Impacting Cultural Globalization through Costume and Apparel Related Professions

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As human beings, it is in our power to take a correct turn, which would make the world safer, fair, ethical, inclusive and prosperous for the majority, not just for a few, within countries and between countries. It is also in our power to prevaricate, to ignore the road signs, and let the world we all share slide into further spirals of political turbulence, conflicts and wars (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization)

I. Globalization and Culture

"Globalization refers to the process of reducing barriers between countries and encouraging closer economic, political, and social interaction" (Tabb, 1999). It is a concept that has its economic, social and political roots and consequences." (Moussalli, 2003). There are those who see globalization as an "aggressive spread of world market economies and communication technologies. For many, it carries the promise that it will relieve poverty and offer security (Seabrook, 2004). Since media is a prime channel for globalization, it is often defined by reference to developments in technology, communications, information processing and so on, that have made the world smaller and more interdependent in very many ways" (Statement on Globalization, 1998;Tarfif, 2002 May). In addition, it is seen as a vital instrument in transferring knowledge and education to the world (Moussalli, 2003).

To a large extent globalization promotes integration of the world and calls for the removal of all cultural barriers. Most often, discussions of globalization do not "indicate precisely what is being globalize: the assumption is that it means the emergence of a single worldwide economy, into which all economies must integrate themselves, or be integrated. This integration is also considered as something that is inevitable (Seabrook, 2004).

Results of a survey of 38,000 people in 44 nations conducted by the Pew Research Center (2003), indicate that to varying degrees, people almost everywhere like globalization. Majorities in every nation surveyed say growing business and trade ties are at least somewhat good for their country and themselves. At the same time, people in every region are deeply concerned

about a range of worsening financial and social problems in their lives - a lack of good paying jobs, deteriorating working conditions, and the growing gap between rich and poor. People also strongly believe that their traditional way of life is getting lost. (Pew Research Center, 2003). Less developed nations are sometimes perceived to be embracing materialistic and individualistic values associated with Western culture while abandoning their own cultures (Akande, 2002). Thus, globalization has been described as a confrontation between global civilization and local cultures (Seabrook, 2004).

Culture is defined by UNESCO as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group that it encompasses, in addition to arts and literature, lifestyle, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs." Culture is the collective representations that societies make, expressed through shared values and cultural products. "Culture gives humanity the capacity to reflect on itself. It is culture that makes us specifically rational, critical and ethically engaged human beings. It is through culture that we perceive values and make choices. . . through it that human beings express themselves, are conscious of themselves, perceive themselves as unfinished projects, call their own creations into question, look tirelessly for new meanings and create works that transcend them." (Tardif, 2002, September).

"The relation between societies and cultures can be conceived in different ways. Whether culture is seen through its artistic expressions and products or in its fundamental social function, intercultural relations will be thought of differently, either within the Nation-states (multiculturalism), or at the extranational level (source of conflict or case for mutual respect)" (Tardif, 2002 September). "Cultural questions have political dimensions that cannot be reduced to artistic matters or to cultural "products." (Tardif, 2002, May). Thus, to reach mutual understanding and act effectively, especially between persons of different cultures, we need minimal agreement on the basic concepts for interpreting our rapidly changing world.

Globalization brings about homogeneity, which leads to concerns of cultural identity and cultural security. The issue of cultural identity is significant in countries where multicultural societies result from migratory movements. Cultural identity links history and recognition of that history. Thus, it is necessary for these societies to find ways to ensure coexistence and mutual recognition between different cultural components (Tardif, 2002 September). It is a component of global dynamics" and countries are forced to deal with the complex realities of what Vacla Havel calls "cultural spheres." (Tardif, 2002, May). When it comes to culture and globalization the issue is transnational, and might well lead to positive factors in world dynamics or to culture clash.

Issues of cultural security become significant, as it is important to physical and economic security. Tardif (2002, September) defines cultural security as "the capacity of a society to conserve its specific character in spite of changing conditions and real or virtual threats: more precisely, it involves the permanence of traditional schemas of language, culture, associations, identity and national or religious practices, allowing for changes that are judged to be acceptable.

