

CHAPTER SEVEN

TENSIONS BETWEEN FAMILIALISM AND FEMINISM: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FRAMEWORKS IN A WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE

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Domestic violence against women entered public discussion in Russia through the efforts of independent women's groups in collaboration with Western feminists in the early 1990s (Hemment 2004). The first surveys brought the prevalence of violence into the public's consciousness: according to a 2002 survey conducted in seven regions of the Russian Federation, up to fifty per cent of married women had experienced physical violence from the side of their husbands at least once. Different forms of psychological violence were even more common. Eighteen per cent of women lived in conditions of severe or continuous violence. (Gorshkova and Shurygina 2003.)

Although domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon in Russia, it was constructed as a social problem, requiring the state's and society's intervention, only in the 1990s. This constructing process is still going on. The Russian Federation has no special legislation on domestic violence, and many Russians still prefer to keep domestic violence a hidden problem and leave the victims of violence unattended. For example, in the survey mentioned above, almost half of the male and female respondents (43%) supposed that if a husband had beaten his wife, it was their private matter and that no one should intervene. More than one third of the respondents assumed that if a wife had been beaten by her husband, she should think about what she could have done to provoke this. (Gorshkova and Shurygina 2003.)

The first crisis centres to provide services for female victims of violence and to do preventive work were opened in 1993–1994 in big Russian cities

(Zabelina 1999, 36; Pashina 2004, 24). The crisis centre movement has been characterized by constant change and dialogue between NGOs and municipal actors. The first crisis centres were founded by women's organizations with the assistance of Western feminist groups and donors, such as the Open Society Institute, USAID and the Ford Foundation. During the last few years many NGO-based centres have been forced to close their doors due to lack of finances (Johnson 2009; Johnson and Saarinen 2011; Liapunova and Dracheva 2009; Amnesty 2005). On the other side, a growing number of municipal crisis centres and crisis departments within local social centres have been opened.

This chapter is based on an ethnographic case study, which was conducted in a municipal crisis centre located in Izhevsk, in the Udmurt republic in 2004. The centre is used as an example for analysing the frameworks used in crisis centre work and the tensions between them. In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the study, focusing on tensions between the frameworks of domestic violence which were applied in the crisis centre's work. In the conclusions, the analysis is completed and reflected on with newer data from three other crisis centres, two of which are located in Saratov in the Southern Volga region, and one in Sortavala in Russian Karelia (also Kulmala, in this volume). The fieldwork in the three new centres was conducted in 2008–2010.

Frameworks of the Work Against Violence

When I travelled to Udmurtia to investigate crisis centre work in Izhevsk, I did not know much about domestic violence and the crisis centre movement in Russia. The starting point of my study was an assumption that crisis centres play a crucial role in constructing the understanding of domestic violence as a social problem in Russian society. The centres work every day with women suffering from violence and, maybe even more importantly, do preventive work and raise people's consciousness about this problem. During my seven-month fieldwork, I came to understand that this particular crisis centre was an extremely interesting place for a social work researcher wanting to analyse work against domestic violence from a constructionist perspective. There were constant, though often beneath the surface, negotiations on the framings of the work. I argue that inside this particular centre there were present many of the tensions that characterize the crisis centre movement in Russia as a whole: most prominently, the movement's relation to gender-sensitiveness and feminism (e.g. Saarinen 2003/2004; Johnson 2007). A change could

also be seen in the ideological climate of the centre during the years of its existence (also Brygalina and Temkina 2004).

In this chapter, I concentrate on analysing how the staff of the crisis centre understand and define domestic violence against women as a social problem. I analyse the frameworks through which the specialists of the centre see the problem that they are working with: How do they understand domestic violence? How do they explain it? To what kind of concepts do they relate it? In this study, which employs the theory of social problems work, the crisis centre is understood as a local culture, a local working community, inside which the frameworks of its activities are negotiated. My interest is in the interpretative practices by which everyday realities are accomplished, managed, and sustained locally, and how the interpretative structures are linked to aspects of everyday reality. These practices are referred to as social problems work. (Holstein and Miller 2003, 71.)

