JDC International Centre for
Community Development

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Growing up Jewish in Poland

A longitudinal study of children and adolescents attending the Lauder-JDC International Jewish Youth Camp Szarvas

Magdalena Budziszewska, PhD

December 2019

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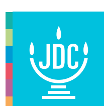

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

JDC International Centre for **Community Development**

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Executive summary

-The report presents the findings of a study about the developmental trajectories of 17 children and adolescents from 14 families living in Poland who attended the Lauder-JDC International Jewish Youth Camp Szarvas (Hungary) for the first time at the time of the study (2015-2018). The main themes of the study were young campers'[1] camp experiences, consequences of camp participation, as well as the longitudinal development of their Jewish identities, values, and life trajectories. All this was analyzed in the context of their families of origin, Jewish communities and organizations in Poland, especially the Jewish Community Center (JCC) environment, and broader realities such as contemporary Polish and international developments.

-The main methodological feature of this study lies in it being a qualitative, longitudinal, observational cohort study. In contrast to most studies that explore development retrospectively, this study involved interviewing first-time Szarvas campers and their families over a longer period, with up to three consecutive interviews per family over a period of three years. To our knowledge, this research experience is unique in Jewish Europe.

-Szarvas summer camp proved to be a strong emotional/psychological vehicle for children and adolescents. Spending 12 days in a sleepaway experience provided self-confidence, a sense of ownership, and responsibility toward the camp and more broadly toward the local Jewish community. The camp also empowers some campers for further Jewish activism. All this, while at the same time developing strong criticisms/reflective thinking toward certain aspects of the camp. In fact, the most striking feature regarding many group members is how they gradually developed a strong identification with and a sense of responsibility for the camp and that this did not prevent them from formulating criticisms and/or other reflections on problematic issues related to the camp.

-When the campers grew older, they began to speak more of themselves as a group or even as a generation. They began having their own ideas for the camp's future and the Jewish community. These voices are often based on a distinction to the previous generation, not only that of their parents, but also to young adults in their communities, such as students. They wanted their identity to be more future-oriented and less based on adults' traditional distinctions, or trauma, or tradition.

-When this intense engagement is viewed from a distance, it becomes clear that more forces are at work than just camp experiences or simple peer group dynamics. The most important one seemed to be the family context, the family's identity status, and the trajectories the parents are taking at the same time. In fact, the study shows how important it is to understand the Szarvas experience in light of the children's family backgrounds. Often there was a correspondence between the children's trajectories and the family ethos and values at home. Children/teenagers play an active role in that journey, not only as receivers, and therefore the camp experience appears to be a catalyst of trajectories those children follow with their family. From this point of view, Szarvas can be understood as a final stage of many processes, not only as the beginning.

-From a Jewish identity-building standpoint, Szarvas plays a role for the whole household, depending on the ongoing identity process the family is undergoing in terms of Jewish identity. If the family is in a "Jewish discovery phase," that is, exploring and discovering their Jewish

[1] In this report, the children and adolescents who attended Szarvas camp are generally referred to as "campers," whereas the people who participated in the study are referred to as "participants" or "study participants."

identity and belonging, then Szarvas fits into their search very well. For other families more "settled" in terms of Jewish identity, Szarvas may be regarded as too basic by the child and with less "Jewish" excitement by the family.

-For most families, sending their children to Szarvas represents a result of longer participation in the local community, especially in the local Jewish summer camp (Atid), and is regarded as a natural step in that sense. Szarvas represents a "safe space" where their children can meet Jewish peers from other countries ("other people like them"), and more importantly, where they can see first-hand a sample of the broader Jewish world. This is especially significant for families accustomed to interacting in very small Jewish communities. Szarvas is also an experience that represents an important step toward more independence, and more developmental opportunities in that sense, including improvement in the campers' English skills.

-The opportunity to participate in Szarvas camp has existed in Poland since the early 1990s and, over time, the camp has grown into the local environment and become a part of standard Jewish experience for many families. Because of the important role that the camp played in their own Jewish socialization, Szarvas functions as a sort of intergenerational point of identification for some parents in the sample. For them, not sending their children to Szarvas would be unthinkable.

-The study shows a new, unprecedented dynamic between generations. For the first time since the Shoah, Judaism/Jewish identity is not at the center of generational conflicts and silences. On the contrary, children tend to "mirror" parents' attitudes toward Judaism. In this particular aspect –transmission of Judaism – there is no rebellion between generations. This is new and totally unprecedented in Poland.

-Szarvas, as well as other local programs run by the JDC such as the JCC Warsaw, function as "legitimizers" of Jewish identity in children with mixed backgrounds, especially those who are not Halachically Jewish (mother not Jewish).

Introduction

In this study, I analyze the developmental trajectories of 17 children and adolescents from 14 families living in Poland who were first-time campers in the Lauder-JDC International Jewish Youth Camp Szarvas (Hungary) at the time of the study (2015 -2018). They and their families were observed and interviewed longitudinally for a period of up to 3.5 years, starting from the year they first participated in the camp. In the final third wave, nine families with ten children remained in the sample. The study focused on young campers' camp experiences, consequences of camp participation, as well as the longitudinal development of their Jewish identities, values, and life trajectories. This development was analyzed in the context of their family of origin, Jewish communities and organizations in Poland, especially the JCC's environment, and broader realities such as contemporary Polish and international developments. The JDC-Lauder International Jewish Youth Camp Szarvas in Hungary started in 1990, soon after the dismantling of the communist regimes. "Szarvas," as is it commonly known, became the largest and most important camp in the region, attracting children from all over Europe -especially Central and Eastern Europe, but not exclusively- and overseas.[2]

Research questions

The following research questions were asked:

1. What are the main factors that affect Jewish participation both from the children's and the parents' perspectives?
2. What are the possible Jewish trajectories of teenagers in Central Eastern Europe? Do they keep connected with Jewish life? If so, how? What is their relationship with Judaism and Jewishness?
3. What are their relative values and priorities, their hopes, and their perceived future as they make their way from teenagehood to young adults?
4. How important is the household in transmitting Judaism? How important are local community organizations in transmitting Judaism? Are there any preferred Jewish spaces?
5. What is the role of Szarvas camp in the local Jewish ecosystem?

Methods

The main methodological feature of this study is that it is a qualitative, longitudinal, observational cohort study. In contrast to most studies that explore development retrospectively, children and adolescents who were Szarvas first-timers and their families were interviewed over a longer period, with up to three consecutive interviews per family over a period of three years. To my knowledge, this research experience is unique in Europe. The longitudinal design made it possible to observe the development as it happens, to see the changes. Those changes could easily be overlooked applying retrospective methodology, as people are seldom aware of changes developing gradually rather than in a revolutionary manner. The observational component allowed the researcher to analyze the development from an external perspective. The extended period of the study made it possible to build trust,

[2] For more information about the camp, see https://szarvas.camp/en

get to know the families better, and see changes as they evolved. Although a period of three years is small when compared to the entire lifespan, it may be significant for children and adolescents. For most of the study participants, it was a critical period of change from a child to an adolescent or nearly an adult. A few of them were children with a childish expression and manner of speaking at the first interview, and their looks, body, and emotional and intellectual development changed so much during the period of the study that it was difficult to recognize them later. The intense time of puberty is also, to my knowledge, seldom studied in the context of Jewish studies regarding identity formation (American Jewish Committee, 2006; Pomson & Schnoor, 2018), so the study has additional value in this regard.

Moreover, during the time of the study, not only the young participants developed and changed, but also their families, some of them profoundly. The study made it possible to track the interaction between family dynamics and adolescent identity from a close perspective and in real time.

Study participants

A total of 14 families with 17 children and adolescents participated in the project. The children and adolescents were all Szarvas first-timers in the years of the study. Szarvas campers who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate by the local JDC office. The researchers contacted those who agreed to participate. Study participants were informed about all important aspects of the study and about their rights as respondents. They were then asked again for their agreement to participate. Parents signed the participation agreement for their underage children. Children and adolescents were independently asked for their agreement to participate. Participation was not paid, but participants received small thank-you gifts from the Warsaw Jewish Community Center (JCC). To foster trust, each of the two interviewers was assigned particular families for the entire duration of the study, growing to know those families more and more each year. All interviews were conducted in Polish. As a very valuable addition to the observational component of the study, most of the interviews were held at the participants' homes. This made it possible to observe the complex sociocultural character of their family environments (books, type of esthetics, Jewish symbols, etc.) and how it changed over time. Family homes were also a natural venue for conversation about family and identity (Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot & Shin, 2006). I am very thankful to the study participants for all those remarkable conversations, and for their time and participation. Most insights in this study result from the participants' (including the youngest of them) insights and their willingness to share them with us.

The demographic profile of the participants and their sociological characteristics will be presented in detail in the first part of the findings section. In the first wave, there were ten children and adolescents and ten families. In the second wave of the study about 1½ years later, there were seven new Szarvas first-timers, however only four new families, as some of the participants were siblings. One adolescent refused to participate in the second wave of interviews, but her family stayed in the sample. In the third and last wave, about three years after the start of the study, there was significant dropout from the study, with only nine families with ten adolescents remaining in the final sample. Three families decided not to participate anymore, mostly because of time and practical difficulties in organizing interviews. Two others could not be reached, probably because they were abroad for a long time. Significant dropout is typical in longitudinal studies, and this study was intense in terms of the time and engagement it demanded of participants.

In the first year of the study, the average age of the campers participating was 13.2 years (standard deviation (SD) = 2.09, N = 10); the youngest was 10, the oldest 16. In the second year of the study, together with the second cohort of Szarvas first-timers, the average age was 12.8 years (SD = 12.9; N = 17); the youngest person was 10, the oldest 18. The oldest camper participating was in the international group at Szarvas. In the third and last year of the study, the average age was 14.2 (SD = 2.4; N = 9), with ages ranging from 12 to 19.

Note that in the findings section, whenever particular stories of families and persons are told, identifying details have been omitted or changed to protect the participants' privacy. All participants' names used in this report are changed.

Interviewers

Two female psychologists acted as interviewers in this study. Both had experience working with children, adolescents, and families as well as conducting in-depth interviews. Prior to the study, the interviewers did not know any of the participants, and they were not members of their Jewish communities. The interviewers' status in this study is neutral outsider interviewers. This interview setting aims to allow participants to express all opinions and Jewish identity types freely, and to be potentially critical of their communities without feeling judged.

Methods of analysis

The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcription company. I listened to the recordings, read, and reread the transcripts to find relationships in the data related to the research questions. The analysis was qualitative and interpretative, systematically applying the circular analytic process, that is, developing concepts from the data, and then testing emerging concepts against new study material, in repeated, multiple rounds of analysis.

