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BETWEEN DECLARATION AND COMMITMENT.  
THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF YOUNG POLISH EMIGRANTS  
IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period in which a number of changes take place that affect functioning in adulthood.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the many difficulties faced by a young person, which include changes in the perception of the world, of oneself, physical, mental changes, conflicts with parents, or the first experience of intimate interpersonal relations, this period is one of the most interesting in a person's life. It is characterized by a high level of activity and the undertaking of many developing activities, an exploration of the world, which is unfamiliar to the teenager, is carried out. Due to the structure of the brain and the changes taking place in it, a young person has the opportunity to learn new things and expand his horizons. The activities undertaken often develop into hobbies, interests or other activities, which, developed in adulthood, become a form for constructive leisure, learning about the world and acquiring the ability to make conscious choices and take responsibility for their decisions. During this period, in addition to many spheres, the spiritual sphere of a young person is especially intensely formed. Thanks to cognitive development, the young people moves away from religious practices fulfilled at the behest of

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<sup>1</sup> K. PIOTROWSKI, J. WOJCIECHOWSKA, B. ZIÓŁKOWSKA, *Rozwój nastolatka: późna faza dorastania: wiek: 14/15-19-20 lat*, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych 2014.

a parent or guardian, and moves to a more conscious expression of his faith or abandonment of its practice and expression of the.<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the topic at hand, the development of the spiritual, religious sphere also takes place during adolescence. At this time, not only parents, but also clergymen play an important role to help the young person learn about this sphere in his life as well. The spiritual sphere is one of the very delicate spaces of life, so it also demands delicate treatment. Any too strong interference from another person can block the development of this sphere for years to come.<sup>3</sup> In the context of the life of Polish youth in the UK, it is important to note not only the presence of parents, but also the many institutions of public life to help shape this sphere. The Catholic Church is one of the main institutions of public life, which with its activities in the UK includes spiritual, cultural, or educational activities. Polish Roman Catholic parishes perform an important socio-religious function helping to shape faith in young people, but also providing space for its free expression. Also, these parishes become spaces that provide opportunities to maintain ties with Polish culture and tradition. The Catholic Church, therefore, not only plays the role of a place of religious celebration, but also a social role in which Poles can maintain contact with their own cultural heritage. It is a place of social integration center giving Poles in the UK to maintain ties with their own nation and its traditions.<sup>4</sup>

These institutions play a key role in creating a sense of belonging and maintaining a Polish identity outside of their home country. A sense of belonging is especially necessary for young people, when authority is transferred from a parent or guardian to one's peers or environment during adolescence. The dictionary of psychology, peer group defines as, a group of people who have a similar reference to each other and position within the functioning of the group. It points out that this most often applies to groups of children and youth.<sup>5</sup> This meaning should be supplemented by pointing out the spontaneity of the group's formation, usually on the initiative of young people. The goal of teenagers is the desire for new experiences, to gain interesting and new

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<sup>2</sup> I. SOWA, *Aktywność religijna polskiej młodzieży i jej wpływ na ich zachowania konsumpcyjne*, "Studia Gdańskie" 31(2017), pp. 343-358; A. AGALAR, D. LAIBLE, G. CARLO & J. LIEW, *Longitudinal associations between parental psychological control and adolescents' intergroup attitudes to prosocial behaviors towards ethnic outgroups*, "Journal of Adolescence" 96(2024), pp. 1-10.

<sup>3</sup> S. KUCZOWSKI, *Psychologia religii*, Kraków: Publisher WAM 1993.

<sup>4</sup> S. KISIEL, *Duszpasterstwo na tle potrzeb psycho-duchowych*, Siedlce: Publisher Wyższe Seminarium Duchowne 1977.

<sup>5</sup> *Grupa rówieśnicza*, [in:] *Słownik psychologii*, eds. A. Reber & E. Reber, Polish edition eds. I. Kurcz, K. Skarżyńska, Warszawa: Scholar 2008, p. 253.

experiences, as well as a sense of security and belonging. Over time, these informal groups can take the form of formal and secondary groups, which are characterized by larger numbers, a specific purpose and program, and a group structure. A characteristic feature of youth groups is the dynamism and alternation, which leads to the transformation of the group, such as from natural to purposeful, task-based.<sup>6</sup>

