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Method and Meaning in Surveys on Attitudes to Jews in Poland¹

Abstract: This article is a methodological commentary regarding surveys on attitudes in Poland to Jews and publications on that research. It is intended to help in interpreting survey results and to prevent conclusions being drawn on insufficient grounds. The article shows some of the problems with interpreting and determining the meaning of survey results. It analyses, in this light, the survey meaning of the word “Jew;” numerical questions and answers; questions about attitudes—like and dislike, closeness and distance; answers expressing belief in Jewish power; and questions and answers in international comparative studies.

Keywords: survey research, meaning, attitudes toward Jews, anti-Semitism, Poland.

The basic issue addressed in this work is the meaning of answers received during surveys of Poles’ attitudes toward Jews. The first such surveys were conducted in 1976 and they have been done regularly since 1989 (Sułek 2013). There have been both public opinion polls, in which only a few questions were devoted to Poles’ attitudes toward Jews, and thorough academic surveys. Some surveys have been part of multinational surveys conducted by organizations monitoring anti-Semitism around the world or by other institutions. Thus a serious body of data has emerged, which is available not only in survey reports and sociological works published in Poland, but also in synthesizing works published in other countries (for instance, Hirszowicz 1993; Cała 2003; Sułek 2012a). This article is a broad methodological commentary on the data and publications. It is intended to help in interpreting the results and to prevent the drawing of insufficiently grounded conclusions.

This article has another aim. Jewish groups, attitudes toward Jews, and research into attitudes toward Jews are respectively complex collectives, constructions, and social enterprises; thus many questions on the methodology of social research can be weighed using these surveys as an example. To use the words of Robert Merton, this research is in itself a strategic research material.

Social researchers know how to put together questions, pose them to representative samples of respondents, and count and analyze the answers. Each of these abilities and phases of survey research has had many books, including textbooks, devoted to it. These abilities have acquired the status of *methods*, and methods can

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easily be learned. The difficulty lies with the last and perhaps most important phase of research: interpreting the answers, defining the meaning of the answers received, and relating them to the ideas that organize experience. Here there are no textbooks and learning to interpret depends to a large degree on analyzing cases, instances, and examples. An excellent learning tool as well as an inspiration for reflection and for doing experimental research into the meaning of survey answers has been provided by Howard Schuman (2008) in his book *Method and Meaning in Polls and Surveys*. The title of the present article has been taken from this work.

Using the example of research into attitudes in Poland toward Jews, this article will analyze the problems of defining the meaning of survey results. In this light, it will analyze the numerical questions and answers; the questions on attitude—like and dislike, closeness and distance; the answers expressing belief in Jewish power; and questions and answers in international comparative research. First, however, the survey meaning of the word “Jew” will be considered. In the present analysis there will be both methodological and substantive content; recommendations will also be formulated for researchers and their audiences.

Who in Poland are the “Jews”?

In surveys conducted in Poland, Jews are described variously: most often “Jews” are those “who are Jews,” but they may also be “Jews who live in Poland,” “persons of Jewish descent,” “Polish citizens of Jewish descent,” or other descriptions. It can happen that the research subjects do not know whether the question is about Jews in general, about Jews as citizens of Israel, or about Jews in Poland; thus the researchers as well do not always know about whom the respondents are speaking. There is no reason to doubt that the respondents semantically differentiate the categories of Jews, Jews in Poland, and Israelis. However, we know very little about whether they associate various positive or negative judgments with these categories and we need this information in order to know what the categories mean, as meaning also encompasses “the emotional flavor of the thought on which the process of understanding is based” (Ajdukiewicz 1974: 11).

The use in survey questions of the definitions “Jew” and “Pole” as separate categories and the publication of survey results on the relation of “Poles to Jews” raises feelings of discomfort among the more sensitive researchers who use these names (Kucia 2011) and criticism from researchers who do not use them (Tokarska-Bakir 2011). How do the surveys define “Jews,” what significance does the definition have, and what definition should be used?

Depending on the definition, there are from several thousand to several tens of thousand Jews in Poland: in a society of 38 million, this is no more than a thousandth part of the population. Being a Jew in Poland has many shades and varieties. Among Jews living in Poland, the Jewish component is variously weighted in their national identity, but generally it has about the same importance as the Polish component. Research has shown that Jews in Poland believe the most important points for their

Jewish identity are the experience of the Holocaust and sensitivity to anti-Semitism; then their descent; and then Jewish literature and music. Language, daily customs, and religion have the least significance (Wójcik and Bilewicz 2012). Various types of Polish-Jewish identity do not have a simple and generally understood nomenclature. Standardized surveys test phenomena of the consciousness that are crystallized and linguistically distinguished, while in a world of fluid borders and as-yet-unnamed consciousnesses, qualitative research or at least open questions, allowing for the free formulation of answers, are more appropriate. Representative surveys do not, however, investigate the identity of ethnic groups, but rather the relation of Poland's inhabitants to people of various nations and ethnicities. Thus the word "Jew" in the questions need not hinder this purpose.

In Poland, the word "Jews" is less the name of a collective existing in reality and more the name of a certain socially created representation. This is a role it suits well. The Jews about whom Poland's inhabitants think and speak in response to surveys are not only the Jews who live in Poland, or even the entire Jewish ethnicity: they are "symbolic" and "ostensible" Jews, a collective existence and simultaneously a construction of the collective imagination. For the biased mind, these distinctions, however, have no significance; it is assumed that people of a certain ethnic category are basically the same always and everywhere and that each of them has some inherent ethnic essence.

