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## Learning Resilience in Adult Education

<http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/PBE.2024.012>

### Abstract

The following article presents a pedagogical conceptualisation of resilience. In reference to adult education, this category will be analysed as a reflection grounded in an empirical study. Using the autobiographical method, I presented narrative interviews conducted with individuals under the care of the Daily Support Centre in Poland. Narrative biography has not only become a tool for learning about the stories of senior citizens but, for them, it was also a way of learning resilience, fulfilling an autotherapeutic function. In the article, I present the theoretical framework of the phenomenon in question and collate it to the functioning of elderly persons, thus demonstrating that the socio-emotional development in late old age is not only possible, but particularly desirable in the face of *uncertainty, loneliness and the mental requirements of the modern world* (Dominicè, 2007, pp. 28–29). The adopted autobiographical method is treated as one of the forms of support. Therefore, the Author does not refer in detail to the analyses of the conducted interviews, taking into account their extensiveness. I indicate only selected aspects without performing a complete research analysis of the presented narrations, referring mainly to the central analytical categories: risk factors and protective factors. The article also contains other suggestions for shaping resilience in adults. Finally, it was created based on research experience on humans; regenerative and learning abilities in late adulthood.

**Keywords:** resilience, adult education, risk factors, protective factors, narrative biography.

## Introduction

Cognitive psychology, interested in the human mind, draws attention to its plasticity in building and transforming information (Nęcka et al., 2006, pp. 22–23). What is more, it shows that the mind has become the subject of interest of many humanistic, social and biological disciplines. Finally, it proves that setting boundaries between these disciplines is not always possible and sometimes even unnecessary. Given the above, as a social researcher, I feel entitled to try to analyse the category of resilience, bearing in mind the human as viewed from a pedagogical perspective, connected with the perspective of psychology and anthropological sciences. If the mind is plastic and mouldable, changes in thinking and actions taken to achieve a resilient attitude can also be plastic (Joyce et al., 2018, p. 7).

The concept of resilience is derived from studies conducted at the turn of the 1960s and the 1970s when pioneering research on children of parents with mental illnesses was first conducted (Werner, 1994; 2000; Masten, 2003). Understanding the causes of these illnesses has set the foundation for the search of risk factors impacting the incidence of mental health disorders in children (Rutter, 1987).

Resilience encompasses the attempts to explain the phenomenon of positive adaptation, initially in children and adolescents exposed to various adversities and traumatic events (Masten, 2003; Borucka & Pisarska, 2012). It is defined as an individual's relatively good adaptation despite the experienced risks (Bond et al., 2003, pp. 1–11). It is also the ability to overcome the effects of negative life events (Ogińska-Bulik & Juczyński, 2008).

## Theoretical framework

The term *resilience* is derived from the Latin term *salire* – meaning to spring up, to arise, and *resilire* – meaning to spring back and return to the previous state (Junik, 2011). Initially used in physics, the term associated with a material's capacity to return to its original form after being distorted was adopted in wider circles. In social sciences, the term was coined thanks to E. Werner's pioneering research on the development of children and adolescents in disadvantaged living conditions (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1994).

In the social sciences, *resilience* is applied to good psychological and social functioning in difficult conditions. This term may also refer to adults who have been exposed to traumatic life experiences (Mancini & Bonamo, 2006). In view of the above, resilience means a certain kind of efficient functioning during difficult life periods, having age-appropriate skills, and implementing developmental tasks despite adversities. In a broader sense, resilience is a dynamic process which reflects relatively good adaptation despite the experienced threats or traumas. Finally, there is also resilience described as “bouncing off the bottom”, when individuals gain back their mental health and function relatively well after a “highly stressful event” (Borucka & Ostaszewski, 2008). Importantly, resilience is not synonymous with good mental health or strong social skills. This phenomenon encompasses exposure to a number of risk factors and relatively good mental health of an individual despite the effects of these factors, which is an aspect I will address later in this chapter. In one of his recent works, Michael Rutter (2000; 2006) emphasises the interactive nature of resilience. It is a concept which includes the exposure of an individual to several serious, disturbing factors and, at the same time, maintaining relatively good mental health despite these factors.

