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SCHOOL OF JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE

EVEN NEWER JEWS
MEMBERS OF BEIT WARSZAWA, THE HOME OF WARSAW'S PROGRESSIVE JEWS

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EVEN NEWER JEWS - MEMBERS OF BEIT WARSZAWA, THE HOME OF WARSAW'S PROGRESSIVE JEWS

By

Małgorzata Szymańska

A thesis presented to the School of Jewish Communal Service of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, California School in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Jewish Communal Service.

May 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my two advisors, whose guidance, ideas, and input were helpful, encouraging, and truly wonderful. My primary advisor, Marla Eglash Abraham, was generous with her time and support and helped me shape ideas for the future of my community in Warsaw. My secondary advisor, Shawn Landres, assisted with conceiving the rationale of this thesis, patiently walked me though the intricacies of statistical analyses, and provided unparalleled support with translating the statistical data into words. I also would like to thank Michelle Windmueller for her assistance. Michelle patiently helped me with the initial process of statistical analysis of my data. My sincere appreciation goes as well to Steven Windmueller, Director of the School of Jewish Communal Service, who taught me about what is good for the Jewish people and made me committed to it.

I owe words of gratitude and appreciation to my classmates, especially Miriam Pullman and Rebecca Garrison, and my internship instructors. My classmates and I shared wonderful two years of learning and Jewish exploration; they gave me true friendship and support. Jack Mayer, who as Executive Director of The New JCC at Milken in West Hills was my first year field instructor, taught me about the bigger picture of understanding the community and became a role model as a devoted Jewish communal professional. Rabbi Gary Greenebaum, Western Regional Director of the American Jewish Committee, and Steve Addison, Director of International Relations at the American Jewish Committee, taught me what the best "insurance policy" for the Jewish people is and instilled in me true commitment to the work of diplomacy and inter-group relations.

I would like to thank Severyn Ashkenazy, Mindy Harris, Irv Hepner, Theodore Bikel, Craig Taubman, and Zuzana Riemer Landres for their support for my efforts and the efforts

of Beit Warszawa. Severyn, the visionary, the "tzaddik" of Beit Warszawa, whose commitment to the Polish Jews in unparalleled, turned me into a Jewish communal professional and continues to be an inspiration. Mindy, with her support, motivation, and patience helped me make the dream of studying at the Hebrew Union College come true. Irv and his wife K.C. supported me and became friends and role models. Theo Bikel and Tamara Brooks were supportive and truly inspirational through their words and music. Craig and his family, Louise, Abby, and Noah, through their good spirit and encouragement became dear friends. Zuzana, with her encouragement and good humor, was a treasured friend who shared with me the happy and not-so-happy moments of the thesis-writing time.

I also wish to extend my deepest gratitude to Marcia Burnam, Evy Lutin, and Joseph Farivar, as well as Steven Windmueller, Dean Lewis Barth, and Fredi Rembaum for making my studies at the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion a reality.

Finally, special thanks to my family and friends in Poland. They supported me in my work, and even from far away I could sense their encouragement and love. I owe special thanks to Beit Warszawa. The community at Beit Warszawa helped shape my commitment to Judaism, and to our common work toward the Jewish renewal in Poland.

ABSTRACT

Beit Warszawa is a five-year-old Reform congregation in Warsaw, Poland, which serves the needs of the growing Jewish community. Since 1989, Poland, like other Eastern European countries, has been experiencing a revival in the Jewish life, fuelled by young people's return to their Jewish roots.

This thesis explores the historical and sociological background of contemporary Jewish life in Poland and focuses on Beit Warszawa participants. It describes the people affiliated with this congregation, and their motivations for choosing Beit Warszawa as the place to express and learn about Judaism, as well as explores their perception about the organization's strengths, weaknesses, and leadership. Finally, the paper contains recommendations as to what Beit Warszawa might do to continue its growth and development as increasing numbers of young Jewish people are rediscovering their Jewish roots and are seeking Jewish knowledge and community.

The findings include the following: members and affiliates of Beit Warszawa are relatively young and well-educated, who choose Beit Warszawa as a venue for socialization, while expanding their intellectual understanding of Judaism, with a lesser emphasis on religious practices. The study revealed that people in Beit Warszawa are confused with the organization's mission and vision for the future. It is essential for Beit Warszawa more clearly to define its role and future direction for the sake of more effective and mission-driven leadership and continued growth.

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POLISH JEWS – A STORY

Poland holds a special place on the map of the Jewish history. On one hand, it was a place of haven for Jews for centuries. "Poland was the world center for the Jews, with leading Jewish cultural and religious life. In Poland, the Yiddish language was formed. By 1800, three-quarters of all Jews lived in Poland. Until the latter part of the 19th century the Jews defined Poland as a paradise for the Jews (Paradisus Judeorum)" (Pogonowski, 1993, p.158). On the other hand, Poland is a place that not so long ago bore witness to the most atrocious slaughter of Jews in history. Especially for American Jews, Poland may evoke sadness and bitterness from a March of the Living experience, or other heritage tours, when they visit Auschwitz and are exposed to the tragic stories from Holocaust survivors of Nazi atrocities, and sometimes, unfortunately, their memories of violence committed by Polish people.

For me, Poland is home. Poland is my family, my childhood, my favorite poems and films in Polish. It is hiking in the Tatra Mountains, sailing in the Mazury region. It is my high school in Łódź. It is Warsaw, with its cafes, theaters, and friends. Coming to America and sharing my story with people here made me confront my Poland with their image of Poland. My first reflex was always to defend my country, but I have grown to understand and respect the negative feelings and reactions.

Simultaneously, I began to tell people about the Jewish revival in Poland, about hundreds of young Polish Jews who are returning to their roots, about Jewish book fairs, festivals and Jewish studies departments. Since 1989, when Communism collapsed in Poland, followed by its fall in almost all of the Soviet satellites, Poland, together with other countries has seen a rise in interest about "things Jewish" (Irwin-Zarecka, 1989). This

interest comes from the non-Jewish population, as well as from those Poles of Jewish origin who are now free to learn, practice, and live as Jews again. In Poland, the number of Jewish institutions skyrocketed in the fifteen years since the collapse of Communism. The community, strongly supported by American Jewish institutions, answers the needs of these Jews in multiple ways. There are various Jewish religious institutions, associations, ad-hoc groups, a theater, and Jewish press.

By sharing this story in the United States, I believe I have challenged American Jewish perspective of some American Jews on Poland in a Jewish context. In the world where on one hand Jews are thriving in the United States, but at the same time the situation in Israel continues to be bothersome, and antisemitism in much of Europe is on the rise, a positive message from a place doomed by most Jews can play an uplifting role. Indeed, my experience has been such that my story of the renewed life in Poland in many cases has had an almost magical power of opening people's minds and hearts to a different reality. The notion that in Poland, where genocide was committed on Jews, Jews still live, and strive to live Jewish lives, is powerful.

The story of the revival is largely about Jews in their 20s and 30s who had not been affected by the stigma of being Jewish that had touched the lives of their parents' generation. They grew up with a mentality of more openness and pride, which had an opportunity to flourish when Poland became a free country. Konstanty Gebert, in his article "Jewish Identities in Poland," used the term "new Jews" to signify a group of young intellectuals who in late 1970s started The Flying University in Warsaw, a study group of younger Jews and their Gentile friends interested in 'things Jewish'. They were different from the generation of "old Jews" in a way that they were the first to start questioning "official truths and attack

hitherto unmentionable taboos"; one of them was the Jewish question (Gebert, 1994, p.163). They were compelled to confront their Jewish roots by the regime in 1968, and ready to start making sense of their heritage. What made them different from the "old Jews" generation is that they wanted to consciously deal with their Jewish roots, while the generation of their parents, who have witnessed the atrocities aimed at Jews, wanted to hide their Jewishness and protect their children from what they had experienced.

After 1989 even more "new Jews" appeared. After the new era in the Polish history began, the generation of the first "new Jew's" children came to realize their Jewish heritage. Interestingly, what made them similar to the previous generation was the psychological problem associated with Jewishness, a sense of 'alien-ness', as well as sometimes their being "imaginary Jews", as some people's identities were based on nothing more than "a vague biographical accident and a social climate in intellectual milieux which supported attempts at root-searching" (Gebert, 1994, p.66). However, the new generation was returning to their roots because they could, not because they were compelled by the antisemitic government to look in the mirror and admit to being Jewish. Thus, the last fifteen years have seen another act of revival of Jewish interest, and in Jewish life. As of spring 2006, there are Jewish schools, festivals, book fairs, and other communal activities for Jewish people of all ages in Poland.

In the last five years, I have been very involved in and have cared deeply about this revival. It has become an important component of my life for personal reasons, but also because I have recognized how extensive the need has been for 'things Jewish' among Polish Jews. I have been involved in a fairly new incarnation of the Jewish revival, one of the youngest Jewish organizations on the Polish Jewish scene, Beit Warszawa. From its

beginnings, Beit Warszawa undertook the role of a reform, or liberal Jewish congregation, which would answer the needs of young Polish Jews who were not ready to make the leap from full assimilation and lack of Jewish knowledge to full religious practice. To a considerable extent, Beit Warszawa has been a very successful endeavor, although it has had its issues and dilemmas, as this research will demonstrate.

This thesis presents the historical and social background for the development of Beit Warszawa. It then attempts to answer the questions: who are Beit Warszawa's members? Why have they chosen Beit Warszawa as their Jewish venue? Is Beit Warszawa playing the role in their lives that it was designed for by its founders? There has a lot been written about "new Jews," and some of this material is presented here. However, Beit Warszawa and its affiliates have not yet been researched and placed within the context of the new Jewish life in Poland.

Beit Warszawa as one of the most recent developments in the Jewish life in Poland is a new type of expression of the revival of Judaism in Poland. It is a natural step in the Jewish community's development towards its continuous growth; it is a venue that allows Polish Jews to be Jews and Poles, a place where they can learn and practice Judaism but continue Polish lives they are not willing to reject. As such, I believe, Beit Warszawa is a new incarnation of this growing community; thus the title: "Even Newer Jews." This thesis attempts to illustrate how Jewish community came to this point, and to discuss where it may be heading.

My aforementioned struggles with the image of Poland in the United States may stem from the fact that the history of Jews in Poland has been filled with misunderstandings, stereotypes, and accusations. In order to grasp accurately the current situation of Jews living

in Warsaw, Poland's capital, one needs to have an understanding of Poland and its Jews' past. As someone once said, "Planning the future without knowing one's past is like planting cut flowers."[1]

Jewish history began in the Middle East about four thousand years ago. Expelled from Judea by the Romans in 117 CE, the Jewish population migrated to Europe. There, Jewish culture endured over the centuries, flourishing notably in Arab Spain and later in the Rhineland. During the period of the Crusades, from the 11th to the 15th centuries, the Jewish people were repeatedly expelled from the lands in which they had settled. Polish land and the Polish state were crucial to the Jewish community during this era, as a place where the Jews found refuge; their numbers soared, and their culture blossomed (Pogonowski, 1993, p.13).

Pre-partition History of Poland and Polish Jews [2]

Polish history dates back to the 10th century, when various tribes settled in the land stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Tatra Mountains. The first king of whom we have credible historical accounts was Mieszko I, who adopted Christianity in 966. It is at this moment that historians mark the beginning of the state of Poland and its establishment on the European political scene. Concurrently the decision to Christianize Poland signaled the adoption of Western culture, language (Latin), calendar, and political affiliations.

In the 14th century, Poland became a European power. From 1333 to 1370, Casimir the Great was Poland's ruler. He was known for consolidating the kingdom, unifying the people, and making Poland an important international center of commerce. Casimir, apart from being a great builder of fortified cities and a great legislator, was also regarded as a

[1] Attributed to Daniel J. Boorstin, Librarian of Congress (1975 – 1987).
[2] Much of the information in this chapter comes from Kozłowski Bronowski (2003).

friend to the Jews and the ruler who improved the quality of life for the peasants (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003). It was under Casimir the Great that Jews were welcomed on Polish land after they were expelled from areas of Western Europe, including Spain, England, and Germany. Jews have had a presence in Poland since the 12th century. In the 14th century, they were given legal status under the "statute of Kalisz," which stated that they were accepted and defended as a group and were the first emancipatory laws with regard to European Jews (Gudonis, 2001, p.4). In the 14th century, Jews came in large numbers, and Poland became the safest country in Europe for them (Slovenko, 1987). Casimir designated a town outside of Krakow for the Jewish community, which was named after him (Kazimierz), and granted them special protection of the crown, extending that which was already stated in the statute of Kalisz (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p.712). They were also exempt from any dominion by church or guilds. Over the next centuries, the Jewish community grew rapidly, and soon became the largest in Europe.

Poland came to be known as a multicultural and multiethnic land, where religious toleration was protected (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003). In the 14th century, Poland and Lithuania became unified through the marriage between Poland's Jadwiga (the daughter of King Louis of Hungary) and Lithuania's Duke Jagiełło, whose marriage marked the beginning of the Jagiellonian dynasty. The kingdom of Poland and Lithuania became the largest power in the Eastern Europe (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003). Its enemies were the Teutonic knights from the North and the West with whom the Poles fought the historic battle of Grunwald in 1410. That battle, during which king Jagiełło crushed the Teutonic Knights, "achieved mythical dimensions in the Poles' collective consciousness" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.12) and is an important fact in understanding Polish nationality. One

hundred years after that battle, the conflict between the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania and the Prussian State of the Teutonic Order came to an end.

As Europe was turning into a culture of Renaissance in the 15th century, Poland's cultural relationships with the West were growing. Poland made some remarkable scientific and cultural achievements during that period, including Nicolaus Copernicus' astronomical revolution. Poland's prosperous economy at the time was primarily based upon agriculture. Politically, Poland was becoming increasingly sophisticated, with strong kingship and nobility, which formed strong parliamentary power. Interestingly, along with the trends in Western Europe, the Church's influence on the general culture was diminishing; the Polish population, however, remained deeply religious. This remains true today and continues to play a strong role in Poland.

In the beginning of the 16th century, Poland was a vast kingdom that extended from the Baltic coasts to the Moldovan border in the south. It had a religiously, ethnically, and culturally diversified population of four million, which included Ukrainians, Belarusians, Mongol and Turkish Muslims, Greek Orthodox Moldavians, Germans, Italians and Spaniards. "Stretching 'from sea to sea' ...the 'Rzeczpospolita' or 'Commonwealth' ...aroused both admiration and envy ...over the splendid military successes, but above all the freedom and religious toleration that prevailed in the Commonwealth" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.19). When Europe was inundated with religious wars in the name of God, Poland's Jews, Christians, and Muslims were living and worshiping side-by-side. Polish rulers did not claim rule over people's consciences.

In the 16th and early 17th century, Poland became the center of Ashkenazi culture.[3] Jewish culture and social life blossomed along with the economic growth. During this period, Jews in Poland occupied a place between the nobility and the peasants, collecting taxes for the nobility, managing their estates, and in fact, controlling the life of a village on behalf of the noblemen. The resentment, which eventually resurfaced, was inevitable (Pogonowski, 1993). The first violent conflict against the Polish nobility was a Cossack uprising of 1647-8 led by Bodgan Chmielnicki, a Ukrainian nobleman. Violence was turned against the Jews, who were viewed as "protégés of the kingdom and the noblemen of Poland and Lithuania and thereby [Chmielnicki's] natural enemies" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p. 20).

Over the duration of these merciless pogroms,[4] an estimated 100,000 Jews were killed or injured. During this period, Charles Gustav, the King of Sweden, became interested in conquering the weakened Poland and attacked from the north, known in Polish history as the "Deluge." This war with the Swedes ended with a treaty, but the period of unrest due to the Deluge and to the Cossacks' invasion left the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania weaker and harder to manage, with weakened central power. In the 1680s, Jan III Sobieski came to power and proved to be a great politician and warrior. He is credited with stopping "Islam on its victorious westward march" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p. 23) at the battle of Vienna with the Turks. However, continued wars further impoverished Poland. Corruption and an inefficient administration caused increasing anarchy in the Republic. During the rule of the Saxon kings, the country fell even more deeply into decay both culturally and

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[3] Ashkenazim – "Members of a biblical people (c.f. Gen. 10:3; Jer. 51-27): since the 9th cent.; applied to the Germans. The German Jews and their descendants were therefore called Ashkenazim in contrast to the *Sephardim* (the Jews of Spain and their descendants)" and *Mizrachim* (the Jews of Central Asia). (Wigoder, 1992, p.87)

[4] Pogrom – "An organized massacre for the annihilation of any body or class, especially with governmental collusion; more specifically one directed against Jews." (Wigoder, 1992, p.758)

economically. Poland was falling into moral chaos and a lack of religious tolerance for which it had been known. An anti-Jewish riot in Sandomierz is but one example of the Jews being scapegoated for Poland's decline.

