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Theorizing global community as cultural home in the new century



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ABSTRACT

The emergence of global society does not necessarily mean that a new sense of community will follow. A new sense of community must be cultivated in order to transform human society into a cohesive global community in the new century. This theoretical paper further argues that this global community can be and should be treated as the new cultural home of human beings. The author first conceptualizes the concept of "home" and then employs four key concepts, including the contextuality of intercultural communication, boundary game, boundary wisdom, and global ethics, to theorize the global community as the new cultural home. The paper concludes with delineating future challenges regarding research on the global community.

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1. Introduction

The trend of globalization has brought forth a closely knitted human society, in which the relationships between cultures and among people become highly interconnected and interdependent. As [Chen and Zhang \(2010\)](#) indicated, the powerful impact of globalization is revealed in its five distinct characteristics: dialectically dynamic, universally pervasive, holistically interconnected, culturally hybridized, and individually powerful. First, the ceaseless interplay between cultural identity and cultural diversity or between localization and universalization in human society reflects the dialectical dynamic nature of globalization. Second, the trend of globalization is running like a river spreading over all the corners of the world in daily economic, social, political, religious, and cultural activities. Third, the penetrating force of globalization builds a huge network in which all elements in human society are holistically interconnected and demand inclusiveness and cooperation. Fourth, globalization penetrates the boundaries of human society by allowing cultures to permeate into each other and result in a culturally hybridized state in the new century. Finally, globalization leads to the recognition of the importance and contributions of individual components, such as the personal use of new media and the influence of NGOs and different ethnic groups, which empowers the individual and groups and further pluralizes human society (e.g., [Boulding, 1990](#); [Cheong, Martin, & Macfadyen, 2012](#); [Sastry & Dutta, 2013](#); [Zhou & Pinkleton, 2012](#)).

The impact of the globalization trend on human society produces numerous specific effects, including the compression of time and space, the close interaction in different aspects of human society, and the accelerated local and global competition and cooperation, which inevitably leads to the shrinking of the world and the aggrandizement of global connectivity ([Lechner & Boli, 2011](#); [Steger, 2013](#)). In other words, globalization not only redefines the meaning of time, space, and cultural assumptions, but also refigures the structure, function, and scope of human society. The old human society has been

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replaced by the so called “global society” which demands new ways of thinking, living, and other new imperatives for living successfully and productively in the new century. However, the emergence of global society does not necessarily mean that a sense of community will follow. A new sense of community must be cultivated in order to build a cohesive global society (Chen & Starosta, 2000).

According to Peck (1987), an authentic community is a safe place which is and must be inclusive in nature, though inclusiveness is only a degree to which the community is always struggling to maximize it. Moreover, community has a sense of “allness” where all boundaries between and among its elements are “soft”, and members in it are willing to coexist by showing the commitment to building the community together. Through the process of realistic decisions based on humility that incorporates different frames of references, the authentic community also demonstrates its capacity of self-examination to increase the awareness of itself as a community, the awareness of outside world, and the relationship between the two. Therefore, the new global community must be able to draw together people of differing experiences in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, spirituality, creed, and emotional release. It demands that citizens participate equally and fairly in the construction of global community, which is an “epistemic community” defined not by members’ racial, political or geographic boundaries, but by common beliefs, values, and shared meanings (Thayer, 1987). It is in this viable human community all members are able to properly and freely participate in the community activities and events through producing and consuming shared messages in the process of communication. It also indicates that members in the community have mutual goals and equal power that allow them to communicate effectively and appropriately with each other (Thayer, 1987).

The goal of global community is thus to promote voluntary pluralism through intercultural communication by integrating different identities and interests to cultivate a global civic culture (Hermes, 2006; Lynch, 1992). Through communication culturally different members of the global community begin to develop a “communication reality,” through which ideas, beliefs, preferences, qualities, evils, and ideals can be talked about, and members can use symbols to recreate themselves and to define why they are a particular kind of human in it. Moreover, in global community a safe space can be found to discuss issues of ethnicity, race, power, gender, and psychological orientation. Ultimately, global citizens establish their own conscious identities and a total social environment in which they coexist and rationalize their own and other’s actions to reach the global epistemic community. This global community therefore can and should be treated as the new cultural home of human beings in the new century. It is the purpose of this paper to theorize global community as a new cultural home in the new century. The next section first examines the concept of home before launching the analysis of global community.

2. Conceptualizing home

According to Heidegger (1971), “to be home” is to dwell in a place where we feel safe and peaceful and exist in freedom with the willingness to protect and preserve the place. Heidegger’s idea of home is a place that assembles the essences of the earth, the sky, the gods, and the mortals. The earth indicates people’s knowledge and experience of the dynamic transformation of human life. Thus, a real home is a place in which we learn how to let things free to be themselves. The sky refers to the experience of permanence of the cyclic transformation and the forces beyond one’s control; thus to live in a home is to know our limits and that we cannot change the sky. The gods signify that the home is a place where we know who we are and know something beyond our own experience and creation; hence, the real dwelling in a home is to recognize the existence of gods or divinities and expect their coming all the time. Finally, the mortals point to the truth that we decide the way of our existence, but have to recognize that we are not like God and must die. Thus we learn the true nature of being human by properly living toward death at home.

While Heidegger’s conception of the home and dwelling in a home is highly philosophical and spiritual, traditional Chinese thinking as well treats the home as the manifestation of heaven, earth, and humans. As indicated in the Book of Changes (Zhu, 1974), the essence of the *I Ching* is vast and complete. It contains the force of heaven, the force of earth, and the force of humans. Reflected in the concept of home, the home not only represents a house displaying a location or a physical place, but more appropriately symbolizes a space of family, in which members of the home interact with heaven and the earth to establish interdependent and interpenetrating relationships with the demonstration of a separate and independent entity (Fang, 1981). The *jia ren* (i.e., the family) hexagram in the Book of Changes further illustrates how to dwell in the home from the perspective of family. It stipulates that members in the home have their own specific positional roles and behaviors that are dictated by the nature of heaven and earth, and when the home is set in order, the society, the state, and the world will result in a firm course too. In other words, the self-cultivation of members is the foundation of successfully dwelling in the home or a necessary condition for a productive family; and its success is the guideline for effectively governing a state and then extending to the world (Zhu, n.d.). In addition, the home is also a place to glorify, worship and communicate with ancestors and the divine. More specifically, an ideal human home aims to reach a state of equilibrium or *tai* (peace) embedded in *an* (security), *ho* (harmony), *le* (enjoyment), and *li* (benefit/welfare) (Chen, 2013a; Zeng, 1986).

In summary, the concept of home possesses three attributes: relation, process, and meaning. First, the relational aspect of the home refers to the mutually conditioned connection among family members and between the family and the outside world. The home not only provides a physical and imagined space in which prescribed relationships among members are established, but also produces a synergetic force that integrates contributions of family members and functions to extend the connection of the home and the society, nation, nature, and the supernatural. This relational orientation opens up the potentiality of historical continuity and the possibility of future development of the home in human society. In other words, the relational orientation of the home demonstrates its structure, function, internal and historical extension, and outward

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