Valentina Marinescu, Silvia Branea,
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New Connections, New Perspectives

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CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON AUDIENCE AND NARRATIVITY

New Connections, New Perspectives

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Contents

Does the cultural capital compensate for the cultural discount? Why do German students prefer US-American TV series?

Daniela Schluetz, Beate Schneider

Many European countries but also other countries worldwide experience a predominance of US-American TV products. This is mainly due to the globalization effects rather than to the audience's choice because viewers usually prefer products that are culturally proximate (Straubhaar, 1991). German television ratings confirm this situation (Zubayr & Gerhard, 2011) with the exception of younger, well-educated viewers who seem to favor US-American fictional television content (Zubayr & Gerhard, 2010), particularly series (Gerhards & Klingler, 2009). In this paper, we examine cultural proximity from an audience point of view posing the following question: how do young highly educated viewers evaluate non-nationally produced TV series? Germany serves as a case study for the present study.

In the last 20 to 30 years, US-American content has become an important part of television programming in Europe and especially in Germany—both quantitatively and qualitatively speaking. Since the establishment of the commercial television sector in 1984, more and more television channels have distributed more and more content—much of which originates from the USA (Europäische Audiovisuelle Informationsstelle, 2010). All over Europe, the share of national fictional TV programs is on decline (Hallenberger, 2005). To a large extent, this is a reflection of economic globalization effects of television production and distribution as purchasing content is often less expensive than producing it. Thus, the predominance of US formats seems to depend on structural reasons rather than audience choice: "More than audience tastes, trade practices and costs better explain the content of schedules" (Waisbord, 2004, p. 369). Nevertheless, with almost a third of the total programming, Germany has the highest percentage of nationally produced fictional content in Europe (Hallenberger, 2005, p. 15). German productions are the domain of public television channels (ARD/ZDF) while commercial channels broadcast less German productions.

Indigenous productions, expensive as they might be, they deserve the price because viewers usually prefer "home grown" television products. This can be explained by the concept of 'cultural proximity' brought forward by Straubhaar (1991; 2002; see also de Sola Pool, 1977). Straubhaar argues that a discussion about globalization disregards the influence of audiences' national identities in selecting and interpreting cultural products (2002, p. 182). By several Latin American case studies, he shows that audiences tend to prefer national entertainment products to foreign ones, for instance Hollywood productions. Viewers actively look for cultural cues in TV productions and derive pleasure out of symbols and practices they can relate to. That is why national formats are appreciated more. Non-national genres are more popular if they are linked to a similar culture connected by, for instance, language, geography or history and values (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005). As Straubhaar puts it: "Since the 1990's it has almost become commonplace to say that audiences prefer culture-specific or national television programs that are as close to them as possible in language, ethnic appearance, dress, style, humor, historical reference, and shared topical knowledge." (2008, p. 15) Language, Straubhaar argues, is the most important factor, with some genres such as comedies relying more on it than the others. One may call it the smallest common denominator for cultural proximity (cf. Ksiazek & Webster, 2008). Language is not the only relevant factor, though. The US-American TV industry even adapts formats from the British market (see the example of 'The Office', Beeden & de Bruin, 2010) and in Germany, for instance, national programs are more popular although all foreign content is dubbed (Tinchev, 2010). The concept of cultural proximity, however, has been challenged by the widespread availability and global appeal of US-American fictional productions (cf. Kerr & Flynn, 2003). A lack of cultural proximity leads to 'cultural discount' (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988). This concept argues that a "particular program rooted in one culture, and thus attractive in that environment, will have a diminished appeal elsewhere as viewers find it difficult to identify with the style, values, beliefs, institutions and behavioral patterns of the material in question. Included in the cultural discount are reductions in appreciation due to dubbing or subtitling. […] As a result of the diminished appeal, fewer viewers will watch a foreign program than a domestic program of the same type and quality." (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988, p. 500) Thus, US-American series should be less appealing to

foreign audiences than their own. There seems to be empirical support for this argument in Germany (cf. Zubayr & Gerhard, 2011): The top 15 in television ratings 2009 comprised only German fictional films. In 2008, only one US-American production entered the top ten ('Ice Age 2'; Zubayr & Gerhard, 2010, p 116). The same was true for television series (Zubayr & Gerhard, 2010, p. 117). The rule, however, does not seem to apply to all audience groups. Younger viewers preferred US-American series like 'The Simpsons' (Gerhards & Klingler, 2009, p. 674). Table 1 shows ratings and market shares of younger, highly educated viewers in Germany. Their 2009 top ten in television ratings included only two German productions: 'Stromberg', which is the German version of 'The Office', and 'Doctor's Diary' (a comedy/drama series, comparable to 'Scrubs'; original title in English) (cf. Table 1).

