Globalization and psychology

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In globalized societies, people often encounter symbols of diverse cultures in the same space at the same time. Simultaneous exposure to diverse cultures draws people's attention to cultural differences and promotes catergorical perceptions of culture. Local cultural identification and presence of cultural threat increase the likelihood of resisting inflow of foreign cultures (exclusionary reactions). When cultures are seen as intellectual resources, foreign cultural exposure affords intercultural learning and enhances individual creativity (integrative reactions). Psychological studies of globalization attest to the utility of treating cultures as evolving, interacting systems, rather than static, independent entities.

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Globalization refers to the process of interaction and integration among the people, companies and governments of different nations [1]. Globalization involves global flows of goods, services, ideas, technologies, cultural forms and people. It speeds up transnational circulation of ideas, languages and popular cultures. It also increases the inflow of capitalist values, neoliberal economic thoughts, and instrumental rationality into traditional communities [2••]. Although globalization is a popular topic of investigation in the social sciences, it has not received much research attention in psychology [3]. Nonetheless, findings from recent psychological studies of globalization invite psychologists to embrace an ecological view of human psychology and a system approach to personal, organizational and societal change [4,5]. These studies have also inspired some psychologists to adopt a polyculturalist perspective to culture, treating cultures as interacting systems rather than independent, static entities [6••].

Many behaviors are individuals' responses to globalization, including organization and participation in anti-globalization collective actions [7]; energy conservation behaviors in response to global warming [8]; support for restricting the civil liberties of foreign visitors and noncitizens in order to contain terrorism [9]; increased popularity of cosmopolitanism — the endorsement of cultural openness, respect for universal human rights and appreciation of cultural diversity — in global cities [10]; and new pathways of constructing cultural identities in globalized societies [11]. The current review focuses on three issues in psychological studies of globalization: (1) Lay perceptions of globalization; (2) perceptual consequences of globalization; and (3) responses to inflow of global culture.

1. Lay perceptions of globalization

Globalization is a multi-faceted construct that involves a multitude of issues [4]. How do lay people categorize these issues and evaluate their impact? Cross-cultural studies have identified 26 items that are perceived by people in the US, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Mainland China to be strongly associated with globalization. These items include Facebook, WTO, the UN, McDonald's, the Olympics, global warming, etc. People in these four regions classify these items into five clusters: (1) global consumer brands; (2) information technology; (3) human mobility; (4) global calamities; and (5) international trade and regulatory bodies [12].

When asked to evaluate the impact of each of these items on their community along two major dimensions of social perception: competence and warmth [13], people from all four regions rated most globalization-related items to have more positive impact on people's competence than on their warmth [12]. A popular folk theory of social change is that when a society develops from a traditional community to a modern society, its people become more capable and less trustworthy and warm-hearted than before [14]. Not surprisingly, in countries where globalization is a major driver of development, globalization is perceived to have the same impact as development. Nonetheless, individuals in a society differ in their beliefs about globalization. Those who expect globalization to have positive effects on well-being tend to believe that development will turn their society into a more competent *and* warmer society [15]. Likewise, in a society with recent positive experiences with globalization, its people also tend to forecast an optimistic future trend in society's competence and warmth [16].

2. Perceptual consequences

Globalization has brought symbols of diverse cultures together, resulting in experiential compression of space

and time. People in globalized environment often encounter symbols of different societies, as well as those of traditional and modern cultures in the same place and at the same time. These encounters afford ample opportunities for the simultaneous activation of two or more cultural representations [17].

When individuals rendering judgments or choices encounter symbols of a culture in their environment, they tend to display culturally stereotypic preferences [18]. For example, American consumers primed with icons of US culture tend to prefer brands that are believed to embody American core values [19]. Many residents of global cities have acquired knowledge of the typical behaviors in multiple cultural groups. These individuals may display stereotypic responses of one culture when primed with symbols of this culture, and automatically switch to the stereotypic responses of another culture when subsequently primed with symbols of the second culture [20,21].

