Online Conflict Discourse, Identity,
and the Social Imagination of Silesian Minority in Poland

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and the Social Imagination of Silesian Minority in Poland

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Abstract

The second decade of the twenty-first century has been that of digital nationalism. In particular,

the 2016 United States presidential elections and Brexit vote in the United Kingdom have shown

that the increased use of social media has raised popular nationalism (Whitmeyer 2002) to a

whole new level. While Europe and other parts of the world have visibly become more

globalized, the Northern Atlantic region has witnessed a contradictory tendency for the rise and

spread of nationalist sentiment. Much of this phenomenon has been taking place on the internet

where conditions of apparent anonymity created a fertile ground for uninhibited identity

expressions and performances. From the United States to Poland, people have retreated to their

stable, national identities as a way of coping with the various facets of liquid modernity, in which

the need for networking pushes individuals to engage in community building by bonding with

other individuals through shared emotions (Bauman 2006, 37).

This has also been the case in Europe where the supranational project of the European

Union (EU) has encouraged Polish, Czech, or Hungarian citizens to forego their national

identities and to embrace a broader European identity instead. However, instead of strengthening

a postnational perspective on the world, the internet and social media have paradoxically made

people even more aware of their identity and the identities of others. There, discussions

surrounding national identity, sovereignty, and free flow of people and products are always

present and, almost unavoidably, always political. "The transition to a digital media

environment," Rushkoff (2016) writes, "is making people a whole lot less tolerant of this

dissolution of boundaries. Am I Croatian or Serbian? Kurd or Sunni? Greek or European?

American or Mexican?" The quiet erosion of European cohesion, culminating in the 2020

unprecedented withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, can also be explained in such a way.

These tensions mirror more global concerns about the increasingly "liquid" world (Bauman 2005), in which "[t]he collapse of the 'institutions' of the solid modern era – of nation, state and territory – led to the emergence of a new world disorder where only the global elite may feel at home" (Jacobsen and Marshman 2008: 26). The internet and digital media further exacerbate this process as instantaneous communication makes people aware of the plethora of nonnational and/or post-national identities that others adopt. These fears are also present and tangible in present-day Poland where people's belief in the unity and indivisibility of the Polish nation has been shattered by Silesian activism, both online and offline. There, questions of identity and sovereignty have unavoidably become highly politicized, representing an easy target for politicians searching for votes, status, or publicity. With the added social media dimension, another, and, arguably, an even more important group of political actors has emerged—popular activists, ideologically committed to spreading political messages in digital spaces. The ongoing Polish-Silesian conflict about identity is a case in point here.

The 1989 political transformation has put Poland on a fast track to democracy and liberalization, but it has also opened up the discussion about the country's internal minorities, including the largest unrecognized minority of Silesians in south-southwestern Poland (see the Silesia, Silesian, Silesians section). With Poland's accession into the EU in 2004, Silesian activists have turned to the rhetoric of postnational "Europe of regions" to support their ethnolinguistic demands, which has generated much controversy and backlash among the Polish majority. The activists' emphasis on multiculturalism and multilingualism has resulted in similar reactions. Such activism, critical with regard to the Polish state, has often coincided with

rhetorical strategies that involved the use of the German language along Polish. As a result, this led some politicians and publicists to believe that Silesian regional activism furthers German, not Polish, national agenda, and that self-identified Silesians can be viewed as "camouflaged Germans" (see chapter 2). Thus, the Polish-Silesian conflict over identity has become an ongoing political issue that affects the daily lives of Poles and self-identified Silesians, and that is discussed at the governmental and popular level, both online and offline. With the spread of social media, this issue has leaked into everyday discussions among nonelite political actors who now discuss it online.

The debate on Silesian identity makes part of a larger discussion on Polish national identity at the turn of the twenty-first century. With the rapid liberalization, Poland and Poles have witnessed an ideological clash between the traditional and innovative understanding of what it means to be Polish. The traditional perspective builds on the narrative of collective victimhood on part of more powerful neighbors (for instance, Germans) who, despite violence and decades of subjugation, could not break the Polish spirit thanks to the leading role of the Roman Catholic church, preservation of the Polish language, and attachment to traditions. In the innovative version, a person can have more than one identity and identify as, for example, Cracovian, Pole, and European at the same time (cf. the EU accession campaign in Poland, which was spearheaded by the political elites under the slogan *Tak, jestem Europejczykiem/Europejką* 'Yes, I am European').

My dissertation shows how online discourse drives social change, boundary work, identity performance, and, ultimately, community management (including in-group/out-group membership) by looking at the development and spread of popular nationalism on the internet. As people from outside of the political elites form online communities, they become politically

active in online discussions on national (and regional) identity. In doing so, such online

communities become communities of practice (Eckert 2006) that discuss recent events and larger

issues, take sides, form coalitions, come up with idiosyncratic ways of discussing certain topics

and people, and, finally, engage in a range of online behaviors that involve othering,

narrativizing, and hateful speech. As a result, nationalism becomes a catalyst for the formation of

online communities that emerge and coalesce around political goals, common language, and

shared ideological stances. The dissertation examines how public discourse drives social change

by looking at nonelite political actors become the 'movers and shakers' who radicalize

themselves over the course of ongoing online discussions and then advance their ideological

agendas by inciting radicalization among others. Finally, this work also analyzes the key role of

language in the process of political radicalization in online spaces.

  This dissertation traces the emergence, coalescence, and maintenance of two such

factions in the *Western Daily* discussion forum (Pol. *Dziennik Zachodni*,

https://dziennikzachodni.pl), as evidenced in language use. Taking a sociolinguistic approach to

internet discussions and applying a close, critical discursive reading of unstructured online

conversations, the dissertation examines such phenomena as linguistic creativity, othering,

narrativizing, and hate speech. All of these phenomena are crucial for identity struggles because

it is through them that identities are constructed in the *Western Daily* forum. Given the context

collapse (Marwick and boyd 2011), it is through language that members of the two warring

communities can instantaneously identify each other as language becomes an immediate

identifier of each participant's stance toward the topic of the discussion. Not only language

conveys intended meanings, but it also encodes pre-existing assumptions that people bring to the

conversation, which is why methods of critical discourse analysis are well-positioned to uncover these meanings by focusing on language use.

