

Dan Caspi and Nelly Elias (Eds.), **Ethnic Minorities and Media in the Holy Land**, London, UK: Vallentine Mitchell, 2014, 252 pp., \$89.95 (hardcover).

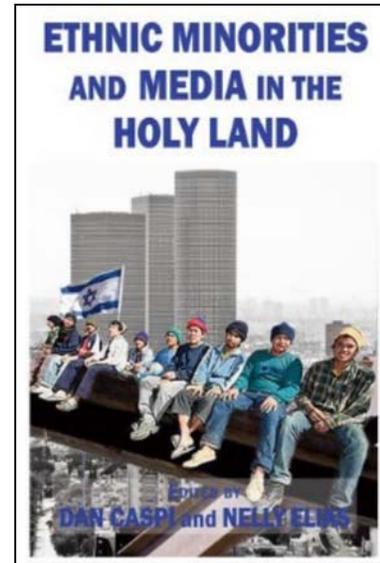
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In *Ethnic Minorities and Media in the Holy Land*, Dan Caspi and Nelly Elias have accomplished something that should prompt reading of this collection of research in courses far beyond those directly interested in the topics suggested by the title alone. They have brought order to a body of social science research undertaking the study of media and minorities and, in the process, offer larger insights into the topic of life inside Israel.

Caspi and Elias would have had no problem coming up with the list of authors for the chapters to fill the anthology—the latter is chair of the Department of Communication Studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and the former earlier served as chair (and is, for all intents and purposes, the founder of the study of communication in Israel). Many authors on the list are their colleagues at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The others—at universities, research centers, and government offices stretching from the Negev across Israel, through Western Europe, to Amherst and Minnesota—are likely peers, students, and friends.

What must have become more difficult was narrowing down the list of those scholars and arranging them in one volume, and deciding what order to list them in. What makes the editors' work remarkable is that they begin the book by writing a seminal work themselves. In that chapter they provide an overview of the totality of social science research about media and minorities in Israel. And while that might sound like a literature review, it is more than that. Although the authors show the progression of scholarship from one period to the next, they also explain and demonstrate how the work from one era persists into the next.

But the editors did not simply organize social science research about media and minority groups in Israel; they then sat down and wrote a study on the subject, which they use as the introduction to their collection. The chapter includes an extremely useful page-long typology that provides insights into the four research traditions outlined. The typology explains when each tradition was popular; its concept of society is; its conception of minorities; the chief spheres of its research; the types of researchers who work in each tradition. They also analyze each tradition's semantic repertoire; the status of the tradition's majority language; media ecology, as envisioned by the tradition; and the subjects of research taken on "in Communication studies" (p. 3). Following this introduction, the book is divided into sections that explore distinct theoretical approaches and issues. Section A takes on "Minorities' Representation in the Media." Section B looks at "Media Production for and by Minorities." Section C considers "Minorities' Uses and Reception of Media."



Nearly 1 million former Soviet Jews immigrated from the USSR to Israel in the 1990s, and two of the four research studies in Section A deal with the challenges they faced. In the first article, Lemish analyzes three years of coverage of women from the USSR (the former Soviet Union or FSU) in the Israeli popular press in the mid-1990s. Qualitative content analysis showed the women were presented as sex workers or as alien "Others," although a small minority were presented as success stories—immigrants who overcame all odds to make it in Israeli society. Gershenson analyzes newspaper profiles of the creator of Geshet, a Russian immigrant theater in Tel Aviv established to present FSU immigrants to Israeli society as the persons of the theater's audiences. The complicated analysis explores media discourses heavy with colonial frames, ambivalent about a "new immigrant" unwilling to conform to the narratives of ideological norms of the "Zionist homecoming."

In the next article, First considers the portrayal of Arabs in Israeli TV news at points of contact and conflict between Israel's majority and minority groups during hot points and banal periods. First finds in the Israeli context, the "us/them" binary is always present, and no distinction exists between periods of banal or hot nationalism; additionally, traces of liberal discourse that emerged in the last decades of the 20th century had completely disappeared. Khvorostianov and Elias fill a gap in immigrant press research, which has generally looked at the information immigrants receive about their new settings, but has never addressed the accuracy of that information or how well the press mediates between immigrants and their surroundings. Since FSU immigrants encountered social services in Israel for the first time, the authors felt reliable representations of those services in their own language be important. The online Russian papers suggested the social workers were undereducated, ignorant, and inefficient, as well as corrupt and hostile.

