Rethinking Professional Identity in a Globalized World

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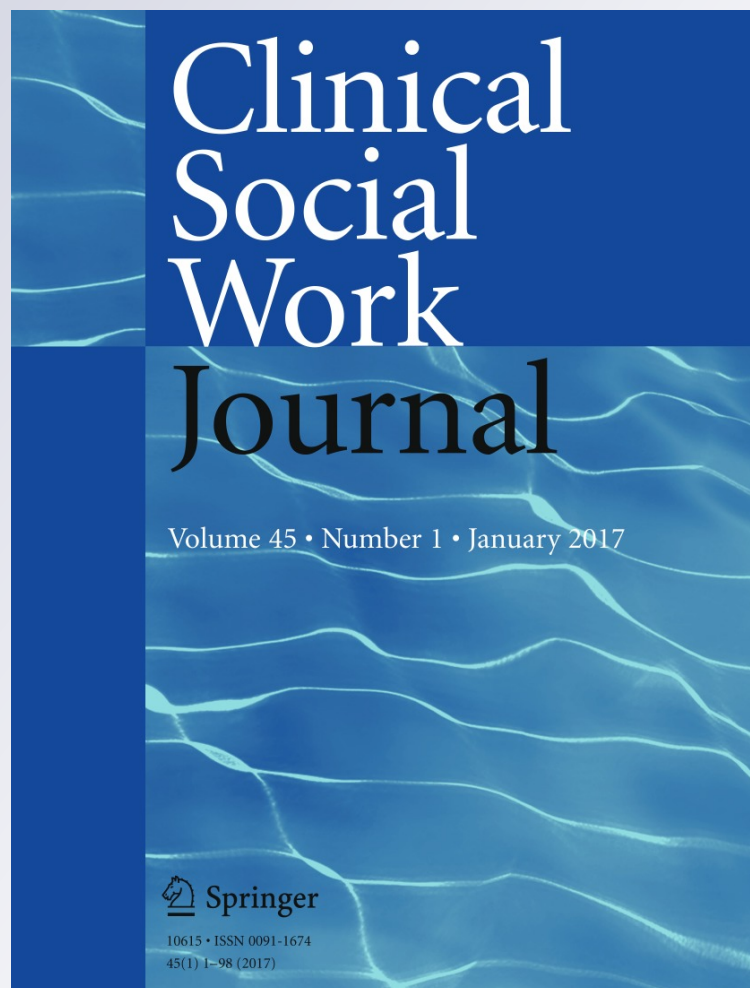Journal

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Rethinking Professional Identity in a Globalized World

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Abstract Recent literature has shed light on changes in the development of personal identity as a result of globalization, but the development of professional identity in the era of globalization has not yet been examined. To fill this gap, we analyzed this issue in light of the traditional construction of the social work profession, the paradigm of cultural competence and cultural relativism, and International Social Work programs. The analysis revealed that professional efforts to cope with globalization might have the opposite effect by reinforcing individualism, nationalism, and oppression, as well as by reinforcing hierarchical power relations among different cultural groups and residents of Northern and Southern countries. In light of this situation, it is important to recognize the need for a complex professional identity that interweaves indigenous, local, global, and universalistic thinking with perceptions based on the new declarations of the social work profession. As such, further research and continuing professional discussions and elaboration are recommended.

Keywords Cultural competence · Cultural relativism · Globalization · Professional identity · International social work · Social work education

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Introduction

The current trend toward globalization has not only affected market dynamics but has also spilled over to the social work profession. This trend is evidenced in the increasing integration of international social work training programs as recommended components of social work education (e.g., Healy and Wairire 2014). It has also provided the background for a discussion about the personal and professional identity that social workers need to develop in the context of globalization processes (Scholar et al. 2014; Wiles 2013).

This article will deal with the issue of professional identity in the era of globalization from three basic perspectives: (1) The traditional construction of professional identity in social work; (2) the debate relating to the universal paradigm versus the paradigm of cultural competence and cultural relativism; (3) international social work programs as reflected in contemporary reality.

