

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

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Subject: *Parenthood experiences in the context of a cardiological disease of a child.
A phenomenological study on parental narration*

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The issues raised in the thesis regard parenthood experiences in the context of a cardiological disease of a child. The main reason for writing the present doctoral dissertation is a profound lack of this kind of research papers in source literature. The available writings from the area of pedagogical studies pay scant attention to families raising children with congenital heart defects. However, statistics indicate that 3500 infants with cardiovascular system diseases are born each year. Many of those newborns undergo complicated life-saving surgeries. Cardiac surgery treatment is connected with multistage surgical procedures, pharmacotherapy, follow-up medical check-ups and long-lasting hospitalisation. Cyclical hospitalisation is the main point of treatment. As collective patients, parents are forced to fulfil parental tasks in a hospital environment. Hence, they are separated from normal life in domesticity. It seems that it is worthwhile to listen carefully to parents' voices in order to understand their world, life and learn about their individual opinions on upbringing a child in the situation of a serious chronic disease. It is also advisable to disclose parents' everyday life during hospital treatment.

Taking that into consideration, the author decided to conduct research with the usage of a phenomenological method which gives the opportunity to reach the inner sphere of human beings, the world of their feelings, emotions, experiences and enables to see something that is invisible in extrinsic observations. Furthermore, it allows for making an attempt to understand and explain this kind of world. Subjective experiences related to the parenthood of parents raising children with cardiological diseases during hospital treatment were the subject of the research project. It aimed at finding the answers to the following questions:

- *What does the parenthood of parents raising children with a cardiological disease look like?*

- *What do the parents say about their parenthood and a disease of their child and how do they say it? How do they define their roles?*
- *What meanings do the parents assign to their experiences?*

The research was conducted in 2016 in the cardiac surgery department of the Children's Memorial Health Institute in Warsaw. It involved 16 parents staying with their children during hospitalisation.

The thesis consists of five chapters. Additionally, it has been provided with an introduction, ending, conclusions, bibliography, list of tables and a special appendix which contains the characteristics of selected congenital heart defects and a descriptive portrait of a child suffering from a cardiovascular system disease.

The first chapter covers theoretical aspects concerning the issues of parenthood as an area of activity of an adult person. It presents different views on parenthood, motherhood and fatherhood experiences. The chapter also contains the analysis of the definition of parental love with its characteristic features.

The second chapter concerns the methodological bases of the thesis. It involves the descriptions of the applied research methods such as a phenomenological method, narrative interview, grounded theory, participant observation and a visual method. Moreover, the chapter contains: the characteristics of the research area and the investigated people, the procedures of conducting a narrative interview in a hospital environment, types of narrators, authors' personal reflections and the individual portraits of the actors from the examined community.

Chapters number three, four and five are the essential part of the thesis as they are dedicated to the analysis and the attempt of interpreting the collected narrative interviews. The third chapter presents the faces of parenthood: the process of adapting to child's disease, the sense and meanings assigned to one's images of parental life, types and roles adopted by the parents.

In turn, the fourth chapter presents different ways of perceiving a disease of one's own child, the attempts to explain the sense of non-culpable suffering and the reconstruction of parents' experiences connected with multistage hospital treatment.

During the interviews, the narrators resided at a hospital, which is a place with specific norms and rules of functioning. For that reason, the fifth chapter presents parenthood fulfilled in a total institution. It is attempted to describe and understand the emotions of sick children's parents who are active participants of hospitalisation. In order to capture a more complete

image of the explored reality of parents raising children with heart diseases, the chapter has been supplied with photographs showing the hospital premises and places familiar to the investigated parents.

The author hopes that the undertaken research project fits into the area of valuable and extremely interesting issues from the point of view of pedagogy and other related sciences. Most of all, the published research results combined with a thorough analysis of the collected narrations will enable to understand the everyday life of parents raising children with a serious chronic disease, will encourage reflection and help to find strategic solutions for coping in the conditions of long-lasting hospitalisation. They will also become a guide for other people involved in similar situations or people responsible for the life of children and their families.

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