Logo-consciousness in a Globalised World

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Abstract: In this paper, we defend this view that globalisation impacts on the moral and value systems within cultures and nations and argue that such loss of meaning contributes to numerous social and psychological ills. To address these socio-psychological ills in the face of a loss of meaning we propose a solution: logo-consciousness. The human *need* for finding meaning serves an important protective factor against anxiety, depression, low self-esteem etc. Finding meaning in a cosmo-politan, secular and individualised world can be a difficult and confusing process. Building on psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl's theory of logotherapy, which focuses on the premise that the search for meaning in life is the primary motivational force for all human behaviour, we recommend that individuals and nations in a culturally globalised world need to actively acknowledge that finding meaning in life is impor-tant; thereby developing a state of logo-consciousness. Logo-consciousness implies transcending the hegemonic confusion of globalisation, by being aware of one's need for meaning in life and to actively pursue it.

Introduction

Despite the collaborative benefits that globalisation offers the world, researchers (Salzman, 2008; Marsella, 2012) suggest that it impacts on the moral and value systems within cultures and nations. As a result, young people in a globalised context often grapple with their identity develop-ment as they attempt to internalise and integrate local norms and values, while simultaneously being influenced by a wider global culture.

Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) reflect that globalisation impacts on self and identity. They reiterate that due to the overabundant influx of local and global norms, individuals are often left with a feeling of uncer-tainty of their place within the world, and search both close and far for niches to construct their identity. The roles and values of a global culture

however, are often at odds with the traditions and norms promulgated by one's local culture. This dissonance could lead young people to experience identity confusion (Arnett, 2002). Individuals may feel that they are unable to commit to life decisions and have little interest in forming a unique identity. If left unresolved, they may experience a loss of meaning in their lives.

In this paper, we defend this view and argue that this loss of meaning could be contributing to numerous present-day social and psychological problems. To address these identity challenges and socio-psychological ills in the face of a loss of meaning, we propose a solution: logo-consciousness. The latter term, based on the works of a prominent psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, implies transcending the hegemonic confusion caused by globalisation, through being aware of one's need for meaning in life and to actively pursue it.

Frankl's Approach to Meaning: Logotherapy

Viktor Frankl conceptualised logotherapy as a cathartic tool to assist individuals in finding purpose and meaning in their lives. Our concept of logo-consciousness is based on Frankl's writings and works. Below is a brief description of Frankl's theory and therapeutic framework.

Frankl entered the concentration camps with the manuscript subsequently published as *The Doctor and the Soul* (Frankl, 1973a), and then documented his experiences in the Nazi concentration camps in the manuscript *From Death Camp to Existentialism* which was later published as *Man's search for Meaning* (Washburn, 1998). This bestseller has sold over nine million copies internationally in over 23 languages (Washburn, 1998). It is also rated as one of the "ten most influential books in America" (Coetzer, 2003: 5).

This book formed the basis for his theory known as the Third School of Viennese Psychiatry – logotherapy (Marshall, 2009). Frankl rejected 20th century existentialism and many other theories which concluded that life is meaningless, including those of Freud and Adler (Huso, 2011). Logotherapy is based on the Greek word 'logos' that denotes meaning (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2012), more specifically, meaning in life. There is no unanimous definition of the term 'meaning in life' across the various disciplines in which it is discussed, but similar elements can be identified. Meaning in life is described as a subjective condition or experience of the "existential significance or purpose of life" (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009: 492), which is fundamental for the individual's wellbeing (Frankl, 1984a; Hergenhahn, 1997). Subjective refers to the fact that it differs from individual to individual and even situation to situation. The contribution to an individual's wellbeing is described mainly through discussions of the impact that failure to find meaning has on an individual. Finally, methods

or ways to find meaning in life are often included. Essentially 'meaning' or 'purpose' answers the question 'Why am I here?' (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). A question that seems to be analogous to the pressing globalised identity development questions, as indicated by Arnett (2002).

Logotherapy is thus an unconditional positive view of life; a "meaning-orientated approach" in that it pursues the "essence of life" or primary motivating force being the search for meaning in life (Marshall, 2009: 8). The human *need* for finding meaning serves an important protective factor against anxiety, depression, low self-esteem etc. However, finding meaning in a cosmopolitan, secular and individualised world can be a difficult and confusing process for individuals, both young and old.

