The role of grandmothers in the religious socialization of young adults in post-socialist Russia and Poland

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Building on the findings of the YARG project, this article examines the enduringly central role of (great) grandmothers in the religious lives and religious socialization of young adults in Russia and Poland. The article highlights the complexities involved in studying the transmission of religious beliefs and values from one generation to the next in social and cultural contexts where religious socialization was severely interrupted for entire generations, and where the religious 'chain of memory' to varying extents has had to be forged anew. Arguing that current theoretical perspectives on religious socialization in post-socialist contexts need to be more attentive to extended understandings of family and kin, the article focuses on the enduring influence that (great) grandmothers exert in contemporary modes of religious socialization of children and young people in Russia and Poland. In light of survey data and in-depth interviews with young adult university students in Russia and Poland, the influence of (great) grandmothers is explored in relation to three main dimensions: the inspirational, the instructive, and the supportive. The article illustrates how (great) grandmothers continue to represent a religious element in the lives of Russian and Polish young adults regardless of their own religious engagements and degrees of personal religiosity.

Keywords: religious socialization, Russia, Poland, grandmothers, religion in post-socialist societies

Introduction

For many socialist countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc, the transition to post-socialist societies took the form of a sudden, rapid, and complete overhaul of societal and cultural structures that had been in place, and indeed imposed, for several decades. This also entailed the reestablishment of religion and religious institutions which had been severely suppressed during socialist times. On the basis of an ideology of 'scientific materialism', socialist regimes developed and implemented a wide range of anti-religious measures, including the imposition of strict restrictions on the activities of religious organizations and concentrated efforts to 'undermine religion's traditional sources of socialization and transmission of religious beliefs' (Müller and Neundorf 2012, 560). As research on religion both during and after the fall of the Iron Curtain has been able to show, this 'state-forced secularization' appears to have been largely successful in the Soviet Union, but less so in countries such as Slovenia and Poland where overall figures of religiosity have remained high (Müller and Neundorf 2012, 564–563). There is no doubt, however, that socialist anti-religious policies were successful in disrupting the intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs and values for what Müller and Neundorf (2012, 563) refer to as the 'Cold War cohort' (people born after 1932) who grew up and were socialized under conditions

of anti-religious policies and state-forced secularization (cf. Tomka 2010, 2). By contrast, the 'post-Cold War cohort' (people born after 1976), and who were still very young at the time of the fall of the Iron Curtain, have instead experienced an altogether different type of religious socialization when compared to their parents and, in many cases, their grandparents.

Substantial amounts of research have been carried out on processes of religious change in post-socialist societies. While some (e.g. Greely 1994; Tomka 2006) have argued that the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc have been experiencing a general religious revival, others (e.g. Pollack 2008; Voas and Doebler 2011) have instead, partly on the basis of the same data, argued that the situation is more adequately understood in terms of continuous religious decline. The state of religion and religiosity throughout many post-socialist countries thus remains a contentious issue. While scholarly opinion on the matter remains divided, there is nevertheless wide agreement about the emergence of a strong link between religion, politics, and national identity (e.g. Titarenko 2008, 251). Because of the disruptions that socialist anti-religious policies caused in the transmission of religious beliefs and values between recent generations, scholarly debates on religion and religiosity in formerly socialist countries have often centered on the topic of religious socialization.

This article focuses on the enduring importance of a particular category of extended family member in the religious socialization of young adults in post-socialist Russia and Poland, namely the female (great) grandparent. Our discussion in this chapter builds on the international research project *Young Adults and Religion in a Global Perspective* (YARG, 2015–2018) that has investigated the contemporary religious subjectivities, values, and worldviews of young adult university students in thirteen countries around the world, including Russia and Poland (the YARG project is accounted for in more detail in the Introduction to this special issue).

Utilizing a combination of both surveys and in-depth interviews (conducted in 2016), the YARG data allows us to investigate how the present-day young adult generation in Russia and Poland perceive the religious instruction and socialization that they have received through their family members. In this regard, the data for Russia and Poland reveals that (great) grandmothers continue to play a particularly central role in introducing their grandchildren to religious beliefs, values, and practices. This finding is notable considering the broader socio-historical context in which today's older Russian and Polish generations have grown up and lived most of their lives. Our findings thus clearly suggest that older generations still appear to view religion as an important part of personal identity to pass on to their descendants in spite of decades of socialist state hostility towards religion and conspicuous anti-religious propaganda.

The YARG data from Russia and Poland does not, however, point to any type of general revival or revitalization of religious attitudes among the present young adult generation. Instead, both the Russian and Polish young adults interviewed generally maintain a critical distance towards religion in general, including what they have learned about religion from their older family members. Our principal aim in this article is to highlight the enduring influence of (great) grandmothers in the religious socialization of contemporary young adults in Russia and Poland, regardless of whether it has been successful or not. In other words, our aim is to highlight and illustrate the enduring role of (great) grandmothers as arbiters of religious beliefs, values, and traditions for religious, religiously indifferent, and nonreligious Russian and Polish young adults alike.

