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The nestling – waiting for adulthood?

Abstract:

Our article deals with the problem of ‘nestlings’ – young adults who postpone the moment of entering adulthood. A brief review of data and research results indicates that delays in undertaking developmental tasks typical of adulthood refer to a professional job, starting a family or a relationship, and gaining independence (not only financially). We discuss cultural, economic and psychological contexts of nestling, and attempt to answer the question whether waiting for adulthood is a global problem or a problem specific to only certain countries or just to Poland. It seems necessary to undertake research on this phenomenon. Nestling ought to be explored not only from the adult child’ perspective but from the parental perspective as well.

Keywords:

waiting for adulthood, global problem, economic reasons, cultural and social reasons, psychological reasons, explorative research, adult children, parents of adult children

Streszczenie:

Artykuł zajmuje się problemem “gniazdowników” - młodych dorosłych, którzy odraczają moment wejścia w dorosłość. Krótki przegląd danych i wyników badań wskazuje, że opóźnienia w podejmowaniu zadań rozwojowych typowych dla dorosłości odnoszą się do pracy zawodowej, założenie rodziny, budowania związków, uzyskania niezależności, a nie jedynie względów finansowych. Artykuł omawia kulturowy, ekonomiczny i psychologiczny kontekst gniazdowania oraz próbuje odpowiedzieć na pytanie, czy czekanie na dorosłość jest problemem globalnym, specyficznym dla niektórych krajów czy problemem dotyczącym tylko Polski. Niezbędne wydaje się podjęcie badań nad omawianym zjawiskiem. Gniazdowanie powinno być zbadane z punktu widzenia dorosłych dzieci oraz ich rodziców.

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Słowa kluczowe:

czekając na dorosłość, problem globalny, przyczyny ekonomiczne, przyczyny kulturowe i społeczne, przyczyny psychologiczne, badania eksploracyjne, dorosłe dzieci, rodzice dorosłych dzieci

Introduction

Young people nowadays grow up in conditions which in many respects are definitely different from those in which their parents or grandparents lived and – first of all – as many researchers point out, their living conditions now are much simpler and quieter. They have better opportunities to get a good education, to master foreign languages or to travel abroad. They do not have to fight or protest. They can spend their free time working on their own development, gaining new experiences and pursuing their careers. It would seem that they have been perfectly prepared for adult life on their own. Nonetheless, more and more often they resign from independence and remain ‘under their parents’ wings’. In other words: ‘Young people enter something I call orange jelly. They wade through apprenticeships and voluntary work. As many as 60 % of them, as long as they want to earn an income, work on so-called “junk” contracts for the lowest possible wages. As a result, most of them function in their family homes living off their parents. They are so-called “nestlings” (Szlendak, 2012).

The name nestlings has its origins in a species of birds – nestlings (*altricial species*), whose chicks after hatching are incapable of living independently and thus require parental care; therefore they spend a longer time in their nests – longer than other species (<http://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/3906210>). In a similar way to ornithologists, sociologists define nestlings as follows: They are ‘children who having reached the age of 30 or even 40 do not start their own families, do not move out, and remain with their parents; they continue using parental care and resources’ (Szlendak, 2012, 294). Bee (2004) defines this type of family relationship as the ‘cluttered nest’. In the literature, we find many descriptions and research results referring to this phenomenon all over the world. Hence, we can conclude that waiting for adulthood or postponing or delaying adulthood applies not only to Poland.

A tendency to postpone fulfilling adulthood obligations is not new. According to Sińczuch, the first reports about shifting the border of growing up appeared in the late 1970s. (Dubas, 2001). Young people started professional work and reached economic independence or adulthood later than usual. Most often it was connected with starting further stages of education. Nowadays, however, we can observe that this phenomenon has been spreading to a greater extent than ever before.

Young people today definitely remain financially dependent on their parents more often and longer than their peers from a previous generation and to a greater extent they take advantage of their parents' material support. The time spent in getting an education necessary for joining the labour market has become much longer, while the deepening economic crisis and hard housing situation additionally hinders entering adulthood. Moreover, this affects not only unemployed people, those looking for work, or those who study but also those who have jobs, pursue their careers, who own flats (quite often their parents bought them their flats). An individual ' (...) does not have (...) possibilities to acquire appropriate social capital which would enable him to fulfil adulthood obligations' (Czerka, 2005).

