



Ethics and Entertainment: The Paradoxical Appeal of Deception in the Traitors

Etik ve Eğlence: The Traitors'da Aldatmacanın Paradoksal Çekiciliği

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the reality competition show *The Traitors* as a trickster-like transformative cultural artifact that while entertaining, reflects and interrogates critical aspects of human behavior and social dynamics. By dramatizing trust, betrayal, manipulation, and deception, the show serves as a microcosm for exploring themes such as group psychology, conformity, scapegoating, ethical ambiguity, and Machiavellianism. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from psychology, sociology, and cultural studies, the analysis investigates how *The Traitors* leverages the allure of the trickster by challenging conventional moral standards. The paper argues that the show's structured environment suspends ethical norms, reframing deceit and manipulation as strategic imperatives. This not only captivates audiences but also encourages critical reflection on the contextual nature of morality and the social values that shape perceptions of success and betrayal. Additionally, the show's portrayal of crowd dynamics reveals vulnerabilities in collective behavior, including conformity, scapegoating, and the diffusion of responsibility, offering insights into real-world social interactions and mechanisms of power. Ultimately, *The Traitors* transcends its entertainment role, serving as a lens for examining the human condition. Its blend of competition and introspection underscores its trickster-like transformative power by engaging audiences emotionally as well as cognitively, sparking broader conversations about ethics, social cohesion, and the allure of transgression. Thus, the study situates *The Traitors* within the broader context of cultural critique, positioning it as a trickster-like transformative mirror to the complexities of contemporary society.

Key Words: *Crowd Psychology, Scapegoating, Deception and Manipulation, Trickster Archetype, Reality Television Analysis.*

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Öz: Bu makale, *The Traitors* adlı gerçeklik yarışma programını, eğlenceli olmasının yanı sıra insan davranışları ve toplumsal dinamiklerin kritik yönlerini yansıtan ve sorgulayan bir düzenbaz/hilebaz (trickster) benzeri dönüştürücü kültürel eser olarak incelemektedir. Güven, ihanet, manipülasyon ve aldatmayı dramatize ederek, program grup psikolojisi, uyum, günah keçisi haline getirme, etik belirsizlik ve Makyavelcilik gibi temaları keşfetmek için bir mikrokozmos işlevi görmektedir. Psikoloji, sosyoloji ve kültürel çalışmalar gibi kuramsal çerçevelerden yararlanan analiz, *The Traitors*'ın geleneksel ahlaki standartlara meydan okuyarak düzenbaz/hilebaz arketipinin çekiciliğini nasıl kullandığını incelemektedir. Makale, programın yapılandırılmış ortamının etik normları askıya alarak aldatma ve manipülasyonu stratejik zorunluluklar olarak yeniden çerçevelediğini savunmaktadır. Bu durum yalnızca izleyicileri büyülemekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda ahlakın bağlama dayalı doğası ve başarı ile ihanet algılarını şekillendiren toplumsal değerler üzerine eleştirel bir düşünme sürecini teşvik eder. Ayrıca, programın kalabalık dinamiklerine dair tasviri, uyum, günah keçisi haline getirme ve sorumluluk yayılımı gibi kolektif davranışlardaki zayıflıkları ortaya koyarak, gerçek dünyadaki toplumsal etkileşimler ve güç mekanizmaları hakkında içgörüler sunar. Nihayetinde, *The Traitors* eğlence rolünün ötesine geçerek insan durumunu incelemek için bir mercek işlevi görür. Yarışma ve düşüncüyü birleştiren yapıyla, izleyicileri hem duygusal hem de bilişsel olarak etkileyerek etik, toplumsal uyum ve baştan çıkarmanın cazibesi hakkında daha geniş tartışmalar başlatır. Böylece bu çalışma, *The Traitors*'ı kültürel eleştiri bağlamında konumlandırarak, çağdaş toplumun karmaşıklıklarına düzenbaz/hilebaz-benzeri dönüştürücü bir ayna olarak değerlendirmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Grup Psikolojisi, Günah Keçisi Belirleme, Aldatma ve Manipülasyon, Düzenbaz/Hilebaz Arketipi, Realite Televizyon Analizi.

INTRODUCTION

In an era where reality television often prioritizes spectacle over substance, the reality game show *The Traitors* emerges as a compelling outlier—a gripping social experiment that, by delving into the intricacies of human behavior, offers not only entertainment but also profound insights into human behavior and social mechanism. Originally developed in the Netherlands by Marc Pos and launched in 2012 under the title *De Verraders*, the format has since been successfully adapted in numerous countries across Europe and beyond, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Hungary, Croatia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Canada, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.² As of 2025, over 25 localized versions of the show have been produced, with several of them continuing into multiple seasons. Notably, both the UK and US editions have aired three seasons each, with increasing viewership and critical attention.³

The basic structure remains largely consistent across adaptations: a group of contestants—typically ranging from 16 to 22 individuals—is invited to a secluded location, often a historical castle or mansion, where they engage in a high-stakes social game of deception, alliances, and strategy to compete for a cash prize. Among them, a few are secretly designated as “Traitors”, whose objective is to “murder” (eliminate) the other contestants, known as the “Faithfuls”, without being exposed, creating a

² See the official site: [The Traitors](https://www.thetraitors.com/)

³ See Appendix A: a table summarizing the international versions, seasons, and notable structural variations of *The Traitors*. This comparative overview offers further insight into the show's evolution and localized reception.

dynamic where betrayal is not only allowed but strategically vital. The “Faithfuls”, in turn, must work together to identify and banish the “Traitors” before being eliminated or outnumbered. Contestants participate in daily missions to add money to the prize pot, while nightly roundtables serve as platforms for suspicion, deception, and strategic elimination. Blending psychological manipulation with group dynamics, *The Traitors* pushes contestants to navigate a labyrinth of trust and deceit, exposing the fragility of social bonds under pressure. Its premise, rooted in strategy and survival, fosters an atmosphere where trickery, manipulation, scapegoating, and Machiavellian cunning are rewarded. This unique format captivates global audiences while offering a rare lens into the intricacies of human interaction and the ethical ambiguities of competitive environments.

Despite cultural and linguistic variations, the central premise of the show—rooted in psychological strategy, suspicion, and social manipulation—remains intact across seasons and adaptations. However, some versions may introduce subtle changes in rules, cast selection, or stylistic tone. For example, while the Dutch and Belgian version initially featured primarily celebrity contestants, other countries opted for non-celebrity participants or a mix of both. Similarly, the US version tends to emphasize dramatization and interpersonal conflict more heavily than its European counterparts. These variations reflect the show’s cultural adaptability without fundamentally altering its trickster-inflected core.⁴

The show’s popularity is underscored by its critical acclaim and industry recognition. *The Traitors* has garnered multiple Emmy nominations, including Outstanding Reality Competition Program, Outstanding Host for a Reality or Competition Program for Alan Cummings, Outstanding Directing for a Reality Program and Outstanding Cinematography for a Reality Program. Additionally, its second season of the USA adaptation recently won the Television Critics Association (TCA) Award for Outstanding Achievement in Reality Programming. These accolades attest to the show’s impact as both a cultural phenomenon and a thought-provoking piece of entertainment. What distinguishes *The Traitors* is its capacity to expose the raw mechanics of social dynamics, laying bare the forces that often remain hidden in everyday life. Elements such as crowd psychology, conformity, and the seductive allure of trickery are thrust into the spotlight, creating a microcosm that mirrors and amplifies societal norms, tensions, and power struggles. As contestants vie for dominance, alliances form and dissolve, scapegoats emerge, and trust becomes a

⁴ See Appendix B: a table detailing the seasons and episode structure of *The Traitors* across multiple adaptations, including the number of episodes per season and specific themes highlighted in each season. This table provides a comprehensive overview of the show’s evolution, both in terms of its format and the diversity of its cultural iterations.

valuable currency—a stark reflection of the broader social forces that govern human relationships in the real world.

Paradoxically, the show's appeal transcends its strategic game-play. Even viewers who pride themselves on ethical integrity and disdain for deception find themselves enthralled by the intricate psychological maneuvers and moral ambiguity on display. This tension between personal values and vicarious enjoyment speaks to the unique allure of *The Traitors*, creating a trickster-like liminal space where viewers can safely engage with morally transgressive behaviors, exploring ethical gray areas within the controlled confines of a fictionalized setting of the game. This dynamic fosters not just entertainment but also introspection, as audiences confront their own susceptibility to manipulation and fascination with cunning.

The article argues that the enduring popularity of *The Traitors* lies in its trickster-like dual role: as both a mirror reflecting the darker undercurrents of human behavior and a form of cathartic entertainment that suspends conventional moral judgments. Through its structure, the show amplifies latent human tendencies—such as the desire for group belonging, the vulnerability to manipulation, and the appeal of cunning—as it dramatizes the tensions between individuality and collectivity, morality and strategy, trust and betrayal. Drawing on foundational theories on the trickster archetype (Radin, 1969; Hynes, 1997; Hyde, 1998; Jung, 1959, 1969; Lew-Strauss, 1976), crowd psychology (Le Bon, 1895), and studies on conformity and obedience (Asch, 1951; Milgram, 1963), this analysis situates *The Traitors* within a broader cultural and psychological framework. By examining how the game dramatizes social phenomena such as scapegoating, manipulation, and Machiavellianism, this study illuminates the cultural and psychological forces that underpin the show's paradoxical appeal. Ultimately, *The Traitors* transcends the boundaries of reality television, positioning itself as a dynamic cultural text that in trickster-like manner offers a critiquing mirror and entertainment in equal measure.

