Multiple-level Analysis as a Tool for Policy: An Example of the Use of Contextualism and Causal Layered Analysis

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Abstract

In 1970 Scribner described four types of community psychologists. Despite social change being a common theme, the four types were differentiated by the extent to which they were inside government and organisations or outside, agitating for change. Community psychology and policy change appear to be implicitly connected. Despite this, engagement of community psychologists in policy change has proven to be minimal. Distinctions between first (cosmetic) and second order (systemic) change (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974) reflect the intractability of fundamental change due to deep systemic cultural influences, and should act as a motivator for community psychologists in the policy arena. We argue that psychology's failure to adopt a multiplicity of epistemologies, in particular a contextualist epistemology, has meant that psychology, and particularly, community psychology has had limited impact. Further, we argue the need to consider community worldviews and culture, in general, if we are to engage more fully in policy development and implementation. Contending with the social issues relevant to policy settings requires an articulation of the worldview and cultural context. Causal layered analysis, a futures methodology, has been adopted to allow a reflective and contextual approach to policy implementation and involves a structured layered deconstruction of social issues. An example of this approach will be highlighted with its application to the implementation of sustainable Australian agricultural policy in the face of climate change. What is revealed is a psychological paradox involving the general endorsement of sustainable policy alongside cultural impediments to its adoption. Community psychologists have a natural and important role to play in policy formulation, given our epistemologies, methodologies and motivation for genuine and transformative social change.

Keywords: multi-level analysis, public policy, contextualism.

Introduction

Public policy would seem a natural arena for community psychology. As Phillips (2000) commented in her chapter on community psychology and effective public policies,

> The ecological, social action orientation of this sub discipline lends it to a special compatibility with the processes, orientations, and issues that characterised policy-making. Yet, the presence of community psychology … in the legislative policy arena, while clearly discernible, has not been prominent (p. 414).

This tension between the natural affinity of community psychology and policy and the reluctance of community psychologists to engage fully in the policy arena has reflected what appears to be an unresolved paradox.

Scribner (1970) described four roles for community psychologists, all of which reflect some degree of ambiguity in the essential nature of community psychology. These roles are – social movement psychologists, social action psychologists, new clinical psychologists and social engineers. These roles differ in scope, location, orientation and value systems. For example, the social movement psychologist, probably most common in the 1970s, is based in community organising and obviously is grounded in community. Social action psychologists and social engineers are also concerned about social welfare policy and are more likely to be top down in orientation. The former are more likely to encourage community participation, or even just professional involvement, in developing and implementing policies and programs designed to promote human betterment. Social engineers tend to be more technologically focussed and would be found more at the manipulative end of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation. The new clinical psychologist should also be driven by policy issues as they sought alternatives to direct one-on-one work with clinical patients, as reflected in Albee's (1959) concerns about the resources implications of individual clinical practice.

As a corollary of these roles, approaches to community psychology are varied and based on different conceptual and philosophical underpinnings. While these differences create healthy tension in the discipline, which encourages critical and reflective thought, the dominant position within psychology (e.g., individualism) is rarely questioned (Burr, 2002; Dashtipour, 2012, Hayes, 2002; Sampson, 1989, 2000; Sarason, 1981). Similarly, methodological approaches have been dominated by positivism. We will return to this issue later on. The emergence of community psychology, then, was based in recognition that psychology needs to be more proactive in community and societal interventions. The discipline was born into the new world of social

change of the 1960s and considerable social policy changes, including President Kennedy's legislative emphasis on community mental health.

Community psychology and community mental health emerged in the mid-1960s during a period of great ferment not only in the mental health field but in society at large.

