

Przegląd Religioznawczy 2(284)/2022

The Religious Studies Review

ISSN: 1230-4379

e-ISSN: 2658-1531

www.journal.ptr.edu.pl

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DOI: 10.34813/ptr2.2022.14

How we were raised: antisemitism, xenophobia, or religious hatred?

Abstract. Many simplifications can be seen in the discussions on the relations between Poles and Jews. The circling demons of the past and, what is worse, the present also put the mind to sleep, causing more stereotypes and myths than truth in the public sphere. Most of us easily judge others without verifying opinions and facts. Thus, we ascribe the same characteristics to the entire group, no matter how different individuals are. In this way, we create a simplified picture of reality that can function in our consciousness for a long time. It is a natural process, as every person has a tendency to create stereotypes that often lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Keywords: upbringing, stereotypes, antisemitism

Introduction

The question posed in the title of the article will be addressed by referring to the stereotypes of Jews that Poles have formed in the process of upbringing. The research subjects include Polish students, in particular those attending the Polish Naval Academy in Gdynia.

Bearing the above in mind, the main aim of this article is to isolate the stereotypical attributes of a Jew and describe their perception among students and cadets at the Polish Naval Academy. The stereotypes of a Jew that students and cadets may have need to be identified and subsequently establish whether these might lead to prejudice. To do that, the following questions need to be addressed: Do students and cadets at the Polish Naval Academy hold any stereotypes? Do these persons assess Jews negatively or positively? How do their personal experiences and contacts with Jews impact the stereotypical assessment? Does knowledge of the history of Jews affect the formation of stereotypes? Do the students and cadets display any antisemitism, and if so, to what a degree? What values shared in the family affect the assessment of Jews? Do students and cadets differ in their assessment of Jews, and if so, what is the nature of such disparity?

In order to respond to these questions, an empirical study was conducted using a survey including the Katz–Braly checklist and the Bogardus social distance scale. The survey was carried out in May, 2017, at the Polish Naval Academy campus, being addressed to students and cadets from every faculty. The survey was completed by 131 subjects; the sample was random.

An overview of the discourse concerning relations between Poles and Jews, one will notice numerous simplifications. Demons of the past seem to haunt the present, lulling the mind and causing there to be more stereotypes and myths circulating in the collective consciousness. Most persons readily make judgments about others without verifying opinions and facts. The same attributes tend to be assigned to entire groups of people, regardless of the differences between individuals within these groups. Thus, simplified reflections of reality are created which may persist in the consciousness for a long time. This is a natural process, since every human being has a tendency to formulate stereotypes, and these might cause prejudice and discrimination (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; McGarty, Yzerbyt & Spears, 2002; Nelson, 2016; O'Connor, 2017; Stangor, 2000; Tajfel, 2010).

The stereotype of Jews occupies a prominent position among religious or nationalistic stereotypes. First, it needs to be stressed that Jews found refuge in Poland in times of persecution and religious oppression, and were able to

lead a successful and “normal” lives thanks to Polish authorities and, more importantly, the Polish people. The appearance of Jews – valued specialists and craftsmen – yielded the notions of the “Polish Jew.” Jews and Poles mutually contributed to their cultures, complementing each other, achieving the benefits, though they remained distinct. While history has seen periods of unprecedented tolerance, it also witnessed Poles treating Jews as “misfits.”

According to Robert Szuchta (2015, p. 9): “The history of Jews in Poland has a thousand years. It has been ten centuries since Jewish tradesmen started arriving from Western and Southern Europe to lands ruled by the Poles. In the course of the next centuries, these newcomers became not only inhabitants, but also co-founders of the Polish state.”

The author rightly points out that the presence of Jews enhanced the economic growth of Poland and enriched its culture, as Jewish culture became intrinsic to numerous Polish towns. That was where customs, culture and social relations intertwined. Naturally, the coexistence of Jews and Poles had different facets, as previous generations were not always friendly towards their Jewish neighbours, and pogroms of Jews took place throughout Polish history. Nonetheless, the presence of Jewish communities continued for hundreds of years and the country was home to the largest Jewish diaspora in history.

A review of the Polish-Jewish relations often leads to discussions about xenophobia, antisemitism and religious hatred that Poles express towards Jews. However, it is seldom noted that antisemitism is a secular ideology which developed in the 19th century, when national (state) capitalism was transforming into imperialism in Western Europe. That brand of antisemitism is conceptually different from hostility between two competing religions, Christianity and Judaism. These two divergent historical perspectives lead to the search for, on the one hand, historical evidence of hatred towards Jews in the story of Christianity and, on the other, for a proof that Jews exerted a negative influence on the entire world. The latter claim offered leeway to present Jews as an universal evil, not only as an opponent or enemy of Christianity.

The relations between Jewish and Christian culture were far more diverse than those historical approaches assume. This is equally true for France, Germany and Poland. Associating antisemitism with nationalism and expressions of xenophobia derives, at least in part, from erroneous premises. The escalation of antisemitism in the 20th century often peaked in times when the significance of nation states decreased and nationalistic inspirations faded (though only temporarily). This type of antisemitism was more totalitarian than nationalistic, while nationalistic antisemitism may be said to have been its variant. Contemporary antisemitism is barely typically Polish or German, let alone French. It needs to be analysed in terms of the development of the

so-called “roots of Europe,” and viewed from the perspective of emerging nation states which found its underpinning in the Christian culture – and their relations with the Jewish diaspora.

