

# Barthes: Semiotics

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1

*the media constructs meaning through a process of **denotation and connotation**.*

- We read the media imagery in the same way that we read conventional language.
- We decode media in two distinctly different ways; first, producing a **denotative reading** that recognises the literal content of an image, and then producing a **connotative reading** that diagnoses a deeper symbolic meaning.
- Image based connotations are created through: props, post-production effects, pose, costuming, composition and lighting.
- Media imagery is **polyvalent - likely, in other words, to a number of connotative effects**.
- Text-based elements can provide anchorage - tying down the meaning of an image for the reader.
- Barthes suggests that meaning is produced by the simultaneous deployment of hermeneutic, proairetic, semantic, cultural and symbolic features

2

*the media has an **ideological effect** on audiences*

- The media is powerful because it has the capacity to **produce realistic portrayal of the world**.
- The media has a **myth like capacity to guide and influence** our behaviours and actions.
- The media naturalises ideas through **repetition**.
- The media reduces or simplifies ideas, discouraging audiences from questioning its specific presentation of the world.
- The media tends to reinforce the worldview of those who affect social power.

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**Two theorists who challenge Barthes's thinking:**

**Claude Levi-Strauss:** would be more interested in the way that media products articulate oppositions than in the effect of any single ingredient or moment. Lévi-Strauss would also argue that media products are informed by universally shared structures, Barthes argues that media products are constructed as a result of temporal or social influences.

**Tzvetan Todorov:** would argue that media products produce meaning through narrative features and that isolated instances of connotation are less significant.

# Claude Lévi-Strauss: Structuralism

ML



1

## *media narratives use **binary oppositions***

- Lévi-Strauss offers a structuralist approach to media analysis, suggesting that **humans encode and decode the world using universally shared principles.**
- The media uses **binary oppositions to explain and categorise the complexities** of the world around us.
- Oppositions can be found in the media in the presentation of characters of narrative themes.
- Media makers also apply stylistic opposition to mise en scène, camera work, editing styles and image construction.
- Thematic oppositions in media products can be genre driven.

2

## *the way binary oppositions are resolved creates **ideological significance***

- Media products construct ideologies by **positioning their audiences to favour one side of an opposition.**
- **Narrative resolutions** – the ending of media products – often help us to diagnose which opposition the product favours.

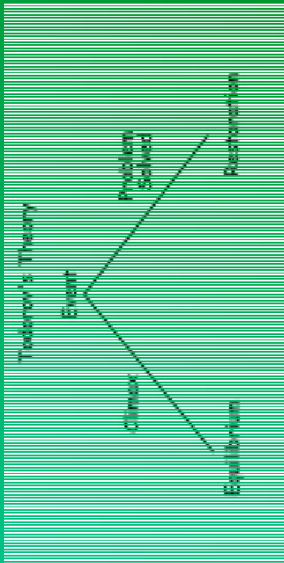
## ***Three theorists who challenge Lévi-Strauss' thinking:***

**Stuart Hall:** would also argue that media products can be encoded using binary oppositions, but he would add that audiences do not necessarily decode the products in the way that media makers intend.

**Paul Gilroy:** argues that Western binary thinking has traditionally classified ethnicity in terms of simplified white/non-white and civilised/uncivilised categories. He calls for the media to move beyond these simplistic and hugely damaging binary classifications.

**Judith Butler:** similarly argues that conventional Western gender binaries mask the complex nature of sexuality. She also argues that individuals have resisted gender binary using 'gender trouble.'

# Todorov: Narratology



ML

1

## *narrative patterns – **equilibrium, disequilibrium and new equilibrium***

- Todorov suggest that meaning in media products is constructed through **narrative sequences and transitions** rather than through any individual effect or single moment within a product.
- Todorov suggests that an ideal **narrative structure follows a pattern of equilibrium, disequilibrium and new equilibrium.**
- The new equilibrium stage transforms characters and the world they inhabit.

