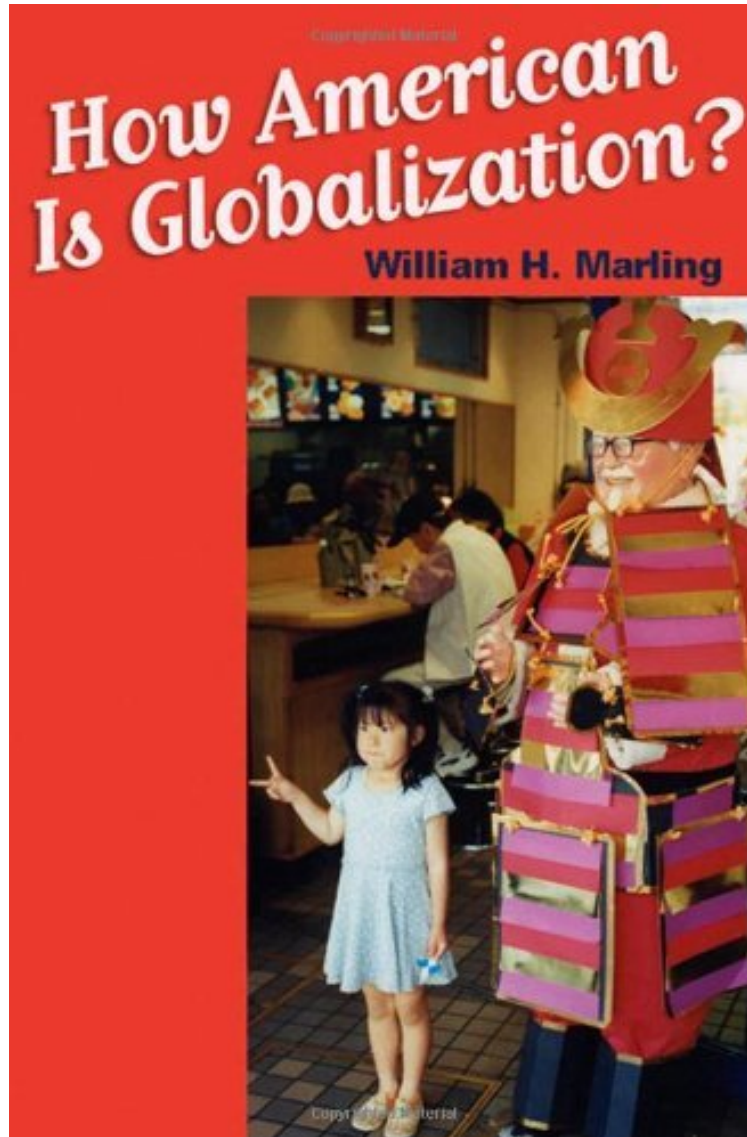


(Download pdf) How quot;Americanquot; Is Globalization?

## How quot;Americanquot; Is Globalization?

*William H. Marling*

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**William H. Marling : How quot;Americanquot; Is Globalization?** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised How quot;Americanquot; Is Globalization?:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Opened my eyes to new--to me--perspectives on globalization. Balanced, unbiased and backed up with facts, quotes, etc.By alfranco918Most books I've read about globalization seem to have already reached their opinion, and are sharing it with the reader. While reading this book, I felt like I was having a conversation with someone who knows a lot more about globalization than me, and they were sharing their own thought processes that led them to their opinions.There are many facts that support opinions--some of which may

have changed since 2003-2004 (most facts and statistics listed are from those years)--but it is the deeper perspective and opinions that are valuable. After reading this book, I feel that I put my time to good use and expanded my own world view.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars  
By Nadine B  
Very good book, served its purpose for my intensive writing class.  
2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Highly useful in a time of too biased anti-americanism  
By D. O. Huseby  
1. Introduction  
William H. Marling is a professor in English- and world literature at Case Western Reserve University. He has worked as a financial journalist for Fortune and Money magazines and has between 1982 and 2002 taught at universities in Spain, France, Japan and Austria. These professorships, in addition to visits to many other countries for shorter periods of time have built the empirical basis for this book, his primary sources. But he also consults with highly regarded (and sometimes disputed) authors such as Inglehart and Hofstede as to provide for more theoretical approaches and fundamentals. Marling has however chosen to focus mainly on three countries for comparing US influence, namely Mexico, France and Japan. His rationale for this book is to, as the title indicate analyse "How "American" Is Globalization?", that is to challenge or at least investigate the assumption that globalization is an American driven and valued trend. He finds this interesting because a lot of anti-American agitators criticise the American influence on societies in the modern world, but Marling is more of an opinion that this trend of American culture diffusion is possible only because of the contemporary global modernization trend, and more importantly that this trend not necessarily just preach American values. He is however not totally unaware that there is American influence on parts of the world society and therefore part his book into two main parts ("Less Than We Think" and "More Than We Know") with a middle part complementing the first part (The Resistance of the Local). He first seek to give examples for how little American cultural values globalization actually exhibit, then goes on to give a general oversight over the mechanisms that makes the local cultures so resistant to fundamental change. Last he gives examples of the parts of society that actually is influenced by American values, and these are in addition not that visible either. He is generally positive towards the contemporary influence of globalisation as in many aspects see its development of societies throughout the world as an valuable asset for the worlds general modernisation, progress and prosperity, and seem to avoid the more negative effects of globalisation, namely unemployment and violation of workers rights, pollution, ruthless exploitation of resources and so on. But this is essentially not his goal with this book either as his main task is to show how surprisingly little American culture that globalisation actually exhibit in the end, even though the US is one of the main drivers of globalisation.

