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FROM MATKA POLKA TO NEW POLISH WOMAN: WOMEN AND RESTRUCTURING IN POLAND

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the impact of the political, economic, social and cultural changes that took place in Poland as a consequence of the 1989 revolution on the lives of women residing in two different regions of the country: Kraków and Upper Silesia. It provides an analysis of the relationship between the place of women's residence and the manner in which they have responded to the transformation undergone by their country. It illustrates that the impact of locality on the lives of Polish women is relevant on two levels: national and regional.

The thesis is largely based on interview material gathered in Upper Silesia and Kraków in 1995 and 1999. The discussion is structured through an exploration of the ways women living in those two regions have drawn in recent years on three dominant images of women available in contemporary Poland: Matka Polka (Mother Poland), the Communist Woman and the New Post-1989 Woman. An analysis of these images of womanhood demonstrates the relationship between political, economic, historical, social and cultural conditions prevailing in Poland on the national level, and the everyday lives of Polish women. The differences between the responses to these images of women from Upper Silesia and Kraków, and the related variation in their responses to the changes undergone by Poland since 1989, demonstrate the role of specific local conditions in determining the ideas of womanhood individual women shape for themselves and the extent to which they are able to live up to these images in reality.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published of written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text of the thesis

Anita Seibert

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The first persons whom I have to acknowledge are ones whom I never met, but of whom I constantly thought while writing this thesis – my great grandmothers and great great grandmothers, my very own Matka Polkas. I also wish to acknowledge my grandparents, grandpa and grandma Seibert from Katowice, grandma (babi) and grandpa Kuroś from Kraków and all babi's numerous sisters, all of whom I was privileged to meet and whose lives, ideas and values influenced and inspired me as a person and in some way lead to my writing this thesis.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Polish Women and Place since the Velvet Revolution.

1.1 Introduction

To anyone who visited Poland before 1989 and returned there in the latter half of the 1990s, the changes that have taken place as a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet controlled Eastern Bloc are obvious. Gone is the shabby greyness of the streets and cities of communist Poland. Gone are the queues. Gone is the feeling that you are on the far side of the iron curtain where freedom, democracy and toilet paper are not commodities one takes for granted. Multinational food chains such as McDonalds and KFC, massive supermarkets owned by international companies, and small locally owned boutiques selling Calvin Klein underwear and Palm organizers have replaced the state controlled shops dominated by empty shelves and staffed by grumpy assistants.

Western visitors are no longer forced to exchange a specific amount of 'hard' currency at the official government rate, only to discover that they could have sold it to illegal currency dealers for twice that price. Foreigners no longer stand out from the Polish crowd because of their clothing and, at least in larger cities and popular tourist destinations, no one turns their head at the sound of English. In large urban centers such as Warszawa, Kraków and Gdańsk, foreign and Polish business people armed with the latest mobile phones rush around talking to each other in English and sometimes in German and French. They compete with fashionable young people for places in trendy cafes and restaurants benefiting from the boom in the Polish economy. The former illegal

currency dealers have set up numerous, now legal, currency exchange outlets and become members of the new capitalist class of Poland.

Those who lived in Poland throughout the 1990s may not perceive the transformation as being quite so dramatic. The transformation of the country's economy and political system was a gradual process. So were the social changes that went with it. Poles grew accustomed to their new living conditions gradually. Even so, any Polish person will tell you that Poland has changed. They are likely to say that now if you have the money you can buy everything. They might also tell you that in the 1990s Poland became more colourful. Billboards have brightened up the grey and drab building walls, shiny imported cars have brightened up the streets, and people have brightened themselves up with fashionable western clothes. Poland and its people have become like any other European country and its inhabitants.

But such changes are only the most visible part of the story. The full story of the transformation that took place in Poland as a consequence of the 1989 revolution is a complex one. One development has been the ability of some people to improve their circumstances and become upwardly mobile. At the same time, however, others have been negatively affected. Furthermore, social mobility seems to have been regulated by quite fluid rules. While in some circumstances whole groups of people living in specific locations or working in specific occupations have been disadvantaged or privileged, there are no strict criteria governing who is likely to benefit from the new economic and political conditions in Poland. The situation of women demonstrates this strikingly, as

this thesis will show in the course of exploring the complex relationship between the post-1989 transformation of Poland and the lives of Polish women.

The thesis highlights the fact that the post-1989 social mobility of women, as individuals and as a group, took place in an environment characterized by complexity and a considerable amount of social fluidity. At the same time, however, it argues that there were some specific determining factors that allowed women to benefit from the changes of 1989 or prohibited them from doing so. Locality is one such factor. Therefore an exploration of the ways in which the culture, history and the economic circumstances of Poland as an entity, as well as the culture, history and economic environment of two different localities within Poland – Upper Silesia and Kraków, influence the lives of Polish women is provided.

An important theme that will emerge in this thesis is that Poland before 1989 was also a complex structure. Its economy was not totally communist or socialist, its social structure was not flat as one might imagine a communist society to be, and the conditions prevailing in individual regions were quite clearly differentiated. So the thesis is also about challenging the notion that a country characterized by uniformity is now being reborn as complex and differentiated. As far as economic and social circumstances were concerned, Poland has always been a complex society, but the differences that were once regulated and camouflaged are now in the open. All this has had implications for the way in which individual women live their lives in certain places.

The material on which this thesis is based has been largely gathered through interviews with women residing in Upper Silesia and Kraków conducted in 1995 and 1999. The utilized recruitment methods of participants are outlined in Appendix 1. The discussion of the interaction between locality and women's lives provided in this thesis is based on analysis of the answers women provided to questions outlined in Appendix 2. The discussion is structured through an exploration of the ways the women residing in those two different regions of Poland draw upon three dominant images available in contemporary Poland: Matka Polka (Mother Poland), the Communist Woman and the New Post-1989 Woman. The role notions of local identity and belonging play in this process is also explored.

1.2 The personal reasons

The arguments and ideas that are covered in this thesis evolved over several years of research. Looking back, it now seems to me that this thesis actually originated a long time before I formally began the research. The fundamental thoughts behind it started to germinate in a shared student house in Melbourne suburb of St. Kilda where I lived after moving out of my parental home. A favorite pastime in this household was engaging in what my housemates and myself perceived to be political debates enabling us to demonstrate to each other our concerns about issues such as class inequality, racism, religion, and whose turn it was to wash the dishes! As in any household inhabited by undergraduate students presenting themselves as left wing radicals, feminism and gender inequality were naturally favorite subjects for discussion, and long hours were spent on

what most of us now consider to be somewhat simplistic or at least naive debates. It was during those discussions that I realized that my housemates did not have a sophisticated understanding of the situation of women in Poland (or in other former Eastern Bloc countries) and that the parameters within which our discussions operated effectively prohibited them from forming such an understanding.

I had left Poland as a teenager in the mid 1980s. My memories of the socio-political climate of Poland were definitely not as dramatic and negative as those of my parents, who remember and were directly affected by the Stalinist regime (1947–1956). However, I still perceived the communist system as oppressive to people in general and women in particular, and rejoiced with other Poles when in 1989 Poland regained its independence from the Soviet controlled communist system.

On my arrival in Australia I was quite puzzled and sometimes even disappointed by the gender relations I observed in this country. I was surprised by the fact that many of the mothers of my fellow secondary students, most of whom came from middle socio-economic backgrounds, did not work outside the home. I was puzzled by my observation that there appeared to be little interaction with teenagers of the opposite sex other than encounters of a romantic or sexual nature. I was outraged by the fact that academic excellence, which in Poland was expected of girls in my learning environment, was seen by Australian male students as being completely inappropriate for a female. Despite those disappointments I never thought that the situation of Polish women was better than

that of their Australian counterparts. I saw the situation of Polish women as merely different.

My views contrasted strongly with those of my Australian-born friends who believed that women from the former Eastern Bloc countries, including Poland, had been 'liberated' as a consequence of the communist system and lived in a society practically free from gender discrimination. The fact that women from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) had for decades been working outside their homes and had access to free abortion during the communist period was seen as proof of the egalitarian nature of gender relations in the region. While I would never argue that having access to paid work was not beneficial to women, and strongly disapprove of the dramatic restrictions to the abortion laws that took place in Poland after 1989, I believed that to understand the social position of women one has to look beyond paid work, government subsidized childcare and holidays, and free abortion. I found this very difficult to explain to my housemates. My thoughts about the situation of Polish women that culminated in the writing of this thesis started at this point. I wanted to be able to explain the ways in which Polish women are different to women from other developed countries, and what the factors contributing to this difference are. In other words, I wanted to start to understand the relationship between geography, culture, history, politics, identity and the lives of women.

1.3 Talking about the Other

I believe that the main reason my housemates had difficulty understanding the social position of women in Poland is that they had a very fixed perception of what is oppressive and what is liberating for women. For most of my housemates the experience of white urban women in Australia was the benchmark for the universal experience of women. While they were quite comfortable perceiving women from Poland as an exotic Other, they saw gender inequality as a globally homogenous phenomenon. This was partly because they constructed their ideas relying exclusively on what Bulbeck calls Western[1] feminism and what 'might also be called 'Anglo Feminism' or feminism produced by English-speaking 'white' women' (1998:4). Hence they tended to look at the position of women in non-Western countries exclusively through Western eyes. While I cannot claim that at that stage I myself had a very sophisticated understanding of the differences between the social positions of women across the world, I knew that the situation of women in Poland was different to that of women in Australia and in other new world countries.

Looking at non-Western countries such as Poland through the prism of Western feminism can be very problematic and misleading, because of the tendency of numerous

[1] In this thesis the term 'western' and 'non-western' will be used predominatly because some of the Central and Eastern European writers refer to texts produced in the United States, United Kingdom or other parts of Europe as 'western'. Furthermore most of women who I talked to during my research referred to Poland as not (or at least not 'quite yet') western and to the United States or other regions of Europe as the West. Secondly the decision to use the term 'non-western' highlight Polands status as a state which was cut off from western culture, information flows, and economic ties, for many years. I am aware that prior to the socialist revolution many Polish people identified with the west, but the cumulative effect of years of socialist rule and separation has produced a difference that needs to be acknowledged in some way, hence my use of 'non-western' for want of a more appropriate term.

Western feminists to misunderstand the specific situation of women in Eastern Europe (Duchen 1992:5; Filip 1995:4). This misunderstanding originates in the fact that some scholars ignore the fact that 'being a woman' is experienced differently by different women, and, furthermore, that shared gender does not always result in commonality in social positioning (Ang 1995:58). This sentiment is in no way new and has been expressed before by women who do not fall (or do not see themselves as falling) into the category of Western women. This includes black feminists, Muslim feminists, and women from less developed countries (Bulbeck 1998).

Slavenka Drakulić makes a contribution to this debate on behalf of women from the former Eastern Bloc. Her book *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* (1993) provides a particularly eclectic and comprehensive discussion about the situation of women in the former Eastern Bloc. While addressing the difficulties in communicating the situation of women from the region to her Western colleagues (in her case Americans) she writes:

> It is not the knowledge about communism they lack – I am quite sure they know all about it – it's the experience of living in such conditions. So, while I am speaking from 'within' the system itself, they are explaining it to me from without. I do not want to claim that you have to be a hen to lay an egg, only that certain disagreement between these two starting positions is normal. But they don't go for that; they need to be right. They see reality in schemes, in broad historical outlines, the same as their brothers in the East do. I love to hear their great speeches or read their long analyses after brief visit to our poor countries, where they meet with the best minds the establishment can offer (probably speaking English) (125).

This point is taken further by Crnknovic (1992) who argues that Western feminism too often claims to represent the Other, non-Western women. Such writing about the Other can result in the production of a false image of the object of study, where it is not a neutral presentation but a construction of the Other. The author is located in the centre of power and knowledge, while the Other is falsified, co-opted, silenced and erased (Crnkovic 1992:22).

Analyses of Western academic literature addressing women in Poland and other Central and Eastern European countries produced both before and after 1989 reveals two main approaches. The first approach is characterized by a tendency to focus on the achievements of communist states in terms of women's emancipation and then the subsequent disadvantages faced by women as a consequence of the 1989 revolution. The second approach emphasizes the failure of communism to provide women with gender equality (Jung 1994:201). Both those approaches largely fail to reflect the complexity of the social environment of Central and Eastern Europe both before and after 1989.

In the early 1990s the majority of Western feminists looked at the changes in Poland through the prism of socialist feminist theory and therefore had a negative view of the impact on women of the 1989 transformation. This negative attitude was not necessarily fully shared by women from the Eastern Bloc themselves. Paradoxically, while high levels of female employment in Eastern Europe were seen in the West as evidence of their emancipation (Marx Ferree 1993:92; Haug 1991:41), many women experienced the combination of paid work with domestic responsibilities as a double burden. As a result

some Central and Eastern European women came to resent Western feminists for their naive acceptance of Marxist ideologies (Royer 1992:101) based on the promotion of sameness as the preferred form of equality combined with the desire to eradicate gender differences.

It could be argued, however, that as far as academic discourse is concerned the 1989 revolution and subsequent interest in the position of women in Central and Eastern Europe could not have happened at a more convenient time. Caine points out that 'the current movement in feminist thought and scholarship is very much one of reflection and revision' (Caine 1995:1). This revision could create avenues for a more flexible reading of the position of women in Poland, enabling the development of an understanding that what could be seen as quite oppressive for Western women is not necessarily seen as equally oppressive for women in Poland. What is liberating for women in the West may not be seen as liberating in the Polish context.

This thesis provides a more flexible analysis of the impact of the 1989 changes on the lives of Polish women. In the words of Drakulić it will discuss women in Poland both from 'within' and 'without'. I believe my position allows me to do this. On the one hand I am a Western scholar and hence I am able to view the situation in Poland with some degree of distance compared with those living in Poland who may not be able to achieve this. This distance may also allow me to focus on and explain issues that Polish scholars might recognize as obvious and therefore as not requiring elaboration. On the other hand I am (still) a Polish woman who understands the nuances of Polish culture, speaks the

language and, most of all, regards being Polish, and a Krakowian, as a fundamental part of my identity.

1.4 The Western perspective

The revolution of 1989 led to a significant increase in interest in issues relating to women in the former Eastern Bloc, including Poland. In many cases, an attempt to comprehend the contemporary position of the female citizens of Poland has been made without reference to the cultural and historical heritage of the country, and without acknowledgment of regional differences in the experiences of women.

In the early 1990s numerous Western authors expressed a belief that the political changes of 1989 did not benefit women. It has been argued that the changes in Europe have no room for women (*Catalyst* 1990), with women participating in the overthrowing of communist governments but then disappearing from the negotiating tables and the political elites of the former Eastern Bloc countries (Duchen 1992; Watson 1993; Kiss 1991). It has also been pointed out that economic rationalism resulted in women losing the limited but nonetheless useful gains made under communism (Pearson 1991). It has been noted that increasing unemployment and reduced childcare services caused women to lose their jobs (Sheridan 1992:93; Einhorn 1991:22; Einhorn 1993a:85; Pine 1992:72). The threat to women's reproductive rights by restrictions on abortion and a war against contraception launched by the Catholic Church and other conservative organizations has

been emphasized (Funk and Muller 1993:2; Watson 1993:74; Einhorn 1993a:74; Einhorn 1993b:63–68).

The fact that women from the former Easter Bloc seemed to be disadvantaged by the arrival of democracy and the free market economy they fought for (even if the level of this impact varied by class, education, location, ethnicity and ability), was paradoxical and even shocking to many Western feminists, who had ignored the fact that communism was oppressive to women in a different but certainly no less significant way than capitalism. Economic crises and political oppression resulting from the Soviet dictatorship had led to various difficulties experienced by women in their everyday lives (Manny 1982:18). The right to work, and the rights to free education, free childcare and free abortion on demand, had failed to provide women with equality (Duchen 1992; Marx Ferree 1993; Haug 1991; Royer 1992). A further disappointment for Western feminists arose from the fact that despite the obvious need for a feminist movement in Eastern Europe, a large proportion of Eastern European women were and still are very suspicious of feminism (Duchen 1992:2; Einhorn 1991:22).

1.5 The Eastern perspective

The literature addressing issues concerning women actually written in Poland is limited. This is particularly true in the case of materials written before 1989. Feminist or gender research was not encouraged in the former Eastern Bloc, in part because the existence of

any form of sex discrimination was denied by communist governments (Royer 1992:100; Posadskaya 1993:7).

Until 1989 the Polish government controlled what was published, so a significant proportion of the material that appeared during the communist period cannot be seen as a reliable representation of the situation of women. The primary role of such publications as Zółkiewska's *Women in Poland 1945–1955* (1955), *Poland, Facts and Figures* (Polonia Publishing House 1962) and *Women in Peoples' Poland* (Czyżowska 1976) was to praise the role of the communist system in 'liberating' women.

In the 1970s the Polish government became more tolerant, and an increasing number of academics (predominantly sociologists) chose women as the subject of their research. Pakszys (1992) identifies three main areas of gender research that existed in Poland during this period: statistical-demographic studies, socio-economic works analyzing women's labour force participation, and political analysis addressing the issue of the equality of the sexes and the position of Polish women from an international perspective (120). Despite the relaxation of the communist state's control over academia, researchers still could not be critical of the impact of the communist system on the lives of women. For example, Warzywoda-Kruszyńska (1975) pointed out that despite the mass entry of women into employment and education, women were still not equal to men. Sokołowska (1976a) addressed the double burden experienced by Polish women which involved combining their domestic responsibilities with paid employment. Both authors, however, emphasized that Poland as a case study showed how much can be done for women

through official structures such as law, education and employment opportunities. They argued that the responsibility for the persistent inequality between the sexes did not lie with the government but with the traditional attitude towards women still dominant in society (Warzywoda-Kruszyńska 1975:136; Sokołowska 1976a:277).

Before 1989 a number of articles by Polish academics addressing gender issues in Poland appeared in Western publications. Holzer and Wasilewska-Trenker (1985) attempted to analyze the relationship between women's economic activity and their fertility. They argued that women were simultaneously expected to work outside the home and perform the majority of domestic duties. Furthermore, they pointed out that the main factor causing the increase in women's participation in paid employment was the national demand for an expanded labour force. But, as did their colleagues publishing in Poland, these authors simply described the lives of women in communist Poland and did not make any links between the social position of women and the political system of the country. It could be inferred that even writers publishing abroad had to be careful not to be critical. Polish academics who offered assistance to Western writers critically addressing this issue had to remain anonymous (Koski 1977:70).

The fall of the communist regime in Poland resulted in an explosion of Polish academic publications addressing women's issues. Some of the authors who are the leaders of contemporary Polish feminism, such as Siemieńska, Plakwicz, Titkow and Sokołowska[2], had addressed women's issues before 1989, but now their research became unrestrained

[2] See bibliography for specific references.

by political forces. The breakdown of the political system allowed for publications of whole books addressing gender issues. Siemieńska's (1990) *Gender, Profession, Politics, Women in Polish Public Life, What does it mean to be a Woman in Poland* edited by Titkow and Domański (1995), *Humanities and Gender* edited by Miluska and Pakszys (1995), Janion's (1996) *Women and the Spirit of Difference, Women in the World of Politics* edited by Żarnowska and Szwarc (1996), Ciechomska's (1996) *From Matriarchy to Feminism* Walczewska's (2000) *Ladies, Knights and Feminists* and *We Want a Full Life* by Górnicka-Boratyńska (1999), are examples.

1.6 Geography

Acknowledging the complexity of the social environment prevailing in Poland both before and after 1989, I directed this research towards an exploration of the relationship between locality and the lives of women. The tendency of a number of Western feminists, particularly ones writing in the early 1990s, to treat the entire region of the former Communist Bloc as a homogenous area, rather than as numerous nations or states with rich individual histories, cultures and heritages was another catalyst for this interest. I return again to Drakulić. Discussing an interview in which she was asked about the position of women in Eastern Europe after the 1989 revolution, she reports:

> I also remember a kind of geographical map appearing in my mind: Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia too – we are talking about perhaps 70 million women there, living in different regions and cultures, speaking different languages, yet all reduced to a common denominator, the system they were living under (1992:123).

My analysis of the lives of women in two regions within Poland emphasizes the impact of locality, local culture, history and economy on the social mobility of women in post 1989 Poland. The comparison is particularly interesting because the two places are in close proximity to each other (see Figure 1.1) but are very different so far as history, culture and economy are concerned.

Just as the decision to research the lives of Polish women evolved from my personal experiences, my choice of these two localities also had a personal element. Both Upper Silesia and Kraków are part of my own heritage. I was born in and grew up in Kraków, but my link with Upper Silesia is also very strong. My father was born in the region and my paternal grandparents, whom we visited regularly, lived there. Even as a small child I was interested in the fact that while the distance between Katowice, the capital of Upper Silesia, where my grandparents lived, and Kraków was small (approximately 78 km) the difference between the two places was significant.

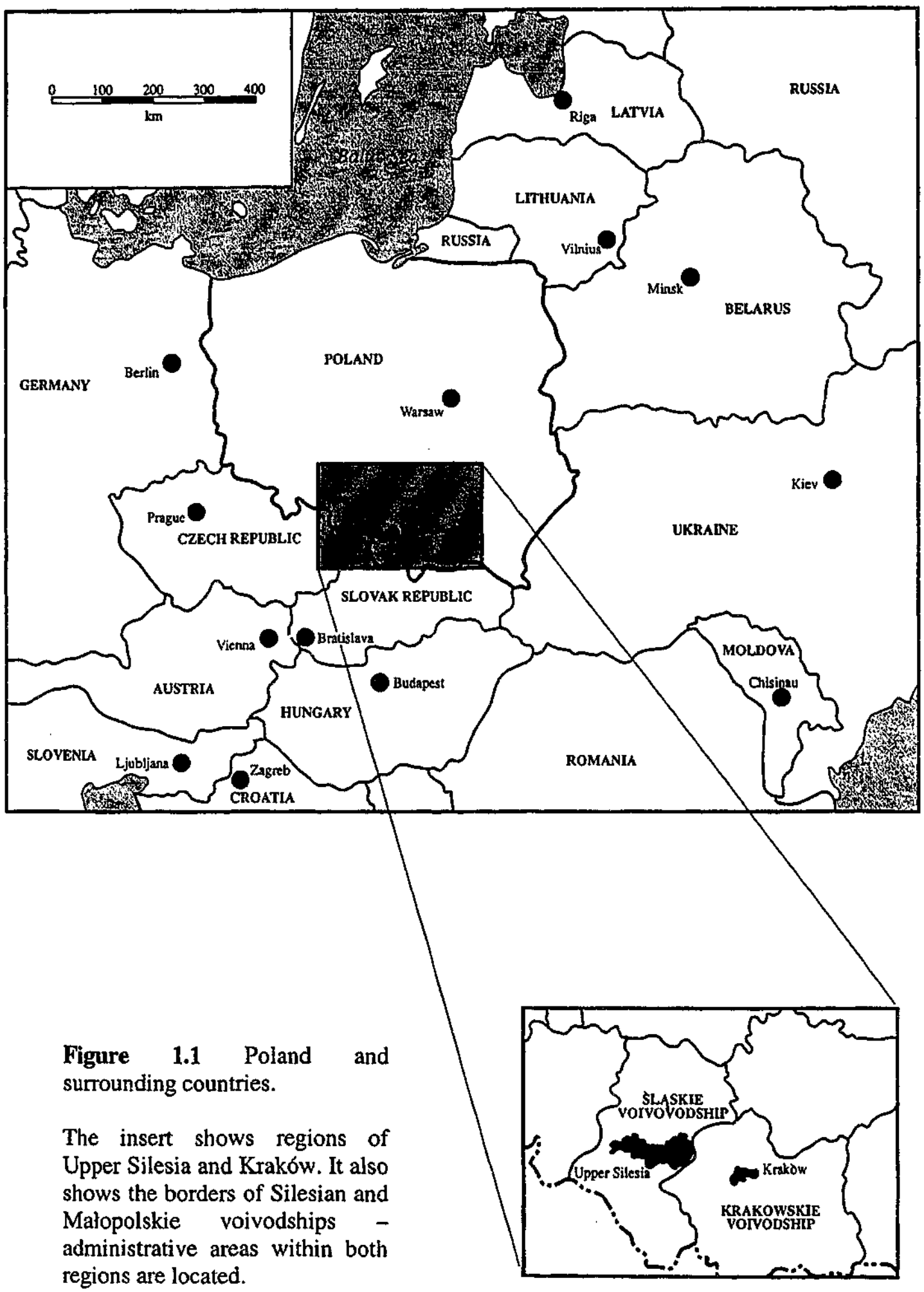


Figure 1.1 Poland and surrounding countries.

The insert shows regions of Upper Silesia and Kraków. It also shows the borders of Silesian and Małopolskie voivodships – administrative areas within both regions are located.
After Smith and Pickles 1998

Paradoxically, while geographical analysis of the position of women in Poland is not common, geography has always been a crucial factor in determining the social position of Polish women. Geographic characteristics have played an important role in the formation of Poland's national identity. Since its beginning as a nation Poland has been bordered in the South by the Tatra mountain range, with its peaks reaching to nearly 3000 metres. The Northern border has been the Baltic Sea. The Eastern and Western borders have changed at different times in Poland's turbulent history, reaching as far West as the Oder river catchment, and as far East as the Black Sea shores. The North–South axis of Poland (or of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, that reached its maximum size in the 15th century) was the Wisła river. The Wisła, together with its tributaries and the river Warta, covers most of the area of contemporary Poland and this river is still the physical backbone of the country. Even in folklore the Wisła is synonymous with Poland. This is reflected in the words of an old Polish song: 'płynie Wisła płynie po polskiej krainie, a dopóki płynie Polska nie zaginie' [Wisła is flowing and flowing through the country of Poland and as long as it flows Poland will not perish].

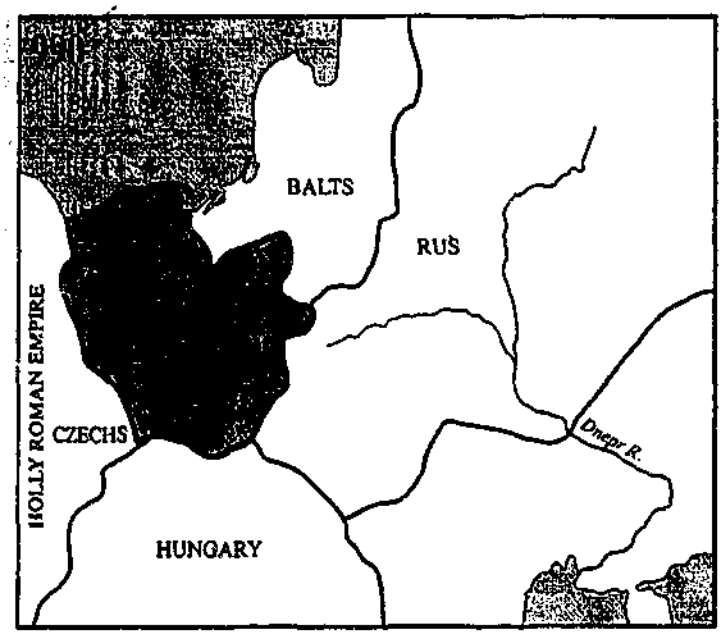
The relationship between geography and Polish national identity in its turn has affected the everyday experiences of Polish people in general and Polish women in particular. Generally, geographical or spatial relationships are so entrenched in everyday life that they are often trivialized or even overlooked (Jałowiecki 1991; Cosgrove 1990). In Poland socio-geographic research has been very limited, despite the fact that modern

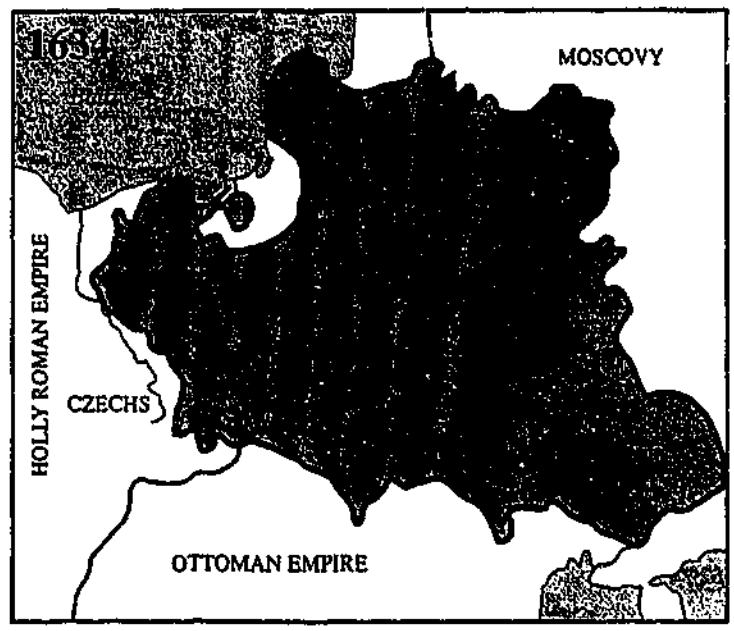
geopolitical concepts of Poland and the associated forms of national identity have always been constructed through spatial references (Babicz 1994). For example, one of the arguments for Polish independence presented during the period of partition was the proposition that in terms of physical geography Poland is naturally a separate country. 'Poland is the land presenting geographical integrity and this is the reason why, in spite of the political partition, 'it is not yet lost'[3] (Romer quoted in Babicz 1994:216)

The geographical location of Poland contributed to the country's frequent political instability. Since its beginnings in 966 AD[4] Poland's borders have changed many times (Figure 1.2). Those changes led to transformations in the social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances of the country (Martin 1995:459). Poland was frequently invaded, partitioned and occupied. The periods of partition or occupation saw women playing different political and social roles than those they played during periods of political freedom. The social, political and cultural life of the country, as well as its economic development was constantly influenced by the agendas of its neighbours. A turning point in Polish history was the partition of the country by Austria, Russia and Prussia that took place in 1772, as a result of which Poland disappeared from the political map of Europe for almost 150 years.

[3] 'It is not yet lost' is part of the lyrics of the Polish national anthem.

[4] In 966 AD Poland was officially baptized and Christianity became its official religion. It was at this time that Poland was recognized by the Vatican as an 'independent' Christian state.





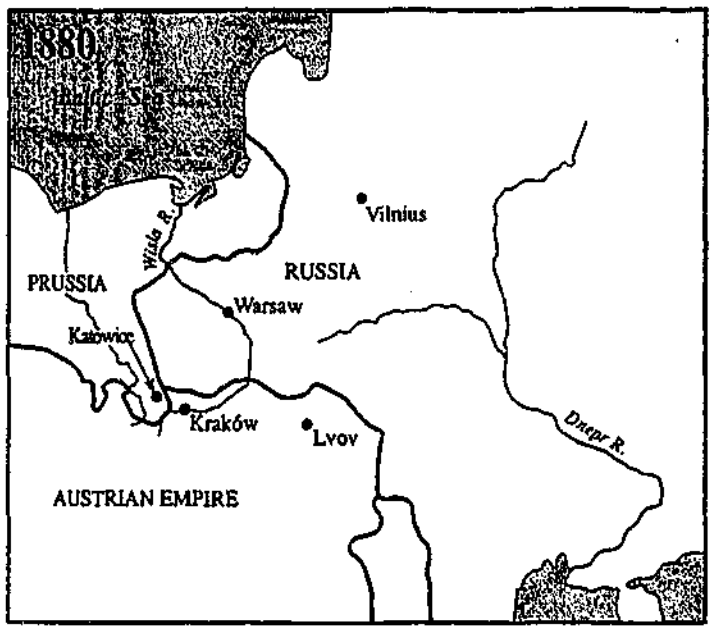


Figure 1.2 Border changes of Poland

After Tymowski 1995

The Yalta agreement of 1945 marked one of the most significant changes to the geography of Poland. Although officially Poland was a politically separate country, becoming part of the Soviet Bloc severely undermined its autonomy (Haraszti 1995:81). The assumption of de facto control by the Soviet Union was accompanied by yet another change to Poland's borders and related changes to its population. By the re-drawing of the map of Europe in 1945 Poland was transformed into a nation with a relatively homogenous, predominantly Catholic, population with very few minority groups (Wojciechowski, 1990). The inclusion of Poland in the Eastern Bloc changed the political and economic structures operating within the country. It was Soviet control, not Polish communists and socialists, that led to the orchestrated corrupted elections that gave power to the United Workers Party (PZPR) (Tymowski 1995:135; Goldyn 1998) in 1947. This party ruled Poland until 1989, and is the group to which most Polish people still refer as 'the communists'.

But in fact the economic system of Poland was never communist. Most of the infrastructure, industry, retailing and services were nationalised. The Polish economy became centrally planned and was governed by the so-called six-year plan. Larger private residences were taken from their owners and made available to those in need of accommodation or converted into public facilities such as schools, libraries or government offices. However, private property and enterprise did not cease to exist. Smaller family operated businesses continued to run and often flourished, despite restrictions and difficulties created by the government. Similarly private trade was tolerated and, in specific circumstances, particularly when government controlled

retailers could not meet the needs of consumers, even encouraged (Goldyn 1998). Furthermore, Poland was atypical of communist countries in that it retained private ownership of peasant family farms and allowed the Catholic Church to remain extremely powerful (Gorlach and Mooney 1998:262).

As a result of Poland's peculiar economic system, the debate (or rather confusion, as debate was not encouraged in pre-1989 Poland) regarding the appropriate classification of its political system started almost immediately after the Communist government won the elections in 1947 and has continued to this day.[5] I have decided to use the term communism to describe the political and economic system of pre-1989 Poland mainly because the majority of contemporary Polish people and certainly all the women who participated in the research conducted for this thesis, referred to the pre-1989 system as communism.

Another consequence of Poland becoming part of the Eastern Bloc was the manner in which geographic research and theory were to develop. From this time onwards, Polish

[5] Podgórecki highlights the point that sociologists and economists in pre-1989 Poland defined the nation as a 'socialist country in transition to communism' (1995:24), though he refers to the ruling party as a communist party. Similarly, Kuroń and Żakowski (1996) refer to the group controlling Poland during the period from 1945 to 1989 as communists. That does not, however, mean that members of the party followed the teachings of Marx or Lenin. Kuroń in particular highlights this fact by emphasizing that since the communist party came to power it has attracted career minded people who did not necessarily uphold the ideological values of communism (1996:33). Such people claimed that the system they were introducing was communism and that they themselves were communists. In the existing literature, both in Polish and in English, the terms communism and socialism are used to describe the socio-political situation of pre-1989 Poland (see for example Duke and Grime 1997, Berry 1995, Wolchik 1992). According to a Polish encyclopedia published in 1959: 'Poland Peoples Republic is a peoples democracy based on the union between workers and peasants, the working classes govern the country through electing parliamentary representatives; the economic system is based on the public ownership of the means of production, transportation and banking, it is managed through a national economic plan' (Suchodolski (et al) 1959:736). Accordingly, 'communism' seems to be the appropriate term to use even if it does not appear within this definition.

human geography became subservient to the theories and research methods promoted by the Soviet Union.

Post-war Polish human geography can be divided into three main fields: economic research, the study of population and settlement patterns, and historical geography (Turnock 1984). Economic research was very much affected by Soviet economic geography focusing on spatial differentia of production (the theory of territorial production complexes), which was introduced to all the countries of the Eastern Bloc (Mazurkiewicz 1992:12). The concept of territorial production complexes was based on Lenin's definition of economic region, as the 'territorially specific combination of an economic activities reflecting a certain stage in the spatial division of labour' (Mazurkiewicz 1992:58).

But despite pressure from the Soviet Union, Eastern European human geography was not simply a copy of the Soviet approach. It often had the same theoretical background as Western human geography, but as the economic and political systems were different the theory was applied differently in each case (Mazurkiewicz 1992:64). In the 1980s social geography in the USSR and Poland was based predominantly on theories introduced by the Polish sociologist Znaniecki, who in the 1930s developed ideas of the role of space in sociology (Mazurkiewicz 1992:98). Compared to their Western counterparts Polish human geographers took a more descriptive rather than an analytical approach. They were generally less concerned with social theory, placing greater emphasis on statistical data analysis. This could be partly explained by the fact that the

government would not have welcomed any analysis criticizing the political system in Poland or its impact on society.[6]

The changes of 1989 have not yet had a significant impact on the nature of geographic research in Poland. Due to financial constraints, little has been published in Poland in the area of human geography since 1989.[7] In the studies addressing Polish restructuring produced to date, two areas in particular have been ignored: the local dimension of transition (as most studies focus on the national level), and the gender dimension of transition (Regulska 1998:309). Despite recent progress in Polish gender research, feminist geography is still not a recognized area of Polish geographical discourse. In fact gender is sometimes not taken into consideration at all. In order to develop an understanding of the impact of geography on the experiences of Polish women, one has to rely on material that does not directly address women and women's issues. These are mainly publications from the field of economic geography, demography and urban development.[8] In many such publications gender is ignored. Population was usually treated as a homogenous group, with gender differences not being perceived as important variables.[9]

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[6] It needs to be highlighted that in the 1980s there was a significant difference between what Polish academics wrote and what they tough. As I was unable to interview Polish academics and refer to material they covered in their teachings, this thesis had to rely on published material.

[7] The most recent comprehensive publications include *The Geography of Poland* by Leszczyński and Domański (1995), and *The Economic Geography of Poland* edited by Fierla (1998).

[8] Some examples of economic geography and demography are Leszczyński and Domański (1995); Kortus (1972); Kortus (1976); Podolski (1975); Lodkowska (1985), Fierli (1998); Woźniak (2000); Malikowski and Solecki (1999); Kryńska, (2000)

[9] An example of this is a book by Seibert published in 1983 addressing the planning of Kraków. This very comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic and physical aspect of urban development and the planning of a future metropolis does not address at all the specific needs or circumstances of the female residents of Kraków. Other examples of gender being ignored in studies where it is clearly a relevant factor include Sulimski (1974) and Frysztacki (1986).

Analysis of the relationship between locality and gender in Poland could provide new insight not only into the experiences of contemporary Polish women but also into the notion of locality itself. While locality, or in other words place, and gender are interrelated, this relationship has to be conceptualised integrally with time (Massey 1994). The situation of women in Poland reflects this. While the culture and economy of Poland as a whole, as well as the culture and economy of specific localities, have affected the lives of women, so has history. Changes to the geography of Poland such as its partition, the formation of the Eastern Bloc and finally the 1989 revolution resulted in different outcomes as far as gender is concerned. Such a conceptualisation of space together with time does not deny the significance of place or prohibit the existence of a unique identity of individual places, but rather it prohibits place from being seen as static and will challenge attempts to attribute fixed identities to it (Massey 1994). In the context of Poland this approach illustrates that while locality had a very significant impact on how women responded to the changes of 1989, experiences of women can vary even within the same places.

In 1989 the geographical situation of Poland changed once more when Poland stopped being part of the Eastern Block. In 1989, as a consequence of decades of social resistance, but also due to an advantageous international climate including perestroika in the Soviet Union and the support of the West for reforms in Poland, the so-called Round Table discussions between the Polish government and the opposition led by Lech Wałęsa were conducted, resulting in the June 1989 elections which the ruling United Workers

Party lost. This led to the formation of the first non-communist government in the Eastern Bloc. In January 1990 the newly formed government began economic reforms aiming to return Poland to a market economy. For over a decade now Poland has been undergoing a process of privatization. At the same time the country has also been undergoing a search for its post-communist national identity. This search has had a very significant impact on the lives of Polish people in general and women in particular.

1.7 Limitations of the thesis

From the outset of my research the thesis was planned as primarily an empirical intervention with a theoretical underpinning. It was my belief that this approach would allow me to take advantage of my specific positioning as someone with access not only to academic texts in English and Polish adopting very different approaches to the situation of women in contemporary Poland, but also to a wide range of Polish women themselves who I could interview in their mother tongue. The thesis was trying to speak across the west/east academic divide by exploring the specificity of Polish women's local experiences in their diversity and complexity in the light of theoretical interpretations that largely arise from 'western' feminism. I wanted to dedicate as much space as possible to the actual voices of women, both those I interviewed in Krakow and Upper Silesia, as well as those whose stories were reported in the popular press. As I see it this is a particularly valuable contribution since the voices of Polish women are still rarely heard both in 'western' feminist literature focusing on Polish women or women from the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region, as well as in Polish literature, of both an academic and non-academic nature.

Another reason for staying close to the empirical material rather the placing greater emphasis on applying certain theories was a desire to develop a framework that allowed the thesis, produced at an Australian university, to function as a link between feminist theory created in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom, and feminist writings produced in Poland and other countries of CEE. An explanation of why I such a link is needed is provided in sections 1.3, 1.4 and 1,5.

What I would like to emphasize here is that development of such a link requires a move away from a theory-focused approach, as a great majority of Polish feminist writings on women's issues in the social sciences sit at some distance from 'western' feminist theorizing. Indeed the majority of recently published social science texts tackling questions of gender (possibly with the exception of texts on semiotics and literary theory) focus on describing rather then theorizing gender issues. My analysis of the situation of women in Kraków and Upper Silesia is positioned in between those two approaches and through this contributes to the existing theoretical approach to the issues of locality, space, gender and identity in the context of post-1989 Poland.

It is important to highlight that I am not saying that a greater theorization of gender issues in the Polish context would have no value or should not be undertaken, but rather that we need to be very careful about the way in which 'western' theory is employed in this context. It is my strong belief that in order to provide a representation of the place based identities of Polish women I need to acknowledge and include the way Polish

feminist writers approach the issue of gender, accepting that this is as equally valid an approach as more theory based 'western' representations.

I would like to suggest that the contemporary situation of women in Poland encourages progressive development of a new and flexible theoretical framework. Such analysis can best be done at a pace that allows those involved in gender issues in Poland to follow the process, each analysis building on the analyses preceding it. The problem of comprehending the specificity of the Polish or Central and Eastern European context by western scholars, analysts, educators, donors and even activists is one of the concerns of the Polish feminist movement. It is my belief that through giving space to women's voices in a theoretically informed (rather than theoretically driven) way will make a contribution to the overall body of feminist knowledge regarding women in Poland.

This approach of course has led to some limitations of the thesis. For example, it did not employ the structural language of regulation theory that has been a dominant focus of much of the economic geographic literature on social and economic restructuring in recent years. Though this is theory of considerable interest to English speaking geographers concerned with economic restructuring, it is fundamentally a theory of *capitalist* restructuring (Gibson-Graham, 1996). I did not want to represent Poland as necessarily 'becoming capitalist', nor did I want to view women's experiences in terms of capitalist, or indeed, communist social regulation and accumulation as these analytical framings appeared to presume too much homogeneity. The stories presented in the thesis (for example the case study of Stanisława on pages 200-211, whose family maintained a

small, yet extremely prosperous business during the communist period) illustrate women's involvement in a complex mix of 'capitalist' and 'communist' economic experiences in both past and present eras. Placing this material within a regulation framework would underplay this diversity.

There are also other limitations to the thesis. Among the issues explored with the interviewed women and subsequently discussed in the text of the dissertation class did not play a prominent role. This is despite the fact that I am extremely interested in the issue of class in Poland, where attempts were made to create an egalitarian society during the communist period. Despite this, status that derives from income and cultural capital continues to be very relevant particularly in very traditional Kraków where being from a 'good Krakowian family' continues to be an important factor, even if constantly laughed at by the residents of other parts of Poland and more 'un-conservative' residents of the city alike. The notion of class is problematic, both theoretically, and in terms of the political history of a nation where very little discussion of class has taken place since 1945 (Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff, 2001; Resnick and Wolff, 2002). The recent changes in Poland are only continuing to add to the complexity of issues to do with economic identity and how to represent it. . The thesis explores, to a limited extent, the ways in which women were involved in different and multiple class processes such as those elaborated in the work of Gibson-Graham, Resnick and Wolff (2000). At the same time, however, I made a definite choice not to employ the language of class here partly because this language is loaded in a post-communist society and would stand in the way of communicating with a Polish audience, and issues of class have yet to be analyzed by

Polish feminist writers. Effectively the thesis offers material that could lead to further elaboration of an anti-essentialist class analysis of Polish society.

Similarly the thesis does not focus on the role of religion in women's' lives in any detail. None of the women who participated in my interviews self-identified themselves as Jewish and thus I did not pursue the question of religious affiliation as an aspect of identity formation. . I chose instead to focus on other dimensions which seemed more dominant. This included the relationship participants had to the images of Matka Polka, Communist Woman and the New Polish Woman, as well the significance of their local identity, namely being a Krakowian or Upper Silesian woman. The thesis also addresses, although quite briefly, the link between identity of Polish women and the exposure to 'Western' people. This is addressed several times throughout the thesis (for example in Chapter 5).

1.8 Conclusion

The changes of 1989 had a great impact on the lives of Polish women. A society that was already characterized by very complex or even peculiar social, cultural and economic conditions was complicated even further. Within it some women were able to improve their social situation in terms of social mobility, whereas others were detrimentally affected. But there were also women whose lives did not simply become better or worse but just different and possibly more complex. Looking at the role locality plays in the lives of Polish women and the way they responded to the changes of 1989 can bring us

closer to an understanding of the complexity of the experiences of women in post-1989 Poland.

