

Does globalization diminish cultural differences assignment

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Giorgia Frizzi, 23rd July 2010 " Globalization, Localization, Glocalization"

Research Paper. Does globalization weaken cultural diversity or does it foster it? Effects of Globalization in Cultural differentiation 1. Introduction. As some of us may know, the term " globalize" started being used in the modern times. However globalization as an idea has been brought up since even before the 1500's when people started forming connections between communities, and therefore creating forms of communication, migration and such between these.

And it is probably from these examples that in the modern era we came to call it Globalization which is known for being a process of integration between cultures, societies, economies, etc. Nonetheless, there have been, and there still are, many debates about the real cultural benefits of such global process. There is no argument that when it comes to globalization, culture is indeed a concept of complex controversies. There are many different points of view about how globalization affects cultures and many competing perspectives of cultural homogenization versus cultural differentiation.

The positive perspective of cultural globalization is that cultural diversity gives people ample choices and enrichment of learning from different cultures and traditions. We get the chance to choose between globally produced goods, besides local products, without being bound by their geographical location. Critics instead state that there is a depletion of cultural diversity through processes like " Mcdonaldization".

Scholars who dislike cultural globalization believe that there is no such thing as " Globalization" but there is instead a process of cultural imperialism, where the only values and life style spread are the American ones; hence the use of the term " Americanization". In these regards, Joschka Fischer, a German politician, claimed I never use the concept, multipolar. I use multilateral. Because we have only one global power: whether you like it or not, this is the United States.

The objective of this paper which I am presenting to you is to give a better understanding of the impact that globalization has on multiculturalism or cultural diversity through the use of analysis of the concept of culture and cultural diversity and by measuring facts and indicators that have changed since globalization has started, and to come to the conclusion that even though globalization gives the world some sort of homogenization when it comes to economical matters, the strongest effect is the one that actually enhances cultural identity. . 1 Understanding culture in the era of globalization. Human societies across the world have always tried establishing closer contacts with each other, but in the era of globalization this has increased a lot , thanks to innovations and science which have made the world interdependent , and multi-national companies which have made the world one global market. When trying to understand Globalization , one of the first issues to solve out is the lack of a universal terminology.

In other words, there's no common acceptance of a unique meaning of the concept of Globalization. As in this paper I will try to identify relations between globalization and cultural diversity and the effects of such relations,

it would be appropriate to take the concept of culture as a starting point to try and explore the process of change of such concept between certain social groups, caused by globalization. Everyday we hear about cultural and religious conflicts in the world, because people are indeed looking for their cultural roots.

Globalization and cultural diversity is strongly discussed among scholars because the situation is more complex than it sounds and it will be helpful to look at it more analytically so on the one hand, we need to understand globalization but on the other, we need to have a clear idea of the concept of culture we're here talking about. In the 20th Century scholars defined culture as a shared set of customs, habits, beliefs and ideas that hold people together in recognizable groups.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Gove, 2000) defines culture as the " total pattern of human behavior and its products embodied in speech, action, and artifacts and dependent upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations. " I believe that nowadays culture is no longer perceived as some sort of knowledge system we got from our ancestors. Indeed many anthropologists and socialists now perceive culture as the ideas, attributes and expectations that change as people react to changing situations.

Indeed, in the 21st century , technology has increased the velocity of social change. For instance the internet and fast communication in general are pretty much destroying cultural boundaries and they are creating the possibility of a global culture. In these regards McLuhan (1962: p. 31) coined

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the term “ global village” in the 60s referring to the globalization of media. McLuhan shows how the world has turned into a village thanks to electric technology that brings all social functions together and makes us all more aware of our global responsibility.

On the other hand it has been considerably argued that globalization might instead foster cultural diversity and give more space to local cultures. Roland Robertson suggests by using the term ‘ Glocalization’, that ‘ locality’ and with it cultural diversity may be strengthened thanks to globalization. More specifically he describes for instance the process of a product or a service – or simply an aspect of life – that is developed and spread globally but is also meant to accommodate consumers in local markets, in a way that a global product conforms to local preferences.