When referring to the target problem of the crisis centre, I mostly use the concept domestic violence or domestic violence against women. During my fieldwork, in discussions with my informants, I usually used the Russian term *domashnee nasilie* (domestic violence), because I found it the most neutral and widespread concept, and because it was used widely in the everyday speech of crisis centre staff and in this centre's brochures as well as in other Russian crisis centres' publications. My theoretical understanding is that domestic violence is a gendered problem, but during my fieldwork I tried to concentrate on learning how my research participants framed it instead of announcing my own viewpoints to them (also Aitamurto, Jäppinen and Kulmala 2010, 48–49).

Different Perspectives on Domestic Violence and Crisis Centre Work in Russia

In scientific discussion and practical work, domestic violence has been examined from different viewpoints. Often the divides can be seen in the way in which different actors see the interconnections of violence and gender: should gendered dimensions of domestic violence be highlighted and closely examined, or should the perspective be gender-neutral, emphasising more the perspective of helping families as whole? Differences and controversies stemming from this divide can be seen in the Russian crisis centre movement as well. Aino Saarinen (2003, 86 /2004, 74–75) has made a rough divide of crisis centres in North-Western Russia between conflict oriented, or autonomous, and consensus oriented, or affiliated/public, units. All the centres aim to provide immediate help and

support for individual victims of violence and to achieve long-term changes in society. The differences exist in how the activities are organized, how they define the key problem, and how gender power comes into the picture.

Conflict oriented centres are usually founded by civic organizations; in general, they act in a feminist framework and emphasize conflict between men and women. According to this framework, male violence against women and children is seen as a phenomenon related to the patriarchal structures of society and oppression of women in all areas and levels of society. Work is based on voluntary work and women helping other women. Men are not welcome in the centres—neither as clients nor as workers.

Consensus oriented centres are usually municipal units or public-civic combinations¹. They act in a framework of family violence or violence in marriage. The terminology used is gender-neutral. The clients are women, men and children. Staff consists of paid professionals, who can be also men.² (Saarinen 2003, 86.) Julia Brygalina and Anna Temkina (2004) have emphasized the influence of the source of funding on the ideological formation of the centres: foreign funding strengthens a feminist interpretation, whereas local or state funding leads to a more family-centred frame.

Janet Elise Johnson (2007) has analysed the frames used in three different crisis centres in Barnaul, and named them radical feminist, sociological and psychological. The radical feminist frame underlines the gendered nature of domestic violence and evokes a gender ideology resistant to the domination of men over women. As an explicitly feminist frame, it highlights the need for women to work together (Johnson 2007, 47). To a large extent, it can be seen as similar to the principles of the conflict oriented centres described by Saarinen (2003).

The sociological frame, for its part, suggests that violence in the family is the result either of the larger structures of society or the dynamics of the family. The perspective of the sociological frame of the gender question in domestic violence differs highly from the radical feminist frame. It suggests that there might be as much violence committed by wives as by husbands. The third of Johnson's frames is the psychological. It understands domestic violence as a specific pathology of an individual's

¹ With public-civic combinations I refer to centres, in which municipal services and NGO activities meet (also Kulmala, in this volume).

² However, in general in Russia, the public sector and especially its social sphere are mostly occupied by female employees, which can be clearly seen also in the crisis centres.

personality, as a psychological disorder that primarily requires psychotherapy to overcome. This frame often provides psychological excuses for the batterer, like the environmental and cultural stresses placed on men by the post-Soviet transition and by unyielding ideals of masculinity. (Johnson 2007, 48–50.)

In addition to these earlier analyses on Russian crisis centres, I employ in this chapter Pirjo Pehkonen's (2003) analysis on the development of Finnish domestic violence work. She has divided the main discourses in the Finnish violence discussion into feminist and family-dynamic, and analyzed tensions between them. This frame will be used in an adapted form as the basis for the analysis of my empirical material.

Getting to the Field, Accessing the Centre

The material for this case study is from Izhevsk, the capital of the Udmurt republic, located over 1,000 kilometres away from Moscow between the Volga river and the Ural mountains. Izhevsk can be characterized as quite a usual Russian provincial city, which formed around some factories and grew fast during the Soviet era from a little industrial centre into a city with a population of more than 600,000 inhabitants.

