

Abstract

This thesis is a construction of knowledge achieved from a process of thought crystallization. It is an analysis conducted by an “insider” who witnessed domestic violence herself. Methodology is Autobiography which having a woman as a ‘subject’ of study, this thesis is a step in attempting to create some spaces for a silenced “sound” within private arenas such as families. It is also a first important step in trying to leave some room for knowledge gained through personal experience which had previously been marginalized by conventional studies and research done by experts who lacked personal experience yet were interested in the issues of domestic violence in Thailand.

Having personally experienced such violence, I realized that my family is different from the recurring representations which have become a generalized ‘reality’ of women’s life presented in many studies and research previously done on the issue of domestic violence. Women who experience violence in their family have traditionally been stereotyped as passive agents entirely deprived of power, and merely as raw materials for study. Men, on the other hand, have been viewed as active agents who possess absolute power but who are absent from any studies. These have distorted the true relationships between men and women in the context of domestic violence.

Analyzing the issue of domestic violence from a perspective of an insider of such an experience, I gained new viewpoints and discovered new findings that are different from those found in previous studies. The results are as follows.

1) Family is a complex network of relations between powers of men and women. An analysis of the problem of domestic violence should investigate into the fluctuation of power between the two parties, which will shed light to the possibility that men and women can equally become both active and passive agents in their relationships. Children, who were often overlooked in previous studies, are actually a factor that contributes to change in balance of power between the two poles. Moreover, family does not only grant men unlimited power or allow them to oppress women, but it can also create pressure on both men and women equally. This pressure is forged through

social and familial expectations on the roles and duties of men and women within the framework of the myth of “the ideal family.”

2) Research on the issue of domestic violence in Thai society often overlooks how important it is to study a large number of women who choose to stay within violent relationships. Economic dependence, fear, love, etc. are the reasons that cloud our visions so that we could see only weaknesses of the women who do not step out from these dysfunctional relationships. By underestimating such an important aspect, the strategies to negotiate for or to seize power employed by these women are altogether ignored. My mother has showed me her womanly strategies. By telling stories and applying everyday tactics that are so simple, yet so intelligent and effective, she has been able to adjust the relations of power within our family, to uphold the family itself as well as to maintain the ties between the members of our family.

3) “Love” is usually a short and inexplicable word of excuse given as the reason why these women choose to stay in violent relationships. Since it is difficult to communicate such an abstract concept, love is often ignored or overlooked in a large number of previous studies and research on domestic violence. My mother has proved that her love is multi-dimensional and not only limited to a romantic relationship that would entrap her in the position where she becomes powerless, weak and stupid in her relations to the man she loves. My mother’s love, however, has granted her the power to withstand violence. She has made it clear to me that her “power of love” is different from my father’s “love of power.” My mother’s love is a constructive rather than a destructive force. The love she gives to my father has put an end to the violence. The love she gives to her children has released me from pains and healed me of deep-cut wounds that had long eaten me away. Her love has relieved me and emancipated me from pain and anger.