

Spring 2013

# Hip Versus Square: 1960s Advertising and Clothing Industries and the Counterculture

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## Recommended Citation

Reading, Tacy A., "Hip Versus Square: 1960s Advertising and Clothing Industries and the Counterculture" (2013). *Research Papers*. Paper 396.

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HIP VERSUS SQUARE: 1960S ADVERTISING AND CLOTHING INDUSTRIES AND THE  
COUNTERCULTURE

by

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B.A., Gonzaga University, 2007

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts.

Department of History  
in the Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
May 2013

RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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Approved by:

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Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
March 28, 2013

AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

TACY READING, for the MASTER OF ARTS degree in HISTORY, presented on MARCH 28, 2013 at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: HIP VERSUS SQUARE: 1960S ADVERTISING AND CLOTHING INDUSTRIES AND THE COUNTERCULTURE

MAJOR PROFESSOR: DR. GRAY WHALEY

This research paper explores the use of Countercultural themes and images by the advertising and menswear industries in the 1960s. Historians have traditionally held that the Counterculture and American business during this era were fierce opponents of one another. More recent scholarship, however, suggest that the advertising industry of the 1960s co-opted and marketed Countercultural themes, such as 'youth' and 'rebellion,' and images like natural looking make-up and free-flowing clothing. The co-optation of these themes and images, historians have charged, commercialized the Countercultural revolution and ultimately led to its demise. This paper examines the ways in which the Counterculture influenced the advertising and menswear industries in the 1960s and questions whether the use of Countercultural themes and images was co-optation or emulation of the youth movement.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Nineteen-Sixties America was an era of conflict, revolution and undeniable change. Young men and women rebelled against and openly rejected the lifestyles of their parent's and grandparent's generation. A Counterculture that promoted individuality and nonconformity burst onto the scene and by the mid-Sixties, it seemed America could not get enough of these odd young people. Whether it was to critique them or to promote their way of life, media outlets flocked to the Hippie enclaves in California and New York. The interest in the new generation's young rebels changed America permanently in many ways. This paper explores how the 1960s Counterculture influenced and affected American business, specifically the advertising and menswear industries, and questions whether the use of Countercultural ideologies and symbols in these industries was co-optation or emulation.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORIOGRAPHY

The traditional narrative about the 1960s Counterculture and business contends that the two were always at odds with one another.<sup>1</sup> The historiography of the 1960s era has followed a binary structure of the Hip versus the Square. In general, the Counterculture viewed the Establishment as their mortal enemy. In turn, the Establishment saw the Counterculture as a threat to hard work and productivity.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the traditional narrative often accuses corporate America of co-opting Countercultural images in an attempt to distract from the true meaning and purpose of the movement and to tap into the large youth population.

In his book, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, Thomas Frank asserts that not only is the binary narrative of the 1960s simplified but co-optation theory is as well. Frank believes that changes in society as a whole ushered in a revolution in businesses alongside the Counterculture movement. He writes, “In fields like fashion and advertising that were most conspicuously involved with the new phase of image-centered capitalism, business leaders were not concerned merely with simulating countercultural signifiers in order to sell the young demographic (or stave off revolution, for that matter) but because they approved of the new values and anti-establishment sensibility being developed by youthful revolutionaries.”<sup>3</sup> Like Frank, Stephen Fox, in his book *Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators*, also believes that the revolution in business

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 14-16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 26.

‘crossed paths’ with the Counterculture. He writes that the two revolutions have more in common than the traditional narrative lends.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1984), 270.

## CHAPTER 3

### ADVERTISING IN THE 1950S

In the 1950s, most of the major advertising agencies relied heavily on scientific data to create ads that they believed would appeal to the masses.<sup>5</sup> Many advertisements openly state the use of scientific research and public polling. For example, a Chevrolet advertisement from 1958 reads, “Millions of dollars and years of research produced this *ideal*” tire and an advertisement for Schlitz beer proclaims, “Schlitz tastes so good to so many people, it’s first in sales.”<sup>6</sup> Despite the focus on popular public opinion and poll numbers, these advertisements lacked any personal connection with their consumers. It would not be until the 1960s that ads began to ‘talk’ to consumers in a language they related to and identified with.<sup>7</sup>

Historian Jackson Lears writes that in the 1950s, advertising was based on the “containment of carnival,” meaning that any impulse toward creativity or individualism was quickly stifled.<sup>8</sup> Popular magazines from the 1950s, like *Look* and *Life*, feature advertisements that depict the hierarchical and conservative lifestyle representative of the 1950s. American-made automobile ads are not only great examples of standard 1950s advertising but also show a marked shift once the industry began to change. A 1958 Dodge advertisement in *Life* features a four page spread with highly detailed descriptions of the car’s functions and caricatures of a middle-class, suburban family with the handsome father, doting wife, football star son and

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Advertisement for Chevrolet, *Life*, October 20, 1958 and Advertisement for Schlitz Beer, “Don’t worry darling, you didn’t burn the beer!,” Food Blog, entry posted October 6, 2010, <http://gibbonsevh-guitarists.blogspot.com/2010/10/dont-worry-darling-you-didnt-burn-beer.html> [accessed April 26, 2012].