The language of the survey questions should correspond to the language in which the respondents think and its categories can be neither too conservative, as they would offend, or too avant-garde, because they would be unintelligible. In other words, in questioning people, it is necessary to use the words that those people use. Thus research into the historical linguistic changes of survey questions can be a method of researching linguistic changes in society: in America, for instance, the change of ethnic label from "colored" in the 1930s, through "Negro" and "black," to today's "African American" (Smith, 1992). Perhaps in Poland as well, with time, some ethnonym of the "Jewish American" or "African American" type will be adopted. As of now nothing of the kind is happening, but we can't know what we will think or like tomorrow. Regardless of what the designation will be, it will remain a label that encompasses various Polish-Jewish identities: Jewish Poles, Polish Jews, Jews living in Poland, Poles of Jewish descent, persons identifying as Polish and Jewish, and other terms.

All this is not so much, however, a matter of the words themselves as of their significance. Ethnic names are not innocent labels; often they not only signify, they emotionally mark the denoted person and are thus part of a reality marred by bias. But the opposite is true too: the above example of America indicates that with time each new, unburdened name is colored by the emotions evoked by a set group and becomes neutral only when the group is fully accepted into society. The name "Jew" will cease to be painful when society changes its emotional relation to the persons to whom it refers. Thus in Poland, while the word "Jew" may still be used as an epithet, it has equally been observed in surveys into stereotypes that by around 1989 the words "Jew" and "Jewish" had changed their emotional coloring in economic matters: the terms "traders" and "wheeler-dealers" had become "capable in business," and "self-

interested” had become “careful in financial matters” (Ryszka and Jasińska-Kania 1992). Attempts have also been made to “demystify” the word “Jew”—the most well known was the publicity campaign “We Miss You, Jews!” initiated by the performer Rafał Betlejewski (Michlic 2011).

What is more important than what the word “Jew” or the word “Ukrainian” will one day mean in Poland is how “Polishness” itself will be understood: inclusively, in a republican manner (“we are all citizens of the Republic of Poland”), or ethnically, exclusively (“if one is Jewish, one isn’t Polish”). It must be said that this latter meaning is rather well rooted historically and too well supported in today’s society to make it possible to count on its sudden atrophy. Without waiting for a change in the language, surveys have tested what changes of emotion were produced in the answers of Poland’s inhabitants by substituting various more or less inclusive terms for Jews who live in Poland for the general word “Jews” in a survey question.

In 2012, to the question “How would you describe your attitude to other nations?” in a survey by the Centre for Public Opinion Research (CBOS), 33% of respondents described their attitude to “Jews” as liking, 30% as neutrality, and 29% as dislike. When, however, in the author’s split-ballot experiment for CBOS in the same year, the term “Jews” (as a group like Germans, Russians, or the French) was replaced in the questions by “inhabitants of Poland” (whose Jewishness was variously defined), then regardless of the definition, neutrality was decidedly the dominant response, and liking was declared several times more often than dislike. It emerged, furthermore, that if Jews from Poland were named inclusively “inhabitants of Poland, who feel both Jewish and Polish” then declarations of liking for them were significantly increased (Sufek 2012b).

Table 1

Feelings toward Jews who are inhabitants of Poland, in three different questions (in %)

What feelings do you have toward:	Liking	Neutrality	Dislike	<i>Hard to say</i>	N = 100 %
Inhabitants of Poland, who are of Jewish descent?	15	73	5	7	354
Inhabitants of Poland, who are Jewish?	17	71	4	7	317
Inhabitants of Poland, who feel both Jewish and Polish?	22	66	4	8	342

The case is similar with the hypothetical marriage of “someone from the family” with a “Jew” and with a Jew who is a “citizen of Poland:” such acceptance is the standard measure of ethnic distance. In CBOS research in 2007, the marriage of a “Jew” with “someone from the family” was accepted by 50% and not accepted by 38% of the Poles surveyed (Jasińska-Kania, Łodziński 2008). In a CBOS survey experiment by the author in 2012, those against having a “Polish citizen” who “is a Jew” or is of “Jewish descent” or “feels Polish and Jewish” marry someone from the family was only 5–11% of those surveyed, while 77–87% of the respondents would have had nothing against such a marriage (Sufek 2012b). Neither the 5-year time gap

between the two surveys nor the difference in the questions' wording (in 2007 the question spoke of acceptance or its lack, while in 2012 it spoke of having "objections" or "no objections"), could explain such a large difference in the answers. In this experiment, in contrast to the previous one, the manner in which the Jewishness of a "Polish citizen" was defined did not have the expected influence on the answers. The explanation—but only *ex post*—of the difference between the experiments is that words weigh on the weak but not on the strong forms of expressing an attitude to others. People can be encouraged to like others, but not to accept a hypothetical marriage with some one of those others. What is important is only that the person is a Jew and a Jew from Poland, and not an undefined Jew.

It appears also that in researching the attitudes and distance felt toward Jews, a lower percentage of answers according with the anti-Semitic stereotype are received when Jews living in Poland are under discussion. "Jews," although less specific and more abstract, were significantly less often the recipients of neutrality than variously described Jews from Poland: they evoked more vivid, and more often negative, sentiments. It ensues that to research anti-Semitic prejudices it is better to ask about attitudes to "Jews," as this name more easily produces the stereotypes, while in studying attitudes to Jews as one of the ethnicities living in Poland, it would be better to ask in such a manner as to make clear that it was a matter of precisely this group. This differentiation could even be used to measure the strength of prejudices and distances: the dislike expressed toward the Jews of Poland signifies a *higher* degree of prejudice than dislike to Jews in general. The differentiation should also be kept in mind in interpreting the answers to questions measuring distance toward Jews and in comparing the results of research in various countries and at various times.

