Salutogenesis, globalization, and communication

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Abstract

Achieving successful communication in transcultural contexts means integrating emotional communication patterns into a global context. Professional, rational communication is characteristic of the cultural dimension, and emotions are characteristic of the direct, interpersonal dimension of human existence. Humans strive to achieve coherence in all dimensions of their lives; this goal is in the end the most essential aspect of psychophysical self-regulation. A major role in integrating emotional needs and cultural features in global coherence is played by the attractor 'global affinity'. The transitions from emotional coherence to cultural coherence, and likewise from cultural coherence to global coherence, can cause considerable insecurity as well as psychological problems, which previously went by the name 'adjustment disorders'. However, instead of pathologizing these processes, we should understand them in a salutogenic sense as challenges important for both individual and collective development. The development of more coherence is regulated by the neuropsychological approach and avoidance system. This system can be consciously fostered by directing our attention to the commonalities of all human beings. Such a global salutogenic orientation furthers both communication and creativity in teamwork. This article introduces a consequent salutogenic and evolutionary systemic view of transcultural communication and demonstrates its effectiveness in a number of case examples.

Introduction

Successful communication in professional, transcultural contexts may be judged by the achievement of both economic and creative goals as well as the well-being of all participants: the feeling of coherence. Successful communication is not only an objective challenge, but rather often more emotional in nature. When humans of different cultural origin work together, conflicting feelings may arise: fascination is coupled with irritation, idealization paired with discrimination.

In the first section of this contribution we sketch a systemic evolutionary framework for developing transcultural communication with a 'global orientation', which integrates the results from systemic theory (Bertalanffy, 1949; Bateson, 1987; Maturana & Varela, 1987), chaos theory (Peitgen et al, 1994; Haken, 2003), neuropsychology (Grawe, 2004), and salutogenesis (Antonovsky, 1997).

In the second section we emphasize that what is 'common' serves as an attractor for individuals *vis-à-vis* the feeling of 'strangeness'. This establishes a relationship between the individual and others.

In the third section we demonstrate, on the basis of our model of 'communicative coherence regulation' (Petzold, 2010b, 2011; Petzold & Lehmann, 2011) and a number of case examples of salutogenic

communication, how emotional communication patterns dissolve or are integrated in transcultural contexts. The coherent integration of emotional needs in transcultural contexts makes an important contribution to mental health.

We understand and define mental health as the ability and possibility to sufficiently and successfully communicate one's needs, desires and goals.

This understanding is introduced in our concept of healthy self-regulation as the systemic regulation of communicative coherence (Petzold & Lehmann, 2011). This model is based on Antonovsky's research into salutogenesis (1997) and on the communicative interventions of Grossarth-Maticek (1999, 2003, 2008).

This contribution may also be seen as a further development of the concept of transcultural communication *sensu* Welsch (1998, p. 46): 'The most important thing is to imagine cultures beyond the dichotomy of own and foreign culture.' Here, we understand cultures to be communicative systems characterized by a coherence of historically developed semiotic systems such as language, music, currency, rituals, etc. Today, these are often the product of creative processes blending smaller cultures into one. What lies 'beyond' these cultures is the very consciousness of global coherence.

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This approach is in this sense a progress of the processual synergy model (Bolten, 1997; Casmir, 1998; Matoba & Scheible, 2007; Rogers & Kincaid, 1981). On the one hand, it sees cultures as bearers of communication; on the other hand, it views communication as the mutual resonance of systems. By viewing communication as a sort of resonance we arrive at a holistic understanding of communication instead of a technical linear coding/decoding model.

Intercultural progress occurs primarily through communication, which we view not as a linear, but rather as a chaotic process that occurs in phases containing the many challenges present in the 'coherence transitions' we experience ourselves or observe in others. In particular, we discuss how to integrate emotional needs by changing set patterns of communication – transculturally a very difficult matter indeed. Meeting this challenge opens up a window to great creative potential and forms the basis for achieving mental health in transcultural contexts. This is of particular value in the health professions.

