Globalization and culture: A sociological perspective

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ABSTRACT

The media imperialism thesis is the most widespread systemic account of cultural globalization. This is in spite of the fact that various ethnographic studies of culture consumption continue to produce evidence that shows that the predictions derived from this approach are not consistent with what is observed. Instead of homogeneity of consumption, we find diversity of interpretation; instead of a decline in the production of domestic local culture, we find increasing “creolization” and a revitalization of folk cultures under globalization. In this paper, I argue that the media imperialism approach, as a global version of mass culture theory, shares with it many of its analytical and empirical limitations. However, while ethnographic approaches provide useful evidence against the accuracy of the media imperialism paradigm, they are unable to produce an alternative account of equal analytic and systemic scope. I attempt to remedy this situation by proposing a “sociostructural” approach to theorizing the process of cultural globalization, which is a) consistent with recent research at the individual level in the sociology of taste and audience segmentation and b) consistent with the actual evidence on transnational patterns of cultural flows and culture consumption. Using data from various cross-national sources, I show that the sociostructural account is better able to account for the observed empirical results than the media imperialism thesis in almost every case, including that of transnational film imports and exports.
INTRODUCTION

The literature on globalization and culture is currently divided between two primary approaches. One is a systemic macrolevel perspective usually referred to as the cultural/media imperialism thesis. The other is a more microlevel approach that attempts to describe and theorize the way in which the consumption of global culture is integrated into everyday routines and traditional ways of life. The media imperialism approach is distinctive in the close attention that it pays to macrostructural inequalities in cultural exchange, patterns of ownership of cultural industries and infrastructural and technological divides across the economically dominant and dominated regions of the world. It is also notable in its attempt to decry these inequalities. It sees cultural globalization mainly as bringing with it the end of national cultural diversity. Globalization is thus mainly conceived as sapping the vitality of indigenous cultural worlds. These are theorized as being replaced by the homogenous sterility of a U.S. dominated global popular culture industry. This theoretical approach can without much worry about oversimplifying, be thought of as a—Frankfurt-school inspired—global version of “mass culture theory.” Mass culture theory is itself notable for having—as noted by Arjun Appadurai (1990)—variants on both the political left (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979) and the moderate right (i.e. McDonald 1957; Shils 1960).

Like mass culture theory before it, the cultural imperialism perspective has come under recent critical fire by more micro-oriented global audience reception studies and by more contextual, agency-centered approaches to globalization (Appadurai 1996; Robertson 1992; Garofalo 1993). These theorists have noted the apparent lack of empirical adequacy of the media imperialism approach, as well as its lack of attention to issues of human agency in considering the cultural object-receiver link (Griswold 1987). Global media theorist Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi is representative of this new critical attitude, as she is ready to abandon the cultural imperialism perspective as a useful paradigm. She notes that “The notion of ‘cultural imperialism’ became one of the staple catchphrases of the field of international communication. Yet from the beginning, the concept was broad and ill-defined, operating as evocative metaphor rather than precise construct, and has gradually lost much of its critical bite and historic validity” (1997: 48). This is in agreement with Griffin (2002), who adds that “...the theories of dependency and cultural imperialism, which arose in reaction to ethnocentric, Cold War notions of post-colonial development and modernization, have constituted a necessary but insufficient stage of macro-level analysis.” In this paper, I attempt to go beyond the narrow conceptual straitjacket of the media imperialism paradigm while also noting the insufficiency of micro-empiricist critiques, which like “.....more recent postmodern conceptions of ‘globalization’ lack coherence and specificity.”

However, in contrast to Griffin’s proposed solution to the problem, which involves a renewed emphasis on ethnographic studies of local strategies of engagement with global media products, I propose that we need a theoretical reconstruction on a sounder sociological basis of a systemic approach to cultural globalization and global culture consumption that goes beyond the narrow localism and fragmented empiricism of ethnographic approaches. The more empirically oriented micro-phenomenological approaches that have recently challenged the media imperialism thesis have the advantage of being closer to the local reality of dissemination and consumption of cultural goods. Unfortunately, they have the disadvantage of losing the systemic and macro-structural feel and intuition of the cultural imperialism
orienting strategy (Schiller 1976, 1991). These micro-constructivist approaches tend to be primarily oriented to detailed empirics and the subjective orientation of culture-consuming audiences. However, they leave the job of reconstructing a theoretical account that might help explain the actual macro-level patterns of culture consumption and audience segmentation that can be observed in the global arena largely unfinished.

It can be said then that if the cultural imperialism thesis is mass culture theory in global garb, the contemporary contextual approaches based on the situated observation of consumption practices of transnational populations leave us with no other systematic and truly macrostructural perspective to replace it. This is in spite of the fact that they do provide useful empirical challenges of the media imperialism thesis, which can be the fodder for further theoretical development. However, instead of theoretical or analytic reconstruction we are left with a plethora of disconnected observations of localized practices and consumption styles. What is lacking therefore is a theory that may help explain more macro-level patterns of national and transnational cultural consumption (as was the promise of the old media imperialism approach).[^1] This is not to say that there are other more mesolevel perspectives that may be up to the task, such as Crane’s (2002: 16-37) “national and urban strategies” approach. These analytic perspectives pay close attention to patterns of organizational activity at the city level and state action through cultural and economic policy. These theories are also able to better account for empirical patterns of state and organizational action in the culture production and dissemination field. However, the national and urban strategies perspective fails to provide a systematic account of certain obvious commonalities of behavior, discourse and legitimating accounts that seem to cross national, geographical and local cultural boundaries. These processes instead of being driven by country-specific strategies of engagement with cultural globalization appear to be a response to fundamental socio-structural transformations common to many of the nation-states that comprise the modern system (Hannan and Meyer 1979; Meyer et al 1997). In this paper, I will attempt to introduce a more systemic alternative to the cultural imperialism approach that does take into account these general processes. I will attempt to do this by way of a sociological critique of recent work on the relationship between culture and globalization from a media imperialism point of view.

This new theoretical perspective on cultural globalization—which I term a “sociostructural approach”—is consonant with the “glocalization” and market-oriented Cowen (2002) rejection of the media imperialism perspective. In particular in taking into considerations the latter’s emphasis on the continuing vitality and possible resurgence of local cultural variety even in the wake of increasing transnationalization of products, peoples and ideas. The sociostructural perspective offered here however primarily draws on various strands of the sociological literature on culture and consumption rather than on the political economy tradition of media studies or the cultural anthropological theory that animates most

[^1]: This is not a worry for most of the advocate of the empirically grounded approaches especially those which draw on contemporary variants of post-structuralism, since they view skepticism any kind of general theoretical attempt at systematization. However, it is definitely a concern for those who worry that after the realization that media imperialism approaches are no longer adequate, there is no systematic attempt of equal scope left with which the understand cultural globalization.
empirical fieldwork on global culture consumption. In particular I focus on recently systematized theoretical approaches in sociology that highlight the role of changing macro-structural features of industrial and post-industrial societies on the uses and usability of both high-status “urban cultures” (Crane 1993) and mass produced popular culture products (DiMaggio 1993) for purposes of status symbolism, network formation and network closure (DiMaggio 1987; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Lizardo 2006; Peterson and Kern 1996; Peterson 2005); and that focus on the changing relationship between local status orders and widely disseminated cultural objects in the wake of these macro-level transformations (DiMaggio 1987; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985). Further, I draw on recent insights regarding long noted relationships between individual level markers of status—such as education (Meyer 1977)—and higher levels of both cultural activity and breadth of taste, studies that have profoundly changed the way that we think about culture and audience segmentation (Bourdieu 1984; DiMaggio and Useem 1978; DiMaggio 1987; Peterson 1992; Bryson 1996), and which have replaced the older mass culture theory as the primary way that we think of the relationship between culture and status at the national level in late modern societies.

**MEDIA IMPERIALISM AS MASS CULTURE THEORY**

The deficiencies of the cultural imperialism approach to the study of globalization and culture are eerily similar to those that plagued older mass culture theories, of which DiMaggio (1987: 440) provides the most succinct summary. Just like cultural and media imperialism analyses, the virtue of the media imperialism approach is that it calls attention to the systemic and global-level relationships between cultural consumption patterns and the hierarchical core-periphery structure of the world system. However, like mass culture theory before it, we can trace the media imperialism thesis’ current difficulties in failing to describe empirical patterns of consumption to the fact “...much of its appeal [is] ideological” (DiMaggio 1987: 440). In the case of contemporary media imperialism theory, the basic parameters of the approach revolve around a reworking of Gramscian notions of cultural hegemony from the perspective of a Frankfurt school inspired attention to the possible “ideological” role played by the products of the global leisure and entertainment industries. In place of the domestic hegemony of the national capitalist class, the global popular culture industries are seen as sustaining the global hegemony of the American (or Euro-American) multinational capitalist class by promoting certain “Western” or “American” values and ideas (Delacroix and Ragin 1978), a notion that did carry some weight in the immediate postwar context (Griffin 2002).

However, like mass culture theory before it which “...by the mid-1970s...had been decisively rebutted on both empirical and theoretical grounds” (DiMaggio 1987: 440) the media imperialism paradigm has begun to enter a degenerative stage of increased empirical disconfirmation. Most of the recent work on heterogeneity, glocalization and the “dialectic of homogeneity and difference” inspired by globalizing trends (Appadurai 1996; Robertson 1990, 1992, 1995), and the empirical studies of situated consumption practices of global popular culture have on the whole failed to support most of the predictions of the media imperialism thesis at the point of the receiver-object link. However, there have been very few research endeavors that attempt to tackle the media imperialism thesis with data, such as aggregate measures culture distribution and cultural consumption flows across countries, that is at the
same analytical level as the broad systemic claims that it makes. It is one of the primary purposes of this paper to do so.

A SOCIOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF MEDIA IMPERIALISM THEORY

Like the previously dominant mass culture paradigm, the contemporary media imperialism approach attempts to draw an unproblematic line of connection between oligopolistic and Western dominated popular culture industries and homogenizing, dehumanizing and ideological culture consumption practices on the part of dominated peripheral masses. Most research has shown that on the contrary, the consumption of Western cultural products can coexist happily with practices of resistance, opposition and even indifference toward the West on the part of non-Western populations (During 2005). The upshot of these studies has been the realization that global popular culture products can be put to many unintended uses, as when Palestinian youth draw on the oppositional stylings of American Hip Hop music to make sense of and vocalize their struggle (Aidi 2002).

Media imperialism theory founders not only at the point of consumption but in its most crucial prediction at the point of production: that of increasing homogeneity. Instead we find global cultural diversity being encouraged by globalization trends and transnationalization processes as opposed to being swallowed by the global culture juggernaut (Crane 2002; Cowen 2002; Ferguson 1997; Robertson 2001; Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997; UNESCO 2005). In contrast to the usual notion of homogeneity-fostering corporate juggernauts, it can be argued that even the large-scale transnational culture industries can be interpreted as fostering heterogeneity by adapting marketing strategies based on product customization, retooling, global localization, negotiated modification and “postmodern upscaling” strategies among others (Crane 2002: 16-17). This inattention to the continuing vitality and heterogeneity of the culture production field, is precisely the blind spot that ultimately sank the old mass culture hypothesis, as sociologists of culture demonstrated that contrary to predictions, “…considerably more diversity among artistic genres existed at the level of production than the theory held” (DiMaggio 1987: 440, italics in the original).

Ultimately the major mistake of the media imperialism thesis —shared by the mass culture approach—is to draw unwarranted inferences from the macro-level structure (oligopolistic, centralized, etc.) of the (global) popular culture industry to the alleged quality and content characteristics of the product. This crass homology thesis is not warranted, since it possible to think of the mass-craft dimension as a continuum DiMaggio (2002[1977]) and therefore highly variable even within a single culture production organization. Second, mass culture approach—like the contemporary media imperialism thesis—possesses a rudimentary model of the conditions of reception of those products, which are assumed to be same across contexts and directly determined by the characteristics of the product without the relational context of consumption entering into the equation (Gotttdiener 1985). Furthermore, not even the the usual inference from macro-structural concentration at the level of the industry organization to 1) lack of product diversity, and 2) decline of alternative specialist culture production outlets is valid, given more recent theoretical and empirical advances in organizational theory (Carroll and Swaminathan 2000; Lopes 1996).
WHAT IS CULTURE GOOD FOR? A SOCIOSTRUCTURAL APPROACH

It is important to note that the some conception of the relationship between the consumer and the object of consumption has to be part of any theoretical effort (however, “systemic”) to understand the structure and functioning of cultural flows in modern societies (and in the global system). This is the case whether we take a macrolevel or mesolevel perspective or a more grounded observational approach of situated practices. Thus, any attempt to reconstruct a macrolevel theory of global cultural flows must deal with the role that culture consumption plays at the level of situated consumption practices and micro-relational contexts. For instance, the conception of the individual-cultural object link in media imperialism accounts is usually left implicit (due to its focus on large scale patterns of industry structure, ownership and product flows). It is fairly clear however, that the underlying model is one of a largely passive audience, especially in film and television consumption studies. This audience is theorized as incapable of engaging in “oppositional” decodings of the cultural object (Hall 1980). The consumer is thus conceived as being left vulnerable to the ideological encodings of the producers.

In theoretical lineage, the model of the receiver-cultural object link (Griswold 1987) used in the media imperialism tradition is behaviorist, with the media flows since as the stimuli and the alleged effects (i.e. consumerism [Shiller 1998] or support for American values and practices [Delacroix and Ragin 1978]) on the audience as the responses. This notion of “media effects” while having a long history in social studies of media use has come under withering critique in recent research (see Gauntlett [1998] for a critical review). This reconsideration of the effects tradition has noted the lack of reliability and validity of the alleged “effects” that the mass media is supposed to reliable produce. Gauntlett (1998: 120) concludes by noting that “[i]f, after over sixty years of a considerable amount of research effort, direct effects of media upon behaviour [sic] have not been clearly identified, then we should conclude that they are simply not there to be found.” Yet from the media imperialism point of view, audiences are assumed to engage in very little higher order processing of media messages, and instead the effect of media flows on the “senses” is emphasized. This is what has been deemed the “hypodermic model” of media effects (Liebes and Katz 1990). Schiller (1998: 4) provides a clear example of the media imperialist version of culture consumption. Speaking of the ability of global corporate giants to synergistically combine their products (making novels, into films, films into TV series, etc.), he notes that

The net effect of such total cultural packages on the human senses is impossible to assess but it would be folly to ignore...In one poll, data was assembled and tables constructed on ‘What People Think They Need.’ The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) received some of its support in Mexico...from the people’s ‘Hunger for US Goods,’ seen ‘on imported television programs and in movies.’...The worldwide impact of the transnational cultural industries, it can be argued, may be as influential as other, more familiar, forms of (US) power: industrial military, scientific...People everywhere are consumers of (mostly) American images, sounds, ideas, products and services.

This is the facet of the media imperialism approach that has come under the more strenuous attack by audience reception and glocalization approaches. From the point of view of these alternative stances the individual/cultural object relationship (Griswold 1987) is conceived as one of radical underdetermination. Cultural appropriation of media content and messages are instead of being directly deter-
mined, subject to the contingencies of the local subcultural and relational micro-environment. The meanings afforded by cultural content are thus conceived as being in a constant state of negotiation and indeterminacy (Fine 1979). The basic model here is one of culture consumption as expressive. Culture consumption (whether local or global) allows socially situated groups and individuals to enact, reclaim and sometimes transform socially constructed identities. Culture consumption communities are seen as being capable of connecting in creative ways local cultural practices to global cultural flows.

However, the identity-social construction approach continues to carry with it an implicit version of the “theory of needs” characteristic of the old users and gratifications perspective in media studies (McQuail 1998) with identity expression as the most important of these needs. Furthermore, insofar as identity construction and identity negotiation are seen as the most important “uses” that can be made of the media, the theoretical model tends toward exposing the ways that social constructed “subjectivities” (whether conceived at the individual or at the group level) are confronted with broader discursive practices and symbolic systems represented by global popular culture flows. From the point of view of this neo-phenomenological approach to identity what tends to be understated is the extent to which the uses of culture consumption are not only relegated to expressivity and identity construction, but to social ends conceived in a more mundane way. These social uses of culture are not necessarily disconnected from identity construction but are essentially relational (DiMaggio 1987; Ikegami 2006; Frith 1998; Lizardo 2006), as cultural goods come to form an essential part of the content of conversation that animates local interaction rituals (Collins 2004). Thus culture consumption comes to be intimately related to conversation and “sociability” (in Simmel's [1949] sense of interaction for its own sake), which is a point that is obscured by the undue neo-phenomenological attention to cultural meanings and subjective narratives of the ethnographic approach. This alternative relational stance on the cultural-object individual link offers a bridge between these neo-phenomenological approaches and the sociostuctural model offered here.

An example of this more “mundane” social role of culture consumption is offered by communication theorist John Fiske (1987), who points to the pivotal role that arts and popular culture consumption play in facilitating social interaction—by way of serving as topic for conversation—in contemporary societies. For Fiske, while there has been a lot of critical attention devoted to “...the mass media in a mass socie-
ty,” a charge that can easily be made about media imperialism analysis when conceived as a global mass culture theory. Fisk notes however that most analysts have tended to ignore “...the fact that our urbanized, institutionalized society facilitates oral communication at least as well as it does mass com-
munication.” Although the household is now the primary site of leisure culture consumption, it is im-
portant not forget that most individuals “...belong to or attend some sort of club or social organization. And we live in neighborhoods or communities. And in all of these social organizations we talk. Much of this talk is about the mass media and its cultural commodities.” For Fiske, these cultural commodities take on primarily expressive functions, can also help in the more everyday life work of sustaining routine social relations, enabling the representation of “...aspects of our social experience in such a way as to make that experience meaningful and pleasurable to us. These meanings, these pleasures are instrumental in constructing social relations and thus our sense of social identity” (Fiske 1987: 77-78).
DiMaggio (1987: 442-444) provides a framework in which the social uses of culture take precedence over its more “expressive” functions and which does not suffer from the implicit subjectivism of neo-Foucauldian perspectives in which lone individuals (or entire subcultures) are seen as confronted with overarching significatory structures. Furthermore, this more socio-structural framework can help us understand the difference—sometimes elided in media imperialism accounts (and also some ethno-graphic observations)—between the consumption of material versus media and aesthetic culture. The reason why this distinction is important concerns the greater facility of media and arts-related culture to figure in a more diverse array of interaction opportunities outside of familiar local settings: “material goods are physically present and visible, whereas cultural consumption...is invisible once it has occurred. This evanescent quality makes artistic experience, described and exploited in conversation, a portable and thus potent medium of interactional exchange” (DiMaggio, 1987: 442-443). Sociostructural trends towards increasing geographic mobility of peoples, media and material and financial goods in post-industrial and developing societies, in fact increase the importance of the “portable” knowledge—“embodied cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1986; Holt 1998)—produced by the media, arts and popular culture industries. These transformation concomitantly decrease the importance of other less “portable” markers of social position—i.e. the customized material goods of the old upper middle class (McCacken 1991)—as generators of social interaction and as practical tools for the formation of both bridges across social positions and “fences” across socially constructed social identity markers (DiMaggio 1987; Frith 1998; Lamont and Lareau 1988).