At the same time as Poland was going through this crisis, new religious movements began and gained adherents. Hasidism soon prevailed in the majority of Jewish settlements, and the movement of traditional Judaism, the mitnaggedim,[5] also gained a following. It was in the 17th century, that a self-governing body of the Jewish community, Va'ad Arba Artzot (Council of Four Lands), took shape. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Jewish community flourished in terms of religious thought and culture (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003).

The growing decay in Poland and the influence of the Russian empire on Polish issues led to a tragedy in 1772 when Poland was partitioned after secret negotiations between Austria, Prussia, and Russia. Not long after, Poland awakened from its political coma into a cultural and political reform. In 1788 the Sejm (Polish parliament) convened, and made decisions for the future of the country without the interference from its enemies who at the time were waging war against one another. During this gathering of noblemen, social reforms were drafted, including those that aided the Jews. The Sejm also drafted a Constitution, the first of its kind in modern Europe, which was adopted in May 1791. However, only a year later, a group of wealthy aristocrats conspired against the new rule that limited their powers and asked the Russian Empress Katrina for protection. As a result of a war and broken promises from Prussia to help, another partition of Poland followed. Polish patriots rebelled and riots broke out in Warsaw and other cities. It was then that a Jewish merchant, Berek Joselewicz, "raised a regiment of light cavalry ...and became part of a national legend as an

[5] Mitnaggedim – "(Heb. 'opponents'): Opponents of the Hasidic movement. The reasons for the opposition were (1) the pantheistic tendencies of the Hasidim; (2) their use of the Sephardi liturgy; (3) the establishment by them of separate synagogues; (4) their belief in *tzaddikim*." (Wigoder, 1992, p.663)

example of national reconciliation" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.35). Nevertheless, the uprising failed, and Poland was wiped off the map of Europe for the following 123 years.

After Polish fighters' involvement with the Napoleonic wars from 1799 until 1815, the 'Polish question' returned following the defeat of the French emperor. The Grand Duchy of Warsaw became the semi-autonomous Kingdom of Poland, also known as Congress Poland, after the Congress of Vienna, with a constitution modeled on that of 1791. However, Russia retained vast influence, with the absolutist rule of the Russian tsar. In 1830, the Poles again rose up against Russian rule, in what is called "the November Uprising," which has "impressed the strongest mark upon the Polish collective consciousness" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.40). Again, the uprising was crushed, and Poland as an independent nation ceased to exist. Moreover, Russia, Austria and Prussia, all attempted to wipe out Polish culture and language. Nevertheless, the Poles remained true to their culture, which flourished abroad. Within the area that used to be Poland, morale remained high and the longing for freedom grew. This caused various social groups to unite, creating a special climate for moral revolution. The revolution also included assimilated Jewish merchants and bankers who identified with the cause of resurrecting Poland. In 1863, yet another uprising broke out, which failed after two years of hopeless fights and triggered even worse repressions for the Poles.

Under the partitions, the Jews' plight differed in each of the annexed lands. In Galicia, which was economically backward, a million Jews lived in poverty, but enjoyed some political rights. In the part of Poland annexed by Prussia, the Jewish community was rather small and relatively affluent. The largest number of Polish Jews found themselves in the Russian part of Poland where "their initiative and enterprise played an important part in

the development of commerce and the building up of such industrial centers as Łódź, Białystok, and Warsaw" (Meyer, Weinryb, Duschinsky, & Sylvain, 1959, p. 207). The Russian Empire never allowed Jews on its land before it 'inherited' them together with the land, acquired from Poland as a result of the partitioning. In order to deal with that population which now came under its control, the Russian government ruled that the Jews could remain in the areas in which they lived but not could move to other areas of the Empire. The area where Jewish residence was permitted was known as the Pale of Settlement and was established in the late 18th century.

Emancipation, which in the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century reached the Jews of Western Europe, was not a familiar concept for most of the Jewry that lived in Eastern Europe. After the partition of Poland, "more than a million Jews lived in a world politically and socially similar to western Europe in the 16th or 17th centuries" (Hallo, 1984, p. 228). Moreover, "the special legal status enjoyed by the Jews in Poland-Lithuania came under attack[;] ...efforts were made to break the Jewish separateness" (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p. 732), supported by some members of the "Haskalah", the Jewish enlightenment movement. It was a common assumption that Jews suffered because of their separateness and both non-Jewish Poles and the Polish Jews would benefit if the Jews were Polonized. Efforts toward this goal were made, including the abolishment of the "kahal," the traditional Jewish self-governing structure, and the "emancipation" of Jews, which lifted all existing restrictions on Jewish residence. The "carrot and stick" method was utilized, but with growing influence of the antisemitic tsarist Russia, soon, only the stick remained. Still, the efforts to Polonize the Jews affected only a minute percentage of the population (*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, p. 736). At the same time in

the 19th century, the natural increase in the Jewish population and the urbanization of Polish Jewry was greater than that of the non-Jewish population.

The end of the 19th century was witness to immense transformation across Europe. This included the abolition of serfdom and the expansion of industry, which triggered massive migration from the countryside to the cities. New social classes appeared, such as the working class, and the intelligentsia, which was made up of free professions, a characteristic trait of the Polish social landscape. Intelligentsia embraced new political movements: nationalism and socialism. The social movement was influenced by the charismatic Polish leader Józef Piłsudski. In this new ideological climate of socialism, Zionism took root as well. Roman Dmowski, a social Darwinist and a dangerous antisemite, led the nationalist movement, with strong Russian ties. "Out of their history, the Poles have distilled a fervent, romantic nationalism" (Pogonowski, 1993, p.158), which was to be a strong influence on Polish-Jewish relations in the coming decades.

Post-partition History of Poland and Polish Jews Until 1945

In 1914 "the Central Powers" - Germany with Austria-Hungary - clashed with France, Britain and Russia, "the Entente." Polish legions were formed, and the Polish question was back on Europe's agenda. Ultimately, Polish independence was confirmed in 1918 at the conference of Versailles and again after General Piłsudski returned to Poland after being interned by the Germans. The situation remained tenuous in terms of ongoing power struggles, the separatist turmoil along the borders, and the economy. The Bolsheviks,[6]

[6] Bolshevism – "Political theory propounded by the left-wing majority of the Russian Social Democratic Party, which crystallized under Lenin in 1903. ...The Bolshevik wing ...held that revolution must come by armed uprising and the dictatorship of the industrial proletariat." (Wigoder, 1992, p.164)

who believed that they could only win Western Europe if they won Poland, attacked Poland in 1920. After fierce battles, Poland emerged victorious.

The post-Bolshevik war situation was marked by further political, economic, and social strife. At that point Poland was a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, with 13% of its population being ethnically Ukrainian, 8% Jewish, and the remainder of minorities being Belarusians and Germans. The lower socioeconomic class made almost half of the population (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003).

During that time, the situation of the Jews, many of whom in fact identified with the Polish language and culture, steadily worsened, as it was fed by the populism of the nationalist parties. The Jewish community was torn internally by political and social divisions. Although there were exceptions, the Jewish community did not support Polish nationalism, but Jews did want change. Reinforced by growing antisemitism, Jews held a sentiment there was a sentiment held by Jews to strive for sovereignty either in the areas in which their population was heavily concentrated, or in Palestine. Indeed, antisemitism would continue to grow in Poland. In 1936, even the Primate of Poland, the highest-ranking Roman Catholic cleric in the country, August Hlond, spoke about "the Jewish problem of Poland" and advocated the economic boycott of Jewish business (Pogonowski, 1993, p.157). At the same time, Zionists accentuated the news about the growing antisemitism in order to motivate more Jews to move to Palestine.

The country's economic hardships further intensified social conflicts. Politically, Poland was in terrible turmoil, with Piłsudski having retired and a minority-backed, newly elected president Narutowicz having been assassinated in 1922 by a right-wing fanatic. Four years later, Piłsudski returned to power with what was named "Sanacja" – 'restoration to

health', which was in reality an authoritarian regime, but "far remote from the brutality and lawlessness that marked the dictatorships of Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.56). After Piłsudski's death in 1935, the nationalist mood grew even stronger, manifested by attempts to Polonize Ukrainians by force, as well as uncontrolled antisemitism, "which did enjoy some tacit approval in the high places" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.56). Some universities officially introduced 'ghetto benches,'[7] and there was a public encouragement to boycott Jewish business.

Poland as a state, however, enjoyed some successes. It managed to unify its regions, establish its currency as one of the strongest in Europe in the inter-war period, and completed some impressive industrial projects. Polish culture flourished during that time, including literature, theater, music, and press. Jewish authors were among some of the best writers of the era. Despite rampant antisemitism, especially intense by the end of the 30's, Jewish communal life was strong and vibrant. By 1939, there were well over three million Jews living in Poland, or about 10 per cent of the total population of Poland, and most lived in 'shtetls.'[8] "58 Jewish periodicals were in circulation[;] ... 15 Jewish theaters, and several dozen Jewish films were made. Yiddish literature developed alongside that written in Polish" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.57), with Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer emblematic of that genre. The political life of the Jewish community was also exceptionally rich.

While internal struggles remained a difficulty, the external political situation determined the future of Poland. In the summer of 1939, the Ribentropp-Molotov pact was

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[7] Ghetto – "Jewish quarter" (Wigoder,1992, p.366); "Ghetto benches" – "separate benches for Jewish students ... "instituted on the demand of extremist representatives of the student body; ...the Jewish students refused to accept segregation and serious clashes ensued." (Wigoder,1992, p.367)

[8] Shtetl – "(Yiddish for 'small town'): Jewish small town or village community in Eastern Europe." (Wigoder, 1992, p.862)

signed, which divided Poland between Soviet and Nazi powers. The preemptive defensive alliance signed by Poland with France and Great Britain did not ameliorate Poland's situation. On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland, and help from Poland's purported allies did not come. The situation became even worse with the second strike less than three weeks later, when the Soviet army attacked from the east. By the end of September, Poland was partitioned between the two powers. Russia occupied half of Poland's territory. Pomerania, Greater Poland, Silesia, Suwałki and Łódź regions, as well as northern Mazovia, were incorporated into the Third Reich. The remaining Polish lands became the "General Government." Terror was unleashed in all occupied lands. Over half a million people were deported as slave labor to the Third Reich, and most of the Polish élite were murdered or taken to concentration camps. About forty such camps were built throughout Polish land, the largest one in Auschwitz. Complete lawlessness and crime were ubiquitous, and death was the punishment for any "crime," from owning a radio receiver, to sheltering Jews.

The worst terror reached the three million strong Jewish population of Poland. With every month of the occupation, increasingly rigorous restrictions were placed upon the Jews, from wearing a yellow Star of David, badge on their clothing, to the obligation forcing Jews to deposit all their monies into bank accounts for the Third Reich. In the first months, the fate of Jews was not that different from that of the non-Jewish Poles, and that might be why few Jews envisioned what was to come (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.61). The first sign of the impending extermination was the creation of ghettos, ultimately totaling 400 within Polish territory. By March of 1941, Jews and Gypsies were no longer protected by any law. Living conditions in the ghettos were abhorrent; their residents were besieged by hunger and

disease. Leaving the walls of the ghetto, or offering help to a Jew was punishable by death. Organized mass extermination began in June 1941 after the German-Soviet war broke out.

The fate of Jews under the Soviet occupation was not as tragic as under the Nazis. Those who were deported, together with thousands of non-Jewish Poles, were paradoxically saved from Nazi extermination. Rather, the non-Jewish Poles fell victim to Soviet cleansing, which was exemplified by the mass murder of 15,000 Polish officers in Katyń in the spring of 1940.

It was the occupiers' policy to take advantage of nationalist sentiments among various populations and pit them against each other. Christian Poles would attack Jews; Jews would fight Ukrainians and Lithuanians. Bloody pogroms in the Białystok area took place (including the town of Jedwabne), becoming symbols of hatred turned into murder. Soon after these massacres, in 1942, Nazis set in motion their full-fledged death machinery, in death camps such as Majdanek, Chełmno, Bełżec, Treblinka, and Sobibór. Revolts in ghettos broke out but were crushed very quickly. The Warsaw ghetto uprising in April 1943, which lasted three weeks, became a symbol of Jewish heroism.

The Nazis murdered three million Polish Jews, which constituted 90% of the pre-war Jewish population of Poland. About 300,000 were saved in the USSR, or in Polish land, due to "Aryan papers," to the good will and heroism of Christian Polish families and Catholic monasteries. There was also a Polish underground organization, the Council for Aid to Jews in Occupied Poland, which brought some help to the Jews in ghettoes. On the other hand, there were instances of "szmalcownicy," those who blackmailed Jews who hid outside of the ghettoes. Stories about their brutality are countered with numbers and stories about the Poles who rescued Jews. Both these phenomena were marginal, as most of the Polish population

was solely trying to survive and was indifferent to the others' fate. Discussions about the Christian-Polish and Polish-Jewish relations during the war remain very painful for both sides, with accusations of complicity by Christian Poles, who try to explain their own martyrology. A 2001 investigation of the massacre in Jedwabne in 1941 offered an example of the open wounds.

By the end of the war, it was clear that as the Nazis were withdrawing from Poland, the Soviets were to be the liberators, and as such they would claim the right to have a stake in the Polish land and governance. Polish sovereignty was thus in danger. Hence, the Polish underground army mobilized into action. It instigated an uprising in order to capture Warsaw and welcome the incoming Soviet army as the established Polish authorities in sovereign Warsaw. Whether the decision to start an uprising was right is debated until this day. The underground Home Army launched the uprising as the Soviets were approaching, but as the Soviet Army reached the left bank of the Vistula river, Stalin decided it should wait for the Polish Home Army, which was very poorly armed, to be decimated and Warsaw to be leveled to the ground by the withdrawing Nazi army. During the 63 days of the uprising, which is seen by Poles as the most tragic event in modern Polish history, 20,000 insurgents and 180,000 civilian inhabitants of Warsaw lost their lives.

Poland's new geographic, and de facto political situation was decided in the two conferences that followed the Nazi defeat in World War II, in The Yalta Conference in February of 1945 and then in Potsdam a couple of months later. The new Poland, which arose from the war, was shifted westward geographically, but eastward politically. The War left Poland ruined, with one third of its pre-war population lost: 3 million Jewish citizens of Poland and 3 million non-Jewish Polish citizens. Most politicians in exile were afraid to

return, and they were soon arrested and deported by the new ruling power if they did return. The Soviets tried to imitate the process of building democracy in Poland, but it soon became evident that Stalinist rule was anything but democratic. The elections and referenda were falsified and Western powers did not react. Communists would have not won without falsifying the elections, as the population was against their rule. However, the people, exhausted and decimated, did not have the power to stand up against the new regime, and any attempt to form opposition was suffocated. The last bastions of independence, the Church and farmers, were soon subdued as well.

About 300,000 Polish Jews survived the war. Some of those survivors came out of hiding having used Aryan papers, some were liberated from concentration camps, and some returned from exile in the USSR. Many of those who survived found no traces of their families and emigrated to Palestine or the United States. Some stayed, especially those who had high hopes for the new political system. In 1946, there were 18,000 Jews in Warsaw (Jagielski, n.d.). That same year there was a government-instigated pogrom in Kielce, which took the lives of 40 people. This combined with other antisemitic incidents, triggered the departure of most Holocaust survivors from Poland. Together with the German and Ukrainian displacement, the Jewish mass migration made Poland a very homogenous country, for the first time in its history.