When individuals encounter symbols of two dissimilar cultures (e.g., the Torah and the Koran) at the same time, the cultural representations associated with these symbols are activated simultaneously. Representations of the two cultures are now placed in cognitive juxtaposition. On the one hand, this process enhances the awareness of cultural differences (e.g., differences between Judaism and Islam). On the other hand, it enhances the perceived entitativity of the cultures (the perception of these cultures as real entities; e.g., the perception of Judaism and Islam as independent, non-interacting lineages). These effects, which have been referred to as *joint culture priming effects*, do not occur when only one cultural representation is activated, even when that representation is one of a foreign culture [22,23]. This finding suggests that co-activation of two dissimilar cultural representations facilitates entitative perceptions of cultures by focusing perceivers' attention on the essential attributes that differentiate the two cultures.

Consistent with these ideas, research has shown that joint culture priming increases the tendency to attribute stereotypic characteristics to members of one's own culture. For example, in one experiment [22], Beijing Chinese undergraduates were asked to evaluate a *McDonald's* hamburger advertisement that was placed either next to another *McDonald's* hamburger advertisement (one culture condition) or next to a Chinese mooncake advertisement (two cultures condition). In the one culture condition, only the representation of American culture was activated. In the two cultures condition, representations of both American and Chinese cultures were activated. Next, participants were presented with two commercial messages for *Timex*, one appealing to individualist values, and one to collectivist ones. Compared to those in the one culture condition, those in the two

cultures condition believed that the collectivist message was more popular among Chinese consumers. Similar phenomena were observed among European Americans [22]. Moreover, these perceptual effects were observed even when people were exposed to two outgroup cultures, suggesting that these effects occur not because joint culture priming has induced a heightened need to differentiate ingroup culture from outgroup cultures [23].

The joint culture priming effects have been applied to explain several phenomena. First, compared to residents of suburban towns, people living in cosmopolitan cities are more aware of cultural differences and endorse cultural stereotypes more [24]. This is the case probably because people in cosmopolitan cities have more frequent exposure to multiple cultures simultaneously. Second, people were more inclined to view cultures as real entities with distinctive traits shortly after an international mega event (e.g., the Olympics Games) had taken place in their city, probably because the event had created many opportunities for joint culture priming [25]. Finally, in cultural psychology classes, students are often directed to compare and contrast cultures. Research shows that students who have taken cultural psychology classes are more sensitive to cultural differences. However, they are also more inclined to endorse cultural stereotypes [26•].

3. Responses to inflow of foreign culture

Exposure to foreign cultures in global contexts may produce a broad range of psychological impacts, from inciting exclusionary, nationalist sentiments to inspiring novel, creative ideas. There are two broad categories of psychological responses to inflow of foreign culture in global contexts. Exclusionary reactions refer to emotion-driven reactions to fears of cultural contamination and erosion. In contrast, integrative reactions are goal-oriented reactions geared toward problem solving.

Some examples of exclusionary reactions to inflow of foreign cultures include the Chinese's demand to remove a Starbucks café from Beijing's Imperial Palace Museum in 2007, the French's objection to opening a McDonald's restaurant at the Louvre Museum in 2009, and some Americans' opposition to building a Mosque near Ground Zero in 2011.

For an inflow of foreign culture to evoke exclusionary reactions, the locals must see it as a symbolic act that signifies the attempt of a foreign culture to trample over the local culture. For example, in one experiment, an ad that announced the "opening" of a McDonald's in the Great Wall (a sacred cultural space in China) evoked exclusionary reactions from the Beijingese only when the McDonald's logo was superimposed on a picture of the Great Wall in the ad instead of being placed next to it (signifying a foreign trespassing on China's sacred cultural space) and when the Beijingese were led by the tagline to

categorize McDonald's as a symbol of American culture (''*Freedom, Independence, American Culture: All in McDonald's*'') rather than a restaurant (''*Fast, Convenient, Delicious: All in McDonald's*''). [28]. Likewise, in Singapore, an attempt by an American company to acquire an iconic Singaporean restaurant chain evoked angry reactions from Singaporeans only when they had been led to categorize the acquirer and the restaurant chain as symbols of American and Singaporean culture, respectively [29].

