

## An Example of Applying Fritz Schütze's Concept of Trajectory Processes in Biographical Research into Young Adults

### Przykład wykorzystania koncepcji przebiegu procesów trajektoryjnych Fritza Schützego w badaniach biograficznych młodych dorosłych

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Received: 01 Apr 2023;  
Revised: 28 May 2023;  
Accepted: 07 May 2023;  
Published: 30 Jun 2023

**Abstract:** This paper presents the possibility of applying Fritz Schütze's concept of the trajectory of suffering in empirical research. The first part of the article presents the methodological assumptions of the research focusing on the biographical research method and the narrative interview technique. The following section analyses a biographical transcript obtained from a narrative interview. The interview participant was a 23-year-old man who told his narrative according to the scheme of trajectory of suffering, defined as *an experience of losing control over one's external circumstances*.

**Keywords:** young adults, biographical research, narrative, trajectory of suffering

**Abstract:** W artykule zaprezentowano możliwości wykorzystania w badaniach empirycznych koncepcji przebiegu trajektorii cierpienia opracowanej przez Fritza Schützego. W pierwszej części tekstu opisano założenia metodologiczne badań, omawiając metodę badań biograficznych i technikę wywiadu narracyjnego. W dalszej kolejności analizie poddano zapis biografii uzyskanej w wyniku przeprowadzonego wywiadu narracyjnego. Uczestnikiem wywiadu był dwudziestotrzyletni mężczyzna, który swoją narrację skonstruował w planie trajektorii cierpienia, tj. *doświadczenia wymykającego się próbom kontrolowania zewnętrznych okoliczności*.

**Keywords:** młodzi dorośli, badania biograficzne, narracja, trajektoria cierpienia



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## INTRODUCTION

In existentialist and personalist theories the human being is viewed as a transcendent entity, destined to go beyond the existing limitations, to rise above difficulties and to overcome limitations, fears and existential crises. Difficult unforeseen events happening in one's life trigger a process of trajectory struggles against the new existential situation, which in turn entails being forced to respond to adverse life experiences. What seems particularly inspiring and valuable from a research perspective is the insight into the trajectory process, the biographical resources individuals make use of and the ways such individuals develop to understand themselves, the world and other people. This approach is mainly concerned with learning about the subjects' life strategies, understanding their behaviour, aspirations, fears and aspirations.

### 1. METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The planned research project aims at finding out and describing the meanings that young adults give to the existential conflicts they experience as a result of their confrontation with objective existential facts: freedom, finitude, fate and their own loneliness. Developing an in-depth and multilayered understanding of human experiences required a qualitative methodological approach geared towards analysing the senses and meanings symbolised in language, narrative and in real rather than merely proclaimed or postulated beliefs and choices (Straś-Romanowska 2010, 103).

The research used the biographical research method. Therefore, the interest of this research focuses on autobiography, a story of one's life, wherein apart from its factual dimension a particular importance is given to its interpretative aspect (cf. Ostaszewska 2018, 81). The latter dimension can be represented thanks to one's reflecting on their lives and reflectively relating to one's past through the lens of the present and future. The key here is to interpret past events from today's point of view, to seek explanations and to combine past and present perspectives (Rokuszevska-Pawełek 2006, 18-19). In this sense, biography is not a reflection of the past but rather a past-related reflection, an expression of retrospective meaning-making and the shaping of one's experiences (Lalak 2010, 252-254; Karkowska 2018, 111).

It has been assumed that the process of interpreting reality, understanding oneself and also telling about one's life experiences is not chaotic and unpredictable but narrative, i.e. it has a narrative structure, taking the form of a story. Moreover, the order of one's life account corresponds considerably with the structure of events one goes through and experiences (Kaźmierska and Waniek 2020, 15; Rokuszevska-Pawełek 2006). In other words, the stages of a biography are reproduced by a narrative in a similar order to the one according to which the biographical experience unfolds. The fundamental organizing principles of life history include biographical process structures that form the basis of the

biographical process (Schütze 2016; Kaźmierska and Waniek 2020, 105). Analysing them leads to revealing the attitude that the narrator takes towards the events he narrates. Process structures, in this view, represent basic forms of biographical experience and attitudes towards one's own life, illustrating the importance of internal motives for action, the influence of external circumstances and social expectations, and stages of life characterised by intentional order or chaos.

