

Joanna Cukras-Stelałowska

Faculty of Philosophy and Social Science
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń
Toruń

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0120-9693>
joanstel@umk.pl

The Jewish Identity of the “Unexpected Generation” in the Context of the Upbringing Model in a Mixed Family

Abstract

The goal of the article is to introduce one of the youngest Jewish generations in Poland, known as the “unexpected generation”, based on my own research and the findings of other researchers. At the same time, I consider the essence of upbringing in a mixed family and its consequences for the socio-cultural identity of this generation. I look at ways of constructing patterns of Jewish family life and possible forms and content of intergenerational family transmission. I also highlight challenges and potential threats faced by Jewish families living in Poland today. Consequently, I try to outline possible further research directions related to issues of cultural content transmission in a family and the transmission of Jewish religious and linguistic heritage.

Keywords: Jews, generations, identity, mixed marriages, ethnicity, exogamy.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 PL License (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/pl/), which permits redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, provided that the article is properly cited. © The Author(s), 2020.

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences

Editor-in-chief: Jolanta Sujecka

Conception and academic editing of this issue: Aleksandra Twardowska, Katarzyna Taczyńska

Introduction

In a situation of rapid social changes and increasingly multinational societies, problems with self-identification are becoming more vivid. In the era we live in, we struggle with the possibility and also the necessity of constantly building our own identities and (re)defining our biographies. Anthony Giddens (2010) points out that in postmodernity the life of an individual becomes a reflexive project. According to Zygmunt Bauman: “The idea of individualisation brings the liberation of the individual from their assigned, inherited, innate and predetermined social character; this change is rightfully perceived as the most important and most productive feature of the modern condition” (Bauman, 2008, p. 176).¹ In other words, in postmodern societies the individual may create certain “identity projects”, also based on ethnicity and its origin.

The dividing line of 1989 meant the rise of a democratic political system in Poland and changes for many national and ethnic minorities in the country, primarily the renaissance of ethnic identities and an institutional heyday. For the Jewish minority it has also been an identity revival, the development of many institutions (including schools), a return to the roots of the young generation brought up in assimilated families. One of the leaders and at the same time a researcher of this society, Helena Datner, sees a number of changes within the community: de-assimilation, registration of all kinds of associations, a return of religion, young people discovering their roots (noticed in all post-communist countries), the activity of the Lauder Foundation, and the 1997 law on the state’s approach towards the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland (Związek Gmin Wyznaniowych Żydowskich, ZGMŻ), which laid the groundwork for the financial independence of communities and the growth of the union’s role. Also, new religious proposals have emerged, e.g. Bejt Polin (Progressive Judaism) and Chabad-Lubawicz (Hasidic Judaism) (Datner, 2010, pp. 46–49).

To the researcher and activist of the Jewish association “Cukunft”, Aleksandra Wilczura (2017, pp. 247–248), the reason for this unique Polish phenomenon is the lively religious and cultural activity of Jewish religious communities and the activity of several dozen Jewish associations and foundations of a secular character, as well as of many Polish institutions

¹ “Idea indywidualizacji niesie za sobą wyzwolenie jednostki z przypisanego jej, odziedziczonogo i wrodzonego, z góry zdeterminowanego charakteru społecznego: jest to zmiana słusznie postrzegana jako najważniejsza i najbardziej płodna cecha kondycji nowoczesnej.”

involved in popularising the history of Polish Jews, including more than 50 different festivals, days and meetings with Jewish culture organised periodically across the country. Despite the social and cultural boom, there has been a certain instability of commitment, a liberalisation of the definition of membership and a danger of the predominance of the social aspects of being in the community (Datner, 2010, p. 50). Additionally, the situation has been complicated by the educational emigration of young people – especially to Israel and the United States – and unfavourable demographic trends. Thus, there are many question marks for the Jewish community in Poland.

