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EDUCATIONAL DIMENSION
OF THE "THE VOICE SENIOR" PROGRAMME –
AN ATTEMPT TO READ MEANINGS

ABSTRACT: The globalisation of the media industry leads to the dissemination and perpetuation of similar cultural patterns of old age, which may open up new horizons of development in the period of late adulthood, as well as inhibit the emancipation potential of the oldest generation and perpetuate old age stereotypes, both negative and positive, thus limiting the pool of patterns available to subsequent generations. Recognising the need for discourse on the patterns of old age presented in the mass media, an analysis of The Voice Senior programme (first edition 2019/2020), broadcast on the first channel of Polish Television, was conducted. The aim of the research was to recognise the educational significance of the programme and to develop postulates important for shaping the positive image of older adults in the media. The nature of the research was non-reactive. Qualitative content analysis was carried out after recording all statements of participants, coaches and presenters. The analysis consisted in identifying conceptual categories relevant to the subject of the research and then subjecting them to interpretation. The recognised categories were the following: the educational dimension of the biographies of the programme participants; old age as a developmental period of life; stereotypes of old age; hidden dimension of meanings; intergenerational qualities of the programme; educational aspects of the master-pupil relationship.

KEYWORDS: old age, cultural patterns of old age; identity of older adults.

Introduction

Shaping a positive image of older adults is one of the challenges facing ageing societies. An important role in preparing society for old age, especially in overcoming stereotypes in this respect, is played by mass media, including the most popular medium among the oldest generation, namely television. Yet, as Piotr Czekanowski notes, gerontological issues in Polish television have been "almost absent" for years (Czekanowski, 2012: 153). Older adults in the media are most often presented in the context of economy, health or family (Chabiera & Tokarz-Kamińska, 2012; Kulisz, 2014). It can be noted that the potentially longest and thus most diverse phase of life is presented in the media in a very simplified way. The sciences dealing with ageing and old age take different approaches to setting the thresholds of old age, indicating, among others, biological, demographic, social, economic, mental, civil (legal) age (Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski & Dzięgielewska, 2006). From a demographic point of view, the threshold of old age for women and men is usually 60 or 65 years of age. Adopting the criterion of "post-production age,"

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in Poland it is 60 years for women, and 65 years for men. At the same time, noting the large diversity of the last phase of life, researchers distinguish the so-called early old age (60-74), late old age (75-89) and advanced old age and longevity (over 90 years of age) (Fabiś, Wawrzyniak & Chabior, 2015). This dual classification indicates the age of about 75-80 years as the boundary between the so-called third age and fourth age. The basis for determining the boundary between individual periods, in this case, is the deterioration of health, the threat of multimorbidity, and gradual loss of independence. Regardless of the negative characteristics of the so-called fourth age, researchers are increasingly emphasising its positive characteristics, stressing the hidden development reserves and the need to break stereotypes in this regard (Baltes & Smith, 2003).

Meanwhile, the media, as Barbara Szatur-Jaworska (2014) notes, are still dominated by the Aristotelian tradition of understanding old age. The Aristotelian tradition, unlike the idealising Platonic tradition, highlights such characteristics as illness, disability and weakness are highlighted. Presenting older adults in difficult life situations evokes compassion, but it can also lead to shaping a simplified image of the older adults, or to perpetuating the stereotype of an old person as dependent, sick and disabled (Czekanowski, 2012). The globalisation of media messages leads to the dissemination of the same cultural patterns in different regions of the world. The cult of youth present in the media may strengthen the negative perception of aging and old age, and the ways of actively spending their retirement offered to older adults may be a manifestation of a new kind of control over the *way of being in the world* of an increasingly numerous and diverse group of people. Media messages pay increasing attention to active forms of spending free time by older adults, while not every type of activity (*e.g.*, solitary activity) enjoys social recognition. The promotion of active forms of leisure activities for older adults has an important educational function, provided that the activity does not become a condition for the acceptance of older adults. This state of affairs will perpetuate, as Jean-Pierre Bois (1996) pointed out, the gap between the so-called third age (active, rejuvenated) and the fourth age (true old age).

Starting from the last decade, we have observed a gradual increase in the interest of the mass media in the issues of the older adults in Poland, which may be associated with the growing awareness of the challenges associated with the ageing of societies, but also, above all, with the growing demand from the older adults (consumers) for services that meet their needs. As noted by Wendy Griswold: "cultural markets always respond to social changes" (Griswold, 2013: 121). Unfortunately, the greater presence of older adults in the media does not lead to a social discourse that would redefine the concept of old age in society. Paradoxically, "the growing demographic significance of older adults is accompanied by a process consisting in pushing old age out of the field

of social and cultural visibility" (Jakubowska, Raciniewska & Rogowski, 2009: 7). The way of talking about old age and older adults has changed. In the era of globalisation of culture, the concept of a "senior" replaced the existing wordings naturally related to the life cycle – old age, older adults. Nowadays, the term senior refers to both people who are active and in relatively good health, who have reached the age of 60 or 65 and thus, for example, acquired the right to receive a senior card, as well as to people aged 80 and over, who, due to emerging physical limitations, may seek different ways of functioning in the world.