2. "Less Than We Think"  
Marling's first part brings up his notion of a biased anti-American world view where critics only seems to emphasis the moments and events that is typically foreign (read: American) in other countries, not taking into consideration the other country specific peculiarities that is quite common for the country in question and to the degree that these actually in reality overshadow the American impact (Marlin 2006: 1). American logos for restaurants and fast food chains are some of the most known symbols for this trend and therefore also subject to much critique as symbols of American cultural imperialism. But the matter of fact is that even though American created logos are visible in many foreign countries, one can usually only recognize a few as American of the over hundred logos. This brings him to the actual content of logos, and the meaning behind them. Logos has to create some sort of resonance to have the wanted effect (that is to advertise for some product), but this volatile resonance changes the meaning in different cultures and contexts simply because of cultural differences. The want for shoes in Mexico can for example be driven by a want to have shoes (as a statues symbol, simply because not everyone has shoes) rather than having shoes of a certain brand (Ibid: 2ff). An interesting point here is also the English language which is said by many critics to be spreading more broadly and becoming the new lingua franca. But this is only partly true, and that is in business and research where it is a dominant language, but the matter of fact is that languages has come and gone at all times and this time is no different. Other languages is also used to a greater degree than English, both as native- and second-language, for example Mandarin, Hindi, Spanish et. al. English has mostly only remained dominant in Anglophone areas of the world, and standardized languages are increasing and reaching new highs. In relation to English used in business, science and education it is also just English as a limited tool to manage and understand technicalities of some sort of professional information, not as a form of socialisation (or colonialization), and at the local level English is also devoid of American or English cultural meaning, it get mixed and strongly coloured by the local environment (Ibid: 7ff). Pop culture in general are also not necessary a part in a cultural imperialistic crusade. Take Hollywood for example where it is today more and more common for different film studios of different nationality to cooperate on projects, do the filming abroad, using local workforce and so on. The typical block buster movies are now also increasingly made so to try it to fit in as many regions of the world as possible, the message of the film has to be simple and understandable for both conservative Poles and liberal Americans alike so they can identify themselves with the content. There is therefore little room for a tirade of American values pushed on any country one wishes, it will be met with strong reactions on local levels. American film is now therefore also just another competitor to other countries film industries. The same goes for television where local oriented programs and shows has manifested itself, and the content of American programs and TV shows are holed out to adapt to other regions, Donald Duck is a different duck from country to country. English is not the dominant language on the internet either any more as more an more language different regions gain access to the net, creating their own content. Actually internet is helping

preserve certain languages from being extinct (Ibid:18ff). Fast food is also not some American specific trend either, as many countries always have had some sort of fast food in their culture. McDonalds and the other American fast food chains are also not unique in the world realm as other countries like Japan and Great Britain also diffuse its fast food corporations throughout the world. McDonalds is not even the biggest fast food chain in the world that is the British Compass Group (Burger King, Sbarro and others). And even though the local McDonald franchises abroad have strict corporate statutes to follow they even encourage the local restaurants to have their own local specialities in addition to the traditional McDonalds food, and not just American burger and fries (Ibid: 51ff). In other industries US transnational companies dominate only a small portion of the world's industries, among these are oil, financial services, aviation and computing. But their dominance is only possible because of the large American domestic market which gives these just enough power to survive on the world market because the domestic market are protected from external economic shocks by quotas and antidumping laws (Ibid: 66ff).