In order to achieve this understanding the next section of this thesis will focus on the link between the post-1989 political, economic and social restructuring and the identities of Polish women. Chapter two will outline the fundamental changes that took place in Poland after 1989, but will also illustrate the complexity which characterized the country both before and after 1989. The chapter will also highlight the impact of those changes on the lives of women. The next three chapters will move away from the specific analysis of the impact of the changes of 1989 on the lives of Polish women and instead will focus on the three dominant images of women relevant in contemporary Poland: Matka Polka, Communist Woman and New post-1989 Woman. I illustrate that those specifically Polish images reflect historical, economic and political conditions prevailing in the country at the time of their formation. They also reflect particular cultural values relevant in Poland. Representations of women in literature, paintings and written media such as women's magazines will be heavily relied on in those three chapters as a way of depicting the three images.

The second part of the thesis focuses more closely on the impact of locality on the manner in which women have responded to the post-1989 changes through an analysis of the experiences of women residing in Kraków and Upper Silesia. Chapter six outlines the differences between pre-1989 conditions prevailing in the two regions and describes the impact of the post-1989 changes on the two places. It highlights the factors which lead to

quite different gender relations in the two localities. Chapters seven and eight address the post-1989 experiences of women residing in Kraków and Upper Silesia and rely on data gathered through my interviews with women conducted in 1995 and 1999. These chapters analyze the relationship between locality and women's responses to the post-1989 period, through an analysis of Krakowian and Upper Silesian women's experiences of locality and their approaches to the images of Matka Polka, Communist Woman, and New Woman. The structure of the thesis does not include one specific theory based chapter or literature review. Instead relevant material – specifically geographic work on transitional economies, place and belonging, nationalism and gender, and feminist work on representations and discourses of women are worked in throughout the thesis.

PART ONE: RESTRUCTURING AND THE SEARCH FOR WOMEN'S IDENTITIES IN POLAND

Chapter 2: Political, economic and social restructuring in Poland

2.1 Introduction

The 1989 transformation of Poland has had political, economic, social and gender dimensions. As a consequence of that transformation Poland has become an increasingly complex society. Within this changing environment some women have been able to improve their circumstances while the situation of others has deteriorated. This chapter provides an outline of the political, economic and social processes that took place in post-1989 Poland and explores the relationship between those changes and the social mobility of contemporary Polish women. In addition the chapter argues that pre-1989 Poland was also complex and that this pre-1989 complexity also informs the intricate ways in which contemporary Polish women construct their lives.

2. 2 Political restructuring

The year 1989 is popularly seen as the date when the revolution in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) began. The slow process of change, however, at least in the case of Poland, started much earlier. A Polish opposition movement started to organize in the late 1970s despite the fact that terror of the communist government was still strong both in Poland and in other countries of the Eastern Bloc and that the West was still living in

fear of the Soviet Union. Polish people had a history of political struggle in difficult circumstances. Since the rigged elections that brought the Soviet supported communist government to power in 1947 there had been several organized confrontations between the people and the communist regime. The major demonstrations, all of which were violently suppressed by the army, took place in 1956, 1968 and 1970. It is often stated by Poles that it was the 1978 election of Kraków's Archbishop Karol Wojtyła to the Vatican throne that gave them the confidence and energy to rise against the system yet again. The election of Wojtyła, so unbelievable that Adam Michnik (1993:153), one of the leading Polish intellectuals called it a miracle, gave the Polish people the feeling of being internationally visible, and hence somewhat protected from the Soviet dictatorship. It was (rightly) assumed that the Pope, would always advocate Poland's case in the international arena. Furthermore the fact that the Soviet government had allowed a Polish cardinal to be elected as Pope was seen as an evidence of the weakening of Soviet control of the Eastern Bloc.

The visit of John Paul II to his homeland in 1979 gave Polish people much needed inspiration and a feeling of national unity (Tymowski 1996:146). And in the summer of 1980 a number of workers' strikes took place in different industries. In the Gdańsk shipyard the strike committee was formed under the leadership of electrician Lech Wałesa, with revolutionary Polish intellectuals such as Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuroń becoming advisors to the workers. The communist government was forced to make limited concessions for the striking workers and consider their twenty-one postulates. These included a pay rise and an improvement in the availability of meat, but also the

abolition of censorship and the formation of an independent workers' union. As a consequence, the 'Solidarity'[10] trade union led by Lech Wałesa was born. Soon different sections of Solidarity, which became more a vehicle for the awakening of the nation rather than a simple trade union, formed across the country in all sectors of industry. By the autumn of 1980 Solidarity had eight and a half million members, which made it the most significant organization in the country (Kuroń and Żakowski 1996:215). But as the communist government came under increasing pressure from the Soviet Union, as well as from conservative members of the Polish communist apparatus itself, to suppress the increasing power of Solidarity, its willingness to compromise proved only temporary. As a consequence of the increasing tension between the government and Solidarity, continuing strikes and further decline of the already unstable economy, the government declared martial law on 12 December 1981. During the period of martial law Solidarity was made illegal and thousands of political activists were detained. But even this measure did not silence the Polish people. Numerous underground organizations were formed and literature encouraging people to oppose the regime was published in underground publishing houses. The cause of Poland also received increasing material and moral support from Western countries such as France, Italy, Germany and the United States. The award of the 1983 Noble Peace Prize to Wałesa demonstrated Western recognition of the struggle of the Polish people.

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[10] For a reflective and philosophical analysis of the Solidarity movement by one of its leading members see Michnik 1993. For an analysis of the movement in the context of the post–Second World War history of Poland see Kuroń (1990) and Kuroń and Żakowski (1996). For an analysis of the involvement of women in Solidarity see Reading (1992).

Throughout the 1980s the authority of the opposition continued to increase. In 1988 another wave of strikes shook Poland. At that stage the international climate, including perestroika in the Soviet Union and the support of the West for the Polish opposition, forced the communist government to compromise more significantly than in 1980. This resulted in the official recognition of the opposition by the government, which led to the Round Table negotiations (Gross 1992:58). The consequence of the negotiations was the elections held in June 1989. Despite the fact that these elections are remembered as the first free elections in the Soviet Block, they were not fully free. In the Lower House (Sejm) they were negotiated, with the past regime automatically receiving a majority of seats in the parliament. Only a small segment was open to free election. All seats in the Upper House were, however, subject to free election. The opposition agreed to participate in the elections in exchange for the legalization of Solidarity. Neither the government nor the opposition anticipated the actual shift in power that occurred (Gross 1992). But, to the surprise of all involved, the communists lost and the first non-communist government of the Eastern Bloc was formed.

Despite this great victory for democracy, to this day the Polish political scene continues to be very volatile and quite confusing, particularly for external observers. Through the 1990s numerous new political parties have been formed reflecting the diversity of opinions among the Polish people. Due to the large number of parties and shifting voting patterns throughout the post-communist period, coalitions rather than one party governments have usually ruled the country. As a result, decision making by government is often a complicated and lengthy process. Furthermore the elected

governments have difficulty in staying in power largely due to their inability to deliver economic reforms, which satisfy a large proportion of voters (Tymowski 1996:149–150). Already during the second free elections in 1991 concerns over the impact of economic restructuring led to a swing away from right wing-parties by large parts of the electorate[11], resulting in the election of a coalition government including numerous members of the former communist party. The election took place just when the West, led by the United States, decided to move away from Cold War geography and began to refer in official documentation to Poland and other countries in the region as Central Europe (Haraszti 1995:81) rather than Eastern Europe. While in the following elections Poles voted in a right-wing coalition, in September 2001 left wing parties gained a large percentage of the votes again. Poland is now governed by a left-wing coalition.

2.3 Economic restructuring

The changes that followed the 1989 election were not the first significant socio-economic changes undergone by Poland and other Central and Eastern European nations (CEE). The economies of the region had previously experienced two distinct modernizing transformations. The first was the capitalist industrial modernization that took place before 1948. The second was the centrally controlled communist restructuring closely associated with the absorption of individual countries into the Soviet economic Bloc, the so-called Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, leading to the regionally organized division of production and labour (Pickles 1998:172). The

[11]For detailed discussion of the issues relating to the Polish electorates turn away from the right see Haraszti 1995.

post-1989 transformation, focusing on efficiency, productivity and flexibility (Moghadam 1993:345), was the third major transformation that influenced the economic geographies of CEE. Although there are numerous similarities between the economic geographies of individual CEE nations and the impact of restructuring on them, Pickles (1998) highlights the importance of the social, geographic and historical differences between the countries involved and suggests that the transformation of CEE 'provide[s] geographers and others with some of their most important contemporary theoretical and practical challenges to understand better the role of locality in the constitution of particular places undergoing modernization' (173). This exploration of the complex relationship between the post-1989 transformation of Poland and the manner in which contemporary Polish women construct their lives is a response to this challenge.

The first non-communist Polish government began its economic reform of the country in January 1990. The task proved to be extremely difficult, partly because along with political power the new government had inherited a legacy of economic mismanagement from its communist predecessors. In fact one of the catalysts leading to the formation of Solidarity had been the economic crisis experienced by Poland in the late 1970s. The economy based on state ownership of the means of production experienced significant difficulties throughout the entire communist period. In communist Poland all large industrial enterprises were owned by the state. Health care, education, most service industries and the great majority of trade, as well as most of the real estate, including residential buildings, were also owned by the state. Economic development was almost exclusively associated with investment into heavy industry, leading to neglect of the

service sector and infrastructure (Fierla 1998:11). The centrally controlled production and distribution governed by the six year plans failed to ensure sufficient availability of practically all basic products including meat and other food products, apartments, cars, clothes, chairs in school classrooms, and toilet paper.

But the Polish economy did not entirely fit the communist model, as some form of private ownership did exist throughout the entire communist period. Individuals were allowed to own the apartments or houses they lived in, and each individual was also allowed to own one standard bloc of land that could be used for gardening or building. Private ownership of peasant family farms as well as small retail outlets was retained. Similarly, some tradespeople and small family owned businesses including manufacturing and food production were able to operate outside the centrally controlled system. Furthermore, many individuals including tradespeople and labourers but also doctors, teachers and academics worked privately in addition to their employment in government owned and controlled institutions. As a consequence some goods and services could be purchased outside the mainstream economic system, for a significantly higher price, at least by those who could afford it. Still, this could not sufficiently fill the gaps created by the inadequacy of the national economy.

It is true that during the communist period those most disadvantaged in pre-communist Poland were able to improve their circumstances thanks to access to free education and health care, and increased employment opportunities in industry and the migration to urban centers associated with this (Tymowski 1996:140). In practice, however, very few

people became upwardly mobile (Kuroń and Żakowski 1996:49). The egalitarianisation of Polish society was not based on social mobility of groups and individuals from lower socio-economic brackets, or on a general improvement of the standard of living of the entire nation. It was based rather on limiting the scope of material success of the entire population, which did decrease economic inequalities but also restricted possibilities of improving one's economic situation. This led to the creation of a society where all that a person from any social group could achieve in material terms was a two or three room apartment in a high rise building, fitted with a wall unit and preferably a colour television set, and a small Fiat 126p to drive (Kuroń and Żakowski 1996:124–125). At the same time all social groups struggled with shortages of basic products and services, which, particularly in the case of women, meant spending a substantial amount of time in queues. Consequently, throughout most of the communist period people were economically disadvantaged and it was the availability and price of food and meat in particular that triggered political unrest (Kuroń and Żakowski 1996:49) including the period that led to the formation of Solidarity. This did not, however, mean that social division did not exist in pre-1989 Poland. Due to the relative inability of expressing superiority through economic means such as wealth accumulation, extra importance was placed on family background, level of education, professional titles, positions held, connections with influential people and general social prestige.

Since 1990 the Polish economy has been restructured. Its reliance on trade with other countries of the Soviet economic Bloc is no longer relevant and it has been transformed into a free market economy regulated by market mechanisms rather than central

planning. The transformation of the economy included the privatization of a great majority of state enterprises and was characterized by the decline of multi-plant large state industries. This had a detrimental impact on the standard of living of populations in specific localities. For example, Upper Silesia's economy was almost exclusively based on such multi-plant industries and consequently became what Pickles (1998) calls 'the new rust-belt of CEE' (174). Between August 1990 and December 1992 almost thirty per cent of state enterprises were privatized (Gorzelak 1993:84). Several branches of the economy, such as service and trade, have been privatized almost entirely. By the end of 1992 fifty per cent of the labour force were working in private enterprises. Foreign investment, particularly in large urban areas with good infrastructure such as air transport and telecommunication facilities, has played important part in the privatization of Polish state assets.

The economic transformation of Poland created a country very different to the one that existed before 1989. Many people, including women, have taken advantage of the changes and have been able to improve their socio-economic situation. But the transformation has also been met with a lot of criticism. Many Western observers were disappointed that the systemic change in Poland lead to Polish peoples becoming more interested in wealth accumulation and consumerism than in addressing the inequalities that existed during the communist period or perfecting the democratic political system. For example, in the early 1990s one consequence of the opening of the borders between CEE and the West was the explosion of shopping motivated travel by people from CEE to Western Europe (Campbell 1991:120). An explosion of imports, local production and

sales and subsequently the increased consumption of everything from fragrant toilet paper through to Big Macs and luxury cars followed.

The ability to consume is still something Polish women value as a (major) positive change resulting from the 1989 revolution. Out of the 60 women I interviewed for this research the majority saw the positive impact of the 1989 change on women's lives purely in terms of ready availability of food and clothing and the disappearance of queues. This is illustrated below in responses to the question 'In your opinion how have the lives of women in Poland changed after 1989?'

> Basia:
> Oh, it's just that it's not hard to buy things anymore, that everything is available and that you can buy it without any problems, that you don't have to get up at night to stand in the queues, that you don't have to stand in them at night, that there is less stress, that pregnant women don't have to stand in the front of the queue. These are small things but they caused a lot of difficulties. I can remember standing in a queue at night, during martial law, in 1980. You would stand at five o'clock in the staircase, and after five or six you would move, because there was curfew.[12]
>
> Marta:
> Not much changed. Maybe women dress better, because there are more clothes in shops, maybe they cook better because there are more ingredients in shops. Before you had to queue for things. I remember one holidays when my parents were going to another town and for two days they were queuing there and they were taking turns doing it.
>
> Kasia:
> In materialistic, most mundane terms, after 1989 women who are working have more time for shopping, I mean they spend less time standing in queues buying clothes for children, or juice.

At the same time, however, it is apparent that this ability to consume is not available to everybody in capitalist Poland. Consequently, while in 1989 the majority of Polish

people were relatively aware that economic change would not be a simple process and were prepared to suffer a temporary lowering of the standard of living, by 1992 the majority of the Poles were very concerned about the level of deterioration in the standard of living and the lack of certainty about the future (Kloc 1992). According to some studies the economic restructuring did not deliver an increase in the standard of living to all sectors of society but instead increased social inequalities (Waryzwoda-Kruszyńska 2000:48). In 1994 more than 25 per cent of Polish families could not afford to purchase even the cheapest food and clothes. Fewer than 20 per cent could afford all the necessities without strict budgeting. In the case of families headed by single mothers those figures were approximately 45 per cent and 15 per cent respectively (Główny Urzad Statystyczny 1994:24). In 1999 the standard of living of 52 per cent of the population did not reach the so called 'social minimum' (Główny Urzad Statystyczny 2000a:104). And while no parallel statistics are available for the communist period the figures indicate that the hope of a better life under the capitalist system did not become a reality for many of those who struggled to overthrow communism. Certain populations group, such as women and residents of regions like Upper Silesia where the economy was based on heavy industry during communism, have been particularly disadvantaged.

2.4 Social restructuring

The political and economic transformation of Poland resulted in significant changes to the nature of Polish society, which is now characterized by a certain level of fluidity.

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[12] All statements by Polish women who participated in this research have been translated from Polish to English .

This has had an impact on the nature of social mobility of women. But what is particularly interesting is that the social transformation took place in a country that was characterized by social complexity even before 1989.

The current and pre-1989 complexity of Polish society is partly due to the volatile history of the country and its problematic geopolitical situation. Poland is an old society that has existed for over a thousand years. While it played a very important role in the politics and economy of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, since then its role has been marginalized. Its location in the centre of an unstable region of Europe resulted in most of its borders being constantly threatened by powerful neighbors (Podgórecki 1995:113). Consequently Polish society underwent significant changes throughout its entire history. Some of the most important changes were triggered off by the disappearance of Poland from the political map of Europe between 1795 and 1918, when the country was partitioned between Prussia, Austria and Russia. It was during this period that the importance of informal social structures such as extended family networks was established (Podgórecki 1995:69); it was also then that the Polish Catholic Church became the most powerful institution in the country. The Polish nobility played a significant role in creating those structures and strengthening the position of the Church. The nobility and the intelligentsia were also the main creators of the concept of 'Polish society' (Podgórecki 1995:84). This was despite the fact that throughout its history Poland, or more correctly the Polish-Lithuanian Republic, was also inhabited by peasants, townsfolk and a variety of ethnic groups many of whom were not Catholic and

did not speak Polish. In reality all of these groups had a great impact on the formation of Polish society, with the result that Polish society became extremely complex.

As a consequence of the Second World War and the politics of the communist government, social, cultural and ethnic differences within the Polish population became much less significant (Kuroń and Żakowski 1996). Numerous social groups were no longer part of Polish society. The Jews, the nobility, tradespeople and big and medium sized businesspeople disappeared along with such ethnic minorities as Germans, Ukrainians and Lithuanians (Podgórecki 1995:69, Kuroń and Żakowski 1996:11, 35). The intelligentsia was removed from its traditional leadership role. In fact during the communist period the government made deliberate ideologically motivated attempts to plan and control the entire nature of Polish society (Podgórecki 1995:111). Despite this, Polish society in the communist period remained a very complex entity. The importance placed on family, the role of the Church, and peculiar, often contradictory, gender relations were the main aspects of this complexity.

2.5 Family

Historically in Poland, as in other countries of the former Eastern Bloc, the family has been viewed as a large network based on socio-economic necessities as well as traditional values, including religion (Ross and Sicinski 1987:9). The idea of the 'family' is not automatically understood as being a nuclear family consisting of two, preferably married, adults and their children, but as a larger group of related people. Within this

social structure women could face, and in most cases have faced, numerous problems including an unequal division of labour and double standards of morality and violence. At the same time, however, family has provided them with important support networks without which they could not have functioned as they did during the communist as well as the post-1989 periods.

The family can be seen as an illustration of the collective rather than the individualistic nature of Polish society. Its importance can be explained in terms of a fear of external danger felt by Poles through a large part of the country's modern history, when family has been the only safe refuge from an otherwise adverse external environment (Podgórecki 1995:91). This function of the family can be dated back to the period of partition, but continued to be relevant throughout World War II and the communist period (Duczewski 1994:55).

The mass entry of women into employment that took place during the communist period played a significant role in the decline of the extended family as an economic unit, weakening the authority of parents and the position of men as the head of the family (Ciechocińska 1993:302), but by no means led to its disappearance (Łączkowska 1991). If anything, the communist period resulted in the function and structure of the family becoming more complex. As a consequence of the economic and social environment of the country under communism, the Polish family reflected neither the traditional model, in which a relatively self-sufficient network of kinsfolk cooperates to address the reproductive functions of the family, nor the modern model, in which individuals are

able to solve their reproductive problems without dependence on relatives because of the support of the public system (Giza-Poleszczuk 1992:316–317). During the communist period the Polish family found itself in a very peculiar situation. On one hand Polish families were definitely not self-sufficient. Most people were employed by the state and dependent on state-provided services such as health care, education, housing, government subsidized holidays and school camps. On the other hand, despite the government propaganda, individuals could not fully rely on the public sector to address their reproductive needs, nor could they rely on themselves to purchase all the required commodities and services. This was due to several factors. During the communist period Polish households incurred budget restrictions stricter then those incurred by similar households in capitalist systems (Giza-Poleszczuk 1992:318). These budget restrictions existed despite the mass entry of women into the labour force. This was accompanied by a shortage of housing, an insufficient infrastructure of crèches, kindergartens and aged care facilities, shortages of fresh food, limited availability of processed foods, restaurants, canteens and laundries (Giza-Poleszczuk 1992:320; Wallace 1995:98). The situation lead to the 'familism' of Polish society, manifested in the nepotism and quasi-nepotism of social structures and the dependence of the younger generation in general, and women in particular, on their extended families for child care (Hillier 1990; Pawelczynska and Tarkowska 1987) and other domestic tasks (Giza-Poleszczuk 1992:317; Wallace 1995). At the same time people relied on their children and grandchildren to care for them in old age. Furthermore, the extended family was the main basis of the social life of the nuclear family, as well a major source of financial

support. The high rate of marriages and low number of extramarital births were consequences of the familism of Polish society.

But Polish familism went even beyond the biological family. Both in pre-1989 and post-1989 Polish informal social networks were based on microstructures, including the family as well as friends, fellow workers and neighbours (Tarkowska and Tarkowski 1991:104). Members of such microstructures cooperate together on numerous levels. One example of this is assistance with the reproductive needs of individual couples; other examples are extensive informal cooperation within households and beyond with child care, home-made clothing, cooking for weddings and so on, and help during exceptional circumstances such as illness and childbirth, as observed by Bloch (1976) and Pine (1992).

The familism of Polish society helped individuals meet their daily needs but also led to greater dependence of all individuals, women in particular, on family networks. While family provided women with important structures, at the same time it restricted their freedom. The changes of 1989 allowed some groups of women to become more self-sufficient, but for the great majority the reliance on the family, particularly for child care, is still a necessity. This was clearly the case as far as the women who were interviewed for this research were concerned. Furthermore even if some women do not have to rely on their family purely for economic reasons, the tradition of close family networks and interaction will take time to be undermined.

2.6 The Church

Another factor that contributes to the complexity of Polish society both before and after 1989 is the role of the Catholic religion and the Catholic Church. In Poland 'Catholicism is not only a religion, it is also a lifestyle, a way of seeing the world and a criteria for classifying people' (Środa 1992:13). The social position of women in contemporary Poland is linked to the influence of the Catholic religion. Very close links also exist between the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church and the representations of women available in contemporary Poland, and the manner in which women interact with these to construct their lives.

The powerful position of the Church is a consequence of its role in the preserving of Polish national identity during the times when it was under threat. This includes the period of partition (Fras 1999:33–47, Mucha and Zaba 1992:57; Sowa 2000:90), World War II and the communist period (Mucha and Zaba 1992, Sowa 2000:91–92). It is also not without relevance that the beginning of the Polish nation is dated from 966 AD, when the prince of a tribe called Polanie secured the sanctioning of the baptism of the lands under his control by Rome and hence the official recognition of Poland as an independent nation by the entire Christian world. Still, the power of the Polish Catholic Church is in many ways surprising. After all, the country was communist for over 40 years, and since many other nations emerged from the abyss of the former communist Bloc without a strong Church presence (Russia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, for example), the same could have been expected of Poland. Furthermore, throughout the existence of the

Polish-Lithuanian Republic Catholicism was not the only religion present. Jews and Orthodox Christians were also significant religious groups.

During the communist period, despite constant attacks by the government, the power of the Church did not diminish. In fact it became stronger, with the Church functioning as the opposition to the communist government (Zalecki 1999:228). It was through the religious tuition given in every local church that Polish children learned that in 1939 both Hitler and Stalin invaded Poland, in contrast to the official version taught in schools which had Hitler invading Poland while the Soviet Union came to its rescue.

In fact it was during the post-war period that the Polish Catholic Church was the strongest it had ever been in its thousand year history. This was due partly to the Polish Jews having been killed by the Nazis, to changes to Poland's borders, and to the expulsion of Germans, Ukrainians and most of the remaining Jews by the communist government, which led to the creation of a society in which for the first time Catholics constituted the vast majority (96 per cent) of the population. This is in contrast to 66 per cent in 1921 (Davies 1984:12). The Church also capitalized on the loyalty towards it that had developed during the Second World War when the suffering nation turned to religion for support. This loyalty survived during the communist period and was even strengthened by human contrariness, with some people giving their support to the Church primarily because the communist government forbad it (Davies 1984:12).

The power of the Church over the Polish people increased during the communist period and continued in post-1989 Poland, when it became legitimate. Many Polish political parties, including one that originated from the Solidarity movement, are closely linked to the Catholic Church and reflect an interpretation of its teaching in their policies. Therefore it is not surprising that one of the main criticisms of political restructuring is related to the role played by the Church in the politics of contemporary Poland. It has been argued, for example, that the power of the communist government has merely been replaced by the dictatorship of the Catholic Church. As Polish writer Anna Bojarska points out, post-1989 Poland became 'the land of the powerless, a divested legacy of the Reds who persisted with their foundered experiments for fifty years, a dictatorship of the Blacks (the Catholic clergy)' (Filipowicz 1993:9). In the context of the experiences of women in post-1989 Poland, the Church has been criticized for its traditional approach to family, its stands on abortion and contraception (see for example Heinen and Matuchniak-Krasuska 1995, Einhorn 1993a, Einhorn 1993b, Pakszys and Mazurczak 1994; *Off Our Backs* 1994) and the role of women within it. During the communist period the teachings of the Church emphasized the importance of Catholic ethics and family values in the struggle against the totalitarian state. This led to a paradoxical situation where a communist government ruled a nation populated by a 'supercharged Catholic society' (Davies 1984:11). In contemporary Poland the Church uses its political power to ensure that those values are retained.

2.7 Gender

As a result of the 1989 changes to the map of Europe people of different nations have had to address ideas relating to changes in notions of community, and to renegotiate borders and territories (Smith and Brinker-Gabler 1997). This renegotiation is often associated with the emergence of nationalism. Gender has always played an important role in nationalism, and the post-1989 Central European nationalism is no different. As McDowell argues nationalism reinforces specific constructions of femininity, masculinity and accepted sexuality (1999). In fact it has been argued that nationalism as a movement 'began and evolved parallel to modern masculinity' (Mosses quoted in Nagel 1998: 249). Gender is embodied through nations being given feminine forms such as Germannia, Britannia and Marianne/La France, and the concept of the 'proper mother' is embraced by nationalism (Smith and Brinker-Gabler 1997). Such co-option of gender in the search for national identity is certainly taking place in post-1989 Poland. But this is only one aspect of the quite complex gender processes apparent in the country. Their complexity is largely related to the historical heritage of Poland.

The 1947 change to the political system of Poland and the related transformation of the country's economy had very significant gender implications. The full employment policy of the communist period, a labour intensive approach to economic development, relatively low wages and finally policies trying to fulfill principles of women's equality led to high numbers of women, including women of childbearing age, being involved in paid employment (Ciechocińska 1993; Welchik 1992). Participation of women in paid

employment increased steadily throughout the communist period. In 1950 women in Poland constituted 31 per cent of the labour force; in 1970 this figure was 39.6 per cent and in 1985, 45 per cent (Wojciechowski 1990:187).

This was combined, however, with a lack of equality within the family. Although there were geographic and class disparities, the majority of men offered only limited assistance to their wives as far as domestic and family duties were concerned (Wolchik 1995:124). Women were still the ones who performed the majority of domestic tasks while men took responsibility for the material well-being of the family. This traditional gender division of labour was also reinforced by the familism of Polish society and the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Attitudes towards the family and the role of women within it did not change significantly despite the mass entry of women into the labour market. For example, in the 1970s most young people believed that regardless of the financial circumstances of the family, women should work outside the home, but the older generation (including working women themselves) still believed in a traditional division of labour where women (especially mothers of young children) should remain at home and be supported by their husbands (Adamski 1976:58). It could be argued that even if individual people or couples wished to implement more egalitarian gender relationships in their lives, their dependence on the extended family, and particularly on members of older generations, could prevent such lifestyle choices.

Furthermore, although the system guaranteed employment for women – with women being represented in almost all fields of employment except in the fields illegal for

women to work in (including bus and tractor driving, which were perceived to be harmful to women's reproductive systems) the majority of them were employed in feminized, poorly paid positions (Ciechocińska 1993:304; Kahne and Gile 1995). This was clearly the case for many women who were interviewed for this research. In more powerful organizations, the representation of women was particularly low (Graham and Regulska 2000:67). This exclusion of women from positions of power could be seen as an extension of patriarchal power configurations in the family extended into the workplace (Wojciechowski 1990:189).

The post-1989 political and economic restructuring of Poland resulted in greater social mobility of women. Unfortunately many women became downwardly mobile as a consequence of limited access to secure, well paid employment (Moghadam 1993:343). Already in 1992 over half of the unemployed were women (Moghadam 1993:341), with older women being particularly vulnerable (Ciechocińska 1993:309). Interestingly younger women are also emerging as as an extremely vulnerable goup. In capitalist Poland women are seen as expensive employees due to the cost of social benefits once provided by the state but now becoming the responsibility of private employers. Women seeking employment are often discriminated against on the basis of their appearance and age, with many employment advertisements specifying that only young and attractive females need apply! In numerous cases women who are successful in gaining employment have lost many entitlements such as maternity leave. It is true that the State continues to provide benefits for those employed in the state institutions, but the withdrawal of state assistance for working mothers, empoloyed in other sectors has

limited women's ability to combine work and family responsibilities and contributed to the identification of women purely as mothers and care givers (Moghadam 1993:343). Subsidized crèches, kindergartens and holiday camps for children, also became severally cut or disappeared all together. In Upper Silesia, where pollution contributes to a high morbidity rate of children, the cuts have led to women having to dedicate more time to caring for their sick children. As a measure to decrease the impact of pollution on their health, during the communist period children from Upper Silesia were entitled to at least one month per year of so-called 'green schools' (Ciechocińska 1993:319), which were heavily subsidized stays away from home with teaching provided. This provision no longer exists. Although the free market economy and the westernisation and consumerism associated with it have led in some cases to an increasingly individualistic approach to life and the weakening of family ties, in many cases, as a result of the disappearance of services, families have had to rely on each other for support and assistance even more than before (Wallace 1995:99).

Difficulties in the job market coincide with still prevailing, if not increasing, traditional attitudes towards women. Since 1989 the role of mother has often been promoted as the preferred option for women. The Catholic Church has played an important role in strengthening traditional attitudes to family (Wallace 1995:99). The notion of the women as mothers of nation is also promoted by post-1989 Polish nationalism. Women are encouraged to put their career aspirations on hold at least while their children are young (Ciechocińska 1993:319). At the same time the standard of living for mothers has

declined, either because of the additional costs associated with child care or because of loss of employment (Ciechocińska 1993:320).

It has been argued that one of the positive outcomes of the political changes in Eastern Europe was the end of the one party political monopoly, and that now women would be able to form independent women's organisations (Racioppi and O'Sullivan See 1995). They would be able to express their political views through participation in democratic political processes (Wolchik 1992:119). This seems logical since during the communist period the equality of women was never a goal in itself (Racioppi & O'Sullivan See 1995) and the period was characterized by 'the illusion of egalitarianism' (Malinowska 1995:35). It has also been argued that women's political participation during communism was tokenistic, with women being absent from real decision making committees within communist parties (Einhorn 1993b; Duchen 1992). Women's ability to organize and express themselves in post-1989 Poland is, however, yet to be fully utilized. One evident impact of the political transition on women is that they are generally absent from the political and the decision making elites of post-1989 Poland (Regulska 1998; Einhorn 1993b; Kiss, 1991). As a result, after dealing with the illusion of egalitarianism, women now have to deal with the illusion of democracy (Malinowska 1995:35). The fact that women are excluded from the patriarchal decision making system of post-1989 Poland suggests that they have therefore exercised little power over the direction of the current political, economic and social transformations.

Still, the existence of opportunities to strengthen feminism in Poland, particularly in ways that were previously inaccessible, cannot be underestimated. This is the case firstly because collapse of the communist system made expression of dissatisfaction by women possible (Regulska 1993:35–36). And secondly because women are able to get involved in innovative feminist activities unheard of in communist Poland. In 1991, for example, the first exhibition of women's art since the Second World War was held (Toniak 1992). Furthermore, it has been argued that women's political involvement has been located primarily at a local level (Regulska 1998:323), with women being actively involved in creating a civil society (Hunt 1997:7) even if their involvement is not at the level of national government. Since 1989, numerous independent and diverse women's organization have been formed in place of the sole official women's organizations that existed during the communist period – Liga Kobiet (Women's League). In 2001 over 50 different women's organizations existed in Poland. Numerous conferences, forums and meetings addressing gender have been held during the last decade, including a conference on Gender and Labour Markets in Transition Countries organized by the World Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Development Fund for Women in Warszawa in January 2001. The Kraków based Women's Center eFka alone has organized ten national feminist conferences during its nine years of existence. So while the situation of women is very difficult, a lot of positive things are being done to improve it and to challenge the beliefs, attitudes and conditions that contribute to Polish women's predicament. A discussion of the representations of women existing in contemporary Poland, provided in the next three

chapters, as well as analysis of the approaches of women living in two different regions of Poland to those representations addressed in chapters 7 and 8 will highlight this.

2.8 Conclusion

Throughout its history Poland's political and economic system has been constantly evolving. Very often, due to Poland's volatile geographic position, this evolution has been quite dramatic and fraught with difficulties. Not surprisingly the social and gender implications of the political and economic transformations of Poland have been significant and have made Polish society a very complex structure. The nature of the family and the role of the Catholic Church in the social life of the country illustrate this complexity.

The post-1989 transformation of Poland strengthened complexities that already existed in communist Poland but also added new dimensions inherent in capitalist democratic society. All this has affected the way Polish women responded to the changes of 1989. While many women became upwardly mobile in the new capitalist Poland, others became disadvantaged. The diversity of responses is testimony to the fact that the ways women could respond to the changes of 1989 was very much restricted by or at least dependent on the nature of Poland as a locality with a specific economic, historical and social heritage. This leads us to speculate that looking at women living in different places in Poland might allows us to uncover the even greater complexity of Poland as a

structure and highlight even further the relationship between the experiences of women in post-1989 Poland and their locality.

Chapter 3: The Origins and Resurgence of 'Matka Polka'

3.1 Introduction

The search for a post-communist local, national and international identity that has been going on in Poland since 1989 has resulted in the creation of a complex range of images of women. It has been argued that these images, particularly the ones produced by the media, not only do not reflect the reality of life in post-1989 Poland but are also only partially adopted by women themselves (Łaciak, 1995:242). Despite this, an understanding of the images available in contemporary Poland and the processes involved in their creation can be a useful tool for gaining an insight into the cultural context of the nation. The construction of images (representation) is one of the central practices that produces culture and gives meaning to people, objects and events, so that members of the same culture who think and feel about the world in a roughly similar manner share specific sets of images (Hall 1997:4). Therefore, by looking at the images of Polish women we can come to an understanding about the basic values, concepts, and ideas dominant in Polish society and thus gain a better understand of its complexity. This understanding in turn allows us to better comprehend the manner in which Polish women are influenced by the changes of 1989.

Almost every Polish person is familiar with the image of 'Matka Polka' (Mother Poland). Its enduring significance in contemporary Polish society is shown by the way it is constantly referred to by the media, academics, feminists, the Church, politicians, and

individual Poles alike. The image of Matka Polka is so strong in the consciousness of the Polish nation that despite – or maybe because of – the major social, economic and political changes that took place in the country after 1989 the traditional image of the woman-mother is promoted today alongside the more liberated images available to Polish women (Łaciak 1995:237). This chapter examines the impact this powerful image has had on the manner in which contemporary Polish women have responded to the changes since 1989. The ability of individual women to become upwardly or downwardly mobile in the changed socio-economic environment of the country is influenced by gender specific social expectations. These expectations are informed by the cultural representations of women available in contemporary Poland. At the same time, the representations themselves reflect culturally constructed values present in Polish society. As the most enduring of those representations, Matka Polka may be seen to reflect the culture's most deeply ingrained assumption about women and their place in society.

Examining the image of Matka Polka not only contributes to an understanding of the relationship between this representation and the lives of contemporary Polish women. It also serves as a further illustration of the complexity of Poland as a structure both before and after 1989, because the image has been interpreted historically in such different and even contradictory ways.

3.2 The origins of the image of Matka Polka

The image of Matka Polka is deeply rooted in Polish tradition and culture. In many ways it almost personifies Poland as a nation and as a geographical location. Although it would be difficult to establish exactly when it first emerged, certainly it did so at some stage during the period of partitions when Poland had disappeared from the map of Europe. The image of Matka Polka is one of a sombre woman dressed in black, surrounded by her many children and grandchildren. The black dress symbolizes not only mourning for husbands, sons and brothers who have died fighting for their fatherland, but also mourning for the loss of an independent Poland (Reading 1992:21). During the period of partitions, in most partitioned sections of the country the Polish language was often banned and Polish tradition and culture could not be cultivated in the public sphere. As a result, the Polish family became the bastion of national identity (Sokołowska 1976b:72; Sokołowska 1977:349). Since the men were often imprisoned, exiled or executed for their involvement in struggles for independence, it was the women who were responsible for sustaining and embodying the Polish national identity (Sokołowska 1976b:72; Sokołowska 1977:350; Siemieńska 1986:6; Siemieńska 1994b:209; Ciechomska 1996:121; Walczewska 2000:53). These women also had to ensure the day-to-day survival of their families by running family businesses or farms (Titkow 1993:253; Regulska 1992:176; Siemieńska 1994b:208).

The absence of men and reliance on women as protectors and teachers of national tradition and culture gave women great political significance, autonomy and power in

their families as well as in the broader society (Sokołowska 1976b:72). Their autonomy and power was, however, limited in numerous ways. It was reserved only for women living out traditional women's roles. Only women who were mothers or grandmothers, or potential mothers, were seen as deserving the name and role of Matka Polka.

The actions of women were subordinate to the interests of their homeland, family and Catholic religion. A woman who fitted the image of Matka Polka had to possess all the qualities of Catholic womanhood. Mainstream society in partitioned Poland perceived the notions of patriotism and Catholicism as one. Matka Polka would usually wear a cross symbolising that she was married to her husband, to the fatherland and to the Church (Reading 1992:21). She was powerful, thoughtful, useful and respected, but at the same time bound to her role as a mother and wife. She was expected to remain faithful to her absent or dead husband. She was totally uninterested in any issues associated with more individual self-fulfilment. She was only permitted to fulfil herself through motherhood, religion and patriotic activity. Even her love for her husband was not based on passion, but rather on duty and social norms: she married him, had his children, and therefore loved him. In fact, the image of Matka Polka was and still is closely linked to the image of Virgin Mary, the so-called Queen of Poland (Monczka-Ciechomska 1992:95; Walczewska 2000:56).

During the period of partition as a way of consoling the Polish people, numerous works of art referred to the glorious days of the historical 'Golden Era', when the Polish-Lithuanian Republic was one of the most powerful countries in Europe. (Its territory was

approximately 815 000 square kilometres – compared to Poland's territory today, which is 311 730 square kilometres.) Some of these paintings represented images of Matka Polka. In his 1866 painting 'The young Sobieskis with their mother at the grave of Hetman Żółkiewski' (Figure 3.1) Eljasz-Radzilowski depicts a woman showing her two young sons the grave of the Polish hero Hetman Zółkiewski[13]. In 1673 one of those boys had become Jan Sobieski the Third, one of the most heroic kings of Poland,[14] who in 1683 moved his army to Vienna to defend it against Turkish invasion and hence became known as the saviour of European Christendom. The message of the painting is quite clear: through a patriotic upbringing, provided by the mother, heroes and defenders of Polish borders are formed.

The painting 'Before the First Campaign' by Mirecki (Figure 3.2) presents an even stronger message. It shows a young man visiting his mother before leaving home for his first campaign. He offers his sword to his mother, asking for her blessing. His patriotic mother points to the painting of their ancestor, a heroic defender of the fatherland, probably telling her son to be just like him. In the background we can see two younger children. The boy is gazing with admiration at his older brother, presumably thinking that soon he too will be preparing for his first battle and receiving instructions from his mother. The girl observes the scene, learning what will be expected of her when she herself will become a Matka Polka.

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[13] Hetman (commander-in-chief) Zołkiewski was one of Poland's most prominent military heroes; he was responsible for defeating the Russian army in 1610.

[14] Since 1382 Poland has been an elective kingdom, where in theory any nobleman could be elected to the position of King of Poland.

Figure 3.1 Eljasz-Radzikowki, W. 'The Young Sobieskis with their mother at the grave of Hetman Zółkiewski' 1866

Source: Okoń 1992

Figure 3.2 Mirecki, K. 'Before the First Campaign' 1888

Source: Okoń 1992

3.3 Intellectual and cultural currents in nineteenth century Poland

The image of Matka Polka cannot be fully comprehended without an understanding of the cultural and intellectual currents that dominated the period during which it was created. Such an understanding is particularly relevant because in post-1989 Poland, as in other countries of the former Eastern Block, the emergence of nationalism has led to movements encouraging a return to the values of the nineteenth century (Einhorn 1993a:8). While the partitioning of Poland began in the eighteenth century, its fate was finally sealed in the third partition that took place in 1795. For that reason I will focus on the nineteenth century as the main context within which the image of Matka Polka developed.

In the complex and unstable history of Poland caused by its problematic geopolitical position, culture played an extremely important role in sustaining the national identity of its people. In the nineteenth century two distinct broad cultural movements developed. In the first half of the century the predominant movement was romanticism, and in the second half it was overtaken by positivism.[15] Both movements greatly affected the attitudes of Polish people at the time, but what is particularly relevant here is that they continue to have a significant influence on the values and thoughts of contemporary Poles (Tymowski, 1995:86). This is born out by the success of two Polish films produced in 1999 that were both based on nineteenth century literary works – 'Mr Tadeusz', by

[15] The term 'positivism' comes from August Comte 'Cours de philosophy positive' (1830–1842), which claimed that science is the only effective way of analyzing the world (Krzyżanowski 1972:351).

Adam Mickiewicz and representing romanticism, 'With Fire and Sword' by the positivist Henryk Sienkiewicz.

As far as women are concerned positivism deserves special attention as it was the first broad Polish cultural movement to incorporate the equality of women into its ideas. The positivist movement started as a reaction to the failure of the January Uprising (1863–1864). After the victory of the occupiers, many Polish patriots lost faith in immediate military action, and the intellectuals began to argue for the re-education of the whole nation in preparation for any possible future uprising (Krzyżanowski 1972:354). The positivists opposed feudal superstitions and clericalism, condemned anti-Semitism and argued for popularizing education, scientific knowledge and technical progress. They also demanded equal rights for women (Arnold and Żychowski 1962:142). The fact that calls for the equality of women originated from positivism has influenced the context within which gender equality is understood in today's Poland. Positivism emphasised respect for science, seeing biological science as the most important. It defined the morality of the individual through her behaviour towards others and her contribution towards society as whole (Nofer-Ladyka 1981:23). Arguments for the equality of women focused not on their rights for self-fulfilment or self-determination as such, but on their duty to be socially useful. This fitted fundamentally, therefore within the parameters of the image of Matka Polka. Moreover, the positivists' focus on biology did not allow for any perception of women outside their biologically determined roles. To this day, discussion regarding the social position of women and their rights to participate in public life has often been framed within the same notions. Women's equality has been seen as

necessary in order to allow them to contribute to society, but at the same time emphasis has been firmly placed on the biological roles of women as the reproducers of society.

While positivism laid the foundation for modern Polish feminism, the concept of autonomy for women had been addressed earlier. In the middle ages convents, which were subsidised by the state and were particularly numerous in large urban centres such as Kraków (Kuklo 1998:50) served as an alternative for women who did not want to marry and participate in child-rearing and domestic responsibilities. The nuns concentrated on charitable work and won equal rights with monks to learn Latin. They sang in church choirs and established schools for novices and lay girls (Sokołowska 1977:349). Furthermore, in 16th century Poland there were already arguments that lay women should be allowed to participate in higher education (Sokołowska 1977:349; Bogucka 1998:129–130).

Despite this, the position of women in nineteenth century Poland was not very different to that of women in other parts of Europe. Women's activities were generally limited to the domestic sphere, with marriage followed by numerous children or the convent being the only viable lifestyle options. Several factors specific to Poland, however, worked to the advantage of women. The first was their relative economic independence. Women from the nobility, the most powerful group of Polish society and one constituting approximately 12 per cent of the population, had the same inheritance rights as man. They could inherit assets from their parents which on their marriage did not become the property of their husbands. Furthermore, every woman had the right to a dowry and

could take legal action against her parents regarding it (Lorence-Kot 1985:48). These rights gave women significant economic independence of a particularly relevant nature when employment opportunities for women were practically non-existent. The inheritance rights of women were the same across all the free strata of society. Once peasants became liberated from the feudal control of the nobility[16] the same inheritance rights also applied to peasant women.

Another factor influencing the status of women in nineteenth century Poland, at least as far as noble women were concerned, was that in theory every noble woman was equal to a noble man. Furthermore while in theory a married woman was expected to submit to the total control of her husband, in practice her bond with her blood family allowed her to maintain some level of autonomy. The fact that the marriages of the nobility were usually political-economic transactions reinforced this autonomy, with pre-nuptial agreements guaranteeing the economic independence of noble wives (Lorence-Kot 1985:47). Additionally, women as wives were subservient to their husbands, but as mothers they exercised power over their daughters and sons alike. All this, however, granted women only relative autonomy, and in effect the freedom exercised by individual women depended very much on the status of her family and the power structures within it.

In other ways nineteenth century Matka Polkas faced numerous disadvantages. It was commonly believed that intellectual endeavours were not suitable for women. Women

[16] Under Prussian rule the abolition of feudal control took place in 1807; in the Austrian territory in 1848; and in 1863 feudalism was abolished in some parts of Poland under Russian rule.

who did succeed professionally were pointed out as failing in more feminine areas. For example, when the artist Rose Bonhem died the local press commented that although she was an accomplished artist she was also ugly (Toniak 1992:104). Although the nineteenth century saw an increase in calls for women to be more active in the public sphere, even those fighting for greater freedom for women did so within the clearly defined boundaries of endeavours considered appropriate for women. For example the 1878/79 edition of *Bluszcz*, a successful publication for women that is often perceived as feminist, argued that 'whatever calling a woman choses for herself, the most honourable of her position was, and always will be, a position as home maker, mother and wife' (Toniak 1992:105). Not surprisingly, all those factors led to the image of Matka Polka that was quite problematic.