In Poland 'almost three million adults still live together with their parents, still as children. Is it a special case of laziness, reasonable calculation or a social tragedy?' (<http://www.polityka.pl/spoleczenstwo/artykuly/1558917,1,pokolenie-doroslych-bobasow.read#ixzz2r2HLZFE>). To be more precise, according to CBOS (Centre for Public Opinion Research) survey, 'as many as 36% of Poles aged 25 – 29 still live with their parents and 20% still get pocket money from them. More than 25% at this age are financially maintained by their parents. Another quarter of the respondents have jobs but they need to be supported by their families anyway. Less than 50% of these people live on their own' (<http://www.sfora.pl/Az-tylu-mlodych-Polakow-mieszka-wciaz-z-rodzicami-62124/3>).

What are the reasons for the phenomenon of nestling and what is it connected with? How do sociologists and psychologists perceive those young non-adult adults? Is nestling only a stage on their way towards (delayed) adulthood or is it a peculiar phenomenon? (cf. Brzezińska et al. 2011; Szlendak, 2012). What characterises Polish nestlings?

Our article deals with the aforementioned questions as well as with other issues connected with the specific character of entering adulthood at the beginning of the 21st century. We attempt to integrate data and findings coming from various sources and try to outline the phenomenon's psychological frames. We also bear in mind that the problem pertaining to Poles in Poland has rarely been tackled by researchers.

Nestling – attempt at definition

Nestling refers to various aspects of entering and experiencing adulthood in the 20th century. The most specific distinguishing feature is waiting for adulthood ('waithood'), which is a portmanteau noun consisting of two words 'wait' and 'hood'. It concerns the period of suspension between childhood and adulthood. On the one hand, young people are no longer children who require being looked after – on the other hand, though, they

are unable to become independent adults. The concept of ‘waithood’, used for the first time by Navtej Dhillon, Tarik Yousef and Dianne Singerman (see: Honwana, 2012), comprises the multifaceted transition from youth to adulthood. This process goes beyond economic criteria, namely, finding a job, and extends into the sphere of social life and civic activity. Tasks of this period are moved to subsequent years and they evidence changes in a life cycle. Hence, it differs in models connected with establishing a family and pursuing a career from those that existed in modern and traditional societies.

Nestlings, as mentioned before, is a notion used in Poland to describe young adults who live off their parents (Szlendak, 2012) and, as a consequence, who remain in specific relations with them, thus building their identity based on a specific social and psychological factors. We can encounter related or even synonymic concepts in scientific literature connected with the nestling syndrome. They are mostly concerned with sociology and are also in popular and popular science literature which in the media raises a social and demographic problem of living off parents. In the media, for example, we can find such terms as a ‘generation of adult babies’.

The concepts connected with the issue, which often emphasise the cultural positioning of waiting for adulthood, provide a context in which this peculiar 21st century phenomenon is described – a phenomenon that, apart from Poland, can be observed in other countries in Europe, Africa, North America and in other parts of the world wherever an unemployment problem appears. Hence, waiting for adulthood (‘waithood’) is a global problem; Honwana even wrote about a ‘generation of waiting for adulthood (waithood generation)’ (Honwana, 2012).

Various countries – range of phenomenon (is the nestling a global problem?)

‘Against the background of other EU states, we do not look so bad. We are far from the European average which amounts to 28.3%. Young Danes live with their parents the least frequently (merely 1.9%), followed by Finns and Swedes (4.1%). On the other hand, Slovaks (56.4%) and Bulgarians (55.7%) are much greater nestlings than Poles.’ Europejskie badanie dochodów i warunków życia (EU-SILC) w 2012 r. <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/warunki-zycia/dochody-wydatki-i-warunki-zycia-ludnosci/europejskie-badanie-dochodow-i-warunkow-zycia-eu-silc-w-2012-r-7,4.html>.