Thus, the consumption of global media and popular culture should be expected to become most important not in unobservable processes of identity constitution but in mundane and observable conversational rituals. This is consistent with the position of Simon Frith (1998: 4) who notes that “[p]art of the pleasure of popular culture is talking about; part of its meaning is talk...” This has the consequence that global cultural flows that are not useful to sustain local encounters and to suffuse local interaction with useful fodder for its maintenance will not figure as important in the local lifeworld of consumers regardless how “colonized” the national media is by these foreign influx of popular culture. Thus most of the “negotiation” and resignification practices enacted vis a vis global culture occur in the context of social interaction in small groups (Fine 1979; Gottliener 1985). This has to do with the nature of conversation rituals which must be “about” something relevant in order to be sustained. As DiMaggio puts it,

Conversation is a negotiated ritual in the course of which participants must find topics that reflect their level of intimacy and to which each partner can legitimately contribute. Persons entering into conversation seek to ‘establish co-membership’ by identifying groups to which they both belong, even when the goal of the interaction is instrumental. If conversing strangers use linguistic variants to ‘to probe for shared background knowledge’, the same is true a fortiori, of the deployment of various conversational contents. Shared cultural interests are common contents of sociable talk. Consumption of art [and popular culture] gives strangers something to talk about and facilitates the sociable intercourse necessary for acquaintance to ripen into friendships (DiMaggio 1987: 443).

It is in this sense that we can connect micro-interactionist concerns with the role of culture in local relational and cultural transactions, with macro-level analyses of global cultural influences and the growing influence of transnational (and regional) popular culture industries.
It is possible therefore to extend DiMaggio’s sociostructural framework, initially formulated to explain the changing class and status bases of taste in modern postindustrial societies to explain the role of transnational flows of cultural goods in the globalization process. DiMaggio highlights common patterns of social change among the world’s most economically advantaged societies all of which exhibit postwar trends toward increasing mass education, increasing economic opportunity (as measured by rates of social mobility) and the rise of the welfare state (see also Meyer et al [1997]). These societies have all transitioned away from a pre-war community-based status order which featured clear boundaries between the consumption practices and lifestyle of local status groups and which exhibited a strong correlation between cultural habits and local status standings (Peterson and DiMaggio 1975; Holt 1998). The new social arrangement instead features a more mobile class-status system in which the arts and popular culture take center stage as providing the younger upper-middle class elites with the type of “mobile” cultural capital, appropriate for the formation and maintenance of their now national (and not communal) networks of mutual recognition and acquaintance (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Ikegami 2006). In a similar way, across the developed and developing world, the relational reach and social “coverage” of certain privileged upper-middle class strata are expanded beyond local communal circles, beginning to stretch not only to the national level as DiMaggio implies, but also to expand to the transnational scene (Castells 1997; Hannerz 1990). These processes are intensified with increased urbanization and the expansion of more encompassing state projects (Meyer et al 1997) as well as with the “stretching” of time and space that come with the transition to and integration into the infrastructure of information and telecommunications technology of the global “network society.” This brings with it a related intensification of (post)modernization trends brought about by increasing interconnection across localities and spaces, or what is usually glossed over under the banner of “globalization” (Castells 1997; Giddens 1991, 2002; Sassen 1999),

This implies an increasingly important role of mass produced global culture (both regional and local) as providing the default forms of cultural knowledge that can be used to connect with individuals and groups beyond the local community (Hannerz 1990). As DiMaggio (1987: 444) puts it, “When social worlds extend beyond the town to the metropolis and the nation, the home becomes less important as a focus for sociable interaction. Subjects of conversation supplant objects of display as bases of social evaluation” (italics added). This means that “Symbols (goods or tastes) become increasingly important to the organization of social life as the division of labor and the number of human contacts increases” thus reconfiguring the role of the mass media and the culture production field in the everyday lifeworld of the consumer. Instead of creating a “mass” society of disconnected individuals the popular culture industry and the arts production field are in charge of producing the cultural resources that increasingly bind individuals in loosely structured interaction networks (Fiske 1987):

In advanced societies, the arts (high and popular) occupy a privileged position among identity-defining conversational currencies for several reasons, not least of which is their availability. Television provides a stock of common symbols for nearly everyone, and youth-oriented cultural forms pass easily across class and geographic boundaries. The high arts have become important status markers, for they are subject to few barriers of age, region, or gender, and are consecrated in school curricula. Consumption of high culture
is associated with status throughout the industrialized world...If there is a common cultural currency, the arts (supplemented by fashion, cuisine, and sport) constitute it (DiMaggio 1987: 443).

In contrast to media imperialism approaches which usually talk about a fairly homogenous, consensual and hierarchical global culture, most studies that pay detailed attention to situated culture consumption and culture production practices find that global culture instead of becoming more and more homogenous, appears to in fact be increasing in diversity. In terms of DiMaggio’s (1987) framework of the dimensions of artistic classification systems (ACS), media imperialist approaches, like old mass culture theories (DiMaggio 1987: 441) think of the global cultural ACS as weakly differentiated (dominated by American popular culture) and highly universal (high cross-regional consensus as to the superior value of Western popular culture). However, ethnographic and more empirically oriented approaches have found that the global culture ACS is instead highly differentiated (with hybrid cultural forms and reconstitutions of old “local” cultures actually proliferating under conditions of cultural globalization) and only weakly universal in what Hannenr 1990: 237) refers to as “...an organization of diversity rather than...a replication of uniformity,” with differentiation and de-universalization widely seen as accelerating trends.

This changing the structure of global culture appears to mirror the changes that DiMaggio 1987, Peterson and DiMaggio 1975) proposed were responsible for the decline of the old ACS dominant in industrial western societies. This system was characterized by being differentiated, universal, highly hierarchical with strong ritual boundaries separating different consumption communities. This older, “mass-elite” regime (Peterson 1997) was undergirded by a status system based on community and locality, which produced relatively strong homologies between local position and lifestyle (evident in the classic community studies of Warner and the Lynds). However, this arrangement gave way to a less predictable relationship between social position and cultural practices in the post-war era (Peterson and DiMaggio 1975; Peterson and Kern 1996), which reconfigured upper middle-class elite status around more mobile networks of recognition and acquaintance. In this manner, the bases of power and status in industrial societies has moved away from an organization around local elites whose claims to social standing—“symbolic capital” in Bourdieu’s (1989) terms—rested on local recognition by other socially proximate community members. This older system implied a fairly bounded symbolic economy of recognition based on local relationships, which was very difficult to “reconvert” (Bourdieu 1986) into other forms of capital outside of the local context (Holt 1998).

Instead in the modern “post-industrial” system (Bell 1976) the social networks of elites have become (trans)nationalized and therefore less attached to the community (due to increasing geographical mobility) with networks of communal solidarity and recognition extending beyond the bounded social structure of the small town (Castells 1997). This transformation has resulted in a decline in both universality and hierarchy of older systems of cultural classification and the increasingly decoupling of lifestyle choices from idiosyncratic local status orders:

Artistic classification systems are becoming more differentiated and less hierarchical, classifications weaker and less universal. Artists revel in assaulting the limits of their forms, and critics in as disparate fields as pop music, painting, and literature bemoan aesthetic malaise and rampant eclecticism....[This] erosion of
cultural boundaries... stems from a combination of factors: the transformation of the local... upper classes into a national elite, anchored in organization rather than community; increased influence of commercial principles of classification with the rise of the popular-culture industries; the emergence of relatively autonomous and highly competitive art worlds; and the growth of higher education and the modern state. (DiMaggio 1987: 451-452).

DiMaggio notes that such a framework can explain various empirical puzzles not explainable from other approaches (whether mass culture or more grounded “postmodern” perspectives): 1) the loose relationships between class standing and the types of cultural goods that are consumed (Peterson and DiMaggio 1975), 2) the strong association between socioeconomic status and education and culture consumption diversity, as the new elites become cultural generalists rather than specialists with their relational worlds expanding to nationwide scale since “…wide-ranging networks require broad repertoires of taste” (DiMaggio: 444), and 3) the association between lack of culture consumption and indicators of social isolation (Lizardo 2006).

DiMaggio’s sociostructural framework can be adapted to the study of global culture and cultural globalization. In contrast to media imperialism approach, which posits wide general trends that do not appear to conform to the data, and the ethnographic “glocalization” perspective which is unable to provide more generic systemic accounts that can connect processes occurring across different national locales, the sociostructural approach leads to several important empirical implications that are useful in explaining variation in cross-national reception, vitality and relative degree of success of both global and domestic culture. Hannerz (1990: 239) provides a hint of the connection between global cultures and changing patterns of social relationships in the current situation that is compatible with a global version of the sociostructural approach:

[A]s collective phenomena, cultures are by definition linked primarily to interactions and social relationships, and only indirectly and without logical necessity to particular areas in physical space. The less social relationships are confined within territorial boundaries, the less so is also culture; and in our time especially, we can contrast in gross terms, those cultures which are territorially defined... with those which are carried as collective structures of meaning by networks more extended in space, transnational or even global.

What are the empirical implications of this stance on cultural globalization? First, the sociostructural approach connects increasing differentiation at the level of culture production and decreasing connection between local status orders and lifestyle to the techno-economic transformations that lead toward greater global interconnectedness, increasing integration across local sites made possible by the establishment of a global telecommunications infrastructure and the digitalization of transnational cultural flows. These are the same processes that are usually highlighted by proponents of media imperialism approaches. In contrast to the proponents of this approach, and in agreement with ethnographic observations of global culture consumption and production, the sociostructural approach predicts increasing differentiation of global culture with the intensification of integration and increasing interconnection of regional locales along economic, financial and information networks. This implies that the artistic classification system of those countries and regions most deeply integrated into the globalization process, should decrease in hierarchy and increase in differentiation.
Furthermore, the sociostructural approach allows us to predict which national societies will be more likely to connect to global culture. For instance in stark contrast to the media imperialism approach, the sociostructural account of cultural globalization leads us to predict that global cultural flows will tend to be stronger where relational demands for portable cultural capital that can be used to form and sustain transnational and (within national societies) translocal social networks. Global cultural flows will be weakest in those regions of the world most disconnected from other facets of the globalization process (informational, economic, demographic, etc.), least urbanized, least economically advantaged, and more structured along segmented and localized ethnic, religious and communal boundaries.

