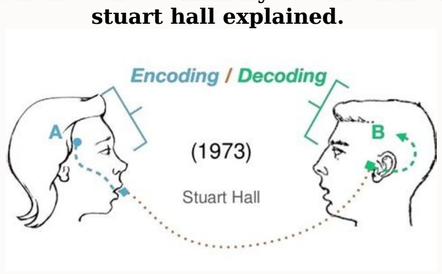


I'm not robot!

Encoding decoding stuart hall

Stuart hall 1980 encoding decoding. Stuart hall encoding and decoding in the television discourse summary. Stuart hall encoding decoding quotes. Stuart hall's encoding/decoding model. Encoding decoding stuart hall explained.

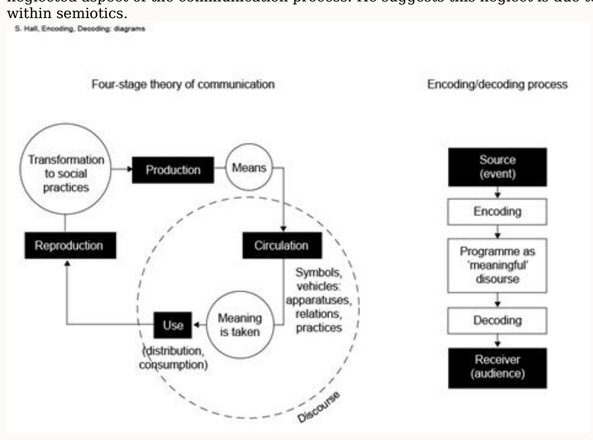


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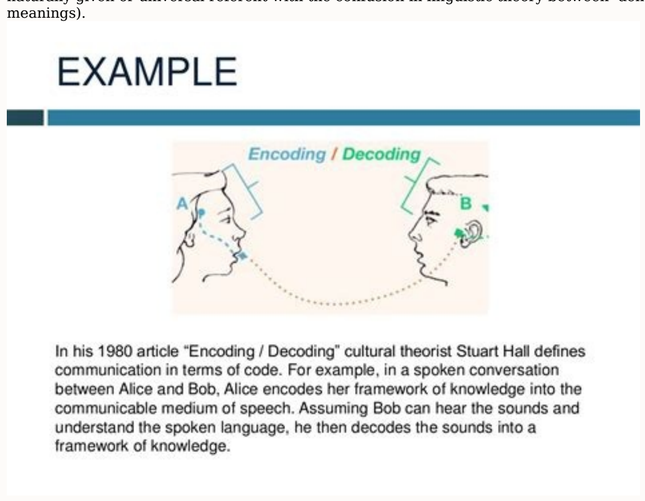
Hall , Stuart (1973) Encoding and Decoding in the television discourse. Discussion Paper. University of Birmingham, Birmingham.PreviewPDFHall,_1973,_Encoding_and_Decoding_in_the_Television_Discourse.pdf17MbType of Work:Monograph (Discussion Paper)School/Faculty:Faculties (to 1997) > Faculty of Commerce and Social SciencesDepartment:Centre for Contemporary Cultural StudiesAdditional Information:This paper has been published in: CCCS selected working papers. Vol.