From the perspective of a social gerontologist, it is difficult to disagree with Szatur-
-Jaworska that the use of the wording "senior" is a manifestation of political correctness or even an escape from the concept of "old people" (Szatur-Jaworska, 2014: 78). The mere replacement of concepts does not solve the problems of a growing group of older adults or contribute to shaping their positive image; it even stands in contradiction to the Aristotelian tradition prevailing in the media. Entertainment programmes with the participation of older adults, starting from the so-called interpretive packages developed by TV broadcasters (see Griswold, 2013), are aimed at promoting a positive image of older adults. Often, however, due to the attempt to reach the widest possible audience on a mass scale, stereotypes, both negative and positive, are perpetuated. Products of mass culture, as Dominic Strinati notes, are "standard, created according to the same recipes – it is the result of the production of cultural articles using routine, specialised, segmented tape forms of production" (Strinati, 1998: 22).

Recognising the need for discourse on the patterns of old age presented in the mass media, an analysis of The Voice Senior programme (first edition 2019/2020), broadcast on the first channel of Polish Television, was conducted. The average number of viewers in Poland was 2.97 million. Until the first edition of the programme, nine local versions of the show were created in countries such as the Netherlands, Russia, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Thailand and Mexico. The global convention of the programme, promoting an active lifestyle in old age, leads to the question of the universality of the presented image of older adults. The presence of the word senior in the name of the programme suggests that the participants are people over 60 years of age, without specifying the upper age limit, which can lead to both breaking and perpetuating stereotypes of old age, depending on the presentation of the participants of the programme and the way of speaking about the period of late adulthood. Therefore, the aim of the research is to recognise the educational dimension of the programme, taking into account recipients of different ages, including the threats arising from the entertainment convention of the programme.

Cultural patterns of old age versus the identity of the old person

With age, an awareness of changes in the physical, mental and social spheres, deviating from the standards of youth, both in the negative and in the positive dimension, gradually develops. However, a person ages not only in their own eyes, but also in the eyes of others. The fact that ageing is perceived socially is not without significance for the individual definition of ageing and old age. The cultural pattern of old age can emphasise the value of old people as wise and experienced, as well as reduce their role to a state of occupational and social unsuitability. There are two types of age bias in the subject literature. Mild age bias results from conscious and unconscious fears of old age. Malicious age bias arises in the process of a strong stereotyping process, associated with the belief that older adults are worthless. Negative age stereotypes are reinforced by the cult of youth, which is dominant in the contemporary culture. The promoted ideal of beauty does not only contrast with old age. It is equally unfavourable to people in early adulthood who differ in their appearance and behaviour from the current, socially imposed and acceptable standards. With the demographic ageing of societies and thus the growing market of new consumers, the way of presenting, speaking and writing about old age changes. Positive characteristics of older adults often take the form of positive stereotypes, which are based on the assumption that older adults are wise, courteous, cheerful, trustworthy, or require help and support. As noted by Todd D. Nelson (2003), research does not confirm the validity of such stereotypes. Moreover, their negative consequences are indicated. The duality of both experiencing and talking about old age is visible both in contemporary and traditional culture. Modernity, as noted by David Riesman (1996), opens up wider possibilities for people to choose their own way of life. The issue of human identity boils down to the search for distinctness, diversity, individual choices among a multitude of possibilities (see Bauman, 1993; Welsch, 1998). However, the diversity of the world and the right to distinguish oneself, characteristic of contemporary culture, leads to problems related to the choice of one's own lifestyle, also in the most diverse period of life, which is old age. On one hand, people in old age, as in earlier periods of life, face the possibility and opportunity to construct their own identity. On the other hand, the question arises of a relatively permanent reference system, a sense of belonging and identification, as defined by Lawrence Grossberg as "a mattering map" (see Melosik, 1996). Culture provides suggestions on how to build the map, and thus the person constructing his own identity draws from the sources provided by culture. According to Ruth Benedict:

The culture of society provides the raw material from which an individual shapes their life. If the raw material is poor, the individual suffers from it: if it is rich, the individual gains the opportunity to use their capabilities (Benedict, 1966: 343).

The multiplicity of possibilities, of potentially possible lifestyles, however, does not mean that they are available to everyone (Giddens, 2002). Not everyone is able to see the diversity of possibilities and make a choice, because "the signs established by tradition have faded" (Giddens, 2002: 115) and the global cultural industry suggests universal possibilities, the same for all regardless of diversity of needs, preferred lifestyles, opportunities and limitations. According to critical theory, industrialised culture is a homogenised culture in which everyone is alike (Adorno & Horkheimer after: Lash & Lury, 2011). The homogeneity of cultural patterns of old age can block the identity potential of older adults or transfer it from the socio-cultural space to the private space. According to Lech Witkowski, if there is a reduction in the pool of cultural premises for action, the "potential of [social] emancipation" is reduced, which is expressed in the disappearance of the ability to "substantively demand empowerment" (Witkowski, 1988: 89-90). The modern world does not resemble the world from several decades ago. The methods of "settling in the world" known to the older adults have lost their relevance, which makes constructing one's own identity not an easy task (Bugajska, 2005: 59). The existing cultural patterns do not provide a reference point for an increasingly large and diverse group of older adults. In contemporary culture, Benedict wrote, we are dealing with "cultural patterns that die before our eyes and new ones that only emerge on the horizon" (Benedict, 1966: 345). The connection of human existence with the world of culture sets the framework for shaping human identity, blocking or stimulating personal development (Bugajska, 2005). The reference "away from" an unacceptable set of values is always, according to George H. Mead (1975), a reference "towards" another set of values represented by society. Old age is a socially constructed concept, demanding social discourse and redefinition. Change in the role of the older adults is associated with a variety of expectations formulated towards older adults, reaching beyond collective patterns of behaviour and attitudes (Mahoney, 1994). Already in the 1980s, Erik Erikson (1982) drew attention to the need to redefine, rethink and reflect on the role of advanced age. Shaping new patterns of old age requires conscious educational interactions. As noted by Ewa Kulisz (2014), shaping the positive image of old age and older adults in the media means presenting various ways of life of older adults free of stereotypes.

