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"Can You Hail Me Now?": Brand, Identity, and Althusserian Ideological Interpellation

Jenna Lo Castro

"CAN YOU HAIL ME NOW?":

BRAND, IDENTITY, AND ALTHUSSERIAN IDEOLOGICAL INTERPELLATION

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By

Jenna M. Lo Castro

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ABSTRACT

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Dissertation supervised by Craig T. Maier, Ph.D.

A surge in the role of branding within marketing practices has influenced an industry transformation. A review of recent literature suggests that brand and the branding process have become integral in sustaining and amplifying organizations. This has been particularly influenced by Integrated Marketing Communication's (IMC) espousal of being a consumer-driven process. As such, this project seeks to explore the current state of branding practices through the vision of French Marxist philosopher, Louis Althusser. Althusser's philosophy inspects the human capacity to exercise autonomous decision-making and highlights the influence of social structures upon individuals. Through the Althusserian constructs of ideology and interpellation, as well as Althusser's stance as an anti-humanist, the question guiding this process is how can Althusser's agenda of ideological interpellation as a philosophy of communication help

us to reinterpret branding as a societal process that systematically structures the lifeworld? While much of Althusser's work has been dismissed and overlooked, key metaphors remain relevant and expository of current marketing shortcomings. Within this project, Althusser will be used to make the claim that there are gaps that exist within marketing discourse that must be addressed in order to improve those conditions affecting the relationship between the consumer and the brand.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Lou Saldutti Tolmer, who remained a steady light on an oftentimes difficult and challenging journey. Since I was little, you have pushed me to be strong, to have passion, and to always remain intellectually hungry. This project is the result of the grit and determination that you have engrained in the fabric of my being and for that, I will be forever grateful. *Je t'aime, maman*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 Althusser and an Imaginary Reality

4 A Spectacle of Structures: The Althusserian Slant of Branding

5 Concerning the Future of Branding: Althusserian

Implications in Current Culture

The Case of Consumer-Centric Marketing

Chapter 1: The Branding Cul-de-Sac

I'm an individual, yeah, but I'm part of a movement
My movement told me be a consumer and I consumed it
They told me to just do it, I listened to what that swoosh said
Look at what that swoosh did
See it consumed my thoughts
Are you stupid, don't crease 'em, just leave 'em in that box
Strangled by these laces, laces I can barely talk
That's my air bubble and I'm lost, if it pops
We are what we wear, we wear what we are
But see I look inside the mirror and think Phil Knight tricked us all
Will I stand for change, or stay in my box
These Nikes help me define me, but I'm trying to take mine, off

– Macklemore, "Wing$," *The Heist*

1.1 The Situation

For decades, marketers have acknowledged branding as a valuable resource (Holt, 2004).

Branding is immensely powerful since it has the ability to drive the vision of a product, portfolio,

or even entire company. Though recognized as a veritable organizational asset (Keller &

Lehmann, 2006), the current state of branding and brands are in jeopardy (Yan, 2003). Its abuses

are evident in both its uses and effects. Implemented as a strategy for bridging and building

relationships with consumers as well as a sustaining source of influence for maintaining them

(Ind, Trevail, & Fuller, 2012), branding is just one practice that offers an organizational metric to

measure success. Today, marketers unabashedly tout branding as a cure for improving relations

with a once cynical and highly-suspicious stakeholder. But branding practices are hardly what

they once seemed.

This project assumes that the branding process plays a significant role in determining the

value of a relationship between marketer and consumer. While it is undeniable that the

integrated marketing communication (IMC) industry fostered a new era in how organizations

value stakeholder relations, current strategies and tactics seem questionable. Under the guise of buzzwords like "collaboration" and "co-creation," marketers have created a climate to make the consumer feel as if they are in the driver's seat with how brands grow, evolve, and even perhaps dwindle away. In fact, efforts made to reproduce this sense of consumer agency have become in some sense, extremist in nature. For instance, some marketers are looking to embrace an ideology of "debranding" in order to persuade consumers of their good intentions.

In June of 2016, *Fast Company* published an article written by marketing strategist and copywriter, Jasmine de Bruycker titled, "The Future of Branding is Debranding." In the piece, de Bruycker recommended a simplified, back-to-basics approach to branding practices called "debranding." Debranding would entail effort made by marketers to strip away the spectacle of intrusive and conspicuous marketing strategies and replace them with organic, "barely there" brand experiences. This treatment of branding is nothing new. For years, marketers have attempted to tap into areas of the consumer lifestyle that seem unobtrusive and natural (Klein, 2000; Serazio, 2012). Other approaches have manifested in subculture trends that have become part of mass culture (Heath & Potter, 2004).

De Bruycker (2016) went on to suggest that the future of branding lies not in the brand content and strategy, but with "real people and real tones of voice" that will "become the interface between consumers and products again" (para. 9). This editorial, though hardly philosophical, alludes to key theoretical implications surrounding human agency and the individualistic urge to control with whom and what we forge relationships. The proposition that debranding is characterized by "real people" and "real tones of voice" seems to advance the more widely-known trend of guerrilla marketing. Guerrilla marketing is simply a contemporary and established marketing trend aimed at embedding natural and organic content into

unassuming public spaces to create a "rhetorical interruption" (Serazio, 2013, p. 167). As the

newest marketing paradigm, this trend works to connect with hard-to-reach consumers like

millennials who ultimately crave organic, simple relationships with brands that, to echo de

Bruycker's words, will be receptive to real voices that represent these brands.

Though this seems like marketers are altruistic in their conscious regard for the consumer

"voice," the work of French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser would tell us otherwise. The

question guiding this process is how can Althusser's agenda of ideological interpellation as a

philosophy of communication help us to reinterpret branding as a societal process that

systematically structures and influences the lifeworld? Louis Althusser's voice answers the call

for a potential solution. Although he has long been critiqued for his philosophy and anti-

humanist orientation, his assumptions about human agency and social structures might be of

benefit to marketing practitioners and scholars through a philosophy of communication. As the

next section addresses, his approach to ideology and his construct of interpellation provides a

theoretical framework for how scholars and practitioners within the field can develop more

ethically responsive practices and create authentic, long-lasting relationships with stakeholders.

1.2 Statement of Purpose

In order to preserve and promote the integrity of branding, we must reinterpret its

function and the strategies it is currently employing to entice stakeholders. How can we

understand systematized social conditions that are created in order to implicitly and indirectly

influence a consumer? If current and future marketing trends continue to embrace a narrative of

quiet ubiquity how should we interpret a company's ethical sensitivities and corporate

responsibility toward its consumers? Does this new approach, one that dismisses actual branded

content or hard/soft sells, genuinely endorse communicative reciprocity and "reciprocal value" with its consumer base?

The task of this chapter is to first establish the connection between branding and communication. Scholarship based on a philosophy of communication is briefly offered in order to highlight the discipline's rootedness within IMC, society, and a capitalist marketplace. Branding is undeniably important more now than ever to sustaining IMC because of its inherent communicative nuances. Its practices are always evolving to meet the needs of the consumer, the client, and/or the industry. It is both "complex" and "idiosyncratic" (Aaker, 2014, p. 2). As such, in order to advance itself and maintain a legitimate role within integrated marketing communication practices, the branding process must be responsive and open to examination. The intention here is to introduce the work of Louis Althusser as a way to address current practices and to propose an alternative interpretation of branding that establishes a critical position so as to advance the discipline.

Additionally, the intention of this project is not to provide an analysis of Althusser's major corpus of work or to justify and defend those metaphors that his adversaries so strongly opposed. Rather, the objective is to utilize and (only utilize) the constructs of anti-humanism, ideology and interpellation as a heuristic, as a rhetorical tool that offers a fresh perspective on current branding practices. As such, this project takes no specific stance on the scholar's political or philosophical leanings. Here, Althusser's work is used as an attempt to generate a conversation surrounding a Marxist perspective that explains systems of production within society and to unveil the dialectic struggle of man in the face of a capitalistic system. The final point of this chapter suggests that Althusser's agenda can be useful in highlighting the dilemma

of the branding process as it currently stands. This functions as a theoretical introduction into the dominant concepts that will be detailed in the following chapters.

1.3 Branding's Importance to IMC

IMC practices propose that the current relationship between branding and the consumer is built on collaboration and co-creation. Unlike traditional practices that market *toward* the consumer, marketing managers continue to implement strategies aimed at cultivating and sustaining a rapport with existing and potential product users. Emphasis is now placed upon "nurturing a relationship between the brand and the consumer" (Kliatchko, 2005, p. 16). In the 1990s, a synergized, streamlined marketing effort emerged as a result of several factors: globalized market expansion, technological innovation, and the growth/emphasis on branding as an influential part of consumer decision-making (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p. xvi-xvii; Iacobucci & Calder, 2003, p. ix). At its core, IMC is an attempt to "combine, integrate, and synergise elements of the communication mix consistent with a one-voice communication strategy" (Batey, 2006, p. 219). Not only were these changes and new definition a way to enhance the customer experience, but the practice was also conceived as a way to ease elitism and confusion across various departments within the organizational structure. Departments such as account management, creative, and digital could now work from a synchronized model addressing responsibilities, capabilities, and expectations of all involved divisions.

These departments are responsible for various deliverables that work in tandem to provide a cohesive, fluid, and persuasive message to the consumer. Branding is a vital component to IMC and is the chassis that gives marketers the ability to pursue robust, unified, and multi-dimensional messages. Its role as the common denominator across IMC faucets is

what allows the discipline to emerge as a communicative gestalt. As Duncan (2002) notes, "Integration produces integrity because an organisation that is seen as a "whole" rather than as a collection of autonomous pieces and parts is perceived as being more sound and trustworthy, a prerequisite for sustaining relationships" (p. 31). Here, one may be reminded of the inherent connection between IMC and an Aristotelian tradition of communication. The cross-functional nature of IMC allows the practice to enhance the marketing mix and foster two-way dialogue across multiple platforms.

Branding is a contributor to the overall bottomline of IMC best practices and can be viewed as both a communicative *process* and an organizational *philosophy* that protects particular goods. Goods are any aspects or goals that represent the well-being of that particular period, and of which provide a standard for how we must evaluate communicative engagement (Fritz, 2015). In this case, the goods of branding may include a quality service or product, a valuable narrative, and/or honest and loyal relationships with stakeholders. Branding as a process also implies purpose. Its success in a capitalistic marketplace must remain committed to both short-term and long-term ROI under the standards it sets forth. On one hand, the communicative nature of the practice yields an organizational philosophy which seeks to maintain an image and reputation that is attractive to the consumer, and is ultimately compatible with the architecture of the brand itself. Both the organizational philosophy and process of branding as a communicative endeavor must protect and promote these goods and as such, work to sustain the integrated marketing communication model.

In the academic field, interest in research surrounding this topic and its relationship to marketing continues to climb. Scholarship in the last fifty years or so illustrates how branding has become an expansive and complex area of study under the marketing umbrella. According to

Moore & Reid (2008), "While some thirty brand and branding articles appeared in the top three

consumer behavior journals (*Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of*

Marketing Research) from 1942 to 1969, branding as a major topic of study in the marketing

discipline began in earnest in the 1970's" (p. 3).

Brand loyalty (Fader & Schmittlein, 1993; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Raj, 1985),

brand attitude (Aaker & Jacobson, 2001; Mackenzie & Spreng, 1992), brand recall (Morrin &

Ratneshwar, 2003; Russell, 2002), brand community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), consumer

culture & branding (McCracken, 1986; Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2002), and brand names (Macklin,

1996) are just a few areas of inquiry that stem from a rich landscape. Most of the presented

research often focuses on how the brand is positioned or presented to the consumer and the way

in which its effects are evidenced within the market. Marketing, in general, provides us with an

arsenal of quantitative and qualitative analysis highlighting its communicative nature and value

as a part of a product or service.

Current marketplace definitions adhere to a loose definition of branding, suggesting that

branding is the "integrated and harmonized use of all marketing mix instruments with the aim of

creating a concise, comprehensive, and positively discriminating brand image within the relevant

competitive environment" (Gelbrich, 2008, para. 1). The author continues to note that the

generalized nature of the concept deems it difficult to differentiate among offshoots within the

branding discipline such as brand management, and as such, branding has been specified as

source for creating and managing aspects of brand name, trademark, and product design and

packaging.

Brand can be defined simply as "a proprietary name for a product, service, or group (. . .)

On a more multifaceted level, a brand is the sum total of all functional and emotional assets of

the product, service, or group that differentiate it among the competition" (Landa, 2006, p. 4). Landa's definition offers a practical, "working" understanding of brand as it exists in a capitalist marketplace context. At face value, brands give consumers a starting point, a topline means of interpreting the characteristics and services of a particular product or company. This function was born as a response to the rise of a competitive marketplace of goods post-World War II. A new, uncharted consumer experience demanded differentiation between similar products and as such, brands became a necessary currency in saturated market segments.

However, under the marketing umbrella, branding does not function simply as a differentiator among competition. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) remind us that one cannot not communicate and that "activity or inactivity, words or silence all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot not respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating" (p. 1). The communicative nature of branding should work to recognize and identify the voice of the consumer. After all, brand too, is never not communicating (Batey, 2006). De Bruycker is thus correct in her assertion that branding has the ability to communicate a voice that makes the other facets such as advertising and public relations more fluid and genuine. Without the branding process, IMC ceases to function at a level of adroit efficacy. Branding's communicative sensitivities illuminate how the discipline has evolved throughout history.

Current marketplace trends continue to show impactful findings on the influence of branding and the consumer. Whereas, classical and even industrial-age markets viewed the product as commodity and as such employed "to-market" and "marketing-to" models, (Lusch, 2007, p. 261) the current historical moment marks a shift toward service-driven models of operation, placing less emphasis on the product, and more emphasis on communication and

relationships. Placing emphasis on stakeholder relationships needs to continuously be at the center of the branding process and the realization that the relationship is the asset helps marketers to understand that the brand value is driven by the culmination of factors that mold consumer relationships (Duncan & Moriarty, 1997). Though there has been a rise in published scholarship relating to branding practices within IMC, very little has been written on its nature as a communicative process.

Brand by itself as a concrete and visual commodity such as a Nike logo or the infamous red, holiday Starbucks coffee cup does indeed communicate an idea. However, the process of branding incites a display of reciprocal interaction between marketer and consumer or even organizationally among employees. Gobe (2006) reminds us that branding best practices is rooted far deeper than communication, in that, communication involves a telling, while dialogue encourages a sharing (. . .) Dialogue facilitates a "rewarding partnership" (p. xxxi). This exchanges echoes Buberian roots of dialogic intersubjectivity.

Martin Buber (2010/1937) contended that we can only be understood in relation to one another and that it is through the other, that we come to know who we are as human beings. The success of the branding enterprise is contingent upon this assertion; branding can prosper only when it responsibly acknowledges another human being as a subject. In this sense, branding is rhetorical because it must remain responsive to social and marketplace changes and evolving consumer demands. Acknowledging these differences is the basis of a dialectic communicative encounter reflective of the "acceptance and honoring of differing opinions" (Arnett & Holba, 2012, p. 147).

The branding process can be an invitation to an "oral dialogic exchange" that works toward "proof of argument through joint deliberation" (Nikulin, p. xi, as cited in Arnett & Holba,

2012, p. 147). The encounter is the key entry point for the marketer/consumer relationship and ultimately plays a role in the likelihood that a consumer will retain her relationship with the brand itself and purchase branded products in the future. A successful brand simultaneously communicates belonging and differentiation while engaging multiple audiences; it is through the dynamic branding process that a symbolic strength functions as "sophisticated communicative work" (Hatch & Schultz, 2008, p. 21). The decision to synthesize this area of marketing with ideological interpellation extends the conversation that drives the fundamental underpinnings of IMC best practices. Recruiting consumers to be part of the communication process is a precarious endeavor and interpellation is a means of suggesting that we need to revisit and revise current approaches.

Branding is a tool that places all facets of the marketing endeavor in conversation with each other. Not only does it assist in product recognition for the consumer, brand extension[1], and positive brand relationships, but it also works to protect products from newer products being introduced into a particular market (Pickerton & Broderick, 2005). While advertising tactics may also help to mitigate the threat of additional options, advertising's orientation toward soliciting short-term engagement with the consumer does little to foster the long-term loyalty that most companies look for within their target segments. Though many scholars and practitioners would argue that advertising remains the main influence on consumers, this project contends that it is branding that is more powerful since it works to ideologically captivate individuals by imperceptible means.

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[1] An organization's application of an existing brand and its attributes/characteristics to a new product or line. Use of the established brand helps to bolster the strength of the new product.

1.3.1 The Advertising Hurdle

Manufacturing in the United States has progressed with so much efficiency that today's organizations, regardless of industry, are now able to mass produce similar products to their competition. This suggests that advertising is simply not enough to persuade a consumer anymore. (Pickerton & Broderick, 2005). Today's advertising messages try to rectify this challenge by implementing new, creative approaches to capture consumer attention. Advertising does offer tremendous benefits to the IMC process, particularly within a short-term context. Its emotive nature and ability to solicit pathos within the consumer psyche is advantageous to the company since it stimulates consumerism and a sense of connection to a product. It has the freedom to change and reinvent itself, but this is where the scope of advertising and branding seem be most prominently different. Its reactive nature is unable to cultivate similar communication processes as branding, and as such, seems to fall short with its capabilities.

Branding however, is the process in which a brand is endowed with a symbolic significance and lives as an embodiment of an actual company as well as functions as a stand-in for a deeper, more philosophical and theoretical narrative. Branding creates a social milieu in which the consumer believes she finds herself in a self-imposed, co-created reality, filled with "interpersonal relationships" which involve reciprocal exchange, purpose, multiple benefits, and the ability to interact and evolve in the name of consumer service (Fournier, 1998, p. 344). As such, one of the biggest determinants of a brand's success is an organization's ability to cultivate a long-term meaningful dialogue with the consumer. A successful branding process considers changing narratives and evolves based on a myriad of internal factors such as a rebranding overhaul or brand acquisition. The process also considers external factors such as evolving marketplace trends or consumer demands.

Research in both critical studies and media studies fields contend that within the discipline of advertising, the advertisement is what controls the consumer by way of ideology (Hall, 1997; Williamson, 1994). At least in advertising, this seems like an obvious correlation—the marketer interpellates, or "calls forth" the individual through the visual and rhetorical creative components by urging the consumer to buy or consider the service/product. The consumer then either complies or rejects the proposal. The target consumer, in accepting the message (and in rejecting it), invests herself in the possibilities that the message promotes. But what advertising does not address is how that particular practice is tied to a larger ideology from which consumer identity is influenced by. This interaction is crucial since its effects trickle down through ancillary areas of IMC such as public relations, media, etc. The ideological hailing by brand upon consumer opens up a larger discourse for how we conceive of the communicative nature of customer relationship management as well as facets of brand management.

The aim of this dissertation is to look at how branding functions as an ideological apparatus that serves a particular practical and social function. Pajnik and Lesjak-Tusek (2002) contend that the promoted discourse in advertising interpellates individuals by producing, reproducing, and implicating identities (p. 281). The Nike sneakers will help an individual jump higher and run faster. Flying Southwest will garner an exciting and enjoyable travel experience. If an individual wears Dior perfume, she will feel beautiful, glamorous, and desirable. But how, why, and within what social conditions? What must be considered is the channel of communication and its relevance. For instance, the role of advertising in a marketing campaign not only points the consumer toward a product or idea but is also the *mediator* between consumer and product. In other words, advertising interpellation adds a step in the process of interpretation via creative/rhetorical interpretation.

Conversely, branding does not mediate, but rather *is* a particular relationship of desire that the consumer invests in. The human properties of the brand and the branding process enable the consumer to qualify his existence. Branding is real and exists through and by the sociality of the other. Branding speaks to the consumer and in theory, always listens to the response. This permits a system of beliefs to easily penetrate the daily life of individuals and materialize in simple action.

What has not been considered in depth are the inherent functions of branding itself as a system of ideology. Within the current paradigm, it is the consumer who "determines value and selectively adds that value from the marketing system using only those elements that provide the greatest value to them" (Schultz & Schultz, 2003, p. 116-7). Ideological interpellation invites us to consider the origins of this determination. The apparatus embeds itself within the lifeworld in ways that do not necessarily seek to promote a product, but implicitly inject individuals with particular ideas, rituals, and rules which ultimately lend itself to subject formation.

As this dissertation will later address, subject formation for Althusser is a precarious phenomenon that contributes to an individual's sense of self-fulfillment. This formation is initiated by ideological interpellation: a system of production that materializes itself in the practices and perspectives of the individual, in order to create the illusion of self-sufficiency and personal agency. As we are hailed, we become the "authors" and "essential subjects" of ideology (Hall, 1985, p. 102). The function of ideology then, according to Althusser, is not to impart knowledge (that is the role of science), but rather to explain the conditions that shape social relations.

It is the intention of this project to address how branding has become the primary marketing modality to convey and control information. This will help not only illuminate but

also inform marketing best practices and address the way in which we understand branding as a process that initiates a particular structural ideology. Consequently, accepting these leanings will assist in determining how we may create new ways to build relationships with consumers.

1.4 Significance of Topic

As the next chapter suggests, marketing faces a precarious crisis since it is a a product of modernity that is working to function within postmodernity (Firat, Dholakia, & Venkatesh, 1993) . Marketing trends are inherently tied to historical periods and have played a major role in understanding how cultural and social coordinates have evolved throughout history. The aim of this dissertation is to ultimately apply the scholarship of a thinker who is a Marxist with structural philosophical leanings. This seems at first, unconventional and futile since many ascribe to the view that society is at the crossroads of postmodernity (e.g. Lyotard, 1979; Baudrillard, 1981; Jameson, 1991). Recognizing the differences between these two historical periods however, helps to situate the current state of branding. At the same time, acknowledging these differences creates an opening for one to consider Althusserian philosophy as a solution to postmodern challenges.

Today, in a postmodern juncture the needs and wants of the consumer have shifted tremendously from an emphasis on tangible products to experiences and self-expression. Generally speaking, postmodernity embodies an "acceleration" of modernity which is manifested in the growing instability of identity (Kellner, 1992, p. 143). Identity becomes nothing more than a "myth and an illusion" that is a creation of language and society (Kellner, 1992, p. 143). In other words, the emergence of multiplicity disrupts the individual's sense of place. As Arnett (2007) explains in his interview with Pat Arneson:

Medieval life gives us a greater insight into a postmodern world; both deal

with narrative contention and struggle, with the difference being that the

conversation no longer revolves around the Church. Postmodernity opens

narrative dispute to all walks of life. This postmodern moment is a juncture, a

pause, a rhetorical interruption. The assumptions of universal agreement are

gone and the temporal assumptions in the stage after postmodernity not yet in

place. (p. 61)

Postmodernism is "where authority in general is rejected and scepticism becomes the defining

cultural characteristic" (Sim, 2000, p. 104). This interpretation reflects the contention that

postmodernity is dynamic in that there is more of an "inmixing of the constative or descriptive,

the normative or prescriptive, and the expressive or aesthetic across the domains of inquiry such

as science, morality, and art (. . .)" (Schrag, 1997, p. 32). In other words, assumptions about this

world are unstable and always evolving to reflect alternative meanings. Serazio (2013) notes

that brands in particular, are responses to this historical moment since, "like faith or polity in

prior epochs, [they] provide for some sense of the social order [. . .] Ideally, religion, political

affinity, family ties, folk culture, or geographic anchoring should play this role, but, sadly,

postmodern life no longer affords such guarantees" (p. 166).

Branding fulfills the needs of the consumer that other facets of IMC cannot; it provides

identity (albeit transient) and relational stability. One of advertising's primary objectives is to

promote awareness, push the hard sell, or even sometimes advance brand recognition. This is

often an explicit and obvious marketing act. However, as Serazio makes mention, branding is

unassuming, quietly implied, and interpellates its subjects quite differently. Its salience allows it

to penetrate consumer feelings and thoughts without dispute. Whereas advertising's

interpellation says that it can instantly satisfy one's desires, branding implicitly interpellates so that it is the consumer who proactively acknowledges that the brand can fulfill his needs and wants. This is particularly important now since consumer skepticism is driven by the desire to make personal choices in a saturated marketplace. However, personal choice does not constitute volition. Competing narratives in the current historical moment can be likened to competing ideologies. The structure of these ideologies are put in to place so that decision-making appears volitional.

A constructive hermeneutic approach of Althusser's key coordinates, namely ideology nd interpellation, are appropriate for the current marketing climate. The construct of ideological interpellation will be offered as an alternative interpretation of engagement between marketers and the consumer and questions the volitional nature that it seemingly wants to establish. The hope is that the ideas of anti-humanism, ideology, and interpellation as applied to branding will reinvigorate the discourse surrounding both its influence and unique philosophical and critical theory applications. By applying these constructs to branding as a discipline, marketers may be afforded the opportunity to recognize branding not just a rhetorical artifact that is part of the marketing process, but rather a heuristic to be used and considered in the development and maintenance of a company, as well as a benchmark to measure the relational impact on culture and society. This may help to alleviate the frustration and cynicism of the marketer.

This philosophy of communication and its rhetorical components presented in this work will also help to diffuse the much needed quantitative scholarship often associated with IMC practices and provide a constructive hermeneutic to a richly interpretive field. A constructive hermeneutic is appropriate for the controversial work of Althusser since it permits one to "transcend the prejudice of a certain tradition" as she "learns about different ones" (Arnett &

Holba, 2012, p. 89). Primary research will be largely based on interpretive scholarship. Additionally, the conversation will be textured with case studies used to express and highlight practical applications regarding consumer behavior and branding.

A philosophy of communication encompassing both cultural studies and critical theory will also be used to make explicit connections between Marxist philosophy and branding. This is an appropriate methodology since a philosophy of communication helps us in understanding relations and "regards the world with a condition of openness and space for possibilities inherent in communication" (Arneson, 2007, p. 8). Right now we are witnessing a consumptive culture dominated by the spectacle of commodity fetishism[2] — our inability to recognize the difference between a commodity and a good so that reality has become colonized by our desires. This problematic incites inquiry and understanding for how these "imaginary" relations are formed and perpetuated across historical periods. A philosophy of communication also "works" to "help us enhance our understanding of how communication shapes society and social issues within society" (Arneson, 2007a, p. 8). The urgency of this issue could not come at a more opportunistic moment in American society where brand communities are now offering their loyal patrons a literal and metaphorical vocabulary that is tied to "a brand narrative of which they can be a part of an enduring way of life" (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 203). These new narratives have become part of the production and reproduction of a capitalist marketplace and demand an exegetic look.

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[2] See Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967/1994). Debord writes that the "perceptible world has been replaced by a set of images that are superior to that world yet at the same time impose themselves as *eminently* perceptible" (p. 26).

1.5 The Case for the Application of Althusser

Though Louis Althusser has been associated with various auxiliary areas of scholarship such as structuralism, Marxism, and critical theory, his philosophical agenda remains wholly unique. Perhaps the biggest challenge of both advocates and adversaries alike was that around the volatile period of revolt and protest in France during the late 1960s, Althusser's followers became greatly discouraged by his critique of humanism and the display of a theoretical perspective that while he once so strongly promoted, now saw as a "ruse" (Montag, 2013, p. 3). It was during this height of Althusser's most productive period of writing in the 1960s and 1970s, that his work began to be regarded as highly contentious and contradictory. Major contemporaries[3] assert that not only was Althusser a Stalinist, but his anti-humanist agenda and his conflicting philosophy on ideology was nothing more than "idealist delirium" (Thompson, 1978, p. 234).

Althusser's philosophical and political leanings continue to evade scholars who seek to categorize him. Much of the controversy surrounding his work has led to several ascriptions placing him into various intellectual camps. Historically, those most critical of Althusser have regarded his work as anti-humanist, anti-historicism, anti-empirical and even as Stalinist (Elliott, 1987). However, those who support Althusserianism and proclaim they believe that Althusser's work maintains intellectual currency have labeled him simply as a Marxist (Balibar & Machery, 1982). Ferretter (2006) also establishes Althusser as a Marxist and clarifies his relationship to the

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[3] E.P. Thompson's "The Poverty of Theory" (1978) launches a head-on assault on Althusser's corpus of work, and in writing a robust response to Althusser's conjectures in *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* argued, "And is not Althusser licensed to envisage capitalism as structure?' The answer is 'no'. And whoever asked that question may go to the back of the class" (p. 207). See also Jacques Ranciere's *La Leçon d'Althusser* (1974).

structuralist movement, noting that while Althusser was not a self-proclaimed structuralist, the philosophy certainly inspired his key ideas.

For example, his desire to create a philosophy that avoided class reductionism and historical materialism jived with the ideas grounded in the structuralist movement. Above all else, it was Althusser who continued to elude any type of label since he had embraced the motto, *on s'engage et puis on voit,* meaning, you commit yourself and then you see (Montag, 2013). What this reflects is not only the evolution and shifts of Althusser's philosophical agenda, but also how Althusser believed in the revision and correction of ideas. As such, this dissertation takes the stance that Althusser was a Marxist with anti-humanist and pro-structuralist inclinations. Establishing this position allows the project to address major issues that are impacting current branding practices and advances the argument that the industry may be able to glean some insight from this perspective.

Althusser believed a revised philosophy of Marx's works could extend surrounding conversations, many argue that Althusser's agenda was to dismantle it and rewrite it for his own self-serving purposes. Noting that humanism was nothing more than a theoretical ideology (rather than a science) because it doesn't provide us with a "means of knowledge" (Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 223), Althusser refuted humanism's ability to add value to the ongoing conversation within the historical moment. Though various types of humanism exist, the foundations of this tradition emphasize the pursuit of self-perfection and the ability to enrich and develop oneself.

Marx believed that this human narrative was one in which man had the capacity and agency to liberate himself from oppressive socio-economic chains. Althusser however, saw humanism as futile and unable to surpass the stipulations that the established structures of

ideology and power imposed on society. For the individual, the possibility of overthrowing such systems is not only futile, but the system is organized in such a way that individuals are unable to recognize that such systems even exist. His anti-humanist structural[4] marxism influenced his dominant theoretical perspectives on ideology and is precisely what provides a panacea for IMC's current privileging of consumer co-creation and collaboration.

In an effort to extend the work of Marx, Althusser contended that power and dominance are not just structures determined by economic status, but rather various ideological apparatuses founded throughout social, legal/governmental, educational, and religious sectors which all ultimately work to mold social formations. This is inclusive of branding. This affects not just cultural or social practices, but structures "social totality and its historical trajectory" (Jensen, 2008, para. 6). This contrasts with Marx who deemed economic determinism as the primary source for understanding history. While there is no mistake that the two thinkers are at odds with one another in their viewpoints, this dissertation claims that Althusser's philosophical perspective warrants consideration as the project attempts to unpack the current climate within the marketing industry.

Drawing from one of his most major intellectual influences, Althusser takes a page from Enlightenment thinker Baruch Spinoza to express how he viewed man's dialectical crisis. Althusser outlines the human attempt at exercising free will, explaining that as we observe the plight of individuals, we must attempt to methodize a structural philosophy in order to account for the notion that an individual's beliefs, ideas, or values are simply just a byproduct of

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[4] Althusser never declared himself a structuralist, however his writings reflect the dominant philosophies of academic discourse at the time. Spearheaded by French structuralists such as Lacan, Barthes, and Strauss, Althusser was influenced by the vocabulary of such scholarship, particularly since its foundation in anti-humanism seemed to fall in line with his thoughts.

preexisting institutions. We are unable to exercise individual choice and personal agency because 1.) ideology works on the individual unconsciously or "behind the scenes" so that we are unable to recognize its constraints, and 2.) even if we were to recognize the existence of ideology, ideology fails to materialize itself within knowledge but is made apparent in its social effects. In other words, it is when we are expressing a specific ideology, that works upon us. "Ideology is a system of representations endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society" (Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 231). This system imposes itself on us by way of interpellation. In basic terms, to interpellate means to hail or call another[5].

The construct of ideology situates itself in the notion of a social systematic structure. Althusser wishes to utilize ideology as a heuristic for understanding how economic conditions influence power, control, and subject formation. This structure, Althusser notes, is "conceived of pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness. All of its reality is external to it" (33). Structures reflect our lived reality, or the reality that we create. Though this outlook *prima facie* seems dismal at best, Althusser's work, when placed in conversation with other scholarship provides us with a revisionist perspective of how we may be able to view brand and how we may be able to constructively revisit branding best practices.

Ideological interpellation derives itself from Althusser's theoretical positions on Marxism and anti-humanism. The scholar's work is concerned with existing social structures and the production and reproduction of particular ideologies. These ideologies, he contends, are ideas, values, and laws that individuals subscribe to unconsciously through the phenomenon of hailing.

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[5] The French definition and the English definition of "interpellate" slightly vary. Within the French language, the term has two meanings, one referring specifically to the hailing that a law enforcement officer might utilize. This definition is sometimes expressed as a "questioning" or "stopping.". The second definition defines interpellation as an act of calling out to, to get someone's attention. The English definition reconciles the term by adding that it can also refer to a formal beckoning of sorts, i.e. something done in the court room.

This hailing calls forth an individual's being as *subject,* and as such offers her an identity. Althusser's definition of social structures would inveigh both branding and even "debranding" and label them examples of such ideological practices that mold and shape the development of human identity. As such, IMC trends of "collaboration" and "co-creation" between marketer and consumer as well as the nature of the branding process can be interpreted as a means to perpetuate systems that produce culture, colonize the lifeworld, and attempt to control individual identity.

This stance is appropriate in a postmodern juncture that banishes universal narratives. Why would Althusser's philosophy, one aimed at expressing how society is an pre-determined, pre-existing system of hegemonic inclinations, be of benefit to branding? IMC best practices (inclusive of branding) allege that the model is inherently tied to co-creation and that the consumer is *equally* important in overseeing the development and the planning process. However, an Althusserian perspective would assert that this is simply a veneer and that the responsive nature of the consumer is already determined by the branding process. His stance reveals a valid interpretation of what's happening in the current marketing climate. Consumers are enslaved by an ideological system of consumption and the branding process that perpetuates it by disguised consumer interest. Academics and industry practitioners alike must account for the power relations that co-exist within the marketplace and should be held accountable in assessing how branding works upon and through consumer agency.

Additionally, individuals continue to experience a loss. Both the sense of the other and the self have been compromised by a voracious desire to accumulate goods and develop relationships with brands and companies that are perceived as authentic. Ideological interpellation is just one way of understanding how the branding process may be flawed and how

both academic and practitioners alike can improve upon current trends, especially since branding is symbolic of a larger communicative paradigm that reflects how human identity is formed and molded by way of interpellation. Althusser contends that individual beliefs, values, and behaviors are ultimately a byproduct of institutionalized ideologies within society. One of Althusser's main concerns was not why certain systems should exist or why they should or should not affect a person, but rather how structured patterns within society affect the individual. For this scholar, ideology was an inescapable, ubiquitous system that was not necessarily pejorative in nature. As consumers within a capitalist marketplace, we easily recognize the agenda of corporations and companies wishing to sell a product in exchange for capital and the rhetorical strategies and tactics often used to persuade us.

