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THE CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND¹ AND THEIR PLACE IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE. THE CASE STUDY OF BABICA VILLAGE

INTRODUCTION

*In Babica, in almost each house there is someone who has left abroad. [...] The lots of families separated by migration are very tragic. There were a lot of dramatic scenes next to the Consulate of the United States, when not all family members got visas.*² [K.02] These words of one of Babica inhabitants describe in a very good way a common phenomenon existing in this village. Transatlantic migrations, which are very popular in this region, require a very specific family migration strategy. However, before the actual analysis is started, a few words about the studied region should be written.

Babica is a village located in south-eastern Poland, in the Province of Podkarpacie. The beginnings of migration history of Babica date back to the 80s of the 19th century. Migration fever covered the whole village very quickly. The first studies on emigration from this region were conducted by a sociologist Krystyna Duda-Dziewierz. Her research was carried out during the Interwar Period. She presented the conclusions of her studies in the book: *The Village of Malopolska*

¹ In the United States the term *children left behind* is commonly used in American educational programs, called “No Children Left Behind”. The main aim of these programs is an improvement of the individual outcomes in the education of children by establishing the determined standards of the education, which are equal for each selected grade level (<http://www2.ed.gov.nclb/landing.jhtml>). However in this article this term refers to the cases of children left in their home country by migrant parents.

² Own translation of the author. „W Babicy praktycznie w każdym domu ktoś jest za granicą. [...] Najtragiczniejsze rodziny rozdzielone. Sceny dantejskie pod konsulatami, jak nie wszyscy z rodziny dostawali wizę.”[K.02]

and the American Emigration. A Study of Babica Village (Wieś małopolska a emigracja amerykańska. Studium wsi Babica powiatu rzeszowskiego, Poznań-Warszawa 1938), which is considered to be one of the best publications on emigration from the Polish village. The researcher tried to indicate the impact of emigration on the structure of the social organization of rural local community. This detailed study, carried out in Babica by Duda-Dziewierz, gave the author of this article the possibility to continue her research in this village.

The main aim of this article is an analysis of the situation of children left behind in their local community by migrant parents. The phenomenon of children left behind is commonly studied (Ehrenreich, Hochschild 2003; Parreñas 2005; Heymann 2006). There is much research on Polish children whose parents left abroad (Urbańska 2008, 2009; Pawlak 2012; Walczak 2008; Danilewicz 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Danielewicz 1998). Absence of parents is usually considered in the context of negative consequences of the migration process. It is noteworthy that in Poland, the term 'Eurosieroty' (Euro-orphans) is sometimes used to analyze this phenomenon (Winnicka 2007; Kozak 2010; Węgiński 2008). However, this term has a rather pejorative connotation, and it does not exactly reflect the actual situation of these children. Parents staying abroad can still perform the functions associated with the role of parent (Hondagneu-Sotelo, Avila 1997). Therefore, using of the term 'Eurosieroty' in relation to children left behind is in many cases quite inadequate, and the term is not applied in this article.

METHODS

The research on which this analysis is based was carried out in Babica from 2009 to 2012, and in the main destinations of emigrants from Babica in the United States (New Jersey, Detroit and Chicago) from January to May 2013. This study is a part of the doctoral dissertation which is being prepared by the author of this article. The research is still continued. The data was collected by using the ethnosurvey method. The research process consisted of three stages: monographic research, survey, and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The study was conducted among 107 respondents. The sample was selected with the use of the snowball technique.

The analysis carried out in this article is based on the cases of 42 families in which at least one parent emigrated to the United States leaving their children behind in Poland. The interviews were conducted among the migrant parents, their children left behind in Babica, and the caregivers (the other parent, grandparents or other family member). The following table presents the structure of the researched families (Table 1).

As mentioned before, the research was conducted among respondents in both Poland and the United States. The analysis of the studied phenomenon from these both perspectives, the country of origin and the country of destination (Thistlethwaite 1960), makes possible to consider the situation of children left behind and their parents in the broader social context. These two perspectives enable also to grasp this phenomenon in its entirety and allow to explore this phenomenon from different accounts: children left behind, migrant parents and caregivers.

Table 1.

