GLOBALIZATION, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND POLITICAL POLARIZATION: NEW CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGISTS

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The aim of this paper is to explore how some macro changes brought about by globalization have created new opportunities, but also difficult problems for community psychologists. (a) Economic changes, which have created new jobs in different areas of the world and promoted the emergence of a "sharing economy", but also fostered huge disparities both within and across countries. (b) Political changes, such as increased polarization and the growth of nationalist and populist parties, which amplify divisiveness but go along with a transformation of the notion of citizenship and identity. (c) Technological changes brought about by the artificial intelligence revolution, which opens up both opportunities and dangers for job prospects, and by the diffusion of social networks, able of both promoting political participation and increasing political polarization. Finally, aims that community psychologists could pursue to help develop the opportunities and reduce the problems that emerge from these changes are discussed.

Keywords: *Globalization, Artificial Intelligence, social networks, political polarization, community psychology*

1.   Introduction

Stark (2011) argues that community psychology has to empower itself by focusing not only on micro issues of community analysis, but also on macro issues, recognizing that business and politics have an impact on local processes. The aim of this paper is to explore how some macro changes brought about by globalization: rapid development of artificial intelligence, diffusion of social networks and increased political polarization, have created new opportunities, but also difficult problems for community psychologists. My analysis will primarily be concentrated on the historic developments that have occurred in the 21st century. The term globalization came into wide use in the late 20th century, with advances in telecommunication and transportation,

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with the widespread enactment of free trade agreements and of financial deregulation, and with increased international trade and investments. Economic liberalization, and new technological developments led to more interconnected economies and cultures. However, due to the economic strength of the developed nations and of international corporations headquartered in Europe and North America, 20th century globalization has in fact been dominated by the spread of Western culture and values (Parker, 2005). Moreover, globalization has been forced upon certain countries, particularly those in the developing world, and has reduced the independence of these nations for the political and economic gain of others. So there has been a power imbalance in globalization processes, with some western countries exercising a dominant role (Held & McGrew, 2002). However, in the first two decades of the 21st century, we are witnessing an historic change: The developed world, which for over a century primarily meant the West plus Japan, is being economically challenged by the developing world.

Therefore, in the first section of the paper, I examine some economic changes fostered by globalization in different areas of the world, which have created new jobs in China and India, but also great environmental problems, and huge disparities in income and wealth both within and across countries. I then discuss how globalization is no longer simply synonymous with Americanization or Westernization and how the rise of China's global economic power and the Chinese model of globalization challenge the prevailing western model. Moreover, I describe how an emerging "sharing economy" is attempting to transform 21st century capitalism, how internationalisation processes are changing some of our institutions of higher education, contributing both to the decline and to the growth of academic community psychology in different parts of the world.

In the second section of the paper, I turn to give an overview of how economic globalization processes have increased political polarization between progressives – who want to tax the very wealthy to improve the economic conditions of the jobless and working poor, fight climate change and pursue sustainable development (Raworth, 2017) – and conservatives – who support loosely regulated capitalism, do not believe in climate change and oppose programs of economic help to the poor as undermining their capacity for self-reliance (Francescato, 2017) –.

I then present the position of those authors who worry that fair political representation is endangered by the influence of the superrich on national and local elections and on the legislative processes. Furthermore, I describe how negative effects of globalization, climate change, and local wars have increased the number of refugees and economic migrants fostering the growth of nationalist and populist parties. Rich-poor, gender, religious, ethnic, country and city dwellers divides have become more prominent and at the same time they have favoured a reconceptualization of citizenship, and the growth of identity politics. I maintain that community psychologists can play a significant role in diminishing some of these divides and recreate a sense of community, now threatened by these economic and political developments.

In the third part of this paper, I present both the opportunities and the dangers of the artificial intelligence revolution for job prospects in the next decades. Whether a huge number of workers will be replaced by A.I., and how fast this change will happen, nobody seems to know. One thing is certain, many people will lose their jobs and they will need retraining for occupations that involve creativity, planning and cross domain thinking, characteristics hard to program in robots. This transformation could increase work opportunities for community psychologists using empowering training methodologies (Francescato & Zani, 2017). I also discuss whether A.I. technological innovations will foster or threaten communitarian values.

In the fourth section, I examine if social networks promote political participation or increase political polarization. Several authors maintain that the Internet in general and social media in particular are the main drivers of political polarization (Sustein, 2017), but recent empirical studies found that growth in political polarization is largest in groups least likely to use Internet and social media (Barbera, 2015; Boxell, Gentzkow, & Shapiro, 2017). I also underline that we as community psychologists, should not leave community building online to Facebook, which has recently changed its mission, from setting out to connect the world to reducing global division through community building.

Finally, in the last part of the paper, I examine what aims community psychologists could pursue both in their roles as activists and as professionals, to help develop the opportunities and reduce the problems that emerge from the macro changes discussed in the first four parts of the paper.

2. Main Economic Changes Fostered by Globalization in different areas of the world

Supporters of globalization underline that globalization has increased the economic prosperity of some developing nations, creating new huge middle classes in China, India, and Brazil. Opponents point out that it has also concentrated wealth and power on the managers of multinational companies and international financial institutions, increasing income and wealth inequalities (Held & McGrew, 2002; Bhagat, Segovis, & Nelson, 2012). Economic data support both theses. Worldwide, there are over 63,000 multinational and global corporations with 821,000 foreign subsidiaries that employ over 90 million people. Globalization processes, such as delocalization of firms in countries where the cost of labour is low, have brought jobs and prosperity to millions in developing countries. But corporate greed and corrupt government officials have promoted an increase in activities such as child labour and modern forms of slavery. Dislocating factories in countries where labour is cheaper has angered western workers who lost their jobs.

