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## **The Family in the Scientific Achievements of Professor Helena Radlińska. References to the Sources of Polish Social Pedagogy**

### **Abstract**

The aim of this article is to present the issues of the family in relation to the scientific achievements of Prof. Helena Radlińska. In the course of the research, the descriptive research method was used. This was accompanied by a cross-sectional analysis of the documents. The subject of the conducted research were family issues, considered from the point of view of social pedagogy. The subject of the research was the family and people creating the family life environment. The summary of the analysis are the directions of further research, the effects of which will facilitate the creation of theoretical foundations for models of assistance, care, support and family development.

### **Keywords**

Helena Radlińska, social pedagogy, family, parenthood, family studies

## 1. Introduction

The family, along with its everyday life matters, is a part of the scientific interest of Polish social pedagogy. Issues related to the family, its existence, functioning, goals, functions, tasks, norms, values, internal relations and ties or relationships with the wider world, were within the field of theoretical, research and practical activity of Prof. Helena Radlińska and her associates (including students and PhD students). It can be unequivocally stated that the family has been the subject of cognition and scientific consideration of social pedagogy from the early days of this science in Poland. This was emphasized by H. Radlińska herself in her first socio-pedagogical speech, which marks the disciplinary beginning of Polish social pedagogy. Participating in the discourse during the session of the Cracow Circle of the Association of Higher School Teachers (April 25, 1908), she delivered a paper entitled “On the issues of social pedagogy.”<sup>1</sup> In the course of the argument, she presented the issues of the Polish national school, with which she connected, among other things, the issues of parenthood and the family life environment of children—students.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent works by this author confirm the presence of the family in the field of socio-pedagogical interest.<sup>3</sup>

Undertaking an analysis of the scientific work of Prof. H. Radlińska, parts of which she devoted to family issues, it is necessary to emphasize that the family as a subject and the issues of family life as an object of interest, were included in all sections of social pedagogy. These sections (departments) defined the following areas of theoretical, research, teaching (didactic) and practical activity: the field of theory of social service, the field of adult education, the field of historical research on social and educational activity.<sup>4</sup> Issues of social service theory referred, among others, to issues related to family assistance, maternity protection, out-of-school educational and care support, social security (including housing) or equalizing opportunities for children from families experiencing

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<sup>1</sup> H. Radlińska, *Z zagadnień pedagogiki społecznej*, „Muzeum”, II, 2 (1908), pp. 52–63.

<sup>2</sup> H. Radlińska, *Z zagadnień pedagogiki społecznej*, pp. 61–62.

<sup>3</sup> H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*, Wrocław 1961, Ossolineum; H. Radlińska, *Zagadnienia bibliotekarstwa i czytelnictwa*, Wrocław 1961, Ossolineum; H. Radlińska, *Z dziejów pracy społecznej i oświatowej*, Wrocław 1964, Ossolineum; H. Radlińska, *Oświata i kultura wsi polskiej. Wybór pism*, Warszawa 1979, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza.

<sup>4</sup> H. Radlińska, *Egzamin z pedagogiki społecznej*, in: H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*, Wrocław 1961, Ossolineum, pp. 361–362.

poverty, orphanhood, etc.<sup>5</sup> The issues of adult education included, among others, the formation of parental competence, raising awareness of the responsibility of adult family members (parents, grandparents) for the development of children and youth (adolescents), as well as the inclusive function of the school towards students' parents.<sup>6</sup> Historical issues related to education and social service were conducive to the analysis of past social processes (including individual human biographies), the knowledge and understanding of which made it easier to find directions for action in the present and future. In particular, it was about searching for factors of change that would serve the theory and practice of supporting human development, including family development.<sup>7</sup>

