Popular Appeal versus Expert Judgments of Motion Pictures

MORRIS B. HOLBROOK*

Cultural commentators addressing the differences between high art and mere entertainment have suggested that the standards of popular appeal governing the tastes of ordinary consumers differ from the criteria for excellence employed by professional critics in rendering expert judgments. These concerns appear in discussions of the cultural hierarchy (distinguishing among levels of tastes) and in claims that commercialism tends to degrade cultural objects (by catering to tastes that represent the lowest common denominator). However, such attacks make assumptions that are generally left untested and that raise at least two key research questions: (RQ1) Do the determinants of popular appeal versus expert judgments suggest differing or common standards of evaluation for consumers versus critics? (RQ2) Do discrepant (shared) tastes produce a negative (positive) correlation between popular appeal and expert judgments? The present study addresses these research questions for the case of motion pictures. The findings suggest that, at least in the case of films, ordinary consumers and professional critics do emphasize different criteria in the formation of their tastes but that we have reason to question critiques based on the implicit assumption of a negative correlation between popular appeal and expert judgments.

Although ancient wisdom holds that there is no arguing about tastes, this slogan has not prevented sages, scholars, and social scientists from doing exactly that, repeatedly, ever since the dawn of Western civilization. Often, such debates have focused on the nature and determinants of tastes in entertainment or the arts and have hinged on two key assumptions related to two research questions that will be developed later. First, many commentators have posited the existence of a cultural hierarchy that extends between two poles—variously labeled as highbrow/lowbrow, elite or high culture/mass or pop culture, art/entertainment, or legitimate taste/popular taste—frequently concluding that certain cultural preferences (e.g., for painting or classical music vs. television or rock 'n' roll) reflect higher or more refined standards of evaluation. Second, many cultural commentators have asserted that the commercialism associated with a market-driven economy tends to drag the aesthetic and intellectual level of the arts and entertainment toward the lower end of the cultural hierarchy on the assumption that popular appeal is negatively correlated with creative excellence or artistic integrity so that, in an effort to achieve greater market success, the producers of popular culture tend to aim their offerings at the lowest common denominator of mass acceptance, thereby degrading cultural products by catering to the relatively uncultivated tastes of ordinary consumers (Brantlinger 1983; Halle 1993; Huyssen 1986; Ross 1989; Shrum 1996; Strinati 1995; Twitchell 1992; Zolberg 1990).

*Morris B. Holbrook is the William T. Dillard Professor of Marketing, Graduate School of Business, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027. The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the Columbia Business School's Faculty Research Fund. For an expanded review with a full set of references and a more complete description of the data, please contact the author: Morris B. Holbrook, Apartment 5H, 140 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10024; telephone: 212-873-7324; e-mail: mbh3@columbia.edu.

Issues Concerning the Cultural Hierarchy and Commercialism

The twin assumptions just described can be traced back at least as far as Plato and his concern that attempts to please the audience would debase the quality of theatrical productions (Brantlinger 1983). More recently and paradoxically, comparable viewpoints have characterized thinkers from otherwise divergent positions on both the ideological right and the political left. From the right, essentially conservative guardians of The Tradition (Harold Bloom, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, etc.) have harked back to such illustrious predecessors as Matthew Arnold to prize a canon of acknowledged masterpieces and to deplore inroads made by the mass media. For example, rather flamboyantly, Ortega y Gasset (1932) accused ordinary consumers of lacking cultivation and blamed popular taste for dragging cultural products down to the level of the hoi polloi. Meanwhile, from the political left, Marxists, such as those from the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, etc.), have offered an equally negative assessment of mass culture under a capitalist system. This leftist viewpoint attacks popular entertainment as an embodiment of the evils found

in mass production—formulaic repetition, stereotyping, standardization, and so forth—tending to lull audience members into a false consciousness based on a commodity fetishism that reflects the dominant ideology of the capitalist masters (Gartman 1991).

In late twentieth-century America, these rightist and leftist extremes have converged in the relatively mainstream critiques offered by any number of cultural commentators (e.g., Hughes 1993; Twitchell 1992). In essence, such intellectuals have adopted the position that what possesses enduring value or artistic excellence cannot in principle achieve popularity or commercial success and vice versa. As perhaps the most voluble of these cultural critics, Macdonald (1957) proposed a sort of Gresham's Law of Culture, wherein the bad drives out the good precisely because the inferior is easier to understand and enjoy, so that the resulting products of commercial communication tend to pander to the lowest level in tastes. Similar critiques of commercialism or commodification have concerned a host of comparable cultural commentators.

Responses to the cultural debates just described have taken a variety of forms. Some thinkers cover their discomfort over the inherently elitist nature of the cultural hierarchy by drawing on humor to make fun of kitsch, schlock, or other forms of popular art in ways that sometimes seem to border on secret admiration (Stern and Stern 1990). When such a secret admiration goes public, it becomes camp (Sontag 1966) and, via ironic detachment (Ross 1989), may elevate the celebration of vulgarity to the level of (reverse) snobbery (Pattison 1987). Where adopted by various subcultures (punks, gays, feminists, etc.), such manifestations of resistance against the dominant culture typify an emerging postmodern ethos that has increasingly challenged the cultural hierarchy and its attendant issues of commercialism by blurring or effacing the boundaries between high and low, elite and vulgar, serious and popular, or art and entertainment (Crane 1992; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Huyssen 1986; Jameson 1983; Zolberg 1990, 1992). Another signal aspect of the postmodern ethos concerns its relativism regarding questions of truth and value (Lyotard 1984). Such relativism has provided an escape clause for scholars whose impulses toward egalitarianism clash with the hierarchical implications of the cultural continuum (Gans 1974).

A more normatively disengaged and therefore scientifically respectable way to deal with the question of the cultural hierarchy and the problem of commercialism is to adopt a descriptive, distanced, nonprescriptive stance (Zolberg 1990). One such posture traces the historical emergence of the cultural hierarchy to the impetus toward social stratification via which members of the upper classes cultivated high culture and sacralized the fine arts as consumption-related status markers by which they could advantageously distinguish themselves from members of the lower classes (DiMaggio 1992; Levine 1988). Still pursuing the descriptive side of cultural research, this link between class status and the cultural hierarchy has received attention in numerous empirical studies. Collectively, such studies have established a clear and pervasive connection between education and an appreciation for high culture (DiMaggio, Useem, and Brown 1978; Gans 1974; Zolberg 1992). Further, researchers have presented arguments and evidence to suggest that cultural tastes serve as socially constructed sources of distinction in the struggle for class-based status (Bourdieu 1984, p. 228), again, with a major portion of this phenomenon attributable to the role of education in reproducing class boundaries (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 387; Gartman 1991; Johnson 1993).

According to Bourdieu (1984, p. 170; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), members of a given social class are characterized by a habitus, a lifestyle-shaping "generative principle" that governs dispositions to prefer certain cultural objects whose appreciation helps to confer class-based distinctions. In part, the habitus results from some combination of economic capital (wealth, income) and cultural capital (family, friends, education, training). By helping to enculturate class members into a set of essentially arbitrary tastes that serve as the basis for class distinctions and by operating through the habitus in the form of various mediating dispositions, such cultural capital works toward reproducing the very class structure on which the acquisition of cultural capital itself depends in the first place, thereby perpetuating a sort of self-reinforcing cycle (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Via this potentially misrecognized, unintended, or even unconscious process—whereby various cultural preferences (food, clothing, housing, sports, hobbies, vacations, the arts, entertainment, etc.) reflect class-related lifestyles—homologous hierarchies of tastes embody a form of symbolic violence that preserves the prevailing class distinctions (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Gartman 1991; Holt 1998; Swartz 1997).