Why is it that young, well-educated Germans prefer foreign, particularly US-American TV content regardless of cultural discount? We want to propose two possible explanations for this preference which might apply to other, non-US-American nations as well. The first one is related to the texts in question. Hoskins and Mirus (1988) argue that US program exports have a rather low cultural discount due to high production values and undemanding content. Therefore, they lend themselves to worldwide distribution. Olson (1999) adds the concept of 'narrative transparency' of US-American television texts that open them to 'different readings' (Hall, 1992; cf. Fiske's notion of 'polysemy', 1987). Varying audiences can thereby relate to the text and identify with the personae based on their individual interpretation and sense making of the text: "Transparency is the capability of certain texts to seem familiar regardless of their origin, to seem a part of one's own culture, even though they have been crafted elsewhere." (Olson, 1999, p. 18) The consequence of transparency in a television program is its appeal to a larger and more diverse audience—as is the case with many US-American TV series.

Table 1: Top ten TV series on German TV 2009

Top 10	Channel	Origin	Adults 18–28 years with higher education (2.73 Mio., N = 456)		Adults 14–49 years (35.56 Mio., N = 5289)	
			Rating in Mio.	Market Share in %	Rating in Mio.	Market Share in %
Grey's Anatomy	ProSieben	USA	0.23	40.9	1.54	14.4
Two and a Half Men	ProSieben	USA	0.22	33.4	1.79	13.5
Desperate Housewives	ProSieben	USA	0.19	31.2	1.77	15.0
Private Practice	ProSieben	USA	0.19	31.6	1.28	11.3
Stromberg	ProSieben	Germany	0.18	37.1	1.36	13.3
House MD	RTL	USA	0.18	28.0	3.07	24.2
Doctor's Diary	RTL	Germany	0.18	30.5	1.89	17.1
Lipstick Jungle	ProSieben	USA	0.14	24.5	1.30	10.3
Fringe	ProSieben	USA	0.13	23.0	1.93	16.5
Monk	RTL	USA	0.13	25.8	2.11	22.0

Note: All shows, Mo–Sa., 5–11 p.m., SAT.1, ProSieben, kabel eins, RTL, VOX, RTL II, ARD, ZDF
Source: AGF/GfK-Television-Research

The second explanation for the worldwide popularity of US-American television content refers to viewer characteristics. Central to the understanding of cultural proximity is Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital. As opposed to economic and social capital, cultural capital refers to education and knowledge. It creates a "familiarity based in language, education, or travel that enables someone to understand a language- or culture-based […] program from elsewhere" (Straubhaar, 2008, p. 17). Cultural capital fosters the understanding and enjoyment of foreign media content because it bridges gaps between culturally positioned audiences and television products drawing on other cultural symbol systems. Consequently, cultural capital has a bearing on cultural proximity and, indirectly, on media selection: "Cultural capital focuses on the sources of knowledge that permit people to make choices among media and other sources of information and culture." (Straubhaar, 2007, p. 202–3) The more cultural capital somebody has at his or her disposal, the more prone he or she is to choose non-national media

content. Thus, higher educated viewers are more likely to derive pleasure from foreign TV content than less well-educated ones.

Moreover, cultural proximity is a dynamic concept based on identifications with national offerings (Straubhaar, 2008, p. 16; cf. Iwabuchi, 2002). Social changes influence the perception of cultural proximity in cultural artifacts by historically and socially positioned groups. Younger people's liking of US-American television would then be a cohort effect rather than a consequence of a certain age. Having been raised with a lot of exposure to US-American lifestyle, culture or values (be it fictional sources like media exposure or factual ones like exchange programs, for instance), younger people might feel closer to the USA than members of an earlier cohort (i.e., elder generations). A closer proximity to US-American culture might be due to more knowledge about the USA, a more positive image of the USA as a country or a higher proficiency of the English language (cf. Elasmar, 2003; Schlütz, 2012). A distinct national identity[1], on the other hand, should have a detrimental effect in this process. National identity is formed culturally and suggests a sense of unity and belonging based on a shared territory (Beeden & de Bruin, 2010, p. 5; cf. Straubhaar, 2002). Communication practices, thus, influence national identity: "The mass media, and television in particular, are powerful nation-building tools, which serve as a main communication space for defining what our country is and what it is like." (Castelló, 2009, p. 315) On the other hand, it is plausible that national identity has a bearing on cultural activities, the reading of cultural texts and—at the end of the day—on media choice. A pronounced national identity should therefore lead to less selection of foreign media content.

