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SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Identity and biographical trajectories of women experiencing violence

Violence against women, which has been a social problem for a relatively short period of time, is widespread phenomenon not only in our country, but also globally. Due to its significance and social importance, as well as the state of current ignorance, it is necessary to conduct research in this respect. Recognizing the problem of violence, reference was made to the definition presented by K. Michalska and D. Jaszczak-Kuźmińska. It defines domestic violence as intentional acts and using dominance or omission directed to family members, which cause suffering, harm and violate the dignity and rights of individual. The critical theory with radical feminism was proposed as a paradigm of the work. Feminism itself is a radical theory that shows that men are responsible for the use of women in society and their benefit from it. However, its main determinant is conviction that: “a system of biological sex/sexual culture” is the main cause of female oppression. Therefore, the oppression of women is responsible for the whole social structure built on this system, called as patriarchy or sexism by radical feminists.

In presented work, the subject of research is a subjective image of social reality of women experiencing violence, which aim was to recognize the identity and biographical trajectories of women experiencing violence; showing how women perceive their role in society and what social-cultural models they have. The aim was to capture and illustrate the violence they experienced and its determinants, to identify the existence of primary trajectories that create potential for trajectories of violence, the direction of action in lives of women experiencing violence, and how women function in a situation of danger. It has been studied whether women identify themselves with the role that culture assigns to them in the role of being a victim, and whether intensive training of passivity, dependency and perception of own situation in view of other people interests is an obstacle to effective self-defense. The aim was also to present what they are guided by their actions, what sense they give to their activities and life, as well as what are they plans for the future.

The aim of study adopted in this work will also help to define the definition of identity, where it was considered as significant the biographical identity presented by A.L. Strauss, which binds the identity and fraught with consequences of our own and others assessments. The definitions of trajectory were adopted by F. Schütze, who described it as

a social and biographical process characterized by an experience of ever more painful and increasingly without end suffering.

Due to the fact that radical feminism was considered a paradigm of work, when choosing the research method, reference was made to postmodern and deconstructional feminist thought, recognizing the world as a series of stories or texts that support the combination of knowledge and oppression, and research based on the quantitative method as not presenting adequate segments of the social world. Therefore, the work is based on qualitative research relating to the methodology of well-established theory, which is a consequence of theoretical assumptions of interpretative paradigm and strict – symbolic interaction. An autobiographical narrative intelligence was recognised as the appropriate method. In the biographical approach, persons are cases, generally belonging to poorly or little researched category, which also includes women experiencing violence. The choice of a method and undertaking research in the indicated scope is also justified by the fact that individual life stories and their analysis are conducive to reaching the social reality, in this case unexplored social world of women experiencing violence. Moreover, as F. Schütze points out, there is a very deep connection between development of individual's identity and the way in which it relates the experience of life history in its narration. Forty-five women were provided with the study, who were selected among those suspected of being or having been affected by domestic violence and who were suspected of being or having been subjected to “the Blue Card” procedure, with a division into: residing with the perpetrator of violence, residing in the specialist centres for victims of domestic violence or centres of crisis intervention and residing in other place (own dwelling, home, social housing, etc.) – which indicates that women left the person committing violence against them. The research was conducted on the territory of Podkarpackie Voivodship.

The dissertation consists of eight chapters. The first introduces readers to violence. This chapter discusses the concept of violence and presents its classification. Violence has been shown in terms of psychological and sociological theories. It also presents conditions to violence against women and its result.

The next chapter contains global, European and Polish legal regulations concerning the phenomenon of violence. Procedures helping people experiencing violence were discussed. Social assistance activities in the face of problems of domestic violence were presented, as well as other forms of assistance for people experiencing and using violence.

The third chapter shows a scale and dynamics of violence in Poland, taking into account the phenomenon of violence against women in Poland and Podkarpackie Voivodship. Research on the causes of violence has also been reviewed. The socio-demographic structure of female population constituting victims of violence was also presented.

The fourth chapter is an introduction to the empirical part. It includes the issue and aim of work, as well as applied method and research technique. The organization and course of research was presented. There was also carried out characterization of studied group.

The following four chapters include analysis and interpretation of conducted research on the identity and biographical trajectories of women experiencing violence. The first one presents a portrait of women before experiencing violence. It presents institutional models in women's lives, meaning biographical sequences in which the individual is oriented towards fulfilling social expectations. Biographical models of action and changes in lives of women affected by violence were presented. It is precisely institutional models of expectations and biographical outlines of intentional action, which extend over time, that bring the order into the course of individual's life. The chapter concludes with a life assessment before crossings the border of violence by women.

The sixth chapter presents trajectories and models of becoming a person experiencing violence, collecting the trajectory potential and crossing the border, determination through violence – release of trajectory potential leading to a breakdown in the normal course of events.

The next chapter presents the identity and biographical work of women experiencing violence, how they evaluate their situation and functioning as a result of violence. It also provides a way of seeing oneself in a violent situation. An attempt was made to show the daily time of women experiencing violence and help those affected by violence in their perception.

The last eighth chapter presents plans and concerns of women experiencing violence with reference to the future. The chapter also shows the sense of life in women's perception. The conclusions drawn from conducted research and analysis constitute the finishing of presented work.

The structure of dissertation, including the past, present and future, allows the reader to see biographical process structures that organize the life stories of women experiencing violence, including their internal development of identity.

Showing the identity and biographical trajectories of women experiencing violence let's hope that the work will be useful not only for specialists dealing with violence, but also for practitioners developing various forms of assistance and support, including social support for women experiencing violence. Dissertation is the canon of knowledge in the field of sociology, psychology, social policy, social work and administration. Interdisciplinary value of work is also reflected in development of the family, employment and housing policies.