



Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture

John Storey

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This revised and fully updated version of John Storey's best-selling survey is an accessible introduction to the range of theories and methods that have been used to study contemporary popular culture. The book also provides a map of the development of cultural studies through discussion of its most influential approaches. Organized around a series of case studies, each chapter focuses on a different media form and presents a critical overview of the methodology for the actual study of popular culture. Individual chapters cover topics such as television, fiction, film, newspapers and magazines, popular music, and consumption (fan culture and shopping). For students new to the field, the book provides instantly usable theories and methods; for those more familiar with the procedures and politics of cultural studies, it provides a succinct and accessible overview.

This edition has been revised, rewritten, and expanded throughout. The book now includes new sections on television audiences, reception theory, and globalization.

Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture Details

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From Reader Review Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture for online ebook

Adrienne says

Perhaps a little dated now, but it does exactly what it says on the tin: introduces a lot of the major theories and methods used within the field of Cultural Studies. This is a very good introductory text, one which I would be happy to assign in any introductory course. It does a nice job of presenting theory in digestible chunks, which is much appreciated by someone like me who has trouble getting through even a handful of pages of most theoretical texts without wanting to gouge her eyes out. This, I got through in a few hours. Huzzah for a text that isn't denser than lead!

Allison says

I bought this at a library book sale thinking that an introductory text on cultural studies could be helpful, and luckily, I was correct. The chapter on critical studies of popular fiction made me feel like my project is not insane, and almost every chapter has some sort of scholarly tidbit or summarized theoretical idea that I could apply to my own studies. It also provided an excellent review of the different theories that I read in my 501 courses, put clearly but not too simply. Unfortunately, as this is an introductory text, I can't use it too much in and of itself. As it stands, however, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture* has a giant bibliography ripe for raiding and will make me look a lot smarter at my thesis proposal defense for having read it. Those two things make it well worth the dollar I spent on the book and the time that I took to read and annotate it.

Robshelton365 says

A pretty useful reader that introduces students to post-structuralism and post-modernism.

Javad says

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Antariksa Akhmad says

Buku ini mengupas paradigma *cultural studies* terhadap berbagai macam media yang membawa kebudayaan pop. Sebagaimana lazimnya buku *cultural studies*, karya John Storey ini cukup beristilah dan susah untuk diakses pembaca awam. Agaknya seseorang harus paham konsep-konsep dari strukturalis maupun poststrukturalis seperti Sassure atau Derrida untuk bisa menyelami sepenuhnya teks ini, walau sebetulnya tanpa latar belakang pengetahuan itu pembaca juga bisa menyerap sebagian isinya.

Rebecca Dunbar says

Great intro. Readable. Praise Jesus.

Sin Iranpour says

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Dinu Gu?u says

okeish, but too theoretical

Farrahnanda says

Selalu bingung kalau mau review buku nonfiksi =)) Buku ini boleh pinjem dari Lord Dev *iyo aku tukang minjem wk*

Beberapa kali sempet bingung. Merasa nggak punya dasar soal bidang ini *emang, Far* Judulnya pengantar tapi kok rasanya ini adalah sebuah pengantar yang butuh pengantar #dsiu. Ada istilah-istilah yang punya makna lebih dari satu dan saya keteteran harus menyesuaikan sama konteks *lha gimana mau nyesuain kalau bahasannya aja asing*. Ada kalimat-kalimat yang terjemahannya berasa kurang enak. Tapi terlepas dari itu semua, saya senang dapat pengetahuan baru. Saya jadi tertarik sama cultural studies. Semua salah Lord Dev! =))

Amir says

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Håvard Bamle says

Et oppslagsverk

Jay says

I read this text for a sociology course and it covered the various schools of sociological thought on popular culture. The main concept that I emerged with after this read was a keen understanding between organic popular culture and the more dominate inorganic mass produced popular culture created by the corporate entertainment industry.