Certain number of Polish Jews were also murdered by the Polish, but accurate figures remain a matter of contention. In this context, one needs to remember that around 900 Poles were murdered by the Nazis for aiding Jews. The latter figure was stated by Waław Bielawski in the volume entitled *Crimes Against Poles Committed by the Nazis for Helping Jews*. In the English edition, it was revised to 740 (Bielawski & Pilichowski, 1987; Piątkowski, 2020). The few Jews who managed to survive the war, emigrated. The Jewish minority currently comprises slightly more than 7,000 people. In spite of this, Jewish presence in the minds of Poles is deeply-ingrained. According to a 2015 poll by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS): “The minimal presence of Jews in Poland causes Jews to become symbolic figures whose image among the public is based on stereotypes rooted in the past. Perpetuating these was encouraged by the People’s Republic of Poland [Poland’s communist state in 1945–1989], whose public discourse by and large omitted Jews and Polish-Jewish relations. The issue of such relations was brought to life after a publication by Jan Tomasz Gross which portrayed Poles as accomplices to and beneficiaries of the Holocaust, thus calling the image of Poles heroically saving their Jewish neighbours from annihilation into question. Issues painful to both parties became topical for the mass culture. Films such as *Aftermath* [*Pokłosie*] or *Ida* spark controversy, but simultaneously somehow accustom viewers to knowledge that threatens the collective self-esteem. The debate about Polish attitudes over the war notwithstanding, the interest in Jewish culture has been growing for a long time and, broadly speaking, so has the social recovery of the Polish-Jewish past. Of the numerous initiatives reminding of the centuries-old shared history of Poles and Jews, one can mention the Museum of the History of Polish Jews (POLIN) which opened two years ago.”

Still, one has to remember as early as the 1980s there was a revival of interest in the subject of Polish-Jewish relations. It may also be worthwhile to recall e.g. the essay by Jan Józef Lipski from 1981 entitled “Two homelands, two patriotisms (comments on the national megalomania and xenophobia of Poles)” or to the “Appeal on Polish-Jewish relations” published in October 1983 in the Paris-based *Kultura* and signed by Michał Borwicz, Józef Lichten, Szymon Wiesenthal, Jan Karski, Jerzy Lerski, Jan Nowak-Jeziorański and Władysław Bartoszewski. Particularly noteworthy, however, is the essay by Jan Błoński entitled “The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto,” published in *Tygodnik Powszechny* in 1987, in which author referred to the problem of the shared guilt of Poles over the Holocaust. Błoński’s assertions sparked a heated debate.

An important element of the discussion on Polish-Jewish relations was the dispute related to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance. On January 26, 2018, the Sejm of the Republic of Poland passed a parliamentary draft amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, which caused an increase in anti-Semitic rhetoric in the public debate. Critics of the changes emphasized the imprecise wording of the amendment which, in their opinion, could sanction penalties for any debates on the shared responsibility of Poles, especially in the context of the Holocaust. The response of Israeli politicians, institutions and the media as well as the arguments of the supporters of the new law repeated in the Polish media engendered a hostile rhetoric in the discourse; one also spoke of the resulting “auction of injury” and “competition in suffering.” It was clearly emphasized that Poles are on a par with Jews in terms of being victims of World War II, for which Germany was responsible. The debate often underscored help Jews received from Poles and the complicity of both Poles and Jews in the extermination. In most instances, no one would deny cases of Jews having been murdered by Poles. It was argued that they were perpetrated by the “demoralized margin” of society. On the other hand, this discourse evidently invoked Jewish collaboration and complicity, as well as featured many elements of the anti-Semitic discourse. First of all, this is conspicuous in the language. In many statements on the subject the word “Israel” was replaced with “Jews” and likely anti-Semitic connotations were exploited. This could be exemplified by an article posted on the *Gazeta Olsztyńska* website, entitled “Jews outraged by the amendment to the Act on the Institute of National Remembrance,” which was additionally illustrated with a photo of an Orthodox Jew praying at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. This was particularly evident in social media, where both the words “Israel” and “Jews” were used synonymously, which can undoubtedly be associated with anti-Semitism. It should be noted that the anti-Semitic language appeared not only in the posts of individual Twitter or Facebook users but also in public television. However, it did not bring about a significant increase in anti-Semitic attitudes.

This conclusion is confirmed in the *Report of the US Department of State on the Observance of Religious Freedom in the World in 2019 and 2020 – Poland* and the *Report of the Center for Research on Prejudice* of 2020, and further corroborated by the Chief Rabbi of Poland, Michael Schudrich in a January 2020 interview for the German daily *Die Welt*, in which he stated that Poland is a safer place to live for Jews than some other European countries. Schudrich said that anti-Semitism can be observed in Poland, but it does not manifest itself in physical attacks on people of Jewish nationality.