Research method

The aim of the conducted research was to recognise the educational significance of The Voice Senior programme and to develop postulates important for shaping the positive image of older adults in the media. The research problem was expressed in the question: What is the educational dimension of The Voice Senior? The participants of

the programme are, by definition, persons over 60 years of age, who are referred to as seniors, in accordance with the name of the programme and the recently adopted way of speaking about older adults. The first edition of the programme included 13 men and 9 women. The youngest of the 22 participants was 57 years old (male), the oldest was 77 years old (female). In the individual age ranges, the number of participants was as follows: 55-59 years old – approaching old age – 1 person; 60–64-year-olds – 7 people; 65-69 – 6 people; 70-74 – 5 people and 75 and over – 3 people. Assuming that people aged 60 – 74 belong in the so-called third age and people aged 75 and over belong in the so-called fourth age, it can be noted that among the participants of the programme, people in the so-called third age (18 people) predominated and only 3 people can be included in the category of people in the so-called fourth age. One person, at the age of 57, was in the so-called "approaching old age" group, and while in studies involving older people it is reasonable to take into account, as a comparative group, people aged 55-59, defining people at this age as seniors may be questionable.

The statements of the coaches, renowned artists of the Polish music scene, three of whom were of senior age (69, 72 and 77) and one of them of middle age (49), were also analysed. The two presenters (male and female) were middle-aged. The rules of the programme provide for three stages of selecting the best vocalist. At the stage of the so-called blind auditions, people perform in 4-person teams. 16 people make it to the semi finale and 8 people meet in the finale. In the first edition, three people performed as a band. The research was non-reactive, which means that the process of studying social behaviour does not affect these behaviours (Babbie, 2009). One of the methods of non-reactive research, *i.e.*, content analysis, consisting in the study of recorded human statements, was used. No interviews were conducted. The research analysed the statements of participants, trainers and presenters registered on the YouTube channel. The collection of empirical material in the first stage consisted in viewing the entire programme and recording general observations regarding its course, including the musical layer. The second stage consisted in making a detailed record of the content of the statements of the participants, coaches and presenters, family members speaking directly in the programme or during the broadcast presentations of the participants' profiles. The recording of the songs performed, and the musical assessment made by the trainers were omitted. An important aspect of the content analysis was coding – understood as the process of converting raw data into data classified according to a defined/ recognised conceptual framework. The starting point for the search for the educational dimension of the programme (which was the subject of this research) was the distinction introduced by Zofia Szarota (2015) into education towards old age, education during old age, education through old age and education for old age. Gerontological education, according to Szarota (2015), means activities aimed at preparing a person

for old age (education towards old age), preparing people to deal with the challenges of old age (education during old age) and education of human resources and family carers (education for old age). Learning in old age in these three educational areas can be carried out using the experience of older adults (education through old age). The research intention was to identify whether it is possible to speak of an educational dimension of the Voice Senior program, and if so, in which of the indicated areas and in what sense. While searching for categories, attention was paid to "what is being said?" in terms of the subject (what is the message about?), values (what goals and aspirations does the message reveal directly or indirectly?), addressee (to whom is the message addressed?). The content analysis used was of a qualitative nature.

Research results

In the qualitative content analysis, it was established that the programme does have, to a certain extent, an educational dimension, with the reservation that it also contains content that can be considered conducive to the perpetuation of stereotypes of people in late adulthood. The programme, due to its entertainment nature, highlights the positive aspects of old age, which makes the educational message one-sided and incomplete. Regardless, the very intention to promote a positive image of older adults in the media, focused on the positive aspects of the last period of human life, has educational value and provides an opportunity to build social discourse in this area.

As a result of the qualitative content analysis, taking into account the conceptual framework set by such key concepts as: education through old age, education towards old age, education during old age and education for old age, the following categories were distinguished: the educational dimension of the participants' biographies (education through old age); old age as a developmental period of life (education towards old age and education during old age); breaking through stereotypes of old age (education towards old age and education during old age); intergenerational qualities of the programme (education through old age); educational aspects of the master-pupil relationship (education during old age and education for old age). The presentation of the research results consists in describing the distinguished categories, which are illustrated by the statements of participants [U], coaches [T], and presenters [P].

