

# Understanding Globalization through Short-Term International Field Experiences

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*The process of globalization is contested terrain across the globe. Social work practice is affected by this process, since globalization has led to a widening of the gap between rich and poor and has increased the number of people living in poverty. Social workers must understand economic globalization in order to be able to contest its effects on our personal and professional lives. This article examines the process of economic globalization. It offers a case example of a short-term international field program, the Sin Fronteras Chile Project, which shows how social work education in the United States can help prepare social workers to be actors in a world affected by economic globalization. It also offers recommendations for strengthening undergraduate social work education, based on students' experiences with Sin Fronteras.*

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Social work education's commitment to social justice, human rights, and multiculturalism is well known and well documented (Boyle, Nackerud, & Kilpatrick, 1999; Gil, 1998; Ife, 2001; IFSW, n.d.; Mama, 2001; NASW, 1996). One of the most comprehensive ways to approach these issues is through the integration of international social work and social issues in the curriculum. However, social work education in the United States has not yet fully embraced international or global content—including economic globalization—into its curricula (Cargata & Sánchez, 2002). This is troubling, given that social workers are on the front lines, working with those persons who are most affected and exploited by economic globalization (Reisch & Jarman-Rohde, 2000). This article seeks to offer an example of how to include content on globalization at the

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baccalaureate level in a way that helps students to integrate theory and practice as well as understand the global-local, or “glocal,” connection.

According to Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz (2002), globalization “is the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and (to a lesser extent) people across borders” (p. 9). The process of globalization is contested terrain—while international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) press for the proliferation of neoliberal free-market economic reforms, grassroots movements around the world engage in massive protests against the process of economic globalization. Social work practice is affected by the process of economic globalization (Penna, Paylor, & Washington, 2000; Polack, 2004; Reisch & Jarman-Rohde, 2000), since this process has led to a widening of the gap between rich and poor and has increased the number of people living in poverty (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001; see also Harvey, 2000; Park, 1999; Stiglitz, 2002). It is incumbent upon social workers to understand globalization and to be able to contest economic globalization and its effects on their personal and professional lives. It is equally important that baccalaureate social work programs offer students the opportunity to study globalization and its effects on social work practice and social policy in such a manner that permits students to integrate this content with their social work practice.

This article will discuss globalization with a particular emphasis on a subaltern perspective of globalization, focusing on how economic globalization imposes itself upon society. Using a program called *Sin Fronteras*, a short-term international field experience for social work students, this article will discuss implications of and recommendations for how undergraduate social work education in the United States can help prepare generalist practice social workers to prepare themselves for effective practice that challenges the deleterious effects of economic globalization.

## **A Review of the Literature**

### Globalization

Much of the discussion on globalization focuses on the economic issues related to the process of globalization—the rapid movement of capital and production around the world and the concentration of capital in the hands of a few transnational corporations. Petras and Veltmeyer (2001) partially agree with this conceptualization but believe it is more than this. They insist that globalization is about both economics and politics. Therefore, in order to understand globalization and its effects, we must be able to examine the process from both a geopolitical and a geo-economic perspective (Gill, 2003). Much of the debate about globalization has occurred in the realm of its economic processes. However, social workers also must examine how closely tied the process of global-

ization is to a new political understanding. This political understanding leads to an achieved hegemony (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001) in which a few dominate the many. In this way, “globalization is both a description and a prescription—a particular model of capitalist development, promoting a Social Darwinist re-configuration of priorities, policies and outcomes. The most pervasive—and perverse—consequence of this shift has been a rapid deepening of social inequality” across the globe (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001, p. 11).

Harvey (2000), agreeing that globalization is more than economic, states, “We can view ‘globalization’ as a process rather than as a political-economic condition that has recently come into being” (p. 19). This process is more correctly termed economic globalization and can be charted from at least feudal times, when communitarian lands were seized for the exportation of wool from sheep, and whole communities were displaced. This process has been strongly affiliated and associated with the movement of capital across international borders in an attempt to impose and regulate a neoliberal world order. As a result, corporate colonialism (Korten, 2001), a new form of hegemony that controls wages, workers, and the economies of nations, has arisen.

