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 the entire complex formal “rules” by which language signifies. To put it paradoxically, the event must become a “story” before it can become a communicative event. In that moment the formal sub-rules of discourse are “in dominance,” without, of course, subordinating out of existence the historical event so signified, the social relations in which the rules are set to work or the social and political consequences of the event having been signified in this way.

(Hall, 1980, p. 129)
Introduction

Currently chair of London’s International Institute of Visual Arts, Stuart Hall is known by many as “the father of critical cultural studies.” He is a husband, father, musician, and public intellectual. In the early 1990s, Hall hosted a BBC series on the Caribbean, *Redemption Song*, and an easy listening show—Radio 4’s *Desert Island Discs*. Hall gained some notoriety for his BBC 2 Open Door program, “It Ain't Half Racist, Mum,” which aired in 1979. As a preeminent figure of the cultural studies movement, his work spans more than four decades of intellectual thought and political discourse. Following the legacy of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, Hall is responsible for the burgeoning scholarship in critical media studies that has influenced the work of Sut Jhally, Issac Julien, Herman Gray, Henry Giroux, Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela McRobbie—to name a few. The latter three are his protégés and produced an edited book, *Without guarantees: In honour of Stuart Hall* (Gilroy, Grossberg, & McRobbie, 2000), which honored Hall’s Marxist theoretical approach to the study of cultural identities and media texts. The preface of the book includes the following acknowledgment of his vast influence:

> These writings are firstly and most importantly a gift. Their testimony to Stuart Hall’s influence, and the esteem in which he is held by the contributors, affirm our profound appreciation for his work, our respect for his wisdom, his creativity, his language and, above all, his lengthy record of serious scholarly intervention in various interconnected fields. Though it may be indiscreet to admit it, the pieces collected here demonstrate how his imaginative pursuit of political ends by other than obviously political means has inspired and motivated us. (Gilroy, Grossberg, & McRobbie, 2000, p. ix)

From his modest boyhood roots in colonial Jamaica, Hall has interrogated systems of political oppression through his writings in a way with which all people can identify. His work creates an active space for political and ideological struggle as well as social transformation.

The author of more than 200 published book chapters and journal articles, Hall has positioned himself as the pioneering voice for a middle theoretical position between Raymond Williams's culturalist and Louis Althussers's structuralist approach to the concepts of ideology and hegemony. His theoretical framework diverges from the three general perspectives of Marxists who study ideology and hegemony: (1) political economists, who view the production and consumption of cultural artifacts as determined by the economic forces of the culture; (2) culturalists, who argue that culture is developed (but not determined) out of the joint “social consciousness” of people engaged in everyday practices and cultural patterns; and (3) structuralists, who contend that the “unconscious connections” between everyday experience and dominant cultural codes constitute culture, whereby lived experience is simply the “effect” of cultural production. Hall has used these concepts to develop a “hybrid” form of Marxist theory. He rejects political economism as a means to uncover the features of cultural production because of its limited focus on “the most generic aspects of the commodity form” (Hall, 1986a, p. 43). His work embraces culturalism and structuralism, yet he advances a perspective of “limited structuralism,” in which theoretical and conceptual development *aid* in the understanding of everyday cultural practices. In sum, Hall critiques structuralists as being too preoccupied with conceptualization, which prioritizes the role of theory to explain lived experience. Along the same lines, he promotes a broader view of the culturalist perspective, which he believes does not focus enough on theory development. He argues that culturalist analyses focus too heavily on experience and/or historical agency. Thus, Hall’s work on
Marxist theory and social justice posits that neither structure nor experience completely determines ideology. Instead, dominant ideological formations such as race, class, and gender are constantly challenged by subordinate ideologies in a “cultural interplay” of discourse. To Hall, this interplay is part of the process of cultural production, along with consumerism, social relations, and the institutionalization of ideological dominance. This conceptualization is indicative of his leftist politics.

