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Globalization in a Sports Management Software Environment

Organizational Communication Capstone Project

University of Portland

Fall 2014

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Abstract

This purpose of this research was to identify that there is no definite version of a definition for Globalization. The origins of the word was used to describe economic-political phenomenon, leaving aside the impact of and on the cultural elements. The other purpose of this research was to identify how globalization is perceived outside of the academic constraints, on how it influences small organizations and people at the individual level. This was achieved through cross-referencing various academic definitions and interpretations of globalization that were later contrasted and compared with the definitions of the interviewed employees of a sports management organization, where they were asked about their perception of its terminology and how its presence affected their professional and personal lives. Though a definite answer was not achieved, evidence that small organizations, the individual person and other cultural elements have a more active role on globalization was encountered. To this point, this research is a first step into better understanding the nature of globalization and how there are more forces exerted to it that become a part of its definition, should be studied not only within the confines of academia, but at its practical environment as well.

Introduction

Ever since the former Harvard professor named Theodore Levitt popularized the term “globalization” in 1983, the definition of this terminology has gone through various revisions and transformations (Feder, 2006). Originally it was meant to describe the role and potential of markets in a global scale and how its impact was bigger than previously imagined as well as the importance of customer retention, yet Dr. Levitt did not leave a specific definition for this term (Hindle, 2009). This lack of specification on what globalization encompasses led to various interpretations and new definition by other contemporary academics and continues to be redefined in the present. Even though through the years the definitions for globalization have simmered into more constant definitions, there is still some struggle to have a definite answer on the extents and limitations of its terminology.

For this reason this study has first investigated and attempted to find the relation between the common perceptions of globalization in contrast to the definitions given by academia; second, it has come to better understand the relationship of the theory proposed through academia and how it applies in practice on a day-to day operations. This was in order to better understand the relationship between these factors. For this reason, three employees who work at a Sports Management Software Environment organization were interviewed over their understanding and views on globalization. Their perspective helps give clues that globalization is not mainly defined by the economic-political element, but that other elements within the cultural element range has influence over the definition and impacts on globalization.

Problem Statement

From the beginning of the popularization of the word globalization, its terminology has not been a clearly defined one. From Dr. Theodore Levitt's popularization of the term in 1983, to the present, globalization has had many definitions, representations and significances. Through this indefinite birth, and in the present there still are no clear consensus of what globalization should entail. The one part of defining globalization that academia seem to agree on is that it has to do with the power and impact if the economy, political, and sometimes cultural elements. Some of these academic definitions further demonstrate this point:

1. "Globalization, or the increased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and countries, is generally understood to include two interrelated elements: the opening of borders to increasingly fast flows of goods, services, finance, people and ideas across international borders; and the changes in institutional and policy regimes at the international and national levels that facilitate or promote such flows. It is recognized that globalization has both positive and negative impacts on development" ("WHO Globalization", n.d.).
2. "Globalization is a conceptualization of the international political economy which suggests and believes essentially that all economic activity, whether local, regional or national, must be conducted within a perspective and attitude that constantly is global and worldwide in its scope" (Spich, 1995).
3. "The characteristics of the globalization trend include the internationalizing of production, the new international division of labor, new migratory movements from South to North, the new competitive environment that accelerates these processes, and the internationalizing of the state...making states into agencies of the globalizing trend" (Cox, 1996).

The problematic with these types of definitions is on the narrowing of the scope and focus of globalization to one of being a side-effect or byproduct of economic activity and political brawn, putting businesses and governments as the main and sometimes, the only motivators of these global interactions and lowering of boundaries, mostly ignoring the cultural tendencies. So how much of it really is dependent in political and economic tendency? This research explores the academic trend thus tends to minimize or deny the impact of the cultural factors that influences globalization.

