

The Aftermath of Jan Gross's Neighbors:
Recasting Poland's Collective Memory

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Abstract

Discusses the impact of Jan Gross's book *Neighbors*, published in 2000, on Polish-Jewish relations with regards to the Jedwabne massacre of 1941.

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INTRODUCTION

For many centuries Poland was known as a land that valued social autonomy and religious tolerance and it was considered a safe home for Jews. The number of Poles honored by Yad Vashem in Israel as Righteous among Nations is 4,454 out of 25,000 people (The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, 2013).¹ However, despite Poles saving many Jewish lives during World War II, the war created the context for the murderous actions of some Poles against Jews. In 2000, Jan Gross addressed these actions in his book, *Neighbors: The Destruction of The Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Jedwabne was the site of a massacre on July 10, 1941, where Jews were slaughtered not by Nazis but by local Poles (Gross, 2000).

Gross documents this massacre with horrific stories of beatings, murders and the slaughter of an entire group of Jews who were driven into a barn set aflame. He included accounts of the event by survivors who witnessed the massacre. The book resulted in extensive media attention as well as significant academic notice. *Neighbors* was especially controversial because Poles saw themselves as victims of the war and had lost any historical consciousness of their own involvement in the Holocaust. Gross's account of the events at Jedwabne resulted in deep divisions among Poles and initiated the first serious debate about their relationship with Polish Jews.² The publication of *Neighbors* led to intense media scrutiny of Jedwabne's history and inhabitants. Anna Bikont, a journalist from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, describes the Polish reaction

¹ Righteous among Nations are non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews from extermination by the Nazis.

² Gross's assertions were somewhat undermined when misstatements were found in his account. Poland's Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) found that Gross overstated the number of victims and provided misleading statements about the crime (Wokół Jedwabnego, 2002).

by saying that after the publication of Gross's book, "the wound exploded" (Bikont, 2013). Journalists wanted to know who participated in the massacre and asked citizens about their parents and grandparents. As Gross's assertions gained more publicity, the media intensified its analysis of the events and began criticizing past and present-day citizens of Jedwabne. The town's residents grew increasingly agitated and became hostile to outsiders. They maintained their belief that Germans, not Poles, were responsible for the massacre, and that the media had persuaded some to falsely confess they had participated in the slaughter.

On July 10, 2001, the president of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, came to Jedwabne and participated in a sixtieth anniversary mass in the Jewish cemetery. He stated, "We stand on tormented land. The name of Jedwabne, tragic to its current inhabitants, by a decree of fate has become a byword summoning the demons of fratricide in human memory" (Kwaśniewski, 2001). He added,

I apologize in the name of those Poles whose conscience is moved by that crime. In the name of those who believe that we cannot be proud of the magnificence of Polish history without at the same time feeling pain and shame for the wrongs that Poles have done to others. I desire with all of my heart that the name of this town should not only remind us of the crime, but that it should become a place of reconciliation (Kwaśniewski in Michlic, Polonsky, 2004, p. 132).

Kwaśniewski declared his hope that Poles and Jews would not merely coexist but that they would also do so in harmony.

On August 16, 2013, I visited Jedwabne to investigate what, if anything, has changed in the social consciousness of the community.³ I was disappointed to find very few people on the town streets. They silently watched everything I did. There is still hostility to strangers and resistance to those who have different beliefs than their own about the events of 1941. The

³ Jedwabne is a small town in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, Łomża County. In 2002 there were 1,942 inhabitants (<http://www.jedwabne.pl/>).

Jewish cemetery is hidden and when asked for directions, an older woman immediately covered her face and answered quickly, “If you want to talk about Jews, go and talk to the priest” (Jedwabnan resident).⁴ Former mayor of Jedwabne, Krzysztof Godlewski, fled the town in 2001 because he was viewed as unacceptably pro-Jewish (Bikont, 2013). Krzysztof Moenke, (2013) the current mayor of Jedwabne, says that even though he is open to talking about Polish-Jewish relations, he does not participate in the yearly anniversary (Moenke, 2013).

In light of these local responses, one can ask the question: Is anger and resentment all we are able to expect between these two cultures? In my paper I will go beyond Jedwabne and examine the broader impact of Gross’s book in Poland. Seen from a national perspective, the book has indeed been instrumental in producing a transformation of Poland’s collective memory and its ability to come to terms with the past. In order to do so I will be using three methods of assessing the impact of the book: (1) the opinions of intellectual commentators, (2) an analysis of public opinion polls on the topic, and (3) the treatment of the Jedwabne massacre in high school textbooks. Examination of these three factors leads to the following conclusion: Gross’s book has changed the historical consciousness and social sensitivity of Polish society. Poles have made substantial and positive changes by addressing this period in their history, especially in comparison to other post-communist European countries like Russia, which I will discuss in my conclusion. Wojciech Roszkowski (2013) describes this transformation by stating that between Poles and Jews, there exists an “understanding between the two cultures” (W. Roszkowski, personal communication, August 17, 2013). In this context, it is important to note that the Polish word “understanding” is often translated to the English word “reconciliation.” Subtle differences

⁴In small Polish villages the priest is most often the leader and the father of the town.

in language, therefore, may affect how Westerners view Roszkowski's representation of this process of change. The Polish word for "reconciliation" (*pojednanie*) is similar to the English words "rapprochement" and "conciliation;" however, the Polish word for "understanding" (*porozumienie*) correlates with the English word "agreement." It is less strong than "reconciliation," thus Polish intellectual commentators are cautious when they speak of 'reconciliation' between these two cultures, preferring the term 'understanding' due to the complexity of the subject. Yet it remains clear that because of Gross's impact, Poles and Jews have been and are working progressively towards establishing more constructive and fruitful relationships.

As an example of the extent to which Poland continues to engage the past, in 2012, Polish movie director Władysław Pasikowski released his thriller *Aftermath* which was inspired, in part, by Gross' book. The movie examined massacres in Poland during World War II, which included coverage of the Jedwabne murders. Although the film was not shown in Jedwabne itself and received mixed reviews in Poland, it was welcomed by critics in the United States and elsewhere who applauded Polish objectivity in recognizing and discussing the culpability of Poles in the crimes committed against Polish Jews. *The Los Angeles Times* called it one of the best movies of the year (Turan, 2013). The movie also won several awards, including the Yad Vashem Chairman's Award at the Jerusalem Film Festival, the Jan Karski Eagle Award, and the Critics Prize at the Gdynia Film Festival 2012 (Onet.Wiadomosci, 2012). The film *Aftermath* demonstrates the capacity of Poles to reflect on their World War II experiences and, if they are willing, to make important changes in their collective understanding about the past.

Framing the Study

French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first established the concept of collective memory. According to him, collective memory specifies the memory inherited or created by a specific group of people who share a common pedigree, i.e., a family or a nation. The notion of a collective memory can be either shared or passed on by small or large groups of people (Halbwachs, 1992).