Professional Identity

Wiles (2013) argued that the development of a professional identity involves acquisition of a specialized knowledge base, understanding of social work values, and an ability to integrate knowledge and values with practice as essential components of professional competence. Professional identity combines the definition of a profession and the nature of identity with the processes involved in acquiring the identity, both by the individual and by members of a professional group. In the context of social work, the main theoretical frameworks are: the trait approach (individual and psychological), which includes need and risk-based perceptions (Sheppard 2006); and the power and the social

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construction approach (at the macro and social levels), which includes human rights, social justice, and anti-oppressive perceptions (Dominelli 2009; Healy 2005).

These approaches translate into academic knowledge, practice, and field training that are accompanied by self and social awareness (Nuttman-Shwartz and Shay 2011; Scholar et al. 2014; Weiss-Gal and Welbourne 2008). Moreover, students need to develop a personal sense of being a social worker. This can only emerge through opportunities to articulate one's professional identity in field placement as well as in the academic setting. Field placements provide students with their first experience of being part of the professional group, and have been described as the *profession's signature pedagogy* which prepares students in fundamental ways of thinking, performing, and acting as social workers (Wayne et al. 2010).

Furthermore, development of identity can be seen as a continuous interaction between individuals and their socio-cultural environment (Sevig et al. 2000). Troman (2007) suggested that the meaning of professional identity is contingent on political, academic, and professional contexts; as this interaction changes, identity will also change. In light of the current trends, Tanner and Arnett (2009) claimed that individuals represent the global environment they live in, and regardless of their place of residence, the psychological and developmental impact of globalization everywhere cannot be ignored. As a consequence of globalization, most people in the world today develop a bicultural identity, part of which is rooted in their local culture and part of which stems from an awareness of their relationship with the global culture. In addition, the pervasiveness of identity confusion may be increasing among young people in non-Western cultures. As local cultures change in response to globalization, some young people find that they do not feel at home in the local culture or in the global culture (Arnett 2002, p. 774). Moreover, in every society there are people who choose to form self-selected cultures with like-minded persons who wish to have an identity that is untainted by the global culture and its values. The explorations of identity are increasingly stretching beyond the adolescent years into the post-adolescent period of emerging adulthood (roughly from ages 18 to 25) (Arnett 2004).

Thus, globalization can be seen as a driving force for social representations that spread across borders, making people from different cultures become more similar as their perceptions, cognitions, and emotions constellate (Türken and Rudmin 2013). This opens a wide range of options for in-groups, even groups that are geographically dispersed, and allows for almost infinite ways of identifying with one another (Buchan et al. 2009). However, Turken and Rudmin (2013) also argued that as globalization makes people aware of the existence of a psychologically different other,

the other might form an out-group that provides distinctiveness from the corresponding in-group. Hence, just as globalization increases similarities, it can also increase national attachment, racism, discrimination of marginalized groups, a sense of mastery in understanding "others", and even ethnic pride (Dunn 2002; Fisher-Borne et al. 2015).

Therefore, the discussion of globalization must also address the concept of universalism and the complexity of localism versus globalism in the context of a professional identity for social work.

Between Indigenous-Local National Identity and Universal Global Identity

Professional identity is shaped so that it can respond to the unique characteristics and needs of the local context on the one hand, while also being attentive to the environment and responding to global issues in accordance with the "Statement of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development" (Gatenio-Gabel and Healy 2012) and to the global social work definition as confirmed by the IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014 on the other hand.

Gray (2005) claimed that the combination of universalism and indigenization is paradoxical. Universalism reflects "elements that transcend national boundaries and give social work a global face" (Gray and Fook 2007, p. 627), whereas indigenization reflects localism and cultural differences. According to Gray and Fook, "indigenization essentially refers to the extent to which social work practice fits local contexts. Social work practice is shaped by the extent to which local social, political, economic, historical and cultural factors as well as local voices shape social work responses. [In contrast]…, universalism refers to the trends within social work to find commonalities across divergent contexts such that it is possible to talk about a profession of social work with shared values and goals wherever it is practiced" (p. 231). Several researchers have argued that the spread of social work across the globe expands the reach of the profession as widely as possible. However, it also refers to methods of social work education and practice used in one social context (usually multicultural pluralistic societies in the global north) that are transferred to training programs in another context (usually the global south). This might cause difficulty applying principles of social justice toward addressing social inequality (Fisher-Bourne et al. 2015), and thus essentially reinforce imperialism (Gray 2005).

