

COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The concept of community has long had an important place in Descriptive Psychology, but has not previously been formally articulated. A formulation, called the "Community paradigm," is suggested, having six parameters: Members, Statuses, Concepts, Locutions, Practices, World. These parameters are discussed and some interrelationships among them developed. Connections between the Community paradigm and the paradigms of Person, Behavior, and Reality are delineated, and the Community paradigm is used to give new perspective on the notions of consciousness, way of life, blue-ribbon panel, and classification space. Some questions for possible future exploration are listed.

The concept of community, in one form or another, has been used in Descriptive Psychology since its beginnings. One of the early observations about Social Practices was that, in some sense, they cluster or form coherent configurations; as Peter Ossorio once put it in conversation, "It's not like a cafeteria, where you go through the line and select the

Advances in Descriptive Psychology, Volume 1, pages 195-209

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ISBN: 0-89232-179-2

ones you want.'’ This configurational aspect of behavior was originally referred to in the notion of ways of life (Ossorio, 1966b). The methodology of blue-ribbon panels (Ossorio, 1966a) directly exemplifies a use of the concept of communities, as do such fundamental practices as negotiation and accreditation/degradation and such key Descriptive Psychological concepts as status and significance (the Significance parameter of Intentional Action).

But community has remained until now one of those background notions to Descriptive Psychology—used, relied upon, but never articulated and brought into the formal conceptual structure. This is especially surprising if one sees (as I do) Community as Descriptive Psychology’s fourth major paradigm, conceptually and pragmatically on a par with Person, Behavior, and Reality, and arguably subsuming the Language paradigm. The purpose of this paper is to present an articulated paradigm of Communities; to demonstrate some of the more important conceptual relationships between Community and the paradigms of Person, Behavior, and Reality; to develop (in varying degrees of detail) some ways in which Community brings new coherence to some key concepts and practices of Descriptive Psychology; and to point to intriguing lines of further investigation using the paradigm. To make these tasks possible within the limited time and space available to the author, I have explicitly assumed a considerable familiarity with the concepts, practices and literature of Descriptive Psychology .

PARADIGM

A Community is, technically, a Configuration paradigmatically seen as an object having both object and process constituents (Ossorio, 1971/1978b, p. 55). The formulation of the Communities paradigm may be expressed as:

$$C = \langle M, S, Ct, L, P, W \rangle, \text{ where}$$

| | |
|----|------------|
| M | =Members |
| S | =Statuses |
| Ct | =Concepts |
| L | =Locutions |
| P | =Practices |
| W | =World |

That is, a Community is characterized by its Members, its Statuses, its Concepts, its Locutions, its Practices, and its World. Some elaboration of each of these parameters is in order; initially, it seems the prudent course to develop the more obvious before articulating the more subtle connections.

Members

The Members of a Community are Persons. Not all Persons are Members of a given Community, of course (with one important exception, discussed later). Indeed, in the paradigm case, there are constraints on who is eligible for Membership in a Community. To be a Member is to have Status within the Community, which means that one is eligible to participate in the Practices of the Community—particularly the Core Practices (see below). To be a Member is to have certain Powers (e.g., the ability to use at least some of the Community's Concepts and understand its Locutions) and Dispositions (e.g., to participate in its Practices with no further end in view). Paradigmatically a Member knows that he is a Member and is known by others to be a Member of this Community—both by other Members and by outsiders. And since distinctions are ordinarily not empty, there are ways of treating the Member as such—both within the Community and without.

Statuses

The notion of status was originally introduced into Descriptive Psychology in *Persons* (Ossorio, 1966b), where it was simply referred to as one of the “comparative” parameters of the Person paradigm (along with state, from which it was distinguished by the relative lack of “discontinuity or contrast which makes it informative in other cases to speak of ‘states.’” [Ossorio, 1966b, p. 55]). Over the years, status has assumed increasing importance in Descriptive Psychology, and experience has shown that the above “state vs. status” distinction is a hard one to sustain. I propose a re-formulation: Status is a concept which has its primary place as part of the concept of Community. It also serves, as a linking concept, to codify the facts of an individual Person's Memberships—thus, it is a Personal Characteristic, as noted by Ossorio (1966b).

