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## INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of the work of a large group of authors who share knowledge and reflections on selected social problems, mainly in the first and the second part, and also show specific problems in Poland and the USA and the possibilities of solving problems, mainly in the third and the fourth part.

The main purpose of this book is to show that, despite the widespread knowledge of some problems and despite many attempts to solve them, there are still hidden problems awaiting solutions.

The first part of the book is entitled *Invisible Groups as a Field of Social Work*. The content of the articles contained in this part shows that it is the investigators and practitioners of social work who have the responsibility to detect problems that are not visible in the social space. In the first paper, *International Social Work with Invisible Groups*, its author Ryszard Romaniuk shows that values and customs often stigmatize those whose characteristics differ from the norms. That is why democratic society creates special laws to protect minorities and weaker communities. In democratic countries, the development of civil society was a response of public opinion to individual needs, including the needs of invisible groups. In this period of globalization we can notice two opposing tendencies. When people feel threatened by changes from outside, society can redefine its strengths and strengthen its identity to resist the oncoming change. For this reason, many people in the European Union are attracted to the nationalist and xenophobic programs of political parties. The opposite tendency is cooperation, learning from other communities and societies. Some see what others are not able to see that significant political and social changes often affect the weakest in society and start or continue to support them on their behalf. This is a very important and very valid statement.

The exchange was part of the curriculum of a class in international social work. Students from the Jack Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (MSASS) at Case Western Reserve University attended lectures provided by the Institute of Sociology at Adam Mickiewicz University and visited several NGOs in Poznań and its surroundings. At the end of their stay, MSASS students presented their papers on specific topics related to American and Polish social policy on some of the invisible groups mentioned above. The student presentations and faculty lectures collected in this publication reflect the interests of this group of social workers and their expectations for possible collaboration.

Details on the program and history are written by Kathleen J. Farkas and Jarosław R. Romaniuk in an article in a book that was published under my editorship on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of social worker education at the Institute of Sociology at AMU (Farkas & Romaniuk, 2018).

The second text in the first part of this book entitled *Training Social Workers in Addictions Practice: U.S. Perspectives* concerns two important issues, education and the role that a social worker can play in addiction therapy. The author, Kathleen J. Farkas, clearly expresses her position: „Certainly there are many differences between the U.S. system and the Polish system of social work education. However, I hope that this discussion of the AODA issues in the U.S. and some of the directions of social work education around alcohol and other drug abuse issues in the U.S. will be helpful as you think about social work curriculum and how to meet the needs of clients who see help. I know that substance abuse treatment in Poland is often the realm of psychologists and psychiatrists. However, consider the roles social workers could play in the community in addressing prevention, harm reduction and screening for these very important issues in Polish society.” Farkas points out the important problem which is the insufficient level of knowledge of social workers about drug addictions and such knowledge is necessary, because in almost all areas of social work a phenomenon may occur that is the result of an addiction. Farkas’s pointing to the differences in the process of educating social workers in Poland and the USA at the same time indicates how important it is to prepare students in the field of knowledge about addictions. This knowledge can be useful in social work with family and in groups that face social exclusion.

Ryszard Romaniuk, in his article entitled *Invisible Problems of Marginalized Populations*, shows that Poland has experience in solving particularly difficult problems related to the treatment of addictions. He shows that one of the most important achievements of the Polish medical community in the field of chemical dependency was the implementation of the Minnesota model of

the treatment of alcoholism. Romaniuk indicates that American professionals should benefit from Polish experiences in solving the problems of categories condemned to marginalization and must learn how governments in Poland and other European countries create national policies to serve marginalized populations. Romaniuk shows that some problems and addictions and the effects of trauma need a look by several specialists at the same time and says: "We discover that people who need more help have symptoms that limit their motivation to seek help." In his opinion, it is worth using Polish experience in solving addiction problems. In particular, it is worth using the experience of non-governmental organizations, quoting the valuable thought expressed by the author: "The awareness of the commonality and significance of these problems will help to build better assessment tools and more effective treatment and educational programs. Professionals in the United States may learn from their Polish partners about the potential role of government in the prevention and treatment of homelessness. Similarly, the well-established tradition of harm reduction in Europe may also encourage those working in the United States to reconsider this approach." This article contains a significant thought which should be emphasized here. It is a necessity to make the society aware of the existing threats resulting from addictions. It can also be added that social workers should especially ensure that the results of research are included in the strategies of action. It is a necessity to make politicians and local authorities aware that there are hidden problems of some social groups.