This article will present the stereotypes of the “Jew” among students and cadets of the Polish Naval Academy in Gdynia, as demonstrated by research conducted with image of a Jew, the Polish-Jewish relations, and the presence of Jews in the Polish collective consciousness in mind. The essential aim was to explore what Aleksander Hertz (1988, p. 238) called one of the most interesting aspects of sociology and anthropology, namely resolving “how the image of a group and each of its members reflects in the awareness of the other group. Investigating this image plays a tremendous role in understanding intergroup and interpersonal relations.”

Judging by the current debates in Poland, Hertz was right highlighting the interpersonal and international characteristic of the phenomenon. These relations cannot be discussed without understanding their origins, in other words without considering the image of the “Jew.” This image was outlined in 1922 by Walter Lippmann (Schaff, 1981, p. 48) and defined as a stereotype. Lippmann observed that “the most subtle yet deepest of all the influences are those creating and preserving stereotypes. We are being told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things well before we experience them.” A similar definition of a stereotype was offered by Daniel Katz and Kenneth W. Braly (1993, pp. 175–193), who consider a stereotype “to be a fixed impression which conforms very little to the facts it pretends to represent and results from our defining first and observing second” (Katz & Braly, 1993, p. 181).

Stereotypes have a significant impact on perception, behaviour and thought, and inevitably involve a certain categorisation of people. Each group member is assigned the same attributes. This may facilitate subsequent discrimination, manifesting in hostile behaviour towards others, though as Czesław Maj (1999, pp. 272–273) aptly points out, not every stereotype leads to prejudice, and not every prejudice leads to discrimination.

Stereotypes inform patterns of thought or behaviour as people usually employ stereotypes in discovering and transforming the world around them. On the one hand stereotypical thinking exposes one to manipulation; however, on the other, it may enable one to learn the truth, brings different people together, and motivates people. Stereotypes provide valuable information about nations, events, phenomena or groups of professionals. They create background knowledge in literature, and are a prerequisite for communication. Wiesław Łukaszewski and Barbara Weigl (2001, p. 49) argue that the cognitive process is easier if governed by stereotypes as opposed to processing and verifying various kinds of information. According to the researchers, “in a setting when time is not the issue there is frequently (yet not always) a tendency to censor one’s own viewpoint, whereas when time is of the essence stereotypical reactions are much more likely.”

It has to be noted that various stereotypes are present in the social and political reality. This article will focus on two kinds of stereotypes: national and ethnic. The former are political stereotypes and pertain in particular to countries which have a global political organisation and agenda. Jan Błuszkowski (2003, p. 93) states that such stereotypes gained prominence after the end of the Cold War and influence contemporary international relations. It must be borne in mind that, owing to their characteristics, national stereotypes are the most common, as they refer to a larger community and “stand out.” Usually if a person hears the term “an English person,” a “Russian,” or “a German,” they are able to experience positive or negative emotions, even if they personally do not know anyone belonging to the given nations. Jan Berting and Christiane Villain-Gandossi (1995, p. 23) underline that like all stereotypes, the national ones “serve group members for a common system of reference, strengthen group bonds, express shared values, allow to stress how one’s own group differs from other groups and allow to discriminate against other groups, as long as the latter’s actions pose a threat, as well as create an opportunity to display loyalty for one’s own group, and serve as a mean of finding a scapegoat in times of crisis” (Berting & Villain-Gandossi, 1995, p. 23).

There are countless definitions of stereotypes, however, stereotypes understood as images of an ethnic group undoubtedly made the greatest career. As Grzegorz Grochowski (2000, pp. 47–49) puts it, “empirical analyses mainly focus on: Jews, Russians, German and the French.” According to Nail C. Macrae, Charles Stangor and Miles Hewstone (1999, p. 137), ethnic stereotypes focus on social groups and national minorities. In the course of history, a given group receives a set of positive or negative attributes. The former may lead to a hostile treatment of the group, while the latter may cause it to be viewed in a positive light.

Each assessment contains emotional content. Jerzy Mizgalski and Małgorzata Soja (2014, pp. 230–233) claim that negative stereotypes are more frequent and that they lead to conflict. Empirical findings show that people construct mental phobias about people from national minorities or social groups. Ethnic stereotypes often cause antisemitism, racism, and discrimination. As Hugh Duncan (1997, p. 87) aptly phrased it, “Jews, African Americans and minority groups are stigmatised as evil before they even act. Heretics are doomed to eternal punishment before they are even born.”

The analysis of research results

The Polish Naval Academy is a military university with both civilian and military students, the latter being candidates for a professional career in the Polish

armed forces (cadets). Classes are sometimes attended by both, though more often students and cadets have classes separately. Cadets must follow a strict daily schedule until late in the evening. They have significantly less free time than the civilian students due to numerous military courses. They are also subject to military discipline and rigors of the curriculum. Consequently, the views of students and cadets had to be examined separately in the study. The percentages of students and cadets who participated in the survey are shown in Fig. 1.

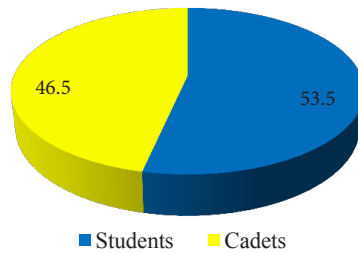


Fig. 1. Research participants: students and cadets at the Polish Naval Academy (%)

Source: own research.

