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The faces of violence in the discourse of science, journalism and in the experiences of victims.

Abstract: In this article I present one type of violence – domestic violence and its consequences. I offer to look at this problem from two different, complementary perspectives. From the perspective of social science theories, and from the perspective of the accompanying public discourse. I also describe the experiences of victims of violence. The methods of analysis adopted include critical analysis of scientific texts, critical analysis of journalism, problem-focused research, and critical analysis of the statements of adults who shared their experiences related to domestic violence based on retrospection. The context of the presented analyses is a critically reconstructed discourse on the transformation of the contemporary family.

Keywords: Physical and sexual violence in the family, the importance of the family, family transformation, defense mechanisms, guilt and shame, paradigms in family research.

Introduction

Violence against another person, against a social group, against a community or against social institutions is nowadays a major problem, as well as an intellectual and research challenge. In this text, I take on this challenge, aware of both the extent of the problem, its theoretical differentiation as well as the ambivalent, very emotional reactions that always accompany it. In this article I will try to present one type of violence – domestic violence and its consequences. I offer to look at this problem from two different, complementary perspectives.

From the perspective of social science theories, and from the perspective of the accompanying public discourse. I will also highlight the experiences of victims of violence.

The subject of the article presented will be domestic violence. I will present two forms of violence – physical violence and sexual violence. The methods of analysis adopted include critical analysis of scientific texts, critical analysis of journalism, problem-focused research, and critical analysis of the statements of adults who shared their experiences related to domestic violence based on retrospection. The context of the presented analyses is a critically reconstructed discourse on the transformation of the contemporary family.

The World Health Organization provides a definition of violence according to which it is “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation”. Danuta Rode (2010) notes that “This definition divides violence into three categories: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence. It takes into account the deliberate action of the perpetrators, as well as the direct effects and those that affect the further development of the individual. This basic division is further categorized: (1) self-directed violence – divided into suicidal behavior and self-injury; interpersonal violence – divided into two subcategories: violence against a family member or partner – most often takes place in the family home, is used against a child, a partner (wife, husband) or elderly people – and violence against an unrelated person, often a stranger – most often takes place outside the home and includes incidental acts of violence, rape or sexual violence against strangers, violence in schools, workplaces, prisons, care facilities, youth violence; (3) collective violence – involves the instrumental use of violence. Definitions of violence committed by people who identify themselves as members of one group against another group for economic, political or social benefit. These include: genocide, repression and violation of human rights, terrorism, organized crime, armed conflicts (within countries, between countries). This typology also takes into account the nature of the violence and divides it into two: physical, psychological, sexual violence, deprivation and neglect.” (Rode, 2010, p. 25).

The value and importance of the family and discourse on domestic violence

My many years of research on the Polish family prove that it is still one of our most important values – both in the individual and social aspect. This undeniable importance of the family often leads to the belief that the Polish family is sacred. This feature, or its basic characteristics, makes it very difficult to

conduct research, as well as to diagnose or interpret the phenomenon of domestic violence. The sanctity of the family is manifested on many levels of its description and research. The family is sacred not only in the project of theologians, in the social doctrine proclaimed by the Church – the family is also sacred when attempts are made to interpret the actual changes and phenomena that describe the life of contemporary families. Z. Tyszka notes that “The sphere of the tradition-based family culture of Poles has been invaded by national events and processes that took place in Poland after the Second World War. Violent political, legal, economic changes, industrialization and related urbanization carried out in the previously agricultural country, increased spatial and social mobility of the population, changes in macrostructural systems, the mass employment of women, particularly married women – all this resulted in intensive intra-family processes, changed the situation of the family in microstructural, mesostructural and macro-structural systems and in the entire global society, influenced the pattern of family life and its value system”. (Tyszka, 2001, p. 27)

