

Ruling vs. Dialogical Relations: NGOs, Women, and Institutional Power in Anti-Trafficking Campaigns in Russia and Ukraine¹

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Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the nature of relations between anti-trafficking professionals and trafficking victims who receive assistance through reintegration programs administered by the International Organization for Migration and local NGOs in Russia and Ukraine. First, I analyze “ruling relations” (Smith 1999, 2005) within the anti-trafficking organizations, paying special attention to the processes of bureaucratization and institutionalization within them. Second, I identify certain spaces within the hierarchal structure of NGOs as institutions, where dialogical relations can take place and clients can participate in the NGOs’ activities. Lastly, I analyze how trafficking victims craft individual identities using dialogue containing institutional definitions. The paper is based on data collected during field research in Russia and Ukraine in 2004-2006. During this field research, I conducted multiple interviews with female victims of sex trafficking who received social assistance in non-governmental organizations in different regions of Russia and Ukraine.

Introduction

Starting in late 1990s, anti-trafficking mobilizations in the post-Soviet countries have brought together non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, state agencies, and other institutional actors. These organizations are responsible for raising awareness about the problem of human trafficking and setting up legislative and institutional mechanisms for combating this social problem. Women’s NGOs in Russia and Ukraine have become particularly active in prevention programs and providing reintegration services to victims of trafficking. Previous research has demonstrated that women’s non-governmental organizations play an important role in the post-Soviet social transformation. Hemment (2004), Johnson

(2007), Sperling (1999) and others have described how these NGOs work to politicize social problems, create spaces for democratic dialogue, lobby for legislative change, provide information, and deliver services. In addition, Funk (2007), Hrycak (2006), and other scholars of post-socialism have shown that the NGOs operate in complex power-laden relations with other national and transnational actors. Less is known about relations and interactions that are formed within the NGOs, particularly between NGOs' professionals and NGOs' clients. In this article, I discuss the nature of relations between anti-trafficking professionals and trafficking victims who receive assistance through reintegration programs administered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and local NGOs in Russia and Ukraine. What is the nature of institutional politics of women helping women in anti-trafficking NGOs? What does engagement with anti-trafficking institutions mean for women who seek their assistance? In this article, I analyze "ruling relations" (Smith 1999, 2005) within the anti-trafficking organizations, paying specific attention to the processes of bureaucratization and institutionalization. I identify certain spaces within the hierarchal structure of NGOs as institutions, where dialogical relations take place and clients participate in the NGOs' activities. Lastly, I analyze how trafficking victims craft individual identities using dialogue containing institutional definitions.

Methods and Site Selection

The methodological approach in this study is institutional ethnography, with its goal to "explicate the actual social processes and practices organizing people's everyday experience" (Smith 1986:6). Institutional ethnography seeks to reconstruct ruling relations or social organization from the actualities of women's lives. Dorothy Smith explains that the "ruling relations" are objectified social relations:

The ruling relations are text-mediated and text-based systems of "communication," "knowledge," "information," "regulation," "control," and the like. The functions of "knowledge, judgment, and will" that Marx saw as wrestled from the original "producer" and transferred to capital become built into a specialized complex of *objectified* forms of organization and relationship. Max Weber's (1978) account of bureaucracy is an early specification, and indeed it is a

part of an examination of the historical differentiation of person and organization in the exercise of political power. But these developments are not confined to the state. Knowledge, judgment, and will are less and less properties of the individual subject and more and more of objectified organization. They are constituted as actual forms of concerting and concerted activities and *can be investigated as such*. (Smith 1999:77-78)

Reformulating this in relation to my research problem, institutional ethnography helps explore the social processes and practices impacting the lives of female survivors of trafficking in Russia and Ukraine. I study how anti-trafficking institutional actors and their practices affect women who have returned to Ukraine and Russia after being trafficked into the sex trade industry in foreign countries.

Institutional ethnographers seek to describe the institutional power of organizations and processes. They pay particular attention to the text-mediated nature of ruling relations. Definitions, categories, standards, and legitimation strategies are the objects of institutional ethnographic investigation. Applying this goal to ethnography of anti-trafficking campaigns, I analyze institutional power in several ways. First, I analyze documents that institutional participants of anti-trafficking campaigns have produced, e.g., procedures and categories. Second, I focus on routine practices of the institutions (such as intake procedures or monitoring). Third, I analyze strategies that experts use to legitimate their authority; this helps to discern how experts justify their claims of having institutional ruling authority.

