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Narrative in Professional Wrestling

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Narrative in Professional Wrestling

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report
submitted to the Faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science
By

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Approved:
Professor James Dempsey, Advisor
Abstract

This project is an examination of the prominent events during the 1950s-present day, and how it relates to the types of stereotypes portrayed in professional wrestling. The idea is to show that there is a connection between the events happening around the world and the stereotypes introduced into the professional wrestling world. The reason for this is so that professional wrestling can capitalize on the events, good or bad, for a profit.

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Introduction

This project focuses on the idea that stereotypes and characters in professional wrestling are taken from current events. The main is to show that the current events of a decade influenced the amount of wrestlers and the stereotypes they portrayed from decade to decade. Another goal is to show some information about the wrestlers to whoever may look at the website that goes along with this report. Overall, people should come away with a basic knowledge of a wrestler’s career, why they were in the timeframe they were placed in, and that the current events of the decade influenced their character in some way, shape or form.

This project is mainly being conducted because of my personal love for professional wrestling. I don’t like how people toss wrestling aside because it is fake, without properly analyzing the ideas behind it. If people looked closely, they would see that even if wrestling is fake, the wrestlers are telling you a story through their characters. While it may not be the gore and violence that other sports bring, wrestling provides a great writing background and some amazing ideas and concepts that other sports cannot do to the nature of the sport.

This project works for an IQP because it explores a subject that most of society knows about. Professional wrestling is a big part of our society in America because the wrestlers don’t just show up in the ring and on stage. They go out into the world both in and out of character to make appearances on talk shows and autograph signings. They also make appearances for other things like the Make A
Wish Foundation. Recently, the WWE actually received an award from them for officially granting the most wishes to the kids.

Another reason this is important is because it is a good insight into the other part of wrestling besides the fighting. This project focused heavily on how much the writing and stereotypes affect the fights, through different moves, different behaviors and different match-ups. For example, a wrestler with a military soldier stereotype fighting a wrestler with a foreign menace one would be a completely different match than one between a foreign menace and a masked villain. This would be mostly due to the conflicting ideals between the soldier and the foreign menace and the crowd’s reaction is different depending on the actions in the ring as well.

The project audience for this project is anyone really. Even if you know a lot about professional wrestling, you could still learn something from this and it is a different perspective on the industry. A person training to be a wrestler could use to try and figure out what they may be asked to do based on body type, race, and social background. Even if the person is new to wrestling, they can get right into the heart of the concepts, and hopefully gain an understanding and possibly a new respect for the business.

The results will most likely be utilized by the people reading this project report or visiting the website. They will likely just be utilized with knowledge and understanding. This project doesn’t have statistics. It doesn’t have graphs or tables. What is does have is a perspective of wrestling most people overlook in lieu
of the fact that most of the fighting is staged. The fact still remains you have to be an athlete to perform well in this sport.

The results will be shown in the form of a website. This will go into the background of many different stereotypes and the history of many wrestlers, which will hopefully give any reader some knowledge and help them understand what the goal of this project is. The way the project will be conducted is by a period of research and then creating the website based on the research. A variety of media will be used to compile research from. This includes the Internet, the on-campus and off-campus libraries, and possible interview with actual wrestlers or authors of the books.

The next chapter in this report will give you an insight to how wrestling got its start in America. It will detail the change from two guys fighting in a circle, to many guys fighting in a ring hitting each other with chairs and other various objects. It will introduce the stereotypes and what they each mean, as well as give a brief talk about women’s wrestling and the ups and downs it has gone through.

The chapter after that will explain in detail the exact process I used to create the website and do the research that led up to it being made. I will discuss some specific examples of books and website information I utilized to create the website, as well as showing how I formed the website.

The chapters following will show the analysis of the information gathered during research. This will be a very straightforward section where stereotypes are listed in contrast to the decade the wrestler was in. Then after that comes the conclusions where I explain what you can get from the analyzed data.
Background

For the better part of half a century, wrestling has been ingrained in world cultures. America however has shown the most when it comes to the evolution of the sport into entertainment. The on-screen characters are lively and interact well with the crowds. However a lot of people seem to think that wrestling falls under certain stereotypes, and cannot break out from his rhythmic patterns. These range from the wrestlers personas to gender and abilities. Many people refuse to believe that wrestling has real aspects and that everything is staged. They see everyone as an actor and not as a person. However, some people realize that wrestling is meant to be staged and is a performance, not a sporting event.

Since the earliest times in history, humans have used ritual activities to cure sickness, create relationships within a community or change personal status. The earliest known forms of wrestling were found in the tombs of Beni Hassan in Egypt. These basic holds were around during the times of the pharaohs.

The rise of the "civilized world" brought new rules and regulations to the ritual. Greco-Romans added rules that reflected their society, and the aspect of the ritual changed from performing as a ritual to winning a contest. Before, where Shaman and holy men conducted the rituals, now stood referee to maintain equality in the contests.

The mid-nineteenth century England became the center of development for boxing wrestling. Three main styles dominated the area. They are known as "Cumberland and Westmoreland", "Cornish an Devonshire" and "Lancashire"
Breton

style. "Cumberland and Westmoreland" was very similar to sumo wrestling. The combatants would wear tights only and a lot of known wrestling holds were barred from use. This was known as the most sophisticated style of the three. "Cornish and Devonshire" was similar to jujitsu. A harness was worn on the wrestlers and they would execute throws using the harness to score points. Again, only a few holds were allowed for this style. Lancashire was developed as a mix between the other two, but one could use any means necessary to throw the opponent. Only the most dangerous holds were barred from this vicious style.

The USA also had their own styles for professional wrestling. The main one was known as "catch-as-catch-can" style. It originated from Lancashire, and heavily resembled jujitsu and allowed all holds to take down an opponent. People would often debate over which part of "catch-as-catch-can" (CCAC)* was more exciting to watch, and which parts were effective as self-defense. The sheer viciousness of the style got it outlawed almost immediately in London and was given the name "all-in"* wrestling because the possibility for death or injury was immense. CCAC was threatened by an anti-brutality campaign against college football in 1905 by President Roosevelt, but it died down quickly. After the campaign, CCAC wrestling changed into two styles. These were known as professional and rural. Professional was used in urban areas and was bureaucratically restricted by rules and regulations. Rural resembled a barroom brawl and was mostly performed at circuses and county fairs. Additionally, skill differences usually made fights last a short time, a few minutes at best, and were exceptionally bloody.
In the 1930s professional wrestling took a big turn positively. Over 45,000 people paid to see Danny O'Mahoney vs. Ed Don George. Often time the wrestlers would interject moves with more action. They would start the fight for real and whoever got more cheers from the audience would win. This was known as "guaranteed entertainment". Otherwise matches were often choreographed in advance. This led to an outrage from the fans and put the wrestling federations in tough spots. No one wanted to watch a boring match but they were angry at the deceit of the promoters. In 1928, Gus Sonnenburg, a famous college football player, entered the wrestling ring on a bet. Because of this, many other former college football players started coming to wrestling.

To increase excitement, wrestlers would use a variety of tactics. One way was to tap each other on the nose to get it to bleed. When a crowd sees blood it adds to the realism. Alternatively they would also employ a technique called blading. This was done by hiding razorblades somewhere such as under an armband and then discreetly slicing your own forehead with it to make it look like you were "busted open" and bleeding profusely. This technique was excellent for getting crowd reactions but it was very dangerous to the person’s health. To counteract this, the blood capsule was created. They could create the look and feel of blood, real enough to fool even the most critical skeptics. The capsules have since seen a decline in use due to people being accused of using them when they were legitimately hurt.

It was possible to use blading more often due to the rise of "big league wrestling" which meant that wrestler would perform in fewer but more high profile
matches. Wrestlers would go from wrestling every day to once or twice a week. Since real blood is a much more spectacular effect, they abandoned the use of blood capsules.

Another affect that a wrestler would use to increase action during a match would be to throw your opponent into the audience. A variation of this would be the aggressor running and the opponent dodges them and the aggressor flies through the ropes to the outside of the ring. With skill and practice there is a very small chance of injury occurring from this stunt and it gets the crowd really into the match. In 1988 another variation was used in a match between Hulk Hogan and "The Million Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase. The referee for the match was being paid under the table by DiBiase to favor him in the match. Hogan found out and hurled the referee into a group of people.

Another big factor for action was the concept of the tag-team match. This involved 2 wrestlers facing off against 2 other wrestlers as a team. Only 1 man from each team was allowed in the ring at the same time and to switch out you had to tag your partner. This added action because it allowed for different match-ups all in the same match. It was almost like have 2 different matches at once, especially when you factor in any cheating that may occur during the matches. Variations on this included a six-man tag, which is a 3 versus 3 match and the tornado-tag match. A tornado-tag match was a normal 2 on 2 tag match except that all four men could be in the ring at the same time.