Global Culture and Identity Issues

Globalization is a current buzzword with varied definitions, most of which include aspects of de-bordering and de-spatialization, as well as compacting and interlinkage (Tetzlaff, 1998). This paper views globalization as the worldwide interconnectedness of individuals in all aspects of life. This global interdependence is facilitated by improved telecommunication and ease of transportation, and is often defined by consumerism and individualism.

Globalization propagates closeness amongst individuals, allowing distant cultures to merge and melt together in trade, communication and travel, forming a global culture. Tomlinson (1999: 30) echoes this view by stating that our current world "increasingly exists as a cultural horizon within which we (to varying degrees) frame our existence". The emergence of a global culture is evidenced in the noteworthy decrease of languages spoken worldwide (Tetzlaff, 1998); in the 'McDonaldization' effect (Ritzer, 1993) and the increasingly shared worldview of secularism and pragmatism. While acknowledging that this interconnectedness amongst individuals allows for collective dialogue, social influence and shared meaning-making, few studies have been done on the positive and negative impact that globalisation has on psychological functioning. Research on the topic reveals that issues of identity and culture seem to be the core psychological challenges of this phenomenon on individuals. (Arnett, 2002; Appadurai, 2000; Giddens, 2000; Tomlinson, 1999). These identity challenges seem to occur due to individuals being presented with a wide plethora of, often opposing, values and norms from both local and global culture. The internet, technology and the media ensure that we do indeed, have the world at our fingertips. This cultural freedom should provide individuals with a plethora of meaning-making possibilities. Frankl (1969) proposed three philosophical underpinnings in understanding man's search for meaning. These are explored further below, in relation to aspects of globalization.

Globalization and Logotherapy

Frankl (1969) professed that there are three pillars to logotherapy, namely (1) freedom of will, (2) will to meaning, and (3) meaning in life.

Firstly, freedom of will opposes determinism which state that one's being is determined by circumstances, for example genetic and cultural influences. Therefore, freedom of will refers to one's ability to influence one's life by making choices in all circumstances. Frankl (2000: 94) writes: "Unlike an animal, man is no longer told by drives and instincts what he must do...". Frankl did not deny that circumstantial factors had an influence on an individual, but believed that an individual had freedom of will irrespective of circumstances; and that at the very least, the individual could choose his attitude in any given circumstances (Burger, 2007). Consequently, Frankl held that because all individuals have freedom to will, each one is responsible for his own life, and for finding meaning in his life (Marshall, 2009). The freedom one has to choose his or her attitudes, beliefs and identity could become problematic in a world where a hegemonic global consciousness prevails.

The term global consciousness (Arnett, 2002: 4) describes the phenomenon whereby young people are increasingly finding personal meaning and a sense of belonging in the worldwide culture, by observing global "events, practices, styles and information". Thus, despite individuals having a will to meaning, freedom to will may indeed be determined by global culture.

Frankl (1973a; 1973b; 1984a) as well as literature based on his principles (Pattakos, 2004; Coetzer, 2003) point to the importance of the search for meaning, or will to meaning. According to Frankl, the search for meaning in life is the primary motivation or force in life (Burger, 2007). "Man is always reaching out for meaning, always setting out his search for meaning" (Frankl, 1978: 31). This is in contrast to Freud's theory that was based on his belief that people are motivated by urges, such as sex and aggression, or Adler's theory that individuals are motivated by feelings of inferiority developed in childhood (Burger, 2007). Mostovicz, Kakabadse and Kakabadse (2009) explain that everyone has an overwhelming urge or longing for purpose. Webber (2000: 221) states "we humans are purpose seekers, more defined by our ability to pursue purpose in diverse ways than by almost any other human trait...".

Developmental psychologists, Erikson (1959) and Marcia (1966) echoed the sentiment that adulthood is characterised by the pursuit and successful development of identity. As was reiterated by Frankl, people from various life stages actively search for, and find meaning in the roles, morals and customs they are exposed to within the contexts they live. These principles and customs are formed and moulded into an integrated

set of characteristics that define an individual and the life they choose to live.