Polish Jews: Between Secularism and Religiousness

What binds today's Jewish community together and determines group identity? Polish Jews asked in a survey *What does it mean for you to be a Jew?* listed sensitivity to antisemitism and the experience of the Holocaust in the family. Their ethnic origin, Jewish culture, relations with other Jews and Jewish symbols (Star of David, Menorah) were also important to them. Links to Israel and Judaism played a slightly lesser role. The issues that the respondents perceived as the least relevant were language and everyday customs (Wójcik & Bilewicz, 2015, pp. 135–136). In Datner's opinion, Jewish life in Poland is dominated by secular Jewish identities, based not on language but on interests, participation in cultural projects, as well as awareness and fidelity to the past (Datner, 2010, p. 51). A sense of connection with the Jewish historical and cultural heritage is extremely significant here. Another important feature of the Jewish community in contemporary Poland is its dual identity; many of its members identify themselves twice: as Poles and as Jews (Datner, 2010, p. 51). Other characteristic features of the community include geographical dispersion, detachment from regional homelands and no inheritance of Yiddish or Hebrew (Singer, 2014, p. 42). At present in Poland we have many different categories and people of Jewish origin. For some, it is enough to remember their own origin, others are committed to nurturing and developing their cultural heritage. They can choose different options of institutional identification, combine elements into new wholes (e.g. secularism and religiousness). They may also try to return to their religious identity. In my opinion, the diversity of Jewish communities is characterised very accurately in the following statement by a young Jewish activist:

Some people go to the synagogue once a week, others on the major holidays, and there are those who never go. But sometimes on the Sabbath they light candles, recite

Kiddush over a glass of wine and eat kosher dishes. Others do not keep kosher, do not burn candles, but they study Jewish texts and would like to raise their children in the Judaic faith. There are also those who discovered their roots quite recently, already as adults. They all have one thing in common: Jewish identity. (Czupryn, 2012, p. 1)²

It is also a fact that most Polish Jews come from mixed families and their origin is non-Halachic. The war, the post-war period and the post-March 1968 emigration interrupted the process of intergenerational transmission; “after the war these families completely abandoned their religion, they live like Polish families, often Catholic. Others are indifferent when it comes to religion. They celebrate some holidays, explaining this with memory and respect for war victims” (Kopytek, 2006, p. 32).³ Mixed marriages might constitute one of the main factors influencing the choice of a secular identity in adult life, although according to Tamara Włodarczyk (2013, p. 93), growing up in a religious family did not guarantee the permanence of this form of identity either. In her opinion, the results of interviews conducted in 2011-2012 with leaders of Jewish organisations in Lower Silesia confirm the thesis about the risk of mixed marriages and, consequently, assimilation, as the children and grandchildren of Jewish organisations’ activists usually have nothing to do with Jewishness.

So far only studies by Adrian Wójcik and Michał Bilewicz (Wójcik & Bilewicz, 2015, p. 134) give us some sense of the scale of the phenomenon and the situation of people from mixed families. These researchers took into account both religious and non-religious representatives of Jewish society. Their study involved 150 people. The average age of participants was 44.6 years. People aged under 30 constituted 20% of the sample while 10% were over 60 years of age. Among the respondents, the majority declared that only one of their parents was of Jewish origin (72.3%), and 23.7% reported that both of their parents were of Jewish origin.

The respondents did not differ significantly in their declared cultural, religious and biological identity. The level of readiness to engage in the secular practices of the Jewish community and the level of ties were also comparable. In fact, people of mixed descent showed a relatively higher

² “Jedni chodzą do synagogi raz w tygodniu, inni od wielkiego święta, a są też tacy, którzy nie chodzą tam nigdy. Ale bywa, że w szabat zapalają świece, zmagają kidusz nad kielichem wina i jedzą koszerne dania. Jeszcze inni nie trzymają koszer, nie palą świec, za to studiują żydowskie teksty i chcieliby swoje dzieci wychować w wierze judaistycznej. Są też i tacy, którzy swoje korzenie odkryli całkiem niedawno, już jako dorośli. Łączy ich jedno – żydowska tożsamość.”

³ “Rodziny te po wojnie całkowicie odeszły od swojej religii, żyją jak rodziny polskie, często katolickie. Inni są obojętni, jeśli chodzi o religię. Obchodzą niektóre święta, tłumacząc to pamięcią i szacunkiem dla ofiar wojny.”

level of identification, as this was crucial for them and involved a greater willingness to engage with the Jewish community (Wójcik & Bilewicz, 2015, pp. 137–144). Social psychologists argue that the number of strategies of identity building and a homogeneous or heterogeneous family background influence the quality and dynamics of the religious life of Jews in Poland. Communities which allow people from mixed families to participate in the religious community develop much more dynamically (Wójcik & Bilewicz, 2015, p. 145). Moreover, according to Wójcik and Bilewicz, it should be noted that many measures to revive Jewish life and Jewish society in Poland after 1989 were in fact started by people from mixed families.