Global practices are taken differently according to local traditions , the universal takes particular forms , fostering locality. In these regards, we’ll see examples of “ glocalization” in the next pages. Moreover, although there’s a tendency of a global lifestyle , for most people , locality has still a strong importance. As a consequence , because a global culture does not yet exist , it would be quite useless to look for proof of a concept of globalization that levels everything in its path.

It would be instead more useful to focus on certain indicators and aspects of people’s life that are being affected by the process of globalization. 2. Some aspects of life affected by Globalization in different parts of the world. In the recent years we have been witnesses of the changes that globalization has brought upon nations around the world, especially in developing countries.

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While it is true that globalization now is bigger than ever because of all the advancements in technologies around the world, we should also be aware that looking back at historical records, us humans have been looking into globalization for centuries.

The developing of old nations has been possible in part with the help of trade with other nations. For example, we can look back at all the trades between Europe and the Americas after its discovery. Or even before with the old Greece and its attempts to expand their culture and language to different territories. All these changes made back then affected different nations in positive as well as in negative ways, and all changes being made now are equally affecting nations in certain aspects of their everyday life.

Some of the areas being affected by globalization are: Food, travel, clothing, music, and religion. 2. 1 Food Food is most certainly the oldest motive for global trade. It has been the most important subject in the history of globalization. Particularly after the discovery of the New World when products such as chicken, beef, potatoes, tomatoes, and others of the like were part of the exchanges between these two continents which then became global products. Some of the best cuisines around the world would not have been possible if it was not for trading.

If certain cuisines such as the Italian were exceptional before the discovery of the New World, they were taken to a higher level after its discovery because it allowed countries in general to evolve in terms of food, flavor, and tastes; not only because they were able to add more products to their kitchens but also because they were able to borrow techniques from each

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other. Food trade has given benefits to the world since ancient times. One of the first recordings of such process is the introduction to the Spanish court by Christopher Columbus in 1493 of the red pepper which quickly spread throughout the world.

Though some see contemporary food trade as a negative activity. The average diet has changed drastically all over the world , so much that today almost all countries follow a diet high in meat , sugars and dairy products , increasing the risk of disorders such as obesity and diabetes. Activists and anti-globalists in general, believe that the term “ globalization” can be easily substituted with the word “ Americanization” because what’s being ‘ globalized’ is western values and ideals which are becoming universal. Fast-foods are proof of “ Americanization” or cultural imperialism.

In fact corporations tend to create similar life-styles throughout the world. McDonald’s and Coca Cola in particular became symbols of globalism. As stated in a BBC guide (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/h2g2/A593525>) in 2001 there were more than 23, 000 McDonald’s fast-foods in 109 countries throughout the world , with around 38 million customers daily. This is not only bad for humans’ health but also for their local activities. The increase of fast food restaurants chains leads to a consequent decrease of local small activities.

However, although it is fact that they are sort of trying to globalize what we eat, and although this could be harmful for us, it’s also true that “

Mcdonaldization” could at times turn into a form of “ glocalization”. Indeed fast food chains tend to adjust the menus to local needs; For instance in

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China there are more chicken products in the menu than anywhere else in the world, and for culture and religious reasons in India no beef products are sold. So we do know that when we go eat at McDonald's we're eating in a globally known place but we still get the chance to keep our own traditions.

There are other positive consequences of the presence of fast foods in the world; the spread of this western aspect, has indeed brought innovation to some areas of the world. For instance McDonald's has introduced queue monitors in places like Hong-Kong where it was unusual for people to stand in lines before getting their own food. Finally, as a popular saying suggests "We are what we eat", and when global diet changes the way it's changing nowadays, not only nations but also ethnic identities are strongly affected. 2.

Clothing All of us have different views on fashion and clothing. Some people give enormous importance to what they wear, some simply don't care.

