

Conceptual issues in communication and culture media essay

[Media](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

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Conceptual Issues in Communication and CultureMid-Term Take -Home
ExaminationA: Short Answer: Identify and Explain1) "[T]he relation of the
producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a
social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products
of their labour." The author of the reading this quote is taken from is Karl
Marx. The quote refers the fact that commodities can be fetishized. What this
means is that commodities created through human labour seem to be
independent from those who created them, where we fail to see the
relationship or connection between commodities and those who produce
them. Marx explains that commodities have all become reduced to the value
form, thus making all labour only valuable when it is related to the
production of commodities. Just like people, commodities too can take on a
social life through their exchange, so instead of having relationships with one
another we start to have relationships with the things we own (Ironstone
January 25, 2013). This signifies that commodities contain mystical or
magical properties where they come to live a life of their own (Ironstone
January 25, 2013). Labour has become disconnected from products, taking
away the importance or significance of those who make them, placing the
importance on the product. Therefore, the products of their labour take on a
social existence, rather than between those who produce them. 2) " The
ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i. e., the class
which is the ruling material force of a society is at the same time its ruling
intellectual force." The authors of the reading this quote is taken from are
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. This quote refers to how the ideologies of the

dominant class become the ideas for all society of a given time period. What this means is that the established ideas of an era are formed by the ruling class and thus only serve the interests of the ruling class. The ruling class controls the material production of society and therefore they come to rule knowledge and intelligence of said society. Therefore, ideologies created by the ruling class create a 'false consciousness' to produce meaning (Ironstone January 25, 2013). This illusion is created by distorting reality, where ideas are made to appear self determined (Marx & Engels, 2001: 41). These ideas are then taken by philosophers, as their own, to give reasoning behind it (Marx & Engels, 2001: 41). The split between those who rule and those who follow is false, where we have come to accept these ideas as our own, without questioning those of the ruling class, causing ideologies to become naturalized. 3) "Everyone must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previous determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type." The authors of the reading this quote is taken from are Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. This quote refers to how the culture industry has provided the public with mass-produced products in a range of qualities to fit the hierarchies' society have placed us in. We have become obedient to this determined status, where our cultural consumption has become passive (Ironstone, February 8, 2013). This structure of means of production has shaped the way in which we consume, where culture such as film and art has become manufactured just like any other consumer good, where it classifies, organizes and labels consumers (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1999: 34). This culture is produced with the goal to make profit, where the production of it manipulates our beliefs (Ironstone,

February 8, 2013). The importance of this is that this industry promotes a society that is saturated in mass culture and manufactured goods, instead of encouraging freedom of thought and individuality. This causes consumption and production to be standardized to specific levels, where it portrays the same repetitive ideologies to its consumers, controlling and influencing our thoughts and actions. 4) " This is why myth is experienced as innocent speech: not because its intentions are hidden [...] but because they are naturalized." The author of the reading this quote is taken from is Roland Barthes. This quote refers to how myths have become so common in our life that we have accepted them and believed them to be normal. According to Barthes, myths are the dominant ideologies of a given time, where it ' is a system of communication, that it is a message" (Barthes, 1973: 117). Myths help us understand the world and the way in which works, where it gives meaning to why we choose to do something or not to do something. It reinforces and signifies the dominant values, ideas and beliefs of our society (Ironstone January 18, 2013). This according to Barthes is the connotation, which is where the signs interact with said ideas, beliefs and values to create ideologies (Ironstone January 18, 2013). Those who consume a myth don't see the actual construction of it, for the image they see is just the presence it signifies, convincing them that what they see is the truth (Barthes, 1973: 141). Myths are seen as providing a natural reason to those who consume it, which has become built-in to our society, making it ' innocent" speech for those who read it. B: Short Answer: Semiotic AnalysisIn the Adbusters Tommy Hilfiger " Follow the Flock" anti-ad, they take a strong one- sided position against Tommy Hilfiger as a clothing brand and as well the lifestyle

it represents. They do this through its clear use of signifiers and the prominence of the company it chooses to use. Through this, it makes an intended comment on Tommy Hilfiger itself, and the people who buy and wear the brand. This anti-ad expresses the opinion that those who buy Tommy Hilfiger become mindless sheep that simply follow, instead of leading. They present the culture and lifestyle associated with Tommy Hilfiger in a syntagmatic relation in three ways: the background, middle ground, and foreground. Each visual image and text of this anti-ad expresses a meaning in which Adbusters wanted to comment on. Firstly, almost the entirety of the background is of the American flag, which is a clear denotation of who the ad is directing its message to; the American people. The connotation of this lies deeper, with the paradigmatic relation, where the pure size of the flag is a metaphor for the large influence Tommy Hilfiger has had on the country. This 'American people' themed ad is given even more meaning when it is put into combination with the middle ground. The middle ground contains sheep and a fence. Sheep are usually thought as easily herded, who are unintelligent animals and follow the group. This combined with the American flag references to how the American people cannot think for themselves and simply follow, instead of lead. The fence in the ad represents the control companies, such as Tommy Hilfiger, have on people, making them think that they have to conform to a certain way, so that they "fit in" instead of "stand out". This ad represents how people who wear Tommy Hilfiger inevitably sacrifice their individuality and freedom to become a part of the "herd". Lastly, the combination of the logo in the foreground encompasses what the anti-ad is trying to say. This logo, with the words "

