

## Everyday Multicultural Life Versus Sense of National Belonging. Pedagogical Implications

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*National belonging becomes problematic for minorities functioning in multinational countries, as its development is determined by multiple factors. On the one hand, such individuals identify themselves with their own cultural heritage. On the other hand, they can whether close themselves within the limits of their own culture, or quite the contrary – cross its borders, opening towards the culturally different. In the latter case, their cultural identities are of dual nature and take place in diverse spaces, specific for the cultural borderland in which these minorities function. Areas of identification, characteristic for the Polish national minority living at the Vilnius meeting point of cultures, entail public, nationally dual, and community spheres. Experiencing them results in the interpenetration of Polishness and Lithuanianness, crucial for their sense of national belonging, the formation of cultural identity, and the construction of a community at the meeting point of cultures. Moreover, such cultural experience acquired in multicultural conditions provides with an important reference for education.*

Key words: *national diversity; multiculturalism; cultural identification; socio-cultural spaces; education*

### Cultural diversity as a conceptualising factor of everyday life

There are unique places and spaces in which one experiences life. By doing the latter, one constructs own image and that of others, establishes social relations assigning unique features to them, conceptualises the dimensions and ranges of functioning together or next to others, builds own identity, and co-creates the identity of the group with which one identifies him- or herself. In the case of experiencing cultural differences – from the perspective of one's own diversity or that of others – one situates himself in the borderland of cultures while making cultural (self-)identification. Their effect weighs on relations between different cultures, i.e. – their mutual permeation, establishing a new culture (borderland culture), or separation. This (in)transcendence of cultural borders is therefore an important reference in building culturally diversified spaces in given areas, contributing to their cultural encapsulation. The phenomena of cultural

identification, especially national identification, "(...) are very sensitive both to places and to the impact measured by the influence of a national minority on the course of events in the society of majority, whereas the awareness of the size of a given minority serves as an important reference in the subjectively defined processes of growing or limiting own national self-identification".<sup>1</sup> Hence the importance of processes and phenomena of multicultural connotation, which stratify and conceptualize its area in relation to a given place. This process is particularly visible, for instance, in the situation of the disintegration of multinational states, followed by the emergence of a new state or those regaining sovereignty and independence (usually also multinational states).<sup>2</sup> These states, within the accepted ideological order and internal and external policy, define the framework and principles of functioning of minority groups, as well as the scope of social, economic, political and civil rights they are entitled to, rights related to cultivating their own culture, or rights to their own education, followed by education in the national language.

Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this process can be observed, for example, in relation to the European countries that emerged from the break-up: the USSR – Belarus (1991), Estonia (1991), Lithuania (1990), Latvia (1991) and Ukraine (1999); Yugoslavia – Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992), Croatia (1991), Macedonia (1991), Slovenia (1991), as well as Czechoslovakia – Czech Republic (1993) and Slovakia (1993).<sup>3</sup> Poland regained its independence in 1918, and its territory includes the former territories of Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Each of these countries was therefore reborn as a nationally heterogeneous state. For example, quoting data from the first census of the population conducted in the Second Republic of Poland in 1931, its national structure was as follows: "Poles constituted over 68 percent of the total number of citizens, Ukrainians – over 15 percent, Jews – 8.5 percent (Poland was in terms of their number the second place of residence in the world after the United States), Byelorussians, as well as "locals" (i.e. persons without established national consciousness) – over 3 percent, Germany – over 2 percent (the only minority whose number decreased significantly in comparison with the beginning of the 1920s due to migration to Germany). The mosaic of nationalities was complemented by Russians,

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<sup>1</sup> Sadowski, A. (1999). Białorusini w Polsce – wybrane problemy i kierunki przemian, In D. Berlińska – K. Frysztacki (Eds.) *Inni Swoi. Studia z problematyki etnicznej*. Opole: Instytut Śląski, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> Burszta, W. J. (2009). Obcość wielokulturowa, In D. Angutek (Eds.) *„Obcy” w przestrzeni kulturowej współczesnej Europy*. Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego, p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Zmiany na politycznej mapie świata*. <http://www.geografia.lo4.poznan.pl/opracowania/temat%2016.pdf>. 18. 03. 2019.

