

# Global Integration

## *Addressing the Pressing Issues Facing Our World*

### *Overview and Opportunities for Mental Health Professionals*

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*Christian Psychology Around the World, 8(1), 2016*

*Today we are also taking a decision of great historic significance. We resolve to build a better future for all people, including the millions who have been denied the chance to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential. We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet.*

United Nations, Transforming our World (2015, excerpt from paragraph 50)

Global integration (GI) is a framework that we have been developing over the past five years, as we consider, like so many others, how to help make our troubled world a better place. We have found this framework to be relevant for the increasing numbers of mental health professionals (MHPs) and colleagues across sectors (e.g., mission, health, humanitarian, development) who want to be meaningfully involved in our globalizing world. This brief paper overviews GI and encourages MHPs to take advantage of the many opportunities to improve the wellbeing of all people and the planet.

#### Overview of GI

We define GI as **actively integrating our lives with global realities by connecting relationally and contributing relevantly on behalf of human wellbeing and the issues facing humanity, in light of our integrity and core values (e.g., ethical, humanitarian, faith-based)**. Crossing sectors for mutual learning and support is a key process of GI. A related term we use is "Global Integrators," colleagues of integrity who link their skills, values, and relationships on behalf of major issues in our world. Some key features of the GI framework are the emphases on integrity/character along with skills/competencies, sharing one's life in addition to offering useful services, and relationships. We summarize these emphases as collectively "building the future we want--being the people we need."



Cover detail, *Global Member Care: Crossing Sectors for Serving Humanity* (2013)

As psychologists working in the mission/aid sector, we have been particularly interested in applications of GI for mission/aid personnel. For some examples from our work, see "Field Consultations: Risk, Resilience, Relevance, and Relationships" (O'Donnell and Lewis O'Donnell, 2015a). It describes how we set up and do field consults and describes multi-sectoral resources that we have used in recent member care trips (e.g., tools for assessment and personal growth).

We have focused substantially on GI in the mental health context (GI-MH) and especially global mental health (GMH) and mental health-psychosocial support in humanitarian settings (IASC 2015, O'Donnell and Lewis O'Donnell, 2016b, United Nations, 2016). These areas are full of opportunities for MHP involvement, including colleagues in the faith-based sector. We describe GI-MH as:

an emerging domain with roots in the integration of mental health and theology, in which colleagues actively seek ways to connect and contribute as “forces for good” who skillfully address the challenges facing humanity. It involves practitioners with character, competence, and compassion who caravan together into GI, crossing cultures and countries, disciplines and sectors, time zones and comfort zones in order to stretch our thinking, practice, and impact on the world. It is mental health AS mission. (O’Donnell, 2011).

We define GMH as:

an international, interdisciplinary, culturally-sensitive, and multi-sectoral domain which promotes human well being, the right to health, and equity in health **for all**. It encourages healthy behaviours and lifestyles; is committed to preventing and treating mental, neurological, and substance use conditions (MNS); and seeks to improve policies and programs, professional practices and research, advocacy and awareness, and social and environmental factors that affect health and well being. (based on O’Donnell 2012).

**Further information.** To review some foundational thinking about **GI**, see the 10 entries on the CORE Member Care weblog (O’Donnell, 2011). These entries include applications for mental health (i.e. mental health as mission) and member care (i.e. the wellbeing and effectiveness of mission/aid personnel). For further information on **Global Integrators**, see “Making Your Mark in Our Troubled World” (O’Donnell and Lewis O’Donnell, 2016a) and the 25 diverse weblog entries on the subject (O’Donnell, 2015a). For some core materials on **GMH**, see our GMH-Map website and our recent article “Global Mental Health: Tracking and Trekking Across Sectors” (O’Donnell and Lewis O’Donnell, 2015b).

### Opportunities for MHPs

GI-MH and GMH are especially pertinent for the major multi-sectoral efforts promoting well being for all people and the planet. A primary example would be *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United Nations, 2015). Foremost on this *Agenda* is Goal 1, the commitment to eradicate poverty in all of its forms. This first goal is followed by 16 other ambitious and overlapping goals, including equitable access to quality and affordable physical and **mental** health care (a core part of Goal 3). With an estimated 450 million people experiencing a mental, neurological, or substance use condition, the vast majority who receive little or no effective care, especially in low-resource countries (World Health Organization, 2013), we believe it is important for the mental health profession to review its training emphases, strategic roles, organizational priorities, ethical responsibilities and above all opportunities to help make a difference in the glaring mental health needs worldwide. The same is true for individual MHPs as well as mental health-related organizations. See the examples of organizations, projects, forums, and resources on the Mental Health Innovation Network and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network websites.



Another important document to help inform and guide MHPs is the World Health Organization's *Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020* (World Health Organization, 2013). The *Action Plan's* overall goal is to "promote mental well-being, prevent mental disorders, provide care, enhance recovery, promote human rights and reduce the mortality, morbidity and disability for persons with mental disorders (p. 9). It's four main objectives are to: "strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health; provide comprehensive, integrated mental health and social care services in community-based settings; implement strategies for promotion and prevention in mental health; and strengthen information systems, evidence and research for mental health" (p. 10). More ideas for relating the *Action Plan* to the work of MHPs and vice versa are in the WHO *mhGAP Newsletters*.

Our work as psychologists in GI is strategically based in Geneva. It includes regular interactions with personnel/events in the United Nations, World Health Organization, and international NGOs—and hence materials, perspectives, and resources that we review and then share with colleagues. We regularly send out *Global Integration Updates* to over 1900 colleagues as part of our commitment to foster "common ground for the common good" and "personal transformation for social transformation". The *Updates* are archived on our main website (Member Care Associates). The December 2015 Update, "Staying Current-Navigating the News", is especially relevant (O'Donnell and Lewis O'Donnell, 2015c). It includes a) Newsletters/Updates from some of the larger humanitarian-development organizations; b) World Reports on special topics; c) links to several News/Media Sources; d) recent resources from the United Nations, humanitarian, and the global health/mental health sectors; and e) reflections on the importance of informed, skilled, and critical partnering for sustainable development.

**Further steps.** We believe that getting a variety of input to help shape and support GI is essential. Organizing informal GI roundtables/consultations (online and in vivo) and including GI and GI-related topics as part of conferences, academic courses, articles, and webinars would be helpful. Ultimately, one of the greatest opportunities for further developing GI would be organizing a new coalition(s) of colleagues who are committed to GI, including a multi-sectoral entity and one for specific GI emphases such as GI-MH. Serving all the above GI components could be a core group of colleagues, a growing global network, a special GI website, and an endowment to help make it all happen.

Finally, we want to emphasize that GI, given the pressing issues facing our world, is a crucial direction for the diversity of *Christians* involved in mental health. Glen Moriarty's 2012 article on the future of integration calls for "integration systems" that are more diverse, global, and with more inroads in non-religious settings. The excerpt below, a supportive admonishment to global action for Christian MHPs around the world, is especially relevant for GI as we consider the many opportunities for connecting and contributing in new ways and across sectors *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

If we want integration [of psychology and theology] to be a credible and relevant voice in all corners of our world, then we need to be proactive about learning, engaging and collaborating with Christian mental health professionals outside of North America....We want to get in on the ground floor—not once institutions are already established. Kelly O'Donnell has insightfully called this "global integration."....We in the integration field find ourselves in a unique position. Unfortunately, globalization and technology have caught us flat-footed...We have a time limited opportunity to make a huge impact in the future of faith and psychology...We can begin by answering the question I started with: Where do we want to be in 10 years? (pp. 43, 44)

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