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| Tallwood high school |
| America’s Entertainment |
| Proposal |
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Introduction

Every world has their own means of entertainment and every culture accepts only a handful of them. In my generation we understand the entertainment industry much more in depth than the spectators of the first television. We have evolved as a people to encourage technology as a social means of technology along with the leisure of it. The population has looked up to their era’s entertainers for centuries but the admiration has expanded from ‘one day fads’ to lifetime achievements.

In my project I plan to uncover what entertainment in America has had an effect on our society as a history. I believe that this industry is much more powerful in our nation than just con trolling the box office. Many of these creations have been used as propaganda in our country and it has lost its effect to the widespread because of the internet. I predict our box office blockbusters have much more effects on us than hysteria and depression. America’s entertainment industry has influenced its viewers since our Founding Fathers sat down to sign the constitution.

From the application of the first light bulb to the death of our ingenious Steve Jobs, the entertainment industry’s success rate has gone nowhere but up until the dreaded hint of a 2012 plateau. This feeling of a plateau has come from a period of advancement. The era of watching movies has been redefined each time a new gadget is introduced. It’s not only America who has come to my attention but nearly every successful nation has been influenced by its entertainment industry. I have discovered many pieces of evidence to help me further present this topic in a form that both my peers and my superiors will find acceptable.

Developing an Economy

In “How ‘entertaining’ is the American entertainment Industry?” David Walsh examines movies in context to 2003. He quotes the mediocrity in each scene released by saying, “*The entertainment industry in the US continually reveals itself to be less and less about ‘entertainment’ and more and more about ‘industry.’* ” Walsh explains how entertainment created in Hollywood is designed specifically to attract viewers over sincere story plot. In an effort to get answers, his form of statistics were movies that everyone would have been aware of at the time and also in depth quotes from actors that had roles in the movies. Walsh discovered that “various factors come into play in producing” amusing movie titles and plots. One of which he describes as a “general cultural decline”, which includes the lack of proficiency among many screenwriters and directors. The unnoticed of that factor would be how “comic timing has almost entirely disappeared”. Another factor Walsh presented is “the great pressure of producing a return” on the $100 million and higher films in which studios then create a film with no zest involved or as quoted, “the film that offends or disturbs no demographic group”. The final factor discovered is “the general rightward lurch by the political and media establishment”, meaning the lack of taste but superb innovation in the box office which starts with film studio executives and almost “precludes the development of material that might subvert conventional wisdom.” Along with these factors come many mistakes that have been made among the biggest of studio names. One mistake would be to “to write off the possibility of lively or provocative material making an appearance on the grounds that the entertainment corporations have the situation firmly in hand”, this mistake displays false strengths in the business and “minimize the contradictions in American social life” which can express themselves surprisingly. He cites examples of these factors in the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School, an essay titled “*The Culture Industry:Enlightenment as Mass Deception*”(in Diacletic of Enlightenment, 1944).The two authors focused on “the totality of the culture industry,” which can be described as “a closed system that thoroughly and escapably dominates the population.” In our world as of 2011, the closed system could be more so the internet as a media and an entertainment source. Television still influences us as a media source but it has almost met its match with the internet’s thriving social media networks. Adorno and Horkheimer stated that,“Films, radio and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part... Under monopoly all mass culture is identical, and the lines of its artificial framework begin to show through. The people at the top are no longer so interested in concealing monopoly: as its violence becomes more open, so its power grows. Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce.” Walsh believes that they correctly defined much of the targets that the modern culture industries look for and I completely agree in conclusion to their essay when it read, “No independent thinking must be expected from the audience: the product prescribes every reaction: not by its natural structure (which collapses under reflection), but by signals. Any logical connection calling for mental effort is painstakingly avoided. As far as possible, developments must follow from the immediately preceding situation and never from the idea of the whole. For the attentive movie-goer any individual scene will give him the whole thing.” (Adorno and Horkheimer) Entertainers in America have provided many gateways for movements across the nation. The level of influence our population receives from a simple approval or backing of an issue by a celebrity is almost instantaneous with results. (Adorno and Horkheimer)