I went to Izhevsk as an exchange student in February 2004 to study social work and Russian language at the local university. However, the main goal of the visit was to gather material for my M.A. study. I obtained easy access to local women's crisis centre through a practice internship, which was part of the curriculum of fourth year social work students and got approval to my research plans.

I conducted my study in the municipal crisis centre, which had been founded in 1997 and at the time of my fieldwork was the only crisis centre in the whole republic. It is financed by the city from the very beginning. The initiative in creating the centre came from the city administration of Izhevsk's Committee of Family, Children's and Women's Affairs. They had noticed that women who had experienced domestic violence repeatedly sought help from the municipal authorities. In the 1990s, it was still quite rare for a municipality to take responsibility for opening a women's crisis centre. More commonly at that time, a non-governmental organization (NGO) started a crisis centre, and the city administration came to support it later on or opened its own services.

There was also an NGO set up inside the centre. The initiative in creating an NGO had come from the staff of the centre a couple of years after the founding of the centre. At least during my fieldwork period, the main function of the NGO was to attract and acquire support from foreign

foundations, which were actively funding crisis centre work in the 1990s and early 2000s in Russia (e.g. Johnson 2009). The centre had been successful in getting grants as well, and the grants were used to top up the regular but not very high municipal funding and to realize different projects. The NGO was a member of the Association Stop Violence (*Ostanovim nasilie*, former Russian Association of Crisis Centres for Women RACCW) and in that way it served as a gateway to collaboration with other crisis centres. The centre can be regarded as a public-civic combination, referred earlier.

In 2004, the centre had a staff of a little over 20 members working either full-time or part-time. The educational level of the specialists working with the clients was high. The specialists included psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers and lawyers. All of the staff, except one lawyer and one part-time psychotherapist, who worked mainly with children, were women. Many of the specialists were rather young and had finished their university studies only a short time ago. Many of them had come to the centre to work on the hotline, for instance as student volunteers, and then proceeded to face-to-face consultations. Some of them told me about experiences of domestic violence in an earlier marriage or in a childhood home.

The services of the centre included the mentioned telephone hotline that operated from nine to nine every day, consultations with specialists, and work in peer groups. The centre also provided a temporary shelter for women and children, where clients could stay for a few weeks. It actively engaged in educational and preventive work by giving lectures and organizing training on domestic violence in schools and workplaces, and through writing chapters to local newspapers.

The shelter was the only service of the centre, which was explicitly directed only at women (with their children). The hotline and consultations with psychologists, lawyers and social workers were basically open to men, too, but the majority of the clients were women. For example, 90 per cent of the callers to the hotline were female. In 2003, over 4,500 calls were registered. The most common reasons for calling were problems concerning family relationships and violence. Often clients of the hotline made reservation for a face-to-face consultation. In the same year, there were over 1,000 face-to-face consultations, and a bit more than half of them were related to domestic or sexual violence. Some clients visited the centre for a consultation once or a couple of times; some client-psychologist relationships lasted for years.

The focus of the activities of the centre had widened during the years, and not all its activities and themes were related to domestic violence,

when I entered the field. In 2004, one theme, which the city administration seemed to be eager to finance, was alcohol and drug abuse prevention among children and youngsters. However, the centre's participation in the projects of the Association Stop Violence kept up the focus on violence work and developing it. In 2004, the centre was getting prepared for a large multi-year joint project by Russian crisis centres targeting ethnic minorities and based on British and European Union funding. Unfortunately, the project faced many difficulties and turned out to be unsuccessful, as Janet Elise Johnson (2009) has reported.

Methods and Data

My rather long stay in Izhevsk made it possible to use ethnographic methodology in data collection. When I planned the study, I found ethnography a suitable method for this kind of study because it gives the researcher the opportunity to learn during her fieldwork and use different materials. In this research I understand ethnography as a wide methodological approach, which has guided my fieldwork process. For me, ethnography has been about focusing on the everyday life of the studied centre and learning to understand the ways in which the specialists of the crisis centres make sense of their work and the phenomenon they are working with. The main forms of data gathering were participant observation and interviews. During my seven-month fieldwork period, I spent one day each week at the centre. To the end of the fieldwork my visits became shorter, and my observations were more focussed. Additionally, I gathered written documents, such as brochures, flyers and posters as well as statistics and reports produced by the centre and a guidebook for its volunteers, and photographed in the centre.³

