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Jewish Motherhood in the Narratives of Mothers Living in Poland

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the maternal experiences of three women of Jewish origin. The data was collected by means of a free-text interview with narrative elements and was analyzed by means of the linguistic narrative method of text analysis. The main questions we seek to answer are “What types of motherhood do Jewish mothers represent?” and “What are the characteristics of each of them?” The aims of the article are (1) to juxtapose the three styles of motherhood and describe each of them and (2) to show the importance of the transfer of the culture of origin and upbringing for the performance of the parental role by Jewish women. In this paper, we discuss the cultural pattern of motherhood by juxtaposing the figure of the Polish Mother with the Yiddish *Mame*. We then outline the detailed methodological design of the article. In the next section, we characterize three types of motherhood: monocultural, bicultural and multicultural. Our analysis leads to the conclusion that despite contemporary social changes, mothers are still responsible for the religious upbringing of their children. At the same time, we point out the similarities between the Polish Mother and the Yiddish *Mame*.

KEYWORDS

motherhood, Polish Mother, Yiddish *Mame*, Judaism, Christianity, Catholicism, religious upbringing

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Introduction

Motherhood is both a highly individual experience for many women and an extremely complex, multifaceted phenomenon that gives rise to inquiries within many scientific disciplines, including pedagogy. In the literature one can find reflections on the biological aspects of becoming a mother (e.g., Lichtenberg-Kokoszka 2008; Nowakowska 2014), analyses concerning the sociocultural determinants of motherhood (e.g., Budrowska 2000; Grzełińska 2012; Maciarz 2004; Sikorska 2012) or descriptions of the struggle between the role of a mother and other life roles (e.g., Pryszmont-Ciesielska 2011; Sokołowska 2013). Importantly, much research in this area is based on the narratives of mothers themselves and on the records of the experiences of specific women functioning in different social, economic and cultural conditions (e.g., Bartosz 2002; Pryszmont-Ciesielska 2013). This text contributes to this discourse by giving a voice to women of Jewish origin who wish to pass on the faith of their ancestors to their children, but who live in a society dominated by Christian culture.

The cultural model of motherhood in Poland

As Martyna Pryszmont notes, “given the historical and sociocultural context, a significant and recognizable ideal of a mother is the *Polish Mother*” (Pryszmont 2020: 66). This ideal began to take shape in the time of the First Polish Republic, in which noblewomen enjoyed a relatively high position in society. What was valued in women of that time was not only innocence and submissiveness towards the family, but above all, thriftiness. Women were expected to be able to take over their husband’s or brother’s duties when the men were absent due to political activity or military campaigns. One such duty was the skillful management of the family’s financial resources. The role of women in the society increased even more during the Partitions, when family life, i.e. the sphere for which women were responsible, became the only space that could ensure the survival of the national identity. Anna Titkow writes,

the period of the loss of independence facilitated the emergence of a cultural pattern of the Polish woman as a heroic figure, capable of coping with all kinds of burdens. On her shoulders rested the responsibility for maintaining the national tradition: the continuity of language, culture and faith. It was this difficult period that created the prototype of the super-woman which, in the sphere of attitudes and behavior, has been functioning until now, and which presents the social genotype of a woman as a person capable of coping with the most difficult demands imposed on her by the social reality. (Titkow 2012: 30)

It should be added that the versatility of the Polish Mother was based not only on nurturing the cultural heritage and raising children in the spirit of desirable values, but also on caring for the financial well-being of the family, whose economic resources decreased as a result of the economic and political turmoil.

The figure of the Polish Mother was consolidated by the two great wars of the 20th century, when women took up military service or were engaged in underground activities despite their familial responsibilities. During the Polish People's Republic many women entered the labor market, though they were by no means relieved of their function of caring for and organizing the lives of their loved ones, often at the expense of the women's own wellbeing. However, the very model of family life changed: there were increasingly fewer families with many children, while the model in which parents decide to have two children became the most popular. Nowadays, the term "Polish mother" is both a negative stereotype and a rich, diverse set of characteristics and attitudes of women which does not only evoke negative associations in the public perception (Szymanik-Kostrzevska, Michalska 2020). Some members of Polish society still prefer the traditional family model in which the burden of care and upbringing (including the transmission of cultural traditions and faith) is mainly placed on the mother. However, there are an increasing number of partnership-based relationships in which both mothers and fathers participate in the upbringing of their children, sharing the responsibilities of parenthood (Dzwonkowska-Godula 2015).

