

SOCL923

Working with texts I: Textual Analysis

Week 2 overview

- Work on Couldry intro
- Explore implications of Couldry account of culture, power, and experience for methods
- Morning tea
- Prepare interview questions
- Interview with guest

Methods for cultural studies

common issues of pedagogy: what exactly is it that we hope to teach, or study, in cultural studies? All these questions can be brought together in a single underlying methodological question: what is the space from which cultural studies speaks?

My answer, in essence, is that cultural studies is an expanding space for sustained, rigorous and self-reflexive empirical research into the massive, power-laden complexity of contemporary culture.

Couldry: what is the space from which cultural/media studies speaks?

- High vs popular culture?
- Culture as process in which each person participates
- The problem with popular culture
- Culture + **power**: who does what when?
- What else should cultural studies be studying?
- How should it be studying it?

Why do we need tools/methods to think about culture?

tity can be easily read off from surface phenomena. Cultural studies, therefore, should take seriously the full complexity of being 'inside' culture.

This – to anticipate a little – is where method comes in. We should always reject short cuts in cultural description, not because we want complexity for its own sake, but because this is the only way to think culture in a non-dominative way, to recognize it as a space of multiple voices and forces. We need a theory of cultural complexity, but without lapsing into excessively complex language (a fault of some recent cultural studies). We need the tools to think about, and research, cultural complexity in a manageable way.

We can imagine cultural studies as a democratic space of cultural

Couldry: what is cultural/media studies?

- Sociologically influenced and fully materialist methods
- Distinctive concern with connections between power and culture (cf. Cultural sociology)

Couldry: experience and studying culture

- Individual experience connects to web of relationships
- Thinking about your own situation as key starting point

Couldry: method and the complexity of contemporary culture

- **Materialist**: culture is the result of what particular people have done at a particular time and place, under certain constraints
- **Reflexivity** about method: think about how particular methods produce particular results or ways of seeing culture
- Relations to **theory**: pragmatic – how does it open up different empirical questions

Exercise 1: culture and power in your research project

- Make a small collection of different online materials relating to your topic
- List some of the kinds of voices you can find associated with your chosen topic
- Describe some of the ways in which your own situations might shape your experience of your research topic
- List some ways in which your research might be **materialist** in its approach
- List some **theoretical** approaches that might open empirical questions for research

Exercise 2: documenting the complexity of a cultural studies approach to your research topic

- Collectively draft an blog entry or piece of writing that:
 - provides some sample **empirical materials** (cut and pasted?), or via hyperlinks
 - Lists some of the **voices** (individual, group, institutional, commercial, etc.) evidenced in this materials
 - Describes how your own **situations** (as students, as a certain age, sex, class, nationality, etc.) affects your **experience** (or lack of experience!) in relation to the topic
 - Discusses in a preliminary way **2-3 theoretical approaches** you might make use of in empirically researching the topic

Part B Interview preparation

- Each group will ask 3 questions
- Nominate 3 people to ask the question
- One person in each group will make notes on the discussion that follows the question

Exercise

- Informed by the reading today (Couldry) and the work you have already done on research project, draft questions that address
 - 1. Power and culture
 - 2. Reflectivity, experience and participation
 - 3. Materialist methods and theories
- In relation to the recommended reading (Tyler)

Review of key points

- Need for method in cultural studies – to resist dominant or accepted view of culture; to find voices that are not visible; to connect our own experience with others; to deal with problems of power
- Next week: working with the **complexity** of texts using semiotics and discourse analysis