Lifestyle television and diet: body care as a duty
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*Luisa Stagi**

Abstract: The formats of makeover and lifestyle television are an evolution of the reality television genre. The function of this type of format is to give instructions and examples that are functional to correct lifestyles. Through their "diagnostic eye" experts, who are the protagonists of these programmes, supply advice and knowledge about every sphere of life. In makeover programmes in comparison to lifestyle ones, the process of transformation to which the participant is submitted and of which the spectator becomes witness is more accentuated. The makeover format, above all when it concerns transformation of overweight bodies, puts the transformation of the Self on show. For this reason, in certain literature, makeover shows may be seen as technologies of the Self. In this paper two makeover television programmes will be analysed that deal with overweight adolescents and their families. The aim is to track down and analyse the discursive repertoires around the work on bodies and on their boundaries as a repair of the identity disorders of adolescents.

Keywords: Makeover television, the body, diet, adolescence

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Introduction: Television narratives between food and diet

The purpose of this paper is to track and deconstruct television discourses on food and diet that are communicated in lifestyle and makeover television. This particular television genre has the function of educating and setting an example of correct lifestyles through a narrative strategy. This narrative strategy communicates the idea that transformation of the body is functional to transformation of the Self. For the purposes of this paper, it was useful to start from these theoretical premises and to look for evidence in the analysis of two formats that are aimed at teenagers and their families. The theme of the "problem of adolescence" is interwoven with a discourse on the "epidemic of obesity". It was considered a particularly suitable context to track the rhetoric and the narrations that are articulated on the consumption-control axis and to track the ways in which the circulation of such discourses reflexively contributes to produce a certain definition of reality. Indeed, in a society defined as *gastro-anomique* (Fischler, 1979, 1990) - where a wide range of foods is found at one's disposal but at the same time the construction of food risk is crucial - the consumer, who no longer possesses a precise regulatory apparatus with respect to eating customs and knowledge, has in any case to appear competent (Sassatelli, 2004). From the time that food abundance and diversification were created in western societies, what one eats has become part of one's lifestyle because it implies an action that is a choice (Giddens, 1994). Furthermore, thanks to embodiment, food tastes and preferences have become essential tools for the project of construction and presentation of the Self (Lupton, 1999). A slender body has a powerful symbolic value as it indicates high self-control notwithstanding obtaining a slim figure is inherently incompatible with the consumer culture. The preoccupation with the internal management of the body (or rather the management of desires) is caused by destabilising factors in what Bordo (1997) calls the "macro-regulation of desire" in the social body system, where food and diet are key indicators of these inconsistencies.The system's fundamental contradiction is the ideal of slenderness on the one hand and the impulse to consume on the other. This finds expression in our bodies. In this sense, bulimia might be considered a typical construction of modern society. It is a method to load on the individual's body the oppositions which can no longer be resolved through recourse to social referents capable of articulating their terms and expressing their inherent conflicts (Stagi, 2002).

It is therefore not surprising that television discourses abound on what and how to eat; nevertheless, the narrations around diets and food are quite complex and sometimes answer functions and representations in contradiction (Ketchum, 2005).

The abundant literature on the theme has clearly shown the educational function of reality television as a cultural technology to help people steer themselves through this complexity, or, according to another perspective, it could be a resource that "cultivates" good citizenship through self-governance (Ouellette & Hay, 2008).

In the first part of this work we will try to reconstruct, through a brief digression, the pathway that has transformed the pedagogic function of television with regard to lifestyles from an educational intent to a discourse on transformation. According to the theoretical perspective of reflexive modernity, makeover television, offers a repertoire of technologies of the Self that are functional to the reflexive construction of one's own biographical project. Instead, for theories of Foucauldian matrix, makeover television is a device for the spreading of that expert know-how necessary for the practices of self-control and subjection. Following this perspective the viewers of such programmes will therefore try to reflect on how the role of the expert is fundamental (Smith, 2010) since from their privileged positions they judge and comment, recognising and corroborating the correct identities (Innocenti & Perrotta, 2013) stigmatising excess (Blaszkiewicz, 2009) and supplying another glance at the goals of the complete and correct representation of the Self. The analysis of the role of these "moral mediators", defined as such because they have the function of making the relationship between consumption and morality explicit, will be placed within a debate about lifestyle television, class and neo-liberalism. Examining the textual strategies of certain formats, one will try to bring out how a discourse tends to construct and represent a broken society that needs political and social 'healing' (Hollows & Jones, 2010). This type of discourse becomes particularly evident in the formats that deal with the slimming of bodies where the equation "bulging body = loss of self-control" is particularly emphasised. To explain this passage further we will deal with the process of "the construction of the obesity epidemic" with the purpose of showing how the discursive repertoires that circulate in the media are reflexively connected with the health and social politics that are trying to be communicated. Following this perspective of reflection we will deal with the political meaning of the body in a neo-liberal society, where a

good citizen is one who knows how to stay healthy through correct bodily practices. Working on the bodily confines is doubly meaningful and therefore the body makes the correct emobodiment apparent but it is also the right territory for the construction of identity.

