

Question 4

The former president of the United States, Donald Trump, exploited the marketing slogan “Make America Great Again” (hereafter MAGA) to propel himself into office during the 2016 presidential elections. Regardless of his infamous legacy, one cannot dispute the sheer effectiveness of this particular political slogan, from a marketing perspective, although ethically questionable, it brutally capitalizes on the conflicting race relations in the United States. To elaborate, MAGA implies that the United States once was great, one could therefore deem the slogan to be inherently problematic, specifically because the country rose to prominence through what (Bhambra, 2017, p. 225) describes as a “slave-society”. This refers to the fact that the US gained an economic advantage, due to the (continued) systematic oppression of black people. Notably, whatever “greatness” the US has achieved is heavily intertwined with slavery, thereafter legalized segregation and now structural inequalities. However, the question still remains - MAGA implies former greatness, but for whom?

According to popular belief, it was the “working class” that swayed the 2016 US election results, apparently in response to being economically “left behind” (Mutz, 2018, p. E4330). Similarly, the *left behind* narrative was applied in terms of the Brexit results; voting “leave” was supposedly the crusade of the working class. In both cases however, this has been debunked, empirical evidence directly implicates the white middle-class being the driving force behind voting outcomes (Bhambra, 2017, pp. 215-216). Therefore, contrary to the assumptions of commentators and academics alike; Trump’s victory in 2016 was not decided by the working class, which essentially voids the *left behind* thesis. On the contrary, it was overwhelmingly instigated by the white middle class. In light of (Cialdini, 2007, p. 257) this makes sense, he explains that downtrodden people, ergo the working class, have normalized their deprivation, but it’s those that have had “some taste of a better life”, in this case, the middle class, that are most likely to react. This encompasses scarcity, which describes the want for conditions that we deem as rare or unattainable. During Trump’s Victory in 2016, it seems as if the working class was less affected by scarcity as opposed to the middle-class. In line with Cialdini, it correlates with the fact that many of those in the working class have been there for generations, not knowing or “tasting” the privileges of another class, whereas those in the middle class would not want to lose their economic advantage. It all interlinks with dreading the loss of freedoms already possessed (Cialdini, 2007, p. 245). On the other

hand, in the aftermath of Trump's victory in 2016, commentators and academics wrongfully focused on the plight of the *white* working class to explain the election results, disregarding the impact of the white middle class, whilst systematically neglecting the fact that people of colour are in the *left behind* category too. Essentially one could say the *left behind* category is a euphemism for the white working class. Paradoxically, the perceived beneficiaries of Trump's 2016 campaign reveal the underlying story; perhaps MAGA does not implicate greatness for everyone. Besides, the way MAGA and its attached nostalgia structurally targets white workers, as opposed to all workers, whilst contaminating the meaning of class and disregarding the impact of race, in practical terms argues for the ethically controversial racial hierarchies of the past (Bhambra, 2017, pp. 217, 227).

According to (Mutz, 2018, p. E4331) the 2016 presidential election results can be explained through dominant group status threat, which takes two forms. To elaborate, racial status threat is a by-product of the fact that white Americans will soon be the minority race in the US, it entails the fear of losing control in social and political settings. On the other hand, global status threat encompasses the downsides of becoming too reliant on other countries, moreover the rise of China also endangers their perceived global dominance. One could say this is a prime example of loss aversion, the middle-class valuing their advantages more, in the fear of potentially being able to lose them. Moreover, (Cialdini, 2007, p. 267) tells us that in terms of scarcity, the joy is rooted in the notion of possessing certain freedoms, ironically, the risk of losing it looms larger than the actual experience. Furthermore (Mutz, 2018, p. E4332) clarifies that global status threat and racial status threat are initially two separate forces, however an intersectionality occurs when predominantly white Christian males anchor their identity in being "American". To elaborate, "the American way of life" is equated to being white, this is also apparent in the whitewashing of the term working class, previously seen in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election. The interchangeable and exclusive relationship between whiteness and being American is ethically problematic by nature, especially when combined with racial and global status threat, psychologically this can cause white Christian American males to think they are suffering the most. The political slogan MAGA, provides reassurance that the status quo and racial hierarchies of the past are not something of old but can be achieved again. Those that find themselves in the intersectionality of perceived status threat, are at risk of being exploited by the scarcity tactic, especially since they are emotionally vulnerable, hence rationality can be overwhelmed. In line with (Cialdini, 2007, p. 266) scarcity obstructs our "ability to think". This makes sense

when (Bhambra, 2017, p. 226) establishes that perceived status threat actually amounts to a “relative loss of privilege”, in other words white Americans are starting to lose their unjust advantage which derives from the times where America was “great”. Nonetheless, people are predictable, (Cialdini, 2007, p. 3) famously labelled our mechanical fixed-action patterns as “click, whir” reactions. Therefore, regardless of ethical rational, many white Americans are more inclined to prevent the loss of privilege rather than the gain of racial equality (Cialdini, 2007, p. 263). Although ethically questionable, Donald Trump’s “Make America Great Again” campaign successfully exploited the perceived status threat in the United States at the cost of fuelling racial tensions in an already divided country.

