Psychology and Globalization: Understanding a Complex Relationship

Anthony Marsella*
University of Hawaii

Within the last two decades, globalization has emerged as one of the most popular topics for study among the social sciences. In contrast, however, to other social science disciplines that immediately grasped the importance of globalization as a trans-disciplinary macro-level concept capable of describing, explaining, and predicting social phenomena, globalization has not yet achieved widespread popularity in psychology. This article discusses the concept of globalization, its emergence, definitions, meanings, consequences, and critical implications for psychology.

Upon this gifted age, in its dark hour, Falls from the sky a meteoric shower Of facts. They lie unquestioned, uncombined. Wisdom enough to leech us of our ill Is daily spun; But there exists no loom to weave it into fabric.

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892 – 1950)
Huntsman, What Quarry?

The Global Context of Our lives

More than a decade ago, I called for the development of a new psychology—a global-community psychology—that would be responsive to the many changes and challenges emerging within our global era. I defined global-community psychology as a “meta-discipline” or “superordinate discipline” characterized as “...a set of premises, methods, and practices for psychology based on multicultural, multidisciplinary, multisectoral, and multinational foundations global in interest, scope, relevance, and applicability.” (Marsella, 1998, p. 1282).

*Correspondence regarding this manuscript should be addressed to Anthony Marsella, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, 8925 Nesbit Lakes Drive, Alpharetta, GA 30022 [e-mail: marsella@hawaii.edu].
I proposed the term “global-community psychology” because it implied that our world was changing in significant ways that offered psychology the opportunity to broaden its basic assumptions, methods, and practices in response to the growing and complex political, economic, social, and technical changes that connected all of our lives in new patterns of interdependency and consequence. In describing this situation, I wrote:

Human survival and well-being is now embedded in a complex interdependent global web of economic, political, social, technical, and environmental events, forces, and changes. The scale, complexity, and consequences of these events, forces, and changes constitute an important challenge to our individual and collective well-being by confronting us with an array of complex, conflicting, and confusing demands and/or opportunities. Our response to this challenge will shape the nature, quality, and meaning of our lives in the coming century as human beings and as psychologists [added] (Marsella, 1998, p. 1282).

At the time, I noted that psychology (i.e., Western North American psychology), replete with its limited vision of topical interests, methods, and interventions, needed to develop a global orientation in which its ethnocentric foundations, especially its emphasis on immediate situation and individual variables, were inadequate for the emerging demands of our global era. I concluded that psychology needed to respond to the opportunities and challenges of our global era by actively redefining its professional and scientific identity, vision, and position to accommodate the complex and interactive events, forces, and changes that were presenting themselves with increased frequency and intensity.

I also joined others (e.g., Mays, Rubin, Sabourin, & Walker, 1996; Moghad-dam, 1987; Sloan, 1996) in recognizing that the task before psychology was to redefine its basic assumptions and to accommodate to a new era in which non-Western nations and cultures were asserting their discontent with our existing Western psychology and in which Western nations were: (1) failing to respond to the challenges of global proportion that were impacting the mental health and well-being of people around the world, and (2) continuing to adhere to conceptional theories and models that failed to capture the complex socio-political and psychosocial determinants of behavior.

These critiques are as true today as they were when we first presented them and many of them hold even greater sway when we recognize the way in which processes of globalization are integrated into nearly every aspect of our lives. Today, these critiques are underscored by a renewed call to develop a psychological science of globalization (Gelfand, Lyons, & Lun, 2011) and to respond in an interdisciplinary fashion to the complexities of globalization (Chiu, Gries, Torelli, & Cheng, 2011; Diaz & Zirkel, 2012).

I wish to emphasize that for psychologists it was never a question of not responding to the many global challenges the world faces (e.g., poverty, overpopulation, migration, war, disasters); many psychologists are doing this admirably with great personal sacrifice, especially through humanitarian interventions. In
fact, an internet search on psychology and globalization reveals that most of the work which comes up is more about global problems than about globalization per se. A good example of this is a publication entitled: “The Changing Face of Psychology at the Dawning of a Globalization Era” (Bandura, 2006). After initial reference to the term globalization in the opening lines it is not mentioned nor explored any further, nor are there any additional references to the topic. I mention this example, not as a critical remark of the article, which I found interesting, but rather as an index of the fact that psychologists (myself included) readily write of global problems (e.g., Marsella, 2009a, b), but do not typically address globalization as both a process and a product.