follow the flock" incorporates all of the imagery into one simple statement. The " flock" which is the sheep in the ad, represents the American people and puts a face to the idea of conforming, in the form of Tommy Hilfiger. The use of the logo is essentially putting a stamp on the brand, saying that the culture Tommy Hilfiger has created through its ads, advocates their buyers to " follow". When comparing this ad to a real Tommy Hilfiger Advertisement, they aren't much different. All that would need to be changed is the sheep for people, making the interpretation of this anti-ad very suitable. Most Tommy Hilfiger ads have an American flag somewhere in the ad, which tries to appeal to patriotism and loyalty for the country. Therefore, this is used in efforts to make their brand part of a person's identity. We all tend to have an inherent desire to want to fit in and to be accepted by our peers, in some aspect of our life, due to this, we tend to show this in our choice of clothing. All of the people shown in Tommy Hilfiger ads are usually young, good looking, happy, and of course all dress the same, making not one person stand out more than the rest. There is a sense of uniformity, where everyone who dresses in these clothes will become a part of this " flock" too. This anti-ad, I believe, is aimed at teenagers and young-adult consumers, due to the fact that those are usually who regular Tommy Hilfiger ads aim to. Teenagers are very susceptible to the pressure of fitting in and because of this they are willing to spend money on looking the part, to fit in with their different social groups. I believe that this anti-ad is trying to inform them, in a clever and strategic way, to think about what they are buying and the reasoning behind it, instead of automatically doing something because other people are doing it. This message doesn't just apply to clothes but to the consumer driven

society we live in today. Even though a herd of sheep travel together, they are still directed. In this situation they are directed and influenced by Tommy Hilfiger who takes on the role of the shepherd in this anti-ad. This ad expresses that Americans have been reduced to sheep, so anyone who wears their clothes will become metaphorical sheep. This doesn't just represent Tommy Hilfiger, but by all large companies who rely on a brand to influence their buyers. By Adbusters layering their ad with straight forward and obvious signifiers, they created a strong symbol to portray Tommy Hilfiger and in turn, their personal opinions to its viewersC: Essay

QuestionMass media and pop culture has played a significant role in society, where it reflects, creates and controls culture, in the way we receive information and interpret it. We are constantly being bombarded with messages from a wide variety of sources, such as, TV, newspapers, radio, etc. The messages sent out to us purposely promote how the media wants us to think, feel and act in order to make a profit. Our lives have become so saturated with this culture that it is has become difficult to decipher which of our thoughts and ideas are our own, and which are those ideologies of the dominant class. This causes us to live in a world where our common sense is not our own but produced and manufactured as any other product. We are no longer individuals but products of a mediated culture controlled by hegemony. The media reflects the views of minority elite, who own and control what is seen, heard and read by the masses. When mass media is controlled by a few, they have the ability to manipulate and control, in such a way that we no longer see their influence, for it becomes regular and normal in our everyday lives. Gramsci's theory of hegemony comes into play

with this, where the way a society is structured is based on a system of power and class. He argues that a ruling class creates and maintains this hegemony by creating a cultural consensus through the use of media (Gramsci, 2006: 89). The way a society is controlled and manipulated is created through a 'false consciousness', where values and choices are created and made to be followed as your own (Gramsci, 2006, 90). The role of media has become a model for consumerism to grow and to engage society through the domination of pop-culture and the purchasing of it. Pop culture is very much linked to consumerism, where lifestyles are thought to be maintained through products. Mass media stimulates these needs and desires for products and the production of commodities. We constantly compare our happiness and well-being with owning 'things', where mass media broadcast this lifestyle in which we hope to obtain. Adorno and Horkheimer criticize this 'culture industry', for it is dominated by the powerful who promote their own ideas and beliefs onto society, with the saturation of mass culture and manufactured goods. This then persuades us into thinking that our choices are free and ours when they are truly not. Consumption and production has become standardized to fit our "needs", which are not our needs but that of the dominant class. For example, films in the culture industry portray the same repetitive ideologies to audiences, where the actors and setting is different, but the story line is always the same. Films have the ability to manipulate our beliefs, blurring the lines of film and reality. In terms of art, Adorno and Horkheimer believe that in contrast to artists who have original and autonomous style, continuous reproductions of the same style are placed in the culture industry (Adorno &

