Editor's notes

Our International Editor, Jo Campling, has suggested that for a clearer idea about the papers in this journal, we should present them with some editorial comments, not just by habitual abstracts. The following words should thus be understood as an attempt at presenting the contributions from another angle, e.g., through the circumstances in which they appeared, through what they entail in terms of our current situation in social work, and so on. Since such an editorial is customarily written in Slovenian anyway, what remains to be done is only a translation. We hope you'll find it useful.

These notes on the papers are, of course, followed by authors' abstracts.

The first article, written by Blaž Mesec, scrutinises the limitations and further possibilities of evaluation of voluntary work. Beside the fact that we in this country are already witness to a burst of voluntary work which in itself sets a demand for some evaluation, it also calls for a critique of the impertinent methods of evaluation, and so many a remark and methodological grasp of the author serve the purpose of a better understanding of evaluation in general.

Srečo Dragos's discussion of (the place of) systems theory in social work, based on the research into the standards of social work that has been carried out by Bernard Strith & al. from School of Social Work, comes in this issue to an end.

Zoja Skušek's study, besides being a thorough review of the most important anthropological research on the behaviour of fathers at childbirth (the couvade), is also a good illustration of how the anthropologist's own signifying patterns dictate interpretations, so that it would not be incorrect to establish, as the author indicates, an anthropology of the "anthropological thought". Such critical (self)-analysis is very much needed in social sciences and practices in general, particularly those involved with any kind of intervention into "the other" (as, for example, social work).

Darja Zaviršek's records of her conversations with two psychiatric patients are followed by her sharp analytical comment on their existential situation. It is the fourth part of her anthropological research on women in the Ljubljana Psychiatric Clinic.

Milko Poštrak, under the somewhat misleadingly translated title (it should rather be "The place of subcultures today"), this time treats the political dimensions of subcultures, in particular those formed around some particular type of music.

A seminar on "social cultural work" that took place in School of Social Work (the publisher of this journal) brought us two articles: Lea Š. Bohinc describes some principles and techniques of this work, while Milko Poštrak, to find a suitable context for it, grapples with the extensive topic of distinctions and junctures among psychology, sociology and anthropology. The seminar itself is presented in the "Reports" section of the journal.

The other report, on the 27th congress of the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), and the review of a noteworthy Slovenian author's sociological-cultural study, are followed by the usual series of self-presentations, based on our questionnaire, of new social services in Slovenia.
ABSTRACTS

Blaž Mesec

Evaluation of voluntary work

Psychologist Dr. Blaž Mesec is a senior lecturer of methodology at University of Ljubljana School of Social Work. With reference to some of the concepts of the systems theory the author concludes that for an autopoetic system - that is what a volunteer projects is, or should be - to exist, it does not need evaluation but a reflexive description of what is going on inside the system. Evaluation is requested for the assessment of the functionality of the system from the standpoint of an external observer and his needs. Three approaches to evaluation are described (the experimental model, opinion polling, detailed description of activities and processes), and an original model of complex evaluation of four aspects (effort input, process, goal attaining and unintended effects) on three levels (individual, group, organisation/community) is presented in the form of an “evaluation grid”.

Srečo Dragoš

Social work - a systemic view (III)

Sociologist Srečo Dragoš, M. A., is an assistant lecturer of sociology at University of Ljubljana School of Social Work. Initially, the author refutes the commonest over-generalised critiques of the systems theory, surveyed in the second part of this discussion (in the previous issue of this journal), according to which it is too abstract and non-verifiable, refers to analogies, and is unsuitable for application in working with people. He points out the basic accents of the systemic approach that are particularly significant in social work: the role of communication as the elementary operation of social systems, the delimitation of (sub)systems, the distinction between “hard” (linear) and “soft” (circular) models of thinking, self-referring as a mode of organising interior and exterior complexity, the use of paradoxes, etc.

Zoja Skušek

Ritual forms of fatherly behaviour - Anthropology and the couvade

Graduate of comparative literature, Zoja Skušek is an assistant of sociology of culture and an associate of University of Ljubljana Philosophical Faculty, Editor of Studia humanitatis series and a publicist. The couvade - “father's behaviour related to the birth of a child” - is an exceptionally interesting institution for the research of fatherhood, and anthropology has always been concerned with it; the interpretation of this institution is a sort of signpost for the development of anthropological thought. The author reviews the most important interpretations, starting with Tylor's from 1865, and then in particular two significant influences in anthropological thought: the theory of an Oxonian anthropologist, Peter Riviere, who advocates the thesis of double birth, corporal (mother) and spiritual (father), and the theory of a French anthropologist, Patrick Menget, who relates the couvade with the prohibition of the incest, the former regulating the internal linkage of a social group and the latter constituting its external linkage.

Darja Zaviršek

Psychiatric ward between illness and its cultural manifestation - A case study (IV)

Sociologist Dr. Darja Zaviršek is an assistant lecturer for anthropology at University of Ljubljana School of Social Work. Relating personal biographies that sum up events in a meaningful continuum of experience is rather neglected in psychiatric hospitals. But it is very important to collect life stories in which
women recollect mostly negative events from their lives. The greater part of the article consists of conversations with two women who have the experience of class deprivation and their husbands' violence. Both are under the impact of the patriarchal ideology and both have to fight for their rights while dividing joint property with their husbands. One is also marked with her ethnic origin which reinforces her alienation from the culture where she lives. Psychiatry is for them a "retirement from unbearable conditions" which they enter as a consequence of "disordered nerves" brought about by a variety of deprivations.

Milko Poštrak

Where have all subcultures gone? (IV)

Sociologist Milko Poštrak, M. A., is a junior researcher at the University of Ljubljana School of Social Work.

Subcultural practices have always been ascribed political undertones. Yet the question whether a subcultural form involving a specific way of life (spectacular as it may be) has any real political power should be answered in the negative. The political dimensions of a given (sub)cultural practice can be read on the symbolic level, i.e., on the level of sign, attitude, manifestation, and on the level of reality, i.e., how a social group organises itself politically in relation with a pattern of (sub)cultural behaviour. The reverse may also be true: the pattern may represent one (innovative) dimension of the political organisation of a given social group. In any case, the political significance of a cultural practice is real - actually producing effects - only in the context of a social movement, but even as such, without this reference, it is an important dimension of human survival.

Lea Š. Bohinc

Social cultural work

Psychologist Lea Š. Bohinc is a junior researcher at University of Ljubljana School of Social Work.

At School of Social Work in Ljubljana the field of "social cultural work" has been developed, using creative cultural activities in the form of "social work with drama, movement-and-dance, art, music and video". The author presents social cultural work from a few selected aspects: why social work with creative cultural activities; the performers and the users in the system of social cultural work; a circular model of planning and performing social cultural activities; a model of social cultural work in groups; the knowledge, competence and qualities needed to perform social work with creative cultural activities.

Milko Poštrak

In the sign of the triad

Sociologist Milko Poštrak, M. A., is a junior researcher at University of Ljubljana School of Social Work.

With consideration of, and assistance by, psychological, sociological and anthropological knowledge about the entities called individual, society and culture, which are roughly covered by the said disciplines, the author offers a multiplex and comprehensive theoretical basis of relating to the multi-layered phenomenon of human existence. To rely on social theorists who always take into consideration the entwinement of these entities or aspects of human existence plays an important part in the theory of social work as well. Thus the article presents one possible general theoretical starting-points for the so-called social cultural work that is being gradually introduced into the curriculum of School of Social Work.