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PARENTS' AND THEIR ADULT CHILDREN'S NARRATIONS ON UPBRINGING

Qualitative analysis was conducted concurrently on two subject groups engaged in the upbringing process: parents and their adult children. The narrations, analyzed "in pairs," ($n = 26$) constituted the answers to the questions: (1) How did you raise your child? (2) How were you raised? The analysis of the narrations (using theory of literature devices) allowed for the isolation of elements of hidden stories (within the confines of a story within a story). As such, we considered communications containing the following information: implied and thematized – at a high level of literary communication and defined in time, told in free-flowing language in which the narrator's distance is the smallest, as well as information which can be attributed to the addresser. Conducting discourse analysis on persons in monologue pairs allows us to compare whether the worlds presented (human activity, attributed roles, processes, states, experiences, times and places) are the same and alike.

Keywords: upbringing, parent & child, qualitative research, narration.

INTRODUCTION

Upbringing can be regarded as a conscious exertion of a formative influence, intentional (intended, planned) activity which has a lasting effect on a child's life; whose aims depend on environmental and cultural factors. The style in which a child is/has been brought up allows to analyze the ways and methods

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that all family members use/have used to influence a child [more or less uniform principles of behaviour – all these influences taken as a whole: the rules which are enforced as well as the ways of assessing and controlling a child's behaviour (see Brzezińska, Appelt, & Ziólkowska, 2008)].

By following the literature on upbringing, it is possible to distinguish a number of research areas, which concentrate on:

aspects related to the “rearing” subject (Arkan, 2013; de Graff et al., 2008; Eisner, 2012) – the research in this area focuses on and concerns mainly: a formal characterisation of a parent who brings up a child (i.e., their age, gender, educational background, financial means, etc.), different aspects of their personality (i.e., their conduct, outlook on life, personal and temperamental traits, parental competence, etc.) as well as their parental skills, and the way a child who is brought up functions (upbringing as a process based on the activity of an adult means for example shaping a child's personality, supporting their social development and socialisation by providing favourable conditions, conducive to a child's development);

the quality of parent-child interaction (communicative, emotional, and cognitive aspects) and a characterization of the family background (the number of siblings, age cross-section, family structure, openness level, etc.) (see Bugental & Happaney, 2000; Dryll, 2001; Grusec & Davidow, 2010) [upbringing as a process in which both an adult and a child are engaged, treated as shared activity aimed at “settling into culture/forming a society (Dryll, 2013, p. 9)]; a characterization of a child is also provided (inborn functioning qualities, personality traits, level of activeness, etc.) and the correctness of matching it to child-rearing methods.

Apart from the above considerations, there is evidence of parents adjusting their child-rearing methods to a child's gender, age, level of intellectual development, etc. (see Roskam & Meunier, 2009). It is difficult, however, to isolate upbringing factors which are “inherent” in the family without taking into account the impact of a child's relations with his/her immediate environment, that is, peer pressure, school, neighbours, his/her parents' workplace environments and their consequent effects on family life, social policy, etc.) (see Bronfenbrenner's concept of ecological niche, where a child's development depends on micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystem – as reported in: Sameroff, 2010, p. 7; Schaffer, 2006, pp. 377-379). Unfortunately, all the regularities which have been presented and discussed in numerous studies convey an impression that, in all the analyses carried out so far, it has been possible to grasp only a few important fragments of

the studied reality – and not necessarily the decisive ones, as it is difficult to conclude which would be such (Dyches et al., 2012; Kościelska, 2011).

In general terms, upbringing can be regarded as an important and meaningful process which takes place in a significant stage of life. It is “significant” on account of its length (about 20-25% of the whole life) and of what a person experiences and learns during this time (see Hinnen, Sanderman, & Sprangers, 2009; Washington & Hans, 2013). Often the importance of early experiences depends not only on their frequent occurrence but also on considerable significance which is attached to them. Thanks to auto-reflection (the self-understanding processes) – the author’s interpretation – it is possible to sort out one’s life experience/experiences, reflections, overall aims, and major undertakings; it is possible to attribute personal meaning to them and create a coherent history of one’s life/a life story about oneself and about the world (see Cierpka, 2013; Stemplewska-Żakowicz, 2002; Straś-Romanowska, 2005). It is often the case that the interpretation of facts can have a larger impact on a person’s life than facts themselves. What choices people make depends on their sense of: rejection, indifference, being loved, being important, security, etc. For a long time in the literature of the subject the thesis has been advanced (and supported by a number of studies) that it is presence/being present and responsiveness (understood as adequate reaction to another person’s needs) that are the most crucial in the upbringing process (see Dryll, 2001; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Pereg, 2003; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Avihou-Kanza, 2011).