In the analysis, I was guided by the adaptive theory model developed by Derek Layder (1998). Layder emphasizes the interconnections between any previous theoretical literature on an issue and any new theory, which might be created by any new empirical analysis. Previous theories give some focus to any new data gathering and analysis: the researcher's mind is never empty of presumptions, based on previous theories. Though the researcher should remain open to new theoretical ideas, which might emerge from any new empirical data, and therefore analysis and new theory building is always a combination of deductive and inductive thinking. In practice, the adaptive theory model is about reading the material, coding it and writing theoretical memos. While reading the

³ A more detailed description of my data can be found in Jäppinen (2006).

material, the findings of the researcher are always partially guided the earlier theories. In my case, I started by outlining the tensions in the everyday work of the women's crisis centre based on Pirjo Pehkonen's (2003) model on Finnish violence work, and proceeded to coding and writing memos lead by the empirical material, adapting the ideas of the former theory according to my own data, moving gradually to a more data-oriented analysis.

Balancing Between Familialism and Feminism

In analysing the definitions and understandings of domestic violence in this one crisis centre, I found different approaches. Essentially, there were two frameworks, between which the crisis centre's actors balanced. These frameworks were used in different situations and sometimes simultaneously. I call them the familialist (family-centred) and the feminist (gender-sensitive) approach. As described earlier, I have created these concepts by adapting the analysis of the struggle between the so-called family-dynamic and the feminist discourses in Finnish violence work (Pehkonen 2003). I call the constant negotiations and movement between these two frameworks balancing between feminism and familialism. Importantly, my study shows that the differences analysed between different organizations (Saarinen 2003/2004; Johnson 2007) can also occur within one unit, which makes the everyday work of the crisis centre a constant negotiation between the frameworks.

Is There a Gender Dimension in Domestic Violence?

Perhaps the most important tension between the frameworks was related to the meanings acquired by gender. Some of the specialists clearly articulated in their speech and working practices that domestic violence is a gendered problem and that most of their clients are women. They used systematically feminine grammatical forms such as *ona* (she) and *klientka* (a client, fem.) Some of the specialists were not eager to highlight the gendered nature of domestic violence and the predominance of women as their clients. They used gender-neutral or masculine forms such as *chelovek* (a person) and *klient* (a client, masc.), when speaking about clients and violence in general.

The tendency towards a gender-neutral approach was also visible in some specialists' way of underlining that both men and women can be victims and perpetrators. I interpreted this as meaning that it was important for them to make clear that they are not accusing all men of

being violent towards women. On the other hand, when asked about the typical histories of the clients of the centre, they all spoke about women who had experienced violence from the side of their husbands. In that way, the everyday understanding of the work was often gender-sensitive or at least took gender into account in some way or another. Usually, when we talked for a longer time about clients and their situations in an informal setting, most of the specialists used the words *a woman* and *a victim of violence* practically synonymously, and the words *a man* and *a perpetrator* in the same way.

In the official documents of the centre, the framework was strictly gender-neutral. It was underlined that the services are for men, women and children. Only the shelter was explicitly for women with children. Violence was constructed as a family interaction problem, in which there are no concrete, gendered actors. In the following quote from an annual report of the centre, violence is constructed as a psychological problem, which is caused by the incapability of family members to solve conflicts in a peaceful way.

In 2003 the hotline providing immediate psychological help received 4,452 calls. 1,157 of calls were related to providing help to the client in solving psychological problems, like problems in family relations and, as a result of them, the appearance of different forms of violence in family relations. [-] 679 clients received face-to-face counselling from a psychologist. First and foremost they were persons, suffering from violence in the family, who could not solve intrapersonal and family conflicts constructively.