But, we do not necessarily recognize the larger mechanism at play—a mechanism that asserts itself well before we exercise any decision, or even more extreme, before we can *think* about making a decision. My intent is explore and address how ideological systems within society and culture, particularly branding as a system, shape individual identity that is indicative of a postmodern milieu and what Hall (1997) refers to as "a moveable feast" (p. 276). In a postmodern vein (and ironically, tipping his hat to Hemingway who by all accounts was considered modernist), Hall contends that identity of the self is never fixed, but rather, changes and fluctuates through time and at any given moment, has the ability to morph again.

As such, identity becomes like a moveable feast and moves with us. It is largely influenced by the particular historical moment the individual may find herself within. This is particularly pertinent in the current historical moment where a grand narrative has been replaced by various petit narratives that now compete for dominance in an individual's *lebenswelt*. Althusser would be quick to condemn postmodernity for these characteristics of democratic

plurality, petit narrative, fragmentation and decentralized power. However, his understanding of subject formation may be advantageous in understanding how branding interpellates the consumer and may help us to reclaim a postmodern juncture that positions itself as a moment in which individuals shape their identity through tradition, whether it be religious, social, ethnic, etc. (Arneson, 2007). Althusser may be able to help us understand the origins of interpreting identity as a moveable feast. It is not something that is controlled by the subject herself, but rather is produced by the conditions of ideology within society. Though ideology offers the individual a perception of self-agency, it is controlled by an ideological apparatus. The branding process is just one such system of power that produces an ideological apparatus and particular exploitive conditions.

Nevertheless, it still promotes identity and belongingness, something to grasp at in an historical moment of fragmentation in which "men are to be formed, transformed, and equipped to respond to the demands of their conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 235). In other words, confronting the work of ideology might be the solution. As Montag (2013) suggests, it is ideology which emerges as a byproduct of society—a system that is the "element or atmosphere" in which a society "breathes" (p. 110). Ideological interpellation is as ubiquitous as brands are within society.

This project's main metaphors of anti-humanism, ideology, and interpellation will propagate their way throughout the course of this work and lastly, be applied to particular contexts in order to offer an application of such ideas. Lastly, suggestions about where Althusser's work can take us within the communication field with be offered. These implications will highlight how Althusserian philosophy remains an applicable resource for exploring and revising marketing best practices.

1.6 Overview of Project

  This project is driven largely by the need to offer a revised understanding of the role of branding within both the marketplace but also society. Today, marketers rely heavily on consumer engagement with the brand but this continues to be problematic. Though early marketing practices were aimed at persuading the consumer to purchase a product, contemporary marketing practices are now oriented toward cultivating valuable, sustainable relationships that ultimately propel the consumer to engage in the branding process on a long-term scale. But how marketers orient the relationship and engage the consumer is questionable. The first chapter of this project recognized the philosophical and critical grounds that support how there needs to be a shift in how marketers approach branding as a strategy in order to be profitable.

  As Ots and Nyilasy (2015) suggested, failures in IMC implementation such as "miscommunication", "compartmentalization" (ignoring alternative opinions or perspectives), and "loss of trust and decontextualization" (adhering to a particular system of rules/routines to the extent that it begins to affect one overall ability to adjust his ideas or be more flexible) affect the overall bottom line of consumer relations management and branding process (p. 140). While branding largely considers tangible deliverables to fuel consumer awareness and market presence, this chapter focused on current IMC practices that take a co-creative approach to branding initiatives. This, I will establish in additional chapters, perpetuates a significant issue for both marketers in an IMC climate. The following chapters will then address how we may be able to reinterpret our understanding of brand and branding practices and what able to glean from a fast-paced ever evolving milieu that demands an attentiveness not only to relationships, but also to a historical moment defined by the pursuit of social belonging and identity formation.

Chapter 2 of the project will extend the construct of brand and how it has made considerable strides of importance in the last 20 years. Marketers continue to acknowledge branding as a cornerstone to the marketing enterprise and its potential capabilities in the IMC process, so much so, that complex and deeply informative branches of brand (i.e. brand loyalty, brand attitude, brand community, and brand names) have expanded to become their very own discipline of study. New possibilities and definitions surrounding branding continue to emerge and this chapter will ultimately detail those findings. Varma (2010) illuminates these possibilities when he writes that brand is like a "floating piece of ice on water" (p. 27). This metaphor conjures a large iceberg-like object bobbing up and down in an expansive body of water that reminds us that not only is branding deeply complex and interpretive, but it is also faced with existing in a massive sea of competing brands and marketing initiatives.

Branding has much to offer us, particularly since its understanding, implementation, and definition continues to evolve. As such, the process in which we discover and decide upon particular aspects of branding proves vital to sustaining the marketer and consumer partnership. This chapter seeks to trace the history of brand and the importance of branding from its earliest roots all the way through the current historical moment, highlighting both its practical/tangible qualities and its communicative proclivities. This project will explore how the use of brand and branding within the current marketplace is the chassis for this inquiry and also consider how the consumptive value of brand as a "good" textures critical theory discourse addressed in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 acts as an expository exercise in looking at the core starting points of Althusser's philosophy. Mainly influenced by the historical moment of shifting political tides, Althusser's anti-humanist agenda attempts to reformulate Marxist theories which furthers the

ideas surrounding subject formation, hegemony, and the creation of an unseen consumer obedience via ideology. Namely, it will be shown that his infamous notions of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) as centralized, omniscient structures of power ultimately deny a person a conscious identity since ideologies impose themselves through institutionalized discourse. This is made apparent in his metaphor of interpellation. Althusser offers us a unique understanding of identity formation since he posits that power and control are not necessarily oppressive, but rather engenders a person's identity.

Though IMC scholarship positions the consumer as a co-creator in the value of a brand, Chapter 4 takes the stance that if we go back to the basic understanding of branding and the fact that a marketer must create a brand, it is feasible to suggest that branding is symbolic of an institutionalized ideal that interpellates the consumer. "The added value of symbolism [of the brand] rests on the brand's ability to create or avail itself if a common ground of understanding among its stakeholders, and the opportunity it gives individuals to participate in sustaining of changing that understanding" (Hatch & Shultz, 2008, p. 39). Branding must be interpreted in such a fashion; doing so, recognizing the structural capabilities of the process, offers an additional communicative tool for better servicing stakeholders.

The work of Althusser will then be synthesized with the branding discussion. When applied to branding, Althusser's construct of ideological interpellation helps us make connections between structures of power in society and the relationships that produce and reproduce them. The conceived relationship between marketer and consumer is one that exists simply in the mind of the latter. Existing ideological structures create an environment that links us to ideas and meanings that impose upon us an identity. "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" or otherwise "world outlooks"

(Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 36). "Ideology, then, is the expression of the relation between men and their 'world' between them and their real conditions of existence" (Hall, Hobson, Lowe, & Willis, 1980, p. 123). In other words, Althusser's philosophy helps to understand that ideological interpellation is a phenomenon that creates order and identity within society.

Chapter 5 looks at the alternative implications of understanding brand through anti-humanism, ideology, and interpellation and considers how marketers might be able to polish their once tarnished image as being what Aristotle deemed "profiteering parasites" (Cassels, 1936, p. 130). What this chapter also suggests is how Althusser's interpellation may offer a more progressive opportunity for the branding practice to revise itself. Utilizing various example and case studies to texture this conversation, Chapter 5 demonstrates how Althusser's work can be offered as a response to improve current marketing trends. Lastly, suggestions for further research regarding this topic will be offered.

Perhaps what is most remarkable about Althusser is his attentiveness and dedication to the pragmatic and necessary nature of philosophical inquiry within society and the pursuit of human liberation. In an interview Althusser (1968c) remarked, "Philosophy represents the people's class struggle in theory. In return it helps the people to distinguish in *theory* and in all *ideas* (political, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) between true ideas and false ideas. In principle, true ideas always serve the people; false ideas always serve the enemies of the people" ("Philosophy as revolutionary," sec. 7). Though Althusser's theories are heavily refuted, critiqued, and to some extent disregarded by those within academia (particularly more Marxist humanist scholars), his contribution to the field and his theory of ideological interpellation offers practical application in the evolving field of IMC. As branding practices continue to hearken more emphasis by both the

marketer, client, and consumer, marketers will continue to be pressed for deciding how and why

branding will be used as a communicative tool.

Chapter 2: Branding's Faustian Bargain

FAUST.
When on an idler's bed I stretch myself in quiet,
There let, at once, my record end!
Canst tho with lying flattery rule me,
Until, self-pleased, myself I see, —
Canst tho with rich enjoyment fool me,
Let that day be the last for me!
The bet I offer.

–Goethe, *Faust*

2.1 Introduction

Technological advancements throughout human history have inspired many to consider

and question its powerful and captivating effects. Upon reading the work of media ecologist

Marshall McLuhan (1964), I was driven to the work of his disciple Neil Postman who discussed

technology as being both a blessing and a curse. Both McLuhan and Postman are hardly

determinists; both believed that technology has the capacity to work upon us, and we upon it.

According to Postman (1992) technological innovation has the ability to enrich and destroy

human experience and affect an individual's capacity to think and commune meaningfully with

others. Calling upon the work of the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Postman

(1998) contends that technology is a proverbial Faustian bargain in which ethical judgment or the

ability to understand the long-term effects of a decision are ultimately clouded by the modernist

pursuit of knowledge and progress:

> The first idea is that all technological change is a trade-off. I like to call it a
>
> Faustian bargain. Technology giveth and technology taketh away. This means that
>
> for every advantage a new technology offers, there is always a corresponding
>
> disadvantage. The disadvantage may exceed in importance the advantage, or the

advantage may well be worth the cost. (p. 1)

Much like the deal with the devil that Postman foresaw in the rise of technology, branding has likewise become a practice that has made some questionable bargains in the name of success. In an effort to conquer a targeted consumer territory, create new and innovative ways to engage the consumer, and produce unparalleled products or services, branding practices now exhibit those warning signs that Faust overlooked on his journey with Mephistopheles. In this sense, marketers are playing the role of both protagonist and antagonist, possessing a desire to obtain what they yearn to have and being that which produces what others desire to have as well. What is seen as much like Faust's desire for fulfillment and absolute truth, so too is the marketer's quest for success.

Branding has become an alluring apparatus; it is what has given us "wings." It is what has convinced us that an individual can be "Like Mike," "Have it Your Way" or that "You're in Good Hands." Indeed, branding is affiliated with a certain type of intoxicating mystique and consumers are drawn to participate in these synthetic brand myths and narratives (Batey, 2006). Today's capitalist marketplace touts an ethos of consumer autonomy that permits us to willingly choose a particular myth. In echoing the fantastical world that brands draw us into, Boorstin (1961) wrote, "The central paradox—that the rise of images and of our power over the world blurs rather than sharpens the outlines of reality—permeates one after another area of our life" (p. 228-9). Boorstin's observation recognized that a thriving consumer culture coupled with perceived self-controlled decision-making was ultimately doing a disservice to man. Superficial or immaterial resources presented in the form of goods, entertainment, and pop culture iconization have become popular conduits of interpreting the real world and continue to be part of a current marketing paradigm. Whatever was once seen as valuable, real, or meaningful now

seems to be teetering on the edge of that postmodern cliff, ready to fall into a sea of an abysmally empty existence.

This chapter offers a foundation for understanding brand and the practice of branding as a Faustian bargain. It will trace its historical development and evolution, as well as highlight the various interpretations of both terms. Providing this evidence will then work to illuminate how branding fits into particular cultural paradigms and historical moments, which has consequently led to auxiliary discourses within the industry such as brand communities and brand equity. Lastly, the chapter will explain the effects of branding and its current challenges. These insights will provide a foundation for just why counter dialogue and concerns raised from sources such as the Medinge Group command the infusion of Althusserian thought.

2.2 The Mark of History

Originating from the Old English word, *biernan*, brand means "to burn" (Twitchell, 2004, p. 17). The practice of branding dates as far back as Ancient times when an emerging marketplace propelled merchants and craftsmen to brand their goods. Research by Moore and Reed (2008) suggest that branding was founded as far back as around 2250 - 2000 BCE in the Indus Valley which is geographically now today where the countries of Pakistan and northwest India lie. Products created during this historical era were branded to show quality or to communicate a distinct quality or particular origin (Moore & Reed, 2008). This continued to be a trend in subsequent early markets. In Ancient Greece for instance, brands were used to communicate where a particular olive oil or wine originated and was connected to a degree of value that the buyer associated with his relationship to the supplier (Kepferer, 2012). Branding

transcended just material goods. Animals and humans were likewise branded to show some type of ownership or ties to a subculture such as criminals or particular ethnic group (Landa, 2006).

Throughout historical periods, progress and technology promoted the use of brands. The creation of the Gutenburg Press in the 15th century lay the roots of modernity and slingshotted various societies into a period of limitless exposure to information and ideas. The printing press "made food for thought much more abundant and allowed mental energies to be more efficiently used" (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 688). This innovation led to an advancement in commerce and allowed merchants to advertise wares to the masses. In the 19th century, the concept of brand came to be known as a trademark or "calling card" and in 1905, Congress passed legislation that deemed brand a "name, term, or design—or a combination of these elements that is intended to clearly identify and differentiate a seller's products from a competitor's products" (Twitchell, 2004, p. 18). Not only had brand transformed from a visual symbol of ownership, but it was now able to tack on a personal identity and a narrative to those ideas associated with it.

After the Civil War, the economy gave away to what Landa (2006) refers to as the "packaged goods society" (p. xxii). Before roughly 1880, products were often purchased by weight and the success of selling wares often relied on relationships with the local craftsman or store owner who was able to confirm the value or quality of the product (Fiske & Malone, 2012; Varma, 2010). Purchases were made out of need or utility, rather than desire. It was around this time that companies behind the products and manufacturers began to implement particular brands or trademarks with their business. Packaging gradually came to be of the selling process. The rhetorical appeal that consumers were presented with advertising worked to promote particular brands. Industrialization and mass media at the turn of the 20th century continued to fuel the increase of branding and advertising. Schultz and Barnes (1999) note that formalization

of brand roots in the United States can be traced back to Proctor and Gamble and their branding of Ivory soap. As the trend of associating a brand with a product continued to gain steam, consumer discontent was born and glimmers of Faust's tradeoff began to take shape. The Industrial Revolution had made it so that for the very first time, consumers were not doing direct business with their local shop owner or craftsman. This shift in the consumer experience is summed up by Fiske and Malone (2012):

> By artificially separating the producers of projects and services from their end customers, the Industrial Revolution introduced middle players such as distributor and retailers to mediate relationships between producer and customer. Producers came to believe that the mass communication of features, benefits, and positioning would be enough to yield lasting consumer loyalty, without having to deal directly with or ever know the names of those individual customers. (p. 10)

The disconnect between the producer and the consumer widened the gap of immediacy and evidenced the prioritization of financial gain over the customer relationship. This move fell in line with what Lusch (2007) deems "to-market" and "marketing-to" economic enterprises (pp. 263-4). Both marketing objectives concerned themselves primarily with the product or service and the process was seen as a one-way exchange with little regard for consumer response. During this historical moment (and for much of the industry afterwards), the product or the service was at the fulcrum of the marketer's initiatives. This gave way to a top-down marketing process whereby the marketer determined the marketing message and how it would be disseminated through various channels.

The thought was that the consumer mind was a *tabula rasa* that the marketers' control coupled with the lifeworld could essentially prescribe meaning for the consumer (Mitchell, 2012,

p. 83). This falls in line with Bernays (1923) who surmised that consumers are a part of an indecisive public that could be expressed as "an ill-defined, mercurial and changeable group of individual judgments" (p. 87). Four years after Benays made this conjecture, Lippman (1927) constructed the public as an "inexpert in its curiosity, intermittent, that it discerns only gross distinctions (. . .) slow to be aroused and quickly diverted; that, since it acts by aligning itself, it personalizes whatever it considers, and is interested only when events have been melodramatized as conflict" (p. 55). A consumer opinion took a backseat to the objectives and visions of the marketer or company. Marketers at that time determined that product benefits would be enough to satisfy both the emotional and physical needs of a passive or ill-equipped consumer.

By the 1980s, brands became largely integral to both marketers and the financial community (Schultz & Barnes, 1999). Practitioners increasingly took notice of how the injection of brand into a marketing mix was likely to produce valuable results for a company as well as its products or services. In order to explore the construct of branding, it is necessary that this dissertation first starts with a more monolithic conceptualization of brand itself. The current brand paradigm is working to rewrite this narrative.

Today's trends exhibit a return to the consumer experience before the Industrial era, and the focus has shifted back to a period in which people can insist on "having their personal relationships back with brands and products" (Fiske & Malone, 2012, p. 15). This has become the new objective for marketers. While consumers continue to crave the relational experience to help guide their decision-making and long-term investments, the definition of brand continues to transform and evolve to meet new expectations.

2.3 Definition of Brand

The idea of a brand is a persnickety phenomenon and for decades its definition has eluded even the most adept scholars and practitioners of the field. Just like Alice and her fall down the rabbit hole, determining the qualities constitutive of brand and branding have produced an expansive semantic journey. Some definitions (particularly those earlier ones) target a brand's tangible assets such as the American Marketing Association's in which brand is "a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (n.d.) The AMA's definition describes brand's earliest function in the marketplace. The use of a concrete symbol to communicate a particular value or to discriminate it from another craftsman is to some extent, still a relevant interpretation.

The traditional assumption that brand is just a static, two-dimensional symbol used to differentiate itself among a competitor sells its rich influences short. Sheehan (2008) notes that brands do have material qualities such as "name, a logo, and other visual elements such as images, colors, or type fonts" (para. 2). However, its ability to growth and flourish as a viable contender in a product market is dependent on the way these characteristics are interpreted. This can pose a problem since as de Chernatony (2009) notes, this definition is almost analogous to the definition of a trademark. Attempts to clarify the true meaning of a brand continue to tap into anthropomorphic attributes.

Now, brand is mainly associated with intangible characteristics or as a persona or essence (Kapferer, 1992). What makes a brand viable in eyes of the consumer is the qualities it possesses and how well those qualities reflect the mission and values of a company. Others equate brand to a type of contractual agreement between marketer and consumer, where the marketer promises to deliver a "specific value or performance" and in its execution, determines the equity of its brand

(Varma, 2010, p.44). Here, brand acts as a stand-in for a promise and reinforces the notion that marketing's focus has shifted completely to the consumer experience. The brand can be seen then as a performance benchmark. Consumers that help to uphold their "contract" with the brand and those who sever ties offer the marketer insight into just to what extent a consumer values the brand or product.

Addtiionally, some scholarship attempts to integrate meanings such as Landa (2006) who positions brand as being a "proprietary name for a product, service, or group" but also as a "sum total of all functional and emotional assets of a product, service, or group that differentiate it among the competition" (p. 4). This interpretation of brand lends itself to Keller and Lehman's (2006) assertion that brands manifest themselves in 3 primary areas: the "customer market", "product market", and "financial market" (p. 740). Brand thus becomes an organizational conductor, mediating a company's internal and external communications while helping to streamline its core values and mission. Schultz and Schultz (2003) maintain a similar tripartite stance and emphasize an understanding of brand as it fits into the IMC paradigm:

> A brand is a product of service represented by a name, symbol, graphic, or other
>
> visible and recognizable identifying element that (a) can be legally protected, (b)
>
> can be exchanged or sold for consideration, (c) contributes perceptual value to the
>
> relationship between buyer and seller, (d) has some form of financial value, and
>
> (e) is managed for ongoing value creation by the brand owner. (p. 304)

Schultz and Schultz's definition considers both tangible and intangible characteristics as well as its benefits to all stakeholders. In short, brand can be one of an organization's most vital assets in maintaining its health, both internal and within the marketplace. Above all else, brand is a unique enterprise and remains an integral piece of the marketing mix. Deciphering how brand performs

in all three of those areas both independently and wholistically, gives the marketer a clear picture of just how well or poorly a product, service, or brand is performing.

As the discipline continues to grow and evolve, the endeavor of finding a universal understanding of brand has been at the center of academic discourse. Relying upon industry experts to spearhead their research, de Chernatony and Dall'Olmo Riley (1998) set out to create a comprehensive understanding of brand that encompassed "formal, semantical, methodological and epistemology" criteria (p. 417). Based on twelve different definitions based on scholarship, the researchers results found that most experts' understanding of brand is as a representation of "unique clusters of values" (p. 422). The brand is the site for which value can be defined, maintained, and fostered. It also highlights the fact that the interpretation of these values are dynamic since multiple factions of individuals are largely contribution to the clusters. This is echoed in later work of de Chernatony (2009) whose "holy grail" definition of brand says that those clusters of value "enables a promise to be made a bout a unique and welcomed experience" (p. 104). What's important in understanding this particular definition of brand is that it acknowledges the communicative interplay between marketer and consumer.

Definitions supporting brand as something related solely to its tangibility, its role as a financial asset, or organizational ownership ignores stakeholders' influence and their critical role within the process. This is not to say that the tangible qualities of the brand as a visual cue or as a logo is unimportant. The creative expression of the brand also communicates particular ideas and values to the consumer and ultimately permits the brand to differentiate itself in a sea of market competition or allows the consumer to make connections between it and various brand extensions.

The paradox with brand is how it may be able to remain consistent and stable in the eyes of the consumer, and yet, maintain flexibility in times of market and consumer changes. Bernstein (2003) expresses this inconsistency by defining the term "identity," in conjunction to brand, noting that the term relates to both "the state of being the same" as well as "individuality" (p. 1136). However, identity changes in its application to either space or time; brand changes within space either through its physical characteristics or in the "space" in which the consumer conceives the brand in her mind. Conversely, a brand remains unchanged through time, "providing the same values time after time" (Bernstein, 2003, p. 1136). This is dependent on its ability to align both its tangible and intangible qualities.

In other words, "Brand meaning is about becoming an enduring and consistent expression of a given meaning. It is about how meaning is sustained in the face of changing times and market conditions, how it is replenished and rejuvenated, how it is leveraged across multiple segments or in different cultures, without contamination, violation, or dilution" (Batey, 2003, p. 130). Brand is a timeless rhetorical artifact, that if properly executed and managed, has the ability to traverse cultures, generations, and geographical spaces. It likewise though can be an unfortunate misstep for organizations that fail to see its potency. As this chapter later suggests, this has been a challenge within postmodernity and a consumer culture. Technological progress and the growth of a knowledgable consumer base have led marketers down a difficult path where they are now trying to counter consumers who tout anti-brand rhetoric (Klein, 2000; Lasn, 1999).

Understanding how brand is interpreted and used within the marketplace is fundamentally tied to the process that makes its use possible. This dissertation takes the stance that branding, rather than brand will be of focus of discussion in its application to an Althusserian commentary. But, just like the defining of brand, the defining of branding also

warrants attention since it signifies the process whereby marketers and consumers have the ability to elicit a long term conversation and sustaining relationship with one another.

2.3.1 Branding: A Devil of a Job

Branding too, has been subjected to various meanings and definitions throughout its history. Early understandings of branding fall in line with the early same one-dimensional, linear definitions of brand and has often fallen victim to scholarship that interchanges the term with the word, brand. Though the two remain germane to the general marketing conversation and draw parallels, these two terms should be used separately and retain different meanings. Though this project will remain attentive to the use of the term brand, the use of the term branding will be utilized more liberally in order to underscore not only the communicative nature of the practice but to also to exemplify the practice as being the site of ongoing process.

In the early days of marketing, practitioners saw the business of branding as analogous to the art of persuasion in that the key function of the practice was about "getting the customer to do what the marketer wanted and there by changing his/her attitudes and behaviors" (Mitchell, 2012, p. 86). One of the first concrete definitions of branding was offered by Rossiter (1987) who said in *Advertising and Promotion Management* that branding was "the achievement, in the prospective buyer's mind, of a favorable brand attitude *given* that the prospect had already acquired brand awareness" (p. 534). The definition suggests that branding offers the consumer a metaphorical "gap" in a conversation whereby it is able to inject itself into the consumer's mind and increase the likelihood that the consumer will be interested in engaging the brand.

This certainly does not fall out of a contemporary purview of marketing. But with the increase of brand as a means of communicating value and integrity to the consumer, marketers

began to look at branding as a constructive resource instead of treating it as a pretense to gain consumer interest. Branding highlights the practice of creating and sustaining not just particular characteristics of a brand, but is an ongoing process in which marketers can decide how they want their organization to be represented through and by the brands that it markets.

Additionally, it was noted in the previous section that brands maintain a critical role in the customer market, product market, and financial market (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Acknowledging how brand serves the organization within each of these capacities permits marketers the opportunity to see branding practices as game changers. In other words, branding is just one process that allows marketers to make seamless adjustments and manage the brand appropriately. Branding is creative, strategic, and tactical and is an avenue that gives an organization the opportunity to make good on a shortcoming, improve a particular weakness, or just simply take its brand to the next level. To put differently, "Branding transmutes the prose of the product into the poetry of the brand" (Bernstein, 2003, p. 1139).

The opportunity for conversation also allots marketers to communicate not just awareness, but utility that fits a specific consumer segment. This is particularly important for consumer segments who do not have a high degree of brand awareness or who may not see the utility in buying the brand consistently. Kapferer (2012) notes that brands such as Coke have been able to circumvent this issue by focusing on branding that touts qualities that are appealing to specific sub-segments. For instance, introducing Coke from the vantage point of being diet or low caffeine has generated greater utility for the consumer, and in turn has led to higher sales (p. 131).

Emphasis on trying to appeal to smaller niche segments highlights the role of a communication exchange in the branding process. Rossiter (2014) explains that branding success

is contingent upon "brand awareness" and "brand attitude" and created the C-U-B Model of positioning to express these components in relation to the benefits of the brand (p. 534). Branding is only possible if the consumer can identify the brand (either through recognition or recall), and is able to "evaluate the brand based on its ability to deliver on its promises" (p. 536-7). This is achieved by an encounter in which the consumer identifies and knowingly acknowledges the presence or essence of the brand. In application to Coke, many are familiar with the Coke brand itself, but successful branding of the C-U-B model contends that the consumer must have a positive attitude of the brand (not just awareness) based on a brand-user connection or brand-benefit connection. This implies that the consumer must feel that the brand improves some specific aspect of the consumer's life or that the connection between the brand and consumer has evolved into a meaningful, long-term relationship.

Additional scholarship positions this encounter as a rhetorical interpretation in branding. Branding functions as a hermeneutic endeavor between the marketer (author) and consumer (reader). Hatch and Rubin (2006), refer to brand as a "kernel of meaning" in which "it is exactly what you can never have but always desire" (p. 359). The contention here is that the process of branding and the symbolic expression of brand as created by branding, embodies values and characteristics that the consumer craves and wishes to attain. It also implies that branding is the turnkey to a larger discourse surrounding consumer engagement. Branding solicits a response from the consumer and presents itself as a message to be deciphered, determined, and ultimately possessed. It becomes a constant interpretive desire, an ongoing dance between the consumer and marketer. In some sense, the exchange is unending since within postmodernity, a decentered and fragmented sense of self promotes an ongoing search for identity and fulfillment in a sea of

transient narratives (See Introduction, Section 1.4). As such, consumers are always negotiating and renegotiating this exchanged.

Hatch and Rubin's suggestion ultimately poses an issue with how brand is interpreted. Their work highlights a problematic with the authorship of branding within today's marketing climate and within the discipline of IMC. A claim to postmodernity contends that the individual subject no longer exists and has "imploded into masses" (Kellner, 1992, p. 144). An incoherent, muddled self who interprets a brand cannot prescribe a stable, fixed identity to brand since this suggests that the simple act of interpretation cannot produce a stable, absolute understanding. An unfixed identity convolutes the integrity of a brand's message by attaching transient meanings. Brand narrative is ultimately in jeopardy and in turn, the onus of preserving brand is placed on the marketer.

This insight introduces Nicholas Ind's (2003) position that because a person's personality is likewise not static, the "transformational potential of brands mean that a person's sense of identity is forever changing in tune with received messages" (p. 8). This implies that the marketer's ability to control the exchange is what ultimately leads to how the brand is interpreted by the consumer. Is what the consumer understands to be an equitable exchange of value-laden experiences a guise? Though the consumer believes that her interpretation is unique and volitional in interpreting what the author (marketer) is suggesting, the consumer may fail to identify the true intentionality of the marketer or fails to interpret the branding message in a way that considers that individual's prior experiences.

This is at the heart of Boorstin's suggestion earlier in this chapter about the melding of images and perceived human agency — what makes branding indispensable is its ability to produce and reproduce meaning and identity even in the most averse social conditions. In the

following section, corporate branding will be introduced as an alternative branding practice that helps to strengthen product or service brand management.

2.3.2 Corporate Branding

As technology continues to progress and the marketing industry continues to evolve based on social and cultural paradigm shifts, so too does the theory of branding (Jones, 2012). A broadening consumer knowledge base alongside advancements in technology and social media platforms, have propelled organizations to turn inward and consider their own brand. A globalized economy suggests that organizations that properly manage their corporate brand experience positive outcomes such as the ability to successfully differentiate itself from competition or gain easier access into particular markets (Hatch & Schultz, 2008).

While product brands do remain important, exactly who is producing or supplying consumers with that product or service grows increasingly more important as the number of millennials (those born after 1980) hovers around 75 million in the United States. (Swant, 2015). This is particularly important since Hoffman (2014) explains that young adults today are not only brand savvier than their parents, but also believe that their involvement with a brand is ultimately going to affect the success of it (n.p.). Consuming has grown from satisfying needs and wants, to consuming in order to promote a larger humanitarian purpose or "create some good." Now more than ever, consumers want their purchases to mean something and want to engage with organizations whom they feel help them to best achieve this goal.

The early 1990s marked period of time in which organizations began to pay more attention to their corporate brand (Balmer & Gray, 2003). This should come as no surprise since this is roughly the same time when the underpinnings of IMC began to take shape as a response

to vast changes in the marketplace. Emphasis on how these organizations choose to differentiated themselves among the competition warranted analysis of its own brand. Being able to promote successful product brands became secondary in the quest to first establish a strong corporate image and required two different approaches.

The mastering of a corporate brand hints at the reminder that marketers should never put the cart before the horse; the objective of properly managing the corporate brand is to create a "favorable disposition" that influences stakeholders positively so that they in turn, are more likely to buy its products, invest, or even work for the organization (Balmer, 1995, p. 30). More specifically, a corporate brand may be understood as a "contract" in which an organization consistently communicates an agreement to stakeholders "by demonstrating, unceasingly and over time, that it has kept true to its corporate branding pledge" (Balmer & Grey, 2003, p. 982). Entering into such a "contract" implies that those who abide by it are more likely to enter into a contract with that particular organization's product brands. This illustrates one of the many opportunistic modes that the corporate brand can shift into; unlike the product brand, the corporate brand offers alternative ways in which the stakeholder might "buy into" the brand long-term and invest in the relational aspect of the brand, rather that than the functional aspects of a product.

For the corporate brand, it is simply not just about moving product and making margins, but also has to do with the ability to attract investors or potential employees. Technology company Apple's commitment to innovation, simple and aesthetic design, and social responsibility have made it a brand mecca for the millennial generation. Not only has it established itself in the tech market as being one of the most progressive and reliable brands, but it has also positioned itself as a hip and trendy organization that individuals want to immerse

themselves within either through employment or investment. This underscores the corporate brand's focus on stakeholders rather than consumers.

The corporate brand is a means of recruitment since it attracts those individuals who feel as though their own personal values or identity lines up with those of the organization. It is also a guidebook for those in human resources or who are in charge of hiring. HR can vet applicants and make decisions based on how well of a fit they believe a candidate to be (Balmer & Gray, 2003). For example, Apple touts job opportunities such as "Geniuses," "Creatives," and "Service Specialists" ("Jobs at Apple") which all cater to a millennial generation characterized by what Twenge (2006) describes as values such as "following dreams," "practicality," and "feeling good about yourself" (p. 51). The corporate brand has cultivated a distinct rhetoric that is reflective of the inherent values of the organization. The corporate brand then becomes embodied in those individuals who work at Apple and see the company as extension of their personal values and beliefs.

Balmer and Gray (2003) contend that from a general standpoint, corporate brands *and* brands in general do have commonalities and can be seen as:

• Denoting ownership

• Image-building devices

• Symbols associated with key values

• [A] means by which to construct individual identities

• A conduit by which pleasurable experiences may be consumed (p. 973).

While the scholars' definition of brands and corporate brands seem to hardly differ in terms of their functions, the management of the corporate brand and its *telos* is unique and differ in terms

of: management (who is responsible), orientation (now "multi-stakeholder" versus customer), and "marketing framework" (traditional practices are not necessarily practical) (Balmer & Gray, 2003, p. 976).

Additionally, not only does the management of the corporate brand differ from traditional brand products, but also its characteristics. In the aforementioned sections (2.3 & 2.3.1) definitions of brand/branding were offered to help illuminate nuanced traits. While there is some overlap, Balmer (2001) explained that there are five main characteristics of a corporate brand: 1.) "cultural", 2.) "intricate", 3.) "tangible", 4.) "ethereal" and 5.) "commitment" (p. 3). The cultural components of a corporate brand speak to the influence of organizational assets, namely its internal stakeholders. Those individuals who play a key role within the company comprise the way in which the organizational brand comes to fruition in terms of mission, key objectives, positioning, etc. It is often the employees who communicate a willingness to embrace the brand or reject it.

The corporate brand is intricate since it is both "multidimensional and multidisciplinary" (Balmer, 2001, p. 3). Corporate brand affects an array of individuals, both internally and externally. Additionally, it affects and is influenced by various departments, branches, and levels of management. In order for the corporate brand to be persuasive, it must be able to effectively serve its purpose within such a dynamic situation. Tangible and ethereal characteristics attend to the physical and non-tangible goods that the corporate brand encompasses. The former refers to those assets that serve a financial or quantitative purpose. For example, profit margins, employee handbooks and retainment, or physical brand attributes such as color, font treatment, and logo are all examples of tangible characteristics.

Conversely, ethereal characteristics are what Balmer uses to refer to the emotional qualities a corporate brand embodies and the role it plays in positioning itself within the stakeholder purview. Lastly, a corporate brand must include complete organizational commitment. The strength of a corporate brand permits the organization to utilize both its particular brand as well as its product brands in conjunction or separately to influence stakeholders. This is particularly useful in situations where an organization leads with its corporate brand or wherein the corporate brand is more recognizable than its product brands.

The organization's decision to exercise "corporate dominance" over "brand dominance," is largely based on the strength of the corporate brand over its products or services. For instance, corporate brands such as Apple, Nestle, and Carnival rely on a strong, recognizable brand to communicate with stakeholders and more specifically, consumers. This "double duty" allows stakeholders to acknowledge that the organizational pillars that uphold the mission, identity, and reputation of the company are also the same ones that hold up specific products and brands. Leading with a corporate brand also improves the market position of a product or the ability to cross-sell as well as, strengthens ties with investors, and cauterizes issues resulting in declining profits or marketshare (Balmer, 1995). The decision to improve a corporate brand falls on the shoulders of the giants within the company.

