

# The Trafficking in Women: An Individual Fate or Social Responsibility?

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**ABSTRACT** *The text is based on research work (Zentner K. Mensch im Dunkel. Qualitative Fallstudie zu osteuropäischen Opfer von Frauenhandel. Ein Beitrag zur Psychotraumatologie [Person in the Dark: Qualitative Case Study on East European Victims of the Trafficking in Women. Contribution on Psycho-Traumatology]. Peter Lang Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 2009). The individual research study was not publicly funded and was carried out exclusively on the initiative of the author on the subject of the extreme traumatising of victims of trafficking in women and deals with how in-depth understanding of a case can be reached by relating the depth-hermeneutic method of scenic understanding (Lorenzer A. Tiefenhermeneutische Kulturanalyse [Depth-hermeneutic cultural analysis]. In Kultur-Analysen, Lorenzer A (ed.). Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag: Frankfurt am Main, 2000b; 11–98), even if the people being interviewed are severely inarticulate. First the scientific and methodological way of questioning in this study is discussed, as well as the background to trafficking in women. Two examples of interviews illustrate the method and its results. Finally the sociological and clinical perspectives are summarised. Copyright © 2011 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

**Key words:** victims, trafficking, extreme PTSD, depth-hermeneutic method, psychoanalytical text interpretation

## BACKGROUND

The trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation takes place on a wide scale as a result of globalised capitalism. Women are brought in, notably from the former Eastern Bloc countries, to Western European countries. The precarious situation of Eastern European women in their home countries accounts for the material preconditions. Furthermore the transition from state capitalistic forms of real socialism to forms of wild capitalism, which is a far cry from the security of the welfare state, has also led to a drastic change in gender relationships. While many men hit by unemployment and social decline react with passive resignation, alcohol abuse or excessive violence, it is the women who are really responsible for providing for the material needs of the extended family. In order to guarantee this they develop a willingness to migrate temporarily in order to work, which makes them easy prey

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for Mafia-organised human traffickers, using deprivation of liberty, drugs and both physical and sexual violence to make the women submissive. These coercive means leave them helpless and above all humiliated, with no control over their own lives. Fear and shame prevent any thoughts they might have had of returning home.

National political activities focus more strongly on effectively fighting the criminal basis of trafficking in women and far less on establishing humane and stable conditions for the women concerned after they have been freed. This is particularly scandalous since it is because these women were willing to testify to the police and to the courts that the way was paved to prosecute the offenders. The victims of human trafficking often abandon the milieu resolutely after the official legal proceedings are over and endeavour to become integrated as fast as possible into their new country; they often manage this by marrying and starting a family. After several months or years, many of them lead an apparently more or less normal, or at least inconspicuous, life. This observation seems to go hand in hand with a feminist position, which critically questions seeing women as victims but stresses women's strength, self-confidence and autonomy instead (Von Dücker, 2005, 256). In Germany these positions are held by the so-called 'whores' movement', which to a certain extent goes so far as to see those women brought against their will from Eastern Europe as competitors who are bad for business rather than as victims of dealer networks working internationally with Mafia organisations. Counsellors and therapists from relevant counselling services, however, with extensive knowledge of their psycho-sociological field of work, very often gain intimate insights into the special types of damage those women have suffered. It is not so much the obvious physical injuries but rather the deep emotional scars left, in some cases by years of existing as a modern slave. These experiences usually include loss of rights, physical violence, enforced drug addiction and multiple rapes, together with blackmail and threats even to punish their families back home. These experiences have kept these women in a state of fear and terror. The long-term consequences of this often remain outwardly invisible.

## QUESTIONING AND METHOD FOR THIS RESEARCH

The focus of this study is to investigate the psychological constitution of the victims of women trafficking years after the actual event. The study establishes which form of traumatisation the victims have experienced, to what extent and what effect this has had on the victims. The reflections are based on counselling experience which the author gained during years of working as a therapist and counsellor in a special counselling centre where the people affected say repeatedly that they do not wish to speak about their experiences within the context of human trafficking. This behaviour is particularly understandable in view of the fact that they often have to give a great deal of evidence on human trafficking in public, in statements to the police or in court. This potentially retraumatising situation intensifies and reactivates their traumatic experiences and the accompanying symptoms. The frequency of these behaviour patterns and also other phenomena point towards a particular form of traumatisation, which so far has not been investigated in this group of people. One of the constantly recurring phenomena is that women who have been the victims of human trafficking are not willing to seek any therapeutic support later. The question had to be addressed as to whether they had really been able to come to terms with their experiences so well that they did not need any professional help. Similarly, the hypothesis had to be tested

that it was a case of a special form of psychological traumatising associated with an impressive ability to adjust to their living conditions later in life.