The other issue that has become apparent is the disconnect between academia and the practical use and understanding of globalization. That is to say how globalization is seen through the lenses of the everyday population that are affected by it in their professional and personal lives. As stated above, the academic globalization tends to concentrate on the economic-political prowess, while not completely examining the active cultural roles and effects it has in the global citizenry. By these definitions, only the bigger enterprises and governments have any influence over the course in which a globalized world will bend towards, leaving unaccounted the influence that smaller enterprises and the individual person may have over globalization, or how much culture can influence its trends. This is leaving a gap between a detached academic interpretations from the active participation of small organizations and the individual person. For that effect, this study became a small stepping stone that showcases evidence that there are still some missing links in the story of the definition and interpretation of globalization. This research also pushes to better understand the relationship between other forms of influences outside of the political and economic, as well as how these potential other forces and influences that may not be accounted for, which could also explain the malleable nature of globalization.

Conceptual Framework

Stohl (2005) describes globalization as having three different sections; the economic which affects the “means of production, exchange, distribution and consumption...”, the political with the “exercise of power, coercion, surveillance and control over people and territories...”, and cultural with “symbolic exchange through rituals, everyday practices, mass-media, face-to-face communication, and cultural performances...” These three elements in theory are the main components of globalization, but upon further analyzing Stohl’s description of the cultural element, it is dependent on both the economic and political elements in order for it to exercise influence over globalization.

Other definitions of globalization are more varied, from the more generalized by Mittleman stating it as, “A rubric for varied phenomena, the concept of globalization interrelates multiple levels of analysis: economics, politics, culture and ideology” (1996). While the International Monetary Fund (IMF) describes it akin to its organizational interests by specifying, “Globalization refers to the growing economic interdependence of countries worldwide through the increasing volume and variety of cross-border transactions in goods and services and of international capital flows, and also through the more rapid and widespread diffusion of technology” (IMF World Economic Outlook May, 1997). Meanwhile critics such as Beck warns about it as he claims that, “Globalization - however the word is understood - implies the weakening of state sovereignty and state structures” (2000). And though there are many that explores the various roles and effects of globalization, the tendency is to mainly rely on the influence of the economic-political more than culture or other external forces, as McMichael’s cautiously describes, “Globalization project’: an emerging vision of the world and its resources

as a globally organized and managed free trade / free enterprise economy pursued by a largely unaccountable political and economic elite” (2000).

On the other hand, Shome and Hedge (2002) recognize the moving importance of culture for a globalized world, calling attention to be aware of history and social movements, while at the same time stating that there is no measurable way to see how globalization is affected by it or predict how it will affect culture. They also describe culture as being a part of the other elements (political and economic), being in constant flow, melding, creating an interdependence with all these elements. This further reveals the issue of why it’s hard to research it and why it’s hard to see the impact of other exerted forces such as smaller entities and individual people. One of the proposed solutions of this conundrum that they both press for is for there to be a more open dialogue about globalization within communication scholars. However this continues to trap the term-defining powers within the walls of academia. This leads to the other presented issue of this research, that academia alone are tasking themselves responsible for searching a definition and meaning of globalization, which bottles down to a streamlining of a study through an expected academic process. This presents a grievous problem because, as Kristof says about the current state of academia, “Universities have retreated from area studies, so we have specialists in international theory who know little that is practical about the world” (2014).

In short, though the necessity of understanding other forces outside of the economic and political have been conceptualized, there is still hasn’t been a clear consensus on how and at what extent cultural elements and other external factors such as the smaller scale economic entities, and the individual person’s perception may impact globalization. This research focuses on these external factors while producing clues that they do have impact on globalization, and should be accounted for in its definition.

Methodology

In order to better understand how a smaller scale economic entity as well as the individual perceives and may be factors that contribute to a larger scale definition of globalization, an organization that works in a sports management software environment called Bonzi was chosen. This organization was chosen because of their small business status that works at a national level thanks to the utilization of internet based servers and computer software that manage the accounts of various league referees nationwide.

The research was based on the interview of three of the organization's employees that occupy varying roles in the company. In order to guarantee their participation, a personal invitation and explanation about the research's broad interest in knowing about globalization and if they believe it has any effect in their personal and professional lives.

During the interview and with prior consent, the use of the following materials to record the observations were allowed: Written (pen, notebook, tablet), Photograph (smartphone), Audio-recording (smartphone), Video-recording (smartphone). On the use of the recorded media: The interviewees were aware that all material would be used solely for the purpose of research; All the primary recordings of the observations and the interviews itself would be utilized for this research alone.

