The Circuit of Culture:
A Case Study of Birmingham school of Cultural Studies

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Studies Office in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Art in

British Studies

December 2014
Contents

Chapter one: Introduction ........................................................................................................1

1.1 Introduction ....................................................................................................................1

1.2 Problem Statement .........................................................................................................3

1.3 Importance of Research (Significance of Study) ........................................................4

1.4 Outline of Research .......................................................................................................7

1.5 Questions ......................................................................................................................8

1.6 Summary ......................................................................................................................9

Chapter two: Review of Literature ......................................................................................10

2.1 Review of Literature ....................................................................................................10

2.1.1 Introduction ...............................................................................................................11

2.1.2 Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) ...............................................27

2.1.3 Cultural Studies ........................................................................................................27

2.2 Conceptual Framework: the Circuit of Culture ..........................................................29

2.2.1 Production ...............................................................................................................35

2.2.2 Consumption ..........................................................................................................36

2.2.3 Regulation ..............................................................................................................37

2.2.4 Representation ........................................................................................................38

2.2.4.1 Stuart Hall’s Theory of Representation ..............................................................38

2.2.5 Identity ...................................................................................................................40

2.2.5.1 Paul du Gay and Stuart Hall’s Theory of Identity .............................................41

2.3 Summary ......................................................................................................................41

Chapter Three: Methodology .............................................................................................42

3.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................................42

3.2 What Is Case Study? ....................................................................................................43
1.1 Introduction

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was a research centre at the University of Birmingham, England. It was founded in by Richard Hoggart, its first director. Its object of study was the then new field of cultural studies. The Centre was the focus for what became known as the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, or, more generally, British cultural studies. Birmingham School theorists such as Stuart Hall emphasized the reciprocity in how cultural texts, focusing on the idea of Encoding/Decoding even mass-produced products are used, questioning the valorized division between "producers" and "consumers" that was evident in cultural theory such as that of Theodor Adorno and the Frankfurt School.

In an inaugural address entitled "Schools of English and Contemporary Society" (1963), Richard Hoggart, the first director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), University of Birmingham, attacked the narrowness of the way English literature was being taught in Great Britain and outlined an approach to what he "provisionally called Literature and Contemporary Cultural Studies"--an approach which he claimed had "something in common
with several existing approaches, but [was] not exactly any one of them" (Hoggart, 1970, p. 254). He intended to conduct research into mass culture.

The CCCS significance is laid upon the issue that it includes two mode of cultural inquiry characterizing the research undertaken at the Centre from the 1960s to the 1980s. The "culturalist" mode, derived from sociology, anthropology, and social history, and influenced by the homegrown work of Hoggart, Thompson, and Williams, regards a culture as a whole way of life and struggle accessible through detailed concrete (empirical) descriptions that capture the unities of commonplace cultural forms and material experience. The "structuralist" mode, indebted to French linguistics, literary criticism, and semiotic theory, and especially attentive to texts by Althusser, Barthes, and Foucault, conceives of cultural forms as (semi) autonomous inaugurating "discourses" susceptible to rhetorical and semiological analyses of cognitive constitutions and ideological effects. What distinguishes CCCS research in latter years is an attempt to employ both modes of inquiry, using Gramscian theory as a bridge (Leitch, 1991).

The Centre’s focus on the ‘contemporary’ aspect in Birmingham Centre, Britain and later around the world was combined with an engagement with critical theory, often introduced from the continent. The application of these theories to contemporary society was rigorously debated during weekly ‘sub groups’.(WWW.Birmingham.ac.uk).

It was Hoggart's statement about the need for English Studies as an academic discipline to "come into an active relation with its age" that framed the inaugural address of a project designed to study cultural practices in a broad sense—-a project whose origins Stuart Hall has reported were marked by "caution and uncertainty" (Hall, 1984a, p. 22). Hoggart, and the cultural studies project in general can be regarded as implicitly addressing an antagonist: the proverbial elitist school of cultural thought in England that argues for a separation between high culture and "real" life, between the historic past and the contemporary world, or between theory and practice, depending on how one chooses to frame the antinomies(Schulman, pp1-17).

The Centre also had an important influence outside the academy, with numerous former students playing significant roles in altering the political and cultural landscapes of Birmingham and beyond. Having been merged with the Department of Sociology, the Centre was closed down by the University of Birmingham in 2002(WWW.Birmingham.ac.uk.).
This study intends to look upon this prominent Cultural Studies through a model which already has been designed by theorists in this group and other researchers in the field. The Circuit of Culture tries to shed light upon the issues of utmost importance like the state of formation of the centre and production, its consumption in general by the context and in particular by academicians, the state of its representation through its publications and projections in media and society, and its regulation through the inner group manners and ideology and within a broader regulatory context of domestic and international atmosphere, and its identity as a prominent Centre in cultural studies.