Contemporary Poland: From the 1950s to Present Time

After Stalin's death in 1956, a new era began called the "thaw." However, the easing of Communist terror was short-lived. In 1956, Moscow dealt harshly with a workers' revolt in Poznań. It was the other Soviet satellites however that bore the brunt, especially Hungary,

where the attempt to create 'socialism with a human face' ended in bloodshed. Poland was able to avoid a similar fate. In fact, in terms of social freedoms, as well as freedom of ownership and of conscience, the situation was improved. It was then that many of the remaining Jews left, mainly for Israel. It was also in the late 50s that Poland's intelligentsia reawakened and when the famous 'Polish School' of filmmaking began, and many famous Polish artists started their careers. Due to this reawakening, Poland was dubbed "the merriest barrack in the socialist camp" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, p.73).

Life under Communism did not allow the Polish Jewish community to thrive. Antisemitism was widespread, and fuelled by the widespread myth that the Communist party was run by (and had been brought by) the Jews. It was true that from the very beginning of the Socialist movement in Poland, a disproportionate number of Jews belonged to the communist parties. However, this did not mean that the majority of communist party members were of Jewish descent. Moreover, the people with Jewish surnames and origins who were members of the communist party after the war had denounced their Judaism and their roots.

In 1953, the American Jewish Committee estimated the number of Jews in Poland to be between 30- and 40,000 Jews (Meyer, Weinryb, Duschinsky, & Sylvain, 1959). In the early 1960s there were synagogues operating in the larger cities of Poland, nine primary and secondary schools where Yiddish was the language of instruction, a Jewish Cultural Association, a Jewish publishing house, a Jewish State Theater, and a Jewish newspaper (Gudonis, 2001c). All this was a consequence of the fact that as much as the regime was against religion, it did support "a secular Jewish identity especially of the Marxist-Yiddishist type" (Gudonis, 2001c, p.133). By that time, most of the Jewish community had retreated

from open expressions of Jewish religion and ethnic identity. It was commonly felt that it was easier not to be Jewish any more, but to assimilate into the general society. The generation that still had a strong presence at the time was made up of those born before the Second World War and who had gone through the atrocities of the Holocaust. For those people, being Jewish was mostly about survival and much less about culture and identity (Rosenson, 1996). Their children, mostly born after the war, were not exposed to Jewish religion or traditions and did not care much about their Jewish identities. The formative year for these people was 1968.

In March of 1968, the Communist regime staged what was to become a practical purge of the Jewish people in Poland. The antisemitic campaign started with young people's protests against censorship and turned into a campaign against the 'Zionist instigators' and enemies of the system. The "March Events," as they are now called, were a result of inter-party conflicts within its political establishment, and antisemitism was used as a weapon to stir up political rivalry. Using manipulation and dredging up the antisemitic 'ghosts from the past', the party turned the workers against the Jews. The party workers were sent to the streets with antisemitic slogans on placards. There were fierce riots at universities, where students, many of them Jewish, protested against the government's censorship. The party also tracked Jewish people, even those who never really identified as Jews, and gave them one-way tickets to depart from Poland, thus sadly authenticating the Sartrian thesis that anti-Semitism creates Jews (Gudonis, 2001c). All over the country, Jewish people lost their jobs, were expelled from their homes, and were told to leave. About 20,000 people left in the aftermath of the March 1968 purge.

There has been a lot written about the root causes of such events and the development of antisemitism in Poland. For example, Michael Wieviorka writes that "anti-Semitism... does not target the Jew as such, but the democrat, an intellectual [or] a student; it tries to discredit him, giving him a definition in which he ceases to be a democrat, an intellectual [or] a student: only a Jew" (Gudonis, 2001a, p.5). Another explanation is that "anti-Semitism can be used instrumentally only if the culture depicts "Polishness" and "Jewishness" as mutually exclusive categories" (Gudonis, 2001a, p.5). An example of such distinction is the notion of "Polak-Katolik" (a Pole = a Catholic), which made it impossible for Jews to be also Poles. In 1968, the notion of Polak-Katolik was not the tool of the ruling party, because the Communists undermined religion. However, the stereotypical ethnic distinction between being Polish and Jewish was present.

The March Events have left a deep scar on the modern history of Poland. The events worsened Poland's image in the world and emptied Poland of much of its intelligentsia, leaving the remaining intellectuals even more angry and disappointed with the system. The long-term effect was that the young people who were active in the anti-Communist protests in 1968 later became active in protests against the regime.

After the intellectuals' revolts of 1968 and workers' revolts in 1970, and due to the deteriorating economic situation, the people of Poland started their reawakening. After the 1970 strikes, a new Communist leader took over the Party and the country, and a short period of economic upturn started. However, that economic prosperity, fuelled by credit from the West that is still a burden on the Polish economy, "soon proved illusive" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.75). Similar to previous years' scenarios, economic hardship led to more workers' revolts in 1976. They were more strongly than ever supported by the intellectuals,

who spontaneously helped the persecuted workers and began independent social movements openly opposing the ruling system (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003). What further intensified the feeling of impending change was the fact that Karol Wojtyła became Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. John Paul II chose Poland to be his first papal visit in 1979, where in his famous "Have no fear" sermon he infused the hearts of Poles with hope and awoke them from political apathy.

Yet another avalanche of strikes broke out in 1980s, this time well organized, and with postulates reaching farther than economy. This time the protesters, supported by "experienced dissident intellectuals and headed by Lech Wałęsa, a charismatic electrician from the Gdańsk shipyard, ...demanded the abolition of censorship, more religious freedom, and ...a guarantee in the form of an independent organization, '*Solidarność*' (*Solidarity*)" (Kozłowski & Bronowski, 2003, p.75). The following months demonstrated the population's enthusiasm to reform the system, which month after month revealed its growing weaknesses. The answer for the government's helplessness was its decision to use force, and in December 1981 martial law was proclaimed, and lasted about one year. The most active members of the "Solidarność"(*Solidarity*) movement were interned. The imposition of martial law caused Poles to hate the system even more vehemently, and it was the beginning of the end of Communism, even though it would take another seven years for the actual change. In 1989, the ruling party had no choice but to legalize the opposition, that is the Solidarity movement. From then the change swept through the country and that part of Europe rapidly. Solidarity-led government opened Poland to a free market economy, and political changes occurred in Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and eventually the USSR.

Since 1989, Poland has been going through tremendous political and economic reform. In the 1990s, Poland belonged to the fastest growing economies in the region, but growth slowed down at the end of the decade. Poland has been a stable democracy, and rather welcoming to foreign investors. Poland opened itself to the outside world and established its position in the region, first through joining NATO in 1999, and then the European Union in 2004.

Contemporary Jewish Community in Poland

During the time when Poland was reawakening to its new democratic and free incarnation, so was the Jewish community. What has been seen in the last 17 years is a remarkable revival, exemplified by the plethora of Jewish organizations that continue to exist, and some which are growing. The American Jewish institutions and individuals who took interest in Poland after 1989 have largely contributed to this growth.

The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation entered Poland in 1988 knowing of the Polish Jewish revival and convinced that there was a point in helping "fan those sparks into flames" (Our Work in Central and Eastern Europe, 2005). The Lauder Foundation opened clubs in seven Polish cities where Jews could get together for Shabbat and learn about Judaism together. Rabbi Michael Schudrich, who later became the Head Rabbi of Łódź and Warsaw, and later the whole of Poland, was then the Director of the Lauder Foundation. In the 1990s, the Foundation opened a kindergarten, followed by the Lauder Morasha school in Warsaw (1994) and in Wrocław. It also has been running educational retreats and camps and has been sponsoring various projects, such as the Genealogy Project at the Jewish Historical Institute

in Warsaw and the International Auschwitz-Birkenau Preservation Project. It also subsidizes a Jewish monthly, "Midrasz," since 1997.

Another organization instrumental in the revival is the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Its mission has been to "work within the local community infrastructure to help strengthen each Jewish organization." The JDC has been instrumental in helping the Jewish Welfare Commission "provide income maintenance and in-kind services to the poor and sick elderly throughout Poland," as well as kosher meals to those in need. It has also been very involved with community building by organizing "leadership and educational seminars for the young and the middle-aged," and by helping organize retreats for youth so that they can have an educational and supportive Jewish experience (Central and Eastern Europe, n.d.).

The Warsaw Kehilla (*Gmina Warszawska*) has been operating since shortly after the II World War (Meyer, Weinryb, Duschinsky, & Sylvain, 1959). In the early 1990s, the Kehillah redefined itself into an organization that welcomes members not according to the religious laws of matrilineal descent, but according to the Israeli Law of Return.[9] In early 1989, an orthodox rabbi, Pinchas Menachem Joskowicz was appointed the head Rabbi of Poland. The Kehilla's synagogue, the Nożyk synagogue, the only remaining Jewish house of prayer in Warsaw, remained what many people call orthodox. In the words of its Rabbi, the Head Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich:

> The Jewish community of Warsaw is pluralistic and its synagogue is traditional. ...I would not agree that ...Gmina Warszawska is orthodox. It is open to all Jews, and the synagogue, which is one part of the community, can

[9] Law of Return – Israeli law from 1959, which grants that "Every Jew has the right to come to this country as an *oleh (*specifically an immigrant to Israel) under the Nationality Law, 5712-1952***." The law includes "a child and a grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew, except for a person who has been a Jew and has voluntarily changed his religion" ("Law of Return," n.d.).

> be called orthodox. Technically, it could be called conservative, but we can call it orthodox. We provide education for any Jew that wants to; ...if someone comes with a Jewish father, they can become a member of the community. So that's why I find it very inappropriate when people paint us in the more typically imagined, closed orthodox society. (personal communication, December 26, 2005).

In 1992, a group of Polish young people who recently had discovered their Jewish identities started the Polish Union of Jewish Students (PUSZ). With Lauder Foundation and the JDC's help, PUSZ organized seminars about Jewish traditions, summer camps and various occasions for young Jews to get together, learn and socialize. To this day, PUSZ is attracting new people who are rediscovering their Jewish roots and has become a gateway for many of the newcomers to the community.

Among other Jewish organizations on the contemporary Polish scene in Warsaw and nationally there are most notably: The Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland and the Association of the Children of the Holocaust. There are also some other institutions whose mission focuses on preserving the memory of the Holocaust and the life of Jews in Poland before the war. However, this research only concentrates on those organizations that serve the Jewish community directly.

The Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland (TSKZ) has existed since 1950. In the 60s and 70s, when practicing Judaism as a religion was not welcomed by the government, many Jews belonged to this secular Jewish organization. In 1966, there were still 6200 members in TSKZ (Jagielski, n.d.). As of 2006, there are 2700 members in various cities, including Warsaw, Wrocław, Łódź, Katowice, and others. It owns a facility not far from Warsaw where many weekend retreats, seminars, and other meetings of the Jewish community take place.

It is also worth mentioning the Association of the Children of the Holocaust. The Association was created in 1991 as a self-help and educational organization. Its members are people who were up to 13 years old on the day the war began, or were born during the war. The Association has 800 members.

JEWISH IDENTITIES IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND

Those Jews who chose to stay in Poland after the March 1968 events have come to be called the '68 generation' (Rosenson, 1996) as that year became formative for them in terms of their relationship with Judaism and their Jewish identities. Many of them, as indicated above, grew up in assimilated homes, where being Jewish was of no importance, or where their parents chose not to tell them of their Jewish roots. In most cases, their parents preferred to protect them from antisemitism after what they had experienced in their lives. What 1968 did to these young people was point out their Jewishness in a debasing, even accusatory way. Often they found out about their own Jewish ancestry from those who expelled them from the university or a job and identified them publicly as Jews (Rosenson, 1996). They would discover their Jewish roots in a most unpleasant and stigmatized manner, feeling both a sense of shame and of having had a burden imposed upon them against their will (Gebert, 1994).

Few of this generation chose to actually carry a Jewish identity, and those who did, had a difficult task. Learning about Judaism was dependent upon written resources, and contacts with the outside world were limited. The few such books in existence were shared and studied together at an underground study group called the "Jewish Flying University" which started its meetings in the late 1970s. It was a small group of sixty to eighty people, meeting regularly in Warsaw. It was, however, a springboard for many of its members, such

as Konstanty Gebert, who later became important leaders in the Jewish community in the 1980s and 1990s. While reminiscing in 1994, Gebert wrote that the "new Jews," excited to explore their Jewish heritage and identities, believed that demographics would prove cruel to the Jewish community and that Judaism in the communal form had no chance of revival in Poland (Gebert, 1994).

It is interesting that among the '68 generation,' searching for Jewish roots was parallel to defying the Communist regime and standing up for civil rights. The meetings of the 'Jewish Flying University' were held in a clandestine manner and had to stop suddenly in December of 1981 when marshal law was introduced in Poland.

The Jewish reawakening process, which had started in the late 1970s by the '68 generation', became only more and more visible after Communism collapsed in Poland in 1989, contrary to what the attendees of the Flying University might have predicted. Suddenly people from their generation and the generation of their children felt free to research, explore and express who they were. There was no longer a stigma imposed by the government, and the overall society was increasingly open to a conversation about Jewish issues.

Since that time, there has been a dramatic reawakening of Jewish identity. It can be seen on an organizational plane as well as in terms of individual identity building. The generation that became visible after the changes of 1989, the '89 generation,' has chosen Jewish identity without the stigma that the previous generation experienced, but for positive reasons, which are often hard for older Polish Jews to understand (Rosenson, 1996). As in other countries, Jewish reawakening is linked with renewed social, economic, and political freedoms. Ethnic or religious identity no longer had to be publicly denounced, so these young people had a choice whether or not to be Jewish. In addition, much of this new identity

acquisition was an appeal to be "different" or "exotic" and feel distinctive from the surrounding people (Rosenson, 1996, p.70).

What undoubtedly reinforces these young people's search for Jewish identity is the "social environment, and the current wave of interest in Jewish history, religion and culture among Poles in general" (Rosenson, 1996, p.70). This was the case to a certain extent already in the 1970s, when within The Jewish Flying University there were people who Konstanty Gebert called "imaginary Jews," whose "connection with Jewishness was based on nothing more than a vague biographical accident and a social climate in intellectual milieux which supported attempts at root-searching" (Gebert, 1994, p.164). This shows that as early as in the 1970s it was becoming desirable, not stigmatized, to search for one's Jewish roots.

In fact, the '68 and '89 generations do not differ from one another as much in terms of their Jewish journeys. Members of both groups were raised in assimilated homes, where Jewishness was something not to be discussed. Both groups were also educated in Polish culture and language, which made them identify as Poles, and only later chose to cultivate their Jewish identity (Rosenson, 1996). Similarly, the "psychological problems" and being "imaginary Jews," about which Gebert wrote in the context of his generation (Gebert, 1994, p.166) are visible phenomena in the '89 generation' as well. The difference that he suggested is that the '89 generation' is much more "community-oriented" and "the scope of solutions offered [by American Jewish institutions such as Ronald S. Lauder Foundation] ... is much larger" (Gebert, 1994, p.167).

In 2000, Marius Gudonis, a post-graduate researcher at Université Paris I, conducted extensive and pertinent research regarding the identities of the new Jews. He studied how it was possible that young Poles who had only recently discovered their Jewish origins decided

to be Jews and, moreover, wanted to live their Jewish lives as Poles. Interestingly, he found that the idea of being Polish and Jewish simultaneously was something unprecedented. Up until the early 21st century, Jewishness as an identity was excluded from Polishness, which had been equated with Catholicism. This concept had its roots in the times when Poland was partitioned. Ethnic homogeneity, unified by Catholicism, was critical to the fight for independence. That sense of Polishness contributed to the notion of "Polak-Katolik" (a Pole = a Catholic), with clear nationalistic undercurrent. However, since Poland became free in the early 1990s, it has experienced the "pluralization of Polishness" not limited to Catholicism and nationalistic views. Many Polish people are now reported to be less religious than before, and the society is reported to be much less homogenous. This pluralization allows young Poles of Jewish origin to feel Polish as much as they feel Jewish. Indeed, contrary to what research shows about building ethnic identities,[10] Polish Jews do not exhibit the "pre-eminent drive to demonstrate a Polish-Jewish boundary" (Gudonis, 2001a, p.6). The differences they tend to see are instead described as existing between Jews and Gentiles, not Jews and Poles, which leaves the Jews' Polishness unquestioned (Gudonis, 2001a). Gudonis' interviewees did emphasize that their Polishness and Jewishness were equally important to them. The boundaries they have created are weak, and they are seen in the areas of religion (detachment from Catholicism) and collective memory.