According to the Polish Scientific Publishing Dictionary (PWN), historical consciousness is similar to collective memory. Historical consciousness is highly colored emotionally and entails positive or negative evaluations of historical figures and events, examples of deeds worthy of imitation, and positive or negative evaluations of the past compared to the present (PWN). Mullin, in contrast, argues that the difference between collective memory and historical consciousness lies in accuracy. "...History concerns itself with establishing, or more accurately approaching truth, while collective memory is concerned with producing a positive self-image for in-group members, regardless of facts. While history can demonstrate a fractured past, collective memory aspires to produce a coherent narrative and relate that narrative to the present through both committed and omitted errors" (Mullins, 2011, p. 11). In their article, *The Role of Repeated Retrieval in Shaping Collective Memory*, Roediger, Zaromb and Butler discuss such "errors in memory." They state that whenever errors in memory are committed, advice and responses can be taken from others to correct it. They divide memory errors into two categories: commission, meaning recalling information incorrectly, and omission, meaning not recalling significant information (Roediger, Zaromb, Butler, 2009, pp. 152-153). Since the publication of *Neighbors*, Poles have been challenged to "correct" their collective memory in part by coming to terms with a new consciousness of their history. Both errors of commission and omission in

Polish-Jewish relations have been publicly confronted. Before 2000 Poles perceived themselves primarily as victims of the past. Fourteen years later my research indicates that Polish collective memory is transforming in a positive direction.

However, the process of “correcting” collective memory “errors” is never an easy one and so scholars have paid significant attention to the dynamics underlying change in collective memory as historical consciousness evolves and encompasses new information about the past. For example, in his article, *Martyrs and Neighbors: Sources of Reconciliation in Central Europe*, Padraic Kenney compares Poland and the Czech Republic with respect to how they have come to terms with the expulsion of Germans after WWII. He suggests that Poland has been more open to reconciliation with Germany than has the Czech Republic. In his analysis, the influence of bishops in the Polish Catholic Church such as the future Pope John Paul II and Solidarity were central to this process (Kenney, 2007). Gregor Thum, in his book, *How Breslau Became Wrocław during the Century of Expulsions*, echoes Kenney’s findings. In his analysis of how Poles overcame the “moral and intellectual scandal” (p. 385) of forgetting the city’s German past, Solidarity again looms large as an explanatory factor as the movement challenged Polish public opinion on how Germany should be perceived. Through a gradual process Poland and Germany have undergone a cultural reconciliation. “West German support during the Solidarność period in the 1980s had a great impact on Polish society” (Thum, 2011, p. 388). More recently, changes in Polish historical consciousness have been supported in the context of the greater European community as Poland’s return to Europe (and membership in the European Union) have encouraged a positive transformation of collective memory by fostering ‘good neighborliness’ and the overcoming of the past through active ‘memory work’ to produce shared understandings of history. The degree of success of Polish reconciliation with its neighbors by

modifying its collective memory and historical consciousness can be elevated to even greater significance if we compare the Polish situation to other post-communist countries which I will assess in my conclusion.

The process of achieving understanding or even reconciliation between former Polish and Jewish neighbors is driven almost entirely by the publication of one extremely contested book written by a very controversial Polish-Jewish historian. Following the 1989 collapse of communism, Jews thought they would be able to speak freely about their experiences during World War II. Unfortunately, there was still a great deal of discomfort about Poland's experience in the war and the interactions of Poles and Jews during the war. Jan Gross's account of the events at Jedwabne was controversial because he exposed Polish participation in the Jedwabne massacre to a wide audience. This information was not well-received and fourteen years later there is still disagreement about the events. In an interview with the weekly magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Jan Gross defended his narrow focus in *Neighbors* by insisting that he was only interested in telling a story. "I was interested in describing history, and not in the political, cultural, or religious implications. The less the taboo, the easier the discussions" (Gross, 2008). During the interview, Gross asked where exactly in his book he offends his readers. If he hurt them, he wondered whether it was because he told the truth or because he lied. "I remember every sentence from the book, and I have a sense that none of the sentences are written by accident and I am willing to defend every single sentence" (Gross, 2008).

In order to assess the book's impact, I visited Poland in August 2013. I focused on the cities of Kraków, Częstochowa, Łódź, Warszawa, and the village of Jedwabne. I interviewed acknowledged Polish intellectuals and public figures including politicians, government officials,

historians and journalists.⁵ The results of these interviews are included in the first section while the second section incorporates data from public opinion polls taken since the book's publication that measure possible changes in public perceptions about Polish-Jewish relations. These polls show how familiar the public is with the massacre at Jedwabne and what impact these revelations have had on public opinion. The third section assesses how Poland's high school history textbooks have dealt with the Jedwabne massacre. Determining what information is available at this level may help evaluate what impact the revised history has had and will have on younger generations.

Gross's book shocked Poles and necessitated an examination of their perceptions about their relationship with Jews. While this process can effect temporary changes in historical and social consciousness, any lasting transformation is dependent on the continued willingness of individuals and collectivities to engage in reflection about past events. Sometimes only a change of generations makes continuous examination and self-critical honesty possible. Gross's book has been a significant factor in coming to terms with the past.

⁵ I chose interviewees by dividing them into two major categories: 1) Journalists from major Polish newspapers who have published on the topic: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*. I also interviewed journalists from *Do Rzeczy*, a new weekly editorial newspaper. I was interested in comparing their responses from 2000 to their assessments of current Polish-Jewish relations. I was also interested in their assessment of the impact of Gross's book 2) Well-known professors, directors, politicians, and religious leaders, who, by way of mass media and various public forums have been discussing this topic. I asked them such questions as, "How have things changed in Jedwabne since *Neighbors* was published, if at all?" "How has the recent movie *Aftermath* been received in Jedwabne?" "Are many people from outside Jedwabne coming to see the Memorial or have things returned to 'normal' since President Kwaśniewski's visit?" "How are people of different generations coping with the past in Poland?" "Has teaching in the schools helped or hindered how young people understand the past and Polish-Jewish history and relations?" "Jedwabne has become a symbol of the massacres and a site of remembrance of the Jews killed by Poles; has it now become a site of reconciliation as well?"

SECTION I

ASSESSING THE BOOK'S IMPACT: INTELLECTUAL

COMMENTATORS

Before the release of Gross's book *Neighbors* in May of 2000, residents of Jedwabne and other cities in Poland only spoke about the Jedwabne massacre and other atrocities committed against Polish Jews in hushed tones. In 2000 Bikont interviewed Leon Dziedzic, a resident of Jedwabne, who revealed that everyone in the city knew what happened on July 10, 1941. "But," he stated, "all of these conversations took place in private, at home, or with friends in a bar" (Bikont, in Polonsky, 2004, p. 272). According to Moenke, the town's current mayor, residents of Jedwabne are fearful to discuss their history with outsiders. They are weary, he reports, of the media asking them the same questions over and over again. They seldom open their doors to strangers anymore or engage visitors in conversation. As the subjects of continuous accusation, even in 2013 inhabitants of Jedwabne still feel victimized by the public (Moenke, 2013).

