**Parenthood, Disability and Gender: On Motherhood of Children with Disabilities – Critical Disability Studies and a Gender Based Reading**

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This is a complex alignment in which the view taken of parents in disability is simply wrong. This view goes beyond the perceptions created by the negative social construct of disabilities. The modern state, under the cover of a market economy and a liberal dialogue, has washed its hands of the challenges presented to it by the children who live with disabilities. At the same time, the state’s systems effectively justify pushing people with disabilities off to the margins of society. Furthermore, the parents in disability are expected and even required to devote all their time to the care, advocacy and representation of their children. They are expected to do this without any support, without compensation and without having any way to make their voices heard. In a Canadian study that presented the narratives of parents in disability, one mother described the situation as follows:

*"The general population tells you – you're the parent, you're the advocate. You're the only one that will advocate for your child so you've got the guilt on your forehead so my God! If I don't do it…"*[[1]](#footnote-1)

This also creates a situation in which there is no social legitimacy for the voice of the parents. A situation in which there is no opportunity to hear them describe the personal costs and the sacrifices that they are forced to make; no opportunity to allow them to speak of the expertise, the abilities and the special knowledge that they have acquired through their compliance with the social, economic and legal expectations and demands that arise from the state’s privatization of the full support of their children throughout their lives. The public and legal establishments must recognize the special status of the parents in disability, in order to heal this systematic flaw and to give a voice to the above-described missing viewpoint. The critical approach is the foundation of my quest to have the rights and status of the parents in disability recognized. This approach seeks to challenge the presumptions, the traditional dichotomies, and the hierarchies that create parallel and interlocking fences. A broad and complete view of human rights, which requires a recognition of the rights of the parents in disability – will blur the binary divide between the public sphere and the private sphere; between autonomy and independence on the one hand and dependence and care on the other hand; between civil political rights and social economic rights; and between “human rights” and “collective interests”, respectively.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The basis of this approach is the idea of perceiving the individual “thickly” - through a broad, deep, wide and complex vision – as an individual and as a social creation, as a citizen and as a part of an interdependent human network.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Jay A. Goddard, Ron Lehr, Judith C. Lapadat, "*Parents of Children with Disabilities: Telling a Different Story"*, 34(4)Can. J. Couns. 273, 279 (2000). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Compare: Ziv, *supra,* n. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Compare: Gabison, *supra*, n. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)