> The successful civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s…having begun with the profound stimulus to social change provided by the Supreme Court's desegregation decision in Brown v. Board of Education, 347 US 483 (1954), became a model for others to use in attacking social inequalities in many areas of society… New kinds of questions regarding social problems and their solutions…were being raised. Social change was so rapid and far-reaching that the limits of the social science concepts used to understand change were reached, making it difficult for science to keep up with the conditions it was studying. (Levine & Perkins, 1987, p. 46)

The shift in conceptual framework from which community psychology developed cannot and should not be lost. As Bennett (1965) wrote reflecting on the Boston Conference on the Education of Psychologists for Community Mental Health (also known as the Swampscott conference):

> The mental health frontier is shifting from the amelioration of illness to preventive intervention at the community level. Community mental health was viewed as one aspect of a broader spectrum of psychological services which was promptly labelled "community psychology." Reference was made to optimal realization of human potential through planned social action. Community psychologists were characterized as change agents, social systems analysts, consultants in community affairs, and students generally of the whole man (sic) in relation to all his environments. (pp. 822-823)

Alongside the emphasis on an ecological perspective was the recognition that psychology needed input at levels other than the intrapsychic level. Impact at macro and exo levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is implicitly oriented to policy and requires new skills and mindsets. The framing of community psychology in terms of social change required understanding and engagement in policy science. Phillips (2000) argued that there were a number of reasons why community psychology did not fully embrace involvement in policy. One of the issues that she raised is that there was tension between the twin desires to be relevant and to be scientific. There appeared to be differing understandings involved in scientific research and application to policy. Not only do these understandings differ conceptually but there appears to be an unwillingness of many community psychologists to forsake 'pure' research for application. Moreover, Bennett (1970) suggested that the nature of scientific psychology meant that it was not necessarily applicable to social policy issues. He stated:

> It would appear, paradoxically perhaps, that community psychology is applying the scientific method, rather than the scientific findings, of psychology to community problems. Much of our laboratory research has not been relevant. Practitioners search the literature in vain for validated techniques. They have had to invent their own procedures and courses of action. But the posture of enquiry, the concern for generalised knowledge, and the methods of theory building they learned in graduate school are directly applicable to community psychology. This is the education the Conference [1965 Swampscott] would transmit to another generation of students. (pp. 8-9)

The above quote could be reframed in light of Kuhn's (1962) notion that science has a value and worldview basis. Specifically, what Bennett wrote could be considered to indicate that while the outcomes of much psychological science are irrelevant to policy areas, the scientific worldview that comes from engagement in science provides the conceptual framework for policy work. In other words, the methods of scientific psychology are appropriate; we have just been looking in the wrong place, as far as policy was concerned. We would make the argument that the generally accepted notion of science in psychology is only one of many, and that the problems encountered within community psychology in attempting to convert its science to policy has arose from the fundamental assumptions implicit in scientific psychology. We will argue that, by embracing alternative approaches to science, it is possible to apply a rigorous approach to policy areas that may not conform to the narrow definition of science that is embraced by much of psychology, but is consistent with a broad definition of science, as Kelly (2003) and Rappaport (2005) have pointed out.

While positivism has been the dominant scientific epistemology for community psychology, many have questioned whether it was necessarily the best model suited to human science more generally (e.g., Gergen, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1983, 1988; Rosnow, 1981; Tebes, 2005; Toulmin & Leary, 1985). Charles Pepper (1942) created a typology of scientific approaches, each with its own philosophical underpinning. These were mechanism (positivism), formism (trait and individual differences), organicism (holistic

organic systems) and contextualism. Altman and Rogoff (1984) used Pepper's framework, integrated Dewey and Bentley's (1946) notions of pragmatism, and provided details about how Pepper's typologies could be interpreted in a psychological research framework. Altman and colleagues have written extensively about one of these epistemologies, contextualism, or as they term it, transactionalism (Altman, 1992, 1993; Altman, Werner, Oxley & Haggard, 1987; Werner & Altman, 2000; Werner, Brown & Altman, 2002). With its emphasis on people in context, contextualism appears particularly relevant to community psychology, especially in attempts to forge a legitimate policy role.