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## *the **ideological effects** of story structure*

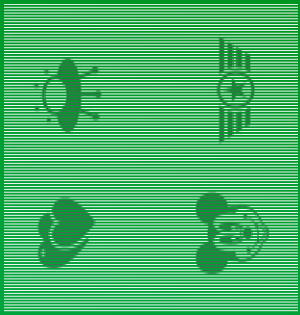
- The power of stories lies in their deeper symbolic meanings.
- **Narratives construct ideals** for the audience through the use of equilibrium.
- **Disequilibrium sequences represent ideas, values or behaviours that are deemed problematic** – often these negative ideologies are embodied through the villain character.
- Narrative transformation produces further ideals or positive models of behaviour for a media audience.

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## ***Two theorists who might challenge Todorov's thinking:***

**Steve Neale:** would argue that story structures are continuously adapting and changing. The idea that there exists an 'ideal' story structure, as such, is problematic for Neale.

**Lévi-Strauss:** is concerned with the way that narrative present oppositions rather than the way those oppositions are transformed or synthesised.



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1

*the pleasures afforded through **repetition and difference***

- The genre of a product is determined by a variety of factors.
- Genres offer specific pleasure to their audience.
- Audiences enjoy genre subversion as well as repetition.
- Genres are not fixed but are subject to constant change as a result of real world effects and the needs of audiences.
- Genre hybridisation is a common feature within the contemporary media landscape.

2

***industry effects on genre-driven media***

- **Genre-driven output is shaped by auteurs** and is also subject to the effects of institutional mediation.
- **Genre labelling is widely practised** by media producers to create a narrative image for a media product.
- Promotion and marketing materials (intertextual-relay) can fix the genre of a product.

?

***Two theorists who might challenge Neale's thinking:***

**Stuart Hall:** would agree that products construct pleasure for audiences, but would also emphasise the potential dangers that certain genres have in effecting audience ideologies through genre specific character representations and stereotypes.

**Curran and Seaton:** might challenge the notion that genre hybridisation is not a significant feature of the contemporary landscape. Curran and Seaton suggest that media concentration has in fact led to fewer experimental forms and the media companies are instead overly reliant on tried and tested narrative formulas that are designed to garner mass audience appeal.

# Baudrillard: Postmodernism



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## *from the **real to the hyperreal***

- Baudrillard suggest that there have been three distinct cultural phases: **pre-modernity, modernity and postmodernity**.
- We now live in the postmodern age which is marked by massive proliferation in media content and media messages.
- Media proliferation has resulted in an implosion of meaning through the **simultaneous presentation of oppositional truths**.
- Media proliferation is enables through the **endless copying of pre-existing media. Media forms 'blend' and hybridise during this copying process**.
- The postmodern age is marked by the dominance of advertising as a media form. Advertising has also impacted on other media forms creating hyperreal inertia.
- Baudrillard suggest that media blending has resulted in the construction of fictionalised reality.
- Audience yearn for authenticity in postmodernity; the media industry tries to satisfy this yearning through realised fiction.

### *Two theorists who might challenge Baudrillard's thinking:*

**Roland Barthes:** would argue that media products have a clear relationship with reality. Media texts represent and naturalise the world views of those who hold power in society.

**Henry Jenkins:** would contest the idea that postmodernity results in hyperreal inertia. Contemporary digital media, he would argue, can make a positive difference in the real world through the use of participatory culture.

# Stuart Hall: Representation



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## *media representation processes*

- The media does not mirror real world events but **produces an edited version** of the events depicted.
- Media **representations are constructed through codes** – through the use of language, imagery, layout, sound and editing.
- The media plays a vital role in shaping our views of the wider world

2

## *stereotypes and power*

- Stereotypes are used by media producers to create instant **characterisation**.
- **Stereotypes reduce social groups to a few key traits** or visual cues and suggest that those groups are naturally inclined towards a specific set of negative behaviours.
- Stereotypes are mostly found where there are huge social inequalities. They **exclude and demonise groups** in a manner that both reflects and reinforces social hierarchies.
- Social groups can internalise the behaviours inferred by stereotypes.
- Stereotypes can be contested through transcoding strategies.