In terms of collective memory, the tragic past has come to play a subordinate role in the process of ethnic identity construction. Gudonis' interviewees interestingly denied the importance of tragic events of the Holocaust as a fundamental trait of Jewishness. They even

[10] Marius Gudonis quotes research done by Fredrik Barth and his work published in 1969 called "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries." In this work Barth explained that building of ethnic identities constitutes work invested in creating and then maintaining the demarcation line with general population and/or other groups based on real or imaginary ethnic differential traits. (Gudonis, 2001c)

exhibited irritation with "identity based on the Holocaust," which they believed is ever-present in the United States. At the same time, it is important to note that his interviewees did not repress or deny what had happened, and neither did they show "willful neglect or indifference." Gudonis explains that awareness of the Holocaust is not limited to the Jews any more; Poles of Jewish origin utilize the same educational resources about these tragic events as their non-Jewish friends. Since 1989, there has been an increased acknowledgement of the Jews' plight and of Polish anti-Semitism in a variety of publications, history books, and the popular press.

Thus, young Polish Jews do not seem to strongly differentiate themselves from their Polish and/or Gentile neighbors, but, as Gudonis has found, they differentiate themselves from other Jews. "Young Polish Jews ...manifest intragroup differentiation based on the division between secularity and religious orthodoxy. ...Only internal differentiation allows these people to feel more Jewish without feeling less Polish" (Gudonis, 2001, p.11). It is a paradox that given the exclusive character of Polishness for many years, now one strengthens one's own sense of Jewishness by differentiating oneself from other Jews. Gudonis wrote his article in 2001, when Beit Warszawa was just starting, but the case can be made that it is this internal differentiation that may explain the need and the root causes of Beit Warszawa's creation.

In the second part of his article, Gudonis makes the point that apart from the components of identity building mentioned above, the construction of Jewish identity is directly linked to the post-communist "desubstantialization" process. This means that with the collapse of communism, the identities inherent in the system collapsed as well. The new identity choices in modern Poland either concentrated on an individualized identity supported

by the Western-style individualism or attempted to fill the void with the introduction of new components like Judaism (Gudonis, 2001b, p.43-44). Through a series of interviews with young Polish Jews, Gudonis discovered that "Jewish revival among the young is not, as yet [the interviews were conducted in April 2000 – M.S.], a Judaistic revival. ... It would be more accurately described as a secular revival" (Gudonis, 2001b, p.46). The secular Jewish identity is composed of some of the religious identity's components, mostly of the communal and cultural component. It is typical for such identity to reveal "strong selectivity and accentuation of particular elements drawn form traditional Judaism" (Gudonis, 2001b, p.46). Such manifestation of identity is known as symbolic ethnicity, where individuals search for easy ways of expressing their Jewishness that do not interfere with the lives to which they are accustomed. The identity is the goal itself, and any activity that results in stronger feelings of Jewishness is acceptable, no matter how an outside observer might judge such Jewishness. Gudonis concludes that these symbolic manifestations of Jewishness indicate a substantial revival, because it is a step toward emerging from assimilation. He juxtaposes this phenomenon with the U.S., where such manifestations of symbolic ethnicity are symptoms of growing assimilation rather than a return to Judaism. These manifestations also lend themselves to collective activity, building a community, as it is in the company of fellow Jews that symbolic behavior is best understood and appreciated (Gudonis, 2001).

In "Is Jewish Identity a Matter of Choice? The Case of Young Jews in Contemporary Poland" Marius Gudonis very well summarizes the reality of modern Jewish identity building in Poland (Gudonis, 2001c, p.141):

> The social transformation after the collapse of Communism comprises three main trends in the younger generation: growing individualism, rising levels of tolerance and the decline of a mono-ethnic Polish identity. These factors reduce the social costs of

manifesting a Jewish identity encouraging a greater number of Polish Jews to make the choice of developing their Jewish awareness into a meaningful identity. They are not Jews by choice, but Jews of a particular choice made in particular circumstances. Jewish identity is ultimately ...a voluntary cognitive act. However, the basis on which the decision is made is determined by factors extraneous to the individual such as the type of family transition and socio-political restrictions.

BEIT WARSZAWA – THE STORY

Beit Warszawa started in 2001 by a small group of American expatriates, most of them businesspeople, and a couple of young Polish Jews. They started with monthly Oneg Shabbat meetings, which were followed by High Holiday and Passover celebrations led by rabbis invited from abroad, mostly from the United States. The idea behind the creation of Beit Warszawa has been the ability of Jews who are rediscovering Judaism to learn and celebrate Judaism in an egalitarian, liberal manner. According to Severyn Ashkenazy, the main founder and supporter of Beit Warszawa, it has been the understanding of the founders that "few Jews in Poland are in the position to make the leap from full assimilation to full observance of Jewish religious practices" (personal communication, April 25, 2006). The mission of Beit Warszawa has been formulated as follows:

> Beit Warszawa is a progressive and egalitarian Jewish community organization in Poland dedicated to promoting Jewish spiritual and cultural life. It is the goal of Beit Warszawa to build a community that:
> 1. Is open to participation by all who share an interest in and commitment to modern Jewish culture and customs;
> 2. Creates opportunities for the exploration and practice of progressive Jewish religion, philosophy and ethics;
> 3. Provides support to and a spiritual home for all who wish to express their Jewish heritage or share in the Jewish heritage of their spouses, partners, colleagues and friends;
> 4. Presents a modern face of the vast majority of Polish Jewry and educates the broader Polish community about the richness and relevance of liberal Jewish thought and culture;
> 5. Stands guard of the respect for the right to live openly as a Jew in Poland;
> 6. Fosters contact with Jewish institutions internationally and provides a voice for liberal Polish Jewry in the world Jewish community.

Beit Warszawa was registered as a cultural association ("Towarzystwo Kultury Żydowskiej"), a non-profit organization in March 2002. Because of its legal status, it is not

formally a Jewish congregation recognized by the state under the law of the relationship between the state and the Jewish community. From its inception, there have been discussions about registering Beit Warszawa as a religious congregation. It was not done in its beginnings because the founders at that time were not in the position to garner the human resources to take the new organization though this time-consuming process.

Beit Warszawa is governed by a General Assembly of Members, which meets at a minimum every second year. It elects a Management Board consisting of the President, two Deputy Presidents, the Treasurer, and the Secretary, who are in office for two years. The organization employs an office manager, who runs the daily operations of the organization. For the first time, as of March 2006, it has also hired an American rabbi, for a full-time position. The organization remains under the protectorate of one of its main founders and its most important benefactor.

Under current Polish Jewish conditions, it is hard to estimate the exact number of people who affiliate with Beit Warszawa. There are about 300 members of the organization, however, it may or may not be indicative of the actual number of participants. Some people became members in the beginning, and still are on the membership list, but do not pay dues or attend programs. Some may have been attending Beit Warszawa for a while, however have not become members because of the cost of membership, or because the staff and board of Beit Warszawa have not put any emphasis on the importance of formal membership. They may also not be interested in formal membership for other reasons. Especially in the older generation, putting one's name on a list of a Jewish organization might have meant repressions and difficulties. An aversion towards formal commitment may still exist. Beit

Warszawa hosts about 40 to 50 people for each Friday night service and about 200 each for High Holidays and Passover.

In terms of programmatic offerings, Beit Warszawa's focus has been on weekly Friday night Shabbat programs, which include a lecture, prayer service, and dinner. Beit Warszawa also organizes celebrations of major Jewish holidays and runs a Hebrew School for children, which meets every Saturday and Sunday. It has been offering various cultural and educational events, including exhibitions, concerts, and seminars. The organization is also involved with the activities of civic society. For example, in 2004, Beit Warszawa co-organized with the mayor of Warsaw a commemoration of the communist government's antisemitic campaign in 1968.

METHODOLOGY

This study used an exploratory design to investigate and describe the membership and affiliation of Beit Warszawa, a home of progressive Jews in Warsaw, Poland. The research included quantitative and qualitative components, which allowed for a broad picture of the people who affiliate with Beit Warszawa.

In the summer of 2005, I traveled back to Poland to look at the community of Beit Warszawa from the academic point of view. The goal was to learn from people about their views on Beit Warszawa and its role in their lives via surveys and interviews in person.

A survey was posted on Survey Monkey (on-line research service) in both English and Polish. Print hard copies were also available on site at Beit Warszawa, placed in a visible location. People affiliated with Beit Warszawa were notified about the survey in two ways: via email or at Friday night Shabbat services. The office of Beit Warszawa sent three emails in the summer of 2005 announcing the study and attaching the link to the survey. An announcement at a Friday night gathering was made several times. As a result, 76 surveys in Polish, including 7 in hard copy, and 16 in English, including 1 hard copy, were received. The total number of the surveys conducted was 92. The surveys that were received as print hard copies were entered manually into the Survey Monkey system. Copies of both versions of the survey are in Appendix 1 and 2.

The survey was first written in English and then translated into Polish, bearing in mind cultural and linguistic differences. The two versions of the survey were rendered as close as possible semantically, thus there are no significant discrepancies to be described.

The quantitative data was analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics. Statistical analysis software was used to analyze the data and to present it in charts and graphs. The answers to the open-ended questions were analyzed through coding.

In addition to the survey instrument, two rounds of interviews were administered. The purpose of the interviews was to complete the qualitative analysis as well as to illustrate it with stories and personal accounts. The first set of interviews was administered in the summer of 2005 and the second in the winter of 2005. In the summer, between June 1, 2005, and June 10, 2005, twelve leaders and activists of Beit Warszawa were interviewed. The schedule of questions is found in Appendix 3.

After a primary analysis of the summer 2005 interviews, it was decided that the voice of the larger Beit Warszawa community, not only the leadership, needed to be researched, as leaders may have a different outlook and understanding of the community than its rank and file members. In the winter of 2005, seven such interviews were conducted. The interviewees were selected in a representative manner in order to reflect the wide variety of Beit Warszawa attendees in terms of age, length of affiliation with Beit Warszawa, and education level. The interviews were more focused on people's motivations to be part of the Beit Warszawa community. The schedule of interview questions for the second round of interviews is found in Appendix 4. In the period between the winter of 2005 and spring 2006, four leaders of the larger Jewish community in Poland were also interviewed. The idea behind these interviews was to understand how they see the role of Beit Warszawa on the contemporary Polish Jewish scene and how they see the general state and the future of Polish Jewry. Their responses helped to place Beit Warszawa in a larger Polish Jewish context. All interviews took place at Beit Warszawa, in a private home, or in a café. Two of the

interviews were conducted in Polish and then translated for the purpose of this study. The interviews were conducted using a schedule of interview questions, however the interviewer tried to make the atmosphere of these interviews natural and open, thus the conversation might have slightly steered away from the initial plan. All of the interviewees identified by name have given their written consent.

Research within Beit Warszawa posed some methodological problems. First, an exact number of affiliates or members is unknown. For many reasons, ranging from fear to formally affiliate with a Jewish organization, to lack of accurate organization of membership processes, the members and affiliates of the organization are not being tracked. Thus, the number of 300 members is an estimate. Two other estimates may help gauge the size of the community. The email list of Beit Warszawa holds almost 1000 names, and for every large holiday celebration, like Rosh Hashanah or Passover Beit Warszawa hosts about 200 people. Because of the discrepancy between these numbers, it is impossible to use any of them as a reference. Thus, it is even hard to tell whether the number of ninety-two survey responses and twenty interviews allows the researcher to make inferences or generalizations regarding the entire population studied. However, it does give the researcher and the reader a snapshot of Beit Warszawa.

In their introduction to *"Personal Knowledge and Beyond: Reshaping the Ethnography of Religion*, Spickard and Landres write about several issues that ethnographers need to take into consideration. One is the problem of subjectivity. Some researchers who encounter this problem "opt for methodological rigor," and some choose to work in teams to mitigate the effect of "mixing their own thoughts and concerns with those of the people they study." Yet, some "freely admit their subjectivity, saying that no 'objective' system can

replace human insight" (Spickard, Landres, & McGuire, 2002, p.5). This research finds itself in that last category.

The second issue is that of insider/outsider status and the relationship of the researcher with the people under study. Any kind of relationship and relationship building are unavoidable and necessary and will shape knowledge of the researched field. It is a new belief in social research that the boundary between researcher and insider does not or at least should not in fact exist. Landres argues that any researcher becomes part of the field, even the field itself (Landres, 2002, p.102).

In this case, the fact that I visited the organization as a researcher after having worked for Beit Warszawa for two years does have some consequences. As a member and former employee of Beit Warszawa, I had a certain advantage, as I already was familiar with the culture and language of the organization and its members. At the same time, my having been an insider might have caused my interviewees to choose words carefully and perhaps not speak fully and candidly about their concerns. Beside that, the fact that I have been an insider also made it impossible to perceive my interviewees as a detached, objective observer (Wilcox, 2002, p.54). I may have shared some assumptions and opinions of my interviewees, and thus I might have explained them better and more thoroughly than others might have done. Yet, being an insider allows to me understand also those views that may be farther from my personal opinions. I cannot pretend to neutrality on the subject. On the contrary, my being an insider, I believe, makes my interpretations and recommendations more credible, as well as more applicable for the community.

Bearing in mind the biases and concerns regarding the validity of the research, the guidelines suggested by Melissa Wilcox in "Dancing on the Fence" have been employed.

These are "being responsible to the group under study for the accuracy of the data ...and open acknowledgement of allegiances and potential blind spots" (Wilcox, 2002, p.58). It is through an open and realistic approach that a researcher can best validate his or her work and make the best possible use out of the research.

FINDINGS

Who are the people of Beit Warszawa?

Age

To begin analyzing the membership of Beit Warszawa, we need to look at the demographics of this constituency. As shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 out of the people who answered the question regarding age (74 respondents), the majority (52%) belongs to the cohort up to 37 years old, and 68% of the respondents are 50 years old or younger. This reflects a relatively young population at Beit Warszawa. Interestingly, more than half of respondents were born around the time of the 'March Events' of 1968 and did not experience them personally. Only 31% of respondents may remember and/or have experienced the antisemitic events of 1968.

Table 1

Age of Respondents

Age range	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
16-26	13	17.6	17.6
27-37	26	35.1	52.7
38-50	12	16.2	68.9
51-60	14	18.9	87.8
61-70	5	6.8	94.6
Above 70	4	5.4	100.0
Total	74	100.0	
Missing responses	18		
Total	92		

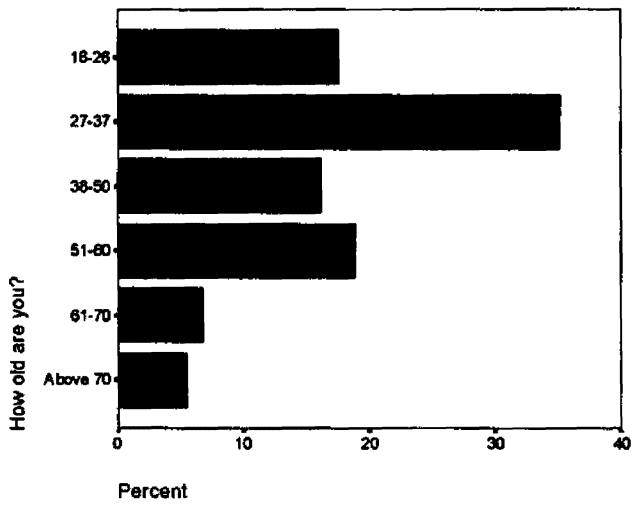

Figure 1. Age breakdown of respondents.

Gender

The majority of respondents to the gender question (75 people) were male and constituted 57%.