This article is based on data collected during multiple field research trips to Russia and Ukraine between 2004 and 2009. During this research, I conducted participant observation in anti-trafficking NGOs, document analysis of NGOs' reports, forms, and published materials, as well as interviews with anti-trafficking activists and returned or repatriated female victims of sex trafficking who received social assistance in IOM rehabilitation centers and non-governmental organizations in different regions of Russia and Ukraine.³

When analyzing interviews, I paid special attention to institutional practices and categories applied in relation to their clients, and institutional effects on women's lives and subjectivities. I also recognized that women who have undergone a "reintegration" process with the help of an anti-trafficking NGO often use institutional terminology. Institutional

ethnographers warn that “people in an institutional setting describe their work using the language of an institution” (DeVault & McCoy 2006:37). This concerns not only NGO professionals but also trafficking survivors. Women often describe their experiences in terms of institutional definitions, standards, and categories—institutional grammars—and it is important to understand how women craft their identities in response to the institutional power.

My sites of entry were offices of two large NGO networks, *LaStrada-Ukraine* and *Angel Coalition* (Russia). I have located other relevant anti-trafficking institutions through these entry organizations. Other sites included international organizations, governmental offices, academics, journalists, and local NGOs in provincial cities in Russia and Ukraine. I first spent seven months in Russia (September 2004 – March 2005) and later moved to Ukraine, staying there between April 2005 and August 2005. I made my other trips to the field in summer 2006 and 2009 to follow-up on changes in anti-trafficking mobilizations.

The non-governmental organizations that I visited are civic associations of individuals with various agendas: most of these organizations focus on women’s issues, while others work primarily on children’s issues or public health. All of them have achieved a certain degree of institutionalization – they have state registration, employ staff members, rent or own office space, receive grant funding, etc. Staff members are local people; sometimes they are relatives of the organizations’ leaders. Most of the NGOs’ leaders are Russian and Ukrainian middle class women who at some point decided to establish a civic organization (with the exception of the Angel Coalition in Russia where one of the founding leaders was an American female doctor). The funding that anti-trafficking NGOs receive typically comes from foreign governments (e.g., U.S. Department of State, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), international organizations (e.g., the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), and private foundations.

International Organization for Migration is another important social actor that participates in anti-trafficking campaigns in the region. Usually, IOM serves as an administrator for the programs of prevention of human trafficking and protection of victims. This means that IOM receives funds to coordinate and supervise anti-trafficking activities, and subcontracts local NGOs to deliver services. In addition, IOM runs rehabilitation centers (one in Moscow, and another in Kyiv) that specialize in medical and psychological assistance to victims.

Ruling Relations

Women's organizations in Russia and Ukraine initiated anti-trafficking campaigns in both countries. In the early 1990s, many NGOs had already had women's issues as a part of their political agenda – some of them helped victims of domestic violence, while others provided business skills trainings or job search assistance for women. Taking on the issue of trafficking in women has allowed them to participate in the global anti-trafficking campaigns and to raise funds for their programs through grants from foreign governments, private foundations, and international organizations. The donors were also interested in stopping the recent wave of trafficking victims from the post-Soviet countries that affected the countries of destination. Western donors such as the STV Foundation (Netherlands), the U.S. Department of State, Winrock International, and others have sponsored the newly established anti-trafficking initiatives in the post-Soviet countries.

Often, initial anti-trafficking organizing began within a transnational contact. For example, *St. Petersburg Crisis Center for Women* was one of the first organizations that started raising the issue of sex trafficking of women. A representative of the center recalls:

In 1994, I was terrified to read about a case of a woman being locked up in an apartment in St. Petersburg. She was forced to serve tourists. When I have read this, I thought that this is some kind of hoax, a stupid joke. It seemed impossible that people could be locked up and made to provide sexual services. In 1994, this was something unimaginable. It is now that it is everywhere. In 1996, I went to Berlin to take part in a conference on human rights. German colleagues told me such things about brothels – Russian women are beaten up there, they are tortured. They told me that they [the colleagues] go to the brothels and try to get the women out. This is when we started saying that people in Russia need to know about this. (Interview with a representative of *St. Petersburg Crisis Center*)

St. Petersburg Crisis Center joined transnational anti-trafficking mobilizations in the context of international collaboration with German women's groups. In the late 1990s, the information about trafficking cases often came from foreign countries. The *STV Foundation* from the

Netherlands has contacted local women's groups in Ukraine. In 1997, several activists of women's rights organized *LaStrada-Ukraine*. The organization used a model of similar to *LaStrada* centers in Poland and Czech Republic. The model included a central office in a capital city and a network of partners among regional NGOs. In this way, *LaStrada-Ukraine* organized its own Ukraine-wide network of anti-trafficking NGOs. Thus, local anti-trafficking NGOs are embedded into complex institutional networks that span across national borders.