1. The Appeal of the Trickster Archetype

At the heart of *The Traitors* lies the enduring allure of the trickster archetype, a timeless figure that has captivated cultures across history and geography. The trickster is not merely a character of mischief but one deeply embedded in human culture, mythology, and social dynamics. Anthropologist Paul Radin observes that “the Winnebago word for trickster is *wakdjunkaga*”, which literary means “the tricky one”, highlighting the intrinsic connection of the trickster to deception and subversion (1969, p. 132, emphasis in original). The trickster has long played an important role in mythologies worldwide, from the cunning Loki of Norse mythology to the clever Anansi in African folklore. This figure, embodying both disruption and transformation, has influenced narratives in popular culture and human history, from ancient oral tradition to contemporary media, acting as both disruptor and a catalyst for change.

William J. Hynes observes that the trickster is “a consummate and continuous trick-player and deceiver”, consistently engaging in acts that destabilize and challenge societal norms (1997, p. 36). In trickster tales, these trick-playing figures are the source of “disruptions and disorders, misfortunes and improprieties... lying, cheating, tricking, and deceiving” (Hynes, 1997, p. 36). The mythical trickster’s importance lies not only in their capacity for disruption but also in their function as boundary-crossers—figures who challenge established rules and hierarchies, ultimately holding up a mirror to the contradictions embedded within societies. Within *The Traitors*, the contestants designated as the “Traitors” personify this archetype, wielding deception, manipulation, and psychological acuity to manipulate their peers and navigate the game’s treacherous terrain. Through their actions, the show per se foregrounds the trickster’s disruptive energy, underscoring the enduring cultural resonance of the archetype in illuminating the ethical ambiguities of human interaction. The trickster’s ability to blur the lines between right and wrong, trust and betrayal, and so on, becomes a powerful tool in exploring the ethical gray of human behavior.

This disruptive energy, however, is not purely destructive; rather, the trickster’s role as a boundary-crosser grants them transformative powers. Lewis Hyde identifies the trickster as a “boundary crosser,” precisely as one who draws, erases, and redefines borders, operating at the threshold of meaning and identity (1998, p. 7). Similarly, Karl Kerényi’s characterizes the trickster as an “enemy of boundaries”, continually violating norms and breaking taboos (Kerényi in Radin, 1956, p. 185), while Paul Radin underscores their duality as both “creator and destroyer”, exposing hidden truths masked by cultural constructs (1969, p. xxiii). Psychoanalyst Carl G. Jung likewise frames the trickster as a boundary-crosser and further situates the trickster within the psyche as a liminal figure—an agent of chaos who dismantles hierarchies, revels in norm subversion, and exploits chaos to their advantage (1959, 1969). This liminality is central to the trickster’s appeal⁵: as boundary dwellers, tricksters not only inhabit liminal spaces but also themselves embody liminality as such, defying binaries between good and evil, heroism and villainy, order and disorder, and so on, which makes them both profoundly disruptive and irresistibly fascinating.⁶ Such ambiguity finds a structural analogue in *The Traitor*, where the game mechanics encourage contestants to inhabit and exploit liminal roles. Here players not only occupy in-between positions but actively destabilize group cohesion, dissolve alliances, and weaponize ambiguity and uncertainty—enacting the mythical trickster’s chaos in real time. This dynamic speaks to Claude Lévi-Strauss’s insight that the trickster’s power lies in their intermediate status between binary oppositions, which gives them an “ambiguous and equivocal character” (1976, p. 226).⁷ *The Traitors* effectively

⁵ For the concept of liminality, see Victor Turner’s *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 1969.

⁶ For the discussion on trickster’s liminality, see Barbara Babcock-Abrahams’s “A Tolerated Margin of Mess”, 1975.

⁷ For reflections on the trickster’s ambiguity, see Michael Carroll’s “The Trickster as Selfish-Boffoon and Culture Hero”, 1984; and Carl Gustav Jung’s *The Archetype and The Collective Unconscious*, 1956.

dramatizes this dynamic by foregrounding the fragility of communal bonds and the volatility of social trust, forcing both players and viewers to grapple with the porous boundaries between deception and survival.

Indeed, the trickster's appeal also lies not simply in spectacle but in their ability to expose the precariousness of societal structures. Kathleen Glenister Roberts argues that tricksters operate within a "narrative ethic", revealing (deeper) truth outside the bounds of conventional morality (2007, p. 179). In this context, Kimberly Blaeser adds that trickster deception "approaches truth in a way that clarity cannot" (1995, p. 51). These insights are borne out in *The Traitors*, where acts of betrayal and manipulation function as revelations—unmasking the performative nature of alliances and the instability lurking beneath social order. For audiences, this exposure is both unsettling and thrillingly captivating, reflecting the trickster's deeper cultural function. As William J. Jackson puts it, the trickster is not just a deceiver but a catalyst—a "bringer(s) of significant transformations" (2014, p. 9)—and *The Traitors* ultimately captures this power through its intricate dance of trust, deceit, and change.

Despite their disruptive tendencies, tricksters also evoke admiration for their resourcefulness and adaptability. Ethical viewers—those who might reject deceit in everyday life—frequently find themselves captivated by the cleverness and strategic finesse required to succeed as a trickster. Within the competitive framework of *The Traitors*, deception is redefined not as a moral failing but as a tactical necessity. This reframing challenges moral binaries, allowing, even encouraging, audiences to appreciate cunning and view manipulation and betrayal not in terms of right versus wrong, but as complex strategies for survival. As a result, viewers are prompted to temporarily suspend moral judgment, engaging with the trickster's psychological maneuvers while maintaining a clear distinction between game ethics and real-world values. On a deeper psychological level, the trickster archetype resonates because it embodies repressed aspects of the human psyche. Carl Jung posits that the trickster personifies traits that individuals often suppress in their pursuit of societal acceptance, thereby offering viewers a safe, mediated space to explore transgressive impulses (1959). Through observing players manipulate and deceive, audiences vicariously engage with these shadow elements, experiencing a form of cathartic release that paradoxically reaffirms their own ethical boundaries.

The influence of the trickster archetype in *The Traitors* extends beyond individual contestants to encompass the very structure of the game. Built on secrecy, betrayal, and subversion, the game's mechanics mirror the qualities of the trickster, embedding the archetype into its core design. In this alignment, the show itself takes on the qualities of and performs a trickster—destabilizing moral frameworks, challenging participants and viewers to navigate an environment where ambiguity reigns, and blurring the line between performance and authenticity. This synthesis of

form and content transforms the show into a meta-commentary on the dynamics it portrays: the game is not just about trickery and tricksters; it *is* a trickster.

By embedding the trickster's essence into its mechanics, *The Traitors* functions as both a narrative and as an experiential exploration of the interplay between power, ethics, and ingenuity in human behavior. The boundaries between strategy and morality are deliberately obscured, forcing both contestants and viewers to navigate an environment governed by trickster spirit. In this sense, the show transcends its status as mere entertainment, evolving into a cultural text that interrogates the moral complexities of human nature and behavior. Like the archetype it dramatizes in form and content, *The Traitors* delivers captivating spectacle while inviting profound introspection. Its dual function—as a source of gripping entertainment and a vehicle for ethical reflection—cements its appeal and cultural significance. By dramatizing the interplay between power, ethics, deception, and adaptability, *The Traitors* emerges as both a mirror of contemporary societal dynamics and a stage for the timeless figure of the trickster. In doing so, it reaffirms the trickster's enduring relevance and offers a provocative meditation on human condition.

2. Crowd Psychology and Group Dynamics in *The Traitors*

The psychological interplay between individuals and groups forms the cornerstone of *The Traitors*, offering a dramatized depiction of the mechanisms underpinning crowd behavior. As contestants navigate a social environment fraught with shifting alliances, mutual suspicions, and strategic betrayals, the show mirrors real-world group dynamics in high-stakes scenarios. Drawing on foundational theories of crowd psychology, this section explores how the show illuminates the tension between individuality, collective identity, and collective behavior. Concepts such as conformity, groupthink, and the volatility of trust are rendered visible through the game's progression, transforming the program into both an experiment in human psychology and a cultural reflection on social interaction.

Gustave Le Bon's (1895) foundational theory of crowd psychology provides a particularly effective framework for interpreting the group dynamics at play in the show and understanding how individuals behave within groups. Le Bon posits that individuals within a crowd experience a diminished sense of personal responsibility and are instead governed by collective emotions, often acting impulsively rather than rationally (2002). This phenomenon—what Le Bon terms *crowd contagion*—is vividly illustrated in *The Traitors* as contestants frequently collectively target individuals based on tenuous evidence or emotionally charged suspicions. His insights help explain why participants so readily conform to majority opinion or quickly turn on those who exhibit nervous behavior or otherwise deviate from group expectations. Indeed, Le Bon's suggestion that crowds amplify emotions and reduce moral restraint

is echoed in the game's social environment. The structure of *The Traitors* encourages contestants to band together to unmask the titular "Traitors", yet this process often devolves into scapegoating, fueled by collective anxieties rather than careful, rational analysis. Individuals who fail to assimilate and conform to group expectations, exhibit nervous behavior, or stand out for arbitrary reasons are swiftly marked as threats, not for their actual roles but for their perceived difference. In this way, Le Bon's notion that the crowd fosters a regression to primal instincts becomes highly relevant: group decisions are frequently driven by paranoia, conformity, and the desire for cohesion, rather than truth or justice. Moreover, Le Bon also argues that crowds indeed are capable to create an environment where moral constraints are loosened, and thus, individuals within crowds are more likely to act in ways that align with group dynamics rather than their personal ethics. *The Traitors* reinforces this dynamic by rewarding consensus—even when it is based on flawed assumptions—demonstrating how easily individual judgment can be overridden by groupthink. Le Bon's theory thus illuminates not only the psychological mechanics behind contestants' behavior but also the show's broader commentary on how social cohesion can come at the cost of fairness and rationality. By dramatizing these patterns, *The Traitors* functions as a vivid case study of crowd psychology in action, revealing how easily the boundaries between cooperation and coercion, trust and suspicion, can be dissolved in the pursuit of collective survival.