The decision to specifically concentrate empirical analysis on formats that deal with the bodily transformation of overweight teenagers derives from the fact that many of the topics that will be tackled in this paper result in this particularly significant declination. Firstly, as widely discussed by Le Breton (2005), the body is the privileged territory for the work of identity construction in adolescence. Transforming the body, in this phase of life, means working on one's own future (as one of the slogans of the formats analysed recites). Furthermore, the moralising task that passes through re-education to correct lifestyles in this case concerns the family, which is considered guilty of failure. One is dealing with a functional symbolic discourse to emphasise the actual narration of the crisis of the family as it causes/results in the social breakup that produces the "adolescence problem". The diffusion of manuals, formats and other forms of cultural production aimed at taking care of parenthood incapable of managing order and discipline is a meaningful indicator of the degree of penetration of these discourses. Empirical research has been conducted on some subjects of this cultural production, but this paper purposefully focused on dealing with the results of an analysis that was carried out according to the approach of ethnography of the media (Boni, 2004). The analysis concerns two particular broadcasts that deal with overweight teenagers and their families: *Teenagers in weight crisis* (*Adolescenti in crisi di peso*) and *Honey let's save the kids* (*Tesoro salviamo i ragazzi*). In both programmes the same narrative structure shared with all the other makeover formats is also present: pre-transformation, transformation and post-transformation. Nevertheless, in the first programme the focus is on the adolescent who subjects herself to the ritual of transformation. Criticism of the family is present but emerges in an indirect way. Instead, in the second programme it is the parents who are the subject of intervention and re-education. A further element that was considered in the choice of programme is the version (original/ localised) of the format. The first programme is an American format that is broadcast in the original language but with the Italian dubbing using the delay effect, while the second programme is an Italian adaptation of a British format.

Table 1 - TV Programmes analysed

TV-Programme	Format	Focus	Type of Makeover	Type of Research Analysis
Teenager in crisi di peso (Teenagers in weight crisis)	USA format(*I Used To Be Fat*) - translation with the delay-effect	Teenagers	Body	Systematic Observation
Tesoro salviamo i ragazzi (Honey let's save the kids)	Italian adaptation of *Honey, We're Killing the Kids (UK)*	Family	Body	Systematic Observation
Adolescenti XXL (Adolescents XXL)	USA format(*Too Fat for 15*) - translation with the delay-effect	Teenagers	Body	Unsystematic Observation
SOS Tata	Italian adaptation of *Super Nanny* (UK)	Family	Relationships	Unsystematic Observation

In the paper we will also deal with how exposure to distant scenarios (the oversized bodies of American teenagers are a long way from overweight Italian teenagers) placed alongside near and recognisable scenarios allows the cultural distance to be filled and the "foreignisation" reduced, thereby facilitating the penetration and circulation of discourses on transformation and self-surveillance.

Lifestyle television (LT): from advice to example

The term lifestyle television, today very much in vogue, refers to a television genre aimed at informing and guiding the behaviour and tastes of people. In reality the basic idea has been present in television since its origins and is traceable to programmes that deal with giving advice on daily and domestic life (DIY, cooking, gardening). This type of programming, that is part of the deepest structure of television, is closely linked with that pedagogic, cultural and educational function of television at its start (Innocenti, 2013, p. 22). In the fifties, after the war, characterised by a return to the domestic sphere and by a boom of consumption, there was a growth in the demand for programmes that, besides entertaining, oriented tastes and lifestyles and contributed to the construction of a national identity through the medium of television (Perrotta, 2013, p. 27). This was also true for cooking where the first programmes truly had the function of reconstructing and transmitting a food culture that had been interrupted by the war. These early attempts are linked with the reconstruction of a

national identity based on the idea of consensus and recognition of a national cuisine (Goody, 1982).