The structure of researched families

| | Father-migrant | Mother-migrant | Both Parents-migrants | Total number |
|--|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Number of migrants | 10 | 26 | 6 | 42 |
| Number of children in each family: | | | | |
| 1 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 9 |
| 2 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 13 |
| 3 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 18 |
| 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Number of migrant single-parents | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Number of families with children left with: | | | | |
| 1) the other parent | 10 | 25 | 0 | 35 |
| 2) grandparents | 0 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 3) other family member | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Length of stay in the U.S.: | | | | |
| 3–6 months | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| 1–2 years | 1 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| 10–15 years | 5 | 3 | 0 | 8 |
| 15–20 years | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| 25–30 years | 1 | 7 | 2 | 10 |
| over 30 years | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |

Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted studies.

The research on migration of families can be quite problematic and demanding, especially when we talk about families separated by the migration process. This kind of studies are sometimes conducted only from one perspective:

children left in the country of origin or migrant parents in the country of their immigration. However, only the analysis of this phenomenon from both of these perspectives is essential for a complete consideration of the situation of migrant families.

Conducting research on migrant families causes also other problems which will be explained on the concrete example of research presented in this article. Firstly, as already mentioned, researching all family members is not always possible. There are of course many reasons: from the simple reluctance of respondents to participate in the study, to lack of opportunities to meet and interview them, for example when a parent is abroad.

Secondly, as already emphasized, the interviews were conducted among parents (migrant parents and those left behind), children left behind and their caregivers. Conducting interviews among such groups of respondents was not always simple. What should be noted is that at the beginning of research, Babica inhabitants were quite distrustful, although the researcher comes from this region. Therefore, the respondents were sampled by using the snowball method.

Moreover, the difficulty of interviewing these families was first of all associated with the subject of this research. The separation of family members was equally hard for children left behind and their parents. The children presented diverse attitudes to research: from those willing to take part in the study, to those who did not want to talk about the leaving of their parents.

The interviews with parents were sometimes also quite difficult. Some of them treated emigration and leaving their children as an embarrassing issue. On the one hand, they felt guilty that they could not be with their children. On the other hand, they stressed their sacrifice and satisfaction that they could secure a better economic status or even better future for their children, which could be the way to suppress the feeling of guilt.

Causes of emigration and its mechanism are very important issues of this analysis. Therefore, the considerations presented in this article begin from the short characteristics of emigration from Babica to the United States.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EMIGRATION FROM BABICA TO THE UNITED STATES

The first migration streams from Babica to the United States began to flow in the 80s of the nineteenth century. They were dominated by men, who accounted for 80% of migrants (Duda-Dziwierz 1938). The role of women in contemporary migrations was mainly limited to the companion feature, designed to deal with the house in the destination country. Only a few of them undertook work

in the United States. Women who emigrated to work usually were unmarried. Therefore, the purposes of their emigration was not only economic but also matrimonial.

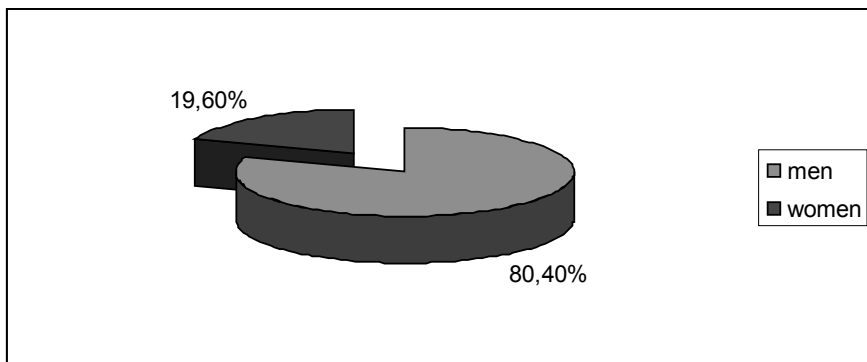
The salaries of working women were much lower than those of men. The women from Babica worked in the United States mainly in factories or as servants. However, as it was emphasized earlier, the man was the first in almost every family to pave the migration way, wandering for the economic reasons and usually working in a factory. Nevertheless, the premise of each trip was a return to their native country. In the United States, they had to only raise funds to support their families left in their home village.

When the man was leaving, the woman had to take up all his duties on the farm. Then her position in the social hierarchy of the village usually increased. A lot of responsibilities rested also on children. They had to work very hard. Children who emigrated with their parents to the United States also undertook paid work to support their families. Though, they also earned significantly less than the men.