In the last sentence, responsibility for violence appears to be laid on the victim: violence is caused by the person's incapability of solving personal or family conflicts. The perpetrator and his responsibility are not mentioned. Another way of reading the quote could be that "persons suffering from violence in the family" include both victims and perpetrators, which highlights the agony caused by violence to each side and that no one should be blamed but everyone should be seen as a victim. Interestingly enough, the actor of the scene is not a man or a woman who uses violence, but "problems in family relations", which cause violence. This angle is parallel to the psychological frame described by Johnson (2007, 51). She wrote that according to the director of the crisis centre for men in Barnaul, the male hotline callers did not speak of domestic violence but of "family conflicts", and in the counselling work conflicts were constructed as "symptoms of a complex of psychological problems" at least partially caused by "victim behaviour". I agree with Johnson that

this approach is problematic, as it tends to slip the responsibility for violence from the male batterer to the female victim, blaming her instead. Nonetheless, in the brochures for clients, the framework was again gender-sensitive: they are explicitly directed to women who are abused by their husbands. Violence was regarded as a gendered problem and a violation of women's human rights. For example the brochure "Safety in the Family" directs its message overtly to women and highlights that the victim is never responsible for violence:

No one deserves violence. It is not your fault if you are being abused or assaulted, or your money is taken from you. Your husband may say that you provoke, but he is responsible for his own behaviour (whether he is drunk or sober).

Some of the brochures were designed in ANNA, Moscow Centre for the prevention of violence, which provides materials for several crisis centres in the national network. ANNA's approach to domestic violence is feminist, which explains the gender-sensitiveness of their brochures. Nevertheless, the brochures produced independently by the centre of my study were also rather gender-sensitive, which made a clear contrast to its official documents of the centre and their family-centredness. I assume that some of the brochures may have been designed and printed a couple of years earlier, and a shift in the frameworks used in them may have taken place in the meantime, or brochures from feminist centres may have been used as models when designing them. Some of them may just reflect the gender-sensitive everyday practices of the centre, which were not welcomed by the city administration and therefore not used in the official documents, but however employed in the work with clients.

The attitude of the specialists towards feminism differed first and foremost according to how they defined the concept for themselves. The attitudes can be classified in three different groups. The first group saw feminism as something that should be avoided. These women compared in the interviews feminism to political extremism like Nazism and stated that going to extremes is dangerous in any context. They thought that feminism means advocating women's interests at the expense of men, and were anxious that feminism might contain elements of oppression against men. The staff members might note that men and women differ also biologically, and because of that an orientation to formal equality is not even needed. Even then, on some occasions they analysed domestic violence from a gender perspective and promoted gender equality. To some extent, the attitude towards feminism was more shaped on the basis

of prejudices than real dissent towards the women's movement or the more feminist-oriented specialists of the centre.

Some other specialists were well disposed to feminism, but anyway took it with a grain of salt. They underlined that it is important to define the concept clearly when using it, because there are many prejudices towards feminism in Russian society. They argued that if feminism is understood simply as promoting gender equality, they supported it strongly. This reflects Saarinen's (2004, 74) analysis, in which she noted that the crisis centres promoted the rights of women and children as a whole, regardless of their opinions on feminism.

A third group was strongly committed to a feminist approach in their work and thinking, and used feminist terminology when analysing domestic violence. They recognized patterns of oppression of women in Russian society and called for larger societal changes and used terminology such as violence against women, discrimination against women, patriarchy, or male solidarity. One of them had come into conflict with the director of the centre over feminist terminology used in a text written in the name of the centre. The director had made her delete all the feminist terms and replace them with more "neutral" ones. The example shows the tensions related to choosing the framework in the centre.

The gender-sensitive approach was typical of those specialists who had worked in the centre for a longer period, perhaps even since its foundation. I interpret this to be connected to the fact that at the beginning of the crisis centre movement the models and methodological tools were imported from the national crisis centre movement and transnational feminist actors. On this basis, the older specialists had adopted feminist concepts and approaches, and identified themselves as part of the women's movement.

Individual Safety Challenging Family Values?

The tension between individualism and familialism can be condensed to the question, what should be done in situations in which the interest of the individual family member and the interest of the family do not meet, and which of them is seen as prior. All the specialists underlined individual safety and argued that for example divorce is the right solution, if violence continues and the safety of the woman cannot be guaranteed in the relationship. Even those specialists whose opinions of some other issues were highly familialist, emphasized that no one should tolerate violence but one should leave the relationship. The following quote from an interview illustrates a framework where the individual safety of the woman is considered more precious than keeping the family together.

There are even cases where the woman literally takes the children, leaves everything and simply vanishes. She moves to another city if, for example, the situation is so difficult... Let's say, the husband is so cruel, he follows her, does not leave her alone. The woman simply leaves everything and hides herself, travels away. And this is a much better solution than living with the man and continuing to suffer.