Section B focuses on minority media production patterns and content. Kama spent six months at *Manila-Tel Aviv* conducting participant observation research and completing in-depth interviews with migrant contributors and the Israeli owners. The magazine is directed toward members of the estimated half a million Filipino migrant workers in Israel. The second piece considers the emerging popularity of "Israeli Mediterranean pop." Kaplan explores the commercial, organizational, and cultural forces that made it possible by 2010 for the Mizrahi music to travel from its Arab-Muslim roots through Turkish and Greek restyling to a light pop welcome on Hebrew stations.

Next, Schejter describes the development of electronic media targeting the Palestinian–Israeli population, analyzing the regulatory landscape. The piece concludes with a discussion of the state's approach to electronic media serving the Palestinian minority. Ben-David examines the Arabic-language media landscape on the Web in Israel. The picture that emerges is of a dense network of locally produced online news in Arabic, which is important to Arabic-language audiences in Israel.

Section C tackles four studies that focus on media uses and reception in communities of FSU immigrants, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Israelis of Mizrahi origin. Adoni and Nossek, studying book reading in Israel for 40 years, find their data consistently demonstrate—even in a media-saturated environment—that reading for pleasure persists. Preference differences still separate cocultures—immigrants from the FSU still seek Russian material in Russian, and Mizrahi and Palestinian cocultures

want Arabic-language materials. All groups read world classics and modern bestsellers in translation, but intellectual elites across all groups also read more English-language books, particularly personal fulfillment, human interest, and J. K. Rowling.

Mesch, Mano, and Tsamir report that Israeli minority groups have fewer resources to use the Internet, but that access is far more available than the resources necessary to obtain specialty medical care. Thus, while Israeli Arabs are more likely than Israeli Jews to visit primary care doctors who are local, they are less likely to visit specialists who are located in Israeli medical centers at a distance and difficult to reach. Notably, individuals who seek health information online—in this case, the Israeli Arabs—are most likely to use the information obtained online to change their health habits.

Ben Hay-Segev and Squires explore Mizrahi audience interactions with Mizrahi representations on Israeli television. The study explores how different generations of Mizrahim negotiate televised representations of Mizrahi identity, showing consistency and discrepancy across age groups. Importantly, audience voices evince continued concern with positive and negative portrayals and the degree to which such imbalanced portrayals influence the social and political status of the Mizrahim in Israeli society. Across generations, participants criticized mostly negative depictions due to Ashkenazi dominance in the industry. Viewers drew parallels between their experiences and those of Blacks in American and British TV representations. Given the audience recognition of issues in representation, the authors suggest it is long past time for academic discourse in Israel to face issues of race rather than hiding them behind labels of ethnicity and class.

Elias wraps up the volume with a comparative analysis of the plights of the millions of immigrants evicted at the collapse of the Soviet Union—2 million ethnic Germans to Germany and 1 million Jews to Israel. Both groups had lived for centuries in Russia; the ethnoreligiosity that made them problematic there gave them the right of immediate citizenship in Germany or Israel. Elias conducted in-depth, semistructured interviews with immigrants in both countries and hypothesized that their reactions in their new homes were also influenced by their experiences at home. The Germans were marginalized and suspect in Russia, whereas the Russian Jews had been highly educated and deeply involved in science and culture. The two groups seemed to have carried with them expectations of how they would be received and valued, which influenced their expectations of language acquisition and assimilation. In Germany, immigrants immediately and intensively used media in the majority language, in contrast to the immigrants in Israel. And once in Germany, they reported that they no longer referred to the Russian media, first, because it interrupted their efforts at language acquisition and, later, because they were no longer interested.

The book's publisher is based in London and Portland, Oregon, so the book can be purchased without directly violating the BDS boycott of Israeli products, if not scholarship. Many ideas and insights are worth encountering with graduate students—which is not to say some of the issues are not problematic, but the word limit is reached.