

Patrycja Zalewska Blechar: Non-medical treatment as a social construct

The main theme of the presented doctoral dissertation is the social context of the non-medical treatment as a still insufficiently understood, but significant social phenomenon. Particular attention has been paid to describing and interpreting the various ways of producing and transforming the "universum of non-medical treatment." As a result, the work has the character of a sociological study of the social conditions in which therapists, who specialize in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) operate. It also reveals the views of researchers, who specialize in the analysis of these phenomena.

The internal structure of the work consists of: Introduction, three main parts: Theory, Methods, Research, and recapitulating the most important results of the project Conclusion. The Introduction contains a systematic overview on the most important underlying theoretical assumptions. It allows for placing the dissertation in relation to various areas of general sociology, as well as the contemporary sociology of health, disease and medicine. This part of the work also contains a critical analysis of the literature on the subject, taking into account both Polish and European perspectives.

Part One reviews selected research concepts that relate to the phenomenon at hand and can be useful in creating new interpretations. Consequently, numerous reasons are presented choosing the specific systems of sociological analysis of CAM that allow to read the phenomenon of "non-medical treatment" in an innovative way. In this context, reference was made to the views of the classics of the sociology of medicine: V. Navarro, H. Waitzkin, I. Illich and E. Freidson. Reference was also made to the concepts of medicalization and demedicalization. However, the basis of the "theoretical concept" became (for the first time in this type of Polish research) the use of social constructivism to describe and interpret the studied social phenomena and processes.

Another research subject considered in this part of the dissertation is an reinterpretation of existing criteria for taxonomies, that have been so far used in the area of "non-medical treatment sociology."

The second part provides the overview of methodological assumptions. It also contains the research objectives and problems, as well as extensive justifications for the qualitative methodology adopted. A detailed reasoning for the choice of grounded theory methodology is also provided. For this purpose reference was made to the constructivist perspective by K. Charmaz. The choice of expert interviewing as the preferred research method was also justified. Similarly, the snowball sampling method was described as a criterion and method of selecting the research sample. Finally, the role of researcher in the process of data collection and analysis was discussed along the overview of the interviewing process, as well as the description of the challenges that arose during the process.

The next part of the dissertation is empirical in nature and consists of two extensive subsections.

In the first one, interviews with practitioners, are analyzed and interpreted. In the second part, interviews with experts, studying the field of CAM, are similarly analyzed.

The conclusion is a summary of the entirety of the most important original results obtained in the research process, the prospects for further work on the "sociology of non-medical treatment" are highlighted, and reference is also made to the goals that were not fully achieved during the research.

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