Supposedly, women are the ones who spend more time and energy on their appearance and they were always told to be more interested in clothes and modes than men. Though this is changing over time, and as we all can easily notice from society and media, men are becoming as much interested in fashion as women, at times even more. This is possible thanks to free trade and globalization.

Some indeed, blame it on the way media and companies are trying to give us all uniformity and make us all have similar life-styles. In the past, different countries, different cultures and different climates have had a lot to do with what people were wearing. Now, with globalization affecting every part of the world, people more and more wear similar or at times even

identical clothes and outfits. For instance, the man's business suit, with tie and shirt with buttons, has become universal and it's pretty much worn all over the world.

Even here, just like in fast foods, we'll find countries that are more careful about adopting global popular life-styles in a way that they try to adapt themselves to universal trends while keeping their own style. Iranians for instance do wear such suit but leave the tie out and some Asian parliamentarians alternate suits with traditional dresses (Bauman , 1998). Another sign of global homogenization in this sense was the introduction of female suits in 1980s, symbols of women's independence.

Besides, the export of second hand clothes from rich countries to developing ones, made the adoption of western-style clothing possible around the world. The same thing happens with shows , hair styles, make up , jewelry and anything that has to do with fashion. Youngsters today tend very much to imitate what they see on TV and movies, they rarely follow their own style, because that's what our globalized society imposes nowadays and if you don't follow the trends , you'll pretty much end up being an outcast.

This is a clear symptom of the way globalization is slowly diminishing local traditions, values and artisans. Though , on the other hand, there are cultures who are determined and persistent on keeping their own traditions. For instance, could you ever imagine Muslims abandoning their clothing and change it for new trends styles? 2. 4 Entertainment We can say that

entertainment before the 20th century was based on family time, puppet shows, freak shows in town, the circus, etc; all these kinds of entertainment

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being pretty familiar and within the customs of each of the communities where being presented.

But since the invention of artifacts such as the radio and especially television, entertainment has evolved massively and it has become a tool to gain the attention of all sorts of people all around the globe. One could say that nowadays with television we can all enjoy all types of shows without needing to leave our homes. The entertainment category is composed by four very important subcategories, each of them pointing out significant effects they have had on global culture. - Movies: People around the world gather to go to their local cinema to see the newest Hollywood film.

It has become a trend especially for youngsters around the world to get together with their friends to go see the new Johnny Depp film and such. One rarely meets a person who is not aware of which movie is the most popular at the moment. The film industry is the most appealing to everyone around the world because of the technology used in them, the screenplay narrating simple situations in the life of a person that everyone can relate to despite of religion, education and social status, of course with a side of amazing special effects. - Sports: Most people around the globe are fascinated about sports.

Live sports attract billions of people worldwide, especially the Fifa world cup, which is a tournament where football teams from different countries play against each other to win a precious cup. Football matches unite people of different countries, and this plays an important role to the economy for the country hosting the tournament. It is so popular that football players are easily recognized everywhere you go, from the largest city to the smallest

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town. Popular team's merchandise is sold pretty much everywhere as well. -
Music: " Music is the universal language of mankind. "

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow If music is universal than it can definitely be global; and music has really proven to be so. And in this so-called era of globalization, music has gone across the borders of almost every nation around the globe. Music is so important for people worldwide for one obvious reason, which is that you cannot find a person in the world who does not feel identified with some type of music or with the lyrics of a song or even with the singer. Go to a town in Zimbabwe and you might be surprised to find some fans of Coldplay or one of those popular rock bands.

This is the work of Globalization and media as its tool. It is nowadays important for the artist to conquer not only national market but international markets as well. 2. 5 Travel Since the migration of people out of Africa, travel has always been crucial to human history. Tourism?? and?? globalization?? are connected to each other , they are interdependent and complementarily benefit each other in many ways. Although the mass tourism and tourism industry only started in the 90s , there were many other forms of travel not for commercial purposes existing since long before.

Such as pilgrimage and migration. Today it's no surprise anymore to see races and people mixing in one same place and exchanging experiences , ideas, values and opinions while keeping their own cultural identity.

