

Chronicles of Culture, Communication, and Media

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Abstract

This paper charts the development of cultural theory over time as it permeates Western Hemisphere civilization. Briefly stated, cultural theory takes into account historical events involving culture, ideology, communication, and media that have impact on the human condition, such as the case when power structures, for example, spark a conversation about people's emancipation in an effort to achieve social balance. Therefore, it is important to have a thorough awareness of the ideological frameworks and symbolisms in a certain culture in order to comprehend facets of identity and cultural amelioration.

Finally, cultural theory espouses a thorough understanding of the human condition that is intertwined with the histories of people's ordinary lives as societies change over time. Through the lessons it has acquired over human history, civilization has become stale. With every story told, it perpetually reshapes the fields of thought, allowing nations and people to freely express the complexities of human ingenuity.

Keywords: communication theory, cultural communication, ideology, language, media.

1. Ideology

Ideology has its roots in the German ideological tradition of the 18th century, which Marx and Engels interpreted negatively as being unreal (Strickland, 2017). In a society where there were class divisions and where material relationships were the main ideological representations in the superstructure, the perception of ideology as a false consciousness heightened workers' resistance as a type of revolution. In other words, ideology as "creation of ideas, concepts of consciousness, political rules, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc. as ownership" of the ruling class led to the obscuring or obfuscation of lower class sentiments. As the bourgeoisie (capitalists) imposed control of their ideology over the proletariats, conflicts between social classes were even more acute as a result of this false consciousness (laborers).

V.N. Volosinov created a more genuinely human ideological definition in 1920, defining consciousness as the material signals, symbols, and interpretations of individuals in a specific social interaction with communication as its primary tool. This explanation has a more thorough knowledge of human consciousness that includes all varieties of subjective interpretations of reality through the use of language without making any distinctions. Language ideology functions as a generative process that creates consciousness from the social interactions that take place in a particular environment. Language, which is both a socially constructed sign system and a material reality in and of itself, is what allows awareness to emerge (Volosinov, 1920).

According to Marxist ideology, which depicts ongoing contact as eventually resolving class conflicts, vulnerability on the many subjective interpretations in semiotic communication can be understood as battles of meaning creation. Such a remark has practical implications in a culture that values communication and allows information to flow virtually continuously, especially in social media when distance between communicators can lead to spirited communication. Semiotic comprehension via signs and words is occasionally a source of disagreement in divided topics that face the general public. This relates to the quest for meaning, which Volosinov discusses in his account of consciousness. Thus, regardless of one's status in society, human struggles in many forms affect every person, making both Marxist and Volosinov's ideologies important even now.

Later, in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," Louis Althusser presented a different perspective on ideology. According to Strickland (2017), ideology serves the purpose of designating people as social subjects who are not naturally chosen by them, such as children born into families they did not choose, or social categories that designate people as distinct subjects based on what society recognizes about them and what they should do. The concept of general and particular ideologies (Althusser, 1970) is the basis for the concept of ideology. According to Strickland (2017), the former might constrain mental processes in a given society, but the latter is infused with personal values and shared understandings of individuals. In the case of special ideologies that dislike

general ideas, tensions and conflicts arise between these two divisions, leading to substantive differences that breed resistance, which breeds chaos in the system (Strickland, 2017).

Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) are forms of state control that Althusser introduces in order to further explain his ideological concept. The former relates to the family, church, educational system, etc. that maintain control in society, while the latter comprise the police, military, and criminal justice system. Without ISA, RSA cannot work, and their connection is a challenging one made more challenging by social reality.

Compared to Marx and Volosinov, Althusser's view of ideology is notably different in that it is rooted not in awareness but rather in institutions and behaviors that are unique to them (Ryder & Goshgarian, 2014). As institutions, the church and school, for instance, have ideologies that define their purposes under the supervision of the state, while at the same time, the police, military, and penal system are filled with ideologies that define their functions in serving the state as needed. Which merely result in a state-controlled ideology that has tangible existence rather than being a domain of awareness or ideas. However, the family's inclusion in ISA is a recognition of a social unit within a perfect society that symbolizes family ties and unity. The implication of the phrase is that a state acknowledges familial obligations as ideological affirmations.

