

Reality television: the new form of entertainment essay sample

[Media](#), [Television](#)



With the explosion of reality television shows on almost every television network, are the shows real or created for entertainment purposes only? Since watching television has become a part of almost everyone's daily lives, reality television are also becoming a part of daily lives' because they are watched on just about every network system available on the air. Reality television shows have seemed to capture the attentions of the viewers, but are they depicting actual, real life situations or are these shows created mainly for entertainment purposes only? Are the viewers of reality television shows being influenced by watching these types of shows or are they just bored with their own lives and looking for pure entertainment of how others supposedly live their lives? These are some questions that will be addressed throughout this essay. Reality television began coming into our homes in 1948 with the introduction of Allen Funt's Candid Camera followed by the show Truth or Consequences. According to Charles B Slocum, WGAW Assistant Director, " both of these two pioneering series created artificial realities to see how ordinary people would respond." These shows introduced a new form of entertainment into our homes not knowing what a huge success they would be and the influence that it would have on today's society.

Those shows are considered very tame by today's standards of reality television and the proof is what they are doing on the shows today. There are television series about contestants trying to win a recording contract through singing, redneck towing companies stopping at nothing to get that repossession, defendants and plaintiffs arguing their cases in front a real judge without a lawyer and strangers spending a summer together in a quiet,

quaint fishing village behaving in a different manner than how the residents actually live their lives there. There are many different versions of what is categorized as reality television, but most of them do not show how ordinary people would react to a situation. Most of these shows are only vague depictions of reality as most people know it.

There are some real facts in reality television that most people overlook or never give a second thought. The budgets for most of these shows are minimal compared to those of a regular sitcom such as *Everybody Loves Raymond*. Actor and comedian Ray Romano was receiving around \$2 million dollars per 30 minute episode (Dale Peck) to portray the main character in this popular sitcom. Add that to the budget along with salaries for Patricia Heaton, Doris Roberts, Peter Boyle and the many other actors that are on the show and you have a pretty hefty salary just for the actors. These large sums are usually earned back in syndication. Players and/or actors on reality shows do not request the fees like professional actors have received in the past several years. In fact, most people shown on these short, 13 week series are indeed acting, but they are not professional actors. This is mainly because the shows are not in syndication (*Atlantic Monthly*, November 2006) and have a short span of viewing life on television. These types of shows are hard to syndicate because most people know the results because of media hype, friends talking and curiosity of knowing what happened. There are some reality shows that we just know cannot be totally real.

For example, *Lizard Lick Towing* is a reality show based on the daily lives of *Lizard Lick Towing* and *Recovery Company* employees in the town of Lizard

Lick, North Carolina. The actors on the show such as the owner Ronnie Shirley, his wife Aimee and Ronnie's right hand man Bobby Brantley are using their real names. Most everybody that likes this show are drawn to the southern redneck ways that are portrayed. While this information is true, we cannot possibly think that they get into an altercation or fight every time they try to repossess a vehicle. In real life, Bobby Brantley would be behind bars because of the fights he gets into on almost every show. Therefore, we have no choice, but to assume that this show is scripted by the producers to entertain the viewers. But these employees/actors are so popular that they have their own fan clubs, have autograph signings at various locations, and even have a barbecue sauce that is sold in markets across the country. Viewers' love whom the actors portray, but we must remember that they are also regular residents of this town and lead a very normal life outside of the show.

In his personal (real) life, Ronnie Shirley is an ordained evangelist and is legal to perform wedding ceremonies in the State Of North Carolina. With his wife Aimee at his side, you can be officially married in the Lizard Lick Towing and Recovery office and spend some time with the crew of the show afterwards. You may also hire the whole crew for special events you may be holding, and for some, this idea of having these celebrities appear at their function could create everlasting memories. This show also portrays Bobbie Brantley as a single man who is dating and trying to find the right person. In real life, Mr. Brantley is currently married to his fourth wife Anita. According to trutv.com " Apparently the episodes showing Bobby Brantley with a

girlfriend on Lizard Lick Towing are non-reality television. He is currently married to his fourth wife Anita, but her photos seemed to have been removed from his Facebook page, either because they have broken up or the producers do not want it known that he is married, since he is shown dating on the show.” (Godfrey, April 2013)

While most of these shows are filmed without a problem, there have been a few “ reality” shows that have caused an uproar where they were filmed; the most recent being CMT’s Party Down South. This show was filmed in a small fishing village called Murrells Inlet, South Carolina. The producers approached Georgetown County, SC officials to obtain permits for the production of this show and they were granted without full knowledge of what the show consisted of. The original name of the show was deemed “ The Dirty South” and was later changed because of residents of the town were very offended on how the name would reflect on this quaint fishing village that caters to vacationers from all over the world. Murrells Inlet is actually named “ The Seafood Capital of South Carolina” and for a show to come in and call it dirty was not taken lightly. Through petitions, court hearings and public outcry the producers agreed to change the name. But the problem that remained was that the actors were supposed to portray the life of 20 something year olds that lived here.

These actors were seen and filmed in liquor stores buying over \$1000. 00 in spirits, and also in the local neighborhood bars acting (?) drunk and being obnoxious. While some residents felt better when they announced at the start of the show that the actors were not from South Carolina at all, some

residents felt that the show left a permanent shadow over what this town is truly like. When the show aired on television for the first time, local bars (mainly the ones that were shown in the filming) held parties in their establishment to help promote and celebrate their short lived fame on television. They had t-shirts made, drink specials named after the show, free lasagna (this was a big part of the show that one of the cast bragged about how delicious hers was but never made it) and of course every television in the place tuned to the show.

However, there were some local bars that wanted no part of the show. Previous bar owner Martina Seifert, owner of Iron Heads Lounge, who had lived in the area her whole life was totally offended by the show. In her bar, she has been heard several times describing the beauty of this town and everything that it has to offer. When asked her opinion of the show, she again described how wonderful and laid back this town is and how she felt that the show disgraced the town's name and the history behind it. The county department that approved the filming of this show has made some major changes in the application process of being approved, but most feel that the damage is already done. Since the beginning of reality television shows, times have changed, morals have changed, people have changed and so has the meaning of reality television shows. While they seem to be so appealing to the viewers, the public should be aware that many of these shows are scripted and the people shown on these shows are actors that are getting paid. It is the responsibility of each viewer to understand the

difference between “ real” and what is acting while we watch these types of shows and not let them influence our personal lives in either situation.

References

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