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CAPTIVATING DISTRACTIONS:
MARKETING MUSIC IN CONSOLIDATED MARKETS

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ABSTRACT

Music is a form of art which has changed with the times. From the instruments, inventions and technologies of the day and the industries in prominence, art follows history in many ways. Each technological revolution involves inventions that people come to participate in—for our time, through the marketing of consolidated industries of popular culture. With the invention of recorded music, television, radio, and the Internet, art is being marketed in ways not imagined before.

The music industry of our day has become consolidated into just a few major record labels. While there are many independent labels and music outlets on the Internet, the major labels have extended connections and marketing tactics to whatever media are available. Specifically, the music industry has moved from radio to the Internet (or Internet forums such as MySpace.com).

The consolidation of the music industry has had consequences for the art form as such. This thesis articulates some of these consequences to highlight how consolidation and marketing directs the substance of this art form, to co-opt, as Theodor W. Adorno argued, even the actual notes into genres of conformity. While this thesis does not analyze music form and style directly, it explores the lyrical side, where words and the ideas they express become marketing tools that sell not only a song or album, but also an artist, an image, and, ultimately, an industry. The thesis aims to tell the story of the co-optation of the music industry, part of the hegemonic character of society as a whole.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

All forms of music, not just those of expressionism, are sedimented in contents. In them survives what is otherwise forgotten and is no longer capable of speaking directly. What once sought refuge in form subsists anonymously in form’s presence. The forms of art register the history of humanity with more justice than do historical documents.

-Adorno, Philosophy of New Music (37)

Music is an art form that occurs throughout history. Important pieces of music have regularly been added to (and have significantly affected) popular culture. Today, as in other ages, music is a well-oiled industry focused on making money. This is largely because music has become a hegemonized industry as part of the wider culture industry (Adorno, Culture; Cook). Adorno, over a half century ago, considered this hegemonization to be no accident: “In all [the culture industry’s] branches, products which are tailored for consumption by masses, and which to a great extent determine the nature of that consumption, are manufactured more or less according to plan” (The Culture Industry 98). We will study the different aspects of music and how this affects the way the industry is run today.

These aspects include the marketing of music, not only in our society today, but throughout history, specifically as an evolution of marketing from co-opting the music industry into the marketing of consumer taste and preferences. The nature of a particular musical piece has become less important within the industry than the ways in which marketing could increase profits and consolidate industry control, largely
through many important new inventions not around a century ago. "Not only does [music] contract and expand in the course of history. All of its specific traits are marks of the historical process" (Adorno, Philosophy 31). This includes radio (FM radio was invented in 1933, [Bellis, "Invention"]), television (invented in the early 1900's [Bellis, "Television"]), recorded music (Edison invented the phonograph in 1877 [Bellis, "History of the Edison"]), and even the Internet (the World Wide Web was invented by Tim Berners-Lee in 1989-1991 [Bellis, "History of the Internet"]). However, all of these new tools are just part of an evolution that has added to the current structure of the music industry. Rock music as a medium, radio, CD's, and other aspects that have affected and been affected by the current music industry are all less than a hundred years old (recorded music itself has only existed a little longer than one hundred years as well), but all have become commodities that create the most profit possible for the corporations responsible for the majority of marketed music today. In such historical and technological developments, this thesis claims, hegemonic processes are recognizable as the consolidation of the music industry. Each of these developments, whether invented over a hundred years ago (such as recorded music) or invented within the last decade (such as MySpace.com), created for whatever reasons, have eventually become a co-opted practice. They also represented the potential for greater freedom and variety in musical experience, and continue to because consolidation has not been total - each development was an expansion of expression even though co-optation and consolidation dominates the history of music as an industry.

The marketing of music includes many different aspects, many that we will cover later. However, the central idea is that the industry knows how to market to
different groups of people to get them to buy a certain piece of music. This may be in
the form of good-looking guys being marketed in a band to get a teenager to like their
music, or a sophisticated-looking album cover for a classical music fan. Whether or not
this is true, small things such as this may be more important than we may think.
However the music industry has had a long time to learn exactly what these tools are
and knows how to use them for capitalistic interests.

The history of the current music industry helps explain specific genres of music
and their evolution. This thesis focuses on an important current genre of music, “rock
and roll,” the term generally thought coined by Alan Freed, a Pennsylvania disc jockey
(Rolling 103).

While rock music emerged from of other forms of music, its beginnings as a
unique genre happened in this time. Rock and roll formed out of one musical tradition
when mixed with other musical traditions that incorporated “the influence of black
music on white.” (Rolling 4). However, this did not happen on its own: “Rock might
not have developed out of a self-contained African-American tradition, but it certainly
would not have developed had there been no African-Americans” (4). The history of
slavery is also important and undeniable. In fact, because these aspects were much
more contested at the beginning of the genre, the survival of the genre must be
understood in relation to a dominant culture that influenced “rock & roll” since it
began. For example, the term “rock & roll” was named for political reasons on top of
just giving it a name: “Freed called the music ‘rock & roll,’ eliminating the racial
stigma attached to rhythm & blues” (Rolling 103).
The popularity of different genres of music has changed throughout time. While rock and roll has become an important form of music since its inception in the 1930s, it is just one type of music in one era. But it will show us how different styles of music can affect popular culture in different ways, and more so how important music can be due to its placement in society. Knowing the history of any cultural phenomenon may be important in understanding why that particular idea has evolved into what it is today. "There is no doubt that the problems of communication, including the operation of the media, are embedded in the history of a culture" (Hardt, *Critical Communication Studies* 233).

Studying these ideas is important for understanding not only the history of this idea but also understanding how these ideas have changed. Theodor Adorno wrote in the mid-20th century about music and its effect on society. He wrote about everything from the different notes and their effects on the music to the overall effect of this music on society and popular culture. The difference between Adorno's writings and today's society is the gaining popularity of two important musical stylings, namely rock and rap. However, much of Adorno's writings still resound today.

Adorno spoke of capitalism and how this affected the music industry. While today we can say the popularity of new genres of music has affected a lot of things, including the marketing of that music, the important point is that the capitalistic ventures of the music industry, and in fact most industries, have not changed much from Adorno's time to the present: "In the present phase...the apparatuses of production and domination are fused together" (Adorno, *Philosophy* 101).
Another important aspect of the hegemony in the music industry includes capitalism and the focus of the industry on making money. We will survey how money affects the artistic value of the music in the music industry. Karl Marx and his writings become important in studying capitalism and its effects on markets, and how this translates to the music industry: "The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones" (Marx and Engels 8).

The capitalistic cause has also evolved over time. The ideas of the proletariat and the bourgeois, the worker and the elites, still work in a capitalistic society. But his words also speak of an evolution of the markets. Marx says that "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society" (Marx, Capital 10). The reason for evolution is to constantly enhance your own situation, and when this includes capitalism others may be left behind in your effort to make your product profitable. Markets have changed in the past hundred years, as music has. In Chapter 2 we will talk about the music industry, its history and its effects on markets, and vice versa.

With music being a cultural phenomenon, the effect of music on society and small, cohesive groups of people has been significant. We have learned that historically different musical styles and genres can create consequences for society. Chapter 3 will cover these consequences and how co-optation has been an important
part of the musical experience in popular culture, and how this has helped shape our society.

Co-optation of the musical experience is an important consequence. It is part of the hegemonization of society. Forms of art from music to acting to paintings are forms that have been co-opted as culture moved into a culture industry, and has affected how we interpret music and its marketing. In order to understand how this affects us, it is important to understand the culture industry today.

Perspectives like cultural studies have shown that “events within human reality...are both themselves practices and results of practices” (Grossberg 51). This applies to the culture industry, which has been altered and has altered human experiences with culture. The creation of such media as television, radio, recorded music, the internet, etc. has “redistributed social knowledge making visible what had heretofore been invisible, rendering vulnerable that which had always been protected” (Grossberg 201). The ease of spreading information globally has changed the playing field to the point where it seems that anything we want to know is at our fingertips.

Such technologies are tied to directly to the history of music; the instruments used in the society in which music is created. With the invention of different instruments, music has changed in different ages. The piano was invented in 1720 in its first form as the harpsichord (Bellis, “Piano”). At this time, Mozart (Mozart Project), Bach (J.S. Bach) and others were composing their most famous pieces. However, one hundred years later, the upright piano “ousted the harpsichord as the standard keyboard instrument” (Bellis, “Piano”). This happens to be around the same time Beethoven was writing his music. It shows how instruments can play an important role in the music of
the day. Similarly, while the guitar evolved from older instruments, the invention of
the electric guitar in 1934 (Bellis, “Guitar”) was in perfect timing with the beginning of
what we today call “rock & roll”, which also is said to have happened in 1934 (Rolling
4). Each new invention and musical genre creates a chance to break free from the co-
optation of the music industry. However, the popularity of these ideas puts them in
danger of an industry that takes the ideas and makes them seem to be their own.

The study of culture has changed significantly since the inception of these
technologies. “Periods of stability are also periods of transformation and competition
for domination and control. The development of communication research reflects such
moments of adjustment to specific social and political conditions throughout modern
times” (Hardt, Critical 11). Not only has the study of culture changed, but the way we
see this culture has changed as well. The quickness with which we get our information
can change our outlook on it. This, once again, is because of these technologies. For
example, when you can watch a movie or see a concert and then go home right away to
find out everything about that celebrity, we have the ability to think of our idols
differently.

Today’s obsession with celebrities only seems to be a new phenomenon. While
never in history has there been the type of celebrity as today, because of the invention
of television, major motion pictures, and music, there has always been an interest in the
“celebrity” of the day. In the early 20th century the members of the aristocracy were
reveled in the papers just as movie stars are in the early 21st century. In the future, the
movie star may take a back seat. The reasons for society or cultures conferring
celebrity status on a particular individual may be directly related to the time we are in,
and even the generations within each era. Within these generations, there come specific interests. While we aren’t able to say that every person in a certain generation has the same interests, growing up in a certain time period will make you different than someone growing up fifty years after you, or before you.

Because of these generational differences, styles and types of art media, and even music, seem to have different fan bases. The culture industry executives pay close attention to fan bases and understand that, in general, perceptions of art and music differ among generations. Perceptions may also vary because of one’s class status. For instance, a rock music fan may have a different idea of their idol’s celebrity status than does a classical music fan: “The hit song enthusiast must be reassured that his idols are not too elevated for him, just as the visitor to philharmonic concerts is confirmed of his status” (Adorno, Culture 35). While the music itself does matter it is by no means most important. The image of the music may end up being more important than the music. “Famous people are not the only stars. Works begin to take on the same role. A pantheon of bestsellers build up. The programmes shrink, and the shrinking process not only removes the moderately good, but the accepted classics themselves undergo a selection that has nothing to do with quality” (Adorno, Culture 36).