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 77.

<sup>8</sup> Jackson Lears, “See Spots Run, *In These Times*, April 15, 1996, in *Ibid*, 54.

cheerleader daughter. The advertisement is dense with automobile jargon like, “HC-HE engine,” “high compression,” “suspension system,” and “TorqueFlite.” The ad also includes detailed images of the car’s engine and suspension system.<sup>9</sup> Terminology and images like those used in the Dodge ads were immensely popular in 1950s advertisements, however, they were most likely lost on the average consumer.

In the late 1950s, the advertising industry underwent a radical change, known as the Creative Revolution. If American capitalism and marketing in the 1950s was described as consumer “conformity” and “fakery,” according to Thomas Frank, in the 1960s it became “authentic, individual, different, and rebellious.”<sup>10</sup> Leaders in the business, especially the young ad executives, grew tired of their orderly and non-creative jobs.<sup>11</sup> Stephen Fox claims that while in college these young advertisers tasted rebellion for the first time and brought it with them to the workforce.<sup>12</sup> The young men in advertising watched the youth movement in America unfold and realized that they were struggling with the same issues, and so began the Creative Revolution.<sup>13</sup> Identifying with Countercultural ideals, like individuality, modernity and rebellion, young admen incorporated these themes into their ads.

Leaders of the Creative Revolution were no longer interested in the conservative and verbose advertisements of the 1950s and began to change the basic layout of ads. Starting in the early Sixties, many ads became clean and minimalistic. An ad for Reading Beer, for example, simply shows the beverage and a plate of cheese and reads, “The friendly beer for modern

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<sup>9</sup> Advertisement for Dodge, *Life*, October 20, 1958.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Steven Fox, *The Mirror Makers*, 270.

<sup>13</sup> Frank, 28.

people.”<sup>14</sup> Ads also began to use humor and wit, reject conformity and intentionally acknowledge the public’s distrust of advertising.

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<sup>14</sup> Advertisement for Reading Beer, “1970 Reading Beer,” AdClassics.com: Specialists in Original Vintage Advertisements, <http://www.adclassix.com/a5/70readingbeer.html> [accessed

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CREATIVE REVOLUTION

In *Mirror Makers*, Fox writes that the young ad executives of the 1960s were the first generation raised on television and movies, which made them more aware of popular trends. They also tended to be more attracted to advertising products based on their visual appeal and strayed away from using heavy text.<sup>15</sup> The new ads were sympathetic to the critique of mass society and openly promoted statements of disgust.<sup>16</sup> Frank asserts, “In the hands of a newly enlightened man...hip would become the dynamic principle of the 1960s, a cultural perpetual motion machine transforming disgust with consumerism into fuel for the ever-accelerating consumer society.”<sup>17</sup> The message in the new ads was quite simply, ‘buy this good to escape consumerism.’<sup>18</sup> Gradually, the models in magazine ads became younger, had long hair and wore ‘rebel’ garb and serious expressions.<sup>19</sup> The ‘rosy America’ ads of the 1950s with the smiling children and doting wives were quickly becoming obsolete.

The Creative Revolution ushered in a rebellion against conformity and a hyper-state of individualism. As Frank states, this new era of advertising addressed, “the ‘real’ problems of society” and outlined the, “‘real’ differences.”<sup>20</sup> By the mid-1960s, advertising agencies wanted to create ads that would appeal to the emotions of the consumer. They wanted consumers to identify and relate to the products personally, as an individual, not as a society. Admen were

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April 26, 2012].

<sup>15</sup> Steve Fox, *The Mirror Makers*, 270.

<sup>16</sup> Frank, 54.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 68.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 105-106.

<sup>20</sup> Frank, 90.

encouraged to be creative and original while scientific research and public polling became less and less important.

One of the first advertisements to embraced the new ideals and perhaps even inspire the Creative Revolution was the Volkswagen Beetle campaign by the Doyle Dan Bernbach Agency (DDB) in 1959. In the 1960s, Volkswagens became the car of the ‘drop-out’ because, as Frank writes, they were the complete, “antithesis to the tailfinned monsters” of the 1950s.<sup>21</sup> The cars not only looked different but the ads that the Bernbach Agency released were shockingly different as well. Instead of the four-page layout of American-made cars, with automobile jargon and detailed images of engines, the VW ads were simple, black-and-white and minimalistic. The ads emphasized the fact that Volkswagen did not change their models every year. American automobile companies were notorious for releasing new models annually in an effort to make the previous year’s model obsolete and increase consumer spending. In a February 10, 1961 ad in *Life* for the Beetle simply features the car with the headline, “The ‘51, ‘52, ‘53, ‘54, ‘55, ‘56, ‘57, ‘58, ‘59, ‘60, ’61 Volkswagen.”<sup>22</sup> The Volkswagen ads were also the first to use humor and wit. One famous advertisement for Volkswagen was the “Think Small” campaign. This ad features a large white space with a tiny VW Beetle in the right hand corner with the text, “Think Small” underneath.<sup>23</sup> Advertisements had never left so much empty space or made the product for sale so miniscule. The Bernbach Agency and Volkswagen Motors were not afraid to take risks and try new marketing techniques in advertising. They were also not

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

<sup>22</sup> Advertisement for Volkswagen, *Life*, February 10, 1961.

