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The meaning of Jewish culture of origin for Jewish women from the third generation¹

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Abstract: This article draws on four free-form interviews with elements of narration, which I conducted with representatives of the “third generation” of people of Jewish origin living in Łódź. In my text, I refer to the knowledge (and lack of knowledge) of the surveyed women as to their roots. I also distinguish two family models they have created. I place Jewish culture and religion in the context of the women’s everyday experiences.

Keywords: women, Jewish origin, family, third generation

Introduction²

In this article, I present some results of the research I conducted among people of Jewish origin. I focus on the meaning of this origin for young women – from the third generation – and the way it manifests itself in their family lives. The context for the present deliberations is the breakage or reversion of intergenerational transmission in the Jewish community.

The article interprets four free-form interviews with elements of narration (out of sixteen interviews I organised while preparing my doctoral thesis). An advantage of this approach is that the researcher does not impose any particular form of narration

* Agnieszka Krawczyk – MA in Slavic Philology and Pedagogy; Assistant Professor at the Department of Educational Studies at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Lodz. Research interests are: multicultural pedagogy, culture, Jewish culture, narratology, methodology, qualitative research, literature, children’s and juvenile literature.

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on the interviewees. Narrations presented by the respondents were formulated in response to my questions. The questions, however, were sufficiently open to be regarded as discussion topics rather than typical questions. As a result, my respondents could speak freely, or even digress. I conducted my research from March 2015 to December 2016. The selection criteria for the research sample were: Jewish background, connection with Łódź (I was interested in the current inhabitants of the city, as well as people who used to live there in the past) and age from approximately 25 years, without any upper limits. Initially, I planned to involve the representatives of three generations: the oldest ('grandparents'), the middle ('parents') and the youngest ('grandchildren/children'). Despite quite general age criteria, the people who contacted me were mainly in the age group from 30 to 40 years, which reflects the absence of the representatives of the oldest and the middle generation in the Jewish community of Łódź. Out of 16 research participants, 12 people represent the youngest generation, 2 – middle, and 2 – the oldest. Using the snowball method during selection, I asked particular research participants to provide the contact details of their parents, grandparents or other representatives of older generations. However, I managed to obtain those details in very few cases. The research participants justified this situation with their parents not being interested in their origin, afraid to talk about it or having no knowledge of Jewish culture.

At the time of conducting the interviews, the research participants were aged 31 to 38 (Judyta – 31, Dominika – 32, Ola and Katarzyna – 38; for the sake of anonymity, the research participants were given fictitious names). All of them are married women with higher education. Only one of them is married to a Jew, all the others are in mixed marriages with Catholics.

I start the next part of this article by explaining the notion of the 'third generation,' followed by information on the respondents' knowledge (or lack thereof) about their origins. Then, I distinguish two main types of families started by the women, in order to place Jewish culture and religion in their daily life.

Women's knowledge (or lack thereof) about their Jewish origins

The 'third generation'³ includes people currently aged approximately 30 to above 40. These are the grandchildren of people who lived during the Second World War. It is more of an informal term, as the people from the said age group include also children of the war generation representatives. Another notion to describe the aforementioned people is '(adult) grandchildren of the Holocaust'⁴, while people from the

³ This notion appears, among others, [in:] J. Cukras-Stelągowska, *Małżeństwa mieszane w społeczności żydowskiej – aberracja czy norma społeczna?*, „Wychowanie w Rodzinie”, No. XIV (2/2016).

⁴ This notion appears, among others, [in:] A. Mazor, I. Tal, *Intergenerational transmission: the individuation process and the capacity for intimacy of adult children of Holocaust survivors*, “Contemporary Family Therapy”, March 1996, Vol. 18, Issue 1.

second generation are referred to as '(adult) children of the Holocaust.' Polish representatives of the third generation are characterised by a willingness to go back to their roots, meaning an interest in Jewish culture, including, in some cases, Judaism, which stands in contrast to their parents, who had a tendency to deny, hide or attribute little significance to the culture of their origin. The second generation is virtually absent in Polish Jewish organisations. Parents, brought up by grandparents in an atmosphere of fear, being the result of the Second World War, tried to avoid any contact with broadly understood Judaism and Jewish culture. Protected by their parents, they failed to pass the traditions (which were often unknown to them) on to their children. Here, the intergenerational transmission was broken, as a result of which young people seek contact with their origins on their own, learning about their culture and, in some cases, introducing their parents to it.

