A Global Community Psychology of Mobility*

Una Psicología Comunitaria Global de la Movilidad

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Abstract. This special issue heralds the coalescence of a new field in social sciences – the psychology of global mobility. This field whilst distinctive is certainly not insular. Contributions in this special issue are interdisciplinary and cross-level, reflecting an open systems perspective. Political motivation, sociological networks, community inclusion, educational institutions, socio-cultural identity processes, and organizational processes are all represented in the collection. Organizational dynamics are perhaps a special theme that runs throughout. They are a timely reminder that the organizational level of analysis in general, and the psychology of work in particular, is a major yet often overlooked component in the study of global mobility processes, including policy development. In a wider sense, the contributions in this special issue cast new light on the interaction between psychology and social/community structures, and the role of these essentially interactive processes in human development. The special issue is about a developing global consciousness, and a role that psychology as one discipline and applied profession can play in this process. A major challenge remains, of course: Connecting psychological research and evidence with social policymaking. To achieve more credibility in the policy domain, psychology will need itself to become more political, and overtly skilled in social advocacy. As these papers remind us, we will need to build more stakeholder alliances, including between research and community groups.
Keywords: global community psychology, global mobility, human development, new settlers, migration, migration-development nexus, poverty reduction, the psychology of global mobility

Resumen. Este monográfico exhorta a la formación de un nuevo campo en las ciencias sociales: la psicología de la movilidad global que—aunque específico—está ciertamente interconectado con otras disciplinas. Sus artículos son interdisciplinares y multinivel, reflejando una perspectiva de sistemas abiertos. En ellos se abordan motivaciones políticas, redes sociológicas, integración comunitaria, instituciones educativas, procesos de identidad sociocultural y procesos organizativos. Las dinámicas organizativas subyacen en todos ellos y constituyen—así—un oportuno recordatorio de que este nivel de análisis en general y el de la psicología del trabajo en particular, son componentes básicos, aunque frecuentemente olvidado, en el estudio sobre la movilidad global, incluyendo el desarrollo de políticas. En un sentido más amplio, las contribuciones de este monográfico arrojan luz a la interacción entre la psicología y las estructuras sociales/comunitarias, y al papel que desempeñan estos procesos esencialmente interactivos en el desarrollo humano. Propugna el desarrollo de una conciencia global, y el papel que la psicología, como profesión aplicada y disciplinar, puede desempeñar en este proceso. Por supuesto, todavía existe un gran reto: lograr conectar la investigación psicológica y sus resultados con las políticas sociales. Para lograr una mayor credibilidad en el terreno político, la psicología deberá volverse más política y más abiertamente competente en la movilización social. Como nos recuerdan estos artículos, necesitaremos crear más alianzas entre las partes interesadas, como por ejemplo, entre los centros de investigación y las comunidades.
Palabras clave: desarrollo humano, inmigrantes recién llegados, migración, movilidad global, nexo desarrollo-migración, psicología comunitaria global, psicología de la movilidad global, reducción de la pobreza.

This special issue marks a welcome and major contribution to an emergent and increasingly coherent field - the *psychology of global mobility* (Berry, 2010 a; Carr, 2010a; Furnham, 2010a). Its wider context is an increasingly interconnected global community, with ongoing developments in global community consciousness (Marsella, 1998). What can psychology do to foster an expansion of human awareness (Berry et al, 2011)? We can and indeed should do more to help identify enabling environments for human development out of poverty, conflict, environmental degradation, and human development as a whole (Sen, 1999). In the past, we have seen largely separated - and to an extent disparate - literatures on international aid work, expatriation, new settlement processes, forced and voluntary, under-employment, brain drain, brain gain versus waste, acculturation processes, cross-cultural psy-

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* Versión en castellano disponible en [Spanish version available at]: www.psychosocial-intervention.org

chological adjustment, and community inclusion. Now it is time for synthesis. The contributions in this volume are refreshingly integrated. To take one example, a key quality that links them all together is a combined *stakeholder* approach (Phillips & Freeman, 2003). Mobility invites the metaphor of a journey, because it brings people into contact with each other. It reflects a multi-level, *systems* view of global mobility (Senge, 2006). Systems themselves entail a range of diverse perspectives, which are nevertheless complementary. A complementariness of diverse perspectives is perhaps what ultimately makes this journal issue truly "special."