A number of studies conducted in this field aim to diagnose the discrepancy between the model, project or desired vision of family life contained in the Church's social teaching and the reality defined then as bad, dangerous, pathological. This disagreement with the reality, the transformations taking place in the sphere of values, practices, actions, styles and quality of life causes that the issue of the family is associated with many stereotypes, falsifications, misrepresentations, makes the problem get closer to ideology. Here is an example of such a way of thinking about the transformation of a modern family: “You can pinpoint a whole set of reasons for the current scenario for the family situation. Undoubtedly, social conditions related to the labor market – which generates job insecurity, unemployment and affects general living conditions – play an important role. They are both factors threatening the creation of a family and its functioning. There are also other factors that pose a threat to the functioning of the family. One of them is the trend of individualization processes, which bring: a) orientation towards the self-development of women and men – which creates difficulties in combining the performance of professional and family roles, b) inability to negotiate and communicate as a couple, lack of willingness to solve problems, quick resignation from efforts to deal with the situation and the choice of ending the marriage, c) social acceptance of divorce – which makes it easier to make decisions about the dissolution of marriage. The threat for building a family in turn is: a) change of social norms, which allows for – acceptance of behaviors permitting the existence of informal relationships and meeting needs without the need to enter into a formal relationship, b) new approach to marriage – which changes expectations – goals of young people, develops the assumption of dissolution, allows for an escape from responsibilities, which young people are afraid to undertake and enter into a binding agreement. Escape from responsibilities goes along with the consent to enjoy life, c) career building (trend of individualization)

– requires a longer period of education, focuses the individual on professional matters, d) assistance from their families supports young people in delaying their transition into adult life, where they are responsible for themselves and those close to them. (Kwak, 2015, p. 18)

The approach of Polish researchers is a functional one, analyzing the problems of the family in terms of its functions. The discussion on the contemporary family, emerging in the area of various disciplines, reveals a conviction about its crisis, threats to it or even its decline. I would like to look at these threats from a cultural perspective.

In this perspective, a number of changes currently occurring in the sphere of symbolic culture are pointed out and treated as a potential source of threats to the contemporary family.

The analysis of the changes mentioned and described most often in the literature leads to the conclusion that they concern:

- the strong tendency to replace the previously recognized Christian values with new ones, called liberal or pluralist,
- the deepening of the sense of freedom and the related freedom of choice,
- the development of the tendency to universalism, expressed in the desire to compete with the Western countries,
- the spread of subjectivism and accompanying individualism. Subjectivism, as the representatives of the mindset in question believe, manifests itself primarily in the sphere of views and norms, while individualism in behaviors and actions,
- the development of ideologies of success and competition,
- the intensification of the desire to achieve personal happiness at all costs.

The main threats that the above changes may lead to are, according to the authors stressing them (Dyczewski, 2007), the cult of oneself connected with making independent choices and making decisions, adopting a naive vision of spontaneity, which is a value in itself, and the cult of subjective thinking.

Researchers of family problems note that the pace of change in the field of culture is so rapid that it threatens the family, which accepts and actively engages in these changes. Reactions to changes in culture, which Polish families are becoming part of, are sometimes compared in the literature on the subject to the resistance with which the family reacted to manifestations of socialist or communist symbolic culture. The concern of the researchers for whom the views discussed here are characteristic is the fact that the intra-family mechanisms of resistance and selection against the patterns of liberal culture of the Western countries, perceived as dangerous, threatening, have been weakened.

The form and substantive content of the above described characteristics of changes in the sphere of culture and defining them in terms of threats that could weaken or destroy the Polish family is characteristic for a very distinct group of researchers of family problems who are openly voicing their views. This

method can be called conservative, cautious or persuasive. It does not increase our knowledge of the family, in my opinion, but becomes a cause of a kind of allergy to any problems related to it. It also becomes a significant context for the phenomena of violence occurring in the family nowadays.

The family as a space of violence – the discourse of science

A conservative, ideological approach to the contemporary family is becoming one of the sources of resistance in perceiving (or even allowing to perceive) the problem of domestic violence. A special, shameful and denied issue is the problem of sexual violence. The temporal dimension of perceiving this problem shows that in the case of sexual violence it was claimed that such a problem does not exist at all. The adoption of a critical research orientation and historical perspective indicates that for many years the problem of possible consequences of sexual abuse in childhood for the person experiencing it has been neglected or overlooked.

