

AGING

SOCIAL, BIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

AGING
SOCIAL, BIOLOGICAL
AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS

Edited by Aleksander Kobylarek

WROCLAW 2012



Printing cofinanced by Community of Wrocław, www.wroclaw.pl,
agreement no. 6/UTW/2011 (01.06.2011)

© 2011 Aleksander Kobylarek, www.utw.wroclaw.pl

Rewieved by
Prof. Stanisław Juszczyk, University of Silesia, Poland

Indexing
Beata Maj

Cover
Marcin Fajfruk

Dtp
Robert Błaszak, rblaszak@interia.pl

ISBN 978-83-60425-78-7

Publishing and printing:
Agencja Wydawnicza "Argi", www.argi.pl

Content:

Editor's Preface.....	6
MANIFESTOS.....	7
Daniel MEYNEN, <i>On the wisdom of the elderly</i>	9
Rosemarie KURZ, <i>Senior participation</i>	17
Jerzy SEMKÓW, <i>The University of the Third Age – The University of the Extraordinary Age</i>	19
STUDIES.....	23
Maria STRAŚ-ROMANOWSKA, <i>An elderly person facing the contemporary challenges</i>	25
Krzysztof BORYSLAWSKI, Piotr CHMIELEWSKI, <i>A prescription for healthy aging</i>	33
Ilona ZAKOWICZ, <i>The University of the Third Age and the social exclusion of the elderly</i>	41
RESEARCH.....	49
Tetyana PARTYKO, <i>Sense and life-orientations in late adulthood: comparative analysis</i>	51
Ihor OSTROVSKII, Sophia GRABOVSKA, Kateryna OSTROVSKA, Anastasiya SOKALSKA, <i>Peculiarities of senior social-psychological activity</i>	61
Natalia HRYTCHAK-ZHUPYLO, Viktoriya IVANUKH, <i>Peculiarities of “social frustratedness” in the older population</i>	69
PRACTICES	81
Nadežda HRAPKOVÁ, <i>Intercultural work and education of the seniors</i>	83
Rosemarie KURZ, <i>LENA – LEARNING IN LATER LIFE a European project</i>	87
Contributors.....	91
Index	93

Editors preface

The process of aging in Western societies is profound and advanced but our knowledge about aging and the possibilities for facing the problem is limited. There is a severe scarcity of books, research, studies, or reports, which analyze the problem in an appropriate way. Even gerontological practices are rare and not elaborated, especially in the area of social gerontology.

The collection of texts presented herein is one of many ways, in which the University of the Third Age at Wrocław University is trying to recognize and describe the process of human aging and the other processes connected with it.

The studies, papers, reports and descriptions of the practices are the fruits of a rich and long cooperation between professors, managers, university lecturers, students and PhD candidates working in the field of gerontology from many European countries including: Germany, Poland, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, and the Netherlands. The advantage of the publication is the bringing together in one volume of the ways of thinking of many different institutions from different areas of work. There are universities, U3A's, NGO's; researchers, students and workers; new and old administrative structures (U3A in L'viv, U3A in Wrocław).

We can also observe the processes of the meeting, connecting, cooperation and mixing of the academic disciplines of science. The main topic of the study is aging but the complexity of the problem needs complex studies, in turn needing transnational, intergenerational and multi- institutional processes of the research as well as a multidisciplinary approach.

Aleksander Kobylarek

MANIFESTOS

DANIEL MEYNEN

Sulzburg, University of The Third Age in Holzen, Germany

On the wisdom of the elderly

If you wander over onto the little islands in the River Oder, near the old Church of Our Lady on the Sand in Wroclaw – the islands that served as a passage over the Oder in days gone by and thus provided the occasion for the city to be founded – you will come across a curious figure: a stocky, bearded man with enormous feet, standing firm on the base of his little plinth, his large right hand slightly outstretched in a contemplative manner, his young, open face turned towards the skies. He seems to be inviting the beholder to do the same. The inscription bears his name: Socrates. Is the statue just on loan, or is it here on a permanent basis? Every time I come to Wroclaw, I go there to assure myself that Socrates is still standing steadfast and firm on the base of facts and trying to find his bearings in the sky of ideas. It seems to me that someone like him is aware of the relativity of human existence and the uncertainties of life. His fearlessness obviously does not stem from the alluvial sand on which he is standing. Is it based rather on the rock-solid certainties that are taking shape in his mind?

Had I had the opportunity to come to Wroclaw in June 2011 for the jubilee of the University of the Third Age, I would have asked those in the auditorium to accompany me to Sand Island and reflect there on the mental faculties of elderly people, at the feet of the old European sage.

What are the particular strengths of elderly people?

Only rarely do they include physical abilities. Physical strength and dexterity diminish with time. This is a general phenomenon linked to human transience. However, by no means does this mean that certain elderly people are not considerably fitter than many younger people. There are 80-year-olds who go climbing nimbly up four-thousand-metre-high peaks and younger people who need to exert great effort to get from Zakopane up to the top of Kasprowy Wierch without taking the cable car. As a rule of thumb, however, the majority of younger people can make it to the top of Kasprowy Wierch more easily than the majority of elderly people.

When I speak of the particular strengths of elderly people, I am referring instead to their **mental abilities**. Here too the point applies that by no means is every elderly person superior to every younger person in this respect, but that there are certain mental faculties that are more commonly found in elderly people than in younger people.

One of the positive characteristics that is often attributed to old people, and one which psychologists often refer to when talking about the abilities that come with age, is **wisdom**, and I would like to turn my attention to this. At this point I will

stress once again that by no means is every elderly person wise, and even in the case of those generally acknowledged as such, not everything they do is wise. I shall merely say that wisdom is a mental quality that is found more frequently in elderly people than in younger people. There are plausible reasons for this phenomenon. Wisdom is, however, by no means limited to elderly people. It can also be found in young people and even children. However, if you are looking for people with this quality, you are more likely to find it in elderly people than younger people.

How can wisdom be defined?

The gerontologist Paul B. Baltes (1994, p. 179.) defines wisdom as an **expert system in the fundamental questions of life**. He is convinced that the term wisdom describes the prototype of the intelligence that comes with age. He describes wisdom as “the highest level of knowledge and power of judgement in the fundamental pragmatics of life”. This definition requires explanation.

The German word *Wissen* [‘knowledge’] always carries the double meaning of theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills; “Ich weiß etwas” [‘I know something/how to do something’] thus means both “I know facts” and “I master an activity”. The same duplicity of meaning applies to *Weisheit* [‘wisdom’], which carries connotations of both knowledge and ability. It can be said in summary that wisdom consists of an awareness of one’s own knowledge and ignorance, and an ability to master one’s own abilities and inabilities.

Wisdom thus always requires knowledge and abilities. Someone who knows a lot may well be learned, but not yet wise; similarly, someone who is able to do many things may well be an expert or have a great deal of power, but this does not make them wise.

Someone only becomes wise once they know the limits of their own knowledge and are aware of their ignorance of many matters; when they are familiar with the areas on the borders of human knowledge and ability; when they know their own values and aims in life and are tolerant towards people with other aims and values.

To sum it up succinctly, wisdom can be defined as:

- understanding how to get to the bottom of an issue, and having explored it in depth, being able to provide certainty and stability. **A wise person is thorough,**
- being familiar with border zones, understanding how to steer one’s ship through shallows like a helmsman, and being able to cross over borders with assurance. **A wise person is familiar with borders and can cross them,**
- understanding how to hold one’s course in rough and difficult terrain and being able to deal with others whose courses are different. **A wise person is an expert in directions and purpose.**

If this rough overview is taken as a basis, the essential criteria that Baltes specifies as necessary criteria for wisdom can be understood.

He identifies five main areas towards which wisdom is directed: individual human existence as such, the integration of a human existence into its environment, the uncertainties of human existence, and the relativity of human values and aims in life.

Furthermore he identifies **basic and metacriteria for wisdom**:

The basic criteria include:

- **knowing facts** about the fundamental questions of life and humanity. General and specific knowledge of the problems of life and the basic situation of man; knowledge of the basic physical, material, mental, social and political conditions of human existence; knowledge of the inevitable dependencies in which humans are implicated,
- **ability to act**: how to deal with these fundamental questions. A breadth and depth of dealing with problems, coming to decisions, and interpreting and planning life.

Metacriteria of wisdom are, according to Baltes :

Knowledge of the circumstances and context of life:

- having knowledge of the historical and biographical embedding of the problems of life,
- knowing how to **deal with the uncertainties** that life brings,
- knowing how to deal with the **relativity of conceptions of the world and aims in life** (i.e. tolerance).

The psychologist G. Peck (1968) carried out an investigation on the personality structures of a few thousand businessmen in 1968 and came to the conclusion that “a genuine development process takes place in the second half of life”; it is only in the second half of life that most people have gained the necessary experience to develop entirely the quality we refer to as wisdom. Here the term encompasses both the ability to make judgements and also social prudence, i.e. the ability to interpret with foresight the things you have perceived, predict complex consequences and make carefully considered decisions. Psychologists such as Piaget and Kohlberg also explain why wisdom is more commonly found in later life: because all high-level thought is superior to low-level thought and no one is able to bypass the lower levels of development in order to reach the higher ones.

If you want to address and evaluate problems linked to divorce, for example, you need a certain knowledge of the conditions of modern cohabitation; you need to be able to diagnose an existing situation; you need to be able to take stock of a human development. You must possess a certain resisting power, so as to be able to uphold your judgement on a real-life situation – a judgement which you have arrived at through thorough reflection – even when faced with other opinions on the matter. Moreover you need to be able to accept that other people have other opinions and remain aware of the relativity of your own judgement.

Elderly people find it easier to establish a connection between seemingly unrelated elements, reinterpret their own behaviour or that of others, possibly redefine priorities on their own scale of values and open up new existential questions for exploration. Elderly people have a wider overview and have experienced more changes in their environment, in nature and society alike.

We thus have an overview of modern notions of wise behaviour.

What are the 'wisdom potentialities' of elderly people?

If what psychologists say is true, elderly people have a number of skills at their command that could be of great value to the further development of our society. So far these skills have had little effect on a social level but are becoming ever more important the less the authorities in our society that were previously responsible for answering questions about significance and the interpretation of meaning – such as priests, experts, teachers and doctors – are being acknowledged as such. In the modern world, everything seems to have become detached and relative and as a result it has become harder for young people to determine which insights and modes of behaviour have a lasting future. What can they use to orient themselves? A need for the guidance of those with experience is thus arising among young people, a need for help with discussion and decision-making. A quality often ascribed to elderly people is that they display a certainty that has developed over a long period of time and has been well-tested, as well as a greater authority in the spheres of reflexive, balanced conduct and the interpretation of reality and life.

What wisdom potentialities in particular do elderly people have at their command? I would like to link each one to specific anthropological constants:

The ability to fathom the circumstances and problems of life

Elderly people have usually had more experience with the trials and tribulations of life than younger people. Trials such as the loss of a job, having to stop work, losing a husband, wife or child, unforeseeable accidents or material losses. Tribulations such as depression, addiction, injustice they have committed themselves, injustice they have suffered at the hands of others, deep disappointment or slander. Through these experiences they have had to learn how to comprehend circumstances, problems and human configurations and how to fathom their meaning.

A normal path through life pursues the common goals of learning an occupation, building up a relationship, starting a family, making a career, running a business, occupying a public or honorary post. The river of life ebbs and flows. There are incessantly new demands. However, at one time or another, you begin to feel you have reached the limits of your performance and you are forced – in the best-case scenario through a holiday, in the worst-case scenario through an accident or illness – to take a step back from day-to-day operations, step away and ask yourself why it had to happen then of all times, and why it had to happen to you and not to someone else.

The ever more frequent ruptures and disappointments of life give people the occasion to search out firmer ground and more solid foundations. We take a step back, pause for thought, tack stock of ourselves and look for something hard and fast on which things can be built up again.

The interruption of the normal course of life obliges us to fathom out our lives, like a helmsman monitoring the draught of his ship: is it sailing evenly enough to pass over a reef without damage? Will we overcome this accident or loss? What caused this event? What is our ship of life carrying?

To get to the bottom of an issue consists of making sure you have firm ground under your feet and looking for cast-iron certainties to which you can attach yourself. There are times when you have to cross scree slopes or expanses of black ice. There are times when you sink into a bog or get into unjust situations. There are times when end up in the mire or get dragged through the mire. What is needed in such situations is the ability to find sure footing and certainty in the turmoil of events, be able to provide this certainty for others, to find internal and external clarity and be able to convey it. Wisdom consists of being able to distinguish between issues with no question marks over them and those that merely give us a false sense of security. Whereas younger people are eager to come out of their shell so as to enhance their own existence, experience new things and discover new worlds, elderly people have this phase of development behind them. They grow weary of the unfathomable length and breadth of the river of experience. When you realise that you can go as far as you like in any direction and never find an end in any of them, you become reluctant in the face of this boundless distance and look for height and depth instead.

Reflection on the meaning of life is encouraged by an awareness that the end is not so far away. The losses that inevitably come with age mean that the ability to say goodbye is required. The activity of life needs to be balanced with calm, passive contemplation of life. If you understand how to take a step back from the constant stream of events and the piloting of life, constantly requiring decisions to be made, you get the chance to put the lifestyle of our outwardly-oriented, economic-political meritocracy into perspective and devise alternatives.

People who are skilled at fathoming out life create fundamental structures for themselves; and inasmuch as elderly people have experienced many ruptures and witnessed failures, they are able to become experts on the depths and fundamental structures of human life, i.e. experts on how to cope with these depths.

The skill of wise elderly people thus consists of being able to justify the behaviour required in a given situation so well that their justification leads to certainty and creates trust, and reveal the consequences of a potential wrongdoing in such a way that the flaws of the action become clear. When this ability is lacking, the advice of elderly people risks becoming idle talk and will come across in a know-it-all tone.

The ability to detect various different elements in one overview and understand borderline situations

It is not only the depths and comedowns of life that threaten our mental existence and require us to find sure foundations, but also the variety, the jungle, the chaos, the inscrutability and the complexity of life. Not only landscapes and traffic conditions but also economic relations, social networks and political relations can all become complex. The more different worlds or social networks you have come into contact with in your life, the more clearly you can see how confusing human relationships can be.

What should you do when you lose your overview of a situation? You climb up a tower or a mountain or look for an Archimedean point. For some time now,

GPS devices have been used to give an overview of areas in their entirety. Thanks to this detachment, you recognise structures that you had missed while in the midst of events. The distance and higher perspective allow you to make connections between elements and events that you had previously perceived as completely unrelated. You see associations and developments that you had never seen before and you learn to think synthetically. Likewise, however, you also perceive conflicts that you had missed before. Looking down from a satellite, you can see that two trains moving towards each other on the same platform will inevitably collide, long before the train drivers realise; that a storm coming in from the west will soon reach the lowlands before raging itself out in the mountains. You can talk of a higher vantage point. On the understanding that elderly people have managed to retreat a reasonable distance from the hustle and bustle of daily life while at the same time maintaining an overview of the younger generations, they are able to occupy this vantage point. Their advantage as experts lies in this overview and in synthetical thinking.

Elderly people who have come into contact with various unrelated spheres of life are able to make comparisons, and thanks to their experience and knowledge, can more easily obtain an overview of confusing associations and establish connections where those with less experience would fail to notice them.

Someone who only feels at home in a single subject area or occupation only has knowledge of this subject. Someone who has come into contact with a variety of subject areas or occupations develops an eye for borderline areas, areas that go beyond the subject and overlap with others, and structures that are common to different subjects or occupations. The Archimedean point enables a metaknowledge of the various complexities of the individual's knowledge. This is not only the case for scientists but also for all those with knowledge of several fields. In the case of elderly people who are reviewing the various phases of their life and its economic, social and political context, they begin to put together an overall picture of their life.

A certain distance from the ground is required in order to obtain the outlook from the Archimedean point. You can no longer remain rooted to the ground.

The ability to act confidently in borderline situations and stride through them

Borderline situations are grey areas, areas of insecurity or times of uncertainty. In such situations, there is a need for precaution on one hand and changes of pace on the other hand.

When a ship sails into shallows, a helmsman is required who knows where the dangerous spots are situated, who is able to hold course even when forced to make a detour, who is able to increase or cut back the ship's speed, and who knows when cargo must be jettisoned in order to gain in ground clearance.

The skill of this helmsman consists of:

- precaution and vigilance, so as to keep an eye on all the important factors and circumstances,

- recognising times for action and times to wait,
- estimating the right points in time and windows of opportunity,
- evaluating the level of difficulty in a given situation: sailing in foggy or stormy conditions, with dangerous cargo or with a damaged engine,
- correctly interpreting signs, including those of danger.

The ability to orientate life towards meaning

The complexity of life leads to the development of yet another important skill in elderly people: being able to give life direction in times of uncertainty and to revise this direction if necessary. If you lose your way in a wood or a town, with no map and no one to ask for help, you try to orientate yourself using noticeable points or landmarks: seafarers by the North Star or a beacon, hikers by the sun or a mountain range, motorists by conspicuous buildings or neon signs. In the context of human life, these orientations are referred to as meaning. Where does the meaning lie in my life?

The meaning of life is the imaginary point where the numerous threads of your life and will converge. It is, so to speak, the North Star you use to orientate yourself; you will never get there admittedly, but it allows you to orientate yourself. It can be a task, the search for a realisation, the hope of an encounter, or being able to give affection to someone. The essential characteristic of the meaning of life is that it focuses all your aspirations on a single point.

Elderly people have more experience than younger people in terms of which meanings of life prove themselves viable and when, and when to give them up when they lose their power of orientation.

The ability to tolerate others with different aims and values

Elderly people have come into contact with very different types of people and attitudes during their lifetime. What is right for one is wrong for another. One man's meat is another man's poison. The question thus arises on each occasion of how to deal with people with values that are different from my own? How to deal with people with different ideologies or religions? Rich and poor people? Powerful and weak people? Respectable people and criminals? Decided and undecided people? People with radical views, people who are indifferent, or a confidential informant? Should I adapt to these people or make myself stand out from them? Should I counter them? Put up resistance against them? Try to convert them to my way of thinking?

Life has taught elderly people that it is impossible to deal with all people in the same way. You can let some of them into your house and others not. As the old German saying goes, *trau schau wem* ['try before you trust']. You will be able to influence some of them, others not. The realisation that some people cannot be changed but that you need to get along with them regardless leads to a certain tolerance in later life. The realisation that people need time to change their ways leads to patience.

Elderly people are more likely to realise that everyone wants to pursue happiness in their own way and that you cannot measure all people by the same yardstick. They find it easier to convince others that one person's values do not necessarily hold true for another and that it is a matter of understanding each person in the context of their own world of values, comparing them to your own values and always paying attention to which values hold true for whom, or not. It also should not be forgotten that different values can hold true alongside each other: values of health, disposition, economics and morality.

My summary of the five wisdom-related skills of elderly people is by no means an exhaustive list. It will have fulfilled its purpose if it has suggested where the specific abilities of elderly people are to be found. The list could be supplemented, for example, by the skill of being able to retract earlier judgements, admitting to wrong conclusions and a change of mind, and revising one's conduct. It could also be supplemented by the ability and the courage to experiment with life and the self; by openness towards experiences or situations that the person has not explicitly sought out themselves; and many more.

I shall conclude with a comment from Leopold Rosenmayr: "the aging of society - as far as this sociologist of great significance to our theme is concerned - does not necessarily lead to an increase in force of habit. The "aging process rather demands - like ecological issues - a fundamental reflection on brotherliness and sisterliness among the signs of an increase in help and affection. Longevity is a challenge to love. It demands all of the strengths that love is capable of sustaining. If the »strengths of old age« are to be optimized, what is required is an exchange and an increased, imparting allocation of strengths among people, a new culture of humanity, one which elderly people can help shape" (Rosenmayr 1989, p.151).

Translation: Tom Low

Bibliography

- Baltes P.B. (1994), *Die zwei Gesichter des Alterns der Intelligenz*, "Jahrbuch der Deutschen Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina LEOPOLDINA" 39., Halle/Saale.
- Peck, G. (1968), Psychologische Entwicklung in der zweiten Lebenshälfte, [in:] Thomae, H. und U. Lehr (eds.): *Alter, Probleme und Tatsachen*, Akademische Reihe der Akademischen Verlagsgesellschaft, Frankfurt.
- Rosenmayr L. (1989), *Die Späte Freiheit. Altern und Handeln - Eine Reflexion über die Zugänglichkeit von Freiheit im späteren Leben*, [in:] Weymann A. (ed.), *Handlungsspielräume*, 1989, Enke, Stuttgart.
- Thomae, H. und U. Lehr (eds.) (1968), *Alter, Probleme und Tatsachen*, Akademische Reihe der Akademischen Verlagsgesellschaft, Frankfurt.
- Weymann A. (ed.) (1989), *Handlungsspielräume*, Enke, Stuttgart.

Senior Participation

The growth in numbers of the older population has significant policy implications for all nations across the EU and there is a debate regarding the ageing population and the increasing costs of health and pensions.

However, people are not just living longer; for the most part they are also healthier and many are in a position to actively contribute to society. Great opportunities thus exist as future generations of older people are expected to be healthier, more skilled and educated, and remain more active in the workforce than their predecessors.

Positive attitudes to ageing and expectations of continuing productivity challenge the notion of older age as purely a time of retirement and withdrawal from society. The focus is on lifetime experiences contributing to wellbeing in older age, and older age as a time for ongoing participation in society.

Older people are important members of society and have the right to be afforded dignity in their senior years. They possess the skills, knowledge and experience to contribute positively to society. The expected increase in the elderly population during the coming decades will provide the EU with a valuable resource. Furthermore, continued social participation of the elderly holds benefits for the individuals concerned, the community, and society as a whole.

Unfortunately, for some older people, their full participation in society is hindered due to a low sense of worth or due to restricted opportunities. Social exclusion may occur through one, or a combination of, a range of circumstances, including a lack of access to personal, community or state resources and facilities, insufficient personal capacity and opportunity, as well as negative attitudes to ageing.