This article is divided into three main parts. In the first part, we discuss some of the main difficulties involved in researching family-focused religious socialization among young adults in post-socialist Russia and Poland on the basis of conventional theoretical perspectives on religious

socialization. In what partly reflects the approach to religious socialization outlined in the Introduction to this special issue, our discussion aligns with an understanding of socialization that acknowledges the enduring presence of conventional socialization agents while simultaneously remaining attentive to the reflexivity and personal agency involved in young adults' adoption of the beliefs and religious behavioral patterns of older family members (cf. Moberg et al. this issue). This is followed by a general account of notable developments in the religious landscapes of Russia and Poland since the fall of the Iron Curtain, including a discussion of the enduring influence of grandparents in processes of religious socialization. In the third and final part, we move to illustrate Russian and Polish young adults' views on the religious instruction and socialization they have received from their grandmothers in light of examples from in-depth interviews.

Religious socialization and young adults: the case of Russia and Poland

Theoretical perspectives on socialization have developed in many different forms. In a conventional understanding, the term 'socialization' essentially 'refers to processes whereby naïve individuals are taught the skills, behavior patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up' (Maccoby 2012, 13). Socialization thus denotes the processes whereby individuals gradually grow into social and cultural roles and acquire the capabilities to fashion their own behaviors and dispositions in accordance with the expectations of others (Furseth and Repstad 2006, 114). Socialization therefore needs to be understood as a process that continues, although in different forms, throughout the life-span. It is important to note, however, that conventional understandings of socialization have been subjected to repeated criticism for being based on simplistic understandings of individual learning and adaption, and over-harmonious notions about the internalization of norms (cf. the Introduction to this special issue). Subsequently developed, more critical approaches instead tend to highlight socialization as a type of social and cultural activity and practice that develops concomitantly with broader social and cultural changes (e.g. Stausberg 2006, 1754; Vermeer 2010, 106).

Socialization has for long also constituted a recurrent theme throughout many sub-disciplines in the study of religion as it pertains directly to questions about of how people become or stay religious, how particular religious sensibilities and ways of being and 'doing' religion are transmitted across generations, how these sensibilities and ways of doing religion are sustained, reproduced, regulated, and so on (e.g. Moberg and Sjö 2015, 92). Although not always explicitly framed in terms of socialization, the transmission of religious beliefs and values from one generation to the next has also constituted a key component of macro-level sociological theorizing on religious change, ranging from more 'orthodox' versions of secularization theory (e.g. Berger 1967; Bruce 2003) to 'new paradigm' perspectives (e.g. Roof 1978; 1999).

Alongside school and religious institutions, sociologists of religion have traditionally singled out the *family* as a key institution and agent in the religious socialization of children and youth (e.g. Mueller and Elder 2003). Indeed, as has been firmly empirically substantiated by numerous studies, it is considerably more likely that a person who grows up in a religious home will become and remain religious than a person who grows up in a nonreligious home. The notion that early socialization by parents and extended family tends to 'exert a lasting imprint on the religious belief orientations and commitments of their children' (Bengtson et al. 2009, 327) has likewise been widely validated by numerous large-scale studies (e.g. Glass, Bengston, and Dunham 1986; Myers 1996, 2004; Sherkat 1998; Smith 2005). Even so, the assumed importance of the family in this regard has also increasingly been brought into question (e.g. Voas and Crockett 2005). In a progressively individualistic broader social and cultural environment, parents are increasingly

granting their children more freedom and autonomy when it comes to religious matters. In addition to this, the general social and cultural context into which children are now raised and socialized is also an increasingly fast-changing one. While it would be a gross exaggeration to say that the family no longer constitutes a central locus of religious socialization, it remains the case that successive generations have become progressively less likely to socialize their children into any particular religious frameworks.

It is also worth noting that previous studies of the role of the family in religious socialization have been largely based on Western conceptions of the nuclear family and with particular emphasis on the role of parents in the rearing of their children. This conception of the family does not, however, correspond particularly well with non-Western, extended understandings of family and kin. Indeed, looking only at the European context, we find considerable variations in how the 'family' is conceived and understood between different Western-, Southern-, and Eastern European contexts. Indeed, as Bengtson et al. (2009, 341) point out: 'In general, socialization theories have tended to focus almost exclusively on the influence of parents on children without acknowledging that children are situated within a wider web of family relationships, as represented by the multigenerational family'. As they go on to argue:

> Changes to multigenerational family structures over the past few decades – a consequence of longer lives and the transformation of marital and childbearing patterns (Casper and Bianchi, 2002) – would indicate that examining the transmission of religious values and practices using traditional two generation, parent-to-child socialization models is too narrow and limiting (Bengtson et al. 2009, 328).

In addition to the above, contemporary theoretical perspectives on religious socialization would also need to be able to take into account the effects of more thoroughgoing changes in socio-political and socio-cultural climate and circumstances, such as those that followed in the wake of the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent collapse of the entire Eastern bloc. In the case of post-socialist countries, changing modes of religious socialization and the transmission of religious beliefs and values across generations have typically been approached in terms of cohort- or period effects (e.g. Voas and Doebler 2011, 43; Müller and Neundorf 2012, 563–564). But as the parents of the Russian and Polish young adults included in the YARG project belong to either the Cold War- or post-Cold War cohorts, this considerably complicates any 'generation gap'-explanations with regard to the religious socialization of our respondents (cf. Voas and Doebler 2011, 56).

