

Stuart Hall and the Marxist view of Racism

Source: Griffiths and Hope (2000) *Access to Sociology: Stratification and Differentiation*

Stuart Hall (1980) in ***Policing the Crisis*** suggested that the racism of the British press in discussing the street crime of mugging acted as a screen behind which the government could hide a deepening economic and social crisis. However, there is a further debate within race analysis developed by neo-Marxists within the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which is whether race should be considered as merely part of social class analysis or whether it has a significance that runs deeper. Neo-Marxists came to two conclusions, creating two models within the theoretical approach:

1. Relative Autonomy Model (Hall, 1980) – suggests racism is a historical phenomenon and works separately from social relations, but at the same time affects them. Consequently class and 'race' should be examined together.
2. Autonomy Model (Gabriel and Ben-Tovim, 1979) – racism is a product of contemporary and historical conflict, arising independently of class and social relations. Therefore racism cannot be reduced to class conflict, it exists as a consequence of ideological and political practices.

Solomos(1988) and Solomos and Back (1995) argue both of these Neo-Marxist approaches can be unified if racism is seen as part of the structure of each society, but with the realisation that each historic example should be studied separately.

Points of evaluation

- Marxism offers an excellent starting point for the study of issues of racism because it is a conflict model of analysis.
- Marxism offers an explanation for the exploitation of ethnic minorities, which is rooted in their position in the workplace.
- Not all members of ethnic minorities are poor and exploited victims of social inequality. There are some social groups who are in a position of some wealth and influence compared to their white neighbours. A disproportionate number of doctors for instance are Hindu and originate from the sub-continent.

Many of the answers are in the passage. Some are not. If you have difficulties, then return to these notes and revise the topic more carefully.

1. With which book is Stuart Hall associated?
2. What does the acronym CCCS stand for?
3. How did the racism of the British press support the government?
4. Is the racial issue separate from the class issue in your opinion? Offer sociological support for your opinions. (This is one you may need to revise!)
5. Explain the Relative Autonomy Model in your own words.
6. Who suggested the Autonomy Model?
7. Explain the Autonomy Model in your own words.
8. Suggest two points in favour of the Marxist analysis of class.
9. Offer one rejection of the Marxist model of class.
10. What is the difference between race and ethnicity?
11. Sociologically evaluate the suggestion that racism is not an issue in modern Britain since the arrival of equality legislation in the 1970s.