Although exclusionary responses may increase intercultural tension, oftentimes, they motivate collective effort to protect the heritage culture from the hegemonic influence of globalization and commercialization [27]. For example, to express their opposition toward the global cultural meanings represented by multinational chains (e.g., Starbucks Coffee), in the United States, some consumers deliberately choose to patronize stores that embody oppositional local cultural meanings (e.g., local coffee shops) [30]. Likewise, to express their opposition to global corporate capitalism, some American consumers prefer to buy foods from local farmers markets. Responses like this have fueled the organic food movement and promoted community-supported agriculture [31]. The halal dietary norms are strongly connected to Islam's sacred values. When Hui-Muslims in China witnessed the erosive influence of the Han-Chinese diet on the halal diet in their community, they became highly motivated to preserve the practices and policies that would uphold the Hui-Muslim religious norms [32•]. People in the local community may also choose to selectively accept only those foreign cultural elements that are compatible with the core values of the local culture [33].

Exclusionary reactions are likely to occur when the following conditions are met: (a) identity salience is high [34,35]; (b) a cultural threat is present [36]; and (c) there is a personal motivation to defend the local cultural worldview [23]. For example, Americans who have a high respect for US symbols but feel that the US is suffering from lowered international status tend to strongly oppose to building a Mosque near Ground Zero [34]. Hong Kong Chinese also respond close-mindedly to cultural mixing if they identify with Hong Kong culture but not with Western culture [35]. Results from computer simulation studies revealed that societies under threat are particularly likely to institute strong sanctions to preserve the integrity of local cultural norms [36]. Finally, individuals are motivated to defend their cultural worldviews when they experience existential anxiety; they want to find meaning of their existence through connecting the mortal self to the longer-lasting culture [37]. Individuals who have been induced to experience existential anxiety are particularly likely to resist mixing of foreign culture with sacred elements of the local culture [23].

Integrative reactions are often accompanied by the perceptions of other cultural traditions as intellectual resources for creative problem solving [1]. Exposure to foreign cultures improves creative performance [38,39], particularly when the following conditions are met: (a) when local cultural identification is weak; (b) when people do not experience existential anxiety; and (c) when people do not craze for firm answers in problem solving [40]. Foreign cultural exposure enhances creativity more when individuals are oriented to learn from other cultures [41]. Placing elements of contrastive cultures in cognitive juxtaposition improves creative performance; it motivates individuals to extend the conceptual boundaries of their knowledge by assimilating seemingly incompatible cultural ideas into new cognitive structures [42,43•]. Thus, simultaneous activation of two cultures in globalized environments can enhance individual creativity when people treat foreign cultures as sources of inspirations.

4. Theoretical implications and new directions

Psychological studies of globalization aim to discover the dynamics of how cultures co-evolve as they interact with each other. These studies have rich theoretical and practical implications. First, these studies illustrate the utility of treating cultures as interacting, changing systems rather than independent, static entities [6••,44]. Second, while teaching cultures as discrete entities to psychology students promotes cultural stereotyping [26•], treating cultures as interacting systems reduces it [45,46]. Indeed, an effective way to mitigate exclusionary reactions to foreign cultural inflow is to encourage people to reflect on the complex interactions of cultures [23].

The psychology of globalization is an emerging field. Many important questions remain to be answered. Here we suggest two possible future directions. First, what is the nature of cultural competence is in a global world? Critical reflectivity and cultural sensitivity are major ingredients of cultural competence in stable cultural environments. To navigate cultural currents smoothly in fluid, global environments (including virtual environments), individuals may also need the capability to use different cultural frames in different cultural settings [47,48•].

Another future direction is to understand the psychological basis of international relations. An interesting question is: When will increased exposure to international news improve international relations? Recent research shows that frequent exposure to a new object increases its perceived familiarity to the community but not necessarily its likability [49]. In the context of international relations, a recent study showed that subliminal presentations of images of American pop culture to the Chinese generate pro-US attitudes only among those with relatively weak identification with China [50••]. Increased coverage of Chinese news in the US deepens Americans' understanding of China, which in turn increases their

liking for the Chinese but lowers Americans' evaluations of the Chinese state [51,52].

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