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Research Article

GLOBAL LITERACIES FOR AUSTRALIAN POLICE: THINKING GLOBALLY, POLICING LOCALLY

Douglas Allan[§]

Globalisation, immigration, and advancements in digital and information technologies present a range of complex socio-political, demographic, cultural and technological challenges for policing. Playing out across an increasingly diverse Australian society, these influences are progressively more likely to have a significant impact on policing, requiring a nuanced and flexible policing style with its attendant challenges for police education. Local challenges posed by regional and international migration, and national and international challenges posed by the cross-jurisdictional nature of crime in a global society are key sociological and criminological factors that police education programs must keep pace with. In a time of such global fluidity, it is argued that designers of police curricula must reassess the underlying principles that have historically shaped police education in Australia. This is a critical discussion that examines two key areas associated with globalisation and proposes the adoption of a definition of global literacies as a guiding principle for police education in the twenty-first century. The study concludes by offering three specific recommendations for the redevelopment of future police curricula.

Key Words: global literacies; police education; immigration, technology-aided learning

INTRODUCTION

Encompassing a multitude of significant changes at local and regional levels, globalisation is seen as a catalyst for the transition from local to global interconnectedness (Guttal, 2007; Kennett, 2006). Incorporating a range of complex demographic, cultural and technological changes, globalisation directly influences how police engage with Australian communities.

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When considering the broader topic of globalisation there are two significant aspects associated with this phenomenon that are important to analyse more closely: global migration and advances in digital and information technologies. Global migration with its corresponding demographic transformations enhances societal diversity, bringing into contact individuals and groups from various socio-political, religious and cultural backgrounds. While digital and information technologies compresses both time and distance resulting in increased exposure to information from an increasingly diverse range of sources.

This paper critically analyses the impact that both immigration and advances in digital and information technologies have had on Australian communities. It evidences the need for police education programs to position these influential factors at the center of future curriculum design thinking. The paper concludes by advancing a definition of global literacies framed in the context of Australian policing and makes three recommendations for the refinement of Australian police curricula.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR POLICE EDUCATION IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY

Global Migration

Immigration and a heightened societal awareness of the cultural, traditional and religious differences between countries and across local and regional communities, influences the interactions between Australian police and their communities. In 2011 the global population moved past 7 billion (United Nations Population Fund, 2011, 2012) and with it global mobility continues to rise. Population movements between developing countries and developed countries, from north to south, from east to west and vice versa have now reached a point where the United Nations estimates that there are currently 214 million people living outside their country of birth (Zlotnik, 2010). This results in increased levels of intercultural contact between dominant and non-dominant cultural groups, both within communities, and through various forms of digital technologies that invade most spheres of life today.

Increased intercultural contact has not resulted in a single recognisable “global culture” (Berry, 2008). Rather intercultural contact results in the concept of acculturation, or “...the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups...” (Berry,

2005, p. 698). Berry (2008) asserts that this may lead to four possible outcomes for global migrants:

- Integration—retaining traditional cultures whilst integrating into the host society;
- Separation—retaining traditional cultures and minimising contact with the host society;
- marginalization—the loss of traditional cultures and exclusion from the host society; and
- assimilation—the acquisition of new practices and attitudes from the host society.

The Cultural Diversification of Australian Communities

Recent immigration trends indicate a need for increased police awareness of cultural differences and a corresponding awareness of the potential for cultural displacement. As a nation built on immigration, Australia's population is projected to increase from 22.7 million in 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011) to 35.9 million by the year 2050 (The Treasury, 2010). Edgar (2001) suggests that nearly one third of Australia's population originates from non-English speaking backgrounds, while the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2011a) reports that between 2009 and 2010 net overseas migration contributed up to 53% of Australia's overall population increase. Of this increase, 68.8% of immigrants (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011b) declared their place of birth as outside the Western European and Others Group (United Nations, 2011). Such figures support the likelihood that intercultural contact will continue to increase between cultural groups within Australia. For police this has the potential for more calls for service where cultures intersect, as such this requires a more nuanced and flexible policing style with its attendant challenges for police education.

As Australia's population continues to grow there is a corresponding expectation that cultural diversity will also increase. Significantly for police, any interaction with the public that either through a lack of cultural awareness or ignorance results in a negative experience for the immigrant may result in a negative acculturation outcome. Such outcomes could include Berry's (2008) concept of separation where cultural groups opt to deal with rule breaking internally rather than through engagement with law enforcement agencies.