Globalization

Emergence if the Term Globalization

Under the best of circumstances a concept should encourage and promote the development of theory, hypotheses, and research options. To accomplish these purposes a concept needs to be clearly defined with regards to its nature, significant explanatory processes, and causal determinants. As might be expected, many definitions of globalization have been published, revealing both the extent of interest in the topic, and also the continuing issues surrounding its utility as an explanatory concept for the changes occurring in our individual and collective lives (e.g., Al-Rodham & Stoutman, 2006; Milner, 2010; Salzman, 2001). Virtually all the definitions proceed from an acknowledgement that the process of globalization involves extensive and often imposed contact among people from different cultures, nations, and empires with subsequent social, cultural, economic, and political interdependencies and consequences.

The Forces, Events, and Changes of the Era

By the beginning of the 21st century, the concept of globalization was rapidly gaining popularity as a theoretical foundation for understanding the rapid and dislocating local, national, and international changes that were occurring primarily to businesses and the economy. Within the United States, these changes manifest themselves in a number of ways with important psychosocial implications and consequences: corporate and small-business downsizing, mergers, monopolies (e.g., oil, banking, airlines, agriculture), automatization, bankruptcies, progressive layoffs, outsourcing, temporary hires, pension defaults, free trade compacts, and the extensive relocation of both production and clerical services (e.g., manufacturing, information and technology services) to foreign countries which offered the cheapest labor and the least control (e.g., Central America, China, India, Philippines, Vietnam). Aneesh (2012) describes the psychological and cultural dislocation
created by the use of off-shore call centers; Christens and Collura (2012) discuss how the economic practices of globalization have placed the primary burden of economic risk on individuals and families as opposed to society.

It is important to recognize that although initial ideas and thoughts about globalization emerged largely from the economic and business sectors, it was soon acknowledged (mid-1970s) that globalization had critical political implications since multinational corporations and global corporations were competing for national loyalties and allegiances. The conflict was thus between national sovereignty (state control) and an emerging international network of individuals, corporations, and other commercial enterprises (e.g., Waters, 2001). In response, Held (1991) even proposed moving to a global governance system and limiting national government powers.

Even a cursory look backward to the 1990s reveals an endless series of economic, political, and social changes that were reshaping the world and, with it, the health/well-being/welfare of the world’s people. Multinational corporations were growing in number and influence; investments in developing countries were increasing while investments within home nations were decreasing; international conflicts and wars were increasing in number and severity, and terrorism was beginning to loom; financial industries were replacing manufacturing as sources for increasing wealth; nongovernment organizations (NGOs) were increasing in number, and protest groups were emerging; information technologies were providing people around the world with access to information, news, and shared organizational interests.

With the help and intercession (some would say “collusion”) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), foreign corporations, multinational corporations, and foreign governments were soon able to dictate economic growth in these countries by controlling human resources (cheap labor for athletic shoes, and T-shirts) and by gaining access to their natural resources (e.g., oil, copper, precious metals, land for agricultural exports). Diaz, Schneider, and Pwogwam Santé Mantal (2012) describe how these policies result, ultimately, in the ongoing impoverishment of low-income countries. Later, of course, the massive human, economic, and moral consequences associated with the 2007–2008 global financial industry collapse and deregulation added to the complex economic, political, and cultural mixture of events, forces, and changes that have characterized our times. Here, a failure of governments, businesses, and the public to understand and monitor the esoteric financial machinations that were created to generate paper wealth will likely have consequences for generations. Even within countries which have benefited overall from globalization certain groups remain or become economically marginalized, such as the Not Employed and Not in Training (NEET) youth of Japan (Norasakkunkit & Uchidos, 2011; see also Jensen & Arnett, 2012).
The Process of Globalization is not New, but the Word is . . .

Contact among people from different cultures is, of course, not new. For example, it has been suggested that contacts such as those that occurred with the Roman Empire, the European voyages around the world of the 15th and 16th century, and the vast 18th and 19th century colonial occupations associated with European imperialism (e.g., France, Great Britain, Netherlands, Spain) are early manifestations of globalization (e.g., Cahill, 2005; Diaz et al., 2012). Indeed, it could be argued, depending upon the definition of globalization, that it all began when our ancestors left Africa, and marched across the globe, dispersing and then once again making contact. What is special about globalization for our present period is that telecommunications and transportation have literally placed all of our lives with all of its consequences in near immediate contact and impact. Today we do, indeed, live in a global village (McLuhan, 1968, 1989).

