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Definition: Globalization
Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology, Edited by Thomas Teo

Introduction

The process of globalization is nearly a ubiquitous phenomenon, affecting economies, politics, cultures, and lifestyles in almost all parts of the world. Globalization is also an intimate force of change, impacting psyches, relationships, and how we communicate. Globalization even influences how we imagine, as we must balance localized, lived experience with knowledge of peoples, places, and social movements seemingly disconnected from everyday concerns, but nevertheless influencing how we feel about own lives. Through communication technologies like the internet and mobile phones, possibilities to connect and collaborate are greater than ever before—as well as our capacity to become aware of one another. While the world continues to suffer from extreme disparities in wealth and resources, some people and populations that once were disenfranchised are now emerging as global economic leaders, instilling a sense of hope in many parts of the world. As Dominique Moïsi (2010) argued, "Globalization may have made the world 'flat,' to cite journalist Thomas Friedman's famous metaphor, but it has also made the world more passionate than ever" (p. 9). Nevertheless, globalization is also criticized for causing increased psychological distress, environmental degradation, loss of traditional ways of life to Western (if not American) cultural hegemony, as well as geopolitical instability. Both its promises and its pitfalls contribute to the passionate discourse that often surrounds discussions of globalization.

Keywords

colonization, communication, cosmopolitanism, cross-fertilization, cultural hegemony, depression, fundamentalism, identity, psychotherapy, PTSD, transnational

Definition

The term globalization is perhaps most commonly used to describe the expansion of capitalism around the world, and in particular, the outsourcing of Western businesses to developing economies. However, globalization is a process of integration that extends beyond the marketplace, and also influences cultures, individual identities, and the social imaginary. Furthermore, the ongoing shift from disparate nations to a transnational world has created specific concerns about globalization's impact, and these concerns influence how globalization is defined. For example, the term globalization has come to signify the compression of time and space associated with the accelerated introduction in the latter half of the twentieth century of new communication technologies and opportunities for travel (Harvey, 1990). The

prospect of relatively inexpensive communication and travel across great distances have been described as foundational for the current globalized world, making possible the flow of people, ideas, and goods (along with communicable diseases, criminal networks, and trafficking of vulnerable people) across great distances and in a relatively short amount of time—if not instantaneously, when the internet is the medium used. Still others use the term globalization to focus on changes in individual identities and cultures, in terms of both their formation and expression, which occurs when distant lands and peoples begin to impact local practices and beliefs. Advanced communication technologies, such as mobile phones and the internet have altered relationships, replacing face-to-face contact with ample opportunities to connect across borders and time zones through text, voice, and video. Social scientists, including critical psychologists, have been particularly interested in globalization's impact on cultures, identities, as well as the social imaginary, and with reason (Appadurai, 1996). As Anthony Giddens (1999) observed, "When the image of Nelson Mandela maybe is more familiar to us than the face of our next door neighbour, something has changed in the nature of our everyday experience." Some have expressed concern that globalization reduces intimate, reliable connections as well as kinship and communal ties, which historically required physical presence to foster and maintain (Turkel, 2011). Others belabor the increased preoccupation with foreign cultures and people, including celebrities, who often have high standard of living and access to resources limited to a small segment of the population. Giddens remarked, "Celebrity itself is largely a product of new communication technology" (Giddens, 1999). The term globalization has thus also been associated with the increase in status anxiety and the correlated health problems associated with this form or social-based stress (Marmot, 2004). In a globalized world, the exposure to many different communities, ways of life, ideas, and goods, along with the compression of time and space, quickens the process of identity construction. According to Giddens, "Self-identity has to be created and recreated on a more active basis than before" (1999). Giddens associated this change with the increased interest in, if not need for, psychotherapy and counseling, which in the West has become a mainstay for dealing with stressors and identity confusion, and the desire for psychotherapy and other mental health services has increased in nonWestern societies, including China and Japan. Giddens wrote, "Freud thought he was establishing a scientific treatment for neurosis. What he was in effect doing was constructing a method for the renewal of self-identity, in the early stages of a detraditionalising culture. After all, what happens in psychotherapy is that the individual revisits his or her past in order to create more autonomy for the future" (Ibid.). Similarly, Dominique Moïsi (2010) associated globalization with replacing twentieth century concerns for ideologies (particularly since the end of the Cold War), with twenty-first century preoccupation with identity, which impacts not only individuals, but also corporations and businesses, for whom their brand is increasingly as important as the products they sell.