Judyta comes from a family of artists, which has been in touch with assimilated Jews for generations. Her grandmother brought up her mother keeping her aware of their Jewish background, but with no connection with religion, which is not typical of the Jewish culture, in which the secular and the spiritual sphere tend to overlap. Also, the multi-generational awareness of roots is rare among people of Jewish origin living in Poland, but Judyta has *always* known about it. She did not experience any breakthrough in her life, related to discovering a secret. In Judyta's family, Jewish culture was nurtured not only by her grandmother, but by her mother as well. However, in this case, culture should be understood in a narrow sense, as it covered mainly artistic activity. When asked about traditions, Judyta answered: *no, not at home, we didn't have that tradition at home* (230/7/W5). Her family did not celebrate Jewish holidays. But *My mum used to take me to the synagogue, and I grew up with the Jewish culture festival [...] Mum used to go there with me, when I was a little girl, I took my friends there too* (230-233/7-8/W5)⁵. It should be emphasised that her mother used to take her both to a synagogue and to a church, which, however, had only cultural, and not religious, meaning for both of them. The mother taught her daughter artistic sensitivity, teaching her about architecture and art. During those visits to places of worship and during trips abroad, they looked at paintings, icons, and became acquainted with the culture typical of a given region.

The other two respondents, Dominika and Ola⁶, were also brought up aware of their origins, although, in their opinion, it was not particularly important for members of their families. Nevertheless, they managed to become acquainted with Jewish holidays, religion, etc. Dominika describes the awareness of her origins as follows:

⁵ At that time Judyta lived in Krakow, and the festival she mentions is the Jewish Culture Festival, www.jewishfestival.pl/en.

⁶ About Dominika and Ola see: e.g. A. Krawczyk, *Wielokulturowość oddalona od pogranicza. Na przykładzie doświadczeń biograficznych członków łódzkich stowarzyszeń żydowskich*, [in:] A. Rzepkowska (ed.), *Odmienność w kulturze*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń 2017.

I've always known it, or at least most of the time (36/2/W2), and it was probably when I was a child, but I can't remember it that well. No, it was no big secret (44-45/36/W2). In Dominika's home, Jewish holidays were celebrated sometimes, albeit not in a regular manner; also, the family members did not emphasise the fact that a particular holiday was celebrated at a given moment. For example, during Hanukkah and Passover, family reunions were organised, and potato pancakes were served during Hanukkah. Moreover, festive family dinners took place not on Sundays (like in the homes of most of Dominika's friends), but on Saturdays.

Dominika's claim as to irregularity in celebrating holidays rooted in Jewish tradition should be treated carefully, as this claim may be the result of selective memory. Adult people do not have to necessarily remember all the events from their childhood, and tend to remember those accompanied by emotional experience and meaningful associations. This could be the case with Dominika – maybe family holidays were celebrated on every occasion, and she remembered only some of them? Moreover, the families of both respondents did not celebrate Catholic holidays – this is unusual for families of Polish Jews, who often tend to treat such holidays as a national tradition, and celebrate them according to the Catholic calendar. A Christmas tree was never present at Dominika's house, although as a child she used to ask her mother to buy one. Dominika's mother refused, saying that a plastic tree would not be aesthetic, and that the needles falling off a real tree would make a mess. It could be presumed that this was just an excuse for the sake of a child, who would be more able to understand such arguments, rather than the details of her family's cultural diversity. Those details were also not very well known to Dominika's mother, who learned about the particular aspects of Jewish culture later on, thanks to her daughter. It is an example of a broken (parents not participating in culture) or reversed (children teaching their parents their culture of origin) intergenerational transmission. This would mean that Dominika's grandfather did not care about systematisation of his daughter's knowledge. The respondent remembers, however, that her grandfather used to take her to the synagogue. He died when Dominika was eight years old.