Whereas the development and execution of product brands ultimately rests with a marketing division or even an outside agency, the management of a corporate brand is fully dependent on the visions of those individuals at the executive level, or perhaps even most importantly, the founder of the organization. This reflects differences in how the brand values are formed sustained over time. Similarly, where product brand values are "contrived," corporate brand values are a culmination of the founder's vision as well as corporate ideals and sub-culture

ideals (Balmer, 2001, p. 2). The development and sustainability of a corporate brand highlights its paramount importance the long-term successes of the organization.

2.4 Brand Consumption & Brand Value

The process of branding means that marketers can provide additive value to a product so that the consumer is convinced of buying the same product, but for more money (Mitchell, 2012). At the heart of Mitchell's agenda lies the very paradox of branding and how it should be interpreted, at least by today's standards. Determinants of what makes the brand as valuable continue to shift based on consumer demands and cultural shifts. Rather than create value by trying assuage a consumer's need, marketers have shifted toward creating relational value. This means that the consumer derives value simply from its relationship *with* the brand, rather than from the brand. Branding by today's definition is measured through the strength of its equity (Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan, & McDonald, 2005). Brand equity showcases a brand's success and failures, which ultimately come to be judged by a loyal consumer base and strong sales growth.

The conundrum of how to measure value and its potential worth is a challenge for marketers and came to peak interest during the 1980s when marketers were beginning to realize that the sheer name of a product became highly significant in a consumer's choice to purchase a product or service. Schultz and Barnes (1999) maintain that four major drivers have influenced the rise of brand communication and brand management initiatives within organizations: (1.) "movement from product to brand value", (2.) "complex distribution channels" (which resulted in a higher difficulty of reaching the end user), (3.) "competition" and (4.) the "increase in communication alternatives such as the internet" (pp. 332-3). These coordinates point to

significant shifts in both technological innovation and socio-cultural trends that prompted the marketing industry to reevaluate the worth of branding within an organization.

Though brand and branding offer different resources and are used in different capacities within the organization, what remains consistent through the two is the impact of brand identity in determining its uses. Brand identity relies heavily upon the values, attitudes and beliefs that are adhered to within the organization and projected publicly (Holt, 2004; Landa, 2006) . Both academics and practitioners of the industry would say that the success of a brand is largely dependent on how well that brand's identity is compatible with the brand of the organization. For instance, the automobile brand Saab touts brand superiority in the category of safety. Had the car manufacturer's organizational identity privileged itself as being associated with luxury or aesthetics, it is very likely that Saab's success in its particular project category would not be where it is at today.

On a consumer community blog page called "Saabs United" (2011) for Saab owners and enthusiasts are able to share their Saab stories. One avid enthusiast wrote that when questioned why he was drawn to the brand he replied, "Primarily safety. I think pound for pound, Saabs are the safest cars in the world" ("Saab and Safety"). The same consumer went on to describe a narrative that exemplified his loyalty to the brand and his perception of the brand's image, citing a car wreck that his college-aged daughter had survived. He accredited this to what he believed was Saab's crafted design and durability to sustain a high-speed car crash. As such, because the identity of the brand is aligned with the values and mission of the company, the brand yields a harmonious brand image in the eyes of the consumer. This reinforces a consistent product and a transparent brand where value is perceived as consistent and reliable.

The exchange of goods and the role of value in this process has roots in Antiquity. Meikle (1995) suggested that value was largely understood in terms of "need" (*chreia*) and "demand" and that it was Aristotle who explored how these feelings are what led men to exchange (p. 29). What this suggests about consumption today is is that the line between need and demand continues to blur. Individuals no longer purchase goods out of just need and/or demand. Disposable incomes have fostered the purchasing of products based on want or desire. Perhaps even more important, is the understanding of what it means to be "in need." Our desire to fulfill what is seen to be a lack has evolved to include the desire to fulfill an intangible lack tied to self-preservation.

Today, (and even then) the buying and selling of goods has not only contributed to the "good life" but has also maintained a standard for which individuals determine and ascribe value. All goods carry some type of value, but this is only valid when considered when the good is placed in competition with others (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979). Increased competition within the marketplace has helped to create a surge in the attention given to corporate branding and while more options seem like the very foundation that capitalism tries to preserve and promote, the downside is that it propels organizations to find alternative, and in some deleterious ways to gain the attention of consumers.

Scholarship suggests that as of 2005, brand value's worth makes up as much as "one third of the entire value of global wealth" (Anholt, 2005, p. 2). This shows us how much financial value can be ascribed to an intangible symbol. Investors and other stakeholders hold the belief the the brand transcends its actual perceptible characteristics. Aristotle's theory of equity is quintessential in how we can understand and relational exchange to the marketplace. Everything is based on a harmonious balance of action and temperance and those invested in the process act

with the other individual in mind. The value of a particular product, and in this case a product or corporate brand, is compared to its competition. Doing such exposes consumers to a myriad of options and is the context for which individuals are able to enter into a relationship with a particular good or form an opinion about a particular product based on the values that the organization touts.

These values ultimately must reflect similar values that the consumer either also conforms to or holds in high esteem. Consumption afford individuals the opportunity to express a given desire and identify with products or brands that help them to communicate who they are or perhaps who they aspire to be. Consumption also allows individuals to connect socially and maintain relationships (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979). Brands are inherently value-laden in the sense that they produce and reproduce an arena that encourages community among users. Whole sub-cultures have been created solely on this premise. For example, people deemed "Sneakerheads" comprise a unique world-wide community that are drawn together by the desire to buy and sell exclusive shoe brands. So not only is value ascribed to the product itself, but value is also seen in the relationships it can cultivate and sustain. Value is also derived out of the perpetuation of particular cultural narratives or norms based on the consumption of a particular good or brand.

McCracken (1986) defines culture as (1.) a "lens" that allows us to look through it in order to see the world and (2.) a "blueprint" that offers individuals a way to see how the world will be shaped by humanity (p. 72). Both the lens and blueprint of culture orient the individual and potentially help her to recognize the type of values most applicable to her sense of self. Culture as a lens tell us how individuals should understand particular norms and values, while the blueprint tells explains to us how we should act. Holt (2002), extends this notion and explains

that if brands are considered as part of culture, then their function is no longer to be a voice of an expert, but an option in which a consumer can choose to extract value. In postmodernity, he argues, brands are "perceived as more valuable if they are offered not as cultural blueprints but as cultural resources, as useful ingredients to produce the self as one chooses" (p. 621). Value then is not derived from the material product associated with the brand, but rather the symbolic attributes of the brand itself, as it is manifested in the product.

As social creatures, we are inherently tied to the social world and use it as an arena to produce and consume meaning. Various cultures essentially act like different "modes" in which the narrative of a particular group of people (whether it be fellow compatriots, a high school clique of athletes, or a music subculture such as the early 90s grunge movement) consume particular goods that allows it to identify with a particular culture. This is reinforced by a good's connection to rituals and traditions (McCracken, 1986) in which consuming particular goods demonstrates a "particular set of judgements in the fluid processes of classifying persons or events" (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979, p. 45). People act and consume based on whether those actions or consumables fit into the paradigm of a particular culture. Participating immediately connects an individual to that particular narrative. The intangible assets of the brand help consumers to essentially distinguish those individuals who value the same intangible qualities associated with the brand. More generally, those who partake in a ritual associated with a particulate brand unveil their identity to others and works to perpetuate the brand as a manifestation of a particular cultural narrative.

This is made apparent in where an individual chooses to do her weekly grocery shopping, the literary tattoo a young man decides to have emblazoned on his arm, or why the high school athlete purchases only Nike athletic equipment. Though the motivation or reason behind product

consumption varies across the board, what remains the same is how the process in which individuals engage a particular good or brand is reflective of how that person identifies herself within culture. Klein (2000) notes that this is not necessarily an act of consumer free will but is rather a reflection of how brands are able to "soak up" cultural ideas and "iconography" that their brands then embody and then cast back out to society as their own identity (p. 29). Culture is thus additive to brands/branding and vice versa. In other words, this process becomes cyclical when the marketer decides to utilize the associated culture as a tactic to entice a potential consumer. The potential consumer then buys into the brand narrative, and thus becomes part of that ongoing cultural narrative which is then employed again and again to attract new consumers who wish to identify with that culture. In other words, culture functions in, and through, brands. Brands are the chassis for which individuals create their worlds and branding is the means in which marketers are able to refresh or maintain a particular narrative.

Twitchell's (1996) comparison of branding's sister discipline of advertising to religion suggests how investing in these narratives illustrates a similar power much like the one religion asserts upon culture: "Like religion, which has little to do with the actual delivery of salvation in the next world but everything to do with the ordering of life in this one, commercial speech has little to do with material objects per se but everything to do with how we perceive them" (p. 110). This observation uncovers the power of branding as a source for obedience, order, and faith. It rewards those who wholly embrace its message with a feeling of self-fulfillment or the entry into a particular sub-culture.

Conversely, it punishes those who did not follow suit by turning faux-followers into sub-culture pariahs. Those who "claim" to know sneakers or wine or college basketball are easily sniffed out as fraudulent by their lack of knowledge on the topic, lack of shared institutionalized

discourse, and lack of participation in rituals and traditions upholding the brand narrative. Competing brands often times pit their "followers" against one another. Nike advocates refute the capabilities of what Reebok can offer its consumers and vice versa. In some respects, branding does what sometimes religion aims to do: create a fear of rejection for those who perhaps are considering "leaving" or "rebelling" against the community.

Additionally, consumers exercise deference in the act of purchasing products or by professing her loyalty to a particular brand. Marketers proclaim their "gospel" by declaring their brand as the one true solution in an sea of imposter brands. Both mass culture and subcultures thrives off of brands' ability to help codify norms and language and while many consumers are conscientious about price points and quality, it is often times the brand itself that influences the consumer. The brand morphs into Goethe's Mephistopheles, urging the consumer to fulfill her innermost desires, regardless of whether that product is a necessity of life or not.

Because culture is dynamic and always changing this implies that value derived from culture is also always changing. This seems to be appropriate in a postmodern juncture since the consumer "lacks commitment to grand projects and seeks different experiences, and is willing to see oneself as a (marketable) object in the different situations s/he encounters in order to make each a supremely exciting and enjoyable experience" (Firat, Dholakia & Venkatesh, 1995, p. 50-51). The scholars suggest that the lack of consumer commitment to brands plays a large role in the management of brands. Difficulty committing drives organizations to develop alternatives to solicit consumer interest and must listen more deeply in order to understand just what a positive consumer experience is like for an individual. A lack of commitment is also not something limited just to brand loyalty or purchasing habits. On a more macro level, postmodern consumers exhibit a lack of exclusive commitment to almost every faucet of their lives: professional

aspirations, personal relationships, self-identity, etc. As such, the relationship between culture and brands is perhaps more important now as consumers continue to rely more and more on brands as means of exploring self-expression and identity.

As a resource, branding can be understood as a communicative site of stability for those looking to make meaning in their lives. This process lives within a space in which people can create and sustain meaning, as well as transform self. All populist worlds have their own idioms and idiosyncratic cultural codes. Brands essentially work to illustrate how they understand those codes (Holt, 2004). This promise to the individual agrees to perform a particular way and communicates just what to expect and what not to so that while consumer trends and products change, brands do not. It also communicates a sure shot promise to "deliver what falls within their purview" (Varma, 2010, p. 8). This in itself offers a credible narrative to the consumer.

Though branding can be viewed as a technological innovation of modernity, its' function now is what quintessentially serves a postmodern consumer culture. From a modernist perspective, branding has allowed both marketers and consumers to be part of the organization of social worlds and allows all to climb Maslow's Hierarchy in the pursuit of self-fulfillment. In this sense, the practice still allows individuals to adopt particular ideologies and reject others (even if it is a transient undertaking) so that they might be able to achieve their personal goals. Even in the wake of postmodernity, a brand must be invested in by the individual, albeit one influenced by a group.

Given the definition of branding in the aforementioned section, it is clear that the practice can likewise be used to help individuals identify with particular brands and the values that a particular organization embraces as core principles of its identity. Most of today's marketers recognize the involvement of the consumer as a pivotal piece to organizational success.

However, while research contends that brands are a byproduct of both organizational vision and customer interpretation, scholarship shows that there is an interest in exploring how this constructed value can be measured.

Being able to measure the worth of a brand could help marketers in assessing and predicting a the trajectory of a brand. "If brands exist as cultural, ideological, and sociological objects, then understanding brands requires tools developed to understand culture, ideology, and society, in conjunction with more typical branding concepts, such as brand equity, strategy, and value" (Schroeder, 2009, p. 124). Brand equity as an offshoot of the branding discipline has been introduced as a method to gauge the impact of a brand's value. It is understood that by grasping its impact, marketers can find a way to communicatively engage various stakeholders. In this sense, the brand is the starting point of many marketing campaigns and the chassis for which brand management is built upon.

Brand equity is way of gauging how an individual perceives that brand and its associations based on awareness and image (van Riel & Rombrun, 2007). To this extent, marketers are able to manage the ebb and flow of brand associations and contact points. But management of the brand does not determine the value of the brand. Again, brand value is contingent upon the branding process whereby the consumer is an active participant in the communicative encounter. Kepferer (2012) ties brand equity to power and notes that brand is consummated when it has the ability to influence the market. This is reified in its ability to dominate particular cultural narratives and is manifested in individuals who consume the brand and perpetuate its discourse by word of mouth marketing (WOMM). If the brand fails to be recognized or fails in consumer engagement, it ceases to be brand. It is simply an image or a logo.

Though the initial brand has a perceived value, branding is how marketers are able to create a structure that positions brand identity (Kapferer, 2012). Foucault's stance on power illuminates this idea. In defining discourse, Foucault (1969) contends that power relations in discourse form on the basis of what constitutes discourse itself, stating that words do not just offer us a definition of objects and experiences, but rather the "ordering of objects" (p. 49). The branding process produces a dialogue between marketer and consumer that structures how the brand is perceived. The role of language is no longer about naming signifiers with signs, but rather a system that propels us to question who is speaking and from where are they speaking. In other words, aside from what is being spoken, what else may be influencing the way in which we encode and decode language?

In this sense, and as Foucault contends, discourse is discursive; it produces ideas and tensions through and by the act of discourse itself. This affects the conditions and spaces in which a marketer and consumer can collaborate but more importantly, how the equity of the brand can only grow or dwindle in the presence communication. It relies on the encounter with the consumer so that it may be affirmed. The marketer assists in the perpetuation of this dialogue but another large proponent in maintaining this conversation is the role of brand communities. The next section address the auxiliary area of study of brand community and its significant impact on the maintenance and sustainment of branding.

2.5 Brand Community

The notion of community has been an idea that continues to evolve in meaning and develop through various historical moments. Traditional interpretations of "community" often link individuals together by way of shared values, traditions, rituals, and culture. However, it has

been the rise of modernity that has sought to unravel the foundation of community and revise the widely accepted definition of "social capital" (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). While the byproducts of social capital typically yield a usefulness to communities, Putnam (2000) advises us that "social capital" today may be internally beneficial to the group, but can produce volatile and adverse conditions for those external to the group (p. 22). Regardless, these connections are often tied to a particular narrative that serves as a paradigm to help individuals interpret their worlds. Just like within any type of community (whether it be religious, ethnic, school affiliation, sports team, etc.), members come to constitute the narrative's value by their level of loyalty and commitment.

Walter Fisher (1987) coined the term "narrative paradigm" in an effort to transform people into storytellers, authors, and co-authors. He argued that the narrative perspective "focuses on existing institutions as providing 'plots' that are always in the process of re-creation rather than existing as settled scripts. Viewing human communication narratively stressed that people are full participants in the making of messages, whether they are agents or audience members" (p. 18). In the same way institutions are reinforced by narrative, so too is brand. The ability to tell a story or to be part of a story is empowering. It offers individuals the ability to validate their beliefs and values and it is through the communal nature of the narrative that individuals form long-term feelings of loyalty toward it.

Bernstein (2003) likens this process to "going steady" (p. 1140) since it implies that consumers make the decision to enter into a "monogamous" relationship with the brand and seem wholly content in doing so. Even adopting the particular language facilitates the community and is what Twitchell (2004) deems "cultural literacy," noting that "branding is one way to generate this literacy because the brand story depends not just on communal adoption (consumption) but shared individual understanding (recognition)" (p. 275).

For a particular community to persist, members must strongly believe in the associated narrative and in turn, the narrative must be one that is woven into various aspects of life within the community. Community is thus fostered by the strength of the valued narrative.

Communities are even able to spawn from brands. Muniz and O'Guin (2001) define brand community as a "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand" (p.412). Technology and online networks allow members to be physically distant but closely connected within virtual worlds and social networking platforms that interact in public spaces. It allows consumers to construct mediated relationships with strangers who we believe share similar virtues of a brand. To borrow Meyrowitz's (1986) metaphor, technology has turned us into "hunters and gatherers" (p. 315), in which we seek a new type of community that no longer binds us to a geographical location. Those seeking members of a brand community are free to roam social networks in search of people who, though may be different in every sense, share the same attitude toward a particular brand. Whether this makes the connection more or less authentic is disputable.

At *prima facie*, brand communities may seem like organic formations. A community of "hunters and gathers is led by those of authority and power who wish to maintain the well-being of the community" (Meyrowitz, 1986, p. 316). And in this case, brand marketers of a particular organization often play this role. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) suggest that a brand community is defined by "a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility" (p.412.) Not only do members think/feel a certain way toward a brand, they may also engage in activities that serve to interact with the brand, share experiences, or identify situations in which they can further the brand's agenda. These communities are often external to the organization

and comprised of loyalist consumers who seek to perpetuate the brand itself to other loyalists or to create a communicative environment that express personal ideas.

Identifying narratival components within a daily routine works to bolster the validity of the particular paradigm and contributes to the overall health of a particular community. Sharing these brand stories is an important process as it reinforces familiarity between members within the community and also works as a standard for how the values of the community should be maintained (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). The more a story is able to infiltrate itself into a group of people, the easier it becomes for members within the community to develop certain characteristics analogous to the particular brand. Consumers project their brand affinity in and through the use of the brand which allows them largely identify with other potential brand loyalists. Language, dress, actions, buying choices, eating choices, etc. all reflect areas in which the brand manifests itself and gives marketers an opportunity to create additional touch points and create spaces for brand extensions. Partnerships at such events also create additional avenues for which the consumer can implicitly interact with the brand, vis-a-vis a partnered brand.

This in turn, helps to strengthen the bond within the community as well as the brand itself. However, Meyrowitz, like his predecessor Lewis Mumford (1934), sees the creation of community at a distance as weakening of the socialization process, noting that this contributes to a homogenized view of culture. Lack of actual interaction between individuals ultimately conceals their differences. In brand communities mediated by social networking sites, emphasis is placed on similarity and in turn relegates individual identity. What is more is that the increase of homogenization within a certain community can often breed intolerance for others. Those in control of the community have the power to vet information and limit the amount of exposure the group is able to have with other pieces of information or with other brands. This is also made

apparent in marketer-driven events such as festivals where a brand takes center stage in assembling masses for the sake of the brand.

The work of McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig (2002) suggest that brand communities are built though events such as "brandfests" and "brand socialization" (p. 532). Brandfests are are company sponsored events that allow consumers to get together, experience various promotions and giveaways, learn about new products and innovations, network with brand representatives and other enthusiasts, and otherwise completely immerse themselves in the brand. These face to face interactions attempt to surpass the barriers of online communication and offer consumers a resource to forge interpersonal relationships with not just other brand consumers, but the brand itself. Participation at the events yields what Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) refer to as the "consumer-brand-consumer triad" (p. 427) and showcases a communicative interplay that is always oscillating between brand and consumer.

The point of this research is to illustrate how interaction is not just simply a single, finite exchange but a transient activity that must be managed accordingly. The organization of these events goes back to Meyrowitz's point about the leaders of a community. An organization that facilitates these events seems to be doing a service to the consumer. However, control of these events places power in hands of corporatism and allows organizations to carefully tailor these particular events so that conversations and agency is controlled. In other words, the organization creates an environment of how they want the consumer to act, think, and feel.

The area of persuasive brand management relies heavily on the use of rhetoric and narrative to communicate brand identity to consumers (Iglesias & Bonet, 2012). This facilitates the strengthening of brand equity and allows individuals feel as it they are actively participating in the branding process by offering feedback and engaging various programs that enhance the

brand image. Consumers commit themselves to the brand as a result, become "genuinely concerned about how the brand may ultimately benefit from their involvement" (Iglesias & Bonet, 2012, p. 550). Perceived value is thus established in the relational exchange.

Around the 1980s, marketers began to identify the possibilities that brand communities had to offer. Today, brands are the motivation behind how a company is able to cultivate loyalty and its ability to facilitate spaces for brand enthusiasts to commune. In some way, other brand enthusiasts part of these communities execute much of the leg work that an organization once had to do itself. But while these spaces facilitate a dialogue amongst users, brand communities are paradoxical since they are synthetic. Individuals understand that these communities are often created and managed by the brand and by individuals who have been hired to be brand ambassadors. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) explain that while brand communities are "explicitly commercial," it is an undertaking in which members are fully consciousness of and one that is made publicly transparent (p. 415).

However, does not always yield benefits for the bottomline of the organization. It is important that an organization communicates its relationship with the brand community. Otherwise, communities that are posed as organic spaces produced by word of mouth marketing (WOMM) face backlash by those wishing to protect the integrity of the dialogue. For example, online brand community members that are exposed to a "transparent narrative will often reject the commercial influences of the marketplace in an attempt to preserve the integrity of the community, rather than goals motivated by financial or commercial gain" (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, and Wilner, 2010, p. 85). This is evidenced in social media platforms who feature brand "ambassadors"—individuals who tout the benefits of a particular product with little to no coercing from the parent organization. This feature of using the brand to elevate the experience

of particular communities highlights the very postmodern function of the brand. Brand and branding is now being utilized to help define the individual.

2.6 A Hard Bargain

In 2002, a group of marketing professionals, consultants, and brand pioneers met in Sweden to discuss the current state of branding. Inspired by the release of Naomi Klein's (2001) seminal text "No Logo" the same year, the group united in an effort to reconstruct what they believed to be the foundational pillars of branding best practices. Klein's book was a battlecry against the corporatization of society and against the abuse of brand, which had now become the "incarnation of corporate transcendence" (p. 21). What became of that meeting was a rulebook of sorts, outlining the group's public position on how the game of branding should be played. They aptly called it, "The Brand Manifesto."

Today, the self-proclaimed Medinge Group touts a philosophy of redefining "brands with a conscience" and works to blow the lid off industry problems. When the Medinge Group formed in 2000, it did so as a response to what it believed to be a deteriorating industry landscape replete of meaningful dialogue and marketers who ascribed to a "narrow view of the world" in which it could be categorized as "short-termist, shareholder focused, narcissistic, and communications led" (Ind, 2003, p. xvi). What Ind's observations tell us about the climate of branding within marketing is that while marketers acknowledge the shift in the needs and wants of the consumer, it is almost as if marketers have tried to outsmart the postmodern agenda by taking advantage of its particular driving principles.

Branding from the perspective of these practitioners has lost its moral compass and the meaning of a "true north." This failure had led to an increase in organizational agendas focused

primarily on profit, gain in market share, and creating a consumer experience driven by shrewd communication objectives. This problem will be discussed in the following section and looks particularly at the failures in the following areas: 1.) guerrilla practices of branding/stealth branding and 2.) The authenticity of brand communities. According to scholarship, branding is essentially an invention of modernity; In fact, it is considered perhaps one of the most "iconic" symbols of modernity, itself (Ind, 2007, p. 513). Brands and branding fit in line with a "marketing-to" agenda fueled by progress, efficiency, and technology. This marketing component was created by man for man, to increase the production and reproduction of goods, expand the marketplace, and create competition. It also was an invention that reassured customers of their purchases and work to streamline the purchasing process. The "cognitive shortcut" that brands offered individuals also changed the way individuals associated certain qualities or product categories with certain companies. But the postmodern consumer is not like how she once was in history.

Advancements in technology, improved and easy purchasing experiences, and increased product options have altered consumer demands and has ultimately altered the consumer experience. Consuming is now no longer wholly dependent on the basic needs of an individual but rather, consumption is the process of an identity search and a shift of focus from the universal to the particular. The mass production of goods of modernity has been replaced by personal, carefully crafted and curated products that seek to create a degree of intimacy. This intimacy breeds a connection of familiarity. The transformation of brands from static icons into intangible, anthropomorphic "essences" has merely advanced a type of consumerism is in a continual search of a personalized solution. One size does not fit all and as today's consumer trends have shown, value seems to be derived from a brand or a product, based on how the

consumer interprets its' utility. Marketers have tried to tap into this by taking alternative approaches to branding.

One method has been to place the brand in an unassuming role, where the message or symbol emphasizes a "cool" sell rather than a "hot" sell. Echoing McLuhan's (1964) understanding of audience engagement with media, this method implicitly forces individuals into a highly-participative role whereby individuals must cognitively complete the message being communicated. Media such as movies and lectures fall into a "hot" category, versus "cool" media that includes mediums such as seminars and television shows. McLuhan's contention what was that audiences engage media in different ways, based on the actual medium rather than the message. Rather than aggressively pursue the consumer, the cool sell attempts to "surprise" the consumer by essentially positioning itself so that the consumer feels as though the brand is not trying to aggressively communicate a particular message, but rather, gives the consumer the opportunity to decide how they want to engage or not engage it.

This can be executed not only through copy or creative, but also by "the space that the brand lives within" (Serazio, 2012, p. 15). Additionally, attempting to go against outstanding ideologies in order to be perceived as authentic and free-thinking has also been an employed strategy. As noted in the prior chapter, today's postmodern juncture sought to reframe branding as a process that actively engaged the customer by inviting them into a conversation and allowing them to feel that their role in the process is tantamount to that of an employee or shareholder.

Those who subscribe to a postmodern agenda contend that this is the problem with branding in modernity; the attempt to control by way of myth and ideology by using explicit tactics to persuade customers is seen as an assault on consumer agency and in a very Bernyasian

way, lacks in the ability to recognize the consumer as a knowledgable, decision-making individual who demands certain characteristics of a brand.

However, modernity reminds us that not all progress is bad and branding as an invention of modernity can be seen as a symbolic "process of incessant inquiry, discovery, innovation, and a shared determination to transform theory into practice, to use all we know to change the world" (Berman, 1985, p. 35). Brands have the ability to offer guidance or a solution in the wake of a chaotic historical moment. They also grant marketers the ability to improve upon currently withstanding practices, address stakeholder issues, or pump life back into an organization. On the other hand, postmodern branding showcases marketing initiatives that can be hampered by an organization's urge to place all power in the hands of the consumer. While much of today's branding and IMC practices showcase this aspect, practitioners must remain attentive to how and through what means they open up this dialogue to the consumer.

Today's employed strategies can obfuscate the intentionality of the company. New trends in branding work to take branding out of branding by adopting guerrilla or stealth approaches (Serazio, 2013; Levinson, 2007). Post-war disenchantment during the mid-20th century highlighted a time in history where individuals became jaded by hegemonic discourses perpetuated within culture. Theodore Roszak's (1969) text *The Making of Counter Culture* offered society's first encounter with the term "counterculture" to describe a society dominated by technological governance that in turn had created a cultural environment full of intolerance and regime. He wrote, "What, after all, does social justice mean to the outcast and dispossessed? Most obviously it means gaining admission to everything from which middle-class selfishness excludes them" (p. 68).

The appeal of counterculture within free market capitalism emerged from a disenfranchised consumer who saw corporatism as a deceitful, money-hungry monster that preyed on her pocketbook. Holt (2002) also claims that the 1960s mark the beginning of postmodernity and a consumer paradigm that looked to brands as as a way to "produce the self" (p. 83). This reveals that Roszak's observation of the rise of a counterculture was reflective of the quest to dethrone the Faustian bargain. Both marketers and consumers were able to observe the paradigm shift taking place during this particular moment and as a response, both parties sought to organize new ways to respond to one another.

For consumers, the rise of a counterculture became apparent in cultural faucets of music, fashion, literature, art, etc. and as Heath and Potter (2004) explain, those spearheading the initiative were seen as truth crusaders. These "rebels" believed that their actions would ultimately dismantle the status quo of capitalism and help incite change and progress within the marketplace. Ultimately, counterculture was "assimilated" into society and became an ideology itself (p. 34-5). This draws a profound corollary to the assumptions made earlier concerning culture and consumption. Culture simply absorbed the narrative of counterculture and as such, marketers found a way to reproduce it in and through their brands and products. This explains that what at once begins as a part of an "underground" movement, eventually migrates to mainstream culture. It explains how bands become "sellouts" or why the newest pair of Nikes are no longer exclusive. It is exactly this countercultural space that marketers have attempted to colonize. And for good reason. There is no better way to seem "authentic" other than to adopt what supposedly goes against mainstream culture.

Naomi Klein (2001) cites campaigns such as Sprite's "Image is Nothing" and Diesel Jeans O line as "pre-jamming" examples of a brand working to utilize the countercultural

message to its advantage. Here, the anti-branding or anti-marketing advantage is seen as the marketer's attempt to explicitly acknowledge the surreptitious nature of marketing and in turn, utilize it as a platform to generate an ethos of authenticity. This narrative functions as safeguard and fits within a postmodern agenda. However, both this and the use of guerrilla marketing is just the first major problematic with branding practices today.

The problem with branding today is that nothing has actually changed within the industry. Mephistophelian marketers have just simply rotated out different veneers so that consumers think that those handling the brand are making changes that reflect concern for the consumer voice. Similarly, Holt (2002) explains this phenomenon vis-a-vis Foucault by claiming that whereas before marketers were seen as producing an authoritarian discourse as the "expert," they still retain their power now by producing a new discourse of "freedom" whereby the consumer sees himself as an autonomous agent (p. 83). Though this may not seem to be a calculated move to undermine consumer knowledge, it still suggests that marketers are alternative finding ways to maintain power and control the conversation with the consumer.

This proves more deceitful than a traditional "marketing-to" approach since it attempts disguise the voice of authority or place the branding message in unassuming places and spaces that subverts consumer choice. The "marketing-to" strategy of being explicit and conspicuous in its rhetoric may be distasteful, but is at least transparent with its efforts. Holt (2002) maintains that the rise in more desperate techniques to be perceived as authentic and original propels individuals to question the motives at play (p. 83). In other words, an abundance of "authentic" messaging or "hyper-authenticity" can be as deceitful as the the type of modern marketing that subscribes to aggressive claims and explicit rhetoric.

Brand savvy consumers are more tuned in as ever today and are able to detect when brands are working overtime to win their loyalty. The postmodern agenda works to dismantle power and hegemonic dominance, but in doing so, reifies consumer skepticism and the urge to "deflect the perceived paternalism of companies" (Holt, 2002, p. 83). In other words, the consumer is *still* as skeptical as she was in a "marketing-to" market. The only difference now is that skepticism that was once grounded in what the marketer was doing has now shifted to how the marketer is executing those objectives and by what means.

The anti-branding milieu that marketers have employed to entice this skeptical consumer is counterproductive since the bottomline is ultimately to convince consumers to listen to a new ideological norm. Fitchett & McDonaugh's (2000) observation suggests that regardless of how much marketers drive a narrative of co-creation, the consumer will consistently remain at a disadvantage since they do not have the resources to vet a brand to the extent that a marketer is able to vet a particular consumer or sub-segment. They note that, "Whereas the firm can choose to define their customers as mutual partners, select those groups of consumers with whom it is prepared to establish relationships, and prohibit relationships it considers undesirable and unprofitable, the consumer can make no such demands," (p. 216). As mentioned earlier, brand communities are just one resource that a consumer has to foster a meaningful connection with a particular brand. But the notion of a community is grounds for inspection.

Daniel Boorstin (1974) introduced the idea of the "consumption community" to suggest that individuals engaged with one another based on the things they bought, rather than actual bonds and exchanges of dialogue (p. 89). Consumption communities still reign king in a capitalistic market that is dependent on loyal consumers. This hypothesis has been tested (e.g. Friedman, Vanden and De Vos, 1992) and specific attention has been given to how consumption

communities function online. Muniz and O'Guinn (2010) maintain that these brand communities are indeed authentic and real since they are founded on instrumental principles governing the traditional understanding of "community" via shared consciousness, shared rituals, and a shared sense of moral responsibility (p. 413). Individuals that comprise these communities are seen as likeminded people who think, respond, act, and understand in similar ways.

However, the act of consumption and the way in which branding influences decision-making within the individual confirms that brands and branding are able to survive since consumption is structured by culture. Culture as noted before, is a product of branding. Branding is the site of the reproduction of culture and ideas that are then recycled back out for consumption, What this suggests is that individual identity comes to fruition through consumption (Holt, 2002). In other words, communities of consumption are perpetuated by brands that produce and reproduce culture. Community is not created organically or out of needs anymore.

Postmodern community that latches on to a brand is created out of the desire to fulfill some type of personal void or to define identity and is what Lasch (1979) believes is the type of activity that breeds narcissism, both in the individual and within the group. "The narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. His apparent freedom from family ties and institutional constraints does not free him to stand alone or to flory in his individuality. On the contrary, it contributes to his insecurity, which he can overcome only by seeing his "grandiose self" reflected in the attentions of others, or by attaching himself to those who radiate celebrity, power, and charisma" (p. 10). The product becomes the mediator between consumer and community. It is what validates the individual's search for affirmation. Dialogue is also thus mediated by way of the brand or product. Ironically, it is even movements such as counterculture

and anti-branding and provide a foundation for communities founded out of corporate suspicion and capitalist skepticism, but in turn continue to produce and reproduce capitalism.

The challenge of branding and its discontents is nothing new. As the market continues to evolve and consumers engage with the brand in different ways, the marketer's main role is now understanding how interest affects loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). As this chapter illustrated, branding is inherently connected to communication and plays a vital role within society. Not only is it largely part of capitalism, but even more, it yields a cultural currency in which individuals utilize brands to navigate, create, and sustain meaning in their lives. The interplay of branding promotes both positive and challenging ends.

On one hand, brands foster a community of people who share similar interest in it. This in turn, also opens a dialogue with the marketer about the brand so that future branding practices are able to consider what it is that stakeholders truly demand and expect. It also allows one to consider just how large of an influence branding plays in not just consumption, but the formation of consumer identity. On the other hand, brand communities suggest a precarious cultural phenomenon which questions the authenticity and organicism of relationships solely derived from a brand commonality. What does the future hold for these communities and how does this affect the human capacity to maintain and manage interpersonal relationships?

The next chapter introduces the work of French marxist Louis Althusser. Althusser's work, namely his constructs of anti-humanism, ideology, and interpellation will be expressed as a heuristic for understanding how we may be able to reconceive of branding, given the main points of this chapter. Branding has been and continues to be a tremendous resource within marketing. Its ability to withstand the test of thousands of years of changing marketplaces and an evolving consumer has proved it to be an indispensable practice. Approaches to the practice

greatly differ, but if scholars and practitioners care to improve and preserve the integrity of the

practice itself, we must look to alternative voices to encourage constructive conversation.

