

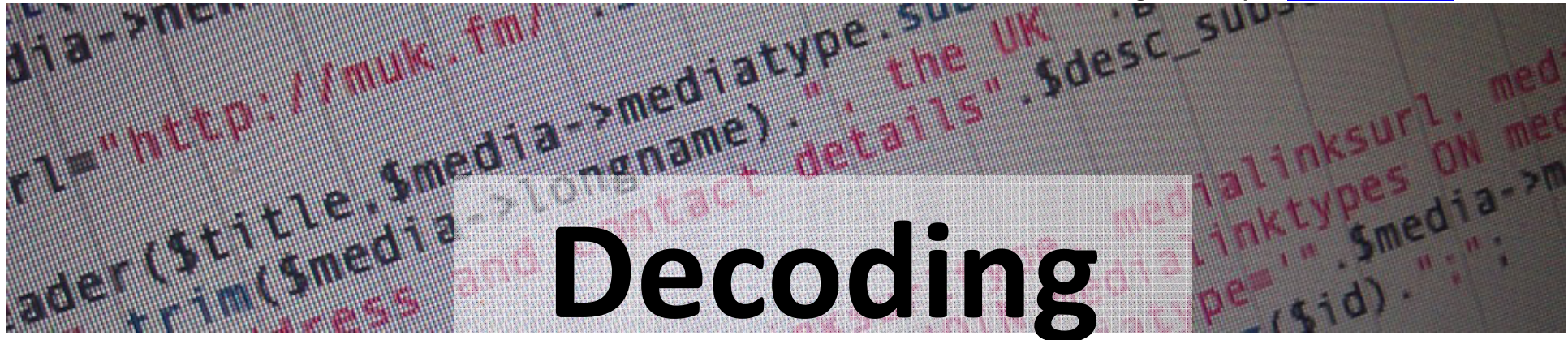


Universidad
Carlos III de Madrid



Week 9

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The cultural studies approach to the media

- Introduction
- Assumption
- Critique
- Context
- Concepts
- Authors
- Arguments



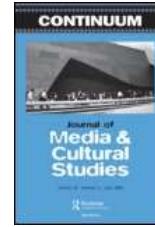
Introduction

- Stuart Hall and David Morley
 - Use concepts such as
 - Representation
 - Cultural Hegemony
- ** Media and power**

• Context



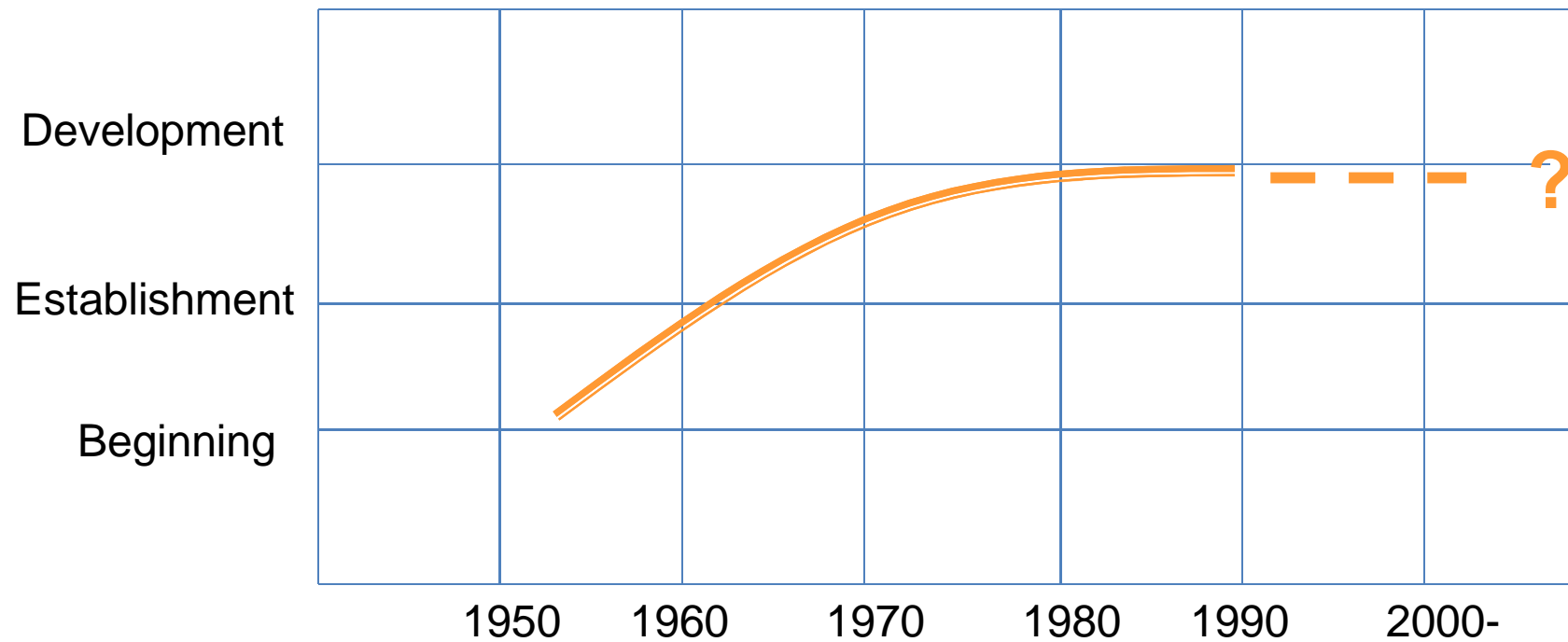
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- British Cultural Studies tradition emerged in **the 60s and 70s in England**
- Conditions for the establishment of **Center for Cultural Studies at Birmingham**
- Key members of the Birmingham group: **Raymond Williams**, Richard Hoggart y Edward P. Thompson (first generation)
- Worldwide Influence of Cultural Studies**