While it may be easy to read a book without knowing anything about the author, television, movies, music, and radio give you the audio and visual aspect of the piece. This may create an interest in the players involved and lead to the celebrity fascinations we have today. This relates directly to the oppression faced by this form of co-optation: “Human dependence and servitude, the vanishing point of the culture industry, could scarcely be more faithfully described than by the American interviewee
who was of the opinion that the dilemmas of the contemporary epoch would end if people would simply follow the lead of prominent personalities” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 106). Additionally, the internet affords the ability to research prominent personalities, which forms another level of celebrity status. The current culture industry creates these ideas and the chance to feel a little closer to the figures you see on television and or within any of the other media. The advertising and extensive media exposure of celebrity figures and status symbols leads us to believe who our idols may be. The more we are bombarded with images and stories of celebrities the more we believe this is what we are supposed to like: “the endless exhibition is also the endless bureau of information which forces itself upon the hapless visitor and regales him with leaflets, guides and radio recommendations, sparing each individual from the disgrace of appearing as stupid as everyone else” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 82).

With the invention and widespread use of the internet in the last twenty years, things have changed significantly. Not only are celebrities at our fingertips, but anything you might want seems potentially there as well. With the invention of sites such as amazon.com, you have the potential to buy anything; with sites like cnn.com, foxnews.com, msn.com, you have the potential to learn anything going on in current culture. Use of the internet expands our ability to research, read, translate, gossip, and travel as well. The list could go on, but the idea is that the widespread use of the internet has significantly changed how our culture does things. One important change is accelerated consumption and marketing.

Because of this new fascination with readily available information and the fact that society is now used to their information visually, music becomes not only about the
music, but also about the brand. "The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property" (Marx and Engels 11). Music is a commodity being sold. The people creating these commodities know that, in certain cases, looks and image may be as important, if not more important than the music itself. This may be the case with certain genres of music. For example, pop music being sold to teenagers and classical music being sold to the upper classes. This target marketing mimics the formula for selling and branding other commodities. The formula is designed to produce easily repeatable products. Plus, if a company has a winning formula, they have no need to work to create anything new and fresh. This is a new form of oppression.

We can speak of oppression in all its forms, but it is the forms such as this that we may not notice and, therefore, will become the easiest victims. Throughout history, there have been many different forms of oppression. Similarly, resistance to this oppression has commonly been prevalent. A way for the oppressors to win the battle over the resistance of a culture would be co-optation. Co-optation is the practice of assimilating a minority idea into a culture (most of the time, without the knowledge of the members of the dominant, hegemonic culture). This makes successful cultural resistance much more difficult. For instance, the clothing, music, and hairstyle of a rebellious teenager can be made to seem a normal social practice without challenging dominant cultural norms. Then rebellion seemingly no longer exists.

This practice of co-optation has existed in many different forms, yet many still don’t notice. "The political needs of society become the individual needs and aspirations...the whole appears to be the very embodiment of Reason" (Marcuse ix).
The perpetuation of this mirror image from society to the individual creates the acceptability of co-optation. The need of many people to fit in enhances these possibilities: "Nobody really takes a chance any more; all are looking for shelter" (Adorno, Essays on Music 199).

Co-optation is accepted because many people don’t know what is happening and, consequently, have no chance to rebel; if they are just part of a larger society they have no say for themselves. The industry bolsters the acceptability of the individual to disappear. "Between the incomprehensibility and inescapability, there is no third way; the situation has polarized itself into extremes which actually meet. There is no room for the ‘individual’. The latter’s claims, wherever they still occur, are illusory, being copied from the standards. The liquidation is the real signature of the new musical situation" (Adorno, The Culture Industry 35).

The acceptability of cultural co-optation is important in terms of an individual mirroring society. Ideologies commonly come to individuals as ideas of a society. It is the same reason certain religions, politics, and general beliefs spread within geographical areas. Whether or not they are right, they can be a form of co-optation as well. This notion of cultural geographies is an important tool in proving that many emotions, ideas, and opinions that we hold are in fact taught from birth, as opposed to being ingrained in us before birth. We are moldable beings and our surroundings determine our opinions and personalities. "Ideologies, like language, are symbolic systems that are produced by a public discourse—in or exclusive of certain facts or fictions—and in the service of specific reconstructions of reality" (Hardt, Aesthetic Theory 8). To many people ideologies are the most important thing to them. If one can
reconstruct reality enough to change people’s core belief systems, it might be much easier to change their ideas on things seemingly less important like art, media, and technology. If our upbringing affects things like religions and politics, that it might also affect certain things like our musical and artistic tastes, our entertainment values, what we watch, and what types of media we enjoy.

Theorizing about co-optation is one thing, but actually bringing it into practice is another. The idea of culture is a good way to do this. “Understanding cultural practice also involves an acknowledgement of the relationship between art and society, or the weight of the aesthetic discourse as it enters the public realm where it resides as a source of insights into the social, cultural, or political meaning of media in the life of a society” (Hardt, The Aesthetic Discourse 10). The producers of media and art create bring co-optation into an area of people’s lives which should be off limits. The creative hobbies and interests of an individual are perceived to be that individual’s choice. It is possible that this couldn’t be further from the truth. “It is hard to ascertain anything in human beings which is not functionally determined. This is an important consideration for the question of free time. It means to say that even where the hold of the spell is relaxed, and people are at least subjectively convinced that they are acting of their own free will, this will itself is shaped by the very same forces which they are seeking to escape in their hours without work” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 188). Hobbies become a way to fit into the dominant society and, therefore, become a target for future consumerism. This again is based on decisions made by caring what society thinks. According to Grossberg “There is no essential and universal human nature which makes all people the same. Different people in different societies struggle to define the
boundaries of human nature" (117). Given this supposition, we do make our own choices, but it also means that we are easily moldable by people and organizations that want to turn us into whatever they would want. This is another way that an individual mirrors society, based on consumerism.

These co-opted forms of expression, especially in the artistic fields, have been altered significantly in the last one hundred years. With the invention of new technologies such as television, radio, recorded music, and even things like the telephone and internet, things like music are spread worldwide with great ease. The music itself, our response to it, and even the artists and stars, become the new commodity. "...The media were implicated in other changes as well, including the increasing commercialization of leisure (which helped to define the majority of the population as cultural consumers) and the beginnings of the commodification of the social imagination" (Grossberg 201). These technologies start as a new chance at freedom, each having the potential to showcase new forms of expression. However, with these new forms of technology, the industry presses a false need to be up-to-date with these technologies, in an effort to encourage blind acceptance of industry offerings. In this age of unquestioned acceptance of the word "freedom" with all its meanings, individuals are left to question on their own. While the industry supplies the genres and words to promote an industry view of opposition, industry controls the idea of oppression by associating freedom and opposition with new technologies that blunt opposition. Marcuse states, "Under the rule of a repressive whole, liberty can be made into a powerful instrument of domination" (7). We as individuals must realize when this is happening to us, because this is vital to freeing ourselves from oppression.
To do this, we must first understand the forms of oppression. "The hegemonic struggle involves captivating not capturing the masses with a media environment that distracts from the real conditions of society" (Hardt, *The Aesthetic Discourse* 6). This distraction (and captivation) becomes necessary for the process of co-optation to work, and seems to be one of the main factors in our society today. One such distraction would be familiarity. "This selection reproduces itself in a fatal circle: the most familiar is the most successful and is therefore played again and again and made still more familiar" (Adorno, *The Culture Industry* 36). While some forms of art have no formula in which to reproduce their ideas continuously, the music industry does have a formula. While it is art, and a creative process, the notes themselves become a tool easily reproduced. It seems as though hearing something your whole life makes what is familiar into a preferred taste. According to Adorno: "To like it is almost the same thing as to recognize it" (*The Culture Industry* 30). The manipulation in this instance can start as early as one can listen to the radio or watch television.

**Dissent/Rebellion**

"The result is then euphoria in unhappiness." (Marcuse 5).

Most of the time when there is oppression, there is also rebellion. There are commonly people creating ways to rebel against the co-optation and hegemonization of society. According to Marcuse: "Independence of thought, autonomy, and the right to political opposition are being deprived of their basic critical function in a society which seems increasingly capable of satisfying the needs of the individuals through the way in which it is organized" (1). While we can speak of history and how this practice has been constant, today’s society reflects this as well. The best way to solve our problem
may be to look at our own age and how we affect the practice of co-optation, specifically with recently invented technologies. These technologies may be our only chance to begin to free ourselves, but Marcuse and others warn us to be cautious about faith in new technologies. Nevertheless, co-optation is not total, and new ideas and experiences can take advantage of that.

An important reason to study the communication field with cultural studies is to understand why people react in certain ways, especially in this era of cultural studies as an important new idea. It is important mostly because of the ideas of radicalism and dissent. For this thesis, the more important issue is how to create more radicalism and dissent in this day and age. "The dilemma of American communication studies continues to lie in its own failure to comprehend and overcome the limitations of its own intellectual history, not only by failing to address the theoretical and methodological problems of an established academic discipline, but also by failing to recognize the potential of radical though" (Hardt, Critical Communication Studies 237).

Today's society seems to agree with whatever they are shown, without question. Even society in itself is an important concept. The individual has gone out the window, and all we are left with is a collective group that has learned to not question things like pop culture because the rest of that collective group isn't questioning these things. As members of this group we should go along with what we are told will make us happy: "Not only does the musical synthesis preserve the unity of appearance and protect it from falling apart into diffuse culinary moments, but in such unity, in the relation of particular moments to an evolving whole, there is also preserved the image of a social condition in which above those particular moments of happiness would be more than
mere appearance” (Adorno, *The Culture Industry* 32). However, this lack of radicalism and individualism may go hand in hand, and in fact be co-opted from the very beginning. Adorno agrees that this circle we are caught in is a premeditated form of co-optation: “The collapse of individuality that helpless and disintegrated individuals confirm, approve, and do once again to themselves. In this there is a fatal resemblance between the radicals—who turn themselves over to what they mistakenly consider the inner law of the material, and who enthusiastically subtract themselves from the picture—and those who have crawled away into the ruins of a bygone tradition, or who trump up a supra-individually sanctioned aesthetic realm that in fact merely corresponds to the ideal of weakened and anxious individuals” (Adorno, *Essays on Music* 199).

In the studies of culture in the modern day, much of it has to do with the idea of how society reacts and responds to certain situations. A relevant question would be whether the oppression caused by the elites should be attributed somewhat to society. “Society” as an idea can largely be associated with a group rather than individuals. “Culture as an anthropological project in American scholarship insisted upon the coherence and totality” (Hardt, *Critical Communication Studies* 219). While coherence of the group always seems to play an important part, it plays a large part only for the group (or “society” or “totality”), and the individuals seemingly have no choice.

In the United States, the term “society” has largely come to be associated with popular culture. “Culture as an American social-scientific concern is less associated with the study of how people live together through communications (culture as a way to live) or with an analysis of specific intellectual or artistic activities (the demise of high
culture and the rise of popular culture), but more with the study of real or potential effect on individuals or groups or with the power to manipulate or transform society” (Hardt, *Critical Communication Studies* 219). The rise of popular culture for the study of communication has brought to light the oppression happening today in the many industries within pop culture, including television, movies, music, art, etc.

However, because this is a societal problem, “The crisis of capitalism was a crisis of culture, which could be overcome only with a transformation of the social structure” (Hardt, *Critical Communication Studies* 219-220). While the idea of changing an entire social structure may be too large a task to undertake, we can start by learning how to bring back the idea of the individual – and with the individual, the idea and act of dissent.