Findings

1. Families who send their children to Szarvas camp – an introduction

Even within the small sample of participants there was a striking variety of families, persons, characters, and lifestyles. Families participating in this study are connected by the fact that they send their children to this Jewish summer camp. Yet they differ in terms of many other characteristics. Geographically speaking, most of the participants were from Warsaw (Poland's capital) and Kraków (a major Polish city with a rich Jewish history). Both cities have vibrant Jewish communities today. However, some participants lived in other places, including nonurban communities. Simple categorizations (such as liberal vs. conservative) could be used to describe this sample. But categorizations should be treated with care. There is a full range of subtle differences within those groups which define and color the lives of the families in the sample. This influences how they understand being Jewish, how they live their Jewishness in everyday life, and how they transmit it to their children. The study group is also diverse regarding social class as well as social and cultural capital. There is a large group characterized by exceptionally high social and cultural capital, including Jewish social and cultural capital. These families typically have an extensive intellectual and professional background, family traditions of academic and artistic activities, and frequently also of political or social involvement. Economically, the families in this group are often middle-class, sometimes upper middle-class, although some are also struggling financially. The main resource of this group lies however in cultivating high social and cultural capital, not primarily in accumulating financial resources. Some of them continue the tradition of left-wing intellectual and social involvement which is rooted in the tradition of secular and assimilated Jews. There is often something warm and very cultivated in the lifestyles of families in this subgroup, and they are often very good, open, and reflexive conversation partners. This could point to multigenerational transmission of cultural capital, which is remarkable if one considers how difficult this transmission was because of the troubled history of Jews in Poland. Another small subgroup in this study is persons connected to international businesses, some of which are based in Israel. This group includes both upper-class and middle-class families, and they are less connected to the first group in terms of relationships and friendships. The international business subgroup is different from the former group regarding culture and lifestyle. Another distinct subgroup encompasses working-class families. Working-class families are the smallest group in the sample and are often also characterized by lower levels of social and cultural capital.

Regarding political and religious orientation, the first group is often liberal, nonreligious, and politically belongs to the cultural left or has a liberal mindset (regarding the free market). The second group is more traditional and more religious, even if nobody is observant in the Orthodox sense, and quite a few keep connection to Chabad groups and also to Israel. The working-class group is the most heterogeneous one, with varied backgrounds and attitudes.

The sample in the present study is not representative of the general Jewish community. It was a purposeful sampling of Szarvas first-timers, which makes it selective. However, the types of Jewish identity are similar to those of the general Jewish population. In this sample, the progressive, liberal nonreligious group may be overrepresented. This group is most often connected to JDC programs in Poland, while religious people are likely to be connected to other Jewish communities and Jewish initiatives. For historical reasons, the assimilated, nonreligious type of identity is common in Polish Jews, and it is a type of identity transmitted over generations.

1.1 Background information about the phenomenon of "discovering" Jewish identity in Poland

Jews who survived the Shoah, after living in hiding or being liberated from concentration camps, were confronted with psychological and physical health consequences and the loss of their loved ones and their whole world. After World War II, Poland was not a safe space, and anti-Semitism persisted (Gross, 2007). Under these conditions, survivors who stayed in Poland sometimes decided to hide their Jewish Identity or tried to simply not talk about it. The experience of trauma caused them continuous fear about the safety of their children. Jewish children could be bullied at schools; stones were thrown at them in the streets. During and after the Shoah, some parents would not tell their children that they were Jewish to protect them from all this or out of fear that the children would not keep this secret (Muller-Paisner, 2002). Some children survived the Shoah by being given to other families or institutions, being baptized and raised in families that were not their biological families, and sometimes not knowing who they were. Quite large groups of assimilated Jews, including those who were staunch communists and survived in Russia, did not emphasize their Jewishness and above all did not support any religion. Jews changed their names for safety or because it was expected by the regime. As later, during the communist period, the ruling party used anti-Semitic sentiments, being Jewish could result in consequences such as losing work and the right to a university education as well as problems with secret service agents. Jews were expelled from the Communist Party, and in/around 1968 also expelled from the country, forced to emigrate. At the same time, the same Jewish families could have Polish friends who knew, and could have positive experiences within their Polish environment. Some of them truly believed in building a better world and a new Poland under communism. Many identified strongly with being Polish, or being Polish Jews, and were committed to Poland as their homeland. There are as many stories as there are persons (Grynberg, 2018). This complex history resulted in relatively many persons in Poland who would learn only later in life about their Jewish roots, and discover a family secret. Or maybe start taking an interest in the Jewishness that was not a real secret, but rather something not talked about in the families. This discovery (having a Jewish mother, father, grandparents in the closet) encouraged many of those persons to take an interest in the Jewish part of their identity – sometimes resulting in dramatic changes, such as becoming religious or emigrating to Israel. Others "dismissed" this discovery, preferring to hide it or minimize its importance, turning to the Jewish community only years later (Kessel, 2000). The variation is considerable in this regard as well as in the ways Jewish identities are constructed and expressed (Gebert,1994; Gitelman,1999; Gudonis, 2001), but it is plausible that in Poland the group of persons discovering their identity could be large. The distinct characteristic of the Polish Jewish community may lie in its specific selection: many Jews emigrated directly after the war, but also later, and between 13,000 and 20,000 Jews were forced to emigrate around 1968. Those who stayed are consequently a specific group, for example, those who could not leave their aging parents, but also those who simply wished or decided to stay.

2. Campers' experiences during Szarvas camp

2.1 Younger campers' camp experiences

The youngest Szarvas first-timers (the younger group at the camp, around 10 to 13 years) were without exception happy about their camp experience. Their important memories from the camp include sports and games, fun, being with friends, and food. They could rarely name bad experiences, even if explicitly asked to think of something bad. One girl was scared by some of the surprise night activities – "they scared us so much." However, one of the young boys thought the same "scary" experience was the best one. Another young participant felt uncomfortable because she could not understand much English and wanted more help with the language. There were some requests for better housing for the Polish group and for the showers to be renovated. On the other hand, some of the housing challenges contributed to the general fun of the camp. All participants in the younger group wished to attend again in the following years. The experience in Szarvas seems to fit the needs of younger children very well, and this group is the least critical one. Many were fascinated, waiting all year for the next camp.

2.2 Older campers' camp experiences

The majority of older campers participating (the older group at Szarvas, age 14 to 18) were also content with their camp experiences. Activities, especially creative activities such as making films or decorations, were very important to this group. This group also enjoyed and appreciated simple things (food, dancing). Some of the teenagers mentioned Jewish learning or prayers as important new experiences. Nevertheless, study participants in the older group also expressed more critical ideas. One important theme was a debate about the extent to which this camp entails ideologies – such as Zionism, a particular attitude toward Israel, and acceptance of pluralistic (for example nonreligious or mixed) Jewish identities. Pluralistic acceptance and freedom were very important to the adolescents, as many of them come from mixed and nonreligious families. Participants sought to be accepted as they were (for example, if they did not want to sing a prayer or sing at all). Freedom not to pray was very important to one study participant, and he felt slightly forced to do so, although only in the first camp, and the next year his experiences were better. However, adolescents in general hate being forced to things, and they generally wished for more freedom in what to do during the camp.

They also made a point of describing this experience as somewhat based on crowd psychology:

> **Boy (14):** *"I did not like the fact that everything was done on such a large scale there, it's like a factory."*
>
> **Interviewer:** *"Factory of what?"*
>
> ***Boy:*** *"Humans. (…) In Szarvas, they take a microphone, they speak to the crowd, there are about 700 persons, and they ask: 'Did you like it?' – And there is no place for a person to say no. Everybody is shouting, 'it was super.'"*
>
> **Interviewer:** *"You mean, it's like not seeing a person in the crowd?"*
>
> **Boy:** *"Yes. In Atid camps (local camp) it was more personal, you were you. But there in this bigger community it looks a little like that. I mean, it's great, it's really good that there*

is this camp, I am very happy about it. But I think this—treating this (being Jewish) as a distinction—this is the worst part for me."

Interviewer: *"You come back to the theme, I don't know … of Jews being somehow special, exceptional. Why are you rolling your eyes?"*

Boy: *"Yes, because I hate that attitude: 'you are Jewish, you are great.' They had these posters there. Someone made them: 'Don't worry, be Jewish,' or 'I'm Jewish, I'm cool.' I don't get that, so I asked people, what does it mean, if I am for example I don't know, Polish, or a Polish Jew who does not feel as Jewish as others who are so high about being Jewish? Am I then not cool? Does it change anything?"*

The same person also commented on the "bubble" character of the camp experience:

Boy: *"I was happy, and then I suddenly started crying. So, they asked me: what's going on? (…) And I felt like, also, they are all closed like in this 'Elysium.'*

Interviewer: *"What is 'Elysium'"?*

Boy: *"It was a film, a reference to a film, that they sit there, only 'elite' kind of. They are in a bubble, and I am in the bubble, and I am observing."*

As in the above example, some camp experiences were emotionally intense for adolescents. But at the same time, they were fascinated with the camp, and their criticism came from deeply identifying with the camp.

However, there were also other, opposite voices among teens regarding the positioning of Jewishness and distinctiveness during the camp.

Boy (12): *"I like it (being Jewish), it's nice for me, because I like being different. I don't want to be like everybody, to wear a cross on my neck, and so on, like everybody. I prefer being different than the same as everybody. (…) It is a feeling inside, a feeling of being special, not in a sense I am more cool but special, different, I can stand out."*

Also, opinions on Zionism differed. For three families—two with at least one parent from Israel and one Polish family that had previously worked in Israel—the pro-Israeli attitude was important. For them, the camp had an air of being "ours" as contrasted to the outside world. But independently of each other, another three participants from different families expressed annoyance with the "Israeli corner" at Szarvas [3]. They also stressed that they wanted to discuss the complex matter of the Middle East conflict. It seems that managing very diverse, even conflicting ideas related to Israel and the Middle East is a challenge for Szarvas camp.

Concerning time and group processes, another theme emerged in the group of adolescents. From their second year on, they often spoke of themselves as a group (the Polish group) and seemed to build strong bonds. Their critical ideas changed, although ideology half-jokingly remained a theme. The topic now was being treated fairly and as partners by camp leaders. It was important for them to be listened to (treated like adults), and not only as individuals but as a group. For example, they would have appreciated if someone from the camp leadership had spoken to them about an incident of stolen money, instead of sending them a formal letter much later about Szarvas being safe. For them, it was not about a lack of safety, but about

[3] The "Israeli corner" is a room at the camp that specifically deals with Israel education. It is run by Israelis and every group takes part in this program for at least one day per 12-day session at the camp.

being listened to. Here, their criticism should be understood in the particular context. At the same time, the same group formed a strong sense of belonging to Szarvas and a very positive (even enthusiastic) emotional bond to it. Therefore, their criticism flows from a sense of caring about the camp, wanting to make it their own. Although readers of this report might get a sense of a highly critical group, this group actually seemed to be "in love" with their Szarvas experience, hence also emotional and critical about it. In the third year of the study, most of this group was planning to become madrichim in the future and already had their own ideas how to make the camp equally good or even better. They developed a sense of responsibility for this camp and for other people (or, more broadly, for all the organizations including local camps in Poland and everyday activities at the JCC at home, because all those things belong together). They clearly would like to be more active in co-creating their space and community.

Even if highly critical, this group actually seemed to be "in love" with their Szarvas experience. In the third year of the study, most of this group was planning to become madrichim in the future

The experiences of two persons from the older group who were interviewed in the first year were different. One of the girls felt that she was not understood and that her special needs (health) were not taken seriously. She was a very intelligent person with extensive and impressive Jewish knowledge, learning Hebrew, Arabic, and a few other languages. She had academic-level knowledge of Jewish history uncommon for someone her age. For her the camp seemed a little childish, even infantile, and she never came back. Another older participant also felt that she was too old for this camp and that the Jewish content was too simple. She liked it, but without the enthusiasm characteristic of others participants in this group.