However, it is not only the developed nations that are complaining about negative effects; people in developing nations lament that their cities have been reduced to garbage dumps where industrial waste is accumulated and pollution levels are sky high. Exporting jobs to countries with fewer environmental and labour regulations means more pollution for residents and less protection for workers (Aneesh, 2012). Prilleltensky (2012) underlined that the benefits and burdens of globalization could be more equally distributed if the goal of globalization focused on achieving a more just society, but globalization has mainly been driven by profit and extractive colonialism. He pointed out that decisions being made by directors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have had dire consequences for most citizens while multiplying profits for managers of global production and financial firms. The American economist Reich (2012) supported this claim by documenting how in the last three decades in the United States, the wages of the average worker have stagnated, while Wall Street moguls and executive officers of global companies have earned more than 300 times the pay of average workers. Reich (2012) also underscored that partners in private equity firms no longer risk their own money.

So, while risks are vanishing at the top, they have increased dramatically for everyone else: full-time workers who have worked for decades in a company can now find themselves without a

job overnight, with no parachute, no help finding another job, and no health insurance. Cuts in local and state budgets for social services have resulted in fewer local family services, the loss of thousand jobs for social workers, and reduced contributions to Head Start and other programs that provide early childhood education to poor children, with the loss of valuable employment for some community psychologists. Reich (2012) concluded that the U.S. economy would not bounce back until America's surge towards inequality is reversed. The election of Donald Trump, a billionaire who is reducing taxes for top payers, makes this reversion more unlikely since Trump has also cut educational, welfare and environmental federal programs.

2.1. Globalization: No longer simply synonymous with Americanization or Westernization

While the growth of the middle class in non-Western developing countries has been beneficial, economic disparities between rich and poor have also increased within these developing nations since a growing number of global companies now also come from emerging countries. A total of 62 companies from BRIC economies (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) are among the listing of the Fortune 500 in 2013, an increase from only 31 in 2003. Economic globalization is no longer simply synonymous with Americanization or Westernization. Piketty (2014) argued, however, that there is a natural tendency to promote high inequality in capitalistic economies, wherever they are located. Companies that operate globally are becoming increasingly detached from their home country contexts. This detachment has profound implications for community psychologists, on a number of fronts. Outsourcing their plants, multinational enterprises deprive local communities of tax revenues and of job opportunities for residents. Many local volunteer and non-profit organizations have been forced to cut their programs. In European countries most affected by the economic crisis, employed community psychologists have been laid off, and there are fewer opportunities for new master's-level graduates (Francescato, Tomai, & Solimeno, 2008).

On the other hand, sense of community, one of the key concepts in community psychology, is acquiring different meanings for different groups. Economically dominant players may acquire a global sense of community, as they increasingly function as stateless corporations, where work is outsourced to global locations wherever most profits can be made, and the corporate boards and the work force are composed of people coming from different cultures, and moving from country to country. Having a global sense of community may have positive effects, for example, making people more willing to contribute to help victims of natural disasters in other countries. However, inhabitants of newly economically deprived local communities, which have lost their jobs due to relocation of factories to other countries, may develop less sense of community (Francescato & Zani, 2017).

2.2. The rise of China's global economic power and Chinese model of globalization

According to Goldman Sachs, a global investment firm based in New York, by 2050, the largest economies will be China, followed by the United States and India, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, and Indonesia. Only two Western European countries (the United Kingdom and Germany) will be among the top 10 countries in 2050. Since economic power contributes to political power, the greater economic growth of non-Western countries represents not only an

economic but also a political challenge for Western economic and political centres of power (Bhagat et al., 2012).

Prasad (2017) maintains that China has profited from entering the World Trade Organization (W.T.O.) in 2001 with the special privileges given to developing countries. Joining the W.T.O China agreed to gradually open its own market to foreign goods and investments in return for better access to markets worldwide for its exports. China has boasted his exports but foreign exporters and investor still face many barriers. To sell goods in China, foreign companies have to partner with local partners requiring transfers of technological expertise and intellectual property. Foreign investment is still restricted in certain sectors including financial services like insurance. Meanwhile, China has become the second largest economy and one of the biggest traders in the world, gaining more power in the World Trade Organization. China is now one of the prime users of the WTO dispute settlement process to protect it own interests and counters trade actions brought against it by other countries. With its rising economic clout, China has also been able to raise its voting shares at international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In these organizations, the Unites States and western countries still hold dominant positions, because decisions are taken by a supermajority of 85% and the Unites States having 16% of the vote, has practically veto power on most matters. China has denounced the undemocratic voting structure of WTO and the World Bank and has created a new international organization, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, where China holds 26% of the votes but has no veto power since simple majority takes decisions. Most developing countries and some western countries like Britain, Germany and France have also joined it (while the USA has not). China has indicated that it will choose only projects that meet the highest standards in terms of corporate governance, environmental impact and commercial integrity. American critics have pointed out that projects of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank avoid sensitive political issues, like corruption, freedom of expression and human rights

After the election of Trump, who campaigned on abolishing international trade agreements, in January 2017, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, President Xi Jinping called his country a champion of free trade and globalization. Moreover, at and international conference in Beijing in 2017 he laid out China grand vision of promoting global integration by linking Asia Europe and beyond, through a new network of roads, railways and sea routes – the New Silk Road. With Trump's America pulling back from global leadership, China is fashioning a new form of multilateralism built on principles very different from the type of global order the United States and other western countries, which theoretically at least, were built on trust and mutual cooperation in economic matters but also on promoting the values of democracy, human rights and freedom of expression. China may also take a global leadership role in an effort to promote climate change, given that Trump has completely abdicated this role, and seems bent on sabotaging even the international agreements to lower carbon dioxide emissions in the next decade to lessen global warming.

2.3. Will the "Sharing Economy" transform 21th century capitalism?

Some authors (Friedman, 2005, 2013) point out that the emerging "sharing economy", that includes a range of activities transacted over online platforms, could transform 21st century capitalism. New disruptive business models include: on-demand (Uber), rental (Airbnb), gig (TaskRabbit), access (Spotify), collaboration (WeWork), platforms (Amazon), circular

(ThredUP) and peer-to-peer (Lufax). These tech-focused models are unlocking the value of unused and underused assets, driving a shift from asset-heavy to asset-light businesses and enabling access over ownership. Consumers are driving adoption as they hit "peak stuff", embracing a "shift to thrift" and the "experience economy".