As a footnote it is worth observing that the word "Jews" appears in survey questionnaires with one other, exceptional, meaning. In addition to political anti-Semitism, there is religious anti-Semitism: an anti-Judaism originating from the earlier teachings of the Catholic Church (Weil 1987). In surveys, this type of anti-Semitism is measured by questions regarding the responsibility of the Jews for the death of Jesus. In Poland, the survey respondents were asked to respond to such pronouncements as: "Now, as in the past, Jews are responsible for killing Christ" (Golub and Cohen 1995), "Jews are blamed for the death of Christ" (ADL 2012), "Jews have so many difficulties because God is punishing them for the crucifixion of Christ" (Krzemiński 2004); 36%, 46% ("probably true"), and 15% respectively of the respondents agreed with these statements. The Jews in these questions (and answers) are something more than the ethnic-religious diasporic collective of today, or even of modern times. The questions speak of the Jews of two thousand years ago, identified with contemporary Jews to the degree that contemporary Jews are collectively to answer for and suffer for the words and deeds of Jews in the time of Christ. This occurs because Catholic theologians, including Pope Benedict XIV, are still weighing who are the "Jews:" the accusers in the descriptions left by the Evangelists of Jesus' prosecution—more "all the people" and "the crowd"—or "the Temple aristocracy" and people in the crowd (Ratzinger 2011: 199–202). The Jewish people are an exceptional nation in the sense that how they are perceived by people of other nations is influenced by the interpretation of

events that took place at a time when none of these other nations had yet appeared on the stage of history.

The Meaning of Numerical Questions and Answers

In the most recent survey into perceptions of Polish society's ethnic structure, Jews emerged as one of the most recognizable ethnicities in Poland; they were also spontaneously counted amongst its most numerous ethnicities (TNS OBOP [Public Opinion Research Centre] 2011). In a couple of other surveys, the respondents were asked how many Jews there are in Poland. The researchers were motivated not solely by curiosity, but by the conviction that a glaring elevation of the number of Jews is an element of an anti-Semitic worldview. The question about the number of Jews was asked in terms of percents, in terms of thousands and millions, and in quasi-quantitative expressions ("many," "few").

In the CBOS survey of 1996, in answer to the pre-categorized question "How many Jews presently live in our country?," 21% of respondents "fairly realistically" chose the range "to 50,000," 13% chose the inflated answer of "to 100,000," while the remaining 32% of answers fell—as it was put in the report—"on the edge of fantasy:" 10% of respondents chose "a quarter million," 8% "half a million," 14% "over a million" (CBOS 1997). In a 2002 reference study by Ireneusz Krzemiński, respondents were asked first "Do many or few Jews live in Poland?" and then "specifically, how many?" (Krzemiński 2004).

Table 2

Approximate and quantitative estimates of the number of Jews in Poland in 2002

Do you think there are many or few Jews living in Poland at present?	
Many + very many	28%
Few + very few	51%
I don't know, I don't care	14%
<i>Hard to say</i>	7%
Could you say precisely how many Jews are presently living in Poland?	
Several hundred thousand + several millions	12%
A thousand, two thousand — several tens of thousands	47%
I don't know, I don't care +	26%
<i>Hard to say</i>	15%

One important result of the research is to have established that a large part of Poland's inhabitants do not know, even approximately, the number of Jews in Poland: 26% of respondents themselves chose "I don't know, I don't care," and 15% were listed by the survey-takers in the "hard to say" category. Obviously, in surveys, part of the respondents will take advantage of offered or acceptable answers of the "I don't know" type and will save themselves the trouble of seeking in their minds for answers

to difficult questions, thus doubtless in this case as well there are fewer such people in society than in the survey, but not very many less.

What do these numbers prove? What do they mean?

First of all, such a widespread lack of any knowledge about the number of Jews in Poland could prove that for a considerable part of society this is not a significant piece of information. People do not collect and warehouse in their minds data that is unimportant for them. This is the nature of “rational ignorance” (Page and Shapiro 1992: 14). The scale of ignorance concerning other ethnic groups in Poland is doubtless similar. Poland’s inhabitants do not have any particular reasons to be more interested in society’s ethnic components than in, for instance, its proportions of rich and poor people. On the contrary, they have less reason, because Polish society is ethnically almost homogenous and ethnic divisions are not a source of social tension.

People’s knowledge about the number of Jews in Poland is a reflection of public knowledge. So many people have no idea about the number of Jews because no such number is circulating in the public discourse and thus they have no opportunity of learning it. However, if in the years 1992–1994 in Poland, Australia, France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States, respondents most often (34–36%) chose the correct number of six million when asked to give the number of Jews killed during the Second World War (Golub and Cohen 1995: 10–11), it was because such a number is intensely present in the sphere of public communication. A Google search turns up the phrase “6 million Jews” 50 million times!

The problem is not the lack of information, but false information. An extreme elevation of the number of Jews is connected with seeing them as a threat (Krzemiński 1994: 256): belief in the ubiquity of the Jews is actually part of an anti-Semitic world-view.

A high estimate of the number of Jews is partially an historical echo: people strongly overestimate the size of the Jewish collective in those countries where there were a lot of Jews. In Austria as well (Karmasin 1992: 31), and doubtless in other countries of East-Central Europe, the existence of a large Jewish society is a phantom of the social consciousness, and anti-Semitism in this region is metaphorically comparable to the phantom pain known to surgeons and their patients (Wisse 1987; Gross 2006: 30).