Wrestling changed from a fairly boring spectacle to an action-packed form of theatre in about 60 years. This was due to two important transitional phases in
its history. The first was the transition to a spectator sport. Audiences changed from people who wanted to learn and see new techniques, cheer on friends or people wanting to become a wrestler to a group that wanted raw entertainment. It was not until the professionalization of wrestling that the audience mattered. Now it was the audience who paid for tickets to finance the venue they were performing at. It also paid for the equipment, promoters and the wrestlers themselves.

In the 1930 and 40s, wrestlers were sometimes rented to local promoters by the pound. Jake Pfeffer was one of those promoters and was known to do this for ten dollars a ton plus transport expenses. This made it possible for smaller venues to have more high profile and popular people performing at their arenas. This increases revenue and profit easily.

Unlike the transition to spectator sport, the transition to television was fairly quick. A lot of newspapers never saw wrestling as a valid sport and didn’t report on it until it started showing on television. Wrestling was also a benefit to television as well. There were very little regular programs on TV, and few people actually owned their own television. Rather, people would go to bars to watch shows there. Since wrestling had developed to the point action could keep the audience’s attention, it was natural barroom entertainment. This didn’t get rid of the direct spectator events though. Rather, announcers were added to explain moves or just be part of the act.

Wrestling fans have usually been believed to be the lower-class people in society. However in the 1940s and 50s approximately ninety percent of the audience was women. There were a couple theories as to why this was the case.
The first was that women are usually the ones to uphold morals and they like the good versus evil aspect of wrestling. The other theory is that women were raised to be non-violent and watching wrestling allows them to vent and let out violent and aggressive emotions.

Wrestling, despite being greatly choreographed and rehearsed is still dangerous. Violence, even staged, can lead to injuries. Matches were described as being "intrinsically brutal". This meant that even with all the proper skills and practice, matches still had a high injury percentage. Former champion Bruno Sammartino reports to having his nose broken 11 times, his ribs 5 times and numerous broken collarbones, wrists, knuckle and ankles, not to mention stitches. A huge crowd in Montreal was shocked to watch "Killer" Kowalski tear off Yukon Eric's ear with a misplaced flying kick. Kowalski himself also still suffers from neck and back pain due to past injuries.

Professional wrestling takes place in a square called a ring as opposed to college and high school wrestling that takes place in a circle on a mat. The ring is fifteen square feet with a 2 foot apron.. The current structure is supported by steel framing covered in plywood and foam. All that is covered with a canvas. The ring is also supported with four ring posts. Nothing but the ring posts touch the floor, which allows the shock of the wrestlers' bodies to be absorbed by the road and the give of the ring floor. Also the ring acts like a large drum, amplifying any noises that are made on the mat to add to the action. The ropes around the perimeter are about an inch thick and covered in plastic. They are hung horizontally and connect to each of the ring posts.
Both the wrestlers and the fans contribute to the action. The fans are encouraged to cheer for their heroes when he is about to lose, or when he is coming back from a disadvantage. On television the audience acts like a backdrop, lighted as deeply as possible and cuts out where the audience ends abruptly. This emphasizes the large audience and gives the impression that it continues into the darkness. The cheers and boos act the same way canned laughter in a sitcom does, cuing a similar response from home viewers.

The audience sometimes was forced to sit very far away from the ring, sometimes as much as a football field of distance away. To get around this, wrestlers employed some different tactics. For one, insults and curses were replaced with things like "Hy-Ooo!" and "Uhhhhh!" Also hand and arm movement were very over-emphasized and sweeping. Anger wasn't represented facially but by flailing your arms around wildly and jumping up and down. Aggressive running was also used. Sometimes gestures were even repeated once or twice so the people way in the back could see the action. An example of this is someone repeatedly punching his/her opponent in the face multiple times in hope that the message gets across to the people in the "nosebleed" seats.

Stereotypes play a huge part in the performance part of wrestling. Depending on the background of the character, this may influence how the wrestler acts in the ring, such as what moves they choose to use and when. For example, "The Nature Boy" Ric Flair struts around the ring when he is winning to show off to the crowd. "The Nature Boy" is a stereotype used for men that are suave but treacherous and will do anything to win. Stereotypes are often affected
by current events as well. For example, after World War II, a few wrestlers worked with the gimmick of a Nazi. A family known well for this is the Von Erichs, all of which were advocating that Germany was the best country and said a lot of hate for America. This led to the crowd booing them right into the Wrestling Hall of Fame.

   Early on, most wrestlers didn't really have a stereotype. They were all big buff men wearing tights and throwing each other around in a ring. However once the action started to pick up in the 30s and 40s, people started demanding more entertainment. This led to the separation of wrestlers into on-screen personas. From these some basic stereotypes were born, including the hero, the masked villain, the foreign menace, and the "sonofabitch".

   The hero was just that, a hero. He was the guy everyone liked to cheer for. An example of a hero would be Hulk Hogan. The crowd would cheer immensely whenever he entered the ring and he really knew how to get the crowd amped up and supportive of him. He did this by constantly addressing the fans whenever he talked and even motioning to them during the match. Hogan cups his ear and listens towards the audience and the fans cheer in the direction he listens. He holds a contest between the sides of the audience to see who can cheer the loudest. It really gets the fans into the match.

   The hero would go out of his way to stop the villains. Some of these villains included the masked villain and the foreign menace. The masked villain was usually along the lines of a "tie a lady to the train tracks" type of villain. An example of a masked villain is Kane. Kane was a villain that kidnap people and tortures
them. A famous example is when he kidnapped Lita and in the storyline impregnated her. He feuded with Matt Hardy over who the child of the father was. The foreign menace changed depending on current events. This mainly included the wars. As stated earlier, the Von Erichs were a family of foreign menace wrestlers.

The "sonofabitch" could be a good guy or a bad guy, depending on his actions. If he went around fighting the foreign menaces for interfering in our country, he would be a good guy, and possibly even also counted as a hero. However if he liked to beat up the heroes, he was the bad guy that just didn't listen to the rules and just wanted to fight. A good example of a sonofabitch would be Stone Cold Steve Austin. Austin would consistently go around fighting whoever he wanted and throwing the consequences out the window. He was a Texas man who loved to kick ass and drink beer.

On March 22, 1999, Steve Austin performed one of the greatest acts in his performance. The Rock and Vince McMahon were discussing the upcoming title match that Rock had against Austin. During the promo, Austin entered driving a beer truck. He talked some trash and then hosed McMahon and Rock with a hefty amount of Coors Light. After this, he stood on the truck and toasted the fans with more beer and the crowd went crazy over the whole thing.

As the events in the world changed, so did the stereotypes that wrestlers took on. After the cold war, many gimmicks with Russian people began to surface. A famous one was Nikita Koloff. However not all the foreign menaces were from Russia. Iron Sheik was from Iran and came to "make everyone humble" as he
With the move into the 80s, more, but less prominent stereotypes emerged. Some of the new ones included the punk, who did whatever they wanted regardless of consequences. A punk was very similar to a sonofabitch, with one major detail. A sonofabitch was usually a person that was from the south, more like a redneck. A punk was the same as a sonofabitch except they usually were not from other parts of the United States, or at least were not portrayed as a southern man. An example of a punk would be Bam Bam Bigelow, as he liked to beat up and decimate anyone he fought. Another new idea was the Authority Figure. They authority figure was a big man that enforced rules within the company. The Big Boss Man was a famous authority figure who consistently enforced the rules on any lawbreakers. His famous quote against Bam Bam Bigelow was "Hey boy, you've got a real big mouth. I don't like mouthy punks. So I'm gonna give you your chance. And then I'll shut your mouth for good. You're gonna end up like all the rest of the scum. In steel bracelets. And once you feel the cuffs on your wrists, you'll call me the Big Boss, like everybody else. (Big Boss Man 1988)"

One of the newer stereotypes was the idea of the Manager. The manager was a person who talked the talk, but couldn't walk the walk. One of the most famous managers was Jimmy "The Mouth of the South" Hart. He managed wrestlers such as "Superstar" Billy Graham and The Honky Tonk Man. He aided in the careers of over fifty superstars.

The 90s further increased the stereotypes with the introduction of the high-flyer. The high-flyer used a lot of showy theatrics to make their moves look
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cooler to the audience. High-fliers existed before the 90s but it was generally not used as much because it also carried a high amount of risk using some of the moves. A good example of this was the team of Matt and Jeff Hardy, the Hardy Boyz. Matt and Jeff were real-life brothers that grew up wanting to be professional wrestlers. While Matt wasn't as showy as his younger brother, both Jeff and himself were able to wow the crowd with their unique and unorthodox style of wrestling.