From the researchers' perspective, the most striking feature of the development of many members of this group is how they gradually developed a strong identification and a sense of responsibility for the camp and their home community as a whole. In a few of the interviews, the intensity of that emotion was thought-provoking. They were stories about crying, kissing ground here (a joke or a gesture symbolizing coming back to the homeland) and in one situation a silent intense religious experience (a child who changed toward a Jewish and religiously colored identity radically different than before the camp). For some of them the Jewish context became an important part of their identity, although it meant something different for every person. A few are already considering a trajectory of becoming Jewish activists in the future, "doing something for the community." Most of them would like to come to Szarvas as madrichim in the future. The interesting and positive feature here is that this attitude certainly includes criticism or reflexive thinking.

When this intense engagement is viewed from a distance, it becomes clear that more forces are at work than just camp experiences or simple peer group dynamics. The most important one seemed to be the family context, the family's identity status, and the trajectories the parents are taking at the same time. Often there was a correspondence between the children's trajectories and the family ethos at home. For example, in later sections, I discuss how responsibility for community and caring for others were named as important values by parents, and children endorsed the same values in the camp context. They clearly take them from their home.

When this intense engagement is viewed from a distance, it becomes clear that more forces are at work than just camp experiences or simple peer group dynamics. The most important one seemed to be the family context, the family's identity status, and the trajectories the parents are taking at the same time.

Szarvas camp seems to be not the main cause, but rather a catalyst and final effect of the trajectories those children follow with their family at home. Children and adolescents play an active role in that journey, as active actors, not only as receivers of the camp experience.

Adolescence is the age of initial and usually strong and emotional commitments to broader ideas: political, religious, lifestyle, and others. Therefore, the young participants' serious engagement and emotions can be seen as an age-related phenomenon. Their intellectual, critical comments are an expression of how deeply they were involved with the camp, mainly in emotional terms.

In summary, teenagers who attended Szarvas and camps at home multiple times and participated in everyday activities in their community developed a sense of responsibility for the present and the future (!) of their camps and their organizations. The community they build, including a group of friends, is in a sense "theirs," and they would like to contribute to it.

2.3 Parents' voices regarding the camp

In conformance with children's and adolescents' reports, their parents were also very positive about Szarvas. Families who participated in this longitudinal study were highly motivated and trusted the camp sufficiently to send their children there. They were also willing to participate in a long and demanding study. Therefore, it is not surprising that they evaluated the camp positively. However, there is variation in the parents' opinions and motivations for their children attending Szarvas. One group of parents would like to include as much Jewish learning and Jewish experiences in their children's trajectories as possible. They consider Jewish spaces their own spaces, and safe spaces, and find what the camp has to offer attractive. An important factor mentioned by most parents is to show their children the broader Jewish world. In their words:

> *"To show them that there are other people like them out there."*

Parents often highlighted that the Jewish communities in Poland are quite small. The camp offers an opportunity for a connection to the broader Jewish world. It also offers an experience in diversity, to see "Jews who are so very different than us."

Another experience that all the parents considered important is that the camp constitutes a developmental step for children regarding independence, social competence with peers, and an opportunity to speak English. Most parents mentioned the opportunity to meet Jews from different countries, to get to know them, and to talk to them.

Independently of each other, many families suggesting encouraging freer and more natural contact between different groups in the camp.[4] In their words:

> *"They take them all together (from different countries), and then they keep them apart."*

Some of the families stressed that it would be better to allow for more freedom and agency on the side of adolescent campers. They stressed that this group of adolescents has good ideas, is motivated, and is generally doing well. So, one could let them do their thing, instead of directing this process too much. On their own, they would find out what they need from the camp experience and take it, possibly reaching new outcomes, which would be characteristic for their generation.

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[4] This relates to the fact that during the camp children are divided into groups from their own country, and tend to spend the majority of the time in their particular group.

> **Interviewer:** *"Would you have any advice, any ideas for the organizers, what they could do better at the camp?"*
>
> **Parent:** *"I would say, let them interact more. And less ideology, I don't mean only Zionist but any ideology. Let them be together instead, and they will find a way."*

Here, the parents strongly endorsed the teenage participants' agency, their ideas, and their quest for their way of doing things. Adults could trust those developments and not try to direct them too much because those teens are an "amazing" group, "are doing well," and are already searching for their own paths. This attitude of trusting their own children, letting them find their own way, and endorsing their freedom seems to reflect a progressive and responsibility-oriented philosophy of parenting. Few families with more traditional and religious orientation made this kind of freedom/trust-oriented comments, instead stressing that the camp provides socialization that is "ours: Jewish."

The dominant comments from most parents were very positive:

> *"They just do everything great there (at the camp), they should just continue."*
>
> *"Tell them: they're doing great, they should continue, we need that."*

Also, a few families use the camp to build a sense of Jewish identity in their children, a sense that they belong to the broader Jewish community:

> **Interviewer:** *"How did participation in the camp influence your children?"*
>
> **Parent:** *"I think it was very positive. They could start feeling, let me say, Jewish; Jewish women, Jewish men. That this camp strengthened the sense of their identity because they could see Jews from other countries."*

2.4 Decision processes regarding camp participation

In contrast to the distinction made above in more liberal and more traditional philosophies of parenting, the decision processes at home regarding camp participation were always primarily connected to the child's choice. Parents said it was the children who decided if they would like to go to Szarvas or not. However, going to Szarvas is often a result of longer participation in the local community and in Atid. Atid is a local Jewish camp organized by the local community for younger children. So the children who are to decide whether to go to Szarvas or not usually know each other already. For them, the most important factor is often if their friends will also be there. Because Szarvas camp serves as the final experience in the long series of Jewish camps, going there is a quite natural consequence of family engagement. As many families said, it was obvious from the beginning that the children would go there, and they prepared for that occasion, even waiting for it. Moreover, in some families, Szarvas is a family tradition to an extent where nonparticipation would be unthinkable. No wonder children wait for that occasion.

Because Szarvas camp serves as the final experience in the long series of Jewish camps, going there is a quite natural consequence of family engagement.

3. Factors affecting Jewish participation and camp experience: Family types

Based on the analysis and the longitudinal observation of the trajectories of children participating in Szarvas camp, I concluded that the most decisive factor affecting children's camp experiences and participation in Jewish life is the type of family they come from.

Children and adolescents from families with little or no psychological dynamics around Jewish identity tended to treat Szarvas camp as a quite conventional summer camp. They treated it mostly as fun and engaged less in the camp idea and organization. In contrast, adolescents from families with ongoing psychological dynamics around Jewish identity (of many quite complex types) tended to experience the camp deeply and often very emotionally, and engage more in the future organization of the camp and Jewish life. For them, this experience was more intense and sometimes quite emotional, confronting them with fundamental questions about their own identities. This finding is partly similar to a previous report on Szarvas (Cohen, 2013). The authors of the previous report stated that children and adolescents coming from families on the periphery of Jewish communities benefited more from participation in the camp. However, in the present study, ongoing psychological dynamics around Jewish identity concerned not only those on the periphery of community life, but sometimes also families in its very center. What is decisive here is that within those families, Jewish identity is the subject of ongoing processes of discovery, redefinition, or other identity struggles. Examples of such processes include working through trauma or family conflict (for example, between generations) or external rejection experiences, either by others (anti-Semitism) or by the community (as sometimes in the case of patrilineal Jews), and the need to coordinate multiple identities, for example, being both Polish and Jewish.

Adolescents from families with ongoing psychological dynamics around Jewish identity (of many quite complex types) tended to experience the camp deeply and often very emotionally, and engage more in the future organization of the camp and Jewish life.

In this section, I use the concept of identity status. This concept is based on the classic theory of identity development (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). In this approach, identity is not understood as given or inherited. Instead, it has to be achieved by individuals, usually after an exploration phase. I would like to apply this idea to families instead of individuals. To my knowledge, this has not been done before. For this study, I would distinguish

a. Settled Jewish identity,

b. Identity in the discovery phase,

c. Identity as an ongoing active open process within the family, and

d. Non-Jewish identity.

I refer here also to the concept of systemic family theory (Boscolo et al.,1987). Finally, I draw on the framework of an ecological approach to family (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fivush & Merrill, 2016). According to these approaches, family constitutes a complex system which exchanges information and interacts with the environment while undergoing homeostatic (continuity) and morphostatic (change) processes. This happens on multiple time scales, for example over the lifespan of an individual or over generations –much in resemblance to many other living biological systems. Therefore, no change in the family system can take place without

influencing every member of the family. Moreover, families can be described along the dimensions of family coherence, the closeness of attachment, and the kind of boundaries they have to their environment, such as open, closed, flexible, and so on. All these dimensions determine the kind of psychological processes happening in the family.

3.1 Settled Jewish identity

In some families, identity seems to be a settled issue. It is experienced and talked about as something which is established and unproblematic. Unproblematic is not only the identity label "Jewish" itself, but also the meanings of Jewish identity (what does it mean to be Jewish?), cultural and religious practices, and lifestyle. This kind of established identity usually develops if it has been uninterrupted and transmitted from generation to generation, grandparents to parents to children, in the "usual" manner. Uninterrupted transmission of identity describes a process in which children learn the whole range of tradition and culture, observance, and cultural ideas directly from their parents and grandparents, and from their immediate cultural environment, including their peers. In this case, they learn it in a natural and usually mainly automatic way, sometimes without consciously knowing that they are learning something. This kind of socialization usually requires little or no special effort; it happens mostly by simply living life as it is.

Immediate, uninterrupted transmission of Jewishness was impossible in Poland due to the country's dramatic history, and this type of established identity is rare. For example, it is tragically rare for Polish Jews to have grandparents or extended family, not to mention living within a large Jewish community.

> *"When I hear about grandparents, then I feel like crying. Because I never had a chance to know mine. Some people even have great-grandmothers, and this is like, this is like I feel crying, I never got to know anybody." (teenage participant)*

In the sample there were a few examples of families where this type of immediate identity transmission occurred, at least partially. These were immigrant families with one or both parents born in Israel, and with children having grandparents in Israel. For example, the members of a multilingual family of Israeli immigrants living in Poland long-term because of business opportunities describe themselves as Jews. They use categories such as "this is normal" to speak about Jewishness and to refer to Jewish traditions as "ours" in contrast to Polish ones. The previous generations of their family were, however, Jews from Central-Eastern Europe who survived by fleeing from this part of Europe and resettling in Israel. Now the (great-) grandchildren of survivors are experiencing immediate family transmission of Jewish culture learned in Israel. They speak Hebrew and sometimes Russian on a daily basis, but also Polish and English, mainly in school settings. Although these cases are rare, their presence is important. It is plausible that with growing international mobility and marriages between persons from different cultural and geographical backgrounds, these types of family will not be so exceptional in the future.

Established Jewish identity can also be a result of a long development within Polish-Jewish families that took place years or decades ago. These are families who long ago discovered or took an interest in their Jewish roots, which had been neglected or of which they had not been aware, perhaps during one of many waves of "Jewish revival" in Poland (Reszke, 2013; Wójcik & Bilewicz, 2015). Supported by the activities of many Jewish organizations in Poland (including the JDC) and waves of public interest in Jewish culture, some cohorts of people had already taken an interest in and discovered their more or less hidden or neglected Jewish identities. Some of them attended the very first Szarvas camps organized for Polish campers

in the early 1990s. With the passage of time, some of these people are currently parents of some of the children in the sample. In a striking resemblance of processes described by Kroger & Marcia (2011) for identity development, those people went through a very intense phase of psychological turbulences around identity, often taking dramatic steps such as sudden conversions, living for some time in a kibbutz in Israel, or joining the public debate about Polish Jewish identities with very emotional voices.