Perhaps dissent seems to have become a rare event because it has become a co-opted practice as well. The need for rebellion in our society, specifically among teenagers, seems to be as prevalent as in the past. However, the practice of co-optation has spread to this rebellion in such a way that even if teenagers think they are being rebellious, they are still being controlled by whomever wants to control them. Today’s music, television, movies, literature, and other media can spread this idea to the point where they can create a “rebellious” event. If you are looking for a way to rebel it may be easier not to look very far, if someone is promoting a path of dissent and you don’t know any better, you may not want to look further to find out the actual “rebelliousness” of the idea. Ironically, these rebellious ideas are commonly created by large companies in many industries, because they seemingly have the most to gain in these situations.
Another way to co-opt this rebellion would be to make repression familiar. “Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate, belong to this category of false needs” (Marcuse 5). These “false needs” become something that is necessary to the co-optation of an individual. “No matter how much needs may have become the individual’s own, reproduced and fortified by the conditions of his existence; no matter how much he identifies himself with them and finds himself in their satisfaction, they continue to be what they were from the beginning—products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression” (Marcuse 5).

The idea of bringing back the individual may help this situation by reserving a space against being told what to think and know and like.

According to Adorno, the only way to do this is by showing the individual a certain happiness; this happiness is what he calls “isolated moment of enjoyment.” He says that “they [isolated moments of enjoyment] conspire to come to terms with everything which the isolated individual who long ago ceased to be one” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 33). When experiencing something on your own you are more likely to remember what it is like to be an individual. These moments, which are brought to us through different forms of art—watching a movie you like or dancing to a new song—can show us who we are as individuals. We will no longer be comfortable with the complacence of only being a member of a larger group.

Adorno speaks of the idea of “false happiness” which he explains is the reason for the complacence of consumers in today’s society. He explains “What makes its appearance aesthetically in the pleasure categories can no longer give pleasure, and the
promise of happiness, once the definition of art, can no longer be found except where the mask has been torn from the countenance of false happiness” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 33). If we were to equate happiness to art, then the artistic value comes out and becomes the most important thing. However, in today’s pop culture this happiness disappears. When dominant cultural institutions choose what is important in art, happiness no longer fits in the equation. Happiness becomes what we are told is happiness. It becomes an integral piece in the equation of what eventually becomes the complete (and repeated) manipulation of society. “The growth and prosperity of a rapidly changing society found theoretical confirmation in the neo-Darwinism of the 1920s and the functionalism of the 1930s, and shaped ideas about communication that emphasized the integration of individuals in the process of labor and consumption. During this period communication research shifted from considering communication in terms of relationships, or notions of sharing and community, to questions of power and analyses of control and manipulation” (Hardt, Critical Communication Studies 12). In other words, when this happiness goes out the window, the concepts of the individual and dissent go as well. The manipulation can only take over when there is no longer any chance of dissent. Ultimately, art should come down to what you think of it, and not what you want people to think of you. Art has become a societal status symbol.

While I will argue that this has been increased in recent years because of the introduction of things like technology, media, etc. this is in fact not a new practice. Throughout history there have been dominant and submissive groups of people – there have commonly been people devising tactics to gain power or to continue their power. Because of this, it may seem like an impossible task to free the oppressed or even to let
them know what is happening. In terms of something like music, people may not want to hear that they are not completely making their own choices.
CHAPTER 2: THE EVOLVING MUSIC INDUSTRY

Music, with all the attributes of the ethereal and sublime which are generously accorded to it, serves in America today as an advertisement for commodities which one must acquire in order to be able to hear music.

-Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (38)

The music industry in the United States has been around for a long time, and throughout this history it has become an increasingly efficient hegemonic force. Many factors contributed to this hegemony, and many recent forces, such as the invention of television, radio, internet, etc., contribute, too.

These new technologies have created a new audience from any in the past. According to Adorno,

The increasing strength of modern mass culture is further enhanced by changes in the sociological structure of the audience. The old culture elite does not exist anymore; the modern intelligentsia only partially corresponds to it. At the same time, huge strata of the population formerly unacquainted with art have become cultural ‘consumers’. (Adorno, *The Culture Industry* 161)

Art has become a cultural phenomenon, in that most everyone has access to it. Music has become accessible over the airwaves and is fairly inexpensive to purchase. Adorno goes on to explain this and how it affects today’s audiences,

Modern audiences, although less capable of the artistic sublimation bred by tradition, have become shrewder in their demands for perfection of technique
and for reliability of information, as well as in their desire for ‘services’; and they have become more convinced of the consumers’ potential power over the producer, no matter whether this power is actually wielded. (161)

In other words, consumers want to think they have control, but perhaps they don’t have as much control as they think they do. Consumers’ lack of awareness helps create the hegemony imposed by the music industry. “Mass culture, if not sophisticated, must at least be up to date – that is to say, ‘realistic’, or posing as realistic – in order to meet the expectations of a supposedly disillusioned, alert, and hard-boiled audience” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 162).

There are many tangible and non-tangible factors which contribute to the hegemonic force of the music industry. One aspect of the co-optation of the music industry is the radio industry. While thought of as a separate industry, many of its decisions and reasons for existence have to do with the record labels. The history of radio is short; radio for mainly music entertainment started in the 1940s.

In the early days, the national networks, which dominated radio, programmed live musical broadcasts and adventure and comedy serials; rarely did a mere disc jockey become a star. But in the late Forties, as the networks’ attention shifted to television, radio began to open up. While live broadcasts and serials continued, some listeners interested in drama started watching TV, while the listeners interested in music started flipping the dial to smaller independent stations. (Rolling 102)

Losing these listeners ended up being a good thing for the music, and also smaller independent stations. “The independents had one big advantage over the
networks: They usually had a much stronger sense of what music their local audiences liked" (102). Local radio became a staple because they could do what the networks couldn’t, and that was localism. This new localism helped certain genres of music in this time. “As television siphoned off the audience for drama, the independents began to attract audiences for specialized music, from hillbilly to rhythm & blues; whether it was on a record or live didn’t much matter” (102).

However, because this was new to the public, the record labels decided to tame it down and make it more acceptable: “As rock & roll for whites broke, [Alan Freed, an early DJ] programmed it alongside discs by his favorite black artists. . . as the record industry began to seize control of the savage new music and tame it down with white ‘cover’ versions of the biggest songs” (Rolling 103). This formula of taming rock & roll worked so well for the record labels that businessmen used these tactics for radio as well. “The increasing number of white ‘cover’ versions and the popularity of the white teen idols indicated new trends in rock & roll: equally fateful was the upswing in chain ownership of AM stations. Independent stations were on the way out, even as they were providing the most exciting radio on the dial. Ironically, the very same wild men who would soon become ensnared in format radio provided the chains with a paradigm of the pop DJ” (105).

The radio industry became a formula in itself and now, owned by only a few companies, radio stations used this formula over and over. “In order to attract and stabilize both a maximum audience and maximum ad revenue, Storz [a broadcast company of the day] cultivated a distinctive ‘sound’ by using identification jingles at
regular intervals, saturation programming for a few hit records, fast-talking DJs for personality and a go-go frenzy punctuated only by the hourly news break” (105).

This rigid formula killed the original intent of early rock & roll DJs. “Of course this meant that disc jockeys were no longer playing their favorite records, but instead were following a programming schedule (based heavily researched ‘popularity charts’) involving just forty songs or less, with the Top Ten of those being played even more frequently” (Rolling 105). This formula was used from the beginning of Top Forty radio until at least the 1990s.

Fifty years after the initial popularity of Top Forty radio, the federal government finally felt that the independent stations needed help. In 1996, President Clinton signed into law the Telecommunications Act of 1996. According to the Federal Communications Commission’s website, this act was intended “to let anyone enter any communications business -- to let any communications business compete in any market against any other” (“Telecommunications”). On the surface, this is what the law did, and it appeared to be a good thing. The Telecommunications Act allowed one company to own more stations in a town than they had previously been able to. What this act actually did was to deregulate the industry such that larger companies had a better chance at taking over much of a market. For example, a company like Clear Channel Communications could now buy approximately 1500 radio stations around the U.S.

A company owning 1500 stations, while attempting to keep profits up, will do whatever they can to consolidate. At this time, before the introduction of new technologies, consolidation becomes a new game. Clear Channel went on to introduce new practices never before used in the telecommunications industry. This included
managing their air talent. A new automated programming system recorded multiple airshifts in multiple cities resulting in many jobs cuts. “The bourgeoisie keeps doing away more and more with the scattered state of the population, of the means of production, and of property. It has agglomerated population, centralized means of production and has concentrated property in a few hands” (Marx and Engels 11-12). This idea transferred to management as well, with many stations being run by one person, usually not located in the same town. Record label representatives began calling radio stations to promote the label’s artists and get their songs played. They only had to convince one person, and they could get airplay on multiple stations.

This consolidation of radio station ownership devalues the music. Once again music becomes a commodity and people are taught what is currently popular based on the decisions of only a few people. And yet, these few people do not talk among themselves and are, instead, in direct competition with each other: “The laborers still form an incoherent mass scattered over the whole country and broken up by their mutual competition” (Marx and Engels 15).

These people are yet another filter in the industry for what passes as mainstream in a given society. Radio industry executives seem to know that their tasks include simple entertainment as well as diversion. Adorno’s concept of “leisure hours” and people not wanting to think of things during those hours plays into the hands of both the record and radio industries. In this market, there is nothing wrong with the selling of a commodity, but when artistry is involved, the market should have nothing to do with it.
The early days of the radio industry offered the chance to break free from hegemonic forces. However, once the record label companies decided how radio could widely distribute their music for huge profits, the radio industry was co-opted just like earlier music industries. While in the beginning radio became a chance to articulate freedom, it was eventually brought into the same hegemonic, consolidated system as the recording industry.

In addition to consolidation and commoditization, another hegemonic force within the radio industry was payola. Commoditized music played on the radio through payola during the 1950s, and again in the early 2000s. Payola has had an influence, then, for a half century in the radio industry.

Since the inception of radio and record industry partnerships in the 1940’s and 1950’s, there have been major issues with payola. Payola is defined as “pay (cash or gifts) for radio airplay” (Rolling 121). In the 1950s and again in the 2000s, many radio stations were punished for accepting payment for playing songs. Payola actually may have been helpful in the 1950s because of its unintended side effects. “Payola...helped the new music reach its intended audience, no matter how small the label on which it appeared. By the late Fifties...a swarm of independent labels recording rock had broken the stranglehold of the majors—in particular Columbia, RCA and Decca—on the sales and airplay of popular records” (Rolling 121). As a consequence, not only were the larger record labels upset with payola, but so was the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) who, at the time, dealt with the royalties of mostly sheet music (Rolling 121). The radio stations eventually decided to boycott ASCAP and start their own publishing company, Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI) (121).
"Since ASCAP tended to ignore music composed by blacks and hillbillies, BMI ended up with a virtual monopoly on songs in those fields—a monopoly strengthened by the fact that many record-playing stations catered to regional tastes ignored by the major networks. When rock & roll—at first the music of blacks and hillbillies—broke, BMI was there first too" (121). In response, ASCAP went to Congress to complain and eventually payola was outlawed.