The applicability of Althusser's ideology in contemporary society is such that, even though socialism and communism are not as widely practiced as they were in his time, institutions like the church and the educational system still have obligations to the state, despite sometimes revolting independent functions they sometimes perform. For instance, the church continues to be an institutional arm of the state despite its polarizing nature and occasionally abhorrent sentiments against the government. The notion that "all ideology praises or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects" is ingrained with this (Althusser, 1970). Therefore, the institutions that raised them, such as the social order embodied in each individual's ideology, formed their values. The chance of a class conflict will always exist, even if ISA and RSA continue to exercise control, as in the case of several groupings vying for leadership roles.

Ideology as it is put into practice combines Althusser's materialist ideology through dialog between the government and the people, who support the institutional ideologies that define them. The use of symbols and language in extensive discussions of many social topics on traditional and social media also regulates symbolic interactions with subjective understanding. Last but not least, social fights in Marxist practice are still felt today, with new diseases being spread by wealthy elites who are stifling people's rights.

2. Culture

The ramifications of the aforementioned create a cultural worldview that permeates a population within a specific time. The core of people's ideologies is formed by their belief practices, norms, and behaviors, which define a cultural identity that does not just adapt to passing circumstances. Similar to how Althusser describes it, despite our resistance, we understand that we are a part of a controlling organization because we stand for an ideological shape that all people share and because our social categories have already been given to us.

The idea of dense description is noteworthy when it comes to culture. Thick description is an interpretive method of examining culture through significant symbol, sign, language, performance, etc. It was developed by Geertz (1973) and is based on the philosophy of Ryle (1949). This methodological approach to understanding culture through semiotics is a response to technical and analytical approaches that strip away the essential essence of how we truly learn about other cultures. As culture lacks a guiding principle, its meaning depends on symbolic readings of particularities, academics should instead interpret symbolic meaning that is understandable through rituals, jokes, and poetry gained from local people.

Studying immediate culture might contradict systems thinking in the sense that intersubjective meanings fall under reductionism because of the semiotic orientation of dense description. As systems thinking suggests, deciphering symbols entails a deep understanding of those symbols that can isolate their interrelationship with other elements. Geertz (1973) however underlines that cultural studies employ detailed descriptions of symbols and meanings that are initially experienced in isolation before later establishing connections of symbolic interpretations that are set universes inside their deeds are signs.

The terms "high culture" and "low culture" come up frequently while discussing culture. Williams (1974) contends that as popular culture associated with the masses continues to rule, high culture—perceived as products and abilities often associated with elites—is in risk of disappearing. However, the issue is more rhetorical because

high culture is not clearly defined and lacks a social structure (Williams, 1974). With the exception of some colleges and other institutions that designate such items and skills as classics in the field of high culture, there are no specific skills linked with such classification. High culture feeds social structures through its consumption and embodies professional structure without social structure (Williams, 1974).

Beyond its elitist connotation, the author of this piece contributes to the nuances of high culture. For instance, the implied professional structure should take into account the craftsmanship of the items and talents displayed that go through specialized training and scientific manufacturing processes to produce high quality goods and services for a sophisticated audience. However, this approach ignores popular culture, which is often seen as being unspecialized or unsophisticated. In other words, just because society considers high culture to be sophisticated shouldn't imply that popular culture is the polar opposite. Popular musicians like the Beatles and Madonna, who are loved by both upper-class and lower-class fans alike, further emphasize the point. The purpose of the media is to blur the boundaries between the two cultures by enhancing understanding of both through distribution. Additionally, high culture items need to travel outside of universities and music halls and carry the same message. The idea of high culture is typically not an artist's intention; rather, it is a historical judgment tainted by the social reality of a particular age that was established by institutions. High culture is said to have paradoxical meanings, as in the example of Mozart's music, which was disregarded by royal courts in his early years but was well-liked by the general public. His music now occupies a lofty place in high culture, yet the average person finds it difficult to understand.