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## *Two theorists who might challenge Halls thinking:*

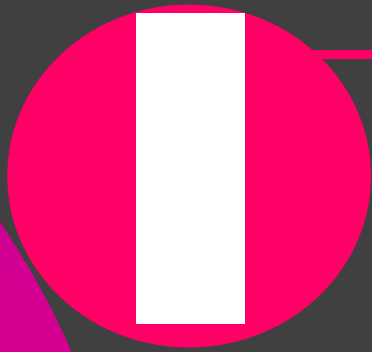
**Stuart Hall:** Strangely, Hall himself provides a substantial challenge to his own ideas. His reception theory model suggest that audiences can resist the effects of the media through the production of oppositional or negotiated readings.

**Paul Gilroy:** In many senses, Gilroy's work picks up on many of the themes of Hall's arguments – his analysis, however, suggest that racial stereotypes are framed by the wider cultural/historical forces of Empire. This makes it much harder for the media to contest black stereotypes because they are so deeply entrenched within the British cultural psyche.

# Paul Gilroy: Postcolonial Theory



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## *racial binaries, otherness and civilisationism*

- **Black communities are constructed as an 'other'** to white culture and are associated with criminal activity and lawlessness.
- The media reflect civilisationist attitudes through simplistic reportage and **the demonisation of Muslims** – media products nurture fear and the idea that Muslims and Europeans are incompatible.



## *the enduring legacy of the British Empire on English identity*

- A deep-seated **postcolonial melancholia** infects the media as a result of Britain's diminishing global importance.
- Postcolonial melancholia prompts a **nostalgic construction of Englishness**.
- Postcolonial melancholy produces a sense of English rootlessness and an **anxiety surrounding British identity**.

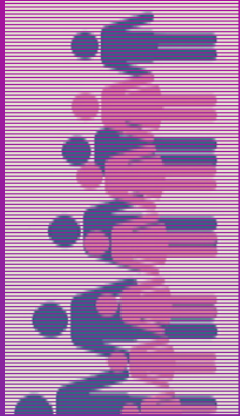


## *Two theorists who might challenge Gilroy's thinking:*

**David Gauntlett:** would present a far more optimistic picture of the media's capacity to effect change or to enable positive identity construction. He would suggest that the variety of media representations available to contemporary audience is far greater than that outlined by Gilroy.

**Henry Jenkins:** would present a far more optimistic view regarding the current media landscape than Gilroy's postcolonial assessment – suggesting that new technologies enable audiences to engage in participatory culture and to form online communities.

# van Zoonen: Feminist Theory and Patriarchy



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## *the female body as spectacle*

- The roles that females are expected to play within society vary enormously across different cultures and historical periods.
- The **dominant representational mode** in Western culture positions women as an **erotic spectacle**.
- Second wave feminists have **challenged the dominance of men** in society.
- Third wave feminists have **reasserted the right of women to occupy traditional female roles**.
- Fourth wave feminists continue to **challenge male privilege** using both mass media and social media forms.

## *masculinity in the media*

- Masculine depictions are not subject to the same objectification processes as females.
- Male social dominance is reinforced using active representations of masculinity.

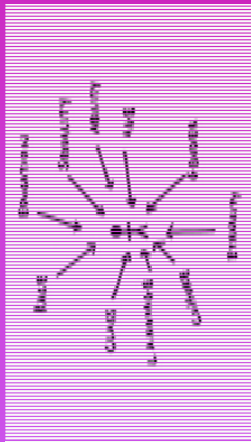
## *Two theorists who challenge van Zoonen's thinking:*

**David Gauntlett:** would argue that contemporary media products both online and mass media oriented, offer audiences a much wider diversity of gender-based identities than is suggested by van Zoonen. This enables audiences to shape their own identities and to resist the ideological pull of patriarchy.

**Judith Butler:** would agree with much of van Zoonen's thinking, but would suggest further that the use of gender-based labels like 'male' and 'female' mask the complex nature of sexuality. She would also argue that individuals have resisted those conventional labels by engaging in 'gender trouble'



# bell hooks: Intersectionality



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## *interconnected oppression*

- Representations of black women (and men) have been shaped by historical forces.
- **Feminist movements** of the twentieth century have largely been **dominated by a white viewpoint**.
- A **social hierarchy exists** that places white men at the top followed by white women, male ethnic minorities and, last, female ethnic minorities.
- **Oppression** of minority groups (racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia) are constructs of a white male dominated social hierarchy.
- The lack of black female power results in absent representations and a range of negative stereotypes that some black women have internalised.