In the second article, entitled *Making the Invisible Visible: Social Work Education in an International Setting*, Kathleen J. Farkas shows that social education in the US has long been focusing its attention on issues of marginalization and discrimination, which is why one of the elements of education is building student awareness in this area. They pay special attention to those groups that experience invisible problems. To make invisible groups visible. Farkas says that this requires looking and studying the basics of culture, society and politics, which is why there is a need for improved international education. This possibility exists during the annual week-long stay of students from Cleveland in Poznań. Cleveland students observe Polish experience in social work with invisible groups. They also study literature on Polish social problems.

It is worth quoting an important sentence from this article: "This experience is but a first step in the development of a long term and fruitful relationship between The Institute of Sociology, Adam Mickiewicz University and The Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University. I hope these papers and the work of our students will show how such a collaborative adventure enriches social work curriculum and social work education both in

Poland and in the US.” At the end of this interesting article Farkas expresses the hope for further development of cooperation between our universities. This development has taken place, as evidenced by the fact that this year, the eighth visit of students from Cleveland takes place.

The last article in this chapter, entitled *International Scholarship Programs: A Look from the Inside* is very important. The author, Olena Shelest-Szumilas, writes about changes that have occurred in her knowledge of important processes and social problems. In this article the author shares her personal reflections that result from her participation in The Lane Kirkland Scholarship Program. Shelest writes about the values of participation in the Kirkland program and the specific benefits for the participants of this program. In her opinion, the program is quite tight but teaches scholarship holders the organization of time and self-discipline. The goal of this Program can be achieved through the structure of the program, which consists of important elements. The organizers allow participants to combine new experiences with the old, and even independently work on unusual solutions and their possible implementation. According to Shelest each new experience involves certain challenges – from the obvious case of a language barrier, to the more complex issue of managing one’s own time and completing everyday affairs in another society. Shelest states that International scholarship programs are also an opportunity to look at your country through the eyes of people from a different culture, and scholarship holders from Kirkland from Poznań have even better chances, thanks to meetings with visiting students and scientists from the Mandel School of Applied Sciences at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. During annual meetings in March, students from Cleveland show the advantages of their city as an academic center and provide practical advice on studying in the US.

The second part of this book presents articles that were developed on the basis of lectures given by the employees of the Institute of Sociology to American students. In one of the articles, Jakub Isański shows the changes that have taken place in the migration process of Poles to various countries of Western Europe. Isański shows that the image of the migrant has changed. The majority of emigrants take individual decisions regarding seeking employment and the place of settlement. Many expatriates want stability and hope to find a partner, new friends and new social contacts. Thanks to migration young people enrich their social and cultural capital. Isański cites the results of the research confirming his thesis that young migrants acquiring new skills participate in social networks and enrich their social contacts. Isański indicates that that participation in ethnic communities gives one the opportunity to use various social contacts and to be a member of the community. The situation of migrants seems to

be a clear example of the aspects that are to encourage the creation of a community.

Isański expresses an reflection: “migration is not always an individual experience, as many examples prove the group context of migration – from the beginning to the stay abroad. Similarly, the effects of migration are far beyond the individual aspects, and beyond the areas where migrants live, work and interact with others.”

In the second article in this part Hanna Mamzer claims that the proposals to promote multiculturalism as a value cause normative and even moral problems. In her opinion, many researchers do not attach importance to the problem of defining culture, and related terms, such as the concept of multiculturalism. The author notices that the multiplicity of debates devoted to the issues of culture, identity and multiculturalism assumes that every human group has its own culture and precise separation of cultures is not possible, because the boundaries of cultures do not perfectly match the group’s boundaries. Mamzer tries to analyze the situation from the perspective of the observer, which reflects the demonstrated attitude of one cultural group towards another group. In this concept, culture does not always have to be assigned to an ethnic group, but it is a set of normative and directive principles respected in a given community. Such broad treatment of culture allows for the assumption that there are many cultures in one ethnic group. The author of the text believes that growing globalization raises problems related to multiculturalism. Mamzer presents various perspectives for the analysis of the phenomenon of multiculturalism and states that the negative consequences of contacts between representatives of different cultures are often overlooked and even considered as undesirable phenomena.