3. The Resistance of the Local In part two of his book Marling tries to give general examples of how reluctant the world is to change on the local level. Globalisation and modernization does exist and influence the different regions, but the local customs and culture have essentially a hard time adapting to "foreign" influence. This reluctance span over all parts of the society, from language to food, from regional infrastructure to business habits and so on (Ibid: 81ff). Language and communication is an important aspect in this relation as many people learn other languages than their mother tongue (or *la langue maternelle* as Marling calls it), and that English is taking over as a sort of new lingua franca. The meaning and content of a secondary language is very difficult to learn in a way similar exhibited in the practise of the mother tongue, as this latter hold several cultural specific words and concepts that only persons who have learned this language from birth succeed to exercise sufficiently. The point made by Marling in relation to language is that he has a hard time accepting that English or any other lingua franca will displace the mother tongue. English is in many non-English speaking devoid of these cultural and value-laden particularities so important for inter-subjective communication (Ibid: 82ff). This goes for other cultural differences as well, as there is a communicative distance and barrier between societies that is manifest in for example different cuisines, gender and nationality (tribalism), education and work, how to create infrastructure, and business and economic conduct. These cultural specific characteristics is deeply rooted in the history of each society and defined throughout life in a self enforcing way, giving little room for reform and in this context globalisation. In other words, one has to see the global impact of American culture and influence in the light of this local reluctance to change, because even though globalisation influence and gives the regions of the world more and more options these options are highly manipulated and reconstructed to fit cultural and local preferences (Ibid: 84ff).

4. "More Than We Know" The third part of this book deals with the actual influence the US exhibit, and as the title of the chapter say, it is more than we know, even though it in many aspects is rather invisible to us. Marling describes the nature of ATM machines and other modern means of payment, which in many countries have different interfaces and producers which has adapted to the specific regions in question, but the underlying structure of having money available and easy to provide is an American cultural phenomenon. The US has also led the increasing use of money markets, which in Marling's notion means the individual's ability to invest its savings in portfolio investments (FPI), in different foreign (and national) funds, stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit etc. This has lead to increased investments in underdeveloped regions and is also closely accompanied by evolution of the computer industry to provide secure information for these investments to be most profitable and prevent losses (Ibid: 144ff). The American fiscal and commercial trends has also manifested itself in the flexible way corporations conduct its businesses around the world; changing production facilities, work stock and products quickly and highly sensitive to economic fluctuations; franchising out business with requirements of certain standards and rights for each franchise, mirroring American cultural values; using highly sophisticated and complexly composed logistical means such as air- and container freight to keep efficiency and productivity on an high level. And it is this last point that is the most important aspect of American influence for Marling, as the real influence and productive competitiveness is exercised through the methods globalization is sustained by, namely a highly effective system of logistics (Ibid: 152ff).

5. Conclusion In his concluding remarks Marling sum up the theme of this book by highlighting the reasons for the anti-American and after his own notion misperceived reality of the American status as globalization pioneer. The critics of "Americanization" which mainly is based in Marxist ideological frames so strongly expressed by Gramsci, Horkheimer, Ardorno and Marcuse in the 1930 miss the point of globalization by only focusing on the "dystopia of modernity", that is that western progress and modernization happens on the expense of the underdeveloped world. The critics seem not to respond to the fact that globalization in many aspects has led to increased prosperity in the world on a general basis, and that it is not only the underdeveloped world that gets influenced but also the industrialised and developed countries, such as the US which also is changing and where more and more foreign influence is exercised. But the local cultures are not necessarily destroyed because of this, they endure, adapt and recreate globalizations and modernizations new developments the best they can, leading to greater diversity (Ibid: 194ff).

William Marling's provocative work analyzes?in specific terms?the impacts of American technology and culture on foreign societies. Marling answers his own question?how "American" is globalization??with two seemingly

contradictory answers: "less than you think" and "more than you know." Deconstructing the myth of global Americanization, he argues that despite the typically American belief that the United States dominates foreign countries, the practical effects of "Americanization" amount to less than one might suppose. Critics point to the uneven popularity of McDonalds as a prime example of globalization and supposed American hegemony in the world. But Marling shows, in a series of case studies, that local cultures are intrinsically resilient and that local languages, eating habits, land use, education systems, and other social patterns determine the extent to which American culture is imported and adapted to native needs. He argues that globalization can actually accentuate local cultures, which often put their own imprint on what they import?from translating films and television into hundreds of languages to changing the menu at a McDonalds to include the Japanese favorite Chicken Tastuta. Marling also examines the unexpected ways in which American technology travels abroad: the technological transferability of the ATM, the practice of franchising, and "shop-floor" American innovations like shipping containers, bar codes, and computers. These technologies convey American attitudes about work, leisure, convenience, credit, and travel, but as Marling shows, they take root overseas in ways that are anything but "American."