1.2 Problem Statement

To illustrate how and to what extent the CCCS as a unique, pioneered and critical group can be scrutinized through the five moments of Circuit of Culture theory and by application of the prominent circular framework devised in 1997 by a group of theorists in the field of cultural study, is the main problem that this dissertation is going to address. The main problems that would be discussed are these:

Q1. How the academic circle of CCCS formed? and became such an entity in international arena of cultural studies?

Q2. How the CCCS is consumed as a cultural entity?

Q3. How the CCCS is regulated?

Q4. How the CCCS is represented?

Q5. How the CCCS’s identity is formed?

In order to address these questions the model of Circuit of Culture as the conceptual and theoretical framework developed by a group of cultural studies scholars namely du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, and Negus in 1997, will be used.

The Circuit of Culture identifies five moments in the process of communication which includes production, representation, consumption, regulation, and identity. These moments or
processes “work in concert to provide a shared cultural space in which meaning is created, shaped, modified, and recreated” (Curtain & Gaither, 2007, p.37). Within the Circuit of Culture, each of the moments works with others to form articulations which in turn contribute to the social production of meaning. These moments will be applied on CCCS as the case study of research to elaborate and launch the detailed analysis and sufficient understanding of the group’s method and its significant impact upon the field of culture and cultural studies.

1.3 Importance of Research (Significance of the Study)

Though the CCCS is a known group in the academic and scholars circles in various disciplines such as social studies, sociology, media studies, literary theory, ethnic studies, still their cultural production and the way the group contributions were used, consumed, regulated, represented, and identified remains not clarified. The most significant part of this study is to shed light on this important aspect.

Although there are other Cultural studies centres schools such as Frankfurt school, Cardiff Centre; but notably, the significance of CCCS’s place in global scholar arena of cultural studies and their fundamental argumentation which is the claim that the CCCS’s kind of cultural studies makes are these:

- Represents the significance of academic study of popular culture
- Analysis of how the American culture with its pop culture greatly influenced the British worker culture.

Besides that, they assert:

- the dominant ideology works in the production of Culture and its representation through media print publishing and currently web.
- broadcasters as media authorities in culture shaping defy notions of accuracy and impartiality (Best. 2001).

So the practical work make accessible for them is the base for decoding the message and that the social and professional suppositions inside the pop culture created specific settings of reference that were not impartial image of reality. This conveyed a fundamental question that
does the way cultural artefact is constituted help to shed light on and illuminate events in the world or does it mystify them? To this point as they claim there appeared a process of mystification. CCCS give notice to the illusion, difference between illusion reality (Hartlety, 18).

The CCCS argues that the dominant ideology imposes the production of cultural text and finds it problematic, actually unhelpful, to assign tags like objective, impartial or unbiased to such a manufactured product. In this regard they considered as having alternative approach so, analysing the center can balance the views in the field of cultural studies and illustrating and examining can be very beneficial and advantageous to other researchers and is a key element for them to be acquainted with such a prominent and universally recognised critical group in the field of cultural studies.

The aim is to elaborate and launch an in-depth scrutiny of CCCS by application of the Circuit of Culture as a model and theory in the field of culture and cultural studies. As Trimbur explained, “the notion of circulation enables us to see how cultural products pass through a range of meanings and uses as they are taken up at various points in the social formation” (Trimbur, 2002, p. 196).

In the book titled, Doing Cultural Studie:The Story of the Sony Walkman (1997), authored by Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay and Keith Negus. A a cultural product, the Sony Walkman, examined from a number of perspectives. The authors argue how the product has been represented in advertising and therefore how it is involved in the construction of specific identities (Turner, 2003).

The second section examines Sony; the company that produced the walkman, with the purpose of explaining the industrial culture accountable for its design and production. This is a complex examination concerning the discussion of published accounts, talks with key suppliers to the design and progress. The cultural identity of Sony itself is part of this story, its relation to Japanese-ness and the cultural bases of the product’s design. In the third part, more particular questions about marketing and design of the Walkman asked to develops a design history of the product. In part four they shape the economic logic of the product from the prespective of the producer. In the fifth part the authors talk over the consumption of the product through reference
to published statistics on gender, age, class and so on. Lastly, argues how the use of the Walkman has been regulated by public authorities (Turner, 2003).

However, what appears is an interesting story, effectively holding the multidimensional roles the Only Walkman has played in modern popular culture, as well as the complicated reasons behind its commercial production. As they define it, their method is to examine “the biography of a cultural artefact” by focusing on the “articulation of a number of distinct processes whose interaction can and does lead to variable and contingent outcomes” (Du Gay, Hall, Mackay, Negus, & Janes, 1997, p.3).

