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Adults in the spaces of life. Balancing personal commitments and social role challenges*

Dorośli w przestrzeniach życia.
Między zobowiązaniami osoby
a społecznymi wyzwaniami roli

Summary. This paper highlights the interconnected interpretations of adult learning, assuming that the scope of the deliberations encompasses broadly understood adult developmental activity. Individuals who engage in such activity, while seeking self-realisation on one hand, strive to meet specific commitments, primarily in the personal sphere. On the other hand, they face the challenge of adopting various social roles. The performance and actualisation of these roles are only possible in public spaces and often require demonstrating new, or at least different, educational activity than that previously practised.

Keywords: adult educational activity, adult development, social role learning, personal sphere, public space

Streszczenie. W tekście zwrócono uwagę na przenikające się ujęcia interpretacyjne uczenia się w dorosłości, przyjmując, że płaszczyzną prowadzonych rozważań będzie szeroko rozumiana aktywność rozwojowa dorosłego. Podejmujący ją podmiot, z jednej strony realizując siebie, stara się wypełniać określone zobowią-

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zania jednostkowe, przynależne najczęściej sferze osobowej, a z drugiej strony staje on przed wyzwaniem podjęcia różnych ról społecznych, których pełnienie i aktualizacja są możliwe jedynie w przestrzeni publicznej i wymagają wykazania się często nową, a przynajmniej odmienną od dotychczas praktykowanej, aktywnością edukacyjną.

Słowa kluczowe: aktywność edukacyjna w dorosłości, rozwój w dorosłości, uczenie się ról społecznych, sfera osobowa, przestrzeń publiczna

The assumption that human history is identical to natural history conflicts with philosophical-historical reflection. This reflection recognises the importance of insights from evolutionary biology as fundamental in discussions about the development of humans as a species (see Futuyma, 2008). However, it also highlights that human social potential was shaped at a different pace during human development compared to nature development (Levinson et al., 1978). The scientific heritage of the 19th century led to the long-term dominance of classical evolutionism in scientific thought. Europeans viewed this as a justification for many assumptions about the regularities in the development of individuals, communities, and cultures. As a result, various beliefs emerged that justified ideological, spatial, economic, or cultural conquests, which continued until the mid-20th century (Krawczak, 2006). Today, most social scientists studying the issues that define human existence agree that the process of individual development in a world of changing roles and cultural values has been shaped by complex and interrelated processes of co-evolution of physiology, psyche, and communal behaviour (Baumeister, 2011).

The paradigm shift in the practice of social sciences in the mid-20th century triggered a revision of numerous assumptions concerning the nature and functioning of human beings in the socio-cultural world. In psychology, this change marked a turning point in thinking about human development in general, leading to the consequent emergence of the life-span perspective (Straś-Romanowska, 2001). In andragogy, the consequence of the paradigmatic change was a reorientation among researchers who shifted the focus of their activity from analysing adult learning processes to exploring the nature and conditions of adult learning (Malewski, 2010).

The notion of lifelong learning that emerged in public discourse at that time has led to various interpretations of adult learning activity. Alongside the traditionally established notion of learning as a cognitive process that continues to be refined into adulthood, other concepts have emerged that interpret this natural human characteristic attributively, viewing it as a feature of social practice. Indeed, individuals' affiliation with different social groups changes over the course of their lives, leading them to function in various roles. The scope and content of these roles are actualised, for example, through a series of interpersonal actions undertaken by individuals. Such an approach enables the study of adult learning from a relational perspective. As members of various communities, interest groups (local and professional), or simply as citizens, individuals experience different states through their actions (practice). The part identified as learning enables a sort of "crossing" of limits of individually internalised benefits. As a result of such a process, individuals who are aware of their own choices are likely to change their attitudes. Consequently, through the possibility of observing certain behaviours, the act(s) of learning becomes noticeable to others and thus publicly "visible" (Merleau-Ponty, 1996).

In turn, as an attribute of the concept of learning, longitudinality has broadened the perspective from which adult activity can be analysed to an unprecedented extent, integrating psychological and sociological approaches. The psychological reorientation (*life-span*) highlights the role of non-normative developmental factors and makes it possible to view a person's entire life (*lifelong*) through the lens of the choices they made. This challenges the traditional belief that compulsory education during childhood and adolescence is sufficient to prepare a person to effectively meet the demands of later stages of life.

On the other hand, the sociological approach (*lifetime*) suggests that it is more appropriate to describe adults as members of a community, assuming that the roles a person adopts over the course of their life do not necessarily form a sequential set. The acceptance of the changeability, co-occurrence, or even unpredictability of the catalogue of social roles an individual can assume in adulthood thus enables the formulation of the idea that one can prove themselves in "adult roles" at different times over their chronological life and in various ways.

