CARMEN-MARCELA CIORNEI, PETRU-VASILE GAFIUC, VIORICA-CRISTINA CORMOŞ, LILIANA ELISABETA ORZA, *Vulnerability and belonging: diagnosis and intervention at the level of contemporary social problems*, BUCUREŞTI: PRO UNIVERSITARIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, 2025

The book *"Vulnerability and Belonging: Diagnosis and Intervention at the Level of Contemporary Social Problems"* authored by four experts in the social field is distinguished by an innovative conceptual approach − correlating social vulnerability with the loss and restoration of belonging. This perspective goes beyond the boundaries of a strictly descriptive or quantitative analysis and proposes a relational and systemic understanding of contemporary social phenomena. The originality of the volume also lies in the integration of systemic counseling as a transversal method of intervention, applicable in various situations, namely: young people "Not in Employment, Education and Training" (NEETs), seasonal migration, and human trafficking.

The authors of this book, in the order in which they appear on the cover, are long-standing specialists in their fields of expertise and have joined to combine broad and current themes of the contemporary world in which we all live. We can easily see that we have two social workers and two law graduates with extensive experience in the social field, and not only. We also have two tenured teachers in higher education (Carmen-Marcela Ciornei and Viorica-Cristina Cormoş) and two PhD students who develop innovative solutions to the social problems they address in their research (Petru-Vasile Gafiuc and Liliana Elisabeta Orza). The combination of the two professional categories is an auspicious interpenetration of the social field.

Before you start reading the pages of any book, you want to discover something about its author, what made him stand out in his field of activity, or how he can convince you to read it. So, if we want to find out more about each author, in their presentation at the end of the book we discover that Carmen-Marcela Ciornei is a social worker with over 30 years of experience in the field and is currently a PhD lecturer at the University "Ștefan cel Mare" from Suceava, where she models future graduates and professionals who will work in the field of social work. Petru-Vasile Gafiuc is a law graduate and a PhD candidate in sociology, and has extensive expertise in the field both nationally and internationally, being a member of various networks developed in the social field.

Viorica-Cristina Cormoș is a social worker and Associate Professor at the University "Ștefan cel Mare" from Suceava and her related experience represents an added value to the social field in which she works. Liliana Elisabeta Orza is a law graduate and a PhD candidate in sociology. Her experience in the field of human trafficking represents the starting point for the research on this topic. Once we were convinced by the authors of the book about their expertise in the field, we can proceed to the actual reading of the published manuscript and it is possible to not put it down until the last page.

In the foreword of the book, Professor PhD Dumitru Stan mentions *"today it is more important to know how to act in social assistance than to have access to many material resources, and globalization is more permissive towards the generalization of the science of assistance action than towards the abundant production of material resources"* (p. 17). Consequently, the book

* CALITATEA VIEȚII, XXXVII, nr. 1, 2026, pp. 85–89

"Vulnerability and Belonging: Diagnosis and Intervention at the Level of Contemporary Social Problems" comes as a response to contemporary challenges and is structured in four thematic chapters, introduction and conclusions. The themes addressed are of: young NEETs represent a major challenge for educational and employment policies in Europe; seasonal migration that affects hundreds of thousands of Romanian families annually, with an impact on family cohesion and social integration; human trafficking is one of the most serious forms of exploitation and is treated here through an interdisciplinary perspective, with an emphasis on the role of the Church, often ignored in other research. The work pertinently responds to the current needs of the social field and offers relevant directions for professionals and decision-makers.

The first chapter, entitled *"Systemic Counseling in Social Work: Restoring Belonging and Rebuilding Relationships in Vulnerable Contexts*, author Carmen-Marcela Ciornei presents the role of counseling in social work in the context of current problems of contemporary society. The author's argument emphasizes the fact that specialists consider counseling in the social field to represent *"a fundamental element, with a direct role in improving the quality of life of clients but also in promoting fairness and social justice"* (p. 28). Also, the integration of the systemic approach in social counseling brought into discussion represents *"exploring the interactions between the beneficiary and his/her systems of belonging, understanding relational circularity and systemic feedbacks, but also mobilizing resources from social networks to support the change process"* (p. 32). Undoubtedly, the role of counseling in social assistance, depending on each case, is an art and the counselor must demonstrate meticulousness in his/her work with vulnerable groups in contemporary society.