2 / edited by Ann Gray et al (Abingdon, 2007) pp. 386-398Date:September 1973Series/Collection Name:CCCS Stencilled Occasional PapersSubjects:P Language and Literature > PN Literature (General)P Language and Literature > PN Literature (General) > PN1990 BroadcastingCopyright Status:This paper is copyright of the University, the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation. Any use made of information contained in this paper must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged.Copyright Holders:Authors, University of BirminghamID Code:2962Repository Staff Only: item control page Arguably the single most widely circulated and debated of all Hall’s papers, ‘Encoding/decoding’ (1973/1980) had a major impact on the direction of cultural studies in the 1970s and 1980s and its central terms remain keywords in the field. The essay is conventionally viewed as marking a turning point in Hall’s and the CCCS’s research, towards structuralism, allowing us to reflect on some of the main theoretical developments at Birmingham. Focusing on the communication processes at stake in televisual discourse, the essay challenges some of the most cherished views of how media messages are produced, circulated and consumed in order to propose a new theory of communication. Basically, where traditionally the meaning of the media message was viewed as static, transparent and unchanging throughout the communication process, Hall argues that the message sent is seldom (if ever) the one received and that communication is systematically distorted. SENDER, MESSAGE, RECEIVER ‘Encoding/decoding’ arises primarily from Hall’s reservations about the theories of communication underpinning mass communications research. ‘Encoding/decoding’ opens with an account of the conventional model of communication to be found within mass communications research. This model moves in a linear fashion from the ‘sender’ through the ‘message’ to the ‘receiver’. According to this model, the sender creates the message and fixes its meaning, which is then communicated directly and transparently to the recipient. For Hall, this communication process is too neat: ‘the only distortion in it is that the receiver might not be up to the business of getting the message he or she ought to get’ (RED: 253). As we will see, Hall is especially interested in the way different audiences generate rather than discover meaning. Hall’s essay challenges all three components of the mass communications model, arguing that (i) meaning is not simply fixed or determined by the sender; (ii) the message is never transparent; and (iii) the audience is not a passive recipient of meaning. Just because a documentary on asylum seekers aims to provide a sympathetic account of their plight, does not guarantee its audience will view them sympathetically. For all its ‘realism’ and emphasis on ‘the facts’, the documentary form still has to communicate through a sign system (the aural-visual signs of tv) that both distorts the intentions of producers and evokes contradictory feelings in the audience. Distortion is built into the system here, rather than being a ‘failure’ of the producer or viewer. There is a ‘lack of fit’ Hall suggests ‘between the two sides in the communicative exchange’ (E/D: 131), between the moment of the production of the message (‘encoding’) and the moment of its reception (‘decoding’). This ‘lack of fit’ is crucial to Hall’s argument. It occurs because communication has no choice but to take place within sign systems. Stuart Hall/Open University The moments of encoding and decoding are also the points, respectively, of entrance into and exit from the systems of discourse. Language does not reflect the real, but constructs or ‘distorts’ it on our behalf. So even at a very basic level, ‘visual discourse translates a three-dimensional world into two-dimensional planes, it cannot, of course be the referent or concept it signifies. The dog in the film can bark but it cannot bite!’ (E/D: 131). While ‘the discursive form of the message has a privileged position in the communicative exchange’, communication is about more than language and discourse for Hall, and structuralism, in isolation, does not satisfactorily explain the lack of fit between the moments of encoding and decoding for him. Hall is ultimately more interested in the political than the linguistic implications of media messages, a fact he foregrounds in the 1973 version of ‘Encoding/decoding’: though I shall adopt a semiotic perspective, I do not regard this as indexing a closed formal concern with the immanent organisation of the television discourse alone. It must also include a concern with the ‘social relations’ of the communicative process.(E/D73:1) Hall’s concern with the social and political dimensions of communication is apparent from the very beginning of his essay, which proposes an alternative to the ‘sender–message–receiver’ model of communication based on Marx’s theory of commodity production. This model comprises a number of what Hall terms ‘moments’ (such as circulation and distribution) but is primarily concerned with the points of production/encoding and consumption/decoding. Hall’s appropriation of a Marxist vocabulary allows him to replace the linearity of traditional models of communication with a circuit. In this circuit the ‘sender’ has become a ‘producer’ and the ‘receiver’ a ‘consumer’.