In order to carry out research, it is necessary to adopt a specific strategy¹. A common strategy employed in many studies is to gather fragmentary information about a particular phenomenon (having grounds for...) and next, for example by means of meta-analysis, try to integrate it. This strategy seems to be predominant in contemporary psychology. Of course, this enormous amount of information enables us to know more; nevertheless, the question remains: do we really understand more? Another strategy accepts considerable restrictions on the amount of detailed data used in a study and concentrates on understanding the essence of a phenomenon. This shortage of detailed information is both advantageous and detrimental to this approach. It is an advantage because researchers do not collect massive amounts of data which need to be integrated, and whose meaning needs to be verified. It is a disadvantage because although it is possible

¹ A wider perspective and shrewd observations (concerning research methodology) can be found in a number of polemical articles published in *Psychological Annals* in 2010 and subsequently summed up by Paluchowski (2010).

to capture an outline of regularity, this method only allows for research speculation when a detailed question is asked.

In the first strategy we interpret data according to some basic guidelines, whereas in the second one the rules are not so clear. Yet, whatever method of research or work with a patient is chosen, and by integrating the aforementioned strategies, the subject or patient does not have the final word in the process of interpreting research findings. “The meaning of a literary work is neither what the author meant while creating the text, nor what – in the author’s opinion – it means after it has been completed but rather what the author managed to convey in his/her work” (Culler, 2002, p. 81). In the narrative method the researcher merely defines the scope, within which it is the subject who decides what he/she is going to deal with and talk about. There are no questions asked or comments made that would modify his/her choice of specific facts or meanings. Auto-narration is not, however, tantamount to objective, or even subjective truth. There is always an element of auto-creation. The meaning of this element may be significant [as Salvador Dali said: “Around Dali everything is true, except for me” (Dali, 2013)] or marginal.

Initially, when we embarked on the study, we found it interesting to hear how the child and the parent remembered/recalled the upbringing process, as they were not given any specific recommendation on which aspect or element to focus on. We wondered: Will their accounts overlap, and if so, in what aspects? To what degree will they overlap? In time, this question took on aesthetic overtones – to what extent was the upbringing process a shared experience, a shared world for both subjects? Behind this question there is a fundamental conviction that presence/being present and interaction are crucial in the upbringing process and that the world created by the characters of the narration is a measure of the level of their mutual presence and interaction and their mutual closeness. Thus, if the worlds presented in the narrations overlap significantly, they could not have come into existence separately: they must have been agreed upon.

METHOD

Procedure for Selecting Subjects

The analysis was conducted in 2013 and involved adult children and one of their parents. The adult children were asked to make a 10-20-minute speech: “How were you raised?” The parents were asked: “How did you raise your

child?” If a child was not an only child, their parent was informed which child he/she was to be questioned about. The interviews were conducted separately so that the parents and children could not hear one another’s answers. The interviewer merely recorded their monologues; he/she could not ask any follow-up questions or give any additional guidelines about the content of the speech, as it was assumed that any additional questions might change the direction or scope of the narration.

One criterion adopted for selecting adult children was that only childless people could participate in the study, as it was believed that the very fact of raising/having raised your own child might modify your narration about being raised. It is because being a parent is connected with creating your own narration about raising somebody and it is negotiated with your partner. The other criterion was that a child had to be an adult, as our aim was to obtain a narration on upbringing as a complete process. Finally, it was parents who decided which of them was to talk about their child’s upbringing. 52 people took part in the study. Among 26 parents were 25 mothers and 1 father, aged between 40 and 69. Among adult children were 20 women and 6 men; the minimum age was 18 and the maximum was 26. The participants were not asked about detailed socio-demographic data as we did not intend to use this information in the analysis.

Procedure for Analyzing the Narration

As literature is derivative of language, for the interpretation of narrations theory of applicable literature devices can be used (Okopień-Sławińska, 1987; Culler, 2002; Balcerzan, 1987; Sawicki, 1987). Applying rules borrowed from the theory of literature allowed for the isolation of three basic stages in the analysis of the narrations (the consecutive stages of the procedure are discussed more extensively in: Kuncewicz, Sokołowska, & Sobkowicz, 2015). The first stage was to look for a “hidden story”, based on the principles of a story within a story, which organizes a narration in a multistage way and arranges independent compositional units in hierarchical order, with each unit confined in the unit one step higher (Sławiński, 2008, p. 255). At the technical level, this process (search) meant recognizing communications which were narratively distinguishable. The next step was to define the layers of this distinctness. These are:

- thematized and implied information²,
- free-flowing and deliberate style of individual language³,

² Thematized information is determined by the meaning of words and sentences while implied information is defined by the rules of speech.

as well as:

– type of narrator and his/her changes; time and ways of defining it, place (real/fictional), events.