In the USA, Canada and Great Britain young people suspended between childhood and adulthood are described by such terms as ‘kidults’, ‘adultolescents’ or ‘kippers’. In Japan the words are ‘freeters’ or ‘parasaito shinguru’. In Italy, it’s the sarcastic term ‘bamboccioni’ and characterizes an increasing number of young people aged 20 to 30 and more

who are still single and live with their parents (in particular with mothers). In Africa (northern, eastern and western) the word ‘youthman’ refers to a person who is not socially adult in spite of having reached biological adulthood. Even a man older than forty can be named like this when he is unable to create a stable, independent life, and establish a family. A difficult political situation in Africa forces some young people to grow up faster (e.g. children whose parents died and who have to take care of their younger siblings, or working children, or child-soldiers). We can encounter a certain paradox here, namely, a thirteen-year-old boy who provides for his entire family is an adult, whereas a forty-year-old man who is unable to be independent financially and start his own family is young – a youthman (Honwana, 2012).

It is worth emphasizing a phenomenon called ‘boomerang kids’ or a ‘yo-yo generation’. It refers to university graduates who (having experienced freedom and independence) on completing their studies come back home and continue being dependent on their parents. They usually do not contribute financially to their households and do not support their parents either with money or help in household jobs. Very frequently they take advantage of privileges connected with daily routines such as washing, ironing or cleaning (Sassler, Ciambone and Benway, 2008). The phenomenon of ‘boomerang kids’ is very popular in the United States to such an extent that it constitutes a problem – so characteristic of this country: it influences insurance policies (referring to health, a car, etc.) of parents whose adult children are back home. They are mostly problems connected with increased living costs. No wonder that some appropriate policies were adjusted and that separate legal provisions were made in reference to children returning home (Lankford, 1999).

A factor that certainly makes it difficult for young adults to become independent is unemployment. According to the EU statistical office Eurostat, young Europeans are faced with a worsening situation on the labour market. In many Member States the level of unemployment among young adults is constantly increasing. The worst situation can be observed in Greece (55.3%) and Spain (53.2%), where more than 50% of adults cannot find any job. Serious problems with finding employment are also encountered by young people living in Portugal (37.7%), Italy (35.3%), Slovakia (34.0%), Ireland (30.4%), Hungary (28.1%) and Bulgaria (28.1%). Although in countries such as Latvia and Lithuania unemployment has slightly decreased during recent years, it is still high – 28.4% and 26.4% respectively. A quite high level of unemployment can also be observed in Cyprus (27.8%), Poland (26.5%), Great Britain (21.0%) and Slovakia (20.6%). Germany (8.1%), Austria (8.7%) and Holland (9.5%) can boast the lowest unemployment levels in the EU among young people. Table 1 presents detailed data.

Apart from Polish ‘nestlings’ and Italian ‘bamboccioni’, in European literature on the subject we cannot find any adverse psychological consequences resulting from postponing entrance into adulthood. It would be very interesting to carry out analyses, particularly with regard to Greece and Spain. The fact that entering adulthood by young people is so difficult and common clearly shows that it has become a global problem encountered on almost every continent.

Table 1. Unemployment among young people (%).

	Youth unemployment rate				Youth unemployment ratio		
	2010	2011	2012	2012Q4*	2010	2011	2012
EU-27	21.1	21.4	22.8	23.2	9.0	9.1	9.7
Euro area	20.9	20.8	23.0	23.7	8.7	8.7	9.6
Belgium	22.4	18.7	19.8	22.0	7.3	6.0	6.2
Bulgaria	21.8	25.0	28.1	28.4	6.7	7.4	8.5
Czech Republic	18.3	18.1	19.5	19.3	5.7	5.4	6.1
Denmark	14.0	14.2	14.1	14.2	9.4	9.6	9.1
Germany	9.9	8.6	8.1	7.9	5.1	4.5	4.1
Estonia	32.9	22.3	20.9	19.3	12.6	9.1	8.7
Ireland	27.6	29.1	30.4	29.4	12.0	12.1	12.3
Greece	32.9	44.4	55.3	57.9	10.0	13.0	16.1
Spain	41.6	46.4	53.2	55.2	17.8	19.0	20.6
France	23.6	22.8	24.3	25.4	8.9	8.4	9.0
Italy	27.8	29.1	35.3	36.9	7.9	8.0	10.1
Cyprus	16.6	22.4	27.8	31.8	6.7	8.7	10.8
Latvia	37.2	31.0	28.4	24.7	13.9	11.6	11.4
Lithuania	35.3	32.2	26.4	24.2	10.4	9.0	7.7
Luxembourg	15.8	16.4	18.1	18.5	3.5	4.2	5.0
Hungary	26.6	26.1	28.1	28.8	6.6	6.4	7.3
Malta	13.1	13.8	14.2	14.5	6.7	7.1	7.2
Netherlands	8.7	7.6	9.5	9.8	6.0	5.3	6.6
Austria	8.8	8.3	8.7	8.7	5.2	5.0	5.2
Poland	23.7	25.8	26.5	27.5	8.2	8.7	8.9
Portugal	27.7e	30.1	37.7	38.4	8.2	11.7	14.3
Romania	22.1	23.7	22.7	22.2	6.9	7.4	7.0
Slovenia	14.7	15.7	20.6	23.2	5.9	5.9	7.1
Slovakia	33.9	33.5	34.0	35.1	10.4	10.0	10.4
Finland	21.4	20.1	19.0	19.3	10.6	10.1	9.8
Sweden	24.8	22.8	23.7	24.1	12.8	12.1	12.4
United Kingdom	19.6	21.1	21.0	20.7	11.6	12.4	12.4