My upbringing in Poland and native knowledge of Polish endowed me with the sociocultural and linguistic background necessary for understanding and explaining the meaning of discourses surrounding the issue of Silesian identity in modern-day Poland. The privilege of working on a Ph.D. in the United States endowed me with much-needed theoretical, historiographic, and geographical distance, with which I approached this topic. This dissertation is thus written from the perspective of an "inside outsider," that is, someone who is fluent in the social, cultural, and historical fabrics of the region and the country yet approaches it with a cool, analytical mind. In doing so, the goal is not to once-and-for-all determine whether Silesians are a separate people or Silesian a separate language, but, rather, to detect, extract, and critically analyze what the discussions on these topics can tell us about the larger societal views on identity, language, and nation, as expressed in language-in-use.

Acknowledgments

As with all accomplishments, this dissertation owes its debt to many people I have been lucky to encounter in my life. Since the beginning of my Ph.D. program, I had the privilege of working and interacting with great minds, intellectuals, and academics who have had a great influence on me and my work. My pursuit of doctoral education in the United States, on the other side of the Atlantic from a small Galician town where I was born and raised, was made possible by the generosity and support of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas and its people, for which I will be always grateful.

Firstly, I would like to thank Marc L. Greenberg who has served as a mentor, advisor, and example of an engaged humanities professor with broad horizons. Ever since our first meeting at a Slavic Linguistics Society conference in Szczecin, Poland, his careful advice, guidance, and support have greatly influenced my academic trajectory. Our many conversations have helped me become a better thinker, researcher, and writer, and provided continual encouragement to keep going forward. It is also thanks to him that I had an opportunity to collaborate on the *Encyclopedia of Slavic Languages and Linguistics*, the most comprehensive topical resource up to date, which will undoubtedly become his life's opus magnum. I was lucky to have him as my advisor and co-chair of this dissertation.

Secondly, I would also like to thank Renee Perelmutter, co-chair of this dissertation, for their inextinguishable excitement about sociolinguistics and socially meaningful linguistic research. Thanks to their guidance and mentorship, I have learned to consider language data from a novel and sometimes unexpected angle. I am also grateful for the invitation to work on collaborative research projects as well as for promoting and instilling a pragmatic dimension to investigations of language in society.

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My thanks also go to other KU faculty members, current and former, with whom I have interacted throughout my Ph.D. program. Thank you to Carlos M. Nash for introducing me to the intersection of linguistics and anthropology and for seeing how the two wonderfully intertwine. I very much appreciate the many hours devoted to our conversations on language, discourse, and the sociocultural dimension of linguistic research. Thank you to Majid Hannoum for his time, expertise, and encouraging a critical perspective on the sociocultural world. Thank you to Nathan Wood whose seminar on nationalism in Europe provided me with a critical approach to national identity, helping me see the larger picture behind the Polish-Silesian conflict over identity in online conversations. Thank you to Arienne Dwyer for her time, feedback, and enthusiasm, both inside and outside of the classroom, and for her incessant desire to make her advisees and mentees prosper. Thank you to Bartholomew Dean, Stephen Dickey, and Monika Kopytowska for their time and feedback during the earlier stages of this project. Special thanks go to Justyna Beinek, Vitaly Chernetsky, Bart Redford, and the KU Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies for providing a platform for presenting my dissertation research at its various stages. Thank you to my fellow graduate students, Ekaterina Chelpanova, Anna Karpusheva, and Olga Savchenko, for their time and feedback concerning some Russian-language material in the data collected for this dissertation. My thanks also go to those who generously devoted/donated

their time to listen, review, or comment on this project in any of its stages at KU as well as numerous venues in the United States and Europe. Last but not least, I am thankful for the KU Office of Graduate Studies for the Graduate Studies Summer Scholarship award, which allowed me to devote the summer of 2018 to my research, and the Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines conference/Carlsberg Foundation for their travel award, which allowed me to attend the 2018 meeting in Aalborg, Denmark. I also want to thank the Conrad family for their continued support of KU Slavic languages and literatures graduate students, and specifically for their generous support and awards during my Ph.D. program that helped me attend and present at international conferences in the United States and abroad.

I also want to take this occasion to express my gratitude to those who have nurtured my affinity for languages, linguistics, and the letters throughout my elementary, secondary, and tertiary education. In particular, my thanks go to Henryk Jaroszewicz, my advisor and mentor from my B.A. and M.A. studies at the University of Wrocław, Poland, whose M.A. seminar and personal interest in nonstandard, "small," and "micro-languages" spurred my interest in Molise Slavic (first) and Silesian (later). Under his guidance, I was allowed to pursue my interest in smaller ethnolinguistic communities, which I preserved until entering the Ph.D. program in Slavic linguistics at KU in 2014. I would also like to thank Julie for all her encouragement and support in the final stage of writing this dissertation. Finally, my deepest thanks go to my parents who early on instilled literacy and thirst for knowledge in me, my brothers Przemysław and Tomasz, my aunt Kazimiera, as well as to members of my extended family and friends who offered their support in my U.S. Ph.D. endeavor.

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List of Abbreviations

Languages and grammatical categories:

adj.   adjective

Engl.   English

f.   feminine

Germ.   German

m.   masculine

pl.   plural

Pol.   Polish

Russ.   Russian

sg.   singular

Sil.   Silesian

Grammatical glosses:

ACC   accusative case

COND   conditional mood

DAT   dative case

INS   instrumental case

NOM   nominative case

PRS   present tense

PST   past tense

SG   singular

Introduction

The second decade of the twenty-first century has been that of digital nationalism. In particular, the 2016 United States presidential elections and Brexit vote in the United Kingdom have shown that the increased use of social media has raised popular nationalism (Whitmeyer 2002) to a whole new level. While Europe and other parts of the world have visibly become more globalized, the Northern Atlantic region has witnessed a contradictory tendency for the rise and spread of nationalist sentiment. Much of this phenomenon has been taking place on the internet where conditions of apparent anonymity created a fertile ground for uninhibited identity expressions and performances. From the United States to Poland, people have retreated to their stable, national identities as a way of coping with the various facets of liquid modernity, in which the need for networking pushes individuals to engage in community building by bonding with other individuals through shared emotions (Bauman 2006, 37).

This has also been the case in Europe where the supranational project of the European Union (EU) has encouraged Polish, Czech, or Hungarian citizens to forego their national identities and to embrace a broader European identity instead. However, instead of strengthening a postnational perspective on the world, the internet and social media have paradoxically made people even more aware of their identity and the identities of others. There, discussions surrounding national identity, sovereignty, and free flow of people and products are always present and, almost unavoidably, always political. "The transition to a digital media environment," Rushkoff (2016) writes, "is making people a whole lot less tolerant of this dissolution of boundaries. Am I Croatian or Serbian? Kurd or Sunni? Greek or European? American or Mexican?" The quiet erosion of European cohesion, culminating in the 2020

unprecedented withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, can also be explained in such a way.

