



Abstract of the doctoral dissertation

Attitude Towards Change in Older Persons – A Self-Creative perspective

The subject of this doctoral dissertation is the attitude of people in late and advanced adulthood towards changes occurring in their lives, from the perspective of their self-creative activities. Particular attention is devoted to the ways in which older adults interpret and assign meaning to experienced changes in the context of understanding their own biographies and personal development.

The study addressed the following research questions: How is the attitude towards change shaped during late and advanced adulthood? In what ways do self-creative activities remain in a dynamic relationship with one's attitude towards change?

The research was based on a qualitative approach, a constructivist paradigm, and grounded theory methodology as proposed by Kathy Charmaz. The data collection method used was an intensive (in-depth) interview, which allows for in-depth exploration of a topic of importance to the researcher by drawing on the narrator's experiences and reflections within a broad framework of life. The study was conducted with fifteen people in late and old adulthood (aged 65 to 84) from the Silesian and Łódź Voivodeships. The sampling process evolved from convenience sampling through purposive sampling to theoretical sampling characteristic of grounded theory and continued until theoretical saturation of categories was achieved. Data analysis included initial line-by-line coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding, supported by the systematic writing of theoretical memos.

The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter discusses the key concepts of old age, attitude towards change, and self-creation as understood within contemporary pedagogical and psychological discourse, providing the theoretical foundation for the study. The second chapter presents the methodological framework, including the assumptions of the constructivist paradigm and the procedures of data collection and analysis in accordance with grounded theory. The third chapter constitutes the empirical part of the dissertation and focuses on the phenomenon of change in older adults' biographical experiences. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the author's typology of change. Chapter four presents a three-stage model of self-creation in old age and a typology of self-creative decision making, which emerged as particularly significant theoretical constructs identified from the data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the research process, providing a detailed account of the research procedure, the evolution of the understanding of the investigated phenomena, the development of concepts, the formulation of

working hypotheses, and their subsequent verification. The conclusion summarizes the main findings, identifies the limitations of the study, and outlines directions for future research.

One of the principal outcomes of the study was the development of a typology of change based on the narrators' experiences. Four dimensions describing change in older adults' lives were identified: object (internal/external), subject (initiated/experienced), primary attitude (desired/undesired), and secondary attitude (positive/negative evaluation from a retrospective perspective). Another important finding concerned the description of decision making as a key component of self-creation. The study demonstrated that changes in narrators' lives are associated with self-creative decisions that contribute to a greater sense of congruence with oneself. These decisions emerge from self-reflective deliberation and trigger specific actions aimed either at introducing change into one's life or at resisting change. This finding makes it possible to move beyond the dominant assumption in scientific discourse that resistance to change is an inherently negative phenomenon. The analysis highlighted less obvious manifestations of self-creation, including situations in which a conscious strategy of resistance to change may foster an individual's self-creation.

These observations led to the development of a three-stage model of self-creation. The pre-decision stage is based on self-reflection, life review, and learning from one's own biography, enabling individuals to determine their attitude towards change and cultivate self-creative readiness. The decision stage constitutes an act of will and includes four types of self-creative decision making: prospective, reactive, conveyed, and postponed. The post-decision stage involves the implementation of actions that may be either transgressive (actions aimed at introducing change) or quasi-transgressive (intentional actions oriented towards preserving the status quo and maintaining the coherence of the self). An additional outcome of the study was the identification of factors that strengthen or weaken self-creative readiness. Three groups of factors influencing older adults' capacity for self-determination were distinguished: developmental and educational factors (e.g., parenting style), environmental factors (e.g., support from significant others and a sense of security), and individual factors (e.g., capacity for self-reflection, sense of agency, vitality).

The study also demonstrated that self-creation in old age often involves two subjects. The involvement of third parties, such as significant others or mentors, does not necessarily diminish personal agency; rather, it may support self-creative processes, provided that older adults perceive such influence as consistent with their own aspirations. In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that old age constitutes a particularly important field for self-creation.

Moreover, resistance to change, when grounded in profound self-reflection, may represent a conscious and constructive manifestation of work on the self.