Beyond such sociological theorizing, one of Bourdieu's most telling contributions has involved collecting and presenting a wealth of empirical data to support the homologous system of cultural tastes just described—for example, the tendency of those higher versus lower in occupational status to prefer Bach fugues to Strauss waltzes (Bourdieu 1984, p. 14). This work has inspired a trend toward empirical studies aimed at examining the homologous class-related differences in tastes for music (Peterson and Simkus 1992), the fine arts (Lindauer 1991; Winston 1995), and diverse objects of household consumption (Holt 1998). Although such studies appear generally supportive of the emphasis placed by Bourdieu on the importance of cultural capital as a taste-shaping engine, other empirical research has indicated reasons to question some aspects of the Bourdieusian analysis in general (Gartman 1991) and its extension from France to the United States in particular (Erickson 1996; Hall 1992; Halle 1993; Lamont 1992; Shrum 1996; cf. Holt 1998).

Further, the aforementioned empirical work has left certain lacunae in our understanding of socially constructed cultural taste preferences. For example, few empirical studies appear to have examined the correlates of taste preferences at the same level of specificity implied by Bourdieu's comparisons of, for example, *Le Monde* with *France-Soir*

(Bourdieu 1986, p. 144) or George Brassens with Petula Clark (Bourdieu 1984, p. 14). Rather, most of the available research has focused on more coarse-grained distinctions, for example, between country and classical music (Peterson and Simkus 1992), abstract and representational paintings (Halle 1993), or books and sports (Erickson 1996). Because most of this empirical work has dealt with differences in tastes among categories or between genres, we lack clear answers to questions such as those raised earlier concerning within-category or genre-specific taste hierarchies, possibly divergent determinants of preferences or different standards of evaluation, and the potential ill-effects of commercialism (cf. the focus on embodied tastes pursued by Holt [1998]). The present study addresses such concerns in the context of the two key assumptions with which I began.

Conceptualization of the Cultural Field

These concerns lead me to consider a conceptualization closely related to issues involving the cultural hierarchy and the problem of commercialism but push the discussion in the direction of a more specific focus on one or more areas of cultural specialization concerned with particular cultural objects or specific works within a subfield (cf. Shrum 1996). In this connection, it appears that Bourdieu's concept of the cultural field (1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1993; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992)—viewed by at least one interpreter as "of all his concepts . . . the least well understood and yet the most promising" (Swartz 1997, p. 291)—carries considerable relevance to the issues at hand (Erickson 1996; Hall 1992; Holt 1998; Johnson 1993; Lamont 1992; Lamont and Fournier 1992). Specifically, my intended focus concerns a relational field involving the domain of tastes in some competitive cultural arena, such as literature, the fine arts, music, theater, journalism, television, or motion pictures. In such a field (as in all others), a struggle for power, distinction, legitimacy, or control over key resources inevitably occurs (albeit, perhaps, at an unconscious level) in the form of a contest for position based on field-specific capital (Bourdieu 1984, p. 113) via "a game in which the conquest of cultural legitimacy . . . is at stake" (Bourdieu 1985, p. 40) or via "competition . . . in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in [that] artistic field" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 17). Thus, in Bourdieu's view, this capital-based competition for legitimacy within a cultural field parallels the struggle for class distinction associated with different capital-based criteria that occurs at the level of society as a whole.

Within a cultural field, the relevant participants include (among others) the artists or producers of works, the critics of these works, the audiences for the works, and even the works themselves (Bourdieu 1993; Johnson 1993). Differences in the relevant cultural capital of the various agents contribute to the differentiation of their social positions (Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo 1995). One term for this link between cultural capital and social position within a cultural field is connoisseurship (Bourdieu 1984, p. 66; Holt 1998, p. 15). Further—by virtue of attaining a large amount of specialized training, acquired expertise, artistic knowledge, and aesthetic experience in the relevant domain—certain connoisseurs possess a high level of pertinent cultural capital that legitimizes their competence to play a special (dominant) role such as that of professional critics offering expert judgments of worth by virtue of their "power to consecrate" and thereby "to give value" (Bourdieu 1986, p. 132). Empowered by their field-specific cultural competence, such professional critics or "agents of consecration" (Bourdieu 1985, p. 24) apply certain conventionally approved standards to their expert judgments concerning the merits of various cultural objects. Given the pervasive impetus toward establishing dominance by means of distinction, these standards differ from those employed by ordinary consumers and are accordingly recognized via a critical discourse through which "every critic declares not only his judgement of the work but also his claim to the right to talk about it and judge it" (Bourdieu 1983, p. 317).

Because the relevant field-specific cultural capital is "heterologous" (Hall 1992, p. 258), that is, differing in magnitude among "multiple cultural markets of distinction" (Hall 1992, p. 277) or between "relatively autonomous arenas of struggle for distinction" (Swartz 1997, p. 1), the ordinary consumers in question do not share in the relevant habitus governing the dispositions that guide the professional critic's standards of evaluation. Such specialized professional standards are autonomous or internal to the field, whereas those related to market success are heteronomous or external to the field (Bourdieu 1983, p. 319); the former pertain to a field of restricted production concerned with symbolic objects viewed in terms of their cultural value, the latter to a field of large-scale production concerned with commodities viewed in terms of their commercial value (Bourdieu 1985, p. 16; see also Anheier et al. 1995; Johnson 1993). Although the restricted-cultural-symbolic standards are socially constructed and inherently arbitrary, they are legitimated and reinforced by a field-specific hierarchy of homologous dominance relations (Bourdieu 1984, p. 232). One could tentatively represent the resulting system of binary oppositions as follows (Bourdieu 1983, 1984, 1986; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Swartz 1997):

- professional critics versus ordinary consumers,
- expert judgments versus popular appeal,
- extensive training versus naive appreciation,
- emphasis on aesthetics versus entertainment,
- genuine or pure versus commercial or commoditized art,
- highbrow versus lowbrow standards,
- elite versus mass tastes,
- legitimation versus market success,
- dominance via cultural capital versus economic capital,
- autonomous versus heteronomous principle, and
- restricted versus large-scale production.

Notice that the field of cultural production (of primary interest here) is viewed as separate from the field of class relations (Bourdieu 1985) but nevertheless as associated via

common principles of hierarchical dominance that establish "homologies between positions within the two fields" (p. 32). The result—looking across fields of culture, power, and class distinction—is a complex system of homologous parallelisms (Bourdieu 1984) or structures within structures (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Thus, the "whole social order" has its "ultimate source in the opposition between the 'élite' of the dominant and the 'mass' of the dominated" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 468) so that "the field of cultural production" is itself "organized around oppositions which reproduce the structure of the dominant class and are homologous to it" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 469). Specifically, "the opposition between a 'cultural' pole and a 'market' pole" results in "a series of structures within structures (type a:b::b1:b2)" (Bourdieu 1996, p. 94).

This set of homologies and homologies-within-homologies is central to the issues raised earlier concerning the cultural hierarchy and the problem of commercialism. Specifically, those who rail against the evils of commercialism tend to assume that a cultural object achieving success on the left (right) side of the bipolar oppositions just enumerated will tend to fail on the opposed right (left) side, that is, that a legitimate offering on the left will be complemented by its market-driven opposite on the right. Hence, speaking normatively, such cultural commentators have suggested that commercialism tends to direct cultural production toward catering to the lowbrow standards of mass tastes on the right at the expense of a sacrifice in excellence as viewed by the highbrow standards of elite tastes on the left. In other words, because the standards for evaluation are assumed to differ between critics and consumers, cultural commentators often infer the existence of a negative correlation between expert judgments and popular appeal.