Despite Altman and colleagues' advocacy for the adoption of a contextualist position, there has been little adoption within community psychology. Part of the reason is reflected in Phillips' (2000) arguments above. Given the positivist pursuit of 'hard science' within psychology, contextualism rejects notions of cause and effect making it a less attractive epistemology for many in community psychology. Another major problem, we would argue, is that contextualism has aspects that run counter to modernist ways of thinking. The rise of the hard sciences has been reflected in how issues are problematized and conceptualised in the broader society. As members of modern community we look for antecedent causation in the world around us. The impact of the period of enlightenment has meant that Western people, in particular, have adopted a lay positivistic conception of the world. The contrast of epistemologies can be seen clearly in the debate about harm reduction policies and abstinence-treatment models in the drug misuse policy arena. This treatment approach is firmly located in positivism and is based on individualistic treatments which can lead to social categorisation and stigmatisation of users (Lushin & Anastas, 2011). This perspective is embedded in community concepts of cause and effect, deviance and labelling (Bright, Marsh, Smith & Bishop, 2008). Harm minimisation is contextually based, is more complex and has emerged as a grass-roots movement in Europe in contrast to mainstream community beliefs and existing broader social policy (Bright et al.; Lushin & Anastas).

In contextualism, people are not seen as discrete entities, rather they are conceptualised as sharing similarities and differences with others in their contexts (sharing differences is a fundamental aspect of diversity). Altman and Rogoff (1984) defined this approach as "the study of changing relations among psychological and environmental aspects of holistic entities" (p. 24). There are a number of features to this epistemological approach. Firstly, in this approach it is assumed

that the context, time and a person's behaviours and actions are inseparable. Altman and Rogoff argued that this contextualism could be metaphorically represented by an "historical event" which involved behaviour which was purposeful, and meaningful. Secondly, this approach also acknowledges that notions of change in any direction are a continual process of all psychological phenomena. Third, it also focuses on the contemporary events, and determines the patterns and structure of phenomena. Fourth, it argues for the use of multiple observers who participate in different contexts and who investigate the same event. The complexity of this approach lies in the first point. The notion that people are not separable from context is contrary to lay understandings of what it means to be an individual and the central assumptions within mainstream psychology (e.g., Burr, 2002; Dashtipour, 2012, Hayes, 2002). This counterintuitive notion of people and context complicates research from a contextualist epistemology. Even in this previous sentence it is linguistically difficult to describe people as part of context, rather than being separate from context. There are linguistic as well as conceptual difficulties in framing contextualism.

While contextualism appears to be the natural scientific paradigm for community psychology, it has not been embraced as fully as it might. This appears to be a consequence of a resistance to consider and question the dominant positivistic position of cause-and-effect. This is ironic in that even given community psychology's activist values and roles the discipline cannot divorce itself from positivistic methodologies and conceptualising. There is also the problem of conceiving of people as being part of context and not separable or meaningful outside of context. We strongly advocate a contextualist position, particularly given its relevance when considering complex social issues in the policy arena. A contextualist position gives the practitioner an episteme that acknowledges complexity, and combats superficial or first order social change (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974). Policy failings are more likely to occur when superficial solutions are posed; as community psychologists, we should be advocates of second order change, and a contextualist position gives practitioners the foundations for grappling with second order change. As community psychologists working in interdisciplinary teams, we have been privy to a range of 'alternative' research methodologies.

In dealing with policy in the complex contextual domain, emerging patterns of change need to be recognised and monitored (Becker, 2011; Polkinghorne, 2004; Kurtz & Snowden, 2002). To achieve this it is essential that a multilevel approach is adopted. One such method is Causal

Layered Analysis (CLA; Inayatullah, 2004). CLA allows for deconstruction on a number of levels. More importantly, it not only addresses different levels but also different depths in terms of culture. The assessment of aspects of culture, both local and more broadly, is an important aspect of policy implementation. Using CLA allows us to address issues of second order change instead of first order change. For example, Zepke (2012) examined the second order competing myths underlying academic freedom in New Zealand using CLA.

Causal Layered Analysis is both a theory of knowledge and a method for deconstructing complex issues according to four levels (Inayatullah, 2004). Each of the Causal Layers is summarised in the following table.

Table 1
Deconstruction Levels of Causal Layered Analysis

Layer	Concern/Foci
Litany	Issue presented as the uncontested truth, is superficial lacking depth, can result in a sense of helplessness or apathy
Social Causal	Issues presented in terms of systemic and/or technical explanations
Worldview/Discourse	Deeper, more complex understanding of the issue. Relates to the meaning of the issue that is constructed. Worldviews shape understanding, and by understanding a worldview, researchers are able to determine insights as to how an issue is socially constructed. Discourses express a worldview through the sorts of words, terminology or phrases that are used. There may be multiple worldviews in evident in the one data set.
Myth/Metaphor	Deep mythical stories and social/cultural archetypes, emotional experiences and responses to the issue. This is the most distal layer of analysis and is likely to require the greatest amount of analytical investment.