Table 2

Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	32	42.7	42.7
Male	43	57.3	100.0
Total	75	100.0	
Missing	17		
Total	92		

Income

Interestingly, a large group (35%) of those who answered the question related to income (total 68 responses earn more than 5,000 zlotys per month. It is important to note that 5,000 zlotys per month is almost twice as much as the average pay in Poland. As of October 2005, the average salary in Poland was 2,538 zloty per month (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2006)[11]. At the same time, almost the same number of respondents earns less than 2,000 zloty per month. Again, note that 899 zloty per month is the lowest salary allowed by the state as of January 2006 (Salaries in Poland, 2006).

[11] As of April 2006: 1 zloty = $ 0.32 (Currency Converter, 2006)

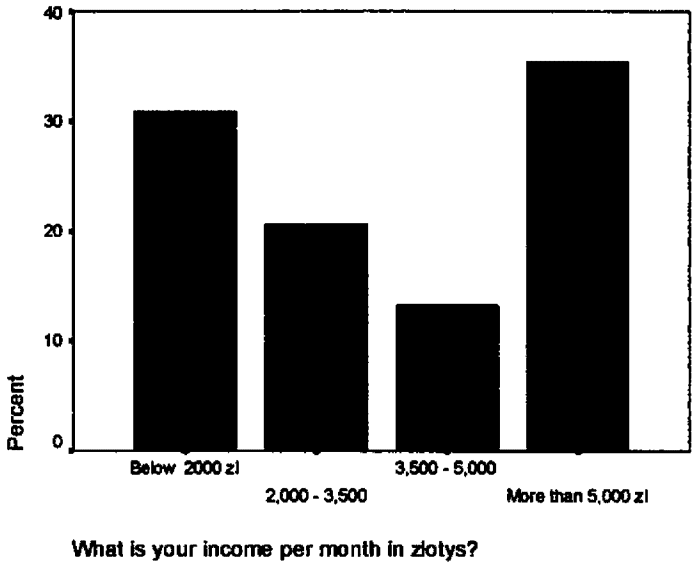

Figure 2. Breakdown or respondents' income.

Contrary to what one might suspect, most of those who earn 5,000 zlotys per month or more come from Poland (17 subjects), only five come from the United States, and three from Western Europe. This data is exhibited in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Country of Origin and Income Crosstabulation

Where are you from?	What is your income? More than 5000 zlotys per month	Total
Poland	17	17
Western Europe	1	1
United States	5	5
Total	23	23

Education

Seventy-four subjects responded to the question regarding their education. It turned out that 54% of the respondents to this question had a Masters or Doctoral degree. This number indicates a highly educated cohort.

Table 4

Respondents' Level of Education

Level of education	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Secondary school	12	16.4	16.4
BA	14	19.2	35.6
MA (including Masters students)	34	46.6	82.2
PhD	13	17.8	100.0
Total	73	100.0	
Missing	19		
Total	92		

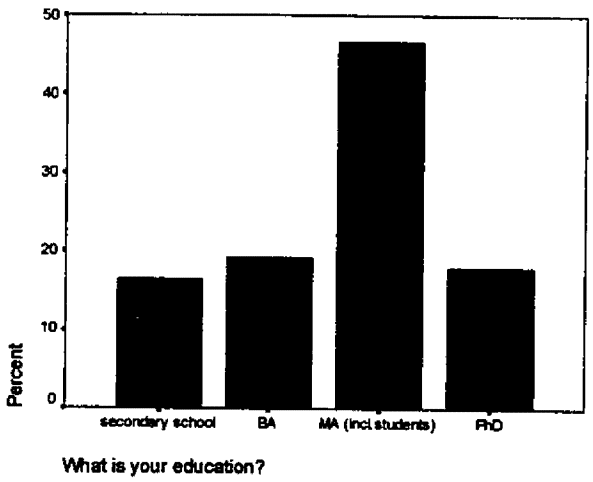

Figure 3. Breakdown of respondents' education level.

Jewish Background

Among the 69 respondents who answered the question about their Jewish background, 72% have at least one Jewish parent. Twenty percent have at least one Jewish grandparent, and 7% of respondents did not identify themselves as Jewish. In their comments, some remarked that their spouses were Jewish, and some were still looking for their roots, but felt that there were Jewish traces in their family. There may also be those who are not Jewish but feel some connection with Judaism. Ania Mazgal serves as an example. Having studied Hebrew and worked for a Jewish institution, she now finds her spiritual place in Beit Warszawa. She is there every Shabbat to cleanse herself spiritually after the busy week, to talk to God and to herself. But, she says, "I don't know if I have converted to Judaism [figuratively – M.S.] and I don't know whether I have decided to become Jewish and I want to leave it like that for now" (personal communication, December 29, 2005).

Table 5

Respondents' Jewish Background

What is your Jewish background?	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
I am not Jewish	5	7.2	7.2
One of grandparents is Jewish	14	20.3	27.5
At least one parent is Jewish	50	72.5	100.0
Total	69	100.0	
Missing	23		
Total	92		

Interestingly, from the 50 respondents who reported having at least one Jewish parent, 17 defined themselves as not religious at all, with half as somewhat, occasionally, or non-institutionally religious.

Table 6

Level of Religiosity and Jewish Background Crosstabulation

How religious are you?	What is your Jewish background? At least one parent is Jewish	Percent
Not religious at all	17	34
Somewhat, occasionally, or non-institutionally	25	50
Very religious	8	16
Total	50	100

The statistics also indicate that those respondents who reported having at least on Jewish parent have a strong sense of Jewish identity. Thirty-five of 41 of them who answered the question regarding feeling pride about being Jewish, reported somewhat or strongly agreeing with the statement "I feel a sense of pride in regards to my being Jewish."

Table 7

Pride and Jewish Background Crosstabulation

I feel a sense of pride in regards to my being Jewish.	What is your Jewish background? At least one parent is Jewish	Total
Strongly disagree	1	1
Somewhat disagree	1	1
No opinion	4	4
Somewhat agree	12	12
Strongly agree	23	23
Total	41	41

However, at the same time, 10 out of 43 respondents disagreed with the sentence "I do not have a problem talking about my Jewish roots with anyone," which indicates that some (about a quarter) may still have some reservations in regard to talking about their Jewishness with their family or friends.

Table 8

Responses to "I do not have a problem talking about my Jewish roots with anyone" and Jewish Background Crosstabulation

I do not have a problem talking about my Jewish roots with anyone.	What is your Jewish background? At least one parent is Jewish	Total
Strongly disagree	2	2
Somewhat disagree	8	8
Somewhat agree	9	9
Strongly agree	24	24
Total	43	43

Subjects in Relation with Beit Warszawa

How did they find out about Beit Warszawa?

Fifty percent of respondents (87 subjects) have found out about Beit Warszawa from friends, 11% from the website, and 9% from poster, flyers, etc. 21% found out from other sources. Seventy-two percent out of those who marked "other" were Beit Warszawa members from abroad. Other indicated sources comprised of: information gathered through the World Union for Progressive Judaism, Jewish press abroad, and some of the other Jewish venues in Warsaw. All these sources are typical places where expatriates or visitors would have learned about the Beit Warszawa community.

Table 9

Ways Respondents First Heard About Beit Warszawa

How did you find out about BW?	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Friends	44	50.6	50.6
Family member	6	6.9	57.5
BW website	10	11.5	69.0
Flyer, poster, or email	8	9.2	78.2
Other	19	21.8	100.0
Total	87	100.0	
Missing	5		
Total	92		

Considering only the Polish Jews' responses, over half of them (58% of 60 respondents) learned about Beit Warszawa from friends. An equal number of them (10%) learned from the BW website and from flyer, poster, or email.

Table 10

Ways Respondents First Heard about Beit Warszawa (Only Respondents from Poland)

How did you find out about BW? (only respondents from Poland)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Friends	35	58.3	58.3	58.3
Family member	3	5.0	5.0	63.3
BW website	6	10.0	10.0	73.3
Flyer, poster, or email	6	10.0	10.0	83.3
Other	10	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

How long have they been affiliated?

Sixty-three percent of the people who answered the question about the length of their affiliation with Beit Warszawa (76 subjects) have only been attending its programs for 2 years or less, and 34% for less than a year. Thirty-two percent of respondents (total of 76 subjects) have been attending Beit Warszawa for 2 years or more. One may not conclude from this data that this trend indicates high turnover in attendance, as those who have left Beit Warszawa have not been surveyed. However, it is "common knowledge" among Beit Warszawa insiders indicates that there is a group of people who changed their affiliation from Beit Warszawa to the Warsaw Kehillah, or simply left Beit Warszawa and did not

affiliate with any Jewish cultural or religious organization. Thus, the fact that many people who currently (as of summer 2005) attend Beit Warszawa have been there for a rather short period may actually indicate growth of the community in the last two years.

Table 11

Respondents' Length of Affiliation with Beit Warszawa

How long have you been attending Beit Warszawa's programs and events?	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
More than three years	16	21.1	21.1
Two to three years	12	15.8	36.8
One to two years	22	28.9	65.8
Less than one year	26	34.2	100.0
Total	76	100.0	
Missing	16		
Total	92		

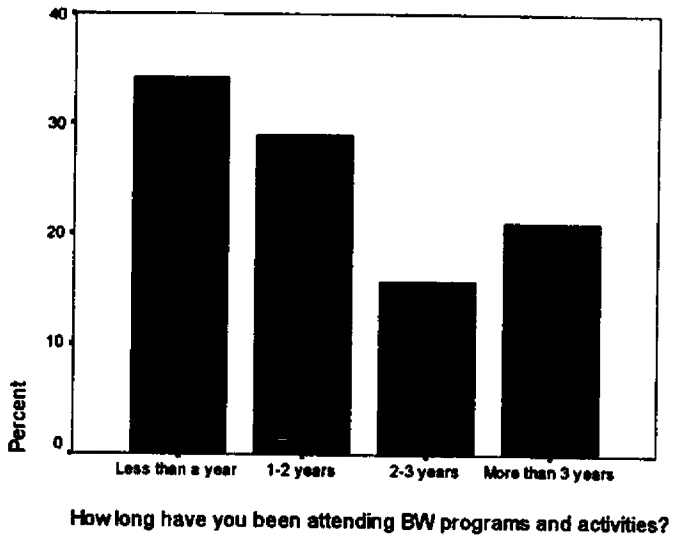

Figure 4. Respondents' length of attendance in Beit Warszawa.

Among those who have been affiliated with Beit Warszawa for two years or more, people indicated three basic reasons for coming to Beit Warszawa: social reasons, learning more about Judaism, and feeling a sense of community there. Those who are newcomers (two years or less) indicated that they frequented Beit Warszawa mainly because they wanted to learn more about Judaism, to meet new people, for social reasons, and because Beit Warszawa gave them a feeling of community. As one can read form the table below, the social component is stronger among the newcomers than among the "old-timers".

Table 12

Responses to "Why do you come for Beit Warszawa for holidays, programs and events" Based on How Long Respondents Have Been Attending Beit Warszawa.

Why do you go to Beit Warszawa for holidays, programs, and events? (Mark all that apply)	Respondents who have been attending Beit Warszawa for 2 years or more; percent of people who marked the answer	Respondents who have been attending Beit Warszawa for less than 2 years; percent of people who marked the answer
I go to BW because of social reasons.	39%	39%
I go to BW because I want to learn more about Judaism.	35%	45%
I go to BW because it gives me a sense of community.	32%	39%
I do to BW for religious reasons.	25%	35%
I go to BW because I do not like the other Jewish places in Warsaw.	21%	31%
I go to BW because I can meet new people.	17%	43%
Other reasons why I go to BW.	14%	10%
I go to BW because my family goes.	0	6%

As indicated in Table 13 below only 37% of the 24 respondents felt that Beit Warszawa gives them a sense of a community. Conversely, 64% of those who have been affiliated with Beit Warszawa for a shorter period indicated that they feel that Beit Warszawa is their community. Thus, interestingly, those who have been affiliated with Beit Warszawa

for a longer period are less satisfied with Beit Warszawa than the newcomers are. They feel more that Beit Warszawa gives them the sense of a community.

Table 13

Level of Satisfaction Among Respondents Who Have Been Attending Beit Warszawa for 2 Years or More and Less Than 2 Years.

	Respondents who have been affiliated with Beit Warszawa for 2 years or more		Respondents who have been affiliated with Beit Warszawa for less than 2 years	
Does Beit Warszawa give you a sense of community?	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
No	15	62.5	14	36.8
Yes	9	37.5	24	63.2
Total	24	100.0	38	100.0
Missing	4		10	
Total	28		48	

Thus, those who have been attending Beit Warszawa for a relatively short period constitute a large group (63% of respondents), and tend to come mainly for social reasons and to learn about Judaism. They are also more satisfied with Beit Warszawa in a way that they perceive it as their community.

How many are members of Beit Warszawa?

Becoming a formal member of Beit Warszawa means filling out a membership application, having it signed by the Board, and paying membership dues regularly. The dues, which can be paid in installments, are 50 zlotys per year for students and seniors, and 250 zlotys per year for everyone else [12]. The surveys revealed that a very small percentage of respondents are members of Beit Warszawa. Out of 84 people who answered this question, only 23% were members. There was a positive correlation between length of affiliation at Beit Warszawa and formal membership in the community.

When asked about the reasons for not being members, 15 respondents out of 52 who answered the question said they lived too far away to attend regularly and be part of the community. Eleven respondents did not know about membership and the rules of formally belonging to Beit Warszawa; for seven people, the membership dues were too high; five were not interested in belonging to any organization; and four felt that either Beit Warszawa was too religious for them, or they just did not feel it was appropriate for a non-religious person to belong to a religious organization.

How often do they attend BW?

Sixty-three percent of 79 subjects who answered the question regarding attendance reported that they attend Beit Warszawa's programs and activities a few times a year or less. Nineteen percent go to Beit Warszawa once a week.

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[12] As of April 30, 2006, $1 = 3.06 zlotys (Currency Converter, 2006), so 50 zlotys = $16.33 and 250 zlotys = $81.70.

Table 14

Frequency of Attendance

How often do you attend Beit Warszawa's programs and activities?	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
More than once a week	5	6.3	6.3
Once a week	15	19.0	25.3
Two to three times per month	3	3.8	29.1
Once a month	6	7.6	36.7
A few times per year	24	30.4	67.1
Less than a few times per year	26	32.9	100.0
Total	79	100.0	
Missing	13		
Total	92		

What programs do they attend?

To analyze the data regarding the types of programs that Beit Warszawa affiliates choose to attend, factor analysis method was utilized. Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to reduce a set of variables to a smaller set of variables. It examines the intercorrelations between the variables (factors), and determines whether there are subsets of variables that correlate highly with each other but that show low correlations with other subsets (Department of Psychology, n.d.). In other words, the factor analysis allows the researcher to

distinguish clusters of answers (components). In this case, we are considering clusters of various program categories in which Beit Warszawa's attendees report interest. It is important to point out that factor analysis cannot identify separate groups of respondents; rather, it identifies separate groups of reasons that may or may not apply to any given respondent.

According to the result of this analysis, one group is composed of social types or programs (at .719) as well as educational programs (at .525). The other group is composed only of religious services (at .638). The first group explains 27 % of the variance, and the second one explains 22 % of the variance. Table 15 provides a list of every variable and its correlation with each factor and shows the two clusters, or components.

Table 15

Factor Analysis of Answers Regarding Most Attended Programs and Activities at Beit Warszawa

What programs and activities do you mostly attend?	Component	
	1	2
Mostly attend religious services	.304	**.638**
Mostly attend educational programs	**.525**	.078
Mostly attend children's activities	.150	-.764
Mostly attend social gatherings	**.719**	.170
Mostly attend other programs	-.668	.333

Table 16 reflects the most popular kinds of programs and activities that Beit Warszawa members/affiliates attend.

Table 16

Most Popular Kinds of Programs and Activities That Beit Warszawa Respondents Attend

What programs and activities do you mostly attend?	Percent of respondents who marked these activities
Religious services	47%
Social gatherings	43%
Educational programs	39%
Other programs	23%
Children's activities	4%

Among the "other" responses, the prevailing answers were: cultural programs (seven people), and Shabbat (four people). It is surprising that those people who wrote Shabbat and/or holidays in the "other" category did not find it sufficient to mark "religious services" in the survey. This may indicate that they do not perceive Shabbat and holiday celebrations as religious events, or they see more meaning to them than merely religious occasions.