## *from evaluation to actions, bell hook's call to action*

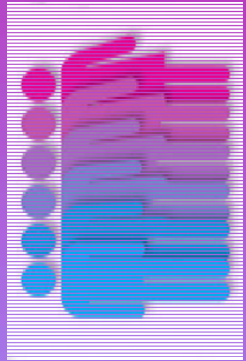
- hook's intersectional work does not just provide us with an analytical tool, **but also prompts media producers to fashion their products in ways that draw attention to social inequality**.
- Intersectional media foregrounds the interconnected nature of inequality.
- Intersectional media celebrates social diversity and gives voice to social groups that have been marginalised by white male power.

## *Two theorists who might challenge bell hook's thinking:*

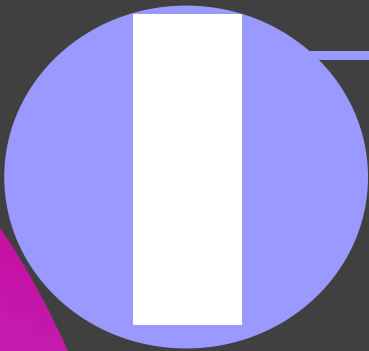
**Paul Gilroy:** would not necessarily challenge hooks, but his work provide a more UK specific framework for evaluation the representation of black people. His analysis highlights the legacy effects of Empire on our notions of ethnicity and national identity.

**Henry Jenkins:** again, he would not challenge hooks directly, but would suggest that contemporary media products, through participatory culture, can circumvent established media power. Indeed, the online activism of **#BlackLivesMatter** provides a brilliant example of the power of participatory culture.

# Butler: Gender as performance



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*our **gendered identities** are not naturally given but **constructed** through repetition and ritual.*

- **Our bodies or sex do not define our gendered identities.**
- Genders are not fixed by childhood experiences.
- **Gender is constructed** by continuous repetition of micro-rituals.



***Contemporary culture reinforces a traditional gender binary** – identities that fall outside of that binary are constructed as **subversive**.*

- **Heteronormativity** is entrenched within society.
- Non-heteronormative identities are marginalised or subjugated.
- The media assists in the marginalisation of subversive identities through absent representations, abjection and parody.
- The **performance of gender trouble is a difficult**, sometimes painful, process given the entrenched nature of heteronormativity.



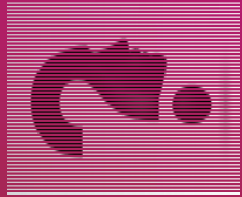
## ***Two theorists who might challenge Butler's thinking:***

**David Gauntlett:** acknowledges much of the work of Butler, but would suggest that contemporary media practices mean that heteronormativity does not completely dominate and that the media allows for diverse or fluid identity construction. He suggests that society has adopted a much more positive view of gender subversion than is presented by Butler.

**van Zoonen:** would agree with Butler's assessment that gender is a social construct but would suggest that the media reinforces male power as a result of women internalising male power and assuming the same passivity that on-screen depiction of femininity construct.

# Gauntlett: Media and Identity

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1

## **traditional and post-traditional media consumption.**

- Gauntlett's ideas build upon Anthony Giddens' assertion that society has progressed to a stage Giddens calls '**late modernity**'.
- The conditions of late modernity enable audience **to escape the prescriptive identities** that are constructed for them through localised social norms and traditional viewpoints.
- Gauntlett argues that contemporary media has brought audiences into **contact with a wider range of representations** – and, importantly, that audience can consciously shape their own sense of self.

2

## **Reflexive identity construction**

- The media provides a variety of role models and lifestyle templates that audience use to guide their own outlooks.
- Audiences are engaged in a continuous revision of their identities.
- Media narratives mirror the process of identity through transformation.
- Audience are in control of the media – adapting and assimilating ideas about themselves through the various representations that the media present.