### 1.1. Narrative interview

The narrative interview has been chosen from amongst the research techniques used in biographical research. Typically, a researcher interferes in the course of the interview to a very little degree which, consequently, lets the subject dominate the topic started by the researcher. The subject's feedback takes the form of a story about his or her personal experiences. I have defined a narrative interview broadly as a conversation during which an interviewee tells the story of his or her life adopting a perspective of a question the researcher is interested in (cf. Rubacha 2008, 136). This technique involves a specific procedure for collecting material which results in obtaining a spontaneous narrative about life, which is then analysed according to the theoretical and methodological assumptions adopted. At the same time, the resulting narrative is not an aggregated sum of the elicited answers, but one's own, spontaneous life story without being interrupted by the researcher (Kaźmierska 2004, 74).

What distinguishes the narrative interview from other types of interviews conducted in the qualitative research paradigm is primarily its facility to capture the processual nature of events, to establish the pattern of individual biographical experiences, to reconstruct process structures, temporal order and the sequence of events characteristic of particular stages in a person's biography.

The recorded narrative interviews have been analysed with reference to the basic methodological directives proposed by Schütze (1983, 2016, 2012) and characterised by Kaźmierska and Waniek (2020). In one aspect, the analysis reconstructed the narrator's life story and, in the other, it retrieved the meanings he ascribes to his biographical experiences. The multi-level and multi-stage analysis has covered the following levels:

- 1) A formal analysis of the content, which involved dividing the story into sequences, establishing narrative, descriptive and argumentative communication patterns, and distinguishing so-called narrative constraints (laws) aimed at providing a biography with a certain form (to condense, to providing details and to close the textual form).

- 2) A structural description aimed at searching for single situations and turning points in the biography of the subjects and establishing the role of biographical advisors with a significant impact on subjects' lives. The scope of the structural analysis of the content also included 'process structures', preambles, codes (summaries that referred to the entire experiences), broken codes (which indicated

an inability to conclude one's story, summarise one's experiences and evaluate one's life) and obscurations (which means leaving out certain biographical experiences during narration resulting in gaps in the presentation of the life account).

3) An analytical abstraction aiming at a holistic view of the history taking into account the process structures identified in it. The purpose of the analysis at this level has primarily been to answer questions about: (1) what stands out in the biography; (2) what is the relationship between the narrator's presented beliefs and the sequence of actual structural processes; and (4) what are the relationships between the individual processes and the social phenomena relevant to this case? (Schütze 2012, 258-259). The overall reconstruction of the general biography organisation has been to reflect the form of a biographical profile (portrait).

The narrative interview was conducted in October 2022. The location and time of the interview were agreed with the subject over a telephone call. The interview lasted two hours. It commenced with presenting the following instruction: "I would like to ask you to tell me about your life with particular emphasis on the conflicts you have experienced with yourself and with other people. Please, start telling your life story from the very beginning, that is, a period you remember from your childhood. What and how you tell your story is solely up to you. I am not going to interrupt you and ask you any questions during your account. Only when you decide you want to finish telling the story of your life will I ask you questions to make sure I've understood everything, or perhaps to elaborate on some of problems and questions you will might have raised."

After the subject had finished telling his life story, he was asked to answer questions, which aimed at clarifying and complementing some of the themes and finding out about the man's values, hidden desires, needs and fears.

## 1.2. Process structures

The most important stage of the research process carried out was to isolate and characterise process structures, illustrating the different ways in which the subject had captured and interpreted his past. Following Schütze's principles (2012, 2016), the following process structures were taken into account during the analysis: biographical patterns of action, institutional patterns, transformations and trajectories. In the first case, the narrator depicts his life taking the perspective of intentional actions he undertook, the fulfilment of his plans and the efforts he put into shaping his destiny and constructing his identity (Schütze 2016, 455). In the case of institutional patterns of expectations, the narrator describes his life story primarily laying stress on the fact of following the activity scenarios prepared for him. (Schütze 2012, 180). Regarding the biographical transformation, the author describes his life mainly through a creative transformation of biographical identity, exposing an unexpected, positive change in his life, entailing the discovery of new possibilities for development and a change in his previous view of the world (Schütze 2016, 455).