Educational dimension of the programme participants' biographies

Learning from biography can be a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration to growth and lifelong learning both to older adults and young and mature adults (Dubas, 2015). The programme formula provides for the presentation of the participants' profiles

using various means of expression, such as statements of the participants and their relatives, presentation of photographs from the past and a short coverage reflecting their past and present life. The vast majority of the programme participants assessed their life decisions positively, especially appreciating the role of loved ones, thanks to whom it was easier for them to go through life and solve emerging difficulties. Only one person drew attention to the sense of loss associated with wasting the chance to have a family, and one person mentioned wrong decisions in terms of managing their professional career. Two people started new personal lives while already in retirement. For all participants, music was important in life and singing itself was a passion to which they decided to return in retirement. In their youth, the vast majority of the participants performed in public, singing as amateurs or professionals. They celebrated artistic successes at different times in their lives. The analysis of the statements of the programme participants, as well as the presented fragments of their biographies, allowed for the uncovering of a life message that can perform an educational function.

Some messages refer to a general philosophy of life, its meaning and key values without references to age, which is illustrated by the statements:

 "I like it, I just like it, this is my life." [U1.3]

"I love to test life. To make an even bigger step; bigger, maybe smaller, but we'll see what happens. I'm not afraid of risk; I go where I haven't been before and though I know that I can get burned – I stick my finger right there anyway." [U2.1]

"You only have one life. There is no replay, no overtime." [U2.3]

"Love, family, children, grandchildren are the meaning of all life." [U1.2]

"I don't like looking back, I go forward; wherever I can find myself I already try to be active somewhere." [U03]

When talking about life, the programme participants often referred to experiences related to the passage of time and the challenges they faced during the retirement period:

 "We have more time, it needs to be filled." [U2.2]

"There is less and less of it, so you need to start thinking carefully about what to put first, what can be done at the same time." [U2.3]

"I think it's only now that I've started living." [U1.1.]

"I was waiting for this moment, to turn 60 and look for this energy in myself; and it is my singing that translates into such energy, into the attempt to show that something can still be done at this age." [U3.3]

"Not all is lost, and I am the best proof of this." [U3.1]

"If I had had the same reason as I do now, I'd probably have run my life differently." [U3.2].

The participants of the programme highlighted the positive aspects of the change that took place after retirement, underlining the advantages of this period of life, which is illustrated by the statements:

"I feel totally, completely fulfilled; in every respect this old age, so to speak, this retirement, has given me the courage to undertake this." [U3.4]

"I'm busy spending my time in retirement; that is, I do what I like, everything that gives me pleasure outside of my duties." [U02]

"When I retired, I decided to become a little… independent." [U4.3]

"A great adventure, the last adventure of my life. I will not have such adventures again, certainly not. I feel totally, completely fulfilled; in every respect this old age, so to speak, this retirement, has given me the courage to undertake this." [U3.4]

The participants perceived their participation in the programme as an opportunity to achieve their own goals:

"It is worth it to strive for something you like and love in life; I will show my children that I went there, I sang the way I could and was appreciated. And above all, I was brave because I tried." [U01]

"I always wanted to take part in this type of programme and… my dream came true. One shouldn't give up." [U2.2.]

It was important for them to show their way of life to others, to encourage others to self-realisation:

"I would just like to infect – maybe people like me, that it is still worth it to do something. All the experiences related to this programme are already deep inside me somewhere." [U1.1]

While appreciating the participants of the programme, the coaches also set them as examples to follow:

"Thank you for finding joy in what you do […]. For being a beautiful model for all those who want to leave home after watching our programme. Thank you for this – for showing the people who are sitting at home that they do not belong there, that they should come to us." [T1]

The fragments of the participants' biographies presented in the programme, combined with a narrative about their own life, retirement life and expectations related to the programme, encourage reflection on the meaning of life and passage of time, draw attention to the need to plan one's life in retirement and highlight the positive aspects of this period of life. In terms of preparing the young generation – as well as people in early and middle adulthood – for old age, they perform an educational function.

Old age as a developmental period of life

The ability to develop is considered to be one of the special characteristics of human beings – from birth to late old age (Obuchowski, 1995). Late adulthood is the most diverse phase of life, in which previously unused intellectual, emotional and motivational resources (or so-called hidden reserves) may be activated (Czerniawska, 1996). The analysis of the statements of the programme participants, coaches and presenters

showed that old age is presented in the programme as a developmental period of life. One of the coaches intuitively applied the concept of late adulthood used in andragogy, treated as a definition of the last period of a person's life, highlighting its developmental potential:

"[…] sometimes for adults it's more like there's something missing in their lives. They think that they are gaining time that is difficult to use, and that is not true. You have to look at yourself and think about what I haven't done yet, what I've wanted to do all my life but haven't had the chance. We create this opportunity." [T1]

The coaches and presenters emphasised the advantages of old age, highlighting the opportunities that activate during retirement, which is illustrated by the statements:

"It's never too late to embrace your passion." [T1]

"The greatest value of this programme is its idea. I'm convinced that when it ends with a performance here and moving on or not; that it will arouse an even greater need for development, I know that." [T2]

