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Development of biophilic character as a factor in effective resocialization

Kształowanie się charakteru biofilitycznego jako czynnik efektywnej resocjalizacji¹

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Abstract: The problems of resocialization measures are not easy and complex. After all, the recipients of these interventions are the perpetrators of crime, including minor and juvenile offenders. In order for resocialization to be effective, it must follow the right principles. The basic principle is the principle of support. Support should have many aspects: material, social, pedagogical, psychological, and medical. The support provided to inmates or juveniles from youth detention centers should include two elements. Those working in resocialization institutions must be willing to provide support despite the fact that the recipients are offenders. There must also be a willingness on the part of the recipients to accept the support. Offenders are reluctant to open up to social support as it requires acknowledging their weakness and even admitting to their actions. They prefer to show their strong-mindedness because it gives them a sense of security. When providing the support, the individual characteristics of its recipients should be taken into account, including personality traits, life experiences, psychological trauma, interpersonal conflicts, illnesses, and family and vocational situation. The perpetrators of criminal acts are often characterized by social maladjustment, antisocial personality, and even criminal lifestyles, which causes their reluctance towards resocialization measures and change in the broad sense. Specific offences are those against health and life. The introduction of a psychological construct called biophilic character into the resocialization measures seems to be desirable and useful. Character in general is an important element in the structure of personality. According to E. Fromm, biophilia is the love of life, respect for one's own life and the life of others, and respect for the world of animals and plants. As the biophilic character develops, the level of aggressiveness should decrease and the frequency of aggressive behaviour should decline. As a method in psychological research, observation allows for noting pro-life, or biophilic, responses in inmates and juveniles from youth detention centres. The greater the number of such responses, the greater the chance of the development of biophilic tendencies and even biophilic character, which will translate into the effectiveness of resocialization.

Keywords: biophilia, character, observation, personality, resocialization

Abstrakt: Zagadnienie oddziaływań resocjalizacyjnych jest niełatwe i złożone. Odbiorcami tych oddziaływań są przecież sprawcy przestępstw, w tym osoby nieletnie i młodociane. Resocjalizacja, aby była skuteczna, przestrzegać musi odpowiednich zasad. Podstawową zasadą jest zasada pomocy. Pomoc powinna posiadać wiele aspektów – materialny, społeczny, pedagogiczny, psychologiczny, medyczny. Pomoc udzielana więźniom czy wychowankom zakładów poprawczych winna zawierać dwa elementy. Po stronie pracujących w instytucjach resocjalizacyjnych musi występować chęć udzielania pomocy, pomimo tego, że jej odbiorcami są sprawcy przestępstw. Po stronie odbiorców

¹ Polska wersja: <https://stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/Presentations0/2021-3-Wozn.pdf>

pomocy musi wystąpić wola jej przyjęcia. Sprawcy przestępstw niechętnie otwierają się na wsparcie społeczne, gdyż to wymaga uznania swojej słabości, a nawet przyznania się do popełnionych czynów. Wolą więc okazywać swoją nieugiętość, gdyż to daje im poczucie bezpieczeństwa. Udzielając pomocy należy uwzględnić cechy indywidualne jej odbiorców, w tym cechy osobowości, doświadczenia życiowe, urazy psychiczne, konflikty interpersonalne, przeżyte choroby, sytuację rodzinną czy zawodową. Sprawcy czynów karalnych charakteryzują się często niedostosowaniem społecznym, osobowością antyspołeczną, a nawet przestępczym stylem życia, w czym tkwi źródło ich niechęci wobec oddziaływań resocjalizacyjnych i wobec zmiany szeroko ujętej. Przestępstwami szczególnymi są te przeciwko zdrowiu i życiu. Wprowadzenie do oddziaływań resocjalizacyjnych konstruktów psychologicznego o nazwie – charakter biofiliyczny, zdaje się być pożądanym i użytecznym. Charakter w ogóle jest ważnym elementem w strukturze osobowości. W ujęciu E. Fromma biofilia, to zamiłowanie do życia, to szacunek dla życia własnego oraz innych ludzi, a także szacunek dla świata zwierząt i roślin. Wraz z kształtowaniem się charakteru biofiliycznego, winien obniżyć się poziom agresywności i winna spadać częstotliwość zachowań agresywnych. Obserwacja, jako metoda w badaniach psychologicznych, pozwala na zauważenie u więźniów i wychowanków zakładów poprawczych reakcji za życiem, czyli biofiliycznych. Im większa będzie liczba takich reakcji, tym większa będzie szansa na kształtowanie się tendencji biofiliycznych, a nawet charakteru biofiliycznego, co będzie przekładać się na efektywność resocjalizacji.