A globalized world however, challenges individuals to stretch their identities beyond the reach of local and traditional structures. Globalization has also been shown to extend the course of identity development from adolescence into emerging adulthood, as indicated by Arnett (2002). He also reiterates that individuals, from non-Western cultures specifically, may find themselves negotiating multiple cultures. This confusion manifests as a result of having to merge one's local identity with a global identity, which could have implications on key areas of development such as sexuality, marriage, work and moral values. Nsamenang (2002: 63) echoes these sentiments:

> The process of acculturation and globalization has bestowed on contemporary Africa a dual politico-economic and cultural system of old indigenous traditions and imported legacies… This has produced a marginal population whose adults, teenagers and children are groping desperately to reconcile within individual and collective psyches the ambivalences and contradictions of a confusing cultural braid.

This phenomenon ties in with the final pillar of Frankl's work, which is the meaning of life. Frankl believed that there is a difference between ultimate and specific meaning to life (Burger, 2007). Ultimate meaning refers to the knowledge that one forms part of a greater order within the universe (Fabry, 1988). Therefore, life is not in total chaos which causes individuals to be at the mercy of life's ups and downs. Specific meaning, according to Frankl (1984a), can be found in specific circumstances and differs from person to person, and situation to situation (Webber, 2000). It is important to note that specific meaning can be simple, and does not have to be spectacular or serious (Webber, 2000). Although logotherapy should be restricted to specific meaning, ultimate meaning may be used to increase an individual's receptiveness to specific meaning (Fabry, 1988). Frankl (1954:18) believed "…life has meaning to the last breath".

Erikson (1959) also highlighted that the integral areas in the formation of identity are both ultimate and specific in nature. Forming one's ideology (beliefs and values), pursuing love and discovering one's interests and callings through work are examples of the latter. An illustration of how these identity aspects are becoming more complex for individuals to integrate is illustrated below.

With regards to ideology, love and work, gender roles are undergoing immense changes in our globalized world. Young men and women, given the resources and information, appear more likely to want to pursue a lucrative career than settle down to nest a family. Societies have always been social beings, but an extraordinary social trend reveals that individuals increasingly prefer to live on their own (Klinenberg, 2012). Even

sexual drives and instincts are being de-prioritised. In Japan, 45% of young women and 20% of young men are not interested in, or despise sexual contact (Haworth, 2013). These are alarming statistics in countries where the birth rates are already plummeting to concerning levels. Identity confusion may also prompt young people to seek self-created cultures (Arnett, 2002) that differ from the global norm, which offer more meaning and structure. Secularism is a global norm, thus young people may be lured by the structure and purposive-driven ethos of fundamental religious systems and rebellion movements such as terrorist organisations and cult groups.

Ultimately, the search for identity is a search for *meaning*. Pertinent questions that arise in this existential quest include: Who am I, in relation to myself and others? What are my values and beliefs? What is my vocation? What sort of roles do I see myself fulfilling in future? What are my hopes and goals for the future?

The Effects of a Loss of Meaning

As discussed, the complex identity questions highlighted above are even more difficult to address in a globalised world. The collective and conservative values and norms of one's traditional culture may often directly and inherently oppose the global values of individualism and liberalism evident in global culture. This may result in identity confusion which could then manifest as psychological problems, such as depression, suicide and substance abuse. Although there are numerous factors to consider in the prevalence and incidence of these mental illnesses, researchers highlight that the numbers of people with mental illnesses and the resulting societal burden will increase significantly in years to come due to globalisation. (Desjarlais, Einsberg & Good, 1995; Bibeau, 1997).

Many psychologists agree that experiencing life as meaningful is essential for psychological health (cf. Steger & Dik, 2009; King, Hicks, Krull & Del Gaiso, 2006). Contemporary society in our globalised world seem, more than ever, to be experiencing a loss of meaning in their lives (emptiness, meaningless, purposeless, aimless) and seem to react to these experiences with unusual behaviours that are destructive to themselves, others and society (Boeree, 2006). The frustration of not finding meaning can lead to nogenic neurosis (also known as spiritual or existential neurosis).

Frankl (1969) used the metaphor of an existential vacuum in order to explain this. If meaning in life is the primary need of humans, then meaninglessness leaves a hole or vacuum in our lives. Any vacuum, naturally gets filled with something else. Frankl believed that the most prominent indication of this in our society is boredom (Boeree, 2006). He used the example of people that have the time to do what they want, that don't seem to desire to do anything – when people retire they feel lost; students get drunk every opportunity they get; masses of people submerge themselves

in passive entertainment every night (Boeree, 2006). Frankl referred to this as "Sunday neurosis" (Frankl, 1969).