The hidden story comprises the following elements:

– implied information; thematized information but only those items which are at a higher level of literary communication (Okopień-Sławińska, 1987),

– information related in free-flowing language (Klemensiewicz, 1987),

– elements in which the narrator's distance⁴ is minimal, and those that can be attributed to the addresser (Jasińska, 1987; Markiewicz, 1984),

– thematized information defined in time, real, was rejected (as those constituting visible/overt narration), so only that thematized information was taken into account which was not defined or which was superficially defined (i.e., which the narrators unsuccessfully attempted to give a real character; cf. Bartoszyński, 1987; Brodzka, 1987; Weintraub, 1987).

All these pieces of information correct one another and are mutually corrective through logic and coherence at the thematic and language levels. Only by selecting elements in the manner outlined above is it possible to reconstruct the hidden narration, which is the final stage of this part of the analysis. The next part is to compare the worlds presented (human activity, attributed roles, processes, stages, experiences, times and places) in the hidden narrations and try to answer the question of whether they are the same and alike. Theoretically they should be, as the upbringing process entails presence of the characters in the same place and at the same time as well as interaction between them.

When comparing and categorizing the worlds presented, we concentrated first of all on the hidden ones (the parent's and the child's). We also considered it noteworthy to compare the visible and hidden worlds and the resultant cohesion or lack of it between these worlds, within and between the narrations. An indication of this cohesion is an agreement between the high-level implied or thematized information, and the low-level thematized information. Thus, this agreement or lack of it might refer to four areas: two intra-narrative/intra-textual ones (between the high-level implied or thematized information and the low-level thematized information within each narration) and two areas between the

³ Unstylized/free-flowing style derives from individual traits of a speaker who does not consciously evaluate his/her own communication while deliberate style stems from the speaker's individual traits and his/her conscious effort to produce – while speaking – an intended and desired mental reaction in the listener-recipient.

⁴ Defining the narrator's distance and the author of a communication is based on the type of narrator and the level of communication (more in: Kuncewicz, Sokołowska, & Sobkowicz, 2015).

narrations/inter-textual ones (between the high-level implied and thematized information in both narrations and the low-level thematized information in both narrations).

RESULTS

Comparing monologue pairs ($n = 26$) allows us to isolate four groups: the world presented the same and alike ($n = 5$), the world the same but not alike ($n = 5$), the world not the same but alike ($n = 9$), the world not the same and not alike ($n = 7$). The criteria for classifying into particular groups and their descriptions are presented below.

The World the Same and Alike

People describing the upbringing process defined as “the world the same and alike” see the same, although from different perspectives. The formal analysis of the narration indicates that:

- main characters are present in both narrations, attributed roles are the same in both narrations, both narrators adopt two perspectives,
- human activity, processes, states, experiences, times and places described in both narrations correspond,
- the visible world is realistic, it is compatible with the hidden one (there is an agreement between the high-level implied or thematized information and the low-level thematized information, within one narration as well as between the narrations),
- narrators use the same language code.

The analysis of the worlds presented in the narrations shows: shared activity and experiences which build up closeness and mutual trust, characters with clearly defined roles – the parent is the one who provides support and instruction and the child is the recipient. What the child receives from his/her parent helps him/her to prepare for adult life. The following statements made by a son and his mother ideally complement each other; the son says: *mother never ignored things and she tried to give me the best of everything* – and the mother says: *I always tried to support and help him, they can depend on us for help, that we will try to support them and provide them with the best of everything*.

The similarly described asymmetry of their relationship must be rooted in the same perception of the world. The stories told indicate both presence and interac-

tion – thanks to these factors the worlds overlap to a considerable extent and have a considerable shared part. The narrators must have had time and place, as well as shared mental space to establish and maintain a give-and-take relationship. They both have the ability to view and present the world not only from their own but also from the other character's perspective. In other words, they must have been in the same world and, what is more, in interaction which would make the world be alike. For example, the main perspective for the narrators was the question of daily duties, in which children were drilled and which they accepted as an obvious element of the upbringing process. Therefore, the son concludes and states explicitly: *upbringing meant duties*, and he is echoed by his mother, who describes her actions in the same manner: *I assigned each of them these duties*.