Nowadays, a similar phenomenon can be observed: in most cases, one family member leaves to earn money for some specific goals. However, in contrast to the emigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which was dominated by men, in the current migration streams the predominance of women can be easily observed (Chart 1 and 2.)

Chart 1.

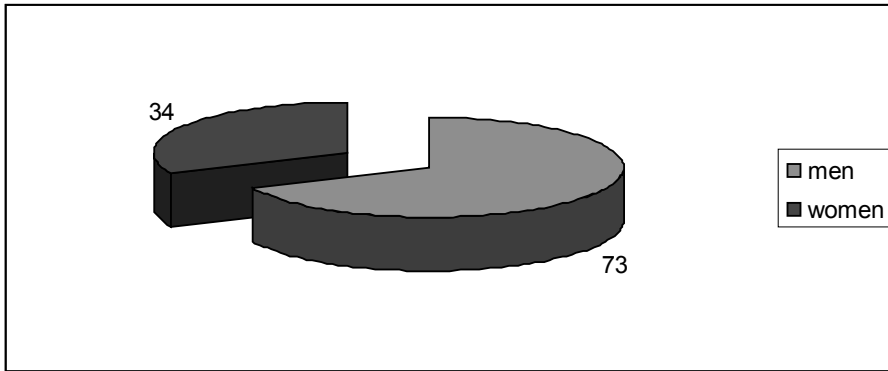
The sex composition of Babica migrants from the late 19th and early 20th century (in %)



Source: Own elaboration on the basis of Duda-Dziewierz K., *Wieś małopolska a emigracja amerykańska. Studium wsi Babica powiatu rzeszowskiego*, Warszawa-Poznań 1938.

Chart 2.

The sex composition of present migrants from Babica



Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted studies.

The study shows that the factor generating the emigration of women from Babica is mainly a higher unemployment rate among them compared to that among men. There is therefore a situation where a man holds the job in the country and takes the responsibilities associated with caring for children and home, while a woman migrates, becoming the breadwinner.

The increase in the migration of women is also the effect of the rise in the demand for ‘hands’ in typically female occupations, such as a domestic help, nanny or a caretaker, resulting from the absence of the native workforce in those sectors (Ehrenreich, Hochschild 2003). This demand on the labor market in the United States reflects the occupational structure of the immigrants from Babica. Most of women-respondents found employment as housekeepers whose duties included also caring for children or the elderly.

These specific occupations have significant impact on migration strategies of those women. Working as a housekeeper or nanny is associated with the necessity of staying in a house of the employer. It is the main obstacle to the family reunification in the country of immigration. Therefore, women migrate alone, leaving their children in their home country. However, there are also other reasons of family separation due to migration, such as personal reasons, legal factors or simply a family strategy.

As the personal reasons, respondents mentioned mainly the reluctance of their children to leave. There were also some problems with obtaining a visa for all family members. Finally, the decision to split and the emigration of only one or more household members was a result of the family strategy. Migration was

usually supposed to be only a temporary process to earn money for some specific goals and quickly return home. The selection of the household members of to migrate was related to the type of profession that was available in the destination country. About two-thirds of respondents had arranged jobs before their trip to the United States.

The contemporary migration streams flowing from Babica to the United States are mainly created by undocumented migrants. Most of them arrived to the United States with a tourist visa, whose provision they broke by prolonging their stay and undertaking work in this country.

The characteristic feature of the migration process from Babica to the U.S. is still a very dense migration network, which started creating in this village in the late nineteenth century. It is one of the most important factors maintaining the transatlantic emigration of Babica inhabitants. Almost all respondents left to someone well-known to them: a family member or acquaintance living in the U.S. The emigration from this village to America has always been chain migration. Resulting from the existence of migration chains the main destinations of emigration of Babica inhabitants to the United States remain almost unchanged. They still emigrate mainly to three regions of this country: New Jersey (Linden and other neighboring localities), Illinois (Chicago) and Michigan (Detroit).

