

The Gender of TV Expertise: A Combined Quantitative/Qualitative Analysis of Israeli TV Talk Shows

Amir Hetsroni*

SUMMARY

This combined quantitative/qualitative study is based on a content analysis of 238 hours of Israeli talk shows from 2012 and semiotic analysis of selected programs to map the gender distribution of TV experts and explore potential differences in the way men and women are treated in the programs.. All in all, 495 experts were coded. Men experts outnumbered women experts in a 1.7 to 1 ratio. These men were significantly older than the women and tended to have a higher academic rank, but they were not treated more favorably during the program. In fact, experts of both genders were criticized or disagreed with in just less than 4% of the cases. The topics on which the experts commented reflect familiar gender stereotypes with men more likely to talk about security, politics and economy and women more often talk about body grooming and child care. The results, which partly accord with feminist criticisms of the popular media, are analyzed in relation to the theoretical concepts of symbolic annihilation and “fast thinking” and the findings of studies that looked at the gender of scientists and scholars in other TV genres.

Key word: talk shows, Israeli TV, TV genres, gender stereotypes, feminist criticisms

This combined quantitative/qualitative content analysis explores various characteristics in the appearance of male and female experts in Israeli TV talk shows in an attempt to answer the question: *Does a numerical under-representation of women in*

* Amir Hetsroni, Associate Professor – Department of English,
Language and Communication, Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China,
E-mail: amirhetsroni@gmail.com

prestigious roles on television coincide with degrading attitude toward them within the programs?

Feminist activists have been advocating for decades that biased depictions of gender roles in the media help to strengthen stereotypes about women and their place in the society (Cavender, Bond-Maupin & Jurik, 1999; Paek, Nelson & Vilela, 2011; Tuchman, 1978). By featuring distinct positions and different behavioral norms for males and females, popular TV programs may reinforce the adoption of attitudes in support of such gaps (Holbert, Shah & Kwak, 2006). This led gender researchers to document gender differences in popular fictional TV formats (Lauzen, Dozier & Horan, 2008), but studies tended to concentrate on head counting and paid less attention to more complex issues like differences in the way genders are treated within the programs. Even when the number of males and females who appear in a program is more or less equal, the show may still construe gender dominance by treating the genders differently throughout the program and by ascribing them with different roles (van Zoonen, 1996).

Further more, only scant attention has been given hitherto to studying gender roles in talk shows, which occupy a major share of the programming schedule in various channels all over the world (Johnson, Smith, Mitchell, Oregó & Yun, 1999), and play a vital role in supplying knowledge and providing advice to large publics (Holderman, 2003). Hence, our study which examines differences and similarities in the representation of male and female experts in talk shows is timely. Even if we leave the potential effects of exposure to biased gender roles aside, this content analysis is valuable in mapping cultural trends in displaying proficiency (Greenberg, 1980, p.XII). Finally, since the study is conducted in Israel it would shed light on the impact of gender on non-fictional TV content outside the more often surveyed U.S. media and portray the situation in a transitional society where gender egalitarianism alongside traditional stereotypes coexist. Thus, it can be of special interest to Croatian readers.

Gender Distribution and Gender Roles in Television

Since its infancy, television has been regarded a major socialization agent which transmits beliefs, values, and attitudes (Gerbner, 1998) and nurtures behaviors (Bandura, 2009). This raised the scientific community's interest in mapping the demographics and qualities of individuals and groups who appear on the small screen, and whose appearance indicates what is acceptable in society (Greenberg, 1980, p.XII). It goes without saying that the lenses through which the media represent "reality" evince an outlook of powerful political, economic and creative elites (Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes & Sasson, 1992). People who belong to powerful societal sectors (e.g. rich people, men) not only appear in the media more frequently, but

are also portrayed as more reasonable and more rational than persons of weaker strata (van Dijk, 1995), who may even sometimes lower their self esteem in accordance with the unflattering reflection of their lives in the media (Cohen & Young, 1981). As Weimann (2000a, pp. 10-12) notes, television provides a rather restricted set of contents for a much less restricted number of viewers. The process through which the contents are is intentionally selective, prioritizing certain societal segments. The outcome is a (re)constructed reality which seems “natural” to ordinary viewers. *Symbolic annihilation* (Tuchman, 1978) is a concept often used to describe an ongoing non-representation or under-representation of women in prestigious roles in the media as part of the reconstructed reality. Symbolic annihilation has three forms: *omission* (refraining altogether from featuring women in broadcasts), *trivialization* (presenting females as callous) and *condemnation* (documenting females’ involvement in unlawful behavior).

As part of the general interest in symbolic annihilation, reality reconstruction and the media representation of privileged and deprived social groups, numerous studies regarding the appearance of men and women on television took place with commercials attracting most of the researchers’ attention. Early research from the 1970s found that TV advertisements portrayed women in a rather stereotypical manner - being overly emotional (Busby, 1975), passive (McArthur & Resko, 1975) and domestic in their interests (Dominick & Rauch, 1972). Later research depicted a less unequivocal picture: While a number of recent studies indicate a shift towards a more egalitarian representation of genders (Eisend, 2010), particularly in western cultures (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010), few works still find no signs of change in the tendency to portray gender roles in accordance with familiar stereotypes (Mager & Helgeson, 2010; Luyt, 2011), especially in traditional cultures (Ali, Ali, Kumar, Hafeez & Ghufuran, 2012). Content analyses of U.S. news programming teach us that in the mid 1990s males appeared in front of the camera as anchors and reporters more often than females (Liebler & Smith, 1997). This trend was still noticed a decade later (Desmond & Danilewicz, 2010). Studies that examined the portrayal of men and women in fictional TV genres point at a rather similar trend. In the 1950s, there were two males on every female in U.S. TV drama (Smythe, 1954), a ratio that hardly changed in five decades (Glascok, 2001). On the other hand, the share of career women among female protagonists did increase in the last two decades, a trend that reflects changes in the makeup of the American labor force (Lauzen et al., 2008). Still, across a range of TV formats, women remain frequently depicted in traditional female professions such as secretaries and teachers (Signorielli, 2012). Such portrayal can have a prevailing cultivation effect on males, who may underestimate the capability of women to succeed in complicated male tasks, and on women viewers who – in the absence of successful role models of their own gender - may internalize an underestimation of their talents (Morgan, 1982; Signorielli, 1989).