Consequently, it can be expected that any individual aware of the possibility of choosing roles in adulthood may decide to exercise this right or not. Thus, the phenomenon of an individual's subjective perception of spe-

cific roles, assuming that multiple and sometimes conflicting roles can be adopted throughout life, may lead to a desire to “test” these roles. In this case, any conscious activity undertaken by an adult in a specific context (or sphere) may be seen as a challenge to learn within a specific cultural framework.

Thus, in such instances, individuals seeking to maximise their own benefits will not only change the volume of their roles (**quantitative dimension**), but also consciously modify the degree of identity acceptance associated with the social roles they currently perform or plan to take on in the future (**qualitative dimension**). Consequently, a person will learn to “cross” the limits of subjective benefits, often resulting from the roles performed in economic contexts. Acting in this way, they will not only intensify cooperation and care for the quality of social relations, but also, by fostering their own development, enhance the well-being of their surroundings (Boski, 2009).

In this paper, I aim to highlight these interconnected interpretations of adult learning, assuming that the scope of the deliberations encompasses broadly understood adult activity. Individuals who engage in such activity, while seeking self-realisation on one hand, strive to meet specific commitments, primarily in the personal sphere. On the other hand, they face the challenge of adopting various social roles. The performance and actualisation of these roles are only possible in public spaces and often require demonstrating new, or at least different, educational activity than that previously practised.

Becoming the self! Adult development

Nature programmed humans not only to efficiently adapt to natural phenomena, the subjugation of which was beyond their capabilities, but also to progressively improve their ability to cope with nature at different stages of life. The acceptance of this assumption of mutual adaptation – between the external world (nature) and the internal world (humans) – fundamental to evolutionary theory, later made it possible to shift the focus of debates from adaptation processes to developmental processes. The essence of these developmental processes was the analysis of the emergent relationships between the individual and the social and cultural world. This topic started to be discussed when philosophical reflection first drew

attention to the duality of human nature. The long-standing conflict between the two topoi of humanity and animality, reinforced by reductionist ideas, led to the increasing importance of the category of “self.” The inclusion of this personal category in philosophical debates consequently led to changes in the language used to describe not only this concept but also other meta-concepts.

In contemporary debates, the problematisation of the category of “self” from a developmental perspective, although still strongly linked to a person’s chronological age, is being more often explained by other criteria. Thus, development, as a conceptual category, has taken on a heterogeneous character. The source of this change is the aforementioned paradigmatic reorientation, as a result of which the term “human development” has acquired a more holistic dimension. This shift has led researchers from various humanities and social sciences to focus more on the object of the process itself and its nature (subject) rather than on the conditions of its course. It should be noted, however, that despite the widespread acceptance of the new interpretative framework for adult development, there remains a shortage of methodological proposals for understanding this phenomenon. As a result, some researchers struggle to conceptualise the term itself, often understanding adult development intuitively and studying what aligns with their own assumptions rather than the phenomenon *per se* (Olejnik, 2017).

While accepting the assumption of human variability throughout life in terms of physical, psychological, social, and cultural aspects, it is important to note that the nature of change in specific areas may vary depending on factors influencing the process itself (Przetacznik-Gierowska, 1996). Thus, in order to discuss the nature of changes in adulthood, it is insufficient merely to have knowledge of developmental mechanisms during childhood and adolescence. It is necessary to understand the nature of changes characteristic of each stage of human life, from birth to death. The accumulation of such knowledge, in light of the assumptions adopted here, will not be legitimate unless the perspective of contemporary perception of humans shifts from an objective to a subjective one, recognising the individual as an autonomous and learning being. It does not seem accurate to continue understanding, analysing, or accumulating knowledge about universal mechanisms that condition individual development throughout lifetime through the prism of assumptions about the stage development of humans, the horizontal or vertical nature of changes, or the

hierarchical system of levels of awareness. In the context of the assumptions adopted in this paper, such a position would lead to a conceptual trap in understanding adults and their lives. It would justify the conviction that changes in attitudes during successive stages of adulthood are largely attributed to the evolution of formative, animating, or educational procedures, without which human development is virtually impossible, or at the very least, significantly hindered.*

Meanwhile, the intra-individual plasticity of humans and the multi-directional nature of development are central concepts in foundational thinking about individual development in adulthood, especially when considering various groups of factors. Among these, in addition to chronological age, which determines biological condition and the ability to perform roles such as those in the family life cycle, other factors are also important. These include the historical time in which the individual lives, the geographical and cultural area in which they reside, and the events they experience. These factors may be spontaneous or random on one hand, and on the other hand, they may result from **intentional** and **autonomous** (bolded by K. P.) choices. These two groups of factors mainly influence the development of individuals in early adulthood and in proper adulthood (Straś-Romanowska, 2001).