Piotr Matczak, Łukasz Posłuszny, Dominik Buttler, in the article entitled *Solidarity and Beyond: Patterns of Public Activity in Contemporary Poland*, present the case of Poland as an example of a transition country with a relatively weak civil society, but in the process of developing its active public model. The authors notice several weaknesses in Polish democracy: low voter turnout and small voluntary involvement. At the same time, they emphasize that the solidarity movement of 1980–81 is an inspiring case of building social trust for the public good. The authors indicate, in historical and sociological terms, what were the prospects for democratic consolidation and social development in Poland. The authors claim that the decisive factor in creating the democratic basis for public activity in Poland and the Polish phenomenon of democratic change was the mass social movement and the creation of the trade union Solidarity in 1980. The authors point to the characteristics of Polish volunteering, which dynamically developed in Poland in the 1990s and claim that the motivation for this

type of civic engagement was associated with the function of expressing values and then with the functions of understanding and improving. The authors of the article state that in Poland there is generally low level of civic involvement, which has a negative impact on volunteering. Indicators of citizenship, such as participation in demonstrations, signing petitions, the number of direct contacts with civil servants or political activity, place Poland among the countries with the lowest level of civil society. The analysis carried out by these three authors shows the specificity of the Polish transformation process, which, however, does not involve strong political and civic activism. Nonetheless, the authors hope that the situation will change.

In the last article in this part of the book Monika Frąckowiak-Sochańska analyzes the relationships between gender categories (femininity and masculinity) and mental health and illness. The analysis is based on the assumption that socio-cultural gender norms cause a higher risk of developing disorders in men and women. The author believes that gender must be taken into account not only in scientific research concerning mental health, but also in the diagnosis carried out by psychologists and psychiatrists. In her opinion, based on the analysis of the study results, the main symptoms of disorders in men or women are the result of distorted elements of the traditional construction of femininity and masculinity. Therefore, these mental health problems can be interpreted in terms of “side effects” of socialization for gender roles, which limits the possibilities of development.

The third part of the book, entitled *Examples of Invisible Problems and Groups in Poland and the United States*, contains texts of American students showing specific social problems that concern not only the American society, but are also present in the Polish society. Some of them are already very visible, while others may become clearer depending on the future social policy.

This part of the book begins with *The Impact of Violence: Comparative Analysis of Polish and U.S. Systems* by Michelle Menegay. The author writes that the perception of residents' safety is often a major problem in low-income urban communities, such as the Glenville district on the east side of Cleveland, and can have a significant impact on their health by reducing physical activity, access to healthy food, and access to facilities. When residents feel that their community is not safe, they limit their children's fun at local facilities, such as swimming pools and public parks. Glenville crime rates are higher than in the rest of Cleveland in the following categories: violent crimes, homicide, rape, robbery, violent assault, domestic violence, crimes against property, burglary, theft, and car theft. The homicide rate is more than twice as high as elsewhere in Cleveland, which can be a huge factor affecting the perception of security by

individuals. It is clear that the crime level in the Glenville district points to the need not only to limit these events, but also to provide comprehensive intervention so that community members can feel safe in their neighborhood. Menegay writes that it is important to minimize the sense of fear and its causes that may prevent individuals from using available resources. This case study of problems related to violence in the urban neighborhood in Cleveland presents an area in which health professionals and social workers can engage in improving the lives of residents. The author shows the weaknesses in the Polish and American system of preventing violence. In her opinion, communities, including local organization, are powerful resources to help residents of this area and should be used in the creation of programs for victims of abuse.

In the next article, entitled *Employment Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation in Poland and the United States: A Comparative Analysis*, Lauren M. Solari performs a comparative analysis of the policy applied to homosexual persons and states that Poland has made great progress in the protection of constitutional rights in comparison with other post-communist European countries. In fact Article 33 of the Polish Constitution is devoted solely to the equality of men and women in the political, economic and educational spheres. Poland adopted the EU anti-discrimination directive relatively late, but now the Polish labor code prohibits the termination or non-employment of employees due to their sexual orientation. The author expresses the opinion that Poland is more progressive than the US in the field of discrimination in employment, but also recognizes that Poland's strong ties with the Catholic Church and conservative government actors serve only to further marginalize the homosexual population. Although it is possible in Poland to organize "parades of equality" and public demand for the abolition of discrimination against homosexuals, the reluctance towards LGBT is quite clear. There are still discussions about whether homosexuals should do some jobs (teacher), marry and adopt children.

Another author, Danielle Cooper, in her article entitled *Human Trafficking: A Comparative View of Poland and Cleveland*, raises a very important and often hidden social problem that has the characteristics of a crime. The author of the article points to the existence of a very serious social problem which is human trafficking. Although there are laws to punish those who do this, it is difficult to identify and recognize its signs. The author points out that it is important that people dealing with the problem can properly recognize it. The most problematic phenomenon in many countries, and certainly in the United States, is the punishment of a victim of trafficking, mainly people who have been forced to prostitute.

