

Spiritual Culture of the Contemporary Child in the Family Environment: Experiential Perspective of Three Generations of Families from the Eastern Borderlands

Kultura duchowa współczesnego dziecka w środowisku rodzinnym. W perspektywie doświadczeń trzech pokoleń rodzin pochodzących z Kresów Wschodnich

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Abstract: The article focuses on characterising the elements of the spiritual culture of a contemporary child growing up in a family whose members were resettled from the Eastern Borderlands to Poland after 1945. The phenomenon of intangible culture is introduced from a theoretical standpoint, following which the elements involved in shaping spiritual culture in the family environment are discussed. The research presented here employed a qualitative method of data collection, consisting of individual interviews that were partially guided and issue-oriented. The interviews were conducted with representatives of five families, spanning three generations. Based on the research, it has been established that children develop a specific spiritual culture by receiving verbal transmissions, experiencing rituals in the family environment, as well as through exposure to symbols and being made aware of the essence of particular values. This culture appears to perpetuate multi-generational traditions arising from the collective memory and experiences of families from the Eastern Borderlands. In such a framework, the intensity and interpretation of individual elements depend on the choices of the parents and grandparents, while family represents the highest value. The research indicates that culture is the primary source of identity formation and individual development, preparing individuals to live and coexist with others.

Keywords: culture, spiritual culture, Eastern Borderlands, family, upbringing

Abstrakt: W artykule skupiono się na scharakteryzowaniu elementów kultury duchowej współczesnego dziecka wychowującego się w rodzinie, której członkowie zostali po 1945 r. przesiedleni z Kresów Wschodnich na teren Polski. Dokonano teoretycznego wprowadzenia w zakresie problematyki zjawiska kultury niematerialnej oraz elementów konstytuujących proces kształtowania się kultury duchowej w środowisku rodzinnym. W prezentowanych badaniach wykorzystano jakościową metodę zbierania danych w postaci wywiadów indywidualnych, częściowo kierowanych skoncentrowanych na problemach. Wywiady przeprowadzono z przedstawicielami 5 rodzin w trzech pokoleniach. Na podstawie badań ustalono, iż dzieci poprzez doświadczanie w środowisku rodzinnym przekazów słownych, rytuałów oraz odbieranie symboli i uświadamianie istoty określonych wartości tworzą specyficzną kulturę duchową. Kulturę, w której należy doszukiwać się implementacji wielopokoleniowych tradycji, wynikających ze zbiorowej pamięci i przeżyć rodzin pochodzących z Kresów Wschodnich, gdzie intensyfikacja i sposób interpretacji poszczególnych elementów zależy od wyborów rodziców i dziadków, a najwyższą wartością jest rodzina. Przeprowadzone badania wskazują, że kultura stanowi źródło kreowania tożsamości, formowania jednostki oraz przygotowuje ją do życia i współżycia z innymi.

Słowa kluczowe: kultura, kultura duchowa, Kresy Wschodnie, rodzina, wychowanie



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INTRODUCTION

The family is the primary and most important educational environment in which one should seek the existential sources and moral values of each individual, as well as the psychopedagogical factors that translate into a characteristic system of relationships between family members (Kawula, Brągiel and Janke 2009, 336). One of its essential tasks is to provide a culture-forming space where the growing child can look within themselves, find answers to their questions, and discover the meaning of life. Functioning within the family system, the young person is equipped with the necessary elements of culture that introduce them to the material and immaterial world of human activity. They acquire virtues, develop their personality and intellect (Parzyszek 2012, 57), and participate in and contribute to the culture of their family environment.

The research considered the multi-generational implementation of a folk tradition which is deeply ingrained in a community originating from the Eastern Borderlands, with specific values attributed to the Christian cultural community (Chałas 2000, 556). In terms of theoretical underpinning, this research is informed by the finding that culture has a material, spiritual and pedagogical dimension, and that symbols, words and rituals should be considered its intangible elements (Wilk and Bieleń 2006, 445).

1. RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

The aim of the study was to characterise the spiritual culture of contemporary children raised in families whose members were resettled from the Eastern Borderlands to Poland after 1945. It focused primarily on answering the following question: What elements constitute the spiritual culture of contemporary children in the family environment, from the experiential perspective of three generations of a family (grandparents, parents, children) from the Eastern Borderlands, and what are their unique characteristics? Detailed issues included: How does language influence the spiritual culture of a child in the family environment? What symbols determine the formation of the spiritual culture of a contemporary child? What role do values and religious roots play in shaping the spiritual culture of a contemporary child? What role do rituals play in building the spiritual culture of a child?

The research relied on the qualitative method of data collection, i.e. individual, partially guided, and issue-oriented interviews (Rubacha 2016, 289). They were conducted with members of five families whose lives became connected with the Voivodeship of Warmia and Mazury. Family representatives were selected in an intergenerational arrangement: grandfather and/or grandmother—mother and/or father—child aged 7-10. The sample was selected deliberately (Rubacha 2016, 120), based on the following criteria: origin from the Eastern Borderlands and resettlement of its members after 1945 to the present-day Voivodeship of Warmia and Mazury; sustained generational continuity between grandparents, parents, and children aged 7-10. The respondents were reached through third-age universities operating in the Warmia and Mazury region. The interviews were conducted between September and December 2024 on the university premises.

Tab. 1. Characteristics of the study group

Family	Generation		
	Grandparents	Parents	Children
I.	grandfather, aged 89	mother, aged 45	female respondent, aged 10
II.	grandmother, aged 70 grandfather, aged 70	mother, aged 40 father, aged 44.	male respondent, aged 9
III.	grandmother, aged 71 grandfather, aged 70	mother, aged 48	male respondent, aged 10 l.
IV.	grandmother, aged 90	father, aged 46	female respondent, aged 8
V.	grandfather, aged 88 grandmother, aged 89	mother, aged 46 father, aged 47	male respondent, aged 7

Source: own elaboration.

Data reduction, representation and verification were employed for the analysis. The obtained research material was condensed to isolate analytical categories and assign meanings to them. Stratified selection of units incorporated variables that allowed for the detection of information which made up the context of the data. Data verification was conducted through analytical induction, in which hypotheses were tested against all cases in the study area.

The research was analysed using theoretical analytical categories (Rubacha 2016, 292) based on the following statements (hypotheses):

- the spiritual culture of a contemporary child in the family environment is formed by words, symbols, values, together with the roots of faith and rituals;
- prayer, religious songs and stories—inclusive of their frequency and content—occupy a prominent place among the words that influence the spiritual culture of children;
- in the spiritual culture of contemporary children, symbols such as the cross, the Holy Scripture, the table and holy water play a significant role;
- the values and faith are rooted in the family environment that remains attached to the traditions of the people from the Eastern Borderlands;
- rituals are an important factor in shaping the spiritual culture of contemporary children within a dynamically changing culture-building space where the traditions of past generations are still present.

A coding system was used to collect and analyse the data: a number assigned to family /first letter of the generation, i.e. I/D – I/grandfather; II/M – II/mother; V/Dz – V/child.

2. SPIRITUAL CULTURE

Culture plays a substantial role in the life of every individual and connects groups and communities. It develops in the spaces of human interaction, where it determines how an individual perceives the world, makes decisions, organises their private life, and shapes value systems and mindsets (Żuk 2016, 90; Błasiak 2022, 25).

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council states that culture is defined by all human actions that lead to the improvement of the manifold talents of the spirit and the body. Culture enables the progress of mores and institutions, while also promoting social and family development. Thanks to culture, spiritual experiences are transmitted and preserved in multigenerational social structures, which benefits the existence of every human being, community and nation (Wilk and Bieleń 2006, 445).