The second chapter, entitled *"Systemic analysis of the issue of NEETs"*, author Petru-Vasile Gafiuc brings to the forefront one of the most recent challenges of today's society, namely: NEETs and their challenges. The term NEETs represents the acronym taken from the English language *"Not in Employment, Education and Training − NEETs"* and refers to young people aged between 15 and 19 who are not in any system (educational, vocational or training). The author briefly reviews the particularities of this category of vulnerable people and the path of its emergence, as well as the existing legislative provisions at national and European level. Belonging to various vulnerable categories (Roma youth, young people with disabilities and young people leaving placement centers) contributes to the increase in the number of NEETs in national and European statistics. Belonging to various vulnerable categories (young Roma, young people with disabilities and young people leaving placement centres) contributes to the increase in the number of young NEETs in national and European statistics. In addition, as the author argues, they *"are exposed to a higher risk of social exclusion, given that they do not develop their skills through studies or accumulate experience by working in the field"* (p. 80). At the end of the chapter, a call for action is presented and *"interconnection of economic, social, cultural policies and coordination at all levels to guarantee their integration into society"* (p. 108) by mobilizing all actors involved, both from the public and private sectors, to develop sustainable and effective public policies for this category of vulnerable people.

The third chapter, entitled *"Specific problems of the individual and family as a result of seasonal migration to work abroad. Qualitative study: «In the world of strawberries»"*, author Viorica-Cristina Cormoș highlights the challenges at the individual, family and societal level of people who go to work abroad. As can be seen from the presented analysis, *"seasonal migration involves a considerable effort of adaptation to a new work and life environment"* (p. 126). For this reason, a qualitative study was brought into discussion based on the semi-structured interview of the 20 Romanian seasonal workers in Germany and direct observation. The conclusions of this study highlight the fact that *"social, psychological and economic interventions are necessary to ensure an effective reintegration of seasonal workers returning home"* (p. 162), and collaboration between public and private institutions to achieve this objective is essential to be able to make the most of the existing human resource at the community level.

The fourth chapter, entitled *"The Role of the Church in Preventing Human Trafficking and in the Social Reintegration of Victims of this Phenomenon"*, author Liliana Elisabeta Orza brings to the public's attention the three dimensions of the phenomenon of human trafficking: historical, psycho-

social and legislative. A brief foray into the past of this social phenomenon is made and the way in which the Church has reported and been involved over time. References to human trafficking, in the form of slavery at that time, in reference texts such as the Old Testament, are also discussed. The four stages of human trafficking are presented next and the fact that *"those who directly or indirectly support this phenomenon, namely consumers or clients"* (p. 175). A very important element brought to the discussion by the author is that as long as there are clients or consumers, the phenomenon of human trafficking will not disappear like any supply and demand relationship. The final part of the chapter presents the existing legal provisions in the field at European and national level, relevant statistics to have a holistic picture of the phenomenon. The scientific approach culminated in the completion of six interviews with people from the church field who brought to the forefront the involvement of the Church in reducing this social phenomenon. In conclusion, this interdisciplinary approach in which the authorities in the field have worked in close collaboration with the Church through *"the involvement of priests in the prevention and social reintegration activities of victims"* (p. 207) is a real benefit to contemporary society.

The conclusions of the work focus on its interdisciplinary nature and rigorous theoretical foundation. Through the four themes addressed: systemic counseling, young NEETs, migrants, victims of human trafficking, the book *"responds to a pressing need in the field of social assistance and public policies: that of rethinking social cohesion, solidarity and interpersonal support in a context marked by fragmentation and uncertainty"* (p. 216).

In the book we are able to find relevant concepts from psychology, sociology, social work and theology, which are correlate with concrete social realities. Qualitative studies and practical analysis demonstrate a good mastery of applied research methodology. The volume also contributes to the consolidation of a relational paradigm in social intervention, offering a replicable model of analysis and action in contexts of vulnerability.

Geta Mitrea

SIMONA ILIE, *Incomes and social protection in Romania*, Bucharest, Pro Universitaria, 2024

In *Incomes and Social Protection in Romania*, Simona Ilie provides a comprehensive overview of the formation, distribution, and legal framework of population incomes in Romania, including the main social protection mechanisms associated with income policies. The volume brings together theoretical perspectives and long-term analysis, based on statistical series, legislative sources, and qualitative data. Written in Romanian, the book addresses a central topic in social policy and quality-of-life studies through an interdisciplinary approach at the intersection of economic, social, and policy analysis. According to the author, the work should enable a better understanding of the (redistributive) issues that govern household budgets and a more acute evaluation of income policies (p. 11).

The volume is structured into several large thematic chapters that span both a conceptual and a secular timeframe from the end of the First World War through 2020. From the outset, the author clarifies the analytical framework for analysing population incomes, emphasising their dual nature: as individual resources for meeting daily needs and aspirations, and as outcomes of broader economic

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