Studies regarding the representation of gender in Israeli television, whose broadcasts form the dataset of the current investigation, are scant, but adhere to the global trend of stereotypization alongside a recent move towards more egalitarianism. A study of commercials from the mid 1990s found that 75% of the major roles are filled in by men (Weimann, 2000b). Avraham, First and Elephant-Loffler (2004) detected a three-to-one ratio of men to women in news magazines and two-and-a-half-to-one in dramatic series from the early 2000s, whereas a follow-up study that took place half a decade later found that in both genres the ratio of men to women shrank to two-to-one (Leor, Elephant-Loffler & Lankry, 2006).

This pattern of findings may represent an ongoing collision between opposite forces that operate within Israeli society. The secular Zionist ideology and the close contacts with western countries push Israelis to adopt an egalitarian position with regards to gender roles (Almog, 2004). Yet, at the same time, the predominance of the Orthodox fraction of Judaism, the sect to which officially nearly all Israeli Jews belong (Levy, Levinsohn & Katz, 2002), may shove the Israeli public to adopt a more traditional view of gender roles in accordance with religious customs that posit men as heads of the family and women as stay at home moms (Ariel, 1993). Israeli women develop business careers in smaller number than men and are severely under-represented in senior positions, making up on only 4% of the CEOs in companies whose stakes are traded in the local stock-exchange (Cohanim, 2013), possibly also due to the more negative view towards career women among observant Israelis (Maagar Mohot Research Institute, 2012). In academe, while females constitute as many as 51% of the junior lecturers, they fill only 33% of the senior faculty slots (Goldschmidt, 2012). Yet, one cannot ignore rapid changes that have occurred in Israel in recent years: For example, in 2012-2013 alone women doubled their parliamentary representation, conquered a CEO position in 3 out of the 5 largest banks and a rector's position in 2 of the 8 research-first universities. The question to what extent will this change find manifestation in a large media share of female experts on Television (including prestigious domains that have been traditionally reserved mainly to men) brings to mind Ogburn's (1964) concept of *cultural lag*. According to Ogburn, mass culture is often the last venue where profound social changes find expression because the shareholders of corporations which operate this culture have the least interest in these changes. On the other side of the spectrum there are scholars who claim that television is a venue that quickly catches up with feminist ideas because liberal attitudes are prevalent among the media creative personnel (Press, 2009). The bottom line is that in a mixed society like Israel, where conservative and liberal forces fiercely battle over the division of gender roles, media expressions of egalitarianism alongside traditional stereotypes may coexist.

Experts on Television

Bourdieu (1999, p.28) has described TV experts as “fast thinkers who offer cultural ‘fast food’”. Because of the need to catch the attention of a large number of viewers over a short period of time, commentators are required to present their thesis briefly. This calls for the participation of certain kind of experts, those who are not necessarily the top of the league, scientifically speaking, but are capable of coming to the studio on a short notice and explaining complex topics in a simple (sometimes simplistic) way, not without a notable sense of self-importance.

Such demonstration of expertise characterizes not only non-fictional shows where actual experts appear as themselves but also fictional programs that feature scholarly characters. In fact, studies show that fictional TV experts are quite similar in characteristics to non-fictional scholars who take part in talk shows (Johnson et al., 1999). Therefore, from reviewing literature concerning gender differences in the appearance of expert figures in fictional TV formats, we may learn of trends that are relevant to our study. Research regarding the representation of scientific experts as fictional characters in American TV drama (the only corpus of programming where this topic has been examined hitherto) found that their share of the overall protagonists' population was negligible - around one-percent (Dudo, Brossard, Shanahan, Scheufele, Morgan & Signorielli, 2011). A two-to-one ratio of men to women characterizes the makeup of the academic scholars population in fictional programming now, as it did in the 1980s (Dudo et al., 2011; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1985). A tendency to downplay the expertise of women scientists, which was still noted in the 1990s (Steinke, 1997), vanished recently as part of a general pattern of diminishing gender gaps in the professional background of fictional TV scientists (Long, Steinke, Applegate, Lapinski, Johnson & Ghosh, 2010). In fact, even the under-representation of female academics in TV drama exists only when the baseline for the comparison is fictional male academics, as the share of female scientific protagonists in American dramatic programming is not lower than the share of women in the faculty body of U.S. universities. In other words, women are under-represented in scientists' roles on television just as they are less likely to be employed as professors of science in higher education institutes (Ceci, Williams & Barnett, 2009). Yet, the presentation of women scientists in fictional programming is rather serious and appreciative and (in this aspect) equal to men – a beneficial key-point for younger viewers who aspire to develop a scientific career (Dudo et al., 2011).

When it comes to the representation of scientists in non-fictional programming, talk shows constitute the arena wherein - all over the world - scholars receive the largest exposure (Abt & Mustazza, 1997; Patrona, 2005). In programs such as *The Doctors*, *Good Morning America* and *Dr. Phil* which are franchised worldwide experts an-

swer layman questions posed by a host and reply to in-studio audience or viewers at home who ask about medical problems, emotional difficulties, legal hurdles and other domestic issues (Lunt & Lewis, 2008, p.10). Typically presented as the voice of authority (Munson, 1993), experts give advice that is rarely challenged within the program (Holderman, 2003, p.47), and is often unconditionally accepted by the viewers, especially the less educated ones (Heaton & Wilson, 1995). Such viewers tend to shape their view of intellectuals and scientists partly on the basis of popular talk shows (Johnson et al., 1999), which are quite often their only opportunity to see and hear academics showcasing their expertise (Holderman, 2003, p.47), even if in a somewhat simplified manner due to the medium's constraints. Given all of that, the lack of studies concerning gender differences and similarities in the presentation of experts in talk shows highlights the timeliness of our research.