These tensions mirror more global concerns about the increasingly "liquid" world (Bauman 2005), in which "[t]he collapse of the 'institutions' of the solid modern era – of nation, state and territory – led to the emergence of a new world disorder where only the global elite may feel at home" (Jacobsen and Marshman 2008: 26). The internet and digital media further exacerbate this process as instantaneous communication makes people aware of the plethora of nonnational and/or post-national identities that others adopt. These fears are also present and tangible in present-day Poland where people's belief in the unity and indivisibility of the Polish nation has been shattered by Silesian activism, both online and offline. There, questions of identity and sovereignty have unavoidably become highly politicized, representing an easy target for politicians searching for votes, status, or publicity. With the added social media dimension, another, and, arguably, an even more important group of political actors has emerged—popular activists, ideologically committed to spreading political messages in digital spaces. The ongoing Polish-Silesian conflict about identity is a case in point here.

The 1989 political transformation has put Poland on a fast track to democracy and liberalization, but it has also opened up the discussion about the country's internal minorities, including the largest unrecognized minority of Silesians in south-southwestern Poland (see the Silesia, Silesian, Silesians section). With Poland's accession into the EU in 2004, Silesian activists have turned to the rhetoric of post-national "Europe of regions" to support their ethnolinguistic demands, which has generated much controversy and backlash among the mainstream Polish majority. The activists' emphasis on multiculturalism and multilingualism has resulted in similar reactions. Such activism, critical with regard to the Polish state, has often

coincided with rhetorical strategies that involved the use of the German language along Polish.

As a result, this led some politicians and publicists to believe that Silesian regional activism

furthers German, not Polish, national agenda, and that self-identified Silesians can be viewed as

"camouflaged Germans" (see chapter 2). Thus, the Polish-Silesian conflict over identity has

become an ongoing political issue that affects the daily lives of Poles and self-identified

Silesians, and that is discussed at the governmental and popular level, both online and offline.

With the spread of social media, this issue has leaked into everyday discussions among nonelite

political actors who now discuss it online.

The debate on Silesian identity makes part of a larger discussion on Polish national

identity at the turn of the twenty-first century. With the rapid liberalization, Poland and Poles

have witnessed an ideological clash between the traditional and innovative understanding of

what it means to be Polish. The traditional perspective builds on the narrative of collective

victimhood on part of more powerful neighbors (for instance, Germans) who, despite violence

and decades of subjugation, could not break the Polish spirit thanks to the leading role of the

Roman Catholic church, preservation of the Polish language, and attachment to traditions. In the

innovative version, a person can have more than one identity and identify as, for example,

Cracovian, Pole, and European at the same time (cf. the EU accession campaign in Poland,

which was spearheaded by the political elites under the slogan *Tak, jestem*

Europejczykiem/Europejką 'Yes, I am European (m./f.)').

My dissertation shows how online discourse drives social change, boundary work,

identity performance, and, ultimately, community management (including in-group/out-group

membership) by looking at the development and spread of popular nationalism on the internet.

As people from outside of the political elites form online communities, they become politically

active in online discussions on national (and regional) identity. In doing so, such online communities become communities of practice (Eckert 2006) that discuss recent events and larger issues, take sides, form coalitions, come up with idiosyncratic ways of discussing certain topics and people, and, finally, engage in a range of online behaviors that involve othering, narrativizing, and hateful speech. As a result, nationalism becomes a catalyst for the formation of online communities that emerge and coalesce around political goals, common language, and shared ideological stances. The dissertation examines how public discourse drives social change by looking at nonelite political actors become the 'movers and shakers' who radicalize themselves over the course of ongoing online discussions and then advance their ideological agendas by inciting radicalization among others. Finally, this work also analyzes the key role of language in the process of political radicalization in online spaces. The purpose behind this dissertation is to illuminate the issues of online radicalization, a widespread phenomenon at this time, which represents a sociolinguistic and sociological problem that threatens the very fabric of contemporary societies. This work is intended for all scholars and students of language in society who are interested in verbal violence and hateful speech in social media and online conversations within the context of nationalism and identity discussions, as well as for educators, policymakers, and organizations seeking to tackle such problems.

The dissertation examines the phenomena of online radicalization and hateful speech by focusing on language use in one case study – the *Western Daily* discussion forum (see below for the rationale behind this choice). Central to this enterprise is language use in digital media, and, in particular, conflict discourse, which encompasses a range of oppositional, competing, or even antagonistic phenomena (Perelmutter 2018). As such, conflict discourse is characteristic of online polylogues, that is, multiparticipant interactions in which the "many-to-many"

communicative context dominates. Internet polylogue facilitate coalition- and alliance-building

(Bruxelles and Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2004), which makes them a fertile ground for the emergence

and spread of political discourse. The same is true about the *Western Dialy* forum where

factionalism, advanced by widespread language-enabled othering, is common and widespread.

Given these characteristics of multiparticipant conflict discourse, the larger question behind this

project is: **What is the role of language in the emergence and spread of hateful speech in**

online spaces? The goal of this study is to answer the following research questions:

> RQ: How nonelite political actors instrumentalize multiparticipant conflict discourse on
>
> Silesian identity to construct othering representations of their ideological enemies, and
>
> what are the implications for our understanding of the concepts of identity, language, and
>
> nation?

Having considered and analyzed all the data, three major trends emerge in this dissertation:

othering (chapters 1 and 2), hateful speech (chapter 3), and narrativizing (chapter 4). The first

two issues are interrelated and co-occur in the data analyzed. As the data show, othering

represents the first step toward verbal violence and hateful speech, which is particularly the case

in online discussions of national identity. Narrativizing is the third major topic examined and

represents a separate trend in online discussions in the *Western Daily* forum.

