While advertising has been said to shape society, at the same time it is essential to recognize that it also mirror it. One’s style of living dictates the manner in which one consumes, the priority of one’s needs and wants, and the advertising messages one perceives as effective. Cultural values are the core of advertising messages and Holbrook (1987) has suggested that in order to convince potential customers to purchase a client’s product or service, advertisers must comply with a public’s value system rather than running counter to it. Empirical research has supported that advertisements reflecting local cultural values are indeed more persuasive than those that ignore them.

However, according to Pollay (1986, 1987), advertising sometimes acts as a distorted mirror. Advertising tends to favorably portray hedonistic characteristics and to celebrate instant gratification, materialism, and covetousness. In contrast, often lacking or negatively portrayed in commercial messages are altruistic characteristics that advocate postponing gratification and instead show the advantages of calculated purchasing. The result is a distorted mirror that reflects only those values that help sell goods. Pollay’s distorted mirror metaphor has been widely disseminated throughout the social science and humanities literature (Fowles, 1996).

Thus, it can be said that advertising can both reflect (more or less accurately) and shape a society. In the following chapters, we will explore this interrelationship between advertising and a society’s culture and its economy and political systems as well as its legal environment.

1. First, explain the mirror metaphor. Then, apply it to how Levi’s jeans, the iPAD and Crest White Strips fit into (or not) our American culture. (Minimum 25 lines)