This issue can have a significant impact on the formation of the value system of young people.<sup>7</sup> It can also affect the differences between the declarations and the practice of young people lives. Young person is under pressure from his parents or guardians, and the desire to please his peers. The discrepancy between declarations and the practice of faith is admittedly a very common phenomenon among the younger generation.<sup>8</sup> This is evident on the ground in Poland, as well as in other countries. Young people by their verbal declaration stand for specific values, but with their everyday behavior they contradict their declarations. Young person in verbal statement may show great openness, clearly specify their worldview, be a very tolerant person, while in behavior they may show difficulties in accepting and adopting the worldview of others. Young people very often present a different way of thinking and being than adults, they also have different needs and expectations. It is difficult for them to adapt to the environment in which they live. Very often they are not able to easily and without conflict accept the patterns, values, norms and goals commonly recognized in society.<sup>9</sup> Such behavior is a most natural phenomenon that results from the process of maturation in a young person, especially the formation and development of his brain, which is responsible not only for the cognitive process, but also for decision-making. Familiarizing oneself with the developmental processes taking place, allows

<sup>6</sup> K. BRAUN, *Środowiska rówieśnicze w rodzinnym wychowaniu młodego pokolenia*, [in:] *Pedagogika rodziny. Podejście systemowe*, vol. 2: *Wychowanie rodzinne*, eds. M. Marczewski et al., Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Wyższa Szkoła Społeczno-Ekonomiczna 2017, pp. 701-703.

<sup>7</sup> I. RAWICKA, *Współczesna młodzież, jej poglądy i wyznawane wartości*, "Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego" 40(2020), no. 1, pp. 135-154; A. PETERSEN, R.K. SILBEREISEN, S. SØRENSEN, *Adolescent development: A global perspective*, [in:] *Adolescence and Cultures (Prevention and Intervention in Childhood and Adolescence)*, eds. W. Meeus, M. De Goede, W. Kox, K. Hurrelmann, Walter De Gruyter INC 1993, pp. 3-34.

<sup>8</sup> D. KIELB, *Wpływ przygotowania do sakramentu bierzmowania na religijność. Studium katechetyczno-socjologiczne na podstawie badań młodzieży w diecezji rzeszowskiej*, Rzeszów: Bonus Liber 2023.

<sup>9</sup> J. SUCHODOLSKA, *Młodzież i młodzi dorosli wobec kryzysu indywidualnego – potrzeba wsparcia społecznego w rozwoju psychicznej niezależności (i dojrzałej tożsamości)*, "Kultura – Społeczeństwo – Edukacja" 10(2016), no. 2, pp. 235–236. L. STEINBERG, A. MORRIS, *Adolescent Development*, "Journal of Cognitive Education and Psychology" 2(2001), no. 1, pp. 55-87.

one to understand the behavior of young people and help them get a good grasp of the surrounding reality. The parent, educator and the environment become guides on the road to adulthood and help to broaden horizons, explore new spaces and shape responsibility and decision-making.<sup>10</sup> Modern young people clearly present their own views and are not afraid to express their own opinions and views including those related to faith to their parents or peers. It is also possible to see a lot of illogic in the actions of young people. They often declare their disbelief, yet admit their faith or participate in religious ceremonies because of various events. One also notices a different behavior, a declaration of one's faith and a failure to practice it.<sup>11</sup> The actions of young people in many situations seem illogical, but justified by the experienced period of adolescence and exploration of the world. At the present time, young people who are immersed in the world of *social media*, very much overloaded with a lot of information, often addicted to the Internet, show a great lack of interest in the real world. Such a plunge into virtuality carries very serious consequences for their social, emotional, but also spiritual development.<sup>12</sup>

The research problem of the study is contained in the question: What is the relationship between profession of faith and involvement in parish life or familiarity with functioning Polish institutions, taking into account the Catholic Church as the largest institution uniting a group of Polish emigrants?

#### METHOD

The survey was conducted in the first half of 2023. Google Forms electronic survey form was used for measurement. The survey questionnaire contained 12 metric questions and 54 basic questions. A total of 1,000 participated in the survey. 378 completed questionnaires were included in the final analysis. The reason for rejecting many of the measurements was that the questionnaire was partially and inaccurately filled out, especially in cases where the questions dealt with religious issues. In fact, a very large number of measurements were not included in the analysis of the results. This is because it could affect the unreliability of the conclusions drawn. The survey revealed that

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<sup>10</sup> A. KOZAK, R. BIELECKI, M. RZECZYCKI, *Nastolatek potrzebuje wsparcia. Zrozum swoje dziecko i bądź po jego stronie*, Gliwice: Sensus 2023, pp. 151-168.

<sup>11</sup> M. RUSZEL, *Psychologiczne aspekty zamykania się młodzieży na religię*, "Studia Gdańskie" 39(2016), pp. 245-255.

