

Americanization of the world a significant impact in modern society essay



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In the 21st century, lives of many seem to be bombarded and influenced by the media consisting of famous public figures from Beyonce, Brad Pitt to Barack Obama. Different forms of entertainment from TV shows and movies such as Vampire Diaries to Twilight seem to flourish with popularity while destinations such as New York, Los Angeles and Hollywood seem to be magnetic destinations for tourists on a universal scale.

From prominent entertainers to influential public figures to well-known destinations, modern society seems to be interconnected globally as people are able to share knowledge, information and experiences without the physical need to travel. In modern economy, expanding mass communication creates the foundation of a technology-based global village” (McLuhan 1964). In analysis of the term ‘ global village’, usage of technologies such as mobile phones and internet provide modern society with mass communication and media as countries from around the world are able to share information.

Since large exports of media are produced in America, it has allowed Americanization to prevail on a global scale. From a sociological standpoint, Americanization can be seen as a form of hierarchical arrangement also known as conflict theory. Throughout the development of this paper, the evolution of Americanization will be analysed in relations to conflict theory while looking at its significance in modern society will be questioned. As the status quo of today’s society, the world has evolved into global division that some may refer to as the First, Second and Third World Countries.

During the early days, battle for land was essential for countries to grow their empires and gain power. For one of few countries in the sixteenth century, Europe gained its benefits from globalization. Using power to their advantage, Europe was able to enslave and colonize countries such as Africa and Asia. The country soon profited from a system of unequal exchange between the powerful and powerless. As people rebelled against the unequal system of capitalism, defining moments such as the Second World War came about benefiting countries such as America. America soon had easy access to foreign investments and world markets. Not long after the country was able to mass produce products such as automobiles, this was a start of a growing economy, the period of Americanization. (Beaudet 2012: 477). The division between First, Second and Third World countries proves that modern society is run by hierarchical arrangements determined by factors such as a country's economic advantage.

It supports the existence of McDonaldization, the world's adoption to Western norms, procedures and structures through the exchange of things such as goods and lifestyles (Ritzer 2010). From the medieval times where servants struggled to survive, confined under the thrones of kings and queens, modern society and class inequality has evolved into a much more complex system. Today, economic advantage and power has become increasingly nuanced and complex over the passage of time while power associated with social class is likely to be much more indirect and subtle (Lukes 1974).

Hierarchical arrangements of conflict theory have taken on a different form of executing power and economic advantage. Evident in the economic elite <https://assignbuster.com/americanization-of-the-world-a-significant-impact-in-modern-society-essay/>

of Canada, large manufacture companies such as General Motors consists of individuals with the power to shut down factories capable of affecting thousands of workers to be unemployed (Beaudet 2012.). In relevance to Americanization, exports of media have affected people on a global scale through the usage of indirect power and dominance.

Special events such as the Oscars, movies such as Twilight or the latest news on Barack Obama often appear on televisions and the search engines of Google search with the disregard of its origin. This majority of mass media from America places the country on a hierarchical arrangement of higher economic advantage resulting in class and social inequality on a global scale. As a country of close proximity to America, Canadians have become greatly affected by Americans from things such as culture, politics to economy. This is evident in Canada through the similarities of media and culture that Canadians share with the US.

Despite some of Canada's unique distinctions as an independent country with a distinguishable health care and education system, it is highly associated with the US in terms of its relation in exports and imports of trading. Today Canada has become more economically integrated with the United States as a result of NAFTA, " a North American Free Trade Agreement started in 1994. During the year of 2008, 75% of Canadian exports went to the US compared to 60 percent in 1960. " (Beaudet 2012 : 478). For Canada, an increased association with NAFTA has benefited the country making Canada economically richer.

Despite the benefits of NAFTA and Canada's alliance with the US, American influence on Canada has its disadvantages. Firstly, as Canada's economy relies greatly on its exports and imports from the US, risks of Canada being a part of a domino effect is also increased (Beaudet 2012: 478) For instance, in regards of the years of 2007 to 2008, recession had drained US of economic growth affecting its neighbouring country Canada soon after, the domino effect was a perfect embodiment of how much the two countries were interconnected and depended on one another for economic stability.

Furthermore, Americanization is also evident in the expansion of "The McDonaldization of Society" (Ritzer 1993). For a world where people are gravitated towards the most efficient and convenient way of living, McDonaldization of the world seems to support a society gravitated to convenience in factors such as efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. Nowadays, efficiency seems to be everyone's best friend, cellphones seem to be in the palm of one's hand, accessible wherever and whenever.

Families have access to one another in less than thirty seconds as they call one another after a long day of work, planning to meet at a fast food restaurant of McDonalds. Although cellphones may be costly and McDonalds may not be the healthiest alternative for a family dinner, efficiency in most families seems to suit a vastly Westernized world of living. Despite its convenience, fast food restaurants in a westernized world prioritize the profits they make. In restaurants like McDonalds, machines such as cash registers are used over employees to make business more accurate and efficient.

This is called a process of non-human over human technologies.

Advertisements often talk about the billions of burgers sold rather than the actual quality of the burgers. Terms such as “ Big Mac” are used while we never heard of the term “ Good Mac”, an example of quantity over quality.

At last control and predictability are also crucial in a world of

McDonaldization for the economic growth of companies such as McDonalds (Ritzer 1983). These factors of efficiency, non-human technology, calculability, control and predictability are all equally crucial in the western world of McDonaldization.

