

How Do Movies Affect Society?

By [PoutyBoy](#) in [UNRESERVED THOUGHTS](#) January 15, 2017

Cinema can be very powerful.

Throughout history, many leaders have used **the power of film** to help achieve their goals. During WWII, for example, both Hitler and Stalin used movies as propaganda and did so very successfully. Cinema can easily **change people's opinions and their outlooks on life**. Good films almost always **impact the viewer**; just how much varies by movie and person. Individually, people are bound to **get affected by movies** given that a main goal **the cinematic art form** has is exactly to impact and send a message. There are also numerous ways in which movies affect society and the modern world we live in: some of them negative, some of them positive. Since the cinema industry is so big and because films have become such a big part of our lives, **the overall impact and influence that cinema has on our society is immense**.

One of the ways in which films affect society is by expanding our knowledge of history and culture.

Some movies are like history lessons to the viewers, since they **show real life past events**. An example of this is the Academy Award winner for best picture in 2001 "Gladiator". Winner of five Oscars and the nominee for seven more, "Gladiator" is a very well-made production and **as close to perfect as few other get**. Even though most of **the plot** in "Gladiator" is **fictional**, for example the love story and the revenge tale, the film does **depict real life past situations**. It shows life of gladiators, the political situation of Rome at the time, and **the overall state at which the world was**. People who have seen "Gladiator" surely **gained some knowledge from the film** and **expanded their current understanding of Roman culture**.

Films also **describe and explore different cultures around the world**. A perfect example of this is the four Oscar nominee "City of God" which takes place in the

underground world of Rio de Janeiro. The film surely impacts the viewer since it **shows certain situations and truths about life** in Rio de Janeiro that most people don't know.

Another huge, and often rather ignored, way that movies affect society is through advertisement of different products.

Often, companies will pay studios to **include their products in movies**; when so many people watch the production, surely some of them will want to buy the can of Coca-Cola that their favorite character was drinking all throughout. A recent example of this that comes to mind is in the movie "Nerve" **starring** Dave Franco and Emma Roberts. It's fairly obvious the film is a huge advertisement for Apple. Millions of people went to see that movie; some of them probably had the desire to buy the new Apple product because they saw how well it was working in the hands of the characters. Unlike 'Nerve', however, some productions have found ways **to advertise products without shoving them in people's faces**. Research has shown that people want **to mimic their idols**, so productions will often **cast** famous actors **for the sole purpose of advertisement**. If someone's favorite actor was Johnny Depp, for example, they would subconsciously try to mimic him. If Johnny Depp took only one sip from a Coca-Cola can, fans would subconsciously want to buy a Coca-Cola can to be like their favorite actor, even though it's a role they are playing and even though it was, after all, just one sip.

People try **to mimic things they've seen in cinema** constantly and in numerous different ways. For example, violence in films can be very influential to many young viewers. People may subconsciously try to be like a character they see in a film they very much like, even if that character **has wicked intentions**. In 2012 in Aurora, Colorado James Holmes killed twelve people and injured seventy others **during the midnight projection of "The Dark Knight Rises"**. James Holmes was **a long time superhero fan** and especially liked Batman. Psychologists still aren't sure what exactly

provoked him to do the shooting, but one of the theories is that he was enraged by the making of “The Dark Knight Rises” as it **defiles** his favorite comic book. Another well-known theory is that he was inspired to be like the Joker, the villain of the prequel “The Dark Knight”, who wanted **to spread chaos and terror through violence**. The Joker does not think of ordinary people as real people and James Holmes has said exactly that ‘these were not real people’. Although this is a *very* exaggerated example, it’s a fact that the violence teenagers all around the world watch in movies makes *them* want **to cause violence**. For example, in 1971, the same year the classic “A Clockwork Orange” came out, **the crime rate** in America rose. It’s speculated that some people were influenced by the psychopaths in “A Clockwork Orange” and the awful things they were doing and that affected them in a way that they no longer **suppressed their desire to do criminal activity**.

But it’s not only through violence that people **strive to mimic their favorite character and actors**. Watching movies that include young people smoking often makes, surprise, surprise, young people want to smoke. Most big movie studios have a tobacco policy in force, which states that PG-13 rated movies must not include smoking or any other use of tobacco in them. That is because **the use of tobacco in films** affects the teens watching them in a way that they think it’s okay to smoke, since the characters they are seeing smoke. However, almost half of all PG-13 **film produced by big movie studios** do include tobacco use in them and the studios are obligated to pay a fine when that happens.

But there are **some positive effects to this mimicking**. People are **inspired to be like characters they love** and that motivates them to work on themselves. When we see someone we really like on screen, we always subconsciously try to be more like them.

Another way in which movies affect our modern world is that they help the economy grow and prosper.