Cultural globalization brings about the need for cultural industrialization that is defined as the managing of cultural relationships. The need for managing global relationships between diverse cultures and societies results from media serving as the channels for globalization.

II. Drawbacks to Cultural Globalization

One of the greatest drawbacks to cultural globalization is the preoccupation with markets which promote Western materialistic and individualistic values, which leads many to believe that globalization is primarily about the production and distribution of cultural products on a global scale. Culture - whether in the form of music, food, clothes, art, sport, images of age or youth, masculinity or femininity - has become a product, sold in the market place. In addition the great unbalanced economic outcome, both between and within countries, leave minority nations with a sense of powerlessness (Akande, 2002).

Akande, (2002) states "The commercialization of culture has a disturbing impact on people. What once was an element of their way of life becomes a product, rather than something unique they had made to suit their own specific need and circumstances . . . . The familiar and old are to be discarded. Results of cultural globalization is the undermining of existing values and culture, the corrosive impact on the sense of self, the crisis of cultural confidence? when culture ceases to serve as the means of constructing societal values; there is economic uncertainty, increase crime, the lack of community solidarity." Finally, cultural globalization destroys diversity in undeveloped countries (Akande, 2002). In worse cases, there exists the assumption that "development must involve a denial of history, a rejection of cultural heritage and the adoption of Western cultural practices" (Akande, 2002) Akanda contends that in a way very similar to economic globalization, most people (and especially the poor) do not experience cultural globalization on terms they have decided for themselves. People do recognize, however, that they may act locally.

Sahlins (1999) notes that

In some measure, global homogeneity and local differentiation have developed together, the latter as a response to the former in the name of native cultural autonomy. The new planetary organization has been described as "a Culture of cultures," a world cultural system made up of diverse forms of life. . . . Thus, one complement of the new global ecumene is the so-called culturalism of very recent decades: the self-consciousness of their "culture," as a value to be lived and defended, . . .

"What the self-consciousness of "culture" does signify is the demand of the peoples for their own space within the world cultural order." (p. X)

III. Costume, Culture and Globalization

I want to turn now to connect cultural globalization to costume. In the manuscript prepared

for this association in 2001, I defined "costume as a style of dress, an ensemble considered as a unit, and typical of a certain country, period, and people" (O'Neal, 2001). Dress is a socio-cultural object which provides a window through which one might view culture. Arthur (1999) notes that dress visually attests to the salient ideas, concepts, and categories fundamental to that culture (p.1). This notion suggests that dress has meaning which has the potential to be interpreted and understood. Thus, one may learn much about a culture by the study of its costume, i.e., its dress.

As cultural globalization progresses, one sees not a single market but a fully integrated network of production and distribution. A feature of this network is the lost of significance of national borders as barriers to the movement of goods and services, creating the ease of culture flow which contribute to borderless cultures. Borderless cultures contribute to the ease of commodification of costumes and other cultural products.

Since costume/dress is meaning-laden, when costumes become commodities (i.e., are traded in world markets), traditional meanings become distorted, lost, and/or replaced with new meanings as they cross geographic boundaries. This acceleration of global access to goods which once expressed cultural autonomy do not generally contribute to an enhanced knowledge of other cultures; instead, cultural meanings become transmuted, diluted, transformed, displaced, replaced, or simply lost. Thus, as costumes are commodified they become entangled in a host of meanings "framed by sociopolitical concerns, and thus they are symbolically charged by their sociality as well as their links to hierarchy and power (Sharp, 2000: 291)" (O'Neal, 2001).

Despite the lack of consensus of meaning as commodities are shared across cultures, There appears to be developing a world culture, ". . . marked by an organization of diversity rather than a replication of uniformity" (Ulf Hannerz, 1990:237).

Ⅳ. Social Dimensions of Globalization

Costume/dress at the local level is social in origin, while costume is commodified and distributed across borders, globalization has not yet created a global society. Cohesive societies are built around shared values which does not yet exist at a global level. The increased interaction between people and countries has brought about an urgent need for a common ethical frame of reference.

