ACTA UNIVERSITATIS LODZIENSIS
FOLIA SOCIOLOGICA 49, 2014

Katarzyna Ornacka*

CHILDREN OF "VULNERABLE IDENTITY"[1] – DO THEY HAVE TO BE EXCLUDED? SOME REFLECTIONS BASED ON EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Abstract. Childhood is a unique period of life, and it has a fundamental influence on human being's process of development. Knowledge and experience gathered by a child has a great impact on his/her behaviour and relations with others. Identity(ies) of the child, especially its social aspect, is shaped through the acting process, in a specific social space. It is the key to understanding mechanisms taking place between an individual and society. Its form and shape are determined by a society as well as an individual depending on his/her position in the social structure. What are the commonalities and differences between the world of children of vulnerable identity and those who are brought up in "healthy" family systems? They form a separate social group and are present in various types of discourse. However, their social situation is different, much more difficult – their life stories are complicated, and their firsthand experience is much bigger. What are their chances of being included in the mainstream? The purpose of the article is to find the answer to the question.

Keywords: childhood, vulnerable identity, empowerment.

1. Introduction

According to Aristotelian doctrine of the four causes – material, formal, efficient and final – a child is one of the human being form. The child is incomplete and unready entity, full of imperfections and shortcomings, in its essence. However, it has the potency of a transformation into a perfect specimen of an adult human, who is equipped with the structure, form and functions of a normal, typical human person (more broadly: Szczepska-Pustkowska 2011: 22 and subs.). This change, or rather transformation of a child into a full-fledged adult is conditioned

* Ph.D., Department of Apllied Sociology and Social Work, Institute of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University in Kraków, 52 Grodzka St., 31-044 Kraków; katarzyna.ornacka @uj.edu.pl.

[1] This concept was introduced by the author in the monograph entitled *From sociology to social work. The social phenomenon of childhood* (Ornacka 2013).

by its participation in the so-called future adulthood (Matthews 2006: 8; see also Szczepska-Pustkowska 2011: 25), which involves the necessity of a transition through the particular developmental stages of the early adulthood period. Hence, the childhood is an extremely important phase in the biography of each person. The knowledge and experience gathered by a child at the time have a significant impact on events occurring after that period (of childhood). According to R. Guardini the most important are the processes of inheritance – from a number of reasons for such state of affairs.

> […] young person inherits the legacy of his/her childhood, adult inherits what lived in his/her youth, and the old man bears the heritage of the whole of his/her life, which taken together shows the beautiful mosaic that we call human life (Guardini 1953: 24 and subs., see: Segiet 2011: 38).

What unites and what differentiates the world of children of "vulnerable identity" from the world of children brought up in a "healthy" family systems? They form a separate social group and are made present by various forms of discourse, and each of the narratives represents their life in a different manner. However, their situation is much more difficult, life stories are more complex and baggage of experience significantly larger. What are the chances of these children for inclusion in the mainstream of social life? Finding an answer to this question will be the article's object of reflection.

2. Identity(ies) of child and experiencing childhood

The childhood is an exceptional and unrepeatable (irretrievably transient) period in the development of every individual, and its impact on functioning in the further life is fundamental. This is confirmed by numerous studies carried out, inter alia, in the field of child psychology (Schaffer 1994, 2005, 2008; Piaget 1993, 2003; Przetacznik-Gierowska, Makiełło-Jarża 1985, Przetacznik-Gierowska, Tyszkowa 1996). It is a period of increased growth during which, child develops a lot of substantial qualities and skills (see: Vasta, Haith, Miller 2004). The experiences gained and the events that have occurred in the childhood, are characterized by long-lasting effect. This implies that who we are now, to a large degree, depends on our development and childhood experiences. The researchers point out as well, that it is easier to understand complex behaviors when there is an opportunity to study them at a time when they are created. Focus on child and intention to discover (and explore) its skills and talents at particular stages of its growth prove to be extremely useful in understanding the behavior of adults, as well as, solving the problems of childhood and better adaptation to the environment (see: Segiet 2011).

In accordance with the personalistic perspective the child is an individual and represents an unconditional value. The child cannot be treated as an object, instrumentally, due to the fact that it has inalienable rights inherent in human nature (Homplewicz 1996; Ruba 1993; Bilicki 2000). Therefore being a child is a period having a value in itself, it is associated to a process (as well as a need) of upbringing and becoming oneself by participation in personal relationships whereby "[…] entities interact with each other in their reality, unity, separateness, truth, goodness and beauty (i.e. transcendental properties), adapt to one another, converge, mutually make present to themselves" (Gogacz 1985: 60). In childhood, a young man builds with adults relationships of love, hope and faith through the experience of the act of meeting. These relationships are oriented to significant others and role models, i.e., parents, carers and teachers. A child deprived of personal relations in the family does not have an opportunity to become human fully. By a contact of the child with the parent – and thus the existence of a another person beside us – the confidence in the world is born, a family bond is created, as well as the system of values and beliefs, which are highly important in the people's social life. Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec (2001: 20; see also 2003: 23) points out that "[…] no one survives without faith, no one comes to any success, life is miserable without hope, and without love, there is no life at all".