Lithuanians, Czechs, Roma, few Slovaks and Karaims, ethnic groups similar in language to Ukrainians (Boykos, Lemkos, Hutsuls), as well as Polonised Armenians and Tatars.<sup>4</sup> From the official point of view, the status of national minorities in the Second Republic of Poland was regulated. The Constitution of the Republic guaranteed "(...) civil and political rights to all Polish citizens regardless of nationality and religion, and prohibited discrimination in any form. It gave the opportunity to freely cultivate the national language and tradition, conduct cultural and educational activities and participate in political life.<sup>5</sup> However, the unofficial image of the implementation of the nationality policy of the Polish authorities and the relations of national minorities with the Polish majority practically "went beyond the legal provisions and required a particularly delicate approach, compromise and understanding of mutual differences and interests. In the Republic of Poland of the interwar period, in many cases there was lack of such measures, and relations between Poles and national minorities were more often conflicting than friendly.<sup>6</sup> Poles, who lived in the territory of the Second Republic of Poland incorporated into the territory of the USSR by virtue of the German-Soviet agreement "on borders and friendship" concluded on 28 September 1939, were in a similarly difficult situation. These lands were inhabited by 40.02% of Poles,<sup>7</sup> who found themselves in a new political, social and cultural reality. It should be emphasized that the diversity of nationalities of these areas was conducive to its management. According to C. Łuczak, the Soviet authorities used "(...) antagonisms, mutual prejudices, pretensions and resentments existing between different nationalities, and thus made them cooperate. Many Jews and Ukrainians were eager to get involved in various anti-Polish actions, especially including those of a political nature, exacerbating the divisions between these nationalities that had already been there... Among all nationalities (...) the Soviet authorities were particularly hostile towards Poles, who were often deprived of their lives for no legitimate reason, imprisoned or sent to camps and deported en masse deep into the USSR".<sup>8</sup>

The situation of Poles, as a national minority living on the territory of the USSR, changed significantly in the 1990s, when the collapse of the USSR and the establishment of post-Soviet states took place. Remaining in the existing residential areas, they became citizens of the new states. Referring to official data,

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<sup>4</sup> *Spółeczeństwo w II Rzeczypospolitej*. [www.polska1918-89.pl/spoleczenstwo-ii-rzeczypospolitej.22.html](http://www.polska1918-89.pl/spoleczenstwo-ii-rzeczypospolitej.22.html). 18. 03. 2019.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> Łuczak, Cz. (1993). *Polska i Polacy w drugiej wojnie światowej*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, p. 511.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 510–511.

the vast majority of them live in Belarus (approx. 396 000), Lithuania (approx. 235 000) and Ukraine (approx. 144 000).<sup>9</sup> It should be stressed that in each of these countries they constitute one of the national minorities, whose status, freedoms and laws are determined by internal legal regulations. In essence, they define the spheres and scopes in which cultural differences of national provenance can formally exist, thus forming a reference for the daily functioning of national minorities in the community, socially and civically. On the other hand, the quality of relations between these minorities and the national majority is determined by everyday life at the meeting points of cultures, in which cultural confrontation takes place and, as a result, the creation of multicultural spaces is accomplished. Thus, multiculturalism, according to M. Golka, can be understood as “conscious co-occurrence in the same space (either in the immediate vicinity without a clear distinction, or in the situation of aspiring to occupy the same space) of two or more social groups with relatively different cultural (sometimes also racial) distinctive features: external appearance, language, religious creed, set of values, etc., which contribute to mutual perception of difference with its complex consequences”.<sup>10</sup> Its specific feature does not lie in “the mere co-existence of these various elements, but in the manifestation of relationships and links between them, or, to put it more broadly, relations that can create intricate structures”.<sup>11</sup> Thus, as J. Nikitorowicz points out, “the awareness of cultural differences determines the essence of multiculturalism, which results in opening up to, or closing oneself to, difference to varying degrees and range, reacting or interacting, referring to stereotypes and being driven by prejudices, referring to negative experiences and arousing fear of others, or making the effort of cognition and understanding, shaping attitudes of tolerance and showing the positive effects of cooperation”.<sup>12</sup> Multiculturalism is therefore a condition of a society which, according to A. Preczelle, is characterised by the following principles: prioritizing the group of origin, classifying differences, a characteristic jurisdiction that guarantees the rights of each individual, recognising cultural relativism and expressing differences in the public space.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the actual existence of multiculturalism in the public space of a particular country results in

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<sup>9</sup> *Raport o sytuacji Polonii i Polaków za granicą 2009* (2009). Warszawa: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych.