Meanwhile, the concept of the interactive nature of resilience developed by researchers assumes the co-presence of risk factors and protective factors, as mentioned above. In this case, the resultant is an interaction of specific features, competencies and external factors, including both protective and risk factors.

Moreover, another important point I would like to raise is the comment made by Michael Rutter, who writes that the occurrence of the factors is related with the so-called turning points, not with the factors themselves (Rutter, 2006). Thus, the very occurrence of risk processes and protective processes is closely related to key moments in life, the effects of which are more significant – the processes triggered by an event, not the factor itself. As it turns out, many traumatic events can constitute “educational opportunities”, as I would describe a task that needs to be completed, which entails an educational value – helps develop resilience potential in the context of *lifelong learning*.

Contemporary knowledge on development proves that in a cognitive functioning of man during his whole life we can talk about multi-directionality and plasticity of changes. (Trempała, 2014, p. 13). Helena Radlińska is

undoubtedly a precursor of Polish scientific andragogy (1947; 1961; 1964). At the turn of the 1960s and 1970s adult education understood by andragogy as educational work with adults in the 1980s takes the form of the idea of permanent learning, and after yet another decade there appears the concept of *Lifelong Learning* (Knowles et al., 2009). The center of gravity moves from teaching to learning. There also occurs a change of meaning of the notion of education, where there appears the role of life experience in the process of cognition, biographic learning of adults and new places where learning processes take place, e.g. organizations, institutions or social institutions (Malewski, 2010, pp. 19, 46–47). In these contents I find total justification of my assumptions referring to the article and research activities. These activities correspond both with the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow & Taylor, 2011), the theory of situational learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) or, finally, with the idea of self-education, referring to only Polish researches, such as Olga Czerniawska (2007) or Józef Pólturzycki (1974; 1989; 2000; 2002). As the strategy taken up by me is acquiring critical reflection, learning in social environment by interactions with others or self-education. And wanting to refer to the geographical context of my research I would like to mention the data of the National Office for Statistics from 2016 showing that educational activity, both formal and informal, among adults increased by 7.5% compared to 2016 (GUS, 2018, p. 14). And in 2022 there was an increase by another 10 per cent (GUS, 2022, p. 1). It is worth noticing that education of the elderly is more available timewise compared to the difficulties of the persons in production age focused on family and professional life (GUS, 2022, p. 4).

In turn, according to Boris Cyrulnik (2005), a psychiatrist, neurologist, and ethnologist, a remarkable expert in the field of resilience, who introduced the term *résilience* to the French language, this subject matter is inherently related to the so-called *valuable emotional niche*. In his understanding, it is based on the safe sense of belonging towards parents, who also experienced a strong emotional bond with their parents during their childhood (Cyrulnik, 2005, pp. 122–123).

Unfavourable development conditions, understood as risk factors, they pose a threat to healthy functioning, and they may cause mental disorders. The typical risk factors include prematurity, poverty, mental illnesses in parents, war, divorce, being placed under the care of institutions (Werner, 1994;

Masten & Powell, 2003; Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 2006). However, the presence of a single risk factor is not sufficient to disrupt an individual's functioning. The four identified risk measurement indices include 1. individual characteristics; 2. peer influence; 3. family relations; 4. place of residence, social relations.

In turn, the protective factors are 1. individual characteristics, such as self-esteem, positive attitude, faith, talents, sociability; 2. family factors: family integrity, close relationships, warmth, good financial standing; 3. external factors: safe neighbourhood, belonging to a pro-social organisation (Werner, 1994; Masten & Powell, 2003; Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 2006; Borucka & Ostaszewski, 2008).

