

Boundaries, Identity and Belonging in Modern Judaism

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4 Identity and negotiation of boundaries among young Polish Jews

Joanna Cukras-Stelagowska

Cultural minorities are particularly threatened by transformation and loss of their identity. Having studied the most significant global ethnic processes for several decades, anthropologists and sociologists point out that responses to domination and subjugation vary from forced or voluntary assimilation and separatism to integration (called for in multicultural societies) that does not involve the loss of one's cultural heritage (Bartz 1997: 9). In this chapter, I would like to look at the processes of building the cultural identity of the young generation of Polish Jews, primarily including the models of constructing modern identifications with the Polish society, the Jewish people and the State of Israel. I will present the results of my own studies, and of those conducted by a few other young researchers dealing with these issues. In a number of democratic societies ethnic minorities may become fully empowered and rightful participants in intercultural dialogue. The democratisation of social life in Poland after the fall of Communism contributed to the change in Jewish attitudes to their national descent. For many, their 'Jewishness', which now can be spoken about openly, has become the object of profound interest, intellectual search or the way to stress one's individuality. As a result, the Jewish community started to acquire new members, particularly young people who grew up with an assimilated Jewish parent and a non-Jewish parent. Along with this unexpected process of de-assimilation of young Poles of Jewish descent (also from maternal or paternal grandparents), an institutional and cultural boom within the Jewish community has taken place. What is more, an interest in Jewish culture is also growing among Gentiles, sometimes verging on philosemitism.

The Poles can variously be tolerant to diversity, philosemitic and antisemitic. According to Ireneusz Krzemiński, a Polish sociologist who has been studying prejudice for many years, there are two types of antisemitism in Polish society: traditional and modern. The traditional type is justified by the Christian tradition and the accusation of Jewish 'deicide'. The modern type is expressed in the belief that the Jews control capital. Krzemiński links this kind of antisemitism with the national ideology derived from the National Democratic Party and Roman Dmowski (1864–1939). In 2002, the modern antisemitism remained at 27 per cent, and the traditional one at 11.6 per cent. A study conducted in 2012 reported a reduction in both these types – down to 20 per cent in the case of the modern type and 8 per cent in the case of the traditional type (Kublik 2013: 1).

Katka Reszke's social-anthropological study of identity narratives of the third post-Holocaust generation of Jews in Poland finds a discovery of Jewish roots among the so-called 'unexpected generation'. She shows how they construct self-definitions of 'being a Jew' and create cultural boundaries. Reszke allows her interviewees to build individual narratives and points to the ways of building Jewish identity authentication models in contemporary Poland and argues that young Polish Jews want to emphasise their presence and participation in Polish society. Consequently, they want the word 'Jew' to change its status – that is to purify it from negative connotations and to use it openly in public discourse (Reszke 2013: 140). Equally interesting is the recent national campaign *I Miss You, Jew* (*Tęsknię za Tobą, Żydzie!*), initiated in 2010 by the performer Rafał Betlejewski in which participants were encouraged to write letters to Jews whom they used to know personally or encountered in literary works and who are no longer among us. The authors of the letters were photographed in places associated with Jews such as sitting in chairs with another chair left empty for the absentee. As part of the campaign, which lasted for over a year, philosemitic slogans were painted on walls. The campaign attracted a lot of media attention and was interpreted in different ways. For example, at the beginning, the authorities of Warsaw University did not agree to place a photograph with the caption *I Miss You, Jew!*, in front of its building, suggesting instead the caption *We miss You!* (Jutkiewicz-Kubiak 2010: 5–6). The social campaign intended to draw public attention to the shared Polish–Jewish fate and the historical, centuries-old coexistence of the two nations on Polish soil. It raised a lot of interest, but while Betlejewski's idea is an original and bold attempt to face traditional stereotypes, it also caused some misunderstanding – for example, the graffiti which refers to Jews connotes antisemitic verbal attacks.

The subject of my inquiry is an individual's *sense* of social identity and the subjective constructions of perceptions of their own group. Among the models of identity distinguished by Richard Robbins (1973), I follow two of them: *the interaction model* and *the world-view model*. In the interaction model, obtaining, maintaining and redefining identity occurs during social exchange. The goal is primarily to develop a self-definition of an individual, and show the processes of acquisition and loss of identity in the context of relations with the 'other' (Melchior 1990: 35–40). The world-view model, which is closely connected with anthropology, understands identity as a variable construct, dependent on social context. An individual also gains the ability to create themselves and design their own identity, so the focus is primarily on the creative consciousness of interacting individuals (Melchior 1990: 40–43).

