



Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application

Fourth Edition

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Cultural Studies

Chapter Overview

- CS at a Glance
- Introduction
- The Marxist Legacy
- Assumptions of CS
- Hegemony: The Influence on the Masses
- Counter Hegemony
- Audience Decoding
- Integration and Critique

CS at a Glance

- Media represents ideologies of the dominant class
- Media is controlled by corporations
 - Information is consequently targeted with a profit in mind
- Media's influence must be considered when interpreting a culture

Introduction

- Culture is influenced by powerful, dominant groups
- Does not refer to a single doctrine of human behavior
- Attitudes that critique a culture are blended

Introduction

- The media shapes public opinions of marginalized populations
- Media serves to communicate dominant ways of thinking
- Media keeps the powerful in control

The Marxist Legacy

- Cultural studies is neo-Marxist
 - Roots are in writings of Karl Marx
 - The powerful exploit the powerless
 - Powerlessness can lead to alienation

Assumptions of Cultural Studies

- Culture pervades all facets of human behavior
 - Culture's ideology
 - Culture wars
 - Meaning is shaped by the media

Assumptions of Cultural Studies

- People are part of a hierarchical structure of power
 - Power held by social groups
 - Power differentials between groups
 - Subordinate groups
 - The media

Hegemony: The Influence on the Masses

- **Hegemony** is the influence, power, or dominance of one social group over another.
 - Based on false consciousness
 - Today's corporate culture
 - Theater of struggle

Counter Hegemony

- **Counter hegemony** is the use of the same strategies and resources as the dominant group to challenge that domination
 - Audiences are not always compliant
 - Allows understanding of history from other lenses

Counter Hegemony

- Television shows as examples of this phenomenon
 - *The Cosby Show*
(Merrit, 1991; Gray, 1989)
 - *The Simpsons*
(Ott, 2003; Matheson, 2001; Delaney, 2008)

Audience Decoding

- An audience decodes a message from a position
 - Dominant-hegemonic
 - Professional codes
 - Negotiated
 - Application of “local condition”
 - Oppositional
 - Image of beauty

Integration

- Communication tradition
 - Critical
- Communication context
 - Mass/media
- Approaches to knowing
 - Interpretive/hermeneutic
 - Critical

Critical Strengths of Cultural Studies

- Logical Consistency
 - Audiences and counter hegemony
- Utility
 - Translates into daily life and practice
- Heurism
 - Concepts applied to various studies