Chapter 3: Althusser and an Imaginary Reality

"Humanity is pregnant with the
imminent revolution which will
give it possession of its own being."
– Althusser, *Feuerbach's 'Philosophical Manifestoes'*

3.1 Introduction

In October of 1990, French philosopher Jacques Derrida gave the eulogy at the funeral of his friend of 38 years and former colleague, Louis Althusser. In his remarks, Derrida remained attentive to the tumultuous professional and personal life lived by Althusser. On behalf of the Marxist scholar he said, "His [Althusser] work is, in the first place, great by what it attests to and by what it risks, by what it traversed with that plural, shattered, and oftentimes interrupted flash, by the very high risk taken and the endurance accepted: his adventure is singular, it belongs to no one" (Derrida, 1993, p. 243). Derrida's remarks allude to a life that within all its brilliance and promise, was not immune to critical voices and the changing tides of political and social climates.

Perhaps there is no other contemporary philosopher who had been exposed to such fervent criticism. In fact, controversy surrounding his theories led Althusser to fall out of the graces of both academia and French public life. By 1978, the socialist writer E.P. Thompson had launched a full assault on Althusser's writings, calling his philosophy an "idealism," his social theory a "bourgeois ideology," and his politics "Stalinist" (Elliott, 1987, p. 3-4). In 1985, Ferry and Renaut even noted, "[Althusserianism] seems very dated, and, like the Beatles' music or Godard's first films, inevitably evokes a recent but vanished past" (p. 200). The decline of Althusserianism had led many to believe that its place in within the Marxist tradition was no longer relevant to progressively humanistic philosophical paradigms. Amongst such criticism,

intellects continue to maintain its topicality. Derrida alongside many of Althusser's disciples

such as Pierre Macherey, Etienne Balibar, and Warren Montag continue to defend the relevance

of Althusser. The death of the scholar alongside the publication of his memoir, *L'avenir dure*

Longtemps (1993), had piqued a resurgence of Althusserian philosophy. Montag (2013)

explained that Althusser's contribution as a philosopher has remained "ambiguous", and has led

to an excess of inquiries suggesting that even the "very questioning of reading his works seems

forewarning" (p. 1). It is easy to admit that theoretical perplexities and inconsistencies remain

present in the scholar's work. However, what also remains is a philosophical richness that is

paramount to the study of marketing, even today.

The inspiration for this project has been influenced by the many who continue to question

the importance of Althusser's philosophical contribution and works with that very same inquiry:

Why Althusser? Why now? Althusser (1993) once wrote that he believed Marxist thought would

survive not only because it had the capacity to "assume different forms" but also because "the

feebleness of current theoretical thinking is such that the mere reappearance of those elementary

but necessary ingredients of authentic thought (. . .) will, at a certain point, contrast so markedly

with prevailing intellectual attitudes that all those who are bewildered by what has happened are

bound to be struck by them" (p. 223). It is in the spirit of this notion and in the midst of current

branding practices, that this chapter too, will address Althusser's philosophical agenda and

present research as to why Althusser's philosophy — specifically his constructs of ideology and

interpellation — remains relevant to marketing practices.

Althusser's work offers grounds that help us to recognize how consumer decision-making

and affected discourses are dominated as a result of ideological structures within society. To

opine that marketing has moved entirely to a democratic co-creation project would be of bad

faith. Althusser's work suggests that marketing and, more specifically, branding create pseudo-relationships with consumers that are ideologically normalized. Through his work, Althusser reclaims Marxism by adopting a structuralist paradigm to explain an individual's relation to the world and the way meaning is inscribed within particular practices. It is Althusser's intention to uncover how ideology governs a subject's thoughts and actions by rationalizing itself within society. This chapter will first start with a biographical overview of the philosopher's life as well as his historical moment. It will then move to his major philosophical coordinates of ideology and interpellation, which will be used as the framework for the next chapter's application of ideological interpellation to branding.

3.2 A *Pied-Noir* in Paris

Louis Althusser lived during a time in which several fundamental historical events would ultimately shape him both as an individual and as a scholar. His upbringing in north Africa, as well as his involvement in World War II and the French political scene of the 1960s are important because they reveal key circumstances that affected the trajectory of his philosophy. Additionally, it helps us to understand how even when critics of his work denounced his ideas, Althusser remained devoted to his stance. The following section offers a succinct biographical sketch and pays particular attention to key historical incidents that help to provide texture to the philosophical conjectures of this project.

Louis Pierre Althusser was born on October 16, 1918 in the town of Birmendreïs, just a few miles outside of Algiers, Algeria. He would die of a heart attack on October 22, 1990 at the age of 73. Both sets of his grandparents were originally from the mountainous Morvan region in Burgundy, France. Unable to procure their own land, Althusser's maternal grandparents moved

to Algeria so that his grandfather, Pierre Berger could pursue his dream of becoming a forester and obtain land for his family's use. While living in the isolated forests, the Bergers would often go into town. On one particular trip, they met the Althussers, a French family who had likewise migrated to Algeria. Both the Bergers and the Althussers were considered *pieds-noirs* (black feet). *Pieds-noirs* were individuals who were of European descent but had made the decision to migrate to the French-colonialized country of Algeria.

Though Althusser's life in Algeria had exposed him to differing religious denominations and cultures, Althusser was raised as a devout Catholic. As a child he was part of the youth group, *jeunesse étudiantes chrêtiennes* and was actively engaged with his faith. His connection to his religious roots would remain intact and at least in his earlier works, actually sought to synthesize Christianity and Marxism (Lewis, 2014). Eagleton (1976) suggests that Althusser's theory of ideology drew heavily upon the Catholic notion that "practice proceeds consciousness" (p. ix). Even at a young age, Althusser seemed to identify how influential ideology could be at determining and maintaining social practices.

Althusser's paternal grandparents had two sons, Charles and Louis. Althusser's mother Lucienne soon became engaged to Louis. Althusser recalls in his memoir how in 1917, the older son Charles returned home from the warfront, told the family that his brother Louis had been killed in Verdun, and then proposed to Lucienne saying that "he should take Louis's place and marry her" (Althusser, 1992, p. 36). This is a particularly important component in Althusser's life, for he noted that his father whom he described as "fundamentally very authoritarian" (Althusser, 1992, p. 41) was from the onslaught, controlling and abusive toward his mother. He would go on to describe the moment in which his father departed once more for the warfront as, "leaving my mother robbed, raped, and shattered, physically brutalised, deprived of the savings

she had patiently accumulated (something in reserve, one never knows — sex and money are closely linked here), and cut off from the life she had begun to make for herself and enjoy" (Althusser, 1992, p. 38). Even early on in his life, Althusser's exposure to inequitable power relations and dominance was made prominent by family relations. This control would eventually overshadow the development of his relationship with his mother and demonstrated the very nuanced structures that Althusser would later address in work on anti-humanism and ideology.

From an early age Althusser (1992) remarked that his relationship with his mother was one in which he constantly "experienced a huge and profound sense of anguish, and an urge to devote [him]self to her service, body and soul, as an act of oblation in order to save myself" (p. 38). He noted a traumatizing sexual incident when he was around the age of 13 that caused him to describe the situation as a "form of rape and castration" by his mother "who felt she had been raped by my father" (Althusser, 1992, p. 51). Later on, he would write that he had always felt like he had never really existed "in or for [him]self," as if, "there has been a mistake, and that was not really me she loved or was even looking at" (p. 53). Here, one is also able to see hints of Althusser's interest in subjectivity and the calling forth of identity. Althusser's early experience with a misappropriated identity echoes what he would later explore in his work on interpellation and misrecognition. It was in his mother's projection of her lost love onto Althusser that led him to readily admit misidentity and his acquiescence to the label.

These feelings influenced Althusser's adult life by plaguing him with depression and advancing hypomania (what one would consider a malady similar to bipolar disorder by today's standards). Throughout much of his adulthood, he would be institutionalized several times, experiment with electro-shock therapy, and experience instances of extreme manias. His psychological hardships however, did little to plague his academic success. In school, Althusser

78

excelled. In 1939, he was admitted into Paris' École Normale Supérieure (ENS), but was called

up to serve in World War II before he could begin his studies (Ferretter, 2006). In 1940,

Althusser was captured by Germans and would remain a prisoner of war in northern Germany

until 1945. During his imprisonment, Althusser (1992) wrote that he felt "quite at home as a

prisoner" and that the structure of a daily routine led him to admit that he was far more

comfortable behind bars than at home with his family (p. 107). In his servitude, he found comfort

in the habitual activity and familiarity of the structure. By the time he returned to ENS after the

war, Althusser had developed a deep intellectual prowess. During his studies for the agrégation[6],

he became interested in Leftist political movements and Marxism, particularly 19th century

German idealism (Lewis, 2014, n.p.). Of conversion, Althusser (1993) explained that he became

a Marxist "as a result of all my personal experiences, as well as the things I read and the

associations I made" (p. 220). Under the direction of Gaston Bachelard, Althusser finished his

dissertation, "On Content in the Thought of G.W.F Hegel" and in 1948 passed the agrégation.

Althusser's superior performance on the exam procured him a position as the agrégé répétiteur.[7]

This would continue to be an important period in Althusser's life. In 1946, he met the

woman who would be come his lifelong partner and wife, Helene Rytmann (Legotien). Rytmann

was an involved member of the French Communist Party (PCF). Though the two would

eventually suffer a catastrophic and fatal event some years later (that would ultimately affect the

rest of Althusser's career), Althusser (1993) wrote that he had "enjoyed the unrivaled privilege

of loving (and being loved) by a woman who was quite outstanding" (p. 131).

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[6] In France, it is a competitive exam that determines entry into University that normally requires 1-2 years of preparation and study.
[7] Also known as a *caiman;* An esteemed position within University; The person holding the title is in charge of tutoring other students preparing for agrégation.

Althusser's membership into the PCF in 1948 inspired both his political and intellectual agenda. Here, one is able to identify the beginning of an intellectual agenda concerned with exposing the political underpinnings of philosophy. Althusser was infamously known for the radical changes he made to his theories throughout the course of his academic career and is in fact one of the major charges against him. According to Ferretter (2006), it is helpful to understand that Althusser's works can be categorized into five different thought movements:

- 1946-1951: Earliest writings that demarcate Althusser's shift from Hegelianism to Marxism. Produces several essays which would later be compiled in *Spectre of Hegel* (1997).

- 1960-1966: Considered the most productive period of Althusser's writing. Major publications include *Reading Capital* (1960/1978) and *For Marx* (1965/2005). Within these works, Althusser set out to "turn attention away from the "ethical" and "humanistic" works of the young Marx, (. . .) to the more "scientific" and "deterministic" writings of the older Marx (. . .) (Smith, 1984, p. 18).

- 1967-1975: Receives criticism from the French Communist Party and as such, "recants" some of his earlier positions on Marxism[8]. Produces a compilation of essays in *Lenin and Philosophy* (1971/2008a) and *Essays in Self Criticism* (1976). It is during this period that Althusser writes about Ideological States Apparatuses and ideological interpellation. These constructs will be a cornerstone to this discussion and will be analyzed in depth later in this chapter.

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[8] For instance, in "Marxism and Humanism" (in *For Marx*, 1965/2005), Althusser declares that ideology does have an "historical existence and role within a given society" (p. 231). But in the essay, "Ideology of the State," he declares that "ideology has no history, which emphatically does not mean that there is not history in it (on the contrary, for it is merely the pale, empty and inverted reflection of real history) but that is has no history *of its own"* (p. 34).

- 1976-1978: During this period Althusser increases his contempt for the French Communist Party because he believes its politics to be too much aligned with socialist motives. He implores them to reevaluate certain party ideologies pertaining to Marx[9]. His writings focus on party reform.

- 1982-1988: After the death of his wife Helene, Althusser develops a new philosophy based on metaphysics. These last several years of Althusser's life centered on writings about "aleatory materialism"[10] (p. 4-5).

These 40 years or so of Althusser's intellectual career also mark an historical period fraught with civil and political unrest. Althusser, having remained acutely aware of the political climate and its effects on French intellectualism as well as French society in general, maintained that bearing witness to such events was of ultimate importance in shaping the ideologies and philosophies of the period. What remains unique to French history in the 20th century is that Marxism was slow to yield legitimate philosophical currency. Smith (1984) wrote that Marx was viewed and studied mainly as an economist and for the most part, the middle class had been able to understand and adopt intellectual thought.

As a result, this faction of French society was not compelled to rise up and revolt like many of the other Europeans countries (p. 32). But the events that continued to occur during Althusser's historical moment both in France and the rest of Europe and Asia soon demanded the attention of those who were willing to respond. Around 1945, as a result of the many of his works being

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[9] Althusser offers an exemplar of his position during a speech entitled, "The Crisis of Marxism" at a conference organized by *Il Manifesto* in November, 1977.

[10] Also known as a "materialism of the encounter" and was another shift in Althusser's writings that attempted to position philosophy as having some type of "underground" or little recognized tradition in its history (Lewis, 2014, n.p.)

translated into French, Marx made his way into the French intellectual movement (Smith, 1984). His political theories gained currency amongst various economic factions as well as intellectuals and politicians. A post-World War II climate coupled with the rise of a repressive governmental system continued to stimulate interest in Marxism and also continued to inspire Althusser'a intellectual agenda.

Of historical events taking place around this time, Althusser (1965/2005) wrote that it had "stolen our youth (. . .)" and forced them to join the working class political organization (p. 21). Althusser remarked that this period was fraught with growing dissent, protests, and demonstration. More specifically, an amalgamation of several events were said to have ignited Althusser's theories including: the mounting troubles within the Communist Party after Stalin's death, the French Communist Party's correction toward de-Stalinization, the evolution of Marxism in the 1950s and early 1960s, and finally the state of French intellectualism (Elliott, 1987).

One of the most pivotal moments that inflamed existing relations and influenced these historical events was the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. During this meeting Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev delivered his speech, "On the Cult of Personality and Consequences," otherwise known as the "Secret Speech" to other Soviet Communist leaders. In this speech, Khrushchev (1956) denounced the leadership of former Soviet General Secretary and Premier, Joseph Stalin urging his colleagues to "abolish the cult of the individual decisively, once and for all" (n.p.). This event set off a chain reaction of events which would ultimately affect Althusser's involvement with the French Communist Party (PCF) as well as offer a reinterpretation of Marxism. Varying interpretations of Marxism led to a cacophony of corollary thought systems of other -isms such as Leninism and a heightened

interest in an humanistic interpretation of Marxism. Khrushchev's remarks ushered in a new era of "social humanism" (Resch, 1992, p. 69). This period marked the movement toward de-Stalinization and pitted Althusser's work against emerging intellectual and political thought.

The scholar however, stood devoutly beside his theories. This move proved to be risky since the growing political ideology during this time was defined by a denouncement of more authoritative government systems. Althusser saw a quickly advancing world outlook privileging individual agency and believed that as a society, individuals continuously failed to recognize that what they believed to be free will and the capacity to form personal ideas and thoughts was really just the influence of preexisting social structures. Reliance on humanism was detrimental to the individual because it moved him further away from experiencing an objective reality. Althusser believed humanism was flawed since it ignored the inherent structures of the natural world. For him, the strength of ideological structures within society could not be overcome, regardless of how strong a woman's will to power.

Above all, Elliott (1985) suggests that what remained at the heart of Althusser's project and his stance on Western Marxism can be summed up as a "repudiation of Hegel and the Young Marx" (pre-1865) and "endorsement" of the mature Marx, Lenin, and Mao" (p. 51). For Althusser, Elliot argues, western Marxist thought "negated 'what is specific to the sciences: the production of objective knowledge'" (p. 51). During this tumultuous historical moment, individuals gravitated toward a Marxist humanism. This afforded the individual the belief that she was fundamentally responsible for change and revolt -- that she was the sole agent of change in a world of class exploitation and unfair economic conditions. The rise of placing the individual in a position of power and as the key to revolt as founded in the work of Marx was for Althusser, a disservice to all women.

Frustrated with a growing emphasis on the agentic qualities associated with woman during this period, Althusser began to pursue a more rigorous anti-humanist agenda and produced a discourse that ultimately ran counter to the day's prevailing discourses. Althusser refuted the idea that an individual could obtain any true knowledge about reality because she could never get outside of his mind (Smith, 1984, p. 72). For him, humanism was a dead end in the epistemological search for knowledge. By creating a new take on Marxism, Althusser instead hoped to position science as the only truly objective way to achieve truth. Locating truth in a more scientific model would advance his argument about ideology as being a repressive apparatus within society and shed light on how political, religious, economic, etc. structures have the ability to influence knowledge. Science is the only way to defeat the theoretical discourse of ideology and the knowledge that it continuously produces. In other words, Althusser was invested in the search for true information that is not the byproduct of ideological discourse— knowledge that was not tainted by ideology or the subjective filtering of information through various individuals.

3.3 A Refutation of Marxist Humanism

Marx's stance on humanism remains a vital viewpoint to Althusserian philosophy since it was ultimately the impetus for Althusser's very own counter-perspective. Marxist humanism was one of the driving forces of a political rebirth following the fall of Stalinism. Its roots influenced a socio-political movement that condemned the capitalist machine, but more importantly, affirmed that individuals possessed the ability to overcome oppressive conditions and find solace the ability to act and revolt against tyrannical conditions. The following section addresses key implications of Marxist humanism and its impact on Althusser's philosophical agenda. In

particular, it clarifies why Althusser was inspired by this feature of Marx's work and how it came to help form the constructs of ideology and interpellation.

Humanism is the view that individuals have the capacity to exercise free will and as social actors, are able to create and shape history. Marxist humanism was seen as "a response to the day's current politics as well as an attempt to further individualism and democracy" (Smith, 1984, p. 30). The movement draws itself from the origins of Marx's works and his major coordinates of historical materialism, alienation, and the essence of man. These coordinates remain relevant to not only the humanist agenda but also ground particular Althusserian touch points. Marx's establishment of a politico-economic theory positioned a capitalist marketplace as the primary origin of production, labor, and consequently class stratification. For him, the trajectory of exploitation of the proletariat could be traced through various historical periods and the various productive forces that perpetuated themselves in and across various economic, social, and political arenas. These forces essentially materialized themselves in the production and reproduction of goods, labor, ideas, etc.

Marx (1845) described this phenomenon as a "sum of productive forces" in which history created a relationship between individuals and nature that was then transmitted to following generations. Marx argued that this progression through history is "modified" by that particular generation, but also "prescribes for it its conditions of life and gives it a definite development (. . .) ("Ideology", n.p.). Not only does the ideology of capitalism work upon the individual, but it is also the individual who has the capacity to affect the course of nature. This continual bestowal of productive forces is a constituting factor in man's relation with the world and shows that "circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances" (Marx, "Ideology", n.p.). The dialectical makeup of these opposing forces meant that not only is woman at odds with the

economic powers that be, but that she is also at odds with himself as piece of the production process.

This relation between woman and her conditions is in some part, dictated by her relation to her labor. According to Marx (1844), [wo] man is a *"species-being"* (p. 31) meaning that woman sees herself as an element of a universal collective. As a result of his membership to the species, woman is intrinsically connected to the world and to the social. She sees herself as part of nature. Labor however, has the ability to estrange woman from both herself and her external world. Marx (1844) contended that within a capitalist market, labor reduced woman (the proletariat) to a worker and even more inhumanely, to that of a horse. Within the economy, woman is only as important as her labor and a such, woman is reduced to what she produces. The paradox of this plight is that, the more an individual is forced to produce, the more she becomes alienated from nature and from herself. Marx (1844) wrote:

> Whatever the product of his labor is, he is not. Therefore, the greater this product, the less is he himself. The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien. (p. 29)

This passage illustrates that alienation grows as the individual becomes more embedded in the production process. The fruits of her labor are of no benefit for her since the process is unsatisfying and does little to communicate how the individual may be valued in the eyes of management. How she is compensated does not reflect the value of her worth nor is it complementary to the real value of the product. Additionally, the product being produced is

external to his being; it is unnatural and contrived. It expresses no deeper meaning, it lacks substance, and reflects nothing about the individual producing it. Rather, the production of goods diminishes man's being and relegates him to an "abstract" (Marx, 1844, p. 31) object of mechanistic labor. For Marx, this type of labor is what estranges man from not only his individual life, but also "the life of the species" (Marx, 1844, pp. 31). It is what creates a distance between herself and her true being, as well as others.

Much of this Marxist perspective is based on the unequal distribution of power within society and within the economic system. The concern of Marxism lies in the transformation of the proletariat's labor into a commodity controlled by those in control. Because of this stratification and exploitation of the worker, woman loses his ability to maintain control of herself and her life. She becomes powerless. In Marxism, the solution to woman's alienation is the abolishment of the production of private property or more simply, capitalism. The understanding is that everything that woman produces is private property since it does not belong to her, and is bought by another woman. The response to such capitalist practice is communism. Within a communist economy individuals are able to achieve equality on the basis that communism conceives woman as "universal self-consciousness" (Marx, 1844, p. 53). Communism is the solution since it is seen as "the process of emancipation and rehabilitation (Marx, 1844, p. 49). Within this political structure all men are equal and are no longer driven to produce another woman's product.

Woman is once again able to reclaim labor that benefits herself and other women whilst placing her in a equitable community where hierarchy no longer exists. Woman's relation to nature is restored back to its original state; she reverts back to a natural life rhythm that is no longer interrupted by technical relations of production and modes of power. These ideas echoed

a humanist philosophy that grants woman the ability redirect the course of her fate. It is this philosophy that many during flocked to during the mid 1960s and 1970s. Those disenfranchised from a post-Stalin milieu sought refuge in humanism. Historical materialism, alienation, and woman's pursuit of emancipation as intersections of this philosophy are just a few touchpoints where Althusser works to counter the views of Marx. However, these ideas provide texture for how Althusser's intellectual agenda offered a response to the rise of Marxist humanism during his particular historical moment.

The death of Stalin marked a turning point in the mid-20th century. Communist countries that once supported his policies were now exposed to a maelstrom of criticism by those wishing to herald in a new era of politics. This period of de-Stalinization gave rise to a relaxing of intellectual thought and the removal of an encroaching governmental system.   It focused on the "active and creative role of men and women in the shaping of history" and sought to rescue Marxism from its determinism and the imposed limitation of its function solely in the economic sphere (Poster, 1974, p. 393). Althusser saw the new form of Marxist humanism as a threat to the more scientific interpretation of Marxism and a "cunning ruse of capitalist ideology" (Ferretter, 2006, p. 23). This was especially apparent during the riot of 1968 when demagoguery reigned king (Ferretter, 2006, p. 23).

This historical moment would come to be driven by "emotion and experience" (Althusser, 1993, p. 186). In a time of turmoil, Althusser charged that science could be a rational panacea. However, an anti-humanist position would be difficult to sell with a new socialist agenda that placed woman at the helm of change and revolution. The allure of the humanist movement touted a period of human freedom and a desire to exercise individual will. However, Althusser took up issue with this branch of Marxism and sought to address its deleterious effects.

His contention was that individuals are but simply an ideological byproduct and that by embracing the humanist approach, Marxism would risk losing its scientific leanings. Placing the individual at the center of theory would diminish what Althusser saw as the later Marxism's endeavor to create a science of history grounded in objective rationalism.

In his essay, "Marxism and Humanism", Althusser (1965/2005) described the Marxist perspective of humanism by acknowledging two separate periods of Marx's thought. This is important to identify since the latter of Marx's works are the foundation of Althusser's intellectual agenda and are what Althusser sees as where one is able to extract Marxism's scientificity. Drawing upon French philosopher Gaston Bachelard's term, Althusser (1965/2005) labeled this as an "*epistemological break"* (p. 32). This term describes a phenomenon similar to a paradigm shift in which there is a rupture in accepted idea that is then overturned or met with some type of obstacles that causes the thought to change or be replaced with a new, different idea. Althusser's argument is that Marx's work can be divided into two different periods that are characterstically different. Traditional Marxists contend that "Marx wanted to stand Hegel on his head" by arguing that while history progresses because of a dialectic tension, "it does not do so because of ideas, but rather because of material conditions of human society" (Ferretter, 2006, p. 39). Marx deviates from Hegel in where he see positions the origins of change. The former scholar grounds the historical process within economic conditions, while the latter sees the evolution of society as a result of the dialectical tension between ideas.

Althusser's (1965/2005) objection to this is one not concerned with how Marx sought to modify Hegel, but rather how Marx broke completely from Hegel; Marx had cut all ties to Hegel in an attempt to create a completely new arsenal of terms (p. 109) and reflect a push toward a Marx's scientific inclinations . For Marx, the science of history lied in historical materialism.

This period takes place around 1845 when Althusser (1965/2005) argued, Marx experienced an "epistemological break" and shifted from a theoretical philosophy to a scientific methodology (p. 34). Herein, is where Marx created a science of history, better known as historical materialism. Althusser noted the two major works that signaled this break as *The Theses on Feuerbach* and *The German Ideology,* both published in the same year of 1845. Althusser characterized the young Marx as being Hegelian in orientation, strongly focusing on idealism Here, Marx adheres to a "philosophy of man" in which the "essences of man" (of which, according to Marx, are freedom and reason) create history (p. 224).

Hegelianism infers that an individual can know her world, but only should she be able to first know herself. In other words, freedom always exists and is accessible to an individual, but it differs in form and in the degree to which the individual is able to actively pursue it (i.e. control of the government, freedom of press, feudalism, etc.). For Althusser, one of the major issues in Marx earlier works is this notion of man's essence. It is the essence of woman that ultimately composes the individual. It is what makes her subject. The issue with this notion is that if the essence of woman is a universal concept—meaning that every woman indelibly has an essence, it would presuppose then that "concrete subjects exist as absolute givens; this implies an empiricism of the subject" (Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 228).

This ultimately places an idealist perspective in conflict with a very empirical reasoning. How can woman assert his ideas freely and exercise reason if what she is ultimately comprised of is presupposed by a universal absolute? This is why, Althusser claims, Marx makes the move toward a more scientific thesis.

This second break in Marx's thought sought to renounce his earlier humanist leanings and according to Althusser (1975), adhered to three new characteristics: 1.) "an introduction of a

theory based on new concepts such as relations of production and ideology", 2.) "criticism toward the theoretical claims of humanism" and lastly 3.) "a definition of humanism as ideology" (p. 227). The goal was not to denounce humanism but to rewrite it as being a theoretical ideology. Althusser was dedicated to exposing how humanism as an ideology could not be the solution that men were looking for in the work of Marx. The very knowledge that woman claims to have as a result of ideas drawn from experience within Marxist humanism, could be nothing more than an idealist illusion.

As a response, Althusser found solace and a fissure for objection in another realm of philosophy and began to gravitate toward the 1960s French Structuralist movement. The movement was experiencing great momentum and for Althusser, would help to further the anti-humanist agenda. What was originally tied to a theory of language, branched out into that which could provide a rationalist-inspired philosophy that worked to describe structures and systems that exist *a priori* within the lifeworld and of which, govern and provide meaning.

At its roots, Structuralism contends that there a "universal, unchanging order of things" (Palmer, 1995, p. 4). Starting in the late 1950s with the work of Roland Barthes (*Mythologies,* 1957; *Elements of Semiology,* 1964) and moving to Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Structural Anthropology* (1958), and Foucault, those within the Structuralist movement tried to "escape Hegel;" and "placed humanism and historicism in the cross hairs of criticism" (Elliott, 1985, p. 61). For the structuralists, humanism and historicism clouded the underpinnings of a rationalist philosophy that contended that structural forces controlled the formation of societies. Additionally, structuralism maintains that nothing has an essence, and because all things lack an essence (including human beings) nothing can be stabilized to the extent that one maybe able to draw empirical conclusions based on it. Adhering to the offerings of structuralist thought,

Althusser "believed that the cause of Marxist materialism could best be defended in the early 1960s in conjunction with aspects of structuralism" (Elliott, 1992, p. 64). Structuralism was complementary to the Marxist notion of the economic structure that was essentially governing class order and modes of production within a capitalist market. It also is a rationalist methodology that Althusser saw as a solution for unlocking some of the difficulties posed within the earlier Marx works. The structuralist view of history is one that Althusser was able to apply to the issues he saw surrounding the Marxist takes on historicism and ideology.

While historical materialism was both scientific and autonomous, governed, like the natural sciences, solely by the exigencies of the pursuit of objective knowledge, yet possessing its own theory, method and object" (Elliott, 1985, p. 52), structuralism broke away from the historicism and aided Althusser's position that structures within society were unchanging and that history has no subject because the subject cannot exist on its own. For structuralism, knowledge is measured by a "system of relationships in static and dynamic articulation. Strictly speaking, there are thus no events, only structural happenings" (Poster, 1974, p. 403). Everything in the world is constituted by preexisting structures, including what an individual can and cannot know. These structures in and of themselves influence and shape the world, including human beings. Within the structuralist paradigm, structures within society affect how an individual communicates, thinks, and acts. The individual's subjectivity is contingent upon the structure; it can never be reached as a result of free will. Though this contradicts the voice of the Marxist humanist, it establishes the point that historical development is not just an effect of socioeconomic disparities and the basis of human judgment.

Althusser turned toward structuralism in order to shed light on the shortcomings raised by Marx's humanism. This observation permitted Althusser to establish that since since humanism

was an ideology (and as such, simply a theoretical conjecture in which one can never derive absolute knowledge from) and history exists without a subject (meaning history is essentially just comprised of structures that determine human existence), then the science of trying to historically trace it could not be conceivable. This is reinforced by the idea that within structuralism, there are no essences. In other words, "the human sciences cannot aspire to complete knowledge of it" and since there is no evidence of a subject, there cannot be a teleology (Resch, 1992, p. 69).

A subjectless history produces an individual that is unable to determine her own telos. One can never be more than what she is and to Althusser, that meant not being able to possess a subjecthood that would allow one to think volitionally. To extend this point further, one is able to also say that since woman is not the subject of history, then one is unable to possess a *telos*. The act of progressing toward something is thwarted by a subjective lack. Rather than history being a progression of subjective acts, Althusser conceives history as being a "sum total of all its possible structural permutations" (Smith, 1984, p. 184). History is simply an arrangement of structures that has progressed as a result of simultaneously happening events. History is not history in the sense that it is a causal, diachronic progression. In other words, Althusser believes that it is not possible pinpoint one event that can be linked to the cause of something. It is rather an amalgamation of various structures, or what he would call overdetermination. This is in direct contrast to Marx who would contribute historical causality to economic conditions. Those in command of the traditional humanist camps saw Althusser as a threat to the progression of human liberation during such political and civil injustice.

Althusser defended his claim however, in the midst of criticism from British Communist member, John Lewis in the essay, "Reply to John Lewis" (1972). Althusser's stance that history

was without a subject ruffled the feathers of Marxist humanists, particular Lewis who wrote in his article "The Althusser Case" that "man makes history." (p. 21). Lewis' thesis was that woman was agent of action and the reason for change within history since he is also the impetus for revolution. Althusser defended his stance by using Marxism directly against Lewis. Althusser (1972) called upon Marx's maxim that it is the *masses that make history,* but more specifically that the *class struggle is the motor of history* (p. 80) and since *masses* are not a particular, volitional subject, we cannot make the deduction that man as part of the masses, makes history. The masses are subjugated to a class structure that dictates its practices; staying true to the roots of communism, Marx implied that revolt is only possible when the individual realizes that his struggle is tied to an economic system that controls his being.

Althusser would disagree with this statement because he believed that the individual was unable to realize that her circumstances were a product of already present ideological structures. However, his larger objective was to refute Lewis' position with the very ideology that he had so faithfully pledged allegiance to as part of the Communist party. Althusser (1971/2008b) wrote in his essay, "Remark on the Category: 'Process without a Subject or Goal(s)'", "In my opinion: men (plural), in the concrete sense, are necessarily subjects (plural) *in* history, because they act *in* history as subjects (plural) But there is no Subject (singular) *of* history" (p. 135). This excerpt alludes to Althusser's stance on historical materialism. For him, history is a "process without a Subject or Goal(s)" (p. 139). It is subjects who become the subjects of history, not the cause. Because subjects come into identity via ideological interpellation, they are essentially agentless and lack the ability to be what Althusser (1971/2008b) deems the "Absolute Centre" (p. 135). They lack the volitional ability to make active, primordial choices. They make decisions solely based on the ideological determinants within society.

Where Althusser would diverge from Marx again is that Althusser believed that the individual was never "given" but rather, "produced an effect" (Montag, 1995, p. 59). Marx's theory of history contended that the material conditions of society (i.e. the effects of capitalism with production, exploitation, classism, etc.) could ultimately explain the way individuals existed socially. In other words, economic activity could essentially explain changes in society and that "The so-called historical presentation of development is founded, as a rule, on the fact that the latest form regards the previous ones as steps leading up to itself" (Grundrisse, 1973/1939, p. 36). Society was thus a culmination of all historical events prior to the current historical moment and that current conditions were a byproduct of its historical material conditions. In fact, Marx (1976) wrote that exploitation and trade could be traced well before economies were established:

> In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. The legend of theological original sin tells us certainly how man came to be condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow; but the history of economic original sin reveals to us that there are people to whom this is by no means essential. Never mind! Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work. (p. 873)

Marx's theory is important in shaping Althusser's philosophy of ideology since Althusser grapples with the historicism of ideology throughout the course of his career. Althusser (1965/2005) contended that Marx saw humanism as an ideology, as a "conditional necessity" (p.

231) and that knowledge (humanism) would never actually help society to eradicate itself of its material conditions or that even knowledge of ideology would never actually "dissipate" it since as it stood, it was "necessary as the existing mode of production" (Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 230). Since ideology is not scientific, but rather what Althusser would associate with philosophy, it cannot produce true rational knowledge. It can only produce some knowledge—the knowledge of the imaginary relation between the individual and the world.

This is where Althusser attempted to make the case that Marx was anti-humanist (at least in his later pieces of work) and grounded it in the idea that Mark was aware that his anti-humanist tendencies but could not shake the foundation of humanism. In this sense, Althusser wanted to disengage the philosophical tendencies that had long been associated with Marxism and focus on a project to create and define a scientificity of historical materialism (Sprinkler, 1995, p. 202). To him, this would be the uncovering of how there is a science to the modes of production and how they are comprised of an actual structure in which "one mode of production passes into another" (Althusser, 1990, p. 6). Pulling from Marx's understanding of historical materialism, Althusser (1970/1968) explained that the mode production produces three elements: an object of labor, a means of labor, and labor power (p. 173).