According to Bikont, six months after Gross published his book, the media began an assault on the residents of Jedwabne (Bikont, 2013). Journalists asked Jedwabnans if they knew whether family members had participated in the massacre. As *Neighbors* gained traction, the media published articles and news briefs criticizing the past and present-day natives of the town. Jedwabnans were defensive as a result of this onslaught of public degradation and became hostile to outsiders. Residents claimed that it was Germans, not Poles, who were responsible for the massacre, and they blamed media for goading unsuspecting interviewees into confessing wrongdoings in which they had not in fact ever partook. Public opinion across Poland was split into two factions, those who believed that Poles had perpetrated the massacre, and those who

believed that Poles were merely the victims of an unfounded media attack. Moenke agrees with Bikont regarding the media offensive which followed the publication of Gross's book. Moenke states, "The most difficult years in Jedwabne were 2000 and 2001 because of the media attack. The media kept driving out to Jedwabne, harassing citizens around town, and shoving microphones up to their mouths while asking them, 'Who participated in the Jedwabne destruction? You? You? Was your family killing people? Tell us the truth!'" (K. Moenke, personal communication, August 10, 2013).

Doubtlessly, as a result of the relentless media pressure, the town's inhabitants would endorse Piotr Forecki's assessment of the book's intent and impact: "As a Jewish historian, Gross wove lies and slander into his book, which is further evidence of the existence of the Anti-Polish phenomenon in the West. Gross's main goal was to hold Poles partly responsible for the Holocaust, to attribute anti-Semitism to Poles, and to compel financial reparations and the return of former Jewish property" (Forecki, in Bender and Nowak, 2011). In such accounts, Nazi Germany is held to be solely responsible for the Holocaust, with Gross misleading his readers into believing that Poles were guilty given that the Holocaust occurred on Polish soil. Fortunately, this victim narrative is not the only response to Gross's book.

Andrzej Kaczyński, a journalist from *Rzeczpospolita*, wrote one of the first major articles which revealed the Jedwabne massacre. His May 5, 2000 article "Burnt Offering" begins with the statement, "In Jedwabne, the German extermination of the Jews was carried out by Polish hands" (Polonsky, 2004, p. 50). He petitioned the Polish people to examine their collective conscience and to repent for their past injustices. Thirteen years later, during my interview with him, Kaczyński states that he sees improvement between the two cultures and describes the increasing amount of information which is now available in Polish media on the matter. It is his

hope that Poles will continue to become more informed about the historical memory they share with Poland's Jewish communities (Kaczyński, 2013).

In her book *Return of the Jew*, Katka Reszke describes the Polish-Jewish relationship as entangled and complicated. "Poland was home to the largest Jewish community in pre-war Europe, but was also where the worst horrors of the Holocaust happened. Poland can never be normal for Jews. Not for the Jewish visitors, perhaps not even for the local Jewish population" (Reszke, 2013, p. 38). Echoing her concerns, Joachim Russek, Director of the Judaica Foundation in Kraków, believes that Poland struggles with an underdeveloped political culture and is not entirely open to Judaism. Some Poles still refer to themselves and Jews in terms such as "us" and "them." "Us" in this case denotes good Catholic citizens of Poland and "them" means anyone not of our background living in Poland. But Russek goes on to emphasize that not all Poles are anti-Semitic (Russek, 2013). He expects that Poles should improve Polish-Jewish relations because learning about and accepting other cultures is an investment in Poland's future. In order to successfully achieve this task, Poles must be aware of their neighbors' common and unique histories (Russek, 2013).

According to Bikont, the relationship between Jews and Poles has indeed improved since 2000, though very slowly. There are numerous festivals, celebrations, and conferences held regularly in Poland which promote the art, music, and history of both cultures. Yet, Bikont is somewhat dubious about the motives of many of these events, citing that Jewish klezmer music (a form of Eastern European Jewish music) and food is more likely to draw crowds rather than Poles desire to connect with Judaism. She dislikes Jewish stereotypes evident at the festivals, such as one theatrical production where actors don "Jewish costumes" and then mingle with the crowd. Nonetheless, Bikont endorses educational tours which occur throughout Poland's larger

cities that examine Poles' and Jews' historical relationship, and which also promote cooperation amongst the two cultures (Bikont, 2013). In contrast to Bikont, Rabbi Gurary Eliezer of Kraków enjoys the festivals and believes they are constructive learning experiences for everyone. He posits that the klezmer music typical of these festivals connects the two cultures (Eliezer, 2013). Jonathan Ornstein, Director of the Jewish Community Centre of Kraków, moved from New York City to Poland twelve years ago and also sees significant improvements in Polish-Jewish relations since 2001. Besides the investment which each culture must make in the other, Ornstein emphasizes the importance of learning to overcome stereotypes. He stresses that Jews sometimes need to see Poles from the Polish perspective and accept that Jews were not the only victims of the war. He states that "In contemporary Poland we need to learn how to deal with stereotypes and move on. I think that as Jews we have a hard time accepting the suffering of others" (J. Ornstein, personal communication, August 18, 2013). Rabbi Gurary Eliezer of Kraków is equally positive about his city and sees wide-ranging improvements in Jewish-Polish relationships. He believes there is little, if any, anti-Semitism in Kraków today. He feels safe and respected by his Polish neighbors. Eliezer has lived in Poland for seven years and notes that, "...it is the only place where there are no security guards in front of the synagogues" (G. Eliezer, personal communication, August 21, 2013). He adds that today Kraków is a city open to Jews as visitors and immigrants alike. Kraków is considered to be pro-Jewish and there are numerous Jewish institutions, synagogues, and restaurants found throughout the city (Eliezer, 2013).

Within the last decade Jews living in Poland have become more at ease with disclosing their identity to non-Jews. "Jews in Poland are 'coming out of the closet'," states Reszke (p. 35). She believes that Jewish inhabitants of Poland welcomed the debate that occurred after Gross published *Neighbors* (p. 38). Polish commentators such as Roszkowski agree with this, and while

he describes the reaction to Gross's book as "an earthquake" for Poles, he views the outcome optimistically (Roszkowski, 2013). Piotr Zychowicz, a journalist from *Do Rzeczy*, emphasized during our interview that he sees progress in the information available in Polish bookstores, "Many Polish bookstores now have a specific section for 'Judaica,' similar to bookstores in other countries. One can find books and publications related to Jewish history, synagogues, and cemeteries in Poland as well as other Jewish cultural topics" (P. Zychowicz, personal communication, August 16, 2013). Poland also arguably holds more Jewish festivals and art projects than any other country in Europe. "Nearly every Polish city now holds a Jewish culture festival of some sort, and almost every day a Polish-Jewish subject is brought up in the media" (Reszke, 2013, p. 36).

