

Summaries

Television and ultimate meaning. Spirituality in the Oprah Winfrey talkshow

by Ellen Hijmans

Against the theoretical background of the assumed function of the media as an expertsystem in modern society, a qualitative content analysis of the worldfamous American talkshow of Oprah Winfrey is presented. The question of how the personal spirituality of ms Winfrey affects the style and content of her talkshow is answered by analysis and interpretation of 28 transcripts of the show, aired by the Dutch commercial tv-station RTL 4 in the fall of 1998. Four types of shows are considered. Analysis of the ultimate meaning, the advice given and the discourses to which Oprah and her guests relate, reveals that spirituality is an eclectic mixture of traditional christianity, new age philosophy and the therapeutic ethos. These elements are cast within the formula of the American Dream, which reaches higher grounds in the Oprah Winfrey show without losing the core of success, attainable for all. The message of the Oprah Winfrey show is reconstructed as a reformulation of the question of the meaning of life as a question of identity. The search for the true, divine self stretches itself eventually to questions of the relations towards others and how to behave in a morally responsible way.

A distorted image of society? A study of bias in a telephone questionnaire due to undercoverage and nonresponse

by Sonja Rispens and Henk van Goor

We studied undercoverage and nonresponse in a telephone questionnaire among the population of the City of Groningen, The Netherlands. The original sample, drawn from the municipal population register, contained 7,000 individuals. For 37% of them, the telephone company was unable to produce a valid telephone number. Of those with a registered telephone 49% did not answer the telephone or refused to cooperate. In all, the final respondents comprised merely 32% of the original sample. To study distributional bias, we used individual-level data compiled from municipal records as our benchmark. Bivariate as well as multivariate analyses showed that the undercoverage was strongly related to all socio-demographic variables studied, except sex. Nonresponse was related to age, country of origin, marital status, and household size and composition, but not to sex, unemployment, dependence on social assistance, and education (only known for the unemployed). Both undercoverage and nonresponse contributed to a strong middle class bias in the final data set: middle-aged and older, economically secure persons, of Dutch origin and living together with a partner are overrepresented, while persons with a socially low and marginal status,

such as the young, people of foreign stock, the unemployed, persons living on welfare and singles are underrepresented.

Archeology and hallucination. The media and the Sixties

by Hans Righart

This essay deals with the relationship between the media and the Sixties. The author points out that the Sixties are partly a media created myth, not just afterwards (which is as to be expected) but also during the Sixties. Transnational diffusion as well as the suggestion of a simultaneity of events – the myth of '68 for instance – can both be explained from editing and cutting techniques used by pictorial media like film and television. Aside from that, many typical Sixties phenomena like pop music, the counterculture and the protest movement against the Vietnam War owe their transnational features to radio and television. The specific contribution of the media to the Sixties-revolution consisted of speeding up the process in which marginal cultures like Beats, students and rockers turned prescriptive for average youths. The author poses the question whether the coinciding of two revolutions – the one of the Sixties and that of the media – have laid a new and in sophistication unequalled totalitarianism upon us.