Women’s wrestling was typically frowned upon until the 1950s. Even then it was considered to be a lower card than men’s wrestling and was rarely ever featured as a main event. Even though a women’s champion was recognized since 1937, it was not until the 1950s and beyond that anyone really started to take interest in the sport. The first ever Women’s champion was Mildred Burke, who went on to form the World Women’s Wrestling Association in the 1950s, calling herself the first champion.

The National Wrestling Alliance (NWA) refused to acknowledge Burke as champion though, and instead made June Byers the champion after Burke’s retirement in 1956. This was due to a high-profile match in 1954 that had a controversial finish. Byers retired in 1964, and the Fabulous Moolah, who was the holder of the Junior Heavyweight version of the Women’s championship, was recognized as the champion by default.

In the mid 1990s, women’s wrestling took a different turn when WWE started promoting their women as “divas” and used them as eye candy more than wrestlers. Many of the women hired were used as managers or valets and had little
wrestling talent. However this changed at the new millennium when WWE really pushed the Women’s division, including having a main event match between Trish Stratus and Lita for the women’s championship. Since then, the women’s division has taken a back seat in WWE, but the women continue to perform and most of them have a lot of wrestling experience.

Women can fall into the same stereotypes as men. For example, Lita would be an example of a high-flyer. She dated Matt Hardy in real life and was part of a stable with the Hardy Boyz called Team X-Treme. She used moves such as the hurricanrana and the moonsault, both of which were fairly dangerous if performed wrong. Trish Stratus played many stereotypes through the years, but was mostly known for being a Fan Favorite. She always amped up the crowd when she entered the ring. Unfortunately, most women were given stereotypes to act as eye candy, and they were really under-utilized until the 2000s.

The stereotypes also influence the moves that the wrestler could use to emulate the style. For example, a person who was a foreign menace from Nazi Germany might show up by goose-stepping around the ring after hitting a big power move. They also would shy away from using high-flying moves. A big and muscular guy would not be seen flipping all over the ring either, just like you would not generally see a smaller and more agile wrestler using high-power moves like powerbombs or powerslams.

For example, Jeff Hardy was a high-flyer stereotype. He would consistently use his finishing move, the Swanton Bomb, but going to the top rope of a ring post, and doing a front flip off of it, slamming his shoulders into the chest of his downed
opponent. However, you would not see him lifting people bigger than him into the air and slamming them down with a powerslam, like John Cena does. Cena also would not usually go to the top rope and somersault onto people like Jeff does. It is these differences that really make each match unique and entertaining to watch.

The basics of the performance can be broken down into two separate arguments. Babyfaces versus heels, or good guys versus bad guys, and superstars versus fallguys. Babyfaces are the wrestlers that usually get most of the cheers from the audience. They love to interact with the fans and delight in their support. The heels are the bad guys. They will sometimes cheat to win and generally dislike the audience while in the ring or on camera. Most of the drama ends up being a conflict between babyfaces and villains.

The other conflict happens between superstars and fallguys. Superstars are the wrestlers that usually win their matches. They are usually seasoned wrestlers that compete in a lot of main-event matches. Superstars could also be rising talent though that the company feels is deserving of it. Fallguys are wrestlers that constantly lose their matches. They usually fit the role of elevating the superstars up the championship ladder. However the positions are easily switched and even fallguys usually get the chance to become a superstar at some point in their careers.

Most of the stereotypes also fit into the category of modern ritual characters. The ritual hero is usually a white, racial or class hero. This could be a superstar that is black, one that comes from a poor social class or just an upstanding young white man. The white hero is usually the most prestigious and spouts out
traditional and conservative values. They are also the current champion holders. The racial and class heroes are usually portrayed as well-intentioned people who just don't have the skills to become champions.

These are counteracted by the ritual villains, which fall into the categories of common, arrogant and global villains. The common villains are the punks, sadists and masked villains. They don't have a higher purpose to their goals except to win for themselves. The arrogant villains believe they are superior because of their social class or educational background. These types of people usually feud with the class and racial heroes, trying to assert themselves as better than the heroes. The global villains are the foreign menaces and they mask their own greed with politics, economics or religions.

The structure of the drama itself is divided into four stages. The first part is the breach. This is the beginning of the problem, like a heel refusing the shake hands with the babyface before a match. The next step is the crisis, which is usually caused by the breach. An example would be a villain cheating and getting a victory. The third step is redressive action where the hero realizes he or she must solve this crisis. This may include "justified" rule breaking. The last step is called re-integration where the villain is punished for their behavior. The overlying theme of the drama is "The good will out" which means that eventually good will triumph over evil.

Stereotypes have evolved from the bland mat wrestlers to the colorful characters that are portrayed today. Today, people like Hulk Hogan and Jeff Hardy, who show that anyone can be a success if they keep trying for it.
Stereotypes show how children should or shouldn't act. They entertain the audience, they captivate it, people laugh, people cry, people cheer and people get angry. Most important though, stereotypes helped create the professional spectacle that over 25 million people a year enjoy.

The Process
The idea for this project evolved from an idea of comparing the storylines in wrestling to those of a tabloid newspaper. Originally I had noticed a handful of similarities between the types of stories and the topics between the two mediums. Using this I decided I would try to create my own tabloid newspaper based on professional wrestling. It was then decided that it was too broad of a topic. So I narrowed it down to focusing on the stereotypes and how they had evolved throughout the history of wrestling.

After the topic was fleshed out, the next step was to do some research and get some information. I went online and checked out many books through the Interlibrary Loan and spent the term before the project preparing for it. I took notes from each book and compiled a pretty good understanding of the history of stereotypes. This was an important step because I was able to gain a good understanding of how wrestling started out and how it became the powerhouse entertainment that it is today.

A book I used a lot of information from was written by Michael R. Ball. It was entitled *Professional Wrestling As Ritual Drama in American Popular Culture*. The book really went in depth about the performance aspect of wrestling and how the storylines are dissected, arranged and played out. I also contacted Mr. Ball with a couple of questions after reading the book and was happy to see him respond. He was my most important resource in this project because I was trying to build on a lot of what he discussed in his book.
Since I was no longer making a tabloid, I had to figure out what I would use to compile my information and put it on display. I eventually decided on making a website to compare the evolution of stereotypes through the various decades of the 20th century. I looked online to find a good web host and discovered Weebly. Weebly allowed me to do everything I wanted to do for the website for free. It made it a good choice for my project.

After I got my website, it was time to fill it out. I created tabs on the site for each decade from the 1950s to the 2000s. In each of these I placed some prominent wrestlers of the time and talked about their life in wrestling. After that was done I added a main slide with a quick biography about me, and a slide describing stereotypes and how they are used in professional wrestling.

All the pictures I used were taken from other sites, so I have to make sure about copyright issues. I messaged Christine Drew at the library on campus about copyright issues. She sent me back a form I could submit to the websites I used pictures from to get their permissions. I also put a link to the site in the picture, so if you click a picture it would take you to where I got it. This was an important step while I was waiting for replies from the websites about picture permissions.

Once all the mini-biographies for the wrestlers were finished, I did some quick research on current events. This was general knowledge that anyone can know about a decade, I just needed to make sure I had my facts straight. For example, World War II ended in 1945 but people were afraid of Germany for many years after. This enabled the Von Erich family to become Nazi-sympathizers as a stereotype. Also some wrestlers that were foreign menaces became allies due to
the changes in politics and diplomacy in the world. A good example is Nikita Koloff, who started as a foreign menace and ended up becoming an ally after Gorbachev was able to improve relations between the United States and Russia.

Analysis
In the 1950s, the aftermath of World War II was still lingering. Due to this, Nazis were seen as vile evil people that should never be allowed to rule over anything. Also during the 1950s a wrestling family known as the Von Erichs was formed. The original Von Erich, Fritz, was a Nazi sympathizer and was a huge foreign menace. People were so angry at him he actually needed a bodyguard to prevent the fans from attacking him in big mobs.

In the 1960s The Cold War was heavy in effect. The thought of a nuclear war scared many nations into not firing any weapons. During the 1960s, wrestling examined a lot of different cultures including Native-Americans, rednecks, Iranians, and Samoans. The 1960s also saw the introduction of one of the newer stereotypes, the manager, with Bobby “The Brain” Heenan.

In the 1970s, the United States was going through a lot of different things. A big part was the “hippie” movement that had started in the 60s was hitting its peak. It also saw a change in music styles, as well as the Oil Crisis from 1973-1979. The 70s also brought wrestlers such as Hulk Hogan, Ted DiBiase and Ric Flair.