From the beginning of transatlantic movements from Babica, migration chains were based on blood relations as well as neighboring relations. Nowadays, migration chains are created mainly among family members. Migration histories of many families from this region are often very long and rich. In the case of more than half of the respondents these stories date back to the beginnings of the migration to *the new land* from this village. Departures to the United States became almost family tradition there. In the same time, transatlantic migrations are also a family economic strategy and the way of life for many of Babica inhabitants, which is chosen from generation to generation. Each studied family has very wide experience of emigration to the U.S., started and collected by their ancestors. Many contemporary migrants have also experienced the lots of being the children left behind by their migrant parents. In their adult life, they reproduce the pattern of behavior of their parents and they also migrate alone, leaving their children in Poland.

As a result of all of these factors, the phenomenon of children left behind is quite common in Babica. The position of these children in the social structure is analyzed in the following section of this article.

CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND AND THE EMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

According to Everett S. Lee, the decision to emigrate is the result of a rational consideration of the pros and cons (Lee 1966). However, a migrant during his or her decision-making process can not predict everything. The migration process is related to many sometimes very difficult choices.

The emigration to the United States seems to be a very specific process in relation to the phenomenon of children left behind. From the beginning of the emigration from Polish lands to this country, many people decided to leave their families in their home villages and set out on a journey in search of a better life for themselves and their relatives.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries the transatlantic movements became a very popular phenomenon. Many families remained separated for several years. The contacts of emigrants with their families left at home were then very hard. They could only write letters, which were sent to family villages by people who returned. In those days, the very strong social control, operating among village inhabitants, helped to raise children, who often did not recognize their fathers when they returned after a long absence. Money earned by migrants was mainly earmarked for the purchase of the land, building a house or paying the debts. The main aim of buying the land was largely protection of children at the time of the distribution of land. Parents tried to make the adult lives of their offspring easier. Then the social position was mainly determined by the size of the property. Therefore, entrepreneurial migrants who managed to save a lot of money were able to provide their children with a relatively good social position in their local community.

Nowadays, the emigration to the United States seems to continue influencing the position of the migrant and his or her family in the social structure of their local community, although to a much lesser extent. In the next parts of this paper, the place of children left behind in this structure is analyzed. An account is given of several factors that affect the situation of these children, such as 1) the length of stay of their parents abroad, 2) the departure one or both parents or 3) a status of the caregivers.

THE IMPACT OF THE LENGTH OF STAY ABROAD OF MIGRANT PARENTS ON THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND

Long-time migrations are an integral part of transatlantic movements. The restrictive immigration law of the United States is conducive to long and often

illegal staying in the territory of this country. Tables 1 and 2 show the length of stay of migrants according to gender.

Table 2.

The average length of stay of researched families from Babica in the U.S.

| | Father-migrant | Mother-migrant | Both- Parents-migrants |
|---|----------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Average length of stay in the U.S. (in years) | 13 | 15 | 7 |

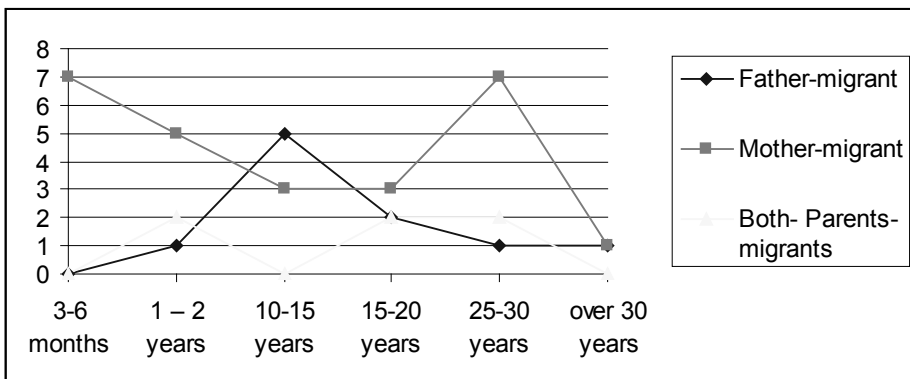
Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted studies.

As it can be seen, the emigration from Babica to the U.S. is mainly a long-term process. More than two-thirds of respondents spent more than 10 years in this country. The length of stay of a parent abroad is one of the most important factors in the analysis of the situation of children left behind.

Chart 3 below shows that the migration strategy of women is more diverse than that of the men. Fathers rather emigrate for a long time, although initially they plan to spend only one or two years abroad. Mothers leave their children for a short period such as 6 months as well as for much a long – from 10 to even 50 years.

Chart 3.