The ability to age positively is assisted by good investment in education throughout life, to provide individuals with a repertoire of skills and abilities to set and achieve goals. It is also dependent on an environment that provides opportunities for older people to remain actively involved in society and offers opportunities for continuing participation, something which is often lacking in modern society.

Retirement from the paid workforce should not mean that persons cease to contribute to society, but rather opportunity exists for participation in a range of different roles: as volunteers, special employees, family members, neighbours, caregivers, committee and trust members, business mentors and advisors, and members of communities.

The choice to work later in life is important in meeting the challenge of positive ageing. Evidence suggests that those who work longer enjoy better health in their old age. However in order to achieve this, more emphasis needs to be placed on

life-long learning (LLL) for workers of all ages, so that they maintain and increase their skills and productivity as they grow older. LLL makes more sense if it is followed by society participation and contribution. This involves a radical change in attitudes towards ageing and older workers.

Information Technology offers a unique opportunity to provide senior citizens with a specialized virtual network to facilitate their engagement in the Information Society and to empower their participation in all facets of society by enabling them to contribute with their knowledge, expertise, experience and wisdom.

The benefits of positive ageing for individuals are multiple: good health, independence, intellectual stimulation, self-fulfillment and friendship being just some of the valued outcomes. Society as a whole has a lot to gain from such an outcome: a healthy, a happy and confident ageing population contributes a wealth of expertise and skills to the community and the workforce, places less demand on social services, and provides positive role models for younger generations.

People should be supported as they grow older, in leading productive lives in the economy and society. It is important to allow and encourage older people, and future generations of older people, to experience ageing as a positive and productive phenomenon.

What can be done?:

- Study and apply how senior citizens can contribute to society: to public institutions, local and national government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), companies, education centers, etc.
- Study and apply roles of experienced seniors (business mentors and advisors, volunteers, committee and trust members, members of communities, etc.) for participation and contribution to society, in order to bring social cohesion, integration and dynamization.
- Bridge the gap that exists between modern day and traditional societies in terms of empowering senior citizens to contribute their wisdom and experience to society. Bridge that gap with new methods: the use of new technologies for networking, communication, linking and remote participation.
- Disseminate the use of those tools for participation in society among senior citizens throughout the countries of the EU. Teach senior citizens to use those tools. Build virtual networks of senior citizens. Participation of post-retirement senior citizens will have to be promoted and encouraged by diverse organizations and companies, private companies of all kinds, public institutions, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, healthcare institutions, etc. Last but not least I want to pay attention to intergenerational issues. We have to promote a society for all ages.

This concept was developed through a debate during the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. *“A society for all is one that adjusts its structures and functioning, as well as its policies and plans, to the needs and capabilities of all, thereby releasing the potential of all, for the benefit of all. A ‘society for all ages’ would, additionally, enable the generations to invest in one another and share in the fruits of that investment, guided by the twin principles of reciprocity and equity”.*

The University of the Third Age – The University of the Extraordinary Age

The idea of adding a new dimension to the later adult age group is gaining more and more proponents as the group of such people grows, people, who after reaching the age of 60 and retiring, find a deep sense of the need to continue to be active in many levels of their functioning. This idea in fact has strongly negated image of an old person deeply rooted in social consciousness, where declining psychophysical abilities lead to the exclusion from life, and from every activity. The image of a person who has ended his own chosen career, and thus performed his duty as a citizen and deserves rest is at best, part of the so-called “dark scenario of oldness”, marked by diseases, the progressing decrepitude and generally the inability to take part in any sensible activity. Therefore, one should not be astonished, that the term “oldness” has in a way become the synonym for being unwanted, for it is the last phase of human life. However, as those of advanced age become more numerous, those who with their active attitude deny the negative connotations, the term “oldness” has begun to lose its previous meaning. So to replace, or at least neutralise the negative meaning, alternative terms are being used, such as: “third age”, “golden age” or “late adulthood”. In those new names for that last phase of human life lies the deep meaning contained in the wish of displaying all those qualities of the existence of the elderly which allow them to realise their intellectual, physical and social needs to the degree allowing them to feel fully valuable members of society. Also, we see in this semantic endeavour the tendency to elevate the elderly from the peculiar ghetto of intolerance, or at best sympathy and enabling them to take the positions equal to those of other ages.

Doubtless, the progressive and more and more visible change of attitude towards the last phase of human life is connected with the progressing process of the aging of society. Even though societies in which the civilization achievements have made the wisdom of old people almost obsolete, or at least often denied by the young, late adulthood is attaining a new meaning because of its new situation, whose origin one can find in the different philosophical attitude towards the last phase of the human life. Simply, the increasing duration of life in the third age, accompanied by the better and better condition of people who have entered this phase, adds to it new dimensions and the sense connected to it. The key to understand this phenomenon of the new reading of oldness is surely the progress of medicine and the changes in nutrition, thanks to which, as Anthony Giddens points out, one can escape or significantly reduce most of the symptoms of ageing, which were once considered inevitable (Giddens 2004, p.185). Therefore, it is not surprising to see the increasing

number of people of advanced age who are altering their attitude, seeing in this last phase of life possibilities other than those found in the previous model of aging.

However, generally speaking, the treatment of the process of aging by those who have crossed the barrier of 60 or even 70 years of age and who have retired, is mostly dependent on their material situation, and also actual emotional support and medical aid (Giddens 2004, p. 187). And because of this not every person is experiencing the process of aging in the same way. A numerous group consists of those, whose low financial status combined with adverse living conditions put them among the ranks of the dissatisfied and bitter. The specific psychophysical lethargy, to which they succumb, causes them to perceive the phase of late adulthood as difficult and unwanted, even a tragic period of life. The oldness experienced by them is perceived as a chain of miseries, discomforts and more and more limited freedom, whose origin lies not only in the weaknesses of physiological nature, but just as much in the behaviour and the reactions of the social surroundings, oriented for the consequent removal of the old person from the domain of active participation in everyday life of the family or – in a broader sense – of society. This attitude, especially of the younger generation towards the older, has numerous reasons. One of them is the desire of easing of the fate of the elderly by relieving them of the various activities which demand effort due to the common rule: “the old must rest”. Even though the general idea of resting in the last phase of life is naturally right, the limiting, at times against the will of the elderly, of the field of their living activity usually leads to the worsening of their psychophysical condition.

However, there are increasingly more of those who believe that the last phase of human life can be just as valuable as the preceding ones, which is proven by the research conducted around the world of the 70, 80 or even 100 years old (USA, England, France, Poland and other countries). People reaching the third age with such an attitude usually begin to realise previously hidden interests and with good conditions they find a better scenario of old age. And so, generally speaking, one must notice that our attitude towards old age and aging is evolving in the minds of many, leading to the change of attitudes not only of people in the age of middle adulthood, but also of the young. However, this change of attitude is mostly visible among those who have already entered the age of late adulthood. As it is their initiative that has led to the establishment of the senior clubs and – beginning in the 70s – Universities of Third Age. Especially the U3A's have played a significant role in the restoration of the sense of dignity and power of the elderly. Their rise in Poland, especially during the last 15 years, is an answer not only to the increasing number of the “gray generation”, but also to the growing needs and aspirations of the elderly.

Behind the name of this form of the organising of the elderly lies a slight mystery and controversy connected with it. For if we realise that the term “University” stands for a special kind of institution, with almost 1000 years of tradition and unquestionable role in the development of science and in the institutionalisation and professionalization of its distinct domains (*Słownik Wyrazów Obcych* PWN 1980, p. 790), then some doubt may arise, as to whether the usage of this term is legitimate for the description of such a different form of organisation meant for the quite well-defined age category, that is: for those who have reached the last

phase of life. This doubt may be further emphasized by the significant distinctions between both institutions, analysis of which could be a topic of another, very extensive paper. Thus, for the needs of this essay, let us point out to those differences, which seem to be undisputed. Most of all, the structure, organisation and government of the university goes back to the middle ages and their roots are the faculties, cathedrals, alternative institutions and departments ancillary to the autonomous authority of the vice-chancellor, which undoubtedly distinguishes this institution from the university of the third age, whose structure arises from the individual interests of the participants (the division into sections, which are governed by democratically elected board headed by the Principal of the U3A). A distinction just as important arises from the academic and educational function attributed to the university as an academy representing the highest level of education. The aim of studying at the university is the shaping of highly qualified workers of distinct professions, including the creation of conditions for the development of academic personnel. The U3A has a different goal. Its content is defined by the range of interests of the people taking part in the classes. Therefore, apart from the weekly lectures on distinct fields of knowledge for all the students, there are classes, usually of a workshop character, whose specificity reflects the variety of passions of people of the third age (starting with the choir section, or theatre, including bridge and chess up to "back gymnastics" and arts sections). Independently of those already standard forms of work the participants of the U3A organise popular science conferences as well as initiate the cooperation with schools.

Even this very brief review of the differences between the university and the U3A displays the far-reaching distinction of aims and tasks and the resulting roles, which both institutions play. Thus, it is no wonder that here and there opinions arise about the impropriety of the usage of the term "university" to describe the institutional form so profoundly distinct from what is represented by and what is the pride of the highest level of institutional education.

Can one possibly defend the decision of using the term "university" to name a form of education so very distinct? If defence is too risky, let us at least justify this not only formal choice of name. At least three reasons can constitute the basis of justification of calling this form of working with the people of late adulthood a university:

1. Going back to the origins of the word university one finds the Latin term "universalism" (universal – common, general). Referring to its meaning and the possible connotations the term university can be broadened to other forms of education, especially those which include in their range the people of advanced age. The term school has so much attached itself in education with childhood and adolescence that using it in reference to the elderly would seem an infantilism.
2. Although the structure of university because of the functions and aims, to the realisation of which it has been founded, is a peculiar exception in the field of education – however the need of copying some of the solutions in the domain of studying (student books, diplomas of graduation, credits etc.) makes the university of the third age attempt as much as possible to live up to the tasks imposed by this name. The confirmation of this state of affairs is also the fact that the lectures and classes are conducted by academics of universities and colleges.

3. Finally, the key argument is connected with the mission of the university as the oldest and the same time the principal type of European multi-faculty academia merging the didactics (the education of the most qualified professional and academic personnel) with academic knowledge (conducting research) (*Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna* PWN 1997, vol. 6, p. 558). The essence of the mission of the contemporary university is the openness of the academia to all the problems bothering the surrounding reality. One such problem is the aging of societies and the arising need of helping those in the last phase of their consequently extending lives. The university by opening its gates for the "gray generation" stands up to the important meaning of its mission becoming a place of intergenerational meetings, which draw from its tradition, but also – and mostly – from the current academic achievements. In this way the academia strengthens and broadens the idea of the so-called "open lectures" (for people not only of the university), which has been deeply neglected in the period of "real socialism".

Recapitulating, one has to notice that the afore described change in the attitude to the age of late adulthood, which has been proven especially by the more and more visible participation of the elderly in different forms of activity, mostly the intellectual ones, has relieved this phase of life of the odium of resourcelessness, disability and uselessness as the only determinants of the lives of people who have reached 70 or 80 years of age. The results, which we observe among the participants of the various forms of activity conducted at the U3A, impose the revision of the up-to-date beliefs regarding the possibility of learning of the elderly and generally of their psycho-physical condition. And even though this metamorphosis relates only to some of the elderly, the term of "extraordinary age" comes to mind when naming the late adulthood. Undoubtedly the splendour of this phase of life is increased by the fact of participation of the elderly in a formula which brings them closer to the intellectual elite. Thus, it will not be a misuse to state that the university of the third age is the university of an extraordinary age.

Bibliography:

- Chopra D. (1995), *Życie bez starości*, Książka i Wiedza Warszawa.
- Coni C., Davison W., Webster S. (1994), *Starzenie się*, Warszawa.
- Dzięgielewska M. (ed.) (2000), *Wielość wymiarów przestrzeni życiowej ludzi w trzecim wieku* [in:] *Przestrzeń życiowa i społeczna ludzi starszych*, Łódź.
- Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna* PWN (1997) vol. 6, Warszawa.
- Semków J. (1997), *Człowiek wobec perspektywy starzenia się; pozytywne myślenie o ostatnim etapie życia* [in:] *Dzięgielewska M. (ed.), Przygotowanie do starości*, Łódź.
- Semków J. (2000), *Dzięgielewska M. (ed.), Wielość wymiarów przestrzeni życiowej ludzi w trzecim wieku* [in:] *Przestrzeń życiowa i społeczna ludzi starszych*, Łódź.
- Semków J. (2002), *Spółeczne oraz kulturowe wymiary przeżywania okresu późnej dorosłości* [in:] *W. Wnuk (ed.), Ludzie starsi w trzecim tysiącleciu. Szanse – nadzieje – potrzeby*, Wrocław.
- Słownik Wyrazów Obcych* PWN (1980), Warszawa.
- Sztompka P. (2002) *Socjologia. Analiza społeczeństwa*, Kraków.

STUDIES

An Elderly Person Facing the Contemporary Challenges

One of the consequences of civilizational transformations is the change in the lifestyle of those actively and directly involved in the transformations, who are their co-authors and beneficiaries or have to keep up with them just to adapt. This is especially true of the young. The psychological image of contemporary youth is in many ways different from the one that we know from the past. Psychologists report a cohort of differences in regard to this phenomenon¹. It is a characteristic feature of the contemporary age that the progress of civilisation, which we are witnessing, results also in the transformation of the lifestyle and condition of the people who have reached the age of adulthood and late adulthood. Also there are more and more of such people on one hand and fewer children are born and on the other and human life is systematically extended. The average inhabitant of the United States and Europe (including Poland) lives consistently longer which is mostly the result of the improvement of the quality of life, in the broad sense, measured with the common access to information, increase in the level of education, as well as progress in the field of medical and rehabilitation services².

One of the non-specific consequences of the transformations of civilisation is the change in the image of the elderly person. It relates on the one hand to the formal matters, such as: socioeconomic criteria of the threshold of old age, expressed in the legal shift of the retirement age, on the other hand however, to the psychophysical characteristics of the seniors, their appearance, physical and mental abilities, and even personal traits. Although ten years ago the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the academic textbooks of the developmental psychology named 55 years of age as the border between adulthood and late adulthood, the current works name 60, even 65 years of age as the beginning of old age (Cf. Przetacznik-Gierowska Tyszkowa 1996; Straś-Romanowska 2011). Many researchers, taking into account the significant individual differences in the process of aging, consider the border between adulthood and late adulthood unstable and move it up to 70 years of age (for example: Stuart-Hamilton, 2006). Here we come across a distinct, even spectacular trend.

The typical contemporary senior is significantly distinct in respect to many psychophysical traits from his peer a decade ago. He is more educated, self-dependent,

¹ A spectacular manifestation of the cohort changes is the disappearance of the attitudes and behaviours defined as the youth rebellion. The young nowadays want to remain children as long as possible and instead of revolting against the adults they prefer to benefit from submission to them.

² Contemporary, in some of the western countries (for instance: in Great Britain) the percentage of people of the late adult age is 18%. In Poland it is 12%, which means that the so-called threshold of demographical old age has been exceeded. Furthermore, a consequently growing number of people of advanced age (that is: over 80 years of age) is observed in Poland. It is the so-called double process of aging of the population.

more active and self-sufficient, mobile, open-minded. However, it does not mean that his psychological and social situation is easier. Difficulties, which are faced by the contemporary seniors, which arise due to intense transformations of civilisation, taking place in almost every field of the social, economic, scientific and cultural life. The main generator of those transformations is the development of computer technology, forcing participants in social life to acquire new skills, so they can orientate themselves and move in the constantly modernising world. The technological and economical distinctions, accompanied by the process of globalisation, are followed by no less important cultural, mental and moral distinctions, constituting the sign of the ethos of the post-modern society.

In order to better understand the kind of difficulties, which confront seniors, and the resulting new developmental challenges, let us examine some of the cultural tendencies of the contemporary world. It is probably most visible and most uncomfortable for the people of late adult age within the accelerated pace of life. Even though the men of the world remark that this phenomenon is especially escalated in the younger democracies, including Poland, nevertheless the whole developing and competing world seems nowadays to live faster than before, more intensively and more greedily, as if taking part in the race constituted the most attractive form of human existence. In this marathon the elderly, due to natural reasons, have relatively slighter chances to succeed: they lag behind the young, they experience shortage of breath when overcoming the new challenges, although many of them manage them quite easily, taking part in various ventures, such as social activities, entertainment or intellectual projects, which are offered by Universities of the Third Age or seniors clubs among others. And yet, most of the elderly with difficulty find themselves in the new, high-pressured reality, on the busy streets, in the great, multilevel shopping malls and in the constantly changing landscape of advertisements, commercial offers, and in the face of the dynamic process of transformation of language rules and interpersonal communication in the broad sense. The experience of discomfort in the above mentioned fields is not the result only of the sentimental attachment to what is known, tame and safe, but it arises most of all from the natural cognitive and motor limitations which become intensified along with the passage of time in the second half of everyone's life. That is why the seniors find it more difficult to orientate themselves and move in the constantly shifting space than the young people, it is also harder for them to find themselves in the psychological sense, as unstable circumstances generate in an obvious but unwanted way the state of uncertainty, unrest, and decrease the sense of security and consequently reduce the sense of the quality of life.

The elderly person is no longer, as he or she used to be, an authority, especially in the fields, which are typical to a young person's primary interest. For instance, when it comes to computer skills or other modern technical devices, the grandchildren are usually more competent than their grandparents. Furthermore, in the contemporary world culture is dominated by a futuristic orientation, towards the future, movement, change, innovation – sometimes even at the price of losing safety and a deeper sense of reality. However tradition, universal values, customs and stability as valued states of everyday existence, are often treated as relics of the past, which can indeed be interesting in the cognitive sense, but have in principle lost their obligatory character, as being of little

use in the undertaking of current actions demanding most of all intellectual ability and know-how, oriented towards success, profit and pleasure. In such a climate an elderly person, embodying the past but not possessing the competences essential for the following of novelties, becomes an unattractive figure, who does not impress the youth and is often treated as an obstacle in the achievement of their goals. A significant role in this process of marginalisation of the elderly is played by the media, for example: through the publicising from time to time of the problem of the pensioners as a certain social group, which is a burden for the national budget and in this way a threat to the welfare of the young.

The physical inconstancy of the surrounding world is accompanied by the cultural inconstancy, which is noticeable mostly in the moral field, the life-style, the interpersonal relationships, etc. The contemporary social world is heavily individualised, in fact: atomised, community life is fading, interpersonal relationships are weakening. Rather than selfless meetings and friendly, sincere conversations, interests, contacts and entertainment are valued. In fact everything, including interpersonal contacts, is converted to profit and expense. The economical calculation, along with straightforward, hedonistic satisfaction, is placed at the top of the hierarchy of importance. Because of the loosening of the family ties and the involvement of the younger adults mostly in employment, the problem of loneliness and estrangement has grown to level never before observed, and experienced more and more commonly and severely by the elderly (and not only by them). Value systems are attaining an individualised character, the conviction of the universality of certain, especially moral, values and their obligations is becoming outdated. Tradition and the ethos of moral values is displaced by the ethos of pragmatism, instrumentalism and relativism. Morality is becoming a private matter, it is more a question of taste than ethos. More and more often what is valuable is considered what is most useful, profitable for the individual, according to a personal, temporary interest, subjective beliefs and preferences, ancillary to the current goals and tasks or the need of pleasure, induced by the mass media with fervour worthy of a better cause. And the feature of the aforementioned criteria of valuing is the situational changeability. As a result the contemporary world has become a world of constantly and ever more rapidly shifting meanings, "flickering lights", unceasingly moved and modified "road signs". Such a colourful, dynamic world, deluding with freedom and pleasure, can be attractive and alluring, however it is difficult to find oneself in it: not only for the elderly, but also the young. Out of this has arisen the new serious psychological problem, which is the problem of postponed identity, consisting of the young coming to a stop in psychosocial development at the phase of early adulthood or at the phase of prolonged emerging adulthood. On the other hand, mature persons, who have a shaped personal and social identities, and among those the elderly, feel estranged in this world, often they isolate and distance themselves from it, withdraw themselves, sometimes fall into misanthropy, limiting their participation in social life to the basic, well-known roles, such as taking part in political elections. "This is not my world" – one can sometimes hear from older friends.

The fundamental difficulties of the contemporary senior are intensified by the experience of stigmatisation with negative stereotypes (ageism), which still (regardless of the real, positive changes relating to a person's condition) remain alive in society,

creating an unfriendly climate for people of late adult age. And so the typical elderly person is usually characterised as conservative, backward, gloomy, complaining, bitter, xenophobic, and what is more, unfriendly, intolerant, filled with resentment towards the world. Unfortunately, much research confirms the presence of this image, not only among the young, but also – even more frequently – among the seniors themselves. Furthermore, the young accuse the elderly of a negative attitude towards the youth, excessive criticism, lack of understanding of the specific character of the civilizational transformations and the lack of approval of them, as well as, and importantly, they refer very negatively to the life-style of the elderly, emphasizing especially the lack of taking care, hygiene, neat attire or behaviour (for example: Koska 2011). Although the afore sketched image of the elderly person is changing, there is more and more research indicating the lower intensification of the negative opinion of the seniors, but still the rather negative opinions predominant in the attitudes of the young towards the seniors as at best indifferent (Zajac-Lamparska 2008).

The fact that many fit and ambitious people are willingly making an effort to overcome the stereotype of the elderly person, by adapting to the transformations of civilisation, is a positive phenomenon. They endeavour to be tolerant, familiar with the commercial and technical novelties, follow the latest trends. With the passage of time it is becoming more and more difficult and bothersome for them. As long as the dynamics of the cultural changes does not transcend one's adaptive abilities and – and that is important – the course of socio-cultural transformations is accepted, one can maintain the sense of one's own value, experience satisfaction, complacency and pride. However, some of the elderly right at the threshold of old age withdraw from active social life, resigning the opportunity of using the still possessed creative potential. Such a decision is highly influenced by the experience of disapproval expressed by the young and the pressure of constant adaptation to the changing expectations of the social environment and the unaccepted moral standards, which is connected with stress and frustration.