As previously mentioned, the respondent knew the customs accompanying particular holidays, however, family members did not explicitly state the fact of celebrating these occasions. This could be caused by the fact that Judaism is not a dominant religion in Poland, and an additional, external reinforcement was missing here. Children from Catholic families learn about celebrating particular holidays not only from their relatives, but also from teachers, friends, the media or by observing decorations in shops. This is also confirmed by what Dominika said. In her opinion, children from convert families have more extensive knowledge about Judaism and celebration of various holidays, since for them it was not an obvious fact – at some point, somebody in their families decided to convert and had to learn all that was related to it.

On the other hand, Ola grew up in an atheist family, where the members of preceding generations were not interested in celebrating any holidays. The main source

of contact with the Jewish tradition for Ola was the information her grandmother spoke of openly, related to the latter's war experiences and traumas. Ola never perceived her cultural affiliation as a sign of her distinctness – Jewish identity was something obvious to her; she even said: *I thought it was natural that grandmas in other homes might do the same* (176-177/6/W3) – meaning they might sing songs in the Yiddish language to their grandchildren. Despite the knowledge of her Jewish origins, Ola still feels there were things left unsaid in her family: *even now, I feel that I should talk about certain things with my father, but I fail to do so. And I know that maybe we'll never talk about it* (154-156/5/W3). The respondent adds that even after her grandmother's death, her father avoided discussing certain topics. This has resulted in a certain loop. Ola says that her father might have expected her to ask him if she wanted to know something. However, she asked one time, but received no answer in return. Therefore, even in families in which the origin was not kept secret, the youngest generation had the impression that not everything was clear and that there were certain topics not to be discussed. Dominika and Katarzyna have also experienced this blockade. It consists of the presence of certain taboos in a family – topics which younger family members would like to talk about, but which are blocked by their parents and grandparents, as well as in avoiding talking about experiences hard to describe by those who went through them⁷.

Katarzyna was brought up in a Catholic family. She herself was a very religious and spiritual person. She learned about her Jewish origins around the age of 14, when she came back from school and told her mother a joke about Jews. Then, her mother informed her of their Jewish roots, and immediately made a secret of it, forbidding Katarzyna to tell anyone about it, even immediate relatives, such as her brother and stepfather. She refers to her origins in an impersonal manner, saying: *it wasn't discussed at home* (65-66/3/W4). She does not use phrases such as *we didn't talk about it*, as if her origin was some mysterious, vague force, difficult to assign to a particular addressee. Discovering the truth about her roots was a very difficult experience for her, involving a trauma Katarzyna hasn't managed to overcome until now. As a result, she turned to therapy.

Failure to handle traumatic experiences of the Holocaust, and transferring them to younger generations, is a global phenomenon, present not only among Polish Jews. It entails passing two types of experiences to the next generations. The first one consists in the eldest generations keeping their private, dark sphere. This results in difficulties in establishing closer relations with the relative who experienced the Holocaust. On the other hand, it is possible to notice that fears are passed on to younger family members. They are not sure what they are afraid of, but nevertheless, they fear

⁷ H. Greenspan, *The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable and the Irretrievable*, "Oral History Review", No. 41/2014, pp. 229–243.

the unspoken⁸. Katarzyna had a similar experience, growing up with the implicit fear which her grandfather passed on to her mother, who, in turn, transferred it to her daughter. The fear exacerbated after the birth of Katarzyna's child, and it was then that the respondent decided to take up therapy, to finally stop this transmission of intergenerational fears. Another phenomenon independent from the country of residence is the presence of fear and inadequate response to current situations, which has a negative effect on families of younger generations of people with Jewish roots⁹. For Katarzyna, it was her failure to take notice of her overly emotional reactions or undertaking unnecessary actions. An example here might be a moment when Katarzyna's child became sick – then, the respondent wanted to travel a long way back to her hometown, since staying with her relatives, during a situation which she felt was threatening, was supposed to give her a sense of security. Such behaviours caused arguments in her marriage, and it was Katarzyna's husband who made her aware of how irrational they were.

