

Bring back class!
Some reflections on the praxis of
"going to the movies"
in the USA and India.

Ravi Vatrapu
PhD Candidate in Communication and
Information Sciences, UHM

Wednesday, January 25, 2006
Cultural Studies Speaker Series

Caveats and Qualifiers

- Personal Reflections (Subjective)
- Anecdotal (n=1)
- Cultural commentary
- NOT a scholarly analysis

- Romanticizing the Past
- Cynical about the Present
- Optimistic about the Future

- BTW, If I get this presentation “wrong”, please don’t take my cultural studies graduate certificate back.

Praxis of “going to the movies”

- Praxis is another name for practice
- Activity centric: Human Beings in the World as against of the world

- “Going to the Movies”
- India: Village vs. Town
- USA: Christiansburg, VA & Honolulu, Hawaii

“Going to the Movies” Comparison Criteria

- Movie Goers & Class (Perception)
- Social Relations
- Means of Transport (Technological)
- Mode of Transport (Private vs. Public)
- Class Consciousness
- Class Conflict

“Going to the Movies”

Two South Indian Villages: Dokipparru and Kaja

- Closed community of non-strangers
- Land owners and Non-owners
- Caste
- Walk, Bicycle, Scooters, Tractors, Bullock Carts (Ox + Ford)
- Government Regulation: Stratified Ticketing and Seating
- Upward mobility still not Ok

“Going to the Movies”

Two South Indian Cities: Vizag and Hyderabad

- City as a closed in-group and strangers
- Socio-Economic markers
- Socio-Linguistic markers
- Public Transport (Buses ,Trains)
- Private Transport (Bicycle, Moped, Bike, Car, Auto, Rickshaw)
- Government Regulation: Stratified Ticketing and Seating
- Black Marketing
- Current Trend: Multiplexes and Imax Movie Theaters

“Going to the Movies”

Two US Cities: USA: Christiansburg, VA & Honolulu, Hawaii

- Totally different experience
- Cultural Outsider: Socio-Linguistic-Economic Markers
- Ward 16 vs. Restaurant Row
- Predominantly Private Transport
- Classless ticketing and seating (except for seniors, students and the military)
- soda can smuggling

Class

From the Encyclopedia of Marxism: <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/frame.htm>

“For dialectical materialism however, the notion of class includes the development of collective consciousness in a class – arising from the material basis of having in common relations to the labour process and the means of production.”

VS.

“According to modern capitalist thinking, class is an abstract universal defined by the common attributes of its members (i.e., all who make less than \$20,000 a year constitute a "lower" class); categories and conceptions that have an existence prior to and independent of the people who make up the class”

Class

Raymond Williams' Keywords

Class as

- (i) Group: objective, socio-economic category
- (ii) Rank: relative social position
- (iii) Formation: perceived economic relationship;
social, political and cultural organization

Class

- New Keywords (Eds. Bennett, Grossberg and Morris)
- USA being “classless” in the context of the British Class System: achievement and Not ascription
- Class consciousness as a Weberian View
- Class as Market Position vs. Class as Relational
- Gender and Race issues are treated as secondary to the primary class conflict
- NOTE the use of parenthesis (more or less)

Class

Giddens, Anthony

1971 *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*. Cambridge [Eng.] University Press.

- Marxian vs. Marxist Writings
- Marx took the meaning of class for granted
- Marx asked “ what constitutes a class?” explicitly and specifically only in *Capital*, Volume 3
- Giddens paraphrasing Marx says “ Class must not be identified with either source of income or functional position in the division of labour. These criteria would yield a large plurality of classes”
- “...the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class.”
- “(...) capitalists form a class only to the degree that they are forced to carry on a struggle against another class.”

And now for something completely different

- Seller is the Academic/Activist
- Buyer is the Activist/Academic
- Pet is the analytic/concrete commodity called class