

**Patriotic Ideology:
America's Imports—Advertisement**

Kristina Valle

English Discipline, El Paso Community College

English 1301: Composition I

Professor Kelli L. Wood

July 19, 2020

Patriotic Ideology:

America's Imports--Advertisement

Society is constantly being bombarded by television advertisements, images, and propaganda. Television ads influence people on what to buy, eat, wear, and depict a false sense of "American Pride." Advertisers use patriotism as a way to influence viewers to buy their product and show the viewer a false sense of patriotic ideology. The Chrysler and Bob Dylan super bowl 2014 commercial "America's Imports," promotes their product with many proud images of our nation and its flag, influential comments, and American-made products. The advertisers use sociocultural psychology to influence and manipulate viewers. American pride does not mean having the finer things in life, building things in America, or living in the past. Since the beginning of the Global War on Terrorism, advertisers have used American Pride more and more to their advantage. They depict images that people can relate to and make it seem un-American if you go elsewhere. In the end, American pride must be earned through respect, not bought, though this is far from the message Chrysler is advocating. The view of America, as presented by this Chrysler ad, is stereotypical and wrapped in a nostalgia for a past that wasn't as free or glorious as we often think it is.

The Chrysler (2014) commercial "America's Imports," begins with a flashback to Bob Dylan playing a guitar. He looks out the window, sees an image of a cowboy riding a horse, and cheerleaders cheering while he states "is there anything more American than America?" The entire ad consists of flashes from the past, "the good old days," with an attractive white woman wrapped in the American flag holding on to it as it flows in the wind. A sixties diner appears, an old white man is eating; Bob Dylan continues to play his guitar and states, "You can't import original." The camera shows a smiling Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, and black basketball

players stating, “You can’t fake true cool.” The ad then proceeds to “You can’t duplicate legacy,” and shows a woman getting a tattoo of the iconic Rosie the Riveter saying, “You can do it.” It shows roads and freeways, then he says, “What Detroit created was a first and became an inspiration to the rest of the world” and “Detroit made cars and cars made America.” They show the side of a Chrysler 200 in black; Dylan’s voice is heard saying, “Making the best, making the finest, takes conviction” (Chrysler 2014).

Then black and white factory workers on the line are depicted and he says, “You can’t import the heart and soul of every man and woman working on the line.” The ad then shows a beautiful black Chrysler 200 and Dylan states, “You can search the world over for the finer things, but you won’t find a match for the American road and the creatures that live on it.” Dylan is driving the car and states, “When it’s made here, it’s made with one thing you can’t import from anywhere else, “American Pride.” The advertiser flashes to a black male factory worker smiling. They show beer pouring from a tap into a glass and Dylan says, “So let Germany brew your beer.” As a watch is shown being assembled, he says, “let Switzerland make your watches.” While an assembly line of cell phones is shown being put together he says, “let Asia assemble your phones.” In the end, Dylan is playing pool, surrounded by white people in the background, and he states, “We will build your car.” Finally, the Chrysler 200 is shown driving down the road.

Chrysler seeks to connect American pride with purchasing their product. Kilbourne (2006) states “The consumer culture encourages us not only to buy more but to seek our identity and fulfillment through what we buy, to express our individuality through our ‘choices’ of products” (Unnatural passions section). By purchasing this vehicle, it does not mean that we are showing pride for America nor that we’re better people. The ad also sells the

assumption that if we buy this vehicle based on cultural values, we are automatically showing support for American pride through the purchase of this American-assembled vehicle. They imply that those who do not purchase this car are not proud of their country, using patriotism as a way to guilt viewers into connecting with the product.

On the other hand, they are sending a hidden message that America has failed. This works on two levels. First, we are part of the problem if we don't buy this American-made product, so it makes us experience that guilt. Conversely, we can relieve that guilt and be part of the solution by participating in buying American-made. In essence, it first makes us guilty about our country going down the tubes, then provides solution. According to Chrysler, if we believe in this country, we must bring back Detroit and its prosperity of the past, where America thrived and pride was at its peak, which was success.

They picture that success during a time that wasn't as free and successfully for most people in the country, and link it to celebrities by flashing back in time to the 40s and 50s, when we have a romantic image that people were happy, the economy was booming, and cars were selling. They show iconic people from the past such as Marilyn Monroe and James Dean. In this way, they are trying to connect to a nostalgic view of America as pure and successful, despite the fact this was a time of segregation and discrimination for both people of color and women. They also tie into our love of celebrity with this. Advertisers are selling us propaganda, and "Many ads show lots of people using the product, implying that (everyone is doing it) or at least, (all the cool people are doing it). No one likes to be left out or left behind" (Media Literacy Project, n. d., p. 7). They're promoting fame and wealth and want viewers to join the bandwagon and be part of them. The commercial is selling celebrity brand association to the consumers, leading viewers to believe the product is credible. The marketers are selling this idea through endorsements of dead

celebrities. On both counts, they are associating American pride and greatness with romanticized images and celebrity, implying that we can have those American ideals if we will but buy this car.

Another assumption this ad makes is a narrow view of diversity. Primarily, American Pride does not consist of only black and white people. Everyone in America is entitled and has the right to demonstrate pride, not just a certain race. America is a diverse nation, consisting of the biggest melting pot in the world, yet Chrysler decided to go with two races. America is multicultural and everyone has the freedom to purchase as they please. It's also significant that the black people pictured were either blue-collar workers or playing sports, feeding into an outdated view of positions for minorities. Clearly, this is another example of Chrysler's version of American pride being very off track with what most people see as things to take pride in.

Finally, they use international stereotypes throughout the ad, stating that beer should be left to the Germans, the Swiss should make watches, and that Asians should assemble our phones as if we, Americans are incompetent and unable to do it ourselves; insinuating America is only good at one thing, "building cars." The irony behind this ad is the Italian manufacturing company itself, promoting their vehicle to the American public through the values of American pride, and the American made label. Again, this does not respect American diversity and ingenuity; things Americans have been proud of for centuries.

Consumers should not be influenced to buy a car because everyone else is joining the patriotic bandwagon, or simply because of the "made in America label." American Pride cannot be obtained through the purchase of one single object or through false pretenses from the past. Now, owners look for practicality in vehicles, such as gas mileage, emissions, budget, warranty, and the durability of the vehicle. A company's reputation should be earned based on quality and reliability, and not sold based on guilt over the American pride as presented by an Italian-owned

company. In the end, this ad and ads like it should encourage us to examine what American pride really is to us. Advertisers would have us believe it is all about buying things and should look like it did during a time of discrimination, but most of us know that diversity, opportunity, and democracy are keys to American pride and cannot be bought at the local car lot.

References

Chrysler. (2014). *America's import* [Video file]. Retrieved from [https://youtu.be/ e4p9H DU6Kiw](https://youtu.be/e4p9H DU6Kiw)

Kilbourne, J. (2006, September). "Jesus is a brand of jeans." *New Internationalist Magazine*.

Retrieved from <https://newint.org/features/2006/09/01/culture/>

Media Literacy Project. (n. d.). *Introduction to media literacy*. Retrieved from <http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/TobaccoEd/IntroMediaLiteracy.pdf>