The social dimension of globalization is what people experience in their daily lives and work. It is "the totality of their aspirations for democratic participation and material prosperity." Globalization carries with it the possibility of a better life which most of the world's population has not yet experienced. I agree with the position of the World commission on the Social IDimension of Globalization, that the focus of globalization must shift from the global market place which tends to dominate discussions of globalization to people. The commission noted that "The social dimension must be based on universally shared values, and respect for human

rights and individual dignity; one that is fair, inclusive, democratically governed and provides opportunities and tangible benefits for all countries and people."

Many interested parties have observed that globalization has developed in an ethical vacuum, where market success and failure have tended to become the ultimate standard resulting in a "winner takes all" attitude. A preoccupation with people would have a humanitarian center, fair rules, deeper partnerships, productive and equitable markets and a greater accountability to people.

Cultural globalization has made it imperative to have a better international dialogue on universally shared values. This organization and each individual member can play a role in the international dialogue. Voluntary initiatives do exist which need to be strengthened. Issues of social responsibilities of business, ethical concerns of consumers, and the promotion of labor standards however defined locally are all public issues of importance to cultural globalization. I believe that all of us will agree with the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization that "a common commitment to a fair and inclusive globalization must be based on a common perception of a shared humanity and a shred planet."

V. Building Alliances

Although the adage, "Think globally, act locally" is conceptually correct, most individuals do not readily see how individual decisions have global impact. Someone has said that today's universities stand at a crossroads of culture. This organization, like ITAA is composed primarily of persons from universities. Each professor has a direct influence on future decision makers. We have the opportunity to reconfigure our roles to become that of facilitating a dialogue of inclusiveness and deriving ways to manage pluralism.

I recently came across a document entitled, "Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders: A statement on behalf of Higher Education Institutions Worldwide. I was intrigued because of the fact that I had provided a title for my speech that I soon realized was impossible to address. So the best that I could hope for was to be able to raise some interesting questions and speak of challenges in this area. Thus, I read the article with great interest.

The aims of the article on higher education across borders is to "create a focused dialogue among these stakeholders which will result in an international consensus on a fair and transparent framework for managing higher education across borders." the framework should address the challenges faced in developing quality higher education across borders for the benefit of all and ensure that cross-border education contribute to the broader public interest.

"Cross-border education is multifaceted which includes the movement of people (students and faculty), providers (higher education institutions with a physical and/or virtual presence in a host country), programs (courses or programs of instruction). These activities take place in the context of international development cooperation, academic exchanges and linkages, as well as commercial initiatives."

I believe that organizations such as the Costume and Culture Society and ITAA are situated to impact cross-border education and impact decision making that places people in the as the focus of globalization. New frameworks for global education to improve the plight of people every where must be developed for the good of all. As the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (2004) noted, Trade frameworks do not work for academic institutions for cross-border education. Thus the World commission recommends that *"higher education across borders contribute to the broader social and economic well-being of communities in the host country, is culturally sensitive in its approach and content, and strengthens local higher education capacity by, for example, cooperating rather than competing with local institutions.*

There is something that can be borrowed from business that might potentially facilitate organizations and institutions of higher education in impacting cultural globalization, that is, building alliances. Decisions are made by volunteers to form partnerships that are collaborative rather than competitive. These partnerships become living systems that evolve progressively in their possibilities, opening new doors and unforeseen opportunities. Rather than focusing on getting something back, emphasis is placed on creating new value together. Alliances that are effective focus first on managing relationships. This requires sensitivity to political, cultural, organizational, and human issues. Alliances yield benefits for the partners, opening new doors and unforeseen opportunities. But an imperative for success is that relationships must be nurtured (Kanter, 1994).

Before many other industries, the textile and apparel industry was global. Objects of costume/dress, by both their visible and symbolic nature and their global access are prime players in cultural globalization. Those of us around the world in professions related to this component of globalization are obligated to use our knowledge and influence to see that the center of dialogue on cultural globalization focuses on people. At the local level, educators have influence. We must use it. At the international level, we have the opportunity to build the kind of alliance that can potentially have a positive global impact. The foundation for such alliance is already established through the cooperation of organizations such as this and the International Textiles and Apparel Association. We must now answer the questions: What should we do, what can we do, what do we want to do, together locally, nationally, extra-nationally, and globally?