Anti-trafficking professionals employed by NGOs and IOM rehabilitation centers as well as their clients participate in a complex web of local and extra-local ruling relations. Dorothy Smith explains: "By the 'ruling relations' I mean that internally coordinated complex of administrative, managerial, professional, and discursive organization that regulates, organizes, governs, and otherwise controls our societies" (Smith, 1999:49). The anti-trafficking expertise produces discourses: definitions, explanations, and solutions regarding the problem and trafficking victims. These solutions are based on information and input from specialists and groups of experts and have the effect of controlling those who lack the expertise.

Institutionalization of anti-trafficking initiatives involves creating institutional spaces where social problems are addressed. These institutions often have to satisfy requirements of donors that supply funding for their programs. The requirements include reporting procedures, standardized forms, professional language, formalized relations with clients (e.g., signed contracts), etc. For example, shelters for trafficking victims serve as spaces of temporary refuge and reintegration. NGO shelters take on different forms: in some places a shelter is a room in a hospital or sanatorium, while in others, it is a rented building. In the majority of cases, the shelter is a rented apartment that is used as a refuge. The shelters provide medical, psychological, legal, and social assistance to victims and their family members. Each NGO establishes its own criteria for admitting trafficking victims. Many require results of medical tests: blood, urine, HIV/AIDS, and STD tests, as well as a gynecological examination. NGOs' workers discuss each individual situation and decide whether they can admit a woman.

The goal of reintegration within anti-trafficking institutional discourse is defined as to sufficiently restore conditions for women to allow them to fulfill their "proper" roles as mothers, daughters, and workers. Local and extra-local institutional actors participate in defining the women's needs and their "proper" roles: state institutions, NGO experts, international

organizations, etc. Nationalist, religious, ethnic, gender, and class discourses inform the social construction of women's identities.

Depending on available programs, female clients can be eligible for the following reintegration services: medical care, psychological assistance, family therapy, material help, occupational training, educational or vocational courses, assistance with housing search, document recovery and other legal advice, as well as other forms of social support. This institutional definition of "reintegration" is often based on individualizing understandings of the victims' circumstances - women are positioned as individuals in need of change, according to institutionally defined criteria of progress. However, even though occupational training is an important part of women's empowerment, it might prove to be fruitless in a community with a high unemployment rate. NGOs rarely work to change social conditions (e.g., unemployment, state welfare cuts, etc.), or, as a representative of a Ukrainian NGO explained, they "try to stay away from politics" because they can lose their funding.

Reintegration of trafficking victims often assumes that individual women "lacked" something (e.g., lack of skills, resources, knowledge, psychological qualities, "normal" relations within the family, etc.) and that this deficit prevented them from initially succeeding in socially appropriate roles and prompted them to migrate. NGOs' professionals often discuss trafficked women's lack of rationality and self-confidence, as well as inability to make responsible decisions.

R: There was this one case. A representative of a German NGO called us and asked to meet a victim. She was threatened [by the traffickers], so she was wearing a wig. Identification happened in Germany... In Germany, they receive 200 EUR. They use the money to buy food and personal things. In Germany, she lived in the shelter and received money. Here, we figured out that this practice will not work. You give money—\$50—to every woman once a month. She goes and buys herself a facial cream for the whole sum of money. Irrational use of money. She buys a piece of meat and a bottle of martini, and she has to eat something until the end of the month. She starts asking from other people. And then she is without money. (Interview with a representative of *Faith. Hope. Love*, Odessa, Ukraine) ⁴

Reintegration institutions, on the contrary, rely on rational principles. In order to develop missing skills and qualities, to “normalize” their clients, rehabilitation experts offer trainings to the women. Professionals use the objective language of reintegration; they define physical and psychological conditions of women in scientific terms. For example, the client assessment/outcome matrix includes five categories for evaluation of a trafficking victim: in crisis, vulnerable, stable, safe, thriving (Social Work 2001:102). Such concepts as “reintegration progress” and “degree of normalization” help to measure the conditions of the trafficking victims in relation to the “normal” lives. At a meeting of a working group that coordinates all counter-trafficking activities in Ukraine, a representative of the IOM-Ukraine argued for more professionalization in the work of NGOs and adoption of result-oriented approaches. Relying on rational principles enables shelters’ employees to claim professional status.