Identity(ies) of the child, especially its social aspect, is shaped in acting process, in a specific social space. It constitutes a key to understanding the mechanisms occurring between the individual and society, because its form and shape are largely conditional on what society gives permission to, and what the individual is able to negotiate by virtue of its position in the social structure. In brief, it can be said that the social world is divided into two coexisting and interdependent parts. One is occupied by privileged groups, whereas the other by the disadvantaged. The privileged groups affect considerably the shaping of the dominant image of the other individuals, resulting in a specific "macro narrative, which influences the social expectations regarding certain issues, as well as crystallizes individual, group and environmental attitudes" (Frysztacki, Kaszyński 2009: 101 and subs.). According to the authors this

> complex entanglement of expectations, expert statements and definitions, political diagnoses, recommendations and strategies becomes a realistic being, narrative field, where also function people categorized as individuals marked by certain problematic characteristics (Frysztacki, Kaszyński 2009: 110).

The social structure within which the privileged groups operate, affects individuals, however simultaneously the actions taken by individuals are able to shape it, provided of course that the narrative field permits it by "indicating a potential and available solutions" (Frysztacki, Kaszyński 2009: 111–114).

The identity is combined with the concept of man (child) as the entity, which manifests itself in a particular manner of its treatment. As noted by Bożena G u l l a (2009: 64) it consists of

> […] respect, assigning authorship of its own actions, retaining the ability to make decisions, recognition of the right to develop in the not imposed direction, accepting a person despite the lack of acceptance of some of his/her behavior, finally of abandonment of activities related to humiliation, devaluation, ridicule and ignoring in relationships.

Tadeusz Tomaszewski concludes that there are three basic definition components in the conception of man as a subject. One of them is the specific identity, which includes a certain manner of the individual's internal organization.

The second is the individuality that distinguishes the entity from other people and defines its place in the social world, demonstrates capacity of the situation interpretation and the circumstances under which the individual is. While the third is own human activity, that is extensively dependent on him/her, which in turn is reflected in operations performed by him/her and performed tasks (T o m a s z e w s k i 1985: 70–76 as cited in: N i k i t o r o w i c z 2005: 82).

Many researchers (inter alia Ł a c i a k 1998; I z d e b s k a 2003, 2006; M a t y j a s 2008; S e g i e t 2011) concentrating on the issue of childhood draw attention to its various images[2]. Bożena Matyjas suggests a division into childhood of excess, global, television, at risk, lonely, wounded and poorer opportunities (M a t y j a s 2008: 40). Matyjas also focuses on childhood of new development opportunities and at risk, childhood in subjective and objective terms, as well as television, media, computer and network childhood. Looking into this divisions – without thorough analysis – it can be concluded that only in images oriented to the media and multimedia some positive features can be found. Other – already at the level of language – have negative connotations. If consider also families struggling with problems (among other things alcoholism, unemployment, violence, drug addiction, crisis), the picture of the subjects or objects of social work impacts and various professional social services is complete.

Hence, the emerging childhood images can be defined through the prism of identity of the child as a recipient of social work, especially that – as stated by B. M a t y j a s (2008: 40)– the images are filled with diverse content of experiences, values, behaviors, as well as the scope and aspect of the relationships and the level of needs perception. Due to the scope of this paper, I will only indicate images related to at risk, lonely, wounded and poorer opportunities childhood.

Childhood at risk is related to both, lack of parental care, periodic deprivation of natural family environment, and with an orphanhood – the natural and social (M a t y j a s 2008: 41–48). Lonely childhood is a special form of social

[2] See: "global childhood", "lonely childhood" in: P i l c h, ed. 2003.

orphanhood, in which we are dealing with a subjective feeling of children loneliness. It refers to children who live with their families and are under their care, as well as children who remain under the total supervision of people outside the family, but maintain contact with the family of origin (Matyjas 2008: 48). Based on the studies performed Jadwiga Izdebska concludes that loneliness is not the choice of the child, however always has negative consequences in its development, contacts with others and its psyche (Izdebska 2004: 29; Matyjas 2008: 48). In terms of creating the identity of the child it is essential to divide the loneliness into emotional and social. The first focuses on the weakening of the emotional bond with an adult, what results in reducing the level of self-esteem, meaning of life and also being needed and loved. Whereas the second usually refers to abandoned, unloved, unwanted children, who are determined to (re)gain the acceptance and love of adults (Izdebska 2004: 29; Matyjas 2008: 49). Wounded childhood is defined from the perspective of phenomenon of child abuse, which is manifested in the neglect, physical, emotional and sexual violence. According to research conducted by the Nobody's Children Foundation (Sajkowska, ed. 2011) the scale of the problem in Poland is large, and trend is upward. In turn, childhood of poorer opportunities concerns children from rural areas, sick and disabled, street children, and these from multi-child and unemployed families (Matyjas 2008: 56; see also Głowacka, Pilch, eds. 2001). These are the kids of "poverty environments" (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska 1999). Poorer opportunities are focused around areas such as health care, culture, upbringing, education and care (Matyjas 2008: 56).