It is noteworthy that the conviction of the necessity of responding to the newest challenges and the will of rising to them, not only absorbs the mind of the elderly person, but also compels him to vigilance and effort, it generates tensions, makes him dependent on the dictates of the young, but it also diverts his attention from the problems, which are naturally important to him. Among those problems are mainly the problems resulting from the need for reflection upon one's own life, the arrangement of events constituting personal history, the deeper understanding of their sense in the context of the whole personal and collective history, also in the perspective of transformations of civilisation as well as the passing of time and the inevitably drawing nearer of the end of one's life. Such an autobiographical reflection and creative activity, also directed towards the settling of the previously unsettled and important matters, are conducted by: the sense of safety, stabilisation of one's life, relatively simple and arranged life-style, as well as relationships with one's peers, the possibility of recollection, discussion of one's views and their reinterpretation in the climate of mutual understanding and agreement. These conditions are in some measure provided for the elderly by the senior associations as well as Universities of the Third Age. Those needs of the seniors and those naturally related to the process of aging and motivation directed towards the achievement of mental integration, are undoubtedly not the

only sources of the life activity in the phase of the late adulthood, however (what is accordingly stressed by the classics of human developmental psychology) they are the main sources. The level of the satisfaction the need of autobiographical reflection and through this the attainment of internal integration is considered the measure of one's personal maturity and is the main determinant of the colour of one's feelings, mental condition and the sense of quality and meaning of life.

It is noteworthy that in the climate of the adoration of youth, activism and pragmatism many of the seniors consciously divert their attention from the past, especially if it had been sorrowful or had not been accepted by them. In such case they use numerous defence strategies, including the psychopharmacological, and in the most extreme cases they uncritically submit to the dictates of mass culture, directed most of all to the young, believing in the myth of eternal youth. Some of the elderly withdraw from the world, grow bitter, turn very critical towards the surrounding reality, the others, even those of their own generation. However, there are also those seniors, and there are more and more of them, who seek happiness and satisfaction, arising from engaging in interesting and socially beneficial matters, such as various aid and educational actions. This attitude is the most advantageous, as it supports the maintaining of one's activity, and thus helps in keeping a good physical and mental condition, improves the mood and humour, prevents depression and other ailments, to which the elderly are usually subject. The problem with those attitudes shows itself now and again, when the individual is no longer capable of meeting the requirements or the self assumed goals, when the task of realization begins to transcend one's abilities, or when, simply, fatigue and exhaustion become a chronic state and contribute to the weakening of the over-all condition. This relates mostly to the oldest group of seniors, who have reached the age of the so-called venerable oldness or longevity (90+).

The outlined characteristics of the psychological situation of the elderly person, supported by the academic textbook knowledge of the human development in the course of life as well as empirical research conducted for many years by psychology students, under the guidance of the author of this paper, induces towards the formulation of the following tasks, which the senior can face when confronting contemporary reality.

An important psychological problem seems to be the choice of a life-style, that would suit on one hand the personal preferences of the individual, resulting from that person's personal predispositions and previous life-style, on the other: it would be compatible with the expectations of the social surroundings. Currently those expectations are dominated by the postulate of activity as a life strategy beneficial for one in every aspect. In the past the life style of the aging person was not as much a question of choice, but rather of quite simple determination, related to the personal features, health condition and family situation. Thus there were seniors who lead an active life, as well as those who fit into the model of withdrawal. As a rule there were more of the latter in the past, therefore the classic development psychology considered the withdrawal from active life a form of everyday existence typical for the age of late adulthood (the disengagement theory). Nowadays, when activity has been promoted to the rank of one of the most important values – due to its desired material, health or pro-development consequences, the approach to the problem of life style has changed also in the field of psychogerontology. The problem is no longer the question, whether to be active or to with-

draw from activity, but the question of the specific form of activity, for example: should the past activity be continued or should one rather engage in some new form; should one aspire to achieve a new skill (such as learning a new foreign language) or rather to preserve and perfect knowledge and skills already possessed; should one engage in expansive actions (such as exploring new countries, with unknown people), or rather pursue a more peaceful, local activity (for instance in the domain of a well-known community or in the family). Therefore, the common awareness of the meaning, which the sole fact of being active has, makes activity a question of fundamental choice and a plan of life for many of the elderly, although sometimes made under psychological pressure, nevertheless: a choice – conscious and responsible. As such this choice needs the recognition of one's potential and possibilities of its realisation. Life passivity, omission of activity is unwelcome, however an unconsidered activity, dictated by the surroundings and pursued at all costs, might turn out to be fatal, especially if it is undertaken in spite of oneself, and not according to one's psychophysical or personal predispositions. Such an activity puts one at risk of stress, accelerates the exhaustion of vigour and instead of improving the quality of life, it causes the worsening. Especially risky is the activity of the elderly arising from the will of trying to outdo the young, becoming similar to them in manners (uniageism), engaging in actions meeting aspirations typical for the young, which leads to the negation and suppression of other needs, which are fundamental, natural and specific for the elderly. We are dealing with the form of activity for example when one excessively strives for physical attractiveness, at the expense of personal or spiritual development. Research shows that the people of late adult age who accept the changes in their own looks caused by the process of aging and who identify with the age group to which they belong, have in general a greater sense of the quality of life, more rewardingly realise themselves in other than physical fields of life (Jodłowska, 2010). Such people are perceived with greater approval by their environment than those who excessively focus on their appearances. That does not mean, that it is better not to take care of one's appearances and physical condition due to image connected reasons. A neat look, even fashionable attire, caring for hygiene, are by all means valued by the environment consisting of young people. However, it is a question of appropriateness, moderation and not making an impression, that it is the most important field of life, in addition one in which the elderly desire to equal the young or compete with them. For then one is put in risk of being accused of lack of self-criticism, ridiculousness and the opinion of being a "hysterically young old man".

When choosing the right form of activity and the level of its intensity the rule coined by one of the most eminent classics of the psychology of the human development in the course of life, Paul Baltes (1984) is useful, telling of the "selective optimisation and compensation". It is all about the way of "managing" one's psychophysical "resources", which relies upon accurate recognition of those resources (mental functions, competences, personal features), in which one can successfully still "invest" energy or effectively maintain them, protect, reaching the maximum of "profit" (satisfaction), whereas in the case of obvious loss of resources – compensate for them in a satisfying way with the help of appropriate behaviour (action) strategies. Acting according to this rule constitutes one of the most important manifestations of living wisdom, developed throughout the whole life, but most intensively in the period preceding the

phase of late adulthood (Straś-Romanowska 2011). It is also worthy to ask oneself from time to time about the purpose and sense of the undertaken activity, so that its results are not limited solely to the momentary pleasures, but that it would support the further development of oneself, to which one is predisposed, and so that it would bring deep joy, sense of purpose and fulfilment.

Another important challenge for the generation of seniors, related to the specificity of their age, is the coming into dialogue with the young. The fast pace of the transformations of civilisation leads to the deepening of intergenerational differences. One of the ways of levelling them is the education of the elderly members of the society in the fields, which they did not have the opportunity to study in the times of their youth, for instance: computer skills³. The ideal of life-long learning seems so deeply rooted and obvious that it does not need a special justification. Therefore, it is only about the popularization of this idea and – which is especially important – about maintaining common sense when introducing it. After all the elderly cannot catch up with the young, so what must be kept in mind is the principle of reasonable investment of one's resources, so that they are not unnecessarily wasted and other important needs and values are not lost from the field of sight.

It should also be kept in mind that the intergenerational dialogue more than expert competences (for example: computer skills) demands social competences, communication skills, such as openness towards the other, showing of interest, acceptance, the willingness to understand the arguments of the partner in the dialogue, his beliefs, choices, reasoning. The elderly often complain that for the young they are in a way invisible, unnoticed, ignored or disregarded. On the other hand the young hold against the elderly that they are insufficiently forbearing, intolerant, interfering, hostile to the youth, and along with that demanding, self-centred, excessively expansive in direct relations, imposing their worldview on others and not letting the younger interlocutor speak. Therefore both the young and old need education in the field of culture of intergenerational coexistence, social or interpersonal communication to eliminate the mistakes which make dialogue and agreement difficult.

Another task is connected with the aforementioned one, a task which is always up-to-date and at the same time specific for the elderly. It is the transmission of the heritage of universal values, tradition, living knowledge of history coming from one's own, direct experience and through this the support of the development of the national identity of the young generation. Face-to-face meetings, conversations and discussions are necessary for the realisation of this task. The mission of the transmission of cultural heritage and of making the tradition an attractive domain of knowledge demands special personal dispositions in the contemporary age, oriented as it is mainly towards the future. For one must not only possess knowledge of the facts, problems or values, but also one needs to be able to talk of them, discuss them and, what is probably of the uttermost importance and the same time difficult, to personally bear witness to the values which one holds dear. Sharing experience is nothing more than showing the living knowledge. In order to make others want to learn it, it must be constantly updated, that is: situated in new contexts and passed on with means of expression adequate to the given conditions

³ Sometimes the generations are distinguished to the information technology criterion: the generation before computer and the generation after computer.

of life and problems associated with them. Sharing the experience and wisdom with the young demands from the seniors a good knowledge of the reality and mechanisms of the contemporary world and its language. Willing to effectively protect the tradition, one needs to constantly develop. *Conservatio est continua creatio*.

There is also a task of a different character, which is faced by the elderly, which is not always realized by them. It is a delicate, even touchy one at times, nevertheless very important task. Namely, the critical approach towards one's own past and settling the account of the personally committed mistakes with oneself. This task has always been up-to-date, but nowadays it seems to be better-grounded than ever before, as the contemporary seniors are better educated and they have a greater access to all kinds of knowledge, and therefore, formulating the matter theoretically, are more predisposed to introspection and conscious, responsible behaviour than the seniors of the past. The young sometimes justify their negative relation to the older generation, pointing out to the lack of good role-models in the family, school or even in the academic circles. Well, for the lack of authorities in the domain of morality one cannot blame solely the youth, or justify this fact with the transformations of civilisation. The transformations are not taking place in an empty space and they have not begun today. We are all taking part in them and we are all responsible for their consequences, of course in appropriate measures. It is worth realising from time to time that it is our generation who have founded the conditions and created the climate for the development of the ethos of certain, and not different values. It is us who were the tutors of the current generation of adults and younger adults. So instead of complaining and criticizing, it is sometimes proper to accept responsibility and take the blame⁴.

Bibliography

- Baltes P.B., Baltes M.M. (1990), *Successful Aging: Perspectives from the Behavioral Sciences*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Jodłowska P. (2010), *Obraz subiektywnie spostrzeganych zmian w atrakcyjności i sprawności fizycznej a poczucie jakości życia u osób w średniej i późnej dorosłości* (unpublished master's thesis), Uniwersytet Wrocławski.
- Koska J. (2011), *Wyobrażenie młodych dorosłych o własnej starości* (unpublished master's thesis), Uniwersytet Wrocławski.
- Przetacznik-Gierowska M., Tyszkowa M. (1996), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, t. 1. *Zagadnienia ogólne*, WN PWN, Warszawa.
- Stuart-Hamilton I. (2006), *Psychologia starzenia się*, Zysk i Ska, Poznań.
- Straś-Romanowska M. (2011), *Późna dorosłość*, [in:] Trempała J. (ed.), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, WN PWN, Warszawa.
- Trempała J. (ed.), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, WN PWN, Warszawa.
- Zajac-Lamparska L. (2008), *Współczesny obraz człowieka starszego wśród młodych dorosłych*, „Polskie Forum Psychologiczne”, 13 (2).

⁴ One can point out to, as an artistic illustration of this problem, “Pułapka” (“The Trap”) a play by Tadeusz Różewicz currently staged at the Teatr Współczesny in Wrocław. This problem is also indicated by the young polemicists of Jan Hartman, a philosopher of the Jagiellonian University, who has published in the weekly “Tygodnik Powszechny” (2011, issues 12 and 14) a very critical essay concerning the mentality of contemporary students.

A prescription for healthy aging

Introduction

Gerontologists, geriatricians and evolutionary biologists have long been puzzled over fundamental questions related to the aging process, such as: how and why has aging evolved (Kirkwood 1977, pp. 301-304), when does old age begin (Milne 2006, pp. 290-297), who is old and who is just ill (Izaks and Westendorp 2003), why do women live longer than men, is the aging process intrinsically inevitable and irreversible or is there anti-aging medicine (Butler et al. 2002, pp. 333-338)? Although some of these issues have been dealt with, aging and longevity research is arguably central to current biology (Kirkwood 2005, p. 437).

It turns out that defining aging is not so straightforward and the definition itself is open to various interpretations (Weinert and Timiras 2003, pp. 1706-1716). Aging has been defined as the collection of changes that render human beings progressively more likely to die. Aging can also be defined as a progressive structural and functional decline, which means gradual deterioration of physiological functions with age, including a decrease in fecundity. However, it can be viewed as the intrinsic, inevitable, and irreversible process of loss of viability and increase in vulnerability.

A plethora of aging theories have been proposed to elucidate the causes and mechanisms of aging, though, to date, none of them has been generally accepted and each has some drawbacks. According to some theories, specific aging genes are switched on at a certain time of life (Hayflick 1993, pp. 207-222; Kim et al. 2002, pp. 503-511). Others implicate mutations, mainly in mtDNA, hormonal influence, and an immune system gone awry. Harman has asserted that byproducts of metabolism and life style, i.e. free radicals, mostly reactive oxygen species (ROS) are the real causes of aging (Harman 1956, pp. 298-300). According to the antagonistic pleiotropy theory, aging is the result of unavoidable side-effects linked to biological factors because some genes appear to act differently in old age than in a younger mature individual (Williams 1957, pp. 398-411). Kirkwood has put forward the disposable soma theory in which he suggests that aging evolved as a side-effect of sexual reproduction (Kirkwood 1977, pp. 301-304). It should be remembered, however, that there is currently no reason to expect there is only one biological mechanism responsible for aging and, therefore, several theories might be true. The peculiarity of the aging process consists in its complexity.

Aging is a highly complex process that involves multiple mechanisms at many different levels. It results from accumulation of unrepaired molecular and cellu-

lar damage arising throughout ontogeny (Kirkwood 2005, pp. 437-447). This process manifests itself in numerous degenerative morphological and physiological changes. Obviously this inevitable phenomenon involves an increase in the death rate. Although human health span and longevity appear to have a modest but significant hereditary component (Cournil and Kirkwood 2001 pp. 233-235), the mechanisms of aging are more stochastic than deterministic since the rate of this process can be easily modified by a lot of factors. It has been proven that differences in aging phenotype in monozygotic human twins are significant. Furthermore, evolutionary considerations suggest aging is caused not by active gene programming. The main significance can be attributed to evolved limitations in somatic maintenance, resulting in a built-up of cellular and molecular damage like mutations in DNA, particularly in mtDNA, caused by the ubiquitous free radicals (Kirkwood 2005, pp. 437-447; Rattan 2006, pp. 1230-1238), mainly by ROS.

It is common knowledge that aging can be thought of in two ways. According to the first interpretation, aging is a developmental process. As a human being ages, many cells undergo biochemical and physiological changes that underlie changes in tissue structure and functions as well as in organs. That aging as a genetically programmed aspect of development is apparent from observations of seemingly similar tissues aging at different rates in different animal species (Lodish et al. 2008, p. 952). The second aspect is often referred to as senescence, which means the process of morphological and physiological decline in body function that occurs with aging. Its consequences include increasing frailty, debility, vulnerability and susceptibility to many diseases and illnesses, which can eventually lead to death (Jurmain et al. 2009, p. 312).

Anti-aging medicine

“If you would live long, choose your parents well”, as the old adage goes. The author was doubtless well-versed in anti-aging medicine since now we know that good genes and the wherewithal to live long are absolutely indispensable right from the outset. In the past the austerities of life could accelerate aging (Rose and Mueller 1998, pp. 409-420). Nowadays people tend to live significantly longer (Kirkwood 2008, pp. 644-647) and, therefore, feasible anti-aging medicine is first and foremost aimed at preventing age-related debility, diseases and illnesses while rejuvenating the body seems to be fading into the background.

Anti-aging medicine consists of four kinds of intervention. The first tenet is a healthy life style including balanced diet and proper nutrition, low stress level, suitable habitation and occupation, social network and support, etc. The next one is appropriate supplementation of important antioxidants, phytochemicals from functional food (see Table 1), vitamins, minerals, etc. Antioxidants are molecules capable of inhibiting the oxidation of other molecules by free radicals so they fight with oxidative stress. Much as oxidation reactions are critical for metabolism, they can also be damaging, hence appropriate supplementation may be advisable. However, it is worth recalling that combined evidence from several clinical trials revealed that mega-doses of beta-carotene or vitamin E in fact increase mortality

rates. However, vitamin C supplementation appears to be pretty safe. The third kind of intervention is often referred to as hormone replacement therapy. The last one is so-called regenerative medicine. The last aspect embraces miscellaneous, cutting-edge medical technologies, such as genetic engineering and genomics, stem cell technologies and therapeutics, therapeutic cloning or even nanotechnology, which can successfully combat serious age-related diseases and illnesses, for instance cancer and cardiovascular diseases (CVD). These technologies are aimed at achieving benefits for both the quantity and quality of the human life span, which means that the main goal is to increase health span and not just life span.

Stem cell therapies can alter the basic cellular sources of dysfunctions and pathologies in order to eliminate numerous disorders and diseases. However, the use of human stem cells, particularly embryonic stem cells, remains controversial. In acute emergency care as well as the treatment of chronic diseases, ample sources of human cells, tissues and organs from therapeutic cloning can be used to reverse the aging process.

According to some scholars, aging is an inevitable consequence of entropy (Olshansky et al. 2002; Demetrius 2004, pp. 902-915), hence all efforts to stop this process or at least significantly reduce its rate are doomed to failure. These researchers have criticized anti-aging medicine and supplements, which are alleged to increase human health span, as scientifically unproven. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated that caloric restriction (CR) without malnutrition, i.e. a dietary regimen that restricts only calorie intake, delays aging in many species including nonhuman primates. CR has been shown to increase both median and maximum life expectancy and even health expectancy in animals.

Scientists keep searching for caloric restriction mimetic (CRM), an innocuous substance, which could affect the metabolism in the same way as caloric restriction does. To date the major candidates include resveratrol – a substance found in grapes and red wine, 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2DG), metformin, lipoic acid, leptin, and telomere length restoration (Dhahbi et al. 2004, pp. 5524-5529). Resveratrol, for example, appears to prevent some diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases (CVD), coronary heart disease (CHD) or diabetes (Baur 2010, pp. 261-269). Although some researchers speculate that the effect of CR and CRM should be negligible in the human species (Demetrius 2004, pp. 902-915; Olshansky et al. 2005, pp. 359-362), no one doubts that, barring serious diseases and trauma, healthy diet and life style, social network and avocation, will keep you healthy for a long time.

How to delay aging?

There is no doubt that there is a clear hereditary component in human longevity (Cournil and Kirkwood 2001, pp. 233-235). Almost all of the mechanisms required for somatic maintenance and repair (DNA repair, antioxidant systems, etc.) are genetically programmed. Moreover, whole long-lived families have been reported and now we know that life span is correlated with quality of mtDNA and enzymes that repair DNA and fight with free radicals. Environmental factors play a key role in the rate of aging. Healthy diet and lifestyle including physical

and mental exercise, social networks and support, successful sex life, hobbies, and taking an optimistic view lengthen not only life span but also health span, which is currently the main goal of anti-aging medicine. Unhealthy diet and use of tobacco, lack of exercise, sedentary lifestyle, obesity, stress, environmental pollution and numerous diseases shorten life. The majority of these factors, for instance smoking, fatty and fried food, stress, some kind of environmental pollution especially substances coming from combustion and industrial processes such as dioxins and dioxin-like compounds (DLC), and diseases have been shown to shorten telomere length or to be linked with an immense amount of ROS in the organism's cells or telomeres shortening, which means that they actively promote aging (Spector 2005, pp. 662-664; von Zglinicki et al. 2005, pp. 197-203). Environmental pollution can aggravate some diseases, for example asthma. Such agents should be avoided.

Healthy diet and avoiding hazardous habits, such as smoking, appear to be crucial factors, which should be considered in order to maintain good health and retard the aging process. Tobacco use is the most preventable cause of death and the most significant cause of lung, larynx, esophagus, bladder and kidney cancer. It is responsible for lung cancer in many thousands of people who are nonsmokers and also contributes to hypertension and CHD in smokers.

There is a notably low incidence of chronic diseases and higher health expectancy rates in populations living along the Mediterranean Sea. The traditional Mediterranean diet is often cited as beneficial for being low in saturated fat and high in monounsaturated fat and roughage coming from fresh fruit and vegetables. However, the diet is high in salt content because of salted fish, anchovies, olives, nuts or salads, which can be deleterious for the elderly due to the higher risk of hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and stroke in particular.

The traditional Okinawa diet is particularly often referred to because the elderly people from Okinawa have among the lowest mortality rates in the world and the highest number of centenarians. It is common knowledge that the aged from Okinawa enjoy not only the world's longest life expectancy but also the world's longest health expectancy. They live on a staple diet of fresh fruit and vegetables, e.g. citruses, yams or sweet potatoes, gobo root, soy and tofu, melons, grains, seaweed, nuts, Shiitake mushrooms, fish, green tea and herbs such as turmeric. Notwithstanding occasional pork and poultry, almost no meat and dairy products are consumed. The diet is rich in functional food, so-called nutraceuticals, and consists of a relatively low energy intake, which brings to mind the well-known effect of CR. Thus, low caloric intake, high vegetable and fruit consumption, high dietary fiber, good fats or flavonoid intake are the hallmarks of the Okinawa diet. It is noteworthy that the indigenous inhabitants of Okinawa are rather short and have a fairly low relative body mass in the vicinity of 20.5 BMI.