<sup>23</sup> Advertisement for Volkswagen, “Marketing Campaign: 1960s Volkswagen Ads,” Alex Grant Creative Agency, entry posted June 24, 2010, <http://alexandergrant.blogspot.com/2010/06/1960s-volkswagen-ads.html> [accessed April 26, 2012].

afraid to make fun of their products or other car companies, especially American-made, for that matter.

Following the lead of Volkswagen, by 1965, Dodge had abandoned the conservative 1950s style advertising and embraced the Counterculture's themes of escape, non-conformity and rebellion. They ran ads twice in *Life* in October and November of 1965 encouraging people to "Join the Dodge Rebellion." Ads for the Dodge Dart, Polara, Coronet and Monaco featured a young blonde woman posing on or in front of the cars with various props, like pool cues and pistols promising a life of adventure and freedom if only consumers would join the Rebellion.<sup>24</sup> Under the image of the young woman with the car and her props were slogans that read, "The Dodge Rebellion wants you," "When you're not content to string along with the herd," "Turn loose the rebel in you" and "Sit up for your rights."<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Schlitz Beer launched a campaign promoting their beer-makers as "revolutionaries."<sup>26</sup> Additionally, a television ad for the Dodge Charger that ran on major networks 1970, features a police officer but not in a respectable, orderly society sense. Instead, the police officer is as a portly Southerner harassing a young man who is driving a Dodge. Dodge was clearly using the anti-law enforcement message of the Countercultural image of a 'pig.'<sup>27</sup>

The image of a conservative society was not only visible in magazine ads, but also in the admen themselves. Frank describes the typical adman of the 1950s by the simple moniker, the "Organization Man." The typical Organization Man was white, middle-class, clean cut and wore the standard gray flannel suit, which would become the hated target of the Counterculture. In the

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<sup>24</sup> Advertisement for Dodge, *Life*, October 8, 1965.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Advertisement for Schlitz Beer, *Life*, October 8, 1965.

<sup>27</sup> Frank, 161.

1960s, Madison Avenue not only witnessed changes in advertisements but also in the admen themselves. The young men abandoned their gray-flannel suits and embraced the creative dress of the Counterculture. They showed up to work in colorful shirts, wearing beads and grew their hair and beards long.<sup>28</sup> Along with the new fashion, the atmosphere in the advertising offices changed. Fox writes in *Mirror Makers*, that at some agencies, “clients were taken on pointed tours of the creative departments, to see the miniskirts and jeans, to smell the incense and other suspicious odors, as though to prove how daring and *au courant* the shop was.”<sup>29</sup>

The young executives had more in common with the rising Counterculture than with their aging bosses. Like the Counterculture, they were growing critical of mass society. The young men despised the conformity, routine and established hierarchy in the advertising industry.<sup>30</sup> Suddenly, the Organization Man in the advertising family became the equivalent to the parents of the Counterculture—they were simply not hip. As these young advertisers started to take over leadership positions they came to view their bosses in their gray-flannel suits as drags, bores, and uncreative.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Frank, 110-111.

<sup>29</sup> Fox, 270.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE PEACOCK REVOLUTION

Admen on Madison Avenue and the participants in the Counterculture were not the only people rejecting conformity in clothing and embracing new styles. The menswear industry also underwent drastic change in the 1960s, known as the Peacock Revolution. Frank writes that while fashion scene is constantly undergoing changes, it was not until the 1960s that men's fashion became a part of this trend.<sup>32</sup> The Peacock Revolution was, like the Creative Revolution and Counterculture, a direct reaction to and critique of mass society. Before the 1960s, men's clothing was generally plain and uniform, lacking much variety and color. Frank asserts, "Like the Creative Revolution in advertising, the Peacock Revolution was grounded in a commercial understanding of the problem of conformity."<sup>33</sup> By the late 1960s, middle-class men were abandoning their boring 'gray flannel suits' and embracing the radical styles of the youth generation.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1960s, a man's choice in clothing expressed his individuality. The menswear industry turned to advertising agencies to promote the new male: the nonconformist.<sup>35</sup> By 1965, popular men's magazines were marketing Nehru jackets, leisure suits and bright shirts with loud patterns. Men also started growing their hair out, wearing wide belts and beads and tight low-rise pants that showed their figures more than a suit ever would.<sup>36</sup> Comparing an advertisement from the 1950s for men's suits to ads from the 1960s for leisure suits and casual

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 185.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 187.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 187.