The role of grandparents in religious socialization

The role and position of grandparents in various types of family dynamics constitutes a long-standing topic of inquiry in fields such as social psychology and sociology (e.g. Bengtson et al. 2002; Starchikova 2012; Goodman and Silverstein 2002). Several studies have highlighted the increasingly important role that contemporary grandparents play in the lives and socialization of their grandchildren (e.g. Bengtson 2001; Cox 2000; King and Elder 1999). Grandparents have for long commonly been taken to function as main arbiters and transmitters of 'collective memory', providing a 'cultural window into the family's history that allows grandchildren to learn more about themselves and their distant kin' (Bengtson et al. 2009, 328). In this regard, grandparents provide younger generations with broader space-time perspectives on such things as cultural traditions and ethical and moral norms (Halbwachs 1992; Salikhova and Nilova 2013, 181).

During past decades, multigenerational family structures have undergone a range of notable changes throughout many parts of the world. As peoples' life expectancy has been gradually rising across many parts of the world, including in Russia and Poland, so have the numbers of three- to four generational families (e.g. Roberto and Stroes, 1992; King and Elder Jr. 1997). In 2010, approximately 22 percent of all Russian households were intergenerational (Starchikova 2012, 143). In Russia it also remains quite common for grandparents to live under the same roof with their grandchildren and to take an active part in their upbringing. In 2005 the Russian 'Public Opinion Foundation' conducted a nationwide survey on interfamilial relationships. The results clearly revealed that Russians are widely approving of grandparents' active involvement in the upbringing of children (Vovk 2005). Similar family-patterns can be observed in Poland. In 2007, 22 percent of Polish families were multigenerational. It also remains common for Polish grandparents and grandchildren to live either under the same roof or in close vicinity to one another (Dyczewski and Jedynak 2002, 58). In addition, it is also common for Polish grandparents to take on roles as main guardians of their grandchildren. This happens, for instance, when one or both parents temporarily migrate to other EU countries for work-related reasons and leave their children in Poland under the care of grandparents (Brzezińska and Matejczuk 2011). Grandparents commonly also share in the responsibility of their grandchildren's upbringing due to an underdeveloped childcare system and the often large amounts of time spent by parents at work (Poland counting among the countries with the longest average annual working hours). In both the Russian and Polish cases, grandparents are therefore actively involved in various aspects of their grandchildren's upbringing.

Several studies on grandparent-grandchildren relationships and dynamics have also addressed gender issues (Szinovácz 1998) and highlighted how grandmothers tend to be closer to their grandchildren as compared to grandfathers and thus to generally exercise a greater degree of influence on them (e.g. Roberto and Stroes 1992, 237; King and Elder 1997, 850). Moreover, in both Russia and Poland it is considerably more common for *maternal* grandmothers to be actively involved in the upbringing of their grandchildren (and especially female grandchildren) as compared to paternal grandparents (Krasnova 2000; Farnicka 2016, 28).

Grandparent-grandchild relationships also vary over different life-stages. While the first stage mainly revolves around caregiving and helping young parents, the second stage opens up opportunities for educational activities and deeper social relations with grandchildren. The third and final stage usually involves grandparents receiving help from their grandchildren in return (Krasnova 2000). The second stage of grandparenthood is clearly the most significant in regard to grandparents' involvement in the religious socialization of their grandchildren. The role of grandparents during childhood and early adolescence was openly acknowledged by almost every Russian and Polish young adult interviewed for the YARG project who mentioned the role of grandparents during the interview. It remains the case, however, that grandchildren's recollections of the influences received from grandparents tend to be highly dependent on the current character of the relationship; the more a grandchild and a grandparent have in common, the more the influence of the grandparent tends to be openly recognized by the grandchild (Szinovácz 1998). In light of this, the accounts that the Russian and Polish young adults interviewed provided of their relationships to their grandparents merely constitutes snapshots of specific phases in life-long grandparent-grandchild relationships, which may (or may not) change in the future.

The contemporary religious landscape of Russia

Whereas religious life during the Soviet era in Russia might be described in terms of lethargy, the post-Soviet period is more appropriately described in terms of religious revival. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the religious landscape of Russia has experienced rapid and dramatic changes. The early 1990s witnessed an explosion in conversions to Orthodox Christianity followed by a sharp increase in the numbers of people who self-identify as Orthodox Christian that continued up until the 2010s (Levada Center 2011). Apart from turning to the traditionally dominant religion of Russia, increasing numbers of people now also discovered religious alternatives and either formed or joined new religious movements (Shterin 2001). The trend towards increasing interest in religion has not, however, translated into a corresponding increase in levels of religious participation; the proportion of regular churchgoers has stayed at the same level of approx. 3–5 percent over the past couple of decades (Prutskova 2015, 64; Zabaev, Mikhaylova, and Oreshina 2018, 19). Since the start of the post-Soviet Orthodox revival, the core of regular and active churchgoers has been made up of older women commonly referred to as 'babushka(s)' (Mitrokhin 2007).

