

Further Comments

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The striking experience of the Australian psychologists tell us about the importance of the advocacy and lobbying power in the pursuit of political and scientific goals; the role of agency as a behavioural attitude in social settings. This article tell also how important is the accurate description of events, relations, and interactions in the dissemination of a certain experience. The authors are, in fact, very detailed in the description of all the contacts, the connections and the networking they went through. It goes without saying that all their actions and reports are giving trust to every sort of collective and participatory political involvement. Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!

Instead, there are hereby two loose ends which I would like to clarify:

First and foremost, the difficulty for community psychologists to perform political purposes and foster social interventions being anchored in the clinical area. In effect, there is a real difficulty to be considered part of the psychological community when their own reference models embrace social, cultural and political perspectives. This is, in fact, a state of affairs which concerns the community psychology of many and different countries across the world. Maton, Perkins *et al.*, emphasize the importance of a training faculty and student body from multiple disciplines. In their word:

“Moreover, over time we must move from occasional communications or collaborations with other disciplines to sustained, robust interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary interactions in which new perspectives and knowledge about social problems and means to address them are developed over the longer term” (Kenneth I. Maton · Douglas D. Perkins · Susan Saegert *Community Psychology at the Crossroads*, Am J Community Psychol (2006) 38:9–21, p. 10).

Building contacts and involvement with professionals coming from diverse fields of research whom work in a multiplicity of community settings is, therefore, a key goal to pursue. Prevention, promotion programs, program evaluation, action research, organizational and

community consultation, community development, advocacy, policy analysis, and community coalition building are only a few of our activities which need the active involvement of many professionals and social actors.

It is clear that we are promoting the interdisciplinary aspect of our discipline, but, in order to do it, we need first to define our specific psychological background.

Therefore, the main questions are: what is the “core business” of community psychologists? How to encourage the interdisciplinary development of this field of study and how to renew our definition of psychologists? Or to put it better, provided that community psychology is an “interdisciplinary domain”, how can we define community psychologists itself? We should try to define both, our goals and our mission, without overlooking our peculiar competencies and tools. All these issues ought to be deepened in order to better understand and define the curricular training courses for community psychologists.

It almost appears that the hallmark of social and community psychology is incidental for the official psychology. The social features ought to be, instead, part of the clinical background as well as pertinent to the psychologist training. This represents a great challenge at the “verge” between different methodologies and various approaches. Now it is time not only to emphasize the collaboration needs but also to specify the specific competencies we put in the knowledge- basket of Community Psychologists.

However, some of our colleagues share a different perspective, clearly stated by Maton, Perkins, and Saegert:

“The motivation to broaden our identity should be enhanced as we remember that many of the people doing community psychology related theory, research and action are not community psychologists, and that we cannot, by ourselves, make a difference in the complex, multi-leveled social problems, and the related social structural changes, that we so deeply care about. Viewing ourselves as part of a

larger community of like-minded scholars and activists that encompasses multiple fields and sectors will help facilitate the interdisciplinary cross-fertilization, linkages and project teams that are so essential to our mutual visions and goals” (ibidem p. 20).

The Australian experience of our colleagues gives us an opportunity to re-open the debate on the future of our discipline.

The second element which I would like to point out concerns the risk to not pay enough attention to the institutional contexts and as a consequence the possible actions for community psychologists result narrowed. By way of example, Donata Francescato in Italy pushed through the teaching of community psychology as core curriculum for psychological degree courses. Today, however, in order to create an European label with the promotion of the same formative courses for everybody, universities are providing social psychology European credit transfer system credits (ECTSC), but without clearly specifying whether or not they correspond to community psychology. The main purposes of EuroPsy should be to guarantee a level of education, professional competence, and ethical

conduct to clients and employers; to facilitate the mobility and cross-border services of psychologists, to give psychologists an opportunity to gain continuing and specialized education throughout Europe. Instead, even though EuroPsy represents the European qualification standard for psychologists the latter are giving no indications concerning the teaching of community psychology. All of which is bringing universities to reduce and sometimes even cancel the teaching of community psychology in order to be recognized from the EuroPsy.

The EFPA (European Federation of Psychologist’s Associations, see <http://www.efpa.eu/>) the organization ruling EuroPsy procedure has also proposed a Community psychology task force. European Association of Community Psychology and various representatives of national associations are part of this taskforce. This represents an opportunity to collaborate with the EuroPsy project and work on the inclusion of community psychology in university curricular. In this light, the actions of the Australian colleagues are an encouragement to all of us as European community psychologists.