“Culture now impresses the same stamp on everything,” according to Adorno and Horkheimer. Discuss the context in which these Frankfurt School scholars coined the term ‘Culture Industry’ and how they used the concept to critique mass culture. Your essay should include your own analysis of a media text that has not been discussed in detail in the lectures or required readings.

Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer are theorist who wrote the “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” in 1944. The document express’s views on how ‘Culture now impresses the same stamp on everything’ (Adorno ad Horkheimer in During, 1999/1944, pp 32). The documentation explains that the Culture Industry promote the same messages in all forms of mass media and if the media’s history has taught critics anything, the consumers and society that this is certainly true. The Culture Industry are the cooperates and stakeholders within the mass media industry, who have control over different medians such as magazines, newspapers, radio, film or television (2014, pp. 21).

The motive to why Adorno and Horkheimer thought that the Culture Industry were promoting the same ideologies/ messages in all forms of media, because the main aim was to create a Profit for the cooperates and stakeholders within the industry and also to create a mindless society. Throughout the document, Adorno and Horkheimer state that Culture Industry claim to be in field because of the love for it, however, in actual the monopoly of the industry (Adorno ad Horkheimer in During, 1999/1944, pp 31). To show that Adorno and Horkheimer were right about the Culture Industry, this essay will elaborate on the ideologies that were presented through propaganda during Nazi Germany, how encoding and decoding affected the audience’s views and perspective, how the Culture Industry used the media to implement the ‘perfect’ Body image and the reasons why the Culture Industry has done so.

Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer are two theorist know from the Frankfurt School Scholars. The pair were exiled from Germany in 1933 and moved to Los Angeles, America. During their time as refugee, both theorists started to see the effect that the media had over society.

The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception (1944), states that the mass media is at fault in creating a mindless society (Adorno ad Horkheimer in During, 1999/1944, pp31). ‘Culture now impresses the same stamp on everything’ (Adorno ad Horkheimer in During, 1999/1944, pp 32) means that all mass media ideologies/messages are the same (Golding, 2016) and the only difference is the medium of the media that is presented. An example of this is the propaganda through our World War II 1939-1945 (WWII) (McKenna, pp16) and the ideologies that were presented during that time.

Ideology is the system of concepts and views that can shape and constrain through both beliefs and behaviour in society (Ivashevskii, 2011, pp 43). The Frankfurt School studied and believed in the ideologies of Marxists within Germany (Corradetti, 2016). The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception (1944), Adorno and Horkheimer blame the media for the forced ideologies on society. An example of this is the ideologies of Adolf Hitler which were Communism and Capitalism (McKenna pp 221).
Joseph Goebbels was appointed to be the Minister of Propaganda for Adolf Hitler during WWII. (2010, History.com). Relating back to Adorno and Horkheimer theory that all ‘Culture now impresses the same stamp on everything,’ (Adorno ad Horkheimer in During, 1999/1944, pp 32), Goebbels and Hitler would be the culture industry throughout World War II and whoever is reviewing the media’s message would be the audience. Goebbels’s work consisted of developing a campaign of different media forms to create a huge support follow for Hitler (McKenna, pp 221). Goebbels did this by generating a simple yet effective campaign. The reasoning behind why propaganda was so successful in ‘promoting a particular goal’ (Kalliss, 2005) was the idea of communal desire and a state of its own. (Kalliss, 2005) Goebbels used imagery to presented Hitler in different forms of media. In each of the media releases had kept to the same ideologies and promoted that Hitler was a leader, the achievements in creating a nationalist society and also the ideologies of communism and capitalism. (McKenna, pp 216-221). By forcing these ideologies everywhere, the audience saw this created the huge following he had within national and international community.

Another ideology that was seen within Germany during WWII was that Hitler was a dynamic leader, however, according to McKeen some of the audience were passive (2010, pp 218-221) and there were some that did not agree with Hitler’s views or received his views in a different prospective. These are the types of audiences that decoded and encoded the messages differently.