In effect, the debate on television genres is almost always built around the functionality that they carry out on viewers. According to Innocenti, LT is characterised not so much on the basis of function but rather with respect to the contents. The specificity of LT is to know how to thematise and isolate certain aspects of daily life, placing them under a microscope in an excess of specialisation (Innocenti, 2013, p. 23). One is dealing with a very pragmatic type of learning: "Learning to apply in everyday life", close to the mechanism of the tutorial spread throughout the network and landed on TV. What counts today is not so much the saying "the television said so" of long ago but the fact that what is said on television is useful and spendable in daily life (Innocenti, 2013, p. 25) and that it can lead to a transformation. This latter function is more linked with a function defined makeover that is considered a declination of LT. In makeover programmes in comparison with lifestyle ones, the process of transformation to which the participant is submitted and of which the spectator becomes witness is more accentuated; that is the makeover gender is able to narrativise "the power of transformation" and to make it "the spectacle of the reveal" (Hill, 2007, cited in Perrotta, 2013). Both of these formats are included in the factual genre. With the term factual one means everything on television that is not fiction (Hill, 2007 as cited in Innocenti & Perrotta, 2013, p. 11), that contains truthful representations of reality and that supplies knowledge of the world. It is also an umbrella term that includes makeover and lifestyle, both formats that have a narrative based formulation on reality (a more widespread notion than factual), that turn to all the circles and interests of society exploring their features with a diagnostic eye, trying to supply knowledge and advice, thereby realizing that need of the contemporary individual, characteristic of the society of uncertainty, of another look that corroborates new identities, confirms correct behaviour and strengthens self-control (Innocenti & Perrotta, 2013).

However, at the start Italian television had no intention of representing reality: even the great investigations into the Italian reality were built following a conservative pedagogy and conforming to editorial lines rather than to the idea of faithfully reproducing reality (Menduni, 2013, p. 39). It was at the start of the eighties that representation of reality and truthful television was first spoken about. The different programmes that dealt with tracking down people who had disappeared or with reopening cases in the

news inaugurated the season of reality TV as an activity of public utility (Menduni, 2013). From this time on television would suffer an unstoppable move toward reality television, gradually losing its pedagogic function. There are many categories that can be traced: from the confessional television of the early afternoon, to the television that brings conflicts of various nature into view (from those of the family to those of the condominium), until reaching the "charitable" television that brings family members back together or collects funds for the most varied of causes. The real turning point took place at the end of the nineties with the arrival of the first reality shows - inaugurated by Big Brother - that would undergo immense development thanks to the advent of pay television and of the multiplication of channels on digital television. Subsequently, reality television will be differentiated in two versions: the first will remain on mainstream television primarily assuming the form of a talent show[1], the more extreme second will be declined as makeover, finding its position on pay television (Menduni, 2013, pp. 40-42).

So, since the year 2000, a genre has been inserted in Italian television that in the international context, above all Anglo-Saxon, had already been consolidated, progressively abandoning "the "educational" scheme and focusing on "advice" for an example and based on transformation (makeover)" (Scaglioni & Barra, 2013, p. 47). Some of the many formats present today in Italy were born in other national contexts and only later were inserted in Italian television schedules, at times suffering a local readjustment, at others, also with translations that follow a different logic[2], are broadcast in the original version. This insertion of international formats in Italian television has produced a considerable change in television language and contents, contributing to that "Americanisation of daily life" (Gundle, 1986, cited in Scaglioni & Barra, 2013, p. 61) which, between the seventies and eighties, had already been tried out with the programming of American serials on commercial networks. Exposure to other and distant worlds is usually alternated with the television scheduling with programmes that show more familiar situations, faces and languages. This

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[1] In talent shows, on closer inspection, there are many elements which act as *trait d'union* between reality and makeover: continual observation of the TV camera even backstage, a challenge, judgment and transformation.

[2] One goes from written superimposition of the translation to "re-voicing" in which the translation pronounced by a speaker begins some seconds later (delay effect) compared to the original which remains partially audible in the background, up to arriving at simil-sync close to classic dubbing (Scaglioni & Barra, 2013, p. 59).

strategy initially produced a territory of "exploration in safety" of strange things and cultural differences (Scaglioni & Barra, 2013, p. 53), but subsequently, this process has gradually modified the consumption habits of a part of the public that has learned to fill the cultural distance and reduce the "foreignisation" (Scaglioni & Barra, 2013, p. 62). Above all it, this process has produced a circulation of the discourse on transformation.

Makeover television and the role of the expert

Therefore makeover television is the most radical evolution of lifestyle television that has been built on a path that goes from "instructional" television passing to truthful television and reaching reality and talent shows. According to Elisa Giomi the conceptual nucleus of this type of format can be summarised in the equation "material transformation = condition or index for an internal transformation" and it represents and reinforces a "culture of therapy" (Giomi, 2013, p. 163), a typical trait of that society that pushes to seek "biographical solutions to systemic contradictions" that Bauman (1999) has spoken of. For this author the phenomenon of makeover television can be seen from two analytical perspectives. The first, that refers to the theory of reflexive modernisation, interprets the increasing process of individualisation and the consequent increase of individual responsibility as the territory in which the spreading of those "technologies of the Self" finds space that act as advice, prescriptions and help to reflexively build one's own project for life (Giomi, 2013, p. 165). The second perspective that is placed in the theory of governmentality with inspiration from Foucault, part of the presupposition that in order to be free in neo-liberal societies the subject must be subjected to expert knowledge and practices. According to Giomi, makeover television represents a process of taming that has lost every connotation of pedagogy: "the normative action that is brought into effect (...) is to produce docile subjects, integrated in discipline of the system through the centrality of the psychological discourse and the adoption of techniques of surveillance and continuous regulation of one's own behaviour" (Giomi, 2013, p. 182).