* The quarterly youth unemployment rate is seasonally adjusted.

e: estimate

Source: Eurostat – <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/eurostat/home/>, [dostęp: 12.01.2014.]

Some reasons for nestling – economic, social, cultural and psychological

According to data published by GUS, even 50% of Poles aged 25 – 34 can have a problem with taking on characteristic adulthood tasks. Can these Poles be perceived as a generation of adult children? Is it a lack of possibilities or willingness that determines their

suspension between developmental stages? Or perhaps the tasks that are traditionally associated with this stage are not congruent with economic and social realities and psychological conditions?

Undoubtedly, among the reasons for nestling, economic issues are the most important. However, we must take into account social, cultural and psychological aspects as well. In this part of the article, we shall indicate various reasons why young adults 'nestle' so snugly into their parents' homes.

First and foremost, reasons for the phenomenon can be sought in the economic situation that young people face, not only in Poland and Europe. When analysing the Polish situation the following aspects must be taken into account: an economic crisis, high unemployment, so-called 'junk' contracts, a large number of young adults who entered or are trying to enter the labour market from the population boom beginning in the 1980s, an overrepresentation of young adults with higher education and a university diploma – all these realities make it difficult for young people to find employment and find their place on the labour market and beyond it.

According to Sheldon (2005), in Great Britain economic reasons also constitute the main cause for postponing adulthood. This author thinks that it is the labour market itself, especially work that is done as part of gaining experience with no pay, that is for free that forces young people to be so-called 'kippers' (an acronym made from *Kid in Parents' Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings*), and it has nothing to do with their laziness.

A similar opinion is held by Honwana (2012). This author, in turn, thinks that the incapability of young Africans to become independent does not result from their failure to reach adulthood (just growing up itself), but results from a breakdown in the social and economical system which ought to ensure growing up healthy, having a good education and being employed. This system should also enable young people to start their families and to participate in a social life as rightful citizens. This problem is often caused by an incorrect economic policy, bad management, corruption, and a lack of civil liberties.

In Poland many university graduates who cannot find work register in the Labour Offices as unemployed persons. In some cases, they are strongly motivated by their unemployed status to continue their development, to gain new skills and qualifications and sometimes even to take a job that is not connected with their original profession. More often, however, a young person assumes the role of a victim, someone who is helpless or even wronged by the country's economic situation (Bańka, 1992). These young people, particularly when they remain jobless for a long time, do not see the necessity to actively adapt to labour market conditions. Instead of trying to improve their professional situation, they become passive and require others to care for them (Skarżyńska, 1996).

This is conducive to nestling in a generational family, especially when parents are able to and truly want to continue caring (not only materially) for an adult child.

So how can we explain this? Some young people use their resources and creativity, actively seek employment or take up alternative forms of earning an income. Why, then, do others have so many problems with this?

There are also other nestling causes, perhaps as equally important as the economic ones and certainly interacting with them, which are connected with the contemporary social and cultural context of entering adulthood according to a 'new' post-industrial programme (Lasch, 1977).