The popular notion that aging always leads to a pronounced decline and loss of cognitive ability is in fact spurious. Decline in memory, intelligence, verbal fluency and other tasks can be attributed to some diseases or lack of mental exercise. The brain can remain fully functioning as it ages. In fact, the majority of the elderly get only a bit forgetful in their old age, particularly in forming memories of recent events, while other individuals develop senile dementia including Alzheimer's

Disease (AD). However, it should not be forgotten that the mind needs exercise as well as the body in order to stay in peak form. Indeed there are many different ways to work on intellectual capacity. They comprise reading books and newspapers, challenging yourself with hobbies, volunteering, studying at The University of The Third Age, learning passages, favorite songs or jokes by heart, playing chess or draughts, solving crosswords, rebuses, maze, and Sudoku. Sadly, a considerable number of seniors underrate these forms of recreation to the detriment of their mental agility.

Some seniors decide to lead a sedentary life style staying at home, which can be very detrimental to health. Making new friends or keeping pets can be highly challenging but satisfactory. The elderly should read books and newspapers to keep up with what is happening in the outside world. Learning languages, playing the piano or science itself can be very enjoyable pastimes. A number of psychological and anthropological studies have shown that a study group with the highest leisure activity is likely to have lower risk of some age-related ailments and illnesses (Uchino 2006, pp. 377-387; Lakey 2010, pp. 177- 194). Social interaction has been shown to have a higher or at least comparable impact on satisfaction with life than physical activity. Thus, any pursuit that brings people together can be beneficial for promoting self-image, personal fulfillment and delaying the aging process. A vital role in providing cognitively challenging courses for the elderly and rallying their mental capacity is provided by The University of The Third Age, which is a self-help, international organization aimed at education, stimulation and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment for retirees.

How to cope with stress?

Stress is often a factor in the development of long-term sickness so stress management is also essential to successful aging. It should be noted that stress not only aggravates your condition, but also causes many disorders to develop. Stress has a detrimental effect on our physiology and emotional stability so it is extremely important to find techniques, which can be useful in order to cope with stress or prevent nervous tension. It is crucial that the elderly know how to reduce their responsibilities and expectations. Such interventions as favorite avocation, visualization, meditation with joss sticks or sedative music, or a warm bath may be helpful. It is important to take one thing at a time, avoid arguments or go easy on giving and receiving criticisms. Thus, flexibility and assertiveness are both indispensable. There are special courses providing techniques and strategies to train and achieve assertiveness. Such training consists of increasing awareness of personal feelings, desires and rights as well as learning verbal and nonverbal assertive skills. Additionally, serenity and cheerfulness should be nurtured in old age. Restorative sleep is also necessary for proper nervous system function since good sleep can rejuvenate brain nerve cells, promote brain function and reduce stress. Some researchers maintain that age is no barrier to having an active and successful sex life because it is purported to be an important part of life even in old age. However, a progressive functional decrease in sexual activity has been found in men

and women. Both sexes differ in the character of this age-related change because desire loss is more linear in men than women. Moreover, there are also large individual differences (Bancroft 2011, p. 262).

Summary

Old age is not a mistake of Mother Nature that happens to us. It is part of who we are and should be seen positively as the continuing growth towards maturity, becoming more fully human. A prescription for healthy aging is the support of the loving spouse, children, grandchildren, and other relatives. Friends often are extraordinarily important as many elderly people find even the greater equality and reciprocity of relationships with close friends because of a better source of emotional support. Thus, social support provided by the beloved person, friends and loving family is the real possession, reward and consolation in one's old age. Lucille Ball once quipped: "The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly [without overeating] and lie about your age". In fact, there is no point in adding years to life, only adding life to years makes sense.

Table 1. Functional food with phytochemicals which have been shown to combat ROS damage and reduce the risk of cancer or premature aging. (Source: Surh Y.J. 2003, pp. 768-780, modified).

Nutraceutical	Active phytochemical
Aronia, blue berry	Proanthocyanidin (PAC)
Broccoli	Sulforaphane
Citrus fruit, e.g. tangerines	Flavonoids, limonens
Cranberry, other -berries	PAC, flavonoids, ellagic acid
Dark chocolate	Polyphenols
Fish, linseed, nuts	ω -3 fatty acids
Garlic	Diallyl sulfide (DAS)
Green/black tea	Polyphenols
Pomegranate (juice)	Polyphenols
Red wine	Polyphenols, resveratrol
Maize/corn	Selenium
Tomato	Lycopene
Turmeric	Curcumin
Zucchini	Flavonoids, lutein

Bibliography

- Bancroft J. (2011), *Seksualność człowieka*, Elsevier Urban & Partner, Wrocław.
- Baur J.A. (2010), *Resveratrol, sirtuins, and the promise of a DR mimetic*, "Mechanisms of Ageing and Development" 131.
- Cournil A., Kirkwood T.B.L. (2001), *If you would live long, choose your parents well*, "Trends in Genetics" 17.

- Demetrius L. (2004), *Caloric restriction, metabolic rate and entropy*, "The Journal of Gerontology" Series A: Biological Sciences 59.
- Dhahbi J.M., Kim H.J., Mote P.L., Beaver R.J., Spindler S.R. (2004), *Temporal linkage between the phenotypic and genomic responses to caloric restriction*, "The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America" 13 (April).
- Harman D. (1956), *Aging: a theory based on free radical and radiation chemistry*, "Journal of Gerontology" 11.
- Hayflick L. (1993), *Aspects of cellular aging*, "Reviews in Clinical Gerontology" 3.
- Izaks G.J., Westendorp R. (2003), *Ill or just old? Towards a conceptual framework of the relation between ageing and disease*, "BMC Geriatrics" 3.
- Jurmain R., Kilgore L., Trevathan W. (2009), *Essentials of Physical Anthropology*, 7th edition. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Kim S., Kaminker P., Campisi J. (2002), *Telomeres, aging and cancer: in search of a happy ending*, "Oncogene" 21.
- Kirkwood T.B. (1977), *Evolution of ageing*, "Nature" 270.
- Kirkwood T.B. (2005), *Understanding the odd science of aging*, "Cell" 120.
- Kirkwood T.B. (2008), *A systematic look at an old problem*, "Nature" 451(7179).
- Lahey B. (2010), *Social support: Basic research and new strategies for intervention*, [in:] Maddux J. E., Tangney J.P. (eds.) *Social Psychological Foundations of Clinical Psychology*, Guildford, New York.
- Lodish H., Berk A., Kaiser C.A., Krieger M., Scott M.P., Bretscher A., Ploegh H. (2008), *Molecular cell biology*, W.H. Freeman and Company, New York.
- Milne E.M.G. (2006), *When does human ageing begin?*, "Mechanisms of Ageing and Development" 127.
- Olshansky S.J., Hayflick L., Carnes B.A., Butler R.N. (2002), *Złudne eliksiry młodości*, "Świat Nauki" sierpień.
- Olshansky S.J., Rattan S.I.S. (2005), *What determines longevity: metabolic rate or stability?*, "Discovery Medicine" 5(28).
- Rattan S.I.S. (2006), *Theories of biological aging: genes, proteins and free radicals*, "Free Radical Research" 40 (12).
- Rose M.R., Mueller L.D. (1998), *Evolution of human lifespan: past, future, and present*, "American Journal of Human Biology" 10(4).
- Rose M.R., Nusbaum T.J. (1994), *Prospects for postponing human aging*, "The FASEB Journal: Official Publication of the Federation of American Societies".
- Spector T.D. (2005), *Obesity, cigarette smoking, and telomere length in women*, "Lancet" 366.
- Surh Y.J. (2003), *Cancer chemoprevention with dietary phytochemicals*, "Nature Review on Cancer" 3.
- Uchino B. (2006), *Social support and health: A review of physiological processes potentially underlying links to disease outcomes*, "Journal Behavioral Medicine" 29.
- Weinert B. T., Timiras P.S. (2003), *Invited review: Theories of aging*, "Journal of Applied Physiology" 95.
- Williams G.C. (1957), *Pleiotropy, natural selection and the evolution of senescence*, "Evolution" 11.
- von Zglinicki T., Martin-Ruiz C.M. (2005), *Telomeres as biomarkers for ageing and age-related diseases*, "Current Molecular Medicine" 5.

The University of the Third Age and the social exclusion of the elderly

One of the most important processes currently affecting European countries – including Poland – is an ageing population. Longer lifespan of the individual along with negative population growth rate, which is a frequently debated subject nowadays, result in senior citizens becoming a social group of considerable and growing size. Therefore discussing the topic of old age and its many possible forms is important and necessary due to its cultural and social context.

Old Age – a term, “which most commonly sends shivers down one’s spine, words filled with unease, weakness and sometimes fear. But it is not a precise term, words whose meaning remains obscure, a fragment of reality whose form eludes perception” (Minois 1995, p. 11). Yet there is a growing interest in it because of the increasing number of the elderly in the total population of western societies. The senior citizens as a group is a specific social-demographic category that has captured the interest of researchers of many different specializations and the attention of public opinion (Jakubowska, Raciniewska, Rogowski 2009, p. 7). Its existence has been acknowledged by commerce and the mass media, whose policy until now had been to avoid the subject of ageing.

The mass media, as Norbert Pikuła states, “avoid topics related to death, disability and old age” (Pikuła 2011, p. 96). It is important to state that this behavior affected only certain instances of the aforementioned items, mainly “natural” death – the degradation of body and decay, disability as a “pathology” or a variety of attention capturing difference and old age perceived as a process of slow degradation and dying of the body. They become sort of taboo subjects, a direct contradiction to the widely promoted “image of young, healthy and successful, well groomed man” (Pikuła 2011, p. 96).

Old age has been a subject of discussion for many years now and there are a considerable number of publications related to it yet still a commonly accepted definition of old age is absent. Some of its characteristics cannot be fully comprehended while other are linked with the individual experience so closely that any attempt to extract their general meaning is destined to fail. The late adult period is considered in different contexts: social, economic, cultural, therefore the researchers vary in their perception and definition of the phenomenon.

According to Emilia Garncarek old age is a “social destination imposed on an individual because society proclaims who should be considered old, and how to perceive and define it” (Garncarek 2005, p. 196). On the other hand Rafał Włodarczyk defines it as a name, that is a “term that is used for different people

depending on specific circumstances, therefore it is extremely important who, when and how to try to set the rules for usage of the term, its field, meaning and who should it describe (Włodarczyk 2006, p. 243). Commercial medical services, social services and media in general consider old age to be physical process of the body growing older and concern themselves with diseases, beauty, preventive care and other various medical conditions.

Ageing is an "inseparable element of development of both individual human beings and humanity as a whole" (Klonowicz 1986, p. 35), a natural occurrence accompanying man from conception till death. Not being truly explained and comprehended ageing has incited varied emotions and stances, some deny it "its value, despise it, place it amongst incurable ills, harbingers of death, others deny its very existence, refusing to acknowledge the changes in their own bodies" (Minois 1995, p. 12). It seems reasonable then to say that in time the ways of perception, interpretation and imagining of old age has changed.

The present period, referred to as postmodernism, as Wojciech Klimczyk and others believe, is "the era of aesthetization and exaltation that is dedicating life to search for the way to fully experience the world" (Klimczyk 2008, p. 62). A period during which only that which is aesthetically correct counts and is directed towards the senses. XX/XXI century society, described as being "visioncentric", has been dominated by ever-present images, which commonly shape human sensitivity and perception of the surrounding world. A community dazzled by the sight of young and beautiful bodies tries to forget eschatology and depressing awareness of ageing and death, which upset those, who imagine them to be uncertain and not truly known future.

"This process of marginalization and social disapproval seems to be based on the physical characteristics of ageing which we perceive as unattractive, ugly, disgusting which are opposite to the preferred and dominant aesthetic patterns" (Jakubowska, Raciniewska, Rogowski 2009, p. 8). Contemporary *homo esteticus* following the principle of aesthetic pleasure does not accept this image and eliminates it from public space (and day-to-day life) along with everything that he may perceive as related to the passing of the body: diseases, disabilities and physical death. Old age must be aesthetical and pleasing to the eye and attractive. The attractiveness of old age can be perceived as a way of "using" the body so that it gains a socially acceptable form. In this context one may argue that in the post-modern period the body is not given to a man but rather an aesthetical-visual project required of him (even, or maybe especially, when the object is an ageing body, which serves as a reminder of the frailty of human life).

Soma as a complex social-cultural construct is under constant pressure to accommodate standards and rules of a given time and place. The main requirement for one's, even elderly, body given by modern society is the need for beauty, which compels the individual to adhere to aesthetic effectiveness which in turn renders the body not only a natural phenomenon but also a potential source of aesthetic experience. Therefore in a strict biological sense the body becomes a problem for modern man which can be further described as a fear that the body, an organic construct, is susceptible to ageing and ultimately death. The end result is

that post modern society driven by its aesthetic needs demands that an individual accepts his body as a project constantly needing attention and when it's goal – aesthetic effectiveness is achieved rewards him with social acceptance.

Robert Piķuła points out that in modern societies “a trend to push elder citizens to the background is present. Youth, health, beauty, ability and showmanship are what counts while old age is not socially acceptable anymore. The younger generation's lifestyle considerably differs from the elder's. Search for »eternal youth« is present. There is a constant struggle with unavoidable passing of beauty and health. The mass media promotes youth especially in television and magazines” (Piķuła 2011, p. 95) increasing the degree of social isolation of the elderly and their „invisibility” in the public space.

Many social and cultural changes that took place at the turn of the XXI century had a dramatic impact on elder citizens – their role, place and status in both family and society has changed. As an effect the community of elders in polish society, as specialists on this subject claim, has been moved to the margin of many levels of social life. Beata Ziębińska believes that this process “has its roots in social order that came into being during the transformation of the form of government, modern culture and in the very essence of advanced age as a phase in human life in which so called “prevalence of losses over gains occurs” (Ziębińska 2010, p. 11). Physical changes – the ageing of the body and many deformities caused by various medical conditions augment the process of exclusion and contempt towards elder citizens, who are being pushed to the margin of what is considered correct and in accordance with current trends such as the “cult of beauty and youth” and “necessity of success”. As an effect we can perceive the phenomenon of “aesthetization of advanced age” and a trend to present it in the light of youth. Marginalization of senior citizens, which is the topic of this text, has a relative quality because it is enacted through comparison of advanced age – as the period of prevalence of losses over gains – and youth which includes characteristics such as: energy, cleverness, initiative, resourcefulness, enterprising spirit and ability to take risks (Ziębińska 2010, p. 120) – traits helping activity and development directed towards the future.

According to Beata Ziębińska the aforementioned attributes in contemporary society have gained “more renown than wisdom and experience of elders” (Ziębińska 2010, p. 120), so highly valued and widespread in the past. Nowadays the elderly are treated as if they were the antithesis to “those qualities, therefore as a burden hindering the development and prosperity of others” (Ziębińska 2010, p. 120). What is more, as Norbert Piķuła comments, the point of view that “elderly should step back and free their place for the young” (Piķuła 2011, p. 97) becomes more and more prevalent nowadays. Exclusion of the elderly according to specialists in the matter, is so painful because it includes many levels of life, there are no job adverts, adequate methods of rest and relaxation, t.v. shows also public transport, streets, pavements and buildings are not adapted to their needs (Piķuła 2011, p. 97).

Marginalization of the elderly is also augmented by passive lifestyle, accommodation and non-existence of extended families (Piķuła 2011, p. 95). After “performing their duties as i.e. babysitters” (Piķuła 2011, p. 96) the elderly quite often are not needed anymore so they are placed in eldercare facilities, a special type

of ghetto which was created for those who “are unfit to be part of society due to their looks, age and deteriorating health, those who remind others of suffering and death” (Pikuła 2011, p. 96).

Withdrawing from professional activity, the change from being an employee to a retired person is usually associated with lowering ones financial status, it forces many changes of a various nature on the elderly. They are among others: changes related to reorganizing daily life due to increased amount of free time (the time spent at work earlier), lifestyle and personal relations. Ending a career and retiring is one of the most difficult transitions for the elderly. Their relations with coworkers decline or are broken which in turn may invoke the feelings of isolation and loneliness. Also withdrawing from important and responsible position at work may trigger the feeling of social uselessness.

The excess of free time forces the elderly to make various decisions on how to organize it. Listening to one’s needs should result in deciding the proper lifestyle: passive – focused on rest and relaxation or active whose object is further development. Both methods are backed by many arguments yet still the active lifestyle is more widely socially accepted since it requires initiative and leads to self-realization.

The social exclusion of the elderly phenomenon has been defined in many ways. It includes numerous contexts and levels: individual, macrosocial, cultural, economic. In general it can be argued that it is a certain type of limiting of the participation of the elderly in various levels of social life due to:

- lack of adequate means which would allow them to perform socially and culturally important roles,
- being objects of discrimination imposed by cultural stereotypes and prejudices,
- possessing characteristics which limit their ability to partake of social resources due to
- existence of individual qualities defining old age as a phase of life (Piotrowski 1973, p. 25).

The elder citizens, as has been stated in many works on the subject, can be considered a group that is marginalized. This process can be witnessed in instances such as:

- improper attitude towards the elderly and their multi-layer discrimination,
- existence of unfair cultural stereotypes which provide the base for constructing the negative outlook of old age,
- existence of unreasonable prejudices and fear of the elderly,
- lack of credible knowledge of old age specificity, which should be considered a regular phase in human life,
- correlation of old age with diseases and death,
- change of status of the elderly in both family and society (Ziębińska 2010, p. 124).

Current stereotypes of the elderly concern many different issues. Their effect is a visible distortion of the old age perception. They also augment the senior discrimination process and in consequence their removal from social “field of vision”.

Beata Ziębińska states that “modern old age loses its only important social function – being the medium which carries traditional values – because those values themselves are losing importance” (Ziębińska 2010, p. 121). It seems reasonable then to assume that the attitudes of the society towards the elderly are at least in some part a result of social, cultural, economical changes experienced by European societies during last couple of years. Important factors that contribute to the process of marginalization can be identified as:

- various economic problems such as rising unemployment, financial crashes,
- aforementioned social-cultural changes: cult of youth, gerontophobia, ageism,
- domination and rapid development of new technology which created the “cyber-exclusion” of the elderly.

Considerable influence on this process can be attributed to psycho-physical characteristics of the elderly, mainly the decrease of effectiveness visible on many planes of life leading to losing or limiting independence that renders satisfying basic human needs difficult or even impossible and the affected person – unable to make decisions regarding him/herself and his/her life.

Willingness to eliminate the often invalid and inactive elderly is a more and more often witnessed phenomenon. There are many possible reasons for this situation. First of all the elderly remind others of the inevitability of ageing and death, next they “do not comply” with the popularized model of “successful man”: young, beautiful, active. Also they show a certain incompatibility with the preferred values which “exist in culture due to changes of social order at the social-cultural level” (Ziębińska 2010, p. 102).

The aforementioned marginalization of the elderly in culture has its roots in the difference and incompatibility of the elderly culture with the one that creates the context in which they are forced to function. This marginalization is at least in part due to the effect of changes of social order in Poland and on the other hand “domination of values nurtured by younger social groups worldwide” (Ziębińska 2010, p. 107). Those values are selected, according to Beata Ziębińska, “by so-called postmodern culture and also by cultural implications of usage of informational-communicational technology” (Ziębińska 2010, p. 107) influencing the increase in range of social exclusion of the elderly. How then can it be stopped?

According to researchers in the field of gerontology the proper course of action in order to prevent marginalization of the elderly in Poland is directing synergetic coexistence of individual work of the senior citizens, whose goal is to turn old age into a valuable, attractive and interesting phase of life for them and others alike, with other communal works which encompass well planned and organized actions of different institutions including those which support and gather the elderly in order to improve the quality of their lives. An example of such institutions are Universities of the Third Age which are becoming more common in Poland and worldwide.

The University of the Third Age is an institution that, as the author believes, negates the social exclusion of the elderly through many varied projects. It popularizes numerous methods of intellectual, social and physical activity for the elderly

in order to improve their quality of life. Different forms of activity including: sections, classes, seminars, team projects, common interest groups are all focused on prompting activity, discovering one's talents, developing interests and hobbies. The search for individual improvement helps with the elderly development in a broader sense – functioning in new contexts and roles (the listener, member of self-government), strengthening the sense of self-esteem.

The broad range of items on offer by Universities of the Third Age makes it possible for an elder person to participate in various activities directed by cultural and art institutions which enables the elderly to witness, understand and comprehend contemporary social-cultural changes. The University of the Third Age also provides the opportunity to perform tasks regarded as socially useful, therefore in a way returning the elderly a “full membership” in society which they lost when they left the workforce.

Excess spare time that used to be occupied by work is often an inspiration to search for satisfactory activity to replace their former full time work. The University of the Third Age gives ample opportunity to fill that gap along with helping satisfy needs such as:

- appreciation (by others, peers),
- effectiveness (self-governing, making decisions, executing tasks),
- importance (in community),
- individuality and uniqueness,
- belonging to a group (peer group),
- self-expression (creating and presenting works),
- development (psychic, intellectual, physical),
- support (psychic, emotional) (Ziębińska 2010, p. 93).

Another aspect of the University of the Third Age operations that helps prevent the social marginalization of the senior citizens is popularizing various forms of social and cultural activity:

- participation in peer help groups and sections,
- organizing and attending various cultural and occasional events,
- undertaking different initiatives, social events,
- organizing international and domestic tours, meetings.

Constant broadening and improving of University of the Third Age educational offerings is a sign of interest in the elderly, listening to their needs and care about their successful adjustment to requirements of changing world.

The attitude of representatives and employees of the University of the Third Age directed to the needs and expectations of participants, augmented by the will to carry out real work is possible due to:

- cooperation with facilities and institutions of both local and worldwide range that promote culture, art and education,
- local authorities of cities, communities and villages,
- mass media,
- social care institutions and facilities gathering the elderly both international and domestic.

Thanks to the aforementioned institutions and their cooperative work directed

to improve the quality of life of the elderly in Poland and abroad, old age may become the time of:

- openness to innovation and changes of the modern world,
- having positive image of oneself,
- constructing optimistic outlook of old age,
- conducting creative search of ways of intellectual self-development,
- increased activity and curiosity about the surrounding world,
- creative problem solving,
- building cross-generation bridges by the means of projects employing people of various ages, sharing wisdom with others including the younger people and gaining from them the knowledge of the new and unknown,
- increased consideration and openness.