Over his career, Hall has edited several journals such as *Universities and Left Review* and *New Left Review* (which incidentally later became the same journal), and lectured before numerous academic constituencies. His ideas about the relationships between consumers of media, media texts, and their means of production have been a tremendous influence on the British cultural studies, American cultural studies, and postmodernist movements of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. While Hall's abundant scholarship has been both critiqued (Slater, 2001; Wood, 1998), and revered (Giroux, 2000; Wise, 2003), the aim of this chapter is to highlight his early beginnings in Jamaica, chronicle his political and scholarly travels, and discuss his profound contributions to communication research.

### Biographical Information

Stuart Hall, a jazz pianist and renowned scholar, was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1932 into a lower-middle-class colonial Jamaican family. He had at least one brother named George. Hall's ambitious, hard-working father worked for the United Fruit Company for most of his life. Hall recalled that he “was the first Jamaican to be promoted in every job he had; before him, those jobs were occupied by people sent down from the head office in America” (Chen, 2003, p. 484). Although both of Hall's parents grew up in middle-class families, their experiences were quite different from one another. Hall's father belonged to an ethnically mixed (African, East Indian, Portuguese, and Jewish), “colored” lower-middle-class family. He owned a small country drugstore outside of Kingston. Hall realized early in his life that he did not want to go into business like his father. Hall's lack of ambition to follow in his father's footsteps led to tensions between the two, and his relationship with his mother was also tense. Hall described her as “an overwhelmingly dominant person,” and recalled that their relationship was both “close and antagonistic” (Chen, 2003, p. 485). His mother was a “fair colored” Black woman who had been adopted by her biracial aunt. She grew up with two male cousins who were educated in England and became a doctor and a lawyer. Thus, Hall's mother enjoyed many of the luxuries of middle-class life that his father did not have. Hall summarized the impact of these differences on the family dynamics of his early life as follows:

> So what was played out in my family, culturally, from the very beginning, was the conflict between the local and the imperial in the colonized context. Both these class factions were opposed to the majority culture of poor Jamaican black people: highly race and color conscious, and identifying with the colonizers. (Chen, 2003, pp. 484–485)

Thus, Hall grew up in a family in which his dark skin marked him for exclusion and ridicule. It was clear to him that not all people of African descent were the same. Like others in this volume, Hall's life was influenced by racial politics. Unlike the American segregationist criteria of the “one drop” rule, which identified any person with African ancestry in the United States (despite the hue of their skin) as simply “Negro,” its form and expression were different for him because English colonialism also distinguished between black people. This intraracial caste system influenced his life from the very beginning:
I was the blackest member of my family. The story in my family, which was always
told as a joke, was that when I was born, my sister, who was much fairer than I,
looked into the crib and she said “Where did you get this coolie baby from?” Now
“coolie” is the abusive word in Jamaica for a poor East Indian, who was considered
the lowest of the low. So she wouldn't say “Where did you get this black baby from?”
since it was unthinkable that she could have a black brother. But she did notice that I
was a different color from her. This is very common in colored middle-class Jamaican
families, because they are the product of mixed liaisons between African slaves and
European slave-masters, and the children then come out in varying shades. (Chen,
2003, p. 485)

Feeling like the outcast of his family, Hall remembers being encouraged to socialize with light-
skinned Blacks because many of his dark-skinned friends were not accepted into his family
home. He resolved to disregard the rejection from his family in an effort to find his own place
in the complex racial strata discovered in his youth. Hall recalled:

They always encouraged me to mix with more middle-class, more high color, friends
and I didn't. Instead, I withdrew emotionally from my family and met my friends
elsewhere. My adolescence was spent continuously negotiating these cultural
spaces.” (Chen, 2003, p. 485)

Hall's sister was also emotionally affected by the ideologies of their upbringing. He recalled a
particularly tense situation involving her choice in a dating partner:

When I was seventeen, my sister had a major nervous breakdown. She began a
relationship with a young student doctor who had come to Jamaica from Barbados.
He was middle-class, but black and my parents wouldn't allow it. There was a
tremendous family row and she, in effect, retreated from the situation into a
breakdown. I was suddenly aware of the contradiction of a colonial culture, of how
one lives out the color-class-colonial dependency experience and of how it could
destroy you, subjectively. (Chen, 2003, p. 488)

