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Some Conditions and Effects of Prostitution

The phenomenon of prostitution was researched in Poland by: Jasińska (1967, 1976), Antoniszyn and Marek (1985), Moczydłowska (1996), Kowalczyk – Jamnicka (1998), Kurzępa (2001), Sztobryn-Giercuskiewicz (2004). In 1997, in Poland published were four books analysing the social and historical context of this phenomenon (Dufort, Karpiński, Roberts, Rossiaud). Researchers notice many changes in prostitution in Poland since it became a domain of ever younger girls and boys who treat it as an entertainment during their free time or as some adventure that gives them money to satisfy their most sophisticated needs. In some circles one does not encounter the condemnation from peers. Prostitution among juveniles as well as adults becomes a profitable business for organised crime. American psychiatrists analysing the state of health of prostitutes discovered in most of them serious emotional disturbances and feeling of social isolation caused by these practices /Yates, Mackenzie,1991/. Prostitutes often become victims of homicides, mutilations and beatings whose perpetrators are their clients /Harbort, 1996/. This is a very dangerous business in which prostitutes usually, voluntarily locate themselves in the victimogenous situations. From the perspective of pedagogy the researching of this phenomenon has an enormous meaning because it concerns dramatic lots of people.

2. Definition of prostitution.

In short, the situation can be described as „sex for money”. Antoniszyn and Marek (1985, p.11) propose to call the prostitute a person who **„permanently or occasionally takes part in the practices consisting in the provision of sexual services in any form for profit that constitutes the most important motive of her actions”**. Ever so often, the prostitution is treated as a profession, and the prostitute as a person „who for money provides sexual services being aware that this is a form of a paid work, and that she has only the profession related ties with her clients” (Sztobryń-Giercuskiewicz, 2004, p. 30). The World Health Organisation defines the behaviour of prostitutes as „a sexual service of a dynamic and adaptative character leading to a financial transaction between the service provider and service receiver”(op.cit.p.20).

3. Research assumptions

The goal of this research was to find the factors that in various periods of their lives could influence women to become prostitutes, and to describe the effects (aftermaths) of prostitution for

the researched persons. This research was conducted in 2007 on a group of 15 adult prostitutes from Jelenia Góra and Wrocław who worked as such for at least 2 years. Information was gathered through interviews with them. In this research taken into account was the subjective self-assessment of one's own situation and objectivised criteria such as conflict with law. The research context was **the life course theory** G. H. Elder (1985), R. J. Sampson and J. H. Laub (1990, 1993) and reflections of D. P. Farrington (1992) and H. J. Schneider (1997- 1998).

4. Research results.

On the basis what the researched women said one can distinguish the following stages of the process of prostitution: **incubation, initiation, adaptation and stabilisation.**

Incubation concerns the creation of the conditions of „activation of the future potential of prostitution”. The factors that in the researched women decided on their life course in the adult life were the situation in their families and schools during their childhoods and early youths.

Family situation: The researched women were raised in the families whose characteristic trait was a low level of education of parents. In their homes they experienced a periodic lack of money. The women described the atmosphere there as normal, feeling loved despite the fact that their parents were focused on their affairs and did not engage in the process of upbringing of their daughters, functioning in accordance with the rule “it will go somehow”. In a few cases, in their homes they encountered some pathology (alcoholism, violence, crime). From their declarations it followed that 1/3 of them periodically were getting to the various types of the care and upbringing facilities that, in their opinion, instead of helping them increased or enhanced their life problems. The researched women, in their majority, had a weak contact with their fathers who were authoritative and assertive, did not respect their mothers, failed to provide financial support and tended to disappear from their homes for longer periods of time. Most of these women characterise their families as such where „all was falling on mothers”. A few women functioned in a coalition with their mothers against their fathers. The women described their relations with their mothers as proper, but full of tensions.

School situation: During their elementary schools the girls in their education were achieving average results. Their selection of further education was accidental. The girls sporadically played hooky, did not do their homework, but usually went to the next form. They did not like their teachers usually having not too good relations with them. Most of the researched women had a relatively low level of education (various vocational schools - 9 women).