Yiddish *Mame*

In the development of the model of the Yiddish *Mame*, many parallels can be seen with the formation of the Polish Mother. What they have in common is the foundation of a sense of threat to national identity and deficits in the presence of fathers in the family's everyday life. However, the absence of men in this case is not due to economic or political reasons, but results from religion. As Agnieszka Gajewska and Joanna Lisek write,

the establishment of the Jewish ideal of a male expert in the Torah who spends all his days studying the sacred scriptures in the *beit midrash*, and who is not involved in everyday affairs, forced Jewish women to take up the roles that had been traditionally seen as masculine. This also combined with a shifting divide between the public and private spheres. For men, the synagogue and the study house were spaces associated with prestige and power. The woman occupied a marginal position there. On the other hand, the economic and commercial spheres were open to her. Girls also had a better access to secular education and language learning, as their education did not require strict rabbinical control. (Gajewska, Lisek 2012: 165–166)

The turning point for the Jewish discourse on motherhood was the experience of the Holocaust. The Yiddish *Mame* was largely identified with a mother fighting for her children's lives in the confined space of ghettos, or walking with them to death in the gas chambers of death camps. The tragedy of the Shoah also exerted an irreversible influence on the women who survived the Holocaust. The trauma of war subconsciously recurred in the everyday life of the family, marking the next generation with fear. The mass murders of the Jewish population during World War II and the subsequent policies pursued in the Polish People's Republic resulted in the fact that people with Jewish roots, who used to form a significant demographic group in the country, became exceptions.

The Polish Mother and the Yiddish *Mame*: once they were neighbours, united by their lonely struggle with the difficulties of everyday life, guardians of national identities, seasoned in martyrdom. Their paths have diverged; today it is difficult for them to look into each other's windows.

However, a symbolic testimony to the former closeness may be the fact that in contemporary Israel, the Yiddish *Mame* has been renamed the Polish *Mame*: the Jewish mother is called the Polish Mother. This term, however, has a negative connotation and is associated with the image (ridiculed by Zionists) of a Polish Jew as an effeminate, sentimental, henpecked husband who is presented in opposition to the promoted ideal of a new Israeli man as a warrior and macho man. (Gajewska, Lisek 2012: 183)

Methodological assumptions

The data presented in this article was collected as part of the doctoral dissertation of one of the authors. Twelve interviews were conducted with young Jewish adults, including eight women. Three of the narrators are mothers and it is their utterances concerning motherhood that are the material for this article. In the article, we do not give the narrators fictional names; the narrators were named “N” followed by a number corresponding to their interview. The female narrators whose parental experience we refer to in the text are referred to as N4, N5 and N10. Each of them grew up in Poland. N5 and N10 knew from early childhood about their Jewish origins, but they grew up in families following secular traditions, as a result of which they did not participate in Judaic traditions and the religion was alien to them. N4, on the other hand, found out about her background by accident when she was a teenager. She was a religious person at the time, and she fulfilled her spiritual needs in Catholicism.

The research falls within the scope of qualitative research, and the linguistic narrative method of text analysis was used. The data was collected by means of a free interview with elements of a narrative (Awdiejew 2009, 2010, 2011; Habrajska 2004, 2008, 2009; Krawczyk 2019).

In this article we address the following questions:

- What types of motherhood do Jewish mothers present? What are the characteristics of each type?
- What are the similarities and differences between “Polish” and “Jewish” mothers?
- What relationships between the culture of origin and the culture of upbringing are revealed in one’s own motherhood?

In turn, we would like to achieve the following objectives through this article:

- form an overview of the three styles of motherhood and the characteristics of each type;
- demonstrate the importance of the transfer of culture of origin and culture of upbringing for the parental role of Jewish women.

Types of motherhood

Based on the data collected, three types of motherhood can be distinguished: monocultural, bicultural and multicultural. Each narrator represented a different type. For the purposes of this article, the following definitions of the different types of motherhood were adopted. Monocultural motherhood is characterized by the spouses representing the same culture, although not necessarily the dominant culture of the society. Bicultural motherhood has spouses who represent two different cultures, one of which is consistent with the culture of the society in which they live. Finally, multicultural motherhood is characterized by spouses representing two different cultures, and their cultures are incompatible with the culture of the given society.

