# Shifts In Cultural Traditions And Values In A Globalized World: Dynamics Of Acceptance And Contestation

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### Introduction

In many parts of Latin America, and throughout the world, the Christmas season is becoming more and more commercialized. Take Country Y, where the *Navidad* (Christmas) season begins on 12 December with Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Sixteen December marks the beginning of the Posadas; 24th and 25th December, commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ. Day of the Holy Innocents – 28 December – memorializes the lives of the firstborn sons lost when King Herod ordered them killed, hoping to destroy the baby Jesus. The Epiphany is celebrated in the first days of the new year, and the 6th of January marks the arrival of the Three Wise Men to Bethlehem. The whole season is rich in symbolism and traditions which celebrate events surrounding the birth of Jesus. The age-old celebration of the *Navidad* season extends from 12 December through the 6th of January, a period of long held by the traditional Catholic church as one of the most sacred seasons of the year.

It seems today that children in Country Y are more excited about "Christmas," which appears to mean Santa Claus and the arrival of presents – toys which they've seen on some sort of media and have convinced parents and relatives to buy for them. Although many families try to keep their children within the traditions of the *Navidad* season, somehow the allure of the Jolly Fellow in the bright red suit, complete with reindeer and brand name toys, manages to captivate their attention during these times of the year. Santa Claus' arrival to the region has come,

not by reindeer flying through the air; instead, he arrived some time ago across international airwaves and through cyberspace into millions of homes throughout the Latin America.

Transnational fast food and other chains dot cities throughout Country Y. English language songs are enjoyed by millions of the region's youth. Children and youth habitually use English to communicate with friends on Facebook and other social networking sites. The study and mastery of English are widely seen as a necessity if young people are to succeed as they enter the world of work. All the while, older people may be protective of the Spanish language, wishing to limit the number of English terms entering the local popular lexicon.

Not a whole lot new is being said here... Cultures encounter powerful input from outside and are being continually transformed by it. In order to address how societies and cultures are changed by the incursion of outside information, in this case from the global media, it is important to go beyond the usual points of departure and ask a series of questions concerning what underlies— what is the nature of culture itself, and of the shifts brought about through encounters with information coming from outside the cultural community.

## Contextualization

The shifts and changes mentioned above might be understood by powerholders and traditional segments of Latino society in the following manner:

Country Y finds itself interacting within the milieu of the present-day global paradigm (GP). National authorities and some segments of civil society reflect a concern that the traditional structures and beliefs binding society together are threatened by a 'cultural incursion,' in part through mass media from the power centers of the global system, which is widely viewed in the country as being primarily secular and economically-driven (Mohammed,1999). Historical experiences of Country Y may lead citizens to view the power centers in the GP as having a primary focus on material gain and capital accumulation by diverse means, i.e. through political, economic and military dominance, etc. (Bello, 1994). Transnational media broadcasts

and publications are seen as carrying implicit messages promoting secularism, individualism, free moral conduct, etc. — which may be viewed as 'anti-values' from the traditional segments of society in the country. In short, Country Y may find its socio-cultural traditions threatened by the incursion of the 'GP's values constructions' within its national boundaries. The incursion of GP messages threatens to disrupt the existing social order, and subvert traditions, values and beliefs held as sacred for so long (Latapí, 1994; Barcia, 1994; Chapa Granados, 1994; Orozco, 1994).

At first glance, this seems to describe the scenario which many developing nations face concerning transnational media messages entering local spaces. This paper aims, not to provide a case study of media-induced cultural shift; but instead to put forth an analytical tool useful for examining the manner and the nature of shift induced partly by the incursion of global media messages into non-core national societies and cultures. In order to examine how external messages impact on national and local cultural traditions and values, it may be useful to look *within* these local and sub-local groupings to examine how they are structured and organized.