Influencing Politics

In “Hollywood Left and Right: How Movie Stars Shaped American Politics”, Steven J. Ross established a thesis on this exact situation of influence. In our generation today as previously stated, social media has almost matched the role of film in America. “..film is arguably the most influential, lucrative, and glamorous entertainment form.”, (Ross) The power of the actual film has more influence on an audience than a speech or a lecture for entertainment is propaganda in and of itself. “Film producers, directors, and the celebrities who star in films are the most powerful of all entertainers,” (Ross) and when a celebrity or entertainer promotes an action, its success is groundbreaking. Ross realized also that in our nation, “films, movie stars, entertainment culture, marketing, power, and politics are not distinct but integrated,” and that they have merged together over centuries of industry and product to where, “the most powerful of Hollywood entertainers create extraordinary economic value and exert phenomenal influence.” These entertainers have actually taken part in politics of the country with the acceptance of our government. Their input to the state of California’s national influence and economic gain of Los Angeles is due to the power politically movie stars deposit. “Hollywood celebrities have been elected to the U.S. Senate: George Murphy; Governor of California the country’s most populous state, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and President of the United States Ronald Reagan.”, (Ross) the reason why Hollywood has taken a powerful role in society is because, “movie stars shape our values and the very essence of what it means to be an American. Hollywood controls, innovates, and excels in the application of the media, which over time has become ever more critical to the marketing process.” (Ross). A very accurate statement due to the fact the Hollywood has been influencing our nation ever since it came to be. The celebrities that tended to flock in this area have created a culture of California that has branded society. Economic and entertainment has always played roles in each other’s success but when the two emerge, it almost resembles the ‘layer cake’ system in which our government can be described to have. Popular actor Marlon Brando has been quoted on observing this conjoining by saying , “If an actor can be influential selling deodorants he can be just as useful selling ideas.”, which is almost the whole idea of having a economic branch of entertainment, for which entertainers can advertise effectively. “Hollywood movie stars are highly influential, not only as celebrities role models, but in connecting with audiences at ‘an emotional level and with a sense of intimacy they rarely feel about politicians,’” (Ross).

Developing ‘Dreams’

The Hollywood lifestyle is often associated with the dream lifestyle, for hosting everything from your dream home to your dream job. Americans absorb this ideology simply as their dream. Mrs. Kelly Bulkeley, Ph.D., expressed her findings on this topic in an essay titled ‘From the Yellow Brick Road to Freddy’s Razor Claws: Films, Dreams, and American Society’. She exemplifies the two classic American blockbusters ‘*The Wizard of Oz*’(1939) and ‘*Nightmare on Elm Street*’(1984) for “both of these films portray the dream adventures of an adolescent girl struggling to survive in and make sense of a world filled with danger, evil, and injustice.”(Bulkeley) In the Wizard of Oz it basically involves a girl who finds herself caught in a tornado in her hometown of Kansas which then blows her to a “dream world”, in which she discovers power and influence after becoming a leader to the characters she encounters. Bulkeley believes one of the morals of the movie can be interpreted as, “the waking world of home and family is the best place, the place we should be, the place we should never wish to leave, the place towards which we should always strive to return.” The similarities between our everyday dreams and the world Dorothy discovers are apparent in order to bond with the audience much more intensely. (Bulkeley) ‘Nightmare on Elm Street’ similarly uses the same tactics except to extract fear from the audience. In the movie, it’s based on a badly disfigured man who murders teenagers with his razor blade fingers in their dreams. But Bulkeley determines that, “One of the biggest differences between films and dreams, of course, is that while dreams are purely private experiences, films are collective experiences. We have our dreams in the privacy of our own personal imaginations…but we usually watch movies with groups of other people. This brings up another interesting feature of the two films under discussion, namely that both films have become the objects of what (she) would call ‘ritual viewing practices.’ ”.