Research Questions, Hypotheses and Rationale

We posit two directional hypotheses and two questions. In the absence of previous studies on gender representation of experts in talk shows, we base our rationale partly on findings of studies that examined the representation of scientists and experts in fictional genres and take into consideration the common assumption among media scholars that popular programming is a relatively coherent universe of cohesive messages (Gerbner, 1998; Weimann, 2000b).

H1: Men would outnumber women as experts in talk shows.

In fictional TV formats male academics and scientists outnumber women in these roles (Dudo et al., 2011; Long et al., 2010). More generally speaking, male protagonists outnumber women characters in nearly any fictional format (Glascok, 2001). This trend is also noted in fictional Israeli TV shows (Leor et al., 2006) and in U.S. news programming (Desmond & Danilewicz, 2010). We expect it to prevail in talk shows.

H2: Female experts would more often commentate on domestic topics (e.g. child care) and body grooming (e.g. beauty and design), whereas male experts would more often talk about politics, economy and security.

The rationale here rests on content analyses of various TV formats which found that – at least to some extent - men still engage in typical male occupations and hobbies and women still hinge to traditional female vocations and practice child-care (Mager & Helgeson, 2010; Wolin, 2003). This trend is even stronger in not entirely western societies such as Israel, where religious-conservative voices are as prevalent as calls for gender egalitarianism (Almog, 2004). We conceive the topic of discussion in the program to be closely related to the expert's occupation: an ex-general would likely commentate about security and a successful businessman

would probably share a business advice, whereas a cosmetician would be able to share her expertise when it comes to skin peeling, and midwife would give advice about birth. Since in Israel politicians, military personnel, successful businessmen and economists are more often men, whereas educators and cosmeticians are more frequently women (Almog, 2004), we expect to find gender differences accordingly in the topic of experts' commentary in talk shows.

RQ1: Would male experts in talk shows be older and senior (in academic ranking) or younger and junior - compared to female experts?

So far, content analyses of fictional programming failed to detect considerable differences in the professional-academic background of scientists and scholars (Dudo et al., 2011; Long et al., 2010). Since academic seniority correlates with age, we cannot predict at this stage whether gender differences in the age of experts, who appear in talk shows, would be noticeable.

RQ2: Would female and male experts be treated similarly or differently (e.g. criticized and disagreed with at the same frequency or at different frequencies) throughout the program?

With the exception of Holderman (2003, p. 45), who describes talk shows as “an Anti-Intellectual affair,” the literature tends to concur that these shows present academics as certified knowledge authorities (Johnson et al., 1999; Powell & Prasad, 2010), and that this mode of presentation characterizes not only U.S. programs (Patrona, 2005). Criticism of experts and scientists, a rare occurrence in fictional programming (Dudo et al., 2011), was never measured in non-fictional shows; however, since studies of fictional genres do not point at major gender differences in the accolades awarded to scientists across gender lines, we cannot predict at this stage whether such differences would be noticeable in the treatment of experts in talk shows.

Method

The study took place in Israel in 2012. Content analysis was used to determine the number of men and women who appear as experts in TV talk shows, their characteristics, and qualities related to the discussion in which they took part in the program.

Sample

The data were obtained from a systematic coding of four weeks worth of broadcasting of talk shows aired in Israel throughout February-June 2012 between 8am and midnight in two terrestrial commercial networks (*Channel 2* and *Channel 10*), and one public broadcasting station (*Channel 1*). The two commercial networks are the most

popular TV stations in Israel. Combined, they attract 60% of the viewers. Channel 1 is the only public broadcasting station in Israel. It is ranked third in the number of viewers (Eurodata TV, 2011).

The constructed week method was used to sample the programs. In this method, one day is picked randomly for each channel in each week until a complete constructed week representing week days and weekend days emerges. However, weeks that contain official state holidays or religious holidays were not sampled so as not to contaminate the dataset with non-representative content related specifically to the holidays. This sampling method is often used in content analyses of TV programming (See National television violence study, 1998) because it yields a reasonably sized sample that is still representative of a rather long period of time (in our case – half a season of broadcasting).

Any talk show that was aired in one of the sampled days was included in the sample. The process was repeated to obtain four weeks worth of broadcasting consisting of 1428 hours of programming (476 hours from each channel) of which 238 hours consisted of talk shows. These shows featured 495 experts.

Coding Book and Coding Reliability

Two *units of analysis* were used throughout the coding: the expert and the discussion in which the expert took part. *Expert categories* (variables) consisted of *gender*, *age* and *education*. *Discussion categories* (variables) included *topic*, *criticism of the expert's expertise* and *disagreement with the expert*.

The coding was done by two students, who worked separately without being privy to the goals of the research. The coders were trained together for six hours and on an individual basis for additional two hours. Before starting to code the dataset they practiced on two hours of talk shows that were not included in the final sample. Then, each broadcast was coded twice by the two coders. Inter-coder reliability was computed separately for each category using *Cohen's Kappa* coefficient. The values that ranged from $K = .810$ to $K = .998$ indicate high reliability.

The coders were allowed to consult external sources to determine the accuracy of their coding where such consultation could be useful (e.g. verifying the expert's academic degree by calling the university where s/he works). Cases of disagreement were brought for tandem discussion between the coders. Five cases, on which the coders remained unable to reach agreement, were solved by the authors. *Table 1* lists - for each variable - the coding options and intercoder reliability.