From the 1930s to the 1980s it was believed that such experiences were of little importance in an individual's biography. The researchers who expressed such views were: Bender and Blau (1937), Bender and Grugett (1952), Darwin et al. (1955), Rosenfeld (1979), Yorukoglu and Kempf (1966), De Young (1982), DeMott (1980). They believed that the genesis of what we call the sexual abuse of children is the so-called "child sexuality". According to these interpretations, "oedipal fantasies were supposed to do much more harm than incest or sexual exploitation, because these children, even though they experienced them, had no symptoms of disease". (Salter, 2003, p. 203). Sex with parents in this approach functioned as a reduction of these oedipal fantasies. The scientists in question claimed both that early incestuous experiences have little effect – both sexual and non-sexual – in the adult life of the victims of these behaviors, and that "the permanence of psychological wounds from sexual assaults experienced in childhood is extremely rare". (Brunold, 1964, p. 8). As recently as 1980 DeMott stated that "incest is a positive and healthy experience or, in the least favorable version, something neutral and irrelevant". (DeMott, 1980). However, by the late 1980s and 1990s, research into the causes, course and effects of depression had already shown that both the disease, as well as anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are much more common in the population of sexually exploited children. In addition, a number of studies have shown that women who were sexually exploited in their childhood are four times more likely to develop affective disorders (Burnam et al., 1988). It has been indicated that sexual exploitation in childhood results in such disorders in adult life as agoraphobia, social phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorders (Saunders, 1992).

Based on clinical practice, psychologists dealing with the issue of sexually abused children have found that anxiety and depression are caused by affective retrospections regardless of whether the victim remembers the events associated with it or not. They may also be a consequence of a distorted perception of reality and thoughts of the attacker internalized by the victim – such effects may include the sense of causality which I described, which becomes the victim's experience. Also, the perception of reality, attitudes towards current events taking place here and now by victims of sexual exploitation may be distorted and may lead to the revictimization of these behaviors (Salter, 2003, p. 220). Among the everyday, most frequent effects of the experience of sexual abuse in childhood are also affective retrospections – a small stimulus is enough to remind the adult victim of the traumatic experience of childhood (smell, voice) to trigger despair, anxiety, fear, shame or even a desire to die. “An adult victim tends to respond to stress as if it was an exact repetition of trauma. “An adult victim tends to respond to stress as if it was an exact repetition of trauma. They experience a huge intensity of feelings, similar to that which accompanied the original trauma, but are not aware of its historical context”. (Van der Kolk, 1987, p. 7). There is also a kind of allergy to closeness, and as one becomes aware of what happened in childhood, there is also a sense of betrayal, which can become a source of distrust towards closeness, towards any form of intimacy.

The effects of sexual abuse experiences in childhood may also be related to cognitive processes. Fears and depressions can be the result of:

“The incorrect way of thinking, which sometimes comes from internalizing the false thoughts of the perpetrator. In short, a victim who feels that he or she betrayed their mother, who believes to be the one who led to the break-up of the family, who tells him or herself that the abuse is proof of his or her worthlessness – may be subject to secondary anxiety and depressions resulting from these opinions, in other words, from a sense of inferiority. [...] The victim may also fall into anxiety and depression because he or she has developed a traumatic perception of the world – a belief that the world is dangerous and unpredictable” (Salter, 2003, p. 228).

Studies of psychological literature related to sexual exploitation of children allow us to create a specific catalog of the consequences of these experiences. These are:

- Changes in affect and impulse regulation, such as: affect regulation, anger modulation, self-destruction, suicidal thoughts, difficulties in modulating sexual involvement, excessive risk taking.
- Changes in attention and awareness such as amnesia, dissociative episodes and depersonalization.
- Somatic changes such as: changes in the digestive system, chronic pain, cardiovascular system, conversion symptoms, sexual symptoms.

- Changes in self-perception such as: inefficiency, constant disorganization, guilt and responsibility, shame, minimization, a sense of misunderstanding by the environment, a sense of inadequacy.
- A change in the perception of the perpetrator consisting in: acceptance of distorted beliefs, idealization of the perpetrator, becoming interested in the injuring perpetrator.
- A change in relations with others, consisting in: inability to trust, revictimization, tendency to hurt other people.
- A change in the system of meanings consisting in: desperation and hopelessness and loss of previous meanings.