The Third Generation after the Holocaust and Its Identity

In this article I intend to pay special attention to the generation of Polish Jews that includes people born in the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. Most of them were raised in assimilated or mixed families. It is a heterogeneous group, but mostly composed of people of Jewish origin, constructing their Jewish identity not earlier than during adolescence (hence the frequently used terms “unexpected generation” or “rediscovered generation”). These are mainly people brought up in Polish culture, who learned about their origins when they were growing up and then started searching for a Jewish reference group. In adulthood, they have perpetuated and developed their Jewish identification. Representatives of this generation show very strong involvement in the activity of Jewish institutions and now play a significant role in the community. They present a socio-cultural identity that is individualised, changeable and at the same time “nostalgic”, i.e. referring to the rich Jewish heritage. Above all, however, it is a “missionary” identity, connected with a sense of responsibility for the Jewish future in Poland. Its origins lie in the intergenerational consequences of the trauma of the Holocaust. Sometimes these young people’s identification assumes a “post-ethnic”, more cosmopolitan form (Cukras, 2003, p. 263). Similarly, after conducting a series of narrative interviews Katka Reszke states that: “young Polish Jews are a case of an exceptionally dynamic and anti-reflexive process of the narrative construction of identity: a process that takes place in a discussion” (Reszke, 2013, p. 70).⁴ This generation is dominated by a dual socio-cultural identity, but the more religious the declaration, the more distant the identification with “Polishness”. The existing division along the axis of religious versus secular Jews is less sharp than it might seem, because

⁴ “młodzi polscy Żydzi to przypadek wyjątkowo dynamicznego i antyrefleksyjnego procesu narracyjnej konstrukcji tożsamości – procesu, który realizuje się w dyskusji.”

fascination with secular culture does not always mean a lack of interest in religious issues. Young lay Jews explore the principles of Judaism, read the Torah, but also participate in collective holiday celebrations and visit the synagogue, because to them Judaism is the quintessence of Jewish tradition (Cukras-Stelałowska, 2012, pp. 215–216). The subjective feeling of belonging to the Jewish community is also becoming a relevant criterion (in Poland many people cannot prove their Jewish roots or have a very distant origin from one grandmother or grandfather).

From in-depth interviews with 10 people born in the 1980s and 1990s conducted in the Wrocław environment, we learn that through contact with the Jewish community, young people's identification started to be filled with positive content, and social ties were strengthened by a community-based youth club. This is an excellent way to integrate a peer group. Moreover, the possibility of working in Jewish institutions or in the community has permanently bound some people to the community. The author of this research concludes that the community is an extremely important institution consolidating the young generation of Wrocław's Jews. Although the first contact with this institution was difficult, in fact it all started here, both in private and professional life (Banasiewicz-Ossowska, 2016, pp. 61–62).

Ewa Banasiewicz-Ossowska's respondents are also a heterogeneous group with varying degrees of identification. Their cultural identity is open, dynamic and post-modern. Born in mixed families, living at the crossroads of two cultures, they have a double identification: they consciously emphasise their Jewish origin but also their relationships with Poland and Polish culture. As they come from assimilated families, they do not have patterns of Jewish family life they can follow. Jewish holidays most often were not celebrated in their family homes; no knowledge of Judaism and Jewish culture was passed on. At first only residual elements of Jewish tradition are practised (e.g. not eating pork, separating meat from dairy products, lighting candles on the Sabbath), but then gradually expanded by knowledge gained from community meetings, literature, trips to Israel, Jewish colonies, etc. (Banasiewicz-Ossowska, 2016 pp. 56–59). These people mainly declare themselves to be secular Jews, but they still practice some Jewish customs in their homes: the Hanukkah lamp, a mezuzah on the door, Seder dinners. Most use religious practices selectively, adapting them to their own needs. Some young people engage in religious activities, undergo conversion and undertake further religious education (Banasiewicz-Ossowska, 2015, pp. 187–189).

This generation does not have to hide their Jewish roots; they live in very different conditions from their grandparents and parents, and the external causes that caused their parents and grandparents to leave Jewish religion

and culture no longer exist today (Pactwa & Domagała, 2008, p. 21). Bożena Pactwa and Anna Domagała state that:

The problem for this generation is rather the lack of a generation of reference. It is certainly not the parents' generation, the generation which many researchers dealing with issues of national minorities in Poland consider to be the "lost generation". If young people learn about tradition, culture and religion, the most common type of message is post-figurative, and the grandparents' generation is the dominant generation in this process. The problem is, however, that this is an ever smaller group of people. (Pactwa & Domagała, 2008, p. 84)⁵

At the same time, rebuilding identity is not an easy task. The external conditions in which these three generations lived were different and have had a important impact on the types of Jewish identity today. We know about the people of this generation that:

They feel responsible for both. They identify themselves with each of their halves. At the same time, they realise that Jewish communities are disappearing in Poland, the true Jewish tradition is disappearing, despite the resurrection of Jewish culture in many places, in fact not by Jews. (Pactwa & Domagała, 2008, p. 83)⁶