Since 2000, there has been mounting interest in research on Polish-Jewish relations. The Institute of National Remembrance has promoted studies that examine factual information about the Jedwabne massacre. The Polish Center for Holocaust Research has launched investigations into the history of the Holocaust. Jakub Nowakowski, Director of the Galicia Jewish Museum, verifies that the debate which began in 2000 after the publication of *Neighbors* has persevered. Following the release of *Neighbors* in 2000, heated debate ensued regarding Polish participation in the Jedwabne massacre. In 2013 the discussion continues, both sides however having made much progress in understanding each other's side of the argument. As an example of progress, Nowakowski noted that there has been a significant change in the terms of the debate over Jedwabne from whether Poles participated to consideration of the percentage and character of Polish participants in the tragedy (Nowakowski, 2013).

Zychowicz, for example, is a firm believer that criminal miscreants were responsible for the Jedwabne massacre. He explains, "In contemporary Poland people are searching for the

causes of the massacre and there are numerous stereotypes about Polish-Jewish relations. Anti-Semitism and Anti-Polonism exist in Poland, as in the rest of the world. There is still much ignorance, unawareness, and misunderstanding” (P. Zychowicz, personal communication, August 16, 2013). It is important, he says, to restore balance to the discussion. In Zychowicz’s view, Nazi Germany is responsible for the Holocaust in Poland, not Poles. “In the Jedwabne massacre, Polish riffraff – people living on the margins of society – murdered the Jews, not the Polish people as a whole. People often forget about the specific people involved and focus instead on the general idea of the tragedy, and rather than analyzing the problem deeply from a multitude of perspectives, they make a sweeping generalization” (P. Zychowicz, personal communication, August 16, 2013). He asserts that Poles who are prejudiced against Jews should recognize that not every Jew is a communist who hates Poland and likewise that Jews should understand that not every Pole is a murderous culprit. Zychowicz also states that no one should forget about the Poles who hid Jews during the war even though it could have resulted in their own deaths (Zychowicz, 2013). Russek, Director of the Judaica Foundation in Kraków, agrees with Zychowicz. Although he believes that the poison of anti-Semitism still exists among Poles, it appears as a “verbal anti-Semitism” with no evidence of “operational anti-Semitism.”⁶ He adds that the perception of Polish anti-Semitism by foreigners who visit the country is too simplistic because of the stereotypes involved (Russek, 2013).

The responses of intellectual commentators regarding Gross’s *Neighbors* are as complex as the topic of Polish-Jewish relations in general. Overall, there is a cautious consensus that the book and the ensuing debate have changed historical consciousness in Poland and that collective memory is in the process of being transformed. However, there are limits to this transformation

⁶ Verbal anti-Semitism which exists today occurs primarily via the Internet or on soccer fields.

and there are still challenges to overcome. Ignorance, prejudice and misunderstandings still exist and true reconciliation in the Polish sense has not yet taken place. Interestingly, among those I interviewed, the Jewish commentators seem more optimistic than their Polish peers. According to the former, it is important for both communities to communicate and to continue discussing polarizing stereotypes, not only because it is a good investment in Poland's future but also to honor their rich shared history. While commentators may be in agreement that Gross has produced a wide-ranging debate that has facilitated mutual understanding, it is unclear to what extent Polish society has actually participated in this transformation. In my next section I will present public opinion polls that examine societal levels of awareness regarding the facts behind the Jedwabne massacre as well as the attitudes of Poles toward Polish-Jewish relations in general.

SECTION II

ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

As interest in Jedwabne grew following the publication of *Neighbors*, historians, sociologists, and researchers began polling public opinion about various aspects of the massacre. This section examines surveys conducted over the past fourteen years that evaluate the degree to which Gross's book changed Polish perspectives on Polish-Jewish relations. While numerous surveys exist which study Polish-Jewish relations from a general perspective, there are only four definitive surveys that sample public knowledge on the Jedwabnan massacre between the years of 2000 and 2014. However, the more general survey polls measure Gross's impact indirectly by examining overall sentiment in Poland about Jews.

CBOS (Public Opinion Research Center) conducted a survey on the Jedwabne massacre in April 2001 and then repeated the survey in August 2001 due to intense public debate after *Neighbors* was released. The second survey compared its results to the older ones to see what effect, if any, new information may have had on Polish sentiment about Polish-Jewish relations. The following table divides the results into two groups: (1) participants who were aware of the massacre, and (2) all participants. CBOS asked the respondents who they believed to be the perpetrators of the massacre.⁷

⁷ The addresses of the adults who participated in the survey were chosen randomly. The second survey was taken August 3-August 6, 2001. Respondents who participated in both surveys were different each time and they were 15 years of age and older. CBOS described the study as an open survey in which people gave spontaneous answers. The responses were categorized by the type of reply (CBOS, 2001, p. 3). The letter "N" refers to the number of people who participated in the survey.

Figure 2.1 Participants of the general public who were/ were not aware of the Jedwabne massacre (2001)

CBOS In your opinion who was the perpetrator of the crime? (Cumulative responses)	Participants in the general public who knew of the Jedwabne massacre		All Participants	
	April 2001 (N=857)	August 2001 (N=866)	April 2001 (N=1036)	August 2001 (N=964)
	In Percent			
Only Nazi Germany	41	32	34	28
Nazi Germany and Poles	16	19	14	17
Poles Alone	9	11	7	10
Others (Soviets)	3	5	2	5
It's difficult to say	31	33	26	30
They did not hear about the Jedwabne massacre	-	-	17	10

If we take into account all participants in the survey, we observe that one sixth (17%) believe that both Nazis and Poles were culpable, and one tenth (10%) that Poles alone were the perpetrators. The survey shows that between April 2001 and August 2001 perceptions about Jedwabne changed. In August fewer respondents answered that Nazis solely murdered the Jews (down to 28% from 34%). We observe an increase from 14% to 17% among respondents who believe that Poles and Nazis were both responsible and there was also an increase from 7% to 10% in the belief that Poles alone were to blame. 27% of all participants believe that Poles participated in the massacre, whether with Nazis or alone, up six points from April.

In 2001 the respondents were confused about the truth. 28% blamed Nazis for the massacre. This study also showed that 30% had no opinion on the subject. When that percentage is added to the 5% who believed that other nations were responsible for the massacre and the 10% who had heard nothing about the crime, 73% of respondents in August had inaccurate or

insufficient information about the massacre. In general, the August results indicate that in 2001 Poles were unsure who was responsible for the crime. However, the results above show that over time, the number of those who held Nazis alone responsible decreased in number, and the number of those who held Poles responsible or partly responsible increased.

A survey completed in 2011 by Dr. Antoni Sulek, professor and sociologist at Warsaw University, shows measured differences in respondents' beliefs about who participated in the Jedwabne slaughter between 2002 and 2011 (Figure 2.2). Between 2002 and 2011 the number of respondents that were not sure who killed the Jews in Jedwabne decreased by 10%. However, the number of those who said they had not heard about the massacre doubled during that same timeframe. In 2002, 50% of the respondents had an opinion about the massacre. By 2011, this increased to 54%. The graph shows a 4% increase in the number of those who believed that local Poles were solely responsible for the massacre between 2002 and 2011, and it shows a 6% decrease in the number of Poles who believed that Poles were forced by Nazis to murder the Jews at Jedwabne.