The reason for this is that global cultural information will be the least relevant for those populations of the world most dependent and most oriented toward more geographically encapsulated communal networks, local status orders and more horizontally segmented standards of valuation, whose social relations are organized around the immediate household or the local town elites and not on more encompassing networks of national or possible transnational scope. We should therefore observe that the consumption of global popular culture is highest among the world’s most economically advantaged and globalized societies and lowest among the most economically disadvantaged societies. In particular, consumption of domestic cultural goods should be at its apex, in large, densely populated low income, relatively globally isolated, societies especially those organized around multiethnic lines which serve to segment the population along a “mosaic” or horizontally aligned status groups. This is the social arrangement, as noted by Peterson (1992) most likely to lead to “univore” culture consumption (which is based on a high homology between group designation and consumption practices) and least likely to produce the cross-(ethnic, religious, racial) segment connections necessary to reduce the relative social value of domestic and regional cultures and increase the relational value of more decontextualized cultural forms, such as global popular culture.

All of these empirical predictions are in severe disagreement to what we would expect given the cultural imperialism, and some versions of the “national strategies” (Crane 2002) approach, which imply a positive association between the consumption of Westernized and “Americanized” global popular culture and a disadvantaged position in the world economy or the interstate system (because weaker states are assumed to be more easily bullied and manipulated by global transnational media industries or are less likely to have the [political, material, social] resources to implement policies of “resistance” against global cultural flows). The sociostructural model, on the other hand directs our attention toward those (relatively privileged) segments of the world’s population—which Hannerz (1990) calls “cosmopolitan”—as the elites most in need of portable forms of transnational cultural capital, most attuned to global popular culture (and other forms of transnational aesthetic flows), and therefore most likely to demand it by way of their comparatively superior purchasing power and access it through their greater access to global communicational and media channels.²

² Furthermore, the sociostructural model implies that the technoeconomic aspects associated with development, globalization and urbanization is bound to increase the inequality between connected groups with access to global cultural resources, and disconnected groups bound to local forms of cultur-
This framework, which connects global media and cultural flows, socio-structural changes that directly affect the immediate relational environment of the individual and social groups associated with the globalization and development process (expanding their potential circle of acquaintances and weakening the local community’s monopoly of their social connections) with the social use of culture at the micro-interactional level allows us to develop a theoretical model of the globalization of cultural goods that is (as we will see below) more congruent with what is actually observed in terms of culture consumption at the macro-level than other macro-structural frameworks such as media imperialism theory, with its primitive and underdeveloped notion (i.e. the hypodermic model) of the “effects” of media and their inability to theorize the social uses of culture at the level of interaction.

There are many additional reasons why media imperialism model is in direct conflict with the socio-structural approach developed here. First, the media imperialism approach implies that exposure to global culture should alienate those who consume, as opposed to the sociostructural emphasis on the essentially connective role, of the arts and popular culture in helping to sustain social relationships by serving as resources for social interaction and the formation of social networks that crosscut traditional categories of social classification (DiMaggio 1987; Ikegami 2006; Fiske 1987; Frith 1998; Lizardo 2006). Furthermore, the media imperialism approach assumes that certain sets of values and behaviors (individualism, consumerism, etc.) antithetical to community and relational cohesion are spread by global cultural flows (Delacroix and Ragin 1978), suggesting that those with the least capacity and opportunity to form extra-local social connections would be more likely to consume foreign cultural goods (they are the peripheral “masses” in the most vulnerable position, unable to resist foreign cultural penetration). The sociostructural model on the other hand, predicts precisely the opposite: consumption of global popular culture should be highest among those who reside in the richest and most globally connected regions of the world, and should be weakest among those who reside in the least connected and least socially and economically advantaged regions of the world. This prediction flies in the face of media imperialism-inspired hypotheses that posit a positive association between having a disadvantaged position in the global system (being in the “periphery” or “semiperiphery” of the world system) and the penetration (and actual consumption) of global media culture.

**MEDIA IMPERIALISM OR THE SOCIAL USES OF GLOBAL CULTURE? AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT**

In the following sections, I attempt to contrast the patterns of empirical predictions that can be derived from the media imperialism account, with those that are consonant with the sociostructural account sketched above. While the media imperialism thesis has come under challenge from the point of view of more ethnographic perspectives, there have been very few studies that have used aggregate data on
global cultural flows (the preferred form of evidence of proponents of this account) to challenge the media imperialism thesis. I rely on cross-national data on musical consumption, film imports and exports and trade flows of various cultural commodities collected from various sources obtained from UNESCO, including the World Culture Report (1998 and 2000), The Survey of National Cinematography (2000) and the Cultural Trade Report (2004).

CROSS-NATIONAL PATTERNS OF MUSICAL CONSUMPTION

I begin by considering data on cross-national consumption of domestic and international music. Is the transnational music consumption field clearly demarcated along international/domestic consumption lines that are homologous to the country's position in the world economy (poor countries more likely to consume international music than rich countries)? This is what would be expected by the media imperialism account. Alternatively, do we find that the demand for popular global culture is in fact the purview of the most economically advantaged societies? This is the scenario that would be predicted by the sociostructural model. I use World Culture Report (UNESCO 2000) data for 74 countries (shown in Figure 1). The scatter plot of the country's relative wealth versus the ratio of international to domestic musical consumption is shown in Figure 1. The horizontal line partitions the y-axis across the "even international and domestic consumption" point (where the ratio is equal to unity and the logged ratio is equal to zero), with the countries above the line disproportionately consuming international popular music and the countries below exhibiting a preponderance of domestic music consumption. The vertical line separates high income countries (at the 75th percentile or higher of per capita GNP for the year 1998) from lower income countries (below the 50th percentile threshold), with middle income (between the 50th and 75th percentiles) as the third category (gray vertical lines in the scatter plot region).

Looking at the figure, it is easy to verify that the correlation between the country's GNP per capita and the consumption of international popular musical in relation to domestic musical culture (as given by the ratio of the market size of one to the other) is positive ($r=0.33$, $p<0.01$), not negative as would be expected from a simple media imperialism model which equates a relatively disadvantaged position in the world economy with the degree of penetration of foreign cultural goods. Conversely, the poorer the country, the more likely it is that its consumption profile will be oriented toward domestic popular culture. This overall positive trend (the ratio of international to domestic consumption increases with per capita national income) contradicts the media imperialism account.
Figure 1. Scatter plot of the association between the size of the international popular culture consumption market and logged per capita GNP, 2000 UNESCO World Culture Report (N=74).

The countries in the upper-left side of the figure (i.e. Ukraine, the Philippines, Bolivia) exhibit a pattern of consumption consonant with the media imperialism thesis, since they are in the bottom tercile of GDP per capita and are also above the zero-line in the y-axis. However, the media imperialism hypothesis has a hard time accounting for why—as shown in Figure 2—the majority of low income societies (60%) are below the zero point in the y-axis (that is, they consume more domestic popular music than international popular music).\(^3\) According to the cultural imperialism thesis (Schiller 1991), these societies should instead be in thrall of and thus overrun by the global American popular culture industry. In a similar way, the media imperialism hypothesis cannot account for the fact that the majority (83%) of high income societies (i.e. Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland, Slovenia) display high levels of international musical consumption. However, this is precisely what we would expect according to the sociostrucutral model. From this alternative point of view, instead of citizens of low income societies being over-exposed to the Western-dominated international popular culture industry, it is precisely the citizens of the richest

\(^3\) It is possible to argue that the “domestic” musical cultures of many of these countries is not actually local, but it is fact composed of already Westernized or “Americanized” versions of forever lost indigenous genres. However, if local cultures are conceived as not truly local, then the distinction between regional or local cultural products and those that originate in the richer Western societies loses all meaning, and the cultural imperialism thesis becomes true by definition.
societies in the world that whose lives are “awash” with global popular culture. Members of the majori-
ty the world’s most economically disadvantaged societies are on the other hand restricted to mostly local forms of domestic music consumption. The U.S. (as would be expected by the media imperialism account) and Japan (which should be subject to imperialist cultural penetration but appears to be fairly protected against it) stand as the starkest exceptions to this pattern (along with the United Kingdom to a lesser extent).4

Figure 2. Plot of the relationship between national income and the relative market share of domestic and international popular musical culture, UNESCO world culture report, 2000; N=74.

Beyond differences in national income, the sociostructural model predicts that demand for global culture increases due to the relational “expansion” that occurs as the society transitions from a “seg-
mented” structure of relatively disconnected local communities, each endowed with locally idiosyncrat-

4 The U.S. and the U.K. are distinctive in that the large majority of the major multinational labels responsible for the production of the majority of Western international popular music are headquartered in these countries (Negus 1999). It bears notice that when the three “core” countries that are primarily oriented toward domestic music consumption are not included in the calculations the correlation between per capita GDP and the ratio of international to domestic music consumption is a robust 0.45.
ic status orders and globally incompatible standards of status assessment, to a “network society” structure in which status orders are nationalized and upper-middle class networks come to expand to cover the entire nation and even spill-over beyond national borders. This means that global culture, especially those transmitted through media organizations of national and global reach (Crane 1992), comes to function as “national cultural capital” that serves to sustain these translocal network connections. In fact, the national income effect should really be a proxy for this more fundamental socio-structural transformation, as the more economically advantaged societies are also the ones more likely to have made an early transition to the globally interconnected network society (Castells 1997). If this is correct, we should expect that it is precisely in those countries that have made the most complete transition to what Castells (1997) refers to as the “network society” that demand for global culture would be at his highest. Conversely, we should expect the societies that are less connected to the global network society to be the most attuned to domestic musical culture at the expense of international musical products.

