A Conceptual Framework/Rationale for World-wide Perspectives: Time for Community Psychology to Go Global

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'The simple step of abandoning a habitual pattern of thinking often leads to a whole new way of dealing with a problem' (Albee, 1980, page 75).

Levine and Perkins (1997) reflect the view of many authors when they suggest the relevant perspective for the work of community psychology is the person in context. While agreeing wholeheartedly with this view, the argument proposed is that the needed context for community psychology is global. Local communities possess many discrete, unique characteristics, and the energetic pursuit of locally or even individually based definitions and interventions are important. But, context is rarely considered from a sufficiently broad perspective. Today, global forces have created a new context for community and environment within which community psychologists operate.[1] Global forces impact on communities in fundamental ways that can and do constrain or occasionally enhance, the success of locally based interventions.[2] The authors argue that despite references to values, community psychology ignores the discursive environments of communities and their role in shaping community behaviours and outcomes. Further, discourses of capitalism and individualism are a core issue, and any possibility of enacting genuinely socially equitable change must address the values inherent in such discourses.[3] To substantiate these views this essay will describe a rationale for the global perspective and consider the evolution of the key issues.

Before identifying and describing the global community it is pertinent to clarify the definition of community that this essay supports. Gregory (1999) describes a community as a group of people related through common values, location, comunication patterns, and/or a relationship. This comprehensive definition encompasses all the possibilities of community most authors (e.g., Heller, 1989) identify separately. This definition recognises what Wallerstein (1984) describes, that in the contemporary world, using the technologies we have at our disposal, spatial and even temporal boundaries of communities or societies as geographically delimited become potentially dissolved. While community can be location based, it is also defined by a felt membership, or as Sarason, (1974, cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997) describes, by a psychological sense of community. Communities in this sense can be, for individual members, multiple, overlapping and even contradictory. For example, we can feel a sense of community with women, African Americans, our village, mental health consumers and so on.

To determine health and needs in any one community, we must consider the web of interacting material structures and social forces that construct and connect individual human beings into any single definable community of peoples (Levine and Perkins, 1997). Because a community does not operate independently, and members will have a psychological sense of membership with other communities, we should also consider the multiple possibilities of interaction between them, including those of identity and discourse. A theorist who has conceptualised communities at more than one level is Bronfenbrenner (1979), who examined communities within a framework of nested and interacting settings.[4] This useful tool directs us to consider broad issues, although it does not specifically consider the global. Bronfenbrenner does identify macro-environmental effects as including society's beliefs, for example about violence, which implicitly raises the issue of discursive environments and values.

The idea of a global community is not new. Many authors write of varying 'crises' or opportunities of global society (Korten, 1998; Tsing, 2000). As Tsing rightly identifies, the terminology of the global is problematic and acknowledgement of the multiple contesting signifieds denoted by the term is important. However it is a term

many authors defend (Korten, 1998; Mander, 1991) in relation to the very connections that Gregory (1999) outlines as constitutive of a community. So, what legitimate claims exist for a global community and from where have they come? People of many cultures would argue that global connections have always been present. We interdependently inhabit the same earth and have obligations to honour the relationships that creates with earth and its organisms (Mander, 1991). This felt sense of community describes location and relationships, although as Mander articulates, the values underpinning these ideas are clearly divergent with much of western thinking.

A wide number of contemporary writers and movements also raise the need for a global sense of community in ecological and human terms (Tsing, 2000). At a practical level, the need to recognise the global community is often presented in purely ecological terms because global over consumption of depleting, non-renewable resources, impacts on all peoples, albeit in very different ways (Korten, 1998; Sachs, 1996; Tsing, 2000). Recognition of the global relationship at a human level is arguably less widely articulated. But a diversity of writing deals with global relationships, and global impacts on communities when human relations are challenged by cultural constructions such as nation states, progress and development (Wallerstein, 1984; Mander, 1991; Sachs, 1996).

