

The advertisements, television shows and films we watch significantly influence and shape our minds, especially at a very young age. Often, we do not realize the manipulation tactics the media utilizes, because it can have a subconscious affect us. This is when something affects us without our knowledge but slowly changes our views and behavior over time. Corporations and the media study our behavior and determine the best way to influence the viewers to purchase their products, and watch their programs. One question to ask is, are television shows and films a reflection of our culture, or do these programs help shape our culture? Jhaley believes that advertisements are the most powerful and sustained form of propaganda that affects our culture. I agree, especially concerning political advertisements, but it is not the only powerful influence that affects our culture. Television series, films and social media all have a relevant influence over the public as well. Many aspects play a role in a person's perception such as the country we are from, the family we were raised with, what programs we watched on television, the advertisements we have been exposed to and our way of life. The media is a reflection of our culture, but the media also helps shape our culture in many ways.

Social media, television shows, movies and other media outlets market different products to the public and insert advertising in their program. When we watch a movie that includes specific cars, brands and even a simple can of Pepsi, these are all advertisements that are paid for by companies to place their products in television programs. Advertisements surround our culture everywhere we look and have a great influence over the public. When a certain ad is repeatedly shown and aired, people begin to remember it and it becomes better imbedded inside their mind. These

advertisements are on city buses, billboards, social media, magazines, television, movies, and virtually anywhere we go. It is difficult to escape them! Even when we search for certain products online, the server collects the data and advertises similar items to the consumer on their social media news feed. It is an invasion of our privacy, but it enables corporations to figure out exactly what peaks our interest so they can create more revenue. Corporations have so much access to our lives now and people do not seem to mind not having the privacy that was once relevant many years ago. Users post their location, friends, family, vacations, and even the food they eat. They may think they're sharing their lives with friends and family, but they are also sharing it with the media and companies who want to earn money from them. Spending habits have also been publicized, which gives companies better access to what we like to buy. Advertisements also change people's perception about what they want to buy. For example, when we see many people wearing certain shoes, it becomes a fashion trend and something that was not desired before is greatly desired now. All of this is possible through advertising, because people like to follow the crowd and be considered "cool" among their peers. Most people do not like to stand out. The media knows this and uses the power of the masses to influence the rest of society. This shapes our style, which in turn shapes our culture.

Our family and friends help shape the person we become but the average American spends several hours per day watching television and scrolling through social media. At a very young age, the types of people, films, ads and shows we are exposed to can have an immense effect on our personalities. Many times, our values are greatly shaped by what we see on TV. For example, there were many sitcoms about family and

friendship in the 1990s, which is the time I grew up in. Shows similar to Full House and Friends have become iconic, have been on the air for years and still continue to air on television decades later. These television shows include the same actors going through different parts of life and situations and show how they overcome the problems. The purpose of these shows is to entertain the viewer, but most of the content is influential in both positive and negative ways. We also tend to form a bond with the actors from our favorite shows whether we realize it or not. My favorite show is from the 1990s, and I always loved the stories and lessons it taught me while growing up; however, I did not think about meeting the actors or learning anything about their personal lives. I have seen many people become deeply interested in learning about the favorite's artist's personal life, but that was not in my interest. I simply liked the show and what it represented. This year, I did meet the actors from my favorite show and actually became friends with one of them for a short period of time. As much as I wanted to view him as an individual and separate him from his acting role, it became very difficult because I grew up watching all of them on TV as specific types of people. He seemed very nice at first, but I soon realized he is a completely different person and actually someone with a lot of personal issues regarding confidence and self-esteem. Promises were made, broken, and the relationship was severed, because of the unstable behavior. After everything went under and the communication stopped, I began to wonder why this particular friendship had such a strong impact on my emotional and mental well-being. After all, I have lost much closer friends and romantic partners in my life, as we all have. I realized that I had formed a virtual bond with this person starting from a very young age and that I looked up to him, because he represented a very