Positive adaptation despite the threats and adversities also constitutes an important area (Rutter, 2000; Luthar, 2006). In other words, they are certain psychosocial skills defined in terms of implementing developmental tasks appropriate to age, culture, society. Hence, to sum up, the theoretical view of resilience, it should be noted that researchers define this category as:

- a particular personal disposition enabling the process of flexible adaptation to dynamic circumstances, and, therefore, a personal trait allowing for adaptation, consistency in behaviour, and persistence in pursuits (Uchnast, 1997);
- a dynamic process taking place in the area of experienced life adversities (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000);
- an interaction that can be learned, based on the interaction of an individual and his/her environment, adapted to the circumstances (Waller, 2001).

Competences, understood as the use of abilities and resources in development, in reference to the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 2006) constitute another area.

## Methods

In the approach of the *resilience* researchers (Gąsior et al., 2016) social competences are seen mainly as skills of: establishing and maintaining relationships, winning people over and asking for help and sense of security in new places. They remain, apart from personality features and family relations, in close connection and dependence. What is more, *resilience* processes are be-

ing shaped throughout entire life, especially in the personality, family and competences area (Gąsior et al., 2006, p. 80). Thus, adult education and education of the elderly is a process which in fact continues uninterruptedly. Glenn Shiraldi underlines the process-like dimension of resilience, admitting that *resilience* are inner features of mind and character – both the inborn and the acquired ones – enabling proper reaction to adversities, including the ability to prevent the disorders connected with stress; faster and fuller recovery after a stress experience; improvement of mental efficiency and functioning in various areas of life (Shiraldi, 2019, p. 10). It is also creating individual predispositions connected with the sense of values, sense and purpose of existence, flexibility and creativity and self-confidence meant as a consent to and acceptance of potential mistakes, cognitive competences connected with controlling stimulating and calming down thoughts, as well as shaping social relationships and the skills related to them (Shiraldi, 2019, pp. 34–50). If the phenomenon of *resilience* is to be perceived in that way, adult education can support development of man whose years of life experience can be used for building resilient reactions to the encountered difficulties. Thus, the age of man becomes a resource of experience and practicing the skills of strengthening individual and social competences. Resilience includes also individual competences, knowledge as well as the skills and positive attitudes supporting creative coping with and in the world (Bzymek, 2000, pp. 210–215 and 223–231). It seems that one can formulate the categories of *resilience* as certain psycho-social competences, defined in terms of completing development tasks adequate for the age, culture, society. In my understanding, it is gaining *educational profit*, when, after a crisis experience, an individual not only comes back to the initial state, but even through that, reinforced, functions more efficiently (Bzymek, 2020, pp. 13, 15–16, 252).

By focusing on a human immersed in contemporary culture and, at the same time, their own history, the method requires a qualitative paradigm. Qualitative research allows penetrating the reality as constructed by people. Paraphrasing Pierre Dominicè's opinion, the contemporary realities of postmodernity: "[...] complicate life and often destroy the elementary values which made it possible to talk about the quality of life. Therefore, attention to one's biography becomes a way of opposing the standards of our society, for instance, in matters related to labour and consumption" (Dominicè, 2007,

pp. 28–29). Thus, the shift of social sciences towards the humanities, as noted by Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 2005), indicates, *inter alia*, a *new discourse style* in social research and the need for a completely different perspective on human existence.

Using the scientific background of the biographical method, the author references the sources of narrativism, which has its place in narrative psychology and philosophical anthropology at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. Pierre Dominicè, reflecting on the reasons for the use of the biographical method, draws attention to the aging of the society and, in consequence, the new approach to the life cycle, as well as economic crises and unemployment, often prompting us to take a new look at our own biography (Dominicè, 2006). As a researcher, I am mainly interested in the respondents' subjective point of view in relation to the possibilities of shaping resilience. Hence, on the basis of the biographical method, from which the biographical narrative methodology was derived, I invited senior citizens to create a story focused on educational situations of building resilience. I used this conceptualisation of resilience to find answers on the sources of resilience and the possibility of learning from difficult situations throughout life.