The dissertation is structured as follows. The introduction outlines the goals, methods,

and theoretical foundations of this dissertation. It also provides a sociohistorical background on

the issue of Silesian identity, the *Western Daily* discussion forum, as well as issues of identity in

digital spaces. Chapters 1 and 2 examine the modality of othering. Chapter 1 looks at instances

of linguistic othering and the strategy of sociolinguistic approximation. Chapter 2 takes the

discussion of othering even further by looking at one particular type of othering relevant to the

political situation in present-day Poland—the "camouflaged German option" discourse. In the

collected data, othering often co-occurs or is followed by verbal violence and hateful speech,

which is the topic of the subsequent chapter. Chapter 3 uses insights from the two previous

chapters to trace and explain the production of verbal violence and hateful speech in the *Western*

Daily forum from the perspective of proximization theory. While chapter 3 considers overt

examples of hateful speech, the chapter that follows looks at covert instances of exercising

violence through language. Focusing on the use of the neologism *szlezjer* and its derivatives,

chapter 4 explores how single words and/or phrases become sociolinguistic labels that lead to the

emergence of "mini-narratives" containing disguised messages about self-identified Silesians.

The final chapter offers a brief discussion of the results and relates them to the research question

posed at the beginning of this dissertation; limitations and further research are also briefly

discussed.

<div align="center">The Western Daily discussion forum</div>

The issues of online radicalization, verbal violence, and hateful speech are widespread in the

Western Daily discussion forum (that is, comments left under news articles published there),

which represents the source of data used for this study. Thus, looking at the discussions held

there allows me to examine a large piece of discourse produced by nonelite political actors,

which illuminates the problem of radicalization online in the context of discussions on national

identity, sovereignty, and multiculturalism.

As the largest regional newspaper in Upper Silesia, the *Western Daily* often provides

regular coverage and commentary on the recent developments in the region. This also includes

issues surrounding Silesian identity, culture, language variety, and Silesian regional activism involving the Silesian Autonomy Movement (Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska, RAŚ*) or the Silesian Regional Party (Pol. *Śląska Partia Regionalna, ŚPR*). Related to this is the fact that in the 2011 census, one in four residents of Katowice (capital of the Silesia Province) declared Silesian ethno-national identification (78,838 declarations out of 310,764 in total, cf. GUS 2014, Table 2). Finally, self-identified Silesians are active users of the newspaper's digital edition (https://dziennikzachodni.pl) and frequently leave their comments there, which in turn generates comments from members of the Polish majority. Altogether, these factors make the *Western Daily* forum a destination that has the potential to yield data relevant to the research questions posed at the beginning of this dissertation.

Here, one core modality of the *Western Daily* forum deserves a mention. Unlike structured discussion forums that use the phpBB forum package or similar, the *Western Daily* forum lacks such structure in that it is text-based only and that no registration is required. Consequently, forum users do not, as a rule, create user profiles and fill them with personally identifiable information. Instead, the forum is being continuously co-created with the common effort of all commenters. The relatively low barrier of entry for this forum (internet connection and an internet-connected device) thus represents one of the key features of this space, which influences the discussions held there both qualitatively and quantitatively. From the qualitative point of view, discussions on the *Western Daily* forum tend to be heavily conversational, with varied attention to spelling, orthography, or grammar, relaxed norms of politeness, and not infrequent mixing of different language codes. As a result, comments there resemble more spontaneous expressions of posters' thoughts and ideas rather than carefully crafted and topic-relevant arguments. This feature makes the *Western Daily* comments sections a perfect source of

popular ideas about the ideas of identity, language, or nation in modern-day Poland. From the

quantitative point of view, the discussions held there often evolve into multi-comment

arguments, or "flamewars" (Perelmutter 2013), and it is not unusual for a single comment section

to contain a hundred or a few hundred comments in total (cf. chapter 3).

In all this, users of the *Western Daily* forum produce single comments or whole comment

threads in a rather stable yet fairly eclectic mixture of language varieties. Since the *Western

Daily* online edition is produced almost exclusively in Polish (with the rare exception of articles,

editorials, and other items that include some degree of Silesian), Polish is also the dominant

language variety used in its comments sections. Nevertheless, the use of Silesian is quite

widespread, especially in cases when the posters self-identify as Silesians (which can often be

inferred from the content of their comments) and want to make their point heard. This is

particularly the case when their comments become emotional because of the content of the article

commented upon or because of the reactions that their comments have elicited. Given that Polish

and Silesian represent the two most popular language varieties used in the *Western Daily* forum,

the phenomenon of code-mixing or code-switching (Lipski 1982; Myers-Scotton 1993; Poplack

and Sankoff 1981) is also present there, mostly in comments authored by self-identified

Silesians. This linguistic collage is complemented by the occasional presence of German

elements whose presence in those conversations is important for both ideological and

sociolinguistic reasons (see chapters 1, 2, and 3 in particular).

Data collection

The data for this dissertation were collected from selected online discussions held at the *Western

Daily* forum (Pol. *Dziennik Zachodni*, https://dziennikzachodni.pl). Relevant examples were

selected according to the following criteria:

(1) presence of the keyword *Ślązacy* (Pol. 'Silesians') in the online material analyzed,

(2) presence of the topic of Silesian identity and, more broadly, identity-related themes in the discussions,

(3) discussions and single comments selected as a result had to be written no earlier than 2004.

The choice of this particular source of data is based on the fact that the geographical range of the daily coincides with the area where the majority of Silesian identifications have been declared in the 2002 and 2011 national censuses (see Map 3). Consequently, the newspaper (including its online edition) features articles, interviews, and op-eds concerning the problems of Silesian identity and culture in general, many of which sparked lively debates in the comment sections. Because of the large concentration and participation rate of self-identified Silesians, the *Western Daily* discussion forums provide a rich source of data for investigations of the Silesian mindset in general. Given their innately interactive character, these online conversations illuminate the otherwise obscure experience of being Silesian in contemporary Poland by providing both an insider's (that is, Silesian) and outsider's (that is, Polish) point of view on the ongoing process of construction, crystallization, and promotion of Silesian identity.

The presence of Silesian identity-related discourse and identity-focused discussions were the two main selection criteria, which regularly guaranteed subsequent emergence of identity talk in the course of the conversation. The selection process was restricted to online comments posted after January 1, 2004, the year of Poland's entry to the European Union (EU). The temporal scope of the data was limited to that turning point in Poland's recent history to ensure that the data reflect contemporary attitudes and beliefs. Given this scope, the dissertation also indirectly

traces the persistence of essentialist vs. collectivist understanding of identity in the context of Poland's continued participation in the supranational structures of the EU.