In each section (of the departments) of social pedagogy, Prof. H. Radlińska together with her associates (scientists and practitioners), placed family issues in various social, cultural, historical, economic, etc. references. The multidimensionality of family life implied a plural approach to matters considered in the course of analyses, research or discourse conducted during conferences, conventions and other forms of dialogue combining the theoretical perspective with the practice of daily family service.<sup>8</sup> Helena Radlińska took an active part in organizational and substantive works devoted to the exchange of thoughts, ideas, professional experiences and the presentation of research results covering various spheres of human life, including family life. They served to explore selected fragments of reality and to generate effective solutions for the practice of cultural, educational or social service (including family service).<sup>9</sup>

Longitudinal and transverse (cross-sectional) analysis of the scientific achievements of Prof. H. Radlińska allow us to state unequivocally that the family was, for this scholar, one of the most important subject groups included

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<sup>5</sup> H. Radlińska, *Egzamin z pedagogiki społecznej*, pp. 379–381.

<sup>6</sup> H. Radlińska, *Podstawy planowania opieki nad dziećmi i pomocy młodzieży*, in: H. Radlińska, *Pedagogika społeczna*, Wrocław 1961, Ossolineum, pp. 345–346; H. Radlińska, *Stosunek wychowawcy do środowiska społecznego*, Warszawa 1935, Nasza Księgarnia SP. AKC, p. 60; H. Radlińska, *Szkoła w walce z ujemnymi skutkami wojny w dziedzinie moralności* (dokończenie), „Praca Szkolna” 9–10 (1946–47), pp. 372–373.

<sup>7</sup> H. Radlińska, *Egzamin z pedagogiki społecznej*, pp. 390–394.

<sup>8</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, „Polska Oświata Pozaszkolna” 6 (1932), pp. 445–449; H. Radlińska, *Stosunek wychowawcy do środowiska społecznego*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>9</sup> H. Radlińska, *Zadania pracy kulturalnej*, „Kultura Polski” 1 (1917), pp. 1–5; H. Radlińska, *Zagadnienia oświaty pozaszkolnej*, „Oświata Pozaszkolna” 2 (1923), pp. 113–121; H. Radlińska, *Istota i zakres służby społecznej*, Warszawa 1928, Dział Wydawnictw Związku Spółzyców R.P.

in the field of socio-pedagogical interest. It is worth adding that it was a comprehensive interest, starting from the period of preparing young people for family roles (parental, marital, custodial, caring, etc.), to adult education and compensation. Education was focused on raising family awareness (consciousness), releasing responsibility for upbringing and supporting children's development, as well as understanding the differences in experiences, goals, aspirations and perspectives of everyday life of individual age generations living in one historical generation.<sup>10</sup> Compensatory activity served to minimize the negative effects of deficits occurring in the family. Holism and the integrity of grasping the issues of family life determined the coherence of the socio-pedagogical approach to the family, as presented by Helena Radlińska.

## 2. Family: scientific cognition for family service

Polish social pedagogy was, and remains, a practical science. It was emphasized by Prof. H. Radlińska on the occasion of the characteristics of this science.<sup>11</sup> Theoretical, research or teaching (didactic) activity in this area is focused upon building methodical models for successful educational, cultural and social practice, including family work. As emphasized many times by H. Radlińska, the family is the most important social unit (cell). The family plays a key role in collective life, because “the natural and moral forces unite in the family.”<sup>12</sup> This statement referred to the conclusions of the Second International Conference of Social Service, devoted to family issues, in relation to social and economic matters. It was held in Frankfurt am Main (Germany) on July 11–14, 1932.<sup>13</sup> Radlińska participated in the deliberations of the sixth committee of the conference, the leading theme of which were the issues of education and its impact on family life.

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<sup>10</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, pp. 447–448.

<sup>11</sup> H. Radlińska, *Egzamin z pedagogiki społecznej*, pp. 360–361.

<sup>12</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, p. 446.