Initiation understood as the first contacts with clients. Among the researched women the initiation appeared gradually (11 women) or suddenly (4 women). It resulted from the earlier socialising conditions or appeared unexpectedly as a result of coincidence. For all the women the

main reason for becoming prostitutes was their desire to make money. They motivated their decisions with a lack of satisfying work. Most of them decided to do it before they reached the age of twenty. Only in two cases a strong sexual drive constituted a motivation for prostitution and usually appeared in connection with economic motives. From this research it follows that at the base of initiation into this profession was a strong need of financial safety, dislike of efforts of any kind as well as the need of changes in their lives, but the most important meaning had a direct contact with the persons having any connections with prostitution (a contact with „subculture” of prostitution).

Adaptation and stabilisation are related to „professional improvement” and development of one’s own way of performing this profession. Among the researched women were so-called escort girls (1), call girls (2), girls working in brothels (8), from their flats (2) or on the streets (2). Some of them combined the work in brothels with the work on their own. Their seniority varied from 2 to 15 years. Usually, they had regular customers. Their incomes varied too: from PLN 30.00 for a „10 minute” oral sex in the car or on the street, through an average PLN 150.00 per hour in the brothel (without any extras), to EURO 300.00 – 400.00 per night or hour depending on their professional status. A typical representative of the profession of the escort girl is Michalina. She is 26, completed graduate studies in economy. Her clients are rich Frenchmen, Japanese, Americans doing business in Poland and other European countries. If her clients so demand she can, outside providing sexual services, make translations, prepare a press review, organise conferences, etc. She has been a prostitute for 4 years, being recruited by her girlfriend from university. Through prostitution she prepares to run her own business finding partners to it. She says that her girlfriends usually work for a year or two and later get married (sometimes with their clients), start a work related to their education or establish their own businesses, have children. The example of Michalina may be shocking, but it shows that prostitution sometimes is a controversial course to the successes in life and profession. It was an accident that decided about her life course, and about her position in the said profession – a potential in the form of her education and many skills thanks to which she could function well also in the other professions. For her, prostitution was not a life necessity, but a conscious choice of a comfortable material situation. Thanks to a good care she does not get into trouble. Yet she is not proud of what she does, hiding it before the outside world, building a double identity and living in fear that the people she is close to get to know what she does. On the question what she would do if her parents got to know what she does, she answers that she is afraid to think about it, but for sure she will find a way to explain it. She is sure that they would forgive her as always. Michalina does not do drugs, she drinks a little and has no police record. She says about herself that she impresses the men because she is independent, well taken care of, interesting and discrete.

Other researched women also had similar life courses. I will quote a few of them: „I completed graduate studies in linguistics. I speak fluently three foreign languages. A “Madame” books clients for me. I deal with foreigners only. I give my „Madame” a quarter of my earnings. A bought a flat, and in two years I plan to leave this profession and establish my own business, I think of a small firm. I have a lot of savings and no remorse. I do only what other women do for free.” „In Ukraine I was a physician. I barely was able to support myself and two children. Now, I support the whole family. Here, I serve my clients and make extra money as a physician in my brothel.

I make PLN 10,000 a month on average. I am satisfied with my life, I have time and money for my children. Maybe I will be able to make a second specialisation as a physician. Then, I will quit this job.” „I study pedagogics. For two years, in a home atmosphere, I made PLN 150,000. I travel around the world with the clients who want to take me with them for vacation of some conferences. I do not feel worse than other women. The clients admire me not for sex only. I can listen to them or give them some advice. I will make enough money to buy a flat before I graduate. I have good results in my studies. I work shifts with my girlfriend who studies history. Nobody knows what we do. I will finish with it when I graduate. Then, I will marry and start working in the profession I study.”

In the social hierarchy the lowest is the level of street prostitutes. Usually they serve drivers who are on long trips.