The Media industry represents a prime example of how the sharing economy, emphasizing access over ownership and subscription-based streaming-access models, is transforming 21st century business. The music industry also has seen a shift from vinyl (1950-60s), to cassettes (1980s), to CDs (1990s) to MP3/digital downloads (2000s), leading to today's music streaming (2010s) model, which is increasingly becoming the dominant form of listening. Similarly, the film/movie and home video industry has seen a shift from VHS vs. Betamax (1970s/80s) to HD DVDs vs. Blu-Ray (2000s) to today's model of video streaming becoming the dominant form of viewing. All these Sharing Economy Services present themselves as a community of users, and give much attention to development of a sense of community among them. However, since profits are primarily given to owners and managers of these online based companies, it is unclear yet if the sharing economy will actually diminish the concentration of wealth in the hand of few plutocrats. The sharing of underutilized capacity does not imply an equal sharing of profits. How profit will be shared will depend probably on policies enacted by politicians both at the national and international level.

2.4. Growth of internationalization processes in higher education

Globalization processes have nudged colleges and universities to internationalize: reshaping their purposes to attract international students, deploying their programs across national borders, concentrating on internationally advantageous educational program niches, and restructuring work roles or compensation systems to recruit, retain, and manage the very best student and faculty talents, even if it means investing heavily in recruiting across national borders (Knight, 2004). Supporters point out that internationalization processes have generated work and study opportunities for many researchers and students from different countries and cultures.

The growth of an international market for college-level research and teaching has fostered a great increase in university entrepreneurialism, and this competition among higher education institutions is positive. To remain competitive, higher education institutions require substantial financial resources, which are obtained by establishing and maintaining a reputation for academic excellence. Researchers compete to publish in top international journals and to present papers at international conferences. They connect with other authors who share common interests, as university professors always have done, but now on an unprecedented scale. Some regions of the world, like India and China, which used to send their top students to Western universities, are now becoming poles of attraction for both top academics and students, thanks to investments by their government in fostering the growth of top academic centres (Bhagat et al., 2012).

How has this transformation affected community psychology's academic standing in different regions of the world and how will it affect its' prospects in the near future?
One transformation that may have a very positive impact in all aspects of the discipline has been the development of online learning, especially Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL), the most advanced form of online education. CSCL, done in small groups, characterized by a high level of task- and assessment-sponsored cooperation, asynchronous communication,

and the presence of facilitating teachers, can provide high-quality education, contrary to the misgivings of many professors. Using CSCL, several authors have documented how community psychology competencies to promote empowerment in small groups, organizations, and local communities can be learned online. CSCL favours learning among students, through teaching modules that have precise weekly goals. It provides cooperative exercises in mastering specific skills, and students can confront what they are doing with what colleagues are producing daily. CSCL enhances students' social capital, empowerment (especially socio-political empowerment), and various forms of problem-solving efficacy (Francescato, Solimeno, Mebane, & Tomai, 2009). It even promotes counter stereotypical behaviour in both male and female students and therefore achieves aims cherished by community psychologist (Francescato, Mebane, Tomai, Benedetti, & Rosa, 2012; Mebane, Francescato, Porcelli, Iannone, & Attanasio, 2008).

One negative change that has happened instead, especially in some European countries like Italy and Germany and in the United States, is that several academic departments that once had graduate programs in community psychology no longer offer them. In Italy the economic crisis has reduced public funding for universities. The cuts in academia have had particularly negative consequences for all disciplines such as ours that had a marginal status in most psychology departments: when a top academic retired no funds were made available to hire new researchers. In the United States, the situation is more complex: several graduate programs have closed, but about the same number of new ones have opened. In Latin America as well, some community psychology academic programs have been short-lived. On the other hand, new community psychology programs are beginning to operate in several countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Globalization in the 20th century had created great expectations of wider sharing of economic wealth, instead globalization of markets and the creation of new international financial instruments have contributed to a great increase of economic inequalities.

What effect have these changes brought in the political world? According to Luce (2017) the strongest glue holding liberal democracies together is economic growth; when this stalls or falls things take a dark turn. With growing competition for jobs and resources, consensus becomes harder to reach as politics devolves into more and more of a zero sum game. I will now therefore turn to give an overview of how economic globalization processes influenced political developments in different areas of the world, which affect community psychology in several ways.

3.   Political polarization comes in different forms

3.1. *Fair Political Representation Endangered by the Superrich*

According to Reich (2012), the worldwide rise of economic inequalities within countries is threatening the basic democratic principles of political representation in liberal democracies. In order to be elected or re-elected, politicians in our media-reliant society rely greatly on advertising, whose costs have risen as campaign spending escalates. For their fundraising, politicians depend increasingly on donations. In the United States, huge donations come from chief executive officers and other top executives of big corporations and from traders and fund

managers on Wall Street. Christia Freeland (2012) underlines that in the last decade a form of plutocrat capitalism has developed, since many plutocrats created foundations where professionals work to solve problems related to all kinds of public affairs: how to improve collective public transportation, how to deal with homeless and refugees, and how to improve schools performance of disadvantaged students.

Freeland (2012) maintains that plutocrats' politics have been favoured by many because it was hoped that it could liberate policy making from the messiness and deal making of grass root and retail politics; and that technocrats employed by the foundations could make better proposals and actually implement new more effective and less expensive solutions.