The fourth perspective involves presenting one's life in terms of a trajectory, i.e. a pattern of different contingencies and constellations one is being caught up in, resulting in a sense of loss of control over life and trust in the world. The phenomenon of trajectory refers to processes of prolonged suffering that leads to a deepening sense of growing disarray, alienation from oneself and others, being overwhelmed and controlled by outer forces. As Schütze argues, a so-called 'trajectory potential' has a great role here, as it "generally has a component of biographical dispositions to be wounded and a component of a set of key contradictions within a current life situation" (Schütze 2012a, 428). The course of the suffering trajectory process usually follows the structure below:

- 1) Gradual accumulation of principal trajectory conditions;
- 2) Sudden crossing of the trajectory potential limit;
- 3) Making efforts to develop a shaky balance when one copes with everyday life;
- 4) Destabilising the unstable balance of coping with life;
- 5) Breakdown in the organisation of daily life and self-orientation;
- 6) Making efforts to theoretically rework the breakdown of the orientation system and trajectory;
- 7) Making practical attempts to work on the trajectory and gain control over it.

## 2. THE COURSE OF TRAJECTORY PROCESSES

The biography analysed here is an example of the story of a person affected by the trajectory of suffering associated with experiencing overwhelming random events. The machinery of his trajectory of suffering is triggered by a specific set of adverse external factors, which is the experience of peer violence. What is distinctive about the narrative in question is the characteristic structure of experience which takes the form of a descending lifeline curve.

In the preamble, which is Adam's first, spontaneous attempt to capture his life story in its entirety, he signals the most important phases of its progression, as he also formulates the basic features of his biography. He begins his story by describing a complicated childhood, filled with pain and suffering, marked by illness, numerous hospital stays, operations and lengthy rehabilitation. Importantly, narrator does not make his illness the main thread of the story, but presents it solely as a factor causing further difficulties and perturbations in his life. The starting point for constructing his biography, violence and various related forms of peer harassment and bullying are the underlying problem. Painful childhood experiences have left deep and difficult to heal wounds in the narrator, becoming an important aspect of his self-image.

"I'd gained weight; this later turned out to be the cause of my later being scapegoated, ridiculed and a sort of physically and emotionally harassed. To be honest, I didn't have a lean build. Mine was more of a barrel rather than a stick. Mess started at my primary school. They would trip me, they would turn my backpack inside out, I was called names, showered abuse on, ridiculed, and occasionally

provoked to get into a fight. Well, I have always been used as a punchbag, you could say, because I would never fight back, I would rather use the pen more than the sword. Well, that did affect me greatly, as they would take advantage of it, so it was already a part of my very deep subconscious. It has left a scar in me that is in there to this day and that has contributed to my low self-esteem.”

The quoted passage ends with a coda, namely, a brief assessment of the past life course and its impact on the current existential situation and self-understanding (“It has left a scar in me that is in there to this day and that has contributed to my low self-esteem.”) At the same time, the narrator’s attempt to explain and justify his current position seems significant, revealing the general nature of the narrator’s personality, his reticence, sensitivity and gentleness (“I would rather use the pen more than the sword.”)

Some signs of a threatening trajectory of suffering can easily be noticed in the presented narrative. Trajectory potential starts to be accumulated as early as his childhood. Experiencing violence from peers, as he lacks support and understanding from teachers and parents, throws the narrator into a state of deep tension, gradually inducing low self-esteem, the feeling of being inferior, useless and worthless (“Well, like I have already mentioned, low self-esteem, low self-assessment, no self-confidence, I was underestimating my own worth. That used to last until high school. Only, it was growing gradually, step by step.”)