As a result, in recent years efforts have been made to train social workers to question the promotion of universalism as a desirable professional ideal (Healy 2005). In

that context, emphasis is placed on being open to cross-cultural differences, and on adopting international and transnational perspectives that will enable the successful performance of professional tasks (Chambon et al. 2014; Nadan and Ben-Ari 2012). This trend also reflects the local space (country), and has resulted in different types of migration processes that have created the current transnational reality (Köngeter et al. 2015; Lyons 2006). In addition, international organizations have recently made an attempt to find an integrative solution and define the professional tasks of social workers in a way that differences within the profession and among different geographic regions are taken into account. The social work profession "…promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels". (This definition was approved by the IFSW General Meeting and the IASSW General Assembly in July 2014.) Still, there is a question as to whether the declaration is helpful in dealing with the complex reality, and whether it promotes a suitable professional identity.

Between Vision and Reality

Three main problems reflect the gap between the vision of a pluralistic profession that is open to the social, regional, and global diversity and the difficulty that the social work profession has encountered in characterizing today's social problems: (a) the contradiction between pluralistic thinking and a profession which is based on processes that distinguish between "us" and "them"; (b) the debate about instilling cultural competence and relativism in social workers; (c) the role of international social work (ISW), including overseas fieldwork, in promoting professional globalization.

The Social Work Profession is Based on Processes that Distinguish Between "Us" and "Them"

The traditional profession has engaged more in providing assistance with emotional and psychological difficulties than in dealing with social issues (Weiss-Gal 2008). As such, the professional identity of social work has essentially created a dichotomy between those who do the work (social workers) and recipients of services. This has created

distancing and reduced basic trust (Doel 2010; Trevithick 2003), which reinforces boundaries of professional knowledge and hierarchical power relations (Oliver 2013) as well as distinctions between the "self" and "other" (Chambon 2013). In addition, the traditional social work profession has emphasized the distance between the knower and the known in terms of professional and academic knowledge. It has also emphasized the distance between the professional (the self) and the client (the other), who is likely to be seen as a less reliable and valid source of knowledge, and exacerbates the discrimination and oppression that clients have already experienced (Beresford 2013; Chambon 2013).

Beresford (2013) argued that social workers have been identified with the upper-middle class and with those who have power (primarily White people). This situation has unwittingly led to the formation of two groups, and to processes of "us" and "them" (professionals versus clients). Notably, there has been an essential change in professional approaches regarding the relationships between social workers and their clients. Despite the trends toward involvement, client participation, and cooperation, as well as trends toward mutuality and intersubjectivity in helping relationships (Beresford and Wilson 1998; Tosone 2004; Weiss-Gal 2008), clinical social workers are still considered more prestigious than those who are "too close to the problem". Social workers who are too close to their clients are not considered professional enough, and their role in the field is still marginal, especially in public social services (Strier and Binyamin 2014). For example, professionals still tend to speak for people rather than encourage them to speak for themselves (Beresford 2013). This reflects the fear that their expert professional roles will be undermined by the inclusion of service users, who are the objects of social policy. Moreover, it has been assumed that clients either cannot or do not want to participate, or that they would be overburdened by participation. It is also easy to exclude these groups, which frequently lack the power to ensure their inclusion (Beresford and Wilson 1998). In addition, Oliver (2013) claimed that in the current social work profession there is a need for diverse practices and roles, as well as for work in inter-professional settings. According to Oliver, the profession needs to be adjusted to social changes, although this might lead to a confused sense of professional self and threaten the professional identity of social workers. Furthermore, it might even emphasize the split between clinicians and community activists despite the ecological and system theories and the person-in-environment approach.

