

Week 4

Visual Analysis

Overview

- Visual methods in general (Rose)
- Discourse analysis as a method
- Applying discourse analysis to the group research projects
- Interview preparation
- Interview itself

Ways of approaching images

- Site of production, the images themselves, sites of audiencing/viewing
- Couldry: 'the textual environment' – flow of meanings, flow of readers,

What visual methods are there, and who uses them?

- Semiotics (see last week) – cultural studies
- Compositional analysis – art history
- Content analysis – sociology and communication
- Psychoanalytic and other theoretical readings: – cultural studies
- Discourse analysis – cultural studies, sociology and communication
- Ethnography of social viewing practices – sociology and communication
- Making images – photos, videos, etc: – sociology and communication, art and design

Exercise: methods and textual environment

Take the list of visual methods and say what **site/s** of the image of the image they focus on (production, image itself, audiencing)

Compositional analysis



•Compositional analysis

- Content – what is actually shown
- Colour – effect on realism, on atmosphere, etc.
- Space: scale, complexity, geometry, perspective
- Viewer's position

Exercise: compositional analysis

1. In pairs, list some key compositional aspects of the Reuters photograph



Gillian Rose's critique of visual cultural studies

- Exercise: what is Rose's critique of typical visual cultural studies?

Gillian Rose's critique of visual cultural studies

- Focus on **meaning**, and contested meanings, with the critic 'finding' the meanings and doing the critique
- Reliance on **connoisseurship** to identify what matters

Discourse analysis as a method

- Centred on Foucault's notion of a **discourse**: groups of **statements** that **structure** the way a thing is thought, and the way we **act** on the basis of that thinking
- Discourse includes both language and things, what is read and what is seen, what is written and what is done
- Discourse analysis less concerned with **meaning** and more with **how power actually works in practice**
- As always with Foucault: **power is productive** (not just repressive!)
- Different emphases in discourse analysis – some on **language** ('critical discourse analysis' (Fairclough)) or **images**, and some on **practice/institutions**

Doing discourse analysis

- Usually starts from **authoritative account + lots of other sources** that relate to it
- No set number of sources, but sufficient quantity to generate complexity or tensions
- Try to forget preconceptions in reading/viewing the sources
- Look for **common features** across sources – similar conventions, styles, features – and perhaps code/tag images/texts
- Look for **different relations** or reactions to the same thing: complexities, **tensions, contradictions**
- Read with an eye for **details** that may indicate something taken-for-granted but nevertheless important

Exercise: finding an authoritative source for your group research project

- Spend some time identifying what might be an authoritative source for your topic
- Now find some less authoritative sources
- List some common features and some differences between the two types of sources
- Can you identify any contradictions or tensions that need further analysis?
- Write this analysis up as a post for the online group documentation – make sure you include snippets or examples from the different sources

Discourse analysis – Practices and their importance

- More on this next week!
- Rose: need to study what people when they see/look
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'Visualities themselves are practices' (Rose, 550)

Methodology for 'what happens when people look'

- **Practice:** what is routinely done, and involves **body, things, thinking, place** and **knowledge**
- Practices are fundamental to *performativity* (and hence experience and identity)
- **Exercise:** list examples of practice and say why they are practices

Exercise: prepare questions on discourse analysis and visual culture for interview

- In your groups, prepare 3 questions that ask the guest how he/she studies
 - Visual forms
 - **Relations of power** associated with visual things
 - **Practice**