

## СОЦІОЛОГІЯ СІМ'Ї ТА МОЛОДІ

УДК 316. 346. 32

### POLISH SOCIOLOGY OF YOUTH AND ITS MAIN FIELDS OF RESEARCH

**P. Długosz**

*University of Rzeszów,  
aleja Tadeusza Rejtana 16 c, Rzeszów, Poland,  
ptc@wp.pl*

The purpose of the article was to present the achievements of Polish sociology of youth. Information presented show that Polish sociology of youth has a rich tradition and is derived from the pre-war period. Along with changes in the socio-political change problems, which they occupied. The specificity of the problems taken also determines the location of academic centers involved in youth. Central academia rather analyze the problems of youth globally. In turn, those located on the fringes of take issues related to the specificity of the border. Along with the accelerated social change youth policy becomes very important. One of the main points made by many researchers to analyze the adaptation strategies to face the challenges of capitalism. Many research shows that young people are partially adapted to it. They are still visible among the young *Homo Sovieticus* personality elements that may hinder further changes.

*Keywords:* Poland, youth, sociology, research.

#### **1. The beginnings of the sociology of youth and its contemporary face**

Research on young people has been conducted in Poland for a long time. It was carried out by Józef Chałasiński, Stanisław Rychliński and Florian Znaniecki. Following WWII, research on young people was resumed. Work was continued by Chałasiński, who published *The Young Generation of the People's Republic of Poland* and showed in it the social promotion of young people of rural origin in the People's Republic of Poland (Chałasiński 1964). Jan Szczepański analysed the role of young people in the transformation process of socialist society as well as the operation of the educational system. Stefan Nowak, based on his examination of young people, tried to forecast the future of society. To this end, in 1959, Nowak carried out a research project called «Students of Warsaw». In the period 1972–1974 he also observed the intergeneration transmission of values. Nowak's research was inspired by «young people's rebellion» in the West (Nowak 1989).

Young people's problems were also analysed by Ryszard Dyoniziak, Maria Ossowska, Władysław Markiewicz, Bronisław Gołębiowski, Władysław Adamski, Zygmunt Bauman, Mikołaj Kozakiewicz, Antonina Kłoskowska, Aldona Jawłowska, Andrzej Siciński and many other scholars.

The sociology of young people was developed by several academic centres in Poland. In

Warsaw, apart from Nowak and his students (A. Sulek, I. Krzemiński, K. Kosela, T. Szawiel and M. Grabowska), also Hanna Świda-Ziemba, Krzysztof Kiciński, Jerzy Wersteinstein-Żuławski, Janusz Kuczyński and Jan Garlicki took up issues related to different aspects of the young generation.

Sociological research empirically oriented towards young people can also be found at the Jagiellonian University. Marian Niezgoda dealt with, and continues to deal with, the relation between education and social transformation. The matter of students' social personality was approached by Jan Jerschina too. Problems of young people were also studied by Władysław Kwaśniewicz, Kazimierz Sowa and Andrzej Szumakowicz. At present, educational and human capital research projects are continued. Analyses of the social consequences of educational change and new/old educational inequalities were carried out by Piotr Długosz and Marian Niezgoda. Jarosław Górniak's team investigates, among other things, the human capital of university students and that of secondary school pupils. The problems of young people of rural origin were dealt with by Krzysztof Gorlach, Zygmunt Seręga and Zbigniew Drąg.

To date, the Toruń centre has ranked high among Polish research centres focusing on the sociology of young people. It was at this centre that research on young people of rural origin was conducted as part of the Institute for the Development of the Countryside and Agriculture. Research involving the sociology of young people was conducted by Andrzej Kaleta and Zbigniew Kwieciński. Other researchers who took up this area of inquiry in the following years included Ryszard Borowicz and Krystyna Szafraniec. The sociology of young people is also studied by Monika Kwiecińska-Zdrenka and Tomasz Szlendak.

During the process of far-reaching transformations, young people became a frequent focus of research due to their significant role in the creation of the new order. Research on young people was carried out by CBOS (Centre for Public Opinion Research), which, at longer intervals, makes analyses of life goals, reference groups, attitudes towards integration, leisure pursuits etc. In Warsaw, the Youth Research Centre headed by Barbara Fatyga operates as part of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences at Warsaw University. Barbara Fatyga approaches young people's problems from the anthropological perspective. She has published numerous papers on the culture of young people, lifestyles, leisure and the generation. The centre is involved in a number of research projects and it is home to many specialists studying the sociology of young people.

