

Reading from Lane Crothers, *Globalization and America Popular Culture*, 4th ed., (NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

A combination of economic, political, and cultural factors promote globalization by (1) making it possible to create new and increased ties among people, social networks and ideas that span traditional nation-state boundaries; (2) linking people in new ways, making it possible for work or travel or shopping or other activities to take place twenty-four hours a day around the world; (3) advancing the speed of communication and the expectation of instantaneous contact, in effect making global events and issues local ones as well; and (4) shaping and reshaping individuals' ideas and identities as they are exposed to this increasingly complex world. Hence, while globalization is dynamic, uncertain, and insecure, its goal is the state of globality—what Steger describes as “interdependence and integration.”[23]

As this book addresses throughout, however, the forces shaping globalization seem to both draw people together through trade and increased cultural contacts and to anger, frustrate, and frighten many groups and individuals in various communities. Globalization may be a set of processes tending to promote a condition of globality, but it also seems to create movements and reactions in opposition to it. Political scientist James Rosenau coined the term *fragmentation* to describe the integration-fragmentation dynamic that shapes globalization today. Fragmentation and integration occur at the same time, profoundly shaping the dynamics of globalization. Moreover, fragmentation affects different individuals, groups, sectors of the economy and communities in varying ways.[24] Thus, whether for economic, political, or cultural reasons, or some combination of these, globalization seems to drive some people apart even as it promotes new international connections among other people around the world. To understand globalization, then it is necessary to assess how economic, political, and cultural forces that stimulate the growth of shared social institutions and values bring some people together while at the same time pushing others apart.

As this book shows, American popular culture is an agent of cultural globalization. It is a conduit by which values, ideas and experiences in the world at large can become known to Americans, only to be adapted and reflected out into the world again. Moreover, popular culture is a business run by mega corporations and marketed across the globe. Accordingly, it has an impact on the economic dimensions of globalization. This economic activity inevitably has both cultural and political effects, as the sudden intrusion of new forms and modes of communication, entertainment, and lifestyles promotes tensions in local communities. Globalization is not simply good. It is multidimensional, dynamic, and transformational in both desired and unintended ways.

CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION

In broad terms, analysts of cultural globalization focus on the question of how Western goods, services, ideas, values, and media affect local, usually non-Western cultures once they enter the new markets opened by globalization.[30] Some analysts, relying on a view of culture as a set of fixed, rigid ideas, values, and practices that make peaceful cultural change unlikely, are pessimistic about the likely resulting effects. They see three kinds of negative effects emerging from the global spread of American popular culture in the years since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991: (1) cultural corruption, (2) cultural imperialism, and (3) cultural homogenization. Other cultural analysts focus on the concept of cultural hybridity to offer a more hopeful sense of cultural interaction over time.

Cultural Corruption

Many critics who are concerned that cultural corruption follows from American popular culture build on the research of the Frankfurt School. As expressed in works of scholars like Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Jürgen Habermas, adherents of the Frankfurt School begin with the idea that the Industrial Revolution broke the traditional ties that oriented people to life in their societies. Whereas once people lived in small communities

governed by rules established by religious, political, and familial authorities who lived in the same small towns, the Industrial Revolution drove people into large cities where traditional authority structures could not function. When millions of people moved from rural areas to cities to take jobs in the new factories, they were separated from the institutions and values that had previously served as the teachers and enforcers of moral behavior. This separation was significant because life in the cities, at least in contrast with the bucolic image of life on the farm offered by critics of town living, was nasty, dirty, and immoral. Brothels, crime, and disease flourished, for example, even as new forms of entertainment like dime novels and the penny press found markets peddling stories of lust, violence, and exploitation. In turn, life became dominated by new values, such as consumerism and the pursuit of entertainment and individual interests, regardless of their social effects. In such circumstances, people became profoundly isolated despite living together in large numbers: lacking traditions of trust and authority like those embedded in their rural communities, new urban migrants were often left to their own devices to survive. As a result, people's life orientations shifted from dedication to the social good of their communities to the autonomous desire to satisfy the self.

