

The religiosity of Polish society has remained relatively stable over the last 25 years (90% of Poles declares themselves as Roman Catholics). The newest researches show that Poles “believe in their own way” more and more often and not necessarily obey Catholic rules. Researchers predict that in the forthcoming years the biggest changes in religiosity of Poles will affect young people and women, especially the educated ones living in large cities. Although the trajectory of the changes is not evident, it is claimed that the process may possibly result in women leaving the Roman Catholic Church.

This project is focused on religiosity of young (up to 40 years old), educated women living in the largest Polish cities. The aim of the project is to research how women refer to different kinds of Catholic rules, how they interpret and negotiate them, if they obey the rules or resist them. I am interested in rules which refer to “feminine” and “masculine” (e.g. rules that define women’s roles in the Church). I will also research the relationship between women’s religiosity and their professional activity and family life (does religion affect professional activity and family life or is the other way, or are the three spheres independent?).

Two kinds of research methods/techniques will be used in the project. Firstly, individual in-depth interviews with lay women who: declare themselves as Roman Catholics, have higher education, live in Polish cities over 500 thousands inhabitants, are not older than 40 years. The group will include women that declare diversified intensiveness of religiosity (from “rather not religious” to “very religious”) and church attendance (not practicing, practicing irregularly, practicing regularly), hence persons attached to the Church as well as these who may soon leave the Church. Interviews will be conducted with married women, women living in informal unions and single women, mothers and women without kids, working and unemployed. I plan to interview around 40 women.

Secondly, the ethnographic research of three women’s religious groups will be conducted. These groups differ regarding the level of openness to new members and modes of activity. But all of them focus on women’s roles (e.g. in the Church, family etc.). At this stage of research I will use such techniques as: interviews with groups members, participant observation, content analysis of the materials generated by the groups.

The project will provide in-depth knowledge about the religiosity of women in Poland and the place of religion in an individual’s life (also in the fields of professional activity and family life). It will increase knowledge about the transformations of religiosity of Poles, especially people with higher education and living in large cities. The project corresponds with a current trend in social sciences of researching women’s agency and will contribute to developing sociology of religion in the field of gender and religion which is still not a popular research direction in Poland. The project will develop the methodology of research on religiosity and will offer the original theoretical approach.