## Analytical Framework: Ideological-Structural Analysis

In the context of transnational media incursion into non-core societies, the Ideological-Structural Analysis (I-SA), (López, 1997), begins by examining the nature and the dynamics of the cultural collectives possibly feeling threatened by said incursion. The focal point for I-S Analysis is known as the critical juncture, where the two or more agents (human or non-human) meet and interact in a communicative situation. Thus, any point of contact among diverse actors becomes a point of critical juncture and therefore, may be analyzed using the I-SA lenses. In the present study, the agents are 1) the cultural system/s in a non-core nation and, 2) information entering the polity through various forms of transnational media. The I-SA aims to detect what these actors bring to the critical juncture inherent *within* themselves — in terms of values, understandings, sociolinguistic codes, world knowledge, etc. To understand how the analysis is to be applied,

it would serve to explain some of the major constructs and assumptions upon which this analytical framework rests.

## Terms, Assumptions and Constructs

The concept of 'non-core nations' or culture arises from the World System Theory (Wallerstein, 1974), which posits that the global system is comprised of core, semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. Core nations [and blocs or regions] are those constituting the center of capitalist power, i.e. the United States, Japan and Western Europe. Semi-peripheral nations are those which having fairly highly developed infrastructures, economies and means of production. Peripheral nations are those which are least developed around the world. Non-core nations, then, are those in the semi-periphery or the periphery.

The term 'transnational media' refers specifically to Western Media images, advertisements, internet, social networking sites, films, programs, etc. whose sourcing comes from the core nations. Advertisements for products from core-controlled transnational corporations, even those which utilize local actors speaking in the native language, are considered part of transnational media.

The Ideological-Structural Analysis begins with the assumption that human beings carry around great stores of information within ourselves through which we will filter and understand our life's experiences. These internal filters, which link cognitive and affective responses, tend to systematize the manner in which we, as products of a socio-cultural community, will sort out and give interpretation to information received through media and other sources of input. The I-SA posits that the *critical juncture* — where members of non-core societies receive messages from external media — does not truly constitute the starting point from which the interpretation of incoming messages will occur. Instead, it asks what members of non-core societies may bring to the critical juncture within themselves, i.e. values, world view, experience, etc., which will affect how messages are interpreted and internalized. It further aims to examine the same type of content — implicit values and world view — which may be found in incoming media messages. While the present work is purely theoretical, suggestions for further

study in using Ideological-Structural Analysis would include the collection of data using an applied research design to provide concrete evidence to either support or refute the propositions made using these analytical lenses.

## Ideology

What constitutes the power of the idea? Ideas, or ideologies, are not tangible structures; yet they have the power to set parameters around people's understanding and interpretation of phenomena encountered in day to day experiences. Only when we've attempted to understand how the sharing of ideas/ideology has the enormous power to hold people together within human groupings, may we begin to address the question of how the incursion of ideas from outside—such as through global mass media—has the power to cause change and shift within existing cultural, societal, national and world paradigms

For the purpose of this article, 'ideology' is understood as a set of beliefs or reality constructions shared by members of a given group, polity or culture. The dominant ideology found within a given system is thought to be based upon the values, attitudes and beliefs of the group/s holding power. Ideologies and 'truths' are internalized by a critical mass of individuals and are considered by the I-SA as being subjective and varying from culture to culture, or group to group. In addition, ideology and truth constructions are dynamic—meaning that they change over time through exposure, for example, to the promoters of the power holders' belief system—such as mass media, education, and other purveyors of 'truth' as defined by the state, the system, the religion, the cultural community or the group in power (López, 1997). Michael Apple (1990) defines 'ideology' as a system of ideas, beliefs, fundamental commitments or values about social reality. Ideology, then, has to do with the legitimization of actions, values and beliefs placed on society, forming a part of the structuring mechanism which holds it together. It serves for...

> ...the justification of group action and its social acceptance.
> This holds whether the writer speaks of rationalization of vested

*interests, attempts to 'maintain a particular societal role,' or justificatory, apologetic…activity concerned with the establishment and defense of patterns of belief. When basic assumptions underlying a social arrangement seem to be seriously challenged, the resulting need for legitimization may well take the form of concern for the sacred… Ideology [often] seeks to sanctify existence by bringing it under the domination of the ultimately 'right' principles*

(Apple, 1990, p. 23).