The interviewees were also made aware that their participation did not involve any risks other than what one would encounter in their daily life and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Because some interviews could be longer than expected, they were also alerted that they may get tired during the observation interview. It was also important to make sure they understood that if they felt emotional or upset with any of the questions that they as the

interviewee could tell the interviewer at any time if they wished to take a break or stop the interview as well as they were free to not answer or to skip any of the proposed questions.

It was also informed that they were not likely to have any direct benefit from being in this research study, other than a better understanding on their own perspective on globalization and their collaboration with academia.

Once they understood and approved of being an interviewee for this research, they were asked for their names (where the real ones would not be revealed in this research) and organizational positions, followed by the research questions pertinent to the study:

- A) What does your Organization do?
- B) What your current position/tasks in the organization?
- C) How would you define Globalization?
- D) What is/are your view/s on Globalization?
- E) READ ACADEMIC DEFINITIONS OF GLOBALIZATION: do you agree/disagree with their definitions? Would you contribute or edit to these definitions?
- F) Do you believe that Globalization has any impact in your Organization?
- G) Do you believe that your daily life is influenced or impacts Globalization?

These questions were setup in such a way to be able to measure their perspective on globalization and gauge how much globalization influences them and how they may impact on globalization. The first question was to be able to understand what impact their organization has in a local, national and global scale. The second question was to understand what influence level in the organization they had. The third question was to explore their understanding of the terminology. The fourth question was for the interviewees to demonstrate their perception on the influence and impact globalization has according to their definition of its term. The fifth question

was to allow them to read academic definitions on globalization, and observe what they felt about them, asking them what they noticed, and would add or subtract from them. On the sixth question, with the interviewees presenting both their personal definition and views on the academic ones, were asked if they could construe instances where globalization affected their professional lives. The seventh and last question explored how they felt about globalization in their personal lives, allowing them to reflect upon the push-pull relationship as an individual with their global environment.

For the research, a set of key terms associated with globalization were utilized in order to gauge what the interviewees understood and saw globalization influencing their daily interactions both in their professional and personal lives. The key terms that were monitored to find the relationship between the organization and the individual person's exchange with globalization were: Capitalism, Culture, E-Commerce, Economy, Environment, Growth, Homogenization, Human Resource Management, Interconnectedness, Internet, Marketing, Multilateral, Negative, Offshoring, Outsourcing, Political, Positive, Progress, Protectionism, Standardization, Technology, etc.

Through these interviews the research would be able to find the perception of what globalization is, how the three major elements of globalization (economic, political, and cultural) are understood, and how from a small scale organization as well as individual people are influenced by and influence globalization. Once done with the interviews and after analyzing their perceived definitions of globalization on how it affected each of them, the findings on globalization's influence and impact were an evident reality for the organization and their personal lives.

Results

As the interviews were completed, one of the resounding themes on how globalization is viewed or interpreted was similar to Aninat description of globalization as “the increasing interaction among and integration of diverse human societies in all important dimensions of their activities-- economic, social, political, cultural, and religious” (2001). The following are the answers the interviewees gave.

Blanca – Age 32

A) What does your Organization do?

“Work for Bonzi, Program Manager for Software division called game officials that provides software for sports assigners to use when assigning games for local, state or national clubs and associations. Bonzi, the parent company provides a registration software for players and teams to sign up for the club or association as well as to schedule games, communicate between coaches and players, as well as a web-based platform that clubs can use.”

B) What your current position/tasks in the organization?

“Program Manager for game officials, a software division at Bonzi. I provide main technical support for clients to call in on how to use the software, or if they encounter any issues while using the software, as well as sales and new client training.”

C) How would you define Globalization?

“Had to contemplate back to her college days, claimed it’s a hard question. Globalization is the process of having a culture grow and scale in a way that it becomes influential across multiple countries and in multiple organizations, taking a product or idea that works for one type of country or culture and making it succeed in a mass international scale in a way that other countries can adopt and assimilate to in terms of usage and ideals.”

