynskyy

Vorname: Dmytro

Uni: National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy

AbstractTitel: Identification with the Reality TV Personages as the Mechanism of National Identity Changes

AbstractText: Identification with the personages of the media texts is the core mode of persuasion and behaviour change of the auditorium members according to the K. Burke's rhetorical analysis system. In my research I prove that the change of the national identity can be achieved through the identification with the personages of the reality TV shows. Research is based on the content analysis of the Russian reality TV show that have been aired in Ukraine and interviews of the Ukrainian auditorium members who were exposed to the show. I also argue that the effect of the identification with the personages of the reality shows is reinforced by the agonistic element (as presented by Johan Huizinga) in the reality TV and dramatic structure of the reality shows.

- I think just those films are not suitable where the faces of the actors are not likeable. Do you agree? You go to the cinema to borrow those faces and wear them on yourself.

Therefore when they are not suitable the half of the interest is disappearing.

- Aren't there films without the actors? Let's say the documentaries...

- Doesn't matter. Let's say there are no actors, but then there are faces anyway. Even fish and insects have some face. Even chairs and tables have their own faces, which one can like or not.

Kobo Abe. Alien Face. 1968

INTRODUCTION.

Media studies have the analogue of the Kantian scandal in philosophy. In the same way as no one was able to prove the presence of the external world no one in the media studies was able to prove the effects of the media. Having that in mind and acknowledging the ideological and civilizational motives of my work, I axiomatically build the research with the belief that there can be significant effects in the certain circumstances. One of those circumstances is the *identification* of the auditorium member with the TV personage.

Identification of the TV auditorium with the personages of reality TV shows among the other consequences such as behavior and world view change can have the viewer's *national identity* altered towards TV personage's national and behavior characteristics. That conclusion was reached through the analysis of the result of the survey and interviews. In an extreme formulation Russian reality TV shows are one of the dangers to the national security of Ukraine. In other words political move of the "russification" has simply changed its once effective form of the political and cultural prohibitions and support of the Russian nationals on the territory of Ukraine. Now "russification" is being implemented through media. In addition I claim that the news and documentary agitation as TV genres are less suitable for the "russification" and national identity change than the fiction genres or genres with dramatic structure. Real life people fighting their way through in the dramatic environment of the reality show provide auditorium member with the fertile ground for identification and thus worldview change.

EMPIRICAL PART.

My research consisted of two interrelating parts – empirical and critical. The empirical part of the research consisted of the three parts:

1. Two TV shows were chosen for the screening to the auditorium. Later I carried out the content analysis of the reality TV shows determining the space given to the auditorium for the identification with the Russian nationals. I have compared three TV shows aired at Ukrainian TV according to the representation of the TV personages. Reality TV show "Behind the Mirror – 3" was built on the dramatic conflict of two teams – Ukrainian and Russian. Reality TV show "10 Negretyat" haven't had representation of any Ukrainian nationals and thus did not provide any space for the identification with the Ukrainian nationals.
2. The individual respondents for the screenings of the reality TV shows and interviews were chosen according to their geographical, national, social and heritage characteristics. All of the respondents were the representatives of the Kiev (Central region) because by the majority of the surveys Center is characterized as the region with the flexible identity comparing to the stable Ukrainian in the Western regions and pro-Russian in the Eastern. According to the surveys of the TV marketing and monitoring companies reality TV shows are of the primary interest to the young auditorium. Hard viewership of the oldest segment doesn't mean that the auditorium member will watch reality TV show. The age of the respondents was between 22 and 27 years old, middle income family, without higher education, with Ukrainian speaking parents and themselves speaking both Russian and Ukrainian. Thus 20 respondents were chosen. Auditorium was randomly divided into two groups. One group was interviewed and asked to answer the questionnaire before and after the months of the screenings.

See addition for the list of the questions.

The analysis of the results of the interviews has clearly showed the correlation of the viewership and identification with the personages of the "10 Negretyat" TV show and change of national identity after viewing the show towards identification with the Russians.

The critical part of my research provides the hypothesis about the special nature of the reality shows that involves the effect of the identification and thus brings the identity change.

CRITICAL PART.

The peculiarities of the auditorium perception and the effect of the identification with the personages of the agonistic media-texts (reality games, TV series etc.) can provide concrete political conclusions and proposals. In the case of the necessity of the identification of the auditorium with the carriers of the national identity the most effective will be the visual text based on the agonistic principle. TV series would be of a best example here.