The I-SA posits that ideology is organic to, and is part of, the structures organizing and providing cohesion to all forms of human groupings (Gramsci, 1981). This shared set of beliefs or truth constructions constitutes the 'glue' which binds humans into the collectives of which they are a part.

## Structures

Human beings group into collectives of different types, such as ethnic, linguistic and/or religious groups, families, nations states, non-governmental organizations, political parties, regional blocs, etc. 'Structures' are the commonalities which bind them together into the grouping and provide the basis for common ways of interpreting life experience and of interacting. For example, religious codes and social norms provide structures through which people interpret phenomena, as well as setting guidelines shared by the community for what are deemed as appropriate behaviors. Other structuring mechanisms for human groupings are culture, language, ritual, common history, familial ties, etc. These structures are found outside the individual—held by the social grouping—and are imprinted internally within memory store to evoke both cognitive and affective responses to life experiences (López, 1990a). Structures—both held by the collective and holding the collective together—are carried around *within* each individual and will inform how they view, interpret and interact with the world around them. The internalized interpretive lenses are held largely below the level of consciousness as long as stimuli in the external environment do not challenge the way in which 'understanding' is structured. It

often takes an affective response to something which falls outside
the parameters of our structures of understanding in order to
begin seeing how our individual and collective understandings
are organized (Rokeach, 1969). When receiving information from
outside the community or the collectives where our world views
are structured, we often find phenomena which challenge our
implicit ways of knowing, thus providing rich opportunities for
increasing awareness of what binds our individual and
community understandings together. Affective responses evoked
when our implicit structures are 'violated' or challenged being
outside one's community are known as 'culture shock.'

## Memory Stores of Knowledge and World View

The nature of memory store in the human mind lends itself to
simplistic, overgeneralized interpretations of that for which we
lack detailed first hand knowledge. The shaping of human
understanding quite literally leaves a complex network of
imprints in the brain. How? From the time we are born and
possibly before, we take input from the external environment
into ourselves through the five senses, i.e. the child imprints and
recognizes the mother's face from a very early age through visual
input; Mother's voice through auditory input, touch through
tactile, etc. In a very short space of time the child has come to
recognize different aspects of Mother — and endless other
phenomena in the environment through a process of imprinting
this input within memory schema in the brain (Garnham, 1985).
Early learning occurs as the mental representation of those things
tangible in the environment increases within memory schema,
giving the child ever greater identification and 'understanding'
of the world within which it is immersed.

One of the ways in which these understandings are stored
in memory is through schema and scripts which, when
activated by exposure to external stimuli, bring these mental
representations to the fore in order to provide parameters of
understanding of the phenomena currently faced by the person
or group. The content of information held within schema and
scripts (mental representations) activated by the external

situation creates lenses (structures of interpretation) which lend themselves to a particular interpretation of events as filtered through the mind's activated semantic networks (López, 1990). The structuring of these networks in terms of how they tend to filter interpretive and affective responses to external stimuli, depends largely on collective understandings held in the community where the perceiver has been immersed. When expectations delimited by semantic and affective schema are violated, the person experiences what is known as an 'alarm response,' calling conscious attention to the act which crossed the boundaries of expectation. The range of interpretations arising depends largely on the affective and values links held by the perceiver in world knowledge store. The alarm response is not necessarily negative. It may be interpreted in a positive manner; it may cause confusion or ambiguity in the perceiver, or it may give rise to feelings of offense, anger, etc., particularly if taboos or norms of some type are felt to have been violated (Rokeach, 1969). Conversely, those messages and images which can be accommodated within the viewer's schema without causing an alarm response may be internalized below the level of consciousness, thus expanding the store of information attached to that particular schema.

What might cause alarm responses and what not? The meanings and value judgments assigned in the interpretation of events are strongly influenced by the social milieu. Constructs through which values and affective responses are assigned in the interpretation of events are based on continua within dichotomous poles (black-white, 'good-evil,' etc.). These are organized into interpretive schemes which place phenomena into a category for judging events in a larger context of meanings, largely shared within one's cultural community (López, 1990b). The values assigned to these constructs are rooted in social origins of interaction with other people. One's construct system is a direct result of their history of interaction in social groups; it is embedded in social life. Culture, therefore, is very important in assigning meaning to events since our interpretive schema come primarily from social interaction (Burleson, 1989).