The actual use of the term globalization and its emergence as a topic of widespread inquiry and understanding are, however, much more contemporary. For many years it was concluded that the term globalization first appeared when Theodore Levitt (1983) published an article entitled “Globalization of Markets” in the Harvard Business Review, in which he noted that changes in technology and business organizations permitted multinational corporations (e.g., Coca Cola, McDonalds) to market their products worldwide or globally (http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/06/business/06levitt.html). Levitt’s comments gave rise to a widespread use of the term globalization and he certainly deserves recognition for his contribution. Abushouk (2006) notes, however, that the concept of globalization first appeared in a little known article by Reiser and Davies (1944) that discussed “planetary democracy” with an emphasis on recognizing changes required for analyzing and planning global interactions. This latter article now appears to be the source of the first use of term globalization.

Ambivalence Toward Globalization

Although some would argue that globalization cannot be avoided or prevented because of the powerful economic, political, and technical changes driving its existence, there is still considerable criticism, resistance, and resentment to globalization locally, nationally, and internationally. In addition, one cannot deny the fact that globalization has brought with it some positive changes. It is, for some individuals and nations, an opportunity. Yet, simultaneously, it is punitive, bringing with it massive destructions in the social fabric of a society with all of the problems this entails.

Globalization gives and it takes, it promises and it deceives, it liberates and it imposes. Angry and resentful responses have come from a number of
sources including child and women’s rights groups, religions, regions (e.g., Latin America), environmental protection groups, and ideologically-driven groups (e.g., anarchists, socialists, collectivists). Increasing cultural exchange can stimulate creativity (Cheng, Leung, & Wu, 2011) or stimulate ingroup cohesion at the expense of outgroup inclusion (Morris, Mok, & Mor, 2011). Jensen and Arnett (2012) describe the extent to which migration from rural to urban areas in response to changes in local economic practices poses an identity challenge to adolescents who are no longer able to rely on traditional systems of intergenerational cultural transmission.

For many, the heart of resistance is the recognition that globalization is being imposed or driven by a few nations (e.g., G-8)—that in reality, it is “hegemonic globalization” (Marsella, 2005). Within the context of hegemonic globalization, globalization is nothing more than colonization disguised as mutual trade interests Marsella (2005) writes:

A serious concern is the hegemonic imposition of values associated with North American—that is, United States—popular culture, including individualism, materialism, competition, hedonism, rapid change (‘progress’), profit, greed, commodification, consumerism, reductionism, celebritization, privatization, and English-language preference. These values carry with them a way of life that is alien and offensive to many people throughout the world, even residents in Western cultures. Of special concern is the fact that American popular-culture values are becoming the preferences of youth around the world. (Marsella, 2005, p. 16)?

Diaz et al.’s (2012) analysis of how globalization further impoverishes rural communities in Haiti is a stark example of hegemonic globalization as is Jensen and Arnett’s (2012) discussion of the Westernization of youth throughout the world. Christens and Collura (2012), in a study of labor activists, describe how some activists respond to the perceived hegemonic aspects of globalization by encouraging local investment, thereby fostering the empowerment of local citizens.

To further complicate the situation, it is essential we recognize that every society, culture, and nation is unique with regard to its history and contemporary identifying features and characteristics. Norasakkunkit and Uchida (2011) point out that the impact of globalization can vary by region within one country. Aneesh (2012) eloquently describes the culturally discordant experience of, on the one hand, the call center work in India and, on the other, the customer she is speaking with in the United States. Thus, it is important to grasp that the impact and influence of globalization changes according to context and setting; we cannot assume that the process or consequences of globalization will be the same for each individual and each community (Diaz & Zirkel, 2012). There are both positive and negative evaluations and judgments of “globalization’s” sources, processes, and consequences, depending upon who is doing the commentary and why.
Held and McGrew (2000) offer one of the best summaries of the debate over the nature and consequences of globalization. In a welcome reasoned discussion of the debate between the two camps, Held and McGrew list the difference in points of view as a function of concepts, power, culture, economy, inequality, and order. For example, with regard to the concept, they note that skeptics see globalization as merely a form of internationalization while globalists see it as an emerging and evolving one-world development. Regarding power, they note that skeptics see the nation-state as the ruling institution whereas globalists see the erosion of state sovereignty and the rise of multilateralism. Their table of differences is deserving of a serious read (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 37).