It is natural to question the particular foci of the layers. We argue that they are defensible and adequately represent the intention of the analysis, that being to contest individualistic and surface levels of observations and conceptualisations of social issues. Specifically, the methodology encourages an analysis of social issues beyond the Litany and broadly parallels the ecological levels enunciated by Bronfenbrenner (1977) and Reiff (1968).

CLA was devised as a tool for analysing community workshops designed to determine future possibilities and alternatives to current social issues. The social issue under investigation is deconstructed according to a number of levels. Inayatullah (2004) provided an example of a 1993 workshop on Bangkok's serious traffic congestion. The discourses were analysed at four levels – litany (the taken for granted 'reality' of the issues), social-structural (the social and structural causes underlying the current situation and possible changes), worldviews (the generally unacknowledged value system that frames people's understanding of the world) and myths-narratives (the grand and community narratives that help give meaning to people and issues; Mankowski & Rappaport, 2000; Rappaport, 2000; Yoshikawa & Olazagasti, 2011).

In Inayatullah's (2004) analysis of the traffic problems besetting Bangkok, he states that at the litany level the obvious problem was that of too many vehicles on the roads. At a social/structural level, it was suggested that engineering solutions might be found to better regulate traffic flows or build new roads. At the worldview level it was recognized that industrial and colonial values had led to centralization and the concentration of a large population in the capital, Bangkok. The dominant myths were that 'West is best' and 'bigger is better'. A short term solution was to develop public transport such as had been done in Singapore. The medium term solution that was suggested was to encourage a return to valuing farming as a means of decentralizing. Long term solutions related to what it meant to be Thai and a re-visioning of Thai cultural identity, especially in terms of the importance and status of rural activity. The re-visioning would mean that farming would be seen as an important aspect of Thai culture and retention of people in rural areas would be achievable.

CLA was developed in the futures area and has attracted much attention in recent years. It has been used in a wide variety of fields. For example, Robinson, Kennedy, and Harmon (2011) used CLA to analyse occupational therapies for people with chronic pain. Zepke (2012) and Wildman (2010)

used CLA to analyse pedagogy. Natural resource management and climate change have been examined (e.g., Ariell, 2010; Barber, 2007; Hofmeester, Bishop, Stocker & Syme, 2012; Kelleher, 2012; Lederwasch, Mason, Daly, Prior & Giurco, 2011), as have China and east-west relationships (e.g., Anthony, 2009; Hoffman, 2012), the Global Financial Crisis (Inayatullah, 2010), dramatic story telling (Head, 2012) and the very nature of science (Turnbull, 2006).

The theory articulated by Inayatullah (2004) is more complicated than that presented here. Inayatullah discusses methods for deconstructing social issues that involve what he calls a post-structuralist toolbox. Current debates have extended the models (e.g., Barber, 2010, 2011; Hampson, 2010; Reidy, 2007; Slaughter, 2008). Although the use of CLA is well developed in futures research, we use it both as a methodology and also as a metaphor for understanding context. CLA is used as a contextualist methodology based on the assumptions described by Altman and Rogoff (1984), Dewey and Bentley (1948), Kingry-Westergaard and Kelly (1990), and Tebes (2005). CLA provides a means to address not only the observed act, but also the act in its social, political, historical and cultural context. Using CLA ensures that researchers examine not only what has happened and the social context in which action occurred, but it allows examination on the worldviews of the participants and the underlying aspects of culture.