On the other hand, the staff members told how they sometimes were accused in public of tearing families apart. Divorce was in many situations seen as a good and even unavoidable solution, but they did not want to be labelled as helpers, who motivate or push women to get divorced. Often the specialists talked about how they would like to work with the whole family, help the men to get rid of their violent behaviour and support the family to keep together. Anyway, they found this work almost impossible, because it is extremely difficult to motivate the perpetrators to work on their problems, and in these situations divorce was seen to be an unavoidable solution.

[S]ometimes it [the centre] is considered as some kind of feminist centre... the goal of which is to get the wife and the husband to divorce. Is it so? But on some occasions, in fact, there is no other way out. If the man does not want to work on this, if he does not acknowledge his problems. Naturally, the solution is to go away, to leave that kind of man to protect herself, her own physical and psychological health.

The quote above unveils that in the mind of the interviewee—or in the Russian society she is referring to—feminism is seen to be something that is against nuclear families and in favour of divorces. Anyway, she rejects the accusations of tearing families apart saying that if the man is not ready to work on his problems, the woman has no other solution but to leave.

Working with violent men in crisis centres has sometimes been seen to be contradictory to the feminist framework. For example Aino Saarinen (2004, 79) has analysed these tensions in a Nordic collaboration project, in which Swedish autonomous crisis centre actors strictly excluded men from their crisis centres. On the other hand, many Russian crisis centre actors, including activists from feminist centres, consider it important to persuade men to recognize that domestic violence is a problem and to find effective ways to collaborate with men (Johnson 2007, 47).

Divorce was often presented as being unavoidable, because the continuation of the marriage would not be in the interests of the child. The specialists questioned the opinion often phrased by their clients and their relatives that women should stay in violent marriages, because their children needed fathers and divorce was a traumatic experience for

children. They underlined that witnessing violent acts against their mothers and experiencing violence themselves is perhaps much more traumatic to children than the divorce of the parents. In their view, this is why it is not always in the best interest of the child that his or her parents stay together.

However, the official documents of the centre were very familialist, as the main goal of the centre was set to “support families in the contemporary world”. The target group of the centre’s work was defined as families and children. Family members were not referred to as individuals with their own rights and needs, but as parts of the family, which was the main thing to be protected. Keeping the family together was the most important value and goal of the crisis centre’s work as set out in its official documents.

Family Interaction or Structures in Society?

The third tension is related to the question, whether violence is considered as a problem of individuals and family systems, or whether it is seen as a broader problem related to the structures of society and cultural representations. All the specialists and the official policy of the centre strongly disagreed with the common understanding in Russian society that violence was a private matter, and that no one should intervene. Breaking that stereotype was seen as one of the main goals of the centre’s work.

Nevertheless, some of the staff members considered that violence was a family system problem, which occurs in dysfunctional families. Domestic violence exists because partners cannot build family relations in a non-violent way, and do not show each other love and respect. This was the framework used in the official documents of the centre as well. There were references to factors that might cause crises and violence in families, but no explanation what these factors might be. Violence was defined as a family system dysfunction, a disorder and an exception which occurs during a crisis. Violence was caused by the incapability of family members to solve problems in peaceful ways.

In the feminist framework, domestic violence as a problem is connected to a wider perspective and to the structures of society. Violence is seen to be related to cultural presentations of masculinity and femininity, to the gender system and to the cultural oppression of women in Russian society. Acceptance of domestic violence cannot be changed just by talking about family values and crisis prevention. Specialists also underlined that domestic violence was a crime and that improvements are needed to the legislation.

The family level and broader structures of society were seen to be tightly connected to each other, though. “How can a person grow in a healthy family, if the society is like this?”, asked one of my informants. In addition to gendered hierarchies and cultural models approving violence against women, many specialists connected domestic violence to the authoritarian structures in their society, which are also reflected at the family level. In the following table, I summarize the results of my analysis and the tensions between the frameworks.