However, plutocrats' policymaking is failing for two main reasons. First, plutocrat capitalism has changed forms of civic engagement, and co-opted smart people, who were community organizers at the local level, to work full time in policy making in foundations. In the post war era, civic engagement was built through a network of community organizations with thousands of dues paying members, and activists of old fashioned party machines, which could mobilize their voters. Now, instead of going to work as community organizers, or taking part in the civil life of their communities, smart, publicly minded technocrats go to work for plutocrats whose values they share. The technocrats get high salaries to focus full time on the policy issues they care about, without doing the hard tasks of building, rallying and serving a permanent mass membership. So precious resources are taken out from local communities to pursue goals chosen by the foundations that employ them. Second, working and middleclass people feel unsecure about their jobs and their retirement, and are afraid of the technological evolution of artificial intelligence that will further reduce good jobs for humans.

Policies delivered from high, arouse in voters both from the right and the left, suspicion and mistrust for plutocrats and technicians, who are perceived as part of the one per cent gainers from globalization that have no personal interest in aiding the lower classes. This divide between plutocrats aided by technocrats and common voters has promoted more extremist politics and a more rancorous political debate (Freeland, 2012).

3.2. *Rise of nationalist and populist parties increase social divides and political extremisms*

Rising inequality, the erosion of jobs for the middle class and the lack of economic opportunities for low-skilled white males and young people in *general*, and the rise of mass immigration has fostered anger and resentment toward economic elites and main-stream media in many parts of the western world. Reacting to these structural changes, young leftist extremists used the Internet and social networks to protect rights of minorities and favour inclusive immigration of not only refugees from war zones but also of "economic migrants". Instead, the extreme right wing movements created sites supporting white supremacy and opposing immigration, increasing political polarization.

Populist and nationalist parties have grown in the European Union, but also in the Arab world giving support to authoritarian governments, and have fuelled mass emigration from regions torn by terrorism and civil wars, such as those in Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan and Libya. The mass exodus of so many civilians increased the fear of many citizens of various European countries, and the growth of right wing populism and also of extremist left wing small parties and movements. Political parties and politicians accused of corruption, nepotism and

incompetence have lost the trust of most citizens. Old parties have disappeared; new ones come to the fore, increasing political instability and weakening liberal democracies.

Since the turn of the millennium, on September 11, 2001, according to Luce (2017) we have seen the failure of two dozen democracies in the world, three in Europe (Russia, Turkey and Hungary), and above all the ascent to the presidency of the United States by Donald Trump. The Trump campaign was based on promoting America First, blaming bad trade deals for the loss of jobs in industrial towns, fighting economic and media elites. Trump promised to curb immigration, to build a brick and steel wall between United States and Mexico, and to abolish health and insurance programs implemented by Obama. These campaign ideas and policies have been upheld by Trump in the first year of his presidency.

Moreover Trump actively favoured political polarization: during the campaign he used unabashed provocative rhetoric goading attendees at his rallies to rough up protestors. On the other side, leftist extremists have accused the president of treason, a crime that can carry a death sentence and compared him to Hitler. Trump has also used an aggressive and violent language on Twitter, further legitimizing the use of threat of violence in radio, TV and social networks also by his left wing opponents that followed Sanders. Civic culture is breaking down not only in the States, but also in several other countries. Political adversaries have become people to be insulted and often attacked physically. In 2011 for instance, in Great Britain, the shooting of Gabrielle Gifford by a mentally ill assailant, came during a convulsive political period when a bitter debate on health care yielded a wave of threats against lawmakers. In Italy proposing new legislation to give citizenship to children of immigrants born in Italy, lead to heated brawls in the senate between extremists of the right and government officials. Demonizing political opponents has fostered the growth of identity politics, which underlines the differences between groups and people and increases political polarization (Luce, 2017).

3.3. Reconceptualization of citizenship, and growth of identity politics

Several authors believe globalization has fostered a reconceptualization of citizenship. Rather than seeing themselves as citizens of a region, cultural subgroup, or nation state, many people are increasingly viewing themselves as entitled to, and ready to participate in, opportunities for the interaction, work, and consumption on an international scale. Many individuals – especially those who use the Internet, work in international companies, travel for work or leisure, have one parent who is born in another country, are in contact with international nongovernmental institutions – perceive themselves as citizens of the world, free to move about, trade experiences, seek educational opportunities, and pursue work or entertainment (Bhagat et al., 2012; Tomai et al., 2004). Citizenship is redefined as sharing a civil creed, regardless of the soil on which a person was born.

Even so, far right parties still conceive nationhood as anchored firmly to specific territorial, ethnic, cultural and religious, linguistic grounds and want to protect these specificities by excluding immigrants who do not share these characteristics.

How does political polarization affect citizenship and identities? According to Amartya Sen (Brooks, 2017) political polarization forces people to reduce the myriads of our personal identities and focus on the part of our identity, which is most attacked by others. Sen calls this process "miniaturization": we live in an atomized, individualistic society in which most people have competing identities, but when you are disrespected for being a Jew, a Christian or a

Moslem, a woman, a gay or a transsexual that part or your identity will become more salient as social psychologists have long sustained. People in a hostile environment often reduce their many affiliations of their plural identities to the one that is most threatened. The more different kinds of divides become salient in a society, the more different groups of people have reasons to feel victimized and everybody gets to assert his or her victimization as worst, and it is the other people who are the elites. In the USA a country with many divisions, special media companies, such as Pure Flix have been created, that produce contents for the different types of Christians (Evangelists, Baptists etc.)[1].

According to Mark Lilla (2017) identity communities are often not even real communities, but just loose groups of individuals narcissistically exploring some trait in their self that others around them happen to share. Many identity-based communities are not defined by internal compassion but by external rage, directed sometimes of subgroups within the main groups. For instance, Spruil (2017) has made an extensive analysis on how identity politics created a rift in the Women's movement in the USA. In 1977 a conference was organized in Houston for the ratification of E.R.A. (Equal Rights Amendment) and a wide range of measures including childcare, elimination of discriminatory insurance and credit practices, reform of divorce and rape laws, funding for abortion and civil rights for lesbians. Some women who were opposed to abortion and civil rights for lesbians were not included in the final conference. So they held a rally outside the conference building, and created a women's "family values coalition" that cast feminism not just as erroneous policy, but also as moral transgression. A sign placed next to the podium of their first rally said: "Women libbers, E.R.A. lesbian repent, red the bible while you are able". These women found common ground in their deep religiosity and opposition to feminism's perceived diminishment of "real" womanhood. They found allies in white supremacy male groups and together they won over the Republican Party leadership. Republicans in the 1970 supported the E.R.A. but by the 1980 presidential election that had changed. The family values coalition co-opted the party platform, convinced Ronald Reagan and George Bush to take a pro-life anti-abortion positions, while feminists were not successful in ratifying the E.R.A. Many white women supporters of family values voted for Trump in 2016.

