



REVIEWS

RECENZJA KSIĄŻKI: Jolanta Maćkiewicz, *Osoby starsze jako ofiary przemocy domowej. Ujęcie wiktymologiczne* [Older people as victims of domestic violence. Victimological approach], Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2015, pp. 358.

In the social dimension, there are problems that are very difficult to describe as they are accompanied by a socially accepted conspiracy of silence. Only when something tragic happens is the truth brought to light. Only then do people ask: why did this happen?, why didn't anyone see or hear anything?, and why was nobody bold enough to break the «closed room» taboo? One person who has been dealing with difficult subjects for years and advocating human rights for the dignity and protection of life, both in a physical and a mental aspect, is Jolanta Maćkiewicz. Her most recent book is devoted to violence towards the elderly in a family setting. Violence is connected with specific heterogeneous factors that increase the risk of such acts. One of the most important factors is the mutual dependence of family members that manifests at various levels, from financial to emotional. The author looks to present the dramatic situation of seniors who are hurt everyday by those closest to them: their spouses, their children, their partners.

This extensive study is divided into several parts. The theoretical section consists of two chapters. The first chapter presents the various issues related to the ageing process in historic, individual, and social dimensions. Special attention is paid to the problem of the place and importance of seniors in family settings, as well as intergenerational relations. According to the definition, it is the family that should satisfy basic human needs and ensure a feeling of safety. However, the author has proven that in many cases, both today as well as in the past, such functions of the family are distorted or are disappearing. What is worse, many dysfunctional attitudes and behaviour pat-

terns are replicated by younger generations who find themselves trapped stuck in the victim-perpetrator vicious circle. The chapter ends with a reflection upon the needs of older people. Its goal is to draw the readers' attention to the dynamics of the problem (related to the increase or decrease in intensity or the perception thereof), as well as to help them understand the motives behind various attitudes of seniors.

The second chapter is devoted to the problem of violence, its origin, manifestations, as well as the role it plays in interpersonal relations. The background for the discussion was the analysis of the results of research on violence towards the elderly in Poland and other European countries, as well as in other cultures. The author tries to show the scale of the problem, as well as to point out that all forms of violence, from the most subtle, sometimes ignored by people around, to the most visible, posing a threat to the senior's life.

There are many theories that try to grasp and explain the causes of violence towards the elderly. The recommended book refers to the extensive theoretical model developed by K. Burnight and L. Mosqued. The readers are familiarised with a number of the theories that make up this model and then learn about the risk factors that may contribute to the occurrence of violence towards the elderly, both on the victim's and the perpetrator's part. In order to understand why violent relations are established and maintained, the author has presented the mechanisms of the behaviour of people stuck in the victim-perpetrator relationship. The chapter ends with a study of the Blue Card procedure which currently is the key element of intervention actions in the Polish system of combating family violence.

The second, empirical part of the book contains quantitative and qualitative studies. The starting point for the research was the analysis of the content of Blue Card records, supplemented by data obtained during direct narrative interviews with selected victims of violence. In her book, J. Maćkiewicz intentionally changes the order in which the results are discussed, giving priority to case study. The purpose of this is to raise the readers' awareness with regard to the issues presented and to prepare them for an analysis of the extensive quantitative material so it is perceived through a personal rather than quantitative point of view.

The author used F. Schütze's trajectory category as the basis of analysis of the mechanisms of the development of suffering and its impact on the identity of victims affected by suffering. Thanks to this approach, the author is able to present the suffering of the victims as a specific "phenomenon" that affects the course of human life and relations with those closest to us, significant others, and oneself. While reading the study on the qualitative material, there is an impression that it is not only an analysis of the research material gathered during the study, but also a record of a *Meeting with a Human Being*, their history and often difficult struggle to regain their dignity and emotional stability. This very personal approach is characteristic of the whole academic work of Jolanta Maćkiewicz.

Quantitative research is based on the analysis of police documents (*Blue Cards*) in the territory of Kraków city and Kraków district. While reading this fragment of the book, readers are given an answer to the questions concerning such issues as: the scale of the problem of violence towards people aged 60+, types and forms of violent behaviour, dependence between social and demographic qualities of victims and perpetrators and the establishment of violent relations. On the basis of the data gathered, the author tries to create a statistical profile of a victim and a perpetrator of violence, as well as the type of family relations. This is a very valuable piece of knowledge that will allow those working with seniors to stay alert and implement preventive actions, especially of a secondary nature. In particular, the case of seniors living together with children or grandchildren, which, according to studies conducted by Małgorzata Halicka and the author of this publication, increases the risk of abuse. The publication presented does not make for easy reading. It requires the readers to face the painful reality experienced by a large group of seniors. The goal of the author was to contribute to a «better understanding of the processual nature of violence, including the most important environment for human beings – the family setting – to estimate the scale of the problem, as well as to raise social awareness in order to improve the system of support for older people». These are only some of the goals of this publication. Everyone can discover something of value in this work as we all experience the ups and downs of family life. The constant rush, the uncertainty of tomorrow, the striving for self-fulfilment, and the promotion of materialistic and narcissistic attitudes by mass media, cause people to succumb to their instincts and negative emotions, projecting their inability to fulfil their needs and associated frustration onto those closest to them.

Seniors should also read this book. The research material gathered in the book will allow them to acquire knowledge of the symptoms that are the warning signs of abuse. Perhaps, thanks to this book, they will be able to protect themselves against violence or stop their dramatic life situation early enough. One of the forms of combating dysfunctional behaviour is the public stigmatization of such incidents. Currently, we have been witnessing the establishment of various self-help organisations for seniors. Jolanta Maćkiewicz's book can contribute to the establishment of more preventive and counselling initiatives.

To sum up, this book should be promoted everywhere so that it could help in the passive and active fight against violence and the author deserves credit for her voice on this socially important matter

Ph. D Joanna Wnęk-Gozdek
Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny im. Komisji Edukacji Narodowej w Krakowie