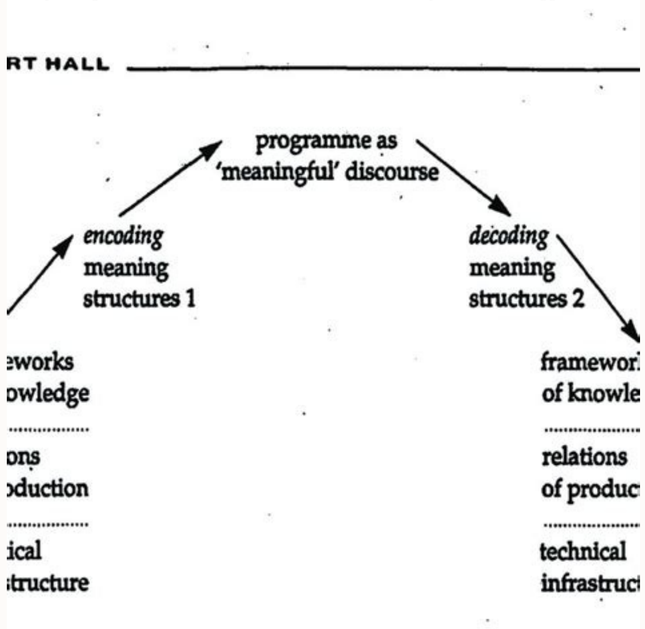
Where to ‘receive’ has passive connotations in mass communications research, marking the end of the communication process, to consume is an active process leading to the production, or ‘reproduction’ of meaning. Here Hall distances himself from the behavioural science of mass communications theory (where the viewer’s response is ‘like a tap on the knee cap’ (E/D: 131), an instinctive reaction), from the language-centred abstractions of structuralism, and from the expressive view of culture in culturalism. Where the ‘receiver’ represented the end of the line in mass communications research, for Hall ‘consumption determines production just as production determines consumption’ (RED: 255). What is being proposed here is an articulated model of communication in which meaning does not reside at, nor can be guaranteed by, any particular moment of the circuit. The processes of production, circulation, and so on, may be both determined and determining in relation to the other moments with which they are linked: ‘no one moment can fully guarantee the next moment with which it is articulated . . . each has its specific modality and condi-tions of existence’ (E/D: 128–9). Adopting an Althussereanvocabulary within this context, Hall suggests encoding and decoding are over-determined, relatively autonomous moments. OVER-DETERMINATION A Freudian concept Althusser used to great effect in ‘Contradiction and over-determination’, an essay in For Marx. By over-determination, Althusser means there are a number of determining forces, not just the economic, but the ideological and the political. Althusser’s notion of ‘over-determination’ implies a number of linked or articulated determinations. This breaks with the mechanistic move from base to super structure associated with ‘deterministic’ versions of Marx. RELATIVE AUTONOMY A term that proved especially influential in the work of Hall and the CCCS. ‘Relative autonomy’ implies that ideology has a degree of freedom from the economic. Determination is present in this model, but only in the ‘last instance’. Althusser argues that while the economic always determines the superstructure in some way, it is not necessarily dominant In order to illustrate these abstract theories of articulation, we will consider in more detail the specific moments of encoding and decoding, using media coverage of ‘9/11’ as an example. When the images of two aeroplanes crashing into the World Trade Center were transmitted to a global audience on 11 September 2001,the meaning of the event seemed abundantly clear to all. North America had become the tragic victim of a terrorist attack. The sense of tragedy surrounding the event was highlighted in media coverage showing the traumatised reaction of audiences in Europe and America as they received the news. However, and in stark contrast to these scenes of mourning, the media also screened footage of people in Palestine apparently celebrating the news. Such opposing reactions by different audiences to media coverage of the same event, suggested the collapse of the twin towers had no single meaning. Among other things, ‘Encoding/decoding’ sheds light on why divergent readings of the same media event occur by exploring the ideological role of the media and the extent to which it governs meanings and gives rise to alternative ones. ENCODING Camera crews were present at the World Trade Center in New York some fifteen minutes after the first plane hit the North Tower. The second strike and its aftermath were broadcast live on television giving the event a certain immediacy as it unfolded before our eyes. Nevertheless, the meanings ‘9/11’ generated did not spontaneously flow from that moment of encoding in isolation. The coverage was also over determined by the larger circuit of communication within which it was articulated. For instance, despite its chaotic, unprecedented feel, the production of ‘9/11’ drew upon the pre-existing routines and rules set in place by what Hall calls ‘institutional structures of broadcasting’. These included, as one commentator notes contacting institutions to obtain access to relevant sites and persons, inter-viewing, attending press conferences, and using certain kinds of documentary sources.