According to Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the personalistic vision of Christian culture promotes openness to seeking personal fulfilment in both the earthly and supernatural dimensions. The human individual is “the principle subject, goal and meaning of all creative endeavour, both cultural and culture-building’ (Ficek 2020, 43-44). Cardinal Wyszyński stresses that “above all, it is the human person who creates culture. Although communities such as the state or nation may provide more favourable conditions for its development, the ultimate creator, originator and inspiration is the human themselves” (Wyszyński 1966, 119-120). Culture may be regarded as a reality originating with the human, which represents the outcome of their individual actions and is identified with their experiences in the personal and collective dimension. “By creating culture—leaving an imprint of their spirituality on life and works, on relationships with God, people and nature—humans give it an idea, a theme and a motif” (Ficek 2020, 51).

In the broader cultural domain, we can discern both material and intangible culture. The former is related to the entirety human activities and products that arise while satisfying the needs of species survival and safety. Intangible culture, often referred to as spiritual culture, is perceived as a set of “objectivised products of human consciousness, such as language, beliefs, customs, knowledge, mores, and ideas which perform utilitarian functions and/or manifest a selfless pursuit to know and reify the ideals of beauty, goodness and truth” (Sakowicz 2022, 39). It is one of the essential dimensions in building a family space, which consists of words, symbols, values, and the roots of faith, as well as rituals. It enables the individual to become anchored in the family sphere and thus shape their identity based on knowledge about themselves, the world (both near and far), and God (Wilk and Bieleń 2006, 464).

Culture, being a specific type of communication, uses words, which are the most common factor in the interactions between individuals. These interactions occur at various levels and encompass all aspects of family life. At the same time, the ideas and works underlying the development of the family, its individual members and the quality of their existence are conveyed and remembered in the words that are uttered (Leszczyńska-Rejchert and Lisowska 2020, 273). Parents, as the vehicle of the words, create a family that should rely on ethical modes of communication. In this manner, the child can maintain mental balance

while also acquiring a sense of meaning and value in their actions. They develop a positive self-image while simultaneously perceiving the world and constructing an inner order in a reflective manner (Cegieła 2020, 81).

Young persons discover spiritual culture through the atmosphere and “images” that allow them to perceive the world, internalise a specific configuration of values and define themselves—their aspirations, goals and sensitivities. Symbols are inextricably linked to the familial dimension of faith and the rules which govern the functioning of a society. With Catholic families, they attest in a sense to following the path of Jesus Christ and fulfilling God’s intentions (Wilk and Bieleń 2006, 484).

Rituals are a major culture-forming element in the life of a child and their family, as they enable spiritual structures of the community to be passed on. Rituals enable individuals to become rooted in their home environment, create their own identity, and integrate and develop a “We” identity. They are contingent on the social background, domains of life and experiences (Piwowarski 1996, 208). They may be identified as unreflective and reflective acts, which encompass aesthetic, religious and secular activities, as well as rituals of crises and life cycles. Given the focus on spiritual culture in children, religious rituals are particularly relevant. They are situated within spiritual worship and oriented towards sacramentals, sacraments and the church year (Leszczyńska-Rejchert and Lisowska 2020, 274). Sacramentals may be observed in daily life, in direct or silent demonstrations of faith in God (Nowakowski 2010, 226). Religious rituals introduce children to the community of faith, define its significance and teach them religious practices that bind them to a social group. In the life of a young person, they provide support and a point of reference rooted in the Christian tradition, while also contributing to their formation and upbringing (Piwowarski 1996, 8).

Spiritual culture depends on the moral values instilled in the home environment, as they are responsible for creating a clear, definite hierarchy of goals, ideals, and needs for each family member. They are involved in the process in which an individual acquires freedom as well as comprehends and accepts the consequences of their actions. Here, one may discern Christian freedom, moral freedom and freedom of choice. As regards the Catholic Church, each believer makes choices guided by the Ten Commandments and examples from the life of Jesus Christ.

In the moral context, the individual must struggle between good and evil from birth. Freedom of choice, on the other hand, depends on the social group and the level of responsibility it accepts for the individual's actions. A person cannot decide on their own which aspects of life, choices and actions they should deem good or bad. This is determined by society as a whole through legal and cultural norms (Pilarczyk 2014, 55).

