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Cable television is filled with all sorts of exciting programming; enthralling dramas, high-intensity physical contests, and adorable animal documentaries. Even with so much variety and draw, one genre has been thriving since the early 2000s, Reality T.V. The purpose of these shows was an attempt to portray ordinary people in “unscripted situations” while it may have started off that way, these programs seem to keep getting crazier to believe over the years. Reality T.V. and game shows are primarily designed to entertain audiences, they often incorporate drama, conflict, and surprise to capture viewers’ attention. However, the degree to which these shows accurately reflect “reality” can vary widely depending on the specific program and production techniques used. Everything recorded is raw footage, how producers choose to edit what is filmed can change the whole narrative of the story. This doctoring of the story can be perceived as misleading and harmful to both the consumer and the one being filmed. Reality T.V. has given rise to a new role in television production which handcrafts stories from raw footage. These stories can harm viewers and contestants.

In many cases, reality TV shows and game shows are heavily edited to create a specific narrative or storyline, which may not accurately reflect what occurred during filming. Reality T.V. has given rise to the “Preditor,” a combination of the traditional roles of Producer and Editor. While a producer of a drama show might be given a detailed script of an episode. On a reality show, a preditor would be given an outline of a script and would have to use hours and hours of raw footage to craft a compelling narrative. Preditors may manipulate footage, use selective editing techniques, and even script certain scenes or interactions to create a more dramatic or engaging program. Additionally, producers may coach or prompt contestants or participants to act in specific ways, further blurring the line between reality and fiction. On the reality T.V. shows “The Bachelor,” producers would give the contestants misleading information about other contestants to create real emotions, creating more drama to drive up viewership. While the contestants may not discover the truth until they watch it play out after the episode aired.

The potentially harmful effects of this type of programming are twofold. On the one hand, the viewers may be misled into believing that what they are seeing is an accurate representation of reality, when in fact, it has been heavily manipulated. This can lead to unrealistic expectations on perceptions about real-life situations and a tendency to see conflicts or interactions in a more black-and-white manner. According to a study done in 2019 by The Mental Health Foundation, 24% of people in the United Kingdom from ages 18-24 say they worry about their body image because of the effects of reality TV shows like *Love Island,* which depict exclusively good looking contestants as the show has a very narrow range for contestant attractiveness. This paints reality to show that all people should look as good as the people on the show when those standards are wildly unrealistic to an average person. On top of that, it can often misrepresent how men and women show affection and demonstrate unrealistic ways to fall in love.

A lot of the time, contestants of reality T.V. shows don't truly understand what they are getting involved in and how this show can shape their brand image, often without a say in it. Such as being framed as the villain on the show, but in real life, the contestant could be a very genuine person. Contestants or participants in these shows may experience negative psychological effects due to the pressure to perform or the scrutiny of the public eye. Often, contestants who experience overnight celebrity fame from reality shows don't have much preparation. This extreme rate of stardom can be a massive source of anxiety and stress. Between the years of 2004 and 2016, over twenty previous contestants across all reality programming committed suicide. Dr. Richard Levak, a California-based personality expert, raises the question of whether reality TV attracts more contestants who are more prone to instability, or perhaps the reality TV show itself brings out the instability in the person.

Reality T.V. impacts the need for more focus on the importance of intelligence, real-world success, and real-life relationships. Reality T.V. contestants only apply to go on the show to boost their following on social media sites and become “reality famous,” not to find love like the show might emphasize. Research has shown that reality T.V. impacts the values of young girls and how they view real-life situations. These shows give women and men the impression that their value is based on appearance and that popularity is derived from beauty. While shows like *The Bachelor* and *Love Island* give them the impression that you can find the love of your life in a matter of weeks whilst that person sleeps with or dates other people simultaneously. These shows idolize materialism and neglect the significance of grit and the hustle people must put into their everyday lives to succeed.

In conclusion, due to the heavy influence of production on Reality TV programming, it is important to take the content with a heavy pinch of skepticism. The negative impact of these exaggerated programs affects people on both sides. Harming images of self-worth and value for viewers unable to see the unrealistic nature of the people and interactions depicted. While also causing extreme stress and anxiety for former contestants regarding how they are received and treated afterward. While the shows are greatly entertaining, a balance needs to be struck to minimize the harm that comes from it and be ethical. By having the programming emphasize more important real-world qualities like hard work and natural body images, as well as remaining transparent to viewers, these shows can lessen the damage they do while still remaining just as entertaining as they already are. Viewers can also protect themselves by understanding the inherent tampering within reality TV shows to maintain a healthy view of their personal reality. It's important for such considerations to be made in order for reality television to be an ethical source of content.