In this paper, we regard cultural proximity from an audience point of view: How do viewers with a certain amount of cultural capital perceive cultural proximity and how important is this perception for their evaluation of (entertaining) media content? We focus on a special audience fragment: highly educated, younger people (in Germany). This choice is based on the assumption that education is connected to the accumulation of cultural capital. Cultural capital, we argue, helps to overcome effects of cultural discount. We chose a cohort of young viewers because they seem to have developed

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[1] "A nation can […] be defined as a name human population an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members." (Smith, 1991, p. 14)

specific viewing habits and tastes. At least in Germany, they do not seem to prefer national TV products in general. We therefore surveyed such young, highly educated viewers regarding the genre of TV series to examine the following research questions:

RQ1: To what degree do German students prefer US-American TV series?
RQ2: What do they appreciate in US-American TV series?
RQ3: How do factors of cultural capital and national identity influence this preference?

Method

In May 2010, we conducted an online survey with German students to address our research questions (Couper & Miller, 2008). Both nationality and the fact that the respondents were enrolled in a university program were secured by corresponding screening questions. The questionnaire was distributed using a snowball system and filled in completely by 3404 respondents. The questionnaire comprised 37 questions addressing uses and preferences of US-American TV series, nation images, aspects of national identity and further aspects irrelevant to this discussion. The average completion time was 21 minutes.

Measures

Viewing volume: The average time spent watching TV series per week was measured by the question: "Approximately how much time do you spend watching television series? Please estimate the time devoted to watching television series during an average week." Answers were given in a closed format with response options ranging from "7 hours or more per week" (code 5) to "I hardly ever watch television" (code 0) with two-hour-steps in between ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.2$).

Evaluation: The liking of US-American series was measured by two questions. The first one was open ended ("Which is your favorite television series?"). In the second one, the respondents were presented with a list of 15 shows (cf. Table 2) in a randomized order to rate on a scale from (1) "don't like it at all" to (5) "like it very much". To capture their evaluation criteria, we asked the respondents to rate a number of items on a scale from (1) "does not apply at all" to (5) "applies completely". The statements were custom-

ized to include aspects regarding both form and content of TV programs (cf. Table 3).

Language proficiency: As a proxy for linguistic proficiency relevant to media use, we determined the preference of the original (i.e., not dubbed) version of a program with the statement: "I like to watch American TV series in the original version." The item was rated on a Likert-type scale from (1) "does not apply at all" to (5) "applies completely" ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 1.4$).

Affinity to the USA: The respondents were asked to indicate on a 7-point semantic differential (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1978) whether the USA was familiar (code 7) to them or alien (1) and whether it was likable (7) or unlikable (1) ($M_{familiar} = 3.85$, $SD = 1.4$; $M_{likable} = 4.2$, $SD = 1.4$).

National identity was encompassed with the question "How proud are you to be German?" taken from the World Values Survey[2]. The answers were "very proud" (code 3), "quite proud" (2), "not very proud" (1) and "not at all proud" (0) ($M = 1.9$, $SD = 0.8$).

Sample structure

From the 3404 participants in our study, 56 percent were female. On average, the participants were 24 years old ($M = 23.8$, $SD = 3.6$). Most of the students who filled in the questionnaire were TV afficionados: 32 percent devoted seven or more hours to watching television series during an average week, only four percent watched one hour or less. This suggests that our sample tilts towards heavier users of television series.