Nowadays in the ' global' era tourism and the desire to travel and see other countries has become universal and touristic activities cover several areas of social life. What made tourism raise a lot was also the dramatic decline of

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the costs of international flights. Whether we're diplomats , business people or just regular tourists , we can feel home in any part of the world.

When talking about food before , I gave an idea of how going abroad doesn't not involve adapting to foreign food and living arrangements. Just like for food and clothing , " Americanization" has its influence also on this area of social life. Western-style toilets, showers, restaurant and toilets are now the world standards of touristic facilities and structures and they are what we all want , and expect, when approaching another country as tourists. Though tourism can be a threat to environment and society unless WTO and governments take the right measures to preserve us from it. 3.

Does Globalization diminish cultural diversity? Even though I have tried to measure the impacts of globalization on different areas of our lives, from a methodological point of view it is too complex to make clear statements about the causality between globalization and the changes that have occurred within these aspects of world cultures (food, clothing, religion and all the topics measured above) over time. However, in this paper we did see some of the ways globalization changes cultural identity , but can we really answer the question about whether globalization diminish cultural differences or not? 3. Global homogenization What will we do in a globalised world? All human beings are equal, so they have the same right to have the same lifestyle-the same social security, jobs, education. J. Fischer Many critics like Fischer believe that Globalization is nothing but a synonym of homogenization. Since the break of trade barriers, people use the same kind of goods everywhere in the world. But as we saw , such use is always set in

different circumstances and social contexts. For instance, Coke is really popular in the US and in western countries but it's rarely sold in India because people can barely afford it.

As well in China you can find hundreds KFC's and McDonald's but Chinese local restaurants are still dominant. When it comes to human relationships, there is some kind of uniformity about how people run their businesses and how they relate to each others within production and marketing situations. Thus this uniformity brought by globalization is only partial and limited to material and economic matters of goods used by people and it does affect culture but " consumer culture" induced by the media and not culture as the senses and purposes that people find in life. . 2 Globalization fosters cultural diversity Globalization requires us to reinvent everything - to think of ourselves as compared to others. Nicolas Sarkozy As Deng (2005) points out , cultural identity answers the questions of " Who am I? " , " What do we have? " and Where are we going? " and just as well as people do build up their identity through their own culture, they will most likely defend it. Indeed, globalization helped bringing awareness of cultural identity, uniqueness and self.

As stated before, it's obvious that when it comes to material and economic matters, globalization may lead to homogenization at the expenses of cultural identities , but in a deeper sense it promotes cultural self-awareness and it fosters cultural differences. As Robertson points out , globalization and localization are so connected that we need to coin a new term for such phenomenon " glocalization". Thus " homogenization" is not in conflict with

diversity. 3. 3 In Conclusion It really depends on what indicators we use to compare the two sides of the coin.

The positive and the negative sides of the influence that globalization has on cultural identity can definitely coexist and homogenization and heterogenization may as well operate in tandem or even reinforce each other (like the case of Indian tradition being kept within McDonald's fast foods in India). Nowadays, globalization is an overwhelming world trend, anti globalists view it as pure homogenization but on the contrary, it can enhance cultural identity. First of all, people are not mere puppets of cultural influences, they are subjects and not objects of it, meaning they can reject or integrate culture.

Moreover, with the development of sciences and technology, people are closer to each other than ever before. Globalization brought this sense of closeness, togetherness and unity to the world and this doesn't necessarily need to be in conflict with diversity. What's very likely to happen is that people are getting much more aware of their own identity and therefore more concerned about the uniqueness and particularity of their own culture and their own traditions. Cultural diversity gives the global meaning of local knowledge and sense of identity, self, community and nation.

It's undeniable that when it comes to scientific , technologic and economic development , globalization does reflect the theory of " westernization" , " homogenization" and hegemonic control, but in a deeper sense, it promotes cultural identity. Finally, if globalization makes the world more " together" it also makes it more diverse. Bibliography Bauman, Z. (1998). Globalization:

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