The second stage of the research, the semiotic analysis, selected from the overall sample of talk shows a number of discussions that highlight the empirical findings

Table 1. Coding Options and Reliability Values of Content Variables
Tablica 1. Kodiranje i pouzdanost varijabli

Unit of analysis	Variable	Coding options	Reliability value (Cohen's Kappa)
Expert			
	Gender	male ; female	K = .998
	Age	less then 20 years old; 21 to 30 years old; 31 to 40 years old; 40 to 49 years old; 50 to 59 years old; 60 to 69 years old; 70 years old or older	K = .810
	Education	Non-academic; BA or MA; Ph.D.; Professor	K = .927
Topic			
	Topic	economy ; politics ; security and self defense; medicine ; body grooming (e.g. beauty and fashion); construction and architecture ; entertainment ; child care and education (domestic matters); law and insurance ; computers and internet ; sciences ; other	K = .902
	Criticism of the expert's expertise (critique made by the host, or by the studio audience, or by viewers at home)	yes; no	K = .914
	Disagreement with the expert (coming from the host, or the studio audience, or viewers at home)	yes; no	K = .935

for a closer reading – based on Altheide and Schneider's (2012) system. This method aims to document and understand the communication of meaning that emanates from the text. The semiotic analysis appears in the discussion section.

Results

H1

To test H1, according to which the share of women experts in talk shows is lower than the share of men experts in the programs, we look at the gender breakdown across the sample. The four-hundred and ninety-five experts consisted of 313 men (63.2%) and 182 women (36.8%). The majority of men is statistically significant and H1 is confirmed, since the null hypothesis suggesting equal proportions among the genders is rejected $\{\chi^2_{(df=1)}=34.7 P<.001\}$.

H2

To test H2, according to which female experts more often commentate on domestic topics and body grooming, whereas male experts more often talk about politics, economy and security, let us look at *Table 2* which shows the distribution of topics by gender.

Table 2. Topic of Discussion by Expert Gender

Tablica 2. Teme prema spolu stručnjaka

Topic	Male (N=313) (%)	Female (N=182) (%)
Economy	16.6%	9.6%
Politics	10.1%	2.9%
Security and Self defense	10.6%	0.0%
Medicine	33.6%	33.0%
Body grooming	3.7%	13.7%
Construction and Architecture	1.4%	3.9%
Entertainment	.9%	0.0%
Child care and Education	4.6%	13.7%
Law and Insurance	5.5%	13.7%
Computers and Internet	1.4%	0.0%
Sciences	1.8%	1%
Other	9.7%	8.6%

The difference in gender distribution across the topics is significant $\{\chi^2_{(df=7)}=41.8 P<.001 \lambda=.046\}$. As expected, compared to men, women are significantly over-represented in discussions about body grooming (13.7% vs. 3.7% ; $\chi^2_{(df=1)}=8.4 P=.004$

$\lambda=.030$) and child care and education (13.7% vs. 4.6%; $\chi^2_{(df=1)}=26.2 P<.001 \lambda=.087$), but they are under-represented in discussions concerning security and self defense (0.0% vs. 10.6%; $\chi^2_{(df=1)}=13.8 P<.001 \lambda=.004$), politics (2.9% vs. 10.1%; $\chi^2_{(df=1)}=7.5 P=.006 \lambda=.020$), and economy (9.6% vs. 16.6%; $\chi^2_{(df=1)}=18.4 P<.001 \lambda=.007$). H2, which predicted these differences, is confirmed.

RQ1

To answer RQ1, which asked whether male experts, who appear in talk shows, are different in age or academic rank from their female counterparts, we look at two cross-tabulations: gender by age (Table 3) and gender by academic rank (Table 4).

Table 3. Age of Experts by Gender

Tablica 3. Godine stručnjaka prema spolu

Age	Male (N=313) (%)	Female (N=182) (%)
Less than 20	1.4%	2.0%
21-29	1.4%	1.0%
30-39	16.6%	31.4%
40-49	24.4%	38.2%
50-59	31.3%	18.6%
60-69	23.0%	8.8%
70+	1.8%	0.0%

Table 4. Education of Experts by Gender

Tablica 4. Obrazovanje stručnjaka prema spolu

Education	Male (N=313) (%)	Female (N=182) (%)
Non-academic	17.5%	24.5%
Junior Academics (BA, MA)	27.6%	36.3%
Doctors	42.9%	35.3%
Professors	12.0%	3.9%

From *Table 3* we learn that the share of male experts in the older age brackets (50 years old and older) is higher than the share of women experts in the same brackets (31.3% vs. 18.6% in the 50-59 age group; 23.0% vs. 8.8% in the 60-69 years old age group; 1.8% vs. 0.0% in the 70 years old and more age group). In the youngest cohorts (experts who are younger than 30) the shares of men and women are quite similar, but in the 30 to 50 year old age range, the share of female experts exceeds

the share of male experts (31.4% vs. 16.6% in the 30-39 years old age group; 38.2% vs. 24.4% in the 40-49 years old age group). Since age groups (contrary to age) constitute an ordinal scale (young to old), *Mann-Whitney test* with approximation to normal distribution is used to assess gender differences in this category. The *Rank Biserial coefficient* measures the size of the effect. The results of the procedure indicate a significant gender difference in age group distribution with a moderate effect $\{Z=4.7, P<.001, r_{rb} = .283\}$. Given that, we confer that male experts are older than female experts.

From *Table 4* we learn that the share of male experts who are doctors (42.9%) and professors (12%) is higher than the share of women experts in these ranks (35.3% and 3.9% respectively). In contrast, the share of women experts who hold only junior academic degrees (BA, MA) (36.3%) and the share of women who have no academic diploma at all (24.5%) are higher than the share of men in these groups (27.6% and 15.5% respectively). Since academic ranks (that express seniority) constitute an ordinal scale, *Mann-Whitney test* with approximation to normal distribution is used to assess gender differences in this category. The *Rank Biserial coefficient* measures the size of the effect. The results of the procedure indicate a significant gender difference in academic rank distribution with a small effect $\{Z=2.8, P=.004, r_{rb} = .170\}$. In light of that, we conclude that male experts are ranked higher at the academic ladder than female experts.

RQ2

Two indicators were used to measure the treatment of experts in the program and answer the question whether female experts are treated differently from male experts: criticism of the expert's expertise (critique made by the host, or the studio audience, or the viewers at home) and disagreement with the expert (coming from the host, or the studio audience, or the viewers at home).