Childhood in images outlined above is neither subjectively – by a child, nor more objectively – by the environment outside the family, considered as a time of carefree and fun. Quite the opposite, in individual and social perception appears as a difficult period, often dramatic, to which return in the memories is reluctant. Building the identity of a child rejected by significant others – as of the situation we face in the cases described – is a difficult and full of internal contradictions process. It is very difficult for a child to understand the reasons of emotional coldness of adults, who are the only source of support and safety in the first years of its life. Living in a constant fear and threat has a destructive influence on shaping personality of a child, who ceases to interact with others, withdraws from social life and forms a wall around itself, unconsciously starting the process of self-stigmatization. At the same time in the presence of "adult" problems and tasks confronted by child, it loses its child space and joins a group of people "redundant" to the society. Taking action aimed at getting out of its situation, the most frequently chooses shortcuts which leads him/her straight to various types of social welfare institutions and support. As a consequence, it becomes a beneficiary of social welfare and the subject, or rather the object of social work impact.

3. Children of "vulnerable identity" – selected aspects of qualitative analysis of own research

Considerations on childhood and its social character constituted the major part of the empirical research conducted over the period 2010–2012[3] among the two groups of respondents: 1) children who functioned as key experts in defining the problem of childhood and related determinants, and 2) adults who have been the implementers of the family policy towards a child (including the directors and managers of institutions, educators, social workers or psychologists) or were preparing to provide direct assistance and support for children from multi-problem families in the context of higher education. The study involved more than five hundred children aged 10–15 years, attending educational care centers in the Malopolska region[4] and five hundred adults between the ages of 19–51 years involved in the support and care of the "children of wounded identity" (O r n a c k a 2013), who represented different positions and institutions[5].

Based on the assumption that social reality is constructed by interactions made by its participants, their perception of reality and speaking about it – it was decided to examine what image of the child and childhood emerges from the narratives of those who constitute the main group of experts – children directly experiencing the phenomenon examined. Multidimensionality of childhood enables to explore the world of the child as imagined by it based on its own experiences. In this experiencing the world – as Bogusław Ś l i w e r s k i (2007: 119) notes – experiencing subject is included as something that appears to him/her with obvious certainty that experiencing is the experiencing of Its and experiencing something.

Methodology used in the study had a complementary character – included both qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques. This resulted from the objectives of research, the nature and availability of knowledge and the specificity of the respondents. As a result, obtaining empirical data was held by use of the technique in-depth interviews, survey techniques and collective case study. In addition, analysis also covered complex desk research (study reports, institutions statistical data, publications and journals discussing the studied phenomenon of childhood with a national and international range)[6]. As mentioned, the primary

---

[3] Empirical studies were conducted by the author within the framework of the habilitation research project NN 116 013339 from the funds of Ministry of Science and Higher Education for the period 2010–2012.

[4] Children from examined group stayed in or attended day care centers (these included daily social therapy centers, sociotherapeutic centers of TPD (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci), prevention and social education centers) and twenty four hour day child care centres (orphanages, family children's homes, foster families, emergency shelters for children).

[5] In the group of respondents there were students of pedagogics, social work and sociology, first-and second-degree, full-time and part-time.

[6] A detailed analysis of methodological assumptions of own research is included in the author's monograph (O r n a c k a 2013).

tool used during the interviews with the respondent was the interview scenario divided into research areas, around which the respondents created their social worlds. Among the many themes discussed were: childhood as a social status, child in a relationship with oneself (for example, the world of values, competencies, skills), child in relationship with others – adults (for example, a communication system, coping with problem situations, support, a sense of connectedness, autonomy), privileges of childhood/adulthood (rights and obligations), child in the context of change, and the child and its message for adults. Explored areas concerned generally the socially created and directly experienced childhood, and thus, what is taking place "here and now"[7]. The conducted research made it possible to gather an extensive empirical material that demonstrates the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the analyzed phenomenon. During the analysis and interpretation, it was necessary to focus on how children construct their childhood, and if in the process they treat each other as agents of own actions, increasing the opportunity to participate in social life, to what extent and in what size is the perspective of the child subjectivity accepted in institutions, as well as how this perspective can contribute to implementation of new solutions and working methods in the field of assistance and child care, including social work, in Poland.

Thus, may the children entangled in their still unformed identities, dependent on adults, carrying the baggage of their traumatic experiences, struggling with a double stigma (internal – associated with low self-esteem and sense of life: "how do I define myself?", and external – related to social stigmatizing: "how do others define me?") be considered as subjects? From a theoretical point of view, the answer regarding the treatment of the child as a subject is positive, starting point, however, is conditioned by the specific context of wounding. Their identity(ies) are shaped through the prism of problems faced by their parents, as well as those that directly affect the youngest and are the result of pathological relationships with significant others. In practice (as confirmed by numerous studies) the label given to the child by others causes, however, that the scope of its treatment as a subject is highly restricted. This is due to several reasons.

