Reading Assignment – Weapons of Math Destruction: Ch 4

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**Objective:** Evaluate student understanding and critical thinking skills by answering guide questions based on a book chapter.

**Instructions:** Read the assigned book chapter thoroughly and answer the following guide questions. Be sure to provide specific examples from the text to support your answers.

**Title:** Weapons of Math Destruction by Cathy O’Neil

**Chapter/s:** Chapter 4

**Guide Questions:**

1. **Briefly summarize the main ideas presented in the chapter. What are the key points the author is trying to convey?**

The main ideas presented in Chapter 4 are:

* The use of predatory advertising to target and fleece the population most in need.
* The ways in which these ads can exploit people's vulnerabilities and their ignorance.

1. **Describe the author's writing style. Is it clear, engaging, and easy to understand? Provide examples to support your opinion.**

The author writes in an accessible, readable, and transparent manner. She does a wonderful job of breaking down difficult ideas into terms that the average person can understand by using a range of examples and stories to illustrate her views. She gives the example of how targeted advertising is used by for-profit universities to entice students who are seeking a better life. She also talks about how these advertisements frequently prey on people's weaknesses and anxieties.

1. **Identify any new terms or concepts introduced in the chapter. Define them and explain their significance to the chapter's main ideas.**

Some of the new terms or concepts introduced in the chapter include:

* **Predatory advertising** - is a type of advertising that targets people who are most likely to be vulnerable to it. These ads often prey on people's insecurities and vulnerabilities, and they can be very effective at getting people to buy things that they don't need or that are not in their best interests.
* **Proxies** - are variables that are used to predict a person's behavior. For example, a proxy for a person's likelihood of dropping out of college might be their high school GPA.

These terms and concepts are significant to the chapter's main ideas because they help to explain how predatory advertising works and how it can have a negative impact on people's lives.

1. **Discuss the evidence or examples provided by the author to support their arguments. Are they convincing and relevant? Explain your reasoning.**

The author provides a variety of evidence and examples to support her arguments. For example, she cites the case of a for-profit college that was fined $2 million for using predatory advertising. She also discusses a study that found that people who were targeted by predatory advertising were more likely to take out loans that they could not afford.

The evidence and examples provided by the author are convincing and relevant. They support her arguments and help to illustrate the potential for predatory advertising to have a negative impact on people's lives.

1. **Were there any areas in the chapter that you found confusing or difficult to understand? If so, describe those areas and explain why they were challenging.**

There were a few areas in the chapter that I found confusing or difficult to understand. For example, I was not sure what the author meant by the term "proxies." I also had some trouble understanding the author's discussion of the study that found that people who were targeted by predatory advertising were more likely to take out loans that they could not afford.

1. **Identify any potential biases or assumptions the author may have made in presenting their ideas. How might these biases or assumptions affect the credibility of the chapter?**

The author may have made a few potential biases or assumptions in presenting their ideas. For example, she may have assumed that all predatory advertising is harmful. She may also have assumed that all people who use predatory advertising are aware of the potential for harm.

However, the author does a good job of acknowledging the potential for harm in predatory advertising. She also acknowledges that not all predatory advertising is harmful.

1. **Compare the ideas presented in this chapter to those in previous chapters or other materials you have read on the topic. Are there any similarities or differences? Explain your observations.**

The ideas presented in Chapter 4 are like the ideas presented in previous chapters in that they all focus on the potential for WMDs to perpetuate bias and discrimination. However, Chapter 4 specifically focuses on the way that WMDs can be used to target and fleece the population most in need.

1. **What questions or concerns do you have after reading this chapter? Are there any topics you would like to explore further?**

After reading this chapter, I have a few questions or concerns:

* How can we ensure that people who are targeted by predatory advertising are aware of the potential for harm?
* What are the legal and regulatory frameworks that can be put in place to protect people from predatory advertising?
* How can we educate people about the ways in which their data is being used to target them with ads?

I would also like to explore further the topic of how predatory advertising can deepen social inequality. I believe that this is a very important issue, and I would like to learn more about the ways in which it is happening and how it can be addressed.

1. **How do the ideas presented in the chapter relate to your own experiences, beliefs, or opinions? Provide examples to illustrate the connections.**

The ideas presented in the chapter relate to my own experiences, beliefs, and opinions in a few ways. For example, I have seen firsthand how advertising can be used to exploit people's vulnerabilities. I have also seen how advertising can be used to target people based on their race or ethnicity.

I believe that the author's arguments are important and timely. I agree with her that we need to be more aware of the potential for harm in predatory advertising. I also agree that we need to do more to protect people from this type of advertising.

1. **Summarize your overall impression of the chapter. Do you agree or disagree with the author's main arguments? Why or why not?**

Overall, I found Chapter 4 to be informative and thought-provoking. The author does a good job of explaining the potential for predatory advertising to have a negative impact on people's lives. I agree with the author's main arguments, and I believe that they are important to consider as we move forward in the age of big data.

Prepared by: Bob Mathew D. Sunga