The focus of this study is the evaluation and analysis of the qualitative empirical material on the specific traumatising of the victims of trafficking in women. The basic definition of psychological trauma calls the traumatic experience 'a fundamental experience of the discrepancy between threatening situation factors and the individual possibilities of dealing with them, accompanied by feelings of hopelessness and defenseless surrender thus causing a lasting shake-up of one's understanding of oneself and of the world' (Fischer and Riedesser, 2003, 81). This approach differentiates between the traumatic situation, reaction as an attempt at dealing with the problem and, on the other hand, the traumatic process (which can possibly become chronic). This differentiation also stresses the time-related development dynamics related to psychological trauma. Therefore particular attention has to be paid to finding out in open interviews whether indications of dealing with trauma successfully could be found, which, for example, could be related to openly discussing what was experienced in the past. Similarly, one must be on the lookout for the opposite development, namely indications of the trauma becoming chronic (as described in classification F 43.1 in ICD-10; Dilling et al., 2005, 169) stress disorder or even complex post-traumatic stress syndrome (Van der Kolk et al., 2001).

Nine women agreed to allow their life stories to be used for such a study. Contact with these women was made possible by KOBRA counselling services (coordinating and counselling services for the victims of trafficking in human beings) in Hanover, where they were cared for. The victims' willingness to cooperate was crucial for carrying out qualitative research. This numerically small study group was examined hermeneutically and biographically from a long-term perspective with the help of multiple research methods. They are women from Eastern Europe who became victims of trafficking in Germany and who, after testifying to the police, appeared as witnesses in court, giving evidence against their tormentors. The material basis of the study consists therefore of a combination of three different research methods, including problem-centred qualitative guideline-based interviews, analysing counselling records and legal files, as well as standardised questionnaires for clinical diagnostics on post-traumatic stress disorder (Van der Kolk et al., 1999; Sack and Hoffmann, German translation).

The findings of standardised clinical diagnostics showed unequivocal results: according to this clinical interpretation all nine women must be considered extremely traumatised. Faced with these preliminary findings and one test interview it seemed particularly significant to find out how to design qualitative, i.e. conversation-led, interviews containing on the one hand sufficient material to permit deep hermeneutical interpretation; on the other hand, for reasons of ethical research, every effort had to be made to avoid anything which could lead the women to relive tormenting experiences too vividly. This therefore resulted in guidelines (Zentner, 2009, 120); for example, the following questions belong to the guidelines: Where did you live previously? What is your attitude to therapy? Will you please tell us about the family you come from? What were your reasons for deciding to go abroad? What have your experiences with German authorities and institutions been like? What wishes do you have? What do you dream about (referring to the current situation)? etc.) with nine conversation impulses on contents which focused biographically on the periods before and after the human trafficking but did not, however, explicitly refer to the human trafficking itself or its traumatic consequences. The necessary information for this was gained from analysing documents.

Problem-centred interviews took place between June 2004 and November 2005. At the request of the interview partners the interviews were carried out in undisturbed surroundings in the KOBRA counselling services rooms in Hanover and took on average 30 minutes. Explanations were given and interviews held mostly in the women's mother tongue. Compiling the data was carried out in three languages: Russian, Polish and German. The transcription was first done in the mother tongue and then the transcribed interview (if it was not in German) was translated into German. The researcher spoke these three languages and did the translating herself. The transcripts of the interviews were subjected to a psychoanalytical text interpretation, which was carried out uniformly in German. Thus the interviewees were able to carry out the interview in their mother tongue. The fact that the group of people interpreting the interview was presented with a translated version cannot be considered here. At this point it should be sufficient to say that the dynamics of the scenes themselves, which were recognisable in the manifest text as well as in the placeholders and the passages characterised by intrusive material, provided a wide variety of 'scenic material' (Lorenzer, 2000a). By understanding the scene and attempting also to grasp the underlying experience as a certain 'form of interaction' the question of translation could be shelved.

## TEXT ANALYSIS AND EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEWS

In the hermeneutic text analysis the concepts of playing with words and scenic understanding were predominantly used. Yet how can texts become accessible where the central theme does not appear in the manifest text? This contradiction can start to be deciphered using psychoanalytical hermeneutics.