Accumulation of negative experiences and a growing state of apathy and sense of meaninglessness result in crossing the boundary between intentional action and passive response. Adam is finding it increasingly difficult to rise above his mounting problems, meet the high expectations of his family and take control of his own life. Despite his deepening sense of disintegration, he still tries to maintain a shaky balance of coping with his life, seeking new solutions and strategies for action. Consequently, he tries to become indifferent to human injustice and alleviate the hardship of existence by suppressing grief, holding back anger and closing himself within the boundaries of his own ‘self’. He adopts an attitude of passivity and limits contact with the social world in an attempt to maintain a state of homeostasis, minimise suffering and reduce the risk of making a mistake (“I wouldn’t go out to play with my friends, I wouldn’t play football, I wasn’t able to do these things”). Using a well-developed mechanism to modulate his emotions, he tries to function fairly properly in the group, as he confines his true ‘self’: “If I hadn’t held back my emotions, it could have ended up differently, I could have experienced a sort of swing of emotions and it could have ended badly, maybe not for me, but, well, for other people. They might have found me strange because now I’m happy and then I’m sad, a strange person. So, I definitely used to block that expression of emotion among people.”

In his interactions with people, he hides behind a mask of normative behaviour, hiding his ‘true face’. Because he is constantly afraid of failure and the associated heightened state of internal tension, he does everything he can to avoid having to take risks and exercise his freedom: “That’s how I’ve always been. When I take a risk, it takes so much stress that it will be enough for me for a very

long time. That's why I choose a conservative lifestyle, because I like keeping my stoic attitude, that calmness, that security, that safety valve." Interestingly enough, although the man is aware that human contact is a source of strong psychological discomfort for him, the prospect of long-term loneliness is not desirable either ("I will be left all alone and that is what I fear most").

Destabilising the unstable balance of coping with everyday life comes when the narrator realises that his adopted way of being does not solve the problem, but on the contrary, it makes it even worse. Adam observes that attempts to safeguard himself from suffering and protect himself from the volatility of fate lead his existence astray, and they become an expression of a profound crisis of his existence. The narrator tries to relieve the built-up tension in solitude, crying and through the experience of emotional catharsis: "Most often it manifests itself to me by yelling and crying into my pillow, for example."

When the man forms a close, intimate relationship with a woman, it becomes a turning point in his biography. Certain markers of biographical transformation can be found in the description of this passage of his life like surprise and the discovery of new possibilities: "We had a lot things deeply in common and we got along really very well, without words and you could tell she was cast in the same mould, literally a mirror image of me. We were the perfect match, like a hand and a glove. You could say I was happiest at that time in my life. My life was getting better. My self-esteem was on a rise. I believed in myself more which means that all was going to pan out well."

When he breaks up with his life partner, his organisation of daily life and self-orientation breaks down. The experience of failure in interpersonal relationships is accompanied by a massive accumulation of other problems, resulting in a complete loss of the ability to do anything, a loss of hope to improve his well-being and find meaning in his existence. Adam begins to experience a state of pervasive doubt, suspicion and distrust of the world and his close ones. The culmination of upsetting events results in a sense of existential 'homelessness', the drama of losing his identity and even the desperate thought of taking his life:

"First of all, I had this thought, 'the world would be a better place without me', yes that was what I most often thought that everyone would be better off without me there. The other thing I thought about was that I would have freed myself from everyone else and I would have finally had a break from it all. I just came to the realisation that since nobody liked me anyway, as they bullied me, as I was a laughingstock and so on, they'd have been better off if I wasn't there." The thought of committing suicide goes hand in hand with the need to free himself from the hardships of everyday life, to rid himself of the burden of life and to get out of the existential trap of living.

In attempting to theoretically work through the breakdown of his orientation system and trajectory, Adam searches for possible reasons for his suffering, attempting to redefine himself. Because he feels completely incapacitated by fate, betrayed, rejected and vulnerable, he willingly positions himself in the role of



victim, adopting a role of a voluntarily suffering person: “I can’t explain it, can’t comprehend it, but I help others, I give them great advice, I can support them, but nobody has given me any idea. I don’t know, I take it as a sort of purpose in life God gave me that ‘you will be a martyr for yourself, and help others.’ This is how I explain it to myself. I don’t know why I can’t help myself but I can help others.”