D) What is/are your view/s on Globalization?

“Pros and cons. From an economic standpoint it gives the company or organization or entity the opportunity to grow and become profitable by expanding their services at an international scale. At the same time it tends to squeeze out the more local based or smaller markets, products and cultural ideals, which reduces their survival rate, unless they adopt the means of that larger entity at a global scale.”

E) READ ACADEMIC DEFINITIONS OF GLOBALIZATION: do you agree/disagree with their definitions? Would you contribute or edit to these definitions?

“From a business or economic standpoint, I agree with those definitions. But at the same time, from a cultural standpoint, it whitewashes an individual culture or a nation’s identity when they adopt the norms of this globalized entity. You have the good with the bad, it’s a double-edged sword, if you don’t you miss out on economic growth opportunity, and at the same time by staying within the mountains of your own comfort as a nation then you miss out on potential growth, but retain your identity. Economically yes, but at the same time social identity is taken away because of it.”

F) Do you believe that Globalization has any impact in your Organization?

“Looking at sports is a culture in itself. Sports is not a unique cultural trait to jut the United States, as many other countries around the world have their favorite sports. I don’t currently get to oversee a lot of international competition, and I don’t see the organization growing at an incredibly globalized scale at the moment. On the globalization spectrum, there are times for example when the server is down (which is located offshores the United States) where while it being 3 a.m. in Oregon, everyone has to immediately wake up to work with the clients and make sure they are assured that their data is still there, while the software engineers and the head of the

department is solving the issue both on our local servers and the company that runs our main servers to solve this problem. This jump into action occurs because though it is 3 a.m. here, first, our clients should be able to access their data at any time of the day, but we also have to consider the different time zones in the country and the world, where others might already have started their day and in need of the service we provide to them.”

G) Do you believe that your daily life is influenced or impacts Globalization?

“Yes, from the media, food, my identity when having to work that forces me to be competitive, active and growing, being better than your competition, stemmed from an American ideal, where in my personal life I am not the way that business demands me to be. The way American businesses now destine themselves is the endpoint to become globalized, make a lot of money and pass it on to the next person to keep scaling it up. And I don’t see a lot of Americans and American businesses saying, “No, we’re okay just the way we are”. I think the culture is of growth meaning success and that having a global reach is the zenith. This is stripping cultural and personal identity.”

Tasia – Age 52

A) What does your Organization do?

“Bonzi, the company develops web-based technology that runs sports organizations in the United States and Canada.”

B) What your current position/tasks in the organization?

“Owner of Bonzi, functioning as the CEO for the company.”

C) How would you define Globalization?

“Globalization is a transition for the world where the people of all the different countries are becoming more interconnected and working more closely together in all facets of life and

business, even culturally; cross-pollinating. It's also about corporations serving the world instead of just locally."

D) What is/are your view/s on Globalization?

"Globalization is changing, evolving. What I like about some of the changes I've seen in the world. I support changes that help bring people that live in poverty or don't have the standard of living that some of the other countries do, helping them achieve a higher level of lifestyle. On the flipside of this, some of the other things that you see, such as the NAFTA trade agreement, I think that it was an attempt to boost some of those countries that were not so well to-do, I think there's been some negative and maybe some unintended consequences from some of the globalization attempts. I am currently reading a book about climate change about how NAFTA has affected, negatively impacted the climate by putting more pollutants into the air because, one example, this country is importing food from a lot more countries, therefore instead of them coming from California, they come from Asia or even Latin America, and they have to go on a boat which puts some more pollutants in the air. That's just one example of a negative impact of globalization and how I view it. At the same time the farmers down in Asia or Latin America are deriving a better living because they're selling more product out of the country and shipping it up to the United States. St. Louis for example is a graveyard of factories. There should be a better way to deal with globalization, a lot of corporations that have benefited off the resources, both human and otherwise."

E) READ ACADEMIC DEFINITIONS OF GLOBALIZATION: do you agree/disagree with their definitions? Would you contribute or edit to these definitions?