These mistaken imaginings are not limited to Jews, or ethnic groups, or minorities, or Poland, but are evidence of *population innumeracy*. In the United States, white Americans estimate the percentage of African Americans at twice the real number and in a European Social Survey in 2002 the inhabitants of nearly every country significantly overestimated the percentage of immigrants: Poles and Italians in particular, by 6–7 fold (Herda 2010). In Poland, the *average* estimate of the total size of ethnicities other than Polish among respondents of a TNS OBOP survey (2011) was 11 per hundred inhabitants. This is 3–4 times higher than it should be, and many respondents have as fantastic imaginings about the size of ethnic groups in Poland as in the above-mentioned estimates of the number of Jews. Such erroneous social perceptions result from a combination of feeling threatened and other factors. Among the latter is media saturation concerning minorities; the more people hear about them, the more

minority members they “see” in their society. “It is the eyes and not the size that matters” (Strabac 2011). Thus it might seem to some people that there are many Jews in Poland, because much is written and spoken about Jews: their history, culture, and Polish-Jewish relations.

The population innumeracy referred to here is only one variety of innumeracy, which is a general difficulty in dealing with numbers and mathematical concepts (Paulos 1988). The respondents do not usually know any numbers or percentages, thus they have to express their vague knowledge in the quantitative terms offered; they choose high or low absolute numbers and percentages, guided by their own sense of numbers. The numbers they give do not represent thus their quantitative information, but only a quasi-quantitative imagining of the “many” or “few” type; additionally, we do not know the principles by which they form a quasi-qualitative description into a quantitative one.

A split-ballot survey experiment shows this well (Sulek 2012b). One half of the national sample was asked the question “what do you think—how many among one *hundred* inhabitants of our country is a Pole of Jewish descent?” and the other half was asked how many among each *thousand* inhabitants of the country were persons of such descent. In each of the sub-samples the same number (53%) of respondents did not answer the question. The average estimate in the first sub-sample was 13.5 per hundred (S.D. = 15.0) and in the second 78 per thousand (S.D. = 120.7) or more than 1.5 times less. What is surprising is not only the unprecedented height of the estimates but also the very large difference between them and the answers’ dependence on the measure used. The difficulty of answering such a question could also result from the fact that the way the question was asked left the respondents without any direct cues to help them search their memory and the public discourse. While there are various numbers circulating in Poland concerning the different ethnicities living in Poland, one does not meet with percentages or descriptions of the “*n* per 100” type, as the minorities are too few in numbers and none exceeds one percent. In this situation, the most apt recommendation emerging from this experiment would be, in researching estimates of social minorities, to ask the question in the terms used in society, preferably in quasi-quantitative terms (“very many”—“very few”) or in terms of thousands, but without giving any numbers, in accordance with the advice of Norman Bradburn (1993): “When you ask about numbers, do not give any numbers!”

In addition to this particular recommendation, there are others that could be more generally formulated. Since overestimates of the proportion of Jews in society could result from so many various circumstances, their significance is not easily defined nor can they be regarded as indicating a single phenomenon such as anti-Semitism. The aptness of this warning is proven by the estimate of the number of Jews living in Poland made by a Jewish institution in Warsaw, the Moses Schorr Center (History 2012). In Poland, there are supposedly around 100,000 Jews, of whom 30–40,000 “have some sort of direct connection to the Jewish community, either religiously or culturally,” while the rest, as Stanisław Ossowski would say, are “unconscious members or potential members” of the Jewish ethnic group. The same 100,000 Polish

Jews of the Jewish institution's estimate turn out to be something quite other than in the answers to the representative survey.

The Meaning of Answers to Questions about Liking and Disliking, Closeness and Distance

Feelings, particularly of liking or disliking, are the most straightforward and easiest to grasp component of a person's attitudes to others or to foreigners. We can ask about them directly, in questions about liking, or somewhat circuitously, in questions about various aspects of ethnic distance.

In 1994, CBOS asked, in the context of ethnic minorities in Poland, whether the respondents would object to a family member marrying someone of foreign origin (CBOS, 1994). CBOS also asked the respondents whether they would object if Poland's prime minister were to be of minority descent. The first question concerned the private sphere, the second, the public one.

Table 3

In 1994—Acceptance of a family member marrying a person of minority descent and acceptance for such a person becoming prime minister (in %)

	Would you object to a family member marrying a person of the following origins:		Would you object to a Polish citizen of the following origins becoming Poland's prime minister:	
	I would have objections	I would not have objections	I would have objections	I would not have objections
Slovakian	22	69	48	44
Czech	23	68	47	45
Lithuanian	27	66	47	45
German	27	64	51	42
Belarusian	29	62	46	46
Russian	32	60	50	42
Jewish	43	49	51	42
Ukrainian	45	47	53	40
Romani	55	38	55	39

A Pole of Jewish descent would not have been accepted as a new family member by 43% of respondents among the then inhabitants of Poland, but would have been accepted by 49%. Jews were clearly one of the least-accepted minorities. But this survey outcome does not in itself mean much, as the readiness to accept an outsider into one's own family did not exceed 70% for any minority: Poles prefer one of "their own" to enter the family. The distance felt toward Jews measured by the question about a mixed marriage thus contains a component of the general distance felt toward those who are ethnic or religious—or perhaps more widely, who are socially and culturally—outsiders. "Like marries like:" the tendency to marry persons who are socially close is well known to researchers of social stratification (Domański

and Przybysz 2007). We marry among the persons with whom we live, but what also counts in such situations is the lower cost of mutual social adaptation and the related lesser risk of an unsuccessful marriage. From this viewpoint, unwilling acceptance of, for instance, the marriage of one's child with someone who is distinctly different ethnically, religiously, or culturally need not be caused solely by distrust of what is different, but also by a desire to avoid excessive risk. In the public sphere, even more than in the private sphere, it is visible that the distance felt toward Jews in Poland is not exceptional or limited to Jews. In the above survey, approximately half of Poles would not want to have a prime minister who belonged to an ethnic minority, and whether the minority was the Jewish one or some other group was irrelevant.