Bureaucratization is another aspect of NGO-provided assistance. NGOs use standard documentary forms and often rely on routine procedures and practices. For example, organizational definitions predefine the needs of the women: meeting at the airport; accommodating in a shelter; transportation; consultation/information; financial support; vocational training; housing; medical, psychological, and legal assistance (Social Work 2001:142). For example, financial assistance for higher education is not a component of the reintegration process. NGO professionals interpret women’s stories with reference to a certain established pattern of need assessments and evaluations; however, this simplifies women’s stories and prevents full complexity of these stories from being represented.

Intake procedure typically involves one or several interviews. Case workers record women’s circumstances in the form narratives. When IOM started administering reintegration programs, a new intake form was introduced. IOM standardized its procedures in country missions and distributed an interview template used by local anti-trafficking NGOs. This interview form is very structured and consists primarily of closed questions which do not allow much description of circumstances. For example, the interview form includes question four in part six “Exploitation” that asks if a person was forced to perform activities against his or her will. Possible answers include only “yes” and “no” which limits the opportunity to fully describe the conditions under which women make decisions to migrate and perform different types of labor.

NGOs' workers establish business-like relations with their "clients." Each assisted woman signs a contract and has to observe the rules of the shelter and reintegration program. Even though the NGOs' specialists claim that they try to imitate family-like space in their shelter facilities, in reality, life in the shelters is often strictly regulated. Violations of these rules lead to exclusion from the program.

R: The main condition for girls is [...] Their freedom is not limited, they can go out, and they can get a job. The main condition is [obeying] the rules of the shelter's order: to be back on time, not to disturb others, no drugs, no alcohol, help in cooking, in cleaning. Not to be rude, observe personal hygiene. These are the rules. They have to attend the vocational courses that they have chosen. They have to receive their treatment. They work with psychologists. We created this according to the "family" principle—we don't have limiting, strict rules. But these are the rules that women have to observe while living together. They should not tell anyone the location, not give out the phone number, not bring visitors, not tell anyone where they are. (Interview with a representative of *Faith. Hope. Love*, Odessa, Ukraine)

The shelters also utilize timetables to schedule activities throughout the day. The regulation of time acts as another form of disciplinary power.

Timetable, shelter "Sofia:"

7:30 am Getting up; personal hygiene

8:00 am Morning exercises

8:30 am Breakfast

9:00 am General meeting

9:00 am Cleaning in the rooms

11:00 am Spiritual lessons

12:00 pm Personal time

2:00 pm Lunch

3:00 pm Personal time

5:00 pm Psychological therapy (individual and group)

7:00 pm Dinner

8:00 pm TV time

9:30 pm Conversations on spiritual topics

10:00 pm Evening shower

10:30 pm Night sleep

Labeling is also a part of the bureaucratization process. IOM uses “VoT” label which stands for “victim of trafficking”. Using labels is an aspect of institutional space that depersonalizes the women who come there for help. Another discursive strategy used by anti-trafficking experts is infantilization of women. NGO professionals often refer to the women’s young age, calling them “girls.” Infantilization, naiveté, and lack—are the institutional concepts which describe the construction of a victim. Framing beneficiaries of NGO’s services as victims is a strategy for the operation of the anti-trafficking institutions since they are primarily financed to support “worthy” or “deserving” populations. Rescuing innocent victims of trafficking can be presented as an “honorable” thing to do. In this way, Russian and Ukrainian anti-trafficking NGOs present themselves to donors as professionalized organizations able to deal with “problematic” populations. Professionalism in provision of assistance is often a condition for receiving grants from donors. While professionalization helps NGO employees to gain expert status, it obscures the relations of power between professionals and trafficking victims.