From the standpoint of this study, Christian values represent the ultimate choice, as they guide an individual's pursuit of the spiritual dimension and, at the same time, enable one to defend oneself against any temptations encountered during human life. Christian moral values may develop most fully in the family environment, where normative systems are established and the multifaceted transmission of formative principles occurs. The successive generations are the guarantors of progress and dynamism of experiences, traditions and familial transmissions. Christian morality is the fundamental pillar of the spiritual culture of the family (Pilarczyk 2014, 57).

3. ELEMENTS OF THE SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT—ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH

3.1. The word

a. Prayer

All generations surveyed recognise prayer as a verbal transmission that is entirely or partly involved in the spiritual culture of children. Grandparents perceive teaching the Lord's Prayer, other acclamations and prayers to children as a duty of the parents, who should shape young persons in such a way that they are attached to tradition, their native roots and the Catholic faith from an early age. Christian values and daily prayer helped them, and their ancestors survive the most difficult times of displacement and war. "Just as we were taught and we taught them, we repeated the text together and said the rosary, so they must do the same. Consumed by work, they rely on us to do it" (1/D). The grandparents emphasise that they would repeatedly help their grandchildren prepare for their First Holy Communion, reviewing the required prayers and church acclamations together. "It has stayed with them, when they go to

church, they remember. They don't think about the fact that they know the Commandments of the Church, but when necessary, they can recite them from memory" (V/D).

The generation of parents offers varied assessments of the role of textual transmissions that become instilled in the spiritual culture of their children. In families III and V, learning prayers is seen as a duty of every parent and their concern for the moral upbringing of their children. According to the respondents, talking to God gives the younger generation an opportunity to obtain support and reflect on how a problem may be solved. It is also a continuation of family traditions and Christian culture—the foundation of the cultural heritage of the population originating from the Eastern Borderlands to whom faith was a means to improve their lot and forge a memory of the events they had experienced. "Thanks to my having taught my daughter to pray in the morning and in the evening, she now knows that she can always turn to God with her problems and calm down after what's happened to her" (V/M). On the other hand, parents from families I, II and IV believe that prayer as an element of their children's spiritual culture takes the form of needs and obligations associated with religious education classes and preparations for the First Holy Communion. "Maja doesn't think about those prayers. She learned what she had to do for the Communion, and now she doesn't really remember" (I/M).

The generation of children and their perception of spiritual culture through prayer and church acclamations reflect the behaviour adopted by their parents. In families III and IV, children find prayer—as a word—to be part of their daily reality. Morning and evening prayers are not said regularly, but they constitute an intangible perspective on talking to God, responding to difficulties and problems, or examining one's conscience. "I'm glad that in the evening or in the morning I can sometimes tell someone what is bothering me. Sometimes it seems to me that this good advice just comes straight from Heaven, obviously" (III/Dz). In families I, II and IV, where the parents spoke of "occasional contact with prayer" or "compelled by the needs of the situation at school or the church environment", the children consider it an element which: appeared in their lives at the time of their First Holy Communion; occurs during Mass; represents infrequent contact with God that. "I don't think about praying. When I'm

overwhelmed by problems, then, of course, I pray. If I really want to pass a test, I ask God for help” (IV/Dz).

b. Religious songs

The grandparents’ generation considers religious songs to be a vehicle of Polishness, a source of spiritual and material culture. According to the respondents, contemporary children rarely know any church songs by heart. In the case of Christmas carols, the younger generation learns to sing the most popular ones, such as *Lulaj, że Jezuniu*, *Gdy śliczna Panna*, or *Dzisiaj w Betlejem*. “It has always been part of Polish culture, and it’s a good thing that young people know it” (II/B). Grandparents stress that during the festive season, when sitting at the Christmas Eve table, children sing carols together with the whole family.

Parents note that their children enjoy English versions of traditional carols performed by popular artists, with contemporary cadences and unconventional delivery. The younger generation pays attention to the visual style of music videos, concert aesthetics and the performers’ outfits. “My child will notice and even stop for a moment to watch when a new version of a carol comes on. One he thinks is great” (II/T). According to the parents’ generation, carols are present at the Christmas Eve table, and children try to sing them along with the rest of the family.