In relevance to conflict theory, westernization has become very much hegemonic and stratified into one of the top capitalist countries which is evident in the trending fast food restaurants of today. Comparatively, McDonaldization seems to have its fair share of positive and negative effects on modern society from the unhealthy resorts to food to its innovative inventions of non-human technology. This is also greatly associated with Americanization since the expansion of American culture has largely influenced McDonaldization as they are both interconnected to westernization of the world.

What is considered beauty? Different countries have their own perception of beauty how are the perceptions of beauty between different countries alike and how do they differ? In analysis of a country from the opposite east end of a westernized world, Japan is a country with a long history of culture. In an interview conducted by Fabienne Darling-Wolf women of Japan speak up about their perceptions of beauty. During the interview, Darling-Wolf strived

to look for answers from Japanese women and their perceptions on what is considered attractive.

During his interview, Darling-Wolf found answers to how war in Japan has been the key influence of how the country has become very much influenced by western culture. " As Western cultural texts invaded the Japanese market, so did Westernized ideals of female attractiveness. Under American occupation, Japanese women traded their kimonos for mini-skirts, cut and permed their hair, and became familiar with Caucasian features". (Kon, 1969; Wagatsuma, 1974). As mentioned in the quote, Caucasian features have predominantly become an ideal beauty for women of Japan.

Since plastic surgery have become more common, it has allowed women to have easier access on changing their facial features to features similar to Caucasian and western society. During Darling-Wolf's time with Takako, one of 29 women being interview stated " Some [young women] have plastic surgery to change their eyes, so compared to the youth in the old days, recently everyone has become prettier. " Her assessment of bigger, rounder eyes as " prettier" illustrates her compliance with the kinds of representations of attractiveness promoted in Japanese cultural texts".

In relevance to Americanization, the interview conducted by Darling- Wolf shows how much Japan has been affected by Americans and western standards of beauty. The effect of westernization in Japan gives us insight on how countries other than Japan may also be affected by western standards of beauty. Although the expansion of Americanization seems to be increasing, it leaves many to debate on whether the influence of American

culture and its western standards is really indispensable. In evaluation of its role on a global scale, the economic growth and well-being of America is analysed.

This is due to the fact that a country's higher economic advantage can equate to a country's global power in society. Despite America's dominance in global markets, the country's hegemonic power is in no doubt supported by the help of other countries much like a celebrity is not a celebrity without its fan base. " Following the surprising collapse of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe in 1989, the US emerged as the sole remaining superpower; but America is not a dominant unipolar power. Huntington has labeled this hybrid case a uni-multipolar system because the United States can only act with the support of other major nations. (Thomson 2000) Furthermore, Huntington states that the world will evolve into a multipolar 21st century with some large nation such as China, India, the European Union, Japan, Russia and Brazil emerging to share leadership with the US. Since countries around the world have evolved into strong beliefs of their own, America's political power and ideas are not always agreed upon between countries such as China, Russia and Japan. (Thomson 2000). For modern society, countries are to be always on the battle for power.

From innovative technologies to politics, new ideas are always being executed affecting and altering countries and their hegemonic place in society. In countries such as Korea, music has become a significant part of Korean culture. The term K-Pop in other words, Korean Pop has become well known. Nowadays, K-Pop has gradually expanded into western countries including the US and Canada. From the prominent days of western

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domination, American pop was popular and now has a large influence on pop-culture in countries such as Korea. This indicates that global elements are already significantly present in the construction and articulation of Korean popular culture (Joo 2011). The effects of American pop on Korean culture is indicated in the quote.

“ Korean popular culture has often imitated and indigenized American popular culture. In this regard, the planned theme park, Hallyu-wood, is a telling example. Even when it aspires to be an alternative to American popular culture, it is not only named after Hollywood, but also modeled after a western theme park rooted in. ” (Joo 2011). Although American and western culture has left a legacy on the cultures of countries such as Korea, more countries are developing into powerful nations of their own with exportations of their own goods. “ The rise of multiple actors and the resulting multidirectional cultural flows has meant that global culture not only flows out from America, but is increasingly flowing into it as well, thus complicating the very meaning of “ Americanization. ” (Joo 2011). In analysis of research, complications in Americanization indicate possible changes in future societies although past influences of westernization will always remain.

Since large nations are emerging as co-leading countries, an indispensable America is questioned in a world where countries of modern society have become increasingly dependent on one another in. In evaluation of Marx's grand theory of conflict theory, hierarchical arrangements of countries may never be static since changes of things such as economic growth are

unpredictable. In a world of continuous evolution and development of civilizations, countries are bound to differ in opinions and clash.

Despite differences, the use of modern technology keeps countries connected to one another through the sharing of information. This helps citizens around the globe understand each other better, a way to reduce conflict. Aside from the use of technology, the trading of exports and imports of between countries reduces conflict because countries are able to make profit and economically grow. " The forces driving global integration are the spread of modern technology, the growing acceptance of free markets and the growing trade and immigration links between advanced nations and the developing countries (Thomson 2000).

In conclusion, America is seen as a capitalist country around the world. Due to the expansion of American culture after World War II, Americanization is stratified in a hierarchical arrangement of society of power where countries are constantly fighting to take its place. Everything in a civilized world from McDonaldization to North American Free Trade (NAFTA) to westernized standards of beauty and pop-culture are all interconnected as they are all influenced by American and western culture.

As a final thought, the debate of whether American culture will remain hegemonic is questionable and unpredictable since countries such as China, Russia and India are continually on the battle for power in a capitalist society. Americanization of the world will always have its benefits although it will also have its fair share of disadvantages. For in a world of free trade and capitalism, economic growth can only thrive with its compromises.