If we accept community connections, relations of place (earth), and relationships (humanness), then what about communications? On the face of it, communications may seem to be the most obvious global commonality of contemporary times. But it is not just twentieth century developments in media and technologies that mean we share the impact of communications. Part of initial human commonality was that which made us local and diverse. Oral communications functioned to construct, delimit and define the very meaning and structure of existence (Illich, 1980). As Illich relates, this altered radically, firstly because we became literate and then we replaced the vernacular with standardised language. Semiotic accumulation took the upper hand in defining meaning (Fiske, 1987).

The deliberate process of standardising language was born in fifteenth century Spain (Illich, 1980). Illich argues that it's birth enabled the global oppression of the vernacular and the creation of the very platform upon which modern, monolingual, western communications could function. Standardisation of language colonises and replaces vernacular values with those driving the lan-guage of a powerful elite, values based on a desire to control and exploit for political, financial, and social advantage (Webster, 2001). Written history as it replaces local narratives, offers a powerful role when the values and perspective of the writer inflect any interpretation (Hooks, 1990). As hooks discusses, literate history and its 'truths' have oppressed and made voiceless many peoples and communities in its subjective narration. This is a very different rewriting process than the local structural forgetting of oral cultures (Goody and Watt, 1962). As languages standardise and meaning becomes determined by particular interest groups, the ultimate use of language is to obtain control (Illich, 1980; Gregory 1997). This is something Albee (1980) and Szaz (1982) identify that occurs in the language that describes mental illness. As Foucault (1990) articulates, discourses construct meaning and power resides in them. Yet within the discipline of community psychology this is not commonly identified or discussed.

Proliferation of technologies, from the printing press onwards, enabled the creation of mass (Ellul, 1965), and the ever more efficient communications of such standardised ideas, labels and values, and through them, of social control. Now, we speak an increasingly common language of values and ideologies across the globe. Many argue that it is the language of capitalism and of individualism (Albee, 1980; Wallerstein, 1984; Gregory, 2001; Sachs, 1996; Mander, 1991; Moore, 1999) and that the values contained underpin the fabric of contemporary existence.

If written communication and standardised language created the platform, how did the language and discourses of global commerce and individualism evolve? Panikkar (1993) identifies that the passage from spoken to written cultures Illich (1980) describes also marked passage from village to city, from agriculture to civilisation, leading to the structures of larger societies that became structures of mass society. The standardisation and norms that evolved from centralised

literate processes ultimately became the standardisation and norms of a universal language that Hunt (1989) says was that of economics. His argument is that pre standardisation, the language of a community was unique but the language used to barter with others in the marketplace was different. As civilisation and its centralised processes predominated, so did mass and with it came the loss of the traditional community and the common engagement of the marketplace emerged as a primary language, underpinned inevitably by the marketplace's values. As this communication that evolved largely from western society penetrated nonwestern cultures, western economics and its accompanying technology also penetrated. Inevitably a colonisation of local values occurs as a result, something starkly revealed in the work of Norberg-Hodge (1996) who witnessed the arrival of such values into Laddakh.

As international trade between countries proliferates, interactions are often driven by opportunities and demands created outside an immediate local economy (Hunt, 1989). Resources are extracted and exploited without reinvestment in local infrastructures (Mander, 1991) and a global 'market economy' forces local communities and local economies to cede local controls to centralised planned economies.

Decisions on trade, prices, lifestyle and local economy itself are shaped by outside forces to be consistent with the centralised model, and the economy is supervised by banks and corporations and even enforced by other governments (Mander, 1991).

The forces of the marketplace and of economics also set measures, in line with their values, to determine the "health" of a country or community (Hunt, 1989). These measures of development are underpinned by values of commerce and of standardisation so that level of education and intelligence become assessed by standardised (western) measures. For example, level of education is determined by culturally specific standardised measures of that learned in state institutions, and not learning imparted in a community (Albee, 1980). As Albee describes, health is measured by the dependence on a 'health' system rather than the status of health and arts of healing. A desire to see order in our world, to categorise to respond to, is in evolutionary terms a useful tool, it enables

speed of adaptation (Plomin, 1994). But categorisation breaks the whole into parts, and attempts to identify commensurable qualities for what Panikkar (1993) clearly identifies is not commensurable. Hunt's (1989) suggestion that our dominant epistemological framework and language is economic, appears to be reflected in measures that value development, progress, growth and profit (Mander, 1991). As Norberg-Hodge (1996) eloquently describes, these largely western categorisations and values colonise other cultures and communities and in doing so they colonise the way people think about themselves. This, in turn, impacts on life structures, peoples' roles in communities and on peoples' self-assurance. Sarbin's (1970, cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997) work on social roles demonstrates that such things deeply affect the mental health and well-being of both individuals and community.