Although Bourdieu in general does not overtly subscribe to the prescriptive aspects of these accounts, we might ask whether he shares their descriptive assumption. The answer appears to be that Bourdieu (1983, 1986, 1993) does indeed assume a "systematic inversion" (Johnson 1993, p. 15)—as when he explicitly posits a "negative relationship . . . between symbolic profit and economic profit" (Bourdieu 1983, p. 330), characterizes "the objective demands of the most advanced fraction of the field" as establishing "a negative correlation between success and true artistic value" (Bourdieu 1986, p. 152), or formulates a "fundamental law" involving "a negative correlation between temporal (notably financial) success and properly artistic value" (Bourdieu 1993, p. 164). For example, in the case of films, Bourdieu emphasizes "the oppositions found in the field of cinema . . . where the taste for 'ambitious' works that demand a large cultural investment is opposed to the taste for the most spectacular feature films, overtly designed to entertain" (Bourdieu 1984, p. 271).

Preview

Pursuing the conceptualization of a cultural field just developed and focusing only on those aspects of cultural capital that manifest themselves via the attainment of connoisseurship, I shall investigate two research questions (RQs) pertinent to the aforementioned issues concerning the cultural hierarchy and the problem of commercialism, in general, and to the key assumptions often made but seldom empirically tested by various cultural commentators, in particular. First (RQ1), I shall ask whether professional critics do in fact issue expert judgments based on standards that differ demonstrably from those embodied in the popular appeal evinced by ordinary consumers. Second (RQ2), I shall ask whether a negative correlation does in fact appear between expert judgments and popular appeal such that commercialism aimed at attracting ordinary consumers might tend to alienate the tastes of professional critics. The oft-assumed premises underlying these two research questions are seldom if ever tested against data, especially not by those commentators who rely on them as a platform for sweeping attacks on pop culture or the mass media. As the primary motivation for the present article, I would advocate the relevance of empirical studies designed to assess the accuracy of the underlying rationale based on the presumed divergence between popular appeal and expert judgments.

TOWARD SOME EMPIRICALLY ADDRESSABLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Tastes, Popular Appeal, and Expert Judgments

Clearly, many competing definitions exist—some of them quite controversial—for the concept of tastes. Following Jones (1991), I shall regard taste as a normatively neutral concept—roughly equivalent to what is meant by preference. As applied to cultural offerings (e.g., entertainment or the arts), I shall focus on two main expressions of potentially different cultural tastes, namely, popular appeal (preferences of ordinary consumers) and expert judgments (preferences of professional critics). This raises the question of whether and how the standards underlying such inherently subjective tastes may or may not diverge between consumers and critics.

Generally, the professional critics who offer expert judgments are assumed to display familiarity with and consistency with the values of the gatekeepers, masters, or other cognoscenti conventionally empowered to determine what passes for excellence in a given cultural field (Bourdieu 1983, 1985, 1993; Gans 1974; Shrum 1996; Zolberg 1990). Inevitably, such specialized criteria are socially constructed and situational (i.e., time-based, culture-bound, field-specific, and context-dependent). These criteria, assimilated through extensive education or training, shape the legitimate or learned preferences of those experts who espouse the relevant artistic standards of judgment in a particular area. Typically, professional critics who presume to evaluate the works in question serve in an institutionalized capacity sanctioned by official appointments or by the support of various scholars, authorities, editors, or other people in power (Frye 1957; Gans 1974, 1992; Shrum 1996; Zolberg 1990).

By contrast, popular appeal reflects the preferences of

ordinary consumers who form the bulk of the general audience (the main body of people who determine market success). Clearly, it is this general audience that the aforementioned cultural commentators refer to when they dwell on issues concerning whether consumers and critics rely on different standards in the formation of tastes (as they tend to assume) and whether popular appeal therefore diverges from expert judgments (as they also infer).

Research Questions

To address such issues concerning the distribution of tastes within a cultural field, the present study investigates the convergences or divergences between popular appeal to ordinary consumers and expert judgments by professional critics. In this connection, I view the present work as exploratory and aimed at theory development rather than theory testing. Toward that end, I examine two major RQs.

RQ1: Common versus Differing Standards of Evaluation. To explore the question of whether consumers and critics differ in their evaluative standards, I shall formulate regression models intended to explain variance in tastes across aesthetic objects for these two relevant audiences and shall perform tests of significance to ascertain where the weights assigned to various characteristics of these objects do and do not differ between the two explanatory models. I define common versus differing standards of evaluation operationally as the absence versus the presence of significant differences in explanatory preference models where those models are designed to account for variance in popular appeal as opposed to expert judgments. This leads to RQ1: What are the determinants of popular appeal as opposed to expert judgments, and are these standards of evaluation held in common or do they differ significantly in determining the tastes of ordinary consumers versus professional critics? Notice that there appears to be little systematic empirical evidence bearing on RQ1. True, Bourdieu and his followers have undertaken large-scale surveys of how economic and cultural capital are connected with patterns of tastes. However, with rare exceptions (Lindauer 1991; Winston 1995), there appear to exist fewer cases of empirical work comparing consumers with critics in particular cultural fields. Accordingly, one purpose of the present study is to pursue the task of building such a foundation in the context of appreciative responses to films.

RQ2: Shared versus Discrepant Tastes. Operationally, I shall define shared versus discrepant tastes between ordinary consumers and professional critics as a positive versus negative correlation between popular appeal and expert judgments. This leads to RQ2: Do shared tastes appear in the form of a systematic positive correlation (across objects) between popular appeal and expert judgments or, conversely, do discrepant tastes appear in the form of a negative correlation? Many of the cultural commentators reviewed earlier have assumed such correlations to be negative, in accord with their focus on the cultural hierarchy (high vs. low culture) and/or their critique of commercialism (preserving highbrow artistic integrity versus catering to lowbrow mass tastes). I shall address the degree of shared versus discrepant tastes between consumers and critics by examining one major illustration, namely, the case of motion pictures.

THE CASE OF MOTION PICTURES

Popular Appeal and Expert Judgments

With reference to motion pictures, various scholars have emphasized the contrast between reviewing and criticism (Sarris 1976), between (scholarly) critics and (journalistic) reviewers (Brown 1978), between the elitist critic and the consumer reporter (Austin 1989, p. 70), or between the professional critic and the journalistic reviewer (Shrum 1991, p. 351, 1996, chap. 2). This distinction is crucial to the present research in that I focus primarily on the expert judgments of professional critics, defined as those who assess the artistic success of films from a relatively detached and long-term perspective that focuses on accepted standards for excellence—as opposed to the opinions of journalistic reviewers, defined as those writers and broadcasters who are concerned with the day-to-day task of recommending certain films to a readership and viewership whose tastes they themselves may well be eager to please or at least not to offend. In other words, critics would typically uphold aesthetic criteria associated with a field-specific training or education, while reviewers might well focus on honoring the known proclivities of their audience by anticipating what its members would like and making recommendations accordingly (cf. Bourdieu 1986, p. 142; Frye 1957, p. 3).

