Reality T.V. Creates an Alternate Reality

Imagine, you're cooking dinner with your partner when all of a sudden the clock starts ticking down. Your children start gasping with anticipation. Will you finish in time and who will create the most delicious side dish ever tasted?

While this may seem slightly exciting and mildly entertaining, is this reality? Television shows categorized as 'reality' would have us believe so. Reality television boasts real people tackling challenges or just everyday life, no gimmicks. But, is that true? Of course it's not! There are still editors, crews, and production schedules. The popularity of reality television has given society an image of the real world that isn't remotely real.

At this point in time, we've all been warned on the dangers of media use especially pertaining to violence and other unacceptable behaviors. Studies by Dr. Bryan Gibson of Central Michigan University show excessive viewing of reality shows with relational aggression can actually cause people to be more aggressive in their actual lives. While it might seem like mindless entertainment, research repeatedly shows that watching these 'real life' shows where people treat others in horrible ways for money or fame actually affect brain chemistry.

As if causing real life aggression weren't bad enough, reality television also contributes to skewed societal views on what kinds of behavior are acceptable. The mere fact that our society is so obsessed with reality television as a form of entertainment proves this point. Why do we find it entertaining to watch people demean, bully, or physically attack others? Why is watching someone else's sexual exploits or narcissism a widely accepted form of entertainment?

Imagine following your best friend around a bar from first flirtation with a stranger all the way to her actual bedroom, only to have her dive under blankets after killing the lights. Sound creepy? Sounds like many reality T.V. scenes. This kind of 'peeping Tom' behavior wouldn't be tolerated in the real world, so why should it be tolerated on reality television?

Perhaps the most disturbing impact of these shows is the notion that anyone can and should become a celebrity for any reason. While we can all agree people should be applauded for worthy accomplishments, has society's standard of a worthy accomplishment been dumbed down? Thanks to reality T.V. the answer is a resounding 'yes!' Society's obsession with fame has spiraled out of control thanks to today's media outlets. There are people famous for literally just being rich alongside those garnering fame for injuring themselves. Are these people deserving of our collective attention and praise?

There is an argument that not all reality shows are bad. Some of the profession-based competition shows actually focus on real skills and acknowledge talent. However, even these shows rely on extreme behaviors to attain the highest level of ratings. Some might also say that reality television simply holds a mirror up to the viewer. The problem with this argument is that much of what we see on T.V. is edited for time or theme. Reality stars are often filmed for hours at a time, but we only see about a half an hour of footage.

In a world where anyone and everyone can film themselves or be filmed for the world to watch, it's time society takes a stand on whether or not we want to watch it. Despite the catchy name, reality television is far from real. You have to ask yourself, do these shows really sum up what I believe about my fellow man or woman? Hopefully, the collective response is a quick 'no.' If you agree with these statements, it's time to take action. If there is no one to watch this alternate reality television, it will eventually die.