First of all, children from multi-problem families, who have already been (or are about to be) incorporated in the institutional framework of social welfare, receive label of "the other" and thereby become members of a minority group. In the course of interactions undertaken children perceive a clear division into Outsiders (strangers) and Insiders while own people are always regarded in a protectionist manner – with a certain amount of respect, recognition and superiority, while Outsiders defined as "inferior" form a group marked by the stigma. According to Kamila S z l a c h t a (2012: 30–31) this division affects the entire course of the interactions, since it contributes to the beginning of prejudices and stereotypes

[7] The analysis of adults (social workers, pedagogues, sociologists, psychologists, educators, managers and directors of institutions) opinions complemented the studied image of childhood from the perspective of a little person (author's note).

– attitudes leading to the social degradation of the referred categories – Outsiders. The stigma as a discreditable sign facilitating categorization, even enabling justifying it, appears as a result of interaction, in which individuals define the surrounding reality, and then reflexively affect these processes. Thus, the stigma is profoundly discreditable feature, disqualifying the individual in the eyes of others. It is socially constructed and assigned to those who differ from the "canon of normality" approved by a particular social group.

Secondly, the child, watching itself, infer about others, their attitudes and ways of acting. The diagnosis of stigma in the course of interaction (most frequently by language) causes the appearance of the entire spectrum of negative emotions. A child is considered to be socially inferior. As a result, once started mechanism of pejorative stigma designation often plays more important role than rational justification, and, as pointed out by Ewa Czykwin, "begin to live as legitimate in its obviousness" (2007: 96; see also S z l a c h t a 2012: 31).

Thirdly, the stigmatized child is usually perceived through the prism of stereotypes, that provide justification for treating it as an individual of an inferior category. By interacting, the child realizes that its actual identity is not consistent with the expected image of a person, which leads to stigmatization. As a result, stereotyping plays an important role in the formation, justification, sustaining and the stigma consolidation.

Fourthly, the child who has a characteristic undesirable by a group (for example, comes from a poor family), is being excluded from the active and full-fledged participation in social life. Thus begins the process of child marginalization, which even less connects to subjective treatment.

The analysis of the stigma, which is being a child "poorer opportunities" shows its three main aspects. Firstly, the family tribal stigma – where the child is perceived through the prism of their parents, that is dysfunctional environment in which they live, which starts stereotyped evaluation and prejudiced attitudes. This stigma is also related to children not staying in the institutions, but residing in a dysfunctional family environments. Secondly, the institutional tribal stigma – as a subjective sense of injustice associated with the status of a child from educational care center, that is, the worse. The stigma of being a child "from the institution" involves assigning to a young person characteristics, attributes (stereotypical content being component of the stigma) connected with belonging to this category, having certain qualities. Thirdly, the parasitic stigma – as nobody, "social" children, maintained for public money (O r n a c k a 2013; see also S z l a c h t a 2012).

It is worth emphasizing that the specificity of the stigmatization consists as well in the fact that, as a social process, is considered not only from the perspective of stigmatizing, but also, and perhaps above all, from the perspective of stigmatized. In this aspect, it is related to the consequences of the stigma for the individual having an identity devalued by stigma, manifested mainly in the subjec-

tive perception of the person's *I*. The child – by self-esteem – confirms or rejects the thesis regarding itself, and this affects its individual identity. The ultimate consequence of stigmatization for stigmatized person's *I*. is self-stigmatization, that is a subjective belief in the rightness of carried stigma. Recognizing that will never meet the social expectations, an individual accepts stigma as the center/core of its identity. Then focuses his thoughts, beliefs and judgments of itself as someone inferior around it (see: S z l a c h t a 2012: 32–33).

Children, as a specific social category, are especially vulnerable to stigmatization. This is because adults define the status of its childhood, according to the position occupied by child in the social structure. Hence being a stigmatized child of poorer opportunities is connected with the malfunctioning of the family, which shapes the child's social "here and now" position. For example, in economic sphere – children are at risk of exclusion, stigmatization due to family poverty, making it impossible to meet the needs, and also minimizes full participation in various spheres of social life (limited access to the culture and education), not performing the function of care and educational may lead to the placement of a child in a care educational centre, which is the orphanage. Child raised in a dysfunctional family systems, which are often the beneficiaries of social welfare, is neglected for various reasons. As a result, its social, emotional development and social skills building are highly disrupted.