"Life begins after 40. When she hears it, she says 'Excuse me' and claims that life really begins after 60; and when I look at how she does in our programme, I come to the conclusion that she is right." [P2]

"You simply flourished after 60." [T4]

"[…] and when I said that life begins after 60, T1 didn't believe me." [T3]

"And I'll say this… This programme is the beginning of a beautiful road leading to balance; it isn't only about balance of children or young people, but of women and men of mature age who use their potential […]." [T4]

In their utterances, the participants and coaches emphasised the importance of self-realisation and fulfilment as a kind of complement to themselves, their own experiences and aspirations that call for culmination in the last period of their lives, which is illustrated by the statements:

"Come on, I'm 75 years old and I say that the reason we lose blossom is to flourish again. Here we see a beautiful flower, in front of us, of miraculous fulfilment, exactly in this age and not any other." [T4]

"Actually, I've waited my whole life for something important. This is such a chance to accomplish something more […]." [U4.1.]

"I get a lot of such comments – why do you need it, what is it for – leave it, go away, rest. What I simply want – it can still come true, to gain some more experience. I don't know if I'll go far but I'm curious and I come in and sing." [U 1.3.]

"The Voice is there so that an old grandfather like me, who is 67 years old, comes out and sings and has a chance to show what he can do; and if I can – and I believe that I can – if he can, hey people, why shouldn't I sing to you. I know my value, I know what I can do and I want to win." [U 2.1]

"This is the moment in life when you can show yourself as you are." [T1]

The participants treated their participation in the programme as an opportunity to prove themselves, but also to give meaning to their own lifelong activities, which is illustrated by the statements:

"Surely music adds energy. There are so many people my age and older, with amazing voices. I like a challenge, so I decided to prove myself. If such a programme was created, why not…" [U1.2]

"I want to go out and sing for someone to judge if my singing all my life made sense. Was it worth singing?" [U1.4]

"It's wonderful – that I am still in this world at my age, that I will have the opportunities to sing." [U4.4]

"At the moment it is my life, my passion, I am fulfilling myself at the moment and I've always dreamed of singing." [U1.3]

The coaches combined new development opportunities with decreasing social pressure resulting from the fulfilled social, professional and family roles, as a result of which the free time remaining at the disposal of older adults becomes a space of individual creation, their own preferences and needs:

"There is such a moment in life when you can really do what you want to do. Our children are already on their own and the 'I have to' isn't there anymore… I have to… I have to… Now I can… I can… I can… I want… I want… I want and I do what I want." [T4]

The statements of the programme participants regarding the need of proving themselves, of self-realisation and fulfilment reflect individual struggles related to the crisis attributed by Beata Bugajska (2017) to the eighth phase of life. Bugajska, referring to the theory of psychosocial development by Erikson (1982), proposes to analyse the period of old age in the aspect of experiencing two developmental crises. She connects the crisis indicated by Erikson (1982), ego integrity versus despair, with the last phase of life, proposing an eighth phase, which plays out on a continuum between engagement and resignation. According to Bugajska, the virtue that is crucial for this phase is courage. We can find it in the statements of the participants and coaches, especially in the context of the courage to realise one's own dreams, which is illustrated by the statements:

"It's beautiful that you have the courage to fulfil your dreams." [T4]

"It's never too late for dreaming." [P2]

"First of all, they are free people, which means they can and want to allow themselves to do things they have dreamed about all their lives. This is a new life for them, for people who are over 60." [T4]

"As they say, it's never too late – we are starting a new stage in life. Yes, it's never too late for mature people to realise their dreams." [U4.1]

"It's about time for The Voice Senior. You will meet people who have achieved everything in life, raised children, grandchildren. They did everything that was important in life. There was

only one thing they didn't have time for – realising their musical passions. Because it's never too late for dreaming." [P1]

In their reactions, the participants expressed joy because of participating in the programme. One participant encouraged retired older adults to engage in the types of activities that are associated with positive emotions and feelings of joy:

"I like to sing or say what is in me, what I like; it's an appeal to people who are no longer professionally active to do something that makes them happy." [U 2.2]

The educational dimension of the programme is expressed in drawing attention to the developmental possibilities of the last period of human life, recognising the needs of older adults such as self-realisation, fulfilment, affiliation, defining old age in terms of potential. Attention to a future time perspective, manifested *i.e.*, in the formulation of goals for the future, realisation of dreams, changes in the past patterns of activity, makes the period of old age a period open to the future (Timoszyk-Tomczak & Bugajska, 2012), thus strengthening the emancipation potential of the oldest generation – contrary to the belief that old age has no future.

Stereotypes of old age – breaking/perpetuating

The simplified and ambivalent image of older adults in contemporary culture is manifested *i.e.* in the stereotypical perception of older adults, both negative and positive. The large diversity of the last period of life, resulting from the individual experience of older adults, their potential, resources (individual, social), excludes unification and calls for the recognition of the diversity of lifestyles in old age. Gerontological education (education towards old age, education during old age, education through old age, education for old age) plays an important role in overcoming negative and positive stereotypes of old age (Szarota, 2015). Promoting diverse old age patterns in the media could contribute to an increase in the so-called emancipation potential of the oldest generation, to changing attitudes to the last period of life and to breaking through stereotypes.