In addition to high culture, popular culture is as important. Williams (1974) argues that popular culture demonstrates two distinct notions created by people: one type is created for the people and has some difficult interpretations, as in the case of foreign popular culture invading a certain country that will face issues with appreciation. The other type is created for the people and has no difficult interpretations. For a colonial nation like the Philippines, the effects of foreign culture can be debilitating. For instance, the invasion of popular music can hurt local artists' popularity, yet the general public has a broader choice. Popular culture can be utilized to address social issues through numerous media channels in addition to its commercial appeal.

3. Learning

A society's social change is greatly influenced by education. According to Williams (1974), "education is ordinary," which refers to lifelong learning, learning is the pursuit of pertinent knowledge and abilities that may be used practically to a larger range of living outside of a person's work. Indeed, continuing education goes beyond the classroom. It is the sum of a person's learning experiences. Public pedagogy, which takes us outside of the classroom and into a variety of different educational institutions, can also be a transforming force.

According to Williams, using new media broadens the audience for learning, but accessibility issues, including the digital divide, separate the haves and have-nots. Through a variety of information released on numerous platforms, new media has a significant impact on the improvement of the underprivileged population. Likewise, through enlightening news and conversation shows, conventional media outlets continue to influence political processes. As a result, using culture as a tool for political change (Josh, 2008) raises people's awareness and promotes critical thinking and observation of the myriad social problems.

Given the prior debates, it is clear that communication intensifies educational pursuits of excellence founded on the notion that ideas must be transmitted to have an influence. If barriers to developing effective communication skills are not removed at the institutional and individual levels, it will just prolong the pain of poorly managed education. Additionally, communication helps communities and civil society to engage with educational issues at the school level, express concerns with educational providers, and encourage public engagement with educational reform initiatives (Hunt, 2007).

4. Concept of signs

Semiotics is unavoidably an intersubjective interpretation of meanings that takes place in a person, alongside cultural signs (Craig, 1999). Pierce's Theory of Signs, or Semiotic, which follows a three-dimensional system (triadic/trichotomy) consisting of sign, object, and an interpreter, can be used to better explain such interpretation (Atkin, 2010). The theory holds that symbols that denote an entity do not actually reflect all of the qualities of that substance. For example, a symbol for dark water is only recognized for its darkness and not for all of the components of water. These are referred to as sign-vehicles, and they eventually register in an individual's interpretation. The function an object serves for a person can thus be used to characterize it in the same manner

that a sign does. Meaning that only specific components of water act as the sign-vehicle function and not the full item (water) (which serves as function for interpretation). The interpreter, who assists with the interpretation that emerges during the process, comes in third. Pierce emphasizes that signs can also act as interpretants, demonstrating how the triadic process is ongoing. The function of cognition, especially logic, is what is meant by the term "semiotic" (Yakin & Totu, 2014).

The significance of Pierce's Theory of Sign lies in one's daring to indulge in true, choice interior meaning. Cognitive processing that meticulously classifies signs according to their interpretive function emphasizes its purity. When an interpreter uses signification, it has a beneficial cultural impact. To put it another way, a detailed account of culture can be reconciled with its internal, subjective meaning, suggesting that, when properly applied, culture can reach a certain level of equilibrium.

The idea of symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes the use of language in communication exchange between people and is articulated in media ecology, the study of environments, becomes important as an individual's interactions with people in a society progress. This includes face-to-face communication through media applications (Postman, 1970). Mead's theory of the self in the process of interaction is supported by the paper "Media and Symbolic Interactionism," where, for instance, holding an object identifies it as an inner experience of the person holding it, which later transcends to his relationship with other objects in the environment.