The data collection and analysis process proceeded as follows. First, a Google search for the keyword *ślązacy* was performed, with the results restricted to the *Western Daily* website only. Next, the results obtained in such a manner were reviewed and analyzed for the selection criteria listed above. If single comments or strings of comments fulfilled these criteria, they were manually extracted and moved to a single MS Excel file. For each comment, the following data and metadata were extracted: the comment's title, the comment proper, the comment's author, the day and time the comment was written, the number of "upvotes" and "downvotes" the comment received, and the comment's position in the course of a larger conversation (e.g., in reply to posters A and B). The forward slash ("/") separates comments from their titles; original indenting preserved. All examples are presented in their original, including orthography, spelling, line breaks, etc. All translations into English are mine.

The Excel spreadsheet created in this manner later became the main corpus used for further data analysis, selection, and, ultimately, write-up of the results. The initial corpus size was 900–1,000 comments and it was used for the initial, exploratory analysis. In the course of the initial analysis, comments were annotated (stance, perspective, language varieties used) and coded for instances of identity work as expressed in language use. Additionally, a topical analysis was performed to determine larger thematical clusters in the data. Further examinations indicated the need to include more examples and, thus, the initial corpus was later expanded to accommodate this need.

It has been established that the data used for this study is not copyright protected and that its use for research purposes represents fair use. The KU Lawrence Campus Institution Review

Board (IRB) determined that the study does not meet the human research requirement, hence no oversight was required. All users are anonymous; accordingly, all nicknames were anonymized and do not appear in the study. The study has a strictly observational character and the language data used is for research purposes only.

<div align="center">Theory and methodology</div>

This dissertation examines online discussions about self-identified Silesians in the *Western Daily* forum by applying the critical discourse analytic toolkit to the collected conversational data. As a whole, the dissertation is embedded within the multidisciplinary field(s) of critical discourse studies/critical discourse analysis (CDS/CDA). The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA, Reisigl and Wodak 2016) serves as the main methodological framework, in which subsequent analyses in chapters 1–4 are rooted. Theoretically, this dissertation takes a sociolinguistic approach to the issue of language and identity in computer-mediated communication (CMC) by incorporating and combining the idea of stancetaking (Du Bois 2007) on one hand with a constructivist and interactional approach to identity in language-in-use (Bucholtz and Hall 2005).

While relatively new, the broader fields of CDS and/or CDA have become a site of intensive and burgeoning research within the last few decades (e.g., van Dijk 1993; Fairclough 1995; Weiss and Wodak 2002; Hart 2011; Machin and Mayr 2012; Richardson et al. 2014; Wodak and Meyer 2016; Flowerdew and Richardson 2017). For instance, as of early 2020, a simple Google Scholar search for "critical discourse analysis" phrase yields more than 100,000 results.[1] Historically, the field of CDS stems from the tradition of discourse analysis, situated at the intersection of several cognate (sub)disciplines, including conversation analysis, pragmatics,

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[1] In comparison, the related phrase "critical discourse studies" returns "only" 13,000 results.

ethnography of speaking, sociolinguistics, etc. All of them have several overlapping points of interest (Wodak and Meyer 2016a):

(1) "An interest in the properties of *'naturally occurring' language use* by real language users instead of a study of abstract language systems and invented examples),

(2) A focus on *larger units than isolated words and sentences*, and hence, new basic units of analysis: texts, discourses, conversations, speech acts, or communicative events,

(3) The extension of linguistics *beyond sentence grammar* towards a study of action and interaction,

(4) The extension to *non-verbal (semiotic, multimodal, visual) aspects* of interaction and communication: gestures, images, film, the internet and multimedia,

(5) A focus on dynamic (socio)-cognitive or interactional moves and strategies,

(6) The study of the functions of (social, cultural, situative and cognitive) *contexts of language use*,

(7) Analysis of a vast number of *phenomena of text grammar and language use*: coherence, anaphora, topics, macrostructures, speech acts, interactions, turn-taking, signs, politeness, argumentation, rhetoric, mental models and many other aspects of text and discourse" (emphases original).

The difference between discourse studies and CDS lays in the critically oriented focus of the latter that goes beyond the immediate results of linguistic analyses. CDS incorporate the seven points of interest, typical for discourse studies, enumerated above and combine them with an interdisciplinary, problem-oriented approach. Thus, CDS is "not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in analysing, understanding and explaining social phenomena that are

necessarily complex and thus require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach" (Wodak and Meyer 2016a, 2). One of the major concerns of CDS is the idea that language represents a form of social practice, which cannot be understood without looking at the broader power relations in play (Bennett 2015, 85). As Wodak and Meyer (2016a, 4) contend, "CDS approaches are characterized by the common interest in deconstructing ideologies and power through the systematic and retroductable investigation of semiotic data (written, spoke or visual)." Consequently, it is not surprising that language can and, indeed, is used for social control, as I have argued elsewhere (Borowski 2018a). Since CDS scholars believe that language use and language choices are not incidental but guided by functional purposes, it becomes the task of the analyst to identify and explain such choices as well as their effects and motivations (Bennett 2015, 104). This is also the goal of this dissertation, which takes a close look at online discussions about Silesian identity to examine how those conversations can inform our understanding of identity and related concepts in contemporary Poland.

In this enterprise, the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is well-positioned to uncover the unspoken attitudes, beliefs, and sentiments behind examples of language-in-use collected from the *Western Daily* discussion forum. As one of the major approaches to CDS, DHA is based on ten major principles (Reisigl and Wodak 2016, 31–32):

(1) "The approach is interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinarity involves theory, methods, methodology, research practice and practical application,

(2) The approach is problem-oriented,

(3) Various theories and methods are combined, wherever integration leads to an adequate understanding and explanation of the research object,

(4) The research incorporates fieldwork and ethnography (study from 'inside') if these are required for a thorough analysis and theorizing of the object under investigation,

(5) Research necessarily moves recursively between theory and empirical data (…),

(6) Numerous genres and public spaces as well as intertextual and interdiscursive relationships are studied,

(7) The historical context is taken into account when interpreting texts and discourses. The historical orientation permits the reconstruction of how recontextualization functions as an important process of linking texts and discourses intertextually and interdiscursively over time,

(8) Categories and methods are not fixed once and for all. They must be elaborated for each analysis according to the specific problem under investigation,

(9) 'Grand theories' often serve as a foundation (…),

(10)   The application of the results is an important aim. Results should be made available to and applied by experts and be communicated to the public."