In order to meet this goals the University of the Third Age tries to:

- change the negative outlook of old age,
- create a positive image of growing old,
- combat prejudice and stereotypes,
- present old age as a value – as an equal and interesting part of life,
- create the “old age culture” with accepting outlook for the elderly,
- provide new directions for development of reflection about old age and process of ageing,
- increase knowledge about old age as a phase in human life in order to support the elderly,
- restore the elderly to a dignified position in both family and society.

Thanks to those actions we can now perceive many positive changes in imagining, perception and interpretation of old age. The University of the Third Age has made the elderly “visible” and their opinions “audible”, creating proper attitudes – promoting the active old age pattern, constantly actualizing the knowledge base about the old age, explaining nuances of contemporary changes, strengthening intellectual, physical and social activity. It counteracts loneliness by prompting students to social and cultural activation, prevents “cyber-exclusion” by counteracting digital illiteracy, ageism, gerontophobia. Therefore one might say that Universities of the Third Age are “institutions that provide opportunity for the elderly to live an active life, counteracting their marginalization” (Ziębińska 2010, p. 11-12).

Bibliography

- Cyceron, Plutarch (1996), *Pochwała starości*, Verum, Warszawa.
- Garncarek E. (2005), *Filmowy portret starszych kobiet*, [in:] Zierkiewicz E., Łysak A. (eds.), *Starsze kobiety w kulturze i społeczeństwie*, MarMar, Wrocław.
- Jakubowska H., Raciniowska A., Rogowski Ł. (eds.) (2009), *Patrząc na starość*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań.
- Klimczyk W. (2008), *Erotyzm ponowoczesny*, Universitas, Kraków.
- Klonowicz S. (1986), *Starzenie się ludności*, [in:] Sawicka F. W. (eds.), *Encyklopedia seniora*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa.

- Minois G. (1995), *Historia starości. Od antyku do renesansu*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen, Warszawa.
- Pikuła N. (2011), *Etos starości w aspekcie społecznym*, WAM, Kraków.
- Piotrowski J. (1973), *Miejsce człowieka starego w rodzinie i społeczeństwie*, PWN, Warszawa.
- Włodarczyk R. (2006), *Kłopot z reprezentacją a widmowość starości. Apologia głosu w imię starości*, [in:] Zierkiewicz E., Łysak A. (eds.), *Trzeci wiek drugiej płci. Starsze kobiety jako podmiot aktywności społecznej i kulturowej*, MarMar, Wrocław.
- Ziębińska B. (2010) *Uniwersytety Trzeciego Wieku jako instytucje przeciwdziałające marginalizacji osób starszych*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe „Śląsk”, Katowice.

RESEARCH

Sense and life – orientations in late adulthood: comparative analysis

During the last decade the number of elderly people in the general structure of Ukrainian population has significantly increased. According to demographic forecasts, the number of 65-year olds and those older will increase to 21% in the next 10 years. It reflects the general tendency in economically developed countries. Therefore, it results in the necessity to research psychological problems that appear in late adulthood. One of them is transformation of person's life values.

The problem of values stands separate among the problems of personal development in the elderly age as this sphere, according to V. Frankl, makes the core of a personality. Being constituents of a person's individual experience, "sense and life" orientations influence the evaluations of the previous life path and help adjustment to future changes. The degree to which these life values are preserved and their integrity can be important psychological criteria of the normal aging process. This aspect of the problem is studied in the works by Kh. Porseva (2004). While researching psychological peculiarities of value orientations of elderly people (55–65 years old) who live in Ukraine, Kh. Porseva (2005) found out that at that age they are characterized by constancy and integrity. Retirees are trying to achieve a balanced life in all the spheres, giving primary importance to such ethical values as honesty and decency. Crucial also are value orientations of personal communications. On the periphery among Ukrainian retirees are values connected with creativity, self-affirmation and professional self-realization.

The shift of need for creativity onto periphery is also stressed by O. Krasnova and O. Liders in their work *Sotsialna psihologia starinnia (Social psychology of aging)* (2002). This fact should be stressed as N. Priazhnikov (1996) and others consider that creativity should be the main value orientation of an aging person. It is the very creativity that ensures inner integrity, social ties, distracts from negative thoughts and results in constructive aging.

According to V. Chudnovski (1988), destructive strategy of aging suggests the collapse of sense and life orientations structure: the main sense collapses and the hierarchy does not exist anymore. The most important factor for such changes is retirement which is connected with the loss of social roles, prestige, income and circle of communication. The system of attitude towards oneself, other people and the whole world undergoes changes. The social life of a person weakens, which could be compensated by preservation of social and personal values of that person.

At the level of everyday consciousness the viewpoint is widespread which suggests that at the elderly age one may observe the change of character traits for

the worse. However, in the 1980-s of the XX century it was established that neither moral nor social traits are lost under the influence of such factors as person's age (Краснова, Лидерс 2002). Nevertheless, it is likely that personal dispositions influence value orientations in late adulthood helping or inhibiting overcoming those psychological difficulties that appear after retirement. The aim of the article is to research "sense and life" orientations in connection with personal dispositions of retirees as compared to those of pre-retirees. First and foremost, we were interested in the fact which key personal features would help preserve active life attitude when a person retires.

Research Procedure

The empirical research involved 50 persons: 25 retirees¹ (aged from 55 to 82, average age 66,5 years old), who have retired and are not involved into professional activity, and 25 persons of preretirement age (aged from 50 to 58, average age 52 years old) who are involved in professional activity. The pensioners' group consisted of 18 women and 7 men, pre-retirement age group – 10 women and 15 men. All these people live in the city of L'viv and towns and villages of L'viv region.

The morphological test of life values by V. Sopov and L. Karpushina (2011) and Japanese version (the author X. Tsuyi) of a five factor personal questionnaire by R. McCrae and P. Costa (Big Five) as adapted by A. Khromov (2000) has been used.

The life values test made it possible to find out how important for those under research are such terminal values as self-development, spiritual needs, creativity, social contacts, personal prestige, material status, personal achievements, preservation of one's own individuality and also in what sphere of life their realization is particularly important: professional life, family or social life, education, hobby or physical activity.

With the help of personal questionnaire five personal characteristics have been diagnosed: extraversion-introversion, attachment-detachment, controlling-naturalness, emotionality-emotional restraint, "light-heartedness"-practicality.

Credibility of the results obtained was checked by means of mathematical and statistical methods of data processing. Cluster analysis was done by means of k-averages on those researched method, comparative analysis – according to Mann-Whitney U Test (with $p < 0,05$), correlational – according to r-Pearsona (with $p < 0,05$). The procedure of factorial analysis (with $> ,60$) consisted in determining key factors resulting from the procedure Varimax normalized for each of the groups: retirees and pre-retirees. The models built made it possible to analyze peculiarities of sense and life orientations of elderly people and importance of realizing personal values in various spheres of life within the context of main personal characteristics of a person.

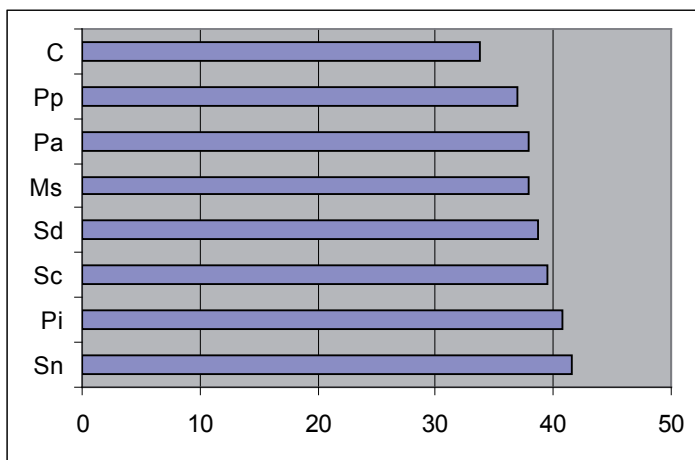
¹ In Ukraine retirement age for women is 55, for men – 60 years old.

“Sense and life” orientations and personal dispositions for the group of retirees

The priority life values among the retirees under research were spiritual needs (Sn) and the need for preserving one’s individuality (Pi), the least significant was the need for creativity (C) (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Priority of life values for retirees

(Sn – spiritual needs, Pi – preservation of one’s individuality, Sc – social contacts, Sd – self-development, Ms – material status, Pa – personal achievements, Pp – personal prestige, C – creativity).

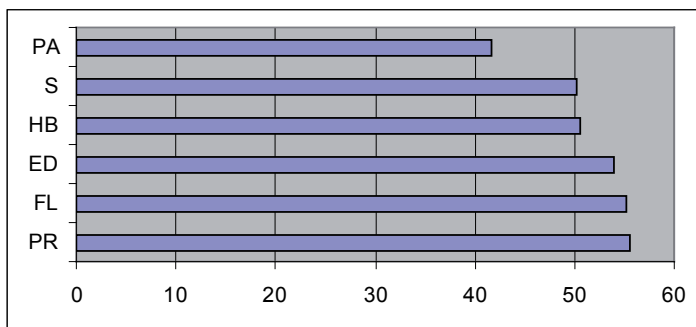


(Source: author)

The most prioritized life spheres for this group are professional sphere (P) and family life (FL), the least – the sphere of physical activity (PA) (Fig. 2). Decrease of the role of physical activity is more typical of women-retirees ($r=0,397$). Among the main dispositions of individuality in the group of retirees are attachment and self-control.

Fig. 2. Priority of life spheres for retirees

(PR – professional, FL – family, ED – education, HB – hobbies, S – social, PA – physical activity).



(Source: author)

The older retirees are, the less they need social contacts ($r=-0,400$), the less is the need for high material status ($r=-0,452$), they demonstrate less "light-heartedness" ($r=-0,428$), cooperation with others ($r=-0,516$) and artisticity ($r=-0,424$).

To deeper analyze peculiarities of sense and life orientations of elderly people, the procedure of clusterization on those under research was conducted. It resulted in two clusters, the correctness of classification of which makes up: for the first cluster 100%, for the second one – 100%. The fact that the researched ones belong to clusters was checked by means of discriminant analysis which has shown that the separation was done first of all according to the importance of professional sphere for retirees ($\lambda=0,217$; $F=10,735$; $p=0,004$). Mann-Whitney U Test was used to compare the obtained clusters. On the basis of such comparison clusters for the retirees have been named in the following way: the first cluster – passive retirees (48%), the second cluster – active retirees (52%).

Retirees with tendency to active life attitude are more interested in various fields of human life, first and foremost, in professional sphere ($p=0,000$). Also a lot of attention is given to self-development ($p=0,000$), satisfaction of spiritual needs ($p=0,01$), creativity ($p=0,000$), social contacts ($p=0,000$), preservation of personal prestige ($p=0,000$) and individuality ($p=0,000$), personal achievement ($p=0,000$), material status ($p=0,000$). As far as personal dispositions are concerned, the group of active retirees demonstrated higher indicators of extraversion ($p=0,019$) which is achieved due to domination ($p=0,011$), communicability ($p=0,002$) and self-presentation ($p=0,05$), as well as higher indicators of "light-heartedness" ($p=0,008$), which is expressed in such features as interest ($p=0,019$) and being artistic ($p=0,009$). The research has shown no age and gender differences between these two subgroups of retirees.

By means of factorial analysis four-factor model of sense and life orientations of retirees was built which explains 80,35% from general data dispersion. These factors are: "Integration of sense and life orientations" (55,21% of dispersion), "Self-control" (8,07% of dispersion), "Emotional stability" (7,14% of dispersion) and "Expressivity" (9,93% of dispersion).

The correlational analysis has shown that such a personal trait as "light-heartedness" is closely connected with life values of an elderly person: expressive people pay more attention to personal and social values as well as see their realization in such spheres of life as profession, education, family and hobby (Table 1).

The above-mentioned makes it possible to characterize the researched elderly people-retirees in the following way: the most important is that retirees try to integrate various spheres of life and life values. Close interaction of "sense and life" values has been discovered which indicates the constructive type of aging. The sphere of social values in the group in question is closely connected with personal ones. They give primary importance to interesting and meaningful work, penetrating into the essence of the activity. They obtain more moral satisfaction from the process of work rather than from its result. The group values the possibility to have such a job or occupation that could stress their individual uniqueness and give them a chance to stand out from the crowd. According to them, one should build one's life pursuing one's own wishes and convictions.

Table 1. Correlation ties for personal characteristic “Light-heartedness” among retirees

Scales		r, p < 0,05
Life values	Self-development	0,648
	Spiritual needs	0,414
	Creativity	0,529
	Social contacts	0,670
	Personal prestige	0,406
	Material status	0,430
	Preservation of individuality	0,557
Life activities	Professional	0,551
	Educational	0,641
	Family	0,469
	Hobbies	0,611

(Source: author)

Considering professional activity as the key factor of human life, the elderly people participating in our research pay lots of attention and time to solving the problems in their families. It is vital for them to achieve spiritual bonds with family members and the main precondition of preserving family welfare, in their opinion, is morality. At the same time they wish to preserve their independence from the members of the family.

For the elderly people in our research it is important, on the one hand, to combine will regulation of behaviour and emotions and, on the other hand, positive attitude towards people. In people they value mutual help, cooperation, sympathy, conscientiousness, neatness, responsibility, keeping to moral principles and established norms of behaviour. Moreover, our retirees gave significance to such personal dispositions as emotional maturity and emotional stability. At the same time with age their expressivity and social determination is decreasing.

In the group of elderly people it is possible to distinguish such persons that are inclined to active and passive life attitudes. These results confirm data of empirical researches by B. Ananiev (1980), E. Erikson (1986), L. Antsyferova (1994) and others, obtained in the second half of the XX century that distinguish two approaches of personal making at the elderly age: adaptive and desadaptive. Thus, despite the change of social and historical and economic situation in the XXI century elderly people who reach retirement age have similar tendencies of aging to those which were observed in the XX century. The main difference between active and passive retirees is in their attitude to the professional sphere: active pensioners pay much more attention to it.

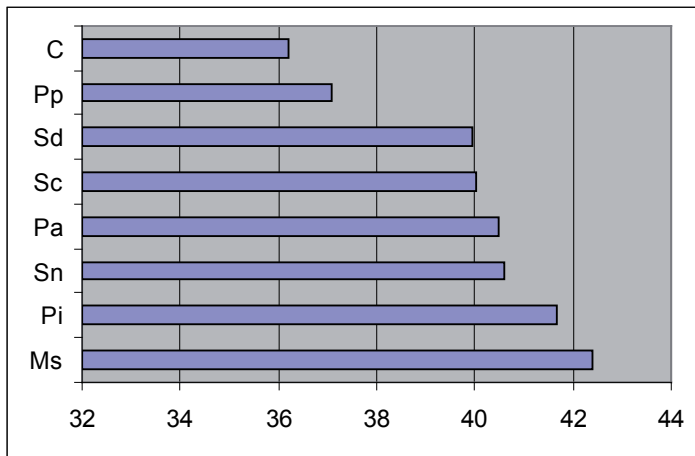
A significant factor discovered among people of elderly age is expressivity. Combination of this feature with communicability allows elderly people to have more active attitude to the world and satisfy their spiritual and material needs. It is necessary to pinpoint that light-hearted and to some extent careless attitude to life at the retirement age promotes growth of a role of the whole range of spiritual, material and social values of a person.

Despite the fact that creativity and physical activity are at the bottom in the hierarchy of sense and life orientations in the general group of retirees, in the life of active retirees, men in particular, they play much more important role than in the life of passive retirees.

“Sense and life” orientations and personal dispositions for pre-retirees

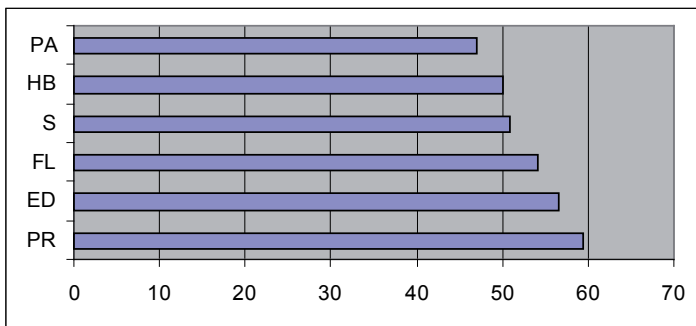
Characterizing the priority of life values with pre-retirees it is possible to state that these are material needs and the need to preserve individuality. The least significant is the need for creativity (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Priority of life values for pre-retirees (Ms – material status, Pi – preservation of one’s individuality, Sn – spiritual needs, Pa – personal achievements, Sc – social contacts, Sd – self-development, Pp – personal prestige, C – creativity).



(Source: author)

Fig. 4. Priority of life activities for pre-retirees (PR – professional, ED – educational, FL – family life, S – social, HB – hobbies, PA – physical activity).



(Source: author)

Among life activities in the group of pre-retirees under research the most important are professional and educational spheres while the sphere of physical activity turns out to be the least important (Fig. 4). The most expressed personal dispositions for them are self-control and attachment to people.

Younger pre-retirees pay more attention to spiritual needs ($r=-0,487$), creativity ($r=-0,470$) and physical activity ($r=-0,411$); more socially active at this age are women ($r=-0,420$). It is discovered that expressive pre-retirees are more inclined to self-development ($r=0,440$) and these are first of all those who show plasticity in behaviour ($r=0,513$) and willingly present themselves ($r=0,483$). Moreover, expressive people prefer educational sphere ($r=0,493$) and hobby ($r=0,412$). Plasticity as a personal trait closely correlates with the importance of educational sphere ($r=0,554$) and personal hobbies of a person ($r=0,396$). The value of one's own prestige when retirement is approaching is more expressed with extraverts ($r=0,400$) and special role is played by their communicability ($r=0,428$), ability of self-presentation ($r=0,534$) and behaviour plasticity ($r=0,570$). More impulsive pre-retirees pay more attention to family life ($r=0,441$).

Data clusterization for the pre-retirees group resulted in two clusters, for which the correctness of classification of those under research makes up: for the first cluster 100%, for the second one – 100%. The discriminant analysis has shown that the separation of this group was done according to the importance of professional sphere ($\lambda=0,293$; $F=8,584$; $p=0,009$), educational ($\lambda=0,329$; $F=11,899$; $p=0,003$), social ($\lambda=0,274$; $F=6,697$; $p=0,02$) and family ($\lambda=0,249$; $F=4,419$; $p=0,049$) spheres. By comparing clusters according to Mann-Whitney U Test, we have obtained the following names: the first cluster – active pre-retirees (56%), the second cluster – passive (44%).

Persons with whom at the pre-retirement age terminal values are expressed more vividly and who from all life spheres pay more attention to professional, educational and social spheres and personal interests, are younger in terms of age (Me=51 years) as compared to more passive peers (Me=53 years) ($p=0,037$). There were no differences in the sphere of family life and physical activity. According to key personal factors which are considered in this work there were no differences between active and passive pre-retirees.

For pre-retirees a five-factor model of sense and life orientations was built that accounts for 79,03% from the general data dispersion for this group. These factors are "Personally oriented values" (29,41% of the dispersion), "Expressivity" (13,35% of the dispersion), "Self-control" (8,97% of the dispersion), "Emotional lability" (8,26% of the dispersion) and "Socially oriented values" (19,04% of the dispersion). More practical and realistic persons at this age are less inclined to self-development ($r=0,439$) and do not consider education and sphere of their own interests important in their lives ($r=0,493$; $r=0,412$).

The analysis of structure and space correlation of factors for pre-retirees has shown that dispersion of variables of self-development, one's own prestige and personal achievement is explained by the impact of factors "Personally oriented values" (0,575; 0,635; 0,567 respectively) and "Socially oriented values" (0,556; 0,614; 0,531 respectively).

Thus, material needs and needs to preserve personal individuality in the professional and educational spheres are a priority for pre-retirees. They try to find jobs which would stress their individual uniqueness and at the same time would ensure material welfare. To do this they try to receive corresponding education and this education should correspond to their personal traits as much as possible. Similar to retirees, they prefer stability in their physical activity and do not want changes in this field. It concerns primarily those who are older.

On the one hand, those at pre-retirement age integrate such personally oriented values as spiritual needs, creativity, personal prestige, material needs, preservation of personal individuality as well as professional and educational spheres, family life and physical activity sphere, and on the other – such socially oriented values as social contacts, personal prestige, social sphere and hobby. Thus, it turned out that with them the sphere of social values was independent from the sphere of personal values. We stress that a playful attitude to life and capability for plasticity can contribute positive formation of sense and life sphere at the pre-retirement age. Pre-retirees who are too practical, who put material values above everything else are not inclined to changes in their life and prefer stability and reliability in everything, they are self-sufficient and consider that their possibilities are limited. First of all, it concerns educational sphere and hobby.

With the growing role of personally and socially oriented values pre-retirees start paying more attention to competence and self-improvement, approval and recognition on the part of referent people at the same time being in need of social approval and thoroughly planning one's life.

Pre-retirees as well as retirees can be divided into two contrast groups: active and passive. Active are a little bit younger in age and demonstrate their active position mainly in the non-family life sphere. These two groups practically do not show any difference in terms of personal dispositions.

Conclusions

Professional field is an important life activity for those elderly people who are retirees. First of all, it is characteristic of those who have an active attitude to life and are oriented onto spiritual, social and material values. Among them of particular importance are the needs to preserve one's own individuality and independence from family members. The needs for physical activity and creativity turn out to be the least topical for retirees. However, for active retirees it is more important to satisfy these needs than for passive ones.

Such personal dispositions as "light-heartedness" help the elderly to have an active attitude to life. It is likely to give pensioners a possibility to successfully adjust to active social positions they have lost. "Light" attitude to life at this age promotes the growth of the role of the whole range of spiritual, material and social values of a person. Thus, in order to preserve life values, the elderly should be careful about taking too practical a life attitude demonstrating in everyday life a bit of artisticness. It distinguishes them from pre-retirees who in this situation are recommended to preserve more plasticity.

Due to the fact that with age the number of active people decreases by only 4% and the number of passive ones respectively increases, one can hardly state that with the transfer from pre-retirement age to retirement life orientations of people significantly change. This is also supported by the lack of remarkable differences in value orientations in the group of retirees and pre-retirees. So, in modern social reality it is neither age nor social status of a pensioner that determines sense and life orientations of a person, but the life attitude the person has.