4. Summary

As illustrated above, there are many identity(ies) of children as subjects of social work. Shaping young people is based on images that have some common attributes distinguishing them from others, so that they are low-valued in the society. Children, because of their dissimilarity develop their identity in the context of wounding, which significantly contributes to treating them more as an object of impacts of professional social services, and less as actively acting agents. The position of the child in the social structure is designed to be peripheral, which may contribute to throwing it out of the social life's margin. The consequence of such process would then be depriving the child of public goods and equal rights, which in practical terms will mean: depriving them of power, poorer opportunities, fewer choices and smaller range of entitlements, greater vulnerability to crisis and stigma. Answers to the question "Who am I?", therefore what constitutes the core of my identity – are obtained from the interaction partners. The feedback significantly affects what the child thinks about itself. If "Others" identify in an entity attributes socially discrediting, they categorize and define it through the prism of this quality. As indicated by Erikson, such processes of organizing are particularly apparent among younger and older children. They throw beyond the marginal those who do not meet the criteria of normality – stigmatize.

The answer to the question whether the children of the "wounded identities" have to be excluded is: of course not. Numerous examples demonstrate, however, that in the past few years in Poland (partially due to media that systematically inform the public of further cases of non-compliance or violation of the rights of children by adults), the child became an object of massive intervention of the professionals who are striving to fix the "neglected childhood". This "different" treatment of children by adults results from the principle of child's welfare implemented by them, which justifies these interventions, but at the same time leads to the subordination of children to adults both at school and at home. The child becomes the object of adults impacts, and is completely excluded from the public space as an independent social actor. Whereas childhood is understood as a sort of benefit for the child, and the impact of adults has an external character to the child. With regard to the children of wounded identity it can be concluded that they are even more afraid of exclusion, abandonment, rejection or boycott (B a u m a n 2007: 87). They are afraid of loneliness, the feeling they are useless, unwanted, hence the most important approach in action taken to help and support children is empowerment (S m i t h 2008; H o w a r t h 2010; H u t c h b y, M o r a n-E l l i s 2005).

The concept of empowerment is the opposite of powerlessness and appears in several dimensions, which not only connect to each other, but also mutually overlap. The individual dimension refers to the activities and processes, by which the entity increases the control of its own life, confidence, its capabilities or knowledge, competencies and skills. Whereas the structural dimension relates to the social structures, barriers and relations of influences that sustain social diversity and reduce the chances of taking control over own life. Therefore this approach involves the empowerment, increasing the scope of the impact, thanks to which an individual becomes more engaged in the process of changing reality and begins to connect with other entities, groups or wider communities (F r y s z t a c k i, K a s z y ń s k i 2009; O r n a c k a, Ż u r a w 2013).

The empowerment (A n c z e w s k a, W c i ó r k a, eds. 2007) emphasizes the treatment of a child as a partner in a relationship with an adult. Partnership as well as the subjectivity may take various forms and range(s), however, in the case of a child, who the adults treat as "not-a-person", it is primarily about respecting, the autonomy and own opinion restoration, shaping and defining the limits of freedom, the democratic realization of rights. It also is associated with the treatment of children "as people", who due to their age are in a privileged position. In practice this means the adults adaptation to the world of a child, adjusting to the way of experiencing this world by it, as well as to the emotions and feelings accompanying the child, in such a manner so that not to offend or hurt its shaping identity (see: O r n a c k a, Ż u r a w 2013: 22–39, O r n a c k a, W a ł e k 2013).

In the process of empowering the child is being "equipped" in the crucial help in understanding the world of adults that in its experience is filled with traumatic events, and to which – especially during adolescence – young man's negative emotions are born – rebellion, anger and aggression. Assistance and support in

what is for it difficult and confusing help minimize anti-social behaviors and those that could dramatically change the direction of its social development. Assisting in the transition through the critical (potentially dangerous) events occurring at different stages of their development increases the chance of a positive change in the life of children. Equally important is the acquisition of emotional maturity by the youngest through working together with carers and peers. The possibility to cope with something completely different and ask questions, to which they find answers, constitute signals of readiness of a child to take on new challenges. Effective child's development is possible provided a holistic view of the little man and "instilling" in him/her motivation to act, commitment, building positive relationships with others. One might even say that development and learning are characterized by reciprocity and bidirectionality – adults explore the world of a child, but also children learn the rules prevailing in the adults' world. This reciprocity allows to function efficiently and benefit from available resources of individual and social (see: O r n a c k a, Ż u r a w 2013: 25–29).

What are the chances of these children for inclusion in the mainstream of social life? In view of such adults policies, their use of stigmatizing language narration with regard to children in public debates or various – more dark – images of the child and childhood, which appear in the field of social actions, child's chances of being included as an actor of social life are small.The changes are required in the approach of adults to broadly understood world of the child and childhood. Their introduction starts with a difficult but necessary social education directed toward adults, who – in the words of Janusz Korczak – **think** that know us (children) well (author's note).