Thus, it is clear that the discourse of science (its part based on psychological scientific research and psychological clinical practice) concerning people who were sexually abused in their childhood has significantly changed over the last few decades. The problem has been noticed, named and its extensive, often dramatic consequences for the individual have been shown. The psychological mechanisms on which it is based have been presented and its socio-cultural sources have also been pointed out. Among these mechanisms there are family mechanisms of passing on patterns of violence to future generations. These include disturbed relationships with mother (ambivalent, avoiding, disorganized model), disturbed relationships with father, disturbed parenthood (traits of parents, their mutual relations, their relationship with their child). There is also a description of personal cycles of violence (for example, lack of empathy towards oneself and others, transfer of responsibility and repression of guilt for one's own actions), a description of biological factors, which include: weakening of memory, impairment of defense against a threat, agitation and numbness (Widera-Wysoczańska, 2010, p. 80–135).

These and many other statements and findings being developed nowadays by psychology in scientific research and in clinical practice are part of the discourse of science. They are the part of it that not only shows how to work with the perpetrator and the victim of sexual abuse and other forms of domestic violence, but also how such behavior occurs between the closest people and why it happens. There are also topics in the discourse of science that hinder both the process of diagnosing this phenomenon as well as its prevention and elimination of its consequences.

“The constant experience of violence and the myths about it spread in society and in the family teach a person that it is impossible to protect oneself from a powerful perpetrator and that the victim will be considered guilty anyway. The dysfunctionality and pathology of the family system and its repetitive traumatic events are reinforced by the environment and its myths and stereotypes which justify violence and indicate its legitimacy. Following these destructive myths, people want to be convinced, among other things, that frequent screaming or prolonged silence in the family is not violence but the norm, typical for every

family. A boy has to be beaten for his own good, if he hadn't been beaten, he wouldn't have grown up to be a decent person. Girls «just ask» to be sexually exploited, seduce the «poor» perpetrator, and if a child reveals that they have been abused in this way, they are accused of making that up or of wanting to be sexually exploited. The father who beats and rapes is better than none. The family must exist at all costs, no matter how badly things are going on in it, because the Church says so, broken families are not welcome in society and children from these families develop less well than in full families, even if these are pathological families. Loyalty to the family is the most important thing, even if one experiences a lot of harm in it” (Widera-Wysoczańska, 2003, p. 64).

Above, I have briefly presented the history of the handling of the problem of sexual exploitation of children in the discourse of science. I have shown a change of approach, from an underestimating, marginalizing perception that this phenomenon is of little importance for the development and biography of the person experiencing it to a confidence based on research and clinical practice that it has dramatic consequences in all spheres of human social life. Theoreticians The concern of clinicians, carefulness, wisdom and reflectiveness of the theoreticians of this problem more and more often allow us to see and understand this difficult phenomenon.

However, in the public discourse, in the public debate, apart from the above mentioned papers, demonstrating the often irreducible consequences of sexual violence, one can also find a number of simplifications, myths and stereotypes that fit in with the belief in the “sanctity of the Polish family”. Myths, stereotypes, and prejudices about family life are “doing well” and are still present in our collective consciousness.

The family as a space of violence – the public discourse

In public discourse, the problem of sexual violence in the family is sometimes hushed up, repressed or explicitly denied. Those who try to talk about it face hostility, stigma, rejection. An example of such a discourse is the book by Barbara Gujska entitled “Molestowanie pamięci. Rzecz o nowym fenomenie psychologicznym i jego społecznych skutkach (Harassment of memory. About the new psychological phenomenon and its social consequences)” (2006). This popular science publication touches on many of the topics, present in our public discourse, that concern the problem of sexual exploitation of children. The first of these is the problem of false memory. The author of the book puts forward a thesis that the responsibility for the topic of sexual exploitation of children in the family home, which appears in the public debate, is borne by the therapists “seduced” by early psychoanalysis, who, as a result of their actions, include this past experience in the experiences of their patients. She writes that:

“According to Hochman, in the early 1990s, some therapists who did not know exactly how human memory works were deceived by an early psychoanalysis-inspired theory that a sufficiently involved therapeutic approach can discover an accurate record of the traumatic events of their clients’ childhood. [...] Moreover, many of them were convinced that certain, quite common symptoms in adults (e.g. headaches, low self-esteem, unexplained anxiety) indicate a history of childhood traumas and thus justify constant demands on the client to recall traumatic events. Convinced by the certainty and determination of therapists, as well as the free use of confusing procedures such as hypnotic trance, many clients «recall» similar incidents and thus confirm the opinions of the «expert»” (Gujska, 2006, p. 13).