According to Skeggs the dramatisation and judgement of self-performance on "reality" television as significant performance will be to

the twenty-first centuries what Foucault's disciplinary techniques were to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries[3].

Although these programmes often focus on individuals' crises and concerns, they rarely address the social inequalities of socioeconomic status. Makeover TV programmes offer interventions for those who are "outside the norm" or in need of self-improvement. A common thread throughout a range of programmes is the need to exercise self-discipline and self-management (Oulette & Hay, 2008). Show participants' problems are depicted as resulting from personal error or fault rather than economic or social problems because this television supports a neo-liberal ideology that privatises social services and emphasises individual responsibility: "reality TV shows us how to conduct and 'empower' ourselves as enterprising citizens" because "the citizen is now conceived as an individual whose most pressing obligation to society is to empower her or himself privately" (Oulette & Hay, 2008, pp. 2-3).

Generally validation of this improvement takes place in what Moseley defines a 'moment of revelation' (2000). There are various and different narrative strategies that lead to the culminating moment, but many shared moments can be found. This transformational element enhances the appeal of the programme by adding an element of surprise and uncertainty to the narrative. Smith (2010, p. 193) suggests that the following structure is a common one across the makeover format:

1. contextualising information;
2. interview/s with the participant/s;
3. host offers advice on makeover;
4. work in progress, with occasional appearances by the host;
5. the 'moment of revelation'
6. independent assessment – the 'validation'; and,
7. host's summing up.

For Giomi (2013) the viewer is dealing with a ritual of degradation that follows three principal phases: pre-transformation, transformation and post-transformation. In the first phase the inspection of the life of the subjects is finalised to tracking down the trauma or psychological problem that has

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[3] Skeggs taking up Mathiesen (1997 cited in Skeggs 2010, p. 67) sustains that Foucault's analysis of power that saw the 'panoptical governance structure' as a structure in which 'few watching the many has been replaced by a synoptical structure of the many watching the many'.

brought about the loss of control. In makeovers that concern overweight people, which are the majority and those with which this paper will be dealing from now on, the equation 'loss of control = bulging body' is very clear and well defined. During the pre-transformation phase the narrative strategy - the use of the shot, the mounting and of other expedients such as for example the music or voice over - is aimed at describing a failure (Stagi, 2010). In the phase of post-transformation, ritualised by the moment of revelation, all this will be retold to emphasise the subjects' resumption of control of their own life through the recovery of control of their own body: often the subjects declare that they will start again - or they will finally try - to act within their workplace, that of study, of their hobbies or of love, in everything that before the transformation was off-limits for them. In the passage between the first and the second phase the inferiorisation of the subject is put on display. The strategies for such a representation are various in nature; often to give emphasis to this moment a scenario of functional medicalisation is made use of to build the figure of a patient and to create a certain distance from the person who fills the function of expert. The subject is made to undress or to wear a bathrobe or a garment from a hospital, while the expert can wear a white coat or in general a uniform that attests his/her competence. This process of "medicalisation" is an important device which serves to set the scene for the inferiorisation and infantilisation of the participant and to attribute power and expert knowledge to the person treating them (Riva, 2012). Also the type of language and paternalistic attitude of the expert towards the participant are declinations of this process of infantilisation. In reality, the strategies to accredit or strengthen the role of the expert are diverse and articulated. One of the most frequent strategies is to appeal for the support of a public that acts as a sounding box for the expert's knowledge; often it is the friends or relatives to be brought in to confirm the diagnosis during the pre-transformation phase and then to validate the "moment of revelation". At times it is a more generic public whose opinion or judgment is brought along side that of the expert (Smith, 2010); at other times subjects, who in the past had followed similar paths and have therefore become testimonials, are called on. According to Hollows & Jones (2010) these devices are important but not fundamental; indeed, the true accreditation of those who embodies the expert knowledge derives from their social position or from the distance of class between the one who judges and the one who is judged. In their interesting work, Hollows and

Jones analyse the figure of a well-known British presenter who, after having been protagonist of cooking programmes for years, recently conceived a programme (*Jamie's Ministry of Food*) in which he goes to cure the eating habits of the British working class. This figure, embodying the function of food educator for a social class that has lost all knowledge of a correct diet, is for the authors a "moral entrepreneur" of consumption. The bourgeois viewers recognise in him and legitimate his role as moral mediator, considering him necessary in a society in which food anomy is an index of social disintegration and pathology (Hollows & Jones, 2010). What passes as a moral message is that in a society of uncertainty and risk it is the subject who must take responsibility for his/her health through the correct choices in consumption. Nevertheless, some are not able to do so and for this reason they must be helped with the technologies of the Self of which the protagonist of *Jamie's Ministry of Food* makes himself bearer; indeed he is a "lifestyle mediator who educates on how to use food as an expressive lifestyle practice" (Hollows & Jones, 2010, p. 13). According to Skeggs the individualisation promoted through the programmes of makeover TV was always reliant upon access to and operationalisation of specific social, cultural, economic and symbolic capital: "The over-recruitment of different types of working-class participants to these shows and the positioning of many in need of transformation, enabled an exploration of how certain people and cultures are positioned, evaluated and interpreted as inadequate, deficient and requiring improvement" (Skeggs, 2010, p. 67).

