

Love Island

Love Island is a reality television show (first in the UK, now also in Australia¹) in which contestants compete for a cash prize equivalent to about \$70,000.² The contestants (attractive singles in their 20s and 30s) live together on a tropical island and must “couple up” in order to remain in the competition. Contestants can choose partners based on mutual attraction, friendship, or strategy. At weekly “coupling ceremonies” uncoupled people are eliminated from the show. Additionally, viewers vote for their favorite couple, and the couple with the least votes are often eliminated (though there is occasionally a dramatic twist in which the islanders themselves vote on who should be eliminated).

The islanders’ every move is recorded by dozens of cameras located around the island. Contestants share a villa containing only double beds, so they must share with one another. There is also a “Hideaway Bedroom” for couples who wish to be romantically intimate. There is no area where couples or individuals can be free from video and audio surveillance and the watchful eye of the viewing public. In 2018, *Love Island* won the British Academy Film and Television Award (BAFTA) in the “Best Reality and Constructed Factual” category.

The 2016 season of *Love Island* featured (then) Miss Great Britain, Zara Holland. Holland, during the show, engaged in sexual activity with another islander in the Hideaway Bedroom. After the episode aired, the Miss Great Britain pageant formally stripped Holland of her crown. In a statement, pageant organizers stated: “We pride ourselves on promoting the positivity of pageants in modern society and this includes the promotion of a strong, positive female role model in our winners... We wholly understand that everyone makes mistakes, but Zara, as an ambassador for Miss Great Britain, simply did not uphold the responsibility expected of the title”.³

Some think that the decision to strip Holland of her crown is rooted in sexism. Critics maintain that it is only because Holland is a woman that she is chastised for publicly expressing her sexuality.⁴ In response to such critics, Miss Great Britain tweeted: “To be clear we have no problem at all with sex—it is perfectly natural. We simply can’t condone what happened on national TV”.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Do public figures, such as beauty pageant winners, have a moral responsibility to maintain a certain image, in virtue of being role models? If so, what sort of image are they responsible for maintaining?
2. What value is there in reality television shows such as *Love Island*?
3. Do television viewers have a moral or ethical responsibility to watch (or refrain from watching) certain sorts of content?

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_Island_Australia

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_Island_%282015_TV_series%29

³ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/06/17/miss-great-britain-zara-holland-stripped-of-title-over-love-isla/>

⁴ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/love-island-sex-row-why-the-disgraceful-miss-great-britain-tsars/>

