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The Family and Identity Constructions of the Youth in Borderlands

ABSTRACT

The theoretical framework for this discussion is constructivism and Jerzy Nikitorowicz's concept of the multifaceted, constantly self--creating identity. In this study, it is assumed that an individual's identity is socially constructed. The author recognises the subjective characteristics of an individual (which she considers in the broader context of social experiences collected and [re]constructed during primary and secondary socialisation) as important factors that are crucially involved in the process of identity formation.

This discussion is based on multivariate quantitative and qualitative research conducted for over 30 years in the Polish–Czech borderland, in Cieszyn Silesia. The analysis concerns the importance of the family (its function in both the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia and in Zaolzie—the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia) in constructing an individual's identity. In this context, it should be stated that an individual shapes the core of their identity in the process of primary socialisation—the relatively constant part of it. This core allows for continuity and is a constructive response to the ambiguity of the world. An individual reconstructs their identity on the basis of the available cultural sources by adding them to the core of their identity.

Artykuły i rozprawy   Articles and dissertations

Introduction

The family always functions in a specific social reality, within a particular local community, which has specific characteristics. Macrostructural, mesostructural and microstructural conditions are important for its functioning. The point of reference for this study is not so much macrostructural changes, but locality. The local community and the place of residence significantly determine the functioning of the family and the formation of national, ethnic and religious attitudes, the identity of its members and their system of values.

The theoretical framework for the discussion is constructivism and Jerzy Nikitorowicz's concept of the multifaceted, constantly self-creating identity. I assume that an individual's identity is socially constructed. I believe that the subjective characteristics of an individual (which I consider in the broader context of social experiences collected and [re]constructed during primary and secondary socialisation) are important factors that are crucially involved in the process of identity formation.

Today, the immigration of foreigners to Poland is growing as a consequence of the ease of travel, the practice of student exchanges and the arrival of refugees, for example. All of these factors contribute to the occurrence of mixed, multicultural marriages. This raises specific challenges and problems for the formation of an individual's identity. This text is mainly devoted to selected issues of socialisation and upbringing in the family in socially and culturally diverse communities (especially in borderland areas), and to their contribution to shaping young people's identities.

Theoretical and methodological assumptions

My attempt to reflect on families living near borders and on their children's identity formation is based on social developmental psychology. The context of this reflection is the reality experienced by the family, the meanings given to experiences, the changes occurring in the perception of one's own place and the constructivist understanding of individual and social development. Constructivism is not a unified, coherent position, but a collection of concepts and claims in the social, natural and formal sciences. A common feature of its

varieties (social constructivism, cognitive constructivism, epistemolog-ical/methodological constructivism) is the assumption that knowledge about the world (both everyday knowledge and scientific knowledge) is constructed in the processes of social interaction. While showing the subjective/objective entanglements and the conditions of the social reality-making processes, I will refer directly to the work of Burkard Holzner, as well as of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann.

Holzer's starting point is the assumption that the activity of the acting subject is embedded in the sociocultural environment from the beginning. According to him, the activity of the subject—seen in terms of particularistic experience—includes four basic contexts or dimensions: (1) the actor's experience, located in a particular time and space; (2) the current present—each experience is embedded in a specific context of values, norms and customs; (3) the attribution of different meanings or senses by individual social actors to the same objects; and (4) the situation of the processes in question in specific channels of interpersonal communication (Holzner 1968: 21–40).

According to the thesis formulated by Berger and Luckmann (1983), an individual's identity is socially constructed. This takes place gradually, in the process of primary and secondary socialisa-tion, according to the social structure prevailing in a given society at a given historical time.

In the theoretical construction of this paper, I also refer to Jerzy Nikitorowicz's concept of the multifaceted, continuously self-creating identity. The concept assumes a continuous process of formation and functioning of identity in the triad of inherited identity—identity acquired in the process of socialisation—the chosen identity of "I" (Nikitorowicz 2001: 15–35). He points out that in culturally diverse regions, the formation of a sense of identity depends on many factors, and that the process of identity formation is a dynamic, continuous process. The most important stage of identity development is the period of childhood (Nikitorowicz 2005), and the first stage of rooting is the family identity (see Nikitorowicz 1992). It is during this time that the child acquires knowledge about themselves and the world around them. In subsequent periods of development, this knowledge is consolidated, expanded and modified, constructed, and reconstructed. People appear in the life of a young person who contribute more or less to the formation of their character, views and opinions.