The evaluative tone of this statement, the definition of therapy as “the use of confusing procedures”, use of the quotation marks for the term experts, as well as the process of recalling childhood experiences, are characteristic of this kind of publicist (public) discourse. Clinical work on one’s own childhood experiences is not treated as an achievement of psychology in terms of theory and practice, but as a simplification or “falsification of memory”. We therefore go back to the 1930s, when the view about the harmlessness of the experience of sexual abuse to our biography was maintained and spread. Another topic of this discourse is the conviction that reaching out to traumatic childhood experiences threatens the system of values relating to family life. This fear for the family, its image, its position in the hierarchy of values of Poles is a very characteristic, frequently undertaken subject of this type of debate. For this reason, the author of the quoted book calls the work of therapists working on unblocking the memory of traumatic events a form of mental manipulation.

Another issue present in the discourse on sexual violence in the family is the belief that the phenomenon of sexual exploitation of children is so rare, so marginal, that speaking out loud about it leads to a false belief that this problem exists. It is believed that publicizing this problem leads to a wave of false accusations that make innocent people into perpetrators of violence. In my opinion, the problem of false accusations must not be underestimated – they can (and sometimes do) become a powerful weapon of those fighting over a child in the situation of parents’ divorce. However, we need to learn how to distinguish such behaviors from those that actually harm, wreak havoc for the rest of one’ life, experiences of disdain. Arousing anxiety by saying that: “As a result of the hysteria unleashed by domestic violence centers in the 1990s, many thousands of American families lost their children forever” (Gujska, 2006, p. 22) seems to be unjustifiable, unreasonable.

Another topic of the reconstructed discourse, based on the book “Molestowanie pamięci”, is the view disseminated therein that, contrary to the position of therapists, the experience of sexual harassment is of little importance for an individual’s biography. It is accompanied by depreciation of psychoanalysis as an

important direction in psychology. The blame for the sexual abuse of children is put on Freud and his theory and on the psychologists who work on the basis of these theories. Social campaigns such as “bad touch” are also accused of destroying the family and undermining the trust in the loved ones. Similarly falsified in the public sphere is the discourse related to the use of physical punishments in family upbringing. Also here, the problem is being avoided, belittled and its consequences underestimated.

Violence in the family – experiences of victims.

The family is that environment, that world in our life, where we want to feel safe. Basic trust, self-confidence, positive self-esteem – all these are basic attributes of family life. The deprivation of these needs is always a problem and always leads to serious consequences both for the individual and the community. The victims of domestic violence are most often children and women – mothers and wives. Research conducted in Wrocław on the basis of data contained in the Blue Card (data from the Police, made available by Andrzej Kamiński in his doctoral dissertation entitled: Participation of police officers in proceedings against victims and perpetrators of violence) reveals that “if we look closely at the percentage values of crimes against children under 13, we can easily notice that in relation to the total number of persons harmed by perpetrators of domestic violence, the number of child victims remains at an alarming level of 12.3% in 2009 and 13.2% in 2010. This can be compared with data on the number of women victims: 68.1% in 2007, 70.9% in 2008, 73.2% in the following year and 70% in 2010. (Kamiński, 2014)

Physical violence against children became the subject of my focus research, conducted in 2017 and 2018 among students of pedagogy at the University of Opole. I conducted a family violence-focused interview with the students. I also asked for written, anonymous feedback about their own childhood experiences of any form of violence. I also talked directly to students who were willing to discuss this issue. I conducted with them an in-depth (clinical) interview. An additional, very interesting aspect of this research was its temporal dimension – the participating students are adults who looked at their childhood in retrospect.

Memory of violence

The experience of violence is unforgettable. Despite the passage of years, the memory of this experience is present, it is permanent in our biography. That's what my research participants say about it: “I remember that day. It was in winter Without asking, my brother and I took sleds and went up a hill. Right next to the

house. We got a little wet, a bit dirty. And when we got back, a big row broke out. Huge, as if the world was ending. And there was a beating.”