The significance of answers about liking and distance in regard to a set ethnic group can thus be grasped by a multifaceted, controlled comparison, where the specific distance is composed of several components. Anti-Semitism consists of a specific enmity toward Jews and a general xenophobia, as long-term research into changes in society's feelings toward Jews and other ethnicities has additionally confirmed. Below we present a series of indicators for the period 1993–2010 (CBOS 2011). The questions did not concern Jews alone, but many other ethnicities/nationalities as well (tables 1 and 2). Over the course of nearly twenty-two years there has been—although not without regresses—a clear warming in attitudes toward Jews: this is moreover the continuation of an earlier trend established in OBOP surveys in the years 1975–1992 (Jasińska-Kania 1992). We would not know what the decline in antipathy toward Jews means, however, without placing it in the context of changes in attitudes to other ethnicities/nationalities.

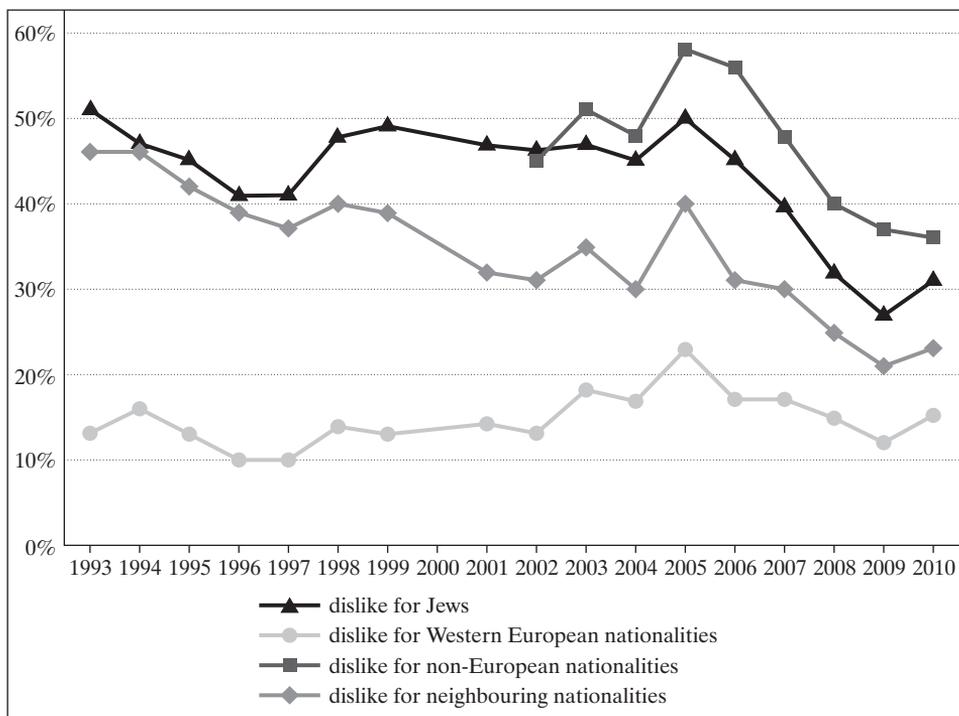
The change in the percentage of dislike among Poles for Jews occurs more or less parallel to changes in the percentage of dislike for other neighboring nationalities, counted together: Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, and Russians. Differences are also visible. In the second half of the 1990s, dislike for Jews ceased to recede, and even gained (this was probably connected with the outbreak of a Polish-Jewish dispute about Poles' relation to the Holocaust) and until around the middle of the next decade it remained at approximately the same elevated level. During the same period, the erosion of dislike for Poland's neighbors, although also hindered and slowed, continued.

A comparison of the general decline in dislike for Jews with changes in the aversion felt toward non-European ethnicities that are even less liked than the Jews—Arabs, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Romani (originating outside Europe)—is also curious. In the years 2002–2011, the curve of dislike for these ethnicities ran parallel to the curve of dislike for Jews, but at a distinctly higher level. The curve of dislike for Jews was nearly the same as the curve of dislike for two Balkan ethnicities—Bulgarians and Serbs—and to Romani.

The decline in dislike for Jews observed in Poland is thus in large measure part of the general tendency toward feeling less aversion toward less-liked ethnicities; in Poland, xenophobia is declining and this influences feelings toward many nations. Probably, the real decline is somewhat less than is registered, as respondents may have felt the rising pressure not to *display* aversion toward other ethnicities, but there

Graph 1

Dislike for Jews in the context of dislike for neighboring, Western European, and non-European nationalities: 1993–2010, in %



Source: on the basis of CBOS data (2011).