The first three decades of post-socialist Russia have been characterized by three principal and particularly notable developments in the religious landscape. First among these is the re-establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and its re-emergence as central national social and cultural institution. A second notable development is the generally growing public visibility and presence of religion and religious actors. Since the early 2000s, religious actors have gradually increased their involvement and engagement in the third sector organizational field (Moscow Patriarchate 2011). The ROC also played a central role in establishing religious education in schools in 2012 (Willems 2007; Metlik 2010). In what constitutes a third significant development, the ROC has also gradually cemented its position as a central source and arbiter of social morality and national identity. This is especially the case following the passing of the law against 'publicly offending the feelings of believers', lobbied through by the Moscow Patriarchate in 2012–2013. This reflects a general tendency among former socialist countries to actively enact new forms of legislation on religion-related issues, typically with the aim of strengthening the link between national churches and the state, to legitimize political power, and to provide 'the plausibility structures for an ethnoreligious identity' (Müller and Neundorf 2012, 578). For example, the 1997 Russian 'Freedom of Conscience and Association Law' accorded Russian Orthodoxy a '"special place in Russian history and in the development of the spirituality of the Russian nation"' (Bruce 2003, 53).

Overall, however, one should be careful in taking the growing social position and status of the ROC as an indication of an increasing de-privatization of religious life. It is more adequately understood as a result of the ever-closer relationship between the ROC and the Russian core social-institutional establishment, including the state (Zabaev, Mikhaylova, and Oreshina 2018). Considering these developments, the present young adult generation of Russia has therefore grown up in a socio-historical environment, and indeed an entire socio-cultural era, that differs in many crucial respects from that of both their parent- and grandparent generations. This makes Russia a unique case for any consideration of contemporary modes of religious socialization. Russia constitutes a case where older generations often possess limited knowledge of, or lack of previous personal commitments, to religious values that they could pass on to their children. As our data shows, young adults in Russia nowadays mainly encounter Orthodox Christianity through their relationships to their grandparents (and especially babushkas).

Institutional religious socialization agents have been slowly recuperating since the early 1990s. Notable increases in the numbers of people who self-identify as Orthodox Christian is not, however, attributable to successful religious socialization (Prutskova 2015). Previous studies have been more or less unanimous in underlining the cultural, symbolic, and even patriotic connotations of self-identification with Russian Orthodox religion as a key factor when it comes to how and why people in Russia have come to identify as Orthodox Christians (Sinelina 2001, 2006, 2013). In many important respects, self-identification with Orthodox Christianity as represented by the ROC therefore often remains disconnected from the adoption of religion as a worldview or the internalization of central Orthodox Christian beliefs.

Although the religious 'chain of memory' (Hervieu-Léger 2000) in Russia has been broken for several generations, and although this continues to affect the ways in which people perceive and express religious beliefs, ideas, and values, more recent developments in the Russian religious landscape nevertheless merits close attention (Bezrogov 2002). This entails returning to central questions having to do with religious socialization: Do people discuss religious matters within their families and social circles, and if so, then how? Do parents who hold religious beliefs and views and engage in religious practices consciously attempt to pass these on to their children? Questions such are these largely remain unaddressed in the scholarship on religion in contemporary Russia.

The contemporary religious landscape of Poland

Poland is a religiously homogeneous country. Almost 90 percent of Poles belong to the Roman Catholic Church; a state of affairs that also has a considerable impact on public life and politics. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Poland's historic ethnic and religious diversity gave way to a relatively undifferentiated religious landscape with the Catholic Church as the dominant religious force. At the same time, Poland became part of the Eastern bloc. The atheist ideology imposed by the socialist state stood in fundamental contradiction to inherited Catholic tradition. The clash between the two did not, however, result in any considerable decline in religious commitment. In spite of decades of socialist anti-religious policies and propaganda, Catholic Church affiliation persisted and became increasingly associated with oppositional political activity. The alliance between Catholicism and oppositional politics also resulted in the emergence of a kind of civil religion in Poland (Mucha and Zaba 1992, 57; Byrnes 2002, 28). An adequate appreciation of the role of the Catholic Church during the socialist era is thus key to an understanding of its role and position in contemporary Polish society and culture.

The strong correlation between religiosity and nationalism in present-day Poland (McManus-Czubińska and Miller 2008, 131–132) can partly be explained by the fact that the Catholic Church has traditionally been perceived as a cornerstone of national independence and democratic opposition. Indeed, the link between Catholicism and notions of Polishness remains strong to this day. Following the political, economic, and societal transformation that commenced in 1989, Polish religiosity has undergone gradual changes. Rapid modernization and thoroughgoing structural changes have not, however, resulted in any dramatic changes in the Polish religious landscape. Religious decline as measured by conventional sociological indicators such as church attendance, religious self-identification and belonging, daily prayer, and adherence to doctrine and beliefs has been visible but by no means radical (Marody and Mandes 2017). There are many possible explanations for the relative stability in general religious attitudes in Poland. Irena Borowik (2010) singles out the following: the historical role of Catholicism in buttressing and maintaining national Polish identity; the civic role of religion and its political

instrumentalization during the transformation period; the general decline in social security caused by rapid social and structural changes; the enduring efficacy of traditional mechanisms of religious socialization; and the possibility that more significant changes in the religiosity of Poles are still not discernible on the surface although such changes might have occurred on the individual level. Although these are five separate hypothetical explanations, it is plausible to argue that each of them have played some role in the stabilization of religious attitudes among the Polish population during the past thirty years.