There are “three main institutions that govern [economic] globalization: the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization” (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 16). These institutions are highly influenced by the U.S. government, and their decisions supersede decisions made within democratic processes in third- and first-world countries alike. The structural adjustment and austerity measures imposed by these institutions, for example, tie the hands of elected officials who campaign on promises of increased social spending, only to find out that they really cannot deliver on their promises since their country’s economy is being run from Washington, D.C. (Korten, 2001; see also Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001).

Related to the hegemonic dominance of these institutions is the development of the so-called Washington Consensus calling for neoliberal models of economics to be imposed on third-world countries—“the ‘right’ policies for developing countries—that [signal] a radically different approach to economic development and stabilization” (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 16; see also Bond, 2003). There are three pillars to this Washington Consensus—“fiscal austerity, privatization, and market liberalization” (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001, p. 53). Not included are programs important to social workers, such as job creation, land reform, and improved health care and education, for example. Therefore, the process of economic globalization has led to a reduction in the welfare state (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001) in third- and first-world countries alike, destroying even the minimal safety net that previously existed. In the third world, this is often due to the exigencies of international lending and trade institutions. In the first and third worlds, the globalization of injustice and oppression is obvious (Chomsky & Saramago, 2002), as the poor and vulnerable, those with whom social workers are called to partner, are affected by the far-reaching and powerful tentacles of economic globalization.

Inherent in the process of globalization are significant contradictions, or “globaloney” (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001). Richer countries demand that poorer countries remove trade barriers, but then they increase their own level of protectionism. Free trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), on the surface call for trade barriers to be reduced so that all countries can compete equally in the global market. In the fine print, however, these agreements and treaties offer the possibility for rich nations to dump their excess products on poor nations, without the possibility for reciprocity (Stiglitz, 2002). Double standards for trade by which richer nations are permitted to protect their business and economic interests and poorer nations are forced to play by a more restrictive set of rules are operant. In the end, the mechanisms of this globalization have “not succeeded in reducing poverty nor ensuring economic stability” (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 6); rather, there is a “growing divide between the haves and have-nots” (p. 5) that exists within and between countries.

Therefore, while the idea of globalization includes more than economic and political hegemony, the practice of globalization has been just that—the imposition of certain modes of production and consumption that have increased social inequality around the world. For this reason, it is more accurate to discuss economic globalization when one is talking about the process of globalization as it is presently understood and referred to in mainstream culture. It is this understanding of economic globalization and its underlying political economy that baccalaureate social work needs to integrate more effectively. In order to do this effectively, U.S.-based social workers need to interrogate their position of privilege and understand this position from the point of view of those in the global south—those who are not privileged at the expense of U.S. privilege.

### Baccalaureate Social Work Education

Social work education has adapted over the years to better prepare generalist practice social work practitioners for changing realities (Austin, 1997). At the dawn of the twenty-first century, social work once again finds itself needing to adapt, change, and modify its curricula to better prepare future practitioners for the challenges of social work practice in a globalized world (Polack, 2004), a world where uncertainty is rampant and inequality is growing (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001). Social work education must prepare students to act on multiple levels simultaneously as life is affected by these multiple levels. Jaribu Hill, human rights activist and co-founder of the Mississippi Workers’ Center for Human Rights, is quoted in the Ford Foundation’s (2004) work on human rights case studies as saying, “Our struggle has never been a purely local struggle. . . . It’s just that we can no longer afford to disregard the global link. What ever happens [over there] has implications here” (p. 7). Perhaps as in no other moment in history, what happens “over there,” and vice versa, is critically important for

social work. Social work education must give students the tools to understand, analyze, and effectively challenge both global, “over there,” and local practices and policies that contribute to injustice and oppression.

This is especially true in the United States, where students tend to be more isolated from the realities the rest of the world faces (Goodman, 2001). Allan E. Goodman (2001), president and CEO of the Institute of International Education, states, “Most Americans are in school with other Americans and in most classrooms there is no international or intercultural perspective. What is missing is what Professor [Allan] Bloom said was so precious about a college student’s intellectual space and time: ‘These are charmed years when he can, if he so chooses, become anything he wishes. The importance of these years for an American cannot be overestimated. They are civilization’s only chance to get to him’” (para. 3).