While researching for definitions and concepts of popular culture, I noticed that most modern sociologists center their definitions, compiled in a text that they are selling, around multiple concepts of already established theories on popular culture. These rehashed and watered down views on the existence and evolution of popular culture all seem to be based on the ideological maxims of either core conflict theory between proletariats and bourgeoisie, which has termed in many different terminologies such as rich and poor, or the optimistic humanist view that popular culture is organic in nature and created by society and the majority of people within a society. The sociologist Shirley Fedorak pointed out two schools of thought, ‘mass culture theory’ and ‘populist theory’. She describes mass culture theory as a division between high culture and popular culture, the later belonging “to the ‘mindless masses’ who accept and absorb it without question or critique” and that popular culture is an “opiate for the masses” (Fedorak, 2009, p. 4). The populist theory, on the other hand, views popular culture as “a vibrant pursuit that offers intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and an opportunity to escape from the stress of everyday life” (Fedorak, 2009, p. 4). The two ideologies resemble the pessimistic and optimistic views of humanity, does it not? One is clearly a conflict theory, while the other is optimistic with only subtle traces of conflict between the economic classes. Interestingly enough, both schools of thought here seem to agree that popular culture keeps the masses dreaming, diverted and unfocused on important social and political issues that impact their society and the future of their society.

Briefly touching on previously established concepts on popular culture, Storey opens with the definitive statement that popular culture “is in effect an empty conceptual concept” (Storey, 2009, p. 1). While I do not completely agree with or disagree with every school of thought that Storey brushes over in chapter one, I disagree with his statement here in favor of a more Marxist view on the matter. Popular culture may be damaging and distracting to society, but I do not believe it to be an empty conceptual concept. I suspect that if popular culture was ever actually organic in nature, that the controlling forces of it changed as technology expanded, over the past 500 years or so, and the means of production for mass-producing popular culture was stripped away from once independent origins of the majority working class. The most alarming point that Storey makes to support this view is that “whatever else popular culture is, it is definitely a culture that only emerged following industrialization and urbanization” (Storey, 2009, p. 1). As most of us realize, capitalism came out of industrialization and urbanization, and with it expanded a great disproportion of

wealth distribution which is the basis for consolidated ownership in means of production, and the chasm widened with every new developed technology from the Industrial Revolution to the recent Internet Boom. Not only did the distribution of wealth and means of production become concentrated into the ownership of a few over a many, as the classic writings of Marx teach, but the advancing stages of technology offered more and more opportunity to mass produce so-called popular culture text. Once possibly innocent forms of text, such as Charles Dickens readings or Shakespearean sonnets on London stages, are now five hundred satellite channels on every television, endless webs of Internet pages, mass marketed music and movies, and video game systems that glamorize meaningless violence. Storey (2009) notes, “They produce what is sometimes called ‘false consciousness’. Such distortions, it is argued, work in the interests of the powerful against the interests of the powerless. Using this definition, we might speak of capitalist ideology.” (P. 3). In the case of American society, the massive modern distraction caused by so-called popular culture leads to apathy toward, and desensitization of, very serious issues in our American society such as the current fifteen trillion dollar deficit and what that massive deficit means for our children, the high murder rates and drug rates in American cities, constant corporate and foreign lobbyist manipulation of Congress, and many other serious issues in our society that need, at the very minimum, the attention of America’s majority population. Instead, the majority of Americans have their concentration diverted after working long hours by a designed popular culture. Not a popular culture created by the working masses, but created for the working masses. This, the distraction factor, is the most obvious comparison between the emphasis points I have put forth by Fedorak and Storey. Popular culture is a drug-like distraction for the working and lower economic masses, and this dream-like distraction that promotes apathy and stagnation is especially debilitating to social advancement of the masses for the better of society when it is mass-produced by an elite group of profit-driven economic resource owners.

The text made me contemplate the larger picture of popular culture as a massive inorganic beast with many arms stretching to the masses. While some arms reach every human who is a part of the mass society, other arms only reach certain ethnicities, religions, or others categories of demographics. I believe it is still possible for an occasional organic form of popular culture to emerge, but it is impossible to prevent the owners of the means of production from hijacking, manipulating and mass-producing those sporadic anomalies in a hybrid form with hidden economic or political motives. I feel that popular culture is inorganic in nature and created for the masses to follow like sheep. Before you deny the possibility, please take some time to notice the self destructive, immoral, and selfishly individualistic nature of most of our mass produced popular culture in the United States.