Development and coherence transitions with 'global orientation'

Aaron Antonovsky (1997, p. 36) defined 'sense of coherence' as a 'global orientation that expresses a feeling of trust' and thus as a feeling of coherence. Before we describe this 'sense of …' more exactly, let us turn to the phenomenon of coherence. Coherence is the most basic characteristic of all systems and a prerequisite for living systems. Where there is no coherence, the system eventually disintegrates and cannot survive. Coherence is thus the dynamic form of cohesion, an expedient form of cooperation.

When dealing with waves physicists speak of coherence when the phases of the waves are coupled, making both interference and resonance possible. Adopted from acoustics, coherence here projects something like agreement. Thus, coherence consists of two major components: cohesion and agreement.

We understand 'sense of coherence' as a sense of, or feeling for, cohesion and agreement. This sense and this feeling can be directed inwardly to one's own self or outwardly to various external existential contingencies. During our individual and social development we are confronted with many different contexts and thus also with many different coherence transitions (see below).

This approach fits the results of the neuropsychotherapy of Klaus Grawe (2004) quite well: 'Coherence regulation … pervades all psychological events. It would appear to be appropriate to speak of a supreme or pervasive regulatory principle in psychological events' (Grawe, 2004, pp. 190–191).

Communication patterns in various contexts

'Communication patterns' denote repetitive courses of communication (Bavelas et al., 1992). Such patterns often create in at least one of the partners the expectation of a certain response (= resonance). When a child smiles at someone, that child expects a smile in return. Such a 'smile dialogue', especially in younger years, is a very basal, positively connoted emotional pattern of communication (Schiffer, 2010). A greeting can thus be a culturally formed polite gesture as well as a simple cultural communication pattern (e.g. an opening or closing form in a letter).

Important emotional patterns of communication are formed in early childhood (Fuchs, 2010). When acquired communication patterns no longer fit the communication patterns in a new or changing environment, misunderstandings may occur–or even mental illnesses (Borde, 2007; Borde & David, 2007).

In professional situations, communication depends on the respective task of the cultural institution and its area of influence (Brünner, 2000). The more the communication is directed towards completing mechanical and technical duties, the less emotional communication patterns will matter, making the common transcultural dialog seemingly easier to handle. Yet that forces the emotional needs to remain outside the communication.

In fields that deal primarily with human subjects, such as in the health field, addressing emotional relationships is also part of the professional task. Adults deal with their emotions as they learned to as children in their cultural environment – without necessarily communicating this explicitly or even consciously reflecting on their actions (compare the concept of 'implicit relational knowledge' of Stern et al., 1998).

Implicit interaction with one's emotions is often even part of one's language. For example, in many western languages the use of the individual possessive pronouns 'my' and 'your' denote personal emotions, whereas many Asian languages in part have no such grammatical constructions: They cannot and do not speak of 'my anger,' etc. In these languages emotions are rather part of the communicative collective called 'we' (Cindik, 2009; Wulff, 1988).

When different emotional communication patterns collide, problems may ensue, with emotional needs remaining disintegrated, especially when they are connected to one's mother tongue.

Yet there is an opportunity looming in all this – that the individual with his or her mostly implicit self-regulation as well as 'emotional intelligence' can discover and apply more complex solutions to integrate emotional communication patterns in a global context, even if that would not have been possible with the more limited logic of one's original language.

An example of integration of a global orientation

Only recently has the term 'global' once again come to mean the entire earth. Earlier it often was employed rather simply to mean 'generally', in the sense of 'beyond all borders known to me'. The term 'universal' is often used similarly. Even if one fails to have the entire earthly system in mind when using the term 'global', we do intend to express that the term is more general than, say, something that only concerns one culture, i.e. transcultural.

A young man from Africa has been chosen in his traditional social unit to be their future spiritual leader. He refuses this role, however, and goes to Europe to study at a technical university. The transcultural confrontation with his fate precipitates an identity crisis; at times he is so depressed that he thinks about returning to his homeland and doubts whether his decision to come to Europe was correct. But he does enjoy fulfilment by working as a manager and technical head of the development of cell phone technology, for which he works globally. Here too his 'spirit' is active: He sees his work as a way to implement his 'supernatural' abilities by developing technical visions.