Telling life stories has healing power, as evidenced by numerous researchers who specialise in narrative biography (Skibińska, 2006). The therapeutic function accompanying narrations of the past allows for looking at one's own life from a completely different perspective and introducing changes (Giddens, 2002).

Finally, by referring to the idea of "narrative medicine" (Kleinman, 1988; Riesman, 1990; Pennebaker, 2000; Charon, 2006), which encompasses a holistic perception of patients, taking into account not only their illnesses, but also their biographies and personal narratives, White and Epston developed the narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990). It proved to be an effective form of treating mood and anxiety disorders. Hence, I am firmly convinced about the efficacy of the selected method and I present below the further stages of the procedure.

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cational situations of building resilience. The narrative biography became not only a tool for learning the history of the seniors but also a way of learning resilience by them, thus having also autotherapeutic function.

I used this conceptualisation of resilience to find answers to the main problem: What are the sources of resilience and the possibility of learning from difficult situations throughout life of the seniors in the Daily Support Centre in Gdańsk, Poland? The following questions present the detailed problems: In the process of narrative construction of their biographies, which events do the seniors define as the ones that can be described as resilience experiences? How can, based on the analysed narratives, the educational values of resilience present in the biographical narratives be described? And: what educational potential (profit) appears in the narratives heard?

The purpose of the study is to describe the sources of resilience and the possibility of learning from difficult situations throughout life of the seniors. And the detailed goals are, additionally: referring to events from the life of the subjects that could contribute to *resilience* attitude and an attempt of defining the ways of constructing and reading individual fates as situations of occurrence of resilience.

The analysed interviews, conducted in the years 2018–2020, included thirty senior citizens (70–88 years old): twenty-two women and eight men, individuals under the care of the Daily Support Centre in Gdańsk, Poland. The Centre is a place which aims to meet social, living, and cultural needs, as well as to maintain social ties of elderly persons capable of functioning independently but often with scarce means for living (low disability/old age pensions, health conditions, identified disabilities).

## **Selected elements of the analysis**

Taking into account the extensive biographical analyses and the need to observe the editorial requirements, I decided to present only selected elements of the narratives, guided by the research analysis of the conducted interviews concerning the perceived risk and protective factors, as well as the possibility of building potential, educational benefits or, in other words, creating power out of powerlessness. For the purposes of the analysis below I specify only two analytical categories that became key elements in the article. It does not



mean that there are no other categories identified in the content of the narratives. But having in mind the size of the article, I make selective choices aiming to present all of them in the monography I am preparing.

I understand the highlighted categories as a group of notions to which I assign the narratives of the seniors on the subject matter to analyze them based on the material collected and literature sources. To distinguish between female narrators and male narrators I use the terms woman/man and the relevant abbreviations [W] / [M].

## **Risk factors**

The risk measurement indexes presented below, to which I refer for the purposes of my analysis, in line with these adopted in the source literature, are used as the key elements of the narratives I build. I find their components in the cited memoirs. However, due to the abundance of information in some accounts, it was impossible to separate the individual indexes, which clustered together in some monologues. Hence, when adopting risk indexes, I list their elements present in the biographies, paying particular attention to the context of residence, family and social relations, as well as the environmental influence. I do not code the respondents' accounts, treating these excerpts as justification of the discussed issues, rather than a full analysis of biographical studies, which I emphasize significantly, is not the subject of this article.