<sup>35</sup> Frank, 189.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 187, 190.

wear, the differences in both advertising and clothing styles are apparent. A 1950s ad for the Robert Hall suit brand reads, “The suit the experts said could not be sold for less than \$50,” emphasizing their scientific research typical in 1950s advertising. The ad also has the classic heavy text and caricatures of a doting wife and a man in a suit, buying another suit.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, an ad for the Rappers brand reads, “Rappers give you a break. You can dress with flair,” and depicts a man by himself. He wears a tee shirt, tight jeans and an embellished belt.<sup>38</sup> Similar to the Rappers ad, an ad for Wards Department store features a lone man wearing several versions of a leisure suit. The pants are tighter, the jacket is cropped or belted at the waist and it comes in a variety of colors. The man is not wearing a tie and has a variety of shirts under the jacket, one is blue, one is black, and one is a turtleneck.<sup>39</sup> The caricature from the 1950s ad appears boxy and bland compared to the man in the leisure suit or the man in the tee shirt and jeans.

By mid-to-late 1960s, the menswear industry discovered the “perfect symbol with which to unite its fantasies of youth and rebellion: the counterculture.”<sup>40</sup> Ads for men’s clothing featured rock stars, hippies and young protestors. Frank charges however, that while the menswear industry underwent extreme changes, which at times resembled the Counterculture, the changes had little to do with appealing to a youthful demographic. Much like the advertising industry, the menswear industry was changing on its own. The men’s fashion industry was also

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<sup>37</sup> Advertisement for Robert Hall Suits, “1950 Robert Hall Suits,” Adclassics.com: Specialists in Original Advertisements, <http://www.adclassix.com/a5/50roberthallsuits.html> [accessed April 29, 2012].

<sup>38</sup> Advertisement for Rappers, “The Rappers Man,” Eat Liver, <http://www.eatliver.com/i.php?n=902> [accessed April 29, 2012].

<sup>39</sup> Advertisement for Ward Department Store, “Time to Make Fun of 1975 Men’s Clothing,” Sentimental Journey, entry posted February 16, 2010, <http://sentimental-journeys.com/2010/02/03/time-to-make-fun-of-1975-mens-clothing.aspx> [accessed April 29, 2012].

<sup>40</sup> Frank, 215.

responding to the conformity of mass society and the Counterculture just, “merely happened along at precisely the right time.”<sup>41</sup> According to Frank and Fox, the Peacock Revolution, like the Creative Revolution began before the Counterculture exploded on the national scene, but when it did, the industry hailed it as the solution to their problems.

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 186.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH

By 1966, non-conformity and individuality were well-established themes in both the advertising and menswear industries but they needed a unifying symbol. The ‘youth’ theme would be just what they were looking for.<sup>42</sup> Clothing and advertising industries realized that they could market ‘youth’ by mimicking Countercultural trends, symbols and slogans. Some advertising agencies went as far as hiring ‘youth’ consultation firms and held conferences where their admen learned the new slang and about rock music and the use of psychedelics.<sup>43</sup> According to Frank, the advertising and menswear industries were not trying to appeal to young people, they were trying to attract their parents.

The baby boomer generation accounted for a large number of American consumers and the fact that there was a large youth demographic was undeniable. Frank writes that almost all articles and speeches from that era mention the standard statistic, “half the nation’s population was, or would soon be, under the age of twenty-five; and...young people had control of some \$13 billion in discretionary spending dollars—\$25 billion if the entire age span from thirteen to twenty-two was counted.”<sup>44</sup> He asserts, however, that demographics could have only played a part in the mass appeal of the counterculture for several reasons. First, not all of the baby boomers were participating in the youth revolution. Jocks, frat boys and clean-cut kids were largely absent in marketing campaigns because they too closely represented the conservative 1950s era, which the advertising and menswear industries were trying to breakaway from.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 212-213.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 109.

Second, Countercultural symbols were used in advertisements for products that were not aimed at a young demographic, but instead for older Americans. For example, many automobile ads featured Countercultural symbols, yet studies showed older people were the main consumers of new cars. Finally, the ads completely failed to ‘speak’ to the young. These ads were not convincing to most of the young people in America, especially members of the Counterculture because they were not the primary targets, their parents were.<sup>45</sup> The young already knew they were young.<sup>46</sup> As Frank states, “Madison Avenue was more interested in speaking *like* the rebel young than in speaking *to* them.”<sup>47</sup>

While demographics are certainly important and something that has been extensively written about by historians, what tends to be ignored is the meaning behind the term ‘youth.’ Youth is not an age but a feeling and the advertising and menswear industries of the 1960s realized that this word had a very creative and attractive appeal. They realized that they could make ‘youth’ available to all Americans.<sup>48</sup> Part of marketing youthfulness was to encourage older populations to spend and consume like the young. The older generations tended to save money and spend less, having lived through the Great Depression, whereas the younger generation tended to be less frugal with their money.<sup>49</sup> The ad agencies wanted the old to spend like the young, but knowing they could not make an older generation young, they instead made them *think* they were young. Through marketing the clothing, music and decoration of the youth movement, the advertising industry was attempting to make an older generation feel young.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 109-110.