3.4 Orzeszkowa and Prus

The problematic nature of the image of Matka Polka can be also linked to the fact that despite the positivists' calls for the emancipation of women, not all members of the movement shared the same views on what this emancipation should involve. The works of two positivist writers, Eliza Orzeszkowa (1841–1920) and Bolesław Prus (1845–1912) best illustrate these differences of opinion. *Marta* by Orzeszkowa (1873) and *Emancypantki* ('Emancipated Women') by Prus (1890) both address the so-called 'women's question' and have numerous common characteristics. Both novels describe women living in partitioned Poland in the late nineteenth century. Both address issues related to the independence of women and illustrate the life choices available to women

in the authors' time. While neither work refers directly to Matka Polka (simply because in partitioned Poland an emphasis could not be placed on Polish national identity), the novels provide a wide spectrum of related images. At the same time, however, the authors approach the topic in very different ways, presenting sharply conflicting representations and interpretations. This is primarily due to a difference in the personal beliefs of the authors.

Orzeszkowa was one of the pioneers of the Polish feminist movement. Besides her novels, several of which addressed women's issues, she also published non-fiction works calling for changes to the social and cultural norms restricting women (Górnicka-Boratyńska 1999:89). Orzeszkowa's interest in the emancipation of women derived from a personal understanding of the problems they faced in contemporary society. She herself experienced a fate common to many women of her times. The only daughter of wealthy landed nobility, she received a limited education and was married at sixteen. Her separation and subsequent divorce from her husband was accompanied by the loss of her land, which forced Orzeszkowa to support herself. This proved to be quite difficult, especially as her divorce was a social scandal which resulted in her exclusion from many social and even some literary circles. For example, for a long time she could not publish in 'Bluszcz' (Zmigrodzka 1966:8).

In contrast to Orzeszkowa, Prus was never a supporter of the emancipation of women and was, often critical and even sarcastic about feminist activists (Kulczycka-Saloni 1966:173; Pietrusiewiczowa et al 1977:629). He addressed the issue of the emancipation

of women out of his concern for the family, which he saw as the basis of society, and also because it was a topical issue. Prus believed that paid employment and independence turned women into 'freaks' incapable of fulfilling either male or female roles (Kulczycka-Saloni 1966:173). So while Orzeszkowa's *Marta* describes the plight of a young woman and her fight to support herself, *Emancypantki* is a satire looking critically at women's attempts to gain independence and inability to do so successfully.

3.5 Prus: women as losers

Through describing the adventures of numerous female characters, Prus conveys his main message: that women who try to be emancipated, will in the end either perish or seek refuge in a return to their traditional roles as wives and mothers.

As no feminist analysis of *Emancypantki* has been written to date, most of the critics addressing the novel support Prus's view. The main character of the novel, Madzia, together with the other female characters depicted, is generally trivialized and criticized. Krzyrzanowski, who for decades was an authority on Polish literature, declared that the novel is a 'biography of a charming young lady, who had a genius of emotion' but is hopeless when crushed by the 'realities of life' (Krzyżanowski 1971:386). One critic was so concerned by what, in his opinion, was the low intellectual level of the main characters of the novel that he renamed *Emancypantki* 'Gees', which in colloquial Polish means naive and stupid females (Kulczycka-Saloni 1966:172). Paradoxically, despite the fact that Prus's work was by no means supportive of the independence of women, the

mere fact that the main characters in the novel are female exposed him to criticism from some quarters (Pietrusiewiczowa 1977:628).

The plot of the novel centres around a boarding school for girls run by Mrs Latter, a very energetic, strong and independent working woman who has for many years managed to support a comfortable lifestyle for herself and her spoiled children by running her prestigious school. She is a woman with a past, a widow who is separated from her second husband. Since separation is unacceptable by the social standards of the time, this remains a secret. Her second marriage evolved out of passionate love, but dissolved when Mr Latter spent all his wife's money. Mrs Latter has paid the price for allowing herself to choose a husband on the basis of desire. She has been punished by being forced firstly to support herself and her children, and secondly to live her life in total separation and alienation from normal people, from whom she is divided by secrets, jealousy or lack of understanding.

The novel begins when Mrs Latter is becoming increasingly incapable of keeping financial problems at bay. The way Prus describes her situation implies that financial hardship has been inevitable for Mrs Latter and that the years during which she managed to support herself and her children were only a passing phase. Prus also emphasises Mrs Latter's inability to combine her responsibilities as a mother of adult (and therefore expensive) children with her duties as headmistress of a school. As her financial problems escalate Mrs Latter receives a marriage proposal from a wealthy and honourable gentleman. But because she is not only still married but is also an

independent women she refuses his proposal. When she is finally totally ruined she travels to the country residence of her suitor and accidentally drowns in the river.

The manner in which Prus presents Mrs Latter is evidence not only of his own attitude but also of society's general view of women entering the male territory of financial independence. Mrs Latter – the independent, self-sufficient, strong woman – is punished with hardship, misery and finally death for her attempt to become successful in a manner reserved for men. A modern-day feminist reading of Mrs Latter's life would be very different. The death of Mrs Latter and the problems she encountered could be interpreted not as a result of her inability to be a successful businesswoman and an independent person, but rather as a consequence of social prejudice towards women rebelling against stereotypical images of femininity.

After the death of Mrs Latter, Madzia – an eighteen year-old former student of the school – becomes the main focus of the novel. Madzia naturally strives for the happiness of others, but because she does it in an unconventional and unrestrained manner she often brings more trouble than good to herself and those around her. Social disapproval of Madzia's behaviour is strengthened or maybe even ignited by her refusal of two marriage proposals. The disapproving response of her world to every independent action Madzia takes results in her nervous breakdown, after which she goes into hiding in a convent and plans to become a nun.

By the end of the novel all the 'emancypantki' who appear in the book find themselves where Prus believed they should be. The actress Madzia befriends and helps, dies after giving birth to an illegitimate child. Mrs Latter drowns. Her beautiful daughter stops picking faults in all her suitors and marries a primitive but young, wealthy and hard-working brewery owner. The wealthy Countess Norska, sister of Madzia's suitor, who has been principally interested in scientific research, abandons her studies to marry the flamboyant but poor son of the late Mrs Latter. One of the teachers from Mrs Latter's school, a devoted feminist activist, marries an accountant and proceeds to spoil him by bringing him his slippers. Only Madzia remains in limbo, unable to decide whether to stay in the convent or marry. Being independent is clearly not a viable option.

But while all the 'emancypantki' suffer or change their misguided ways there are other characters in the novel who fare much better. There are Miss Malinowska and her mother, who successfully manage the school and gain respect from their students and society. There is Madzia's mother, a respected citizen of a small town who successfully manages her household and makes important decisions about her family and community. There are also a number of other powerful, influential and respected matrons living in Madzia's small town. Finally, there is Mrs Burakowska, whose boarding house Madzia is living in in the final stages of the novel. All these women enjoy a reasonable level of respect and integrity, but only because they remain within the roles defined by the image of Matka Polka: living the lives of supportive wives and mothers, thrifty widows or women who, like Miss Malinowska, are permited to dedicate themselves to the roles of Blue Stocking only because they are spinsters.

Despite Prus' approach, the modern reader cannot avoid concluding that the reason the female characters in *Emancypantki* are unable to live independently is not because of their personal shortcomings or biological characteristics, but a consequence of social structures prohibiting women from being treated in an non-discriminatory manner. In the context of this thesis the novel is an excellent illustration of the cultural boundaries within which Polish ideas about women's independence and appropriate feminine role models have been formed. Matka Polka as an image of a powerful woman yet one who is devoted to her role as mother and homemaker, is a natural product of such cultural environment.

3.6 Orzeszkowa: Women as fighters

A very different approach to the position of women in Polish society was presented by Eliza Orzeszkowa. Like *Emancypantki*, *Marta* written by Orzeszkowa presents the situation of women in Polish society during the second half of the nineteenth century. Like Prus' main characters, Marta is also lost in a man's world. The author's point, however, is not that women are not capable of independence but that society makes this independence impossible. The main issues addressed are the rights of women to education and employment. The issues are presented as an important social problem affecting large numbers of urban middle-class women, many of whom had become impoverished at the time Orzeszkowa was writing as a result of the economic hardships faced by the middle and small nobility who had until that time resided on the land. In fact

Orzeszkowa's goal was to convince her readers that the participation of women in the workforce was a necessity that had to be accepted (Monczka-Ciechomska 1992:97). *Marta* was written out of strong personal convictions. Not only did it bring the author fame but, being very popular with women readers in particular, it also changed the lives of many of Orzeszkowa's contemporaries (Jankowski 1966:157).

The novel's main character is a 24 year-old middle-class woman with a noble background. The early death of her parents is preceded by their bankruptcy. However, Marta's future seems to be secure, as 'she loved and was loved' (Orzeszkowa 1949:20). She marries a promising young clerk who provides her with happiness and financial security. But their happy life does not last long, as he dies leaving Marta and their 5 year-old daughter without any means of support. She is forced to sell her belongings and move with her child to a rented room in a poor part of Warszawa.

Marta is very ambitious and hopes to be able to support herself and her child, but that proves to be impossible. Her limited education prohibits her from gaining employment as a teacher. She is also unsuccessful in becoming a translator of books, as her French is not good enough. She cannot become a housekeeper, as nobody wants to employ a middle-class women in this position. She is a gifted artist but cannot secure a position in the male-dominated crafts as nobody is prepared to employ a woman in a workplace full of men. Naturally, partly because she sees herself as a good Catholic woman and partly because she still loves her husband, she turns down offers to become a courtesan. Finally she finds work as a seamstress, sewing underwear by hand for twelve hours a day in a

dark room filled with other women in a similar position. But even this job does not last. In the final part of the novel Marta's daughter falls ill. Unable to afford medicine, she steals money for it. But before she takes the medicine to her child, incapable to cope with the burden of the crime she has committed and crushed by her inability to provide for herself and her child, she jumps in front of a tram.

Interestingly, while showing Marta failing to survive as an independent person Orzeszkowa, like Prus, shows several working women who are able to support themselves. All these women are working class however, and hence have skills that make them employable. The way Marta was brought up makes her fit for only two positions: wife and courtesan.

The relevance of these two novels to the current situation of Polish women is considerable. First, they illustrate the social conditions within which the powerful image of Matka Polka was created. Second, they highlight the differences of opinion regarding the emancipation of women that operated at the time when Polish feminism was born and hence inform the cultural heritage of the Polish women's movement that continues to affect Polish women today. Third, analysis of the two novels sheds some light on the cultural heritage of Polish women in general, without which any real understanding of their current position would be impossible. And finally, by underlining the differences between the opinions of the two authors, who after all were both members of the same intellectual movement, they indicate some of the contradictions within Polish society.

3.7 The revival of the image of Matka Polka

The image of Matka Polka developed in the nineteenth century as a reaction to the changed geopolitical situation of Poland. The role of Matka Polka was to protect the national identity of a nation that did not exist on the map. The image lost some of its significance during the communist era, as some of its aspects were incompatible with the political agenda of the time. Women during this period were not expected to focus exclusively on motherhood but were also encouraged, at least in theory, to participate in the social and political life of the country as well as being involved in paid employment. Their role in preserving national identity in Poland was also played down by the Soviet controlled government. However, aspects of the image such as the idea of women's selflessness were still called upon throughout the period.

Interestingly, the changes of 1989 that liberated Pland from Soviet control, strengthening its autonomy, brought about a revival of Matka Polka. The difference between images of women promoted during communism and the revived image of Matka Polka lies in the fact that during communism women were encouraged to become selfless workers for the common good of their nation, while in contemporary Poland women are encouraged to be selfless mothers for the good of their nation (Einhorn 1993a). Contemporary Matka Polka, like her earlier predecessor, is a selfless being, uninterested in her own fulfilment. She is an asexual being (Kofta and Domagalik 1999:42), and is totally devoted to her family, her fatherland and the Church. Numerous Polish feminist writers have expressed

their concern about those aspects of the image (see for example Kozak 1993; Nowakowska 1995a; Kofta and Domagalik 1999; Walczwska 1999).

The Catholic Church, along with right wing political parties and semi-political organizations claiming to be based on Christian ethics and principles (such as the Polish Federation of Pro-Life Movements) plays a particularly important role in promoting the image. The term Matka Polka is often used by the Church and related organizations to describe the most desirable (in the Church's opinion) role of women in society (Nowakowska 1995a). You only have to attend Sunday mass a few times to hear the priest refer to it.

The report prepared by the Polish Federation of Pro-Life Movements for the 1995 International Women's Conference in Beijing is an excellent example of how the image is promoted. The opening sentence of the report claims that 'women in Poland do not experience gender discrimination' (Kowalewska 1995:1) and that women, and particularly Matka Polkas, always receive the respect they deserve. The tradition of men kissing women's hands to greet them is cited as the proof of this! Only women who behave in a 'dishonourable' manner lose this respect. The report does not elaborate what such behaviour might involve, but as it talks about women exclusively as Catholic mothers and wives whose only goals are marriage and children, it can be assumed that 'dishonourable' behaviour would be any sexual or social activity that exists outside this model. The report argues that family and Catholicism are the only important values for Polish women and portrays them as asexual individuals who engage in sexual activity

only for procreation and prefer natural forms of family planning to modern forms of contraception. It also states that Polish women work exclusively out of financial necessity and would be happy not to work if the government ensured that the husband's wage could support the family. The report is emphatic in its anti-abortion stand. While it claims to represent all Polish women, it does not provide a sound explanation of the methodology by which the data used was gathered. On close analysis of the text it becomes clear that only women organized in the Federation were consulted.

Reports such as that produced by the Federation promoting the image of Matka Polka can be quite easily exposed as unrepresentative of the views and experiences of Polish women. In fact this report was only one of three Polish documents presented at the Beijing conference. The two others, produced by the Polish Committee of NGOs and the Polish government, provided much more comprehensive analyses of the position of women in post-1989 Poland.

But undermining the power of the Catholic Church in promoting the image of Matka Polka is a much more difficult, if not impossible task. The Church uses all its power to actively uphold the image. The campaign against abortion and contraception is just one of the methods by which it seeks to ensure that every Polish woman has little chance of not becoming a Matka Polka. In October 1995 the radical weekly *Nie* reported that the Church had fulfilled the first phase of formalities in the long process leading to the beatification of a young woman, Dorota, who in the early stages of pregnancy had discovered that she had cancer. She did not have an abortion, and she also refused to

undergo any treatment that could harm her child. As a result Dorota spent most of her pregnancy in hospital and died soon after giving birth. While Dorota had a right to choose to continue her pregnancy and refuse treatment her motivation could be questioned. It could be argued that she did not make a fully informed decision but simply continued her pregnancy because the Church's doctrine dictates that abortion is unacceptable. The way the Church authorities approached the event, representing Dorota as an example of a 'good' woman making the only 'right' choice by putting the life of her unborn child before her own may also be seen as problematic.

The current climate of nationalism in Poland is another strong force behind the revival of the image of Matka Polka. Like nationalistic movements in other parts of the former Eastern Bloc, the Polish movement is associated with a return to a romanticized concept of community characterized by traditional gender roles, including women being subordinate to men (Einhorn 1993a:8). In the case of Poland this nostalgia for traditional notions of community is demonstrated by celebrating the lifestyle and values that allegedly existed in the nineteenth century. Books, magazine articles and movies produced in contemporary Poland often choose the nineteenth century as their setting, with the lives of nobility being particularly popular. Women's magazines, for example, very frequently publish articles referring to and often glorifying life in nineteenth century Poland. Films such as for example extremely successful 1999 production of 'Mr Tadeusz' (based on the novel by Adam Mickiewicz, the most influential Polish writer) show the nobility living with their extended families in country houses surrounded by gardens, orchards and fertile fields. The women of such families occupy themselves in

the virtuous pursuits of housekeeping and motherhood, and in religious and patriotic activities. The men cultivate the fields, hunt bears and – most importantly – die for their motherland. Family love, or rather respect between family members, and romantic love between heroic young men and beautiful but chaste young virgins flourish under the watchful eyes of matriarchs and parish priests.

The use of gender specific images in constructing national identity is not an exclusively Polish or European phenomenon. For example, in Ecuador representations of women have been incorporated into the nationalistic discourses of nostalgia, development and territory, where images of the nation's past are represented as women while forward-looking national projects are represented as masculine (Redcliffe 1996). Like Matka Polkas, Ecuadorian women are represented as the mothers training their sons in civil patriotism, while the defence of the territory they inhabit while performing their reproductive and caring roles, is left to the men (Redcliffe 1996). A comparable correlation between nationalist discourse and gender stereotypes exists also in post-colonial Sri Lankan drama, where Sri Lanka is portrayed in stereotyped images of the caring nurturing mother. Such stereotypes are used to create some sense of security and continuity in a country experiencing shifting norms and realities, and to assist in establishing a national identity through defining what one is and what one is not (Silva 1997).

The identification of motherhood as women's primary role is integral to Polish nationalism and the nation's search for its new post-1989 identity. Family is seen as a

crucial element in preserving national identity and self-determination, with the role of woman-mother or Matka Polka being central to this ideology. Again, Poland is not the only nation reverting to traditional perceptions of gender roles in reaction to years of communism. Polish women are not alone in being encouraged or even coerced to be mothers. In Serbia, for example, nationalism has also led to women's roles being limited by the 'mother of the nation' stereotype (Bracewell 1996). Within the anti-Albanian rhetoric present in contemporary Serbia the fact that Albanian residents of Kosovo had large families in contrast to Serbian couples who usually had one child, has been perceived as a threat to Serbian nationals of the region. In this context Serbian women controlling their fertility were on the hand portrayed as liberated and independent in contrast to Albanian women who were burdened with the traditional task of looking after a large family. On the other hand, it was argued that the liberation of Serbian women had gone too far and resulted in women being selfishly unwilling to have children for the sake of their fatherland. While women were blamed for being selfish, men were accused of having been emasculated during the communist era. It was argued that women could not be expected to have children with men who did not fulfil the criteria supposedly intended for them by nature and tradition, but women were encouraged and expected to help men regain their masculinity. Mothers and masculine men were therefore portrayed as 'good Serbs' in contrast to 'bad Serbs', who included political opponents of Milosevic's government as well as homosexuals. This glorification of mothers and masculine men can also be seen in the Polish context, where Pole-Catholics (who prove their masculinity through producing and supporting numerous children) and their wives (Matka Polkas) are represented as 'good' Poles who are contributing to the survival of

their nation and the preservation of their national identity. This criterion of 'goodness' has had a very significant impact on Polish women, excluding them to great extent from other forms of citizenship.

It has been argued that an overemphasis on women's role as mothers makes Polish women unable to reflect other images promoted in contemporary Poland, such as that of 'citizen-entrepreneur', and that this inability excludes them from active participation in Polish citizenship (Rukszto 1997). The 'citizen-entrepreneur' ideal is a reflection of the shift towards a notion of Polish identity constructed on a romanticized convergence of the patriarchal family, the Catholic religion and capitalism. Citizenship is conceptualized as attainable through participation in public activity such as governance and commerce, while the appropriate sphere for women is portrayed as the private domestic sphere of the Matka Polka. To be a citizen is seen as synonymous with active participation in capitalist processes outside the home. Women often have no access to such involvement, and when they do they are seen as having to sacrifice or neglect their 'natural', family centred tasks. The representation of economic activity in the media constructs the image of the entrepreneur as desirable and positive, and links the willingness of Polish citizens to become entrepreneurs with the success of capitalist Poland. However, female and male entrepreneurs very differently: 'the female citizen-entrepreneur is presented as someone occupying a contradictory location and her performance is usually presented as in an ongoing state of crisis' (Rukszto 1997:108). This approach is strikingly similar to the attitudes to woman entrepreneurs presented over one hundred years ago by Prus. Mrs Latter, a literary pioneer of women's involvement in commerce, was presented

occupying exactly the same contradictory position, in that her maternal role was shown as being incompatible with her role as a businesswoman.

3.8 Matka Polka in contemporary Poland?

It would be unjust not to point out that there are numerous positive aspects of the image of Matka Polka, both historically and in a contemporary context. The social position of the mother in pre-communist Poland often gave women a great deal of power in their own families and local communities, as well as in politics and in broader social life. Similarly, in contemporary Poland it is also the women who play a central role in cultivating and controlling the cultural, religious and social traditions of their families. They are the ones who offer moral and financial support for their children and grandchildren (Komorowska 1976:156). In a country where great emphasis is placed on tradition and family values, this gives women-mothers significant authority and integrity. But as in the past, the contemporary image of Matka Polka promises women social power and respect only if they choose to live their lives exactly the way the patriarchal system expects them to: as self-denying and home-centred mothers.

Despite pressure from the Church and other groups that support traditional women's roles, the majority of the women I interviewed claimed to reject the image of Matka Polka. This is at least partly attributable to the way they interpreted the image. Most of the women did not see Matka Polka in terms of its historical context; nor did they associate it with patriotic women preserving the national identity of Poland. If anything,

they associated it with the image of a woman oppressed by the hardship of life under communism. The image was seen as unattractive, undesirable and restrictive. It was associated with the predicament of an overworked mother of many children, caught between her unattractive job and her equally unattractive domestic responsibilities, who does not have time for any form of self-realization. Statements by two young women – Basia from Upper Silesia, a professional woman working part-time and the mother of a baby daughter, and Anna, a beautician from Kraków and the mother of two school-age girls – both illustrate this attitude:

> Oh, Jesus! A stupid goose with a wooden spoon stirring soup and surrounded by crying children (Basia 1995).
>
> Matka Polka ... a neglected woman with five children, very absorbed by cooking, dinner, etc. It's a negative description, such a neglected Matka Polka (Anna 1995).

This does not mean, however, that women do not fit this image at least to some extent. Despite the fact that only 63 per cent of adult Polish women are married, the role of mother and wife is promoted as a model for all women (Walczewska 1995:245). Women's magazines, for example, emphasize the negative impact of women's paid work on their families. They also assert that communism destroyed the traditional model of the Polish family (Łaciak 1995:238). Consequently it is difficult for women to focus on professional and political activities (Regulska 1992:182) and to move away from the model of Matka Polka. Women who do concentrate on their careers and do not marry and have children are often pitied for not having the support of a family of their own. At the same time, however, a woman who decides to bring up a child by herself is seen as a failure or an immoral 'unmarried mother' (Walczewska 1995:246). Such attitudes lead to

reflections of the image of Matka Polka in the way women live their lives, even if the women themselves neither want to fulfil this image nor believe that they do so. Studies in which both men and women participated have shown that in general the traditional image of the woman as a mother and wife is more popular then any other image (Domański 1995:67-69). However, Titkow and Domański (1995) argue that at least in the case of women this can be explained by participants verbalizing their support for the model they believed they should support, rather than declaring their actual beliefs (Titkow and Domański 1995:259).

Still, family and family life are often declared to be the most important value for Polish people (see for example Tarkowska 1985:68; Siemieńska 1994B:215–216). Women participate very actively in marriage and motherhood and do so relatively earlier than women in western countries. For example, despite the fact that the age on marriage for women increased for the first time in the middle of the 1990s, in1998 the average age on first marriage was still only 23.4 years (Centrum Praw Kobiet 2000:118). This is despite the fact that it significantly limits their employment and educational prospects (Tarkowska 1985:73). It is true that in 1993 the number of newly formed marriages in Poland reached its lowest point since World War II, with 5.4 marriages per 1000 people per year, placing Poland in the fifth lowest position in comparison to other European Community countries (Biolik 1994:6), which indicates that some level of social change is taking place. But this trend is balanced by the fact that the number of divorces in Poland is two times lower than the average number for EC countries. The low divorce rate continued throughout the 1990s. In 1998 it was 1.2 per 1000 people (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 1999:84).

Generally women in Poland apply for divorce only in very traumatic circumstances which they cannot tolerate any longer. In most cases they are the wives of alcoholics (Fuszara 1995:163). The traditional model of the family is perpetuated by the legal system and by the family court, where the woman is expected to be the sole builder, maintainer and protector of the relationship and family life. This includes offering her labour (washing, cooking) for the benefit of her husband and children, and for other members of the family as well (Fuszara 1995:164). A man is only expected not to be destructive (not to be an alcoholic, not to be unfaithful, not to beat his wife) and to contribute financially to the family budget.

Polish women often do not marry purely for their own gratification. Marriage is often the result of social pressures and traditional social attitudes towards sexual behaviour. The EC average of extra-nuptial births is three times higher than that recorded in Poland (7.2 per cent in 1993) (Biolik 1994:6–7). These figures indicate a very traditional approach to marriage and childbearing among Polish people. Marriage is still seen as the most appropriate way of organising sex life and procreation, and having children is seen as one of the most important aspects if not the essential function of marriage. It is very common in Poland to think about the future only in terms of one's children's achievements and to subordinate one's own life to their needs (Tarkowska 1985:67). Having children immediately after marriage is still seen in Poland as the preferred option. In a study by Duch-Krzystoszek (1995:183) 32.2 per cent of respondents saw having children straight after marriage as the best arrangement. Additionally 46.3 per cent of respondents

believed 'that giving birth to children is a duty', with women being slightly less supportive of this idea than men. Women who choose to remain single are commonly viewed with suspicion. Housing shortages and social policies favouring married people with children force many adult single women to live with their parents (Bishop 1990:30). De facto relationships are not widely accepted in Poland. In a study conducted by DEMOSCOP in 1996 34 per cent of respondents believed that de facto couples should definitely get married, 42 per cent percent believed that they should get married, and only 3 per cent believed that marriage is not necessary (*Naj* 1997:8).

Furthermore, in Poland there is still a very strong double standard of morality, leading to restrictions on the lifestyles of women not only in their married life but also before and after it. In a study conducted in 1995 22.6 per cent of respondents believed that girls should not be sexually active before marriage, while only 13.5 per cent believed that boys should not be sexually active before marriage (Duch-Krzysztoszek 1995:180). The 'morality' of women's behaviour is policed not only by their families, neighbours and friends but also by the law. For example, the most common reasons for under-age girls, and not boys, appearing in the children's court are running away from home, skipping school, contacts with 'demoralized' youth and spending nights outside the family home. Such activities are not actually against the law but are seen as suggesting that the girl may be involved in sexual activities and is therefore 'immoral'.

3.9 Conclusion

The re-emergence of the image of Matka Polka in post-1989 Poland has had a significant impact on the manner in which Polish women can respond to the changes of 1989. The promotion of the family centred model of womanhood by the Church, the media and nationalistic movements, together with restrictions on abortion and contraception, has restricted the ways contemporary Polish women can respond to the changing social, economic and political conditions within their country. The power of the image seems to be so strong that most women, even the ones who do became upwardly mobile, adopt aspects of it such as accepting marriage as the preferred form of conducting personal relationships and seeing motherhood as a fundamental part of being a woman.

The re-emergence and the power of the image of Matka Polka illustrates the complexity of Poland as a structure, in which traditional forms of social control such as the Church merge with modern notions of capitalism, and in which as the country enters the twenty-first century people are encouraged to look back and accept at least partially the values and beliefs dominant in the nineteenth century.

But nothing illustrates the complexity of Polish society more convincingly than the attitudes of women themselves towards the image of Matka Polka. While the Church and other right wing organizations focus on promoting the image, most Polish women are confused about what this image involves, often seeing it as a product of the communist

system. This is despite the fact that the some women do incorporate aspects of the Matka Polka image in the construction of their lives.

Chapter 4: Communist Woman – A Representation from the Bygone Era

4.1 Introduction

The image of Matka Polka was created in the 19th century as a consequence of the partitions of Poland. Its re-emergence in post-1989 Poland has been largely due to the nationalistic climate of the country and a related revival of nineteenth century values as well as to the increased power of the Catholic Church. Between 1945 and 1989 the dominant position of this image in Polish culture was interrupted by a new representation of women that arose as a result of another change to the geo-political situation of Poland. After the Second World War the map of Europe was transformed again when it was divided by what became known as the iron curtain. The image of the Communist Woman was created as a response to the new political structure of the country and related economic and social changes. This chapter is devoted to an analysis of this image. It demonstrates that the nature of the image of Communist Woman has had a significant impact on how contemporary Polish women have responded to the changes undergone by their country since 1989.

While the imagery associated with Communist Woman has been very different to that associated with Matka Polka, there are some very significant continuities between the two. An analysis of those continuities illustrates the complexity of Poland as a structure not only after the 1989 transformation but also during the communist period.

The creation of the image of Communist Woman reflected the redefining of Poland as part of the Soviet dominated Eastern Bloc. Therefore, just as Matka Polka cannot be understood without knowledge of the social conditions prevailing in partitioned Poland, Communist Woman cannot be understood separately from the fact that during the communist period Poland as a locality was not an autonomous nation but a part of the Eastern Bloc. In this geo-political environment it was the Soviet Union that dictated the manner in which its communist satellites operated. This affected attitudes towards women's liberation, the models of womanhood that were promoted in the country and how Polish women reflected these models in their everyday lives.

4.2 The myth of women's equality in the Eastern Bloc

After the United Workers Party gained power in post–Second World War Poland the communist government promised women unrestrained ability to fulfil their aspirations within the workplace, politics and family alike. This promise was enshrined in the new Polish constitution.

> 1. Women in People's Poland have equal rights with men in all aspects of national life: politics, economy and culture.
>
> 2. The equality of women is guaranteed by:
> Equality with men regarding the right to work and pay according to the 'equal work, equal pay' rule, the right to rest and relax, the right to social security, education, respect and honour, and the right to political participation (Żółkiewska 1955:8).

The constitutional guarantee of equality was accompanied by the abolition of regulations restricting women's employment and the introduction of laws prescribing women's equality in marriage and family life (Ciechomska 1996:156).

But an analysis of the involvement of women in employment, politics, and domestic responsibilities throughout the communist period indicates that despite the constitutional guarantee of equality and associated laws and regulations women's status in society remained very different to that of men (Siemieńska 1983:276). In fact for women in Poland, as for women in other Eastern Bloc countries, socialism, communism and Marxism were concepts that for decades legitimized their oppression (Cockburn 1992a:55). The official equality that guaranteed women the right to work, and the rights to free education, free child care and free abortion failed to undermine gender discrimination (Duchen 1992; Marx Ferree 1993; Haug 1991; Royer 1992) and often contributed to the oppression of women.

The governments of the Eastern Bloc placed great emphasis on the industrial development of their nations, while ignoring gender relations within households or dismissing the issue as being best left to the discretion of the individuals involved. What emerged from this approach was an alternative form of patriarchy that institutionalized the equal participation of both sexes in the public sphere, while retaining the domestic sphere as women's responsibility (Duchen 1992). As a result, women found themselves in the situation where their 'right' to work conflicted with their 'duty' to be mothers and wives (Plakwicz 1992; Marx Ferree 1993; Środa 1992). It is only now that historians are

pointing out that Russian and European revolutionaries never challenged the fundamental social stereotypes of male and female roles. Most of these revolutionaries did not believe that men should participate in housework and childcare, rather they believed that women should be enabled to participate in political and economic work by the provision of communal childcare and domestic services (Hutton, 1991:71).

In pre-revolutionary Russia, feminism was seen as an integral part of the democratic movement (Malysheva 1992). The revolution of 1918 was followed by a brief period when gender equality was addressed. In the 1920s the class struggle was extended into households, and with the support of the government a relatively small number of communal households were set up. In these households gender roles relating to the domestic division of labour and power were renegotiated (Resnick and Wolff 1996:350). This experiment did not, however, automatically lead to any broad social change in traditional attitudes towards women – particularly regarding their responsibility for childcare and housework. In the 1920s women's participation in the political and economic life of the Soviet Union was still significantly constrained by their domestic responsibilities. Time-budget studies from the period show that women spent significantly more time doing housework than participating in political activities (Hutton 1991:69). Any further challenge to gender stereotypes within households slowed down when it became apparent that women involved initiatives outside the domestic sphere required all sorts of state support and services for themselves and their children. The Soviet government of the time focused all its resources on industrial development and war efforts, and hence was reluctant to invest in the provision of such services.

Consequently Stalin initiated a return to the traditional model of the family in which men were seen again as the heads of their households and as responsible for supporting their wives and children in exchange for domestic services (Resnick and Wolff 1996:362). This promotion of a family model based on the traditional principle of man as a breadwinner took place in an environment in which many households could not survive on men's wages alone (Molyneux 1984:55) and at a time when the industrial development of the country required women's labour. Consequently the main significant difference between the Stalinist model of the family and the model dominant in pre-revolutionary Russia was that on top of their domestic responsibilities women were now also expected to be involved in paid employment.

From that point onwards the equality of women was subsumed by the broader political discourse which, contrary to propaganda, in its essence involved protecting the interests of the communist party elites rather than striving for actual social equality (Malysheva 1992:193–194). In the years that followed, the increasingly restrictive political climate of the country led to feminism being viewed with suspicion. The last hope of a happy marriage between the women's rights movement and the communist dictatorship disappeared when Soviet revolutionary Clara Zetkin stated that 'Feminism in essence remains non-revolutionary and sometimes even counter-revolutionary' (Malysheva 1992:194).

After the Second World War the neglect of gender equality within households and the consequent double burden experienced by women in the Soviet Union were reproduced

in other communist countries. This situation was particularly problematic since the governments of all the Eastern Bloc states claimed that women had been liberated by the change from the capitalist to the communist political and economic system (Molyneux 1984:55). The high level of women's participation in paid employment and education was used as evidence of the formal equality between the sexes (Marx Feree 1993:92). When in the 1960s the West experienced the second wave of feminism, communist governments officially declared it to be irrelevant to Eastern Europe since women in this region were not discriminated against (Ciechomska 1996:166). Furthermore, since totalitarian communist systems lacked genuine political democracy (Molyneux 1984:58) challenging this government propaganda was practically impossible. Thus women living in communist countries found themselves in a situation where their governments overstated the extent of women's equality while the women themselves could not organize against or even complain about gender discrimination.

Women's activism was not encouraged in communist countries. The existence of official women's organizations institutionalized by the communist parties was accompanied by a prohibition of any public discussion of gender inequalities (Marx Feree 1993:96). In Poland, for example, the only officially recognized and permissible women's organization was the Women's League (Liga Kobiet), which was a sub-committee of the communist party. In Hungary the Hungarian Women's Organization was also not an autonomous movement but a branch of the communist party. In theory these organizations existed to represent women, but in practice they had neither political power nor relevance to women's everyday lives (Kiss 1991; Robinson 1995). It was only in the

late 1970s and early 1980s when the political climates in most communist countries became less oppressive that small groups of women started very carefully to meet and play with the idea of forming alternative women's organizations (Drakulic 1992:128–130).

Hence it can be argued that communism was clearly oppressive to women in a different, possibly more complex and contradictory but certainly no less significant way than capitalism can be. While in developed capitalist societies women have often been disadvantaged because of uneven distribution of wealth, and have been discriminated against as far as education and employment are concerned, in communist countries women suffered as a consequence of official unwillingness to address the gender division of labour within households and the double burden imposed on women. The inability of women in these countries to organize as a political movement made challenging this situation impossible. An analysis of the image of Communist Woman promoted in Poland and other Eastern Bloc countries until 1989 further illustrates the difficulties faced by women in the region.

4.3 The tractor driver versus the loving mother: the image of Communist Woman

The image of Communist Woman promoted during the communist era, showed women as workers toiling alongside men for their communist homeland. But this image, which at first appears to be very simple, was quite complex. It also underwent significant

transformations during the period, as it reflected the complex political, social and economic conditions present in Poland.

Between 1945 and 1954 the Polish economy experienced labour shortages and women were therefore encouraged to work outside the home (Plakwicz 1992:80). Posters, such as that shown in Figure 4.1 showing women driving tractors were used to encourage women to participate in specific areas of paid employment until then reserved for men (Plakwicz 1992:80). Other posters showed women as active participants in rebuilding a new, better and supposedly fairer communist Poland. The state provided women with domestic services such as childcare (Figure 4.2) and medical services including free abortion. However, it appears that the provision of these services did not aim to improve the living conditions of Polish women or to challenge sexual stereotypes, but rather to ensure that women were available as workers. The young woman shown in Figure 4.1 is wearing the uniform of the communist youth organization ZMP (Union of Polish Youth). This implies that her energetic and joyful tractor driving is performed as a part of a broad political commitment to communist Poland rather than from a simple desire to participate in exciting activities until then reserved for men. The caption under the poster asks her and other young people to participate in the fight for a happy socialist Polish countryside. Thus it could be argued that the participation of beautiful blonde young women attired in nice skirts rather than appropriate work clothes was an instrument of the economic transformation of Poland rather than a measure towards challenging gender stereotypes. The image represented in Figure 4.2 illustrates this point further. It shows children being cared for by a nurse because their mothers are at work. While it can be assumed that the

fathers of the children are also at work, the provision of childcare, which in this photo is not accidentally provided by a woman, is portrayed as a service exclusively benefiting women. A woman was able to take her child to a hospital-like crèche, go to work and then be the one to collect the child on the way home. This approach gave the state the labour force it required without undermining gender stereotypes associated with the reproductive 'duties' of women.

Despite the familiar imagery of post–Second World War posters encouraging women to drive tractors, in Poland driving tractors or even buses was illegal for women throughout most of the communist period as it was seen as dangerous to their reproductive organs. In 1956 new laws prohibited women from working in numerous types of jobs (Ciechomska 1996:156). Throughout the communist period this list grew longer, until ninety types of jobs in eighteen branches of industry were banned for women. This included driving tractors, underground work and work demanding great physical effort (Fong and Paull 1993:235).

Figure 4.1 Chmielewski, W. (1951) Youth – move forward in your fight for a happy Socialist Polish countryside.

Source: Galeria Plakatu Kraków

A teraz do żłobka pod opiekę pielęgniarek! Mama wraca do pracy. Zobaczymy się po południu.

A teď do jeslí k pečlivé ošetřovatelce! Maminka se vrací do zaměstnání. Uvidíme se zase odpoledne.

Figure 4.2 The caption under this picture reads 'And now to the crèche under the care of a nurse. Mum is going back to work. We will see each other in the afternoon.'

Source: Żółkiewska 1955.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the image of Communist Woman was transformed. In these years the government become concerned about slow population growth in Poland (Nowak 1998:25) and, at the same time, about slowing economic development. As unemployment did not formally exist in communist countries, a strategy was required to decrease the excessive workforce. As a result the government decided that the labour market no longer required women (Ciechomska 1996:172). Women started to be reminded that being a mother was the most important part of their true selves. This was accompanied by the introduction of pro-natalist policies (Holzer and Wasilewska-Trenker 1985:122). Women were given the option of extended childcare leave, which had until then consisted of three months paid maternity leave. The pro-natalist policy saw paid maternity leave extended to six months and the introduction of additional unpaid leave until the child's third birthday. At the same time funding to family planning clinics and organizations was cut, and restrictions were placed on abortion.

The extent to which the image of Communist Woman matched the everyday lives of Polish women varied between individual women and between different regions of Poland. It can be argued, however, that throughout the communist period government propaganda about the position of women did not reflect most women's lives. This discrepancy was partly a consequence of the fact that the 'equality' of Polish women was not achieved through a slow process of social change initiated by women themselves, but was simply announced by the communist government as part of a new and allegedly fairer system. The state guaranteed women equality, at least in legal terms, as far as access to work and education were concerned. The government also officially recognized

women's contribution to the Polish economy. In a book produced in 1979 by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance Secretariat entitled 'Women in Socialist Society', the chapter on Polish women states that:

> By their selfless labour Polish women have made a valuable contribution to the rehabilitation of the war ravaged economy, and taken an active part in socialist construction and in the developing Polish national culture (Czyżowska 1979:51).

But the laws and official declarations of the communist governments never challenged the fundamental assumptions behind the discrimination of women. The official position was contradicted by prevailing traditional attitudes to gender roles, sex, family and what constituted appropriate involvement of women in politics, employment and education. These contradictions were intensified by an economic crisis characterized by constant shortages of even the most basic products that contributed further to the burdens women as a group carried.

4.4 Work, education and political involvement

The mass entry of women into the workforce could have drastically changed the position of women in Polish society if it had emphasized self-determination, challenged gender stereotypes and the traditional perception of femininity, and been accompanied by the promotion of equality for women within the family. This did not happen. Instead the mass entry of women into the workforce simply led to a waste of opportunities for true changes to the stereotypical perception of women's roles within society (Titkow

1995:30). As is evident from the quotation cited in the previous section, women's participation in employment was expected to show their selfless and self-denying characteristics rather than their increasing self-determination and power. The same level of selflessness or self-denial was not expected of men. This emphasis on the willingness of women to sacrifice themselves for the common good made the image of Communist Woman very similar to Matka Polka. This was especially true since Communist Woman was not expected to abandon her responsibilities as a wife supporting her husband and as a mother of future generations of communist workers.

Despite the constitutional guarantee of equal pay, well paid jobs in heavy industry were still reserved for men, with badly paid jobs in the underdeveloped service and manufacturing sectors being performed by women. Where women did manage to enter traditional men's fields in large numbers, medicine being one example, remuneration received in such fields dropped dramatically. The right of women to free education did lead to a number of women entering professions that were traditionally reserved for men, but despite this the top positions in technological fields remained in male hands and technology was still perceived as a masculine rather then a feminine or gender-neutral quality (Cockburn 1992b:87).

A 1955 propagandist tract written by Wanda Żółkiewska provides a very good illustration of how, despite the mass entry of women into education and the workforce, traditional perceptions of feminine characteristics and appropriate social roles for women did not change. In this book (written in both Polish and Czech and used as a propaganda

tool in Czechoslovakia as well as in Poland) Żółkiewska attempts to demonstrate the advancement made by women in People's Poland. The book's illustrations include a group of photographs with the caption 'In schools with various specialisations they prepare themselves for work in professions chosen according to their personal interests'. Interestingly, the personal interests of the pictured young women are evidently activities traditionally performed by women even before the arrival of the communist state, such as ironing and cooking, rather than less traditional fields (Figure 4.3). Even the fact that the young women occupied with ironing are wearing nice frilly aprons seems to reinforce a traditional perception of femininity. The photographs in the book also provide evidence that traditional assumption about what constituted appropriate or 'natural' attributes of women were unchallenged even when women entered professions traditionally reserved for men. The caption under a photograph of female doctors reads 'More and more women become doctors. Compassion together with hard work can be well applied in that profession.' (Figure 4.4) (Żółkiewska 1955:135).

Figure 4.3 In schools with various specialisations they prepare themselves for work in professions chosen according to their personal interests

Source: Żółkiewska 1955

Coraz więcej kobiet w Służbie Zdrowia. Łagodność serca obok rzetelnej wiedzy fachowej mają tu olbrzymie pole do popisu. We zdrowotnicze służbę pracuje dziś dużo kobiet. Płeć ta się uplatnia jak przynosi tak dokładnie odbarne wkład

Figure 4.4 More and more women become doctors. Compassion together with hard work can be well applied in that profession.

Source: Żółkiewska 1955

The contradictory nature of women's employment in communist Poland was similar to that of women's involvement in politics. Despite their constitutional right to participate in government and the quotas that ensured that women were relatively visible in the government of Poland, women as an interest group had limited access to political power (Regulska 1993:56, Regulska 1997:66). Women's active involvement in decision making was very limited (Duchen 1992:2). While women were represented in the three main Polish political parties at the rate of 26 to 30 per cent, very few of them held influential posts (Regulska 1992:184). The only legal women's organization was under the control of the ruling communist party, and none of the three dominant political parties had committees representing women's interests. It should be emphasized here that these political institutions had little power under the communism. Women's lack of political influence even when they held elected positions could be explained by the fact that most of them were much younger – many in their early twenties – than elected men. A further reason could be the relatively low educational level of elected women. It can be assumed that many of these women had very limited political experience and had not had time to establish sufficient links with the communities they were supposed to represent. It can also be argued that while the educational level and political experience of candidates were taken into consideration by the parties in selecting male representatives, these qualifications were more often overlooked in the case of women (Siemieńska 1990:189). This might have been due to conscious efforts aimed at recruiting women who would be less likely to destabilize party politics by initiating more open discussion about gender inequality. Alternatively, less experienced and less educated women might have been

chosen as party representatives out of a sexist assumption that as far as women were concerned wisdom and experience were of secondary relevance.

4.5 Sex and family

During the communist period women were not encouraged to focus on their sexuality. While, as figures 4.1 and 4.3 indicate, women were still shown attired in skirts and frilly aprons, such images reinforced notions of traditional femininity but definitely did not encourage women to adopt the bourgeois pursuit of elegance or eroticism. Such preoccupations were actively discouraged under the communist regime (Ciechomska 1996:157). Communist Woman could not be sexy, as attractiveness, or any attempt to pursue her own pleasure or even to give pleasure to others, was seen as self-indulgent, decadent and bourgeois. In communist Poland, particularly in the 1950s but continuously until 1989, individuals were not meant to belong to themselves or even to their families but to their country, their workforce, their brigade or their regiment. Conformity, not only in thought but also in dress, was encouraged (Davies 1984:8).