A common feature for retirees and pre-retirees participating in the research is that a lot of attention in their life is paid to professional activity. The least significance is given to values connected with physical activity and creativity of a person. Among other personal dispositions well-expressed is self-control.

The differences between retirees and pre-retirees are in the fact that pensioners demonstrate higher integration of various life activities and life values. Among them the sphere of social values is closely connected with personal values while among pre-retirees these two spheres are created by separate independent factors.

If retirees give priority to the spiritual needs and besides professional activity significance is given to family problems, then for pre-retirees of priority are material needs and besides professional sphere significance is given to educational one. The group of retirees is characterized by more clearly expressed need for positive attitude towards other people and empathy as compared with pre-retirees.

Further research of this problem can be related to more in-depth research of personal dispositions of active and passive persons in the period of late adulthood.

Bibliography

- Erikson E. H., Erikson J. M., Kivnick H. Q. (1986), *Vital involvement in old age*, Norton, New York.
- Ананьев Б. Г. (1980), *Избранные психологические труды*, В 2 т. Т. 1, Педагогика, Москва.
- Анцыферова Л. И. (1994), *Новые стадии поздней жизни: время теплой осени или суровой зимы?*, "Психологический журнал" 15(3).
- Краснова О.В., Лидерс А.Г. (2002), *Социальная психология старения*, Издательский центр "Академия", Москва.
- Порсева Х. О. (2005), *Психологічні особливості ціннісних орієнтацій осіб похилого віку: автореф. дис. канд. психол. наук*, Київ.
- Порсева Х.О. (2004), *Психологічні особливості ціннісної сфери пенсіонерів*, Науковий часопис НПУ імені Н. П. Драгоманова. Серія № 12. Психологія: Збірник наукових праць, НПУ імені Н. П. Драгоманова, Київ. 1(25).
- Пряжников Н. С. (1996), *Профессиональное и личностное самоопределение*, Изд-во Института практической психологии, Москва.
- Хромов А.Б. (2000), *Пятифакторный опросник личности: Учебно-методическое пособие*, Изд-во Курганского гос. Университета, Курган.
- Чудновский В. Э. (1988), *Проблема субъективности в свете современных задач психологии воспитания*, "Вопросы Психологии" 4.

Netography

- Сопов В.Ф., Карпушина Л.В. (2011) *Морфологический тест жизненных ценностей*, retrieved: 14.06.2011.

IHOR OSTROVSKII¹, SOPHIA GRABOVSKA², KATERYNA OSTROVSKA², ANASTASIYA SOKALSKA²

¹L'viv National Polytechnic University, Ukraine

²L'viv National University, Ukraine

Peculiarities of senior social-psychological activity

Introduction

The problem of the active life of seniors in recent years has been a subject of numerous scientific investigations (Kobylarek 2006, Yatsemirskaya 1999). An increase in scientific interest in senior activity results from several reasons: demographic crisis (aging) of humanity; increase of retirement age in Europe. Social and psychological aspects of aging have been comprehensibly developed in Russia (Alperovych 2004). Due to the introduction of retirement reform the problem has become particularly relevant in Ukraine.

The aim of this paper is to study senior social-psychological activity related to the creation of L'viv University of the Third Age. The paper consists of two parts. The first concerns the investigation of senior social-psychological activity as the precondition for the creation of the U3A in L'viv. The second includes studies of social-psychological performances of L'viv U3A seniors.

Experiment

At the stage of precondition for U3A creation the experiment includes group testing for determination of senior value orientations, feeling lonely, health, activity, mood and peculiarities of life. The following methods have been used: The Rokich method for evaluation of value orientations, The Rassel and Fergustone method for diagnostics of feeling alone, the HAM method for detecting health, activity and mood as well as profile for determination of peculiarities of life.

The examined persons consist of two groups: 49 persons of retirement age and 47 persons of pre-retirement age for comparison of social-psychological activity factors before and after retirement.

In the second stage of the experiment the examined persons also include two groups: 59 U3A students and a control group of 55 seniors outside U3A. The investigated parameters – self-attitude, self-motivation and mood were detected by use of a V.Stolin questionnaire, J.Rotter questionnaire and V.Bojko express diagnostics method respectively. The data obtained was discussed using comparative and correlation analysis.

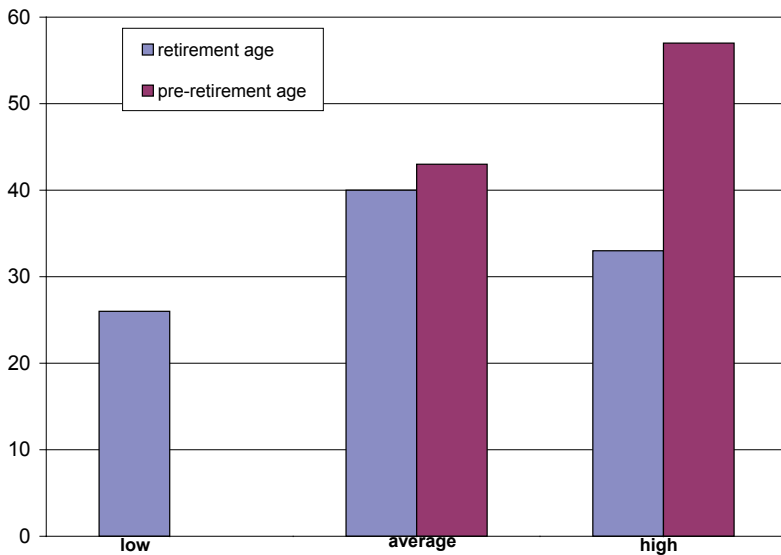
The experimental results and discussion

A. Senior social-psychological activity in L'viv

According to results of activity investigation in L'viv about 34% of persons of retirement age are characterized as having a high level of social and professional activity. They use any possibility to work, also they are involved in family life (help the parents to educate grandchildren, maintain order etc.). Among the investigated seniors 40% have average level of activity. The persons work part of their time, their principal activity being care of the household. Those who need care and cannot independently look after themselves among the studied seniors of retirement age were detected as being 26%.

A comparison of the results obtained with studies of activity for persons of pre-retirement age shows that after retirement seniors try to maintain an adequately high level of social-professional activity (see Fig. 1).

Fig.1. A comparison of social-professional activity for persons of pre-retirement and retirement age

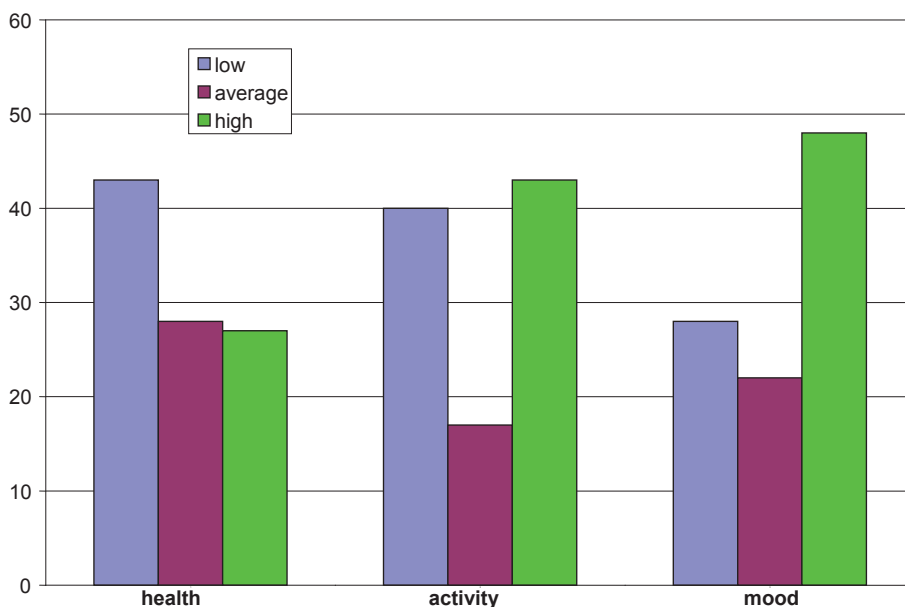


(Source: authors)

Studies according to the HAM method for detecting health, activity and mood of retirement age persons have shown the following results (Fig.2). About 43% of persons have low level of health, 28% and 29% have high and average levels of health respectively. It is interesting that as for investigation of mood level we have obtained the opposite data. The retirement age seniors have high level of mood (of about 48%), which indicates emotional stability of the category studied. As for activity it was established the dominant was low (40%) and high (43%) level is observed. This can be explained by the possibility to demonstrate activity or its absence.

Among the terminal values of people of retirement age the following values prevail: health, happy family life and wisdom. Among the instrumental values the most important values are responsibility, education and neatness. Comparing the obtained values of retirement age seniors with the values of pre-retirement age persons (see Fig.3) you can observe an essential change of values. For pre-retirement age persons such values as health, wisdom and neatness are not so important. Retirement is a period of re-evaluation of values. It is time to think about personal health. It is time to look back, to think about eternity. In this connection it is interesting to compare the most important values for representatives of L'viv and Russia seniors (Alperovych 2004) (see Table 1).

Fig. 2. Level of health, mood and activity according to HAM method



(Source: authors)

The analysis of Table data shows, that health and happy family life are priorities among terminal values for both Russia and L'viv seniors. Nevertheless, L'viv seniors put wisdom in third position, while for Russian seniors presence of good friends is important. The fact indicates a difference in mentality between East and West, the first are orientated towards friendship, relations, while the second are more individual and self-absorbed. These peculiarities manifest themselves in instrumental values of the categories of seniors. The main values for Russian seniors are honesty, sensitivity, breeding, i.e. values directed outside, while the main values for L'viv seniors are responsibility, education, i.e. values directed inside the person.

Table 1. A comparison of values for Russia (Alperovych 2004) and L'viv seniors

	Russia seniors		L'viv seniors	
	Value	Level	Value	Level
Terminal values	Health	76%	Health	65%
	Happy family life	47%	Happy family life	44%
	Presence of good friends	29%	Wisdom	35%
	Material condition	24%		
	Activity	24%		
Instrumental values	Honesty	41%	Responsibility	89%
	Sensitivity	35%	Education	65%
	Breeding	35%	Neatness	43%
	Neatness	29%		
	Responsibility	18%		

(Source: authors)

The practical value of these studies is the use of the results for organization of U3A in L'viv. From one side, the main terminal values of seniors – health, happy family life and wisdom – indicate the content of the educational program – the main subjects for teaching at U3A are: healthy way of life, physical culture -- for improvement of health; psychological courses and pedagogical aspects of conversation in the family – for improvement of family climate; new knowledge of science and techniques, history, literature – for reflection about life wisdom. From another side, the main instrumental values of seniors – responsibility, education and neatness – could be used for creation of self-organization of seniors. High level of responsibility, needs in education and high level in neatness are a good background for senior organization.

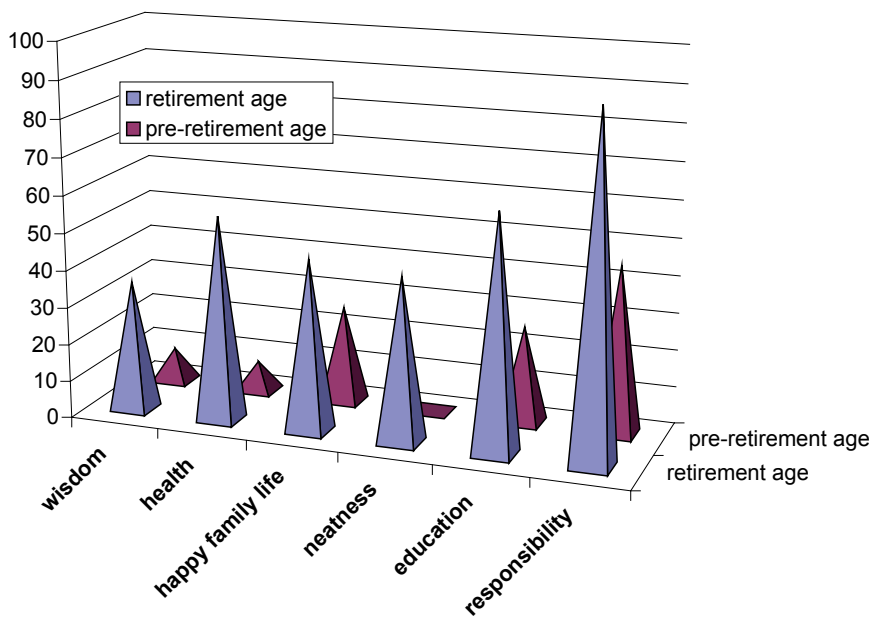
Correlation analysis of data obtained has shown existing correlative relations between various performances of seniors. Below we present the influence of various factors on feeling lonely.

- straight correlative relation between freedom and feeling lonely;
- converse correlative relation between sensitivity, good friends, health, education and feeling lonely.

The correlative relations are obvious: freedom liking persons as a rule avoid contacts, they like to be alone. At the same time existing friends, need education, personal sensitivity leads to social activity of seniors. Education due to the creation of U3A is the good way to avoid being alone, because it enables seniors to have good friends, to continue their activity, to express their sensitivity etc.

During the investigation we have shown the existence of:

- a straight correlative relation between presence of good friends and activity;
- converse correlative relations between the beauty of nature, high needs and activity.

Fig.3. A comparison of value orientations for persons of pre-retirement and retirement age

(Source: authors)

If a person chooses beauty of nature as main value one can suppose that such a person is inward looking, and contemplative and therefore is not active in social aspects. High needs as a main value force a person to think about welfare and comfort. The person who uses other people as instruments for achievement of his goals and is not socially active. From the other side, presence of good friends stimulates a person to common activity.

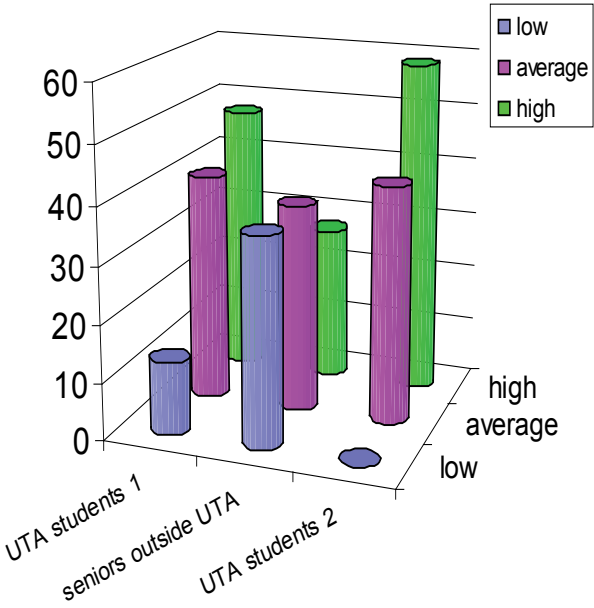
The results of the studies were used for the creation of L'viv U3A with an educational program corresponding to the obtained data. The main instrumental values of seniors were used for creation of senior self organization. Thus, we have about 200 seniors in L'viv U3A and of about 10 active seniors in student self-government.

B Senior social-psychological activity in L'viv U3A

The next part of the studies concerns to investigation of the influence of U3A on senior social-psychological activity factors. Such factors as self-attitude, mood and self-motivation were under investigation. The results obtained for UTA seniors were compared with analogical performances for the control group of seniors, who stay at home. It is worth noting that the principal difference between the two investigated groups: U3A seniors are characterized by a substantially higher level of social-psychological activity as compared with seniors at home. Furthermore, for U3A seniors we present the results obtained at the beginning and at the half year point of study at the University.

According to results of the V. Stolin questionnaire a comparatively high level of self-attitude for U3A seniors was shown (see Fig.4). Study at University during a half year leads to some increase of senior self-attitude level. At the same time the data in Fig.4 shows the principal difference in self-attitude level for U3A seniors and seniors at home. The latter is characterized by substantially lower self-attitude compared to U3A students. The fact is indicated in the specific contingent of U3A students. At the beginning the most active seniors came to U3A, while low active and passive stay at home.

Fig. 4. Level of self-attitude at U3A seniors and control group of seniors (U3A student 1 – at the beginning of study, U3A student 2 – repeat investigation after half a year)

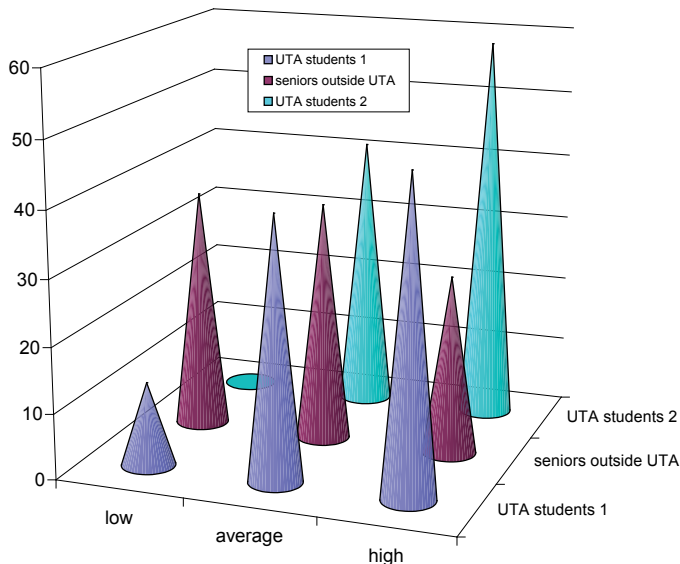


(Source: authors)

The difference between these two groups is observed in the results of studies of senior self-motivation. As you can see in Fig.5, the U3A students have an essentially higher level of self-motivation than seniors at home. The study at University during half year leads to some increase of self-motivation level (see Fig.5). This can be explained by the fact that U3A students should be more responsible taking into account responsibility for their university, for its development and growth of fields of their interests and activity.

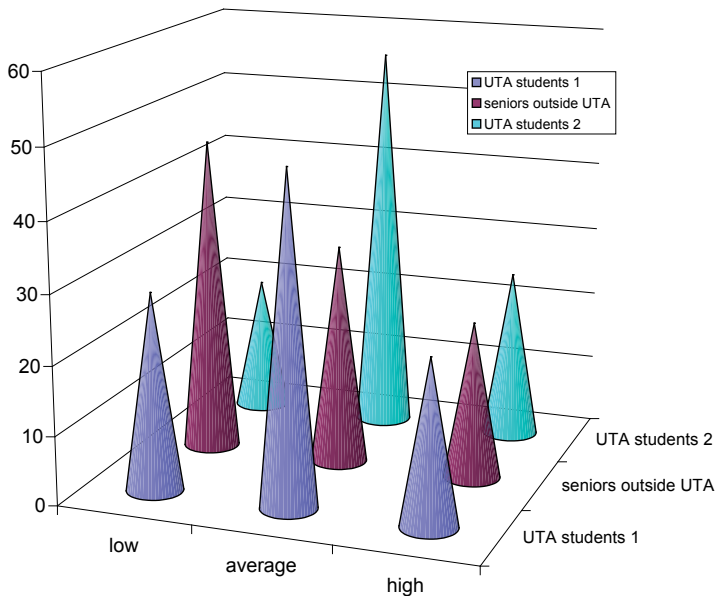
We have obtained similar results concerning to mood investigation among U3A students and seniors at home (see Fig.6). The main reason of higher level of mood at UTA students as compared with seniors at home is their higher level of social activity.

Fig.5. Level of subjective self-motivation at U3A seniors and control group of seniors (U3A student 1 – at the beginning of study, U3A student 2 – repeat investigation in half of year)



(Source: authors)

Fig.6. Level of mood at UTA seniors and control group of seniors (UTA student 1 – at the beginning of study, UTA student 2 – repeat investigation in half of year)



(Source: authors)

Conclusions

The studies of preconditions for U3A creation in L'viv have shown that retirement age persons are characterized by a comparatively high level of activity. Despite poorer health seniors have mainly good mood, are optimistic and open to different initiatives. The investigated value orientations became the starting point for formation of the U3A. So such terminal values as health, happy family life and wisdom served as a basis for UTA program (lectures and exercise on physical culture, psychological courses for improvement of family relations, various subjects for senior reflection about life, wisdom, eternity). Such instrumental values as responsibility, education and neatness were used for creation of senior self-organization.

The results of studies of social-psychological activity of U3A students show that the first seniors of L'viv U3A represent the most active seniors in the city. This is the main reason for the substantial difference between psychological performances (self-attitude, self-motivation and mood) of U3A students and seniors outside the U3A. A high level of social-psychological activity leads to high indices of self-attitude, self-motivation and mood. Senior social-psychological activity is a guarantee of a high level of autonomy, self-attitude and self-estimation, positive relationships with others, competence and commitment of personality.

The U3A gives an opportunity to increase social-psychological activity of the seniors. At this stage only active seniors came to U3A. However, the next task of the U3A is an involvement of low active seniors and their gradual stimulation.

Bibliography

- Alperovych V. D. (2004), *Problems of aging: Demography, psychology, sociology*, AST, Moscow.
- Kobylarek A. (2006), *Animacja społeczno-kulturalna jako metoda aktywizacji środowiska lokalnego*, [in:] Zierkiewicz E. (ed.), *Tworzyć, zmieniać, aktywizować. Animacja społeczno-kulturalna jako mobilizowanie potencjału indywidualnego i przeciwdziałanie bezradności społecznej*, MarMar, Wrocław.
- Yatsemirskaya R.S. (1999), *Social gerontology*, VLADOS, Moscow.
- Zierkiewicz E. (ed.), *Tworzyć, zmieniać, aktywizować. Animacja społeczno-kulturalna jako mobilizowanie potencjału indywidualnego i przeciwdziałanie bezradności społecznej*, MarMar, Wrocław.