NGO workers use different legitimization strategies to justify their expert authority on the issue of trafficking. They often receive invitations to participate in public events, TV programs, and interviews, where they give advice to the public on the social problem of trafficking. Official position titles and educational qualifications often emphasize their expert status: certified psychologist, professionally trained social worker, president of an NGO, etc. Another legitimization strategy is the production of published work in collaboration with academic institutions. The merging of these institutions and their discourses is especially visible in texts on social work and sociology. For example, *Social Work in Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings and Protection of the Victims* (2001) is a manual for social work and sociology students, written by representatives of NGOs in collaboration with academics. Anti-trafficking experts legitimate their status by referring to their collaboration with international organizations and

foreign NGOs, as well as participation in international seminars. The “West” often serves as a reference point in expert legitimation. An illustration of this is the adoption of western terms: the concept “trafficking” became a new term—“трэффик” (traffik) in Russian and Ukrainian, which do not have such a word. Further, NGO professionals learn the language of grant writing—English (Silliman 1999; Sperling 1999)—and anti-trafficking activists quote international documents (UN Trafficking Protocol of 2000 and other UN conventions) to support their claims.

Anti-trafficking NGOs in Russia and Ukraine participate in transnational networks and raise funds for their organizational survival and provision of services. While doing this, the NGO workers often present themselves as professionals capable of organizing rational management of reintegration of trafficking victims. Often, the efforts to professionalize their activities are related to grant application process or participation in IOM-administered programs that require a professional, efficient, and results-oriented approach. For example, the U.S. State Department in its 2010 call for applications for international programs to combat trafficking in persons specifies that “project outcomes, deliverables, and performance indicators” are essential for applications’ format and content.⁵ As anti-trafficking NGOs’ activists rely on international funds, they experience the pressure to professionalize and orient their activities towards donors’ goals.

Dialogical Relations

Even though anti-trafficking NGOs demonstrate a hierarchical and discursive organization of ruling relations, there are certain aspects of their work that allow space for dialogical relations which take into consideration a client’s perspectives, priorities, and needs. The concept of dialogism (Bakhtin 1986) helps to illuminate interactional (even if uneven) relations between the NGO workers and their clients. These dialogical relations concern trafficking victims being included as active participants in the workings of NGOs. For example, *St. Petersburg Crisis Center for Women* defines its principle of interaction with clients as “Equal to Equal”:

This means “come and participate.” We ask them [the trafficking victims],
“Would you read this prevention brochure? What would you add? How should we
organize preventive work? What should we write?” They [the trafficking victims]

watch different films; they participate in different programs and interviews. We do not have many girls who have participated in film production, maybe four or five. We take them to different conferences. They like to participate and listen.
(Interview with a representative of *St. Petersburg Crisis Center for Women*)

The workers at this center invite women to take courses intended for volunteers, and some women who have been referred to the center by police in relation to trafficking investigations, have become volunteers. A similar dialogical approach is used at another NGO in Ukraine where workers have created a program called “School of Volunteers,” through which trafficking survivors can participate in the NGO’s activities.

Dialogical relations also concern the manner in which interaction takes place. A psychologist from *LaStrada-Ukraine* argues that NGO specialists must practice active listening in order to understand their clients:

N: What helps to establish trust?

R: I try to ask questions about her current state—her health, her psychological state, but not about her trafficking situation. I try not to dig into this. With some clients, you should be silent. With younger ones, just hold hands, sit close. With women who have children, I talk about their children—this is important to them. I ask if their children wait for them; did she have an opportunity to write or call them. Be attentive and watch her reactions. If she does not like the question, it is visible in non-verbal reactions as well; I don’t pressure her to answer questions. If she does not want to answer, she does not have to. (Interview with a representative of *LaStrada-Ukraine*)

An additional aspect of dialogical relations is when trafficking victims become employees of the organizations themselves. After undergoing the reintegration program, some NGOs offer women the chance to join the organization as staff members.

The importance of such dialogical spaces within NGOs is that the migrant women can voice their opinions and be heard, while NGOs’ activists can overcome what Sonia Alvarez calls “a growing chasm between the technical-professional and movement-activist faces of feminist

NGOs” (Alvarez 2004:138). Without such dialogue strategies, anti-trafficking NGOs risk to drift away from their grassroots functions of representation towards professionalized and bureaucratized agencies focusing on organizational goals.

Dialogical Identities

The dialogic approach emphasizes that selfhood is a product of social relations, of a dialogue between individuals and institutions. I use elements of narrative analysis (Franzosi 1998; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber 1998; McNay 1999; Riessman 1993) to discuss how women present their experiences of reintegration. Narrative analysis aids in understanding how trafficking victims construct their identities through a dialogue with institutional discourses and definitions. In particular, I am interested in how the NGOs’ clients negotiate their identities within institutional spaces in between ruling and dialogical relations. I trace several stories of the trafficked women who are able to position themselves as anti-trafficking activists, however often using the terms of the institutional discourse.