The exceptional attention of the *medium theories* of the *first generation* M. McLuhan and H. Innes (as proposed by J. Meyrowitz) to the nature of the medium brings the general context to the problem of the effects of mass media. In particular the problem of the identification of the auditorium with the media characters should be viewed as defined by the visual

dominant of the contemporary culture and the dominance of television in that culture. Although McLuhan as the classic of the medium theory proposes the “tactility” of TV and the come back of the electronic societies to the “symbolic and mythical structures” with the help of TV that should rather be viewed as the allusion to the totality and multitude of directions that are owned by that medium in its contrast to the linearity and single direction of the print.

In its most general meaning the definition of the identification is given by the cultural studies, “spontaneous and temporarily emotional investment or the place of the connexion that with the help of the fantasy sews together discursive practices and psychic elements” (Burke, 386). But that definition is general and does not deal with the sphere of the media studies that declare themselves as the autonomous discipline that has acquired social, psychological, cultural, philosophical, rhetorical and linguistic knowledge being guided by its own endeavor logic. That work has in some way mosaic definition of the phenomena of the identification as long as the main aim was to describe the actual effect and not the roots of the identification.

Theoretical part of the work was aiming to define the connection between identification and the general cultural and historical context of the electronic culture as defined by theories of medium. In other words to give the answer to the question, why is it easy for the auditorium members to identify themselves with the media characters of the agonistic television genres? The practical task of the work was to formulate several principles that would be helpful in transforming Ukrainian society and would help in developing national consciousness and identity in the circumstances of the global electronic culture.

There were several major theoretical sources of the paper. The concept of the electronic society was borrowed from the medium determinism of Marshall McLuhan. Identification as socio-cultural phenomena is viewed through the prism of the four major authors: J.Meyrowitz and J.Cohen in media-studies, K.Burke with the rhetorical analysis, Z.Freud's psychoanalysis, H.Kelman in sociology, A.Bandura in social psychology. Some of the characteristics of the TV format and genre of reality shows were taken from A. Hill's *Big Brother. The Real Auditorium*.

The “super task” (in the terms of Stanislavski) of the work was to define one of the most effective ways of the development of the national consciousness in its contrast to the old methods of the linear, classical education. The task of the development consciousness is urgent for the Ukrainian state, because recent political processes showed that the independence of the country and its European integration depend upon the level of the national consciousness that is one of the elements of the public sector together and democratic ideology. The general theoretical context of that work does not have any geographical or time frames. Electronic culture in its opposition to the verbal culture and print is the diachronic characteristic of the global culture. Agonistic mechanism of the culture is also global characteristic. One can have doubts about the fact that all of the cultures develop according to the agonistic principle and within the frames of the global electronic culture, but such phenomena do not determine any part of the world history and thus are not part of my interest.

McLuhan's determinism and the history of communication by Innis are the first example of the first generation of the medium theories as proposed by Meyrowitz. His own research should be considered as products of the second generation. Meyrowitz work deal both with the general topics of the media influence on the human history and with the specific problems in particular identification subject. Meyrowitz claims that electronic media change the perception of the situational geography of the social life. We receive new virtual perception of the world which creates new forms of the identification. Meyrowitz main argument is that electronic media are damaging traditional links with the geographical place and social identification because of the multiproduction of the sources for the identification by new media and absence of those geographical tights in new media products. Meyrowitz question is the question of the media theoretician in particular professional television viewer that is asking about the links of the culture, identity and television medium in the global society.

Kenneth Burke's dramatism theory was based on many humanitarian methods, but has been used mainly in the rhetorical analysis and media studies. Burke is the follower of the Aristotelian rhetoric but at the same time he is not interested in enthymeme and example as the rhetorical figures. His primary interest is the identification of the speaker with the auditorium as the main tool of the effective speech. “The core tem of the old rhetoric is persuasion and the creation of the text. The term of the new rhetoric is identification together with unconscious modes of the influence” (Burke, 203) Identification according to Burke is the joint space that unifies listener and speaker.

Behaviorists use the term homophile in describing similarities of the speaker and listener, whereas Burke prefers to use “consubstantiation”. Term was originally used by the Anglican scholars when describing the coexistence of the substance of Christ's blood and flesh with the substance of bread and wine after the Eucharist. The interest of the auditorium is raised through the similarities of the style and the content of the message. Burk posits that the effective communicator declares the consubstantiation through the language and signs that show that his qualities are the same as auditorium's.

Burke has borrowed many of his concepts from Freud. In freudism definition of the identification is developed along with the critics of the culture in two major cultural-oriented articles “Psychology of the Masses and the Analysis of Human Ego” and *The Future of One Illusion* (Freud,2). In both articles culture is defined as the phenomena in opposition to the individual human nature but as the harmonizing agent. In some places articles touch upon the questions of the nation and national identity. Although the notions of nation and culture are equivalent in freudism.

