

Editorial

Professional identity and personal value in occupational health psychology: Overlap or eclipse?

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Developing a professional identity encompasses acquiring specialized knowledge, understanding social work values, and integrating knowledge and values into practice, all of which are crucial components of professional competence. Professional identity combines the definition of a profession, the nature of identity, and the processes involved in acquiring that identity, both individually and within a professional group. In social work, two main theoretical frameworks are relevant: the trait approach, which focuses on individual and psychological aspects such as needs and risk-based perceptions, and the power and construction approach, which operates at the macro and social levels.

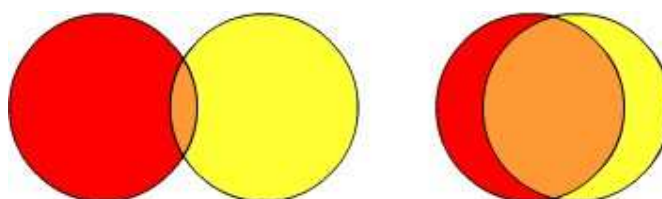
These theoretical approaches translate into academic knowledge, practical skills, and field training accompanied by self-awareness and social awareness. Furthermore, students need to develop a personal sense of being a social worker, which emerges through opportunities to articulate their professional identity in field placements and academic settings. Field placements offer students their initial experience of belonging to a professional group. They have been recognized as the profession's signature pedagogy, preparing students to think, perform, and act as workers.

Moreover, professional identity development can be viewed as an ongoing interaction between individuals and their sociocultural environment. The meaning of professional identity is contingent on political, academic, and professional contexts, and as these contexts evolve, identity will also undergo changes.

In the third millennium, the issue of professional identity permeates all spheres of our lives. It seems that our value depends entirely on our productivity and performance. And even when we are not working, we manage the other areas of life as if they were working: being parents, managing our digital image, managing our friendships.

Work takes up much of our week, day, and psyche. Traditionally we know that professional identity can never be said to be completely separate from personal identity, but when do we talk about overlap, and when do we talk about the eclipse?

If, in the overlap, there is a sphere of personal value that coincides with professional value, in the eclipse, professional identity, and unique value overlap and end up being the same thing.



In our society, there are some signs of eclipse. One such sign is the suicide of college students due to academic failure. Some sources report that 1 in 3 students have lied to their parents about their college career (Skuela.net). The need for performativity leaves no room for failure, reconsideration, renegotiation, and resilience, understood as the possibility of learning from adverse experiences [1,2].

The existential distress of college students is not only in striking epilogues but expressed with many symptoms such as anxiety, depression, insomnia, panic attacks, and psychosomatic stress response [3]. In this regard, grade rescaling, the cancellation of grades below a passing grade, has been proposed as a snowplow solution (removing the obstacle to avoid frustration). However, no thought is given to how to make young people and adolescents more able to tolerate failure and distinguish performance from personal worth. There is a complete lack of school and university programs in which training is thought of in terms of empowering unique values and promoting life skills [4].

The eclipse between professional and personal identity also affects adults in the 30-50 age group. Those who manifest on a large scale and in broad occupational categories clinical distress symptoms such as burnout and work-related stress, with an increased risk for physical and mental health [5-7]. As is well known, burnout can lead to reduced sense of professional efficacy, cynicism in the relationship with the client/patient, to emotional depletion of resources. This condition of affective depletion is compatible with an imbalance in the balance between environmental/organizational demands and individual resources. Often, the burnout syndrome is linked to a feeling and cognition of low attentiveness, that is, the feeling of helplessness and lack of the necessary resources to cope with the situation [8-10].

Another sign of eclipse is represented by that portion of people nearing retirement who require an extension of work activity or continue in other forms to work. Or again by that segment at retirement age that experiences retirement as the abrupt termination of an activity that also represents

their identity in terms of role, sense of personal satisfaction, interpersonal contacts, and sense of usefulness. Such an experience is compatible with a complete fusion of professional and personal identity, such that losing the work dimension triggers anxiety about losing one's identity [11,12].

Some reviews have seen that the transition to retirement age may be a risk factor for depression in older people [13]. On the other hand, a protective factor is the retirement plan: those with vague plans are at greater risk and more prone to avoidance than those with retirement plans (such as traveling or volunteering).

Why should we move toward an overlap? As Michele Pellerey (2021) states, professional identity represents a part of personal identity, and work activities also make sense to people concerning their activities and experiences in other areas [14]. Thus, professional identity should be considered a graft into a larger project of self as a worker and person.

Professional identity is also changeable in our age of fluidity and change [15]. Over their lifespan, individuals find themselves in multiple roles in different organizations. The challenge is to retain a sense of integrated identity through narrating one's experiences, guided by the thread of self-determination as the driving motivation for satisfying psychological needs [16]. .

In "Off Balance," Matthew Kelly addresses the complexities of achieving work-life balance by providing evidence-based guidelines rooted in scientific principles. Challenging the conventional notion that individuals strive solely for work-life balance, the author emphasizes the pursuit of authentic satisfaction. This enlightening work delves into the fundamental philosophies that impede human progress and offers practical methodologies to navigate and overcome daily challenges. Furthermore, the author presents a comprehensive framework for professional and personal satisfaction, drawing from psychological research and empirical evidence, empowering readers to establish and prioritize their highest aspirations in a scientifically informed manner.

Thinking of work as one of the ways of expressing one's values, but not the only one, protects personal values and identity. Marsha Linehan, in "Building A Life Worth Living" (2021) [17], makes public her story of great personal suffering that led her to develop a complex but effective treatment for emotional dysregulation and suicide risk. She has completed her experience and her work. Still, she lets it shine through as the result of a larger picture of relentless work in research, experimentation, and integration of the self.

In this effort, he has provided valuable elements for building personal well-being. Building a life of worth involves identifying personal values, expressing one's needs with respect for oneself and others, and surviving crises. The dialectical approach makes it possible to hold opposing sides together and consider different aspects of experience valid and integrable.

We need to provide people with tools to build a culture of personal value, as something to invest in and care for, to withstand the adverse events of life-academic, work, and personal-to develop an integrated view of self in our various traits and inclinations, not to succumb to eclipse.

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