



International School

Chapter 5: Globalisation

5.2 Globalisation and identity



The impact of globalisation on identity

- Identity is heavily based on places - on the local more than global (identifying with a nation state or ethnic group)
- 40% of states have more than five significant ethnic groups (Cohen and Kennedy)
- Benedict Anderson: national and ethnic communities are 'imagined communities'
 - People believe they share identity with many people who they will never meet or know
 - National narrative - stories about the nation's origin and history
- Some groups feel that their identity is under threat due to globalisation
 - Strengthening of nationalism
 - Rise of strong nationalist parties





Ethnic revitalisation

Ethnic revitalisation: a renewed emphasis on ethnic identities as a reaction against globalisation.

Islamophobia: fear, hatred or prejudice against islam in general or against Muslims.

- Ethnicity is socially constructed and usually based on ideas about language, religion, customs etc.
- Exaggeration of ethnic differences as a reaction to globalisation
- Suspicion and aggression against other groups that are seen as threats (e.g Islamophobia)
- Hostility towards people who belong to the national or ethnic community but can be 'othered' (gay and other sexual minorities).





Cultural defence and hybrid identities

Cultural defence: refers to situation in which culture acts as the focus for defence of a group's identity when it is seen as under threat.

Hybrid identities: identities created by the belonging of aspects of two or more cultures.

- Islamophobia led to Muslims making Islam the main aspect of their identity
- Johal (1998): South Asian + British = 'Brasian'
 - Greater emphasis on individualism and personal choice
 - Don't follow traditional religious constraints on dating, diet and drinking alcohol
 - They may choose their marriage partner





Cultural divergence versus cultural convergence

- Cultural divergence - led to existence of considerable differences between cultures in different parts of the world.
- Cultural convergence - globalisation will lead to a single global culture
- Chanda (2002): globalisation is in fact the process by which human populations, which at one point were all in Eastern Africa but then migrated and scattered around the world, are reunited.
- Globalists: positive process - people around the world are able to participate in global culture (language, clothing and sports, values - freedom of speech and expression.
- Sceptics: the spread of Western, primarily American culture, potentially harmful values and practices such as excessive consumption. Cultural imperialism will destroy local cultures.
- Transformationalists: creation of hybridised cultures.





The role of Western ideology in shaping identity and the concept of westernisation

Westernisation: the process by which Western values, ideas and practices spread globally.

- Aspects: emphases on individualism, democracy, science and technology, human rights, support for a 'free.market' economy.
- Association: Christianity, Europe and USA.
- Fusion with other ideologies (Japan) and conflict (Afghanistan)

Coca-colonisation: the process leading to a global consumer culture, strongly influenced by American culture, in which standard commodities are promoted by global marketing campaigns to create similar lifestyles.

McDonaldisation: the process by which contemporary corporate cultural products are standardised, homogenised and formulaic, in a similar way fast-food restaurants.





The role of Western ideology in shaping identity and the concept of westernisation

Cultural globalisation creates choice and so there is always the risk of making the 'wrong' choice. The homogenisation of global products quantifies and reduces risk in two ways:

1. Through standardised experiences - each time a product is consumed, the individual knows exactly what to expect.
 2. Where billions of people are making exactly the same consumption choices, consumers are reassured that they have made the 'right' choice.
- People increasingly see themselves as diverse individuals while they make very similar consumption choices. **Bryman (1999)**: diversity and homogenisation co-exist in the same cultural space.





The role of Western ideology in shaping identity and the concept of westernisation

Cultural life is increasingly expressed through the kind of manufactured experiences similar to Disney World, a theme park that is safe and secure, within which different individuals have different consumption experiences.

The disneyisation of cultural life involves things such as:

- Theming - themed consumption experiences
- De-differentiation - range of products - seamless life experiences
- Merchandising - 'themed lifestyles' taken into home
- Cultural imperialism

Cultural imperialism : when the culture of one nation or part of the world become dominant over others. The process by which Western or American culture is taking over from indigenous cultures around the world.