In almost every family, the mother or father is Catholic. The Jewish tradition was partly transferred from the grandparents' generation to the generation of the grandchildren, whereas the parents' generation did not identify with Jewish culture and tradition. Young Jews have to struggle with the problem of an "aura of inauthenticity" resulting from the lack of continuity of the intergenerational message and a need to seek new forms of reference. Non-Halachic origin can be an obstacle to institutional involvement, especially religious involvement. These people's identity is additionally questioned by Jews from abroad and the Orthodox Jewish community in the country, as well as by Poles and other young Jews of matrilineal descent. In order to "authenticate" their own identity, they decide to convert (Reszke, 2013, pp. 158–173). On the other hand, due

⁵ "Problemem dla tego pokolenia jest raczej brak pokolenia odniesienia. Nie jest nim z pewnością pokolenie rodziców, pokolenie, które przez wielu badaczy zajmujących się problematyką mniejszości narodowych w Polsce uważane jest za »pokolenie stracone«. Jeśli młodzi czerpią wiedzę o tradycji, kulturze, religii, to najczęściej typem przekazu jest przekaz postfiguratywny, a pokolenie dziadków jest w tym procesie pokoleniem dominującym. Problemem staje się jednak to, że jest to coraz mniejsza grupa osób."

⁶ "Czują się odpowiedzialne za jednych i drugich. Identyfikują się z każdą swoją połową. A równocześnie zdają sobie sprawę z tego, że w Polsce, mimo wskrzeszania w wielu miejscach kultury żydowskiej, *de facto* nie przez Żydów, społeczności żydowskie zanikają, zanika prawdziwa żydowska tradycja."

to the small number of people of Jewish origin and the intergenerational phenomenon of mixed religious marriages, leaders of the Jewish community in Poland had to accept such new members at some point. The opening of communities to non-Halachic Jews was an extremely important element influencing further formation of religious life. This was possible thanks to changes in the statute of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Poland, allowing this category of people to be eligible for membership in communities (Włodarczyk, 2013, p. 92).

Institutional and educational support was also significant for this generation, including the invaluable role of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation (its important financial assistance to the Jewish minority in Poland). For the “rediscovered generation”, the foundation’s camps were often the main source of knowledge about Judaism. Today the situation is better, young people from Warsaw and Wrocław have the opportunity to be educated in Jewish schools. In the group of people of Jewish origin who are graduates of the Warsaw Jewish school (born between 1988 and 1992), Jewish culture was present from birth (unlike in the group of people born between 1972 and 1984, which was the subject of my research in 2002: most of the interviewees learned about their Jewish origin when they were growing up). Among the graduates of the Lauder School, there was no unexpected discovery of their roots, as they grew up in families cultivating traditions or in Polish-Jewish families that spoke openly about the Jewish origin. In addition, young people from mixed families never met with opposition from the non-Jewish part of the family; on the contrary, sometimes they received support and interest from them. This was confirmed by the enrolment of the child in a Jewish school (Cukras-Stelągowska, 2012, p. 212). As we can see, there are many hues of Jewish identity nowadays, also varying within generations, because in the case of younger people brought up at least partly in awareness of Jewish tradition, school was a very important next link, a kind of “building block” of identity (bearing in mind, however, the territorial reach of a single school and limited educational opportunities outside the metropolis).

Potential Patterns of Third-Generation Family Life: Discussion

The future of the Jewish community in Poland will depend on the plans and prospects of people representing the “rediscovered generation”. We already know that upbringing in an assimilated or mixed family broke the transmission chain of cultural heritage; it could be an important obstacle,

especially on the road to religious orthodoxy. It is impossible to determine how many people did not undertake (or gave up) attempting to build Jewish self-identification. However, a number of people have made a de-assimilation effort. Today people in their thirties are raising children who will take over the responsibility for further development of the Jewish community in Poland in a few years. The biographical interviews conducted by Reszke (2013, pp. 146–174) suggest the conclusion that young people are heading towards choosing the Jewish way and creating a traditional Jewish family because they want to establish relationships with people with Jewish roots in order to continue the chain of traditions together (or are already in such relationships). They would like to raise their offspring in full awareness of their Jewishness and even provide them with some degree of Jewish education (Reszke, 2013, p. 232). The interlocutors I examined also declared willingness and a need to pass on the cultural heritage. Some dreamed of raising children in the Jewish culture, but most underlined that children should make their own decisions about their own life path. Some included the possibility of a mixed marriage (as had often been the case with their parents). The religious factor was of considerable importance. People declaring themselves to be religious spoke about the need to raise children in tradition (Cukras-Stelągowska, 2012, p. 227). However, it has been a long time since this research was conducted. In my opinion, it is worth returning to talks with this generation, to consider what family life patterns they will use and what family model they will try to create.