2.1. Conformity and the Pressure to Align

The reliance on group deliberation to exile suspected "Traitors" during roundtable discussions in the show vividly exemplifies Solomon E. Asch's (1951) foundational experiments on conformity⁸. Asch's experiments reveal the powerful influence of group pressure on individual decision-making, suggesting that individuals are likely to conform to majority opinions, even when they perceive them to be incorrect to avoid social ostracism. In *The Traitors*, this pressure to conform is palpable during the roundtable discussions, where contestants must publicly justify their suspicions. The fear of dissenting from the group—lest they themselves become targets—compels many players to suppress their instincts and align with the group consensus, even if it conflicts with their instincts.

⁸ The Asch conformity experiments, led by psychologist Solomon Asch in the 1950s, were designed to investigate the extent to which social pressure from a majority group could influence an individual's judgment. Participants were placed in a group with confederates who had been instructed to unanimously provide incorrect answers to simple visual perception tasks, such as comparing the length of lines. The study revealed that a significant number of participants conformed to the majority's incorrect answers, despite the evidence of their own senses. Approximately 75% of participants conformed at least once during the trials, highlighting the powerful role of group dynamics in shaping individual decision-making. These findings underscored the influence of social norms and peer pressure on human behavior. For further information, see Solomon E. Asch's "Social psychology", 1952; "Opinions and Social Pressure", 1955; "Studies of Independence and Conformity: A Minority of One against a Unanimous Majority"; 1956.

Expanding on Asch's emphasis on individual conformity, Irving Janis (1972) illustrates how such pressure can produce destructive outcomes at the group level through his concept of *groupthink*⁹. Groupthink arises when the pursuit of cohesion and consensus lead a groups to suppress dissent, ignore alternatives, and engage in flawed decision-making. In *The Traitors*, this is frequently observed as contestants collectively misidentify the "Traitors" based on shaky logic, emotional appeals, or conformity-driven alliances. The desire to maintain group harmony often overrides critical thinking, leading to decisions that are more reflective of collective anxiety than rational analysis.

This interplay between Asch's and Janis's theories helps illuminate the psychological mechanisms underpinning the show's strategic environment. While Asch highlights the individual's susceptibility to group pressure, Janis reveals how this pressure scales up, distorting the group's capacity for sound judgment. The show thus becomes a dramatized microcosm of broader social realities, where individuals—despite personal convictions—often conform to dominant views for self-preservation. Contestants routinely justify morally ambiguous decisions as necessary for group success, even when these choices conflict with their ethical intuitions. In this way, *The Traitors* underscores the precarious balance between individual agency and collective conformity, offering a compelling reflection of real-world dynamics in workplaces, institutions, and social communities, where conformity is often incentivized at the expense of critical thinking.

2.2. Obedience to the Collective Will

Although *The Traitors* lacks a centralized, hierarchical authority figure, the collective will of the group often functions as a surrogate authority, shaping individual behavior in subtle ways that reflect broader social dynamics. This dynamic can be analyzed through the framework of Stanley Milgram's (1963) seminal research on obedience, which demonstrates that individuals are likely to carry out ethically questionable actions when they believe these are sanctioned by an external authority.¹⁰ In the

⁹ Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon where the pursuit of harmony or conformity within a group leads to flawed or irrational decision-making. The strong desire for cohesiveness often pressures group members to prioritize consensus over critical evaluation, resulting in minimized conflict but at the expense of sound judgment. The term was first introduced by William H. Whyte Jr. in 1952 in his article "Groupthink", with significant contributions to its study made by Yale psychologist Irving Janis. Janis's seminal work, published in 1972 and revised in 1982, remains foundational in understanding this concept. See Irving Janis' *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, 1982.

¹⁰ Starting on August 7, 1961, Stanley Milgram, a psychologist at Yale University, conducted a series of groundbreaking social psychology experiments to assess individuals' willingness to comply with authority figures, even when instructed to perform actions that clashed with their moral beliefs. Participants were told they were contributing to a separate study and were instructed to administer electric shocks to a "learner" whenever the learner gave incorrect answers. These shocks, though simulated and not real, escalated in intensity to levels labeled as potentially lethal. Surprisingly, the results revealed a high level of obedience among participants. All subjects delivered shocks up to 300 volts, and 65% continued to the maximum level of 450 volts, despite showing visible discomfort and hesitation. These findings highlighted the powerful influence of authority on human behavior. For further information, see Stanley's Milgram's *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*, 1974.

context of *The Traitors*, the authority is not institutional but social: the pressure exerted by the group serves as a legitimizing force, enabling contestants to act against their moral intuitions under the guise of collective decision-making. Contestants often rationalize morally dubious actions—such as scapegoating or betrayal—by framing them as obligations to the group’s strategic aims. This rationalization process enables players to dissociate from the ethical implications of their actions, effectively displacing responsibility onto the collective will. For example, accusations against suspected “Traitors” are frequently justified as part of the game’s mechanics, allowing contestants to reconcile their personal moral discomfort with the perceived demands of the group. Such behavior closely mirrors Milgram’s findings, wherein individuals justify their compliance with harmful instructions by attributing responsibility to the authority figure, thus mitigating personal guilt.

This climate of dispersed authority and moral displacement creates fertile ground for Machiavellian¹¹ contestants to exploit group vulnerabilities. The connection between Milgram’s theory and Machiavellianism becomes particularly salient here: just as Milgram’s participants acted under perceived external directives, Machiavellian players in *The Traitors* manipulate collective sentiment to engineer decisions without bearing visible responsibility. By subtly directing suspicion, manipulating group narratives, and orchestrating emotional responses, these individuals leverage the crowd’s psychological tendencies to advance their personal agendas. For example, a skilled manipulator might plant seeds of doubt about an innocent contestant or amplify existing suspicions to deflect attention from themselves.

Such strategic manipulation to influence collective behavior reflects a refined understanding of group psychology and highlights the show’s dramatization of Machiavellian principles. Within the game’s moral suspension, traits like cunning, deception, and emotional control—typically condemned in everyday settings—are re-contextualized within the game as essential skills for success and reframed as valuable assets. In this sense, *The Traitors* functions as a social laboratory where Milgram’s insights into obedience and the ethos of Machiavellian manipulation intersect, revealing how individuals can both succumb to and exploit collective authority. The show thus not only exposes the fragility of ethical behavior under social pressure but also illuminates how power can be exercised through influence rather than command.

¹¹ Niccolò Machiavelli’s seminal work *The Prince*, originally published in 1532, serves for understanding this inversion of ethical norms. Machiavelli argues that pragmatism and the ability to manipulate appearances are critical for maintaining power, even at the expense of traditional morality. Similarly, contestants in *The Traitors* must adapt to an environment where moral absolutism is impractical, and instead, embrace situational ethics to achieve their objectives.

2.3. Scapegoating and Collective Sacrifice

René Girard's (1986) theory of mimetic desire and scapegoating offers a compelling lens through which to examine the social dynamics of *The Traitors*. According to Girard, mimetic desire—where individuals imitate the desires of others—inevitably breeds rivalry and tension within groups. To resolve these conflicts, communities often identify a scapegoat: an individual onto whom collective fears, frustrations, and hostilities are projected. The exclusion or symbolic sacrifice of this figure temporarily restores social harmony and reinforces group cohesion. In *The Traitors*, this mechanism plays out through the ritualized identification and elimination of suspected “Traitors”. Contestants, driven by fear and uncertainty, frequently target individuals based on scant evidence or emotional intuition, revealing the deep-seated human tendency to create unity through exclusion.

The process of scapegoating in the show takes on an almost ceremonial quality. Roundtable discussions and banishments become communal rituals, where players collectively deliberate and act upon their shared anxieties. This collective decision-making fosters a sense of unity and moral justification, even when the exiled individual is innocent—targeted due to biases, misunderstandings, or manipulations of Machiavellian contestants. Girard's concept of the *sacrificial crisis* is particularly relevant here. He describes how, in moments of heightened social tension, the scapegoat becomes a symbolic vessel for the group's fears and conflicts (1977). In *The Traitors*, suspicion often snowballs, with contestants rallying against a perceived threat to the group's stability. The eventual exile or elimination of the scapegoat provides temporary relief, allowing the group to redirect its focus. Yet, the cycle inevitably repeats, highlighting the fragile and temporary nature of such resolutions.