But after this phase of intense interest and studies, some of them settled down to less adventurous and more established lives with their Jewish identities. In Marcia's language (Kroger & Marcia, 2011), they have an achieved identity, one that is established and accepted after a long, intense process of search and redefinition. Marcia describes this path being taken alone. What is striking here is that many took this path as families, together, sometimes also involving their Jewish siblings, parents, and extended families. Children in those families who were old enough to remember usually recount this phase in family life as a family revolution that involved their life to a great extent. For example, when one family discovered that they were Jewish (or a suspicion they held earlier was confirmed), they first took their children out of classes in the Catholic religion attended by most children at public schools. The children did not like those classes anyway. Then they relocated to another city to be closer to a synagogue and a Jewish community. Then they enrolled the children in the Jewish school. Then they signed their children up for classes on Judaism held by a rabbi, and so on. For the children who were part of this process, this amounted to a revolution in their lives, but for those who were born later (there are children of different ages in the family), Jewish life is the life they were born into. They have only seen Jewish holidays at home and the only religious institution they have been part of is the synagogue. They do not treat it as this exciting, exotic, or distinctive new identity, but as a family routine. The youngest boy in the family said with a sort of "you can count on children's honesty" attitude that synagogue is boring and everything is too long, and none of it is very interesting. But the older children who underwent the transition process with the family are much more enthusiastic about exploring their identity.

The idea of established identity is not only a theoretical category. It was a category study participants themselves used to describe their families. For example, one Polish Jewish family with a long history of being in the community reacted to the questions about their Jewishness with the following statement.

> *"Jewishness is natural to us. We are out of the discovery phase."*

This statement was followed by a joyful flow of memories – of what they did when they were in the discovery phase. At that time, it was all new in Poland. As a young couple they read about Jewish things, studied, attended meetings, helped to build Jewish institutions that did not exist in their city at the time. But now, years later, Jewishness is no longer new for them and their children; it has grown into their family life. Jewish identity was established to a point where questions of how to understand it, or how to practice it in a nonreligious, but somehow quite traditional and peaceful way, is no longer a point of controversy. A teenage girl from this family used the same words as her parents (even though they were interviewed separately) to describe her attitude toward Jewishness: "It's natural for me." In her understanding, this "natural" label holds a few additional meanings – similar to her parents, maybe only articulated more critically. One of these meanings, as became apparent later in this conversation, was to say that the interviewer's complex questions about how she understands her Jewishness were a bit stupid, or not necessary. Things that are natural do not need lots of explanation or deliberation. She was proud of her "natural" attitude toward Jewishness, and this also served to distinguish herself from those who were just discovering it. She described them as people who feel the need to constantly talk about it, be excited about it, discuss it, make it the central thing in their lives, meet with Jews all the time, go to many Jewish meetings and camps, etc.

But there was one more consequence of this "natural" discourse in this interview. "Natural" also means "not so exciting," like a fish is not excited about water. She said, she is no longer as interested in Jewish themes as she once was; her main focus is elsewhere.

As said earlier, family identity status is important to the research question regarding children's and adolescents' Szarvas participation and their Jewish trajectories. It is clear (although there are also exceptions) in this sample that children from homes with a settled, set kind of Jewish identity have very different experiences at Szarvas than other children. They also follow other trajectories of future development with regards to participation in Jewish life.

Especially if they are young, children and adolescents from families in this group treat Szarvas more as a summer camp per se than as a Jewish camp. Their experiences there involve having fun, enjoying the good food, playing games, and all the "cool stuff." Szarvas camp may be an occasion to practice English or meet international peers. The Jewish content, Jewish learning, and cultural information offered there are for them, in their words, "too simple," and they don't pay much attention to it. A young boy from one of the families described above said in the first interview that he liked Szarvas because it was fun and formulated similar answers about his Jewishness. He did not elaborate on what it was; it was so natural to him that he did not even need to say it. Instead he talked about Purim, about getting presents, in a quite childlike way. Another young girl talked similarly about Szarvas being mainly an occasion to meet with her friend who lives in another city, and whom she sees only there. She could not say anything about what she had learned in Szarvas regarding Jewish themes. After thinking for a long time, she came out with "some dancing." Maybe the most interesting opinions come from an older teenager. She was the only study participant who did not want to return to Szarvas after her first time. She never went again during all the following years, but was kept in the sample and interviewed over three years to track her trajectory. She said it was simply not interesting, and she had enough of talking about Szarvas the whole time. She also felt she was also too old for this camp, and it was generally not attractive. She did not mean it was a bad experience. She was not rebellious against it, she spoke about the camp, the people, and the organization in positive and balanced words. It was just not interesting to her, and she stated, "I don't need that." All study participants mentioned in this paragraph see their future trajectories as Jewish, but in a way where this is not a subject of choice, but something that is given. At the same time, identity is not their focus. The oldest adolescent in this group, for example, sees her future as Jewish, although she explicitly said she is not going to engage much in all the hype of organizations and Jewish life, even if she is probably going to university in a city where Jewish organizations offer a lot of activities for students.

3.2 Discovering Jewish identity and ongoing active identity processes

A canonical example of discovery are families who for a long time did not know that one or both of the spouses had Jewish roots. This was usually a consequence of family secrets, hiding in anti-Semitic environments, or complicated stories from the postwar period. Many come from assimilated or communist families where members of the older generation distanced themselves from religion and sometimes also from ethnic traditions and identity, thus not socializing their children as Jewish, or even not telling them they were Jewish. When they learn this, either by pursuing genealogical research or because someone in the older generation decides to speak, they may go on a search to learn more. Then they gradually adopt this knowledge into own identity. Some of them do not change much in their lives; others decide to move toward Jewishness and engage in Jewish life and communities, sometimes dramatically changing their lives and adopting a fully new identity. During this process children often play a central role, as there is a question how to socialize them in light of this new identity.

A phase of open internal psychological work on Jewish identity, where both emotional and intellectual engagement with Jewish themes are high, can be present for a variety of reasons. A family does not need to discover a secret. Some families always knew but did little in this respect, and then for some reason took interest and began to engage with Jewish life more. This could be, for example, an angry reaction to the rise of the xenophobic political atmosphere. Other families have a family climate and identity style that is based on openness and constant reflexivity, searching for meanings, and reflecting on them. Here the ongoing process is not discovery, but a quest for understanding, and sometimes a sense of caring for the community. Identities are seen as complex and at times problematic realities. And in Poland, being Jewish often comes with the "complicated" part.

Another important reason for a prolonged identity motive beneath the surface of family life is participation in multiple strong identities. This often happens in cases of Polish Jewish identities and in mixed families where both sides are valued strongly. Another such circumstance is being a patrilineal Jew. It means having an identity that is not universally acknowledged, thus requiring much more effort to define it.

Yet another reason for having an ongoing open psychological process connected to Jewishness is the amount of inherited trauma from one's family history. In Poland this connection to trauma and preoccupation with the Jewish theme are not only a Jewish phenomenon. The Jewish theme can be important in constituting personal identity also for non-Jewish Poles. For example, the Polish non-Jewish wife of a Jewish man had many stories to tell from her family's past. They were stories about saving Jews during the war, or failing to do so, and witnessing death. It made her feel connected to Jews even before she met her Jewish husband. The case of Polish-Jewish and Polish-non-Jewish mixed identities can be thus very complex.

It is important not to see open identity processes as in any sense worse than achieved identity. In contrast to Marcia, who observed that after a period of searching, identity was established and stable for adulthood, contemporary people often participate in many changing identities, and the process of identity construction is rarely definite. Persons with complex identities established from opposites are often the most creative and engaged members of their communities. Some become writers, artists, and social activists as a consequence of their heritage coming from complex and rich combinations of identity; they never peacefully rested under the label "achieved" or "uncomplicated." All the various types of identity status described here are meant to be considered equal; none is to be considered "better" or "worse" than another.

Also, rather than a sharp dichotomy between identity search and identity achievement, there is probably an axis between open identity processes and achieved identity. In every family some things are likely more open and others more definite. Moreover, there is a positive and negative side to each of these statuses, one of them carrying the risk of identity diffusion or the psychological burden such as preoccupation with identity issues, another being the risk of rigidity and foreclosure. In the language of Marcia's theory (Kroger & Marcia, 2011), foreclosure identity status means a commitment to an identity without exploring alternatives. Such commitments are then often based on one's parents' choices and are accepted without any exploration of one's own.

Szarvas participation is different for children from families with open identity processes beneath the surface of their family life than for those without such processes. The former are the children or adolescents who become deeply moved by the experience and who could potentially let the camp experience influence them to the point of revolutionary reactions (such as suddenly becoming religious or Jewish activists). In less radical reactions they simply

become more interested in Jewish content and continue their interests by learning Hebrew or seeking out further Jewish experiences. They sometimes become emotional about the camp for a time. It becomes like home for some of them, an important landmark for their identity, which is however also very strongly shaped by peer group membership. Some of these adolescents wore Szarvas armbands on their arms for months after the camp.

There are always exceptions to observations of this kind. Emotional reactions can differ individually. However, as a trend, study participants from the group described here are the main group for which the Szarvas Jewish experience is a significant one. In the following paragraphs, I illustrate this with a few examples.

A daughter of a Jewish father was born during the time when her father became increasingly interested in Jewish identity. At the time of the first interview, she was a primary school student. She was the first in the family to participate in Szarvas camp. Her father's family story is one of rediscovery of a more or less hidden family secret. The father expressed the opinion that his story shows very clearly how Poland is a different habitat for Jews, and how everything here was different and not easy for American Jews, for example, to understand. He and his siblings, from a Jewish nonreligious family, managed to survive the dramatic circumstances of the war, and after the war decided to hide their identity – including hiding it from their own children. Together, they took two conscious decisions, namely that they would stay in Poland, and that would they never tell anybody they were Jewish. And they kept that secret ever after. The secret was broken in the family only after the father's mother's death, when the consequences of that powerful agreement among survivors faded a little. At the time of the first interview, there were still cousins in this very family who were halachically Jewish, but had no clue they were Jewish. However, by the time of the last interview, three years later, everybody in the family knew, and those who did not know earlier were already engaged in Jewish learning and slowly participating in community life. Generational interplay occurred here. The survivors' children, the second generation after the Holocaust, were characterized by fear, secrets, and hiding. The third generation did not want to hide anymore; they felt Poland was their country and that they had the right to live here openly as Jews. [The idea of different characteristics of different generations is described in more detail in the books by Mikołaj Grynberg (for example, 2014). A few families referred to those books and defined themselves using this categorization. Therefore, this frame of reference is also one used by the study participants, not an external category by a researcher.] The place of the youngest child - a Szarvas first-timer and fourth generation - in this family puzzle is very special. This is a family with very clear liberal values: freedom, diversity, and free choice are important. Not surprisingly a child is given a lot of freedom and a lot of choices. She is not only in Jewish groups, but engaged in other activities and peer groups, including a non-Jewish school and a non-Jewish scout group. Her parents did not want to impose any identity on her. But in a process which to a psychologist looks like an example of the systemic family perspective, she was not only enchanted with Szarvas when she went there for the first time, but has become more and more involved with Jewish activities and peers year by year. Similar to her father, she is also very courageous and open with her Jewish roots. She has given presentations about Jewish holidays at her primary school, acting as an expert and telling all her friends. She has become a speaker for family Jewishness. Her parents feared that somebody would react negatively to their young daughter's courage, but nobody did. After the first Szarvas camp, she came back home with a strong identity label: "I am Jewish." In the interview, her parents used a phrase that again sounds very strong from the systemic perspective.