According to a 2015 poll by the Polish Public Opinion Research Centre, the vast majority of Poles (over 90 percent) identify as believers (CBOS 2015). Non-believers make up only a small part of the total population (approx. 5 percent). About 50 percent of Catholics in Poland report that they engage in religious practice on a weekly basis, while 36 percent report practicing irregularly. Despite stable declarations of faith and practice over time, the percentage of Poles who self-identify as religious in a way that corresponds to the teachings of the Catholic Church has, however, decreased from 66 percent in 2005 to 39 percent in 2014. This change may indicate not only a reduction in the influence of the Catholic Church; it may also point to a more general privatization of religion. Whatever the case, the Catholic Church retains a strong presence at every level of Polish society and culture.

Religious socialization in Poland is based mainly on the two social institutions of family and the Catholic Church. A well-developed system of religious education in schools is maintained through close cooperation between the Catholic Church and the Polish state. Borowik describes the predominant pattern of religious socialization in Poland as follows: 'It begins very early and religious action – such as prayers, kneeling, church attendance – is regularly repeated. Action precedes reflection about it. It is long-lasting for it is ingrained as a kind of "social instinct" with a strong element of social control and self-control' (Borowik 2010, 269). The principal aim is to instill Catholic faith and practice as a natural and taken for granted part of human life. As a side-effect of this model of religious socialization, religious self-identification, ritual, and participation generally take precedence over doctrinal issues and theological reflection. Belonging to the Catholic community thus becomes every bit as important as ascribing to its doctrine. Figures of self-reported religiosity among young adults are now nonetheless substantially lower than that of older generations. According to a recent Pew Research Center study (2018), Poland displays the highest age gap in religiosity among all 71 countries studied. A decrease in main indicators of religiosity among young adults has not, however, been accompanied by a comparable decrease in identification with the Catholic Church (Mandes and Rogaczewska 2013, 268).

The role of grandparents in the religious socialization of young adults in Russia and Poland

In this section we move to discuss the role of (great) grandmothers in the religious socialization of Russian and Polish young adults in direct relation to select portions of the YARG project data. As is discussed in more detail in the Introduction to this special issue, the YARG project was conducted among young adult university students in thirteen countries throughout the world. This mixed-method project utilized a combination of four data collection instruments: (1) a conventional survey that included the (2) Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), (3) the novel Faith Q-Sort (FQS) instrument, and (4) semi-structured interviews. The survey and PVQ results for each country (N=300 per country) served as the basis for the selection of a smaller representative number (N=45 per country) of respondents to participate in the FQS and in-depth interviews

(conducted in 2016). The following discussion is based on the survey results and in-depth interviews from Russia and Poland respectively.

The survey included an item block on religious identification and self-assessed degrees of personal religiosity as well as that of the parental home. The Russian respondents' replies to the question 'Regardless of whether you consider yourself as belonging or close to a particular religious group, community, or tradition, how religious would you say you are?' on a 10-point degree scale revealed a mean of 2.8, while their replies to the question 'How religious would you say the family you grew up in was?' revealed a mean of 4.2. By comparison, the Polish sample revealed a mean of 4.5 for self-assessed degrees of personal religiosity and a mean of 6.8 for that of the family home. The Russian sample mean is clearly lower than that of the entire sample (13 countries, 4965 respondents) mean of 3.9 for self-assessed degree of personal religiosity and 5.0 of that of the family home. The Polish means, by comparison, are slightly higher. However, as is also the case for the entire sample, in both cases respondents' self-assessed degrees of personal religiosity were decidedly lower when compared with their assessment of the degree of religiosity of their family home. These findings raise obvious questions about the intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs and values. While these findings could well be analyzed in terms of age-, period, and/or cohort-effects (Voas and Doebler 2012), our data also provides us with the option to explore the questions raised by our findings in light of the views of Russian and Polish young adults themselves as expressed in in-depth interviews (N=45 per country). Our interview data makes it possible to inquire into what our respondents actually mean when they talk about and compare their own personal religiosity with that of their parents and older family members. Two particularly important insights emerged from the interviews. First, the interviews from both Russia and Poland revealed that it is common to include grandparents and sometimes even other relatives into the notion of family. When Russian and Polish young adults assessed the degree of religiosity of their family home, they may thus (at least partly) have done so with their most religious family member – most commonly their grandmother – in mind. Second, the interviews also revealed that our respondents' understandings of what it means to be religious are often based on the living examples of family members. When asked about their personal religious beliefs and sensibilities, respondents thus often compared their own beliefs, values, and behaviors with that of their most religious relatives.

Grandmothers (and great grandmothers) are mentioned in 39 out of a total of 45 interviews conducted as part of the YARG project in Russia. As a general rule, maternal mothers assume the status of 'first granny' and most important grandparent in the accounts provided by the Russian respondents. Out of all 39 of the Russian interviews mentioning grandmothers, 32 mentioned them in direct relation to religion. Out of 45 interviews conducted in Poland, 18 respondents provide information about the role of grandmothers in their religious upbringing. The majority of respondents who mentioned grandmothers were female in both cases.

On the basis of both the Russian and Polish interviews, the following three salient, recurring, and often interrelated themes were identified: (1) (great) grandmothers providing living examples of religious persons; (2) (great) grandmothers acting as educators and introducers to religion-related topics and practices; and (3) religion-related issues constituting an integral part of respondents' interactions with their (great) grandmothers. Considering these three themes in combination provide us with a fuller understanding of the role of grandmothers in the development of Russian and Polish young adults' understanding of religion, religious self-identification, and attitudes towards the religious sphere more generally.