The contingencies of the news format – meeting dead-lines and obtaining ‘facts,’ pictures and quotations from specific categories of people (eyewitnesses, authority figures) . . . (Karim 2002: 102) In addition to these material structures, the encoding of ‘9/11’ was shaped by journalistic discourses on ‘violence, terrorism, and Islam’ that had been circulating in the West for ‘the last three decades’(E/D: 102).Within this context it is possible to make sense of Hall’s point that encoding is the point of entry into the discursive realm of communication, as well as a ‘moment’ constructed by the material context of production in which it occurs. For Hall encoding is the crucial moment at which ‘the institutional-societal relations of production must pass under the discursive rules of language . . .’(E/D: 130): A raw historical event cannot, in that form, be transmitted by, say, a television newscast. Events can only be signified within the aural-visual forms of the televisual discourse. In the moment when a historical event passes under the sign of discourse, it is subject to all the complex formal ‘rules’ by which language signifies. To put it paradoxically, the event must become a ‘story’ before it can become a communicative event.
(Karim 2002: 129) The news cannot be given to us in the form of a pure or ‘raw’ event, but is subject to the ‘formal rules’ (Saussure’s langue) of the governing system of language. While clearly television news is not literally ‘language’, the fact that it is a highly coded, or ‘conventional’ discourse makes the analogy a productive one. Desks, formal dress codes and postures, for instance are all ‘signs’ within television news used to convey or ‘signify’ values such as ‘authority’, ‘trustworthiness’, ‘seriousness’ and ‘objectivity’. Similarly, the individual news ‘item’ does not provide a window onto the actual historical event, but must transform it into a ‘story’. Disasters, scandals and murders can-not appear ‘in that form’, but must be produced discursively, that is encoded(placed within a set of codes or system of signs), before they can ‘mean’ or signify. For all its apparent immediacy, what viewers of the ‘9/11’ coverage saw that day was not the unreconstructed event, but an ‘aural-visual’ discourse: the selective combination of care-fully edited amateur video, eyewitness accounts and reporters’ narratives in order to produce a ‘story’. In order for the encoded ‘message form’ to generate meaning and ‘have an “effect” ’ (E/D: 130) it must be decoded by the viewer. Hall suggests that televisual discourse does not contain an intrinsic meaning embedded there by its producer (although as we have seen the production/encoding process works to secure and determine its meaning in important ways). Rather, it is the act of viewing that releases its signifying potential. It is at the moment of decoding, then, that the television message acquires ‘social use or political effectivity’ (E/D: 130). For Hall, decoding is the most significant, but most neglected aspect of the communication process. He suggests this neglect is due to the fact that televisual discourses use ‘iconic’ signs. ICONIC SIGNS American philosopher Charles Peirce (whose Speculative Grammar (1931) is cited in ‘Encoding/decoding’) made a distinction between ‘indexical’, ‘symbolic’ and ‘iconic’ signs that became influential within semiotics.



An ‘iconic sign’ is a visual sign that closely resembles the object it refers to(the referent), such as a photograph. Iconic signs tend to resist conscious decoding, according to Hall, because they reproduce the codes of perception used by the viewer: This leads us to think the visual sign for ‘cow’ actually is(rather than represents) the animal, cow. But if we think of the visual representation of a cow in a manual on animal husbandry – and, even more, of the linguistic sign ‘cow’ – we can see that both, in different degrees, are arbitrary with respect to the concept of the animal they represent. The articulation of an arbitrary sign – whether visual or verbal – with the concept of a referent is the product not of nature but of convention . . .(E/D: 132) Following Saussure, Hall highlights the arbitrary nature of the sign, the fact that though the relation between signifier and signified and between visual signs and ‘things’ seems natural, it is, in fact, conventional. Hall goes on to associate the confusion of the culturally constructed sign with a naturally given or universal referent with the confusion in linguistic theory between ‘denotation’ and ‘connotation’. DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION In the final chapter of Mythologies, ‘Myth today’, and in Elements of Semiology, Barthes elaborates on the terms ‘connotation’ (a sign’s associated meanings) and ‘denotation’ (a sign’s literal meanings).



At the denotative level there is a general agreement about the meaning of a sign.
At the connotative level however, the ‘language’ of its advertising reveals associations that are marked by class and by ideology and which we may either agree or disagree with. It is for this reason that ideology operates mainly at the level of connotation for Barthes. While noting that the distinction between ‘denotation’ and connotation is false (in reality all signs are connotative, no matter how ‘literal’ they seem) Hall suggests the distinction does have analytical value.



