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Globalization

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Introduction

The term globalization is applied to many different situations. It has become the “buzzword” for the media to use when covering a wide range of topics from politics to economics to cultural trends. The globalization discourse includes topics on the “free market” policies of world economy, the dominance of western forms of politics, economics and culture, the explosion of the “Internet Revolution” and the idea that humanity is entering an era where there will be a unified community, referred to as “global integration”. From a social theory viewpoint, globalization is considered a fundamental shift in the effects that space and time have on social existence. Basically, our world is becoming smaller as humanity is able to communicate, travel and trade with each other and this has an effect upon the various forms of human activity. Social theorists are currently engaged in a discussion about the specific sources that contribute to the recent shift of space and time in relationship to the human life experience. However, most agree that this shift is undermining the fabric of local and national boundaries as humans endeavor to function in the world.

As this paper attempts to focus on globalization as a social theory, the following questions will be discussed:

- What issues does globalization address?
This section will take on social issues that globalization has created over the past 20 years.
- What is the assumed implication of globalization?
This section will ponder the impact that globalization has and will have upon the world.
- How does globalization intersect with other theories?
This section will compare how other theories interpret globalization.
- How does globalization intersect with schooling or teaching and learning?
This section looks at how globalization can be implemented into both the K-12 and higher education environments.
- Are there alternatives to globalization?
This section will explore the other viewpoints to globalization.

The Issues of Globalization

There are two opposite views people tend to take when globalization creeps into the conversation. The optimist looks at globalization as a path to a prosperous future, a world in which we all work together for the good of everyone, everywhere. The pessimist views globalization as the source of many problems the world is currently encountering, from the destruction of cultures to increased poverty and miserable economies. Globalization has two sides when viewed from a world perspective. Many countries have benefited from globalization, while it has been destructive to other countries.

Joseph Stiglitz poses a perspective in his essay on *Globalism's Discontent*, that the problem is not with globalization, but rather with how it has been managed. He states that globalization has been governed in undemocratic ways that brings the advantage to rich developed countries, while putting the developing countries; especially the poor in these countries at an unfair disadvantage (Stiglitz, 2002).

Ulrich Beck in an article, *The Terrorist Threat: World Risk Society Revisited*, argues that collaboration and cooperation between countries is the necessary key to survival, especially when it comes to the threat of terrorism. He talks about the survival of the world relying on the idea of a cosmopolitan state. In a cosmopolitan state the government would emphasize the necessity of unity with foreigners from within and beyond the national borders. To do this people are instilled with responsibility for national and non-national issues. The outcome would be laying the groundwork for international cooperation on the basis of human rights and global justice (Beck, 2002).

Going back to the optimist and the pessimist view of globalization, there is a story told by Thomas Friedman in his book, *The World Is Flat* that illustrates this point. He compares two individual that are on the same track of creating a business, one has a vision that will bring a positive effect upon the world and the other's vision is to create destruction and chaos in the world. The two people are David Neeleman, who started JetBlue and the other is Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM), whom along with Osama bin Laden orchestrated a plot referred to as "plane operations". They both used great imagination to bring their plans to the global attention. David Neeleman used the available technologies to flatten the world with the launch of a successful airline that benefits many

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people. Through his success he has even created a catastrophe relief fund for his employees. While KSM and Osama bin Laden used the same tools to create an attack that created a massive catastrophe under the guise of religion.

A quote by Nandan Nilekani the CEO of Infosys sums up the major issue with globalization, "From the primordial swamps of globalization have emerged two genetic variants, one is al Qaeda and the other are companies like Infosys and JetBlue. Our focus therefore has to be how we can encourage more of the good mutations and keep out the bad." (Friedman, 2007)

The Implications of Globalization

As a contemporary social theory, globalization has several ideas for us to ponder. The first would be the ideas of deterritorialization. This is breaking apart or redefining of the traditional environment of "social space" where human activity takes place. In a sense, globalization is spreading new forms of non-territorial social activity (Ruggie 1993; Scholte, 2000).

Another idea is globalization as it is associated with the growth of social interconnectedness across political and geographical borders. How we connect to each other is changing and this may have an effect upon human activity both at the global, regional and local level.

Globalization is also connected by the speed of social activity. The ways we travel, communicate and disseminate knowledge has accelerated and this has become crucial to the forms of social activities in which humans participate. Even though globalization appears to be moving at neck breaking speed, most social theorist agree that it is a long term process. As we look back at the writings of our nineteenth century predecessors, we find them discussing the effects of the railroad and the telegraph, so as we look forward we must realize that the future will hold innovations that we can only image today.