Undergraduate education is clearly an opportunity for U.S. educators to help students see the world from a different viewpoint, to question the assumptions they have been brought up with, and to challenge the dominant discourse on reality. Given that the mainstream media portrays globalization as a positive process, neglecting to point out how economic globalization contributes to inequality and injustice, it is important for baccalaureate social work programs to include content on this topic in their curricula. It is also important to give students the opportunity to engage in a personal way with those most affected by economic globalization. That is, students need to be provided with “relevant education [that] aims to help the learner cope with the new world context and new world realities that beset a fluid society such as ours” (Romero, 1990, p. 8) so that they can integrate theory into and throughout their practice.

While there are many more nuances to the process of economic globalization and baccalaureate social work education, the above discussion is meant to offer a context for understanding the role of the Sin Fronteras Chile Project in helping BSW students understand economic globalization through hands-on experiences. The next section discusses the Sin Fronteras Chile Project in depth, using the words and experiences of students from the United States to demonstrate how the program helps them better understand globalization while building international partnerships contesting the process.

### **Sin Fronteras—the Chile Project**

The Sin Fronteras Chile Project has been bringing university students for the past thirteen years to the *población*, or shantytown, of La Pincoya in the northern section of the city of Santiago. Its theme, *Sin Fronteras*—without borders—points to the purpose of building relationships that go beyond the familiar, and making global connections possible. The primary objectives of the program are to help students challenge themselves to see the world from the perspective of the dominated, rather than the dominators; understand how the process of

economic globalization has led to more precarious living conditions for the world's majority (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001); make connections between economic globalization and social work practice; learn about political, civil, social, economic, cultural, and collective human rights; and learn how they can engage in glocal social work practice. This article focuses on the second and third objectives, which are interrelated with the other objectives.

Over the years, approximately two hundred students, over 80 percent of them BSW students, have participated in this experience, many participating repeatedly to continue their learning, reconnect with the community, and increase their global understanding. Other participants return to the United States and begin to apply what they have learned about Chile and the world in their studies and/or social work practice. The group varies in size from year to year from between eight to twenty students. The group usually stays in Chile for eighteen to twenty days, but some group members have stayed much longer or returned on their own later. While students do not earn academic credit for this program, upon return from Chile, a number of students have chosen to extend their learning through an independent study based on the Sin Fronteras experience.

It is important to note that an integral component of Sin Fronteras is reflection, both alone and in a group setting. From the moment a student expresses interest in the Sin Fronteras program, he or she is asked to reflect on his or her reasons for wanting to participate, as well as the connection this experience will have to his or her future social work practice. Before leaving for Chile, students are required to complete a number of readings and attend a series of meetings. Students are given a journal with a list of questions that they should reflect upon before they leave for Chile, once in Chile, and upon return to the United States.

Once they arrive in Chile, the group meets regularly to discuss what has been going on; the impressions of the students, and their concerns; and to help them apply what they are learning to their understanding of how globalization, human rights, and social and economic justice relate to and affect social work practice. When the group returns to the United States, members continue to meet to reflect, share experiences, and plan how to integrate this experience into their personal and professional lives. While students are not necessarily taking classes based upon Sin Fronteras, they incorporate their experiences into their social work course work and well as course work outside the major. They do this through term papers and presentations that focus on global economics and social work, social work with Latin American immigrants, human rights, and international social work. Aside from this course work, participants are asked to write a short reflection for inclusion on the Sin Fronteras Web page and to participate in a campus-wide presentation about the program.

Each year the group works with youth leaders from La Pincoya, a typical *población* with high unemployment and underemployment, tenuous living conditions, poor schools, rampant illness caused by poor nutrition and a damaged environment, and insufficient assistance for those living the ravages of so many years of free-market economic exploitation, to run an *escuela popular* (Freedom

School), called Escuela Popular Concierto y Cultura, for children. The theme of the *escuela* changes from year to year, but it is always related to the United Nations Covenant on the Rights of the Child. Aside from actually running the *escuela* for one week, students' related work includes planning meetings, compiling summative and formative evaluations, and communicating with past participants in the United States.