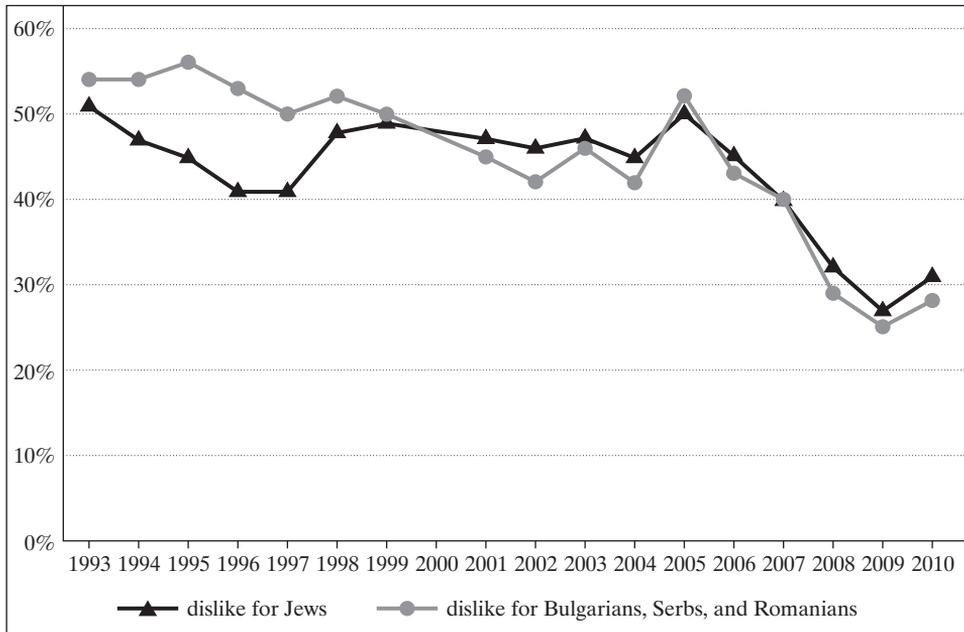
is no obvious reason why this rise should solely concern dislike for Jews. It is only in this context that the place of Jews in the scale of feelings and distances toward other ethnicities can be seen. In Poland, they are located much lower than Western European nationalities (including Americans) and lower than Poland's neighboring nationalities, but higher than non-European nationalities/ethnicities (including Romani). These multiple time series and direct comparisons, although they show the distance felt and changes in this feeling, are not, however, able to display its conditioning: the factors that make dislike for Jews deeper and more lasting than dislike for many other ethnicities/nationalities. Dislike for Jews is supported by a specific "prejudice structure," in the broader worldview that is anti-Semitism.

The Meaning of Answers to Questions about Jewish Influence

A type of research that concentrates more than surveys do on specific traits of attitudes to Jews is research into the content of stereotypes and cognitive schemas. Aversion and the negative characteristics of the stereotype do not alone distinguish the attitude to

Graph 2

Dislike for Jews in the context of dislike for Balkan nationalities and Romanians: in 1993–2010, in %



Source: on the basis of CBOS data (2011).

Jews from attitudes to other ethnicities.² What is unique is the belief in Jewish control, the conviction that Jews exert enormous, disproportionate, and undesirable influence on economic, political, and media institutions, and thus on the entire society; in addition, they do this covertly, underhandedly: “the conspiracy stereotype is a central component of anti-Semitism” (Kofta 2001). In survey research, questions involving an evaluation of Jewish power and influence are therefore used as a measure of anti-Semitism. In Poland as well, the question about Jewish influence has been asked since the beginning of the regular surveys on attitudes to Jews.

In the light of survey research, it is indubitable that a large percentage of Poles easily accept the view that Jews have a large, or a bit too large, influence in Poland, and that this is one of the highest such percentages in Europe (Bergmann 2008). For example, in an international survey by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in 2008, 50% of respondents in Poland agreed with the statement that “Jews have too much influence in Poland;” the respective percentage for Hungary was 69%, but the percentages for countries of Western Europe fell within the 6% (the Netherlands) to 28% (France) range (Zick *et al.* 2011: 56–57). The problem is the *meaning*, the interpretation of this data. In Poland, there are very few Jews and they do not have any particular, collective,

² It is difficult here to find a better argument for this thesis than the negative stereotypes of Poles among Polish Jews before the war (Hurwic-Nowakowska 1996: 44–45) and in certain present-day Jewish American milieus (Cherry and Orla-Bukowska 2007).

and intentional influence on the country's affairs; they are not even a separate political, economic, or cultural entity. The above-mentioned answers can not, thus, be treated as simply a false description of reality, but rather as acceptance of the anti-Semitic belief in "Jewish influence."

Research has shown, however, that Poles are generally distrustful of others (Czapiński 2011) and willingly ascribe secret influence to many groups and organizations; moreover, in their opinion, Jews are one of the least, and not the most, influential groups of hidden power. When the Poles surveyed were not evaluating solely Jewish influence, but had to choose the most influential groups among those known to them or evaluate the influence of Jews among other groups, and thus had to think about and compare Jews with other groups and not solely respond to the stereotype of Jewish influence suggested to them by the survey, then the conviction about Jewish influence suddenly lost its popularity.

This was indicated in a survey by the American Jewish Committee in 1995 (Golub and Cohen 1995) and confirmed in a CBOS survey of 2005 in which the respondents were asked to evaluate "how large a hidden influence a given group or organization has" on "political and economic events in Poland, in Europe, and in the world" (unpublished data). Poles ascribed the greatest "secret power" to the following, successively (the average estimate on an 11-point scale—1 to 10—is given in parentheses): an informal group of politicians and businessmen "holding power" (6.81), large entrepreneurs (6.89), foreign capital (6.72), an old-boy network of economic and political elites (6.70), the EU administration (6.60), Polish criminals and mafia (6.16), figures from the former Communist regime (6.04), the Church (5.30), foreign criminals and mafia (4.95), and allies of France and Germany (4.70). Jews occupied eleventh place in this ranking (4.62) and below them were only secret societies (4.31) and the masons (3.92).