Liza

Liza is a former trafficking victim and a current organizer for the School of Volunteers at the NGO (Ukraine). She describes how she became involved in the organization’s activities:

Liza: When one of them [a trafficking victim] arrived, [an NGO employee] told me to try and talk to her alone, and she was nearby to help me. And then she [the NGO employee] said that I managed so well that I could do it myself. So, when new victims come, I talk to them, check their passports, check their deportation status. We send them to Kyiv. We contact police. If they were indeed abroad, the police check their records. One of them became my friend. Now, she also wants to open a shelter in [city in Crimea]. We will do this together. There are many victims there [in Crimea]. Many of them travel to Turkey. Her [friend’s] grandmother died and left her a house. We can have a rehabilitation center there, if I can find money to pay for utilities. She was the first person whom I helped. We became friends.

Liza's story indicates that she is well integrated into the NGO's activity, and she is thinking about establishing another anti-trafficking institution in a different region (Crimea). Liza explains that she works with trafficking victims because "this experience can only be understood by someone who lived through this" (Interview with Liza). Talking to trafficking victims requires certain skills, and Liza presents herself as an expert on talking to victims. She claims power by referring to the authenticity of her experience as a trafficking victim. She presents herself as someone who has direct knowledge of the problem and, therefore, can be a better helper: "I came through this, and I immediately see who lies and who does not, who was and who was not there." Here, Liza refers to the problem of "false" vs. "true" victims and argues that she can distinguish between the two groups.

I: How do you see this?

Liza: I see it when a person who was victimized does not talk much. She keeps everything in herself. You need to help her to open up, to approach her in such a way that she opens up... I came here by chance. When I came back home, I could not tell [my story to] anyone because they [family, community] would not understand, they would not be able to help. I came here and met [an NGO employee]. For the first time in my life, I was crying like a baby for three hours. I told her [the NGO employee] everything that was hurting me here [points to her chest, heart]. I also told my story to psychologists, but not what was here [points to her heart]. Here [in the shelter], they understood me, helped me, sent me to get medical treatment in Kyiv. Then, we opened a center for volunteers. We are helping others. I have already brought about 30 to 40 girls here. I bring them here, we gather, we communicate, we talk about all the problems that we have. We talk about what they want, etc. All the women who were in the sex trade, and who had families, they don't have families anymore. To put these families back together—this is not realistic. But at least we can keep mother and child together—this is what we are trying to do. When a mother does not have her needs provided, then her child is not provided for as well.

Liza's identification with the School of Volunteers is very strong. She uses "we" to include herself in the shelter's group of employees and define the organization's collective identity. Liza's narrative demonstrates how she gradually became involved in different aspects of the shelter's institutional organization: she started working on a hotline, she was responsible for intake, and now she runs the School of Volunteers. Finally, she has plans to become an organizer of her own shelter. Liza's story demonstrates that NGOs develop inclusive relations with their clients, although within the organizational constraints of bureaucratization and professionalization.

Natasha

Natasha does not work in the NGO that assisted her, but she aspires to become a social worker. Her narrative further demonstrates how anti-trafficking institutions' ruling relations influence clients' identities.

Natasha: I was invited to Kyiv to work as a social worker.

I: Who offered you this position?

Natasha: A psychologist. She said that I would be a good social worker. I actually like to work with little kids. I like to take care of someone. If I could work in a kindergarten, I would like that. Even if children are spoiled, I still like to work with them.

I: When can you become a social worker?

Natasha: Next year, when I am 19. I need to understand first how to work, how to interact with the girls [trafficking victims]. I already know how to write a story [an intake story]. When girls are arriving, sometimes their stories do not get written because they are tired after the trips. [NGO director] asks me to write down the stories of the girls. We have special forms, and I fill out the forms.

I: Someone has shown you how to fill them out?

Natasha: When my story was recorded, I already understood how it was done. I like that. I would work like this with pleasure.

Natasha discusses how the NGO employees involve her in the work of the shelter: she learns the bureaucratic procedures and forms. She also seems to enjoy being associated with the professional status of a social worker.

Natasha: I could work here as a social worker. There was one girl who was working here as a social work. She did not manage [well] with this work. She was drinking at work. She was going out with the girls. She was friends with them because they had money. Girls arrive from Turkey with money, and she goes out with them. And now, they [the NGO employees] don't hire social workers from [among] us [trafficking victims]. It's an unofficial rule. I would like to work in such a sphere. I like to attend workshops. I would like to go to different workshops.