Słowa kluczowe: biofilia, charakter, obserwacja, osobowość, resocjalizacja

Introduction

Isolation during imprisonment is a specific situation that a person experiences. Prison is a total institution, and therefore it takes away a person's individuality by surrounding them and offering ready-made patterns of behavior. The feature of a prison as a total institution, although not only that, may contribute to the failure of resocialization to prove effective. Resocialization is the activity assigned to penitentiary isolation but it is not always associated with the improvement of the imprisoned person, nor does it always lead to the realization of the idea of restorative justice. The process of penitentiary resocialization is complex, and at the same time it is subject to legal regulations, and therefore has a "schematic" form, which should be considered a certain limitation. However, the resocialization interventions carried out in penitentiary units in Poland, cross barriers and are based on various concepts. Resocialization often fails for various reasons, and, for this reason, it is important that it enters a phase of self-socialization, because then the prisoners themselves will strive to change, and the pressure in this respect will no longer be necessary. Psychocorrection is an important part of broadly understood resocialization interventions, and it can contribute to the formation of biophilic character in a given person incarcerated in a penitentiary (resocialization) unit.

In the case of the phenomenon of crime, knowledge of forensic psychology or forensic psychiatry is important (cf. Majchrzyk, 2018; cf. Majchrzyk, 2020), serving primarily the diagnosis, but much more important are already the interventions concerning offenders in the penitentiary (prison) environment. For example, it is important to prevent self-destructive behavior (cf. Wawrzyniak, 2020) or impaired communication (cf. Woźniak, 2019)

among inmates, but more important is the formation of desirable psychological traits, including biophilic tendencies.

1. Basic assumptions of resocialization

In strict terms, resocialization activities are carried out in institutions with isolated nature, and in Poland, such institutions include penal institutions and juvenile correctional facilities, while the former can also be referred to as penitentiary institutions. Resocialization in Poland should be considered a pedagogical subdiscipline but of an interdisciplinary nature, as it is based on the use of law, psychology, sociology, and medicine (including psychiatry). If broadly defined, psychological measures can accelerate progress in resocialization, but they can also impede its progress in the desired direction. Personality traits, such as aggressiveness and psychopathy, for example, can trigger antisocial acts, including criminal acts.

Two main streams can be distinguished in resocialization: behavioral and psychodynamic (cf. Jaworska, 2016, pp. 121–129).

Behavioral interventions are expected to influence the behavior of a resocialized person to inhibit and delay antisocial behavior, or even to preclude them but also to give the behavior a desired and social direction. Rewards and punishments have the nature of behavioral measures, and the greatest reward seems to be early release from prison; however, furloughs cannot be overlooked in this regard. In juvenile correctional facilities, the "points economy" that rewards and reinforces positive behavior is used. Contact with people outside the prison has a positive effect on the prisoner's behavior. These may be volunteers (visiting prisoners e.g. as part of religious groups), free people who become models of the desired behavior (e.g. sportsmen and women), but also family members who, by visiting their loved ones in prison and talking to them, may facilitate the development and implementation of the resolutions for improvement. At the core of resocialization is the change that takes a positive direction (cf. Jaworska, 2016, pp. 124–129).

Interventions of a psychodynamic nature are those which, even in the conditions of penitentiary isolation, directly influence the prisoner's personality or in general the given elements of the internal structure of mental life. In Poland, these include, for example, psychotherapy in its broadest sense, especially within the therapeutic system of serving prison sentences, and psychological resocialization programs carried out in penitentiary units, for example, training in replacing aggression. Conversations with psychologists working in the penitentiary units or with correction officers can also have a psychodynamic direction, when they will calm the emotions, stimulate motivation, and influence, at least to a small extent, the hope, the sense of meaning in life, etc. (cf. Jaworska, 2016, pp. 121–124).

The term "penitentiary resocialization", is related to, among others, three systems of serving prison sentences in Polish penitentiary institutions: ordinary, programmed (individual), and therapeutic. Within the ordinary system, typical penitentiary

resocialization is implemented into the standard system, requiring first and foremost submission to the prison's rules and regulations. The process of resocialization is facilitated by the other two systems. The therapeutic system largely implements psychological principles (Executive Penal Code, 2009, Art. 95–98).