The object of labor is the product that the means of labor (the individual and the technology used) produces via the labor power. The individual is intertwined with the machinery/technology that she uses to produce an object. For Marx, the individual loses her essence as a result of her entwinement with the capitalist machine. The individual becomes embedded in the regime of capitalism and as such, defined and constituted by ideology. Whereas Marx saw ideology as symptomatic of a suppressive bourgeois class and dominant capitalistic market, Althusser saw it as an opportunity to express how meaning and identity is created and

sustained within societies. Ideology has the capacity to empower individual agency and Althusser remained interested in investigating its influence. The following section suggests that ideology is fundamental to society and offers individuals a means of understanding the formation and evolution of those societies and the individuals that comprise them.

3.4 Ideology

Althusser's most influential contribution to Marxist thought and philosophy was his work on ideology. Not only does ideology provide the chassis for Althusser's concept of interpellation, but it also provides a philosophy that expands well beyond Marxist thought. The following section details Althusser's definition as well as his commitment to advance the concept. Additionally, theoretical analysis will be offered to explain how Althusserian ideology continues to permeate society and ultimately influences individual ideas, beliefs, and practices.

An understanding of ideology is one replete of complex history. Evidence shows that the actual term (*idéologie)* first appeared around 1796 when it was coined by French nobleman and prisoner of the French Revolution, Antoine Destutt de Tracy who called it a "science of ideas" (Niarala, 2014). Though de Tracy first employed the term to describe sensory experience as a basis for knowledge, it was quickly refined to emphasize how conscious behavior, namely— perception, memory, judgment, and will— all affect knowledge. Napoleon was concerned with how potent *idéologie* could be and fearful that it would trump other sources of authority such as the Church, banned the movement of its study in 1803 (Nirala, 2014).

Throughout history and with exposure to various "-isms," both its definitional and semantical use has evolved. Its use by Marx was seen as a "set of beliefs in which people deceive themselves" in which individuals develop a false consciousness and come to believe what they

think rather than what is actually true (Cranston, "Ideology"). Much of Marx's work with ideology would be the foundation that would later influence generations of Marxist scholars, including Althusser, who saw the constructive nature of ideology within society.

Though ideology remains an area of both interest and evolving interpretations, it is Althusser who sought to create an entire theory surrounding it. It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that Althusser began to tout ideology as fundamental element to the conditions of society. He (1965/2005) noted that "ideology (as a system of mass representations) is indispensable in any society if men are to be formed, transformed, and equipped to respond to the demands of their conditions of existence" (p. 235). Unlike traditional Marxism, Althusser believed that social change was not a task that could be executed by woman. Woman's freedom could only be found in the understanding her relation to ideology. The forms of ideology structure the lives of human beings and as such, it is unavoidable, inevitable, and largely constitutive of social life. This line of thought reinforces Althusser's resolute stance that structures and systems rather than woman's conscious, dictate the course of history and the relations between woman and his world.

A look at Althusser's corpus of work would *prima facie,* place him amongst philosophers, however Althusser would have been slow to label himself as one. He wanted to make apparent the differences between philosophy and science so that one would be able to see that not only does ideology pose determinant circumstance, but it does so in away that shows how it is a theory that is systematized. The scholar delves into this exploration because he believes theory is able to explain what "already exists in a practical state" (Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 168). His search is an epistemological one. Knowledge of things and of the world is possible, but what remains more important, is understanding why that knowledge exists as it does and from what origins. For to make sense of Althusserianism, it is beneficial to trace the scholar's

position on philosophy and science. Althusser's (1974) very own "epistemological break" sought to refine his theory of ideology, writing:

> A philosophy does not make its appearance in the world as Minerva appeared to the society of Gods and men. It only exists in so far as it occupies a position, and it only occupies this position in so far as it has conquered it in the thick of an already occupied world. It therefore only exists in so far as this conflict has made it something distinct, and this distinctive character can only be won and imposed in an indirect way, by a detour involving ceaseless study of the other, existing positions. (pp. 165-6)

Althusser is expressing in the above remark is that is that philosophy only exists if it is in the company of its opposite, science. Science and ideology are both important since they both contribute to social formations. Whereas Althusser associates ideology with philosophy, he too associates science with theory. Althusser (1965/2005) is careful to define the term, theory and offer three derivations of the word:

• theory: A theoretical practice with scientific character

• "theory": A "determinate *theoretical system* of a real science" (i.e. historical materialism)

• Theory: General theory; the Theory of practice in general (p. 168).

According to him, Marx's later work on historical materialism is considered a science, or "theory," Its objective is to produce a scientific system of which to trace the development of societies. However, Althusser (1965/2005) is quick to demonstrate that Marx's epistemology, is based on an empiricism that suggests all knowledge is a posteriori. Woman as subject can come to an understanding of an object through experience (p. 12). However, because ideology is absolute (because it pre-exists woman), woman's quest for knowledge is influenced by ideology.

This is not to say that ideology does not provide the individual with knowledge. Ideology does offer woman knowledge but since ideology is tied to one's imaginary relation to the world, it gives woman only a partial knowledge. Althusser's goal is to explore a science that is able to eradicate those ideological leanings.

This is what Althusser (1965/2005) calls "theoretical practice" (p.164). For Althusser, theory is any form of practice of "scientific character" (p. 168). Practices are any "process of *transformation* of a determinate given raw material into a determinate *product*, a transformation effected by a determinate human labour, using determinate means (of 'production') (p.165-6). So theory is capable of turning a preexisting piece of ideological knowledge (empiricism) into a "scientific truth" (Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 168). This pursuit of scientific knowledge was the basis for an epistemological break. Understanding how theory and practice worked in conjunction with one another facilitated the transformation of thought and the mining of real knowledge. This dialectic of tension that Althusser alludes to is indicative of the discord between philosophy and science that he tried to reconcile.

Althusser (1968a) noted in an interview that philosophy starting with Plato had been the product of exposure to mathematics in society and evolved with Descartes' offering of physics (n.p) This idea also reflects the oscillation of Althusser's thought process in the mid-1960s and highlights the intention of this project. As Gregory Elliot (1987), alluded to with the title of his book, *Althusser: The Detour of Theory,* Althusser's philosophical work was an ongoing detour of sorts, often finding new routes or new ways to enter into a conversation (p. 9). It has been noted in previous chapters that the work of this particular scholar often contradicts itself.

Levine (2003) explains that not only does Althusser contradict his theory of ideology, but he goes as far to say that Althusser's work can be characterized into two different

metaphilosophies (p. 80). In his earlier writings of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital,* Althusser adhered to the theory that ideology was essentially a theoretical system of representation that doesn't actually exist. It was during this period that even the use of the term philosophy (he often used the term "Theory," with a capital T, according to Levine, 2003, p. 82) was often ambiguous in that it seemed to refer to both *ideological practices* or a *theoretical practice* that he claims was introduced first by Marx (Levine, 2003, p. 80). For Althusser, philosophy was not a science but a method in which individuals attempt to progress toward some type of truth.

In his later metaphilosophy (post-1967), Althusser claimed that philosophy is an "object of knowledge" in which science is tasked with explaining (Levine, 2003, p. 81). Individuals are able to glean information from it, to an extent. As human beings, philosophy helps us to sustain those ideas that science may first reveal to us. He then becomes critical of this position in *Essays in Self-Criticism* and *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists* by positing that ideology materializes itself in apparatuses, in actual physical systems, machines, tools, etc. Montag (2003) noted that his theory went to being concerned with immaterial ideas and representation to later being concerned with "the disposition of bodies in apparatuses [. . .] (p. 78). In his 2013 text, Montag posed the issue more simply by asking if ideology consists of ideas, discourse, practices or apparatuses" (p. 104). This shift is important to this project since it applies Althusser's later position of ideology (from 1966-1978) to branding.

Althusser (1976) was interested in trying to understand what exactly governs the conditions that surround us and how those conditions work to produce and reproduce themselves as well as the labor that the individual produces. He was also interested in how knowledge is obtained and to the extent that one is able to infer true knowledge about an object. This is indicative of Althusser's leanings as a rationalist. Again, this is not an endeavor easily remedied

by philosophy, but rather of science. Habermas' (1981) stance on rationalism is concerned not with the "possession of knowledge," but rather with how people "acquire and use knowledge" (p. 8). This is view that Althusser likewise holds. Through what social structures do individuals accumulate knowledge and how may one know whether that knowledge is valid?

In referencing Marx, Althusser (1976) wrote, "'Society is not composed of individuals,' says Marx. He is right: society is not a 'combination,' an 'addition' of individuals. What constitutes society is the system of its social relations in which its individuals live, work and struggle. Because each society has its own individuals, historically and socially determined" (p. 53). Althusser is trying to make the case that Marx recognizes the imperative nature of social relations and how it shapes woman's being. Individuals are part of the web of relations that constitute society. Woman does not simply exist and live in isolation of the various social relations. These relations, according to Althusser, are impacted by ideology. Ideology then, and its modes of production, are what perpetuate the illusion of individuals. But more so, society itself is a structure that has the ability to produce like-minded subjects. These structures bind women to each other through ideology.

Not only is the search for the source of knowledge of interest to Althusser, but also how we may be able to understand the evolution of this process by way of scientific method. For him, ideology describes an organic structure within society that could help individuals make sense of the occurrence of humanity. Balibar (1993) noted that ideology was "first introduced as a theory of social formations and seen as a conceptual break with any expressive causality, the decisive step towards *materialism* (p. 8). This becomes the onset of Althusserian ideology within a marxist paradigm. This interpretation would essentially act as a response to the key determinants of Marxist historical materialism which posited that social formations within

society and throughout history were a product of *transitive* causality (A affects B, B affects C, and so forth) or *expressive* causality in in which the summation of effects in a particular object or event ultimately affect its overall ability to change. In other words, within expressive causality, it is the manifestation of effects which induces change.

Contrastingly, Althusser sees changes of social formations as a result of an "organic totality" — everything is determined by a mode of production. His theory attempts to undermine the type of historical materialism that Marx had tried to establish. For Althusser, change is not like playing dominos; the modes of production do not change as a result of single causal pattern. Rather, the modes of production are singular, independent systems that when taken as a whole, determine the effect. In order to understand change, one must look at everything wholistically. Simply put it is impossible to pinpoint the exact cause of an effect. Althusser sees this process as happening in a vacuum. What changes is all relative and modes of production are what he saw as a "partial whole" (Althusser, 1990, p. 6).

An example of how Althusser sees ideology would be a metaphorical interpretation of the Titanic. By comparing the function of ideology to the Titanic, one is able to understand how Althusser argued against the Marxist notion that history is causal and that events are an effect of prior occurrences. At the bottom of the ship, there were compartments that the ships engineer's touted as being air-tight. However, after the crash, the damaged air-tight compartments began to fill with water and spill into subsequent compartments, ultimately leading to the sinking of the ship. This is how Marx would see history— a series of causal modes of productions and instances comprised of ideology which are ultimately influenced by way of ideology and create changes. Althusser, however, would argue that the ship sinking is not an effect of a sequence of compartments filling with water, but rather, that each compartment functions as its own

independent compartment and that each compartment can be seen as an independent structure that when taken in totality, determines what happens. To explain in another way, each compartment by itself is the "partial whole" that produces the effect. In other words, an occurrence does not happen as a result of a series of causal events, but rather because of an amalgam of those separate events, seen as a totality.

That is to say that instead of having a several dependent compartments working to produce an effect, one may have separate, independent compartments that comprise a whole of an effect and these effects, according to Althusser (1968) "cannot exist outside the structure" (p. 188) So in terms of the marketplace, the effect of capitalism (ideology) is determined by its relation to different faucets or modes of production. Montag (2013) cogently captures this event by stating that ideology is "secreted, not invented; it is the effect of society as a totality" (p. 111). Ideology itself does not directly govern society. It has not teleology. It is simply a function of the social organism that permits it to properly operate. Althusser's (1965/2005) echoed this by arguing that ideology was "indispensable . . . to historical respiration and life" (p. 232).

Aside from production processes labor, wages, etc. Althusser first begins his conversation surrounding ideology with the notion that in order for a capitalist market to succeed, there needs to be submission to the rules set in place through a ruling ideology (Althusser, 1971/2008, p. 6). For each mode of production, there is a corresponding ideology that reflects that essence of that particular mode, whether it be the economy, politics, etc. In a structuralist vein, everything within the lifeworld, including the marketplace, is governed by structures. Ideology is fundamentally crucial to the well-being of society. It is what sustains it and what allows it to exist. Each ideology then is a "determinant structure" (Althusser, 1990, p. 27) is in itself, of rules, laws, and ideas and without it, society would cease to exist. Schmid (1981) argued that

Althusser's definition is similar to that of Durkheim's collective or social representation because it shows itself in the form of materialized social practice (p. 60). Just like the rules, norms, and practices that show themselves in a collectivism and can only come to fruition in conjunction with the collective group, so too is how ideology functions. It is only through the social and the ideology can permeate.

Althusser (1971/2008b) posited that there are two guiding principles to ideology. The first postulation is that "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their conditions of existence" (p. 36). As human beings, we subscribe to particular ideologies that help shape our lives: religious, cultural, ethical, etc. Each particular ideology is endowed with a system of icons, symbols and language that help to reinforce the ideology itself. Here, Althusser contends that ideology is a rope that ties us to our reality. As human beings we know that ideology is "largely imaginary" and that it doesn't "correspond to reality" (1971/2008, p. 36). Althusser's use of the term "imaginary" draws from both Spinoza and Lacan.

Baruch Spinoza was a 17th century Dutch philosopher. His interest understand religion from than just an ideology built on belief, led him to a philosophy of rationalism. In his *Ethics* (1677), he uses the terms *imaginatio* (imagination) and *ratio* (reason) to designate types of knowledge. In doing so, Spinoza's term *imaginatio* sought to describe the epistemological effect of experience such as memories and associations. He (1677) wrote, "For imagination is an idea, which indicates rather the present disposition of the human body than the nature of the external body; not indeed distinctly, but confusedly; whence it comes to pass, that the mind is said to err" (p. 6). Spinoza uses the example of the sun to describe this phenomenon saying that when we look at the sun, we may think that it is not that far away from us. If we do not have factual knowledge of its distance, then we consider our interpretation or experience with our distance

from the sun to be true. However, after we learn the true distance of the sun and learn that it is

indeed incredibly far, that knowledge does not negate the fact we still *feel* as though the sun is

closer.

Another way to understand this is that we *imagine* the sun to be closer to us than what

truth tells us. Ideology works upon in such a way that we imagine that we are personally

responsible for those thoughts and actions. Montag (2003) illuminates Althusser's postulation by

noting that we imagine that we "are the origins, causes, and masters of our thought, speech and

action when in fact we are simply unaware of the causes that determined us to think, speak, and

act" p. 62). As a result, the illusion that ideology creates within our world is thus seen as our

reality. Althusser (1971/2008b) contended that this reinforces a "material alienation" (p. 37) in

that "men make themselves an alienated (= imaginary) representation of their conditions of

existence because these conditions of existence are themselves alienating (p. 38).

In other words, the ideology we ascribe to because it is already an illusion of reality,

further alienates the individual from that particular reality. The experience itself is simply a

channel of illusion. Althusser (1970/1968) distinguished this experience between the "object of

knowledge" (*objet de penseé)* and the "real object" (*objet réel)* (p. 40). So there is the object (e.g.

the sun) as it exists independently of the subject and then the idea of the object as it exists within

the rationalist-orientation: the mediated object as it exists in our interpretation of it.

As such, the closer one tries to come to reality and to meaning, the further one ends up

being from the real world or having what Marx would consider a true essence (*Gattungswesen*).

However, the relationship that the individual has in relation to a particular ideology no less

represents individual identity. It is this imaginary relation itself that contains the "cause"

(Althusser, 1976, p. 38) and it is this imaginary relation that individuals live in reality. This is

106

because the imaginary "expresses a will" (Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 234). The imaginary is a reflection of an individual's desire to understand the world, accessing only what resources are made available. Ideology offers us the ability to obtain some knowledge, but it is never absolute knowledge or true knowledge.

So the imaginary becomes the individual's way of a desired understanding. The individual uses the imaginary relation to maintain a real, lived relation to the world. Althusser (1965/2005) wrote, "In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence, but *the way* they live in relation between them and their conditions of existence: this presupposes both a real relation and an '*imaginary', 'lived'* relation" (p. 233). Ideology is the apparatus for one to create a connection with the world, albeit one based on an imaginary relation. The imaginary relation regardless, still reflects the actual real relation to the world.

The second postulation regarding ideology is that ideology has a material existence (Althusser, 1976, p. 39). Again, in Althusser's earlier works, he discounted this aspect but in moving forward in his determination to progress the theory of ideology and interpellation, he suggested that ideology exists within the material relations of society, whether it be in practices or within an apparatus. The individual will then engage in activities that reinforce a particular ideology. For example, if someone is a Democrat, she may attend rallies where a Democratic speaker is giving a lecture or she will sign a petition that supports democratic ideals of human rights such as universal access to health care or access to free birth control. Engaging in these practices perpetuates not only the ideology itself but also helps to reproduce those ideas associated with the ideology.

In other words, practices sustain the apparatus. Laws and rules that are obeyed by the individual also help to maintain the health of the apparatus as well. Althusser explains that action, or the active engagement of a practice also reinforces the notion of the imaginary in which the individual think she is consciously making these decisions. By "allowing" the individual to be in control of said practices, ideology maintains the facade of a powerless apparatus. This additionally supports Althusser's position that ideology is unconscious; it unconsciously forms a conscience.

What it proposes to do is "produce forms of consciousness for individuals and groups, that is modes of representation: 'modes of being in the world' and subjective identities, always already not together with *non-representative* elements (Balibar, 1993, p. 10). These non-representative elements can include things like hope and fears or values. It produces a consciousness within the individual and a type of "lense" of which the individual views his world through. This production of meaning creates concepts in our minds through language (Hall, 1997, p. 17). Althusser (1965/2005) described ideology as a "lived relation" between the individual and the world (p. 233). The individual experiences her world through the relation that is ideology.

The individual exists within his world through the mode, or through the lense and is aided by the engagement of practices. According to Ferretter (2006), Althusser saw ideology as a means for interpreting and understanding the world. The jobs that we hold, the clubs and organizations in which we are members, the brands that we buy, or the groups that we belong to are all part of the larger endeavor of creating relationships and forming a reality recognizable only to ourselves. These practices are controlled by rituals and the rituals are embedded in the ideological apparatus (Althusser, 1976). What then materializes is that and individuals' ideas are

"his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject" (Althusser, 1976, p. 43). Ideological apparatuses then become the chassis for which these practices find a home and a legitimacy. They warrant the ideology and the apparatus permits the individual to execute the complementary practices and reify what is already at play in the already-existent mechanism. What happens next is the apparatuses ability to call the individual into being, granting it an identity.

Althusser's work on ideology has given way to a resurgence of interest in adjoining fields. Interest areas such as cultural studies, literary criticism, critical theory, social science and philosophy have seen a resurgence in Althusserian scholarship as ideology continues to be implemented as a way of dissecting cultural and literary discourses (Albrecht, 2004, p. 2). In 1966, Althusser wrote a letter to Andre Daspre in response to the author's published article in *La Nouvelle Critique* addressing the relationship between ideology and art. The communist Daspre claimed that art provides individuals with knowledge (Ferretter, 2003). The response to Daspre gave Althusser the opportunity to clearly demarcate how art provided an exception to the traditional function of ideological structures.

His (1971/2008b) thesis is that art (real art—not reproduced art such as copies of the Mona Lisa) is not strictly ideological and allots the opportunity to "get at" at a relationship with what he would consider scientific knowledge in that art allows us to "see" and "perceive" (p. 174). Though art is born from ideology (an idea he expresses in his essay, "Ideology and "Ideological State Apparatuses,") as an ISA, it has the capability of showing its true form to the subject. According to Althusser (1971/2008b), art gives subjects the ability to distance themselves from ideology. In the creation of that distance one is able to recognize to a degree,

the very ideologies that work upon us. Ferretter (2003) described art as "allow[ing] us to see it, as it were, from the inside, whereas science produces knowledge from the outside" (p. 96). A subject's engagement with art exposes it to both the ideology that it outwardly communicates, but as an aesthetic piece, it also has the ability to communicate the internalized nature of ideology. Though many formalist Marxists have criticized Althusser's stance on art, stating that the scholar is much too tolerant with art's "transformative" qualities, Albrecht (2004) defends Althusser by noting that the scholar was less concerned with the art object, itself and more with the effect that the art has on the viewer (p. 3). This circles back to Althusser's initial theory on ideology as having epistemological qualities that expose the viewer to a degree of knowledge.

For example, reading Orwell's *1984* invites us into the trenches of the dystopian world of Oceania and extends our knowledge of a totalitarian society without actually explicitly explaining the systematic process by which totalitarianism exists. This is communicated both through its form and content. "The difference between art and science lies in the *specific form* in which they give us the same object in quite different ways: art in the form of 'seeing' and 'perceiving' or 'feeling,' science in form of *knowledge* (in the strict sense, by concepts)" (Althusser, 1975, p. 175). In this sense, art still cannot escape the fate that Althusser prescribes to it as a result of its inability to identify as true science. Though an individual may be afforded the opportunity to see or understand an idea, art (unlike science) doesn't afford her the about to understand why. Put another way, for Althusser, science affords the individual of and understanding: a reason for the effect, while art merely provides the effect.

Art allows us to see the effect of ideology on woman. It projects itself outward and invites a consciousness. What remains unique about this medium is that one of ideology's characteristics is that it maintains the appearance of the natural and organic. Art however, offers

a rupture and rather than produce just a materialized effect, it likewise produces an aesthetic effect or what Althusser calls, *donner à voir* (Albrecht, 2004, p. 10). The phrase *donner à voir,* meaning "to make visible," highlights art's ability to detach itself from both the materialized ISA system within society and allows the viewer to see the work as separate. Though art gifts one with the aesthetic value of making itself visible, it does little in offering some type of existential transcendence. Althusser maintains that while art does offer us knowledge, it does not enable to us experience some cathartic episode and revolt against the grip of ideology, because again, it still perpetuates the very ideology that inspires its creation. Aside from its application to art as a means of artistic expression, ideology also provides a foundation for Althusser's work on interpellation. Interpellation, as it will be explored in the next section, opens a discourse for how social relations are created and maintained. But more importantly, interpellation suggests that the relationship between the individual and his world is dependent upon a perpetual invitation from the determinant structures in society.

3.5 Interpellation

Ideological interpellation remains Althusser's core concept and was the scholar's way of attempting to explain how ideology functions within the world and in conjunction with the individual. Althusser wanted to expose the problematic with Marxist humanism namely that individuals do not have the ability to exercise free will against existing structures in society. In doing this, he presented interpellation as an alternative theory of conceptualizing how structures work upon the individual. The following section will position the coordinate of interpellation as a means for justifying the notion that for ideology to flourish, there must be individuals present for it to work upon. The connection between woman and ideology is intrinsically linked for "man

is an ideological animal by nature" (Althusser, 1971/2008/2008, p. 45). Conversely, in the same way women give ideology life, ideology too offers women life by providing an identity an transforming woman into subject.

Montag (2003) suggested that Althusser may have drawn inspiration for interpellation by Samuel Beckett's *Molloy* (1955). In the novel, the character Molloy is walking down a dirt path into town with his bike. The man is on crutches as well which makes it difficult for him to push his bike. He is approached by a policeman who asks him what he is doing and Molloy responds that he is simply "resting." Beckett continues to write:

> Will you answer my question? he cried. So it always is when I'm reduced to confabulation, I honestly believe I have answered the question I am asked and I reality I do nothing of the kind. I won't reconstruct the conversation in all its meanderings. It ended in my understanding that my way of resting, my attitude when at rest, astride my bicycle, my arms on the handlebars, my head on my arms, was a violation of I don't know what, public order, public decency. Modestly I pointed to my crutches and ventured one or two noises regarding my infirmity, which obliged me to rest as I could, rather than as I should. But there are not two laws, that was the next thing I thought I understood, not two laws, one for the healthy, another for the sick, but one only to which all must bow, rich and poor, young and old, happy and sad. (p. 10)

Malloy's interaction with the police officer highlights the experience of being interpellated, or "hailed." According to Althusser (1971/2008b), "all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" (p. 47). In other words, ideology is what transforms an individual into a subject. This happens not just through the act of hailing, but rather by the way

in which an individual answers the response or the call of the apparatus (Montag, 2003). In Molloy's case, the reader can sense his jolt of surprise when he comes into conversation with the authoritative figure. The man is called by the officer before he can even recognize the reality of the situation. For a moment the man questions how he imagined he had responded, versus how he actually did.

The experience proved to Molloy (and also communicates to the reader) that the communicative act of interpellation is not selective; ideology does not discriminate its call. It is always already, everywhere. Interpellation is thus a lifelong phenomenon in which subjects are constantly provoked and propelled to the call of ideology. The basis of interpellation justifies Althusser's staunch denouncement of humanism; in a period full of conflicting ideologies, Althusser believed that man was already implicated and could not stand outside the forces of ideology. As Molloy illustrates, he was interpellated before he was even conscious of the situation. Ideology is thus pre-subjective. It informs the ontological being of man before man even enters the social world. Althusser draws upon the work of Jacques Lacan to clarify this point.

Althusser (1971/2008b) wrote in his description of this phenomenon that we are "always already subjects" (p. 46) in that we are subjects called into being before we even come into language and society. He draws upon the work of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's theory of psychosexual development. Lacan (1966) contends that there are three registers of identity development: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. The three registers are interwoven with one another as well as influence each other. These stages are what Lacan contends can express an individuals development and relation to the world. It is also a theory which helps to produce an understanding of motivations and desires.

Most important to Althusser's theory of how ideology and interpellation affect the individual, is Lacan's imaginary stage. The imaginary stage is experienced when an individual is a baby, before she has been exposed to language. At around six months of age, the child begins a transformation in which she develops an image (Lacan, 1966). Here, the individual begins to sense the separation of self and surroundings or between her internal world and the world outside of her (Lacan, 1966). The inner and outer worlds become distinguishable and the individual begins to develop an understanding between the separate nature between the self and what exists outside of the self.

This is seen as the period of the "mirror stage" when the baby works to recognize herself and develop some sort of self-awareness. A tension between self and other gives rise and the individual begins to feel the pull of the conscious and unconscious. The imaginary is a register in which the individual begins to imagine how she is perceived or wants to be perceived from others. The imaginary thus becomes unconscious (this is where Althusser says that ideology functions) and language within the symbolic works to help the individual create meaning in her world. The nature of being also shifts from a private space to a public space. Althusser calls the placement of an individual in society based on ideological norms and structures the "law of culture."

Althusser's situating of the ideological within the imaginary works to express the ideas that individuals are always already subjects. In other words, our very existence exposes us to ideological interpellation to the extent that event in our first encounter in the world, we are being hailed and identified. For instance, in the ritual of parent's naming their child, they are already imposing ideological norms upon it. One can trace this phenomenon even while the child is still in utero; events like showers, sprinkles, diaper parties, and gender reveal parties all express

rituals that direct description toward human that is still yet to be. If one returns back to Althusser's use of Beckett's character Malloy, one is able to see how interpellation continuously works upon the subject.

In this instance with Molloy, the police officer is what Althusser would call a repressive state apparatus (RSA). RSAs distinguish themselves from ideological state apparatuses (ISA) through their function and through the sphere in which they are founded. The main distinction that Althusser (1971/2008b) makes in his conjecture is that RSAs that are part of the *public* sphere resort to violence "at least ultimately (since repression, e.g. administrative repression, make take non-physical forms)" if necessary (p. 17-8). Examples of RSAs would include the government, the State, army, police, courts, prisons. etc. These structures are used in order to maintain order and regulate society so that individuals act in accordance with the dominant ideology. Laws, rules and particular discourses help to reinforce the apparatus and warrant it as a valid ideology within society that all must obey. In Malloy's case, it was the act of an RSA that interpellated his subjectivity.

On the hand, ISAs are other apparatuses that exist within society and perpetuate the materialization of ideology through their own *private* rituals, practices, discourses, etc. These would include religion, private and public schools, families, "communications" such as the media, TV, radio, etc., culture (e.g. literature, arts, athletics) (Althusser, 1971/2008, p. 17). ISAs attempt to guide beliefs, morals, thoughts, and actions.

The most dominant ISA is that of the school system. Before education came to be seen as the dominant ISA, it was religion and the Church that prevailed (Althusser, 1971/2008, p. 26). This seems apparent since most if not all children, regardless of educational level or economic status, are often times required to attend school. In society, education is seen as a positive,

equalizing resource that affords individuals opportunities and access to resources. Most often, school systems are seen as resources for growth and ironically, are commonly viewed as structures within society that fight against the traditional definition of ideology and whose *telos* appears to have the best interest of its subjects in mind. This postulation also seems valid since education is oriented toward providing secular, objective, empirical knowledge to students, which for many, seems more easily graspable than an apparatus built solely on a belief system.

ISAs are where the State is essentially able to execute its objectives but only under the conditions that RSAs and ISAs work working harmony with one another. Althusser (1971/2008b) readily admitted that he did not believe a State can hold power without at the same time, controlling and "exercising hegemony" within the ISAs (p. 20). The implicit control over the ISAs is what allows the RSAs to function with full health. This observation sees obvious since ISAs are oftentimes groups and organizations that individuals volitionally decide to become a part of or pledge membership. Thus, it is not necessarily the State or the government that lends itself to class stratification or exploitation, but the very apparatuses that individuals often seek for solace.

Althusser draws upon this distinction based on Antonio Gramsci's notion of the state and civil society. Though Althusser and Gramsci differed greatly with their philosophical agendas (e.g. Gramsci was major advocate of absolute historicism), they nevertheless had similar thoughts on how power is maintained within society. The bourgeoise come to dominate culture through hegemonic ideology or what Gramsci (1971) calls "common sense" (p. 199). Common sense is seen as the accepted dominant discourse of a particular era. It is what we come to know as socially acceptable or true based on social agreement.

What Gramsci contended though is that common sense is created and perpetuated by the bourgeoise in order to keep classes like the proletariat from rising and revolting. Gramsci (1971) maintained that this is the problem:

> Is a philosophical movement properly so called when it is devoted to creating a specialised culture among restricted intellectual groups, or rather when, and only when, in the process of elaborating a form of thought superior to "common sense" and coherent on a scientific plane, it never forgets to remain in contact with the "simple" and indeed finds in this contact the course of the problems it sets out to study and resolve? (p. 330)

Gramsci alludes to the idea that knowledge that is disseminated in particular ways and to particular groups demonstrates a specific consciousness of motive; in this sense, ideology remains ubiquitious and unseen. Althusser reinforced this notion by noting that ideology never outwardly identifies itself to individuals; it remains implicit. Even the bourgeoise that seem to be projecting it onto society seems to be responsible for how it propagated, it nevertheless remains implicit, even to them. In so far as the argument has been made that the ruling class must be conscious of the ideological beliefs that it attempts to push upon the proletariat, it must be expressed that these beliefs do not show themselves to the bourgeois. For "the *structure* and mechanisms of ideology are no more immediately *visible* to the people subjected to them than the *structure* of the relations of production, and the mechanisms of economic life produced by it, are visible to the agents of production" (Althusser, 1990, p. 26). It is the structure that imposes itself upon individuals, regardless of the class. This, Althusser (1990) said, is the "beautiful lie" of ideology (p. 28).

117

Socially, ideology produces and reproduces itself by way of the individual. Drawing from Marx's basic theory of the economic system of base and superstructure, Althusser contends that ideology is founded within the superstructure. Institutions and governing bodies reproduce the practices and rituals through materialization (Schmid, 1981). While these ideas are produced in the base, the superstructure maintains and guarantees that the ideology will continue to interpellate subjects. What is more though is that not only does the superstructure materialize the effects, but ideology itself also reproduces the superstructure itself. To use Marxist terms, the laborer produces the object in the base.

In producing the object, the laborer is also producing and reproducing the knowledge it takes to create or manufacturer the object. This is also considered one mode of production. Consumption of the object and the desire to maintain the conditions of production (e.g. capitalism) are in turn produced and reproduced in the superstructure. As such, "society becomes an ideological formation of pre-established forms, and the material life process becomes that "substratum" which carries the burden of the formation" (Schmid, 1981, p. 61). What is then produced and reproduced remain the building blocks of society. In order to highlight the major coordinates of ideological interpellation, Althusser draws upon his Christian background and the transcendental experience that an individual has in her encounter with religion.

Althusser contends that religious ideology personally addresses individuals by interpellating them—by calling them by name, religious ideology has the capacity to transform an individual into a subject. It is in this calling of the name that highlights how the subject is always already. By calling the subject by name, God (religious ideology) recognizes that the "subject has been interpellated before and have a personal identity that has already been ascribed to them" (Althusser, 1971/2008, p. 52). He explains that God functions as an *absolute Subject*

118

(capital S) and that this presupposition of an *absolute Subject* is what helps us to grapple with the question of what prefaces individuals within society—that God "thus defines himself as the Subject *par excellence,* he who is through himself and for himself ('I am that I am')" (Althusser, 1971/2008, p. 53).

To put differently, the *absolute Subject* is how Althusser seeks to explain an interpellative source. God then creates (wo)man and it is through her and by her that God is able to work; the Subject is thus "doubly speculary" since the Subject *subjects the subjects* but also gives them their subjective identity (Althusser, 1971/2008, p. 54). This incites a process whereby the subject incites her own subjectivity. The answer of interpellation is such that the individual answers her own call and reduces herself to a subject whose identity is a product of the ideological apparatus acting upon her. The apparatus need not be an explicit source of control or have to exhibit force since the structure itself does all of the work.

One of the larger impending conjectures concerning ideological interpellation is its recognition and misrecognition of the subject. Drawing upon the work of Lacan, Althusser implements the use of *méconnaissance,* to describe the misrepresentation of ideology. In Lacan's (1977) mirror stage the individual develops a "libidinal dynamism" (p. 4) in which the ego starts to form. The individual develops a sense of herself (an "I") from which she is then able to recognize a differentiation between self and other. Seeing one's image in the mirror leads to a confusion in which the individual attempts to reconcile the image in the mirror. This produces an effect of misrecognition where the individual attempts to grapple with that image.

As human beings we strive to make sense of our world and express a desire to understand. As noted earlier on, our symbolic relation to the world allots us this ability. Ideology allows the imaginary and the real become intertwined. This occurs when the individual attempts

to forge a connection with ideological practices through an imaginary relation. In regard to Althusser (1970), as ideology interpellates the individual into a subject, both a recognition and a misrecognition occurs. Recognition occurs when the individual answers and accepts the call or hailing. In acknowledging the communicative act of being called forth, the subject recognizes himself as the subject of the call as well as a consciousness of his own consciousness. The lack of questioning and the full acceptance of the hailing into a subject is what Althusser (1971/2008b) saw as "obvious" (p. 45).