<sup>10</sup> Golka, M. (2010). *Imiona wielokulturowości*. Warszawa: Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie MUZA SA, pp. 6–65.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Nikitorowicz, J. (2017). *Etnpedagogika w kontekście wielokulturowości i ustawicznie kształtującej się tożsamości*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, p. 254.

<sup>13</sup> Grzybowski, P. P. (2009). *Edukacja europejska – od wielokulturowości ku międzykulturowości*, Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, p. 42.

a heterogeneous response to cultural differences, the impact of which is visible in the individual and collective dimension. They can be referred both to features specific to the identity of the subject, as well as to the cultural group one is a member of, and with which one identifies (national, ethnic or religious), as well as to the community which is co-created in the conditions of cultural diversity, incorporating own cultural specificities, while accepting or rejecting what is culturally different. Cultural differences and attitudes towards them generate the multicultural course of everyday life, with its various spaces and dimensions.

It is therefore worthwhile to consider the following subjects of analysis:

- spaces and dimensions of cultural identification,
- construction of a community space at the meeting point of cultures,
- educational potential of the cultural identification.

In this regard, the reference is made to the analysis of the results of own research conducted between 2012 and 2017 (with the use of the diagnostic survey method, questionnaire and interview technique) among 411 Poles living in the Vilnius region, who (mostly) display both the sense of Polish nationality (attachment to the homeland) and the awareness of civic belonging to the Lithuanian state in which they live. Therefore, they function in the nationally dual space in which they perform cultural (self-)identification.

### **Cultural identities in a multicultural space and its community connotations**

For the surveyed Poles, the Vilnius region is a significant place where Polishness and Lithuanianness permeate in a specific way, constituting an important reference in the process of constructing their cultural identity and co-creating everyday life at the local meeting point of cultures.<sup>14</sup> It is a specific area of experience, in which, on the one hand, “(...) the sense of biographical continuity of the individual as an effect of narration built on one’s own and others’ experiences and reflective control of reality”<sup>15</sup> is manifested, and on the other hand, cultural borderlands are revealed and contribute not only to the pluralisation of culture, but also to the competition for the right of precedence of the competing ethnoses.<sup>16</sup> Hence the importance of dealing with cultural

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<sup>14</sup> Szerłaż, A. (2010). Mała ojczyzna – przestrzenie autoidentyfikacji. In Szerłaż, A. (Ed.) *Wileńszczyzna małą ojczyzna*. Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, p. 188.

<sup>15</sup> Muszyńska, J. (2014). Miejsce jako przestrzeń doświadczania. In Nikitorowicz, J. – Muszyńska, J. – Boćwińska-Kiluk, B. (Eds.) *Od wielokulturowości miejsca do międzykulturowości relacji społecznych. Współczesne strategie kreowania przestrzeni życia jednostki*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Kurcz, Z. (2005). *Mniejszość polska na Wileńszczyźnie. Studium socjologiczne*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, p. 13.

differences from the perspective of dual nationality (Polish and Lithuanian), which, by creating different configurations, determines the existence of divisions, or promotes understanding while generating its adequate spaces.<sup>17</sup> The first of them is *the public space*, where an important role is played by the internal policy of the Lithuanian state towards national minorities living in its territory, Lithuanian nationalism and the existence of social distance manifested mainly towards the Polish national minority. The emerging divisions are strengthened by, among others, historical and political premises, given the significant importance of the Lithuanian-Polish relations shaped by historical past of the Vilnius region as well as the current social-political situation in Lithuania. The surveyed Poles indicated Lithuanian nationalism and the anti-Polish policy of the Lithuanian state as the main causes of conflicts with Lithuanians, followed by the lack of tolerance towards national differences in Lithuania and restricted right to use Polish language. The unwillingness of Lithuanians to engage in dialogue, distortion of historical facts or creation of a controversial image of Poles in the media equally contributes to that situation. The analysis of social distance between Poles and Lithuanians in the years 2005–2011 indicates that the reluctance towards Poles, despite short periods of stability, reveals a rather upward trend. Interestingly, the greatest distance to Poles was declared by the inhabitants of Šiaulai and Klaipeda, where only a small percentage of the Polish reside.<sup>18</sup> Hence the assumption that the lack of direct relations with representatives of national minorities is conducive to the dissemination and development of their negative image. However, despite the fact that Poles experience national and cultural marginalisation, they make reference to their cultural identities not only within their own culture, but also the Lithuanian state and its culture and local environment, which they perceive through the prism of their little homeland, and which together establish *the space of national dualism*. Polishness and Lithuanianness are the basic attributes of this area, consequently generating and conceptualizing its dimensions. The first of them is *civic*, linked to the Lithuanian citizenship of Poles and encompassing their obligations towards the Lithuanian state and its development, respect for the symbols and rituals of the state, Lithuanian language, as well as with the place of birth and living. Another dimension is oriented towards *localness*, i.e. the local community, encompassing different national groups living in the same area, and between which subjective bonds emerge resulting both from living in similar conditions, as well as from the common historical past, passed on a sense of