The author of the article indicates that for social workers there are five practices that must be implemented in Poland and Cleveland. The first practice is learning to recognize the signs of human trafficking. The second practice is to provide services to people who have been victims of trafficking. The third practice is to educate the public about human trafficking. The fourth, very important practice is to punish those who are involved in human trafficking. The fifth and most important practice that must be introduced is not charging the victim.

A different but important social problem, *Legal Issues and Procedure for Lesbian Divorce in Ohio*, is analyzed by Jessica Lordi. The author of the article analyzes the quite complicated specific problem of the divorce of a lesbian couple who married in Massachusetts but are trying to divorce in Ohio. The problem is that the Ohio court faces the dilemma whether to divorce and thereby recognize that the couple were in a marital relationship or refuse to divorce and thus deprive a lesbian couple of their constitutional rights. This is a very complicated problem which is a consequence of the difference in rights in particular states. The author shows the difficulties faced by the Ohio court and analyzes the legal possibilities of solving this difficult problem and indicates that, generally, the US courts in such a situation recognize the principle of considering a particular case as an exception. This is unquestionably a hidden legal problem in the form of a lack of clear divorce procedures.

Sunita Denton, in the text entitled *A Comparative Analysis of Pension Systems in the United States and Poland*, reviews pension systems, indicating cultural and political conditions. In general, while the US social security system is the second, obligatory social insurance program with its benefits and limitations, the three-pillar system in Poland uses a hypothetical defined contribution system with its own set of strengths and weaknesses. The author is aware that her analysis does not include an exhaustive list or discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each pension system and areas for improvement, but suggests that the comments in the article on the systems compared should serve to understand these complex systems. While the United States will have to continue considering solvency strategies with the growth of an aging population, even taking into account the strategies of other developed countries, Poland will have to undertake similar efforts while remaining realistic in its capabilities. Either way, for both countries, the future will show how everyone is moving towards adequate support and even investing in their older adult populations.

In the last article in this part of the book, Jazmin Long reviews the state of knowledge about the subject of HIV transmission from mother to child. The author says that there is too little research in Poland on the knowledge of women

about HIV and potential risks. The author argues that this knowledge, especially for pregnant women, is extremely important in combating HIV transmission from mother to child. Such knowledge gives the opportunity to receive treatment at an early stage of pregnancy, which can significantly reduce the risk of child's illness. The author proposes to conduct a cross-sectional research among health care professionals in Poland and learn about their attitudes and prejudices regarding HIV, HIV transmission and treatment options. It rightly assumes that education is important for health professionals, but also for pregnant women. Women should have access to knowledge about the importance of prenatal HIV testing. Thanks to appropriate education, probably more women would agree to an HIV test, which would also reduce the risk of their unborn child being infected with the disease. The author recognizes the need to use television, radio and billboard commercials in this education. This campaign could be used to reduce the stigma associated with HIV testing.

The fourth part of this book groups together texts showing examples of systemic and structural solutions as well as local solutions in leveling significant social problems that are not always visible. The authors of these texts, when presenting the essence of the problem, show deficiencies in social policy and suggest how one can help by applying new solutions.

The author of the first text in this part of the book Bright Kweku Bobobee raises the problem of homelessness of children and students and shares his work experience in the ACT project at the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD). This project implements a holistic approach in providing direct instructional and support services. The support offer includes everything that is necessary to meet the physical, social and emotional needs of each homeless child, and to enable parents to support their children in this venture. The author explains how the project goals are realized, synchronized with CMSD resources. The program includes children in all development phases — from early childhood to school age. The school age program includes help with homework, tutoring, enrichment opportunities, and support services. An important form of the ACT Project program is advocacy for parents and students, implemented in schools and shelters for homeless people, to ensure that a homeless student receives all the services to which he or she is entitled.

Juliana Cole, the author of *Building Networks: An Analytic Look at New Methods of Organizing in the United States and at Social Work in Poland*, shows an interesting perspective on the conditions and possibilities of applying a specific approach to conducting social work by engaging resources found in the local community. She discusses the differences and similarities in the use of the method of organizing the local community – an important method of social

work and social development. At the same time, she shows the strengths and weaknesses of this method in the US and suggests that it is worth propagating and disseminating this method in Poland. The author shows the most important advantages of two methods, one called ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) and another – a method of organizing based on a network organization. This method emphasizes building relationships that can create new development paths for the individual and the community.