Hall's sister was given electric shock treatment, from which she never recovered. Thus, Hall
had to somehow come to terms with the fact that his family valued a system of oppression
that positioned him as invisible and insignificant when compared with other members of the
extremely color-conscious society. The significance of these early experiences was clear to
Hall and readers of his work. His work on signified identities, the argument that identity is
embodied and enacted in everyday social relations, is intimately linked to the search for
belonging and acceptance that characterized his youth. Interestingly, Hall recalled:

My family would never have—in a thousand words—ever thought of itself as Black;
the word would not have entered its vocabulary. And you have to know the colonial
Caribbean to know how utterly unthinkable it would have been for this middle-class
family to think about anything like that. (“A conversation with Stuart Hall,” 1999)

In the mid-1960s, Hall returned home and had a conversation with his mother, who remarked
that she hoped Americans did not think he was Black and that native Jamaicans did not
mistake him for an immigrant. Hall was told soon after by someone else that he had
transformed a bit, that he had essentially been socialized enough to behave a bit differently
from native Jamaicans who remained in Jamaica. In that instance, he began to question his
cultural identity and wonder whether he had become someone different from who he was
before he left Jamaica for Britain. All at once, these moments led to, as Hall explained, “the
first time that I ever thought of myself as Black” (“A conversation with Stuart Hall,” 1999). In 1964, Hall married a long-time friend, Catherine Barrett—a woman who was 13 years his junior. They have two children: Rebecca, who has a doctorate in English and is interested in mulattoes in fiction literature, and Jess, who works as a cameraman.

From that time forward, rather than dismissing the influence of English colonialism and American slavery in his life, he regarded it as part of his “personal history:"

My own formation and identity was very much constructed out of a kind of refusal of the dominant personal and cultural models which were held up for me. I didn't want to beg my way like my father into acceptance by the American or English expatriate business community, and I couldn't identify with that old plantation world, with its roots in slavery, but which my mother spoke of as a “golden age.” (Chen, 2003, p. 485)

Hall's resistance to the color caste system of mid-twentieth century Jamaica mirrored the concerns of his generation. Jamaican Blacks who fought and spoke out in support of the country's independence rallied together. Led by Michael Manley, a popular political leader of the time, newly emerging Jamaican Rastafarian groups also lobbied for a political voice and were partially responsible for Jamaica's independence in 1962. The formation of local resistance groups and political parties was meaningful to Hall. Through them, he saw strength and power unlike he had ever seen before. He recalled that “Bright kids like me and my friends, of varying colors and social positions, were nevertheless caught up in that movement, and that's what we identified with” (Chen, 2003, p. 486). The energy of socialist politics awakened Hall's cultural, political, and communal consciousness. It caused him to reflect on the global as a seedling of the local that had been magnified. Hall came to understand how social transformation and public consciousness have to evolve from a sense of local identity. This inspiration sparked the numerous writings, lectures, and social critiques that made Hall one of the most prolific critical cultural scholars of the past 50 years.

Academic Background and Experience

In his youth, Stuart Hall attended one of a series of small primary schools for boys that were modeled after the English public school system. He described his early education as “very classical” (Chen, 2003, p. 486). Hall studied Latin, English colonial history, European history, and English literature. Yet his political interests encouraged him to ask questions outside of the “narrowly academic, British-oriented” instruction he received (Chen, 2003, p. 488). He wanted to learn more about contemporary world issues in courses on Caribbean history, the Cold War, and American politics. Resolved to leave the depressing conditions of Black Jamaican life, Hall saw social activism and higher education as two viable ways to take charge of his future and give other Caribbean nationalists a voice. In 1951, Hall left Jamaica after high school to continue his education because there were no local universities in Jamaica until Northern Caribbean University (formerly West Indies College) achieved senior college status in 1959.