In this chapter I would like to investigate certain characteristic identity options. Young Jews in Poland are in a specific situation of cultural borderland. Their dilemmas of identity are significant, and cultural identification is a matter of conscious choice and a subject of individual design. In this context, I would like to refer also to the problem of redefining ethnic boundaries, developing individual ways of coping with the negotiation of group membership, the blurring of boundaries and the formation of new ones. Here, I refer to the classical theory

of Fredrik Barth (1969), who considers ethnicity relationally through the prism of culturally perceived boundaries between groups. I also draw on the contemporary theoretical constructivist approach, where ethnic identity is liquid and subject to constant change in interactions with other groups (Cornell and Hattmann 1998: 72), within which 'the construction of ethnicity is an ongoing process that combines the past and the present into building material for new or revitalized identities and groups' (Nagel 1996: 9).

Identity

Life in modern Diasporas usually requires participation in a *host* society. This sometimes involves obtaining a dominant cultural identity, but many people prefer to define themselves with the use of hyphens (e.g. Asian-American Japanese or Afro-American New Yorker) (Appadurai 2005: 255). In Herbert J. Gans' opinion, 'most people look for easy and intermittent ways of expressing their [ethnic] identity'. *Symbolic ethnics* can 'find their identity by affiliating with an abstract collectivity which does not exist as an interacting group'. Even though some traditions are to some extent reproduced, this revival takes place beyond their natural context (Gans 1979: 8–9). The Polish anthropologist Wojciech Burszta has argued that new forms of ethnic manifestations, such as parades, concerts, publications, ethnic restaurants, often reduce the category of ethnicity to the exposition of cultural diversity in order to meet the needs of culture consumers (Burszta 2008: 69). That strangeness is reduced to the approval of the most agreeable practices of alien traditions, for example that of oriental cuisine as a result of which some peculiar ethnic practices may lose their original meanings.

In some countries where Jews belong to 'vestigial minorities', a Jewish culture is now flourishing. However, the sphere of its organisation and perception has been annexed by non-Jews fascinated by the legacy of Judaic heritage. Ruth Gruber argued that a new form of Jewish culture – without Jews – is coming into being and wrote of a 'virtual Jewishness' (Gruber 2004: 24). However, in her recent book *Beyond Virtually Jewish*, Gruber emphasises that

by now, in Kazimierz, the new 'Jewish' cafes, bookstores, museums, and Jewish culture centers, and even their attendant kitsch, are not just, as Eco put it, 'offered', they actually *are* all part of both the reality of the city and the reality of the experience of those who live, visit, and amuse themselves there. The Jewish Krakow scene in itself is real, an authentic, living phenomenon, even though it may not be 'authentically Jewish' according to traditional definitions of 'Jews', 'Jewish' or 'Judaism'. What is more, over the past twenty years, the scene as a living phenomenon has created its own tropes and traditions.

(Gruber 2009: 492)

Thus, it is important to remember that the reconstruction of the Jewish world even if only artificial or imagined one, may help some people in quest for individual

'self'. The fashion for Jewish culture stimulated numerous young persons of Jewish descent to search for their roots (Gruber 2004: 65). We can observe this situation among the young Jewish generation in Poland. My several-year biographical study has shown that young Polish Jews are a group with diverse forms of cultural identity, still trying to find appropriate forms of self-identification. My main theoretical sources are within the interpretive paradigm. The research methodology was based on the grounded theory, which adopts an inductive procedure when building theoretical concepts. The basic material for analysis included unstructured, in-depth interviews. In the first stage of my research (2002), I carried out interviews with 14 young people of Jewish descent who lived in Warsaw and Wrocław and were born between 1972 and 1984. In the next phase (2007), the research group included ten graduates of the Jewish school in Warsaw (the respondents were born between 1988 and 1992). At the same time, I conducted a study in Jewish schools in Warsaw and Wrocław, and in five Sunday schools in Poland. The results of these studies are presented in Cukras-Stelągowska (2012). My biographical study focuses on the methods of constructing the socio-cultural identity among young Jews (which I called the 'founded generation') and younger group: Lauder-Morash school graduates. All my interviewees seem to share a common denominator, that is the affirmative quality of identification with 'Jewishness' and some differences which become apparent are connected with the intensity of this affirmative identification. More distinctive Jewish self-identification prevails, and the feeling of connection with Poland is based on ties with their place of residence. In the case of the few religious young Jews (who declared themselves 'Orthodox') they either show weak 'double identification' (Poland as the place of residence without any bond with the Polish culture), or declare complete identification with the 'Jewish part' of their identity (with weak ties with 'Polishness'). Nevertheless, a dual cultural identification is a predominant one among my respondents and it is favoured also by believers in Judaism, although then they clearly separate 'Polish' identity from Catholicism. This dual cultural identification results in an approximately even participation in both cultures and the acceptance of a dual national identification (Cukras 2003: 262–263). Such an option appeared in many of my interviews:

Being a Jew from Poland – it is something more unique, a more different form of territorial affiliation with Jewry.... It is the place which was for centuries the epicentre of Jewish life. Everything developed here, among other things it was in Poland where Hasidism emerged ...

I feel first of all a Jew, and only then a Pole ... I am completely assimilated, and there are no problems with it. I have many friends who are Poles, Catholics. I am in no way against Poland, I was brought up here. I feel good here, here are my roots, here I lived my childhood.

As far as nationality is concerned, I definitely feel more a Pole than an Israeli. All my ancestors lived in Poland for at least 150 years, and I think they certainly were Poles ... I feel a Pole of Mosaic faith, I also feel a Jew, but I don't see any problems with making these two things compatible.

The British researcher Marius Gudonis conducted twelve semi-structured interviews and described pluralistic forms of Polishness:

Young Polish Jews feel both Polish and Jewish at the same time. They are unwilling to set clear-cut boundaries which separate them from 'the rest'. They want to feel in same way distinct in relation to other Poles, yet without feeling completely different.

(Gudonis 2003: 256)

This thesis is confirmed by the quantitative research done by Michał Bilewicz and Adrian Wójcik using Likert-type scales, their sample consisting of people of various ages. They concluded that 'Polishness' seems to be an important part of the Polish-Jewish ethnic identity. The Jewish identity is slightly dominant – respondents prefer Jewish to Polish identification in their self-definition (Bilewicz and Wójcik 2010: 72). Similarly, Reszke offers the image of young people who attempt to build a hybrid Polish-Jewish identity (Reszke 2013: 261). Participants see the process of discovering a family secret – their Jewish roots – as something positive. This is often followed by an active search for the core of 'Jewishness' and attempts to join the community of young Jews. In this way their 'Polishness' is being enriched with components of Jewish identity: Judaism (in the case of religious people), selective participation in religious observances by non-religious people, but most of all ethnic and cultural elements of Jewish heritage (literature, philosophy, history, language and identification with the State of Israel).

During the last few centuries Jews underwent a series of such identity crises and the fundamental question about nation membership cannot be answered easily and unambiguously (Webber 1993, :144–145). Young Polish Jews also construct a fluid and fragmented self-identity, which was defined by Anthony Giddens as 'the reflexive project constantly negotiated with a society' (Giddens 2010: 74). The participants in my survey reveal the symptoms of a selective choice of the most interesting cultural elements, and consequently of 'trying on' and experimenting with their ethnic and religious identity. Their self-identity is open to changes and modifications and individualised (Cukras-Stelągowska 2012: 79). Their identity is based on personal choices and is internally diverse (Gudonis 2003: 250–258). According to Gudonis, the new articulation of Jewishness in the post-Communist era is one of individualism and consumerism. These two trends are revealed in his research carried out in 2000. For Gudonis, the consumption of commodified cultural products like festivals, language courses, purchasing Jewish magazines, eating in Jewish restaurants is important in that 'by consuming the product, the Jew is identifying with the producer of this culture' (Gudonis 2003: 257). The individualism of exploration, freedom of choice and identification problems can also be found among other young Jews, including those who were interviewed by Irena Wiszniewska (2014: 191–228):

I do not cultivate these customs on a day-to-day basis but if I did, it would not be anything unusual. This is something I grew up with. And certainly,

this is only a part of my world because I do not think that in my case this Jewish upbringing was dominant. I grew in Poland which is a Christian country and this culture also shaped me to a large extent.