Horkheimer, 1999: 99). The author's believe the industry "cheats" consumers into thinking they can have everything that it promises, influencing them to buy into a product or message, in order to make a profit (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1999: 100). This emphasizes that what consumers are offered can never be fully obtained, making it an illusion. The dependence on products and constant consumption fuel consumer culture, with mass media closely tied to it. Individuals want to be accepted, and this is shown through our consumption. The media uses the qualities of different or unique, and turns it into weird or wrong, influencing us and instilling thoughts that we must consume in order to be normal, aspiring us to become a consumer. The way the media operates is by creating values that we learn to follow and understand as our own (Gramsci, 2006: 86). This ideology created by the dominant class through the mass media influences the way in which we decode TV programs, read advertisements, and listen to the radio or any other text which has the possibility of influencing, manipulating or carrying a hidden meaning. Instead of being an active consumer we become passive to this media. This power the mass media holds makes it very easy to have control over the public. The mass media and pop culture and those who own and control it has become the dominant class. Adorno and Horkheimer discuss this idea that the dominant class becomes the dominant thinkers and producers, and the rest of society therefore becomes the consumers of these products (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1999: 35). This relates to how the public has become so conditioned by the mass media that we end up wanting to see things that we have become so accustomed to seeing, therefore the dominant ideologies become our ideologies. The constant flood

of media has resulted in it becoming routine in our lives, where every day we wake up, turn on the TV or read the newspaper. The media creates illusions where the ruling class no longer seems to control us, for the public has placed it in their daily lives, making it seem normal and disconnected from the power of the ruling. Even though in pop culture "new" things are constantly being sold to us, they aren't really new, but variations of things we already own. We have been taught to accept things and not question what is being presented to us, only if it doesn't stray too far from what we already know. What we have come to know are ideologies presented to us from the media. The same ideologies are presented to us over and over again, but advertised and promoted as something different. It is still similar enough to what we recognize as normal so we buy it, continuing the cycle of production and consumption. This is where the dominant class skillfully projects its views on the world to us without us taking much notice or concern. This relates to Marx and Engels, where they argue that the established ideologies formed by the ruling class only serve the ruling class, which is contrary to the illusion they present to us to make us believe that our ideas and thoughts are formed separately from them (2001: 51). They said "the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it" (Marx and Engels, 2001: 49). They believe that ideas are given a "mystical appearance", just as Barthes thought that myths reinforced the thoughts, ideas and beliefs of the dominant. This illusion that ideologies are separate from that the ruling class is then created and maintained through

the media, continuing this cycle of ideological control. This cycle is seen very easily in pop culture, where even those who try to resist this control by being different and not following what everyone else does gets brought back into the system. Adorno and Horkheimer said, " anyone who resists can survive by fitting in" (199: 38). This means that no one can ever be original or unique because once they do, the dominant class will take it as their own and use it with their own ideologies and sell it, advertise it, etc. This will then cause everyone else to follow, getting absorbed right back into society, making it popular, profitable and beneficial for the ruling class. Like Horkheimer and Adorno indicated, I believe that society makes it almost impossible to make a living unless you are making or doing something that fits into this dominant ideology and accepted by the ruling class. Dominant ideologies only survive because they have made us believe that if we move away from the mainstream we won't be seen equal or adequate to those around us (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1999: 40). The main theme of mass media and pop culture is sameness. There is no difference between film, radio, TV, the news etc. It is all the same in different forms. All of these media are owned and run by the same people, so their ideologies are going to be projected throughout every single one of these media, making them no different from the next. These ideas, values and beliefs seen throughout are purposely and consciously placed, to influence us the viewers. Althusser's ideas come into play here, where he believed that the things we do are based on ideological influences. He questions how the relations of production are not only being reproduced in society but maintained as well. He believes that the Ideological state apparatuses, which is similar to Gramsci's concept of hegemony, are

sustained and repeated through cultural institutions such as the mass media (Althusser, 1989: 62). This system creates willing cooperation from the public due to the fact that it gives a sense of choice, even though it is completely imposed and chosen for us. This form of ideology is presented to us in a material form, where we literally buy into their ideas, values and beliefs. This then makes individuals into products, where the dominant class controls and manipulates in order to make everyone the same, including the way we look and think. The ideological state apparatuses works to get people to do things without them knowing that they are told to do things, making them act on their own free choice, establishing in into to their lives, maintaining that this is the way things are and that it could not be any different (Althusser, 1989: 75). The mass media produce images of the world and society and these images can carry particular meanings and ideologies. Media images do not reflect how society is, but rather it re-presents it to us, so we get a representation of what reality is by the media. This is thus controlled by the dominant class, where they choose what they want reality to be, not what it actually is. The mass media entails the active involvement of selecting, organizing, constructing and presenting, images and information. Representations presented by the media involve power and ideology, where ideas of the dominant class are distributed as the truth, where the values, ideas and beliefs are reproduced to the public, causing us to carry the same ideologies. This then causes our reasoning for why we do things the way we do to become " common sense and natural".