

Childrearing experiences of mothers with visual impairment

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The state of motherhood

(Stern, 1995)

- Subjective approach:
 - As a psychological stimulus it creates a new unity of action, dreams, worries and desires
- Cultural conditions:
 - High prestige of motherhood (how the mum can cope with the role)



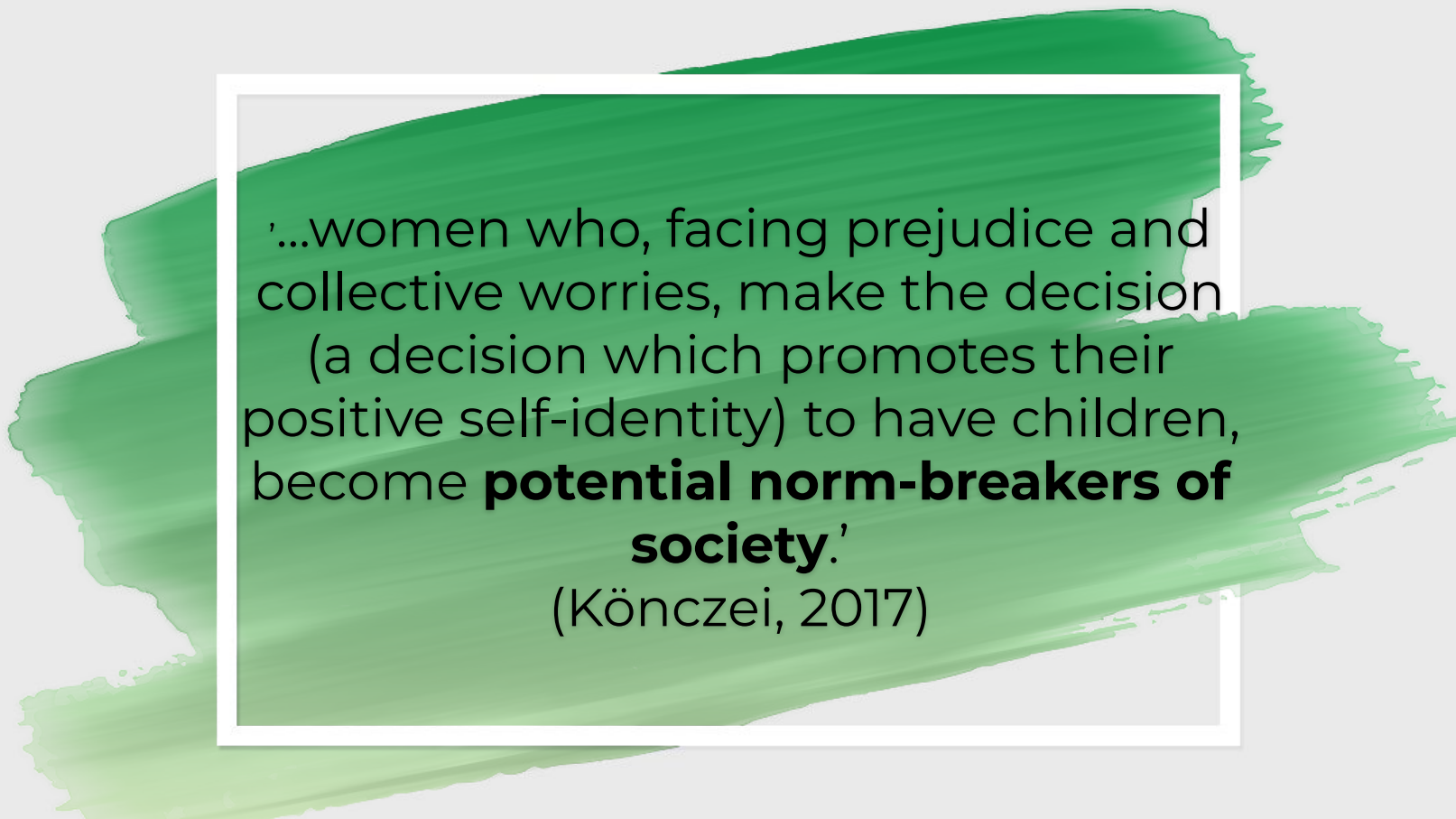
Femininity and disability

- Public opinion:
 - Lack the traditionally accepted main attributes of femininity
 - Do not fit norms and beauty-expectations in their physical appearance
 - **Asexual unfeminine body** (Hernádi, 2014)



Motherhood and disability

- On the verge of feminism and disability studies (Könczei, 2017)
 - Women becoming mothers: able, active, autonomous, assertive, independent
 - What makes a mother?
 - Exaggeration of physical abilities
- Society denies the chance of becoming mothers
- Socially constructed reproductive role, oppression



'...women who, facing prejudice and collective worries, make the decision (a decision which promotes their positive self-identity) to have children, become **potential norm-breakers of society.**'

(Könczei, 2017)

Society vs. individual

Society:

Woman with a
disability



Parent

Mother with a disability:

Mother, woman



Woman with a
disability

- Subjective experience vs. Social construct



Motivation

- Motivations of having children among women with disabilities:
- Compensation
- Denied option
- Planned choice

(Lappeteläinen, et al., 2016)

Research questions



1. What are the motivations of having children for mothers with visual impairment?

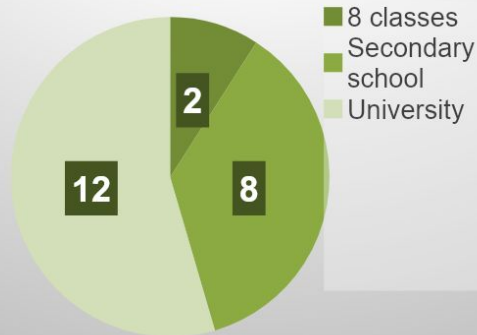
2. Do social stereotypes influence visually impaired mothers' understanding of motherhood?