Where at the denotative level, ideological meaning appears relatively fixed, the connotative level is a significant site of ideological intervention and contestation because its ‘fluidity of meaning and association can be more fully exploited and transformed’ (E/D: 133). Hall announces at this point that language is ‘multi-accentual’: ‘the sign is open to new accentuations and .
. . enters fully into the struggle over meaning – the class struggle in language’ (E/D: 133). Multi-accentuality has important implications for decoding because if we accept Volosinov’s theory then the ‘reception’ of the television message is likely to be more contested than it first appeared. Audiences can no longer be seen as passively absorbing the

fixed meanings planted there by the producer, ‘decoding’ must necessarily involve a struggle over meaning which is dependent upon the social position of the viewer.
In this context the ‘already constituted sign’ of the producer is ‘potentially transformable into more than one connotative configuration’ (E/D: 134) by the consumer. Althusserian Marxism Hall is concerned here with what he calls the ‘polysemic values’ of the televisual sign: its ability to signify more than one thing, to carry a variety of potentially conflicting meanings. Meaning is multiple rather than singular: the ‘work’ of the audience is not to discover a true, core meaning which has been embedded at the heart of the message, rather the audience generates meaning with a degree of ‘relative autonomy’. This is why Hall’s consumer is also a producer. What Hall is not saying here is that the television message can mean anything we want it to mean. Moreover, the finite number of meanings the televisual message is capable of generating are ‘not equal among themselves’ (E/D: 134) and therefore it would be a mistake, Hall insists, to confuse polysemy with ‘pluralism’ (which implies free, democratic choice). Society constructs a ‘dominant cultural order’ (E/D: 134) that generates what Hall terms ‘preferred meanings’. PREFERRED MEANINGS Hall’s notion of dominant or ‘preferred meaning’ allows him to address the political implications of polysemic signs, which have ‘writ-ten in’ (E/D: 134) to them, a variety of ‘social meanings, practices, and usages, power and interest’ (E/D: 134). Preferred meanings rely upon ‘common-sense’ or ‘taken-for-grantedness’ and reflect the ‘dominant cultural order’, which imposes and validates ‘its classification of the social and cultural and political world’ (E/D:134). COMMON-SENSE A term used by Gramsci to refer to the supposedly ‘spontaneous’ assumptions and beliefs of different social groups. Where a common-sense view of ‘common-sense’ might regard it as a positive attribute, Gramsci suggests it is a mode of conformist thinking, signalling consent to the dominant order. It must therefore be questioned and replaced with ‘good sense’. To suggest something is common-sense is to place it beyond question (‘this is how things are’), to present that which is cultural and specific as natural and universal. Common-sense then clearly performs an important ideological role in relation to the maintenance of hegemony, as Hall notes: It is precisely its [common-sense’s] ‘spontaneous’ quality, its transparency, its ‘naturalness’, its refusal to be made to examine the premises on which it is founded, its resistance to change or correction, its effect of instant recognition . . . [that] . . . makes common-sense, at one and the same time, ‘spontaneous’, ideological and unconscious.(CMIE: 325) In ‘Encoding/decoding’, Hall suggests media messages accrue a common-sense status in part through their performative nature. Through the repeated performance, staging or telling of the narrative of ‘9/11’ (and others like it within the media) a culturally specific reading is rendered not simply plausible and universal, but common-sense. Meaning and interpretation are organised hierarchically for Hall: dominant meanings and readings will, therefore, reflect the dominant cultural order at an institutional, political and ideological level.
Television news coverage of ‘9/11’ worked to secure a dominant or preferred meaning of the event as a ‘terrorist’ attack on the ‘civilised’ world.