In the coaches' statements, we find attempts to overcome negative stereotypes of old age:

"[…] you are breaking the stereotype, because thanks to you many other women will understand that they can go out and be beautiful, ageless women – shining. You have a wonderful light in you. You ladies, my dear sisters, are just getting started. Understand this!" [T4]

"I admire you more and more. You are the cure for all the lazy two-legged healthy bulls who complain and even whine, and you walk in with this cane… You are the young one and you dance better with this cane than some healthy teenagers, because you are a musical and wonderful young man for ever." [T3]

The participants themselves protested against their coaches' stereotypical perceptions of them, which is illustrated by the statements:

"Do you (to U 2.2) make a good cheesecake?" [T1]

"I can sing but I am talentless when it comes to cakes." [U2.2]

"This lady should sing, just sing." [T4]

"[…] and not stand by the oven and bake cakes." [U2.2]

"Emancipation." [T1]

"It's true it has started happening only now; I have more joy in life now; the time of women of my age with a handkerchief tied under their chin is past. We go out to people, we wear what we like, in what we feel good. I always say about myself: Once I was a young granny and now, I am an old filly. There are no age limits, let's do the things we want, the things we like, the things for which we had no time our whole life." [U2.2]

Coaches and participants pointed to the importance of love in old age, but the topic of sexuality of older adults was raised in the conversation only twice:

"Is it possible to change your whole life after 50 and fall in love and be happy?" [T3]

"It's even necessary – it is advisable – it would be boring." [U4.4]

"[…] we all still have a heart that can do anything, it could be the motto of the programme – a fragment of a song." [T2]

"There are a lot of people born late here – they think that people do not fall in love at a certain age, that we hide somewhere in the corner." [T3]

"He has a sexy voice and I liked it very much about him." [T4]

The Voice Senior programme is designed to promote active older adults. Activity is a lifelong need, and the comprehensive development of older adults is part of idea of gerontological education – with the reservation that its form and scope depend on individual capabilities and preferences and that activity cannot be a condition for accepting old age.

Thus, from the point of view of gerontological prophylaxis, it is reasonable to recognise the risks associated with promoting a specific pattern of old age. In most of their statements, coaches, participants and presenters emphasise the advantages of the last period of life. However, in some statements we find a double message – glorified and unwanted old age. In this sense, one may rather speak of perpetuating stereotypes and thus a hidden, negative educational message. This is particularly evident in the presenters' dialogues, in which we can find depreciating the value of retirement life, infantile treatment of older adults, acceptance of older adults conditioned by undertaken activity and manifestation of youthful energy, which is illustrated by the statements:

"The longer this programme lasts, the more I think that retirement probably doesn't exist at all." [P2]

"That's very good, because you're thinking about it, are you?" [P1]

"Of course not." [P2]

"There's almost no room here, and there are buses in front of the building – all Third Age Universities. People are trying to get into the studio on a senior ID card." [P2]

"Oh, no…. student ID – because youth is coming." [P1]

"I would even say eternal youth." [P2]

"There will be 50 000 to spend. What can you do with such money?" [P2]

"Spend it – maybe on a grandson?" [P1]

"It's more likely to be lost on a grandkid, unless you are sure that it is your grandchild." [P2]

"Youth, energy, courage – simply The Voice Senior." [P2]

"Youth – because it is a state of mind." [P1]

"Energy – in this respect, our seniors can easily race with the rogues from The Voice Kids." [P1]

"Please see what they did, how our youth did in the programme." [P2]

"You're beautiful, you're young." [P2]

It is also important that the programme mentions disease only incidentally, just in the case of one participant using a cane:

"I am 67 years old and I still walk […]. I'm all sick except my voice, and that is all, and I am well." [U2.1]

Similarly, only one dialogue addresses the issue of death. One of the coaches is trying to change the subject related to death and the other to naturally accept death as a process naturally related to the human life cycle:

"This is not true – love is for the rest of life." [T3]

"To the grave." [T2]

"What grave? Don't speak of that." [T3]

"At our age – because we are all of the same age, everything is ahead of us – everything can happen." [T2]

In the individual statements of the participants – and coaches as well – we find a hidden message pointing to the low position of the older adults, regret for the youthful years, or the belief that in old age it is not worth it to start new things, which is illustrated by the statements:

"He will teach me French; I will learn French in my old age." [T3]

"I sang in the opera, but unfortunately, so to speak – I am emeritus, which means resting." [U4.3]

"I found myself here because no one wanted to listen to my songs and did not want to sing." [U1.1]

Promoting a positive image of older adults involves taking deliberate, thoughtful educational actions, eliminating double, false or contradictory messages. Thus, for example, the acceptance of older adults, the recognition of the values of old age and showing respect to older adults due to the value of old age in itself, contradicts the

promotion of the image of old age created on the model of youth; "eternally young" old age, as one of the presenters described it.