“I will always remember how my father used to punish me. I knew his belt very well. For being late, for a bad grade, for everything.” “I remember every beating. That’s how our parents disciplined us. It was their method of education.”

This memory makes up a picture of the family home. In a 2002 study, published in the book “Doświadczenia rodzinne w narracjach. Interpretacja sensów i znaczeń (Family Experience in Narratives. Interpretation of Senses and Meanings)”, I studied the memory of the family home. I looked for the meanings given to their home by the people living there. At that time, the feeling of security, being at home, the sense of homeliness incomparable to anything else, appeared to be the most important. Another meaning given to this unique space was the reduction of anxiety – the research participants pointed out that in the family home they are not afraid of anything, nobody and nothing threatens them, they can be themselves. How to confront the biographical memory of physical punishment, the violence they experienced with this sense of security, with basic trust, with the reduction of anxiety? I think that through the irreducible memory of the experience of violence, the image of our family (although idealized) cannot be the source of solely positive emotions. It has a permanent (as the quoted statements show) scratch, it is somehow cracked.

Guilt and shame as a result of violence

Parental violence (physical punishment) is usually accompanied by a verbal message. It is meant to be a justification for this type of punishment. This message gives an indication of the type of misconduct for which the punishment is imposed. The words accompanying the violence, uttered with a raised voice, become a source of guilt and shame for the victims. All the participants in my research who have experienced violence in childhood indicate a sense of guilt for the misconduct that has become the cause of physical punishment and the accompanying shame. That’s what they write and say about it: “Every time I got beaten – not so seriously, but still – I felt bad, I felt like I deserved it. I was sorry and ashamed. Very ashamed. For not being like my parents want me to be, for them being unhappy with me. I felt guilty.” “Whenever there were spankings, arguments I thought, I knew I deserved them. They had to deal with me somehow. I was a difficult child.”

For victims of sexual violence, the feeling of shame and guilt is an even deeper experience. “Victims of sexual violence are unable to accept themselves. The inability to accept themselves, built on a sense of shame and guilt for somebody else’s actions (the source of which is the violence used against them) is one of the most visible, biographical experiences, often accompanying them throughout their lives. This is what they say about themselves:

“A smoothly shaved old man is leading a girl by the hand [...] An idyllic film about a loving grandpa and a polite granddaughter, but don't let it fool you, because at the end of the day the grandpa devours the granddaughter together with her scratchy, ugly dress. He devours her with his eyes and rough fingers, and later on with something more painful, although smooth and usually hidden. The girl has already learned one thing: whenever she tries to tell someone about it (in those few special words that she knows) she always hears that she is a Little Disgusting Girl. That's what Grandma said, that's what Mom said. “A Little Disgusting Girl is less loved – that's what the girl has also learned” (Narration *Mała Wstręciucha puka do drzwi* / A Little Disgusting Girl knocks on the door) (Nowakowska, 2002, pp. 10–11). “The perpetrator of sexual violence is a constant element of the self-image in these narratives. The women telling their story cannot separate their own image from that of the perpetrator. Through their suffering they become one in pain, horror, guilt and shame. In this way, they take on a part of the responsibility for what another person, a person close to them by definition, does to them (the perpetrators of sexual harassment are usually the closest family members). This co-responsibility burdens them even more, making it difficult both to understand what harm another person has done to them and to free themselves from that harm. It seems that our sexual behavior is inscribed in such cultural patterns and norms that always indicate its relational, interdependent character – maybe this explains the problem. Accepting part of the responsibility for the experience of disdain makes it very difficult to work to free oneself from its effects. How can I free myself from the perpetrator if I am guilty? How am I supposed to free myself from myself?” (Dziemianowicz, 2016, p. 282)