Not all of the series chosen as favorites by our respondents are accessible on German television permanently or at all, for that matter. Accordingly, many students in the sample did not watch them on regular German television channels. Instead, 27 percent reported that they watched series on DVD or Blu-Ray and 51 percent of the respondents claimed to follow their favorite series over the Internet using both legal and illegal channels to download or stream them (multiple responses possible). One of the reasons of non-linear use seemed to be that most viewers (64 %) preferred the original versions (OV) of the shows to dubbed ones (OVs are not accessible on German free TV).

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[2] Source: http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/

Results

The surveyed German students distinctively preferred US-American productions (RQ1): The ten most frequently named shows in the open ended question were (in this order) 'Scrubs', 'How I Met Your Mother', 'Grey's Anatomy', 'Two and a Half Men', 'Lost', 'House MD', 'The Simpsons', 'Gilmore Girls', 'CSI/CIS', and 'Desperate Housewives' (*N* = 4012). Not one German series made it in the participants' top 40. The closed ended question revealed the same pattern. Table 2 illustrates that all of the presented US-American shows were liked almost equally by the respondents: On a 5-point Likert-type scale (5 denoting the highest evaluation), thirteen out of fifteen series were rated 4 or higher with an overall mean of 4.3 (*SD* = 0.5). The best liked show was 'How I Met Your Mother', followed by 'Lost' and 'Scrubs'. 'Lost', 'Californication' and 'The Simpsons' were more popular with men, while female students preferred 'Grey's Anatomy' and 'Desperate Housewives'. There were three comedy shows within the first five positions. This finding strikes us as particularly interesting, since humor is said to be highly susceptible to cultural discount because it lacks cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 2008; cf. Beeden & de Bruin, 2010).

What is it that German students like about an US-American TV series? (RQ2) We asked the participants to evaluate US-American TV series in general by assessing several items in terms of applicability to their own opinion (cf. Table 3). Subsequently, all items were submitted to a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation. Five factors with eigenvalue > 1 were extracted accounting for 49 percent of the variance.[3] Responses to all items per factor were then averaged for each participant to yield a single score. Higher index scores indicated higher importance of the dimension in question.

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[3] The item "A television series is good if it touches me emotionally" is not a part of the solution because it has no clear-cut classification.

Table 2: Evaluation of US-American TV series by German students

Title	Main Genre*	N**	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	p <
		All participants			Females		Males		
How I Met Your Mother	C	1709	4.5	0.741	4.5	0.77	4.5	0.714	n.s.
Lost	F	1007	4.4	0.913	4.3	0.987	4.5	0.844	.000
Scrubs	C	2278	4.4	0.768	4.4	0.797	4.5	0.731	.010
Californication	D	800	4.4	0.821	4.2	0.888	4.5	0.773	.000
Two and a Half Men	C	2024	4.4	0.828	4.3	0.859	4.4	0.785	.000
Grey's Anatomy	D	1495	4.3	0.880	4.4	0.811	3.9	0.950	.000
House MD	D	1840	4.3	0.806	4.3	0.800	4.3	0.812	n.s.
The Mentalist	F	719	4.3	0.823	4.2	0.845	4.3	0.794	n.s.
Navy CIS	Cr	1050	4.2	0.883	4.2	0.907	4.3	0.846	n.s.
The Simpsons	C	2346	4.2	0.855	4.1	0.905	4.3	0.787	.000
Fringe	F	746	4.2	0.887	4.1	0.918	4.2	0.861	.050
Desperate Housewives	D	1384	4.1	0.957	4.2	0.913	3.8	1.008	.000
Monk	Cr	1035	4.0	0.859	4.1	0.832	4.0	0.882	.01
CSI	Cr	1023	3.7	0.915	3.8	0.914	3.6	0.896	.000
Heroes	F	839	3.7	1.016	3.9	0.994	3.6	1.018	.001

Question: *"Now we are interested in how you appraise the television series you actually watch. (1) means "don't like it at all" and (5) means "like it very much"."You can use the numbers in between to grade your opinion."*

*C: Comedy, Cr: Crime, D: Drama, F: Fantasy

**Number of respondents who watch this show at least occasionally

Note: Randomized item order in questionnaire

Table 3: Evaluation criteria (Factor Analysis)