positive, kind and loving person; not to mention he was older than me. Consciously, I knew he would be different from the role he played, but subconsciously, I still expected that same person with all the good traits I grew up watching. The bottom line is, what we grow up with in our childhood, whether it's television shows, movies, friends, family, the media, etc., with enough exposure, they all have a big influence regarding how we feel about certain situations, people, ethics, values and how we live our lives. After discussing this with a few people, they have disagreed with my viewpoint, but they have not had the same experience as I have had. Looking back before this event occurred, I would have also disagreed and would not believe that a television show I watched growing up would have this effect on my emotions. It was after the fact that I realized the subconscious mind played a huge role in my perception of the situation, which is astonishing. These actors were people I admired on television, but they were never people I thought of on a regular basis in my adult life. After becoming friends with the main actor, communicating on a daily basis and going through the ups and downs is when I realized this does have a huge effect on my emotions and it stems from my bond with these characters from early childhood. Many people do not want to admit this to be true, maybe it isn't true for some people, but I did not realize the impact this friendship had on me in the beginning. The subconscious mind is definitely a mind of its own and many things imbedded inside can come out in certain situations completely unexpected. I believe many of the shows in the 1990s regarding family and friendship had a positive influence and emphasized the importance of loyalty, love and "doing the right thing." Many people I know who grew up watching the same shows and films have similar

values as I do and view the world similarly as well. This brings me to my next question, if this is the case, how much of our personalities represent an autonomous individual?

We all want to believe we have become our own autonomous person through life's experiences, but how we choose to behave, act, dress and talk is also a product of the media we have been exposed to in our lives. Even though I grew up as an only child with limited television exposure, I still find myself having a similar style with what is considered popular according to the media. People who go against the norm are often labeled as outcasts and strange, instead of being appreciated as an individual. Even the way we talk and socialize with one another is made up of certain rules and expectations. This has a lot to do with our own culture, and the media helps shape our culture. Advertisements play a huge role in this, especially when it comes to luxury goods. For example, Lululemon is a company that sells high end and very expensive workout apparel. Their yoga pants sell for over \$100 each! When my friends and I first heard about this, we all thought it was ridiculous to spend so much on workout clothes that we were only going to sweat in. As this brand progressed, their ads and popularity grew and now we all have at least one pair of these yoga pants that we wear on a regular basis. As I think about this fact, I realize ads have a strong power to influence the public without them even knowing it. I continue to wonder what could justify spending over \$100 on yoga pants. We have been convinced that these pants are more flattering on our bodies than any other yoga pants you could buy anywhere else.

Another example of luxury goods that continue to sell are the following brands: Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel, etc., These brands claim to sell high quality, very exclusive merchandise to their consumers, which they do; however, the price tag is very high for a

simple bag or pair of shoes. These brands have become a symbol of status and anyone wearing their product is considered to be a stylish, wealthy, and high-class individual. People spend thousands on these accessories just to look upper class in front of others. Some people even buy the counterfeit version of these accessories, not spending the thousands but want others to think they did. If we analyze this behavior, part of it stems from insecurity, but it also stems from the media influencing everyone to think a certain way. Many other luxury brands such as Coach and Michael Kors sell their products in their retail stores at very high prices, but sell similar items in their outlet stores completely marked down. These companies know that people recognize them as a high-end brand and using that reputation, they have created outlet stores to sell similar products to consumers for a lower price. People from other countries come to these outlet stores to purchase they accessories and sell them in their home country. The fact that people all over the world know about these brands and their supposed value, are willing to pay more for these products is shocking and a product of successful marketing. Why should a bag with a certain logo cost so much money? We sometimes question these things, but are unwilling to change the culture we live in. Many of us figure it is easier to follow the trend than rebel against it.

The media and advertisements have become so imbedded in our minds that many people are a product of a certain style or type these days. I do understand that everyone is different and this may not apply to every single person, but many fall under the product and stereotype of their style, and many of these styles are a product of the media and advertisements. Advertisements often show people with a certain style having a distinct attitude, way of talking and socializing. These advertisements also

show people with certain physical appearances to represent the style. I believe this is partly how stereotypes are created. For example, stores such as Abercrombie & Fitch have a specific style for certain types of people and they show these people through their ads. Another example is Victoria's Secret, which displays women who all look very similar and have certain looks. The store does attract many types of women but their image of the ideal woman is very prominent in all their advertisements. Their sizes are also very small for many women because they only represent certain types of women. This type of branding had a big impact on our culture and what we perceive to be beauty. When so many media outlets display certain looks and styles, it still influences our culture because the media is a reflection of our culture and our culture is a reflection of the media. We may not realize the effect until our culture has been altered. I am noticing now that people's perception of a woman's body is changing because of certain celebrity influences. For example, the Kardashians have helped changed the public's perception about a woman's body in both negative and positive ways. The positive ways include accepting curvier and full-figured women and negatives include plastic surgery and body alterations. I am noticing that people are more accepting of curvier women now and that curvier women are now considered more attractive than very thin women. Personally, I do not think there should be an ideal body type, but this mindset does help some women avoid developing eating disorders.