According to sociologists, following the 'baby boom' which took place after the Second World War, and starting from the 1950s, we have witnessed sexual liberalization that has resulted in differentiating, complicating and changing family forms (cf. Szlendak, 2012). In spite of these differentiations, we can notice one common aspect, namely, a considerable decrease in the fertility rate. 'According to Eurostat figures, the fertility rate in 25 countries European Union dropped from approximately 2.5 in 1996 to about 1.5 in 2005' (Szlendak, 2012, 367). One of the most popular sociological theories, namely, a theory about a second demographic transition authored by Dutch demographer and sociologist Van de Kaa (cf. e.g. Giza-Poleszczuk, 2005) states that decreased fertility consequences go beyond demographic and sociological areas. A decreasing number of children in a family is accompanied by concentrating psychologically on an individual (Giddens, 2007). Expansive individualization and a related striving for personal freedom devoid of any limits (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim, 1995) lead to changing the so-called 'normal biography' into 'choice biography', which is further connected with privatization regarding norms, relativism of attitudes and pluralised life models (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Hence if an individual's autonomy becomes a social and cultural priority, situated beyond any responsibility, it is possible to construct the autobiography outside typical adult tasks which contemporarily are treated as uncomfortable and requiring compromises.

It must be added that decreased fertility in Poland is connected with many factors such as popular contraceptive use, a decrease in marriages, an increase in divorces, more women going into the labour market who make careers, and self-realisation perceived beyond motherhood (Giza-Poleszczuk, 2005; Slany 2011). Fewer and fewer children in a family (mostly there is just one, and according to demographic forecasts this number will grow) are accompanied by a specific kind of 'infantocentrism' (Slany, 2007; Bartosz, 2003). In other words, the lower the number of children in a family, the greater the parental focus on a child, even when it is an adult one. This focus on a child results from the accumulated parental efforts to meet the child's needs, to organize optimal conditions

not only for learning but also for enhancing the adult child's chances in a so-called career – an adult child who, according to parents, is able – and unable at the same time – to lead an independent life.

The parents' liberal attitude towards an adult child's informal relationships and their acceptance, at least declared, of divorces are conducive to nestling or re-nestling after an 'episode' such as a marriage or another relationship which has failed. Some researchers see in these phenomena a manifestation of 'culture of egoism' (Giele, 2007) and they indicate the promotion of life concentrated on satisfying egocentric needs while bearing the lowest possible costs. Thus, nestling becomes a good option or even the best one and certainly a comfortable one. All the more, it is so when we consider that a close relationship and a family are seen by young adults as a difficult choice. Personal comfort and striving for self-realisation with no compromises made with another human being contribute to the fact that the divorce rate in Poland is one of the highest in Europe (<http://www.prawnik-online.eu/najnowsze-statystyki-dotyczace-rozwodow,3,3423.html>; http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/RS_rocznik_stat_miedzynarodowy_2012.pdf).

Individual autonomy, so far-reaching in Poland, is conducive to building an identity based on the parent's own 'self'-expansion. Contemporary parents of adult children who exerted themselves to bring up, educate or even buy a flat for their only child, made this effort and engaged in these investments partly because they wanted to satisfy their own, sometimes unfulfilled ambitions. In this way, parents of young adults take part in a cultural and environmental 'game' in which they can emphasize their participation in their children's process of reaching 'assets' in the form of high incomes, exclusive travels and general comfort that they themselves were deprived of. All this contributes to postponing the moment of entering adulthood and consequently to delays in assuming responsibilities connected with taking up a job (especially since it is not easy to find one today), postponing starting relationships and starting their own families as well as multiplying reasons why this option is difficult or simply unattractive.

Even if we assume that gaining financial independence is conditioned by the situation on the labour market and the existing level of unemployment, we must admit that the state of close relationships in Poland – and not only in Poland – is full of contradictions and paradoxes. We must bear in mind that in our times these two basic planes (work and relationships) penetrate each other and thus they cannot be treated separately. Our private life is increasingly subordinated to a job situation, and this material status plays a more decisive role for the value of an individual work prestige and family importance than used to be the case (Giele, 2007).

Paradoxically, in the rating of values declared by young Poles, love and a happy relationship, possibly lasting, are still mentioned among the most important values. As

emphasized by Growiec in his book 'Social capital. Origin and social consequences.' (2011), Poles think that their cultural differentiator is attachment to family. 'We are at the top of the world with regard to the strength of family bonds. African countries followed by Arabic countries and then us'. (<http://www.polityka.pl/nauka/czlowiek/1559705,1,nieufny-jak-polak-prawda-czy-mit.read>). In the international research described by Growiec, some data was obtained confirming a high value of family in the hierarchy of Polish people. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents answered the question What is the value of family in your life? as 'it is very important'. The next question Do you think that parents should sacrifice everything for their children or do they have their own separate lives? was answered by most Polish respondents as 'parents are obliged to sacrifice everything for their children'. Therefore, we can see that declaratively, and certainly not only declaratively, Poles have a good mental background for nestling, both in the case of young adults and their parents as well.