Political perspective

A received wisdom about global mobility behaviour is that it is driven by the "pull" of macro-economic forces, and in particular by potentials to earn higher wages in labour markets abroad compared to labour markets at home (Brown & Connell, 2004). Yet global mobility is often motivated by much less macro-level, "push" factors at home, e.g., at work in local organizations (Carr, 2010b). One of the most neglected yet salient of localised push motives is addressed in the article on "brain drain" from lower- to higher-income countries, within the medical and health care sector (MacLachlan, Mannan, & McAuliffe, 2011). Benjamin Siankam critically examines the metaphors used by policy-makers and researchers, who are trying to understand mobility among health professionals (e.g., between sub Saharan Africa and the United States). Metaphors like "brain drain" imply a simplistic model of human motivation. Its "homo economicus" model implicitly assumes that people are essentially passive, amoral and quite selfish. Health professionals by implication are inexorably lured away from needy home constituents; even though they endure conditions of extreme poverty, health crises like HIV, and acute shortages of local health carers.

An alternative model is homo politicus, with its set of dispositions and motivations that are significantly more agentic, cognisant of political power, morally aware, and responsive (MacLachlan et al, 2010). The evidence for such alternative conceptions comes from Siankam's interviews in the paper, with doctors who have relocated to the United States, from countries in sub Saharan Africa. Their narratives are revealing. They show socio-political structures in play, and active resistance against them. This includes vocational streaming into medicine despite preferences for other careers, and condemnation of structural adjustment programs that have made real health care often impractical. Against a backdrop like this, including both career and moral frustrations, mobility can be reframed as an assertion of freedom. Moreover, the loyalty to people 'back home' has not been broken, the drain far

from complete. Case illustrations include for example two brothers, who have used their medical practices in the United States to forge a global community alliance. The alliance has built a successful clinic in Kenya, which helps prevent and treats HIV and other illnesses, on average for 1200 patients each month.

Social achievements like this might not have been possible if the protagonists had simply stayed at home. Via global mobility, community spirit and agency have in this case (and others) prevailed over political (and economic) constraints. Viewed anew, political forces are powerful factors behind decisions to leave one's home country, family and friends (Jackson et al., 2005). They are just as salient as economic gain (Narayan & Smyth, 2003). In keeping with that narrative, the paper concludes with a call for *researchers* to do the same, to step outside their/our comfort zones and embrace other perspectives.

Sociological perspective

Political participation is one of several themes in a paper on "migrant" workers' communities, in the cities of China. Across China's urban metropolises, these communities have fuelled economic growth. An important paper by Professor Qingwen Xu and colleagues focuses on their social networks. As such, the paper is more "sociological" than "psychological" social psychology (Stolte et al, 2011). The paper complements related research on "forced mobility" (Ager & Ager, 2010). Literature to-date has included more on armed conflict and disasters as motivators of mobility behaviour (Miller, 2010). By comparison, new settler populations in urban metropolises are substantive. Precise figures are hard to come by, but internal mobility in China and India alone outnumbers international new settlers, estimated at 214 million people globally (International Association for Migration, 2009). As early as 2001, across China and India together, there were more than 400 million "internal migrants" (King, Skeldon, & Vullnetari, 2008).

A frequent characteristic of internal mobility is the search for better employment, an aspiration for "decent work" (Njonkou, 2008). *Finding* such work is a salient motivator of mobility, linked for example to vocational and social inclusion (Inkson & Thorn, 2010; Maynard, Ferdman, & Holmes, 2010). The researchers in this innovative study used an intriguing way of gauging social connectivity: *Bainian* networks. These are activities undertaken during Chinese New Year, e.g., visiting family members, sending cards, and transmitting text messages that extend New Year greetings. The researchers asked the respondents about their bainian networks among family and friends. They included their jobs (do they have friends who are teachers, entrepreneurs, party leaders; and do they work in small businesses, joint ventures, government

departments). This measure thus enabled the researchers to create occupationally-relevant, locally-aligned indexes of connectivity.

