

6.3 Critique as a Practice

Reading and Doing Ethnography
Social Anthropology 314

Let's talk about how
critical discourse
forms.

What's "critical discourse"?

Discourse: Is just a moment where something is being communicated in some way. It could be in face-to-face speech, or in writing, or in online communication. It could include non-linguistic forms of communication, like if someone is making a political statement with their outfit.

Critical: Is a very general category designating any time when someone is conveying that the world is imperfect in some way. To speak critically is to say that the world could be different, or *should* be different. It could be saying that something is unfair, or nonsensical, or broken, or just generally wrong.

Critical discourses: Sometimes they come in recognizable forms, like a legal complaint or an activist manifesto. Often they are more veiled and indirect, jumbled together with other kinds of talk.

Questions to ask about critical discourse

- >> Who is speaking?
- >> To whom are they speaking?
- >> In what kind of social context?
- >> What gives someone the right to speak?

Feminist inconsistencies

A man that dated my best friend claimed to be a feminist and someone who respected women, but after they broke up, he spread rumours about her, slut-shamed her, and tried to make her out to be a "crazy ex-girlfriend." This type of behaviour was inconsistent with his self-professed "feminist" views.

Feminist inconsistencies

A girl/friend proclaimed to practice feminist rituals and as such vowed to or proclaimed to not add any damaging hair products or apply heat to her hair and after a week did the opposite.

Feminist inconsistencies

A friend of mine claims to be a feminist and very motivated by being a strong woman. But she went almost crazy knowing that she did not have a date on Valentine's day. And even commented on a very embarrassing public display of affection by saying "At least she has someone on Valentine's day."

Christian inconsistencies

He claims to be selfless but he forgets to serve those who are not Christian. Despite those very people serving him too.

Christian inconsistencies

A girl I knew in high school preached Christianity and with accordance to this not drinking, partying, smoking etc. But over weekends when I would go out to clubs with friends I would see this girl on the dance floor with a beer in her hand.

Christian inconsistencies

A pastor at a church I used to visit always made it clear about how drinking is a sin but then he was seen coming out of a bottle store with alcohol.

Critique of institutions

[Powerless] Having to attend prayers at school when I did not want to & if I did not attend it, I would get into trouble therefore feeling powerless, because I wasn't in control, and my school (institution) was.

Critique of institutions

[Powerless] Watching a woman get attacked by a huge mob over new year's, and all I could do was call & wait for the police to arrive because my boss at work wouldn't allow me to leave the facility.

Critique of institutions

I went to boarding school so I constantly felt powerless within the institution of the school. We were forced to eat certain foods, forced to make our beds, we weren't allowed to just leave the school grounds whenever we wanted without our parents' consent first. We were shuttled to doctors and dentist appointments by a driver who was accompanied by a security guard. It was horrible.

Critique of institutions

Boys complained at school that they could not have long hair, and made a petition, and everyone grew their hair (hiding it with hairbands/hats) but because it was going against school rules, the school brought in a barber to cut the boys' hair.

Critique of institutions

[Powerless] During all our Anthropology classes. You voice your opinion and suggestions, but the lecturer and tutor give vague responses and does not aid your development in writing. This course is very frustrating because nothing is ever clear and the classes are a complete waste of time.

How someone handled a critique

My friends went out to the theatre and an elderly white woman complained on how they were not supposed to be there. My friend went up to the lady and told her that it was a free country and she had every right to be there, just like her.

How someone handled a critique

Last year in my one module that Eli taught he asked for feedback on him and his teaching. I remember someone critiqued him on saying "uhm" a lot. He took the criticism without (it looked like) feeling attacked and tried to improve on it for the rest of the lecture.

This week's assignment

Please submit fieldnotes about a form of critique or protest you observe at your fieldsite. You should write between 350 and 500 words. Explain briefly **what the critique is, what motivates people to make it, how it is expressed, and how it is received.**