The group also engages in other activities. Group members stay with families in La Pincoya in order to share the *pan de cada día* (daily bread) with folks. They spend time attending seminars and presentations in order to learn more about Chile. Presentations include a history of the *población*, which was born from a land invasion. Chile is known as the birthplace of *tomas de terrenos* (land invasions, or squatter settlements), where people living in poverty organized to improve their living conditions. One of the leaders of the La Pincoya *toma* was Luzmenia Toro Sepúlveda. She is the current president of the Junta de Vecinos but was nineteen at the time of the *toma*, with three children under the age of three. She shares her thirty-five-plus years of experience, including the dim days of the dictatorship, when she, her children, and her husband of forty years were tortured, with the group. She also talks about how the *población* today continues to suffer due to issues related to economic globalization, such as the privatization of health-care and educational services.

The group also visits the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD)—the Family Members of the Detained and Disappeared. Representatives share their ongoing struggles to find out about their loved ones and poignantly communicate their irrational hope that some family members still harbor, even after more than thirty years, of finding their family members alive. The discussion also touches on the issue of human rights in Chile today, with a special emphasis on how the imposition of a neoliberal economic model exacerbates poverty in Chile and limits social programs that deal with poverty and people living in poverty.

At a local university, an economics professor presents on the relationship between political economy and social work, with a focus on Chile. This presentation includes a discussion of the recent economic history of Chile, now considered the “economic tiger” of Latin America. While the macroeconomic indicators may point to economic growth, as the group has seen, this has not improved the lives of the people in the *poblaciones*. The effects of the neoliberal economic model that was imposed upon the Chilean people by the dictatorship, with the support of the United States, the IMF, and the World Bank, are obvious. The dictatorship privatized or did away with almost all social programs in Chile, and this has led to Chile's position as one of the ten countries in the world with the greatest inequality (Claude, Carreño, & Gutiérrez, 2002). After the presentation, the group is able to engage in a discussion of the relevancy of this for social work practice across systems levels. The group can also make connections between the United States and Chile regarding how economic globalization violates human rights at home and abroad.

### Student Learning

Students comment that their learning is intensified by their participation in this hands-on project. One of the ways students have been most affected has been through the building of relationships with people in Chile. Participants routinely comment that they are much better able to grasp issues related to economic globalization due to their discussions, sometimes heated, with Chileans. They also comment that through participation in Sin Fronteras, they are contributing to a healthy form of globalization—the globalization of partnerships between first- and third-world peoples. This is the other side of globalization (Cargata & Sánchez, 2002; Ife, 2000; Roy, 2003; Stiglitz, 2002), and the side that social workers can benefit from, since it is based upon relationships of collaboration and respect. Participants almost always articulate their learning through the relationships they have formed with their Chilean partners.

Mark,<sup>1</sup> who has been to La Pincoya five times and is now an adjunct faculty member in a local undergraduate social work program, says:

Relationships are revolution. We have to hang in there with each other and keep our connections. We have to strive for understanding and struggle to increase our understanding. We learn to do that effectively while we are in Chile—now we must bring that back to our family and friends in the U.S. . . . We get conditioned and move forward with blinders on, and we do what is set out for us to do. This [our experience in Chile] is just a glimpse of another possibility. It is made possible because we leave behind our defenses and open ourselves up to freely learning.

What Mark is referring to is how the relationships he has made in Chile with Chileans and other members of the Sin Fronteras group have helped him be faithful to his commitment to social transformation. Mark returns to Chile each year in order to learn more, share with his friends in La Pincoya, and remind himself of how he can be a more effective social worker in the global movement for human rights. He states that “It is necessary to continue to learn about globalization, the good and the bad, in order to bring about social change.”

Jessica points out that while

I have had a good education, I read a good deal, and I try to read from varying points of view; this trip has taught me so much. In the U.S. we are taught that our country is the world. I am so naive—I thought people liked us. I have so much more to learn. People here in Chile know so much because they care about knowing and educate themselves, even without a good education system. In some ways they are forced to do this since their daily lives are affected by decisions made in Washington, D.C., and New York. It is so opposite here from at home, where people are so docile. At times in the U.S. I think we are living in [Orwell's] 1984.