Since one is already always a subject, it is thus evident that we would naturally identify as such. We already *recognize* ourselves as such subjects that appear to assert freedom and will. Althusser uses the example of greeting a friend by calling to her, "Hello, friend." The ritualistic discourse of this greeting affirms that relation between the two subjects and illustrates how the call is declarative of the subject's recognizability. It is in this acceptance the subject allows herself to be identified by that ideology. The ideology allows us to recognize and know ourselves. This "knowing" though is only an illusion, for it the real objective of ideology is create a perception of reality. Althusser (1990) wrote, "We understand, by this, that ideological representation imparts a certain *'representation'* of reality, that it makes *allusion* to the real in a certain way, but at the same time it bestows only an *illusion* on reality" (p. 29). The function of ideology then is that is attempts to create a real version of reality, but in doing so, is only able to create a false sense of reality.

What is interesting about this postulation is that recognition is a doubly false recognition or *méconnaissance*. The existence of the subject is based on an ideological construct. Because an individual only sees herself through her imaginary relation to the world, his "representation" within ideology is not the real relation, but what is simply exhibited. Resch (1992) explains,

"Ideological recognition is anchored in the real because ideology always defers to its material conditions of existence, but its relation to the real takes the form of an imaginary identification and is thus at the same time a misrecognition; ideology only "knows" the real in order to "represent" it in an order appropriate to its practical goals" (p. 213). Ideology projects a subject's identity, but the projection is simply a reflection of the subject in relation to the particular ideology.

The subject's identity is always contingent upon the subject's relation to ideology. A better analogy might be to consider identity as a product of refraction and reflection. When a mirror reflects light, the light bounces off and maintains its same form and path of direction. The light returns the same way it was cast. However, when light is refracted, it will change its trajectory. Just like how a mirror reflects light, ideology too reflects a persons's identity. It then refracts that identity and casts it out in a new form. This reinforces Althusser's contention that ideology precedes the subject — that it does not exist because of individuals, rather individuals become subjects because of it.

3.6 Conclusion

Althusser's philosophy of ideological interpellation is very much a Marxist enterprise influenced by structuralism since it attempts it offers a determinist, anti-humanistic world view.Its rigidity and loyalty to science make it inconsistent with today's elimination of absolute truth and knowledge and emphasis on subjectivity over objectivity. However, Althusser's dedication to the quintessential principle of philosophy makes his work an exemplar of how it is possible to learn from difference. Though he grappled with a definition of philosophy for most of

professional career, Althusser (1992) established his resting stance toward the discipline the way many within the discipline seek to do: in contradiction to another.

Marx (1976) once wrote that philosophers "have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it" (p. 3). Marx's thoughts suggest that only action and revolution makes change possible and that ideas alone were not enough ensure change. In response, Althusser (1992) wrote, "But what philosopher has not succumbed privately, particularly if he will not admit it, and in the case of the major ones often openly, to the temptation of keeping in view what he hopes to change or transform in the world? It is an integral part of philosophy" (p. 172). In interpreting the world, the philosopher does change it— she invents or reinvents a way of thinking or a new piece of knowledge that solicits change or perhaps even ensures that no change is made (perhaps because the change is detrimental).

By creating a theory that exposes the structure of society as constituted by ideological institutions such as the economy, the educational system, and the Church, Althusser sought to ignite the timeless epistemological endeavor of the search for knowledge and truth. A return to Spinoza and a rationalist paradigm during an historical moment marked by humanist thinking fell on deaf ears. Today however, in the midst of chaos and a lack of absolute truths, particularly within marketing, Althusser's voice seems to be a resource of understanding. In the following chapter this dissertation will illustrate how ideological interpellation, when applied to branding practices, helps scholars and practitioners alike see the gaps in the industry. When applied, Althusserian thought fills those gaps to hearken a new take on communication that exposes both practitioners and consumers as part of the problem. As subjects, all human beings are implicated in these social structures. As a result, all subjects must address the Marxist myth that it is simply those who are in control that dictate what others do.

The following chapter will establish the deep connection between those three Althusserian coordinates of anti-humanism, ideology, and interpellation with branding. This will yield a bridge to a discuss the value of the symbolic within a capitalist society and how this allows branding to develop as an ideological state apparatus. A discourse on the structures that maintain the branding discipline will help us to confront how ideology represents itself into socially normative practices such as consumption. Though the branding paradigm has come to seemingly possess an "Oz-like" mythos by becoming the purveyor of unique products, experiences, and services, Althusser's work reminds us that behind the curtain there is simply a man. And that man is no less immune from ideology than the consumer. Within this project, Althusserian ideology will help to highlight how the branding battle being fought is one of illusion; those who are fighting in opposition of one another are really allies, and it is ideology that must be turned to for explanation.

Chapter 4: A Spectacle of Structures: The Althusserian Slant of Branding

The consciousness of desire and the desire for consciousness are identically the project which, in its negative form, seeks the abolition of classes, that is, the direct possession by the workers over all the moments of activity. Its *opposite* is the society of the spectacle, where the commodity contemplates itself in a world which it has created.

— Guy DeBord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

Pas de replâtrage, la structure est pourrie.
— May of 1968 French revolt slogan (Trans: No replastering, the structure is rotten.)

4.1 Introduction

The relationship between branding and ideology is indubitably intertwined. As long as a capitalist market has existed, marketers have been determined to separate themselves from competition by forging a brand steeped in exclusivity and strong ideals. Regardless of whether it has been used to mark cattle, humans, or goods branding has historically been used as a way to communicate ownership and more specifically, identity (Arvidsson, 2005). Though the passage of time, branding has continued to maintain the veritable function of its roots. O'Reilly (2006) argues that in this sense, all ideologies function as branding ideologies in which the main purpose is to, in some way, "mark or brand a person" (p. 268).

Independent from one another, the two concepts undeniably retain their relation, for both branding and ideology are dynamic processes concerned with the "production and manipulation of meaning" (O'Reilly, 2006, p. 263). Though the production and consumption of products is what essentially keeps the discipline of branding relevant and necessary, it nevertheless remains tethered to a larger ideologically capitalist enterprise that was at the center of civil and political unrest in the mid-20th century.

The 1960s marks a wholly unique historical moment in that it was a period of unparalleled social unrest, revolutionary thought, and counterculture. Even philosophical

thought at the time had largely shifted and strayed from the work of the "three Hs" (Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger) to the three "masters of suspicion" (Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud) (Callinicos, 1990, p. 72). Husserlian phenomenology and the role of the subject was now being investigated and this new generation of thought sought to unveil the establishment of the subject by "forces and relations of production, the unconscious, or the will to power" (Callinicos, 1990, p. 72). This new philosophical paradigm yielded a vigorous critique of capitalism.

One of its leading voices Marxist Guy Debord, captured the mood by asserting that the commodification of goods had catapulted capitalist desires and numbed the human capacity to reject its aims. He (1967) wrote, "The spectacle subjects living human beings to its will to the extent that the economy has brought them under its sway. For the spectacle is simply the economic realm developing for itself at once a faithful mirror held up to the production of things and a distorting objectification of the producers" (p.17). Debord's construct of the spectacle captures the growing concern of a society slowly losing its grip on its relation with reality and the consequential supplantation of social decline.

As a response to encroaching government restrictions and dominant reigning ideologies during this period, a counter movement took form in the shape of protest. Demands of liberation for equal rights and the improvement of work conditions created a hostile social milieu. In an historical moment when prevailing Marxist beliefs offered a response to bourgeoise discourse and the roots of a counterculture began to take hold, the work of Louis Althusser would offer another counter to the conversation. Althusser's philosophy at the time was both radical and ran counter to an emerging counterculture. Today though, it is evidence that Althusser was able to see the much larger implications of a social structures and the systems that govern those within society. The ongoing use of Althusser's three coordinates of anti-humanism, ideology, and

interpellation exposes the still largely intact ideological underpinnings of current marketing. While postmodern marketing works to feed off the postmodern condition, this chapter suggests that its approach has deviated little if at all from the traditional marketing paradigm. Before, marketers were commonly pegged with enticing consumers through various tactics and strategies, but a this chapter reveals, the presence and force of various inescapable ideological structures also impacts the consumer in ways far beyond what the marketer is capable of doing. What this chapter also advances is the way that communication in the branding process has simply altered its appearance. Today's discourse between brand and consumer takes on the appearance of being a conspicuous and indisputable exchange however, Althusser's work will call attention to the discrepancies of this illusion.

The present chapter provides a synthesis of the preceding two chapters and responds to the question, "What is the connection between branding and Althusser's major coordinates of anti-humanism, ideology, and interpellation?" This chapter will run parallel to the major ideas expounded in chapter two such as corporate branding, brand consumption, and brand communities in order to make clear those ideas that Althusser is largely responsible in influencing. It will then provide an analysis of what those connections help to infer about current branding practices.

4.2 This is Your Brain on Branding & Anti-Humanism

Today, there is no denying that postmodern marketing practices have come to dominate consumer culture. Postmodernity distinguishes itself from modernity by emphasizing the "'artistic'" attributes of intuition, creativity, spontaneity, speculation, emotion and involvement" (Brown, 1993, p. 22). The emphasis on the individual has led the marketing discipline to reassess

its responsiveness to the consumer and revisits older or more traditional methods. Brown (1993) contends that postmodernity has led refined marketing initiatives such as "relationship marketing," but that above all else it embodies an emphasis on "dealing with the customer *as an individual and "*a desire to *retain existing* customers, products or services rather than creating them anew" (p. 26). Firat, Dholakia, and Venkatesh (1994) contend that fragmentation, hyperreality, and the decentred subject are now post-modern characteristics that have been absorbed into marketing trends. Postmodern marketing now tries to focus on "the uniqueness, diversity, plurality and idiosyncracy of each and every individual" (Brown, 1993, p. 26).

Consumers now fail to adopt strong and consistent brand loyalty and purchase multiple brands to meet particular needs. This is evidenced by the decline of brick and mortar stores and a consumer shift in buying online and growing consumption of services, rather than products (See Semeuls, 2017). Rising interest in hyperreal experiences such as Disneyworld or Las Vegas demonstrate the consumer propensity to participate in imaginary representations of the world; disconnection is a welcomed experience. It is this lack of consistency and changes in consumer demands as well as the shift from emphasis on material consumption to symbolic/experiential consumption that elicits an Althusserian response.

Chapter 2 established Althusser's decision to form a philosophical perspective based on his anti-humanism. The scholar's anti-humanist tendencies came to be a counter to growing Marxist humanism in the 1960s. Althusser (1993) noted that this period of time was driven by "emotion and experience" (p. 186) and his concern was that in a time of revolution and turmoil, exercising human freedom would cloud individual judgment rather than provide clarity and rationality to the situation. Above all else, an anti-humanist agenda contends that there is no

individual subject and the role of human agency is secondary to prevailing dominant social structures that determine how people think, act, and live.

Althusser was able to develop and justify his anti-humanist agenda by adopting the methodology of structuralism and implementing it as a chassis to engineer his philosophy. For structuralism, knowledge is measured by a "system of relationships in static and dynamic articulation. Strictly speaking, there are thus no events, only structural happenings" (Poster, 1974, p. 403). Everything in the world is constituted by preexisting structures, including what an individual can and cannot know as well as the individual himself. Structures preexist even woman, herself. It is this postulation that compels Althusser to pursue anti-humanism during his historical moment.

Althusser (1973) defended this claim by stating, "One thing is certain: one cannot begin with man, because that would be to begin with a bourgeois idea of 'man,' and because the idea of *beginning with* man, in other words the idea of an absolute point of departure (= of an 'essence') belongs to bourgeois philosophy" (. . .) These men are thus the *point of arrival* of an analysis which starts from the social relations of the existing mode of production, from class relations, and from the class struggle" (p. 85). For anti-humanists history is subjectless, and woman lacks subjectivity because woman is always an effect of the structure. To affirm the humanist position would mean that woman's essence pre-existed history, before materiality.

This is a contradiction to traditional Marxism that privileges the idea that one can only know what actually exists. Althusser was trying to argue that woman cannot have an essence that precedes materiality — she is dependent on the structures within history that advance her subjectivity and advance her knowledge of the world. These structures give way to the development and evolution of nature and shape history, including human beings. Within the

128

structuralist paradigm, structures within society affect how an individual communicates, thinks, and acts. The individual's subjectivity is contingent upon the structure; it can never be reached as a result of free will.

Althusser's concern with the anti-humanist underpinnings of structuralism help to enhance this dissertation's larger connection to branding. Althusser remained wary of Marx's humanism because he believed that human agency and man's essence were not the ultimate factors in helping to explain an historical narrative dominated by class struggle, tyanny, and exploitation. Althusser was dedicated to communicating the idea that prevailing structures within society, not personal volition, ultimately ruled individuals. For Althusser, anti-humanist structuralism can help us understand "the real emphasis of Marxism is not on man, not human actions which can be made intelligible through a phenomenological description of states of consciousness, but on structures which are not resolvable into the expressions of human agency and which are themselves unknown or "unconscious" to the agents whose actions they determine" (Eagleton, 1976, p. 175). These structures come to dictate a person's beliefs, values, judgments, and actions. Branding itself, is one such structure.

In Chapter 2 it was noted that the definition of both branding and brand remains difficult to pinpoint. However, a very general understanding of the term itself showcases the systematic nature of the practice itself. Landa (2006) suggested that brand carries with it three integrated meanings including: 1.) The sum total of all characteristics of the product, service, group, including its physical features, its emotional assets, and its cultural and emotional associations, 2.) The brand identity applied to a single product or service, an extended family of products or services, or a group, and 3.) The ongoing perception by the audience (consumer of public) of the

129

brand (p. 4). Landa's simple definition helps to establish branding/brand how it can be seen as a

system or to use Althusser's term, an *apparatus.*

According to Althusser (1970), apparatuses possess the following characteristics: they

function either by repression or by ideology, they are "relatively autonomous," and are often

controlled by the ruling ideology or ruling class (p. 23). The author offers an explanation of both

Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs), repressive formations that carry out the objective of

restraint, and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), structures that function by way of ideology.

In a very practical sense, a brand's characteristics and assets as well as its cultural and emotional

associations, contributes to brand ideology. This ideology translates into elements of the

apparatus that maintain its form such as core mission, organizational values and objective/goals,

corporate culture, etc. The brand becomes driven by the perceived relation that the apparatus

cultivates with the consumer. What makes the branding apparatus unique is that its systematic

aims produce an ideology that functions both internally and externally of the organization. The

more a brand is able to embrace its core ideas (e.g. ideology) the more it is able to remain

autonomous. For Althusser, an apparatus is able to maintain its autonomy by the production and

reproduction of the knowledge derived from individual engagement, or in this case, consumer

relations.

In other words, branding as a process is able to maintain its structure because consumers

do no just buy a product for the sake of satisfying a need. Rather, branding helps consumers

assume personal meaning and identity. This is predicated on a marketplace that makes space for

various brand apparatuses whose ideological proclivities are able influence individual beliefs and

values. This is especially apparent in a postmodern market propelled by post-Fordist capitalism.

Today's consumer base seeks a brand that will yield personalized value. Moran (2014) argues

that this trend became more apparent during the 1970s when capitalism experienced "significant restructuring" because of the shift from modernity to postmodernity (p. 141-2). Postmodernity introduced a new consumer who no longer derived his identity from the traditional institutions of Church, family role, or social status. The consumer no longer sees a need for mass-produced, "one size fits all" goods.

Rather, identity within postmodernity has become "fractured, intersectional and fictive, and it is also 'multiple,' free-floating and detached" (Moran, 2014, p. 142). Alternative avenues have been explored by marketers in order to maintain a grip on their mercurial consumers. In an effort to accommodate the needs of this shift, the marketers' response have been to modify marketing so that the consumer no longer feels exogenous to the process. The consumer then becomes a coproducer or helps to co-create value (Lusch, 2007). The process of branding offers an opportunistic arena in which this type of collaboration can take place since brands can reflect the very beliefs and perspectives that consumers desire (Shepherd, Chartrand & Fitzsimons, 2015). While it may seem that this process is autonomous and voluntary, branding as an apparatus is what essentially produces the beliefs and values that shape an individual's identity.

The co-creation model allows the branding process as an apparatus, to appear autonomous. It is perceived humanist by design but it deceives the consumer because it leads him to believe in a capitalist illusion of agency and choice. While the consumer sees branding as a resource that helps to communicate identity, branding remains systematic in nature and ultimately retains a grasp on the consumer through what appears as brand attributes such as its identity, personality, or value. Its attributes function as communicative touchpoints in which the consumer is given various avenues to interact and communicate with the brand, depending on needs and desires. These characteristics of a brand and the branding process are ideological and

anti-humanist in nature and repress the consumer by "allowing" him to claim the brand as their own or to choose the way in which they use it.

In the same way that the branding apparatus produces the beliefs, ideas, and values of individuals, it also systematically creates a lifeworld that appears meaningful for the consumer. Rumbo (2002) suggests that marketers colonize a "psychic" space in which "an individual's sense of self increasingly reflects the values, assumptions, and beliefs of consumer culture" (p. 135). One of the first brands to capitalize on an appeal to identity was Dove's 2014 "Campaign for Real Beauty." Yanni (1990) argues that modernity's interpretation of marketing is predicated on advertising that falsely represents women because the androcentric nature of culture positions men as the "standard" or "norm" (p. 73). By Althusserian standards, this was at one point a dominant ideology. The result was that women have become easily objectified and dissected under a patriarchal microscope. This objectification is then implicated in the standardization of cultural norms that were then perpetuated in brands across various product categories—from makeup that "enhances" beauty all the way to slimming jeans.

However, postmodern marketing tries to counter this practice by simply altering its strategy. Since identity within a postmodern juncture is transient, multiple, and unstable, marketers have not only attempted to target those diverse niches, but have also taken to developing an angle that suggests that the consumer can simply choose how one wishes to articulate his identity (of course, from a set of pre-determined identities as set forth by the marketer) (Moran, 2014). From this perspective, the marketing game hasn't changed — just the strategy and the rules that brands play by.

Dove's contention with its 2014 campaign was that beauty has no standard. The brand touted a message that encouraged women to defy the narrowly determined beauty ideal and

embrace the idea that "Beauty is not defined by shape, size or color – it's feeling like the best version of yourself" ("Dove 'Real Beauty Pledge'"). This campaign aligned itself with the postmodern consumer; it offered female consumers "endless ways to assert their identities in resistance to dominant meanings and power structures [. . .] (Rumbo, 2002, p. 135). However, this freedom to cherry pick identity runs parallel with the characteristics of an ideological social structure since it, as Rumbo (2002) explains, still enmeshes the consumer within the marketplace. Dove's recent branding is invitational of consumer participation and naturalizes the engagement between brand and consumer. In building that relationship, branding inculcates its ideology into the consumer.

In the mind of the consumer, the consumer believes he is both differentiating his identity from others, while forming communal bonds with those who share a love or interest in consuming the same brand. For instance, in Chapter 2 it was discussed that individuals who buy the Jeep brand cultivate valuable and meaningful ties with other Jeep owners within a "brand community." At the heart of this communicative engagement though, is the brand's ability to systematically produce and reproduce its brand ideology by way of the consumer. Those who consume the product or even communicate the product to others through social media, blogs, etc. regenerate the brand system unknowingly. The current consumer interprets this communication as valuable to both himself and the brand, since it again, appears as a reflexive communicative exchange. Lazzarato's (1996) work on this *immaterial labor* as "labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (p. 132) offers one instance of how this develops within a capitalist market.

Arvidsson (2005) suggests that Lazzarato's definition infers that immaterial labor can be considered the way "common competences" through the use of language, are used to establish

social relations (p. 241). For instance, a media buyer working at an advertising agency might utilize common phrases such as "CPMs," ":60s and :90s", or "run of schedule" in a meeting with other buyers who are familiar with this particular type of language. The language utilized in the meeting, Arvidsson (2005) explains, forms a foundation for how these individuals will commune and socialize. The use of this particular language is, in and of itself, immaterial labor since it still aids in the production of relations that preserve systems. More so, while this serves as an example of organizational immaterial labor that works internally, immaterial labor also appears external in the consumption of products because the products would not leave the shelves if it were not for the execution of internal immaterial labor.

What Althusser's anti-humanist stance allows us to think about in regard to branding as a system is that that forgoes the agency of woman. External of an organization, an individual forms an identity and becomes a subject though engagement with the branding process and the consumption of brand. But in also becoming a subject through these structures, consumption of the brand also produces immaterial labor. Lazzarato (1996) writes:

> The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labor (its
>
> essential use value being given by its value as informational and cultural content)
>
> consists in the fact that it is not destroyed by the act of consumption, but rather it
>
> enlarges, transforms, and creates the "ideological" and cultural environment of the
>
> consumer. This commodity does not produce the physical capacity of labor
>
> power; instead, it transforms the person who uses it. (p. 138)

The labor then is not what is produced as a commodity, but rather, how the commodity works upon the consumer to produce information and cultural content. As the consumer produces the brand by way of consumption, use, and/or discourse, she will by default produce immaterial

labor necessary to sustaining the circulation and reproduction of its ideological features. The labor she commits, though seemingly conscious, is neither organic, nor a product of her own volition. Arvidsson (2005) extends Lazzarato's claim by explaining that the immaterial labor of producing value is that the brand allows us to be constantly invited "to give attention to a particular brand" and in doing so, "contribute to sustaining the immaterial qualities that form the basis of its [brand] value" (p. 235). Constant consumption of these immaterial qualities such as basic knowledge of the brand underscore how this consumption can never been depleted.

It is also what Althusser (1971/2008b) explained as the opportunity for those in "power whose aim it is to exploit and repress, to continue to do so" (p.7). In turn, immaterial labor affords this discussion the idea that the branding process is an ongoing, structured channel of communication that introduces and generates new ways in which the marketer can interact and engage in dialogue with the consumer. As long as the consumer continues to produce immaterial labor, branding will continue to be a system that produces meaning within a capitalist market, as well as society. It provides a touchpoint for both the consumer and the marketer. For the consumer, immaterial labor creates a social relation in which she can preserve the brand and the communicative process of branding.

What is more is that it will continue to naturalize the branding process for both the marketer and consumer since immaterial labor is not an organizational objective—it is a byproduct or effect of the branding apparatus. Ultimately, for Althusser, the forces that influence consumerism within a capitalist marketplace cannot all be pinned on the intention of the marketer. And likewise, the marketer does not hold all the power. The structures at play, rather than human agency precede branding practice. What is produced through branding and

the brand cannot be solely associated to the marketer. Immaterial labor is made possible only by the associated ideologies.

Anti-humanism continues to take charge against a humanist agenda by way of ideology and demonstrates how current marketing initiatives are not always advantageous to the consumer. This is particularly important since Althusser would argue that postmodernity cannot completely expunge the idea that social structures determine the individual. The following section discusses the connection between ideology and branding and how Althusser's examination of the term and its effects influence best practices and the marketer-consumer dynamic.

4.3 The Best Part of Waking Up is Ideology in Your Cup: The Crossroads of Branding and Ideology

Traditionally, the definition of ideology has been associated pejorative connotations. The use of the word has been used in conjunction with concepts related to oppression and subjection. Even in its simplest definitions, the term has been historically associated with a worldview or belief tied to the notion of control. As Marion (2006) notes, ideology has been long associated with a Marxist position concerned with the dominance and power over a working class.   For Marx, ideology was always tied to the economic because within the structure of human society, ideology resides in the superstructure, which is influenced by what is being produced within the base. Undoubtedly, the use of the term has traversed various applications and definitions. Individuals tend to associate ideology with everything from ancient beliefs derived from religious ideology, all the way to an emerging postmodern ideology concerned with obscuring what was once an absolute bifurcation of gender identity norms.

Today, associating ideology with the term "brand" is not a difficult leap. In fact, it is difficult today to talk about a successful brand such as Starbucks, Nike, or Apple without mentioning the brand's cultural and social impact not just on consumers, but consumer culture in general. Schroeder (2009) argues that brands "develop prescriptive models for the way we talk, the way we think, the way we behave — out goals, thoughts, and desires" (p.124). Just as brands affect culture, so too does culture, art, and history infuse itself into branding to produce interpretations of meaning and value. Not only do brands possess and perpetuate a particular ideology, but the practice of branding is in itself, a system of values, or ideology. This connection however, has remained little discussed within marketing literature. In fact, O'Reilly (2006) explains that ideology has never really been a "key concept" in marketing or consumer research (p. 265).

Aside from interpreting both the process of branding and brand itself as having ideological features, Althusser's definition of the term specifically introduces a new understanding of how ideology is connected to branding. Althusser's theory is unique since it deviates from the traditional Marxist view of ideology as being fundamentally deleterious to man. Althusser sees ideology as a way to interpret the lifeworld and to infer meaning. He saw it as a means in which people are able to create experiences based on how institutions come to structure life (O'Reilly, 2006). Montag (2003) extends this statement by noting that Althusser saw ideology as being a set of representations that was more "practical" than "theoretical" (p. 62) since he saw it as being fundamentally influential in shaping human experience.

Althusser (1965/2005) explained that individuals could not survive without ideology since ideology is essential to various systems of representation in which we make sense of our worlds (p. 232). His work is important now just as much in the 1960s. The social unrest,

revolution, shift in political tides, and influence of counterculture at that time still reflects a similar discord plaguing today's world. In fact, it is fitting that from Althusser's historical moment, that we see the roots of postmodernity start to emerge (Holt, 2002). No longer is ideology confined just to economic or political entities. Its application here extends to the growing conversation surrounding branding as a dominate channel within today's current marketing practices. However, connecting these dots first requires a reexamination of Althusser's understanding of ideology itself.

In his philosophy of ideology, Althusser (1971/2008b) expressed the importance of clarifying the semantical use of the term: he declared that the concern with ideology does not lie with "*ideologies*" but with a "general theory of *ideology*" (p. 33). In other words, Althusser is concerned with ideology as a general structure versus various ideologies tied to a history. The latter term, ideologies, are "products of social formations and history" (Althusser, 1971/2008, p. 33) and are structures influenced by materialized events. Ideology in general is an "omnihistorical reality" for its "structure and functioning are immutable, present in the same form throughout what we call history" (Locke, 1996, p. 74). These are the absolute structures that exist and that make ideology always present as a determinant force.

For instance, Christian ideology emerges from *ideology in general*. This is the type of ideology that Althusser (1971/2008b) referred to as "a pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness" (p. 33). He goes on to compare ideology in general to Freud's unconscious, arguing that ideology in general is like the unconscious in that they are both eternal, or omnipresent. Althusser (1968) wrote, "They are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act fundamentally on men via a process that escapes them" (p. 233). For him, ideology, always already exists and that it "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real

conditions of existence" (Althusser, 1971/2008, p. 36). Ideology thus, represents the connection

made between the individual and the world.

The relation though, remains imaginary since it is constituted by an ideological

illusion/allusion. It is not real, but is rather a representation of the real conditions of existence.

As such, it also becomes an illusion of the individual's relation to the world. Ideology is in and

of itself, a distortion of what he calls the "relations of production" (Althusser, 1971/2008, p. 39).

The relations of production account for the relationships that are produced by the individual and

his engagement with the world. Because ideology is omniscient, those relations are always

already constituted by the structure so what the individual engages with is an imaginary relation,

rather than the real one. These relations are predicated on the mirrored representation of the real

world.

The second most critical attribute of ideology is that it has a material existence. This

material existence exists in an ideological apparatus and its associated practices. Individuals

come to believe in the ideas set forth by ideology and these ideas are then executed by way of

practices that the individual partakes in[11]. As the individual performs these practices, the idea

becomes reflected in the act. These practices, Althusser (1971/2008b) explained, are what the

apparatus depends upon in order to survive: "In every case, the ideology of ideology thus

recognizes, despite its imaginary distortion, that the 'ideas' of a human subject exist in his

actions, or ought to exist in his actions, and if that is not the case, it lends him other ideas

corresponding to the actions (however perverse) that he does perform" (p. 42). Althusser is

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[11] Hall (1985) explains that this remains another major area of contention with scholars since Althusser
writes that the term "ideas" disappears (p. 100). In other words, Althusser never seems clarify whether
individuals are able to personally conjure ideas in their minds; he merely argues that ideas are
materialized through practices.

implying that as much as ideology is unconscious, it also becomes conscious through the individual's lived actions in the world.

This is an important insight because it materializes the existence of ideology. Even language, which is described by Hall (1985) as being "signifying practices involving the use of signs" (p. 99) helps Althusser make the connection between ideology and social practices. It is only through sociality that language can exist and can serve as a practice that situates meaning inside of a practice. In other words, men "*live* their actions, usually referred to freedom and 'consciousness' but the classical tradition, in ideology, *by and through ideology*; in short, that the 'lived' relation between men and the world, including History (in political action or inaction), passes through ideology, or better *is ideology itself"* (Althusser, 1965/2005, p. 233). What is real to the individual is the action, but the relation is imaginary. Further, what appears conscious or volitional is essentially unconscious — it is simply a reflection of the imaginary relation that ideology creates. Ideology essentially produce "forms of consciousness" or "modes of representation" (Balibar, 1993, p. 10) or ways and ideas in which the individual is able to interact with his world. So, the relation that man "creates" with his world, is actually a relation with a relation — the latter being ideology.

Additionally, the appearance of conscious action highlights how these systems of representation are able to appear natural — so natural, that individuals "accede and consent to their explicit organizations of relation and their implicit structures of power and dominance" (Hall, Hobson & Lowe, 1980, p. 130). These systems of representation are the systems that individuals employ to depict a representation of the world to themselves and to others (Hall, 1985) and how they situate themselves. These two major points (ideology is a representation of the imaginary relations of individuals with the real world and ideology has a material existence)

offer foundational coordinates for how Althusser's ideology can inform today's current branding practices.

This project is aimed at exploring how branding is both an ideology and how ideologies influence consumers. While it is perhaps easier to see how branding produces brand ideologies (e.g. Nike, Kony 2012, Beach Body, Levi's, etc.), what is at the heart of this discussion is exploring how *branding* itself as a process can be seen as an ideology that influences identity formation, social structures, and meaning in society. In Marxist terms, ideology is indicative of an individual's values, beliefs, and ideas and as such, resides in the superstructure of human society. Hall (1985) describes them as the "ideas" that help individuals understand the world and inform their understanding of what they "ought" to do (p. 99). The use of "ought" infers that the function of ideology is to produce a systems of representations that appears natural and autonomous.

Orthodox Marxists claim that Marx's theory on the structure of society constituted by the base and superstructure is static and that the base simply influences and dominates the superstructure (Lukacs, 1923/1999). However, contemporary Marxist thought contends that the base and the superstructure have a dialectical relationship in which the two are constantly affecting each other. This implies that ideology is produced by forces within the base such as class relations (bourgeoise versus proletariat), machinery/resources, and tools but that it also has the ability to influence the forces of production within the base as part of the reproductive superstructure. This is important to both Althusser's theory as well as this dissertation project because it attempts to explain how Althusser (unlike Marx) did not see the economy as the

absolute dominant structure influencing human life.[12] Other structures within society produce

ideologies that continue to have immense influence on the individual. The branding agenda of

marketers is one such apparatus that has the ability to play a foundational role in the social

formations that govern the individual.

Althusser maintained that because the base-superstructure is always in flux, another

structure at any point could be dominant. For example, Althusser (1971/2008b) contended that

the current dominant apparatus of his historical moment was that of the education system (p. 28).

The education system had replaced a longstanding religious structure and was able to flourish on

the account that education was a pervasive and positive apparatus that was able to appear

impervious to prevailing economic or political structures. The rise of other dominant structures

in society also points to a lack of historical materialism in accounting for the progress and rise of

various groups. One dominant ideology could not in fact, validate a succession of determinate

events as reason for changes in history[13].

At the onset of this project, it was explained that branding as a practice was conceived

out of a growing capitalist market and the increased production of products. Capitalism gave

birth to branding initiatives and because branding can also be seen as a useful tool for

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[12] Though Althusser's position on ideology as being able to exist outside the economic seems incompatible with him positioning ideology within the superstructure, Schmid (1981) clarifies this by noting that ideology is founded in all levels of social, even the economic and oftentimes, the economic's relations of production are often tied to the social.

[13] Balibar (1968/1971) explains, "In the social formation this overdetermination is, in the last instance, determined by the economy (determiné en dernière instance de l'économie). This is Althusser's clarification of the classical Marxist assertion that the superstructure (q.v.) is relatively autonomous but the economy is determinant in the last instance. The phrase 'in the last instance' does not indicate that there will be some ultimate time or ever was some starting-point when the economy will be or was solely determinant, the other instances preceding it or following it: 'the last instance never comes', the structure is always the co-presence of all its elements and their relations of dominance and subordination -- it is an 'ever- pre-given structure' (structure toujours-déjà-donnée)" (p. 320).

consumers, the practice was able to justify its place within the marketplace. The branding enterprise was just one way that capitalism could preserve itself. More importantly, it is branding that can be viewed as a dominant structure within society that maintains and influences both the base as well as the superstructure and even more specifically, the apparatus of capitalism. Branding as ideology creates and sustains the imaginary relationship between the consumer and the real world. The schemas that consumers adhere to compel them to believe in the practice of branding because branding's ideological nature appears autonomous and natural.

The autonomy of the structure normalizes ideology for the individual in the same way that branding as a system legitimizes itself through consumption. As Holt (2002) explains, this supports a consumer culture that has been developed as a result of "collective actions of firms in their marketing activities" (p. 71). Within a capitalist market, consumers are given options and are able to choose a product or service. In a similar vein, marketing ideology is legitimized because it enables all stakeholders involved, including employees and consumers, the right to act (Marion, 2006). This right to act is successful because it jives with the desires of the consumers.

While it is the consumer who decides the worth of a brand and in turn makes the purchase (the conscious relation), Marion (2006) points out that marketers are still in charge of making those brands and the products associated with it, available, and ultimately control the representation of the brand. Holt (2002) echoes this idea by noting that marketers control the transaction of information and organize the "code" that consumers engage in—according to him, marketing has essentially become a form of "distorted communication" (p. 72). Branding is equipped with the structural power to control the communicative process. Just because the consumer is now able to interact with the brand, does not guarantee a valuable and equitable exchange.

Through "freedom," consumers still continue to communicate with the brand and "influence" the branding process. For instance, in 2006 the Frito-Lay-owned brand, Doritos launched their "Crash the Super Bowl" campaign with the hope that consumer-generated content would spark interest in a young male consumer market (Schultz, 2016). Consumers, rather than ad agencies, had the opportunity to create a Super Bowl commercial which was then to be voted upon by viewers and then aired at some point during the game. The rise of the dominance of branding ideology has been driven by the postmodern search for identity and individuality. When an individual engages a brand, she consciously develops a relationship with it. To her, this is a real relation. In the communicative exchange, the individual invests in the brand and involves himself with the branding process.

But what remains unconscious is that this relation is a representation of branding as ideology. Individuals thus possess a relation to the real relations of existence. The relationship is not the relation that the individual has with the real world, but rather the relationship is an imaginary relationship with the real world. More importantly, the "freedom" of the consumer also permits for an exchange of dialogue between brand and consumer. This act materializes the ideology. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as an organizations public relations or marketing communications teams are ideological extensions that materialize its existence. The apparatus also preserves itself through the consciousness of the individual who adheres to the values and ideas associated with the brand and carries out those acts which preserve it.