Confusion related to a family secret is deepened by the fact that Katarzyna has been unable to fully determine her sense of inclusivity. Katarzyna herself says she feels like a 'half-breed.' The reason for using such a term is twofold – firstly, the respondent is not a Jew in the female line, which, according to orthodox Judaism, means she is not Jewish at all. At the same time, such a feeling may result from the family's powerlessness; when it comes to Jewish issues, there is a problem with determining the identity, resulting from uncertain cultural affiliation. The family denies their origin. Katarzyna cannot count on their support, but she has also been unable to find it in an orthodox Jewish community. Her family thinks that her focus on Jewishness has become her obsession. The Jews among whom she lives do not perceive her as 'completely' Jewish, so she has difficulties in determining her own identity. The respondent says: *I'm somewhere in-between* (272/9/W4). She is unable to choose one side in 100%, as she does not feel she belongs to either of them – this might be the reason for her incomplete conversion. This might also give an apparent sense of security – being in a Jewish world, she has *her people* in the outside world, while being in a non-Jewish environment, she still has *her people* in the Jewish one. To confirm it, she recalls a conversation with her mother, who told her not to talk about her Jewish roots, and warned her about negative consequences such actions may have for her daughter. In response, Katarzyna said she had no fear, as she had her loved ones (husband, friends) always by her side. However, the truth is Katarzyna does not seem to be a person full of confidence – she is quite confused and does not feel secure in any environment.

The lifestyle related to her origins, the awareness of ethnic affiliation, as well as teaching her child the principles of Jewish culture, or even information about their

⁸ A. Mazor, I. Tal, *Intergenerational transmission: the individuation process and the capacity for intimacy of adult children of Holocaust survivors*, "Contemporary Family Therapy", No. 18/1996, pp. 95–113.

⁹ Above, pp. 95–113.

origin, is of crucial important for the future life of a young boy or girl. In fact, the respondents brought up with the sense of Jewish ethnic affiliation, treated it as a natural element of their identity, which later facilitated establishing families and having children, as they did not experience internal conflicts. The respondents obliged by their parents not to reveal their roots to outsiders and to other relatives experienced difficulties in doing so.

The place of Jewish culture and religion in the everyday life of women

The respondents established two basic family types – monocultural and multicultural, with the addition that the latter type includes two subtypes – marriage with and without children, as shown in the below specification:

Monocultural/monoreligious families	Multicultural/bi-religious families/mixed marriages	
Family with numerous children	Married couple with a child	Married couples with no children
Judyta	Katarzyna	Dominika Ola

Judyta, brought up in an atheist community of Jewish artists, has established a religious Jewish family with her husband and children. She was not always a religious person. She became like that when, as a student and an active member of one of the Jewish organisations, she met her present husband. She summarises it as follows: *And... And it turned out that there is something like Judaism, with lots of principles and rules, and suddenly I realised that these rules make me feel really good* (412-414/13/W5). Judyta, being aware of her origins, certainly knew that *there is something like Judaism*, and she knew that such a religion exists. *Sudden realisation* could rather mean her surprise to find that religion could be of interest to a non-religious person like herself. Judaism probably appeared as an outcome of the need to live with a religious man. Particular rules – regardless of the cause for interest in them – have become permanent elements of Judyta's life, and they give her genuine pleasure. Encouraged by her partner, she started exploring this religion, and then adopted its rules in her daily life. This means that currently, Judyta, her husband and children cultivate the Jewish principles on a daily basis, they say the *berakah* at appropriate moments, eat kosher food, adhere to every Sabbath and all the rules related to it, and they also celebrate all typically Jewish holidays. Moreover, it should be mentioned that, in the Jewish community, they serve as a rabbi and a *rebbetzin*, which obliges them to perform the aforementioned activities; at the same time, however, the social functions they have accepted are a consequence of the earlier turn to religious life. Their marital bond is warm, cordial and friendly (which can be concluded not only from the interview with

Judyta, but also from a conversation with her husband). They try to comply with all the rules stipulated in the Torah and the Talmud, and also with the principles characteristic for a broadly understood Jewish community.

