Culture and taste

Sociology taster session

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KEEPING UP WITH THE KARDASHIANS
Pierre Bourdieu – Distinction


• Taste acts as a marker of social class

• Role of education and upbringing

• Cultural consumption fulfills ‘a social function of legitimating social differences’
Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar.
Bourdieu, habitus and ‘capitals’

- Habitus
- Economic capital
- Cultural capital

- Social capital
- Symbolic capital
Beverley Skeggs – Circuits of value

• The value of culture varies across different social contexts
• Unequal ability to claim value from cultural consumption

Skeggs and Wood (2012) Watched reality TV with research participants
Reality TV audiences

Skeggs and Wood (2012)
• Reacting to reality television
• Role of reality television in construction of personhood
• Four groups, ten women in each. Black, South Asian, white, working-class and middle-class).
• Interviews
• Text-in-action
• Focus groups

• Audiences engaged in ‘tournaments of value’
Reacting to reality television
Activity

- Two pieces of data from project about celebrity culture and young people’s aspirations

- How can Bourdieu’s and Skeggs’ ideas help us to understand what is going on in these extracts?

- What is the significance of class, ethnicity and gender in what the participants are saying?
“I like, like where I live everyone, like I live, everyone there is like a chav, all they talk about is like The Only Way is Essex, and they’re all bright orange. And I’m just like I’m not even going to listen to any of you people. [laughter]”

Alison, Year 12, London school
“When I went to my work experience, one of them said to me, they go ‘who’s your, who’s your role model?’ I said ‘Tu Pac’, she goes ‘Right’. And I explain everything to her, she just couldn’t, she said ‘I think he shouldn’t be your role model, you should have another role model’. [laughter]”

Snoop, Year 12, London school
Taste and distinction
Interviewer: What influences your work?

Nina: I’m influenced by Hip-Hop.

Interviewer: Hip-Hop or the history of Hip-Hop?

Nina: The history of Hip-Hop.
Taste and power

Interviewer 1: Why should we say we’re rejecting her?

Interviewer 2: Well she’s all hip-hop and sport tops.

Interviewer 1: We’ll say that her portfolio was weak.
‘Legitimate’ culture

“Nina was not recognized as a legitimate subject of art and design studies because she cited a form of fashion seen as invalid in the HE context...The male candidate, on the other hand, knew how to cite the discourses that would enable him to be recognized as a legitimate student subject. The admissions tutors’ judgements were shaped by implicit, institutionalized, disciplinary and racialized perspectives of what counts as legitimate forms of experience and knowledge”

Burke and McManus (2011, p.708)
Any questions/ comments?

For more info on the Celeb Youth project:

Celebyouth.org

@CelebYouthUK