Cultural displacement poses a number of potential challenges for police, particularly when interactions are viewed negatively. Where police action devalues an individual's perception of their own worth or standing within a community, the outcome is often a reduction in willingness to cooperate and engage with police services. This in turn leads to a rejection of "...influence[s] from the dominant [culture in preference for] a more "traditional" way of life..." Berry (2005, p. 701). Wallace (1956, p. 265) suggests that such "...deliberate, organized, [and] conscious efforts by members of a [minority] society to construct a more satisfying culture..."; one that offers an increased level of socio-cultural familiarity and one that builds identity within groups is instead a more attractive option than integration into the wider community.

The importance of this lies in the concept of developing identity. Tyler (1989) emphasises that people place great value in belonging to, and being part of social units. Consequently a desire to be valued by others within a group or community is critical to the individuals' perception of standing (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Murphy and Cherney (2010, p. 15) suggest that "...people care about...how others perceive their standing..." and when interactions with institutional services like the police are negative in nature then there is a potential for reduced trust.

Australian Institutions and the Preservation of Status Quo

At an institutional level, Australian police forces have a legal and moral obligation to work with diverse communities across Australia. Understanding challenges faced by immigrants and minority cultures therefore becomes critical for police services. Australia's institutional setting, which includes police services, is premised on a societal acceptance of a "...belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands..." (Weber, 1968, p. 215). From an institutional perspective, settlement in Australia subsequently requires an acknowledgement or acceptance of this legal authority as imposed by its institutions. In essence learning how to 'live' in Australia requires compliance with institutional laws which often reinforce the cultural norms and practices of a nation's dominant culture.

Outright compliance with institutional legal authority, without reciprocal levels of cultural engagement by Australian police forces does not constitute integration (Berry, 2008). Rather in instances where police and public interactions are framed in a negative manner, the traditional authority of cultural

communities is undermined. Traditional authority, or authority derived from countless years of traditional practice, is based on the "...established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them..." (Weber, 1968, p. 215). While cultural traditions are deeply rooted in the cultural psyche, institutional or legal authority takes precedence in many situations and as such triggers feelings of cultural mores and rules being devalued or overridden in immigrant communities (Berry, 2008; Weinstein, 2010). Subsequently negative cultural tension between the police and public is likely to lead to assimilation, separation or marginalization, rather than integration.

As a microcosm of the broader Australian society, police services inescapably have a significant role to play in the acculturation process occurring between dominant and non-dominant cultures in Australia. The existence of numerous police policies addressing multiculturalism and the policing of culturally diverse communities indicates an awareness of the importance of working with ethnic communities (New South Wales Police Force, 2011; Queensland Police Service, 2011; South Australia Police, 2011). Yet whether the dominance of Australia's Anglo-Celtic culture as expressed through its institutional setting allows for the integration (retention of traditional cultures whilst integrating into the host society) of non-dominant cultures, or whether it results in assimilation, separation or marginalisation still remains to be seen (Ang, Brand, Noble, & Wilding, 2002).

Intercultural Education and Police

While Australia is considered by many as a multicultural society, the adoption of multicultural education as an approach by some police forces (New South Wales Police Force, 2011; Queensland Police Service, 2011; South Australia Police, 2011; Victoria Police, 2008) may actually detract from their good intentioned aims. Coffey (2012, p. 1) suggests that "...unequal power relationships are prevalent..." in institutions and schools as they seek to maintain the status quo through the use of sanctioned and authorised materials. Indeed as police curricula are mandated at the state level (Birzer, 2003; Oliva & Compton, 2010), and predominately by the dominant culture within that state, the 'voice' contained within a curriculum perpetuates the core culture while at the same time marginalising non-dominant cultures.

As an educational concept, multicultural education prescribes acceptance, cooperation and harmonious coexistence in culturally diverse communities, however by the 1980s support for this approach began to wane (Portera, 2008). Early global attempts at multicultural education mirrored assimilation by concentrating on assisting immigrant children to learn the host nations languages and secondly by providing immigrant children with the capacity to retain the languages and cultures of their home country so that they could make a return to their country of origin (Coulby, 2006; Portera, 2008). In practice, multicultural education became the exploration of similarities and differences between cultures and cultural groups. In other cases it became a standalone subject for immigrant children used when there was a need. This eventually led to increasing criticism that it assimilated immigrants rather than provided a pedagogy that developed understanding through interaction (Coulby, 2006; Portera, 2008).