The 1980s brought a huge new era of music and culture. The war on drugs picked up with the “Just Say No” campaign, and the Cold War ended in 1989. The discovery of AIDS however did hurt the rights of homosexuals due to the Christian Right claiming they brought it to America. The 1980s also saw a big leap in stereotypes and the amount of wrestlers. Some new ones included Bam Bam Bigelow, the punk, and the Hero, “Macho Man” Randy Savage. Wrestling continued to expand their stereotypes in the following decades as well.
The 1990s saw a big musical revolution with the bands Nirvana and Green Day. The Internet was also made available on a wide-scale in 1991. The 90s also saw the Gulf War and the reunification of Germany following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Wrestling also continued to expand, bringing in such people as The Undertaker, a zombie-man, and the vampire Gangrel. The WWE brought in a team of young brothers, Matt and Jeff Hardy. The Hardy Boyz were known as high-flyers and their in-ring style of high-risk moves riled up the crowd and created a big amount of interest in WWE.

The 2000s was a big era of change both in the world and wrestling. After the 9-11 attack, many people were scared that terrorists would attack again. Some people became patriots overnight and the army gained a good chunk of new recruits. Then the war on Iraq started and the world’s view of the United States dropped. Wrestling however was bigger than ever. WWE had pretty much taken over the business except for TNA, and WWE really showed what they could do behind the scenes. With such people as The Hurricane, Edge and Christian, John Cena and Randy Orton, the wrestling scene in WWE really gained a lot of dimension. They were different matches every week, new feuds, new gimmick and stereotypes. The superhero and the fan favorite added a lot to the behind the scenes work, including many wishes with the Make a Wish Foundation.
Conclusion

It is hard to analyze the data gathered from the project. This is due to the fact that most of this project is a different view of a popular media. There aren’t hard facts that can be derived without knowing what the writing staff is thinking, and WWE would not be too keen on leaking that knowledge to the public. However I still think that a lot can be taken from this project despite the fact that it is almost fully speculative.

The first thing that I noticed was that wrestling paid heavy attention to current events. This is best shown through the “Russian Nightmare” Nikita Koloff. He started as a foreign menace, even learning Russian and really taking his gimmick seriously. However due to the actions of Mikhail Gorbachev, he was able to become a hero, completely changing his image in the eyes of the fans, due to real life events.

Another example would be Sargent Slaughter, who changed his alliances often. He began as a patriotic authority figure supporting America, however during the conflict in Iraq, he became an Iraqi sympathizer and was a heel. Shortly after he changed back to being a face, claiming he “wanted his country back”.

One thing of note is that foreign menaces were very prevalent in the 1950s to 1980s but they dwindled in the 90s and 2000s. This suggests that either the WWE decided that the newer conflicts were not worth it, or that there just wasn’t enough conflict to draw upon. Certainly World War II was the catalyst in creating the Von Erich Family. The Cold War helped Nikita Koloff become an intimidating
heel. However in the more recent years, especially following the events of 9-11, there still was not a big uprising of terrorist stereotyping.

A lot of diversity came from the 80s and 90s when punks, fan favorite and heaps more of the other stereotypes emerged. This stemmed from the ongoing battles between WWE, WCW, the NWA and eventually ECW. Everyone was trying to be the top federation in the business. The best way to do that was to get the top stars and promote them correctly, but you also had to take some risks on lesser-known people, such as Bam Bam Bigelow. Bam Bam was extremely successful despite not being known by everyone and was a definite factor in the Monday Night Wars in the 80s and 90s.

In the 2000s the amount of stereotypes tended to drop off however the amount of wrestlers did not. For a long time WWE had so many wrestlers they eventually split into three different shows. They are Raw, Smackdown and ECW. The new ECW was nothing like the original one, and instead is a place where they can test out new wrestlers bring brought up to the professional level.

Overall, what can be drawn from the analysis is that current events likely inspire the wrestling business to create character based on those things. This is easily shown through events that happened between the United States and other countries. If you had a wrestler that was playing a character from a country, their attitude towards the crowd and the country would change depending on what was happening in real life. This suggests that the business pays heavy attention to the news, looking for anything to give them the next great character.

Another great example is Jeff Hardy. Jeff Hardy grew up with his brother
Matt and his father. His mother died when he was young, and he spent his whole life wanting to be a professional wrestling. Jeff and his brother even started their own wrestling federation in their backyard, and it grew to be a fairly big company in North Carolina. One day a WWE agent contacted him and his brother and they started out as fallguys in the business. Eventually WWE decided to use them for something bigger, and the Hardy Boyz were created.
Bibliography


Appendix A: Website Text

**What Is a stereotype?**

A stereotype is a common belief about a certain ethnic or social groups. Stereotypes differ from prejudice because stereotypes are simplified conceptions of groups based on prior assumptions. For a stereotype to be able to be valid, it must have some rationalization of truth. Multiple people must also witness the stereotype. For example, a popular stereotype is that women are bad drivers. For this to have become real, many people must have witnessed women getting into car accidents. Stereotypes can be positive or negative. Usually people associate them with negative connotations.

**Types of Stereotypes in Professional Wrestling**

Professional wrestling uses stereotypes to attract an audience. A wrestler represents a certain group in a positive or negative light and the crowd reacts accordingly. The main ones that will be focused on for this project are:

- The Foreign Menace
- The Authority Figure
- The Hispanic
- The Red Indian
- The Sadist
- The Sonofabitch
- The Cowboy
- The Hero
- The Masked Villain
- The African-American
- The Punk
- The Mentally Ill
- The Nature Boy
- The Hillbilly
The Titled Snob  The Pointy-Headed Intellectual
The Manger  The High-Flyer
The Luchador  The Fan Favorite
The Superhero  The Vampire
The Zombie

Some of these stereotypes are used more than others but all have played a huge role in the evolution of wrestling. Wrestling began as two men on mat with a circle grappling each other for hours on end. Nowadays wrestling is spectacular, action-packed, dramatic, and full of different characters. Wrestling has come a long way from its roots and it is currently at the peak of sports entertainment.

**How Does a Stereotype get Picked?**

The simple answer for this is current events. Whatever is going on in the world, the writing staff will look at it and say, "Well this man did this. He belongs to this group of people. Maybe we could use that to get the fans more active." Then they find a person to perform said stereotype.

For example, after the 9-11 fiasco, a wrestler by the named of Muhammad Hassan emerged onto the wrestling scene. He would praise Allah, speak the language of Iran, and proclaim that the United States deserved the 9-11 incident because of its mistreatment of the Middle East. He was immediately hated by 99% of the wrestling audience. He was so hated that he wanted protection during travel to
prevent the fans from attacking him.

Stereotypes for wrestlers can be dangerous, but they also have a chance to not work. Sometimes people just can't portray a stereotype correctly and he needs to be taken off screen and repackaged. During this process, the writing staff comes up with a new idea, and the wrestlers go back to developmental territory for a while to gain more skills and experience in the ring. Once the new idea is selected the wrestler begins to use it in the developmental territory, to make sure they can perform it to an adequate level. Then they get called back up to the big leagues and they try again. Usually a repackaging can take a few months to perform, mostly so the fans have a chance to forget who they were.

The Von Erichs
The Von Erichs are a famous wrestling family most notably known for portraying the Foreign Menace stereotype, more specifically Germany. The family had many members, but the first one was Fritz Von Erich. He emerged in the 1950s as a Nazi sympathizer and was hated by the fans. Many of them did not have the bravery to boo him at first due to his intimidating looks, but eventually they gained the courage to. He was the first of the family.

Foreign Menace – The Sheik
Sheik made his start in the midwest before joining WWE. He feuded with the greatest champion of all time Bruno Sammartino. In 1969 he mainly wrestled in Toronto and won 127 matches in a row. After his company went bankrupt in 1980
he wrestled in various federations. In 1994 he competed in Extreme Championship Wrestling in a feud against Tazz and Kevin Sullivan. He wrestled his last match in Japan in 1998, at the age of 72. He died in 2003 at the age of 76.

The Sheik's wrestling was centered around his character of a rich wild man from Syria. He locked on normally mundane holds and refuse to break them, leading to submission. He used hidden pencils to cut open his opponent's faces. Often, the tactic backfired and the opponent got the pencil, leading to the extensive scarring on Farhat's forehead. The other illegal move was his fireball that he threw into his opponents faces and they sold as if their face was burnt severely. He didn't speak on camera and had two different managers during his career to cut promos on his behalf. His first manager was Abdullah Farouk but when he managed full-time in World Wide Wrestling Federation (WWWF), Eddie Creatchman became his manager. He kept in character even around his own family, only breaking character around business partners. The character was very easy to go from territory to territory with and Farhat was often brought in as a special attraction for big shows or by NWA promoters who were fighting opposition promotions.