The considerations are based on research which took into account many variables and was conducted for more than 30 years in the Polish–Czech borderland, in the Polish and Czech parts of Cieszyn Silesia. The historical territory of Cieszyn Silesia was divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia by the decision of the Council of Ambassadors on 28 July 1920. From that moment on, Cieszyn Silesia as a political and administrative unit disappeared. The part of Cieszyn Silesia belonging to Poland was called the Cieszyn Land. The remaining (eastern) part, which was annexed to Czechoslovakia, was named Zaolzie (Trans-Olza).[1]

The analysis in this article is concerned with the role of the family in the construction of an individual's identity (the Cieszyn family, functioning in the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia, and the Zaolzie family, functioning in the Czech part). The general nature of the considerations justifies this selectivity. In this study I refer to selected results of quantitative research carried out in the area between 1990 and 2022 by a team under the direction of Tadeusz Lewowicki, in which I participated.[2] I cite, among other things, the results of the comparative quantitative and qualitative research on youth development tasks and social conditions of education conducted in 2003–2004 and 2016–2017.[3] In order to deepen my analysis and reflections and to stimulate the reflection on the condition of the family and on the duties and possibilities of bringing up the next generation for a

1 In Polish terminology, "Zaolzie" refers to the part of Cieszyn Silesia which is located in Czechia and inhabited by native Poles. In Czechia, the terms "Těšínsko" or "české Těšínsko" (Czech Cieszyn Silesia) are used in several meanings to specify either the area of Czech Cieszyn, the whole historical Cieszyn Silesia or the whole part of Cieszyn Silesia located on the Czech part of the border.

2 The research conducted by the Social Research Team for Borderland Culture and Education (Społeczny Zespół Badań Kultury i Oświaty Pogranicza) were presented in a series of works called "Intercultural Education" (over 80 volumes have been published from 1992 to the present) and in the journal Intercultural Education, published since 2012. In this article, I return to the issues mentioned earlier, to explore and expand on them. I place the reflections in a different theoretical and problem-orientated setting than was applied previously.

3 As part of the author's theoretical and empirical research project, I conducted a comparative pedagogical study, 13 years apart, of two demographic cohorts of young people living in the Polish part of the Polish–Czech borderland. I present their results in two of my monographs (Szczurek-Boruta 2007, 2019).

successful life, I conducted qualitative research among 24-year-olds, inhabitants of the Polish and Czech parts of Cieszyn Silesia, in 2022.[4]

The study group in that research included inhabitants of the region located in Poland and Czechia, territorially constituting the southern part of the Polish–Czech borderland. People living in the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia (Poles—people of Polish citizenship and Polish nationality) and people living in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia (the Zaolziak people[5]—native Polish people, people with Czech citizenship or Czech/Polish nationality) participated in the study.

The selection of respondents (the research from 1990 to the present) was non-random. The elements of purposeful selection were age (different age groups: children, adolescents, adults and seniors); social role (child, parent and grandparent); and place of residence (Cieszyn Silesia—representing subgroups from the Polish and Czech parts of Cieszyn Silesia). A comparative approach was used, which contributes to a better understanding of the facts, phenomena and processes described in the two neighbouring countries.

The research whose results I refer to used a survey (the primary research tool was an auditorium and correspondence questionnaire) and in-depth individual interviews (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias 2001). The methods of quantitative data analysis used to process the collected material were statistical methods. Interpretivism was used in the analysis of the qualitative data (Miles, Huberman 2000: 8–9) and the elements of analytical work included data representations (Kubinowski 2012: 251). A detailed description of the research methodology is presented in the individual studies I refer to, so I will not present it here. This is beyond the scope of this article, and the reader is referred to the cited texts.

The description, diagnosis, explanation, understanding and interpretation of facts, phenomena and processes of identity formation, socialisation and upbringing in the family are broadened by the (micro)historical perspective. History is used in order to better understand the role of the social environment in human life, and the

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4 In-depth individual interviews were conducted online with 16 women aged 24 (8 in the Polish part and 8 in the Czech part). This material has not been presented before.

5 The term "Zaolziak" refers to the regional identification of the respondents living in Zaolzie, Czechia.

importance of the "historical factor" is emphasised by authors such as Wiesław Theiss (2006).

The meaning of the Cieszyn and Zaolzie family in building the identity of young people, based on the research results

The Polish–Czech borderland is a border area between the two countries where various spheres of social, cultural, political and economic life interweave. It is an area where national and state interests clash, where cultures and ideologies intermingle. The borderland has been a source of tension and conflict in the past—including armed conflicts (the Polish–Czechoslovak war in 1919)—and now it fosters friendship and cooperation between people and their cultures (the phenomena were particularly intensive after 2004, when Poland and Czechia joined the European Community) (*Euroregions…* 2014; Śliż, Szczepański 2016: 47–59). Borderlands are founded on the specific features of the place and the people that result from the permanent intermingling of cultures in a specific social space. Among the inhabitants of Cieszyn Silesia, the conviction that the place, i.e. the region in which they live, is better than others has prevailed for centuries. They have been supported in this conviction by writers, journalists, ruling elites and teachers (Szczurek-Boruta 2008: 87–104).