First of all, we should consider interesting European research. According to three reports on mixed marriages in Jewish communities in France, the Netherlands and Germany, the ethnic identifications of people brought up in a mixed family are fluid, situational, individualised, and most often no religious identity is strictly developed. There is no cultural transmission, or the transmission of heritage from the older generation (grandparents) is minimal. The parents are in the role of “learners of Jewishness” along with their adult children. There are also different attitudes of non-Jewish parents and other family members. The reports suggest that exogamy is repeated in successive generations, because respondents also decide on such relationships. However, it cannot be said that people with Jewish roots from their father (or even more distant ones) are less involved in the life of the Jewish community. In many cases, it is associated directly with a sense of exclusion and is a consequence of it. Instead, they often show great determination to build a Jewish identity. However, they feel excluded and inferior. The response to this condition may be “forced” conversion to Judaism, searching for other forms (e.g. Reform Judaism), developing a secular identity, creating a contextual identity or consistently reinforcing

the Jewish identity (Cukras-Stelągowska, 2018, pp. 127–128). I think all these trends will also be observed in the Polish Jewish community.

Among a dozen or so interviews conducted by Agnieszka Krawczyk from the University of Łódź, the biographies of two Jewish women from the “rediscovered generation” are worth noting. In the first case, the woman was brought up in an atheist family, she was aware of her grandmother-based roots and was familiar with the tradition and heritage but without introducing them into the family home. Her Jewish identity was developed during her studies and in Jewish organisations. She and her supportive Jewish partner started a Jewish life together, incorporating religious rituals into their everyday life and endeavouring to raise their children in this way. They want to isolate their children from the dominant culture, preferring an ethnic upbringing, in a religious spirit. In the second case, the woman was brought up in a Catholic family whose ancestors were of Jewish origin. She felt anxiety in connection with awareness of her origins but nevertheless, in adulthood, she started the process of searching for her roots. The lack of a matrilineal origin and misunderstandings with the family were an additional problem. The respondent discontinued the conversion process after parting with her Jewish partner and still feels insecure in the Jewish environment. She has built a relationship with a Catholic and is trying to introduce elements of bicultural education, for example by celebrating both Catholic and Jewish holidays. She conveys elements of Jewish tradition to her child, also through education in a Jewish kindergarten (Krawczyk, 2019, pp. 175–183).

Following this path, I decided to start another qualitative study with representatives of the “third generation after the Holocaust”. This time it meant taking into account that these were already almost middle-aged people bringing up school-age children (who in turn will set future paths for the community). The research was embedded in the interpretative paradigm. The biographical method appeared to be the most appropriate for studying the family life of the young generation of Jews, as it made it easier to understand the specificity of cultural socialisation in the contemporary Jewish family, with special emphasis on the intergenerational transmission of cultural heritage. My goal was to understand the essence of upbringing and ways of conveying religious and ethnic traditions, as well as to distinguish the main upbringing models within the “unexpected generation”. In-depth interviews with people of Jewish origin declaring themselves as being religious, associated with Jewish communities and having children were conducted in 2018.

Here I would like to present the first model of Jewish upbringing, based on five in-depth interviews in a group of religious people who are now in

monocultural relationships, raising children in the Jewish tradition and religion. It is characteristic of this group that it was not until their youth that they built their Jewish identity. Their acculturation was only of a peer-based nature, with varied institutional support. It was then strengthened by a long stay in Israel and graduation from religious schools there. This search was complemented by finding a partner equally determined to create a traditional Jewish family. Now the families celebrate all religious holidays, apply the principles of kosher, fulfil the obligations arising from the principles of Judaism, fulfil religious practices. The interviewees underlined the importance of strong cultural and religious self-identification, which is a prerequisite for proper intergenerational communication. These statements at the beginning of the interviews are distinctive:

I wasn't brought up in a religious home; it wasn't until before college that some issues came alive for me and I developed them in college. I've learned from a lot of people, I don't have a specific pattern, it's a kind of compilation. If you have assimilated a Jewish identity within yourself, if you feel you are a Jew, a part of the nation, and this is a constitutive element of your identity – then we inevitably pass it on to our children during upbringing, we transmit our reflections, reactions, etc., there is no problem with that: then our identity will be present in the home. (interview 1)⁷

