FROM NEW TECHNOLOGY TO ALIENATION: SMARTPHONES

AS CULTURAL SYMBOLS

A Thesis in
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by
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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the powers of capitalism through contemporary technology, like the smartphone. It illustrates how the smartphone is not just a convenient tool or progression for the betterment of human kind, but rather a tool used under the context of capitalism to further exploit workers and further cultivate the relations of domination within society.

The study discusses the marketing tactics of smartphone corporations that make it possible for capitalism to utilize such a contemporary technology to further manipulate the consumer/worker into submission of the ruling class. The research draws on theories of Marx to understand how consumers buy into the conventions of society while marketing tactics make it possible to introduce and continue the reproduction of a cultural ideology that extends the power of capitalism. Through the use of critical theory and analysis of the current social structure of capitalism, this research explains in further detail the negative effects a progression such as the smartphone has on the consumer and worker.

The thesis analyzes the current market of smartphones from a business and communications perspective in order to understand how a product is able to be popularized within society and further cultivated as a cultural ideology that indicates the powers of capitalism through manipulation. The thesis also combines survey data from workers about their smartphone usage in and outside the workplace for work purposes in order to emphasize from real life data how this contemporary technology blurs the line between a social life and a work life.

Keywords: smartphones, cellphones, corporate synergy, alienation, capitalism, consumer, worker, technology, exploitation
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THESIS OVERVIEW:

There has been much debate, throughout the years, about the effects of capitalism and the tactics employed in order to hold power over the working class with little conflict. Smartphone corporations often seek holistic control of the mobile phone value chain with synergistic strategies that are vital to their success. However, considering the savvy marketing tactics of promotion to produce a cultural ideology as opposed to a simple product, such as consumerism, are all consumers passive to their suggestive powers? Despite any resistance the consumer might present, the dominant class still holds power over the consumer. Does this imply that their resistance is not enough? To make sense of all this, we need to analyze contemporary technology through culture studies and political economic studies to understand how smartphones are portrayed and infiltrated into our society, and what the effects are on the consumer and society as a whole.

Technological developments, specifically smartphones, have facilitated the corporate control of global communications through digital convergence and corporate synergy. Karl Marx discussed technology resulting in workplace exploitation as a means for the corporate world to continue to flourish. Various philosophers have discussed and expressed an interest in alienation as a significant and empirically measurable concept. Marx, a renowned philosopher known for disputing feudalism, capitalism and socialism, distinguished alienation into four separate forms, with workplace exploitation being part of that theory. Following a Marxist approach, this thesis will further investigate Marx’s distinction of the efficiency in technology versus the utilization of technology to reproduce and intensify capitalist power through digital convergence and corporate synergy on the structural level.
In chapter two, I discuss how smartphones of transnational conglomerates are made into cultural symbols that conceal the fact that they enable new occurrences of workplace exploitation. This discussion will further review the patterns of corporate acquisitions that seek to shape all aspects of a mobile user’s experience in order to recognize the corporate cultural homogenization process amplified by capitalistic measures. In chapter three, I review the patterns of these capitalist measures in workplaces—more specifically, how technology alienates human beings by objectifying workers. It applies Marx’s theory of alienation to further understand the cultural expectations and impositions that stress the ability of technology to discipline workers while simultaneously impinging on their social lives.

Chapter three further features the use of mobile phones to expand spheres of exploitation by extracting additional surplus value from the worker. The paper begins by discussing the theoretical concepts and ideologies applied throughout the thesis to explain the revolution of capitalism from the regime of accumulation (consumerism) to the mode of social regulation, causing a new set of cultural and political practices.

1.2 CONCEPTS

To substantiate the transparency and instructive view on the prevailing assumption that a new form of technology enables a new social and political structure of society, I will apply the following concepts/theories to my analysis of cellphone/smartphones advertisements and worker’s experiences of technology-enabled alienation. Technology discourse, in its own, is not a transparent vignette of the relations between technology and society. Therefore, to frame an approach that the use of technology determines the shape of society, reconfiguring it in accordance with its internal workings requires an examination of Marx’s theory on alienation to further explain the effects of technology under a capitalist structure.
Inheritance and bloodlines were the factors that made ownership of land possible in the feudal society, as Marx described throughout his writings over the years. It was as if “birth” was the sole determination of destiny; the secret of the aristocracy is zoology (qtd. Walton 20). One’s life and relationships with others was determined by this “zoology”, in a sense. However, the lords of the kingdom and church officials seized what they wished from the peasants by means of force, while low levels of productive forces endured intensified labor and struggles.

From examining past history and Marx’s influential writings, it can be determined that alienation in turn arose from the dominance of the ruling class, human subordination to the land, and the low level of the productive forces. The social relationships in the feudal society were of supremacy and subordination relationships. Marx’s theory of alienation can be used to explain the organizational and cultural structure of current society affected by smartphones. Although cellphones did not exist during Marx’s times, his theory can be applied to understand how the dominant class (corporate world, media, advertisements, etc.) is able to assert its powers on the subordinate class (workers/consumers).

Marx explained that workers become mere intangible activity, not a man or a human being, subject to conditions that disparage an individual as less than an apparatus without desires, emotions, dreams or aspirations (Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* p.30). In turn, the worker became dependent on the capitalist system, the investment of capital on the hands of the wealthy. This way of living became the workers themselves; they could not exist without capital. The cycle begins with the workers needing income to supply for their family or themselves; the only way to accomplish such a goal is to subject themselves to society’s rules and regulations of acquiring income.
Capitalism showed quick maturity over the years, expanding to high levels of production and bringing alienation on a high scale never previously predicted. In *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Marx discussed four ways that alienation permeates capitalist society: the product of labour, the labor of process, alienation from human beings, and alienation from our species beings. For this thesis, however, I will only focus on Marx’s theory of alienation from his discussion on the labor of process.

Marx identified the lack of control over the process of production as the second element of alienation. The workers have no capacity to work independently or control to work creatively. They have no power to control or, in fact, any say in the conditions in which they work, how it affects them emotionally or physically, and how the productivity is organized. Capitalism drives the workers to produce faster and work harder, creating hostile environments. Marx suggested that this antagonistic, inflexible process conceals the talents of the workers. He explained:

> “Factory work exhausts the nervous system to the uttermost, it does away with the many-sided play of the muscles, and confiscates every atom of freedom, both in bodily and intellectual activity.” (Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy. Volume 1: The Process of Capitalist Production* p.463)

In contrast, some scholars view contemporary technology as a way to create a flexible environment for production and the labor process. However, Marxist analysis is particularly prolific in exposing the illusions of technologies of production as an “arsenal of class struggle, rather than an implementation of universal instrumental rationality” (Fisher p. 231). Therefore, this thesis offers a contrasting framework of the disparity between the hegemonic views of the historical shift in the technological advances of capitalism hiding the lack of control in the
impositions that are concurrent with the new cultural expectations in the workplace as is discussed below.

To further validate the connection between workplace exploitation and smartphone symbolization in society will require the utilization of more current concepts. These concepts are digital convergence, encoding/decoding symptomatic reading, and Althusser’s theory of interpellation, in addition to the marketing strategies of corporate industries.

Digital Convergence is the combining of underlying digital technology components and features such as voice, texts, video, pictures, broadcasts, presentation, streaming media, global connectivity and personalized services. The combination of all of these components allows individuals to interact, play, collaborate, and share information in many new and different ways through a computer-mediated communication system (Asonye). Are we on the verge of a true technological revolution that will reshape the global economy? How does analyzing the effects and strategies of smartphone corporations help us understand and evaluate the current reshaping of society through technological advances? The concept of digital convergence and neoliberism expressed in ads and in corporate synergistic practices will be utilized to explain the conveniences and applications of technological advances, more specifically smartphones for the purpose of this study, and help illustrate the various corporate mergers to control the value chain of the smartphone industry.