The adoption of the perspective of individuals as subjects who develop and thus create themselves and their lives can be found in various strands of psychological practice. Classic theoretical findings in this regard by Carl Gustav Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, or Rollo May may also serve as starting points for research and analysis of the essence of adult development. Magdalena Jančina and Dorota Kubicka note that, depending on the author, the theoretical approaches varied in their subject-orientation (Jančina & Kubicka, 2014).

The authors point out that one of the first researchers to draw attention to the direct relationship between the personal category of “self” and awareness was Carl Gustav Jung. At the beginning of the 20th century, this author initiated a debate on the then overlooked phenomenon of the individualisation of human development, as a result of which individuals became unique and different from others during their lives. The second half of a person’s life and changes that occur then, which Jung describes

* In her publications, Marzanna Bogumiła Kielar (2015, 2017) provides a comprehensive overview of theoretical positions that take into account such assumptions.

as *individuation*, are surely of interest to andragogists. During this stage of life, in fact, individuals integrate their intentions with the conditions of everyday life (current experiences). It is crucial that this process occurs on the individual's own terms, in accordance with their accepted norms and principles, rather than under the influence of social dispositions or cultural patterns. According to the author of this concept, these actions are intentional and contribute to personal development. The predominant orientation towards the "self" creates an opportunity for individuals to transcend barriers that arise on their developmental path (Górniewicz & Rubacha, 1993, cited in Jančina & Kubicka, 2014).

The limits of debates prevailing until the mid-20th century, characterised by deterministic assumptions about human development, were thus crossed, marking the emergence of transgressive thinking. A key aspect of understanding humans was the assumption of possibility of transcending various personal limits in human development. The act of becoming someone else, through the conscious undertaking of specific tasks, was mainly aimed at reinforcing self-creation rather than making a person's life easier.

Other thinkers of the era, proponents of the theory of *self-actualisation*, expressed similar views. Maslow, Rogers, or May, mentioned earlier, emphasised the unique value of individual development that could assume different forms specific to each individual. Abraham Maslow referred to this process as *self-actualisation*, where an individual, at any point in life, might use an opportunity to satisfy their own needs (Maslow, 1986). Rogers perceived the essence of human development in the process of *self-realisation*. According to his view, in their desire to become someone else, individuals sometimes act in ways that transcend their current state. In so doing, they continuously test the limits of their potentials and strive to go "beyond themselves." Rogers referred to this tendency as the growth motive, considering it the most significant factor that, consciously or unconsciously, motivated individuals to act (Rogers, 2002, cited in Jančina & Kubicka, 2014).

Rollo May emphasised the significance of human development within a specific context, as one's life cannot be shaped independently of their natural environment. In his view, the individual's developmental imperative lies in the creative formation of the relationship between self-awareness ("self" as subject) and awareness of one's world ("self" as object). For a person's life as an independent being to be considered developmental, it

must involve the capacity to understand oneself from the perspective of the community to which one belongs (May, 1995, cited in Jančina & Kubicka, 2014).

The classical ideas mentioned in the works of Magdalena Jančina and Dorota Kubicka, which perceive an individual (self) as both a subject and a creative architect of not only one's own life but also of one's own "self," were further developed by representatives of the cognitive trend in psychology. As argued by the aforementioned authors, new concepts emerged over time. These concepts not only identified the forms (patterns) that a person's life could take, as understood from the perspective of the assumptions of a given concept, and the behaviours (attributes) that could indicate the individual's realisation of the selected pattern, but also suggested how proposals to assist adults in the developmental process should be formulated, if at all.

The belief in the significance of discussing the last issue was likely based on idealistic assumptions. Recognising intentional raising, animating, and educational influence as the appropriate method of supporting adults in their development as subjects from the andragogical perspective could be viewed as illusory and categorised as educational myths, some of which still persist (Kargul, 2005).

There are two theoretical concepts that address the nature of the dilemma whether the focus of considerations should be on adult development as "becoming the self" over the course of life due to undertaken activities and assumed roles, or on the idea of who an adult could potentially become. The first concept is proposed by Zbigniew Pietrasiński (1990, 2009). While acknowledging the significance of heredity and environment in human development, the author highlights the crucial role of an individual's own activity as a motive factor in **self-creation** (bolded by K. P.). However, he notes that the capacity for self-creation is achieved once the individual is already shaped by the first two factors. Only then can they engage in reflection on their own life. Adult reflexivity differs from non-reflective adolescence in that it is formulated consciously, and the resulting behaviours often challenge prevailing social norms. In adolescence, an individual's activity is primarily spontaneous and thus non-reflective, often constrained by socialisation norms.

