

CHAPTER 2

Globalization in Cross-Cultural Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization is defined in different ways by different disciplines but generally focuses on the decreasing importance of national borders in social, political, economic, and cultural processes and institutions (McLuhan, 1989). As a result of globalization, powerful new types of linkages among people and nations will be facilitated through the marketplace, the media, law, and technology. Movement of commodities, capital, information, and images across national and local boundaries will also be increased.

Although many potentially positive influences of globalization have been discussed, such as the opportunities it brings with it for increased flow of resources and knowledge around the world, these opportunities may not always come without significant costs. For instance, globalization processes have contributed to increasing income gaps between rich and poor nations, to the displacement of people and communities, and to loss of cultural identity among some nations and ethnic groups (Crafts, 2000; Schiller, 1996).

Scholars and the popular media in the West have tended to spend less time discussing the social influences of globalization and concentrated more on its economic implications. In this chapter we describe a cultural framework for considering the potential impact of globalization on the everyday lives of children and their families. We suggest that such a framework is helpful for facilitating the design of research that will assist policy makers operating in an ever connected world to enhance the well-being of children, their families, and communities.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN FAMILY VALUES AND ROLES

Many definitions have been used to define the term “culture” (Shweder & LeVine, 1984; Smith & Bond, 1999). For example, culture has been conceptualized

as a common way of construing or bringing meaning to events or a shared way of looking at the world (D'Andrade, 1987). It can also be identified as a system of perceived restraints that impose limits on the behavioral repertoire available for cultural group members (Poortinga, 1992). Culture can further be examined in terms of concrete behavior and shared values and behavioral assumptions (Stewart, Danielian, & Foster, 1998). Values in this sense define commonly endorsed cultural "oughts" or normative prescriptions for behavior. Assumptions, conversely, define shared beliefs about the nature of the world or an understanding of "what is".

Considerable differences exist across cultures in behaviors, values, and assumptions that pertain to children and families. For example, cultural variations exist in: (1) how authority within the family is viewed; (2) what is seen as the proper scope and timeframe for different types of commitments to family members; and (3) how loyalties and obligations to the self, the family, and the community are defined and balanced (Kagitcibasi, 1989). The settings in which children live and the types of connections individuals have with each other also show great cultural variability as well as customs and practices of behavior, societal "ethnotheories" about the nature of childhood, beliefs about the needs of children, and ideas about what constitutes effective child rearing (LeVine, 1974; Quinn & Holland, 1987; Miller & Goodnow, 1995; Whiting, 1980; Super & Harkness, 1997). An important question is how these cultural variations regarding the role, value, and function of children and families in society will mediate and/or be influenced by globalization forces.

INFLUENCE OF GLOBALIZATION ON CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN THE FAMILY

Some suggest that cultural variations in the family will become reduced and traditional collectivist structures will be replaced by more individualistic forms as the global marketplace enlarges. Some assume that this reduction will occur because individualistic patterns are seen as being more compatible with so-called "modernity" and the forces of economic capitalism (see Inkeles & Smith, 1974; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1989; Giddens, 1990). In this view, families across the world are expected to become increasingly autonomous and smaller with less emphasis placed on large extended interdependent networks. Convergence to Western individualist forms, according to some, will also be hastened by the social and media dominance of Western cultures (Moghaddam, 1997). For instance, the global influence of CNN, Disney, and IBM cannot be denied.

Another view suggests that globalization and the breakdown of communication barriers may lead not to increased homogeneity, but rather to greater diversity in cultural values and beliefs (Jones, 1997; Canclini, 1995). Pieterse (1995) writes of cultural hybridization occurring through the formation of new global subcultures and the transformation of existing cultural practices into increasingly divergent forms. In this view, the impact of globalization will

result not in a one-way flow from West to East, but rather will consist of multidirectional influences. Pieterse gives examples of a boy of Asian heritage in London playing football and a child of Native American background adding his or her own special flavor to a Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans. Increased contact through telecommunications may also lead to formation of communities not tied to geographic boundaries but rather linked by commonalities of interest or experience. Thus, the very meaning of the word community and culture may undergo change.

Fukuyama (1992) presents a third view. He asserts that the push via globalization towards convergence and divergence may not be incompatible, and that we may see increased convergence at some levels and increased divergence at others. Fukuyama suggests that greater convergence may occur across nations in basic economic and political ideologies, with trends accelerating toward increased economic capitalism and democratization. However, he states that this type of convergence may take place within a framework that affirms cultural distinctiveness. For example, in Chinese culture very hierarchical and multi-generational extended family structures are valued. While China has shown increased use of capitalistic economic systems, they have at the same time maintained traditional values by utilizing more family-centric models of business operations. Thus, core values may be maintained at some levels while change occurs at others.

CULTURE AND CHANGE

Globalization influences may well hasten cultural change at multiple levels. New linkages among nations offer opportunities for people to explore cultural identities in previously uncharted ways. Through increased communication and contact, individuals may be nudged out of unreflective and automatic thinking about their cultural traditions and moved toward constructing alternative ways of viewing the world. Culture will provide a context from which change via globalization will be mediated and framed.