Hall's early intellectual influences were his teachers, who challenged him to explore his passions and to seek knowledge on subjects that his formal training would not provide. Although no single teacher seemed to have affected his life more than others, he reported that collectively they “gave me a strong sense of self confidence, of academic achievement"
(Chen, 2003, p. 487). He learned more about American politics, the Russian revolution, and the Cold War—areas of study that he was not familiar with. Hall was strongly encouraged to read about the ideas of Marxism and was particularly drawn to ideas espoused in *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx, 1964). This work addressed the questions of poverty, colonialism, and the problem of economic development in Jamaica that Hall had been asking throughout his entire life. Unlike many of his university colleagues, Hall saw the answers to these questions in political, rather than economic, discourses. He recalled:

> A lot of my young friends, who went to university at the same time I did, studied economics. Economics was supposed to be the answer to the poverty which countries like Jamaica experienced, as a consequence of imperialism and colonialism. So I was interested in the economic question from a colonial standpoint. (Chen, 2003, p. 488)

Hall saw the problems of Jamaica and other newly emancipated post-colonial countries as embedded in political constructions of class and privilege. Ironically, he would take these ideas with him to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar—a scholarship named after Cecil Rhodes, a “paragon” of colonialism (Gandesha, 2000, p. 22).

Hall described his academic course as “a journey” that began with his move to England. He recollected the day of his arrival in the following words:

> My mother brought me, in my felt hat, in my overcoat, with my steamer trunk. She brought me, as she thought “home” on the banana boat, and delivered me to Oxford. She gave me to the astonished college scout and said, “There is my son, his trunks, his belongings. Look after him.” She delivered me, signed and sealed, to where she thought a son of hers had always belonged—Oxford. (Chen, 2003, p. 489)

In England, Hall was free to explore socialist politics and to meet other independent leftists who shared his politics. He found an open marketplace for his seemingly rebellious ideas and enjoyed the opportunities that England offered him. Although Hall was never a member of the Communist party, many of his close friends were. He was so enamored with his experiences in England that by 1957, he knew that he would never return to live in Jamaica. The dualism of Hall's position against British colonialism and his desire to live and learn in England was a necessary cultural dichotomy for Hall. He recalled:

> In spite of my anti-colonial politics, it had always been my aspiration to study in England. I always wanted to study there. It took quite a while to come to terms with Britain, especially with Oxford, because Oxford is the pinnacle of Englishness, it’s the hub, the motor, that creates Englishness. (Chen, 2003, p. 492)

Hall saw himself at the center of cultural repression and rigidity in England, yet he was able to speak out against it from this place. Although his mother was not particularly pleased with his politics, she agreed that Hall was where he belonged. Until the death of his parents, Hall found it continually difficult to face the Jamaica he knew as a child and was delighted to see the changes taking place there after its independence:

> I felt easier in relation to Jamaica, once they [my parents] were dead, because before that, when I went back, I had to negotiate Jamaica through them. Once my parents were dead, it was easier to make a new relationship to the new Jamaica that emerged in the 1970's. This Jamaica was not where I had grown up. For one thing, it had become, culturally, a black society, a post-slave, post-colonial society, whereas I
had lived there at the end of the colonial era. So I could negotiate it as a “familiar stranger.” (Chen, 2003, p. 490)

Hall likened his experiences of negotiating Jamaican and British cultures to the experiences of many natives of the Caribbean who traverse multiple cultural spaces, never feeling completely assimilated into any of them.

After completing his studies at Oxford, Hall decided to remain in England and to pursue a master of arts degree from Morton College. During this time, he became increasingly committed to anti-Stalinism and anti-imperialism. Along with others who identified themselves as neither communist nor imperialist, Hall formed the Socialist Society—“a place for meetings of the independent minds of the left” (Chen, 2003, p. 492). The group quickly became the political conscience of the left, causing the Oxford branch of the Communist party to fold. He described this shift as a significant one in the history of British cultural studies: “We had the moral capital to criticize both the Hungarian invasion and the British invasion [of Germany]. That is the moment—the political space—of the birth of the first British New Left” (Chen, 2003, p. 493). The new movement attracted intellectuals, students, trade unions, tenant associations, and others who wanted involvement in the new political voice they saw brewing. Hall was heavily involved in the journalistic outlets of the group. He served as an editor of the The New Reasoner and The New Left Review, along with E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and other well-known leftists of the time. Led by the intellectuals, 26 New Left Review clubs formed in and around London between 1956 and 1962.