In addition, corporations utilize marketing strategies to sell their products, which later become cultural symbols in our society and signify much more than just a convenient way to communicate with one another. Cultural symbols are widely accepted as having a specific meaning within a culture or society. This thesis proposes a cultural studies' approach by utilizing
concepts such as Stuart Hall’s encoding and decoding to interpret the messages the media portrays to the consumer: A message must be perceived as meaningful discourse and be meaningfully de-coded before it has an effect, a use, or satisfied a need (Hall p.18).

Communication between the sender and the receiver is not a one-way circuit; the sender produces meaning in the encoding process while the decoding process occurs by the audience, who is not a passive recipient of the constructed meaning. For example, cellphone advertisements, through the encoding process, reproduce the dominant ideologies of current hegemonic views while it may be possible for the recipient to decode the message in a contrary way. In chapter two I will discuss in further details the oppositional way of encoding and decoding in order to bring meaning to the latent text found in advertisements.

Analyzing media texts through symptomatic reading of smartphone advertising will illustrate the underlying meaning portrayed by the conveniences of smartphones that hide other factors not clearly illustrated for the consumer. While encoding and decoding will help illustrate what the advertisements (sender) propose to illustrate to the consumer (receiver), deconstructing the problematic with symptomatic reading will further elaborate examples of the latent texts.

Furthermore, through hailing and interpellation, the homogeneity of mass media under a capitalist production is able to confine the consumers as passive subjects. Althusser theorized that by means of pre-existing category of the subject, ideology hails or interpolates individuals as subjects (Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus", p.150). Althusser’s theories of hailing and interpellation can help explain why consumerism has become such a prevalent subject among academia, as it illustrates the effects of capitalism on the individual. Capitalism creates the individual in a society as a subject and is able to have control over them by recognizing them as subject-objects. There is an underlying involvement beneath the individual’s
desires within a capitalist's society. "The notion of a subject cannot be separated from that of its object, and from the relation held to subsist between them. In a sense, subject and object are made for each other. To conceive of a subject is to conceive of whatever it is the subject of. To conceive of an object is to conceive of whatever it is an object for" (Callinicos p. 65). More specifically, Althusser’s analysis helps explain how capitalism markets to the consumer in a way that makes them feel as if they “need” specific objects to satisfy their desires.

Every concept previously discussed demonstrates a general assumption that the use of technology under a capitalistic structure shapes our society. Moving forward, the next question will revolve around the methodology applied in order to weave and connect these concepts to validate the message of thesis.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The first research goal of the thesis is to explain the corporate industry’s success of smartphones as an internal power of cultural homogenization through synergistic strategies explained in chapter two. The cultural values that smartphone ads impose and/or suggest onto our society were analyzed and revealed through symptomatic reading by analyzing the presence of the dominant ideology in the commercial ads. Althusser described the problem of texts determining not only the questions posed and the answers given, but also the problems omitted by them. For example the manifest content of a cellphone commercial might be its conveniences, while the latent content behind it is the sweatshops created in order to produce the product.

To further achieve the second part of this goal, a historical overview of cell phone commercials throughout time was used to understand the developmental change advertisements of cellphones have undergone in a capitalist society that ties together with the current demands companies and society exerts on the consumer/worker. This analysis provided an examination of
the development of cellphone commercials and their cultural symbol status. This thesis analyzed seven commercial ads found through the help of Youtube.com and Retrojunk.com. The commercials are as follows:

1. AT&T’s Pocketnet Service (Retro Junk)
2. Motorola’s Startach Phone (Retro Junk)
3. Verizon’s LG cellphone (Retro Junk)
4. Nokia (Retro Junk)
5. Samsung’s Galaxy (Samsungmobileusa)
6. Apple’s iPhone (Televisionpromos)
7. RIM’s BlackBerry Z10 (PhoneAds)

This section of the methodology used a qualitative method, therefore only seven cell phone commercials were chosen. The commercial ads were chosen on the basis of accessibility and based on the cellphone companies most popular in our society.

The analysis examined the different meanings found in these cellphone commercials and how they have developed through time from a utilitarian product to a social symbol. Lastly, in chapter two, I will offer a literature review of the current top conglomerates involved in distributing the smartphones employed in order to build an economic-political context for the actual analysis of cellphone ads. In addition, this chapter will uncover the influential symbolization of these cellphones as cultural symbols.

The second goal of the thesis is to analyze the patterns of technology usage in the workforce, more specifically, how current smartphones alienate human beings by objectifying workers. The study seeks to explore the effects of technology used outside of work hours for
work purposes on the social lives of workers. In order to uncover the effects, questionnaires were conducted with a group of employees of a recruiting company.

This study utilizes primary research using questionnaires, and secondary research using recent literature. Aerotek, a staffing firm, was chosen for the study because it is representative of America’s corporate culture regarding the use of smartphones beyond the regular workday. Aerotek implements a cultural expectation in which employees feel responsible for using their smartphones to execute work beyond work hours if they want to succeed within the company. This company demonstrates the competitiveness of corporate America to climb the corporate ladder by any means necessary while neglecting any negative effects it might have on the social life of the worker. Clients of Aerotek staff positions for day and night shifts every day of the week, requiring Aerotek employees to maintain their client’s needs on a constant, round-the-clock basis. While Aerotek employees are scheduled to recruit during a normal workday, a client issue might arise after Aerotek’s working hours; Aerotek employees are expected to respond accordingly at all hours of the day.

The general population for this thesis was composed of ten Aerotek employees (managers and recruiters). These participants were asked questions regarding their current employment status and their opinions of smartphone/cellphone usage for work reasons outside of their working hours.

The questionnaires, using a descriptive approach, were utilized in order to gather data on how smartphones are used and workers’ feelings/opinions of using a cellphone for work purposes outside of working hours to illustrate how the worker is further disciplined.

When viewed together, the findings of these two research goals can help us understand how the use of contemporary technology and smartphones in particular, enable an advanced form
of exploitation, where smartphones are not only used to extract surplus value from workers’
personal time-space, but also marketed as essential to the workers' cultural identities, something
the workers must have but must not question.

Now that I have presented the steps taken in order to understand the different components
that lead to the general prevailing assumption that it is the stipulations under which technology is
used that makes society, as proposed above, we need to understand the importance of this
generalization.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF INVESTIGATION

Concepts discussed by Marx relating to workplace exploitation have a prominent place in
contemporary smartphone usage. Marx stressed consumers to be more active and understand the
effects of the media in a capitalist society. Analyzing the effects and the marketing ploys of
smartphone corporations helps us understand and evaluate the current reshaping of society. I will
start with a discussion of the marketing strategies that harness the needs of capitalism and the
modern state.
2.1 Corporate Markets

Capitalistic developments progress through marketing efforts and the acquisition of companies. Commodities are sold for a specific price set by the demands of the public that are further established by successful marketing portrayals of the commodity. Cultural shifts are often created by portrayals of products shown by the media through a company’s strategic development. Corporations often acquire other companies for the purpose of controlling the value chain of the products— in this case, smartphones.

There are a range of motivations that drive the undertaking acquisition activity of companies, including, but not limited to, increasing opportunities within managers, increasing shareholder wealth and fostering organizational legitimacy (Sitkin p. 145). Regardless of the acquiring company’s motivation, the intention is most always related to controlling the competition.