A woman was meant to get up in the morning and rush off to the factory or the building site in her overalls without worrying about lipsticks or hairstyles. Just like the woman shown in Figure 4.5 she would work there for at least eight hours, under the guidance of men who, like the man shown in this illustration, would point out to her the achievements of their communist fatherland and the significance of her selfless toil. All this would take place without her being distracted by sexual desire for men – and being attracted to

women would not even be considered.[17] She would then go to a party meeting, or maybe to a socialist realist[18] play being shown at her workplace club. After that she would go home, play with her children, cook, clean, read newspapers and books (see figures 4.6 and 4.7), and sleep through the whole night without participating in any activities that might diminish her ability to work efficiently the next day. Even at the height of the pro-natalist propaganda of the 1970s this official attitude to sex did not change. It was an approach that backfired quite significantly (Ciechomska 1996:157), with the majority of Polish women striving for romantic if not erotic relationships (Kuroń and Żakowski 1996:80) and expending considerable efforts on appearing fashionable and desirable (Kuroń 1990:61).

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[17] Lesbianism was treated as non-existent in communist Poland. The only book addressing the issue that has been written to date since 1989 is a book by Adamska (1998) People Next to Us. Lesbians and Gays in Poland. Consequently the experiences of lesbian women under communism are still awaiting appropriate research and analysis. This is not to underemphasise the importance of numerous web sites, newsletter and archives, which are devoted specifically to gays and lesbians in Poland.

[18] Socialist realism was the official art form promoted in Poland (and other communist countries) particularly from 1949 to 1955. It rejected avant-garde art and saw narrative art as a political instrument. It dominated all fields of art including painting, sculpture, film, music and architecture.

Figure 4.5 Working Woman

Source: Kuroń and Żakowski 1996

Figure 4.6 Domestic Work

Source: Żółkiewska 1955

Figure 4.7 Domestic Work

Source: Żółkiewska 1955

Until the 1970s women were treated by the government as a much needed labour resource and were given everything that could be required to increase their productivity: childcare facilities, maternity leave and, despite constant opposition from the Church, free abortion. But it is important to understand that although free abortion had been available in Poland since 1957 (Matuchniak-Krasuska 1995:189), women were far from being in control of their reproduction and sexuality. Throughout the entire communist era the accessibility of contraception and family planning services was limited (Duchen 1992:4). In fact abortion was one of the main methods of birth control (Jankowska 1991:178; Davin 1992:82).

Sexual freedom was never promoted, and marriage was seen as the only appropriate environment within which sexual activities should take place. Furthermore, the union of a man and a woman legitimized by both a compulsory civil and an optional church ceremony was seen as a social unit whose purpose was to provide the appropriate environment for children rather than as the union of two people who wanted to be together for love, desire or other self-indulgent reasons.

Throughout the entire communist period discussion of sexuality and eroticism was considered embarrassing and even vulgar, and this led to a great deal of ignorance about sexual issues even amongst people who had been sexually active for a long time (German 1991; Jankowska 1991). By the 1980s there was only one popular weekly magazine that published a section (a single page) addressing (hetero)sexual relationships and there was one book, by Wisłocka (1984), that addressed sexual relationships. The consequence of

such prudish attitudes is illustrated by Johanna, a Polish feminist quoted in German (1991) who gives an example of a sex education class in a Polish technical school. 'The teacher would come and show a condom and everybody would laugh. These people were twenty years old! Women in the class had already had children' (24).

It can be argued that contraception and sex education were not freely available because the government saw it as too likely to encourage people to have sex for pleasure rather then procreation. Increasing the availability of modern forms of contraception would have consumed some precious government resources and, since the availability of contraception would have mainly benefited women, it would appear that the government did not see this allocation of resources as necessary. Furthermore, restrictions on the availability of contraception and sex education was one of the ways in which the government lived up to its agreement with the Catholic Church not to interfere more than necessary into each other's domains of power.

In 1957 a non-government body called the Society for Conscious Motherhood (SCM) was established. This organization was responsible for the provision of sex education, contraception and abortion. The attitude of the government towards SCM changed according to its relationship with the Church. In 1970, partly as a response to the previously discussed decrease in the birthrate and partly as a signal of goodwill towards the Catholic Church, the government created significant difficulties for SCM, renaming it the Society for the Development of the Family to reflect official commitment to the family.

The level of state control of women's fertility that existed in Poland was similar to that in all other communist countries. Despite an alleged commitment by communist governments to women's emancipation, they showed little commitment to women's freedom to manage their own fertility (Davin 1992:79). While the aims, measures and outcomes of government in this area of women's lives varied between countries and sometimes even between regions within those countries, the desire and self-determination of women were never taken into account. For example, in the early days of the Soviet Union discussions of abortion and contraception were related to the liberation of women, but by the 1930s Stalin insisted on population growth and official government propaganda therefore portrayed motherhood as a display of social responsibility, with women being told that they have a duty to bear children (Davin 1992:81). In 1955 abortion was made legal in the Soviet Union. One of the main reasons for this was the need for women workers. At the same time, racist policies encouraged low fertility rates in the Asian states and higher rates in Europe (Davin 1992:86). In Romania, Ceaucescu, in his attempt to dramatically increase the population, used drastic measures: he not only outlawed abortion and contraception but also introduced compulsory pregnancy tests for women to ensure that they did not abort pregnancies (Davin 1992:85). Ceaucescu's approach to women's reproductive rights was summarized in his belief that:

> The foetus is the socialist property of the entire society. Giving birth is a patriotic duty which is decisive for the faith of the country. Those who deliberately refuse to have children are deserters trying to escape the laws of natural continuity (Davin 1992:85).

It is very important to understand that in Poland the availability of abortion did not provide women with an actual right to choose. In many cases women decided to have an abortion because that was the only widely available method of birth control. Some women could not afford to have children due to economic factors such as two wages being necessary for the survival of the family (Davin 1992:84). The shortage of housing was also an important factor that forced women to limit the size of their families. A 20 year wait for a small government supplied apartment was not uncommon, and only a few families could afford to purchase or even rent apartments at the (black) market price. While waiting for an apartment to become available many couples lived with their parents or parents-in-law, or rented single rooms from people who were fortunate enough to have larger quarters. In the private rental market couples with children were discriminated against. Another reason why women chose to abort pregnancies was that the Polish government did nothing to change negative social attitudes towards single mothers. Single mothers and their children were routinely ostracized and discriminated against. Single mothers, particularly if they had only one child, were also not officially seen as a family unit and consequently were not entitled to separate government provided accommodation.

Discrimination against single mothers continued despite the fact that the Sixth Congress of the Polish United Workers Party held in 1971 expressed a belief that women constituted a social group that should be given special attention in the strategy and tactics of social policy. Though it sounded promising, this decision led only to the creation of policies aiming 'to provide favourable conditions for strengthening family ties, and to

secure maximum concern for mothers and children, and for the upbringing of the rising generation' (Czyżowska 1979:51). The interests of women were seen as synonymous with the interests of mothers and children, a view that strengthened and perpetuated traditional social beliefs regarding appropriate roles for women.

The government's traditional attitude towards the role of women in the family is also illustrated in Żółkiewska's book. Its illustrations show women cleaning their state supplied apartments (Figure 4.6), cooking, serving men and children at the table (Figure 4.7), making clothes for their families and walking children to state run kindergartens. The sexual division of domestic labour is never questioned. Men are seen only sitting and looking proudly at their wives, whose domestic work has become so much more efficient and pleasant thanks to the services and equipment provided by the state. In the only picture in the entire book where the woman is being helped, it is by her daughters. This is despite the fact that it can be assumed that the women shown in these photos would also work outside the home.

The provision of affordable childcare by the state was intended to help women to combine their dual roles and manage their double burden. And while it was of significant assistance to working mothers, it was never adequate. After 1945 the Polish state dedicated substantial funds to developing childcare facilities. In 1939 only 83,300 children attended kindergartens; in 1946 this number had increased to 201,500; and in 1959 the number reached 356,088. It is important to understand, however, that during the postwar period of 1950 to 1955 Poland experienced a 'baby boom'. Each year between

760,000 and 800,000 children were born. In contemporary Poland there are only about 150,000 births per year (Kuroń and Żakowski 1996:69). So the number of children in kindergartens during the communist period was actually quite low in relation to the birthrate, especially as during this period the majority of women were in paid employment (constituting 43 per cent of the labour force). Furthermore, childcare facilities were never equally available to everybody in Poland. There were, for example, discrepancies between the provision of kindergartens in urban and rural areas. The number of children attending kindergartens in urban areas was three times as high as that in rural areas. The official explanation of this situation was that this was related to the 'nature of parents' employment' (Suchodolski 1959:736), while in fact women in rural Poland often experienced a triple burden as they combined paid work with farm work and domestic responsibilities (Pine 1992:70). In urban areas kindergartens were often overcrowded and had long waiting lists. In the later decades of communism women often had to 'prove' that they required organized childcare and could not have their children looked after at home by a paid carer or relative (usually the grandmother of the child).

The traditional attitudes to women's roles within the family under communism, like the expectation of women's self-denying approach to employment, indicate significant continuities between the image of Matka Polka and that of Communist Woman. This continuity was reinforced by an increase of the importance in the family that arose quite independently of the government's pro-family policies. In the communist era, as a consequence of the development of a considerable gap between the state and civil society, family became 'the most central element of the national fabric' (Haavio-Mannila

1985:69). Numerous factors contributed to the strength of the family during the communist period. The government promoted the family as a desirable environment for bringing up children and as a fundamental part of society. At the same time, Polish people saw the family as an escape from the artificial and constraining government controlled public sphere. The family was widely regarded as a safe environment and as a protection against economic hardship (Tarkowska and Tarkowski 1991:104). The Polish people's mistrust of the state and official institutions and hence the strength of their adherence to the family had begun during the period of partitions (Tarkawska and Tarkowski 1991:107; Środa 1992:11). During this time they learned to mistrust state institutions occupied by foreigners. This feeling intensified during the period of German occupation and continued after the war under the shadow of the USSR.

4.6 Ham and tampons

In the first decade after the Second World War the general standard of living of the lower socio-economic classes improved. Kuroń and Żakowski (1996:43) argue that:

> Maybe only some people improved their standard of living, but this was enough to create an atmosphere of progress of the entire working class. This was reinforced by the propaganda emphasizing the importance of the 'leading class' (i.e. working class)[19].

This improvement in the standard of living was used in government propaganda to emphasise the benefits women gained under the communist government. It is true that

[19]This quote was translated from Polish by Anita Seibert

for many working class women it was communism that gave them access to commodities and services that had previously been out of their reach, but by 1951 shortages of various commodities caused by economic mismanagement overshadowed those gains.

From that point on, life in the communist system was characterized by a lack of basic consumer items including food. Ham and pork chops became a symbol of all that Poles wanted but did not have. As a result of these shortages, running a household in communist Poland was harder than in Western countries (Sokołowska 1976a:265). Lacking cleaning products, processed food and domestic appliances, women in Poland were forced to perform domestic tasks in conditions that by Western standards would be seen as very primitive.

Paradoxically while shortages of commodities started to become increasingly apparent in the early 1950s, it is at this time that consumerism started to emerge in Poland. What became known as 'communist consumerism' picked up in the 1970s under Gierek's regime when, through the aid of foreign loans, the government supplied shops with various 'luxurious' and imported products such as bananas and jeans to divert attention from political crisis. Still this 'communist consumerism' characterised by very unpredictable and insufficient supply of products did not solve a problem of shortage of basic items necessary for decent existence. Consequently on the top of responsibilities for providing food and clothes for their families and upholding the Polish traditions of hospitality and elaborate cuisine, women spent hours queuing in empty shops, waiting for the delivery of basic items. Preparing meals from a restricted range of foodstuffs, and

repairing items that were hard to replace (such as clothes) required many hours of work (Haavio-Mannila et al. 1985:84). As a result of the gender division of labour, women were the primary victims of the economic crisis in Poland. It is again Drakulic (1992:18) who provides a good description of the effect of food shortages and shortages of other essential products such as tampons and cotton wool and toilet paper on the lives of women in the former Eastern Bloc.

> Every Mother can point to where communism failed, from the failure of the planned economy (and the consequent lack of food, milk), to the lack of apartments, child-care facilities, clothes, disposable diapers, or toilet paper. The banality of everyday life is where it really failed, rather than on the level of ideology.

The shortage of meat was an especially significant problem in Poland. Strangely enough, it was not ideology or politics but the price and accessibility of meat that was the main trigger for the social unrest that eventually led to the overthrow of the communist government (Kuroń and Żakowski 1996:149).

4.7 Matka Polka and Communist Woman – similarities and differences

At first glance the image of the Communist Woman appears to be the exact opposite of Matka Polka. Matka Polka was ruled by national and Catholic values, while communist woman was ruled by the values of internationalism and communism. Furthermore, whereas Matka Polka was expected to define and sustain the national identity of Poland at a time when it did not even appear on the map, communist woman lived in a supposedly independent and democratic People's Poland as part of the Eastern bloc.

The imagery that is associated with these two role models for women has also been quite different. Dressed in black and surrounded by her children Matka Polka was usually portrayed in her rural home. In contrast, Communist Woman, like her comrades in other communist nations, dressed in overalls and placed her children in government run childcare centres, and if she was not driving a tractor it was only because she was working at the building site just like the woman shown in Figure 5.5. In reality, however, the image of Communist Woman, was considerably more complex. It reflected the complexity of Poland as a structure during the period, and throughout the years of communism it changed according to the needs of the state. It must also be understood that the image of Communist Woman varied between regions of Poland. For example in Upper Silesia, which was the promised land of the workers for communist Poland and offered well paid jobs for men, accommodation, services, and greater availability of various commodities including ham and pork chops that were scarce everywhere else, women often did not work. For the women of Upper Silesia the image, or at least the interpretation of the image, of Communist Woman was not a woman worker but the wife of a coal miner concentrating on domestic responsibilities.

Still, in most regions of Poland women were encouraged to work outside the home while at the same time seeing the family as their main priority. In fact the model of womanhood promoted by the communist government was not drastically different from Matka Polka. Matka Polka was expected to sacrifice her personal interests for her partitioned fatherland through bearing children and rasing them as patriots and Catholics. Communist Woman was also expected to be self-denying through her selfless work for

the good of the communist fatherland. At the same time, like Matka Polka, her interests were subordinate to those of her family. A woman was meant to work, be a good housekeeper, care for children and other needy members of the family, and be a support to her man (Titkow 1995:30).

Furthermore, while Catholicism was an integral part of the image of Matka Polka but not Communist Woman, the Catholic faith in reality played an extremely important role in reinforcing the traditional attitudes towards women prevailing in communist Poland. This was true particularly in relation to sexuality and reproduction. The bureaucracy of the ruling United Workers Party reinforced patriarchy in the public sphere, while in the private sphere patriarchy was perpetuated by the still powerful Catholic Church (Bishop 1990:16).

4.8 Conclusion

The main difference between the image of Communist Woman and the image of Matka Polka is that while the latter is enjoying its revival in post-1989 Poland, the former is no longer promoted. However, while the image of Communist Woman as a whole has been rejected, at least verbally, aspects of it such as the rights to employment and education are taken for granted by most contemporary Polish women, including the women I interviewed for this thesis. In general, Polish women believe that they have to work outside the home, and if they do not, they see themselves as doing 'nothing'. Women are also constantly concerned about losing privileges they gained under communism, such as

maternity leave, access to abortion and free medical care. They are also concerned about unemployment. So while not many women would openly admit to supporting the communist system or believing that in some respects the situation of women was better before 1989, they do not want to give up those privileges that were granted to Communist Woman. This ambivalent attitude to the legacy of Communist Woman significantly affects the way women respond to the changes that have occurred since 1989.

Chapter 5: Searching for the New Polish Woman

5.1 Introduction

In pre-1989 Poland two dominant images of women were promoted: the image of Matka Polka and the image of Communist Woman. Both images reflected the complex environments that produced them. In contemporary Poland a new image reflecting the changes undergone by the country has began to be promoted – the image of New Post-1989 Polish Woman. This New Polish Woman is usually shown taking advantage of the economic, political and social transformations in her country. She also reflects the fact that Poland is no longer part of the insular Eastern Bloc but part of the new reunified Europe. At the same time, however, the image does not exist outside its broader cultural and historical heritage and hence inherits some of the earlier representations of Polish womanhood.

The analysis of the image of a New Polish Woman presented in this chapter is predominantly based on an exploration of representations of women in popular Polish women's magazines. It is argued here that while the image of New Polish Woman has been created in an environment of significant social mobility, with some women benefiting from the changes of 1989 and others being disadvantaged, the images of women promoted in women's magazines reflect this only in a limited manner if at all.

5.2 Representations of women in women's magazines

The role played by women's magazines in reflecting as well as shaping images of women has been acknowledged by numerous feminist writers (Clammer 1995; Sheridan 1995; Lumby 1997; Ussher 1997). In communist Poland only a small number of publications targeting women were available. After 1989 this number increased dramatically. The evident popularity of women's magazines could suggest that their impact as promoters of specific images of women is very significant. In fact it has been pointed out that Polish women's magazines see their role as teaching female readers new values, lifestyles and modes of behaviour appropriate in post-communist Poland (Łaciak 1995:233).

Polish women's magazines can be divided into two general groups. The first group includes more expensive, thicker monthly publications printed on quality glossy paper. They feature longer articles written by acclaimed journalists and also by other famous Polish personalities. For example every issue of *Twój Styl* features short essays by Anna Boyarska, the controversial Polish novelist and playwright, and Andrzej Żuławski, the world renowned film director and the husband of actress Sophie Marceau. Publications in this group predominantly advertise exclusive products such as cosmetics, clothes and cars, and are aimed at women from upper socio-economic backgrounds. This group includes Polish versions of *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*, but also Polish *Zwierciadło* and the already mentioned *Twój Styl*. The second group of magazines is aimed at women from middle and lower socio-economic backgrounds. These publications are cheaper, thinner and generally are published more frequently than once a month. They are printed on lower quality paper, feature shorter articles and advertise more affordable products. They also seem to dedicate less space to advertisements than the more expensive publications. Publications in this group include revamped versions of pre-1989 publications such as

Przyjaciółka and *Kobieta i Życie,* and new titles, some of which (for example *Tina* and *Olivia*) are Polish versions of Western publications.

For my examination of images of the New Polish Woman I regularly perused the following magazines: *Tina, Przyjaciółka, Pani Domu, Twój Styl, Olivia, Zwierciadlo, Pani, Kobieta i Styl, Kobieta i Życie, Z Życia Wzięte, Świat Kobiety.* The publication that I relied upon most heavily was *Twój Styl.* All the issues of *Twój Styl* published between May 1995 and February 2001 have been examined. This magazine stands out for several reasons. It was one of the first glossy women's publications to appear in Poland after 1989 and to be aimed explicitly at the New Polish Woman. In many ways it can be seen as a feminist publication, featuring articles about powerful and successful women and addressing some current social issues such as reproductive rights and racism. It also features articles about travel and art, offers beauty and fashion tips and features endless advertisements for up-market beauty products and other consumer items. Its founding editor's explicit goal was to create a specifically Polish publication reflecting 'the mood of the transitional period' and simultaneously emphasizing the high level of education of Polish women and the strength of Polish family traditions (Einhorn 1993a:247). Despite the later arrival of other glossy Polish women's magazines, and of Polish *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue*, *Twój Styl* is still one of the most popular women's magazines aimed at the higher income bracket. Among the cheaper and therefore more readily accessible magazines there is not one specific title that stands out as the most popular or influential; therefore a selection of these has been analyzed for the purpose of this thesis.

All contemporary Polish women's magazines present the New Polish Woman as sexually liberated, attractive, well groomed and focused on her career. She is a business woman and a consumer, but also lover, wife, home maker and most of all mother. At the same

time, however, there are some significant differences between the manner in which the image of the New Polish Woman is presented in publications aimed at women from different socio-economic backgrounds.

5.3 The sexy beloved

The most striking difference between the women's magazines produced before and after 1989 is the emphasis placed by current publications on sex. According to women's magazines the contemporary Polish woman is sexually liberated. Women are not only encouraged to enjoy (heterosexual) sex but also to demand it. In contrast to the pre-1989 period, 'how to' articles about sex, contraception and securing sexual partners appear in almost every issue of publications aimed at the female readers. The underlying message about sex is that its role in the lives of Polish people has changed as a consequence of the political and economic restructuring of the country. For example in *Twój Styl* an article entitled 'Office Romance' argues that while in the past Polish women usually met their future husbands at work, in today's Polish firms there is no room for counter-productive workplace love affairs. The article emphasises, however, that this is not because people working in 'new modern businesses' are not as attractive or sexy. On the contrary 'the stunning girls one can see in the corridors could easily be contestants in beauty contests, and the elegant young men with good haircuts could be models' (Jabłońska 1996:34). It also points out that in one particular firm, upon signing their employment contract, women agree to always have their fingernails painted and their legs waxed. But in this environment physical attractiveness is not seen primarily as a personal asset, rather it is a marketing tool, and female employees are expected to use their flirting skills while talking to clients. For example, a female worker from 'a consulting firm with foreign capital' declares that 'even if a client asks me what kind of underwear I like or who do I

sleep with, I cannot just hang up on him. It is recommended that I respond in a humorous manner which will encourage him to visit our firm, since then it will be easy to convince him to use our services' (Jabłońska 1996:34).

When the magazines discuss sex in the context of private life rather than work, they do not emphasise a model of the family where the husband is the first and only sexual partner of the woman and marriage is an unbreakable union (Łaciak, 1995:233). Paradoxically, at the same time women's magazines still portray men as the most important aspect of women's lives, whether the men are husbands, fiancés or lovers (Łaciak 1995:240; Kofta and Domagalik 1999:152). Magazines aimed at women from lower socio-economic backgrounds regularly feature personal advertisements, often accompanied by photos in which men and women as young as eighteen declare their determination to put an end to their loneliness and express their readiness to settle down. Being loved, adored and appreciated – by one's partner in particular, but also by men in general – is presented as a fundamental part of being a woman. Magazines for both lower and higher socio-economic groups regularly publish articles providing women with hints about how to secure the love, devotion and fidelity of their husbands, boyfriends, and lovers, but also how to ensure they are attractive to men in general.

Since the second half of the 1990s there seems to have been a marked increase in the number of articles addressing types of behaviour by women's partners that are portrayed as unacceptable, ranging from selfishness to alcoholism and domestic violence. While the fact that these issues are now addressed by the media at all is in itself positive, they are still addressed very rarely, seem to be treated as marginal, and are sometimes even presented as behaviour a wise woman can change. This is particularly the case in the upmarket publications, which avoid negative topics and prefer to represent contemporary

Polish women in terms of success stories. The editor of *Twój Styl*, for example, believes that this is what her readers require – empowering stories about women who can cope with their situations rather than depressing stories of women living in hopeless situations (Einhorn 1993a:247).

The lack of faithfulness by husbands is another issue often addressed by magazines. Women faced with this problem are not advised to be passive, but are also usually not advised to leave the relationship. Whereas the upmarket magazines feature articles about single, divorced or separated yet happy and successful women, in publications aimed at women from lower socio-economic backgrounds the break down of relationship or failure to have a relationship at all is usually represented as having a negative impact on women. 'She had no luck from the start. She was a teenager when she fell in love with a boy from the village but he left her pregnant and married another' (Przyjaciółka 2001b:12); 'What could I do with myself after a divorce? I don't have home, work or any savings' (Z Życia Wzięte 1997:26); 'I was already twenty-seven but until then I never really loved anyone. ... I wanted to have a home, a husband and children' (Świat Kobiety 1997:58). Magazines aimed at women from lower socio-economic backgrounds advise readers facing marital or relationship problems to focus more on their appearance and to show straying husbands or boyfriends that they, the women, are still attractive to men.

The 'real life' confession of a woman published in Tina (1995:19) exemplifies this approach. A young woman married for ten years discovers that her husband has a lover. Although shocked she does not confront him. At first she become depressed, loses weight and neglects her already ailing appearance even further. But soon she looks in the mirror, realises that men could still be attracted to her and decides to develop a new strategy. The fact that her husband has not mentioned divorce indicates to her that all is

not yet lost. She starts to focus on her looks, begins to exercise, visits the hairdresser and buys some new clothes. When her husband notices the change she sends her daughter on holiday and seduces him in the afternoon, instead of serving him lunch. After that their sex life becomes fantastic once again and her husband spends all his spare time at home, having evidently abandoned his lover. To ensure his ongoing interest the wife decides to act mysteriously. She dresses up and goes out without explaining where, and sometimes even leaves bills from cafes lying around. Her efforts pay off, and she is reassured of her husband's devotion and love when she catches him trying to listen to her phone conversations in order to check that she is not being unfaithful to him.

At this point it must be noted that for magazines directed to women from lower socio-economic backgrounds recommending divorce or separation would be unrealistic. This is partly due to a lack of affordable accommodation (which can result in many couples being forced to continue living in the same small flat after separation), inadequate child allowances for single parents, and long family court proceedings that often demonstrate double standards regarding the social expectations of the roles men and women should play in their families (see for example Fuszara 1995).

5.4 The businesswoman

Since 1989 images of the businesswoman and professional woman have started to appear in women's magazines and in other popular media (Dukaczewska 1995:213). Predominantly young, attractive women, preferably working for international companies, speaking foreign languages, frequently travelling abroad, wearing business suits and driving foreign cars, and living in elegant, fashionable houses are portrayed as the ideal role model for all women. In the case of magazines aimed at women from higher socio-economic brackets this image is shown not only as an ideal but also as a norm.

The magazines do indicate that being a busy businesswoman can be problematic, and they frequently feature articles addressing the stress associated with a demanding lifestyle, busy work schedule and pressure to collect an appropriate work wardrobe. Articles about the experiences of older women (i.e. those who started their families and careers before 1989) having problems adapting to the new ways of living and working also appear quite regularly. This is the case particularly in magazines aimed at women from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Commonly, adopting a new, more fashionable hairstyle and purchasing professional looking clothes and nice highheels are recommended as ways to overcome these problems. Furthermore, as far as articles aimed at women from middle and lower socio-economic backgrounds are concerned the image of the businesswoman is more correctly an image of the working woman – a woman who is working outside the home but is not necessarily climbing a corporate ladder. Articles in these magazines feature women who are working as nurses, teachers, hairdressers or office administrators. Very often, too, publications in this category focus on the issue of women's unemployment.

The magazines aimed at women from higher socio-economic backgrounds almost never refer to those individuals or groups who experience problems in adapting to the new environment. All women, older and younger, those who have entered their professional lives in the 1990s and those who had already established themselves professionally are shown as thriving in post-1989 Poland. The up-market magazines also emphasize the similarities between Polish women and women from Western countries, presenting the Polish businesswoman in the same image as an international or western woman, as if she is living in a borderless world. The fact that contemporary Polish women are not presented as distinctly different from western women is of course partly a consequence of Poland no longer being a part of the Eastern Bloc but a part of reunified Europe. Interestingly this phenomenon of westernisation is not unique to Poland. The trend is also present for example in Japan, where western values, fashion and lifestyle are portrayed as the ultimate goal for any modern woman (Rosenberg 1995) and modernity and progress are depicted as being synonymous with western.

In Japan, as in Poland, the image of the 'global woman' presents her as working abroad or at least frequently travelling. Geographical borders are portrayed as almost irrelevant, or rather are only relevant as markers of where the familiarity and everydayness of one's own country finish and the excitement and success of the west begin. In the case of Poland, where travel was restricted by political constraints until quite recently, the disappearance of borders is much more literal than in Japan. In Poland until 1972 travel to countries other than those within the Eastern Bloc was severely restricted, and even travelling within the Eastern Block was closely controlled by the government. After 1972 travel to Western countries became possible, but the state had complete control over granting passports and many people had their applications for passports constantly refused. Those who did receive passports had to surrender them again on their return to

Poland, with no guarantee of obtaining one again in the future. In contrast to Poland, in Japan travel was restricted for financial rather than political reasons, and over the last decades has become easier due to improved means of transport and the increasing affluence of Japanese society.

While Polish magazines promote the image of an international Polish woman, they also display a degree of disbelief that Polish professional women are treated as equals by the businesspeople of the western world. This is evident in an article about Alina Kornasewicz, Deputy Treasurer of Poland, published in *Twój Styl* (1998). The article points out in a tone of wonderment that Kornasewicz, a former accountant from Ursus (a tractor factory developed during the communist period), 'today has meetings with Rockefeller, and insurance tycoon Stanford Wills during his visits to Poland invites her to dinner' (Szmidt 1998:38). In reality, of course, there is nothing extraordinary about the Deputy Treasurer mixing with such people, regardless of whether she previously worked for a tractor or gumboot factory.

Despite the amount of coverage the image of the businesswoman receives in women's magazines, this image is often disliked by Polish women and men and is perceived as an 'inappropriate' role for women – who should make family and home their top priority (Domański 1995:68; Dukaczewska 1995:228). While it is true that in general women hold less traditional views than men in this regard Kofta and Domagalik (1999) argue that many Polish women are not prepared to admit that they are focusing on their careers (148). The belief that a professional career should not jeopardise a woman's domestic responsibilities, is still dominant (Dukaczewska, 1995:228). This leads to a conflict between the internationalised and capitalist values that are associated with the image of

New Polish Woman, and the values of those who continue to see Poland, symbolised by home and family, as the preferred geographical reference point for every woman.

The magazines do not attempt to solve this conflict by encouraging women to choose one form of lifestyle over another. Instead, both publications aimed at women from middle and lower socio-economic brackets and those aimed at women from the upper strata of society attempt to solve the conflict simply by merging seemingly incompatible representations. This results in the image of the sexually liberated businesswoman adopting some of the characteristics of Matka Polka. The magazines stress the importance of having a family as well as a successful career. The New Polish Woman is portrayed as sexually liberated but at the same time married to the husband of her children. She focuses on her professional life but also has time for creating a happy home, and most of all she is able to combine all her activities with motherhood. In fact childless women are rarely visible in the magazines. Those childless women that do appear are usually very young, but even then choosing not to have children is almost never promoted as a valid lifestyle option. In fact people who do not have children are often found explaining their childlessness. For example in an interview with the famous managers of Wrocław ZOO we learn that in order to dedicate themselves to their profession 'we had to decide not to have children, at first it just didn't happen, then we had no time to address this problem. We did think about adopting, but because we have so many animals to care for at home, I didn't want the child to feel she is just another one of our monkeys' (*Kobieta i Styl* 2001:13).

The fusion of Matka Polka dedicated to her children and her men with the image of the professional woman is exemplified in an article about the first Polish war reporter, Maria Wiernikowska, published in *Twój Styl*. The author emphasises that although

Wiernikowska has achieved a lot in her professional life, her private life is extremely important to her. She is constantly looking for true love (Stanisławczyk 1995:11). Stories of Wiernikowska's encounters with death in the trouble spots of the world are intertwined with confessions of her love for her son (who, it is pointed out, was not planned but is now very much loved) and regrets that there is currently no man in her life. Similarly, in the photos used in the article Wiernikowska is presented as a reporter having professional discussions with her colleagues, writing an article on her computer and doing research on the phone, but also (or perhaps most of all) a mother having breakfast with her son and their pet dog (Figure 5.1). The article also attempts to explain why Wiernikowska has difficulty 'having it all' – achieving happiness in both her personal and professional lives. Much emphasis is placed on the comment of one of her close male colleagues that 'Maria in every private conversation behaves like a journalist. In every relationship she wants to be the dominant one. As a result she loses as a woman' (Stanisławczyk 1995:10). Wiernikowska's interest in her appearance is also highlighted. It is emphasised that when she goes to war zones she takes her sleeping bag, a knife, radio and an eye liner and that she was upset that she did not take powder to Chechnya because this meant her nose was red when she was shown on television (Stanisławczyk 1995:10).

Figure 5.1 Maria Wiernikowska

Source: *Twój Styl*

5.5 The consumer

All post-1989 women's magazines feature a large volume of advertisements, but in the case of magazines aimed at women from upper socio-economic groups – those who are perceived as being able to purchase a wide range of products – the volume of advertisements is quite astonishing. For example in the January 2001 edition of *Twój Styl,* which consists of 192 pages, only 83 pages do not contain advertisements for specific products, while the 170 page February 2001 edition has only 69 advertisement free pages. Even the advertisement free pages of women's publications are often dedicated to lifestyle articles describing holiday destinations or new trends in furnishings and therefore providing readers with ideas of how and where they can exchange their money for goods and services. The emphasis on advertisements in women's publications is indicative of one of the most important characteristics of the post-1989 image of Polish women. What makes the New Polish Woman quite distinct from Matka Polka and the Communist Woman is her portrayal as a consumer.

Contemporary Polish women are encouraged to participate in the consumer culture of the new economic system of Poland regardless of their financial situation. All women are encouraged to purchase beauty products, clothing, holidays, home furnishings and appliances, as well as language classes and computer and business courses. The difference lies in the fact that while magazines aimed at women from higher income brackets advertise expensive foreign and local brands and encourage readers to visit exotic places and cook exotic food, magazines aimed at women from middle and lower socio-economic backgrounds advertise cheaper, often Polish products and provide information about holiday destinations in Poland and other more affordable places.

The portrayal of the New Polish Woman as a consumer also has another function at least in the case of upmarket women's magazines. Just as the Polish businesswoman is shown as an international woman no different to other westernized women, the Polish consumer is shown as the same as her counterparts around the globe. The fact that Polish women use 'prestigious' products is emphasised in order to illustrate the fading of differences between Polish and Western women. Prestigious brands of different commodities are mentioned throughout articles even where it is not necessary. For example, in *Twój Styl* in an article regarding car theft the following statements appear 'On Saturday I went shopping in my Fiat Toledo'; 'Something hit my Volvo' (Szmidt 1998:269). Interestingly, no women driving less impressive cars experienced difficulties. Similarly, in an article in which famous or at least recognizable women describe their preparations for a ball they all name expensive upmarket products as part of their beauty routines 'I jump into the bath tub and do everything at once. I apply the facial mask, usually Souplesse Lancôme' (*Twój Styl* 2001:136); 'First, to ensure that I am in a good mood, I poor Shiseido tablets into my bath. Then I apply a facial mask by my favourite Clarins' (*Twój Styl* 2001:137).

But this encouragement to embrace western products is not synonymous with encouraging women to abandon the Polish tradition and identity central to the image of Matka Polka. It simply aims to emphasize the fact that Poland is now a part of the West and that Polish women, including Matka Polkas, are the same (i.e. as good as) western women. Women are portrayed as consuming western products, participating in western culture and a the same time cultivating Polish tradition. In the magazines women's participation in Polish culture is manifested through their involvement as producers and consumers of Polish music, literature and fine art, but also through observing traditional Polish customs and cooking Polish food. Women are also encouraged to remember

Polish national history and the history of their family, which is ideally full of strong patriotic women. In 1993, for example, *Twój Styl* conducted a competition in which women were invited to write articles about their female ancestors. In one of those articles we read 'my grandfather's mother always placed emphasis on her background; her family tree reached back till the times of King Jan Sobieski the Third' (*Twój Styl* 1993:58).

5.6 Negotiating identity in contemporary Poland

The model New Polish Woman manages to combine her successful and exciting paid employment with domestic responsibilities. She also successfully combines marriage, and more importantly motherhood, with sexual liberation, and finds time and energy to be youthful and beautiful. The debate as to how and if women should be combining these demanding tasks is one of the issues constantly addressed by the media, and by women themselves. This debate is reflected in the April 1992 cover page of *Wprost,* the Polish equivalent of *Time* magazine, which featured an article addressing the position of women in post-1989 Poland (Figure 5.2). The cover illustration strikingly depicts the diverse role every Polish woman is expected to successfully fill. A woman is expected to be an efficient and ambitious worker, attired in a business suit and wearing the glasses she needs as a consequence of years of study and hours of diligent work. But she cannot just work anywhere; it has to be in a modern, busy commercial office, which in the picture is symbolized by the computer and the diary in the woman's hand. After hours she takes off her glasses, frizzes up her hair and puts on sexy lingerie to entertain her man. The washing line and steaming pot in the background of the picture remind us that she also finds some time for home cooking and laundry. We can also assume, although it is not

shown in the picture, that she manages to find some room for a cot and children's clothes in her bedroom vibrating with sexual energy.

Despite the power of the media, Polish women do not simply accept the images that are presented to them. While constructing their self-identity Polish women interact with the images and representations as active agents, adopting some characteristics of the images and rejecting others or at least trying to do so.

Early feminist approaches attacked the media for producing images that do not show women as they really are (Gledhill 1997:346). But more recently it has been argued that such 'accurate' representation is impossible, as 'the category 'women' does not refer to a homogenous social grouping in which all women will recognise themselves' (Gledhill 1997:346). Images are never 'accurate' reflections of reality. Even when the images are based on real women, or interviews with them, they are clearly the writer's own interpretation of the experiences of the women in question. This is very evident in *Twój Styl's* depiction of its female subjects. All the women featured in its articles are portrayed as successful, contented, interesting and independent, very close to their families, loved by their children and partners, worldly, well-groomed and slightly mysterious. This complex and often contradictory set of characteristics seems to apply regardless of whether the woman is an actress, a politician, a surgeon, or a mother of a rock star. This depiction of women is perhaps at least partly motivated by the fact that the readers of the magazine express a preference for stories about strong women who deal with the adversities of their lives in a successful manner (Einhorn 1993:247). But as a result, all the women presented in *Twój Styl* seem to be remarkably similar to each other.

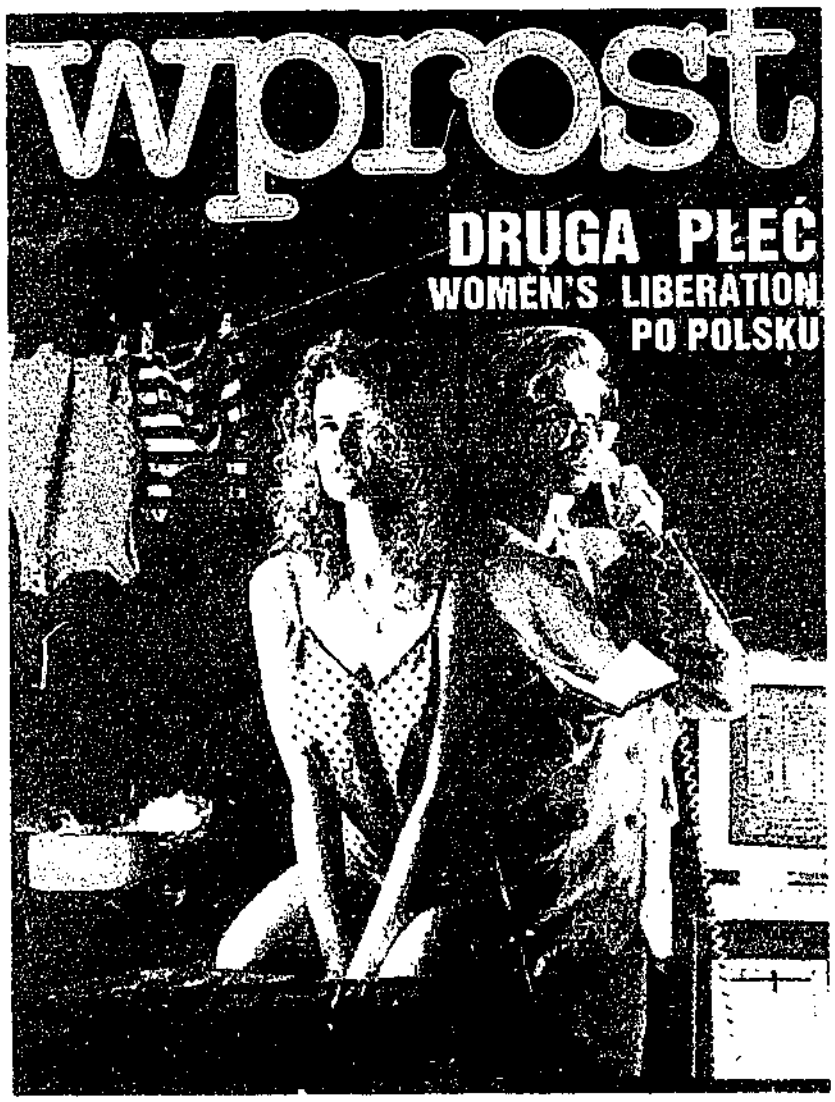


Figure 5.2 The New Polish Woman

Source: Wprost 19 April 1992

This approach to the representation of women is not unique to *Twój Styl,* nor to Poland. Clammer (1995) describes a similar suppression of diversity in her article about the construction and representation of the female body in contemporary Japanese print media. She argues that

> Pure image may exist: here is representation but no self; here is body but not a woman ... it is the women's magazines that manage the most thorough suppression of selfhood, replaced by what are really categories – the perfect housewife, the young mother, the elegant professional woman (208).

Real women, whether in Poland or Japan are infinitely more versatile and complex than the images of women presented in the media.

The difference between the images and the women those images are presented to can be illustrated by an analysis of public discussions that occurred as a result of particular articles published by *Twój Styl.* In February 1997 *Twój Styl* printed an article entitled 'Next Stop: Poland' (Łopieńska 1997) that described the lives of Western women who come to Poland to advance their careers. These women are shown as inhabiting the same borderless world the Polish businesswomen promoted by upmarket magazines are supposed to live in, where moving from one country to another is normal. The women described in the article have left their homelands, including America, England and France, to further their careers in Polish branches of large international firms. The article describes their professional triumphs, hectic lives and successful adaptation to a Polish lifestyle. It sparked off a great debate about women who are:

> Citizens of the world [and] come here because they believe that Poland is a new America [i.e. land of opportunity]. They earn good money, further their careers. While busy from morning till night, they are happy and pleased with themselves. They bring up their children on the run. They have high positions in large international firms. They do not cook, do not

> iron their husbands' shirts. Work is the most important thing for them. Do Polish women like them? (1997:19).

The answer was 'no'. The majority of Polish women who wrote to *Twój Styl* (1997) in response to this article did not like the images of women presented in the article. Respondents questioned the value systems of the 'citizens of the world' that allowed them to see work as the most important aspect of their lives. Polish women also accused the women featured in the article of pretending to be happy, and of neglecting their children. A strong belief that having a happy family is more important than professional success was expressed. Further, the readers argued that for Polish women international careers are not as easily achievable as for western women, regardless of whether they work in Poland or abroad. The women also criticized the promotion of images of women based on western models, with one respondent stating that:

> This image of contemporary Polish woman is a carbon copy of an American woman: ambitious, flamboyant and a successful workaholic. They are wonderful mothers, wives and lovers, and have no wrinkles ... But do all women have to be like that? And what about average women ... They bring up their children, read them stories, cook dinners for their husbands. They do not cry into their pillows that while they are on their maternity leave they do not further their careers ... Polish women have to watch out not to wake up one day in some strange Disneyland we are likely to create (1997:19).

So does criticism of the western inspired image of the businesswoman indicate that the image of the traditional Matka Polka is perceived by contemporary Polish women as more desirable? This also does not seem to be the case. In March 1998 *Twój Styl* published an article entitled 'Homemakers' (Grigo 1998:66) in which the lives of tertiary educated women who have given up their professional lives to concentrate on domestic responsibilities and supporting their husband's careers are described. Several women wrote in response to this article (*Twój Styl* 1998a:20). The majority of comments were

negative. Again the respondents were suspicious about whether the women described in the article were really happy. Women argued in their letters that men would not make such sacrifices, and that therefore women also should not. They pointed out that dependence on husbands could be a great risk. One respondent expressed surprise that when it had taken women so long to be able to work outside the home some women decided to forgo the professional opportunities available to them. At the same time, however, readers expressed an understanding that successfuly combining career and family responsibilities can be very difficult 'Sometimes when I read about professional women, their successful marriages and happy children, I smile in disbelief. Ask their children, if they are happy when their mums are not around' (1998a:20). The dominant response to both articles was that it is best for women to combine both their family and career.

The greatest debate regarding the appropriate role for women was caused by an article called 'Young, attractive and single'. This piece addressed the lives of professional women in their twenties and thirties who consciously decided, (the emphasis on their attractiveness clarified the point that they decided rather then were forced) to remain single and concentrate on their professional careers (Mazur 1998). The volume of letters sent to the magazine in response to this article was so great that *Twój Styl* published an entire article providing an analysis of the respondents' opinions (*Twój Styl*, 1998b). There were several age related response patterns. Young women in their twenties expressed their intention to live their lives in a manner similar to the women featured in the article. They too wanted to develop their careers, become independent and not be afraid of not finding a husband.

Younger respondents argued that in Poland social pressures drive many women to marry too early or settle for uncooperative partners. They believed that women should be able to choose whether they wanted to concentrate on their work, marry or remain single, but the fact that at some stage of their lives they also wanted to be mothers made the prospect of a single life less appealing to this age group also. Older women who themselves combined work with family life argued in their responses that concentrating exclusively on a profession was an expression of selfishness. At the same time they believed that sacrificing everything for family was inappropriate. One respondent noted that suddenly, right in front of her eyes, the image of Matka Polka had changed into a career woman, and she believed that the choices available to women did not have to be so extreme. Again, many responses expressed the suspicion that single, career women were not really happy and that deep down they wished they were married and had children.

These above discussions show that Polish women are very critical of the images presented to them. As most respondents referred to their own experiences it became apparent that women very often advocate lifestyles which they themselves have chosen or been forced to choose. The women who focused on their families actively objected to arguments that women should forgo family for the sake of career. This does not mean that they believe that career should not be pursued at all; rather they advocated that it should not be the only goal. Those women who had not abandoned paid employment despite experiencing difficulties in combining work and domestic responsibilities criticized women who focused exclusively on domestic responsibilities for choosing an easy way out. The discussions also show that while most women advocate combining both family and career, they are aware that this combination will not make their lives into accurate reflections of the image of New Polish Woman. They know that living up to this

image would be extremely difficult, that it is unlikely to suit every individual, and that at different stages women's lives their priorities will be different.