Overall, the DHA consists of three analytical dimensions and focuses on (1) the content and topic of specific discourse, (2) its discursive strategies, and (3) linguistic means and their linguistic realizations. A DHA-oriented analysis is oriented by five questions about the nature of discursive strategies used in a specific example of language-in-use. These are (Reisigl and Wodak 2016, 32):

(1) "How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?

(2) What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?

(3) What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?

(4) From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?

(5) Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, intensified or mitigated?"

In this dissertation, I use these principles, analytical dimensions, and questions about discursive strategies to guide my analyses of online discussions about Silesian identity. However, rather than applying them comprehensively, I modify the original DHA framework to best serve the analytical goals at hand while preserving a critical approach to language data and keeping in mind the larger sociocultural question and sociohistorical context. In each analytical chapter, I combine and complement the methodological and theoretical orientations of DHA with related theories, frameworks, and insights from sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences as needed. Thus, I stay true to the critical and interdisciplinary nature of CDS-oriented research to study, analyze, and explain the topics at hand through close functional analysis of collected conversational data.

In an attempt to complement the methodological framework of DHA with social theory, this dissertation utilizes ideas and theories expressed in recent sociolinguistically and socially oriented research within the broader field of sociocultural linguistics (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Here, two main theoretical approaches are prominent and relevant for all analytical chapters in the dissertation. The first one is concerned with stancetaking and the second with an interactional approach to identity as expressed in language-in-use.

The notion of stance as a theoretical construct, put forward by Du Bois (2007), deals with the act of taking a stance, which, in addition to being its linguistic expression, achieves specific interactional goals. Stance, Du Bois (2007, 163) writes, is "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field." From the perspective of the person who takes a stance, this definition can be explained through the following well-known informal formula: "I evaluate something, and thereby position myself, and thereby align with you" (ibid.). This formula is often represented by the figure of the eponymous stance triangle, representing two subjects doing the work of evaluating and positioning with regard to the object at hand while simultaneously (dis)aligning themselves with respect to each other. Since the concept of stance is inherently interactional, not only is it something individuals "have" (in the sense of mental beliefs and attitudes), but it is also something that they do. While the original formulation of stancetaking was based on English-language examples of affective and evaluative verbs and other parts of speech (e.g., *I agree*; *That's horrible*, etc.), I extend this modality to Polish-language data to demonstrate that the work of stancetaking can also be performed through apparently neutral content words (e.g., *Paljaki*, see chapter 1) or through the morphological process of suffixation (e.g., *szlezjer**ki***, see chapter 4), common in Polish and other Slavic languages.

The utility of applying the concept of stancetaking to online discussions on Silesian identity in the *Western Daily* forum lays in the very character of those conversations, which are inherently centered on stance. As the first analytical chapter shows, stancetaking represents probably the most common interactional practice among users of this forum. Taking a stance on issues surrounding Silesia, Silesian, and Silesians is an ever-present phenomenon in the collected

data as posters exhibiting either pro-Silesian or anti-Silesian views engage in endless discursive battles over what it means to be Polish or what it means to be Silesian. In doing so, they attempt to get their message across by arguing their perspectives and, consequently, taking a stance on each smaller or larger issue under discussion. Given all this, the concept of stance represents the theoretical frame for all analytical chapters as well as the dissertation as a whole. As the larger narrative frame, stancetaking remains the omnipresent link between language and identity in the context of online discussions in the *Western Daily* forum. In the analytical chapters that follow, I successively use that frame to analyze four different types of stancetaking identified in my data: othering as stancetaking (chapter 1), associating as stancetaking (chapter 2), verbal violence and hateful speech as stancetaking (chapter 3), and naming as stancetaking (chapter 4).

Consequently, this dissertation shows that stancetaking is one key modality of identity wars online. In the context of the *Western Daily* forum, stancetaking represents probably the most common modality of user behavior in discussions centered on identity. The conversations held in the comments sections there are characterized by constant evaluation of the points and arguments made by the users. This kind of evaluation is performed both discursively (on the intersentential level) linguistically (on the intrasentential level) and results in the frequent work of positioning (van Langenhove and Harré 1999). The latter concept, auxiliary for the framework of stancetaking, assumes that "[w]henever somebody positions him/herself, this discursive act always implies a positioning of the one to whom it is addressed" and that "when somebody positions somebody else, that always implies a positioning of the person him/herself" (van Langenhove and Harré 1999, 22). Viewed from this perspective, the online activity of *Western Daily* forum users can be theorized (and explained) as a constant work of positioning, which in turn results in acts of stancetaking. As I demonstrate in its analytical chapters, the *Western Daily*

discussions studied are not about debating and reaching a constructive conclusion – instead, they are about repeated performances of individual identities as expressed in language-in-use.

The concept of identity represents another salient component of this dissertation theoretical toolkit. Following the analytical framework for analyzing identity in linguistic interaction by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), I approach the concept of identity as "a relational and sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories" (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 587–586) and define it as "the social positioning of self and other" (ibid.) that emerges in interaction. Consequently, instead of talking about "Poles" and "Silesians" in my data, I employ more interactional and locally grounded labels of "pro-Silesian posters" and "anti-Silesian posters" (see chapter 1) that better reflect the discursive identity work performed in the *Western Daily* forum. In doing so, my goal is to avoid the danger of "making" or "unmaking" the Silesian community, or what Brubaker (2002, 164) calls "groupism": "the tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed." While such attempts represent a frequent trope in much sociocultural and linguistic research on Silesian identity and self-identified Silesians, the question of whether Silesians represent an ethnic or national community (or a separate people) will not be dealt with in this dissertation.

Instead, the analytical chapters that follow are theoretically informed by the following five principles about identity in interaction from a sociocultural linguistic perspective (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 587–606):

(1) "Identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (the emergence principle),

(2) "Identities encompass (a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles" (the positionality principle),

(3) "Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups" (the indexicality principle),

(4) "Identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy." (the relationality principle),

(5) "Any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant to interaction. It is therefore constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts" (the partialness principle).

As it becomes evident later in this dissertation, all these principles apply to the discussions in the *Western Daily* forum. The collected conversational data show that you cannot readily tell users' identities, particularly because of the forum's text-only character (the emergence principle), the semantics of "Silesian" acquires different meanings depending on the poster's position on the issue of Silesian identity (the positionality principle), interactions between users yield identity relations and include overt mentions of identity categories and labels, assumptions about users' identities, and linguistically performed ideologies about individuals and groups (the indexicality principle), identities are discursively constructed through constant relational work in ongoing discussions (the relationality principle), and discursive constructions of identity in the *Western Daily* forum are necessarily partial, fractional, and resulting from various sources including the immediate interactions at hand, the users' cognitive processes, and larger ideological frameworks that are being discursively imported into the ongoing discussions (the partialness principle).