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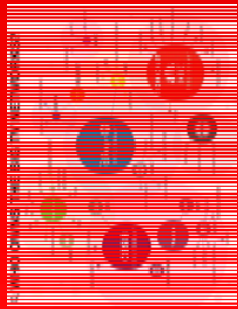
## **Three theorists who challenge Gauntlett's thinking:**

**Stuart Hall:** would argue that the media landscape is not diverse, but saturated with stereotypical portrayals that reflect wider social inequalities. This leads to a deeply problematic portrayal of minority groups of all persuasions.

**bell hooks:** hooks would argue that portrayals of black women are largely absent from the media and, when they are present, they are prone to produce overly sexualised portrayals.

**Paul Gilroy:** would argue that British media narrative do not offer diversity but are stuck within a colonial mind-set that positions non-whites as threatening, primitive or uncivilised.

# Curran and Seaton: Ownership effects



1

*the media is controlled by a small number of companies that make products to create profit*

- Globalisation has concentrated media ownership into the hands of a few companies.
- Media conglomerates are **horizontally and vertically integrated** to maximise profit.
- Large-scale media producers rely on **advertising to generate income**.
- Advertising drives media companies to produce products that have **mass audience appeal**.

2

*media concentration adversely affects media content*

- The **business function** of the media industry takes precedence over its creative/public service capacities.
- **Profit-driven media is softened** to create mass audience appeal.
- Minority interest content is pushed to the margins of broadcast schedules.
- Free market competition produces **format-driven products**.

3

*diverse ownership creates diverse products*

- Curran and Seaton highlight the damage that free market ideologies have had on the media landscape.
- Public service broadcasting provides impartial news, serves minority audience and champions national unity by offering inclusive rather than exclusive content.

?

*Three theorists who might challenge Curran and Seaton's thinking:*

**Clay Shirky:** argues that the media industry is increasingly driven by audience feedback systems rather than the top-down control of proprietors.

**Henry Jenkins:** would acknowledge that Web 2.0 enables big business to exploit the web for commercial reasons, but would also argue that the internet retains the capacity to work as a social good and that online communities created via 'participatory culture' have the power to change the world for the better.

**Steve Neale:** would critique the idea that media proliferation has resulted in a narrowing of product types or the dominance of formula-driven media. He would argue that audiences prompt producers to continuously adapt the finese genre-driven material.

# Livingstone and Lunt: Regulation



# 1

## *citizen and consumer based models of media regulation*

- Citizen-oriented regulation is concerned with content-based issues.
- Citizen-based regulation is a positive form of regulation that directs media content so that it can improve the lives of citizens and contribute to the well-being of wider society.
- Citizen-based regulation promotes forms of media that are able to hold powerful groups to account.
- Consumer-based regulation seeks to ensure that the media landscape contains a variety of different producers so that audiences have choice.
- Consumer-based regulation seeks to ensure that the technological infrastructure that provides media to the public is fit for purpose.
- Consumer-based regulation creates an environment in which audiences themselves make judgements about the kinds of media that are appropriate for their consumption.
- A consumer-orientated approach has dominated the media landscape as a result of the Communications Act 2003 and the creation of Ofcom.

# 2

## *the challenge of regulation in the age of globalised media.*

- Globalisation has reduced the power of national governments to control the media – global companies operate beyond the scope and boundaries of any one country.

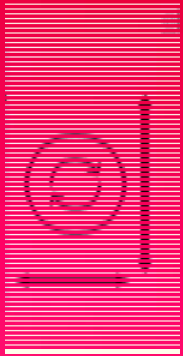
# ?

## *Two theorists who might challenge Livingstone and Lunt:*

**Henry Jenkins:** would emphasise the benefits that the global digital media landscape offers. He would argue that digital media allows audience to freely construct their own products and to make connection with like-minded individuals across the world. This process has also enabled some groups to affect deep-seated social change.

**David Gauntlett:** again, would emphasise the benefit of globalisation. Globalisation, he might argue, has brought audiences into contact with a wide range of identities that they did not previously have access to. This has helped audience to perceive their identities as fluid and not fixed.