In the interviews there are breaks in content and sudden pauses in the flow of words which then continue as stammering or else speaking stops altogether, which points to the deep emotional confusion of the person being questioned; these phenomena occur when the interview partners did not have language entirely at their command. This state can be seen in the way that the interview partners breathe in more deeply, make long pauses or appear very agitated or confused because visibly they cannot find the words to express themselves. During the conversation something has caused a blockage, resulting in a system of counter-mechanisms aiming to control the mental processes. One outcome of this procedure is that nothing is said about the reason for the blockage and the interviewees are highly concentrated on deliberately avoiding any contact with this subject (Zentner, 2009, 223). Such preconscious avoidance phenomena, which help to control and avert a flood of intrusive material, are well known (Horowitz, 1986).

In the interviews there are substitute stories (substitute images) which help the women overcome their speechlessness and express themselves when confronted with their own story of human trafficking. First of all, obviously these substitute stories or substitute images can be seen as analogous to the psychoanalytical concept of screen memory (Mertens and Waldvogel, 2000, 119).

From this perspective the victims' sufficiently strong ego functions would result in their being able to repress traumatic experiences; they are no longer accessible to consciousness, with the milder screen memories replacing them. The screen pictures come close to the traumatic experience but in an abbreviated form and compared with the real traumatic experience are milder and less harmful: they form a protective wall against involuntary

intrusions. The women interviewed show subjective strength when they are able to identify these affects, memory fragments and situation elements, which could work as triggers. In this context they develop parallel images. This means that the substitute story is not the result of subconscious processes but results from a conscious decision in order to avoid the trigger (Zentner, 2009, 223).

Therefore victims use speech abbreviations/images (>it<), for the whole scene of the traumatic situation with all feelings and thoughts which go with it, in order to be able to grasp and describe the whole scene (Zentner, 2009, 234). However, even this protective measure cannot prevent these abbreviations from occasionally also functioning as triggers and thus failing in its protective function. The flooding of emotions from the traumatic situation which then occurs has to be repelled dissociatively. This frequently results in a characteristic detachment from all feelings (psychological numbing). There is no repression process since both the substitute story and the abbreviation are the result of a conscious decision – a means of self-defence against intrusive retraumatisation (Zentner, 2009, 234).

The following passage comes from Natalia, who was 21 when the interview took place. She comes from Moldavia, at the age of 17 she was lured to Germany from abroad with false promises about working there. She was forced into prostitution and had to work in a brothel for a month. She was freed by the police and gave detailed evidence. The court case began 4 years after the occurrences.

At the beginning of the interview she says that since the trauma she has settled down well in Germany; she is married and has a little family. However, at certain points she uses speech placeholders:

Natalia: ... [pensively] but all the same, it somehow it you, still, and I think all my life it will, somewhere such a point / [...] Yes, yes the story, and it happened like it ... (Zentner, 2009, Interview 3 with Natalia, p. 221, lines 507–511)

She speaks of a burden because that will follow her forever. It particularly significant how she says that what she experienced somehow belongs to her life. She loses her logical thread at this point when she mentions the lifelong damage she has suffered. After that the words follow each other without recognisable (grammatical) sense; she stammers fragments of words and sentences.

‘Somewhere such a point’ – at this point, which is not defined more specifically, the trigger could be found which causes the flashbacks that take her back to the traumatic situation. The horrifying experience of forced prostitution is reduced to a single word: the pronoun ‘it’. Natalia repeats this word every time when she speaks about the trafficking of women. The placeholder ‘it’ in her experience contains the entire traumatic experience, even if she does not explicitly verbalise this.

Such substitute images or placeholders are used by all the women interviewed and in the course of the hermeneutic analysis gained an ever greater significance. The deep hermeneutic procedure provides access to a special type of remembering and talking pictorially. It is precisely what is not said which has a special message here and which contains specific information. The severe traumatisation is often not mentioned directly in the interviews, i.e. it is not described in the manifest text. However, what the women themselves express through their substitute stories and placeholders (and what is confirmed additionally by clinical

diagnostics) is the fact that the victims portray their extreme traumatisation vividly without directly mentioning their sufferings.