A key role in the process of children of "vulnerable identity" "disenchantment" (i.e. "removing the stigma", restoring subjectivity and authorship ability), which is the foundation of social education directed towards adults, will be played by non-governmental organizations. Firstly, because the combination of systemic, institutional and individualistic circumstances creates and recreates the groups of "strangers" in the aid institutions, often leading professionals to focus on the child's deficits and work on them, instead of concentrating on the individual's internal resources and its potential. As a result, a negative image of a child of "vulnerable identity" is being consolidated, which in turn contributes to its acceptance of the role of marginalized in the future. Secondly, the perception of the child through the prism of its shortcomings connected to its different behavior which goes beyond the socially accepted norms and principles make closer contact with it difficult. Thirdly, building a relationship requires time and a lot of patience, since often anxiety and aggressive behavior destroy the seeds of bond that is formed between a small man and his carer. Meanwhile, social welfare institutions are aimed at achieving results in increasingly shorter period of time, the use of a quantitative approach based on statistics, illustrating, among others, the number of "respondents" who participated in projects and their level of satisfaction with the offer. This leads to minimizing the presence of the youngest

as autonomous agent of the actions, stabilization of adults' demanding attitudes and a short-term solution of the problematic situation. Fourth, social welfare institutions rarely implement the policy of disadvantaged groups' inclusion to (co) create change, since it requires building a reflective partnership with the child. It is based on trust, the involvement of a little man in actions, listening to the voice of his/her and (re)cognition of his/her perspective, use of his/her internal and external resources, mutual understanding, respect, complying his/her boundaries and clear definition of his/her position in the institutional structure (see: O r n a c k a, Ż u r a w 2013: 22–39; O r n a c k a, S z l a c h t a 2013).

In contrast to social welfare institutions, NGOs acting on behalf of children from disadvantaged environment, of which an excellent example is the association CPES Parasol in Cracow, implement the policy of inclusion, which is based on application of the approach "together with you" that is accompanying an individual throughout the whole process of introducing the changes in its life. The high efficiency of such approach is guaranteed, because all of social initiatives are a response to specific needs of individuals, groups or communities and are always preceded by a thorough and accurate diagnosis. (Re)cognition of problems and difficulties encountered by the youngest makes it possible to both provide an adequate support as well as meet their needs.

The actions undertaken by NGOs within the policy of inclusion are characterized by multi subjectivity and multidimensionality. While multi subjectivity applies to partners, who are involved and actively participate in efforts to improve the situation of a child; so much multidimensionality refers to listening to the voice and needs of the youngest, carrying out a comprehensive diagnosis and referring to the latent decisiveness of a person, who must be previously properly "revive". Therefore these processes are dynamic, flexible and thus most suitable for the needs of children of "vulnerable identity". The difficulty in activating young people and their closest lies in the fact that dependence on social welfare contributes to the appearance of syndrome of learned helplessness and the adoption of a passive attitude towards others. In addition, has a significant effect on inhibition and blocking potential as well as "closure" in own world of living and experiencing reality. As a result, the work with such people and particularly establishing appropriate (open) relationship, are very difficult and require considerably more time for the appearance of concrete results.

Natural part of the work of NGOs with children of "vulnerable identity" is to respect the right of individual to make own choices in life, encouragement to express their own opinion and views on the issues that can contribute to the improvement of their social functioning. Regardless of whether the child views are rational or not, it has the opportunity to express them, and then work through, together with professionals. A child can always count on the support of carers, as well as the group with which it (co)works, which is particularly important at the stage of adolescence and shaping of individual and social identity. Hence including a child means genuine cooperation with it as partner of interaction, empowering at each stage of making choices and decisions, searching for resources

and mutual finding various, sometimes surprising solutions. The competencies acquisition by a child through teaching it other behavioral patterns, different from those which have been inculcated by parents, thereby building self-esteem is directed towards maintaining a balance between resources and capabilities of a child, a manner it is defined by parents (among others "I'm the coolest in the world"), and the actual characteristics which possesses and manifests in its behavior towards others. Entering direct relationships with children reveals adopted by them, most often extreme attitudes, in which either dominates dismissive attitude and lack of respect for others or total lack of self-esteem, which is associated with susceptibility to being vulnerable. In the process of working with the child, awareness of its psychosocial development and knowledge which enables to look at the little man from the perspective of processes and changes that are occurring at the moment of going through the particular phases of this development, are essential. It is worth remembering that the experience gained from the family home is the cornerstone that shapes the identity of the child in its present and later life, substantially affects its attitude toward himself and the world, starts the processes for responding to problem situations, and also gives direction to development of key competencies (see: O r n a c k a, Ż u r a w 2013: 22–39).

Non-governmental organizations in general and those acting on behalf of children from disadvantaged environment in particular, therefore constitute a crucial link in the process of social education directed toward adults, who represent institutions of social welfare, as well as to adults – parents and carers, who have not discovered in themselves resources that allow them to treat others with respect and dignity. Social work implemented in non-governmental organizations, as this specific area of professional action oriented to change, increasingly approaches a little man and equips him/her with such tools with which (s)he is capable of full and most optimal development in all areas of life. It might be worth that social welfare institutions benefit from the experience of non-governmental organizations and engage in the process of building the civil society – become more open, sensitive to the "voice" of the youngest, and consequently, ready for a change.