Stuart Hall, the theorist that explains that Decoding and Encoding is ‘how messages are produced and disseminated...’. (Hall in During,1999/1973, pp 507). Although Hall was relating this theory particular to the media form television, this idea can be still used to relate back to all mass media within the cultural industry and the effect it had on the audience through the duration of WWII and in history.

Hall explains that the process of the audience encoding a messages this is the audience’s internal thoughts. While decoding is the outcome or reaction that the cultural industry would expect to have after the presentation of the media mass. However, what Hall also explains is that ‘decoding does not follow inevitably from encodings.’ (Hall in During,1999/1973, pp 507), which is sometimes the decoding reaction is not always what the culture industry are expecting from the audience. In the case of the propaganda Goebbels had created, there were some audiences local and international did not agree with Hitler’s ideology such as Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party and the industrial workers within society (McDonough, 2001). These groups and individuals had not believed that Hitler was a great leader. The Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party and the industrial workers encoded and decoded the messages differently from the culture industry (Hitler and Goebbels) had wanted. Adorno and Horkheimer theory does not support this case study nonetheless Hall’s theory explains the reasons why, then, both theory’s support the world of Hollywood.

For a long time, celebrities in Hollywood have been promoting and representation body image through mass media specifically in commercials, print media (2011, pp 447) and other forms of medium. From this body imagery has been a huge issue within society. The cultural industry or known as Hollywood have created ‘body perfection’ (2011, pp 447) looks for
males and females. For females the most iconic look is Marilyn Monroe, who is known to be the most beautiful woman in history (Bushak, 2015) and for men it is Channing Tatum, where he has a broad chest, narrow hips, high chest-to-waist ratio and above average high at 1.87 cm (Olds, 2016; Healthy Celebes, 2016). Both of actors throughout their careers have been known for exploiting their body in print advertising such as posters and magazine articles. Marilyn Monroe for the Chanel no. 5 advertisement, was asked in one interview, what she had worn to bed and replied with the iconic line ‘So I said. Chanel no 5! ... And yet I don’t want to say nude...’ (Chanel, 2012). Channing Tatum exposes his body through the film Magic Mike and through the movie posters. Both public icons have now set an ideology of ‘perfection’ (2011, pp 447) which every man and woman within society should want and feel the need to be just like them. By the Culture Industry represented through Hollywood imposing this idea on society, Adorno and Horkheimer were accurate in expressing that Cultural industry are all same and it is the medium of the media which are presented differently. (Adorno ad Horkheimer in During, 1999/1944, pp 31).

Over history, Marilyn Monroe and Channing Tatum are one of many examples of how the media have imposed ideologies. This then has created a society where the audience have become passive to all messages and are only giving in to the culture industry profit. From this the audience and society have allowed Culture Industry to becoming an ideology in which provides them with an understanding of personal values and beliefs. Adorno and Horkhemier states that “Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies... All the other films and products of the entertainment industry which they have seen have taught them what to expect; they react automatically.” (Adorno ad Horkheimer in During, 1999/1944, pp 31), thus providing the audience no room to think for themselves, which then this leads to the profit the audience creates for the cultural industry.

Adorno and Horhemier provide a reason why the Culture Industry implements and pushes ideologies such as body perfection on society through mass media. This is seen to make a profit off society. Adorno and Horheimer also explain by generating a revenue off society, that “Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art... They call themselves industries; and when their directors’ incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed.” (Adorno ad Horkheimer in During, 1999/1944, pp 31).

Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer document how the Culture Industry executed ideologies through the use of mass media. This is clearly seen through the passive audience during Nazi Germany and in Hollywood past and present. Although this essay states that there were groups locally and globally that did not fall for Goebbels campaign, there were many that who did. Adorno and Horkheimer theory that the Culture Industry are in the media industry for the profit outcome, which is seen through the ideologies of body imagery and Hollywood have created a revenue from this issue. Lastly there is no more love within the culture industry for the actual business itself. Overall, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer theory ‘Culture now impresses the same stamp on everything’ can be used to describe the Culture Industry within society and to critique the use of mass media.
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