5.7 Life beyond the magazines

The ability of women to successfully reflect the image of New Polish Woman is not only related to their personal preferences and the way they chose to negotiate which aspects of the image to adopt and which to reject. In many cases women are unable to reflect some or any aspect of the image because of economic, social and political constraints. Women's magazines ignore this fact in presenting the image of the New Polish Woman as being relevant and available to all Polish women. While the situation of women under communism was very complex and not without problems, it has not automatically improved as a result of the changes that occurred after 1989 (Watson 1993). The transformation of Poland's economic circumstances that allowed certain women to improve their socio-economic status caused other women to became disadvantaged. While women's magazines choose not to notice it, this division has been examined in the wider media. An abstract of an article from a Polish newspaper that appeared in 1995 illustrates the different impacts of the changes of 1989 on supposedly similar women and their families.

> The Kolskis and the Wolskis are neighbours in a high-rise flat. Both couples are in their forties and have teenage children. For many years their lives were very similar. The wives were office workers and after their maternity leave returned to work. They assisted each other with childcare. The husbands were technicians in a large company and used to fish together. The families would jointly celebrate such achievements as obtaining a place for a child in a kindergarten, a pay rise or managing to buy a wall unit after a record six weeks of queuing.

> In the last few years their paths have separated. Their contacts are limited to brief greetings. They have been divided by a wall of social division that has grown between them despite the fact that neither side wanted it to happen.
>
> In the Kolski family only the wife has a permanent job ... In the last few years the Kolskis have had to do without things that until then they took for granted. They have stopped going on holidays, buying new clothes or shoes, entertainment, and eating main meals consisting of two courses and meat ... They cannot foresee any improvements in the future ... The Wolskis in contrast became small business owners. They started with holding a stall at the markets, but now they own a small warehouse ... For his eighteenth birthday they bought their son a new BMW. They go on family holidays to Majorca and soon they are moving to their own house in a good suburb (Nowakowska 1995b:14).

The fact that some groups of women managed to improve their situation while others did not can be explained by the changes in employment conditions in Poland. Despite the fact that magazines promote an image of the businesswoman working in a vibrant, preferably international commercial firm, many Polish women have difficulty finding any employment at all, let alone well-paid employment in international corporations. As unemployment rose and childcare facilities were reduced, women were the first to lose their jobs (Sheridan 1992:93). In the last quarter of 1999 Polish national unemployment figures stood at 15.3 per cent, but for women the figure was 18.1 per cent. In all regions of Poland unemployment of women was higher then unemployment of men (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2000a:108). Furthermore, women's unemployment tends to last longer than men's, as there are fewer job vacancies for women as a result of legislation enacted to encourage maternity, gender segregation of employment, and the relative underdevelopment of the service sector (Fong and Paull 1993:225; Reszke 1995:13). In Poland (as well as other regions of CEE) unemployment is one of the arguments used to

support political trends that press for women to stay at home (Einthorn 1990:22; Pine 1992:72). At the same time women are seen as capable of dealing with unemployment better then men, partly because of their ability to concentrate on home and children and partly because they are seen as better able to adjust to new situations than men (Reszke 1995:16). Faced with such adverse employment circumstances, many women not only find it difficult to live up to the image of the businesswoman but are also prevented from effectively embracing the image of the consumer. This image, is in fact, difficult even for employed women, as the average monthly wage in Poland is 1673.12 zł (approximately AU$ 900). The cosmetics and beauty products and services advertised in magazines are so expensive that following the recommended treatments would alone cost more than the average wage (Łaciak 1995:242).

But there are other factors that also prohibit women from embracing the image of New Polish Woman. While sexual liberation is a strong component of the representation of New Polish Woman, this directly conflicts with the teachings of the politically powerful Polish Catholic Church that sexual activity should be restricted to marriage and that procreation is the only valid purpose of sex. The Church has a major influence in restricting the availability of abortion and contraception and is the most powerful participant in the debate associated with these issues even before 1989 (Davin 1992:88; Jankowska 1991:174). One of the first issues addressed by the post-1989 government (dominated by the Church-influenced Solidarity) was abortion. Already in 1989 a bill was submitted to the Diet to made abortion illegal, with three to five years in prison the suggested sentence for a woman who had an abortion. Right-wing anti-abortion groups

tended to rely on the argument that abortion was a Stalinist (i.e. communist) law (German 1991:24). The Church also opposed any form of birth control except for the 'natural method' (Davin 1992:90). This was despite the fact that attacks on women's right to choose met with great opposition in Polish society, with even 60 per cent of Catholics opposing the abortion ban (German 1991:24).

5.8 Conclusion

From examining different aspects of the image of New Polish Woman promoted by women's magazines it can be concluded that the image most often presented to contemporary Polish women incorporates many characteristics of the traditional image of Matka Polka but also emphasizes qualities specific to post-1989 Poland. These include participating in the new economic system as a businesswoman and as a consumer. The New Polish Woman is also represented as an international person taking advantage of Poland's new geographical position as part of reunified Europe. While there are differences between the images presented in magazines aimed at women from higher socio-economic groups and those presented in publications aimed at women from middle and lower socio-economic groups, none of the magazines reflect the reality of women's lives with any accuracy, and most women are unable to live up to the images presented to them. Despite this fact, understanding the different aspects of the image of the New Polish Woman and the manner in which women interact with this image is necessary in order to understand, not only the way contemporary Polish women construct their lives, but also to comprehend the complexity of contemporary Poland.

PART TWO: WOMEN AND PLACE IN POST - 1989 POLAND

Chapter 6: Mapping the Different Histories and Presents of Two Polish Localities: Kraków and Upper Silesia

6.1 Introduction

The post-1989 political, economic and social transformation of Poland had a very significant impact on the lives of Polish women. One of the consequences of the changes was the ability of some women to improve their situation and become upwardly mobile, while others became disadvantaged. While this mobility has been regulated by quite fluid rules, place of residence has been one of the factors that determine the manner in which women have been able to respond to the changes of 1989. An examination of gender relations in two different regions of Poland, Kraków and Upper Silesia, illustrates this.

The present situation of women from Kraków and Upper Silesia cannot, however, be understood simply by analyzing the post-1989 social, economic, cultural and political environment of the two regions. An appreciation of the conditions existing in the two regions before 1989 is also needed. Those conditions not only retain a significant impact on the opportunities available to contemporary women, but also influence the manner in which women respond to those opportunities. Gender expectations as well as notions of local identity and belonging play an important part in this process.

Despite the very close proximity of the two localities (see Figure 1.1), their history and, related to this, their national significance have been very different. The economic, social and cultural conditions prevailing in the two places have also been dissimilar. This has resulted in differences between gender relations in Kraków and Upper Silesia. The impact of the changes of 1989 has intensified further the contrasts between women's lives in the localities. On the whole Kraków as a locality has benefited as a consequence of the 1989 changes. In contrast Upper Silesia, which during the communist period was the promised land of Poland, went into economic decline after 1989. This chapter illustrates the relationship between locality and the position of women in post 1989 Poland. It does so primarily through explaining the impact of the post-1989 changes on the lives of women, but also by an analysis of the pre-1989 historical, social and economic factors that led to the creation of the specific gender relationships predominant in the two locations.

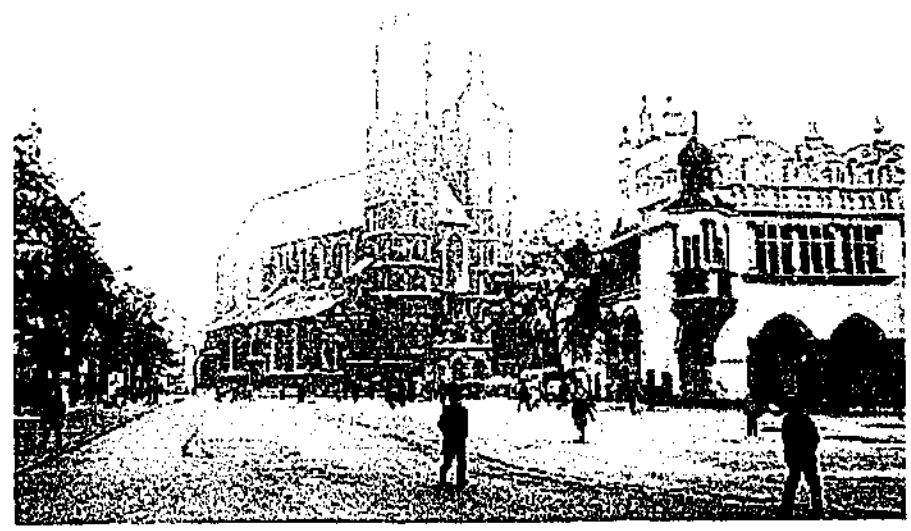
6.2 Kraków before the communist period

Kraków has always been seen as a symbol of the Polish nation. This has been the case despite the fact that historically until the Second World War Poles were not the only residents of the city, with Germans and Jews representing a large proportion of the population. The city's history as a major urban centre dates back to the tenth century and, as is pointed out by Seibert (1983), its urban patterns and architecture represent all

the periods of Poland's past. In a way the city embodies the history of the nation (see Plate 6.1).

For six hundred years Kraków was the capital of Poland, and even after the capital was moved to Warszawa, in 1596, Polish kings were still crowned there. Polish royalty, war heroes and other individuals of national significance also continued to be buried in Kraków, long after the capital was moved to Warszawa. During the time of the partitions, when Kraków as part of Galicja, was annexed by Austria, the city functioned as the centre of national culture and tradition.[20] This role fell to Kraków partly because, in comparison to Russia and Prussia, Austria was relatively tolerant as far as the cultivation of Polish identity and culture was concerned (Sowa 1986:111). This led to an even further intensification of the city's symbolic character and resulted in the unique social structure of its urban population. Kraków attracted artists, writers and those who had to escape other partitioned regions of Poland for political reasons (Sowa 1986:111, 119). It was here that priests and nuns persecuted in the Russian section of Poland sought refuge (Karolczak 1995:210). It was in Kraków that Polish art was cultivated at the School of Fine Art. Kraków's Jagiellonian University was re-Polonised in 1861 and Polish people, (particularly young people) travelled to Kraków from other parts of the partitioned country, where Polish language and culture were excluded from education, to be educated and influenced by its Polish ethos (Sowa 1986:112).

[20] For a detailed analysis of the situation of Kraków as one of the two main cities of Galicja – the section of Poland annexed by Austria – see Fras (1999).



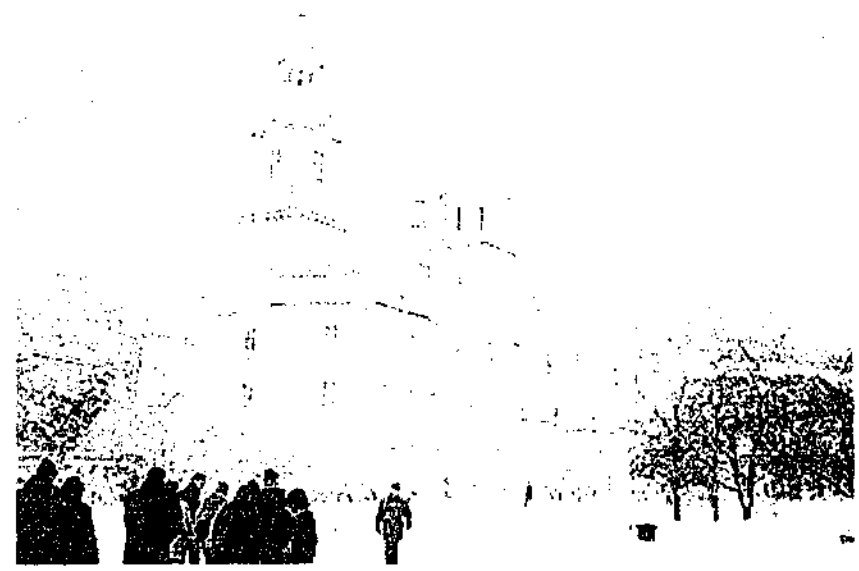


Plate 6.1 Historical parts of Kraków

Photos Anita Seibert 1999

The special nature of Kraków as a university and service oriented city was strengthened by the fact that heavy industry did not develop there until the middle of the nineteenth century (Sowa 1986:117). Even after this development took place it was still relatively insignificant. Consequently until the communist period the city lacked an industrial working class population. In the nineteenth century the dominant sections of the population were the intelligentsia (with the most prestigious social positions occupied by university professors), the townspeople (small business owners) and the nobility (Karolczak 1995:214). Numerous aristocratic families lived in the town, with women from noble families particularly favouring Kraków as a place of residence (Karolczak 1995:215). In fact the city had a long history of being the preferred locality of many independent women. Already in the eighteenth century a large proportion of Krakowian households (22.7 per cent) were headed by women (Kuklo 1998:97). Furthermore, Kraków, along with other large cities stood out as not only having a large number of female residents but also as having a significant population of single women who seemed to be economically active (Kuklo 1998:143).

6.3 Kraków during the communist period

One of the most significant changes that took place in Kraków during the communist period was the construction of what was originally a separate city 10 km from the main city – Nowa Huta (New Steel Works). After the Second World War Poland experienced a shortage of steel, and the decision was made to redevelop two steel plants in Silesia and one in Kraków (Ryder 1989:139). The city of Nowa Huta, which soon merged with Kraków itself, was designed to house and provide services for the steel workers. Today western tourists, particularly those who want to be perceived as adventurous, make visiting Nowa Huta a part of their Kraków experience. Although they rarely venture into the sprawling high-rise settlement stretching in all directions into the once fertile countryside, they are eager to see the socialist realist part of Nowa Huta that was built during the postwar period. Despite the fact that the monument of Lenin that used to dominate the centre of the area is long gone,[21] the experience of standing in Nowa Huta's Plac Centralny (Central Square) is a profound one. Standing in the middle of the square, looking at what seems to be a continuous wall of buildings dominated by monumental, regular facades, one can almost hear the songs of the young builders and of their female companions, who could for the first time overcome the boundaries set by their gender and fully contribute to the building of a better tomorrow.[22] From this aspect Nowa Huta could not feel further away from the historic City Square of the Old Town.

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[21] The statue of Lenin was removed in 1989 and sold to Sweden. Currently negotiations are underway to purchase it back.

[22] The building of Nowa Huta by such young heroes of communist Poland has been depicted in the film masterpiece directed by Wajda 'Men of Marble' (1977).

There can be no doubt that the main goal of the construction of the Steel Works in Nowa Huta was to change the social structure of a conservative and quite homogenous area (Sowa 1986:123)[23] whose population tended to be highly critical and suspicious of communism (Goldyn 1998:139) by transforming it into a 'communist' industrial zone with employment and production concentrated on heavy industry rather than trade and education (Ryder 1989:252).

At this point it might be useful to explain why the residents of Kraków were so resistant to the introduction of Soviet controlled communism. In comparison to other major urban centres of Poland Kraków was materially less damaged by the war. The majority of Kraków's Jewish population were murdered during the war and the city's intelligentsia were persecuted. For example, in 1939 all the academics from Jagiellonian University were sent to a concentration camp. But the city itself escaped the physical destruction of its buildings and infrastructure as well as most of its population. Consequently the political values in post-war Kraków were similar to those of its residents before the war, with most residents supporting the anti-communist Polish Peasant Party (PSL). Furthermore, postwar Kraków under the leadership of Archbishop Sapiecha was a Catholic intellectual centre and that further increased the anti-communist climate in the city (Goldyn 1998:140). As a consequence, despite being falsified, the June 1946 referendum which brought the communists to power in all other regions of Poland, was still lost by the communists in Kraków.

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[23] The development of heavy industry in Kraków (and Silesia) also stemmed from the locational theory predominant in Eastern European industrial geography, in which it was believed, as suggested by Lenin himself, that industries should be located near the source of the raw material and the fuel they used (Mazurkiewicz 1992:77).

Nowa Huta was not welcomed by the established residents of Kraków, who met the newly arriving workers with a prejudice now seen as typical of Kraków. Over the years Nowa Huta also contributed significantly to the pollution of the Kraków region (Carter 1993:131). This made it even less popular and contributed to the perception of the development as a 'communist plot' aimed at destroying Kraków (Janus 1999:1). This prejudice, combined with the fact that the population of Nowa Huta was mainly composed of immigrants and therefore socially and demographically different to the population of the rest of Kraków (Jelonek 1989:49), suggest that the new predominantly working class residents made only a small impact on the general culture and social environment of the insular city.

The fact that Nowa Huta was constructed as an independent city helped to preserve the unique social and demographic nature of Kraków. After the Second World War other large cities such as Warszawa changed their character due to the influx of predominantly rural working class migrants, but in Kraków voivodship the majority of workers settled in Nowa Huta. As a result of this the social structure of the old town did not change significantly (Jałowiecki 1991:63). Kraków continued to be seen as the cultural and artistic heart of Poland, rather than as an industrial centre, while Nowa Huta was treated as a marginal and still unwelcome addition to the city despite the fact that it soon merged with Kraków. Kraków also retained its reputation as a university city. In 1978, for example, despite the influx of the working class population, Kraków still had a high percentage of university graduates: 12.7 per cent as compared to the average national

rate of 4.5 per cent (Jelonek 1989:50). The number of students in the city grew rapidly: in 1960 there were 17,100; in 1980 the number was 42,700; and in 1994 it was 66,118.[24]

As a result of the special nature of Kraków gender relations in the city were relatively favourable for women. First of all, historically the city was inhabited by large numbers of women, many of whom were economically independent. Many of these women belonged to the nobility and were therefore accustomed to being perceived as having (at least in theory) the same economic and personal rights as noblemen (Lorence-Kot 1985). Second, while it cannot be argued that during the communist period the position of women in the city was significantly better then in other large cities, it can be stated that in Kraków there were few local cultural, economic and social conditions promoting traditional approaches to gender roles and therefore disadvantaging women. Third, because the city was fundamentally a service oriented university town, employment opportunities for women were quite good and hence women could maintain a reasonable level of economic independence. This was particularly the case in the 1980s when the growth of employment in the service sectors lead to Kraków voivodship being one of the regions in which there was a marked increase in the employment of women (Ciechocińska 1993:310–312).

There is another factor that can be seen as placing Krakowian women in a more advantageous position. It has been argued that in Poland the traditional approach to gender roles, restricting women to domestic tasks and limiting their access to

[24] Adapted from Seibert (1983) and the Statistical Office in Kraków (1995).

employment, education and decision making, is more common in lower socio-economic groups (see for example Stańko-Krajewska 1991). Since in Kraków the majcrity of people from lower socio-economic groups were concentrated in Nowa Huta it can argued that these traditional attitudes to gender roles did not affect women across the city as a whole. In fact it has been suggested that even in Nowa Huta gender relations within families were quite egalitarian. Sulimski points out that newly arrived industrial workers were prone to adopt models of behaviour from professionals working and living in their immediate environment. This included adopting models of marriage based on partnership and the employment of both spouses (Sulimski 1975:281).

6.4 Economic development of Upper Silesia.

Upper Silesia is a predominantly coalmining area, part of the larger region of Silesia which stretches on both sides of the river Odra. In the early middle ages it was under the controi of Polish kings, but in the thirteenth century it became a possession of the Bohemian crown. When in 1740 the Prussian King Frederic II invaded the part of the region that is now Upper Silesia, it had fallen under the control of the Austrian house of Habsburg (Pounds 1958:1). During the partitions period nearly all of Silesia became Prussian (except Zagłębie Dąbrowskie in the East, which remained Austrian).

During the interwar period Austrian Silesia became part of Czechoslovakia, while Upper Silesia was split between Germany and Poland. After the defeat of Germany in World War II Upper Silesia was returned to Poland. As a result of this complex history Upper

Silesia's cultural heritage involves the merging of Polish, German, Czech and Slovak cultures. The area has been described as a rich and diverse cultural and political borderland. That makes it very different from Kraków, which for centuries has been seen as an unquestionable symbol of Polish identity.

Until the eighteenth century Upper Silesia was a poor, underdeveloped province with most of its land owned by the nobility and dedicated to agriculture. Although some of its rich natural resources, which included coal, iron and zinc, were utilized it was not until the nineteenth century that the region underwent rapid industrialization under the Prussian administration. The process of industrialization in the region continued until World War I. During the interwar period Upper Silesia, then split between Germany and Poland, was industrialized further, but the real boom in its economy took place during the communist period. In contrast to Kraków, Upper Silesia showed relatively little resistance to communism. This can be explained by several factors. During the German occupation the part of Upper Silesia that before the war had been Polish territory was incorporated in to the German Reich. The Jewish population of the region was systematically exterminated and the Polish intelligentsia were persecuted. After the Second World War the whole of Upper Silesia became Polish again and most of its German population was voluntarily or forcibly repatriated to Germany. As most of the region's professionals and people from upper socio-economic backgrounds had been of German origin, while many of the Poles who belonged to these groups perished in the war, the majority of the Upper Silesian population remaining after the war were poor industrial workers. For those workers as well as new migrants moving to the regions to

take advantage of employment opportunities in booming heavy industry, the centrally planned economy of communist Poland meant a marked improvement in the standard of living.

During the communist period the region's importance in the national economy was emphasized by the Polish government and significant amounts of money were invested there, leading to Upper Silesia being perceived as 'a region of opportunities and promises' in communist Poland (Gorzelak 1994:73). Coalmining played a crucial role in the communist economy.[25] Coal was necessary for the growing power demands of the energy-inefficient industries of the communist bloc (Paulinek 1998:218). This, combined with an ideology that asserted the leading role of the working class (coalminers being quintessential members of the working class) lead to coalmining regions becoming enclaves of stability and prosperity. The standard of living of the majority of Upper Silesian residents was significantly better than that of residents of other regions, including Kraków. For example, the limited availability of accommodation was a serious ongoing problem in post–Second World War Poland. The standard waiting period for a flat in Poland was no less than fifteen years (Ciechocińska 1986:249), but in Katowice voivodship[26] the housing situation was much better (Ciechocińska 1990:167; Muziol-Węcławowicz 1985:105). While in Kraków

[25] This was not only the case in Poland but also in other CEE countries (Paulinek 1998).

[26] The use of statistical data required by this thesis has been at times problematic. It was often difficult to find relevant gender desegregated data. Polish statistics are usually gathered by the individual voivodship, so in most cases there is no available data referring specifically to the two regions in question, Kraków and Upper Silesia. A further problem was created by the change to the administrative map of Poland that took place in 1999 when forty-eight smaller voivodships were replaced by sixteen larger administrative areas (those seen in figure 1.1). While the above problems are significant it is important to note that the statistical data used here is not the focus of this thesis.

voivodship during the period 1979 to 1981, 21,585 dwellings were completed (18.3 per 1000 inhabitants), in Katowice Voivodship the figure was 109,405 (28.7 per 1000 inhabitants) (Muziol-Węcławowicz 1985:107). This led to waiting periods for apartments being much shorter in Upper Silesia then in the rest of the country.

Better housing conditions were not the only advantage of living in Upper Silesia. However, it must be understood that life in Upper Silesia was far from ideal and was better only in relation to other regions of Communist Poland. The developmental policies of the communist government first built places of production and only then housing for the workers. Services, retail outlets, schools and medical centres were of secondary concern. This attitude can be seen as resulting from an interpretation of Lenin's definition of an economic region which focused exclusively on the division of labour and ignored other activities and processes such as consumption and reproduction.

6.5 Kraków and Upper Silesia after 1989

If we accept the hypothesis that the economic development of the region is the most important factor affecting people's standard of living (Chojnicki & Chyż 1987:208), then during the final years of the communist period Upper Silesia and Kraków were both in a very good position compared to other regions of Poland. In 1987 Katowice voivodship had one of the highest net economic outputs per inhabitant, with Kraków voivodship having a lower output but nevertheless rating high on the national scale (Chojnicki and Chyż 1987:208).

In communist Poland the regions that were the most prosperous and therefore had the highest standard of living were those with a high concentration of heavy industry and mining such us Upper Silesia. Interestingly, these provided very few employment opportunities for women. Parts of Poland with high employment opportunities for women, such as the Łódź textile region, usually offered manufacturing jobs with low wages (Ciechocińska 1993:304). Therefore women were either affected by the lack of employment opportunities or by lower wages and a lower standard of living of the region. During the period 1980–1989 Katowice voivodship had one of the lowest proportions, of gainfully employed women in the country (37 per cent in 1980 and 40 per cent in 1989). This was partly associated with the patriarchal family structures (Ciechocińska 1993:312) and partly with the fact that coalminers' wages were high enough to allow their wives not to work, as well as with limited employment opportunities for women.

The strong economic situations of Kraków and Upper Silesia continued despite the fact that because of the collapse of the centrally planned economic system the positive growth of Poland's economy stopped in 1979 (Ciechocińska 1986:249). Dissatisfaction with the standard of living was one of the forces leading to the birth of Solidarity in 1980 and the subsequent change of political and economic systems in Poland. Unfortunately Upper Silesia was one of the main 'losers' from this transformation. The monopolistic industry sectors that had dominated the economy of the region, received subsidies from the communist government and benefited from government price

regulations, were adversely affected by the post-1989 economic reforms (Kloc 1992:140). The post-communist industrial transition in CEE has been characterized by the decline of the multi-plant large state industries. Upper Silesia's industry was almost exclusively based on such enterprises and was heavily dependent on trading with other countries of the Soviet economic bloc. The dramatic decline of Upper Silesian industry after 1989 led to the region emerging as 'the new rust-belt of CEE' (Pickles 1998:174).

As a consequence, in the early 1990s the difference in standard of living between Kraków and Upper Silesia started to change. While conditions in Kraków continued to improve, those prevailing in Upper Silesia started to deteriorate. For example, already in 1992 expenditure per capita on education, culture, social security, health, sport, tourism and recreation was higher in Kraków voivodship than in Katowice, which ranked third and eighteenth retrospectively on the national scale (Śmiłowska 1995:13). The difference is similar today. Even more alarming for Upper Silesia is the fact that in the early 1990s as far as the general quality of life was concerned Katowice voivodship was ranked last (49th position) on the national scale, while Kraków voivodship was in 25th position (Śmiłowska 1995:23). This was partly due to the fact that Katowice voivodship had the most degraded natural environment (Duch and Sokołowska 1990:346; Carter 1993:126). Furthermore, the residents of the voivodship have one of the worst health records in Poland (Carter 1993), living on average three years less then other Poles (Duch and Sokolowska 1990:347). In contrast Kraków voivodship ranked second best for health care (Śmiłowska 1995:36).

One of the first consequences of the 1989 changes was the increase of unemployment in. Upper Silesia, which had already been experiencing great difficulty in moving away from its traditional sources of employment and production. The cause of this difficulty was the fact that the non-industrial sectors of the local economy such as services, retailing or education had only been developed in the region to meet the needs of the people employed in heavy industry rather then as economic sectors in their own right. After 1989 not only was there no significant government or private investment in the service sector but in fact a lot of holiday homes, sports centres, apartments and health clinics owned by coalmines and other large companies were sold as unproductive assets (Perlez 1997). This led to even further erosion of employment opportunities in the region. By 1990 Katowice voivodship recorded the highest numbers of unemployed in Poland (Czyż 1992:62). And while it was mainly men who lost their jobs (according to Główny Urząd Statystyczny in 1999 in Silesia voievodship there were 210,300 unemployed males and 124,100 unemployed females (2000b:103)) women's employment is also considered very insecure. In recent years the residents of Katowice have seen employment of women as being under greater threat than that of men, with those surveyed (both men and women) believing that employers prefer to dismiss women rather then men (Reszke 1995:15).

The deterioration of the Upper Silesian economy affected all its residents, but miners and their families were particularly disadvantaged. The Upper Silesian coalmines, always perceived as fundamental contributors to Poland's wealth, began in post-1989 Poland to be seen as a burden on the country's otherwise booming economy (Perlez

1997). The unemployed in Upper Silesia did not simply lose their wages. In the case of coalminers they lost much more. During the communist period coalminers were earning up to five times as much as other blue collar workers. This allowed miners' wives not to work, which was quite unusual in Poland. Furthermore, the mines provided their employees with apartments, free health and dental care, subsidized holidays in company vacation homes and other benefits (Perlez 1997).

There are other factors that make unemployment amongst coalminers particularly problematic. In many families the men had been employed in heavy industry for generations. During the communist period they became accustomed to thinking that not only would such jobs always be available to them, but also that being a coalminer was a noble and important occupation as well as providing them with a comfortable lifestyle. Retraining and entering another industry is often unimaginable for coalminers, even those who are no longer employed. For example, while Upper Silesia has now become the new automotive manufacturing centre of Poland, former coalminers show little interest in applying for jobs that are available in this new industry (Perlez 1997).

6.6 The social environment of Upper Silesia

Kraków is a very old city with a very distinctive character set in a hinterland in which there are no other comparable towns. In contrast, in Upper Silesia most of the land was used for agriculture until the arrival of the Prussians in 1740, and towns did not develop in the region until the eighteenth century (Pounds 1958:5). During the industrial

development of the region numerous small and large urban centres were established, and contemporary Upper Silesia incorporates a number of sizable towns such as Katowice, Chorzów, Gliwice and Zabrze. Katowice is the capital of Upper Silesia and also of the Silesian voivodship. In contrast to Kraków, the city is relatively young and did not become a significant urban centre until the nineteenth century (it was declared a city in 1878). The relatively recent origin of Katowice is reflected in its appearance (Plate 6.2).

Despite the presence of numerous urban centres, Upper Silesia is perceived both by its residents and by people from other regions of Poland as one homogenous region. This perception is manifested for example through people being described as Silesians regardless of what town they come from. In contrast, people from Kraków are described as Krakówians specifically to exclude people from surrounding areas. Furthermore, residents of Upper Silesia whose families traditionally lived in the region have a very strong sense of regional identity. The homogeneity of Upper Silesia is closely linked to its industrial character. The whole of Upper Silesia is a coalmining area with one of the highest concentrations of industry in Europe. The fact that it developed greatly during the communist period contributes further to its homogeneity. To an outsider it seems to be a neverending, unattractive sprawl of high-rise flats built during the communist period to house the workers who moved in droves to the region (Plate 6.3).

The sense of local identity in Silesia is so strong that it has even resulted in calls for regional independence. In 1997 Rudolf Kołodziejczyk, the leader of the Movement for Silesian Autonomy, called for Silesia to become administratively separate from the rest

of Poland. One hundred thousand Silesian voters supported this idea (*The Economist* 1997:54). According to Kolodziejczyk, Silesians are ethnically different from rest of the Polish population. They are honest, law-abiding workers who have been exploited and discriminated against since Upper Silesia was absorbed into Poland after the 1921 plebiscite in which the citizens decided whether they wanted to be part of Germany or Poland. At the same time, however, Kolodziejczyk does not identify Silesians with Poland's German minority (*The Economist* 1997:54).

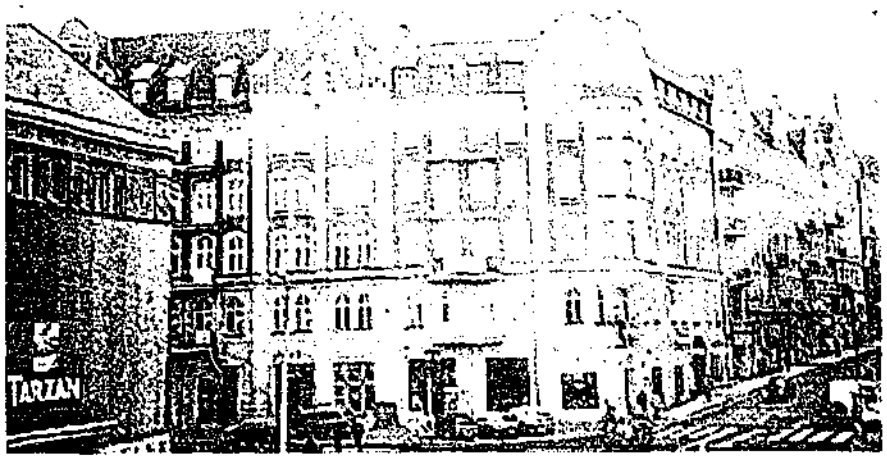
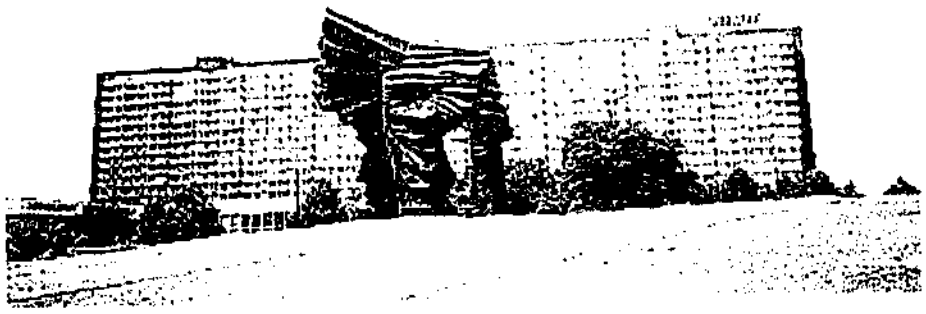


Plate 6.2 Older sections of Katowice



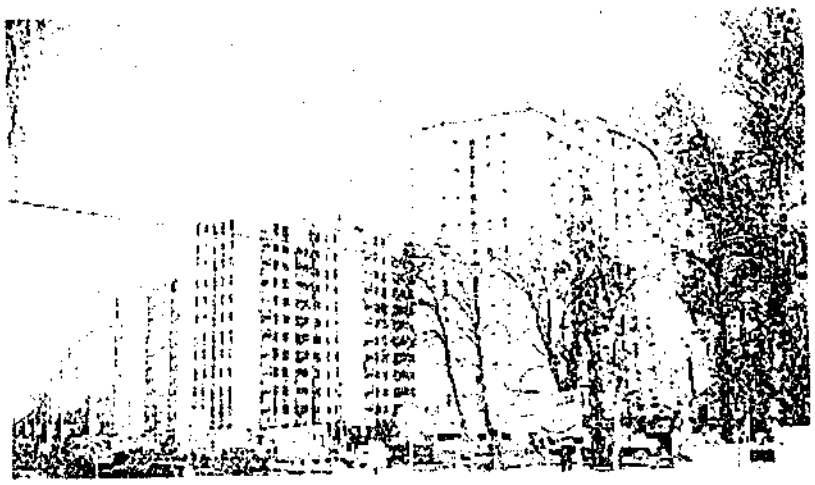


Plate 6.3 High-rise flats in Upper Silesia

The social attitudes to gender prevailing in Upper Silesia have often been seen as quite unique to the region. It is generally believed that Upper Silesians have more traditional views on gender roles than those held in other regions of Poland. Broadly speaking, this interpretation stands up to scrutiny. Generally speaking, in Upper Silesia great emphasis has been placed on the patriarchal family (see for example Szołtysek 1998 and Ciechocińska 1993:312). Traditionally married women in coalmining families did not work and concentrated on domestic tasks (Reszke 1995:14; Mrożek 1987:23). Young unmarried women worked mainly in order to save up for their glory box (Mrożek 1987:94). Although women entered paid employment in increasing numbers during the communist period, in studies carried out in Silesia as recently as the 1980s the belief that women should concentrate on domestic responsibilities rather than employment still prevailed. In 1989, Katowice voivodship had the lowest percentage of women's employment in all of Poland, with only 37 per cent of women working outside the home (Ciechocinska 1993:311). The low level of employment of Upper Silesian women was particularly visible amongst coalminers' wives. The rate of paid employment among this group raged from 7 to 30 per cent (Mrożek 1987:94). The continuing low rate of employment of women during the communist period can be explained by the fact that because the Upper Silesian economy was based on heavy industry there were less jobs available for women. Furthermore, due to the high wages earned by coalminers their wives were in a position not to work. This was not the case for the wives of men employed in less lucrative industries. The traditional attitude to gender roles combined with the economic decline of the region resulted in contemporary Upper Silesian women still seeing the domestic sphere as the centre of their activities. This is illustrated by the

fact that while in 1999 in Małopolskie voivodship women constituted 49 per cent of the labour force, in Silesian voivodship they constituted only 45 per cent. Additionally, it can be argued that the social composition of the Upper Silesian population with its large proportion of manual industrial workers reinforced the traditional approach to gender characteristic of lower socio-economic groups.[27]

6.7 Belonging and identity

To properly understand the way in which women from Upper Silesia and Kraków have been affected by the post-1989 changes one has to move beyond the economic aspects of post-1989 restructuring and the statistics on employment of women. The way women responded to the changes that took place in their regions after 1989 were also affected by non-economic factors. Their responses were also informed by feeling of local identity and belonging.

On the simplest level the sense of belonging can be described as a strong feeling of attachment to a given place such as a city, a neighbourhood or a nation. The starting point for establishing a feeling of belonging can be being born, growing up or living for an extended period of time in a specific place. The sense of belonging may be established through attachment to physical aspects of the locality such as its natural environment, its buildings, and one's family home. It can also involve attachment to and familiarity with other people occupying the space. This includes social networks including close family

[27] For a detailed analysis of traditional gender attitudes among families of manual industrial workers see Stańko-Krajewska 1991.

ties, friendships and professional contacts, but also looser networks involving acquaintances, neighbours, local shopkeepers, and other members of the community who also identify themselves as belonging to the locality. A sense of belonging can be further demonstrated through respect for and attachment to values seen as traditional for a given locality.

The feeling of belonging to a specific locality influences one's sense of identity. However, experiencing a sense of belonging does not automatically mean that the person in question experiences a sense of local identity. While a sense of belonging is quite a simple and basic feeling, which can rely on some but not necessarily all of the factors mentioned above, a sense of local identity is more complex. It involves a passionate embrace of what the person herself perceives to be the defining important characteristics of the locality. It involves identifying herself with the qualities, values and symbols particular to the locality and perceiving her relationship with those things as a fundamental part of self. This does not mean that feelings of local identity are the same for all individuals. Place identities can be complicated and multiple (Allen, Massey and Cochrane 1998), and it is therefore important to stress that this may be true of the sense of local identity experienced by residents of Upper Silesia and Kraków. A sense of local belonging can be shown to strongly influence the way in which women in these regions shape their own identities and interact with the images of womanhood available to them. Combined with the social and economic conditions prevailing in the given locality, identification with local values may, for example, result in some or even most Upper

Silesian women following models of gender relations in the family that appear to be particularly traditional.

6.8 Conclusion

The ability of contemporary Polish women to respond to the changes in their country since 1989 has been significantly affected by the economic and social conditions prevailing in their place of residence. Kraków's history led to it becoming a diverse multifunctional centre with well developed heavy industry and service sectors. As a result the city adapted relatively easily to the post-1989 economic climate. In contrast Upper Silesia, which during the entire communist period relied almost entirely on heavy industry, was adversely affected by the changes. Consequently, as a group, women from Kraków have benefited from the changes of 1989 while women from Upper Silesia have been disadvantaged. But while regional economic circumstances in post-1989 Upper Silesia and Kraków have exerted a significant influence on the lives and expectations of Upper Silesian and Krakowian women, historically shaped social conditions and values have also played an important part in determining the manner in which these women have responded to the changes of 1989.

Chapter 7: Identity, belonging, gender and difference in Kraków

7.1 Introduction

The fundamental goal of this thesis is to illustrate the relationship between place of residence and the manner in which Polish women have been influenced by the post-1989 political, economic and social changes. Hence this chapter and the next explore the differences between the opinions of women from Upper Silesia and Kraków about the impact of the post-1989 changes on their lives, as a way of illuminating this relationship. The discussion demonstrates that a sense of local identity informed by specific social, cultural, historical and economic characteristics of Upper Silesia and Kraków influences the ways in which women respond to the changes of 1989. Therefore this chapter also discusses the mechanism by which a sense of belonging and local identity is constructed by women from Kraków. The impact of this sense of identity and belonging on the way contemporary Krakowians appropriate the dominant images of women presented to them, which in turn affect the way they live their lives, will also be examined.

Analysis of the data gathered in Kraków shows that, as in Poland as a whole, the impact of the post-1989 changes on the lives of Krakowian women has been very complex. Some women have been able to improve their circumstances while others have been adversely affected. While the voices of all women interviewed demonstrate this, the complexity of the situation in contemporary Kraków is particularly highlighted by the case studies of Stanisława and Sylwia, which are discussed at length below. Stanisława and Sylwia are singled out precisely because their stories seem to capture not only the

impact of the changes of 1989 on the lives of women, but also the interaction between locality and the way women responded to those changes. The stories of Stanisława and Sylwia also show the fluidity of the rules regulating the mobility of Krakowian women in post-1989 Poland. Furthermore, they illustrate that while the current situation in Kraków is very complex, the situation of women living in the region was already complex before 1989.

This chapter is based predominantly on interviews conducted in Kraków in 1995 and 1999 (see Appendix 2 for interview questions). In total thirty women residing in Kraków were interviewed for this study. The first group of fifteen women were interviewed between May and September 1995. The second group of fifteen women were interviewed between October and December 1999. An attempt was made to interview a diverse group of women as far as socio-economic background, age, marital and parental status were concerned. The only criteria that the participants had to fulfill was that they be Polish, eighteen years old or older, and living in Kraków at the time of the interview. A detailed discussion of the characteristics of the interviewees is provided in Appendix 3. Although I was particularly interested in women who had always lived in the region, I was also aware that women who had moved there could provide me with a comparison between Kraków and other localities in Poland. Therefore, while most of the participants were born locally, several of the women had moved to the region as adults.

The sample was also not restricted to women who were natives of Kraków because this would not reflect the demographic structure of the city. Since the Second World War the

population of Kraków has increased significantly, growing from 344,000 in 1950 to 740,500 in 1998. Migration to the city was the main factor responsible for this increase (Seibert 1983:67).

7.2 Krakowian women and the post-1989 changes

Most participants in the Kraków study believed that the post-1989 economic, social and political changes had made a significant and positive impact on the lives of Polish women in general and Krakowian women in particular. They valued the improved availability of products and the increased quality of retail outlets. Many valued the increased career and income generating opportunities resulting from the post-1989 changes. This statement by a 28 year-old widow and mother of two daughters exemplifies this attitude:

> I remember that I was very happy about all the changes. In 1989 the first colour magazine was published. The first shops, supermarkets where you could buy everything were opened. So there were changes that indicated that things were only going to get better and they took place really quickly. And I also got used to it very quickly, so it was all very pleasant for me ... New firms have been created, private ones, foreign ones, which gave people opportunity to get good work with good wages, to show their abilities, to get higher positions; having a career and that was very important for people because all of a sudden their abilities started to count (Dagmara 1999).

The change to a democratic political system that included a broadly understood freedom of speech was also seen as important. But the great majority of women did not talk about wider political, economic and social reforms as such, rather perceiveing the changes in

terms of more specific issues relevant to their everyday lives. All the respondents stated that the main change was the better availability of food and other products, leading to women not having to queue on a daily basis. The second most mentioned change was the perception that in post-1989 Poland women began to pay more attention to their appearance. This was often connected to the observation that they could now buy necessary beauty products as well as clothes, and that they had access to fashion magazines and were generally living in an environment in which such an indulgence was not only accepted but expected. This point is illustrated by the statement of an 18 years-old high school student.

> I think that women started taking care of themselves, mainly because of cultural influences from the West, mass media and so on. All my aunties go to the hairdresser, put on makeup, and look after themselves. It's very important, that exercise, aerobics, health and beauty are being promoted, I think that's important. Because before everybody was grey and neglected, because you couldn't do it, you couldn't buy anything, so it was understandable (Asia 1999).

The ability to travel freely without difficulties in securing passports, as well as a general openness to the world, was also valued highly by a number of interviewees.[28]

The women were also aware that the post-1989 transformation of Poland had led to some changes that were related to the specific nature of Kraków. One such change, related to the historical and cultural significance of the city, was a marked increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting the city, and the associated development of the tourist

[28] It can be argued that in order to empower themselves people often perceive their situation to be better than that of others. But what is important here is that women from Krakow in general perceived themselves to be better off while women from Upper Silesia did not.

industry. The attitude of all but one woman to the increase in tourism was very positive. The one dissenter expressed concern about the erosion of the city's national identity and stated that she did not like the fact that in the central part of the city one constantly heard foreign languages. In fact several participants were concerned about maintaining the identity not so much of Kraków but of Poland in general. Their concerns focused on Poland's attempts to become a member of the European Union, which could take place as soon as 2003.

The predominantly positive approach to the post-1989 changes did not mean that there were no critical voices; a number of women observed that while the systemic changes in themselves were good and led to better circumstances for many Krakowians and Poles, some people were adversely affected. Furthermore, some participants were aware that the changes had led to the creation of a very complex economic and social environment within which many women might find it difficult to operate. Ewa, a general store owner in her late forties, stated that:

> I think it's worse now. Because I can see that before you had, for example, subsidized holidays. I'm definitely not supporting the communism that was in Poland before, definitely not at all, but there was more security then, you knew that your children could go on subsidized camps during holidays. Now I work in the shop and for the whole holidays the children come to the shop ... And women have to work more now. And now we don't have Saturdays off for which we fought (Ewa 1995).