Table 5. Experts Treatment during the Program by Gender
Tablica 5. Tretman stručnjaka u programu u odnosu na spol

	Male (N=313) (%)	Female (N=182) (%)
Criticism of the expert's expertise		
No	97.4%	98.9%
Yes	2.6%	1.1%
Disagreement with the expert		
No	96.8%	96.2%
Yes	3.2%	3.8%

As can be seen from *Table 5*, both male and female experts are rarely criticized or disagreed with (none of this occurred in more than 4% of the cases). To assess gender differences in these criteria we computed a combined ordinal criticism-disagreement measure wherein any disagreement or criticism gains one point and each expert gains as many points as s/he was criticized or disagreed with. Gender differences in this measure are not significant $\{Z=0.4, P>.05\}$. Thus, we can say that there is no indication of different treatment to experts in talk shows as a function of the expert's gender.

Discussion

As predicted, men experts outnumber women experts in talk shows. The gender distribution in our dataset (1.7 men for every woman) is even quite similar to what was found in other popular genres (Glascock, 2001). However, male experts do not receive a more favorable treatment from the host and the audience during the program. The fact that male experts are older and more senior than female experts contradicts some of the results of studies regarding the professional-academic background of scientists in fictional programming (Dudo et al., 2011; Long et al., 2010), but it is in line with gender distinctions in other TV formats – specifically the tendency of female characters to be younger and less senior in their position (Signorielli, 2012). The differentiation of discussion topics across gender lines, namely that male experts are less likely to give advice on beauty, fashion and child care and more likely to talk about security, politics and economy, that we found in talk shows is in line with the results of studies that examined the distribution of occupations among fictional TV characters (Collins, 2011; Mager & Helgeson, 2011). Thus, the picture – when it comes to the comparison of gender differences across the fictional/non-fictional genre axis - is that there are more similarities than differences across formats and that gender gaps are closing in but they have not vanished altogether yet. To an extent, the depiction of women experts in talk shows as younger and not as senior as male counterparts, replicates a pattern known from popular fictional programming (Glascock, 2001; Signorielli, 2012) more than it is consonant with the representation of scholars in high-brow science programs (Dudo et al., 2011; Long et al., 2010). This might be the case because the audience to which talk shows appeal is more similar (in SES) to the audience that watches popular fictional programming (Johnson et al., 1999).

Yet, as in any study of gender differences in media content any conclusion about the receivers of the message remains somewhat speculative and the inevitable question is whether the effects that we found reflect only what the production views as the right way of presenting gender roles, or whether they reflect actual societal circum-

stances. Of course, a broadcasters' survey conducted concurrently with a content analysis is needed to fully answer this question, but the qualitative analysis may shed some light. Let us look closely at an excerpt from a discussion that took place in a morning program that was broadcast on *Channel 2* (commercial station) in June 2012:

Host: |We are here to discuss the approaching summer holiday. Who among s does not need a vacation? To enlighten us where to to and which places to avoid we have retired *Brigadier-General (Res.) Mr. X¹* - former military intelligence officer and now CEO of a company that developed an application that can recognize suspicious terrorists in crowded places [*male*]. He will guide us how to remain safe while we are abroad. We also have with us *Dr. Z.* - dermatologist [*male*] who will teach us how protect our body from the sun if we decide to take a vacation in a sunny island. Finally, we have Ms. Y, kindergarten teacher [*female*] who would happily share her experience on what to so with small kids during the summer holiday.

This short discussion includes a number of embedded meessages that indicate female marginality: The woman is presented last in the list of experts. Unlike then male counterparts, she is deprived of a title (academic, military, etc.). While the men experts promise to “teach” and “guide” she is only about to “share” her experience.

Potential Explanations of the Findings

The most disturbing question is why does the TV industry consistently feature a stereotyped reflection of gender roles, even when some of the more intellectual (and possibly progressive) people are brought into the studio. One possible answer is that such presentation meets audience expectations (and lets us not forget that the more avid viewers of talk shows tend to be older and more sonservative than the public at large – see Comstock & Scharrer, 1999). Another explanation comes from a British study which found that media outlets select scientists to commentate as experts mainly based on their availability, professional reputation, and capability to explicate complex processes in an easily digestible manner (Chimba & Kitzinger, 2008). That British study further revealed that even though the most common answer given by TV producers to the question whether the scientist's gender is relevant in the decision to invite him/her to the studio is ‘no’, these producers do admit that physical appearance is taken into consideration in such decisions. If we add to that the common myth according to which, physically speaking, women age faster than men (Saar, 2012), this may partly explain why in our sample female experts were young-

¹ The names of all the experts whose TV appearance is cited are concealed.

er than males in the same roles. Yet, the 1 to 1.7 ratio of female experts to male experts in Israeli talk shows expresses gender equality more than the 1 to 3 ratio of females to males among senior faculty members in Israeli institutes of higher education does (Goldschmidt, 2012). The tendency of male experts to be more often than their female counterparts doctors and professors (55% vs. 40%) and less frequently junior academics (27.5% vs. 36%) also echoes the gender reality in Israeli higher education system, where females constitute only 33% of the senior faculty positions (Goldschmidt, 2012). Thus, the majority of male experts in talk shows and their tendency to be more senior may represent quite accurately the demographic makeup of the academic body from which most of the experts are recruited to take part in the programs. In other words, talk shows may reflect rather than invent gender bias in senior academic positions. Add to this the fact that (as learned from the aforementioned British study) female scientists less often agree to appear in the media partly due to lack of confidence and lack of time (Chimba & Kitzinger, 2008), the lack of awareness of systematic discrimination of women as media professionals that is widely shared by decision makers in media organizations around the world (Macharia & Morinière, 2013), and the obvious conclusion is that the under-representation of women experts in talk shows is quite possibly not intentional.