As the narrators are aged 70–88, their past is often affected by an exceptionally difficult historical period – the time of the Second World War and the post-war reality in Poland, experiencing the effects of war and communism. Undoubtedly, this constitutes an extremely difficult factor. One of the men recalls, “The atmosphere of war [...], when we heard air-raid sirens, was deeply unpleasant, the sirens were constant. It took a huge toll on me as a child”. Another man says, “Daddy wasn’t home during the occupation, he was in Germany, performing forced labour. [...] the conditions in the labour camp were extremely challenging”. The seniors remember that time as a period when: “The famine [...] was immense. I remember going to bed hungry. [...]. The sense of worry and fear accompanied us every day” [M]. Traumatic memories of another woman: “I was separated from my mum. When she cried, *Give me my child back*, I saw a German soldier shoot her. I heard that

shot... They took me to a camp; there was a gallows in the centre from which they would hang somebody every single day..." [W].

In addition, numerous narrators also experienced their parent's absence during the military operations: "I missed my mum; at first I was raised by my aunts, and this impacted my whole life" [M] and: "When they killed my Dad, that was terrifying, too. They brought him from the forest, and we buried him at the cemetery – it was a devastating experience..." [M].

Due to poverty, the devastation of the country, and corruption amongst the socialist authorities, the post-war reality was not easy either. Social background and huge housing difficulties became substantial risk factors. One of the men recalls, "I had to leave the country due to the political situation [...]. I went to the United States, I fled, actually, because I wasn't a member of the Party".

Finally, family relations. One of the most difficult confessions I have ever heard was expressed in the following statement: "Mother [...] was strict, she would lose her temper easily. [...]. She did not show emotion. I was lonely as a child" [W]. Sometimes, the relationships with fathers were also difficult experiences: "I did not have a good relationship with my father, he was withdrawn and didn't talk much" [M]. Another woman says, "Things were bad at home. Dad beat me, he abused alcohol. [...] I was fourteen when Dad raped me" [W]. Next, peer influence constitutes another risk factor: "When I ran away, I used to sleep at my friends' houses, and would either attend school or skip it. I started smoking, and I would go to school less and less often. Sometimes, I slept in the forest" [W]. In her case, the social system was of considerable help; hope for a change appeared shortly before she reached retirement age – a spark of resilience was lit in the form of a social worker. Undoubtedly, a social worker's role can be compared to the idea of a resilience guardian, as described by the aforementioned Cyrulnik (Cyrulnik, 2005). The woman says, "The court assigned me an apartment [...]" – thanks to the social worker, she found her place and started to grow at the Daily Support Centre.

## Protective factors

The presence of risk factors in the life of seniors was unquestionably mitigated by protective factors, which counterbalance the factors which jeopardise

the growth. I have noticed that they include the individual's own potential, individual characteristics, such as self-esteem, positive attitude, faith, talents and interests, sociability. I will mention only some of the features which appeared in the biographies: "I felt that I was happy" [W]; "I'm like that, I want to fix the world, I want to fight for justice" [W]; "I'm happy with my life. I have the joy of life" [M]; "Gratitude is an important feature. If you expect things from others, you also have to expect things from yourself" [W]; "I'm unable to hurt people, even if they hurt me" [W]; "I've never felt lonely, I was at work in the mornings, in the afternoons I studied foreign languages" [W]; "I was able to cope, I completed a waitress training and worked" [W]. Indications of individual abilities and predispositions, such as commitment to tasks at hand, are also present. "I would sit on a problem for as long as it took to solve it or find the error. The class would wait for me to solve it. And I usually did" [W]. Another person sees herself aligned with those who fight for a better world: "[...] I'm like that, I want to fix the world, I want to fight for justice [...]" [W]. Finally, the interests: "I love theatre and operettas" [W] or: "Hiking in the mountains was my passion" [M].

In addition, the stories emphasise family factors: family integrity, close relationships, and warm atmosphere: "Mum was a very good person, she was strong and hard-working" [M]; "I really missed my mum. But she visited me often. I felt loved" [W]; "My childhood was happy, we were poor, but I felt loved. I had good parents" [W]; "I loved Mum, who doesn't love their mother! Mother loved me" [W]; "I had the best possible conditions growing up" [M].