<sup>12</sup> A. KOZAK, R. BIELECKI, M. RZECZYCKI, *Nastolatek potrzebuje wsparcia*, pp. 193-240.

a significant percentage of Polish emigrants are reluctant to answer personal questions about faith and religiosity. The questionnaires, especially those sent to young people, were completed superficially or only at the end of the first set of questions, which is unfortunately a common phenomenon in surveys.

It should be noted that a strong point of the study is the high willingness of youth to speak out about their own faith, religious practices, morality, the Church, politics or the moral-ethical construction of the world. This is due to the strong sense of autonomy that exists at this time. In turn, the weaknesses of the study of this social group include the high rate of responses, the still low level of abstract thinking, and the lability of dynamically changing views under the influence of various factors, such as peer groups and social media. As a research technique, the method chosen was CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview). This method is based on collecting information through quantitative surveys, in which respondents are asked to fill out an electronic questionnaire. In order to carry out the measurement, the research tool was placed in an online environment. This technique has a number of advantages, including full anonymity of respondents, quick preview of survey results, quick access to many respondents, the ability to quickly fill out the questionnaire and thus collect empirical material, and less risk of error on the part of interviewers. It should be noted that the CAWI technique, in addition to the above-mentioned advantages, also has disadvantages. In the process of collecting empirical material, a questionnaire developed by the authors was used. In order to minimize common methodological errors, the questionnaire was divided into individual parts. At the beginning of the questionnaire, an information clause was included in which respondents were informed of the full anonymity and voluntariness of the study, as well as the consent of the university ethics committee. Participation in the study was voluntary, anonymous, and participants were not rewarded. The study group was a representative part of the population. The procedure was approved by the relevant Research Ethics Committee.<sup>13</sup>

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ADOLESCENCE PERIOD

Over the course of a person's life, adolescence is a key period. It is a transitional time between childhood and adulthood, and includes a number of changes that occur in the life of a young person. The goal of the processes

<sup>13</sup> Rozporządzenie: No. 2/2023/KEBN WT KUL.

taking place is to achieve maturity, which will allow a person to live independently in adulthood.<sup>14</sup>

Puberty is divided into 3 major phases: prepubertal (girls 9-12; boys 11-13), pubertal proper (girls 12-14; boys 12-15), and adolescent (girls 13-17; boys 15-19).<sup>15</sup> In addition, it includes development on many levels among which can be distinguished: physical, motor, cognitive, linguistic emotional, social, personality, moral development<sup>16</sup> and spiritual.<sup>17</sup> For the purposes of this research, the development of the emotional, social and spiritual spheres will be specifically described.

The changes taking place in the physical sphere are well known. One of these changes is action at the level of hormones, the ambivalence of which affects the emotionality of the teenager. It is then perceived that there is great emotional instability and a multiplicity of expressed emotions, especially negative ones. This is particularly noticeable in early adolescence. Lowered mood and labile emotions are influenced by changes in self-image, problems at school, family difficulties, lowered self-esteem, strained contacts with peers. Difficult emotions that feature strongly during this time include: anxiety, which is one of the symptoms of a sense of inferiority and lack of self-sufficiency; depressive states, sadness, resentment and hostility towards oneself and others, a sense of shame.<sup>18</sup> Emotional ambivalence is conditioned by the emergence of new cognitive abilities and experiencing opposite emotions in quick succession, such as sadness and joy.<sup>19</sup>

Another sphere in which significant changes are taking place is the social sphere. A characteristic feature of this sphere is the young peoples consideration of himself as a separate, adult, equal to others, and this can be seen in interpersonal relations between peers and adults, especially parents.<sup>20</sup> During adolescence, peers are often viewed in terms of gender, with mutual dislike of peers of the opposite sex being common. As youths spend more time with their peers, they form relationships that can take the form of packs, wider groups,

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<sup>14</sup> D.G. MYERS, *Psychologia*, transl. J. Gilewicz, Poznań: Zysk i S-ka 2003, p. 152.

<sup>15</sup> A. OLESZKOWICZ, A. SENEJKO, *Dorastanie*, [in:] *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, ed. J. Tremplala, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2015, s. 261.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, pp. 284-285.

<sup>17</sup> M. NOWOSIELSKI, R.P. BARTCZUK, *Analiza strukturalna procesów dekonwersji w okresie dojrzewania – konstrukcja skali dekonwersji adolescentów*, "Roczniki Psychologiczne" 20(2017), no. 1, pp. 143-165.

<sup>18</sup> A. OLESZKOWICZ, A. SENEJKO, *Dorastanie*, pp. 266-267.