Some people saw outlawing payola as a political move based on a business practice and also a move on a new type of music which was corrupting the world. "From the beginning, rock & roll had been the object of virulent attacks. Many insisted that it was a source of a breakdown of morals among youth, that it encouraged miscegenation, that it was a subversive tool of Godless Communism. It was commonly believed the music was so terrible that teenagers listened to it only because they had been tricked into doing so by greedy DJs who pocketed payola and then played a record so often it was imprinted on listeners' impressionable young minds" (Rolling 122).

However, while payola was outlawed for political and other reasons, perhaps it was important and necessary to do so. This goes back to the idea that we tend to like what is popular.

So if people listen to music just simply because it's on the radio, and what is on the radio goes to the highest bidder, society chooses the music they listen to based on who has the most money. With these hegemonic forces, the culture becomes monopolistic and in a monopolistic culture such as this, nothing can be considered an accident: "Advertising becomes information when there is no longer anything to choose from, when the recognition of brand names has taken the place of choice, when at the
same time the totality forces everyone who wishes to survive into consciously going along with the process. This is what happens under monopolistic mass culture” (Adorno, *The Culture Industry* 85).

While payola isn’t as big of problem anymore, it is still something worth mentioning. It shows how easily society can be swayed in terms of their tastes in certain forms of art.

Radio and record label companies aren’t the only ones to blame for this problem. The artists may be equally to blame, specifically because artists usually are not the businessmen. They are the *artists* and therefore are responsible for content and should not care about the formula or how much money the record company makes. Many musicians in this time rebel against the idea of major labels and this formula. However, there are plenty of musicians out there in it for the money, and willing to create a copy of a song over and over again. Besides studio musicians who are paid to play whatever they are told, original musicians constantly write and play songs based on what is or has already been popular. The musical value is eventually cut down to nothing more than a commodity.

However, there may be nothing pure anymore, even for a musician who writes their music for no other reason than for their love of the music. They could perhaps be in on this as well, whether they know it or not: “This menace weighs on the few intransigent works of art that are still actually produced. By realizing total enlightenment in themselves, regardless of the cunning naivété of the culture industry, these works not only become offensive for the sake of their truth, the antitheses to the total control aimed at by the industry, but they also simultaneously make themselves
like the internal structure of what they oppose and enter into opposition with their own intentions" (Adorno, *Philosophy* 16). This is difficult to understand why a "pure" work might work in concert with those setting out to trick consumers, but perhaps the work existing and being consumed by those same people may be the answer. According to Adorno, "Even after the achievement of complete autonomy and the rejection of entertainment, the being-in-itself of the work is not indifferent to its reception" (*Philosophy* 17). To re-phrase, how the music is received may have nothing to do with how the music was created and produced. Either way, Adorno seems to be saying that there is no way to free ourselves, or be freed, from this hegemony of the music industry. This is especially applicable to the hegemonizing of music.

While this formula does eventually create a commodity (and in some ways, is a commodity itself), it is still created by humans. Karl Marx claims that we must not solely blame economics but should also include the people in charge of production. He writes, "The mystical character of the commodity does not therefore arise from its use-value. Just as little does it proceed from the nature of the determinants of value. For in the first place, however varied the useful kinds of labour, or productive activities, it is a psychological fact that they are functions of the human organism, and that each function, whatever may be its nature or its form, is essentially the expenditure human brain, nerves, muscles, and sense organs" (*Capital* 164). But while these functions of the human organism should be our savior in a situation like this, they also trick us. If the brain and our senses should tell us what we like, others since our birth have as well. Consequently, it may be hard to tell the difference between what we like naturally and what we like because hegemonic forces have co-opted us into thinking we like it.
Marx goes on to explain that “The commodity is, first of all, an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs of whatever kind. The nature of these needs, whether they arise, for example, from the stomach, or the imagination, it makes no difference. Nor does it matter here how the thing satisfies man’s need, whether directly as a means of subsistence, i.e. an object of consumption, or indirectly as a means of production” (Marx, Capital 125).

Without fail, an artist’s work eventually becomes a commodity, because, according to Marx, in a bourgeois society, economics always rule. He professes that “[the bourgeois] has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade. The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honored and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into paid wage-laborers” (Marx and Engels 10). In every profession, people need to make a living wage, and as a musician fighting for survival, wages are important. The music industry capitalizes on this survival need and uses this knowledge to manipulate paths to success. “The objectivity of artworks...is translated back into the person who stands behind the work, even though he is usually only the character mask of those who want to promote the work as an article of consumption” (Adorno, Aesthetic Theory 170). Sometimes it may be important enough for musicians to have their music heard; that they will do whatever it takes to make this happen, including changing their music in whatever way they are told will make it more popular. These suggestions or demands usually come from the music industry. They are the ones who create the standard formula for
producing popular art and music; therefore, they would be the ones to ask the musician to change their music to fit into the formula.

As for music listeners (a.k.a. consumers), Adorno claims that they don't have any choice or obligation in the matter – due to their lack of consciousness, and many times, even laziness. “Since the culture industry has trained its victims to avoid all effort in the leisure hours allotted to them for cultural consumption, they cling all the more obstinately to the appearances that conceal their essence” (Adorno, Philosophy 12). Adorno blames the hegemonic training of consumers on their lack of consciousness in this matter. However, just because one is conditioned to avoid effort doesn’t mean it is acceptable. If this lack of effort makes people happy, if the music they are fed makes them happy, they may have no reason to want to change their patterns of consumption. Oppression can become comfortable, especially when it’s all you have known. “Even where people are at least subjectively convinced that they are acting of their own free will, this will itself is shaped by the very same forces which they are seeking to escape in their hours without work” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 188). Not being conscious becomes the excuse.

Another tool in this equation used to hegemonize the world of the music listener is idolatry. Music is not just about the music anymore, marketing is very important. Image continues to play a major part in the marketing of popular music. The image of the musician in some ways can be more important to the selling of albums than the actual recorded music. This may have been an accident in the beginning, but since it has worked over and over marketing executives rely on image creation to generate profits. Elvis Presley is a good early example of image being important to the
consumption of music. In some ways, his image was more important than his music.

“This cat came out in red pants and a green coat and a pink shirt and socks, and he had this sneer on his face and he stood behind the mike for five minutes, I’ll bet, before he made a move. Then he hit his guitar a lick, and he broke two strings. I’d been playing for ten years, and I hadn’t broken a total of two strings. So there he was, these two strings dangling, and he hadn’t done anything yet, and these high school girls were screaming and fainting and running up to the stage, and then he started to move his hips real slow like he had a thing for his guitar” (Hemphill, as quoted in Rolling 23). This simple quote shows us the significance of image versus the actual music and artistic value. Significantly, this event took place within a few years of the time when teenagers in waves began to rebel and attempt to be individuals. “Youth, in the rock formation, became its very difference from the adult world, a world that, above all else, was regulated, disciplined and boring. It was the radical rejection of boredom as the very negation of youth that came, in the 1950s, to define both youth and rock” (Grossberg 180). While this rebellion was perhaps a natural phenomenon, it became a marketing tool used by the industry. Perhaps it was a coincidence, or perhaps the industry started to understand the power the youth had and started to market toward them. In this time, idolatry of musical artists became one of the most, if not the most important tools for marketing to youth. While it may have started as a natural phenomenon, this branding of image has become an almost exclusively co-opted market. “From the death of [Buddy] Holly to the arrival of the Beatles, pop music fell into the hands of those same old men of the music industry—promoters, radio programmers, A&R men, record executives—who had long sought a means to remove
the unpredictability originally inherent in rock, and to bring the phenomenon (or fad, as they considered it) more into line with their own standards and marketing expertise" (Rolling 107). To mainstream and contain rock & roll, the teen idol was made prevalent from the years 1959 to 1963 (107). Idolatry in rock music works well for youth in many ways. Given that, historically, a majority of significant rock bands have been male-led, the idea of the cute, young, male musician playing music just for his female fans has always been prevalent. Watching videos of the Beatles coming to the United States, it looks as though every female teenager in the crowd wanted one of the Beatles to be in love with them. Idolatry of rock & roll musicians gives young males something to strive toward. If a male, just like them, can be famous and have girls swooning over them, then anyone has the chance to have that. Music can be very powerful; however, every hegemonic marketing tool impacts or modifies this music, sometimes making the music unimportant to the point where untalented people still sell millions of albums.

When considering youthful music audiences, the whole package has become important and necessary. The musician has become a celebrity and in this age of far-reaching technologies (as with any other form of celebrity) the so-called whole package is at audience’s fingertips. Many youth will not buy an album without first going to the artist’s MySpace site, or at least viewing pictures of the artist(s). Hearing a song and liking it so much that you will spend $15 (or more) on an entire album has become a much rarer phenomenon than it was before the invention of new media technologies, such as MTV, music videos, and MySpace.com.
Many people resist this formula of the "whole package" and attempt to individualize themselves by breaking away from the constricting ideas of the music industry. The artists know what is happening, and they let it happen anyway. Whether or not "selling out" really exists, or if everyone has a different definition and standards of it, it is, at the very least, a phantom which creates a reason for many people to want to free themselves from this phenomenon. The way to break away is to search out other avenues of music besides those offered by the major labels, whether on radio, MTV, or somewhere else.

A current medium that seems to have this approval is MySpace.com. MySpace was started as a community for musicians to get their music out and to network with other musicians. The community has grown to a place for all people, not just musicians, and is seen as a way to hear music that people can't hear on the radio or buy through major music retailers. MySpace currently has almost 185 million members (Myspace). Compare that number to the number of residents in the U.S.—300 million. Because this site seems to have the approval of those who distrust the major music industry, it is seen as a good tool for musical expression and an acceptable public means for artists to spread their music. The site allows musicians to start their own page and upload music and pictures. Then they can add friends, other people on MySpace, and try to spread this music. For example, it is easy to find people in a certain town, have them listen to your music, and invite them to a show. Posting music on MySpace is a way, completely free of the major music industry, to have your music heard, without the issues of money (money is of course always an issue; it takes money just to record your music in order to upload it). MySpace is a good example of a public
space which seemingly will free us from hegemonic practices, because in the beginning it was not taken over by the music industry. Public sites like MySpace may be ways to connect with others, but connections occur within the context of an industry that continues its project of consolidation.

Currently, MySpace remains free of many music industry controls or formulas. However, the use of MySpace has become a co-opted practice as well. The major music industries have immense resources to promote their band MySpace sites. The more manpower and financial backing you have the more people work on your site to get as many friends as possible. This in turn could get more “plays” on your page (how many times your song is played), this in turn brings your page to the top of many lists. According to MySpace, “While we do not publicly release information regarding Top Artist Charts calculations, charts are roughly compiled (sic) based on the number of daily plays and profile views generated on a specific profile, as well as how many people have added the artist's songs to their profile” (Myspace Support). These are just a few examples of the co-optation that can happen within a seemingly emancipated system. Adorno explains further, “It glorifies the musical underworld: an underworld which has long ceased to assist the opposition of those excluded from culture to find expressionism, and now only lives on what is handed down to it from above” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 34).