5. The Self

Media ecologists should seriously explore how one projects themselves through digital technology in relation to Mead's idea of the self. The case study in the paper describes a homosexual who utilized several aliases to conceal his identity online. This tactic is employed by many people who assume false identities and is not exclusive to gays. Numerous people continue to be impacted by this issue as a result of cybersex, money laundering, scams, and other crimes as a result of virtual interactions via social media. This is not just a problem with media ecology; it's also a problem with behavior. Even though there are rules that punish the offenders, everyone's commitment is necessary to find a solution. However, not all media-based communications are bad. Mediated communication is credited with the advantages of online learning, globalization in banking, finance, trade, communication, and the arts, among other things.

A theory of social interaction known as the dramaturgical model of social life also explains how social relationships that emerge through communication (Goffman, 1959 & Crossman, 2018). This theory compares social interaction to seeing performers play parts in a play while the audience watches and listens, which is comparable to how people converse in real life. On the front stage, actors perform, and the audience reacts to create a communication engagement. Backstage is the area on the opposite side of the stage where actors can unwind and be themselves in private.

Goffman (1959) identified six components that make up the dramaturgical model. The first is a performance where an actor acts in front of an audience. Communication arises from a variety of interactions with the audience, including the latter's expression of acting impressions that may serve as signals to the performance in a similar manner to how the actor interprets the character depending on audience views. Second, the setting offers the stage scenery that affects an actor's performance. Third, through the use of clothes that assign emblems of social position, a performer's look is linked to their social standing. The way a person presents himself on stage can be used to infer other social variables like gender, age, etc. Fourth, a performer's approach directly relates to the role they are portraying. Audience perception may get muddled when social status and role performance are inconsistent. Fifth, facing the front expresses how one appears on stage. Front can be a "persona" or a representation of someone or something other than the true self in social interactions. Three areas are represented by the sixth, front, back, and off stages that influence performance as mentioned.

Overall, Goffman's dramaturgical approach clarifies how social interaction is similar to performance, where an actor interacts with the audience. Actors can enhance their performances by developing a rapport with the audience and paying attention to their applause and other emotions while they perform. The similar thing happens in social interactions as people listen to one another and act in accordance with their perceptions. Additionally, role-playing illustrates the various roles we play throughout life. It is intimately related to the environment such that, for instance, if a nurse wearing her uniform is seen in a hospital, people will quickly understand her functions and obligations, just as a priest in a church is interpreted as someone who is to preach. The theory's concept of front, which can be understood as a person donning a mask to conceal genuine identity and character, deserves special attention. People don't always express their true identities in social situations. They don a mask to cover up what

is really going on. Similar to how "generalized other" develops when the roles and attitudes of others around one are understood—this is a sign of a social structure or community to which one belongs.

5. Theory of Social Contract

The Social Contract Theory (Berger, P.L., and Luckmann, T., 1966) is linked to symbolic interactionism and semiotics in order to advance the discussion of social interaction because it explains how people construct their perceptions of reality using patterned behavior that results from habitual practice. Due to prior usage and institutionalization of the practice, this idea promotes social acceptance of reality. A school, for instance, is easily recognized because of the pattern of previously created images of the school, which is explained by socially constructed reality as connections of representations from previous associations. Thus, our symbolic relationships have an impact on how reality is constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

In the context of online communication, the social contract is a fictitious agreement that people feel they must sign in order to share their personal information with the online community, suggesting that representations are crucial criteria that determine whether people engage in privacy-protecting behavior (Kruikemeir, Boerman & Bol, 2019). As such, communication envelopes a socially acknowledged set of nuances as forms of agreements characterizing human connection. In digital communication, self-identity tends to be veiled because a person's representation does not necessarily indicate one's genuine identity. However, in social consensus, the digital self's presentation can create a social consciousness that encompasses the sentiments of the majority as social constructs.

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