Peculiarities of “social frustratedness” in the older population

The indicator of society's high civilization and humanity is well-being, welfare of the older population and its prosperous aging. According to data of the United Nations the numbers of the older population constantly increased in the 20th century, this tendency remains in the 21st century as well. In 1950 the proportion of the older population was 8%, in 2000 – 10 %, and it is projected to reach 21 % in 2050. There will be nearly 2 billion older people by the middle of the 21st century. Nowadays there are 9 working-age persons to each 1 older person while in 2050 this number will drop to 4¹. We can see that the topicality of the issue of psychosocial adaptation and working ability of the older population will only rise.

Contentment and adjustment in old age actually depend on a range of factors: health, interpersonal relationships, material and social standing, marital status, adequate living conditions, the number of social interactions (Крайг Бокум 2005), therefore low levels of their fulfillment can lead to social frustratedness.

According to L.I. Vasserman social frustratedness is a type of psychological tension which is conditioned by dissatisfaction with a person's achievements and position in socially determined hierarchies. Therefore social frustratedness shows itself in a person's emotional attitude to the positions which she/he manages to occupy in society (in such spheres as: education, family, job, accommodation, interpersonal relationships, financial standing, etc) at a given moment of his/her life (Вассерман, Беребин 1997).

It is necessary to mention that here we view social frustratedness as a personality trait and not as a short-term state. The research works of R.B. Cattell and Ch. D. Spielberger showed that an emotional state is characterized absolutely in a different way from an emotional trait of a personality, although they do not differ in their intensity of feelings (Измайлов, Черноризов 2004). Frustration as an emotional state can last from several seconds to several hours and differs considerably in its intensity. An emotional trait is a characteristic trait of a personality and refers to a personality's peculiarity (disposition) to feel often in a process of vital activities a certain complex of emotions connected with this trait.

Frustratedness lasts longer and happens more frequently than frustration, therefore it can lead to disorganization of a person's consciousness, activity and behavior; frustratedness is followed by the development of an individual's negative emotional reactions to life circumstances.

Frustration state can be experienced by an individual quite often in the context of everyday life situations and eventually it develops specific emotional and behavioral ways of reaction. If these ways of reaction are not stable and effective, it can lead to social disadaptation,

¹ Population Division, DESA, United Nations *World Population Ageing 1950-2050* <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldageing19502050/> 18.06.2011.

selection of ineffective behavior in interpersonal relationships, and overcoming of various difficulties. In general all older people suffer, in one way or another, from income decrease, health deterioration and loss of close people, however, each of them reacts differently to ageing as such. Different researchers described these reactions differently. For instance, I. Con provides the classification of older people types according to the activities they are involved in. Thus, he distinguishes four types. He characterizes the first type as creative and active. Such people do not cut themselves off from their professional activities and continue to be involved in social life, living a full life without feeling any inadequacy. The second type is also characterized by good social and psychological adaptability, although such persons' energy is directed mainly at establishing their own life – material welfare, leisure, entertainment, self-education, everything they did not have time for before. The third type consists of women mainly and people of this type find their main life resource in their families, thus they do not have time to complain or be bored, but they are less content than the representatives of the previous two types. People of the fourth type choose health care as the most important aspect of their life which is the main form of their activity and gives them a certain moral satisfaction. I. Con considers all these four types to be psychologically satisfactory and remarks that there are also negative types of development, such as disappointment in oneself and one's own life; such people blame themselves for real and imaginary missed opportunities (Кох 1990).

A.I. Antsyferova singles out two types of older age, which differ from each other by the level of activity, strategies of overcoming difficulties, attitude to the world and themselves as well as contentment (Анцыферова 1994). The first type reacts to retirement without any particular emotional deviations and has an active attitude to life. The second type develops a passive attitude to life; those people alienate themselves, their interests circle narrows and their IQ test results decrease. They lose respect for themselves and experience a strong feeling of uselessness.

Social and psychological underestimation or devaluation of themselves by older people is linked with other unfavorable circumstances for their full functioning. These include loss of a job, forced retirement, loss of personally important social roles. An older person can also be excluded from the system of interpersonal relationships which includes representatives of different generations.

One of the major objectives of an old age is preservation of personal identity which is a person's synthetic conception of his/her physical, psychological, social and inner characteristics.

It is very important for older people to maintain the balance between adjustment and changes, stable identity and openness to new experience, as well as life changes. E. Erikson wrote about the stage of maturity (over 60 years of age) where there is a conflict between the integrity of the Ego and despair at life being wasted. In this period a person has to accept his/her own unique life cycle as something which was destined to happen and did not allow any changes. Non-acceptance is manifested in the fear of death (Крайг Божум 2005).

A lot of older people cannot avoid this conflict between the integrity of I and despair, since they often ponder whether their life met their expectations. The conclusion that their life had sense conditions the feeling of their own integrity.

Some older people focus on purposeful search of activities, which would give them the feeling of usefulness and participation in social life, get involved in public events and public work, devote themselves to hobbies, caring about close people, helping their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Thus it is possible to say that the best life strategy for older people consists of maximum maintenance of activity, because it gives the feeling of contentment.

A person's individual characteristics also play a certain role in forming a psychosocial status of a person in old age when a person's attitude to personal losses, passed opportunities, a new perception of the surrounding world are determined. A personality of an older person going through transformation remains the same preserving all individual traits. There are no changes of individual characteristics in old age.

Activity, creativity, self-confidence, contentment, sociability, openness to new experience promote adaptation in old age.

Adaptation in old age is not promoted by dependency, inertness, absence of a stable high self-evaluation, unsociability, and anxiety. When such people retire, they feel lost and helpless which can lead to decrease in self-evaluation.

When self-evaluation is affected, the integral image of I is violated and then under the influence of negative thoughts a lot of representatives of late adulthood lose belief in themselves, their abilities and capacity. They devalue themselves, lose self-respect, feel guilty, their motivation decreases and so does their social activity. The main objectives of an older person are adaptation to new changed life conditions, maintenance of the balance between adjustment and changes, reevaluation of their own life, values, capabilities, preservation of their identity, preservation of activity and openness to new experiences.

The success of an older person's social adaptation is determined by how well a person is prepared for entering a new stage of his/her life (how well his/her adaptive traits as an individual and behavior have developed during his/her life), specific for old age difficult situations, acceptance of his/her own place in society and changes of social status.

The knowledge of the factors that influence the appearance of social frustratedness can prevent disadvantaged old age and premature dissociation from a society of people who have rich life experience and could take an active part in its formation.

On the basis of discussed ideas concerning old age and social frustratedness the following research questions have been posed:

Is there a connection between a person's character, type of behavior in interpersonal relationships and social frustratedness? Are there any considerable differences in character traits and types of interpersonal relationships of people with different levels of social frustratedness? Does a person's character, his/her formed traits of personality influence the level of social frustratedness?

Research hypotheses:

1. Older people will have a prevailing high and increased level of social frustratedness.
2. The higher social frustratedness indicator, the lower emotional stability; the lower social frustratedness indicator, the higher emotional stability.

3. We assume that the higher level of social frustratedness, the more aggressive type of interpersonal relationships will be typical of the people examined.

Research methods

The research included older people aged from 55 to 75, part of whom, in particular, are the students of the University of the Third Age in L'viv. The analyzed group contains 45 persons.

The following methods have been used to conduct the research:

1. The method of "Diagnostics of social frustratedness level" by L.I. Vasserman (Ильин 2001);
2. The method of "Diagnostics of interpersonal relationships" by T. Leary (Заброцький 2003);
3. The method of multifactor research of a personality by R. Cattell (Райгородский 2004)

"Social frustratedness level" (SFL) method is developed for the diagnostics of relationships between a personality and his/her social environment, evaluation of stressogenic capacity of frustrators which consist of various social factors. SFL makes it possible to evaluate a general frustratedness level of a personality by his/her discontentment in four important social spheres: relationships with family and close people; relationships with the nearest social environment (friends, colleagues, employers, etc.); social status; social and economic standing; health and working capacity.

The method allows evaluating social frustratedness level which indicates dissatisfaction with achievements and position of an individual in socially determined hierarchies.

"Diagnostics of interpersonal relationships" method by T. Leary as modified by L.M. Sobchuk allows determining of the peculiarities of settings in the sphere of interpersonal relationships, that is, types of interpersonal relationships.

The method includes the following scale: I - Authoritarian type of interpersonal relationships, II - Egoistic type of interpersonal relationships, III - Aggressive type of interpersonal relationships, IV - Suspicious type of interpersonal relationships, V - Conforming type of interpersonal relationships, VI - Dependent type of interpersonal relationships, VII - Benevolent type of interpersonal relationships, VIII - Altruistic type of interpersonal relationships. Beside the scales the method contains two parameters: Parameter V: Subordination - Dominance, and parameter G: Aggression - Cooperation.

The third method of our research was "Multifactor research of a personality 16PF" by R. Cattell. The method makes it possible to determine personality traits or constitutional factors (according to R. Cattell).

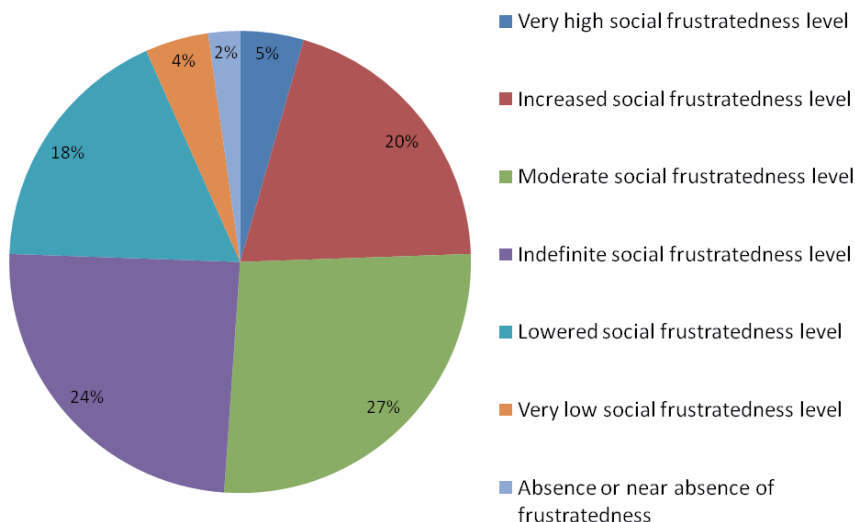
All respondents participated voluntarily without coercion and reward. The research had a group form. The respondents independently answered the questions in questionnaires following instructions. If the instructions or questions were not understood, a researcher provided additional explanation.

The statistical analysis we used included: Spearman's non-parametric correlation analysis to find relationships between indices; unifactor variance analysis to find the difference in indices among groups (Scheffe's test) and Pearson's criterion χ^2 to test fit of distributions.

Research results analysis

Having analyzed the data received after applying Vasserman's method to our research, we saw that older people under study have a moderate social frustratedness level (27% of all respondents); 24% has an indefinite social frustratedness level; 20% has an increased social frustratedness level; 18% has a lowered social frustratedness level; 5% has a very high social frustratedness level; 4% has a very low social frustratedness level and frustratedness is absent or almost absent in only 2% (Figure 1).

Fig. 1. Social frustratedness level data received using Vasserman's method



(Source: authors)

For further analysis we combined the data about social frustratedness level into three groups:

- the group with the tendency for a high or with a high social frustratedness level,
- the group with a moderate social frustratedness level,
- the group with the tendency for a low or with a low social frustratedness level.

To reveal the character of data differences received using variance analysis, Scheffe's test was used with the significance level of $p < 0,05$.

Are there any differences among groups?

The results of the analysis conducted show that there are differences in groups according to such scales as "benevolent type of interpersonal relationships" (VII), ($p=0,04$), "emotional instability-emotional stability" (C), ($p=0,3$), "conformity-dominance" (E), ($p=0,03$), "trustfulness-suspiciousness" (L), ($p=0,03$). The results received with the help of Scheffe's test according to the "benevolent type of interpersonal relationships" and "trustfulness-suspiciousness" scales show that these differences are not statistically significant, but according to the "emotional instability-emotional stability" and "conformity-dominance" scale there is a considerable difference.

The group with the tendency for a high or with a high social frustratedness level is liable to emotional instability ($M=2,66$) and conformity ($M=4,8$) and the group with the tendency for a low or with a low social frustratedness level is more liable to emotional stability ($M=4,21$) and dominance ($M=6,35$) as traits of a personality. These data confirm some correlation analysis results. There are no considerable differences in the group with a moderate social frustratedness.

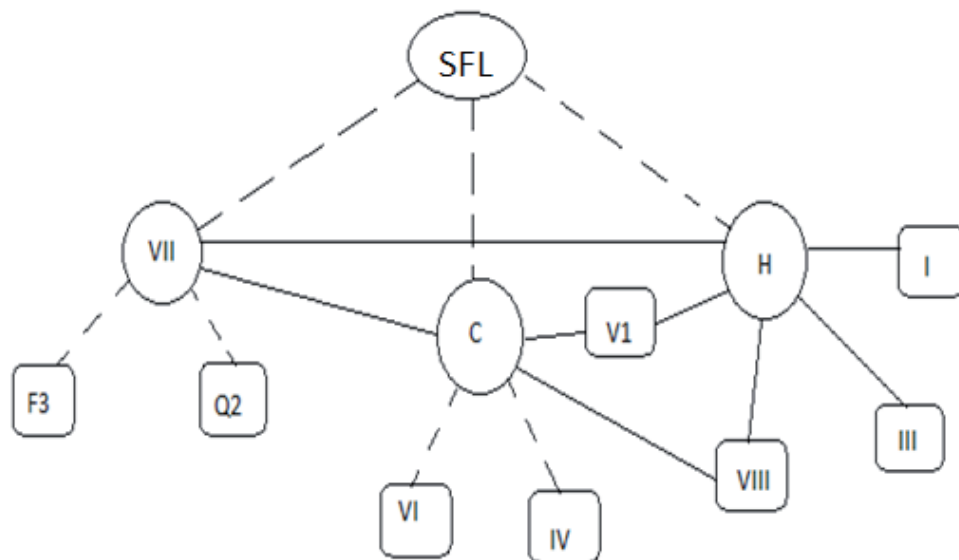
Thus, the people with a high social frustratedness level will show such traits as low tolerance towards frustration, dependence on feelings, interests changeability, disposition to mood lability, suspiciousness, tiresomeness, neurotic symptoms, hypochondria (emotional instability); gentleness, modesty, kindness, compliance, dependence, passiveness, conformity, obligingness. Such people are characterized by the tendency to blame themselves, tactfulness, diplomacy, easy loss of self-control under the pressure of authorities (conformity).

The people with a low social frustratedness level are characterized by such traits as emotional stability, composure, self-control, working capacity; they are realistic and have constant interests and hobbies, besides they have a strong nervous system and dominance of inhibitory process. They are also characterized by dominance, ascendance, stubbornness which touches on aggression, assertiveness, persistence, self-confidence, proneness to conflict. Such persons can show obstinacy, rudeness, non-conformity, hostility. They clearly emphasize their independence of thought and behavior and consider an independent direction in thinking to be a law for them and those around. In conflicts such people tend to accuse others and do not recognize authority and pressure directed on them, though they themselves are inclined to authoritarian management style and compete for a higher status.

What is social frustratedness connected with?

Having collected all the data, we decided to determine personal characteristics and types of interpersonal relationships which are connected with social frustratedness. We did it with the help of Spearman's correlation analysis with the significance level of $p<0,05$, because the correlation analysis according to Pearson's criterion with the significance level of 0,1 did not catch correlation connections. The achieved results are depicted in correlation pleiad.

Fig. 2. Correlation pleiad



(Source: authors)

SFL- social frustratedness level; H- "timidity-boldness" factor; C- "emotional instability-emotional stability" factor; Q2 factor- "conformity-non-conformity"; F3- "sensitiveness - responsive even-temperedness"; I- Authoritative type of interpersonal behavior; III- Aggressive type of interpersonal behavior; IV- Suspicious type of interpersonal behavior; VI- Dependent type of interpersonal behavior; VII- Benevolent type of interpersonal behavior; VIII- Altruistic type of interpersonal behavior; V1- Subordination - Dominance;

— - direct correlation connection; - - - reverse correlation connection.

How is boldness connected with social frustratedness level?

Analyzing correlation connections we found out that social frustratedness level is connected through a reverse correlation connection and "timidity-boldness" factor (H), ($r=-0,29$).

Apparently, it means that people with more boldness, as a trait of a personality, have a lower social frustratedness level. And vice versa, people with more timidity are more socially frustrated.

Accordingly, the people with low social frustratedness will show boldness, impulsivity, proneness to risk, adventurism, social courage, disinhibition, emotionality, carelessness, incomprehension and ignorance of danger. The people with high social frustratedness show indecisiveness, shyness, emotionality, lack of confidence in their strength and abilities, and nervousness in the presence of others. They are prone to display emotional restraint, narrow-mindedness, increased danger sensitivity, and strict rules conformity.

Is emotional stability connected with a social frustratedness level?

An emotional component is an important constituent of our personality during the whole of our life. Correspondingly, we assumed that an emotional stability level is connected with a social frustratedness level. Correlation showed that "emotional instability-emotional stability" (C) factor is connected through reverse correlation connection with a social frustratedness level ($r=-0,33$).

If persons display emotional stability, they have lower social frustratedness. Such persons are characterized by self-control, working capacity, realistic disposition, constant interests and hobbies. If persons are liable to emotional instability, they have a higher social frustratedness level. Such people show low level of frustration tolerance, dependence on feelings, changeability of interests, proneness to mood lability, irritability, tiredness, neurotic symptoms and hypochondria.

Connection between social frustratedness and a benevolent type of interpersonal relationships

We have discovered that a benevolent type of interpersonal relationships formed in a personality is connected with a social frustratedness level. In our research a "benevolent type of interpersonal relationships (VII)" scale has a reverse correlation connection with a social frustratedness level ($r=-0,29$). The increase in the level of a benevolent type of interpersonal relationships leads to decrease in a social frustratedness level, and vice versa. Thus, the people with a low social frustratedness level display such features of interpersonal behavior as benevolence and kindness to everyone, disposition towards acceptance by those around and social approval, aspiration for fulfilling all the demands, "being good" for everyone regardless of situation, striving to reach the microgroup objectives as well as emotional lability. Conversely, the people with a high social frustratedness level show proneness to collaboration, cooperation, compromise in resolving problems and conflict situations, aspiration for being in agreement with the opinion of those around, conscious conformity, compliance with conventions, rules, the "good form" principle in their relationships with others.

Boldness and an aggressive type of interpersonal behavior

In accordance with the research results we have also established the connection between boldness level and interpersonal behavior. "Timidity-boldness" (H) factor directly correlates with "aggressive type of interpersonal behavior" (III), ($r=0,33$) scale, thus the bolder a person is, the more aggressive type of behavior she/he shows in interpersonal relationships, the more timid a person is, the less aggressive type of interpersonal relationships is peculiar to him/her.

Since a social frustratedness level correlates reversely with "timidity-boldness" factor and it, in its turn, correlates directly with "aggressive type of inter-

personal behavior" scale, we can assume that an aggressive type of interpersonal behavior influences mediately a social frustratedness level. We can also assume that such influence has a reverse character: the lower social frustratedness, the more aggressive type of interpersonal relationships.

What types of interpersonal relationships are connected with a social frustratedness level?

We have also determined the types of relationships which are connected with a social frustratedness level. According to the correlation results "timidity-boldness" (H) factor correlates directly with the scales of dominance (V1) ($r=0,52$), authoritarian (I) ($r=0,41$), "benevolence" (VII) ($r=0,33$), "altruistic" (VIII) ($r=0,62$), as well as the types of interpersonal relationships, thus the more dominant a person is in interpersonal relationships or the higher index of authoritarian, altruistic, benevolent type of interpersonal relationships, the bolder a person is; and vice versa, the lower the index of these scales, the more timid a person is. Since "timidity-boldness" factor is connected with a social frustratedness level through a direct correlation connection and correlates directly with the scales of dominance, authoritarianism, benevolence, and altruism, we can assume that dominance, authoritarian, altruistic types of interpersonal relationships influence mediately a social frustratedness level, thus we probably can decrease a social frustratedness level influencing the formation of the ability to display, depending on a situation, such characteristic behavioral features that correspond to these scales as assertiveness, leadership qualities, ability to rely on one's own opinion, ability to teach others (an authoritarian style of interpersonal relationships); overresponsibility, trying to offer help and sympathy, activity directed towards those around, taking responsibility instead of others (an altruistic type of interpersonal relationships that often is only "a mask" which hides a person of an opposite type); aspiration for leadership, and dominance in communication.

"Emotional stability-emotional instability" (C) factor in its turn is connected with such scales as "suspicious type of interpersonal behavior" ($r=-0,3$), "dependent type of interpersonal behavior" ($r=-0,34$) through a reverse correlation connection and with such scales as "benevolent type of interpersonal behavior" ($r=0,33$), "altruistic type of interpersonal behavior" ($r=0,37$) and "dominance" ($r=0,3$) through a direct correlation connection. Since a social frustratedness level correlates reversely with an "emotional stability-emotional instability" factor and it in its turn correlates with such scales as "dependent type of interpersonal behavior", "suspicious type of interpersonal behavior", and "altruistic type of interpersonal behavior", we can assume that dependent, suspicious types of interpersonal behavior influence mediately a social frustratedness level. We can also assume that such influence has a direct character, thus the lower social frustratedness, the less prone a person is to dependent and suspicious types of interpersonal behavior. We probably can decrease a social frustratedness level influencing the correction of such traits as alienation, estrangement, offensiveness, proneness to doubt every-

thing, discontentment, spitefulness (a suspicious type of interpersonal behavior); lack of self-confidence, fear, obsessive fear, anxiety for any reason, dependence on others and other opinion (a dependent type of interpersonal behavior).

Therefore a low social frustratedness level can be typical of bold people with high emotional stability and proneness to a benevolent type of interpersonal behavior.

What other traits are connected with a social frustratedness level?