Consistent with this focus on diversity in social capital, the analysis did not stereotype its subject-matter. It allowed, and actively scanned for, variety between groups. These groups emerged in the data as distinctive clusters or segments. They included for example "traditional migrants" (unskilled, young, single or married), "new generation" (both genders; being highly educated and married), "wives" (largely supporting familial roles), "young female" (skilled, working or looking for decent work) and "older migrants" (beyond retirement age, with low income). Moreover, the analysis revealed significant differences between the segments. For example, clusters with the most education (young female and new generation) had the widest social/organizational networks. This finding suggests that education beyond the national minimum (9 years) is a crucial facilitator of occupational and social inclusion.

Importantly, there were no strong differences between the segments on life satisfaction and on political participation. The authors interpret this to mean that "life satisfaction" may not be a terribly meaningful concept for people in this context, whilst political participation may be influenced by strong situational/structural barriers such as access to equal pay, services, and occupations (*hukou*). Such barriers may foster solidarity among new settlers *despite* the sociological differences that were found. A core issue for China's rural-urban mobility, therefore, is enabling both educational and occupational environments for maximal human development (Sen, 1999).

Community perspective

What do the *host* communities think about the causes and consequences of mobility? Globalization has lowered institutional barriers to mobility, for example in and out of Eastern Europe. Rising aspirations have also however created opportunities for human traffickers. They take advantage of people's rising aspirations for a better life elsewhere, frequently for example selling them into bonded work, sexual slavery, or other forms of dominance and disadvantage. A timely paper by Jill Robinson explores the views of Moldovans in Eastern Europe, and compares these with institutional discourse and understandings. Communities are potential allies against the scourges of trafficking. Garnering their support through learning about their understandings requires policy-makers to appreciate everyday perspectives on trafficking, in the local community. Without this community perspective-taking, social policy may eventually lose touch with its own constituents in the community, its potential "end-users" (Nickerson, 1999).

At the grass-roots, community level people knew about, and had been affected by, human trafficking for prostitution, organ donation and illegal adoption. Like the policy-makers, they were aware of the macro reasons for trafficking statistics, such as poverty and unemployment, the promise of wealth elsewhere, and the demand there for cheap labour, including in sex work. However, they were also - according to the empirical evidence - knowledgeable about the micro and mezzanine drivers of trafficking. Their understanding included close-hand people being cheated on immigration fees; and of being sold into prostitution to cover a partner's debt. Included too was knowledge of corrupt officials within the government - a finding that highlights the importance of governance and work behaviour, in local institutions.

Overall therefore, unlike their counterparts in Universities, and governmental or non-governmental organizations, the general public tended to include a range of micro-level causes and attributions, and to include a range of possible attributions for the issue, and its potential solutions. An enduring point here is that policy-makers have a particular world view of their own. Connecting social policy with workable practices may depend on *extending* that understanding, to include everyday stakeholders, across the local community. Tackling corruption and criminalizing solicitation may have a viable foundation in public support. In that sense, research can be used to help educate policy-makers, about how to align community development policy with local perspectives, to design sustainable, preventive, and successful social policy.

Educational perspective

Host communities matter. Indeed, concepts like "stereotype threat," from the social psychology of prejudice and discrimination (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002), suggest that community norms sometimes impact negatively on new settlers' wellbeing (Marsella & Yamada, 2010). In their paper probing the mental health of first-generation adolescent new settlers in Northern Italy, Dr. Cristini and colleagues tested the linkage between felt discrimination and depression. As expected, they found a significant linkage between felt discrimination on the one hand and depression on the other. However the paper went further. It explored a range of variables that have the potential to counteract essentially negative linkages. Variables sampled included support from teachers in school, from schoolmates, and perceived support for multiculturalism in the school itself. The researchers measured important variables from acculturation theory (Berry, 2010b). These included social identification, with both home and host cultures in these new settlers' environment.

The taking of these measures enabled intriguing linkages between them to be examined. A key finding

was that support from teachers was the one statistically significant predictor of depression levels. Greater support from teachers was significantly associated with lower levels of depression, all else being (statistically) equal. What the authors infer is that teachers may be important counterweights to fighting prejudice and discrimination. They can support new settlers in the classroom, and possibly educate their peers in a socially inclusive, acculturative sense. Teachers themselves can also be trained to provide such supports.