Chambon (2013) aptly describes this situation, and asks: "Do we learn, develop, and use social work as a way of bringing people together to create stronger collectives? Or is the discipline used as a way of identifying vulnerable

groups as problem populations? And has our knowledge the effect of distancing ourselves from them?" Chambon's conclusion is that "striving towards the other is both an obligation and impossibility" (p. 125).

In light of this reality, Anastas (2013) called for a more comprehensive model, and claimed that "it is impossible to understand all the intersectionality that we, our students, and our clients inhabit and enact" (p. 91). Moreover, Oliver claimed that the foundation of social work professional identity is "for a dual commitment to individual and structural intervention together with professional solidarity and interprofessional work" (p. 782). Other scholars have emphasized teaching knowledge and skills relating to cultural competence and cultural relativism, which aim to promote equal relationships (Nadan and Ben-Ari 2012; Reichert 2006).

Instilling Cultural Competence and Cultural Relativism in Social Work

Cultural competence is based on the assumption that a prerequisite to working with the "other" is having relevant information about group history, world views, social and familial norms, values, communication styles, and behavioral characteristics (Nadan and Ben-Ari 2012; Sue and Sue 2003). The literature review showed that many cultural competency frameworks have failed to encourage critical self-awareness that examines or challenges the inherent power imbalance between the provider and client. Rather, these frameworks have focused primarily on exposing providers to different cultural groups (Tervalon and Murray-García 1998).

In the article "The Myth of Cross-Cultural Competence", Dean (2001) discussed the discomforts that the cultural competence approach brings about in social work practice. Dean argued that cultural competence is a static perspective which introduces distortions, and that this way of thinking is flawed in its promise that the resulting knowledge can be mastered outside of interpersonal exchanges with clients. As a radical alternative, Dean suggested that social workers adopt a dialogical stance of "not knowing", and that they approach the intercultural, socio-economic, political and radicalized distance between client and worker as the ground for mutual learning.

Moreover, Fisher-Borne et al. (2015) argued that "…the major criticisms of cultural competency frameworks include: (a) the focus on comfort with 'others' framed as self-awareness; (b) the use of 'culture' as a proxy for minority racial/ethnic group identity; (c) the emphasis on attempting to 'know' and become 'competent' in understanding another's culture or cultures; and (d) the lack of a transformative social justice agenda that addresses and challenges social inequalities" (p. 169). As a result, they advocate the adoption of the *concept of cultural humility*, which takes into account the fluidity of culture. This concept challenges both individuals and institutions to address inequalities, and requires personal accountability in challenging institutional barriers that impact marginalized communities.

Beyond this, Nadan and Ben Ari (2012) claimed that social work educators, who are primarily theory driven, tend to adopt conceptualizations involving the transmission of knowledge about cultural groups as well as cultural differences. These conceptualizations neither call for personal involvement nor provide a basis for fostering self-perceptions of social workers as agents of change in society. Rather, they are directed toward perpetuating conservative notions of multiculturalism that tend to support and maintain the dominant hegemony, and don't even deal with social justice and equality for disadvantaged minority groups (Lum 1996). To fill this gap, it is necessary to acknowledge social and cultural differences in global contexts (Healy 2007), in addition to acknowledging local differences between subcultures, races, and ethnic groups as well as differential availability of resources within a given society (Reichert 2006). It is also necessary to reconsider cultural competence as it is presently defined in order to acknowledge its complexity, to pursue the goal of mastery, and to address social change in the way that anti-racism, post-colonial thinking, and anti-oppressive practice models address this issue (Garran and Werkmeister Rozas 2013).

Against this background, several methods of teaching and learning have been offered to adjust the social work profession and identity to the current complex social situation. These include cultural humanity (Fisher-Borne et al. 2015), professional boundary spanning (Oliver 2013), and International Social Work, which are considered to be a professional response to the social effects of the globalization (e.g. Lyons 2006; Healy 2005; Healy and Wairire 2014).

International Social Work: Is This in Fact the Desirable Solution?