At this point, it may be useful to reflect on conducting a CLA in its entirety. The metaphor of a microscope and multiple lenses can be applied to conducting a CLA, and is a useful way to remember the overarching aim of the analysis. The process of conducting a CLA is much like looking at a phenomenon under a microscope, with each layer comparable to different lenses of a microscope. This marks a strength for its adoption in contextualist research. Each layer provides a different perspective to the same phenomenon being scrutinised. Much like lenses, each layer gives a different level of depth. The first layer (the Litany) can be considered the most superficial, or surface level interpretation and so is comparable to the first lens that would likely be used. The litany often consists of unorganised facts or observations. The second layer is the Social Causal Layer and is concerned with systemic and structural influences. This is where policy debate is often located. The third layer (Worldview Discourse layers) provides even greater depth or clarity. The final layer (lens) gives the finest and deepest level of interpretation. So, much like how the lens used in a microscope increases in intensity resulting in greater clarity of the phenomenon, this is also the case with the layers of analysis. No lens or layer outweighs the

other in level of importance; rather, they all contribute to building a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being analysed. Collectively these accounts make for a rich and in-depth interpretation. These levels were characterised by Barber (2010, p. 171) as being:

* What we say (Litany)

* What we do (Social Causal)

* How we think (Worldviews & Discourses)

* Who we are (Myth & Metaphor)

It is this process of deconstruction according to multiple layers that gives depth beyond a typical thematic analysis. Further still, comprehending the meaning within and between the layers makes for an analytical process of deconstruction and reconstruction. This final step in conducting a CLA requires the researcher to consider the overall message or finding from the analysis in relation to their initial research question. This phase marks what Futurists claim as 'proposing alternative futures', or in terms more readily accessible to psychology, it is when the problem is summarised and strategies proposed for its resolution. The reconstruction stage of the analysis is crucial to the analysis. It is where the researcher is able to tie together their findings across the layers to give a consolidated and defensible response to their research question. This is akin to pulling together what was identified with each lens of the microscope to convey a holistic and deep account of the phenomenon being investigated.

One of the issues confronting those who adopt contextualism is the assumption of local specificity, or more broadly, the ontology of possible multiple truths. This would lead to a question of what can be learned from an analysis presented here of natural resource management issues in rural Australia? What relevance do these findings have for community psychology in northern America, or elsewhere? Paradoxically, we will suggest that there are generalizable lessons that may be applicable to other regions. One will be the methodology. More importantly, it can be argued that the notion of generalizability contains elements that are inherently positivistic (as do notions of reproducibility and authenticity when applied to qualitative methods). Positivistic generalizability involves not just the ability to apply outcomes in differing localities; it also involves abstraction and reduction. Generalisation in a contextual framework is quite different. Contextualism retains complexity. We will make a case that there can be generalisation of the following exemplar of CLA as part of the conclusions about the methodology.

Considering environmental governance and policy in rural settings

One of our earliest applications of CLA as a methodology to deconstruct complex social issues was in partnership with government agencies and farmers in central New South Wales (NSW), a State of Australia. The aim of the research was to identify how communities and government agencies could work together to improve the environmental impacts of farming, especially given the impacts of global climate change. We sought to identify opportunities and impediments to the adoption of farming practices that could be more "sustainable". We report one such CLA workshop as an example of what can be done.

Method

The workshop of 17 participants was facilitated by three staff members of CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, a federal government scientific organisation established in 1926), a facilitator who led the discussion, an observer and a recorder. The recorder was able to type extensive notes of the comments, almost verbatim. An audio recording of the session was made to contribute to the accuracy of the recorder's notes. The facilitator asked a series of questions and prompts designed to elicit information about the litany (e.g., *What type of farming practices are you engaged in?*), social-structural (*What's been the impact of the financial crisis?*), worldviews (*Richard, you talked about sustainability as a European notion. Could you tell us some more about this?*) and myth-metaphor (*If you wrote a book to describe your experience as a farmer, what would the title be?*).

The workshop transcript was analysed according to a two-step process. First, the transcripts were coded according to Causal Layer. This is a process of reading and re-reading the transcripts to identify utterances in the text that relate to a specific Causal Layer. For example, the use of a metaphor would be coded as relevant to the Myth Metaphor Layer, or, reference to social structures such as family, the local community or government would have relevance to the Social Causes Layer. This was followed by the extracts relevant to each Causal Layer being coded thematically. Coding thematically within each Causal Layer allows for further deconstruction of the issue under investigation. More specifically, themes relevant to the Litany Layer provide an understanding of the overt or superficial way in which the issue is conceptualised. Themes at the Social Causal Layer provide an understanding of how the issue manifests and impacts on social structures such as families, friendship or working groups, and, community at large. Themes at the Worldview /Discourse Layer provide an understanding of the different worldviews and discourses that exist regarding the issue being investigated. This can include complementary and contrasting

worldviews. Themes at the Myth/Metaphor Layer provide an understanding of the deeper and more complex ways in which the issue may be conceptualised. For example, it is not uncommon at this level for social archetypes, stereotypes, myths, 'untruths' and cultural stories to emerge related to the issue being investigated. The merit therefore for the contextualist researcher in adopting CLA is that there is a deeper and more active deconstruction. The layers provide specific frames of reference which guide the analysis; however, the thematic analysis within the layers gives contextual depth and richness.