Research related to the sociology of young people is conducted by different academic centres across the country. At Zielona Góra University, a group of researchers studying young people, headed by Maria Zielińska, has been created. The researchers focus on the problem of cultural diffusion as well as problems of the borderland near the Polish-German border, studies of generations and leisure. In Wrocław, at SWPS, research is conducted by Jacek Kurzepa, who deals with social pathologies among young people living in the borderland (*juma*). He studies the problem of underage prostitution and abnormalities in the socialisation in the Western borderland.

Also Poznań features among the centres dealing with young people's problems. Sociological research on young people is conducted by Witold Wrzesień. The issue is also addressed by educators analysing the influence of popular culture on socialisation and educational inequalities. Among the scholars one can find Zbyszko Melosik, Dobrochna Hildebrandt-Wypych, Katarzyna Kabacińska and many others.

One should also mention the Lublin centre, where many years' studies of morality and religiousness, and of their changes, have been conducted by Janusz Mariański. As can be seen, there is a wealth of research on young people and we have only mentioned selected projects. The overview of research projects shows that young people are appreciated by scholars who, in their publications, deal with a wide range of topics.

## **2. Sociology of youth in the borderlands**

A separate line of inquiry, though strictly connected with the problems of young people, can be seen in the borderland. It concerns mainly the Western and Southern borderlands, represented by numerous related publications.

We should mention here research carried out by Hans Merkens (2003) in Zielona Góra and Berlin. The findings show that Polish youth resembles German youth in terms of their perception of the future, life orientation, family resources, attitude to one's profession and politics. The aspirations of young people living in near-border cities have been studied by Ewa Narkiewicz-Niedbalec (1999) and Woźniak (2003). A great contribution to the generation of knowledge about young people in the borderland has been made by Leszek Gołdyka. He investigated their attitude to European integration, life aspirations and social orientation.

One can also find research projects focusing on young people living near the Polish-Czech border. Interesting findings have been generated by research on young people from the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia done by Bożena Pactwa (2011), from which it follows that most young people decide to study at a university and believe that higher education will guarantee a job, and that most frequently they want to have their own businesses. We can also refer to research done by Teresa Soldra-Gwiżdż (1997, 2008) and Szczurek-Boruta (2003) showing a picture of young people living in the Opole region and in Upper Silesia.

Several Polish-German research projects focusing on young people have also been undertaken. Qualitative results of this research have been presented by Barbara Fatyga, Katarzyna Górniak and Przemysław Zieliński (2000). Also quantitative findings have been presented, showing similarities and differences between the attitudes, lifestyles, religiousness and identities of young people in both countries (Kosela, Jonda 2005). Similar (at least in some respects) comparisons between Polish and German young people in the context of social trajectories were made by Mach (2003). While we have extensive knowledge about young people near the Western and Southern borders, knowledge about young people living near the Eastern border is much more limited.

In the Polish-Ukrainian borderland one should note research carried out by Jerzy Nikitorowicz (2000) related to the cultural identity of Polish, Ukrainian and Belarusian youth. It follows from the research that young people in the borderland are family-centred and oriented towards private goals and stabilisation. As compared with Polish and Belarusian youth, Ukrainian young people identify with the nation to the greatest extent. On the other hand, Polish youth has higher educational aspirations and declares higher mobility. The greatest pessimists are found among young people from Belarus, which may be linked to this country's political situation.

In the Eastern borderland, and in particular in the Podkarpacie region, research was carried out by the Youth Research Centre at PWSW (East European State Higher School)

in Przemyśl in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011. Based on the research, we know that the main life goals of young people are as follows: getting a job, starting a family, gaining respect and achieving a high quality of life. High aspirations related to education prevail. At the same time, people with the highest competences declare that they intend to leave their region. Young people have the ability to exist in information society, but this ability amounts to basic computer skills, using the Internet or the mass media (Długosz 2009).

### 3. Current research problems-search for *homo sovieticus* among Polish youth

For many years now, young people have been an important subject of sociological, pedagogical and anthropological research as well as of other studies. Researchers usually take a closer look at young people when social changes take place, since, according to Karl Mannheim (2011), young people are an innovative factor and constitute potential which may be used in the transformation process. This, however, applies mainly to dynamic societies (Ortega y Gasset 1993, Szczepański 1958).