Surveys of movie reviewers and empirical studies addressing the link between favorable reviews and audience acceptance have produced mixed results, some showing no clear connection, others a positive relationship. However, most such studies have tended to focus on the journalistic reviews that appear in the media upon the release of a film and that may thereby influence or anticipate popularity. On the issue more central to RQ2 concerning shared versus discrepant tastes between ordinary consumers and professional critics, little relevant systematic empirical evidence has appeared in the literature (cf. Wallace, Seigerman, and Holbrook 1993).

Working Hypotheses Concerning Standards of Evaluation and Movie Characteristics

With respect to RQ1 and consistent with my conceptualization of the cultural field, I rely on the general proposition—à la Bourdieu and others—that ordinary consumers prefer entertainment that is more readily accessible, easier to assimilate, and less demanding in the difficulties it poses; whereas professional critics gravitate toward more challenging artworks of higher complexity, greater difficulty, and more intellectually taxing demands. In the case of motion pictures, this distinction would apply with special force to the extent to which a film is more realistic versus abstract

(Nichols 1976, pp. 378–459, 1985, pp. 29–161), that is, more referential in its representation of the everyday world versus analytic in its tendency to examine, question, or suspend conventional assumptions concerning ordinary experience (Holt 1998, p. 9). This conceptualization suggests that certain measurable movie characteristics, especially those indicative of a film's *vraisemblance* or grounding in "ordinary life" (Nichols 1985, p. 153), might serve as proxies or surrogates for the evaluative standards likely to appeal to consumers versus critics. I shall operationalize these relevant movie characteristics in the form of six working hypotheses (WHs).

WH1: Objectionability and Exploitation. Ratings of films on their appropriateness for general audiences (e.g., the Motion Picture Association of America [MPAA] "G" and "R" ratings) appear to signal their likely acceptability to consumers versus critics (Austin 1989; Wallace et al. 1993). For example, certain films that graphically portray violence or that contain explicit sexual material may achieve artistic effects admired in the abstract by professional critics even while their challenging content may tend to disturb ordinary consumers, to conflict with the mainstream worldview, or to alienate parents protective of younger family members (Holt 1998, p. 10). Accordingly, WH1 suggests that popular appeal versus expert judgments might tend to respond more favorably or less negatively to more wholesome or familiar content versus content higher in objectionable violence or exploitative sexual material.

WH2: Genres—Family, Comedy, Drama, Musical, Sci-Fi, Western. It also appears likely that, by virtue of a greater versus lesser grounding in realism, some movie genres tend to be more accessible and easier to assimilate, whereas others typically prove more challenging or intellectually taxing (Nichols 1976, pp. 107–175, 1985, pp. 89, 165–300). Further, a devotion to certain genres as opposed to an appreciation for more eclectic genre-crossing styles might tend to characterize those with lower versus higher levels of field-specific cultural capital (Holt 1998, p. 16). Accordingly, it seems plausible to propose as WH2 that some genres (e.g., family entertainment) versus other genres (e.g., sci-fi) would tend to appeal more strongly to consumers versus critics.

WH3: Country of Origin and Language—United States, British, Foreign Language. In general, it seems reasonable to assume that many or most studio-produced American films aspire to the sort of mass appeal or blockbuster stature associated with commercial success, whereas many British or other foreign films that make it to this country cater more to the art-house crowd or to other more specialized audiences (Austin 1989; Nichols 1976, pp. 178, 205, 240, 531; Wallace et al. 1993). Also, almost by definition, non-U.S. films are likely to contain more exotic material less connected with familiar everyday reality and therefore less prized by consumers with lower levels of field-specific cultural capital (Holt 1998, p. 12). Further, films shot in foreign languages tend to challenge viewers with difficulties owing to reading subtitles or following dubbed dialogue in which sounds do not realistically match lip movements (Nichols 1976, p. 241, 1985, pp. 173, 529, 567). All these factors tend to make U.S. films more conventionally realistic, more accessible, and easier to assimilate. Hence, WH3 suggests that consumers versus critics will tend to respond more favorably to U.S. versus foreign films.

WH4: Color, Length, Year. Certain film characteristics tend to make them more realistic versus abstract, more spectacular versus subtle in their impact, more current versus classic in their temporal orientation, and, for all these reasons, more easy to assimilate versus intellectually challenging so that they tend to appeal more strongly to ordinary consumers versus professional critics (Holt 1998; Klawans 1990; Wallace et al. 1993). More specifically, color versus black-and-white (B&W) is directly associated with greater versus lesser realism (Nichols 1985, pp. 91, 121, 135). Longer duration might tend to reflect an orientation toward the sorts of spectacular visual effects associated with the blockbuster mentality. And recency in years might signal a preoccupation with the kinds of current everyday experiences typically read by mass-cultural consumers as expressing their self-understandings or speaking to their lives (Holt 1998, p. 15). Accordingly, WH4 proposes that newer and longer movies in color versus older and more compact B&W films will cater more strongly to popular appeal versus expert judgments.

WH5: Artists, Stars, Directors. It makes sense to suppose that certain directorial or artistic styles would lean more toward realistic referentiality or easy accessibility versus formalist abstraction or difficult complexity (Holt 1998, p. 4; Nichols 1976, pp. 221–309). In this connection, numerous studies have tested the widespread assumption that certain actors, actresses, or directors contribute to the box-office success of the motion pictures in which they appear, but with mixed results (Austin 1989; Wallace et al. 1993). Given this inconclusive pattern of findings, I could not formulate a priori hypotheses concerning which personalities would register higher in popular appeal or expert judgments. Thus, considering the present study exploratory in this respect, I searched (via a process described later) for the relevant personalities that might support WH5 to the effect that certain bankable stars versus other acclaimed artists or directors would appeal more strongly to consumers versus critics.

WH6: Awards. In representing the field-specific artistic knowledge and aesthetic sensibilities of the practitioners who produce motion pictures, it appears reasonable to take the annual Academy Awards as a formalized expression of industry opinion regarding the reputation for excellence that a film enjoys within the relevant cultural field. Thus, despite various possible distortions or biases in the awards process, scholarly opinion tends to regard the Oscars as "an *institutionalized* measure of film quality" or "a legitimate yardstick of film excellence" (Levy 1990, p. 330). The aforementioned logic of the cultural field suggests that this

measure of value might predict more favorable ratings from professional critics attuned to abstract formal properties or challenging complexity than from ordinary consumers more concerned with realism or easy accessibility. It is true that Oscar nominations and awards are used to market films that win approval from the Motion Picture Academy and, indeed, that Academy Awards exert a measurable effect on short-run market success (Dodds and Holbrook 1988). However, it seems plausible to assume that long-run audience popularity would be less dependent than would long-run critical evaluations on excellence as measured by the Academy Awards. Accordingly, WH6 proposes that, although cinematic excellence as reflected by Oscar awards might be positively valued by both consumers and critics, it should more strongly explain expert judgments versus popular appeal.

METHOD

Sample

My sample of motion pictures came from the roughly 5,000 films represented in the popularity polls of its viewers conducted by Home Box Office (HBO) and reported in *HBO's Guide to Movies on Video-Cassette and Cable TV* (HBO 1989). From this population of films, a sample of 1,000 movies was selected in a manner that included (1) only films released before 1986; of these, (2) those that had won an Academy Award in any of six major categories; (3) those that had been listed as a box-office hit by Finler (1988) or Sackett (1990); (4) those that had been named among the 100 top critical favorites by Kobal (1988); (5) those that had appeared on the American Film Institute's list of top-10 movies, the British Film Institute's list of top-30 movies, or the best-movie award lists of the British Film Academy, the New York Film Critics, or the National Board of Review; and (6) an additional 384 HBO films selected at random until a sample size of 1,000 was obtained.