As such, conducting a CLA requires a first step of deconstructing an issue according to the specified layers of Litany, Social Causal, Worldview/Discourse and Myth/Metaphor, followed by an in-depth thematic analysis within each Causal Layer. Following the deconstruction of the issue, there is the opportunity for transformation. More specifically, it is argued that once there is a deeper understanding of the issue being explored, there is the opportunity for considering how the true issue at hand can be addressed. This allows second order change to be addressed (Watzlawick et al., 1974).

Findings

Litany

Litany is the uncontested 'facts', or the superficial or overt conceptualisation of the issue. There was an overwhelming theme relating to the harsh realities of farming in the Australian social, environmental and economic climates. In all, a vast range of farming hardships were reported by participants, dominated however by the farmers' experiences of difficulty due to the long term drought experienced in their district. Farmers made explicit connections between the drought and their ability to be 'good' land managers. With no rainfall, and with dams and creek lines drying up, it made watering stock and crops next to impossible for some farmers. For example, a farmer stated the following:

> H: *Seasons can make a good manager…and a good agronomist. Good seasons even everyone out. Success is hard without rain.*

Social Causal

At the Social Causal Layer of analysis, the same reflection of pressures on farming was evident; however, these were related more to the social ramification of these pressures than to the farmers' ability to manage their properties effectively. For example in the following extract, the farmer laments about world wool prices in the context of the Global Financial Crisis:

> J: *The prices for superfine wool are shocking.
> We have a friend with pretty good super-fine
> wool and he was devastated as he got half the
> amount per kilo this year.*

Here, it illustrates how global financial issues can severely impact those at the local community level. Such mammoth and complex challenges, such as global markets, were observed at the Social Causal Layer as resulting in farmers feeling that they are at the mercy of social and economic systems. For example, one farmer reflected on experiencing a lack of control:

> C: *Doesn't matter what you're farming...your
> input costs are slowly going up but your
> income is fairly stationary. It puts the squeeze
> on, harder and harder.*

Incidentally, this quotation is also relevant to the Myth/Metaphor Layer of analysis (*it puts the squeeze on harder and harder*). Here the metaphor is used to illustrate the social and emotional impacts of the global economy on the individual. Building on this sense of a lack of control another farmer stated:

> G: *The variables we can't control. Don might
> grow the best cattle in the world and do
> everything right with genetics and breeding
> but unless the market is having a good time he
> can't get his rewards for the efforts he puts in,
> because the other person's not in a position to
> buy.*

In this example, it is evident how the actions of a farmer at the individual level (illustrated through their farming practices) are inherently connected and dependent on the actions and decisions of others. This illustrates the system in which farmers operate and the social dependency they have on others to not only farm well, but make a living. With a lack of control comes uncertainty, as reflected on two other farmers:

> H: *We just can't keep budgets though. From
> year to year you don't know your income. You
> do well one year and think you can buy that
> new ute* [pick-up truck], *then the next year you
> have a bad one and it takes 10 years to recover
> from it. You need to have three budgets: One
> for yourself, one for the bank manager and one
> for the accountant.*

And,

> A: Y*ou can't plan as you don't know what's
> going to happen up here (rain). You can plan
> but you don't know if it will come into fruition.*

Worldview /Discourse

At the Worldview/Discourse Layer, the dominant theme related to a 'farming worldview'. Farmers articulated that in their role, farming was more than

tending the land and caring for animals. Farming was identified as a passion, whereby they felt connected to the land, and, a level of responsibility to caring for it. It was this passion and connection that had kept them in the practice of farming despite the obvious economic and climatic pressures. One farmer described in the following quote a tension between loving farming and feeling as though this is something they were born to do, within the context of trying conditions. He reflects that there is a conflict between the heart (passion to farm) and the head (the reality that farming is currently risky and not overly viable financially). He stated:

> C: *It is in our blood. There is something wrong
> up here (points to head).*

Another stated:

> K: *It's the love for it.*

Myth/Metaphor

At a deeper cultural level is the Myth-Metaphor level. These comments reflect deeper aspects of the local and broader culture and as such represent core aspects of local social functioning which are much less amenable to change. Comments at this level were dominated by farmers' reflections on the impacts of globalisation, and a move from buying local. There was a distinct message that farmers felt under siege by larger corporations, that farming was no longer valued as a family run enterprise and that there was the potential that due to these factors they could be the last generation of farmers in the district. A farmer reflected on trends of globalisation:

> K: *It's a worrying trend. 80% of the food
> [sales] is controlled by two supermarket
> companies and a lot of the produce is from
> overseas. What we don't want is to rely on
> other countries for our primary needs; it
> makes us very dependent on other countries.
> Other countries have subsidies to keep
> agriculture going but we don't. Beef into the
> states [USA] is one thing, there's a flat limit…*

Other farmers reflected on their concerns about globalisation, stating:

> M: *Go to the supermarket and the produce
> there is from all over the world – very little of
> it is local produce.*

> G: *I think food security will be a major issue
> especially with population growth. Once the
> southeast Asian population is too big and can't
> feed itself they'll look at our big open land and
> say "hey we could have a part of that".
> Everyone talks about this even playing field
> we're playing on but we play on the bottom*

and everyone else is on top. [This comment elicited general agreement].

P: Decisions…are made on the coast [cities] and you get little once you get over the mountains [into the farming areas]. It's just getting worse and worse... in terms of infrastructure decisions that is not relevant to this area…people [agricultural advisors] not getting out of the office.

G: *A lot of people are selling up and leaving the land, a lot of big companies buying up land and getting bigger and pushing out smaller farms.*

In these quotations, the farmers provide their account of instances whereby global food production and selling patterns are changing the dynamic, affecting how people source their food and ultimately live their lives as traditional family run enterprises. There is a sense that they, as producers, are being threatened by an amorphous entity that is beyond their control. 'Globalisation' as a term connotes enormity, and while it implies the potential of a global community, the construct in real terms depicts the removal of local power, control, decision making and inherently localism— all of which are prized within rural agricultural communities.

Transformation

The above deconstruction illustrates the complex experience of being a farmer. 'Rural issues' are complex and not constrained to the happenings within a rural community. From the above deconstruction, we can see that challenging experiences at the local level can be driven by global social changes. Given this, there is a recurrent myth throughout the interviews relating to scale and power. We see that the myths are closely related to the Social Causal Layer of the analysis, because the participants are reflecting deeply about their social circumstances. The farmers are reflecting on the power differentiation they feel that distances them (psychologically, socially and physically) from city power. To encapsulate their experience of being in a position of lesser power, they reflect on the social structure of rural communities and have adopted metaphors of scale (small and large), of force (being pushed out) and of inequality (challenging the construct of an even playing field). Further, the farmers are acknowledging that there are myths associated with the value of their role within the broader society. Thus, the connection between the Social Causal and Myth/Metaphor levels of this particular analysis is very pronounced. The connection is present because while issues regarding farmers' relationships with the city people imply applicability to the Social Causal level of analysis, it is the farmers' expression of their response to the

dynamic which makes it appropriate for the Myth/Metaphor Layer of analysis. They are actively challenging the negative constriction of their role and the myth associated with food production which makes globalisation the dominant belief. Within Australia there are three major providers which account for nearly 90 per cent of the market share. While there is considerable discussion about the influence of vertical integration of farm prices, this is far from simple (e.g., Round, 2006; Smith, 2006).