A Psychological Definition of Globalization

Unfortunately, as is often the case when a concept or word gains rapid and widespread popularity, definitions of globalization have proliferated and are often unique to each discipline. In responding to the definitional variations Al-Rodhan and Stoutman (2006) state:

Many authors have attempted, with relative success, to define globalization in a variety of ways. Some claim that it cannot be done, others claim that it would constrain the meaning to do so, and still others have defied these two beliefs and have constructed a working definition. Despite differing opinions about developing a definition, all authors agree on one thing: that defining this term is anything but easy (Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006, p. 3).

Some psychologists, in an effort to move psychology toward a better understanding and involvement with globalization have written about the nature, meaning and implications of globalization (e.g., Arnett, 2002; Berry, 2008; Marsella, 1997, 2001; Salzman, 2008). Gelfand et al. (2011) provide delineation of the objectives of a psychological science of globalization and point to the need to develop an understanding of globalization which reflects the individual and situational difference in the way in which individuals create meaning out of globalization.

As psychologists further expand upon the development of a psychological science of globalization, it may be helpful to provide a definition of globalization which can serve as a heuristic for psychological work. I would like, therefore, to propose the following definition of globalization which, I believe, frames the concept in language and possibilities familiar to psychology (e.g., Marsella, 1997, 2001; see also Prilleltensky, 2012):

Globalization is both a process and product; the globalization process and product are reciprocally determined; the primary drivers of globalization are all events, forces, and changes that are transnational, transcultural, and transborder, especially: capital flow, ownership,
trade, telecommunications, transportation, political and military alliances, and international agencies (Marsella, 1997, 2001).

Processes of Globalization

As a set of processes globalization refers to historical and contemporary economic, political, cultural, geographic, and technical events, forces, and changes that alter our individual and collective lives by virtue of their immediate and/or future global proportion and consequences for interdependency. It is this interdependency of our lives that raises important questions about our survival, adaptation, and adjustment because we are unaccustomed to dealing effectively with events, forces, and changes occurring in the lives of people, societies, and nations in distant lands which have an immediate impact upon our own lives.

Globalization can occur at many different levels (e.g., individual, community, societal, national, regional) and it can have many different sources (e.g., economic, political, cultural, geographic, technical, medical, psychological). There are a number of critical descriptive parameters of globalization (e.g., level, source, rate, frequency, intensity/severity, duration, complexity, controllability, predictability, negotiability), and there are many different outcomes to globalization (e.g., positive, negative, both) depending upon who is doing the evaluation (local, national, foreign).

In some instances, the events, forces, and changes associated with globalization may be welcome in any setting; but it is also possible that they can be imposed directly or indirectly, as often occurs when Western cultural values, products, and ways-of-life penetrate a culture and challenges traditional ways of life (e.g., Aneesh, 2012; Jensen & Arnett, 2012; Marsella, 1978, 2006). It is notable that many Muslim cultures and nations have seen this process as a “cultural invasion” undermining their religion and cultural values. International terrorism, which is partially a result of this perception, in turn engenders counter exclusionary and retributive responses which further solidify between group differences (Breckenridge & Moghaddam, 2012). In these latter examples we see how globalization processes engender psychological outcomes.