The issue of identity in online discussions and computer-mediated communication (CMC) has received much attention in recent research in sociocultural linguistics and neighboring fields (e.g., Marwick and boyd 2011; Page, Harper, and Frobenius 2013; Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2014; Hardaker and McGlashan 2016; Jacknick and Avni 2017; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2017; Baider and Kopytowska 2017; Borowski 2018b; Perelmutter 2018; Tovares 2019, among others). This body of research has, on one hand, tested the usefulness of "offline" theories in novel, digital contexts while generating new theoretical approaches and concepts that the advent of CMC has produced. As a result, ideas such as "context collapse" or "imagined audience" (Marwick and boyd 2011; Androutsopoulos 2014; Szabla and Blommaert 2017) have entered the theoretical lexicon of researchers of CMC interactions. Similar advancements have been made in the field of (critical) discourse studies as

applied to digital communicative practices (for an overview, see, e.g., Herring 2004, 2013; Herring and Androutsopoulos 2015; and, more, recently, Blitvich and Bou-Franch 2019).

In an attempt to marry some of the major tenets of critical discourse studies with the advent of CMC, KhosraviNik (2017) offered a discussion of social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS), an approach to studying discourses and discursive practices in the context of participatory social media (including, but not limited to, social networking sites). As an approach to critical investigations of discourse, SM-CDS "deals with discourse, not technology, as its central object of analysis. We are not only interested in what happens in media per se but in how it may shape and influence social and political sphere of our life worlds" (KhosraviNik 2017, 586). Accordingly, "digital performances of identity, conflict, and misogyny are to be interpreted within a wider socio-political context, which embeds the digital mediation" (KhosraviNik and Esposito 2018, 55). Thus, the SM-CDS approach is both local and global in that it seeks to illuminate how local discursive practices, for instance, in an online discussion forum, reflect and/or are reflective of larger sociopolitical trends and ideologies in play, with which CMC participants come to table. In this dissertation, I adopt this approach as an auxiliary theoretical framework to study discussions in the *Western Daily* forum and how these local discourses can inform our understanding of larger discourses about identity, language, and nation in the twenty-first-century Poland.

<div align="center">Previous research</div>

There exists relatively little prior research on the topic of Silesian identity from the perspective of digital media and computer-mediated communication. In a notable exception, Majewski (2012) offers an account of how self-identified Silesians use the Internet and new media to (re)construct their identities. Since that study predated this dissertation, it provides a useful

window into the world of early Silesian online activism that emerged as a consequence of the availability of broadband internet connection in Poland. Majewski finds that means of digital communication have become a welcome addition for the way self-identified Silesians consume and look for content relevant to their identity. These developments have led to the emergence of ethnic vigilantes labeled "Silesian cybernationalists":

> "… with a mass access to the internet, a new category emerged among people declaring membership in the Silesian nation – internet users who can be described by the name of Silesian cybernationalists, not only fighting with the means of the keyboard for their 'right to' possess their identity but also [fighting] against all those who dare to foul the sacred national principles and oppose their vision of the world" (Majewski 2012, 160).

Consequently, the digital spaces become an arena of fervent discursive battles over the ongoing constructions of "discursive worlds" that, after having been constructed, need to be defended by their adherents. According to Greń (2014, 257), it is "not a coincidence that Silesian identity and the processes that accompanied its determination reached a larger scale thanks to and during the era of the Internet." As Majewski notes, self-identified Silesians co-construct their national discourse on the internet and, in doing so, they devote "much time, energy, and space for constructing contents that are supposed to perform the function of 'conventional/canonical' materializations of the national spirit" (2012, 153). In this manner, the Silesian digital activism reflects the ontological character of all conflicts over subnational identities, as described by Bourdieu (1991, 221):

"Struggles over ethnic or regional identity - in other words, over the properties (stigmata or emblems) linked with the origin through the place of origin and its associated durable marks, such as accent - are a particular case of the different struggles over classifications, struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to make and unmake groups."

In a related line of work, Buchowski and Chlewińska (2012) incorporate data collected from the internet to report on political tolerance in Poland and its limits using the Silesian Autonomy Movement as a case study. Szmeja (2014, 219) argues that the internet and new media shape a new image of Silesia as people "learn anew how to use the Silesian dialect or how to behave in accordance with the groups' cultural norms." Other researchers look at the problem of folk standardization of the Silesian variety in online spaces. For instance, Greń (2007) identifies five distinct orthographical tendencies in the texts from Upper Silesia, Opole Silesia, and Cieszyn Silesia; Mętrak (2016) classifies Silesian websites regarding their language and content; more recently, Greń (2019) analyzes a sample of online Cieszyn Silesia texts from a linguistic point of view.