For me, it's a success that I live the way I live, after completing my conversion, that I've managed to find a life partner I love, with whom I have children, if the children won't continue ... I'm proud of my way of life. Today we are lanterns for people from the community, for the seekers. I have no family traditions, I'm the only Jew in my own family, there were only some in the distant past. I went through conversion eight years ago; as a child I went to church for religious instruction. I learned Jewishness from books, from Rabbi Keller and from a Hasidic rabbi in Israel; I read Buber. (interview 2)⁸

⁷ “Ja nie wychowałem się w religijnym domu, dopiero przed studiami zaczęły we mnie ożywać pewne kwestie, a na studiach to rozwijałem. Uczylem się od wielu ludzi, nie mam konkretnego wzorca, to taka kompilacja. Jeśli w sobie przyswoiłeś tożsamość żydowską, jeśli czujesz się Żydem, częścią narodu i jest to element konstytutywny twojej tożsamości – to siłą rzeczy przekazujemy to w trakcie wychowania dzieciom, przekazujemy swoje refleksje, reakcje itp., nie ma z tym problemu, wówczas nasza tożsamość będzie obecna w domu.”

⁸ “Dla mnie sukcesem jest, że żyję, tak jak żyję, po zrobieniu konwersji, że udało mi się znaleźć partnerkę życiową, którą kocham, z którą mam dzieci, jeśli dzieci nie będą tego kontynuowały [...]. Jestem dumny ze swojej drogi życiowej. Dzisiaj jesteśmy latarniami dla ludzi z Gminy, dla ludzi poszukujących. Nie mam tradycji rodzinnych, we własnej rodzinie jest jedynym Żydem, jedynie w dalekiej przeszłości byli. Przeszedłem konwersję osiem lat temu, jako dziecko chodziłem do kościoła, na katechezę. Żydostwa uczyłem się z książek, od rabina Kellera i chasydzkiego rabina w Izraelu, czytałem Bubera.”

My mother and mother-in-law aren't Jewish, in Israel I saw how Jewish mothers live. I come from a multicultural family. I chose Judaism when I was already an adult. I don't see any contraindications for parents who previously had nothing to do with Judaism to decide to convey values derived from Jewish culture to their offspring. (interview 3)⁹

The choice and shaping of the Jewish path required determination and constancy. However, nowadays it is something permanent, obvious and natural. The process of further transmission of values also seems to be that way. The children of my interlocutors participate fully in "Jewish everyday life". For these families, certain patterns of life are universal, so they think they can derive them from their own family experience, "dressing them up in Jewish identity". Based on an initial exploration, it seems that the trajectory of "becoming a Jewish parent" in the "rediscovered generation" probably takes the following direction:

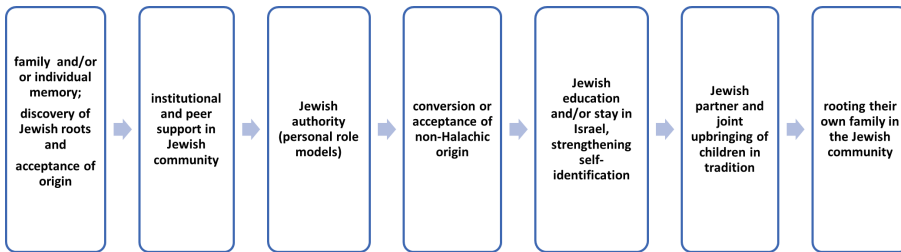


Fig. 1. Becoming a Jewish parent (by J. C.-S.)

They also encountered barriers in their path of life that could disrupt, slow down or completely change this path. The interlocutors pointed to individual obstacles (fear, inconsistency of actions, emotional confusion), but mostly to external ones (lack of kosher food and full religious education, intolerance from Polish society, local Jewish communities being too small). Factors that hinder the development of identity and make it impossible to build a monocultural family might include:

⁹ "Moja mama i teściowa nie są Żydówkami, podpatrzyłam w Izraelu jak funkcjonują matki żydowskie. Pochodzę z rodziny wielokulturowej. Wybrałam judaizm w dorosłym już życiu. Nie widzę żadnych przeciwwskazań, aby rodzice, którzy wcześniej nie mieli nic wspólnego z judaizmem, postanowili przekazywać swojemu potomstwu wartości pochodzące z kultury żydowskiej."