The length of stay in the U.S. according to gender of parent-migrant from Babica



Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted studies.

The length of stay abroad of a parent or parents impacts on the strength and quality of family ties. The United States is a specific case in comparison with the emigration from Poland to European countries. The restrictive immigration policy

of this country is a very important factor determining the migration strategy of each family. As it was pointed out earlier, migrants from 27 families from Babica spent more than 10 years abroad. More than a half of them had never visited their family in Poland since their departure, which was a consequence of their illegal status in the U.S.

Illegal migrants usually stay in destination countries as long as they can or as long as they reach their goals. For some part of my respondents, this goal was earning money for buying a car, building a house or for current expenditure by the family left behind. The majority of respondents emphasized the need to raise money for the education of their children as the main aim of their emigration, because they wanted a better life for their children. They thought that thanks to the higher education it will be easier for their children to find a job in Poland and their children will not have to leave their home country and work as hard as their parents do. Most of these children were well-educated and found good jobs in their adult lives. Only one-third of the children from the researched families thought about the emigration to the U.S. or any other country in the future.

The most important factor maintaining the ties is the quality of contact between migrants and their families left behind. New technologies make these contacts much easier now. However, for some of my young respondents these contacts were not enough. In their opinion, phone or skype calls could not replace real contacts with their parents. Some of them, especially younger children, did not even want to talk to their parents on the phone, because they probably could not understand this situation.

The loosening of family ties can be easily observed in some cases of the studied families. Parents returning after 15, 20, 30 or even 50 years, as it was in the case of one family, were the long-awaited guests, but they were often known only from photographs. After their returning, they could see that their hard work abroad had brought benefits. However, they often felt sorry for so many years spent in separation from their relatives, because they noticed that they did not really know each other at all. Migrants who came back after so many years had often problems with adaptation, they could even experience the culture shock. Their roles and related expectations were often modified. Women did not take care of children of their employers any longer, but they needed to take care of their own children and grandchildren. Therefore, suddenly this remote virtual world became real, and for some of them finding their way in it was again very difficult. At the same time, children needed to take care of their parents after their returning.

To sum up, it can be seen that the length of migration is a very important factor which impacts not only on the strength of family ties but also on the whole family structure. Although parents still maintain their status in the family

structure, they can not perform all roles assigned to this status. Some parts of their roles are transferred to the caregivers of the children. Therefore, the positions of all members in the family structure seem to remain unchanged, however in many spheres caregivers can often become closer and even more important for children than parents.

The roles of caregivers in the case of emigration of one or both parents.

Men's push emigration for money has been a traditional life strategy in this region, known here for years. Therefore, the absence of the father seems to be nothing unusual. This is also largely a result of the traditional division of roles: a man – a breadwinner, a woman – a housewife. However, this traditional division of roles has already nothing in common with the reality. As it was noticed earlier, nowadays women predominate in the migrations from Babica. The emigration of one of family members changes the traditional division of roles. However, it does not apply only to the roles of parents who due to their functioning within a transnational network, can still perform their parental duties (Hondagneu-Sotelo, Avila 1997). It rather applies to children, in relation to whom expectations rise at the time of the emigration of one or both parents. In the case of the emigration of one parent, the majority of his or her obligations is transferred to the other parent and their children. In the case of the emigration of both parents the situation is more complicated. Children usually have to change their place of living, move to the house or apartment of their caregivers. It is often related to a change of their social environment and it increases the stress caused by the leaving of their parents. In the cases of emigration of both parents, for all of the respondents the caregiver was a person who they knew very well and were on very good terms with him or her, which made the separation with their parents little easier for them. However, their position and expectations related to them were usually modified. They became part of another structure and needed to find their own place in it.