Psychological Outcomes (Products) of Globalization

In an important volume on globalization and culture, Pieterse (2004), an anthropologist, suggested that globalization can lead to three possible outcomes for societies. Pieterse argued that cultural differences (especially as encoded in religions) may never be resolved leading to states of constant tension and conflict. Pieterse suggested that a second possibility is “McDonaldization,” in which Western corporations impose a uniform or homogenized global culture rooted within Western values, priorities, and life styles. Pieterse’s third suggestion is based on
Table 1. Potential Positive and Negative Societal Outcomes of Globalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative beliefs, values, lifestyles</td>
<td>Cultural disintegration, abuse, dislocation, collapse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased quality-of-life</td>
<td>Future shock, culture shock, identity shock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased level-of-living</td>
<td>Decreased predictability and control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased GNP and national wealth</td>
<td>Greater divisions between rich and poor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social mobility</td>
<td>Income equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New life meanings, purposes, opportunities</td>
<td>Exploitation of labor forces, land, environment, culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International integration and networking</td>
<td>New social dysfunctions, disorders and deviances (e.g., substance abuse, youth alienation, family disintegration, divorce, suicide, generational conflicts, prostitution, mental health)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to new ideas and customs</td>
<td>Breakdown in traditional values and customs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased population diversity</td>
<td>Loss of national sovereignty to foreign powers and multinational corporations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Migration</td>
<td>Cultural homogenization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New technologies (e.g., Internet)</td>
<td>Out-migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in gender status and opportunities</td>
<td>Commodification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for economic growth via foreign companies</td>
<td>Increased dependence on foreign sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of global solidarity with humanity</td>
<td>English language penetration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distrust of authorities, foreign governments, businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployment (switch from agricultural to manufacturing economy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The same events can be considered positive or negative depending upon differing points of view. These societal outcomes are particularly relevant for developing nations and nations caught in rapid economic/political transition.

the “hybridization,” in which Western globalizations processes and products interact with traditional processes and products in an ongoing process of mixing and generating new patterns with neither side of the interaction dominating. This dynamic encounter (struggle) between East and West, North and South, between corporate power and traditional life styles was made famous in journalist Thomas Friedman’s (2000) popular volume, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*.

As an outcome, globalization refers to the negative and/or positive economic, political, cultural, geographic, technical, psychosocial, and health consequences of globalization processes. Table 1 displays examples of the positive and negative societal sequel of globalization. As Table 1 indicates, the societal consequences of globalization are sources of great debate since they are both positive and
negative. There can be no doubt that globalization brings change—often rapid and dislocating—and that the changes produce not only social upheavals but also many associated psychological and behavioral disturbance, disorders, and deviancies. The instabilities in the economic, political, and social institutions become associated with uncertainty, unpredictability, and a range of negative emotions including anxiety, fear, anger, and distrust. This creates the conditions for protests, mob violence, and insurgencies. It is at this point that psychology, as a profession and as science, needs to develop its concepts and methods to help assess and address the crises that can emerge.

Multiple Identities, Multiple Loyalties

Sandel (1996) suggested that the changes associated with globalization were creating new global requirements for multiple group loyalties, multiple identities, and multiple citizenships relating to groups, organizations, cities, regions, and the world. He pointed out that the nation was no longer situated as a defining determinant of culture and/or behavior. Sandel argued that as national sovereignty was being eroded by globalization, other groups were asserting themselves. He writes:

As their effective sovereignty fades, nations gradually lose their hold on the allegiance of their citizens. Beset by the integrating tendencies of the global economy and the fragmenting tendencies of group identities, nation-states are increasingly unable to link identity and self-rule. Even the most powerful states cannot escape the imperatives of the global economy; even the smallest are too heterogeneous to give full expression to the communal identity of any one ethnic or national or religious group without oppressing others who live in their midst (Sandel, 1996, p. 74).

For Sandel, this situation called for a new citizen who could “abide the ambiguity associated with divided sovereignty” and “who can think and act as multiply situated selves”; he concluded that the new global community would require multiple loyalties (Sandel, 1996, p. 74). The requirement of multiple loyalties, multiple identities, multiple citizenships relating to cities, nations, regions, and ultimately the world, challenges the way in which psychology has typically conceptualized group identity. The innovative research of Chiu and Cheng (2007) on the social psychological impact of simultaneously stimulating more than one cultural identity moves us in the direction of a psychology which can address the multiple loyalties that Sandel spoke of (see also Arnett, 2002; Torelli, Chiu, Tam, Au, & Keh, 2011).

Threats to Meaning and Values

Salzeman (2008), a counseling psychologist, published an important article linking globalization, religion, and meaning. This article offers some very
powerful statements on the destructive consequences of globalization for our quest for meaning and our acceptance of certain values. Essentially, Salzman (2008) suggests that amidst the events, forces, and changes associated with globalization, our sense of meaning is challenged and possibly destroyed. He writes:

Clearly, globalization is a source of anxiety because it threatens traditional sources of meaning and value. Furthermore it has, for many serious analysts, now become a principle source of global injustice, inequity, corruption and violence (Nasser, 2005). Although one is ultimately responsible to construct a life of meaning and value, social and economic conditions may facilitate or impede this process. A globalization process that impoverishes and marginalizes masses of the world’s people inhibits people’s efforts to see their lives as having meaning and value. A globalization process that truly enhances development and opportunity would facilitate these efforts (Salzman, 2008, p. 326).