A total of 150 surveys was distributed among the participants (75 for students and 75 for cadets), of which 131 were returned: 70 completed by the students, which accounted for 53.5% of the total responses, and 61 by the cadets (46.5%). The participants were students at the technical faculties, as well as the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The percentage split of the civilian students between the faculties is provided in Fig. 2.

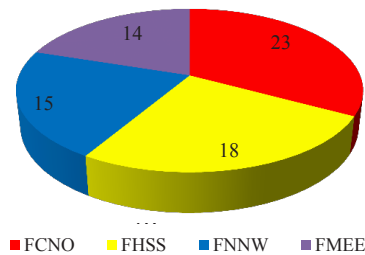


Fig. 2. Faculties (%)

FCNO – Faculty of Command and Naval Operations; FHSS – Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; FNNW – Faculty of Navigation and Naval Weapons; FMEE – Faculty of Mechanical and Electric Engineering

Source: own research.

The survey was conducted at four faculties, with 23 participants (33%) from the Faculty of Command and Naval Operations; 18 participants (26%) from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences; 15 participants (21%) from the Faculty of Navigation and Naval Weapons; and 14 participants (20%) from the Faculty of Mechanical and Electric Engineering. Among the civilian students, the majority of respondents (41 students, i.e. 59%) came from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences: while students from all three technical faculties were in the minority with 29 participants (41%).

The aim of the research was to investigate stereotypes in the group in question. Thus, a part of the questionnaire included a list of adjectives in a set order. Out of 30 attributes (15 negative and 15 positive), the participants were asked to choose ten that they found to characterize Jews most accurately. Importantly, the questionnaire did not suggest that these qualities are characteristic of Jews. The results from this section are shown in Figs. 3 and 4.

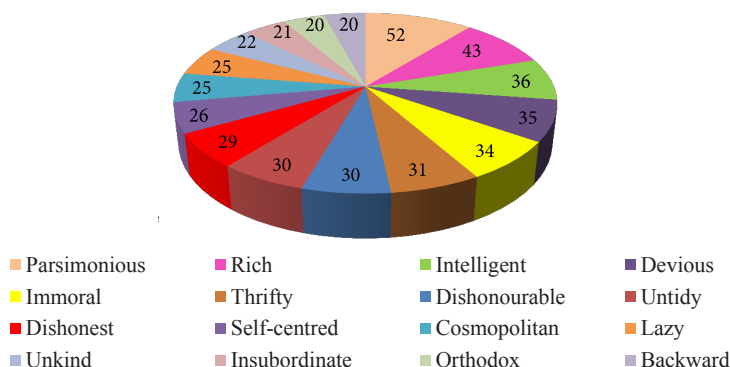


Fig. 3. Attributes most frequently selected by students of the Polish Naval Academy (%)

Source: own research.

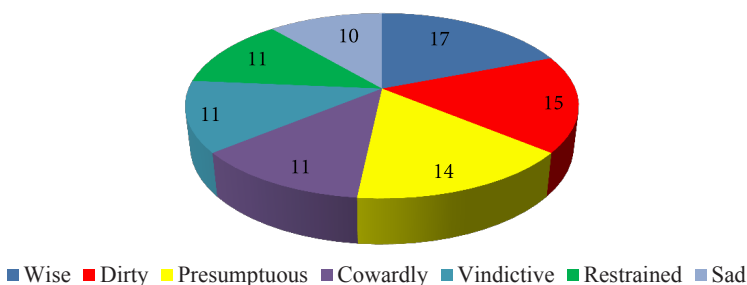


Fig. 4. Attributes least frequently selected by students of the Polish Naval Academy (%)

Source: own research.

The respondents had a choice of 30 adjectives, a selection allowing a precise description of a stereotypical Jew. There are significant discrepancies between the responses, with attributes such as “parsimonious” and “rich” achieving high response rates (over 74% and over 62%, respectively). The research shows that most civilian students who chose the attribute “rich” think that a Jew is also a parsimonious person. The attribute “rich,” according to the survey results, is the most distinguishing trait, and it is a negative one as well. Over 14 (27%) participants who chose the attribute “rich” also declared that a “Jew is a thief.”

Other attributes most frequently chosen by the civilian students are: intelligent (51%) and devious (50%). It seems that students chose the attribute “intelligent” because Jews are commonly considered to have contributed to the development of science and culture. Jews are believed to be both talented and smart, but also devious and seeking profit from whatever they do at the same time.

Further attributes selected by over 30 participants (43%) include: immoral, dishonourable, untidy and thrifty. Over 20 respondents (28.5%) chose attributes such as: self-centred, cosmopolitan, dishonest, orthodox, insubordinate, unkind, lazy, and backward. Most respondents indicated negative attributes, as presented in Fig. 5.

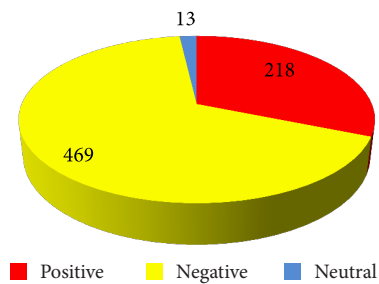


Fig. 5. The quantity and distribution of attributes assigned by the civilian students (%)

Source: own research.

