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**Rome, August 31, 2019**

**To the members of the Promotion Committee,**  
**Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovak Republic**

I'm writing on behalf of Dr. Júlia Kanovská Halamová, who is applying for promotion at the rank of Full professor. I strongly support Dr. Halamová's application, as I consider her a deserving, gifted and outstanding scholar. I met Dr. Halamová for the first time during a psychotherapy conference 3 years ago. Since that first meeting, I have met Dr. Halamová professionally on a regular basis at Comenius University, where she invited me to teach basic and advanced workshops in Compassion Focused Therapy. I also collaborated with her in many scientific publications. Through those years of sustained interaction, I have had the opportunity to appreciate Dr. Halamová sharp mind, great wit, intellectual originality and stamina, passionate scientific drive and, last but not least, compassionate dedication to the edification of her students. Simply stated, Dr. Halamová's achievements deserve much praise.

One of her most important scientific contributions is the establishment of community psychology in Slovakia and the introduction of its central concept, *psychological sense of community*, in this region. Last year, the fifth annual conference and workshop "Community Psychology in Slovakia" was held with the aim to convey the latest findings from the theory and practice of community psychology, to publicly establish community psychology in Slovakia and to integrate Slovak community psychology into an international context. The conference and workshop have attracted more and more scholars over the years, not only from Slovakia but also from abroad (Italy, Portugal, Germany, Norway, Spain and the UK). On December 2019 there will be the sixth annual conference and workshop "Community



Psychology in Slovakia" and I will attend again. As a clear validation of the relevance of her work, Dr. Halamová has been elected as International Coordinator of the Society for Community Research and Action 27 of the American Psychological Association (SCRA) and the Regional Community Coordinator of the European Community Psychology Association (ECPA). As a regional SCRA APA coordinator she has received a grant from the American Psychological Association every year since 2015. She has also been elected a member of the ECPA Committee since 2017.

The relevance of Dr Halamová's scientific work has been recognized by scientists studying the change in community sense under the influence of community intervention, but also by practitioners working with specific communities such as the Roma community, eco-communities, and school communities. Dr Halamová's scientific work has been praised by Dr. Eva Naništová in the preface of Dr. Halamová's influential book "The psychological sense of the community" (2014): "By its thematic focus, this book represents a significant contribution to the development of psychological sense of community into community psychology, not only in Slovakia".

In addition, over the past six years, Dr. Halamová has made important international contributions to the scientific literature on self-compassion and self-criticism. It's important to note that self-criticism is considered a key factor in the incidence of psychopathology; thus, treatment targeting self-criticism and self-compassion have a huge impact on mental well-being of patients and general population. Relevantly, Dr. Halamová has adapted and validated in Slovak the most relevant, internationally recognized questionnaires measuring self-compassion and self-criticism, and she is in the process of translating, adapting and validating questionnaires that have just been published in the scientific literature. I'm deeply impressed by the capacity of Dr. Halamová to stay scientifically updated on these topics and to promote a prompt translation of the major tools and interventions in Slovakia. Thus, I consider her second most important scientific contribution to be a series of international comparisons of the two most widely used scales in this area: The Forms of Self-Criticizing and Self-Reassuring Scale (Gilbert et al., 2004; an article on the scale factor structure was published in the Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment; an article on scale invariance



was published in the Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy), and The Self-Compassion Scale (Neff, 2003; an article on factor scale structure was accepted in Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development; the scale invariant article is under the second round of review in the Journal of Individual Differences). In all four articles Dr. Halamová is the first author and samples include, respectively, 13 countries with over 7,500 respondents and 11 countries with more than 15,200 respondents.

Thanks to the work of Dr. Halamová, Slovakia is, to my knowledge, the only country in which a systematic research into various interventions to increase self-compassion and reduce self-criticism has been done. She has already adapted and tested four interventions (for example, The Compassionate Mind Training and The Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Program; papers on the results of those interventions are, at the moment, under review in different international scientific journals). Of note, the third most important scientific contribution is the creation of two novel interventions (Emotion Focused Training for Self-Compassion and Self-Protection and Emotion Focused Training for Emotion Coaching) to increase self-compassion and reduce self-criticism. According to previous research, these interventions show a stronger effect compared to pre-existing interventions and outcomes have been measured both with self-reports and psychophysiological indexes.

I consider the following five publications to be her most important work.

- **ADD01 Halamová, Júlia [UKOFSAP] (100%) : Psychological sense of community: examining McMillan-Chavis' and Peck's concepts. Lit. 23 záz. In: Studia psychologica. - Roč. 43, č. 2 (2001), s. 137-147. "Psychological sense of community: examining McMillan-Chavis' and Peck's concepts".** The article has been cited in more than ten international papers. It is focused on testing two theoretical concepts of sense of community, a field of community psychology research that is still underdeveloped internationally.
- **ADC03 Halamová, Júlia [UKOFSAP] (100%): Psychologický zážitok komunity 1: historické, metodologické a výskumné východiská problematiky. Lit. 53 záz.**



**In: Československá psychologie. - Roč. 46, č. 5 (2002), s. 420-429.** This review paper brilliantly deals with the phenomenon of the community's psychological sense, more specifically with the historical background, methodological approach and research results related to this phenomenon. It has been published in the journal *Ceskoslovenska psychologie* and has reached 18 citations.