<sup>19</sup> D. BECŁEWSKA, *Repetytorium z rozwoju człowieka*, Jelenia Góra: Kolegium Karkonoskie Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa 2006, pp. 220-232.

<sup>20</sup> A. OLESZKOWICZ, A. SENEJKO, *Dorastanie*, pp. 266-267.

or more intimate friendships. During adolescence, friendships tend to be same-sex and can help to boost self-esteem, discover personal strengths, and provide emotional support. Peer relationships also contribute to a sense of community, with teenagers often conforming to group norms in terms of dress and speech, while also creating their own unique culture through shared symbols and patterns of behaviour. When teenagers lack a sense of connection with their family, they may conform strongly to their peer group, which can have negative consequences.<sup>21</sup>

Due to the significant influence of peers, young peoples attitudes towards parents and elders tend to become more realistic. The challenge in establishing communication arises from the ambiguity of adolescence: they are not yet adults, but they are no longer children. This leads to youths becoming more distant from their parents, and parents struggling to acknowledge their child's autonomy. These conflicts often manifest themselves and become a platform for mutual disagreement and discussion. Research suggests that there is a positive emotional connection between parents and teenagers. Additionally, young people often adopt the values of their parents' social class. The developmental objective in this area is to transition from dependence to a partnership with parents.<sup>22</sup>

No less important than the other developmental spheres is the spiritual sphere, and its development discovers an important role during adolescence.<sup>23</sup> The development of this field relies on abstract thinking. It is a time when young people seek their own image of God, reference to Him, and ways to express their own religiosity. This period is also characterized by a high degree of tolerance and less dogmatism. Often, it is a time of rebellion, challenging the traditional forms of religious expression handed down by parents or guardians. The development of this sphere is also associated with the pursuit of ideal goodness. However, this pursuit can lead young people to abandon religion or fall prey to dangerous sects due to unrealistic expectations. The rebellion of a teenager can be tempered through spiritual growth, which is facilitated by various experiences, conversations, and encounters with

<sup>21</sup> I. OBUCHOWSKA, *Adolescencja*, [in:] *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka. Charakterystyka okresów życia człowieka*, ed. B. Hrawas-Napierała, J. Trempała, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2009, pp. 175-177.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, pp. 178-179.

<sup>23</sup> J. BAGROWICZ, *Religijność w kształtowaniu tożsamości młodzieży*, "Studia Włocławskie" 6(2003), pp. 135-148.

people. The modifications result in a conscious acceptance or overt rejection of religiosity inherited from the family home.<sup>24</sup>

#### RESEARCH OF PRESENTATION

Table 1. Gender of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage important	Percentage cumulative
Male	175	46,3	46,3	46,3
Female	203	53,7	53,7	100,0
Total	378	100,0	100,0	

Source own study.

The sampling of the research sample by the random-target method involved the entire population of Polish expatriates living in the UK. Thus, the data obtained indicate different age groups. The present study refers to young people. This age was defined as up to 34 years old. In the questionnaire's cafeteria, the group to which the analysis applies was included in the first two response options. The question was: "Mark your age range." Only 3.4 percent of respondents were 24 years old or younger. In contrast, 18% percent indicated a range of 25-34 years. Thus, more than 21% of the respondents' answers were included in the analysis.

Table 2. Age of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage	Percentage important	Percentage cumulative
24 years and under	13	3,4	3,4	3,4
25-34 years	68	18,0	18,0	21,4
35-44 years	192	50,8	50,8	72,2
45-54 years	78	20,6	20,6	92,9
55 and over	27	7,1	7,1	100,0
Total	378	100,0	100,0	

Source own study.

The research indicates that the level of self-declaration of faith is dependent on age ( $p=0.000$ ; Kendall's tau-b=0.282). The relationship is weak. It can be concluded that respondents with higher age declared faith more often than

<sup>24</sup> I. OBUCHOWSKA, *Adolescencja*, p. 183.

those in other age groups. Younger people described themselves as non-believers in 50% of cases and as indifferent in 20%.

Therefore, the sum of unbelief and religious indifference accounts for 70%. The figures presented are significantly higher than those in Poland, where only about 70% of young people identify as believers. While there are changes occurring in Poland, with an increasing percentage of individuals identifying as non-religious or indifferent, the shift is not as significant as in other countries.<sup>25</sup> Researchers note that changes in religious beliefs among young people in Poland are gradual rather than sudden.