# Hesmondhalgh The Culture Industry



1

## *maximising profits and minimising risks*

- The media industry is prone to risk as a result of shifting audience tastes.
- The media industry tries to reduce risk through overproduction.
- Overproduction strategies, generally speaking can only be engaged by large media conglomerates.
- **Media conglomerates have expanded to enable them to cope with risk.**
- Media products are carefully formatted using a number of industry specific strategies to reduce risk.

2

## *the effects of the internet revolution are difficult to diagnose*

- The democratising effects of the digital revolution have been over-exaggerated by some academics.
- Digital media is used by audience in radically different way, while only a few users have the necessary skills to engage in participatory culture.
- **The internet is dominated by a handful of very powerful companies.**
- The commercialisation of the web has further reduced is democratising capacity.

?

## *Two theorists who might challenge Hesmondhalgh's thinking:*

**Henry Jenkins:** emphasises the positive effect of the digital revolution – suggesting that digital media cultivates online communities and allows audiences to express themselves in positive and creative ways through fan engagement.

**Clay Shirky:** might argue that large-scale media providers will be replaced by products that are created by everyday users, or that mass media content will be significantly controlled by audience feedback mechanisms.

# Bandura Media modelling effects



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1

*violent behaviours are learned through modelling*

- Humans learn much of their behaviour through social interaction.
- Social learning can occur as a result of first-hand experiences.
- Social learning can also occur by watching others' experiences.

2

*Audiences can copy media representations of negative behaviour*

- Representational modelling can have a powerful effect on the behaviours of media audiences.
- Modelled behaviours by role models and the vivid visual encoding systems of media products further concentrate the effects of representational modelling.
- Violence is an endemic feature of media content.

?

*Three theorists who might challenge Bandura's thinking:*

**Stuart Hall:** would argue that media products do not produce a cause and effect learning response - audiences decode the media they engage with using contextual knowledge.

**Henry Jenkins:** emphasises the positive effects of media consumption - suggesting that the media forges communities and allows audiences to express themselves in positive and creative ways through fan engagement.

**Gerbner:** would argue that the media should not be measured just in terms of its impact on individual learning behaviours but also on the cumulative effect of mass media consumption on wide social attitudes.



1

*media products shape attitudes and perceptions of the world at large*

- **Storytelling** performs an enculturation role helping to shape our attitudes and social values.
- **Mass media** has replaced other institutions, most notably religion and education as the principle constructor of symbolic storytelling.
- **Television** has had a homogenising effect on society - we all watch or engage in the same symbolic stories as a result of mass media.
- Television schedules are saturated with violent content that cultivates a widespread fear in society - 'mean world syndrome'.
- The media can produce resonance or mainstreaming effects on audiences.

2

*media consumption leads audiences to accept established power structures and mainstream ideologies*

- Mass media narrative create symbolic representations of power that **affect our real-world view**.
- Mass media products **over-exaggerate** the power and scope of real-world authorities.
- Mass media products **marginalise alternative viewpoints** as a result of middle-of-the-road reportage.

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*Three theorists who challenge Gerbner's thinking:*

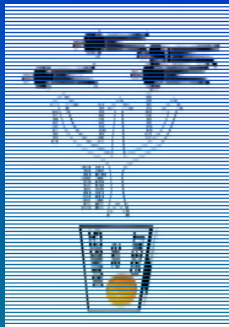
**Stuart Hall:** would argue that media products do not produce a cause and effect response - audiences decode the media using contextual knowledge.

**Henry Jenkins:** emphasises the positive effects of media consumption - suggesting that the media forges communities and allows audiences to express themselves in positive and creative ways through fan engagement.

**Bandura:** would argue that the media directly impacts and individual's behaviour and induces consumers to be violent. Gerbner, in contrast, suggest that media consumption prompts attitudinal rather than a behavioural response.