At the same time, Pietrasiński indicates that when undertaking certain activities, individuals can act intentionally or unintentionally. Both strategies can facilitate the growth of their well-being, but only intention-

al actions have a developmental nature. The aim of the latter is usually to improve one's potential by satisfying living, professional, family, social, and private needs, but not personal ones, as they are developed in an intentional process of self-knowledge, that is, building self-creative knowledge.

The second concept that proposes an explanation of how people become who they want to be across their life span is based on the idea that the cognitive interpretation of the "self" results from self-reflection on the experiences that shape an individual's identity throughout their life. Dan P. McAdams (2015) posits that personality can be understood as layered and cumulative at the same time. The first layer, which develops earliest, is a result of personality traits (based on the Big Five model)* and enables the observation of behaviours that serve as indicators of personality differences among individuals. Through learning their own emotions, among other things, individuals discover how others react differently to the emotions they experience. As they grow up, they learn to regulate their behaviour. According to the author of this concept, individuals acquire the status of actors on the stage of life where they observe themselves and others, striving to be more aware of the means of expression they use. The second layer develops during early adulthood, complementing the first and continuing the developmental process. As individuals enter the stage of life, they often formulate a framework of agenda or plan to implement in the years ahead. At the core of this developmental stage are goals and values, serving as reflections of the individual's anticipations and concerns. Plans hold motivational value not only on an individual level but also on a social level, thus contributing to the cognitive construction of one's self-image in specific social roles, such as Self as an informed citizen, Self as a devout follower, Self as a good employee, Self as a husband, or wife, etc.

Assuming specific roles is frequently associated with the dispositions formed in the first layer of development, but the absence of such a link does not imply that the plethora of possible roles is subject to organic limitation. According to McAdams, the third "author" layer develops as adults seek to formulate interpretations of the stories of their "selves." Life storytelling is not about recalling past events, but it makes the past meaningful. It enables one to understand how they have become their current selves and whether they wish to persist in their present path or embark on further exploratory endeavours. Chronologically, middle adulthood is some-

* See Strelau (2004).

times an appropriate stage for the intensive formation of this final layer. At this stage, while organising their own memories, individuals interpret them not only within the context of the current place and time of their lives, but they also confront them in relation to the plans for the future. Seeking the selves, they narrate their own stories. This is how **a person's narrative identity** is constructed (bolded by K. P.).

In further considerations, I interpret adult development according to the subjective orientation proposed by Zbigniew Pietrasinski and Dan McAdams. They argue that individuals **are** the subjects of their own biography where the regulatory character of their activity is most fully expressed. Consequently, individuals autonomously, consciously, and intentionally create a unique structure of their lives and can credibly articulate it (Jančina, 2016).

The private and the public worlds of life

The world of everyday human life may seem on the surface to be a natural, repetitive, predictable, and linear practice. Hannah Arendt's (2000) designation of activity in which humanity lives (realises) its life organises the reception of identifiable and describable spheres. However, it also imposes the epistemological dichotomy regime on the theoretical categories distinguished by the author. In current debates, this regime loses its seemingly discursive dominance and becomes a popular category. In contemporary discourse, the status of various analytical categories introduced into the language of science has become so blurred that it is difficult to use them without first attempting to re-identify and redefine them.

Terms such as "public sphere," "educational activity," "civic attitude," "personal development," or "adulthood" have nowadays gained the status of intuitive terms. Instead of organising the discourse, they often undergo a process of interpretative differentiation. As a result, they acquire a double identity and begin to exist in two worlds simultaneously, with the real world determining their recognisability to a greater extent than their theoretical status (Nowak & Pluciński, 2011). This completely new situation justifies the re-identification of the scopes of terms used later in this paper to legitimise the premise of the possibility of adult development in different roles and social spaces.

The discourse on spheres, spaces, areas, or dimensions of human activity has been conducted intensively since the Enlightenment and has nowadays not only become more dynamic and diverse, but, more importantly, has also placed the question of the *essence* of the private/personal and the public/social at the centre of debates again. Paradoxically, this has transformed the categories used to organise the nature of human activity in different areas into contextual categories. The factors that led to this turn were projects conducted in Western European countries and the United States from the mid-20th century onwards, aimed at revising existing philosophical, social, and political concepts. As a result, several currents emerged, with representatives interpreting these traditionally present categories in discourse differently. In their search for new formulas of description, they either expanded the scope of interpretation of existing terms, emphasising their dialectical nature, or narrowed the field of debate by excluding certain themes (Cichocki, 2013).

