GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON FAMILIES

May 5, 2006
4th Viennese Conference on Mediation
Vienna, AUSTRIA
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The term "Globalization" has been widely used in the last fifteen years. It is a controversial term and has been defined in several different ways. Globalization indicates that the world today is more interconnected than before. Globalization in its basic economic sense refers to the adoption of open and unfettered trading markets (through lowering of trade barriers, removal of capital controls, and liberalization of foreign exchange restrictions). Large volumes of money movement, increased volumes of trade, changes in information technology and communication are all integral to a global world. There is also a significant movement of people from one country to another for trade and work. Such increases in the movement of goods, labor, and services have weakened national barriers and restrictions that are imposed by a nation state. Some identify a new emergence of a "global village." In the past two decades, economic globalization has been the driving force behind the overall process of globalization.

Here is what Amartya Sen a Nobel Laureate and Economist has to say:

"Global interaction, rather than insulated isolation, has been the basis of economic progress in the world. Trade, along with migration, communication, and dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge, has helped to break the dominance of rampant poverty and the pervasiveness of 'nasty, brutish and short' lives that characterized the world. And yet, despite all the progress, life is still severely nasty, brutish and short for a large part of the world population. The great rewards of globalized trade have come to some, but not to others."

Amartya Sen, Foreword, Make Trade Fair, Oxfam 2002,
http://www.maketradefair.com/

It is apparent that globalization is a complex concept and depending on who is addressing the topic, the opinions and views remain quite conflicting. Globalization has several dimensions: political, technological, human, environmental and cultural. These dimensions can reflect or contribute to the exclusion of the economically and educationally poor people especially in developing countries, and environmental degradation, as well as the growth of prosperity and peace in some areas. Proponents and opponents of globalization have described and emphasized these different aspects. Others believe in the opportunities for social and economic progress, alongside the major problems associated with asymmetrical development.

Globalization and Its Impact on People: Families and Mental Health:

For the purpose of this presentation, I will discuss globalization and its impact on people at social, cultural, and psychological levels. As a social scientist, I am interested in how societies and people change because of this economic phenomena and how the process of change can impact families, individuals and communities.

Globalization is associated with rapid and significant human changes. The movements of people from rural to urban areas has accelerated, and the growth of cities in the developing world especially is linked to substandard living for many. Family disruption and social and domestic violence are increasing. For example, 2004 New Delhi police reports indicate that deaths in the city of about six women everyday are dowry-related suicides. Concepts of national identity, and of family, job and tradition are changing rapidly and significantly. There is concern that competitiveness introduced by globalization is leading to more individualistic societies.

On the other hand, rapid change can encourage fundamentalism, a desire for the past, and a loss of tolerance for differences in religion and culture. The nation state is losing influence relative to global economic pressures, and in some countries there is a failure or hesitation to develop social policies. All of these changes increase the likelihood that vulnerable people will be exploited, and threats to the human rights of less able people will increase.

It is believed by economists that the crash of the stock market in Asia in 1994 was an example of the rapid spread of adverse human consequences because of the interdependence of economies and people. Millions of people lost prosperity and livelihoods, and education and health services were among those cut across the region. The effects, including social unrest and poverty, are still evident. Domestic violence and suicide increased in this period in several of the countries in the region. It is believed that the illicit drug trade has grown in recent years to form a significant proportion of the total business volume in the world.

Let me revisit the business perspective of globalization:

In a capitalistic market, multinational companies are taking the lead in establishing themselves and creating a major presence in almost every part of the world. Coca Cola, McDonalds, and Nike are examples of such growth and proliferation. The media then plays a major role in advertising the benefits of new products and services as being BETTER AND SUPERIOR to what the local market has. And slowly but steadily the food that we eat, the clothes we wear and the life style we lead begins to change. This process becomes consumerism within a capitalistic culture. So people as consumers are being studied for their patterns and behaviors of spending.