**Manager – Bobby “The Brain” Heenan**

Heenan got his career as a cowardly heel manager in 1965. He eventually went on to create the Heenan Family, a group of wrestlers that he managed. It started in 1969 with the Blackjacks, Nick Bockwinkel, Ray Stevens and Bobby Duncum Sr. These men created the original family. Stevens and Bockwinkel became multi-time AWA Tag Team Champions under his management. In 1975 Bockwinkel captured
his first of many AWA World titles, and during one of his runs, Stevens and Duncum were able to get the AWA Tag Team Titles, making Heenan the first manager in history to manage the tag team champions and a major singles champion.

In 1984, Heenan came to WWE to manage Jesse "The Body" Ventura. However due to medical problems Ventura was forced to retire from wrestling and Heenan went to manage Big John Studd in his feud against Andre the Giant and created the second Heenan Family. He was often the most hated man in the entire promotion. In WWE it took Heenan a while to gain champions, however eventually he succeeded when Ravishing Rick Rude upset the Ultimate Warrior to win the Intercontinental Title. Shortly after he managed the Brain Busters to the WWE Tag Team Titles. A few months later, he managed Colossal Connection to a tag team title run and Mr. Perfect to an Intercontinental Title run.

Eventually Heenan became a commentator as well in 1986. This lasted until 1993, when health issues and the long working hours forced him to retire from WWE.

“High Chief” Peter Maivia

Maivia was the leader of the famous Samoan Wrestling Family. The family includes such wrestlers as the Wild Samoans, his son "Prince" Peter Maivia, and his grandson, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. Maivia's tribal tattoos, which covered his abdomen and legs, were a symbol of his High Chief status. According to
"Superstar" Billy Graham, they were completed in three days. Maivia’s grandson revealed that they were done with traditional Samoan instrumentation: a small hammer, a needle, and ink. Maivia was famously known as a promoter for the National Wrestling Alliance, especially in Hawaii. Unfortunately his life was cut short when he died from cancer in 1982, at only 45 years old.

**Sonofabitch – “Redneck” Dick Murdoch**

Dick Murdoch started wrestling in 1965 as Ron Carson in a tag team with Don Carson. He soon started wrestling under his real name. In 1968, he formed a tag team that would continue throughout the early 1970s with Dusty Rhodes called "The Texas Outlaws". After splitting with Rhodes, he wrestled for Florida Championship Wrestling the NWA, and Mid-South Wrestling.

His most noted work as a wrestler came in Mid-South Wrestling in the early 1980s, where he teamed with Junkyard Dog. The pair was the most popular champions in the region, attracting the hardcore, working class white fans with his "Captain Redneck" persona and JYD drawing the support of the black fan base. Their feud with the Fabulous Freebirds was perhaps Mid-South's most compelling storyline.

In 1984, he went to the WWE and formed a tag team with Adrian Adonis that captured the WWE World Tag Team Titles. He left the WWE in 1985 after dropping the tag-team title to the US Express and wrestled in Mid-South Wrestling briefly before turning up in the NWA’s Jim Crockett Promotions in 1986. He feuded with
Ric Flair and attempted to win Flair’s NWA World Title.

In early 1987, Murdoch joined Ivan Koloff and Vladimir Petrov in their attempt to get Nikita Koloff and Dusty Rhodes. Murdoch, who at the time held the NWA United States Tag Team Championships with Ivan, injured Nikita’s neck after a brain-buster suplex on the floor that summer, resulting in Murdoch being suspended for 30 days and the team being stripped of the tag team title. Murdoch left the NWA and wrestled in the World Wrestling Council before appearing in World Championship Wrestling as one half of the "Hardliners," or "Hardline Collection Agency," with Dick Slater in 1991. They feuded with The Steiner Brothers but could not win their title. He tragically died of a heart attack in 1996 at the age of 49.

**Red Indian – Chief Wahoo McDaniel**

Wahoo actually started as a football player, but wrestled during the off season. Eventually McMahon brought him for a run in WWWF. After leaving football, Wahoo had great success in Houston. He feuded with Boris Malenko, eventually winning his hair, and was a frequent challenger for Dory Funk Jr.’s NWA World Heavyweight Championship. The feud sold out the Sam Houston Coliseum on several occasion with Wahoo going time limit draws with the champ but ultimately coming up short. After Houston, he went to the AWA and had a very successful feud with "Superstar" Billy Graham after Graham could not defeat Wahoo in an arm wrestling challenge and attacked him. Eventually, the feud
turned into a tag feud with Wahoo teaming with the Crusher against Graham and Ivan Koloff.

In 1974, Wahoo came to Mid-Atlantic to wrestle for Jim Crockett Promotions and help build up the territory as a singles territory. McDaniel and John Valentine began a feud remembered to this day for the sheer force of their punch/chop exchanges, both men widely known for their hard-hitting style. Wahoo won the Mid-Atlantic title from Valentine on June 29, 1975, in Asheville, North Carolina. McDaniel and Ric Flair entered into a legendary feud over the Mid-Atlantic Heavyweight Championship title throughout 1975 and 1976 after Johnny Valentine's career was ended in a plane crash. Flair won the title for the first time on September 20, 1975, in Hampton, Virginia. Wahoo regained the title in the Charlotte Coliseum in May of the following year.

Flair regained the title three weeks later in a match remembered as the "table leg" match. Wahoo and Flair shattered a table at ringside, and Flair picked up one of table legs to hit Wahoo in the head, not realizing a nail was sticking out of the table leg. McDaniel was legitimately injured and the match quickly ended with Flair pinning McDaniel for the title. After this Wahoo went on to have many other feuds before his retirement in 1996.


DiBiase made his debut in WWE in 1979. He quickly won the North American
Championship and became the title’s first holder. He lost it to Patterson and left the company only to return in 1987. During his return he was known as the "Million Dollar Man" and walked around with a gold-studded suit and his self-awarded Million Dollar Championship. His first big storyline was that he was going to buy the WWE Championship from Hulk Hogan. Hogan refused and after a series of frustrating losses, DiBiase employed Andre the Giant to win the belt for him. Andre won the belt under questionable circumstances and gave the belt to DiBiase. However the WWE refused to recognize him as champion and the title was declared vacant.

DiBiase eventually created what was known as the Million Dollar Corporation (MDC). This was a stable that was managed by DiBiase and had such wrestlers as The Undertaker, Stone Cold Steve Austin, Tatanka and Sycho Sid. The Undertaker in his stable was actually a fake version of the real Undertaker and the two had a match at Summerslam in 1994, which the Undertaker won. Since then the fake Undertaker hasn't been seen. After that the Corporation feuded with Lex Luger, Razor Ramon and Diesel. At Survivor Series in 1994, DiBiase’s MDC beat a team captained by Lex Luger. Ted retired in 1996 but comes back every so often, including winning a 15-man battle royal against his former partner Irwin R. Schyster (IRS). Schyster won the match and Ted came out, offering a bribe to eliminate himself. He obliged and threw himself over the top rope, and Ted claimed that "Everyone has a price for the Million Dollar Man."
The Hispanic – Tito Santana

Santana made his debut in 1979 and rose quickly towards the top. He won the WWF Tag Team titles with partner Ivan Putski. The duo held them for close to 8 months before losing them to the Wild Samoans. In 1983 he entered a lengthy feud with Intercontinental Champion Don Muraco. Santana eventually won the title on Feb 11, 1984, becoming the first ever hispanic Intercontinental Champion. He started a feud with Greg "The Hammer" Valentine before losing the title in Sept 1984. Valentine injured Santana’s knee and he was out for several months.

Santana returned at Wrestlemania in 1985 and jumped right back into a feud with Valentine. The two competed in a series of matches with neither gaining the upperhand. Eventually in July if 1985 Santana won the Intercontinental title back in a Steel Cage Match. While he was climbing out of the cage, Valentine was crawling out the door. However Santana was able to get to the top, and close the door on Greg’s head, allowing Tito to win the match. Valentine threw a fit and destroyed the title, allowing a new one to be made in its place. Santana was champion for 7 months before losing it to Macho Man Randy Savage. Santana continued to wrestle until his retirement in 1993. He was inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame in 2004.

The Nature Boy – Ric Flair
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Flair got his start in the American Wrestling Association (AWA) in 1972. He started out weighing nearly 300 pounds, and not really resembling the Nature Boy gimmick. However during his time in the AWA he fought against Andre the Giant and Dusty Rhodes, before leaving for the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA). He was fairly successful in the NWA including winning the Mid-Atlantic TV Championship. However Flair was involved in a serious plane crash in 1975. The doctors told him he would never wrestle again but Flair refused to believe that. After a rigorous physical therapy schedule, he returned to the ring just six months later.

