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"Nieporozumienia z dorastającymi dziećmi w rodzinie. Uwarunkowania i wspomaganie", Ewa Gurba, Kraków 2013 : [recenzja]

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**Review of the publication:
E. Gurba, "Nieporozumienia z dorastającymi
dziećmi w rodzinie. Uwarunkowania
i wspomaganie." [Misunderstandings with
Adolescent Children in the Family.
Determinants and Support]**

Youth are heated by nature, as drunken men are by wine.

(Aristotle)

The period of adolescence is a difficult and complex time in a young person's development. It is also a stage in the recreation of relations with the immediate environment. Referred to in Latin as *adolescere*, which means "growing", it constitutes a bridge between childhood and adulthood. As with any transition period, it entails numerous changes, as a result of which teenagers structure their identity and independence. This change in young people's way of functioning affects not only them, but also their relations with their closest relatives. The parents, who until then, have been perceived as the fundamental source of knowledge, lose their authority. Teenagers begin to think that mum and dad are ordinary people who make mistakes just like the majority of society. The parents, so far unquestioningly imitated and accepted, begin to be subject to heavy criticism coming from their own children. However, it is not only the closest relatives who are subject to harsh and ruthless judgement, but the entire reality that adolescents live in. This way of perceiving the environment triggers numerous conflicts and tensions, emerging in social interactions, mainly with the parents. This raises a few questions: does the period of adolescence have to be accompanied by disorders referring to

the quality of interpersonal relations with important people? Do young people who go through the identity crisis have to destroy “the old” and build “the new world”? The publication under review will not provide us with any definite answers to these questions. However, becoming acquainted with its contents may prompt a change in the perception of adolescents, understanding their behaviours and modification of mutual relations.

The monograph presented explores the problem of relations between adolescents and their parents extensively and in detail. Five chapters are devoted to the characterization of the misunderstandings between the parents and teenagers from the perspective of both parties. The last chapter, which appears to deserve the greatest attention, contains a description of the model of intervention actions and an analysis of the effectiveness of the stimulation of young people’s cognitive skills. The stimulation actions not only aimed at the adolescents’ cognitive development, but first and foremost at reducing the level of adolescent rebellion, and thereby the level of conflict between the teenagers and their parents. The classes supporting young people in solving social and everyday problems were conducted during ten meetings. Each lasted 45 minutes and was undertaken in groups of 6–8 persons. Moreover, the groups were diversified in terms of the training provided. The first was directed mainly towards solving logical problems, the second concentrated on the analysis of social problems, and the third comprised both forms of training described above. Furthermore, a control group was singled out – no stimulation actions were conducted within this group. Although the results of the research did not prove as spectacular as assumed, they can still serve as a basis for deeper reflection. On one hand, major modification of the mental structures of students taking part in the training was not achieved. On the other hand, it was proved that the number of conflicts (especially with the mother) in the groups with stimulation dropped significantly, which was not observed in the control group. The results obtained confirm the thesis that conducting classes stimulating the cognitive processes of the adolescents is justified and reasonable. In addition, they may become an inspiration for teachers working with young

people to formulate their own original educational programmes supporting the formal-operational reasoning.

The publication presented is worth reading for another reason as well. It appears to deny numerous myths concerning the process of adolescence. For instance, the author reveals that there is no explicit correlation between the growth in the number of hormones in adolescence and the escalation of conflicts with parents. She also emphasizes that the scientific and popular literature used to disseminate information about the period of adolescence presents it from the perspective of "storm and stress". The media contributed to this picture by making numerous programmes popularizing the image of rebellious youth. Such information is easily assimilated by recipients, including parents and teachers, which may affect their expectations concerning the approaching stage of adolescence and their children's activity. As a result, adults tend to expect that young people during adolescence will begin to cause numerous problems of an educational nature, which may lead to them provoking this kind of behaviour.

Undoubtedly, the period of puberty is a difficult time both for adolescents and their closest relatives. However, it cannot be perceived from the angle of one major reason, which underlies young people's rebellious behaviours. Ewa Gurba in her monograph presents their diversity and mutual connections. Each chapter provides solid theoretical knowledge, but also presents the results of the author's own research. The theoretical part was based on the experiences of Polish and foreign authors on the subject of the relations between the parents and their adolescent children. They are mainly titles in English correlated with the reports of Polish researchers of the subject. The author's own research was carried out on a population of 664 adolescents and 399 parents, which may form the basis for drawing certain, though tentative, conclusions. The subsequent chapters of the book contain information within the area of the change in the mutual perceptions and expectations connected with the period of adolescence both among teenagers and their parents: we find out the most frequent spheres of misunderstandings and their dynamics, and to what extent biological growing and the characteristics of

temperament may disturb relations with the environment. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the sources of misunderstandings with parents may be found in the development of young people's cognitive processes, especially formal-operational thinking, and also in building one's own identity, which appears to be the fundamental task in the period of adolescence. In one of the chapters, the author makes a particularly interesting attempt to answer the question: can we call the conflict between the parents and their adolescent children the conflict of generations?

In her monograph, Ewa Gurba draws attention not only to the changes that adolescents undergo, which certainly is the leitmotif of the book, but also presents the transformations which affect the parents throughout this period. She particularly emphasizes the difficulties connected with the development of one's own professional career, achieving plans, and also making first life assessments. During the period when children enter the first phase of adolescence, their parents are most often affected by "the experience of the turning point". Therefore, the period of adolescence coincides with a clash of two crises: identity crisis among young people and their parents' "mid-life" crisis.

The book is written in academic language, contains psychological terminology, which is skilfully explained by the author. Valuable information can be found here both by parents, whom the publication may help to understand at least some aspects of the rebellious behaviour that their children exhibit, and the teachers who work with adolescents on an everyday basis. We believe that the kinds and the extent of the escalation of conflicts with parents may prove of interest to adolescents themselves, as well as the students of teacher training programmes. The publication teaches sensitivity, empathy towards the young generation, refreshes and reminds us of the times of building our own identity, attempts to explain and encourages us to understand certain behaviour. Thus, it is worth reading in order to understand that the tensions and conflicts in children-parents relations which accompany the period of adolescence do not have to destroy the bonds between the two groups, but can serve as a modifier and stimulator for the development of both teenagers and adults.

Reviewed publication:

Ewa Gurba "Nieporozumienia z dorastającymi dziećmi w rodzinie. Uwarunkowania i wspomaganie" [Misunderstandings with Adolescent Children in the Family. Determinants and Support]

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