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Two Reality Shows Stir Publicity and Anger

By **EDWARD WYATT**

If a reality television show is not generating outrage these days, it seems not to be doing its job.

By that measure, two recent debuts are hitting on all cylinders. “Jersey Shore,” an **MTV** series that places eight hormone-rich twentysomethings in a beach house with plenty of liquor and relatively little clothing, has drawn complaints that it reinforces negative ethnic stereotypes and caused at least one MTV advertiser to steer clear of the show.

And on ABC, a tearjerker reunion series called “Find My Family” has angered some members of the adoption community with its attempts to reunite now-grown adoptees with their birth parents, a practice that, according to the critics, can marginalize the parents who adopt and raise children.

MTV, which practically pioneered the genre of installing a group of temperamental, egocentric people in a shared house and filming the experiment, has taken the concept a step further with “Jersey Shore.” Rather than mixing people from various backgrounds, it has focused on Italian-Americans (or those who love them) from the Northeast.

Their beach house, in Seaside Heights, N.J., has on its garage door a map of the state painted over a giant Italian flag. And while the subjects profess a certain amount of pride in their ethnic heritage, they persistently refer to themselves and one another as “Guidos,” a term that in previous generations was a derogatory nickname for Italian-Americans, many of whom still consider the term to be offensive.

Three groups representing Italian-Americans — Unico National, the Order of the Sons of Italy in America and the National Italian-American Foundation — issued statements last week condemning the MTV series, which the Unico group said used “ethnic slurs, violence and poor behavior to marginalize and stereotype Italian-Americans.”

“Their behavior is reprehensible and demeaning in all respects,” André DiMino, the president of Unico National, said in an interview. “I don’t see any redeeming value in the show. They are an embarrassment to themselves and to their families.”

The show’s cast members have defended themselves in interviews, saying that the term some people find offensive, to them simply refers to a lifestyle of muscled, well-coiffed and deeply tanned men and women.

MTV also supports the series. In a statement, the network said: “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.”

Nevertheless, the show’s content apparently came as an unpleasant surprise to at least one advertiser. After the first episode, Domino’s, the national pizza delivery chain, asked MTV not to place its ads on the series any longer, a spokesman for Domino’s confirmed over the weekend. The spokesman said the decision was made after its media buyers reviewed the show’s content but before it was contacted by groups opposing the series.

MTV stated that no advertisers had withdrawn from the network, but in a statement it said that the series “may not be for every sponsor or advertiser and we understand that.”

Not wanting to miss an opportunity to promote its beaches, the Jersey Shore Convention and Visitors Bureau also offered its own perspective. “We’re flattered that MTV thinks we’re an interesting enough destination to warrant an entire reality series,” Daniel Cappello, executive director of the bureau, said in a press release. But the series presents “a one-dimensional, dramatized version of a very small group of visitors’ summer experiences in one Jersey Shore town.”

The cast of the MTV show "Jersey Shore," which takes place in Seaside Heights, N.J.

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