### 2.1. Role of a voluntarily suffering person

As he fosters the role of a martyr within himself, the man is bitter about his unrequited feelings, laments his fate, complains about the law of necessity, the injustice and hostility of the world, surrendering passively to his destiny (“I as a victim”). In doing so, he strongly focuses on the wrongs he has suffered, his unfulfilled needs and desires, he keeps taking a tragic view and he constantly ponders on his past. This attitude of voluntary suffering is accompanied by his having a sense of entitlement and demanding more from life: “I wish a person would arrive who would help me get up from my knees after all that has happened. I am afraid that the longer I carry on, the worse it will get, but maybe at some point, in this dense forest, there will be a clearing where there will be a forest nymph who will break the spell for me.” The man waits for his grievances to be heard and his expectations to be met, relieving himself of the responsibility of working on his own biography. He lives in an atmosphere of resentment towards the world, moral stagnation, expecting initiative on the part of fate and those around him.

The role of the victim he enacts is well reflected by the linguistic forms used in the text. It is dominated by passive voice expressions, impersonal predicates, negative forms, reflexive verbs indicating a lack of possibility, and third-person expressions illustrating actions taken towards the subject: “I was ridiculed”, “he targeted me”, “I was judged”, “it was hard for me”, “I didn’t have a lean build”, “he took advantage of that”, “I didn’t go out”, “I didn’t play”, “I couldn’t”, “she told me”, “it hurt me a lot”, “I was disliked there”, “I was left in the lurch”, “I don’t think of myself in a positive way”, “I was tripped”, “my backpack was turned inside out”, “I was called names, showered abuse on, ridiculed”, “they tried to provoke me”, “I was always a punchbag”, “they took advantage”, “I had no strength”, “it didn’t work”, “I cannot comprehend”, “I can’t understand”, “he threw me about”, “I fell”, “I couldn’t”, “she told me to call”, “I didn’t see the point”, “I had no sporting skills”, “I had no evidence”, “I couldn’t”, “I’m a pessimist”, “I was a perfect victim”. The role of a victim, as can be seen from the expressions quoted, is apparent first of all in the depreciation and belittling his own worth, low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence.

### 2.2. Subject’s attempts to justify his helplessness

Adam justifies his own helplessness quoting his problematic character, bad environmental role models, his upbringing and the experience of harm from his peers. He places the responsibility for the tragedy of his own existence on the



social environment, seeing it as the main factor restraining his movements and paralysing his creative activity. In an attempt to shake off the burden of freedom, he seeks various excuses, calling himself: a romantic, sensitive person, scapegoat, martyr and introvert ("I suspect that not only do I suffer from depression, but I'm also an HSP, a highly sensitive person"). He uses his character traits and innate qualities as a straightforward basis for his reasons for not taking action. Filled with resentment, regret and distrust of people, he feels insecure, weak and threatened, fearful of being hurt by those around him. He fears that he will be hurt again, unfairly judged and unfoundedly accused: "A bad reputation sticks a person. For example, someone spreads a rumour and people start to turn away from me. This is quite likely, because people are different, they are two-faced, they are insincere, they want to cause trouble to someone."

The man makes no attempt to practically work on the trajectory and gain control over it. He is unable to free himself from its destructive bonds, shed his pathological anxiety and regain his sense of agency. Conversely, he develops various strategies that fail to work dealing with the problem, which clearly block the process of transformation in the identity area. The trajectory mechanism thus begins to resemble a negative feedback loop, taking the form of a trap. The lack of hope to free himself from the trap of the trajectory and insufficient awareness of his own freedom result in the transformation of the initial suffering into other problem areas. According to the theory of Fritz Schütze (2012a, 450-451), three types of transformation can be distinguished here: 1) Quasi-metaphysical: The repeated experience of failure and the constant breakdown of expectation patterns result in a disintegration of trust in the world order and a breakdown of trust in its fairness; 2) Interactional level of trajectory distortion: The repeated experience of suffering in interpersonal relationships leads to feelings of insecurity in dealing with others and paralysis of interpersonal skills; 3) Identity transformations: The man loses his sense of 'self' and previously accumulated biographical resources prove ineffective and inadequate for his current existential situation.