In a previous study on the role of grandparents in religious socialization King et al. (2006,

89) singled out three main dimensions of grandparent-grandchild influence: the instructional, the inspirational, and the supportive. The abovementioned main themes identified in the YARG interview data from Russian and Poland correspond relatively well with this three-dimensional framework. The commonly expressed view of the grandmother as a living example of a religious person, or the 'most religious person around', could be located in the inspirational dimension. The educatory aspects of the grandmother-grandchild relationship could, in turn, be situated as part of the instructional dimension. Lastly, the palpable role that religion plays in our respondents' interactions with their grandmothers ties in with the supportive dimension. In the following we move to illustrate the character and interconnections of these three dimensions in light of the views of Russian and Polish young adults (and grandchildren) themselves as expressed in the interviews. It needs to be noted, though, that not all of these dimensions are equally observable in every interview. There are also notable differences between the Russian and Polish case, with some dimensions predominating in one while being less visible in the other.

The inspirational dimension: (great) grandmothers as living examples of religious persons

When talking about their own religious upbringing, our respondents often single out their grandmothers as having functioned as particularly important living examples of religious persons. This aspect emerges most clearly in the Russian interviews where respondents' representations of their grandmothers as living examples of religious persons often stems from a general lack of previous experience with religious communities or institutions. Indeed, only a handful of the Russian respondents reported any previous experience of institutional religious socialization (such as Sunday school), and even fewer had ever interacted with clergymen. For the majority of our Russian respondents, then, the (great) grandmother becomes the only close living example of a religious person and thus also an important authority on religion-related issues. As one Russian respondent recounted:

> R: Well, I should probably start with my great grandmother who's very religious; she survived the Second World War and I spent every summer with her up to the age of seven; she'd teach me various prayers and all that. Well, that is, uh -- and we always fasted, it was the only way.
> I: Even when you were so little?
> R: Yeah. I remember that we fasted each Wednesday and Friday, uh -- That is, she was very devout, but at the same time not -- uh -- rather, she's not devout, but she's reverent and, uh, believes, truly believes. Uh, um, my granny, uh, who, um -- up to a certain point she wasn't, uh, kind of wasn't interested in all this, but now she goes to church and reads books; well, that is, she's very religious (YRUPV030).

This respondent clearly underlines the religiousness of his/her great grandmother who he/she describes as someone who is 'very religious' and 'truly believes'. Indeed, when asked about his/her religious upbringing and relationship to religion, the influence of the great grandmother is the first that comes to mind for this respondent. However, although grandmothers often take on the function as living examples of a religious person, this does not automatically translate into a successful transmission of religious beliefs and values. For example, while some respondents clearly remember their grandmothers' religious habits, they still remain unsure about the proper performing of religious practices. For this reason, they frequently report avoiding practicing religion themselves. In a frequently recurring example, a respondent reports having been taken to

church by his/her grandmother as a child but now feels uncomfortable going to church or engaging in other forms of religious practice as an adult because of a lack of knowledge or sense of uncertainly about the proper or correct performance of certain religious practices. As one Russian respondent related:

> I remember that my great grandmother, she prayed before sleep. But then again, I didn't receive a religious upbringing, so I don't know how to pray. […] So when I come to church, um, I simply stay inside for a while and -- I give homage to everything that's happening in it and -- um, I walk past icons -- actually, I have a vague idea of what you're supposed to do in church, yet still I visit it and sometimes the very air is different inside, as it seems. I don't know how to explain it (YRUPV021).

The uncertainty and lack of knowledge noted above finds clear expression in the words of this respondent, who only has a 'vague idea' or what he/she is supposed to do when visiting a church. Moreover, while this respondent remembers that his/her grandmother used to pray before she went to sleep, he/she does not know how to pray due to a lack of religious upbringing. For both of the respondents quoted above, their memories of their grandmothers' religious habits have evidently not translated into any type of active religious involvement on their own part.

The instructive dimension:* (*great) grandmothers as educators and introducers to religion-related topics and practices

As noted, the Russian and Polish interviews contain plenty of examples of respondents singling out their grandmother as the person who played the most important role in introducing them to religion and religious practices as children. For example, as one Russian respondent recounted:

> Well in childhood as all other kids, grandma took me to church, taught prayers, how to cross oneself (YRUPV039).

Similarly, another Russian respondent related:

> She would take me to church once a year, at Easter, and she was the one to tell me about Christianity, Orthodox Christianity and what faith is in general. So it was somehow through her. I can't say it was a big input; it was more of an introduction to the whole thing (YRUPV017).

Both of these excerpts provide illustrations of the role that grandmothers have played in introducing these respondents to religious tradition and practice. In the first case, the respondent mentions learning prayers and how to cross oneself; in the second case, the grandmother was the person who introduced the respondent to faith and religion more generally. A Polish respondent had some very similar experiences:

> I: how did you become the person you are today? Was there anything special, any important people or communities in your life that shaped you into the person you are now?
> R: Well, my parents for sure. Obviously, my grandparents, especially my grandmother who had this -- in the religious sense she guided me and encouraged me to go to church and pray (YPLSS148P).

