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EDITORIAL

The current issue of the *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice* includes a wide range of absorbing articles on social intervention research and theory.

The combination of a worldwide ecological, financial and economic crisis will likely result in sweeping changes to our society. These changes will require us to reassess and retool so that we may promote paths to development that are more sustainable, ultimately resulting in a sustainable society. Social work can play an important role in creating such a society by researching and contributing to the social dimension of sustainable development. In our previous issue, Jef Peeters, one of the contributors to the ENSACT conference in Brussels, published the first of two articles on the topic of sustainable development and the role that social work can play in this regard. In his article Peeters outlined a framework that links sustainable development to social work by comparing *the Brundtland definition* of sustainable development to the international definition of social work. The guidelines presented by Peeters on how social work can reinforce sustainable development are put into practice in this current issue, in which he presents a *social-ecological practice model* for social work. This model provides a framework which may serve to bolster the position of social work and enhance its effectiveness in the complex world of sustainable development. The social-ecological practice model is based on the core building blocks of *empowerment, social capital formation and resilience building*. In the concluding sections Peeters

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states that several conditions need to be fulfilled in order to achieve a coherent social-ecological approach.

The second article in this issue reports on a study by our colleagues from Sweden, Billquist and Skårner, about the characteristics of supportive professional relationships between professionals and their clients in drug addiction treatment programmes. Clients' experiences are a valuable source of input. For example, clients can provide detailed information about when they perceive a professional relationship as being supportive. In earlier issues we discussed various studies which were written from the client's perspective, e.g. the study by Moeke and Verkooijen in issue 1 of 2010 about health care logistics and clients' need to have an influence on their own health care. Billquist and Skårner base their study on the empirical data of a research project which investigates the factors that influence and form a psychosocial drug-addiction treatment relationship. On the basis of this data the authors identify five themes which together form the supportive professional relationship.

In their concluding remarks Billquist and Skårner emphasize three fundamental prerequisites for the professional relationship in drug-addiction treatment to be experienced as supportive: it must arise from a personal and reciprocal relationship; the individuals involved need to define themselves in a partnership as a professional or as a client; and the relationship must be used as a means for comprehensive and variable support based on confirmed power.

We continue this issue with an article by Schout and De Jong about the course and outcomes of three *Eigen Kracht-conferenties* for groups, internationally known as Community Conferencing (CC), in public mental health care. CC stimulates social relationships in communities by giving members the responsibility over their own social cohesion in the community. The goal of CC is to restore the damaged relationships between members, so that it becomes possible to resolve conflicts and improve living conditions in the community. To reach this goal, the first step in CC consists of discussing the origin of the conflict. The second step is to discuss the consequences of this conflict. It is only possible to focus on the future once these two points have been clarified. Then, two questions can be addressed: how can the conflict be resolved and how can we prevent such a conflict in the future? It is important that an independent coordinator is involved during these discussions to prevent any escalation of conflicts. The power of the CC in the Netherlands lies in the fact that this coordinator is not a professional, but a person that is perceived as being an equal among the members, because members have often had negative experiences with professionals in the past. After analysing the progress and proceedings of three CCs, Schout and De Jong put forward three recommendations: an impartial party must be involved to control the outcomes of the

CC; depending on the situation, it may be necessary to organize a CC for individuals in addition to a group CC; finally, it is important to involve community members in the conference at all times.

In the fourth article in this issue, Jeannette Hartman explores the question of whether the *pragmatic moral philosophy* of John Dewey (1859–1952) can offer a new perspective on how social workers can deal with moral tensions in their profession. Many articles on the role of morality in social work have appeared in our journal through the years (see Van Donkersgoed 2/2009, for example). Social workers regularly have to deal with conflicting interests, for example when the social worker's vision is in conflict with the client's vision, or when the social worker encounters a conflict with organizational policy. The result of these conflicting interests is that social workers may fail to act appropriately. Ethical theories and professional codes are not always helpful due to their inability to anticipate on unique situations in our constantly changing society. In her article Hartman discusses how John Dewey's pragmatic moral philosophy can assist social workers who face moral tensions. Hartman explains some of Dewey's key points, for example *habits*, a framework of personal capacities in which actions take place, and *inquiry*, making a morally acceptable decision based on critical thinking. Furthermore, she discusses the value of personal experience and moral intuition, the development of the social worker as a person and as a professional, the importance of moral competence and the pros and cons of professional codes of conduct. Hartman concludes that the pragmatic moral philosophy offers social workers the opportunity to make their own decisions based on their own personal experience and the realities of the changing world.

Finally, this issue includes the familiar book review and News from Higher Social Education sections. Sietske Dijkstra discusses *Children in the line of fire. The impact of violence and trauma on families in Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago*, written by Claudette Crawford-Brown, about the alarming fact that many children and young adults in these countries have been exposed to severe violence. Toby Witte responds to a book review by Herman Nijenhuis, published in the previous issue of this journal, of Witte's own book *Hart van de verzorgingsstad. Club- en buurthuiswerk in Rotterdam* [Heart of the caring city – community centre work in Rotterdam].

This issue also features not one but two contributions to the News from Higher Social Education section. Both Willem Blok and Nol Reverda write on the theme of internationalization in social work. In his column *Een internationale blik verruimt het sociale denken* [An international perspective expands social thinking] Blok focuses on the importance of the development of international awareness in the social sector in the Netherlands. To this end he discusses the outcomes of the conference *Internationalisering in sociaal werkopleidingen: waarom wat en hoe?*

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[International awareness in social work training: why, what and how?], where several national and international speakers emphasized the need for critical reflection on social work and on the position and functions it fulfils in society. With regard to social work in the Netherlands, critical reflection reveals that international awareness needs to be integrated into the training of social workers in order to develop a dynamic historical awareness.

Reverda is also critical about the current state of international awareness in social work in the Netherlands. He devotes his column, which was presented during the symposium *Samenleven is geen privézaak* [The community is not a private matter] on 29 March 2012, to the lack of an international perspective on social work in the Netherlands. Reverda states that, because living together is not a national matter, it is important for social workers to become receptive to a more international perspective. In future issues we will continue discussing the topic of international awareness in social work in a series of articles devoted to this topic.

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