Experiencing violence as a barrier in development

The aim of development of every human being is to build a sense of well-being, a sense of identity based on the conviction of belonging to a group, a community, a larger whole and the certainty of one's own uniqueness and exceptionality. At the same time, we want to be like others, somehow similar to others and (although it seems contradictory or at least difficult) we want to be exceptional, unique. We cannot construct identity, as a goal of our development, in a situation of refusal of recognition. Recognition is a kind of intersubjective relationship in which my sense of self-esteem, usefulness and autonomy is affirmed in the eyes of another person – my partner in interaction. According to a theoretician dealing with recognition (Honneth, 2012) its refusal always results in the experience of disdain. Can you imagine a stronger refusal of recognition than violence? Physical violence, sexual violence? “Disdain becomes part of our identity, an unforgettable, irreducible experience. The experience of disdain as what they

expect, what they experience from other people is permanently inscribed in their biography. Disdain as a result of refusal of recognition is built on the relationship with another person – it is always intersubjective. The inability to separate from the perpetrator, both the real one, experienced in childhood, built on helplessness in the face of what the women experienced, and the symbolic one, consisting in being forever imprisoned in this experience from childhood, is another of its constitutive features. Ambivalence towards the perpetrator, co-responsibility for the suffering they have endured, feelings of shame and guilt for what has happened to women – victims of sexual harassment – because of other people, are the basis of the experience of refusal of recognition, the basis of its consequence – disdain.” (M. Dziemianowicz, 2016, p.284). Do people who have experienced disdain have the opportunity to develop? Do they have a chance to work on their own identity, based on ontological security and a sense of recognition? I think that given the permanent place of experiencing violence in the memory of the victims, their development is much more difficult, if not impossible. What characterizes these people is the loop on the trajectory of suffering, is their inability to cope with this traumatic biographical experience. “A few years ago, I went through a stage where I seriously planned a suicide. Suffering, which I hadn’t anticipated before, took away not only my desire to live but also my physical strength. Walking down the street I had to squat out of exhaustion, the mornings started at four a.m. and lasted forever, evenings brought little relief. It’s gone and I hope it won’t happen again. Only. I can’t get rid of the thought that somewhere out there he comes to little girls at night.” The quoted excerpts from the narrative of a victim of sexual violence in the family show the significance of the trauma experienced. They show that it is, regardless of the further course of life, its most important experience. One that affects everything: the self-esteem that it takes away permanently, the hope for change that it blocks and makes it impossible to fulfill, the relationship with others: both men and women. The experience of sexual abuse is a biographical trap, an endless nightmare. In the temporal dimension it will never end – as the narrators point out. The past, present and future are encapsulated in this experience. It is part of the biographical memory, a memory that brings shame, a sense of guilt, a sense of shared cause and co-responsibility.” (Dziemianowicz, 2016, p. 288)

I think that the permanent, unforgettable character of the experience of domestic violence (physical, sexual) is one of the features that makes it necessary to treat this kind of experiences of other people with seriousness and care. The second one is the conviction about the influence of this experience on development, the conviction that the experience of violence, underlying the feeling of disdain, blocks it or makes it significantly difficult.

Conclusion – a multi-paradigmatic proposal for research on domestic violence

Presented above is a very brief description of the treatment of sexual violence in the discourse of science and journalism. I described both the dynamically developing research on the causes and effects of violence against children and the journalistic theses about the illusory, imaginary, unrealistic nature of this problem. I also characterized the biographical and identity-related consequences of experiencing violence based on the accounts of its victims. I addressed physical violence and sexual violence. The permission to beat children (for the so-called “spanking”) is common in our country. I believe that physical violence (including spanking) and sexual violence have a common denominator. Accepting spanking as an educational method is for me an example of a defensive mechanism based on the attitude towards the perpetrator. Since it is difficult to accept that the physical suffering and accompanying humiliation (which is a consequence of even the slightest act of physical violence) is inflicted upon us by the closest to us (parents), we must somehow justify them. And it is precisely how I treat frequent opinions of today’s adult advocates of spanking as an educational method – as an excuse, being in fact a defensive mechanism. They say – I was spanked by my father, my mother and see – I grew up to be a decent man. I do not know any justification for the belief in being a decent person expressed in this sentence. However, I am convinced that the acceptance for the physical punishments applied in the past by one’s own parents, which is expressed in it, is an attempt to deal with ambivalence – the source of suffering becomes someone who was always supposed to protect, love, give a sense of security. It’s hard for us to call someone close to us a perpetrator, a bad man. The same mechanism underlies the attitude of the victims of sexual violence to the perpetrator of this violence who is part of the family. Each type of violence is caused by the belief in the impunity of the perpetrator, their dominance over the victim, their power. The Polish Family and Guardianship Code mentions parental authority. It is assumed that the essence of it is the power of the adult (parent) over the child. This belief is associated with an imbalance of rights – it is assumed that the rights of the parent are superior to those of the child. The difficulty and reluctance to conduct research on domestic violence (especially sexual violence), and open diagnoses can also stem from the guilt and shame of researchers. For us researchers, as participants in social life, the family is also sacred, the family is very important. Diagnosing domestic violence, both physical and sexual, violates family taboos, so we prefer to push this problem out of our consciousness. Repression, denial is two defensive mechanisms. I believe that they are triggered by both scientific and journalistic discourse on domestic violence.