To have a Status is, fundamentally, to have a place in the Practices of a given Community. (Member is, of course, one such Status.) In the paradigm case, there are some Statuses for which Locutions exist (e.g., Black, White, Pawn; Quarterback, Coach, On-sides Kick, Touchdown), but there can certainly be others for which no particular Locution exists (e.g., the person who holds the “open” button in the self-service elevator while others exit). In all cases, however, to say that X has a certain Status is to say that X is eligible to enter into the Community's Practices in certain ways and not in others; that there are ways of treating X as having that Status, and that Members *do* treat X as having that Status.

This last statement perhaps needs elaboration. Viewed as an empirical generalization or a universal law, the statement “Members *do* treat X as having that status” is obviously nonsense and demonstrably false in many

instances. But it is intended as neither generalization nor law, but rather as what Ossorio (1967/1981a) calls a “non-falsifiable rule.” As such, it requires unless clauses to make it complete. A fairly standard set of unless clauses has evolved over the years (Ossorio’s original 1967 formulation of “non-falsifiable rules” is reprinted in this volume). They are: If a person has reason to do X (in this case, treat another person as having status X), he will do so, unless:

- (a) he has stronger reasons to do Y or not to do X,
- (b) he doesn’t recognize the opportunity to do X,
- (c) he does not know how to do X in this situation,
- (d) he believes he *has* done X.

Note that in this formulation, it is not only Persons who have Statuses, indeed, any object, process, event, state-of-affairs, concept, or relationship that has a place in the Practices of the Community can be straightforwardly said to have Status within that Community (*which* Status, of course, is a matter of *which* place(s) in which Practice(s)). “Pawn” is as clearly a Status in the Chess Community as is “Black.”

Concepts

It is a modern commonplace of philosophical and linguistic discourse to observe that there is no such thing as a “private language” (e.g., Rhees, 1954); it is equally commonplace to observe that there is no such thing as a private concept, and that concepts vary from community to community. (“The Eskimos have 27 different words for snow!”) The Members of a Community can ordinarily expect (indeed, require) each other to be competent in using the Community’s concepts, and would typically be surprised to encounter a Member who lacked such competence. At the least, one expects another Member to be able to use the Core Concepts of the Community—those which are necessary to make distinctions required for participation in the Core Practices. (“You call yourself a psychoanalyst but you can’t even recognize a simple transference neurosis?”) Not all Members are generally expected to have full mastery of all Concepts of the Community, of course; indeed, such differential mastery is often one basis for important Status distinctions within the Community (e.g., apprentice-journeyman-master; neophyte-acolyte; child-adult).

Just as Deliberate Action, written $DA = \langle I, PC, \langle IA \rangle, \langle IA \rangle, KH, P, A, S \rangle$ is the paradigm case for human behavior, the paradigm case of a human community might be written $C = \langle M, S, \langle C \rangle, L, P, W \rangle$. That is, among the Concepts of a paradigm-case community is the concept of Community, the use of which enables one to distinguish this community from others.

Locutions

One of the more readily observable facts about a given community is its use of characteristic locutions (or its characteristic, non-standard use of standard locutions). The difference in locutions between two communities can range from subtle (e.g., “U” vs. “non-U” speech in England) through moderate (as exemplified by technical articles in, say, *Philosophy of Mind* and *Heavy Equipment Maintenance*) to profound (e.g., Mandarin Chinese vs. English), but it is clear that, as much as by anything, a Community is characterized by its locutions.

At first glance it might seem odd to give such prominence to mere words; we are, after all, quite familiar with the strategy of dismissing an argument as semantics. But Locutions are not mere words; indeed, they are indispensable Performances in human social practices involving the use of language. Locutions, as Ossorio (1969a/1981b) points out, stand in a one-to-one relationship to concepts—and behavior; that relationship is codified in the Verbal Behavior paradigm, $VB = \langle C, L, B \rangle$, that is, Verbal Behavior = Concept, Locution, Behavior. (Ossorio, 1969, p. 100). It should be recalled that a paradigm case of treating something as an X is to call it an “X.” Thus, Locutions form a vital “link” between concepts and behavior, and codify the common notion that a different community speaks a different language. Again, it should be noted that, in the paradigm case, a Community’s Locutions include those required to identify “one of us” (Members) and the Community itself.

