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**PSYCHOSOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
ASPECTS OF NESTING AS PERCEIVED
BY ADULT CHILDREN LIVING WITH THEIR PARENTS**

One of the developmental tasks of early adulthood is autonomy expressed through living outside one's family home. This is being postponed increasingly often, and this process of deferment, called nesting (in this context: remaining in the original "nest", rather than starting one's own), is increasingly common among young adults aged between 18 and 34. Sociologists indicate a variety of transitions from youth to adulthood as a result of the fading of a strict interrelation between leaving the home and gaining economic independence and starting one's own family.

The aim of this article is to present qualitative study results based on 42 interviews with women and men, aged between 27 and 38, who live with their parents in Warsaw. This analysis is focused on showing the process of nesting in the context of relationships between young adults and their parents. Studies show that "extension" of the youth phase is a result the subjects' fear of lack of satisfactory financial prospects in adult life and what they perceive as their parents' overprotectiveness.

Keywords: adulthood, young adults, parents, nesting

**THE PHENOMENON OF ADOLESCENCE
IN AN INDIVIDUALIZED WORLD**

Today's world, full of risk, demands that young people be reflective and active in planning and creating their own individualized biographies (individual life planning) (Beck 2002). Researchers are seeking criteria of this "new adulthood" because the dynamics of individuals entering or taking up adult roles have clearly changed (Hartmann and Swartz 2006). Entering adulthood is an increasingly less predictable series of events. Less often does it follow a traditional, relatively permanent sequence: leaving the family home and beginning independent life in a self-sufficient household, entering a steady relationship and parenthood. Adulthood defined subjectively as an element of individual social identity is the result of an individually

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chosen set of traits and predispositions (Sińczuch 2002: 93). In the situation of accepting, or indeed promoting a wide spectrum of individual differences concerning developmental paths, there is a lack of a clearly defined moment, a method, a traditionally functioning procedure, and rituals of passage into adulthood.

In postmodern societies, young people increasingly often are postponing their separation from their family of origin, despite coming of age. The lifestyle associated with deferring the process of moving out of one's family home and cohabiting with family is often called "nesting", while the effect of this extended relationship with guardians is called "cluttered" or "crowded" nest (Boyd and Pryor 1989). Nesters are included in the group of "kidults", i.e. people who have fully matured physically or legally speaking, but remain mentally or financially dependent on their parents, and thus are still children. In Japan (*hikikomori* or *parasaito shinguru*) and China (*diaosi*) there is a growing group of men considered outcasts, a group of "lonely parasites", who do not leave their parents' home (Zimbardo and Coulombe 2015: 254). In Germany, *Nesthockern* are "illegal residents of a nest". In Italy, Greece, and Portugal, the model of extended living with one's parents is an accepted norm. 20–30-year olds called the "Big Babies" (*Bamboccioni*) are rejecting the idea of permanent or full-time jobs and are supported by their parents, who provide them with a place to live and all amenities. In the United Kingdom they are called *neets* (not in education employment or training) or *kippers* (kids in parents' pockets eroding retirement savings). In France there is talk of Tanguy syndrome, from the name of a French film character, a young man stuck in boyhood, who sues his parents for the right to stay in their home. This life style makes it possible to use family resources while fulfilling one's own individual goals. This was not possible in traditional families, which required the full subjugation of individual interests for the good of the family.

In the past, entering adulthood meant, besides changing place of residence, financial independence worked out beforehand, mental autonomy, and the near prospect of also starting a family. Currently, a young person of legal age leaves the family nest, but remains supported by guardians regardless, or also works, is financially independent and still lives with parents under the same roof. Passage into adulthood has been substituted by a postponement, extension, and all according to individual preferences and abilities within the moratorium (Erikson 1997; Arnett 2004). Sociologists today speak of a "destruction" of youth and its "destandardization", where classical models of phases of youth have lost in significance, to be replaced by highly diverse, co-existing forms of life and problem solving. The arbitrarily defined "transitional status" has been replaced with individualized biographies of young age, creating a blank space for many biographical options (Tillmann 1996: 249–262).

