

Movies that have made an impact on society

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Movies & Their Various Impact on Society

Nowadays, people focus most of their attention on TVs, computers, phones and movie screens as sources of entertainment. Last century, families would sit around for dinners and talk about how their day went. Now, as the amount of time spent looking at screens is increasing, so too is the impact it has on a civilization as a whole. Perspective and behavior in American society is clearly influenced by the themes and content of modern movies. Watching violence and horror in movies can seem to prompt people to act in a more vicious manner, while documentaries or historical movies may promote someone to be more inquisitive and curious. Whatever the case may be, different films can have various effects on what people in society do and how they react to what they have seen. Throughout the years, there have been many movies that have had significant impact on American society. There have been movies that have drastically changed the viewpoint of an entire generation, inspired a community, or negatively impacted the lives of a distinct group. A few films I found to have such an impact on our culture are Jaws, The Star Wars series, Super-Size Me, and Batman: Rise of the Dark Knight. Each one of these movies has had a distinct influence on the American population and had some influence on the people and society's behavior.

One of the movies which has made a lasting impression on American culture in particular is the documentary Super-Size Me. This film may not be that summer blockbuster everyone looks forward to seeing, but its impact is no less the same. Super-Size Me highlighted the dangers of eating fast food on

a daily basis, which many people do, and the many negative health and medical side effects that come along with consuming this unhealthy food. This comedic and informative film is shown throughout middle and high schools around the country in order to inform students about how terrible fast-food products can be for them and their families. Morgan Spurlock, the main character of the film, began an experiment in which he would eat nothing but McDonalds for a month including, once per week having his meal super-sized. Spurlocks' ingenious film showed us what else can happen, besides weight gain, and it wasn't pretty. The film's many scenes of disgusting fast-food and of his vomiting showed how this diet caused him to become lethargic, depressed and emotionally detached even within the first 15 days! After this initial period, he has a checkup with one of his three nutritionists, who tells him that he has gained 25 pounds and has severe liver damage. The results have everyone shocked. By the end of the film, the doctors and nutritionists are begging Spurlock to stop the movie project. According to analysts from alternet.org, six weeks after this traumatizing documentary premiered, McDonald's took the "super-size" option off its menu. It was revealed by reporter Suemedha Sood that because of this movie, McDonalds introduced healthier food substitutes for fries, such as sliced apples. Super-Size Me did not create a healthier group of kids, but it paved the way for a more health-conscious and aware generation of fast-food lovers. Despite not being a blockbuster film, it still had a positive effect on American culture.

One of the biggest ways to persuade a group of people is to play on their fears and that's exactly what the movie Jaws did. Before this movie came

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out, the perception of sharks in the deep blue sea wasn't as negative as they were before the movie was released. Society believed they were wild animals and dangerous but mostly harmless to humans. After the release of *Jaws*, the fear of going into the ocean at the beach reached an all-time high. Steven Spielberg's design of a 25 foot shark, combined with snazzy special effects and a young and eager audience, made for one of the biggest and most influential movies in American society. This movie was so impactful, the music of "dun-dun, dun-dun, dun-dun..." has become a universal soundbite for something fearful. The advertising campaign leading up to the release of the movie made for such a big splash, the number of sharks being fished around the country increased by almost double. (Charles, LiveScience)

Jaws overall impact on American society was negative because of the perception it gave people about sharks as devious, menacing creatures with the ability to take out vengeance. Despite the negative affect from this film, people continue to venture into the ocean, although with some added precautions and perhaps a little fear in the back of their minds. For many, this movie made an otherwise normal trip to the beach to never be the same because of lingering thoughts of a killer beast lurking in the depths.