British Tradition of Cultural Studies



• Authors and Writings

Raymond Williams

- *The Long Revolution* (1958)

Stuart Hall

- *Encoding / Decoding* (1980)
- *Representation ...* (1996)

David Morley

- *The Nationwide audience* (1980)



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- **Assumptions**
- Louis Althusser – The ideological Aparatus
- **Antonio Gramsci – Hegemony**
 - ✓ Dominant culture (*status quo*)
 - ✓ Cultural resistance
 - Sub-culture studies
 - **Between structure and subjectivity**
 - **Class-related theory**

Concepts and Arguments

- **Stuart's Hall "Encoding / Decoding"**

What is the purpose of the text?



distribution/consumption, reproduction. This would be to think of the process as a 'complex structure in dominance', sustained through the articulation of connected practices, each of which, however, retains its distinctiveness and has its own specific modality, its own forms and conditions of existence. This second approach,

Concepts and Arguments

- **Stuart's Hall "Encoding / Decoding"**

How do you relate this text to media theories already seen?

Traditionally, mass-communications research has conceptualized the process of communication in terms of a circulation circuit or loop. This model has been criticized for its linearity - sender/message/receiver - for its concentration on the level



Lasswell's Model

Marx's Grundrisse and in *Capital*, has the added advantage of bringing out more sharply how a continuous circuit - production-distribution-production - can be sustained through a 'passage of forms'.¹ It also highlights the specificity of the forms



Frankfurt School

Concepts and Arguments

- **Stuart's Hall "Encoding / Decoding"**

How do you relate this text to media theories already seen?

social meanings, practices, and usages, power and interest 'written in' to them. The connotative levels of signifiers, Barthes remarked, 'have a close communication with culture, knowledge, history, and it is through them, so to speak, that the environmental world invades the linguistic and semantic system. They are, if you like, the fragments of ideology'.¹⁰

Semiotic
(cultural forms)

In recent years discrepancies of this kind have usually been explained by reference to 'selective perception'. This is the door via which a residual pluralism evades the compulsions of a highly structured, asymmetrical and non-equivalent process. Of course, there will always be variant readings. But 'selective perception' is almost never or privatized as the concept suggests. The patterns exhibit, across individual variants, significant clusterings. Any new approach to audience studies will therefore have to begin with a critique of 'selective perception' theory.

Theories of
persuasion

Concepts and Arguments

- **Stuart's Hall "Encoding / Decoding"**

Main points of the texts

1. **Production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction**

versus

Sender / message / receiver

2. The 'object' (message) of these **practices** is **meanings** in the form of sign-vehicles (...) through the operation of codes within a **discourse**

3. **Discursive form** of the message vs. content analysis

Concepts and Arguments

- **Stuart's Hall "Encoding / Decoding"**

Could you summarize the main points of the texts?

4. **Production** constructs the (TV) message

- Circulation and reception are "moments" of the production process

5. To have an effect, TV message has to be created and appropriated as a meaningful discourse

6. The semiotic model of communication process and its implication for audience research

Representations of violence on TV are not violence but messages about violence

Concepts and Arguments

- **Stuart's Hall "Encoding / Decoding"**

Could you summarize the main points of the texts?

7. The **televisual sign** is a complex one

It is an iconic sign

It is the result of a practice – naturalism or realism

8. **Ideological values** are strongly fixed through codes

9. Any society/culture tends to impose its classifications of the world – These constitute a **dominant cultural order / dominant or preferred meanings**

Concepts and Arguments

- **Stuart's Hall "Encoding / Decoding"**

Could you summarize the main points of the texts?

10. The communicative process consists on rules of competence and use, of logics-in-use, which seek actively to enforce one semantic domain over another

11. Distorted communication / misunderstanding happens when audience doesn't operate within the dominant / preferred code

- Three hypothetical position from which decoding may be constructed:
- **The dominant-hegemonic position /code**
- **The negotiated position /code**
- **The oppositional position /code**

- **Conclusion / Critique**

A new and exciting phase in so-called audience research using a semiotic paradigm in contrast to behaviourism (?)

• Conclusion / Critique

mational operations of its own, especially those of a technico-practical nature. The professional code, however, operates *within* the 'hegemony' of the dominant code. Indeed, it serves to reproduce the dominant definitions precisely by bracketing their hegemonic quality and operating instead with displaced professional codings which foreground such apparently neutral-technical questions as visual quality, news and presentational values, televisual quality, 'professionalism' and so on. The hegemonic interpretations of, say, the politics of Northern Ireland, or the Chilean *coup* or the Industrial Relations Bill are principally generated by political and mili-

Inability to answer the question of **the relative autonomy of culture** (the media)

Shortcomings of the theoretical foundations of the British tradition

Cultural studies are based on **Gramsci's theory of hegemony**, which attempts to explain the ways in which popular culture is involved in the process of **class domination**