		Factor Loadings				
	Item Mean	Cultur-al Ties	Serial Structure	Produc-tion Val-ues	Charac-ters	Morality
I think it's important that a television series is close to reality.	2.79	0.729				
A television series should present solutions for personal problems.	2.14	0.668				
I like a television series presenting a lifestyle I can identify with.	3.02	0.661				
I like television series that deal with current social issues.	2.75	0.589				
I like to find out what's up to date through watching a television series.	2.08	0.465				0.446
I prefer television series where each episode has an ending and the story doesn't continue in the next episode. (reversed)	2.41		-0.771			
I prefer stories that continue from episode to episode. That way, it remains exciting.	2.98		0.732			
What's especially good about a television series is when the story never ends.	3.69		0.606			
I like distinctive camera work.	3.17			0.721		
It's important that a television series is very well produced.	2.42			0.593		0.411
I think the music of a television series is very important.	3.6			0.485		
The more different threads of action there are, the better the television series gets.	3.23			0.464		

	Item Mean	Factor Loadings (Cont.)				
		Cultur-al Ties	Serial Structure	Produc-tion Values	Charac-ters	Morality
The delightful part of a television series is that one always returns to the same people and scenery.	3.51				0.592	
I like to identify with the behavior patterns of the characters.	3.43	0.516			0.539	
The cast of a series is extremely important to me.	3.73			0.417	0.448	
I like to see a few bizarre characters in a television series.	4.08				0.446	-0.443
It is important to me that I can clearly distinguish the "good" and "bad" characters of a television series.	2.08					0.731
It bothers me when the main characters in a television series act against my beliefs.	2.57				0.403	0.425
Eigenvalue		3.4	2.2	1.4	1.2	1.1
Variance explained (%)		17.9	11.7	7.3	6.5	6.0
Factor Mean (overall loading items/factor)		2.5	3.4	3.1	3.7	2.3

Note: Scale: from (1) "does not apply at all" to (5) "applies completely"; Extraction Method: PCA; Rotation Method: Varimax (13 Iterations); N = 3404; total variance = 49,3 %

We found three more important clusters of criteria (i.e., with an overall mean above 3.0)—characters, serial structure and production values—and two less important ones (with an overall mean below 3.0)—cultural ties and morality:

Characters (*M* = 3.7, *SD* = 0.6): Most important for a good TV series is—as far as the respondents were concerned—a good cast: recurrent personae lending themselves to identification, real people (maybe a little bit bizarre) who can easily be made friends with.

Serial structure (*M* = 3.4, *SD* = 0.9): Beyond that, what makes a series[4] worth seeing is the ongoing narrative, the potentially never-ending story.

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[4] To be precise, one has to distinguish serial from an episodic series (cf. Cantor &

Production values *(M* = 3.1, *SD* = 0.7): Distinctive camera work, a high-quality production, music and a complex narrative structure are important for a well-liked program.

Cultural ties (*M* = 2.5, *SD* = 0.7): The respondents found it slightly less important that the show relates to (their) reality, that it presents a lifestyle they can identify with or that it deals with current social issues and the "dernier cri", respectively.

Morality (*M* = 2.3, *SD* = 0.9): The surveyed German students found it less appealing to watch series with clear-cut characters who act according to the respondents' beliefs.

Regarding this factor solution, the notion of 'cultural proximity' does not seem to be the most important criterion for evaluating US-American TV series within our sample. If it were, the factor 'cultural ties' should be rated much higher by the respondents. 'Morality' should be a relevant dimension as well because values and beliefs are deeply rooted in a nation's culture. The respondents, however, appreciate the personae—American folks—they observe on the screen; people they apparently can relate to and identify with although they are from a different cultural background. Apparently, US-American texts offer enough narrative transparency (Olson, 1999) to facilitate this reaction.

To find out to what extent these evaluative criteria explain the amount of TV series consumption in our sample (RQ3), we conducted a stepwise regression analysis with frequency of use as dependent variable. Evaluation dimensions, affinity to the USA, language proficiency, national pride as well as gender and age served as regressors.

Pingree, 1983; Creeber, 2004).