"A lot of these definitions have to do with, are focused on trade, but I think you can't overlook the impact social media has had on globalization. And I think that it is not necessarily negative, I

think it's extraordinarily positive. If I were to add something to the globalization definition I think it would have to be how the internet and social media has impacted how we've come to know each other through cross-cultural barriers as people. I think that it also allows for advanced freedom of speech for a lot of people who wouldn't otherwise have it. It helps increase awareness of people here to people who are sometime oblivious of other countries, I think that social media has maybe put some issues on the forefront of people's minds that would otherwise not be there. I think that's another example maybe of how we're coming to be more, considering other countries and other people, we're coming to be more like neighbors because we're getting to know them, where we never had that opportunity before. These definitions seem to emphasize more trade and economic, it's focused on commerce."

F) Do you believe that Globalization has any impact in your Organization?

"Absolutely, we can see it with technology, with the engineers that we're hiring. I am thankful that a lot of people are coming to this country learning to be engineers because not enough Americans (people who are born here, or live here) are becoming software engineers, so we're hiring people from other countries that come here, and they're applying for work visas to stay here and so I think that that's a very small example. I guess another example for us would be where we had our mobile products, we couldn't find anyone to develop them here so we hooked up with a company over in India and have them developed. And it wasn't because of cost, it was out of need because we couldn't find the people we needed to help develop the products that we need, so we reached out to people from other countries. Because we're an internet-based company, that opens opportunities for us, sometimes I think it's easier for us to serve other people from other countries, and people are open to working with us. Before, say eight, ten years ago, just take Canada, Canadians would never consider working with an American company,

they didn't want anything to do with you, now we get calls consistently from people in Canada who want to do business with us. The point there is that you see trust building, and a comfort level increasing working with businesses from other countries. Those are some examples of how it has impacted us."

G) Do you believe that your daily life is influenced or impacts Globalization?

"Sure, absolutely, you can see it all around you. We know more of what's going on in the world and what happens to people really far away than we ever have, and have more information about those people. If they didn't allow people to come in the country and go to school here and stay and work for us, we wouldn't have the product that we have today because we wouldn't have the people to build it. And you might not have the food in your grocery stores that you do. Just immediately you can see many different ways that it can impact us. Then on the negative side you have the whole, I think climate change is a very big thing, I don't know if it's on everybody's mind, but when I see eight feet of snow drop in Buffalo, NY, and everything that happened last year, I think you've got to start thinking about it. I am not saying that globalization causes climate change, all I'm saying is that, when you say "does it affect me"? I say that that's something that is adding to the things that we've done to create a more global community have had a negative impact, and I think that that impacts me. I like a closer world, I think that it will, everybody has more of a stake in keeping things peaceful and balanced and all working together, rather than being isolated, I think it's a good thing. It also gives opportunity for other people. A closer world means a lot, because if you're all, sort of like our software is too, you sign up for our software, you put all this work using it, it's working really well, and to have to disconnect from it is painful, and the same thing is true from countries that get all intertwined together, and

they work together, they depend on each other, you're going to think twice before you start causing problems and lose all the benefits that you have. People lose their unique identities.”

Butch – Age 65

A) What does your Organization do?

“Game Officials, owned and supported by Bonzi. It's a software firm that manages Game Officials across various sports in the United States and Canada.”

B) What your current position/tasks in the organization?

“Marketing Director, the ‘general go-for’.”

C) How would you define Globalization?

“Globalization involves the interaction, not necessarily between countries, but I also envision it as interaction between more companies and organizations working together whether they are in the United States, or in China or in Peru or wherever. It's more about how to work together to provide the services and products.”

D) What is/are your view/s on Globalization?

“I have mixed views on it. I like when it's about cooperation and working together to create a goal, service or product. But I also see a lot of manipulation. I live in Texas, I see a lot of that, I see a lot of local people who have lost stuff because they'll do it cheaper in another country, that's the bad thing about it is why I'm not really sure that it really improves the standard of living in the other countries either, more people are being taken advantage of. And at the same time I think it does allow opportunities if we could manage them better.”

E) READ ACADEMIC DEFINITIONS OF GLOBALIZATION: do you agree/disagree with their definitions? Would you contribute or edit to these definitions?