Figure 3. Model of the relationship between national income, transition to the network society and the relative market share of domestic and international musical culture.

A structural equation path model (Bollen 1989) of the process that might result in different musical consumption profiles for different societies is given in Figure 3. In the model we can think of the measure of the measures of the relative proportion of consumption that involves domestic versus international music as measures of the structure or composition of the culture consumption field. The Human Development Index Score in 1975 is a measure of previous national socioeconomic development; national

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5 All models are estimated using version 6 of the AMOS statistical program.
socioeconomic development in 1975 its turn is seen as impacting the degree to which a given country has transitioned to the network society in the last decade of the 20th century. This latter factor is conceived as the position of each country in a latent continuum that drives the covariation of the four observed indicators (logged number of fax machines per capita, cell phones per capita, personal computers per capita and average number of internet hosts per ten-thousand population) as specified in confirmatory factor analytic measurement model. Because the errors among the four indicators are not correlated, the measurement model in effect says that they are independent given the implied position of the country in the latent network society scale. The latent network society variable is in its turn specified as affecting the relative balance of domestic versus international music consumption. The model explicitly takes into account the presence of measurement error in the music consumption variables by conceiving of these as latent constructs that are driven by the systematic part of the UNESCO measures of the relative size of the domestic popular and international popular markets.

If the sociostructural model is correct, we should expect that international music consumption should be more extensive in societies that have made the network transition in comparison to societies that remain organized around more traditional relational and telecommunication structures, which should tilt toward the consumption of domestic music. Also consistent with this model, the effect of previous levels of socioeconomic development on the relative consumption of global versus domestic culture is specified as being entirely mediated by the network society latent variables. This is shown by the lack of a direct path going from socioeconomic development in 1975 to the local and global culture consumption variables. This is consistent with the claim that economic development is simply a proxy for the more fundamental sociostructural changes highlighted in the sociostructural account. Thus, with that might have displayed relatively high levels of socioeconomic development in 1975 (by having a disproportionately high GDP for instance), but which remains relatively disconnected from global telecommunications networks in the more recent period (as in some oil-rich states in West Asia), should remain primarily a consumer of local culture.

Table 1 shows the parameters estimates obtained from the model shown in Figure 3. The model’s implied covariance matrix reproduces the observed covariance matrix fairly well ($\chi^2 = 16.39$, 13df), with the $IFI$ and $RMSEA$ statistics satisfactorily close to one and zero respectively, suggesting that the sociostructural prediction of no direct effect of previous levels of socioeconomic development on the structure of the music consumption market is on the right track. In fact a model that allows the direct path from socioeconomic development in 1975 to global and local culture consumption to be free to be estimated does not fit the data any better than the restricted model that fixes these paths at their null values ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1.86$, 2df, $p=0.39$). When it comes to the direct effect of the network society transition latent factor on culture consumption, the results are also consistent with the sociostructural account: transition to the network society has a strong positive impact on international musical consumption but a

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6 The model includes a correlation between the error variances of international and domestic culture consumption which, given the fact that they are proportions, are forced to be almost perfectly negatively correlated by design. Thus, any impact of the other variables should be estimated net of this artificial negative correlation.
negative impact on domestic music consumption ($p<0.01$). Socioeconomic development in 1975 has similar indirect effects on these last two variables, as they are mediated by network society transition, a pattern of results consistent with figures 1 and 2.

While the media imperialism model fails to explain these results, this is exactly what we should expect given the socio-structural model. If the demand for global culture is driven by its usefulness for the formation and maintenance of extra local networks, then it stands to reason that the least economically developed societies, the populations of which are still relatively disconnected from global telecommunications flows and which maintain close relationships with similar others in more communal environments have much less of a need for international musical culture and are much more likely to consume domestic music, which is the type of cultural good that is useful for the maintenance of local networks of acquaintance and sociability (DiMaggio 1987; Lizardo 2006). In a similar way, the more mobile, cosmopolitan populations of the more urbanized societies of the Global North should be the primary consumers of global media culture, and that is exactly what we find. Notice that it is much harder to speak of straightforward media imperialism when the “satellite” societies are countries such as Sweden, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, since these are the nations with the most access to legal, economic, cultural and material resources to “resist” globalization through international trade policy (Crane 2002). Yet, counter-intuitively they seem to be the ones that resisted the least.

Table 1. Unstandardized parameter estimates for the structural equation model of the relationship between international and domestic music consumption, national income and transition to the network society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network Society Transition</td>
<td>Global Culture</td>
<td>Local Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Development Index Score (1975)</td>
<td>14.945**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.922)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Society Transition</td>
<td>3.717**</td>
<td>-4.556**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.757)</td>
<td>(0.782)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Logged N. of Cell Phones per capita (1995)</td>
<td>0.725**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.040)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged Avg. N. of Fax Machines per capita (1992-1995)</td>
<td>0.584**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged N. of Personal Computers per capita (1995)</td>
<td>0.643**</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Logged. Avg. Number of Internet Hosts per capita 1996-1997)  1.000  --

Note: N=156, χ² = 16.39, df = 13, p-value=0.23, IFI = 0.996 RMSEA = 0.041

*p<0.05 ** p<0.01 (two-tailed test)
+p<0.05 (one-tailed test)

The mystery disappears once we realize that it is the avid demand and access of the local populations of the richer societies for a global culture which will allow them to enact and sustain translocal social relations that explains this apparent paradox. Thus, global cultural flows do not need to "kick down the door" in the richest countries in the world, since it is embraced with open arms by the local populations of the more economically advantaged societies, as is shown by the complete market dominance of the Hollywood industry (Cowen 2002) and the present data on international music consumption. This is consistent with the fact that as shown by most recent research in the sociology of taste, popular culture consumption increases with socioeconomic status in all Western industrialized societies (see the reviews in Van Eijck 2000, Peterson 2005 and Peterson and Annand 2004), in contradiction to the mass culture theory account which expects popular culture to be primarily consumed by the disadvantaged.

The sociostructural model which connects culture consumption and cultural demand to the types of local relational environments that are more likely to be faced by inhabitants of different societies explains why the consumption of global (and regional transnational) popular culture is the purview of the most privileged global strata, as they are the populations most likely to use this cultural information to form and sustain loose networks of social relations both at home and across national borders. In addition, the sociostructural account also explains why, as often noted by global media scholars but usually inexplicable from simple imperialism perspectives, in most countries in the world, especially in the large multi-ethnic, low income societies, the consumption of domestic culture continues to be the rule and not the exception (Ferguson 2002). Insofar as the majority of populations continue to be tied to relatively less mobile and more circumscribed networks, local cultural goods which serve to enact locally meaningful social identities and facilitate interaction in relatively relationally circumscribed communal contexts will be both as a rule preferred over less socially useful foreign fare and, by way of governmental policy and the action of local cultural organizations, will be more likely to be crafted by domestic culture-producing actors. Most research shows that the dystopia painted by imperialism scholars, of a supply of foreign cultural goods that "drown out" domestic and regional cultures seldom obtains, as local populations gravitates towards more interpersonally appropriate and socially useful regional cultures.

FILM IMPORTS AND DOMESTIC FILM PRODUCTION

It is possible however, that music is the "easy" case to make for the sociostructural model, while the film media is the case where the imperialism account would be most at home. Of all of the global cul-
Cultural industries (including television) film is the one which in its structure most conforms to a media imperialism model, with Hollywood, and thus American film, overwhelming all other global competitors (Cowen 2002). Data from the 2000 World Culture Report confirm this view: 84% of the 72 countries for which film import data was collected imported 50% or more of their films from the United States in 1998. It is possible that in this American monopolized industry the patterns predicted by the media imperialism account will more clearly come to the fore, in comparison to musical consumption.

![Figure 4. Plot of the relationship between the average number of film imports for the period of 1994-1998 and national income group, UNESCO world culture report, 2000. N=83.](image)

If the cultural imperialism account is correct, we should expect to observe a negative association between levels of economic development and the degree of foreign penetration by the U.S. film Industry. However, just like music consumption, the association between film imports and per capita GDP is positive not negative ($r=0.39$, $p<0.01$). As shown in Figure 4 and contrary to the media imperialism prediction we find that a full 47% of the countries which belong to the high income group (as measured by belonging the top tercile of GDP per capita for the year 1994) are also in the top film import tercile. In
comparison, only 18% of the countries in the top import tercile are low income countries (bottom tercile GDP per capital in 1994). Looking at those countries in the bottom tercile of film imports, representing those societies that are least exposed to global film culture, I find that a reverse pattern obtains. Most of the countries on this slot are in the bottom third in the GDP per capita ranking (49%) while only a relatively smattering few (13%) are in the top GDP tercile.\(^7\) This is consistent with the socio-structural prediction that posits a positive association between exposure to global culture and economic development. These results also mirror the results obtained using musical consumption as a measure of exposure to and demand for global culture.