The figures above show that 67% of the respondents opted for negative attributes, while 31% selected positive ones. The remaining 2% of attributes could not be assigned to either of the categories. It needs to be noted that positive characteristics attributed to Jews may ultimately prove ambiguous upon consideration. Characteristics such as “thrift” and “wealth” are not necessarily positive if a person believes to be immoral. A similar image of the Jew was outlined by CBOS (2015): “On the one hand, they [Jews] were characterised by attributes such as wisdom, intelligence, education and hard

work, thriftiness and frugality, and on the other hand they were considered to be crafty, cunning, likely to deceive, greedy and tight-fisted.” One can readily concur with the author of the publication, who further states that “as if on the margin of the image of a Jew skilfully doing business, there is a sentiment that Jews strive to take control over the whole world, and are uniquely united and supportive of one another. The image of Jews reconstructed from the opinions expressed in the poll unveils a complex relationship between Poles and Jews, where admiration is accompanied by envy.”

At this point, it is worthwhile to cite the opinions about Jews that students shared in the following parts of the survey. When asked what they thought of Jews, 10 students (14%) responded positively, 37 (53%) negatively, and 23 (33%) neutrally. The assessment is correlated with the choice of adjectives, as the majority of students chose negative attributes. It must be stressed that only 17 students (24%) had any direct contact with Jews and as many as 53 (76%) never had any direct interaction. The respondents acquired their knowledge about Jews from mass media (69%), their families (16%) or their university (15%). Furthermore, 20% of the respondents declared that they knew the history of Jews, 8% said their knowledge of that history was “fairly good,” and 51% did not know any historical facts or knew very little. The subsequent questions support these data, as only 41% of the students knew what *Shabbat* was, and 40% knew the date when the State of Israel was established.

The above results show that antisemitism is present among of students of the Polish Naval Academy. It may likely be rooted in Polish history and the contemporary political situation. The civilian students also noticed antisemitism in their environment, as shown in Fig. 6.

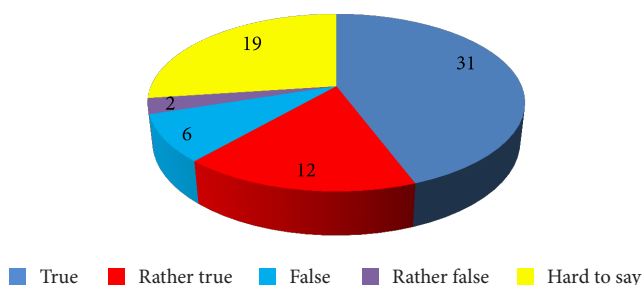


Fig. 6. The students of the Polish Naval Academy and antisemitism (%)

Source: own research.

What is more, most students (70%) defined antisemitism using expressions such as “Aversion to the Israeli nation,” “Intolerance to Jews,” “Dislike of

Jews,” and “Hatred of Jews.” However, as many as 30% of the civilian students claimed that antisemitism did not exist or they were unable to define it. The participants who stated the former made a positive assessment of the Jewish minority.

A majority of the respondents stressed that certain opinions expressed by their peers might imply their antisemitism; 44% stated that Jews are not liked by students, 17% suspected that antisemitism was likely to exist among students, 27% did not know how to answer. The participants who selected “hard to say” did not know what antisemitism was. Few students opted for “false” and “rather false,” including mainly those who considered antisemitism to be absent among students.

The respondents also thought that antisemitism was present not only in their peer group, but also at their school. This is borne out by the responses to the question: What approach to Jews is there at the academy? The distribution of answers is shown in Fig. 7.

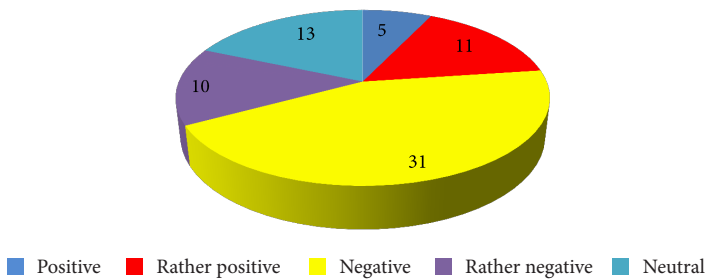


Fig. 7. The community of the Polish Naval Academy on Jews (%)

Source: own research.

Forty-four per cent of students thought the approach to Jews at the academy is negative, and 14% opted for “rather negative.” Most of the participants who indicated negative answers here also stated that antisemitism existed at their school and that a Jewish person would be perceived negatively at the Polish Naval Academy.

This background explains stereotypical notions relating to Jews. The civilian students named the following triads when describing Jews: thief, fraud, liar – sly, rich, guileful – thrifty, wise, frugal – tired of life, devious, hostile to people – skimp, scant, frugality – money, good in business, rule-abiding. The students associated the following concepts with a Jew: Israel, Judaism, jokes, prayer, persecution, ghetto, enemy, power, antisemitism, loan, tenement, parasite.