Wallerstein (1984) is another writer who looks at historic drivers of global community. He specifically identifies two major forces that radically altered social interactions at a global level. Wallerstein (1984) offers a conceptual framework (world systems theory) for the collapse of the feudal system and the evolution of the state/society split; and the progression of 'knowledge' from the age of enlightenment, through modernism to the postmodern. World systems theory describes all the inter-societal networks in which global interactions such as trade, warfare, intermarriage, and information, are important for the reproduction of the internal structures of local communities and affect local changes. This theoretical approach recognises the whole system of important global interactions that affect local, regional and inter-regional communities. It also recognises that world systems do not determine all local events but that it is a relevant context within which those events must be considered (Chase-Dunn and Hall, 1997). This way of thinking identifies the dominance of capitalism, its driving of over-consumption of resources, and the inequities of power such a model produces.

Wallerstein (1984) identifies the western/northern culture as having defined patterns of con-sumption and production, but as we are seeing it also defines values and ideologies. As Ellul (1965) describes, capitalist culture promotes

individua-lism over community but then commodifies individual human values into mass purchasable items. The individuality promoted is false and is designed to promote consumption. Advertising communicates that our very human-ness and values can be realised through our commodity purchases (Williamson, 1978). But are we aware of what those values really are? As Panikkar (1993) says, if you attach an economic tag to all human values the human values vanish and give way to the economic. Despite identify-ing informa-tion as a global force, Wallerstein (1984) does not identify what Gregory (2001) and Webster (2001) pull very decisively out of world systems theory, and that is that there is a global system of values. Values are arguably a critical key to capitalism's operation and one of the few places at which that operation may be vulnerable to change.

The evolution of the state Wallerstein (1984) describes, was directly connected to the devolu-tion of individual responsibilities to other human beings (Vela-Mcconnell, 1999). Thus his work can link directly to human values. Feudal systems of mutual obligation disappeared and in it's place, a system of taxation was introduced, to enable the state to provide for a society's peoples unable to provide for themselves. It bought with it a nega-tive attitude, to those peoples and their care, that stigmatised their conditions and behaviours and made them other than of the community, and dif-ferently valued (Vela-Mcconnell, 1999). Coupled with this was, as Panikkar (1993) pointed out, increasingly sheer size of communities. Size de-manded centralisation and standardisation (Ellul, 1965) for communities, of governance and laws. The result was and is, that decisions about, re-sponsibility for and control over our individual and community lives, rests in the hands of (a few) strangers (Esteva, 1993). Democratic ideals, when they operate in mass, are subverted into the ap-pearance of democracy (Mander, 1991; Moore, 2000). Industrialisation bought specialisation of tasks and protections for professional roles. This process had enormous impact on households and communities, particularly for the role of women and the (lack of) value ascribed unpaid work (Brooks, 1997). Specialisation also critically re-duces the capacity for what Albee (1980) termed individual competence. It affects the way we are

valued, a point of great importance, as Albee makes clear in his call for a competency model, for the community of mental health. As cited above, Sarbin's (cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997) work on role theory highlights that role and its value is a critical aspect of human well-being. It connects directly to the fit between human and environment that community psychology wishes to address.

The dominant operations of mass societies, formed and disseminated through structures and tools/technologies ostensibly designed to 'ser-vice' and reach communities, operate through stan-dardised processes and environments (Ellul, 1965). As Ellul outlines, these social structures (of education, media, government, medicine, and law) deliver conditioning in standardised means, procedures and even layouts. Barker's (1968, cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997) writing on theories of behaviour in settings relates to this standardi-sation. Barker does not however include the values such structures and settings communicate or the cognitive effects of such settings.