Table 4: Factors influencing frequency of use (Stepwise Regression Analysis)

Independent Variables	Coefficients		
	B	SE B	Beta
(Constant)	1.665	0.247	
Serial Structure (Index)	0.303	0.028	0.213
Gender (1 = male)	0.244	0.047	0.098
Language Proficiency	0.074	0.017	0.085
Affinity to the USA: Familiarity	0.062	0.016	0.073
Cultural Ties (Index)	-0.131	0.033	-0.078
Characters (Index)	0.128	0.04	0.065
Production Values (Index)	-0.083	0.036	-0.046
National Identity	0.065	0.028	0.044
Age	0.013	0.006	0.038

Note: Dependent variable: Average time spent watching television series per week (quasi-metric); R^2 *adj.* = .09; method stepwise; criteria pin (.05) pout (.10); excluded variables: Morality (Index); Affinity to the USA: Likability

The analysis revealed several variables that significantly influenced the exposure to TV series. Together they explained 9 percent of the variance of the dependent variable. The most important aspect is the show's seriality: The more the respondents appreciated the ongoing narrative, the more time they devoted to watching series. The second most important factor was gender: Male respondents reported consistently more exposure to US-American TV series than women. Language proficiency (enabling the respondents to follow the series in the original version) influenced frequency of use positively as well as familiarity with the USA. Consistent with our assumption was the fact that the factor 'cultural ties' was negatively associated with viewing frequency. Respondents who valued a show relating to their reality were less prone to watch a lot of US series. The same was true for production values. The preference of high-quality production leads to less series consumption. This result seems to contradict Hoskin and Mirus' (1988) argument that high production values diminish cultural discount. Interestingly, the B value of national identity was positive. This suggests that respondents with a more pronounced German national identity watched more foreign series instead of less as we had assumed.

Discussion

In this paper, we posed the question whether cultural capital can compensate for effects of cultural discount. In this context, we discussed the con-

cept of 'cultural proximity' (Straubhaar, 1991) with regard to TV viewing habits of German students. We chose this specific group because of their higher education that allowed them to accumulate cultural capital. Cultural capital, we argued, can help to overcome detrimental effects of cultural discount in cultural artifacts. The study was conducted in Germany, one of the European countries with a lot of US-American television content. As object of investigation we chose US-American TV series as they are very popular with young Germans. They are, in fact, much more popular than German TV series although the notion of 'cultural proximity' would suggest otherwise. To address our questions, we conducted an online survey with 3404 German students. We found that the respondents distinctively preferred US-American TV series to German ones. The answers to both open-ended and closed-ended questions showed that US-American programs were the respondents' favorites. We suspect that this preference depends at least partly on their better education. Language proficiency, for instance, seems to play an important role in this process. Many German students are more or less fluent in English due to their education, foreign exchange programs and—not least—the viewing of English TV shows in the original version. This "multicultural fluency" (Ksiazek & Webster, 2008, p. 500) seems to be an important factor in diminishing effects of cultural discount.

Additionally, we found that German students seemingly did not suffer from a feeling of cultural discount when watching US-American television series—even though many of them watched the shows in American English, commonly on the Internet. A certain amount of cultural capital is a precondition for this kind of cultural practice. Another indicator for the lack of feeling cultural discount was the Germans' preference for Hollywood comedies. Humor is usually thought to be deeply rooted in culture and therefore especially prone to effects of cultural discount. This was not the case with our sample. Apparently, there were other criteria for evaluating US-American fiction. For our respondents, likable characters were the most important criterion, while the opportunity to connect the scene and plot with their own experiences and values seemed less important. These results suggest that the narrative transparency of US-American series makes them more accessible for foreign viewers.

The amount of exposure to TV series was mainly influenced by the serial character of the narrative.[5] Viewers who preferred continuous serials to episodic series tended to watch more of them than other viewers. This is comprehensible as you "get hooked" much easier by the story of these formats. Another important factor influencing frequency of use was language proficiency. Respondents who preferred original versions to dubbed ones watched more series. This might be due to the fact that they have generally a broader range of shows to choose from. Another reason might be that they possess more cultural capital and that their multicultural fluency enables them to appreciate foreign media content more. The latter argument is supported by another factor: affinity to the USA. The more familiar somebody in our sample was with the USA, the more time he or she devoted to watching TV series. The importance of recognizing cultural cues within a program, on the other hand, reduced viewing hours of foreign TV content (at least in our sample). Finally, a distinct (German) national identity leads to slightly more demand of US-American series. This result struck us as particularly interesting because it was unexpected. When scrutinizing the patriots' image of both Germany and the USA, it appears that they like both countries better than German non-patriots (Schlütz, Schneider, & Stipp, 2011). The feeling that Germany is "good" apparently does not coincide with the feeling of the USA being "less good". On the contrary: The USA seems to be some kind of idol, an aspired culture one wants to be close to. This suggests another explanation why so many German students embrace US media content—the people, places and issues in those programs are interpreted as proximal because the students feel close to the USA and its culture.