In 1961, Hall left the Review to teach at Chelsea College in London. He was appointed as a lecturer there to teach film and mass media studies at a time when no one else was teaching film anywhere. His work with the New Left also afforded him an opportunity to teach cultural studies courses. In 1964, he coauthored The Popular Arts with Paddy Whannel (Whannel & Hall, 1964) which launched his career in British cultural studies. Because of his profound and well-received writings, Hall was invited by Richard Hoggart to the University of Birmingham and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). Hoggart had just founded the Centre in 1964 and was eager to develop its research initiatives, ideologically diverse habitat, and reputation. Hall and other colleagues in sociology, history, and literature followed the path of Hoggart and Williams and began laying the foundation for the field of cultural studies (Gandesha, 2000, p. 23). When Hoggart left to occupy a position at UNESCO, Hall became director of the Centre in 1968. The critical paradigm, which explored the inextricable link between power and media, emerged in the early 1970s out of the work of the Centre. Around this time, both the CCCS and the Leicester Centre for Mass Communication Research became quite well-known as major organizations generating leading cultural studies research. Although both embraced Marxist ideology, their approaches were a bit different. The CCCS produced research primarily related to cultural processes, whereas the Leicester Centre focused predominantly on economic processes and therefore could be characterized as classically Marxist. The CCCS group would explain media as socially transforming, capitalist-driven, modernist vehicles that inform about culture and its processes through symbols and visual representations. However, the Leicester Centre researchers would view the “culture industries” as intentionally amoral—not immoral, because an economically driven vehicle has no regard for morality, except as it helps to achieve profitable ends. These industries concentrate on expanding the consumer base, which leads to profit, rather than being preoccupied with how audiences understand culture. In this way, audiences were seen as merely commodities or symbols of exchange within volatile markets, yet they were the primary means of stabilizing the industry's economy. Out of this philosophical base and under the leadership of scholars such as Graham Murdoch and Peter Golding, the Leicester group
developed the political economy approach. This distinction between CCCS and the Leicester Centre became increasingly clear among CCCS researchers. As persons mainly from working class and colonial backgrounds, they maintained that although the media were clearly driven by capitalism, they also served important functions as an industry to shape public consciousness. During his tenure in Birmingham, Hall produced some of his most groundbreaking work. During his first year there, in 1964, he married his long-time sweetheart, Catherine Barrett—a White English social historian and feminist. Things were coming together successfully in his personal and professional life.

In the 1970s, Hall found himself growing weary of the constant fight to keep the Centre open. Because of his role as the “father” of British cultural studies, there was a general perception that he was obliged to stand as the leading figure to defend the separate political agendas of Black graduate students, feminists, and working-class Whites. This was one among many struggles that led Hall to the decision to leave the Centre in 1979—a particularly difficult but necessary decision. He reflected on the circumstances surrounding this decision in the following statement:

In the early days of the Centre, we were like the “alternative university.” There was little separation between staff and students. What I saw emerging was that separation between generations, between statuses—students and teachers—and I didn’t want that. I preferred to be in a more traditional setting, if I had to take on the responsibility of being the teacher. I couldn't live part of the time being their teacher, and being their father, being hated for being their father, and being set up as if I was an anti-feminist man. It was an impossible politics to live. (Chen, 2003, p. 500)

His desire to leave also challenged Hall to anticipate the next step in his career. While under his direction, the Centre became a hotbed for the best and brightest intellectual constituency. During Hall's tenure, he noticed that the Centre no longer served its original function, which was to incorporate socialist politics into academic discussions of culture, society, and transformation. According to Hall, its popularity and success also resulted in it becoming “the pinnacle of a very selective education system” (Chen, 2003, p. 501). He did not desire an appointment with a traditional sociology department. Rather, he embraced the challenge of teaching cultural studies to nonacademic audiences. He wanted to be in a setting in which a cultural studies curriculum was made accessible to all interested persons despite their academic standing. The Open University, an unconventional interdisciplinary institution committed to challenging the selectivity of higher education, seemed like the perfect place to continue the New Left legacy. Hall remained there until his retirement in 1997. He continues to write and lecture about Marxism, media discourses, and Diasporic cultural identity.

