

Real vs reality tv

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



Television has become a “ member” of almost every singlefamilyon our planet. And not just an ordinary member, but a very important one, because the time spent next to it exceeds the amount of time spent together with any other family member. You do not have to apply any efforts to talk or listen to complaints while “ communicating” with it. You do not have to play with your little son after a hard working day. You are SO tired! Can anybodyrespectthat? You can simply turn the TV on and everything is done.

The kids are quiet, your significant other is not complaining. It is so simple that it has become an integral part of thecultureof every family. It is the only time, when a person can forget about all the family troubles and the failures of the day. The sofa opposite the TV set has become the place of “ reconciliation and spiritual unity” of the family. And what is it that we’re watching? Is it an educational or discovery channel? Although some might, the majority of the shows we consume are reality shows. But “ what is reality television? ” one might ask.

Reality TV is defined by MSN Encarta as “ television programs that present people in live, though often deliberately manufactured, situations and monitor their emotions and behavior. ” Within this genre of television are subgenres such as Game or Elimination, Talent, Talk, Makeover, Documentary, and Spoofs. It was first introduced by Allen Flunt’s 1948 program Candid Camera. The show involved concealing cameras filming ordinary people being confronted with unusual situations, sometimes involving trick props, such as a desk with drawers that pop open when one is closed or a car with a hidden extra gas tank.

When the joke was revealed, victims would be told the show's catch phrase, " Smile, you're on Candid Camera. " The show became a top rated TV show in both network runs and syndication. Reality television enjoyed a renewed popularity in the 2000s with shows like American Idol that featured an interactive aspect, asking viewers to call in to vote for favorites. Today you cannot turn the television on without coming across reality television. The final ratings for the 2009-2010 television seasons show that reality TV lead the pack and bring up the rear end.

It is everywhere and although it has spread in popularity there is often more negative remarks made against it than positive. Critics of reality TV often argue that the shows promote sex, drinking, violence and racism. Although reality TV may be fun to watch, it is very dangerous for teenagers who don't have set morals and self-identities. Reality TV is questionable because of the messages some of the shows depict. While these messages can have an effect on everyone who views them, the audience that may be the most susceptible is teenagers.

The most contested issues are whether reality TV is, in fact, " reality" and whether teenagers may develop perceptions from the reality shows that may lead to poor choices and negative consequences. In a 2004 issue of " Pediatrics," Rebecca L. Collins, senior behavioral scientist at the RAND Corp. , and her colleagues presented the results of a survey that measured the amount of sexual explicit television that teenagers watched and how much sexual experience the teenagers had had at a one-year follow up survey.

They found that teenage exposure to sexual content on television shows increased the likelihood of initiating sexual acts and the effect of shows that depicted sexual behaviors and those that just discussed sex had the same effect on teenage audiences. Similarly, in a 2008 edition of " Pediatrics," Anita Chandra, a behavioral scientist at the RAND Corp. , and her colleagues released the results of a survey conducted over a three-year period that measured teenagers' exposure to sexual content on television and any resulting first-hand experience with pregnancy.

They found that teenagers who regularly watch television programs containing a significant amount of sexual behavior are two times more likely to become pregnant or impregnate someone than those teenagers who do not watch programs with sexual content. Reality TV is also dangerous because of the way it depicts the characters as heavy drinkers. Many programs include segments that show the main characters drinking, partying and engaging in rambunctious behavior, but they often fail to show to the consequences that the characters must face for these actions.

When teenagers see these types of behaviors, they might be led to believe that they too should consume large amounts of alcohol and act in a similar manner. Television violence in reality TV is another major concern. Studies show that the amount of violence that is watched on television affects the amount of aggression and violence displayed in the individual (Fernandez, Roberto, Juan and Amy 137). Reality shows such as The Bad Girls Club and The Real World have more than its share of the violence. The target viewers for MTV are ages twelve to thirty three, this demographic makes up

approximately thirty three percent of the U. S. population (Smith 89).