Thus, our study supports the assumption that cultural capital can compensate for cultural discount to a certain extent. German students prefer US-American series (among other reasons) because their education and knowledge about the country and the language allows them to appreciate US-American TV content as well. The narrative transparency that these programs offer adds to this effect.

Due to our sample, we cannot prove that this is especially the case with young, highly educated Germans but the notion would be plausible. This

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[5]   The rather small amount of explained variance indicates that there are other relevant factors we did not capture.

generation has been raised in a globalized world where the effects of 'deter-ritorialization' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2007; cf. Glanzner, Schlütz, & Schneider, 2012) are experienced, i.e., the disconnection of culture from social and geographical territories. Thereby, the process of national identification is influenced in manifold ways. It is less linked to territories and more to mediated experiences. As Hollywood television is part of these experiences, it might influence the process of identity forming and change the way we perceive national identity as a concept—not only in Germany but anywhere in Europe.

Limitations

Despite the cohesive findings of our study, we have to address some limitations. First, the findings are limited by the homogeneity of the sample both in terms of nationality and socio-demography (mainly education and age). As we were still in an exploratory state of research, this was consciously decided to work out the effects more clearly. In the future, however, we wish to include respondents from different national backgrounds and social strata to be able to compare subsamples and analyze the influence of these criteria. Another limitation of the study is its cross-sectional design that cannot account for causal relationships. In future research, we would like to use an appropriate approach, preferably a panel, to address developments and changes over time. The question whether the affinity to non-national TV products is a cohort rather than an age effect strikes us as particularly interesting when analyzing long-term effects.

Conclusion

Our study showed that young, highly educated people prefer foreign TV content to national productions. Elasmar and Hunter (2003) argue that repeated exposure to foreign media content influences attitudes and values with regard to the production country. In this process, values can be complemented or altered. Elasmar (2003) models this relationship of the 'Susceptibility to Imported Media' (SIM) and labels the process 'Media-Accelerated Culture Diffusion', i.e., the process of cultural hybridization on an individual level (cf. Schlütz, 2012). Effects are enhanced when viewers appreciate the country of origin of the media content, share similar values and are exposed to the content frequently. Cultural capital is a prerequisite

for the selection and appreciation of foreign media content. At the same time, it is enhanced by watching this specific content. Thus, cultural capital facilitates the approximation to foreign values by compensating for cultural discount in foreign media products. This process can be modelled as a self-reinforcing process of cultural deterritorialization (Glanzner, Schlütz & Schneider, 2012). Thus, the prolonged exposure to (and enjoyment of) US-American series might have manifold consequences (in terms of attitudes, (cultural) values, cultural capital, felt proximity etc.) in the long run.

Tomlinson reminds us that "globalization fundamentally transforms the relationship between the places we inhabit and our cultural practices, experiences and identities" (1999, p. 106). If this is true it should have consequences on the development of cultures: Is there a globalization of tastes? Maybe there are socializing effects of American television on international audiences as Tan, Tan, and Gibson (2003) propose or Quick (2009) shows for 'Grey's Anatomy'. This would argue for a cohort effect that should become more pronounced in the future. Maybe learning effects can explain the rising interest in US-American commodities: The repeated and long-lasting consumption of entertaining Hollywood products might a) change the expectations of television content and b) foster change in the perception of cultural proximity (cf. Moyer-Gusé & Nabi; 2010, Shrum, 2004 for effects of narrative persuasion). Both effects might lead to an altered perception and evaluation of these products in the long run. Because of their routinized use and their potential endlessness, series (and particularly serials) might play a special role in this process (cf. Castelló, 2009, p. 307; Tamborini, Weber, Eden, Bowman, & Grizzard, 2010).

In their in-depth study on cosmopolitan communications, Norris and Inglehart (2009) showed that individual news media use encourages more cosmopolitan, more modern orientations—while simultaneously strengthening feelings of nationalism. According to the authors, national identity is not "a zero-sum game, but it seems more accurate to understand modern identities as multiple and overlapping" (Norris & Inglehart, 2009, p. 304). We observed something similar in our sample.