Key Variables and Measures

Popular Appeal. My primary measure of popular appeal comes from satisfaction surveys conducted by HBO (1989) after every screening by polling randomly selected viewers to record the preferences of "the mainstream audience" (p. iv). The resulting HBO viewer-preference ratings range along a six-position scale from zero stars ("not recommended") to five stars ("excellent"). Note that, although this measure of popular appeal is itself a single-item index, it reflects a condensation of data based on large sample sizes and therefore doubtless possesses a fairly high degree of reliability by conventional marketing-research criteria. Further, because it is based on randomly selected viewers who have watched the films on HBO, it can safely be assumed to represent the tastes of ordinary consumers (popular appeal) rather than the preferences of those with higher levels of field-specific cultural capital (expert judgments). To validate the HBO ratings against an independent assessment of popularity, I composed an additional three-item popularity index based on whether a film achieved audience acceptance as determined by its inclusion in the lists compiled by (1) Finler (1988), (2) Sackett (1990), and/or (3) *Consumer Reports* (Blades 1986). The resulting summative popularity index was based on three zero-one variables, applied to 831 films, could be tested directly for reliability via KR-20 or Cronbach's alpha, and could be used as a validation criterion to assess the convergent validity of the HBO-based measure of popular appeal.

Expert Judgments. My primary measure of expert judgments by professional critics was based on star-code ratings from six comprehensive movie guides from 1986 to 1989. These guides all present critical evaluations of from zero or one to four or five stars, typically with half-star increments in between, generally claiming that these ratings emanate from some panel of expert judges and that they are updated periodically to reflect evolving long-run assessments. The six separate critical evaluations were first standardized across films for each movie guide and were then combined into a summative six-item index of expert judgments. This index was checked for reliability (via Cronbach's α) and unidimensionality (via confirmatory factor analysis). To assess its validity, I compared it with an independent three-item index based on lists of greatest films compiled by (1) the American Film Institute, (2) the British Film Institute, and (3) Kobal (1988). The resulting three-item index of critical evaluation summed three zero-one variables, applied to 673 films, could be assessed for reliability via KR-20 or Cronbach's alpha, and was used as a criterion for the convergent validity of the aforementioned six-item index of expert judgments.

Movie Characteristics. As independent variables, keyed to the operationalized WHs described above, the present study employed the following measures of movie characteristics.

WH1: Objectionability and Exploitation. The six-position measure of objectionability utilized the parental recommendations provided by CineBooks (1989), which represent offensiveness due to such factors as graphic violence and which range from "good" (1) to "objectionable" (6) for children. The seven-item index of exploitation—based on summing the zero-one assessments by HBO (1989) of whether a film portrays rape, nudity, strong sexual material, adult situations, explicit language, adult humor, and/or violence—permitted an assessment of reliability via KR-20 or Cronbach's alpha. Objectionability versus exploitation were weighted more toward considerations of graphic violence versus sexual content, respectively. Hence, shared variance due to their multicollinearity was not so high that they could not both be included as predictors in the same regression ($r^2 = .34$, $N = 1{,}000$, $p < .0001$).

WH2: Genres—Family, Comedy, Drama, Musical, Sci-Fi, Western. Six effects-type dummy variables were coded −1/0/+1 to represent seven genre classifications provided by the movie guides—Family, Comedy, Drama, Musical, Sci-Fi, and

Western—with the remaining major category Action-Mystery-Adventure omitted to avoid perfect linear dependence among these categories. An independent check on the validity of these genre classifications was obtained via the genre designations provided by HBO (1989).

WH3: Country of Origin and Language: United States, British, Foreign Language. Country of origin, reflecting where a given film was produced (HBO 1989), does not necessarily correspond to the predominant language used in a given film, as reported by the movie guides. Accordingly, I combined these two pieces of information into four categories—United States, British, Foreign Language, and All-Other—represented by the effects-type coding (−1/0/+1) of three dummy variables.

WH4: Color, Length, Year. Using information from HBO, color (vs. B&W) was coded as a zero-one dummy variable, length was converted to minutes, year was standardized across films and represented both by its standardized score (year) and by the square of its standardized score (year-squared), with the standardization helping to reduce multicollinearity between the linear and quadratic terms to only $r^2 = .16$.

WH5: Artists, Stars, and Directors. Three dummy variables represented whether a film featured the creative talents of various favorably evaluated personalities (artists, stars, and directors). In the absence of a priori lists of such relevant personalities, I based these three variables on a systematic search to identify the relevant directors and performers. First, I coded multiple dummy variables to represent the 18 directors who had each directed 17 or more of the films contained in *HBO's Guide* (HBO 1989), plus Steven Spielberg; correlated these directors-based dummies with popular appeal and expert judgments; selected those with positive correlations significant at $p < .10$ or better; and combined these into a zero-one measure to represent whether a film was directed by Woody Allen, George Cukor, John Ford, Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, Sidney Lumet, Martin Ritt, Steven Spielberg, George Stevens, Billy Wilder, or William Wyler. Second, I coded dummy variables to represent performers appearing in 20 or more HBO films and again used a selection based on positive correlations significant at $p < .10$ or better to create two zero-one variables indicating the absence-presence in a film of various artists associated with favorable expert judgments (Humphrey Bogart, Gary Cooper, Walter Brennan, Donald Crisp, Henry Fonda, Cary Grant, Alec Guinness, Katharine Hepburn, Dustin Hoffman, William Holden, Diane Keaton, Grace Kelly, Burt Lancaster, Peter Lorre, James Mason, Claude Rains, George C. Scott, Meryl Streep) and/or various stars associated with favorable popular appeal (Glenn Close, Faye Dunaway, Robert Duvall, Clint Eastwood, Sally Field, Warren Beatty, Wilford Brimley, Jane Fonda, Harrison Ford, Goldie Hawn, Katharine Hepburn, Dustin Hoffman, William Holden, George Kennedy, Eddie Murphy, Paul Newman, Gregory Peck, Richard Pryor, Robert Redford, Burt Reynolds, Sylvester Stallone, Rod Steiger, Barbra Streisand, Debra Winger). A slight overlap in artists and stars did occur (Hepburn, Hoffman, and Holden), but multicollinearity between the two was quite modest (a shared variance of less than 2 percent).

WH6: Awards. My primary measure of awards—interpreted earlier as a reflection of cinematic excellence as expressed by industry opinion—summed the number of Oscar nominations received by a film for best picture, director, actor, actress, supporting actor, and supporting actress (Levy 1990). This six-item index of awards was assessed for reliability by KR-20 or Cronbach's alpha and for validity by comparing it with a three-item index applicable to 609 films and based on awards given annually by the British, New York, and National film academies.

Analysis

Research question 1, WH1–WH6, and RQ2 were examined by means of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression and correlation analyses. Specifically, popular appeal and expert judgments were each regressed on the full set of movie characteristics just described. The results of these regression analyses were compared in order to address RQ1 and WH1–WH6 concerning the extent of common versus differing standards of evaluation between consumers and critics. These comparisons examined whether the movie characteristics could adequately explain the criterion variables and, if so, whether popular appeal and expert judgments differed in their manners of responding to the various determinants—as assessed by exact multivariate F-tests for differences among coefficients of common independent variables in explaining different dependent variables. Then popular appeal and expert judgments were correlated to address RQ2 concerning the degree of shared versus discrepant tastes between consumers and critics.