There are various types of advertisements, but one of the most influential are political ads. Both the democratic and republican political parties create advertisements to push their own agenda and influence the public to follow their lead. When there are so many different viewpoints regarding how our country should be managed, political candidates

must make their advertisements as convincing as possible in order to win the election. These candidates invest an immense amount of money to push their campaign and win these elections. They will do everything they can to overpower their opponent even if that means being dishonest with the public. The advertisements must be influential and push people for votes, but this is dangerous because this can also push people to go against one another. These advertisements and the media we watch today divide our citizens instead of unite them. This is very prominent today, because many people who do not agree on a certain political standpoint compete against each other regarding who is correct in the debates. This creates a lot of tension and people end up not getting along instead of working together to find solutions to problems. I believe advertisements we view regarding politics is the most influential, because it can divide people and create anger and resentment toward one another. Most of the news channels on television have a biased viewpoint and deliver the news from a liberal or conservative viewpoint depending on the news station. Many times, these channels will not display the complete truth, but only partial truth, which is also manipulated in certain ways to cater to a specific political party. This causes the public to be ill informed and have a very biased view of certain events that occur. Also, many times, the media has no intention of broadcasting the truth of a situation and broadcasts the most popular content to get more views. Sometimes bad attention by the media creates more popularity and success for a candidate. This was the case with Donald Trump, and I believe it is what caused him to win the election. The public is fed-up with the lies and false promises by people in office and Donald Trump was aware of this. He has been dishonest with the American people from the very beginning of his campaign, but because he speaks very

bluntly and inappropriately, people perceive this to be honesty. This is the reason why many people voted for him and that is not including the rigged system and controversy regarding Russia interfering in our election system. Donald Trump's entire campaign was a manipulation tactic that influenced the public into believing he was going to make real changes because his character was so different from the rest of the candidates. Even though, most people knew he was different in a negative way, they disregarded his uneducated responses. Also, I believe reality shows play a crucial role in our culture today. It seems that our political system, and new channels have become a reality show of their own, creating drama and controversy in our country. People were more entertained by Donald Trump in political debates and tuned in because of the entertainment aspect of it. This is concerning to me, because important matters regarding our country and its future should not be a product of entertainment for the public. This is not a reality show, this is real life and should be taken seriously. I do not think people even realize how reality shows and the media have affected mindsets all over our country. I believe the subconscious mind plays a significant role in this matter, because people are behaving differently if compared to ten to twenty years ago.

There is a lot of misleading information and it can influence the way our culture thinks and perceives certain events. For example, the controversy surrounding certain dog breeds and the inaccuracy of the reportings regarding them. The media intentionally reports dog attacks involving "pit bulls," because it peaks public interest. The reportings are misleading, because most people do not know that there are over twenty-five different dog breeds that look similar to a "pit bull," which isn't considered a breed at all. The news does not post about other dog breeds who attack a person,

because the attention is on pit bulls and it gets more views than a Labrador attack. Also, since there are many different breeds that can resemble a “pit bull,” it is easy to clump these dogs together and target the “pit bull.” If the media creates fear among the public, they get more views and make more money. It is more about the revenue than making sure the public is well informed, which is very unfortunate. This is dangerous as well, because this misinformation can cause deaths and change laws that affect many people. In Europe and some parts of the United States, there have been dog breed bans called BSL (Breed Specific Legislation), which has killed many innocent animals who have not been aggressive toward people. The people who own a pit bull type dog must surrender their dog to be put down by law. I can’t imagine giving up an innocent pet who is a part of my family to be killed all because of ignorance and greed by the media.

On a positive note, the media may be a very influential part of our culture, but it is not 100% negative. For example, bullying in schools has been a global phenomenon, especially when we see stories about teen suicide due to bullying in schools. News channels have broadcasted many stories about these unfortunate events and has raised more awareness regarding bullying in schools. Bullying is now taken more seriously, than thirty years ago. Many children are now able to ask for help if they are being bullied and many kids participating in bullying others are being punished in legal matters. Another example when the media can be positive outlet is when it aids the public in broadcasting their voices and opinions to others. When a tragedy occurs, news channels interview people involved and get their point of view on the events as well, which is a great way to help people be heard. Overall, the media has an immense

influence over our culture and it will continue to hold power over people's perceptions if the public blindly believes everything they hear and read. It is always best to find alternative viewpoints and form our own conclusion in every situation. Understanding that the media is mainly focused on revenue is crucial, so we must do our own research to get the most accurate version of the news and politics.

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