At one level it may appear that globalization has no significant impact on families and that our lives are ‘normal’ in most circumstances. Many people are not totally aware of how they form a crucial part of this phenomenon. The reality is that every single individual is affected in one way or another. These changes affect people’s identities and cultural values, which sometimes become altered significantly. Whether it is between generations, or intra-personally, new values can cause dissonance and conflict with existing deeper-rooted values. Sometimes such transitions and changes can further cause difficulty with internal growth and development.

Psychological Impact of Globalization:

The most significant psychological consequence of globalization is that it transforms one's identity: in terms of how people think about themselves in relation to the social environment. According to Jeffrey Arnett (2002), there are four major issues related to identity, which develop due to globalization.

The **first** is the development of a **bicultural identity or perhaps a hybrid identity,** which means that part of one's identity is rooted in the local culture while another part stems from an awareness of one's relation to the global world. The development of global identities is no longer just a part of immigrants and ethic minorities. People today especially the young develop an identity that gives them a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture, which includes an awareness of events, practices, styles and information that are a part of the global culture. Media such as television and especially the Internet, which allows for instant communication with any place in the world, play an important part in developing a global identity. Yet, along with this new global identity people continue to retain and develop their local identity for daily interactions with their family, friends and community. A good example of bicultural identity is among the educated youth in India who despite being integrated into the global fast paced technological world, may continue to have deep rooted traditional Indian values with respect to their personal lives and choices such as preference for an arranged marriage, caring for parents in their old age. Although developing a bicultural identity means that a local identity is retained alongside a global identity, there is no doubt that local cultures are being modified by globalization. As traditional cultural practices and beliefs change, a bicultural or a **hybrid multicultural identity** likely develops to include the elements of the native, local and global culture. This is especially true with immigrants.

The **second** issue is identity **confusion,** which individuals from non-western cultures experience as a response to globalization. While people may adapt to changes and develop bicultural or hybrid, multicultural identities, some may find it difficult to adapt to rapid changes. The ways of the global culture may seem out of reach, too foreign, or even undermining their own cultural values and beliefs. Instead of becoming bicultural, they may feel isolated and excluded from both their local culture and the global culture, truly belonging to neither. The terms delocalization and dis-placement have been used to describe these processes. For some young people, however, delocalization may result in an acute sense of alienation and impermanence as they grow up with a lack of cultural certainty, a lack of clear guidelines for how life is to be lived and how to interpret their experience.

Identity confusion among young people may be reflected in problems such as depression, suicide, and substance use. A variety of cultures have experienced a sharp increase in suicide and substance use among their young people since their rapid move toward joining the global culture

The **third** change brought about by globalization is the growth of the **self-selected culture,** which means people choose to form groups with like-minded persons who wish to have an identity that is untainted by the global culture and its values. The values of the global culture, which are based on individualism, free market economics, and democracy and include freedom, of choice, individual rights, openness to change, and tolerance of differences are part of "western values." For most people worldwide, what the global culture has to offer is appealing. One of the most vehement criticisms of globalization is that it threatens to create one homogeneous worldwide culture in which all children grow up wanting to be like the latest pop music star, eat Big Macs, vacation at Disney World, and wear blue jeans, and Nikes. This outcome is unlikely since most people will develop a bicultural identity that includes a local identity along with their global identity. Besides, while most young people may jump with accept globalization and its changes, there will e other who will remain out of it by joining a self-selected culture of fellow dissenters. Such groups can have a religious basis, which can result in fundamentalism or espouse clear non-religious anti-global views

The **fourth** consequence of globalization is the **spread of emerging adulthood.** The timing of transitions to adult roles such as work, marriage and parenthood are occurring at later stages in most parts of the world as the need for preparing for jobs in an economy that is highly technological and information based is slowly extending from the late teens to the mid-twenties. Additionally, as the traditional hierarchies of authority weaken and break down under the pressure of globalization, the youth are forced to develop control over their own lives including marriage and parenthood.