Figure 2.2 Poles' views on participation of Poles and Germans in the Jedwabne massacre (2002 and 2011)

Poles' Views on Participation of the Poles and Germans in the Jedwabne Massacre. 2002 and 2011 (Percent)		
SULEK	2002: There was a discussion recently about the crime committed against Jews in Jedwabne	2011: I am sure you remember or know that 10 years ago there was a discussion in Poland about the crime committed against Jews in Jedwabne
	In your opinion, who murdered the Jews in Jedwabne?	
Local Poles without Nazi Participation	1	5
Poles Encouraged by Nazis	9	13
Nazi Germany with Polish Help	14	10
Poles Forced by Nazi Germany	17	11
Only Nazi Germany Without Poles	9	15
I am not sure	44	34
I did not hear about it	6	12

Figure 2.3, also compiled by Sulek, examines beliefs about Jedwabne of students from varying educational backgrounds. Figure 2.3 indicates that there was an 11% increase between 2002 and 2011 in the number of high school respondents who believed that local Poles, encouraged by Nazis, murdered the Jews in Jedwabne. Interestingly, this change occurred despite the fact that there was no change in the content of these students' school textbooks regarding Jedwabne. In fact, up until 2012 no high school textbooks even covered the Jedwabne massacre at all. Figure 2.4 indicates that 18% of high school aged students had not heard about Jedwabne in 2002, and by 2011 unawareness in that group more than doubled to 41%.

Figure 2.3 Poles' memory of the Jedwabne massacre (2002 and 2011)

Poles' Memory of the Jedwabne Massacre (Sulek)						
Education and Views of Participation of the Jedwabne Destruction, 2002 and 2011 (Percent)						
Education	Who do you think murdered the Jews in Jedwabne?					
	Local Poles, Without Nazi Participation: Poles Encouraged by Nazi Germany		Poles Forced by Nazis: Only Nazi Germany Without Polish Help		Nazis with Polish Help	
	2002	2011	2002	2011	2002	2011
Primary and Secondary	4	8	26	37	13	11
Vocational	7	11	25	31	12	13
High School	12	23	25	24	18	10
Bachelor and Masters'	29	33	27	20	10	13
Total	10	18	26	26	14	10

Figure 2.4 Respondents unaware of the Jedwabne massacre (2002 and 2011)

Respondents unaware of the Jedwabne massacre; 2002 and 2011 (Percent) Sulek		
Age Group	2002	2011
15-19	18	41
20-39	6	16
30-39	5	11
40-49	6	10
50-59	5	8
60 and more	4	4
Total	6	12

The fact that Gross's findings regarding the Jedwabne massacre published in *Neighbors* in 2000 were so widely publicized calls into question why, by 2012 (Figure 2.2), over one-third of respondents were still unsure about who perpetrated the Jedwabne slaughter. The simplest explanation is that some people are likely to forget what they learned ten years prior. It appears that despite the publicity Jedwabne received over the past decade, many Poles still know little of it. And even if the Poles surveyed knew about Jedwabne, it seems that many have little interest

in learning about who was responsible for the crime. It may be surmised that this subset of either unaware or uninterested respondents tends to forget what they have heard on the topic, and thus they were confused by the questions in the survey. While the reasons for why people forget are unclear, what is clear is that extended periods without new information lead to less recollection. According to Sułek, “In the last nine years, unused information about Jedwabne moved to the periphery of our responders’ memories. Consequently, this information becomes difficult to access, and when it has not been active for a long time it is then forgotten” (Sułek, 2011, p. 43).

Figure 2.2 indicates that in 2002 only 1% of those surveyed believed that Poles alone were perpetrators. In 2011, that percentage increased to just 5%. Sułek is not surprised by this because, as he states, the questions are difficult and the respondents need information about the events as well as the motivation to answer. Certainly some respondents are less informed than others and may want to save themselves the effort of formulating answers. He believes that in general Poles have little historical knowledge (Sułek, 2014).

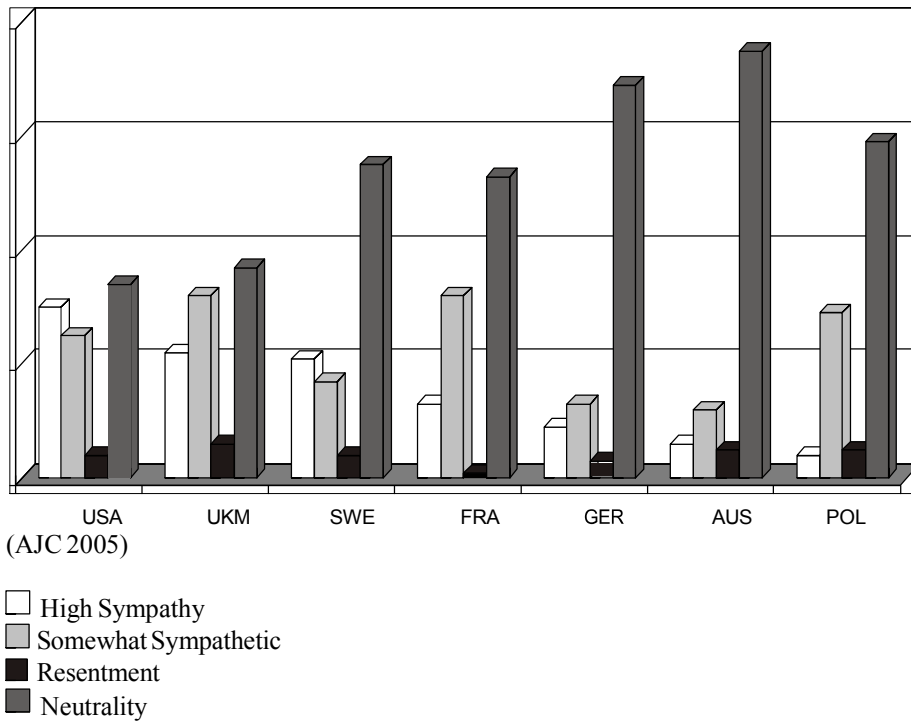
A description of one group’s attitudes with regards to another should commence with what the former knows of the latter. Yet a significantly large fraction (sometimes even half) of the Poles surveyed cannot even vaguely approximate the number of Jews currently living in Poland, neither in thousandths nor in proportions. This should surprise no one. People have no source for such an accounting because no figure functions in the public realm that could be remembered like the broadly recognized number of six million Jews murdered during the Second World War. The fact that ordinary people do not know how numerous the Jewish community is in Poland today could also signify that it is not crucial for them. We neither seek nor accumulate in our memories information that is immaterial for us (this is the basis for so-called rational ignorance). Moreover, the majority of common folk are poor at numbers (“innumeracy”), especially large numbers regarding lesser known issues – and the ethnic composition of society in Poland is just such an inconsequential topic (Sułek, 2012, p. 427).