In postmodernity, diverse and competing narratives give way to a consumer that is always adopting and discarding brands based on current desires or market trends. What this movement gleans from Althusser's position is that dominant ideologies in society that were once seen as a reflection of class power and control over the economic enterprise, no longer have to be

dominant in order to promote capitalism. Hall (1985) explains that Althusser was highly

opposed to class reductionism in ideology and that Althusser did not believe that class status was

inherently connected to the "social relations of production" (p. 97). In other words, Althusser

did not think that the dominant ideology had to be the perspective of the ruling bourgeoise class.

Put another way, woman does not express her actual real relationship with the world, but

"the way" she lives the relation between himself and her conditions of existence (Althusser,

1965/2005, p. 233). Branding ideology thus, does not give the woman freedom to create

relations of existence, but infers an unconsciousness that creates a relation of how woman will

act. Branding creates an imaginary relation between man and world. It likewise creates an

imaginary relation for the marketer, for as Althusser (1965/2005) suggests, if an ideology is used

to exploit a group of people, the people who use it are also its captive (p. 235). For as much as

the individual is subject to ideology, the marketer as individual is also subjected to the bigger

determinant structures that are coexisting.

These practices can only exist as a result of ideology. Holt (2002) argues that this system

of "mass cultural production" (i.e. branding as a producer of symbols which signify meaning) is

the "ideological glue" that manages the continuous participation of consumers within a capitalist

market (p. 71). What this means is that branding ideology can only exist socially and society can

only exist with ideology. Resch (1992) argues that, "In contrast to science, ideology performs a

ubiquitous social function, one that must be fulfilled in every society, including a socialist

society, since in all societies men and women must be formed, transformed, and equipped to

respond to their conditions of existence. This process of socialization requires systems of ideas,

beliefs, and values by which men and women experience their world as a coherent whole and

find their place within it as subjects" (p. 206). While Althusser continued to advocate a science-

based practice, he nevertheless acknowledged the profound impact that ideology could have on individuals. At its core, ideology provides an individual with a meaningful narrative and a way of connecting with the world. To some extent, the knowledge that ideology bestows upon individuals renders meaningful value.

The connection between branding and ideology showcases how ideology affects an individual's relation to his world. What one comes to think, feel, and act has proved to be affected by ideology. Branding as an ideology has shown how it has the capacity to affect not just consumer purchasing, but on a more deeper level, it explains the larger structure at play in determining the representation of an individual's ideas, that individuals are endowed with a conscious and unconscious relation to ideology that affects lives. On a more deeper level, Althusser posited that ideology had the capacity to interpellate individuals into subjects. The following section suggests that not only does branding as an ideology affect woman's relation with the world, but that branding as an ideology has the ability to interpellate individuals as subjects.

4.4 "Can You Hail Me Now?": The Connection between Branding and Interpellation

Today, brands have evolved to become one of the most significant influences within culture. Their symbolic nature and capacity to evolve and morph throughout time and space has allowed them to garner unique attention from both consumers and organizations. Additionally, branding has given marketers another possibility of finding alternative communicative opportunities with stakeholders. For some organizations, branding has been the key to bringing a brand back from the edge of extinction and ruin. Perhaps the exemplar model of this phenomenon is the Harley-Davidson narrative, which went from being on the verge of

bankruptcy in the 1980s, to being one of the most recognized and well-respected brands today (Aquino, 2011). Harley-Davidson was able to successfully perceive a change in consumer habits as well as its brand image.

What remains unique about Harley-Davidson is that it was able to rewrite a brand narrative without compromising its relationship with those fundamentally reliable consumers who had stayed with the company long-term. What is even more so, is that the company was able to recruit and transform new consumers so that they, too, actively bought into the brand's ideology. In rebranding their identity, the company was able to culturally transform themselves and their product into a brand desired by consumers. This, Althusser would suggest, captures the role of ideological interpellation in society and the role of branding as a system. When used as a heuristic, interpellation illuminates the implications for current branding practices and suggests that a marxist theory inspired by anti-humanism and structuralism can be helpful even today since provides resolute meaning in the midst of narrative fragmentation. Firat and Venkatesh (1993) note that within postmodernity, the consumer tends to feel vindicated by partaking in hyperreal or fragmented experiences, rather than what they call "somber reminders of reality" (p. 231). Postmodern marketing attempts to simulate this by promoting products and services through messaging that is discreet, symbolic, and provisional. The more disjointed the consumer experience is able to become, the more easy it is for marketers to convince individuals that their consumption habits are a result of their own agency. This practice also promotes products and services as free-floating signifiers always ready to be interpreted by the individual. To illustrate:

> Each product, seemingly independent from the rest, represents an experience that
>
> is disconnected. Fragmentation implies that in each instance of consumption, for
>
> example, as the consumer eats a frozen dinner, watches television, brushes one's

teeth, feeds the cat, the consumer engages in a series of independent, separate,

unconnected acts without a common purpose (. . .) The consumers of

postmodernity are encouraged by marketing messages and images to play a game

of image-switching. (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993, p. 232)

However, the Harley-Davidson brand offers an example of an organization that continued to

embrace their core identity and sought alternative methods to not only solicit consumer interest,

but control a dialogue that persuaded people to feel that they too could be part of an identity,

inherently different from the one they possessed. Rather than diversifying their brand or touting a

new identity, Harley-Davidson struck to its core roots, choosing to amplify its fundamental

organizational values and interpellating unlikely consumers into motorcycle-loving subjects.

The chief function of ideology is to constitute individuals as subjects (Althusser,

1971/2008, p. 45). An effect of ideology is that it produces the process by which individuals are

hailed or recognized as subjects. Althusser distinguishes the apparatuses of Repressive State

Apparatuses (RSA)[14] and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA), noting that ISAs function more

by ideology and are thus sites where interpellation occurs. In Chapter 3, this process was

described through Beckett's character Malloy. This process of interpellation infers a few critical

coordinates. The first coordinate is that just as ideology is eternal and omnipresent, we are

always being interpellated by systems of representation. This means that ideology produces a

system of representations that function by way of practices, language, values, etc.

This is what sustains and reproduces ISAs. For instance, the CrossFit brand has been able

to grow and expand at exponential rates because of its ability to cultivate a community that

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[14] RSAs primarily depend on repressive power such as the police or military, but still also rely on
ideology to maintain and reproduce the apparatus.

functions as a result of particular routines, rituals, and shared language. Doing Crossfit "harnesses natural camaraderie, competition and fun of sport or game yields an intensity that cannot be matched by other means" ("What is Crossfit?," 2017). Though the creation of communal exercise, the brand has been able retain its consumers as well as reproduce the fundamental components of its ideology because it has been able to traverse into other areas of fitness such as nutrition and competitions.

These systems are already present in our social world in both public and private realms and impact our identity and our relations. This, Althusser (1971/2008b) explained happens even before we are born since we are born into a social world structured by existing ideology. Because ideology is constituted by practices laden with meaning, ideology cannot exist outside of the social and individuals cannot know life outside of it. Ideology interpellates us as subjects. In other words, we evolve from being just individuals to subjects with a knowable identity. Subjects come to know themselves and embody a subjecthood through ideological interpellation. Because individuals cannot live outside of ideology and because ideology is already present, Althusser (1971/2008b) argued that individuals are "*always already* subjects" (p. 46). This is reinforced by the idea that ideology is unconscious. We are called into being before we are even able to recognize the call. Additionally, there are instances in which the simple acknowledgment of a call affirms subjectivity that the individual failed to recognize as being part of his identity.

It is in the practices and rituals associated with ideology, that subjects are continuously being interpellated and are constantly producing and reproducing the ideological systems. These practices help us to affirm our recognized identity. Consumption of product and services allow the subject to present herself to the world. Her consumptive practices reflect her representation of how she wishes the world to see her and how others should see her as well. Here is where

149

Althusser argues that one can be "conscious" of herself as subject. That being so, Lock (1996) explains that interpellation "provides the individual with the subjectivity he or she requires in order (the functional explanatory scheme again) not only to accept his or her submission but to accept it "freely" (which only a *subject* can do but not any substance—a stone or a plant or even a lower animal). Such comments, however, concern not the operation of *ideology* in the general sense but that of the various particulars ISAs" (p. 81).

Within the apparatus, we make decisions and act in ways that lead us to believe that we are consciously determining subjectivity. Althusser (1971/2008b) describes the subject as the "*author* who continues to write the ideological story" (p. 45). For example, as consumers, individuals engage with a brand and become co-creators within the branding process. Through these actions, individuals maintain that they are actively defining themselves based on their personal thoughts and actions. They affirm their identity. But in pursuing this act, they are merely subjecting ourselves to ideology. The subject fails to recognize branding and brand as ideological because branding as an ideology, (and ideology in general) "does not announce itself as such" (Althusser, 1971/2008, p 49).

The failure to recognize ideology or being interpellated is possible because it is able to remain inconspicuous and provisional. This is particularly obvious in postmodern branding practices. Rising skepticism born from conspicuous ideological apparatuses such as corporations and government has compelled marketers to develop new practices associated with branding that work to build trust and loyalty with the consumer. Whereas at one point branding was transparent with the intention of pushing consumers to buy to try products, systems have now become even more implicit by way of what Serazio (2013) refers to as "brand neutrality" (p. 128). The branding apparatus works to disguise itself either through cooperative discourse with

the consumer (i.e. anthropomorphism) or it tries to work in reverse by suppressing any type of

direct messaging. This can come in the form of a Facebook conversation or a giveaway table at

a music festival. Though the consumer recognizes to an extent that the brand is presenting itself

to him, she fails to recognize it is still able to call out to her. This is what Althusser means when

he uses the term, *misrecognition;* the subject misrecognizes herself as a free subject. Regardless

of whether or not the subject believes she is being hailed or not, interpellation still occurs

through the practices and discourses that the consumer adopts or chooses not to adopt.

The intention here is that the ideological forces within the branding apparatus will create

the conditions for which the subject can be interpellated. As this shows, even Althusser's

forthcoming police officer hailing the person on the street is unnecessary because the person will

come to be signified in some way by the many structures surrounding him. The individual now

can be interpellated by just a general discourse void of any action-specific takeaway. This

hearkens back to the production of immaterial labor and the generation of discourse that may

simply be influenced by ideological systems. As Arvidsson (2005) notes, "Brands work as

platforms for action that enable the production of a particular immaterial use-values: an

experience, a shared emotion a sense of community. This way, brands work as a kind of

ubiquitious means of production that are inserted with the socialized production process that

consumer engage in" (p. 248). The subject develops an identity based on the mere exposure to

the knowledge produced by the practice of discourse and also expands the marketers ability to

tap into nuanced consumer demographics.

Acknowledging this shift, marketing practices have evolved to influence a consumer

culture driven by autonomy and ability to assign value to a brand. In an effort to take advantage

of this shift, post-fordist capitalism has realized that the mass production of products and

services has been trumped by personalized, original, and tailored consumer experiences. Marketers have been trying to tap into this trend by creating extreme niche markets such as craft-micro breweries or hyper-local, curated apparel services. Marketers ability to play into diverse narratives only strengthens their ability to interpellate consumers on a more micro level and creates more opportunity to expand and promote consumption. The ability to reach more consumers by way of more niche products and services supports the postmodern machine.

While this may seem as the upswing to postmodern branding practices, it reinforces the idea that identity can be bought and can be a source of revenue for marketers. "Fostering "difference" essentially reinforces cultural homogenisation" (Moran, 2014, p. 145). This is because it implies that tapping into identity allows marketers to manufacture identity as a product or service. It does very little to promote diversity since it normalizes or standardizes particular consumer identity. Further, branding homogenizes identity because it lumps consumers who "share" an identity together. For instance, Chapter 2 argued that an offshoot of branding was the development of brand communities. These communities are either synthetically created by the brand or have been cultivated by the consumer.

Regardless, communication with a brand has resulted in a desire to produce continuous, communal dialogue surrounding a particular brand service or product. This dialogue is homogenous since it is produced by subjects who have experienced the interpellation of a brand and have developed a discourse that reflects the characteristics of that particular brand. Ongoing discourse within the brand community is likewise influenced by the brand through particular rising challenges, trends or topics pertaining to the brand at a given moment and of which, are discussed within the communities. Additionally, this brand community can function as a

recruiting tool that uses the system of representation to interpellate others as subjects. This again, ensures that the ISA appears autonomous.

Additionally, corporate branding illustrates how interpellation occurs not just externally with consumers, but can also occur within organizations. This phenomenon suggests that a seemingly double interpellation is possible and that ideology that exists within an organization promotes a different set of practices (e.g. in the form of goals, visions, etc), but nevertheless functions to interpellate individuals. Corporate branding differentiates itself from a product brand through several distinct characteristics. Balmer and Gray (2003) suggest that stakeholder focus shifts from the consumer to other multiple stakeholders like employees and shareholders and that corporate brands have to "align other organizational dimensions such as brand value, identity, corporate strategy, and vision" (p. 978).

So the means in which ideology operates organizationally is different in such a way that the modes of production are based heavily on immaterial labor. The organization as an institution supports internal ideological practices that interpellate employees as subjects. Subjects then support the institutionalized system by carrying out actions, adopting a particular discourse, and producing the brand in multiple forms to external stakeholders. This, of course, is only possible through and by communication. As mentioned in section 4.2, the immaterial labor generated internally by the organization sustains the branding process and in some way, the branding process becomes contingent upon a more dominant ideological structure. What this means is that ideology fosters what Habermas (1981) calls communicative "rationality" (p. 8). This happens when individuals rationalize knowledge of a topic based on consensus. So, when employees engage in a particular shared discourse, the discourse is validated by an agreed-upon, shared understanding. That discourse is then preserved by an ongoing renewing of consensus that

"rests on the intersubjective recognition of criticizable validity claims" (Habermas, 1981, p 17). While Habermas believes in the ability of choice (*willkur*) and Althusser believes in choice as being the effect of ideology, these perspectives nevertheless showcase how ideology is an apparatus that can facilitate consensus and provides an opportunity for community within an organization.

The existence of multiple structures is what Althusser (1965/2005) discusses though his construct of *overdetermination.* In a critique of Hegel, Althusser (1965/2005) argues that overdetermination is not the constitution of "an infinity of concrete determinations" (i.e. laws, habits, regimes, etc.), because "none of these determinations is *outside* the others , not only because together they constitute an original, organic totality, but also and above all because this totality is *reflected in a unique internal principle,* which is *the truth* of all those concrete determinations" (p. 102). In instances of overdetermination, multiple structures in play with one another can be considered part of a totality of structures that determines things such as historical events. However, it is impossible to pinpoint or absolutely determine how and in what ways these elements of society affect another event since all structures are part of a totality.

The various ideologies at play with an organizational brand and more generally within the marketplace, are represented by systems of representation whose function is produce meaning that interpellates the consumer into subjects. The branding process is just part of an overdetermined totality of systems. It essentially offers just another apparatus in which individuals become subjects and are subjected to ideology. These systems produce subjects who identify via branding as individuals but who also experience the feeling of collectivism based on the ideology's capacity to interpellate consumers to feel part of a shared identity.

Though this aspect of interpellation seems to enforce the determinist stance that individuals develop identity in a vacuum and that this process cannot be influenced, Althusser's theory offers space for dialogue on these competing ideologies. While the scholar never actually addresses the notion of competing systems of dominance or the idea that individuals have the ability to break away from withstanding ideologies, he does offer his audiences an opportunity to explore the role of plurality. Unlike Marx, Althusser recognized that materialism could not be the only way to understand the evolution of history and the systems of representation that come to ultimately influence the trajectory of human action.

Althusser's insistence that there are multiple ISAs within society infers that the subject is always already being exposed to different ideologies and that ideologies are in and of themselves dialectical because they exist in contrast to one another. Hall (1985) explains that this position is plausible "if one starts at the root of the State" (p. 93). Hall maintains that while the State was historically seen as a monistic, unitary source of power, it must also be seen as the site in which various political and social discourses unite and are "condensed" so as to "allow that site of interaction between different practices to be transformed into a systematic practice of regulation, of rule and norm, of normalization, within society" (p. 93). The State is an entity that can be conceptualized in various ways, whether it be concretized or abstracted. Hall's (1985) argument is that ideology is the "work of fixing meaning through establishing, by selection and combination, a chain of equivalences" (p. 93).

Althusser insists that while systems within society are determined, there are an indeterminate number of systems in play and those systems in play are ultimately coming in contact with one another to form a totality. The social milieu that Althusser was determined to uncover is grounds for understanding how the connection between his work and branding can be

beneficial today. The following section suggests that in light of an Althusserian application, individuals (both consumers and marketers) have become complacent and complicit within a market-driven economy fueled by consumption of brands.

4.5 "So-What?" Analysis

Consciousness has remained a significant metaphor in the construction of connections between branding and anti-humanism, ideology, and interpellation. It is theme that has become a cornerstone in research and philosophy concerned with how society subjugates various factions of individuals. Consciousness continues to play in role in the conversation surrounding individual subjectivity and identity, across varying disciplines. For Althusser, the connection between consciousness and identity was based on the inevitable influence of ideological structures in society and the representation of meaning. Above all else, it can be inferred that Althusser's work helps us to discover how branding today can be interpreted as an ideology that interpellates consumers and is also used by consumers to interpellate others. Interpellation continues the cycle of communication, even outside of consumer engagement with the brand. But at the heart of this discussion, we must ask ourselves why this matters, and more importantly, why now? The following section offers an analysis of key takeaway points that suggest how the connections made in the aforementioned sections may be beneficial to the marketing communication conversation.

4.5.1 The Question of Consumer Autonomy

A current capitalist market provides an abundance of hyper-personalized choices and options for consumers, thanks to limitless competitive space. Today, consumers are able to satisfy their identity "cravings" through the branding apparatus. If we assume that all consumers are made subjects by way of ideology, it becomes apparent that subjects develop a consensual attitude toward various brand ideologies perpetuated by the capitalist system. The branding apparatus gives the consumer a platform so that he is able to become conscious. This consent infers that subjects have developed a particular consciousness of their imaginary reality. In turn, this has resulted in an obfuscation of the real conditions of reality—one in which the consumer or the subject, is not conscious of. Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/1972) concluded that this complacency, or inability to see the effects of the mass production and consumption is due to a restriction of our critical awareness. This consumer unwittingness is, just like identity, an effect of ISAs. Critical awareness is absorbed by the imaginary relation produced by apparatuses that govern our ideas and interests. In today's society this is often popular culture and media trends.

For Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/1972), culture was at fault for creating an imaginary reality that "perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises" (p.139). Referring to culture as an "industry", the scholars contended that culture deceptively manufactures particular beliefs and practices which work to control and discipline the consumer. I argue that postmodern branding is indeed its own ideological system, but is also a corollary of other ISAs such as the culture industry since branding is seen as a major component in the culture dichotomy. It has infiltrated various cultural channels such as media outlets of television and the internet where its presence is conspicuous. It has likewise penetrated other forms of cultural meaning such as music, art, and literature.

Embedding brands within these alternative forms of expression has helped to protect ideology from being seen by the consumer as a domineering and imposing threat to his freedom, and has bolstered its legitimacy. For example, in expressing the views of Horkheimer and Adorno, Thompson (1990) writes that the "rise of the entertainment industry as capitalistic enterprises has resulted in the standardization and rationalization of cultural forms, and this process has in turn atrophied the capacity of the individual to think and act in a critical and autonomous way" (p.98). While this autonomy implies that the individual is active since he buying and engaging in communication, its does not necessarily mean that the individual is thinking or reflecting autonomously. ISAs that are able to blend the lines between various systems, particularly within apparatuses that appear to be functional only through expressive means, and interpellated consumers are able to reinforce the subjectivity imposed upon him. Put differently, while the subject has already been hailed by the branding apparatus, inculcating branding into alternative ideological forms such as art and music distorts autonomy.

The exposure to additional and various other forms for identity emancipation creates the illusion that the postmodern consumer is in abundant company of self-determining resources. The exposure to several various apparatuses only delights the consumer more since their postmodern proclivities invite multiplicity and choice. Satisfaction with identity, however ephemeral, reinforces the control of the apparatus. As one comes to know his identity, the consciousness produced in that relation also reinforces thoughtlessness. In coming to know ourselves, we become self-satisfied with the effects, and lack the ability or the "unconscious" aspect of ideology which would unveil the more deleterious effects.

While Althusser believed we can never obtain absolute knowledge (because that is only possible through science and ideology is merely theory), ideologies offer us knowledge that we

accept as true in order to structure our worlds. The meaning that we derive from this knowledge can only be extracted through ideology. This infers that meaning is not something inherently constructed and determined by the individual, but rather comes to the individual by way of ideology. Here, Althusser is trying to reinforce an anti-humanist agenda of a decentered subject. Branding as antithetical to homocentrism, relies on ideological practices and language as channels of knowledge. We come to understand truth as it is represented to us and accept it as valid. For the consumer, the ideological structure diminishes any resolve for the search for reality. And in the satisfaction of reality based on what individuals to believe their own determinate acts, true knowledge is stifled and knowledge derived from am imaginary reality becomes gratifying.

Though it appears oxymoronic *prima facie,* Althusser's contribution to the notion that branding is an ideology that interpellates also supports the position that both consumers and branders today have also become complicit in the process. Mumby (1988) asserts that ISAs turn subjects into consumers so that they can continue to contribute to the reproduction of capitalism. The branding process as an ISA supports a capitalist structure since it continuously functions to solicit the interest of consumers and encourage consumption. Consumers as complicit actors in the branding process allude to Althusser's stance that ideology functions through the realized materialized practices of the consumer. Knowledge offered by the branding apparatus to the subject works to indoctrinate them into the system. A post-modern juncture merely reinforces this process since today's consumer is constantly in search of information to satiate his ongoing examination of self and world.

The conscious and voluntary act of choosing to engage in the branding process also highlights a postmodern juncture defined by a rise in what is seemingly individuality. The

consumer buys the brand or subscribes to the use of a brand and in turn, differentiates himself amongst his peers. Additionally, by doing so, he becomes self-determining by choosing to identify with a particular community that suits his individualized needs and desires. He is complicit with the branding process because it is the gateway to individualism. However, the ruse of postmodern branding practices is that what is conceived as a resource for self-satiating desires, the branding ISA breeds homogenization that is buttressed by hegemonic discourse. The consumer's entry into his relation with the brand reinforces a homogenized discourse. This is what Horkheimer and Adorno (1944/1972) argue is at the heart of the culture industry; a "stereotyped appropriation of everything" is used to service the process of reproduction and that this reproduction eclipses any interest in "real style" (p. 127). Today's branding practices are able to appeal to the postmodern consumers because they are able to tap into nuanced market segments that popular culture deems unique and driven by "real individuals."

These characteristics of branding ideology seem to indicate what Gramsci's notion of hegemony. Gramsci (1971) argued that dominant ideologies within society would produce hegemony, and while Marx would have seen dominant economic classes (i.e. the bourgeoise) as the culprit for this, Gramsci maintained that hegemony was not confined to simply economic classes—it could expand to other social and cultural factions. Gramsci helps to bridge the gap between Althusser and how he saw the way in which particular ideological apparatuses were able to rise to the top. Dominant ideas within society were not a product of the dominant class, but rather a product of particular groups who were able to ideologically inculcate the masses by way of legitimizing practices. Smith (1998) concluded that these hegemonic social structures were at the root of influencing subject identity since the hegemonic discourses in place were able to normalize a particular idea or discourse so that it could become socially accepted and adopted (p.

157). In other words, Smith (1998) summarizes this by noting subjects lack the freedom to single-handedly "construct the frameworks" through which she can form a position in the world (p. 157). Consequently, it is up to the systems at play to ultimately provide a panacea for shaping selves in society.

The irony in postmodern consumerism is that while consumers are interested in pursuing brands in order to help and define identity, Rumbo (2002) explains that consumerism is actually hegemonic in that the logic of it actually filters into "public, discursive, and psychic spaces dictating that our lived experiences are increasingly shaped and monitored by marketers" (p. 134). The ideological nuances of branding itself already impose restrictions and laws upon consumerism that govern the "choices" of consumers.

What plays into this dynamic is that today's socio-economic status no longer influences what consumers purchase (Holt, 1998). Consumers from all backgrounds are able to communicate with a brand and engage in dialogue. Today, "meta-narratives such as nationalism, extremism, class ideology, and the religious universal truth no longer rule the soul of the masses" (Trendafilov, 2015, p. 315). O'Reilly (2006) reminds us that ideology is inherently connected to meaning since it is concerned with language. Interpreting messages and meaning within contemporary marketing practices has played a significant role in influencing the relationship between the consumer and the brand. This highlights how an increase in fragmented identity or a growth of multiple identities within a consumer propels the consumer to be even more drawn to the ideological benefits of brand. Branding is able to infiltrate the relation between the individual with the world with greater ease since it no longer depends on whether or not the consumer can afford the brand.

Ideology is able to produce what has been appropriated as hip and trendy and thus, what was once *sui generis,* is contrived. It is simply a representation of what has been appropriated already by the apparatus. But alas, the consumer as subject, still hears the interpellative hail that the brand, product, or service is legitimately unique. According to Heath and Potter (2004), consumption has become a type of "conformist groupthink" that has come to suppress individualism (p. 27). What individuality is dependent on is the social structure and those other subjects within the lifeworld. It is because of this reification of dominant meanings within cultural, that ideology is able to continue to appear natural (Mumby, 1988). This is likewise how strains of counter-culture have likewise been able to infiltrate popular culture and the branding enterprise with great success. Initially, the rise of counterculture was to supposed to be "an attack on capitalism, but those in power simply turned this criticism on its head by adopting this culture and normalizing it by marketing it" (Heath and Potter, 2004, p. 34). Mumby (1988) extends this notion by writing that "the ideological effect is to produce and reproduce an ostensibly decentralized, pluralistic structure which serves the interests of no one in particular, presenting sectional interests as universal" (p. 91). Ideology remains omnihistoric because it is able to perpetuate the cycle of its effects.

Consumers are also complicit in legitimizing branding as a democratic and deeply-vital capitalist enterprise. The consumption of brands would infer that individuals are jointly supporting the capitalist enterprise of the production and consumption of goods. Ewen (1976) echoes this by noting that the buying of products is essentially a democratic enterprise and that those dominating these positions of power (in this case, branders and marketers) are given the green light to maintain their dominance within a capitalist marketplace. The consumer then becomes complicit with corporatism.

Likewise, those involved in marketing and branding process are also complicit in this exchange since they too, acquiesce to the authoritative powers that the consumer as subject appoints them. But more importantly, marketers have become complicit too because of the organizational apparatus that has interpellated them with such an identity. At a corporate level, employees are hailed by the imaginary relation created by the organizational ideology at play. In expressing her relation with her world and to affirm her identity vis-à-vis his company, she engages in practices that help to reproduce both the organizations ideology but also reproduce the branding apparatus.

4.6 Overdetermination & Communication: Where Branding and Ideology Converge

The marketing industry has been successful in establishing the increasingly important role that branding plays in the success of a product or service as well as their determined value (See Brodie, Glynn, and Little, 2006). However, as the marketplace increase with competition, particularly within the e-commerce realm, the initial reaction by marketers has been to invent, create, or co-opt spaces for consumer engagement. But what has been overlooked in this process and what can be inferred now based on the Althusserian coordinates discussed in this chapter, is the effect of multiple co-existing structures on a subject. Though an Althusserian treatment of branding pegs consumers as having become both complacent and compliant, it should also be suggested that within his philosophy, there resides an assurance about ideology and interpellation.

As part of his construction of these two concepts, Althusser sought to rebuke the claim that his theory was functionalist by introducing the notion of *overdetermination.* Althusser (1965/2005) describes the concept by explaining that within history, there are innumerable

determinations and that those determinations are not outside of each other since together they create what he calls an "original, organic totality" (p. 102). What he is suggesting is that there are multiple structures that co-exist and that are unified to create social formations. This treatment of structures propounds that structures are not static in their relation to other structures and thus, causality is not static but can be abundant. Ultimately, an historical event for instance, is determined by the amalgamation of other determinations.

Overdetermination is also applicable in determining subject identity. Though the major issue with ideology and interpellation is that it leaves no room for human agency or choice, overdetermination fills that gap by suggesting that a person's subjectivity is constituted by the various determined structures that compose his lifeworld. As humans, we are an amalgam of ideological structures. Branding as ideology is just one determined structure that influences identity and subjectivity. If we can conceive of overdetermination within postmodernity, it may help marketers to understand consumer desires. Ultimately, a consumer can answer the hail of various brands and in return, those structures all impose meaning through interpellating the subject. This proves beneficial for a postmodern paradigm where individuals situate their identity in multiple, transient narratives. Overdetermination grants the consumer the ability to sustain the amalgam of various determined structures and advances the idea that a Marxist enterprise is applicable to a postmodern paradigm.

The discussion surrounding branding and ideology has evolved little around its relationship with communication. This is unsurprising, as Althusser's understanding of ideology as a determinate structure within society lends little room to associate it with the dialogic, reciprocal process of communication. However, there remains a meaningful connection between the two and how they have come to influence culture (Mumby, 1989, p. 291). Both ideology and

communication are fundamentally bound to meaning in the lifeworld. Though Brown (1978) takes on a more humanist stance of ideology in relation to communication, he posits the applicable notion that ideologies are "homes" that serve individuals with "places" to construct roles, rules, motives, etc. (p. 128). Branding offers the same artifice for consumers and without it, subjects would fail to develop any meaningful agenda in their lives. The determinate structures within society offer meaning in our relation to the world, albeit the imaginary one. Ideological structures provide particular discourses that individuals as subject are inserted into and of which, are utilized for expression and relational creation. As we are always already subjects, we are always already within embedded in the social through language.

This, Arvidsson (2005) argues, is what opens the door for ongoing communication between the consumer and the brand . If consumer is king, it is communication that puts her on her throne. Grossberg (1997) contends that even though governing structures still exist within societies and help to regulate processes, ideas, and ideologies, it is a system that is still linked to communication. Communication within systems continues to be a source of dialogue, tension, and change. It is what allows systems to take hold and maintain their structure within societies. He argues that the "crisis of modern culture is understood as the domination of some particular symbolic structure and the subsequent control that structure has over our worldview. Communication, in such a view, belongs to the symbolic structures or codes rather than to the individuals who appear to use them. It is the system rather than the speaker that is the source of meaning" (p. 36). The system as a source of meaning relies on communication as the glue that holds the system in place.

Because language is connected to a determinant structure, Althusser would argue that the subject is always outside of it—that like all ideological structures, it is subjectless and that the

effect of its structure is the subject. We develop the self through language. This poses a possibility for understanding the communicative opportunity that lies on the part of the subject. If the subject is the object of the structure and the structure can only exist through the subject, then the onus of interpretation is placed on the shoulders of the subject. As Grossberg (1997) explains, "Ideological practices locate the individual language user within language as its absent source who is therefore responsible for the meanings produced, the transcendental agent of experience" (p. 126). It is therefore the subject whose responsibility it is to carry out actions. In relation to branding, this validates the role of the apparatus within the lifeworld since branding is an alternative apparatus which opens up possibilities for diverse identity.

In a time of disparate identities, the Althusserian claim to structures as governing social apparatuses offers subjects a rootedness. From an Althusserian perspective, the existence of these structures remains stable and while difference marks the postmodern paradigm, the a Marxist philosophy gives way for how current practices can be transformed. The next chapter seeks to advance this claim by exploring where an Althusserian perspective may be able to take branding in the future. Althusser's work will present a new way of showing how branding may be able to get back to the roots of its practices without rehashing consumers dissatisfaction with an alternative marketing paradigm. More importantly, the following chapter will illuminate the role of marketing and its weightier effects on faucets of human life such as community, culture, and individualism.

Chapter 5: Concerning the Future of Branding:

Althusserian Implications in Current Culture

5.1 Introduction

In order to advance branding and the larger discipline of IMC, this project has incited the voice of Louis Althusser. Althusser's critical voice beckons us as practitioners, academics, and consumers to listen to what has perhaps become muffled by recent branding practices. The chapters leading up to this part of the project explored the necessity of refining a burgeoning discipline, unpacked postmodern brand and branding practices paradigm, introduced major Althusserian coordinates, and finally drew a corollary between the two topics in order to show how a philosophy of communication might be of service to culturally influential discipline.

Above all else, this project has argued that while branding persists as a significant resource for meaning and communication, it also remains an area of marketing practices that warrants introspection and reexamination. The preceding chapter established grounds for why IMC, including branding, cannot simply subsume collaboration and co-creation as a solution to an evolving marketplace. As a response, the following chapter will offer theoretical suggestions in as a response to the current IMC paradigm defined by conversation and engagement. Doing so may help practitioners and academics avoid what Klitatcho (2009) deems "moral myopia" (p. 159). This failure to see underlying problems plaguing a practice may affect the way practitioners choose to pursue ethical marketing aims.

Contributing to this issue is the continuous melding of branding practices and postmodern drivers. Firat, Dholakia and Venkatash (1995) contend that today's marketing practices have become so synonymous with postmodern characteristics that marketing "represents the essence of the ongoing transition to postmodernity" — mostly because just like postmodernity,

marketing recognizes that individuals have symbolic needs" (p. 49). The consumer's role and influence in both the marketplace but the broader culture, has caused branding to shift toward the illusion that power has been transferred into the hands of the individual. As Althusser's work suggests, the postmodern paradigm of situating the consumer at the helm of decision-making and allowing individual choice to drive branding conversations, is simply a ruse. Based on the preceding ideas and analyses within this work, this chapter works to advance the conversation into one final stage and presents key touch points where Althusser is applicable to branding discourse.

His insights will help to make the case for why both marketers and academics alike should use an alternative method to evaluate the current marketing system. Questions will be conceptualized they relate to one of the three Althusserian coordinates of anti-humanism, ideology, and interpellation. This correlation will illustrate how Althusser is able to trigger an alternative scope of inquiry. Lastly, specific suggestions for the field will be offered for future consideration. The significance of this chapter is that it ultimately reflects that current branding practices are in need of revision and invites both practitioners and academics alike to revise current branding practices that from the surface appear ethical, authentic, and synergetic. The use of practical application advances the pertinence of a philosophy of communication and underscores the notion that marketing practices cannot be judged efficient or effective simply based on a quantitative benchmark or social scientific research. An interpretive analysis applies a humanities-based perspective in the hope that it will unveil the human proclivities that buttresses the discipline and provide a new lens of engagement and best practices.