Monocultural motherhood

Monocultural family

At the time of the interview, the narrator had three children. Her fourth child was born one week after the interview, and she is currently the mother of five children. N5 comes from a non-religious Jewish family. She was aware of her background from childhood and participated in events related to Jewish culture, though the events were not religious in nature. Her husband is of Jewish origin, but Jewish culture was not present in the family home. They both form a religious Jewish family: the husband serves as a rabbi and N5 as a *rebbetzin* in the Jewish community. Their children are brought up according to the principles of Judaism, but they are encouraged, not forced, to follow religious practices. The family live in Poland, where they are a minority family in terms of culture. At the time of the

interview, the younger children attended a Jewish kindergarten and the eldest attended a democratic school.

Monocultural mother

When N5 met her husband, she discovered the importance of Judaism in her life. In the religiosity of her family of procreation, she probably finds compensation for the lack of religious rules in her family home. Her family of procreation constitutes a contrast to her family of origin: “We are religious. We follow lots of rules. I mean those related to religiousness” [W5/XXIX/502-504/37]. The source of this religiousness is her husband. Before she met him, she was a non-religious person, which she believes resulted from growing up without a father. She attributes the responsibility for religious upbringing and the religiosity of family members to men. In her family of origin, men were absent from the children’s upbringing, and therefore it was never a religious home. According to N5, however, her religious home is not accompanied by religious fanaticism. She believes that this results from the fact that she was not brought up in a religious family, as well as from her husband’s philosophical education.

Their children are being raised according to religious rules and regulations, “but the rules are not a crazy thing” [W5/XXXIII/526/38]. This means that the family observe the laws derived from the Torah, but they treat them as guidelines for life, not restrictive rules that determine, for example, mealtimes. N5 refers the implementation of particular rules to the general principles of Judaism, which “is a bit of a religion of thanksgiving” [W5/XXXIII/532/39]. The children are encouraged to recite blessings at appropriate times and to rest from their daily affairs on Friday evening, i.e. during the Sabbath. However, if they do not wish to do so, their parents do not force them. In her family of procreation, N5 tries to combine the freedom of her family home with the observance of religious principles.

The narrator tries to include members of her family of procreation (her grandmother and mother) into religious traditions. Although the grandmother does not want to participate in religious events, it is important to N5 that she has accepted and likes her husband. The grandmother appreciates that, in addition to his religious studies, he

also has a degree in philosophy and is a discussion partner for her. N5 enjoys listening to their conversations and believes that her husband's religiousness has introduced a new thread to topics that were previously discussed in her home, which she describes as follows:

and sometimes my grandmother needles him, but my husband can defend himself in a spectacular manner. And she also sees that he's not a wimp; that she can tell him anything and he won't break down. She can be painfully honest, and he'll still be tough. These are very cool theological and philosophical conversations about life, faith, God, Jews. These are also the kinds of conversations we had before, but not only in the context of Judaism, but also in the context of the human being. This is how my husband, with his way of thinking, introduced her to the Jewish religion. This is reopening her a little to her pre-war history. [W5/XL/683-691/51]

The mother sometimes visits her daughter on the Sabbath, and then she participates in the celebration. The grandmother does not come, but the narrator explains that this is due to her reluctance to travel rather than to her granddaughter's religious life. When N5 and her husband keep the Sabbath in her grandmother's hometown, she is happy to visit them, but the Sabbath itself has no meaning for her: "she's like that; she would sit and listen, but it's also OK for her to come after the blessings" [W5/XL/676/50]. There is some reversal of order here: N5 and her husband have more conservative views than the grandmother.

Education is the topic to which N5 devoted the most time during our conversation. One of its aspects was the education of her children against the background of Jewish education in general, and their education in comparison with Polish education. This theme also appeared with N4, but as a doubt. N5 expressed certainty about her views on this topic. She views education both informally, as upbringing in the family, and formally, as institutional education. She perceives upbringing in the family from the point of view of Judaism. The parents try to show their children the positive aspects of certain prohibitions. They treat the Sabbath as a family day during which they can take walks together or read books in order to compensate for the children's sense of loss, for example, of watching cartoons. They encourage the children to say blessings, and when the older daughter refuses, they do not force her.