The value of the Cieszyn region and family home was made famous by poems and songs by Jan Kubisz (1848–1929), a local teacher, poet, memoirist and social activist (see Gładysz, Rosner 2012: 145–146). His most popular songs, such as *Płyniesz, Olzo…* [You Flow, Olza], *Nad Olzą* [By the Olza River]) and especially *Ojcowski dom* [Father's House], accompany family celebrations (birthdays, weddings and funerals), as well as the meetings of local associations. These songs have become the unofficial anthems of Cieszyn Poles on both sides of the national border. In 2008, the song *Ojcowski dom* was recognised as the anthem of regionalists of the Cieszyn Land:

Ojcowski dom to istny raj	*Father's house is like a Paradise*
Dar Ojca Niebieskiego	*A gift of the Heavenly Father*
Chociażbyś przeszedł cały świat	*Even if you crossed the whole world*
Nie znajdziesz piękniejszego!	*You would not find a more beautiful one!* [6]

6   The text is available on the website https://www.partykula.pl/ojcowski-dom/.

In the view of sociologists, the Polish–Czech borderland is an example of "a borderland isolated from the state and the nation, maintaining itself by its own internal forces and its own means, generating in its culture forces of resistance to foreign domination, as well as a resilient force of assimilation and subjugation of those foreign components to its essential content" (Szczepański 1990: 10).

In a borderland, as Halina Rusek writes, a "man with a heterogeneous identity and cultural competence, distancing himself from stereotypical thinking about 'others'" is formed: a man who has acquired an extraordinary ability to tame multiculturalism in himself (Rusek 2008: 85).

Cieszyn Silesia is a region centred around the city of Cieszyn and the Olza River; it includes the lands of the former Duchy of Cieszyn (Chlebowczyk 1971; Szymeczek, Kaszper 2006). It is an area of cohabitation and coexistence of population groups that are heterogeneous in terms of language, ethnic origin, nationality, religion and confessions (Kadłubiec 2016; Rusek, Pieńczak, Szczyrbowski 2010). The region is rich in social and cultural institutions and organisations (Szczurek-Boruta 2008: 87–104; 2013: 9–26). The attachment to local traditions, especially family traditions, is strong in the area (Lipok-Bierwiaczonek 1984; Ogrodzka-Mazur 2011: 15–71; Studnicki 2015). Multiculturalism, multi-religiousness, intercultural relations, historical experiences, the border location and traditions of forming a complex, multidimensional identity and participating in a well-organised regional cultural life have always been an expression of the strength and power of the inhabitants resisting the assimilation flooding the area.

The family in this area has always been an important factor in the formation of a person's identity, as it ensures persistence, survival and active acclimation to the conditions of numerous political changes (the area has changed nationality many times), as well as sociocultural, economic and civilisational changes (e.g. Rusek 1997; Różańska 2000: 72–83; Urban 2002: 181–187).

In the constructivist approach, the process of a social actor's continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of the sociocultural reality (social environment)—as Holzner argues—is located on two basic and interrelated levels: the institutional and the individual.

The former refers to the typical frame of reference that marks one or another social role; the latter focusses on the person and their identity.

In this article I focus on the family as one of the many systems of reference existing at the institutional level and on the level of identity (the individual level). According to Holzner, the formation of a relatively stable, mature individual identity is possible through the assimilation of the components of the symbolic system, as this system provides the modelled solutions for the fulfilment of human intentions (Holzner 1968: 21–40).

In theoretical and empirical studies on the family, it is assumed that a family embedded in a diverse space determines social patterns of behaviour and attitudes, thus setting its own path for the formation of both personality and identity. Researchers of culturally diverse, multicultural and mixed families focus on various aspects of their lives: ancestral experiences (e.g. Panic 2002: 105–117; Kasprzycki 2013: 181–204), types of families (Nikitorowicz 1992), social functioning in culturally and confessionally heterogeneous environments (e.g. Nowicka 2003: 222–241; Ogrodzka-Mazur 2010: 445–461; Hruzd-Matuszczyk 2012: 51–58; Sowa-Behtane 2016; Miluska 2018: 42–60), conflicts, risks and the quality of multicultural marriages (Sowa-Behtane 2017: 79–92; 2019: 194–205).

The differentiation of the family refers to its various aspects. Leon Dyczewski points to "differentiation inside the family," i.e. mainly differentiation in terms of the positions and roles of family members (Dyczewski 1994: 106). Jolanta Suchodolska, in the context of her research on the family determinants of the formation and development of "doubled" and "dispersed" identities in a borderland, takes into account the "differentiation of an ethnic and religious nature, resulting from matrimonial relationships of family members" (Suchodolska 2000: 39).

Marian Golka defines the multicultural family as a type of a family in which "the system of values may be a barely mixed collection of different influences resulting from different sources and cultural circles, e.g. through the scale of the family in which the spouses are of different nationalities and, moreover, they live in a foreign environment; through the scale of the building (e.g. a block of flats inhabited by immigrants from different countries)" (Golka 1997: 53).