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<sup>17</sup> Szerłaż, A. (2016). Polacy na wileńskim pograniczu kultur: przestrzenie (nie)porozumienia a budowa międzykulturowej wspólnoty. *Multicultural Studies* 1/2016, pp. 82–83.

<sup>18</sup> Szerłaż, A. (2013). Narodowy dualizm w codzienności polskich rodzin na Wileńszczyźnie. In Nikitorowicz, J. (Eds.) *Patriotyzm i nacjonalizm. Ku jakiej tożsamości kulturowej?* Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, pp. 200–201.

belonging and identification with the cultural heritage of the Vilnius region. This locality is reflected in their sense of national belonging. In the first place they feel definitely Polish, secondly Vilnius, and to a lesser degree – Lithuanians, i.e. Polish Lithuanians.<sup>19</sup> The locality is also fostered by positive relations with nationally different neighbours, mainly Lithuanians and Russians, who are favoured by good knowledge of the languages of their nationally different neighbours, high frequency of direct contacts, as well as tolerance, mutual respect entailing the national differences of their neighbours, followed by the sense of humanity and community. Poles perceive themselves as members of a nationally diverse local community that cooperate in the community and for the sake of the community. Such cooperation creates favourable conditions for mutual permeation and mixing of cultures, embedding Polishness and Lithuanianness in the cultural dimension of the space of national dualism. Among Poles living in the Vilnius region, there is a focus on both Polish and Lithuanian culture. Polishness in its essence is based on three pillars: language – cultural heritage – faith, constituting a common cultural canon, and determining the sense of Polish national belonging. The centre of Polishness is primarily the mother tongue, thanks to which it is possible to preserve and transmit Polish cultural heritage, in particular to cultivate Polish traditions, customs and holidays, as well as faith, hence the right to celebrate Holy Mass in Polish. As a result, the Polish cultural canon provides an important reference for Poles in the process of cultural identification, which, however, is also influenced by the Lithuanian culture. The common history, common Lithuanian culture, Lithuanian language and Lithuanian education, that all create opportunities for professional, social and cultural functioning in the Lithuanian state, are important for them.

Polishness and Lithuanianness are also present in the family circles of the Polish, determining the *family dimension* of the area of national dualism. On the one hand, Polish identity is cultivated in the family environment through the intergenerational transmission of Polish cultural heritage and a sense of Polish national belonging, and on the other hand, the transmission of patterns and outcomes of Lithuanian culture takes place. As a result, the attitude of family members to their own culture and Lithuanian culture, as well as to individuals and groups identifying themselves with these cultures, is shaped. It is therefore important for these families to bring up children in Polish culture as it is the cultural heritage of ancestors who have lived in the Vilnius region for generations, and in Lithuanian culture, for it is the national heritage of the country in which they live, as well as the heritage of their culturally different neighbours, with whom

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<sup>19</sup> Szerłaq, A. (2010). Mała ojczyzna – przestrzenie autoidentyfikacji. In Szerłaq, A. (Ed.) *Wileńszczyzna mała ojczyzna*. Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, p. 192.

they have direct and positive relations. On the other hand, regarding the process of family socialization, a small percentage of Poles is oriented exclusively towards Polishness or Lithuanianness. The above clearly proves that in the vast majority of Polish families there is an interpenetration of Polishness and Lithuanianness. It should be noted, however, that the key role in this identification is played by Polish identity, that predominantly constructs the identity of the self, while Lithuanian identity is inclusive in this process. This is conducive to cooperation in a culturally diverse local community, creating favourable conditions for the social construction of *community space*, for which the *sense of community* present in three dimensions is a constitutive: axiological, cultural and existential.<sup>20</sup> The first one – *the axiological dimension* – creates significant values, which serve as important regulators of the attitude of Poles towards their own culture and Lithuanian culture. They take on a form of:

- values resulting from the cultural canon, namely: respect for cultural heritage, respect for a different language and respect for another religion; due to their recognition it is possible to protect one's own culture as well as other cultures;
- values determining the relation to the homelands, i.e. the homeland of ancestors in terms of culture and spiritual bond (respect for the country of origin), and the Lithuanian homeland in terms of citizenship enhanced by patriotism with regards to Lithuania;
- Intercultural values, thanks to which it is possible for cultures to interact and, as a consequence, for groups of different cultures to coexist. These values include: tolerance, openness to different cultures, cooperation despite cultural differences, intercultural dialogue.