Despite the restrictive rules of Orthodox Judaism and many the restrictions that result from it, the children are free to decide whether to participate in particular rituals. The parents are also free to apply the rules, which N5 described as follows: “but again, it’s kind of... each parent has to sense what stage his child is at, how to talk to the child, how to teach him or her” [W5/XXXVII/642/47], because “it’s also about the fact that children who are forced to do something escape from it in the future” [W5/XXXIV/565/42]. Children are introduced into the world of rules gradually, because they will not understand everything at once. The rules of Judaism are adjusted to the children’s age and preferences. In the narrator’s stories, Judaism appears as a reflective religion that individual rabbis and parents can freely interpret and adapt to the abilities of an individual child. However, this freedom is limited by the principles of Judaism.

N5 is an advocate of an individual approach, not only in home religious education but also in institutional education. She needs to be able to make decisions and adapt particular rules to the developmental stage of children. She criticized the public education which is rooted in the dominant culture.

After arriving in Łódź, she opened a Jewish kindergarten for her daughters to attend. She did not want them to participate in Catholic events in the public kindergarten. She was probably worried that her daughters’ introduction into Jewish culture would be hindered because of their young age. Her son attends a democratic school, as there is no Jewish school in Łódź, and N5 did not choose to establish one. This form of education seemed to be the least restrictive to the family’s religious freedom. The son can attend morning prayer and only go to school afterwards; school events that would take place on a Friday are postponed to Thursday because of the Sabbath. The teachers are open to the cultural differences among the pupils and their parents: N5 has been to the school and talked about Jewish culture, and the pupils have visited the synagogue. The lack of Catholic religion lessons is crucial for N5. The students who are interested in practicing the Catholic faith do so on their own. N5 was curious to know whether the preparation for the First Communion takes place at school despite the lack of religious education (RE): “well, and so I asked, a bit reluctantly, the teachers what it looked like, and they looked at me like I was crazy. They did! And they said they have no RE at school!”

[W5/XLI/721-723/53]. She emphasized her surprise at the situation by the exclamation in her statement. Also, her son does not participate in all school events and he does not go on school trips. N5 thinks it is too complicated to explain to him why the other children can eat jelly beans or sausages from the campfire and he cannot.

Despite certain limitations, N5 claimed that she is more likely to protect her daughters from the influence of the world than her son. Although she did not explain the reason for this view, religious principles may be an explanation. According to traditional Judaism, men are to be involved in extra-domestic affairs, such as going to work or to synagogue. Women tend to act as keepers of the household. This does not mean that they cannot work, because if they want to or if the economic situation of the family requires it, they have the right to do so. They can also go to synagogue, but unlike men, they are not obliged to do so. Moreover, N5 usually spoke of her son individually and of her daughters collectively, which may be for two reasons. Firstly, the children are differentiated by gender, so when referring to the rules of religious upbringing, she talks separately about the rules of upbringing for boys and separately about upbringing for girls. Secondly, the experience of her son going to school is different from that of her daughters going to kindergarten.

Bicultural motherhood

Bicultural family

At the time of the interview, the narrator had one child; she currently has two. In her family of origin, N4 was brought up in the Christian culture and her Jewish roots were hidden. She discovered them as a teenager. She found her religious path in Judaism. Her husband grew up in a Catholic family. They are both religious and thus form a culturally mixed family. Their child is being brought up in two cultures, but with a clear indication of which is mum's and which is dad's. The daughter goes to synagogue and Judaic traditional events with her mum, and to the Catholic church with her dad. The couple have found agreement in their non-institutional perception of God. They live in Poland, where the culture of N4's husband is dominant. The daughter attended a Jewish kindergarten.

Bicultural mother

According to N4, her husband approves of her religion and participates in what is important to her. “When I have the Seder, he also tries to help me clean up or something, and he sits with me” [W4/XLVII/447/35]. “So it’s like that, well, he’ll always sit with me, he’ll help, he’ll also read” [W4/XLVIII/451/35]. N4 does not celebrate Catholic holidays. She prefers to celebrate Jewish holidays at home, among her family, i.e. in the company of her husband and daughter.