5.2 Anti-humanist Ruptures in Branding: The Case of Consumer-Centric Marketing

Schultz and Schultz (2004) argue that IMC is now focused on a comprehensive consumer experience, all the way from considering how a product is produced and manufactured, to how it performs for the consumer. As evidenced in the preceding chapter, postmodern marketing now tries to position itself as[15] by focusing on "the uniqueness, diversity, plurality and idiosyncracy of each and every individual" (Brown, 1993, p. 26). What this implies is that marketers are looking for alternative ways to introduce and sustain their brand in ways that jive with consumer needs and wants. Postmodern branding tactics aimed at embodying a consumer-orientation spawned in the 1960s and 70s during the rise of counter culture and growing disillusion of corporatism (Holt, 2002.) A shift from what Gronstedt (2000) calls the "production century," of which organizations are concerned with the production and distribution of goods, ultimately began to shift to a "customer century" that positions communication with the consumer as its focal point (p. 7). As a result, strategies used to accommodate this shift were developed. Postmodern marketing initiatives are defined by the ability to appear "disinterested" and as Holt (2002) argues, several branding trends emerged as a reflection of the postmodern paradigm:

• Creating a "reflexive" brand persona in which the brand acknowledges its function in order to create a disconnect with traditional, modernist, marketing objectives.

• Infiltrating culture such as the arts and music in order to establish a more credible ethos and build relationships with consumer-trusted communities.

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[15] Consumer-centric organizations are defined by Kliatchko (2009) as "understanding and responding to consumer needs and desires and being able to communicate with customers at the individual level (. . .) (p. 157).

- Embedding the brand in the natural "lifeworld" and within the "disinterested" spaces of

  subcultures so that authentic nature of those spaces justifies the brand as authentic.

- Utilizing stealth branding that promotes strategies such as buzz, viral, grassroots and tribal

  marketing.

Within a postmodern juncture, marketing practices have evolved in order to compete with

a mercurial consumer. Marketing scholarship contends that traditional marketing trends no

longer assuages consumer desires and as such, radical marketing practices have been developed

to maintain and entice consumers (Serazio, 2012). For example, the faucet of marketing

concerned with guerrilla or stealth marketing is devised to tap into consumer desires and assault

consumers in ways that are unexpected and sometimes undetected. The impetus behind this

approach is to run a strategy that is counter to traditional marketing and branding methods so that

the consumer is unable to recognize any semblance to those traditional ones. Levinson (2007)

writes that guerrilla marketing "involves recognizing the myriad of opportunities out there and

exploiting every one of them" (p. 14). It suggests that marketers employ various "weapons"

(Levinson, 2007, p. 10) in order to prevail over competition. While guerrilla marketing is

suggestive of the larger metaphor of war and is perhaps if anything, it nevertheless is still

indicative of systematic manipulation of the consumer. It is true that appealing to consumers and

infiltrating their buying habits has become increasingly difficult. However, marketers must

continue to encourage practices that encompass a *telos* concerned with not just the bottom line or

making a conversion, but rather one concerned with the process of this exchange.

Serazio (2012) extends examples of consumer-centric marketing practices by

highlighting guerrilla marketing's ability to transfer itself from strategies and materialized tactics

to social and spatial spheres. Now, marketers have colonized untraditional, unsuspected public spaces to embed messages (Serazio, 2012). Sometimes the planting of a brand is so conspicuous that it appears natural or ironic, and in turn, does not interrupt the consumer in ways that traditional marketing has been responsible for doing. These are oftentimes "serendipitous, covert, and niche-oriented" (Serazio, 2012, p. 15). Rather appear explicit and overbearing, marketing has molted its skin and grown a new identity that implants itself in consumer routine so that consumer interaction appears natural and unforced. The problem with this approach is that it undermines consumer agency. Marketers are still trying to predict and determine the outcome of the consumer's engagement with the bran; now it is just shrouded by the cover of spontaneous discovery.

The argument to be made for the justification of these practices stems from a postmodern perspective that no longer maintains a belief system rooted in absolute truth. "Postmodernity rejects absolute truth for fear of its oppressive nature and drive to colonize other belief systems" (Singh, 2011, p. 59). Marketing and branding as extensions of capitalist ideologies that are often now seen as oppressive and consumers have developed reservations regarding the intention of these institutions. As a result, marketers have distanced themselves from traditional marketing methods and replaced practices with techniques that seek to naturalize the appearance of marketing. While the trend of appearing unobtrusive and discreet gives the appearance that marketers respect the postmodern perspective of demanding more agency and less dominance, a consumer-centric orientation fails to affirm this goal.

The growing trends of not just guerrilla/stealth marketing but other methods that promote consumer-centric tactics are not always the more ethical route just because the consumer appears to be more involved. An anti-humanist position contends that various structures in play are what

ultimately influences consumer agency, rather than personal choice. Marketing as a structure in itself, intentionally or unintentionally leads marketers to muddle the truth of their marketing message. The more a marketer obscures its intentions or provides inadequate representation of its brand based, the more it devalues the brand and the marketing communication enterprise itself.

What this means is that consumer-centric marketing tactics promote ambiguity or passivity of a brand or a marketing message so that the consumer can ascribe meaning. Consequently, the marketer then accepts that ascribed consumer meaning and uses it to strengthen brand's ability to build equity with the consumer though various contact points. Maintaining a brand that promotes open interpretation helps organizations to stay relevant, particularly during the changing of cultural tides. Althusser would denounce this practice, reminding marketers that the identity and ideas of a subject are based on ideological structures, not volitional creative agency and that the simple illusion of creating such agency is indicative of the humanist ruse. Marketers should approach these strategies with caution while keeping their core brand ideals in mind so as to avoid compromising the integrity of a brand or spreading their brand and its extensions too thin.

Keeping this in mind may help marketers to avoid dissonance with the consumer. A strong brand identity, coupled with core values, and a strongly communicated message places the consumer in conversation with an ideological apparatus that has the ability to provide meaning. This perpetuates Althusser's notion of ideology and construct of the truth. If the consumer is able to decide meaning for the brand and that meaning is derived from the ideological structures that press against the consumer, then the meaning of the brand is simply the perpetuation of various ideological apparatuses and the truth will remain obscured. In other words, ideology is what

produces ideas, meanings, and thoughts of an individual and because ideology is always already present, choice to ascribe such meaning to things like a brand is never a creation of the subject.

Rather, it is a byproduct of ideology that the individual adopts as his own. Reality is then once again passed up for an imaginary reality and the marketer has perhaps moved even further away from the intention of the brand. The function of the branding apparatus then conjures up questions concerning its influence and practicality within the marketplace.

As mentioned before, consumers have become wary of marketing as an institution which in turn has forced marketers to pursue alternative, less evasive strategies and tactics to connect with them. But consumer-centric marketing, whether it choses to communicate itself as a resource for identity or not, still maintains that role today. The role of the branding apparatus also summons a closer look at its impact on cultural and social orientations. Lasch's (1979) work on narcissism suggests that the rise of an "ideology of personal growth, superficially optimistic, radiates a profound despair and resignation. It is the faith of those without faith" (p. 51). The rise of a narcissistic culture reflects grounds for why organizations have shifted toward satiating consumer desires.

This echoes a culture dominated by urgency and the need to feel constantly connected. Postmodern marketing seems to feed off this narcissist behavior. As Lasch (1979) reminds us, "The narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. His apparent freedom from family ties and institutional constraints does not free him to stand alone or to flory in his individuality. On the contrary, it contributes to his insecurity, which he can overcome only by seeing his "grandiose self" reflected in the attentions of others, or by attaching himself to those who radiate celebrity, power, and charisma" (p. 10). Lusch's argument is that today's individual affirms her identity in alternative sources of meaning rather than traditional institutions—sources that cannot

necessarily fill the void in enriching and meaningful way. What this demonstrates is that while Althusser would argue that we cannot avoid ideology, we do have the capacity to be mindful with how we engage in these practices and adopt various brands as extensions of selves.

Consumption that is reckless and driven by selfish needs promotes a narcissistic culture that is concerned with self. Arnett and Arneson (1999) add, "When one communicates with another out of one's own historical formation without reaching out to understand and address the historical formation of the other, a confirmation of narcissicism, not "otherness" is invited" (p. 41). Marketers must recognize their relationship with the consumer as an opportunity to reorient their organizational motivations as well as the motivations of the consumer. And while identifying with various brands is what consumers believes helps them to associate with particular communities, the motivation behind these communities is still rooted in rampant individualism.

Garber (2017) explains in *The Atlantic* that community is defined by self-identity—it is an active search in which subjects seek out various groups that fits them best. This echoes Althusser's stance that individuals are naturally ideological animals. One craves the social and in engaging in these practices, creates and sustains the imaginary relation of the particular ideological conditions. What is true is derived from the interpretation of determined structures within society. For the consumer, avoiding engagement with a brand or product is simply impossible today—however, what anti-humanism encourages us to think about is the mindfulness of these structured practices. The brand, The Gap faced a branding crisis several years ago when it failed to acknowledge its vital role in the production of meaning for its consumer base.

Figure 1. (Left) New Logo, (Right) Old Logo

The American clothing retailer The Gap, Inc. (or GAP) provides a practical account of the organizational missteps of current branding practices as they relate to these inquiries. Gap was founded in 1969 by married couple Don and Doris Fisher in San Francisco and four years later, created their iconic jingle "fall into the gap" ("History"). Following its success, the company decided to extend its master brand and developed a house of brands to accommodate the needs of its growing and diverse consumer base. In 1983, Banana Republic debuted and in 1994, the first Old Navy store was unveiled.

However, in 2015 the brand started to see a decline in sales and continues to experience loss ("Gap Historical Sales to Date"). In September 2017, it was reported that Gap would be closing 200 of their "underperforming" Gap and Banana Republic stores due to a steady decline in sales (Wattles). But the brand was in hot water well before this decline. In 2010, Gap sought to reclaim its identity by introducing a new logo which was supposed to symbolize its progression from "classic, American design to modern, sexy, cool," (see figure 1) according to company spokesperson, Louise Callagy (as qtd. by Laurent, 2002, p. 9).

The Gap logo was immediately detested by loyal consumers who took to social media to voice their contempt for the new logo. Just one week after the new logo was released, it was retired and Gap executives asked consumers to offer their suggestions for a new logo ("What

Gap did Wrong," 2016). Maria Hansen, president of Gap North America published, a piece in the *Huffington Post* in an effort to start mediating the brand crisis. In it she writes,

> We want our customers to take notice of Gap and see what it stands for today. We
>
> chose this design as it's more contemporary and current. It honors our heritage
>
> through the blue box while still taking it forward. Now, given the passionate
>
> outpouring from customers that followed, we've decided to engage in the
>
> dialogue, take their feedback on board and work together as we move ahead and
>
> evolve to the next phase of Gap. From this online dialogue, it's clear that Gap still
>
> has a close connection to our customers, so tapping into this energy is right.
>
> We've posted a message on the Gap Facebook Page that says we plan
>
> to ask people to share their designs with us as well. We welcome the participation
>
> we've seen so far. (para. 5)

While this move appeared to invite consumers into the branding process and provide an opportunity to be part of the co-creation process, it ultimately proved disastrous. The decision to solicit consumer input backfired as it created "speculation that the whole thing was a front for a crowd sourcing campaign, and even further criticism from designers who decried the idea of spec work being offered up to the retailer for free" ("What the Gap," 2010). After being unable to remedy the situation, Gap went back to its old logo and some several years later is still struggling to turn sales around. Gap's missteps highlight the questions and implications that Althusser offers us in a practical application. First, the branding debacle highlights the postmodern tension of individual control and involvement. Postmodern marketing practices remind us that the consumer desires sovereignty that Firat et al. (1994) go as far as to suggest that within postmodernity marketers will "resort" to "opening up their proprietary processes and

systems – design, manufacturing, assembling, packaging, accounting, delivery, billing, etc. – to the consumer" (p. 51).

But Althusser would suggest that this is not always the case and that current consumer-centric practices should remain attentive to a marxist perspective. Gap's failure to appease its consumer base with a brand refresh as well as its shoddy attempt to ameliorate the situation by "hailing" consumers to be part of the rebranding process proves that what is considered typical marketing practices today are in need of revision. Marketers first need to recognize that new is not always better and that in the case of Gap, the traditional use of the brand logo was favored more heavily than the one that their organization was trying to implement. This suggests that while postmodern consumers can be mercurial in their tastes and ideas, identifying with recognizable, stable brands with an historical narrative embedded in the richness of their brand landscape is still desirable.

Additionally, what this also suggests is that consumers might not always be in a position to be part of the collaboration process. As seen with Gap, consumers thought that the marketers' attempt to involve them was just a ploy to gain creative insight for a job that should have been completed by the brand experts at the company. This example of "guerrilla marketing" (i.e. presenting a fresh, innovative, and intriguing way to solicit consumer involvement) had ultimately floundered and revealed the marketing objectives that consumers had been wary about in a "marketing-to" marketplace. Not only do consumers still expect brands to create meaningful initiatives that is intuitive of needs and desires, it highlights how essentially consumers still recognize the brand or the organization as being the authoritative voice of the brand and its products.

Wolfsohn (2011) notes that the consumer is not in control, nor should be and that "it's critical to distinguish a consumer's increased ability to amplify a brand's successes and failures from his or her actual control over the story a brand tells" (n.p.). The focus on a total customer experience (i.e. how the product or service performs in the marketplace, how it is obtained, the capability of channel members to provide products in a timely and efficient manner, how customer service is delivered, and what type of social impact the firm makes in the community it inhabits) may inadvertently hurt an organization since the organization may risk losing sight of its own objectives and its bottom line in the name of sustaining affable consumer relations. Althusserian anti-humanism helps marketers to remain attentive to notion that other ideologies affect the consumer's ability to make decisions and that marketers should not necessarily depend on the consumer to guide the IMC or branding process.

Additionally, the Gap, Inc. campaign failure also enlarges the critical question of the validity of the marketing discipline. The fact that the consumer remains a mercurial subject, in constant flux, and always desirous of ways in which identity can be satiated advocates for IMC to be an apparatus that serves the consumer. Keller (2009) explains "To build a strong brand, the right knowledge structures must exist in the minds of actual or prospective customers so that they respond positively to marketing activities and programs in these different ways" (p. 140).

Thus, there is no negating the fact that marketing is systematic. However, the knowledge and the value produced by the apparatus is an area that marketers have the ability to refine. Marketers help to bridge the gap and create a streamlined process of communication across various related functions part of the marketing mix. The following section poses questions related to the production of knowledge and how that knowledge affects the individual's relation with the world.

5.3 Ideological Ruptures in Branding: The Case of the Paradox of Choice

Branding ideology remains both a challenge and a source of opportunity in the marketplace. Its ability to thrive as a dominant structure is largely based on its capacity to influence the ideas, beliefs, and practices of individuals. More importantly, the apparatus depends on the ability for the consumer to produce value, and in doing so, justify the institution as a social imperative. Currently, IMC practices are focused on the creation of abundant value and choices. Even Lusch (2007) explains, "In a complex and dynamic world, knowledge is dispersed throughout the system or network. Value is not created and delivered but is co-created by customers and all partners in the value network" (p. 266). Because value can only be cultivated as a result of the marketer's ability to effectively communicate knowledge, marketers continue to find alternative contact points for the consumer to be exposed to. The increase of the consumer interaction with a brand, as well as the increase of specialized products, has ultimately affected the way consumers are making decisions. Schwartz (2004) captures the climate of the consumption writing:

> As the number of available choices increases, as it has in our consumer culture,
>
> the autonomy, control, and liberation this variety brings are powerful and positive.
>
> But as the number of choices keeps growing, negative aspects of having a
>
> multitude of options begins to appear. As the number of choices grows further,
>
> the negatives escalate until we become overloaded. At this point, choice no longer
>
> liberates, but debilitates. It might be said to even tyrannize. (p. 2)

Schwartz's insight asks practitioners and academics to take heed to a marketplace where consumers are drowning in options. Not only has the amount of products and services increased, but there is a growing initiative to create more specialized products and services that give the

consumer a more "personalized" experience with the brand. This increase in niche marketing functions to meet the very nuanced wants and desires of the consumer. But what was supposed to be a marketing practice that would satisfy the consumer, has ultimately led to an overloaded consumer and a marketing industry that has become increasingly concerned with a sort the hyper-creation of products. For instance, the retail experience of buying a pair of bluejeans is no longer an effortless transaction since consumers are inundated with questions of style, cut, wash, fade, material (Schwartz, 2004). Additionally, part of today's allure of branding methods is its ability to offer experiences to the consumer that are often inconsistent with everyday life. Hyperreal branded experiences and hyper-personalized products and services disrupt the monotony of life and provide moments of gratification and happiness. Oftentimes, consumption of products and services facilitates a fulfilling experience that consumers would otherwise not be able to pursue in other facets of their life.

Singh (2011) furthers this point by noting that consumer culture "necessarily promotes ambivalence, it offers a world beyond scarcity and hardship, the dream of abundance, yet its modus operandi is through the commodity form, the calculus of monetary value. It encourages a calculating hedonism, a cost-benefit analysis of pleasure, time and other people. Yet it also encourages a calculus of public policies, the consequences of growth, along with the costs to other forms of life and the planet, of our actions" (p. 83). Singh's point suggests that while one understands that consumer culture has made individuals even more desirous of materialized goods that we do not need (and at times, do not even necessarily want), it also advances assumptions about how brand engagement holds the potential to distance the individual even further away from his reality.

Holt (2002) also suggests that because the today's consumer has taken on the role of co-collaborator, consumers have looked to "cultural infomediaries" and "collaborative filtering devices" to manage the influx of information for them (p. 87). Examples of these include websites that allow an individual to filter a search, gossip sites, and review sites. Consumers are not able to personally process all the widespread information with the marketplace, and are thus trying to find shortcuts that give them the opportunity to cherry pick necessary information. What this suggests is that as the marketplace continues to grow with diverse choices and can offer the consumer specific options, this explosion of multiplicity will continue to affect the consumer's ability to maintain concrete knowledge about a particular brand and make decisions.

This has propelled people to develop a mentality as a "maximizer" (Schwartz, 2014). Maximizers are individuals who are always in search of better options, including those offered by brands. Maximizers believe that the perfect choice is out there to be discovered and that the only way to find it is to continue searching for it. As such, these types of consumers are never wholly satisfied with their options. Schwartz (2004) argues that this is a serious epidemic in American consumer culture and it has expanded beyond the consumption of products. The influx of options in our lives "produces psychological distress, especially when combined with regret, concern about status, adaptation, social comparison, and perhaps most important, the desire to have the best of everything—to maximize" (Schwartz, 2004, p. 221).

This paradigm is a vicious cycle since as consumers, we continue to demand more choices in order to fulfill ephemeral desires, at the cost of personal happiness and contentment. Althusser suggests that that reason for this problematic stems from ideology. Marketing continues to impregnate the marketplace with with ideologies. For Althusser (1971/2008b), these ideologies is driven by practices. Practices are not only what helps to sustain an apparatus, but

are also the means by which individuals are able to materialize their beliefs and affirm their

subscription to those coinciding ideologies. The more choices that consumers are exposed to, the

more exposure a consumer has to ideology. These ideologies come to cloud the lifeworld of the

consumer and further muddle her ability to make sound, meaningful choices. This ultimately

leads the consumer to crave consumption even more.

Althusser (1971/2008b) understands ideology as representing "the imaginary

relationship of individuals to their conditions of existence" (p. 36). This relationship is the

conscious experience of the lifeworld that the individual positions herself in, in order to make

sense and derive meaning. Williamson (1994) explains that advertising for instance, functions to

associate how one feels with something with objects in order to link "*un*attainable things" with

things that are "attainable" which thus in turn, affirms our thought that we can obtain out-of-

reach desires (p. 31). This implies that in today's marketing culture, creating this illusion of

autonomy has become even more critical to sustaining identity—not just just in the eyes of the

consumer, but also in the eyes of the marketer. The illusion has become significantly more

important than reality because it allows ideology to permeate human life and ultimately shapes

the way individuals think and act.

Althusserian ideology propels us to think about how branding as an institution has

permeated so deeply into consumer culture that it is affecting larger constructs of community,

individualism/entitlement, and perpetuation of stereotypes. It has expanded far beyond

purchasing habits and individual identity. Consumption is no longer about Veblen's conspicuous

consumption[16] or "keeping up with the Joneses." Though it seems like brands help one to define

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[16]Thorstein Veblen's (1899/1994) exploration on the rhetoric of consumption during the tail end of the
19th century produced what he deemed "conspicuous consumption"— the notion that excessive

identity and meaning in the world, branding now and the constant production and reproduction of goods in a consumer culture *diverts* identity formation into an ongoing series of detours. While it appears as though this shift in consuming non-tangible products and services is more value-laden and provides individuals with the perception that now their consumption has become more meaningful, it does not detract from the notion that "increases in experienced control over the years have been accompanied, stride for stride, by increases in expectations about control. The more we are allowed to be the masters of our fates, the more we expect ourselves to be" (Schwartz, 2004, p. 210).

In other words, consumption of experiences still contributes to the sustaining the ideological apparatus of branding and continues to plague individuals with the challenge of decision-making. This decision-making promotes a dissonance of identity. As practitioners and academics, we must be attentive to the deeper implications of branding and the effects that stretch far deeper than just what appears as identity-formation or satisfaction. Are hyper-realities and hyperpersonalized products/services offering true services to the individual, or are they just contributing to an allusion of reality that continues to propagate itself through consumption? This new hyper-commodification of goods/services via branding is a trend that demands vigilance.

While Althusser argued that this imaginary reality was unescapable as well as an integral part of our life as subjects, this forces us to question how brands as ideologies forge communicative chasms between self and other as well as self and the world and branding practices improve the conditions for these relations so that what remains an illusion can at least produce meaningful self-existence. Of this, Baudrillard (1970/1998) wrote:

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consumption leads to a stratification of economic classes and more so an "evidence of wealth that is to be classed as derivative wealth" (p. 43).

So we live, sheltered by signs, in the denial of the real. A miraculous security:

when we look at the images of the world, who can distinguish this brief irruption

of reality from the profound pleasure of not being there? The image, the sign, the

message — all these things we `consume' — represent our tranquillity consecrated

by distance from the world, a distance more comforted by the allusion to the real

(even where the allusion is violent) than compromised by it. (p. 35)

This notion suggests that the postmodern consumerism invitees room for fractured narratives, ambiguity, and a multiplicity of voices. Individuals perpetuate this milieu by actively seeking out products, services, and experiences that further distance him from reality. This phenomenon is essentially a double binding of ideology: Not only does ideology create the imaginary reality but the subject subjects himself to practices (i.e. consumption) that reifies ideology in general. Of this, Singh (2011) argues "Metaphysically, postmodernism is anti-realist, holding that it is impossible to speak meaningfully about an independently existing reality. Postmodernism substitutes instead a social-linguistic, constructionist account of reality (p. 56). A surplus of ideological imaginary relations leads practitioners and academics alike to think about how A.thusserian discourse can influence branding objectives that are attentive to truth and reality.

Branding must consider not just the relations that it creates with the consumer, but how that relationship acts upon other areas of the consumer's life. Ideology constructs systems of representation within society that ultimately help determine meaning. The branding discipline must consider how branding as an apparatus is affecting the relation that consumer has with the lifeworld, based on her encounter with a brand and her involvement with it. One way is the fetishization of consumption. Althusser makes it clear that he does not want to provide a theory of Marx's definition of "fetishism" (See Balibar & Althusser, 1970/1968, p. 218), but he does

see fetishism as part of the economic apparatus and namely and aspect of the structure that is "not a subjective phenomenon related either to the illusions or to the perceptions of the agents of the economic process, that it cannot be reduced therefore to the *subjective effects* produced in the economic subjects by their place in the process, their site in the structure" (Althusser, 1968, p. 192).

For Marx, fetishism occurs as a result of a capitalistic enterprise that is more focused on production of objects. Individuals become fixated on the produced object rather than the individual who actually created the object, which is what in turn produces a disconnect between individuals and each other as well as themselves. What Althusser tries to explain is that he does not see fetishism as a result of subjectivity, but is rather a phenomenon that is already embedded within the apparatus. Fetishism essentially promotes and maintains a disconnect between the individual and reality. What this showcases about the ideological rupture of branding is that marketers must tend to the practices that their brands promote and the relations that those practices work to maintain. Brands have easily become fetishized—as ideas and objects that consumers desire and of which, have become more important than the product or even the organizational mission itself. Continuous fetishizing of brands constitutes individuals who are more concerned with creating a meaningful identity and world vis a vis brand. This implies that in a postmodern world branding will continue to be of tremendous importance to both the marketplace and the success of IMC.

The last section of this chapter explores implications of interpellation within branding and focuses primarily on what marketers may be able to consider in the future in relation to consumer identity. This is particularly vital to the branding conversation since consumer culture in postmodernity will continue to challenge the marketing practices.

5.4 Interpellative Ruptures in Branding: The Case of Advertising and Gender

Lastly, Althusser's construct of interpellation offers practitioners grounds for exploring how new waves of consumer diversity should be represented within the branding process and branding discourse. Many scholars have gone on to refine Althusser's philosophy by inject it with human agency an the ability to reject a call. But what Althusser's interpretation highlights in marketing, is that branding is inherently predisposed to ideological interpellation. At its core, branding's objective, particularly in conjunction with IMC, is to create a social relation with the consumer. In turn, Althusserian interpellation now asks marketers to think about how we may be able to open up the possibilities of meaning of that hailing.

This last section highlights marketing's current challenges of addressing the notion of gender identity. If there such a time to redefine the way in which practitioners and academics inspect branding and brand engagement, it would be right now. Though this continues to present a challenge, it is a challenge worth meeting. The bending of rules and norms and the dialectical tensions that emerge from misunderstanding and challenges is the fundamental factor if one wishes to rewrite the truths about branding and opportunities for improvement.

What Althusser allows to think about is that identity is never ours alone—it happens through the social. One can reason that in postmodernity, identity is formed the same way. Identity is a myriad of narratives constructed through the social that we subscribe to and embrace as our own. And what brands offer us is a channel in which we can always be changing and redefining how identity is perceived by the subject. We use those ideologies to constantly refine what is meaningful and what gives self, meaning. Because of this, the challenge that will continue to grow for marketers is how the practice can continue to produce various meanings for subject formation without compromising the integrity of the brand or convoluting brand identity

so much so that the consumer finds it difficult to interpret. In critical theorist Judith Butler's *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005)*,* she discusses how identity never truly belongs to the individual since identity is formed in relation to the other:

> An account of oneself is always given to another, whether conjured or existing, and this other establishes the scene of address as a more primary ethical relation than a reflexive effort to give an account of oneself. Moreover, the very terms by which we give an account, by which we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves and to others, are not of our making. They are social in character, and they establish social norms, a domain of unfreedom and substitutability within which our "singular stories" are told. (pp. 20-21)

Butler's position coupled with Althusserian interpellation suggests that the branding apparatus will continue to be a source for subject formation and that its influence will continue to propound various narratives that the subject will embrace as his own. Some organizations have already acknowledged this paradigm shift within culture and have revisited the underpinnings of their brand identity. For instance in 2015 the big box retailer, Target purged its stores of gender-based signage in toy, entertainment, and home departments and also made the move to allow transgendered persons to utilize restrooms that most appropriately fit their gender identity (Mollnos, 2016). Shepherd Laughlin, director of trend forecasting at the marketing communications agency JWT, echoes Butler by noting, "The whole notion that gender is a performance is something that's been playing out in academia for a very long time (. . .) Young people today are rather accustomed to the concept of identity, in general, as performance. That's really what social media is" (Mollnos, 2016). This statement supports the postmodern paradigm of identity as performance and the lack of fixity with identity.

While gender identity is just one aspect of how a subject defines himself, it is certainly not the only one that marketers must acknowledge as a growing dominant ideology. As marketers continue to make changes to their brand and revisit brand identity, it will become more vital that these transitions happen with marketers at the helm. Shifts in brand identity and brand positioning in this historical moment must emphasize strong guidance from the marketer rather than the consumer. It is imperative that marketer recognizes that control of the ideological branding message will directly affect public discourse surrounding other ideologies. Additionally, changes in how the consumer sees herself will also continue to solicit brands to shift based on other ideological apparatuses. Because brands are able to take on an authoritative role in society, marketers need to remain attentive to how they are influencing public discourse. As Holt (2002) reminds us, brands are now seen as "authentic cultural resources" (p. 86).

Discourse can be the byproduct of a materialized practiced forged by an ideological apparatus. Consumers that employ a particular discourse based on their response of an ideological hailing incites a need for marketers to not just listen to the content of this discourse, but to also be attentive to how that particular discourse is part of the totality of structures governing society as well as the marketplace. Bitzer (1992) argues that "rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action" (p. 4). This correlates with Althusser's contention that interpellation of the individual into a subject influences the way in which the subject perceives his reality, which ultimately affects the adoption of particular practices.

It is important that marketers not only continue to view IMC as a long-term process but are also attentive to the fact that discourse produced by the brand and sustained by the consumer

also has long-term implications within the marketplace and within society. In other words, marketers that have begun to adopt alternative branding practices that acknowledge the notion that consumers no longer fit static molds of identification. Several brands such as Ram, Coors, and Jim Beam have started to discard traditional patriarchal advertising methods in favor of featuring more gender friendly ones (Mollnos, 2016). In an effort to communicate that their brands do not simply "hail" men, these brands are working to traverse traditional, normalized brand narratives. While this move certainly allows marketers to tap into another potential market of consumers, it also questions the authenticity of these moves.

While consumer inclusivity is a selling point in a postmodern consumer culture, marketers need to maintain a watchful eye on how this new initiative can work long-term for the company and consumer. Brands that interpellate additional targets is inventive and can yield short-term capital streams, but will marketers maintain this marketing agenda for long or will they eventually switch back to selling products to their tried-and-true market base? Reverting back to traditional trends or lack of a robust attempt to pursue alternative-gender consumers will only incite a suspicious and faithless consumer who may potentially see the transient shift in branding efforts as a ploy to simply capitalize on an additional consumer, rather than meaningfully change the ideological narrative underpinning the brand.

Iacobucci & Calder (2003) remind us that both long-term and short-term integrated marketing efforts can yield different benefits, but ultimately the marketer must be remain aware to changes that have happened in the marketplace and changes that may happen in the future. Understanding and anticipating these changes can allow the marketer to make appropriate strategic decisions that best benefit both the brand and the consumer. Ultimately, this suggests

that the current trend of tapping into unorthodox market segments should be seen as a long-term initiative to promote brand equity for all types of consumers.

5.5 Conclusion

Today's capitalist marketplace, full of a cacophony of possibilities shows that not only is there room for Althusser, but that there are certainly areas of improvement in which marketers and academics alike could potentially benefit from an alternative and to a degree, a very unlikely voice. As the market evolves, branding and the communicative endeavor will be forced to explore and refine new ways of communicating and connecting with consumers. When placed in conversation with Althusser, branding should be viewed as major constituent in communicating and determining meaning within individual's lives. The conditions of postmodernity certainly make the traditional objective of marketing challenging. However, today's consumers are subjects who are actively seeking out opportunities to form meaningful and ethical relationships. While many remain suspicious of branding and its objectives, consumers are alternatively seeking out brands that can contribute to their search for identity and that can satisfy desires. It would be beneficial to marketers to reassess the cultural value that their brands symbolize and the communicative value that they offer a bustling cultural pastiche.

In turn, this perspective must inspire new modes of branding and refine those tactics and strategies that simply conspire to create the illusion of agency. Just because the postmodern consumer demands more involvement and knowledge of brands, does not necessarily infer that the brand should adopt various practices that offer the illusion of such so as to satisfy these demands. This chapter sought to evaluate how Althusserian coordinates of anti-humanism, interpellation, and ideology might be able to offer constructive and practical ruptures in the

190

branding conversation. It highlighted questions pertaining to current postmodern branding tactics and strategies as well as how the system of branding ultimately contributes to communities as cultural resources. It then addressed questions that related to knowledge production and its influence on an individual's connection to a meaningful reality. Lastly, this chapter brought forth the topic of subject identity and the ways in which marketers may be able to reevaluate branding practices that are attentive to postmodern characteristics in the future.

Above all else, this chapter fosters three areas of scholarship that further the branding conversation as well as introduce new ways of considering its relation with other marketing faucets:

First, as brands become more involved and vital within the marketing paradigm, their role in organizational crisis will also grow as a critical resource. Organizations will continue to navigate unpredictable and challenging events that affect the structure of the company both internally and externally. In times of organizational crisis, brand and branding have the ability to provide stability and guidance to both internal and external stakeholders. An application of Althusserian philosophy would open up a possibility for understanding the role of branding during crisis and the function it plays within crisis communication. Specifically, I propose that future research involving interpellation may provide insight into *understanding* and responding to the effects of crisis, as well as its dissolution and post-crisis initiatives. This would help to enhance an organization's ability to deal with similar crises in the future.

Secondly, this project opens up an opportunity to explore in greater depth, how rebranding or branding crisis may be able to benefit from Althusserian discourse. Now more than ever, brands are challenged with remaining topical to their consumers. But this is not always possible. Companies that have suffered severe image hardship like Kodak and J.C. Penny

provide examples for how brands can fall out of good graces with their consumers and consequently, deteriorate. This dissertation suggests that there is room for conversation surrounding Althusser, brand renewal, and the transformation of brand identity in order to procure organizational longevity. Often, organizational and/or brand identity is deeply embedded and anchored within the company in order to help navigate other channels such as media relations, stakeholder relations, etc. A deep-seated identity is sometimes difficult to change and the challenge incites a carefully-crafted, comprehensive strategic plan. What may be a unique angle is looking at how ideology and interpellation may be able to inform this process and help mitigate or resolve issues that may emerge as a result of such radical shifts.

Lastly, this project urges a future look at online marketing techniques and strategies through an Althusserian filter. Marketers using technology and online marketing strategies to appeal to a consumer audience face the challenge of creating authentic virtual spaces for consumer engagement. Public relations, advertising, and branding will undoubtedly undergo shifts in functionality and Althusser's work provides a dialogue for how ideology and interpellation are constructive metaphors for interpreting these shifting dynamics. For example, as interest in brand engagement continues to grow amongst consumers, asynchonrous communication on the web will be eclipsed by more synchronous, real-time communication tactics. By synthesizing these two areas, marketers may be able to discover deeper insight into the influence of technological structures on online branding and marketing as well the limitations of consumers as influenced by a technological apparatus. This also incites research on how public relations functions through mediated structures and how this ultimately influences the marketer's ability to communicate.

This dissertation as a whole has shown that branding is process that remains deeply influential within the IMC practice, and also as part of culture. While the work of Louis Althusser remains controversial, it does bear fruit for the current dialogue surrounding current branding practices. The philsopher's observations and his view of the world offer light to a discipline that will always have room to improve its practices. This is where Althusser (1994) believed there remains an interstice of possibility in which we can continue to foster meaningful lived experiences:

> I believe, rather, in intellectual lucidity and in the superiority of mass movements over the intellect. On this basis and since it is not of supreme importance, the intellect can follow the lead set by mass movements, prevent them above all from becoming the victims of past errors and help them to discover truly effective and democratic structures. If, in spite of everything, we still entertain some hope of helping to inflect the course of history, it will be along these lines and these lines only. (p. 226)

As long as individuals continue to consume products, services, and experiences and look to the marketplace to provide an arena of choices and resources, marketers must continue to rectify the conditions of these systems and work toward developing an attentiveness toward structures impacting both themselves and individuals.

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