Katarzyna was not brought up aware of her Jewish origin, which, in her family, was perceived as a stigma and a thing to deny. However, she *always* felt the urge for spirituality, which she initially tried to satisfy by active participation in Catholic culture. In time, the search for her own religious path and contact with her roots, led her to Jewish culture. For a while, she was in a relationship with a Jew and considered the decision to convert. After their relationship ended, she did not fulfil her plans. Nevertheless, it would be an oversimplification to conclude that she decided not to convert only due to the break-up – Katarzyna herself is not sure of such a linkage. Her way of narration might imply that she is reluctant to institutionalise her life and formalise its particular aspects. At present, she is married to a Catholic, with whom she tries to merge the customs of both cultures and religions. Consequently, they celebrate both Catholic and Jewish holidays. Katarzyna's husband tries to support her in cultivating her religions and in overcoming her childhood fears, passed on from generation to generation, starting from her great-grandfather and her grandfather, who experienced the horrors of war.

Dominika and Ola, similarly to Katarzyna, are married to Catholics. All three respondents decided to enter into civil marriages with their partners, however, Dominika and Ola are open to their husbands' religion. Dominika refers to it by saying: *we learn about each other* (334-335/11/W2). They themselves were not brought up in Catholic culture; they did not attend religion lessons at school and they did not go to church. Each of them participates in Mass only to accompany their husbands, but nevertheless, they try to engage and learn as much as they can about Catholicism. This often surprises representatives of the Catholic Church, unaccustomed to a situation in which participants of the Mass stay in the church after it, to ask the priest some questions or request clarification of complicated issues. The respondents and their husbands celebrate both Jewish and Catholic holidays. Dominika, thanks to her husband's culture, has managed to make her unfulfilled childhood dream come true – every Christmas they decorate a Christmas tree:

but I really wanted to have the tree (...) Now, I live with my husband in our little apartment, and since our home is so tiny, also our tree was the size of this fern, but it was there anyway. We watered it and cared about it, but it withered in March, unfortunately (89-92/3/W2).

At the same time, celebration of holidays – both Jewish and Catholic – does not entail any attachment to religion. Dominika explains it as follows:

when we first met, and then started going out with each other (...) he [husband] participated in Seders, one or two times he came for Passover or some other meetings we had, and he really got into it, he read aloud, finding it hard to pronounce all those names, and I think that's all – neither of us is really religious (32-327/10/W2).

The lack of religiousness may be the key to the success of mixed marriages – strongly religious people would definitely be less open to their partner's culture and would not agree to partake in the customs related to it.

In the past, when someone wanted to marry a person of a different denomination, it was necessary for one of them to accept the religious beliefs of their partner. Contemporary times offer more opportunities in this respect. Judging by the experiences of the respondents, it can be said that these are not just formal opportunities – a bi-religious family is not a problem in the informal sphere. Reconciliation of traditions of two cultures in one family requires the openness of each partner to the other person's customs and the will to discover them.

Judyta claims that Judaism is not a rigorous religion, leaving a certain amount of freedom to children: *if a four-year-old takes his yarmulke off, his parents don't have to chase him. The thing is that if kids are forced into anything, they will abandon it in the future* (533-536/16/W5). However, children are given freedom to the extent permitted by the rules of Judaism. Rules and principles are adapted to the age and perceptive capabilities of a child. Simultaneously, parents try to minimise the feeling of loss in their children – if the children see somebody at school eating non-kosher food, which they themselves cannot eat, their parents give them something else – something attractive to them.

Judyta and her husband try to bring their children up in isolation from the dominant culture. Their daughters attend a Jewish kindergarten and, in general, have no contact with people from beyond the Jewish community. It is a kindergarten which – according to the respondent – *was established for them by myself* (505/16/W5). It is not certain whether such an attitude of Judyta proves the need to control the education of her children, or maybe the feeling of responsibility for their education. Her son attends a democratic school, where religion classes are not held, which was the main argument when choosing the place of the boy's education. At the same time, Judyta's son does not participate in school-related activities, such as school trips for the birthday parties of his friends. When describing this situation, Judyta claims it is easier this way, but it can be presumed that it makes things easier above all for the parents, rather than the child. If their son went on a school trip, they would not have control over what their child eats; this, in turn, might provoke their son to give up the kosher diet for a moment (for example, if another trip participant offered him snacks containing pork, brought from home). Judyta's son does not go to his friend's birthday parties, because they are usually organised on Fridays or Saturdays – during Sabbath. *He doesn't go to parties. Especially those birthday parties that take place on Saturdays. It's out of the question* (636-637/19) – it is a stringent statement, beyond any discussion. In this area, her son does not have as much freedom of choice as, e.g., with wearing a yarmulke. It is an unbreakable rule. Her son, similarly to his sisters, has virtually no contact with people from beyond the Jewish world. He only encounters them at school, in the context of specific rules, allowing the parents to interfere significantly.