Akyol (2017) has examined the divides among Muslim immigrants. Many Muslims emigrate to western countries not only to improve their economic prospects, but because they are attracted by some western values: freedom of speech, freedom of religion and non discrimination, but they do not share the values of irreverence toward religion, defence of LGTB people and permissive attitudes toward sex and dress codes, based on individual preferences. Some try to switch at will between western and traditional Islamic values. The deeper problem according to Akyol is that Islam, as a legal and moral tradition developed in a time when the world was a very different place - there was a very limited concept of individual freedom as people lived in strictly defined communities. There was no notions of international laws, universal human rights, the secular

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[1] In 2015 the company introduced an on demand streaming services. It produces programs such as, "The American Bible Family Affair", " The Encounter", a series about people who are visited by Jesus. It also streams sermons, and documentaries for parents of home schooled children. The company produces movies such as, "God is not dead" and "The case for Christ", a movie that depicts how a former journalist of The Chicago Tribune goes from being a hard-nosed newsman and atheist to devout Christian and minister. Pure Flix has 250.000 paying subscribers that can choose from a catalogue of 7500 titles and 715,000 unique visitors that want content that suit their specific beliefs (Rosman 2017)

state or freedom of religion. Moreover, Muslims were often the dominant faith, making the rules to their advantage, such as tolerating non-Muslims as "protected" but inferior communities.

That pre-modern world is long gone. There is now an increasingly diverse world where boundaries fade, cultures meet and individuals roam. And the forces that try to promote liberal globalization are often the very forces that are perceived to despise Islam and threaten Muslims. Akyol maintains that Muslim opinion leaders have to decide where they stand. Now Muslims immigrants are split into different subgroups. Some Muslim immigrants in western countries want a free world with universal principles in which everyone, including Muslim, lives according to these values. Other Muslims prefer to live in segregated communities where traditional Islamic values are upheld. The birth of ISIS, which created Islamic state in Iraq and Syria, and which imposed by force extremist traditional Muslim values, has made the contradiction between the two different Muslim worldviews very salient, creating conflicts about different Moslem groups living in western countries.

Community psychologists can play an important role in diminishing intragroup and intergroup conflicts, using community profile analysis and empowerment training tools. Benedetti, Mebane and Oancea (2010) used these tools with different groups of migrants from Muslim, Christian and Hindu backgrounds, in a neighbourhood of Rome, with high presence of immigrants, trying to make more salient how all the different groups had common interests in improving quality of life in their shared neighbourhood rather than focusing primarily on what divided them. They found it was important to include, in these kinds of intervention, children and adolescents, who are often cultural mediators within their immigrant families.

3.4. Country city divides

The election of Trump showed he received most votes in small towns while Hilary Clinton had most votes in big cities. When Great Britain held the referendum on Brexit, most Londoners voted to stay, while country dwellers voted for leaving the European Union. Ross Douthat (2017) thinks this cities-country divide is going to widen, because big cities attract the educated young, the wealthy and mostly liberal people. Talented college graduates, compounding their skills through cooperation and exchange, make cities culturally rich and rife with policy innovations. But most cities are now places where lower and middle class people have difficulty buying a house or paying the high rents those talented professionals can afford. The cost of health and college has increased, there is rising income inequality and lower class mobility. The dwellers in countries, small town or in areas where industrial plants have closed like Detroit and Cleveland are resentful that the American dream of self-betterment and a brighter future for one's children is vanishing. Depression and anger are rising both in the worst segregated parts of cities, where the middle and lower class can afford to live and in the small towns in the country. Symptoms of this malaise are the growing opioid epidemics, decline of life expectancy, increase intolerance of others' view point s and contempt for out of touch governing elites and main media, in both underprivileged urban and rural areas.

Douthat (2017) thinks cities have become like monopolies for the educated young and the wealthy, and he proposes drastic changes: "we should treat liberal cities the way liberals treat corporate monopolies, not as growth-enhancing assets, but as trusts that concentrate wealth and power and conspire against the public good. And instead of trying to make them a little more egalitarian with looser zoning rules and more affordable housing, we should try to break them

up. Let us take offices of our federal government, now concentrated in the conurbation of Greater Washington DC and spread them around in poorer states and smaller cities that need revitalization. Let's distribute health and science and regulatory agencies in Detroit, Cleveland and Milwaukee". Douthat also proposed that famous universities like Harvard, and Stanford open satellite campus in areas well below the median average income, and get discount on higher tax or their wealthy endowments. He proposes that new business tax credits should encourage regional diversification, while the state and local tax deduction should be capped, making it more expensive for the upper class to live in and around high cost high tax metropolitan areas. Finally, he suggests that the corporation for Public Broadcasting should be expanded with local country branches and a new corporation for local needs would fund newspapers in smaller cities and rural areas.

Some of the solutions proposed by Douthat to diminish the growing divides that now plague our society will have to be adopted very quickly, since we are now facing a new technological revolution that again will probably make things better for the already wealthy and spread unemployment among middle and lower classes, whose jobs will be endangered by the artificial intelligence revolution (De Masi, 2017; Francescato, 2017).

4. What will artificial intelligence deliver? Further political polarization and mass unemployment or service jobs of love and wealth redistribution?