Thirteen year olds are already susceptible to influence, and are more at risk to be adversely affected by violent television than are those of later years (Comstock 1205). If life is really like it is depicted to be on an episode of The Bad Girls Club, the average person should wake up to a side of pointless fight, brunch to a cussing war, and eat supper around the time someone breaks a nose. Studies of US television airings discovered that there was a consistent rate of five to six violent acts per hour (Fernandez, Roberto, Juan and Amy 137).

In watching an episode of the Ultimate Fighter, one can expect to see at least twenty to thirty violent acts within the thirty minute airing with three minute commercial interruptions. Arriving at twenty to thirty violent acts in an episode is when you only count each individual match as one act. The numbers climb out of the ring as fast as in. If this is what young adolescents are taking is as " reality" than it is no wonder there are problems with violence and aggression in schools and on the streets.

In a behavioral science study, it was stated that " Aggression [... is the product of social categorization" and that it is not a natural phenomenon (Comstock 1206). According to a study conducted at Syracuse University in New York, " There is a statistically significant, positive relationship between exposure to television or film violence and aggressive and antisocial behavior" (Comstock 1186). The study concluded this theory by stating that by viewing violent television in everyday life, antisocial and aggressive behaviors and tendencies would be facilitated (Comstock 1191).

With this outlook, it seems much more likely that the significant amount of aggression present in society today can very well be influenced if not caused by the vast ocean of aggression harbored in television culture. Racism is very prevalent in crime reality television. There is a vast overrepresentation of violent crime (e. g. Kooistra, Mahoney, & Westervelt 1998; Oliver, 1994; Potter et al, 1997), crimes cleared (e. g. , Kooistra et al, 1998; Oliver, 1994) and non-whites as offenders and whites as law nforcement officers. In a direct test of the cultivation hypothesis, a social theory which examined the long-term effects of television on American audiences of all ages, Oliver & Armstrong (1998) reported that whites who watched more reality TV were more likely to report higher crime prevalence estimates.

The construction of these programs is considered from a cultural, qualitative perspective focusing on the ideal perspectives conveyed about law and order, social threats, and audience empowerment (Cavender, 11998; J. Fishman, 1999). For example, Cavender and Bond-Maupin (1993) argue that these programs make use of story-telling conventions to encourage empathy with an unsuspecting victim who falls prey to evil, which, in turn, primes the notion that no place is safe. They also indicated that reality-based crime shows such as America's Most Wanted and Unsolved Mysteries depict crime in ways similar to those used in fictionalized crime shows which reinforces existing cultural stereotypes about criminals and victims.

The First 48 is one of the most watched non-fiction investigation series which aires on A&E. Set in several cities across the U. S. , the series offers an insider's look at the real-life world of homicide investigators. Each episode

picks one or more homicides in different cities, covering each alternately, showing how detectives use forensic evidence, witness interviews and other advanced detective skills to identify suspects. The cops on this show are mainly White, with the exception of a couple of Black investigators that are shown on few episodes.

This show is very biased in the fact that it depicts only the black communities across the nation and that which is full of criminals, gang violence & drug saturation. One would almost think that there are no White people who commit the same types of crime(s) in those cities. Or is it that the Police Departments in the white communities of those (& other) cities don't permit the exploitation which is presented by this programming's directors? The genre has also created a slew of reality stars, as a result of the fame game.

It seems that many are random people with no apparent talent. Keeping up with the Kardashians has made famous a whole family who appear to be famous without reason except that they have a reality show. Another reality TV favorite is The Real Housewives of Atlanta. The series has been going strong for three seasons. Everything about the show is a mess. This season has been about even more drama than ever before. Will Cynthia marry Peter? Is Phaedra married to a convict? Will “ NeNe” and Greg get divorced? Will Brice get it together?

The craziness and complexity of it all is never ending. Why do we care? These people are just ordinary people with no real celebrity other than what we the viewers give them. The uses and gratifications perspective, the

assumption that a media channel cannot influence an individual unless that person has some use for the medium or its particular message (e. g. Katz, 1959; Rubin & Rubin, 1985), may be a clear explanation of the genre's appeal. The uses and gratifications framework includes five primary beliefs.

The first is that an individual's behavior is goal directed and motivated.

Second, people select and use media to satisfy biological, psychological and social needs. Third, individuals are influenced by various social and psychological factors when selecting among communicational alternatives.