“A benevolent type of interpersonal relationships” (VII) scale is connected through a reverse correlation connection with such factors as “sensitiveness – responsive even-temperedness” (F3) ($r=-0,39$) and “conformity-non-conformity” (Q2), ($r=-0,33$). Thus the higher the index in these scales, the less prone a person is to a benevolent type of interpersonal behavior and vice versa. Since “a benevolent type of interpersonal relationships” scale is connected with a social frustratedness level through a reverse correlation connection and correlates reversely with such factors as “sensitiveness – responsive even-temperedness”, “conformity-non-conformity”, we can assume that “sensitiveness – responsive even-temperedness” and “conformity-non-conformity” influence mediately a social frustratedness level, therefore we probably can decrease a social frustratedness level influencing such traits as self-consistency, independence from opinions and approval of others, independence in making decisions, creativity, and absence of expectations to get help from others (non-conformism), stability, cheerfulness, initiative, proneness not to notice life nuances, orientation to the obvious and evident (responsive even-temperedness).

Summary and interpretation of the data received

The main aim of our research was to examine whether there exists a connection between social frustratedness, type of interpersonal relationships and personality traits of older people.

The group of older people under study is characterized by a prevailing moderate (27%), indefinite (24%) and increased social frustratedness level (20%). We have not confirmed our hypothesis that a high and increased social frustratedness level will prevail among older people. Therefore we can doubt the assumption that older people under the influence of different changes which happen in their lives at the moment and certain disadaptation factors are prone to a high social frustratedness level.

We have discovered a connection between social frustratedness and such personal traits as boldness – timidity, emotional instability and emotional stability. The older people with a high social frustratedness level display such traits as timidity and emotional instability, thus such people are likely to be indecisive and shy, unconfident in their abilities, have low frustration tolerance, dependence

on feelings, changeability of interests and mood. The people with a low social frustratedness are bold, emotionally stable, impulsive, prone to risk, adventures, carefree, have incomprehension and ignorance of danger. Such a trait available in their character provides them with an ability "not to miss a chance" that comes their way. Moreover, self-control, working capacity, realistic disposition and constant interests and hobbies make it possible to achieve their goals without being distracted by other trifles.

Social frustratedness is also connected with a benevolent type of interpersonal relationships, therefore the more benevolent and kind people are to others and the higher their orientation towards acceptance from those around them, the more life goals they achieve being in good relationships with those around.

Concerning an aggressive type of interpersonal relationships, it might seem that a person who feels a high social frustratedness should display this discontentment and a certain level of aggression in his/her relationships with those around him/her, but this assumption has not been confirmed. It has turned out that an aggressive type of interpersonal relationships is connected with such a personal trait as boldness and through this trait it influences a social frustratedness level. The bolder people are, the more prone they are to an aggressive type of relationships with those around them. They can display cruelty and hostility towards others and in this way obtain what they want from those around them which decreases the possibility of social frustratedness.

The groups with different social frustratedness levels reveal considerable difference only in such scales as emotional instability-emotional stability, conformity-dominance. The group with a tendency to a high and with a high social frustratedness level displays emotional instability and conformity, and the group with a tendency to a low and with a low social frustratedness level displays emotional stability and dominance as personal traits. No considerable differences have been discovered in the group with a moderate social frustratedness level.

Therefore the people with a high social frustratedness level, besides emotional instability mentioned above, will also display the traits which correspond to conformity such as kindness, modesty, gentleness, compliance, passiveness, conformity, and obligingness. Conforming people are prone to accuse themselves, show tactfulness, diplomacy, easy loss of self-control under the pressures of authorities, which is likely to lead to the feeling of social frustratedness as a result of the fact that a person follows a group and not his/her own goals and interests. To avoid developing a feeling of social frustratedness, a person, besides emotional stability, must possess such dominance traits as ascendancy, stubbornness, impetuosity, self-confidence, proneness to conflict. Such a person being in corresponding life situations must show non-compliance, firmness, rudeness, rebelliousness, hostility, be able to emphasize his/her independence of opinion and behavior.

We can conclude that the selected types of interpersonal relationships as well as certain traits of a personality which have been developed by persons during their life will influence the feeling of contentment or discontentment with their own achievements and social position in older age. People who developed such traits as boldness, emotional stability, dominance, benevolence and

sometimes even aggressive types of interpersonal relationships achieve better results in their life, and feel themselves less socially frustrated than those people who during their lives acquired such traits as timidity, emotional instability and conformity.

Bibliography

- Анцыферова Л. И. (1994), *Новые стадии поздней жизни: время теплой осени или суровой зимы?*, "Психологический Журнал" 15(3).
- Erikson E. (1963), *Childhood and Society*, Norton, New York.
- Ильин Е. П. (2001), *Эмоции и чувства*, СПб: Питер.
- Измайлов Ч.А., Черноризов А.М. (2004), *Психофизиологические основы эмоций*, Московский психолого-социальный институт, Москва.
- Кон И.С. (1990), *В поисках себя. Личность и ее самосознание*, Прогресс.
- Крайг Г., Бокум Д. (2005), *Психология развития*, СПб: Питер.
- Заброцький М. М., Павелків Р. В. (2003), *Педагогічна психологія : Теорет. концепції та практикум: Навч. посіб. для студ. вищ. навч. Закл. Рівне.*
- Райгородский Д.Я. (2004), *Практическая психодиагностика. Методики и тесты*, Бахрах-М.
- Вассерман Л.И., Беребин М.А. (1997), *Социальная фрустрированность и ее роль в генезе психической дезадаптации*, „Обзорение психиатр. и мед. психологии им. В.М.Бехтерева“, Nr 1.

Netography

Population Division, DESA, United Nations World Population Ageing 1950-2050,
<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/worldageing19502050/> 18.06.2011.

PRACTICES

Intercultural work and education of the seniors

The culture of our society is a phenomenon that affects our daily lives and determines our manners. Each society has its own typical culture, which confirms its identity. Despite the globalization, which is now going on all over the world, each nation is seeking to preserve its identity and culture maintained for many generations. Due respect of one's own culture and sense of identity are a prerequisite for intercultural work and for the understanding of the cultural diversity.

Cultural diversity is not a problem. On the contrary, it adds richness and extra possibilities to the dialogue, mutual enrichment and ways for co-operation. The great variety of cultures creates possibilities for finding new forms of work in various fields, also for the work with seniors.

What exactly is intercultural work?

In the past, opportunities to travel to other countries were not common, nor was intercultural work, or intercultural communication. Today we don't find it strange to talk daily about meeting different nationalities, people from different countries and about the exchange of information in various forms.

Many activities aimed at seniors and for the elderly also allow the realization of intercultural work. The use of different forms leads us to acquire new information, interchange them and transfer them between different cultures.

Which subjects of study at our U3A are focused on the culture?

- Ethnology and folklore,
- General history,
- History and monuments of Bratislava,
- History of fine art,
- History of religions,
- Life in Italy and Latin,
- Theatre and music in the transformation of time,
- World of the opera,
- UNESCO.

How to implement intercultural work into the environment of seniors?

Intercultural work with seniors includes:

- Intercultural learning,
- Cultural and creative activities and their presentation,
- Intercultural exchanges and visits to other cultures, objects and cities,
- Intercultural contacts within teams and individuals,
- Intercultural work within generations.

Forms of the intercultural work:

- Lectures (guests from abroad),
- Sightseeing tours, visits to cultural locations (museums, galleries, historical buildings),
- Participation in cultural events and festivals,
- Exhibitions of handmade works,
- Implementation of projects aimed at intercultural education and activities.

Methods of the intercultural work:

- Intercultural Dialogue,
- Self-study online,
- Exchange of experiences and adventures,
- Detection of differences and similarities between cultures,
- Publishing of written materials about the results of cross-cultural activities.

Examples of good practice

1. EU Grundtvig projects

Danube Networkers: Writing stories about people, bridges, natural monuments, important and interesting things from the Danube area (<http://www.danube-networkers.eu>) - European Soirée as a complementary activity of the project. It is an intercultural event where the chosen person takes on the role of an important person from history, culture or economy and invites to a European soirée persons from various eras, countries or cultures, persons who are important for their countries. And who through their lives and actions have a relationship to Europe.

Project VECU (Virtual European Cultural Centre)

Subjects of the culture: music, fine art, traditions in the family, eating culture, events in a human life, yearly festivities - traditions during a year (<http://vecu.efos-europa.eu>).

2. Membership of international organizations

EFOS, as an international European federation gives possibilities to its members to realize intercultural activities and learning together in the European framework. EFOS keeps in contact with the UN in Vienna, a representative of EFOS is a member of the "Committee on Ageing" and with AIUTA (International Association of the Universities of the Third Age). EFOS issues the periodical "EFOS News". Homepage: (<http://www.efos-europa.eu>).

EFOS has the following aims:

- Fostering of academic studies of older people together with younger students or at special academies/universities for older people,
- Fostering of joint projects for older students throughout Europe,
- Fostering and securing the access of older people to academic education also without formal qualifications,

- Public support of academic education for older people in politics and society,
- Fostering of autonomous national organisations with similar goals,
- Identifying possibilities to utilize the skills and expertise of older students for the benefit of science and society,
- Cooperation with other international organisations that support lifelong learning (LLL).

AIUTA as a world International Association of the Universities of the Third Age has main objectives:

- to federate Universities of the Third Age across the world, including those organizations, which under different names, subscribe to the same objectives,
- to constitute, with the support of Universities around the world, an international framework of a lifelong educational nature and concerned with research for, by, and with the old,
- to develop the exchange of knowledge that the older generation achieves for the benefit of society as a whole.

The Governing Board elected Professor Francois Vellas (son of the professor Pierre Vellas, who established first U3A in the world in 1973 in Toulouse) as President at its meeting on Friday 21st January 2011. In AIUTA there are members U3As from all over the world. In April 2011 an International Conference in Toulouse was organized on the subject: *Urban Tourism, Culture, Health and the Third Age*. There will be a World Symposium in Lignano Sabbiadoro, near Venice, on Friday 23rd September 2011 on *Voluntary Work & the Third Age*.

AIUTA homepage: <http://www.aiuta.org/>

Other possibilities for the intercultural work could be:

3. Professional meetings abroad - conferences, exchange between universities.

4. Club work and activities for example on a voluntary basis, a team of enthusiasts with deep interest in a field of culture.

Working methods of the projects:

- Discussion in the same age group,
- Discussions in a group of young students,
- Reading a collection of stories – good practices,
- Searching literature about everyday culture,
- Testing of knowledge and opinions of youth,
- Interview and discussions in schools,
- Visits to cultural centers,
- Creative writing.

Research methods in the projects:

- Questionnaires,
- Personal recollections,
- Writing stories,
- Interviews with eyewitnesses,
- Visits to museums,

- Study of sources on the Internet, in the press and in literature,
- Discussion circle.

Methods of transmission of culture:

- Meeting young students at schools and discussions in groups,
- Collection of stories in a book given to younger people,
- Discussions with young people,
- Cultural festivities – good practices,
- Folks group participation and performances,
- Contributions on a website,
- Best way is within families.

Conclusion

It is necessary to preserve the particular traditions and culture of each country and pass them on to future generations and to other cultures. Indeed, older people are the group that has a profound relationship to traditions, culture and history of the home country. Therefore, this group of our population is predetermined to participate regularly in activities aimed at intercultural exchange.

LENA – LEARNING IN LATER LIFE a European project

(11627 – CP – 1 – 2004 – AT – GRUNDTVIG – G1)
LEARNING THAT WORKS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

We live in a society that changes constantly and rapidly. Because of an immense explosion of information and knowledge, learning is becoming more and more important.

The memorandum *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality* from the European Commission in 2001, established Lifelong Learning as the guiding principle for the development of education and training policy.

The term “Lifelong Learning” implies much more than simply “education” or “learning” and – most importantly – Lifelong Learning embraces older people!

In an interim review of *Progress towards the Lisbon objectives in education and training* (Commission Staff Working Document 2006) the issue of participation in lifelong learning by adults is raised. The Commission believes that these future generations will be more mobile, more inclined to work later in life and to consume new goods and services and that they will wish to continue to socialise actively.

It is within the context of changing demography and of the promotion of lifelong learning that the LENA project has taken place. The partnership is committed to the inclusion of older adults in learning. It is particularly concerned to focus attention on learning that contributes to quality of life post-retirement.

LENA has shown how learning can equip older adults with some of the skills they may need to remain in the mainstream ... it has reinforced for us that lifelong learning means lifelong ... it has proved that the need to learn does not stop in retirement.

Learning in later life ought to be an act of empowerment. Learning that empowers improves the capacity of people to relate to the world around them as active, critical, reflective citizens. It is a social experience where the educational focus is on collective, innovative, problem solving processes of action, reflection, communication and co-operation.

Simply acquiring skills is not enough and indeed may obscure and exacerbate issues of inequality. Instead learning must provide opportunities for the improvement of “critical literacy” whereby people are encouraged to debate, argue, challenge, disagree, evaluate and resist.

Definition of an empowerment curriculum

An empowerment curriculum is a programme of learning that in its content and in its conception ought to lead individuals to be empowered. Learning among

other factors has the potential to support individuals to maintain an independent and active life physically, cognitively and socially.

Empowerment and Learning

Key values of empowerment are: justice, participation, equality, diversity and co-operation.

Empowerment is not something that is done to people. It is a process whereby people come to recognise their own situation and develop the ability to do something about it.

In order to be “empowered” people must have an understanding of what power is, in relation to themselves as individuals within families, communities and the wider political context. What is within their grasp? What do they have the right to do? What skills, knowledge and understanding are necessary?

Learning that empowers improves the capacity of people to relate to the world around them as active, critical, reflective citizens. It is a social experience where the educational focus is on collective, innovative, problem solving processes of action, reflection, communication and co-operation.

Simply acquiring skills is not enough and indeed may obscure and exacerbate issues of inequality. Instead, learning must provide opportunities for the improvement of “critical literacy” whereby people are encouraged to debate, argue, challenge, disagree, evaluate and resist.

Learning in the context of empowerment – roles and actions

The learner:

- understands what learning is, what it can do, what it can't do,
- reflects on his/her current skills, knowledge and understanding,
- understands how existing skills, knowledge and understanding can be channelled and repackaged to fit the current situation,
- identifies new skills, knowledge and understanding that will promote and support participation and engagement,
- describes how best he/she learns and can negotiate appropriate learning opportunities,
- understands that the process of learning delivers a range of skills, knowledge and understanding – not just the content of the course – that is of value and can be transferred to other learning and to daily life,
- undertakes learning that he/she knows is fit for purpose having been enabled to make informed choices about its relevance,
- understands how learning acquired in one context can be applied to other contexts and to daily life,
- recognises and can explain the difference learning has made,
- evaluates learning and decides on an individual level its contribution to quality of life and to the ability to function effectively as an individual, within families and communities.

The facilitator / trainer:

- finds ways and means of meeting older people to talk about learning,
- finds non-threatening, positive and realistic ways of discussing learning and opening up the opportunities it holds for older adults,
- presents an impartial view of learning that enables people to make their own decisions about it,
- has strategies that enable people to reflect on their existing knowledge and skills, evaluate them and match them to current need,
- demonstrates how previous experience and existing knowledge, skills and understanding can be tailored to meet current need,
- negotiates and delivers learning that will enable the refreshment of skills, knowledge and understanding and/or that will channel experience into usable formats for participation and engagement,
- finds non-prescriptive ways of introducing skills, knowledge and understanding that are or may be new,
- develops learning offers around new skills, knowledge and understanding that are rooted in relevance to the daily lives of the learners,
- facilitates discussions about relevant learning and about the practicalities of engagement with learning with older people ensuring that this facilitation is without bias and enables all voices to be heard,
- engages learners in learning processes and methodologies that are intrinsically empowering,
- demonstrates how learning can be applied to daily life to enhance participation and engagement,
- makes overt the process outcomes of learning and shows how these can be transferred to other contexts,
- helps learners to action plan around things that have been learned in order to maximise impact,
- supports learners to take control of learning and to make it work for them provides the means by which learners can make value judgements about learning and its potential to enhance their lives.

Methodology

Empowerment is, however, essentially an individual experience. Each learner will have a different set and balance of needs. The teacher must take account of this in the development and implementation of learning. Involvement with individuals as well as the management of the group will be key responsibilities. On an individual basis teachers will seek to create confident, informed, inquisitive, adaptable, assertive learners, they will use the dynamics of the learning group to do so.

Expectations of an empowering learning environment will include: that it is an active, lively place where everyone is busy and engaged in learning; that the teacher is part of this activity, directing but not controlling; that each learner is doing something that he/she can see and describe as relevant; that he/she is learning using

resources that can be accessed with ease; that learners interact with each other in ways that promote learning; that they give and receive information and feedback about how things are going between each other as well as with the teacher.

The concept of empowerment provides a learning programme that is designed with the potential beneficiaries, not for them. A commitment to ensuring that learning has a relevant place in the lives of older adults means that we need to be certain that we know what is required from a learning experience. The best way of knowing is by asking.

The LENA project has used the “focus group” as its principal tool of an engagement of older adults.

Summary

Lessons learned about running focus groups

It is easier to approach a group that already exists – people know each other and they are used to meeting regularly. It is good to give people some input or ideas for discussion rather than to ask them open questions like: “What would you like to do/learn?”

Lessons for curriculum development

“Learning” is not the best term to be used with older people, it is better to replace it with “activity” or something else. It is necessary to motivate people to start learning/doing something in older age. Learning can successfully combat isolation. It is necessary to take into account the life experience of older people.

The empowerment curriculum consists of seven modules, which can be used independently or all together.

The LENA empowerment curriculum allows older learners freedom to participate in the creation and selection of activities that meet pre-determined objectives.

The modules were developed from information gathered in national focus group meetings. The professionals translated into a learning programme that the older learners were suggesting. As far as possible learners’ wishes regarding content, timing, location, resources for learning were accommodated in the development process.

Description of the units www.bia-net.org/LENA

Contributors

Borysławski Krzysztof (PhD, hab.), Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, The Faculty of Biology and Animal Science, Poland

Chmielewski Piotr (PhD candidate), Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, Poland

Grabowska Sophia (PhD), National University of L'viv, Ukraine

Hrapková Nadežda (PhD), head of the University of the Third Age at Comenius University Bratislava, Slovakia

Hrytchak-Zhupylo Natalia, student of psychology at National University of L'viv, Ukraine

Ivanukh Viktoria, student of psychology at National University of L'viv, Ukraine

Kobylarek Aleksander (PhD), University of Wrocław, head of the University of the Third Age, Department of Pedagogy, Poland

Kurz Rosemarie (PhD), University of Graz, head of the Department of Intergenerational Issues, Austria

Meynen Daniel (PhD), Sulzburg, scientific advisor of the European Federation of the Older Students, University of The Third Age in Holzen, Germany

Ostrovskii Ihor (PhD, hab.), L'viv National Polytechnic University, Ukraine

Ostrowska Kateryna (PhD), National University of L'viv, Ukraine

Partyko Tetyana (PhD), National University of L'viv, Department of Philosophy, Ukraine

Semków Jerzy (PhD, hab.), lecturer at School of Administration in Bielsko- Biała, Poland

Sokalska Anastasiya (Ma), National University of L'viv, Ukraine

Straś-Romanowska (Maria PhD, hab.), University of Wrocław, Department of Psychology, Poland

Zakowicz Ilona (PhD student), University of Wrocław, Department of Pedagogy, Poland

Index

Al'perovich Valerij	61,63,64	Milne Eugene	33
Alzheimer Alois	36	Minois Georges	41,42
Ananiev Boris	55	Mueller Laurence	34
Antsyferova Ludmiła	55,70	Olshansky Stuart	35
Ball Lucille	38	Pearson Karl	52,73,74
Baltes Paul	10,11,30	Peck Robert	11
Bancroft John	38	Piaget Jean	11
Baucum Don	69,70	Pikuła Norbert	41, 43,44
Baur Joseph	35	Piotrowski Jerzy	4
Bieriebin Michaił	69	Priazhnikov Nikołaj	51
Bojko V.	61	Porseva Khristina	51
Butler Robert	33	Przetacznik –Gierowska Maria	25
Cattell Raymond	69,72	Raciniewska Alicja	41,42
Chernorizov Aleksandr	69	Rajgorodskij Daniil	72
Chudnovsky Vil'	51	Russell Dan	61
Costa Paul	52	Rattan Suresh	34
Cournil Amandine	34,35	Rogowski Lukasz	41,42
Demetrius Lloyd	35	Rokach Ami	61
Dhahbi Joseph	35	Rose Michael	34
Erikson Erik	55,70	Rosenmayr Leopold	16
Ferguson George	61	Rotter Julian.	61
Frankl Viktor	51	Scheffé Henry	73,74
Garncarek Emilia	41	Sobchuk Ludmiła	72
Giddens Anthony	19,20	Sokrates	9
Harman Denham	33	Sopov Vladimir	52
Hayflick Leonard	33	Spearman Charles	73,74
Izaks Gerbrand	33	Spector Tim	36
Izmajlov Chingis	69	Spielberger Charle.....	69
Ilin Evgenii	72	Stolin Vladimir	61,66
Jakubowska Honorata	41,42	Straś-Romanowska Maria	25,31
Jodłowska P.	30	Stuart-Hamilton Ian	25
Jurmain Robert	34	Thus Cr.	36
Karpushina Ludmiła	52	Timiras Poala a	33
Khromov Abram.	52	Tsuya X.	52
Kim Hyon-Jeen	33	Tyszkowa Maria	25
Kirkwood Thomas 1977	33,34,35	Uchino Bert	37
Klimczyk Wojciech	42	Vasserman Ludwik	69,72,73
Klonowicz Stefan	42	Vellas Francois	85
Kobylarek Aleksander	61	Vellas Pierre	85
Kohlberg Lawrence	11	Weinert Brian	33
Kon Igor	70	Westendorp Rudi	33
Koska J. (2011)	28	Whitney Donald	52,54,57
Krasnova Olga	51	Williams George	33
Lakey Brian	38	Włodarczyk Rafał	41,42
Leary Timothy	72	Yatsemirskaya Raisa	61
Liders Aleksander	51	Zabrocki Michaił	72
Lodish Harvey	34	Zajac-Lamparska Ludmiła	28
Mann Henry	52,54,57	Zglinicki Thomas	36
McCrae Robert	52	Ziębińska Beata	43,44,45,46,47