Ewa Sowa-Bethane, in turn, perceives multiculturalism as "the co-presence and interaction of various cultural models in the area of family activity. Thus, the multicultural family, as a social group, transmits the models of minimum two cultures, equips its members with a basic bicultural resource and provides a repertoire of traditions of at least two cultures" (Sowa-Bethane 2017: 81).

In the Polish–Czech borderland, the category of mixed (in terms of religious denominations) marriages has existed for a long time. "The concept of a mixed marriage refers to the situation in which a [member] of the Roman Catholic Church marries a member of another Christian Church. In the law of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, this concept corresponds to the concept of a marriage with different denominational affiliations" (Mędela 2021).

In the context of the views cited above, what I mean by a multicultural family is one whose diversity in its various aspects (i.e. diversity in terms of the positions and roles of family members, nationality, ethnic origin, religion and cultural patterns) makes it possible for the family members to be active and develop their own identity. It is worth noting that the core of the Polish elites in Cieszyn Silesia was made up of wealthy peasant families and their descendants, who—having acquired an education—decided to settle in the towns (Spyra 2012: 203).

The traditional family in Cieszyn is a three-generation, patriarchal family with the unquestioned position of the man as head of the family. The woman's role is reduced to raising offspring and running the household. Much importance is attached to the traditions of the region and religious upbringing (Szczypka-Rusz 2000: 48–71).

Identity is a complex whole, constructed within social interactions and giving direction to one's life. It is a system that is responsible for a specific way of behaving, a structure and a process (Erikson 1968). Identity is perceived as a stable, open and dynamic structure (Brzezińska 2006: 53). Stable aspects of identity allow a young person to establish what is really important to them and what attributes they have (external ones, e.g. behaviour, and narrative ones: what kind of person they are, who they are, what group they belong to). This is because they can build the rest of the construction on this base, i.e. integrate experiences from different areas of life.

By using the term *cultural identity*—which is a variant of social (collective) identity—I express the conviction, in line with the culturological view, that there is a relatively permanent construct of an individual's consciousness, arising from their subjective choices, which is usually referred to as the individual's self-concept. Its content is drawn from outside; from one cultural system or another (Jawłowska 2001: 53).

According to Nikitorowicz, cultural identity is a "developing, dynamic phenomenon which is open to continuous creation and becoming; it is a complex and changeable phenomenon, a multidimensional construct combining elements of the individual's personal system with the central values of the culture of the group to which the individual belongs and with conscious participation in the timeless values of the European and global culture" (Nikitorowicz 2001: 26).

I assume that an individual's identity is socially constructed. I consider the subjective characteristics of the individual to be important factors that are crucially entangled in the process of identity formation, and I consider them in the broader context of social experiences accumulated and (re)constructed (neoconstructivism) (Tyszkowa 1988: 44–79) in the course of both primary socialisation (family and peer group) and secondary socialisation (educational institutions) in three domains: natural upbringing environment, intentional upbringing environments and institutions of indirect upbringing.

In the context of the reflections carried out in this article, several questions can be posed: How does a person become capable of social action? How do they shape their identity? What is the importance of the family environment for the identity formation of young people living in a borderland?

In attempting to answer these questions, I will refer to selected results from the research conducted since the 1990s among the inhabitants of the Polish–Czech borderland. The presented material was collected during field research in the area of Cieszyn Silesia. In their context, it should be stated as follows:

The prerequisite for achieving an identity that is specific to adolescence (for mastering the developmental tasks attributed to this phase of development) is going through a certain type of experience and acquiring the tools (knowledge, emotions and actions) to master and symbolise them. The profiles of Generation Y (adolescents

surveyed in 2003–2004) and Generation Z (adolescents surveyed in 2016–2017) in the form of a separated identity were similar (Szczurek-Boruta 2019: 61–65).[7] The similarity of results between the two cohorts is due to the similarity of the repetition of the development pattern, the similar quality of development and education and the ways in which they are used in the groups under study. Socialisation and upbringing influences have led young people with different personal and social resources, living in different historical and sociocultural times (Generations Y and Z), to a similar amount of identity capital, which means that such influences have made those young people similar to each other (similarity of the average attainment of identity appropriate to adolescence between Generations Y and Z; see Szczurek-Boruta 2019: 63).

The perception of cultural identity is undergoing significant changes (Szczurek-Boruta 2017: 195–209). It is possible to notice varying views and declarations in terms of national identity, and among the surveyed Polish youth, national identification was the strongest[8] (see Szczurek-Boruta, Grabowska 2009: 21–64). This stage of rootedness grows out of lower-level (local or regional) identity and is always linked to regional identity. Regional identification is dominant among the young people from Zaolzie [9] (for more on this topic, see Szczurek-Boruta, Grabowska 2009: 21–64; Grabowska 2013: 312). Regional identity provides a good basis for the formation of subsequent stages of identity. As Berger and Luckmann (1983) argue, there is no doubt that primary socialisation is usually more important for the individual, and that the essential structure of any secondary socialisation must resemble that of the primary one.