Children observe that they remember typical church songs when attending Mass. They do not think about their lyrics or message. This is not the case with Christmas carols, which they believe are an expression of Polish tradition; singing them shows that one is Polish and Christian. For them, the joint singing of Christmas carols connotes a home filled with family, friendship and a sense of togetherness. “It’s nice when everyone sings together. Dad plays the guitar. Mum sings a bit out of tune, but it’s still lovely because we’re together” (II/Dz). “You can feel the spirit of Christmas, a closeness to God. It’s awesome when everyone starts singing in their own way” (III/Dz).

c. Stories

The spiritual culture of children encompasses narratives that blend the folk culture of the Eastern Borderlands with Christian teachings. Regardless of the generation or family,

respondents mentioned oral accounts they had heard during holidays and special family gatherings. They had been known to the great-grandparents, grandparents and parents, and now their children know them too. The statements of the younger generation indicate that they feel a powerful bond with the narratives, and they know most of them by heart. They emphasise that the stories enabled them to learn about their roots and appreciate how important the values of the Catholic faith were to their ancestors. “I love it when my grandfather tells us at dinner how he used to walk around the village on Easter Sunday and beat his girlfriends with willow osiers. It’s so funny” (IV/Dz).

Parents emphasise that children are most readily drawn to stories about regional celebrations of church holidays, especially if the older generation is the protagonist and has experienced an interesting adventure in the course of the story. “Grandmother tells a story about the ‘Maying’ of cows, which involved feeding the cows and bringing them to the church, for which the children received money” (V/B). Members of families I and IV note that children make use of the information they have heard about peculiar dishes that appear on festive tables or during daily meals. “My daughter asks me for sour milk pancakes with honey. Just like at Grans” (I/M). “This Christmas, my child came up with the idea that we’d make the same dishes that my grandparents used to eat on Christmas Eve back in the Eastern Borderlands” (V/M).

Grandparents remark that their grandchildren are surprised when the stories they tell do not always correspond to contemporary realities. This applies, for example, to the scattering of sweet flag in the countryside during Pentecost or to Jesus bringing gifts. “ ‘Hold on,’ our Michał would say, ‘it’s not Santa Claus who brings gifts, but Jesus?’ ” (V/B). Among oral accounts, there are also narratives in which the younger generation sees a continuation of tradition, such as “humorous stories” about decorating houses at Christmas and looking for sweets at Easter. “Once, my grandson turned my story into a poster and sent it to a school competition on Easter traditions, and then the whole family had to look for sweets in the garden” (III/D).

3.2. Symbol

a. The cross

The cross is a symbol of Christian culture for the younger generation. Its tradition is strongly embedded in the reality of children, who stress that it occupies a central place in every home. “It hangs above the front door” (V/Dz); “At my place, it hangs in the large room above the entrance” (III/Dz); “All Catholics have one. We have one, my grandmother and grandfather have one, my friends have one at home too. It’s a tradition” (I/Dz).

The generation of parents believes that their children consider the cross a symbol of the suffering of Jesus Christ, who reified faith in God and created the path for the sins of every human to be redeemed. Parents and grandparents emphasise that children are aware of the role that the symbol played in the lives of their families during World War II. It was considered a sign of God’s protection over the Polish nation.

b. The Holy Bible

The Holy Bible is accepted by the younger generation as a symbol of the Christian faith. Children from families III and V, where parents read the Scripture, state that it requires interpretation and analysis (to the best of their ability). For them, it is a “*księga* [a book of substantial gravity and significance]” that should have a prominent place at home. “When I grow up and have my own home, I will have a special place for the Holy Scripture, just like my mother and grandmother” (III/Dz).