> *"She is the one who pulls us to Judaism."*

Here a child in a family is not only a carrier of processes happening in the family but becomes (and also is positioned as) an active agent in this respect.

Several siblings from another family are another example. This family learned several years ago that their mother's side of the family was Jewish (their mother managed to get the reluctant grandmother to confirm this fact). The children became Szarvas first-timers in the second year of the study. The older ones said that Jewish learning at the camp was very interesting for them and undertook ambitious activities (such as learning Hebrew, reading Torah) after the camp. But as said above, open identity processes do not need this kind of discovery to be present in a family. There are many other reasons.

A powerful and unsurprising reason that explains why families in this study often have an emotional, open relationship with their Jewish identity is the gravity of history and the traumatic experiences embedded in the life/death stories of their ancestors. Based on the literature on intergenerational transmission of trauma (Fromm, 2012), severely traumatic experiences influence later generations, especially if there is no open communication about them. Coping with major trauma is a task that often needs the effort of more than one generation.

One of the families made insightful comments about this. In a family with a complex history, but without any secrets, where everybody always knew, the parents stated the general context:

> *"There is diversity when it comes to this identity thing. There are among us those who first orient themselves, who discover things. But not us. We have always known who we are."*

This knowledge, however, comes with the knowledge of many traumatic experiences. Participants recounted multiple emotions from past generations during the interviews.

> *"This is regretfully connected to the traumatic past, and this is something difficult to hand down to the children, that their whole family, that they were killed in concentration camps, and those who are left, that they are survivors, only remains of the family. And it's difficult to talk with children about that."*

Grandparents, and also to an extent parents, in many families were fearful not only about the physical safety of later generations and the political climate in postwar times, but also about the psychological consequences of massive trauma, so they became overprotective of their children. One of the questions is, for example, at what age children are ready to be confronted with the traumatic past of Jewish people, a past that is rich in cruel details, and what happens if it is too early? History has also often been a part of their home space in the forms of many books on this topic. In one of the families we had this conversation:

> **Interviewer:** "I saw the books."
>
> **Father:** "We have at home the whole ..."
>
> **Mother:** "I call it nasty, the 'ghetto section.'"
>
> **Father:** "Yes, we have the 'ghetto section' here on a shelf."

In contrast to children from the families where Jewish identity was not reflected upon so much, and not so rich in meanings and memories, the young study participants from the "open identity" group (here I refer to more than one interview and more than one family with a similar background) were very rich in elaborating on being Jewish: what it meant for them, what consequences it had. Participants as young as 11 to 14 could talk for hours about

what it meant for them to be Jewish, sometimes with strikingly mature reflections. One boy confessed that after the camp he could not sleep at night, turning the question, "am I Jewish or Polish, or what is my identity?" over and over in his mind. He had an emotional crisis before concluding that he is and can be a Polish Jew (even if people say otherwise).

In contrast, participants from families where no open processes of this kind were present could not and would not say more than one sentence about the meaning of identity and seemed surprised by the question.

Moreover, in that respect the young study participants' answers mirrored almost entirely what was perceptible in conversations with their parents. If parents' narratives were long and nuanced, humorous, emotional, so were their children's. If parents answered with one definite sentence – "We are Jewish, period" - children also gave short identity labels without any elaboration. One parent (Israeli-born) expressed his sheer outrage at the question of how he understands being Jewish. For him Jewish is Jewish, there is no debate about that, and commented on Polish Jews making things unnecessarily complicated. Remarkably, his daughter, although she is of a similar age as children who would elaborate for hours on their identity, did not even understand that very question.

In this study, the group of children from families where some kind of open identity processes was present was the largest group. This was the group of children who became very engaged in Szarvas experiences. But one has to remember that the open/closed identity theme is more an axis than actually separate groups, and it has strong dynamics.

3.3 Theoretical comment on open identity processes

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that marginal group members and those who face opposition or rejection (such as patrilineal Jews, new members, or converts) are more likely to develop strong in-group attachment and involvement. Another theory, effort justification theory (Aronson & Mills, 1959) proposes that persons who need to make a considerable effort to achieve something (for example, face opposition within their own family, discover their roots, confront a traumatic past, change their lifestyle, or face anti-Semitism) will consequently also develop stronger in-group attachment. It seems plausible that large numbers of persons with this kind of life history in Jewish communities in Poland constitute an opportunity rather than a danger to their future survival. These are persons who are most likely to engage in the communities and develop strong identification (Wójcik & Bilewicz, 2015). They could be particularly important in maintaining Jewish culture and heritage in Poland, as well as becoming central members or activists in their communities. This theoretical explanation was previously demonstrated in Poland by Bilewicz and Wójcik (2010), drawing on quantitative survey data. Current findings support this conclusion in adolescents. In the Polish case, the complexity of identities and the vitality of communities go hand in hand.

4. Family ethos, family values, and identity. What does it mean to be Jewish?

Family ethos is a system of shared meanings, rules, and values that a family creates and sustains via narratives, common language, and behaviors (Keeney & Sprenkle,1982). Family ethos governs relationships between family members and between the family and the world. Rules ("in our family, we care for each other") and self-fulfilling prophecies ("this boy is very

sensitive, like his father"), parental expectations ("be ambitious!") - all this belongs to family ethos. Family ethos is transmitted from generation to generation and can maintain generally positive messages ("in our family, we study hard") and generally negative ones ("we don't trust strangers"). Family ethos is similar to a common lens a family shares in seeing the world.

In this section, family ethos, important values, and the way study participants understand their Jewish and other identities are described together because they are strongly intertwined. I treat family as a unit of analysis because there was a surprising, strong, if not overwhelming similarity in what parents and children said about their values, their understanding of being Jewish, and what the most important things in life are for them. Children and adolescents clearly take after their family home. The strength of this similarity in this particular sample of Jewish families was extraordinary, a phenomenon that needs closer examination.

4.1 Universal values and universal understanding of Jewishness

The difficult and somehow abstract question "What does it mean to be Jewish?" and a connected question "What would you like to convey to your child regarding being Jewish?" were met with a variety of reactions. But the very first reaction was surprisingly common to most of the families, and it was the emphasis on universality:

> *"They are universal values, right? You need to be responsible, to be active, to contribute to society, to society in a broad sense." (parent)*

> *"I would say it's basic human decency." (parent)*

> *"To be open, to be open to the world and curious." (parent)*

> *"For me, it is being decent, working hard, being responsible for others and yourself, all that stuff..." (parent)*

> *"If I have a business, I should be ethical, just, honest. I need to be responsible, have integrity, and be a good person. I should share with others, in every sense, share my knowledge, skills, and if I can, also in the material sense. I need to be a decent human being. And this also testifies, in a sense, about my Jewishness, yes?" (parent)*

For most of the participants in this study, being Jewish equates to being critical and open, engaged in society, and universally human. Jewishness is seen as connected to universal values.

4.2 Traditional values and traditional understanding of Jewishness

All kind of families endorsed universality. However, the families with a degree of religious engagement and a more traditional definition of Jewishness added to these universal values a stronger emphasis on observance and group belonging. In their accounts, however, religion also has a universal meaning:

> *"In the end, God is one for all. And he sees everything. And I teach them (children), they should act so that they never need to be ashamed for themselves, and for God. We pray in the morning and the evening, but it's not, I mean you can't force anyone, so he (son) does it (prays), but if he didn't like to, I can't force him. You can say (religious values) are human values. I knew a very religious Catholic woman (…), and she is always praying for*

my children and me, and when she was ill, I lit the candles on Friday and I prayed for her too." (mother)

But here in this family, the continuity of tradition, ancestry, and religion are stressed:

"To tell you the truth, I would like for our children to stay connected with our roots, our religion, and our origins. It comes really from your grandmother, your grandfather – and you are what you are. And should you forget who you are, there will always be someone to remind you." (mother)

The interesting thing about the statement above is how Jewishness is embedded in loyalty to previous generations. What one is, is unchangeable and essential, even if forgotten. Children in this family were more than happy with their identity, faith, and tradition. In the last year of the study, one boy in this family was preparing for his bar mitzvah, a great festivity for the family, which was planned to be celebrated in Poland and also in Israel, where his grandparents live. He became very serious about his religious obligations and the ceremony, but at the same time very happy about it.

A traditional attitude was also visible in some Polish Jewish families. Those parents wanted the camp to strengthen their children's Jewish identity.

"This camp made them (children) stronger in their identity as Jews, because they could see other Jews, other nationalities in this camp, and organizers, and madrichim. Here in Poland, you can't see that." (mother)

The same mother had expectations related to identity and religion toward her children.

"I would like them to go in this direction, toward Jewish religion and tradition. (…) I would like them to assure this continuity. I think our grandparents would like that. That the children grow up to be Jewish." (mother)

4.3 Long-term family continuity and similarities between parents and children

It is surprising that many different traditions and Jewish sociological groups were represented in such a small sample. There were families of assimilated-intellectual extraction. Those families were usually secular, progressive, and opposed to religion, and also sometimes socially engaged for the broader good. There were families with a middle-class background coming from Jewish entrepreneurs or craftsmen's families. Those families were also sometimes assimilated before the war, but much more conservative and traditional than the first group. Also, in a very small number of families, family traditions came from village Jews, usually religious and not assimilated before World War II and also usually less educated and poor. One of the participating parents commented on that diversity:

"Those Jews (from other geographical locations) are so different from us. Because they are children of small shopkeepers, of hard workers, and for us, who are grandchildren of intelligentsia in the third or the fourth generation, this constitutes another reality."

There has to be a remarkable strength to this kind of family traditions, as transmission still occurred even though many sources of immediate transmission were broken. For example, a son of a village prayer leader misses not having the opportunity to enjoy early religious education at Cheder and still defines his identity via tradition, religion, and distinctiveness from non-Jewish Polish people. He stressed that traditional observance, such as keeping

kosher, was not possible for him anymore, so he concluded that being Jewish is no longer possible in Poland, and that all Jews should emigrate to Israel. He opposed, even resented, assimilated modern identities. He also remained relatively poor, as his ancestors were. A thought-provoking relationship here is the continuity of social class, relationship to religion, and identity style, or even political orientation.

This is mirrored in the family values parents explicitly mentioned in the interviews. Although they called them universal and they are indeed universal, each family gave different weights to different values. For example, a family with a strong tradition of liberalism called openness, acceptance of others, including refugees, and fighting anti-Semitism their core values. Their relatively young child does presentations at school about diversity and helping refugees. In contrast, families who named hard work and agency as values had traditions of entrepreneurship in their family. And some of their children were on the way to studying business and also valued practical skills. And in a few families with an academic background, the values of learning, critical thinking, and openness were important, i.e., a set of characteristics that would make a good academic or a good university student. Also, the characteristic secular but engaged stance toward society, emphasizing care for others and the community, can be understood as a certain tradition (leftist, as it were) and is reflected in some families from generation to generation. Today, parents are active in civil society organizations, active participants in social and political life, and their children take for granted that it is their duty to be engaged for the community, to serve it for the greater good. In contrast, a grandson of a prewar Jewish religious leader in a village subscribed online to a traditional Jewish school and was learning about religion and traditions with adamant pride and interest, while at the same time pursuing less intellectual everyday interests (sports), and less intellectual future professions, such as in the military or the police. Here, too, a value was attached to it (to protect the innocent during the war), and it was a family tradition. In this family, the ethos was connected to valuing strength and remembering how many innocent people were killed during the war.