**Global Film Culture and Domestic Film Production**

Is cultural penetration by Americanized global flows deleterious for national cultural production? The media imperialism thesis would predict that the more that a country’s national market comes to be exposed to foreign cultural goods, the less likely it will be for domestic culture production organizations to find a market for local products as national tastes become homogenized and oriented toward the stereotyped products of the international (Hollywood-dominated in the case of film) culture industry. Thus, we should expect a negative association between the extent to which the local cultural market has been captured by international film and domestic film productions. Both Crane’s (2002) cultural policy-oriented national strategies of globalization account and the sociostructural model predict the opposite result. From the “strategies” perspective, states react to market penetration by the American culture industry by attempting to regenerate local production of film and other cultural goods through subsidies, tax incentives and other forms of cultural policy aim at stimulating domestic culture production. Thus globalization ends up, by way of these policy and organizational mechanisms, increasing the production of local cultural goods especially those such as film, more deeply connected to national identity.

The sociostructural model’s prediction is similar to the “strategies” account that points to a symbiotic, and not competitive relationship between global and national film industries. Insofar as the countries which are likely to react to the global dominance of Hollywood by developing their domestic film industries are also the ones the most economically advantaged and globally connected societies, and insofar as domestic film industries will tend to occupy a specialist niche (Carroll 1985), specializing in the production of more aesthetically oriented (“arthouse”) and cognitively demanding products (Cowen 2002), then we should expect that the very same segment of the population that is attracted to global culture will also gravitate toward domestic film products. Thus, there should be no strong opposition between local and global in the case of film since “domestic” film industries are also part of a global market, but simply specialize in a different product niche. As such, there is not equivalent of “local” film (i.e. culture

\(^7\) It is clear however, that Figure 4 understates the positive association between GDP per capita and film imports, since most of the countries that are excluded from the list by virtue of reporting zero film imports during the last year are low income societies. Thus, consistent with the sociostructural account, low income societies rather than being “awash” with American cultural goods, are in fact the most isolated from global culture.
that is useful for enacting and sustaining extremely local identities and social relationships) as there is for music (although the “Bollywood” regional industry in India can come close to this).

Thus, from the sociostructural perspective, insofar as the domestic and global film products represents different facets of a global culture, then demands for all film-related should goods increase with socio-economic development and the move towards a “networked” society as individuals come regard both global and domestic culture as complementary cultural resources, and are able to master both domestic and global cultural codes in order to sustain their increasingly diverse social networks which come to be composed of a mixture of local and translocal social ties (Lizardo 2006). There should be no incompatibility between taste for global culture (i.e. Hollywood) and taste for local cultural goods: both should increase and should be more prevalent in wealthier and more economically advantaged societies, just as more diverse forms of taste that cut across the highbrow popular divide are more likely to be found among the omnivorous upper class strata of Western societies (DiMaggio 1987; Peterson 1992, 1997, 2002).

Figure 5. Cross-lagged panel model of the relationship between domestic film production and foreign film imports, 1970-1999.
In order to subject the empirical implications of the cultural imperialism and sociostructural model to test, it is important to disentangle the various casual claims that are implied by both of these perspectives between socioeconomic development, exposure to global culture through cultural imports and national cultural production. Figure 5 shows a structural equation path model (Bollen 1989) of the relationship among these variables. The model is specified as a cross-lagged panel design (Paxton 2002: 265), in which film imports affect future domestic film production and future film imports and domestic film production at the earlier point in time affects domestic film production and foreign film imports at the later point (solid paths). To smooth over short term fluctuations in both film imports and domestic film production, I measure both domestic film production and foreign film imports using a 10 year average for the first time period (as the data are more sparse during this time) and five-year averages of counts for the 1980s and 1990s. The model includes controls for the two variables that most strongly differentiate large film producing and importing countries: socioeconomic development as measured by the logged per capita GDP and country size as given by the logged population for the year 1975. I also include controls for both the size of the movie going market in the 1970s and the presence of a robust film distribution infrastructure in the same decade. Population and GDP data were obtained from Maddison (2003). The film production data were obtained from the UNESCO World Culture Report (1998, 2000).

The sociostructural model and the cultural imperialism model make the same prediction when it comes to the connection between socioeconomic development and domestic culture production: as socioeconomic development increases we should find that domestic cultural production should also increase. In a similar way, we should observe predictable effects of population size: as the size of the potential domestic market increases, domestic popular culture production should give way to dependence on foreign imports. The parameters of theoretical interest are those that connect socioeconomic development to cultural imports and the latter variable to domestic film production. According the cultural imperialism model, the least economically advantaged societies should be the ones most dependent on cultural imports such as foreign films, and therefore the direct effect of socioeconomic development on foreign film imports should be negative. The sociostructural model on the other hand, predicts that global culture should be most in demand in the most economically and socially advantaged societies, which means that this effect should be positive.

In a similar way, the cultural imperialism thesis suggests that foreign cultural imports (in particular those that are dominated by American cultural production such as international film) should quash domestic cultural domestic production, as populations become captive to foreign, Americanized global culture. Thus, the effect of cultural imports in the earlier time periods (1970-1979) and (1985-1989) on domestic cultural production in the 1980s and 1990s respectively should be negative. The sociostructural model on the other hand, predicts that both global and domestic culture can coexist (sometimes fostering one another), and that there is no deleterious effect of exposure to global culture on domestic cultural production. This implies that the effect of foreign film imports on domestic film production should be positive (or at the very least indistinguishable from zero). Similarly, domestic culture production should not stand in an antithetical relationship to foreign imports. If the most socially and economically advanced societies are also the ones most likely to have thriving film industries, we should
expect that domestic film production should promote rather than restrict foreign cultural imports. The reason for this, as we have noted is that if the global film market is indeed partitioned between American popular culture and more specialized productions from other countries—with certain exceptions such as Japan, Hong Kong and India which produce popular films for local audiences—then the most economically advantaged populations in the world, who are more likely to consume both popular and highbrow culture, should be more likely to consume both foreign Hollywood film and domestic film. Notice that the structural equation path model as specified in Figure 5 also permits contemporaneous correlations between the exogenous factors measured at the earlier time period, allowing socioeconomic development and population size to be associated with domestic film production and international film imports in the 1970s. These correlations are allowed in order to account for the fact that domestic culture production is much more extensive in richer and larger countries (in the case of film, this is true due to the fact that large domestic markets can offset the fixed costs of establishing costly film production industries [Cowen 2002]).


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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logged Avg. Number of Domestic Films (1970-1979)</td>
<td>0.487** (0.088)</td>
<td>0.034 (0.078)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged Avg. Number of Imported Films (1970-1979)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.199)</td>
<td>0.528** (0.149)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged Number of Domestic Films (1985-1990)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.167** (0.115)</td>
<td>0.271* (0.121)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged Number of Imported Films (1985-1990)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.349+ (0.188)</td>
<td>0.557** (0.271)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged per capita GDP (1975)</td>
<td>0.515* (0.189)</td>
<td>0.246 (0.160)</td>
<td>-0.077 (0.207)</td>
<td>-0.034 (0.224)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged Population (1975)</td>
<td>0.420**</td>
<td>0.167+</td>
<td>-0.360**</td>
<td>-0.102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The unstandardized parameters estimates are shown in Table 2. Overall, the model's implied covariance matrix reproduces the observed covariance matrix fairly well ($\chi^2=15.8$ with 13 df), with the RMSEA below 0.10 and the IFI score (Bollen 1989b) close to 1.0, suggesting that no crucial casual paths were left out of the model specification. Not surprisingly, and consistent with expectations, socioeconomic development and a large domestic market (as measured by raw population size and cinema attendance) in the 1970s increases domestic culture production in the 1980s ($p<0.05$); but there is no direct effect of national income on 1990s domestic production. GDP per capita affects domestic film production indirectly however, by way of its positive effect on 1980s domestic film production and the substantial positive lagged effect of the latter factor on 1990s film production ($p<0.01$). Furthermore and in accordance with the sociostructural model, I find that socioeconomic development in 1975 has a positive effect on the level of film imports in the 1980s (although this effect does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance $p<0.05$ with a one-tailed test). In addition, socioeconomic development in 1975 indirectly enables a more intense magnitude of future foreign film flows in the 1990s by way of its positive effect on domestic film production in 1980s, since this last factor is itself positively associated with foreign film imports in the 1990s. Thus, the negative association between development and exposure to global culture postulated in the cultural imperialism account is not borne out by the analysis.

Also contrary to the cultural imperialism account but consistent with sociostructural model, I find that that the effect of film imports on domestic cultural production is positive and not negative as predicted by the media imperialism thesis. While the effect of film imports in the 1970s on domestic culture production in the 1980s is null, the effect of film imports in the 1980s on domestic culture production in the 1990s is positive and statistically significant ($p=0.03$ with a one-tailed test). Suggesting that in the more recent period, countries that are more intensely connected to global culture are also the ones that display the most active domestic production industries. Another result that cannot be made sense of from the media imperialism perspective—which tends to posit a zero sum relationship between domestic culture and global culture—is the fact that, as noted above, domestic film production 1980s has a reciprocal positive effect on foreign film imports in the 1995-1999 period ($p<0.05$). This synergistic relationship between local and global popular culture however, is precisely what we would expect from the
sociostructural perspective (domestic culture production in the 1970s has no effect on foreign film imports in the 1980s however.

These results serves to dispel simplistic accounts of the globalization process, in which states and local cultural organizations are “captive to” and powerless against the incoming flow of foreign cultural products, and which draw unwarranted lines of demarcation between global and domestic culture (under the assumption that both cannot be appropriated simultaneously by certain segments of the local population). Instead I find that the effect of foreign film imports on domestic film production is null: the entrance of Hollywood dominated global culture into the domestic market has no connection to the vitality of the local film industry; in fact the countries with the most vital local film industries appear to be the ones most likely to import foreign films.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GLOBAL FILM CONSUMPTION FIELD

An important assumption of most media imperialism accounts, especially when considering television and film, is that of a highly concentrated international consumption market, which mirrors the observed concentration of production at the hand of a few Western (and increasingly non-Western) actors. The case of film is usually pointed to as the most stark and clearest example of unbridled American dominance of global culture, insofar as Hollywood is the biggest (by all accounts whether monetary or in terms of market size) player in the international film industry. Thus, the case for globalization as homogenization can most unambiguously be made for film.