Practices

Social Practices (for simplicity, “Practices”) are, literally, the significant aspect of a community. After all, the point of being a Member is to be eligible to engage in the Community’s Practices. It is not surprising, then, that this Practices parameter will be articulated in greater detail and to greater effect than any of the other five.

The key, classic distinction among Practices is intrinsic vs. non-intrinsic—and it is precisely for the purposes of articulating the concept of “intrinsic” that the Community paradigm is required. A Practice is intrinsic *only* for Members of a Community in which that Practice is intrinsic (“Only a chessplayer can play chess for the sake of playing chess.”) To say that a practice is intrinsic within this community is to say: that the members engage in it with no further end in view; that, when a member engages in it, another member would typically *not* ask “What’s he up to?”; that, given an opportunity to engage in it, a member will do so (the standard “unless” clauses apply here, of course). And as previously noted, among the most important criteria for Membership is the disposition to engage in the Practices with no further end in view—that is,

intrinsically. Indeed, in this context one can see intrinsic Practices as redundant—what makes X a Practice of *this* Community is precisely the fact that, within this Community, X is engaged in with no further end in view.

The conceptual connections with (and within) the concept of Practices are many and rich; several of the more important ones are discussed later. But one further articulation seems appropriate at this point.

Among the Practices of a Community a subset which I call “Core Practices” seem worth special designation. In general, not every Member participates in all Practices; indeed, often there are differential eligibilities involved, and some of these may be codified with Locutions. In that sense, then, many Practices, although intrinsic, can be seen as optional—e.g., a Member would not be puzzled to find that a fellow Member did not engage in this one.

But there are some Practices which are *not* optional; That is, it would be literally nonsensical to say, “He’s one of us, but he doesn’t participate in this Practice.” Indeed, to a Member the whole point of being a Member is precisely to be able to participate in these Practices—and, of course, vice versa. To forego *these* would be straightforwardly to lose one’s Membership—and again, of course, vice versa: The important aspect of losing one’s Membership is that one is forced to forgo participating in these. These are the Core Practices.

An example may help: “You don’t read chess books? Fine. You don’t belong to a chess club? No problem—neither do I. You don’t work chess problems in your spare time? That I can understand. But what I don’t understand is: how can you call yourself a chess-player when you *don’t play chess!*”

Core Practices have no place whatsoever for outsiders—another way in which they differ from other Practices. (We may welcome other religions at ecumenical breakfasts—but not in Holy Communion.) Indeed, the paradigm Rite of Passage (or any other Accreditation Ceremony) consists of (or culminates in) participation in a Core Practice: *By* such participation, you *become* one of us. (Baptism is a classic example here.)

Core Practices have another unique utility, in that they are obvious candidates to become a means whereby one affirms (or reaffirms) one’s Membership—to oneself or to others. But since a Core Practice is intrinsic, there may be ambiguity regarding a Member’s intent: Are they affirming their Membership, or just doing something they see the point of doing? Thus, typically, such affirmations become ritualized; that is, of all the possible versions of this Practice, a particular one, specified by Performance constraints, is designated as *the* version whereby one affirms Membership. (“There’s a right way, a wrong way—and the *Army* way!” Religious rites of baptism, confirmation, and communion are famil-

iar instances here—a *real* Baptist is baptized by *total* immersion, not just water sprinkled on the head—and there are many others: standing for the National Anthem, dressing in a “business” suit for business, etc.) Quite literally, the ritualized Performances acquire added significance—which only a Member is in a position to appreciate.

World

In ‘*What Actually Happens*’ (Ossorio, 1971/1978b), the real world is taken to consist of objects, processes, events, and states of affairs, and the point is made that different real worlds result from different choices of ultimate objects, processes, etc. The step to the Communities paradigm is a small one: Observe that, just as there are no private concepts there are no one-person real worlds (outside of psychosis; a psychotic may be a community of one). The fact of there being a given real world is fundamentally a fact about a Community, rather than about any particular individual; further, Communities differ in which objects, etc., are ultimate for them—in short, in their Worlds.