In his original society this young man had received (and was aware of) a very high sociocultural position attached to his spiritual task. His feelings of belongingness were integral to the emotional linguistic communication patterns inherent in this position. In Europe, however, these communication patterns went without resonance, which led to depression and a loss of meaning. Only by entering a transcultural dimension was he able to integrate his original communication patterns into a global activity and to produce creativity. Every act of coping with such an integrative learning task causes the communication patterns (and one's very thought patterns) to be new sorted – a new coherence arises.

Development and coherence transitions

Such developmental events we call 'coherence transitions', analogous to the 'phase transitions' of chaos theory, which describe the transition from one state of order to another (Kriz, 1999; Schiepek, 2003). Incoherence and uncertainty in communication may occur when several foreign employees begin work at the same time. That is a challenge that has to be dealt with – a new coherence must be found. In chaos theory the dynamics of a system are ordered according to immanent attractors and resonate with those attractors (Peitgen et al., 1994; Haken, 2003). Attractors 'pull' the respective systems towards an order – towards a new coherence. Such an event may appear to us to be rather chaotic; but the goal is certainly orderly. The transition from one level of order or coherence to another we call the 'coherence transition'. Every illness and every act of healing is just such a coherence transition.

Defining coherence transitions are birth and puberty. During puberty adolescents leave their accustomed emotional framework of their family and enter into a new reference system particularly in work contexts and thus a cultural coherence of mediating semiotic systems. Both of these coherence transitions are frequently associated with considerable and often dramatic and chaotic relationships as well as health and mental problems.

Leaving one's accustomed cultural background and proceeding to a new, larger, transcultural coherence may be experienced much like puberty. Machleidt (2007; Machleidt & Heinz, 2010) called this step the 'third individuation'. In the existential dimension model we introduce below we would call this stage the 'third major integration': following social and cultural integration, one experiences global integration under such circumstances. But different from what is usually posited, we define 'integration' as any event that leads to mutual change and rapprochement. Thus, even the larger system will be changed when a smaller one does the approaching, for example, when a new child is born and integrated into an existing family. The same is true of cultural integration, where the leading culture is modified by the introduction of immigrants. This aspect does not receive enough attention in Berry's concept of 'acculturation' (Koch et al., 2003).

A new systemic perspective

Systems are considered entities that differ from their environment, even though they communicate with their surroundings. A system is *in toto* more than the sum of its parts; it has its own qualities that cannot be derived from its components (Bateson, 1987/1990; Bertalanffy, 1949/1990; Maturana & Varela, 1987; Luhmann, 1987). Every system has its own special coherence that characterizes the system (Petzold, 2010a, 2011; Petzold & Lehmann, 2011). These are the basic tenets of system theory.

In our new systemic view, the coherence of a system is the result of the communication between the parts of that system which are resonating with the whole. The coherence of a culture is shaped by the respective characteristic semiotic systems, such as language, music, currencies, rituals, etc. The coherence of a certain culture and that culture's striving to achieve consistence means excluding some individuals, ideas, and feelings that seek other qualities of communication because they are unable to completely and authentically integrate their own needs in the traditional system.
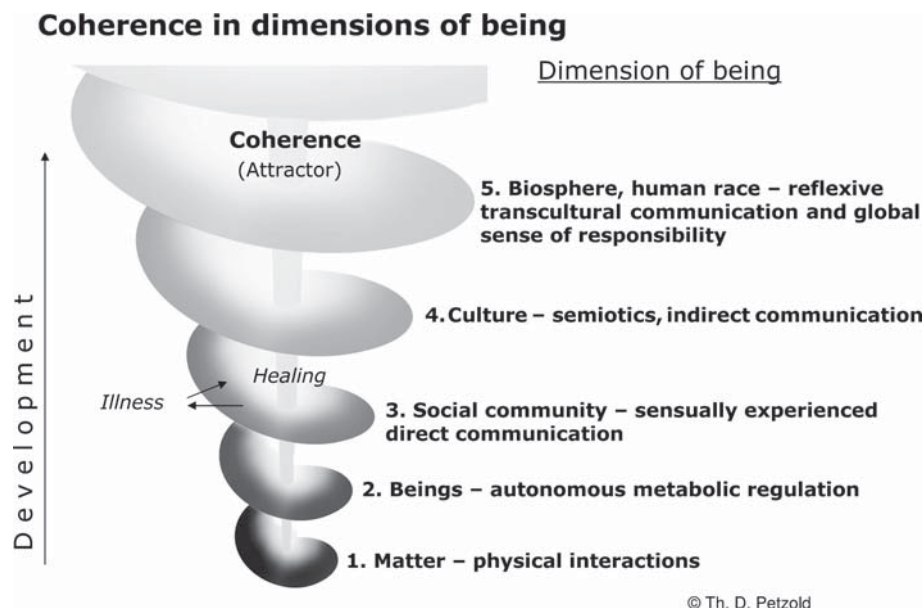
Coherence in dimensions of being