Sometimes, the narrations include ways of compensating for a parent's absence – one person narrates the following: "Grandma taught me everything. She was a lovely person. We slept in the same room when I was a child. [...]. Grandma was great" [W]. Compensation, derived from the Jungian idea of archetype, seems to be a unique way of filling in the gaps in terms of relationships. The very concept of the archetype (Greek: *arche* – beginning, *typoos* – type) was used by Jung for the first time in 1919, during a symposium at the University of London. The term *archetype* is derived from the Ionian school of philosophy of Philo of Alexandria. It was further developed in the Middle Ages by St. Augustine, becoming the source of Jung's idea perceiving the archetypes as "forms or images of collective nature, which appear in virtually every part of the world as constituent parts of myths and, simultaneously, as

individual products of unconscious origin” (Jung, 1995, p. 67). Thus, the archetypes play a compensatory and therapeutic role, making up for the absence of a mother or father in the form of, for instance, *the Old Sage* and *the Great Mother*, which arose from myths and symbols present in human cultures (Jung, 1976, p. 87; 1998, pp. 265–302).

Moreover, there is the factor related to close relationships, safe neighbourhood, and the broadly understood community. It is both the realm of family relationships: “My mother-in-law liked me. [...] My family and the love in our family give me strength” [W], as well as relationships within the community: “I received so much care and support throughout my illness. Thanks to a social worker, I was directed to the daily support centre, with wonderful employees who look after me” [W]. The importance of relationships also appears in the reminiscences of childhood, for example considering relations in rural areas: “They helped one another, they mowed hay together, I haven’t seen anyone argue. If someone fell sick, they helped one other out. I would say the people were good. It wouldn’t be possible now to lock your doors with just a hook, not a key. The people were completely different back then” [W] or: “[...] The people from the village were good. They comforted us and helped as much as they could. They really respected one another” [W]. An exemplification of the importance of an institution/organisation in the local environment can be found in a research assumption emphasising the importance of local organisations in building the resilience of elderly persons in the face of a disaster (Pendergrast et al., 2020, pp. 1–26). Undoubtedly, this constitutes a valuable research contribution in times of a current global pandemic.

Referring to the social relations factor, Marek Smulczyk writes about community resilience, which concerns processes related to the functioning of a community, especially in the face of crisis situations (social transformation, natural disasters, war). Resilience in local communities consists of the factors such as interactions conducive to the sense of community, for instance, good relations between the residents (Smulczyk, 2019).

I pay particular attention to these conclusions while researching adult education. If these factors are meaningful in children and adolescents, they should also be noticed in the adult world. Why would they not be of importance here? What is more, by recognising a certain crystallised personality of adults, one might expect that they are ready to strengthen their self-control or

plan educational processes. At the same time, consciousness allows them to engage in learning. On the other hand, the joy of participating in education, both formal and informal, means much more for the development of resilience than one might think. I believe that, apart from the acquired knowledge and competencies, the social bond and creating a community become important elements. In the era of changes in the traditionally understood family, the latter is transferred to social constructs and new ways of life, sometimes resulting in social and state institutions taking over the functions traditionally served by families (Jabłoński & Ostasz, 2001). Therefore, resilience will not be founded upon noticing the negative effects of the disintegration of traditional bonds, but primarily upon noticing the new potential which comes from this situation. Now, how to build academic resilience in adults who often function outside the traditionally understood family? How to use their potential for building their resilience? In other words, how can the resilience factors be used and strengthen them in the face of (or thanks to) difficult experiences? Is it not a direct focus on social bonds, community resilience?

## **Attempts of interpretation**

The collected accounts are sources of knowledge about another person's life, especially about their particularly difficult, breakthrough situations. However, their authors never failed or got discouraged, and despite their extreme experiences, they have not given up their will to live nor have built a negative attitude towards the world.