“Yes, I agree with these definitions.”

F) Do you believe that Globalization has any impact in your Organization?

“My part of the business is more parroquial, it is more localized. We do have some customers in Canada, and as we grow we plan to expand to other countries. We are an internet-based service, so it’s easier for us to translate that.”

G) Do you believe that your daily life is influenced or impacts Globalization?

“It definitely impacts us all in the products we use, the products we get, food we get, prices we pay. It’s generally been a positive thing. I feel sometimes that globalization wants to take away identity, but at the same time it brings different identities together that sometimes can conflate with each other. People that don’t want to lose their unique identity.”

Though the economic forces are immediately recognized by the three interviewees, they all interpret that it is not the only factor that makes globalization. As the questions on their personal definition of globalization were asked, another common thread that came up was the talk of unity and cooperation, and that globalization brings both good and bad elements to those they affect. When asked about their personal view on globalization, they emphasized how globalization works like a scale, that when it benefits some, it will at the same time be a hindrance for others. Once described various definitions of globalization, two of the interviewees noticed that there was heavy emphasis on the economic elements of globalization, they mentioned the influence of politics, however they noticed that very little of the definitions had to do with the impact of culture and the individual person’s efforts. When talking about the impact to the organization, they all talked about the importance of connecting with others through technology. And when asked about their personal impact, they all had a sense that globalization elements have a profound effect in their daily lives in both positively and negatively, and that they are active participants and modifiers of the world.

Discussion

During the interviews, it was undeniable the impact that the economic element has over both the definition of globalization and impact in both their professional and personal lives. Though not referenced directly, the political element were referenced in passing and interchangeably with the economic element. The element that was distinguishable to the interviewees that was set apart from the other two elements was the cultural one, as they spoke about how globalization is bringing the world together while stripping away one's individuality. Though they debated if it's really a ripping of one's individuality and cultural traits, or if it's something new altogether. The interviewees view on what globalization means tends to side with Stohl's definition more than the other authors that side more with the economic-political or the cultural traits of globalization. Another of the concerns presented was the streamlining of the economic, political and cultural elements, as they were able to see the many benefits and facilitations that this brought, but it came with sacrifices that sometimes did not make sense, that though they made life easier for some, it made life harder for others, which were easy to ignore because of its benefits. This is just as Ritzer predicted when he coined the McDonaldization process (2004). Unlike the definitions of the IMF, Beck and McMichael, the interviewees described the value and impact of small organizations like their own to the globalized world because of their ambition to grow, though they would have agreed that they must also be cautious and weary of the negative elements that this could bring to the Organization. Finally, the interviewees described Shome and Hedge's importance of culture, adding the importance of the thinking process and decision-making power of the individual. Giving reason to their report that there is still more to be learned from the cultural element, but also by adding to it the importance of the individual persons' smaller organizations' potential to impact globalization through the three core elements.

Conclusion

Though the research did not find a definite conclusive answer to how smaller organizations and the individual impacts globalization as a whole, it does show that both those entities are active and aware participants of the global spectrum. What was noticeable is how much is assumed and understood by academia and the non-academic alike on the impact of the economic-political element exerts on globalization. On the other hand, the cultural influence is understood to have been impacted by globalization more than the other way around, that globalization changes culture more than culture effects globalization.

What is interesting about globalization and its various definitions is that the reason why it is such a malleable term is because it is alive. This means that there isn't a set definition because globalization is constantly evolving and adapting with the world as its needs and values change over time. What is happening with globalization and its terminology is similar to what has happened with Environmentalism and its own terminology, where over time its significance changed with the necessity of its era.

Just as Bernard described the three environmentalism waves where the first stage was about conservation, the second about activism and the third about restoration and co-creation (2010); the analogous is what is happening with globalization, as a first stage was about the economic, the second added the political, and the current stage is adding and defining the importance and impact of culture and the power of the globalized local economy and the influence of the individual people.

In the end, the study showed evidence that small organizations and individuals have the potential to impact the globalized world. In future studies it would be advisable to take this into account as part of the cultural element to better understand how it is impacting the globalized world.

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