

Values Analysis of Ethnographic Stakeholder Responses: Report on Cabri-Stewart Valley and the Blood Reserve for the IACC project, section 1A

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Abstract

The initial results of the Cabri-Stewart Valley and the Blood Reserve ethnographic field work yield preliminary data suitable for a values analysis. As preliminary, the data does provide indicators of value commitments, but also leaves most statements about such commitments opaque and ambiguous. As such, they indicate a need to follow up on what respondents mean by these statements, to allow them to elaborate and to narrate the experiences they associate with these statements.

Although the report is short, it indicates that values analysis as conceived for this research project is a viable component, consistent with and indeed, implied by the nature of the research project. The fact that vulnerability (closely aligned with the harm principle in ethics) is the focus of research, implies a value/normative orientation/motivation to the project. Understanding what is at stake requires an understanding of what matters to stakeholders. Hence, the initial findings described here, suggest that a more thoroughgoing values analysis could enrich the IACC findings and enable its application to serve the interests of more comprehensive and adequate policy/decision-making objectives.

Introductory comments

The following analysis is structured to accord with the paper, “Value and Ethical Analysis in Vulnerability to Climate Change: Establishing an Analytic Framework for Identifying, Classifying and Evaluating Vulnerability Issues,” for the SSHRC-MCRI research project, Adaptation to Climate Change – Comparative Study of Dry Land River Basins Canada and Chile <http://www.parc.ca/mcri/pdfs/Morito.pdf>. Some general preliminary comments are in order.

The initial results from the ethnographic research in Cabri, Stewart Valley and the Blood Reserve are as anticipated. The data from Cabri and Stewart Valley do not provide many explicit statements of what stakeholders value and do not immediately suggest lines of inquiry for depth analysis in the way that the results from the Blood Reserve do. Respondents in the Saskatchewan region appear much more focussed on their knowledge of water availability, technical understanding of how water is managed, treated, supplied and the like. In contrast, Blood Reserve respondents are focussed not so much on water management or even on direct water-related values, but on other sorts of factors that pertain to their sense of vulnerability. Where the Cabri/Stewart Valley respondents seemed more focussed on their adaptive capacity in terms of their historical ability to utilize technological and economic instruments, respondents on the Blood Reserve focussed on issues of governance, their history as a disenfranchised people and internal social problems. In other words, they were much more attuned to the conditions that made them vulnerable, rather than on those that enabled them to adapt. We could put this

differently. Blood reserve respondents were more aware of the lack of adaptability, whereas Cabri/Stewart Valley respondents seemed less aware of their vulnerability to drought.

Value commitments and concerns were far more evident in the Blood Reserve respondents, especially those having to do with ethical principles of governance and social cohesion. Inability to trust the band or federal governments, accusations of betrayal and dishonesty are prevalent. Loss of traditional practices and relationships are also prevalent concerns.

This difference is not surprising, since typical. Those stakeholders who belong to what might be called an empowered (politically and economically) group tend not to recognize the values that underlie their thoughts and actions, degree of vulnerability and adaptability. Being empowered allows people to take their value commitments more or less for granted, since the political and economic systems to which they belong exercise, reflect and support these values. In contrast, disempowered groups will more readily claim that their values are not being recognized by the empowered group. Since many of their values (particularly cultural and social) are being ignored, suppressed or otherwise denied, they will be identified more explicitly, by way of contrast with the dominant system of values. Through this contrast, then, the values of the disempowered and marginalized tend to be identified more as 'not those of the dominant group.' It is in such cases that we find cultural, social, moral, religious/spiritual, or, what might be characterised as "identity" values emerging as important to the stakeholder group in question. It is not that these sorts of values do not pertain to dominant groups; it is that dominant groups need not identify them, because there is no reason to fight for them, since their values are embedded in the socio-economic systems and exercised as a matter of fact.

This, however, is not to say that the Cabri/Stewart Valley respondents see themselves as belonging completely to the dominant society, since some regret is expressed concerning loss of a way of life and of not being able to have their children inherit the family farm. Heritage and family values, although not forcefully mentioned do have some force in people's lives and what they consider to be their stakes. This recognition is important in many respects. First, it indicates that a general socio-economic sense of belonging for the Cabri-Stewart Valley communities makes them more readily able to trade certain identity related values off at the margins; that is they are seen as more legitimately negotiable than identity values are for the Blood Tribe. At this point, it would appear that most farming families are quite adaptable in the sense that, despite the poor prospects of being able to continue the family farm tradition, they can envisage a good life for their children and grandchildren by supporting their education as doctors, lawyers and the like. They are somewhat prepared to accept the prospects of seeing their children and grand children only during special events (e.g., centennial celebrations), when children return to the community for visits. Part of the reason for this acceptance seems to be that farmers can see themselves as belonging and contributing to the network of institutions which their children can access.