The term “ultimate object” (process, etc.) is used here in a very pragmatic, rather than truth-seeking, sense—a pragmatic usage which I take to be consistent with Ossorio’s. To say that X is an ultimate object within this Community’s World is to say nothing more nor less than that X has no object, etc., constituents which themselves have a place within the Practices of the Community. To say, for example, that a pawn is an ultimate object within the World of chess is *not* to pretend that this physical object we use as a pawn can’t be analyzed into molecules, atoms, etc., but rather, straightforwardly, to observe that such constituent objects have no place in the practices of chess (Molecule to QB-4? Guard your quark?). This is equivalent to noting that a pawn is not meaningfully equivalent to a physical object . . . or “Chess is not physics.”

The following are some basic connections of World to the other five parameters. When a Member is participating in the Practices of this Community, his real world at that time is, paradigmatically, the World of the Community. Those objects which are “ultimate” for this Community paradigmatically will be among the Concepts and identified by Locutions; further, there will be Practices consisting of treating such ultimate Xs *as* Xs (as having the Status of X); and there will be no Practices consisting of treating X as an instance of some more fundamental Y.

Roles, Relationships, and Norms

In presenting these six as the basic parameters of Communities, I have explicitly omitted the notions of roles, relationships, and norms, which many students of society have taken to be fundamental starting points in

their analyses. My position is that these concepts, while often important and useful, can be derived from further specifications of these six parameters. This is a very considerable claim, which I am reluctant to make without more thorough elaboration than time and space in this article permit; kindly let the following stand as promissory notes against such an elaboration.

I take it that the facts referred to by role and relationship are adequately subsumed by the concept of Status. To have a Status is to have a particular place within the Community; specifically, it is to be eligible (and expected) to engage in certain actions within the Community's Practices (and not eligible, of course, to engage in others). I submit that this is a reasonable statement of what is meant by role as it is used in the literature of the social sciences. Further, to have a place within a Community is to have a place vis-à-vis the other Members (and elements) of the Community; this "place vis-à-vis" aspect of Status is typically codified by talking of relationships, e.g., among Members. Thus, role and relationship are readily available via the concept of Status.

The notion of norm is a bit more problematic. It often appears to be used as positive specification of a negative condition. That is, we say "He violated a norm" when we observe that "His action was inappropriate": either he was not eligible to do it, or else "that's not the way we do things." In either case, we are running the risk of inventing positively-specified norms of behavior to account for the Members' *ability* to recognize cases of appropriate and inappropriate action. As outside observers, lacking such recognition ability ourselves, there may well be a point to talking about norms as a means of organizing our observations—but such talk might appropriately be taken as saying more about us than it does about the Community. In any event, I take it that a Member's ability to recognize appropriate behavior is a fundamental fact of any Community in a way that norms arguably are not.

COMMUNITIES AND PERSONS, BEHAVIOR, AND REALITY

Communities and Persons

The Members of a Community are paradigm-case Persons. Further: paradigm-case Persons are Members of Communities. I submit that the statement, "A Person is paradigmatically a Member of Communities" is as fundamental a specification of the Person paradigm as the familiar statement, A Person is paradigmatically an object whose history is a life-history of Deliberate Action (Ossorio, 1969/1978).

As previously noted, Status appears as a parameter of Communities, as

a comparative parameter of the Person concept, and as a value of the Personal Characteristics parameter of Intentional Action. From the Person viewpoint, Status is seen primarily as a means of codifying the facts of a Person's Memberships and eligibilities within those Communities (as well as the Person's relations to other elements—including communities—external to the Community in which he is a Member.)

Communities and Behavior

Among the parameters of Intentional Action is Significance, which specifies the social practice(s) of which this Intentional Action is a part. This parameter reflects the paradigm case of action, in that the stopping point for the question "But what's the point of doing *that*?" is to point to the intrinsic social practice of which this action is a part. Note, however, that "intrinsic" means that it is one of the Practices of a Community; thus, the Significance parameter directly links Intentional Action to the Community in which this Practice has its place. *All* action is straightforwardly a case of participating in the life of a Community. (This is not to pretend, of course, that one might never be mistaken in identifying *which* Community a given action takes place within; nor to deny that different significance descriptions of "this same action" might well apply—but then, these are familiar caveats in Descriptive Psychology). Further, the alienated person who merely goes through the motions of participating is the classic exception-that-proves-the rule; it is his lack of *recognition* of the significance of his actions that constitutes the pathology, *not* some actual lack of significance. Such lack of recognition can typically be seen as a problem of eligibility—and dealt with accordingly.