This respondent described his/her grandmother as a guide who encouraged him/her to attend church and engage in private religious practice. In contrast to most Russian respondents, it is also worth noting that this Polish respondent also mentions the influence of parents. Overall, our respondents have been most prone to adopt religious beliefs and practices when they have been subjected to more intentional and concentrated forms of religious instruction on the part of their grandmothers. As one Polish respondent commented:

> Well, let's say, eeh, as my grandmother taught, one can pray or something else. So I assume that when one wants something strongly, yes, and begs for that, it anyway materializes. […] Yeah, as my grandma taught me to pray in childhood, it stayed with me still (YRUPV045).

For this respondent, the influence of the grandmother has been more enduring as he/she still prays – a practice first introduced by the grandmother. For another Polish respondent, the influence of grandparents has been even greater:

> Since I was little, grandma and grandpa told me: God exists and -- I somehow adopted it. So when I read about other religions I think that I couldn't manage -- uhmm to change it into a different religion. I believe in Christianity (YPLSS104P).

This excerpt provides a particularly clear example of a direct acknowledgement of successful religious socialization on the part of this respondent's grandparents. As he/she states, the process of adopting the religious beliefs and values of the older generation was largely an unreflective and straightforward one.

As already noted, the religiosity of a grandmother does not automatically translate into a successful transmission and enduring instilment of religious beliefs, practices, and habits. Respondents reporting that their grandmothers sometimes go too far in their efforts to instill religious values and behaviors makes up a recurring theme in both the Russian and Polish interviews. As is clearly expressed by several respondents, when grandmothers are perceived to assume the role of active apologists and try to impose religious behaviors, their efforts typically provoke a negative response. One explanation for this lies in the strong value that both the Russian and Polish respondents place on individual freedom and self-determination, especially when it comes to matters of religion and morality. This attitude is clearly expressed by one Polish respondent who recounted:

> You know, when I talk to my grandmother, she urges me in some way to get back to it [religion], but she knows that -- she cannot persuade me. She can try and talk, but everybody knows it is not such strict -- well, and I think that everybody should have -- their own choice of -- faith and -- moral rules (YPLSS063P).

In spite of the efforts of the grandmother, this respondent is of the firm opinion that one should make up one's own mind when it comes to religious and moral matters. In this case, therefore, the particular type of religious socialization exerted by the grandmother has evidently not been particularly successful. Yet, this respondent is nevertheless repeatedly faced with the issue when talking to his/her grandmother. As such, even though this respondent does not subscribe to the religious views of his/her grandmother, she nevertheless constitutes a continuous religious

presences in his/her life. Another Polish respondent, however, experiences the opinions of his/her grandmother rather differently:

> My grandma is a person who must say the rosary or -- chaplet every day. And, for example, when I said one day that I have no time to do it, my grandma shouted at me: 'How is it possible that you have no time for God?' - - Very strict. […] What is sick for me is that I attend church because my mom wants me to do it or I say the rosary because my grandma asks me. I think everybody should do it willingly and do it when they want to do it -- to be in the church (YPLSS116P).

This respondent describes his/her grandmother as deeply religiously engaged. He/she is not, however, all that happy with his/her own reasons for engaging in religious practice. Indeed, he/she reports being troubled by the fact that he/she attends church and engages in religious practice mostly in order to meet the expectations of his/her mother and grandmother. In this case, the grandmother appears as an embodiment of a strict and uncompromising attitude towards religion that this respondent is unable to ascribe to.

The supportive dimension: religion as an integral part of interaction with (great) grandmothers

In many cases, religion appears to constitute a central part of respondents' interactions with their grandmothers. They might, for example, go to church together or have regular discussions on spiritual, religious, and moral matters. Several respondents associate the preparation for and celebration of religious holidays with grandmothers; they visit church to bless Easter cakes together (YRUPV012); they visit their great grandmother on Easter (YRUPV030), etc. Interacting closely with their grandchildren at these types of occasions provides another central means by which grandmothers try to encourage religious involvement on the part of their grandchildren. As told by several respondents, as grandchildren, they, in turn, feel obliged to maintain the religious aspects of their relationships to their grandmothers because of the large degree of support that they receive from them. As one Russian respondent explained:

> I was a small child, I'd come to stay with my granny, and granny goes to church on Saturdays, of course {LG}, so she couldn't leave me. If I come to stay with them now, and it's a Saturday, of course, I join them, out of respect. Because doing otherwise seems impolite to me. I just don't feel so strongly about it now (YRUPV002).

This respondent reports having visited church regularly with his/her grandmother as a child. He/she still sometimes accompanies his/her grandmother to church, although only out of politeness and respect. Another Russian respondent similarly noted:

> I sometimes go to church with my granny […] she, um, sometimes, often wants me to accompany her to church, right. There again, she expects it and wishes it. But I don't always go with her (YRUPV013).

Similar to the previously quoted respondent, this respondent talks about the expectations that grandmothers often seem to have when it comes to the religious observance and participation of their grandchildren. A largely similar attitude is also reflected in this Polish respondent's account:

> I believe in God, but I'm non-practicing, I rarely go to church, and when I do, then I really -- because my grandma asks me or well sometimes I feel such a need to go (YPLSS082P).