Gelfand et al. (2011) discuss how the complexity associated with the various contradictory dimensions of globalization may result in a “moral conflict” whereby an individual’s morality of fairness may be in conflict with his/her morality of the in group (loyalty to one’s group). Breckenridge and Modghaddam’s (2012) study of the conservative dilemma inherent in globalization reflects this moral conflict; this dilemma refers to the contradiction between the economic openness required of globalization and a conservative belief in the need to protect the cultural uniqueness of one’s group or nation. Prilleltensky (2012) also calls for a socially just globalization that can enhance human development.

The Measurement of Globalization

Measurement has long been at the core of psychology’s priorities and the discipline’s success often revolves around the development of valid and reliable measures for indexing a broad spectrum of phenomena. It is possible that the relative resistance to the study of globalization within psychology is related to the fact that there have not been adequate measures or indices of globalization by which psychological research efforts could link globalization to the behavior of individuals and groups. However, this situation has changed in recent years as indices have been developed for a variety of macrosocial variables that would permit psychology to explore the complex system relationships that go from macrosocial variables (e.g., globalization, sustainability, ecology) to psychological variables and even biopsychological variables.

For example, initial efforts to index or assess globalization relied heavily, but not totally, on economic variables. Milner (2010) reports that the first globalization index was developed by Kearney (2001) and included indices such as imports and exports, investments, international travel and telephone communications, internet use, aid contributions, and membership of nations in international organizations. Within a short time, globalization measures or indices were extended to include a number of social, health, education indices (e.g., Draher, 2006; Draher, Gaston, &
I am particularly impressed with Milner’s efforts at indexing globalization for research purposes as it come closest to being a psycho-social effort in which a major psychological and social problem (suicide) is linked to the globalization index she developed. Milner (2010) reasoned that economic indices, social movement and social contact indices, and social development indices would be among the most useful for linking to suicide rates within the context of Durkheim’s classic ideas about anomie and alienation. Diaz et al. (2012) discuss the applied implications of linking psychosocial well-being to an clear understanding of the relationship between mental health and global economic policy. Milner’s (2010) globalization index provides an important research tool for a psychological science of globalization (Martens & Zywietz, 2006).

**Current Status of Psychology and Globalization**

The question may be asked, “Why isn’t psychology among the disciplinary leaders in pursuing the study of globalization?” At the heart of my answer is psychology’s limited focus on macrosocial variables of analysis. This is explained in Figure 1 which offers a general systems analysis of disciplinary topical interests associated with various conceptual and methodological approaches.

As Figure 1 indicates, while macrosocial and microsocial levels of analysis have found some expression of interest within psychology, it is really at the psychosocial level and below that psychology has made its most outstanding contributions to knowledge. There are a number of potential reasons for psychology’s limited interest and disinterest in the topic of globalization. I have listed some of these reasons below.

**Emphasis on Individual Psyche and Behavior**

Psychology’s historical development as the study of the determinants of individual behavior placed extensive interest on both within person (e.g., brain, personality, unique developmental experiences) and immediate situational (e.g., family, school, work settings) determinants, especially reward and punishment patterns. Causes were always located within the human psyche or the environmental context of behavior amidst a vocabulary of needs, motives, drives, and thoughts.