The World the Same but Not Alike

This group comprises pairs of narrations in which the upbringing process is described from the perspective of travelling down the same path by both the parent and child while growing and maturing). The formal analysis of the narrations shows that:

- main characters are present in both narrations; attributed roles are characterized by uncertainty and lack of definite character,
- narrators are in agreement on at least one element of the worlds presented but not on all of them: human activity, processes, states, experiences, times and places (e.g., they have the same opinion about characters but not about their experiences or activities),
- the visible world is not compatible with the hidden one (there is an agreement exclusively between the low-level thematized information between the narrations, in the three remaining areas there is no agreement),
- language codes are different.

If we compare the worlds presented, we easily notice that they are characterized by uncertainty, which is shared by both narrators, there is no guide (unlike in the narrations in the group the “world the same and alike”). For example, the mother emphasizes the fact of her being immature and her desire and need to attain maturity together with bringing up her own child *it helps when you grow up with your child, you change*. On the other hand, the child treats upbringing as a process of mutual adjustment between two partners, each other's equals: *in our family a lot of serious conversations are made in a rather frivolous or light-hearted atmosphere . . . as a joke, inexplicitly*.

This group also comprises relationships in which roles are reversed, as their complementary nature is superficial (the role of the “guide” is performed by the child, which, however, goes beyond his/her capabilities). The narration is marked by uncertainty and a feeling of being lost. What is typical of these narrations is that places are the same but times are different, and the world looks different from the two different perspectives. The parent and child follow the same path, but not at the same time. They meet only occasionally for a very short time and perceive the world differently. The parent and child basically miss each other on the way, and when they do meet while performing their proper roles, it is too short a time to discuss and agree on any substantive issues. A mother recalls that her daughter has always been mature and in control, taking care of people around her: *I am satisfied that I brought her up so well. She has always been of great help and even today when she drops in, she is concerned for everybody . . . she inquires about everybody, not only family but about other people as well. She remembers about everybody. And she thinks in such a mature way. I can seek her advice on everything e.g. which school to choose for her younger brothers and sisters, and she always comes up with some sensible ideas*⁵. As for her daughter, she takes on the role of guardian/almost-mother at home, yet she observes that this responsibility stops her parents from perceiving her as their child. She recalls her craving for affection that she even had to ask for one kiss: *. . . one night I was reading a book and mum came and started talking about something, . . . I was about to fall asleep when I noticed her give my little sister a kiss so I asked, What about me? And she: Okay, OK if that's what you want . . . Then I said: If you do it grudgingly, I don't want it. She: It's not that I do it grudgingly. I kiss Zuzia because she is a child. When you were her age, I also kissed you good night So I went into a sulk, as I thought to myself that I was also her child and yet I had to asked to be kissed.*

The World Not the Same but Alike

This group includes narrations where there is observable collusion between the child and parent to omit or even hide certain subjects. The formal analysis of the narration indicates that:

⁵ The subjects' monologues were transcribed in such a way as to faithfully reflect the character, form, and dynamics of their communications. Grammatical correctness was secondary to the accuracy of the record.

– main characters are present in both narrations (as in the groups the world the same and alike and the world the same but not alike),

– the visible and hidden worlds are different in both narrations but the narrators hold the same negative opinion of the hidden world and they agree that what is perceived as negative should not be revealed (there is an agreement exclusively between the high-level implied or thematized information between the narrations, in the three remaining areas there is no agreement),

– language code is stereotypical and thematized, it does not catch attention. It is just to fill space. It may be also another form of expression without anything distinctly different – e.g., in one tone, a line without amplitude (e.g., chaos).