Indeed, each conception that emerged within this current argued in its own way for the need to modernise both categories, acknowledging a particular socio-political tradition. However, whether the source of change was the social-liberal tradition (Rawls, 1994) or the conservative tradition (Oakeshott, 2019), the consequence of the adopted solutions was a change in the image of the social world and, thus, a different interpretation of the nature of personal and social relations. Researchers, to a greater or lesser extent, broke with the canon established by Arendt (Sikora, 2014). The meaning of the private underwent a gradual erosion until it reached the level of an “intimate” category, so opaque, even enigmatic, or personal, that its expression became confined to the individual and subjective experience, to which a person’s life testified (Sennett, 2009). In the lens of such views, it may be assumed that *privacy* encompasses both the recognition of the will to inhabit a specific territory, separated from others, and the right to autonomously decide about oneself, one’s fate, appearance, or patterns of daily personal and family life. The acceptance of the concept of privacy defined in this way advocates for granting every adult an inalienable right to authorship of one’s own biography (Dubas, 2017).

The creation of one’s life story in adulthood begins in early childhood. During this time emotional bonds with parents and siblings are formed, and through interactions with those around the child, his or her developmental path begins to take shape. The multitude and variety of experiences a person accumulates during this period not only modify their store of

knowledge and skills, but also shape a variety of competences, both their own and those of individuals in their social environment. During this period, it is important for a person's development that these relationships are complex, multifaceted, and heterogeneous. Even when they cause tensions and conflicts, such relationships are more beneficial for the quality of a person's development and later life compared to those formed in a "poor" context. The conditions created by parents and the surrounding environment not only determine the quality of children's daily activity, but also their development as autonomous individuals. As a person grows up, they strive to free themselves from the influence of their immediate environment. This marks the beginning of adolescence (Brzezińska, 2005).

The identification of the precise boundary between childhood and adolescence is difficult. However, considering the fluid and successive nature of these phases, it is important to emphasise that experiences accumulated to that point begin to lose their previous functions. In their search for new role models, interpretative schemes, or frames of reference, teenagers engage in an intensive re-examination of the self. However, the personal level, where the accumulated capital defining the "self" has been verified, is no longer sufficient. A young person also begins to form their own identity on a social level (Bardziejewska, 2005).

The emergence of a social and cultural frame of reference involves not only the need to re-identify values that have so far been shaped in specific isolation within the private sphere, identical to an individual's own world. It also presents a challenge of confronting a specific set of tasks, patterns, and social expectations that are governed by the public sphere, constituting part of the common world. Thus, the development of young people is characterised by a perpetual tension between the obligation to conform to the established patterns of their immediate environment, where they naturally grew up as children, and the rebellion stemming from their desire to liberate themselves from the pressures and control mechanisms imposed by their relatives. This rebellion also arises from their aspiration to become more authentic and self-aware young adults. By living in accordance with their own convictions (self), they reinforce the process of self-realisation.

The dilemmas outlined above are particularly significant in the context of these considerations for two reasons. First, they remain relevant in their essence despite changes in the forms of their cultural descriptions and representations. Second, they still require interpretative effort, as ne-

glecting this perpetuates the belief that socialisation processes during adolescence shape individuals who, aware of their subjectivity, can leverage their accumulated capital to intentionally and autonomously manage their development throughout their lives.

The first conclusion is supported by Matthew Shipton's (2018) findings from his study of ancient drama, including Sophocles' *Antigone* and Euripides' *The Bacchantes*, concerning the nature of the social tensions in the 5th-century Athens. The author's thesis posits that to understand the situation of adolescent characters in Greek tragedies, it is necessary to analyse reality, including the dynamics of tensions between politics and young Athenians integrating into social life. The author analyses both the nature of the conflict itself and the conceptualisation of negative models of youth at the time. He argues that contemporary societies' perceptions of young people transitioning into adulthood, much like centuries ago, are invariably intertwined with emerging tensions. This is because young adults' perceptions of specific social roles and patterns for fulfilling these roles in the public sphere often conflict with those who constructed these specific patterns earlier. Thus, Shipton draws attention to the enduring political nature of intergenerational conflicts, highlighting that a way to alleviate the tensions of the time was through culture, with its inherent performativity of discourse. He argues that ancient playwrights often crafted their characters to faithfully depict the nature of the existing tensions and to serve as a touchstone for public examination regarding if and how the audience would engage with the discourse presented in this form.

In contemporary Poland, such a method of presenting reality might be regarded as a political provocation (theatricalisation of discourse) or as an example of the term "pedagogy of shame," which has been coined to serve current political agendas (Bilewicz, 2016; Ponczek, 2017).