Adopting an altogether different political voice is the concept of intercultural education. Suggesting that intercultural education is not a module that can be taught, Coulby (2006, p. 246) suggests rather that it "...is a theme, probably the major theme, which needs to inform the teaching and learning of all subjects." Coming from an alternative political angle, intercultural education is interested in the intersections of culture and knowledge and in the ways in which they are mutually transformative. Effectively the concept of intercultural education addresses the complexity of a global society (Portera, 2008), which in turn offers police an approach that does not assimilate or study non-dominant cultures from a safe distance.

Rather intercultural education advocates interactive discourse between groups. It addresses problems by approaching community issues from multiple angles, thus allowing problems to be framed within different world views. The benefit of such an approach is that it brings different cultures to a position where the emphasis of learning is placed on interaction and parity rather than the identification of differences and power imbalances. Ultimately intercultural education offers police pedagogy the opportunity to examine a range of challenges facing immigrants as they integrate into Australian society. In doing this intercultural education may assist in the development of recruit's global literacies so that they are better able to make informed and supported judgments within their evolving communities.

While representing a radical shift for police pedagogy, the movement from a model of education that perpetuates status quo (multicultural education) to one that focuses on the sharing of knowledge and power (intercultural education) is perhaps the best approach to address the development of recruit constable cultural literacies. Intercultural education can address both the need to “...enhanc[e] the capacity, confidence and capabilities of [the] entire workforce, to operate successfully in a culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse environment...” (New South Wales Police Force, 2011, p. 2), while at the same time producing staff that are capable of operating under both problem-oriented and community orientated models of policing.

Impact of Digital and Information Technologies on Policing

Perceptions surrounding the exact nature of policing in a modern society are often romanticized by sections of the media depicting a far more exciting profession than what may actually occur in a majority of cases. Indeed far from the depicted car chases and drug raids, Sheptycki suggests that policing is more akin to working within a knowledge society, than in an action orientated skills dominated industry, as police “...spend far less time directly protecting persons and property from crimes than is commonly supposed and far more time processing and exchanging knowledge about crime and insecurity” (1998, p. 59). Castells (2001a, p. 1) defines the concept of a Networked Society as one “...where the key social structures and activities are organised around electronically processed information networks.”

At present information technologies have a central role in the operationalisation of policing services. Nunn (2001) suggests the biggest area of information technology use within modern police forces is in the administration and control of crime. Therefore, in a time dominated by problem and community orientated policing approaches, a shift from reactive to proactive policing is likely to be carried out in a networked manner through an increased use of digital and information technologies (Brown & Brudney, 2003).

Improvements in digital and information technology increasingly influences how officers come into contact with, collate, analyse and manage information. While such a technical evolution has in part been driven by an internal search for greater operational efficiency (Nunn, 2001); external influences have also had substantial impact on the organization of modern day policing. The use of social media by criminal elements creates both challenges

and opportunities for policing. This was illustrated in the United Kingdom during the 2011 London Riots when numerous media organisations reported that social networking sites had been used to organize and instigate looting across parts of Britain (Bowcott, 2011; Lawless, 2011; Osuh, 2011). In the days following the initial outbreak of riots, the ability of both mainstream and social media outlets to spread awareness of the evolving riots in north London led to an increase of copycat disorder across a wider geographic region in a seemingly shorter space of time. This in turn created an element of randomness as to where and when disorder arose.

Police forces around the world now use various forms of social media as part of both their reactive and proactive efforts in maintaining societal stability. In the United Kingdoms' West Midlands and London areas police forces utilized the very social media sites used by criminals during the riots to publicise photographs of looting suspects (Lee, 2011). In New South Wales Police Force Facebook is used, while other approaches include the use of social network analysis (SNA) as an increasingly viable investigative tool in the fight against crime (Hulst, 2009). Despite advances in information technologies, and an increasing dependence upon those technologies in the workplace, police curricula and classrooms are generally low tech affairs that do not adequately prepare recruit constables for their role in a networked, global knowledge society (Beare, 2000). Therefore, in an industry dominated by knowledge workers and associated technologies, the development of technological literacies becomes increasingly important (Sheptycki, 1998).

Police Education and Technology

In academy classrooms traditionally dominated by verbal and textual modes of literacy, and to a lesser extent gestural modes that are typically assessed through behaviourist orientated examinations, other forms of literacy such as digital tends to be overlooked. As such, the measurement of attainment in a majority of cases revolves around written examinations that unduly favor print based reading, writing and verbal literacy skills over a wider range of literacies that are required today (Henderson, 2008).