A host of other assumptions accompany this line of thinking however. Not only is it assumed that given its tremendous market size dominance will American film be consumed in most national markets, but the added assumption of an incompatibility between Hollywood global culture and global cultural exports from other regions of the world is smuggled in. From this “globalization as homogeneity” approach (Tomlinson 1999), Hollywood movies are seen as driving out, and excluding, film products produced in other regions of the world (Schiller 1991; Boyd-Barrett 1977). The picture is therefore of a largely centralized and concentrated consumption field, which mirrors the disproportionate concentration at the level of production. From this perspective the structure of the consumption market therefore should be composed of a preponderant element or dimension completely dominated by American film, surrounded by much lesser and smaller regional industries. Furthermore, American film consumption should be seen to be incompatible (by showing negative correlations with for instance) other forms of global film culture (i.e. European, Asian, etc.), which should be relegated to a smaller more regional role.

As we have seen, recently formulated regional vitality and multicentric approaches to the study of cultural globalization (Crane 2002; Robertson 1990, 1995, 2001) and the sociological approach to production industries derived from resource partitioning theory (Carroll 1985; Carroll and Swaminathan 2000), paint a different story. From these alternative perspectives, no straightforward conclusions can be derived from market structure to the organization of the “consumption field” (Zukin and Maguire 2004). In particular, from the point of view of resource partitioning theory, highly concentrated markets can in fact be perfectly compatible with the vitality of alternative (smaller) culture production organizations in
the same industry, insofar as those products can develop, nurture and institutionalize identity categories that clearly differentiate them from the market-dominant fare. In this way partitioned markets can provide specialist producers with important access to resources and a committed audience that helps them carve a distinct portion of the resource space (the latent multidimensional space of consumers’ tastes and preferences) away from competition from the generalist market leader (Peli and Nooteboom 1999; Carroll and Hannan 2000). This appears to be what explains Lopes (1990) finding that innovation in the music industry can co-exist with high concentration market concentration ratios in the most recent post-partition period (1969-1990). This is in contrast to Peterson and Berger’s (1975) finding of a negative association between industry concentration and innovation in earlier decades (before the market had partitioned).

Transferring this insight to the global film industry is straightforward. As noted by Cowen (2002: 73-101) what appears to have happened in the global film industry after the post-war decline of the European film industry and the post 1960s emergence of the “blockbuster” as Hollywood’s staple product, is that European film (and other regional film making industries) began to specialize in more intellectually demanding, artistic fare, which could not easily be replicated in Hollywood, producing a mutually beneficial trading system where the U.S. imports arthouse films from Europe and other regions of the world even as they are the dominant exporters of film in the world (a national consumption pattern that is probably common to other economically advantaged societies). Furthermore, by all accounts both “Bollywood”, the Hong Kong and Japanese film based industries continue to grow in both global and regional scope and influence, taking advantage of their greater access to information regarding the tastes of their immediate local and regional markets, allowing them to provide those audiences with forms of entertainment that cannot be matched by Hollywood fare, which is in the language of resource partitioning theory, constrained by “generalist” identity codes (similar to large brewers in the U.S. vis a vis microbreweries [Carroll and Swaminathan 2000]) which prevent its primary global product (action-oriented blockbusters) from acquiring any type of regional or idiosyncratic features that would make them tied to local specificities.

This is consistent with the fact that the U.S. is not only one of the top three exporters of film, but is also one of the top three film (and other audiovisual cultural products) importers, as shown in Table 3. While the U.S. had the world’s fourth largest domestic film industry for the 1988-1998 period (behind India, Hong Kong and the Philippines), the U.S. was also the fourth largest importers of foreign films, behind Japan, Spain and the small Andean country of Ecuador. Furthermore the other large-scale domestic producers that are not as economically advantaged as the U.S., (China, India and to a lesser extent the

\[ 8 \] The case of Ecuador neatly fits the media imperialism hypothesis (at least in the case of film). In fact Ecuador could be the poster-boy for a media imperialism argument; while Ecuador had only the 46th ranked domestic film industry for the 1988-1998 period (averaging only 4 domestic films per year) it imported 510 films in the year 1995 alone, which puts it in the number two spot behind Japan. However, while the case of Ecuador appears favorable to the media imperialism thesis, the overall pattern of results does not as we will see below. The correlation between domestic production rank and foreign film import rank is small but positive (r=0.21, p<0.04) for 98 countries. This is in contrast to the media imperialism thesis, which predicts a steep negative correlation between these two ranks.
Philippines) display a large imbalance between their domestic production standing and their overall rates of openness toward global film culture. Japan in contrast, not only has one of the most active domestic film industries (5th overall), but was the number film importer for the year 1995.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Domestic Film Production rank 1988-1998</th>
<th>International Film Import rank 1995</th>
<th>Domestic-Import Rank Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.A.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes Hong Kong

What is the structure of the international consumption market in film? To answer this question, I use data from the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, which catalogues for 68 countries (the U.S. not included) the number of films imported from the top nine of the major exporting countries. To smooth out short term fluctuations I use the average number of films imported from each of the countries from the period 1995-1999. I use an exploratory factor analytic approach, using the logged number of films imported into each of the 68 countries from each of the nine major exporters (and a tenth residual category of “other”) as indicators. The covariance among these various export flows, can then be decomposed into various partially orthogonal consumption dimensions which can give an idea of the shape of the global film consumption field (Zukin and Maguire 2004) across the 68 nations.

If the media imperialism account is correct, we should observe that the demand structure of international film should be dominated by a single U.S. consumption factor, with much smaller subsidiary dimensions accounting for the residual association among film export flows. This could be considered a measure of both the degree of universality and hierarchy of the global film ACS (DiMaggio 1987). If the sociostructural and resource partitioning explanation is on the right track on the other hand, we should find 1) a much smaller degree of concentration than that predicted under the media imperialism hypothesis (with the U.S. dominant but no excluding other specialist Western producers) with other regional
exports markets displaying smaller (but still substantial) ability to account for the association that remains after the main U.S. dominated factor is accounted for; and 2) we should also observe no incompatibility between Hollywood imports and imports from other countries, especially European movie imports. That is, contrary to the homogenization thesis, and consonant with the sociostructural explanation, we should find that countries that are high consumers of Hollywood fare are also high consumers of more aesthetically oriented European imports. Not only that, but we should expect to observe that it is precisely the most economically advantaged and socially developed societies of the world that are most likely to combine high consumption of Hollywood film with other “arthouse” imports. This is the national-level analogue of the “omnivorousness” effect—high consumption of both popular and highbrow forms of culture by high status individuals—at the individual level (Peterson 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996).

Table 4 shows the results of a full decomposition (by way of a principal components analysis) of the correlation matrix of a average film imports from each of the 10 major exporters for the year 1995 to 1999. Contrary to what we would expect from the media imperialism account the first principal factor hardly explains the majority of the covariance among the various exporters, accounting for only 36% of the total variance. This indicates that the structure of the consumption field is much less centralized than what we would expect if we extrapolated from the dominance of Hollywood in terms of sheer production. Furthermore the second, third and fourth subsidiary factors, which explain the association left net of the first principal factors are hardly negligible, account for a cumulative 37% of the total covariance.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor1</td>
<td>3.617</td>
<td>0.362</td>
<td>0.362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor2</td>
<td>1.434</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>0.505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor3</td>
<td>1.341</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor4</td>
<td>0.933</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>0.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor5</td>
<td>0.705</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor6</td>
<td>0.683</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor7</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor8</td>
<td>0.350</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor9</td>
<td>0.226</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor10</td>
<td>0.165</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the structure of the factors? Table 5 show the factor loadings for each of the indicators obtained from a principal components factor analysis, in which I retain the first five components, I subject the factor scores to an oblique rather than orthogonal rotation which means that the factor dimensions are allowed to be correlated (as the assumption of uncorrelated country-level cultural consumption di-
dimensions in the world film market seems *prima facie* unrealistic). The first five factors explain (under the assumption that five factors are enough to account for the data) a full 91% of the association among the different exporting countries.

U.S. film imports load strongly on the first dominant factor as would be expected from the media imperialism perspective (0.68). However, contrary to this view, imports from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and to a lesser extent Italian imports, *also load on the first dominant factor* and have *stronger* loadings on this factor than U.S. imports. This suggests that the consumption of Hollywood film is not incompatible with the consumption of the more specialized and non-mass audience (highbrow) oriented exports from the European film industry. Furthermore, insofar as none of the other exporting countries have strong negative loadings on the first factor (Hong Kong is the most negative at -0.15), the factor analysis results indicate that this represents a characteristically *open* approach to global film culture, which is dominated by Euro-American cultural fare, but which does not necessarily imply a rejection cultural products from other world regions. Similar to findings from surveys at the individual level of analysis which usually find a dominant "omnivore" consumption factor characterized by consumption breadth and relative weakness of cultural dislikes (DiMaggio 1987, Bryson 1996, Peterson 1992). These results suggest, following the sociostructural model, that this first factor combining consumption of Hollywood film and Western European film should be characteristic of the most socially and economically advantaged societies. Consistent with the regional vitality perspective, I find that the four factors which account for the residual association left after the main factor is accounted for are dominated by the secondary global film producers of regional scope. Thus, Japanese imports dominate the second factor, Russian imports characterize the third factor (opposed to American imports), Hong Kong imports correspond to the fourth factor and Indian imports are characteristic of the fourth factor.