At the time of the interview, her daughter was not yet attending kindergarten. N4 was considering enrolling her in a Jewish kindergarten. However, she was unsure if this decision would be good, fearing that perhaps it would deprive her of contact with the dominant culture. At the same time, she did not want her daughter to learn the Catholic religion in kindergarten or at school. However, she supports such education at home and is happy for her husband to teach the girl religious issues. This is a certain contradiction: N4 prefers that her daughter’s Catholic religion is taught at home, but she wants to entrust the teaching of Judaism to the kindergarten staff. Perhaps this results from her own negative school experiences, as the RE teachers did not allow her to ask questions and forced her to accept what they taught without understanding it. N4 would like to show her daughter Christianity as an idea of goodness, and, in her opinion, the institutionalized version of Catholicism mainly includes scaring people. N4’s reluctance to institutionalized religion appears only with reference to Catholicism.

Multicultural motherhood

Multicultural family

At the time of the interview, the narrator had two children; she currently has three. N10 grew up in a non-religious Polish/Jewish family. She is a non-believer and she identifies with Jewish culture secularly. Her husband grew up in a religious Polish/Jewish family. He identifies with and attends the rites of both Judaism and Christianity (mainly Catholicism). The spouses, for religious reasons, move frequently and travel a lot, as a result of which their children grew

up surrounded by Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy, and they also went to a Muslim school. It took a lot of negotiation on the part of the spouses to harmonize the values coming from the different cultures. Nowadays, they want the children to be able to function in many cultures, and in future to decide for themselves which one is the closest to them.

Multicultural mother

N10 and her husband held different cultural values until a certain point. Both she and her husband grew up in Polish/Jewish families. Her husband's family of origin participated in both Catholic and Judaic rites and went to the Church and synagogue. The narrator grew up with an awareness of her Jewish origins, but in a non-religious family that did not celebrate Jewish holidays and went to her grandmother's for Catholic holidays. However, N10 was not familiar with any of the religious rites. She only became acquainted with them through her husband, which she recounted: "at that point ... well, I had just met him. And it was also as if [my husband] suggested, 'Come on, let's go to the synagogue'. I, well... I wanted to go, because it's sort of a piece of me, too That's right, I wanted to go to see it; well, because, it was a kind of curiosity, all together, right?" [W10/XXXV/747-751/65-66]. The interviewee was not used to going to religious places. She identified with Jewish culture, as she called it "a part of herself." She wanted to see a synagogue, but had not done so before meeting her husband. The couple found an agreement in terms of the participation in the practice of Judaism.

The insignificance of religion for N10 can also be confirmed by the fact that she agreed to get married in a Catholic church. For her, it was not for religious reasons, but aesthetic ones, which she recalls as follows:

We didn't think about a Jewish wedding either, because, like—where, and how, right? And besides ..., well, sort of also, even legally, you know, it wasn't possible in the synagogue, because I'm not a member, right? And if it was, for example, a reformed synagogue, it wouldn't actually count ... So we decided that wouldn't be good either. Then we started to think about Catholicism. I wasn't convinced that I wanted it either, but then I decided that if [my husband] wanted it, then OK. And it didn't

really matter to me. Well, I mean, I sort of thought to myself that it was so... I don't know, well, that it could at least be so nice, right? But, I don't know, maybe it was a bit naive, but it happened, anyway. In the end, I decided that maybe it should be like that. [W10/XXI/434-457/39-41]

The lack of attachment to religiousness meant that for N10 it was not important according to which rite the wedding would be held. The aesthetics of the place and legal considerations were important factors for her. In this respect, the Catholic Church proved to be more open to the difference between the spouses, allowing a unilateral wedding with a non-baptized person, which would not have been possible in a synagogue. In her statement, N10 also pointed to her husband's openness towards getting married in particular institutions. However, the biculturalism in her family of procreation caused some difficulty after the wedding: "and it also started to annoy me that [my husband] was going to this church. We also sort of argued about it a bit" [W10/XXIII/473-474/42]. The reason for the narrator's dissatisfaction was the fear that the husband would try to make Catholicism the dominant religion in their new family. Perhaps his religiosity was incomprehensible to N10. When it came to Catholicism, the spouses did not find the same understanding as with Judaism. This may be because in Jewish culture they participated in a form of play. In Catholicism, on the other hand, they made binding declarations.