Yet if things were to get much worse, it is not clear that these identity values would not become more prominent concerns of individuals and the community as a whole. What is not explicitly identified in the interviews is perhaps as important as what is explicitly identified. The absence of value oriented claims and statements and the emphasis placed on adaptive capacity rather than vulnerability suggests that the stakeholders in the Cabri-Stewart Valley region did not need to identify what values they held and were at stake because, unlike the Blood, the system of institutions and their history are compatible with the values they currently hold. Like the value

of breathable air, identity, cultural, moral and other typically intangible (non-quantifiable) values go unnoticed until there is some threat to people's ability to satisfy or exercise them.

On the one hand, then, the value profiles that we can initially provide for these three communities suggest, but only suggest, that the Blood Tribe is far more vulnerable to climate change than are the Cabri-Stewart Valley communities. The primary reason is that they do not feel empowered to act and view their system of governance with mistrust. They, therefore, do not and likely will not feel as confident in accessing governance institutions in times of drought or other problems as are people in Cabri-Stewart Valley. As a consequence, even if there is institutional adaptive capacity, it will be less likely tapped. Coupled with this mistrust is a sense that their traditional system of governance and social cohesion, according to which a collective identity and related values operate, ought to be the organizing concepts and principles for the community. A conflict between perceptions of what is in fact available to them as instruments of adaptation and what they see as the legitimate instruments of adaptation exacerbates and possibly underlies the more explicitly identified problem of governance. From the perspective of personal integrity, proponents of traditional systems are less likely to access institutional supports, because they will judge them to be illegitimate.

Another issue to consider with respect to qualitative concerns, is that the data gathered by Lorenzo Magzul, himself a Mayan indigenous person and identified as such by members of the Blood Tribe, was made available, precisely because of his identity and, therefore, status as a member of the indigenous community. First, he would not be readily identified as a researcher who was attempting to mine the community for information, as many if not most First Nation communities have come to receive researchers in the social sciences [see Deloria]. It is likely that, had Mr. Magzul not been indigenous, the respondents would have said very little about tribal governance issues and other family-related matters. Had the field researchers been assigned other communities, the results would likely have been very different. This observation brings a question to the research approach. Factors such as personality, social identity, and the like factor into the ability of the researcher to elicit more or less honest and deep responses. Hence, value profiling can depend to a large extent on personal factors.

The difference between the two research communities indicates that the IACC team needs to account for differences between explicit and implicit conditions of vulnerability and adaptability. Good reasons to pursue further lines of inquiry into the vulnerabilities and values of the Cabri-Stewart Valley communities are raised. If cultural and identity values were not identified by stakeholders in these communities to any significant extent because they are strongly supported by the institutional arrangements of Canadian society, there may be little reason to consider their vulnerabilities and values any further. But if the institutional structure or its functioning alters significantly in the future, possibly *because of* climate change, it is quite possible that these communities will re-focus on vulnerability. Say, for example, that water supply becomes so short that oil and gas production becomes prohibitively expensive. With soaring energy and transportation costs, it may become prohibitively expensive for most families to educate their children in other professions. Adaptability potentials will likely be narrowed considerably, making stakeholders much more cognizant of their vulnerability.

This possible future scenario, indicates that there is currently strong institutional support for most stakeholder values. The ability of farming families to accept that their children will have to be educated elsewhere to learn other trades or professions, presupposes a network of

institutional structures that allows people to choose from a number of options, all of which are seen as negotiable with farming values. That is, the institutional arrangements are generally compatible with underlying identity, community and social values. Cabri, in particular, seems to have adapted to economic changes in ways that suggest further adaptive capacity. There seems to have been considerable effort exerted by several community members to have a new regional school and medical centre built in the town. How they managed to persuade, if they persuaded at all, decision-makers to prefer their site over others is worth examining to determine whether it was a general community effort or the effort of a few dedicated individuals. This would reflect the degree to which the community generally was able to work in concert toward the end of maintaining their identity in the face of external forces (e.g., out migration) that threaten it. The community's efforts to maintain sports teams is a further indication that people hold strong identity values and that they are held flexibly.