‘Terrorism’ and ‘civilisation’ were encoded and (presumably frequently) decoded as common-sense terms within these discourses. Nevertheless, they are clearly not value-free or ‘innocent’ labels and carry the ideological imprint of the dominant cultural order in the West. Alternative, if subordinate, accounts of ‘9/11’ did appear in which America’s less than ‘civilised’ foreign policy was cited in relation to the attack. Here, the US was interpellated as ‘terrorist’ and the ‘terrorists’ as freedom fighters or anti-imperialists. The ideological struggle over signifiers such as ‘terrorist’ reveals, as Hall puts it, that ‘preferred meanings’ are neither ‘univocal nor uncontested’ (E/D: 134): In speaking of dominant meanings then, we are not talking about a one-sided process which governs how all events will be signified. It consists of the ‘work’ required to enforce, win plausibility for and command as legitimate a decoding of the event within the limit of dominant definitions in which it has been connotatively signified.(E/D: 135) Following Gramsci, Hall suggests here that culture and ideology are not external structures imposed upon us from above in a one-sided fashion, but sites of constant struggle and negotiation within which we are caught.
If in the West the ‘preferred’ meaning and reading of‘9/11’ was of a ‘tragic’ event, it was a ‘signified’ that was not set in stone or uncontested. The news images of Palestinians apparently celebrating the collapse of the twin towers powerfully exposed that ‘tragedy’ was not an intrinsic or fixed meaning of the event. The twin towers emerged as polysemic, or multi-accentual signs following ‘9/11’, connoting, on the one hand, advanced democratic civilisation and, on the other, oppressive neocolonial capitalism. For Hall, ‘preferred meanings’ are always contested and open to transformation in this way. The term ultimately reveals encoding and decoding as ‘an asymmetrical and non-equivalent process’ in which ‘the former can attempt to “prefer” but cannot prescribe or guarantee the latter, which has its own conditions of existence’ (E/D:135). What is more, the lack of ‘fit’, or ‘necessary correspondence’(E/D: 135) between the moments of encoding and decoding has little, if anything, to do with personal or individual ‘misunderstanding’ (although Hall concedes literal misunderstandings do occur) and everything to do with ‘systematically distorted communication’ Partly in order to ‘deconstruct the common-sense meaning of “misunderstanding”, Hall closes his essay by outlining three hypothetical positions from which decodings might be made.
These positions were developed from Frank Parkin’s Class Inequality and Social Order (1971), but avoid the economic determinism of Parkin’s work. 1. The dominant-hegemonic position: where the viewer decodes the message in terms of the codes legitimated by the encoding process and the dominant cultural order. This would be an example of ‘perfectly transparent’ communication: the viewer who watches dominant European or American news coverage of ‘9/11’ and draws the common-sense conclusion that the event is nothing more than a terrorist attack on the ‘civilised world’. 2. The negotiated position: a contradictory position where the viewer has the potential to adopt and oppose the dominant televisual codes.
‘It accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reserving a right to make a more negotiated application to “local conditions” ’ (E/D: 137). Hall gives the example of a worker’s response to reports of a pay freeze. The worker may agree such a freeze is in the national interest and therefore adopt the dominant-hegemonic position. However, this may have little bearing on her decision to strike at shop-floor or union level. Alternatively, this would be the British Muslim viewer who responds to news of ‘9/11’ by condemning the ‘terrorist attack’ on America, while protesting against the construction of Islam as ‘uncivilised’ and the subsequent racial abuse directed at Western Muslims. 3. The oppositional position: ‘One of the most significant political moments’ (E/D: 138) for Hall, where the viewer recognises the dominant televisual codes and opposes them. Continuing his example from above, Hall imagines the viewer who hears reports of the wage freeze but decodes every reference to ‘national interest’ as ‘class interest’.
Alternatively, in terms of the ‘9/11’example, recent news reports have suggested that British Muslims believe the so-called ‘war against terrorism’ led by the Bush administration is a ‘war against Islam’. This is an actual instance of oppositional reading. The three different positions outlined above are best understood as part of a continuum across which viewers move, rather than separate, static points of view that the audience take up or reject once and for all. So Hall speaks of the ‘oppositional position’ as the moment ‘when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiated way begin to be given an oppositional reading’ (E/D: 138). Just because an audience sympathises with a public sector strike in its opening week does not guarantee support the week after. Another point to make about Hall’s positions is that they don’t refer to the ‘personal’ (mis)readings of isolated viewers. For Hall, they are ideological positions concerning particular social groups. The examples used by Hall to illustrate his model indicate that he is thinking in Marxist/class terms (‘the workers’). However, Hall is clear that these positions can never be simply reduced to class: as the ‘9/11’ example suggests, social groups might be defined in terms of religion, ethnicity as well as age, sexuality, and so on. Finally, it should be noted that Hall’s positions are hypothetical, they are not intended as prescriptive templates for studies of actual audiences. Hall has been the first to point out in this context, that they ‘need to be empirically tested and refined’ (E/D: 136). The most influential of these ‘tests’ and ‘refinements’ have been carried out by one of Hall’s former students, David Morley. Morley’s research emerged from a media group project at the CCCS (1975–7) on the British television show Nationwide, a popular early evening magazine programme broadcast by the BBC.