Apple has acquired various companies that have contributed to their success and integration/control of the smartphone industry. For example, Apple has distributing contracts with Time Warner, News Corp, and Disney, while having their own online store, the App Store (Shi p.137). Apple’s ambition to create a new business model of hardware-software convergence has led to the monopolization of the iPhone. Furthermore, in relations to their wireless services, there was a time that only AT&T had exclusive rights as a distributor of Apple’s product line. Now, other service providers, including Verizon, T-mobile and Sprint, are able to distribute iPhones. Regardless of the service provider, however, the Apple store is the only source that can
assist with consumer problems regarding the phone. The first iPhone, introduced in 2007 in the United States, was only sold outside of the U.S. in Germany, United Kingdom, and France. It only took Apple a year later until it introduced the iPhone to other countries and regions, including, but not limited to, Australia, Austria, Canada, and Chili (Shi p.137). To the United States consumer, the iPhone represented a sense of “fitting in” with others, and a social status. Globally, the iPhone transmitted itself as a symbol: “possessing is power” (consumerism).

Apple’s synergistic initiatives can help explain how the market success of a consumer product heavily relies, not only on the companies’ business model, but also on a cultural pattern (Shi p.148) whereby the product is invested with social and personal meanings. Apple still has competition from other smartphones like Blackberry, Samsung and HTC, but the growth of Apple’s empire has grown substantially more quickly than other smartphone corporations.

Apple has been strategic in acquiring exclusive rights to the output for a set period of time. This allows Apple to create new components well before competition, and creates a monopoly for its product. One of the essential acquisitions of Apple that illustrates its desire to have as much of the value chain under their control as possible was PA Semi, purchased in 2008 (Kotelnikov). PA Semi is a boutique microprocessor company that Apple bought in order to center the iPhone design on a chip that Apple could own. However, the competition still manages to be fierce for Apple.

Blackberry, formerly known as Research in Motion (RIM), is responsible for the introduction of the BlackBerry smartphone, revolutionized in 1999 (Research in Motion). Blackberry popularized innovations of mobility beyond that of a phone from a competitor, Palm which created the smartphone revolution. Palm was an American smartphone corporation that created a PDA (palmtop computer) called Zommer that did not last in its market, instead
Blackberry marked its territory as the smartphone that led the revolution to introduce the product into a corporate production tool, and as a social economic status symbol. Blackberry gained market share and industry dominance by providing businesspeople with a bridge between their computers and their phones. By enabling unlimited access to internet and email, the Blackberry became the quintessential tool for the businessperson on the go. As technology progressed, other competitors, such as Apple and Samsung, emerged to combine business and pleasure in a way that Blackberry could not and it has consequently made them the current smartphone industry leaders. Currently, Apple and Blackberry are the only companies in the smartphone industry that have their own operating system. The majority of today’s smartphone devices run on the Android operating system, which is produced by Google and offered on a multitude of devices from various manufacturers, most popularly Samsung.

The few acquisitions mentioned above illustrate the desires of various companies to control one specific industry. Information communication technologies and media networks determine the success of these corporations to attain maximum economies of synergy that take advantage of the current fluctuating communications environment (Shi p.139).

In the article titled “World Communications in Today’s Age of Capital” by Schiller, he discusses “redefining the social purposes and institutional functions of world communications” (Thussu p.122) as a result of capital demand predominance. To understand the development of communications that has taken over the past few decades, neoliberalism should be understood for its current societal application. Neoliberalism has four main aspects playing part in the stage of capitalism: privatization, deregulation, globalization of markets, and liberalization. Schiller described the developmental change that world communications have undergone with the dominance of capitalism by focusing on telecommunications services.
In an era of neoliberalism, owning a smartphone is a neoliberal rationality that cellphone commercials normalize as such. The framing of world communications under the dominance of capitalism as described by Schiller is contingent on advertisements’ production of neoliberal views. These political-economic signatures, with neoliberalism as the guiding principle, influence the advertising discourse by encoding a manifestation of the current dominant ideology in these advertisements. This intensifies the imbalance of power between the consumer and the worker: “Neoliberalism works on an ideological level so that neoliberal subjects are interpellated as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life and are thus controlled through their freedom” (Lee p.51)

Textual analysis of smartphone commercials reveals that advertisers not only strategically appeal to the American culture, but also use these ads to construct the smartphone as a cultural symbol. This further emphasizes the linkage between an American culture of consumerism and the branding and marketing of smartphones. The neoliberalism policies of endorsing free market economics, free trade, liberation of imports, and consumerism, as previously mentioned, led to more freedom for business with loosened market regulations that, in exchange, encourage consumer spending. Neoliberalism explains the promotion and rapid growth of consumerism. Cultural economies and brand economy, therefore, resulted from the open economy policies represented by neoliberalism. This further substantiates how commodities such as smartphones became symbols.

In cellphone ads, this guiding corporate ideology of neoliberalism is often painted as beneficial to consumers. The imported products by smartphone industries represent certain values, and cultural ideologies that are imposed by the producer through consumerism. The new globalized economy has allowed for this facilitation through technological advances that make it
convenient to communicate with one another. This type of cultural imperialism can be explained in relation to subliminal power.

This study, so far, has discussed how corporations acquire other corporations for the purpose of having control of a smartphone’s value chain and imposing neoliberal and consumerist values onto other societies as a result of their global ambitions. This type of ideological power and neoliberism is seen throughout advertisements through their suggestive power, convincing the consumer of what to buy. Accordingly, this study’s research theory is that while smartphones are portrayed as convenient tools, they also act as cultural symbols and hide other factors that potentially exploit consumers/workers. What about what the smartphone symbolizes in our society? The following section will continue the discussion of marketing strategies by explaining the “smartphone symbol,” as termed by this analysis, in addition to looking at the cellphone ads as promised in the methodology section.

2.2 Smartphone Symbol

Cellphones function as status symbols, giving recognition to those who posses the materialistic possessions portrayed by the media as a “must”. In today’s society, youthfulness can be equated to having the latest cell phone: “The mobile’s new status as an object of value, and thus a means of increasing its user’s social standing, can be seen in other advertising strategies, such as those around Christmas. At this time the mobile becomes a significant gift. Attributing the gift to the techno-object automatically makes it a desirable object, and consequently an object of value” (Caron & Caronia p.97).

The cellphone has drastically transformed in capabilities and design over time. Cellphone commercials in current times portray cellphones as the “next big thing” that everyone needs to possess, while commercials in the earlier years of introduction portrayed the cellphone
as a convenient tool if something unexpected were to happen. Although current commercial advertisements do portray the cellphones (mostly smartphones - for those with the latest technology tool) as convenient tools of everyday life, the commercials are more concerned with the culture of the phone.

The cellphone in earlier years was a term used to describe a functional mobile phone that although restricted in capabilities (compared to what we have now) it was functional in use for the use of calling on the go. Through digital convergence, this mobile device is mostly referred to as a smartphone with capabilities ranging from the use of mobile calling to browsing the web. The portrayal of the smartphone in our current society concerns itself with the culture it can be made to represent while the older commercials’ portrayal was more about its functionality.

In earlier commercials, all that was portrayed in the advertisements of cellphones was that this device would make people’s lives easier. These commercials were remarkably simplified in comparison to present commercials. In today’s commercials, a lot is not said. The idea that possessing the smartphone as a means to advance in society is portrayed in these commercials, while the power imbalances (Shi p.149) that are intensified by corporate synergy and media convergence is neglected. In the current commercials, the customer does not see the sweatshops that help produce these “cool” phones or the implications of spreading cultural ideologies.