Take, for example, **action figures**. For every big blockbuster, action figures are created and distributed. Fans buy them for aesthetic and collectible value. Action figures **don’t**

have any real application or impact on people's lives, they are just for fun. It doesn't cost a lot for an action figure to be made, they are mostly all made by either plastic, rubber, or both. But since they have such **a high collectible value**, fans buy them **at ridiculously high prices**. That way, people bring money into the country, into companies, and into private manufacturers. And it's not only action figures, it's any form of **merchandise**. Furthermore, the money the theater makes from selling snacks before every **screening** is 85% of that theater's total profit. Some of that money goes to the country in the form of taxes. Another example of this is simply **the tickets sold for projections**. Although most of the money goes directly to the studio that has produced the movie, some of it goes to the country. And it's not only direct influence to the country's economy that films have; the industry itself is of huge significance. A lot of people find jobs in the film industry, especially in the US. About 0.1 percent of all people in the USA work in the film industry. Although that may seem like a low percentage, it's actually higher than that of a lot of other fields. So, because of big productions, it's not only that money goes to the country and thus the economy is developed, but private manufacturers and companies **prosper** and there are more workers in the field.

Films can also both improve and ruin the health of individuals. Studies show that **adrenaline junkies** love going to horror films since being scared gives them real pleasure. However, most of them don't know that being scared while watching a horror movie **increases your heart rate and blood pressure**, which can **lead to heart attack** and even death. For example, a woman died in the theater from heart attack while watching "The Passion of Christ". And yes, this is a very specific example, but the principle applies on a smaller scale, too. But of course, films can also give benefits to your health. Comedies help **lower your blood pressure** and can **make your blood vessels dilate**. There have been studies that show that 15 minutes of **intense laughing** while watching a movie **have the same effect on the cardiovascular system as exercising**.

Perhaps the most influential ways in which films affect society is through giving individual people the

opportunity to fantasize and inspiring them about who they want to be.

Although this might sound great, there are, as always, some negative sides to it. Take, for example, **the five Oscar nominee** “The Wolf of Wall Street”. In it, we have the character of Jordan Belfort: a **sinister**, self-centered, arrogant, and egoistic millionaire. The movie is based on a real story and **explores the life of** this Wall Street broker. Throughout the movie, there are numerous scenes where we see Jordan spending his money on ridiculous things, doing whatever he wants because he has money, **behaving immorally**, and actually enjoying his life. By seeing his extravagant lifestyle, viewers may want to be like him.

However, in that particular movie, the character **feels absolutely no remorse** when it comes to his actions. Jordan feels amazing while spending his money and unlike most other films about greed, **there is no lesson to learn from** “Wolf of Wall Street”. In the end of the movie, Jordan does go to prison, but he states that he **feels at peace** there. He doesn't learn from his mistakes that much and **the movie isn't apologetic about his greed**. Someone watching that will see how great it is to be rich and arrogant and might subconsciously think that **there are absolutely no downsides to that** and may **strive towards** it.

However, **the positives** on this one do probably **outweigh the negative**. Films inspire people **to get in the industry and create dreams**. Most actors, directors, cinematographers, etc. probably saw some film as children and were thus inspired to create something themselves. This is a very important aspect of how films affect society: they inspire. They inspire individuals **to work towards their dreams** and inspire them to get into the industry. Not only that, good movies **teach valuable lessons**. The aim of that is to affect the viewer and to send a message, and so many individuals change their ideals and beliefs because of what they see in films.

Movies are just so damn powerful.

Even though it's called 'the seventh art', cinema is surely **the most influential art form**. Most people **don't follow sculpture or architecture** and don't get affected by new sculptures or buildings. Movies, however, are everywhere. So many people see movies every day and the film industry is so big and influential. However, movies can affect society in both positive and negative ways. They can help the economy grow, inspire individuals, and **expand our basic knowledge of the world around us**. Movies can also create violence and bad habits, can make people greedier, and can **send a bad message to the public**. The effects that films have on society are numerous and two-fold. And as movies are such **an impactful art form**, big movie studios must be very careful in what they include in their productions, since even the smallest things can affect the viewer. Individuals must be careful about what they take from movies, since even the smallest thing can **push them to do something bad** or to become someone different. It's fairly clear that movies affect society very much. Not only that, they **shape the modern world** we live in and help individuals develop. In the big picture, it might be too early to say in what way. All people can currently do is think critically and **not allow films to entirely change who they are**.

A little backstory on this article. This was written years ago and now, re-reading it, it is definitely not one of our good pieces. However, it's ranking extremely well and people seem to love the more analytical tone to it. So, we're keeping it up; but keep in mind that even we disagree with a lot above and, maybe, we'd like to do a How Do Movies Affect Society pt. 2 soon —

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— Pouty Boy