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**Daria Zielińska-Pękał (2019), *Poradnictwo
telewizyjne w perspektywie poradniczej*
[*Television counselling from the perspective of
counselling*]. Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza
Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, pp. 304**

**The assessment of television counselling
by a media studies expert**

I wish to start this review with a caveat that will be fundamental for my comments below: this is not a review of a monograph on television counselling written from the perspective of a counselling specialist. The author of this review is a political scientist and media expert, and it was from this position that I had proceeded with a careful reading and then reflection on the monograph, both of which spurred this review. Attentive reading of this monograph was a very interesting experience, as the publication relates to television – a particularly important medium, which is still dominant in the sphere of social communication.

Despite the increasing significance of the Internet and the social media embedded in it, television is still a particularly important and popular mass medium, resulting from numerous conceptual and practical efforts initiated as early as the first quarter of the 20th century (or, according to some media historians, in the previous century) and continued until today. In the sciences focusing on social communication and media, it constitutes a key subject of much scientific research, including: the analysis of TV programming content, reception of broadcasts, its impact on public opinion, and presence on the advertising market, and many more. I believe that this medium is also of considerable importance to counselling experts, as demonstrated in an extensive and competent take on the subject offered by the author of the monograph reviewed here.

This work is clearly interdisciplinary in nature, which is, of course, in no way a negative comment on Daria Zielińska-Pękałski's study. On the contrary, the strength of this monograph lies in very skilful interweaving of numerous issues relating to the domains of pedagogy, psychology, media studies and even sociology, because – as in many other fields of research – counselling is keen to use tools developed by other disciplines. The vast spectrum of television counselling programmes, subjected by the author to a thorough analysis, is a clear evidence that they provided the author with plentiful food for thought, which she shared with her readers.

From the point of view of writing technique, the book is fully commendable: it has been logically and harmoniously structured and consists of informative chapters presenting a variety of data (which proved very useful to the media expert as well), preceded by a well-written introduction. In Chapter 1, the author presents counselling practiced in a direct relation between people (in the introduction she is “treating it as a primary model for that practiced indirectly”). Chapter 2 constitutes an attempt to look at television counselling in the context of contemporary mediatization processes. In this chapter, the author discusses e.g. the opinions of key researchers focusing on social communication and media sciences, such as Denis McQuail, Manuel Castells or Winfried Schultz, as well as Polish experts Tomasz Goban-Klas, Wiesław Godzic and Maciej Mrozowski. From my point of view, the approach to television as a mass medium is of particular importance here, and in particular a synthetic but concise analysis of its ongoing transformations, especially those that occurred in recent years.

Chapter 3 is a follow up on the issues presented in the first two excerpts of the reviewed monograph and focuses on intermediary counselling. As the author wrote:

“My aim was to highlight the process of the emergence of scientific reflection on such counselling. Thus, I present the beginnings of such reflection, which are linked to indirect counselling, thus sketching the idea of emergence of mediated counselling as a separate subject. I describe its specificity, trying to situate it within not only mass communication, but also mediated communication.”

The main task Zielińska-Pękał set for Chapter 4 was to demonstrate the methodological framework of television counselling, by situating her analysis within a broadly understood discourse of qualitative research. In other words, in this part of her monograph, the author presented the methodological solutions she applied in writing her book.

The key issue for the author was to identify and conduct an in-depth analysis of three kinds of counselling: counselling “through television”, “in television” and “with television”. The next three chapters of her book Zielińska-Pękał dedicated to such an analysis (which in fact made the four preceding chapters a methodological and theoretical springboard, necessary for the ensuing analysis). As the author stated:

“The key element for understanding each of these three kinds [of counselling, JWA] are the particles I use to identify them. “Through” indicates counselling. By counselling done “through” television I mean counselling situations occurring due to television understood as a medium and a tool for passing on advice. (...) The particle “in”, on the other hand, points out to a certain embeddedness of advice in the world of televised images and texts. I approach counselling done “in television” as a scripted, storied counselling show performed for the TV audience. (...) The particle “with”, which I use to identify the third kind of counselling, highlights assistance and accompanying. Indeed, I understand counselling done “with television” to be television-based practices that are inherent in televised narratives, embedded in the counsellee’s daily life and accompanying them closely. Whether such a narrative will have counselling consequences (i.e. become advice) depends fully on its subjective reception by the television audience seeking advice; it will depend on the meaning ascribed to it by the viewer.”