Changes in the cycle of young people's lives resulting in the lack of haste toward self-sufficiency are explained through, among others, extending the duration of the education process, the need for self-realization, difficulties in taking up professional work which would allow financial independence in conditions of economic crisis, putting off marriage and home ownership, the potential for participation in alternative forms of social-married life, separating sex life from procreation and marriage, as well as the transformations in parents' attitudes toward their children (infantocentrism, liberalization of relationships, inter-generational solidarity, and fear of an empty nest) (Walther 2006; Mitchell 2006; Brannen, Lewis, Nielsen

and Smithson 2002; Tillmann 1996; Boyd and Pryor 1989). Today, the temporary nature of decisions and constant changes in trajectory are socially accepted. When a *yeppie* (young experimenting perfection-seeker) makes a wrong choice regarding work or a relationship, he or she returns to the family home (Manning and Brown 2014: 47). American sociologists call this situation B2B, or “back to bedroom” (Mitchell 2006; Tyyskä 2014). So-called “boomerang kids” or “adulolescents” are those in their 20s and 30s who leave home and return to it after university, around the age of 25–34 (Harper and Leicht 2001: 89).

In Poland, the phenomenon of “nesters” more commonly has material rather than mental roots. 53% of young Poles believe that they can afford to move out of their parents’ homes, and 2% of them support their own parents (Szafraniec 2011: 184–186). Polish nesters greatly associate success in life with high material status. The ability to plan their work-career and effectively use their skills are important to them. High consumer aspirations and the pragmatism of not wanting to give up current material levels of living influence the postponement of moving out of the family home (Wrzesień 2009: 146–160). After the political transformation in Poland, we have noticed a weakening and fading of parental control over children’s decisions regarding entering adulthood. Parents assume the necessity of paying constant “benefits” to their offspring, regardless of age or developmental phase, which also finds approval in Polish public opinion (Piszczatowska-Oleksiewicz 2014: 87).

NEGOTIATING THE BOUNDARIES OF ADULTHOOD IN RELATIONS BETWEEN NESTERS AND THEIR PARENTS. AUTHOR’S STUDY RESULTS

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The research fragment presented in the article is part of a wider empirical analysis regarding the process of entering adulthood as perceived by young people living with their parents (Bieńko, Kwak and Rosochacka-Gmitrzak 2017). The following analysis is meant to form a picture of the process of children entering adulthood in the context of their relationships with their parents.

The study was conducted between 2012 and 2013. The study sample selection was purposely done using the “snowball sampling” strategy. To qualify, subjects had to have been observed postponing realization of developmental tasks such as finalizing education or taking up career work, while also remaining in their family home. The respondents are 23 women and 19 men, aged 27–38, who are defined by journals as young adults. The subjects live in Warsaw with both or one of their parents. They do not have marital experience or children. Though some of them are in a relationship with a partner, they do not cohabit with them.

The most appropriate research perspective turned out to be qualitative analysis, considering the subjective views accessed through direct conversation. The material used for analysis included 42 individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Symbols in parentheses next to quoted statements are each respondent’s code: the respondent’s gender – index number according to order of conducted interviews/the respondent’s age.

STUDY RESULTS ANALYSIS

The participants in the study described here belong to a generation of people raised in a post-transformation, consumerist society. Their entry into adulthood coincides with the development of capitalism. They are representatives of the precariat, unsure of tomorrow and the job market (Standing 2014). The studied nesters, although supported by their parents, unlike “neets” (Eurofound 2012), are studying and/or working; they take or plan to take courses to gain qualifications and accumulate cultural capital. Striving for success through education and employment is the dominant attitude in their everyday lives.. Respondents postpone their commitment to marriage and parenthood until they have reached relative economic stability. They admit that starting a family is a rival project to the job market, which requires flexibility.

Only half of respondents feel that they are adults, and their parents, they claim, mostly accept their postponement of responsibilities associated with adulthood. 14 respondents have the impression that their parents still treat them like small children who need to have things done for them. This is a problem, especially for men: It’s a little like: now I’ll make you some sandwiches, little Maciek, and I feel a bit stupid [...] I think that maybe it’s pitiful (M-7/27); [...] to them I’m usually just a little boy, and my sister says that that’s just how sons have it (M-34/29).

Parents aversion toward their adult children’s independent, self-sufficient lives may have a significant influence on the dynamics of them entering adulthood. 20 respondents claim that their parents never suggested they move out of the family home, and 23 suppose that the parents would be surprised or even worried about a decision to leave: *My mom would be stunned* (K-16/30); [...] *they would probably be shocked* (F-23/32); *I think that their jaws would drop* (M-27/29); *There would be awkwardness* (F-38/27); [...] *they would be worried* (M-34/29). Especially mothers, in the opinions of the respondents, would have trouble accepting the idea of their child moving out: *My mom was worried, she even cried a little, when she heard about me moving out* (M-32/33); [...] *my mom once said that she will be sad* (M-8/30); *My mom would despair* (F-22/27).