### 2.3. Subject's problems with defining his own identity

In this case, a prolonged experience of contempt, violence and lack of recognition becomes the main factor blocking the attainment of an authentic and coherent identity. The problem also stems from a deep sense of discrepancy between the need to follow his conscience and fulfil his vocation and the desire to fulfil a commonly accepted social role. In consequence, the subject adopts a negative identity, which characteristically accepts negative messages regarding the images of himself and the world. The identity is marked by low levels of cohesion, instability and vulnerability to external influences. Adam has a sense of not being good, capable and competent enough to be able to spin and implement his own biographical action plans. Adopting a negative identity propels a vicious cycle of failure, blocking the choice of new action strategies and limiting the possibility of

transforming the state of anxiety into constructive action and thus neutralising the potential for trajectory. The man does not accept himself, his character traits and his appearance, wanting to become someone else (“looking in the mirror, I would change everything”). Clinging to some idealised vision of himself, unable to rid himself of himself, he chooses, in Søren Kierkegaard’s terms (1982), ‘sickness unto death’, plunging into despair. A lack of self-acceptance is accompanied by a lack of self-confidence, a refusal to recognise his own freedom and to take control of his own life: “I look in the mirror and declare ‘I don’t want to look in the mirror because it makes me sick. I’m looking at a stranger. I don’t believe in my worth and my abilities.’” The fear of freedom and, at the same time, the resistance to his own necessity become the cause of experiencing an extremely strong inner conflict. The more Adam pushes away the realisation of his own freedom and, at the same time, the more strenuously he struggles against his external and psycho-physical necessity, the greater his suffering grows.

Because the narrator gives up working on his own biography and working on his destructive trajectory potential, hence he condemns himself to function in a state of limbo and existential homelessness: “I do everything on one breath and my brain has kind of switched off by now. And so it has been until now.” By choosing an inauthentic mode of existence, he perpetuates the tendency to constantly ‘police himself’, control emotions and ‘brace’ his own behaviour. Lack of determination and refraining from creative activity go hand in hand with the fear of uncertainty and the loss of a sense of relative security.

The man’s self-portrait is marked by his attitude to his own past. Recollecting only his negative images and memories and recording his past in a rigid memory framework effectively block access to alternative ways of perceiving reality, resulting in the adoption of a fatalistic approach to life, which clearly reduces its dynamics. The man’s behaviour resembles a vicious circle. Closing himself in a circle of negative experiences increases feelings of alienation and exacerbates the state of low self-esteem. When he constantly recreates painful past events in his mind, he perpetuates a schematic way of thinking. Adam interprets his life solely as a failure. He explains each of his setbacks, such as for example his break-up with his life partner, to validate his low self-esteem. By focusing exclusively on his negative states of mind, he constructs a narrative in which he becomes a tragic character.

Although the life story presented above illustrates a trajectory of suffering, some fragments also show features inherent in institutional patterns of expectation. The latter ones include Adam’s attempts to meet social demands, including the expectations of peer groups, even though they are incomprehensible and problematic for him. This condition results in role diffusion. At its root lies the conflict between social expectations and the impossibility of adhering to them. Being himself is in contrast with playing a role according to social expectations, norms and rules. Adam finds it very difficult to adapt to his role of a man and to accept the characteristics of that role. His preferred qualities of affection, subtlety and obedience are at odds with the patterns of manly behaviour. In order to adapt

to society, the narrator hides his tenderness, tears and emotions, as he does not allow himself to be moved and show weakness. He therefore plays the role of being manly, strong and decisive, even though this behaviour seems alien to him and incompatible with his personality structure:

“I can't cry, as this would be rather unacceptable according to the stereotypes of today's society. A guy is supposed to be manly, he is supposed to be tough, he is supposed to be made of steel, have a lumberjack beard, a lumberjack haircut, have a lumberjack shirt and hunt for food and dinner on his own. Well, that's not me. I am the total opposite of that. I am a female version of a man. I write poetry, I can distinguish colours well, I don't have a voice as deep as a well, so it seems to me that the worst thing is that I can be delicate and emotional enough for some to consider it a flaw in a man. I am afraid that I will be perceived by society as, quote, a faggot rather than a man.”