The seven chapters are complemented by concise but informative conclusions and a relatively rich bibliography (where I found many helpful and relevant sources, but also publications that seem redundant or not entirely relevant). The final part lists the television shows which were analysed, as well as the list of tables and diagrams. Here, I wish to recommend to careful Readers (including media experts) to pay attention to three interesting (in my view) tables on page 195 (Table no 20), “Elements of Teun van Dijk’s triad in the activities of counsellors”, page 215 (Table no 25) “Client types in televised shows”, and page 283 (Table no 28) “Types of television counselling”. All of them were produced by the author of this scientifically thorough monograph.

In terms of the structure of the reviewed monograph, as the above brief description shows, less than a half of the book (about 45% of the total text) has been devoted to the presentation of the theoretical “foundations” of the subsequent reflection by the author (I already mentioned that I especially appreciated the sections focusing on dynamic evolution of television as a mass medium). The author’s discussion of the television-based counselling and their unique character constitutes over half of the monograph and is – in my view – interesting and cognitively valuable. I understand and accept the *mise en abyme* perspective adopted by the author, as it “creates the possibility to approach television counselling as open to new descriptions, interpretations and re-interpretations” (quote from the book). I am also glad that the author seems open to further analysis and research related to such a currently and prospectively interesting topic for academic inquiry as television counselling.

As the concluding remark of this brief review, I wish to point out some shortcomings of this overall superb counselology publication, hopefully giving the author the opportunity to reflect on the following issues:

- ♦ **change in the typesetting** in the next editions the book, which is printed – in my humble opinion – in a manner that does not do justice to the value of its content (even though I understand the difficult financial situation of publishing houses, but I cannot approve of such policy). The font (especially that used in the numerous footnotes) is definitely too small, and the line spacing too tight, which presents difficulties in the mindful “consumption” by the reader of this delicious “dish” served by the author. Also a more dynamic layout would certainly make the book more readable and provide more clarity.
- ♦ **correcting** the style and expressions (and general proofreading). Let me quote just a few of such shortcomings in terms of language or terminology, and typos that I think could be corrected, e.g. on page 118 (line 2–3) we find the term “*autonomia metodologiczna*” (methodological autonomy, instead of the intended “*autonomia*”), on page 226 (line 3), we come across a similar proofreading error: “*postawa to bierno-konstruktynna*” (passive-constructive approach, where “*konstruktywna*” was probably meant). On page 122 the referenced author’s name Czachur was wrongly declined in accusative as “*Czachury*”, whereas the correct form in this case is “*Czachura*”. To continue this merciless dissection of the text – on page 245 the subsection title is: “*Generowanie i sepizowanie problemów, czyli sposoby ujarzmiiania homo consultants*” (Generating and SEP-ing problems: the ways to subjugate the *homo consultants*). The author briefly explains her intention for this part of the text, but I still find it difficult – despite an increasingly tolerant approach of our Polish language experts (including those whom I hold in high regard, my colleagues – professors from the University of Warsaw: J. Bralczyk and A. Markowski) – to accept the word *generować* (generate) as part of the Polish language, instead seeing it as an anglicized expression imposed on our beautiful mother tongue (not to mention the term “SEP-ing” rendered as “*sepizowanie*”). Last but not least, let me quote one more “savoury” bit from page 278 (here in the English translation): “By calling the counsellee a “casual vagrant” (“*przygodny włoczyk*”) I wished to highlight that he or she represents a position of a **shouting co-existence** (“*postawę krzyczącego współbycia*”, emphasis added, JWA) with television counselling, identified further by a characteristic that I call “transitiveness”. The author experiments with diverse kinds of terms used for counsellee typology, which she introduced in her publication – my two favourite being (p. 279) the above-mentioned “casual vagrant” and “errant sheep”.

To conclude, I wish to emphasize that my comments above in no way diminish the unquestionably valuable work by Daria Zielińska-Pękał, but only aim to assist the author (if she allows me) in improving the subsequent editions of this very interesting and skilfully written book. Certainly, her monograph constitutes a helpful

and valuable source of information, allowing the readers to supplement our knowledge about television as a mass medium crucial to the society, as seen from a perspective other than that of a media expert, with great care and in-depth reflection.

Translated by Katarzyna Byłów