The justifiability of the above claims is verified by the events of the so-called Arab Spring, the occurrence of the 15-M Movement in Spain, the Occupy Wall Street initiative in the US or young people's protests against ACTA. Following the dissatisfaction with the social and economic situation, an «indignant generation» is emerging. Young people display a demanding attitude here. If one is to accept free market and liberal democracy as axiomatic, one may conclude that these protests are anti-system in nature, and this is not a factor which promotes modernisation. One can conclude, after Sztompka (2000), that young people are affected by postmodernism trauma and that protests serve to introduce changes which remove traumatogenic factors: high unemployment, inflation of diplomas or «junk» contracts. Protesting against such phenomena, young people want to remove obstacles which impede their entrance into adulthood.

Problems related to globalisation and the entrance of peripheries into the world system overlap with local phenomena embodied by transformation and modernisation processes. We remember that in 1989, Poland as well as other Central and Eastern European countries, started a far-reaching and comprehensive social change affecting all walks of life. Beside their positive results, the changes have brought many negative phenomena as well. Sztompka refers to them as a social and cultural trauma. He mentions the first wave of trauma which was related to the cultural change, the second, related to the negative consequences of changes (unemployment, decrease in the level of social security) and current traumas arising from the current situation (e.g. inflation of diplomas). They are all a serious system obstacle which will delay the social transformation process, at least until socialised young people appear, in new circumstances, deprived of characteristics typical of representatives of the older generation. In this case, it applies to the replacement of the *homo sovieticus* personality with the *homo economicus* orientation. This claim is close to that put forward by Mannheim and it explicitly positions young people as the demiurge of changes. On the other hand, the above leads to the conclusion that the success of social change, transformation and modernisation is possible when the generation change occurs.

However, as shown by research CBOS, the above hypothesis has not been fully confirmed. While it is true that when one considers the level of educational, life and consumption

aspirations as well as lifestyles, one can observe pro-modernisation attitudes among young people. However, when one looks at deeper system attitudes, it turns out that the affirmation of changes among young looks different.

If we take into consideration the enterprise orientation, then according to 2010 CBOS data, 50% of young people declared that they intended to set up an enterprise in the future (Młodziej 2011). However, this trend continued to weaken and it represented the smallest proportion if we take into account earlier measurements. However, faced with unemployment, only 12% of respondents selected the answer «I would start my own business». When asked about investing money in some kind of business, young people most frequently opted for a small profit and a small risk (43%). A different attitude was observed in 27% of respondents. When asked about allocation of a small sum of money, they stated that they would deposit it in a bank account and the use for current needs, while the establishment of an enterprise ranked the third (18%). Comparable data were yielded by research carried out in the Podkarpacie region (Długosz 2009) as well as studies conducted as part of the Human Capital Balance (Szczucka, Jelonek 2011).

As can be seen, the enterprise orientation is not the preserve of young people. It is a characteristic of a minority and therefore it is difficult to expect an explosion of economic development in a situation where there is no achievement motivation. As maintained by Sztompka (2005: 227), economic development is preceded by the spread of achievement motivation. This orientation is expressed in enterprise activity, for which it is necessary. If we take into account results of research on young people, we will not see their ability to take risks. Far more frequent is affiliation, which means that the spread of one's need for affiliation stops individual competition, non-conformism, originality and innovativeness, thus hampering economic development. In connection with the above, one should conclude that one of the prerequisites of modernisation has not been fulfilled. Subsequent cohorts of young people have still lower values in the case of this variable, which, for countries undergoing transformation may point to serious problems in the future.

According to CBOS research, the democratic orientation of Polish young people does not look good either. Only one-third of secondary school youth believes that democracy has an advantage over other forms of government. On the other hand, 77% of them claim that parties scramble to get the greatest number of «seats» and personal benefits for their leaders. Only 22% of respondents are satisfied with the manner in which democracy operates in Poland. Only 9% claimed that the situation in Poland points to the right direction (Młodziej 2011). Young people do not take any interest in politics (only 14%), unless they are prompted to do this, which was the case in 2007, when the Civic Platform party won thanks to the broad participation of young people. What is more, 80% of young people state that they have no trust as regards interpersonal relationships (ibid.). Yet, as observed by Sztompka, «the ability of society to undergo self-transformation certainly depends on the nature of forces holding a group together» (Sztompka 1999:268). In post-modernity, with its challenges, trust may turn out to be a fundamental matter determining the condition of society and its ability to pursue active strategies. However, it is the culture of trust that is needed, and not that of cynicism which is recorded by research and which results in social disintegration. Even worse is the situation in the Ukraine deprived of elementary trust for institutions and the human being (Długosz 2012).