The problems of defining his own identity is expressed in the many contradictions in his perception of himself and the world. On the one hand, the man declares indifference and resilience to the harm he has suffered, while on the other, he strongly experiences his own isolation and loneliness. Moreover, he considers himself to be an extremely emotional, compassionate and sensitive person (he writes poems, reads poetry) and at the same time declares a rational approach to the world, pointing to the relevance of rational arguments, scientific findings and cause-and effect relationships (“I would rather stick to this material world. I understand my love not in terms of spirituality, but I take it more in terms of biology and hormones that stimulate the mind”). Other contradictions revealed in the narrative include happiness contrasted with the unfavourable nature of fate, the desire for solitude contrasted with sharing life with another person and the real world contrasted with the utopian one.

Adam lives in two worlds: an idealised world, imbued with a longing for harmony, unity and happiness, and a world of real everyday life, marked by numerous contradictions. He dreams of a world without violence, problems, brutality, filled with mutual respect, help and love. Failure to acknowledge basic existential facts, including accepting the duality of his own existence, makes the man feel unhappy in the real world. He reacts to each of his failures and inability to realise his plan with a strong sense of hurt and disappointment, losing motivation to overcome subsequent difficulties in life. Moreover, his longing for an idealised future becomes synonymous with a yearning to be cared for, loved, interested in the environment and given the ability to think positively:

“I'd like to be happy, which means waking up and immediately smiling instead of saying 'Jesus, fucking hell' like in 'Day of the Wacko'. I wish I didn't wake up just like that, and that would already make me happy. I just need a sense of love, I need such – to put it nicely – protection, in inverted commas, security. I would like another person to hug me so tenderly and I would feel safe simply.”

The adoption of a (pseudo) identity and the objectification of his self are clearly accompanied by his deficit of appropriate educational influences. Adam is

on his life path where he does not meet people who are personal role models for him to follow. He accuses his school teachers of indifference, a dismissive attitude towards their students, lack of commitment and sensitivity to the problems and concerns of young people. He points out their inappropriate behaviour, lack of support and recognition: “They were mute, as if no-one lifted a finger, none of them took any interest, there was no initiative at all (...) Some teachers said, for example, I was good for nothing or said, ‘Good god, how are you going to pass this’ or something like that, and so, it all accumulated in me, bit by bit. This kind of things has built up my pessimism”. He memorises and stores unpleasant words said to him, depriving him of his dignity, discriminating, objectifying and relegating him to insignificance. What is more, he believes that his time at school contributed to his attitude of resignation and moral indifference, becoming a source of spiritual ‘numbness’ (“I have learnt to actually switch off a bit, to become sort of numb”).

The analysis of the narrative presented makes it possible to reconstruct the profile of a person that is completely helpless when facing the world, lost, unable to give his life a deeper meaning. The experiences prior to the suffering trajectory being triggered and the subject adopting the role of victim include rejection by the environment, facing peer violence and failures to establish a relationship with the world. They all result in his difficulties in defining his own identity and – which is related – in reflectively and responsibly confronting the conflicts he experiences.

## CONCLUSION

The use of Fritz Schütze’s concept of the trajectory of suffering in the study of young adults’ life experiences enables to capture the wide range of senses and meanings they give to their problems, crises and difficulties in life. At the same time, the interpretation of biographies based on the presented concept provides an opportunity to reconstruct the process of forming attitudes towards unfavourable life circumstances. The narrative analysed above shows how life’s difficulties and negative social arrangements contribute to the adoption of an attitude of escape into suffering. Since the man telling the biography is unable to relate to his life experiences in terms of values and the meaning of existence, he chooses not to act and closes himself off, adopting the role of victim and a voluntarily suffering person. He does not see his fate as a challenge, but only as a destiny, refraining from getting involved in actual projects. By succumbing to the logic of misfortune, he unconsciously plunges into a spiral of failure and suffering, treating random circumstances as a source of despair, a reason for total loneliness and anguish. The man uses up all his vitality to constantly analyse his misfortunes and fight against his inevitable fate, falling into the state of existential ‘homelessness’.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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