The social construction of obesity

The discourse used by programmes such as *Jamie's Ministry of Food* however is much more complex. As Hollows & Jones (2010) effectively point out, what they are trying to build and represent is a sort of moral panic (Maneri, 2001)[4] around the question of obesity. Using expressions like "epidemic" or "threat to public health" when referring to obesity is part

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[4] Maneri, using and amplifying Cohen's concept (1972), defines moral panic "the set of emotional waves in which an episode or a group of people is defined as a threat to a society's values; mass media present nature in a stereotyped way, commentators, politicians and other authorities erect moral barricades and pronounce diagnoses and remedies until the episode disappears or returns to fill the position previously covered in collective preoccupations (2001, p. 8).

of this construction (Campos, Saguy, Ernsberger, Oliver, & Gaesser, 2006). In addition, speaking of obesity as an illness leads to classifying obese people as sick[5]. For Conrad the definition of obesity as an illness is really one of the examples useful to explaining the power of the American organisations of Managed Care[6] in defining the territories of illness and, what is more, the confines of insurance cover on the basis of parameters of economic convenience. From the moment in which the organisations of Managed Care understood that it is worthwhile as a financial investment to cover a gastric bypass operation rather than taking care of the potential illnesses and conditions linked with obesity (such as diabetes, heart diseases, muscular or skeletal problems), the discourse on the medicalisation of obesity has begun. The discourse on the "obesity epidemic" is therefore also built by economic interests that use it to legitimate health policies, but then it reflexively circulates, spreads and produces other discourses.

Different authors (Inthorn & Boyce, 2010; Rich, 2011) affirm that it is the same proliferation of makeover transmissions on the slimming of overweight bodies that collaborate in the construction of the idea that a global obesity epidemic exists. However, in the perspective of reflexivity, it is not so important to trace the origin of a discourse as it is to record the spreading and articulation of different discursive repertoires and their possible consequences. Therefore, in this sense it is interesting to note how the necessity to orient oneself against the risk "of the obesity epidemic" can become a moral problem of personal competence (Rich, 2011) in a context in which with the lack of a welfare state everyone must prove responsible and answer for their own health (Inthorn & Boyce, 2010).

The presupposition is that in contemporary society a thin body does not only represent good health but also a series of virtues such as control and good citizenship that are the moral imperatives of self-surveillance and responsibility from which the obese subject escapes (Rich, 2011). For this Oulette and Hay (2008) argue that this type of television is a technology of

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[5] Conrad and Maturo in their studies on the sociology of health have devoted ample space to reflections on the definition of the confines of medicine that also passes through the differentiation of the concept of human improvement from that of medicalisation "understood as the extension of medical categories to areas that previously were not included" (Maturo, 2009, p. 26).

[6] Managed Care are the organisations that dominate distribution of health care in the United States fixing the limits and restrictions on treatments that patients can receive (Conrad, 2009, p. 48).

the Self functional to building a citizenship suitable for a neo-liberal society and Allen writes that: "neo-liberal ideology situates the responsibility for health and body size in the hands of the individual; eliminating the role of the individual's social context" (2008, p. 595). In this respect, Hughes (2000) has noted how, as Western societies have become more and more body conscious, the moral, healthy subject has been increasingly linked to the individual entrepreneur who cares for him or herself: this is what Hughes (2000, p. 17) terms "vigilant body". This modern (rationalised) body is governed according to a 'doctrine of obligation': we are required to continually re-invest in our individual bodily capital while at the same time maintaining our bodies as discrete, closed and controlled entities" (Tyler & Wilkinson, 2007, p. 542).

If the theories of Foucauldian matrix focus above all on questions of self-surveillance and subjection (vigilant body) through the concept of biopolitics, for the perspectives that are inserted in the theoretical debate on reflexive modernisation, the body becomes part of the reflexive project of identity construction (Turner, 1994). As Giddens argues, "we become responsible for the project of our bodies (...) the more post-traditional the contexts are in which we move", (Giddens, 1991 p. 102). In such contexts attention to the body becomes then a task, or even a duty, acquitted by the owner of the body through a series of practices of self such as diet, fitness, plastic surgery (Bauman 1999, Borgna 2005). In this sense, the concept of embodiment is extremely meaningful, since it effectively expresses this "incorporation" or "personification" of the practices of the Self (Lupton). For Le Breton, "if the body is a "matter of identity", "acting on it means modifying the perspective, the nature one's own relationship with the world" (2005, pp. 20-22) and the bodily confines then become an inexhaustible symbolic resource to work on subjectivity (Le Breton, 2005, p. 24). If work on the body is meaningful for everyone, according to Le Breton, it becomes an even more meaningful territory for teenagers; the anthropologist speaks in this case of "surgery of sense" to emphasise the importance, in this evolutionary phase, of being able to change one's own identity through the body.