Sample

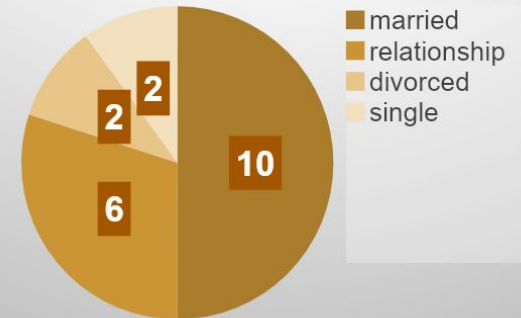


- 10 VI and 10 sighted
- Matched pattern
- Ages 21-40
- Congenital VI (blindness included)
- Other chronic illness: not present

Education



Marital status



Method



Semi-structured interview

- Face-to-face/telephone (40-60 minutes)

Thematic content analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

- Inductive and deductive method
- Repeated topics and phenomena

Inherited diseases

Motherhood

Motivation

fear,
difficulties

Respondent's parents

Parental principles

Delivery

Changes

Support



RESULTS

Motherhood

'What does motherhood mean to you?'

Young women with VI	Sighted women
Care Responsibility Provision of a safe environment (‘shelter’, ‘home from house’) Part of feminine identity (mother from woman)	
Mother as first trustee	Tight bonds
Mother as an example	Time
Fear from losing mother	Unconditional love

Thinking of own mother

child-mother relationship

Parenting principles

'What parenting principles is she planning to follow?'

Women with VI	Sighted women
Consistency Mutual trust, cooperation Support in studies	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect from any danger• Give life-knowledge• Meaningful time together	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patience• Limitations, rules• Loving, open• Easy-going, but conscious• Strict• Precise



Worries, difficulties

'As a mother what do you think you will fear most?'

Women with VI	Sighted women
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diseases, (e.g. fever, rashes)• ○ Fear from being abandoned (by sighted partner)• 'To provide enough visual stimuli for my child'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Returning to work• Financial status – give everything to the child• Traffic accidents• Kidnap



Narrative categorical content analysis

- NarrCat (Ehmann, et al., 2014):
- Stories → principles of composition → inner states which can be described with psychological categories
- Psycho-thematic/narrative categorical modules:
 - **Agent** module – activity/passivity submodules – how much influence does respondent have on her surroundings
 - **Emotion** module – valence submodule –positive and negative emotions
 - **Social** references – 'I' vs. 'we'
- Text: 10-10 interviews - narratives
- Relative frequency (number of words in the submodule / total number of words)

Narratives:

- Childhood separation
- Positive memories with parents in childhood

	Agency, activity	Agency, passivity	Social reference E/1	Social reference T/1	All emotions	Positive emotions	Negative emotions
Sighted women	0,007	0,012	0,089	0,000	0,023	0,023	0,000
Women with VI	0,017	0,007	0,059	0,009	0,006	0,005	0,001

Discussion



Pilot study:

- Similar parental principles
- Stigmatisation, influence of stereotypes → motherhood, parental roles

Future plans:

- Sighted and VI pregnant women and mothers
- Identification of social references in the interviews by interaction assessments



References

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Thank you for your attention.



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Motherhood

Foucault's concept of motherhood:

- One of the most sensitive and most essential elements of the stereotypical construct of femininity
- Women are just their bodies, determined by biology (Braidotti, 2011)
- Self-definition, power

Third wave feminism:

- 'Feminine identity is found in motherhood' (Széplaky, 2011, in Hernádi, 2014)



Healthcare experiences

- Lack of empathy
- Questioning parental competences
- Lack of emotional support, ignorance of patient's needs (Csattos, Grósz és Szécsényi, 2011; Mazurkiewitz et al., 2018)
- Communication difficulties:
- Ignorance of pregnant woman, communication with family members (Kálmán, 2010; Mazurkiewitz et.al., 2018)
- Inaccessibility of official documents (Kálmán, 2010; Csattos és mtsai, 2011; Mazurkiewitz et.al., 2018)

'What do you think about having children?'

Having children

Women with VI	Sighted women
First, provision of financial assets	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'I am not yet mature enough'• Planning• Part of feminine identity, this is how a woman can 'become a whole'• 'If I am able to give birth to a child, then I may have a second one, not to leave the first child alone'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great responsibility• Under the age of 30• Instinct• Have someone I can always count on• 'This is how I have always imagined my life'• Good relation with mother is a good example• See the child grow up• A good friend's baby (made her want a baby, too)• child is a gift from God• Assets for the future• Big family

Motivation

What are your motivations of having a child?

Women with VI	Sighted women
First, Having all necessary financial assets	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maturity• Planning• Part of feminine identity, this is how a woman can become 'a whole'• Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Great responsibility• Under the age of 30• Instinct• Need of safety• To see the child grow up• Child is a gift from God• Assets for the future• Big family