- **ADC11 Halamová, Júlia [UKOFSAP] (50%) - Kanovský, Martin [UKOFSKS] (30%) - Naništová, Eva (20%): Development and psychometric analysis of the sense of community descriptors scale Lit.: 50 zázn. In: Psychosocial Intervention. - Roč. 27, č. 1 (2018), s. 44-55. - ISSN (print) 1132-0559.** This work in co-authoring, published in the journal *Psychosocial Intervention*, describes the development, psychometric analysis, and factor analysis of the Sense of Community Descriptors Scale. The Sense of Community Descriptors Scale is one of the few scales that measures the psychological sense of the community, regardless of context, and can be used in all kinds of communities to assess sense of community or the effect of community intervention.
- **ADC12 Halamová, Júlia [UKOFSAP] (50%) - Kanovský, Martin [UKOFSKS] (36%) - Gilbert, Paul (1%) - Troop, Nicholas A. (1%) - Zuroff, David C. (1%) - Hermanto, Nicola (1%) - Petrocchi, Nicola (1%) - Sommers-Spijkerman, Marion (1%) - Kirby, James N. (1%) - Shahar, Ben (1%) - Krieger, Tobias (1%) - Matos, Marcela (1%) - Asano, Kenichi (1%) - Yu, FuYa (1%) - Basran, Jaskaran (1%) - Kupeli, Nuriye (1%): The factor structure of the Forms of self-criticising/attacking & self-reassuring scale in thirteen distinct populations. Lit.: 87 zázn. In: Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment. - Roč. 40, č. 4 (2018), s. 736-751.** This groundbreaking study investigated the factor structure of the widely used Forms of self-criticizing / attacking & self-reassuring scale in 13 non-clinical samples (N = 7510) from twelve different countries: Australia (N = 319), Canada (N = 383), Switzerland (N = 230), Israel (N = 476), Italy (N = 389), Japan (N = 264), Netherlands (N = 360), Portugal (N = 764), Slovakia (N = 1326), Taiwan



(United Kingdom 1 (N = 1570), United Kingdom 2 (N = 883) and USA (N = 331).

This study was the first of its kind, because it employed more advanced statistical analyses compared to previous studies (bifactor model of answer theory, two-tier model of answer theory and nonparametric analysis of item response theory). Results suggested that the two-factor structure of the FSCRS scale can be used in a variety of non-clinical contexts between different countries and cultures.

- **AAB02 Halamová, Júlia [UKOFSAP] (100%): Sebasúcit a sebakritickosť: tvorba a meranie efektu intervencie. - 1. vyd. - Bratislava : Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, 2018. - 297 s. Lit.: 216 záz. ISBN 978-80-223-4573-6.** This monograph is significant because it provides a detailed overview of current knowledge of interventions aimed at increasing self-compassion and reducing self-criticism. However, the core of the monograph consists of three research studies to validate the intervention to improve self-compassion and to reduce self-criticism in a short two-week online format and in a long-term three-month group format. Of note, both self-report and physiological (HR and HRV) assessments have been used.

Dr. Halamová should also be praised for her outstanding grantsmanship. Since 2000 her scientific contributions have been supported by 22 grants (in 11 she was the principal investigator). The three most important founding agencies were VEGA, the American Psychological Association Division 27 Society for Community Research and Action and the John Templeton Foundation.

As regards her teaching activities, Dr. Halamová has shown not only passionate scientific but also strong creativity and dedication to the edification of her students. She has been working at the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences (the Institute of Applied Psychology) at Comenius University since 2013. Since then, she has been teaching numerous courses such as Contemporary Work and Organizational Psychology (PhD.), Clinical Psychology in Work (Mgr.), Basics of Clinical Psychology (Bc.), Basics of Counseling Psychology (Bc.), Counseling Process Training (Mgr.), Conflicts and their Solution (Bc.), Social Interaction Practice (Bc.), Community Psychology (Mgr.), Social Psychological



Training I. (Bc.), Social Psychological Training II. (Bc.). Of note, the course of Community Psychology is not taught anywhere else in Slovakia. Over the years she has shown an impressive commitment not only in the development of new syllabuses and courses but also in creating study materials for teaching new courses. It is outstanding her use of innovative and interactive teaching methods for greater student involvement and for a greater link between teaching and research and practice. Of note, over the years she has also been involved in other pedagogical activities (lectures in trainings, workshops, seminars) mostly connected to the dissemination of the evidence-based approach called Emotion Focused Therapy. Moreover, she has been consulting 24 Bachelor Thesis, 32 Master theses and 4 PhD Thesis and served as opposer of 15 Bachelor Thesis, 13 Master Thesis

Dr. Halamová's work constitutes a significant contribution to the social sciences and, more specifically, to psychology. In her many publications Dr. Halamová has displayed an impressive mastery of research trends in psychology. With such a skill set, I have no doubt that Dr. Halamová will contribute greatly to the development of psychology in the coming future. That is why I have absolutely no concerns to recommend Dr. Halamová for promotion at the rank of Full professor. Dr. Halamová accomplishments, including her administrative investments, her grantsmanship, and her publications make her a perfect candidate for promotion. Based on her extant body of work, we can expect more ground-breaking scientific contributions to come.

I wish to thank the committee members for their time and dedication. Please, do not hesitate to contact me for any additional inquiry that there might be.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nicola Petrocchi'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Nicola Petrocchi, Psy.D., Ph.D.