A diet for families: discursive repertoires for parenthood breaking down

The choice to concentrate the empirical analysis of this work on the makeover format that deals with re-educating teenagers and families on lifestyles and eating derives from the fact that the discourses that have been traced until now and that circulate, are produced or strengthened through this type of narrative strategies are connected with and complementary to another particular rhetoric: the crisis of adolescence as a result of social disintegration. Up to this point, one has tried to explain how TV lifestyle formats can act "as didactic devices that encourage self-responsibility, self-management and personal improvement as a neo-liberal form of government" (Inthorn & Boyce, 2010, p. 84). In this sense the State is acquitted as it is no longer considered responsible for the health of citizens and TV becomes a technology of good citizenship (Oulette & Hay, 2008, p. 10). Furthermore, as already seen, makeover shows are aimed above all at transferring techniques of conditioning, through an operation of moral mediation, to a particular social class. This operation passes through the symbolic dimension of the body as a territory in which one has to operate, and therefore to make self-surveillance visible. Re-education to the styles of correct food consumption is functional to this operation and inevitably has also to concern the family. Since, as Bourdieu has explained, there is a strong bond between lifestyles, social class and family, taste belongs to the cultural capital that one "inherits" from one's family and it "contributes to moulding the body of every class: [...] it presides over all the forms of incorporation, it chooses and modifies everything the body ingests, assimilates [...]" (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 198). On the other hand, sharing food, habits and rituals are the basis of the symbolic family dimension (Barbagli, 1988; Canetti, 1960/90). So the discourse on the eating disorders of boys/girls and teenagers becomes a symbolic discourse that is inserted in the current narration of the crisis of the family as a cause/result of social disintegration (Risé, 2007) that, in turn, produces the "problem of adolescence" (Crepet, 2004; Galimberti, 2007; Pietropolli Charmet, 2009). Indeed, a certain psycho-socio-instructive knowledge collaborates on the reflexive construction of that "liquid adolescence" (Casoni, 2008) as a consequence of a society of uncertainty that can no longer cope with containing the identity haemorrhage of youth (Dalla Ragione, 2005). The narration of the "evaporation" of the father led by authors such as Massimo

Recalcati (2011, 2013) produces the circulation of discourses on the lack of an ethic functional to confinement and limitation. However, if Recalcati's discourse is referred to as a symbolic dimension, in which the father represents the norm and the ethic, for authors such as Risé, social problems are instead to be attributed to that process of downgrading the father within the family as a result of female emancipation and the increase of separations. Fragility, haemorrhage and nihilism are the terms used by authors like Pietropolli Charmet, Crepet and Galimberti to speak of young people lacking order and discipline and, consequently, to build a rhetoric on parental incompetence. These discourses and rhetoric on adolescence, currently well deconstructed by the work for example of Stefano Laffi (2014) and in the past visionarily by the work of Alberto Melucci (Fabbrini & Melucci, 2000), produce a series of consequences in terms of reflexivity. What mostly interests us here is the construction and circulation of the discourse of a parenthood in trouble that needs to be taken care of. The cultural production is considerable - of programmes but also of handbooks - born around the creation of the need for educational tools to be parents. The programme *SOS Tata* is a well-known example of this production. One is dealing with a lifestyle/makeover format, an Italian adaptation of programmes such as *Nanny 911* (USA) or *Super Nanny* (UK), definable as a sub-genre transformation of relationships; indeed, the subject of the transformation intervention is the family nucleus i.e. the relationship between parents and children (Giomi, 2013, p. 171). One is dealing with a show with a strong normative function: "the expertise of the nannies is built, first and foremost, as the ability to impart strict discipline" (Giomi, 2013, p. 173). The scheme is similar to that already described and common to many formats of makeover: a pre-transformation phase in which the life and house of the protagonists are inspected, with some confessional moments aimed at tracking down the "psychological truth" and showing their pedagogic inadequacy (Giomi, 2013), a phase of diagnosis, with the proposal of a series of rules and the final evaluation of the transformation. One of the two programmes that one wishes to deal with in greater depth in this paper and of which a systematic analysis is developed, follows this format but specifically deals with diet. In *Honey let's save the kids* (*Tesoro salviamo i ragazzi -Fox TV)*, an adaptation of *Honey, We're Killing the Kids* from the BBC, a researcher-chef[7] enters the homes of obese children to help families solve their problem.