International social work (ISW) focuses on understanding global processes that influence policy and practice beyond the local level (Lyons and Ramanathan 1999; Webb 2003). This approach crosses boundaries, and involves global and local efforts to assist populations in distress and individuals who have lost their rights (Healy 2001). In spite of its missions, common criticisms of ISW are similar to those of cultural competency, and also relate to the above-mentioned contemporary approaches to social work that

advocate general social sensitivity (Nimmagadda and Cowger 1999), preventing oppression (Dominelli 2009; Healy 2005), and social relativism (Rankopo and Osei-Hwedie 2011).

In addition, over time ISW has come to mean the transmission of social work from countries in the global North, where it is well institutionalized, to countries in the global South. This reinforces the logical models underlying the profession, which are based on Western thinking (Rowe et al. 2015; Wehbi et al. 2014). Therefore ISW is based on Western perspectives, so that fieldwork abroad and student mobility might breed paternalistic behavior as well as a new form of colonialism which might even be seen as an act of professional imperialism (Midgley 1981, 2001). For example, Hokenstad (2012) claimed that "ISW education perpetuates cultural and intellectual imperialism and discourages development or valuing of indigenous models promoting dominant Western ideas and practices" (pp. 172–173).

Another aspect is pointed out by Nadan (2014), who argued that in an international context, the encounters between people from different countries and continents are not merely cross-cultural, but often place them in unequal positions of power. This inequality is based on differential characteristics such as their history, as well as on current global divisions such as the North–South division. Thus, operationalization of cultural competence in international contexts is not an easy task for professionals and educators. In these contexts, there is a need for a more constructive and reflective view of cultural competence, which includes power relations, oppression, and inequality. Moreover, there is a need to employ a critical, anti-racist and post-colonial perspective among students and educators alike.

To overcome processes of paternalism and neocolonialism, several recommendations have been presented in the literature. Gray (2005) claimed that it is important to rely on the notion of culture, which enables indigenization and includes different voices and diversity. Based on this notion, it is possible to retain universalism and yet to avoid imperialism. In addition, Gray recommended adopting "multiple local 'social works' as constitutive of international social work rather than of ISW" (Gray 2005, p. 238), and Abram et al. (2005) offered the "reverse mission" as a model for international social work education and transformative intra national practice which "… emphasizes learning from indigenous people and their leaders, raising missionaries' and sojourners' levels of consciousness and advocating for changes in one's home country that can impact poverty and injustice in the world" (p. 163). One of the attempts to overcome the imbalance during the encounter between overseas students was Nuttman-Shwartz and Ranz (2014) description of their experience in implementing a reciprocal model of ISW training in the context of fieldwork abroad. Their findings indicate that it is still unclear what local perspectives of social workers and social work the visiting students took back with them to apply to the local context of social work in their own country. Hence the question: Is international social work in general and field placement abroad in particular a satisfactory space for developing a professional identity that fits the global reality of this field?

Does ISW Actually Promote a Global Identity?

There is a difference of opinion as to whether ISW programs are the best way to promote a professional identity today, or whether these programs reinforce processes of division and exclusion. Through ISW programs, the social work profession assumes responsibility for changing the social structure. This is the most effective strategy for understanding the unequal power dynamics that accompany the transmission of ideas and knowledge, and for developing a professional identity among social workers in today's world (Hugman 2012). For example, Dominelli (2007) argued that international social work focusing on anti-oppressive practice seeks to undermine universalized biological representations of social divisions, which both validate diversity and enhance solidarity among people. In a similar vein, Ife (2001) claimed that international work must be regarded as the core task of social workers, and needs to be made central to our construction of the role of social work as well as to our definition of fields of social work practice. "All social work practice, wherever it occurs, must now be regarded as working at the global/local interface, at the point where global forces impinge on the human experience" (Ife 2001, p. 13).