Young adults, when speaking of their relations with parents, emphasize that they can always count on their emotional support and help in difficult situations and in daily life as well. This awareness of family home support strengthens the desire to cohabit with parents. 10 adult children do not plan to move out of their family home at all: *The topic of moving, whenever it’s brought up, I feel anxious, because I’m very attached to my parents* (F-31/27); [...] *I’m at home here, I like it and really, I don’t think I’m strange for it, because I do feel a bit like that actually. Is it abnormal, that I live with my parents? I’m not some kind of weirdo* (M-37/33).

The family home, where young adults eagerly stay for longer, becomes a form of asylum which takes away some of the responsibility for one’s own life. Only in 5 cases do the respondents participate in the costs of maintaining the household. Nesting is not just comfort, but also security, which allows one to take advantage of life: *As long as I’m home, then I know that if something doesn’t work out, my mommy will help me, if I’m in a lousy mood, mommy will cheer me up, etc.* (F-3/27); *At my parents’ I didn’t have to worry about anything. Food, laundry, etc.* (M-5/31). There are also arguments that living with parents is a sign of maturity:

We are all aware that living together has concrete benefits for us. Each one of us would want to live by themselves for a while, but we think with our heads, not our emotions (M-13/29).

Grown-up children who stay home return the favour by helping their parents. Subjects indicate their parents worsening physical condition and health as a factor that contributes to them not moving out: *I wanted to move out a long time ago, but then my mom was seriously ill, and I felt that she needed me* (K-12/27). Young adults declare that they cannot move out due to the parents' fear of an empty home: *I don't consider moving out. I think my mom already settled on me as being part of her old age, or I fit myself in, so speaking on a basic human level, it wouldn't be right to go and leave her all alone now* (K-41/35).

Despite declarations of strong inter-generational ties, respondents would like to take on independent lives: *Yes, for quite some time, I've been feeling that I'm a small parasite, I don't want to be a nuisance* (K-12/27); *I would prefer to be on "my own"* (M-20/32); *I would really like to live by myself* (K-21/30). The main obstacle in leaving the family home is the perspective of difficult and unstable economic conditions: *In the beginning I wanted to break free as soon as possible, but that was stopped by the thought that I can't afford to live alone and that passed* (M-17/35); *I really, really, really think about moving. I have an apartment which I could live in, but I don't want to move out and come back after 3 months, because I can't afford it, that's why I keep putting it off* (F-28/28).

Respondents are not moving out because housing prices are outpacing wages. Living with parents means lower costs. A benefit of extended nesting is the possibility of saving money for the future: [...] *I still live with them, so they let me save money for my goals, a car, an apartment [...] I save the money that I would spend on renting* (M-35/29). However, one in three people of the studied group does not save any amount due to lack of motivation or sufficient earnings. 21 of the adult children dream of moving out to a purchased apartment. In order to attain the "perfect" adulthood with one's own (not rented or shared) apartment, young people would rather wait, extending their adolescence until the goal is achieved: [...] *I would rather move out to my own apartment or house. I don't want to spend money on renting a place* (F-4/31); *The plan is to save money and buy an apartment for cash* (M-13/29).

Moving out forces emotional distance towards the parents (Bee 2004: 433). Young adults wish to become independent of their parents, while also remaining engaged in the role of a son or daughter. 17 of the respondents do not want to move too far away, to not lose the close bond with their parents: *Close by, maybe not in the same stairwell, but in the same building, so you can come over without a problem* (F-6/35); [...] *to live within one neighbourhood, or nearby. I wanted to be near my parents, so I can always drop by, go for a walk together* (F-30/28). On one hand the closeness of cohabiting enables potential care for the parents while on the other it facilitates long-term support from parents: [...] *mom would definitely take care of the kids, sometimes she says that she wants to spend time with the grandkids* (M-29/30); [...] *mom would probably help with the children, when I have them* (M-34/29).

In the studied group, the link between leaving the home and gaining independence fades. 35% of young adolescents count on support from parents after moving out of the family home: *I would expect help, I think it's only logical* (M-29/30); *Financial help was, is and will be present, that's totally obvious* (M-37/33). More often the respondents imagine potential help from the mother, usually to do with cooking: [...] *mom would cook for me* (F-26/30); *I will*

definitely be getting a pack of provisions from mom, my brother does. He's always carrying out jars, containers (F-15/28); I would come over for dinner (M-25/29). Help from the father would have to do with renovating: Help with moving things, choosing things for the home, or some advice, my dad's an engineer, so he'd have a thousand ideas for the place right away (F-10/28); With moving, with arranging the place, or dad would paint the walls (F-15/28).