This is what seems to have happened to MySpace. MySpace.com was started independently but was soon bought by Fox News, a conservative corporation. While this is public information, perhaps it isn’t common knowledge. It seems that it would be important that MySpace has become a corporation, and in fact, a major commodity.
Although Myspace started as an underground concept and still seems that way to some people, with 185 million members, is this possible? This site has become a major commercial corporation, seemingly an underground concept, but owned by the elites. Therefore, those who use it are buying into the ideas of the very people they may attempt to rebel against. For example, Adorno would criticize the very musicians using MySpace for being a party to commercialization. Perhaps there is possibly no way to win in the music industry. Musicians often become a part of the music industry while attempting to promote their music in acceptable, customary ways, once again buying into the very system that they strive to work against. This is an idea that Marx speaks of: That the proletariat will eventually rise up, if for no other reason than their numbers. "With the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more. The various interests and conditions of life within the ranks of the proletariat are more and more equalized in proportions as machinery obliterates all distinctions of labor and nearly everywhere reduces wages to the same low level" (Marx and Engels 15). While this may seem a chance to take back what was taken from them, MySpace may just be another co-opted, seeming chance to rebel.

Even so, MySpace may be the best chance we have to resist the co-optation of consumers by the music industry. MySpace and other actions that are seemingly counter-cultural (even if they aren’t) are probably the best chance to embrace and value the artistic elements of music and even the music industry. Even though MySpace is owned by Fox News, there is no way to police or control all the content. There are millions of music pages, each one a vehicle for spreading one’s music. It is a way to let
people hear your music for free without the restrictions of excessive monetary
investment or lack of a record contract.

MySpace has become a place for the record industry to market their music in a
way which seems as though they are an underground concept. This is just another way
the industry has infiltrated culture to co-opt the opinions of its consumers. Since the
technological revolution, these technologies generate new needs. "The people
recognize themselves in their commodities: they find their soul in their automobile, hi-
fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the
individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in the new needs
which it has produced" (Marcuse 9). The perceived need for new technologies (such as
the Internet and MySpace) may be very dangerous to the consumer, yet very useful for
the marketer.
CHAPTER 3: MUSICAL STYLE AS THE CO-OPTING OF MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

Under the constraint of its own objective logic, music critically canceled the idea of the consummate artwork and severed its tie with the public.

Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* (29)

A century ago the music industry didn’t exist in the form it does today. While there were operas and music stars, the invention of radio, television, and recorded music spread music to wider audiences than ever imagined. According to the Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll, rock music started to make a widespread appearance in 1934 (3). This new genre of music and its popularity created the conditions for co-opting the human musical experience through musical style. This chapter will examine how the music industry spreads music to mass audiences with the least amount of money and effort. As discussed in chapter 2, a consequence of recent consolidations and revised legal restrictions within the music industry is that there are fewer chances for bands and musicians to produce and distribute their music within the record industry. For instance, after the outlawing of payola, an act which was supposed to put musicians back on what was called an even playing field: “As a result [of the end of payola], the independents found themselves back in withering competition with the majors and their superior publicity and distribution networks” (Rolling 122).
Adorno’s seminal study of the co-optation of music does not directly speak of the changes in the industry we are seeing today. He spoke largely of musical stylings. He studied how, down to every note, the music was being co-opted. While his work holds true, other things have become more important to the marketing of music. Unlike marketing and branding in the current music industry, it would be hard to link musical stylings with co-optation. “Advertising becomes information when there is no longer anything to choose from, when the recognition of brand names has taken the place of choice, when at the same time the totality forces everyone who wishes to survive into consciously going along with the process” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 85). This loss of choice and “going along with” anything presented to us creates a great springboard for the entertainment industries to deliver their packaged products to us with confidence that we will consume them.

Co-optation is an idea that has most likely existed as long as human consciousness. Creating a consciousness in other humans based on what you need from them can be a dangerous idea. When we add in capitalism and the acquisition of money to the idea of co-optation, we get a formula which pervades our society today. This pervasive co-optation may be unavoidable. “Political and cultural struggles are intimately involved in, and deployed into, capitalism’s own struggles over its future shape and direction” (Grossberg 327). One of the key reasons the acquisition of money becomes so important is because of who is, and has always been, in charge of producing music. “To date, music has only existed as a product of the bourgeois class; a product that in its fractures and concrete configuration at once embodies the whole of
society and registers it aesthetically. Feudalism scarcely produced its ‘own’ music; rather, it always had it delivered by the urban bourgeoisie” (Adorno, *Philosophy* 100).

That delivery exploited a lack of knowledge in the proletariat, co-opting what the 20th century would call “audiences” seemingly celebrating rather than freeing themselves from bourgeois manipulation. “Only in the realization of freedom, freed of all manipulative management, would the proletariat achieve [their] subjectivity. In the given order of things, the existence of other than bourgeois music is dubious” (100). With the proliferation of recent critical communication studies, researchers are documenting oppressive practices and problems. However, the entertainment industries continue to be in a good position.

Today, these industries have the opportunity to shape what passes for popular art without worrying about audiences or critical researchers asking probing questions. Co-optation is dangerous because it hegemonizes a society so much that marketers can trick people into buying “popular” products. It is also a lifelong process of cultural manipulation and the manipulation of personalities. The social being a person becomes may not be his or her choice. “[Hegemony] holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of will, with varying efficacy (sic) but often powerfully enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity” (Gramsci 333). This passivity is a well-planned part of the formula of the co-optation by the music industry. For example, while there may be few people working in concert in one place, there are many more
individuals within the entertainment industries that combine to determine what the
general public knows and how they perceive themselves and others.

Adorno concurs with Gramsci’s claim about hegemony leading to a passive
state of consciousness. “The change in the function of music involves the basic
conditions of the relation between art and society. The more inexorably the principle of
exchange value destroys use values for human beings, the more deeply does exchange
value disguise itself as the object of enjoyment” (The Culture Industry 39). In other
words, whether through economics or the popularity of an artistic piece, music can take
on a completely different use value than just the piece itself. Industry executives
expertly exploit this condition by making their product seem important (disguised used
value) at the exact time they can gain many more consumers. “The substance of the
music has not been left untouched... Music participated in what Clement Greenburg
called the division of all art into kitsch and avant-garde, and kitsch—the dictatorship of
profit over art—has long since subjugated the particular, socially reserved sphere of
art” (Adorno, Philosophy 13).

Oppression in one form can blind us to other forms of oppression. “....Who, in
a place of amusement, is really being amused. With the same justice, it can be asked
whom music for entertainment still entertains. Rather, it seems to complement the
reduction of people to silence, the dying out of speech as expression, the inability to
communicate at all” (Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character” 271). The hegemonizing of
society into silence becomes problematic when related to music and to, but that we are
taught this silence is okay.
Many people form their musical tastes in their youth. Wanting to fit in becomes much more important with youth. Art and entertainment industries have been around for many years, and they have learned the precise ways to use this youthful desire to their advantage. The most vulnerable people should be the people most protected.

Co-optation as an idea of manipulation has existed for a long time, in most every industry. When we speak of propaganda, in times such as Stalin-era USSR, Nazi Germany, and other places, we think of terrible, manipulative media tactics. However, these tactics are used not only within governments, but also within marketing departments assigned to get us to buy products.

This propaganda has become worse as it is not a blatant tactic anymore, but is done most the time as advertising for what people allegedly want. “Society still is organized in such a way that procuring the necessities of life constitutes the full-time and life-long occupation of specific social classes, which are therefore unfree and prevented from human existence” (Marcuse 128). Marcuse suggests that industry even creates what is important and what is not. Education about who decides what matters may be a way to reclaim choice (Marcuse 128). Our art forms might be different today if society knew how they were marketed as propaganda. For example, a rebellious teenager listening to music because she identified rebellion with the simple act of listening to that music might think differently once realizing that that music was created and produced by a large conglomerate--especially if she knew that that music was made and distributed using a well-established formula and corporate mechanisms that exist to get rebellious teenagers to listen to that very artist. “New music, which is unable to intervene willfully in the social struggle without damaging its own consistency,
involuntarily takes up a social stance—as its enemies well know—in that it abandons
the deception of harmony that has become unsustainable in the face of the catastrophe
toward which reality is veering” (Adorno, Philosophy 101).

The manipulation of what counts as opposition through music is dangerous in
many ways, but is especially important to study because it should be considered a
“gateway” oppression. While seemingly less harmful than other forms, it is the first
step in us forgetting forever who we really are and what we really think and like.

Music is one of the most important parts in this equation of the manipulation of
art. If we are speaking of the idea of society and their non-involvement in the problem,
we must then look at the idea of how we perceive and comprehend the music. “When
they think they comprehend the music, they only perceive an inert, empty husk of what
they treasure as a possession: an indifferent showpiece, neutralized and robbed of its
own critical substance” (Adorno, Philosophy 12). This “critical substance” of the
musical piece should be the most important aspect, if not the only aspect, the individual
uses to decide what music they listen to. Adorno explains how, even though it may be
non-conscious on the part of the public, they still have a part in it. “All that the public
grasps of traditional music is its crudest aspects: easily remembered themes; ominously
beautiful passages, moods, and associations” (12). We must understand and grasp the
complexity of this form of art. Perhaps then can we understand what is being done
through music in the form of oppression. Perhaps then we can understand oppression
more fully in every aspect of our lives.

Adorno suggests that the mass diversions of the public is to blame for the spread
of co-optation through the music industry. This industry plays to simple diversions,
assuming that people will not work hard for a leisure activity (such as music).

However, because music plays a key role in the shaping of individuals and their personalities, people invest considerable time and resources for leisure. This simplicity that the music industry relies on can be compared with the concept of hegemony. However, hegemony may not be an accident as many would like us to believe. "The active man-in-the-mass has practical activity, which nonetheless involves understanding the world in so far as it transforms it. His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed" (333). These are two reasons for co-optation. The first speaks to our interactions within a larger society and the desire to fit into this society. The second alludes to the condition of people inheriting cultural knowledge and assumptions from birth, to how institutionalized bourgeoisie, commodities, and marketing form our opinions.

According to Gramsci, the two ideas create a situation where ideologies and morals may be overlooked. Applied to art and music, conclusions about forms of art mirror or respond to dominant morals and ideologies. Society becomes more important than personal opinions as opinions come to mirror society. Self is lost in this situation. Fortunately, Gramsci offers a solution. "Critical understanding of self takes place therefore through a struggle of political 'hegemonies' and of opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics proper, in order to arrive at the working
out at a higher level of one’s own conception of reality” (333). This conception of reality can change based on how well you know your self. “Consciousness of being part of a particular hegemonic force is the first stage towards a further progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice will finally be one” (Gramsci 333). This self-consciousness includes responsibility as well. According to Adorno, “The concept of taste itself is outmoded” (Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character” 271). If we lose this “taste” then we may loose the ability to critically examine our likes and dislikes. Consumers have a responsibility to research what they are buying; to know themselves well enough to determine if they approve of how this product was created, and to discern that they are buying it for themselves, and not just to receive the approval of a particular society.

This relates to music in more way than one. Being in an industry that is hundreds of years old, many things cannot be considered an accident. “The music industry, which debases music that is available from the past by extolling and galvanizing its sanctity, merely confirms the consciousness of the listeners” (Adorno, Philosophy 12). Without knowledge (or the consciousness) of how they are being treated, consumers have no chance at consent and, therefore, no chance at dissent.