<sup>1</sup>All names have been changed.

Another participant, Ed, echoed Jessica's comments with "Even the kids here in the *escuela popular* know about world issues. Their awareness reflects a sophistication that we do not see in most adults in the U.S." Both Jessica and Ed had traveled before, but never in a program like the Sin Fronteras experience, which is hands on and very grassroots. The design of this program is such that from the first few minutes in La Pincoya, participants are in constant contact with Chileans. While it can be exhausting, it is also quite educational and reflects the desires of the participants over the past ten years. Jessica continues, "I feel like I have been ripped off in my education because I do not know much about the world. I feel like I got shortchanged." To that, Doris replies, "Don't rely on the U.S. education system—do it on your own." These students are all people who have been active in community service, are concerned about human rights, and read a good deal about international affairs. However, they all have realized during these trips that their knowledge was limited because most of it came from a U.S.-based worldview. Once they arrived in Chile they were able to begin to see the world through different lenses.

Elisa also talks about how impressed she was with how much people in Chile knew. Elisa lived in Central America in her junior year, but she was still impressed with how this immersion experience helped her increase her knowledge and also reinforced her desire to work in international social work. She said, "This trip reiterated the effects of U.S. foreign policy and economic globalization and the ignorance that I have [as] to what the U.S. continues to do abroad. . . . I was impressed how much Chileans [young and old] knew about U.S. politics" in comparison to similar populations back in the United States. This experience helped Elisa understand the role that social workers must play in educating the general public about international and global issues, since those issues affect the multifaceted work of social workers across systems levels in the United States.

Janet was equally impressed with the knowledge of Chileans, some of whom can barely read, about world affairs.

I had no idea how much the U.S. affected the political and economic issues of Chile. I was disgusted coming back home. Political and economic issues are right in the face of the Chileans. They are directly affected by matters that seem so far from us here in the United States. When legislations are passed here, we often don't feel the impact as intense as Chileans feel. I learned that this is why everyone is so politically preoccupied. It's their lives and they can't forget it or expect someone else to deal with it.

Others agreed with Janet, realizing that they were ignorant to the real meaning of economic globalization. Many have echoed the remarks of Elisa and have said that they had much more to learn about the role the United States plays in the day-to-day operations of foreign economies and the effects this economic interference has on the lives of the vast majority of the people in those countries.

All in all, these experiences demonstrate how this short-term field experience has helped students broaden their perspective and develop a new understanding of globalization and global issues. Students often comment that since this

experience is a complete immersion from arrival to departure, their learning is profound. Many students on this trip have met other students from the United States while in Chile or en route to the United States. Those other students stay in hotels in the center of Santiago or on the “main line” and are always amazed that the Sin Fronteras students would stay in a shantytown. When they compare experiences, it is obvious that the Sin Fronteras group has learned far more about geopolitical and geo-economic reality, has built significant relationships, and is beginning to understand how to be better glocal social workers. As Janet, who took an intense public health course in Costa Rica, stated, “Costa Rica was a place to study. In Chile I am part of a community committed to change.”

As Jessica pointed out above, students learn how their education has failed them, both inside and outside the social work curriculum. As a result, students are asked to make suggestions to strengthen social work education. Those suggestions follow.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The Sin Fronteras experience helps students understand how globalization affects social workers professionally and personally as both they and people in client status<sup>2</sup> experience more complex problems while social programs are consistently underfunded, understaffed, and de-professionalized. Based on this, participants in the Sin Fronteras Chile Project believe that social workers can and should be at the forefront of opposing, challenging, and confronting this new world order of economic globalization since the social work commitment to human rights and social and economic justice calls on all social workers to challenge all forms of injustice, oppression, and discrimination (Gil, 1998). To that end, participants of Sin Fronteras have made some suggestions about how undergraduate social work education can be strengthened to help social workers gain the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to contest economic globalization. These suggestions include increased exposure to and about social movements, a better understanding of political economy and international social welfare policy and analysis, and an understanding of how glocal action is the cornerstone of all practice.