Contributions to Communication Research

Although Stuart Hall's work has been published and reprinted in the journals of several disciplines, he was trained in English. Although he later became a professor of sociology, he was never a formal student in that department, so not one of his degrees is in that discipline.

Early in his career, in the late 1950s, Hall became editor of the very first New Left journal, *Universities and Left Review*. When this publication linked with the *New Reasoner* to become the *New Left Review*, it also became an important sociopolitical journal for cultural studies and for Hall, as it was the place where he would publish many of his earliest writings. He was the editor in a London office, above a Soho coffeehouse he co-owned and operated to help finance the journal. He did all this while working as a substitute teacher in a secondary
modern school, an educational environ designed for kids who do not test well on the elementary school diagnostic exam that all British children take at age 11.

His work in media and film studies began in the 1960s, yet his work had not been published in mainstream communication books and journals until the 1980s. This was especially interesting as Hall trained communication scholars such as Lawrence Grossberg in the late 1960s and beyond. Grossberg was sent by political economist James Carey, a colleague of Richard Hoggart, to study with Hall at the CCCS in 1968. Despite Grossberg's affinity for Deleuze and Guattari, which was of much less interest to Hall, we mention Grossberg to say that Hall's significant influence on communication research in the United States was present even before the 1980s. The following sections will review his contributions to communication studies in two areas of the field: intercultural and interracial communication and media communication.

Intercultural and Interracial Communication/Cultural Theory

Stuart Hall wrote approximately 15 articles and book chapters on race and ethnic identity formation and negotiation during the 1980s and 1990s. His approach to the topic of race and ethnic identity has been predominately theoretical. Heavily influenced by Gramscian ideology, Hall explored the way studies of race, ethnicity, and racism could be traced back to Marxist ideas of hegemony, power, and class struggle. In his article, “Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” Hall (1986a) uncovered how Gramsci's nonacademic critique of the conditions of 1870s Italy could be applied to concrete academic discussions of race, power, and sociopolitical relationships. By introducing the contributions of Marxist thought to the practice of identity negotiation and group formation from British cultural studies, he was able to provide theoretical support for those interested in the newly emerging discourse in intercultural and interracial communication. That year, in the same journal (the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*), Hall published “The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees” (1986b). He argued that despite the potential of Marxism to explain and describe the struggles of “subaltern classes,” there was still much work to do to provide a theoretical framework that could stand up to social scientific scrutiny. For Hall, the answers to the questions of racism and racist ideologies were to be found within the spate of epistemological concerns about the realities of everyday experiences with racism and methodological concerns about how to access the multiple ways in which these experiences are interpreted by racists and targets of racism. In another theoretical turn, Hall’s piece in the book *Black Popular Culture* (1992b) described how contemporary discussions of Black popular culture essentialize what it means to be Black in popular culture. He commended the work of Cornel West and bell hooks for articulating the need for increased consciousness about African American experiences in the United States. At the same time, he cautioned American cultural critics not to overly invest in notions of the “collective” Black experience. He contended that popular culture has provided a space in which racial differences can be articulated and challenged. However, the desire to emphasize the idea of difference within this space can encourage false notions of an “authentic” Blackness. He wrote:

The essentializing moment is weak because it naturalizes and dehistoricizes difference, mistaking what is historical and cultural for what is natural, biological, and genetic. The moment the signifier “black” is torn from its historical, cultural and political embedding and lodged in a biologically constituted racial category, we valorize, by invasion, the very ground of the racism we are trying to deconstruct. In addition, as always happens when we naturalize historical categories (think about gender and sexuality), we fix that signifier outside of history, outside of change,
outside of political intervention. And once it is fixed, we are tempted to use “black” as sufficient in itself to guarantee the progressive character of the politics we fight under the banner—as if we don’t have any other politics to argue about except whether something’s black or not. (Hall, 1992b, p. 27)

This critical statement is the philosophy that undergirds Hall's thinking. Hall maintains that ideology is unavoidably linked to language and representation. So what we signify or symbolize is practically as real as the thing itself if it represents how we approach the world. In other words, Blackness has competing definitions that only become real when manufactured ideologies are translated into a community's universe of discourse and then consumed by the local citizens of that community. This is a potent web of signs, signifiers, and signification.