Parents and grandparents from families I, II, and IV emphasise that contemporary children are not very interested in interpreting Scripture. Naturally, they recognise that it is a significant symbol of Christian culture, a tradition passed down from one generation to the next. It becomes obvious to them that every family belonging to the Catholic Church should have the Holy Scripture.

c. Table

The table, as a symbol of a bond, of belonging to a specific community, being part of a group and responsibility for one’s own actions, is identified in the spiritual culture of all surveyed children. “The table is the central place. We sit there together and eat and talk and

play various games” (V/Dz); “Well, my grandfather always says so, and it’s true, that the table brings us together. Sometimes, when I do something wrong, I sit down with my mum at the table and have to explain myself” (I/Dz); “Well, every house has a big table for the entire family” (III/Dz).

Parents and grandparents from families III and V emphasise that their children perceive the table as: the place where Jesus would meet his disciples; a symbol of the Last Supper. In the life of the family—understood as a community—the table plays a special role, particularly where children are concerned, and remains an important element in shaping their morality and hierarchy of values. Respondents from the parents’ and grandparents’ generations observe that the children see the table to be a symbol of a place where everyone can meet their loved ones and express their feelings; it is the “centre of the family”.

d. Holy water

To the children, holy water is one of the symbols of their spiritual culture. Its identification stems from family traditions that go back many generations and the adopted social norms. All respondents indicated that the presence of holy water at home is associated with the custom of receiving pastoral visits from the local priest each year.

The respondents from the generations of parents and grandparents state the same. They claim that children do not attribute any deeper significance to holy water. Representatives of families III and V emphasise that the younger generation does not perceive it as a symbol which protects the home and its inhabitants or as a manifestation of the Church’s presence in everyday life.

3.3. Rituals

An analysis of the material collected during interviews with three generations of the surveyed families demonstrates that, with respect to the spiritual culture of children, the following rituals are observed in the family environment:

- a. hanging of the cross – according to the younger generation, this is a symbol of belonging to the Christian culture that characterises the functioning of their families. Parents and grandparents underline that regardless of the extent to which

children identify with the Catholic community, the cross will accompany them as a symbol of faith throughout their lives, as a tradition passed down from generation to generation.

- b. family participation in the Sunday Mass—for the children, this is a form of attachment to Christian culture, i.e. traditions cultivated by their families. In families III and V, this is an expression of attitudes and values instilled in three generations.
- c. shared meal at the table—in every home, the table occupies a central place and, for the younger generation, the object is associated with a sense of belonging to a community, with building bonds and closeness. It symbolises compliance with and application of norms and rules in daily life, as well as support, providing a possibility for turning to the family with any problem; it also constitutes a living space where children do not feel alienated or lonely.
- d. prayer—recited together with the entire family at the Christmas Eve table and during Easter breakfast, it is a tradition for children and an expression of being part of the Christian community. The grandparents' generation believes that by cultivating shared prayer, young people develop a sense of growing up in a milieu where the values of the Catholic Church are present and thus acquire appropriate patterns of conduct.
- e. tradition of Christian holidays combined with the native culture of the Eastern Borderlands—children emulate behaviours which were developed and established in the generations of their grandparents and parents. They adopt a particular manner of decorating the house as well as the sequence and type of dishes prepared for the occasion, etc. They uphold (in families III and V) the family tradition of attending the midnight service together. Parents and grandparents emphasise that Christian tradition equips young people with values that will help them confront life's challenges.
- f. joint singing of Christmas carols—this integrates family members, unites and brings different generations closer together. Children note that during that time, the

entire family “speaks the same language”. Grandparents stress that this is a time when the younger generation is more willing to ask for advice, talk about their expectations and hopes, and more readily listen to older, more experienced family members.

- g. passing on folk stories about past generations and native traditions during church holidays—parents state that such stories foster children’s attachment to both their family and Christian culture. They instil young people with values that are passed down from generation to generation, such as goodness, respect, courage, and sacrifice. Children emphasise that the narratives are the history of their great-grandparents and grandparents, persons whom the children consider very important since they can “be in the world” thanks to them. In the opinion of the parents’ generation, their children understand the courage and the actions of their ancestors, which have enabled them to live in a democratic society today.