There are tensions in the dynamic between city and farming communities, and this has implications for policy interventions, as policy, decision making and funding for initiatives are all determined within the city despite being enforced in rural communities (e.g., the current policy direction for sustainable farm management practice is through a Federal Government initiative called *Caring for Our Country,* the program encourages sustainable land management, environmental stewardship, biodiversity and conservation management, Commonwealth of Australia, 2012). The implications of this are that greater ownership of changes in policy is necessary for their acceptance by the farming community. If we consider transformative futures for rural agricultural communities, these must be considered in light of these inherent tensions between decision makers and those who 'receive' the decision. Understanding this dynamic, and determining appropriate strategies as to how this can be remedied, can be considered in terms of some of the fundamental principles within community psychology. For example, we argue for the importance of genuine engagement (Rappaport, 1987), and of not only distributive but procedural justice (Tyler, 1988). The possible transformation from disengaged and disempowered rural communities to ones that are actively, genuinely and meaningfully engaged in determining their future would benefit from the principles and practices of community psychology. Given this, community psychology naturally has a place within the policy arena as we can assist as agents of change (Aber, Maton & Seidman, 2011; Jason, 2013).

Discussion: A place for community psychologists in the policy arena

The deconstruction of the issue of land management in rural Australia is clearly complex. It is an issue that is more far reaching than contending farmers have to make difficult land management decisions; their experiences, and the challenges they experience in being 'good farmers' relates to broader social, cultural and economic patterns and pressures. Conducting contextualist research, specifically using CLA as the method for deconstructing the social issue, meant that we were

able to comprehend the complexity of the issue. This method allows us to deconstruct and reconstruct the issue. It is a powerful methodology for policy development because it means that issues must be considered in all of their complexity. For example, why were farmers having so much difficulty managing their land? It was more than a drought issue, and more than a global financial issue, but, these are still fundamental issues for the farmers and have become the focal point for policy. However, drought policy is decontextualized, and historically has not been considered in its full complexity. Fundamentally, the pressure experienced in farming communities also relates to a change in the perceived dominant value in farming. Globalisation, and the emergence of large supermarket chains, super-corporately owned (as opposed to family owned) farms and a growing emphasis on importing products that are being grown locally is dramatically challenging farmers' capacity to be 'good farmers'. Farming, as evident in the analysis at the Worldview/Discourse layer, is a part of their being, and being a farmer in Australia has with it a particular cultural archetype. This, however, is being challenged by a consumerist value system, which ultimately threatens rural communities. As family farming becomes more challenging and less viable, so too the surrounding communities are under threat. This is an area in which community psychologists can and should be engaging, at multiple levels and in multiple ways.

To recapitulate, Altman and Rogoff (1984) provided community psychology with a philosophical framework for understanding people and community. They used the work of Pepper (1962), and Dewey and Bentley (1949) to provide a contextualist framework of transacting people as part of community. The positivistic notion of community comprising discrete and separate individuals was rejected, as was the organic notion of people in community. Community is people and people are part of community. The people are not separable entities but share culture in which there are not interactions, but transactions. To quote Dale Berra talking about his famous father, Yogi, "I am a lot like him, only our similarities are different" (cited in Jones, 1994).

CLA can be used to look at where people have differences, where they share local culture and where they are part of a larger cultural group and also what makes them human. CLA also offers the opportunity to recognise that transactions operate at a number of conceptual levels. People do not simply address Litany Layer issues, but their words have symbolic meanings that convey emotions and also deeper understandings of common history and community life. It allows us to see aspects of their lives that often well-disguised. As a method, it can

help reveal what is not needed to be said along with what is said, and it is often what is not said that is reflective of culture and community. Thus CLA can be a useful tool in policy development as it allows acknowledgement of what is explicit, but also the implicit and tacit aspects of local and broader culture. It is critical that as community psychologists we have the appropriate tools in which to fully deconstruct complex social issues. Entering into the policy arena, it is crucial that we understand social issues beyond the superficial. As evidenced in this analysis, farm management challenges are more complex than the decisions that farmers make on their properties. The challenges relate to larger social, cultural and economic factors, particularly around globalisation, and threats that farmers feel to being local producers. Policy in this area needs to also think about changing values, particularly values directed towards rural and agricultural communities, and, the social and economic stressors that are placed on them.

Community psychologists have a natural and necessary place within the policy arena. Being able to contend with social complexity, and to deconstruct social issues in their full provides a sounder foundation and opportunity for second order social change.

Acknowledgements

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