The narrations present different imagined worlds but the hidden worlds are alike. The connivance to conceal certain things stems from the characters' negative opinion of those things and from the conviction that they must be kept secret. Thus, not much can be inferred from the monologues. We can only guess that this negative opinion is related to a sense of shame, guilt and suffering. For example, the daughter's opinion about the way she was brought up does not correspond with her mother's opinion whatsoever. The daughter finds the upbringing process to be lacking in initiative, unimaginative and especially uncontrolled (*they were not very involved in my upbringing, they let things take their course, things were happening, they somehow reacted to them . . . it didn't help much anyway*). Her mother stresses that not only did she prepare her upbringing scheme but she also meticulously carried it out (*I attached great importance to instructing her on how to deal with other children, how to behave properly, basically "to be a good child" I suppose I did force her to do things but she learnt very quickly. Yes, I might have imposed things on her: she was talked to, taught things*). The greatest discrepancy concerns the child's feelings and thoughts. The daughter is convinced that what she felt and thought as a child did not really matter to her parents (*they just catered for my physical needs, dad would often say "don't speak unasked" or "do as I say, not as I do", after all, a child feels something, thinks . . . then goes into the world carrying such a burden on her back, instead of wings*). The mother admits that she did not know what her child's feelings or thoughts were. However, she does not make any comments on this negligence – it seems that for her it is a sphere of her daughter's life that can be ignored, a matter of secondary importance (*I didn't notice that she was unhappy about it. It wasn't obvious that she didn't like it. Not at all. We would tell her to do something and she did it. So if she didn't mind doing one thing, it was only natural to go further and make her do another thing, drill her, instruct her. "You are to be there," we would say. "Stay at home, don't go out" – and she did, she*

stayed at home). The above problem might have become a question of crucial importance but apparently it was never addressed in this upbringing process. Each participant is left with her own separate narration.

The World Not the Same and Not Alike

The worlds presented are parallel to each other; the inhabiting characters could not meet but merely knew of each other's existence. The formal analysis of the text shows that:

- the narration includes the perspective of only one of the characters (sometimes the other is not present at all, he/she is just “a figure”, an episode, with no significant influence on the events presented in the narration),
- the hidden world is not compatible with the visible one (lack of agreement refers to the high-level implied or thematized information and the low-level thematized information, both within one narration and between the narrations),
- none of the aspects of the worlds presented correspond: processes, states, experiences, times, or places; and if the main characters are present – human activity or attributed roles do not correspond, either,
- the worlds presented in both narrations are realistic, but they are not possible ones,
- the language codes used by the narrators are different.

The upbringing process went separately for the person who was raised and the one who did the raising. The child was not present in the world of the parent, and vice versa. The former functioned without the latter. Had you not actually known which monologues constituted one pair, it would have been extremely difficult to put them into pairs. These narrations hardly ever converge, which points to an obvious lack of a relationship between the parent and child. In the following extract, the interviewee (a child) comes up with a long list of examples to prove that people do not support each other or show sympathy to each other (*I remember . . . sitting alone . . . I felt lonely, I recollect doing harm to myself, I remember being bullied by everybody in my class and . . . ever since I have had a complex, . . . basically, I have a negative attitude towards people; I feel people have a negative attitude towards me. From how they behave and what they say I gather they are against me*). Her mother produces a similarly long list of complaints about how exhausted she was having to continually stay with the child, indulging her whims, and giving in to her demands (*she wanted her mother to be at her beck or call all day long. She demanded that I stop whatever I was doing*

and tend only to her, she was always ordering people around, she was used to getting her own way, I feel useless as a mother).

DISCUSSION

The upbringing process – to what extent is it a world shared by the child and the parent? The worlds- the same and alike? Compiling these two vectors provided 4 possible answers. Behind each are concrete emotions, interactions.

The world the same and alike, the world is shared – this means clearly defined and adequate rules, fixed borders, a sense of clarity and security, mutual support, occasional conflicts of “interests”, understanding of each other’s imperfections which comes with time, gratitude, appreciation. Presence/being present and responsiveness is there, not only in what is thematized, visible but also in the similarity of codes and experiences. Attaining this similarity would be impossible without presence and interaction (Dryll, 2013). The memories are accompanied by extremely positive emotional signs. All these factors allow us to conclude that the upbringing process in this group was “good enough” (we use this term in a similar way as it is used by Winnicott (1953).

We could examine parent-child relationship in this group adopting methods which would allow for the analysis of some specific aspects of the relationship (communication, ways of expressing emotions and establishing borders) and then these very aspects might prove to be not “good enough”. And it also might be the case that, by pure coincidence, for the families (in this group) that took part in the analysis these particular aspects of their relationship might also be assessed as “good”. On the other hand, it is possible that presence/being present and interaction provided such an important positive context that some unacceptable aspects of the upbringing process become practically negligible and not worthy of investing them with any meaning (Speera, 2005; Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

The world the same but not alike – growing and maturing together; a metaphor for travelling along the same path – this is what seems to characterize this type of narration. Partnership, a humanistic approach to upbringing. However, if a closer look is taken, this initial appraisal does not appear so obvious. Uncertainty, which is characteristic of this group of narrations, casts doubt on the validity of this positive opinion, which is in agreement with Dryll’s theses (2001), according to which a measure of directiveness/control over a child is necessary (Dryll, 1989, p. 200) and in opposition to Pisula’s stand (2003), which treats the mother as a partner in her interaction with a child, assuming that non-