Based on this analysis, it is not surprising to see the large numbers of survey respondents who reportedly knew nothing about Jedwabne even after the media frenzy following the release

of *Neighbors* in 2000. Figure 2.4 indicates that in 2002 just under a fifth of high school aged students had never heard about Jedwabne, and that number rose to over two-fifths in 2011. In 2011, in other words, 41% of high school students were unaware of the Jedwabne massacre. However, according to Figure 2.3, between 2002 and 2011 high school students who had heard of Jedwabne (still a majority of students!) nearly doubled their opinion that local Poles were solely responsible for the massacre, while the number of students who thought that Nazis and Poles were co-responsible fell by almost half. So, how can one explain this outcome? In a context of generally declining knowledge of Jedwabne, those who did know of the massacre correctly ascribed responsibility to Poles. According to a high school history teacher, “There was no information in high school textbooks about Jedwabne [before 2012], and it depended on each teacher whether or not he covered Jedwabne in class. Certainly the Jedwabne massacre was embarrassing to discuss, therefore it was often omitted in curriculum (high school history teacher, 2013). So how did students seem to know more about the massacre in 2011 than they did in 2002 despite the fact that the material was not incorporated into textbooks until 2012? Of course some instructors discussed it individually in their classrooms, but other potential sources of learning include information passed on through primary and secondary sources such as parents, the internet, popular media including television, newspaper, and magazines as well as scholarly articles, academic journals, and public forums. According to Sulek, somewhat in contradiction to his earlier analysis, within the last decade the issue of the Holocaust, particularly the theme of Polish violence against Jews, is often raised in public discourse and in the media. Poles are accepting the bitter truth about their past (Sulek, 2014). In order to better understand Poles’ awareness of the Jedwabne massacre, analysis of public opinion polls reveal a vast array of details on Polish-Jewish relations as they exist in Poland today.

Since 2000 several surveys have explored general perceptions about Polish-Jewish relations. The figure below shows results from a 2005 study completed by the American Jewish Committee on whether Poles and other European countries think about Jews with sympathy or resentment. In most of the countries, including Poland, Jews are viewed neutrally. Great Britain and the United States are the two countries with the highest relative rates of sympathy for Jews.

Figure 2.5 Levels of Sympathy towards Jews by Country



Figures 2.6 and 2.7 denote Polish sentiments of resentment and sympathy towards Jews between 1993 and 2012. Figure 2.8 condenses information from both Figure 2.6 and 2.7. In 2001 sympathy was at 19% and resentment was at 47%. In 2008 and 2012 sympathy towards Jews was at its highest peak for the years surveyed at 34% and 33%, respectively, while during these same years resentment was at an all-time low.

Figure 2.6 Changes in Resentment toward Jews

CBOS Nation	Responses of the Respondents																	
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2010	2011	2012
	In Percent																	
Jews	51	47	45	41	41	48	49	47	48	47	45	50	45	40	32	27	31	29

Figure 2.7 Changes in Sympathy towards Jews

CBOS Nation	Responses of the Respondents																	
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2010	2011	2012
	In Percent																	
Jews	15	17	25	26	28	19	19	19	23	21	18	20	20	23	34	31	31	33

Figure 2.8 Attitudes of Poles towards Jews (2012)

CBOS Nation	How would you describe your attitude towards Jews?				Median*
	Sympathy	Neutrality	Resentment	Difficult to say	
	In Percent				
Jews	33	30	29	8	0.14

*Median is measured in a range of -3 to 3, with -3 signifying the highest resentment, 0 being neutral, and 3 signifying the highest sympathy.

Figure 2.8 indicates that in 2012 one-third of Poles surveyed felt neutrality towards Jews. The American Jewish Committee’s 2005 survey (Figure 2.5) also suggests that Poles retained a largely neutral position about Jewish culture, and that few respondents maintained either high sympathy or resentment which was in keeping with the survey results from other European nations. Less positively, however, are the still high responses that characterize Polish attitudes toward Jews as ‘resentment.’ In order to understand why this percentage is so high (although falling in recent years), collective memories, in particular perceptions of historical rivalry, may play a key role. Poles recall that prior to World War II there was a great deal of

competition between Poles and Jews. Jews were well-educated and created prosperous businesses. Non-Semitic Poles felt threatened by their Jewish neighbors' economic prowess. Poles believed that Jews had a great deal of power and influence and since that time there has been little change in this perception. Sułek cites a 2005 survey from the American Jewish Committee that asked about the level of influence of Jews on the rest of the world. More than half (56%) of Polish respondents agreed with the statement, "Now, as in the past, Jews have too much power and influence in the world." Just over a third (38%) disagreed with that statement (Sułek, 2010, p. 10). Although only several thousand Jews live in Poland it is possible that there is still the sense that Poles are competing for influence with Jews who until today have played an important role in media and government.⁸ This fact may be responsible in part for the ignorance and apathy of Poles about the accurate history of their Jewish neighbors.

On the other hand, Polish sympathy towards Jews (Figure 2.8) can be explained by the "revolution" that Gross created as Poles grew familiar with the topic of Polish-Jewish relations and with the Jedwabne massacre.

The intellectual turmoil Gross caused in Poland cannot be overestimated. Finally the Polish public discourse opened itself, or was forced to open itself, to the most disturbing facts in Poland's anti-Jewish record, and while it stimulated anti-Semitism where it had been invisible, it brought about an invaluable reformation of national awareness in Poland at large. Polish intellectuals, some of them Jewish, others not, have written about the darkest chapters in Polish Jewish relations before Gross, but it was his uncompromising rhetoric and his compelling call for a new historiography that instigated a revolution in Poland (Orla-Bukowska and Cherry in Reszke, 2007, p. 40).

Gross's powerful message prompted a media flurry and sparked public debate on the topic of Polish-Jewish relations. Ordinary Poles gradually felt more comfortable commenting on what had once been a taboo topic, and expressed their thoughts and opinions on the matter in public

⁸ Referenced below is a list of famous Jews who have had an influential impact on economics in Poland: http://www.aferyprawa.eu/content/zydzi_w_POLSCE.html.

and private discussions. Whereas Poles in 2000 were shocked by Gross's book, by 2012 they recognized their dark history and spoke about it more openly. Comfort often leads to sympathy. And while not all Poles fully acknowledged the results of the Jedwabne massacre, as a whole society Poles are more aware of the past and also more likely to participate in Polish-Jewish cultural events. All of the surveys above show evidence that since *Neighbors* appeared on bookstore shelves it has had some influence on changing Polish perceptions about the massacre in Jedwabne. Since 2008 Polish opinions of Jews have also improved with two-thirds of respondents either sympathetic or neutral toward Jews. This change likely is a consequence of Donald Tusk's taking office as the prime minister in 2007.

