

## **MTV's 'Jersey Shore' Garners Critics Over Use of Term 'Guido'**

Show's Star Defends 'Guido' Lifestyle, Says It's Part of Being Italian

By EMILY FRIEDMAN

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For the cast members of "Jersey Shore," the MTV reality show depicts everything they say a [summer in the Garden State](#) is about: hair gel, hook ups and the coveted, flawless tan.

But for [Italian-American groups](#) and New Jersey tourism officials, the show is awash with inaccuracies, many of which they fear give the Italian community and the vacation destination a [bad rap](#).

In particular, the willingness of the eight 20-somethings sharing a [Jersey Shore summer house](#) to classify themselves as "guidos" has drawn the ire of groups that consider the term offensive.

"The program certainly depicts the Jersey Shore as a culturally vapid place and doesn't make it appealing to anyone outside the demographic [MTV] is showing," said Daniel Cappello, the executive director of the Jersey Shore Convention & Visitors Bureau.

After just two episodes, the show, which airs Thursday nights at 10 p.m. on [MTV](#), has introduced viewers to the eight shore house residents, all of whom pride themselves in being "guidos" or, for the ladies, "guidettes."

And later in the show's season, the Shore will get violent when one of the roommates, Nicole Polizzi, gets punched in the face at a local bar.

Polizzi was hit by New York City gym teacher Brad Ferro, who was later found guilty of simple assault and was fined \$500 and ordered to take an anger management course, according to Seaside Heights Police Chief Thomas J. Boyd.

Within the first five minutes of the show's premiere episode, a 28-year-old male who goes by the name "Mike 'The Situation'" because of his chiseled abdominal muscles -- "My abs are so ripped up we call it 'the situation,'" he says -- tells the camera that the Jersey Shore is where "you have to be" because it's the place "where the shirts come off and the bikinis come out."

Mike proudly says he's a "guido" -- the type of guy every girl wants because he is typically "a good looking, smooth, well-dressed Italian."

As another cast member, "Pauly D," readies to move to the house in Seaside Heights, N.J., where the show was filmed earlier this year, the cameras capture him filling an entire suitcase with hair gel.

Hair gel, he says, is all part of the "guido lifestyle."

"It takes me about 25 minutes to do my hair," says Pauly D, who works as a DJ in Rhode Island during the off season. "There's no way I'm going to Jersey without my gel."

But Joseph Del Raso, the president of The National Italian-American Foundation, isn't happy about the cast throwing around the term "guido."

"We find this program alarming in that it attempts to make a direct connection between 'guido culture' and Italian-American identity," Del Raso said in a statement. "'Guido' is widely viewed as a pejorative term and reinforces negative stereotypes. "

In a statement provided to ABCNews.com, an MTV spokesperson responded to some of the criticisms of the show, saying, "We understand that this show is not intended for every audience and depicts just one aspect of youth culture. Our intention was never to stereotype, discriminate, or offend."

'Jersey Shore' Star 'Snooki' Defends Show, Use of Word 'Guido'

Polizzi, known on the show by her nickname "Snooki," told ABCNews.com that she was aware some people would take offense to the term "guido" being used so freely.

"I knew the reaction to the show was going to be negative because it's about guidos, and some people think it's a derogatory term," she said. "But it's not -- it's basically [a term] to describe Italians who like to look good and be the center of attention, and there's nothing wrong with that."

Polizzi spoke to ABCNews.com prior to the airing of the second episode and did not comment on the punch.

"It just means you like to take care of yourself," said Polizzi, 22, who is originally from Poughkeepsie, N.Y., and is currently taking time off from school to focus on her acting career.

She says she'd like her own MTV spinoff show that focuses on her search for love. In 10 years, Polizzi says she'd like to have the partying "out of her system and hopefully be settled down with a nice job and income and a beautiful Italian husband and beautiful Italian babies."

Polizzi herself has been the target of online critics, including a Facebook group dedicated to her called "Fans of Punching The Jersey Shore's Snooki in the Face."

She admitted the early criticism has been hard to take, but added that she hopes "everyone realizes that she's not a crazy, drunken idiot."

"I don't have to drink all the time to have fun. I'm a normal person too -- I just like to have fun at the Jersey Shore. I don't want everyone to think I have rehab. I want people think I'm a fun, nice girl," she said.

In the end, Polizzi says she's certain the disparaging remarks about her will make her a "stronger person," and adds that she thinks the show's harshest critics will continue tuning in.

"Bad publicity is really good publicity," said Polizzi. "Everyone who is hating on the show at the end of the day is still watching it, so I don't care what anyone says because I know deep down they're watching."

#### Advertisers Back Away

But while more than a million viewers reportedly tuned in for the first episode, the public backlash may be starting to hurt the program.

At least one advertiser -- Domino's Pizza -- asked the network to stop playing its ads during "Jersey Shore."

In a statement to ABCNews.com, Domino's spokesman Chris Brandon said that the "content" of the show "wasn't right for "Domino's."

"We have no issue with MTV, and we haven't pulled our advertising from the network. We just have chosen not to be on that particular show," said Brandon.

In response, MTV released a statement: "'Jersey Shore' may not be for every sponsor or advertiser and we understand that."

#### 'Jersey Shore' Critics Worry About Italian-American Image

According to the network's Web site, MTV is simply continuing its tradition of focusing on "various subcultures," this time following a group of young adults living in a summer share in Seaside Heights, N.J. MTV says that by the end of the show viewers will see "there is more to these tan and buff individuals than hair gel."

But others aren't so sure, and worry that the lasting impression some viewers will have of Italian-Americans won't be a good one.

"The show does not depict anything close to the reality of Italian-Americans," said Philip Piccigallo, the national executive director of The Order of the Sons of Italy in America, a Washington D.C.-based origination that represents the Italian-American population.

"Italian-Americans are a highly educated group, highly accomplished, and most go on to great schools and colleges," he said. "These kids are there having a good time, and we don't condone the way they behave. We just hope the American viewers take it for exactly what it is."

"It's silly and ridiculous and is the new reality of television and people want to see the sensationalism," said Piccigallo. "It doesn't have any connection to what is real in the Italian community and to the familial experience."

But according to Polizzi, her time filming "Jersey Shore" did result in a so-called Italian, familial experience.

"Because of the show, we're at the Jersey Shore to party, and that's basically what you do -- drink and party," she said.

"But I think everyone is getting the vibe that that is how we're trying to represent Italians, but we're not," said Polizzi. "We do have dinners and get to know each other as a family."

"Yeah, we party, but we also have a family side."