**Emphasis on Direct and Immediate Services in Clinics and Offices**

The heavy emphasis of psychology on direct clinical interventions at individual levels of adaptation and adjustment associated with various mental health
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPTUAL LEVEL</th>
<th>ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES</th>
<th>SAMPLE VARIABLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transdisciplinary</td>
<td>All Social Sciences, Policy Studies, Law</td>
<td>Globalization, Nationalization, Modernization, Industrialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological</td>
<td>Philosophy, Religion, Pastoral Psychology</td>
<td>Spirituality, Consciousness, Meaning, Morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macrosocial</td>
<td>Political Science, Sociology, Anthropology, Human Geography</td>
<td>Economics, Poverty, War, Urbanization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microsocial</td>
<td>Family Studies, Community Studies, Work/Education, Religion</td>
<td>Family Processes &amp; Dynamics, Work Adjustment, School Adjustment, Community Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psycho-Social</td>
<td>Personality, Self Theory</td>
<td>Self Concept, Self-Esteem, Traits, Meaning, Temperament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive &amp; Behavior</td>
<td>Cognitive Sciences</td>
<td>Thinking, Memory, Attention, Decisions, Consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory/Motor</td>
<td>Perceptual Psychology</td>
<td>Reaction Time, Sensory Thresholds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychophysiology</td>
<td>Social Psychophysiology</td>
<td>EEG, EKG, GSR, Arousal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio-Psycho-Social</td>
<td>Neurosciences, Psychiatry, Anatomy, Neurochemistry</td>
<td>Brain Structures, Brain Damage, Neurotransmitters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1. Hierarchical general systems framework of disciplinary variable interests and activities (Marsella, 1997, 2001). Note: Certain variables, such as stress, social change, violence, psychopathology, trauma, have been the topic of widespread disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and interdisciplinary study. Obviously, though much of knowledge is organized by disciplines, creative inquiry has often pursued topics across many different disciplines, seeking integration and often resulting in the emergence of new subdisciplines and specialty areas such as cognitive neurosciences, behavior genetics.

Problems limited concern for the broader macrosocial variables in which these problems were actually located.

**Dominant Interests of the Psychology Professions (Clinical, Counseling, Industrial, Organizational)**

The domination of psychology’s directions by the applied fields of clinical, counseling, and organizational/industrial psychology, especially as these are now institutionalized in hundreds of for-profit, not-for-profit, and nonprofit
professional psychology schools emphasized office practice and clinical therapy models and interventions. Larger global problems (e.g., poverty, war, disasters) and their settings (e.g., war zones, famine areas, refugee camps) did not yield well to conventional professional skill and value sets. This also minimized interest in the broader macrosocial terms used by other social sciences to explain these problems and to intervene at levels beyond the individual.

Ethnocentric Bias

Psychology as a science and profession is unprepared to function at global levels because of its ethnocentric biases and orientation. Psychology, as a Western cultural creation proceeded from a series of assumptions (e.g., individuality, materialism, reductionism, experiment empiricism, objectivity, nomothetic laws), that impaired its ability to be an effective resource for understanding human behavior in non-western cultures and crisis settings (e.g., Kim et al., 2006; Marsella, 2009b).

Limited Multidisciplinary, Multicultural, MultiNational, Multisectoral Training

Concepts like globalization are so broad in their conceptual implications and consequences that no single discipline can adequately provide understanding. By its very definition a psychological science of globalization requires a multi-orientation approach (e.g., discipline, culture, sectors). Psychology, replete with all of its course requirements in traditional foundation topics (e.g., physiological psychology, developmental psychology, social psychology, statistics and research design) combined with the heavy demands on conducting research, seeking funding, completing time requirements, leaves little room for multidisciplinary orientations. Further, there are virtually no popular psychology journals that can be considered multidisciplinary in their acceptable topics for publication.

Inadequate Attention to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR)

Although psychology and psychologists have demonstrated an expanding interest in the study of the many social problems associated with globalization, the American Psychological Association (APA), in my opinion, has not evidenced a strong social activist orientation with regard to global challenges. A notable exception within the APA is Division 9, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, particularly with regard to nuclear weapons. It is only the last decade that the APA formed Division 52 (International Psychology) and the much more active Committee on International Affairs (CIRP). I would like to suggest that psychology, psychologists, the APA, and other psychology organizations commit themselves to the principles of the UDHR; inherent in the UDHR is a strong sense of global awareness and solidarity with the world’s which makes this
document a rich foundation from to build new and creative research directions for psychology in a global era. Prilleltensky’s (2012) call for an ecological approach to social justice and human well-being within the context of globalization moves psychology decidedly in this direction.

**Conclusion**

To date, the process and products of globalization have largely been the purview of certain social sciences and international studies disciplines. Until quite recently psychology as a science, profession, and art, has been relatively uninvolved in the study of globalization, although it has been involved in understanding and intervening in the amelioration of various global challenges at individual levels. There are many reasons for psychology’s limited involvement in the study globalization including the fact that globalization is a transdisciplinary and macrosocial concept that has not been widely conceptually connected to those psychosocial and biopsychological levels of functioning claimed and preferred by psychology.