Again, this respondent also reports primarily visiting church on the request of his/her grandmother, although he/she sometimes also feels an urge to go to church him/herself. Some respondents also report engaging in deeper and meaningful discussions about religious or spiritual matters with their grandmothers. Through these discussions, respondents also learn about various religious notions and acquire the vocabularies and interpretive frameworks for expressing and making sense of religious beliefs and experiences. One Russian respondent recalled the following occurrence:

> So we went to church and -- I lit a candle in front of an icon and said a prayer, like my grandma had explained. So I went outside and I haven't experienced anything like that ever since, probably -- I don't know, it was kind of {SG}, oh, well, not enlightenment, some kind of relief, I don't know. I went outside and some fifteen minutes later I felt, I don't know, like I was about to fly. I don't know how it could have been possible. Grandma always recalls this incident, how I told grandma I was feeling well and how her friend explained, who's involved in all this church -- life, and she said, it had been God's grace. I don't know whether it was God's grace or not, but it actually happened (YRUPV013).

Here we see an example of a respondent recalling a religious experience that he/she had when visiting church with his/her grandmother. His/her grandmother frequently ('always') recalls this incident, suggesting that they occasionally discuss personal experiences about religion-related topics. Such types of discussions are not, however, possible for all respondents. As one Russian respondent said:

> My grandmother, she is not so -- Well, let's say she does not take certain values seriously, because she is religious, sometimes it is difficult to communicate with her on certain topics. (YRUPV036)

A Polish respondent similarly stated:

> My grandma strictly follows teachings of the Church while I am not always. […] Let's just say I try to follow the doctrinal issues. It is not the case that I departed from it completely. I more or less accept some [teachings] but -- I do not reject anything. As for the socio-political issues, I sometimes strongly disagree with them, but when I am talking to my grandma, I do not reveal my views (YPLSS129P).

As both of these excerpts illustrate, not all respondents are equally comfortable with openly talking about their views and convictions with their grandmothers. In these cases, the grandmother appears as a person who sticks so strongly to her own convictions that it becomes difficult, perhaps even futile, to talk to her about certain issues.

Concluding remarks

Our data from Poland and Russia illustrates a range of interactions between grandparents and grandchildren when it comes to religion-related issues. Although our data does not permit us to

say much about the religious socialization of the older generation, their grandchildren (i.e. our respondents) clearly associate them with religion and religious life.

When it comes to the intergenerational transmission of religious ideas and practices in Russia and Poland, our data clearly shows that (great) grandmothers continue to play a central role in the (both attempted and successful) religious socialization of contemporary young adults. The prominent role that grandmothers continue to play in this regard also suggests that the parent-generation of the present young adult generation is either less familiar with or less inclined to actively socialize their children into religious beliefs and values. In the Russian case, respondents rarely mention any direct influence of their parents in this regard and the parental generation almost falls out of the picture completely. The Polish case displays a much higher degree of intergenerational continuity, as respondents often referred to both their grandparents and parents as reference points for their own religious engagements. The Polish respondents were also much more likely to underline the continuity between the three generations as part of a more general commitment to religious tradition. In Russia, respondents instead repeatedly highlighted the 'babushka', i.e. the (great) grandmother, as their principal authority on religious issues. Russian respondents also shared a general sense of 'babushkas' as heroic bearers of a religious tradition that had been largely lost to their parents. For Russian respondents, the (great) grandmothers' ability to hold on to religious tradition during Soviet times further reinforces their authority and makes them even more deserving of respect.

The differences between the strength of religious socialization in Russia and Poland are no doubt largely attributable to the persistence of much stronger religious socialization frameworks and the enduring presence of multiple religious socialization agents in Poland. As our analysis in this article has shown, Polish respondent primarily tend to associate their (great) grandmothers with the instructive dimension, while Russian respondents instead primarily tend to associate their (great) grandmothers with the inspirational dimension. Our findings from both countries nonetheless illustrate the enduring importance of religious exemplars in the religious socialization of the present-day young adult generation (cf. Petts and Desmond 2016). The role of the (great) grandmother emerges as particularly significant in this regard.

While the three-dimensional model of the influence of grandparents in the religious socialization of grandchildren outlined by King et al. (2006) remains useful, it draws attention only to the positive aspects and outcomes of these types of interactions. As such, it largely overlooks how each dimension may be either positively or negatively perceived from the perspective of grandchildren themselves. As our discussion in this article has shown, the inspirational dimension may sometimes mutate into one of revulsion. The instructive dimension may be perceived to be too strict and too hard to follow, and hence seen as destined to fail. The supportive dimension may be perceived to rather take the form of an unequal requirement-obligation relationship. As has been illustrated by the expressed views of many Russian and Polish young adults above, such distortions are not uncommon and are most likely to occur in relation to the supportive dimension, as when young adults experience difficulties in communicating openly with their grandmothers when it comes to religion and morality related issues. In both the Russian and Polish context, grandmothers nonetheless clearly continue to exert a strong influence on how young adults perceive and feel about religion, whether it be positive or negative.

This article has further highlighted the need for research on contemporary modes of religious socialization to expand its focus beyond the parent-child relationship to also consider the influence of extended family and kin. While the enduring influence of grandparents clearly surfaces in the post-socialist contexts of Russia and Poland, future research could usefully consider the possible

influence of grandparents and extended family in other social and cultural contexts as well. When it comes to contemporary approaches to religious socialization as such, this article has highlighted the need for future theorizing to be able to simultaneously account for at least the following three interrelated factors: 1) the peculiarities of broader socio-cultural and socio-political context, both historical and more recent; 2) the enduring presence and influence of *particular* traditional socialization agents (as opposed to others); and 3) the personal agency and active participation of the people being socialized.

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