It should be added that, for a child at the age of Judyta's son, socialisation is very important – at this age, children tend to move away from what their parents have taught them, as parents are no longer the most important people to them. Secondary socialisation starts when a child reaches the age of Judyta's youngest daughter. Thus it can be concluded that socialisation is significantly limited for all of her children. Going to a kindergarten, a child discovers new rules, views, and lifestyles, confronting them with what he/she has learnt at home. In the discussed case, the daughters attend a kindergarten established by their mother and managed according to the principles which she represents. It is true that Judyta's son attends an external school, and is able to experience such a confrontation, but it is not fostered by informal contacts with his friends, for example in the playground or in other children's homes. Therefore, it is difficult to precisely state to what extent the choices made by the boy are really his choices.

The parents also do not maintain numerous social relations with people not involved in Jewish culture. Due to their social functions, they spend most of their time with representatives of Jewish culture; they find it hard to distinguish work time from private time, as their entire life focuses on their Community, so they do not have many opportunities to meet non-Jewish people.

Katarzyna and her husband bring their daughter up in both of their cultures, but with a clear distinction of which religion 'belongs' to a particular parent. This means that the mother takes her child to the Community and introduces her to Jewish culture. Katarzyna keeps searching for new perspectives and is open to help from the outside world, so when she realised her knowledge was insufficient, she (and her husband) decided to send her daughter to a Jewish kindergarten, where she would be educated by people specially prepared for this task. However, it was not a simple decision – it raised many doubts, and also objections on the part of Katarzyna's mother. On the other hand, the respondent's husband takes their daughter to church for Mass and provides her with information about his culture. Katarzyna has doubts similar to those troubling Judyta – she does not want her daughter to attend religion classes at school, but she also does not want her child to be excluded from certain activities related to Catholic religion in state schools. At the same time, she does not mind her husband taking care of their daughter's education. It is possible to observe a certain contradiction here, as it means that, according to Katarzyna, one culture will be communicated better by specially prepared people, and the other – through education in home surroundings. At the same time, Katarzyna and her husband do not require their child to choose any religion – she has not been baptised, and the decision regarding which religion to choose or abandon is completely up to her. However, after giving birth to her child, Katarzyna started feeling a growing fear related to her Jewish origin, and began to imitate her mother's patterns of behaviour. Patterns she always criticised and wanted to avoid, but which manifested themselves in crisis situations and which she realised thanks to her husband.

It is difficult to present the social relations of Katarzyna's daughter in any way, as the girl is still too young. The respondent, in turn, engages in relations with various people, regardless of their background and religion – these are predominantly people from the environment of artists, as Katarzyna herself is a representative of this profession.

Katarzyna and Judyta present diverse strategies of introducing their children to their ancestors' culture, which results, above all, from the differences in their knowledge and the access to this culture, and which may be rooted in the way the respondents were brought up by previous generations. Judyta herself takes on the responsibility for educating her children, trying to protect them against the impact of the external (dominant) culture or even cultures (any other than the dominant one). Katarzyna, on the other hand, entrusts her daughter's education to people she considers specialists. At the same time, she does not protect her child from an 'alien' culture, as her husband represents the culture she herself refuses to accept. In this situation, Katarzyna sees her husband as an expert in Catholic culture. Trust towards specialists in one's own culture is a characteristic situation, not only for Polish Jews. Similar attitudes are presented by people interviewed by Lena Inowlocki. Her respondents come from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, and represent the second generation of people with Jewish background. One of the women who grew up in Germany was, in her childhood, allowed to play only with Jewish children, and her parents forbade her to make friends with young Germans¹⁰. In the case of Judyta's children, this prohibition is not as strong as in the said case, since her son contacts children of various origin at school. Outside school, however, his parents do not provide him with conditions to keep in touch with children representing the dominant culture. The respondent in the test by Lena Inowlocki referred to her childhood as life in a ghetto, and she created for her daughter a space to live in a diversified environment; nevertheless, she sent her child to a Jewish school and to private lessons, which, in turn, is typical of the attitude shown by Katarzyna. Such an attitude of both women results from the awareness of insufficient knowledge of Jewish culture, making them willing to provide access to it for their children, through formal Jewish education. The aim of such action is to shape their children's awareness of their origins¹¹.