This targeting of contestants lays bare the fragility of group cohesion. As players struggle to distinguish friend from foe, paranoia escalates, and collective anxieties are projected onto those perceived as different, weak, or inconvenient. These dramatized interactions echo real-world examples of scapegoating—from historical witch hunts to modern-day cancel culture and political scapegoating—where societal fears and insecurities are mobilized and redirected toward the vilification of the vulnerable and marginalized, with communities rallying around targeting perceived threats and the expulsion of a symbolic *other* to preserve internal harmony. The ritualized scapegoating in *The Traitors* invites viewers to critically examine the ways in which collective fears shape social interactions. Hannah Arendt's (1951) analysis of totalitarian regimes underscores this pattern, showing how the invention of a common enemy serves as a unifying force for otherwise fragmented societies. Similarly, Susan Sontag's (1978) work on cultural metaphors of illness illustrates how society often stigmatizes individuals or groups as embodiments of collective fears.

For audiences, the dramatization of scapegoating in *The Traitors* provides an unsettling reflection of real-life societal behaviors. The “Faithfuls” fervent attempts to unmask the “Traitors” parallel real-life dynamics in workplaces, classrooms, and political systems, where individuals are often unfairly targeted based on biases, misunderstanding, or groupthink. Viewed from the safety of entertainment, these dramatizations prompt reflection on the ethical compromises that underpin crowd behavior. Audiences are invited not only to observe but also to recognize their own potential complicity in mechanisms of blame and exclusion in real-world contexts. Ultimately, the show’s cyclical scapegoating rituals expose the underlying tension between individual agency and collective will, between justice and expediency, and between trust and suspicion. Thus, *The Traitors* functions not merely as a game of deception but as a cultural critique, highlighting the ethical compromises inherent in crowd behaviour, and a cultural allegory—a space where viewers can witness, and perhaps interrogate, the psychological mechanisms that underlie societal cohesion, division, and sacrifice.

2.4. The Fragility of Trust in Social Interactions

Trust, or its absence, plays a pivotal role in *The Traitors*, where the fragility of trust in competitive environments is dramatically showcased. The game highlights how suspicion and betrayal can swiftly erode social bonds, mirroring real-world dynamics of group cohesion and conflict. This theme resonates with social psychological research, such as Morton Deutsch’s (1958) work on trust and suspicion in both cooperative and competitive settings. Deutsch argues that while trust is fundamental to group cohesion, it is remarkably fragile, easily undermined by fear and uncertainty—factors that are vividly dramatized in the game.

In *The Traitors*, the precarious balance between trust and suspicion is continuously tested. Contestants navigate a social environment where alliances are fluid, and trust is perpetually under threat. Decisions regarding whom to scapegoat are often influenced by collective insecurities and emotional reactions, rather than rational deliberation. For instance, in roundtable discussion, it is not unusual that a contestant is unfairly targeted based on their perceived nervousness, rather than any substantial evidence. This showcases how easily group cohesion can dissolve into paranoia and blame, reflecting Deutsch’s assertion that trust within groups is highly susceptible to disruption when fear dominates decision-making.

The erosion of trust in *The Traitors* has broader implications as it mirrors real-world scenarios where trust is similarly fragile, often compromised by external pressures or internal fears. The show’s portrayal of alliances, betrayals, and scapegoating serves as a stark reflection of how individuals and groups navigate the complexities of trust and suspicion in broader social contexts. These moments invite viewers to examine how trust is negotiated in their own lives, both within personal

relationships and societal structures. In sum, *The Traitors* functions as a powerful metaphor for the fragility of trust in group dynamics, urging viewers to reflect on the ease with which trust can be undermined and the profound impact this has on collective behavior. The game's portrayal of shifting alliances and scapegoating offers a compelling lens through which to explore the complexities of social interactions in both competitive and everyday settings.

3. The Social Function of Play and Simulation

The Traitors is not merely a reality competition—it serves as complex arenas where entertainment intersects with profound social experimentation by operating within a framework of structured play. Johan Huizinga's (1971) *Homo Ludens* offers a compelling framework for interpreting the cultural significance of play within the show. Huizinga argues that play is not a frivolous pastime but a foundational aspect of human culture, one that shapes social norms, reveals power structures, tests boundaries, and fosters creativity. His theory explains why *The Traitors* should be understood not just as a game but as a ritualized simulation of real-world social dynamics, exemplifying how the dynamics of play can illuminate broader societal structures and tensions, and offering both the participants and viewers a controlled environment to engage with behaviors such as deception, manipulation, and trust-building.

This framing is further supported by the show's intentional design. While *The Traitors* is based on the Dutch series *De Verraders*, its adaptation across different national contexts suggests a conscious effort by producers and directors to explore psychological and sociological themes through game-play. The carefully constructed rules, settings, and roles ("Faithfuls" vs. "Traitors") mirror classical social experiments in their ability to generate conflict, provoke emotional responses, and expose latent group dynamics. Investigating interviews with the show's creators may shed further light on the intellectual influences behind the format—whether drawn from psychological theory, classic experiments, or other social games. Such insights would deepen our understanding of *The Traitors* not only as entertainment but also as a cultural text engineered to simulate and expose collective human behavior. By situating game-play within an enclosed and rule-bound environment, *The Traitors* dramatizes the ethical tensions that emerge when social norms are temporarily suspended. Deception becomes a strategic tool rather than a moral failing, and trust becomes both a weapon and a liability. For viewers, this dramatized simulation becomes a space of reflection: how do we recognize manipulation? Why do we trust some people more than others? What happens when the social contract is gamified? Through Huizinga's lens, the show is not an escape from reality but a heightened mirror of it—one that turns everyday interactions into rituals of suspicion, allegiance, and survival.

3.1. Play as a *Magic Circle*

Johan Huizinga's (1971) concept of the *magic circle*, later elaborated by Eric Zimmerman (2012), is essential for understanding *The Traitors* as a kind of social laboratory. According to Huizinga, play occurs within a distinct, self-contained sphere—separate from everyday norms and consequences—where its own rules govern behavior. This *magic circle* creates a boundary in which actions ordinarily condemned—such as deceit, manipulation, and betrayal—are reframed as legitimate and even celebrated as strategic achievements. Far from merely suspending ethics, this reframing transforms moral frameworks: behaviors carrying real-world penalties become winning tactics within the game, enabling contestants to experiment with alternative modes of interaction and decision-making.

Zimmerman (2012) expands on Huizinga by showing how games act as systems for exploring alternate realities and testing the elasticity of social norms. He argues that well-designed games provide structured spaces where players can safely engage with new moral logics. This framework helps elucidate how *The Traitors* operates both as an immersive experience for contestants and as a reflective space for viewers. Contestants partake in a form of moral experimentation, pushing the boundaries of ethical behavior in an environment that rewards cunning over conformity. Viewers, too, enter this *magic circle* vicariously: they observe morally ambiguous scenarios unfold without real-life repercussions, granting them a psychological safe zone in which to assess and reflect on transgressive behavior.

This dynamic underscores the transformative nature of play as a social laboratory. Contestants do more than temporarily set aside their ethical codes; they actively reconfigure them according to the game's internal logic. Audiences, in turn, are invited to consider how context shapes moral choices, prompting deeper insight into the situational nature of ethics. This dynamic invites audiences to reflect on the elasticity of ethical norms and the situational nature of morality, providing a rare opportunity to explore human behavior without direct involvement or consequence.¹² Ultimately, the *magic circle* of *The Traitors* serves as a lens for both moral elasticity and ethical introspection: a rare space where players and spectators alike can explore the boundaries of trust, strategy, and social order.

3.2. Games as Microcosm of Society

Building on Huizinga's (1971) insights into play, Roger Caillois (2001) re-conceptualizes games as structured activities that not only entertain but also reflecting societal norms, values, and tensions. Caillois categorizes play into four distinct types—*agon*

¹² The idea of the *magic circle* as a reflective tool for audiences aligns with theories of media spectatorship, where viewers engage with fictional or gamified narratives to explore ethical and psychological boundaries. For further information, see Henry Jenkins' *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, 2006; Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette's (Eds.) *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*, 2009.

(competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (role-playing), and *ilinx* (vertigo)—each illuminating different facets of human experience. *The Traitors* predominantly exemplifies *agon*, with its competitive elimination format, while also embracing elements of mimicry, as contestants adopt roles as either “Faithfuls” or “Traitors.” This dual structure mirrors real-world group behaviors and societal dynamics: alliances, betrayals, and scapegoating within the game echo the tensions between individual ambition and group cohesion found in organizations, communities, and political systems. Trust—a cornerstone of social relationships—becomes precarious within this environment as contestants must navigate an ever-shifting social landscape where alliances, often forged out of necessity rather than genuine camaraderie, dissolve under the weight of strategic calculation, revealing how quickly cooperation can fracture when personal gain is at stake. For viewers, *The Traitors* serves as a microcosm of these dynamics, offering a heightened perspective on human interaction. This dramatization invites critical reflection on the fragility of social bonds: just as contestants must balance personal objectives with collective demands, so too do individuals in real-world settings negotiate between self-interest and group expectations.

Erving Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical model further illuminates this performative dimension. Goffman’s theory of dramaturgy argues that social life resembles theatrical performance, with individuals managing impressions to meet audience expectations. In *The Traitors*, contestants consciously perform trustworthiness or deception, manipulating others’ perceptions to secure their own survival. These staged interactions underscore the performative nature of group dynamics: for instance, alliances become scripts formed under the pretext of mutual benefit, betrayals unfold as climactic plot twists, and the roundtable emerges as a theatre where social norms are tested and rewritten. This dramatized unraveling resonates with real-life scenarios where group dynamics are influenced by power struggles, conflicting interests, and the pursuit of personal gain. Ultimately, *The Traitors* functions as a microcosm: it condenses and dramatizes the complexities of human interaction, power struggles, and ethical dilemmas inherent in any collective endeavor. By rendering these processes visible, the show not only entertains but prompts audiences to examine the similar games—and gambits—that play out in everyday social life.