Diving deeper into movies with big impacts on society, there are no other movie sequels bigger than that of the "Star Wars" series. Once again, Steven Spielberg had his footprint on this film and once again it shaped American culture to the max. The combination of never-before seen special effects and the science fiction plot with likeable characters made for one of the biggest movie series that actually spanned both the 20th and 21st centuries. The series of movies had such an effect on the lives of the viewers

and their behavior it was reported by analysts from Space. com that in a “ 2001 United Kingdom census, some 390, 000 people stated their religion as “ Jedi”, making it the fourth largest religion surveyed” (Choi 2). The importance of this movie paved the way for other movies, events, and even the U. S government. Other notable films such as “ Back to the Future” and “ E. T the Extraterrestrial”, used similar ideas of flying cars and futuristic CGI alien-like characters. Similarly, large events such as Comic-con and Dragon-con were first marked as major affairs because swarms of fans dressed as Star Wars characters. Also, many music events in the past few years have seen similar tactics from that of the iconic movie. Reoccurrences of Tupac, Amy Winehouse, and Michael Jackson as holograms have all been influenced by the technology presented in the Star Wars saga. Lastly, the Star Wars franchise guided the way for many of the techniques used in today’s military. Devices such as flying drones, laser-infused, high-pressure beam-guns, and moving and walking robots can all be in some way, shape, or form related to Star Wars. Military leaders’ behavior has also been influenced by these films considering the strategic format used in combat. An ambush attack, similar to that used by the drones and Jedi’s is also used by our military to eliminate terrorists such as Osama Bin Laden. Even though a controversial topic, flying drones and technological advancements in spy-ware are used by our soldiers as means of gaining an advantage and spying, just as the soldiers did in Star Wars. According to Charles Choi at Space. com, “ The Strategic Defense Initiative, created under U. S. President Ronald Reagan in 1983, aimed to use ground- and space-based lasers, missiles and other weapons to help protect the United States from attack by nuclear missiles”. Reagan referred to this

move as a plan to help the Allies during the Cold War to defeat the Soviet Union, or the “ Evil Empire”. If this sounds familiar, that’s because the president took the name “ Evil Empire” from Darth Vader domain, the evil “ Galactic Empire”. As still one of the most popular movie series to-date, Star Wars set the stage as society looked upon a futuristic world. The impact it had on society’s behavior and attitude is difficult to measure.

So far, we’ve seen how movies can affect society in a mostly positive or productive light. There are also huge potential negative consequences when a darker movie is presented and perceived the wrong way. This was the case when one man, James Holmes, shot up movie theatre in Aurora, Colorado during the “ Batman: The Dark Knight Rises” premier. Evidence from the crime supports the theory that Holmes was influenced by the movie and acted out scenes similar to that in other Batman related films. Holmes dyed his hair red, the same color as The Joker in the movie. Also, he uttered the phrase, “ I am The Joker” while being taken into police custody. Police reported that the shooter had “ booby-trapped” his apartment to harm police when the authorities would have arrived, just as The Joker does as a cruel joke in Batman films. Also, in many of the comic books and movies, the Joker sets off gas bombs before going into a shooting frenzy, similar to how Holmes carried out his attack. The parallels between Holmes and the Batman movies are too close to not be seen as directly related. Repeated scenes of violence of a dark and bleak superhero may have triggered something psychotic in Holmes to cause him to act in such a sadistic manner. ABC News reported that 72 people were injured in the shooting and 12 people died. Journals were recovered from Holmes apartment, half burned, with

resemblances of Batman themed events he had been planning for years. The way certain films can impact individuals and groups psychologically can be mind-blowing. Clearly, James Holmes was unable to handle it.

Cinemas and films in general can impact people and society in various ways. The main way described in *Watching Films*, by Karina Aveyard and Albert Moran, is that they are a communal experience. Films bring people and ideas together that can shape their behavior and impact their way of thinking. As stated in the book, “cinema-going offered a kind of communal experience” (Aveyard, Moran 28). The authors explore how the community type feel helps to influence the way people think about the films and as well as their world. Filmgoers talking about their experiences and thoughts on the films presents new ways of thinking that can both positively and negatively affect society.

The impact movies have in our society and on the culture we live in is still underrated. Whether we know it or not, everything we see on screen affects us in some way and what we decide to do with that influence is entirely up to us. Some people are inspired to violence, others use it to motivate and inform generations, and some, simply to leave a legacy. Without impactful movies we wouldn't be where we are today, technologically or culturally. We need to spend more time and pay homage to the films we are given and the influence they have had in our lives. They are constantly shaping society's behavior and the world around us.