

Aleksandra Sobańska

Gender Transition as a Social Phenomenon. Social Worlds and Opportunity structures in The Biographical Experiences of Transgender Women

The aim of the dissertation set in the interpretative paradigm was to: 1/ to reconstruct the social world of transgender women; 2/ to gain an in-depth knowledge of the political, institutional, discursive and individual opportunity structures that condition the process of gender transition realized in Poland; 3/ to show the individual experiences of transgender women; 4/ to show the functioning strategies of transgender women with different socio-demographic characteristics. The paper uses the concept of social worlds and opportunity structures as a theoretical framework. The methodological strategy is based on the biographical method. The researcher used a triangulation of research techniques: autobiographical narrative interviews, in-depth interviews, qualitative preliminary analysis of journalistic content and unstructured observation. The paper consists of an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion and a methodological note. In the introduction, the author presented the problematic, the aims of the work, the ontological and epistemological foundations, the theoretical framework and the structure of the dissertation. The first chapter includes a description of the basic issues - transgender and gender transition. The second chapter discusses the political opportunity structures available to transgender people in Poland. The third chapter attempts to reconstruct the social world of transgender women. Some issues of this concept are developed in the following chapters. In the fourth chapter, the author presents trans-specific institutional opportunity structures, describing the technologies used by transgender women and characterising the institutions of the sectors - public and private - that these women use. The final section of this chapter also provides information on opportunity structures created within the third sector. In the first part of the next, fifth chapter, the author has included an analysis of the arenas of dispute taking place in and around the social world of transgender women. Then, using the concept of discursive opportunity structures, she described the role of media and pop culture in shaping the image of transgenerness. The author has indicated how transgender women produce their collective identity and how they want to be perceived and treated by those around them. The final, sixth chapter presents a layout of individual opportunity structures developed from a structural analysis of the contrasting life stories of four female narrators. A methodological note, bibliography and appendices can be found at the end of the thesis. In the content of the entire dissertation, theory is intertwined with the results of empirical research. The social world of transgender

women is extremely diverse in terms of the variety of approaches to the gender transition process, the needs associated with it, opinions on authenticity, ways of legitimising transgender issues, etc. Furthermore, there is a complex set of political, institutional, discursive and individual opportunity structures at work in this world, which intertwine and influence each other. The research draws not only cognitive but also applied conclusions regarding changes in the way the state, institutions and NGOs function towards transgender women.

Keywords: transgender, transgender woman, gender transition, social worlds, opportunity structures, biographical research

12.02.2024, Aleksandra Sobczak