Is Celebrity Culture Corrupting our Society?
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It’s clear that Celebrities are all around us. They dominate the news, magazines and of course the Internet. But should we be looking up to these people? Are they really success figures? Is it expectable for children to be imitating the attitudes and behavior of Katie Price and Rhianna? Over the past weeks we have been studying celebrity culture and observing in what ways celebrity culture can affect society? We have also been finding out how students and teachers in our school feel when celebrities they admire, or model themselves on, act inappropriately. We wanted to find out just how celebrity lifestyles can influence the way we live.
            So, it’s quite clear that celebrities influence our lives. Whether it’s the new hairstyle that’s arrived into fashion after Cheryl Cole’s appearance at the BRITS, or whether it’s our obsession with celebrity gossip in magazines that can dominate our conversations with our mates. Just think; it’s almost impossible to live your life unaware of the ‘glamorous’, ‘sophisticated’ lives of the rich and famous and it’s pretty scary to think about how much we know about these people when we have never actually met them!
            Don’t get me wrong. Sometimes it can be healthy to have a role model, someone to look up to who has achieved in life and celebrities can fulfill this brief. They can make giving to charity look cool and inspire millions of people to donate money to Children in Need. They can also give people hope of success in their lives and teach them important messages of self-belief, perseverance, determination and following your dreams. Another benefit of celebrities is that they can represent our nationality and make us proud of the Country we live in. But, most importantly, celebrities entertain us. They make us laugh at the T.V with our family and friends. They make us sing along to catchy tunes played on the radio while on our way to school in the morning and their onscreen roles can cause us to cry into our buckets of popcorn in the cinema on Orange Wednesday.
            But I bet you’re thinking, ‘hang on, if celebrities can make us do all this then can’t they influence us in a negative way too?’ This is exactly what we as a group have been studying these past weeks. We have been frantically researching celebrities who have ‘gone off the rails’, studying recent newspaper articles concerning the unacceptable behavior of today’s celebrities. We have also been annoying – I mean interviewing students and teachers of our school.
            We have discovered that there have been lots of incidents in the news recently concerning behavior and lifestyles of Celebrities. For Example, Frankie Cocozza, runner up of Celebrity Big Brother 2012, has been in the news an awful lot recently since his first appearance on the X Factor last year. Frankie was in the Daily Star Sunday because of his latest claim that he is on course to bed 200 women this year. He also stated that he’s worried that his wild lifestyle is catching up with him and is damaging his health. However he feels ‘It’s not possible to drink less’.
          Another example of a ‘reckless’ celebrity is Lindsey Lohan an American actress, pop singer and model who began her career in 1986 as a child fashion model and got her big break at the age of 11 when she starred in the remake of The Parent Trap. She had many fans in Britain a lot of which were young children because of the many children’s films she’d starred in such as Mean Girls, The Parent Trap and Herbie: Fully Loaded. In February 2007 however she was convicted of misdemeanor theft for stealing a necklace from a store, an offense that also constituted a violation of her probation from previous convictions. Scarily, 80% of students in our school that we surveyed answered ‘yes’ to the question – have you ever-admired Lindsey Lohan?
            One major concern of many parents and schoolteachers is that celebrities have glamorized bad behavior. Children learn though imitation so, if their idol is taking drugs, drinking excessively and going through series of arrests, the child’s understanding of right and wrong is going to be confused. The ‘glamorous’ culture of celebrities can also be unjust in some cases and celebrities are known to ‘get away’ with unacceptable behavior that an ordinary member of society wouldn’t. This also confuses young children trying to understand ‘what is fair’.
        Another major concern is that celebrities can affect our confidence about how we look and our body image. There is constant pressure on celebrities for them to look their best, partially from the media and the entertainment industry. Often stars, especially actresses, are required to look thin and we the public are then bombarded with the idea that being thin means being beautiful. Some celebrities maintain their body images through extreme measures, including plastic surgery and eating disorders. Though celebrities do not directly cause people to seek out these extreme measures, the National Eating Disorder Association says that the media impacts the ways people define ideas of body image and create a lot of pressure on young girls in particular to look as ‘beautiful’ as their favorite celebrities. Not only can this pressure and the need to be thin affect peoples’ health but it can also affect their self-esteem and their confidence.
          So, we have found out that celebrity lifestyles can influence us is many ways. They can affect our hobbies, interests and opinions. Celebrities influence us in a positive way - to donate money to charity and they can also inspire us to want to succeed in our lives. However, they can influence us in a negative way too. They can define ideas about body image and affect our confidence and self-esteem. Another way celebrities can corrupt us is by promoting inappropriate behavior through the media, which can be imitated by young and sometimes vulnerable children. For example it’s clear that young children will often imitate the behavior of their favorite football players like Wayne Rooney and Steven Gerard and a lot of their behavior on the pitch is inappropriate e.g. spitting and swearing. This kind of behavior also takes away the spirit of good sportsmanship and sidetracks children from the real meaning of sporting culture and the pride of being part of a team.
            There’s no doubt about the fact that celebrities have a major impact on society and we all know celebrities are becoming more and more influential because of the world’s great advances in technology this decade. It is easier now more than ever to follow a celebrity over the Internet and become addicted to their ‘amazing’ life. Celebrities these days have very little privacy and their every move is recorded by the media and shared with millions of people. They have a massive responsibility and a hugely important role in our society as role models and success figures.  We all know the odd celebrity that has ‘gone off the rails’ but the majority of the rich and famous are good law abiding citizens and excellent role models - they are the celebrities that we should be looking up to. We have each been given free will and we all have the ability to distinguish the difference between a healthy role model and an unhealthy role model. So, as long as we are not obsessed about these people and we realize that they are humans too and that they have their own lives to live and their own choices to make then there really is no worry of society being corrupted by celebrity culture. Film, television and sporting stars will always be influential but it is perhaps the people closest to us like our friends and family who are the most influential role models and these are the people that have the biggest impact on us of all.