The identification as the psychological phenomena without necessary cultural meaning is viewed from three positions: 1) as the defense mechanism; 2) part of the psychoanalytical therapy in the case of the patient's obligatory identification with the psychoanalyst; 3) Oedipus complex element. In *Future of One Illusion* Freud gives an example in connection with the unsatisfaction with the culture. Participants of the given culture (national cultures) that are not the carriers and developers of the culture receive the narcissistic pleasure from the identification with the developers of the culture. “Each culture gives itself the right to feel superior towards the other cultures” (Freud, 488) Narcissistic pleasure is thus both possible for the privileged and suppressed classes. In the *Psychology of the Masses and the Analysis of Human Ego* Freud defines identification as one of the first “emotional links with the other person” (Freud, 449) Identification is the part of the Oedipus complex, because the move towards the father is completely masculine and has the aim of taking father's place. “Such identification forms the Ego according to the other that is taken as an example” (Freud, 450) At the same Freud provides three main forms of the identification as the symptom production: “...first of all, identification is the primary form of the connection with the object, second, it becomes the substitute for the libidinal objective connection as some sort of the introjection of the object to Ego, third it can appear from any new unification with the self that is no the object of primary sexual drives. The bigger that unification the stronger is that partial identification and thus he beginning of the new link” (Freud, 451)

Kelman has proposed to view identification as the adoption of such attitudes and behavior that will bring the reward and enjoyment. “In the case when one identifies with the star that is in some way the friendly attempt to take the star for a ride in the old auto” (Kelman, 480). Kelman posits that the identification is based on the classical role relationships. In classical meaning one person adopts the role of the other that is spreading the influence. According to Kelman in the case when identification happens people want to be as similar with the object as possible.

Bandura's social learning theory proposes that the identification defines how precisely the behavior of the model will be duplicated. The initial social learning theory was later broadened by Bandura to social cognitive theory but his concept of the identification was saved in the new versions of the theory as the moving process of the social learning. Bandura was claiming that identification was based on viewers' perception that s/he is similar to the behavior model of the object of identification. That perception can be defined by gender, race and physical attractiveness. Although in many cases people are identifying

themselves with the models that are referring to their own expectations from themselves. In the case of the identification of the media characters s/he also adopts the model of behavior.

In his article *Defining Identification: a Theoretical Look at the Identification of Audience with Media Characters* that was printed in *Mass Communication & Society* in August 2001 J.Cohen claims that nevertheless identification with the media characters was widely discussed in the Western culture it was not conceptualized and empirically examined. Cohen provides theoretical basis of the identification together with the definitions and discussions of the results of the identification. Cohen proposes to differ identification from the other reaction to the media-products and media-characters. Identification according to Cohen is just one of the reactions to the media text. Auditorium member can react with:

- 1) appreciation or denial of the media character;
- 2) searching the peculiarities or the differences between himself and media character;
- 3) attempt to develop parasocial relations
- 4) defining personage as attractive and sexual or not
- 5) with the attempt to imitate the character.

Table reprinted from Cohen, J. *Defining Identification:...*

	Identification	Liking/Similarity	Parasocial Interaction	Imitation
Nature of the process	Emotional and cognitive, changes worldview	Attitude, relationship	Interactivity, parasocial nature	Behavior
The basis of the process	Understanding and empathy	Perception of the personage and self	attraction	Modeling
Auditorium position	As the personage	As self	As self	As pupil
Similar phenomena	Text enjoyment, catharsis	Realism	Personage and text dominance, company support	Studying, compulsion
Theoretical sphere	Psychoanalysis, film studies, social psychology	Social psychology	Psychology, Interpersonal communication	Experimental psychology, theory of social learning

Reality TV shows are impossible without drama and agonistic structure. Higher concentration of the actions of the characters and dramatic intensity provides the interest of the auditorium. The concept of the game and culture relation as formulated by Johan Heuzinga can be described by such quote, "culture appears in the form of the game and is played from the very beginning" (3, 57). Duality together with the agonistical principle gives the basis for the development of culture. "The spiritual world of such society is based on the duality..."

Game is impossible without duality. Culture is impossible without the game. Drama as the general principle of the struggle and unity of the oppositions and as a change of the positions of those oppositions is one of the forms game has acquired in human culture. Drama is the part basis of the majority of TV products where documentary is claimed to be the "dramatised reality".

Duality and agonistic principle work even in the reality shows a-la Big Brother that seemingly do not have obvious competition. The reality TV format was first used in 1973 at PBS (USA) in program "American Family". Instead of the actors real people were participating in the show. After that the format has gone through many modifications of "police chases", "dating", "historical reconstructions" etc. The apogee of the reality TV format show "Big Brother" was invented in Holland in 1999 by John de Moll. After that the analogues were repeated in 19 countries with the highest national TV ratings up to 75% witnessed in Portugal.