Donald Tusk is Poland's most successful prime minister since the fall of communism. Under his leadership his country has become the rising star of the European Union, and he has managed to build a close and cordial relationship with Germany, Poland's most important trading partner and the EU's power centre. He has maintained a reputation for personal integrity and even managed to keep his party, the centre-right Civic Platform (PO), away from the corruption scandals that are the scourge of many central and eastern European countries (The Economist, 2013).

Under Tusk's leadership, Poland's economy profited due to an increase of production and better economic policies. According to CBOS, "The improvement of relations towards other nations [cultures] is associated with higher education and an increase in Poles' quality of life during that period... [and that] The amount of per capita income has indeed had a significant impact on the attitudes of Poles toward other cultures" (CBOS, 2013, p.5).

In the next section I will examine how changes in high school textbooks have taken place as a result of the book's publication and how these changes influence the way that Jedwabne is taught in institutions of learning across Poland.

SECTION III

THE TREATMENT OF THE JEDWABNE MASSACRE IN HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

This section examines how the content of Polish high school history textbooks has changed since *Neighbors* was published. During my interviews with intellectual commentators, the majority maintained that high school history textbooks do not contain any information about the Jedwabne massacre: “The education system in Poland does not adapt quickly enough to the collective awareness of the public” (J. Nowakowski, personal communication, August 19, 2013). Even though education has evolved slowly in Poland, as of 2012, high school textbooks do in fact include information on the Jedwabne massacre. This section of my paper incorporates information from Polish publishing houses, the Ministry of National Education, and an interview with high school history instructors.

Poland’s high school curriculum is regulated by the Minister of National Education Office (MEN) whose director is appointed by the president. Appointed in 2013, MEN’s current minister is Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska. Her predecessor, Krystyna Szumilas, served from 2007 to 2013. In 1999 the Minister announced that teachers could choose among several MEN approved textbooks depending on their students’ needs and their own preferred teaching methods. The purpose of this policy was to ensure that teachers had access to the broadest possible range of educational resources. Then, in 2010, Minister Szumilas initiated a policy that restricted schools from changing textbooks more than once every three years, and then only if twenty percent of the text needed to be changed. Due to mounting taxpayer expenses, it was too costly to make a change in curriculum every time a publisher launched a new version with only minor cosmetic changes (Szumilas, 2010).

The most recent educational reforms in Poland took place in September 2012, during which time a number of textbooks were replaced.⁹ At present, twelve history workbooks printed by six different publishers are available to teachers. Textbook authors are typically recognized educators who have published their own research. Some authors are school principals. An author can be either appointed to write a textbook by a superior or may voluntarily choose to write one. Upon its initial submission, a textbook manuscript is edited and then modified. Editors are most often leading professors from major Polish universities. According to national education requirements, high school principals must provide teachers at their schools a list of authorized textbooks by June 15th preceding the beginning of a new academic year. Teachers then have the duration of the summer to choose which materials suit their needs.

The 2012 reforms included a significant change in history curriculum. Prior to the change, middle school history courses started their timeline with ancient history and ended it with the fall of the Iron Curtain. This course is called “Basic History.” Middle school teachers covered the events of World War II at the end of the semester and often ran behind schedule, frequently limiting sections which focused on the Holocaust and the widespread effects of the war. After the 2012 reforms however, the entire “Basic History” course was moved to the beginning of the first year of high school. According to Andrzej Dusiewicz, lead editor at the Educational and Pedagogical Publishing House, “This change has many advantages. Students learn difficult and complex material when they are older and teachers are able to fully cover the WWII material since they teach it within the first year of high school rather than at the end of middle school” (A. Dusiewicz, personal communication, January 10, 2013).

⁹ Poland’s high school history curriculum calls for 60 hours of instruction per school year. This is divided into two hours per week (Dz. U. Nr 89, poz. 730).

Before the reforms of 2012, high school textbooks contained no information concerning the Jedwabne massacre. According to Dusiewicz, investigations initiated in 2002 by the Institute of National Remembrance resulted in new content about the Jedwabne massacre; this content can now be found in history textbooks (Dusiewicz, 2013). As the public became more informed on Gross's book, publishing houses decided to include the new information in their textbooks. A representative of one of the publishing houses states, "The textbook authors decided to include information about the events of Jedwabne, and appraisers appointed by the Ministry of Education approved the proposed formula. The appraisers have not expressed opposition to the new information" (Publishing House employee, 2014).

Both old and new versions of the high school history textbooks supply similar information about the Holocaust. Both describe a complex historical relationship between Poles and Jews. Of the textbooks reviewed, *Simply History*, *History Now*, and *We are Meeting the Past*, the authors' tone and phrasing appears balanced given the controversial nature of the topic. Writers of the textbooks attempted to describe the range of relationships that Poles maintained with their Jewish neighbors. The textbooks portray Poles as refusing to help the Jews and caring mostly for their own survival in the face of the Nazi threat. Most Polish are depicted as detached and disinterested in Jewish life, preoccupied with their own woes stemming from the German occupation. Many Poles were frightened by the repercussions of helping Jews. Some Poles handed Jews over to the Nazis and stole their property. Others betrayed their Jewish neighbors by telling the Gestapo where they hid. Some Poles, dubbed "szmalcownicy," or blackmailers, extorted money, jewelry, and other items from Jews in exchange for assurances that they would not disclose their location to the Nazis (Kozłowska, Unger, Zajac, 2012).

But the textbook authors also write about the benevolence of certain Poles who helped Jews during the war, Poles who risked their lives to hide Jews in their houses and on their farms, and who provided them medicine and clothes. There were also Poles who helped Jews escape from the Nazi concentration camps. In Warsaw in September 1942, The Provisional Committee to Aid Jews was created by the Polish Government in Exile, which eventually became the Council to Aid Jews (a.k.a. the Konrad Żegota Committee, or “Żegota”). The Poles who were active in Żegota were primarily Catholics and, according to the history textbook *History Now*, the organization helped rescue and hide Jewish refugees, particularly children. Żegota collaborated with priests and monasteries by giving Jewish children false birth certificates (Zajac, 2012). Żegota financially backed Polish families who hid Jews. According to *History Now*, Irena Sendlerowa saved 2,500 Jewish children in Warsaw this way. It has been estimated that 100,000 Jews were saved during the occupation (Zajac, 2012). Finally, it is worth mentioning that the questions found in the “Discussion” sections at the end of each textbook chapter in *Simply History* are also appeared to be written objectively. For example, one problem asks students to “Discuss various Polish attitudes towards the Holocaust” (Gutowski, Dolecki, Smoleński, 2012, p. 216).

