

VICTIMS' AGENCY FOR AN EMANCIPATORY INTERVENTION

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Introduction

- Intervention cultures in the 4 countries differ greatly regarding the political and ideological framing and the social policy concerning protection and support to women from unprivileged social groups and subaltern (minority) ethnicities, including discriminated social groups (Roma, farmers), immigrant, LGBT, and others;

Introduction (2)

- In the 4 countries, DV is seen as a public interest issue;
- Language is gender-neutral in the 4 countries, even though the legal documents identify women as the main victims;
- UK and DE have no specific law for DV, despite having developed social policies of intervention; decisive role of the national feminist movements.
- SLO – family violence; PT – DV as a public crime.

Introduction (3)

- In the 4 countries, the legal and policy framing is immersed in the respective socio-political-cultural context:

“what counts as truth is produced in the interest of those in power to shape reality and that this process is pervasive as it is necessary, as it is changeable” (MacKinnon, 1983, p. 640).

Main findings (1)

- In the 4 countries, the notion of empowerment of women victims and survivors is present in the professionals' discourses, despite the participation of victims survivors in the processes of escaping violence not being explicit.
- This absence of the women's voices and their experiences contributes to the ***othering process***, viewing them as powerless, submissive, ambivalent, without agency, space for action or resistance.

Main findings (2)

- Women's silence, as well as their silencing, are not conceptualized (the common belief is that women that don't press charges or don't want to leave the relationship are resigned and unempowered).
- In the 4 countries, the professionals are greatly implicated in the processes of eradicating domestic violence against women.

Main findings (3)

- The absence of women's agency in the professionals' discourses (not all) was confronted with a **strong presence of resistance, escaping strategies and awareness of the violence by the women participants.**

Main findings (4)

- The professionals' dilemmas about when and how to intervene can be contrasted with stories about poorly timed interventions (too early, or too late).
- The political and legal consensus about the eradication of the violence in the private sphere doesn't meet an equivalence at the public sphere where patriarchy, coloniality and social relations of power and exploitation are pervasive in all dimensions of society

Main findings (5)

- In some cases the **epistemic violence** of the intervention systems is visible — professionals are viewed as knowers and women and children as not-knowing — notably when dealing with women and children from ethnic minorities (all 4 countries) or migrant women from previously colonized countries (PT and UK);
- Also, the **risk discourse** (stronger in the UK) seems to push professionals into this paradigm which confronts them with the need of lowering numbers of femicide and DV. As researchers pointed out this risk discourse coupled with austerity measures has the danger of undermining a quality intervention with women.

Main findings (6)

- **Criminalization of DV** was a crucial frame in PT and SLO, and in distinction with DE. Nevertheless, in all the four countries few convictions were reported. This discourse is constructed in an individual basis as a dichotomy — either criminalization or the tolerance of violence — leaving aside the complexity of social relations of power and the ways women negotiate their lives. In this dichotomy, the silence of women is viewed as sign of backwardness, as resigned and submissive to their community or as a sign of their “emotional dependency”.

Main findings (6)

- **Self-determination and autonomy of women were construed differently by the professionals in the four countries.** This is one of the aspects that can be linked, although not straightforwardly, with the cultures of intervention in the four countries (Hagemann-White, 2016). In some countries, feminist movements were more successful in defining the terms of intervention culture (and services provision), with a strong focus on men privileges and patriarchal domination (DE and UK), while in other countries, feminist organizations have to negotiate in the hegemonic discourse of the statutory definitions and frames (PT and SLO).

Main findings (7)

- The culturalisation of violence present in some professionals' discourses can be confronted with a much more nuanced perspective of culture in the participants' discourses.
- The participants never mentioned culture as a barrier to their recognition of violence. Interestingly, when culture was mentioned in relation with violence, it was a way to express that cultures (in general as well as their own) privilege men.
- Recent research has shown the extension to which culture is built either as a problem or as a reason for not intervening by the institutions (Batsleer et al., 2002; Chantler et al., 2001), and have also demonstrated how these constructs of culture within the services can potentially serve as a barrier to provide adequate services..

Final remark (1)

- In the 4 countries, it is evident a lack of attention about women's agency, suffering, voices and perspectives;
- An explanation may be that the success of feminist activism in the public awareness demanding protection and services for women may have also lead to the growing involvement of law and police forces, as well as a progressive professionalization of the intervention in DV.

Final remark (2)

- Even though this process was able to achieve fundamental goals for the support and protection of victims and to increase public awareness about domestic violence, it also had the effect of substituting the role of women's movements and NGOs in the intervention processes. Along the way also remained the voices, perspectives, and subjectivities of women.

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