The music industry relies on the idea that the individual no longer exists. This also has a lot to do with this “self” and knowing what we like, not just what we are told we like. According to Adorno, “Standardization of song hits keeps the customers in line by doing their listening for them, as it were. Pseudo-individualization, for its parts, keeps them in line by making them forget what they listen to is already listened for them, or ‘pre-digested’ (as quoted in Wiggershaus 244).” Using standardized formulas,
music industry experts can reliably generate hit songs that will make money almost every time. This can be done down to every note, and can be even more powerful than marketing. Adorno speaks of these in length, and although this thesis does not delve into these ideas significantly, some examples he speaks of include the “rhythmically obedient type” which he believed “was found mainly among younger people, held fast the basic tempo in spite of any syncopations, and was thus expressing its pleasure in obedience. This view corresponded to that in his essay on jazz, where the jazz fan was seen as being masochistically subjected on an authoritarian collective” (245). The second type Adorno called the “emotional type.” This used “sentimental music to unload feelings, above all the feelings of unhappiness” (245). These are just a few examples of how the music industry can create formulas with certain types of music styling to relate to different economic classes, ages, and genders.

Art and music become tools for making money, and artistic value is no longer the first priority. An artificial artistic value gets created and utilized over and over. “This selection reproduces itself in a fatal circle: The most familiar is the most successful and is therefore played again and again and made still more familiar.” (Adorno, *The Culture Industry* 36). Whether related to business, marketing, music videos, fan clubs, or any other area of the music industry (including the music itself), entertainment executives are skilled professionals. However, this industry is somewhat different from other industries because of its placement within the area of art. The standardized formula of co-optation translates to the creative process, i.e. the songs. Adorno describes this formula as “destitute of any function, [to be] celebrated. One
need not even ask about the capacity for musical performance” (*The Culture Industry* 36-37).

The co-optation formula serves an important function with the music industry. New media, inventions, and genres are all ways to exercise free and democratic expression, but as soon as they are implemented, the emancipatory potential faces the power of corporate control. Not only do consumers rarely question the formula—they help make the formula work—in their role as consumers. The formula affects the artistic value of the works as well. “The familiarity of the piece is a surrogate for the quality ascribed to it” (Adorno, *The Culture Industry* 30). Songs lose their value when the same formula is used over and over, repeatedly conforming to industry demands about song selection and themes, lyrics, etc., used in the songs. Adorno places much of blame on the elites within the music industry themselves. Individuals have a responsibility to question what elites promote; however, within the social norms and inherited ideas of a particular society people do not actively exercise their personal autonomy, they have learned to eat what they are fed.

Adorno hesitates putting any blame on the proletariat. “An approach in terms of value judgments (sic) has become a fiction for the person who finds himself hemmed in by standardized musical goods. He can neither escape impotence nor decide between offerings where everything is so completely identical that preference in fact depends merely on biographical details or on the situation in which things are heard” (Adorno, *The Culture Industry* 30). All culture is run by an industry: “Whoever speaks of culture speaks of administration as well” (107). When it comes down to it, all of these things are a business.
There are many forms of art produced outside of formal business structures. However, the majority of art easily accessible to the public will be associated with a business. For instance, when a major record label company supports a musician or band, the company has the money and resources to spread the music farther than the musicians could. It comes down to money and connections. One example of these connections is radio. A radio station may be more likely to put a song on their play lists if the radio station managers know who sent the song to them. "The diverse spheres of music must be thought of together. Their static separation, which certain caretakers of culture have ardently sought—the totalitarian radio was assigned to the task, on the one hand, of providing good entertainment and diversion, and on the other, of fostering so-called cultural goods, as if there could still be good entertainment and as if the cultural goods were not, by their administration, transformed into evils—the neat parceling out of music's social field of force is illusionary" (Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character" 275). The record industry makes a business out of cultivating contacts with people who can play a record label's music and spread it to a wide audience. The audience listens to the "pre-digested" music, music they like simply because it must be good—it's on the radio.

Marcuse believes this is a defense tactic, a means of survival. "Functional communication is only the outer layer of the one-dimensional universe in which man is trained to forget—to translate the negative into the positive so that he can continue to function, reduced but fit and reasonably well" (Marcuse 104). He argues that our "freedoms" are illusions that we are in control. "The institutions of free speech and
freedom of thought do not hamper the mental coordination with the established reality” (104).

Many forms of music carry the same forms of co-optation as rock & roll. At almost the opposite end of the spectrum is rap music. While not speaking about this subject in depth, critically examining the rap music industry shows that not just rock & roll music, but the entire music industry, is involved in co-optation. Rap music is a much newer form of music than rock music, at least in the mainstream. Many agree that rap first appeared in the late 1970’s in New York (Rolling 682). Marketing rap music varies from rock & roll. Rap music is marketed very heavily based on socio-economic factors. Many rap artists either are, or are portrayed as, coming from less than favorable backgrounds, at least economically if not geographically—the first years of rap were centered around The Bronx and Queens, New York (Rolling 682-683). The music and marketing of the artists centers on someone in the same situation as you, the rap listener, “making it.” “These middle class rappers approached the ghetto itself as an outlaw fantasy. Being ‘real’ or ‘hard’ was the new credo, with no musical or verbal concessions to pop conventions” (683). Not only could young people make it rich, they could rise above their economic class, making something of themselves, even if only as an image. For people with limited possibilities, identifying with someone who was once just like you and is now a celebrity becomes a moment of hope.

Could this form of marketing be just another form of co-optation? How many people know where that rap artist came from and how much truth is there in the stories told about what has happened to them?
In both the rock & roll music and rap music industries, the hope for circumstances that are incredibly rare and hard to achieve becomes a common factor. Whether it is hope of making it out of a dire situation, hope of someone liking you, or hope of becoming a rock star, marketing strategists appeal to this hope, beginning with idolatry. The co-optation does not fulfill people’s dreams even as they are promoted as legitimate ways to live. Of course anything is possible, but these dreams of stardom are similar to winning the Powerball. How many people with these dreams actually marry the rock star, or become the rock star or rap star? Talent and motivation are very important, and anyone with these has a chance, but they may not be enough. The marketing in this case makes it seem easy, and that you may not have to work hard for this. People want to believe in a dream and when this one is presented to them as possible it becomes easy to believe in these possibilities.

An important aspect of music and this co-optation of music listening has to do with youth. “‘Youth’ is the most powerful determinant of the audience, not only of rock in general, but of particular alliances as well” (Grossberg 171). The youth of America, at least since the baby boom (if not before), often are rebellious in general, which is itself of interest to industry as a marketing opportunity. Youth culture is produced as a set of co-opted practices. “It is not that youth was somehow inherently rebellious but that its identity was given, at a particular moment” (Grossberg 178). In general, throughout the generations since the baby boom, youth have been given this rebellious image. Whether they were fighting a cause, as in the 1960’s, or fighting their parents, or not fighting anything, America’s youth have been juxtaposed with rebellious causes. Beginning with baby boomers wanting to differentiate themselves from their
parents' generation, up to the present day where youth. In 1992, Grossberg observed, "A public generational crisis came to define the content of youth's identity. But the rupture which separated youth from adults was not a matter of ideology or interpretation. It was a crisis of the relation between affect and signification, in the possibilities of investing in the meanings and values being offered to them" (Grossberg 204).

The youth culture of today is different from any other in the past. Digital technologies bring the youth of the 21st century unique, novel, and never before encountered experiences. They have music at their fingertips; it's just a click away. With websites like myspace.com, youth can search out their own music, whether those artists have been signed to any sort of a label or not. Their world exists largely online, and anything they might want is only a click away. Rebellion is located in virtual, computerized experience: starting a MySpace account and meeting friends that parents don't know about, or don't approve of; discovering new, unapproved music, regardless of rules that one must be 18 to buy a CD with a "Parental Advisory" sticker on it in a retail store--anyone with a credit card can buy it online.

The internet has changed the way our youth think and interact. They grow up in a world where they are experts at things their parents have never experienced. There is now a place of rebellion, a place where youth go that their parents don't often reach, even if they want to. Where society has given up rebellion, youth culture supplies the illusion of it by portraying each young generation as a generation searching for something more. Musicians and music executives alike create and perpetuate this portrayal. "Rock emerged as a way of mapping the specific structures of youth's
affective alienation on the geographies of everyday life, and the specific differences of youth’s social identity on the grid of socially defined differences” (Grossberg 179).

While this generation of youth has resources no other generation had before, its still much like any past generation. “This unique position was formed at the intersection of youth’s alienation from the adult world, and the sense of its difference which had been constructed by that world” (Grossberg 178). Marketing executives create the portrayals and appearance of youthful rebellion by discovering what youth do not want to be defined as is, and then directing their plans and programs toward the opposite images. A critical analysis of this co-opting process reveals that individuals and groups may not know they are being led and directed in this way. In desperation, they may compromise their personal autonomy and look for messages and assurances, within familiar artistic expressions, that there is space and opportunity for rebellion. “The delight in the moment and the gay façade becomes an excuse for absolving the listener from the thought of the whole, whose claim is comprised in proper listening. The listener is converted, along his line of least resistance, into the acquiescent purchaser” (Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character” 273). Those moments of enjoyment, no matter how co-opted, become a tool of co-optation in themselves.

Music lends itself to rebellious constructions because of its diverse nature. No matter what a young person’s parents approve of, there is bound to be some form of music available that they don’t approve of. “McLaren [of the Sex Pistols] understood that rock & roll was the most important, perhaps the only kind of culture the young truly cared about; he understood that for the young everything else (fashion, slang, sexual styles) flowed from rock & roll, or was organized by it, or was validated by it—
and that therefore rock & roll was not just the necessary first principle of any youth revolt, but that revolt’s necessary first target” (Rolling 595).

The extensive variety of music in the world lends itself to almost everyone with access to like some form of music. While youth may be an easy group to co-opt, this seems to be true especially for music, whether the consumers (in this case, the youth of our society) realize it or not, “The liberal consensus seem[s] to agree that they [will] become the ultimate replicants of the very world they rejected” (Grossberg 204).

When music becomes a status symbol, and when being liked is very important, the music you like also becomes important. “The woman who has the money with which to buy is intoxicated by the act of buying. In American conventional speech, having a good time means being present at the enjoyment of others” (Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character” 279). This can be a double-edged sword; when it is important to fit in and when it is important to be different. Music can lend itself to both of these sides, oddly at the same time. There are the groups of teenagers that listen to certain music just to fit in, but in a more complex way, there are teenagers that want to be different, yet become friends with others who are similar to them and their differences, or as Grossberg says “this identity in a lack of identity” (202). The identity problems of youth create a new opportunity for co-optation. “Perhaps the only identity that could be achieved was that of the ‘identity crisis,’ where the uncertainty of what lay beneath the surface of social roles and images, where the question of how to identify a ‘real me,’ was identified as a psychological disorder” (Grossberg 203).