This study is a timely reminder that schools are organizations. Their employees - teachers - play a very important role in processes of socialization (Tumwebaze & MacLachlan, 2012). Social psychology has studied the role of schools in the reduction of prejudice and discrimination (http://www.jigsaw.org/articles.htm). Cross-cultural psychology has studied teachers as conduits of cultural values (Schwartz, 1997). Their role may be particularly salient during the identity searches of adolescence among new settlers. This new study shows that teachers may have a key role to play in the management of identity-related prejudice, discrimination and wellbeing, *among new settler youth*. The paper ends with a call for more applied attention to be paid to the specifics of 'how' teachers can help. It is a reminder of the importance of education, and specifically classroom leadership, in global mobility.

Developmental perspective

Global mobility is part of a wider educational process – human development (Carr, 2010c). Acculturation and culture shock are focal points in such human development processes (Berry, 2010a, b; Furnham, 2010, a, b). In the paper on acculturation and adaptation in this special issue, Jaimee Stuart and Colleen Ward focus on the negotiation of cultural identity. John Berry and others have argued that these essentially dynamic processes are central to successful acculturation outcomes, at individual, group and societal levels (Berry, 2010a). Stuart and Ward's paper goes one step further, by casting light on 'how' multiple identities combine and sometimes integrate during acculturation among Muslim youth in New Zealand/Aotearoa.

As well as being conceptually innovative, by focusing on dynamic process, the paper adopts a holistic mixed methods approach, incorporating a blend of workshops, thematic analysis, projective mapping, survey and focus groups. The paper also adopts a positive rather than psychological deficit perspective, by measuring processes of success, including success at identification.

Overall, the findings converge on several key ideas. First, that success is often a question of achieving an integrated balance between different forms of identity, e.g., past and present, religious and cultural, family and community, or global and local (Carr, 2004). Broadly speaking, this finding about the import of balance is in line with recent acculturation theory in general, and the style of integration in particular (Berry, 2010b). In addition however, the use of mixed methods themselves revealed that act of balancing global and local identity can be achieved through what systems theory calls "equifinality," namely different pathways to the same goal – integrated balance (for a wider discussion of systems theory, Senge, 2006).

There were at least three distinct strategies for coping with transition and development. First is alternating between one identity and another using contextual markers or cues, for instance donning a suit for work and traditional garb for the home. Second is blending orientations into one, a hybrid process of identification in which balance is achieved by choosing different elements from each identification source, e.g., embracing traditional spirituality alongside modern technology and conveniences. Third there is minimizing differences, a process in which the sense of self is maintained over different situations, an overarching identity in which different repertoires are constructed as surface variations.

Processes like these remind us that in acculturation, as in global mobility as a whole, one size does not fit all, and that diversity takes different developmental forms. The challenge, and ultimately in fact opportunity that the research signals, for policy-makers, researchers and society alike, is to enable multiple pathways the expression of identity. Each way of achieving balance requires what the authors have termed "operating space," which by definition accommodates, and respects, diversity in identity, and inclusion.

Organizational perspective

Inclusivity can be aided by organizations. Some organizations aim for example to help new settlers integrate into a host society. Other organizations arise from the grass roots in local communities, for example self-help networks amongst new settler groups. In their critical analysis of these forms of organization, Virginia Paloma and Vicente Manzano-Arrondo highlight the irony that community psychology has been quite slow to appreciate the overlap between organizational dynamics in general, and the dynamics of power in particular, in their study of acculturation and integration processes. These authors review the work of mobility-focused and affected organizations through the lens of Liberation Psychology, as advanced by Paulo Freire and Ignacio Martin-Baró. They furthermore apply theories of empowerment at the individual and community levels (e.g., Pick & Sirkin, 2010).

Organizations that set out to aid new settlers sometimes adopt a relatively individualised approach to the

empowerment process. The net result can backfire, insofar as the onus for change is placed on the individual not the system. In the process, these organizations can unwittingly promote the status quo, and separation rather than integration. Grass-roots organizations that focus on processes like problematization and conscientization, that include both new settler and local host communities, may fare better. Organizing into groups in general can enable empowerment processes, ultimately perhaps aiding community human development (Pick & Sirkin, 2010).