Aware of how scarce the elements of the research presented above are, I emphasize that my intention was to focus on protective and risk factors as basic categories present in all the narratives. I built the article around them referring to the theory of resilience in adult education. The narratives I am still working on will let me make a full analysis. The presented fragments show the presence and significance of protective factors in the life of seniors and referred to in the theoretical part of the article (Werner, 1994; Masten & Powell, 2003; Luthar, 2006; Rutter, 2006; Borucka & Ostaszewski, 2008). The significant factors in the stories of the narrators included their personal characteristics and predispositions, faith, family bonds, social relations and support, especially that of day care center, neighborly and local. The people they met

often became resilience guardians (Cyrulnik, 2005) playing the compensation role (Radlińska, 1961).

In view of the elaborated above, I am convinced that spreading knowledge of resilience mechanisms can be of great importance in education, aimed at effective learning, sustainable development processes, facilitating adaptation and boosting social competencies. The domains where resilience finds its application constitute? society, social power, intangible environment, family, education and lifelong psychosocial development. These components are the sources of resilience which I asked in the research question, and which appeared in the narratives. It thus seems to be necessary to quote them.

The multidimensionality of the phenomenon as well as its yet unexplored areas, undoubtedly, require further research, and can be used to effectively support human development. To sum up, I will only briefly review the elements mentioned above, being aware that these are only examples of non-exhaustive benefits of resilience.

## **Society and social forces**

Regarding community and social environment, Helena Radlińska's (1961) pedagogical elaborations remain relevant. Social pedagogy presents a significant cognitive and practical field, especially in the domain of social forces and powers inherent in social relations and compensation mechanisms. Radlińska's holistic view on culture, upbringing and the environment approaches them as a source of human growth and support.

## **Invisible environment**

I consciously want to include this issue in my analysis. Based on the studies of the source literature and my research, faith became not only an element shaping resilience in the presence of threatening factors but also turned out to be a protective factor which secured healthy functioning in old age. The concept of the invisible environment and spiritual needs appears repetitively in Radlińska's works (1964) that are characterized as needs of self-knowledge, self-expression through interpersonal relationships, love, and perform-

ing specific community roles. Sergiusz Hessen (1997), proving the existence of a spiritual being shaped my perception of the importance of the spiritual sphere as an element of the “invisible environment”, particularly important in the phenomenon of resilience described by me.

The importance of the invisible world seems particularly significant in the older generation. Wojciech Sroczyński presumes that the issue of elderly persons in the context of the “invisible environment” will gain an increasingly important role, as the area of adult life finds an increasingly wider niche in the pedagogical thought. This also allows for psychological and sociological cooperation which benefits pedagogy with a strong empirical relation with these sciences (Sroczyński, 2002).

## **Family**

The concept of family resilience approaches lies in the ability of family members to cope effectively in difficult situations, creating mutual support and a sense of family bond (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988). Resilience is seen here as an adaptive feature evolving under hazardous circumstances, being a dynamic process, not an individually attributed trait.

## **Education**

The systemic concept of the work of Józef Koziński (1997) refers to the conscious setting material, social and symbolic boundaries. Undoubtedly, regarding the issues in question, focus should be paid on the deliberate undertaking of transgressive actions – against the adaptive actions opposed to them – protection.

Respectively, creative interaction concept suggested by Edward Nęcka (1995) recognizes the mutuality of this process, and, most importantly, a continuous impact of its goal and constantly tentative constructs to achieve it. If creative interaction were to be related to resilience mechanisms, I could state that the goal of activity would be to reach a state of immunity or, in other words, the individual's sustainable development. The tentative structure might constitute specific actions building or shaping the state / condition of resilience (given, individual case), for example passing an exam, graduating from

school, establishing a social relationship, deciding about work and its implementation, etc. Finally, the role of training remains primarily cognitive, especially working memory, which represents a system for both storing and processing information (Nęcka et al., 2006). In subject-related literature (Nęcka, 1995), one can find ideas for training adults' creative thinking in order to learn how to create innovative ideas or unconventional perception of reality, but also to remove obstacles towards creative thinking. Due to the scope of the category in question, I abstain from including broader contexts of resilience in the education and pedagogical sub-disciplines (Bzymek, 2020). But I am convinced about the process character of education of man, whose creative and critical thinking can be developed regardless of the age, as the above quoted literature proves.