Creation of Stereotypes

A majority of Americans are impressed with American popular culture, though a large minority of the public is doubtful about the quality of US movies and television, divided about the spread of American culture. Only a small minority considers the dominance of US culture a threat to other cultures. When it comes to globalization bringing greater cultural influences into the US, Americans express a positive attitude. One impact globalization has had on societies including America’s, is stereotypes. In America the stereotype of a Native American has expanded from Pocahontas to old Western set movies where they are savage. In the ‘*Journal of Navajo Education’*(1996-97), they tackle the story of ‘*Pocahontas*’ and how it effects the Native American population in America. “She has been unjustly portrayed in history as a supporter of the invading English settlers, thus giving her the reputation amongst American Indians as being an "apple and a sellout..” (Navajo) Young Indian students who are treated as though they are less than human beings in movie cartoons and as sports mascots, logos, and even the tomahawk chop, often assume that they are, indeed, inferior to "normal" children (Pewewardy, 1991 and 1993). The effects of this assault on the self-esteem of American Indian children, when buttressed by the other factors that plague their communities - poverty, cultural dislocation, and related social ills - can be devastating (Young, 1993). For decades, American entertainment media have defined the Asian image to all the world. And usually, that image has been shaped by people with little understanding of Asian people themselves--and with little foresight into how such images would impact the Asian American community. “Too often, an Asian face or accent is presented as a shorthand symbol for anything antithetical to American or Western culture.” (MANAA) This depicts the lack of information most studios discover when reenacting another cultures actions. But Hollywood also created many successful interpretations. “some Hollywood movies--such as ‘Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story’ and ‘The Joy Luck Club’--have been widely welcomed by Asian American audiences.” (MANAA) But what usually ruins a good Asian influence is “a limited range of clichéd stock characters” (MANAA) and that limited range develops how the audience will perceive Asian Americans. In result, the ‘Media Action Network for Asian Americans (MANAA)’ has come up with ways to prevent these stereotypes. “Asian Americans as foreigners who cannot be assimilated. Because they are racially and culturally distinctive from the American mainstream, Asian people have been widely seen as unable to be absorbed into American society.” (MANAA) “This portrayal ultimately suggests that anything Asian must remain apart from American society.”(MANAA) Their idea to prevent further stereotypical actions is for Hollywood to begin “Portraying Asians as an integral part of the United States. More portrayals of acculturated Asian Americans speaking without foreign accents.”(MANAA) Similarly in 1920’s America, the African American population began to reinvent entertainment for the era known as the ‘Harlem Renaissance’. “Some cultural and social activists of the Harlem Renaissance wanted to emphasize African Americans' ability to express and handle mainstream culture in order to show that the race was not as the common stereotypes portrayed and had intellectual and cultural abilities equal to those of White Americans.”(Kura Hulanda) “Music is one of the areas in which the achievements of the Harlem Renaissance continued long after it had formally ended in other ways. For example, in the 1940s and 50s, Harlem saw another musical upsurge in the Bebop era with people such as Charley Parker and Thelonius Monk. Even later, in the 1960s, the musical creativity of Harlem (as witnessed in many R&B performances in the Apollo Theater) was going strong.” (Kura Hulanda)

Formation of a Mass Culture

Our Mass Culture development occurred during the 1920’s, one of the most positive and negative economic times in America. “Of all the new appliances to enter the nation's homes during the 1920s, none had a more revolutionary impact than the radio. Sales of radios soared from $60 million in 1922 to $426 million in 1929. The first commercial radio station began broadcasting in 1919, and during the 1920s, the nation's airwaves were filled with musical variety shows and comedies.” (Digital History) Radio in the 1920s had the power in which is equivalent to today’s internet, where news and entertainment can be accessed simultaneously. “Radio also disseminated racial and cultural caricatures and derogatory stereotypes. The nation's most popular radio show, "Amos 'n Andy," which first aired in 1926 on Chicago's WMAQ, spread vicious racial stereotypes into homes whose white occupants knew little about African Americans. Other minorities fared no better. The Italian gangster and the tightfisted Jew became stock characters in radio programming.” (Digital History) But it soon came a time where listening became unexciting and the introduction of motion pictures attracted widespread attention. “The single most significant new instrument of mass entertainment was the movies. Movie attendance soared, from 50 million a week in 1920 to 90 million weekly in 1929. According to one estimate, Americans spent 83 cents of every entertainment dollar going to the movies, and three-fourths of the population went to a movie theater every week.” (Digital History) Today, our movie attendance is much lower due to easier ways to access recent and older films, a universal occurrence through the usage of the worldwide web. “From the beginning of the 20th century, people abroad have been uncomfortable with the global impact of American culture. In 1901, the British writer William Stead published a book called, ominously, *The Americanization of the World*. The title captured a set of apprehensions—about the disappearance of national languages and traditions, and the obliteration of a country’s unique ‘identity’ under the weight of American habits and states of mind—that persists until today.” (Pells) In the article ‘Is American Culture really “American”?’ Richard Pells discusses our most predominant culture characteristics and reveals how they are just mere imitations of what had already existed. “For better or worse, Hollywood became, in the 20th century, the cultural capital of the modern world. But it was never an exclusively American capital. Like past cultural centers—Florence, Paris, Vienna—Hollywood has functioned as an international community, built by immigrant entrepreneurs and drawing on the talents of actors, directors, writers, cinematographers, editors, composers, and costume and set designers from all over the world.” (Pells) That transformation to fit stars from global stages has increased Hollywood’s popularity and population. It’s the modernized home feeling that actually attracted our foreign population. “America’s mass culture has often been crude and intrusive, as its critics have always complained. But American culture has never felt all that foreign to foreigners. And, at its best, it has transformed what it received from others into a culture everyone, everywhere, could embrace—a culture that is both emotionally and, on occasion, artistically compelling for millions of people throughout the world.” (Pells)

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