References

A n c z e w s k a M., W c i ó r k a J. (red.) (2007), *Umacnianie – nadzieja czy uprzedzenia*, "Biblioteka Psychiatry", nr 8, (Instytut Psychiatrii i Neurologii, Warszawa), pp. 45–82.

B a u m a n Z. (2007), *Tożsamość. Rozmowy z Benedetto Vecchim*, GWP, Gdańsk.

B i l i c k i T. (2000), *Dziecko i wychowanie w pedagogii Jana Pawła II*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków.

F r y s z t a c k i K., K a s z y ń s k i H. (2009), *Socjologia – makropraca socjalna. Teoria dla podejścia socjalnego*, [w:] A. K a r w a c k i, H. K a s z y ń s k i (red.), *Polityka aktywizacji w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo UMK, Toruń, pp. 101–116.

G ł o w a c k a B., P i l c h T. (red.) (2001), *Dzieci gorszych szans*, Krajowy Komitet Wychowania Resocjalizacyjnego, Warszawa.

G o g a c z M. (1985), *Człowiek i jego relacje*, Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, Warszawa.
G u a r d i n i R. (1953), *Die Lebensalter. Ihreethische und padagogische Bedeutung*, Topos, Wurzburg.
G u l l a B. (2009), *Wolność a zależność dziecka*, [w:] B. G u l l a, M. D u d a (red.), *Dziecko a świat dorosłych*, Wydawnictwo św. Stanisława BM, Kraków, pp. 64–74.
H o m p l e w i c z J. (1996), *Etyka pedagogiczna*, Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie, Warszawa.
H o w a r t h J. (2010), *The Child`s World. The Comprehensive Guide to Assessing Children in Need*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London–Philadelphia.
H u t c h b y I., M o r a n-E l l i s J. (2005), *Children and Social Competence. Arenas of Action*, Routledge Falmer, London – New York.
I z d e b s k a J. (2003), *Dziecko w rodzinie i środowisku rówieśniczym*, Trans Humana, Białystok.
I z d e b s k a J. (2004), *Dziecko osamotnione w rodzinie*, Trans Humana, Białystok.
I z d e b s k a J. (2006), *Dom rodzinny postrzegany przez dzieci w kontekście społeczno-kulturowych zróżnicowań współczesnej rodziny*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie Trans Humana, Białystok.
J e n k s Ch. (2005), *Constituting Childhood*, [w:] Ch. J e n k s (red.), *Childhood. Critical Concepts in Sociology*, Vol. I, Routledge, Nowy Jork, pp. 30–56.
J e n k s Ch. (2008), *Socjologiczne konstrukty dzieciństwa*, [w:] M. J. K e h i l y, *Wprowadzenie do badań nad dzieciństwem*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków, pp. 111–134.
K r ą p i e c M. A. (2001), *Dziecięctwo jako forma życia ludzkiego*, [w:] D. K o r n a s-B i e l a (red.), *Oblicza dzieciństwa*, Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, Lublin, pp. 17–21.
K r ą p i e c M. A. (2003), *Dziecko osobą dojrzewającą*, [w:] J. W i l k (red.), *W służbie dziecku*, vol. 1, Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, Lublin, pp. 19–24.
Ł a c i a k B. (1998), *Świat społeczny dziecka*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie "Żak", Warszawa.
M a t t h e w s G. B. (2006), *A Philosophy of Childhood*, The Poynter Center for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions, Indiana University, Bloomington.
M a t y j a s B. (2008), *Dzieciństwo w kryzysie. Etiologia zjawiska*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie "Żak", Warszawa.
N i k i t o r o w i c z J. (2005), *Kreowanie tożsamości dziecka*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk.
O r n a c k a K. (2011), *Społeczny fenomen dzieciństwa – na podstawie badań przeprowadzonych wśród dzieci*, [w:] K. F r y s z t a c k i, M. N ó ż k a, M. S m a g a c z-P o z i e m s k a (red.), *Dzieci ulicy. Procesy marginalizacji i automarginalizacji nieletnich*, ser. "Zeszyty Pracy Socjalnej", vol. 16, Instytut Socjologii, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Kraków, pp. 7–28.
O r n a c k a K. (2013), *Od socjologii do pracy socjalnej. Społeczny fenomen dzieciństwa*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków.
O r n a c k a K., S z l a c h t a K. (2013), *O dzieciństwie (nie)równych szans z perspektywy młodzieży gimnazjalnej oraz wychowanków domu dziecka*, [w:] J. M a t e j e k, R. S p y r k a-C h l i p a ł a (red.), *Dziecko i rodzina w różnych obszarach wsparcia instytucjonalnego i pozainstytucjonalnego*, Wydawnictwo Koło Kwadratu, Kraków, pp. 93–110.
O r n a c k a K., W a ł e k I. (2013), *O dziecięcej filozofii wartości i wsparciu dla rodziny – na przykładzie badań wśród młodzieży*, [w:] J. M a t e j e k, R. S p y r k a-C h l i p a ł a (red.), *Dziecko i rodzina w różnych obszarach wsparcia instytucjonalnego i pozainstytucjonalnego*, Wydawnictwo Koło Kwadratu, Kraków, pp. 179–196.
O r n a c k a K., Ż u r a w K. (2013), *O umacnianiu dzieci w organizacjach pozarządowych – na przykładzie stowarzyszenia Parasol*, [w:] J. M a t e j e k, R. S p y r k a-C h l i p a ł a (red.), *Dziecko i rodzina w różnych obszarach wsparcia instytucjonalnego i pozainstytucjonalnego*, Wydawnictwo Koło Kwadratu, Kraków, pp. 22–39.
P i a g e t J. (1993), *Psychologia dziecka*, [tłum. Z. Zakrzewska], Siedmiogród, Wrocław.
P i a g e t J. (2006), *Studia z psychologii dziecka*, [tłum. T. Kołakowska], Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.