This suggests a new form of behavior description, called "Significant Action," in which only the content of the Significance parameter is specified (compare the form of "Achievement Description" (Ossorio, 1967/1981b) in which only the Achievement parameter is specified). Some uses that immediately come to mind for this form are: (a) when we want to answer some version of, "What's the point of doing *that*?"; (b) when we want to follow Ossorio's principle of "Drop the details and see what pattern remains" in formulating case descriptions—indeed, Significant Action descriptions would appear to be a major technical resource for explicating psychopathological cases; (c) any time that underlining the significance of behavior is useful, as in treatment of alienation, or in enculturation, or cross-cultural understanding. Indeed, it is reasonable to suggest that most *actual* behavior descriptions are Significant Action descriptions.

It also suggests another new form of behavior description: specify all parameters *except* Significance. Perhaps surprisingly, this form also has

an obvious, immediate name (and implied utility): Ritual Action. This form allows us to specify in great detail all other parameters of behavior while remaining noncommittal about the point of it all. This might be used by, say, an anthropologist or ethnologist studying a religion, a foreign protocol, or a mystery cult; its use might be straightforward acknowledgement of the notion that "Only an initiate could possibly grasp the significance of this ritual." (This, of course, is outsider's language; Members will view rituals quite differently, and indeed might appropriately use Significant Action descriptions among themselves to identify rituals—to one who is "partaking of the blood and body of Christ" no further description is necessary or relevant.)

There are other conceptual links between the paradigms of Community and Behavior: (a) As discussed above, the Personal Characteristic parameter includes the Person's Statuses, which reflect one's Memberships. (b) The Know parameter involves the use of concepts to make distinctions—and those concepts are the Concepts of some Community, paradigmatically a community of which the person engaging in the behavior is a member. (c) Part of the content of the Want parameter will reflect the intrinsic social practice in which one is engaging—that is, just as Achievement may be part of Want, so may Significance. (d) As mentioned in the previous paragraph, a particular Performance may be a ritual of affirmation or accreditation with a Community.

Communities and Reality

A Community, as previously noted, can be conceived of as a configuration paradigmatically seen as an object having both object and process constituents (although there are times, it seems, when the alternative configuration paradigm—a process with process and object constituents—may prove more useful). Among the object constituents are Members; among the process constituents are Practices; and Concepts are themselves listed as one of the basic Reality concepts (Ossorio, 1971/1978b, p. 17). These are some of the straightforward ways in which Communities fit within the State-of-Affairs system.

We have already noted some of the ways in which Reality concepts enter into Communities—notably via the World parameter. There are other, more subtle but equally substantial, connections which are of interest. One has to do with composition.

Treating a community in a strictly formal fashion as a Configuration immediately, via the State-of-Affairs system transition rules (Ossorio, 1971/1978b, p. 18), allows the possibility of "composition" of this community with others into a larger object which may itself be a community; and of "decomposition" into smaller objects that themselves may be

Communities as well. This gives us the methodological resources to do justice to the fact that larger communities (e.g., the community of scholars) are in some sense the same as a combination of a number of smaller ones (e.g., philosophers and historians), which in another sense remain distinct, even antagonistic, communities (e.g., psychotherapists composed of psychiatrists and psychologists and social workers). That sense in which they are the same is the State-of-Affairs system sense, in which they are viewed as Configurations; the sense in which they are *not* the same is the Communities sense, in which they are viewed *as* Communities. Note also that merely composing or decomposing with a community does not automatically result in new communities; in addition to being Configurations, they must also *be* Communities in order to qualify. (Or . . . “A Community is not *merely* a Configuration of Persons and Practices.”)

As soon as one introduces composition and decomposition, of course, one introduces considerations of ultimates and limiting cases. There is one particularly interesting limiting case: the Community that includes all other Communities.