Morley tested the hypothesis of dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings by screening an episode of the show to different audiences grouped in terms of class, occupation, race, and so on. This ‘ethnographic’ approach revealed that audience responses are highly contradictory and are not rigidly determined by class or social position.
Categories: UncategorizedTags: Analysis of Stuart Hall’s Encoding/Decoding, Class Inequality and Social Order, Cultural Studies, DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION, Elements of Semiology, Encoding/Decoding, Frank Parkin, Gramsci Common-Sense, Literary Criticism, Literary Theory, Media Theory, preferred meaning, Stuart Hall, Stuart Hall Theory, Stuart Hall’s Encoding/Decoding The theory of encoding and decoding is a critical theory formulated by the British sociologist Stuart Hall in the work Encoding, Decoding in the Television Discourse (1973), which is a part of his cultural studies. Instead of the literary and history-oriented approaches of the reception theory, Hall based his judgment on the example of television, although his theory is applicable to other media, such as broadcast (film, radio, recorded music, or television), print media (newspapers, books, pamphlets or comics), outdoor media (billboards, signs or placards placed inside and outside of commercial buildings, sports stadiums, shops and buses) and the Internet (email, websites, blogs, and internet based radio and television) (“Mass Media” par. 3, 4, 5, 7). Our experts can deliver a Stuart Hall’s Theory of Encoding/Decoding essay tailored to your instructions for only 13.00 11.05/page 308 qualified specialists online To a great extent, Hall’s involvement with the cultural studies, which, according to Chris Barker, “seek to explore the connections between the forms of power and to develop ways of thinking about culture and power that can be utilized by agents in the pursuit of change” (Barker and Galasiński 25), was due to his background. Stuart Hall was born in Jamaica in 1932 to a family with both “class” and “colored” heterogeneous origins. His family belonged to the middle class; however, his father and mother came from the different strata. Hall’s father descended from the lower caste, which comprised of mixed ethnic groups (Africans, Portuguese, Jewish, and others). His mother belonged to the higher class, the “local white” strata that culturally identified itself with England and planters; “she considered England as homeland and identified herself with the colonial power” (Chen). As a schoolboy, Hall was as anti-imperialist who sided with the movement for national independence of Jamaica, avoiding friendship with pupils from the upper class. The dramatic story of his sister, who had been prohibited from having a relationship with a Barbados native from the lower strata, and who ended up receiving the electroconvulsive therapy and forever remained in her parental home due to the disability resulting from the treatment, made Hall realize the contradiction of the colonial culture, “the way an individual experiences the colonial dependence on color and class and how it can destroy him/her as a subject” (Chen). Hall’s theory was developed as a response to the traditional process of communication in terms of a circulation circuit or loop, conceptualized by the mass-communications research, which was “criticized for its linearity – sender/message/receiver – for its concentration on the level of message exchange and for the absence of a structured conception of the different moments as a complex structure of relations” (Hall par. 1). By suggesting the presence of an encoded message, its subsequent decoding, as well as decoders, Hall intended to add the missing links in the chain of communication, thus complicating the traditional model, which was seen as a one-way process and drastically overestimated the role of the message sender as well as underestimated the recipient’s role.