3.4. Values

The supreme value identified by children is family: the source of love, security and happiness. “I love my mum. I like doing lots of interesting things with her and I know that she’s always waiting for me at home” (I/Dz). The young generation believes it is essential to spend time together with parents and grandparents. “I am glad that we’re all together. We do stuff together, and it’s cool when my grandfather tells us stories about our family” (III/Dz). The grandparents’ generation emphasises that family and faith were the elements that kept people alive during the war and displacement. They helped them move forward so that today they can pass on this legacy to their children and grandchildren. Grandparents believe that children are aware of the role that home and family ties play in a person’s life. Parents note that this nurtures their sense of belonging to a cultural community where they learn to live in tolerance and respect for others. Families III and V indicate that their children understand the need to coexist with others in love for God and through God.

Among the values most frequently mentioned by children is friendship, which manifests in caring for one’s loved ones, their sense of happiness, as well as in kindness towards one’s friends and readiness to help them. Young people seek friendship both among their peers and

family members. “I have friends and that’s important for me’ (V/Dz); “Actually, I have one best friend. One, but a good one” (I/Dz). “I’m friends with my mum” (III/Dz).

The generation of grandparents’ stresses that their grandchildren learn respect for the culture of the Eastern Borderlands from a very early age. “Our children have it in the back of their minds that their ancestors came from the Eastern Borderlands, that the Catholic faith was important there” (V/B). The younger generation understands that Catholic values were at the heart of the canon of social norms which governed the life of their ancestors.

CONCLUSIONS

The spiritual culture of a contemporary child raised in a family whose members were resettled from the Eastern Borderlands to Poland after 1945 encompasses various dimensions, including words, rituals, values, and symbols. These analytical categories were considered in the analytical induction and served to verify the adopted assumptions, which remained unchanged throughout the qualitative research. Given the tradition of the three generations of the studied families, it is essential to highlight the varied intensity, significance, and specificity of the individual components that make up the aforementioned spaces.

Rituals play the most prominent role in shaping culture. According to the grandparents and parents, they are a powerful vehicle for values, native traditions and the roots of the Christian faith inscribed in the history of families from the Eastern Borderlands. The young respondents identify rituals that enable them to enter the world of social norms, specify ways of solving problems and acquiring correct patterns of conduct. They emphasise that by cultivating holiday traditions, attending church, and eating meals together, they have a sense of belonging to a specific group. They do not feel alienated or lonely, but experience being with others, being part of the Catholic community, the family of God.

Another important dimension that contributes to spiritual culture in children is language. The research demonstrates that it is recognised as such by the generations of grandparents and parents. Young people focus primarily on the transmissions concerned with family rituals in the form of stories and mention upholding the tradition of singing Christmas carols, which gives them a sense of happiness and teaches them what friendship and love for other people are.

Symbols feature less prominently in the spiritual culture of children. One of the well-entrenched symbols is the cross, which epitomises belonging to the Christian community, as well as the table located in the central place of one's home, a token of active coexistence in the family space, shared decision-making and conscious choices.

The dimensions of words, symbols and rituals determine the formation of values within the spiritual culture of the studied children. The intensity of individual elements, the interpretation of transmission, participation and co-creation of intangible space translate into the values that emerge as a result, the most important of which is the family. The family is equated with happiness, respect, tolerance, friendship, love and tradition. Children are aware that they are part of the family of God and bear responsibility for its co-creation and functioning.

The importance of elements of a child's spiritual culture for the family space is underlined by Anna Błasiak (2022), who draws particular attention to the culture of speech as a marker of intra-family relationships and a model of how a child should interact with the world and people around them. In turn, Rev. Ryszard Ficek (2020) notes that, in the family environment, Christian involvement for the benefit of culture, including spiritual culture, enables one to shape all complex levels of social life. Thus, as Magdalena Parzyszek (2012) and Anna Leszczyńska-Rejchert (2020) observe, the characteristic elements of spiritual reality include words, symbols, rituals, and values, which are expressed through knowledge, science, religiosity, and morality. Often enough, they also reflect the complex norms of Polish culture, which is deeply rooted in folk traditions.
(Chałas 2000, 556).

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