

CULTURAL STUDIES

(PG)

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CCCS

- Based at the University of Birmingham
- From 1962 – 2002
- Led research into, what is now termed, 'British cultural studies'
- Whilst not being a centre for media research, the work centred on the role that media plays in society.

CCCS Approach

- Interdisciplinary – this is true of cultural studies; whether local, translocal and global
- It drew on methodological approaches from sociology and anthropology
- It incorporated a wide range of theories, such as post-structuralism and feminism
- Areas covered, aspects of culture, subculture, and popular culture in the media

CCCS Mission Statement and Ethos

- CCCS questioned the social structures which produce contemporary culture, and explored the ways in which culture affects society.
- This led to a predominantly left-wing, Marxist approach, which questioned the assumptions attached to capitalist structures that drive contemporary societies.
- The centre has always been viewed as 'being led by a succession of intellectual misfits' (Rojek 2003: 64)
- The work demonstrates a definite unease with accepted practices of higher education

The recognition of 'Class'

- A key focus for the centre's work was exploring class.
- It is often argued that Britain is a nation with a history of class divisions (Reid 1998)
- However, some argue that we live in a 'classless society' (Adonis and Pollard 1997)
- ...indeed, arguably the centre's focus on class reveals its inherent 'Englishness' (Gibson 2007: 85)

Class Systems

- 'Class' as a term is difficult to quantify
- It is hard to come up with a system that defines whether someone is:-
 - working class, middle class, upper class or something else.
- Should class be measured in terms of:-
 - wealth, education, upbringing, culture or a combination of things?
- It is argued that 'class' as a term is outdated as a word – a hundred years ago it had value; with such advances like the welfare state, NHS and social housing projects, we potentially are a 'classless society'?
- Question: should you be judged as an individual with your own actions, or as part of a group?
- Class is a complex term, CCCs still found some value in it.

What does class mean to you?

- What does class mean?
- How would you define yourself?
- Are there differences in people from different backgrounds and you?

CCCS - History

- The original founder was Richard Hoggart (1918 -)
- His seminal work, *The Uses of Literacy* (1958)
- In the book, he adopts CCCS approaches:-
 - the assumption that everyday, common-sense cultural activities can be read as representative of broader social structures – especially, social power.
- He uses an autobiographical account, and questions his own upbringing, and a view of how class has left an indelible print on his life.

History continued...

- Stuart Hall, became director after Hoggart in 1969.
- The ethos was the same, but Hall introduced the ways in which texts work.
- Other audiences became the focus.
- Subcultures and Feminism
- The wider notion of class – gender, race and social groupings
- These things also inform the way culture relates to power
- Texts opened up a debate about production (what media-makers do) and consumption (what audiences do)
- The 'Encoding/Decoding model'

Key Works

- Paul Willis's – *Learning to labour* (1977)
- Charlotte Brunson & David Morley's – *Everyday television* (1978)
- Angela McRobbie's – *Jackie* (1982 [1978])
- Dick Hebdige's – *Subculture* (1979)
- Dorothy Hobson's – *Crossroads* (1982)
- The centre put 'ordinary' people under analysis – this was seen as radical and previously thought of as invalid.

The Reading

- Hall argues a bipartite functionality:-
 - firstly, there is the process which involves media producers creating texts.
 - secondly, there is the process whereby audiences read and make sense of those texts.

this equates to:- audience expectations/ production conventions.

 - question: would you be surprised if a newsreader wasn't wearing a shirt and tie? The news is still the news, isn't it?
- It highlights ways of thinking about the media?
- Theory is *process*

Thank you