Children and youth may tend more toward the reception of media images without alarm response, while parents, and some

political and religious leaders may be much more sensitive to the
content of incoming messages, since they have acquired many
affective and values attachments to particular messages which
develop over time. Furthermore, parents and religious or political
leaders tend to be consciously concerned with the shaping of
understanding and values of those for whom they perceive
themselves to be in a caretaker role. The sense of responsibility
as caretaker, leader, etc. adds to the greater consciousness which
people in these roles may have concerning the content implicit
in incoming media messages.

## Culture

The values and interpretive attachments which may make
caretakers aware of messages implicit in media input are largely
formed through immersion within a particular cultural milieu.
Cultures are essentially common ways of thinking and doing
which develop historically because of somewhat isolated in-group
communication (Littlejohn, 1992). They differ among others due
to less contact between cultures than within cultures. Societies
consist of connected groups that cluster together according to
common beliefs, values and behavior. What really makes the
socio-cultural system is the interaction among its parts. Groups
and cultures are open systems sustained by communication, or
the transfer of information, among individuals in a collective.
Communication creates a network of relations among people
that comprises the structure of society. Groups vary to the extent
to which they share common ideas (Kincaid, 1987).

Culture is then a shared set of interpretations and rituals,
constituting a major structuring mechanism around which
human communities group. Constructs such as shared history,
religion, political understanding, values and general ways of
knowing are some of the ideological threads holding cultures
together. This is not to say that culture is monolithic; instead, it
is viewed as the set of commonalities binding a particular social
group together. Cultural structures are dynamic in as much as
there is not a complete homogeneity within cultures; those
members or subgroups who do not entirely fit within the
structures (i.e. dissenters, minority groups) of the cultural belief

system, may act as agents of change as their differences serve as a catalyst through which the culture experiences shift and flux as it aims to continue unifying the grouping (Gramsci in Manacorda, 1996). In addition to internal agents of change impacting on the dynamics of cultural life, there are also outside catalysts which exert pressure for the culture to shift, accommodate and adapt; examples of this include the various forms of global mass media as mentioned above.

Henry Giroux (1981) views culture as being embedded in the dynamics of class, power and conflict. He argues that the distinction between 'power' and 'culture' is false. His politicized notion of culture includes the dialectical character of the relationship between ideology and the socio-economic system. Culture, then, is more than an expression of shared experiences forged within the social and economic spheres of a given society; it is a complex realm of contending experiences mediated by power and struggle, and rooted in the structural opposition between the more and the less powerful. In the imposition of culture, power is used unequally to produce different meanings and practices, which reproduces a particular kind of society that functions in the interest of the dominant classes. This concept applies to both national cultures and to the 'culture' of the global paradigm which is quickly extending around the world. The notion that an individual or group can be 'cultured' is constructed around relations of power and subordination. As such, mass media, formal education, and other societal institutions reproduce the dominant culture in its hegemonic form (Giroux in López, 1997).

This understanding of culture as a structure of power relations might shed light on concern at the national and subnational levels pertaining to cultural shifts encouraged by global media messages. Power holders at the national level—who would determine the shape, values and norms of local culture— may find their control threatened by outside forces which could encourage change away from the way of life which has sustained stability and power relations within the polity. This in turn, might explain why national governments sometimes screen, edit, and ban material from outside deemed threatening to the continuation of local values, norms and traditions. The globalization process, which

may already compromise national economic and political autonomy, might also 'threaten' to change national ways of life. The I-SA posits that political, economic and social (cultural) control form part of the same overarching structures of hegemony and domination. The local authority then, may wish to resist external economic, political and social forces through a reiteration of national traditions and values as a means of encouraging unity and national identity. The aim, conscious or unconscious, may be for citizens within the polity to join together to resist the external messages which assail cultural traditions, *as well as political and economic aspects of national life.*