P i l c h T. (red.) (2003), *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, vol. 1, Wydawnictwa Akademickie "Żak", Warszawa.
P r z e t a c z n i k-G i e r o w s k a M., M a k i e ł ł o-J a r ż a G. (1985), *Psychologia rozwojowa i wychowawcza wieku dziecięcego*, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa.
P r z e t a c z n i k-G i e r o w s k a M., T y s z k o w a M. (1996), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, vol. 1: *Zagadnienia ogólne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
R u b a M. (1993), *Osoba a akt moralny*. *Maxa Schelera personalizm etyczny*, [w:] M. F i l i p i a k, M. S z u l a k i e w i c z (red.), *Człowiek drogi – poszukiwań. Studia z antropologii i etyki*, Wydawnictwo WSP, Rzeszów, pp. 81–91.
S a j k o w s k a M. (red.) (2011), *Dzieci się liczą. Informacje o stanie zagrożenia bezpieczeństwa i rozwoju dzieci w Polsce*, "Dziecko Krzywdzone. Teoria, Badania, Praktyka", vol. 36, nr 3, (Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje, Warszawa), pp. 1–184.
S c h a f f e r H. R. (1994), *Wzajemność kontroli we wczesnym dzieciństwie*, [w:] A. B r z e z i ń s k a, G. L u t o m s k i (red.), *Dziecko w świecie ludzi i przedmiotów*, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań, pp. 125–149.
S c h a f f e r H. R. (2005), *Rozwój społeczny. Dzieciństwo i młodość*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Pedagogiczne, Gdańsk.
S c h a f f e r H. R. (2008), *Psychologia dziecka*, [tłum. A. Wojciechowski], Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa.
S e g i e t K. (2011), *Dziecko i jego dzieciństwo w perspektywie naukowego poznania i doświadczania rzeczywistości. Studium pedagogiczno-społeczne*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań.
S m i t h R. (2008), *Social Work and Power*, Palgrave–Macmillan, Basingstoke.
S z c z e p s k a-P u s t k o w s k a M. (2011), *Od filozofii dzieciństwa do dziecięcej filozofii życia. Casus władzy (i demokracji)*, Impuls, Kraków.
S z l a c h t a K. (2012), *"Kim jestem dla siebie i dla innych?", czyli wpływ stygmatu sieroty społecznej na konstruowanie indywidualnej tożsamości na podstawie badań przeprowadzonych wśród dzieci z Domu Dziecka w Zakopanem*, Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Instytut Socjologii, Kraków, (niepublikowana praca magisterska napisana pod kierunkiem K. Ornackiej).
Ś l i w e r s k i B. (2007), *Pedagogika dziecka. Studium pajdocentryzmu*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk.
T o m a s z e w s k i T. (1985), *Człowiek jako podmiot i człowiek jako przedmiot*, [w:] K. O b u c h o w s k i, J. R e y k o w s k i (red.), *Studia z psychologii emocji, motywacji i osobowości*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, pp. 59–74.
V a s t a R., H a i t h M. M., M i l l e r S. A. (2004), *Psychologia dziecka*, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa.
W a r z y w o d a-K r u s z y ń s k a W. (1999), *Kwestia biedy dzieci (na przykładzie Łodzi)*, "Problemy Polityki Społecznej", Studia i Dyskusje, vol. 1, pp. 139–153.

Katarzyna Ornacka

DZIECI O „ZRANIONEJ TOŻSAMOŚCI" – CZY MUSZĄ BYĆ WYKLUCZONE? REFLEKSJE NA PODSTAWIE BADAŃ WŁASNYCH

Streszczenie. Dzieciństwo jest wyjątkowym i niepowtarzalnym (bezpowrotnie przemijającym) okresem w rozwoju każdego człowieka, a jego wpływ na funkcjonowanie w dalszym życiu jest fundamentalny. Zgromadzona w tym czasie przez dziecko wiedza oraz doświadczenie w istotny