For me the most interesting is being a Jew in Poland. Because it is difficult, complicated and multidimensional. You can open any newspaper and find some Jewish topic. I was brought up to be a Jew. In Israel I would be a Pole.

I have always considered being a Jew as something positive. Something that distinguishes you and gives you the sense of being exceptional. I have associated it with something rewarding. In the nineties Jewishness was a kind of a ticket to the Western world. Some of our teachers were from the States, we had Western textbooks and school equipment. Thanks to money from the West, Jewishness was attractive.

Within this diversity, young Jews are on their own in building symbolic cultural boundaries. What is striking in the reconstruction of social identity is choosing some interesting aspects of both Jewish and Polish culture – this identification instability, and the desire to ‘put down roots’ within an authentic social environment, because ‘Jewishness has become fashionable in some circles’ (Cukras 2003).

Because agnostic and atheist Jews may identify with Jewish culture or the religious life of the Jewish community, the criteria for accepting new members have become less rigorous (Webber 1993: 142). It appears that aspects such as awareness of descent, concern with preservation of traditions and involvement in the community life, are more important than the Halachic requirements (Cukras 2003: 252). Since the 1990s, Polish Jewish communities have started to accept people with Jewish grandparents. The number of young people interested in joining the community has been growing. No specific knowledge for beginners about the history and Jewish religion, no prior knowledge of Hebrew or Yiddish is required. In Kraków there is also an independent Jewish Association, Czulent, that has been active for several years and attracts young local Jews. At its core there is a Jewish identity that is based only on the self-identification with Jewish culture, tradition, history and/or Jewish religion. Czulent is open both to those who are inclined to religion and to those whose Jewishness has a secular dimension (Czulent 2014). Nevertheless, even Reszke avoids stating explicitly whether it is reasonable to clearly distinguish between the paradigm of primordialism (where young people are bound by Jewish identity defined by their heritage, genes, blood and it is ‘something metaphysical’) and constructivist approaches (an individual decision, a choice concerning one’s identity). The latter approach predominates among studies conducted by other researchers in this field. Nonetheless, Reszke does not confirm this approach conclusively since this constant ‘need to reaffirm oneself make individuals reach for primordial categories in order to defend “an identity up in the air” or “a threatened identity”’ (Reszke 2013: 257).

Nostalgia

From the practical point of view, young Polish Jews talk about the impossibility of following all principles of Orthodoxy in the modern world. The selectiveness of religious practices is sometimes explained with reference to institutional barriers, particularly the lack of religious education in Poland and of kosher food provisions (Cukras-Stelągowska 2012: 221). Perhaps it is suitable to use the term 'partially religious' to describe this attitude (Gudonis 2003: 251). In this context, we should also ask about the religious boundaries. According to Gudonis, a vague split can be seen between people who care more either about religious or secular elements of Jewish culture (Gudonis 2001: 10–11). For my interviewees boundaries are flexible – some young religious Jews are also fascinated by literary, philosophical and artistic heritage, whereas other Jews who declare themselves atheists emphasise that it is impossible to break away from Judaism, which has been a constitutive element of Jewishness for centuries (also: Reszke 2013: 135). On the other hand, for many young Jews this 'Jewish particle' is fundamental for forming their self-identity. Among the reasons for return to their 'roots' they mention deep religious motivation and fascination with the culture of their grandparents. It should be noted that this is more than just a passing fashion. Jewishness means being a member of the historical community affected by the Holocaust, feeling proud of Jewish cultural heritage, and recollections of the pre-war Polish Diaspora. Apart from an identity built upon national solidarity, the culture of Yiddish language and literature is dear to the Jewish youth and they are particularly interested in klezmer music. When asked to define some unique characteristics of Jewish culture they list the following attributes: strong social bonds, intellectuality, devotion to family values, respect for tradition and genuine involvement in religion (Cukras-Stelągowska 2010–2011: 254–255).

The studies by Cukras (2003), Bilewicz and Wójcik (2010) and Reszke (2013) reveal that there is a notable involvement of the young generation in organisational activities, a strong need of affiliation, and a sense of responsibility for the future condition of the community. Does this contradict the thesis of gradual disappearance of ethnic identity? Whether it means that there is an 'authentic' Jewish life in Poland, or whether these are merely nostalgic attempts to recollect a Jewish life preceding the Holocaust? Greater emphasis and consideration must be given to these questions. At a time when cultural differences are blurred by the influence of popular culture, the ethnic background and affiliation with a national group are still very important and it is not only an additional element in one's biography.