In September of 1977, Flair finally reached the top when he beat Dusty Rhodes for the NWA World Heavyweight Championship. In the next few years he was pushed as the face of the NWA to combat Vince McMahon and the rising WWE. In 1983 Flair lost the title to Harley Race. The two faced each other in a big series of matches. Officially Flair won the title 8 more times.

In 1985, Flair along with Arn Anderson, Ole Anderson and Tully Blanchard to form the Four Horsemen. The four immediately used their strength in numbers to beat all the company's top faces while controlling the majority of the championships. After their reign of terror, Flair continued to jump ship, going back and forth between WCW and WWE until 2001, where he stayed with WWE permanently. He formed a horsemen-esque stable with Randy Orton, Batista and HHH called Evolution. He would go on to compete and mentor against many people before his
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retirement in 2008. Many WWE wrestlers and fans recognize Flair as the greatest wrestler in history.

**Hillbilly – Hillbilly Jim**

Jim made his debut as a biker named Harley Davidson and formed a tag team with partner Dirty Rhodes. The two were one of the more popular tag team from 1975-1984. In 1984 he made his official WWE debut as a fan who wanted to try his hand as wrestling. In a series of backstage segments, he would receive training from Hulk Hogan. He competed in a couple tag team matches with his teacher until his first big match in 1985 against Rene Goulet, which he won. Unfortunately he was sidelined by a broken leg. However the WWE added in some other hillbilly wrestlers to act as his family. When he made his return he usually teamed with his family or Andre the Giant. He was used more as a comedy character and never got involved in any big storylines. He wrestled his last match in 1990. Jim currently has a satellite radio show where he plays country and southern rock as well as telling stories from his time in WWE.

**Authority Figure – Hulk Hogan**

Hogan was introduced into WWE by Terry Funk. The owned, Vince McMahon was impressed by his charisma and his physical stature. During his first run in WWE he feuded against Andre the Giant. He left WWE but returned in 1983. This also started the birth of Hulkamania thanks to Gorilla Monsoon, a commentator. Hogan
started referring to his fans as Hulkamaniacs. He won his first WWE Championship in 1984 defeating the Iron Sheik. He remained champion for an astounding four years and thirteen days before a controversial loss to Andre the Giant. After the title was vacated, Hogan competed in a tournament to win it back, but he faced Andre the Giant to a double disqualification. However Hogan interfered later on in the night helping Macho Man Randy Savage win the title.

After Savage turned heel, Hogan pinned him to win his second title in 1989. His second reign lasted a year and during the year he won the Royal Rumble before losing the title to The Ultimate Warrior. After this he entered a heated feud with Earthquake. Eventually Hogan won his third title from Iraqi-sympathizer Sargent Slaughter, but he departed from WWE in 1993. He went to WCW and eventually formed the New World Order stable, where he was known as Hollywood Hulk Hogan. He swapped back to WWE, but eventually left in 2003. Currently Hogan is working for Total Non-stop Action Wrestling.

**Authority Figure – Sargent Slaughter**

Slaughter held numerous regional titles early in his career and experienced his first major success in the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA) capturing the NWA World Tag Team Championship with Don Kernodle. During the late 1970s, Remus worked the American Wrestling Association (AWA) territory under a mask as Super Destroyer Mark II with manager Lord Alfred Hayes. He then signed with the WWF and was pushed as a heel. Between 1980 and 1981, Slaughter engaged in a
feud with Pat Patterson, culminating in a match at Madison Square Garden. In 1983, Slaughter was a top contender to Bob Backlund's WWE Championship. However, his career took off after he turned face and defended America's honor against the hated Iron Sheik in 1984. Slaughter and the Iron Sheik engaged in many matches throughout 1984, culminating in a boot camp match which took place before a sold out Madison Square Garden that summer. However due to issues with management, Slaughter left WWE to join the AWA.

Slaughter returned in 1990 and won his only WWE Championship in 1991 against The Ultimate Warrior. However he dropped it to Hulk Hogan. Slaughter established himself as an Iraqi-sympathizer heel and teamed up with Iron Sheik. However after the feud with Hogan he became a face again, proclaiming "I want my country back!" After a hiatus he returned in 1997 as an on-screen commissioner and feuded with D-Generation X, who called him Sargent Slobber. After the feud, Slaughter was mostly used to help establish younger stars such as Kurt Angle. He occasionally make appearances in present day wrestling but mostly is content to sit behind the scenes and help the young stars.

Foreign Menace – “The Russian Nightmar” Nikita Koloff

Nikita Koloff started his wrestling career in 1984 in the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA). He entered his first match without any real wrestling training and won it in 13 seconds. Koloff began to fight a series of shorter matches until his wrestling skills were honed and he was more experienced. He also stood behind his
teammates Ivan Koloff and Don Kernodle during promos. As his speaking skills grew, he was allowed to speak more. Koloff took his "Evil Russian" gimmick to heart, and even learned Russian and refused to be out of character even when not in the ring.

Eventually, Koloff's skill in wrestling grew and he was able to challenge Ric Flair for the NWA World Championship. Even though he lost the match, he established himself as a huge heel in the business and was even attacked by a fan during the match. After the match, due to his superstar status, he was approached by Vince McMahon about coming to the WWE and starting a high-card feud against Tito Santana or Hulk Hogan. Koloff turned it down though, believing that the NWA would give him what he wanted. He then went on to win the NWA Tag Team Titles with Ivan.

Throughout the 1980s, Nikita Koloff was an establish Russian menace until late 1986 when The Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev was growing in popularity in the United States. Dusty Rhodes used this to change Koloff from a heel to a face, by booking him as his ally against the Four Horsemen. The fateful match took place on October 24 in a match that Rhodes needed a partner for. Koloff came out and immediately became one of the company’s top faces, proving that stereotypes can change depending on current events.

**Hero – “Macho Man” Randy Savage**
Savage ironically started his career as a heel, and joined WWE in 1985. He feuded with Tito Santana over the Intercontinental Championship and eventually won it due to a secret steel object stashed in his pants. He also engaged in feuds with Bruno Sammartino and George "The Animal" Steele. The feud with Steele was due to Steele developing a crush on Savage’s manager, Miss Elizabeth. Savage successfully defended the Intercontinental Title against Steele in 1986. He went on to face him two more times, with Savage winning both times.

Randy Savage was a participant in what some call the best match in WWE when he faces Ricky Steamboat at Wrestlmania III. The match was a culmination of a long and bitter feud and featured huge amounts of athleticism and in-ring storytelling. After 19 close pins, Steamboat finally pinned Savage, ending Savage’s near 14-month reign as Intercontinental champion.

After the match, Savage began to turn face due to the crowd liking his wrestling style. He teamed up with Hulk Hogan to create the Mega Powers tag team, which lasted until 1989 when Savage turned heel again, attacking Hogan. The same year he lost the WWE Title to Hogan after holding it for 371 days, making him the 6th longest reign champion in history. The same year he went on to win the King of the Ring tournament and was in the main event until he left WWE in 1994. He had a run in World Championship Wrestling from 1994-2000, but left when his contract expired.
Punk – Bam Bam Bigelow

Bam Bam made his debut in 1987 as a heel. The current gimmick of his was that all the heel managers were trying to become his manager. This was known as the Battle for Bam Bam. This angle actually turned him into a face when he refused the services of all the managers. Fans also liked his unique wrestling style and his agility despite his enormous size. He wrestled on Hulk Hogan's team at the first Survivor Series, lasting longer in the match than even Hulk Hogan, who was the most famous wrestler in the business at the time.

In 1992, Bam Bam became a heel once more and went on to defeat the Big Bossman at the 1993 Royal Rumble. In the same year he made it to the finals of the King of the Ring tournament, but lost to Bret "The Hitman" Hart. He then went on to join Ted DiBiase's Million Dollar Corporation. He went on to survive the 1994 Survivor Series match against Lex Luger's "Guts and Glory" team. Bam Bam went on to leave WWE in 1995 due to backstage problems with many wrestlers.

Hispanic – Eddie Guerrero

Eddie made his debut in 1987 in lower ranked wrestling federations and didn't really get any sort of television time until 1995, when he signed with Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW). He won the ECW Television title from 2 Cold Scorpio in his debut match and went on to feud with Dean Malenko before both of them jumped ship to World Championship Wrestling (WCW). There he began numerous feuds, including one with his real-life nephew, Chavo Guerrero.
However, Eddie eventually became frustrated at never getting to be in the main event and left the company for 9 months. He returned in a series of angles, including the stables Latino World Order and Filthy Animals.

In 2000, Eddie and many other WCW superstars came to WWE. They were known as the Radicalz and feuded with the New Age Outlaws. After that feud ended, Eddie began to pursue the affections of Chyna. Originally she rejected him but eventually accepted him, saying she could not resist his "Latino Heat". The alliance lasted for a long time, until friction began to rise after Eddie pinned Chyna to win his first Intercontinental Title on accident. After this he was seen showering with two other girls and turned heel as a result of the outcome.