Figure 1. The spiral of evolution.

A global, transcultural coherence exists in the presence of many different semiotic systems, communication patterns, and rituals and is by nature open to more human diversity and developmental possibilities: more humaneness. Such global coherence thus represents a larger, systemically higher-level dimension of being.

The coherence of the primary social systems is characterized by direct and sensual communication, like that practised with children at a pre-linguistic age or non-verbally among adults (including para- and extra-verbal communication), for example, during sexual contacts. Communication is a form of reciprocal resonance whereby one individual (a system) answers or reacts to the information emitted by another individual ('vibrations').

A human individual integrates in his or her own personality the resonance experienced toward these different systems in the respective life context. Reflecting on the influence one's own culture has on one's behaviour and thinking kicks off the true journey to becoming aware of a systemically higher-level global dimension of being.

Petzold (2000a, 2000b, 2010b, 2011) describes systems according to their respective type of coherence and their communication patterns as different dimensions of being or system: the material, the vegetative ('biological'), the social, the cultural, and the global dimension of being, which grow ever more complex in the course of evolution.

Psychiatric diagnoses and coherence transitions

In a coherence transition, elements of one's identity construction are stirred and would appear to dissolve

(Keupp et al., 2006). Feelings of losing one's footing may appear; one is confused, disorientated, dizzy, etc. Old emotional patterns and traumatic experiences resurface when patterns that previously guaranteed support and security no longer function. The result is that psychopathological diagnoses are obtained in such coherence transitions – among migrants, too (Borde, 2007).

What would have happened to our young African if he had officially received the diagnosis of depression or been yanked from his work environment?

The rising number of psychiatric diagnoses may be the expression of this coherence transition from one's usual cultural communication to a new transcultural communication. However, therein may also lie the chance to overcome pathogenic idiosyncrasies of the 'old' culture and moving on to the 'new' coherence based on global human rights ethics. This perspective implies the chance to achieve more mental health. The goal is to develop means of communication that consciously and patently configure such coherence transitions.

A dynamic global orientation

Antonovsky came to define sense of coherence (SOC) after interviewing women who had emerged intact from concentration camps some 30 years earlier – something he considered a 'miracle'. Women with a high level of SOC had a 'global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence' (Antonovsky, 1997, p. 36).

These women who successfully coped with traumatic intercultural experiences (or at least

Antonovsky's understanding of their attitudes) point to a way in which healthy development can occur in the context of multiculturality: a global orientation that is connected with a feeling of transpersonal, transcultural trust. A 'global orientation' was what eventually pointed the young African in our example above in the right direction to exit his crisis.

Transcultural coexistence and professional cooperation reveal a coherence transition in which people can live more healthily. This thesis, derived from our original theory, would seem to be confirmed by the research done by Sam, Vedder et al. (2006): In a study of 55 samples from 13 nations they found immigrant adolescents had better mental health than their non-immigrant classmates.

Integration or adaptation?

This step does not only represent integration into a new culture in the broad sense of the word (let alone adaptation or 'acculturation' as Berry calls it (Koch et al., 2003)), as the migration problem today is often depicted in Germany. Rather, this type of integration is one of culturally different people taking a common step towards a systematically superordinate state of coherence of all mankind – a sort of common 'world citizenship' (Machleidt, 2007): a joint acceptance of what collectively binds us together. Just such a communicative developmental step is active when people from different cultural backgrounds cooperate, much as is the case when one migrates to another country (Casmir, 1998).