<sup>13</sup> Polski Komitet Drugiej Międzynarodowej Konferencji Pracy Społecznej, *Sprawozdanie z Drugiej Międzynarodowej Konferencji Służby Społecznej*, Warszawa 1933, Drukarnia Państwowa, p. 50, <http://bc.gbpizs.gov.pl/dlibra/publication/699/edition/675?language=pl> Sprawozdanie z Drugiej Międzynarodowej Konferencji Służby Społecznej we Frankfurcie nad Menem 1932 r. — Główna Biblioteka Pracy i Zabezpieczenia Społecznego<br /> ul. Zabraniecka 8L (I piętro)<br /> 03-872 Warszawa<br /> (gbpizs.gov.pl) (25.08.2023).

The conference sessions were attended by doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers, counselors, caregivers, educators and scientists (researchers) in a total of 1,200 participants representing 35 countries in Europe, America and Australia.<sup>14</sup> The aim of the conference was to outline the current facts of the family and to look for ways to improve and develop in the future.<sup>15</sup> In the delivered paper, entitled "Issues of education in the service of family culture"<sup>16</sup>, Prof. H. Radlińska emphasized the need to re-evaluate the inherited values, which in contemporary times (1932) have lost their former meaning. It was related to the changes in living conditions in which children and youth found themselves in the third decade of the 20th century. At the same time, she emphasized the importance of active participation of children and youth in social life. In the light of both law and social policy, the youngest citizens of the world have gained the ability to engage forces in social processes, which, according to the speaker, should take place with the participation of all fully-fledged subjects.<sup>17</sup> In order to implement the legal status in everyday life, adult education addressed to parents and grandparents is necessary. In particular, it is about developing a culture of family life, in order that adults would understand family roles and be able to support children in their development. At the same time, it is important to raise awareness, both legal and substantive, in the field of natural generational differences occurring in family life environments.

The Frankfurt conference was entirely devoted to family issues and family service. Helena Radlińska's participation was not limited to one section only. She was the secretary of the Polish Committee of the Second International Conference on Social Work and participated in the preparatory work for this event. Thanks to this, she had a full picture of the conclusions emerging from the dialogue undertaken. In a lecture given on the Polish Radio on October 25, 1932, she expressed this by summing up her speech with postulates arising from the field of theory for the practice of family service: "To maintain, heal, and develop the institution of the family—proclaimed the closing of the Conference, it is necessary not only a minimum of material resources, but also a certain

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<sup>14</sup> Polski Komitet Drugiej Międzynarodowej Konferencji Pracy Społecznej, *Sprawozdanie z Drugiej Międzynarodowej Konferencji Służby Społecznej*, p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, p. 447.

<sup>16</sup> H. Radlińska, *L'Education populaire au service de la culture familiale*, „Le Service Social” 1–2 (1933), pp. 1–5.

<sup>17</sup> H. Radlińska, *L'Education populaire au service de la culture familiale*, pp. 2–3.

amount of cultural goods. Lowering the standard of cultural life, reducing the productivity (efficiency) of public welfare institutions, threatening culture, also threatens the family.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Family: children and adolescents (youth)

Family issues, considered from the perspective of children and youth (adolescents), were taken up by Prof. Radlińska in relation to school, upbringing, care, assistance, hygiene (health) issues, as well as preparation for the performance of family roles (parenthood, marriage, nurturing and child caring, etc.). In the field of analysis and research covering the spheres of family life, there were problems in this regard: a) school records<sup>19</sup>, b) school and students' educational achievements<sup>20</sup>, c) popularizing access to education and educational support for children and youth<sup>21</sup>, and d) the implementation of young people for family responsibility through the formation of parental, child-rearing competencies, etc.<sup>22</sup>

In Helena Radlińska's scientific activity, the citizenship of children and youth (adolescents) was inextricably linked to the issues of family life. According to this researcher, the most important upbringing processes take place in the family. They are aimed at supporting the development of young family members and preparing them for adulthood. Undertaking educational, cultural, social, health (hygienic), preventive, etc. issues, H. Radlińska referred to the space of family life. Educational, cultural, social, health and other activists emanated from families. They constituted specific subject groups centered around educational, cultural and social etc. activities. Looking at family relationships in a longitudinal perspective, this author emphasized the need to understand the separateness (distinctiveness) of individual generations co-creating a family in its historical generation.<sup>23</sup> In particular, it regarded three active age classes

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<sup>18</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, p. 449.