This complex mode of deconstructing culture by unraveling learned and often imposed ideologically imbued meanings is the hallmark of critical cultural studies. It is because of this sophisticated approach that renowned scholars such as Lawrence Grossberg, Henry Giroux, Paul Gilroy, Gayatri Spivak, Paulo Freire, and others have developed lines of inquiry parallel to Hall's approach. Any reader of their works can recognize the synergistic influence of Hall's concerns in the shape of their careful discussions of racial/ethnic identity and communication processes. His concerns about how cultures, particularly Black cultures, are represented in popular discourse are infused in his writings about media texts.

**Media Communication/Reception Theory**

Hall's scholarship on race and mediated imagery began in the 1970s, when many academics took up the challenge of critiquing media institutions as sites of ideological struggle between the “powerful” controllers of the medium and the “powerless” consumers of it. Hall's position on this issue was unique because it was both academic and activist in scope. For instance, during an interview in 1971, Hall shared the following remarks to a “visibly shocked” BBC television audience: “There is something radically wrong with the way black immigrants—West Indians, Asians, and Africans—are handled and presented on the mass media” (Chronicle World, 2003). Hall was clearly indicting British media. His emotional reaction that year was attributable to his awareness that images of Blacks in media had become increasingly disparaging and, in his opinion, disrespectful. Hall was the new director of the CCCS at the time and saw his opportunity to promote change and awareness through it. In 1980, he published the groundbreaking piece, “Encoding/Decoding,” in which he argued that mass media are a means for the “haves” to gain willing support for dominant ideologies from the “have-nots.” He further argued that this support functions to reinforce the importance of those ideologies—and thus maintain the status quo. Hall contended that in the process of describing “events,” media institutions encode dominate ideologies into their “stories.” However, these stories are decoded by members of media audiences in one of three ways: (1) They can adopt the dominant code; that is, members have the option of simply accepting the stories of mass media as encoded, without challenging them. (2) They can apply a negotiable code, in which audience members may acknowledge the dominant ideologies provided, yet they may do so from their own subject position. (3) They can substitute the dominant code for an oppositional code, which rejects the dominant ideologies and promotes critical analysis of the “stories” told by mass media. Although exclusively theoretical, Hall's writing on audience reception theory was the first of its kind to consider the idea that consumers of mass media decode its messages from within their own social situations and cultural spaces. His work implies that encoded readings are not necessarily adopted by readers/listeners/watchers by default. Five years later, Hall's work was formally introduced to the field of communication with
his article, “Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the post-Structuralist Debates” (Hall, 1985), which appeared in the then-new journal Critical Studies in Mass Communication (now called Critical Studies in Media Communication). Hall had just begun work with Grossberg on articulation theory. This conceptual approach emerged from Hall's reading of Althusser, who claimed that articulation is the interface between power, culture, discourse, production, and consumption. Althusser was mostly concerned with ideology and state apparatus and took up a position that dominant practices cause individuals to hold an ideology that functions only as an imaginary escape from people's actual lived conditions.

This grappling with the nature, scope, and definition of articulation helped Hall to understand encoding and decoding better because articulation is simultaneously a critical elaboration and disentanglement of concrete and hypothesized lived experiences. It is a way of both making meaning and turning meaning on its head to see whether the inverse interpretation makes sense. When Hall discusses articulation, he generally uses the words “articulation with.” For example, he might say that a text is articulated with hegemony or articulated with mass media to suggest that discourse can be intermingled, interjected, or interpolated with something else to produce many meanings. In that way, the text asserts or expresses its positionality as much as it intersperses it. Likewise, Hall tries to make clear, through his articulation theory, that one can articulate (i.e., express) a political position without being fixed in that position, but no matter how ephemeral, the fact that one took up a position at all is an important act of articulation. Articulation, by its very nature, is elusive and fluid. It is not static for long because it is always questioning itself, and yet it is what we do naturally without even thinking about it as articulation theory. This is why identities represent intersecting realities that sometimes appear as contradictory impulses.