In Spanish society, new settler youth from Morocco have reportedly benefited from empowering training on how to access local resources, from celebrating their own culture alongside Spanish customs, from advocacy sessions, and through educational interventions to reduce prejudice in the local community itself. These are all examples of quite systemic considerations, not heavily individualized approaches (for more examples, see Hernández-Plaza et al, 2010). As the authors in this special issue point out, systemic approaches can help avoid the making of fundamental and cultural attribution errors (Maclachlan et al, 2010). This is partly because they do not over-focus attention on new settlers and their cultural backgrounds, at the expense of structural factors and inequalities. In that sense, the paper infers that we must go beyond cultural identity. We should focus on wider structural considerations; and in particular the balance of power relations between the two.

This is essentially an interdisciplinary approach, in which the *psychology of organization* has a role to play, in partnership with other disciplines and professions, and above all with the community - and community of practice - in which it works. The paper also takes us back full circle to the beginning of this commentary, with mobility in political perspective.

Systems perspective

A first rather obvious conclusion to draw from these studies is that they are bound together by multiple perspectives, which belong to multiple stakeholders. Stakeholder theory suggests that the more stakeholders are involved and invested in the global mobility process, the more successful mobility processes are likely to be, for all (Lefkowitz, 2012). The papers in this special issue enable us to appreciate the perspective of doctors who have left Africa in part because of political reasons; of communities who receive internal migrants from the rural heartlands of the People's Republic of China; of the general public in Moldova, who take a critical perspective towards human trafficking from their country; of students in educational institutions and the value they place on support from their teachers in Northern Italy; the perspective of Muslim youth in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and how they manage

to strike a balance between one form of identity and the next – a developmental perspective; and finally, on how organizations can unintentionally prop up systems that make it harder for youth to successfully acculturate, because they let the system off the proverbial hook; versus others that align with grass roots perspectives, and speak truth to power.

A related theme in the papers, stemming logically from multiple perspectives and the consciousness of power, is that mobility processes are part of a multi-level system; and that it would be a fundamental error to focus on any one, e.g., psychological level, to the occlusion of others. This special issue avoids that trap. It takes us from structural motives for brain drain, social networking and inter-community relations to educational, developmental and organizational interventions. This is a systemic analysis. All stakeholders have a role to play, and a contribution to make. More than that however, the issue gets to grips with the problem of levels in systems theory: Brain drain is not just about macro-level salary differences between one country and the next. Migrants are not homogenous but diverse, with layers of relationships between them and with the wider community. The reasons for trafficking are both macro, such as economic depression, and micro, such as greed or corruption. Teachers are nested in schools as well as classrooms. Equifinality within acculturation styles suggests that new settlers identify with multiple groups, at multiple levels, in different social contexts. And strategies for community integration will not work unless all sides are involved, along with a range of stakeholder groups from majority, minority, and a range of academic research traditions.

Finally, and for me perhaps the most striking resonance in the set of papers as a gestalt – a key binding factor – is their innovative and shared recognition about the importance of organizations, including of course organisational psychology. Brain drain is partly motivated by resource shortages; and by breached psychological contracts in the health system, and organizations, in sub-Saharan Africa. A key differentiator of new settler groups in China is related to occupational and organizational networks, career capital acquired through education, in regard to aspirations about finding decent work, in an organization. Traffickers will sell their wares on the promise of better employment, of decent wages in the new location, even though the truth is often horribly different. Schools are organizations, and teachers are doing a pivotal job - for the community at large, and for its older and newer residents. Contexts for identity transitions, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, are often related to going to work, donning office norms and so on; and bringing the self home to a different, but not necessarily incompatible set of beliefs and customs. Work-Life balance is a metaphor that may apply to acculturation as well as to work generally – at least in some settings. And lastly,

we have seen how communities are organizations just as organizations are communities.

This intersection between work and community psychology is, for me, the highlight of the special issue, and a domain in which the contributors in this volume, and their scholarly editors, lead the field.

Where to Next?

Psychology does not have a stellar track record at establishing credibility with policy-makers and local community stakeholders, including in the field of global mobility (Carr, 2010c). The papers in this special issue are focused on the applied edges of evidence-based practice. They make some very promising suggestions about how to apply psychology more. Nevertheless there remains a great task before us al, as a discipline and as a profession: Communicating with a wider range of stakeholders; breaking down the stereotypes about psychology that impede credibility and connectivity; and becoming much more interdisciplinary. In the final analysis, evidence-based practice may not be enough on its own. We may need a lot more (a) political engagement, (b) organizational nous, and (c) social advocacy. These papers are promising starts in that new direction.

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