The Radicalz then reunited to feud with D-Generation X, of which Chyna was a member. Eventually the feud was lost by the Radicalz and Eddie was released from the company for a drunk driving charge. He returned attacked Rob Van Dam in 2002 and started a feud with him, eventually winning the Intercontinental title from him. After this Eddie went on to be in the main event scene until his untimely death in 2005.

**Manager – Jimmy Hart**

Jimmy Hart is one of the most influential managers of all time. During his WWE career, he managed over 50 superstars. Some of these included:
"Superstar" Billy Graham  Greg "The Hammer" Valentine
The Iron Sheik  Lex Luger  Jerry "The King" Lawler
"Macho Man" Randy Savage  Hulk Hogan

The reason so many people liked Jimmy was because of his charisma. He was originally a musician before he became a manager. He knew how to get the crowd behind his superstar and he knew how to do it every single night. In the picture, he is seen holding a megaphone with "Hulkamania" painted on it. He used this while managing Hulk Hogan. He would always use a megaphone to express himself because it made him loud and gained him the nickname "The Mouth of the South".

**Mentally Ill / Sadist – Mick Foley**

Mick made his debut in 1986 as Cactus Jack. He wrestled in lower-ranked federations before coming to WCW in 1991 as a heel. He instantly began a feud with Sting which led to what Mick considers one of the best matches in his career at Beach Blast in 1992. Since then, Mick has suffered many legitimate injuries, including losing his ear. However he became frustrated that WCW did not want to write storylines around his actual injuries, and left in 1994 to go to ECW. He wrestled in ECW for a couple of years before going to WWE.

In WWE, Foley began to show multiple personalities. The three he used were Cactus Jack, Mankind and Dude Love. He started a feud as Mankind with the Undertaker. This led to him beating the Undertaker in numerous matches,
including a Boiler Room Brawl. He eventually lost to the Undertaker at Survivor Series. In between the Undertaker feud, Mankind challenged Shawn Michaels for the WWE Championship in what he considers the best match of his career. Foley is quoted as saying "Sure, at 280 pounds I still looked like hell, but after a brutal cardiovascular training regimen, I was able to go full-tilt for twenty-seven minutes with a smaller, quicker, better athlete than me." Foley went on to compete with multiple personas, including taking part in the Royal Rumble as all three of his different personalities.

**Authority Figure – Big Bossman**

Bossman made his debut in 1988 attacking Hulk Hogan. The two would go on to feud for Hogan's title which led to a memorable moment in a Steel Cage Match that saw Hogan suplex the 350 pound wrestler off of the cage. He then turned face when he refused to return the Million Dollar Championship to him. He then went on to feud with many people before losing to Bam Bam Bigelow in 1993 and left the WWE.

He returned as a heel to join Vince McMahon's Corporation and feuded against Stone Cold Steve Austin and D-Generation X. He went on to win the Tag-Team titles with Ken Shamrock and the Hardcore Titles four times. He also feuded with the Undertaker which culminated in a Hell in a Cell match, where Bossman lost and Undertaker "hung" him, leaving the big man suspended 15 feet in the air. He went on to compete in various matches and storylines until 2002 when he was
assigned to train upcoming wrestlers. He left WWE in 2003 and died from a heart attack in 2004.

**Masked Villain – Kane**

Kane debuted in 1997 as the younger brother of the Undertaker. He caused his brother to lose a match and led to a feud between them. Originally The Undertaker had refused to fight his own flesh and blood, which led Kane to attack many people backstage in anger. This feud led to The Undertaker defeating Kane in an Inferno match, where the way to win is the light your opponent on fire. Like the Undertaker, Kane is able to summon fire and lightning at will through pyrotechnics.

After their feud, Kane feuded with D-Generation X and then in 2001 reunited with The Undertaker to become The Brothers of Destruction. They feuded with Edge and Christian and the Two-Man Power Trip. The two were then split when Raw and Smackdown were created. Kane went on to feud with many people and eventually ended up in a match where if Kane lost he would be forced to take off his mask. Kane lost and has been unmasked ever since. However this has not stopped his ruthless ways in the ring. He went on to feud with Matt Hardy over a relationship with WWE Diva Lita, who for storyline purposes was pregnant with Kane's child. Matt, who was dating Lita in real life, was appalled but fought Kane multiple times, eventually losing to him and forcing Lita to marry Kane. However the wedding was stopped when another wrestler, Snitsky, caused Lita to miscarry. The whole thing ended like a bad soap opera.
Since then, Kane has been feuding with random people on Raw and Smackdown, most notably Rey Mysterio due to the fact that he wanted to unmask Mysterio much like he was cruelly.

**Vampire – Gangrel**

Gangrel made his debut in 1998 and quickly established his vampire goth group The Brood with Edge and Christian. Eventually, The Brood joined up with the Undertaker's Ministry of Darkness, however that ended because the popularity of The Brood was destroying the heat of the Ministry of Darkness. Basically people were cheering them instead of booing them like intended.

Eventually Edge and Christian left Gangrel and he formed the New Brood with the Hardy Boyz, but that ended because the Hardy Boyz wanted to be managed by Terri Runnels instead. Gangrel unfortunately after that never received too much fame. He stayed in the midcard until he was released in 2001 due to weight problems.

**Zombie – Undertaker**

The Undertaker made his TV debut in 1990 as a mystery partner for Ted DiBiase's
Survivor Series team. He decimated the other team in the match. He gained a manager in Paul Bearer, that carried a mysterious urn around with him. The urn had the power to give the Undertaker more strength during matches. He also had a post-match ritual of putting his opponent in a body bag and dragging them to the back. He made his Wrestlemania debut by defeating Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka. After that he went on to eventually win the WWE Title from Hulk Hogan, but lost it soon after back to Hogan. Later on he challenged Yokozuna to a Casket match and lost after interference from several other people.

The Undertaker would return and get revenge. After several feuds his gimmick changed slightly from the Undertaker to the American Bad Ass. He would ride out on a Motorcycle and was pretty much a biker. However after a few years of this he went back to his old undead gimmick and continues to fight as the zombie man even today, where he is the current World Heavyweight champion.

**Luchador – Rey Mysterio**

Rey Mysterio made his debut in WCW in 1996, before an unfortunate event caused him to grow angry at the company. He lost a match to Konnan and was forced to remove his luchador mask. He released a statement explaining how disappointing it was, but it was either lose the mask or lose his job.

Eventually Rey ended up in WWE in 2002 and has been a fan favorite luchador ever since. He has not had to unmask for WWE however he has been involved in a
number of storylines with people trying to unmask him. Most recently Chris Jericho
and Kane would be two of those men.

Rey has a reputation for beating many superstars much larger than him. Due to his
short stature and small body compared to most other wrestlers, he uses his speed
to overwhelm his opponents. He won the World Heavyweight Champion,
becoming the lightest Heavyweight champion in history at 175 lbs.

The fans have always loved his high-flying moves with his mexican lucha libre
background. Rey Mysterio flips and twists all over the ring and his opponents,
hitting moves that people didn't know were even possible. He continues to wow
fans every week.

**Punks – The Dudley Boyz**

D-Von and Bubba Ray Dudley originally debuted in ECW, but once that went
downhill they joined WWE in 1999, feuding with The Hardy Boyz and Edge and
Christian. They competed in the first ever Tables, Ladders and Chairs match at
Wrestlemania in 2000 but came up short to Edge and Christian. However
throughout their WWE career they held the titles over 7 times. They are currently
the most decorated tag team in wrestling history, winning a total of 26 tag team title
matches and Bubba was also an 11-time Hardcore champion.

They didn't listen to anyone and did whatever they wanted. Bubba Ray was most
noted for pushing D-Von before saying "D-Von! Get the tables!" D-Von would then get a table and push it into the ring. They would set up the table and then put someone through it, usually with their finisher the 3-D, which is a tandem flapjack drop / cutter move. They were most known for using tables, while the Hardy Boyz would use ladders and Edge and Christian would use chairs. This is what led to the eventual Tables, Ladders and Chairs match.

Currently they are wrestling in Total Non-stop Action Wrestling as Team 3-D.

**High Fliers – The Hardy Boyz**

Matt and Jeff Hardy grew up in North Carolina. Their mother died at a young age and they only had their dad to provide for them. Ever since they were kids they dreamed of performing in the WWE. They started their own backyard wrestling federation entitled OMEGA. They met a man who had ties to WWE and got them into the company. They started at the very bottom of the ladder but quickly rose into the tag team division together. As brothers, they captured the tag team titles numerous times before splitting up to build their singles careers. Since then, both of them have had successful careers as singles competitors.