The interviewees' concern about the impact of the changes on the lives of women in particular was also evident. According to a 28 year-old bank worker

> Before there were committees at work which would not allow those things [discrimination of women], women had a protected period during pregnancy and when their children were small. I mean there was no such unemployment then, nobody was so worried about it. Now if they ask you to stay longer at work you are afraid not to because they would dismiss you; before there were no such worries. There was a lot of work available and if you lost one job you would get another one, which would pay the same money. And now it's harder, people are more stressed (Hanka 1999).

Interestingly, the participants who admitted that they themselves, or members of specific social groups, had been disadvantaged by the economic transformation of 1989 emphasized the view that in general the process of change was positive for Poland as a country and Kraków as a locality.

This positive attitude to the impact of the post-1989 transformation of Kraków was often related to recognition of the fact that other regions had clearly been disadvantaged by the changes. Several participants from Kraków mentioned that the 1989 changes had made a much more negative impact on Upper Silesia than Kraków. In their opinion this was connected to the industrial nature of Upper Silesia and to the social conditions prevailing in the region, as well as to the fact that Upper Silesia was treated preferentially during the communist period. Janina, an unemployed academic editor in her fifties, argued that:

> The impact on Silesia was much more dramatic because coalmining at the moment has to be subsidized by the government, a lot of mines got closed down, there is huge unemployment. So this turned life in Silesia upside down. It's much more dangerous there than in the Kraków region, there are lots of people without jobs who can't find themselves in the new reality. New workplaces are being organized, but not everybody from the generations of coalmining families can find themselves in this new reality.

> And in a community where the coalminer who earned money was the most important person and had a large family, this creates huge social problems there now (Janina 1999).

7.3 Place, belonging and identity

The positive feelings of the participants towards the impact of the post-1989 changes on the lives of women in Kraków are very significant. A sense of local belonging and identity was experienced as part of the everyday lives of the Krakowian women, with the majority of those interviewed in both 1995 and 1999 expressing a strong sense of belonging to the locality. Hence it can be suggested that the confidence in the positive impact of the post-1989 changes on Kraków tended to give these women a more optimistic attitude towards their own experiences and opportunities. In the Polish context, being born in a particular locality has a more decisive impact on the entire shape of the person's life than it does in countries where mobility is greater and where moving is relatively easy and therefore frequent. As Renata, a 26 year-old literature student, put it:

> In Poland people are tied down to where they live. You cannot talk about a free labour market if you don't have a free housing market. Society is not very mobile. So really you are tied to the place you are born in, and this is unfortunate but true (Renata 1995).

Being born in one locality, particularly if it is a large urban area such as Kraków with relatively good educational and work opportunities, will in most cases deter a person from moving elsewhere. Moving from one locality to another or even moving within a

city is also greatly restricted by the shortage of housing and the high cost of accommodation in relation to average income. Many people including number of the women interviewed continue to live with their parents or parents-in-law. Consequently, developing a sense of belonging to the place you are born in is almost inevitable and occurs very much as a matter of course. However, in the case of Kraków the sense of belonging is enhanced by specific attributes of the city such as its interesting and significant architecture, rich history, pleasant living environment and reputation as the cultural center of Poland. As a result the ways in which the interviewed women constructed their sense of belonging included identification with Kraków as their birthplace and as a beautiful city and a fun place.

All of the women born in the city saw themselves as Krakowians and most of them indicated that they would not like to live anywhere else. A number of women connected the feeling of belonging simply to the fact that they were born in the city and were therefore used to it. The fact that most of their networks including family and friends were there was also relevant. But many respondents also felt that their sense of belonging was related to the beauty, cultural significance and unique atmosphere of the city. Most of the participants, however, struggled to explain the factors contributing to their sense of belonging and feeling of local identity, and gave quite brief and imprecise answers on the subject. For example Dagmara declared that:

> I would never move away from Krakow, it's a beautiful town, there is wonderful atmosphere here, I would never move to any other city, or any other country. What else can I say? (Dagmara 1999).

Sixty-five year-old Bronisława, who had returned from the USA to retire in Kraków, stated that:

> Kraków is a European city of culture; you can't get bored here. I love Kraków very much and wouldn't like to leave it (Bronisława 1999).

Thirty-three year-old businesswoman Iza liked the relaxed lifestyle, which in her opinion was a positive characteristic of Kraków and made it very different from busy Waszawa, which over the last decade has become one of the main commercial centers in Central and Eastern Europe.

> If I compare Kraków with Warszawa, and I spent a lot of time there, there are differences. Life is slower in Kraków. Here if you go to a café people just sit there. In Warszawa in a café, everybody nervously flicks through documents, constantly checking their watches, and then they run out on the street in with their coats flapping behind them (Iza 1999).

Only two women, both well educated, one a medical doctor and the other studying at Jagellonian University, provided a more detailed explanation of the factors contributing to their sense of belonging to the city. Both mentioned the cultural and historical significance of the town, as well as its physical attractiveness and charm.

> I love it ... mainly because it's the spiritual capital of Poland. Although there are people who are saying that the spiritual capital of Poland is Częstochowa, I think that Kraków is. And I love it because it's a royal city and even the kings who ruled from Warsaw were still crowned and buried here in our castle. And I love Wawel castle and its special radiation,[29] which is meant to be strengthening the spirit of the whole of

[29] Legend says that one of the walls of the Wawel castle contains a stone with supernatural powers that protects the city against all ills. The fact that Kraków was not destroyed during the Second World War is sometimes attributed to the presence of this rock.

> Europe. Kraków is a place where the best poets and artists come from – Słoniński, Boy-Żeleński. And later great talents flourished here such as the actors Jan Nowicki and Kucówna, who were later 'kidnapped' to Warsaw (Stanisława 1999).

> Well I don't know. I partly like Kraków, because I like the narrow streets, small alleys, various old things which are partly falling apart, a mosaic here, an old house there, I like the cultural life which exists here ... (Danuta 1999).

A significant number of younger women mentioned the entertainment opportunities available in the city as a factor contributing to their sense of belonging. This aspect of Kraków is not a recent phenomenon. In 1976 Sulimski highlighted the important role cafés played in the lives of the young residents of Kraków. Historically Kraków has always been famous for its café culture, which has been an integral part of the city's bustling artistic and cultural life. Kraków has numerous renowned theaters and music venues as well as many cinemas, cafés and music clubs. The communist period did not suppress this characteristic of Kraków, and such venues as the café Jama Michalika, established in 1895, survive intact today.

The post-1989 changes led to a boom in the entertainment industry capitalizing on Kraków's reputation as a bohemian city. While old venues such as Jama Michalika are maintained and others such as the café Europejska have been carefully renovated and re-opened after a long period of closure, numerous new venues have also been established. Dozens of coffee shops, pubs, and music bars have been opened in previously disused cellars in the old section of the town. All this makes Kraków a very attractive city to tourists and strengthens residents' sense of belonging to something special. Statements

by Dagmara, who herself owned one of Kraków's bars, and by 26 year-old married administrative worker Nina illustrate that this is particularly important for young women.

> You can always go out in the evening and there is always something open, if not a restaurant then a drink bar. I don't think it's like that anywhere else. I don't know about Warsaw because I have never been there, but Kraków has this specific characteristic. So in summer all the coffee shops in Rynek [the town square] are open all the time. I really like that (Dagmara 1999).

> I live here and it's a big city, so as far as entertainment is concerned, theatres, cinemas, nightclubs, it is really completely different to people who live in the country. Because what entertainment could they have there? (Nina 1995).

Some of the older participants who no longer saw active participation in Kraków's entertainment as a relevant part of their daily life also remembered (sometimes with nostalgia) participating in the city's bustling youth culture as something that strengthened their sense of belonging. An active student cultural life had allowed them to interact and connect, even if only on a superficial level, with people who in later years became icons of Kraków's artistic scene. This allowed even average residents of the city to feel as though they were part of the cultural elite that Kraków is famous for.

> There was always a lot of students here then. It was a pleasant, safe city where there were a lot of student's clubs, 'Pod Jaszczurami' for example, where art of any kind flourished. I remember that in those times it was very pleasant and happy. Such stars as Maryla Rodowicz were starting their careers then; Adam Macedoński, our friend and poet, would experiment with poetry (Waldemara 1999).

For many interviewees their sense of belonging was established first of all simply by the fact that Kraków was their birthplace. However, the physical attractiveness of the city, its reputation as a cultural center, its historical significance, as well as the cultural and entertainment activities available in the locality, strongly reinforced this sense of belonging. A feeling of belonging can result in a person experiencing a sense of local identity. For most of the women who participated in my research this was the case. Seeing themselves as Krakowians was a very important aspect of the identity of most, and pride in being a resident of the city was evident in their responses.

A sense of local identity involves identifying oneself with qualities, values and symbols specific to the locality, or at least with one's own perception of what those qualities, values and symbols are. But since the formation of local identity is a complex process, a number of the Krakowian women tended instead to define it on the basis of exclusion. Allen, Massey and Cochrane (1998) argue that places are constructed through a process of exclusion, by which spatial and social boundaries are used to define where one place, experience, process or group finishes and another begins. This process of exclusion can be used to construct a space related identity not through defining what this identity is, but rather through highlighting what it is not. In this way, Nowa Huta was used by residents of Kraków as a means of defining the identity of Kraków, and hence the identity of Krakowians through exclusion.

The majority of the women I interviewed had a negative attitude to Nowa Huta. In fact in many cases Nowa Huta was not even perceived as being part of the city. Only one

participant mentioned that she appreciated the unique value of the social-realist character of the area and often took foreign visitors there. Dislike of Nowa Huta was partly related to the fact that it was seen as a living monument to the communist period. This attitude is best illustrated by a statement by 21 year-old bank worker Agnieszka, who lived near the border of Nowa Huta. While she herself did not see it as different to other regions of Kraków, she acknowledged that the division between Nowa Huta and the rest of Kraków existed.

> In my opinion there is no such thing – Kraków and Nowa Huta. It's all just Kraków. Nowa Huta is just a part of it just like the Inner City or Krowodrze [other regions of Kraków]. That's what I think and it really annoys me when for example in some radio competition somebody rings and they ask him 'Where are you ringing from'; 'From Nowa Huta'; 'From Kraków?'; 'No, from Nowa Huta' (Agnieszka 1999).

The division between Kraków and Nowa Huta takes place not only along physical lines or borders but also along lines of socio-economic status, as well as (and possibly even more so) along lines of social acceptance and belonging. Agnieszka's statement emphasizes the Nowa Huta residents' own identification as belonging to a different locale. But other women interviewed, none of whom lived in Nowa Huta also saw it as being different to the rest of Kraków. Many believed the division between Kraków and Nowa Huta was caused by socio-economic differences between the populations of the two areas. The residents of Nowa Huta were seen as socially and culturally distinct. In contrast to the established and allegedly better educated residents of the older sections of Kraków they were perceived as poor, badly educated migrants from rural areas, who were attracted to Nowa Huta because of the availability of work in Lenin's Foundry and

accommodation. The fact that residents of Nowa Huta came from different parts of Poland was seen as actively contributing to their inferiority.

> The people who live in Nowa Huta have a different mentality than indigenous Krakowians; that's because they are a migratory population from various parts of Poland, but mainly from rural areas. And they preserved this rural mentality and this led to the creation of a specific subculture. I wouldn't want to judge if it's better or worse but for us it's less pleasant (Janina 1999).

The participants' dislike of Nowa Huta was also connected to it being perceived as physically unattractive and, in comparison to older sections of Kraków, alienating and foreign. Thirty-one year-old business owner Ilona provided this explanation of her feelings towards Nowa Huta:

> Nowa Huta is horrible. I got lost there once, because you can't tell anything apart there; everything is the same, high-rise next to high-rise, one settlement is finishing, another one is starting (Ilona 1999).

In the light of the fact that Krakowians tend to see the attractiveness and historical nature of their city as important to the formation of their sense of belonging and identity those alienating characteristics of Nowa Huta are very important. Of course Nowa Huta is not the only area of Kraków dominated by high-rise apartments, the so-called 'bloki'. With the exception of a few settlements consisting of freestanding houses and units most of the residential buildings constructed in post war Kraków (or Poland for that matter) are high-rises built in sprawling, poorly serviced settlements. What makes Kraków different is that in contrast to other Polish cities, most of which were destroyed during the Second

World War or were insignificant towns until the communist period, it has large areas consisting of historic and prewar buildings.

The process of defining the identity of Kraków through exclusion does not finish with Nowa Huta. Krakowian women also saw Upper Silesia as fundamentally different. Their criticism of Upper Silesia was based on the same premises as that of Nowa Huta. Both localities were seen as inferior to Kraków because of their industrial nature and because they were perceived as physically ugly and populated by unskilled migrants recruited from underdeveloped rural regions. A strong connection between Upper Silesia and Germany was perceived as a complicating if not a negative characteristic, leading to ambiguity as far as its identity was concerned. The majority of women who participated in my research also saw Upper Silesian people as different to the population of Kraków. Upper Silesians were perceived as working class, honest and hardworking if sometimes simple people, supporting traditional attitudes to the gender division of labour and family values. Not all the participants saw those differences as negative. For example Maria, a tertiary teacher in her forties who had moved to Kraków from Upper Silesia, stated:

> Kraków is definitely culturally different, so to speak, to Katowice [capital city of the Silesian voivodship]. I have to say that I felt better in Katowice, because people are more open there, and I am also an open person, so I felt very good there. In Kraków I easily noticed that it's a little bit different and really I am still trying to adapt to this slightly different culture (Maria 1999).

Many women from Kraków also emphasized the physical differences between Kraków and Upper Silesia.

> Such towns as Bytom, Chorzow, Ruda Slaska are horrible. All those narrow streets, buildings inherited from the Germans, the red brick buildings, it's very depressing. I would never want to live there [in Upper Silesia], it's really depressing (Ilona 1999).

The process of exclusion was not the only way women from Kraków defined their identity as Krakowians. Many of the participants who felt very strongly about being Krakowians and for whom being from Kraków was an important part of their identity relied very heavily on the symbols of the locality. For most women those symbols included the historical buildings and coffee shops that characterize the city.

One young woman explained her sense of identity as a Krakowian woman in terms of her dedication to one of the Kraków soccer teams. For Agnieszka, the 21 year-old bank worker, being from Kraków was synonymous with being a Wisła Sports Association supporter. Hence other localities in Poland, and particularly other major towns that have their own soccer clubs, could only incite dislike in her.

> It's just that since my childhood I have been barracking for Wisla, and since I was a child I didn't like Warszawa. I never liked Warszawa and I believe that the regions over there are so strange, and strange people live there. I, for example, associate Warszawa exclusively with Legia Warszawa soccer club; I can only think about the fact that during communism they took guys from Kraków to the army and put them into Legia (Agnieszka 1999).

Agnieszka's response is quite unusual for a Polish woman. None of the other respondents made any references to their favorite soccer clubs, although it could probably be assumed that if they supported any soccer club it would be one of the Kraków teams.

To understand how the women from Kraków constructed their sense of local identity it is also useful to consider the responses of women who were very critical of the locality. The only two women who were critical of the city were both young and well educated. Eighteen year-old Asia was born in Kraków and had lived there her entire life, while 21 year-old Danuta had moved to Kraków to study at the university. Asia saw Kraków as conservative, provincial and overrated. She did not identify with the values and symbols of the city and believed that too much emphasis was placed on the historical and cultural heritage represented by its architecture as well as by respect for the establishment and attachment to old customs. In her opinion, this resulted in opposition to any new ideas, particularly plans for new progressive buildings or urban projects. Danuta was a recent arrival in Kraków and was therefore able to look at the city as a well informed outsider and point out a few aspects of Kraków she did not like. Her response indicated clearly that she did not identify with Krakowian values as she perceived them.

> I don't like Kraków's penny pinching, Kraków's dirt, because here everybody wears peacock feathers but nobody will sweep the footpath. And I don't like 'We Krakowians; In Kraków we do this' (Danuta 1995).

7.4 Images

The sense of local identity of the Krakowian interviewees resulted in their adoption of certain values and behaviours seen by them as appropriate for the locality. This is demonstrated by the way the women interacted with the images of Polish women

available to them. While the images presented to women in Kraków by the media, the Church and other powerful forces are the same as in the rest of Poland, the manner in which women negotiate those images is affected by specific locality. As McDowell (1999) argues:

> So, what people believe to be appropriate behaviour and action by men and women reflects and affects what they imagine a man or a woman to be and how they expect men and women to behave, albeit men and women who are differentiated by age, class, race and sexuality, and these expectations and beliefs change over time and between places. It is only as an icon or an image, as the Virgin Mary perhaps, that notions of femininity are universal (almost), untouched and unchanging (7).

Since Kraków is seen as an exciting, historical city with a bustling cultural life and scene opportunities, Krakowian women seem to interact with the standard images in a way that reflects those characteristics. The political, economic, social and cultural conditions prevailing in the city, both before and after 1989, as well as gender relations characteristic to the city, also played a crucial role in the way Krakowian women interacted with images to construct their identity as women. So, while the images of Matka Polka (almost a Virgin Mary herself), the Communist Woman and the New Polish Woman are omnipresent, locality plays an important role in determining which aspects of these images women see as desirable and which they do not.

7.5 Matka Polka from Kraków

Women from Kraków on the whole did not approve of the image of Matka Polka. Their rejection of the image of Matka Polka was particularly interesting since most declared

themselves to be Catholics and accepted that Matka Polka is the main model of womanhood promoted by the Polish Catholic Church. Most of the women associated the image of Matka Polka with an overworked mother of many children, so absorbed by domestic responsibilities and the needs of her children and husband that she does not have time to work, develop other interests or improve her appearance. What is interesting is the fact that most of the participants did not associate Matka Polka with patriotism, cultivating national tradition or bringing up children in the love of their fatherland. None of the interviewed women believed that they fitted the model of Matka Polka. Only half of them stated that family, their children, and sometimes also their husbands were the most important aspects of their life. The majority of women who had children mentioned work or career, friendship and self-fulfillment as important aspects of their lives alongside family. Most of the women who did not have children, and these were predominantly young women, did not mention family as an important part of their life at all and concentrated on other priorities.

The rejection of the image of Matka Polka can be related to Krakowian women's perception of their region as one characterized by egalitarian gender relations. For example, women from Kraków saw the Silesian concept of family as too extreme and even oppressive to women. The Silesian family was seen as a traditional coalmining family, with the men working in the mines and the women concentrating on domestic tasks. Furthermore, some participants believed that Silesian women living in such families, in contrast to women from Kraków, were subservient to their men.

I would like to argue, however, that some aspects of the image of Matka Polka still have some relevance to women in Kraków. For example, two older participants expressed the view that their husbands, due to their professional responsibilities, were 'guests' at home. This resulted in the women, in addition to their paid employment, having to single-handedly carry all the burden associated with running the household and caring for the children. Like the Matka Polkas of the past, however, this arrangement allowed the women to gain significant autonomy and control over their lives and the lives of their entire families, with the husbands being almost irrelevant.

7.6 The Communist Krakowian Woman

All of the participants from Kraków rejected the image of Communist Woman.[30] The women interviewed described this image in negative terms that largely reflected the popular attitude that everything associated with communism is bad. They saw the Communist Woman as a worker involved in manual labor, labouring on a building site, driving a tractor on a communal farm, wearing overalls. All these characteristics assigned to the Communist Woman were similar to characteristics that Krakowians disapproved of and assigned to the residents of Nowa Huta and even Upper Silesia. Alternatively, the Communist Woman was seen as a party apparatchik. However, in the opinion of Krakowian women the main fault of the Communist Woman was her focus on fulfilling work quotas rather than maintaining an elegant feminine appearance.

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[30] Women who were interviewed in 1995 were not asked what they associated with the image of Communist Woman, so my analysis relies on the responses of the women interviewed in 1999.

> I mainly associate the Communist Woman with the tractor. And the pants, work clothes, working in the factory; this is a communist woman. Not much elegance there (Dagmara 1999).

Some women mentioned the fact that the image of the Communist Woman is not commonly associated with the empowerment of women or with progressive social change but instead, as explained by Danuta, is rather associated with women being unappreciated by those around them and oppressed by adverse socio-economic conditions.

> It is sad to say but it is not associated with participation in the government or women revolutionaries, but with poor women who were pushed into dragging shopping bags, driving tractors, and who would get a flower, a single carnation, on women's day for their efforts. That's what I associate it with the most (Danuta 1999).

At the same time, participants highlighted the fact that during the communist period most women did not fulfil this image.

> But a communist woman is not a woman who used to live during this time, because I lived then and I don't consider myself to be a communist woman (Ilona 1999).

Paradoxically, while all the participants were critical of the Communist Woman or at least of the circumstances in which she had to live her life, one expressed a belief that due to the general improvement in the quality of life that took place in post-1989 Poland the importance of women within their families had decreased. Throughout most of the communist period the woman's role focused on organizing food for her family. All women developed extensive queuing skills, which included the ability to discover in

which shops desirable products were available. They also developed an ability to recognize the right queues, which was an important skill since queues often formed before it was known what products were going to be available in the shop. Women also maintained extensive networks that helped them track down sought-after products. Becoming familiar with shop assistants, or better still managers of shops, was always a good method of ensuring access to products. The networks also involved a kind of mutual assistance, where women who had access to particularly scarce products would make them available to other women and expect similar favours in return. While their husbands might have been the only income earners in the family they could not actually ensure that the money they earned could be exchanged for food and other essentials. In a sense, then, women were the actual bread (or ham) winners. The role of women as the true providers of food made them indispensable and therefore valued.[31]

7.7 The New Krakowian Woman

Most of the Krakowian participants in this study believed that the image of the New Polish Woman, who is well groomed, independent and successful in both her career and her personal life is a positive one. Many acknowledged, however, that in reality not all Polish women can fulfil the image of the New Woman presented in the media. They noted that economic circumstances, as well as the fact that many women choose to focus

[31] For an insightful analysis of the role of queuing and food shortages in the lives of women in former Eastern Bloc countries see Drakulic (1993). A non-academic book *Poles Apart* by Frydman (1984), which at times presents a misinformed picture of the situation in Poland in the early 1980s, provides an excellent description of the significance of queuing in pre-1989 Poland.

on domestic responsibilities, prohibit some women from effectively reflecting the image. Only four participants saw themselves as New Women.

The comments of the interviewees on the image of the New Polish Woman highlighted the fact that the changes of 1989 did not affect everybody in the same way. Numerous participants, both young and old, strongly believed that although the social position of women has generally changed since 1989, age is an important determinant of women's ability to reap the benefits of the transformation. There was a dominant perception that women who started their careers and family life during the period of communism find it difficult to adapt to the new circumstances and therefore attempt to live their lives in a relatively unchanged way. In contrast, young women were thought to be embracing the new opportunities and lifestyles. As a fifty year-old retrenched academic editor and mother of two adult daughters noticed:

> Now due to the political change there are completely different opportunities ... Besides this everything has changed, and I always feel nostalgic and think that in the time of my youth it was really nicer, more interesting and safer. What we have now is probably appreciated by today's youth who accepted it as positive change. My daughters believe, and they have emphasized it many times to me, that today there are definitely more opportunities, it's better (Janina 1999).

7.8 The case studies

A more detailed understanding of the social position of women in Kraków, and of the interaction between the general changes to Poland and the specific social, cultural and economic conditions prevailing in Kraków, can be gained by looking at the lives of two

women interviewed in 1999: Stanisława and Sylwia. Their stories clearly reflect the impact of the 1989 changes on the lives of women in Kraków. They highlight the fact that the post-1989 transformation of Poland created a very complex economic and social situation that has significantly affected the lives of Krakowian women. The two women represent two very different socio-economic positions. Stanisława was born outside the city in a wealthy middle class family, who were very influential in their hometown. She is fifty-five years old, tertiary educated, and married with five children. Sylwia is twenty-nine years old, finished her secondary education and comes from a lower socio-economic background but recently became quite wealthy due to the success of her business. The changes that took place in Poland after 1989 affected these two women in very different ways.

7.9 Stanisława

Stanisława is a specialized medical doctor who was born in a small town one hundred kilometres from Kraków. She moved to Kraków in the 1960s to study medicine and settled there after securing employment in the city. At the moment she holds several jobs and works very long hours. Her jobs include working in a clinic attached to a university where she unsuccessfully attempted to complete a PhD, and a position in a hospital. She also works within the justice system as a medical expert, and has a private consultation room in her house where she sees patients twice a week. On weekends she travels to her hometown, where numerous members of her family, including her aging mother, still reside. During the weekend she cares for her mother and occasionally sees patients. In

order to improve her financial position and eliminate the need to travel between two cities she is trying to establish a permanent practice in her hometown, but despite owning premises which can be used for that purpose she is encountering numerous problems associated with administrative issues[32] and costs associated with renovating the premises.

Stanisława does not identify herself as Krakowianka despite stating that she loves Kraków more than her hometown and recognizes its cultural, historical and spiritual significance. Stanisława believes that locality is very significant in shaping the identities of women. She thinks that her small-town background is evident in her behaviour and the way she conducts her life and that it prohibits her from being a true Krakowian woman. She feels that she does not possess the same characteristics as women who were born in the city, whom she sees as different to women from other regions of Poland.

> They [women from Kraków] are proud that they are from here, they have this feeling of superiority, they don't look down on others, but internally they feel that they are from a royal city. I think they are also a little bit more educated than women in other localities ... I also think that they are more elegant, they are more worldly, they are more noble and have class.

In her opinion women from Kraków are, for example, very different to women from Upper Silesia.

> I think it would depend on the person, but if you looked statistically I think women from Kraków use more literary language and people from Silesia talk more ... in a country way. Women from Kraków speak more correctly. I think this is culturally very significant. I think women from

[32] In 1999 Poland underwent a reform of the health care system which in its early stages of implementation led to general confusion among patients as well as service providers, and to difficulty in accessing the funds designated to cover health care.

> Kraków have a lot of external interests while Silesians are more family oriented. I also think that Silesians are much cleaner then Krakowians.

For Stanisława, like other women from Kraków, exclusion plays an important role in defining the identity of Kraków and its residents. She has quite a negative attitude to Nowa Huta, believing that it was constructed in order to suppress reactionary Kraków, in which the communists lost the elections of 1947.

> And because Kraków was seen as so reactionary, and such a bastion of old gentry families, so Nowa Huta was made as a workers' city which was to compete with Kraków. And it was like that because all those primitive, simple people would move there, they got flats in high-rises and they kept chickens and pigs in baths, because they were from the country so they could not imagine paying a lot of money for meat when they could have their own.

The post-1989 changes had a significant impact on the lives of Stanisława and her whole family, but not in a way that might have been expected. Despite the fact that until 1989 Poland was supposedly a communist country, for decades Stanisława's family and all the families of her numerous siblings had been supported by the small bakery business owned by her parents. The two hundred year-old family business survived not only the Second World War and the repression of the communist period but had been thriving until 1989. It had allowed Stanisława's parents to provide most of their children with a tertiary education and assisted them in buying houses and establishing careers and businesses both in Poland and abroad. Since the remuneration received by medical professionals in Poland was (and remains) low, this assistance was very important for Stanisława. After 1989 other bakeries were established in Stanisława's hometown. Her aged mother, who by that stage was a widow, could not manage the business in a way

that would allow it to compete with new enterprises run by young, dynamic people. Consequently, exactly at the time when many Polish women were improving their socio-economic situation because their families were establishing small business in the new free market economy of Poland, Stanisława was no longer able to benefit from the capitalist businesses of her parents. The bakery went bankrupt and this led to a decline in Stanisława's own financial circumstances.

> My entire life I was supported by my parents. I earned wages which were not enough for a housekeeper, because what I earned could pay her wage, but she also had to get board. All my bills were paid by my parents' bakery. And now this business which supported the education of all my siblings and another generation before them, all of a sudden went bankrupt.

Without this support Stanisława's lifestyle has been continuously declining since 1989. At that time some of her children were still young and needed to be cared for, yet her low wages did not allow her to employ a housekeeper. She was forced to temporarily cease full time employment and instead received a pension that allowed her to earn some additional income. When her children became more independent she returned to work, but her standard of living continued to deteriorate.

> Over time everything changed for me. I used to have a very good dressmaker; now I haven't bought new clothes for two years. I also liked to go to a restaurant once a week and invite a good friend with me, now I can't remember when I last went to a restaurant, I haven't been for years. I used to love nice underwear, now I would be embarrassed to go to the doctor, because it's all ripped.

At the same time Stanisława appreciates that the post-1989 changes that led to the bankruptcy of her parents' business have opened up numerous opportunities for young, energetic people to whom any chance of improving their standard of living and exercising their initiative was previously closed.

> I can give you an example of one woman. When I saw her the first time she was selling parsley and she had it laid out on the rolling board, and she kept it on her knees but everything she had was so fresh. In autumn she already had a kiosk ... There was a shop next door and she used to go there and ask if she could make herself a cup of coffee there, because she was so cold. And soon she bought that shop. Now in one section they have food and a newsagent in the other, and they employ at least six people. Apparently they bought a mansion and they achieved so much just in those ten years. And the shop in which everybody used to buy vegetables for years went bankrupt because of this competition.

Stanisława is also aware that for many individuals and social groups the 1989 changes brought a drastic deterioration in the standard of living, much more significant than her own, and that for them the fact that Poland is now a free democratic country is almost irrelevant. She quoted a woman who questioned the point of having democracy if it meant having difficulties being able to pay for necessities such as food.

Just like any other woman living in contemporary Poland, Stanisława has been exposed to the three the dominant images of women available in the country. The way she has responded to the images of Matka Polka, Communist Woman and the New Woman reflects her personal needs, opportunities and values, but also the specific economic, social, cultural and gender conditions characteristic of Kraków.

As a very religious person and the mother of a large family, Stanisława could be seen as embodying the image of Matka Polka. She was one of the few women who saw Matka Polka in terms of patriotic motherhood.

> I associate Matka Polka with patriotism. I mean that this woman can outdo herself more than other women. It's like those Spartan women who would give shields to their sons and tell them to come back with the shield or on the shield, meaning that they were meant to come back triumphant or dead. I think Polish women have a lot of those qualities too. It means that you have to fight for your fatherland to the last.

Despite these powerful associations with the idea of Matka Polka, even Stanisława saw the image as irrelevant for contemporary Polish women, in contrast to women from other generations such as her grandmother.

> For contemporary women Matka Polka is probably less relevant. I also have a different attitude to it now than when I was young. Now, when I bring up my children I realize that women have to put so much energy into it and that therefore I wouldn't like my children to fight for the fatherland; the fatherland is not so valuable to me now ... My father told me that when he was going to the war, his mother blessed him and told him to fight for the fatherland.

While Stanisława acknowledged the incompatibility of the idealized model of Matka Polka with the contemporary priorities of Polish women, her own life is not an example of independence and self-fulfillment. In fact, sacrifice for her family and gender imbalance were some of the main features of her life, not unlike that of Matka Polka. Stanisława is very religious. She has five children; her youngest child is sixteen. She sees her marriage as unsuccessful and disappointing. She feels that she has never received enough emotional support from her husband and is also unhappy about his contribution

towards childcare and housekeeping tasks. Her tertiary educated husband, who until 1989 worked in a large government owned company, currently lives abroad with two of the couple's children. This is partly due to the fact that he cannot find employment in Poland. Two other children are already independent, but Stanisława's 24 year-old son is still studying and lives at home. She performs most domestic tasks for him. In fact Stanisława recalled that on several occasions she has been told by acquaintances and work colleagues that she is a Matka Polka. But she herself did not identify with this image, partly because she felt she did not share the extreme patriotism she associated with it.

Stanisława also does not fit the image of Communist Woman. Politically she was always opposed to the communist system, and her life was closely connected to the capitalist business owned by her parents. Her needs as a worker and a mother were met more by her parents' financial support than by government assistance for working women. She did not benefit from the provision of childcare as her children were cared for at home. She did not utilize extended maternity leave or childrearing leave, returning to work within weeks of the birth of each of her children. Stanisława believes that her career developed as a result of her parents' support rather then government policies encouraging women to be involved in paid employment. She also believes that her parents' assistance went much further than providing her with the financial means to employ domestic help and hence be able to continue to work while having a young family. She is convinced that her father paid one of her superiors to employ her, as in her opinion having a large family would otherwise have prohibited her from gaining employment as a neurologist.

In Stanisława's experience women were discriminated against during the communist period. She recalled that at her workplace during their job interviews female doctors were asked by their future superior to commit themselves to having at the most only one child. Female workers who became pregnant for the second time feared being dismissed. Although Stanisława managed to keep her position, the fact that she was a mother of a large family was not appreciated.

> I was singled out for having so many children. I was given extra work; I had to constantly show that I was as good as those who had one child; that I was needed. Once a colleague walked behind me when I was pregnant and was mumbling to himself, but I could hear it well, 'What is she doing, why doesn't someone in her family tell her what to do not to get pregnant, so she doesn't have to walk around with her big belly all the time'. I can't tell you how badly he was thinking of me. Somebody else was saying that a child is your private thing and should not affect your work.

Although she now regrets the fact that she did not stay home longer when her children were small, her quick return to work was a necessity rather than choice. Stanisława's experiences contradict the belief that during the communist period female workers were protected and issues of fertility became relevant only after 1989 as far as women's employment was concerned. Therefore, while it cannot be denied that the 1989 changes led to increased discrimination against female workers it has to be acknowledged that such discrimination existed in the past, even in such a highly feminized field as Polish health care.

While not quite fitting the image of Matka Polka or Communist Woman, Stanisława cannot be perceived as fitting the image of New Polish Woman either. Her standard of living has deteriorated as a result of the post-1989 changes. Her work, despite giving her satisfaction, is not financially rewarding and does not belong to the group of glamorous jobs performed by New Polish Women. Her house, although spacious by Polish standards, has not been renovated in line with modern trends. She does not have a fashionable new car and in fact does not drive at all. She also does not travel as much as the New Polish Woman is expected to, and when she does it is usually to visit her children. She has no money or time to concentrate on her appearance and therefore does not present the image of a well groomed post-1989 woman. Furthermore, Stanisława's personal life lacks excitement and romance, which form an integral part of the image of the New Polish Woman. She sees her marriage as unsuccessful and resents the fact that she was never adored by her husband. Although most of the time she had domestic help, all the remaining tasks, which in her large family were still numerous, were performed by her rather than equally shared between her and her husband. Now, when she is living only with one of her adult sons, she is still the one who performs all the domestic tasks. This, however, does not mean that Stanisława entirely rejected or saw as irrelevant the image of the New Woman in women's magazines even in relation to her own life. She simply believed that rather than representing the everyday lives of women, the images presented in upmarket women's magazines were relevant only to special events in women's lives.

Stanisława's life and her responses to the three different images of women would be different if she did not live in Kraków. Despite the fact that she did not identify herself as a Krakowianka, living in Kraków was very significant in her life. It was in Kraków that she received her education and gained employment. This is particularly relevant in the post-1989 period, when she has been able to hold three positions simultaneously. This would be impossible in any smaller or less affluent locality. The intellectual and cultural atmosphere of Kraków has also influenced or at least perpetuated Stanisława's values and allowed her, despite her deteriorating material circumstances, to maintain a full life. The values dominant in the city have also allowed her to question not only gender imbalance in her own family but also gender discrimination in her workplace. But another dimension of Stanisława's situation is not so much related to her place of residence, but to the complexity of Poland as a structure both before and after 1989. This complexity is exemplified by the role of Stanisława's parents' business played in her life during communist as well as post-communist period.

7.10 Sylwia

The complexity of the situation in post-1989 Poland is illustrated further through a comparison of the experiences of Stanisława with the experiences of Sylwia. Sylwia was born in Kraków and has resided there most of her life, except for a short period of time when she lived in the country with her husband's family. Married at 19, she now has two children, aged ten and six. She has a secondary education and is a qualified bookbinder. She does not work in the job she is qualified to perform and instead owns and manages a

successful travel agency. Her husband, who now runs a publishing company, originally established the business. She lives in an affluent area of Kraków in a new and fashionable house. She drives an expensive car and has a housekeeper who attends to the majority of domestic tasks twice a week. Her older child attends a private school while the younger is still in a local kindergarten. She frequently travels abroad. She has an extensive wardrobe, is interested in fashion, frequently attends the hairdresser and beautician, and regularly exercises. All of these characteristics make Sylwia an excellent reflection of the image of the New Polish Woman.

Due to the nature of her business, Sylwia's life is more entrenched in the specific historic and cultural milieu of Kraków than Stanisława's. Sylwia's business benefits directly from the city's reputation as a tourist attraction. Local residents constitute a significant number of her clients, so the relative affluence of the residents of Kraków, many of whom are able (and willing) to spend money on holidays and other leisure activities, is also relevant to her business' success.

Sylwia sees herself as a Krakowianka and feels very attached to the place. She is proud to live in the city, which she sees as very beautiful and therefore attractive to tourists. She believes that the residents of Kraków are very cultured and aware of the cultural value of their historical city. She is not very specific, however, about what this culture might involve, beyond the beauty of Kraków's architecture, the availability of theatres, cinemas and museums and the willingness of its residents to patronize them.

> Kraków has been a city of culture for many years ... Kraków was always alive due to its culture, it was always attractive to people. For example, there are lots of theatres here, and the tickets are always sold out. People for example go to the pictures with their children, not to supermarkets, although that happens too. People have family outings to supermarkets, because this is a done thing. But most people are up to date with the programs of cinemas and theatres, and museums are also open on Sundays so you can see people going there as a whole family.

While she does not have many contacts outside the Kraków region she has a very firm opinion about Kraków's superiority to Upper Silesia its access to cultural events and work opportunities, its lifestyle and the aspirations available to its residents.

> Silesia is a working class town [sic] so it's hard to expect it to be as cultured as Kraków. I don't think people have the same opportunities in Silesia. People there are overworked, people are locked in bloki. And it's quite hard there. In Kraków there are a lot of opportunities; you can earn good money, unlike in small towns. I have a cousin in Silesia; most of the people there work in mining, so they concentrate on such work of the lowest level and really they don't need anything else to be happy.

She has a similarly negative attitude to Nowa Huta, which she sees as an area populated by working class people from underprivileged backgrounds who moved to Nowa Huta due to the availability of high rise apartments and work at the foundry. This is particularly interesting because Sylvia and her husband did not come from a privileged social background either.

The years since 1989 have had a significant impact on Sylwia's life, not only because of the economic and social transformation of the country but also because of changes to her family and professional life. During this period of time she married, had her first child, completed her secondary education, started to work, had her second child and finally

established a successful business that allowed her to gain financial independence. Like Stanisława she was assisted by her parents, and by her mother in particular, and this contributed to her current successes. The difference was that Sylwia was financially supported as well as assisted with childcare after the birth of her first child, which took place when she was still in secondary school. She continued to live with her parents, who took care of the child when Sylwia went to school and socialized. She only saw her husband on weekends, as he lived with his parents who supported him financially in a rural town near Kraków. This parental support finished as soon as Sylwia and her husband were able to earn an income. Achieving financial security and independence was very important to Sylwia, who placed a lot of emphasis on the fact that her financial circumstances have changed tremendously over the past decade.

> And what is most interesting is that in those ten years we really went through all periods. We had periods when we could not afford anything, we would go to the shop and wonder if we could afford to buy half a loaf of bread or a whole loaf, and then slowly we moved to a better financial situation, to a prospering business, and in the last period of time my dreams are coming true, in such a short period of time. And I achieved it all with my own two hands.

While Stanisława felt very strongly about the political changes that took place in 1989, Sylwia's attitude was much vaguer. She did not indicate that she was very interested in politics, nor was she informed about the changes to the political process that took place in Poland during the last decade. At the same time, she saw the changes as positive ones especially as far as freedom of speech was concerned.

While Stanisława stayed at home for only two and a half months with each of her children, Sylwia's circumstances were quite different. When her first child was born she was studying three afternoons a week and therefore had more time to care for her child. When she had her second child she moved to the country, where she lived with her husband's family and focused exclusively on domestic tasks and childcare. Sylwia believed that it is imperative that the mother looks after her child until it is at least a year-old, although she also talked about the benefits of the grandparents being involved.

Sylwia's marriage seems to be more egalitarian than Stanisława's. Both Sylwia and her husband perform childcare tasks including driving the children to school, kindergarten and other activities as well as supervising their homework. Sylwia's husband does the cooking and the housekeeper attends to the rest of the domestic tasks. This egalitarian division of labour does not mean, however, that while supporting partnership in marriage, Sylwia does not retain some traditional attitudes to appropriate male and female roles.

> Also when something needs to be fixed you don't go to the mother who could also fix it but to the father. And if you go away, you also go with a father who is behind the wheel and is the most important person for the child. So they are all little things, but they count. The child watches parents who live together and each of them has his or her duties. When the child hurts itself it goes to the mother, but when a man's decision needs to be made, such as if we go to the park or to the pictures on Saturday, the child will go to the father.

In this sense Sylwia's attitude towards the gender division of roles was more traditional than that of Stanisława who, despite being in non-egalitarian relationships first with her husband and later with her son, did not see such an arrangement as natural or desirable.

Like Stanisława, Sylwia actively interacted with the images of women presented to her. She believed that there are two images reflecting two separate groups of women in contemporary Poland. She also believed that the women represented by those images constitute two different social groups that do not mix with each other. One group of women do not work outside the home and concentrate on domestic duties. The other group consists of well educated, business or career women who are well groomed, know foreign languages, and are able to drive cars and use computers and mobile phones. Their relationship with their husbands is based on partnership, and they share domestic responsibilities. This leads to the career woman being appreciated as a person rather than exclusively as a homemaker. Sylwia added that at the same time the career woman is overworked, as she still has the same domestic responsibilities as the woman who does not have all the added pressures of a professional life, despite the assistance of her husband. Sylwia saw herself as a typical post-1989 woman, a reflection of the image of the New Polish Woman. When asked about the most important things in her life she did not focus on her family but on her professional plans:

> Having a good business, ensuring employment for my workers. I decided that I have to reach a certain financial position and a certain level of satisfaction and I have not achieved it yet. I am halfway there.

In contrast to Stanisława who did not think that her life was much different or, more specifically, better than her mother's, Sylwia saw her life as a significant improvement from her mother's circumstances. She emphasized that she had actively learned from her

mother's mistakes. She saw her mother as an unliberated woman who had no time for herself and was always controlled by her parents and the immediate environment.

This disapproval of her mother's lifestyle was closely connected to her critical approach to the image of Matka Polka, which she saw as inappropriate to contemporary Poland.

> This expression, Matka Polka, is a little bit strange for me. Because a mother was seen as the most important person, she would sacrifice herself for her children, she would cover up everything at home, she would not have her own ambitions. So when somebody says Matka Polka now, it sounds strange because the ambitions of women now are for themselves; they are not interested in sacrifice any more.

Paradoxically, while being very critical of the image of Matka Polka Sylwia still possessed some of the characteristics of this image. At 29 years of age, with many plans for her business and private life, to some extent she saw her life as a bridge over which her children will walk towards a better future. At times it almost appeared that her main goal was to prepare her children, rather than herself, for that future. She saw the future predominantly as the domain of her children and their generation, almost as if she herself was not going to play any part in it. She constantly referred to the fact that it will be the next generation that will truly benefit from the post-1989 changes, who will be fundamentally different to Polish people today, and who will be able to proudly represent Poland to the rest of the world. She emphasized the importance of bringing her children up in a way that will allow them to perform this role.

Sylwia had a very negative attitude to the image of Communist Woman. She saw it as part of a past characterized by political repression and the lack of freedom of speech.

> A communist woman is a woman who is scared and can't do anything herself. She can't express herself and can't change anything in her life and is controlled by her environment. There are no Communist Women now.

Sylwia saw the images of women shown in her favorite magazine, *Twój Styl*, as representative of New Polish Woman, and she also saw *Twój Styl* as a valuable source of information. In her opinion, a woman who wants to have her own business has to have all the characteristics promoted in *Twój Styl*.

> *Twój Styl* is really good. It shows a woman who is fashionable, well groomed, who takes care of her family, who is prepared for every situation. She can be well dressed, have good makeup on and smell good, but also feel at home in the kitchen. So it's a magazine that gives you information about lots of things.

Sylwia believed that she herself was a Contemporary Polish Woman, a personification of images shown in the media.

7.11 Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the link between locality and the impact of the post-1989 changes on the lives of women in Kraków. The stories, attitudes and experiences of Stanisława and Sylwia, as well as the stories of the other Krakowian women interviewed, testify to the interaction between the changes in their environment brought about by the socio-

political transformation of 1989, the historically formed attitudes towards women prevailing in Kraków, and the personal circumstances of each individual. But the case studies presented also illustrate the complexity of the social and economic circumstances prevailing in Kraków in particular and Poland in general, both before and after 1989. Stanisława, despite her full support for the 1989 changes, has to be seen as largely disadvantaged by the socio-political transformation. This is the case despite the fact that she was never a stereotypical communist woman who benefited from the protective employment and social policies guaranteed under the communist system and hence became disadvantaged by the transition to capitalism. Sylwia is a perfect example of the young resident of Kraków, embodying all the characteristics of the New Polish Woman. Her personal circumstances allowed her to benefit from both the socio-political changes in Poland and specific conditions existing in Kraków.