Natasha disapproves of the "girl" who failed as a social worker. Her position reflects the institutional definitions of a good social worker.

I: What else do you plan to do?

Natasha: I will finish another course of vocational training. I should stay focused; I will not get lazy. I often want to sit in a room, watch TV, and relax. But if I want to work in an organization like our center, I need to study. I like our center; I like communicating with the girls [trafficking victims]. I like to relate to them with attention. Every girl comes traumatized; they all need care. People who work in this organization understand that these are women who have lived through difficult times.

Natasha has developed an institutional identity ("I like our center"); she identifies with the women who work in the shelter and wants to be one of them. She understands that this will require education, and she is willing to become disciplined (not "lazy").

I: Would you change something in the way shelter works?

Natasha: I would introduce a rule that girls should not give out our phone number when they meet guys. I don't like when men call at 3am, and ask for Alyona or Oksana. [Director] tells them not to give the phone number, but she is a kind person; she cannot scream at them. I don't like it when they give out the number. My [boyfriend] knows that he can call only until 11 pm. I told him. Then, they should not show up where we live. There were a few cases when men came under our windows. It should be quiet in the organization; we live here. I would like to see this introduced.

Not only has Natasha tried to disassociate from those "girls" who violate the order of the shelter, but she also presents the director as too soft and too kind to discipline the shelter's inhabitants. At the same time, Natasha positions herself as a person who is capable of ensuring discipline. An important reason why Natasha internalizes many institutional definitions and rules is that the shelter is her most significant source of social support. Natasha has not told her boyfriend or her relatives about her experience of being trafficked. At this stage in her life, she can only have completely open relations with the NGO workers: the closest people to Natasha are employees of the shelter. This partially explains why she develops a strong identification with the shelter, its workers, and its regulations. At the same time, she wants to become a part of the NGO institutional space because she recognizes it as a space of potential empowerment for herself.

Nina

Similar to Liza's case, Nina gradually became involved in the life of an NGO (St. Petersburg, Russia). She describes this gradual process of transformation of statuses – from being a client to "one of us."

Nina: In the shelter, they [the NGO employees] provided me with food; they bought me some clothes, a coat—a big expense. And the center conducted different interesting activities. Volunteers accompanied me to different museums. I was also helping here, in the center; I did some work that is usually conducted by volunteers—distributing brochures, folding, unfolding them. In the beginning, everyone paid a lot of attention to me. Then, when they understood that

everything was ok with me, I was accepted as “one of us.” I was not a “victim” any more, but a colleague. When I visit the center, they tell me what happened in my absence. I also went to a conference with them, and no one was introducing me as a “victim,” but it was written “an employee of the NGO.”

Nina describes how gradually she was included into the life of the NGO. She emphasizes how important it has been for her to become “one of us.” This has helped her to trust the NGO employees after her repatriation to Russia from Israel.

Nina: The people who met me initially looked very trustworthy. They behaved in such a way that I was not a victim, but an equal person, like we had known each other 100 years...

I: Do you maintain your connection to the NGO?

Nina: Yes, sometimes there are some activities or some interesting conferences, trainings. Also, there is material help provided by the NGO. After the last conference there was some food left, and I was invited to come get some food. Sometimes there are tickets left; you can go to a theater for free—then they call me to come.

I: How often are you here?

Nina: Lately, not often, because of work. But, in general, I usually call to see how they are.

Like in the case of Liza’s story, Nina claims that she has a special commonality with other trafficking victims – this helps her to better understand them. This also helps the trafficking victims talk to Nina. Sometimes, she works as a volunteer at the shelter.

Nina: Even after I had not lived in the shelter for months, I still came to the shelter. There was one girl, [name]. She is from Germany [returned from Germany]. And she was afraid to sleep alone at night. And I offered to help [...]. Yes, I, myself, offered [to the NGO employees] that I would stay at night with her. I had very nice relations with her; she told me everything. When you come to

such a shelter, you think about what you can tell and what you should not tell [to NGO employees]. It is easier for her [the girl who was afraid to sleep alone] to talk to me—we told everything to each other.

I: Hers was an especially difficult case?