The intergenerational qualities of the programme

Older adults currently remain in disproportionately longer contact with the younger generation than in the past (Bugajska, 2010). Therefore, an important dimension of gerontological education is creating conditions for intergenerational integration, in order to ensure cultural continuity and break stereotypes. The programme drew attention to the importance of intergenerational relations at the stage of presenting the profiles of participants, as well as the presence of children and grandchildren during performances. The programme participants were satisfied to be able to demonstrate their own skills before the younger generation, which is consistent with the formula assigned to old age by Erikson – "I am what survives of me" (Erikson, 1982), which is illustrated by the statements:

"What is important to me now is that my songs remain, that they will be an unforgettable legacy for my children." [U1.2.]

"The proverbial grandchildren will see how great their grandmothers and grandparents are, how much they can do and what joy and energy they have." [T3]

"If I win, I would have something to boast about to my grandchildren." [U1.2]

"I think I'm inspiring my granddaughter. She keeps saying she wants to sing like grandma. I have never learned to sing, and I sing as my heart dictates to me." [U2.2]

"We came here, leaving friends and acquaintances in order to be closer to our son and his family. It's nice to hear your grandchildren romping around and running up to you asking, 'Grandpa, Grandpa, where have you been?' Recently, the eldest granddaughter asks, 'Grandfather – would you teach me to play guitar?' 'With pleasure.'" [U1.2]

The programme formula limits the possibility for the children and grandchildren of participants to speak frequently. When such statements appeared, they mainly indicated the pride felt due to the success of the parent participating in the programme, which is illustrated by the statements:

"I'm proud of my mother because she has proven that no matter how old you are – you can make your dreams come true. It impresses me very much." [son about U1.1]

"My dad is very active, which I am proud of, I'm very happy that he has many interests, but music is first and above all." [daughter about U04]

Speaking about the intergenerational values of the programme, it is worth noting that apart from the programme addressed to the older adults, Polish television also broadcasts a programme addressed to people in early and middle adulthood (The Voice Poland) and children (The Voice Kids). Thus, The Voice Senior programme creates the

opportunity for older adults to pursue musical passions on par with other age groups, which has educational value.

Educational aspects of the master-pupil relationship

For the participants, The Voice Senior programme was a challenge tied to various expectations and emotions. The coaches, both during workshops and performances, appreciated their students, paying attention not only to their singing technique, but also to their personal qualities, values, attitude towards people and the world, which is illustrated by the statements:

"They don't want to shine; they just want to fulfil themselves and sing well and experience what they're singing." [T3]

"I don't think anyone told him that the best thing about him is who he is; the greatest thing about him is himself." [T3]

"You have an identity, you are recognisable by your first word, even by your mood, you have something of your own, something individual, and that is very important." [T4]

"When I said that you are a delicate, beautiful woman, it was only […], but what's most valuable to us is music, and you have a very beautiful tone of voice, especially in the lows […]." [T1]

Working with coaches, renowned musicians of the Polish music scene, allowed the participants to improve their own workshop, but also provided an opportunity to look at themselves through self-reflection, which is part of the area of education in old age:

"At the workshop, I think it will be better because I didn't sleep much yesterday and I will practice, I will practice so that it's as good as it can be." [U4.4]

"It feels to me like it's not the end, but the beginning of something. I think that this programme not only turned my life upside down, but also put me on a sort of [shows the movement like a rotation of a carousel] all the time – I'm still spacey. I feel that I have a little more courage, a bit more confidence, but I'm also more certain that I should keep doing what I'm doing." [U1.1]

"The moment I am now at is something special; simply because I can realise my dreams and I will not forget this moment for the rest of my life; it may not happen again." [U1.2]

The coaches were building up the programme participants' self-esteem, giving them courage and confidence in themselves, motivating them to change, supporting them, which is illustrated by the statements:

"There's no courage, we will try to open it." [T2]

"You don't believe in yourself; you have something else in your voice – subtlety." [T1]

"This programme will end, but whoever wins it, the next day after the programme you have to look in the mirror and say, 'It's me. I like myself.'" [T1]

"I really like you […]. I believe you. Every word you've sung. You're beautiful, you're intimate, you're persuasive. Congratulations. I'm with you." [T4]

"Dare and shout, the way you can." [T3]

"Believe in yourself." [P1]

"You are you!" [T2]

"[…] beautiful words; you believed in yourself and this is the greatest victory." [P1]

"[…] remember, it's wonderful… you know where the happiness of a person is born [points to their center]. If you do not believe that you are wonderful, no one will tell you that you are; that's why I would like to take you to the finale." [T1]

"You are a pure amateur because you have only been singing for 3 years. For the total amateur you are, since yesterday after the rehearsal… you implemented an unexpected lot of suggestions." [T2]

During the workshops, the participants took the advice of coaches, but without hiding their nervousness. The coaches, on the other hand, gave them specific tips, calmed them down, worked with the participants' stage fright and stress, which is illustrated by the statements:

"I don't have such refinement; I don't feel comfortable. In my head there's only fear that I will fail." [U1.1]

"[…] be aware of the tone of voice and let me hear it during the workshop." [T2]

"Often we have to act against our habits and convenience, and in this case, they break through their habits and weaknesses and do something they haven't done." [T3]

"It's enough to make a small suggestion, show the way, work something out." [T3].

