

FRAMING STUART FOR SOCIOLOGY STUDENTS

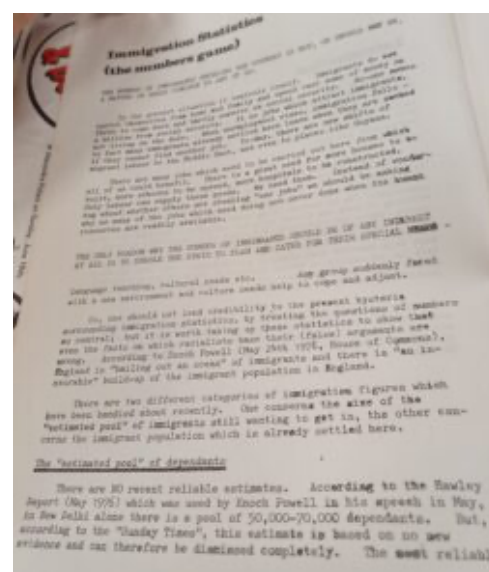
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My name is Charlie King and I am a second-year history student at the University of Birmingham, with a particular interest in Modern British History. I had come across Stuart Hall many times in my studies, due to his centrality to understanding British society in the second half of the twentieth century, and his status as a prominent figure in the university's history. Therefore, I was excited to get especially close to his work by undertaking this Collaborative Research Internship, in which I would discover the growing archive, held in Birmingham's Cadbury Research Library, that is dedicated to Stuart Hall's life and work.

The project's particular emphasis was on expanding knowledge of Stuart Hall to more diverse audiences, beyond the traditional academic circles to whom he is a well-known figure. This prompted me to consider how I first came across Stuart Hall, and what defined him as a figure of interest. Hall and his colleagues in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) were recurring figures in my A-Level sociology studies. His fascination with culture and the media, and how they interacted with contemporary affairs provide a wealth of insight, especially his work on the crime of mugging in the 1970s and 80s. My aim was to take a closer look the work and the research that went into his theories and conclusions with which many A-Level sociology students will be well-acquainted.

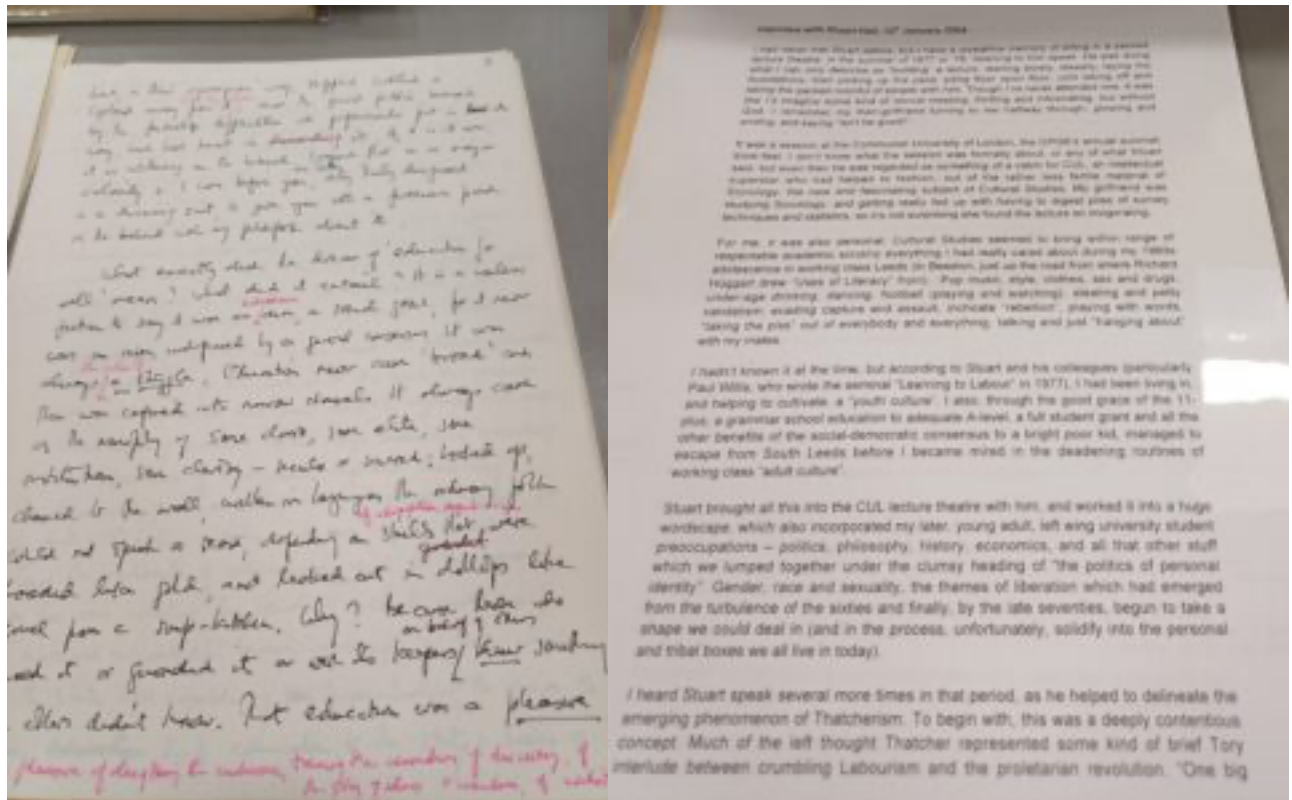
The main thing that struck me about Hall was how closely his work tied to current affairs. He saw his job as not merely to comment on society, but to take an active role in provoking change. The first source which was of interest to me was one of his many opinion pieces published in magazines, in this case on the immigration debate. Hall was ahead of his time in ensuring that such volatile political matters were confronted with considered and detailed research. He deals with the issue with sensitivity. By taking a deep-dive into the immigration statistics from the British Commonwealth he dispels certain myths, particularly the idea that immigrants were coming to Britain to live off social security benefits. He concludes that "there are no recent reliable figures on immigration statistics" and that "immigrants do not uproot themselves from home and family to barely survive on social security."

Another source made clear the vast amount of editing that went into Hall's work. From looking inside one of the many notebooks that he kept in his time at the CCCS, his work was full of scribbling and corrections. Whilst this, at times, made the content difficult to decipher, it also suggested just how thought went into Hall's writings and how much pride and care he took in the accuracy of his work. The esteem in which Hall was held also shone through in much of the other material. He is described in the below letter as a "thrilling and intoxicating lecturer." Additionally, there is a plethora of letters held in the archive with correspondence to Hall which expressed admiration towards his work. Despite this, I gained an image of Hall as generous and humble. My conversations with Nick Beech, who is part of the team cataloguing the



Stuart Hall felt it was important to deeply research issues

Stuart Hall archive, confirmed the image of Hall as a selfless researcher who was always willing to give credit to others. He gave great agency to his students in the CCCS to contribute to his main work on inner-city muggings in the 1970s. Hall was not only a socially conscious and determined researcher, he was also one of the most generous and admired of his time.



Ultimately, my experience working in the Stuart Hall archive achieved its aim in furthering an understanding of the man behind the ideas. He is important to understand not just for his work, but for how he went about his work. He devoted his life to investigating issues which were impacting vulnerable groups to society. Although he inaugurated the field of cultural studies, and would not necessarily describe himself as a sociologist, his determined stance towards changing how society was understood makes his work well worth further investigation for all those interested in the field of sociology, no matter how nascent this interest is.