The appeal and secret of the format where nothing dramatic according to the script can happen was explained by the "voyeuristic interests" of McLean, interactivity and the possibility to determine the winner according to Jones and finally "the search for the moment of the authenticity" (Hill, 230). Although none of the researchers provided the complete list of the format and its characteristics. It is necessary to mention that the how is he game thus the rule of the game are major characteristic of the show. Based on the peculiarities of the "Big Brother", "10 Negrytyat" and "Behind the Mirror-3" shows I would like to propose characteristics:

1) Chronotope of the game is stable (e.g. Show is usually for one month. In the case of Big Brother in the building, in "10 Negrytyat" in Germany);

- 2) The rules of the games cannot be changed;
- 3) Rules and exceptions to the rules are created by producers;
- 4) The tasks of the game are stable all through the game;
- 6) The situations happening with the characters are real, spontaneous and unprepared;
- 7) Participants are under the constant look of the producers.

Characteristics of the reality shows auditorium:

- 1) Voyeuristic complexes;
- 2) Flexible identity and role and behavior model search;
- 3) High level of the identification with the media characters.

ADDITION.

1/ FIRST INTERVIEW:

Views of the auditorium members towards Ukrainian-Russian issues:

1. Ukraine and Russia:

a) Should be one state?

"yes" -1/more "no" then "yes"-2/"not sure"-3 / more "yes" then "no"- 4/"no"-5

b) Have similar cultural space?

"yes" -1/more "no" then "yes"-2/"not sure"-3 / more "yes" then "no"- 4/"no"-5

c) Have similar historical space?

"yes" -1/more "no" then "yes"-2/"not sure"-3 / more "yes" then "no"- 4/"no"-5

2. Ukrainian identity is he same as Russian.

"yes" -1/more "no" then "yes"-2/"not sure"-3 / more "yes" then "no"- 4/"no"-5

3. Ukraine is an artificial political and historical organism.

"yes" -1/more "no" then "yes"-2/"not sure"-3 / more "yes" then "no"- 4/"no"-5

4. Ukrainian language is the dialect of the Russian.

"yes" -1/more "no" then "yes"-2/"not sure"-3 / more "yes" then "no"- 4/"no"-5

5. Ukraine is weak without Russia.
“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

2/ DAILY VIEWING OF TV SHOW. 30 days.

3/ SECOND INTERVIEW:

The personages of the reality TV show were:

1. Appealing.

“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

2. Interesting.

“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

3. Acting in the right way.

“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

4. Their behavior was worth of following.

“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

4/ THIRD INTERVIEW:

After viewing the reality TV show members of the auditorium were interviewed once more. At the same time the questions of the survey were reformulated in such a way that the members of the auditorium weren't recognizing the questions from the first questionnaire.

1. I positively accept the idea of the Slavic unification under Russian rule.

“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

2. Russia is the great country that shows the way other Slavic countries should follow.

“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

3. Ukraine was suppressed by Russia.

“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

4. If I had a choice to live in Moscow or Kiev with the same salary I would choose Kiev.

“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

5. Russia has a great historic future.

“yes”-1/more “no” then “yes”-2/“not sure”-3 / more “yes” then “no”- 4/“no”-5

SOURCES:

1. Freud, Z. (1999) Psihoanaliticheskiye Etyudy. Minsk: Byelorussia
2. Heuzinga, J. (1994) Homo Ludens. Kyiv: Ukraine
3. Baker, C. (2000) Cultural Studies. Sage Publications: London
4. Bandura, A. (1977) Social Learning Theory. Engelwood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall
5. Burke, K. (1950) A rhetoric of motives. Engelwood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall
6. Cohen, J. (2001) Defining Identification: a Theoretical Look at the Identification of Audience with Media Characters that was printed. Mass Communication & Society., Vol.4, Issue 3
7. Innis, H. (1972) The Empire and Communication. University of Toronto Press: Toronto
8. Jones, J. (2001) Pore-Close TV: Big Brother and the Internet: not printed, cited by in Hill, A.
9. Hill, A. (2002) Big Brothe. The Real Audience. Television and New Media, Vol.3, No.3
10. Kelman, H.C. (1961) Processes of Opinion Change. Public Opinion Quarterly, 25
11. McLuhan, M. Fiore, Q. (1967) The Medium is the Message. Random House: New York
12. McLean, G. (2000) You are Watching Big Brother. Guardian: 3 August
13. McLuhan, M. Fiore, Q. (2002) Understanding Media: The Extension of Man. MIT Press: Massachusetts
14. Meyrowitz, J. (1994) No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior. Oxford University Press: New York