For the Blood Tribe, this is far from being the case. The values associated with the general institutional structure of the Canadian system of governance are associated with colonialism, disenfranchisement and disempowerment. To access these institutions, then, is more likely associated with an undermining of personal and community integrity. They remain identified as “empowering for the non-Native people.”

If it is at all reasonable to make *ceteris paribus* qualifications in the context of climate change, the data suggests that for Cabri and Stewart Valley, future vulnerability is low and adaptive capacity is high. Institutional adaptive capacity is also high and perceived as such, especially since the PFRA has had a long history with these communities and such measures as building dams in response to the threat of drought demonstrate a preparedness on the part of governing institutions to aid in developing a robust adaptive capacity. The analysis for the Blood Tribe is the opposite. *Ceteris paribus*, the community will remain highly vulnerable and develop little adaptive capacity. If institutional adaptive capacity is or becomes strong, it will not likely bring as much advantage to the Blood community as it will to the Cabri-Stewart Valley communities.

Comments of the Field Data

The openness of the initial ethnographic fieldwork has been sufficiently compatible with the values analysis research design to provide an initial value profile of individuals and communities, which could be usefully taken back to the communities for feedback, revision and re-formulating. If comparisons between communities were allowed during these fora, it is likely that it would evoke deeper and richer responses from stakeholders who might want to contribute responses of a like order to other communities. For instance, having seen a value profile of the Blood Tribe, it is likely that more respondents in Cabri and Stewart Valley would want to indicate how identity and other sorts of values are as important to them as they are to the Blood respondents. It is also likely that Blood respondents would say that they too would value technical knowledge of water resources, if only they were in a position to do so. However, community comparisons may not be politically or even morally acceptable, if they become unfairly exploitable; e.g., if conditions of the Blood reserve were to be taken as evidence of backwardness, as is the case in our history of government/First Nation relations. The inability or unwillingness to adapt to western systems of governance and economics of First Nations has typically been seen as evidence of backwardness and a need for Indians to be assimilated into the dominant social systems.

Ethnographic fieldwork results suggest that, from the point of view of values analysis, there is much more to be examined in assessing vulnerability and adaptability of these communities. In addition to the reasons already cited, other conditions relevant to the Blood Tribe's vulnerability are indicated by the rather ironic situation Lorenzo Magzul found himself in. His focus was initially intended to be an examination of drought related scenarios, consistent with the overall focus of the IACC team. However, drought was the last thing on Blood Tribe's mind, since their problem for two years at least has been flooding. Surrounded on three sides by rivers that had a tendency to overflow, emergency procedures for rescuing people and protecting dwellings was the main water issue. Few had any understanding of the problems to be faced in fifty years when the glaciers and snow packs feeding these rivers would disappear.

Nevertheless, people provided sometimes elaborate responses to questions about general vulnerability and adaptive capacity and related the high level of vulnerability and low adaptability to low levels of empowerment, lack of trust in all levels of government, the destruction of cultural supports and practices. With the general lack of concern over water shortage and lack of knowledge about the glacial sources of their water supply, we can conclude that the epistemic focus of the Blood Tribe will not soon be turned toward vulnerability to water shortage. Water supply over the next fifty years is not likely to change significantly enough for the community to divide their attention between water supply issues and pressing social, political and cultural issues. The next generation, as a result, will be ill-equipped to face the droughts that they will encounter.

If *ceteris paribus* conditions cannot reasonably be maintained, we are likely to see increased numbers and types of conflicts arise over water. At present, the Blood's sister Nation, the Peigan, are in conflict with other stakeholders over the Old Man River dam. In part, this conflict has to do with how water is identified and, therefore, treated. Differences in the way people respond to researchers are indicative of further epistemic differences. Initial data indicate that the two groups can be considered culturally distinct, which in turn suggests a distinction between what it means to have knowledge of the land. In Cabri and Stewart Valley, factual and technical knowledge about the land forges a major part of their knowledge system. Such knowledge serves as a sort of psychological buffer against any perceived lack of control they have over water supply. In contrast, the Blood Tribe interviews seem to display a knowledge of being *with* the land as opposed to being *about* the land. As Francis First Charger indicates, "Elders don't look at water from the economic side of things. They look at it from the spiritual side." This, then, suggests the relevance of a distinction between propositional knowledge and practical/traditional knowledge, or, "knowing that" versus "knowing how." An interesting complement to this line of discussion, if we were to pursue it, would be the interview with Paulette Fox who illustrates attempts to meld western scientific knowledge with traditional knowledge. It indicates that deeper value issues could emerge about what counts as knowledge and how knowledge should be used.