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7   The aim of my diagnosis was to determine the degree to which an identity appropriate to adolescence is achieved. I assumed that mastering (fulfilment) the existential task (satisfaction of the need for identity) is connected with the need to synthesise (master) various detailed developmental tasks. On the basis of the adolescents' sense of mastery of developmental tasks, conclusions may be drawn about identity and its formation; about the condition and development of the individual.

8   The term 'Polish youth' is used with reference to young people from the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia.

9   The term 'youth from Zaolzie' is used with reference to young people—students from schools with Polish as the language of teaching, located in the Czech part of Cieszyn Silesia.

The formation of young people's regional identity demonstrates the effectiveness of both family socialisation and regional education (formal and informal) in the local environment under study (I have commented on this topic in several texts, e.g. Szczurek-Boruta 2014b: 105–120).

Some of the surveyed adolescents of Cieszyn Silesia declared a multidimensional identity (harmoniously combining local, national, European and planetary dimensions in Lewowicki's understanding, as well as a multidimensional identity and continuously self-creating identity in the approach of Nikitorowicz). An enriched identity is particularly evident in the young people from Poland (51.2%), and slightly fewer such declarations were made by young people from Zaolzie (46.9%) (Szczurek-Boruta, Grabowska 2009: 59).

The dominance of an aligned profile (66.7%)—national identification, religious identification (Catholic or Protestant), regional identification (resident of a region or of a village/town) and supranational identifications (European or global identification) were also revealed by the results of the study conducted in 2016 (Szczurek-Boruta 2017: 195–209). The respondents showed a strong tendency not to distinguish between any of the analysed spheres of identification, and a strong sense of belonging to all cultural spaces. Particular identities overlap, complement and enrich one another. The results show the positive effects of primary and secondary socialisation in this environment. Forming a multidimensional identity is one of the aims of intercultural education. The above-mentioned research confirms that where such education is carried out, it fosters the formation of a multidimensional identity among adolescents (e.g. Szczurek-Boruta, Grabowska 2009; Szczurek-Boruta 2017), among adults—future teachers (Szczurek-Boruta 2014a)—as well as among seniors (Jas 2015).

The cited research results demonstrate that socialisation and educational influences lead to the formation of some personal characteristics in childhood that enable young people to take up a specialised type of social participation and move on to the subsequent type of social participation. This sequence of types of participation is socially expected, as it integrates the system in which it is upgraded and ensures continuity and sustainability. It indicates the interdependence between the phases of socialisation and the outcomes achieved within them.

Apart from tradition or self-reflection, the basis of identity is one's own experience (collected, developed and subjected to structuring and restructuring [Tyszkowa 1988: 44–79]). Such experience is the source of self-knowledge and the frame of reference towards other people. Family life is the engine that drives the younger generation to undertake multifaceted physical, social, educational and occupational activities which in turn help consolidate an existing sense of identity or help one perceive of oneself in new categories. As a consequence, it leads to the resolution of a psychosocial crisis and the answer to the question of "Who am I?"

In the adolescents under study, the family shaped and developed not only a sense of inherited identity (as understood and interpreted by Nikitorowicz [2005: 85])—which increased with the internalisation of behaviours, social attitudes and values—but, first and foremost, it introduced them to the process of acquiring personal and social identity through creative self-acceptance and demanding from the individual the maturity of choice and an adequate sense of self-esteem.

Family identity is the first stage of rootedness. The awareness of family identity is considered basic and leading (Nikitorowicz 2001; 2005). The contribution of the family to the process of constructing an individual's identity is evidenced by the utterances of young people in interviews. The analysis of the qualitative data (obtained in 2022) in line with the theoretical assumptions made it possible to identify two main areas of experience: (1) experiences relating to family or place of residence and (2) experiences of identity formation within the family. This is illustrated by the following utterances:

I feel connected with my family. My parents exert a huge influence on me. I am also connected with the local community. … I try to get involved in the life of my village and organise various activities for children and young people. Besides, I am Polish; I feel a great attachment to our country, to our language and traditions. I am also European, I learn European culture and I love travelling. Being a European opens up a lot of possibilities for all of us. (W1, Poland)

I come from Zaolzie, a small village where, in a family atmosphere, I learnt respect for my elders and got to know our (Polish/Zaolzie) culture …. I had contact with the Polish language at school; at home we only spoke the dialect …. These experiences had a decisive influence on the formation of my identity, on who I am, where I come from and where I belong. (W1, Zaolzie)

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The similarity of the determinants of a sense of family identity between the groups can be noted. These included belonging to a family (41.7% of Polish young people, 35.1% of Zaolzie young people); social roles performed by adolescents in the family (12.8%—Polish, 19.6%—Zaolzie); the importance of home in adolescents' life—home as a place and living space (8.3%—Polish, 3.1%—Zaolzie); involvement in family life (2.8%—Polish, 1%—Zaolzie) (Szczurek-Boruta 2010: 91–105). Young people were aware of their family identity. The family is a specific cultural microsystem, a cherished value, and the family pattern of life has been protected for centuries. Within this pattern, which is defined by customary norms, children are introduced to the culture of the local community.