What is more, civilian students considered a Jew to be a thin, tall person with dark complexion, black hair, a beard and sidelocks. Most respondents declared that Jews typically have large brown eyes. A Jew also has a distinctive, aquiline, long nose. He usually wears a suit and a cap, the yarmulke. A Jew's clothing is dominated by black. None of the surveys mentioned a female Jew, therefore it can be assumed that students associate Jewish ethnicity with men.

The research findings presented so far support the predictions of the Bogardus distance scale. The questions were designed to assess the relation which the students were willing to establish with Jews and the distance they had towards them. The analysis shows that students of the Polish Naval Academy inclined towards exclusivity, as 54% of the participants would not want to live or interact with Jews. Over 40% would not want a Jew to become part of their family. Nearly every respondent who had contact with Jews would not want to live with them, nor would they like Jews to join their family. They also thought that Jews had a negative impact on Poland's development. Justifying their answers, the survey participants exhibited a stereotypical standpoint, although it does not seem to be antisemitic or xenophobic, as it does not include tendencies to discriminate against Jews.

The results from the sample of civilian students are all but surprising; they overlap with the views presented in the CBOS report (2015), according to which, "the image of Jews is deeply rooted in the past. On the one hand, Jews are associated with the war and the Holocaust; on the other, the stereotypical image of a Jew – a businessman, broker and banker – integrates an ambivalent feeling of admiration and resentment. The balance in Polish-Jewish relations is usually seen as equal on both sides. Only few people think that Jews experienced more evil than good from Poles."

This leads to the question of whether and, if so, in what way do these results differ from the answers provided by the cadets, who were subject to intense military education which involved discipline and, to a large extent, patriotic inculcation.

The questionnaire was completed by 61 cadets, i.e. 47% of the surveyed population. The cadets studied at two faculties of the Polish Naval Academy.

Most of the military respondents were cadets in the undergraduate programme, 25 of whom were freshmen (41%), while the fewest were in the senior year of the graduate programme, i.e. 4 persons (6%). The total of undergraduate students who completed the survey was 51, whereas only 10 surveys were received from cadets in the graduate programme.

The survey included the Katz–Braly checklist: a table with adjectives, 30 of which (15 positive and 15 negative) were to be selected by the respondents. The

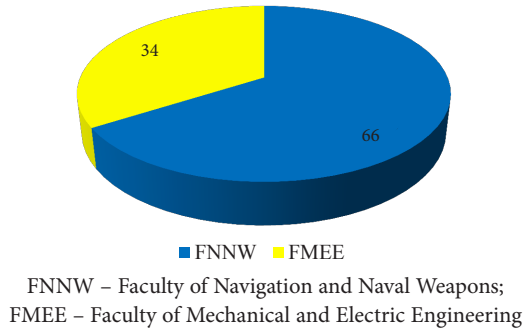


Fig. 8. Cadet distribution by faculty (%)

Source: own research.

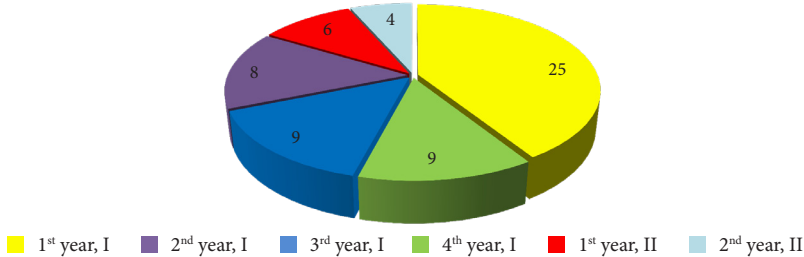


Fig. 9. Cadet distribution per year of study (%)

Source: own research.

cadets were asked to choose ten attributes that they considered characteristic of the “Jewish minority.”

In the survey questionnaire the cadets named the following attributes of Jews: parsimonious – over 69% (as compared to 74% in the civilian group), rich – over 67% (versus 64%), self-centred – over 65.5% (v. 37%), unkind – 54% (v. 30%), intelligent – 54% (v. 51%), and devious – 51% (v. 50%).

In the case of cadets, more attributes were selected by over 50% of the respondents. Cadets and students alike described Jews as parsimonious, rich, and self-centred. Cadets also chose the following traits out of the set of 30: devious, unkind, and intelligent (rated second by the civilian students). Most of these attributes were negative. Over 20 respondents (30%) also selected: domestic, sad, orthodox, and backwards. The majority of these attributes were negative, as shown in Fig. 10.

Fig. 11 shows that 57% of the military respondents selected negative attributes, 41% chose positive ones, while 2% opted for the neutral traits. In

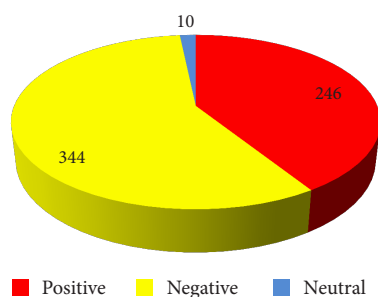


Fig. 10. The number and distribution of attributes assigned by cadets (%)

Source: own research.