This identity crisis—wanting to fit in while also wanting to be different—leaves youth, as a group, easy to manipulate. Co-optation is not a far stretch for those who
desire to be liked and to conform. They are probably more likely to do whatever it takes to reach conformity and, consequently, may be an easier to influence and direct. However, when youth desire to be different, it’s possible that the only way for large companies to market to them is through co-optation. Part of co-optation is taking something underground and making it popular, and this works well in this situation. As a somewhat naïve group grasping for being different and conformity, bringing difference into the mainstream is a way to accomplish both. For instance, punk culture started as an underground movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Rolling 594-595). This culture centered on music, fashion style, and even a lifestyle. However, since that time punk culture has been co-opted in many ways. One example is the fashion style of punk culture. The real style is available in only a few shops in the world. The themes of punk were rebellion and anti-establishment. Consequently, clothes were largely made at home or re-made from other clothes. However, today these styles grace the picture windows and fill up the racks of many popular clothing stores, including Wal-Mart. Punk culture has been reduced to the way someone looks and dresses, not the original punk ideals. It is now about fitting in, even if that way of fitting in looks like you are rebelling, but has very little to do with the original reason that punk style and state of mind were invented.

The music of the punk culture started as a way of rebellion and an attempt at individualism. However, the rise in the popularity of punk music began its downfall. "The isolation of radical modern music is due not to its asocial content but to its social content, in that by virtue of its quality alone—and all the more emphatically the more it allows this pure quality to emerge—it touches on the social disaster rather than
volatilizing it in the deceitful claim to humanity as if it already existed. It is no longer ideology. In this, in its remoteness, music converges with a fundamental social transformation” (Adorno, *Philosophy* 101).

The Sex Pistols, one of the original punk bands, were pivotal in the creation and rise in popularity of the punk music scene. However, popularity came at a cost, the loss of the band’s original punk ideals. “As invented, inspired and carried to a formal (but not historical) conclusion by McLaren and the Sex Pistols, punk rock was an aesthetic and political revolt based in a mass of contradictions that sustained it aesthetically and doomed it politically” (Rolling 595). Ironically, an original punk band actually contributed to the downfall of the original punk movement.

With simple lyrics, the Sex Pistols got their point across to their fans and critics. They projected an image of not caring what anyone thinks, which is what punk was originally all about. A sample of lyrics from their song “Anarchy in the UK,” while simplistic, gets the band’s point across.

I am an antichrist
I am an anarchist
Don’t know what I want (Sex Pistols)

This song was one of their biggest hits and brought punk music to the forefront in its time, a point which is ironic in its own way. Saying that the Sex Pistols doomed the political anti-establishment message of punk music shows the importance of this genre of music staying underground. The moment it became popular and was aired on mainstream entertainment channels it no longer represented the rebellious ideals of the original movement.
The music of today shows very little similarity to its punk roots. While on the surface the message seems the same, major record labels back many popular bands, making those bands and their music vulnerable to co-optation. With new forms of punk, such as ska, punk-pop, and others, it is hard to tell what is genuine. Given the dialectic between rebellion and co-optation, if there is a “genuine” punk band recording music, we probably haven’t heard of them, and any we have heard of are probably false in many ways. It becomes a catch-22 in studying a subject (and genre) such as this one, where “art adjusts itself to...the harmonious and the inharmonious, the correct and the incorrect,” with “no more choices,” where “the question is no longer put, and no one demands...justification of the conventions. The very existence of the subject...has become as questionable as has...a freedom of choice which empirically, in any case, no one any longer exercises” (Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character” 271). We have begun to rely so much on being told what is good and bad taste that we no longer exercise our own judgment.

The dialectic between rebellion and co-optation continues today. Green Day, a popular band with punk roots, offers a complex and rich example because even though they have been popular in the mainstream punk genre for 14 years, they have always been marked to youth. Since the release of their first major LP in 1994, they have kept the same attitude as their original “punk” image, but who is to say how true to punk ideals this is? They released a CD in 2004 called “American Idiot.” The title track was written about President Bush.

Don’t want to be an American idiot.
One nation controlled by the media.
Information age of hysteria.
It’s calling out to idiot America.
I'm not a part of a redneck agenda.
Now everybody do the propaganda.
And sing along to the age of paranoia.
Welcome to a new kind of tension.
All across the alien nation.
Where everything isn't meant to be okay.
Television dreams of tomorrow.
We're not the ones who're meant to follow.
For that's enough to argue. (Green Day)

While seemingly a rebellious song at a time when other bands experienced a backlash for speaking badly about President Bush (e.g., The Dixie Chicks), how rebellious was it? The lyrics are suggestive of the earlier Sex Pistols song. The Green Day album was released on Reprise/Warner Elektra Atlantic Records, one of the three major record companies. It sold almost six million copies (5,800,001 to be exact) (Bumbery). Does the popularity of a product indicate that co-optation has happened? Does the selling of albums guarantee oppression? “At every moment in rock’s history, people have identified some music’s, audiences or alliances as inauthentic. These are dismissed, not merely as bad or inferior rock, but as mere entertainment, as not really rock at all” (Grossberg 207).

Green Day’s fans are split on the issue of co-optation. While Green Day started out as a self-defined punk band, their increased popularity drew new fans, while at the same time alienating their original fans. These original fans felt that Green Day had “sold out” when they signed with a major label, therefore, Green Day’s music didn’t hold the anti-establishment value it held before. Again, this example illustrates how instead of understanding and making choices based on artistic value or identification with a common ideal, popular choices are made based upon image and marketing.
There are questions on subjectivity and who chooses what is actually correct. “Such judgments are not merely judgments of taste: what do I like? They are judgments about the very possibility of taste; they offer distinctions which question the right of a particular practice or alliance to be included within the formation” (Grossberg 207).

Whether or not they stay true in their punk roots and continue to write songs about what they feel passionate about versus what they know will sell, they are being marketed by a major record label and the goal of that business is to make as much money as possible. “[Music] listens according to formula, and indeed debasement itself would not be possible if resistance ensued, if the listeners still had the capacity to make demands beyond the limits of what was supplied” (Adorno “On the Fetish-Character” 285). This has changed in the past years because of inventions like Myspace.com and other online music services but it is still an important idea to understand.

While the youth who bought their first Green Day album are older now, the record label doesn’t seem to market new albums to those initial fans. Those fans are adults now, most likely married with children of their own. The allure of rebellion may not be as important to them as it was when the first albums came out. Music is marketed to different people in different ways. Targeting America’s youth is an important marketing strategy for Green Day as well as for other artists. “A sort of musical children’s language is prepared for them; it differs from the real thing in that its vocabulary consists exclusively of fragments and distortions of the artistic language of music” (Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character” 290).

“Higher” types of music are marketed to the wealthier economic classes, “It is claimed that they actually like light music and listen to the higher type only for reasons
of social prestige” (Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character” 275). Adorno reminds us that people often like and choose music because of how their choices will “look” or matter to other people. Although it is possible the record label companies market to youth only because of the ideas of rebellion, in a highly co-opted society, more likely the ideas of rebellion permeate rock, punk, and rap lyrics to sell records. A song or band that seems authentically rebellious becomes just another co-opted instrument for making money. “At certain moments, from certain places within the rock formation, these inauthentic alliances appear to define the dominant form of rock. The result is that the history of rock is always seen as a cyclical movement between the high (authentic) and low (co-opted) points, although different fans will disagree over which moments constitute the high and low points” (Grossberg 207).

The emotions associated with a person’s attempt to be different and rebel should seemingly be off limits. However, pathos marketing appeals are powerful tools for the music industry. Along with the formation of individual personalities, people stress about developing self-concepts and self-images which mirror societal norms. “Society had to develop strategies to ‘program’ the mobility, the ‘otherness’ and the uncertainty of youth into the normalcy of adulthood (through the specific historical alliance of family, school, psychology, medicine and criminal justice systems, as well as economic and cultural discourses), a trajectory most fully and nostalgically imagined in Happy Days” (Grossberg 178).

The forming of personalities during adolescence is one of the reasons co-optation of rebellious ideals seems to work so well. Even with a close examination of song lyrics from bands such as Green Day and the Sex Pistols it is difficult to recognize
or discern true rebellion. True rebellion may now be the tool of the individual. However, if an individual’s personal autonomy no longer exists, then there may be no chance to ever rebel. “If nobody can any longer speak, then certainly nobody can any longer listen” (Adorno, “On the Fetish-Character” 271). The loss of autonomy is related directly to the co-optation of rebellious ideals and the consumption of pre-packaged and pre-digested goods (i.e. music and art). “The sacrifice of individuality, which accommodates itself to the regularity of the successful, the doing of what everybody does, follows from the basic fact that in broad areas the same thing is offered to everybody by the standardized production of consumption goods” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 40). The exhilarating, highly charged emotions that accompany rebellion have just become another set of emotions that we think we have complete control over but haven’t for quite a while.

The emergence of rock music in the 1950s and 1960s created a “perfect storm” of the alienation of youth mixed with an identifiable way to rebel. “Rock actively foregrounded that subordination as the source, not only of its own empowerment, but of the possibility that youth could empower itself as youth, that it could place itself into a position of power and desire, that it could live out its alienation in ways that would increase its own sense of the of control over its everyday life” (Grossberg 179). Music is suitable for rebellious action for many reasons, including its production of emotions otherwise repressed among teenagers. The nature of music, including rock music, is an artistic form; a way for people to express themselves, which in turn becomes a way for the listener to relate to someone else’s emotions. For someone (such as youth) in an
emotional state, relating to someone else can become a way to deal with those emotions.

Another reason is that music creates a recognizable rebellion in its noise aspect. While seemingly a simplistic idea, without noise, rock & roll music in the 1950s and 1960's would not have the stigma it carried with mainstream music consumers. While other media have spurred on and offered public forums for rebellion (such as *Catcher in the Rye* and other literature), music has an auditory aspect that no other medium had; the chance to turn it up as loud as you want. It would be hard to read a book your parents disapproved of with the drama and highly-charged atmosphere that music can create.

Another piece of the "perfect storm" involves the way music mirrors the ideas of the youth. "Rock emerged as a way of mapping the specific structures of youth's affective alienation on the geographies of everyday life, and the specific differences of youth's social identity on the grid of socially defined differences" (Grossberg 179). Music became a catalyst time and time again in the 1960's. Rock & roll music provided an outlet for feelings of confusion and a mass audience to speak to about what was happening. Anyone listening felt that there was a voice for them. In a time of struggle, those on the fence may not know how to respond unless someone tells them there are others out there doing the same.

A major contributing force in this decade was the Beatles. Whether or not their ideas were popular at the time, they had a point of view, and tens of thousands listened. A sample of the lyrics from the song "Revolution" explains their opinions well:

You say you want a revolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
You tell me that it's evolution
Well, you know
We all want to change the world
But when you talk about destruction
Don't you know that you can count me out
Don't you know it's gonna be all right (Beatles)

In just nine lines they articulated their opinions about rebelling, about peace, and about how they felt conflict would end. Listeners were encouraged to take action, but to do it in a peaceful way, because it's not worth it to be violent in order to end what was happening. It's an example of how powerful one song, or one band, can be.

However, this music is mirroring the ideas of youth, so how is it different from other music mirroring the ideas of society? Rock bands can create situations where people might listen so they can say whatever they want. But this occurs according to how the entertainment industry functions, so that bands become conductors of co-opted industry messages. Rather than focusing on individuals and their choices, messages are aimed at the Youth Culture, which mirrors society.