Currently, striving towards adulthood by both adults and their parents is also connected with psychological reasons. In this place, we ought to draw attention to the complex psychological reasons for Polish nestling. If one consequence of these changes is a new model for relations between parents and children within a broader context (decreased fertility – a child becoming an autotelic value – a broader range for investing in children and caring for them, including providing for their material welfare, mental support and even a specific type of encirclement), there appears a problem with 'anchoring the identity' of young adults. Tasks which are typical of adulthood are postponed or they are not fulfilled at all (cf. Brzezińska, et al. 2011). Apart from delays in assuming an adult role and prolonging a transitory early adulthood phase, other difficulties are also indicated such as an emotional dependence on parents, an inability to be separated from them, and the fact that parents or guardians help their children out with performing certain tasks. This leads to a decrease in motivation to become an adult and a lack of working out one's own self-realisation in social roles (Bee, 2003). We also notice here cases where resigning from accomplishing economic and non-economic independence is difficult to gain, giving up responsibility for one's own life, abstaining from assuming new professional roles and family relations connected with separating from their original family.

Young people, when faced with the question about constituting their own identity, that is, how to build it? where? when? with whom? and at last what for?, may easily find a clue by taking advantage of a nest that is ready, prepared and already domesticated. On the one hand, adult non-adults have at their disposal many possibilities to choose from and may construct their own autobiography, while on the other hand a multitude and diversity of choices entails a fear of constructing a wrong one. What is more, these are frequently only apparent choices as most of them are conditioned by material aspects.

Therefore, we can see that multiple offers provided by the contemporary world and the possibility to select from various autobiographical options paradoxically lead to questions asked at the threshold of adulthood such as ‘what shall I choose?’, ‘what is more important: career or family?’, ‘if work and/or relationship or family, then what kind?’ and so on. Thus they often experience a ‘quarter century crisis’ (Szlendak, 2012, 295).

Hence taking into account the complex conditions that underlie nestling, we need to bear in mind those possible configurations of economical, social, cultural and psychological factors, including their interactive character.

Contemporary road to adulthood?

Our times has seen an increase in tolerance towards accomplishing social tasks and fulfilling social roles (Gurba, 2009). Additionally, the age of assuming obligations connected with adulthood is constantly moved higher and higher. According to Oleś (2011), entering adulthood is nowadays associated with determination of future goals and plans, making decisions to lead a single life or start a relationship with another person on a permanent basis, and the consequent performance of the assumed obligations. Emotional relations with parents are loosened and a young person starts to be independent and makes his own decisions. Moreover, a sense of responsibility combined with bearing consequences for one’s own choices ought to develop. An additional criterion underlying adulthood is financial independence, which is acquired thanks to taking up a job (Oleś, 2011).

As noted previously, adulthood as tasks connected with this stage of life comprises two dimensions, namely, the objective and subjective. The objective dimension refers to social norms and phases of human life, which is determined within a chronological framework. Within this framework some tasks were formulated, the accomplishment of which is identified with entering adulthood. However, in our times we may ask whether these tasks are universal and match contemporary reality. Researchers place more emphasis on other dimensions. The subjective dimension is expressed through a sense of adulthood and psycho-social maturity. The former refers to having a strong conviction about being adult (category approach) or being adult to a certain degree (continuous approach). The latter, or psycho-social maturity, is connected with a human being’s experiences who, influenced by particular events, tries to externalize particular norms and pursue a certain adulthood model. This is manifested by certain competences and behaviours attributed to adults (Brzezińska et al., 2012). Indexes of adulthood include assuming responsibility for one’s own actions, making independent decisions, being able to

plan one's own activeness, having definite plans for the future, and being able to get involved in a chosen activity (Brzezińska, Appelt, Ziółkowska, 2008).

According to Arnett, people in their early adulthood do not perceive objective determinants as indispensable for being an adult (Brzezińska et al., 2012). External factors, also called individual criteria, are evaluated as the most important. Research results on the subjective sense of being an adult person indicate that taking up these adulthood tasks positively influence one's self-perception as an adult (Arnett, 2000).

