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EDITORIAL

The *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice* has a strong interest in the international aspects of social practices, policies and professional intervention. As such, our last two issues (3 and 4/2012) embarked on a discussion on the international dimension of social work. In this current issue we continue this discussion with a contribution by Mark Garavan, coordinator of Applied Social Studies at the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in Ireland. Garavan states that it is important for social workers to remind themselves of, and return to, the first principles of their profession. Due to an increasing emphasis on performance, targets and efficiency, social workers are not always able to recognize that they are working with human beings. It is not managerial aspects but the human dimension that should provide social workers with the guiding principles by which they can orient themselves and judge their work. In his article, Garavan suggests that a dialogic approach – involving listening to and responding to the words and experiences of the other person – has the potential to restore humanity to both the client and the worker. To demonstrate this point, Garavan conducts an extensive discussion of the purpose, principles, goals, core assumptions, methodology dialogic practice needs, and implications for professional practice of the dialogic approach. He concludes his article with examples of the dialogic approach, for example the dialogic approach of Paulo Freire.

EDITORIAL

One fascinating recurring theme in the *Journal of Social Intervention* are the Family Group Conferences (FGCs), known in Dutch as the “Eigen Kracht-conferenties”. The *Journal of Social Intervention* published the first article specifically on these FGCs in 2012. The article, about the course and outcomes of three community conferences in public mental health care, was written by Schout and De Jong (3/2012). They concluded in their article that “the empirical research leaves several question unanswered”. It is therefore not surprising that in this issue Schout, professor at the School of Nursing, Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen and De Jong, researcher at the University of Groningen and the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen, have written an additional article on this interesting subject.

The goal of FGCs is to stimulate social relationships in communities by giving members responsibility over their own social networks in the community. In this way, a bridge is built between the informal world of the family and the formal world of the authorities. Of course, not all FGCs succeed in their goals, and sometimes an FGC is considered a failure by the parties involved. In this article, Schout and De Jong focus on these failed FGCs, 15 in total, which were organized between the start of 2011 and end-2012. What can be learned from these failed conferences? The authors analyzed the interviews of 101 participants of failed FGCs to find an answer to this question and others. One of the conclusions that we can draw from these interviews is that there was inadequate informal support and the leading characters of the FGCs found it difficult to act.

The growing interest in FGCs is also illustrated by the second article on this subject, written by Huber, Joanknecht and Metze, who work respectively as junior researcher for the research programme in Assertive Outreach Work at the research centre for Society and Law, regional manager for the “Eigen Kracht Centrale”, the coordinating institute for Family Group Conferences, and PhD student for the Assertive Outreach Work research programme. In their article, the authors focus on a specific target group for FGCs – vulnerable citizens who are living in care for the homeless. The FGCs can be a useful tool with which to encourage the strength of citizens in a vulnerable position. However, a number of requirements are identified for their success. For example, an FGC functions best when it is part of a wider range of social network empowerment methods, supported by professionals and deployed at moments of transition. These arguments are elaborated by Hubert *et al.*, who discuss social networks in social care and the development of FGCs. They also analyze the research results on the factors involved in success and the potential pitfalls, and, finally, they describe the deployment of FGCs at moments of transition and as part of a wider process of consolidating management and networks.

The fourth article in this issue is written by Matthys and Thijssen, who are – respectively – associate professor at the Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University and emeritus professor of Human Resource Management at the School of Governance, Utrecht University. In their article, the authors focus on social mobility by individuals who have completed higher education. This group experience typical problems such as exclusion by their new milieu and inappropriate expectations when entering the labour market. However, there are significant differences within this group when it comes to the extent to which these issues are experienced. The central question of this article is what factors underlie these differences? To answer this question, Matthys and Thijssen explore the meaning of *identity capital*. For the purposes of this exploration, identity capital is specified by analyzing data obtained from previous studies involving social mobility. The authors conclude that there are three aspects of identity capital that can explain the differences in the well-being of social climbers: the quality of social interaction, cognitive reflexivity and a strong orientation towards professional expertise.

As always, the issue also includes a familiar book review and the News from Higher Social Education section.

Two books are discussed in the book review section. First Frits Meijering discusses *Het huis van de vrijheid* [The home of the freedom] by Rutger Claassen. In his book, Claassen updates the principles of liberalism of the nineteenth century and provides an outline for a contemporary political philosophy based on liberalism. The second book review is by Jef Peeters, a well-known author for the *Journal of Social Intervention* (2 and 3/2012). He discusses *Green Social Work. From Environmental Crises to Environmental Justice*, written by Lena Dominelli. Peeters states that “Dominelli offers a broad view of the social impact of environmental problems and the work performed by social workers in that respect”, but he doubts whether a “mainly descriptive approach is a sufficient reason to write a new book”.

In the News from Higher Social Education section, Joop Berding and Toby Witte discuss the tensions and dilemmas experienced in practice-based research, such as when the research is done on behalf of external clients.

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