In the cases of Sylwia and Stanisława the difference between their stories could be explained in terms of their ages, or rather the stages their life cycles have reached. In 1989 Sylwia was a young woman just starting her life. She had no established career, no set lifestyle. She was not used to living her life under the communist system and therefore could easily adapt to the changed circumstances. Learning to live in capitalist Poland for her simply became a part of learning to be an adult. In Stanisława's case it was different. In 1989 she had a large family, an established career and well developed networks, attitudes, approaches and support systems, which allowed her to live quite a comfortable life in communist Poland. The reliance on her parents' business, which was a fundamental part of Stanisława's life, illustrates the complexity of the economic

structure of Poland before as well as after 1989. With the support of her parent's business removed her life became less manageable, while the possibility of retraining to find a more profitable occupation was not an option for a woman dedicated to her field of endeavour, especially since in Poland being a medical professional is still held in very high esteem.[33]

It could be argued that the lives of these women could be exactly the same in other regions of Poland. However, it is very clear that a sense of belonging and identity related to being from Kraków influenced the way the interviewed women, not only Sylwia and Stanisława, lived their lives. These women gained advantages from the specific conditions prevailing in Kraków, one of the cities that has benefited from the transformation of 1989. The employment opportunities experienced by all the women interviewed are directly connected to Kraków's economic growth. Sylwia's business, for example, benefits from the city's growth and from the further development of its tourist industry. Stanisława, on other hand had been able to secure several jobs in her field of expertise, which would be impossible in many other urban centres. Her children have been also able to establish themselves in Kraków.

Finally, the most striking factor influencing the lives of Stanisława, Sylwia and the other women from Kraków is the general attitude towards women dominant in the area. This is characterized by a belief that women are independent agents and that while the family should be important to them they should by no means be restricted to it. The relationship

[33] In post-1989 Poland it is not unusual for medical graduates not to pursue a career in the low paid medical professions but to find employment in pharmaceutical sales, which is much more lucrative.

between all the characteristics of Kraków mentioned above and the everyday lives of its female residents will become more evident when compared to the experiences of women from Upper Silesia, which are examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: Women in Upper Silesia

8.1 Introduction

> What was the role of a woman, mother and wife in the traditional Silesian family? According to the saying borrowed from the Germans, a woman would find self-realization through the so-called three 'Ks', which meant: Kirche – church, Küche – kitchen and Kinder – children. Those three 'Ks' were not, as it is often believed, a reflection of discrimination against women; just the opposite – they were an expression of appreciation of women ! (Szołtysek 1998).

This quotation comes from a book entitled *Silesia. Such a place on earth*, an example of an emerging genre of popular literature addressing the culture and history of the region. The passage quoted evidently illustrates the author's support for the traditional position of women that has historically prevailed in Silesian families, but it also highlights the perception that the identity of Silesian women is largely determined by locality. Szołtysek implies that the link between the cultural and social values dominant in the locality and the identity of the woman who live there is so strong that it allows Upper Silesian women to happily lead a lifestyle that may be seen as oppressive by people from other regions of Poland. Women from Silesia are presented here as so different from other women that to them the three 'Ks' are not only unoppressive but actually validate their rich and satisfying lives. This chapter is partly dedicated to investigation of this claim.

Through an analysis of the interview material gathered in Upper Silesia in 1995 and 1999 this chapter looks at the relationship between locality and the ways women living in the

region have responded to the political, economic and social changes that took place in Poland after 1989. Like the previous chapter on Kraków, it approaches the link between locality and the post-1989 position of women through an examination of how the economic, cultural and historical characteristics of the region influenced the way women living there have appropriated the images of womanhood available to them. The discussion points to differences between the lives of women living in Upper Silesia and women living in Kraków, but also highlights the range of experiences among Upper Silesian women. While there are significant commonalities characterizing the experiences, values, views and attitudes of women from Upper Silesia living in the post-1989 environment, the fact that some women have been affected by the changes in a positive way while others have been disadvantaged creates a high degree of diversity. The two case studies presented in this chapter provide a striking illustration of this point.

Thirty women residing in Upper Silesia have participated in this study. Fifteen women were interviewed in 1995 and a further fifteen in 1999. Most of the women interviewed were born in Upper Silesia. They lived in various urban centers within the region, but most lived in Katowice. A significant number of participants identified themselves as coming from 'true' Silesian families, meaning families that had been established in the region for generations, or even as long as could be remembered. These are families that cultivate Silesian traditions, and in which the men work in traditional occupations such as coalmining. Only seven participants were born outside the region and moved there in the 1970s or early 1980s. Most of those women migrated to Upper Silesia either because they were marrying a resident of the area or because their husbands found better

employment opportunities in the region. The group of interviewees was diverse as far as age, socio-economic background and marital status were concerned. A detailed description of the characteristics of participants is provided in Appendix 2.

8.2 Place, belonging and identity in Upper Silesia

Since this chapter suggests the existence of a strong link between cultural values and identity in Upper Silesian women and the way they live their lives, the mechanisms involved in creating a sense of belonging and local identity for the women interviewed need to be examined. For most of the participants, defining themselves as Slązaczkas (Silesian women) was the basis for the construction of their identity. The majority of those who were born in Upper Silesia showed a strong attachment to the region. Local patriotism, with the perception of Silesians as a separate population group, was very evident throughout the interviews. Some participants believed that the self-perception of indigenous Silesians as a separate group has led to a strong sense of solidarity that manifests itself in environments where they interact or compete with recent migrants to the region. Marzena, a 44 year-old administrative worker who was born in the region and had lived there her entire life observed:

> At work for example there are some differences between people from different regions, and somehow Silesians stick together and the rest are separate from them (Marzena 1999).

However, despite declaring that they did feel a strong sense of local identity and belonging just like their counterparts in Kraków, the Upper Silesian women were unable

to clearly define what this sense of belonging and local identity entailed. In contrast to the Krakowians, the Silesian women could not explain their attachment to the region in terms of its beauty. Jałowiecki (1985:132) writes that

> Urban space is a message which can only be read as a whole. It constitutes of the present as well as the past; all the individual parts of it as well as the relationship between them, the world of objects and symbols.

In the context of this thesis Jałowiecki's approach suggests two important points. First, before we look at the changes that occurred in Kraków and Upper Silesia after 1989 we have to look at the past of the two regions. Second if Jałowiecki is right we can argue that the message about Silesia, or its individual urban centres, is dark and glum and very different to the one that emerged about Kraków. Upper Silesia, like other industrial regions in the world, has never been prized for its beauty. In fact rather the opposite is true. It has a reputation as an unattractive industrial wasteland with high levels of pollution. This reputation is reflected, for example, in the 1993 edition of a travel guide to Poland published by Lonely Planet (Dydyński 1993:306) which on the subject of Upper Silesia asserts that 'there is not much here for tourists, unless you're an environmentalist searching for examples of ecological disasters'.

So while in contrast to the Krakowians the Upper Silesian women were not able to explain their attachment to their region in terms of its beauty, like the Krakowian women they constructed their sense of belonging fundamentally on the basis of being born in the region. For most of them being a Silesian woman simply meant being born and growing up in the region, and as a result becoming used to and attached to it. Twenty-six year-old

bar owner Monika, whose family had lived in the region for as long as anyone could remember, explained that she felt she belonged in Upper Silesia

> Because this is where our place is, this is where we live, so it definitely would be very hard for us to leave everything and go and see if it's better somewhere else (Monika 1999).

Upper Silesian identity and local patriotism were also seen as a function of being raised up surrounded by Silesian tradition and later cultivating it. A 28 year-old secretary and self-proclaimed Upper Silesian patriot stated:

> I am a person who places a lot of importance on culture and tradition; maybe it will sound banal but I place importance on some form of patriotism, the local patriotism (Beata 1999).

Experiencing a sense of belonging and seeing Upper Silesian tradition and culture as important did not mean that the women were able to clearly define what this tradition and culture involved. However, while most of them described their regional tradition and culture in very general terms their descriptions were still more elaborate than those provided by the Krakowian women. Upper Silesian women referred, for example, to 'things that take place around Christmas', and the Coalminers Day, (the so-called 'Barburka') which falls on St Barbara's Day. They also talked about traditional Silesian food,[34] traditional folk costumes still worn by some (particularly older) women at special religious occasions, and traditional Silesian folk dances such as the 'trojak'. Halina, a

[34] Silesian food is one of the focal points of writings about Silesia. Szołysek for example celebrates praises the traditional Silesian Sunday lunch consisting of meat roulade, dumplings and red cabbage, Świątkiewicz (1999), writing about the crisis among coalmining families, expresses his concern over the fact that in contemporary families the symbolic Sunday lunch is replaced by a hamburger from McDonalds.

bookkeeper in her thirties, provided one of the most elaborate descriptions of the components of her Upper Silesian identity and the differences between traditions practised in Upper Silesia and other regions of Poland.

> So that I am Slazaczka means that my accent is a little bit different, I speak a little bit differently than people from somewhere else, but that's normal, people from the seaside talk differently to the people from central Poland too. We celebrate Coalminers Day and elsewhere it's not celebrated. In Silesia we celebrate birthdays elsewhere name days. I celebrate the things that my parents did (Halina 1999).

During the interviews all the women spoke mainstream Polish and only a few had a detectable Silesian accent. Some of the participants used some German words or German grammatical structures.[35] Most, however, identified the Silesian dialect as a distinctive characteristic setting them apart from other Polish people and saw it as a very valuable part of Upper Silesian culture. The women who were born in the region but could not speak the dialect regretted that fact. In contrast, most of the women who were migrants to the region not only disliked the Silesian dialect but also found it difficult to comprehend how anybody could like it.

As well as Upper Silesian traditions and the dialect, the women also relied very heavily on the various of symbols they associated with the region in explaining their local identity. Numerous Silesian writers have addressed the role of the industrial landscape of Upper Silesia in the region's culture and hence in the identity of its residents. Lubina

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[35] For example a number of women said 'dziekuje pieknie', of which a direct translation into English would be 'thank you beautifully'. The structure of this expression is a direct translation of the German 'danke schön'. The correct Polish expression is 'dziekuje bardzo' which translates into English as 'thank you very much'.

(1999) for example writes about the cultural symbolism of mining the waste heaps, while Drwal (1999a and 1999b) addresses the symbolic role of industrial structures such as coalmines and foundries in the Upper Silesian ethos, calling for the partial preservation of some unused buildings for this reason. Despite this, the women who participated in my interviews did not express any such sentiments. The only part of the Silesian urban landscape that was mentioned by any of the respondents were the so-called familioks (see Plate 8.1) that dominate the architecture of the older towns and suburbs of the region. The familioks are pre–Second World War multistorey red brick residential buildings with characteristic window frames painted in red, green or brown rather than white which would show industrial dust. These buildings were constructed and owned by individual mines to house their workers.

Several women saw the 'Silesian family', which in most cases was perceived as synonymous with a coalmining family, as a symbol of Upper Silesian identity and an integral part of Upper Silesian society, simultaneously symbolizing, embodying, preserving and constructing regional tradition and culture. A number of interviewees from Upper Silesia emphasized the fact that they came from such families. The perception of the attributes of the coalmining family as a specific and important aspect of Upper Silesian society has been reflected in academic literature. One of the most interesting descriptions of the role of the coalmining family in the regional culture of Upper Silesia has been provided by Świątkiewicz (1999). In his article 'Coalmining family, a symbol of Silesia?' he argues that despite the changes that have taken place in Upper Silesia not only in recent years but throughout its history, the coalmining family

has been seen as the bastion of regional culture and identity and a vehicle for defining those who belonged and those who were cultural outsiders. Świątkiewicz argues that the coalmining family symbolizes everything that is Upper Silesian, including the traditional gender division of labour: 'family traditions and culture, the rhythm of everyday life, the division of roles and tasks within the family, nurturing contacts with relations, material conditions, approaches to work and religion, models of consumption, values and attitudes, ambitions' (36).

Świątkiewicz points out that the coalmining family is associated with specific imagery: the slim father of the family, his face reflecting years of hard work, attired in his formal coalminer's uniform, and the merry yet worried mother in traditional Silesian costume, surrounded by their numerous children. This image is connected to a specific model of family life. The father of the family, who had inherited his profession from his father and grandfather, works in the mine and brings his wage home to pass on in its entirety to a wife preferably recruited from his immediate environment. The wife and mother is never in paid employment but concentrates entirely on domestic tasks and raising the children. She remains the focal point of domestic life and family activities. She introduces the children to aspects of local culture, including the tradition of the Sunday meal and the strict division of domestic roles. Her daughters become good coalminer's wives and the sons follow in the footsteps of their father.

Plate 8.1 Familiok in an old section of Katowice

Świątkiewicz argues that in the post–Second World War period the coalmining family underwent significant changes. This was partly caused by interaction with a migrant population from other regions of Poland who brought with them different family models and had no interest in cultivating Upper Silesian traditions, and partly by the economic processes that took place in communist Poland. One significant change was that the wives of miners started to enter paid employment. The post-1989 changes leading to the decrease in the actual earnings of the miners, as well as the disappearance of the privileges they enjoyed under the communist system, intensified this process further, with even greater numbers of women seeking paid employment. This led to other fundamental changes in family life such a drop in the birth rate[36] and the greater involvement of husbands in domestic tasks.

Despite the weakening of the significance of the Silesian family and all the associated attributes of its individual members, Upper Silesian women are still perceived, both within the region and possibly even more so outside it, to be exemplary housekeepers, celebrated for their scrupulous cleanliness. The interviewees from Upper Silesia shared this perception. They argued that this quality of Upper Silesian women is particularly prized because of the high level of pollution in the area, which makes cleanliness especially time consuming and challenging. While a number of interviewees, possibly partly out of modesty, argued that they themselves did not fit this image of Upper Silesian women, they still mentioned that a generally spotless home and particularly

[36] For example in 1990 the birth rate in Katowice voivodship was 2; in 1993 it was 0.9 (Statistical Office in Katowice 1994:63) and in 1998 Silesian voivodship's birth rate was –1.88 (Statistical Office in Katowice 1998B:53).

clean windows are an integral part of the Upper Silesian landscape and the trademark of every good Silesian woman.[37] Ania, a 34 year-old unemployed mother, believed that:

> Typical Silesians, as far as those windows, their cleanliness is concerned, I have a friend, a traditional Silesian and she is crazy about those windows. The windows, the curtains. She washes them every two weeks and there always has to be some decoration in the window (Ania 1999).

Jaga, a 34 year-old tertiary educated woman, also perceived clean windows as one of the symbols of Upper Silesia.

> It's those so called 'familioks', those small houses with those extremely clean windows, which the women wash all the time, because of course they get dirty really quickly (Jaga 1999).

Interestingly, not unlike Świątkiewicz, many participants, including the young photographer Lucyna, perceived the Silesian family to be a social structure that is quickly becoming part of Silesian history rather than part of its contemporary reality. The influx of migrants from other regions of Poland was seen as being partly responsible for this.

> There are still Silesian families where Silesian coalmining family traditions are nurtured. Those families have special characteristics, which are hard for me to describe. At the moment it's disappearing (Lucyna 1999).

Like the women from Kraków, Silesian women used the process of exclusion as a tool in defining their sense of belonging and group identity and all the characteristics associated

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[37] The clean windows of Upper Silesia have become folklore. For example , in the movie 'Pearl in a Crown' Kazimierz Kurt, a screenwriter and director who made numerous films depicting Upper Silesian

with it. While the process of inclusion and exclusion was adopted in both localities, the factors used to decide who was an outsider and who was a local differed significantly between Kraków and Upper Silesia. Historically the Silesian family was the main means of delineation between outsiders and locals. In Kraków such family connections, while not irrelevant, played a less significant role. Another difference was that the Upper Silesian women who participated in my research limited their criticism of people from other regions to those who migrated to Upper Silesia. The participants did not in any way indicate that they perceived their region to be superior to other parts of the country. This attitude was considerably different to that of the Krakowian women, who saw their own city as a very special place and sometimes perceived themselves as superior to people from other regions of Poland. This is probably one of the reasons why they were quick to make negative comments about Upper Silesia and sometimes even its inhabitants. In contrast, the interviewed women from Upper Silesia did not have a negative view of Kraków as such. In fact quite the opposite was true. Numerous women thought very highly of the city. A number believed that Kraków had specific advantages over Upper Silesia, including Kraków being a more pleasant and more cultured location. Some women mentioned that the city's university is better and that this led to the migration of many people from Upper Silesia to Kraków.

In Kraków migrants from outside the region and people who lived in Nowa Huta were perceived undesirable largely because they were a migratory population. Upper Silesian women felt the same way towards people who were not indigenous Silesians. The

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history and culture depicted women 'washing windows and window ledges and everything that was exposed to ever-falling industrial dust' (Kutz 1995:55).

difference between the mechanisms of exclusion used in Kraków and Silesia existed on another level. Kraków women saw the Nowa Huta population, dominated by manual workers, as dissimilar and inferior, whereas in Upper Silesia being a manual industrial worker was not automatically seen as a negative factor. So rather than being excluded on the basis of belonging to a lower socio-economic group, the post–Second World War arrivals to Upper Silesia were branded as a mismatched mix of people of different backgrounds, lacking attachment to the region and an understanding of Silesian values and heritage. These characteristics were seen as being perpetuated by the environment they inhabited – new high-rise settlements of 'bloki' characterized by high population density and deficient infrastructure.

> We all know what it is like in the bloki ... There is a collection of people there from all over Poland, so of course if they come from all over the place they have different attitudes and so on (Monika 1999).

Large urban agglomerations in particular were seen as problematic nests of un-Silesian attitudes and lifestyles.

> Katowice is an agglomeration of many different people, there is very little, I mean of course there is a group of local Silesians, there is a large migratory population and this creates combinations of people that are not always pleasant. And I think that a lot of those arrivals do not feel very comfortable here (Lucyna 1999).

A negative attitude towards more recent residents of Upper Silesia was often combined with a belief that the residents of other regions did not like Silesians. In Lucyna's opinion

the fact that Upper Silesia had enjoyed economic prosperity during the communist period contributed to this phenomenon.

> A lot of ethnic Silesians are very proud of being Silesians, this is their national pride, but Silesians are not liked by other Poles. I think this is because during the communist period Silesia was better off than other regions of Poland, money was diverted to Silesia. I don't remember it because I was a child then, but I know that this was the case and the rest of Poland was questioning it. Why should everything be for Silesia and for the coalminers? More products were sent here than elsewhere. (Lucyana 1999).

While the women whose families had lived in Upper Silesia for generations felt suspicious towards the migratory population, most of the women who were born outside Upper Silesia displayed very strong feelings of dislike towards the region and often emphasized their separateness from Silesian culture and group identity. This is despite the fact that the migrants acknowledged that they had benefited from the economic situation that prevailed in Silesia during the communist period, such as the availability of housing and well paid employment (for males). Still, they did not feel emotionally attached to the region. In fact most of the interviewed migrants stated that they would prefer to live elsewhere, usually in their region of origin. Failure to be accepted by indigenous Upper Silesians, air and noise pollution, and the movement of houses resulting from mining damage were some of the reasons these women gave for disliking their region. Missing the home region was another common complaint.

To be perceived as an outsider by Upper Silesians, and also by themselves, women did not have to be born far from Upper Silesia. The definition of Silesian women as opposed

to an outsider was probably most visible in the case of Grażyna, a 47 year-old post office worker, mother and grandmother married to a coal miner. Grażyna was born in Zagłębie, an area that borders Upper Silesia. As the industrial nature of Zagłębie is very similar to that of Upper Silesia, an uninformed person from another region of Poland would consider it to be part of the some region. Paradoxically, however, the border between Upper Silesia and Zagłębie is probably the most firmly defined one within the social consciousness of the residents of the two areas. The sense of national versus local identity is one of the issues setting the regions apart.

> Grażyna:
>
> Because we are from Sosnowiec and Sosnowiec is in Zagłębie. We are different maybe not as far as tradition is concerned because we have Silesian tradition, but our speech is different. Silesians have a dialect and we talk normal Polish.
>
> Anita Seibert:
>
> So you do not consider yourself to be a Silesian?
>
> Grażyna:
>
> Definitely not. I am a Pole. Silesians say that they are Silesians; they are not Poles or anything else, but they are Silesians. And I consider myself a Polish woman.

Grażyna also believed that attitudes towards the role of women were different in Zagłębie than in Upper Silesia.

> In Upper Silesia the tradition is that the father works at the mine, the woman has children and stays home, takes care of the children, looks after her husband when he comes from work. This is Silesian tradition. And in our region women got qualifications and went to work. So besides the

fact that men went to the coal mine the wife went to work too. And in Silesia this was not the case (Grażyna 1999).

8.3 Impact of the post-1989 changes on the lives of Upper Silesian women

One of the factors mentioned by the Upper Silesian interviewees to explain antagonism between Upper Silesians and people from other regions of Poland was the relative affluence of Upper Silesia during the period of communism. As the economic situation of Upper Silesia has dramatically declined as a result of the post-1989 transformation it is not surprising that the majority of interviewed women from Upper Silesia had negative feelings about the changes. Almost all of them believed that the post-1989 changes had made a significant impact on their lives, although interestingly one participant when asked how the 1989 changes had influenced her life, said she was not sure what changes took place in 1989! The recurring comment regarding the 1989 changes was that while before 1989 people in Upper Silesia had a lot of money yet experienced difficulties in purchasing even the most basic of products, today products were freely available but people did not have enough money to purchase them. However, the fundamental point in relation to this thesis is that most of the women from Upper Silesia had a negative view of the 1989 changes, believing that the transformation had made a detrimental impact on their lives. This sets the women from Upper Silesia apart from the women from Kraków. Lidka, a divorced and now retrenched employee of a no longer existing large government owned company, the mother of two adult sons, living in an apartment with her ex-

husband and his new wife, was not surprisingly one of the women who had a negative attitude towards the post-1989 changes.

> Maybe it improved for some people, but I can't see that. It's poorer. There is no money, there is unemployment, my life was better before. Maybe for some people it's better now. If the revolution had not taken place my workplace would still exist and I would have work, and now I have a small pension and can't really see all those improvements. That's why so many children are left unsupervised because people can't afford crèches and kindergartens, wages are low. So maybe it's better for some, but not for most (Lidka 1995).

Some respondents believed that women in particular had been disadvantaged by the changes.

> I don't really know, it all happened too fast to have any positive impact. Life is worse, as far as access to health care is concerned, as far as children are concerned there are restrictions on the time you can take off when they are sick; there are also issues of employment: it's very hard for women who have children to get work. I remember that it wasn't like that before; nobody asked how old a woman was, if she was planning to have children, what she was going to do with the children and so on (Halina 1999).

Only two women singled out the shift to a democratic political system as important. It may be that the women did not see the changed political system as significant partly because they did not recognize their limited participation in the democratic process through voting as a meaningful exercise, and partly because they did not see much connection between who they voted for and their living conditions.

> A lot of people are disillusioned, a lot of people don't vote, for example. Because the government changes all the time, there are always new people

> in there [government], but our life is the same. So as far as government is concerned it's hopeless (Monika 1999).

A significant number of women believed that the impact of the 1989 transformation was worse for Silesia than for other regions of Poland. Some women argued that after decades of contributing to the economy of Poland Silesia has been betrayed by the rest of the country. A young administrative worker in her thirties, born in Upper Silesia, argued that:

> Silesia was always different as far as this is concerned; now it's maybe even more ... people often mention that in the past Silesia was always drained and utilized, Silesia was supporting the entire nation and now everybody is outraged that Silesia is left on its own, because the mines are meant to be liquidated, only coal miners who can be employed in other mines will be employed. And in the past Silesia used to support the whole nation (Halina 1999).

Some women pointed out that the fact that Upper Silesia used to be presented as a promised land for the countless workers arriving from other less prosperous regions meant that the economic changes leading to unemployment had been felt even more bitterly in this region than elsewhere.

> Everybody used to always come to Silesia to work in the mines. From anywhere, whenever there were too many people and they couldn't get work, or if there were a few boys in a farmer's family they went straight to Silesia and stayed in workers' hostels. And they would all find jobs here. And now all of a sudden there is no work for anybody, not for those who came here and already see themselves as Silesians because their life is here and they can't really go back, nor for those Silesians who have lived here for generations. So people are upset (Halina 1999).

Halina made the connection between the traditional view of the family prevailing in Upper Silesia and the dramatic impact of the crisis in the mining industry and unemployment on Silesian society:

> So maybe people will be more affected here, because here usually (I mean now it's a little bit different as women go to work too) in typical Silesian families women didn't work, they stayed at home. So there was one income and when the husband loses his job, it's extremely difficult (Halina 1999).

At this point it is important to emphasize that while most of the women saw the 1989 changes as negative they also believed that their lives were still better than the lives of their mothers and grandmothers. The majority of women talked about a general improvement in the standard of living they saw as a consequence of technological progress and a long-term general increase in affluence. Nine women talked about the extreme poverty experienced by their mothers or grandmothers. This included women whose families had moved to Upper Silesia to improve their economic situation, as well as indigenous residents of the region.

> For example, my mother in the mountains was the oldest one of six in a very poor family, very poor ... I would ask her not to tell me about it because I would get upset that she had to live like that. When her parents bought her shoes because she was the oldest she would only put those shoes on when she was near the church, so as not to ruin them so the younger sisters would be able to wear them. She would wash her feet in the stream in order not to put them on dirty feet (Ania 1999).

> My mother was born before the war in 37, and she lived in Silesia her whole life, so she would tell me the whole history of Silesia. There was extreme poverty here. Just poverty. So when she got married it was to

> escape from her impoverished family home, but she just got into another poverty (Iwona 1999).

Two young women in their mid twenties pointed out that historical films about Upper Silesia show such poverty. They specifically remembered the scene from 'Pearl in the Crown' (see footnote 34) in which two little boys attempt to steal a rissole from their father's dinner plate.

It could be argued that it is only reasonable for women who either witnessed or were told about their family's progress from poverty to relative comfort during the communist period to be resentful of the recent changes to the economic and political system in Poland. These changes, while providing more diverse opportunities for people capable of adjusting to the new system, led to the disappearance of familiar and uniformly available ways of improving one's economic situation – such as through gaining employment in government-supported industries. Not surprisingly the women who did adjust successfully had a much more positive view of the post-1989 changes in Upper Silesia. For example Kinga, 35 year-old owner of one of the very few fashionable bars in Katowice and a single divorced mother of a teenage daughter, saw the freedom to travel abroad and a decrease in the differences between life in Poland and life in other developed countries as important positive changes.

> It's easier for me to shop, there are more commodities available, and definitely it's easier to go abroad on holidays. It's no longer an issue of passports or finances; the difference between the income of your average Pole compared to a Greek for example is decreasing (Kinga 1999).

8.4 Images and reality

While the images presented to Silesian women by the media are the same as the ones available in Kraków, the attitudes of Silesian women towards those images, and even more, the way the images are reflected in the everyday lives of women, are very different. The problematic economic climate in post-1989 Upper Silesia, as well as the historical and cultural heritage of the region, appear to have strongly influenced the way the Upper Silesian women interpreted the images of womanhood available to them. At the same time, those interpretations themselves affected the manner in which the women were able to respond to the post-1989 changes.

8.5 Matka Polka in contemporary Upper Silesia

Silesian women had a more diverse and significantly more positive attitude to the image of Matka Polka than women from Kraków. Many of them highlighted the fact that Matka Polka is only a stereotype rather than a realistic representation of woman. Only a few participants saw it exclusively in negative terms as the Krakowian women did, as an overworked mother of a large family caught up in tasks traditionally performed by women:

> A mother who has more than one child, is overweight, doesn't look after herself, wears an apron, cleans and makes preserves, and is only concerned about her children and husband and not about herself (Iwona 1999).

Two young women criticized their former school friends for turning into overweight Matka Polkas after becoming mothers through 'letting themselves go'. These interviewees saw traditional Silesian food, which they perceived as very heavy and fatty, as the main factor responsible. According to this interpretation, to liberate themselves from the negative aspects of the image of Matka Polka women would have to abandon their (at least culinary) links with Silesian tradition.

Basia, a young professional mother who also perceived the image of Matka Polka negatively, saw the real Matka Polkas as a consequence of the difficult economic conditions and cultural discrimination against women still prevailing in her locality.

> Because here we don't have a custom and there is not enough money to allow you to concentrate more on your work, you have to combine both, and the women are with shopping bags, their hands stretched down to the ground, here they have a stroller, here a child, here a bag, here something else. I see even young girls like this. It's a nightmare. This is what our Matka Polka looks like. There are very few liberated women here (Basia 1995).

Another young woman, the owner of a fashionable bar in Katowice who saw herself as a New Polish Woman, presented a slightly different yet even more negative description of Matka Polka.

> It's such a stereotypical expression that I associate it with a small town mentality, with narrow-mindedness, with paying attention to pretenses, with shopping bags and restricting everybody and everything around you and trying to make everything little. But this is a stereotype (Kinga 1999).

What was interesting was the fact that quite a large number of participants including a 19 year-old high-school student exclusively and anachronistically associated the image of Matka Polka with the communist period.

> I associate it with a woman from the communist period, with a big bag of shopping, two or three children next to her, and she is big, fat and wears a scarf on her head, and she just stands over the pots (Magda 1999).

Some of the women who associated the image with the communist period asserted that Matka Polka was an image created by government propaganda. They emphasized that while being presented as an ideal role model for women, the image was very unrepresentative of the reality of women's everyday lives.

> I associate it with the monument. It was meant to be an ideal during communism: Mother Poland, but it's all a bit funny, so ideal. Because Matka Polka is so overworked and they were idealizing it and I think it's funny (Grażyna 1999).

A bookkeeper from Katowice believed that the image of Matka Polka was a part of the lip service paid by the communist government to women.

> During the communist period they would talk about Matka Polka all the time, on Mother's Day. It was such a lip service expression Matka Polka, and they would build monuments to Matka Polka and other strange things (Halina 1999).

Ola, an administrative worker for the Katowice city council saw Matka Polka as the antithesis of a businesswoman.

> I associate it with a person who is totally dedicated to her family, children and closest environment. So I don't associate a business minded woman with this description (Ola 1995).

But the majority of Upper Silesian women interviewed, including the ones who actively ensured that they themselves did not reflect the image, associated Matka Polka with positive characteristics of the Upper Silesian good mother and good woman, a traditional image of womanhood that continues to be relevant today. For example, Teresa, a women in her forties born outside the region whose husband was working in Germany, acknowledged the fusion between the traditional model of Matka Polka and a more modern type of woman:

> For me it's a real mother of the children, concentrating mainly on home, not employed, Matka Polka, an old Matka Polka. And now Matka Polka is a more modern woman (Teresa 1999).

The positive attitude of Upper Silesian participants to the image of Matka Polka must be seen as a consequence of the importance placed on family and the attachment to traditional gender roles sill dominant in the region. The Upper Silesian participants had a more diverse and positive approach to the image of Matka Polka than women from Kraków, but they still saw her in the context of her domestic duties, surrounded by the omnipresent shopping bags and numerous children. And while in their everyday life they attempted to abandon those aspects of the image they associated with oppression while adopting other of its characteristics, in general the women from Upper Silesia had a much more traditional attitude to life than the women from Kraków. A number of older

women stated that the father had traditionally been, and should continue to be, the head of the family. For example Grażyna, who was married to a coalminer, stated that:

> The father is a base. That's the case in my home. He is an authority and a role model, he is caring. There is the tradition here that the father is the head of the family (Grażyna 1999).

Most of the women believed that small children should be cared for by their mothers and that women were naturally better than men at caring for children. Additionally, many women believed that even if the woman was working, the father of the family should be able to support the family, with the mother earning only extra income. Several women stated that as far as domestic tasks are concerned men were not as good as them, that men's involvement in domestic tasks should be limited to larger jobs, and that even then men should only be helpers rather than the ones responsible for the tasks. This belief was shared by both older and younger women, and across a range of socio-economic groups. Lidka, a divorced office worker with a secondary education, had a view similar to that of Basia, a young, married speech pathologist.

> Maybe I am old fashioned, but I think that certain things will not be done as well by a man as they would be done by a woman. A man may be able to cook but he won't do it as well as a woman does. But with larger tasks such as washing windows men should help (Lidka 1995).

> Now on ads only men wash babies' hair, only men wash them. I mean a man certainly can do it, certainly this is not caused by any differences, but after all you can't deny that a woman has a different attitude to a child and nothing can substitute for a mother. It doesn't matter how hard a man tries, he can't (Basia 1995).

The vast majority of women interviewed saw family, children, grandchildren and more rarely a good relationship with their husband as the most important part of their life. The importance of the family network and the closeness of individual family members were emphasized. For example, one woman referred to both her son and her daughter-in-law as her children. While some women mentioned work as a significant part of their self-fulfillment, this was not the dominant response. Wanda, an administrative worker for the Katowice council, believed that it was impossible for a woman to have less family centred values.

> Definitely family. I think it is genetically programmed. We can't put our jobs first or career first (Wanda 1995).

Only Joanna, a retired bureaucrat and self-proclaimed community activist and feminist, affirmed the importance of professional success, but even she saw it in the context of her family.

> Fulfillment through marriage, fulfillment through motherhood and fulfillment at work because it's all connected. Those things can't be separated from each other unless you are not ambitious in terms of your career. But I was ambitious and when I achieved something it gave me great joy, but it wasn't my only joy because I was equally happy when my husband achieved things (Joanna 1995).

In the context of such a value system it is not surprising that numerous women had very negative attitudes towards attempts by some political lobbies to provide women with similar work opportunities to those available to men. Numerous women interviewed in 1999 were critical of the proposed raising of the women's retirement age to 65. They

believed that this proposal was promoted by individuals they called 'businesswomen' who were unfamiliar with the needs of an average Upper Silesian woman. The interviewees believed that women should be able to retire at fifty-five, arguing that at that stage women are already tired and old. Grażyna argued that if a woman worked for twenty years and also brought up children she should be allowed to have some rest. Most of the participants did not understand the reasoning behind delaying the retirement age for women as a move aiming to secure a larger sum of money for women to retire on.[38]

Not surprisingly, most of the participants did not see feminism as relevant to them. Three young women believed that in a small Silesian town there was no room for feminists as there was nothing they could fight for there!

The traditional approach to gender roles and family dominant in Upper Silesia resulted in women in the region having a more positive attitude to the image of Matka Polka. But the image's positive associations did not finish with her domestic responsibilities. In contrast to the participants from Kraków, most of whom did not understand the image in terms of patriotism, several Upper Silesian women associated the image of Matka Polka with a patriotic Silesian woman who is simultaneously proud of her regional identity and proud of bringing her children up in the love of their fatherland, Poland, a woman producing many sons who could defend and serve their country.

[38] This could be explained by the fact that the retirement pensions are so low that any changes to them are virtually irrelevant. It is also possible that the women assumed that the level of pensionswas decided by the government rather than accumulated by the worker herself over her working life.

> This expression was formed to describe women who would have seven sons who would become soldiers, so it's some kind of stereotype (Wanda 1995).

> Ladies here in Silesia who had five sons and they all went to the army and some of them died, that's what I associate with Matka Polka (Bożena 1995).

This difference between the attitudes of Upper Silesian women and women from Kraków towards the image of Matka Polka can be explained in terms of the political history of the two regions. It makes sense that in Silesia, which for a long time had to fight for its national identity, the image of Matka Polka as the patriotic protector of Polish nationhood had much more significance than in Kraków, whose Polish identity was never questioned. This was particularly highlighted by the statement of 60 year-old Lidka, who believed that the fact that Upper Silesia is now Polish decreased the political significance of the image of Matka Polka.

> Well ... I am not a typical Silesian woman so I can't tell, but this was an expression which was relevant in the past, when Silesia was Germanised, so Poles were saying that Silesian women were Matka Polkas, but now we are all Matka Polkas (Lidka 1995).

8.6 The Communist Woman in contemporary Upper Silesia

Despite the fact that numerous women who participated in my research believed that during the communist period life in Upper Silesia was better than life after the post-1989 changes, the majority of them did not have a positive attitude towards the image of the

Communist Woman.[39] The only positive response to the question regarding Communist Woman came from participants who associated the image with a strong woman. Three more women associated the image with an activist, but their response cannot be seen as a positive one. Several women mentioned that they associated the term 'communist woman' with women tractor drivers. Some women made a link between the image of the Communist Woman and a Russian woman. This attitude pointed to the power of propaganda in the early communist period, and simultaneously reflected the suspicion with which the Polish people approached images presented to them during that time. Fifty year-old high school geography teacher Jadwiga, when asked about her associations with the image answered:

> A woman on a tractor [laughs], I don't remember this at all. This is more a Russian image when women work leaders were riding on tractors, trying to plough more fields. It was more in my childhood (Jadwiga 1999).

But the image of the Communist Woman also evoked another association. For example, Teresa simply associated it with a woman oppressed by the realities of life during the communist period, a woman who was 'standing in queues, long queues. Burdened with all the duties'. In contrast Grażyna disputed the existence of the Communist Woman completely:

> This is funny too. I don't think she existed. People talk about the commies all the time now, but there were no commies, we never had them. So it's a stupid saying (Grażyna 1999).

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[39] Women who were interviewed in 1995 were not asked what they associate with the image of the Communist Woman, therefore my analysis relies on responses of the women interviewed in 1999.

This response is related to the quite common attitude of many Poles who argue that during the communist period there were no real or true communists at least among regular Polish people.

8.7 New Polish Woman in Upper Silesia.

The majority of Upper Silesian participants did not feel a strong link between themselves and the image of the New Polish Woman. Most of them were aware of the nature of the images promoted by the media in contemporary Poland but did not regard these as representative of Upper Silesian women. As far as the images of women promoted in magazines went, the women believed that they were simply unrepresentative because magazines showed specific women who were interesting and therefore could not be representative of average women and their mundane daily experiences.

> It's obvious that they [magazines] wouldn't show everyday people or do an interview with them. So those successful women have to achieve something to make the magazine interested in them (Iwona 1999).

Numerous women believed that the dominant image of women promoted in contemporary Poland by the media was that of the businesswoman. Some interviewees indicated that they were not necessarily comfortable with that image. Grażyna questioned the reasoning behind celebrating the image of the businesswoman as the preferred model of womanhood, and believed that the real hard work and challenges were located at home rather than in the workplace. This does not mean that the participants ignored the changes in the lives of Upper Silesian women that lead to their greater involvement

outside the home. A number of women believed that one of the main changes that took place in the lives of Upper Silesian women after 1989 was the changed model of the family that allowed women to work outside the home and placed greater emphasis on self-fulfillment through activities unrelated to the domestic sphere. Beata, a 28 year-old secretary studying social work, stated:

> I think women became more self-confident, they know now that they can find fulfillment through work and not just family. I think this is the main change. The model of the family has changed and not only the father but also the mother is earning the money. It is not assumed that the woman will go on child-rearing leave because if the woman has a better position and is earning better money the father would stay at home (Beata 1999).

Despite the fact that most of the Upper Silesian participants did not identify themselves with the image of Contemporary Polish Woman, most did not think that women from Upper Silesia were different to women from other regions of Poland. Kinga argued that the only difference between Upper Silesian women and other women existed on the level of stereotypes.

> My friends are not different at all; my girlfriends are just like women living in Toruń or Kraków or Amsterdam. But the stereotype tells us that Silesian women are very family centred, they value family very much and everything else that is associated with a stereotypical image of women (Kinga 1999).

The diminishing difference between Silesian women and women from other regions was explained by some of the interviewees in terms of the influx of people from other regions of Poland.

> I think those differences are becoming less strong. Maybe it's due to political or cultural factors, I don't know. Maybe in typical Silesian families in coalmining suburbs where a lot of men work down in the mines it's still like that and here in the middle of Katowice where there are a lot of people from other regions of Poland those differences are less evident (Beata 1999).

But some participants believed that Polish women are often different to women from other countries, such as German women.

> Well I only came into contact with Germany and I think that in appearance and what they wear there is a difference. I think that Polish women are more concerned about appearance. German women are not. They don't worry if they are thin or fat, they buy clothes and don't worry if everything matches tastefully. They are very clean, they are clean and have greater choice of clothing but they don't have such good taste (Ania 1999).

The attitudes of the Upper Silesian women towards the three dominant images reflected values prevailing in the region. Therefore their positive associations with the image of Matka Polka cannot be seen as surprising. Similarly, the scepticism with which they responded to the image of the New Polish Woman can be understood in terms of a regional culture that values the family above everything else. But these attitudes to the dominant images also strongly reflect the economic conditions prevailing in the region which can be seen as preventing women from leading less family centred lives. The fact that Upper Silesians had much less to say about the image of the Communist Woman than their Krakowian counterparts indicates a significant regional difference in experience and therefore in attitudes. For the Upper Silesian women the communist era was not as strongly associated with women having to work outside the home, because of

the relative prosperity of the region and tradition of women not working. Nor were they as badly affected by shortages of food and other products as women from other regions such as Kraków. Therefore the contrast between their lives before 1989 and after 1989 was less that it was for Krakowian women – particularly as the economy of Upper Silesia has declined rather than blossomed in the free market era. In an area suffering economic decline women may find it very difficult to reflect any image other than that of the family oriented wife and mother.

8.8 The case studies

Similar attitudes to the images of women do not mean, however, that all women from Upper Silesia have been influenced by the post-1989 changes in the same manner. The case studies of two women presented here illustrate this. Jola comes from a traditional Upper Silesian family, completed secondary nursing school, is married and has two children. Jaga is single, tertiary educated and comes from a comfortable middle class family. They were both born in Upper Silesia and both identified themselves as Silesian women. But they have experienced the changes that took place in Upper Silesia as a consequence of the post-1989 political, economic and social transformation of Poland quite differently.

8.9 Jola

Jola is in her early forties. She recently started to work part-time in administration and is married to a coalminer. Until the early stages of her marriage she worked as a nurse, but throughout most of her married life she concentrated on domestic duties. Her parents were also Upper Silesians and most of the members of her extended family, as well as her friends, live in the region. Jola has two children, aged 19 and 15. Both are currently in secondary school. Her older child, who is in the final year of high school, hopes to start university studies next year. Jola lives in one of the smaller urban centers of Upper Silesia but is originally from Sosnowiec, which is located on the border between Upper Silesia and Zagłębie. She lives in a high-rise three room apartment, owned by her husband's coalmine. Jola can be seen as a typical Upper Silesian woman, and there is only one factor that makes her quite different from the statistically average woman from the region. Jola and her family are not Catholics but members of another church (which will not be identified here for confidentiality reasons). This makes Jola quite unusual in a country where 91 per cent of the population declare themselves to be Roman Catholic (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 1999).

Jola is very happy with her town, which she sees as quiet, free of traffic jams, and convenient for all services. She also believes that it has a microclimate that makes it less polluted than other parts of Upper Silesia. She identifies herself as a Silesian woman but she is not certain what this means, especially since people from other regions of Poland do not recognize her by her Silesian accent. She was quick to emphasise that she also

identifies herself as a Polish woman 'because regardless of where you live, you are still Polish'. At the same time, however, she realizes that there are differences and conflicts between Upper Silesia and other regions of Poland, which she links to issues of national identity.

> I know that there are some conflicts, because when I was still unmaried there was something like that between Mysłowice and Sosnowiec because they were already from Zagłebie, and there was always this antipathy. We couldn't go there to discos, because the boys would always get in trouble. That's because in Sosnowiec they saw themselves as typically Polish and us in Silesia as Germanized, so that's why they didn't like each other.

In Jola's opinion there are some differences between Upper Silesian women and women from other regions of Poland, at least at the level of perceptions. She believes that Upper Silesian women are commonly perceived to be happy, family centred women of large build who are exemplary housekeepers. However, she argued that due to the influx of the migrant population and significant behavioural differences between Upper Silesians and people from other regions of Poland the tradition of good housekeeping is quickly disappearing from Upper Silesia. She also argued that those differences had led to a lack of social cohesion and family-like atmosphere in contemporary Upper Silesia.

> We have these neighbors above us. They came, as we say it, from Poland, and it was horrible at first because if they didn't need some food from the pot, they wouldn't put it into the rubbish bin but would throw it out the window. When we were renovating my husband took everything to the rubbish downstairs, but the others were throwing bits of concrete out the windows. And they also fight more; it's difficult to reach agreements with them, you have to be very patient to do it. In the past in Silesia, the whole street or the whole neighborhood would know each other: people knew everything about their neighbours, it was like an extended family. Now it

> has all changed because people are mixed. Now you only say hello to people and sometimes not even that.

Jola stated that the post-1989 changes had made a negative impact on her life and on the lives of the people around her. She realizes that before 1989 the standard of living in Upper Silesia was higher than in other regions of Poland and believes that in contemporary Poland not only is this not the case but the region has been more disadvantaged by the post-1989 transformation than other parts of the country. In her case the post-1989 changes led to deterioration in the economic situation of her household. For financial reasons she has had to undertake paid employment, whereas in the past her husband was able to support the whole family. Furthermore, even with both of them working the purchasing power of her household is lower than it was before 1989. When her husband started to work as a coalminer in 1980 they managed well on his wages alone despite the fact that Poland was experiencing an economic crisis and shortages of most products. For example, Jola's husband's income was substantial enough at the time of the birth of their first child to allow them to buy some baby goods that were not available in regular shops from outlets where only foreign currency was accepted.[40] Their budget enabled them to buy American dollars on the black market.

Jola subscribes to a criticism of the impact of the post-1989 changes on the everyday lives of women common to many interviewees from Upper Silesia, arguing that while before 1989 people had an excess of money but were unable to buy anything with it, since 1989 everything is available in shops but people cannot afford to buy it. Despite

[40] The so called 'Pewex' shops were run by the Polish government. Many western imports not available in normal shops could be bought there with foreign currency.

this, however, she perceived the availability of products as a positive factor and had unpleasant memories of food, clothing, cigarette and alcohol ration coupons. At the same time she is very concerned that she cannot afford to buy chocolate or apples for her children every day as she has to restrict her grocery shopping to basics. Before 1989 she was able to buy anything that was available.