Globalization is a critical determinant of massive political, economic, and cultural changes occurring in our world today. These changes can be linked to specific global challenges (e.g., poverty, migration, population demographics, wars/violence) that have profound implications for individual and collective survival, adaptation, adjustment, and well-being. As a central causal force in scores of social problems, psychology must study globalization as a process and product, and assist in evaluating globalization’s potential as a source of good and harm.

Emerging efforts in measuring and assessing macrosocial concepts such globalization, sustainability, ecology, poverty, at both individual attitudinal/behavioral levels and at socio-cultural and socio-political levels, offers psychology an opportunity to expand its role and function in the study of globalization (see for example, Swim & Becker, 2012). A number of efforts in other disciplines represent a good starting point for psychology.

If psychology is to increase its role and function in understanding globalization, then it must encourage greater multidisciplinary, multicultural, multisectoral, and multinational orientations in its training, conceptual frameworks, and practices. It is essential that psychology increase its awareness and appreciation of the complex socio-political determinants of individual and collective behavior related to the various “isms” (e.g. racism, sexism, classism), and of the role of the social formation generated and sustained by government policies, religions, corporations, and the military-industrial complex.

There are many calls within psychology to respond to the global era of our times and its associated challenges. Among existing psychology specialty areas, cultural psychology, minority psychology, multicultural psychology, peace psychology, and international psychology, have been particularly active in calling
for changes in psychology’s vision, concepts, and methods in response to the demands of a global era. Further, a number of emerging progressive conceptual views and theoretical orientations have also called for changes (e.g., ecology theory, stress-coping theory, hierarchical systems theory, cultural theory, critical theory, post-modernism, feminist theory, liberation psychology, social constructivism). These theories and concepts have gained increased attention and support because of their applicability and relevance to the multi-levels of human functioning (e.g., psychosocial, microlevel, macrolevel).

While predicting the future of globalization is impossible, it is possible to create different scenarios that can offer insights into potential processes and outcomes of globalization and other world events. For example, Burrows and Van de Putte (2008) provide a framework to assess the future along three dimensions: urgent borrowed time, fragmented world, and constant renewal. It is essential that psychology increase its interests and concerns in globalization so it can participate in scenario building and modeling given the simple fact that it is people—individuals and groups, not institutions, governments, corporations—who are the ultimate victims and/or beneficiaries of globalization.

Globalization may be inevitable given its present political, economic, and social determinants. Given this situation, we should strive to develop a globalization that is consistent with human rights and human dignity. A report by the United Nations Development Program (1999) called for a globalization characterized by:

1. **Ethics**—Less violation of human rights;
2. **Equity**—Less disparity among nations;
3. **Inclusion**—Less marginalization of people and countries;
4. **Human Security**—Less political and economic instability and vulnerability;
5. **Sustainability**—Less environmental destruction; and
6. **Development**—Less poverty and deprivation.

These qualities are consistent with a science and profession of psychology committed to social activism (Prilleltensky, 2012; United Nations, 1948/2010).

Each day the media brings home to us the immediate realities of the interdependencies of our lives and our connections to people, cultures, and nations across the world. Whether we can define it or whether we can trace its causal relations, we can see that the concept and term globalization can readily be invoked as a force that exacts its influence at many different levels as both a source of problems and opportunities for individuals, societies, and nations. It is an appealing and often apparent explanation for a spectrum of individual and collective behaviors. This offers psychology an opportunity to make a profound contribution to understanding and addressing the challenges posed by globalization and amplify the opportunities provided by globalization.
References


ANTHONY MARSELLA, PhD, is Emeritus Professor of Psychology and Past Director of the World Health Organization Psychiatric Research Center in Honolulu, and Past Director of the Clinical Studies program. He has published 15 edited books and more than 230 book chapters, journal articles, technical reports, and popular articles. He has been awarded numerous research and training grants and contracts in the area of cross-cultural psychopathology and psychotherapy PTSD, social stress and coping, schizophrenia, and global challenges. In 2009 the International Academy for Intercultural Research conferred upon him its lifetime Achievement Award for Significant Contributions to International Research. Most recently, the Columbia University counselor’s roundtable (Teachers College) presented him with its Award for Social Justice.