In general, individuals feel as if they need to belong to society. Capitalism seizes the opportunity to draw on this need and then influences the consumers to follow the conventions of society. From these explanations, we can begin to understand not only how cellphones revolutionized, and how individuals communicate with one another, but also how the corporate world dictates society’s organizational structure.
The iPhone, for example, is not simply a means of communicating with someone else. The iPhone is a fashion statement signifying what type of person the user might be. As described above, cellphone commercials go to great lengths to illustrate their products as aesthetic objects of great design. In current cellphone commercials, we begin to see the cultural shift in cellphones from practical products to “cool, fun” products.

The volume of text messages people receive signifies their “popularity” and status in their circle of friends: “Receiving large numbers of text messages from the right persons signifies that a person has lots of friends who are worth ‘friending’. When cell phone and Internet friends fall out, they then “unfriend” one another” (Berger p. 208). Smartphones, like the iPhone, have many applications which are marketed by cellphone advertisements which, symbolically speaking, define the smartphone as a product that is capable of doing more than that of a conventional phone. These applications are sending other industries, like newsprint media or GPS devices toward extinction, signifying the ambition to control every aspect of the user’s experience.

To answer why consumers still choose to buy smartphones despite evidence showing an awareness that it does make them work beyond working hours without getting properly compensated (later explained), we need to first analyze how smartphones become cultural symbols that are embedded into our society. There are two aspects relating to this issues: social status, and the need to conform to the “rules” of society if an individual wants to progress in life. Such dominance imposed by smartphone corporations like Apple reflects hegemony of power within the media system undermining individuality and constructing the viewer as passive consumers further producing a homogenized mass culture.

In 1997, AT&T released a commercial to market its “PocketNet Service”. This
cellphone/smartphone device allowed the customer to browse the internet, send emails, and place phone calls. The commercial is approximately a minute long, in which a father and his child are stranded out on the road because of a snowstorm. The father calls for a help, and realizes that he still needs to send out emails for work, but wants to take advantage of the time he has with his son to play in the snow. He quickly realizes that his phone is capable of letting him send out the necessary information he needs while they are waiting. The manifest content of this commercial is showing the cell phone as a convenient and practical product that allows the customer to call for help and send out important information even when he is unable to be in the office. For the consumer, this new technology is creating a more flexible working environment that allows multitasking and creates more free time.

The encoding message of the sender aims at producing a dominant ideology that centers on convenience; the illusions of convenience perfectly portrayed by the ad makes it possible for the consumer to decode this message as it is intended by the sender. An oppositional decoding of this message, on the other hand, demonstrates the latent content neglected in the ad. The latent content is the further exploitation that is being facilitated rather than mitigated through this technology. The ideological intention, while superficial in meaning, is convenience with the oppositional and neglected message being inconvenience. The commercial neglects to point out that the worker will not be able to detach from work as his work is transformed to a portable device constantly attached to him. In chapter three, I further discuss this implication to bring a deeper meaning beyond the latent message of this cellphone ad.

A more glamorous portrayal of the cellphone was the Motorola Startac Phone in 1998. A beautiful young woman is at what seems to be a stylish event (given the gowns) and realizes she is late to meet up with a date. She quickly leaves the event and changes in the taxicab while she
is on the phone (presumably speaking to her date). The commercial illustrates the phone as a “set of wings” that takes the woman where she wants to go. In this commercial, we begin to see a change of how phones were portrayed. This commercial is a bit more glamorous as it portrays the phone with a hint of luxury, showing a beautiful woman dressed up and ready to meet her date. The intentional ideology is the symbolization of the cellphone as a luxury. Simply put, we all want to fit in society as desirable humans, and the cellphone portrayed in this ad makes it possible to fit in with the elites of society.

The latent message of such a luxury phone is the sweatshops that are created in order to mass-produce this product. “Despite strict codes of conduct, labor rights violations are the norm at factories making the world's favorite high-tech gadgets” (McLaughlin). Conditions such as low hourly wages, firings without notice, labor brokers that leech away months of a worker’s hard-earned wages, are all widespread at the factories producing these luxury items. There is a large contrast between what is being done behind the scenes to the illusion of luxury constructed in the ads.

Another similar portrayal of the cellphone as a practical, yet luxurious product, was for the Nokia phone. In the early 2000s, Nokia came out with a commercial that introduced their cellphone with the help of a celebrity pop singer, Shakira. In the commercial, Shakira is caught in traffic, making her late to her own concert. She makes a call from her Nokia phone to her producer, and the producer puts the phone next to the microphone so the audience can hear her singing while she makes her way to the stadium.

This ad portrayed the phone as useful and practical when life throws unexpected turns. Putting a phone next to a microphone might not work as illustrated, where the audience would be able to hear you; however, the use of this tactic was to catch the audience and market the phone
as a convenient tool in unexpected events. Through the help of celebrity Shakira, this ad is able to portray the cell phone as “cool” and convenient. The manifest message is creating the cell phone as a global symbol that identifies with the younger generation. The brand or the kind of cellphone a person has displays his or her socioeconomic status, not to mention how technologically savvy he or she might be (Berger p. 209).

While this advertisement portrays a convenient use of this technology, it neglects a glaring distinction between personal time and work time. Disputes between the usages of smartphones for work related purposes outside of working hours have begun to arise as this device becomes cheaper and more workers begin to buy into owning such a “convenient” tool. The boundaries have become more permeable, making work difficult to monitor.

In 2004, Verizon released a commercial for their new LG camera phones. In the commercial, a husband brings his wife a present in bed for Mother’s Day. She opens the present and finds two camera phones. The husband quickly and excitedly says, “It’s a Mother’s Day miracle…I’ll take the second one.” The commercial ends with the couple eating breakfast in bed and the husband says, “I sent you a picture of the syrup.” In this commercial, we see yet another shift to seeing this product as more of a toy, or luxury that does wonders to romantic relationships, rather than a convenient tool to help in a bind, as the previous commercials illustrated. The commercial also portrays the cellphone as a product that everyone wants, as the husband was excited to own one for the first time. The missing latent message is in the shift of communication with one another. Today, we have more conversations via text messages, emails, and calls rather than face-to-face interactions.

In Marvin’s analysis of the introduction of electricity and telephone, she argued that in the late 19th century communities used new technologies as a way to solve problems relating to
time management, and space in communicative relationships (Humphreys). It is in this process that users of new technologies alter the social and organizational fabric of our world (Humphreys). The effects of new technologies are negotiated through people’s construction and use of them (Humphreys) in order to manage the anxieties that arise from the indirect effects of these technologies. It is in this explanation that we can begin to reason as to why this negative impact on the quality of our communication has been filtered without questions from the consumer.

In a 2012 Samsung commercial, the cellphone is portrayed as a status symbol. The commercial pokes fun at the iPhone and shows the Samsung Galaxy as “the new best thing.” In it, iPhone customers are waiting anxiously in line for the new iPhone. Some of the iPhone customers comment about the new things of the expected new iPhone. One customer says “I hear the connector is digital. What does that even mean?!?” and another customer responds, “Who knows! I am psyched!”

While waiting in line, a customer notices someone in line with a Samsung Galaxy, and says to the Galaxy customer, “Guess the Galaxy didn’t work out.” The Galaxy customer responds, “I love my Galaxy, I am just saving a spot for my parents.” This commercial is very different than the earlier commercials for cell phones; it portrays the Samsung Galaxy as a “hip” and “cool” product that every “cool” person has to have, while the iPhone is “old”— the Galaxy customer turns out to be saving a spot in line for his parents. In this commercial, customers of the Galaxy use words like “awesome, and cool” in relation to the Galaxy.