Permeating nearly every aspect of modern society, the growing range of information technologies has created a shift in how recruits access information; many of whom are now being called the Net Generation or Generation Y (Henderson, 2008; Merritt & Neville, 2002; Treuren & Anderson, 2010; Wilson

& Gerber, 2008). Because the digital literacy profile of the current generation of police recruits is significantly more developed than that of their parents,' the often heard phrase of *new technologies* (Henderson, 2008) to this generation no longer reflects their actual experiences with digital and information technology.

Rather students bring with them a broader set of literacies than is given credit for in police education curricula. This change in the pre-employment profile of recruits presents a golden opportunity to harness their expertise in the development of a police curriculum that empowers greater ownership of learning (Henderson, 2008). Despite this, careful consideration must be given to the manner in which digital technologies are introduced into police curriculum. Poorly conceived attempts to introduce digital and information technologies as simply information repositories, offers recruits little in the way of actual knowledge and skills development outside of content acquisition. Instead strategies must add value to a recruit's portfolio of literacy skills.

In order to add value it is necessary to understand what digital technologies can offer the recruit education process itself. Early educational technologies were primarily repositories for information; where a few deposited, and the majority accessed information to read. Increasingly, such approaches are being replaced by more innovative thinking. A key aspect of Web 2.0 and 3.0 is the increased ability to facilitate interactive collaboration between all users, so that anyone is able to create and communicate a wider range of information to a wider range of recipients (Imperatore, 2009).

With the flexibility of information technology creating new and interesting ways in which to explore a range of educational topics, Web 2.0 and 3.0 technologies engender greater use of the multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993). At the same time Web 2.0 and 3.0 technologies also present new and innovative ways acquire knowledge and understanding in the search for answers (Barton & Hamilton, 2003). The capacity of users to source, create, and blend information from a wide range of literary sources and, working in collaboration with others to share that learning with a wider audience moves students beyond the passive absorption and recital of explicit knowledge towards a more active model in which the student's engagement with the digital literacies brings learning to life.

Global Literacies

Increasing levels of immigration and advancements in the development and use of digital and information technology poses unique challenges for the provision

of police education now and into the future. To address such challenges, policing education must begin to reassess the underlying principles that have historically informed curriculum development. A key part of such a reassessment begins with a closer look at the literacies required by police officers in a global society.

In examining the concept of literacies from an Australian police education perspective it is useful to start with definition that as closely as possible describes this concept.

Literacy involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking; it incorporates numeracy. It includes the cultural knowledge that enables the speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different social situations. For an advanced technological society such as Australia, the goal is an active literacy which allows people to use language to enhance their capacity to think, create and question, in order to participate effectively in society. Australian Council for Adult Literacy Police Statement 1989 cited in (Wickert, 1989).

At its most basic level, literacy is “...using printed and written information to function in society...” (Kirsch, 2001, p. 6). Whether that includes signing one’s name, reading street signs or completing charge sheets, it describes the fundamental skill sets needed to function effectively as a police officer. However, literacy no longer relates solely to print based reading or writing. Richmond, Robinson, & Sachs-Israel (2008) suggest that literacy must increasingly encompass the multitude of methods by which we communicate with each other. Whether in our private, social or professional spheres of life, any definition must reflect both the diverse range of literacies used in modernity, while at the same time acknowledging the manner in which globalisation modifies the coding and decoding of such communications.

Policing in a knowledge society has evolved to the extent that police are often faced with large amounts of complex information that is in turn derived from an array of sources. In this vein literacies must include the concept of information literacy at its heart Sheptycki (1998). Sharkey and Brandt (2008) suggest that information literacy encompasses the capacity to locate, gather and use information that is relevant to the context within which the person is operating or investigating. In that regard information literacy involves or at least

requires both an awareness of the role that information plays in a specific context as well as the ability to gather and use that information in a meaningful manner.

Closely aligned to the context within which police locate and gather information, is the idea of cultural literacies. Hirsch (1987, p. xiii) suggests “to be culturally literate is to possess the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world.” Putting aside the debate surrounding the validity of Hirsch’s approach to cultural literacies (Hilton, 1989), the concept of possessing basic information with regard to policing in a culturally and technologically diverse society fundamentally requires police to understand and read a range of cultural indicators present within the communities they police. This can only be achieved in the first instance by developing a level of cultural awareness that in turn is able to inform the manner in which one communicates with another. However, idealistic as this may sound, it is inconceivable to suggest that recruits can be ‘taught’ every aspect of every culture within Australia. Rather what is achievable is to explore various aspects of policing within culturally diverse communities, and provide recruit constables with the skills to engage in the ongoing “...process of intellectual discovery...” as they interact with a wider range of cultures in the course of their duties (Hilton, 1989, p. 307).