Not having field researchers trained in practical ethics and value theory made gathering value relevant data very difficult. Whether this will turn out to be an advantage is difficult to say. As mentioned, the absence of explicit value statements in the Cabri-Stewart Valley communities could be as important as explicit statements would have been. Yet knowing how to follow a line of inquiry to elicit value statements is, at some point, important to enabling respondents to express what their values are and why they hold them. Owing to tight schedules and the relative novelty of the approach to ethical inquiry being taken for this project, neither

Morito nor Thachuk could participate in field work and could not find a research assistant who could free sufficient time to engage in field research. Developing a strategy for employing graduate students then had to be somewhat *ad hoc*. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that philosophical training ignores field research and data collection altogether. In this way, the participation of a philosopher in developing field work methods is novel. We can consider these results little more than preliminary as a consequence, but promising as a further application of philosophical education.

Appendix

Initial identifications of values

This is a very rough identification/categorization list. The first part of the list indicates how various value statements were identified. The second, after the dash, indicates an initial categorization. What the researcher can glean from these lists is an initial sense that the Blood are concerned about a large range of values but place considerable weight on values that pertain to social cohesiveness, governed in large part by moral values. There is a sense in which cultural cum spiritual values are considered. There is a mixture of statements about individual and collective moral values.

Nothing definite can be said about these categorizations until more information about these values statements is attained and a subsequent deeper analysis is given. But it does begin to show how pursuing more information can proceed. Each of the responses from which value identifications were taken could be taken as an indicator, such that pursuit of questioning, letting respondents talk more about them by way of explanation or narration of related experiences would likely yield more accurate and robust value profiles. It would help to narrow the list and likely narrow the numbers of categories that would have to be used. More importantly, it would enable researchers to develop a more nuanced profile of stakeholder values. This could then aid in developing a more comprehensive vulnerability profile of the people and communities.

Blood Tribe Reserve – Values

vocational/professional identity - identity (id)/core
developing skills of adaptability - capacity
independence - social/freedom/core
self-determination - social/freedom
discipline - capacity/
tradition - id/core?
economic security - economic
legal values - legal
economic values
recreation - recreation
education - capacity
environment - environmental
mother earth - environmental/moral
responsibility - social/moral
caring/respect for elders and the neediest - social/moral
secure housing - security
health - security
political values - social
cultural identity - id/core
spiritual values - id/spiritual/core
parenting skills - social/core?
accountability - social/political/moral

sense of belonging - id/social/moral
employment - economic
sensitivity to cultural/spiritual values
self-directed governance - political
getting what's due - economic/moral
government fulfilling fiduciary obligation - social/political/moral
stability - social/economic/political
honesty - social/moral
integrity - social
language - social/cultural
clan system - social/moral/political/id
role of women in the tribe - social
future generations - social/moral
holism - conceptual
inclusivity - social/moral
dedication/commitment - moral
harm principle - social/legal/moral
healing - social/security
animals - social/moral/id?
transparency - social/moral
grassroots movements - social
empowerment -moral/political/legal
religion - spiritual
efficiency - economic/social
equality - social/moral
proactive/initiative-taking - capacity
family - social
traditional ceremonies - cultural/id
hard work - economic/social/moral
community - id/social/moral
respect - moral/social
open communication - social/moral
pride -social/moral
freedom from addiction - capacity/moral/social
sharing - moral/social
relationships - social/moral
materialism - moral/economic
individualism - moral/social
simple living - moral/economic/social
solidarity/cohesiveness - social/moral/political
dialogue - social/moral
cultural history - id/social
honour/shame - moral/social
pace of life - lifestyle/social/economic
aesthetic value of environment - environmental
hope - capacity/moral

Blood Reserve – Main challenges affecting values

addiction

housing shortages

living conditions

lack of financial resources

violence

health – mental, physical

nepotism

laziness

gangs

gambling

individualism

land conflict

lack of education

lack of co-ordination among various departments