Frankfurt School analysts emphasized the way that new forms of communication, particularly mass communications and entertainment like newspapers, radio, and the movies, could promote false or harmful ideas to their mass audiences. Without historical moral anchors like local religious and community leaders to offer authoritative dicta on crucial issues of the day, people living in the mass isolation of large cities could only know or care about what they were told by newspaper publishers, radio broadcasters, movie producers, and other agents of mass communication. This shift from social to private authority made people susceptible to manipulation by outside forces. Thus, two great transformations occurring at the same time — the social and manufacturing changes associated with rapid urbanization and the Industrial Revolution and the rise of mass communication and entertainment to fill the urban market — created a world in which mass media and entertainment could lead to the undermining of moral society in favor of some corrupted new order.

Some contemporary critics of American popular culture espouse a version of Frankfurt School thought known as mass society theory. For adherents of mass society theory, the moral decay of urban society (compared to agrarian, rural societies) is a result of the messages and meanings embedded in the communications of mass entertainment. [31] As people became separated from the rural, traditional social and political institutions that defined their lives and provided them with meaning, they were exposed to exploitative, manipulative media. The media replaced traditional forces in socializing behavior and attitudes: immoral behavior in novels and magazines was easy to mirror in lustful violence in the real world. Individuals are, essentially, helpless victims of those who control the media. This concern is particularly acute in the case of some individuals or groups, such as children, who are seen as gullible and prone to manipulation. [32] Thus critics employing mass society theory argue the people need to be protected from “bad” cultural products and message for their own good, echoing — or perhaps foretelling — the arguments of Soviet leaders about the corrupting influence of American popular culture during the Cold War.

Cultural Imperialism

A second group of critics of the globalization of American popular culture focus on its capacity for cultural imperialism. As a concept, cultural imperialism suggests that the interaction of different cultures will inevitably be conflictual. Members of each culture will seek to destroy or eliminate the other. They might do this using outright violence or by undermining the alien culture and installing a new, dominant culture in its place. The logic of cultural imperialism can be illustrated quickly in the work of two prominent scholars in political science, Samuel Huntington and Benjamin Barber. Huntington, for example, argued that civilizational/cultural boundaries constituted ultimate cleavages along which political conflict would inevitably arise. [33] In Huntington's model, cultural interactions would stimulate civilizational conflicts, as members of each group sought to expand or defend their cultural turf. Benjamin Barber made a similar, more nuanced argument when he noted that the values, products, and processes of globalization can and must provoke what he called “jihad” — the “bloody holy war on behalf of partisan identity the is metaphysically defined and fanatically defended.” [34] Jihad was thus counterpoised against “McWorld” — the

integrated, sophisticated, and even cosmopolitan world reflected in the notion of global free trade and cultural interaction. Jihad could occur between societies—the highly integrated globalized societies of the West, for example, versus those of the less developed, less linked world. But it could also emerge within nations (e.g., between coastal communities heavily dependent on trade and upland areas in the same polity that found trade issues uninteresting or not worth acting on). Under such circumstances, increased cultural contacts associated with globalization are likely to generate violence and fragmentation, not the new world order promised by globalism’s proponents.

Cultural Homogenization

Those critics concerned with the concept of cultural homogenization agree that American popular culture may well dominate the world; however, rather than worrying about the imposition of supposedly “American” values on local populations, these critics fear that corporate-produced mass entertainment will ultimately move everyone’s values toward those associated with mass consumer capitalism. One scholar that termed this “McDonaldization.”[35] Corporations like McDonald’s are expected to have such advantages in economies of scale, organization, predictability, and efficiency that, combined with superior marketing, they will drive traditional providers out of business. The same logic applies if the corporation in question is Walmart, Home Depot, or Starbucks. The fear is that in time everyone everywhere will end up eating the same thing, reading the same thing, and wearing the same thing. Under such circumstances, cultural diversity would be lost forever. In its place we would have a world of soulless consumers just looking for the next thing to buy, which would be exactly like what everyone else in the world already had and wanted, until the corporations generated the next must-have item. One culture, consumer capitalism, would dominate the globe.

Cultural Hybridity

There are, however, less skeptical analysts of cultural globalization. One group of scholars focuses on the concept of cultural hybridization.[35] Roughly defined as “mixing,” hybridization has been characterized as “the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms and new practices.”[37] Such mixing is common in global affairs. Christianity emerged from Judaism and retained many of its core values before being adopted by and integrated into the Roman Empire, for example; it then served as one source for the creation of Islam. Contemporary English is the result of the mixing of an array of cultural and linguistic traditions that began at least a thousand years ago. There were no horses in the Western Hemisphere until Spanish colonists brought them in the sixteenth century; accordingly, the iconic image of Native Americans chasing bison across the plains in the American West became possible only when two widely different and profoundly hostile cultures came into contact — and indeed when one quite literally tried to annihilate the other. The core dimensions of discrete cultures often turn out, on closer inspection, to be hybrid forms.