Table 3. Declaration of faith

	Age					Total
	24 years and under	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55 and over	
I am a non-believer	50,0%	4,7%	5,2%	2,8%		5,5%
I am indifferent	20,0%	12,5%	4,0%	4,2%	4,3%	6,1%
I am undecided	10,0%	17,2%	4,6%		4,3%	6,1%
I am a believer		35,9%	46,6%	33,3%	17,4%	38,5%
I am a firm believer	20,0%	29,7%	39,7%	59,7%	73,9%	43,7%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source own study.

This research suggests that young people's declarations are influenced by a different context, characterised by greater religious pluralism and a more secular society. In Poland, social and traditional factors have a strong influence, particularly in small towns and villages, which affects society even at the stage of declarations.

However, it should be noted that this relationship is weak, as indicated by almost 40% of the respondents. Gender is a significant factor in the relationship with the parish (chi-square;  $p=0.006$ , Kramer's  $V=206$ ), with men more likely to participate in religious practices than women.

<sup>25</sup> D. KIEŁB, P. MĄKOSA, *Between personal faith and façade religiosity. Study on youth in the south-eastern Poland*, "European Journal of Science and Theology" 17(2021), no. 5, pp. 15-30.

Table 4. Relationship to parish – gender relationship

What is your relationship with the parish?	Please indicate your gender:		Total
	Man	Female	
I visit the parish irregularly and occasionally	6,0%	12,7%	9,7%
I only attend Mass and services	25,6%	15,3%	20,0%
I attend Mass and services, sometimes participate in events organized by others	28,6%	41,4%	35,5%
I regularly participate in the liturgy, join in organizing various initiatives carried out by the parish	39,8%	30,6%	34,8%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source own study.

The obtained data indicate a relatively high proportion of individuals who are religiously committed. This conclusion applies to over 70% of the surveyed population, but it is important to note that this trend is more prevalent among individuals over the age of 35. Around 30% of respondents indicated a lack of involvement beyond occasional participation in Mass, typically during Christmas or Easter, or for family occasions such as weddings and funerals.

Another aspect analysed was the relationship with the parish across different age groups, with approximately 68% declaring regular participation. This data contrasts with the reported non-belief or religious indifference. The measurement reveals a discrepancy in the declarations of young people, as 100% of the age group up to 24 indicated occasional organized services sometimes.<sup>26</sup>

Table 5. Relationship to the parish – participation in parish life

What is your relationship with the parish?	Age					Total
	24 years and under	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55 and over	
I visit the parish irregularly and occasionally		<b>21,3%</b>	8,7%	5,9%	4,5%	9,7%
I only attend Mass and services		<b>46,8%</b>	16,0%	14,7%	9,1%	20,0%
I attend Mass and services, <b>sometimes</b> participate in events organized by others	100,0%	17,0%	<b>35,3%</b>	<b>41,2%</b>	<b>50,0%</b>	35,5%
I regularly participate in liturgy, join in organizing various initiatives carried out by the parish		14,9%	<b>40,0%</b>	<b>38,2%</b>	<b>36,4%</b>	34,8%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source own study.

The statistical analysis shows that age does not have a significant impact on involvement and connection to the parish (chi-square; p=0.000; Kramer's

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

$V=0.233$ ). The relationship between the variables is weak. However, it is worth noting that those over 35 years of age tend to be more involved, which is also reflected in their frequency of religious practice.

In the UK, the Catholic Church is the most common Polish community, but there are also other organizations and associations for Poles. To measure differences in membership and involvement in other organizations and associations, we measured membership in such groups. Similar to the Catholic Church and its concretization as a parish, there is an analogous phenomenon. Affiliation and association have a weak character that depends on age (Kendall's tau-b=0.134;  $p=0.003$ ). The data shows that affiliation becomes more frequent with age.

Table 6. Knowledge of Polish institutions, including the Catholic Church

Age	While in exile, did you get acquainted with the functioning of Polish organizations or institutions associating Poles?				Total
	No, I have never heard of any organization/institution of this type	Only heard/heard about such organizations/institutions, never got to know any of them more closely	Yes, I know of such organizations/institutions, but I do not belong to them	Yes, I know such organizations/institutions, I belong to them	
24 years and under	23,1%	38,5%	7,7%	30,8%	100,0%
25-34 years	13,2%	42,6%	29,4%	14,7%	100,0%
35-44 years	14,1%	26,6%	40,1%	19,3%	100,0%
45-54 years	9,0%	24,4%	42,3%	24,4%	100,0%
55 and over	7,4%	25,9%	29,6%	37,0%	100,0%
Total	12,7%	29,4%	36,8%	21,2%	100,0%

Source own study.