It is this acknowledgment of the need of understanding the relations of different, possibly opposing and highly dependent processes that supports the method of the book.

*Doing Cultural Studies* describes what is called as the Circuit of Culture. This is a model of cultural production and consumption. What this model defines is the interaction of the five key processes “through which any analysis of a cultural text or artefact must pass if it is to be adequately studied” (Du Gay, Hall, Mackay, Negus, & Janes, 1997, p.3).

These processes are: production, representation, consumption, regulation and identity. These processes are all interrelated. When the diagram applied to the examination of a particular cultural text or artefact, it becomes apparent that even the categories themselves can overlap. For instance, identity and representation are quite hard to separate when one is examining advertising. Regardless of this however, the academic value of the Circuit of Culture model lies in its explanation of the kinds of questions that need to be asked in a study of a phenomenon, product or practice.

These are:

How is it represented?

What identities are associated with it?

How is it produced and consumed?

What mechanisms regulate its distribution and use? (Du Gay, Hall, Mackay, Negus, & Janes, 1997).
Answering all questions guarantees that the subject matter will be approached from more than one perspective. It ensures that the cultural study of the artefact, product or practice emphases not only on representations but also on how those representations are connected to the cultural processes which structure identity, consumption, production and regulation. It is this mixture of approaches, this emphasis on the articulation between relatively distinct cultural processes, which now seems to mark out this research tradition (Turner, 2003).

In order to have a clear picture of the function of the Circuit of Culture, in the literature review section examples of its application on various case studies are presented; such as Apple case, SHELL international company case, Napster case study, Bolivian media landscape, and climate change in U.K. broadsheet newspapers. Emerging from an area of theory and research identified as cultural studies, also this theoretical framework and circular model has provided a basis for studies related to advertising (Soar, 200); film and television studies (Acosta-Alzuru, 2003); analyses of magazines (Benwell, 2003); the music industry (Fraley, 2003); and public relations (Curtin, 2005). The model of Circuit of Culture has also served as a guide for research related to human geography (Squire, 1993), science journalism (Wilcox, 2003), and tourism (Norton 1996) but it has never done on such a unique media group who pioneered as being a turning point and having an alternative approach and critical, opposing outlook in the area of media studies.

The Circuit of Culture pinpoint that in explaining the meaning a phenomenon or artefact such as CCCS, one should at least explore how it is represented, what social identities are associated with it, how it is produced and consumed, and what mechanisms regulate its distribution and use. By this kind of examinig through the five moments of circular model, it can be illustrate that how the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies(CCCS) and its social and cultural position have arisen, how they set out and came into existence and how they represent themselves, became international phenomenon in academic arena and to what extent they could achieve and get their academic identity. These are the very central things that demonstrate and signify the importance of the research.

1.4 Outline of Research

After the first introductory chapter, the second chapter focuses on the scholarly, academic review of literature which centered on the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies(CCCS) in
order to become familiar with the group, shedding more light on and clarify their works and purpose together with objections and criticism about them. Then, there is a definition of the area of cultural studies as it is considered as an umbrella term for it has media studies at the heart of itself. In addition to that the theoretical framework-the Circuit of Culture-that shapes the skeleton of this thesis will be explained.

The third chapter is devoted to the methodology. The case study as a method will be presented and introduced. And the appropriate kind of Case Study for this study is explained. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) as an object of scrutiny and as the case study of the research will be in depth analysed through the theory and five dimensional model of the Circuit of Culture. This was to demonstrate how the Circuit of Culture with its moments of production, consumption, regulation, representation and identity as the base and theoretical frameworks can be used to guide methodological analysis by focusing on one specific case study of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS).

In chapter four the findings and result of the dissertation will be presented. The address to the major and minor questions through the Circuit of Culture framework will be provided. To discover how the British academic circle of the GUMG has become such an international phenomenon in global arena via five moments of the conceptual framework.

The last chapter will be that of conclusion of the study which also includes any limitations faced during or about writing this dissertation and address suggestions for further research.

1.5 Questions

There are several questions which will be addressed and should be discussed in the thesis. The questions in this dissertation are categorized as major and minor ones.

The major question which this dissertation tackles to answer is:

How the British academic circle of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) has become an international phenomenon in global arena?
In order to find out the answer the above question, there should be an application of the five aspects and moments of the Circuit of Culture on CCCS. Then the minor questions are:

Q1. How has the CCCS been formed?

Q2. How has it been consumed?

Q3. How has it been regulated?

Q4. How has it been identified and represented?

Q5. How did it get its academic identity?