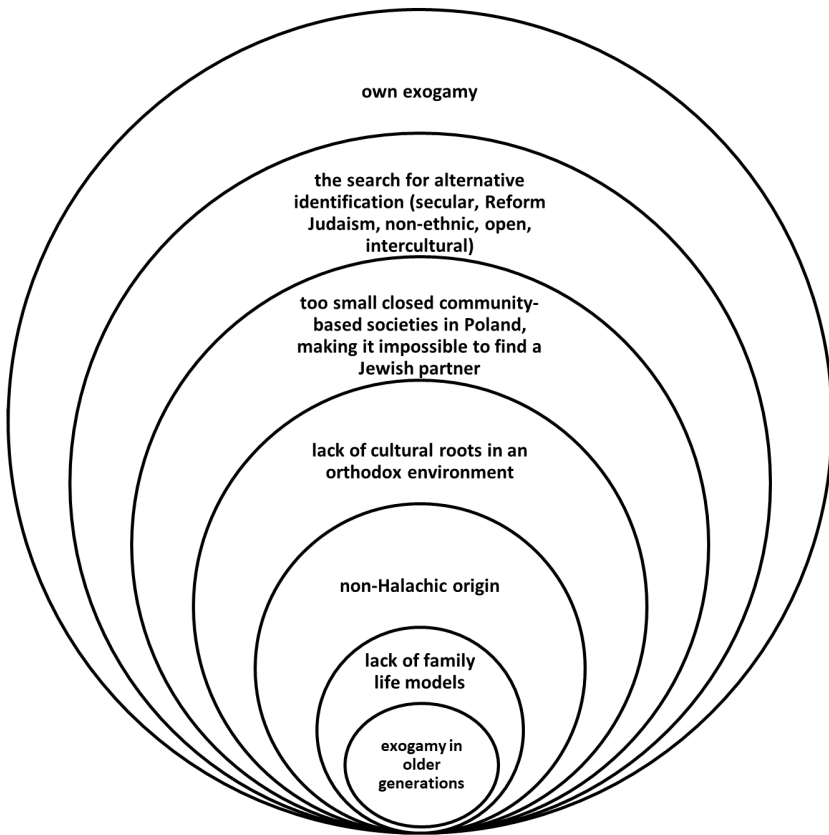


Fig. 2. Individual obstacles in creating a Jewish family (by J. C.-S.)

Of course, in the whole process of building social identity, one must also take into account voluntary aspects, individual biographical events and development crises. Mixed relationships are not accepted by Orthodox and conservative Judaism and are subject to public criticism in official discourse. On the other hand, mixed marriages set a different cultural quality that the Jewish community in Israel and the diaspora must face. These families are a social fact and are already accepted in many Jewish communities today. Often non-Jewish partners and their children feel a cultural closeness to Jewishness and, although they do not decide to convert, they become part of Jewish social life (Jewish gentiles). Children from these families create a new Jewish identity in a more reflexive way. "Coming from a mixed ethnic family means that a person needs to create his or her identity from scratch. It is a matter of choice and not of fate. Thus probably new forms of Jewish

life will arise but for sure the Jewish community in Poland will not perish” (Wójcik & Bilewicz, 2015, p. 145). The “unexpected generation” is, in my opinion, the best example of the process of inevitable social changes.

Both ethnic upbringing in the overwhelming dominant culture and bicultural upbringing entail dilemmas, concerns and challenges. They enrich and complicate the process of socialisation and upbringing, blurring ethnic boundaries. This is why a closer look should be taken at the transmission of cultural content and religious heritage in the various models of contemporary Jewish family life.