Table 5. Factor loadings for the first five factors from a principal components factor analysis of international film imports, 1995-1999, UNESCO Statistical Yearbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Factor 1</th>
<th>Factor 2</th>
<th>Factor 3</th>
<th>Factor 4</th>
<th>Factor 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Film Imports</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian Film Imports</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Film Imports</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Film Imports</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Film Imports</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian Film Imports</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Film Imports</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Film Imports</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Film Imports</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Film Imports</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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9 Logged number of films imported from each country.
The sociostructural approach predicts that the most socially and economically advantaged societies should be the ones more likely to consume both Hollywood and Western European film culture, while the media imperialism approach predicts that countries most likely to score high on any factor dominated by U.S. imports should be the least powerful societies in the world. This last expectation however, seems prima facie implausible, since as we have shown, there is no incompatibility between the consumption of Hollywood culture and the consumption of Western European film. Figure 6, which shows the scatter plot of a measure of economic development (the “GDP Index” obtained from the 2000 Human Development Indicators Report) and the score on the first film imports factor, confirms this expectation. The results show an unambiguous positive association between economic development and score on the first film import factor (r=0.67, p<0.01). The richer the country the more likely it is to import Hollywood film and more aesthetically demanding Western European film products.¹⁰ Not surprisingly, almost all of the countries toward the upper right hand side of the diagram are Western European. However, we do find some other economically advantaged non-Western European countries in this group (South Korea, Slovenia, Hong Kong, Czech Republic, Australia, New Zealand), suggesting that the first factor is not driven by a Western European regional market dynamic, but is more closely tied with sociostructural changes that transform the consumption habits of the local populations of the richer societies in the world.

¹⁰ A proponent of the media imperialism perspective might object that this is not a fair test of that hypothesis, which instead predicts that it is the proportion of the domestic market that is captured by American film that will be negatively correlated with the country’s economic position in the world system. However the data show that this prediction is not consistent with what is observed; the correlation between logged per capita GDP in 1999 and the average proportion of imported films from the U.S. for the 1995-1999 period is statistically indistinguishable from zero (r=0.04, p=0.72).
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have reviewed the strength and weaknesses of the most pervasive systemic approach to the study of cultural globalization in contemporary social science, the media imperialism hypothesis, and have shown that it is found wanting in both analytical and (even more crucially) empirical grounds. At a theoretical level, I have argued that due to its close conceptual connection to mass culture theory, the media imperialism perspective shares many of its conceptual limitations and theoretical blinders. In particular the media imperialism approach is deficient in its underdeveloped conceptualization of the relationship between culture consumers and cultural objects, conceiving of these processes as largely dominated by the “media effects” that cultural products have on culture consumers. These effects are
conceived in an overly reductionist and deterministic way, while the ability to reinterpret cultural goods, and most importantly the inherently social role that mass media and arts consumption play in modern societies is ignored. Furthermore, the cultural imperialism thesis flounders at a more macro-level, by drawing unwarranted inferences from the large-scale organization of culture production industries, which like all industries that permit of economy of scale production benefits, is organized as a highly concentrated oligopoly, toward alleged trends toward increasing homogeneity of culture production.

I have argued that, taking a stance more consistent with recent research in organizational studies, we can think of local diversity in culture production as driven by industry concentration rather than smothered by it. Finally, drawing on a sociological approach to the social uses of culture, which in contrast to various “late modernity” perspectives on recent globalization trends, posits an increasing dependence of social relations and network connections on mass media and artistic products, as these come to serve as the “default” forms of cultural knowledge that serve to forge and sustain network relations beyond the closed-in confines of the local community, as the social worlds of the upper class elites of the world’s most economically advantaged societies expand to cover the entire nation, and more recently to expand beyond national borders. This perspective suggests that the consumption of global culture rather than being driven by asymmetric flows from a center to a helpless periphery will instead be primarily the purview of residents of the world’s most economically advantaged and socially developed societies. Thus, we should expect than in addition to dominated culture production markets, the richest countries in the world should also be the leaders as consumers of transnational cultural flows.

Having shown that the media imperialism thesis shares the same set of assumptions and weaknesses of its long lost cousin at the intrasocietal level mass culture theory and such must be replaced by a different theoretical framework that holds a greater degree of verisimilitude with the observed facts, I proceeded to an empirical assessment of evidence on transnational culture flows. The stark conclusion that emerges from this analysis is that the media imperialism paradigm simply cannot explain the cross-national patterns of flows and consumption of global culture in the contemporary junction. This is important, since while the empirical critique of the media imperialism approach had been made by others, especially those engaging in focused ethnographic observations of local patterns of consumption of global culture in various national locales, there has been little or no research that shows that the media imperialism thesis fails in what it should be its own playground: the explanation of highly aggregated patterns of culture consumption across nation-states.

In addition, while most empirically driven ethnographic researchers had provided crucial empirical evidence that created doubt about the overall usefulness of the media imperialism thesis, few had gone on a more constructive route, in an attempt to provide a serious theoretical alternative to the media imperialism account that retained its analytic scope and systemic ambition. In this paper I have attempted to provide that, by drawing on research and theory on the sociostructural consequences of recent trends toward urbanization, state centralization, the rise of mass education and the advent of what some have referred as the “network society” in the most economically advantaged nations in the world system to provide an alternative macro-structural perspective that is compatible with the evidence at hand. I have shown that this perspective can help us explain why the most socially and economically
advantaged countries in the world are the most attuned to global cultural flows and the consumption of non-local culture, a pattern of results deeply at odds with the predictions gleaned from the media imperialism perspective.

**Alternative Macrostructural Approaches to Culture Globalization**

In the above analyses the media imperialism paradigm was taken to be the primary extant theoretical framework for the macro-level study and theorization of cultural flows in the world system. However, the intent of the preceding analyses was not to suggest that the media imperialism thesis constitutes the only resource for the understanding of media and culture in the international arena. Other macro-level approaches that deserve mention in this respect are (1) pluralist “market oriented” approaches that take as their point of departure a “gains from trade” model (i.e. Cowen 2002) and (2) regional culture approaches that, like the media imperialism model, focus on the large-scale organization of transnational cultural industry systems but that see this structure as organized along a more mosaic-like arrangement of integrated regional production hubs without a true “global” (much less U.S. dominated) center (Crane 2002).

What are the repercussions of the above findings for these alternative macrostructural paradigms? A detailed and rigorous answer to this question is beyond the scope of the present study. Therefore I will limit myself to a few somewhat general remarks. The sociostructural model’s predictions of an increase in the diversity of cultural production as a result of the globalization process are indeed compatible with a market oriented perspective. This latter perspective construes global connectivity as a direct stimulant (by way of serving as an incentive) of cultural production, by providing local producers with previously unavailable markets and culture consumption publics that transcend their local demographic base. However, the market account works with a rather “thin” description of cultural trade (underspecifying for instance the factors that may lead some national groups to “demand” particular cultural forms and ignore others) and thus fails to account for the observed segmented structure of the world cultural trade market. In this respect, the sociostructural model is an improvement over this account since it specifies the reasons for why we should expect the global cultural market across to be partitioned according to the relative level of connectivity and economic development of its national participants. Thus this latter approach, in contrast to the unconstrained market model, is able to not only suggest that cultural trade will tend to take place in the absence of political or communicative barriers (and that such trade will tend to increase intra-regional cultural diversity), but also to predict that global cultural exchange will also tend to take place largely within world-societal “blocks” partitioned according to national income and relative degree of connectivity into global telecommunications flows of goods and information (Crane 2002; Guillen 2001).

These blocks should look a lot like the traditional world systems inspired core-periphery models. Like contemporary intrasocietal associations between socioeconomic status and levels of cultural activity (Peterson 1992; DiMaggio 1987), the world’s cultural trade system should therefore be expected to be partitioned between a highly cultural active core of culture producers and consumers, a quasi-integrated semi-periphery (which appears to have improved its relative market position—as measured by its decreasing cultural trade “deficit”—in recent decades) and a largely culturally disconnected peri-
phery. While it is not a valid conclusion to suggest that less well-connected societies “lose” if they be-
come part of this trade system (as previous models of “imperialist homogenization” destroying and re-
placing local cultures maintained) according to the sociostructural model, the advantages that accrue
from consumption of global culture outside of the intra-core trading system are only available for
smaller and more privileged elites of those peripheral societies. The cultural elites of richer societies
however, end up benefiting by partaking of the renewed cultural heritage of peripheral societies (i.e.
increasing their “omnivorousness” which can be parlayed as domestic and transnational cultural capital
within and across those societies).

The socio-structural model is also not necessarily inconsistent with attempts to re-describe the interna-
tional mass-media industry system as organized along regional poles, rather than being characterized
by the dominance of a single Western (or American) command and control economic center (Golding
and Harris 1997). The regional approach however, tends to deemphasize “world” popular culture and to
emphasize the effect of “regional” popular culture. The sociostructural account however, suggests that
these two forms of popular culture do not serve the same role as global form of cultural capital. Ameri-
can popular culture (Hollywood film, rock music, etc.) is predicted to be most in demand in the national
arenas whose connection to the international system most transcend their local regional connections
(i.e. Canada, Australia, etc.). The reason for this is that popular culture produced by regional conglome-
rates is relationally useful (in terms of serving to forge translocal social connections) in a locally deli-
imited international arena (i.e. Latin America Televisa’s television programs are easily recognized
throughout Spanish-speaking South American and the Caribbean), American popular culture appears
to constitute the closest analogue to a truly global (in geographic scope) popular culture, and as such it
should carry a wider relational range for the most cosmopolitan of the world’s class fractions, who are
disproportionately represented in the world’s richer and most globally connected societies.
REFERENCES