-directiveness and responsiveness are most conducive to the upbringing process. Although the narrations seem to concern the same things, they are done in isolation, it is as if there were no encounters within the same world, and if there are any, they are only occasional. The same place gives a false impression of being together. This group of narrations seems to be the most difficult one, which might be related on the one hand, to the participants' conviction that their parent-child relationship is great and, on the other hand, to experiencing a vague sense of missing out on something important, which might be ignored or dismissed as groundless. In this narration there is no qualitative distinction between the growing-up processes of parents and children, which – while giving a sense of similarity and mutual understanding – does not provide support, as the parent is not “stronger” than the child. The emotional and cognitive factors of the characters may be in conflict. The narrations give the illusion of their being in the world which is the same and alike.

It seems plausible that by analyzing specific aspects of the upbringing process for these narration pairs we could come to the conclusion that it is “good enough”. However, viewing the upbringing process in a wider perspective makes this conclusion somewhat questionable – after all, the narrators experience loneliness, uncertainty, and a feeling of being lost.

It should be noted that the parent-child relationship defined as “growing /maturing together” or “travelling down the same path” might also refer to the type of relationship in which “together” involves concurrent qualitative distinction of this maturing process. In such a relationship the child grows to maturity, while the parent matures (in their relation with the child) to their role as a parent who can successfully address their child's specific needs which change, as the child grows older, and the resulting tasks which inevitably change, too. Such narrations about growing/maturing together could be classified as belonging to the group “the world the same and alike” on account of the fact that parents who have successfully grown into their parental role are perfectly capable of providing adequate support to the children: their understanding of their children's needs is the result of becoming fully mature people rather than being at the same stage of growing up. In “the world the same and not alike” narrations the term “growing/maturing together” means a qualitative similarity, and sometimes serves to hide the vague nature of the roles.

The world not the same but alike. On the surface this narration is a far cry from the “good enough” relationship. The collusion between the parent and child to hide some aspects implies that the narration contains elements which are socially unacceptable, perceived as negative (also by the narrators), probably re-

lated to a sense of shame, humiliation, helplessness, guilt. The price of encounter in this relationship might be high but it does take place, and responsiveness is also there. Although the context of the encounter is emotionally disagreeable, and although different defensive mechanisms are used, this relationship still seems healthier than that in Group 2. The very fact that there is a relationship and interaction holds a promise for the future that this might evolve into something positive.

Fragmentary analysis of the upbringing process in this group of narrations might reveal behaviours or relationships regarded as dysfunctional or even pathological. However, this relationship seems to indicate that a sense of belonging attachment, and closeness is there. Similar reflections upon the difficulty (complex nature) of assessing family relationships have appeared in the literature (see Kościelska, 2011).

The world not the same and not alike, the worlds presented are different, as if parallel. Here, no encounter has taken place, not even a superficial one. If we assume that the most important aspect of the upbringing process is presence/being present and interaction, here there was neither of these elements.

Fragmentary analysis of relationships in this group of narrations would not probably reveal behaviours commonly considered pathological (even such undesirable behaviours could not take place if there was no relationship established, however difficult and costly it might be). It would, however, indicate lack of closeness, loneliness, and overly tight borders.

Although for obvious reasons the metaphor of “worlds” (the same and alike; the same but not alike; not the same but alike; not the same and not alike) to define and classify parent-child relationships (their being together) is – to a certain degree – an oversimplification, it seems to meet the criteria of simplicity and usefulness. It appears to be a “friendly” description of relationships for practitioners and their patients, and also a useful tool for theoreticians. The study was short and straightforward, unlike the analysis. Yet, the rich abundance of relevant information obtained in the process was well worth the effort. The “worlds” metaphor might also come in handy when giving information to patients.

Undoubtedly, the analyses presented here do not involve the details of parent-child relationships. However, this is not a disadvantage, as it prevents us from getting lost in a tangle of detailed data while at the same time allowing us to grasp what is the most essential. At the same time, the results of the analysis are rather difficult to distort (thematized information is not the most important), as the subjects are not very skillful at carrying on their narrations in a conscious

way. Controlling such monologues effectively would require many corrections, even in the case of experienced writers (Szumilak, 2008).

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⁶ To comply with the editor's requirements, the footnotes and references have been cut down to a considerable extent. The full version is available from the authors of the article.

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