Translated by:
MONO Translation Studio

References

- Banasiewicz-Ossowska, E. (2015). *Życie religijne i jego organizacja w gminie żydowskiej we Wrocławiu*. *Roczniki Teologiczne*, 62(9), 173–190. <https://doi.org/10.18290/rt.2015.62.9-9>
- Banasiewicz-Ossowska, E. (2016). Tożsamość społeczno-kulturowa młodych Żydów wrocławskich. *Zeszyty Etnologii Wrocławskiej*, 2016(1[24]), 53–63.
- Bauman, Z. (2008). *Zindywidualizowane społeczeństwo* (O. Kubińska & W. Kubiński, Trans.). Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Cukras, J. (2003). Młodzi Żydzi w Polsce: Socjologiczna analiza tożsamości społeczno-kulturowej. *Etnografia Polska*, 47, 247–266.
- Cukras-Stelągowska, J. (2012). *Tożsamość w dialogu: Polacy i Żydzi w szkołach Fundacji Ronalda Laudera*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.
- Cukras-Stelągowska, J. (2018). Kulturowe wzbogacenie, zagubienie czy wykluczenie?: Konsekwencje wychowania w żydowskiej rodzinie mieszanej w kontekście europejskich raportów. *Edukacja Międzykulturowa*, 2018(1[8]), 117–132. <https://doi.org/10.15804/em.2018.01.08>
- Czupryn, A. (2012, October 19). *Żydostwa nie da się zakopać, czyli kim są i jak żyją Żydzi w Polsce*. *Polska Times*. https://polskatimes.pl/zydostwa-nie-da-sie-zakopac-czyli-kim-sa-i-jak-zyja-zydzi-w-polsce/ar/680847_
- Datner, H. (2010). Obraz współczesnej społeczności żydowskiej. In P. Zieliński (Ed.), *Konferencja Mniejszość żydowska w Polsce – mity i rzeczywistość* (pp. 45–52). Kancelaria Sejmu. [http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/FB063998437C9BBFC12578E70045AE59/\\$file/Mniejszo%C5%9B%C4%87%20%C5%BCydowska.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/FB063998437C9BBFC12578E70045AE59/$file/Mniejszo%C5%9B%C4%87%20%C5%BCydowska.pdf)
- Giddens, A. (2010). *Nowoczesność i tożsamość: “Ja” i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności* (A. Sulżycka, Trans.). Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Kopytek, E. (2006). Tradycje i wzorce wychowania w rodzinie żydowskiej. *Państwo i Społeczeństwo*, 6(2), 23–34.
- Krawczyk, A. (2019). The meaning of Jewish culture of origin for Jewish women from the third generation. *Kultura i Wychowanie*, 2019(1[15]), 173–185. https://doi.org/10.25312/2083-2923.15/2019_09ak

- Pactwa, B., & Domagała, A. (2008). Meandry tożsamości mniejszości żydowskiej w Polsce: Trzy pokolenia rodziny żydowskiej w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim. In J. Mucha & B. Pactwa (Eds.), *"Status mniejszościowy" i ambiwalencja w społeczeństwach wielokulturowych* (pp. 63–85). Śląskie Wydawnictwa Naukowe.
- Reszke, K. (2013). *Powrót Żyda: Narracje tożsamościowe trzeciego pokolenia Żydów w Polsce po Holokauście*. Austeria.
- Singer, S. (2014). Odnowa kultury żydowskiej w polskim społeczeństwie. *Zeszyty Naukowe DWSPiT: Studia z Nauk Społecznych*, 2014(7), 39–54.
- Wilczura, A. (2017). Inkluzywność oparta na wartościach religijnych w edukacji społeczności żydowskiej w Polsce na przykładzie działalności Stowarzyszenia Żydowskiego Cukunft. In M. Humeniuk (Ed.), *Między ekskluzją a inkluzją w edukacji religijnej* (pp. 247–264). Instytut Pedagogiki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Włodarczyk, T. (2013). *Świecka tożsamość polskich Żydów jako żydowska tożsamość alternatywna. Studia Europaea Gnesnensia*, 2013(8), 71–95.
- Wójcik, A., & Bilewicz, M. (2015). Beyond ethnicity – the role of coming from a mixed-origin family for Jewish identity: A Polish case. In L. Wohl von Haselberg (Ed.), *Hybride Identitäten des Jüdischen: Gemischte Familien und patrilineare Juden* (pp. 133–145). Bohlau Verlag.

Tożsamość żydowska „nieoczekiwanego pokolenia” w kontekście modelu wychowania w rodzinie mieszanej

W swoim artykule chciałabym przybliżyć jedno z najmłodszych pokoleń żydowskich w Polsce, zwane „nieoczekiwaną generacją”, na podstawie badań własnych oraz ustaleń innych badaczy. Jednocześnie uwzględniłam istotę wychowania w rodzinie mieszanej i to, jakie niesie za sobą konsekwencje dla tożsamości społeczno-kulturowej tegoż pokolenia. Przyjrę się sposobom konstruowania wzorów żydowskiego życia rodzinnego oraz możliwym formom i treściom rodzinnej transmisji międzypokoleniowej. Wskażę także na wyzwania i potencjalne zagrożenia, przed którymi stają dziś żydowskie rodziny mieszkające w Polsce. W efekcie postaram się wytyczyć możliwe dalsze kierunki badawcze podejmujące kwestie transmisji treści kulturowych w rodzinie, przekazu żydowskiego dziedzictwa religijnego i językowego.

Słowa kluczowe: Żydzi, pokolenia, tożsamość, małżeństwa mieszane, etniczność, egzogamia.

Note

Joanna Cukras-Stelągowska, Faculty of Philosophy and Social Science, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Toruń

joanstel@umk.pl

The preparation of the article was self-funded by the author.

No competing interests have been declared.

Publication History

Received: 2020-05-12; Accepted: 2020-12-04; Published: 2020-12-31