Jola's negative attitude towards the post-1989 economic changes is juxtaposed with her positive attitude to the political changes. She believes that Polish people currently have more political freedom and freedom of expression. She also pointed to other changes that she is happy about. According to her observations, since 1989 children of all women, regardless of whether they are working or not, have been able to attend kindergartens as long as their parents are able to make the payments. She remembers that before 1989 women had to show an employment certificate before their children could be considered eligible for any available kindergarten places.

Jola appreciated the fact that until recently she did not have to work. She explained that there were two main reasons why she stopped doing paid work in the past. First, her shifts and her husband's shifts were clashing, which was difficult for a young married couple, and made her husband particularly unhappy. Second, she wanted to take care of her children on a full-time basis, because she strongly believed that kindergartens or grandparents cannot substitute for maternal attention. This attitude towards the appropriate way of caring for one's children is compatible with Jola's conservative views on the family and on the appropriate roles of men and women within it.

> The father should be the leader, he should protect them and provide for them. And the wife should have a complementary role, she should support him in his duties, support his decisions, of course only if they are good and have a positive influence on the family. And she should be a good wife, good housekeeper. So really a woman has so many jobs: she is a nanny and a mother and a wife and a cook and a cleaner. And she should fulfil them as best she can.

It is important to understand that Jola's attitude towards the gender division of roles cannot simply be seen as a consequence of her Upper Silesian heritage. It should also be understood as a function of her religious background, as she and her family belong to a church that has quite a traditional approach to men's and women's roles. It should also be noted that while Jola expressed a very traditional attitude towards men's and women's roles and does perform the majority of domestic tasks, her husband actively participates in housework too. On the days when he is home earlier than Jola he cooks dinner, and in her opinion 'does a good job'. Recently he has also started baking cakes, and was actually busily baking while Jola was being interviewed.

In light of her traditional views about women's role in the family it is not surprising that Jola had a positive attitude to the image of Matka Polka. This is despite the fact that in her opinion the image was more representative of the social position historically held by women in Upper Silesia than the contemporary situation. She associated the image with:

> A typical Silesian woman. Because those women participated in the life of the coalmine and in family life. They would meet other coalminers; when the miners were coming up they would be standing there waiting for their husband. Because every miner's wife is afraid about whether her husband will come up or not.

Jola's positive view of the image of Matka Polka was connected to her belief that historically mothers in Upper Silesia held a very prestigious position in their families, with children showing a lot of respect to their mothers. She believes that this is no longer the case in Upper Silesia.

Despite Jola's positive experiences during the communist period she does not see herself as a reflection of the image of the Communist Woman, which she understands in terms of an activist and a member of the communist party. Furthermore, she believes that the concept of the Communist Woman is merely an idealized image and not a true representation of women who lived during the period.

Jola reads women's magazines sporadically but believes that because they focus on women with perfect appearances the women shown in them are not representative of the everyday reality of Polish or Upper Silesian women. At the same time, however, Jola's perception of New Polish Woman is very much the one promoted by women's magazines.

> I think she wants to be independent financially and I think that such a woman wants to work, have a responsible position at work or have her own business. And often they want to earn as much as men or even more because they think that they can be as good as men. And often it's true.

Jola believes that Silesian women do not always fit this image, with many women entering paid employment only out of necessity rather than career interests. She believes

that she herself does not reflect any of the three dominant images of women, but rather adopts some of the aspects of all of them and combines them with other attributes that are exclusively hers. At the same time she is quite concerned that she herself does not fit the image of the New Post-1989 Polish Woman as she is not interested in a career or money. Her family life is the most important thing to her. This was not the only concern expressed by Jola. In fact the entire interview with her was filled with concern about the current situation of her family and other families in Upper Silesia. The post-1989 changes have not only led to the deterioration of Jola's standard of living but also to the disappearance of a predictable, secure and familiar lifestyle where a job in a coalmine could guarantee a good wage, an apartment and a secure future for coal miners and their families. It can be assumed that this lifestyle will never again be available in Upper Silesia. For Jola that means an insecure future without great potential for improvement. But as the next case study illustrate's not all Upper Silesian women have been affected by the post-1989 changes in this way.

8.10 Jaga

Jaga is 34 year-old and works as an English language lecturer. Due to the nature of her work she has longer annual leave than most people and spends most of her summer holidays traveling to the United Kingdom and other countries. She lives by herself in a large, older-style apartment in Katowice. Her mother lives nearby and Jaga spends a lot of her time at her mother's place, where she also eats her dinner. Her father, who is dead, was a Silesian with a part-German background. Her mother was born in the Eastern part

of Poland. Jaga is very attached to Katowice and feels that Upper Silesia is where she belongs. She explains her sense of belonging in terms of feeling comfortable in the locality and knowing that her home is in Katowice. At the same time, however, she emphasizes that despite being very fond of the Silesian culture symbolized by familioks, coalmining families and Silesian tradition, she is not part of it. In her opinion the fact that she is not from a coalmining family and that she also has very strong links with her mother's home region separates her from this tradition. Interestingly, she also pointed to her approach to window washing as one of the factors setting her apart from traditional Upper Silesian culture.

> I should wash my windows too for Christmas, but I am not intending to do it, so I am not part of this culture, I am completely different to other Upper Silesian woman. I have a lot of students who come from such simple but very good traditional families, and I can recognize it immediately. They are people who have good 'kindershtuba'[41] they are well behaved, very polite, they have good hearts and there is this order in their life, they have their hierarchy of values and they stick to it.

Jaga spent a lot of time in her mother's home region and therefore felt able to compare Upper Silesia to other regions of Poland. In her opinion differences between Upper Silesia and other regions of Poland do exist, even if only on the level of stereotypical perceptions and images.

> For years Silesia was associated with those miserable mines. There was always this image of a miner who ran to the mine and spent hours of hard work there, and he would bring money for the wife who was at home and

[41] The term kindershtuba is borrowed from the German language. One reason for borrowing it is that there is not a sufficient equivalent term in Polish, or in English for that matter. Kindershtuba means a way of bringing up the children that results in them being very well behaved, respectful of their elders, polite, hardworking, obedient, observant of cultural and moral traditions, and so on.

> took care of the children. So there is this stereotype, although more educated people known that it's more complex. But on the other hand the East of Poland is known as very messy, because Silesians are such good housekeepers with their clean windows, spotless curtains and so on. And Galicja has a reputation of being more untidy and when you are there you can see that it's true.

In Jaga's opinion the stereotype of the Silesian woman – a perfect housekeeper staying at home and taking care of her children – is becoming less and less relevant as increasing numbers of women have to work due to their financial circumstances, thus leding to the gradual disappearance of the Silesian family. In Jaga's opinion this is regrettable and cannot be compensated for by the fact that women are now able to seek self-fulfillment outside the home, as their lack of education prevents them from finding employment that would allow them to gain this fulfillment.

Jaga experienced the post-1989 changes more positively then Jola. In her view the most important impact of the 1989 transformation was the increase in political freedom. For her this meant predominantly the ability to travel freely to other countries. She also appreciated not having to queue for most basic items, which she perceived as humiliating. She also believed that in general the post-1989 changes led to the improvement of employment opportunities for women, as many Western firms offering attractive positions and wages have established branches in Poland. Simultaneously she acknowledges that there is a lot of unemployment in Poland, and links this to the lack of and tradition of retraining and career changes.

Jaga's generally positive approach to the changes that took place in Poland after 1989 did not mean that she was not conscious of the disadvantaged position Upper Silesia found itself in after the transformation.

> You have to go back here to the times of the Gierek[42] era, when Silesia was favoured. I remember when I was visiting my mother's family they always tHaught that people here were better off, that there was more in the shops here. So Silesia felt those changes in a very brutal way, because it was relatively prosperous. The coalminers stopped earning relatively good money, they are worse off now. Before 1989 they had various privileges such as special shops. Now all this has finished, so many people from here experience the changes in a more negative way.

Jaga also believes that the changes had a more dramatic impact on women from Upper Silesia than women from other regions. In her opinion the 1989 changes forced women who traditionally concentrated on domestic duties to seek employment outside the home. This greater participation in employment led to different outcomes for different groups of women. While well educated, enterprising women have been able to take advantage of the changes in Poland's economic system, less educated, more family oriented women have been unable to find a place in the new reality.

Jaga's concerns about the impact of the post-1989 changes on the lives of Upper Silesian women are connected to her quite conservative approach to family. She is single and does not have children, but believes that if she found the right person she would like to marry and have children. In her opinion children should be brought up by the mother at least until they are one and a half or two year-old, and she sees leaving children in the

[42] Gierek was the first secretary of United Workers Party from December 1970 to September 1980.

care of 'strangers' as inappropriate. The only other carer she sees as adequate is a grandmother. She herself had very fond memories of having her mother around when she was a child.

> My mother didn't work when I was small so in that way we were a typical Silesian family; I didn't walk around with a key on my neck,[43] I was taken care of and had a warm meal when I came home after school.

While having a traditional approach to childcare, Jaga does not necessarily support a model of the family where the father is the most powerful figure. In her opinion despite the fact that some Upper Silesian people still believe that the father should be the head of the family and the main decision maker, contemporary family relationships should be based on partnership. However, she was quick to add that in some matters, such as the choice of car, leaving the decision to the man might be appropriate, while for other matters, including the upbringing of children, the decision should be shared.

Interestingly, despite her relatively traditional approach to family and gender roles, Jaga expressed quite a negative attitude towards the image of Matka Polka.

> I have this image of a woman dragging shopping bags, followed by a flock of children. I really dislike this expression. I have some masochistic associations with it; some martyr who sacrifices her life for her children, her home and her husband, and none of her life belongs to her. It's very negative.

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[43] Children in the early years of primary school often have only two or three hours of classes and if both of their parents work they either attend after school care or go home by themselves. The parents put house keys on a string around the child's neck to prevent them being lost.

At the same time, like many other Upper Silesian women, Jaga is aware of the patriotic context of the image of Matka Polka.

> Matka Polka has a traditional historical meaning, when the mothers really sent their sons to war and waited patiently to see if they would or would not come back. And the boys would go with their crosses for the road, to fight for a free Poland.

Jaga has negative associations with the image of the Communist Woman. She does not associate it with communist ideology or the privileges enjoyed by women during the period, but with the pre-capitalist bureaucracy and bad service.

> I thought of the Communist Woman when I went to some office and somebody treated me badly, implying that she was an important lady behind the desk and I was a little unimportant person. So I associate office clerks with the Communist Woman, and it's a negative association.

Jaga sees the image of the New Polish Woman as that of someone who is very busy, combining family life and the responsibilities of a demanding professional job that often involves overtime. While she emphasized her support for women being able to choose if they wanted to concentrate on family or pursue a career, she argued that the image of the New Polish Woman, together with the economic and social conditions prevailing in Poland in general and Upper Silesia in particular, placed women in a very difficult situation. The double burden of paid employment and domestic responsibilities, in Jaga's opinion, often led to women neglecting themselves as well as having low self-esteem. This low self-esteem arises from the fact that women are conditioned to think that they should be good housekeepers, but due to their work outside the home they have

no time to perform domestic tasks to their satisfaction. Jaga also mentioned that more ambitious women with demanding careers feel guilty that they do not dedicate enough time to their children and fear that their children will grow up not being close to them.

Jaga made the connection between women's low self-esteem and the nature of the images of the New Polish Woman presented in women's magazines.

> When you look through *Twój Styl*, for example, you see images of successful women, super businesswomen, who earn very good money, buy the most expensive cosmetics and drive expensive cars. I think this creates a feeling of inferiority in women. They wonder why they can't be like that. So they create this artificial model of womanhood that is not really achievable for women, but it creates all those anxieties.

Jaga stated that she tried not to take articles in women's magazines too seriously, but still disliked the currently promoted model of New Polish Woman, seeing it as one-sided and discriminatory towards women who want to concentrate on motherhood and domestic responsibilities. Jaga asserted that she herself did not fit any of the three dominant images. She did not see herself as reflecting in any significant way Matka Polka, the Communist Woman or the New Polish Woman, but argued that this lack of definition was in itself one of the aspects of the real New Polish Woman.

8.11 Conclusion.

The lives of the women from Upper Silesia who were interviewed for this study reflect the complex social, economic and cultural processes that have taken place in their

locality throughout the history. The participants' attitudes towards work, family and the post-1989 changes, and the way in which they approached the three dominant images of women available to them, were notably different from those of the women from Kraków. This is true for all the interviewees from Upper Silesia, including the two women presented in the case studies, despite the fact that Jaga and Jola have been affected by the changes in different ways. Jaga has not been disadvantaged by the post-1989 changes and her concerns about their negative impact are not of a personal nature but rather focus the impact of the changes on traditional social conditions that she values. In contrast, Jola has been personally disadvantaged by the changes. What Jaga and Jola have in common is support for the customary Upper Silesian way of life characterized by a traditional approach to family and the division of labour. This is also true for most of the other Upper Silesian women interviewed. It shows in their positive associations with the image of Matka Polka and in their suspicion of the image of the New Polish Woman with her focus on career and financial independence. These attitudes in themselves mean that in general Upper Silesian women are not able to respond to the changes of 1989 in ways that would allow them to take advantage of new opportunities.

However, what most sets women from Upper Silesia apart from women from Kraków is the fact that the post-1989 changes have affected Upper Silesia in a negative way while the general social and economic conditions in Kraków have improved. Therefore, for many Upper Silesian women reflecting the image of New Polish Woman is not possible due to both social traditions encouraging them to concentrate on the domestic sphere and

the fact that they simply do not have the same career and social opportunities as women from Kraków.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The changes that took place in Poland as a consequence of the 1989 revolution had a significant impact on the lives of Polish women. One outcome of those changes was the ability of some women to become upwardly mobile. At the same time, however, other women became disadvantaged. While the rules governing the ability of individuals or groups in post 1989 Poland or groups to benefit or be adversely affected by the changes have been quite fluid, this thesis has demonstrated that locality is one of the key factors determining the nature of women's responses. Using material gathered through sixty interviews with women living in Upper Silesia and Kraków, the thesis has provided an analysis of the relationship between place of residence and women's experiences of the political, economic, social and cultural changes that followed the fall of communism.

The revolution in Poland led to the creation of very complex and at times contradictory political, economic and social structures but, as this thesis has illustrated, Poland has always been a complex structure. Its geopolitical situation placed the integrity of the country under constant threat. Poland was frequently invaded, partitioned or at least influenced by neighbouring political and economic powers. The period of partitions and the communist period are the clearest examples of times when Poland was not an independent nation. The period of partitions was characterized by the uneven development of different regions of Poland, and this contributed to the contemporary complexity of Poland as a structure. The inheritance of such uneven development is still relevant today and has a visible impact on the lives of modern Polish women and the

manner in which they have responded to the post-1989 changes. During the communist period Poland continued to be a very complex structure. The economic and social systems of the country were not totally communist. Some forms of private ownership and private enterprise continued to exist throughout the entire period. Poland was also never an egalitarian society, as socio-economic background and gender continued to influence the lives of individuals and groups. All these factors affected the ability of contemporary Polish women to find their place in post-1989 Poland.

The complexity of Poland as a structure is reflected in the nature of the images of women that have been promoted in the country. The three dominant images addressed in this thesis – Matka Polka, the Communist Woman and the New Polish Woman – not only demonstrate the complexity of Polish society and culture but also illustrate that the impact of locality on the lives of Polish women is relevant on two levels, national and local. While all three images have been promoted in the Poland as a whole and reflect the conditions and values prevailing throughout Poland at the time of their creation, the manner in which women have responded to these images is informed by the specific political, economic, social and cultural conditions prevailing in their place of residence.

The three dominant images of women have been constructed largely in response to sweeping changes in the geopolitical situation of Poland. The image of Matka Polka was created as a consequences of the partition of the country. During that time Poland did not exist on the political map of Europe, and the cultivation of Polish national culture and tradition was exiled from the public arena to the private sphere. The image of Matka

Polka shows women as patriotic defenders of the Polish nation and is closely linked to the Catholic religion dominant in the country. Despite the fact that Matka Polka is a family centred figure, her role in her family and in the broader society gave women a significant level of autonomy and power.

The image of Communist Woman was created as a consequence of another change to the map of Europe: its division by the iron curtain. The image of Communist Woman is that of a woman working outside the home and actively participating in the public life of her country. According to government propaganda, the political and economic systems of communist Poland liberated women and freed them from any form of gender discrimination. In practice, however, women were disadvantaged by communism in a different but no lesser way than capitalism. As a consequence of being employed outside the home, but at the same time having to perform the great majority of domestic tasks, women found themselves carrying a double burden of labour. The problematic nature of this double burden was strengthened by the economic difficulties Poland experienced that resulted in acute shortages of foodstuffs and other essential products and services.

The image of the New Polish Woman incorporates aspects of the images of Matka Polka and Communist Woman as well as new characteristics, some of which are imported from the West, others reflecting the cultural values specific to contemporary Poland. The image of the New Polish Woman shows women as modern, sexually liberated and independent. It shows women working outside the home in interesting and lucrative occupations, and most importantly it presents them as very similar to women from any

other developed countries. At the same time, however, the New Polish Woman is expected to nurture her Polish identity, focus on her appearance, ensure that she is attractive to men, and secure a partner who is preferably her husband and the father of her children. As a consequence of such complex qualities, the image of New Polish Woman is very contradictory and practically impossible for women to follow.

This thesis illustrates that Polish women do not simply adopt the dominant images presented to them but instead negotiate them in ways that most accurately reflect their own circumstances. While all three images have been promoted throughout Poland, women residing in different regions of the country have responded to them differently. The responses of women residing in Upper Silesia and Kraków provided in Chapters 7 and 8 have demonstrated this. The specific economic, cultural and social conditions and values characterizing the regions are reflected in women's responses to the images of womanhood, which in turn have affected their ability to take advantage of the post-1989 changes.

Most of the Upper Silesian women who participated in this research had a more traditional approach to the family and to women's roles within it than the women from Kraków. Upper Silesian women were more likely than Krakowian women to have a positive attitude to the image of Matka Polka and to adopt some of its attributes in their everyday lives. Most of the Upper Silesian women also believed that they did not fit the image of the New Polish Woman promoted in contemporary Poland. This attitude is making it difficult for them to benefit significantly from the political, economic, social

and cultural changes that have taken place in Poland since 1989. This is the case despite the fact that not all Upper Silesian women have been materially affected by the post-1989 transformation in the same way. The case studies of Jaga and Jola show that while the diversity among experiences of Upper Silesian women has to be acknowledged, commonalities determined by locality are evident despite different personal circumstances.

During the communist period Upper Silesia enjoyed a great economic boom, but after the post-1989 restructuring of the Polish economy it went into a drastic economic decline. This fact, combined with traditional attitudes to the gender division of labour and attachment to a disappearing traditional Upper Silesian lifestyle characterized by families supported by sole male breadwinners, has led to contemporary Upper Silesian women finding themselves in a disadvantaged position. The lack of employment opportunities for women in the region has contributed further to the broadly negative impact of the post-1989 changes on the lives of Upper Silesian women.

In contrast to Upper Silesian women, women from Kraków have found themselves in a much better situation. The fact that their locality has benefited from the post-1989 changes, combined with their less traditional approach to the dominant images of women and greater support for the image of New Polish Woman, has resulted in many Krakowian women being able to improve their situation. This is especially visible among, but not restricted to, younger women. The positive impact of the changes on women from Kraków is evident despite the fact that, like women from Upper Silesia not

all Krakowian women have been affected by the transformation in the same manner. The differences between the experiences of Stanisława and Sylwia illustrate this.

In conclusion, it is important to point out that this thesis highlights only some aspects of the relationship between locality and the manner in which Polish women have responded to the post-1989 changes. More research focusing on locality and the experiences of Polish women needs to be conducted. This future research could focus in greater detail on specific aspects of the relationship between locality and Polish women's lives on national, regional and local levels. This could include an analysis of the various aspects of the relationship between locality and the social position of women during the communist era. Such research would be particularly valuable, as it could at least partly compensate for the restrictions on gender research that existed during the communist period. The need for studies addressing less dominant images of women and responses to images of women from minority groups also has to be emphasized. It can be speculated that the role of locality in the lives of lesbian women, for example, as well as women from ethnic, cultural and religious minority groups, and their responses to the three dominant images of women and to the post-1989 changes would be very different from those presented here.

Further research could also involve an exploration of applicability of regulation theory, especially as recently applied by Cox to spaces of engagement and spaces of dependence and the importance of locality to the material presented in this thesis. Additionally elaboration of an anti-essentialist class analysis of Polish society would make a very

interesting contribution to the field that has only very recently developed concerned with the diverse economies of post-socialist societies, especially since my thesis offers material that could be written up in this way

The possibilities of gender research can even go beyond the scope of those outlined above. This thesis has made a significant contribution to the geographical understanding of gender identities in post-communist Poland. However, the nature of Poland, a country of hidden diversity, cultural nuances and contradictions and most importantly a country in transition, makes any research just another step in a continuing journey.

APPENDIX 1

Recruitment of participants

In total sixty women residing in Upper Silesia and Kraków were interviewed as part of this research. The first group of interviews during which fifteen women from Kraków and sixteen women from Upper Silesia participated was conducted between May and September 1995. The second group of interviews was conducted between October and December 1999, with fifteen Krakowian women and fourteen Silesian women being interviewed.

The recruitment of the participants was a time consuming and often frustrating process. From the onset of my research I was intending to conduct long open ended interviews with only a small number of women and therefore I was confident about my ability to find a sufficient number of suitable participants through my existing networks. Those networks included family connections, the assistance of neighbors and old acquaintances, and new networks. The new networks were developed via women's organizations and academic institutions that I had come in contact with in the course of undertaking my research.

The use of personal networks was chosen over more random recruitment methods for several reasons. Firstly, I knew that the use of some popular and effective recruitment methods appropriate in other contexts could not be used in Poland. For example, it was

suggested to me in Australia that I recruit women by placing notices asking for participants in venues frequented by women, such as community houses or maternal and child health centers. This simple recruitment method was, however, impossible because such places do not exist in Poland. For example, local medical centers where mothers and children may seek medical advice are not seen as centers for community activities, but rather are perceived purely in terms of their medical purpose. Hence women would not expect to find notices at a medical clinic seeking their participation in research.

Secondly, I believed that randomly selected participants would be unsure about who I was, why I was doing this research and what questions would be asked of them and therefore would be reluctant to volunteer their time. Assurances of privacy and confidentially given by an unknown person such as myself would not be sufficient in a country where history had taught its citizens to guard their privacy in a very vigilant manner. Even after agreeing to participate, numerous women were quite unclear about the purpose of my research. My explanations supported by the official ethics committee approved explanatory statement, were not always sufficient. Questions such as 'Who are you doing it for?', 'Is it for the Polish or Australian government?', 'So why does anybody in Australia care about Poland?' were asked repeatedly, sometimes even after the interview. Thirdly, I did not think that randomly selected participants would be prepared to dedicate as much time as the interviews required.

Another method of obtaining a random selection of participants, was to advertise in a newspaper. This method would possibly reach a greater number of women and hence the

problems outlined above would have been less relevant. This method, however, was also inappropriate for several reasons. Firstly, the concept of a 'local paper' does not exist in Poland so the request for assistance in research would have to be placed in the major regional newspapers. I was skeptical about the effectiveness of such advertising as I was not sure that an average Polish newspaper reader expected to find an advertisement seeking participation in research. Placing an advertisement in the employment section would have been more effective but as I was unable to provide payment in exchange for participation and I did not think that this was appropriate.

Advertising via a newspaper could also lead to numerous undesirable outcomes. I would have had to provide my private contact number and some details about myself. I considered that this would amount to a quite significant breach of my own privacy and even security, which was particularly relevant since I was residing by myself in a house in the outskirts of Kraków. My concerns were reinforced by this popular belief, which was repeated to me by almost every person that knew about my living arrangements. It was considered unsafe for a young woman to live by herself, particularly if it was known that she was from the West and therefore it might be assumed, however wrongly, that she was in possession of a large quantity of foreign currency.

While I was confident about my ability to recruit a sufficient number of participants through my personal networks I was aware that this could lead to the recruitment of a quite homogenous group of participants as far as socio-economic status is concerned. To avoid that, I decided to use my personal contacts only as a starting point and I hoped that

this would have a snowball effect resulting in the recruitment of a diverse sample of women. To ensure that the sample was diverse I monitored closely the socio-economic background of the participants, including their level of education, family background, general standard of living and occupation. The age, marital and parental status was also recorded to insure that the sample was not significantly weighted towards one group of women.

The snowball effect worked very well and as anticipated it led to the recruitment of a diverse sample of women. The following are two examples of how this operated in practice. Through one of the contacts I made via the university I recruited Joasia, a twenty-six year old doctor from Kraków. Joasia was single and came from quite an affluent, professional family. She lived in a large house owned by her parents located in a prestigious area of Kraków. She frequently travelled overseas, spoke several foreign languages, and was at the brink of a promising, if badly paid, career. After the interview Joasia offered to ask her cleaner to participate in an interview. A few days later I interviewed Ziuta, who together with her husband and three school age children lived in a small run down flat consisting of a kitchen, and one small room. Ziuta had completed only her primary education and she used to work as a caretaker of the apartment block in which she lived. For over ten years she had been working privately as a cleaner for numerous families. Her husband was a blue collar worker. Ziuta in turn introduced me to Marcela her widowed sister who lived near by with her two teenage daughters. Marcela was an office worker struggling to support her family on one wage. She lived in a single room apartment in a house which had been the luxurious residence of one wealthy family

before the Second World War. It was now badly converted into numerous slum-like apartments. After her interview Marcela asked her neighbor Anka to participate in one of the interviews.

Bubbly Anka was then on maternity leave. She had a secondary education, had completed numerous post-secondary courses, was fluent in Spanish and French and in addition had completed her secondary education at a music school. Despite her many skills Anka had great difficulty in finding permanent employment. Her husband worked in a badly paid and insecure blue-collar job. Together with their two small children they lived in a one room flat, where the tiny entrance hall was converted into a kitchen. The flat was so small that when her husband came home for lunch I had to interrupt the interview and come back later because there was not enough room for the family to have their lunch around the table with me present. Apart from the problems associated with living in such cramped conditions Anka had another even greater concern. She was very afraid that her family would soon lose even that accommodation because the pre-war owner of the house they were living in had returned to Poland and had indicated an intention to reclaim the property[44].

I interviewed a similarly diverse group of women in the Upper Silesian city of Myslowice. When I found out that one of my neighbors, a childhood friend, had inherited a small apartment block in Upper Silesia, I asked him to enquire whether his female tenants would be willing to participate in the interviews. During his monthly rent

[44] During my 2001 visit to Poland I walked past the house in which Marcela and Anka lived. It was no longer inhabited by many families, but was converted into luxury apartments, which were up for sale.

collection trips to Upper Silesia my neighbor put the question to his tenants. All of them agreed and a month later I accompanied him to Mysłowice. After polite coffee with the family of his cousin who co-owned the apartment block, I was shown to a flat where another cousin and (as I was told) the 'black sheep' of the family resided with his partner, Dorota, and their children. The fact that the couple were not married and had had their first child when Dorota was in her mid teens was quietly emphasized to me. I was also warned in advance about the dirt and poverty as well as the alleged ignorance I would be exposed to during that interview.

Dorota and her partner lived with their three children in an apartment consisting of one room and a kitchen. Dorota was expecting another child and told me she was twenty-two years old. Her neighbors informed me in advance that she would probably lie about her age to make herself older. Dorota's partner worked as a roofer. She herself finished eight years of primary education and had never been employed outside her home. She explained that this was partly due to the fact that she had small children to care for and partly because employment was very difficult to find. She came from a poor Silesian family and in the very brief answers that she gave she indicated that poverty had always dominated her life and the lives of those around her.

I was also introduced to the residents of two other flats in the house. Justyna and Marta came from what they themselves called 'real' Silesian families which meant from families who had lived in the area for generations and in which at least some of the men worked in jobs associated with the coal industry. Both women were twenty-four years

old and married. Justyna was planning to have a child the following year, while Marta declared proudly that she was not going to have children for at least four years. They were both very happy about securing the accommodation they were now living in. Justyna's flat consisted of two rooms, kitchen and bathroom and she was very proud that in the two years since her marriage she and her husband were able to furnish the entire apartment in a comfortable way. Marta's flat consisted of three rooms, kitchen and bathroom and she and her husband were currently in the process of renovating the flat at their own expense. Marta was a trained nurse who now worked in a book shop in Katowice and her husband was a professional soldier. Justyna had finished a trade school qualification and worked in an office, while her husband worked in a blue-collar job.

Knowing that I was coming to Mysłowice to interview women from Upper Silesia, Justyna invited her friend Danka. Danka was also in her early twenties and also came from a 'real' Silesian family. Her father was a coal miner. She had finished a post-secondary two year office administration course but was currently unemployed. She was single and lived with her grandparents.

The apartment block that Dorota, Justyna and Marta lived in also had a shop on the ground floor which was rented to a couple running a second hand clothes shop. Jolanta, the forty-three year old woman who owned and managed the business with her husband, was very happy to participate in an interview. In contrast to the other participants that I interviewed that day, Jolanta was not native to Upper Silesia. She had moved there ten years earlier when her husband found a job in the steel mill. She had been to a farming

academy and for several years after the move she had found it very difficult to find employment in Upper Silesia. In the early nineties the couple opened a second-hand clothes shop. Jolanta did not like Silesia although she was very happy with the flat they lived in. She believed that in her place of origin they would not be able to secure such comfortable accommodation. She also felt happy about her financial situation although she believed that her livelihood (selling second-hand clothes) was partly the result of the living conditions for many people in Poland, where things were so bad that people had to resort to buying second hand clothes. Jolanta could not have children and she saw this as one of the great tragedies of her life.

APPENDIX 2

Interview questions

This thesis is based on research gathered through interviews with Polish women residing in Upper Silesia and Kraków conducted between May and October 1995, and October and January 1999. The fact that I conducted two series of interviews was motivated by two factors. Firstly, when this research commenced it was a part of a Masters degree. One of the conditions of upgrading to a PhD, which took place after the first group of interviews was conducted, was that I would carry out more interviews. Secondly, interviews conducted in 1995 were to some extent a pilot research. Little similar research had been carried out previously in Poland. Although, as outlined, I had a definite idea about the issues that I wanted to research, I needed to consult the women in the two areas to assess which themes were relevant to them, as opposed to what *I* thought might be relevant to them. As a result, some of the questions asked in 1995 were omitted in the interviews conducted in 1999. Omitted questions included the participants' attitude to abortion, divorce, the circumstances which led to them marrying their husband, and their knowledge of and attitude towards domestic violence. These questions were influenced by literature I had read prior to 1995 but later became less relevant to what ultimately became the focus of this thesis.

Participants were asked questions regarding their everyday experiences of living in post 1989 Poland. They were asked to describe models of womanhood promoted in

contemporary Poland and to provide their own definition of Matka Polka, the Communist Woman, and the New Polish Woman. They were also asked about their attitudes towards Kraków and the impact of the 1989 changes on the two localities. In order to identify any differences between Kraków and Silesia the participants answered questions about their perception of any differences between those localities and the women populating them.

Interview Schedule 1995

(Guidelines only)

1. Have you always lived in Kraków/Upper Silesia?
2. If I asked you to tell me a few things about your familv life what would be the first few things that come to your mind?
3. How would you describe yourself to me?
4. What do you think is the most important thing in a woman's life?
5. What role does family play in your life?
6. What is the relationship between your family life and your paid work?
7. What did your mother tell you about her life that most stuck in your mind.
8. What did your grandmother tell you about her life, or what did you mother tell you about your grandmother's life that most stuck in your mind.
9. Do you think the situation of women in Poland has changed over the time and if so what are those changes?
10. Are the lives of men different to the lives of women?
11. Are men naturally different to women?

12. What do you think is the best aspect of being a woman?

13. What do you think is the worst aspect of being a woman?

14. Could you tell me a few things about love/romance in your life?

15. What do you think about marriage?

16. How old were you when you got married?

17. Why did you decide to get married?

18. What could you tell me about your marriage?

19. What do you think about people who do not marry at all?

20. Have you had other sexual partners beside your husband?

21. What role does sex play in your life?

22. How do you think pornography which is now available in Poland influenced your married life.

23. What role do your children play in your life?

24. Do you bring up your children differently according to their gender?

25. What do you think about single mothers?

26. What do you think about divorce?

27. What role do your parents and parents in law play in your life

28. What role does the Church play in your life?

29. Who do you think should primarily responsibile for bringing up children?

30. Who should take care of domestic duties?

31. What do you think about premarital sex?

32. Do you think there is a difference between a man engaging in premarital sex and woman engaging in premarital sex?

33. What would you do/say if your twenty year-old, unmarried son told you that his girlfriend is pregnant to him?
34. What would you say/do if your twenty years-old, unmarried daughter told you she is pregnant?
35. What do you think about abortion?
36. Are you aware of the problem of domestic violence?
37. What was the most beautiful moment in your life?
38. What was the worst moment in your life?
39. Are you happy?
40. Could you give me an example of an ideal woman (it could be from a book, film, or somebody you know or even somebody you imagined).
41. What do you understand by the expression 'Matka Polka'.
42. If you could change anything and everything in your life would you change anything?
43. Would you like to say anything regarding women in Poland and the role family plays in their lives?
44. Do you think your life would be different if you lived in another region of Poland?

Schedule of questions 1999

(Guidelines only)

Section A: locality

1. How would you describe your region or your town? (culturally, economically and socially)

2. Do you like living here? Why?

3. Would you describe yourself as a Silesian or a Krakowian woman? If so, what does it mean to you? What is distinct about women from Kraków or Upper Silesia?

4. Are women from other regions of Poland different to women from Kraków/ Upper Silesia?

5. What do you generally think about women from Upper Silesia?

6. What do you generally think about women from Kraków?

(Ask only women from Upper Silesia)

7. Recently there have been a lot of reports in the Western press about the closure of mines in Silesia and associated strikes. Can you tell me anything about this?

8. Have you been involved in those actions in any way?

9. What are your networks in the region (family, friends)?

(Ask only women from Kraków)

10. What can you tell me about Nowa Huta ?

Section B: women and restructuring

11. What was your life like during the communist period? (home, work, emotionally)

12. How would you describe the life of women in general during the communist period?

13. How is it different to the lives of women today?

14. What did you think about the quality of the childcare, health care/information, consumables, freedom of speech, political representation before 1989. Has it changed?

15. It has been over 10 years since 1989. Can you describe the main changes that took place since then? How did it affect women? Specify in which area of life.

Section C: everyday life of women

16. Can you describe your average day to me?

17. Do you think that children should be with their mothers most of the time when they are little?

18. What should the role of fathers be in family life?

19. Who does the housework in your house? Which tasks do you like/dislike?

20. How would you describe an average woman of today?

21. Do you yourself fit this description?

22. What is the most important thing in your life?

23. What are your plans for your future?

Section D: representations of women

24. What does the expression Matka Polka mean to you?

25. What does the expression Communist Woman mean to you?

26. What does the expression contemporary woman mean to you?

27. Do you yourself fit into any the of above mentioned types of women?

28. What does feminism mean to you?

29. What does it mean to be a Polish woman? What does the Polish nation mean to you?

30. Are Polish women different to other women. If so what are those differences? Is it important to you?

31. What role models for women are promoted by the Polish media, church or the government?

32. Do you read magazines aimed at female readers?

33. In your opinion what should Polish women be like?

34. Would you like to add anything?

APPENDIX 3

Characteristics of the participants

Age of Participants.

At the time I conducted the interviews the youngest participant interviewed was eighteen years old and the oldest was sixty-eight years old. Most of the participants were asked directly about their age or volunteered the information themselves. In Poland asking a woman about her age can be seen as impolite therefore in some cases I had to estimate the age of a particular respondent. This estimation was usually done through a series of questions asked throughout the interview in addition to questions outlined in Appendix 2. For example I would ask a woman how old she was when she had her first child and later I would enquire about the age of her first born. This way of estimating age was quite effective and accurate and the participants were divided into four very broad age groups to reflecting specific life stages (see Table 1).

Age group	Kraków	Silesia
Young women 18 - 29	15	9
Adult women 30 - 45	7	13
Middle aged women 46 - 60	6	5
Older women + 60	2	3
Total	30	30

Table 1. Age groups of participants

The first group consisted of young women ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-nine years. Fifteen participants from Kraków, and nine residents of Upper Silesia fell into this category. Throughout the interviews it became apparent that during this period most of the women interviewed made the decisions that shaped their future. During that stage of their lives most of the women finished their secondary education and had either undertaken paid employment or had started tertiary studies. Most women in this age group were quite recently married or were anticipating marrying soon. The women also either had young children or planned to have them in the near future. Those characteristics were reflective of broad statistical trends prevailing in Poland. For example out of 219 398 marriages that took place in Poland in 1999 women between age of twenty and twenty nine were most likely to be married with 166 879 new brides falling into this category (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 1999:79). Similarly women in this age group were most likely to become mothers. In 1999 85.6 children were born per 1000 women aged between 20 and 24 years. For women aged between 25 and 29 the figure was 92.8. The average fertility rate for all age groups was 37.3 children per 1000 women (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 1999:80).

The second age group, referred to as 'adult women', included women aged between thirty and forty-five years of age. Most of the participants in this age group concentrated on paid employment and bringing up their children. In most cases their children, or at least some of their children, lived at home and the participants were not yet grandmothers.

The group of women aged between forty-six and sixty years of age were referred to as 'middle aged'. During this stage of their life most of the women who participated in my research had already brought up their families, some had became grandmothers, and although several were still working outside the home, most had already retired. The final and smallest group of participants were women over sixty years of age.

As is evident from Table 1 most of the participants (76 per cent in total) were either young women or adult women. This disproportion was planned as it was expected that the responses of those two groups of women to the changes that took place in Poland in 1989 would be the most enlightening. All of the women in these age groups remembered communist Poland (even if in the case of some younger participants those memories were quite general) and therefore could comment on the changes that took place in their lives and in the lives of other women around them as a consequence of the 1989 changes. Secondly, most of the women from these two groups were not automatically disadvantaged by their age, as was seen to be the case for some respondents from the middle aged and older women's groups. It has been reported that while young Poles are full of confidence about their future, it is those who are middle aged and older that feel disadvantaged as the consequence of current government reforms of health care, education, pensions and administration. A number of the women interviewed from the older age group felt that they were too old to adapt to the new political and economic system in Poland. Additionally at the time of the system change the women from 'young' and 'adult' groups were in diverse stages of their lives. This was reflected in their responses to the questions. Some of the women were still children themselves in

1989, others were just starting their adult life and had commenced paid employment, or a university course or were starting their own families. Other participants had already established themselves in communist Poland, they had employment and families. They had also learned skills and developed the knowledge and networks, which allowed them to operate within the communist system.

Family Structures.

Most of the participants had children. Sixty-seven per cent of women from Kraków had children and seventy per cent from Upper Silesia had children. The largest number of children that an individual participant had was five. Most of the participants started their families in their early to middle twenties. One participant, who was twenty-two years old, was pregnant with her fourth child.

The partnership status of the participants is outlined in Table 2. Most participants were married and a small number of women were in de-facto relationships, separated or divorced. This is representative of contemporary Polish society where de-facto relationships are still often viewed as inappropriate (Duch-Krzystonek 1995:180). Similarly divorce is perceived in a very negative light (Kofta and Domagalik 1999:134). Most of the women who stated that they were single (i.e they had never married and were not in a de-facto relationship) were young women.

Partnership status	Kraków	Upper Silesia
Married	20	21
De-facto	3	1
Divorced/separated	3	2
Widow	3	2
Single	6	4
Total	30	30

Table 2. Partnership status of participants

Occupation

Most of the women who participated in the interviews were gainfully employed (see Table 3). It is important to note that some women fell into several categories, for example they were both retired and employed. Regulations in Poland allowed retirees and pensioners to undertake paid employment. Similarly some women who were employed also studied. One woman who was performing home duties was involved in further education. It is important to note that although Poland has experienced high unemployment since 1989 with 18 per cent of women being unemployed (Główny Urząd Statystyczny 2000b:108), only two participants stated that they were unemployed. The data gathered in the table below was based on the respondents answer to the question 'Are you working at the moment?'. The respondents who indicated that they were employed were not necessarily employed on a full time or permanent basis. Some of the

participants may not have been registered as officially employed and were either working on a cash in hand basis or in family businesses.

Occupation	Kraków	Silesia
Employed outside home	19	21
Unemployed	1	2
Home duties	2	2
Materninty leave	1	
Studying	5	4
Retired/pensioner	4	3

Table 3. Occupation of the respondents at the time of the interview

Education Level.

Participants were asked about their level of education. The participants were categorized according to whether they had already achieved a certain level of education or were currently working towards it. Participants who were included in the category 'secondary' finished eight years of primary school followed by either four years of high school, five years at a technical school, or two to three years at a trade school.

Level of Education	Kraków	Upper Silesia
Tertiary and above	13	8
Post-secondary	3	1
Secondary	12	20
Less then secondary	2	1
Total	30	30

Table 4. Level of Education of participants (either already completed or being undertaken during the time of the interview)

Nature of Employment.

The table below shows the nature of the employment of participants who were employed outside the home at the time of interview. For practical reasons they have been categorized into three broad categories: professional, white collar and blue/pink collar. Finding out the participants' occupation was not always a straightforward process. A simple question 'What is your occupation?' often led to participants asking me if I meant their 'trained' occupation or their 'performed' occupation. For example a young Silesian woman who had finished training as a pastry cook at trade school stated that her occupation was as a pastry cook, but she was actually the owner and manager of a bar. A twenty-nine year-old woman from Kraków who had taken over the running of the family business (also a bar) after the death of her husband and was preparing herself to get

involved in another family business (fruit wholesale), believed that she did not have a formal occupation as such because she did not finish her secondary education.

Nature of Employment	Kraków	Upper Silesia
Professional	5	5
White Collar	9	12
Blue/Pink Collar	5	5
Total	19	21

Table 5. Nature of employment performed by participants at the time of the interview.

Private business owners

Women working in, and in particular managing small and medium sized businesses in post-1989 Poland have received a significant amount of coverage in both academic writings (Lisowska 1996, Lisowska 2001, Dukaczewska, 1995) and in the popular media, including women's magazines[45]. The image of the businesswoman is an important part of the models of womanhood promoted in post 1989 Poland, and was mentioned by a significant number of women interviewed. In my sample the number of small businesswomen was actually quite small, particularly in Upper Silesia where only one of the interviewees owned and managed a small business, a very successful restaurant/bar, by herself. Three other women worked in small family businesses together with their

[45] For example in January 2001 several women's magazines including Przyjaciólka published articles about winners of 'Woman Entrepreneur 2000' competition organized by Avon Cosmetics.

husbands. These businesses included a second-hand clothes shop, a bar and a candy shop.

In Kraków one woman had a beauty salon, one woman managed a bar by herself and was about to get involved in another family business, one woman managed a travel agency, one woman had a small leather goods factory, one woman managed a family owned shop. Finally, one woman was involved in numerous businesses owned by her family, including a brewery, a building materials depot, a bar and various real estate investments.

Standard of Living of Participants

This was probably the hardest category to define. Participants were asked directly to describe their standard of living. Most of the answers were usually elaborate but very imprecise. Respondents would often state that their standard of living was much better than that of other people, or they would state that they 'cannot complain'. Often they would say that the economic situation in Poland in general was quite difficult but they themselves should not complain. Therefore in most cases I had to decide the category a given respondent should be placed in on the basis of a variety of questions asked throughout an interview, as well as other information volunteered during the interview. In cases where the interview took place in the home of the participant I could also observe their living conditions.

The definition of each of the categories listed in the table below, may not correspond to definitions normally associated with such categories in Australia or other Western

countries. The term 'poor' was used to describe women who lived in substandard accommodation. All the participants who shared one room flats with their husband and children were included in this category. Three women who stated directly that their financial situation was very difficult were also included in this category.

The category 'average', into which most participants from Upper Silesia and half of the respondents from Kraków were included, was the broadest one. It included all the women who themselves stated that their standard of living was average or good. All the women who said that they had enough for everything were also included in this category. However it is important to understand that 'enough for everything' ranged from being able to buy beer on hitch-hicking holidays in Poland to being able to travel abroad once a year, own a car and regularly buy new clothes. All of the women in this category were either residing in a separate flat by themselves or with their immediate family or they resided with their extended family in conditions where no more than two people lived in one room. It is important to note that numerous women who were included in this category would probably be seen as living in unacceptable living conditions by Western standards.

The category 'comfortable' included women who themselves stated that their situation was comfortable. All of them had one or two cars per household, felt that they could buy anything they wanted and they travel abroad at least once a year.

'Very comfortable' or 'wealthy' women again included women who proclaimed themselves to be in this group. In Kraków all of such women lived in their own houses, had luxury cars, frequently travel abroad and were happy about their ability to buy practically anything they desired. The only woman from Upper Silesia who fell into this category was probably an exception. She stated that her situation was extremely comfortable and she emphasized that she did not have a car or a free standing house because she was not interested in either of those things and preferred to spend her money on other pleasures.

Standard of Living	**Kraków**	**Upper Silesia**
Poor	4	2
Average	15	24
Comfortable	8	3
Very Comfortable/Wealthy	3	1
Total	30	30

Table 6. Standard of Living of Participants

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