There are three types of prisons in Poland: closed, semi-open, and open. Relevant provisions specify in detail the functioning of these types of institutions (Executive Penal Code, 2009, Art. 90–92). Such a division can be regarded as a progressive penitentiary system, i.e. one that takes into account the progress in resocialization and at the same time makes it possible to serve the sentence in an increasingly lenient form (cf. Gruźlewska, 2016, pp. 92–93).

In Poland, juvenile correctional facilities for boys have been divided into types, which makes it easier to adapt resocialization measures to the types of socially maladjusted young people. These institutions are divided into resocialization facilities, resocialization-revalidating facilities, and resocialization-therapeutic facilities. Resocialization establishments can be divided into open (called youth social rehabilitation centers), semi-open, closed, and those for the highly depraved. Juvenile correctional facilities for girls are not divided into subgroups, mainly due to their small number, which, however, makes programming of resocialization measures difficult, as they accommodate all representatives of particular types of female juvenile offenders who have been socially maladjusted, with particular focus on criminal maladjustment, and yet different measures should be taken e.g. for girls with low maladjustment and those with high maladjustment (Woźniak, Ptak, 2005).

The divisions of penitentiary or correctional facilities should be assessed positively, as they serve the purpose of the application of resocialization and correctional activities, adapted to a given group of people, having their specificity and distinguishing features.

People working in penitentiary units or resocialization centers need to be aware of the people they are working with and the changes they can expect to see in them. Those working in such establishments should follow the principles of resocialization so that their work is effective to a specific degree. The basic principle is the principle of assistance. The assistance should be tailored to the person, their experiences, personal qualities, and psychological resources. The person responsible for resocialization must be willing to help, but it is equally important that the resocialized person wants to take full advantage of the assistance offered. Two principles, in particular, are directly linked to the principle of assistance: the principle of acceptance and the principle of individualization. If one wants to help a person in the broadest sense of the word, they should accept that person, regardless of what acts he or she has committed or what life path he or she has followed, because this will encourage them to be open to the assistance. The principle of individualization implies, among other things, that the assistance is to be tailored to the person, so that his or her personality traits, injuries, medical conditions, etc., must not be disregarded (cf. Zabłocki,

Woźniak, 2017, pp. 126–131; cf. Marzec, Sarzała, Woźniak, 2018, pp. 97–102; cf. Woźniak, 2020, pp. 51–58).

In resocialization, i.e. in the strict sense, in the process taking place in the institution isolating given individuals from the society as a whole, personality traits should be shaped (including character traits) to determine that the process of social readaptation, taking place after leaving a penitentiary or correctional facilities, will proceed in a harmonious manner.

2. Towards understanding of biophilic character

Character is a component in the structure of personality. In broad terms, personality can be thought of as what makes a person, here and now, who they are. *The Dictionary of Psychological Terms* (Krzemionka, 2017, pp. 152–153) presents the following definition of personality: "The general concept of personality refers to the mechanisms that ensure the integration of our functioning, the coherence, and constancy of our responses, and at the same time, individuality and uniqueness. It is difficult to give a single definition of personality because different currents existing in psychology describe and examine differently the mechanisms that make up personality. It is understood differently in the psychodynamic approach, the humanistic approach, and the cognitive or cognitive-social approach.

Personality is mostly associated with a person-specific configuration of traits that determine the consistency of a person's behavior and identity. They are shaped by the interaction of genetic and environmental factors. People vary in the severity and configuration of these traits. This is how personality is described by trait theories, such as the Big Five".

S. Siek (1986, p. 29) proposes to approach the personality structure as "(...) a cohesive organization, encompassing the whole of the mental life of an individual in which the elements are different in qualitative terms (e.g. temperament, character, mental needs, will, attitudes, emotions, ego systems, directions, psychophysical systems, talents), complex, internally coherent, relatively stable, defined as response patterns, features, dimensions, and types that may remain in a dynamic, correlative, and «causal» relationship".