People try to fill this existential vacuum in order to attain some satisfaction, hoping for ultimate satisfaction: this leads to for example pursuing pleasures such as eating excessively, having promiscuous sex, seeking power through monetary success or filling our lives with 'busyness' (Boeree, 2006), conformity or hatred and anger towards things that are preserved as the cause of the emptiness. Frankl believed another manifestation of this phenomenon is certain neurotic 'vicious cycles' (Frankl, 1969) such as obsessions with germs and cleanliness or fear-driven obsessions with a phobic object. These vicious cycles are characterised by nothing ever being enough.

Frankl (1967) believed that the problems caused by existential vacuum are common and quickly spreading throughout society. He supplied the omnipresent complaint of a feeling of futility as proof hereof, which he referred to as the 'abyss' experience (Frankl, 1967). Frankl (1969) linked depression, addiction and aggression (or as he called it "the mass neurotic triad") with a sense of meaninglessness. Research shows a strong relationship between a feeling of meaninglessness and criminality and involvement with drugs in our globalised world (Boeree, 2006).

Boeree (2006: 6) explains "*Even the political and economic extremes of today's world can be seen as the reverberations of futility: We seem to be caught between the automaton conformity of western consumer culture and totalitarianism in its communist, fascist, and theocratic flavours. Hiding in mass society, or hiding in authoritarianism – either direction caters to the person who wishes to deny the emptiness of his or her life*."

Logo-consciousness

This 'nogenic neurosis' or existential confusion appears to be prevalent amongst individuals in our globalized world. Individuals unsure of who they are, who are uncertain of their place in the world and their purpose in life, often struggle to find meaning in the ideologies they choose and the work and love paths they follow.

Frankl clarified that meaning cannot be created, but must be found in one of three ways. He explains:

> Life can be made meaningful in a threefold way: first, through what we give to life (in terms of our creative works); second, by what we take from the world (in terms of our experiences); and third, through the stand we take towards a fate we no longer can change (an incurable disease, and inoperable cancer, or the like) (Frankl, 1969: 15).

The first mode refers to a creative contribution such as work (Krasko, 2004). The creating value can include a number of things from discovering

new principles of science or technology, or painting a masterpiece to less ambitious tasks such as cleaning. The work itself does not have to be creative or spectacular, but the individual doing the work must find meaning in work. Therefore, the work is of subjective significance (Krasko, 2004). This corresponds with the value of 'work' as a key area in identity formation, as identified by Erikson (1959).

Secondly, experiential values refer to the experience of love and beauty or other things that are authentic, good and true (Burger, 2007). This includes relationships, such as friendships and feeling part of a community. Again, this path to meaning correlates with 'love' as an important part of identity formation (Erikson, 1968) as discussed in the sections above.

Finally, one can experience meaning through the attitude one can adopt when facing an unchangeable fate (Krasko, 2004). When faced with a fate that cannot be changed, an individual can find meaning in the suffering. "Everything can be taken away from man but one thing – to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (Frankl, 1984b: 65). The manner in which suffering is approached reflects an individual's ideology (beliefs and values). Therefore, this meaning avenue links with an essential area of identity formation as previously mentioned (Erikson, 1968).Thus an awareness of the impact that a bicultural identity can have on one's identity development is key. We postulate that a continuous inner cognizance of what and how one attributes meaning to could mitigate the identity misunderstandings brought about by being in a globalized context. We refer to this term as logo-consciousness. The word 'logos' is derived from the Greek word that translates as 'meaning'. Frankl (1969) identified that the primary motivational source in life is the search for meaning and that this is a basic human need. The identity frustrations that individuals experience in a globalized world often contribute to the psychological ills that Frankl identified as being destructive. His experience in the concentration camps allowed him to formulate his psychotherapeutic paradigm of logotherapy, which emphasises the importance of being open to the idea of meaning in one's life and life choices. The concept logo-consciousness builds on this premise. We recommend that individuals and nations in a culturally globalized world need to actively acknowledge that finding meaning in life is important. Thus, identity development in a globalized world should be infused with logo-consciousness. Further research is needed to establish how the concept of logo-consciousness can be integrated into an identity development theory and applied to our globalized context.

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