### **Challenges to Social Work Education—Social Movements**

While the discussion of globalization provided in this article may seem to indicate that the forces of oppression cannot be questioned, nor their effects overturned, this is not accurate. There is a large international movement of diverse

<sup>2</sup>In an attempt to confront the current hierarchical practices within social work, I avoid using the term “client” to refer to the people with whom social workers practice. I prefer to use the term “people in client status,” which addresses the fact that in this world of uncertainty, we might all need the collaboration of a social worker. I do not contend, however, that this terminology is perfect; my hope is that it is better and less vertical.

people and groups consistently and vociferously fighting for a humanization of globalization—for a globalization that will truly connect all peoples on our planet, not only through economic forces, but on a human level as well. This has been called the globalization of hope (Chomsky & Saramago, 2002) and was evidenced in worldwide protests against the war in Iraq in February of 2003. These protests were possible because for the past years there has been a strong movement taking shape around the world (Chomsky & Saramago, 2002; see also Gabetta, 2002; Roy, 2003)—a movement dubbed the “antiglobalization” movement by the media. In fact, it is important to note that this movement is not against the idea of globalization; rather, it is against the form and shape globalization has taken, as described above. As Korten (2001) states, it is “the forces of a newly emerging global movement advanced by a planetary citizen alliance” (p. 5). Participants in *Sin Fronteras* begin to experience their connection to this global movement while they are in Chile and begin to become part of this “planetary citizen alliance.”

As professionals committed to societal transformation and human rights, social workers need to commit to movements that reflect social work values and connect these movements to their professional and personal activities. At the same time, social workers must engage in the circle of practice/praxis (Freire, 1970)—dialogue, reflection, and conscious action—in order to understand how social work practice might actually be contributing to the perpetuation of injustice and oppression. That is, how might social workers actually be accomplices in the violation of human rights (Lyon-Callo, 2004)?

Social workers must use their skills and knowledge to be partners in building social movements that address injustice and oppression. In Chile, the *Sin Fronteras* group experiences this working side by side in partnership with neighborhood leaders and professional social workers. They witness how social workers use their professional ties to help community leaders network and make connections beyond their immediate milieu. As a result of their hands-on experiences, these participants are able to educate themselves about social work in service of human rights and social justice. They also gain a more complete understanding of today’s social movements fighting against economic globalization and the role social workers can play in those movements.

Social workers must also gain a better understanding of how agencies and institutions may be obstacles to significant change (Lyon-Callo, 2004). Students in *Sin Fronteras* reflect on some of their field experiences, realizing that oftentimes they were asking people to conform to unjust social structures when what really needed to change were those very structures. They realize that they need to develop the tools to analyze how the structures within which professional duties and responsibilities are exercised might block the work and action of social movements (Addams, 2002; Reynolds, 1991). Finally, social work education needs to provide students with concrete examples of how social workers are working within social movements to both protest and propose, recognizing that “social movements cannot exist unless they both assert something and

reject something” (Touraine, 2001, p. 48). Social workers have the skills, the contacts, the vision, and the values to be significant players in social movements to bring about significant change and contest and counteract the negative consequences of economic globalization.

### Challenges to Social Work Education—International Policy Analysis and Political Economy

Students also articulate that they feel their social work education is lacking in political economy and international policy analysis. Mark pointed out that many countries are able to successfully offer programs to eliminate poverty and inequality, and that the United States could learn from those examples rather than being isolated into thinking of itself as an exception. To that end, social work education can help counteract the deleterious effects of economic globalization by offering social workers the knowledge and skills they need to engage in analysis of political economy. By increasing their knowledge of political economy and international social welfare policy, social workers can be more effective in pursuit of social change in the United States. As Haynes and Mickleson (2000) note, “A commitment to social change without the means to achieve it is futile in any profession” (p. 5). Social work education can help create the means to achieve this social change, but only if as students social workers develop the skills of social analysis, like those Jessica spoke of above.

