

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURE

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Abstract- Transnational flows of people, financial resources, goods, information and culture have recently been increasing in a drastic way and have profoundly transformed the world (Ritzer and Malone, 2001). This phenomenon has been labeled globalization. As a result, a great deal of debate and discussion, even controversy (Bird and Stevens, 2003) has taken place about globalization in various disciplines from different angles. In fact, there seems to be a controversy in regards to globalization and the contradictory meanings associated with it. This controversy refers, among others, to either “a dominant logic of globalization” which postulates that there is a single cause for globalization or to a “phenomenon with a complex set of causes” which argues that there are various causes for globalization (Beck, 2000). In corollary, research has not been successful in grasping the globalization phenomenon in its entirety. Globalization is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses not only economic components but also cultural, ideological, political and similar other facets (Prasad and Prasad, 2006). Consequently, globalization has been addressed from the points of view of economics, social sciences, politics and international relations and has been subject to endless debates in various disciplines. Nonetheless, globalization effects are rarely addressed as a determinant that impacts societies and their cultures. More precisely, the interaction between globalization and culture still remains under-researched (Prasad and Prasad, 2007) and the current globalization debate in this respect is relatively recent (Acosta and Gonzalez, 2010). Along the same lines, the literature has not been able to stress whether concepts such as Americanization and Macdonalization are synonymous with globalization (Latouche, 1996). In an increasingly borderless world impacted by a globalization of economies, the preservation of cultural diversity feeds contrary and controversial reactions. For instance, Cowen (2002) contends that while changes and potential losses imposed by globalization on local and traditional cultures, including those extending to cultural differences, may be damaging and destructive, they may also lead towards new prospective opportunities. Given the above context, it is argued that globalization brings about diverse trends, namely cultural differentiation, cultural convergence and cultural hybridization (Pieterse, 1996) and each trend does not preclude the other as cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity are complementary (Cowen, 2002). The purpose of the following presentation is to provide a lens view of the interactions between globalization and culture as the latter positions itself on the spectrum of a theoretical perspective. To look into the interactions between globalization and culture, a literature review of relevant theoretical contributions has been conducted followed up with a discussion on their main insights. To do so, the key concepts of culture and globalization will be introduced. The three scenarios of the interaction between globalization and culture, namely heterogenization, homogenization and hybridization will be discussed. We posit that these scenarios and theoretical perspectives associated with them are capturing the broad contours of the current debate on globalization and culture, despite some overlapping insights among the different viewpoints. We conclude that they are of use and interest for both researchers and practitioners as the subject still remains under-researched across disciplines.

Keywords- culture; globalization; heterogenization; homogenization; hybridization.