All kind of families endorsed universality. However, the families with a degree of religious engagement and a more traditional definition of Jewishness added to these universal values a stronger emphasis on observance and group belonging.

4.4 Family as a value

Another value that was very visible in the analysis (and even more while interacting with the families at their homes), but seldom explicitly named, was the intrinsic value of family. Jewishness in some of its forms is very often centered around things happening in the family, such as Friday night, or roles ascribed to family members in home-based rituals.

> *"So it is, so if you ask what is special in our family and our friends' (Jewish) families, so I think that family is very important, and you hold to those family bonds, and good relationships, you take care of those relationships." (parent)*

This family named a few behaviors that strengthen it: always calling to say that one has arrived at one's destination, together welcoming family members returning from travels, even from short trips. In their narrative, some of these behaviors were connected to trauma, such as always counting persons sitting together at the table and appreciating how many family members there are.

Indeed, many of the families in this sample are characterized by high family coherence.

This family coherence could be a factor that helps the children to accept and continue their parents' values. Many of them care about the family as a unit, about being together, about family life. Even in divorced families their attention was focused on the children, and some rituals were maintained. Family members can usually count on the support of others. In some families, people listened closely to other members of the family and were very attentive to what they said in the interview and to their needs. Put less "scientifically": there was lots of visible love. This is of course not an positive reality without exceptions, but the number of cohesive, coherent, and well-functioning families in this sample was substantial.

There could be a link between this important family value and a high level of previous losses in the family's history. Having families, staying together, this was a rare and precious good during times of persecution.

In some cases, the choice of pursuing Jewish identity stemmed from family loyalty to lost Jewish ancestors.

> *"… And I felt closer to my Jewish family, to the family I completely lost (in the war) and I wanted to be their hands, and their legs, and their eyes. Because they did not survive, I am going to do everything their way, I will do everything as they would have liked. So, my children are engaged in Jewish life, it is important to me that they should be engaged in Jewish life." (parent)*

This statement is very strong regarding family loyalty and trauma. Strong family loyalties, connected to previous generations and to parental expectations toward children are powerful, but not unproblematic, processes and are described more closely by systemic family psychology. In some families this is explicitly reflected upon as a theme of not burdening children with expectations linked to continuing the huge and lost Jewish past, of highlighting their agency and freedom in that respect.

In conclusion, what it means to be Jewish, and what the value aspect of Jewish tradition is depends on the family context. Participants often endorsed the view that there are no specific "Jewish values" different from universal values. But they believe that Jewish cultural messages certainly do exist, namely a set of attitudes such as learning, discussion, openness, criticism, doubting ideologies and general truths, personal and social responsibility and agency, valuing family and diversity. More conservative families add the values of in-group belonging and observance to this list.

4.5 Jewish ritual and observance

In the present sample, nobody practiced Judaism from an Orthodox point of view, and a few families were religiously observant to a certain extent. As expected, more traditions and rituals are practiced in families where religion plays a role. A few families rarely practice at home, but still go to the synagogue regularly. Elements of tradition and ritual were also present in nonreligious families who celebrate their family identity by lighting Shabbat candles, for example. However, they constitute "traditions of choice" and can be modified to needs. Sometimes families practice creative and emotionally positive reinventions of those traditions and use them to express the individual family's identity. Surprisingly often it was the non-Jewish female spouse who would remember the tradition and do things such as buying candles or cooking a thematic meal. Some families celebrate both Christian and Jewish holidays. Some celebrate Jewish holidays exclusively and would consider Christmas inappropriate in their Jewish homes.

The level of observance in the present sample was not related to the level of Jewish identification. This seems to diverge from the general claim that observance serves Jewish socialization and community engagement. Some of the most engaged participants who contribute a lot to their community have little ritual or practice in their home. In most cases, Jewish traditions do not serve as the main way to introduce Jewishness to the children. Identity is based on many other sources: kinship, remembering, trauma, a common fate, community bonds, life values, traditions. This could be characteristic for Poland and other countries of Central Eastern Europe, where transmission of Judaism based on religious observance is rare and where assimilated Jews, even before the war, built their identity on other meaningful sources in place of religion, customs, and rituals (see Karady, 2006, for similar results.)

4.6 The tension between particular and universal

A recurring theme in many interviews was a specific tension Jewishness introduces as being both a very particular thing, something defined by "tribal" belonging and by defining "who is (not) a Jew," and something very universal. This tension in the study participants' voices was attached to Jewishness. It seemed that this tension, as expressed by the participants, was inherent to being Jewish.

> *"[At Szarvas] they stress how wonderful it is to be Jewish. But it is wonderful to be human, no matter if you are Jewish or not." (parent)*

And another parent:

> *"I say, our Jewish values, they are very important, very, but of course, everybody considers Poland our fatherland, we were raised here in the Polish tradition, yes? So here in Poland, it is very difficult to separate those, should we take a knife and cut?"*

Also, for some participants, it is important that Jewish identity should not represent something exotic, defined by Otherness, by being different.

> *"[The strong side of the community] is that it in a sense started normalizing. That it stopped being folklore sort of, even if there are some people who would like to keep this, this being different, separate. I always believed being a Jew should not exclude me from normal functioning, normal life. On the contrary, I would say I must show that I am a normal person, a human." (parent)*

In the same family their teenager stated: "Jewishness is not Otherness."

At the same time, being who we are, being Jews, remembering who we are, was a very central value to most participants. Universalistic distinctiveness – this seems to be a paradox embedded in those families. This can be understood by Jews as other people having their own identity, tradition, who they are, but not valuing the "tribe" above everything else. In this way, strong identities were expressed as tolerance, not as prejudice toward others.

Another comment on this comes from one of the campers, an older teenager:

> *"I don't want to be someone in a group, so there is Antek, and there is Maja, and this 'I am a Jew.' But they (some people at the camp) suggest it's different. They say, no this is wonderful, show this to everybody, put your sidelocks (peyot) in your eyes."* [5]

In conclusion, there is a tension between stressing distinctiveness and universality. Which

side is more important can be individual, but can also depend on the context. As one of the parents stated:

> *"In Poland, I feel very Jewish, and I stress this, but when I am in the USA among American Jews, I feel Polish, and I feel an urge to stress that."*

4.7 The role of intermarriage and ethos in mixed families

There are a considerable number of mixed families in the sample, some families with a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother, but also some families with a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father. One observation about Polish non-Jewish women married to Jewish men is that in many cases they are highly supportive of Jewish identity in the family and the children. In a few cases, the family narrative was that these women were more interested in Jewish content than their husbands. They took on a role of "keepers of Jewishness" in the family (JDC-ICCD, 2014), including remembering about the holidays, buying candles and food, and arranging the house. In a few cases non-Jews stayed in the Jewish community after a divorce, seeking to socialize their children in the Jewish tradition, including that their children would be more engaged in Jewish life and eventually also marry Jewish spouses.

However, in a few families, there were also some tensions or differences which were seen in a positive light on this axis. Such differences do not have to be negative, given a sort of family culture that is generally accepting of differences between family members. For example, a few spouses showed a kind of distance, not negative but rather respectful, letting a Jewish person in the family, mother or father, take care of the Jewish element in family life. Some couples lead a very attentive and respectful conversation about religion, allowing both persons to have their tradition without conflict, but not without reflexivity. For non-Jewish spouses, it was important that the family participates in a Jewish community that does not make non-Jewish spouses or children feel bad about their mixed origin. This was, in fact, a reason for some of them to participate in activities supported by the JDC.

Other solutions to the mixed identity issue also occurred within the sample. In one family the non-Jewish wife went through conversion to follow her religious husband and give their children an identity unquestioned by others in the Jewish family.

A few of the children from mixed families returned from Szarvas with the problem of black-and-white identity. They came back from the camp with the idea that one is either Polish or Jewish and cannot be both. This can be difficult for a child. In a few cases, it would force a child to decide between mother and father. Seeing a child at 10, or 11, or even 14 be put in this dilemma is worrying from a family psychology perspective. Moreover, Jewish identities in Poland are often a non-exclusive type of identity, where multiple identities are coordinated within one person (Karady, 2006; Lorenz, 2015).

The majority of mixed families in this sample had mature and harmonious family identities built by simply connecting all the different identities and roles in the special mix/atmosphere of their family. The interviews with these families were often spontaneous and full of warmth. There are many well-integrated families among them that discuss their differences safely and elegantly. Usually, this uniting factor was on a higher level, such as universal values, common political orientation or lifestyle, and secure emotional attachment. Moreover, navigating multiple identities is not rare in contemporary society (Cheng & Kuo, 2000; Sheskin &

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[5] This Polish idiom, "put it in your eyes," means making something visible, while at the same time, you are blinded by it; this teenager is saying that emphasizing Jewish identity too strongly may amount to overdoing it, while also blinding oneself to it.

Hartman, 2015), and it is plausible that persons with only one clear identity and coming from a homogenous background may be a minority in the Europe of the future.

4.8 Generational change

It was striking that over the period of just one generation (at least concluding from what study participants in this one sample said) the dynamics of family interactions about coming back to Jewish identity and openness about it have changed. The parents (who mostly define themselves as the third generation) often more or less had to oppose their parents, who were the second generation, in order to explore their Jewish roots. Also, in previous generations, the act of going to Szarvas could have been met with reluctance by the parents. The following illustrative example was given about a family that would like to return to their Jewish-sounding surname.

> *(Grandfather changed his surname to hide his Jewish identity) "…and it was a secret; they wanted to protect their children so that nobody would know. You know, if they learned you were Jewish, you could be in trouble. And now this grandchild of theirs, he would like to come back to his Jewish name, because he has the right to it, after his grandfather, and they, all this family, they feel indignant, they were deeply hurt, it was really like a nightmare. It tormented them badly, father, grandfather, cousins, everybody… what is this boy thinking, what is he doing (…) because they made such a great effort to hide it, and now he is destroying it all."*

This example illustrates how older generations would sometimes oppose coming back to their Jewish roots. But in the present sample, children who were more or less the fourth or a later generation were pursuing their Jewish identity at the same time as their parents. Most parents wanted their children to go to Szarvas and have Jewish experiences there. The intergenerational dynamics regarding Szarvas have changed over time, from conflict between generations to more or less harmonious transmission and a common search for identity.

On the children's side, there were several styles of discourse about participating in Szarvas: from intense interest combined with identity issues to normality and fewer interests (you are not fascinated by everyday reality, it's not new). There was also some criticism, and sometimes being tired of the "hype" around Jewishness.

The family is primary in shaping the overall type of children's engagement. Families use organizations, camps, and community to give children certain experiences – to teach traditions, give opportunities to meet Jewish peers, show context. Still, it is clear that it is the family that creates the dominant attitude and that it is the primary factor within this system. Nonreligious families often use the JCC as a place to teach their children Jewish traditions and values. They treat this space as their Jewish home, and are often engaged and a little worried about its survival.