What, however, does the answer about "Jewish influence" mean? What is the structure of the conviction it reflects?

The traditional file-and-drawer model of opinions assumes that people have a ready opinion and in a survey they simply reach for it and display it for the survey to register. This is often the case in fact, but it is only one end of the continuum of situations encountered in public opinion research. Survey respondents have often not previously given any thought to the matters on which they are questioned, or if they have thought, it was not to the point of having formed a lasting view that need only be recalled for the purpose of answering a survey. According to the widely accepted belief-sampling model of the question-answering process, people may have inclinations, dispositions, and tendencies, but an answer emerges only in the survey situation: it is formed by the connection of deeper inclinations and the respondent's most readily accessible information—for instance, the information most recently disseminated by the media or circulating in the environment (Zaller 1992). The question about "Jewish influence" is one of those questions for which some respondents will have a ready answer, because they have views, but for which other respondents will only try—not always successfully, as is shown by the large percentage of "I don't know" answers—to form a response on the spot.

The research results mentioned above—the answers to questions about Jewish influence—do not justify the easy conclusion that a large percentage of Poles have a view on the subject and that they live with the conviction (which the survey simply reflected) that Jews are very influential in Poland. In Poland, “Jewish influence” is not a controversial issue, or one on which most people have a position. The ready acceptance of such a claim in research test situations leads rather to the conclusion that the schema of Jewish influence is deeply rooted in the collective consciousness in Poland and is easy to activate.

The difference between these two conclusions is shown by a survey experiment conducted in 2002 and repeated in 2012 (Sulek 2012c). The respondents were first requested to list, themselves, “the groups or persons having too much influence on affairs in our country.” In 2012, 45% of respondents mentioned politicians, 7% those in power, 9% wealthy persons, 7% businessmen and wealthy entrepreneurs, and 12% the Catholic Church and priests. Only afterwards were the respondents asked “if any of the ethnic minorities living in Poland has too much influence on the affairs of our country:” Jews were then spontaneously mentioned by 6%. At the end, the respondents were asked directly: “What influence on affairs in our country do the Jews who live in Poland have?” 19% of respondents chose the answer “too much.”

Table 5

Perceived Jewish influence in three types of questions, 2002–2012

Type of question	2002	2012
What groups or persons in our society have too much influence on affairs in our country? Spontaneously: Jews	1%	1%
Do any of the ethnic minorities living in Poland have too much or too little influence on affairs in our country? Spontaneously: Jews	19%	6%
What influence on affairs in our country do the Jews who live in Poland have—too much, too little, or as they should? Too much	43%	19%

We are well aware that in surveys of attitudes, the answers depend on the questions—on their form, wording, and context (Schuman and Presser 1982). In the case of this experiment they are dependent because the questions have different meanings: they touch different layers of consciousness. The belief about Jewish influence is multilayered. Particular layers are revealed in various research situations, defined by the type of questions: some questions will reach to deeper inclinations, while others will register superficial convictions. Answers to different questions mean different things.

The results of this research argue in favor of three theses.

1. In Poland, Jewish influence is not an issue present in daily thought or so salient that it is recalled to mind almost automatically whenever people begin to think about the country’s government. In ordinary conversations about politics, privileged groups,

or marginalized groups, ethnic categories rarely appear and there is no (survey) proof that Poles think that “it’s all because of the Jews” and not, for instance, “it’s all because of the politicians, businessmen, foreign capitalists, or machinators.”

2. In Poland, the schema of Jewish influence is easy to activate. It can be produced even by weak stimuli: for instance, the evocation of an ethnic context (“ethnic minorities”), never mind a direct mention of the subject of Jewish influence. People to whom it would only exceptionally occur that Jews have too much power in Poland fairly easily agree with the idea when they encounter it.

3. The mention alone of undefined ethnic minorities and their influence is becoming increasingly less likely to lead to the schema of Jewish influence. In 2002, 19% of respondents needed only a reminder of ethnic minorities to produce the schema. Today, however, the same percentage of respondents requires a considerably stronger stimulus—an explicit reference to the Jewish-influence stereotype.

This simple longitudinal survey experiment shows how necessary a substantive theory of the convictions being researched and a methodological theory of the question-answering process are for the interpretation of survey answers.

The Meaning of Answers in Comparative Research

Anti-Semitism is a transnational problem and research into attitudes toward Jews—real and imagined—is conducted in many countries. Descriptive surveys, as in the research of the American Jewish Committee and Anti-Defamation League, serve to monitor anti-Semitic attitudes in the world and to compare countries with one another. More refined comparative surveys are not used to make these comparisons; they would serve, however, to elucidate the differences between countries: for instance, the difference in intensity of anti-Semitism. Every type of comparative study requires comparable measurements, and it is not a matter here of identical questions, but of their equivalency, of their same theoretical significance, because different societies require different questions to provide the same meaning. Charles Osgood (1967) long ago put this complicated issue in the form of four simple questions: “When is the same really the same? When is the same really different? When is different really the same? When is different really different?”

In studies into attitudes toward Jews, people in various countries are asked, for instance, whether in their opinion Jews have a lot or a bit too much power. If questioned about Jewish influence on world affairs, a confirmative answer means the same in every country: faith in a Jewish “world conspiracy” and that “Jews rule the world,” which is part of the universal canon of anti-Semitic thinking. Therefore, on the basis of the percentages agreeing with the statement “Now as in the past, Jews have a bit too much influence on what is happening in the world” (AJC 2005), we are entitled to speak of international differences in the dissemination of political anti-Semitism.