While this commercial is marketing the Galaxy by making fun of the iPhone, it shows the change in commercials through time and how cellphones are now a cultural symbol that represent social status. The customers seem to be more concerned with how “cool” the iPhone
was than with its convenience or usefulness. The ad seeks to build cult followings: the cult of Galaxy against the cult of iPhone. The fierce competition that leads to exploitation because workers strive to go up in the corporate ladder are omitted in this humorous commercial because intentional ideology is the portrayal of the Galaxy phone as more advanced than the iPhone.

Another omitted fact is that the two brands, with their cult followings, dominate the cellphone market now, making it more difficult for new entrants. When it is portrayed as cool and fun to be part of the Galaxy or iPhone camp, it is not cool and fun in real life to have only two choices embraced as cool. There is a monopolistic hold on the smartphone market by only a few conglomerates in order to control and gain the market share of this new technology.

Apple also competes in the industry’s fierce environment by recruiting actors like Samuel L. Jackson to be in commercials. In a 2012 iPhone commercial, Mr. Jackson demonstrated the extreme convenience of having an iPhone as this product can act as a personal assistant through the help of an automated voice activated application, called “Siri”, that answers questions with the help of the internet. The repressed meaning in this ad is the electronic waste of using this application as a mere toy because of its luxury to act as an assistant. In 2010 the United States wasted three millions tons of mobile devices that were just thrown in the trash or given to local collectors who extract precious metals from them in environmentally hazardous ways (Lasar). As the competition continues to grow, corporations come up with new products on a regular basis, making the mobile device’s shelf life only 18 months for the average consumer (Infinity Resources Holdings company).

Another omitted fact is how new technologies like the smartphone extend our human capabilities. It is with new technologies that make it possible to live in a flexible environment through the help of digital convergence. It is through the convergence of digital content, social
media, internet, and much more that we are able to do more efficient work in less time.

Although, I have argued throughout this study that technology can have a negative impact in society, it is the use of new technologies, specifically under a capitalist structure, that lead to negative impacts of the structure and organization of our society. Digital convergence throughout these applications have opened the door to extend and go beyond the realm of human capabilities that has lead to progress and can be use to have a positive impact on society.

A more current luxurious portrayal of the smartphone was the Blackberry’s newest addition of the Z10 in 2013. This device is intended to “keep you moving,” as the tagline closing commercial indicates. Throughout this minute-long commercial, there are many images of the use of this phone in every possible situation imaginable. The intention is to portray the Blackberry as a device that can do it all. Heightened corporate powers and class struggles are not mentioned in this commercial because the intent ideology is to portray the possibilities of this technology- again as convenient and luxurious. It is in these commercials that consumer desires increase while the gap between their desires and their actual income also increases. Consumers begin to emulate the upper class while struggling to meet basic housing needs. Consumerism explains this need to possess new luxurious products in order to be recognized as someone with class within a community. I will come back to consumerism in the next section to explain the why consumers buy into these new ideas of possession.

These cellphone advertisements portray cellphones as “hip and cool” in hopes of relating to the adolescent cultures that hold such an important attitude. Owning a cellphone becomes a signifier of youth and has “an identity-building function, whatever else cell phones may signify for adults, and having the right cell phone confers status” (Caron & Caronia pp. 98-99). What is not said in these ads is how costly the phones will be, or how often employers will expect
workers to be available even after working hours. These advertisements portray smartphones as the symbol for success and a high social status. The concept of what is “essential” has dramatically changed from food, water, clothing and a roof over one’s head to well beyond what a human being needs to survive.

The marketing of cellphones illustrates a transformation in how society functions and views itself: “The ubiquity of cell phones and the popularity of the social media are signifiers of a new social order in which anyone and almost everyone can make their presence known, by sending messages, photos, and videos that potentially can be accessed by a huge number of people” (Berger p.211).

There are many underlying signifiers to the popularity of cellphones, similar to any other social product, as a result of the American media on our society and other countries as well. Social status was one signifier examined throughout this study; however, other signifiers generated by today’s society are also to be kept in mind for further research in order to fully understand all the impacts and long-term consequences of the new media.

In conclusion, through hailing and interpellation in which the suggestive forces of capitalism influence the individual, corporate industries succeed in the production of their products. The manifest messages found throughout the ads illustrated convenience, social status, cool/trendiness, and a sense of belonging. These messages are foregrounded in the commercials while others, such as heightened workplace exploitation, electronic waste, and increasingly concentrated corporate power that lead to power imbalances throughout our society, are repressed.
2.3 Consumerism

This section will take a deeper look into corporate marketing strategies and consumerism by demonstrating how neoliberism policies have promoted consumer spending that effect our perceptions of income. Theorists influenced by the Frankfurt School argued that Americans are often persuaded or manipulated into partaking in a synthetic consumer culture which does not yield true content for human satisfaction (Schor). As illustrated above, with the samples of cellphone commercials, we currently live in a consumption-induced environment with increasing pressure to spend. As a result, there has been much discussion about the worries of individuals in meeting basic needs while keeping up with the current trend of consumption.

Wealth in the United States is concentrated in the top 20% percent of Americans while the bottom 80% only owns 11% of the wealth (Wolff p.4). Presumably, this is a problem. The obvious solution is to redistribute the money in order to create a more equal playing field. However, in our current culture, having an adequate income is almost an impossible goal.

The problem with money redistribution is that it does not address the current consumption trend. Adequacy in income or social status is defined by the current social structure (Schor). As the commercials previously mentioned illustrated, the illusion of needing to consume what is the current trend continues to expand at a rapid rate as the media manipulates the collective sense of social standing. Consuming is the problem at hand as more income leads to consumption practices that intensify the reproduction of social inequalities (Schor).

Our social structure is formed as though quality of life equals quantity of products. From studying the marketing tactics of cellphone corporations and the cultural symbols they represent, consumption can be seen as social status and is reflected as indicative of an individual’s quality of life. The cellphone transformed into a smartphone and allowed people to communicate more
effectively with one another. It is now considered a “basic” need to own a smartphone, while years before it was popularized it was a luxury to own such a technological tool.

In the representations of cellphones in commercials through time, the media first portrayed the cellphone to reflect its utilitarian use rather than its luxury use. In order to turn the cellphone into a cultural symbol, the consumer had to view it as a necessity and therefore be persuaded to buy into the idea of owning such an expensive product. After cultivating the idea of having a cellphone as a convenient tool, the media later made cellphones even more popular by portraying this contemporary tool as a luxury that promoted social standing: “Luxury, rather than mere comfort, is a widespread aspiration” (Schor).

Schor explained “competitive consumption” as a means of emulating the norms of the social group while the gap between consumers’ desires and their income increases because of this. Consumers understand that to have a good quality of life means to own products that reflect the upper class social standing. One might consider that if an individual cannot afford an expensive new product like the next new smartphone, then why buy it? Why not just save the money and continue to work hard to climb up from the lower class to the middle class? This question can be answered with theories of the new consumerism explained by Schor.

Individuals do not just want to acquire a middle class standing; they instead aspire to be in the top 20%. The problem is that their growing desires to attain these elusive goals outrun their actual income. The aspirational gap was created by structural changes in society, particularly the growing decline in community and social connection, the rising manipulations of the mass media, and the increased consequences for failing in the labor market (Schor). Indeed, “the profoundly social nature of consumption ensures that these issues cannot be resolved by pure acts of will. Our notions of what is adequate, necessary, or luxurious are shaped by the
larger social context. Most of us are deeply tied into our particular class and other group identities, and our spending patterns help reproduce them” (Schor).