<sup>46</sup> Frank, 120-121.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 121.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 118-119.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 122.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

Like Thomas Frank and Stephen Fox, Peter Braunstein asserts youth is not an age but rather a metaphor for the way to live life. In his essay titled, “Forever Young: Insurgent Youth and the Sixties Culture of Rejuvenation,” Braunstein writes that, “By mid-decade [1960], an enraptured media had endowed youth with heroic attributes that would have seemed shocking in the late 1950s, and adults desire to buy into this new valuation of youth led to a more inclusive conceptualization of the term ‘youth.’”<sup>51</sup> He charges the youthful Kennedy White House (John F. Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy) and his Administration (Robert F. Kennedy) for ushering in this new national striving toward youthfulness. Braunstein also implies that the assassination of the iconic youth symbol, JFK, led to the skepticism of the Establishment among the nation’s young.<sup>52</sup> He writes that hippies were essentially rejecting adulthood and embracing youth through child-like dress-up and costumes. The media gravitated to hippie enclaves like Haight-Ashbury and Greenwich Village and broadcasted the lifestyles of the young.<sup>53</sup> The advertising and menswear industries noticed this feeling of youthfulness and created marketing campaigns designed around a “think young” theme.

Advertisements promoting the “think young” theme did not run in the underground papers of the Counterculture but instead the mainstream and popular magazines, like *Life*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Look* and *Ladies Home Journal*. One of the most iconic ads that embraced the theme of youth was the Love cosmetics campaign. Love cosmetic ads distracted from the cynicism associated with advertising and asked the consumer to question the industry. For example, an ad featured in a March 1969 *Life* magazine read, “You are young. We’re young too.

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<sup>51</sup> Peter Braunstein, “Forever Young: Insurgent Youth and the Sixties Culture of Rejuvenation,” in *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s & 70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein et al. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 243.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

And we're on your side.”<sup>54</sup> The ads were “hippie-looking,” with birds, flowers and psychedelic colors and young, longhaired models. The ads played on the “anti-cosmetic” theme, assuring the reader that if they purchased the product they would be freer, more natural looking and most importantly, the make-up would not mask their natural beauty.<sup>55</sup> Though the models in the ads were young women, the ads ran in mainstream magazines like *Life* and *Harper's Bazaar*, indicating that they were clearly aimed at an older audience.<sup>56</sup> Similar to Love cosmetics, Oldsmobile began running ads in the in 1968 marketing their cars as “Youngsmobiles.”<sup>57</sup> In a 1969 ad for the Cutlass S., Oldsmobile encourages consumers to think young and “escape from the ordinary.”<sup>58</sup> Other ads, like those for the American Gas Association, Inc.<sup>59</sup> and Bank of America,<sup>60</sup> did not use the words “young” or “youth” but use psychedelic colors and images of flowers and butterflies.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid* 250-251.

<sup>54</sup> Advertisement for Love Cosmetics, *Life*, March 7, 1969. See images on page 20.

<sup>55</sup> Advertisement for Love Cosmetics, *Life*, March 7, 1969, April 17, 1969.

<sup>56</sup> Frank, 129.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 157.

<sup>58</sup> Advertisement for Oldsmobile, “1960s Ads,” American Studies at the University of Virginia, [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug01/morgan/car\\_ads/Olds3-69.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug01/morgan/car_ads/Olds3-69.html) [accessed April 26, 2012].

<sup>59</sup> Advertisement for American Gas Association Inc., “1960s Ads,” American Studies at the University of Virginia, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug01/morgan/funkystyle/Gas1-68.html> [accessed April 26, 2012].

## CHAPTER 7

### HIP VERSUS SQUARE

The sudden interest in the Counterculture begs the question: were the advertising and menswear industries mimicking the Counterculture because they genuinely felt attracted to the same ideals or were they trying to co-opt the fast growing youth revolution? According to Frank, “many in American business...imagined the counterculture not as an enemy to be undermined or a threat to consumer culture but as a hopeful sign, a symbolic ally to their own struggles against the mountains of dead-weight procedure and hierarchy that had accumulated over the years.”<sup>61</sup> He asserts that the advertising and menswear industries welcomed the youth-led cultural revolution not because they planned to undermine it or because they intended to exploit the giant youth demographic (though he does admit that this did not hurt), but because they genuinely viewed the Counterculture as a comrade in reforming business and consumerism in America.<sup>62</sup>

Admen were aware that the Counterculture did not like them and what they were doing, but the cultural critique of these young rebels is what helped the admen turn a critical eye on the industry and their professions. As Frank states, “Hip young people famously despised Madison Avenue and the plastic civilization for which it stood, and yet admen could never seem to get enough of their criticism, their music, or the excellent trappings of their liberated ways.”<sup>63</sup> Though these advertising industries may not have been targeting the Counterculture, they were

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<sup>60</sup> Advertisement for Bank of America, “1960s Ads,” American Studies at the University of Virginia, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ug01/morgan/funkystyle/Gas1-68.html> [accessed April 26, 2012].