In this piece of research, nearly all the interview partners give the word ‘it’ this function: to include the trafficking in women events as a significance extension. Access to what was left unspoken was made possible during interpretative work with the material by means of characteristic text blocks: obvious logical contradictions, abrupt changes of subject, pauses and interruptions in the manifest text pointed the way to meanings omitted in the spoken context. The unspoken, because it is unspeakable, still remains present because a figure of speech with changed meaning has developed as a substitute for the whole traumatic scene, the placeholder (>it<). The consequence is therefore not only the speechlessness typical of severe traumatisation but also a particular type of confused and/or garbled speech. This confirms the hypothesis that for the interviewees the trauma caused by trafficking and its consequences (PTSD) still hugely influences their lives even after many years. Omitting things from their language helps the women survive but it does not help them to work things out and integrate. Below the surface the pain remains virulent, even if the victims appear to be quite healthy in their daily lives (Zentner, 2009, 234).

It is known that with screen memories it is necessary to analyse them ‘not only in order to get closer to the historical truth but also to recognise the causal relevance of the experiences repressed by screen memories’ (Mertens and Waldvogel, 2000, 119). Does that also apply to placeholders and substitute stories where the interviewees have made a conscience decision not to touch on their traumatic experiences? Are the feelings which are not discussed unconscious? Probably not, due to the very fact that they are not repressed – repression would almost be regarded as a success. Dissociatively repelling them cannot completely repress the trauma-related contents – that is to say, make them unconscious. They remain – as far as the topic image is concerned – to a certain extent in the preconscious (Freud, 1900/1994a, 1915/1994b). The substitute images (placeholders) clearly demonstrate how resistant the trauma is and in what manner it infiltrates psycho-dynamically and without speech so that a traumatic image without words emerges. It approaches what Lorenzer calls a sensual–symbolic interaction form (Lorenzer, 2000, 203). But by inventing and using the placeholders the traumatised show nonetheless their firm will to regain control over their inner state, to use reduced language and to stop intrusive flooding.

Sofia, 25 years of age, is another interview partner. She was born in the Ukraine but lived with her mother in Russia. Her financial position and family situation were difficult and this was the reason why she started looking for a better-paid job. In 1999 she was brought to Germany and forced to work as a prostitute for over 2 years. She survived two attempts to murder her, which were carried out by human traffickers, and it took a year before she was able to make a statement to the police. Sofia had to wait 4 years for legal proceedings to start. Meanwhile she has one child and lives in Germany.

For Sofia, despite all attempts to control the traumatic images, the abbreviations and substitute images are inadequate. She comes to the interview and from the very first moment an eerie and dramatic dynamism unfolded. She comes through the door and says:

Sofia: It’s terrible, this [smiles].

Interviewer: What’s terrible?

Sofia: This situation, it isn’t long but it happens, it isn’t long but it seems so, that you have the feeling that it

will stay that way, that it will stay that way, really stay that way for everyone/every one ... [she speaks unclearly] [...] Oh, I, it's all starting like suffocating [suppression], all the sounds, all the sounds, that and the sun [she talks very fast as if she could see certain pictures in front of her], all the sounds in the conversations, it all seems to me to be so loud in my head, that's what it's like (points to her head with circling gestures), that's what it does with me ... (Zentner, 2009, Interview 4 with Sofia, p. 135, lines 1–10)

The subject of this research in itself seems to act as a trigger. The conversation starts with Sofia saying: 'It's terrible, this', yet she smiles as she says it. When asked what she means, she says she means the situation, which does not last long but often happens, that she has the feeling that it probably stays for everyone (she probably does not mean everybody but every one, every single occasion, no matter how minor. Sofia describes this situation in the third person – like a metaphor which expresses her whole psychological and individual life, using imagery to do so. The interviewer realises that Sofia is referring to her feelings and asks for clarification. At that point Sofia very quickly describes the images which she probably sees in her mind's eye – how this manifests itself for her and what emotional consequences it triggers for her. To start with she feels as if she is suffocating. She hears very loud sounds and all in her head and at the same time she sees the sun. She hears these sounds during the conversations. At the same she indicates by her gestures that these sounds go round in her head, getting louder, and that she cannot stand 'it'. Whenever she finds herself in this situation she holds her head very tightly and 'later it goes away, so suddenly'. Apparently for Sofia every type of contact with subjects related to the trafficking of women causes a spontaneous flooding of traumatic material, and also a repetition of the dissociative attempts at self-protection, which she experienced in the traumatic situations – recorded as a situation scheme – and which recur unchecked and are uncontrollable.