In order to create a culture that is fair to the bottom 80% of the population, we need to address the culture itself and its effects on our current structure. Now that I have discussed how smartphones affect our current societal structure, I will further investigate in the next chapter the cultural environment in which workers are disciplined in the workplace through smartphones.
3.1 Technology and Exploitation

Chapter two illustrated the marketing strategies of cellphone corporations in order to demonstrate how cellphones are popularized into our culture. Chapter two further described neoliberism within cellphone commercials that deliver a message to the consumer that owning a fancy smartphone is important. To recap, we have discussed the marketing strategies of cellphones/smartphones and why the consumer buys into the ideologies formed by these corporations and the effects it has on society. What about smartphones in the workplace? How can owning a piece of technology be of any negative effect onto the worker? Marx’s insights and critical inquiry about technology’s functions under a capitalist societal structure are profound in that they bring to light the exploitations of human kind.

Technology in Marxism is seen as two forces: independent and as a social product. The means of production are crucial elements leading to the comprehension of human beings’ potential and social structure. The necessary step in pursuit of human freedom is brought by technological change that provides for the improvement of productivity and efficiency. Marxism points out that capitalism has a dependency upon a technology of industrial production, and technology can provide new conveniences for a community. However, when seen under a social structure constructed and operated by capitalism, technology yields burdens on the consumer.

Structural Marxism explains that innovation, brought on by technology and changes, occurs within our society. It is by technology that dominant groups are able to effectively have social control, and by this approach rather than the system itself, is where an inequality between
classes can be examined. In his efforts to work towards a communist society, Marx explains how technology was utilized to exploit others to add to the capitalist power. Instead of technology helping to lessen the burden on workers to work less, workers work even more. The development of new technology in Marx’s view is supposed to aid in the betterment of human kind instead of acting as a destruction tool for freedom.

Marx proposed strong arguments against capitalism and how it in turn is the result of human beings feeling “alienated.” In his book *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx, states:

“Political economy conceals the estrangement inherent in the nature of labor by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labor) and production. It is true that labor produces wonderful things for the rich – but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces – but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty – but for the worker, deformity. It replaces labor by machines, but it throws one section of the workers back into barbarous types of labor and it turns the other section into a machine. It produces intelligence – but for the worker, stupidity, cretinism.” (p.71)

His suggestions of deprivation resulting from capitalism can be argued both ways. He does point out that labor can create bountiful outcomes; however, he also points out that capitalism is guilty of producing deprivation for the laborers in the workplace. Marx theory of alienation can be applied to our current social structure in describing the worker under our capitalistic environment. The word alienation refers to a separation. Although Marx described different forms of alienation, this paper focuses on alienation that takes
place when workers work beyond their traditional working hours without getting properly compensated.

Marx’s specific theory of alienation applied to this thesis was his critique on labor process, where the worker has no control of his environment. As described above, marketers impose a cultural value onto consumers to own a smartphone for their own conveniences. In the workplace, the employer creates another cultural imposition, making it impossible for workers to disconnect from their work lives, thus affecting their social lives.

The problem is not in the smartphone itself, which is capable of delivering emails, taking pictures or videos, texting or browsing the web. The problem is the expectations that are set by companies on their employees once they own a smartphone. Many employees that own a smartphone, or even a simple cellphone that does not receive emails, feel obligated to answer their phones or read through their emails after working hours, even if they are not getting paid for that time. The conveniences of having a smartphone are causing intrusion into workers’ personal lives in their off duty hours. For the employer it is convenient to have an employee who answers phone calls and emails outside of working hours; that means more money for the company and cheap labor, which further substantiates Heidegger’s framework of technology “driving a maximum yield at minimum expense” (pp. 3-36)

However, how much of this ideological power used by the media in hopes to sell a concept or an idea to the public, actually gets through to the consumer? Some scholars have discussed that consumers are often passive and accept the cultural values imposed by the media, whereas other scholars have theorized that there is resistance from consumers. While corporate
synergy has facilitated and created monopolies of smartphones, there is evidence that some corporations have had to negotiate and change their practices overseas. For example, Shi (2001) discusses and analyzes the structural obstacles facing Apple that come from the creative resistance from consumers.

Shi discusses consumers’ eagerness to own the phone but at the same time retaliate against Apple’s control. Fans post unauthorized ways to break into the iPhone on a community website (Shi pp. 139-142). This analysis shows that consumers are not as passive as they may appear; however, they still fall victim to the culture of mobile phones, in this case the suggestive powers of the iPhone that are imposed onto the consumer. Even in places like China, the iPhone portrays itself as a product that everyone must possess.

In the workplace, there are also signs of retaliation that have put companies in a position to change their own practices or face losing money in the end. Fox News featured a story on February 7, 2013 titled “Lawsuit in Chicago: Answering Calls, Scanning Emails After Work Hours Deserves Overtime.” Chicago police Sgt. Jeffery Allen was seeking retribution for overtime pay for work that was performed outside of working hours on department-requisitioned BlackBerry phones (Fox News).

The story exemplifies a growing cultural development: workers are encouraged if not required to use their smartphones to continue to work after work hours in order to provide safety for their jobs. Capitalism has created such a competitive working environment where workers feel compelled to work for free in order to continue to grow with a company. This shows a struggle between the regime of accumulation set by capitalism and the social mode of production. To further examine the worker’s social life with the introduction of this new structure set on by hegemonic views, I gathered live data from workers themselves.
3.2 Cultural Ideologies

Consumers buy into the powerful cultural ideology that owning a smartphone delivers convenience, status, and identity. But what about from a worker’s standpoint? As discussed above, society has established and promoted consumerism, where owning expensive products is valued. Employers have taken advantage of this and created another culture within their companies, requiring workers to utilize the smartphone to work harder and longer.

Althusser explained that through the process of interpellation the individual is already the subject before he or she is born, because the individual is immediately tangled into the rituals and ideologies that exist in his or her community (Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus” pp. 143-147. Only through these ideologies can capitalism assure individuals will continue the reproduction of the existing relations of production.

In order to survive in the world, individuals need to make a living and provide for themselves and their families. The current structure of capitalism has made it so competitive in the workforce that the workers work longer hours than in past decades. It is not uncommon for two parents of the same household to both have jobs and need a babysitter to take care of their children while they are gone. The expectations of wanting and needing more income have increased because of the ever-rising culture of consumerism. In order to afford to buy all the expensive products marketed in society, the individual needs to be competitive in the workforce and thereby acquire more income.

Examples of corporate technology based on consumerism not only reflect exploitation derived from the employer, but also self-exploitation to self-disciplining in private space. When workers use their phones outside of work hours without getting compensated, they believe it is the right thing to do because they want to keep their jobs and they want to get promoted. Later in
this section, I will relate self-exploitation resulting from our current competitive structure to the realm of our social lives.

Some workers find it hard to balance a social life with work because of the expectations to work after work hours. Smartphones are a convenient way to communicate with one another, but they can also facilitate an expectation that workers are not allowed to disconnect. The ideological intention of convenience legitimizes heightened work expectations. Culture in turn creates the worker as the subject, a functioning realization of its environment.