This consciousness can be cognitively resolved by adapting a new systemic perspective (Petzold, 2000a, 2000b, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Petzold & Lehmann, 2011).

The feeling of oneness, organically founded in the womb, now takes its place in the social community through an emotional feeling of belongingness, on a cultural level through common semiotic systems and on a global level through a consciousness of the reflected transcultural affinity of all mankind. In this way meta-communication creates a new global coherence and (perhaps) even a new 'meta-culture' with room for many different individual cultures.

What is common and what is foreign

What is common binds, the conjunctive in us that results in an approach mode. The feeling of foreignness is often linked with distance and rejection (Velander, 2006), since the need for security has not yet been sufficiently resolved.

Many people react to foreign things defensively, others with curiosity. Modern neuropsychology has made a great contribution to solving this major conflictual problem of modern societies by providing a differentiated description of the two motivational switching systems with which we can resonate: the approach system and the avoidance system (Elliot, 2008; Grawe, 2004; Strachman, 2009; Strachman, 2009 & Gable, 2006).

People who tend to react to all things foreign with curiosity favour the neuropsychological approach system, which is connected to the pleasure centre (nucleus accumbens), which pumps dopamine into the brain and thus rewards one's approach to something new with the corresponding feeling of pleasure (Strachman, 2009).

People who, on the other hand, tend to react to foreign things defensively, react to their avoidance system, which is closely connected to the fear centre (amygdala). This in turn leads to an increase in sympathicotonia with a corresponding release of cortisone and adrenalin. The organism experiences stress and wants to deflect it. What is perceived to be foreign is also determined by the respective culture that formed us and steeped us (Grawe, 2004).

Approach and avoidance. Avoidance behaviour has many important and vital functions. It activates in humans an awareness of threatening circumstances, such as poisons, 'evil eyes', fast cars (and red lights), aggressive others, etc. It activates that awareness so that we may either avert or overcome the danger at hand – to turn the danger away (fight) or to turn oneself away (flight). People who have a very attentive avoidance system can sniff out dangers and get away more quickly, sometimes even at the slightest discrepancy (Grawe, 2004; Strachman & Gable, 2006). These qualities are also in demand in professional contexts.

People with a distinctive approach system tend to oversee or play down dangers – or become conscious of them only when it is too late. They make friends more quickly with others without noticing whether that person is good for them or not.

Each motivational system has its own justification. Nature contrived it such that we can meet with strangers with both a positive curiosity and a prudent measure of caution, whether the communication is coherent and whether mutual understanding is sufficiently present.

People with a very active avoidance system persevere in a state of permanent stress, lack all motivation, or become depressive. In the presence of something foreign they tend to feel endangered and have the need to repel. The strength of the approach/avoidance system depends on the respective culture.

The interaction of approach and avoidance motivation is present in all dimensions of being, though it can emerge differently in each dimension

(Fua et al., 2010). That is to say, there are people who have a great feeling of coherence in their own family and yet experience every official as the representative of the culture as a threat. In Christianity there can be great solidarity of the church parishes to the exclusion of heathens (who, however, must be proselytized). A similar situation can be found today among Islamists and infidels. The approach system in the cultural dimension of being is tuned to a certain, well-defined group, opinion, or confession; the avoidance system to many more.

The courage to approach

With the help of our neuropsychological insights we can explain why it is of no avail to try and avoid the avoidance modus. Cries such as 'Down with xenophobia!' only serve to further activate the defence system. Rather, it is better to stimulate the approach system with positive and motivating goals (Grawe, 2004; Petzold, 2010a), for example, transcultural cooperation, cultural wealth, the chance to learn from other cultures. In professional contexts, for example, common celebrations with input from various cultures can be very rewarding and attractive events.

An interesting and good example for transcultural empathy is the recent French film *Babies* (Balmes, 2010), which shows early childhood development in four different cultures. In the absence of any commentaries the impressions derived solely from the images shown create in the audience more feelings of closeness to culturally very distant peoples such as the one in Namibia than to one's own highly civilized culture. Our pre-verbal empathy appears to function in a transcultural setting just as well.