## Values

Shared values are one of the foundational structures around which human societies are built. The existence of 'values' within social groupings takes as its point of departure a dichotomized notion of the existence of 'good' and 'bad.' Different phenomena are placed, un/consciously by the historical collective, somewhere along the continuum of 'Good and Bad' upon which human values systems are structured (Burleson, 1989). These value-attached understandings of the world carry a great deal of affective weight with them. 'Good' behaviors on the part of children elicit positive feelings and feedback from the caretakers. Children (and adults) thus learn what is 'good' and 'bad' through the affective responses and feedback which conduct/behavior and other phenomena in the environment elicit from family members, teachers and others within the society in which they live. As children grow older and are increasingly able to understand abstracts, or non-tangible phenomena in the environment, they become very perceptive to the general sentiment or the value-laden tone with which adults respond in given situations. In addition to the outright teaching of values, which parents, religious and educational institutions do, these inherent messages about how the societal collective views, understands and values social phenomena are instilled very deeply within both the individual and the collective psyche.

Values are stored in the mind as cognitive and affective attachments to symbols and events, often placed on continua of

'good — bad,' 'virtuous – evil,' and other opposites which denote positive and negative valuing of phenomena and experiences encountered in the external environment (Burleson, 1989). These value constructions provide powerful guidelines for how things *should* be done, what should or should not be done, etc. Values, then, serve as a set of prescriptive guidelines (structures of weighing and understanding) which inform the manner in which people interpret, classify and respond to the 'shoulds' and 'shouldn'ts' of human behavior. Value attachments and their expression vary widely across cultures; however, the I-SA posits that cultures arising from major religious and philosophical traditions hold a series of core values in common, although these may be expressed in different forms across the diverse cultures.

## Taboo

Taboo constitutes a category of behaviors (including communicative acts) which are considered out of bounds, not to be done, nor discussed. Common areas where taboo abounds pertain, for example to religion, 'superstition,' and sexual behavior. Violation of taboo provokes powerful negative affective reactions toward actor/s believed to have caused the violation. Responses to the violation of taboo range from rejecting the violator's action, rejection of the person himself, to outright violent acts or arrest against the parties having transgressed the sacred boundary in question. Here again, in spite of stereotypical constructions which groups may hold toward others, the I-SA proposes that the great civilizational traditions share abundant commonalities concerning what is considered taboo and what is not. It would be useful to uncover the points of convergence concerning taboos (López, 1997), as well as discovering areas where actors might differ in what is seen as taboo and what is not. A study of this sort would help clarify what outside information conveyed by transnational media might be readily assimilated into national life, and what information may tend to be resisted. Power holders at the national level engage in this type of screening activity each time the censor and edit material entering national boundaries from outside sources.

## Stereotyping

Can humans avoid stereotyping each other? Since our memory and world knowledge stores are clustered around heuristic prototypes (López, 1990b), is it possible to avoid seeing our interlocutor through the stereotyped lenses evoked in our memory stores by the mere presence of the interlocutor? Level of experience in interaction with members of Group X—depending on both the nature of the interaction and on interpretations given through our filters— may reinforce, or they may help break down stereotypical notions concerning the other.

In Malaysia, for example, it's commonly heard that, 'Indians are like this...,' 'Chinese do this...,' 'Malays behave like that...' These 'truth' constructions come from one group's interpretations of the other, and are spread among, around and across cultural communities. When we encounter members of X group, we tend to unconsciously see and interpret them through the lenses of our information/misinformation stores in individual and collective memory (Fry and Fry, 1986).

Is there such a thing as a typical Indian? Chinese? Malay? Probably not, but humans tend to operate unconsciously on these embedded filters in memory store, which impact strongly on how we will interpret our interactions with the person, or that group of people (Burleson, 1989). All people hold within themselves the potential for a complete range of human characteristics, emotions, actions, etc. But if we look at how each group characterizes individual and collective others, we tend to find projections of the negative aspects of human beings cast on 'other.' How much do cultural communities define themselves in a positive manner, by casting negative human characteristics on 'other' and juxtaposing the collective self to the collective other, thus facilitating a positive casting of self?