There was a positive correlation between frequency of attendance at Beit Warszawa and frequency of attendance at religious services at Beit Warszawa; this may reflect the fact that Beit Warszawa's main regular weekly program is Shabbat. Analysis also showed that younger people attend religious services more frequently.

Not surprisingly, there was a positive correlation between marking "mostly attend educational programs" and marking that they go to Beit Warszawa to learn more about Judaism.

Why do they go to BW?

Three main groups of motivations to attend Beit Warszawa were extracted by factor analysis. The remaining two groups, reporting only educational programs and going only to accompany family members, are too weak to report as significant.

The first and strongest group is comprised of the following main reasons to attend Beit Warszawa: social reasons, because they can meet new people there, and because they want to learn more about Judaism. The next cluster of reasons to go to Beit Warszawa includes religious reasons, not wanting to go to other Jewish places in Warsaw and feeling a sense of a community in Beit Warszawa. The third cluster emphasizes "other reasons" for attending Beit Warszawa.

Among "other" reasons indicated by respondents were: feeling comfortable there as a visitor, wanting to learn more and going to special programs, discussions, and being part of new initiatives. These three groups of reasons why people go to Beit Warszawa explain almost 50% of the variance.

These sentiments are exemplified by the following fragment of an interview: "[I go to Beit Warszawa] for religious reasons because I enjoy being in a synagogue; for cultural/religious reasons because I prefer reform and [Beit Warszawa] lets me do reform; and for educational reasons because my children have gone to Hebrew school since they were three and I wanted them to continue" (personal communication, December 28, 2005).

How they feel about Beit Warszawa?

In order to answer the question how the affiliates of Beit Warszawa feel towards Beit Warszawa, interviewees were asked about whether or not they felt that Beit Warszawa gave them a sense of community. Among the 69 respondents to that question, the answers were almost equally divided.

Table 17

Sense of Community Among Respondents

Does BW give you a sense of community?	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	34	49.3	49.3
Yes	35	50.7	100.0
Total	69	100.0	
Missing	23		
Total	92		

Correlation analysis revealed that there was a positive relationship between frequency of attendance at Beit Warszawa and having a sense of community at Beit Warszawa. This again probably reflects the people who attend Shabbat services and dinner every week. There is a core group of people who attend almost every week and they seem to constitute a tight group of like-minded people.

When asked the open-ended question, "Please specify in what way do you feel that Beit Warszawa is your community?" many of the respondents answered that they enjoyed

being with like-minded people with whom they shared common goals, they liked the sense of togetherness in general (the fact that people share time together, they become friends, and together they care about and are committed to Beit Warszawa), as well as in religious terms (sharing a religious experience). Another reason it was their community was the fact that they made new friends there, with whom they spend time outside of the Beit Warszawa institutional framework and the fact that Beit Warszawa made them feel welcome. Respondents thought the organization was open to everyone and offered a nice and friendly atmosphere.

A female interviewee felt welcome even though she is married to a non-Jew, commenting, "Every person [in Beit Warszawa] is married to a non-Jew and I am married to a non-Jew. And it's nice because there is no judgment."

The people who were dissatisfied with Beit Warszawa (those who answered "no" to "Does Beit Warszawa give you a sense of community?") were asked about the reasons why. Factor analysis revealed that the following three groups explain 71% of variance concerning the reasons why people are dissatisfied with Beit Warszawa. The first cluster of reasons has a great deal to do with leadership: they do not find Beit Warszawa spiritual enough, they think it lacks religious leadership, and they did not feel connected with the leadership. One of the interviewees said, "Beit Warszawa lacks leaders who gather around them a group which sets the tone.... It is one of its largest weaknesses." (Paweł Śpiewak, personal communication, January 2, 2006). The second group reveals that people do not feel comfortable at Beit Warszawa and do not connect with other members, which may indicate that there is a group of people who do not feel that welcome there. It also indicates that there are people who did

not find there a group of like-minded people. Here is an example from an interview with Paweł Śpiewak:

> These are people with whom I did not manage to build any sense of community; I felt I could not become friends with them. Every institution [of this kind] needs to be a social institution, i.e. should be focused on contacts between people, conversations, building of social connections, which are more lasting than the meetings themselves. One might think that [Beit Warszawa's] exclusivity, but also its inclusivity would cause people to build the social bonds, so that people go there and feel good, so that it radiates to others.

The third group of reasons for not being satisfied with Beit Warszawa showed that respondents felt they did not need a community in their life at all.

Apart from that, 20 respondents marked "other reasons" as to why they did not feel that Beit Warszawa was their community. Younger respondents marked "other" more often than older respondents did. Many explained that they live too far away to attend often and become involved. A couple people pointed to the lack of spiritual leader, and thought that it concentrated too heavily on social aspects. They would have preferred Beit Warszawa to be more religious, follow more strict rules of kashrut,[13] and engage more in learning. Yet others were dissatisfied that Beit Warszawa was religious and would rather it held on to its secular, cultural mode. This is the first indication of how polarized the respondents are in terms of their perception of what Beit Warszawa is. Some people expect it to be religious and are bothered by its social aspects; others perceive it as a cultural organization and do not appreciate its religious aspect.

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[13] Kashrut: Hebrew for dietary law in Jewish tradition. Biblical and rabbinic legislation permits certain foods for consumption, while prohibits others. These include meat from birds and animals, which are unclean or not ritually slaughtered, meat and milk products eaten together, and some kinds of fish. Proponents of kashrut in Beit Warszawa call for kosher meat, or if not that, not serving meat at all, and not serving meat with dairy products.

Where do they see the strengths of Beit Warszawa?

Fifty-eight respondents shared their thoughts by answering an open-ended question "What do you see as the strengths of Beit Warszawa?" Many of them wrote that Beit Warszawa's strength is that it is open and inclusive to a variety of people of different backgrounds and varying levels of religiosity and familiarity with Jewish traditions. There were 20 comments of this kind. Gender equality is a factor here too. It creates Jewish opportunities for all Jews regardless of observance to come together. One interviewee explained this in the following way: "I think that in this group there exists some good will. And a willingness to be with others. It is somehow attractive. There are no tendencies to exclude anyone" (Eleonora Bergman, personal communication, January 6, 2006).

Two respondents (both from abroad) saw Beit Warszawa as having "potential to create a valuable and open community" which fills the needs of Polish Jews in Poland as a center of the rebirth of Judaism in Poland. A kind and friendly environment as well as a good and welcoming atmosphere where people can enjoy being together at Beit Warszawa was mentioned as a strength by 15 of the respondents.

Six respondents see the leadership of Beit Warszawa as strength. A couple mentioned the charismatic leader, as well as the grass roots participation of a group of volunteers who share a love for Judaism and their dedication and enthusiasm for creation and development of Beit Warszawa. Three respondents think that Beit Warszawa is managed well and that it communicates its activities with members in an effective way. People enjoy the variety of programs offered, the high quality of invited lecturers, and the fact that they are given various opportunities to learn. Some also appreciate the physical premises of Beit Warszawa

where all the meetings take place and the fact that the food served for Shabbat and other holidays is good.

It is also seen as a strength that the people who attend Beit Warszawa are intelligent, nice, well educated and interesting, with high level of interest, curiosity and thirst for knowledge. People feel like Beit Warszawa created a sense of connectedness, togetherness and community for them, both in a spiritual and social sense. It also is appreciated that Beit Warszawa gives people an opportunity to make new contacts and friends. Again, as the previously reported answers revealed, people enjoy the togetherness and sense of community with like-minded people.

Eight people felt that it is a strength of Beit Warszawa that it creates an alternative for people who do not feel welcome or comfortable in the Orthodox synagogue. They like the fact that it is more secular and modern. At the same time, some people wrote that they enjoy the fact that it is 'cultural, rather than religious'.

One of the interviewees, whose statement exemplifies what is shared above, and epitomizes what was heard from other interviewees, spoke about Beit Warszawa in the following way:

> I think that this place is a great answer to people's needs, the needs of having a community, which is not an Orthodox community. Apart from friendships, and the fact that [Beit Warszawa] is a friendly and open place, I like the fact that it is not like a ghetto where you only let in your people after they show you their papers. This is Beit Warszawa's great strength that it is a community open to everyone, people who have Jewish background, and those who do not. (personal communication, December 22, 2005)

Where do they see the weaknesses of Beit Warszawa?

The respondents were also asked an open-ended question about their thoughts regarding the weaknesses of Beit Warszawa. Among the 53 responses to this question there were many comments about communication, organizational structure, management, programming, spiritual leadership and Beit Warszawa's identity.

There were seven comments about communication between the board and the members of Beit Warszawa. Members feel that they do not know how decisions are made and are not informed in a consistent way about the leadership's decisions. They feel a gap between the board and the members. For example they feel that the board does not ask members for ideas and feedback, and this results in lack of a sense of ownership on the part of members.

Nine people made comments about Beit Warszawa lacking organizational structure. They think that Beit Warszawa needs a clear vision, mission and goals, as well as a strategy for the organization's continued development. It lacks identity, which is exemplified by the following quote: "It is a problem that we don't know what community it is, is it a religious community, or is it a cultural association, what is it? The character if this institution is not clear and not defined" (Paweł Śpiewak, personal communication, January 2, 2006). Eleven people complained about weak lay leadership ("lack of taking ownership by the board," "the board is not really making decisions") and lack of a rabbi. Five people see Beit Warszawa's reliance on a single donor without solutions to move toward financial self-sufficiency as a weakness. They also think that it lacks planning and budgeting processes, and that rules regarding membership are not clear. There are also people who feel that it is a weakness that participants need to pay for participating in meetings (people are required to pay for Shabbat dinners and other events involving food).

Respondents perceived areas of weakness in programming and scheduling practices. They would like to see more programmatic variety, especially in terms of more educational and intellectual, and less religious programmatic offerings. They would like to see Beit Warszawa grow further as an intellectual center. They feel that Beit Warszawa is not involved enough in the general Jewish life in Poland. People felt that scheduling of programs was inconsistent.

Nine respondents wrote about the lack of spiritual leadership, with strong emphasis on the need to hire a rabbi. They would like the rabbi to be their spiritual leader, as well as assist in creating Beit Warszawa's mission and vision. The need to hire a rabbi was confirmed in answers to a question "Would you like BW to hire a full-time rabbi?" where out of 66 respondents 75% answered yes.

A great deal was said in these responses about religious versus not religious positioning of Beit Warszawa. The numbers of those who prefer religion in Beit Warszawa and those who don't are rather balanced, however the latter group seems more vocal. They perceive that Beit Warszawa is moving toward greater religiosity, and they do not appreciate that. They call for more balance between the religious and cultural aspects, with more offerings to non-religious members of the community, on other days than Fridays and religious holidays. Conversely, there is also a group that complains that Beit Warszawa is not religious and spiritual enough. They would like more religious traditions and rules to be observed, including the rules of kashrut.

How do they see the future of Beit Warszawa?

The respondents were asked a couple of questions regarding their vision of Beit Warszawa's future. The sentences the respondents could mark from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" posed questions about: Beit Warszawa's potential to grow religiously, to grow in terms of membership numbers, and various combinations of options regarding remaining a cultural association and/or becoming a religious congregation recognized by the state. These questions were asked to gauge how optimistic people are about the future of the organization, as well as how they feel about the most important pending question for Beit Warszawa regarding its religious and/or secular and cultural identity.

Table 19

Responses Regarding Beit Warszawa's Religious Potential

Beit Warszawa has potential to grow religiously	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	2	3.2	3.2
Somewhat disagree	3	4.8	7.9
No opinion	14	22.2	30.2
Somewhat agree	20	31.7	61.9
Strongly agree	24	38.1	100.0
Total	63	100.0	
Missing	29		
Total	92		

Most respondents, 69% of 63 people agreed that Beit Warszawa has the potential to grow religiously. In terms of membership numbers, 93% agreed that Beit Warszawa may grow, however it must be noted that fewer respondents answered that question.

Table 20

Responses Regarding Beit Warszawa's Growth Potential

BW has potential to grow in terms of membership numbers	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	1	2.3	2.3
Somewhat disagree	1	2.3	4.5
No opinion	1	2.3	6.8
Somewhat agree	9	20.5	27.3
Strongly agree	32	72.7	100.0
Total	44	100.0	
Missing	48		
Total	92		

A factor analysis of these variables (all from question 18: Beit Warszawa's potential to grow religiously, in terms of membership numbers, and various combinations of options in terms of remaining a cultural association and/or becoming a religious congregation recognized by the state) failed to reveal a clear pattern of concrete visions for the future, suggesting that the respondents do not know what they want for Beit Warszawa. While there

is no clarity on the direction in which people believe Beit Warszawa should go in terms of its organizational status, groupings of their responses reveal that they do believe in continued growth of the community.

The interviews showed a different perspective. Most of the interviewees thought that Beit Warszawa had a bright future. One female interviewee said that Beit Warszawa played a "very significant" role. Thus, "more attention needs to be paid to [Beit Warszawa], because it is important that Jews have choices, especially Jews who are beginning to self-identify" (personal communication, December 28, 2005).

DISCUSSION

About 25 years ago there was little evidence, other than the existence of initiatives like the Flying University in Warsaw, to think that Judaism may thrive in Poland once again. The only people in synagogues were elderly Holocaust survivors, distrustful of the younger Jews who started to rediscover their roots and become involved in the Jewish life. Now, in 2006, the situation is very different. There are now two places in Warsaw where Jews, young and old, can worship and many more where they can learn about and experience Judaism. Most places are filled with young people. There are kindergartens and schools in Warsaw and in Wrocław, and there are summer and winter camps and retreats for all age groups.

Thus the Jewish community in Poland has a future, and this is exhibited in the demographic analysis of Beit Warszawa. It is interesting to note that many of Beit Warszawa members were not influenced by the antisemitic purge of 1968, but rather by the political changes in 1989, as they are relatively young (under 37 years old). When Communism collapsed in Poland most of Beit Warszawa's affiliates were just out of high school or younger. In a free Poland they could choose Jewish identity without the stigma, or fear of antisemitism.

Interestingly, Beit Warszawa's members seem to be a more affluent cohort than one might have expected. Thirty-five percent of 68 respondents earn almost twice as much as the average Pole. Polish Jews are rarely asked to give money, because the assumption has been that they cannot afford to support the organization, and thus few have been asked to give. In the light of this finding, it would be helpful to inquire what people's attitudes towards tzedakah and being involved in the community as donors are. One might argue that the

reason for low levels of giving to the community stem from the lack of culture of giving in Poland. One might also make the case that Beit Warszawa's members would contribute to the organization, were they more confident in the way it is run (their distrust was revealed in the 'weaknesses' question), and were they appropriately asked and recognized.

The study has also revealed that Beit Warszawa's members and affiliates are a very well educated. As other studies have shown, in 1995, 16% of the Polish population had a higher educational degree, including private universities, which are a new phenomenon in Poland. Since 1995 many more new private universities were created, so currently the percentage of the people with higher education may be higher. However, in 1995, this percentage was relatively low, as compared with about 20% in most European countries (Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości, 2005). Considering those numbers, Beit Warszawa proves to be a highly-educated group, with 46% of 73 respondents holding Masters degrees or being candidates for Masters degrees, and 17% holding doctoral degrees. In the light of this finding, it should be no surprise that many of the respondents called for more stimulating, intellectual, and cultural programmatic offers.

Surprisingly, many people who answered the survey attend Beit Warszawa very rarely. This result may be a reflection of the fact that some of those who do attend regularly are older people who are not computer users, and they did not fill out the paper surveys. Most of the surveys were completed via the Internet. Perhaps if the paper surveys were more aggressively distributed in Beit Warszawa the answers to this question would reveal more frequent attendance. Indeed, there is a group of people who attend Beit Warszawa regularly every Friday, and many of them are rather elderly people, perhaps not likely to have responded to a computer survey. This result may also be a function of the fact that many

people who completed the survey via the Internet were from outside of Warsaw, and naturally they do not attend Beit Warszawa's activities often.