The discrepancies between the spouses became most apparent when raising their children. At the time of the interview, they had two children. The first religion they were introduced to was Catholicism, which was done on the husband's initiative. The first doubts, which had already arisen when N10 got married in the Catholic Church, were expressed as follows: "now I'm not so sure; then I also had a moment when I said that maybe it wasn't the right choice. Because it was afterwards that sort of parenting happened, right? It was then that I started to think about what I was committing myself to, and, at the moment when I was to sign that paper, I also sort of had a moment of hesitation, but finally I decided, well OK, yeah?" [W10/XXI/458-460/41]. The Catholic Church offers the possibility of unilateral weddings, i.e. with persons of other faiths (or with non-believers). However, it does not give the right to a non-Catholic spouse to bring up the children in the values specific to their religion

(or to atheism). During a Catholic wedding, it is required that the spouses promise to raise their children in the Catholic faith. This declaration was taken seriously by N10. In light of the obligations imposed on the family, the spouses decided to baptize their first child, about which the narrator said, “Well, so we baptized him. But then I decided that I wasn’t interested in the Church—that I sort of don’t want to, that it sort of annoys me. And that this is absolutely not for me” [W10/XXIII/469-472/42]. For this reason, N10 and her husband did not choose to baptize their second child. Nevertheless, the children went to church with their dad from an early age, although it was an Anglican church rather than a Catholic church due to where they lived, which the narrator depicts as follows: “later on [my husband] would go with them a little bit himself, but [my son] was not very interested in going there; [my daughter] was more interested. [She] is not baptized” [W10/XXIII/494-495/44], “but they now go to the Anglican church. Because it’s close to our home. But they don’t go there because it’s close, but because it has some activities for children during the Mass, so [my husband] goes to Mass, and [she] or sometimes [my son] go to the children’s club; the club offers some activities for kids, like artistic activities, during which they draw or do similar things; ... and they have some classes, they talk about God” [W10/XXIII/502-506/44-45]. It is easier for the narrator to accept the children’s participation in a mass held in the Anglican church than in the Catholic church. She tries to convince herself that they are taking part in artistic activities only accompanied by religious content. Interestingly, the unbaptized daughter is more likely to attend Mass than the baptized son, which means that for the children the sacrament introducing them to the Catholic community is not important.

As the children began to grow up, N10 felt it was important to start introducing them to Jewish culture and Judaism:

At one point, I concluded that if these children were already going to church, then I should also make it possible for them to hear about Judaism. It is because I really didn’t want them to be, sort of, in the Catholic Church with the sense that this is God It would be a kind of a limited image. [W10/XXV/533-535/47]

It is likely that the idea of introducing the children to Judaism stemmed from her dislike of Catholicism; perhaps it would not have

come up if they had not gone to church. However, she wanted the children to learn about different religions. A family's participation in religious practices depends on the abilities of all its members, as my interviewee recounted:

We don't do it very systematically, but, in a way, we do it [W10/XXV/531/47]; and now, for example, for some time it has been happening that, I mean, we try to celebrate the Sabbath in such a loose form; I would say, for example, it is not necessarily at the time it should be, but when we manage to do that, right? That is, in the evening, right? [W10/XXVII/536-537/47]; it doesn't, sort of, include saying all the prayers; also, we don't turn off the lights during the Sabbath. I don't know; surely, the TV is off. Because we don't have one. But also, well, we kind of try to explain this to the children, for example, in a normal way But we're not completely restrictive about it. It's just that we explain to them, that now we can refrain from listening to the radio, right? [laughter] Or to music. But, in the end, if we have to practice playing the violin and we need some accompaniments from the internet, we use them and it's OK. [W10/XXVII/544-556/48-49]

In addition to celebrating the Sabbath, N10's family also celebrate the New Year, during which they eat "apples with honey or something, or some other food" [W10/XXVII/543/48]. Celebrating the Sabbath and other holidays in accordance with all the rules is not possible, as she explained: "we have this kind of lifestyle that is quite crazy ... I mean, we travel a lot and that is why this is so" [W10/XXVII/559-560/49]. Religious selectivity, which only occurs in Jewish families, is a result of the lifestyle of those living in 21st-century European countries. Working parents, as well as children going to schools and extracurricular activities, do not always have the opportunity to celebrate every holiday according to all the rules. Consequently, the rules have to be adapted to the lifestyle of the family. Some have to be abandoned, while others are slightly modified. For the participants in a given culture, it is important to know the symbolism and to be able to recreate at least some of it.