The Community that includes all other Communities might be referred to as the Community of all Persons (or the brotherhood of man, or the human race, depending on one’s preference for ultimates and taste in locutions). It can be formulated as:

$$C_p = \langle P, FS, \langle P, B, R, C \rangle, \theta, FP, IA \rangle$$

C_p , the Community of Persons, has all Persons for Members. “FS” indicates Fundamental Statures: those required for participation in the Fundamental Practices (see below). They include actor, observer, and critic. The Concepts of this Community are just those concepts referred to as the “Person concept” in Ossorio (1971/1978b, pp. xi–xii) which consists of Person, Behavior, Reality and a fourth paradigm—arguably, Language or Community. The theta in the Locutions parameter indicates that the parameter is deleted. This reflects the existence of two competing arguments. On the one hand, it seems reasonable to point to the community-specific nature of locutions and actively assert that there are no locutions which all Persons have in common. One might, however, just as readily use some symbol to indicate that *any* locution of *any* actual community is a Locution here—making the reasonable argument that any human linguistic utterance is characteristic of the human community. Lacking such a symbol, deleting the parameter seemed the conservative choice.

“FP” is an abbreviation for “Fundamental Practices,” which term I use to denote those Practices which are necessary for the existence of any Community. (Perhaps unsurprisingly, a number of the technical methodo-

logical devices which have been created for the doing of Descriptive Psychology, and which have existed up to now as rather ad hoc pieces, clearly fundamental and necessary but not clearly articulated within the major paradigms, turn out to be fundamental practices.) Among the fundamental practices are; observation, description, criticism (formulated in Descriptive Psychology in the Actor-Observer-Critic (AOC) diagram), negotiation, accreditation, and degradation. In some form, each of those practices must exist within a community for it to function *as* a Community—and since the community of Descriptive Psychology is no exception, it's not surprising to find them there.

FURTHER CONNECTIONS

Briefly, then, and in admittedly broad strokes, the above are some of the major connections between the Community paradigm and the other three major paradigms of Descriptive Psychology: Person, Behavior, and Reality. I take it that the inextricable conceptual interdependence, as well as that mutual interassimilability that characterizes so much of Descriptive Psychology's conceptual apparatus have been adequately demonstrated.

A major point of articulating a concept is to bring new coherence to other concepts to which it is related. I take it that this, too, has been demonstrated; as further demonstration (and, I presume, further substantive contribution), let us take a fresh pass at some old Descriptive Psychology notions, with an eye to polishing them using the Community paradigm as a tool. Specifically, let us examine the concepts of consciousness, way of life, and the methodologies of blue-ribbon panels and Classification Spaces.

Consciousness

It has been customary in Descriptive Psychology, whenever the term "consciousness" is introduced, to inquire "conscious—of what?", as a means of reminding us that we are typically interested in the *content* of consciousness rather than in consciousness itself—whatever that may be. To this "reminding question" I would add another, perhaps more fundamental, one: "Conscious—as what?", to call attention to the fact that one is conscious *of* only those "things" (objects, processes, etc.) which one is able to distinguish from other "things" by means of the concepts one has—and that those concepts are the Concepts belonging to the conceptual systems of a Community of which one is a Member. Further, being eligible to engage in Practices involving this "thing" gives one reason to be conscious of it. Thus, what a person *can* be conscious of, and *has reason* to be conscious of, depends on what Statuses the person has,

and in which Communities. In a common manner of speaking, the Community provides the *context* of consciousness: conscious *as* a chess player, mother, elder of the church, psychoanalyst, etc.

One implication of the above is that we would not be surprised to find that a person's consciousness seems to change as he moves from community to community. And indeed this is the case; we are all familiar with numerous examples. ("It all seems so clear in the classroom, but as soon as I get back on the job it gets fuzzy again"; the brutal criminal who is a kind and loving father; the mental patient who does well in the hospital, but regresses during a home visit; etc.) Thus, in a very direct sense, the most "individual" of a person's characteristics—his consciousness—can be seen as inextricably rooted in his community.

Way of Life

The phrase "way of life" has an immediate commonsensical intelligibility, suggesting the sense in which an individual's life has a sort of form or coherence. But the concept has proved difficult to pin down. For instance what way of life should we attribute to, say, Albert Einstein? Scientist? Intellectual? German Jew? And which of these accounts for his passion for playing the violin—badly? It seems that any substantive attempt to specify a way of life amounts to little more than stereotyping—encompassing too little, implying too much, lacking sufficient detail to be either accurate or informative.