<sup>19</sup> H. Radlińska, *Stosunek wychowawcy do środowiska społecznego*, pp. 95–114.

<sup>20</sup> H. Radlińska, *Podstawy walki z drugorocznością*, „Praca Szkolna” 4 (1932), pp. 97–103.

<sup>21</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, p. 447.

<sup>22</sup> H. Radlińska, *Stosunek wychowawcy do środowiska społecznego*, p. 60; H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, p. 446.

<sup>23</sup> H. Radlińska, *Stosunek wychowawcy do środowiska społecznego*, pp. 59–60.

creating the space of family life: seniors (grandparents), adults (fathers) and young people (grandchildren).<sup>24</sup> The key was to support the development of children and youth in an atmosphere of freedom and respect for the individuality of human existence. This is because (in the light of the research results cited by Prof. H. Radlińska), it conditioned the success of family coexistence, as well as the bond and trust of children to their fathers.<sup>25</sup>

The ideas of cooperation, mutual understanding of subjective separate-ness, as well as respect for the diversity of generations of age families (resulting from different life experiences and conditions in which they grew into family reality, and more broadly—social reality), were the key axes around which prof. H. Radlińska focused on research issues. This is confirmed by the scientific achievements of this scientist, in which she referred directly to the family and issues related to family life. It is worth emphasizing on this occasion that the longitudinal and transverse analysis (cross-analysis) of Helena Radlińska's texts validates the theorem about the interpenetration of family issues in relation to all important issues raised by her from the point of view of social pedagogy.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, subjective universalism can be indicated, which in the family is fully reflected in the research and theorizing activity in the socio-pedagogical field. Such an approach implies the optics of perceiving social and family matters in full symbiosis, which referred to children and youth as well as adults and seniors.

#### 4. Family: adult and seniors

The socio-pedagogical optics of viewing the family as a subject of scientific cognition and, at the same time, the practice of social support, covered all age groups co-creating the space of family life in Helena Radlińska's work. In addition to children and young people, adolescents, adults (parents, foster families, professional carers) and seniors (grandparents, great-grandparents) were perceived by this author as recipients of specific types of influence. It included

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<sup>24</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, p. 448.

<sup>25</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, pp. 447–448; H. Radlińska, *L'Education populaire au service de la culture familiale*, pp. 2–4.

<sup>26</sup> H. Radlińska, *Egzamin z pedagogiki społecznej*, pp. 361–362.

in particular: a) educational work (adult education)<sup>27</sup>, b) cultural work (provision and dissemination of cultural goods and cultural activation)<sup>28</sup>, and c) social work (compensation, care, assistance, counselling, social support).<sup>29</sup>

Adult education, included in the field of social pedagogy, was addressed, among others, to family members representing the generations of parents and grandparents. The family orientation of this activity included not only knowledge regarding the phenomena and processes conditioning family relationships or situations of families in everyday life. It also concerned the development of relevant (appropriate) skills related to performing family roles, as well as awareness of the responsibility of adults and seniors for the success of family coexistence with their offspring.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to adult education, an important issue taken up in the workshop of Prof. H. Radlińska's scientific work, were issues related to cultural and social work. The results of the research and theories generated on this basis were used to create methodical models for practice aimed, among others, at supporting family life environments. They covered two main fields of socio-pedagogical activity. On the one hand, it was about developing the potential of strength (human forces), through active participation and creativity focused around culture. This concerned in particular the sharing and dissemination of cultural goods and the awakening of the need to participate in the co-creation of works that conditioned the spiritual, aesthetic, ethical or moral sphere of human existence.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, it came down to compensating for the various deficits that exist in families. This type of activity was related to rescue, care, assistance, counseling and other forms of service to improve the financial situation of families. The necessity of these actions resulted from crisis situations and deprivations (shortages) caused by poverty, unemployment, loss of health,

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<sup>27</sup> H. Radlińska, *L'Education populaire au service de la culture familiale*, pp. 3–4; H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, p. 448.