Finally, globalization is a multi-pronged process involving all of the factors that have been discussed in this section. Within each of these factors there will be distinct discourses that must be addressed at a local, regional and global level.

Globalization Intersection with Other Social Theories

Marx and Engels were among the first men to understand and write about the idea of globalization, as this one famous quote from the Communist Manifesto shows:

“All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned . . . the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, and establish connections everywhere”.

It is fascinating that in the nineteenth century Marx and Engels were able to speculate about the expanding markets and the possibility of globalization.

Another avenue that could be considered to intersect with globalization is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a collection of economic and social policies that have been growing since the end of World War II. The main points of neoliberalism include: the free or open market rules with no boundaries by any government, the reduction of public funding for social services, deregulation of everything that could harm profits, privatization of all government owned enterprises and the elimination of the concept of “community”. This last point is to be replaced with “individual responsibility”. Many powerful financial institutions all over the world have adopted this policy.

Globalization in Teaching and Learning

How can we take the power of globalization and translate to our local teaching and learning environments? “Global events –via telecommunication, digital computers, audiovisual media, rocketry and the like -- occur almost simultaneously anywhere and everywhere in the world” (Scholte 1996, 45). We can use the technology Scholte referenced and broadcast these events to teach our students about the world. Why would educators turn to a textbook that is out of date as soon as it is printed, instead of using an electronic version or live streamed media?

There are some filters that do need to be addressed in the delivery of live media when teaching young children. As an example, many school children were watching the live the historic event of the Space Shuttle carrying the first teacher into space, when some thing terrible went wrong. What were the implications of this disaster happening via live

technology in the classroom? Were schools tuned into to watch the live action of the September 11 incident? Was this event, one that has had global effects on everything in our lives from how we view other religions to how we travel to national security ignored in our classrooms?

On another note, there has been a major increase in distance education that has been happening in the higher education arena for the past 10 years and is starting to spill over into the K-12 environment. Currently, I am working with University of Arizona faculty who are teaching in study abroad programs. These faculty want to add a component of an online course to their study abroad program to reach a population of student who could not travel abroad for personal or economic reasons. We are looking at using the tools that have added to the expansion of globalization, like web streaming videos and social networking to include students in the learning experience of studying abroad. Now students can interact with students from their home computer, and have the experience of learning at locations around the world.

Alternative to Globalization

There is a movement that is critical to the concept of globalization. It is commonly referred to as the global justice movement or alter-globalization. These activists want global integration to make available democratic representation. They also want to protect and advance human rights, fair trade and assist in sustainable development for all of the world. They are opposed to global financial institutions and the agreements they make with governments will undermine the local decision-making methods.

An organization out of Quebec, Canada has formed a non-profit organization, the Centre for Research on Globalization to gather and distribute information on globalization.

One of the articles published on their website is titled, Towards a Alternative to Globalization. A few themes of this article include, 1) economy for man, not man for economy implying stable, sustainable self-reproduction instead of unlimited growth and expansion, 2) preservation of the natural environment and culture over consume use, meaning that profits do not come before the environment or the people, and 3) preserving national cultures as an alternative to unification of the world, basically do not destroy the diversity of human culture in order to maximize profits. There are ten themes that are

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discussed in this article, all of them point to a position of man, his biological, social, cultural and spiritual need over the ideas that globalization bring to the table such as techno sphere, state machine and impersonal economic forces.

Conclusion

Globalization is a two-sided coin. There will always be advocates and critics of globalization and the effects it has upon the world. The advocates will claim that globalization increases economic prosperity and gives people opportunities that they would not have at a local level. They also state that globalization enhances civil liberties and is a good way to allocate resources throughout the world. The results of globalization from the advocate's viewpoint are lower prices, more people employed, higher output and a higher standard of living.

Flipping the coin, the critics describe globalization as damaging to the planet in terms of both, the natural biosphere and the human cost. The biosphere costs refer to global warming and the effects humans are imposing upon their habitat. The human cost includes poverty, inequality, misappropriating resources, injustice and the erosion of local and traditional cultures.

It is imperative to find a balance with globalization. There are many positive creative ideas that can be generated out of globalization, however there will always be the negative, destructive schemes created from the same concept. It is essential that we are not paralyzed by our fears of the negative, but become vigilant to protecting new threats on the horizons, while nurturing the positive creativity that is made possible from globalization. Future generations have many decisions to make in shaping the way the globalization takes form in both the world stage and the one in their own backyards. It will take the right imagination and motivation for globalization to become a true success.

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