This theoretical dispute shows that in social interactions the issue of the authenticity of one's 'return to roots' and of the 'renaissance of Jewishness' in Poland has become an important component of youth one's identity. Questions connected with the core of Jewish identity, questions about the revival, or rather appearance of new forms of the community emerge from this.

The valid questions above seem even more important for young Jews who wish to pass their cultural heritage onto the next generation by beginning a new stage in their family history. According to Reszke, the formation of the identity takes the form of mission and responsibility for carrying on Jewish presence in Poland. It means accumulating knowledge of the Jewish tradition and religion, as well as preserving the collective memory of the Holocaust. At the same time, Jews must struggle with the 'air of inauthenticity' resulting from the lack of generational continuity and the need to find new forms of cultural reference suffused with nostalgia for the pre-war Diaspora. Furthermore, their identity (some who do not have a Jewish mother) is sometimes challenged by Jews living abroad and questioned by Poles and other young Jews. Reszke claims that 'Playing this game of "Who is more Jewish?" is a dangerous game played by the members of "the unexpected generation"' (Reszke 2013: 173).

The ambivalence of a Jewish self-identity must be noted: even though, as the young people say, there exists a Jewish community but there is no a Jewish life – rather the reminiscence of the latter. However, there is notable involvement of the young generation in organisational activities, a need of affiliation, and a sense of responsibility for the future condition of the community. In the 2011 *Polish Census of Population and Housing* (GUS 2012: 106), only 8,000 people self-defined as Jewish, including 5,000 who declared both Jewish and Polish identities and, of course, not everybody is involved in Jewish social life. Apart from such issues as modest numerical strength of the community, some questions about the appearance of new forms of the institutional life emerge. The ambivalence manifests itself as a desire of a long-lasting identification. This desire is accompanied by inability to build a consistent field of identification, and furthermore by the sense of responsibility for the condition of the community and the awareness of merely symbolic existence of 'Jewishness' within the Central and Eastern European Diaspora. It can be a form of nostalgic identity:

I wouldn't like the struggle of my grandfather to be wasted. I would like to carry on the Jewish history of my family and hand it down to my children. I think, I'll succeed.

(Wiszniewska 2014: 233)

My national identity is in a way a liquid phenomenon, it is still evolving. At this particular moment, it moves towards Jewish identity. This process is up to me because it is me, not the Jewish community, who cares more to get in touch ... I care about preserving my own culture. Now I'm working on learning it. At the same time, I want to continue it. When I run my own household, it will be my decision what takes place in it. I would like to hold Sabbath dinners. In religious terms they will probably not be a one hundred percent as they should be. But they will be my Sabbath dinners.

(Klimek 2013: 2)

Boundaries

In other contexts, the ambivalence described here can lead to polyvalent identity. The individuals in my study presented cultural polyvalency, by which I mean that their self-identities combined elements from different cultures and from which they received a high level of approval in social interactions across two or more groups (definition by Kłoskowska 1996: 140–141):

I feel like being an heir to all cultures of the world. I don't limit myself to a Jewish or Polish culture.

I'm simply a European and find it difficult to be closed within one particular national category.

My system of values is as far from 'a traditional Polish model', as from the model of Jewish orthodoxy.

(Cukras 2003: 263)

It is interesting, as Marcin Starnawski also pointed out, that there is to an important cosmopolitan aspect of their identity. He studied the social and cultural identity of Polish citizens of Jewish origin who emigrated from Poland after the anti-Jewish smear campaign in March 1968. The respondents interpret the above in connection with relations between Judaism and humanism, pluralism and the idea of social justice. Starnawski thinks that it deserves to be called 'a cosmopolitanism awareness of history' – an element that balances out two aspects of postmodern identity, i.e. its boundlessness and the need of affiliation (Starnawski 2007: 143). 'Is it possible to be Polish and Jewish at the same time?', the Italian researcher Barrio Ferro asked a group of eight persons of both sexes, members of the JCC Student Club in Krakow (2010/2011). He confirmed that 'not only did the interviewees answer positively, but they also referred to Europe as a factor in helping them reach that conclusion'. Europe seems to be trans-cultural space and that is why the young people, 'seeing how other communities were flourishing in other parts of the continent, and considering that they also belonged to Europe (even though their activities remained rooted in the local) helped them reconcile both sides' (Ferro 2012: 95–96).