History

One could argue globalization is a phenomenon as old as humankind. Evidence of trade dates back at least 150,000 years (Watson, 2005). Yet the term globalization is usually reserved for modern, transnational movements. According to American journalist Thomas Friedman (2005), there have been "three great eras of globalization" (p. 9). The first, "Globalization 1.0," Friedman correlated with the period from 1492 to 1800. He claimed this era was marked by the

establishment of trade between Old World and New World nations. "Globalization 2.0," stretching from 1800 to 2000, is distinguished by the emergence of multinational companies. Finally, "Globalization 3.0," which Friedman described as beginning in 2000, harnesses the potential for individual collaboration and expression made possible by the world wide web. According to Friedman, the shifts with each period of globalization are due to a predominant, dynamic force emerging in each era: "while the dynamic force in Globalization 1.0 was countries globalizing and the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was companies globalizing, the dynamic force in Globalization 3.0—the thing that gives it its unique character—is the newfound power for individuals to collaborate and compete globally" (p. 10). The current era of globalization has also been associated with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. When America emerged as the world's only Superpower, its model of democracy, which weds political freedom to free markets, rapidly became the dominant model for political, economic, and cultural norms around the world. The American president William Jefferson Clinton also did much to promote globalization. Following the Mexican Peso crisis in 1994, his administration based their international policy on economic development, promoting globalization as the basis for world peace as well as economic sustainability (Zeiler, 2002). However, President Clinton did not seem to anticipate the charges of economic, political, and cultural hegemony thrown at America, which are often identified as the ugly underbelly of globalization.

Critical Debates

The process of globalization has been accused of causing rapid shifts in identity as well as deteriorating cultural traditions that historically stabilized the process of identity construction (Gottschalk, 2000). Globalization contributes to feelings of uncertainty, if not fear and humiliation. According to Moïsi, "globalization causes insecurity and raises the question of identity…. Identity is strongly linked with confidence, and in turn confidence, or the lack thereof, is expressed in emotions—in particular, those of fear, hope, and humiliation" (2010, p. 12). Furthermore, the expansion of Western markets into developing countries has coincided with increased numbers of people thought to have mental disorders (Ustiin, 1999). Along with increased psychological distress, the increase in mental disorders may result from aggressive efforts by multinational pharmaceutical companies to expand market exposure; the increased numbers of non-governmental organizations committed to mental health, including educating about the symptoms of mental disorders; and in general, the exportation of Western notions of mind and mental illness (Watters, 2010). An example of the Westernization of psychological distress comes from the widespread diagnosing of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Although depression is considered a leading cause of disability around the world, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may be the most commonly diagnosed disorder. In refugee camps and conflict areas, PTSD is the diagnosis most often assumed to apply to victimized and traumatized populations. PTSD symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, and intrusive memories are viewed as universal response to trauma. Yet critical psychologists have argued symptoms of a mental disorder do not necessarily dictate the correct treatment, or take into account how culture influences the expression of psychological distress (Horwitz, 2002). When well-meaning Western mental health workers descend on nonWestern social groups, they risk replacing local customs for addressing trauma with Western models for healing PTSD. Trauma and its aftereffects have been with humans throughout our history. Yet Western notions of PTSD, like

all conceptions of mental disorders, were developed in response to particular social needs and conditions. In the case of PTSD, the diagnosis was developed in response to the experiences of US war veterans who were extricated from the location of their trauma—war on foreign soil—and returned to their own social groups in America. For many veterans, the people they returned to were unable to comprehend (and sometimes unwilling to hear) their personal tragedies. In this context, and for other social contexts where trauma is silenced, attention to psychological states through counseling and support groups has led to great strides in regaining mental well-being. In contrast, a study of persons detained and tortured during Apartheid in South Africa revealed the presence of PTSD symptoms, however, the people in the study were more concerned with rebuilding their community than addressing their psychological wounds (Kagee, 2004). Furthermore, individuals were often more plagued with somatic symptoms than psychological symptoms, which Kagee and Naidoo (2004) associated with the African tradition of relating psyche and soma that contrasts with the Western tradition of assuming a mind-body dichotomy. Furthermore, depressed persons in nonWestern countries and populations in general are more concerned with somatic symptoms than their Western counterparts (Kerr and Kerr, 2001). According to Bulhan (1985) efforts to apply Western notions of mental illness to nonWestern populations is akin to other forms of oppression typically associated with colonization.

