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## **EDITORIAL**

*The Journal of Social Intervention* regularly publishes articles on social intervention that relate to practice, research, theory and policy. This broad range of perspectives is reflected in the current issue of the journal. Although multifaceted in nature, all articles contribute to the main objective of this journal: bridging the gap between social intervention practices and scientific reflections on these practices. The first article (Hojtink & Van Doorn) takes a macro perspective to the field of social work, discussing major changes that are relevant to the profession. The second article (Van de Luitgaarden) deals with the issue of professionalism, and the author examines the decision-making processes of social workers. The third (Van Gelder) and fourth (Dijkstra) articles focus on interventions aimed at specific target groups; they discuss male providers of sexual services and male perpetrators of abuse, respectively. The last article of this issue, by Kerklaan, returns to the subject of professionalism and falls under the category of "Student's Work". It addresses the role of tacit knowledge in social work.

Articles in earlier issues of this journal have discussed the impact of major changes in the field of social intervention, such as managerialism and the need for assuring and demonstrating the effectiveness of the profession (see for instance Van Houten, 2/2006, Potting, Sniekers, Lamers & Reverda, 4/2010 and Banks, 2/2011). In the first article of this issue, Hoijtink and Van Doorn further elaborate on this topic, stating that the field of social work in the Netherlands is facing four major administrative changes: the increasing impact of market forces, bureaucracy and risk

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management, and the introduction of a strict new interventionist policy, through which social workers have easier and more direct access to the private lives of individuals and families (in the Netherlands, this is known as the “home intervention policy”). On the basis of four research projects which took place between 2004 and 2009, the authors analyze how social workers and managers from social work organizations perceive and handle these administrative changes. They group their reactions into four different clusters: the confused reaction, the introvert reaction, the extravert reaction and the binding reaction. The authors state that turbulent times require organizations that are capable of forming strong internal and external coalitions in which social workers are involved in all stages of the process of policy making, execution and evaluation. They conclude that the binding strategy is the most beneficial and productive, thereby following – amongst others – the work of the former editor of this journal Geert van der Laan and Marcel Spierts (issue 1/2005).

In the second article in this issue, Guido van de Luitgaarden makes the case for a new conceptualization of professional expertise that incorporates experiential and contextual knowledge. He reports on the findings of a qualitative research project into the assessment of protection and decision-making processes at the point of first referral in child protection. Using case file reviews, participant observation and interviews and drawing upon Actor-Network Theory (ANT), Van de Luitgaarden seeks to understand the ways in which workers transform information into “facts”, or what he calls “antecedent conditions”. In the results section of the article, the author presents “a process model of child protection practice”, dividing the process of decision-making in a three-layered taxonomy: the stabilization of the agency’s and workers’ identities (what is the agency expected to do, by others and legally, and what does it want to do itself), building and stabilizing an actor network of informing (understanding what the agency itself is supposed and allowed to do, as well as other agencies involved, in a given situation) and constructing service user identities (constructing a coherent account of the case by means of triangulation).

Two of the articles in this issue deal with the professional assistance of specific and often hard-to-reach target groups: male providers of sexual services (Van Gelder) and male perpetrators of abuse (Dijkstra). In the article “Male sexual services in The Hague: developments on the internet”, Van Gelder argues how the rise of the internet has changed the day-to-day reality of male hustlers and how this poses new questions and opportunities for social workers trying to provide assistance for this group. He states that the closure of boys clubs, tighter controls at cruising areas and the “double taboo” of homosexuality plus prostitution are all reasons why this group has turned to the internet as a place to offer their services. On the basis of a research project, he concludes that

the internet can serve as a means for social workers to identify male providers of sexual services. One possible social function of the internet (e.g. gaining trust, getting acquainted) appeared to be difficult to realize, however, and needs further elaboration.

In her article on male perpetrators of abuse, Dijkstra underlines the need for a holistic view of social work (including the thoughts and opinions of the target group) when dealing with this group, and in doing so reports on the lessons learnt from a working visit to two domestic abuse programs on the basis of this principle in the USA. During her visits, she also held an interview with a key academic theorist on this theme. Based on her observations and conversations with social professionals and experts working in this field, Dijkstra disentangles four communication principles that are relevant when working systematically with male perpetrators of abuse: clarifying, perspective taking and making things personal; deepening thoughts, concretizing and confronting; respect, choice and responsibility; evaluation and reflection. Dijkstra regards the working visit as a valuable experience: it brought a deepening of insight, but also posed relevant questions and dilemmas that require further elaboration (e.g. more insight into the perspectives of male perpetrators of abuse themselves, risk assessment and the value of restorative work).

As we announced in issue 4/2010 volume, *The Journal of Social Intervention* considers it important to offer students the opportunity to publish in our journal. Accordingly, we launched the "Journal of Social Intervention Thesis Award". We are proud to present this year's prize-winning article "Working with socially isolated older people. The role of tacit knowledge" by Ria Kerklaan. Kerklaan was a student of the Master's programme in Social Intervention at the National Expertise Centre for Social Intervention in the Netherlands. In her article, she reports on the findings of a qualitative research project on the role of tacit knowledge in the actions undertaken by social workers to maintain or restore the autonomy of socially isolated older people. Kerklaan states that tacit knowledge is part of the day-to-day reality of the social work profession and presents the reader with examples of the use of this type of knowledge in six domains relevant to the profession. The author concludes by stating (and warning) that, although it is part of the social worker's professionalism, the development and utilization of tacit knowledge is not always clear to see, especially given the increasing need for quantifiable accountability in the field, and it requires guidance and time.

In the familiar book review section, Meike Kühl discusses *Violence in relationships of dependency: Developments in supply and demand of help and shelter* and Nicolien Wassenaar discusses *The burden of educational exclusion. Understanding and challenging early school leaving*

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*in Africa*. In the "News from Higher Education" column, Mariël van Pelt, elaborates on the developments of the Master's in Social Work, taught at the HAN University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. In issue 4/2007, she and her colleague Els Blikendaal reported on the start of the Master's programme, which was in its infancy at that time. The field of social work is in need of professionals with a wide-ranging background education, as is underlined by the diverse contributions in this journal's issue, so we are delighted to read about the positive developments taking place in the educational programme.

Nol Reverda, editor-in-chief

Jitske van der Sanden, managing editor