The spread of emerging adulthood is related to issues of identity. Where a period of emerging adulthood is present, young people have a longer period for identity explorations in love and work before they commit themselves to long-term choices. By experiencing different love relationships, different educational possibilities, and different jobs, they learn more about themselves and they clarify their preferences and abilities. Emerging adulthood is possible only in societies where economic development is high enough that the labor of young people is not urgently needed. They are allowed to spend their late teens and early to mid-twenties exploring possibilities for self development because there is no pressing need for them to contribute to the economic well-being of their families (Arnett, 2000). For young people in developing countries, emerging adulthood exists only for the wealthier segment of society, mainly in urban areas, whereas the rural poor have no emerging adulthood and may even have no adolescence because they begin adult-like work at an early age and begin marriage and parenthood relatively early. Young people who are poor and/or live in rural areas are more likely to suffer from what Amartya Sen (1999) has called the "unfreedoms" of poverty, lack of education, and restricted, economic opportunities. Social scientists (Saraswathi and Larson, 2002) observe, that the lives of middleclass youth in India, South East Asia, and Europe have more in common with each other than they do with those of poor youth in their own countries.

To sum up, globalization appears to be a significant force in the psychological development of the people of the 21st century. Globalization has been going on in some

form or another for centuries: Cultures have long influenced each other through trade, migration, and war. As a consequence of globalization, the challenges of creating a viable identity are perhaps greater than they have been in the past. According to Giddens (2000), “when globalization alters and erodes traditional ways, identity “has to be created and recreated on a more active basis than before” (p. 65). Identity is less influenced by prescribed social roles and based more on individual choices, on decisions that each person makes about what values to embrace and what paths to pursue in love and work. Some people react to this responsibility with identity confusion or seek refuge in a self-selected culture that offers more structure and takes over some decisions.

Social and Cultural Impacts of Globalization: The Impact on Families

Up to now, my discussions on the psychological impact of globalization have described changes and influences only at an individual level. The study of families and changes they experience as a system although rich and complex can be very time consuming and expensive and perhaps best obtained one family at a time through clinical counters. However, the study of social changes is extensive and often support the impact of changes in families.

Allow me to present a general view of how globalization has impacted families and family life for Indians. As a native of India, who moved to study in United States in the early 1990’s, I have been interested how changes impact the two bicultural worlds that I am a part of, as well as understand the experiences of Indians in India as globalization occurs. Today, as I work and live in the United States, India seems to be one of the two “talked about” countries, the other of course being India’s neighbor, China. Let me briefly say a few salient points about India.

India:
India is a culturally diverse country. Sixteen per cent of the world’s population lives in the country. There are over 826 languages and thousands of dialects spoken. The difference in regions, topography and climate allow for different types of lifestyles and culture. Although about 70 per cent of the populations live in rural areas, India is rapidly urbanizing with more than 225 cities with over 100,000 population, and at least ten cities alone with over a million people.

By United Nations standards, Indian has begun to age. Over 7.7% of the population is above 60 years and this number is expected to reach 12.6% by the year 2025. . Improved sanitation, increased attention to maternal health and better childcare facilities greatly reduced infant mortality rates. Globalization is hardly a new force affecting India. To think so is to ignore a diverse and pluralistic long-standing civilization that was shaped by a long list of "invading" (globalizing) cultures that became what we now know as India. The previous globalizers of India include the Aryans, Greeks, Turks, Afghans, Muslims and most recently, the Europeans, Portuguese, French, Dutch and finally the English. The former globalizers that came with invading armies have increasingly been replaced by less violent but equally powerful globalizers. Television is arguably the most dominant gateway of globalization affecting India today. While TV was launched in

India in the late 1950s it only became widespread in the 1980s, after the governments ended their monopoly as the only broadcaster. Satellite TV arrived in 1991, bringing with it far reaching consumerism.