The intergenerational dynamics regarding Szarvas have changed over time, from conflict between generations to more or less harmonious transmission and a common search for identity.

Other families prefer to practice tradition at home or synagogue, and for them, camps are more a Jewish social environment for children. For children from somewhat observant Jewish families, the Jewish content at Szarvas was often too elementary. Note that nobody in the sample was Orthodox; while they represent a continuum, most are more on the secular side.

5. Factors in the Jewish community

How important are local community organizations in transmitting Judaism? Are there any Jewish spaces preferred by these families? In this section, I begin with communities as seen from inside by study participants, then talk about other Jewish spaces in Poland, as seen by study participants, and finally I discuss their general perspective on Jewish communities in Poland. I start by analyzing two of the most popular Jewish places mentioned in the sample, the Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) in Warsaw and in Kraków. Whereas the JCC in Warsaw was founded and is currently supported by the JDC, the JCC Kraków, even if initially founded by the JDC, World Jewish Relief (UK), and the local Jewish community of Kraków, is today more independent; it is supported by a number of Jewish international organizations and private donations.

Many families consider the JCC Warsaw, as well as other activities offered by the JDC, their Jewish home. There is a strong sense of caring for this Jewish space, including some parents starting an initiative called Puszke to secure the financial future of these activities, to be financed more from Poland, and to create a culture of giving. Parents also give their time and effort to different community activities, for example cooking classes, courses, and lectures. Also, some teenagers volunteer to help in the community, and most of them would like to become madrichim and help with the organization of Atid and Szarvas. Like other statements in this study, this does not describe every person or every family, but there is a large group who stressed this attitude of "responsibility." There are a few exceptions – for example, families who are connected to other Jewish spaces, such as synagogues, Chabad, or other organizations, on an everyday basis. For them, Szarvas is still valuable, and it is important to send their children there, but they live in different Jewish environments day to day. A limitation here is that this concerns only study participants who live in major urban centers, with an active JCC in their community, such as Warsaw and Kraków. Persons living outside of major centers face a different situation.

The study participants who identify with the JCC Warsaw mentioned the following as its special features: "it's nice, it's good, it's safe," "they are not so hardcore ideological," "they are very open, tolerant toward others," "they are different to many other Jewish organizations who are attached to strictly defined options," "they are the most open" – this was an opinion expressed by a teenager from a conservative family, "they are very relational, relationships are important," "they are simply a group where most our friends and family are." Stories were told with the message that over time, some/many Jewish organizations become mostly "organizations," institutionalized at the expense of relationships. The study participants value spaces that are communities based more on friendship and relationships. They believe that those friendships stem from a common language, common experiences of Polish-Jewish life stories, acknowledging the complexity of the world, having a troubled past or a common fear for the future. They see this community of experiences as something positive; interpersonal closeness develops on this basis. Also, they see it as a community of interesting people, intelligent, creative, and caring for each other. Many families highlighted that the JCC Warsaw's acceptance of complex identities and patrilineal Jews, its welcoming and appreciating of non-Jewish women married to Jewish men and their children, and its acceptance of secular values without imposing religion make it an ideal space for them.

There is a perceived risk of being moved by outsiders into the realm of "folklore" or a sort of "trendy place," a fashion that would be perceived from outside as "pop Judaism" or a "hipster place." The study participants do not like to be seen as a kind of folklore; they attach deep meaning to their community and would not like it to be seen as a shallow and overly enthusiastic "everything is so easy" kind of place.

Teenagers from more conservative families were unanimously convinced that JCCs are most inclusive and open. However, their peers from progressive families were sometimes more critical:

> **Teen:** *"They invited Muslims and Protestants to come, to show how open they are, open for everybody, but I still see the problem: 'You're Jewish, you're cool,' 'I'm Jewish, I'm cool,' all these t-shirts... And it's not cool that people learn you are Jewish, but you aren't because your mother is not Jewish."*
>
> **Interviewer:** *"Did it happen to you, this kind of rejection because you are partly not, your mother isn't...?"*
>
> **Teen:** *"Yes, it did happen to me."*
>
> **Interviewer:** *"And who said that to you?"*
>
> **Teen:** *"My friends from school, friends who are not Jewish and have nothing to do with this. They told me: 'You are not Jewish, your mother is not Jewish, what are you saying, what's this talk?'"*

JCCs in major urban centers were seen by teens as their "bubble" where they don't have to explain themselves. They both appreciated it and felt that it is a reality that is a little different from the outside world, where different rules apply.

> **Teen:** *"Tell them, tell them [the study organizers] that you can't close yourself in the bubble, but it's good to be in it… it's good to have it. Tell them: a bit of everything."*

This "a bit of everything" can serve as a summary of this specific attitude. There are many different identity styles, many opinions on the boundaries of being Jewish, and many life situations. They seem to be sometimes conflicting perspectives, but one can live a good life inside of those paradoxes without resolving them, taking "a bit of everything." This condition is very similar to modern identity styles also outside of the Jewish world, where "pure" well-defined identities, national, professional, gender, and all others are less the overwhelming norm than they were before. However, a backlash against this development is also present worldwide, especially from right-wing positions.

In conclusion, the JCCs gather a community that is defined by its openness and diversity which can be attractive for teens even from more conservative environments and which provides a Jewish home of choice for persons who do not fit into old-style or denominational Jewish communities. Study participants see the risk in institutionalization and in interpreting their communities as folklore, and there is also an ongoing open process of negotiating the boundaries of identity.

5.1 Other Jewish spaces

Unsurprisingly, other Jewish spaces preferred by the study participants largely depend on the place the family lives. The Jewish environment and the number of spaces and organizations are quite large in Warsaw and Kraków, but little exists elsewhere. Some children went to the Lauder Jewish School, with varying positive and negative experiences, a few also used e-learning methods to study Jewish cultural traditions and Hebrew. Only a few families were affiliated with synagogues and a rabbi. Those religious institutions, different ones in different cities, were subjects of criticism for being conservative, some of them also in a political sense,

and sometimes for lack of transparency. The Chabad community was yet another reference for a few families, especially those living internationally. The events that were positive for everybody and attended by nearly everybody, including the children, were the Limud family meetings. The families interviewed spoke very highly of places that could unite a divided community, for example the educational initiative Czulent in Kraków, which offers a kind of Sunday school for Jewish children. What was seen as positive there is that children from Chasidic families in Kraków and children from other families, Polish and Israeli, meet at the same place, with everybody's trust, which seems to be a rare thing. Generally, Jewish spaces are seen as quite divided between different options. Also, nearly everybody takes part in Jewish cultural life, events encompassing music, theater, books, Jewish festivals, and so on. Also, Israel is a reference point, and if possible, children visit the country with their parents or learn about it. Some families do this regularly.

5.2 The national level

Study participants expressed their hopes for positive development, meaning that Jewish communities in Poland are no longer in their beginnings as they were in the years following 1989. There is more "normality," more settled Jewish life, better structures. Some participants think that this normality already exists, others are skeptical. The main negative factor, as seen by participants, is community size. It is small in numbers[6] and therefore vulnerable. Study participants feel that an ideal Jewish life would feature a much larger community, with lots of diversity and different options. This diversity would cause less tension if the communities were bigger than they are now. Especially in the later years of the study there was growing concern about the rise of anti-Semitism and how this could affect the community because living in fear usually has negative consequences. Parallel to hope, many participants (including children) expressed concern about the continuity of the communities in the future.

6. Into the future, voices of a new generation

In the third year of the study, when the study participants were older and had grown into a quite coherent peer group, they began to speak more about themselves as a group or even generation (in their words!). They began having their own ideas for the future and the Jewish community. These voices are often based on a distinction to the previous generation, not only that of their parents, but also including young adults in their communities, such as students. Teens seem to see themselves as distinct.

> **Boy (17):** *"I will start as a madrich at Atid, and then I plan to help as a madrich at Szarvas too."*
>
> **Interviewer:** *"This question may seem a little strange, but why would you like to do that?"*
>
> **Boy:** *"To continue this, to sustain this somehow. It's not even this big, you know, huge idea to sustain Jewish identity in Poland, but it's more like - these madrichim, they all become older, and it would be so bad for all this not to continue. That one day they don't*

[6] The Jewish population of Poland is estimated to number between 7,500 and 10,000 individuals. Most Jews live in Warsaw; other centers of Jewish life include Kraków, Lodz, and Wroclaw, but reliable data on the numbers and composition of the Jewish population is not available at the level of cities. A typical Jewish community in Poland has around 100 persons. There may be multiple Jewish communities (one liberal, one Orthodox, and perhaps one more) in major cities.

do this because they are not enough hands on board. And it's done, the end! This would be a great loss."

Interviewer: "You were talking earlier about the new generation of madrichim …"

Boy: *"Yes, there needs to be a new generation because otherwise this will be extinct, it will simply die."*

Not only this boy, but at least two more adolescents and a few parents formulated worries about the continuity of all the camps and organizational initiatives in the future. Adults linked this to realistic worries about financing and the size of the community. Adolescents were more emotional and less concrete, but there was a theme relating to the future survival of community - surprisingly emerging in the last year of the interviews.

One of the boys from the sample went through a transition during the last year of the study. When he was interviewed for the first time, he went to a quite traditional Jewish school; he said he was not Jewish because his school recognized only a halachic definition of "Jewish." When he was interviewed for the last time three years later, he was no longer attending the Jewish school, but was more engaged in the JCC and Szarvas and Atid camps. In a more liberal environment, he came to identify with being Jewish regardless of being a patrilineal Jew. He went through a transition from Jewishness defined by external sources (such as Halacha or his teachers' opinions) to self-defined Jewishness, where the power to define identity lies with the individual. This teenager, however, has the support of friends and community.

Adolescents were asked how they would define their "new generation" – a few of them used this exact phrase independently of each other. On the one hand, they would like to continue many things that are already done very well in the camps. However, on the other hand, there is a sense of different ideas, but they do not seem very concrete. One thing they talked about was Jewishness that was less defined by the past, by trauma talk, more future-oriented, more modern. They liked avant-garde things, be it technology or art, or creative ideas, were international in their thinking, and could imagine their future anywhere in the world, not only in Poland or Israel. A few mentioned a need to discuss the "issue of Palestine," which was seen as very big and controversial. They differed from the parents in that family was not a central topic in their future, especially for boys. This may, however, be an age-related phenomenon. Another interesting theme was that their definition of Jewishness seemed to be different from many traditional ways of looking at the subject (Wertheimer & Benor, 2010). It is difficult to define what it is - maybe a philosophy, an attachment to a group of like-minded people, a mix of interest, knowledge, fascination, and commitment. But it is easy to define what it is not. Not a religion, not an uncritical relationship to Israel, not Jewish rituals, and not, or not mainly, blood or ancestry.

