

but the reader is forced to wonder whether those are the only choices available to viewers and consumers around the world. On the second issue, Barker concludes that television is a modern social structure that has disseminated a postmodern social form made up of a wide array of images—an electronic bricolage.

Barker also addresses the issue of whether television is guilty of cultural imperialism in shaping cultural identities around the world. Not surprisingly, while he sees some merit in the cultural imperialism model, he sees strong limitations in it and powerful support for the globalization thesis, which “suggests a less coherent, unified and directed process than cultural imperialism” (p. 201). And globalization suggests a movement away from the centrality of America and the West and toward more multidirectional flows and hybrid forms. All of this supports globalization theory generally and the idea of globalization more particularly.

From the point of view of contemporary social theory, this book can be seen as “politically correct.” It tends to side with postmodern and globalization theory rather than the seemingly more dated modern, Americanization, and westernization theories. It refuses to see actors and groups of people as mere pawns in the hands of larger forces. Barker’s case is fairly convincing, but I couldn’t help but come away with the feeling that the author greatly understates the continuing significance of modern social theory and the process of Americanization. Perhaps the problem lies in the fact that Barker feels he has to make some choices here when, in fact, it may well be that all the theories to some degree illuminate the character of global television. In the end, the real payoff of having a wide range of theories lies in their collective ability to enhance our understanding of global television (and much else), not in choosing one set of theoretical orientations rather than another.

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*How Nations Choose Product Standards and Standards Change Nations*, by Samuel Krislov. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997. 264 pp. \$45.00 cloth. ISBN: 0-8229-3969-X. \$19.95 paper. ISBN: 0-8229-5622-5.

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Raising the topic of standardization and

convention tends to bring up a few familiar questions: Why is it that we have the standards we do—such as driving on the right or using the QWERTY keyboard layout? What boundary constraints does the natural world impose on our conventions—is there one superior electrical plug shape, or a best number of hours in the day? In a world where it is now essential that e-mail from Mongolia and Minnesota use compatible character sets, the geographical scope of standardization is larger than ever before. How does this take place politically, and what are its economic effects? If we don’t like a convention, how do we change it? How do standards contribute to people’s sense of group identity? And how would we subgroup the family of phenomena that we refer to as standards and conventions?

The apparent triviality of these commonplace operating procedures of daily life understandably discourages scholars from considering them seriously. Discussing why clocks run clockwise distracts us from setting important appointments, just as the linguist who stops you every sentence to say something about the way you just spoke makes you forget what you were trying to say in the first place. Yet the writers who do present us with studies of railroad gauges, screw threads, egg grading, or the evolution of the typewriter keyboard layout know that everyday conventions are absolutely central to social life, that they reveal profound generalizations neatly and elegantly, and that their stories can be told well.

Hooray, then, for Samuel Krislov’s book on standardization. What most fascinates Krislov is *standards of quality*: how much fat is permitted in ground beef, how safe cars should be, what constitutes adequately shielded wiring conduit. These regulatory standards contrast roughly with what we could call *coordinative standards*, which permit all parties in an interaction to rely on their expectations of each other’s behavior: We all drive on the right (or the left) side of the road, start daylight saving time in April, read from left to right and top to bottom, and agree on how long a yardstick should be. For Krislov, product standards seem to be those that regulate and constrain the production of goods; they include quality standards plus those coordinative standards (like electrical plug shapes) that are important for manufacturers.

The book is divided into four parts. Part 1

is a historical and thematic primer on standards and standardization. Parts 2 and 3 discuss the history of product standards in America, Japan, Europe, and the former USSR. Part 4 is about how individual standards evolve and how standardization will change in the future. Krislov's account of the evolution of standards (pp. 201-14) might by itself make an excellent introduction to standardization in a course reading packet.

Krislov is interested in the relationships among law, regulation, government, and organizations. He is concerned about bureaucratic inertia in official standards organizations. He favors voluntary industrial standards over outright regulation, and prefers performance standards (i.e., product capability requirements) over design standards (specifying the exact form of a product). He points out how standards boundaries have affected political alliances and created strong and lasting trade barriers.

Krislov's focus on quality standards reflects that of national and international standards bodies, which spend very little time on basic coordinative standards these days. Thus the Canadian Standards Association's web page defines a standard as "a document that stipulates the requirements for the safety and/or performance or use of products, processes, and services." Unfortunately, Krislov does not really confront the diversity of the things we call "standards." This becomes a problem when he uses coordinative standards (which have more lay-reader appeal) as hooks or teasers to lead into discussions of product and quality standards or of regulation. The generalizations he makes are not always valid across the different categories.

It is unfortunate that Krislov's project seemingly did not allow him time to become an expert on very many individual standards. For example, although he brings up the issue of left- and right-hand drive over and over, he never mentions Peter Kincaid's comprehensive and easily accessible book *The Rule of the Road*. It is also unfortunate that Krislov does not articulate any general theory or definition of standardization, and fails to refer to such well-known scholars of convention as David Lewis and Thomas Schelling.

This book is about the politics and macroeconomics of product standards. But it reminds us, in passing, of many other things

that sociologically minded scholars can do with the general topic of standardization and convention. Scholars of organizations and bureaucracies will be interested in how standards bodies work. Social constructionists can show us how society's standard operating procedures become reified into facts of the natural world. Others will be more interested in how, when standards become symbols of groups and nations, they force us to state our identity and draw social boundaries. Many scholars have written theoretically informed books on calendars, weights and measures, and the like; it would be good to have more of these, as well as another book synthesizing these studies on a more abstract level. All these themes await the attention of sociologists with the gumption to explore this apparently trivial but ultimately vital area.

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*Resurgent Evangelicalism in the United States: Mapping Cultural Change since 1970*, by **Mark A. Shibley**. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996. 156 pp. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN: 1-57003-106-1.

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In writings about religion in America, the prospect of blending sociological and historical approaches has always held a great deal of promise, most of it unrealized. As a historian who has characterized himself in print as a "shadetree sociologist," I confess that my eyes begin to glaze when the rhetoric turns to percentages, coefficients, and ascriptive behavior. By the same token, however, too few sociologists have absorbed even the most rudimentary contours of history. Unfortunately, Mark A. Shibley's book, *Resurgent Evangelicalism in the United States: Mapping Cultural Change since 1970*, falls into this category.

Shibley sets out to test the so-called "southernization" thesis, which posits that the growth of evangelicalism in recent decades can be explained by the expansion of southern evangelicalism to regions outside of the South. Although this thesis apparently has some credence among sociologists, any historian worthy of the name could demolish it speedily by free associating the names of a few institutions and individuals: Wheaton College, Moody Bible Institute, Billy Sunday,