1. The definition of Culturalism, like the definition of popular culture, has been analyzed to the point of having an unclear definition. Many sociologists have conducted researches and developed scholastic text in efforts to define the concept. I agree with E.P. Thompson’s position that culture is “a historical phenomenon” (Storey, 2009. P. 49). I also support the view that, both historically and currently, the historical phenomenon of culture is defined by two polarities, the human agency and the structural detriments. While Thompson leaned toward the ‘human agency’ as the major motion in culturalism, I tend to follow the Marxist ideology that considers the ‘structural detriment’ of society the dominant factor, especially within an ultra-capitalistic, highly technological society such as the United States, that defines the ebb and flow of culturalism. In order to understand this view, one must understand the reality of wealth distribution, means of production and production distribution. Storey quotes Raymond Williams on page 48: “...In fact the main source of this ‘popular culture’ lies outside of the working class altogether, for it is instituted, financed and operated by the commercial bourgeoisie, and remains typically capitalist in its methods of production and distribution. That the working-class people form perhaps a majority of the consumers of this material...does not, as a fact, justify this facile identification.” (Storey, 2009, P. 48). With the mass production of so-called popular culture, the human agency or human element is heavily influenced and manipulated by the structural detriment, which could also translate to the judicial and legislative components put in place, or purchased in

place, by those who possess the means to mass produce so-called popular culture in order to protect those who possess and who have consolidated the means of production.

2. Hoggart makes a rather keen observation of the early stages of mass produced popular culture, during its early stages during the 1950s, when he writes about the Milk Bars and the Jukebox Boys “putting copper after copper into the mechanical record player” and wagging one shoulder or stare “...as desperately as Humphrey Bogart” (Storey, 2009, P. 42). Keep in mind how this early stage of mass produced popular culture centers around the newly developed technology of the jukebox and the recently enhanced silver screen (with audio). With each decade that follows the 1950s, we can see new technologies that enhance the mass production of so-called popular culture. As the technology grows and is produced in higher volume, the lower the price becomes on the technology and it becomes more available to the ‘popular’ working class. • Juke Box joints to 8 track players, record players, and tape decks • Video game arcades to video game systems • Movie theaters to VCRs-DVDs • Basic cable to 500 channel satellite systems • Home computers to the Internet boom. Again, as the price of technologies become affordable to the working class, as a result of mass production by those with means of mass production (capital), the influence of mass produced popular culture becomes stronger on the human agency (the working class people).

3. After 1950 and the beginning of the technologic quickening, and mass production of popular culture, it appears fine culture was still a reflection of the shrinking upper class, but the only distinction of value between the two categories would be that fine culture is overall organic in development, since it generally developed among economic peers in the upper class, while popular culture has been, and still is, manufactured by the highest element of upper class (those with means of mass production) for the working class population in order to influence economic consumption (purchasing) and influence multiple areas in human agency. It is evident to me that the continuous moral decline over the past five decades has been heavily impacted by three factors: 1) the advancement of technology for mass producing popular culture by those with means of production. 2) The influence of developing technology for mass production of popular culture on the human agency has produced a vicious cycle within the working class of mental and routine dependence on mass produced popular culture. 3) The weakening and declining social awareness (politically and economically), the stagnation of intellectual abilities (critical thinking), the moral degradation and unconscious euphoria of apathy caused by routine addiction to mass produced popular culture, especially when heavily force fed in glamorized images of self-destruction are focused on the youth (future adults and parents). It produces a degenerative generation cycle that weakens all positive strengthening of family and community with each generation, and quite frankly weakens the ability to parent, guide and mentor. If popular culture is, and has been, such a natural phenomenon instead of a manufactured drug designed to numb the masses, where are all the mass produced popular culture text that encourage the advancement of families and communities? Are these vulgar mass products of immoral humor really a reflection of a popular culture that the majority of Americans have created on our own? Is popular culture in the United States really a reflection of who we are as a people?