Current identity dilemmas can be also resolved within what David Hollinger called 'post-ethnic communities', where identification with a given community is important but not the most vital for individuals. Here the key issue is the shared humanness within which 'affiliation is flexible, changeable, manifold and voluntary. Multiple identities are enhanced and the formation of new groups is approved as a normal part of living in a democratic society' (Hollinger 2000: 116). But is this a realistic concept? It seems that ethnic diversity will last as long as a given ethnic group will be a fundamental structure, the structure which in the face of the crisis of values and external threats provides a sense of security. We can see signs of 'getting out' of the criterion of ethnicity among Wiszniewska's interviewees:

I have a strong community and family identity. I also admit sharing some beliefs. However, national or gender identifications do not seem especially important to me.

Secular Jewishness has become unsustainable. I'm not saying, it is something bad. We live in the era of globalization, the era of this mishmash when various boundaries have become blurred.

(Wiszniewska 2014: 212 and 252)

It is also worth mentioning that Reszke's study included members of the third generation, those who must learn the rudiments of the tradition and make an effort to 'continually construct contemporary Polish-Jewish culture' (Reszke 2013: 15). The reason for this is that their primary socialisation was deprived of the heritage of Jewish culture. Their identities are uncertain, extremely dynamic and individualised. It is rather important to stress that within this 'young generation' there are also people who, thanks to their parents, had contact with Jewish culture. To prove their willingness to put down roots, they were sent to Jewish schools. Former pupils interviewed by me confirm that the family home supported acculturation to Jewish culture. In their families, the Sabbath was observed on more or less regular basis, as well as other major Jewish holidays – even though some elements of Catholic tradition, like celebrating Christmas Eve or Easter – were also present. Furthermore, certain symbols like a mezuzah or menorah were visible part of their homes. In such an environment, the process of building one's identity is much easier than in case of young people from assimilated families.

Non-formal education and participation in meetings with peers also plays a large role in shaping identity. In Youth Clubs associated with larger communities, children and teenagers are able to learn a lot about Jewish culture, history and language. Summer camps attended by the youth also play an important role. Collectively celebrated Sabbaths, learning about kosher cuisine and Jewish dances give them an opportunity to experience some aspects of Jewish culture, as well as to meet important figures from among Jewish community. The Warsaw community offers the most varied educational facilities and nearly every day some classes are organised addressed for children and young people. Young members of the Jewish community may choose from various forms of informal education. Thriving Jewish communities, like those in Warsaw, Łódź, Wrocław and Kraków, offer the largest number of classes. The schedule of classes is based on the cycle of Jewish holidays. Weekly classes are very often made more attractive by dancing, singing, art workshops and excursions. The Sunday schools generally do not teach Judaism as a religion, but some information about principles of the Jewish religion are given, as well as facts from Jewish history. Children learn how to say blessings and they are taught about holidays. The coordinator explains the guidelines as follows:

The main goal of this Sunday school is to create the place where Jewish children can meet other children of Jewish descent, to create a curriculum

that introduces children to some Jewish issues, but also to create the place where they can have a lot of fun. I think that the Sunday school is just the first stage – when a child recognizes his or her background and develops his or her Jewish identity.

(Cukras-Stelagowska 2010: 290–291)

Sunday schools in Poland are a very important part of informal education. This is an education that engages and becomes a great group experience and an opportunity to touch the ‘living culture’ (Jewish songs and dances, Hebrew language, excursions to the synagogue, meetings with a rabbi who talks about the community). This informal education has a ‘more Jewish’ character than for example Lauder Foundation Schools (which many non-Jewish pupils attend). However, is the informal Jewish education really the first step toward Jewish identity or is it simply having fun for some children? Barry Chazan, describing informal Jewish education in the US, emphasises that sometimes focusing on affect and behaviour is a rejection of intellect and understanding the canon (Chazan 2003).