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[7] Marco Bianchi, who calls himself a scientist-chef, is in reality part of the research team of

The structure of this programme closely recalls that of *SOS Tata*: initially the expert observes the educational errors from a distance, after which the objectives that must be reached are fixed and results reached are appraised. The rules, as in *SOS Tata*, are so simple as to appear banal - healthy food, physical exercise etc...- but the emphasis with which they are set, in the form of slides that recall business motivational training (being part of a team often appears among these slogans), confers a certain solemnity to the whole. The parents, called to order, nod with an attitude that expresses a great sense of guilt[8], also because this moment is preceded by a modified image showing what the child would be like as an adult if a lifestyle change is not made. Through this operation the responsibility of the parents for the future of their children is underlined – the slogan sentence of the programme is "change the future for your child", a future that appears full of risks for the child's health if bad eating habits continue. Indeed, in order to build the images with the technique of morphing the children are submitted to a series of physical and psycho-aptitude tests, the results of which will be functional to sustaining the "truth" of the projection. The children's images at the age of 40 show rather unkempt and unattractive people, constructed to emphasise a destiny of ugliness and unhappiness. In the English version, at this point the presenter tells his/her parents that their incompetence "is killing their children". The Italian version is without doubt more sugar-coated but the discursive style to transfer the eating matter to that of health is similar to the English one and to a lot of other programmes of this kind. The moment of diagnosis and communication of the rules to follow and the objectives to be reached (in the following two weeks) happens with a completely white background that closely recalls the atmosphere of a clinic. Besides the "medical diagnosis-forecast" in parallel "psychological diagnosis-forecast" is operated: in episode 4, for instance, the narrating voice, which describes the possible consequences of the bad behaviour through slides, affirms that Chiara's eating lifestyle, based on food which is too rich in saturated fats and sugars, may lead her to developing physical problems such as gout, kidney stones and cardiovascular pathologies, while her physical shape, that already brings her to have low self-esteem, will favour the development of troubles

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Umberto Veronesi as a scientific informer. He has written many "healthy" cookery books and is a vegan.

[8] The stigmatisation and feeling of guilt placed on families with obese children is without doubt greater than in other cases (Ostuzzi & Luxardi, 2007).

such as lack of self-esteem, anxiousness, social isolation and depression. In some episodes of the second series a psychologist was also inserted to help form the diagnosis. In episode 8, for example, analysing the case of Mimmo defined keen on "TV, mum and the fridge", the psychologist states that "he must be helped to address his impulses not so much to a food need but primarily to more complex needs: his autonomisation from his mother, his growth as an individual separated from his parenting figures". In this episode the emphasis on the incapability of his parents to limit and therefore to build the desire, that passes through the symbolic dimension of free access to the refrigerator and television, seems to go back over the discourse of Lacanian matrix spread by the popularising work of Recalcati.

Then the structure of the programme foresees scenes of daily life that show the children's difficulties in facing the new dietary regime and that show the presenter's work as food educator who helps the members of the family in the transformation, accompanying them shopping or preparing healthy dishes together with them. In episode 1 of the second series the scene of the family at table together with the presenter is shown. The focus is on the father who refuses to taste the new food. The interview with his daughter backstage points out how much the infantility of the gesture is disapproved: "my dad should set a good example", says the girl; the interview with her father follows and with a strong dialect accent he justifies himself saying that he comes from a simple family whose eating habits didn't foresee changes, "I eat pasta and steak...I've been doing so for 35 years so how can I change?". This episode shows the relationship between taste and social class, reminding us of the moralising work of the presenter as cultural mediator, but it also speaks to us of a father quite unable to be a father in his capacity to set "a good example". In general, however, the figure aimed at with this type of programme is the mother, with a continuous emphasis on the maternal responsibility for the task of care giving and feeding (DeVault, 1991) and on her symbolic role as "bearer of the moral values of the nation" (Skeggs, 2005, p. 968); the main female characters are usually defined by their role as mothers, while the main male protagonists are defined by their occupations. Even in the other programme that we intend to analyse, *Teenagers in weight crisis* (*Teenager in crisi di peso,* original format*: I Used to Be Fat*), in different episodes attention is focused on maternal faults. In episode 14/1 of the first series they try to trace the trauma that brought the protagonist to losing control in a previous period of her mother's illness. In episode 13/1, Latrice has