For example, a commonly held 'truth' construction in some non-core countries may be that Western women are 'easy.' The way women are portrayed in many types of mass media, such as films, may facilitate this assumption. While it would be extremely subjective and value-laden to classify who in Western societies does or doesn't seem to fit the stereotype, its very existence gives rise to alarm and concern in nations whose values

system simply does not consider sexual freedom to be an option. Local authorities may go to great lengths in screening and editing information entering the country; their intention being to ensure that messages which may implicitly encourage what is locally deemed as unacceptable behavior is not presented through global mass media to the citizens of the polity.

### Further Discussion

To further explore the nature of transnational media penetration into non-core nations and local communities, it may be useful to examine the construct of nation state. We've long spoken of 'autonomous' nation states as a basic point of departure for our understanding of the human condition. Socio-political organization within the nation state aims to create a stable, peaceful environment where a diverse population will be content enough, will have their basic needs met, so as not to threaten the existing social order. The structuring of society along race, class and gender lines aims to be so ordinary and everyday as to be invisible to the conscious mind. In this manner, people tend not to consciously think about the nature of the society in which they are immersed, neither questioning nor disputing existing social, political and economic arrangements. However, human organizational structures inherently create patterns of super-ordination and subordination. Those in the super-ordinate positions are not likely to rebel, as their lot in life is not stifled nor limited by the existing structures; rather, it is favored by placing these members of society in a position of privilege within the given system. When dissent does arise within a polity or other type of human grouping, it usually comes from those members who are in a subordinated position within their given nation or community, and who feel that their position is somehow unacceptable.

In any nation state, there are relatively small numbers of actors in positions of power and privilege; yet the majority of those ruled do not tend to become politicized and dissent. Why is it that there are relatively small numbers among the ruled who choose to oppose or dissent against the national power system?

Both Liberal and Critical economic analysis would say that

the polity or the cultural structure must provide an acceptable level of material sustenance for individuals and families in order to maintain social stability. Another factor, not seen, and thus usually not discussed, lies in the 'reality constructions' that we as individuals and as members of human society have internalized to the extent of calling them 'good' or 'virtuous,' 'correct' or 'sacred' and so on.

At the group level, societal leaders often construct, become conscious of, and are able to articulate understandings of the 'desired collective selves' through a juxtaposition with 'other.' It is through the contrasting of local world views, values and inherent beliefs with those of others that people are able to bring to light and articulate our own implicit understandings. When these implicit, largely unconsciously held 'truth structures' are not gone against through living in a community where they are fairly uniformly held by the collective, they tend to remain unchallenged and, thus, largely invisible to ourselves and others. It is often when something goes against our internalized assumptions concerning good, bad, fair, etc., that members of the collective are able to consciously see what is valued within local society. In the case of non-core countries faced with incoming information presented by transnational media, those values and traditions felt to be threatened by the incursion of outside messages become more clearly articulated. A common reaction is for leaders to implement a 'back to the basics/ fundamentals' type of response in an attempt to reiterate and preserve the *status quo* as expressed through traditions and values. The perceived threat to way of life is generally accompanied by a threat to remaining threads of political and economic 'autonomy' as the globalization process moves forward. The I-SA posits that cultural, political and economic change impelled by outside forces is all part of the very same structures of globalization. The ideological aspects of shift—in values, traditions, etc.—constitute only one foundational aspect of the larger politico-economic shifts occurring both within and outside of Country Y.

Focusing on ideological shift—of primary interest in Ideological-Structural Analysis—it is believed that definition and articulation of the collective self often occurs through implicit

juxtaposition with other. Furthermore, the articulations which arise seem to construct the collective in an idealized fashion — 'what we *should be* as a society,' while placing the anti-values on other. While the potential for 'good' and 'bad' (however defined) exists in all human communities, nations choosing to adhere to non-secular moral and ethical foundations may be particularly challenged as global capitalism's imperative toward expansion may not obey the 'rules' largely held in that particular society. Global corporate interests claim to use media to enhance the free flow of information and to offer goods on Country Y's markets, which the non-core country might wish to keep more under local control. Global economic and political actors may argue that the 'free flow of information,' presumed to be value neutral, is part of the universal democratic practice of freedom."