Fourth, those media consumers are aware of their needs and whether these needs are being satisfied by a particular medium. Fifth, that different media compete with one another for attention, selection, and use.

In sum, uses and gratifications theory states that individuals are aware of their needs, evaluate various channels and content, assess functional alternatives and select the media or interpersonal channel that they believe will provide the gratifications they seek. Reality TV also offers some positive aspects as well. American Idol, which is the leader of reality TV, had over 24, 000, 000 viewers. The show starts off with thousands of people auditioning in hopes of becoming America's next superstar. Some can sing, but many just make utter fools of themselves on national television.

Just a week ago an American Idol hopeful auditioned in front of the judges with her opera rendition of Justin Beiber's song " Baby". As she belts the notes Randy immediately puts his head down and motions for her to stop. Steven Tyler and " JLo" look as if they don't know what is going on and as she hits the high note Steven marks the end with the sound of an explosion.

They break out with laughter, just as we do sitting at home watching. “ What the hell was that? ” may be what comes to mind. Beside it being purely entertaining because we like to see others humiliate themselves, the show offers stories of success.

For the people who volunteer themselves for the likes of American Idol and America's Next Top Model, winning the show is potentially a life-changing experience and a springboard to a career in the entertainment industry. The reward is there for the taking, but it's often not just the winners who can make a name for themselves. Jennifer Hudson, a finalist on season 3 of American Idol and Tocarra Jones, a participant on season 3 of America's Next Top Model, may not have won the shows, but they both went on to have major success.

Jennifer Hudson made her film debut in the 2006 film Dreamgirls, which won her many awards such as an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress and a Golden Globe Award. She also won a Grammy award for her debut album. Tocarra is a working plus-size model today and she is signed to the largest modeling agency in the world. Reality TV can also provide learning on dating, family relations, friendships and dealing with sensitive issues. Pedro Zamora's 1994 appearance on MTV reality show The Real World was a landmark media event: the first openly HIV-positive gay man on a nationwide TV series.

Zamora, who died at 22 just as Real World: San Francisco ended, was a teen when he learned he was HIV-positive, a diagnosis that led the diminutive Miami resident to become an AIDS activist and educator. His MTV fame

ultimately drew the attention of President Clinton. Zamora's role on *Real World: San Francisco* was memorable not only for lecturing housemates and viewers about HIV and preventative measures but also for his combative relationship with the abrasive Puck Rainey, one of the most polarizing roommates in the show's 21-year history.

Things got so testy between Zamora and the politically incorrect Rainey that the roommates ultimately banned Rainey from their collective home. Even those reality shows that aren't competitions can still make a name for the stars. Lauren Conrad started her career on MTV's "*Laguna Beach: The Real OC*," and with subsequent exposure on "*The Hills*" has become a best-selling author, spokesperson and fashion designer--not bad for a normal California girl. Watching these successes has also inspired a generation of youngsters to aspire to make something of themselves.

They want to better their lives and find inspiration from the success stories after the cameras have stopped rolling. Reality TV also offers a source of distraction and diversion to everyday life. It gives you a break away from your stress and frustration. Of course this does not solve the root cause, but it helps take away from the root source of the stress. Although taking a walk or reading a book may be better alternatives for distractions, reality TV still allows you to momentarily forget your problems because you're consumed in others on television.

Although reality TV offers some positive aspects such as success stories, positive learning experiences, distractions and others, the negatives outweigh them all when it comes to the teenagers which the shows are

aimed at. They presume that reality TV is actually “ reality”, which it is not by any means. Teenagers do not have the understanding so they could and probably will fall subject to all the negative side it can entail. Some solutions to the problem may be for the parents to parent more and as they should. Parents should have the knowledge about what reality TV is and explain it to their children.

Parents or society should not rely on reality TV or any genre of television to teach our children or ourselves for that matter. It will indefinitely lead us in the wrong direction. It is not to teach, but to entertain. If we have the knowledge about what reality TV actually is, in turn, we will be able to keep it in the context of entertainment and not reality. For those who don't take it seriously it can provide entertainment for 30 minutes or so. But if taken as “ reality”, it then has a danger of harming its audience with unrealistic expectations.