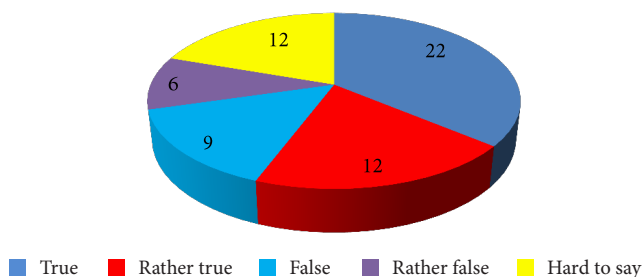


Fig. 11. Antisemitism at the academy as perceived by cadets (%)

Source: own research.

total, the cadets selected 344 negative and 246 positive attributes. The adjectival method shows that a Jew is considered intelligent, but they fail to be rated positively. The majority of participants named six qualities, only two of which were positive. Whenever Jews were considered rich, it was associated with being involved in questionable business and attaining wealth at someone else's expense. None of the survey participants selected positive attributes exclusively, and 10% chose nothing but negative ones.

Further study reveals that only 23 cadets (38%) had previous contact with Jews, and two of them had a Jew in their family. These participants pointed to positive attributes and claimed there was little difference in the behaviour of Poles and Jews. Those who had contact with Jews 15 (24.5%) gave them a positive or neutral rating. One cadet stated that “[a]voiding prejudice and reading the Bible lead to a positive attitude towards Jews.” Nonetheless, the majority of the 38 cadets (62.5%) who had no previous contact with Jews assessed them negatively, basing their judgement on information originating from the Internet as well as television commentaries.

It is interesting that the majority of cadets, i.e. 37 (61%), claimed to know the history of Jews, while only 9 cadets admitted having no knowledge. These declarations were corroborated by additional questions: 45 participants (77%) correctly explained what *Shabbat* was, and 47 (77%) accurately pointed to the date when the State of Israel was established. Furthermore, 80% of the cadets knew what antisemitism is. Most also considered antisemitism to be present at the academy, as shown in Fig. 11.

The surveys were completed by 61 cadets, most of whom found the statement that the students of the Polish Naval Academy have an antisemitic approach to the Jewish nation to be “true” or “rather true.” Moreover, 34 cadets (56%) thought that Jews were not tolerated by their community (36% “true,” 19% “rather true”). 15 participants (25%) claimed that antisemitism hardly existed, while 20% found it hard to say. The latter is puzzling; apparently, cadets might have been afraid to express their unfavourable judgments about Jews, so that they would not be accused of antisemitism, which 80% of the respondents described as: “Aversion to the Israeli nation,” “Intolerance to Jews,” “Dislike of Jews,” and “Hatred of Jews.” Simultaneously, cadets claimed that there was a general negative approach to Jews at their university. This is shown in Fig. 12.

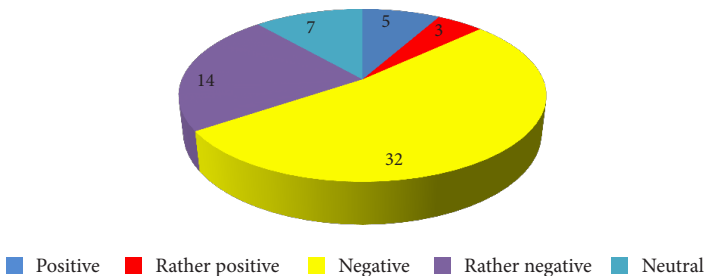


Fig. 12. The approach to Jews at the Polish Naval Academy (%)

Source: own research.

As presented in the diagram above, 52% of the cadets stated that the approach to Jews at the Polish Naval Academy was “negative,” and 23% opted for “rather negative.” Most of the respondents who rated Jews positively also admitted that Jews would not be approached likewise at their university. They suspected that antisemitism did occur at the Polish Naval Academy, which they confirmed in responding to the question concerning the opinions about Jews that they encounter at their university. The result is presented in Fig. 13.

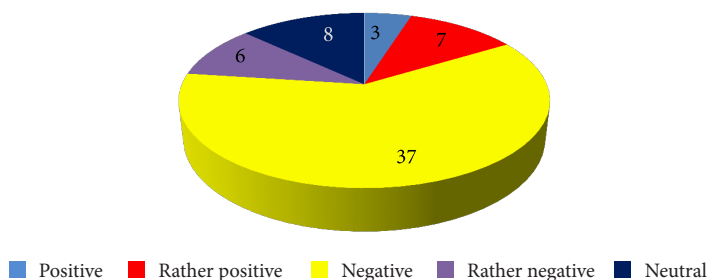


Fig. 13. Opinions about Jews at the Polish Naval Academy (%)

Source: own research.

The Polish Naval Academy cadets usually encounter negative or rather negative views relating to Jews. Such answers were chosen by 43 cadets (70%). Research shows that their answers stemmed from stereotypical knowledge about Jews. This includes views such as: “Jews desire to rule the world” and “Jews are: thieves, frauds, sly, dirty and devious people.” The cadets associate Jews with Israel, the Holocaust, *Shabbat*, Judaism, power, prayer, loan and antisemitism. When describing the external appearance of a Jew, cadets cited the same elements as civilian students: “A Jew is a thin, tall person with dark complexion, black hair, a beard and sidelocks.” The majority of study participants decided that Jews typically have large brown eyes and a distinctive, aquiline, long nose. A Jew was usually dressed in a suit and a yarmulke. Black colour predominates in Jewish attire.

