

CASE STUDY 2 - REALITY TV

Transformation Narratives

Television Cultures

COMM1073

Journal due next week (Thursday at midnight)

- regular entries for Wks 5-10 [*worth 25%*] ... no entries necessary in relation to Wks 11-12

- 2 x showcase posts of at least a 1000 words - *revisions* ('enhanced special widescreen editions' :-) [*worth 10% each*] ... must demonstrate independent research (citation/reference to 3 sources other than those mentioned in lectures)

Reminders

- 3 x comments (100-150 words each) on peer posts [*worth 5% total*]

- Could you please find time to fill this out
- Qualitative feedback is important to me and has been acted upon in order to improve the course
- Note that there is only one Television Studies course in the School - would appreciate an expression of support for it as a worthwhile area that should be accommodated in the School elective offerings

Online Course Survey

- the makeover – a ubiquitous cultural phenomenon
- has moved from the marginal (women's mags and daytime tv) to primetime
- makes use of an interesting combination of genres (reality tv, soap – eg, the emotional aspect of 'the reveal')
- but also features the expert – has link to other forms of popular advice culture

Transformation narratives: 'the makeover'

- people
- bodies
- cars
- houses
- pets
- relationships
- professional skills
- gardens/backyards

Makeover subjects

- context of the rise of the television format trade
- broader turn to 'the real' in television schedules
- strong shaping by national traditions

-see T.Lewis (ed), 2009, *TV Transformations: Revealing the Makeover*

History of the makeover

e.g. UK context for 'makeover takeover'

- social observation tradition
- leisure-oriented advice programming
- industrial shifts
- influence of US soap/talk shows - melodrama as narrative element

-T.Lewis, 2009, *TV Transformations: Revealing the Makeover*

'While such shows draw strongly on social documentary traditions, the educational approaches here is far from sociological, tending instead to focus on the emotional dimensions of people's lives and to reduce social issues to questions of individual lifestyle choice.'

-T.Lewis, 2009, *TV Transformations: Revealing the Makeover*

- a 'promiscuous' concept
- 'an accretion of personal style achieved primarily through consumption'
- a popular practice of identity-making
- has a defining context of modernity and rise of mass culture

What is lifestyle?

See Annamarie Jagose on 'The Invention of Lifestyle' in *Interpreting Everyday Culture* (2003), ed. F.Martin

- lifestyle – a pervasive contemporary discourse
- 'ways of life': mostly associated with stable communities and reproduction of related institutions; grounded in specific localities
- 'lifestyles': strongly oriented toward consumer choices and leisure patterns (and representations of economic practices)

See David C. Chaney, 'From Ways of Life to Lifestyle'

The rise of 'lifestyles'

•Lifestyle is not a term which has much applicability to traditional cultures, because it implies choice within a plurality of possible options, and is “adopted” rather than “handed down”. Lifestyles are routinized practices, the routines incorporated into habits of dress, eating, modes of acting and favored milieux for encountering others; but the routines followed are reflexively open to change in light of the mobile nature of personal identity ... All social choices (as well as larger and more consequential ones) are decisions not only about how to act but who to be. The more post-traditional the settings in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self-identity, its making and remaking.

- -Anthony Giddens (1991) quoted in

- daily life has become a target of ‘expertise’
- consider the transformations in the kinds of ‘experts’ that now feature heavily in this kind of programming as well as the sorts of knowledge they specialise in

role of ‘experts’

- Eco-House Challenge (SBS, 2007)

example re
experts

- the role of makeover television and lifestyle experts in promoting normative models of the 'good citizen'

'the well-being of all [...] has increasingly come to be seen as a consequence of the responsible self-government of each'
(Nikolas Rose, 1989: 264)

'governmentality'
& the DIY self

'Television's role is to alert viewers to the existence of more products and services for their utility in the endless project of the self.'

(Bonner 2003)

The DIY self

World's Strictest Parents (Series 2, 2010)

- 2008 -
- Originally - UK BBC3 (4 series so far)
- American, Australian (Ch.7), Danish, German, Polish versions

Consider:

- 'types' of people it focuses on
- mode of address
- narrative organisation and editing
- voiceover
- use of music
- pedagogical/ideological 'lessons' of the show for participants and viewers

Screening