If, however, the question does not concern “Jews,” “the world,” or “international finances,” but expressly concerns the influence of Jews living in various countries on affairs in those countries, the matter becomes more complicated. In the opinion of

Frederick Weil (1987: 174–175), the question about Jewish influence is not a “pure measure of anti-Semitism” since “it contains an evaluative or empirical component—whether Jews have proportionately more power than their share of population.” In regard to American society, Tom Smith (1994: 8) claims that while it is admittedly possible to see “testimony to the persistence of a key anti-Semitic belief, many of the expressions that Jews have too much power do not represent any hostility to Jews or any call for action to remedy the situation.” For instance, those Americans who say that Jews have too much influence in business rarely consider that “something should be done to take power away from the Jews,” and if they do, then it is not because they are animated by anti-Semitic resentment, but because they think monopolies or the size of enterprises should be restricted. This is one more argument to prove that the question about Jewish power as a measurement of political anti-Semitism is not equally valid in all countries: the smaller, less distinct, less organized, and less significant is the Jewish collective in a particular country, the larger will be the question’s validity.

In a sketch entitled “How Comparative is Comparative Research?” the then director of the European Social Survey, Roger Jowell (1998) warned against a too easy recognition of differences in international comparative results as proof of the existence of factual differences between countries. In particular, he pointed out that minor differences in the data collected probably resulted either from differences in the wording of the sentences and the way they were understood by the respondents, or from differences in the way the survey was organized and the social conditions of its realization, including the strength of pressure to return socially desirable answers and avoid undesirable ones. It is thus not worthwhile to attempt to explain, sociologically, the few percent differences in intensity.

However, the significance and sociologically perceptible causes vary distinctly between groups of relatively homogenous countries, formed by a common or similar historical experience. Stanisław Ossowski (1964) called such groups “genetic sequences.” And thus the greater intensity of anti-Semitism in the countries of East-Central Europe in comparison with the centre of Western Europe was explained by Weil (1985) as due to the centuries-long presence of Jews, anti-Semitic nationalism, Catholic domination, and the lack of a liberal democratic tradition in Eastern Europe. Werner Bergman (2008), on the other hand, explained the diversity of anti-Semitism in today’s Europe by the attitude of societies to the history of their countries: in countries that were responsible for, or aided in, the destruction of the Jews, or were generally indifferent to their fate, and that have not yet internalized this experience, Jews are often perceived as a threat to national identity and to society’s moral self-esteem.

Jowell also warned against an excessive extension of the range of international comparisons: “The fact is that devoid of detailed local knowledge of the social structure, history and the culture of the country or countries being investigated, an analyst is powerless to do much more than describe and gawk at the variations.” The same holds for the researcher who does not know what meaning, in various societies, is assigned to the same or similar-sounding questions and answers. Therefore, for ex-

ample, without knowledge of Israeli society, we can only “gawk” at the 71% of Jewish inhabitants of Israel who in a 1993 survey by the Guttman Center agreed with the claim that Jews (including Israelis) who live abroad “have a lot of economic power (money) and political influence in the countries where they live,” while in Poland in 2008, to the question of “how much influence on affairs in our country do the Jews who live in Poland have?” (“a lot” or “little”), the respondents answered contrarily: 26% answered “a lot” and 54% answered “little” (TNS OBOP 2008).³ The meaning of the survey claim for Israelis was explained to the author of this article by an analyst from the Guttman Center: “most Israeli Jews understand this statement as referring to positive attributes of Jews, showing how important and prominent Jews are all over the world.”⁴ It is hard to find a more persuasive warning against a mechanical comparison of answers to an individual question, as is often practiced in public presentations of the results of international monitoring of anti-Semitism (see Winiewski and Bilewicz 2013).

A methodology of measurement requires that complex multi-item measurements should be used rather than individual questions in the assessment of theoretical constructs such as anti-Semitism. The methodology of comparative research has additionally produced methods of intercultural translation and of assuring the equivalency of survey questions. Models to follow and sources of inspiration for researchers into attitudes toward Jews might be the Polish-American research into the dependence between social structure, the complexity of work, and values conducted by Melvin Kohn and Kazimierz Słomczyński (1990) and the European Social Survey with its sophisticated intercultural methodology for attitude measurement (Jowell *et al.* 2007).

A Very Brief Conclusion

Stereotypically, meaning is accessed by imagination, insight, and empathy, while method is discipline, rigor, and algorithms. The products of method—words, numbers and texts—yet require interpretation: a certain medieval Jewish scholar wrote that a text cries “interpret me!” (Taswir 2009: 83). In the above article it has been shown how the results of surveys on attitudes toward Jews in Poland and on other opinions can be interpreted, the meanings of the answers determined, and methods chosen so that with the basic tools of survey methodology, and in particular controlled comparisons of results and survey-based experiments, it will be possible to give the answers the meanings they were intended to have. In the spirit of Howard Schuman’s conclusion to *Method and Meaning in Polls and Surveys*, it can be said that the survey method can be used to explain the meaning of its own products.

³ There are several Polish surveys from the same period as the Israeli survey, but the question in them was about Jewish influence, and not about the Jews who live in Poland, and about whether this influence was too much or too little, and not whether it was large or small.

⁴ Israel Democracy Institute, Guttman Center, Continuing Survey, week 266, 1064 (February 14th–March 22nd, 1993); information received from the IDI. E-mail from Raphael Ventura, 13 July 2011.

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