In addition to participating in Anglican and Jewish culture, N10's children also had the opportunity to learn about the Orthodox Church as, due to N10's husband's work, the whole family lived for a time in a country where it is the dominant religion. In turn, at the time of the interview, they were living in England, but "in a Pakistani district, i.e. in the Muslim religion, where they have a mosque next

door and the children go to school where most of the children are followers of Islam; Muslim holidays are also celebrated at school” [W10/XXIX/621/54]. Functioning in such an international environment means that the children as well as the parents learn about the rules coming from different cultures. N10 was not sure whether those religions with which the children have had contact so far are distinguished by them:

I don’t know if our children fully recognize which holidays are from which religion. But they are still small. And I, sort of, I can laugh a lot sometimes, because I can see that they’re mixing things up there. And I try to explain to them that there are more religions and it’s not necessarily the same religion everywhere. But I think at some point they will somehow understand this, right? Because that is simply a learning process. [W10/XXX/658-663/58]

In her explanations she pointed out “that it is not known if this God is there at all, and I don’t believe He is, but there are people who believe” [W10/XXIX/653/57]. N10 and her husband show their children different lifestyles. However, this is not intentional, but a consequence of the parents’ lifestyles, into which the children are naturally integrated.

At the first stage of their acquaintance, the spouses found agreement about participating in the culture with which they both identified. It is likely that this compatibility led them to trust each other on religious issues. N10 believed that, despite her Catholic marriage, her husband would not attend Mass every week or introduce the children to that culture. The husband may have trusted that his wife would follow through on her declaration. It is also possible that they did not spend much time reflecting on the religious future of their family. The conflicting attitudes of N10 and her husband that emerged after the marriage made it possible to uncover cultural divergences that may not have been visible before. However, the spouses have found an agreement. It involves introducing the children to both cultures, with them attending the Christian one only with their dad. At the same time, the daughter and son are not forced to attend Mass if they do not want to. The customs of the Jewish culture, in which the whole family participates, are adapted to the needs and abilities of all its members. At the same time, the parents emphasize the educational aspects of religion, showing the children the denominations that

are available in their community. Thus, we can say that N10 and her husband present cultural and religious openness. It means that even professing different values does not make it difficult for them to cope with the cultural diversity of the family of procreation.

Conclusion

Each of the narrators presented a reflective approach to motherhood. For them, making individual cultural decisions involves solving a number of dilemmas which are consulted with their husbands. In each family, culture is mainly revealed through religion. The children are shown the positive aspects of their parents' religions. In individual families, women are mainly responsible for raising younger children. Despite the declaration that it is the husband who makes the family home religious or not, the wife is still responsible for the religious education of children. Various restrictions are treated as providing new opportunities. For example, the prohibition of watching cartoons on the Sabbath is compensated for by the constant presence of the parents during this time and the possibility of spending time with them in another form. Religious education is provided through reading books on the themes of particular celebrations. Religious content is adapted to the age and ability of the children. They are gradually introduced to the world of particular rules. A kind of dichotomy is discernible in this image. On the one hand, it is possible to discern the functioning of a partnership according to which the direction of the children's cultural development is discussed between the spouses; on the other hand, the responsibility for introducing the children to the world of traditions and values still rests with the mother, which is characteristic of traditional models in which both the figure of the Polish Mother and the Yiddish *Mame* are firmly established.

A major dilemma for each of the narrators is the education of their children. The mothers want them to maintain their cultural identity, but, at the same time, they want the children to be able to function in the dominant culture. Each narrator has adopted a slightly different strategy in this regard. The monocultural mother isolates her children from the dominant culture, believing that they need to know their own culture well at that stage of life, and that contact

with other cultures will come later. The bicultural (and partly also multicultural) mother raises her children in both cultures, but with a clear indication of which culture is represented by mum and which is represented by dad. In turn, the multicultural mother also raises her children through reference to the culture which prevails in her family's environment at a given time.

The polycultural mothers (bicultural and multicultural ones) leave the final decision regarding the choice of culture to their children, while allowing them to explore more than one. The monocultural mother also makes this declaration, but does not provide her children with role models from different cultures.

All the narrators believe that cultivating the Jewish tradition in a world dominated by Christianity is a challenge. It is also a source of constant doubt and balancing between being able to maintain cultural continuity and providing their children with role models to help them live in the dominant culture. A correlation is apparent: the stronger the mother's religious convictions, the more clearly they are reflected in the cultural and religious upbringing of the children. Fathers play a secondary role in this regard.

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