Ellul's (1965) observation is that the major result of these processes has been a remove from humanness and community. This sentiment is reflected in the work of Mander (1991), Hunt (1989), Panikkar (1993), Sachs (1996) and many others, all of whom identify such sources of the removal of humans from the 'real' or natural. Community psychology often discusses con-cerns with values, and the critical role they play in producing change (Levine and Perkins, 1997), but it does not often identify socio-historic con-texts of the values that have evolved to underpin the communities they inhabit. Nor do community psychologists explore the global nature of these values. The global is (briefly) discussed within ecological theory (Levine and Perkins, 1997) and Newborough (1992), who also briefly considers the broader role of the operation of media. But these appear to be exceptions and they are not located in a robust framework. Authors like Albee (1980) and Gregory (2001) are unusual in that they explicitly address values. This may be because values and the discourses they inhabit seem to be such an intangible that they are difficult to credibly examine within in a field of scientific endeavour. But values inhabit communities in dis-cernible places, we can examine them in the dis-

courses of communities. As Panikkar (1984) writes, every day speech reveals to us the values of the speakers, though they are not often aware of this.

Another argument for the way values have shifted and become removed from conscious critical examination, is the removal of humans from values connected to a sense of the sacred (Mander, 1991). Here we would read sacred as conveying what is of greatest value. Berry (1988) and Panikkar (1993) identify the fundamental separation of the community in history into the religious and the secular/scientific, arguing that both the processes of science and of religion took humans a step away from the natural/nature, away from the 'real'. Religion abstracted any idea of the sacred in the present, and gave it the form of gods. Gods ultimately came to inhabit a realm other than this earthly one (Berry, 1988) and as Panikkar (1993) states, the earth became a tempo-rary home in which to survive until the real home of heaven could be reached. Wallerstein identifies a broader domain in world systems of knowledge (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1996), and Berry (1998) focuses specifically on science when he says that science, in its turn, focused on the physical and abstracted it into parts and categorisations (Berry, 1988). Berry and Pannikar (1993) both argue that the knowledge of science was the driver that accomplished the impotence and subservience of the world and its inhabitants to human 'reason', objectivity and scientific 'truths' (Panikkar, 1993). Many working within community psychology identify the need for a focus that is not about parts (Levine and Perkins, 1997) and for a psycho-logy that does declare its subjectivity (Kuhn, 1970, cited in Newborough, 1992). But these sorts of challenges and the interdisciplinary effort they imply are not easily accepted by academia or professionals (Albee, 1980).

Both religion and science, in their own ways, have legitimised a value base for us that we are other than of nature, and consequently in a struggle against it rather than engaged with it. As Berry (1988) describes, the resultant human community, through such processes of remove, have largely lost any awareness of human dependence on the integral functioning of the surrounding communities of life-forms/life-systems, or sense of those systems and forms as sacred. This reflects the work of Vela-Mcconnell (1999) who describes similar processes of removal of the individual from a sense of connectedness within human communities and the evolution of individualism.

What is raised when considering these dimensions of the global is the critical impact of the process of abstraction, begun as cultures made meaning in written form. The shift that occurred from oral to written cultures (described above) was most profound. Encoding life in more than the body and identifying abstract human measures of seasons/time/the 'real'/'truth' and meaning, are an inevitable function of human culture (Hunt, 1992), but we often fail to interro-gate these culturally constructed meanings. As Hall (1992) says, in abstraction, a remove from the real is inevitable. Time as created by recording histories has become understood as a progression into the future and we no longer inhabit a present space, but progress along a trajectory towards what will be (Panikkar, 1993).Here is Wallerstein's (Taylor, 1989) founding myth of the modern, progress. A value base of connection with earth's rhythm and of being engaged fully in the present, is undermined and replaced with values related to the future and progress. Life is conceptualised as a linear progression, peoples and cultures as either ahead or behind and speed of progress becomes important lest we lose ground (Mander and Goldsmith, 1996). Speed and technology, coupled with mass, means deci-sions are processed at speed and use methods labelled democratic. But neither speed nor the methodologies of decision-making in contem-porary communities enable the genuine engage-ment of the community (Mander, 1991; Moore, 2000).