Based on research conducted in Canada, Hiranandani (2011) claimed that in order to develop a global-pluralistic society one needs to deconstruct national identity. "Whenever I have challenged some North American/Canadian ways of thinking in classroom settings, students have mentioned they are taught since childhood that the 'North American way is the best way'!.." (p. 10). Moreover, Wiles (2013) argued that among more affluent populations, globalization intensifies feelings of nationalism. An extreme view was proposed by Fenster and Vizel (2006), who argued that global training programs break the students' identity—particularly for social work students from Northern countries who participate in overseas ISW programs. Therefore, those ISW training programs can lead to distancing and reinforce trends of "us" and "them" between the North and South. This, in turn, can intensify trends that lead to inequality. Moreover, research findings have revealed that globalization undermines the sense of belonging to a familiar place, and creates a need to

strengthen ties with a subgroup or community (Fenster and Vizel 2006). Hence, the encounter with otherness without a sense of belonging to a familiar place can have the opposite effect, as evidenced in training in other countries during field placement abroad (Ranz et al. 2015).

An integrative perspective relating to social work identity in the era of globalization was raised by Lyons (2006), who argued that in a universal professional context there is no contradiction between globalization and localization, and globalization is essentially integrated in local social work. Based on this premise, Lyons talks about "glocalised" social work, which refers to an understanding of the local context in terms of the impact of economic and cultural globalization on the local socio-cultural context, as well as the impact of the local context on global developments (Dominelli 2007; Lyons 2006). Lyons (2006) further contended that thinking globally and acting locally can help enhance the social welfare of global citizens.

It is important to note that this perception is reflected in the increasing numbers of international education programs and overseas students, as well as in *international and transnational research and teaching (either face-to-face instruction or on-line long distance courses;* Schilling et al. 2013; White 2006). In these programs, students from overseas must cope with the need to understand social work in very different political systems and cultural contexts with varying levels of resources. In addition, ISW programs have been conducted within national boundaries during a period of unprecedented voluntary and involuntary population mobility, as reflected in work migration as well as in the migration of displaced populations, refugees, asylum seekers, and even populations with no legal status.

In the same vein, Healy (2001) emphasized the interconnectedness between what happens at home and abroad, where social workers must "monitor the impact of their own nation's policies on other countries and people's well-being" (p. 3) as stressed through the "reverse mission model" (Abram et al. 2005; Abram and Cruce 2007). Thus, these approaches and activities will affect perspectives of professionalism as well as the professional identity of social workers.

Discussion, Conclusions and Thoughts for the Future

The present article dealt with the issue of instilling a professional identity in an era of globalization. It questioned the status quo in terms of the developmental impact of globalization on the formulation of personal and professional identity among social workers. An analysis of the literature points to the lack of a definition of professional identity that fits the changes in identity processes in the current global world. In that connection, there is also a dispute regarding the best way to develop a professional identity that suits the changes resulting from globalization (Arnett 2002; Beresford 2013; Chambon 2013; Türken and Rudmin 2013). In this discourse, there is a question regarding the visions and training methods that professional organizations should adopt in order to respond to the social reality of the global world (Dean 2001; Nadan and Ben-Ari 2012).

Moreover, the analysis indicates that there is a debate about the following issue: Does instilling cultural competence and cultural relativism in social work, and promoting global collaboration and field work training abroad facilitate the development of the desired identity (Fisher-Borne et al. 2015)? Or does the opposite process take place, i.e., does training abroad strengthen national identity and elitism, and even cause divisions? In response to these questions, traditional approaches are often maintained despite the increasing demand to combat oppression and change the social constructions that create these identities (Dean 2001; Dominelli 2009; Nadan and Ben-Ari 2012; Weiss-Gal 2008).

The above-mentioned debate highlights the differences between developed areas of the world, which are referred to as the global north, and less developed areas, which are referred to as the global south. In addition, the debate raises classic questions relating to universalism, cultural relativism, and localism. There is a need to continue investing efforts in enhancing awareness of these issues among professionals, especially in the era of migration and massive transnational and international mobility.

In addition, the challenge is how to consider simultaneously holding multiple identities and how this perspective can be instilled. It appears that over the years, the acquisition of identity has been perceived as an outcome of training processes. There is a need to understand how identity is created in a globalized world which is characterized by open technology and offers infinite options. In this world, people oscillate between their national identity and their global identity, as well as between their individual and collective identities. Because this may cause ambiguity (Chambon 2013), it is necessary to redefine what professional identity is (Oliver 2013).