3.3. The Machiavellian Playbook

Contestants’ reliance on Machiavellian tactics in *The Traitors* illuminates the flexibility of moral frameworks under situational pressure. Zimbardo (2008) shows that individuals placed in unique circumstances often recalibrate their ethical compasses to align with situational imperatives. In the game, Machiavellian contestants harness deceit, manipulation, and strategic foresight—traits typically condemned in everyday life—as essential tools for advancement. The strategic interplay further aligns with

principles of game theory, particularly the concept of Nash equilibrium,¹³ in which participants adapt their decisions based on the anticipated choices of others to achieve an optimal outcome. In *The Traitors*, contestants continuously weigh the benefits of trust against the allure of betrayal, seeking equilibrium between cooperation and self-interest to maximize their chance of survival. The fluid alliances and betrayals reflect broader societal tensions, illustrating how individuals often prioritize self-interest over collective well-being in competitive contexts. As John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern (1944) argue in *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, such dynamics are intrinsic to decision-making processes in high-stakes environments.

Within the show's *magic circle*, actions such as deceit, manipulation, betrayal, and subterfuge are not only permitted but celebrated, reframing deception from a moral failing into a tactical necessity. This inversion of ethical binaries demonstrates that moral judgments are often contingent on context: what is impermissible in ordinary social interactions becomes a marker of ingenuity in competitive games. For viewers, *The Traitors* functions as a pointed social critique. By dramatizing the valorization of Machiavellian attributes—strategic calculation, narrative control, and emotional manipulation—the show mirrors real-world arenas (e.g., corporate hierarchies, political campaigns) where such traits are frequently rewarded over altruistic cooperation. This critique invites audiences to reflect on the conditions under which society elevates cunning above convention, and to question how context shapes our moral valuations.

3.4. Simulation as Cultural Critique

The Traitors functions as a simulated arena in which both participants and viewers confront the dynamics of human interaction under controlled conditions. Johan Huizinga (1971) reminds us that play is not frivolous but foundational—a space where cultural norms are tested, challenged, and reinvented. The show's format creates what Zimmerman (2012) describes as a constructed system that simulates real-world tensions such as trust, betrayal, and vulnerability, allowing participants to navigate these without real-world consequences. In *The Traitors*, the format dramatizes core social dynamics—trust, betrayal, and vulnerability—presenting a microcosm of broader societal dynamics without real-life repercussions, and thus, inviting a form of moral rehearsal. By compressing high-stakes social interactions into a series of rituals—daily challenges, secret votes, and roundtable banishments—the show

¹³ The concept of Nash equilibrium, named after mathematician John Nash, refers to a situation in game theory where no player can improve their outcome by unilaterally changing their strategy, provided the strategies of other players remain unchanged. In essence, it represents a state of mutual best responses, where each participant's decision is optimal given the decisions of others. Nash equilibrium is particularly relevant in competitive and strategic scenarios, such as those depicted in *The Traitors*, where contestants must anticipate and adapt to the actions of their opponents to maximize their chances of success. For further information, see John F. Nash's "Equilibrium Points in N-Person Games", 1950; "Non-Cooperative Games", 1951.

transforms ordinary group behavior into heightened drama. This spectacle provokes reflection on power and cohesion: alliances rise and collapse, deceptions yield short-term gains but long-term mistrust, and vulnerability becomes both a liability and a strategic asset. Like Roger Caillois's (2001) notion of structured play operating as a laboratory for exploring human behavior, *The Traitors* offers a microcosm where these themes can be observed, analyzed, and critiqued.

Moreover, the program enacts the trickster's transformative role¹⁴ by embodying the transformative potential of play as a tool for self-reflection and cultural critique. By suspending everyday moral constraints—deceit is reframed as a tactical necessity and betrayal as an acceptable strategy—the show, like the trickster, turns ethical norms inside out to reveal their contingent nature. The game's structure thus simulates social interactions, yet offers a controlled environment to explore profound social themes. This deliberate inversion creates a liminal zone, not just for participants but also viewers, drawn in by the drama yet able to remain external enough to reflect. The controlled environment provided by the show thus serves as both a spectacle and a site of reflection, encouraging audiences to grapple with questions about morality, strategy, and the interplay between individual agency and collective dynamics. Hence, the show performs the trickster-like dual role: while the unfolding drama captivates audiences, it also prompts a deeper engagement with the ethical and psychological complexities of human behavior. This dual function reflects the trickster's transformative role, challenging conventional norms while revealing their inherent contradictions. In so doing, the show becomes more than entertainment; it operates as a cultural text that interrogates how social contexts shape—and sometimes distort—our moral judgments.

Ultimately, *The Traitors* underscores the enduring significance of play and simulation. By leveraging the safety of its *magic circle*, it allows (participants and viewers) for a deep-dive into the complex interplay between individual agency and collective authority. The show's controlled chaos not only entertains but also holds up a mirror to societal dynamics, challenging to reconsider social assumptions. Thus, in a trickster-like manner, *The Traitors* challenges conventional understandings of morality and social interaction, reinforcing the enduring cultural significance of play as both a tool for self-reflection and a lens for understanding the human condition. The phenomenon of obedience to the collective will in *The Traitors* extends beyond the confines of the game, offering a lens through which to examine real-world social dynamics. The show dramatizes how collective pressures can override individual ethical considerations, fostering an environment where manipulation, deceit, and scapegoating are not only normalized but rewarded. This raises critical questions

¹⁴ For discussion of the trickster's transformative function, see Barbara Babcock-Abrahams' notion of *Trickster-Transformer-Culture Hero*, discussed in her article "A Tolerated Margin of Mess": The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered", 1975; and Robert Pelton's *The Trickster in West Africa*, 1980.

about the situational nature of morality and the ways in which social contexts shape ethical behavior. By simulating these dynamics, *The Traitors* invites viewers to reflect on their own susceptibility to group influence and the ethical compromises that arise in collective settings, serving as both a cultural critique and a psychological experiment.

4. Spectatorship and the Suspension of Ethical Constraints

One of *The Traitors*' most intriguing features is its ability to draw viewers into a liminal, morally ambiguous space—one that mirrors the trickster's world—where behaviors normally condemned in everyday life (deception, manipulation, betrayal, scapegoating) become not only permissible but deeply compelling. This paradox can be understood through theories of spectatorship, the psychology of moral suspension, and the affordances of reality television as genre. The show creates a self-contained microcosm in which ethical norms are temporarily redefined, inviting audiences to engage with complex, transgressive behaviors without the real-world consequences these actions would normally incur.

4.1. Re-contextualization of Ethics

The framework of *The Traitors* fundamentally reconfigures actions typically deemed unethical into vital survival strategies. This shift aligns with Philip Zimbardo's (2008) exploration of situational influences, which demonstrates how context can radically alter moral judgments. Behaviors such as lying and manipulation—condemned outside the game—are reframed inside it as essential tactical necessities integral to gameplay, judged against the show's own rules rather than ordinary social mores. This re-contextualization allows both participants and viewers to temporarily adopt a moral perspective distinct from conventional ethical norms. Zimbardo's observations regarding the power of situational dynamics resonate here: the controlled, rule-bound environment of *The Traitors* functions as a bounded moral universe where actions are judged not against societal ethics but within the internal logic of the game. This mirrors Zimbardo's findings in the Stanford Prison Experiment, where participants' behavior was influenced by the roles and expectations imposed by the experimental context.¹⁵ Similarly, contestants in *The Traitors* enter knowing that deception is a legitimate component of the competition, and viewers adopt the same internal logic, assessing players' actions by their strategic merit instead of everyday

¹⁵ Conducted from August 15 to 21, 1971, in the basement of Jordan Hall, the Stanford Prison Experiment aimed to explore the psychological impact of authority and powerlessness within a simulated prison setting. Led by psychology professor Philip G. Zimbardo, the study enlisted Stanford students through a local newspaper advertisement. After rigorous screening, 24 participants were randomly assigned roles as either prisoners or guards. Although initially planned to last one to two weeks, the experiment was abruptly halted on the sixth day due to the rapid escalation of events, with prisoners subjected to severe and dehumanizing treatment by their fellow participants. For further information, visit the official website: [Stanford Prison Experiment - Spotlight at Stanford](#)

ethics. The show thus creates a moral framework distinct from the everyday life, in which the game's rule-bound environment functions as a bounded moral universe.

This re-contextualization establishes a clear boundary between the fictionalized world of the game and the reality outside it. Game theorists Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman (2004) emphasize the importance of the concept of the *magic circle*—a conceptual boundary that separates the game's moral code from that of the outside world. Within this circle, deceit and betrayal become legitimate maneuvers, allowing participants to strategize without real-world ethical considerations, and spectators to interpret the players' actions not as moral failings but as competitive tactics within the agreed-upon framework of the show.