The justification for the second conclusion, which highlights the need for a sustained effort to interpret the existing assumptions, stems from the persistent belief that behaviours in public spaces are learned and that this learning process begins in childhood and is completed during adolescence. This belief was popularised in the late 1960s with the spread of the concept of political socialisation (Hyman, 1969). Herbert Hyman argued that instilling politically appropriate behaviour pattern, aligned with the social roles identified in various public institutions, served to stabilise the political system. He also advocated for secondary school teachers to verify whether the process of political socialisation had occurred and to supple-

ment it, if necessary. Hyman's belief in the effectiveness of such measures resulted from his assumption about the stability of child development in a changing environment.

During the 1960s and 1970s, this belief evolved. Taking a developmental perspective, many researchers attempted to establish a correlation between the publicly demonstrated attitudes of adults and the conditions in which they were raised and grew up. They thus sought to substantiate the thesis of the socio-political inheritance of views and attitudes displayed in adulthood (Jennings & Niemi, 1974).

David Easton argued that the stability of political systems depended more on the maturity of adult civic reflection than on family circumstances, although it was primarily shaped by educational development. However, he also acknowledged that, to some extent, civic reflection relied on sentiments from the past, predominantly stemming from strong ties to the family home. This perspective was to justify the persistence and limited flexibility of the attitudes that adults exhibited in public spaces regarding their political choices (Easton, 1965).

Today, no one argues that an unshakeable foundation for a person's worldview is built during childhood or adolescence. Instead, it is assumed that beliefs formed through educational influences during childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood are more likely than other factors to shape certain attitudes, such as civic attitudes, which then manifest themselves in the public sphere more often than those defined as moral, religious, or ethnic. At the same time, the thesis of human development and lifelong learning supports the assumption that individuals maintain a permanently open perspective for making free and informed choices. This implies that it is possible to change one's orientation at later stages of life, even though physical age and certain types of public (political) rights are intertwined.

Activities such as voting, starting employment, changing marital status, and becoming eligible for certain offices are indeed dependent on chronological age. However, the ability to logically recognise abstract problems (for example, notions of the common good, public interest, or civil liberties) is also influenced by age. Thus, young adults cannot be expected to exhibit the same quality of social or public engagement behaviour that they might exhibit as mature adults. On the other hand, reaching the age characteristic of proper adulthood does not determine this quality either. It is assumed that the qualitative change in the perception

of principles inherent in the public sphere depends less on cognitive maturity and more on life experience, the quality of education, the type of work performed, and the reference group. Above all, it depends on the developmental effort made.

From personal growth in daily life to social dimension development experiences

The process of becoming an adult involves both biological maturation and the exploration and making, or not making, of commitments through which a person's identity is formed (Brzezińska, 2017). However, according to the assumptions made in this paper, this process cannot be considered complete when an individual reaches a certain age or status (Marcia, 1980). A person's life and the capitalisation of various experiences – personal experiences fostered through self-reflection and social experiences accumulated through various interactions with the social and material environment – suggest that an individual's sense of identity remains subject to change. This unique potentiality provides the rationale for posing questions about the types and values of teaching and learning mechanisms that will enable an adult's attitudes towards themselves and the surrounding world to maintain a developmental dimension.

The functional perspective analysis of the issue indicates that a person's rootedness in personal life signifies the highest form of individual development. An indicator of this state is the awareness of one's distinctiveness, the unique conviction of experiencing oneself, or even a profound sense of uniqueness (Erikson, 2002). This conviction fosters a unique sense of existence as a "self." In striving to achieve this state, one may engage in the effort of *individuation*, as Jung called it; *self-actualisation*, as Maslow referred to it; *self-realisation*, as Rogers indicated; or experience the unique dilemma of the relationship between *the subject "self" and the object "self,"* following May. At the same time, it should be noted that reductionist tendencies in science have led to an adult's involvement in personal development being considered an intimate category. While individuals can competently discuss this category, its status is becoming increasingly opaque to others.

Many critics of the late post-modern era highlight the last aspect, warning that the growing culture of individualism will lead to the erosion

of community and, consequently, weaken the status of social practices that are essential for maintaining the democratic order. Thus, it will lead to a situation where “social interest” becomes part of the personal development strategy, and an individual’s engagement and fulfilment of a role in the public sphere will become an indicator of their developmental process.

Meanwhile, subject development does not imply that common values are the personal values of “someone.” Rather, having such a status, they represent a developmental challenge with unique specificity. To internalise these values, an individual must be aware of their existence and convinced of their uniqueness, given that the interest in them is primarily social (Marquand, 2004). In this context, the intentionality of purpose, as noted by Zbigniew Pietrasiński, remains relevant. Satisfying living, professional, family, or social needs on a **private** level, but not **personal** one (bolded by K. P.), cannot be considered developmental as the latter is developed in an intentional process of self-knowledge. This process includes situations of attempting self-transcendence when public interest conflicts with individual interest.