In order to further understand how smartphones have an effect on the worker in the workplace, a sample of ten employees from a recruiting company named Aerotek was analyzed. Aerotek employees were given a questionnaire asking them about their usage of cellphones during working hours and during non-working hours, along with their feelings pertaining to such usage. Tables 1 and 1.2 illustrate the actual questionnaire with the questions numbered. Table 2 and 2.1 illustrate answers from the respondents found in the questionnaire from Table 1 and 1.2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. 20-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 25-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 35-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 45 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 3. Please state your occupation |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. What are your normal work days/hours in the office?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Monday- Friday, 8:30am-5:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Monday- Friday, 9:00am-5:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Other: Please specify ____________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. What do you use your cell phone for? Check all that apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Personal usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Work related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Other; Please specify</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. How often would you say you use your cell phone for work related activities (outside of work and at work)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Does not apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How often would you say you receive phone calls, emails, and text messages relating to work during work hours? Please give an example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Does not apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How often would you say you receive phone calls, emails, text messages relating to work during non-working hours (time not in the office)? Please give an example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Does not apply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If you do receive phone calls, emails, text messages relating to work during non-work hours, does it interfere with your personal and family time? How so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How do you think cell phone blurs (makes it difficult to distinguish) the line between your work and your leisure time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Are you expected to answer phone calls, emails, text messages relating to work from your employer, client and/ or co-worker, during the hours you are not at work? If so, please explain the expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Does your employer supply you with a cell phone for work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Does your employer reimburse you for cell phone usage relating to work? If yes, explain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. How much would you say you make a year (estimate)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. $30,000-$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. $40,000-$50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. $50,000-$60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. $70,000-$80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. $80,000 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 – Questionnaire Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.1</th>
<th>Q.2</th>
<th>Q.3</th>
<th>Q.4</th>
<th>Q.5</th>
<th>Q.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Account Manager</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Account Manager</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Account Manager</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Account Manager</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Recruiting Manager</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Recruiting Manager</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>Recruiter</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Recruiter</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-when I am done</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Recruiter</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>Recruiter</td>
<td>Monday-Friday, 7:30am-6pm</td>
<td>Personal and work related</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q.7</td>
<td>Q.8</td>
<td>Q.9</td>
<td>Q.10</td>
<td>Q.11</td>
<td>Q.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always-emails, on phone all day</td>
<td>Frequently, emails on phone</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>It can seem like you never stop working if you can’t take the time to put it away and do other things</td>
<td>yes, somewhat. Depends on client and situation</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always-emails, on phone all day</td>
<td>Occasionally-Customers on off shifts outside of normal work hours, calling or emailing</td>
<td>not really</td>
<td>no factor</td>
<td>yes, customer service comes first</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently-client phone calls to cell phone</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Yes, rarely interferes. Maybe 1-2 times per month</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes. It is expected to return any urgent client requests as soon as possible</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>Frequently, receive emails constantly</td>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>my job has become 24/7</td>
<td>no expectations set but for business it makes sense</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always, calls and emails</td>
<td>Always, call offs, issues with candidates, injuries</td>
<td>Yes! Takes up my time with my family</td>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>Yes. We have to take calls of all issues when they come up</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently- my project manager and I text to get info to each other quickly</td>
<td>Rarely-only one client that might call me after working hours</td>
<td>I separate myself to talk in a quiet environment</td>
<td>no. I do check emails a lot though.</td>
<td>If urgent from GE (client), yes and immediate if anyone else</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>Sometimes during family dinner/ last night I had to walk away to answer work emails</td>
<td>I feel like I don’t get unplugged after work and relax some days</td>
<td>depends on the message, most can wait until work hours</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>Maybe briefly-if I’m responding/taking care of something</td>
<td>Totally blends, people know you’re available-you feel you should respond like you are available</td>
<td>(no answer)</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently-my emails all go to my phone. My partners and I text if needed</td>
<td>Occasionally-candidates/contacts working 2nd or 3rd shift</td>
<td>sometimes, I may have to step away to release/terminate someone</td>
<td>I am available for work 24/7 if needed</td>
<td>yes, emergencies with contractors outside of 1st shift Monday-Friday/Checking in with candidates</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>yes, dependent upon severity</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions one through six asked respondents their gender, age, occupation and working hours along with their cell phone usage outside of work and at work. In total there were ten respondents, three females and seven males. There were four recruiters, two account recruiting managers, and four account managers. All respondents indicated that they use their cellphones for work and personal reasons. Most of them indicated that they use their cellphone outside of working hours frequently or always. During non-working hours, most of them indicated they do use their cellphone for work related reasons. However, the responses varied between, occasionally, frequently and always.

In questions seven through fourteen found in the questionnaire, the workers answered about their cellphone usage at work and outside of work for work related purposes. Table 2.1 illustrates there is a mix between respondents’ responses on questions eight and nine. Question eight asked the worker, “How often would you say you receive phone calls, emails, text messages relating to work during non-working hours (time not in the office)?” On most occasions, respondents indicated that they frequently or always use their cellphones outside of work during non-working hours. Question nine asked the respondent “If you do receive phone calls, emails text messages relating to work during non-working hours, does it interfere with your personal life?”

Out of the respondents who indicated they use their cellphones outside of work during non-working hours (frequently or more), they indicated that it does not interfere with their personal life. Question ten asked, “How do you think cellphone blurs the line between your work and your leisure time?” The responses to this question varied. One respondent answered, “It can seem like you never stop working if you can’t take the time to put it away and do other things.”
Another respondent answered, “No factor.” While this question varied in responses, most of the respondents commented that they are available 24/7 for the job. Questions twelve and thirteen asked the respondents if they are supplied with a phone or receive reimbursements.

Only account managers have their cellphone bills paid monthly. Out of the account managers that have their cellphone bills paid, their salary is $80,000 and above. Most of the recruiters only make $30,000-$40,000 a year, without any reimbursements of their cellphone usage during non-working hours and working hours. One would think that it should not be justified that employees making $80,000 and above are reimbursed for their cellphone usage while the employees on the much lower paying scale do not receive any reimbursements. Why do the lower paying employees put up with such an unjust practice? In our culture, workers see this practice as an incentive. They believe if they sacrifice and are loyal to their companies, they will someday be in the upper bracket income.

This data shows that the cultural expectations of working outside of working hours have become so ingrained, that the worker does not see the imposition as interference. Most respondents responded that it is expected to answer to work related questions outside of working hours. One respondent replied that there is “no expectations set but for business it makes sense.” Even if the employer did not verbally set the expectations, the cultural expectation to work outside of working hours is understood in order to continue to grow with the company.

Smartphones have become a common product within the American culture, and consumers purchase them for purposes of convenience and luxury. However, as explained above, the consumer first needs to acquire the income in order to buy into the conventions of
society. The smartphone, which is marketed as a convenient tool that has marked for progress for civilization, has also negatively affected the lives of individuals as consumers and as workers.

Examining Althusser’s theories in comparison to the theories of alienation provides explanations for the results gathered from the study of how, under a capitalist society, workers conform to the patterns of the economic structure. This leads to capitalism, socialism, and feudalism. Not only does Marx emphasize that capitalism has an economic effect on development in society, but a social effect as well.

For the purpose of survival, workers conform to believing in ideas connected with capitalism, in turn facing an inner conflict. However, in a capitalist society, the dominant class shapes individual beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, when the dominant class utilizes technology to achieve its goals, it in turn shapes the beliefs and attitudes of the repressed class, and the repressed class interprets messages in accordance to those shaping beliefs.

So far, I have presented both the market’s success in controlling the value chain of smartphones and the interpretations it has portrayed onto the consumer/worker. I now turn to the implications of this case study focusing on technology as discourse, meaning its cultural, social, and ideological implications in playing a constitutive role in the operation of modern society.

3.3 Discussion and Conclusion

The discourse of technology is a form of projection of social realities as evident from the literature reviewed above and the data found throughout the questionnaires. This technological vision is more than just a reflection of the centrality of technology, but rather an enabler in the operation of our modern society. Despite various propositions that society shapes technology and
seeks to introduce social coordinates into the analysis of technology construction and use (Fisher pp. 231-234), I argue that evidence has suggested otherwise.