While information about the Holocaust is readily available in high school textbooks written prior to 2012, one can only find information about the Jedwabne massacre in editions written after the 2012 reform.¹⁰ Authors take a range of positions on the massacre in their writings, and while some state that Poles cooperated with the Germans in Jedwabne, others hold

¹⁰ Most of my interviewees were not aware that the topic of the Jedwabne massacre is included in current high school textbooks.

the Poles fully responsible.¹¹ One description of how Germans took advantage of the Poles who participated in the attack is found here in *Simply History*:

As a result of Germany's aggressive attack on the Soviet Union (1941), the Wehrmacht invaded areas where Jews constituted a significant proportion of the residents. Special units of the SS, so-called Einsatzgruppen, committed the murder of many Jews. In some areas of Poland, such as Jedwabne and Radziłów in the Podlaskie region, Poles took part in the slaughter of Jews. Germany took advantage of those Poles who wanted revenge on Jews for their own amusement during the September, 1939 fall of the Republic of Poland (Gutowski, Dolecki, Smoleński, 2012, p. 215).

Another textbook, *We are Meeting the Past*, states that Poles were not just participants in the massacre, but that they were sole murderers of the Jews. "In July 1941, several hundred Jewish men, women, and children were murdered by Poles, who were their neighbors in the same town" (Kozłowska, Unger, Zajac, 2012, p.142).

A third textbook, *History Now*, focuses on all massacres which occurred on Polish soil during the war. Nazi Germany did not interrupt the local Ukrainian, Romanian, Lithuanian, and Polish residents of the Łomża Voivodship who enacted exterminations on local Jewish populations (Zajac, 2012). The textbook goes on to describe the brutality of the persecutions. At the beginning of July 1941 [soon after Germany invaded Poland] Poles burned the Jews alive (Zajac, 2012).

Besides high school curriculum, there are many other educational forums for learning more about the history of Jedwabne. Teachers can attend a variety of seminars which cover the topic. For instance, the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kraków conducts workshops on Jedwabne, as does the Polish Center for Holocaust Research in Warsaw and the Oświatowiec Publishing House in Torun. Popular films outside of the literary realm have also examined the tragedy at Jedwabne, including three well-known movies: *Where is My Son Kair?* (Agnieszka Arnold,

¹¹ I examined all of the history high school textbooks published after the 2012 reform. I have focused on three books that are representative of how the Jedwabne massacre now appears in the new textbooks.

1999), *The Legacy of Jedwabne* (Slawomir Grunberg, 2005), and *Aftermath* (Władysław Pasikowski, 2012).

Although intellectual commentators are cautious about reconciliation between these two communities and public opinion since 2000 on the matter appears increasingly uninformed, high school history textbooks suggest that a transformation in the nation's historical consciousness is taking place as a result of *Neighbors* being published. My account indicates that awareness of and education on the topic of Jedwabne has developed significantly in Poland since 2000. Most importantly, his provocative book has changed how history is recounted in high school history textbooks. Now every high school history textbook since 2012 includes a section which specifically covers the Jedwabne massacre with passages written in a transparent manner. While variations exist between authors, these texts consistently hold Poles responsible for the murder of the Jedwabnan Jews. How comprehensively instructors delve into the material is a personal decision teachers make depending on their own flexibility and sensitivity to the subject. Because of this fact there is the potential that some teachers might still avoid discussing the Jedwabne massacre, regardless of its inclusion in the textbooks. Despite many schools integrating Jedwabne into their curriculum, there is still widespread ignorance about its occurrence. For example, in Jedwabne, history teachers still use history textbooks from 2009. But as time progresses and more Polish educators become more comfortable discussing Jedwabne in the classroom, the likelihood that it is reliably taught to students throughout the country will increase. As long as the information is included in texts of schoolbooks, students will be able to read it. Knowing that pervasive illiteracy about the Holocaust existed all the way through the late 1990s, Polish historical consciousness as expressed in the education system has transformed relatively quickly and effectively. Gross's book persists as the single-most important source of

information for informing and transforming the way in which Poles perceive the events of Jedwabne. Moreover, the fallout that initially occurred as a result of its rediscovery in 2000, and the process of reconciliation which has transpired since then between the Jewish and Polish communities have been instrumental in beginning the process of changing collective memory.

EPILOGUE

In conclusion, Poland appears to be moving towards a more objective and inclusive historical consciousness, especially in comparison to Russia. While several of those interviewed for this study believed that Poles have little information about the Jedwabne massacre, this study suggests otherwise. There is, in fact, abundant literature on the event. Gross's book led to considerable discussion and writing about the massacre, and this attention resulted in substantial and positive changes among Poles. His account of the massacres at Jedwabne stimulated historical research, public awareness, and changes to educational materials. While significant issues remain, it appears that many Poles are cognizant of their history and are willing to alter their perspectives accordingly. Jewish and Polish cultures have been intertwined for hundreds of years and acknowledging the brutal atrocities against the Jews during World War II may begin with agreement about their shared history, leading to the possibility of reconciliation.

The Baltic countries are coping with the past in a similar way to Poland although perhaps not in such a widespread and wide-ranging manner. For example, Ellen Cassedy, the author of *We are Here, Memories of The Lithuanian Holocaust*, states, "Lithuanians – some of them, at least, both non-Jews and people in the 4,500-member Jewish community – were holding up long-buried truths for examination. They were questioning cherished assumptions and challenging age-old prejudices. Only in so doing, they felt, could Lithuania hope to build its future" (Cassedy, 2012). According to her, Lithuania is coming to terms with the past and is following in the footsteps of Poland, Chile, and Argentina. She also agrees with Polish intellectual commentators who state that it is important to work on historical consciousness in order to avoid future tragedy. "Their aim was to extend the bounds of empathy, to bind up wounds, and even, perhaps, to prevent future genocides" (Cassedy, 2012). Comparably to Poland and Lithuania,

Latvia has also been making progress in coming to terms with the past. There are numerous reminders throughout Latvian culture which celebrate Latvian-Jewish relations. For example, in the Museum of Latvia there is a display called *Jews in Latvia* which commemorates Latvians' and Jews' collective memory and supports a model of the multi-ethnic society.

In contrast, transforming historical consciousness in Russia has been much more difficult and contested. In his book, *It Was a Long Time Ago, and It Never Happened Anyway: Russia and the Communist Past*, David Satter observes that by 2008, Russians had created 627 memorial plaques to the victims of Communist atrocities. While this seems like a significant number, it is in fact fewer than the number of Russian labor camps (Satter, 2012). How can this difference be explained? Unlike Russia, Poland has had a government willing to acknowledge past crimes, an education ministry that was willing to incorporate new material into high school textbooks, an active and ongoing media debate over past events, continuous engagement by intellectual commentators, and a small but active Jewish community that has reached out to Poles – by providing more information about the past but also by welcoming Poles to Jewish festivals. In the absence of these factors, Gross's book would not have had the same impact in significantly transforming Poland's collective memory since 2000. Conversely, without Gross's book, Polish elites and the Polish public would not have been confronted with the need to make painful 'corrections' to their historical consciousness and to act on this new understanding of history. Under the right conditions, one small book can indeed change a society -- in this case much for the better.

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