Familialism	Feminism
Gender-neutrality <i>“Both men and women can be victims and perpetrators”</i>	Gender-sensitivity <i>“Domestic violence is a gendered problem and a violation of women’s human rights”</i>
Family-centredness <i>“We support families to solve their problems and stay together”</i>	Individualism <i>“Individual safety is the most important issue, and sometimes divorce is unavoidable”</i>
Reasons for violence lie in the family system <i>“Violence occurs in dysfunctional families”</i>	Reasons for violence is structures in society <i>“Violence is related to cultural presentations and patriarchy”</i>

Table 7-1 The main tensions between the familialist and feminist frameworks

Situational and Temporal Shifts

In this chapter, I have analysed the frameworks used in the work against domestic violence conducted by one particular women’s crisis centre in Russia. As has become clear, there have been differences amongst specialists in how they frame domestic violence as a social problem, although there were no notable distinctions between the professions represented at the centre. The same specialists might also have used different kinds of frameworks in different situations. I find the contextual changes and contradictions to be even more important than the differences

between persons. The everyday work with clients was to a large extent gender-sensitive. The specialists knew that most of their clients were women and their evidence-based everyday understanding was, to a large extent, that domestic violence is a gendered problem. Yet, the more official the context was, the more family-centred the framework became. The official regulations of the centre did not even mention violence or women and men, but talked about “supporting families in crisis”.

I found this to be interesting. Why is this language, which places supporting the family system at the forefront and blurs the experiences of victimization and violent crimes, used in official documents? Some of the older specialists also told me that there had been a clear shift from a more feminist perspective towards familialism. The “feminist beginning” of the centre is easy to understand, as the roots of the crisis centre movement in Russia are connected to feminist activism. For example, when planning the functions and activities of the centre the staff had used the manual *How to start a crisis centre for women?* (Israelian and Zabelina 1995) and other material written from a feminist perspective. Some staff members suggested that the shift to a more familialist framework was connected with the city administration’s suspicion of feminist and gender-sensitive models. The familialist framework seemed to be more acceptable to the authorities and to public opinion. This interpretation is supported by the analysis of Brygalina and Temkina (2004) of feminist organizations, including crisis centres, in St. Petersburg. The authors’ analysis shows how the organizations partly abandoned their feminist rhetoric or had to choose where to use it, in order to be able to collaborate with the authorities. I propose that also in the centre of my study a familialist framework was partly used to secure municipal funding for the centre and to protect itself from negative perceptions by the local people that the crisis centre was advising couples to divorce.

On the other hand, the feminist framework was welcomed when collaborating with other crisis centres and when applying for project funding from foreign donors. The crisis centre’s staff had learned to choose a particular framework suitable for every individual situation and to avoid feminist concepts in situations where they were not approved of. The similar phenomenon has been conceptualized by Brygalina and Temkina (2004, 224) as selective, or latent, feminism. In any event, changing the frameworks was not always easy, and it created contradictions within the work community, too. Some of the specialists found the goals and principles of the work unclear and were frustrated by this. On the other hand, some of the specialists did not even seem to notice these shifts of frameworks or did not see them as problematic.

Discussion

Different methodological approaches are important in researching the logics of the work of crisis centres, as different methods produce different kinds of information. Surveys, usually answered by one person in each centre and reflecting the official opinions of a centre, highlight differences between units (e.g. Saarinen, Liapounova and Drachova 2003; Liapounova and Drachova 2004). Surveys help to create an overall picture and to make categorizations. Yet, in addition to them, in-depth case studies are needed to explore and understand the multifaceted processes of constructing frameworks of domestic violence at the micro level in the everyday activities of the units, and to be able to recognize and analyze negotiations and variations between them.

The crisis centre examined closely in this case study can be defined, at least on an official level, as a consensus-oriented centre. According to Saarinen (2003), this orientation is characteristic of municipal crisis centres. Nonetheless, a strong gender-sensitive undertow, which also oriented the work with clients, could be found in my ethnographic data from 2004. I argue that this is connected to the early years of the unit, when a model for the work was adapted from the women's organizations that initiated the crisis centre movement in Russia, and to its collaboration with the national association of crisis centres.

In any event, the gender-sensitive approach was not welcomed at the official level—particularly by the financing municipal authorities—and the staff of the crisis centre had even been forced to switch their discourses and activities to more gender-neutral and family-centred variants. The family-centred approach seemed to be more “safe” in relation to the public discussion and the authorities. Nevertheless, gender-sensitive terminology and perspectives were used when collaborating with the national association of crisis centres. This kind of “multi-talk” seems to be common in crisis centres which collaborate with both transnational and local actors (Saarinen 2008).