It has been shown that a sense of adulthood is also strongly connected with age and an individual's existing life situation, that is, his/her level of education, taking up a professional job and being in a relationship (Piotrowski, 2010). Other authors point to a connection with assuming responsibility for consequences of one's own choices, supporting the closest relatives (mainly financially) and learning to control one's emotions (Gurba, 2008). Assuming and fulfilling an appropriate role and tasks, therefore, facilitates a sense of adulthood and has an impact on our self-perception as an adult person (Piotrowski, 2010).

Arnett suggests that in the light of current social and cultural changes, with their significant increase in individualism particularly in developed and developing societies, a new developmental phase has emerged between adolescence and early adulthood and can be referred to as emerging adulthood (Piotrowski, 2010). It lasts six to seven years – between the 18th and the 25th year of life. During that relatively short period many changes take place along with an attempt to determine one's own lifestyle. That period has as its characteristics: explorative behaviours, frequent changes, a disposition to experience something new, and to try out new styles in order to find one most appropriate for that individual. It is connected with building an identity and focusing on one's own personality (Arnett, 2000). At the same time, it is unstable as a result of numerous changes that occur in the young person's life (changing partners, taking up a professional role, discovering new interests and directions of activity).

This emerging adulthood phase can be noticed in countries in which the economy is based on science and where education and practical experience take many years in order to achieve a satisfying job and reach a desired status. Also other tasks connected with adulthood are postponed until that time. In Minta's research, a peculiar group of "apparent adults" has been identified: people that experience being suspended between adolescence and adulthood (Minta, 2007). Persons during the emerging adulthood phase perceive themselves neither as adolescents nor as adults (Piotrowski, 2010). Although a sense of adulthood does appear on some planes, is not comprehensive in character.

Many tasks associated with adulthood are connected with the economic stability of a given country. The main obstacle in reaching adult status is a lack of financial background.

According to Honwana, the incapability of young people to gain basic resources for being independent does not result from their failure to reach adulthood or to complete the growing up process, but results from a breakdown in the social and economic system, which ought to ensure healthiness, a good education, and employment. This system should also enable young people to start their families and participate in a social life as rightful citizens. This problem is often caused by an incorrect economic policy, bad management, corruption, and a lack of civil liberties. It would appear therefore that persons who have greater financial or educational resources ought to reach adulthood faster (Honwana, 2012). However, it turns out to be illusory. Many young adults, in spite of having a good education, a job and a financial background, still remain dependent on their parents.

From the perspective of adult children and parents

Taking into consideration the specific character of entering adulthood in our times, we must approach the problem from three viewpoints of both adult children and their parents.

From the young adults' perspective, we may enumerate some specific Polish problems, namely:

- the 'cheated generation'; young people live convinced, often reinforced by the media or parents, that education, an MA degree, or even more so a PhD, will ensure them an attractive, satisfying and well paid job as well as a better life than their parents have, including its non-professional aspects; more than once, this has turned out to an illusion;
- a lack of models; young people have thought that all the clues for functioning as a 'young adult', along with a belief that the schemes and tested models effective one generation ago could be still actual; it has turned out, however, that they no longer apply and do not meet modern requirements; this is accompanied by the lack of a constructive model for solving crisis situations and coping with life problems. Quite often, young people at home do not learn how to cope with life challenges because they are protected from them and/or are excessively helped by their parents who do so out of love. Yet another situation, is that some non-constructive models are communicated such as taking advantage of numerous benefits and pensions instead of taking up a job;
- young people being used to 'home luxury'; they are comfortable and have a commercial approach to life, they calculate, What pays off: to continue living with parents and save money or pay for everything on their own (be independent) but live modestly.

- prolonging their studies and gaining education because of the existing labour market situation and consequently avoiding and postponing confrontation with adulthood and having to assume responsibility for one's own life;
- fewer children in a family (in most families there are just two children or even only one): 'One-child families constitute 46.9% of the whole, those with two children – 36.2%, while large families (with three or more children) – 16.9%. The percentage of large families living in the country is more than twice as high (25.3%) than in cities (11.8%) (http://www.unic.un.org.pl/rok_rodziny/mi_informacja.php). There is a belief that an adult child by leaving home violates the family system; hence young adults remain in a specific dependence relation with their parents. They may experience various dilemmas connected with 'abandoning' their parents and this is often accompanied by guilt feelings and being afraid to cause a nuisance to parents. This is especially true when an adult child performs important roles by supporting, helping and constituting a family.