RESULTS

Reliabilities and Convergent Validities

Popular Appeal. Because my measure of popular appeal was a single-item score, it could not be assessed directly for reliability by means of Cronbach's alpha (though, as noted earlier, its reliability can safely be assumed to be satisfactory). As a validation criterion, the aforementioned three-item popularity index showed an acceptable reliability of alpha = .62 with a mean corrected item-total correlation (the average correlation of an item with the sum of the remaining items) of $r_{mcit} = .44$. Moreover, this three-item index correlated more strongly with popular appeal ($r = .50$, $N = 831$, $p < .0001$) than with expert judgments ($r = .35$, $p < .0001$), thereby supporting the convergent validity of the HBO measure.

Expert Judgments. The six-item index of expert judgments showed an exceptionally strong internal consistency of Cronbach's alpha = .91 with $r_{mcit} = .75$. As often happens with large sample sizes, a maximum-likelihood

TABLE 1

REGRESSIONS OF POPULAR APPEAL AND EXPERT JUDGMENTS ON MOVIE CHARACTERISTICS

Independent variables: Movie characteristics	Popular appeal			Expert judgments			Test of difference	
	β	*t*-value	*p*-level	β	*t*-value	*p*-level	*F*(1, 980)	*p*-level
Objectionability	−.20	−5.62	.0001	−.03	−.91	NS	20.2	.0001
Exploitation	−.14	−3.24	.001	.12	3.19	.002	31.2	.0001
Family	.22	3.57	.0004	.06	1.24	NS	5.4	.02
Comedy	−.04	−1.11	NS	−.02	−.56	NS	.3	NS
Drama	−.20	−4.59	.0001	−.14	−3.71	.0002	1.6	NS
Musical	−.04	−.95	NS	−.02	−.60	NS	.2	NS
Sci-fi	−.06	−1.19	NS	.09	1.99	.05	7.3	.007
Western	−.01	−.25	NS	.03	.63	NS	.5	NS
United States	.23	8.26	.0001	−.18	−7.50	.0001	188.2	.0001
British	.04	1.45	NS	.01	.52	NS	.9	NS
Foreign language	−.17	−6.12	.0001	.22	9.18	.0001	171.0	.0001
Color	.09	2.28	.02	−.06	−1.74	.08	12.4	.0004
Length	.11	3.76	.0002	.03	1.04	NS	7.1	.008
Year	.22	4.36	.0001	−.46	−10.47	.0001	155.8	.0001
Year-squared	.13	4.21	.0001	−.07	−2.38	.02	34.0	.0001
Artists	−.01	−.21	NS	.05	2.12	.03	3.6	.06
Stars	.21	7.83	.0001	.01	.39	NS	48.7	.0001
Directors	.09	3.20	.001	.10	4.55	.0001	.5	NS
Awards	.29	9.26	.0001	.47	17.48	.0001	29.7	.0001
R^2	.38		.0001	.53		.0001		

confirmatory factor analysis indicated significant departures from the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 26.996$, $df = 9$, $p = .001$), but unidimensionality of the index appeared satisfactory in other respects with all factor loadings exceeding .75 ($\bar{X} = .79$); with a Tucker-Lewis reliability or Bentler-Bonnett nonnormed fit index of .99 and a comparative fit index also of .99; and with a construct reliability of .91 and an average variance extracted of .63. Further, the alternative three-item index of critical evaluations itself showed an acceptable reliability of Cronbach's alpha = .61 with $r_{mcit} = .46$ and correlated more strongly with the six-item index of expert judgments ($r = .37$, $N = 673$, $p < .0001$) than with popular appeal ($r = .02$, NS), thereby supporting the convergent validity of the expert judgments measure.

Movie Characteristics. Independent assessments of reliability and/or validity were possible for three measures of movie characteristics: exploitation, genre(s), and awards. First, the seven-item index of exploitation showed a satisfactory reliability of Cronbach's alpha = .68 with $r_{mcit} = .38$. Second, the genre categories showed a percentage agreement with the independent HBO classification of 87.1 percent ($\chi^2 = 4{,}471.58$, $df = 42$, $p < .0001$). Third, the six-item index of awards based on Oscar nominations showed a good reliability of Cronbach's alpha = .77 with $r_{mcit} = .52$, correlating strongly and significantly with the number of other academy-awards nominations ($r = .60$, $N = 1{,}000$, $p < .0001$). The independent three-item index based on other kinds of awards did show a disappointing reliability of Cronbach's alpha = .41 with $r_{mcit} = .25$ but, as a test of convergent validity, correlated more strongly with the index of awards ($r = .48$, $N = 609$, $p < .0001$) than with the measures of either popular appeal ($r = .06$, NS) or expert judgments ($r = .40$, $p < .0001$).

First Research Question (RQ1) and Working Hypotheses (WHs)

As shown in Table 1, the movie characteristics account for about 38 percent of the variance in popular appeal ($R^2 = .377$, $F(19, 980) = 31.3$, $p < .0001$) and for about 53 percent of the variance in expert judgments ($R^2 = .534$, $F(19, 980) = 59.2$, $p < .0001$), thereby providing a basis for addressing RQ1 and the various WHs concerning common versus differing standards of evaluation.

Key Determinants of Popular Appeal. Popular appeal responds positively to the family-oriented genre ($\beta_{Family} = .22$, $p = .0004$); domestic origins ($\beta_{U.S.} = .23$, $p < .0001$); color cinematography ($\beta_{Color} = .09$, $p = .02$); greater duration ($\beta_{Length} = .11$, $p = .0002$); more recent vintage ($\beta_{Year} = .22$, $p < .0001$; $\beta_{Year\text{-}Squared} = .13$, $p < .0001$); star power ($\beta_{Stars} = .21$, $p < .0001$); leading directors ($\beta_{Directors} = .09$, $p = .001$); and cinematic excellence as judged by industry members ($\beta_{Awards} = .29$, $p < .0001$). Conversely, popular appeal responds negatively to offensiveness ($\beta_{Objectionability} = -.20$, $p < .0001$; $\beta_{Exploitation} = -.14$, $p = .001$); the dramatic genre ($\beta_{Drama} = -.20$, $p < .0001$); and exotic origins ($\beta_{Foreign} = -.17$, $p < .0001$).

Key Determinants of Expert Judgments. Meanwhile, expert judgments respond positively to sexual content ($\beta_{Exploitation} = .12$, $p = .002$); sci-fi ($\beta_{Sci\text{-}Fi} = .09$, $p = .05$); exotic origins ($\beta_{Foreign} = .22$, $p < .0001$); B&W cinema-

tography ($\beta_{Color} = -.06$, $p = .08$); older films ($\beta_{Year} = -.46$, $p < .0001$; $\beta_{Year\text{-}Squared} = -.07$, $p = .02$); acclaimed acting ($\beta_{Artists} = .05$, $p = .03$); great directors ($\beta_{Directors} = .10$, $p < .0001$); and cinematic excellence ($\beta_{Awards} = .47$, $p < .0001$). Conversely, expert judgments respond negatively to the dramatic genre ($\beta_{Drama} = -.14$, $p = .0002$) and to domestic films ($\beta_{U.S.} = -.18$, $p < .0001$).