Zofia, 39, working in this profession for 12 years, including 9 years on the streets with breaks for detoxes; she has been a drug addict for the last 18 years. She completed a vocational school of the building industry. She ran away from home, from her parents-farmers and constantly drunk father. She has a husband who knows how she makes money, but it does not bother him. He himself was a heroine addict in the past. She is visibly worn out by drugs, toothless and unhappy. At nights she walks the streets waiting for guys who do not notice how she looks. Her clients are drivers only. A normal sex is out of question, only “oral” as she says. Usually for PLN 30.00. She does not talk with her clients, and they cannot be active. She is the one who rules. „Sometimes, I hate myself for the way I make money. But when she starts starving for drugs she stops thinking about shame. I do everything to avoid pain. After an injection, I do not think about anything. Now, I am going to a detox facility. I can’t copy with it anymore. So is the life. I will be back in a few weeks in a better shape. Then we can talk.”

A majority of the researched women work in brothels. They have so-called service professions (shop assistants, waitresses, hair dressers, etc). They made attempts to start a work in the professions they learned, but quit them when encountered first difficulties. Working in brothels they make money for fashionable clothing, they save something. The time outside work they spend watching TV, shopping, home working or taking care for themselves. They sleep a lot. Outside contacts with people in brothels they have no other friends. They live in the world separated from the outside world. They plan changes in their lives, but do not invest a lot of efforts in it. They say that they became prostitutes because they couldn’t find any work in the professions they learned, had significant financial needs and they stay with it because they get accustomed to it and fear changes. They treat prostitution as the way of coping with the social marginalisation. They are convinced that they can count only on the “comrades in misery”.

Effects of prostitution: Over a half of the questioned women had problems with police. Two of them did some time in jail. Three of them several times were searched for because they did not show up for court cases against them. One of them was sold to a brothel in Warsaw from where she was to be taken to Germany to work in a night-club. The police prevented it. Most of them drink heavily or take drugs. In work they often use ecstasy or amphetamine. Cocaine is less popular among them because of its high price. They also use a Czech specialty called „piko”, i.e.

methamphetamine. They permit a sex without condom if the client pays extra. They have health problems, 1/3 of them very serious ones. Most of the questioned women have the feeling of isolation from the external world. Five women moved to so-called normal districts after their material status improved. But that did not bring the expected improvement in their moods. They are convinced that they do not fit the new conditions, feel themselves worse. Their financial position has not changed that much. They realise that what counts in the life is also other values that they do not care about now. Most of them are afraid of the social stigma; those who have children try to hide before them the fact that they are prostitutes. In the opinion of some of them prostitution has also good sides: it brings order in their lives in the areas work-home, it improves their material and social status, provides social safety and creates a supporting circle of people around them creating ties with their “comrades in misery”, providing entertainment and filling out the time.

Summary

The research disclosed two basic patterns of the life courses „to” prostitution: **the way conditioned with an educational „emptiness”** during the period of childhood and early youth, and the way on which it is difficult to find educational conditions of prostitution. In this first case we can usually see such factors as: **weak rooting in the family, inadequate knowledge of the world, contacts with other „deviants”, lack of preparedness to life in an emotional and problem-solving sense.** We can talk about a peculiar forcing into prostitution that becomes **a way for avoidance of the social marginalisation.** In the second case we can talk about **a balance prostitution** related to the selection of a comfortable way of life, subjectively understood as the social safety. For this category of women characteristic is **a good knowledge of the world, good preparation to life, and the selection of their profession results from the syndrome of the pragmatic ethics and, possibly, an extreme sexualisation of identity** that is characteristic for the contemporary culture of the western world. Between these variations of the life courses appear also the courses combining both of these alternatives. Possible is also another type of the life course that did not show up in the researched women – **prostitution by force**, as a result of an especially perfidious, criminal manipulation of women. Most of the researched women treat prostitution as a rational behaviour leading to a subjective de-stigmatisation of this profession. At the same time, they minimise threats and usually see the solution in legalisation of prostitution, and not in its stoppage.

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