Hall’s approach granted rights to the audience, resulting in a conflict with the “deep semantic codes of a culture” (Hall par. 13) that comprised the ideology. The ideological hegemony was a result of the reduced accents within a system, that is, the narrowing of the potential range of values to those preferential in the dominant ideology, allowing its wide application in manipulation. In other words, the encoding and decoding concept were created as a theoretical basis for in praxi attempts to destabilize the hegemonic cultural order. According to Louw, decoding refers to the way meaning is extracted from a language system. It is suggested that communicators encode meanings in the hope that the recipients of their messages extract the meaning they intended (i.e. decode the text as intended) (Louw The Media and Political Process 207). Hall distinguished three possible types of message decoding. In the first case, the recipient accepts the dominant code, which is what the sender wanted to achieve. On-Time Delivery! Get your 100% customized paper done in as little as 3 hours In the second case, the recipient denies the message based on the oppositional code. The third decoding type deals with the negotiated code, which combines both the dominant and oppositional codes, thus partly accepting and denying the message. A closer look should be taken at the three types. In the first case, there is full compliance between the encoding and decoding, and the process corresponds to the ideal of undistorted communication. For Hall, it is the worst possible option, since it means that an individual is fully inscribed into the cultural hegemonic order and operates according to the exclusively prevailing codes. In this case, the individual becomes an ideologically constructed subject. Here is a contemporary example; decoding an American TV series in the direct correspondence with the encoders’ (that is, the filmmaker’s) plan, a person identifies itself with a white man from the middle class who shares the traditional moral norms; a heterosexual European. This means that if the decoder is, in fact, a woman, a factory worker, a non-European, or a person with nontraditional sexual orientation (or a person possessing all of the mentioned characteristics), the media commit aggression upon the person by incorporating him/her into the hostile cultural order and imposing a false identification. In the case of the second type, decoding may be radical, that is, the decoder takes up a position directly opposite to the dominant ideology. In this case, the audience member deconstructs the hegemonic cultural code and reconstructs it as a code in opposition. It means that he/she refuses to experience the pleasure of recognition, denounces the ideology’s validity and ceases to perceive own position in the social structure as a normal, natural and consistent. According to Louw, resistance to the values imposed by the broadcaster is a possibility, which is not always translated into action (Louw The Media and Cultural Production 102). More specifically, the oppositional interpretation is rarer than that which is imposed. However, in conflict situations, the number of oppositional interpretations increases, and in some cases, they become quite frequent. As for the third type, Stuart Hall has also distinguished the negotiated decoding; in this case, there is only partial concurrency between the encoding and decoding, which is inter alia achieved as a result of negotiations. The point of the negotiation process is that during the process of decoding, the audience member “acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, he makes its own ground rules” (Hall par. 24). Thus, the audience members can still enjoy the pleasure of recognition and have faith in the meaningfulness of the eternal fitness of things, but at the same time, they refuse to fully correspond to the structure of the subject offered to them, and ambiguously respond to the communication. As cultural studies researcher, Hall linked the media and culture by making values a common unit, since culture is “a set of common values, in which such values permit social expectations and collective understandings” (“Political Values” par. 12). When it comes to propaganda, the “negotiated” and “oppositional” values in the Hall’s concept are of particular interest. According to the contemporary psychologists, there is no harm trying to convince a person regardless of its political preference, as he/she has a different attitude to various problems (in such works as Westen’s The Political Brain and Lakoff’s The Political Mind). However, he remains a liberal or a conservative, who has a contrasting opinion on certain issues, and this can be used in persuasion. It is crucial for the Western model of elections, where political technology primarily aims at those who have yet to make their decision. We’ll deliver a custom paper tailored to your requirements. Cut 15% off your first order To summarize, the most important factor in the Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding theory is the active role of the recipient and the ability to read the dominant content of a message as oppositional. In this case, the intermediate version of the message, in which part of the dominant values is not recognized, can serve as a manual for campaign development. This strategy was used by various politicians, including the group of individuals who initiated Perestroika in the USSR by removing the dominating image of Stalin and replacing it with that of Lenin; eventually, the cult of Lenin was renounced, shifting the blame on the system instead of the revolutionary leaders.
This example demonstrates that it may take several stages to establish the oppositional thinking. Sources Cited “Mass Media.” ScienceDaily. sciencedaily.com, n.d. Web. “Political Values.” Boundless Political Science. Boundless. 2015. Web. Barker, Chris, and Dariusz Galasiński. Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis, London: Sage Publ., 2001. Print. Chen, Kuan-Hsing.
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