Sawicki (2011) presented a study in which patients (as opposed to professionals) from very different cultures generally agree on their criteria for judging good medical treatment – the primary criteria being attention to and understanding of patients and their needs.

Given a solid foundation of commonalities, differences discovered create interest and do not lead to divisions (a continual state of avoidance), but rather, mutual learning and creative cooperation. It is easier to think in an integral manner when a common basis exists.

What our approach system looks like is by and large determined through our sociocultural influences (Grawe, 2004), which is why it is so important that people who bear cultural responsibility formulate positive goals first and foremost, and only then point out any dangers of cultural mingling. Conscious communication can stimulate positive motivation (the approach system) and thus make a major

contribution to mental health. Schools in Finland, for example, introduce their pupils to a so-called 'learning by being welcome' programme (Krause, 2007).

With respect to health professionals, this means a complete turnaround from the primarily pathogenic orientation of modern western medicine (fear of risks and a 'fight against diseases') to a salutogenic orientation – to greater well-being and autonomy. The pathogenic view complements the salutogenic one. Such an orientation may be found in many traditional medicine systems, such as traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and Ayurveda.

Salutogenic communication with a global orientation

Salutogenic communication is based on the model of communicative coherence regulation (Petzold, 2007a, 2007b, 2010a, 2010b, 2011; Petzold & Lehmann, 2011). This model describes how, in the three phases of perception, behaviour, and evaluation, self-regulation sees to it that humans approach their attractors (Grossarth-Maticek, 2003; Carver, 2006).

This autonomic coherence regulation takes place in a continual resonance (communication) with the physical, social, cultural and global/universal environment, whereby the coherence of the larger dimension of being is pervasive over the smaller dimensions.

When two people communicate with each other, parts of their respective families and cultures, which have shaped their patterns, are also communicating. These two individuals can understand each other because implicitly they have a common ground in their humanity, which binds humans together and gives them coherence. And coherence leads to resonance.

The general desire for transcultural cooperation and coherence (= attractor) becomes once again particularly important when it is noticed that the relationship with a cultural foreigner is endangered by emotional rejection, something felt by colleagues to be disruptive. Being aware of such an important difference between the present state and the ideal state gets things going – it motivates one to pursue one's desire. In this dynamic situation of coherence regulation, Antonovsky´s component 'meaningfulness' takes on a new, clearer meaning.

If someone wants to carry out their desire under present terms, a solution to the problem at hand will be available. And the solution lies in seeking in the concrete relationship to the communication partner what is common to both parties.

Thus, the second phase after becoming aware of the attractor and the discrepancy in the concrete situation as well as formulating a desired solution is joint action. This joint action may precipitate more
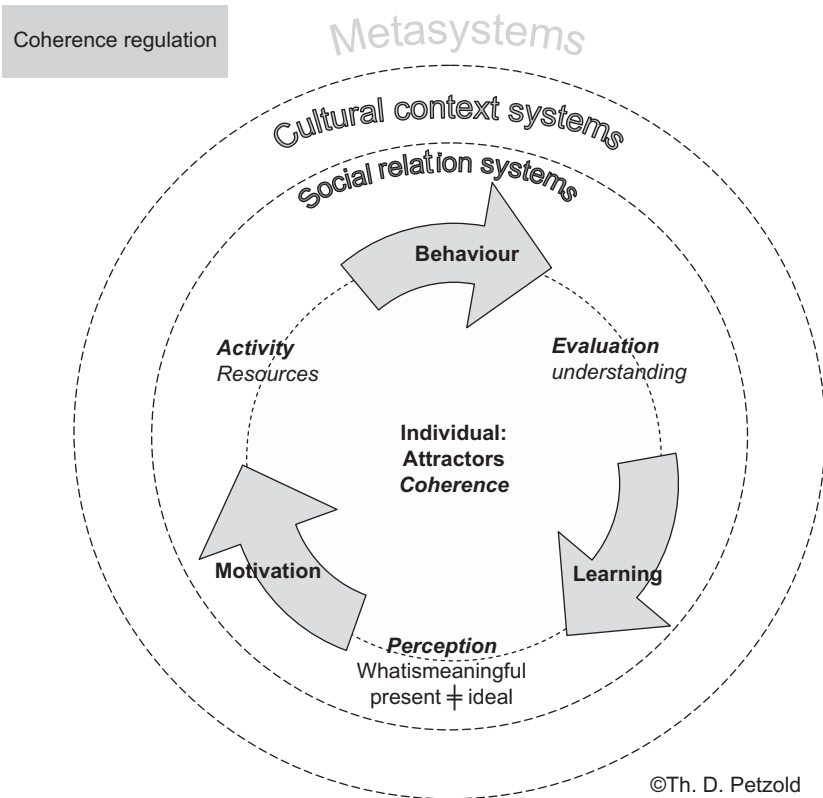
Figure 2. Coherence regulation.