Their high-flying moves as a tag team garnered them quick popularity among the crowds and quickly rose them up the ladder. Many of their matches were decided with a couple jumping attacks, maybe putting someone through a table or onto a
steel chair. Their finisher, entitled Event Omega, was a double high-flying move that saw the brothers jump on the same opponent simultaneously from opposite sides of the ring. This combination leg drop / body splash was considered a risky move and one of the most dazzling finishers in the company.

**Punks – D-Generation X**

D-Generation X formed due to Bret Hart calling the founding members degenerates. The main thing D-Generation X did was provide crude humor on TV and rebel against Authority Figures. After a successful run with Shawn Michaels as the leader, he needed back surgery so HHH took over and recruited other members. Eventually D-Generation X faded away though due to people leaving the company.

Recently there have been a couple of D-X revivals between HHH and Shawn Michaels. This was once again used to rebel against an Authority Figure, most notably WWE Chairman Vince McMahon. They were able to overcome the odds and put the Chairman in his place. Currently D-X in in another revival but are forced to face each other for the WWE title in a triple threat match with the champion John Cena.
D-X was known for its catchphrase "Suck It!" as well as its extensive pyrotechnics and in-ring theatrics. They have been known to play many jokes surrounding roosters and someone's love for them in the crude humor of referring to them as loving cocks.

**Pointy-Headed Intellectual – Chris Jericho**

Jericho debuted in WCW in 1996. He was a high-profile star there for 3 years. In 1999 he debuted in WWE with what is still considered the most surprising moment of WWE history and the biggest crowd cheer of all time. He called him Y2J, a play on the new millennium technology scare. In 2001, Jericho defeated The Rock to win the WCW Title and Stone Cold Steve Austin to win the WWE Title in the same night to become the first ever Undisputed Champion, holding both belts simultaneously. He became a heel by attacking The Rock with a chair prior to the match. This heel turn lasted for a couple years, during which he teamed with Christian and defeated The Hurricane and Kane to win the Tag Team Titles.

After this he feuded with many people including Shawn Michaels, Test and Jeff Hardy. He also had a feud with Goldberg, but it didn’t last long due to real life
issues between the two men. He gained an on-screen romance with WWE Diva Trish Stratus while teaming with Christian, however she eventually turned on him to go with Christian instead. After competing in a numerous amount of feud, he eventually lost a "Loser Gets Fired" match to John Cena in 2005.

After a 2 year hiatus, he returned in 2007 to face then champion Randy Orton. The return was sparked by a series of cryptic binary code messages which led to his return on November 19. He interrupted Randy Orton's speech on how it was time to pass him the torch because he had beaten all challengers. He never won the title from Orton due to Bradshaw interfering and instead began a feud with him ending at the Royal Rumble. Jericho then turned heel by attacking Shawn Michaels. He began to use a number of big and colorful words such as hypocrite and parasite. He decided to play his intelligent side more and described many people with a string of big words but the audience just tells him to shut up. He is currently a WWE Unified Tag Team champion with his partner The Big Show.

**Pointy-headed Intellectuals – Edge and Christian**

Technically Edge and Christian debuted in 1998, but they didn't do terribly much until the 2000s. They started as allies of Gangrel as The Brood and they were vampires. However they left him and started a huge feud with the Dudley Boys and Hardy Boyz. The three teams competed in numerous matches with one another. This really culminated at Wrestlemania in they year 2000. The three teams fought in a Tables, Ladders, and Chairs match for the tag team titles, which Edge and
Christian ended up winning. This was the first ever TLC match which led to the great success of all three teams in the tag division. Since then, Edge and Christian have split and both have had successful singles careers much like Matt and Jeff Hardy. Edge has been notably more successful than Christian, but Edge also gets injured more than he does. Both employed quite a few heelish moves to win matches, and a lot of cheating occurred in their matches. They were able to take advantage of any situation and always found a way to win whether it was against the rules or not.

Recently Edge was injured again and is not scheduled to be back on the air until 2010. Christian is actually having a stellar run as the ECW Champion as a Fan Favorite, showing that gimmicks can change given the right circumstances. Christian is still a pointy headed intellectual but now the fans cheer him for it instead of yelling at him for cheating.

**Fan Favorite – John Cena**

John Cena broke onto the scene in 2002 facing off against Kurt Angle, a very famous wrestler. He quickly established himself as a threat in WWE. Eventually, he became a fan favorite, wanting to give the fans everything they want in and out of the ring. Besides his exploits in the squared circle, John Cena loves to interact with the fans. He is currently the person to grant the most wishes with the Make a Wish foundation in WWE history. John Cena loves the fans because they support him and help him in his time of need. They cheer for him in the ring and he gives it
all back to the fans. He’s always willing to meet fans, sign autographs and talk with them. Cena is truly the epitome of a fan favorite in the WWE.

**Pointy-headed Intellectual – Randy Orton**

Randy Orton actually began his career as a fan favorite, compared to John Cena who debuted as a Punk heel. Eventually Randy joined a stable known as Evolution with fellow superstars Batista, Triple H and Ric Flair. Together the four of them dominated the WWE, holding 3 different titles between all four of them. Eventually Randy Orton won the right to challenge Triple H for his title, and he beat him. The following night, Randy Orton was betrayed and thrown out of evolution. Since then he became a face for a bit, but it was quickly obvious that his look was not suited for such a role.

Randy became a Pointy Headed Intellectual heel and challenged for the titles of all divisions. He teamed up with Edge and had a great run as the Tag Team Champions and Randy himself has held the WWE and World Heavyweight titles numerous times. His constant aggression and ability to take advantage at any given moment with his finisher, The RKO, which is named for his initials Randall Keith Orton, gives him the edge in any contest. His finisher is quick to execute and can be used from a myriad of positions. Although he does resort to cheating, Randy Orton still has some fame with the fans for doing things no one else dared to do such as kick the chairman of WWE in the head. Randy is a future hall of famer in the making due to his heelish tactics and brilliant portrayal of an opportunist.
**Superhero – The Hurricane**

The Hurricane (Gregory Helms) burst onto the scene in August 2001. The gimmick was inspired by Gregory Helms’s favorite superhero, the Green Lantern. He won the European Title from Matt Hardy in his debut and gained a sidekick soon after named "Mighty Molly" Molly Holly. The two would drive to the ring in a custom motorcycle named "The Hurri-cycle". Eventually he was betrayed by Molly and was drafted from Raw to Smackdown. On Smackdown he gained the Cruiserweight title before losing it and being drafted by to Raw. He began to team up with Kane, calling themselves Hurri-Kane. They won the tag team titles once before breaking up.

The Hurricane then began a feud with The Rock. The feud ended with a match that Rock was dominating, but a distraction let Helms get the win. Eventually he teamed up with another wrestler named Rosey and began a feud with Lance Cade and Trevor Murdoch. This led to the Hurricane’s eventual betrayal of Rosey and his unmasking, becoming Gregory Helms.

In the following years, Helms had a successful stint as the Cruiserweight champion, however a broken nose sidelined him. Eventually he was taken off screen and showed up on ECW feuding with Paul Burchill. This led to the revival of The Hurricane in a series of backstage segments where he would save the backstage crew from random accidents. Paul Burchill was convinced that Helms is
The Hurricane and the two have been fighting ever since.
Questions and Response from Mr. Ball

Hello Mr. Ball. My name is Aaron Breton and I am a student at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. I am going to be doing a project on professional wrestling, and have recently read your book "Professional wrestling as ritual drama in American popular culture". I am still trying to find a focus for my project that will be running from mid-October to mid-December. I can't do anything too crazy but after reading your book I did come up with a few ideas. I was thinking about focusing on how the role of women in wrestling has drastically changed since the time after your book was published. Either that or focus on stereotypes and storylines of present day wrestling. If you have any insight or advice for me I would greatly appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Aaron Breton

Hi Aaron,
Actually there is some overlap between the two ideas. Although the roles of women might have changed, they continue to follow relatively predictable story-lines--much like men's. As the roles evolve, the story-lines evolve. Although there is change, there will be constants. Look for those constants to create role or story-line categories. If you find that you can create new role categories, they should be placed into some larger theoretical context, like Deegan's work on ritual dramas or something similar.

If you pursue the idea of change in roles, you would be well served to look at perceived historical changes. That is, changes take place, but society's perceptions about the reasons for, and effects of, those changes are reflected in popular culture. We are quick to observe change, but slow to create new structures to explain it. For example, 911, the Iraq and Afghan wars, the recession, and the recent rise in racism might lead to new wrestling roles, but do they fit the same old categories?

That's all the wisdom I can summon up right now. Let me know if you need anything further. Good luck on your project.

Dr. Michael R. Ball