Differences between Determinants of Popular Appeal and Expert Judgments. As shown at the right of Table 1, direct answers to RQ1 and the various WHs concerning the issue of common versus differing standards of evaluation appear in the tests for differences between the standardized regression coefficients (β's) of movie characteristics as determinants of popular appeal and expert judgments. In general, these results support the WHs proposed earlier. Specifically, popular appeal responds significantly more positively than do expert judgments to (WH2) the family-oriented genre ($F_{Family} = 5.4$, $p = .02$); (WH3) domestic origin ($F_{U.S.} = 188.2$, $p < .0001$); (WH4) color versus B&W ($F_{Color} = 12.4$, $p = .0004$); (WH4) longer duration ($F_{Length} = 7.1$, $p = .008$); (WH4) recency ($F_{Year} = 155.8$, $p < .0001$; $F_{Year\text{-}Squared} = 34.0$, $p < .0001$); and (WH5) star power ($F_{Stars} = 48.7$, $p < .0001$). Also, popular appeal responds significantly more negatively than do expert judgments to (WH1) offensive content ($F_{Objectionability} = 20.2$, $p < .0001$; $F_{Exploitation} = 31.2$, $p < .0001$) and (WH3) exotic origins ($F_{Foreign} = 171.0$, $p < .0001$). Further, popular appeal responds significantly less positively than do expert judgments to (WH2) science-fiction ($F_{Sci\text{-}Fi} = 7.3$, $p = .007$), (WH5) critically acclaimed acting ($F_{Artists} = 3.6$, $p = .06$), and (WH6) cinematic excellence prized by industry members ($F_{Awards} = 29.7$, $p < .0001$). All these comparisons relevant to RQ1 are consistent with the logic followed earlier in developing the various WHs.

Second Research Question (RQ2)

With respect to RQ2, the data show a statistically significant but relatively weak positive correlation between popular appeal and expert judgments of $r = .25$ ($N = 1{,}000$, $p < .0001$). Thus, though evaluations by professional critics explain only about 6 percent of the variance in the preferences of ordinary consumers ($r^2 = .062$), there exists a small but reliable degree of shared as opposed to discrepant tastes between the two. Further, this relationship is strictly linear ($t = 7.64$, $p < .0001$) with no hint of a quadratic component ($t < 1$).

DISCUSSION

Limitations

Like any research of the type described here, the present study is subject to certain restrictions and limitations. Most saliently, I might have found different results with a different cultural medium (e.g., country music), a sample drawn from some other population of movies (e.g., art-house films), different criteria of popular appeal (e.g., rentals of tape cassettes), different assessments of expert judgments (e.g., concurrent movie reviews), or different factors included among the movie characteristics (e.g., assessments of the story line, themes or motifs, mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing, sound track, etc.).

I might also have found different results using different analytic approaches or different testing procedures. However, with respect to this latter point, my findings appear to be fairly robust to potential modifications. For example, I did experiment with various subsamples of my data; alternative ways of defining the independent variables and dependent variables; the omission of some independent variables (e.g., awards); the addition of quadratic terms for objectionability, exploitation, length, and awards; and the inclusion of moderating effects based on interactions among selected independent variables. These variations exerted only numerically small, statistically weak, generally nonsignificant, and conceptually unimportant impacts on the empirical outcomes of relevance to my RQs and WHs.

Conclusions

With respect to RQ1 and in accord with WH1–WH6, I find support for the general proposition that—in the case of motion pictures—ordinary consumers and professional critics rely on at least some differing as opposed to shared standards of evaluation. Briefly, popular appeal tends to respond significantly more favorably than do expert judgments to nonoffensive American-made family entertainment that features box-office stars in longer and more recent technicolor productions. By contrast, the tastes of consumers versus critics are significantly less attracted to sci-fi, exoticism, artistic acting, or even award-winning cinematic excellence. Apparently—with respect to the movie characteristics examined here and in answer to the issue of the "pertinent property" or "the question of what is determinant in the determinant variable" raised by Bourdieu (1984, p. 22)—popular appeal seems to gravitate more toward movies that are accessible by virtue of their greater realism in representing familiar settings (non-sci-fi, American, English language, shot in color, recent vintage) and in catering to conventional values (nonobjectionable, nonexploitive, family genre) and/or by virtue of their adherence to the blockbuster mentality (long duration, big stars); whereas expert judgments tend more to favor offerings that are challenging by virtue of their abstract qualities of cinematic style (B&W cinematography), deviations from conventional values (graphic sex and violence), departures from familiar settings (sci-fi, foreign languages, older vintage), and/or emphasis on subtle complexities (artistic acting, cinematic excellence).

Despite this support for the WHs of RQ1, my findings for RQ2 show a weak but significant tendency for popular appeal and expert judgments to reflect shared tastes between consumers and critics—resulting in a correlation that is actually positive ($r = .25$, $p < .0001$). Hence, many of the aforementioned cultural critiques that denigrate popular appeal to ordinary consumers while extolling the expert judg-

ments of professional critics appear to be skating on thin ice. This verdict applies especially to those commentators who have posited a cultural hierarchy, have deplored the effects of commercialism, and have charged that catering to mass audiences panders to the lowest common denominator in tastes for pop entertainment. To the extent that such deprecations assume a negative correlation between popular appeal and expert judgments—at least in the case of movies—they are just plain wrong.

But how, we might wonder, can the conclusions pertinent to RQ1 and RQ2 both apply at the same time? How can ordinary consumers and professional critics show different standards of evaluation (RQ1) yet display a weak convergence in tastes (RQ2)? The likely answer to this apparent puzzle lies in the additional consideration that there may well be other movie characteristics, not included here, that tend to enhance both popular appeal and expert judgments, thereby accounting for the weak positive association between the two in the face of the different standards for evaluation that we have observed.

The plausibility of this interpretation can be demonstrated as follows. If I omit the only three independent variables (drama, directors, and awards) that contribute significantly and in the same direction to explaining both dependent variables (popular appeal and expert judgments), the remaining independent variables produce a negative correlation between the predicted values for the dependent variables ($r = -.12$, $p < .0001$). Including these three independent variables as predictors (as in Table 1) raises the correlation of predicted dependent variables to a weak positive level ($r = .14$, $p < .0001$). But, the correlation between actual dependent variables is somewhat more positive than that ($r = .25$, $p < .0001$). This implies that additional movie characteristics—important but not included here—contribute further to the otherwise unexpected positive correlation in shared tastes (thereby raising r from .14 to .25).

What additional movie characteristics might work in this capacity? In this connection, my present results for RQ1 say nothing about the potentially convergent versus discrepant effects on consumers and critics of factors emphasized by film theorists such as contributors to the compilations by Nichols (1976, 1985). These factors would include the character of a movie's story line (e.g., linear flow, relevance to everyday experience, dramatic shape, plot standardization); the development of certain themes or motifs (populism, feminist perspectives, multicultural influences, ideological positions, psychoanalytic surfacing of unconscious material, gender roles, sexual preferences, power relations, class conflict, racial tensions, utopianism, ethical dilemmas, romantic love); various aspects of the mise-en-scène (locale, scenery, decor, historical period, atmospheric lighting, costumes), cinematography (camera angles, long takes, tracking shots, deep/shallow focus, low-/high-key lighting, fast/slow film, wide-angle/telephoto lenses, close-up/distant shots, camera movements, visual composition), and/or editing (montage-related cutting between short takes, shot/reverse-shot juxtapositions, double exposures, dissolves, establishing shots, point-of-view shots, narrative continuity vs. flashbacks); key features of the sound track (musical scoring, melodramatic accompaniment, special sonic effects, off-screen voices, voice-overs); the design of a film's semiotic structure and semiological signification (binary oppositions vs. subtle gradations, myths or archetypes, metaphoric meanings, consumption symbolism, intertextuality in referencing other films, reflexivity in foregrounding the film's nature as a signifier vs. the dominant practice of concealing its own means of production); the degree of openness to alternative or resistant readings (Marxist interpretations, countercultural messages, subversive implications, ironic commentaries)—not to mention various other hard-to-define attributes (the brilliance of a movie's special effects, its level of spectacularity, the romantic chemistry between its hero and heroine, its air of authenticity)—and so on. Presumably, the presence or absence of some such neglected factors—crucial to film theory though omitted here in addressing RQ1, not because they are unimportant but because they are so difficult to measure—contributed to shared tastes between consumers and critics even while many of the movie characteristics that I did manage to include in my analysis were influencing popular appeal and expert judgments with differing strengths or even in opposite directions. The likelihood that such additional factors—hard to operationalize but nonetheless worthy of consideration—work toward the convergence or divergence of tastes between consumers and critics may provide a fertile source of topics for future research, perhaps using different methods from those pursued here, to compare the popular appeal versus expert judgments of motion pictures.