Deborah Crane, in an interestingly written text entitled *Revitalization: Slavic Village to Śródka*, undertakes a comparative analysis between two cities and specifically two districts that are experiencing similar problems. The author shows the degradation processes of these districts and the revitalization measures undertaken. The revitalization processes follow other programs, but have similar goals and achievements. The author states that the experiences in the revitalization of Slavic Village and Śródka (in Poznań) show differences in community structures and cultural mentality as well as barriers related to housing policy. Residential communities without many monuments and tourist opportunities will face more problems in attracting people from outside. The author concludes that regardless of these differences, there is always an inherent value of observing what other cities and cultures are doing, and creating a free exchange of ideas and building on the successes of others.

Megeen Tube shows the determinants of the emergence and development of volunteering in Poland and the USA and brings closer the main values that flow from this type of activity. She makes a comparison of volunteering in Poland and in the USA and claims that volunteers and voluntary organizations have played an important role in shaping Poland and the United States. She calls for the volunteers' participation in working for other people to be increased in several ways. Positive impact can be felt on a personal level, at the interpersonal level, at the organizational level and at the social level. Volunteering can really be a transforming force in our societies; we just have to ask what we can do for our countries. The author notices that greater participation of volunteers would reduce the costs of US social services, which is why it is in the interest of this country to encourage student volunteering by reducing student debt and increasing educational scholarships.

In the next article, attention is paid to the problem that is becoming more serious and which should be the subject of greater care on the part of social policy. The author of the article, Cathryn Conner, discusses the causes and effects of air pollution in Poland. She believes that it is a serious problem causing diseases and deaths among Polish citizens. The Polish government is working on reducing its impact through activities related to environmental cleansing. The

Environmental Protection Fund and the EcoFund have enabled ecologists and government agencies to achieve significant progress. Some problems remain, and the most important issue is that the funds do not reach the areas of Poland that need help most. In the author's opinion, the problem of air pollution does not directly concern the scope of social work, but there is a need for greater involvement of social workers in the fight against pollution and its negative effects.

The important social problem of the functioning of the health care system is the focus of attention for Olivia Celmer. The author compares the healthcare system in Poland and the USA and draws attention to the changes taking place in the Polish system after 1992. She also draws attention to the conditions and difficulties in the process of implementing primary and preventive care in Poland. She recognizes the advantages of the regionalization process in the Polish healthcare system. In her opinion, regionalization is more effective because local governments have a better sense of what their residents need. The author shows selected indicators (concerning the reduction of mortality due to cardiovascular diseases, life expectancy), but also notices an increase in the risk of morbidity due to alcoholism and obesity. In this regard, she recognizes the similarity between Poland and the USA. The author draws particular attention to the problem of care for the elderly and long-term care and the costs associated with this type of care. The author not only draws attention to significant problems in health care systems in Poland and the USA, but also proposes appropriate solutions.

The last text in this book is slightly different from the previous ones, because it does not contain a description of a selected social problem, only a project addressed to volunteers. This project provides for the launch of a website that will contain very important information enabling greater volunteer activity and a wider provision of assistance in Poznań. The website will contain information sorted by topics and facilitating volunteers to choose the form in which they would like to help someone. The author, Patryk Kowalski, assumes that thanks to this project volunteers who do not yet have much experience can get information: where and whom they can help. That is why the project "Be a Hero" defines a new direction of its activity, consisting in supplementing the work of specialists. The project "Be a Hero" is primarily a form of support for volunteers and encourages all people who want to help but who, for various reasons, do not know how to get involved.

Concluding this introduction, I wish to express, like Romaniuk, the hope that this publication will not only be a summary of many years of cooperation between the universities in Poznań and Cleveland, but also allow for the development of a stronger research relationship between universities. I also hope that this book will be a handbook for social work students used in several

important topics, including lectures on social policy and seminars devoted to diagnosing social problems and designing change. From the perspective of several years of cooperation, it can be concluded that there are specific benefits for students of social work. Polish students can broaden their knowledge about social, political and economic problems that generate the formation of hidden social groups. The benefits can also be gained by American students because they have the opportunity to learn about the differences in the functioning of the Polish system of social policy and the institutional social assistance system. For both Polish and American students, the knowledge of system imperfections can be a source of reflection and ideas for solving problems experienced by marginalized social groups.

## References

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