Brought into the context of contemporary globalization, scholars who focus on hybridity note that the interaction of American values, institutions, products and services does not necessarily have to lead to the elimination of local norms and desires in favor of rational, efficient American alternatives. Instead, businesses can adapt their practices to fit the needs of their workers and the cultures of their clients. [38] Or American corporations may develop a profit interest in celebrating and protecting the diversity of the cultures in which they operate.[39] Cultural communication and hybridization can be a two-way process; Western societies can be as influenced by non-American ones as non-American communities are influenced by the United States. Jan Nederveen Pieterse has referred to the result as a global *mélange*. [40] Marwan M. Kraidy suggests that hybridization is the inherent end of globalization.[41]

Hybridization does not always lead to equal cultural exchange, however. Roland Robertson has coined the term *globalization* to describe the ways globalization can change cultures in favor of the needs, interest, and values of the dominant trading partners. Paying particular attention to questions of identity—how individuals and groups define their values, ideals, and communities—Robertson sees globalization as a “massive, twofold process involving *the*

interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism.”[42]. Products found in local communities can be packaged and adapted for international markets, or globally popular products can be adapted to local conditions. (As is examined in chapter 4, McDonald’s does not use beef fat in its fry oil in India, for example.) Robertson thus argues, “The contemporary capitalist creation of consumers frequently involves the tailoring of products to increasingly specialized regional, societal, ethnic, class, and gender markets—so-called micro marketing.” In turn, while the broader global community experiences new products and ideas, the local community is integrated into the global economy as another group of consumers.[43]

Popular culture, as cultural artifacts and products marketed around the world, stands at the center of the glocalist/hybridized/globalist dynamic. Different groups and individuals can respond to pieces of popular culture from American sources in diverse ways. As shown in chapter 5, many groups and nations resist American popular culture as an element of globalization. However, as addressed in chapter 6, these concerns may be misaimed; globalization is a complex phenomenon, and American popular culture is both less fixed and less permanent than is often supposed.

CONCLUSION

This book examines the ways that the messages and mechanisms of American popular culture are a force for fragmentation in contemporary globalization. It focuses on the way American public culture is expressed on a global scale in movies, music, television, programs, fast-food franchises, sports, and styles of clothing. As will be seen, what some find appealing about the American dream others find repellent. What one group admires about a civil culture another sees as proof that people have lost their moral values. What many see as hopeful in globalization’s promise still others view as symptomatic of the end of uniqueness. What is free choice for some is petty consumerism for others. What promises a vision of inexpensive, enjoyable entertainment for some threatens others’ livelihoods.

NOTES

23. Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction*, 3rd ed. (NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9-16.
24. James N. Rosenau, *Distant Proximities: Dynamics beyond Globalization* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
30. Paul Hopper, *Understanding Cultural Globalization* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2007).
31. For a fuller discussion of each these points, see Ralph Hanson, *Mass Communication*, 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2017) and Stanley J. Baran and Dennis K. Davis, *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future*, 5th ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009).
32. Donald K. Emmerson, “Singapore and the ‘Asian Values’ Debate,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 4 (1995): 95-105.
33. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
34. Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism Are Reshaping the World* (NY: Ballantine Books, 1996), 9.
35. George Ritter, *The McDonaldization of Society* 5, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2008).
36. Compare Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2005); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: Univ. Of Minnesota Press, 1006); Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity: Studies in the Social Organization of Meaning* (NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1992); Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Cultures, People, Places* (London: Routledge 1996); and Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture*.
37. William Rowe and Vivian Schelling, *Memory and Modernity: Popular Culture in Latin America* (London: Verso, 1991), 231.
38. James L. Watson, ed., *Golden Arches East: McDonald’s in East Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1997).
39. Kraidy, *Hybridity*.

40. See Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture*, for a full discussion of this point.
41. Kraidy, *Hybridity*.
42. Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 100 (emphasis in original). See also Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson, "Culture: The Glocal Game, Cosmopolitanism, and Americanization," in *The Global Studies Reader*, ed. Manfred B. Steger, 2nd ed. (NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015), 176-94.
43. Robertson, *Globalization*, 100-102.