Families living in the Polish part of Cieszyn Silesia maintain their distinct "otherness" primarily in their religion/beliefs, while the families of Zaolzie do so through their origin and membership in the Polish national minority. Their hierarchies of values show a relative similarity (they pursue universal goals, such as health, love, work, etc.) (Szczurek-Boruta 2000: 117–140). The religion/nationality factor can be regarded as a manifestation of the preservation of the respondents' cultural identity: a manifestation of participatory and historical identification.

The contemporary family in Cieszyn or Zaolzie is undoubtedly significantly influenced by cultural tradition, i.e. the established and faster or slower changing norms, social patterns and values and regional traditions. The values of family life are deeply rooted in the fulfilled patterns of family life. Respect for parents (and older people in general) and a sense of connection with them are important. It is also possible to observe strong bonds (especially emotional and social ones) with closer relatives from the lateral line (independent brothers and sisters) (Szczurek-Boruta 1998a: 43–61; 1998b: 99–119). The family is a place of intergenerational transmission of values and intergenerational contact. According to research, the strongest influence on transferring knowledge and culture of the region is exerted by parents (50.52%) and grandparents (49.74%) (Jas 2019: 180–193). Grandparents have played an important role in upbringing, in passing on traditions and values and in shaping the attitudes of young people living in the borderlands. Moreover, good relationships between grandparents and grandchildren contribute to the proper

functioning of the whole family (Szczurek-Boruta 1998a: 43–61; Jas 2015).

In Zaolzie, the fusion of family and patriotic traditions is clearly marked. It seems to largely be the heritage of a society/community living in an area that has changed its political affiliation; grandparents and great-grandparents made the family a bastion of Polishness. Here, the mother tongue, national traditions and customs were passed on from generation to generation, and Polish history was taught. The system of values developed in this way was reflected in social and moral norms, and it influenced the cultural traditions of generations, including the contemporary generation of young people from Zaolzie.

Just like their parents, the Polish youth and the youth from Zaolzie should maintain the traditions learnt in the family home, according to 74.1% of young people from Poland, 41.7% of young people from Zaolzie, 94.2% of parents of Poles and 91.2% of parents of Zaolziaks (Szczurek-Boruta 1998a: 43–61). At the same time, while the parents of Poles and Zaolziaks were unanimous in their declarations, the youth, especially those from Zaolzie, took an inconsistent position. It can be assumed that the declarations of this group were related to social changes, including cultural unification. Young Zaolzie people do not associate their identity and distinctiveness exclusively with the Polish tradition, although the core of their identity is their cultural heritage (Polish, Zaolzie or local heritage), carefully cultivated and passed on from generation to generation. In Zaolzie, the family model is changing. The number of mixed marriages is increasing, and most of them turn into Czech families with all the consequences. The Zaolziak people live in the environment of three cultures: Czech, Polish (flowing from the sources, i.e. from Poland) and the regional one. Young people are culturally bivalent. The canon of Czech culture is as important for them as the canon of Polish culture. This cultural bivalence is shaped, to a large extent, by mass culture and by the education system. Young people learn about the canon of Czech national culture at school; although they attend schools in which teachers use Polish, these schools follow the Czech curriculum. Perhaps the youth from Zaolzie are becoming people of the cross-border culture. They are reconstructing their identity based on various cultural sources, selecting them to match the core of their identity.

Upbringing plays an important role in the formation of the identity core. It is important to note the diversity of parents' declarations concerning the way in which children are brought up in the family: partnership (58.3%), support for children's development (25.0%), compulsory observance of rules (13.9%) and freedom in upbringing (2.8%). These declarations are differentiated by gender, age, education and religion (Szczurek-Boruta 1998b: 99–119). It is noteworthy that some families bring children up in a strict way and expect absolute subordination. Such parents do not show much tolerance towards their children's behaviour. The following are not tolerated in such families: a bad attitude towards the parents and disrespect for the elders (Szczurek-Boruta 1998b: 99–119).