Rulers in Country Y may view this media usage as eroding its ethical and moral traditions, (as well as local markets). This socio-cultural erosion is feared to promote purportedly amoral, materialistic values, thus posing various threats to national society and way of life, i.e. increased divorce rates, the spread of AIDS, the disintegration of families, sexual promiscuity and, in general, the 'anti-values' found in the 'non-value neutral' global social and economic system. These phenomena, if not kept under control, could pose a threat to national stability and way of life, which are based on specific hierarchical social relations, values constructions and other collective understandings. To ensure stability, it is important that members of society do not overly question nor challenge social order existing at the national level. Global media messages standing outside the parameters of what is 'normal', by contrast or juxtaposition with local norms, tend to make people more consciously aware of the structures within which national society functions, i.e. implicit subjugation to the authority of national rulers, bosses, heads of household, community leaders, etc. National stability and *status quo* are better ensured if people do not question their place within the established order at the national and sub-national levels. Thus, it is important to legitimate structures of authority, both public and private, in order to ensure stability. The boundary of *nation state* serves as a powerful tool for constructing those structures of authority organizing societies and cultural communities.

If people are not to question nor dissent against local hierarchies of authority, it serves power interests at this level to construct the local collective identity as 'good' and the external social, political and economic force as something to be resisted as a threat to the virtues of life within the nation state. It thus becomes a 'moral struggle' which may serve to unite citizens within existing national and sub-national structures. This unification in reaction to an external threat serves to enhance stability and perpetuate the rule of national authorities.

## Some Final Reflections

To cast global mass media as a monolithic, amorphous entity would be entirely inaccurate. It would be equally erroneous to assume that there exists one overarching set of values, traditions and beliefs within any polity. However, there may be reason for concern about global media messages for those national actors wishing to maintain the *status quo*, and/or what is perceived to be 'the traditional ways of life.'

Country Y is just a case in point. Cultural shift, encouraged partially by global media and social networks, is occurring in countries and cultural communities throughout the world. The present 'global' phase of the world order is not the first outside force to cause shift in national and sub-national traditions. Cultures have always been fluid, dynamic and ever-changing, both from within and due to outside influences. Mercantile capitalism and colonialism are two of many examples of external penetration causing shift and disruption within societies. A primary difference now may be that fast-paced globalization, with its secular, consumerist mass-media messages—serves as a dynamic force/catalyst toward the homogenization of culture, precisely toward a more consumeristic, 'secular world culture.' The traditional ways, particularly in terms of values and local understandings of the role of the individual *vis-à-vis* the community, seem to be shifting toward the notion of the rights and property of the *individual* as the overarching 'values.' Members of nations and cultural communities which are aware of the direction of this shift, may be able to make conscious and informed decisions about what they wish to harness from the

globalizing world, as well as what they would decide to reshape—if possible—in order to preserve those aspects of community which they deem essential to values, collective identity and the conservation of a world view and belief system that each community wishes to reserve the right to decide.

External media messages surely serve as agents in the process of cultural shift. They may encourage change in ways which the power holders and others in local societies feel are not for the general good. The present analysis began with a brief description of how the *Navidad* season is gradually shifting to look more and more like media images of 'Christmas,' as promoted by market strategists who find Santa Claus useful for selling toys and gifts, while religious aspects of the season may fall increasingly into the background. Other areas of concern in segments of traditional Catholic societies pertain, for example, to messages which may encourage sexual behaviors not accepted by the local religious and moral codes.

There are dynamic forces both within and outside national society which serve as impulses for change. Nations wishing to conserve their own traditions are faced with challenges as global media messages penetrate into millions of homes, computers and minds. This widening incursion into national culture and language occurs simultaneously with the ever-greater transnational presence in the country's economic and political life. The Ideological-Structural Analysis suggests that cultural penetration is part and parcel of the same globalizing structures which are changing the shape of economic and political life in non-core nations around the world. It is the author's hope that each nation will be able to capture those aspects of the globalization process which are best suited to their ways of life.

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