begun to eat because her mother has gone to live in another state, abandoning her. In three episodes (12/1, 15/1 and 9/2) explicit reference is made to the separation of her parents as a cause of her being overweight: "her parents divorced when she was small and she took consolation in food"; "her parents' divorce made her give up sport and begin to eat too much". This type of correlation is one of the discourses on adolescence that was mentioned briefly above and is particularly present in the work of Claudio Risé who considers the family breakup the cause of a lot of adolescent problems among which numerous forms of addiction. In episode 19/1 the eating style of a family of Latin American origin is in the line of fire, but above all the mother who opposes the normalising work of the coach stating: "why isn't it all right as it is? You are like us and we are not wrong"; the coach's expression while listening to the mother letting of steam expresses all of his moral dissent. In episode 1/2 the boy who is the protagonist of the episode declares as his initial self-diagnosis, "I grew up with parents who work all day and struggle to reach the end of the month...I feel lonely"; many times during the episode the coach points out the lack of a father figure as a "teacher of discipline". Still in this episode, the coach, who is the toughest among those that alternate in the episodes, will make Jose kneel at the time in which he has a breakdown in his training to speak to him about the importance of his transformation for himself but also as an example for others. The moment of yielding belongs to the narrative structure of this type of format. It is the moment in which the moralising action of the presenter, of the coach in this case but in general of the expert, unveils all of his/her power; indeed, the message "and we are doing all this for you, we are offering you a possibility and you are not making any effort". Also in this programme the same sequence as those of the makeover is reproduced: pre-transformation, transformation and moment of revelation. The pre-transformation has a particular style, the narrating voice, while the bad habits are being shown, are those of the same protagonist who usually speaks about a passion that, because of his/her weight, he/she can't manage to follow (dance, baseball, football). The slogan the protagonists are made to pronounce at the end of this phase is, "I want to become the man/the woman that I have always wanted to be". The programme mostly concerns boys and girls that must go to college and who will devote the previous summer (110 or 90 days) to becoming suitable for such an appointment. Indeed, in the post transformation the slimmed protagonists will say that they can finally do what they had always wanted

to do, above all to go to college (as if with an unsuitable body they would not have been able to do so). Indeed the rhetoric of social redemption is very present as it passes through the body, but also the idea of control of the body as social control. In many episodes, for example, participation of the protagonists in organisations on the streets (the so-called juvenile gangs) returns as a background theme; the work of disciplining the body will also bring the outcome of taking them away from this reality. In episode 2/2 the protagonist even tells of his problem with weight as the dramatic result of the death of his brother in a fight between gangs and his objective of redemption, that passes through a thin body, is to become a police officer to give his contribution to social order. Also in the already quoted episode involving Jose one sees the funeral of a friend who died in the same circumstances. In general, many of the protagonists of this programme are of Latin American origin and many of their problems are traced back to their cultural affiliation. Rather evident is also the recalling of gender expectations: the various coaches, depending on whether the protagonist is male or female, use a series of stereotypes linked with the gender of belonging both as incentives (virility and seductivity as values to be reached) and as threats in the moment of breaking down (be strong, don't be a cry-baby for males or reference to gifts of constancy and self-control for females).

Conclusions

The great attention to adolescence, testified by the many programmes of makeover and lifestyle television constructed for this target - even the most famous *Extreme Makeover diet edition* devoted almost all the last series to teenagers - is probably imputable to the numerous narrations that build "the problem of adolescence" as a result of family breakup and parental incompetence. In the programme *Adolescents XXL (Adolescenti XXL,* original format: *Too Fat for 15: The Obesity Crisis*) boys are even taken away from their families and put in an institute that has to re-educate them to correct lifestyles. Indeed, the function of lifestyle television is that of supplying a repertoire of technologies of Self that, depending on the theoretical perspectives of reflexive modernity, can be functional to the construction of the biographical project, while they are considered disciplinary devices according to the perspective of the theories of

governamentality. For teenagers all this takes on an even deeper meaning because they have to operate according to what Le Breton (2005) has called "surgery of sense" to be able to change their own identities through the body. Generally, in a society where the social state is disappearing for everyone, not just teenagers, good citizenship is also shown with care of self that makes itself evident, and therefore inspectionable, through a slender and performing body. However, one is not dealing with a simple assignment because all this must be done in a consumer society that has multiplied discourses on food. What is more, current television production collaborates on polarisation of the hedonism/self-control axis: on the one hand it increases the construction and production of desire and imagination of consumption around food - with a redundancy of cooking programmes, recipes and culinary competitions - on the other one it spreads a normative discourse on control of the body through lifestyle and makeover formats that communicate the idea of transformation of the body as transformation of the Self. Therefore it is necessary to prove ourselves competent consumers knowing how to negotiate correct compromises. Nevertheless, if it is true that contradictions serve as a background to the biographies of everyone, they do not produce the same results for all. Instead it is cultural capital that makes the difference. Therefore television also seems to take on the role of the cultural mediator for the social categories that have more difficulties in moving about in contemporary complexity. It replaces the family and in some way even the state and it also completes that "anthropological mutation"[9], anticipated by Pasolini (1975), that makes bodies indistinguishable.

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[9] When the middle and lower classes take on the bourgeois values about consumption.

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