Social work education can also ask what will be the “new principles of social justice . . . [that will be] a criterion for judging the adequacy of policy that can challenge the counter-myths of progress and endless accumulation and consumption associated with neo-liberalism” (Gill, 2003, conclusion, para. 4)? By examining international examples, social workers can question the status quo and how it is presented, providing concrete examples for change. In order to do this, social work education needs to make a commitment to include the experiences of exploited persons in curricula (Ife, 2001). This means including readings that are written from the perspective of the dominated and not relying on academic interpretation as expressed through academic writing.

### Glocal Action as a Cornerstone in Social Work Practice

The saying “think globally, act locally” has been a refrain of many people engaged in conscious action for social change. Today, in order to bring about long-lasting and profound change, this concept needs expansion. Energy, resources, and commitment can be focused on the glocal. “No longer can we ‘think globally, act locally,’ but rather it has become necessary to think and act at both local and global levels, and to link the two” (Ife, 2000, p. 55). This requires a paradigm shift that affects social workers professionally and personally; it is a shift to global citizenship—“a citizenship of activism” (Drover, 2000, p. 34; see also Addams, 2000). Social workers are called to engage in practice that examines

and addresses collective responses to needs (Cargata & Sánchez, 2002); they must recognize that as global structures operate in transnational ways, social workers also must do the same (Penna et al., 2000). Global structures affect the lives of everyone, requiring ethical and effective social work practice that understands those global structures, questions them, and challenges them.

## **Conclusions**

Social workers have an ethical commitment to continuing education (NASW, 1996, Standard 4.01) and an ethical responsibility to the broader society (Standard 6) to “promote the general welfare of society, from local to global levels.” Therefore, social work education needs to focus on social work practice issues, concerns, skills, and knowledge that help address issues related to economic globalization and its negative effects on society. This focus will help advance both the mission of social work and contribute to the broader society.

At the same time, social workers must recognize that the global struggle to overcome the injustice of economic globalization requires persistence, patience, and commitment; the fruit or direct benefit of this labor may not be visible in this lifetime, but social workers are called upon to leave a legacy for future generations. As Indian author and activist Arundhati Roy (2003) points out,

If we look at this conflict as a straightforward eyeball to eyeball confrontation between Empire and those of us who are resisting it, it might seem that we are losing. But there is another way of looking at it. We, all of us gathered here, have, each in our own way, laid siege to Empire. We may not have stopped it in its tracks—yet—but we have stripped it down. We have made it drop its mask. We have forced it into the open. It now stands before us on the world’s stage in all its brutish, iniquitous nakedness. (p. 16)

Social workers must be willing to engage in what Italian theorist and activist Antonio Gramsci called the work of ants. The Gramscian notion of the work of ants is multifaceted and collective. The work of ants is a slow, laborious communitarian process through which the ants must learn to work together in the long haul to achieve their goal. This is an analogy for social work, which needs to recognize that this work is a long haul.

Roy (2003) continues:

What can we do? We can hone our memory, we can learn from our history. We can continue to build public opinion until it becomes a deafening roar. . . . We can reinvent civil disobedience in a million different ways. In other words, we can come up with a million ways of becoming a collective pain in the ass. Our strategy should be not only to confront empire but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness—and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we’re being brainwashed to believe. The corporate

revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling—their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability. (p. 16)

Arundhati Roy's directives can give meaning and direction to social work practice that enhances human rights and questions economic globalization. They can help social workers think in new and exciting ways about how to exercise the social work profession collectively with creativity, energy, diligence, and commitment. Roy calls upon all to understand the present situation in light of history and to take action based upon that understanding. Social work pioneers Mary Richmond (1917), Jane Addams (2002), and Bertha Capen Reynolds (1991) called on social workers to understand the structural forces that affect all lives. Their directives are as accurate today as they were one hundred years ago. Baccalaureate social work education can follow in their competent footsteps, increasing global understanding and challenging society to confront assumptions and confront empire, as Roy articulates. In our quest to accomplish this, experiences like the Sin Fronteras Chile Project can help social work broaden its horizons, question the status quo, understand the human rights violations perpetrated through economic globalization, and effectively engage in global praxis where human rights can be supported.

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