According to Kai-Fu Lee (2017) chairman and chief executive officer of Sinovation Ventures and President of the Artificial Intelligence institute, we are entering a new era that some call deglobalization: there will be fewer dislocations of factories in developing countries because workers will be replaced by hardware robots. Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) applications that examine huge amount of information from a specific domain (loan repayment histories) and uses it to make a decision in specific case (whether to give an individual a loan) in the service of a specific goal (maximizing profits for the lender) will reshape what works means, and how wealth is created. Many domains are involved, from retail sales, to transportation, to the service economy. The A.I. revolution is not like the Industrial and the Computer revolutions that abolished certain jobs and replaced them with others. Instead, A.I. is poised to bring about a wide scale decimation of jobs, mostly lower paying but also some professional jobs in many domains. Above all, the A.I. revolution will result in huge profits for the companies that adopt it, and make their products and services with very little human work. A.I. is an industry in which strength begets strength. The more data you have, the better your product, the more data you can collect, the more talent you can attract and the better your product becomes. It is a virtuous cycle and according to Lee (2017) the United States and China have already amassed the talent, the market share and the data to become predominant and make enormous profits

In the Internet consumer market seven big companies, three Chinese Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent and four American Google, Facebook, Microsoft, and Amazon dominate the sector. Lee argues that American businesses will dominate in developed markets and some developing markets, while Chinese companies will dominate in most developing countries. Lee proposes an interesting possible solution to the problem of widespread new employment these developments will bring: to create "service jobs of love" which are the volunteer jobs of today, which society

needs and give people a sense of purpose. Lee proposes that these jobs should be paid through taxation of wealthy companies in China and the USA. These special taxes would be used to fund a "conditional universal basic income" for those who loose their jobs, if they agree to retrain or commit to a certain number of hours of service of love.

Not everybody agrees that A.I is going to create mass unemployment. Amazon, for instance, has been blamed for destroying traditional retail jobs by enticing people to shop online. Amazon has replied that it has been hiring many new entry-level warehouse workers, even having more than 100.000 robots operating in its warehouses. No workers have been fired, Amazon found new roles for them. But what happens when the future generation of robots arrives? Martin Ford author of *Rise of Robots* (2015) thinks in the future technology will eventually displace many workers in those warehouses. He thinks this will happen gradually, Amazon may not fire anybody but will just create less new jobs (Wingfield, 2017).

Whether in the next decades a huge number of workers will be replaced by A.I., and how fast this change will happen, nobody seems to know. Many new developments have not yet been realized (as autonomous trucks) and some novel algorithms will certainly be invented (Raworth, 2017). One thing is certain, many people will lose their jobs in the next two decades and they will need retraining for occupations that involve creativity, planning and cross domain thinking, characteristics hard to program in robots.

This transformation could increase work opportunities for community psychologists using empowering training methodologies (Francescato, Tomai, & Solimeno, 2008; Francescato & Mebane, 2015; Francescato & Zani, 2017). However, this will happen if political leaders take difficult decisions, like taxing major corporation great profits, which would demand a political consensus hard to reach in a polarized political world. In fact in the USA Trumps is working to lower taxes for corporations. Only by strengthening the European Union, which has already inflicted several fines to Facebook and Google, for not paying taxes on the profits they make in European countries, there is some hope, that policies enacting huge retraining programs and "conditional universal income" as proposed by Lee (2017) could be realized. Populist parties, which do want to give more power to the European Union might fight these policies, since in a polarized political world is harder to make these kinds of major decisions. Still the A.I. revolution gives us a tremendous opportunity to rethink economic inequality on a global scale, both between and within countries, if we can rediscover a communitarian spirit.

4.1. Will technological innovations foster or threaten communitarian values?

A South American community psychologist, Malvezzi (2010) noted that communitarian life, in which human beings find mutuality, affection, and identity, has been threatened by technological innovations, in three main ways. First, there is the subjection of routine, social and affective parts of our lives to the determinism of technology. Technological procedures have become important mediators in self–other relationship. People tend to rely more on technological gadgets to meet their needs than on other people. Sensation seeking is becoming more important than affection. Second, a neoliberal market ideology promotes the creation of a-temporal individuals: mobile phones, which when Internet-connected, permit viewing programs made decades ago and still available today. Moreover, mobile phones make it easier to escape from the local context of one's existence, undermining one of the pillars of communitarian lifestyle, based on sharing time and physical and symbolic place. Third, technological changes brought about by

globalization in the production process increase the fragmentation of life. Objects are conceived, manufactured, and assembled in diverse places; users do not witness the production process or know the people involved, and therefore reciprocity is weakened.

However, Malvezzi (2010) maintained that globalization also creates new forms of community building. Local companies are increasingly relying on teamwork among international collaborators, creating in these groups some of the conditions that promote sense of community (synergy, creativity, collective competencies, and commitment). However, often these work communities are focused only on results required for competing with other firms and do not emancipate their members. On the contrary they overwork and overstress their employees, making it more difficult for them to achieve a satisfactory life–work balance and to become active citizens in their residential communities (Florida, 2005).

For Bhagat et al. (2012), by increasing the demand for products, globalization has augmented the rate of production and created new employment opportunities. Globalization has raised the numbers, power, and skills of employees such as women, ethnic minorities, and international migrants, creating a new multicultural and multinational workforce. This new workforce presents specific psychological problems that can benefit from a community psychology perspective that focuses on the mutual influence of individuals and their contexts. For instance, the elite employees who differ from their White European or American managers in racial/cultural/national origins may experience cultural confusion and acculturation process difficulties, while gender-difference interactions with cultural background may contribute to emotional turmoil affecting extra work activities as well as family ties.

The new workforce composition has also had positive consequences. It has increased managerial attention to cultural diversity as an impetus for organizational effectiveness. These new human resources provide a competitive advantage due to increasing creativity and innovation, problem-solving quality, and organizational flexibility as dimensions of business performance. Specific cultural and gender-relevant workforce issues are discussed in knowledge sharing, reward allocations, and informational research briefs describing employee selection. In several international corporations there has been a shift from a multicultural perspective to a cultural hybridization approach. By merging local and Western management policies, a new hybrid corporate management emerges in which flexible practices are based on participatory systems and the integration of different cultures (Bhagat et al., 2012).