# Stuart Hall Reception Theory



# 1

## *encoding and decoding*

- Professional media encodes messages using visual and aural cues.
- Media encoding is affected by institutional context, media production processes and genre-driven routines.
- Media products are polysemic as a result of their use of visual signs.
- Audience do not necessarily decode meanings that media produces effect in a straightforward way.
- Audiences can misread products if they are too complex or untranslatable.

# 2

## *dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings*

- Media products reinforce dominant ideologies and cultural hegemonies.
- Dominant ideologies are subject to change - again, the media plays a crucial role in effecting those changes.
- Audience use 'situated logics' to decode media messages.
- Audiences can produce reading of products that accept the dominant ideologies they construct.
- Audiences can use their contextual knowledge to read against the grain of a media product and to thus produce negotiated or oppositional decodings.

# ?

## *Three theorists who might challenge Hall's thinking:*

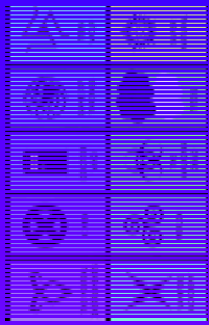
**Gerbner:** would suggest that audiences find it difficult to resist the effects of media products. Gerbner's mainstreaming theory would suggest that even the least susceptible audience members experience attitudinal change as a result of media exposure.

**Bandura:** his Bobo doll experiments would suggest that the media has a casual effect on audience behaviours and prompts audiences to copy behaviours they have seen in the media.

**Guantlett:** would argue that media products do not necessarily reinforce cultural hegemonies. Contemporary media products offer a wide range of identities and subversions that often work in opposition to dominant ideologies.

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# Jenkins: Fandom



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1

*fans appropriate media texts, producing readings that are not fully authorised by the media producers*

- Jenkins suggest that audience are able to use professional texts as 'creative scaffolding' on which they craft their own reading of products.
- Textual poaching can be used by marginalised fans to explore alternative readings to mainstream culture.
- Textual poaching in the digital age can take many forms, including fanfiction, remix culture, fan art or video parodies.

2

*fans and media makers have converged as a result of digital technology*

- Digital technologies have brought audiences and producers together.
- The digital revolution has expanded the scope of fandoms.
- Producers use their fans digital labour to promote and market media.
- Contemporary media producers deliberately construct material to engage fan interest.

3

*fans use participatory culture to effect wider social change*

- Participatory culture is distinctly different from the commercial activities of Web 2.0.
- Participatory culture allows individual to share and develop ideas with like-minded community.
- Participatory culture can create social change.

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*Three theorists who might challenge Jenkins's thinking:*

**Curran and Seaton:** argue that the internet is dominated by an oligopoly of commercial companies thus minimising the potential effect of participatory culture.

**Hesmondhalgh:** might agree that the internet has resulted in audience-producer convergence, but would argue that the media industry is still heavily reliant upon traditional marketing activities to reduce product risk. Media makers might engage in fan-based listening activities to construct or adapt products, but formulaic product design (using stars/genre codes) remains a consistent focus of product content.

**Livingstone and Lunt:** suggest that the global nature of the net and the volume of material uploaded make effective regulation very difficult. New technology might open up the media to democratising forces and the development of new communities, but it is also open to potential abuse.

# Clay Shirky: The end of audience



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1

## *everybody makes the media*

- Shirky highlights the revolutionary impact of digital technology in **speeding up media production processes**.
- Media consumption patterns have changed from a **broadcast model** that involves one sender and many recipients to a **many-to-many model**.
- Traditional media, Shirky argues, uses a 'filter then publish' model to provide quality content.
- Shirky suggest that the internet has resulted in a '**publish now, filter later**' model due to lower production costs and reduced entry barriers to media production.

2

## *everyday communities of practice*

- Audiences actively shape their own rules of engagement with professional media products.
- Digital technologies have resulted in an explosion of what Shirky calls 'communities of practice'.

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## *Two theorists who might challenge Shirky's thinking:*

**Curran and Seaton:** argue that the internet continues to be dominated by an oligopoly of commercial companies.

**Hesmondhalgh:** might agree that the internet has resulted in audience-producer convergence, but would argue that the media industry is still heavily reliant upon traditional marketing activities to reduce product risk.