The findings presented above bear out the predictions of the Bogardus distance scale. The study was designed to assess the relation which the students were willing to establish with Jews and the distance they had towards them. The results are shown in Figs. 14 and 15.

The cadets stated that they could not imagine Jews in the dormitory and in military studies due to their nature; they did not tolerate Jews, they did not like Jews, Jews were dishonest and immoral, they preferred to live with a Christian, they were afraid of Jews, Jews did not tidy up, were tight-fisted, Jews were treated as hostile persons, Jews did not sleep at night, also admitting that they were intolerant of Judaists. 18% of the respondents “would want” or “would rather want” to live with a Jew. These respondents had previous contact with Jews. The cadets would not want to have a Jew in the family due to religion, intolerance and the self-centred, “devious nature of Jews.” Fig. 15 illustrates the results.

Figs. 14 and 15 reflect a noticeable social distance to Jews exhibited by the cadets at the Polish Naval Academy, who show preference for an exclusive

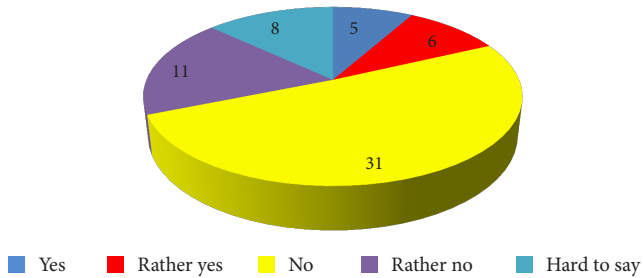


Fig. 14. The cadets' willingness to live with a Jew (%)

Source: own research.

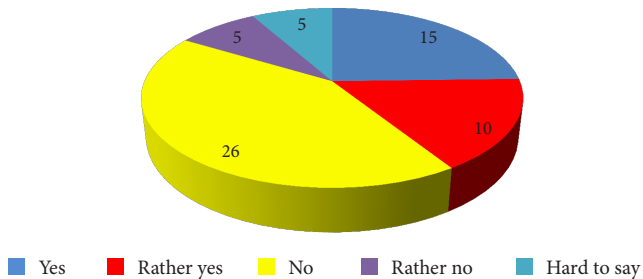


Fig. 15. Jew as a member of my family (%)

Source: own research.

community. The results may suggest they are not far from the stereotypical attitude, though would not be considered antisemitic or xenophobic. This approach is historically and politically conditioned.

Conclusions

In summary, the research demonstrates that both groups assigned more negative than positive attributes to Jews. The civilian students named a greater variety of attributes, choosing 710 adjectives altogether, 67% of which were negative. The cadets selected 600 attributes, 57% of which were negative. Both groups most frequently indicated parsimony: respectively 74% and 69% cases in the civilian and military group. Also, respondents in both groups described Jews using the following attributes: rich, self-centred, devious, intelligent, immoral, dishonest, unkind and backwards. In contrast to the civilian students, the cadets did not consider Jews good managers and thrifty people. The study

participants attributed the wealth of Jews to their self-centredness, deviousness and guile, while the civilian students also saw a connection with Jewish immorality, dishonesty and their business aptitude. Both groups deemed Jews intelligent.

The fact that the majority of respondents named negative attributes might lead to the conclusion that the students and cadets at the Polish Naval Academy think in a stereotypical manner and have a prejudice against Jews. This is supported by the information relating to mutual contacts and sources of information about Jews: both groups had had scarce contact with Jews and their knowledge about Jews was general and not thorough.

The majority of respondents declared that they knew what antisemitism is and both groups found it exists at the Polish Naval Academy, as they most frequently encountered negative opinions about Jews at their university. The students and the cadets alike demonstrated a certain distance towards Jews. Neither would want to live with a Jew, nor would they desire a Jew to become a member of their family. The cadets who stated they could live with a Jew had previous personal contact with Jews, whereas the civilian students did not wish to have any contact with Jews. The cadets had positive recollections of their personal contacts with Jews, while the civilian students only had bad memories thereof.

The attitude of Poles, including Polish students, to other nations is an outcome of many factors: stereotypes, personal experience, mutual historical narratives, current circumstances, or socioeconomic international relations. "Our attitude to nations we used to feel affinity with, i.e. the Italians, the Americans and the French, deteriorated, while the approach to the nations we used to like significantly less, that is, the Romanians, Ukrainians or Jews – improved."

To counteract the existing attitudes this study has demonstrated, one should:

1. Take actions aimed at preserving the memory of the local Jewish communities.
2. Undertake care of the cultural heritage, old neglected Jewish cemeteries in particular.
3. Commemorate local Jews with information boards and create educational and historical trails.
4. Hold educational workshops to discover the erstwhile presence of Jews in one's hometown.
5. Celebrate Holocaust remembrance day at higher education institutions.
6. Organize annual educational and historical trips for first-year students to Jewish memorial sites in Poland and to the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

7. Invite representatives of the General Consulate to meetings with students to present contemporary Jewish culture.
8. Arrange an online course run by the Jewish Center in Oświęcim.
9. Establish international exchange schemes.
10. Promote the Daffodils campaign in the student community, to commemorate the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.
11. Hold periodic seminars on religious freedom.

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