## **Lifelong psychosocial development**

Józef Koziński (1998) points to the dual structure of an individual's bibliography that consists of rational and irrational acts, successes and defeats. In turn, telling your own story is characterized by a considerable therapeutic power, being an opportunity to learn about yourself and learn how to perceive difficult life events in a new way, more focused on seeing profits rather than losses, or how I would describe: drawing power from unproductiveness. Considering the ideas of self story-telling as an effective method, Jerzy Trzebiński considers self-narrative a construct. Here emerges a personal insight, events, motives behind actions or decisions taken and their effects. Self-narratives serve as a venue to meet other people, to empathize, understand the motives and feelings of an individual (Trzebiński, 2005). By recognizing an individual as the author of his own story, you can learn to construct it. In the paper I am referring to both the language of the narrative and the way we perceive or name what has become part of our history. Duccio Demetrio recalls here the Proust's image of the cathedral, which at sunrise (the metaphor of youth) has a completely different appearance than at dusk (the metaphor of old age (Demetrio, 2000, p. 41).

The above article does not exhaust the efficient applications of a phenomenon in question. It is rather an attempt to draw attention to the category's potential. Both sociological, psychological, pedagogical and philosophical



inquiry has the opportunity to utilize it for the developmental processes of the individual and a society on the whole.

## Summary

To summarise my considerations, I would like to emphasise the importance of resilience in adult education. Hence, as the research approaches mentioned in the theoretical part suggest, resilience can be referred to as:

1. A personal disposition enabling the process of flexible adaptation to dynamic circumstances, and, therefore, a personal trait allowing for adaptation, consistency in behaviour and persistence in pursuits (Uchnast, 1997). What I see here are all the personal characteristics of the senior citizens I interviewed, determination in achieving educational success and overcoming difficulties, motivation, faith, perseverance and an attitude enabling one of the women to voice the following opinion: "Life is always worth living. Since you're here, anyway, live in such a way so as not to feel ashamed of yourself".
2. A dynamic process taking place in the experienced life adversities (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). As told by one of the men: "I also fight by taking care of my health, exercising, walking". It is a process of finding inner strength despite the circumstances, like stroking one's knee after a fall, hugging oneself when no one else is able to do this at the moment. However, at the same time, it is a process of searching for an internal change in terms of self-knowledge, knowledge of one's potential, abilities, opening oneself to accept a situation and bounce back from it. Finally, it is building *academic resilience*.
3. An interaction that can be learned, based on the interaction of an individual and their environment depending on the circumstances (Waller, 2001). Here, undoubtedly the ideas of the aforementioned community resilience, for example in the following statement from one of the narrators, are observable: "Helping an older person gives me a lot of strength, it makes me feel I have somebody to live for" [W] or: "It's important to be honest and to help people" [W]. Finally, it is the role of the compensation processes and the resilience guardian: a teacher, a friend, a neighbour, a priest (Cyrulnik, 2005).

Recently, resilience issues have been in the spotlight of Poland's scientific thought that is marked by a constant increase. With the view of its potential, the importance of resilience in pedagogy domain seems invaluable. While psychology bends over the issue of breaking the relationships into risk factors and problematic behavior resulting in psychopathology, the pedagogy is characterized by promising venues for development. Adult people will definitely benefit from knowledge of insight into a resilience phenomenon regarding education and sustainable development, especially from cognitive and socio-emotional perspectives. Acknowledging the idea of holistic life-long learning, one cannot ignore the phenomenon of resistance in relation to educational support for adults, including support in their socio-emotional functioning. The enormous possibilities arising from the resilience category analyzed here constitute, no doubt, a valuable element utilized both in the pedagogical theory and in education practice/instruction.

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