What has been revealed about Beit Warszawa is that few of its affiliates and people who attend its activities become members. In the responses to the question why they are not members, people often indicated that they live far and are not able to attend Beit Warszawa's programs. However, apart from these people who indeed live too far, one can make the case that the cause of low membership is lack of appropriate membership processes. What exemplifies this is a comment written by one of the respondents. He became a member, filled out the application, and got it signed by the board, but never received any payment or renewal information. It has never been a priority in Beit Warszawa to stress the importance and benefits of membership, or the necessity to pay dues. People rarely hear about what membership may give them and are rarely invited to formally join the association. This is largely to the detriment of the organization for two reasons. One is that people who are not members and do not contribute have a lesser sense of ownership of the organization. Being a member binds the person to the organization in a different, more profound way. The other reason is that small membership numbers are a detriment to the finances of the organization. Even if the dues constitute a very small percentage of Beit Warszawa's budget, they would still contribute to it as predictable and constant source of revenue.

The study showed that most, but not all affiliates of Beit Warszawa are Jewish, according to Reform standards. Because Beit Warszawa formally belongs to the Reform movement, people with at least one Jewish parent, a mother or a father, are considered Jewish. Some people in Beit Warszawa are not Jewish, which was proven by the survey, as it is Beit Warszawa's policy to be open to everyone and accept members' non-Jewish spouses

or significant others. Some people may also just be interested in Judaism, even if they have no roots, and Beit Warszawa is open to them as well, just as the above-mentioned example of Ania Mazgal shows.

One of the main research questions of this paper has been to explore why people choose Beit Warszawa. This study did make it possible to gauge their motivations. Most people pointed out that they attend Beit Warszawa for social reasons, which includes seeing friends, but also meeting new people. One may be tempted to downplay the importance of this motivation as not specifically Jewish. However, there is ample research that indicates that social connections are an important factor in the building of Jewish identity. Phillips and Chertok (2004, p.9) wrote, "After the way in which a person was raised, the extent to which a person was surrounded by Jewish friends has the next greatest impact on what they will become." According to Bethamie Horowitz, "The nature of a person's Jewish engagement and identity can be seen as both a cause and a consequence of an individual's social networks. ...Having highly Jewish networks ...has been treated as evidence of strong ethnic association" (2003, p. vii).

Another important motivator to attend Beit Warszawa was the willingness to learn about Judaism, with less weight attributed to religious reasons. Indeed most Jews who attend, 84 %, do not define themselves as religious, or do as somewhat, occasionally, or non-institutionally religious. What could not be inferred from this research in terms of religiosity is whether those who have marked that they go to religious activities, go there because they want to worship, or because they want to see their friends, attend the lecture before services, or just have dinner afterwards, with no or little involvement in davening. In other words, they may have responded that they attend religious services, including Shabbat, but not for

religious reasons. Some observations and casual conversations may indicate that this is the case, but this study did not lend itself to prove or disprove this hypothesis.

Still one can make the case that the results indicate, together with some of the responses to the 'weaknesses' section, that many of the people at Beit Warszawa do not find religious expression and worship a priority. Many, as revealed by factor analysis, go to Beit Warszawa for educational and social reasons, with a smaller group of those who come only for religious reasons. Meeting people while learning about Judaism seems to be the main reasons why people choose Beit Warszawa.

The number of people who are satisfied with Beit Warszawa is almost the same as the number of those whom are dissatisfied. For those who felt that Beit Warszawa does not feel like their community, many were also unsatisfied with the leadership. They do not connect with the leadership, and they feel a lack of spiritual guidance. The first comment, together with many remarks about the lack of appropriate communication between the board and members and lack of clarity in regards to decision-making processes should send a strong message to the leadership. Members are sensitive to what they are and are not told. In the light of the fact that dissatisfaction stems to a large extent from the lack of spiritual guidance, one may venture a hypothesis that satisfaction levels will rise with the hiring of a full-time rabbi. This next step in Beit Warszawa's development will become a reality in July of 2006.

The other distinct group among those dissatisfied with Beit Warszawa seems to feel uncomfortable at Beit Warszawa and not connected with other members. It is surprising that in the face of all the comments about how open and welcoming Beit Warszawa is there is still a group of people who feel alienated and do not fit in socially. Perhaps this contradiction stems from the fact that it was easier for people to express feelings by putting a tick next to a

multiple-choice question than actually to write about it. It may also reflect the existence of an "insiders" group that is not open to the newcomers. Analyzing this data one might again venture a supposition that people feel disconnected from the organization and its other participants when they experience dissatisfaction with the balance or lack thereof between the religious and secular components. People who expect a more intellectual, secular experience may feel alienated when the programs are solely positioned as religious, and conversely, those who are religious may feel uncomfortable with greater emphasis on secularity and disregard for Jewish traditions.

Indeed, some people in their comments regarding why Beit Warszawa is not their community explained that it was too religious, and some said it was not religious enough (lack of kashrut, rabbi, not enough bonding over a learning experience). In both cases it seems to be a matter of expectations and perception. This disconnect, together with a voiced dissatisfaction regarding the lack of Beit Warszawa's identity and vision, and the confusion over what Beit Warszawa should develop into, makes it clear that people need Beit Warszawa to specify its identity. It is exemplified again in one of the interviews:

> [Beit Warszawa] has a problem: what it is. Is it a religious institution, which teaches religion, or through religion introduces traditions, grounds people in tradition, gives them the sense of identity? Or is it a cultural-artistic society, where people meet, talk, drink together and lead a social and intellectual life? I think that Beit Warszawa does not have an identity; it does not know what it is and what it wants to be. (Paweł Śpiewak, personal communication, January 2, 2006)

Beit Warszawa's members need it to specify what it is, for whom, and what it envisions to be in the future. They also need it to construct those identity markers with them, so that the decision making process is clear and understood.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Beit Warszawa is a relatively young organization whose creation in 2001 fits into the sequence of steps in the Jewish renewal in Poland. It was created as an answer to the needs of young reemerging Jews for whom the existing opportunities for Jewish learning and expression were not comfortable for various reasons. Beit Warszawa has been a logical step that this new community undertook to address its Jewish needs.

The analysis of the answers from 112 of Beit Warszawa's members and participants lend themselves to the following conclusions and recommendations.

1. Income patterns and the fact that some of the wealthier members are Polish Jews may mean that there are local monies that Beit Warszawa may be able to access. This indicates that, contrary to the assumptions that there are no potential donors in Poland, a local fundraising initiative may bring positive effects.
2. It is advisable that Beit Warszawa focuses more on membership processes. This involves, first and foremost, making sure that people are aware of membership, and that they renew their membership annually. It also means the need to clarify membership rules, including members' obligations, benefits, as well as the level of the dues. In order to make the membership benefits and rules clear, and to give membership more meaning than the due-paying status, it is recommended that Beit Warszawa use a resource packet prepared for Reform synagogues by the Union for Reform Judaism. The resource guide reads:

> "What can we do to help ensure that the covenant between our synagogue community and its members is lasting and sacred? Membership, the lifeblood

> of your congregation, is best nurtured when the individuals in your community are known, valued and supported throughout their individual and family life cycle. The information and resources that follow will assist your synagogue to become a place where lifelong membership is an important part of the culture and values of your community" (Union for Reform Judaism, 2005)

3. The indication that many guests from abroad heard about Beit Warszawa through Jewish press and The World Union for Progressive Judaism emphasizes the importance of getting the word out about Beit Warszawa. Advertising Beit Warszawa in magazines for English speakers, as well as outreach to Jewish groups from abroad through Jewish press and organizational channels brings the interested and involved Jewish tourists or expatriates living in Poland to Beit Warszawa.
4. There were consistent indicators that Beit Warszawa needs to decide upon its identity. An analysis of life stages in non-profit organizations, suggested that Beit Warszawa is between stages two and three in its development. Stage two is "characterized by excitement and high levels of interest by many people, accompanied by fear that formalizing the dream will result in the loss of its magic." In stage three, "the organization is concerned with building its foundation by grounding its activities and growing the 'business.' ...The Ground and Grow stage has a mundane feel of 'taking care of business'; but it also has numerous enticing intersections, choices, and challenges" (Sharken-Simon, p.6). In the case of Beit Warszawa these choices and challenges include needing to specify its role, mission and vision. Beit Warszawa can serve its constituents better if it gradually shifts from a grass-roots spontaneous organization to one that has defined its identity, strategy, and vision, and that markets itself accordingly.

5. The main aspect of contention seems to be the question of whether Beit Warszawa is, and should be a secular/cultural organization, or rather a religious congregation. For many respondents to the survey meeting people while learning about Judaism are the main reasons why they choose Beit Warszawa. This indicates a rather educational/cultural approach to building of the community. A leading Polish sociologist, Paweł Śpiewak,[14] who used to come to Beit Warszawa's programs and services, perceives Beit Warszawa in the following way:

> Beit Warszawa is largely a non-religious institution. There is Shabbat of course, and the holidays are observed, but it is very shallow and not ritualized. There is very little, Shabbat is reduced to a minimum. And there are few people who are interested in going deeper with this religious dimension, for whom Judaism is important and the shape if it is important. [In the case of Beit Warszawa] I would put more emphasis on 'liberal' than on 'Judaism'. (personal communication, January 2, 2006)

He also said: "I think that this institution is rather undefined. It would probably be best for it if it was a non-religious institution, since religion is minimal there anyway, unless it hires a rabbi" (personal communication, January 2, 2006). Indeed, some people have pointed to their religious needs, which they have hoped to satisfy at Beit Warszawa, and they do believe strongly in the necessity for Beit Warszawa to hire a rabbi.

The first group has expectations of a cultural organization, as Beit Warszawa is formally a cultural association. At the same time Beit Warszawa has been reportedly branding itself as a "home of progressive (reform) Jews in Warsaw", which may have given the understanding that is offers religious fulfillment within the framework of the

[14] Paweł Śpiewak – "Polish sociologist and historian, professor at the Warsaw University,... , member of the Polish Parliament (Sejm) since 2005. His realm is sociology, political sociology, history of thought and political philosophy" ("Paweł Śpiewak," 2006). He has published extensively on these subjects. He also writes for some leading Polish papers and magazines, such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, and *Tygodnik Powszechny*.

Reform movement. Indeed, Beit Warszawa has been trying to be both. However, as it is becoming clear, Beit Warszawa's members' needs are growing apart. Those who understand Beit Warszawa as a religious organization need it to serve kosher food, honor religious traditions, and be more spiritual. Those who expect it to be rather cultural would like religion not to be part of every activity, and to have more programmatic offer to the non-religious group of the Beit Warszawa community. Even though it may seem like these are very distinct needs, there may be a balance found between them, as they do not exclude one another.

6. Thus, Beit Warszawa may consider the creation of two branches, or two separate streams of activity, so that both groups feel that their needs are met. It might also choose only one of the ways, however such choice would alienate a large group of its adherents. What is certain is that Beit Warszawa needs change in this respect, as status quo bears the danger of Beit Warszawa's members growing disappointed in what the organization offers them. Without addressing the changing needs of this burgeoning community Beit Warszawa may become obsolete and cease fulfilling the new Jews' needs.

7. This decision is intertwined with Beit Warszawa's identity issue. In fact, Beit Warszawa has been struggling with this question since its inception: whether to remain a cultural association, or become a religious congregation recognized by the state. It is recommended that Beit Warszawa create an institution that satisfies those two groups. Paweł Śpiewak seems to believe that even though Beit Warszawa seems not religious right now to him, it still has an opportunity to play a religious role and an important role in the society: "The opportunity for Beit Warszawa is introducing an open Judaism

to Poland, in which one talks about and celebrates Jewishness on par with Polishness. [Judaism] open to many dimensions of identity. ...Here one could be a Pole, a Jew, [even] first a Pole and then a Jew, there could be more openness in this sense. This might be an opportunity. [It might work] if identity is chosen and then consistent. This requires a community" (personal communication, January 2,2006).

8. The history of the synagogue movement in the United States gives us ample examples of institutions where the religious aspects intertwined with the cultural aspects. It is known as the synagogue-center, "a multipurpose synagogue that encompasses the three functions of religious worship, social activity, and education" (Kaufman, p.2). Even though the ideals of the synagogue-center movement did not fully come to fruition, they impacted the forms of Jewish communal life and may serve as a model to create an institution that serves religious and cultural needs, and is similar to the American "Jewish Community Center." Beit Warszawa can also draw from modern models, which emerge in the American Jewish communal life. Shawn Landres of Synagogue 3000 (2006) has recently identified a new phenomenon of "parashuls," which are "led by charismatic entrepreneurs creating connection beyond traditional institutional boundaries." They attract unaffiliated individuals, and "blur the line between the 'sacred' and the 'secular.'" Hospitality and the social component underlie every aspect of a "parashul's" activities. As Beit Warszawa is ready to welcome its new rabbi in the summer of 2006, it may find this model viable in order to satisfy its constituents.
9. It is important that the identity issues Beit Warszawa is facing are solved with the input from all members of Beit Warszawa, not only its leadership. In terms of the

formal identity question it became clear that at this point members are very confused with the choices: remaining a cultural association, forming a Jewish congregation, becoming members of the Union of Jewish Congregations. They need information about the possible options and existing models to be able to make a communal conscious choice regarding what they would like Beit Warszawa to be.

10. It is also crucial for Beit Warszawa's leadership to support the identity decision by relevant mission, vision, as well as leadership and staff development. These are all the pieces that will take Beit Warszawa toward further stages of development.
11. At the same time it is important for the leadership of Beit Warszawa to make more effort to keep the membership of the organization more intimately involved in the decision-making. Members need to know how decisions are made and why, and all information needs to be ready for them and as transparent as possible.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Survey in English

You are about to fill out a survey which will serve for Malgorzata Szymanska as part of her research on Beit Warszawa' standing and future development. This research will help her prepare her Masters Thesis in the School of Jewish Communal Service at Hebrew Union College. The information obtained through this questionnaire will also be of tremendous help in Beit Warszawa's strategic analysis and strategic planning process.

This survey is confidential and will only be used by Malgorzata Szymanska for the purpose of research and analysis. Your survey will not be shown to anyone, nor your name will be quoted. If you provide your name at the end of the survey it will only be used for membership purposes, but no one other than Malgorzata Szymanska will have access to your responses.

Your filling of this survey is of tremendous value to Beit Warszawa. Thank you for your time!

Respectfully,

Malgorzata Szymanska

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. How long have you been attending Beit Warszawa's programs and events?
   - ☐ For more than 3 years
   - ☐ For 2 - 3 years
   - ☐ For 1-2 years
   - ☐ For less than 1 year

2. How did you find out about Beit Warszawa?
   - ☐ From friends
   - ☐ From a family member
   - ☐ From the Beit Warszawa website
   - ☐ From a flyer, poster or e-mail

3. Are you a Beit Warszawa member?
   - ☐ Yes (please go to question number 4)
   - ☐ No (please go to question number 5)
   - ☐ Other (please specify) .....

4. How long have you been a member?
   - ☐ More than 3 years
   - ☐ 2-3 years
   - ☐ 1-2 years
   - ☐ Less than 1 year

5. Please indicate why you are not a member.

   - ☐ Because I cannot afford paying the membership dues.
   - ☐ Because I do not know enough about membership conditions and rules.
   - ☐ Other (please specify) .....

6. How often do you attend Beit Warszawa's programs, activities or religious events?
   - ☐ More than once a week
   - ☐ Once a week
   - ☐ 2-3 times per month
   - ☐ Once a month
   - ☐ A few times a year
   - ☐ Less than a few times a year

7. What kind of programs do you mostly attend? (You can check more than one)
   - ☐ Religious services
   - ☐ Educational programs (lectures etc.)
   - ☐ Children's activities
   - ☐ Social gatherings
   - ☐ Other (please specify) .....

8. What is your Jewish background?
   - ☐ Both Jewish parents and Jewish upbringing
   - ☐ Both Jewish parents but lack of Jewish upbringing
   - ☐ Jewish mother
   - ☐ Jewish father
   - ☐ One of the grandparents is/was Jewish
   - ☐ Other form of Jewish roots (please specify)
     .....
   - ☐ I am not Jewish (please go to question number 10)

9. How religious would you say you are?
   - ☐ Very religious
   - ☐ Somewhat religious
   - ☐ Occasionally religious
   - ☐ Not religious at all
   - ☐ Religious, but not in terms of organized religion

10. Which religious denomination would you say you affiliate with?
    - ☐ Orthodox
    - ☐ Conservative
    - ☐ Reform
    - ☐ Reconstructionist

- ☐ I am religious but I do not know which of the above best describes me
- ☐ I am not religious
- ☐ Other .....