For viewers, this framework operates as a narrative contract. As cultural theorist Umberto Eco (1984) suggests, audiences willingly suspend disbelief and adopt the narrative's internal logic. In the case of *The Traitors*, this suspension extends beyond disbelief to moral judgment. The show implicitly forces audience to set aside real-world ethical frameworks and evaluate contestants' actions based on their effectiveness and ingenuity within the game. This narrative contract enables viewers to empathize with and even root for players engaged in morally ambiguous behaviors. Moreover, this reframing resonates with Bernard Suits's (1978) definition of games as voluntary attempts to overcome *unnecessary obstacles*. The constructed challenges of *The Traitors*—rooted in deception, manipulation, and psychological maneuvering—are embraced as the essence of the game. This acceptance allows both players and viewers to adopt a moral lens specific to the game, one in which traditional ethical norms are temporarily suspended. This re-contextualization of ethics in *The Traitors* reflects broader cultural trends that explore moral complexity and the fluidity of ethical codes. By creating a self-contained moral framework, the show invites to grapple with the malleability of morality in different contexts, challenging to reconsider assumptions about deceit, manipulation, and ethical behavior.

4.2. Psychological Distance and Narrative Pleasure

The Traitors leverages the inherent detachment of spectatorship to invite viewers into a morally ambiguous space, where they can vicariously experience acts of deception and betrayal, and appreciate the unfolding drama without personal moral accountability. This detachment resonates with Roland Barthes' (1975) concept of *narrative pleasure*, which describes the enjoyment derived from following a story without being entangled in its ethical or emotional conflicts. It is the safety of narrative distance that allows audiences to vicariously experience the excitement of trickery, engaging with morally ambiguous actions as part of a constructed spectacle rather than as real-world transgressions. This emotional buffer—what Laura Mulvey's (1975) theory of visual pleasure calls the *voyeuristic gaze*—allows viewers to observe

manipulation and intrigue on screen, even as they maintain their own moral certainties off screen.

Framing *The Traitors* as a game—where actions occur within clearly delineated boundaries of fiction and entertainment—further amplifies this distancing effect. Viewers recognize that the consequences of the players' actions are limited to the game's constructed world, allowing them to suspend their ethical concerns and instead, focus on the strategic brilliance and skillful cunning of the participants. This aligns with the idea of *ludic spectatorship* as explored by Huizinga (1971) in *Homo Ludens*, where the act of watching becomes a form of play. In this context, viewers find themselves rooting for the clever manipulation and tactical ingenuity displayed by contestants, appreciating these qualities as forms of skill and mastery rather than moral breaches.

The moral transgressions the show presents are further reframed through the lens of entertainment, transforming actions like betrayal and deceit into a source of intrigue and admiration. Marie-Laure Ryan (2001) in her focus on narrative immersion demonstrates how fictional contexts create a *cognitive buffer* for audiences, enabling them to explore taboo and morally complex behaviors without compromising their ethical standards. Similarly, *The Traitors* capitalizes on this dynamic through editing techniques and narrative framing. Moments of vulnerability, humor and dramatic irony, and confessionals and personal reflection provide a well-rounded portrayal of participants, humanizing even its most duplicitous players. Additionally, the ethical distance of spectators taps into broader cultural and psychological phenomena. As Barthes (1975) argues, narrative consumption often involves a dual process of *identification* and *detachment*. Viewers may identify with the players' cunning or resilience while simultaneously maintain enough distance to critique their actions or celebrate their downfall. This duality allows audiences to safely explore their fascination with morally ambiguous behavior and the mechanics of manipulation, and experience a cathartic release as they navigate these complexities in a controlled and mediated setting. Hence, as viewers oscillate between *identification* with a cunning player's triumph and *detachment* from their moral transgressions, experiencing catharsis that both thrills and reassures, this dual process—also rooted in Laura Mulvey's insight into visual pleasure—turns the show into a space where transgression can be safely witnessed, dissected, and ultimately enjoyed. By weaving together narrative pleasure, game-induced moral suspension, and the voyeuristic appeal of deception, *The Traitors* transforms ethical conflict into gripping entertainment, positioning audiences as both spectators and judges drawn into an exploration of profound themes while secure in the knowledge that their own ethical boundaries remain intact.

4.3. Collective Spectatorship and the Role of the Crowd

The collective aspect of spectatorship in *The Traitors* amplifies the psychological experience of viewing by transforming dispersed individuals into a metaphorical *crowd*, whose shared engagement produces a sense of complicity and shared, collective excitement. Gustave Le Bon's (1895) theory of crowd psychology offers a crucial lens here, as he posits that individuals in crowds experience a diffusion of personal responsibility and become more susceptible to collective emotions. In the context of *The Traitors*, the viewers' emotional alignment with the contestants' strategies mirrors Le Bon's *crowd contagion*, whereby support for the "Traitors" can intensify without individual moral reckoning. The notion of crowd dynamics of spectatorship also resonates with more contemporary theories in media studies, particularly Henry Jenkins' (2006) concept of participatory culture. Jenkins' studies explore how collective spectatorship, especially in the digital age, transforms viewers into active contributors, not only through emotional investment in the narrative but also via discussions on social media platforms and fan communities. These online spaces, as the official websites of the show reveal, amplify the metaphorical crowd effect, reinforcing a communal experience by encouraging viewers to collectively analyze, critique, and celebrate the contestants' strategic moves. Online fan forums and social media discussions further extend the collective engagement, enabling viewers to co-create meanings and emotional solidarity around strategic moves within the game. This participatory element enhances the sense of shared complicity, as viewers navigate their ethical engagement with the game in a communal setting.

The show's editing techniques further reinforce this collective engagement. Linda Hutcheon's (1988) theory of postmodern narrative underscores how *The Traitors*' editing constructs complex characterizations to present contestants as multifaceted individuals with intricate motivations that challenge traditional moral binaries. This empathetic framing that humanizes both "Traitors" and "Faithfuls" complicates moral binaries, blurring the lines in trickster-like manner between victims and villains, and invites multiple, sometimes even contradictory, emotional responses. The complexity nurtures a postmodern *meta awareness* in viewers, who recognize—and relish—the fluidity of ethical judgment. Moreover, the editing techniques employed in *The Traitors* align with Roland Barthes' (1975) notion of narrative pleasure. By structuring episodes to reveal dramatic conflicts, alliances, and betrayals incrementally, the show creates a heightened sense of anticipation and emotional investment. These narrative hooks contribute to the collective experience by ensuring that viewers remain captivated and engaged, often aligning their sympathies with the most cunning players regardless of their ethical transgressions. This interplay between narrative construction, crowd dynamics, and ethical suspension mirrors anthropologist Victor Turner's (1969) concept of liminality, positing that threshold states—*liminoid spaces*/ transitional states where traditional social norms are suspended—allow for the emergence of alternative modes of

behaviors and identities. *The Traitors* operates within such liminality where traditional ethical frameworks are set aside in favor of shared exploration. In this liminal viewing context, audiences experience a temporary suspension of real-world ethical constraints, permitting exploration of taboo behaviors. Together, these theoretical perspectives reveal how *The Traitors* transforms solitary spectatorship into a collective psychological event, where the show's narrative and editing strategies foster a communal liminal experience. Viewers become both participants in—and analysts of—the crowd dynamics portrayed on screen, enhancing their emotional investment while prompting reflection on the social forces that shape group behavior in both mediated and real-world contexts.

4.4. Ethical Fluidity and Catharsis

The suspension of ethical constraints in *The Traitors* engages deeper psychological mechanisms that challenge conventional moral frameworks. Milgram's (1963) work on obedience and Asch's (1951) studies on conformity underscore the malleability of individual morality within structured environments. Milgram reveals that individuals are often willing to act against their personal ethical standards under the influence of situational authority, while Asch demonstrates how social pressure can lead individuals to conform to group norms even when they conflict with personal convictions. These findings resonate with the viewing experience of *The Traitors*, as audiences recalibrate their ethical frameworks to align with the internal logic of the game, finding entertainment in behavior they might otherwise condemn.

Another layer of complexity emerges from the interplay between individual psychology and group dynamics. The pressures of *groupthink*, as theorized by Irving Janis (1972), are evident in the contestants' behaviors, as they adapt their strategies based on shifting alliances and suspicions. This dynamic is mirrored in the collective spectatorship experience as viewers, engaged in discussions, debates, and fan communities, collectively negotiate and reshape their perceptions. As Henry Jenkins (2006) argues, this participatory culture transforms spectatorship into an interactive and communal experience, further blurring the lines between personal ethical standards and the game's moral framework. Additionally, the psychological appeal of *The Traitors* is rooted in its ability to provide a form of emotional and psychological catharsis. Carl Jung's (1959) concept of the shadow¹⁶—the repressed aspects of the psyche associated with taboo desires and impulses—offers a lens through which to understand the audience's engagement with morally transgressive behaviors. By witnessing contestants navigate ethical gray areas, viewers vicariously explore their

¹⁶ In analytical psychology, the *shadow* represents an unconscious part of the personality that conflicts with the ego ideal, often leading to resistance and projection by the ego. This aspect, sometimes referred to as the *Repressed Id*, *Shadow Archetype*, or *Ego-dystonic Complex*, can manifest in archetypal forms aligned with the collective unconscious, one of which is the trickster. Jung's (1959) concept of the *shadow* explains the cathartic appeal of exploring suppressed impulses through mediated experiences, such as reality television. See Carl G. Jung's "Aion: Phenomenology of the Self (The Ego, the Shadow, the Syzygy: Anima/Animus)", 1971.

own shadow elements, experiencing a mediated and socially sanctioned confrontation with suppressed impulses. This engagement provides a safe environment for confronting and integrating suppressed impulses, offering a sense of psychological release. The show's trickster-like nature, which thrives on deception and subversion, enhances this cathartic experience catharsis by allowing viewers to experience the allure of transgression without real-world consequences.

