

Located in the field of *critical health studies*, this project aims to explore the **narrative professional identities of Polish child psychiatrists**. In agreement with the idea that *just like a lens, the profession is where social processes converge* (Sarapata, 1965), its main hypothesis is that of the ***experience of transformation in the professional identity of the contemporary psychiatrist***. Health definitions may reflect the favoured system of values, define the relationship between the normal and dysfunctional or suggest a preferred mode of interplay between individuals, groups, institutions or the system in general. As the concept of health mirrors a number of its defining culture's qualities, so the status of medical professions may offer insight into class mobility, stereotypes, biases, fantasies or narratives relevant at a given time. Both as a discipline and part of medical culture, psychiatry is said to be facing a complex crisis. Research shows that psychiatry is the most stigmatized medical specialty, which has complex consequences for clinicians: psychiatrists' experience significant anticipatory and self-stigma. The majority of media announcements on the broadly stated "crisis of psychiatry" tackle the issue of insufficient funding, lack of infrastructure & tremendous staff shortages. Indeed, medical students seem to have no interest in entering this field. Locally and internationally, it stands as one of the cornerstones of the mental health care crisis. This phenomenon escalated dramatically in the Polish public sector of child & adolescent psychiatry. Since the year 2016, it has emerged as one of the most eagerly explored topics in the Polish media. Leaving aside the crisis' factual, tangible aspects, the results of our preliminary research point out the possible impact of different facets. These are largely connected to the distinctiveness of psychiatry as a medical discipline & to the sociocultural context. In their media contributions of recent years, Polish psychiatrists uncovered much more than already well-known issues of the public mental health care system. Analyzed discourses were rich in narratives on in-group intergenerational conflicts, ethical challenges or value system dilemmas. If one considers these motifs as emerging from a particular discourse, a common denominator becomes visible: a narrative on the experience of transformations within contemporary psychiatrists' professional identities. Although dominant remarks within the public debate loop around finances, the doctors repeatedly reiterated that *it is not a question of money*. Believing firmly, that this voice has to be heard, we want to make room for its elaboration and an in-depth analysis. For this purpose, a qualitative multidisciplinary study drawing on the contributions from critical cultural studies, narrative psychology, organizational anthropology and sociology of medicine is being proposed. This study has two parts (1) ***preliminary participatory observation*** performed in Polish hospitals, aiming to provide extensive ethnographic description of the everyday institutional context & (2) ***narrative inquiry***, based on LIS-style interviews (McAdams, 2007) conducted with people connected professionally to Polish child psychiatry, aiming to explore professional narrative identities. Calls for the *humanization of medicine*, which usually concern the realm of practices and relations, are largely derived from critical evaluations of the medical system's mechanisms & performance. Numerous studies on psychiatry's crisis, including Polish pediatric psychiatry, omit the less evident yet vital aspects. However, the crisis in psychiatry cannot be solely attributed to structural challenges. Neoliberalism and market forces in healthcare, alongside societal stereotypes and stigmatization of mental disorders, contribute to diminishing interest in psychiatry among medical students. Preliminary research findings reveal that beyond structural factors, the crisis of psychiatry, and the lack of interest in entering the field in particular, is largely determined by matters that can be referred to – in gross simplification – as symbolic ones. Moreover, they indicate a shift in discursive practices used in media depictions of the profession, particularly the ones highlighting the diverse experiences and perspectives of psychiatrists, who are no longer portrayed solely as detached observers, but rather as active agents and main protagonists of their own stories. Yet these are backed up with plethora of rhetorical strategies, such as the use of „strength”, „weakness”, „military”, „maladic” and „resurrection” metaphors, as well as presuppositions of doctors' negative characteristics, mainly ones referring to alleged conflicting systems of values.

This project seeks to expose the fundamental complexities of mental health professionals' experiences. **Such an empowering gesture towards humanizing the doctors' fits, in our opinion, into that broad postulate of the humanization of medicine.** By delving into the narratives of child psychiatrists, we aim to shed light on the interplay between cultural dynamics and the professional identities of psychiatrists in Poland. Through qualitative methods we aim to explore their personal experiences & challenges. The study holds significant value to discipline development, given that *critical health studies* are still underrepresented within the field of Polish cultural studies. Notwithstanding its fundamental nature or the centrality of exploratory value, study's outcomes may be of a broad spectrum of use. Its findings may contribute to the development of actions aimed at transforming the current circumstances of medical doctors', starting within the academic medical training field, up to the institutional, structural support & health care initiatives. Finally, it is anticipated that the project may initiate further practice-oriented, local research and thus demonstrate anthropology's potential for involvement in "urgent" issues of current social relevance.