During the 1970s and 1980s, popular music often addressed social issues in the communities and the nation. Music was used in many cases to address and bring about political, economic and community consciousness in order to change various negative issues. This was especially the case in musical genres of the black communities. In the 1970s, popular artists such as Gil Scott Heron, Curtis Mayfield and Marvin Gaye addressed issues facing the black community and the nation at large. In the early period of hip hop music during the 1980s, artists such as Grandmaster Flash, Public Enemy and Boogie Down Productions spoke out through their music to address and bring awareness to social issues that troubled the black community.

Many people who listen to popular music in the Hip-Hop genre of music today often ask, “What ever happened to the positive messages in black music?”

The answer can be found in the corporate consolidation of mass produced popular Hip-Hop music. After the genre of Hip-Hop music proved, in the late 1980s, its potential for profit, it was not long before the corporate conglomerates began mass producing the genre of Hip-Hop music and either forcing the independent hip hop music labels out of business or controlling which types of products would be created, funded and mass distributed. The trend today in mass produced Hip-Hop music is no longer the identification of negative and community destroying issues, such as drugs and murder, that need to be countered and address. The trend in mass produced hip hop music today amplifies, promotes and glamorizes the negative, community impacting issues and problems, especially in urban and lower economic communities. In order to illustrate this trend, we will select one negative issue and critically analyze five recent chart topping Hip Hop songs, and the artists who perform them, within the mass-produced music production machine. Considering all the forms of glamorized self-destructive trends that are mass produced and placed into heavy repetitive rotation, we will focus on one area of promotion: the glamorization of drugs. Drugs in the United States destroys communities, increases the prison population, increases crime rates, has been argued to increase violence, lowers property values within neighborhoods and communities and drains state budgets for mass incarceration and private prisons.

The first popular artist we will look at is 2 Chainz and his so-called hit song “No Lie”. The lyrics in his song clearly promote drug usage, among other negative behavior patterns: “I am smoking on that gas, life should be on Cinemax, Movie, Bought my boo bigger tits and a bigger ass, Who he's, not I, I smoke strong, that Popeye, Louie V's in my archives, black diamonds, apartheid, Bread up and my top down, On the block with a block out, Hit ya ass with that block out, Dope enough to go in yo nostrils, I take ya girl and kidnap her, Beat her to my mattress” (Epps, 2012).

The promotion of drug usage, especially in lower economic communities, is not only destructive to individuals and communities; it promotes a much larger political problem. The influence of drug usage and drug selling, since, regardless of individual opinion, are illegal acts, produces a rise in incarceration rates and quickly fills state prisons. In the past fifteen years, the vast increase has opened a lucrative business in the form of the private prison industry, which has several corporations available for investment on the New York Stock Exchange. When state prison facilities become overpopulated, the state is required to move incarcerated inmates to privatized prisons, which increase the fiscal drain on state budgets. The funding paid to privatized prisons from the state budget could be used on positive areas such as education, community improvement and job creation. The promotion of drugs in heavily promoted and repeated glamorized images, along with other crime-promoting fads, not only influences the individual consuming listener consciously and subconsciously, it creates several cause and effect reactions and implications impacts as high up as Congressional budget cuts under a fifteen trillion dollar debt.

The following chart-topping artists promote the same negative trend of drug glamorization:

- A. In the Kanye West song “Mercy”, we once again see the artist Big Sean promoting the same negative excess, this time using sex appeal to glamorize the negative element: “Make that ass shake, Woah make the ground move, that's an ass quake, Built a house up on that ass, that's an ass state, Roll my weed on it, that's an ass tray” (West, 2012).
- B. The artist Whales, in his chart topping song “Bag of Money” follows the same tired trend with his repeated hook: “And I like my marijuana bright, And I like my window tinted out, Shout out them strippers who hustle” (Ross, 2012)
- C. Not wanting to be undone, the artist Meek Mills gets to the top of the genre chart with his promotion of drugs and excess in his song titled “Amen”: “Bottle after bottle, drink until I overdose, Pull up in the

Phantom watch them bitches catch the holy ghost, Everytime I step up in the dealer I be goin' broke, Shorty wanna fuck me I say get on top and rollercoast" (Mills, 2012) and "Just bought my niggas some cane, so much it came with a plane, Bought my niggas some dope, so much it came with a boat, I just bought me a crib so big it came with a moat" (Mills, 2012).