On the other hand, from the viewpoint of parents, nestling an adult child can be connected with diverse factors which mutually interact:

- fulfilling a 'parental obligation' which according to the Polish mentality ought to ensure 'everything' for their child; thus parents assume responsibility for their adult child's life and his 'start into adulthood in the best possible way'; currently in Poland this is often means that a young person has to have a background in the form of a flat, a high income, and professional and social status - which certainly require expenditures of strength, means and time by parents who get involved in complex relations with their children;
- anchoring mental attitudes of Polish parents (and not only e.g. Scandinavian ones) in a conviction that 'children cannot be told to pack their bags'; it is especially true in the Polish and Italian stereotype of a mother who never throws her child out onto the streets, which is often connected with controlling an adult child and preventing him from 'making wrong decisions in life';
- investing in children in order to receive a specific 'return on investment' in the future (e.g. when parents grow old or lose their jobs), which is frequently linked with a cultural tradition (for example, in Japan aging parents expect care from their children; it is similar in the Poland);
- tolerating/acquiescing/accepting various manifestations of the 'non-adult child' syndrome, for instance, in maintaining adult children because they hope to get a job or anticipation of getting a more attractive or better job, in accepting a son or a daughter living together with a partner and hoping that the relationship will be formalized (which is supported by the popularity of cohabitation among young adults, including those involving parents themselves);

- bonding a family by an adult child (as it was mentioned before, especially when an adult child performs an important family role) because when a child is gone, the parents have to look at each other anew, again as partners, which might not turn out to be an easy task;
- strengthening the parents' worthiness, which is built on 'their meaning' for a child no matter what the child's age is (conviction and confirmation that parents are still important/the most important/indispensable/necessary for an adult child because without parental help, the child would not be able to manage in this world).

In noting both the adult children's and their parent's viewpoints, it is worth emphasizing that when conducting psychological research it is necessary to compare and combine these two perspectives since they supplement each other and can be complementary (for example, parents investing in young adults is linked with 'repayment' of emotional investments by adult children). When we underestimate or ignore one of these two perspectives (either adult children or parents), the resulting picture of nestling is subjected to unauthorized reduction.

Conclusions

Problems with smoothly entering adulthood are encountered not only by young adults in Poland.

We may observe some explicit nestling that is connected with commercialization of life in its broad sense. Postponed adulthood in its Polish version has its own specific character, also in reference to psychology. However, apart from a few examples (Brzezińska et al., 2011), research on this issue is very scarce; so is our knowledge about the problems and difficulties of young adults and their parents and the emergence of new types of relations between them. Our article discusses only some aspects of delayed adulthood and nestling, taking into account mainly sociological data and selected psychological aspects.

Below we would like to indicate some significant questions which are worth further research aimed at describing – empirically by means of scientific sociological and psychological tools – the nestling phenomenon in other words, postponing and waiting for adulthood.

- What constitutes the distinguishing features of Polish nestling and how is it different from related phenomena in Europe and beyond – in the context of comparative intercultural research?

- What is nestling for parents when the ‘empty nest syndrome’ is challenged? What does it mean for mothers and for fathers? Is it legitimate to equally interpret being a mother or a father of an adult non-adult?
- Is a nestling daughter or son the same phenomenon? If we emphasise the varied nature of women and men waiting for adulthood by stressing differences in certain areas and similarities in others, we also ought to focus our attention on these aspects.
- What forms of Polish nestling can be distinguished? How is basic nestling (a child has always lived with parents) different from re-nestling (when adult children come back home after emigrating, losing or changing a job, or after a failed relationship or divorce)? What is the psychological status of children referred to as *boomerangs* ?
- How are relations established between those who wait for adulthood in their parents’ homes and what are the areas in which problems start to appear? How can we work out a new formula of relations between an adult child and parents? When a young adult has good relations with only one parent (mother or father), what are the characteristic features of this type of nestling?

Findings in this area of study may not only constitute important psychological knowledge about entering adulthood, but they can also serve to create support programs and help systems both for children as well as for parents who experience problems connected with nestling.

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