<sup>61</sup> Frank, 9.

<sup>62</sup> Frank, 9.

using their symbols, and members of the movement noticed. Frank writes, “For countercultural participants and their admirers, advertising’s change was co-optation, pure and simple, an effort to dilute a meaningful, even menacing uprising and sway a large body of consumers at the same time.”<sup>64</sup>

The Counterculture as a whole was a youth movement reacting to the conservative lifestyles of their parent’s and the many problems in society, including the race relations and the war in Vietnam. There were many different factions, some small and some large, of the Counterculture. Generally, these factions, though they differed in political ideology and activism, embraced similar symbols, clothing, hairstyles and philosophies about free love and drug use. The reaction to the use of Countercultural symbols by the advertising industry can be seen through examining two Countercultural factions: the Flower Child Hippie and the New Left’s Yippies.

In 1969, activist and later law professor, Charles Reich wrote a book called *The Greening of America*, in which he predicted the coming revolution and notes that it is about the individual and the changing of culture.<sup>65</sup> He writes, the new generation’s, “protest and rebellion, their culture, clothes, music, drugs, ways of thought, and liberated life-style are not a passing fad or a form of dissent and refusal, nor are they in any sense irrational.”<sup>66</sup> Reich implies that this revolution will and should come to include not only young people, but also all of America.

Reich asserts that the problems in America in the 1960s need to be closely examined to fully understand the logic and actions (or reactions) of the new generation. This group of young

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<sup>63</sup> Frank, 107.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 106.

<sup>65</sup> Charles Reich, *The Greening of America* (New York: Random House, 1969), 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

people, he asserts, felt betrayed by power structures in America. They were witnessing first hand the rise, domination and exploitation of corporations, technology and the State. They were also trying to justify how they could live in a country where poverty was rampant, yet so was affluence. This young generation did not understand how the government could spend money on a large defense budget for what they saw as the imperialization of Vietnam, but underfund education, medical care and anti-poverty programs. Finally, this new generation looked at their parent's lives and felt that they lacked meaning, were boring and commercial. They felt that their parents lived lives of artificiality, full of work and loveless marriages.<sup>67</sup>

The new generation, which Reich refers to as Consciousness III, was different from any other previous generation. Reich asserts that this is because they were the first to view themselves as a culture—one in which music, clothes and drugs defined them.<sup>68</sup> Consciousness III identified as a united community where everyone was family and unlike in corporate America, no one had to compete to get ahead in their society. They encouraged one another to embrace their individuality and be who they wanted to be.<sup>69</sup> Reich writes that one way Consciousness III expressed their individuality was through their dress. Each person, he writes, exhibited his or her own creative style.<sup>70</sup> The new generation expressed their freedom and liberation by discarding the expensive clothing and suits of their parent's generation. The clothes they wore emphasized comfort and functionality. The new generation could work, dance, sleep and relax in their clothing without worrying that they would get dirty or worn.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 6-8.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 224.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, 227-228.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 234.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 235.

Reich writes, that bellbottoms gave, “the ankles a special freedom as if to invite dancing right in the street.”<sup>72</sup>

The new generation’s rejection of the gray flannel suit and embrace of a new style expressed their desire to remain young, Reich asserts. The attire of the Counterculture was very costume-like because they were expressing their inner-selves. They could add a headband to their outfit and become a Native America or they could put on a cowboy hat and become an outlaw.<sup>73</sup> They were, Reich observes, simply playing dress-up as adults. Jerry Rubin, an iconic activist in the Counterculture, wrote that the “suit-and-tie is the manifestation of class snobbery,” and that people should impersonate others in their dress in order to understand what it is like to be someone else.<sup>74</sup> Most importantly, Rubin states, is that one must never grow-up because growing up means, “*giving up your dreams.*”<sup>75</sup> Writing in 1969 as well, historian Theodore Roszak, agrees with Reich. In his book, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections of the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition*, Roszak writes that the Counterculture served as an entity in which the young could grow-up but never lose their inner-child, hence the outlandish costumes and behavior.<sup>76</sup>

The Flower Child faction of the Counterculture was generally peaceful and optimistic after national triumphs, such as the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. By 1967, however, the Flower Child era was ending and many hippies placed the blame squarely on mass media. In his essay, “Forever Young,” Peter Braunstein writes that the decline of the Flower

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 237.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 236-237.