Regarding Polish organizations, including the Polish Catholic Mission operating in the United Kingdom, respondents were asked about their awareness of any Polish organizations. It is interesting to note that more than 36% of respondents who are many before the age of 35 indicated that they have no knowledge of such organizations. Conversely, 80% stated that they had heard of such organizations but had not familiarised themselves with them. The data suggests that young people are not interested in organisations that aim to bring together Poles living in exile. However, this phenomenon provides an opportunity for better communication within the Polish community, including the Catholic Church. The data may also support the conclusion that the younger generation is undergoing an axiological transformation. In previous decades,

these organizations, particularly in the UK, were instrumental in building and strengthening national and religious identity. However, their purpose is now being questioned due to a lack of interest and indifference among young Poles.

## DISCUSSION

The analysis of the surveys shows very clearly the discrepancy between the declaration of faith and its practice and the traditions associated with it.<sup>27</sup> Identity formation is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors. One such factor is the search for personal identity, which is particularly prevalent during adolescence. Young people in this stage of life often experiment with different values and beliefs, and are more open to change and seeking new experiences than adults. It is important to note that the faith one declares may be influenced by family or social pressures, and may not necessarily reflect their personal beliefs. During adolescence, parents or guardians heavily influence young people and may try to impose their religious beliefs on them.<sup>28</sup>

The second significant factor is social pressure, which may compel a teenager to identify with a particular religious group. During adolescence, it becomes more important for a teenager to belong to a group than to be isolated by their own firm beliefs. The emphasis shifts from parental authority to peers and the group. Therefore, a young person may relinquish their own worldview to experience community and belonging.<sup>29</sup> This discrepancy between declaring faith and not practicing it may also result from the development of critical thinking. During adolescence, young people begin to question and analyze religious beliefs, which can lead to a decrease in religious practices, even though

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Pew Research Center. 1018 a. *Being Christian in Western Europe*, [online]; <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2018/05/14165352/Being-Christian-in-Western-Europe-FOR-WEB1.pdf> [accessed: 20.01.2024]; Cf. Pew Research Center. 2018b. *Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities and Key Social Issues*, [Available online] <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/10/29/eastern-and-western-europeans-differ-on-importance-of-religion-views-of-minorities-and-key-social-issues> [accessed: 12.01.2024]. Cf. Por. S. BULLIVANT, *Europejska młodzież i religia. Wyniki Europejskiego Sondażu Społecznego (2014-2016)* [online], <https://wszystkoconajwazniejsze.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ Raport-prof.-Boullivant.pdf> [accessed: 23.01.2024].

<sup>28</sup> B. JANKOWIAK, E. WOJTYNKIEWICZ, *Kształtowanie się tożsamości w okresie adolescencji a podejmowanie zachowań ryzykownych w obszarze używania alkoholu przez młodzież*, "Studia Edukacyjne" 2018, no. 48, pp. 169-173.

<sup>29</sup> K. KUSZNIAR, E. FIRLEJ, M. JANISZEWSKA, J. KONARSKA, P. KUSTRA, A. BARAŃSKA, *Potrzeby oraz sposoby ich zaspokajania przez młodzież w okresie adolescencji*, "Journal of Education, Health and Sport" 7(2017), no. 8, pp. 900-901.

they may continue to declare their membership. The role of parents is significant in this regard, particularly when their faith is not reflected in their actions. This highlights the notion that faith is merely an accessory and does not have a significant impact on one's life.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, one important argument is one's own life experiences, especially difficult and traumatic ones. In the face of difficult events, a young person turns to God for help, when he does not receive it in a tangible way, a conviction may arise in him that God does not exist because he has not intervened in his case.<sup>31</sup> The survey results reveal multifaceted discrepancies. 50% of respondents under the age of 24 identify as non-believers, 30% as indifferent or undecided, and 20% as firm believers. It is worth noting that the response 'deeply believers' was selected while 'I am a believer' was not. This suggests that young people are consciously exploring and engaging with faith, and that it influences their decisions and behaviour. In a detailed analysis, the life context of the individual and the openness and sincerity of the individual should be taken into account.