One cultural context dimension that has been much studied is so-called individualism/collectivism (see Kim, 1994 for discussion of individualism/collectivism). In stereotypic conceptions of individualism/collectivism, very different ideas concerning the socialization of children by parents and others to become productive members of society are also posited. Within these different conceptions, however, we see increasing examples of patterns in which seemingly disparate cultural values and assumptions have been combined. Furthermore, economic capitalistic influences have also been assimilated into individualistic and collectivistic societies in an interesting variety of ways.

Several examples of assimilative patterns are presented below to highlight the range of challenges that are present for the growth and development of families and children within different types of cultural contexts. These examples are also given to illustrate how globalization might work to facilitate the emergence

of new cultural forms in which old dichotomies between the collectivistic and individualistic structures are less meaningful.

THE CHALLENGES OF INDIVIDUALISM: A DIVERSITY OF PATTERNS

Economic capitalism, as stated, has often been assumed to be most compatible with individualistic, small nuclear family structures. In the stereotypic view of individualistic cultures, or what Kagitcibasi (1989) labels cultures of separation, a launching type model of parenting is endorsed. Here a main goal of child rearing is to prepare children for an adulthood in which they will leave the family and live self-sufficiently in a competitive, consumer-driven society (Smith & Bond, 1999). In this model, traits such as independence and assertiveness, which facilitate children's ability to ultimately separate from the family and function well on their own, are valued. The adult child's decisions concerning choice of career, decisions about when and whom to marry and selection of a community in which to live are preferably guided by personal goals, not the expectations of others (Triandis, 1989). Thus, another function of childhood socialization is to raise children in such a way that they develop a clearly articulated sense of themselves and their own values, beliefs, and interests. In-group boundaries are rather loose and permeable and the child and the eventual adult are expected to be able to easily form relationships with a broad range of individuals over the course of her or his life. This flexibility also allows individuals to move easily with changing market and employment needs. Caring obligations in individualistic cultures tend to be fairly restricted (e.g., the parent is obligated to care for the child, but adult children are not strictly obligated to care for their parents or for others in their extended family) and guided by personal choices, not imposed duty (Miller, Bersoff, & Harwood, 1990). Emphasis is on freedom and rights expression and development of one's own "voice" (Tyler, 1989). The family unit is separated from the broader extended family both functionally and emotionally.

In these so-called cultures of separation, too much stress on freedom and independence without balancing emphasis on responsibility and duty has been criticized as leading to loneliness, alienation, narcissism and the breakdown of the social order and commitment to others (Sampson, 1977; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985). Such cultures also express concern that rights may be overemphasized without concomitant consideration of the importance of societal obligations and cooperation. These concerns become especially urgent if one assumes that this independent type structure will be increasingly imposed on other cultures via pressures stemming from global capitalization. Some, for example, Greenfield (1994), suggest that there may not just be one type of independent family structure, and that through globalization compatible with economic capitalism, a range of forms may emerge. The work of Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) provides interesting data on how autonomy and social cooperation and commitment can be balanced in

different ways among different types of individualistic societies. Schwartz and Bilsky have conducted major studies of the value patterns of a large variety of cultures and have identified several key dimensions on which these cultures appear to reliably vary. Three of these dimensions (mastery, intellectual autonomy, and affective autonomy) have often been associated with cultural individualism. Their findings suggest that these various elements of individualism may be quite different and may not always covary. For instance, according to Schwartz, the United States is a culture which is high on mastery and affective autonomy, but not particularly high on intellectual autonomy. Thus, in the United States culture, values that emphasize self-assertion, having control over one's environment, being competitive, and getting ahead of others and acting on the basis of personal desires and interests to achieve happiness are stressed more than values that relate to independence of thought and flexibility. The United States was also not as high as some other Western cultural groups on what Schwartz labeled egalitarian or voluntary social commitment to the welfare of others.

In contrast, Schwartz identified a Western European pattern in which emphasis on intellectual autonomy is combined with priority given to a sense of egalitarian sharing of resources with others. Additionally, in the Nordic cultures, a somewhat similar pattern of what might be called cooperative self-reliance was revealed in which value is placed both on the promotion of individual self-sufficiency and commitment to the welfare of others in society. Thus, children are socialized both to assert their own individuality and to connect to the larger community.

These alternative patterns of individualism suggest that the promotion of economic market capitalism may be facilitated in a variety of ways. Further, developing a sense of autonomy in children may not necessarily be incompatible with facilitating a sense of social cooperation and civic commitment.

THE CHALLENGES OF RELATEDNESS: DIFFERENT IDEAS OF ACHIEVEMENT AND COMPETENCE

In so-called cultures of relatedness, different challenges are present for adapting to social and economic changes presented by an increasingly interconnected world and global economic structures. In such cultures, children ideally should be raised so they will remain loyal and connected to the family over their lifetime (Kagitcibasi, 1994; Triandis, 1989). It is expected that during this period, interdependencies among family members will shift with the parents caring for the child when the child is young and the adult child caring for the parents when the parents are old. These caring duties are firm obligations, not personal choices. Thus, childrearing traits that facilitate the development of loyalty such as obedience and ability to be self-sacrificing are strongly endorsed. Ideally, the adult child's choices concerning whom to marry, where to live, and what career to pursue are at least partially governed by family expectations, as opposed to personal desires. Emphasis in child development is

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