International Relevance

By its very definition, globalization has international relevance. Yet two changes—loss of tradition and increasing standardization according to Western lifestyles—have emerged as near universal outcomes of globalization in the twenty-first century. As far back as the seventeenth century, the Enlightenment in the West loosened dependency on tradition (including religious rituals) as a precursor to building a society based on rationality and science. Traditional forms of society were further dismantled with the Industrial Revolution, when rural communities, and their extended kinship networks, were eroded by the exodus of their members to work in factories in cities. Today, people in the developing world accelerate this developmental trajectory. When Western industries relocate to their countries, they must often quickly adapt to the breakneck pace and inherent instability of the competitive global market. Like modernity in its infancy, they too have experienced threats to traditions as well as to kinship and community bonds. Giddens (1999) claimed, "traditions are needed, and will always persist, because they give continuity and form to life." When traditions have been threatened, a common response has been compulsive attempts to regain tradition, including religious fundamentalism. The resurgence of fundamentalism is most prominent when perceived options for the future are cast as a choice between Western cosmopolitanism or traditional modes of living. The resistance to Western cosmopolitanism is not surprising, particularly given the extent that many societies attempt to reproduce Western standards of living. Artifacts of Western lifestyles—ranging from the plumbing put in houses to the food put on plates—are not only seen throughout the world, but they are also what many aspire to. Shifts in food consumption are especially revealing of the impact of Western standards on developing countries. The Western diet is exceptional for its high amounts of meat, dairy, and processed sugars, which contribute to obesity and related diseases. The World Health Organization now identifies obesity as a global health threat (calling it "globesity"). The Westernization of diet has also altered traditional eating habits. For example, the introduction of fast food restaurants such as McDonald's and KFC into East Asia introduced the opportunity for young people to choose what they would eat—an option initially not

available to youths in this part of the world. Such opportunities for self-empowerment can ignite desires for self-expression and individualism outside of traditional norms, which in turn can lead to a preference for Western styles of living that are already adapted to individualism and the creation of identity through the consumption of goods and services (Watson, 2006).

Future Directions

While a primary critique of globalization has been the expansion of Western standards across the globe, less attention has been given to the cross-fertilization of the West by nonWestern ideas, goods, and practices. This cross-fertilization will likely increase as the so-called BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) gain economic and cultural influence. As Zeiler (2002) pointed out, "At the time anti-globalization demonstrators were protesting in Seattle against the WTO in December 1999, children throughout America were gripped by the Japanese fad game Pokemon. Film industries in India and Hong Kong presented competition to Hollywood, and MTV discovered the need to vary its formula in the world's various regional markets—providing, for example, Chinese music in China and Hindi pop in India. True cultural globalization, not just Americanization, was in effect." Rather than focusing on cultural hegemony, it may become more relevant to explore the meanings people are making with, and contributing to, with the ideas, goods, and practices they absorb from other cultures and societies. The emphasis on identity formation in the twenty-first century has also impacted how multinational corporations and nations leverage power. Where once people were expected to adapt their identities to the needs of institutions and nations, now companies and countries must adapt to individuals' ever-changing identities, alliances, consumption patterns, and needs. Not only must multinational corporations contend with well-connected and increasingly vocal consumers, nations are less able to protect a diverse population, who through global travel, the internet, and other communication technologies regularly transcend national borders. Centralized power is loosening, both as a reality and an idea. Envisioning how to govern a global village has become a major concern. Cities could become the model for envisioning how to govern an increasingly interconnected world. In 2010, approximately half of the world population lived in cities, and about 100 cities were responsible for 30 percent of the world's economy (Khanna, 2010). Like the globalized world, major world cities contain diversified populations and crucibles for the creative consumption of goods and services. They also suffer from the disparities in wealth that also characterizes the current state of globalization. Whereas cities may not displace nations as arbiters of sovereignty, they may nevertheless become the model for how nations and transnational corporations attempt to remain relevant to populations driven more by the construction of identities than the maintenance of ties to institutions and nations.

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