Finally, it is also not out of the question that female scholars are not so good at “fast thinking” – if to use Bourdieu’s (1999) term. This means that they might be less willing than male counterparts to simplify complicated facts or to explain ambiguous circumstances in an unequivocal sensational manner. Perhaps, they prefer to be more loyal to the scientific truth, but such loyalty is not what is sought for in a fast-paced talk show. To demonstrate this possibility let us look closely a part of a discussion taken from current affairs talk show that was broadcast in *Channel 1* (public broadcasting) in February 2012:

Host: [We are here to talk about the US elections that are about to take place exactly nine months from today. To predict what will happen we invited two experts: *Prof. X* – an expert on American politics [*male*] and *Prof. Y* who is a pollster [*female*]. *Prof. X* – would you say that Obama’s victory is safe?”

Prof. X: “Clean sweep. Landslide. Read my lips.”

Host: “*Prof. Y* – What do you think?”

Prof. Y: “I think that the situation is very complicated. Both candidates still face a very long campaign in which many things might happen. In addition, if we look at the figures, we see that the confidence level for Obama’s victory and for Romney’s victory fall into the same range with standard deviations that intertwine and cross the boundaries of being able to declare a winner at a confidence level of 95% or more. This means that the range of potential election results is theoretically indefinite. Of course, in a binary race like the US elections the

range of possible results is actually limited to two, but two is - in our discussion – is practically an indefinite number.”

Host: Prof. Y – You are using terms which are unfamiliar to our viewers. Please try to simplify.

Prof. Y: “The situation is complex. I am actually simple...”

Host: “Thank you, Prof X. We learned from you that Obama will win this race. Thank you also Prof. Y. We learned from you that life is complicated.”

The inevitable meaning of this discussion is that the male expert [*Prof. X*] knows what is about to happen and can predict the future, whereas the female expert [*Prof. Y*] “reveals” only the cliché according to which “tomorrow never knows”. Of course, the truth is that the female expert is less speculative and more scientifically rigid, but scientific rigidity is not what a fast thinking TV program seeks (Bourdieu, 1999).

Our results confirm that the symbolic annihilation of scholarly women from the popular media (see Tuchman, 1978) exists in talk shows mainly in the form of *omission* (fewer female experts appear in the programs). There are no signs of *condemnation* and when it comes to *trivialization* the results are mixed: on the one hand female experts are not contested more often than male counterparts; on the other hand, they are over-represented in low-brow topics such as body grooming. The last finding is in line with the often heard feminist critique of popular programming for discouraging young female viewers, who (contrary to males) lack role models of their own gender, from attempting to climb higher in the academic ladder (Durkin, 2011). Against this backdrop, the fact that women experts, who do take part in talk shows, are not criticized or disagreed with more often than male experts are, transmits an encouraging cultivation message to the viewers regarding the capability of women to become esteemed knowledge authorities.

The representation of “hard core” scientists (physicists, chemists, etc.) in talk shows is miniscule regardless of gender (less than 2% of the experts). This low frequency is similar to findings of studies concerning the prevalence of scientists in fictional programming (Dudo et al., 2011), which concluded that the meager exposure of scientific occupants on successful TV shows is considerably limiting the capability of science to reach out to larger publics. Our study reveals that while talk shows refrain from inviting “hard core” scientists to the studio in large numbers there is no connection between the expert’s gender and his chances of being one of the few “hard core scientists” who do take part in the program.

Cultural Considerations, Study Limitations and Suggestions for Further Studies

In the absence of previous studies of similar content with which our findings can be compared, no claim concerning persistent tendencies can be made. In the Israeli context, the lower prevalence of women experts, their tendency to commentate on traditional feminine areas of expertise (body grooming, child care), and the fact they are not criticized or disagreed with more frequently than male experts are together portray a society in transition, where expressions of egalitarianism alongside traditional stereotypes coexist in the media just like they do in the parliament (Knesset – Heb.), which hosts concurrently a zealous group of feminist politicians and an active family values political club that aims to assist women in actualizing themselves as homemakers. In other words, the results of the content analysis portray cultural trends (Greenberg, 1980, p. XII), a fact which serves as *raison d'être* for this work, even without a proof of effect, but at the same time limits the validity of the findings to mixed transitional societies such as Israel. In countries such as Slovakia and Bulgaria, where the educational level of women, their economic status and political success (compared to men) is more or less similar to the situation in Israel (Best and Worst Places for Women, 2011) we may detect similar trends in the appearance of women in prestigious roles in talk shows.

Beyond the need to replicate the study to ascertain the consistency of the findings across time, conducting interviews with media producers is recommended to gain a better understanding of the decision to invite (or not to invite) men (or women) experts to commentate in TV programs. Audience studies of talk shows viewers would allow bracing the assumption that a repetitive presentation of gender differences among experts, who participate in popular programs, fortifies a gendered image of authorized knowledge. Yet, with all due respect that audience studies deserve, one should not forget that a work like ours which examines the relationships between different aspects of message variables related to gender expands our understanding of the representation of gender roles in the media in a meaningful way (Neuendorf, 2011, p. 278) and improves our ability to grasp the complex interaction between media and gender.

REFERENCES

- Abt, V., & Mustazza, L. (1997). *Coming after Oprah: Cultural fallout in the age of the TV talk show*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
- Ali, A., Ali, R., Kumar, D., Hafeez, M. H., & Ghufuran, B. (2012). Gender role portrayal in television advertisement: Evidence from Pakistan. *Information Management and Business Review*, 4(6), 340-351.