New job opportunities are increasing for organizational and community psychologists with experience promoting appreciation of diversity, in all its multifaceted expressions, in companies, nongovernmental international associations, and public organizations. Occupational opportunities for psychologists who can organize employee assistance programs to cope with work stress with cultural hybrid perspectives are also rising. This includes creating preventive stress management programs, aimed at improving health and wellbeing at work that will expand beyond current individualistic, job oriented initiatives to include more collectivistic, employee-oriented interventions. But it can also give community psychology opportunities to focus on organizational and policy change, which will empower women and minorities within these organizations, fostering a power-sharing approach to globalization (Francescato, 2017).

5. Do social networks promote political participation or do they increase political polarization?

Social media are transforming the way in which citizens consume political information. Individuals now have access to a wider span of viewpoints about news events, and most of this information is not coming through the traditional channels, but either directly from political actors or through their friends and relatives. According to Germano and Sobbrio (2017) however, ranking algorithms are the information gatekeepers of the Internet era, which influence opinion dynamics. They found that ranking algorithms can contribute towards the diffusion of misinformation (e.g., "fake news"), since lower ex-ante accuracy of content of minority websites can actually increase their overall traffic share.

Other authors fear that the Internet sites and social media function as an "echo chamber," where citizens are primarily exposed to like-minded political views. This process could occur especially among Internet users who habitually visit extremist leftwing or rightwing chats, which spread a very negative vision of political opponents, furthering political polarization (Sustein, 2017).

Some authors point out that the interactive nature of social media creates opportunities for individuals to discuss political events with their peers, including those with whom they have weak social ties. They maintain that the great spread of global social networks like Twitter and Facebook has created both a new kind of active citizenship, which expresses itself mainly through the Internet, promoting political online blogs, online groups, and virtual communities, which sometimes organize huge face-to-face street protests around specific events. However, these streets protests organized online also may contribute to further political polarizations since often counterdemonstrations are also staged and members of the two rival groups have violent clashes which require police intervention to prevent bloodshed (Krastev, 2017).

Two recent studies have tried to explore if social networks favour or diminish political polarization. Barbera (2015) found lower political extremism in Twitter and Facebook users in Germany, Spain and USA compared with older users and non-users of Internet and social media. These results argue against the hypothesis that the Internet in general and social media in particular are the main drivers of political polarization. On the contrary, Barbera found that growth in political polarization is largest in groups least likely to use Internet and social media. Boxell, Gentzkow and Shapiro (2017) used nine measures of political polarization ranging from straight voting to affective polarization, which they defined as the tendency of people identifying as Republicans and Democrats to view opposite partisan negatively and co-partisans positively. Less than 20% of those 65 years and older used social media while 80% of those ages 18 to 29 were frequent users. For eight of the nine individual measures, polarization increased more for older than younger. These findings confirm those of Barbera (2015): Twitter and Facebook increase exposure to political diversity, which seems to induce political moderation. Neither of these two studies explored if being a member of Twitter or Facebook increases sense of community, and reduce global divisions, which the founder of Facebook has declared to be Facebook's new mission.

5.1. *Are we as community psychologists, going to leave community building to Facebook?*

Originally setting out to connect the world, Facebook now wants to focus on reducing global division. The company's official new mission statement is: give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together, to tackle the huge challenges that we face like

ending poverty, curing diseases, stopping climate change, spreading freedom and tolerance, and stopping violence. The new mission requires that Facebook should empower its users to build community by adding some new features aimed at making things easier for Facebook Group administrators. New features include real-time metrics about group growth, engagement, and membership request filtering, tools to help remove "bad actors," scheduled posting, and group-to-group linking.

Several studies have documented that digital platforms and mobile phones can foster social capital (Wellman, Rainee, & Wellman, 2014) and therefore have the potential to develop sense of community among groups of Facebook users. But do we want to leave community building to Facebook? Can we trust Zuckerberg? He is mining the data we furnish interacting on Facebook, using them to profile different groups of people who will be more receptive to specific kinds of advertising. Moreover, according to Vaidhyanathan (2017) Facebook has allowed "dark" posts (unpublished page post ads), which are seen only by a specific audience, obscured by the flow of millions of posts within Facebook News Feed. They are ephemeral: they disappear after a certain amount of time. These "dark posts" are not only commercial ads to sell services and goods, but also political ads, which violate the core principle of transparency in political advertising: political ads should be easily visible to everyone, viewers are supposed to understand that they are political ads and where they come from and who pays for them. Instead, Facebook has allowed the use of dark posts also in political campaigns: it revealed only after the 2016 election, in September 2017, that hundreds of Russia-based accounts had run anti- Hilary Clinton ads precisely aimed at Facebook users whose demographic profiles implied a vulnerability to political propaganda. The majority of the ads (about 3,000 placed by 470 accounts and pages spending about 100,000 dollars) according to Alex Stamos, head of security at Facebook, did not directly mention presidential candidates but "appeared to focus on amplifying divisive social and political messages across the ideological spectrum-touching on topics from L.G.B.T. matters to race issues, to immigration to gun rights" (Vaidhyanathan, 2017, p. 11).

Facebook has pledged to install better filtering systems using artificial intelligence and machine learning to flag accounts that are run by automated bots or violate the site's terms of services, but still human beings will review troublesome accounts only long after the damage has been done.

6.   What can community psychologists do as social activists and practitioners?

To tackle the multiple challenges that 21st globalization, new technological innovations like A.I, diffusion of social media, and political polarization have created, as described in the first four parts of this paper, it is urgent, as Francescato and Zani (2017) suggest, that we should integrate both critical community psychology insights and improve the skills of practicing community psychologists.