So, to take us back to our original question of what is the global community and what are its core issues? We are a community of over six billion people. We represent an extraordinary multiplicity and diversity of local communities and interests but we are also interconnected through our location on this planet and by global forces that have come to operate within and across human communities, such as trade, use of resources, travel, and critically, communications. The values underpinning these global forces, are dominated by growth and profit (maximal profit), and the rights of the individual. These are valued over sustainability and community (Panikkar, 1979, 1993). Standardisation is valued over originality and creativity,

and difference (the plural), lies outside our categories (Wesselow, 1998). Process is valued over product, and means (technologies in particular) have become the end (Ellul, 1965). We value technology and speed, over the peoples and environments on which they impact, and are driven by Darwinist capitalism, that rationalises the survival of the technologically, economically fittest (Mander and Goldsmith, 1996). We value progress and the future over the present and value success and the individual over community and our neigh-bour (Panikkar, 1993). These are not uncontested values, they do not represent all human values, but they are dominant values now (Mander, 1991).

We are not necessarily conscious of the values that drive us (Ellul, 1965) and we largely inhabit those driven by modern society without examining them (Berry, 1988). As Panikkar (1993, page 89) states, 'language is a human metron, par excellence', because it is human nature incarnated and in it we have the crystallisation of human experience and tradition, if we know how to look.

How do we rationalise this essay in terms of its relationship to contemporary community psychology? Context is critical, community psychology is very clear about this (Levine and Perkins, 1997). Our global relationships, their history and evolution, the forces that create them, are intrinsically part of the context of contemporary community life. The values inhabiting the discour-ses of communities, global and local, limit our attempts to create change. As Sarason (cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997) makes clear, the success of an intervention is often dependent on addressing values. Core then, for the community, is the need to find robust ways of examining values and discursive environments.[5] This is not an argument for a universal approach, it is a call for inclusion, of socio-historic contextualisation, for the broader global community and its structuring forces in local communities, and for particular examination of discursive environments and their values, beginning with that of the work and pro-jects of community psychology.

NOTES

1. Western capitalism's largely uninterrogated values are of growth, profit, speed, standardisation, the rights of the individual and a Darwinist logic of survival of the fittest (Panikkar, 1979, 1993; Mander and Goldsmith, 1996). The very powerful bodies of knowledge of both religion and science have legitimised a value base for humans that has them as other than of nature, in struggle with it and consequently without awareness of the integral functioning and dependence of all life forms and life systems (Berry, 1988). Industrial growth and evolution of the state has led to devolution of community and individual responsibility to other beings (Vela-McConnell, 1999).

2. An example would be the environmental and health concerns of the community of the Love Canal. Although they were established as a geographic community they became actively united as a community through the issue of chemical waste (Levine and Perkins, 1997).

3. For example see the work of the International Forum on Globalization (IFG), an alliance of sixty leading activists, scholars, economists, researchers and writers formed to stimulate new thinking, joint activity, and public education in response to economic globalisation.

4. Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualised nested and endlessly interconnected relationships from dyadic (not individual) as the most basic unit to the broadest possibilities of meso systems and the relations they implied, but he did not as Dohrenwend (cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997) does incorporate possible solutions.

5. The framework of these examples of values is taken from Fox (1993) in a set of questions developed specifically for psychologists to identify and clarify the field's central issues, providing a broad critical overview that one might use as a basis for further investigation. They asked five general questions: 1.Does the field promote the status quo in society? 2. Does the field promote social justice or injus-tice either for its particular population of interest or for society at large? 3. Is there an awareness of the social repercussions of the field's theories and practices, or is the fielded oblivious of its potential negative effects? 4. Do researchers, theorists and practitioners declare their values, or do they assume what they do is value-free? What are your own cultural/moral/value commitments, and how do they affect your critique?

ABSTRACT Community psychology grew from traditional psychology into a more socially aware and responsive discipline in the mid-1960's. Recent political and economic changes at the global level now demand a broader vision from disciplines such as community psychology, a vision that encompasses world-wide communications, financial transactions, massive technological changes, and the emergence of common values.

Indigenous peoples, cultural diversity, and collectivist lifestyles are all under threat as a result of these global influences. Community psychology must elevate its framework to understand and cope, otherwise the discipline and profession will lose relevance.

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