“Needing to *become* what one *is* is the hallmark of modern living” (Baumann 2001) – prophetic words introducing Beck’s study “Individualization”. Beck raises a number of points which, accelerated by the advance of media technologies have since come to characterise society in 2016. Rather than achieving a ‘reflexive modernity’, the ‘risky venture’, which characterises Beck’s concept of biography, the removal of certainties in terms of employment, geographical location, family, leaving everything subject to decision – making, on an individual and immediate level, without considering the consequences has become even more risky, and the potential for globalisation to divide rather than unite is demonstrated in global conflicts, extreme levels of income inequality, displacement of millions, increasingly violent crime, and media – fuelled xenophobia. ‘Social crisis phenomena’, focusses blame on the individual, and the markets create ‘atomisation’, for Beck the Biography is a lifetime study adapting to rapid and enforced change, but too often in isolation, an isolation clearly identified by Putnam in recognising the demise of social capital in “Bowling Alone” (1999).

The isolation created by this focus on the self as the main project is unhealthy, both for the individual and society. Prilleltensky is very clear that connectedness is a source of well being, and that this connectedness should be present at a personal, community and professional level. Prilleltensky cites studies conducted by Marmot over a 25 year period which quite clearly demonstrate that both individual autonomy and connectedness are vital elements of well being. This balance is not only absent in current society, but, conflated with ‘cultural products’ (Bourdieu) related to the acceptance of celebrity and media success as concepts of power and personal power, this imbalance has created the social conditions which support the rise to power of the narcissist, the obvious example being the Trump presidential candidacy giving rise to an unprecedented public diagnosis by American psychologists including Gardner. Such social conditions have nurtured the creeping acceptance of speeches expressing hatred for specific groups. In short, the biography of ‘the other’ has been displaced and even negated, and the disconnected biography has become a source of opinion not discourse.

The very real challenge, for educators, social workers, psychologists, politicians, indeed anyone working with people, explored in this paper, is to find a means to create a more enlightened environment to promote open discourse, to redefine concpets of individual and societal success within whatever current systemic and institutional constraints are operating. To revisit existing concepts of self and our stories in a more connected way, identify means of being rather than having, (Fromm). To develop and explore the need for interpersonal connections in personal and social well – being. A focus on celebrating existing biographies and stories of hope and humanity, of connecting with local and global communities in reflective discourse, as a means to develop new ‘connected biographies’.

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