

INTRODUCTORY

COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY IN SLOVAKIA

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Community psychology is a psychological discipline that is usually categorized within applied psychological disciplines. According to Dalton, Elizabeth, and Wandersman (2001), community psychology deals with the relationships between individuals, communities, and societies. Through collaborative research and interventions, community psychologists seek to understand and enhance quality of life for individuals, communities, and societies. To better distinguish community psychology from other psychological disciplines, it is useful to describe the differences between it and other related disciplines (Levine, Perkins, & Perkins, 2005). Unlike in clinical psychology, the goal of community psychology is to promote human health and quality of life within the social environment. In contrast to social work, community psychology puts great emphasis on the rigorous investigation of social problems. And, in contradistinction to social psychology, community psychology emphasizes the application of psychological knowledge to solving social problems.

Despite most official historical resources identifying the beginnings of community psychology in the Swampscott Conference in the United States in 1965, they can in fact be traced back to the work of Marie Jahoda and her colleagues in Central Europe in the 1930s (Fryer, 2008). In *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal* (1933) in particular, Jahoda, Lazarsfeld, and Zeisel deal with the social and psychological impact of unemployment on a small community in Austria. In this work, one can clearly identify the community perspective and the emphasis on the positive, not just the negative, characteristics, which are the key values in community psychology. It is somewhat paradoxical that community psychology originated in Central Europe as it has not developed much in Slovakia or the surrounding countries. Therefore, I consider it particularly important to promote community psychology in this region through the organization of annual conferences and workshops which provide the time and space for researchers and practitioners from various areas of community psychology in

Slovakia and the rest of Europe to meet, present their work and research, and to inspire each other, and socialize together.

This special thematic issue of *Human Affairs* (issue 1, 2019) includes selected papers that were presented at the international 5th Community Psychology conference in Bratislava, Slovakia, in 2018, organized by Júlia Halamová from the Institute of Applied Psychology at the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences at Comenius University in Bratislava, as well as by the European Community Psychology Association, and with financial support from The Society for Community and Action Research (SCRA), Division 27 of the American Psychological Association.

This issue consists of six articles from the field of community psychology in Slovakia and Europe based on twenty-seven conference presentations. They are introduced in alphabetical order according to the first author.

The first article by Martina Baránková, Júlia Halamová, and Jana Koróniová concerns focus group discussions by non-expert people on their personal definitions of compassion. They also discussed how they distinguish compassion from similar constructs, what their attitudes are towards compassion, and how compassion is displayed and expressed. The sample consisted of Slovaks and Czechs and the authors used Consensual Qualitative Research analysis.

Júlia Halamová and Martin Kanovský, base their article on Emotion-focused Therapy, specifically on the development and testing of a new intervention aimed at cultivating emotional intelligence within the student community. Although the intervention does not directly deal with self-criticism, it significantly decreased it. The results are promising because self-criticism is a key underlying factor in all kinds of psychopathology.

Isabel María Herrera-Sánchez, Samuel Rueda-Méndez and Silvia Medina-Anzano suggest that the storytelling technique can be used as a drug addiction strategy to help people organize and make sense of their lives. The authors performed a systematic review of the literature along with a narrative analysis and found that community and personal narratives are considered transformative and change processes.

The work of Danijela Jerotijević and Martina Hagovská deals with alternative spiritual groups consisting of people who are not affiliated to a traditional church but who pursue different kinds of spiritual experiences. The authors studied spiritual gatherings and used theories of collective rituals and shared emotions. These gatherings seemed to have a positive impact on overall well-being.

Xenia Daniela Poslon and Barbara Láštiová tap into the paradoxical nature of perceived similarity and intergroup differences in school settings. The authors discuss recommendations for creating interventions aimed at reducing prejudice. As children spend a substantial amount of time at school and because schools fulfill all the conditions for optimal contact, they can be particularly effective settings for interventions.

Anna Šestáková and Jana Plichtová begin from the work of Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom and analyze the relevance and applicability of her findings to new kinds of urbanized or digitalized commons. In their article, the authors explain Ostrom's eight principles of common sharing and apply them to contemporary sharing practices such as the bikesharing service in Bratislava.

I hope readers will enjoy reading these articles from various areas of community psychology research.

References

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