Analysing the master-pupil relationship, a great commitment on the part of the coaches can be noticed – as well as a great readiness to improve in the participants of the programme. The coaches supported the participants' efforts to achieve the set goal. The results of their work are the effect of the applied action strategy, which corresponds to individual stages of the model of selective optimisation with compensation (Baltes & Baltes, 1990). In this sense, one may speak of education during old age. The pedagogical area of the coaches' activity may contain guidelines for people working with older adults. In this sense, it is another important educational dimension of the programme – the so-called education for old age (Szarota, 2015).

Discussion and Summary

The most important findings of the research boil down to the recognition that it is possible to speak of an educational dimension of The Voice Senior program in each of the analysed areas – education *towards*, *through*, *during*, and *for* old age. The recognised categories fit into more than one of the indicated dimensions of gerontological education. The educational dimension of the programme is manifested especially in presenting old age as a developmental period of life in which one can realise oneself.

Learning about old age from the participants' biographies, analysing what they have to say, what they consider important in life and what goals they still set for themselves is equally valuable from the perspective of preparing for old age in early and middle adulthood. It cannot be ruled out that it can also encourage reflection on one's own life in late adulthood.

The attempt to break through the stereotypes of old age visible in the statements of the programme participants and their coaches, but also unintentional statements, especially on the part of the presenters, perpetuating stereotypes, may provoke reflection on the place of the older adults in modern societies. Or rather, according to the convention imposed by the creators of the programme, over the place of seniors in the world. The concept of a "senior", present more and more clearly in social life, and thus in the media, has become not only a polite form of addressing the older adults, but also a kind of trap – distancing social discourse from the recognition of the real problems and needs of the generation of people in retirement age, which thus promotes the unification of cultural patterns of old age and limits the "emancipatory potential" of the oldest generation. Referring the name of the programme not only to the vocal voice of the older adults, but to the voice of the oldest generation, one could expect that the participants of the programme would be bolder in claiming their place in the world, their right to self-determination, recognition for the diversity and multiplicity of possible ways of being in the world. The convention of the programme probably did not allow it. Thus, the question arises about the actual space for recognition of the diversity of experiencing old age, about the actual change in the approach to older adults and the available pool of patterns of experiencing an increasingly long and diverse life period, which is old age.

The idea of the programme seems to be to break the stereotype of passive and dependent old age and promote a vision of active old age, pursuing its passions. However, the programme is not free from gender stereotypes, roles assigned to older women. The entertainment nature of the programme excludes presenting life problems of older adults, such as illness, loneliness, disability, or raising topics naturally inscribed in the human life cycle, albeit difficult, such as death and passing. The programme grants older adults the right to love, pointing to the changing face of love in long-term relationships and the importance of close relationships for well-being in old age. However, the issue of the sexuality of older adults is rarely addressed. The fairly one-sided and simplified image of active old age presented in the programme may pose a threat to people who do not respond to the promoted model of active old age by their behaviour, thus excluding people who, due to their advanced age or progressing diseases, are not able to actively participate in social life.

Bearing in mind the phenomenon of the so-called double aging described by demographers, expressed in the growing number of people aged 80 and over, it can be stated that the old age patterns promoted in The Voice Senior are not a proposal for people in the so-called fourth age. The oldest participant in the program was 77 years old, but the vast majority were people up to 70 years old.

The globalisation of the media industry leads to the dissemination and perpetuation of similar cultural patterns of old age, which may open up new horizons of development in the period of late adulthood, as well as inhibit the emancipation potential of the oldest generation and perpetuate old age stereotypes, both negative and positive, thus limiting the pool of patterns available to subsequent generations. The Voice Senior programme mainly serves entertainment purposes. The educational function of the programme is expressed in promoting active retirement time, the possibility of fulfilling dreams and realising passions. Showing old age as a developmental period of life and emphasising the potential of older adults can contribute to breaking the stereotypes of old age. As a result of the conducted analysis, examples were indicated of breaking, but also perpetuating the stereotypes of old age; of double, contradictory messages, hidden meanings that arouse reflection on the real value of old age in the modern world. The programme presents unified patterns of old age, which is characteristic of popular culture. On the other hand, the visible concealment of negative, difficult aspects of old age and its presentation as a "second youth" may be an expression of taming old age, in accordance with the rules of the mass market, including the media aimed at meeting the needs of consumers (*cf.* Podsiadła, 2009).

Old age, as an increasingly long, diverse period of life, requires social discourse, leading to a redefinition of established beliefs about the role of the older adults in the modern world (Bugajska, 2015). Along with the growing awareness of the older generation in terms of demanding space for recognition, the demand for education adequate to the ongoing cultural changes is increasing, liberating the potential of older adults and preparing subsequent generations to construct new meanings exceeding the existing ways of "being in the world". Gerontological education enters the space of cultural meanings, the spiritual dimension of human being, creates a space for individual choices from the multitude of proposals of contemporary culture.

Shaping a positive image of old age and older adults in the media requires referring to the diverse experiences of older adults, their ways of understanding reality, their definitions of problems they share in and their ideas for experiencing the last phase. The educational function of the mass media should be expressed in creating space for social discourse around the place of the older adults in the world. Thus, it should not be limited to presenting a simplified, youthful image of the older adults.

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