The above values should therefore be considered as axiological premises for understanding within the framework of the local community, as they not only open up to cultural differences, but also sanction the dualism of socio-cultural practices, crucial for the cultural compromise. It is worth mentioning that these values are also significant for Lithuanians who live in the immediate vicinity of Poles and maintain direct, positive relationships with them. Their importance should be also interpreted in relation to the cultural and existential dimension of the community space. The first of these – *the cultural dimension* – is created by a common history, a common cultural heritage, a common Lithuanian homeland, a common place of residence, as well as faith and the Christian values the latter entails. The *existential dimension*, on the other hand, is constructed by the orientation of the local community towards common everyday problems, good neighbourly relations, common interests and shared concern for the future.

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<sup>20</sup> Szerłaĝ, A. (2016). Polacy na wileńskim pograniczu kultur: przestrzenie (nie)porozumienia a budowa międzykulturowej wspólnoty. *Multicultural Studies* 1/2016, p. 86.



The distinguished areas, spaces and dimensions of the cultural identification of Poles prove that in the situation of functioning in a culturally diverse environment they do not close within their own culture and national community. They move beyond the borders of their own culture, perceiving what is common in the historical and contemporary perspective for the place where they live from generation to generation, recognising its culturally diverse inhabitants. As a result, their sense of belonging is of a dual character, for it is based on the national premises resulting from Polish and Lithuanian nationality. This sense is conceptualized in a given place and its appropriate socio-cultural spaces, created as a result of cultural identification within the family environment, local community, as well as more globally through the prism of civic obligations. Notwithstanding, the recognised values that foster compromise in the cultural borderland and result in the establishment of a multicultural community entailing its culture are of paramount importance.

### **Pedagogical implications**

The issue of the sense of national belonging, constructed in a multicultural everyday life, is of great importance for the education of the young generation. The primary question in this context is the issue of cultural references in the process of shaping their identity, which is a component of education understood as “(...) all the influences on individuals and groups of people, conducive to such development and the use of the possibilities available to make them conscious and creative members of the social, national, cultural and global community to the maximum extent possible, and to make them capable of active self-realization, unique identity and individuality. It’s about making them able to develop their own self by undertaking ‘supra-personal tasks’, by maintaining the continuity of their own self in the course of fulfilling ‘distant tasks’”<sup>21</sup>. Achieving such a state of affairs is oriented towards the category of belonging, treated as a fundamental motive shaping human actions, in particular tackling wide range of social behaviours, significantly connected with the participation in groups<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, given education of this generation, it is necessary to incorporate the experience acquired in the cultural borderland, as it consists of bi-cultural identification, dual nationality, a strong bond with the local community and awareness of civic obligations for the benefit of the state, as well as, importantly, intercultural

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<sup>21</sup> Kwieciński, Z. (2001). Dziesięciościan edukacji (składniki i aspekty – potrzeba całościowego ujęcia. In Jaworska, T., Leppert, R. (Eds.) *Wprowadzenie do pedagogiki. Wybór tekstów*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, pp. 31–32.

<sup>22</sup> Batory, A. – Brygoła, E. – Oleś, P. (2016). *Odslony tożsamości*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo naukowe PWN, pp. 76–77.

orientation and building a culture of the borderland. The inclusion of this experience in the process of education can contribute to the development of pupils' key competences, as in the educational process they should be equipped with knowledge, understanding and skills constituting the basis for their acquisition of social and civic competences. This, in turn, shall enable the promotion of equality, social cohesion and committed citizenship and, consequently, the creation of social conditions stimulating the development of a democratic culture open to difference on the level of citizenship, which depends significantly on the professional teaching competences<sup>23</sup>. As multiculturalism forces us to go beyond traditional and established education, it is worth including to a greater extent regional and intercultural education in pedagogical practice, which are both anchored in cultural pedagogy, as well as multicultural and intercultural pedagogy.

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<sup>23</sup> Szerłaż, A. (2017). Multiculturalism and Interculturalism as the Points of Reference for Teaching Competencies. *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia* 38/2017, pp. 77–86.