Only by a deep hermeneutic analysis in an interpretation group can a verbal approach be made, through the use of identification, empathy and countertransference feelings, to the experiences and scenes which Sofia herself cannot discuss, which she cannot express by means of language. This speechlessness regarding their own woman trafficking – here a traumatic speech defect – has caused a change in language with severely traumatised women, which is clearly different from the destruction of language in Lorenzer's theory (Zentner, 2009, 224). He assumed that the original scene is repressed and excommunicated from the language symbol spectrum, that is, it really becomes unconscious (Lorenzer, 2000, 203). The complete scene, however, as Sofia experiences it again in the interview situation, is still emotionally present as a scene she experienced and suffered, and thus not unconscious. Nonetheless she is obviously not in a position to verbalise this experience. In the interaction form state, it is represented emotionally, but not symbolically. In the interpretation process access to the unspeakable is quickly gained; basically one can understand immediately that it is a question of a traumatic situation, although this is not named. How is this possible? The traumatic destruction of language smashes the original connection between language, linguistic game, and interaction form even for the subject herself. What remains conscious are the splinters of emotions and experiences from the traumatic situation, without these being expressed in words. They are merely a certain form of interaction (Lorenzer, 2000, 28).

In the work on Sofia's interview the interpretation group (made up of students and researchers from the Social Psychology Department of the University of Hanover) reacted to

the text with very strong emotions, that is to say, countertransferences. That means the negative and positive attitudes of the group towards prostitution and forced prostitution with all their inhibitions, prejudices and strain but also partly very concrete imaginations about what Sofia must probably have gone through. These strong emotions in the interpretation trigger certain defence mechanisms because unconscious conflicts arise for the researchers too, which in turn cause dynamics in the group that can be related to the case. Although very little additional information about Sofia's biography was known, a very precise picture of her suffering emerged in the interpretations, which made a deep impression on all the interpreters. In the course of further research the accuracy of these reconstructions was confirmed when the documents were analysed. One of the participants showed a typical reaction in the countertransference: during the night after the interpretation meeting he had a dream in which he continued work on the interview and which he talked about at the next colloquium. He dreamt about the scene with Sofia and in it he himself was part of the scene. The interpreter could feel his participation very realistically and vividly. He saw Sofia with a man who raped her and he saw how she suffered from the abuse. He was incapable of intervening and felt horrified; he suffered with her. In one of the next dream sequences – after an intermission – he continued dreaming. In this dream he saw Sofia as an attractive and self-confident woman, talking cheerfully to two men and then walking away sprightly. She is now unharmed and enters a normal life as a healthy woman with a positive attitude (Zentner, 2009, 139).

In the interpretation group what the participant reported about his dream was partly identified as a leftover from the day and, on the other hand, was understood as a strong, unconscious participation in Sofia's scene. It is very intuitive how much the interpreter reconstructs the whole scene from what he heard, and more or less senses what happened. In spite of the translation (Russian and German) and the transcription, the fragmented text provides such vivid impulses, as if the person concerned had taken part in Sofia's suffering himself. Even through these fragments Sofia's traumatic experience is communicated directly to the interpreters. In the second part of the dream he creates a special compensation for Sofia. The last picture contains his hope for real healing and rescue from the nightmare which Sofia's life has become for her. At the same time, however, he expresses his feelings of guilt by identifying with the male perpetrator.

These feelings of guilt demand compensation and therefore, logically for the male interpreter and dreamer, lead to Sofia's rescue. He reconstructs her dissociation from the scene, but also the change from a hopelessly disturbed to a healthy, i.e. healed, woman. The material (the extract named here from the interview with Sofia) continues to work on him so that the scene is portrayed like a film within him and is repeated in his dream. The real multiple traumatisation of Sofia appeared to the dreamer in the first dream sequence. The second part of the dream creates his hopes for her to be healed and therefore this second part has more to do with the interpreter and his identification with the perpetrator. Sofia herself believes she has completely lost hope of support and for the future. His 'film' transforms the trauma into a normal scene which can contain Sofia's latent wishes. In any case it is a relief for the dreamer: through the male participant's inner reconciliation everything is compensated for by 'repairing' what happened. Here it becomes clear that the reflection of Sofia's extreme and multiple traumatisation is so strong and triggers so much that the only man in the group cannot endure the strength of this destruction. In his dream he wants to take over responsibility for the perpetrators – people of the same gender. But he also dreams of



Sofia's healing; as if equipped with magic powers, he brings about her liberation from the trauma. It is more than likely that with her liberation he also frees himself of pressure. On no account should one conclude at this point that with this dream he wants to express anything of Sofia's own hopes, which he has sensed intuitively. The unbearable situation for Sofia is reflected, however, in the strength of the resistance to this material which occurs in the interpretation group. The compensation fantasy in the group is thus an unconscious expression of the intolerableness of Sofia's agonising experiences.