I have deliberately placed the problem of domestic violence in the perspective of changes and threats to which this interactive community (not to write a social unit) is subject nowadays. I attempted to present the importance of the family as a kind of barrier in dealing with the problem of violence, the sanctity of the family excluding the presence of violence. Overcoming this blockade may be a suggestion of a methodology for research on the family and the violence that happens within it. Based on the paradigms present in social sciences, I propose to use all methodological orientations to investigate this difficult and complex phenomenon. I am of the opinion that the principles shaping the ways of creating and using the family theory can be developed on the basis of philosophical ideas, connected with the philosophy of science and especially with the issues related to defining knowledge. (Morawiec, 2014) And so positivist philosophy assumes that there are objective truths, processes, objective realities. It is the basis for the evaluation criteria of the family theory, which concern their construction (related to their internal coherence, simplicity, abstraction, level of generality). The aim of the theory is to explain and predict. Thanks to this orientation, we can study both the conditions of behaviors related to domestic violence and their consequences, their effects.

Interpretative philosophy assumes that truth is subjective and all knowledge is created during and through the interpretation of the actors involved, communicating with each other. The criteria for the evaluation of the theory, resulting from the assumptions of this philosophy, are based on the information established in the experience of family members. The aim of theory is to understand. Thanks to this approach it becomes possible to get to know the subjective world of people experiencing violence, to understand their situation, their fate, their biography.

The critical philosophy assumes that truth is imposed by those who have the power to shape knowledge. The criteria for the evaluation of the family theory, resulting from the assumptions of this philosophy, are related to the consent to pluralism, emancipation, possibility of change. The aim of the theory is emancipation. With this approach, we will show ourselves and the victims of violence how to overcome this critical life situation, show them and give them ways to cope with the trauma they have experienced.

The application of all these orientations, i.e. description, explanation, understanding and the ability to emancipate, are objectives that I think should be taken into account when constructing family theories, designing or conducting research on the contemporary family. This seems to be priceless to me in the case of research on sexual violence as a particular, constantly repressed, shameful case of our family relationships. In the public discourse quoted in the presented text there are phrases such as: "One has to be aware that man is a manipulative creature and sometimes can be "stunned," as Shakespeare said. The pluralism of world views that exists in democracy favors all kinds of manipulations to which people who often decide our fate: psychologists, teachers, judiciary officials and

politicians are also subjected. Under the influence of therapy, training, a book read or emotional shock, they may also experience “being stunned” and changes in their perception of reality, not always beneficial”. (Gujka, 2006, p. 112)

I would like to say that the message contained in the book cited above is an alarm signal for me. It warns against wishful, normative construction of such a social image of the world, which is not based on real experiences, experiences of people living here and now, but is a normative, ideological project closed to everything that deviates from the adopted axiological vision, from the approved model. Scientific and public discourse must be based on a community of experiences from which no one is excluded. A community is a place for everyone – including those who have experienced dramatically harmful behavior from their close ones. Even when the description of these experiences makes us outraged, arouses fear and disbelief, the testimony of another person’s suffering is a sufficient reason to want to know the problem, to be able to describe it and to counteract it. It seems to me that our fear of allowing the researchers to speak out and discuss the results of their research on domestic violence not only falsifies the reality but also makes it difficult for all of us to understand this phenomenon and deal with its consequences.

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