Moving out of the family home is an important moment, seen as a sign of entering adulthood, although 36 of the respondents would not see a problem with returning home if the move did not meet their expectations: *I think I would consider moving back with my parents, why suffer? (F-19/37); [...] I would probably go back, I wouldn't go rent anywhere. I'm definitely an opportunist (M-7/27).* For 8 subjects the return home would be an admission of a life failure: *I would probably resist going back, because it's like a test of my independence. I would feel I'd failed (F-15/28); [...] I would probably feel it as a kind of failure, maybe not quite like the prodigal son returning, but I'd rather avoid it. I think it's a last resort, to decide on that (M-27/29).*

Although over-bearing attitudes of parents may result in limited autonomy of their children and difficulties in adjusting to responsibilities in adulthood, for a large part of the nesters, deferring moving out is a choice. A situation in which they supported themselves would mean a lower quality of life. Most respondents want to maintain their consumption at a determined level, with help from their parents. Living under one roof with them, they have their asylum, their safe haven, to which they can always return, while also making attempts at passage into adulthood.

STUDY RESULTS SUMMARY

The circumstances and the timing of young people leaving home change with social, cultural and economic developments. Living at home with parents, as an adult, is not a new phenomenon in Poland; staying at the parental home before getting married was the norm. The process of deferring adulthood within the studied group is an example of “post-adolescence”, or the phase of young people’s relative independence in some areas of life, with continued dependence in others (Slany 2009: 158–159). On one hand, putting off the process of moving out of the nest indicates a lack of ability or aversion to taking on roles appropriate for a mature person. On the other hand, nesting is a conscious and rational strategy for a time of economic crisis and a sign of adapting to current conditions. The studied nesters do not define themselves as immature, focused on themselves, entitled young adults, who live day-to-day at their parents’ expense. They do not identify with “man-babies”, “sloths”, “kidults”, “parasite singles” or “boomerang kids”, judging these terms as hurtful, presumptuous and offensive. They simply want to maximize their profits and avoid unnecessary risk in making important life decisions.

Preparation for adulthood extends because of the long period of intensive accumulation of resources required to realize this process (both material and social capital). This is not to say that young adults living at home do not also have close, positive relationships with parents. They see multigenerational living as a plus: it is an opportunity to build mutual and long-lasting solidarity and support. Living with parents allows the realization of a lifestyle not

yet limited by the responsibility of “full” adulthood. Two quite strong positive motivations not to leave home are apparent in the comments of young adults. The first was the security and company which living at home provided. The other positive factor was that living at home was cheaper and offered an opportunity to save for an apartment or house, to hold out until they find a meaningful job. Nesters maintain the image of their parents as “perennial guardians”, which results in their lengthening emotional and financial dependence. Statements reveal the argument that living with parents longer is a sign of reason and resourcefulness. In the opinion of interviewees, adulthood takes on the form of reflexive biographical narration: it becomes an original author’s project. It is a state developed in the process of social interactions, a constant process of maturing, learning, redefining oneself, one’s identity, and relations with others. Individual choices, decisions and needs become more important than socially accepted, traditional norms and indicators of entering adult life. Young adults who feel comfortable with the temporary give themselves time to be adults according to social criteria. If there is support, a reasonable amount of independence and freedom available at home, and some financial advantage in living at home, there is no compelling reason to leave. As a consequence, they remain “on the road to adulthood”.

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PSYCHOSPOŁECZNE I EKONOMICZNE ASPEKTY GNIAZDOWANIA W PERCEPCJI DOROSŁYCH DZIECI MIESZKAJĄCYCH Z RODZICAMI

Jedno z zadań rozwojowych okresu wczesnej dorosłości to autonomia wyrażająca się w zamieszkiwaniu poza rodzinnym domem. Funkcja ta coraz częściej bywa przesuwana w czasie, a zjawisko jej odraczania, nazywane „gniazdowaniem”, jest coraz bardziej powszechne wśród młodych dorosłych w wieku 18–34 lat. Socjologowie wskazują na różnorodność przejść z wieku młodzieńczego do dorosłego na skutek zaniku ścisłej zależności między opuszczeniem domu a uzyskaniem ekonomicznej samodzielności i założeniem własnej rodziny. Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie wyników badań jakościowych opartych na 42 wywiadach z kobietami i mężczyznami w wieku od 27 lat do 38 lat, zamieszkującymi z rodzicami w Warszawie. Analiza skupia się na zobrazowaniu procesu gniazdowania w kontekście relacji młodych dorosłych i ich rodziców. Badania dowodzą, że „wydłużanie” młodości wynika z odczuwanego przez badanych lęku przed brakiem zadowalających perspektyw finansowych w dorosłym życiu oraz odczuwanej przez nich nadopiekuńczości ze strony rodziców.

Słowa klucze: dorosłość, młodzi dorośli, rodzice, gniazdowanie