The final aspect worth considering in the development of a definition of global literacies for police is the impact that information and communication technologies have on society and those who police it. An increased use of information technology highlights a greater requirement for a range of literacies to meet the increasing demands of those living within a global society (Sharkey & Brandt, 2008). Viewing technological literacy from an “...applied and outcome orientated...” perspective, insofar as the mastery of various technologies, aids the primary functioning of policing practice (Sharkey & Brandt, 2008, p. 87). However, this only addresses one side of the proverbial coin. Investigators invariably come into contact with, and need to locate, gather and analyse an increasingly diverse range of information contained within a myriad of electronic sources in the course of their duties. Therefore, it is necessary that recruit constable education adds value to the pre-existing technological literacies that recruits bring with them to their training so as to aid in their future roles.

Having presented the four preceding areas for discussion, the author suggests the following definition for global literacy:

Global literacy is the developing capacity to locate, retrieve, and make sense of a wide range of information from various sources in a global society. It is the developing capacity to understand how the socio-political and cultural contexts found in a global society impacts both directly and indirectly on how information is understood, processed and communicated; and it is the developing capacity to continually update technological skill sets in order to access, interpret and communicate a range of information in a meaningful manner to an audience of global origins.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The context of policing in Australia has changed noticeably over the past twenty years. Digital and information technologies have evolved to such an extent that recruit constables, both as students and early career police officers, now require increasingly complex literacies to filter, analyse and use the plethora of information and evidence available to them. At the same time the ebb and flow of global migration influences both the physical and cultural diversity of Australia's communities.

This in turn creates a rich and diverse tapestry of technological and cultural influences that directly impacts on how policing is carried out in a modern, global society. The intricacy of this modern environment requires police officers to be well educated, well informed and self-starting learners capable of keeping abreast of such evolving societal factors as are found within their local and regional environments. To address the evolving nature of policing in global society it is proposed that the adoption of three recommendations will aid the development of police curriculum.

- (1) Develop a definition of global literacies to inform future curriculum reviews and development, by examining the impact that globalisation is having at a local and regional level.

The quality of any curriculum review and redevelopment process is directly affected by the quality of the definition of the challenges faced. Putting this into its relevant context, a high quality, evidenced definition of the global literacies required by early career police officers will accurately inform the development of police curriculum, resulting in the development of officers capable of operating in a diverse and dynamic society.

- (2) Embed intercultural education as a key theme throughout all facets of police curricula in order to challenge the cultural status quo that may exist within police organisations in an effort to enhance the distribution of knowledge and power across the community.

Increasing cultural awareness reduces the dangers of cultural ignorance and stereotyping by police. It produces several other positive outcomes including a developing awareness of the range of cultural behaviours within society and the need to understand individual's actions from their own cultural perspective. It also aids in developing a level of awareness of how the dominant Anglo-Celtic culture present within Australia (Ang et al., 2002) may be reflected in the institutional practices and doctrine of the police organisations, thus raising an awareness of the impact this may have on minority cultures.

- (3) Embed information and digital technologies into police academy classrooms and curriculum.

The use of digital and information technologies in police academy classrooms more accurately reflects the reality of technology use in modern day policing. In turn this provides a more authentic learning environment for recruit constables. Adding value to the recruit constables existing digital literacies will also enhance their abilities as early career police officers to interact with and access a wider range of information and evidence in the course of their duties.

Police education programs that combine both instructional components and student centered approaches to learning (Birzer, 2003; Cox, 2011; Oliva & Compton, 2010; Shipton, 2009) provides the best possible learning environment in which to develop early career police officers critical thinking and literacy skills. Combining the three recommendations presented in this article into such programmes affords early career police officers the best head start in what is a very demanding and challenging career.

Increased cultural awareness ensures that interaction with members of the public from different cultural backgrounds is not automatically impeded by misunderstandings or ignorance of cultural differences. While increased familiarity with a range of digital and information technologies enhances the capacity of early career police officers to take a more effective role within a global knowledge society (Sheptycki, 1998). Together these approaches signify a comprehensive and considered approach to recruit education for a modern, global society.

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