The research revealed a lack of interest in Polish institutions, including church institutions, among young people. These organizations are designed to enable young people to practice traditions, yet 23.1% of respondents indicated that they have never heard of such institutions and do not belong to them. It is noteworthy that 38.5% of young people are aware of such institutions but have not sought further information. Additionally, 31% of young people have indicated involvement in the practice of faith and transmission of traditions, demonstrating their awareness of the importance of preserving the deposit passed down by their parents or grandparents in Poland. Factors that influence responses include social changes, cultural influence, lack of experience with tradition and faith, scandals in the Church, and the search for one's own identity, which was discussed in the previous paragraph. Notably, social change is occurring rapidly and affects the formation of values and thinking. Similarly, globalization should be understood as a factor.<sup>32</sup> The assumption of significant cultural and religious diversity leads to the acquisition of a new perspective, which may result in the abandonment of one's own religious practices and traditions. For many, the preservation of their cultural identity is closely

<sup>30</sup> I. CZAJA-CHUDYBA, *Myślenie krytyczne w ujęciu psychopedagogicznym — w kierunku poznawczej samodzielności i odpowiedzialności jednostki*, "Argument. Biannual Philosophical Journal" 10(2020), no. 2, pp. 289-3014.

<sup>31</sup> A. PRONIEWSKI, *Doświadczenie wiary w życiu młodego człowieka w nauczaniu Benedykta XVI*, „Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej” 8(2009), pp. 95-102.

<sup>32</sup> Z. MELOSIK, *Kultura popularna i tożsamość młodzieży. W niewoli władzy i wolności*, Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls 2010.

linked to the practice of their traditions, which is an essential element of maintaining Polishness abroad.

The influence of culture should also be considered as a factor. Mass media often promotes values that differ from those of the Catholic Church. This exposure can affect young people, who are often susceptible to outside influences during their maturation process. Additionally, some young people may not have the opportunity to practice their faith or engage in associated traditions within their own family home. When it comes to parents, the development of the religious sphere may not be a priority and could even undermine its existence. Therefore, they may not make an effort to instill such attitudes in their children. It is also important to mention the scandals associated with the Church, which can lead to a lack of trust in the institution and its affiliates. This can cause young people to feel resentment or distance themselves from the Church due to its involvement in various controversies.<sup>33</sup>

The summary highlights the illogicality of teenagers' actions, which can be attributed to various factors. Specifically, brain development in the areas of planning and risk assessment, as well as the ambivalence of hormones, can contribute to impulsive behavior and decision-making. Additionally, the search for identity can lead to contradictory actions that may appear illogical to adults. Social pressure is an important factor that can force teenagers to conform to group standards, even if they disagree. It is crucial for young people to consider the potential consequences of their behaviour. Another factor is encountering new situations, which can lead to misjudgements and illogical actions due to lack of life experience. Adolescence is a time of intense change and exploration, often resulting in illogical actions.

## APPLICATIONS

Drawing conclusions from the research conducted could aid in developing a more appealing offer for young people residing in the UK. The Church's activities, particularly in the realm of social work with the Polish diaspora in Britain, but also more broadly, are fundamentally based on an open attitude that reaches out to people, rather than closing ourselves off in our own structures. The witness of believers, clarity in attitudes and behaviour, practicing their faith, and not being ashamed of their faith and belonging to the Church can help to attract those who are undecided, indifferent, or non-believers. This attitude on the part

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<sup>33</sup> A. PŁACHECKA, *Pedofilia w Kościele katolickim za pontyfikatów Benedykta XVI i papieża Franciszka*, „Świat Idei i Polityki” 16(2017), pp. 301-323.

of the faithful can generate interest in the Catholic faith, often leading to important existential questions and an interest in the person of Jesus Christ. The Church's pre-evangelisation activities towards indifferent or non-believing individuals are crucial tasks and missions for contemporary evangelisers.

The research above indicates that young people often fail to connect their declaration of faith with their daily actions. Given the developmental period of adolescence and the mechanisms at work during this stage, it is crucial to identify gaps in the connections between decisions and actions. Parents, guardians, and educators, including the clergy of the Catholic Church, have a crucial role in demonstrating to young people the illogicality of certain behaviours and providing constructive feedback. This presents an opportunity for reflection on the issue and can broaden the horizons of young people, enabling them to make clear choices and take responsibility for their words and actions. It is important to communicate with young people. This includes parents, guardians, educators, and clergy who may have occasional contact. It is essential to show respect for teenagers as individuals and acknowledge the importance of their concerns, even if they may seem trivial to adults.