Nina: Well [...]. It probably looked serious to them [the NGO employees]; I don't know. For me, she behaved normally. Naturally, after all the time she spent abroad, after one year or more of working without weekends [...]. [Traffickers] force [women] to work even during menstruation. So, no weekends, nothing. And this is painful [...]. And I understand that this is just such the state at the beginning. This long rest is normal. You want to lie down; you want to do nothing. This is relaxation. We were sleeping there [abroad] six to seven hours. Sometimes, we slept four hours. And it's necessary to always be wearing make-up, with hair done, with everything. No traces of tiredness. And maybe she [the victim who was afraid to sleep alone] looked too sleepy to them [the NGO workers], but she was just sleeping, relaxing, from this [...]. [The NGO worker] considered this a very serious problem. This was not that serious, as I [...]. I am not a psychologist, but anyway [...]. I lived with her while she was there. I maybe spent two weeks there with her.

Nina makes a claim that she has a particular skill of understanding the trafficking victims because of similarity of experiences, even though she simultaneously affirms the objectified relations of ruling ("I am not a psychologist"). NGOs' professionals sometimes request Nina's participation in their intake or rehabilitation activities. Nina was able to develop a very collaborative relationship with the NGO employees, and, because of this, they included her in the organization's activities. Nina was glad to participate and, at the same time, started taking on some volunteer responsibilities. Nina continues her volunteering relationship with the NGO.

Anna

After receiving reintegration assistance at an NGO in Ukraine, Anna became an employee of that organization. The NGO runs programs of HIV/AIDS prevention, and Anna was

hired as an outreach worker. She works mostly with sex workers by distributing condoms, talking with sex workers, and helping them to solve some medical or other issues.

I: Tell me about your job. What kind of people do you work with?

Anna: I work as a social worker in a program of harm reduction. This is about prevention of HIV/AIDS among risk groups in [city]. The risk groups are drug users and women in the sex business. My group includes women in the sex business who consume drugs and work on highways.

I: Where do you meet them?

Anna: They come to meet me at a place of needle exchange. I've worked with them for more than a year. They come themselves. We have very trusting relationships. They know that if they tell me something, than no one will know. They started to trust me. Before, they looked at me with caution. When I had just started my work, they studied me. Now, they come to me as a friend.

I: What helped you to establish trusting relationships?

Anna: My ears. They need someone to listen to them. This is such a closed group. They communicate most often with their customers. I give them different literature, tell them something new, how to avoid risks. If they have some problems, I tell them where to go.

I: Did you study to work in this position?

Anna: Yes, I went through some training.

Through training, Anna has developed a professional identity of a social worker. She uses her communication and active listening skills. She also uses some concepts from public health institutional discourse, e.g., "harm reduction," "risk groups." Anna is proud that the NGO workers have trusted her to perform this work; she is satisfied that she can now support her two children.

I: How do you see your future?

Anna: My children, first of all. My work. I don't want to stop where I am now; I want to go maybe a little bit [further...]. In general, I like to work with people; I

like to give myself away. I would like to be a social worker—this is for me. I like my work a lot. I was lucky; I just got into the right place. Maybe, there will be some professional growth, I don't know. So far, I am satisfied to be a social worker.

Anna would like to receive additional education to become a “professional” social worker, as she recognizes that she needs professional certification to “grow” in this institutional space.

Conclusion

Anti-trafficking institutions are composed of asymmetrical power relations – NGOs often exhibit objectified relations of power (“ruling relations”). Anti-trafficking NGOs and IOM in Ukraine and Russia make efforts to professionalize their assistance activities. Professionalization is often related to NGOs’ efforts to attract donors. At the same time, NGOs’ workers practice dialogical relations with the trafficking victims. In addition, some NGOs make efforts to include trafficking victims in the process of their work and create possibilities for the clients to participate in the organizations as volunteers and employees. I argue that such dialogical relations that prioritize different forms of inclusion of women into the lives of the NGOs as institutions are beneficial because they allow assistance to be directed towards the victims’ needs. They also enable trafficked women to have access to a support group.

Overall, the clients of anti-trafficking shelters benefit from reintegration services. They are able to receive valuable material and social resources even though often within the terms set up by the NGOs. In the process of reintegration, trafficking victims develop dialogical identities that engage with, negotiate, and resist institutional definitions, norms, and categories.

Notes

¹ Many thanks to Olga Bueva for her editorial assistance with this article.

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³ The field work for this research was made possible with financial support from Patrick Stewart Human Right Scholarship program (Amnesty International – USA), Georgia State University Dissertation Award, Global Supplementary Grant (Soros Foundation), and Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy Scholarship.

⁴ Interview transcription lists “T” for interviewer and “R” or first name for respondents.

⁵ <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/other/2009/131238.htm>

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