Bibliography

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Question 5A)

The social marketing campaign of Grenfell United in collaboration with Anomaly in 2019 was designed to provoke an aggressive reaction from both the public and policy makers. This is first and foremost reflected through the campaign name and hashtag: “#DemandChange”. The simple language utilized, implies an imperative message; change is necessary. The tone deployed, is direct, signalling that change is not an option but a must. Consequently, the language and tone provide a clear message to the public and a very direct instruction to the policy makers. The social justice campaign projected messages such as “2 years after Grenfell this building still has no sprinklers” on to tower blocks in London, Manchester and Newcastle. The setting of the campaign provides an alarming reminder that due to the inaction of the government; this could happen again. As a result, evoking emotion, perhaps even righteous anger towards the government, as people realize their families could still be in danger. Since the campaign provided a hashtag, members of the public can use social media as an outlet to vent and put pressure on the government, which would hopefully lead to policy makers choosing to install life-saving sprinklers. The fact that the campaign was broadcasted simultaneously across the country whilst being displayed in large fonts across multiple buildings, signals credibility. Moreover, the projection on the House of Parliament saying “2 years after Grenfell this building has still not kept its promises” is a tangible reminder of the inefficiency of current politicians. The campaign strategically pivots the authority people

associate with the House of Parliament to instigate change. The timing of the campaign, almost certainly induces empathy towards the victims' families but more importantly, through the simple wording of the message channels those emotions into a demand for change from policy makers (Gwynn, 2019).

Question 5B (i)

The media has repeatedly referred to Grenfell as a tragedy, this is inherently problematic. In line with (Zehfuss, 2018, pp. 37-38) as cited in (Bulley, 2019, p. 3) the term "tragedy" signals a random occurrence and therefore lacks accountability. This is dangerous, as similar incidents could happen in the future, if no concrete measures are put into place. Consequently, utilizing the word "tragedy" alleviates those with political authority from the burden of responsibility and action. However, the 2019 campaign by Grenfell United and Anomaly directly obligates the government to act (Gwynn, 2019). In regard to housing policy the #DemandChange campaign focused on sprinklers, cladding and fire doors. Holistically however, the message encompasses the fact that human lives have infinite value and should not be sacrificed to save money. The emphasis of sprinklers is a tangible example, but it also translates to other factors, for example, the fact that fire resistant panels were swapped out for non-fire-retardant ones, for the sole reason of saving £2 per square metre (Bulley, 2019, p. 9). Another example is the deliberate mis-selling of the flammable RS5000 insulation, this proved to be fatal. The #DemandChange campaign exemplifies that buildings are still in danger, which notifies the public, whilst urging policy makers to revise their flawed housing regulations.

However, the sub-standard housing regulations did not merely appear out of thin air, they are part of a sequence of decisions. Many causes are rooted in neoliberal economic orthodoxy, which according to (Bulley, 2019, p. 10) deregulated the UK in the name of profit maximisation, whilst opening the door for international corporations and foreign investment, essentially creating a competitive but unpredictable economic environment. Furthermore, previously protected and regulated industries opened up, boosting economic growth in London, but also making it vulnerable to the downsides of capitalism as per (Tilley & Shiliam, 2018) in (Bulley, 2019, p. 10). Notably, "compulsory competitive tendering" enabled private companies to bid for public service delivery, in other words the privatisation of the public sector as a result of globalization has influenced the standard of housing across the UK (Bulley, 2019, p. 10). Nevertheless, the ramifications of austerity might have been decisive in this case, due to the fact that the councils building control department was heavily defunded. Nevertheless, the complexity and intersectionality of the issues, not only regarding Grenfell but high rises across the UK, imply that fundamental change in housing policy is the most secure and predictable way

to save lives. The #DemandChange campaign of 2019 effectively points out the lack of sprinklers, however even if rectified buildings are still unsafe, perhaps directly challenging current housing policy by holding the Prime Minister and London Mayor accountable might lead to more sustainable change.

Question 5B (ii)

In addition to establishing that the Grenfell fire was not an accident, (Bulley, 2019, p. 3) explains that it is not only a domestic predicament, but a global sequence of events, including the wrongful execution of power. According to (Bulley, 2019, p. 1) the triggers of the fire and methods of holding those responsible have been conducted on a national level. One flaw in the #DemandChange campaign is potentially the lack of international implication. For example, the projection on the House of Parliament stating “2 years after Grenfell this building has still not kept its promises” in some ways neglects the impact of capitalism and globalisation, whilst potentially overlooking foreign governments and entities that have enabled the occurrence of the fire. At the same time, the complexity of the situation makes any attempt of reformation seem inadequate. Perhaps holding UK politicians accountable nationally is not enough, maybe the inclusion of international political bodies is necessary, or even the involvement of the International Court of Justice. On the other hand, other social justice implications are vast, especially institutionalized racism, since those that died were proportionately people of colour. One can also not disregard the element of classism, the lives of those in a lower socio-economic group being deemed less valuable. These basic human rights are still being violated. Paradoxically however, the post-colonial British government is willing to continuously benefit from the labour of people of colour provide, whilst ignoring their continued segregation and fatal dehumanization at the hand of housing policies.

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