In terms of people, India faces some resource and infrastructure constraints. Increased longevity has led to the emergence of many health and social issues. Fragmentation of the traditional **family** network is leading to an erosion of the available support within the immediate and **extended family**. Migration of younger generations from rural to urban areas and from one urban center to another as well as transnational migration has resulted results in the elderly being left to fend for themselves at a time when **family support** becomes more crucial. With more women joining the workforce system, the care of aged within families has declined. For those who live within extended families the elderly have to live in harmony with the younger generation that has to face a highly competitive world of **globalization.** While the nuclear family system is increasingly becoming the norm, modern life-styles, changing professional and personal expectations are impacting relationships of marriage and commitment. In cities young people are starting to choose their own partners. Arranged marriages, however, continue. Meanwhile, as divorce rates increase especially in cities, the concept of single parenthood has not caught on in the Indian culture. According to the India's Ministry of Health reports (1997), teenage pregnancies are reaching an all-time high. In the southern state of Kerala, teenage abortions rose by 20 per cent in a year, while the western state of Maharashtra, one-fifth of all abortion were with girls less than 15.

Consumerism has permeated and changed the fabric of contemporary Indian society. Western fashions are coming to India: the traditional Indian dress is increasingly being displaced by western dresses especially in urban areas. Indian MTV, soap television, and films set a stage for patterns of behavior, dress codes and jargon.

Despite prohibition of **child labor** by the Indian constitution, over 60 to a 115 million children in India work. While most rural child workers are agricultural laborers, urban children work in manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs. Globalization most directly exploits an estimated 300,000 Indian children who work in India's hand-knotted carpet industry, which exports over $300 million worth of goods a year. Uncounted other children work in less formal sectors, such as the incense industry, used both domestically and exported. Reports indicate that urban Indian children and youth face significant competition and pressure to succeed. Yet, as the joint family system weakens and there is less parental supervision and support (with both parents working), the youth seem more restless and insecure. There are also reports of increases in violent behavior and aggression especially in urban areas and cities.

As for **women,** the impact of globalization has been interesting. On one hand, it has allowed women to become a larger part of the workforce, with opportunities for higher pay raising their self confidence and independence. Globalization has provided a power to uproot the traditional views about women that have kept women economically poor and socially exploited. The growth of the computer and technology sector has provided middle class educated women with better wages, flex-timings, and the capacity to

negotiate their role and status within the household and society. On the other hand, women continue to work in poorly paid, mentally and physically unhealthy, and insecure situations. For most women, their domestic responsibilities are not alleviated. Wage gaps have not showed any significant changes in most employment sectors other than information technology. Additionally, prostitution, abuse and dowry related suicides are on the increase despite globalization and some say that the materialistic greed is one of the main causes.

Globalization and marginalization go hand in hand in India. With millions of poor farmers, rural laborers, urban unemployed, slum-dwellers, 3 million refugees, 100 million street children, and the millions displaced by 'the development' projects, poverty in this era of globalization has assumed new dimensions. The question of "are the poor getting poorer?" related to inequality both nationally and internationally. It is apparent that in order to ensure that the potential gains from globalization are shared among all groups (rich and poor countries and between groups within a country) major reforms may be needed. As Amartya Sen states, "Even if the poor were to get just a little richer, this would not necessarily imply that the poor were getting a fair share of the potentially vast benefits of global economic interrelations."

As a social scientist, I am interested to know if indeed globalization, liberalization of markets and open trade in India has indeed "improved" the lives if women. The prime indicator of poverty eradication in a changing society is improving access to health and access to education. To get a clearer picture, it would be important to study if and how the changes that are being brought about by globalization are helping the lives of people in all socio-economic groups.

I would finally like to conclude my discussion today by sharing a few pictures of Bangalore, also known as India's Silicon City. Bangalore, sits 3,000 feet above sea level. It was once a garden city with lakes and vast green spaces and is now home to about 5 million people. Today Bangalore is a mass of aging single-story houses and shops, gray concrete apartment buildings, collapsing colonial offices, and shocking slums. Despite periodic islands of modernity, glass faced buildings and high-end boutiques, the urban sprawl and burgeoning population make Bangalore one of the most polluted cities in India. India's Silicon City has done little to provide viable mass transit in a nation where most Indians do not own cars.

These slides present the dichotomy of an urban city in India that is very much a part of a global world…….