agreement or more disagreement; only the subsequent evaluation can determine that. It is important that the emotional experiences be concretely and verbally addressed and mentally reflected.

Such weighing and reflection is enacted in light of the criterion of the attractor; that is, the question of how much agreement or coherence that joint action has actually produced. And what can be learned from this experience for the future.

It is helpful to reflect on both one's own communication patterns as well as those of others in order to better understand one's partner. Being open to such meta-reflection of one's own and other linguistic interactions is an important prerequisite for coping with the challenge of cooperative relationships between people of different cultural backgrounds.

An example from salutogenically orientated transcultural work

In a workshop concerning transcultural work and salutogenesis with female immigrants in Germany, an African project leader was annoyed at the behaviour of the African Muslim women. She complained that the women were always complaining all the time, about their phlegmatic way of communication, about their many sensitivities especially concerning their health state. She often felt overwhelmed by the depressive atmosphere. The project leader was concerned with the social life in the residential house, where many different cultures had gathered.

The workshop-trainer asked her about the resource; that is, what positive effect the behaviour of these women would have in their own culture. She thought about it and finally acknowledged that in their culture it may help these women to control the demands of their own culture toward them; that it may help them to control the emotional atmosphere at home; and that it may be a way of self-defence toward cultural constraints.

The trainer asked further what the goal of her work with them was. She said that she wanted to help the women to lead a self-determined life in Germany, to get work, and to get out (and stay out) of cultural isolation.

The trainer replied that perhaps the women's strategies and her own strategies had the same goals – but that their strategies had to first be acknowledged; that the positive aim, the attractor of this behaviour, has to be evident for both sides before commencing work. One has first to commit to an intense communicative process.

'What are the qualities of these women?' the trainer asked further. 'Well,' she said, 'they like to sit together und to prepare festive dinners. They like to dance and care very well for their children.' Now, after having reflected on both sides, the project

leader decided to ask these women to organize a festival for the house the next month. She decided to dip deeper in communication to find the positive goals of these women.

Transcultural salutogenic communication

The type of communication problems and their respective solutions depend greatly on the desire and task of those involved: What is the goal – a neighbourly, friendly atmosphere, or a business-like one (Faltermaier, 2001)? Communication problems can precipitate an intercultural challenge, particularly when dealing with medical care (Kirchermeier et al., 2003; Zimmermann, 2000). For example, a Turkish doctor knows immediately what is meant when a patient says 'My liver is burning.' In another context more linguistic work is necessary, to compare and create commonalities (Straub et al., 2007).

The greatest opportunities in all sorts of transcultural relationships lie in the creativity, in the emergence of new qualities that arise from forming a new, common system, and in revealing previously hidden commonalities. A major opportunity is also present in such relationships because we indirectly discover much about our own heretofore unreflected peculiarities and can better plan. Reflecting on one's own position and sociocultural background (of a personality in accordance with one's family and culture) enables us to reach a new level of consciousness that is both amenable to global human coherence, and furthers such coherence.

Language is learned in the context of sensually direct communication. What words mean is determined by the direct emotional context in which they are spoken. That is why our mother tongue moves us most.

A Japanese participant

A Japanese woman is taking part in a training group on salutogenic communication. She has lived in Germany for 12 years and works as a physiotherapist. She is highly sensitive and very empathetic. She tells the story of a very positive experience she had where she was helped by a woman on the street when she was in need. This experience with a stranger, which took place in a small German town, had given her a feeling of trust, even in strangers. She cries at the thought.