Conclusion

Religion is an important reference point in shaping individual identity – each respondent strongly focused, in what they said, on religious issues, trying to identify themselves by referring to religion.

¹⁰ L. Inowlocki, *Doing „Being Jewish”: Constitution of „Normality” in Families of Jewish Displaced Persons in Germany*, [in:] R. Breckner, D. Kalekin-Fishman, I. Miete (eds.), *Biographies and the division of Europe: experience, action and change on the 'Eastern side'*, Leske + Budrich, Opladen 2000.

¹¹ Above.

Based on the analysis of interviews conducted with the aforementioned respondents (but also with others, whose lives have not been discussed here), it can be stated that currently, in Poland, there is no single Jewish community which would behave in a characteristic manner. Every family functions in a particular way, resulting from the past experiences of their ancestors, and has different ways to make younger generations aware of their background and to take actions related to this awareness.

To a large (or maybe to the largest) extent, the approach of an adult to his/her origins depends on how family members engage with this origin and culture. If this origin and culture is valued, children may treat their origin as a natural element of their identity. A negative message transmitted by the family of origin does not preclude later interest, which, however, is then underpinned by fear and raises many doubts and uncertainties. However, if a particular individual channels them appropriately, they can provide a constructive force, supporting development.

The youngest generation rebuilds the Polish Jewish world their own way, which means that its representatives formulate their own rules, partially selecting, in traditional Judaism, the elements that suit them, and partially giving rise to new traditions. On the one hand, it results from the fact that they had nobody to teach them the determined and binding rules, so they interpret them their own way, and on the other hand, it is an expression of the contemporary approach of young people to religion, which should be adapted to their needs and capabilities, and not subject to rigid principles and values, stipulating what should or has to be done. People from the youngest generation also have a tendency to say: *I have origins* (41/2/W4) without specifying that these are Jewish origins. This phrase, uttered by many participants, may prove how obvious it is – members of the Jewish community may talk this way with one another, and are accustomed to using such words, but this phrase might also mean something hard to express – participants of such conversations know what they are talking about and do not need to add this ‘embarrassing’ word. This could result from the fact that older generations have instilled in them a fear of admitting to their background.

Translated by: Mateusz Pazdur

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Znaczenie żydowskiej kultury pochodzenia dla żydowskich kobiet z trzeciego pokolenia

Streszczenie: Prezentowany artykuł ma charakter badawczy. Powstał na podstawie czterech swobodnych wywiadów z elementami narracji, które przeprowadziłam z przedstawicielami „trzeciej generacji” osób pochodzenia żydowskiego mieszkających w Łodzi. W moim tekście nawiązuję do wiedzy (i braku wiedzy) badanych kobiet na temat ich korzeni. Rozróżniam też dwa stworzone modele rodzinne. Co więcej, umieszczam żydowską kulturę i religię w kontekście ich codziennych doświadczeń.

Słowa kluczowe: kobiety, żydowskie pochodzenie, rodzina, trzecie pokolenie

Nota o autorce: Agnieszka Krawczyk – magister filologii słowiańskiej i pedagogiki; asystentka w Katedrze Badań Edukacyjnych Wydziału Nauk o Wychowaniu; Uniwersytet Łódzki. Zainteresowania naukowe obejmują pedagogikę międzykulturową, kulturę, kulturę żydowską, narratologię, metodologię, badania jakościowe, literaturę, literaturę dziecięcą i młodzieżową.