I suggest that the problem here lies in treating way of life as a substantive concept, when it is more appropriately seen as referring to a methodological principle. Specifically, way of life refers to a summary statement of an individual's community memberships, and the practices within which he has status. Just as "self-concept" is not a simple summation of *facts* about a person (Ossorio, 1971/1978b), neither is way of life appropriately seen as a summary of an individual's actual behaviors. Rather, it represents the life of the communities within which his behaviors acquire the significance and coherence they in fact have.

Methodologies

The blue-ribbon panel is a classic method in Descriptive Psychology for judging or assessing states of affairs. It can be seen straightforwardly as exemplifying the use of the Community paradigm: members are chosen on the basis of their status within the community within which the states of affairs to be assessed have their place. (We don't ask quarterbacks to judge the adequacy of a research design—unless they are also research scientists.) What makes the panel "blue ribbon" is precisely the fact that *other* members of the community will recognize the panel members as

really “one of us,” i.e., as a genuine member, for whom our practices really *are* intrinsic. For exactly the same reason, of course, judgments by outsiders won’t do the job.

The methodology of Classification Spaces (e.g., Ossorio, 1966a) even more clearly exemplifies the Community paradigm. In constructing a Classification Space, a key step is to ask experts in a given field (i.e., members of the technical community) to rate the extent to which a particular work is relevant to their field. This is simply a case of asking Community Members to identify their Locutions. Those Locutions rated most highly relevant to this field will certainly include those which are identified with the Core Concepts. Thus, factor analysis, a procedure which effectively highlights those highly rated Locutions while minimizing the contribution of the less highly rated, not surprisingly yields a representation of the technical community’s concepts, which we can use to make judgments of, e.g., relevance of documents to the community. The main point here is that the procedure used to generate a classification space is neither arbitrary nor serendipitous, but rather follows from some logical interconnections among the Community parameters.

Further Questions

The Communities paradigm, in addition to shedding new light on established facts and concepts, also suggests some intriguing lines for future development. A slightly annotated listing of some of these would include:

1. Hypnosis and “Altered States of Consciousness”: It seems promising to use the Community paradigm as a framework for viewing hypnosis as consisting of a two-person community, with some unusual constraints on eligibility within the fundamental practices, especially negotiation and accreditation/degradation. The obvious facts of hypnosis—the behavioral and consciousness changes—might be seen as the result of the subject’s status within this community (“conscious *as*”). This formulation at first glance seems not inconsistent with Plotkin and Schwartz’s perceptive formulations.

2. Consider a person whose consciousness does *not* change from community to community. Such might be the condition of a person classically referred to, in some communities, as “enlightened.” Every action of the enlightened is participation in an intrinsic practice—but of what community? Could it be other than the community of persons referred to above? And could it be, that the enlightened consciousness is simply conscious *as* a member of *that* community? Is this what is referred to as “transcendence”: in which *every* action is engaged in as a ritual of affirmation of this membership?

3. Are there other fundamental practices? What are they?

4. It seems that the Language paradigm which Ossorio (1971/1978b) proposed as the fourth paradigm can be appropriately subsumed in the Communities paradigm. Is this in fact the case? Demonstration, not assertion, would be required to bolster this assessment.

5. Are there identifiable "forms of Community description," comparable to "forms of behavior description" (Ossorio, 1967/1981b), which are obtained from the paradigm by means of specifying, deleting, or substituting operations? Some prime candidates might be Family, Tribe, Organization, Mob, Religious Community, Hierarchy, to name only a few. There seems to be ample room (and need) for invention here.

SUMMARY

The Communities paradigm has been presented; some of its important conceptual links within Descriptive Psychology have been displayed; it has been used to re-formulate a few concepts and practices; and some lines of future investigation have been indicated. It is now up to the members to determine the status of the concept of Community within the community of Descriptive Psychology.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Peter Ossorio, Keith Davis, Thomas Mitchell, and Mary Shideler for comments on any earlier version of this paper. Author's address: Descriptive Systems, 1019 Baldwin St., Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104.

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