- Altheide, D. L., & Schneider, C. J. (2012). *Qualitative media analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Almog, O. (2004). *Preda Misrulik: Shinuy arachim ba'elita hayisre'elit* [Farewell to 'Srulik': Changing values among the Israeli elite – Hebrew]. Haifa: Haifa University Press and Zmora Bitan.
- Ariel, Y. (1993). Tifkud ha'isha hayisre'elit bedorenu. [The functioning of contemporary Israeli woman – Hebrew]. *Shana Beshana*. Retrieved from <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/kitveyet/shana/tiefkud-4.htm>
- Avraham, A., First, A., & Elephant-Loffler, N. (2004). *Hane'darim vehanochechim bizman tzfiyat si: Migvan tarbuti beshidurey arutzey hatelevizia hamischariyim beyisrael* [The absentees and attendees on primetime: Cultural variety in commercial television broadcasts in Israel – Hebrew]. Jerusalem: The Second Authority for Radio and Television.
- Bandura, A. (2009). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. In J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (3rd ed., pp. 94–124). New-York: Routledge.
- Best and Worst Places for Women (2011, September 18). *Newsweek/The Daily Beast*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/09/18/best-and-worst-countries-for-women-from-iceland-to-the-u-s-to-pakistan-and-afghanistan.html>
- Bourdieu, P. (1999). *On television*. NY: Free Press.
- Boyce, T., & Kitzinger, J. (2008) *Promoting women in the media: The role of SET organizations and their science media communicators*. Report for the UKRC. Retrieved from http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/resources/Boyce_Report_4.pdf
- Busby, L. J. (1975). Sex-role research on the mass media. *Journal of Communication*, 25(4), 107-131.
- Cavender, G., Bond-Maupin, L., & Jurik, N. C. (1999). The construction of gender in reality crime TV. *Gender & Society*, 13(5), 643-663.]
- Ceci, S. J., Williams, W. M., & Barnett, S. M. (2009). Women's underrepresentation in science: Socio-cultural and biological considerations. *Psychological Bulletin*, 135, 218–261.
- Cohanim, E. (2013). *BDI: Rak arba mankaliyot beme'a hahavarot hagdolot be'Israel*. [Only four female CEO's in the 100 largest companies in Israel - Hebrew]. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.co.il/news/new.aspx?Pn6VQ=ED&0r9VQ=HGDD>.
- Collins, R. L. (2011). Content analysis of gender roles in media: Where are we now and where should we go? *Sex roles*, 64(3), 290-298. doi: 10.1007/s11199-010-9929-5

- Comstock, G., & Scharrer, E. (1999). *Television: What's on, who's watching, and what it means*. San-Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Desmond, R., & Danilewicz, A. (2010). Women are on, but not in, the news: Gender roles in local television news. *Sex Roles, 62*, 822-829. doi: 10.1007/s11199-009-9686-5
- Dominick, R. J. & Rauch, G. (1972). The image of women in network TV commercials. *Journal of Broadcasting, 17*, 259–266.
- Dudo, A., Brossard, D., Shanahan, J., Scheufele, D. A., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (2011). Science on television in the 21st century: Recent trends in portrayals and their contributions to public attitudes toward science. *Communication Research, 48*(6), 754-777. doi: 10.1177/0093650210384988
- Durkin, K. (2011). Television and sex-role acquisition 2: Effects. *British journal of Social psychology, 24*(3), 191-210. doi: 10.1111/j.2044-8309.1985.tb00680.x
- Eisend, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of gender roles in advertising. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 38*(4), 418-440. doi: 10.1007/s11747-009-0181-x
- Eurodata TV. (2011). *One television year in the world*. Paris, France: Mediametrie.
- Furnham, A., & Paltzer, S. (2010). The portrayal of men and women in television advertisements: An updated review of 30 studies published since 2000. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 51*(3), 216-236. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9450.2009.00772.x
- Gamson, W. A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W., & Sasson, T. (1992). Media images and the social construction of reality. *Annual Review of Sociology, 373-393*.
- Gerbner, G. (1998). *Cultivation analysis: An overview*. *Mass Communication & Society, 1*, 175–194. doi: 10.1207/s15327825mcs0103&4_4.
- Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1985). *Science and television – a research report*. Philadelphia, PA: Annenberg School of Communication.
- Glascock, J. (2001). Gender roles on prime-time network television: Demographics and behaviors. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 45*(4), 656-669. doi: 10.1080/08838150801992078
- Goldschmidt, R. (2012). *Netunim al nashim ba'academia* [Data on women in academy – Hebrew]. Knesset information and research center, Retrieved 10 December 2012 from: www.knesset.gov.il/mmm.
- Greenberg, B. (1980). *Life on television*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Heaton, J. A., & Wilson, N. L. (1995). *Tuning in trouble: Talk TV's destructive impact on mental health*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Holbert, R. L., Shah, D. V., & Kwak, N. (2006). Political implications of prime-time drama and sitcom use: Genres of representation and opinions concerning wom-

- en's rights. *Journal of Communication*, 53(1), 45-60. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb03004.x
- Holderman, L. B. (2003). Media-constructed anti-intellectualism: The portrayal of experts in popular US television talk shows. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 11(1), 45-62. doi: 10.1080/15456870309367437
- Johnson, A. J., Smith, S. W., Mitchell, M. M., Orrego, V. O., & Yun, K. A. (1999). Expert advice on daytime talk television: A beneficial source of information for the general public? *Communication Research Reports*, 16(1), 91-101. doi: 10.1080/08824099909388705
- Lauzen, M. M., Dozier, D. M., & Horan, N. (2008). Constructing gender stereotypes through social roles in prime-time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(2), 200-214. doi: 10.1080/08838150801991971
- Leor, N., Elephant-Loffler, N., & Lankry, I. (2006). *Hane'edarim vehanohehim bizman tsfiyat si—mehkar ma'akav: Migvan tarbuti beshidurey arutsey hatelevizya hamischariyim beyisrael* [Absence and presence in prime time – A follow-up study: Cultural diversity in commercial television channels in Israel – Hebrew]. Jerusalem, Israel: Second Authority for Television and Radio.
- Levy, S., Levinsohn, H., & Katz, E. (2002). *Yehudim yisraelim—dyokan: Emunot, shmirat masoret ve'arachim shel yehudim be'yisrael* [Israeli Jews—A portrait: Beliefs, values, and observance of the Jews in Israel – Hebrew]. Jerusalem, Israel: Guttman Center of the Israel Democracy Institute.
- Liebler, C. M., & Smith, S. J. (1997). Tracking gender differences: A comparative analysis of network correspondents and their sources. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 41(1), 58-68. doi: 10.1080/08838159709364390
- Long, M., Steinke, J., Applegate, B., Knight Lapinski, M., Johnson, M. J., & Ghosh, S. (2010). Portrayals of male and female scientists in televised programs popular among middle school-age children. *Science Communication*, 32, 356-382.
- Lunt, P., & Lewis, T. (2008). OPRAH.com: Lifestyle expertise and the politics of recognition. *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, 18(1), 9-24. doi: 10.1080/07407700801902775
- Luyt, R. (2011). Representation of gender in South African television advertising: A content analysis. *Sex roles*, 65(5), 356-370. doi: 10.1007/s11199-011-0027-0
- Maagar Mohot Research Institute. (2012). *Seker daat kahal bekerev nashim mehamigzar hayehudi* [Public opinion survey among Jewish women – Hebrew]. Retrieved from www.emunah.org.il/.../Survey-HarediyotDativotHiloniyot.pdf
- Macharia, S., & Morinière, P. (2013). Gender in journalism: Status of gender in media codes. *Global Media Monitor*, 24, 405.