The Church provides support to individuals at various stages and moments in their lives, demonstrating vigilance and care for all people, regardless of their place of residence or economic and social activity<sup>34</sup>. It is important to update the Church's services to meet the needs of young people. Social research proposals can help identify the needs and interests of young people, allowing for the adaptation of the parish community's services. The research results will help to understand the condition and expectations of young people from the parish community. The study revealed that young people lack interest in the Church's institutions and their subordinate bodies. Even when they are aware of them, they do not engage in these activities. The current generation is often preoccupied with consumerism, the accumulation of material possessions, hedonism, and the satisfaction of lower-level needs. Many young people do not prioritize the development of their own values or the establishment of a hierarchy of values, which requires effort and discipline. Therefore, the Church has an opportunity to highlight timeless values through its teachings and activities, and to showcase contemporary and historical figures who embody these values and demonstrate the beauty of a life lived in accordance with them.

Therefore, it is important to conduct an advertising campaign for a parish offer after examining the needs and expectations and establishing new activities. Based

<sup>34</sup> PIUS XII, *Konstytucja apostolska o duchowej opiece nad emigrantami "Exsul Familia"* (01.08.1952), „*Studia Polonijne*” 4(1981), pp. 15-58.

on the research conducted, some young people are not aware of Polish diaspora institutions, and even when they are, they do not take the time to learn about the institution's offer. Therefore, promotional activities should aim to capture the attention of young people while avoiding banality. A clear and concise message can be effective. To achieve this, social media and platforms commonly used by young people should be utilised. It is important to gather feedback from interested parties regarding proposed platforms and examples.

The aim is to structure the daily operations of the Church in a way that fosters a genuine sense of community among those who share not only a common background but also a shared faith. According to the literature, the period of early and late adolescence is marked by a crucial element of identification with peers and the formation of new relationships and bonds. As the peer group plays a crucial role, it is important to consider and supplement the activities of the parish community with these elements. This will help the young person feel like a part of the community, meet new people, and engage in new, socially constructive interactions. A sense of belonging to a group can be based on common country of origin, religious experience, shared interests, and current topics important to young people.

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BETWEEN DECLARATION AND COMMITMENT. THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES  
OF YOUNG POLISH EMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Summary

The present study concerns the declaration of faith among young Polish emigrants in Great Britain and their conscious involvement in parishes or Polish institutions. It is common, especially among young people, to notice a discrepancy between the declaration and the conscious participation that is its practical confirmation. It is also a fact that there is a phenomenon of change in the religious landscape of Polish émigrés in Great Britain with particular reference to the abandonment of the practice of faith. The main question therefore concerns the relationship between declaration, knowledge and involvement in the life of Polish parishes and institutions. The research carried out indicates that a secularising context, different from that in Poland, underlies the abandonment of private prayer and public religious practice. Increasingly, a change is also observed already at the level of declarations in relation to religiosity, as well as knowledge of the Catholic Church, which is the most numerous institution for Polish emigrants in Great Britain, and other Polish diaspora organisations. It appears that contemporary young Polish émigrés living in the UK do not pay attention to nurturing the spiritual factor in themselves, and are not even interested in the existence of institutions aimed at shaping their religiosity or national identity.

**Keywords:** Young Polish emigrants; adolescents; national identity; religiousness of emigrants

MIĘDZY DEKLARACJĄ A ZOBOWIĄZANIEM.  
PRAKTYKI RELIGIJNE MŁODYCH POLSKICH EMIGRANTÓW W WIELKIEJ BRYTANII

Streszczenie

Niniejsze opracowanie dotyczy deklaracji wiary wśród młodych polskich emigrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii oraz ich świadomego zaangażowania w życie parafii lub instytucji polskich. Często, zwłaszcza wśród młodych ludzi, można zauważać rozbieżność między deklaracją a świadomym uczestnictwem, które jest jej praktycznym potwierdzeniem. Faktem jest również, że obserwuje się zjawisko zmian w krajobrazie religijnym polskich emigrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem porzucania praktyk religijnych. Główne pytanie dotyczy zatem relacji między deklaracją, wiedzą i zaangażowaniem w życie polskich parafii i instytucji. Przeprowadzone badania wskazują, że u podstaw porzucenia prywatnej modlitwy i publicznej praktyki religijnej leży kontekst sekularyzacyjny, odmienny od tego w Polsce. Coraz częściej obserwuje się również zmianę już na poziomie deklaracji dotyczących religijności, a także wiedzy o Kościele katolickim, który jest najliczniejszą instytucją dla polskich emigrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii, oraz innych organizacjach polskiej diasporы. Wydaje się, że współcześni młodzi polscy emigranci mieszkający w Wielkiej Brytanii nie zwracają uwagi na pielęgnowanie w sobie czynnika duchowego, a nawet nie interesują się istnieniem instytucji mających na celu kształtowanie ich religijności lub tożsamości narodowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** młodzi polscy emigranci; młodzież; tożsamość narodowa; religijność emigrantów