Research has revealed that in multicultural and international encounters experienced by social workers and social work students, there is an unconscious regression to conservative and even nationalistic perspectives (Chambon 2013; Wiles 2013). This might intensify apologetic attitudes and feelings of shame as well as feelings of anger and aversion (Ranz et al. 2015), and can even devalue indigenous knowledge (Tsang and Yan 2001). In contrast, others have argued that integration between localization and

globalization enables multi-layered identity constructs (Healy 2007; Lyons 2006), and that for populations from disadvantaged areas, holding a global identity is a substitute for an identity that they seek to abandon. From that perspective, global identity engenders a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and equity (Kunst and Sam 2013).

This highlights the need for awareness of the complexity involved in defining the desired professional identity, and the need to determine how that professional identity can be achieved. As such, it is necessary to examine processes outside of the "regular" educational setting that affect professional identity, and to determine how students and professionals can establish a professional identity during the course of global social work training. This is particularly important in situations where there is an automatic and even an unconscious tendency to develop an independent, individualistic identity on the personal and professional levels. As described above, such situations in field placements abroad or at local sites during the course of ISW training can intensify trends such as elitism and emphasize Northern perspectives, which are considered undesirable and conflict with the aims of the social work profession. These difficulties are in line with critical social work theories that shed light on the constraints of the profession as a whole and the difficulty of clinical work with marginalized populations in particular. Moreover, in light of the above-mentioned limitations, these theories highlight the need to develop suitable social work strategies in order to change the lives of these populations and promote social justice (Krumer-Nevo et al. 2011).

As mentioned, globalization processes shape and re-shape the identity of social workers in the Western and non-Western worlds (Global North and Global South). Thus, it is necessary to examine how global processes affect the professional identity of teaching staff in organizations engaging in social work education, as well as the professional identity of practitioners and students in the field (Abram and Cruce 2007; Hiranandani 2011). Toward this end, there is a need to identify the conditions that are essential for the development of a professional identity that is consistent with the vision of the social work profession today. In this process, the importance of interweaving indigenous, local perceptions with global and universal thinking in a way that goes beyond existing models should be acknowledged. There is also a need to enhance understanding of the concepts of globalization, universalism, localism, and professional identity. Moreover, the existing ambiguity in the terms and methods of training and practice highlights the importance of formulating new definitions. It is also important to bear in mind that although clinical social work is still considered the desired expertise among social workers in the US. Despite intersubjective theories, these workers are far from integrating the declaration of human rights and social justice into their practice (Reimer 2014).

Recently, Tosone (2016) argued that "clinical social work appreciates the impact of the environment on the individual…, but extends this concept by contextualizing the relational therapeutic matrix in the immediate milieu, larger society, and its institutions" (p. 107). Particularly in clinical social work settings, both the client and clinician filter their experiences of one another through their respective familial histories, peer relationships, as well as through their cultural norms and respective reference groups, and through the community and larger societal institutions with which they interact as individuals and as a dyad. This might also help integrate the client's internal life with external reality and social forces that play an important role in individual functioning. As such, clinical social work might make a special contribution to developing professional identity in the era of globalization by promoting the global health arena, as reflected in the way that they incorporate multiple local contexts into clinical social work discourse and practice.

In the same vein, others have claimed that clinical social work today encourages in-depth exploration of areas of difference, oppression, and privilege in order to promote personal and professional growth. It has also been argued that clinical social work has an acute sensitivity to cultural bias in diagnosis as well as to economic disparity in treatment options, and that clinicians have been forced to walk a diagnostic-environmental tightrope (Berzoff et al. 2008; Probst 2013). Hence there is a need for more extensive research dealing with effective methods of social work training, as well as for research dealing with the development of an appropriate identity for the global context, which meets the professional demands formulated recently by professional organizations (IFSW 2014), and which reflects the spirit of the times. An attempt should be made to promote understanding of the implications of learning together with overseas students, working with different migrants, and using different approaches towards the professional identity of social workers today.

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