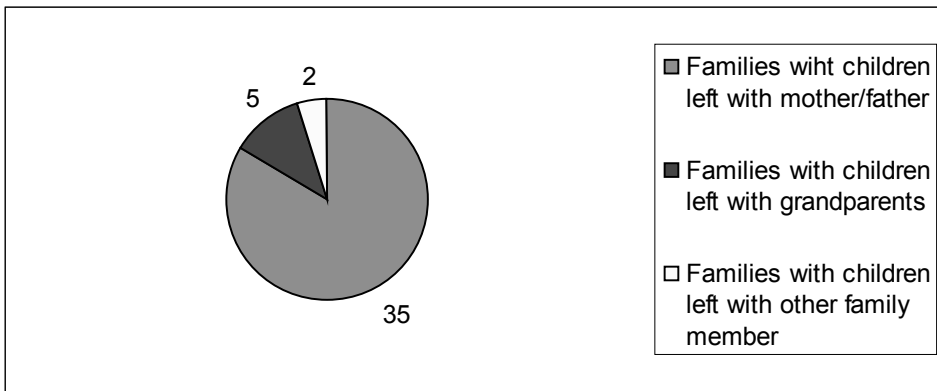
In the cases studied in Babica, children were left with one of the parents, grandparents or with any other family member (Chart 4). There were various attitudes of children to the caregivers. Almost all respondents stressed that other family members could not replace their real parents. However, they usually established very strong bonds with their caregivers. For some of them caregiver became much closer to them than their absent parents. Almost all respondents emphasized that their caregivers assured them a good care.

Different children saw their parents' decisions to emigrate in different ways. Most of them were grateful to their parents and appreciated their sacrifice made for them. However, some of them did not understand why their parents had left and it was hard for them to accept this situation. In those situations, the caregivers

usually tried to explain to the children why their parents had left and they cared for the good relations between the children and their parents abroad. Therefore, the role of the caregivers in migrant families is crucial for the functioning of these families.

Chart 4.

The composition of caregivers of the children left behind by the parents-migrants from Babica



Source: Own elaboration on the basis of the conducted studies.

A CASE STUDY OF BABICA FAMILY

For a more detailed analysis, this section of the article refers to the specific case of one family from Babica. Full names have been deliberately altered. Family Pasternak consists of 5 members: mother Ewa, father Wojciech and three sons: the eldest Piotr (currently 29 years old), Michał (27 years old) and the youngest Robert (20 years old). In 1998, Ewa and Wojciech decided to emigrate to the United States. They planned then to stay there only for 6 months in order to earn money to finish the renovation of their house. They went to their friend, who helped them to find jobs. Ewa worked as a charwoman. Wojciech found a job in a construction site. They left their children with Ewa's sister. The boys were then 14, 12 and 5 years old. However, not only the emigration of their parents was for them a source of big changes. Half a year before the emigration, whole family moved from the neighboring Lubenia to their newly built house in Babica. The event was a very significant change for the boys. The change of the school and

friends was associated with high stress. After half a year, they had to experience other changes. They moved to the house of their aunt, who already had their own three children: two daughters and son. The eldest daughter was then 15 years old, the second daughter was 14 years old, and son was 12 years old. Therefore, as can be seen, the middle daughter of the aunt was the same age as Piotr, and the son of the aunt was the same age as Michał. This situation helped the Pasternak's sons integrate with the new environment.

After 6 months Ewa and Wojciech decided to not come back to Poland. They had jobs and earned enough money to live in the U.S., and to send money to their sons to Poland. Meanwhile, in the *old country* they could probably have problems with finding jobs. Before they emigrated, Ewa did not work. She was a housewife, who took care of their youngest son. Ewa's decision not to come back was very hard for her sister. She had to take care of six children. Of course, she received money from their sister and brother-in-law, but money is not enough to raise the children.

Ewa and Wojciech made phone calls to their children every Sunday. Each conversation ended with the words *I love you*. After several years, for the youngest son Robert these words had become only an insignificant ritual. He knew his parents only from photographs, and the aunt began to play the role of mother in his life. However, she also emigrated when he was 16. She went to her husband to Ireland. Then Robert moved to his parents' house and lived alone. The second sister of her mother visited him only from time to time.

The situation of his brothers was different. Considering Ewa and Wojciech's undocumented residential status in the United States, resulting from the fact that they arrived in this country with tourist visas, they could not visit their children in Poland and the children were not able to visit their parents, either. After four years, the eldest son became adult and could get his passport. Then he got a tourist visa and went to his parents. He started working with his father in a construction site. He still lives in the U.S.

The second son, after he became adult also got a tourist visa and went to the United States during the summer holidays. However, after two months he got back to Poland, because he wanted to graduate from the high school. He also left few times for the U.S. during his study. However, currently he does not visit his parents any more. He graduated from the Cracow University of Technology (Politechnika Krakowska) and works as a construction manager in a very prosperous business in Poland.