The way Sofia's interview began, marked by intrusive traumatic material, shows the long-term consequences of extreme traumatisation without mentioning by name what actually happened. These symptoms and fragments lead the interpreters to become participants in the scene through empathy and identification. Scene understanding is intersubjective activity. By sharing in it the interpreters complete Sofia's experience, burst into disconnected splinters, to form a whole picture. It is only in another person and through reaching that other person's understanding that the traumatic pieces fall into place to form a whole. Access to the depth of damage to the interviewee's subjective structure only becomes possible by means of scenic understanding as a method of interpretation in the work with the interview texts. As explained earlier, the women themselves have for many reasons adopted a self-protecting attitude, which involves omitting concrete experiences made during their time of forced prostitution. Outward normality is an essential component of a psychosocial defence formation, which is extremely unstable and therefore hard to maintain. This is clearly seen at the beginning of Sofia's interview where she completely loses all self-control. The spoken word stands in a characteristic relationship to the unspoken, to what is withheld. Only the scene as a whole makes it possible to gain an understanding of the full significance of what is said. Here it is focused on a degree of damage which fills the women themselves with terror and from which they want to distance themselves.

## SUMMARY

Finally, the question to be answered is to what extent a clinical perspective, as was chosen here, is relevant for sociological study.

The standardised clinical diagnostic investigation underlines without doubt the facts about extreme traumatisation combined with a wide variety of symptoms. In view of the inconspicuous outward appearance of the women interviewed the question arises as to the possible resources for overcoming trauma or for special coping strategies. It is far more urgent to ask which form will be looked for to express the considerable damage their subjectivity has suffered. Both short interview sequences serve as examples for numerous similar scenes. The substitute constructions and the deliberate avoidance of triggers are indicative of the threatening and always perceptible presence of traumatic scenes within the preconscious. How easily this crosses the threshold and, with its destructive vehemence, overwhelms the interviewee's attempts at control is particularly obvious in the second interview excerpt (Sofia).

The dissociatively split-up traumatic experiences, however, remain in operation as injuries in the subjective structure, lurking within the preconscious. These injuries prevent any kind of integration of this experience into a self-confident identity after being freed. Due to these very same destructive consequences of forced prostitution it is not possible to develop an

autonomous life plan for which the experiences suffered represent a terrible chapter, yet one which has been overcome. Such creative narrative work requires the strength which grows from the gradual integration of a horrific experience. This sort of step has been denied to the nine women so far; they have to expend their energy on dissociative defence. This correlation can only be understood through a perspective which includes the clinical aspects, comprehends the speechlessness scenically and makes the severity of the psychological consequences transparent, even or rather because on the surface the women now live really normal lives and in fact do not speak about their troubles. For this reason, too, despite the clear empirical results, the women find it hard to take the path of seeking therapy, which would at least make their injuries public. The findings presented do help in comprehending the real injuries suffered by the victims. Thus one of the tasks of this type of research study is to give those people a voice who, because of the particular type of harm they have suffered, cannot raise their own voices. A public voice is necessary to name the real injuries and thus provide the conditions for society to make compensation. A certain partiality towards the interests of those who suffered so much is therefore a prerequisite for this research project; otherwise the researcher would have been taken in by the well-adapted external structure.

If no compensation is made it will remain impossible for the women concerned to develop an independent life plan in a new society, despite and in view of their experiences. If they do not receive any supporting voice/language from outside – as here with this research study – then the tendency in Western industrial societies will unintentionally but practically be strengthened to push the problem of the trafficking of women aside and into the realms of concealed reality, to make it unconscious on a wide scale socially. The language (voice) lent to the victims of social transformation processes makes it recognisable that the way those affected deal with the trauma does not depend only on subjective (individual) factors but also on objective (social) ones. These can contribute to overcoming trauma or to its permanent fixation – dealing with the survivors of the holocaust even in psychoanalytical treatment proved the devastating consequences of society's denying things. If attempts are not made to get society to recognise the wrong which has been committed and to compensate then this has the characteristics of a political retraumatisation with the approval of the new country where the victims are now forced to remain. In this context the clinical perspective just provides the prerequisites for society for a differentiating evaluation of the long-term psychological consequences of the trafficking of women, and also provides a conceptual framework for appropriate sociopolitical instruments for overcoming it.

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