6.1. Priorities for community psychologist as social activists

Some critical community psychologists (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom, & Siddiquee, 2011) think that community psychologists should commit to political engagement at the local, national, and international levels. Community psychologists should support individuals, groups, organizations, or movements that are working to oppose inequality and disempowerment, to promote action on global warming and to protect the environment, and to fight for quality public services and against privatization of national health services. Stark (2011) argues that community psychology has to empower itself by focusing not only on micro issues of community analysis, but also on macro issues, recognizing that business and politics have an impact on local processes.

Community psychologists should become more involved in shaping social policy. We should partner with urban planners, social scientists, economists, environmentalists and many others to plan and implement innovative projects. Prilleltensky (2012) argues that to resist the pernicious effects of globalization, cope with its implications, and maximize its opportunities, we should increase people's understanding of the impact of globalization on their daily living. To move from victims of globalization to agents of change, individuals and groups need to understand the way globalization affects them.

Reflecting on the main opportunities and problems emerging considering the four macro issues discussed in this paper, I would like community psychologists as social activists to focus on four crucial issues. First, I think we should *support more strongly environmental activists* since floods, hurricanes, and drought have hugely increased the number of "environmental refugees". If we do not take care of the planet that we all inhabit, we will waste all our economic, social and personal resources fighting one emergency after another, and very little will be available for prevention programs. Second, I believe we should *strongly favour policies like the ones proposed by Lee (2017) to lower economic inequalities by increasing taxes for wealthy corporations that will benefit from the A.I. revolution*. According to the university of Oxford economist Kate Raworth (2017) we should tackle environmental problems and economic and social inequalities together, because both have their roots on the out-dated theoretical assumptions of neo-liberal financial capitalism. She proposes to promote a circular economy, capable to regenerate ecological natural systems and redistribute resources to allow all inhabitants of our planet to live with dignity in a safe and fair place.

Third, *we should monitor what happens on social networks* and partner with those which demand that social networks like Facebook and Twitter remove "dark posts", especially those that deal with political propaganda, because citizens have a right to know who pays and post these ads.

Fourth, community psychologists need to join forces with the other agents of change, *making community psychology theoretical contributions and professional competences better known and available*.

6.2. Priorities for community psychology as practitioners

As community psychology practitioners, we should work on building bridges on some of the main issues that now foster bitter political polarization at the local level. In Europe, for instance, we should privilege empowering programs for young people who neither work nor study (the NEET generation); for workers displaced by A.I., for the integration of immigrants from different religious and ethnic groups, and for women victims of domestic violence, because we

have as community psychologists accumulated innovative intervention methodologies on these issues that will make our interventions more effective.

We can for instance favour immigrants' integration using community profiling and networks building. Community Profiling and Network building is a participatory action research, through which we can find out what particular problems and strengths characterize a local community for different groups of residents and what are their most desired changes[2].

We can also empower local organizations that provide help to women victims of violence. In the last decades many centres for battered women have been created in various localities worldwide, and more need to be developed given the huge magnitude of the problems. Community psychologists can facilitate the empowerment of these organizations and of the women that provide and receive support, through PMOA: Participatory Multidimensional Organizational Analysis. Using PMOA, members examine the strong points and the problem areas of their organization across four dimensions (structural-strategic, functional, psycho-environmental and cultural), using a variety of participatory methodologies, and propose possible solutions (Francescato & Aber, 2015; Francescato & Zani, 2013; Francescato, Tomai, & Mebane, 2006).

As practitioners we can also retrain workers displaced by A.I. and N.E.E.T. through socio-political empowerment labs. Socio political empowerment labs integrate concepts and tools from the affective education movement and feminist and liberation psychology consciousness raising groups, and community psychology methodologies to explore the congruence between personal desires and competences and what the outside world offer could be very useful of empowering workers displaced by A.I.[3]

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[2] Eight profiles: territorial, demographic, economic, service and institutional, anthropological and psychological perceptions and visions of the future are examined. First a core research group made up of experts of each profile is formed and then interviews with experts are performed. Afterwards, special focus groups with the dominant and marginalized groups of the community, for instance groups of local and of immigrants from different countries, are carried out to explore perceptions, emotions, desires and fears for the future of the community. In each focus group first a preliminary analysis is carried out: participants use brainstorming techniques to come up with positive and negative aspects of their community. Each comment is then classified as primarily belonging to one of the eight profiles, if more positive points are mentioned, this is seen as an indicator of a perceived empowered community; if more negative comments appear, it is an indicator of a perceived disempowered community. Then participants are invited to develop a plot for a movie script about their community. After this creative phase and the presentation of its results through narration and dramatization, groups members are invited to discuss their movie script contents, the emotions they experienced and portrayed in the narratives, the problems and strengths that emerge from their narrative about their community. Afterwards participants focus on the future of the community and outline possible solutions to identified problems, through networks building (Arcidiacono, Tuozzi & Procentese, 2016; Francescato & Mebane, 2015; Francescato & Zani, 2017).

[3] These labs take into consideration the negative emotions that the experience of losing a job entails and try to explore workers desires for the future using pluralist methodologies (such exploration of needs and desires promoted by families, previous work experiences; and by specific mass media used daily and by those available during their early adolescence - favourite songs, movies, internet sites etc.). Afterwards participants examine the political socialization experienced in family, peer groups, school and specific mass media and social networks, and how one can use media to actively promote desired political changes. Then participants detect the strong and weak points of the small groups of which they are members, and using short versions of PMOA and community profiling, they explore opportunities and problem areas of these territorial contexts. Finally, they select priorities for personal change that they can manage on their own. For desired collective changes, participants identify other people, groups and/or institutions with which they have to network to achieve these wider goals (Francescato & Zani, 2017).

Integrating the activist and the practitioner roles will permit us to overcome some of their limits. Community psychologists who focus only on activism often do not recognize the great disparities that exist between the multitude of economic, political, environmental problems that beset our planet and the means community psychologists have to solve them. On the other end community practitioners sometimes focus too much on local issues neglecting the broader global roots of various forms of oppressions: to reach integration we need to show respect to both roles recognizing their limits and their strengths.

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