<sup>74</sup> Jerry Rubin, *Do It! Scenarios of Revolution* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1970), 127.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>76</sup> Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections of the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), 40.

Child era was due to the constant media attention and advertising of the hippie lifestyle which drew hoards of people to the hippie enclaves, eventually leading to the collapse of these communities. Hippie settlements, growing rapidly, began to run out of resources and so they hosted the Summer of Love in 1967 where as Braunstein states, “commercialization and tourism meant to capitalize on the hippie phenomenon.”<sup>77</sup> In *The Making of a Counter Culture*, Theodore Rozak offers a very eerily accurate prediction. He writes, that the Counterculture would eventually become commercialized by “clothing designers, hairdressers, fashion magazine editors, and a veritable phalanx of pop stars, who without a thought in their heads their PR man did not put there, suddenly expounding ‘the philosophy of today’s rebellious youth’ for the benefit of the Sunday supplement.”<sup>78</sup>

*Reporting on the Counterculture* is a collection of articles journalist Richard Goldstein wrote for the *Voice*, an underground ‘hippie’ weekly established in the 1950s by Norman Mailer, Dan Francher and Dan Wolf [the paper, more commonly known as the *Village Voice*, is still in existence today and is no longer underground]. In an article written in 1967, Goldstein ruefully observes that the hardest thing in society to maintain is an authentic underground. He writes that men and women that rebel against conformity attract media attention, writing about and photographing their ideals and lifestyle. Mainstream magazines, like *Life*, published these articles and images for the consumption by mass society.<sup>79</sup> Goldstein writes of his struggle with reporting on the Counterculture once the movement had become the “fuel for the engines of an expansionist economy.” He laments, “I knew the music and the movement meant something to their followers, but the closer one got to the hot center, the more this revolution resembled

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 261.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 72.

spectacle for the sake of publicity.”<sup>80</sup> Goldstein saw the use of the Counterculture in advertising and by the media as co-optation that drew in activists and rock stars alike and sadly brought the collapse of the underground hippie movement.

Similarly, Nicholas von Hoffman, also a journalist accuses the mass media for ending the hippie culture in his 1968 volume, *We Are the People Our Parents Warned Us Against*. He details what he observed as a journalist in the Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco during the Summer of Love in 1967. Von Hoffman writes that many of the hippies were unhappy with the amount of publicity the Summer of Love was attracting. One of these hippies, a local ‘psychedelic’ shop owner, commented, “The mass media made us into hippies. We wanted to be free men and build a free community. The word hippy turned everybody off.”<sup>81</sup> Many of the hippies in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood left the city and moved onto communes. Those remaining distributed cards inviting people to attend the funeral of “Hippie, devoted son of Mass Media” on October 6, 1967.<sup>82</sup> The Flower Children carried a coffin through Buena Vista Park in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco during the mock funeral with the body of “Hippie.” At the end of the ceremony, the hippies burned the coffin which reportedly contained the remains of shaved beards, beads and two kilograms of marijuana. A local dope dealer, Teddybear, gave a eulogy, in which he stated,

There never were any flower children. It was the biggest media fraud ever perpetuated on the American public. And it’s your fault; you, the mass media, did it.

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Goldstein, *Reporting the Counterculture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 53.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, xix.

<sup>81</sup> Nicholas von Hoffman, *We Are the People Our Parents Warned Us Against* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 261.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 261. See image on page 28. Image accessed from:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Death\\_of\\_hippie.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Death_of_hippie.jpg) [accessed May 1, 2012].

This wasn't a 'Summer of Love,' this was a Summer of bullshit and you, the press, did it. The so-called flower children came here to find something because you told 'em to, and there was nothing to find... They got all the rules written down for them—how to dress, how to behave, what to say. They only had to turn on their television sets or open a magazine or a newspaper...<sup>83</sup> \_

Nicholas von Hoffman concludes that journalists and writers placed too much responsibility and power on this generation of young people. These writers like the Counterculture, wanted change in America and they wanted it fast so they projected, "absurd hopes onto the young and then converted these hopes into facts."<sup>84</sup> Though von Hoffman does not address the advertising industry, it can be argued that they too put too much pressure on the nation's young to usher in a change. In the end, the media (and possibly the advertising industry) inspired "harmless escapist excursions," about overthrowing the government among a small faction of the Counterculture, the Youth International Party or the Yippies.<sup>85</sup>

A founder and one of the most famous Yippies, Jerry Rubin, describes the group as, "A hybrid of New Left and hippie," it was for those that did not fit in with the flower children or the student activist intellectuals and though they dressed like hippies, they were much more radical and political. The Yippies came to fruition during a meeting when Rubin amongst other famous activists, such as Abbie and Anita Hoffman and Paul Krassner, decided to start a, "*youth* revolution...an *international* revolution," and a revolution where, "people were trying to have meaning, fun, ecstasy in their lives—a *party*." From this description of revolution (Youth,

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 262.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 264.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 264.