At the same time, spectatorship reinforces ethical boundaries through a process of reflective distancing. Drawing on Brechtian theory,¹⁷ the act of observing a performance inherently invites critical engagement. While viewers may empathize with the contestants, they also maintain a critical distance, evaluating the morality of their actions within the game and affirming their own moral frameworks beyond the show's context. This dual engagement—aligning with and critiquing the behaviors on screen—demonstrates the intricate psychological interplay between ethical fluidity and moral reaffirmation in the context of reality television. Ultimately, *The Traitors* capitalizes on this dynamic duality of spectatorship to offer a unique viewing experience. It immerses viewers in a world where deceit and manipulation are celebrated, encouraging them to grapple with complex moral questions, while simultaneously offering a reflective lens through which to examine the fluidity of ethical codes and the influence of context on moral judgments. As such, *The Traitors* transcends its surface identity as a mere reality show to emerge as a thought-provoking commentary on the malleability of morality under situational pressures and collective engagement.

5. Ethical Ambiguity and Viewer Engagement

The moral complexity of *The Traitors* is central to its appeal, immersing viewers in a web of ethical dilemmas that, in trickster-like manner, challenge conventional understandings of morality. The show's narrative thrives on ethical ambiguity, framing deception and betrayal as simultaneously reprehensible and strategically rewarding. For viewers, this duality creates a compelling tension between their moral principles and their admiration for the ingenuity of successful traitors. By placing ethical ambiguity at the core of its game-play, *The Traitors* deepens audience engagement, fostering a complex and nuanced connection with the show's psychological and social dynamics.

¹⁷ This observation draws on Bertolt Brecht's concept of the *Verfremdungseffekt* or *alienation effect*, which argues that theatrical performance should not simply immerse audiences but also provoke critical reflection. Brecht believed that by maintaining a certain distance from the narrative, spectators could engage more actively with the underlying social and moral issues. In the context of reality television, this reflective distancing allows viewers to navigate dual perspectives: emotional involvement with the contestants' experiences and analytical evaluation of their actions. This dual engagement parallels Brechtian ideas, fostering both empathy and moral critique in the audience. See Bertolt Brecht's *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, 1964.

5.1. Empathizing with Morally Ambiguous Characters

One of the most compelling aspects of *The Traitors* lies in its ability to humanize morally ambiguous characters tasked with deceiving their peers. Through confessionals, candid moments, and strategic discussions, the show provides insights into players' thoughts, emotions, and motivations. These narrative devices frame players' actions not as malicious, but as pragmatic responses to the pressures of the game. This portrayal aligns with Lawrence Kohlberg's (1981) theory of moral development, which posits that moral reasoning evolves through stages influenced by situational pressures and individual perspectives. Kohlberg's theory outlines how individuals progress through different stages of moral reasoning, each influenced by their cognitive development and social environment. These stages are grouped into three levels: 1) the *Pre-conventional* level, where morality is centered on avoiding punishment or seeking rewards; 2) the *Conventional* level, where actions are judged according to societal norms, expectations, and the maintenance of law, order, and social relationships; 3) the *Post-conventional* level, where moral reasoning transcends societal norms and is guided by abstract principles such as situational ethics (Kohlberg, 1981). In the context of *The Traitors*, contestants' ethical decisions often reflect the *Post-conventional* level, where moral reasoning is context-sensitive and situational ethics take precedence over rigid adherence to universal principles. Within the *magic circle* of the game—a conceptual space where normal societal rules are suspended and replaced by game-specific norms and expectations—contestants may justify deceit, betrayal, and manipulation as necessary survival tactics. Ethical decisions are no longer governed by absolute values like honesty or fairness but are recalibrated according to the game's structure and objectives. This dynamic reflects Kohlberg's notion that individuals at the *Post-conventional* stage weigh ethical choices against situational pressures, prioritizing pragmatic solutions over adherence to absolute moral codes. The show thus dramatized the tension between personal integrity and strategic demands, challenging viewers to consider how situational pressures influence moral reasoning and exposing the fluidity of ethical decision-making under high-stakes conditions.

By contextualizing deception as an integral component of game-play, *The Traitors* transforms acts of manipulation into feats of psychological artistry. Contestants who successfully deceive others are often celebrated for their cunning, adaptability, and strategic acumen. This celebration reflects audience's recognition of deception as a survival mechanism rather than a moral failing. However, this framing also generates an ethical paradox: behaviors such as lying, betrayal, or scapegoating—typically condemned in real-world contexts—are reframed within the *magic circle* as legitimate and even admirable tactics. This duality resonates with Albert Bandura's (1991) theory of moral disengagement, which explains how individuals suspend ethical judgments when actions are contextualized in ways that minimize moral responsibility. Bandura identifies mechanisms of moral disengagement that allow

individuals to rationalize actions that might otherwise conflict with their ethical standards—*Moral Justification*, where harmful actions are reframed as serving a higher purpose; *Euphemistic Labeling*, where harmful behaviors are described using morally neutral language (e.g., “strategy” instead of “betrayal”); and Displacement of Responsibility, where blame is shifted onto external circumstances or authorities (Bandura, 1991). In *The Traitors*, these mechanisms are evident in both contestants’ self-rationalization and viewers’ interpretations. Players rationalize deceit as necessary for success, and viewers, in turn, empathize with them, suspending moral judgment while navigating their own ethical ambivalence. The suspension of moral judgment fosters a unique form of engagement, where audiences both root for and critique the same players.

The humanization of morally ambiguous characters in *The Traitors* reflects broader cultural trends in contemporary media and storytelling, particularly the rise of complex antiheroes in popular culture. Characters such as Walter White in *Breaking Bad* or Tony Soprano in *The Sopranos* exemplify growing fascination with figures that operate within morally grey landscapes. *The Traitors* extends this trend into the realm of reality television, foregrounding the intricate interplay between ethics, strategy, and survival in high-pressure environments. By humanizing morally ambiguous characters, the show challenges viewers to reconsider the criteria by which they judge ethical behavior and underscores the adaptability of moral frameworks within specific social contexts. In doing so, *The Traitors* both entertain and invite critical reflection on the fluid and situational nature of morality.

5.2. Blurring the Lines Between Good and Bad: Ethical Ambiguity

The distinction between the “Faithfuls” and “Traitors” in *The Traitors* initially appears to establish a binary moral framework, with the former embodying trust and virtue and the latter deception and malice. However, the strategies employed by the “Faithfuls” challenge this simplistic dichotomy. In their quest to identify “Traitors” and maintain group cohesion, the “Faithfuls” engage in behaviors that mirror the very tactics they condemn in their adversaries—suspicion, manipulation, scapegoating, and even deceit. This ethical ambiguity aligns with the trickster archetype, which disrupts conventional moral binaries and emphasizes the fluidity of ethical boundaries. The “Faithfuls” are thus not immune to the situational pressures of the game, where the stakes of survival encourage pragmatic decision-making over adherence to universal moral principles. For instance, suspicions are frequently based on circumstantial evidence or subconscious biases, leading to wrongful accusations and betrayals. Additionally, alliance-building often entails manipulation, as players vie for control of the group narrative while attempting to preserve their own safety. Such dynamics complicate the viewer’s perception of morality within the game as the players’ actions reveal that the lines between “good” and “bad” behavior are not only blurred but also contingent on context, necessity, and perspective.

This fluidity resonates with psychological and philosophical theories that emphasize the malleability of moral behavior under external pressures. Bandura's (1991) theory of moral disengagement explains how individuals justify questionable actions by reframing them as aligned with a higher goal—in this case, exposing the traitors to protect the group. Similarly, Zimbardo's (2007) exploration of situational influences on morality highlights how environments can shape and even distort ethical decision-making. From a sociological perspective, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory adds another layer of understanding. The players' actions can be seen as performances tailored to their perceived roles within the group, with the "Faithfuls" adopting behaviors that protect their position even at the expense of others. This performative aspect reflects broader societal dynamics, where moral decisions are often dictated by external expectations rather than intrinsic values.

Crucially, the ethical ambiguity portrayed in *The Traitors* also exposes the relational nature of power within the group. Drawing on Michel Foucault's (1978) conception of power as diffuse, dynamic, and enacted through social relations rather than possessed by individuals¹⁸, the show illustrates how influence is constantly negotiated among players. Power in *The Traitors* is not a static attribute but emerges through interactions—through the ability to persuade, to form alliances, and to shape collective perceptions. Those with greater rhetorical skill, social capital, or strategic acumen can better manipulate the narrative and protect themselves, while others, more vulnerable within these shifting networks, become easy targets for suspicion and exclusion. This imbalance mirrors broader societal structures, where unequal access to social resources reinforces vulnerability and ethical compromise. By revealing how power circulates unevenly within the group and shapes moral decision-making, *The Traitors* invites viewers to reflect not only on individual ethical choices but also on the systemic dynamics that govern trust, authority, and survival in social contexts.