Here, I have proposed that the use of technology is central in the shaping of the cultural and social structure of our modern society. While Marx saw technology in an optimistic way and thought it should become an instrument of progress and fulfillment for human kind, he argued that under a capitalistic structure it becomes an ideological model that exploits lives. Technology is used as an alibi to justify what are in reality relations of force (Feenberg pp.47-64) by being one of major sources of public power in modern societies.

Throughout time, capitalism has been marked by transformation in how production is carried out, where and by whom. Consumerism as discussed above has provided examples of how the mode of capital accumulation currently distorts the income imbalances between classes. The result of this emergent phase of a more flexible mode of capitalistic accumulation has shifted from mass production (Fisher p.234) to ‘just-in-time production and mass customization to a centralized corporation and/or monopoly that controls most if not all facets of production. Because production has become so global, flexibility in turn has dominated the labor process, leaving the worker with no control over their employment scheme as they adhere to a new social regulation. Workers/consumers do not question this current scheme because digital convergence has made it possible for the consumer to have more than they once dreamed off in one simple device. Computers, telephones, laptops, cellphones have all evolved throughout the years that the consumer expects a certain scheme to take place. There is no reason to question something that has existed through decades.
Technology is seen as “convenient and a freeing tool.” For whom is it convenient? Technology creates a flexible economy but whom does it benefit? It is in the exclusion of workplace exploitation throughout the analyzed commercial ads that we can begin to see how smartphones function as an ideological tool that cofounds instruments of power and domination while the consumer/worker continues to be passive because of the culture that has been in place over the years.

What marketing does not mention when promoting smartphones is that workers will be constricted to their work even after working hours. As the results illustrated above, workers examined in the sample had all received text messages, emails, and phone calls pertaining to work after their work hours. The symptomatic reading of commercials illustrated above demonstrated a cultural hierarchy. Furthermore, the pervasive concept of alienation in contemporary work, in combination with these commercials, features the result of the structural fatality of the capital system.

When re-examining Marx’s theories of alienation in a modern society, where technology advances have progressed and developed, we can see how contemporary technology such as cellphones are used in capitalist workplaces to further alienate and discipline workers. Furthermore, the theories applied throughout the research study provide evidence for the effects of technological advances in the hands of a capitalist society.

So far this thesis has provided explanations of how capitalism shapes the beliefs and attitudes of society in the hands of technology because of how capitalists choose to utilize such an innovation. Since there is no exchange between the dominated class and the dominant class, no social change can be made and the dominated class will continue to be demoralized and
exploited for the benefits of the dominant class. However, let’s not forget that new technologies can and have been used by the consumer/worker in liberating ways, not analyzed throughout this study, but should not be overlooked for further research.

However, in this study technology can be seen as a fuel to expand capitalism. Marx debated the efficiency in which technology is being utilized in terms of exploitation of the workers. Technology creates social change, but it hinders human potential between the dominated classes. Capitalism uses technology to add to the capitalist power, instead of fostering human capabilities, by utilizing technology for the profit of the dominant class.

It can be agreed that society does enjoy a higher standard of living in today’s modern society with technology innovations booming. However, at what cost is that being made possible? Society is losing sight of the other facts concerning class struggles and poverty happening worldwide and within our communities. Individuals no longer compare themselves against other families in the same neighborhood but instead emulate the previously mentioned top 20% and strive to own more.

In his work *Transforming Technology*, Feenberg discusses the possible dangerous effects new technology can have on human kind. The problem with new technology, such the smartphone, is that it is not a neutral tool. In order to understand the capabilities, whether good or bad, we must first understand the technology in its social and political context. Feenberg goes on to explain the contextual basis that places technology at the center of social domination (pp. 47-64). Smartphones are not neutral conveniences for the worker or the consumer. Smartphones go beyond the simple structures of its capabilities, because they are linked to social structures of domination that bring forth multiple potentials for capitalism to grow. It is in these relations that
the smartphone becomes the instrument to produce relations of domination between the 
worker/consumer and the employer.

As technology continues to blossom, so does capitalism. Capitalism is able to hold 
control over the oppressed through tactics like hailing and interpellation in order to create the 
consumer as subject-objects as seen throughout the ads in this study. Individuals will continue to 
buy into consumerism and capitalistic ideologies to satisfy their own needs. Capitalism feeds on 
new technologies to accumulate power that shapes and controls our lives.

Therefore, it is crucial that society realizes that the outcome of this determinate type of 
historical and social development (capitalism) can be altered by an affirmative conscious 
interference in the historical process. In order to find potential ways of overcoming the various 
effects alienation has on all domains of human activity, it is important to understand how Marx’s 
theories of alienation can be interpreted to illustrate the negative effects of capitalism through the 
uses of technology.

Marx explains the impoverishment of the workers, not necessarily because of their 
declining living standards, but, instead, because of the rapid distance between the social classes 
(moreover, between their needs and what they can afford). It is in these relations as explained 
above, that we can see our capitalistic structure requiring immediate attention. The uses of 
technological advances should be understood as instruments that enable and facilitate the 
concerns for social evolution while failing to provide individual emancipation. New technology 
constructs provisional illusions, offering a trade-off between the society and the individual, 
between socially-backed security and individual opportunity, between long-term stability and 
liberating flexibility (Fisher p.232). Smartphones are portrayed as flexible and adaptable, but
they have stifled individual emancipation because they have suppressed individualism, personal expression, and creativity within our society.

Communism is one solution Marx theorized in hopes of improving the current conditions in which he lived decades ago. While communism does pose difficulties, the negative effects of capitalism are something to consider given the current economic conditions of the lower classes. It is with critical theory that we can begin to recover the neglected context in which technology changes the sphere of expectation for consumers and workers.

Marx discussed that evolvement would be best accomplished with comprehension of the origins of wealth in accordance with an accurate view of social conflict. If capitalism continues to deflect from the constant struggle between economic classes rather than finding solutions to aid such a void, the possibility of revolution will be inevitable.

Even though this thesis has discussed and suggested that resistance from the consumer is evident in some parts of society, it should not be taken so lightly where we neglect the power imbalances that are intensified by corporate synergy and media convergence. From a cultural perspective, scholars often discuss the subversive meaning and the new conventions that might arise from such a resistance from the consumer when cultures clash.

However, as Shi (p.150) discusses, it is important that we keep in mind the structural dynamics of the political economy that enable and disable unconventional communications in everyday life. Both the political economic theory and cultural studies are imperative to understanding transnational corporate cultural imperialism and human agency activity in order to connect the two, in hopes of understanding a bigger picture. This will be useful in understanding the effects of capitalism, not only on economics, but also on the structural power and organization of society.
In conclusion, this thesis has looked at the social implications of new technologies such as the smartphone, that reflect the social and cultural world in which they are situated, along with the existent blurred line between work and personal time. It is not technology that shapes our whole social and economical world, but how we use these technologies that shapes social relations within the public sphere and corporate world within workers.

This study is only a small step towards understanding the modifications and the negotiations that occur from new technologies under the current distorted structure of our capitalistic society. It should be noted that these findings are not generalizable beyond the scope of this study and restricted to the data found within the company analyzed. Therefore, it is important for future research to expand the study to larger and various corporations to find a more general pattern of workplace exploitation through more open-ended questions when surveying these companies.

Mobile devices are changing and greatly affecting the global marketplace not only socially but also politically and economically as well. Further research should be done exploring these technologies on a macro level that helps us understand what we can gain from these new technologies. This study displayed a negative impact new technologies have under a capitalistic structure. However, what has society gain from these innovations? How can new technologies liberate workers? Have companies used new technologies to allow for a more flexible schedule that better suits the worker? All these questions lead to pervasive subjects within our society; even though not explore within this study because of lack of time and resources they should not be overlooked.
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