International, Party), sprung the YIP-pies.<sup>86</sup> The Yippies never posed a real threat to America but their goal was to overthrow the government. They staged comical protests, such as attempting to levitate the Pentagon and attempting to put a pig named Pigasus on the 1968 Presidential ballot.

Iconic Countercultural figure Abbie Hoffman writes about the commercial co-optation of the youth theme in his book, *Woodstock Nation: A Talk-Rock Album*. He directly addresses the youth consultation firms after he saw an advertisement for a youth conference at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York. He writes that the participants in the conference will be hearing from “mind-manipulators” that will try to “lay down the rap to winning back the kids.”<sup>87</sup> Hoffman writes that it is the responsibility and duty of Countercultural participants to “work out the problem of the vultures that prey” on their culture.<sup>88</sup> Hoffman also writes of the commercialization and co-optation of the Woodstock festival in 1969. He defines co-optation as a, “sense of being lured to your doom by the power structure.”<sup>89</sup> Hoffman states that it was no secret that vendors paid a couple thousand dollars to set up booths selling food and merchandise at the festival, co-opting Woodstock and turning it into a capitalist venture.<sup>90</sup>

It is clear that whether they viewed themselves more as a hippie or a Yippie, many members of the Counterculture felt that they were being co-opted and that many of their counterparts were lured into mass media’s depiction of their movement and sold-out. The draw of the Counterculture was so powerful that the industry continued to use it in images even after

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<sup>86</sup> Jerry Rubin, *Do It! Scenarios of Revolution* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1970), 81.

<sup>87</sup> Abbie Hoffman, *Woodstock Nation: A Talk-Rock Album* (New York: Random House, 1969), 95.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 131.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 127, 130-131.

many unpleasant episodes occurred, like the Chicago riot during the Democratic Convention.<sup>91</sup> The irony in this is that mass society's critique on materialism and obsolesces became the main selling point in advertising and in men's fashion but trends would only remain "hip" for a season before becoming outdated perpetuating consumerism.<sup>92</sup> The recession of the 1970s would send America back into a more conservative age and creativity gradually lost its appeal.<sup>93</sup> At the end of his book, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, Theodore Roszak predicts that a new generation of young people trying to define their generation would push aside the 1960 Counterculture, making their liberated costumes and lifestyle obsolete.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Frank, 216.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 196-197.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 225.

<sup>94</sup> Roszak, 72.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

Historians have traditionally viewed the relationship between the 1960s Counterculture and American business corporations through a binary lens. The popular narrative contends that the Counterculture and Establishment were mortal enemies. Through this binary view, a co-optation theory develops in which the Establishment stands accused of pilfering Countercultural images and ideologies in order to weaken the movement and profit off the large baby boomer population.

In the more recent past, historians like Thomas Frank, have attempted to rewrite the relationship between the Counterculture and Establishment, charging that the binary narrative and co-optation theory is over-simplified. He, along with Stephen Fox, believe changes in society during the 1960s ushered in a revolution not only among the Countercultural youth but also in American business. These historians assert that young businessmen in fields such as advertising and menswear were not trying to co-opt the Counterculture by tapping into the large youth demographic and definitely not trying to destroy the revolutionary movement. Instead, they argue, that these young men in business identified with the new values and anti-establishment sensibility espoused by the Counterculture.

In conclusion, it is clear that major changes in 1960s society had an effect on and influence over people outside the Counterculture. It is very likely that young businessmen in industries like advertising and menswear felt a connection to the message of revolution and change of the Counterculture. To state, however, that these young businessmen, their older bosses, and the agencies or companies they worked for did not co-opt the movement is a falsity.

Thomas Frank and Stephen Fox do an excellent job in their books, *Conquest of Cool* and *Mirror Maker* respectively, of providing evidence that the advertising and menswear industries underwent drastic changes in the 1960s. The advertising industry began using simpler and more minimalistic ads that emphasized Countercultural themes of creativity, rebellion and individuality. During the Creative Revolution, young admen ditched the gray flannel suits of their boss and embraced a more colorful and youthful wardrobe. The menswear industry, noticing these trends, began marketing clothing for a non-conformist. The Peacock Revolution promoted clothing that would make a man an individual, one of the Counterculture's main ideologies.

The young businessmen may have been reacting to the same problems and frustrations in society as the Counterculture, however, they were not the ones establishing ideologies, symbol and styles. Their use of the Countercultural themes of rebellion, youth and non-conformity in advertisements and clothing is clear co-optation. The reaction of hippies and Yippies to mass media and their movement is a clear indicator that the young men and women of the Counterculture felt exploited and used. The young businessmen may not have intentionally set out to end the movement, but by using the youthful Counterculture as a marketing ploy, whether it was because they identified with it or not, they ended up commercializing a movement which was revolting against that very thing.

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