I interpret the shift to a more familialist approach in the work of this crisis centre to be connected to two main factors. Firstly, there is widespread suspicion in Russian society of feminist ideas and gender-sensitive approaches. This applies to both the domestic funders of the centre and the public at large. Secondly, there is a strong emphasis on family values and the importance of the family (also Cook, in this volume), in respect to which feminist ideas are unfortunately often seen as controversial.

During my later fieldwork in other centres⁴, my hypothesis, suggesting that negotiations on the frameworks were especially prevalent in the examined centre, has been confirmed to be correct. Different perspectives can be found in the other centres, too, and many of the controversies analysed in this chapter occur in them as well, but the negotiations are not as active and predominant as in the first centre of my study. Even more importantly, the relation between different perspectives seemed to be not as tense in the other centres as in the first centre. This is probably due to the more homogenous background of the centres. The two other state centres were not as engaged in the international women's rights movement: one had no notable connections outside the local setting, and the other collaborated mainly with Finnish organizations, whose approach to violence was rather family-centred. In the firstly-studied Udmurtian centre strong negotiations on the future direction of the centre took place during my first research trip: therefore, it has provided an especially vivid example of the tensions that can occur in violence work.

In May 2010, while finishing this chapter, I made a new field trip to Izhevsk and observed significant changes in the everyday practices of the centre. The centre had merged with another unit, most of the staff had changed and the work against violence had diminished. Alongside the violence work, the staff dealt with families with several other problems, and the volume of women coming to the centre because of experiencing violence had decreased. Most of the counselling was now addressed to individuals and families in different life situations, and common reasons to come for psychological counselling included intrapersonal problems and difficulties in parent-child interaction. Some of the shelter's client seats were reserved for a new department called Little Mom (*Malen'kaia Mama*), a mother and child home for young women with newborn babies and no place to stay, but these clients had so far been relatively few. However, the number of women assigned to the shelter because of homelessness had increased in recent last years, which troubled the staff.⁵

⁴ In 2008–2010 I conducted extensive fieldwork in three other centres in Sortavala (cf. Kulmala, in this volume) and Saratov. Two of them are municipal or state centres, one is NGO based.

⁵ This tendency can be observed in another state crisis department in my sample as well. It might be related to the economic downturn and increased unemployment, and the flow of these people to crisis centres indicates weaknesses of the public social service system and a lack of assistance to homeless women and children. Nevertheless, in everyday conversations at the centres that I observed, staff members often viewed these types of clients as *tuneiadsy*, parasites, and were

Moreover, the negotiations between the frameworks, which I have analysed in this chapter, seemed not to have been as intense as they were some years earlier: rather, familialism was the main framework of the activities, or the frameworks employed depended only on the personal interests and knowledge of each coworker. In addition, older staff was concerned about not providing enough training in domestic violence issues to new coworkers. The centre's directors, as well as city administration's representatives responsible for the centre, openly pronounced that over the years they had found the "aggressive Western feminist" approach, as they put it, to be erroneous in working against domestic violence. They emphasized that it is important to work with the family, not only with women, and that the goal of the work should always be to protect the family and help family members to live happily together.

Based on my later fieldwork in this and other centres, I argue that this is a common way of thinking in public crisis units in Russia: keeping families together and helping family members to live together non-violently is seen as the main goal of the work, and feminist ideas of changing gendered power patterns in families and society are more or less rejected or at least given less attention. After the feminist initiation of the crisis centre movement in Russia, largely mobilized by civic organizations, the continuation of Russian violence work, conducted in public units, seems to be predominantly familialist. Additionally, these dynamics of shifting from domestic violence-oriented work towards more general help for (mostly low-income, *maloobspechennye*) families can also be seen in another state crisis centre of my larger ongoing study. How and why this happens: why work to counter domestic violence gradually becomes a secondary activity of these centres, which were established especially to provide help for victims of domestic violence—will be one of the questions to be taken up in my future work.

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concerned about people becoming passive, instead of working for their own well-being, and waiting for the state organizations support them.

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