11. How do you feel about being Jewish?
Please mark whether you STRONGLY AGREE, SOMEWHAT AGREE, HAVE NO OPINION, SOMEWHAT DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE regarding the sentences below.

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	NO OPINION	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I feel a sense of pride in regards to my being Jewish.					
I do not consider my being Jewish as a reason for pride, but I am not ashamed of it either.					
I prefer not to share about my Jewish roots with my closest family, but being Jewish is very important to me.					
I prefer not to share about my Jewish roots with my friends, but being Jewish is very important to me.					
I do not have a problem with talking about my Jewish roots with anyone.					
I prefer not to talk about my Jewish roots at all.					

II. CURRENT STANDING AND THE FUTURE OF BEIT WARSZAWA

12. Why do you come to Beit Warszawa for holidays, programs, and events? (you can mark more than one)
- ☐ Because I want to learn more about Judaism
- ☐ For religious reasons
- ☐ Because my family goes
- ☐ Because I can meet new people
- ☐ Because of social reasons
- ☐ Because I do not like the other Jewish places in Warsaw
- ☐ Because I have a feeling of community there
- ☐ Other (please specify)

.....
.....
.....

13. Does Beit Warszawa give you a feeling of a community?
- ☐ Yes (please go to question number 14)
- ☐ No (please go to question number 15)

14. Please specify in what way do you feel that Beit Warszawa is your community?
……
……
……

15. Why do you feel Beit Warszawa is **not** your community (you can check more than one answer)
- ☐ It lacks religious leadership
- ☐ I do not need a community
- ☐ I do not connect with the leadership
- ☐ It is not spiritual enough for me
- ☐ I do not know what you mean by "community"
- ☐ I do not connect with the other members/attendants
- ☐ It does not feel comfortable enough
- ☐ Other (please specify)

……
……
……

16. What do you see as the strengths of Beit Warszawa?
……
……
……
……

17. What do you see as the weaknesses of Beit Warszawa? What could be improved?
……
……
……
……

18. For each of the statements please indicate with a tick whether you STRONGLY AGREE, SOMEWHAT AGREE, NO OPINION, SOMEWHAT DISAGREE, or STRONGLY DISAGREE.

STATEMENTS	STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	NO OPINION	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I think that Beit Warszawa has potential to grow religiously.					
I think that Beit Warszawa has potential to grow in terms of membership numbers.					

I think that Beit Warszawa should just remain a cultural association.

I think that Beit Warszawa should remain a cultural association, but should also start a religious congregation recognized by the state.

I think that Beit Warszawa should transform from a cultural association to a religious congregation recognized by the state.

I think that Beit Warszawa should become a member of the Union of Jewish Congregations in Poland.

19. Would you like Beit Warszawa to hire a full-time Rabbi?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

20. Would you be interested in a conversion process with a rabbi at Beit Warszawa?
- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No
- ❑ I do not know yet
- ❑ I do not know what this process entails

21. If you have any ideas or suggestions regarding the development of Beit Warszawa, please write about them.

.....
.....
.....
.....

III. PERSONAL INFORMATION

22. How old are you?
- ❑ Under 15
- ❑ 16-26
- ❑ 27-37
- ❑ 38-50
- ❑ 51-60
- ❑ 61-70
- ❑ Above 70

23. Gender:
- ❑ Female
- ❑ Male

24. What is your income?
    - ☐ Below 2 000 zł per month
    - ☐ Between 2 000 and 3 500 zł per month
    - ☐ Between 3 500 and 5 000 zł per month
    - ☐ More than 5 000 zł per month

25. Where are you from?
    - ☐ Poland
    - ☐ United States
    - ☐ Israel
    - ☐ Former Soviet Union
    - ☐ Western Europe
    - ☐ Other .....

26. What is your education?
    - ☐ Secondary school
    - ☐ BA
    - ☐ MA
    - ☐ PhD
    - ☐ Oher .....

Appendix 2 Survey in Polish

Szanowna Pani / Szanowny Panie,

Ma Pani/Pan przed sobą ankietę, która posłuży do badań prowadzonych nad Beit Warszawa. Wyniki z tych badań staną się częścią mojej pracy magisterskiej, którą piszę w ramach studiów na kierunku Jewish Communal Service w Hebrew Union College w Los Angleles. Ponad to informacje te posłużą do stworzenia analizy strategicznej i planu strategicznego dla Beit Warszawa.

Poniższa ankieta jest anonimowa i tajna. Informacje w niej zawarte będą dostępne tylko i wyłącznie mnie. Wypełniona przez Paią/Pana ankieta nie zostanie nikomu pokazana, a Pani/Pana nazwisko nie zostanie w pracy ujawnione.

Uprzejmie proszę o poświęcenie kilku minut na wypełnienie poniższej ankiety. Będzie to z ogromna pomoc mnie przy pracy magisterskiej, a także bardzo cenna pomoc w dalszym rozwoju Beit Warszawa. Z góry dziękuję za Pani/Pana czas.

Z poważaniem,

Małgorzata Szymańska

PS. Można się ze mną skontaktować pisząc do mnie na adres gosia444@yahoo.com bądź telefonicznie 603 88 55 15 (do 16 czerwca 2005).

I. INFORMACJE OGÓLNE

22. Od jak dawna przychodzi Pani/Pan do Beit Warszawa?
    - ☐ Od ponad 3 lat
    - ☐ Od 2-3 lat
    - ☐ Od 1-2 lat
    - ☐ Krócej niż 1 rok

23. Jak się Pani/Pan dowiedziała/dowiedział o Beit Warszawa?
    - ☐ Od znajomych
    - ☐ Od kogoś z rodziny
    - ☐ Ze stony internetowej Beit Warszawa
    - ☐ Z ulotki, plakaty lub e-maiła
    - ☐ Inne (proszę wyjaśnić)

      .....

24. Czy jest Pani/Pan członkiem Beit Warszawa?
    - ☐ Tak (proszę przejść do pytania numer 4)
    - ☐ Nie (proszę przejść do pytania numer 5)

25. Od jak dawna jest Pani/Pan członkiem Beit Warszawa?
- ☐ Od ponad 3 lat
- ☐ 2-3 lata
- ☐ 1-2 lata
- ☐ Krócej niż 1 rok

26. Proszę zaznaczyć dlaczego nie jest Pani/Pan członkiem Beit Warszawa.
- ☐ Ponieważ uważam, że składki członkowskie są wygórowane
- ☐ Ponieważ brak mi informacji na temat zasad członkostwa
- ☐ Inne powody (proszę opisać)

.....

27. Jak często uczestniczy Pani/Pan w wykładach, programach lub wydarzeniach religijnych w Beit Warszawa?
- ☐ Częściej niż raz w tygodniu
- ☐ Raz w tygodniu
- ☐ 2-3 razy w miesiącu
- ☐ Raz w miesiącu
- ☐ Kilka razy w roku
- ☐ Rzadziej niż kilka razy w roku

28. Na jakie rodzaje programów najczęściej Pani/Pan przychodzi do Beit Warszawa? (mozna zaznaczyć więcej niż jedną odpowiedź)
- ☐ Modlitwy
- ☐ Programy edukacyjne (wykłady itp.)
- ☐ Zajęcia dla dzieci
- ☐ Spotkania towarzyskie
- ☐ Inne (proszę wymienić) .....

29. Jakie jest Pani/Pana pochodzenie żydowskie?
- ☐ Oboje rodzice są Żydami i zostałam/łem wychowana/y w kulturze żydowskiej
- ☐ Oboje rodzice są Żydami ale nie zostałam/łem wychowana/y w kulturze żydowskiej
- ☐ Pochodzenie żydowskie po matce
- ☐ Pochodzenie żydowskie po ojcu
- ☐ Pochodzenie żydowskie po jednym z dziadków
- ☐ Inne (proszę opisać)

.....

- ☐ Nie mam pochodzenia żydowskiego (proszę przejść do pytania numer 10)

30. Za jak bardzo religijną osobę uważa się Pani/Pan?
- ☐ Bardzo religijną
- ☐ Trochę relgijną
- ☐ Tylko okazyjnie
- ☐ Nie jestem wcale religijną osobą
- ☐ Uważam się za religijną osobę, ale nie w sensie zorganizowanej religii

31. Z jakim wyznaniem czuje się Pani/Pan związana/y?
- ☐ Z judaizmem ortodoksyjnym

- ❑ Z judaizmem konserwatywnym
- ❑ Z judaizmem reformowanym
- ❑ Z judaizmem rekonstrukcjonistycznym
- ❑ Czuję się związana/y z religią żydowską, ale nie jestem pewna/y która z powyższych kategorii pasuje do mnie
- ❑ Nie czuję się związana/y z religią żydowską
- ❑ Inne (proszę opisać) .....

32. Jak się Pani/Pan czuję w związku ze swoim pochodzeniem żydowskim? Proszę zaznaczyć czy Pan/Pani się zdecydowanie zgadza, raczej się zgadza, niema zdania, raczej się nie zgadza, lub zdecydowanie się nie zgadza z poniższymi zdaniami.

	ZDECYDOWANIE SIĘ ZGADZAM	RACZEJ SIĘ ZGADZAM	NIE MAM ZDANIA	RACZEJ SIĘ NIE ZGADZAM	ZDECYDOWANIE SIĘ NIE ZGADZAM
Czuję się dumna/y z bycia Żydówką/Żydem.					
Nie uważam bycia Żydówką/Żydem za powód do dumy, ale jednocześnie nie wstydzę się tego.					
Wolę nie rozmawiać z moją rodziną o żydowskim pochodzeniu, ale jest ono dla mnie bardzo ważne.					
Wolę nie rozmawiać z moimi znajomymi o żydowskim pochodzeniu, ale jest ono dla mnie bardzo ważne.					
Nie mam problemu z rozmawianiem o moim żydowskim pochodzeniu.					
Wolę nie wypowiadać się wcale na te tematy.					

II. TERAŹNIEJSZOŚĆ I PRZYSZŁOŚĆ BEIT WARSZAWA

33. Co powoduje ze Pani/Pan przychodzi do Beit Warszawa? (można zaznaczyć więcej niż jedną odpowiedź)

- ❑ Przychodzę z powodów religijnych.
- ❑ Przychodzę ponieważ moja rodzina tam chodzi.
- ❑ Przychodzę z powodów towarzyskich.
- ❑ Przychodzę, ponieważ Beit Warszawa daje mi poczucie społeczności.
- ❑ Przychodzę ponieważ mogę tam poznać nowych ludzi.
- ❑ Przychodzę ponieważ chcę się więcej dowiedzieć o judaizmie.

- ❑ Przychodzę do Beit Warszawa ponieważ inne żydowskie miejsca w Warszawie nie odpowiadają mi
- ❑ Inne powody (proszę opisać)

  .....
  .....
  .....

34. Czy Beit Warszawa daje Pani/Panu poczucie społeczności?
    - ❑ Tak (proszę przejść do pytania numer 14)
    - ❑ Nie (proszę przejść do pytania numer 15)

35. Proszę opisać w jaki sposób Beit Warszawa daje Pani/Panu poczucie społeczności?

    .....
    .....
    .....

36. Z jakiego powodu odczuwa Pani/Pan, że Beit Warszawa nie jest Pani/Pana społecznością? (można zaznaczyć więcej niż jedną odpowiedź)
    - ❑ Wcale nie odczuwam takich potrzeb.
    - ❑ Nie czuję się tam wystarczająco komfortowo.
    - ❑ Nie czuję związku z pozostałymi członkami/sympatykami Beit Warszawa.
    - ❑ Nie czuję związku z liderami Beit Warszawa.
    - ❑ Beit Warszawa nie jest społecznością wystarczająco duchową.
    - ❑ Brakuje duchowego przywódcy w Beit Warszawa.
    - ❑ Nie rozumiem znaczenia użytego tu słowa "społeczność".
    - ❑ Inne (proszę opisać)

      .....
      .....
      .....

37. Jakie są mocne strony Beit Warszawa?

    .....
    .....
    .....
    .....

38. Jakie widzi Pani/Pan słabe strony w Beit Warszawa? Co mogłoby zostać poprawione?

    .....
    .....
    .....
    .....

39. Dla każdego z poniższych zdań proszę zaznaczyć czy Pan/Pani się zdecydowanie zgadza, raczej się zgadza, nie ma zdania, raczej się nie zgadza, lub zdecydowanie się nie zgadza.

	ZDECYDOWANIE SIĘ ZGADZAM	RACZEJ SIĘ ZGADZAM	NIE MAM ZDANIA	RACZEJ SIĘ NIE ZGADZAM	ZDECYDOWANIE SIĘ NIE ZGADZAM
Uważam, że Beit Warszawa ma potencjał by się rozwijać w sensie religijnym					
Uważam, że Beit Warszawa ma potencjał by się rozwijać w sensie ilości członków.					
Uważam, że Beit Warszawa powinno pozostać Towarzystwem Kultury Żydowskiej.					
Uważam, że Beit Warszawa powinno pozostać Towarzystwem Kultury Żydowskiej, ale jednocześnie powinno założyć gminę żydowską uznaną przez Państwo.					
Uważam, że Beit Warszawa powinno przeistoczyć się ze stowarzyszenia w gminę żydowską uznaną przez Państwo.					
Uważam że Beit Warszawa powinno stać się członkiem Związku Gmin Wyznaniowych Żydowskich w Polsce.					

40. Czy Pani/Pan chciałaby/chciałby, aby Beit Warszawa zatrudniło na stałe rabina?
- ☐ Tak
- ☐ Nie

41. Czy byłaby/byłby Pani/Pan zainteresowana/y procesem konwersji w Beit Warszawa?
- ☐ Tak
- ☐ Nie
- ☐ Jeszcze nie wiem
- ☐ Nie wiem na czym polega ten proces

42. Jezeli ma Pani/Pan sugestie zwiazane z Beit Warszawa, bardzo prosze sie nimi podzielic.

.....
.....
.....

III. METRYCZKA

22. Ile ma Pani/Pan lat?

- ❑ Ponizej 15
- ❑ 16-26
- ❑ 27-37
- ❑ 38-50
- ❑ 51-60
- ❑ 61-70
- ❑ Powyzej 70

23. Plec:

- ❑ Kobieta
- ❑ Mezczyzna

24. Jakie sa Pani/Pana miesieczne dochody?

- ❑ Ponizej 2 000 zl
- ❑ Pomiedzy 2 000 a 3 500 zl
- ❑ Pomiedzy 3 500 a 5 000 zl
- ❑ Powyzej 5 000 zl

25. Skad Pani/Pan pochodzi?

- ❑ Z Polski
- ❑ Ze Stanow Zjednoczonych
- ❑ Z Izraela
- ❑ Z bylego Zwiazku Radzieckiego
- ❑ W Europy Zachodniej
- ❑ Inne .....

26. Jakie jest Pani/Pana wyksztalcenie?

- ❑ Szkola srednia (matura)
- ❑ Licencjat
- ❑ Magisterium
- ❑ Doktorat
- ❑ Inne .....

Appendix3 Schedule of questions for the first set of interviews

1. How did you find out about Beit Warszawa?
2. How have you started your involvement in Beit Warszawa?
3. What is Beit Warszawa to you, in what way is it important in your life?
4. How do you see your role in Beit Warszawa?
5. How would you assess the strengths of the congregation?
6. How would you assess the weaknesses of the organization?
7. What do you think the organization's needs are?
8. Where would you like to see Beit Warszawa in a year, three years and five years?
9. What steps do you think will lead towards Beit Warszawa's development?

Appendix4 Schedule of questions for the second set of interviews

1. How long have you been attending Beit Warszawa's programs and activities?
2. Do you participate in Beit Warszawa's programs and activities for religious or other reasons? What are they?
3. What brought you to Beit Warszawa?
4. Is Beit Warszawa the only Jewish place that you frequent?
5. What does Beit Warszawa give you that you miss in the other Jewish venues?