- Mager, J., & Helgeson, J. (2011). Fifty years of advertising images: Some changing perspectives on role portrayals along with enduring consistencies. *Sex Roles*, 64(3), 238-252. doi: 10.1007/s11199-010-9782-6
- McArthur, L. Z., & Resko, B. G. (1975). The portrayal of men and women in American television commercials. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 97, 209-220.
- Morgan, M. (1982). Television and adolescents' sex role stereotypes: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43(5), 947-955.
- Munson, W. (1993). *All talk*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. *National television violence study* (1998). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2011). Content analysis—A methodological primer for gender research. *Sex roles*, 64(3), 276-289. doi: 10.1007/s11199-010-9893-0
- Ogburn, W. F. (1964). *On culture and social change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Paek, H. J., Nelson, M. R., & Vilela, A. M. (2011). Examination of gender-role portrayals in television advertising across seven countries. *Sex roles*, 64(3), 192-207. doi: 10.1007/s11199-010-9850-y
- Patrona, M. (2005). Speaking authoritatively: On the modality and factuality of expert talk in Greek television studio discussion programs. *Text*, 25(2), 233-267.
- Powell, H., & Prasad, L. (2010). "As seen on TV" - The celebrity expert: How taste is shaped by lifestyle media. *Cultural Politics*, 6(1), 111-124. doi: 10.2752/175174310X12549254318908
- Press, A. (2009). Gender and family in television's Golden Age and beyond. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 625(1), 139-150. doi: 10.1177/0002716209337886
- Saar, T. (2012, August 24). *Yofi, gil, migdar - Eich nashim mitmodedot im hameshulash ha'achzari?* [Beauty, age, gender - How do women cope with the brutal triple - Hebrew]. *Haaretz*, retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.co.il/gallery/fashion/1.1807823>
- Signorielli, N. (1989). Television and conceptions about sex roles: Maintaining conventionality and the status quo. *Sex Roles*, 21(5), 341-360.
- Signorielli, N. (2012). Gender stereotyping on television. In G. Brewer (ed.), *Media psychology* (pp. 170-186). London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Smythe, D. W. (1954). Reality as presented by television. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 18(2), 143-156.
- Steinke, J. (1997). A portrait of a woman as a scientist: Breaking down barriers created by gender-role stereotypes. *Public Understanding of Science*, 6(4), 409-428.
- Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. New York: Free Press.

- van Dijk, T. A. (1995). Discourse semantics and ideology. *Discourse and Society*, 6(2), 243-289.
- van Zoonen, L. (1996). Feminist perspectives on the media. In J. Curran & M. Gurevitch (eds.), *Mass media and society* (pp. 31-52). London: Arnold.
- Weimann, G. (2000a). *Communicating unreality: Modern media and the reconstruction of reality*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.]
- Weimann, G. (2000b). Migdar vepirsomet: Nashim vegvarim betashdirey hapirsomet hatelevizyonit beyisrael [Gender differences in Israeli television commercials – Hebrew], *Megamot*, 40, 466–485.
- Wolin, L.D. (2003). Gender issues in advertising: An oversight synthesis of research: 1970–2002. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 43(1), 111-129.

Spol televizijskih stručnjaka: Kantitativno-kvalitativna analiza Izraelskih televizijskih *talk show* emisija

Amir Hetsroni

SAŽETAK

Ovo kvantitativno-kvalitativno istraživanje temelji se na analizi sadržaja 238 sati izraelskih televizijskih *talk show* emisija iz 2012. godine, te semiotičkoj analizi odabranih programa kako bi se očitala spolna distribucija televizijskih stručnjaka i istražile moguće razlike u načinima na koji se u takvim programima tretiraju muškarci, odnosno žene. Istraživanje uključuje ukupno 495 stručnjaka. Muški stručnjaci prevladavaju nad ženskim u omjeru od 1,7:1. Ti su muškarci znatno stariji od dotičnih žena, te su u pravilu višeg akademskog ranga, ali nisu bili tretirani s više favoriziranja tijekom programa. Štoviše, stručnjaci oba spola bili su kritizirani ili im se proturječilo u manje od 4% slučajeva. Teme koje su stručnjaci komentirali odražavaju poznate spolne stereotype, pri čemu su muškarci češće govorili o sigurnosti, politici i ekonomiji, a žene o uređivanju tijela i brizi za djecu. Rezultati, koji djelomično odgovaraju feminističkoj kritici popularnih medija, analizirani su u svezi s teorijskim konceptima simboličkog uništenja i “brzog mišljenja” kao i pronalascima studija koje su razmatrale spol znanstvenika u drugim televizijskim žanrovima.

Ključne riječi: *talk show*, Izrael, televizijski žanrovi, spolni stereotipi, feministička kritika