In “Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the post-Structuralist Debates” (1985), Hall argued that no meanings are “fixed.” In fact, they are created by complex sets of social and political discourses, forming what he called an “ideological field.” Thus, media outlets and institutions contribute to ideological fields of race and gender constructions; they do not control them. Additionally, he suggested that the problem of representing Blacks in media in a more enduring light lies in the sociohistorical problem of White social domination. He described these fields as the result of social tensions that have roots in capitalism and forced labor—namely, the African slave trade. He wrote: “This signifying chain was clearly inaugurated at a specific historical moment—the moment of slavery” (Hall, 1985, p. 110). According to Hall, then, the role of media is twofold. It serves as a site for signifying practices of subordination and marginalization yet it might also be a site of intense ideological struggle.

Hall's work in media communication encourages media agencies to challenge themselves and cultural studies scholars to push forward in their explorations of theory and praxis as they promote cultural shifts from right to left. His contributions to communication theory and his political work are vastly different from almost all the other pioneers in this book. Hall's work stands in contrast to that of the African American scholars in this book, in part because he has a different cultural standpoint—one that is an indigenous third world perspective. That does not make him better or worse, but it does suggest something different about how he comes to the conversation about culture and Black identity. Hall is featured here for many reasons. Besides the obvious fact that he is a pioneer in cultural and communication studies, he is also ideologically different. He is very cautious about what culture means. He does not hold fast to one theoretical approach, cultural standpoint, or methodological orientation. He believes wholeheartedly in multiplicity of identifications and a fractured Blackness. He is a citizen of British society and culture, which means he comes to the conversation of Blackness with a different set of nationalist politics that traditionally emphasizes variations within
Blackness and a tentativeness of connections between Black Diasporas. This has heavily influenced his social activism, intellectual perspective, and personal politics. Communication and cultural studies are enriched because of his courageous, unique, and insightful approach to culture.

Conclusion

Over his impressive career, Stuart Hall has written at length about the need for academic scholarship to reach out to nonacademics and to promote social change. His fearless activism in both scholarly and lay circles is nothing less than laudable. His international and interdisciplinary reputation precedes him wherever listeners are fortunate enough to hear him speak. Hall is not only an internationally renowned public intellectual but he is also proficient in Russian, perhaps as a result of his anti-Stalinist, post-graduate school days. Though he never joined the Communist party, he clearly stood for leftist politics and was the founding editor of the New Left Review. Although retirement has distanced Hall from large intellectual circles, we are still privileged in that his commitment to academic activism has not waned. He continues to write and lecture about Diasporic identities and calls for American and British cultural studies scholars to expand the breadth of their methodologies to social scientists and nonacademic audiences. It is our hope that young scholars will heed his call and carry on his legacy.

References


Further Reading
Stuart Hall
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>Born in Kingston, Jamaica.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>Moved to Bristol, where he attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Received a master's degree from Merton College.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joined E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and others to launch two radical socialist journals: <em>The New Reasoner</em> and the <em>New Left Review</em>.</td>
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</table>
Began to teach film and mass media studies at Chelsea College in London.

Coauthored *The Popular Arts* (with Paddy Whannel).

Invited by Richard Hoggart to the University of Birmingham and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS).

Became director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS).

Published *Situating Marx: Evaluations and Departures*.

Published *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*.

Published *Policing the Crisis*.

Left the CCCS to teach at the Open University, an unconventional, interdisciplinary institution committed to challenging the selectivity of higher education. Was professor of sociology from 1979 until his retirement in 1997.

Published the groundbreaking piece *Encoding/Decoding*.

Formally introduced to the field of communication with his article “Signification, representation, ideology: Althusser and the post-structuralist debates” in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* (now called *Critical Studies in Media Communication*).

Published “Gramsci's relevance for the study of race and ethnicity.”

Published “The problem of ideology: Marxism without guarantees.”

Published *The Hard Road to Renewal*. 
Published *Resistance Through Rituals*.

Published *The Formation of Modernity*.

Published *Questions of Cultural Identity* (with Paul du Gay).

Published *Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Retired from Open University.

- Jamaica
- new left
- Stuart Hall
- cultural studies
- black culture
- interracial communication
- culturalism

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