Because many industries use these formulas, they realize to the need for reproducing and incorporating the ideas of their customers. Many youth feel a need to relate to someone or something. "The gesture of the lonely individual finds common measure" (Adorno, Philosophy 41). This gesture marks the Baby Boom generation, perhaps since World War II, when, for example, the book Catcher in the Rye showed that all was not well in the cookie-cutter, emerging suburban paradise. Anticipating Youth Culture, the book follows Holden Caulfield, a rebellious and lonely high school student, and through the process of his journey we learn quite a bit about the teenage mind, from sadness to happiness to cynicism: "I think I was more depressed than I ever
was in my whole life” (Salinger 194), “People always clap for the wrong things” (84), “I was probably the only normal bastard in the whole place, which isn’t saying too much” (62), “I felt so lonesome all of a sudden. I almost wished I was dead” (48), “People never believe you” (36), “You take a very handsome guy, or a guy that thinks he’s a real hot-shot, and they’re always asking you to do them a big favor. Just because they’re crazy about themselves, they think you’re crazy about them, too, and that you’re just dying to do them a favor. It’s sort of funny in a way” (28), “That way I wouldn’t have to have any goddamn stupid useless conversations with anybody” (198). Rephrased, such sentences found their way into the music of Youth Culture. Teenagers saw their feelings in Holden Caulfield, if not in every emotion. While this book did become a mainstream success, it was never seen as a co-opted marketing scheme. Of all the popular books written, *Catcher in the Rye* never became a movie, but perhaps should have. Salinger never sold the rights to this book, which is a reason it was never made into a movie. However, many believe that rebellious youth from *Rebel without a Cause* to current movies have been modeled after Caulfield. While youth may have felt no connection with anyone else, characters like this made them feel connected for the first time: “Society seemed unable to provide any narratives or meanings which could allow youth to understand, or even imagine, a significant place for themselves in history. Instead, there were few stable values and truths which could give meaning to youths’ lives and define the future as a worthy goal. If traditional models of people’s place in society no longer works, then the significance of such heroes as Holden Caulfield, James Dean and Marlon Brando lay precisely in their struggle to achieve some identity consistent with this new set of experiences” (Grossberg 203). This is one
of the reasons the book continues to be a classic, and popular with youth. Author JD Salinger (through the voice of Caulfield) couldn’t have described co-optation in a better way: “If you do something too good, then, after a while, if you don’t watch it, you start showing off. And then you’re not as good anymore” (Salinger 126).

Music industry executives understand marketing and how to generate huge profits for music companies. “Sacrosanct traditional music has itself been assimilated to commercial mass production of the character of its performance and as it functions in the life of the listener” (Adorno, Philosophy 13). One way to generate sales during the early years of rock & roll was to appeal to and mirror feelings of loneliness, an emotion many teenagers relate to. This theme was used over and over in different kinds of music, not only in lyrics but also musical stylings as well. But this doesn’t mean that this co-optation was acceptable either, “That the anxiety of the lonely becomes a canon of the aesthetic language of form betrays something of the secret of loneliness” (Adorno, Philosophy 37-38). Feelings of abandonment and loneliness are shown to be okay if you have a chance to feel better, also others are feeling the same as you. For many youth, knowing that they aren’t the only ones experiencing these feelings have a powerful effect. Sharing these feelings of angst and loneliness in a public forum gave youth a way to feel connected to others of like mind and to free themselves from the way their forms of rebellion had been defined and constructed by society’s institutions. “As society attempted to shape the body of youth—to organize its material, ideological and affective life, to monitor the needs, aspirations and behavior, the baby boomers gained an independent existence as youth apart from these social institutions. This left a space within which the privileged place of youth enabled it to resist its own
subordination by foregrounding the sense of its own difference, a difference which had already been constructed for it” (Grossberg 178).

Since the discovery of rock & roll in the 1940’s and 1950’s, there have been many bands recreating the formula used by the music industry to create and market music. Today, one such band is called My Chemical Romance. This band’s music is published on the Warner Brothers Records label (Music). A song of theirs called “Helena” was on radio and MTV constantly for many months in 2005. The lyrics of this song resonated with anyone looking to break free from loneliness, or even just to relate to someone. A few lyrics are as follows:

When every star fall brought you to tears again
We are the very hurt you sold
And what's the worst you take
From every heart you break
And like the blade you stain
Well I've been holding on tonight
What's the worst that I can say?
Things are better if I stay
So long and goodnight (My Chemical Romance, “Helena”)  

The video for this song features the band in a church, during a funeral. The feeling of abandonment permeates the video. For someone feeling that way, they may receive a message that someone “out there” agrees with you. There may be over 1 million people who agree with you. “Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge,” the CD this song is off of sold 1,634,715 copies (Bumbery).

As this thesis argues earlier in this chapter, marketing and “the music” influence each other. Millions of dollars are spent on marketing campaigns, even on seemingly less important things like the band’s website and MySpace sites. According to My Chemical Romance’s website, www.mychemicalromance.com/links, their enemies are
“Fear” and “Regret” (My Chemical Romance, 2007). Their lyrics echo feelings of loneliness, or the survival of it. This theme spreads into every facet of the band’s culture as well.

Observing the emotions of people can say more about humanity than can studying and classifying why group of people do certain things. “‘Lonely speech’ says more of society’s own tendency than does communicative discourse” (Adorno, Philosophy 37-38). Adorno may have been on to something. As “society’s own tendency” (37-38), loneliness may have become more common, which would explain why it is being used as a formula by the music industry today. “Youth struggled to express its frustrations, to realize its own desires, to enable its own activities” (Grossberg 177). This is especially true with the youth culture today, many of whom are not only confused about who they are but are perhaps the most naïve consumers and therefore could be more likely to not question why they are relating to a certain thing at the time, or why they like it.

My Chemical Romance will be releasing a new CD, an ode to lead singer and songwriter Gerard Way’s grandmother called “The Black Parade.” Some song lyrics embrace and portray these same emotions of loneliness and abandonment, but in a different way.

And though you're dead and gone believe me
Your memory will carry on
We'll carry on
And though you're broken and defeated
Your weary widow marches on

Do or die, you'll never make me
Because the world will never take my heart
Go and try, you'll never break me (My Chemical, “The Black Parade”)
Although the feelings are the same, in this case, the band talks about how to overcome these feelings. They offer "...the possibility that youth [can] empower itself as youth, that it [can] place itself into a position of power and desire, that it [can] live out its alienation in ways that [will] increase its own sense of control over its everyday life" (Grossberg 179). While not sharing these feelings of hope on the last CD, perhaps it is best the band finally did, since many follow whatever they say. However, perhaps these lyrics and the band’s music represent another form of co-optation. Perhaps it is important that the formula changes and does not become stale. Perhaps in the two years between these CD’s (CDNow), fans matured. Perhaps they are less jaded and looking for hope. Whatever the reason, the second album was just as popular as the first (it sold almost as many albums as “Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge” at 1,356,863 [Bumbery]), and this changing of formula could be a way to sell more albums, as well as to keep fans.

This “tendency” of society creates something the music industry cannot. Loneliness can bring out the same natural emotions as music can. However, both of these seem to have been co-opted, in this example both by the same industry.

These forms of co-optation created by the music industry have been around for a long time. Our forms of art may no longer be a personal choice but created by an industry focused on creating formulas to best make money. These formulas can include everything from marketing, image and even the music itself. The first step in reclaiming our personal choices might be to realize that these formulas and tactics do exist and are used frequently.
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Only for a pacified humanity would art come to an end. Its death, which now threatens, would be exclusively the triumph of bare existence over the consciousness that has the audacity to resist it.

Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* (16)

Aesthetic theory has in recent years become a widely studied critical theory. Artistic expression, in any form, lends itself to studies of oppression because it is considered a leisure activity in our lives. Art has entertainment value that is an expressive form, and this is something we should always have control over.

“Contemporary aesthetics is dominated by the controversy over whether it is subjective or objective” (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 163). If we do not feel free to express ourselves, then we probably won’t feel free in other things we do. Our expressive inclinations are influenced by new inventions and expressive forms, from radio and recorded music to rock music, MySpace, etc. Each has created ways to free expression of ideas and identities. Yet each has been co-opted into the mainstream and marketed, using music industry formulas to generate profits in ways that frustrate the chance at freedom. The fact that society is not completely co-opted preserves the chance at freedom from conformity that co-optation demands.

However, incomplete co-optation requires knowledge that our expressions are not under our control. When we sit down to listen to a new song, to read a new book, or to view new art, we may assume that what we like and don’t like, what we enjoy and
don't enjoy, is a matter of pure choice. Critical studies of aesthetic theory, hegemony, and co-optation have argued that such a view of free choice most likely is not the case. The independent “aesthetic judgment of taste” (Adorno, Aesthetic Theory 163) has been co-opted since birth to tell us what we like and what we may not like.

Music has existed since the beginning of time. The 20th century brought us inventions never before imagined. We have access to information at our fingertips. We can take music with us wherever we go. These new ways of communicating lead to new ways of thinking. These new technologies change the ways things are done. “The change in the function of music involves the basic conditions of the relations between art and society” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 39). In general, people today have a low tolerance for waiting for information. This need for immediate access changes the marketing landscape.

Broad-based, immediate access to information brought about another unexpected change. Entertainment marketing departments have to work harder to convince consumers that their product(s) is the one that we desire and must consume. Because of this increased focus on product differentiation, co-optation has become prevalent in our society; especially in ideas that should never be able to be co-opted, such as our hobbies. However, this may be the only choice and, therefore, we become unknowing victims. Adorno agreed with this formula in his time: “One has the choice of either dutifully going along with the business, if only furtively in front of the loudspeaker on Saturday afternoon, or at once stubbornly and impenitently acknowledging the trash served up for the ostensible or real needs of the masses” (Adorno, The Culture Industry 43-44). While times and technologies have changed
since Adorno, the ideas are still very much the same. The art industries, and specifically the music industry, have become conglomerates, to the point where only a few major companies still exist. These conglomerates enjoy the rare opportunity to have very little competition and, therefore, very little oversight. Companies have more money to promote and produce their products and more liberty to do this in whatever way they want. Usually this means in whatever way will create the most money for them, without a lot of acknowledgement to artistic value. “If the value of taste in the present situation is questioned, it is necessary to understand what taste is composed of in this situation...Musical analysis has today decayed as fundamentally as musical charm, and has its parody in the stubborn counting of beats” (Adorno, *The Culture Industry* 40).

The history of co-optation presents the challenge to free ourselves, at least enough to know what is happening behind musical forms and marketing. The problem with this oppression is that we normally look for and notice overt forms of oppression that have more obvious relations to life, like uncompensated or poorly compensated labor. While seemingly less important, one could argue that our leisure activities are important to who we are as individuals. Consequently, it is incredibly important to know what we are consuming. If we are free to do so, then we act from our heightened personal autonomy and no longer simply mirror the values and aesthetic judgments of societal, hegemonic institutions.

According to Adorno, the loss of individuality is also the loss of our own opinions, “If the liquidated individual really makes the complete superficiality of the conventions passionately his own, then the golden age of taste has dawned at the very
moment in which taste no longer exists” (*The Culture Industry* ‘40). That in itself is a much more important issue than our hobbies. To realize this is a key step in leading ourselves to freedom from oppression in other ways. The co-optation of our entertainment values is a key step in losing our individuality.
Works Cited