For viewers, the ethical ambiguity of the players further challenges traditional notions of morality. The game's structure highlights the adaptability of human behavior, demonstrating that moral choices are rarely absolute and often shaped by external pressures and internal conflicts. This interplay invites audiences to reflect on their own ethical boundaries and consider how context influences their judgments and actions. Thus, the show's deliberate disruption of moral binaries mirrors the complexities of real-world ethical dilemmas, where decisions are rarely black and white. By blurring the lines between good and evil in trickster-like manner,

¹⁸ In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (1978), Michel Foucault develops the idea that power is *relational*, everywhere, and exercised through networks, not simply possessed or wielded by individuals. For further reference on power, also see Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977), in which the author elaborates on relational power in the context of surveillance and control mechanisms.

The Traitors underscores the universality of certain behaviors in high-stakes environments and reinforces the idea that morality is both situational and subjective.

The ethical ambiguity of *The Traitors* serves as a microcosm for broader societal dilemmas, forcing the audience to grapple with uncomfortable questions about morality, context, and the boundaries of acceptable behavior. In a world where individuals must frequently navigate competing loyalties, shifting norms, and situational ethics, the show's dramatization of these dynamics offers both entertainment and meaningful insight. By engaging with these ethical complexities in a fictionalized setting, *The Traitors* allows audiences to explore their own moral frameworks without the stakes of real-world consequences. This exploration is particularly compelling in its ability to spark introspection, prompting viewers to consider how context, perspective, and power asymmetries shape ethical judgments. In this way, the show transcends its entertainment value, functioning as a cultural artifact that reflects and critiques the ethical ambiguities of contemporary society.

5.3. Cognitive Dissonance and Dual Narratives

A defining feature of *The Traitors* is its use of dual narratives, alternating between the perspectives of the "Traitors" and the "Faithfuls". This structural choice immerses viewers in the moral and psychological dilemmas confronting both groups. While the "Faithfuls" struggle to identify "Traitors" amidst a haze of suspicion and paranoia, the "Traitors" grapple with the pressures of sustaining deception while navigating complex interpersonal dynamics. By presenting both sides with equal depth, the show fosters a layered emotional response, compelling viewers to empathize with characters who embody conflicting moral roles.

Leon Festinger's (1962) theory of cognitive dissonance offers a useful framework for understanding viewers' psychological engagement. Cognitive dissonance arises when individuals experience discomfort due to holding conflicting beliefs or emotions. In the context of *The Traitors*, viewers must reconcile their admiration for the cunning strategies employed by the "Traitors" with their sympathy for the struggles and betrayals endured by the "Faithfuls". This tension becomes particularly acute during moments when the "Traitors" demonstrate resourcefulness or emotional vulnerability, thereby humanizing deception. Conversely, when the "Faithfuls" engage in morally ambiguous behavior, such as scapegoating or manipulation, viewers are forced to question the extent of their sympathy. This emotional interplay heightens viewer investment in the show, as they oscillate between competing allegiances and moral judgments.

The dual narrative structure further prompts viewers to reflect on their own ethical frameworks. By presenting the ethical dilemmas faced by both groups, *The Traitors* mirrors real-world situations where moral clarity is elusive and decisions are

shaped by context and necessity. This dynamic resonates with the phenomenon of moral relativism, wherein ethical judgments are influenced by situational factors rather than universal principles. Moreover, the alternating perspectives underscore the subjectivity of moral experience: for the “Faithfuls”, the “Traitors” represent an existential threat to group cohesion, while for the “Traitors”, survival demands strategic manipulation of trust. This complexity forces viewers to confront the malleability of morality and invites introspection about how they might navigate similar ethical challenges in their own lives.

By generating cognitive dissonance, *The Traitors* intensifies viewer engagement through a layered emotional experience. Unlike traditional narratives with clear moral binaries, the show thrives on ambiguity, reflecting the complexities of human psychology and ethical decision-making. This approach resonates with real-world challenges, where individuals are often required to balance competing interests, emotions, and moral imperatives. The show’s capacity to elicit cognitive dissonance underscores the power of storytelling as a means of ethical exploration. By immersing audiences in a world where morality is fluid and context-dependent, *The Traitors* transcends its role as mere entertainment, functioning instead as a mirror through which viewers can examine their own values, biases, and ethical boundaries.

CONCLUSION

The Traitors transcends its status as a mere reality show, emerging as a cultural artifact that both mirrors and critiques fundamental aspects of human behavior and societal dynamics. By dramatizing themes such as crowd psychology, scapegoating, Machiavellianism, and ethical ambiguity, it constructs a microcosm where the intricacies of trust, deception, and power are magnified and interrogated. The show functions as a mirror reflecting the fragility of ethical boundaries and the malleability of moral judgment in highly contextualized settings, offering audiences a dynamic interplay of entertainment and reflection.

One of the show’s most profound achievements lies in its trickster-like ability to challenge and re-contextualize conventional moral frameworks. Within the confines of the game, deception and manipulation are reframed as necessary strategies rather than moral weaknesses. This redefinition invites viewers to grapple with the contextual nature of morality, where actions traditionally condemned in everyday life are celebrated as marks of ingenuity and adaptability. The ethical ambiguity woven into the game intensifies viewer engagement while encouraging critical reflection on the societal values that influence our judgments of success, loyalty, and betrayal. However, this same ethical ambiguity may carry problematic implications. Some might argue that by normalizing manipulation and rewarding strategic deceit, *The Traitors* risks desensitizing audiences to the moral consequences of such behaviors in real life. The celebratory portrayal of cunning and betrayal, when

unaccompanied by critical framing, could inadvertently reinforce cynical worldviews or diminish empathy among viewers. Thus, while the show invites introspection, it also necessitates a cautious awareness.

Beyond its immediate narrative, *The Traitors* serves as a commentary on the mechanisms of collective behavior. Through its exploration of group dynamics, it reveals the vulnerabilities inherent in crowd psychology—conformity, scapegoating, and the manipulation of collective emotions. These portrayals resonate beyond the screen, offering a lens through which to examine similar dynamics in real-world settings, from workplace hierarchies to political movements. By exposing the underpinnings of collective behavior, the show invites viewers to consider their own susceptibility to these forces, both as spectators and participants in societal systems. Moreover, *The Traitors* exemplifies the power of media to interrogate and reflect upon societal norms. Its carefully constructed narrative and moral ambiguity serve as a platform for exploring deeper ethical and psychological questions, while its immense popularity underscores a collective fascination with the darker facets of human behavior. The show's ability to captivate audiences stems from this duality: it is at once a spectacle of competition and a stage for cultural critique. By turning the lens on both its players and its viewers, it offers a shared space for grappling with the complexities of morality, trust, and power.

Ultimately, *The Traitors* is not just a game of deception; it is a nuanced study of the human condition. Its success lies in its capacity to illuminate the tension between individuality and collectivity, morality and pragmatism, trust and betrayal. It challenges viewers to confront uncomfortable truths about the fluidity of ethical standards and the ways in which context can redefine values. Simultaneously, it prompts critical reflections on societal systems that shape—and are shaped by—our moral choices. As a cultural phenomenon, *The Traitors* underscores the enduring power of storytelling to reveal and question our understanding of human nature.

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Appendix A:
Overview of Selected International Versions of The Traitors

Country	Local Title	Seasons (as of 2025)	Contestant Type	Notable Features or Format Variations	Broadcaster
Netherlands	<i>De Verraders</i>	4	Celebrities	Original format; missions in Dutch castles	RTL 4
United Kingdom	<i>The Traitors</i>	3	Non-celebrities	Filmed in Scottish Highlands; psychological focus	BBC One
United States	<i>The Traitors US</i>	3	Celebrities & civilians	More dramatic editing; higher prize pool	Peacock
Australia	<i>The Traitors AU</i>	2	Mixed	Local cultural adaptation; shorter run	Network Ten
France	<i>Les Traîtres</i>	2	Celebrities	Emphasis on theatrical elements	M6
Germany	<i>Die Verräter</i>	1	Celebrities	Follows original Dutch format closely	RTL
Belgium	<i>De Verraders</i>	3	Celebrities	High production value; dramatic narration	VTM
Canada	<i>The Traitors: Canada</i>	1	Mixed	Filmed in Quebec; bilingual structure	CTV
Czech Republic	<i>Zrádci</i>	1	Mixed	Culturally localized format	Nova TV
Israel	<i>The Traitors IL</i>	1	Mixed	Integrates regional themes and strategies	Keshet 12

Appendix B:
Overview of Selected International Adaptations of The Traitors:
Season and Episode Breakdown

Country	Season	Number of Episodes	Air Year	Key Themes/ Features
Netherlands	Season 1	10	2012	Psychological manipulation, group dynamics
United Kingdom	Season 1	12	2021	Trust vs. betrayal, social deception, strategic game-play
United States	Season 1	10	2021	Manipulation, group conformity, team vs. individual motives
United Kingdom	Season 2	12	2022	Deception, sabotage, loyalty vs. betrayal
United States	Season 2	12	2023	Identity, group pressure, ethical dilemmas
Australia	Season 1	10	2023	Suspicion, alliances, trust-building vs. trickery
Germany	Season 1	12	2023	Psychological warfare, group cohesion, manipulation tactics
France	Season 2	10	2024	Competition, moral ambiguity, survival strategies
Czech Republic	Season 1	10	2024	Strategy, deception, breaking social norms
United Kingdom	Season 3	12	2023	Betrayal, identity, shifting alliances, emotional manipulation

- **Etik kurul onayı:** Etik kurul onayına ihtiyaç bulunmamaktadır.
 - **Çıkar çatışması:** Çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.
 - **Finansal destek:** Yazar bu çalışma için finansal destek almadığını beyan etmiştir.
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