Youth protests are usually protests «against» something. The only common goal is the expression of dissatisfaction. Usually, it is the ruling party. One may ask whether we deal with «civic deficit» and what its result will be on the activity of young people (Szafraniec 2011). The fact remains that participation in elections, interest in politics, support for political parties is an index of participation in public life. If, in this respect, young people show serious deficits, then the transformation process may be stopped. The approval of changes as such does not rank high among young people either, as indicated by research carried out by Krystyna Szafraniec (2010). Young people are not enthusiasts cheering the new order, there is no legitimisation of the system. It is difficult to speak of the success of transformation, if only one-third of young people see changes in a positive way, almost 50% approve of capitalism, one-fifth of them assess privatisation in a positive way, and a slightly bigger portion welcomes the tightening of ties with the West. The system is more often legitimised by young adults than by nineteen-year olds. The higher the position on the social ladder, the better was the respondent's assessment of changes. Winners' children assess the transformation positively, while losers children provide negative assessments.

Another aspect which shows the level of legitimisation of changes is the so-called sense of inadequacy, expressed by one's psychic well-being. In the case of thirty-year olds, a sense of maladjustment to the surrounding world was noted in 12% of respondents. In the group of teenagers, such people represented a much bigger group. In this case, winners' children were in a better mental state than the children of losers. Among young adults who achieved success, a sense of adequacy was clearly higher than among people who experienced problems with their jobs, professional status, family and living conditions. One can reiterate, quoting the author, that comparisons made over time and between the youth cohorts analysed allow the researcher to observe a growing positive and ambivalent attitude to changes among thirty-year olds as well as a growing ambivalent and negative attitude among nineteen-year olds. If this trend observed among the young people analysed was to continue in the future, one should expect a growing dissatisfaction and the lack of approval of the system, which merits examination in future.

Reception of the quality of social life by young people was in no way better. In this case, Szafraniec compares the results of research on modern youth with studies carried out a long time ago and she concludes that despite huge system changes, reception of the social world by young people has changed insignificantly. If young people see system circumstances in such an unfavourable light, one can venture the claim that there are no changes related to the improvement of the quality of social life. The lowest values were noted in the case of interpersonal relationships, since social reality is dominated by the rat race and the culture of distrust. Young people also lack a sense of security, because changes carry with them threats and social reality is filled with insecurity (ibid. 114). Even greater «deviations» from system norms can be seen in the case of questions related to the operation of economy. As many as 83% of respondents decided that providing everybody who wishes to work with a job should be the responsibility of the government. What is interesting, 45% of respondents supported the idea of maintaining jobs which in fact are not needed, but which are maintained to prevent unemployment. Also, 67% of subjects claim that in Poland there are too big differences between the highest and lowest incomes.

Young people who were socialised in capitalism are not pro-capitalist at all and one should rather think that they display characteristics of *homo sovieticus*, which may significantly prevent further changes from taking place in Poland (Długosz, Niezgoda 2012). One sees here strong statist and egalitarian trends which may hamper further modernisation of Poland. Again, it is worth quoting Sztompka (2002), who believed that there is no democracy without democrats, i.e. citizens filled with the democratic ethos, who want to, and who can realise democratic values. There is no capitalism without capitalists filled with the ethos of enterprise and competition, who want to, and who can realise capitalist values. There is no pluralism and openness in culture without open, enlightened, critical and tolerant participants in cultural life. They are indices of change-oriented personalities. One can talk about far-reaching mental changes when a block culture is replaced by democratic and market cultures.

As can be seen in the case of research carried out in Poland, not all constitutive features of capitalist society are embodied by young people. Above all, they show values oriented towards security, conformism, paternalism and a demanding attitude.

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## ПОЛЬСЬКА СОЦІОЛОГІЯ МОЛОДІ ТА ЇЇ ДОСЛІДНИЦЬКЕ ПОЛЕ

П. Длугош

*Жешувський університет,  
ал. Тадеуша Рейтана 16 с, Жешув, Польща,  
ptc@wp.pl*

Метою статті є розгляд досягнень польської соціології молоді. Представлена інформація доводить, що польська соціологія молоді має значну історію і сягає корінням до міжвоєнного періоду в ХХ столітті. Сьогодні поряд із інтенсивними соціальними змінами зростає важливість соціології молоді. Однією із тем соціологічних досліджень у цьому контексті є адаптація молоді до поширення системи капіталізму в пострадянських суспільствах. Дослідження вказують як на успішну адаптацію значної частини молоді так і на наявність групи молоді, яка успадкувала риси Homo Sovieticus.

*Ключові слова:* Польща, молодь, соціологія, дослідження.