D. Last, but not least, we end near the place that we began with the ultra-popular Lil Wayne rapping over the 2 Chainz instrumental "No Lie": "I got them yellow Zanax, I slipped on a banana pill, Trukfit t-shirt, blunt dripped in syrup, pass that weed around like some fuckin' hors d'oeuvres" (Carter, 2012) and "Shout out to my weed man, shout out to my lean man, I'm sitting on these motherfuckin' millions like a beanbag, fuck you, don't judge me, drug me then love me" (Carter, 2012).

These are the artists that have their material constantly played in heavy rotation on the Viacom video channels, radio, and the Internet with corporate money behind them to ensure it reaches the masses in repetitive consumption. The messages of self-destruction are clear and the selected songs from 2012 can be easily replaced with different selections from 2012 and will more often than not reveal the same promotion of negative materials. Just how much of an influence does this heavy dose of mass produced repetition have? A 2006 study by the nonprofit organization Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation revealed that "almost 70 percent of the students who listened to music "daily or almost daily" listened to rap and hip-hop, and when that data was compared with the students' answers about alcohol, drugs and violence, the survey found that "substance use and aggressive behaviors among young people were significantly associated to certain genres of popular music," mainly rap" (Montgomery, 2006).

The same point of realistic disenchantment is echoed in a 2010 dissertation by Dr. Boyce Watkins. Watkins points out the systematic influence factor on targeted consumers by pointing out that currently "black males listen to hip-hop in a way that is different from nearly any other group of people in America. We don't just listen to the artists, we imitate them. Millions of black boys want to be like Lil Wayne, copying every tattoo, gesture and ridiculous punch line. When he goes to jail and brags about it, we end up bragging about it ourselves. Therefore, hip-hop has done its share of work to sustain the perpetual love affair between African American males and the systems designed to destroy them" (Watkins, 2010).

Emilie F. Yaakaar says

This book is a great introduction to Cultural Studies in general, covering key theories and main scholars very well. It is a good starting point for people with not much knowledge on the subject, with references to do further research depending on individual interest.

I loved the nuance of the author, how every argument had a counter-argument: Storey showed different perspectives on the issues discussed. It is also nice how the book throws light into the evolution of Cultural Studies, and into the tensions within the field. By the end, it makes sense the book focuses on Popular Culture, a field full of conflict, and more nowadays.

Only issues I had with the book is that I wish the queer and race theory sections were longer, they felt rather quick and not as considered as others. More depth in those areas would be nice.

Overall, a must-read for people interested in culture and issues surrounding it. Even as an International Development student, it made me think a lot.

sabisteb aka callisto says

Das Buch umfasst folgende Themenbereiche:

1. Introduction
2. Television: Recht klassisch, normale discourse analysis und der Hinweis, dass die Zuschauer eine Sendung durchaus anders als gewünscht dekodieren können... Das bekommt die aktuelle Medienlandschaft, Stichwort „Lügenpresse“ gerade gehörig zu spüren. Hätten die eingeschnappten Reporter doch zumindest mal eine Einführung in die Kulturstudien besucht, wüssten sie, dass das kein neues Phänomen ist und man damit immer rechnen muss, wenn man keinen Bezug zur Basis mehr hat. Als Beispiel wird hier eine Studie zu „Dallas“ genommen. Der erste Hinweis, dass das Buch doch ein klein wenig veraltet ist.
3. Fiction: Man muss den Text interpretieren der nicht da steht und verschwiegen wird... Passt meiner Meinung weniger zu Fiction als zur aktuellen wirtschaftlichen Berichterstattung. Einerseits jammern, dass da keine Inflation in Sicht ist, andererseits verschweigen, dass Inflation direkt an Lohnerhöhung gekoppelt ist. Aus dem Verschweigen kann man herauslesen wessen Sprachrohr die deutschen Medien sind: Das der Arbeitgeber. Weniger gut funktioniert diese Methode jedoch für nicht Sachbücher.
Interessant in diesem Kapitel ist das perfekte Rezept für eine Romanze: „the ideal romance is one in which an intelligent woman with a good sense of humour is overwhelmed, after much suspicion and distrust, and some cruelty and violence, by the love of an intelligent, tender and good-humoured man, who in the course of their relationship is transformed from an emotional pre-literate to someone who can care for her and nurture her in ways that traditionally we would expect only from a woman to a man.“ (p 48)
Und ja, das ist ein einziger Satz. Das Buch ist voller Bandwurmsätze, die teilweise verschwurbelt und unnötig verkünstelt sind, so dass man den Autor eigentlich nur gegen einen Wand klatschen möchte aber in Ermangelung dessen eher das Buch gegen die Wand wirft.
Auch schön die Begründung warum Frauen Romanzen lesen: „In order to experience this regression to maternal emotional fulfilment, she has three options: lesbianism, a relationship with a man, or to seek fulfilment by other means. The homophobic nature of our culture limits the first; the nature of masculinity the second; romance reading may be an example of the third.“ (p 49)
4. Film: Flucht aus der Realität, das übliche Blabla + man kann sich mit der „modernen“ Hollywoodfrau identifizieren und so gegen die restriktive britische Gesellschaft rebellieren. Blablabla.
5. Newspaper and Magazines: „According to Fiske, the official press articulates the interests of the power-bloc in a top-down flow of information. [...] The official press provides the information and knowledge necessary to ensure maintenance of the prevailing structures of power.“ (p 77) => Die Kulturstudien haben die Mainstreammedien schon 1996 als Lügenpresse angesehen, die nur den 1% als Sprachrohr dient. Warum sind die Mainstreammedien so überrascht, dass nun auch den Normalbürgern klar geworden ist, was in den Kulturstudien schon lange Grundwissen ist?
6. Popular Music: Und täglich grüßt Adorno. „Work under capitalism is dull and therefore promotes the search for escape, but, because it is so dulling, it leaves little energy for real escape – the demands for „authentic“ culture; instead, refuge is sought in forms such as popular music.“ (p 94).
7. The consumption of everyday life: “Youth cultural styles [as] [...] symbolic challenges, but they must end by establishing new sets of conventions; by creating new commodities, new industries or rejuvenating old ones.”

Das Buch hat seine Momente. Insgesamt ist es stilistisch aber echt grausam. Der verschwurbelte Stil der Geisteswissenschaften treibt hier einige sinnfreie Blüten, die einem Naturwissenschaftler die Haare zu Berge stehen lassen.

Teilweise ist es auch massiv veraltet, besonders der Popmusikteil, den kann man vergessen. Youtube hat die

Künstler vom Joch der Musikindustrie befreit und die Macht der Musikkonzerne und auch der Verlage, wenn auch nicht komplett gebrochen, so doch deutlich unterminiert.

David Withun says

Storey gives a very interesting look at the developments in cultural theory regarding popular culture over the past century, from early movements like Leavisism through to modern Marxist and post-Marxist, feminist, and other postmodernist theories. This book is very helpful for its application of cultural theory and sociological concepts to popular culture and for the numerous references to excellent books for further reading on each subject encountered. I was somewhat disappointed, however, with its assumption of radical left politics as standard. I'm well aware of a left slant among cultural and sociological academics and I'm fine with authors with biases (purely natural, of course), but the assumption that all readers share these same biases is a bit irritating. It would have been interesting to see Matthew Arnold given a more thorough and fair treatment, and to see those who have followed in his footsteps today mentioned at all.