This variation in parenting methods was confirmed by the statements of the respondents:

I was brought up by my parents and grandparents. It was a strict upbringing, which did not allow me to do many things. (W2, Poland)

My parents gave me a lot of freedom; I was brought up to be a person who can handle everything in life. (W3, Zaolzie)

I think I owe who I am to my family and friends. I've always been the confident younger sister in the family and it's remained that way to this day. But it was my family that encouraged me to be open and brave. My friends also accept me and probably like me for it—because I am myself, I don't pretend to be anyone else and I don't try to please anyone by force. I think where I live makes a big difference to who I am. Here, in our town, you have to have a strong character not to let others dominate you. (W4, Poland)

When analysing the fulfilment of developmental tasks by adolescents living in the borderland environment, it is worth noting that the importance of the environment here is based on providing objects of feelings and emotions as well as an object of action (Szczurek-Boruta 2007; 2019). The main mechanism of development is identification and self-regulation, expressed in the pursuit of a balance between an individual and the environment. Regardless of whether the source of knowledge about oneself and the world was parents (75%), peers (63%), teachers or the local environment (44% each) (Szczurek-Boruta 2003: 73–84), young people felt and considered three main tasks to be important and fulfilled in their lives (independence from others, having a group of friends and love). These are the tasks whose

fulfilment requires the help of other people, their cooperation or at least their consent.

Living in a borderland provides young people with opportunities for intercultural contact that is valuable because it is permanent and based on shared situations and tasks. Such contact is also valuable because of the fact that young people feel the need to expand their circles of acquaintances (Szczurek-Boruta 2001: 332–334; 2007; 2019). Significant others mediate in showing them the social world, and they change this world during the mediation (Berger, Luckmann 1983).

Also, the family acts as a kind of a filter through which social influences, especially those coming from school, mass culture, the media, the social environment and peers, are appropriately processed.

The attitudes and identity behaviours of young people are influenced not only by religious diversity within the family, but also by a certain adopted, preferred model of religious life (Suchodolska 2000: 45). Religious diversity naturally breeds openness and religious tolerance in the youth; it allows—as Aniela Różańska notes—for the development of an enriched type of religiosity "with an ecumenical dimension" (Różańska 2000: 72–83; 2015; 2018: 97–112; Różańska, Klajmon 2002).

The family environment—family structure and parental attitudes—affect the course of socialisation, i.e. the introduction of children into society. One of the consequences of socialisation is the assumption of existing social categorisations and participation in making new ones. This entails learning rules to recognise one's own group and to distinguish it from others, and to see oneself not only as an individual or a subject, but also as a member of a particular group. Stereotypes and prejudices are a special subclass of human knowledge that permeate different spheres of consciousness. The process of assimilating stereotypes takes place during a very important period, i.e. during childhood and adolescence.

Research indicates that the "generalised stranger" (a person of undefined nationality) gains acceptance from both children and their parents (Szczurek-Boruta 2002: 165–176). One of the young people surveyed in 2022 stated, *I was brought up with respect for other people* (W6, Poland).

Thanks to socialisation, the individual acquires a sense of familiarity (closeness, similarity, intelligibility and acceptance) and, at the same time, becomes a part of the community. Being familiar and strange are analytical categories and above all real criteria for ordering reality.

In the traditional family life in Cieszyn Silesia, marriages to religious or regional "strangers" (immigrants, so-called "*werbus*" people) were not welcome. Nowadays, the criterion of the familiarity of the spouse does not seem to be important, so the area is inhabited not only by native Silesian families, but also by mixed families (in which one of the spouses is a local) and by immigrant families (in which both spouses come from outside the region).

The models of religious upbringing are also varied. There are religiously mixed families in which the children are brought up according to the mother's faith. There are also families in which the parents establish and follow the principle according to which the daughter inherits the mother's religion, and the son inherits the father's confession.

Families that have kept the traditional division of roles have the support of grandparents, who often look after their grandchildren. There are also families in which the roles of the parents change—the woman works while the father takes care of the children—or families in which the parents share their responsibilities and are partners in raising their children. However, some families transfer their responsibilities to nurseries, schools and other institutions, entrusting them with the care of the child from early morning until late in the evening. The attitudes of grandparents are also changing, as they remain professionally active or socially involved for longer and are reluctant to take care of their grandchildren, while using their strength and health to pursue their dreams. Family celebrations are also cultivated (birthdays are important and celebrated lavishly, especially the first, 18th and 50th birthdays). Annual and religious festivals are celebrated, as well.

Changing political, worldview, social and economic contexts affect the daily lives of families. One can see the impact of politics on the formation of a transnational, European identity of borderland residents (Poland and Czechia joining NATO, the EU and the Schengen area) (Grabowska 2013; Urban 2014). The scale of

migration caused by the desire to improve one's standard of living (also educational standards, by studying in Poland or Czechia) is increasing. Cross-border cooperation is developing. All this modifies the existing behaviour patterns and attitudes towards others, but it also changes the perception of life near the border. For centuries, the behaviour of the borderland inhabitants has been periodically influenced by the cultural and civilisation circles and the systems of sociopolitical relations which the local population, for various reasons, finds more attractive and realistic. They are characterised by local particularism—an attitude characterised by a preference for issues concerning a selected social group (family or another group) or region over general issues.