1.6 Summary

By stating the questions I put an end to chapter one and move forward to the following chapter. The next chapter, the review of literature is composed of three sections. In part one, the review of literature about Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) will be presented. Part two is devoted to the definition and presentation of the area of cultural studies which has media studies at its heart and the Circuit of Culture as the theoretical conceptual framework with its five processes of production, representation, consumption, regulation and identity will be introduced in the last part.
2.1 Review of Literature

2.1.1 Introduction

With an intention of in-depth scrutinizing the CCCS, the model of Circuit of Culture as a methodological and theoretical framework, with its five interconnected processes of production; consumption; regulation, representation and identity, will be used and applied on CCCS to shed light on the ways in which it has become such an international, critical phenomenon in global arena of cultural studies. Thus, this chapter consists of three main categories. The first one involves at its centre, the academic literature on the work of the Birmingham school. Specific contents which concerns about the CCCS whether written or published by the CCCS itself or other scholars due to detailed analysis and examining the group, their criteria and works. Also in order to do so in a review of literature a brief overview of the history and field of cultural studies and particularly the CCCS contribution to this field is presented. The third category relates to the
conceptual framework. It includes the universal scholarly information about the model and theory of the Circuit of Culture and its five interrelated aspects.

Also, beside the aforementioned theory the two theories of representation and identity, both in the heart of the Circuit of Culture will be looked upon to clarify the issue. In order to make the Circuit of Culture more tangible and make a clear picture of it also some Case studies which has been conducted through the Circuit of Culture presented.

2.1.1 Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)

For about two decades, in many parts of the world, Cultural Studies (CS) has been moving into the mainstream of intellectual life, offering scholars interested in society and culture alternatives to old research paradigms (Hardt, 1989; Grossberg, 1997). BCS emerged from the work done at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), an interdisciplinary research centre Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall established at the University of Birmingham in 1964. Different scholars have endorsed different definitions of CS as a problematic (Hall, 1996, p. 31), but most claim that CS enables them to examine cultural objects and practices from the point of view of their interaction with and within relations of power. Hall (1984) writes that CS is both interpretive and evaluative in its methodologies, but rejects the simple equation of culture with "high" culture,[1] stressing that all forms of cultural production need to be studied in relation to other cultural practices and to social and historical structures.

In compiling this history, I take as my point of departure the account Norma Schulman (1993, p. 52) produced. Like Schulman, I will discuss the historical antecedents of this intellectual movement; explain what the founders and their successors meant by CS and how they defined its aims; consider what theoretical or practical obstacles lay in the way of realizing its goals; and indicate the contributions Birmingham CS has made to the study of culture and communication. I end with a brief sketch of the characteristics that distinguish this problematic.

ANTECEDENTS

It is possible to trace CS to S.T. Coleridge (1772-1834), the poet, critic, and philosopher who wore the mantle of cultural critic for his generation. Coleridge met William Wordsworth in 1795, and the poets formed a deep friendship; they visited Germany during the year 1798-99
(Coleridge developed a taste for German philosophy and criticism), and they collaborated on *Lyrical Ballads* (1789), a volume which signalled the start of the Romantic movement in English poetry. Coleridge wrote such inspired poems as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan," and over the years he shared his interest in political philosophy in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), in which he introduces the philosophy of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling to English thinkers, *Aids to Reflection* (1825), a philosophical treatise on the distinctions between Understanding and Reason, and *Anima Poetae* (1895), a collection of observations on a variety of social and cultural topics. His Tory-democratic attitude appealed to many and his defence of orthodoxy (always philosophical) has influenced modern "neo-Christianity."

It is more fruitful to trace CS to Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, and F.R. Leavis, who in the twentieth-century saw the "great tradition" as a remedy for contemporary social problems (they regarded culture and democracy as opposed). These critics offered readers examples of detailed, concrete analyses of cultural experiences.

Matthew Arnold (1822-88), poet and critic, worked as inspector of schools from 1851-57, travelling across England and Europe, investigating Nonconformist schools, and Professor of Poetry at Oxford, 1857-86. Arnold outlined the function of the cultural critic in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), where he wrote that society is heading towards anarchy (he sees evidence of this threat in the contemporary philosophy of "doing as one likes"); only culture (he writes) can save it. He claims that, throughout history, two forces have governed society: (a) the impulse towards duty, self-control, and work, and (b) the impulse towards knowledge and ideas. Two races, the Hebrews and the Greeks, embody these impulses. By Hebraism, he means "firm obedience" and "strictness of conscience," and by Hellenism he means "clear intelligence" and "spontaneity of conscience." These impulses alternate throughout history, Christianity being the triumph of Hebraism and the Renaissance being the triumph of Hellenism.

Ideally these impulses can be balanced, and in fact Arnold writes that, as a critic, he will promote this very cause. In practice, however, the mission to "improve" the populace meant promoting culture with a capital "C" (his opponents regarded culture as trivial). That is, he speaks of culture as the study of perfection, the impulse to make the world a better place, the drive to realize the ideal of human perfection and happiness. He argues that great literature