

# Determining factors of reality tv's popularity

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



Getting Real With Reality TV POC PGS. 291-294 In the article "Getting Real With Reality TV" published in the 5th edition of Perspectives on Contemporary Issues, author Cynthia M. Frisby argues that the reason that reality TV stays so popular is because of the audiences media gratification from social comparisons in the mass media. According to CBS, the same element of being human that encourages people to gossip about the lives of their friends, family, and even total strangers is what fosters an audience for reality television (292). However she feels that it is something else that creates a reality television audience and it is the social comparison. Frisby believes that despite the shifting desires of society and fickleness of television audience, the human need to compare and relate has provided a market for this genre (294). One major reason that Frisby feels that reality TV stays popular to the audience is because of the benefit of media gratification from social comparison. "people may compare themselves with others in their immediate environment or in mass media in order to judge their own personal worth (293). Frisby states that individuals compare themselves for various reasons "to determine relative standing on an issue or related ability; emulate behaviors; determine norms; lift spirits or feel better about life and personal situations; and evaluate emotions, personality, and self-worth (292). There is also the upward comparison in which there is a individual who is superior to or better off another individual, but on the other hand "self improvement is the main effect of an upward comparison because the targets serve as role models, teaching and motivating individuals to achieve or overcome similar problems (292). Frisby believes that social comparison does not mean that the individual has to give careful,

elaborate, conscious thought about the comparison, but implies that there has to be, to some degree, an attempt to identify or look for similarities or differences between the other and self on some particular dimension (293). Theorist argues Frisby's claim that "for a comparison to be considered a comparison, the individual must be aware of the comparison and come into direct contact with the other person" (293). In Frisby's complete a uses and gratification survey she came up with two goals in mind to show that certain television shows may cause social comparison and to show that "viewers use reality television and images as a source for social comparison" (293). After doing this research she then conducted a analysis of all the thoughts that were given while watching reality television. Frisby's final thoughts were that regular reality television viewers and non reality television viewers responses did not differ. Frisby states "that one major effect of exposure to reality television is to feel better about one's own life circumstances, abilities, and talents" (294). Whether if the aim of the show is about love, surviving to win money, to become a singer or for other creative expressions the results of reality viewers and non viewers are all the same. Reality television viewers like the fact that they are going through the same problems and that they can compare their living experiences and also can feel at ease that they have once made the same mistakes. Frisby feels as if "through a vicarious social comparison process (294). That viewers can one day land it big like "falling in love, winning \$1, 000, 000, or getting the office snitch fired (294).