[Received December 1997. Revised March 1999. Robert E. Burnkrant served as editor, and David G. Mick served as associate editor for this article.]

REFERENCES

Anheier, Helmut K., Jürgen Gerhards, and Frank P. Romo (1995), "Forms of Capital and Social Structure in Cultural Fields: Examining Bourdieu's Social Topography," *American Journal of Sociology*, 100 (January), 859–903.

Austin, Bruce A. (1989), *Immediate Seating*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Blades, Joe (1986), *Guide to Movies on Videocassette*, Mount Vernon, NY: Consumers Union.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1983), "The Field of Cultural Production," *Poetics*, 12, 311–356.

——— (1984), *Distinction*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

——— (1985), "The Market of Symbolic Goods," *Poetics*, 14, 13–44.

——— (1986), "The Production of Belief," in *Media, Culture and Society*, eds. Richard Collins et al., London: Sage, 131–163.

——— (1993), *The Field of Cultural Production*, New York: Columbia University Press.

——— (1996), *On Television*, New York: New Press.

——— and Jean-Claude Passeron (1990), *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, London: Sage.

——— and Loïc J. D. Wacquant (1992), *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brantlinger, Patrick (1983), *Bread and Circuses,* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
Brown, Trevor (1978), "Reviewers on Reviewing," *Journalism Quarterly,* 55 (Spring), 32–38.
CineBooks (1989), *CineBooks Movie List,* Evanston, IL: CineBooks.
Crane, Diana (1992), "High Culture versus Popular Culture Revisited," in Lamont and Fournier, eds., 1992, 58–74.
DiMaggio, Paul (1992), "Cultural Boundaries and Structural Change," in Lamont and Fournier, eds., 1992, 21–57.
——— Michael Useem, and Paula Brown (1978), *Audience Studies of the Performing Arts and Museums,* Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.
Dodds, John C. and Morris B. Holbrook (1988), "What's an Oscar Worth? An Empirical Estimation of the Effects of Nominations and Awards on Movie Distribution and Revenues," in *Current Research in Film: Audiences, Economics, and Law,* Vol. 4, ed. Bruce A. Austin, Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 72–88.
Erickson, Bonnie H. (1996), "Culture, Class, and Connections," *American Journal of Sociology,* 102 (July), 217–251.
Finler, Joel W. (1988), *The Hollywood Story,* New York: Crown.
Firat, A. Fuat and Alladi Venkatesh (1995), "Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchantment of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 22 (December), 239–267.
Frye, Northrop (1957), *Anatomy of Criticism,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Gans, Herbert J. (1974), *Popular Culture and High Culture,* New York: Basic.
——— (1992), "Preface," in Lamont and Fournier, eds., 1992, vii–xv.
Gartman, David (1991), "Culture as Class Symbolization or Mass Reification? A Critique of Bourdieu's *Distinction,*" *American Journal of Sociology,* 97 (September), 421–447.
Hall, John R. (1992), "The Capital(s) of Cultures," in Lamont and Fournier, eds., 1992, 257–285.
Halle, David (1993), *Inside Culture,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Holt, Douglas B. (1998), "Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?" *Journal of Consumer Research,* 25 (June), 1–25.
Home Box Office (HBO) (1989), *HBO's Guide to Movies on Video-Cassette and Cable TV, 1990,* New York: Harper & Row.
Hughes, Robert (1993), *Culture of Complaint,* New York: Oxford University Press.
Huyssen, Andreas (1986), *After the Great Divide,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Jameson, Fredric (1983), "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic,* ed. Hal Foster, Seattle: Bay Press, 111–125.
Johnson, Randal (1993), "Editor's Introduction," in *The Field of Cultural Production,* by Pierre Bourdieu, New York: Columbia University Press, 1–25.
Jones, Peter Lloyd (1991), *Taste Today,* Elmsford, NY: Pergamon.
Klawans, Stuart (1990), "Colorization: Rose-Tinted Spectacles," in *Seeing through Movies,* ed. Mark Crispin Miller, New York: Pantheon, 150–185.
Kobal, John (1988), *John Kobal Presents the Top 100 Movies,* New York: New American Library.
Lamont, Michèle (1992), *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and American Upper-Middle Class,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
——— and Marcel Fournier, eds. (1992), *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Levine, Lawrence W. (1988), *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Levy, Emanuel (1990), *And the Winner Is . . . ,* New York: Continuum.
Lindauer, Martin S. (1991), "Comparisons between Museum and Mass-Produced Art," *Empirical Studies of the Arts,* 9 (1), 11–22.
Lyotard, Jean-François (1984), *The Postmodern Condition,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Macdonald, Dwight (1957), "A Theory of Mass Culture," in *Mass Culture,* ed. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 59–73.
Nichols, Bill, ed. (1976, 1985), *Movies and Methods,* Vols. 1 and 2, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
Ortega y Gasset, José (1932), *The Revolt of the Masses,* New York: Norton.
Pattison, Robert (1987), *The Triumph of Vulgarity,* New York: Oxford University Press.
Peterson, Richard A. and Albert Simkus (1992), "How Musical Tastes Mark Occupational Status Groups," in Lamont and Fournier, eds., 1992, 152–186.
Ross, Andrew (1989), *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture,* New York: Routledge.
Sackett, Susan (1990), *The Hollywood Reporter Book of Box Office Hits,* New York: Billboard.
Sarris, Andrew (1976), "Towards a Theory of Film History," in Nichols, ed., 1976, 237–251.
Shrum, Wesley (1991), "Critics and Publics: Cultural Mediation in Highbrow and Popular Performing Arts," *American Journal of Sociology,* 97 (September), 347–375.
——— (1996), *Fringe and Fortune: The Role of Critics in High and Popular Art,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Sontag, Susan (1966), *Against Interpretation,* New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux.
Stern, Jane and Michael Stern (1990), *The Encyclopedia of Bad Taste,* New York: Harper Collins.
Strinati, Dominic (1995), *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture,* London: Routledge.
Swartz, David (1997), *Culture and Power,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Twitchell, James B. (1992), *Carnival Culture,* New York: Columbia University Press.
Wallace, W. Timothy, Alan Seigerman, and Morris B. Holbrook (1993), "The Role of Actors and Actresses in the Success of Films," *Journal of Cultural Economics,* 17 (June), 1–27.
Winston, Andrew S. (1995), "Simple Pleasures: The Psychological Aesthetics of High and Popular Art," *Empirical Studies of the Arts,* 13 (2), 193–203.
Zolberg, Vera L. (1990), *Constructing a Sociology of the Arts,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
——— (1992), "Barrier or Leveler? The Case of the Art Museum," in Lamont and Fournier, eds., 1992, 187–209.