Modern psychology increasingly rarely uses the notion of *character*, which can be shown in contrast to temperament. Consequently, the latter is linked to innate factors and is manifested, for example, in reaction speed. Character, on the other hand, is related to environmental influences and thus can be shaped over a person's lifetime. In earlier depictions, character had a primarily positive connotation. Even today, colloquial speech used the expressions such as "this is a man of character". However, character can have both positive and negative faces. In extreme cases, one can speak of the formation of an antisocial character, or even a criminal character, when environmental influences have blurred the

individual the distinction between right and wrong, and crime becomes, among other things, a rational choice. S. K. Ciccarelli and J. N. White (2015, p. 494) state that character is made visible in judgments that value moral (ethical) reasons for behavior.

E. Fromm moved the term "necrophilia" to the characterological domain and spoke of necrophilic character, which he contrasted with biophilia (biophilic character). Fromm (1999, p. 372) wrote that "in the characterological sense can be described as the passionate attraction to all that is dead, decayed, putrid, sickly; it is the passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive; to destroy for the sake of destruction; the exclusive interest in all that is purely mechanical. It is the passion to tear apart living structures".

Characterological necrophilia is directly linked to aggression. Based on Fromm's study "The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness", characterological necrophilia should be regarded as the apogee of aggression, and the development of aggression should be shown on a continuum: aggression (in general) – sadism – cruelty – necrophilic character (Fromm, 1999). Biophilic character is the opposite of necrophilic character.

Fromm (1999, p. 408) puts the biophilic character as follows: "Biophilia is the passionate love of life and of all that is alive; it is the wish to further growth, whether in a person, a plant, an idea, or a social group. The biophilous person prefers to construct rather than to retain. He wants to be more rather than to have more. He is capable of wondering, and he prefers to see something new rather than to find confirmation of the old. He loves the adventure of living more than he does certainty. He sees the whole rather than only the parts, structures rather than summations. He wants to mold and to influence by love, reason, and example; not by force, by cutting things apart, by the bureaucratic manner of administering people as if they were things. Because he enjoys life and all its manifestations he is not a passionate consumer of newly packaged «excitement». Biophilic ethics have their own principle of good and evil. Good is all that serves life; evil is all that serves death. Good is reverence for life, all that enhances life, growth, unfolding. Evil is everything that stifles life, limits it, tears it to pieces".

It should be assumed that in their "pure form" both characterological necrophilia (according to Fromm, its clinical case is Hitler) and characterological biophilia appear extremely rarely. Man's task is to stand up for life: his or her own life, the life of other people, but also for the world of animals and plants, for development, for conflict resolution, for forgiveness, because then the biophilic tendencies become more and more visible until finally there is a chance for a continuous formation of the biophilic character (even to the end of the person's life).

It can be concluded that any form of aggression and violence is a factor that directly obstructs the development of biophilia. Aggressive behavior (which can, after all, be only incidental) cannot, therefore, be allowed to lead to the development of aggressiveness, which is already a relatively permanent trait in the personality structure. However, the

consequences of aggression depend on its type, so that, for example, the consequences of defensive aggression (which can only be an aggressive act rather than aggression in the full psychological sense) will be different from those of destructive aggression (cf. Farnicka, Liberska, Niewiedział, 2016).

3. Observation as a source of information on biophilic responses and tendencies in prisoners and wards of juvenile correctional facilities

The concept of biophilic character seems not to be adequately widespread in psychology, and, in the case of resocialization, it is still an unexplored concept. The process of resocialization involves prisoners or wards of juvenile correctional facilities, i.e. people who, through their actions and behavior, have often undermined the value that life represents.

Biophilic character means assigning a high value to one's own life and the lives of others. It is a significant psychological construct for human existence. However, there are no research tools to measure it. Biophilic character can be studied indirectly by examining other traits that may lead simultaneously to blocking the development of biophilic tendencies.

When an individual scores high on aggression, the researcher indirectly acquires information about processes that inhibit, block, or even preclude the development of biophilia. It is therefore worth using available aggression questionnaires for research in isolated communities.

Personality disorders will also at least inhibit the formation and development of biophilia. In research among prisoners, the R. Hare's Psychopathy Checklist can also be used, which makes it possible to examine emotional coldness and antisociality taken together (cf. Pospiszyl, 2000, pp. 172-176).

K. Pospiszyl (2000, p. 170) considered observation as one of the most serious methods of getting to know another person, although it is not an easy method and requires a lot of experience, responsibility, sensitivity, and delicacy.