The Zaolzie people use the opportunities provided by the borderland and the freedom to cross the border (these aspects were emphasised in the interviews). Here is an example utterance:

The town where I live is Jablunkov [Czechia]. It is located in a mountainous area. The nearby Istebna [Poland] is good for tourists. There are very nice ski slopes; the Zagroń station boasts probably the widest of them. The asset of the complex is the Olza water park with exceptionally warm water and many attractions. There is a unique microclimate here. And that is why, last year, when me and my husband were planning our wedding, we wanted to show our guests the beautiful landscapes of Poland and we organised the wedding party in "Dwór Kukuczka" in Jaworzynka. (W6, Zaolzie)[10]

Bilingualism (the use of Polish and Czech) and multilingualism in Zaolzie has not constituted an obstacle to marriage; on the contrary, they enrich marriages. The experiences of such marriages are intercultural in the dimension of "their place," as the following statement shows:

We are a mixed marriage (my husband is Czech), and we focus on tolerance in our lives. In my opinion, it is good to know more languages. My husband speaks English better, and I try to speak Polish. There are various opportunities to hear Polish. We have some companies working here, and every day people cross the border to go to work. They have a beauty studio here, a hairdresser's, a mono–café and a pizza–burger which is new. People are happy and there are more and more customers. (W6, Zaolzie)

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10   The original statement (W6) has been maintained. Linguistic errors, grammatical errors and Czechisms can be found here. The respondent (with Polish roots) graduated from a Czech school and learnt Polish occasionally.

Young people see the positive aspects of living in the border area, such as work, social life and access to cheaper services. This is confirmed by the following statements: *The borderland offers great opportunities for work. My parents work in the Polish and Czech parts of Cieszyn Silesia* (W4, Zaolzie); *I have acquaintances and friends in Poland and in Czechia. We spend time together* (W5, Zaolzie). Poland is attractive for some young people from Zaolzie. Czechia is attractive for a certain group of Poles who value better and cheaper medical care, services (e.g. beauticians or hairdressers) or interesting tourist sites. Life on the border is complex. The access to and learning about different aspects of the world, assuming various social roles and participating in social life in different frames of reference are fundamental factors shaping the sense of multiple realities in a borderland inhabitant.

The family provides constancy; it provides solutions based on certain models; it is the stage on which intercultural communication and constant (re)interpretation take place, which means that both the reality and the identity are constructed.

Conclusion

Cieszyn and Zaolzie families are similar in many respects. In fact, in each of their genealogies one can find ancestors from other nations (Poles, Czechs, Germans, Slovaks and Ukrainians) and religions (Catholics, Protestants and others). These families have mastered the ability to maintain continuity and duration, as well as the ability to change, to assimilate foreign content and customs and to borrow various aspects from other cultures. Intercultural learning has always been a natural part of their everyday life. At the same time, there have always been some constant, unchanging values that guided the parents, such as the good of the family, the welfare of the children, respect for elders, work and faith. Living in a territorial, social and cultural borderland in changing external conditions influences the course and results of family socialisation and upbringing. The basic condition for effective socialising and upbringing in the family environment is the awareness of the goal. The main goal of the family in the borderland environment is to raise an open-minded person who is rooted in the tradition and culture of their region, and is resilient and able to cope with various problems.

Under the specific conditions of the borderland that I described above, its residents have developed flexibility, the ability to mitigate tensions and contradictions—e.g. between fixed, inherited elements and changeable elements—and the ability to cope with situations of everyday life. Thus, the local residents possess resilient behavioural patterns. The borderland, by its very nature, is a source and stimulus for learning resilience dispositions (I discuss this in more detail in Szczurek-Boruta 2021: 488–505).

The family is an important place for human development and socialisation, which is indicated by the results of the cited scientific studies. The process of combining different cultural elements, "taming the difference," positive relations between families and the closest social environment, the transmission of values from generation to generation and the formation of positive intergenerational relations, which is characteristic of the historical borderland, is clearly revealed in those analyses. The value of the environment of Cieszyn Silesia is the presence of families that differ from each other in many respects (e.g. in age, social status, number of children, income, religion, nationality and origin—local or foreign), but share the same educational vision. The socialising influence of the family in this environment is supplemented very early on by interaction with the school, sociocultural organisations and peer groups. But family is undoubtedly the first school of socialisation that the child participates in.

All that I have presented so far leads me to conclude that, in the process of socialisation, the individual shapes the core of their identity, or a fixed part of it (I do not define the structure or content of this core here). The core allows for continuity and provides a constructive response to the ambiguity of the world. In this approach, a person can reconstruct their identity by drawing on available cultural sources and attaching them to the identity core. This core continues throughout one's life.

Identity change and development always take place in relation to cultural resources, in interpersonal and intercultural relations, amidst contradictions and conflicts. The results and their analysis, which have been simplified and made brief in this text, do not cover the entire vast topic area surrounding the family and the construction of youth identity, but they form a general background of the ongoing discussion on this topic.

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