Yet she was unable to relate emotions when talking about her own childhood. Nevertheless, she was motivated to participate in the group training; she wanted to understand her emotions because she had felt such a feeling of deep connectedness that she could not otherwise grasp.

But things changed for her in the course of the training – not because of some special intervention or a key moment, but because of the common experience of emotionality coupled with communication and reflection in the group.

Learning a language, much as children do in the emotional context of the family, could be imitated in part by the foreign language of group activities (Lehmann, 2007). It is noteworthy that the Japanese culture has a completely different way of dealing with emotions in the family than western culture. In Japan, emotions are not individualized and thus remain unnamed.

Similar experiences are reported by immigrant participants of other nationalities.

Imagined dialogues

In this group process, 'imagined dialogues' – a special application of salutogenic communication – plays a major role and points to the importance of dialogue (Buber, 1994; Petzold, 2007a, 2007b; Schopp, 2010).

We proceed from the neuropsychiatric fact that we humans best learn to interact with others when we are emotionally involved (Grawe, 2004; Grossarth-Maticek, 2003; Hüther, 2004, 2005). This is why so many basic patterns of communication are shaped in childhood. If they are later to be changed, then it is necessary (or at least helpful) to remember these early patterns in order to revise them. That is also why, when during therapy we notice interfering experiences starting to appear from somewhere in the depths of our past, we ask about similar feelings in childhood. Once these have been recalled, we let the client carry on an imagined dialogue with some important person from the past, relating to that imagined person his or her needs or feelings and also imagining the answers that person would give. The counsellor urges such a dialogue in a direction that allows the client to be able to communicate his or her needs, such that the important person from the past provides the right answers, allowing new patterns of communication and new emotional references to arise. This process integrates previously excluded needs and emotions. In this easy way, emotional communication patterns learned at an early age can be modified towards healthy development (Petzold, 2011).

Conclusion and outlook

The best thing for transcultural communication is when all participants have a 'global orientation' – a grasp of what is common and what connects beyond all cultural and religious limitations. This assumes, of course, that there is in fact much that is common and

collective to all individuals, and that what is learned has smothered this insight, though it can be revealed if necessary. This is our attitude – it is also the result of transcultural communication.

The path for the individual to achieve an ever increasing level of transcultural communication is characterized by reflection on the influence of one's own culture on one's own being, values, and thought patterns as well as on its approach to feelings, compared to those of one's partners. A mutual exchange concerning the ways and means of the respective culture and its attitude towards human needs is both helpful and interesting.

At the latest when disturbances occur in communication or cooperation can experiences - gained in groups with participants from different cultures - be of great importance. Such groups should try to deal repeatedly with the emotional groundwork of the original family and with how one learned to approach emotions. We are in the planning stages of studies designed to grasp the creative and healing capacities of emotional-linguistic communication patterns in group processes.

In the transcultural dimension there are cultural coherence transitions that cause whole cultures to veer into sometimes very chaotic forms. The goal is to integrate cultures into a global coherence. For example, with respect to health systems, this can take decades or even centuries, as one can see in the integration of acupuncture in western medicine (and vice versa). It is helpful here too to assume that all cultures experience humanness in similar ways, which inevitably leads to agreement about the phenomenology, even if a different vocabulary is employed. There are good reasons for assuming that the meridians known from acupuncture describe the function of hormones from the body's large glands (Petzold, 1992, 2000a). We can better understand this if we view words solely as crutches and instead deal directly with the phenomena. Then, in a second step, we can turn to and develop a common language for the phenomena, much as we agree on a well-differentiated language to describe our empathy.

Take-home points

- The striving for individual, social, cultural, and global coherence.
- Detection of commonalities focuses our attention and integrates individual (including emotional) needs.

Future directions

Individual, social, and global processes of change (including psychological crises) are increasingly being understood as systemic coherence transitions that can approach an attractor, e.g. a global coherence.

Social and cultural differences are increasingly being seen and communicated in the light of global human commonalities. The emergence of a global sense of responsibility furthers the development of an evolutionary and systemic perspective.

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