Analyzing the history of this family one can observe the impact of emigration of parents on their children. One important phenomenon which can be noticed here is a change of strength of family ties due to migration. It can be seen how different the family ties are which bind each of the Pasternaks' children to their

parents. The eldest son Piotr is characterized by the shorter period of separation from his parents. He remembered them very well and felt very close to them. Michał met with his parents after 6 years of separation. He also felt quite close to them. He treated his aunt only as his temporary caregiver. He summed up the time spent at his aunt's house in one sentence: *By taking care of us, my aunt did not do us any great favor, because she lived thanks to the money sent her by my parents.*³ [Dz.03] However, Michał did not want to stay in the U.S., mainly because of the strong bonds created in his home country among his friends, especially because of his younger brother. He felt responsible for his brother and tried to take care of him.

Robert could visit his parents only two years ago, after 13 years of separation. It was a very emotional experience for all of them. However, his parents seemed strangers to him, known only from photographs and phone calls. He felt more involved with his aunt than his parents. He came back from the U.S. after a month and he would rather not plan to go there once again soon. The relations among their friends and family in Poland were more important for him than the emigration and life with his parents in the United States.

The history of Pasternak family can be an example of the functioning of families in which both parents emigrated to the United States. A situation of children left behind by both parents is of course most complicated for children. In those cases, migration has the biggest impact on the family and it demands a well-considered reorganization of family life. The loosening of family ties is not the only problem in this case. The lonely life of Robert in the house of his parents in the age of 16 seems to be quite disquieting. It can be observed that the initial family strategy of migration prepared before the departure, could not work for a longer time.

The example of this family also shows the children's different attitudes to the caregivers and to the emigration of their parents in relation to the length of separation. The longer the time of separation, the greater attachment to caregiver and the bigger acceptance of the decision of parents about migration. Children just get used to the situation and live according to created rules.

CONCLUSIONS

The position of Babica Americans was always very high in this community. Re-emigrants enjoyed a considerable admiration, but also aroused jealousy, particularly among people not involved in international migrations. In the

³ „Moja ciotka opiekując się nami nie zrobiła nam żadnej wielkiej przysługi, bo żyła dzięki pieniądzom przysyłanych jej przez naszych rodziców.” [Dz.03]

decades, the position of re-emigrants was always higher comparing with their position before migration. It was mainly the effect of the economic capital which they brought with them from the U.S.

The emigration of one family member affects the position of the entire family, also children. Children whose parents are abroad seem valuable friends for their peers, mainly due to things sent them by their parents. They also usually have more pocket money than other children. The position of the Pasternak's brothers was always quite high among their colleagues. They had a house, where they could organize parties, and money which they spent in an uncontrolled way. Parents staying abroad are still a source of pride. On the one hand, these children are proud when they can boast that their parents are abroad, but on the other hand, they are jealous of other children's parents staying at home.

The phenomenon of children left behind is in this region something completely normal, known here since the beginning of the emigration from this village. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the time of separation was fairly shorter. Usually, men left their families for a few years and then they got back to their home village or they brought their wives and children to the U.S. Nowadays, the period of separation includes often a significant part of childhood, adolescence period and sometimes also the adult life of child.

The emigration to the United States is a very specific case. In contrast to the emigration to European countries, regular visits of parents in Poland or their children's in the U.S. are often impossible, mainly due to the restrictive immigration policy of this country. Therefore, the maintenance of family ties at the distance seems to be quite difficult, despite recent technological developments, which in the same time makes the transnational parenthood possible.

The main aim of this paper was to analyse the position of the children left behind in the social structure of a local community. Resulting from the research, this position seems to be quite high. Most of these children are very well-educated. Thanks to the money sent by their parents, they have a much easier start in the adult life than many of their peers. They have got houses, cars and although they earn money, they are (at least to some extent) still financially supported by their parents. Life without parents teaches them to be more independent and how to cope with difficult situations. This conclusion can be found in many other studies on children left behind in virtually all regions of the world. The efforts of parents to provide their children with better future, therefore, do not go to waste. However, this aim involves sometimes a great expense, such as broken families or the accompanying longing for both children and their parents for, like it could be seen, most part of their lives. Therefore, their position in the community structure is quite comfortable, however the structure of their families is often quite complicated, and finding themselves in it can often be difficult for them.

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