<sup>28</sup> H. Radlińska, *Podstawy planowania opieki nad dziećmi i pomocy młodzieży*, p. 345; H. Radlińska, *L'Education populaire au service de la culture familiale*, pp. 1–4; H. Radlińska, *Stosunek wychowawcy do środowiska społecznego*, p.60; H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, pp. 447–448.

<sup>29</sup> H. Radlińska, *Stosunek wychowawcy do środowiska społecznego*, p. 60; H. Radlińska, *Egzamin z pedagogiki społecznej*, p. 380; H. Radlińska, *Podstawy planowania opieki nad dziećmi i pomocy młodzieży*, pp. 346–350; H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, pp. 447–449.

<sup>30</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, pp. 448–449.

<sup>31</sup> H. Radlińska, *L'Education populaire au service de la culture familiale*, pp. 2–5.



housing problems, etc.<sup>32</sup> Phenomena of this type implied the weakening of family ties, and in extreme situations led to family breakdown, single motherhood, and abortion, about which H. Radlińska wrote explicitly in 1946–1947: “It is necessary to prevent the termination of pregnancy, which ruins the physical and mental health of many women. In this area, it is important to influence fathers (who are often forced to take this desperate step).”<sup>33</sup>

Of utmost importance in this author’s consideration of family issues, was the question of the integrity of strengthening activities, which required references to the material and immaterial spheres in equal measure. She expressed this by pointing out that “The effectiveness of assistance almost always depends on the joint (combined) satisfaction of material and spiritual needs.”<sup>34</sup> It can be assumed with full conviction that in the 21st century, the recalled view of prof. Helena Radlińska is still valid—is still up to date.

## **5. Conclusions: inspirations from the past for the science and practice of family service in the 21st century**

The summary of the analytical approach to the scientific achievements of Helena Radlińska devoted to the family, opens the way to in-depth studies in the future. In the conclusion of the analysis, it is possible to indicate the directions of further cognitive activity inspired by the past. Adopting the assumption of consistency between theory and practice, it is worth emphasizing that the effects of exploring family life issues can serve to build theoretical foundations for methodical implementation proposals in the field of family service. In a dichotomous approach, it is associated with activities for the development of the family, as well as compensation for deficits resulting from various dysfunctions.

Contemporary reception of the scientific works of Prof. H. Radlińska makes it easier to outline further directions of scientific exploration that can be undertaken in the field of socio-pedagogical and family-centered research. The open catalogue of issues that are possible and worth taking up includes, first of all, methodological issues, which are fundamental for exploring detailed

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<sup>32</sup> H. Radlińska, *Podstawy planowania opieki nad dziećmi i pomocy młodzieży*, pp. 345–351; H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, pp. 446–447.

<sup>33</sup> H. Radlińska, *Podstawy planowania opieki nad dziećmi i pomocy młodzieży*, p. 349.

<sup>34</sup> H. Radlińska, *Rodzina i świat społeczny*, p. 446.

fragments of the reality of family life. The family as a subject of scientific interest may include the issues of family narrative, biographical research, cognition and understanding the sphere of family relations, ties, functions, goals, tasks, as well as ethical foundations that bind families as a special type of social group. Matters related to parenthood, marriage, childhood or activities, supporting the everyday functioning of family life environments are also equally important and require scientific cognition. Each of the indicated directions requires a separate analysis and presentation, which may be a signpost for further family-science discourse and the subject of detailed scientific analyzes and presentations in the future.

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