Declaring higher-order and social values may indicate moving beyond individuality and valuing other people. People repeatedly indicate "life" in general (rather than only "health") as one of the most important values (or even the most important value). There may be a discrepancy between the declared values and the realized values. Nevertheless, when examining the systems of values of inmates in prisons or wards of juvenile correctional facilities, one can often see tendencies towards life (biophilic tendencies) in the choice of values.

The author of the present paper has been involved in voluntary and professional work with the environment of prisoners, and with the environment of wards of shelters for minors and juvenile correctional facilities since 1997, which allows him to conduct

observations in such communities. A specific type of observation is *participatory observation*, meaning the common activity of the researcher with the observed (researched) people, e.g. sport or tourist activity, or activity of religious character (such as pilgrimage activity). The author of the present paper views *participant observation* as a kind of *field experiment*. Observation in general, and participant observation in particular, provides an opportunity to gather empirical material that cannot be obtained using psychological tests or sociological and pedagogical questionnaires. Observation, especially participant observation, is characterized by noting spontaneous behavior, which is of great research value. The participant observation can be conducted simultaneously with the spontaneous interview. Such an interview can also provide cognitively interesting empirical material that differs significantly from that obtained in a structured interview.

The present study will present, in a general way, the information that the author of this article obtained through observation, including the participant observation, conducted for many years in the environments of socially isolated people, i.e. among the prisoners and the wards of juvenile correctional facilities, which is related to the problem of biophilia. Many offenders, not only adults but also juveniles and adolescents, are characterized by a lower (to varying degrees) instinct of self-preservation, which translates into a failure to consider their own lives, and the lives of others, to be of high value. The phenomenon of prison subculture, i.e. the phenomenon of "the other life", is still observed in penitentiaries, although to a lesser extent than e.g. 15 years ago. This subculture is also referred to as the aggression and violence subculture. It promotes power-based behavior and the exclusion of those who do not belong to it. This subculture is hostile to prisoners at the bottom of the informal hierarchy in prison, and are described by the prison service as disadvantaged. The prison subculture principally precludes the development of biophilia in its participants. In juvenile correctional facilities, such a subculture does not formally exist, but the wards, having contact with inmates or former inmates, may adopt and behave based on at least some of the principles of this subculture.

However, in many prisoners, and even more so in those brought up in correctional facilities, certain biophilic reactions can be noted, which can be spontaneously expressed by prisoners in verbal communication, for example, in the form of the phrase: *and I wanted to be a good person*. Many behaviors in people from these communities can be surprising, such as expressing sympathy for the crime victims. These people, even if they are sentenced for the most serious acts against life, are able to care for animals or grow plants. Biophilic reactions can also be induced through religious activity, such as praying for victims of crime or visiting the graves of those who died as a consequence of crime.

The author of the present paper has observed biophilic reactions even in homicide perpetrators (cf. Woźniak, 2015). These reactions appear in people undergoing social rehabilitation mostly in unplanned situations, without any coercion, i.e. spontaneously and

voluntarily, and may in many cases be an impulse for change or, in the case of reactions of a religious nature, an impulse for conversion.

Conclusions

The E. Fromm's concept, showing the biophilic character, should be used in resocialization measures, directed both to prisoners and wards of juvenile correctional facilities. Every crime is against another human being, but the most serious category is crimes against life. In Fromm's view, biophilia is evident in the character of the person, who cares for the development of his or her own life and the lives of others, and even values animal and plant life greatly. Observation, especially participant observation, seems to be the best method to notice biophilic reactions or tendencies in the communities of people living in social isolation. The communities of inmates in prisons but also, to a certain extent, of those in juvenile correctional facilities, are marked by aggression and violence, but in spite of this, certain pro-life reactions, i.e. biophilic reactions, can also be observed. These reactions, at times, are so strong that they begin to form biophilic tendencies in individuals. If they persist for a considerable time, these tendencies may initiate the formation of a biophilic character, which may already become a relatively permanent element in the personality structure. In such a case, the individual's personality increasingly acquires a prosocial orientation whereas the antisocial factor is weakened. In the communities of prisoners, but also of the wards of juvenile correctional facilities, biophilic reactions may be noticed most frequently, but biophilic tendencies are less prevalent. However, such tendencies, even in conditions of social isolation, can initiate the development of biophilic character, although actually only in few cases. Nevertheless, it is only biophilic reactions that can give a chance to initiate change.

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