However, assuming that the intentional construction of self-creation knowledge facilitates the formation of identity understood as a person’s self-creation process, primarily in the psychosocial dimension, it can be argued that building the quality of relationships with oneself becomes as important as building the quality of relationships with others, that is, with a person’s social environment. The issue to be resolved is whether the experience a person gains directly in the process of personal development translates into socially valuable behaviour.

Some andragogists highlight the untapped potential of civic education mechanisms in this area. They note that discussions about their effectiveness are more frequent when they pertain to initiatives directed at children and adolescents, and less frequent when they involve adults (Gierszewski, 2017). However, there is a lack of clear indications regarding whether the foundation of these educational mechanisms is, for example, social learning or another form of learning. Others emphasise the value of unorganised and unplanned activities in this context, which belong to the field of informal learning. These activities are implemented outside systemic solutions and are, at the same time, a natural part of adults’ everyday lives (Markowski, 2011). In this case, success should be sought in the life attitudes of adults. Development efforts should consciously avoid the

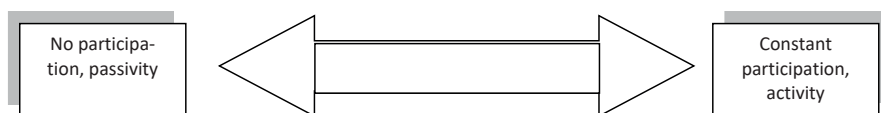
temptation for individuals to “privatise” social or public interests (Marquand, 2004).

It seems, however, that both the conviction in the educational potential of created institutional and non-institutional solutions, and the belief in the inherent naturalness of the process of enquiring beyond-personal competencies throughout life, which ensure the effective performance of consciously chosen roles, still require attention. This attention should focus on at least two category labels that define the variants of learning social roles practised by adults today.

The first label is derived from an individual’s conscious self-identification within the social sphere as a potential member of a specific group. This identification is expressed, for example, through the aspiration to adopt a particular role in the future and, once mastered, to integrate into a specific community. Consequently, the process of role acquisition involves recognising that mastering a predefined pattern necessitates its continued practice. This approach can be termed socialisation, as learning citizenship, for instance, requires the internalisation of specific patterns of practice. Adults must continuously engage in certain activities (participation) to become integrated into the existing socio-political order. Passivity or abstention from participation would disrupt the existing order and consequently expose them to ostracism.

The states defining the extremes of the described continuum would indicate addressing the quantitative dimension of learning (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Continuum describing an individual’s activity



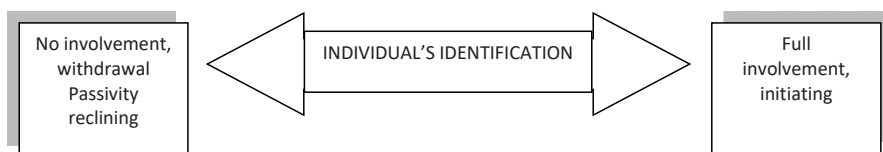
Source: own study.

The second label is derived from the belief that an individual’s freedom, expressed through voluntary and conscious engagement in personal development, encompasses the initiation of experiences from the catalogue of “limit” and “crisis” events. As a result, adults consciously modify the

extent of their identity acceptance of the roles they currently perform or plan to undertake. Individuals simultaneously mark their activity with an emotional sign (“+” or “-”). This approach can be termed developmental, as by taking learning risks that include increased engagement (including emotional identification) in these uncommon experiences, adults will consciously test the “transgression” of the limits of subjective benefits associated with their current status.

The states defining the extremes of the described continuum would indicate addressing the qualitative dimension of learning (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Continuum describing an individual's identity identification