For older children, teenagers and adults there is a spectrum of possible institutional options: the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, the Union of Jewish Religious Congregations, Socio-Cultural Association of Jews in Poland (TSKŻ), JCC Clubs, ZOOM for students, Chabad Lubawicz Poland, Shavei Israel, Pardes Association, Czulent, Shalom Foundation, and so on. Nowadays, some young Jews spend time in the religious community, others learn in a Jewish school, some work for the Lauder foundation. Some form their own group – for example Progressive Judaism (Beit Warszawa) or Czulent (secular, open society in Krakow). The rest are the people who sometimes attend the activities at a Jewish club or visit the synagogue. It seems to me that for a description of Polish-Jewish youth Régine Azria’s typology from French-Jewish society might be useful, that is, Professional Jews, the Faithful, Volunteers or Militants, Consumers and Seekers (also looking for a suitable organisational form) (2003: 67–73). Further, Helena Dolata highlights the importance of institutional support. She writes about Jews in Poznań who were able to get to know only snatches of Jewish rituals at their family homes but this changed when the Poznań Jewish community was formed. The institution took over the religious duties that, according to custom, once belonged to the family (Dolata 2014: 1). According to Dolata, many people think that Jewish religious life is limited almost exclusively to Shabbat celebrations and other holidays held in an organised manner in their communities. This is also particularly important for young people raised in Catholic or atheist families, who for various reasons cannot (or will not) transfer Jewish religious symbols and practices to their home environment.

Claire Rosenson draws attention to the tension between the orthodox Lauder Foundation, the Union of Jewish Religious Congregations and TSKŻ (folkloric Yiddish culture and communist past) and raises some interesting issues about the internal transformation in these institutions. This complex situation forces individuals to make considered choices of self-identification (Rosenson 2003: 278).

Which identities prevail in the community that is now experiencing an institutional revival? Are there appropriate cultural, educational or religious institutions in today's Poland that ensure the development and cultivation of each model of identification with Judaism? What we can say for sure is that both secular and religious institutions (tailored to different age groups) are flourishing. Belonging to a chosen organisation gives an individual a sense of social integration and may also become one of the elements of group separation from dominant social structures. Another question is connected with protecting the ethnic boundaries, such as opposition to mixed marriages or conversion. In an interview titled *My grandfather killed a German*, Jan Śpiewak, a social activist and long-standing chairman of the National Jewish Youth Organization (ŻOOM), expressed his worries about the future of the Jewish communities because their leaders do not instil in their children respect for traditions. As a result the young have church weddings with non-Jewish Polish partners. Furthermore, he also finds the strong competition of Reform Judaism to be an 'identity threat'. Śpiewak would not like 'Polish Jewishness to become muddy and Jewish life to be made up of goys' (Wiszniewska 2014: 200). Thus, debates on modern forms of identity are also connected with the issue of conversion. As Reszke shows, in case of 'the unexpected generation' their conversion is often more social than religious. That is, its main motive is to obtain 'better status' within the Jewish community. This difficult process of conversion to Judaism does not always win the approval of the Jewish community (especially of its older generation) (Reszke 2013: 185–191). This may present particular problem for people with a distant Jewish background. It is worth noting that even non-religious individuals have their doubts about the conversion of Gentiles:

For me it is somewhat strange. Judaism is not an evangelical religion, but it is based on ethnicity. If more Gentiles are joining, then in some years Gentiles will be making decisions concerning the Jewish community. This is why ŻOOM accepts only those of Jewish descent. Not necessarily Halakhic – matrilineal – but also patrilineal.

(Krzyżaniak-Gumowska 2008: 3)

Others are not disturbed by this as long as converts 'do not make a display of their religion' (Wiszniewska 2014: 252).

At present, the Jewish community in Poland, as well as other ethnic groups and minorities, must determine its boundaries and answer questions about the centre or the core of its identity. These ethnic boundaries are being constantly negotiated – with the elder generation, between secular and religious Jews, between Halakhic Jews and converts, and with Gentiles. These boundaries become wider because of the pluralistic and cosmopolitan attitudes to identity formation among some Jews. These boundaries have become blurred because the Jewish community in Poland is not large. Polish Jews sway between participation and exclusion, between being faithful to their traditions and following the newest identity trends of the young generation. This identity is constantly in question, in search of 'authenticity'. This

is summarised by Krzyżaniak-Gumowska (2008: 3): 'In the history of Poland, rarely would we see a madman who would admit openly to being a Jew. And now many people pretend they are Jews'.

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