Boy (17): *"Well, I went through different phases. And I am now in a phase that I think that Judaism, that's my impression, is more philosophy than an actual religion. So, if you look at it like this, then I can tell that I am Jewish because I know quite a bit about this religion, and this culture, and all of this, …"*

Interviewer: *"But you also have Jewish roots…"*

Boy: *"Well, there are roots too, but it's not so, as a fact, this part, it's not so important for me. I mean: I am not going out in the street and telling everybody that I am Jewish because my father was Jewish."*

Interviewer: *"Okay."*

Boy: *"That is, I am Jewish because I identify with this concrete philosophy, I know enough to have a right to call myself a Jew."*

Another older teen explains his search for a self-defined Jewish identity:

Interviewer: *"So, what does it mean to you to be Jewish?"*

Teen (17): *"Of course, historically I am a museum exhibit, yes?"*

Interviewer: *"Well, in Poland there are not many young Jews left."*

Teen: *"I remember, during this last vacation, I was so exhausted about all of this, that I did not want to be Jewish anymore (...), it was …"*

Interviewer: *"Okay."*

Boy: *"Yes. And then after Szarvas, it occurred to me that I am Jewish, and I can't do anything about it. And that I can find a way - how to be Jewish my way… , and feel good about it."*

This person narrated about feeling good in the Jewish community because the others know him and he does not need to explain his identity. Sometimes it feels good for him to be as he is, not to engage in deliberations about "the Jewish thing." In his words: "My identity can rest then."

In the group of older adolescents, there were many close friendships among study participants, which can partially explain the similarity of their opinions. A group of friends formed a core group of participants. They often used the first person plural. They also shared a dislike of folklore- and tourist attraction-based definitions of Jewishness. (In Poland certain aspect of Jewishness are heavily marketed and very popular, for example places connected to Jewish history in Kraków (Lehrer & Meng, 2015), klezmer music, Jewish culture festivals, etc.) They were focused on the future and were interested in things that are modern, even modernistic, cosmopolitan, artsy, fun.

Those children and adolescents are right that the mainstream (non-Jewish) population in Poland views Jews through the lenses of both trauma and folklore. So, for those few Jewish teens, there is a danger of being put in the box of, as they said, "museum exhibits" or "objects of ethnographic interest." Therefore, they stress that they lead modern and "normal" lives.

7. The role of Szarvas camp at the levels of family, community, country, and in general

The opportunity to attend Szarvas camp has existed in Poland since the early 1990s. Persons who have participated have later lived different Jewish trajectories. Many of them have found their place in the community, becoming leaders or activists. Others have engaged in Jewish life in the realms of science, art, politics, and so on. Some of those persons have become parents in the meantime, and some of their children are part of the sample in the present study. Over time Szarvas has grown into the local environment and become a part of the standard Jewish experience for many families. This is true not only of families connected to the JDC, but of many others as well. The impact of the camp should be seen, however, as a part of a complex ecosystem with circular causality (Boscolo et al., 1987). Circular causality

describes a type of causality often present in living ecosystems where the same element is both cause and effect of a process. At the moment when families who normally would not be engaged in Jewish life, or not very much, have children, they have to decide how to deal with issues of Jewishness as they raise and educate their children. Sometimes they move closer to Jewish organizations in order to find places that would help socialize their children in a Jewish environment. This can also be a part of a general process of identity discovery as described earlier. It is important for them that the Jewish community offers good activities for children, and especially summer camps, first in Poland (such as Atid) and then, when the children are older, international camps (such as Szarvas). It seems that families choose to engage more for their children. At the same time, children who are raised in this Jewish environment, with family meetings (Limud), first vacations at Atid, and finally Szarvas, often develop a strong attachment to this community and their own Jewish identity. However, the exact form of this identity depends, as it was shown in this study, on family identity type and family ethos. Young people often constitute a peer group, especially if their families are friends in urban environments. Then children's and adolescents' engagement in Jewish life could become a driving force, and it is children and adolescents who "pull" their families toward Jewish life, including influencing their siblings and members of their extended family (aunts, cousins). In effect we have here a circular ecological model, and the role of the camp lies in constituting one of the key elements of the system. However, this is not only an effect of the camp per se, but rather an effect that exists only as a whole system, offering children and adolescents a trajectory to follow. This may be finalized in becoming madrichim at the camp, as most teens in this sample plan to do. With some exceptions, going to Szarvas is the last step in a series of camps, first with parents and family, and then local camps for younger children. So it can be seen as a threshold experience, important to have, even for those who are and plan to be less engaged.

Over time Szarvas has grown into the local environment and become a part of the standard Jewish experience for many families.

The general Jewish community is also very involved in caring for children, giving them opportunities for participation in Jewish activities and a sense of Jewish socialization. It constitutes an important factor on the axis of community life. There are many local summer camps, and many children participate in them. The final and important camp is Szarvas. In some families not going to Szarvas would be unthinkable. To them, Szarvas is an intergenerational point of identification. Jewish summer camps also existed in Poland before the war and in the early years after the war, and they played an important role in the community. There are still persons alive who remember those early Jewish camps (some of which were financially supported by the JDC). So the camp tradition has a longer history and a positive tradition in the Jewish community.

There was complete agreement among the study participants that the way the staff is working with the families is very good: personal, encouraging, and engaged. Everybody agrees that communication between the Szarvas staff and the parents is very good and that the Polish organizing team is very engaged, helpful, and maintains good working relationships with the parents, the adolescents, and the staff. The practical part, such as information availability, communication, transport, organization, is functioning very well in the study participants' opinion. For many families, additional financing of the camp is important. They could not afford it otherwise, especially if they are sending multiple children to camp. For a few affluent families, costs are not an issue. There is agreement that the costs are acceptable.

Discussion

Most quantitative studies that employ macro approaches (Crippen & Brew, 2007) examine factors such as family structure, intermarriage, religion, geographical location, education, and language to determine the trajectories of Jewish identity formation. In this study I took a micro, qualitative approach to Jewish identity. I explored in depth how the complex Jewish culture, history, tradition, and the context of modernity meet the dynamic within the family to result in identity formation. A Jewish summer camp as organized by the JDC in Szarvas, Hungary, constitutes an ideal venue for such an exploration. A camp of this type is never just a "camp." It is a place of dense identity (and psychological) processes which could eventually have a huge impact on the lives of campers (Markstrom, Berman & Brusch, 1998). A camp mixed with adolescence and with the complex issues of Jewish identities is a potentially "sensitive" reality. It could be a self-defining experience; it also could be easy misused.

Social constructionists following Mead (Mead & Wolfenstein, 1955) propose that socialization is an ongoing process in which human actors interpret symbols and negotiate their identities. Explaining the development of social identities in individuals is a complex endeavor where social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), systemic understanding of family (for example family loyalty, parental expectations), but also the motive to attain individual distinctiveness (Brewer, 2003), observed, for example, in siblings and generations wishing to be distinct from each other, play a role. Yet there is also a place for individual freedom, manifested as the freedom to interpret experience and identity in one's own way. Hence the children are not passive receivers of parental or camp socialization. It is more than simple reception of what is transmitted by the parent or the camp leaders. A qualitative approach is a suitable research strategy for capturing this dimension.

A special characteristic of the present study was the longitudinal cohort design. Over a period of up to 3.5 years I interviewed and observed change in a group of teenagers who attended Szarvas camp for the first time. I had the opportunity to carefully listen to what they had to say about their experiences and struggles and how they understand themselves in the context of Jewish identity. At the same time, I was able to observe change and remember what they said earlier. If change occurs in a nondramatic, gradual way, it is often more visible from the outside. Working with transcripts, I could often better remember what they had said previously than they could themselves. This allowed me to observe trajectories of engagement in the camp, which were often quite emotional, and also trajectories of disengagement. It also enabled me to see if some of those changes had a short-time explosive character, as associated with adolescence, or were stable. Because the interviews took place in the context of the family, I could observe that the children's trajectories mirrored those of their families. This finding could not have been confirmed if not for the longitudinal character of the study.

Moreover, in this report, I conceptualize identity as a dynamic process, a quest. Adolescence is the time (Kroger & Marcia, 2011) when people first find and build an adult identity. This process has been described as the main developmental task of adolescence (Erikson, 1994). I was able to accompany the study participants on this path, and they shared their ideas about it with us. Being able to see this processual character of identity was one of the strong points of this study.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study lies in its relatively small sample size and limited period

of observation. Although three years is a long time when it comes to adolescence, it is short from the perspective of the lifespan. Because of the qualitative form of research and purposive sampling, the findings should be considered an insight into the variety of possible processes and trajectories rather than a representative account of the population. As with any qualitative study, it has also a subjective element connected to the necessity of selecting from the abundant study material and interpreting it.

A camp never exists in a void; it is a part of a complex ecosystem. Some of the children live in a very complex psychological and developmental situation that influences their participation. Although there is richness in this heterogeneity, it is difficult to draw conclusions that are not idiographic. Moreover, the findings of this study have the character of the double hermeneutic (Smith, 2004) – the researcher is interpreting the study participants' interpretations of their experiences.

Another limitation of the present findings is that most families who took part in this study are connected to local JCCs. They are involved in Jewish life and were willing to help with an intense, long study. They were open to inviting interviewers to their homes, spending up to three hours with them for the interviews. This makes this sample nonrepresentative of families that would be less open and less engaged. Also, some of the less affluent families received financial support from the JDC for Szarvas camp participation because they would not be able to afford it otherwise. Those families often expressed their gratitude. This is a limitation which could lead to underrepresentation of critical or mistrustful voices in the sample. On the other hand, both interviewers were outsiders, not connected with the local Jewish community, and not working for the local JCC, a fact that allowed for more professional distance and for study participants to feel comfortable potentially expressing different opinions.

Self-reflexivity

My professional background may have affected study design,[7] the interviews, and the interpretation of the data in the following way. As I am a psychologist, and as an academic researcher, my understanding of this data is influenced by drawing on psychological theory, including a systemic understanding of family, as well as social identity theory. My background makes me see the emotional underpinnings of reality, relationships within the family, trauma, and so on, as important factors. This study would be different if it had not been conducted from this psychological perspective, but instead from a sociological one, for example.

Personally, I was surprised how young study participants took such different things from the same camp experience, and how the family context shaped this process. Whereas the third generation joined Jewish life in a kind of opposition to the previous family climate, this fourth generation mirrored their family environment.

Finally, as an outsider (I did not know the JDC prior to this study, and I am not Jewish. I do have many Jewish friends, colleagues, and some academic knowledge.), I have a great sense of respect for the families studied and also for the adolescents' sense that Szarvas is their space. I value their right to see the things the way they do. I also share a family therapeutic opinion that it is families themselves (not external professionals) who are experts in what they are. The perspective of an outsider looking for patterns and family types, the use of theory – this is always a simplification of a complex reality.

[7] I developed this study together with Marcelo Dimentstein, Operations Director of JDC-ICCD.

Future directions for research

One of the defining qualities of the Jewish community in Poland is that it is relatively small. Larger communities exist in a few big cities, but they too are not very big; communities in other places count only a handful of people. But on the other hand, those communities have a Jewish history dating back more than a thousand years, and trauma and long-term anti-Semitism obviously persist. The situation emerging is thus one of contrast, and also pressure. The small group of young Jewish people is now faced with the contrast between the Polish Jewish community's great past and its small size today as well as the pressure arising from the expectation that they are responsible for continuing the grand traditions of the past. Some families are aware that they should not burden their children with such expectations, that they will be able to continue only a little or even simply go their own way. But the complexity of family expectations, family loyalty, and community expectations toward those young people is substantial. Future studies could aim to more deeply understand the trajectories of family traditions in that respect. It could be that the specific minority situation and historical trauma make family loyalties stronger.

The emergent theme is to study Szarvas camp using a longer time perspective. For example, one could apply a lifespan perspective to undertake a retrospective evaluation. A longer timescale would enable better evaluation of the outcomes of the camp and its meaning for the community.

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