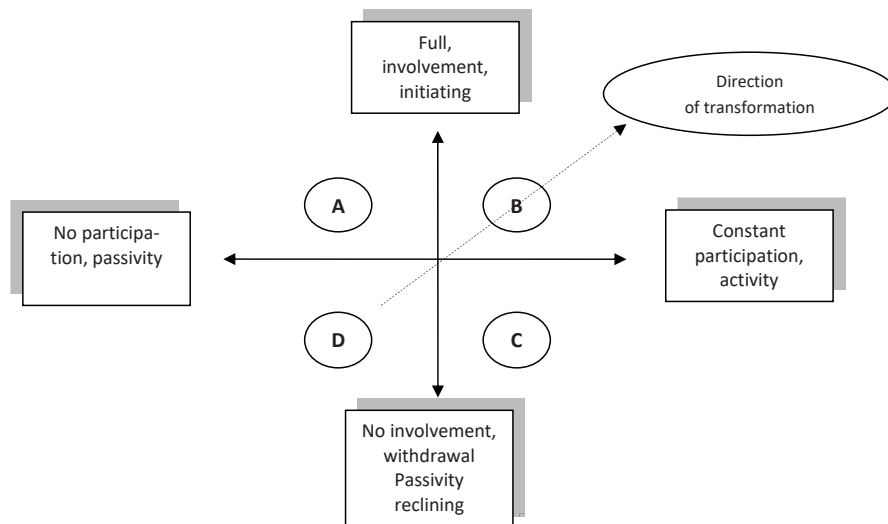


Source: own study.

The juxtaposition of the vector of the categories described above – volume of activity and identity identification – helps to identify and describe the potential areas in which different forms of role learning, primarily social, are possible or not in adulthood.

In Area **A**, the learning of the social role of an informed citizen, for example, occurs through **critical observation**. Adopting such an attitude leads an adult to increase their awareness of the essence of the role they plan to assume, particularly through the critical identification of the range of rights and responsibilities that arise from different understandings of the status of being a “citizen.” However, the concomitant lack of engagement, such as the physical practice of civic behaviour in public spaces, for example, participating in protests or voting, makes it difficult for the broader community to recognise indicators of this form of social learning. Nevertheless, certain social circles in which the individual interacts with others (family, professional group, and close friends) are likely to observe the change in attitude and, consequently, the learning that is occurring.

Figure 3. Areas of social role learning forms in adulthood



Source: own study.

In Area **B**, the learning of social roles occurs through **active participation**. Adopting such an attitude is expressed in an adult's constant, although often unpredictable in form, involvement (emotionally marked behaviour) that can be observed by others. The successful testing of roles, such as that of a climate activist, leads to the establishment of new practices that can be modified and thus provide a model for others to adopt. At the same time, it is only in this area that individual initiatives can exemplify a consciously initiated strategy of "testing" existing solutions. These initiatives can contribute to changing or at least modifying seemingly "unshakeable" patterns, leading to a new quality of practising them.

In Area **C**, it is difficult to discern a change in attitude towards a particular role and to identify any form of learning, despite the undeniable occurrence of relevant learning processes. One indicator of this is that others can observe the individual's behaviours. However, the inability to identify the emotional sign of such behaviour (its peculiar authenticity) makes it difficult to verify whether the observed attitude results from active learning, such as establishing or modifying new relationships with others – in-

dicating deep learning (Ciechanowska, 2012) – or whether it is rather the result of the social promotion of particular personal behaviours. The latter would imply a colonisation of a social role.

In Area **D**, it is difficult to identify any form of learning. If learning occurs, its outcomes and processes remain invisible to others, and even the individual may not be aware that such learning has taken place.

Without empirical verification, it is difficult to determine which forms of learning occur, their frequency, and the modes among specific age groups of adults. On the other hand, it is possible to recommend, with a degree of confidence, the direction in which forms of social role learning will transform with age. This recommendation is based on the subject-oriented adult development approach, which posits that younger people are more likely to have their social behaviour guided by socialisation patterns acquired during adolescence. These patterns correspond to the behaviours described for Area **D**, which, with age, experience, and self-reflection, may be supplanted by learning forms characteristic of Area **B**.

Closing remarks

The conceptualisation of social role learning in adulthood proposed in this paper aligns with the transgressive understanding of human development. This approach posits that adults autonomously learn to construct their identities throughout their lifetimes. However, the concept of learning is not solely viewed as a transition from learning as an individual (personal) act to learning as an empowering act within a social context. The outlined dilemmas encourage a discussion on reconstructing the concept of learning itself, which should be approached as holistic phenomenon. These dilemmas challenge researchers to reinterpret its representation beyond the formulas established in contemporary culture.

The established belief that a person's development occurs largely as a result of self-creation efforts should be supplemented by the context of social validation. There is no indication that an individual's personal experiences automatically translate into valuable social behaviours and attitudes with age and the assumption of increasingly numerous and complex roles. In fact, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting that it is adults' attempts to cross, essentially to test, the limits of both their intuitive (personal) understanding of social roles and their normative patterns

that are personality-forming. Therefore, the authentic learning of social roles by adults is validated only in a space beyond the individual.

This does not imply that the process is always consciously initiated and adheres to an established model. As argued by Zbigniew Pietrasiński or Dan McAdams in their theoretical proposals, adults more often become convinced of their own personality-forming potential as a result of experiencing critical events. However, experience alone is not developmental unless it is accompanied by biographically interpreted reflection.

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