Silesia, Silesian, Silesians
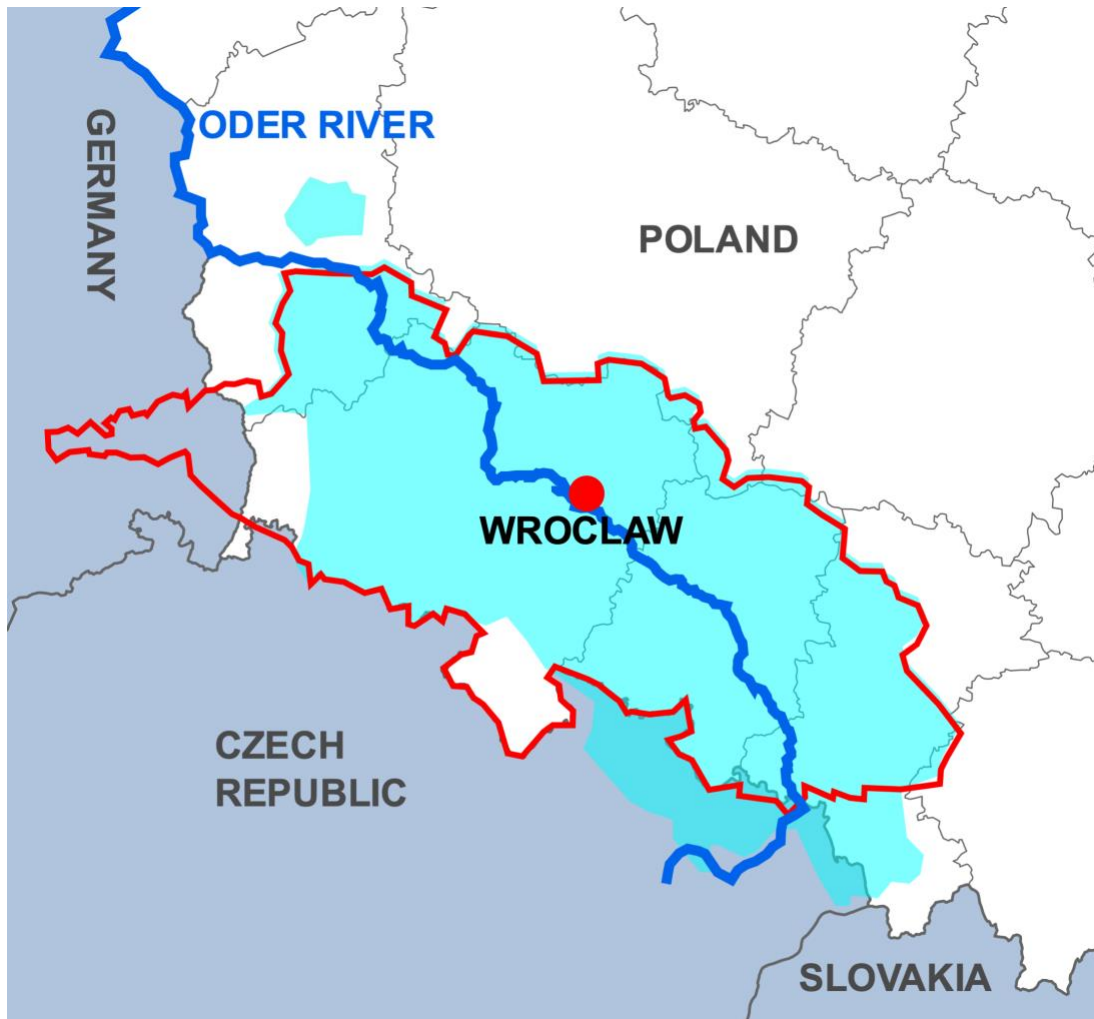
Map 1: Map of the historical region of Silesia superimposed on present-day borders:
Austrian Silesia in cyan, the Prussian Province of Silesia delineated in red

(Lommes / CC BY-SA (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0), image source:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/01/Silesia-map.svg)

Silesia is a historical region, located along the upper and middle course of the Oder River (Pol. Odra) in southwestern Poland and, partly, in the Czech Republic alongside the Polish-Czech border from south of the Kłodzko Valley in the north to Teschen Silesian in the south. The historical capital of Silesia is Wrocław (Germ. Breslau). Traditionally, the region is divided into Lower Silesia (its western part) with Wrocław and Upper Silesia (its eastern part) with its industrial basin. Today, the Polish part of Silesia is divided into the Lower Silesian (around

Wrocław), Opole (around Opole), and Silesia (around Katowice) Provinces, with a small part in the Lubusz (around Zielona Góra) Province. The etymology of the region's name is commonly derived from the name of the Ślężanie tribe, linked with the Ślęza River or the Ślęża Mountain, located less than 50 km southwest of the region's capital, Wrocław (Malec 2003, 236).

The history of Silesia took quite a different turn compared to the rest of Poland. In the late Middle Ages, Silesia was composed of small principalities as the Polish Kingdom entered the period of fragmentation (1138–1320). As the different provinces of the country were gradually united under Władysław Łokietek after 1320, most Silesian princes opted for a rapprochement with Bohemia. In 1340, the Polish king Casimir the Great renounced Silesia, which came under Bohemian influence, later to be passed into the Austrian (since 1526) and Prussian (since 1740) hands (Davies 2005, 70). These decisions consequently separated Silesia from the core Polish areas for six centuries and it was not until 1945 that Poland regained control of most of the region's territory.

While this unique historical trajectory of Silesia is not commonly found in Polish historiographic works, it represents one of the building blocks of Silesian (regional, ethnic) identity and is key for self-identification as a Silesian, as later chapters in this dissertation will show. This sociohistorical and sociopolitical separation of Silesian from core Polish lands is also the rationale behind the local narrative of Silesia as a region that has always been a part of the European cultural milieu. According to this narrative, the same cannot be said about Poland itself or many Polish areas, which had to endure other (that is, non-Western European) influences in their turbulent history. This narrative of always-European Silesia gained particular prominence after the end of World War Two, as the region witnessed an influx of ethnic Poles from territories annexed in the east by the Soviet Union; this idea is also present in the contemporary

discourse of Silesian regional activists (see chapter 1). The roots of this type of mental mapping

run, however, much deeper. In the early sixteenth century, Bartholomäus Stein wrote

Silesiographia, in which a distinction between Silesian locals and Poles was already made

known. According to Stein, Poles "are rustic, rough, without industry and ingenuity … Ours, by

contrast, as if their civilization [humanitas] had come from the West, lead a more cultured life

and have more industrious habits, and more open minds" (cited in Karch 2018, 29).

One important consequence of Silesia's divergent history is the different sociolinguistic

and sociocultural context, in which the locals lived for generations. This was especially the case

for the region's eastern part, Upper Silesia. In historiography, as Karch (2018) observes, both

German and Polish historians tend to promote narratives that create assumptions about German

or Polish roots of Upper Silesia and its populace while minimizing the influence of the other

culture and language on the complex ethnolinguistic fabric of the region. The reality, however,

was more complicated and multi-layered. As in other European regions in the pre-national era,

bilingualism was common in Upper Silesia, as German was used alongside a Slavic dialect

called *ślonzok* or *schlonsak* ('Silesian'). While German was the language of the middle- and

upper-class newcomers from core German areas, *ślonzok* was mainly used by the local

Slavophones rooted in the region for generations. Although the local vernacular was distinctly

Slavic in its grammatical structure, it nevertheless included a fair amount of Germanic

vocabulary. This is attested in the name given to *ślonzok* by German speakers – *Wasserpolnisch*,

or 'watered-down Polish'. Similarly, its speakers were pejoratively called *Wasserpolen*,

'watered-down Poles' (Karch 2018, 222). In sociolinguistics, such a co-presence of two

linguistic codes used under different conditions, one of which is more prestigious and dominates

the official use while the other is mostly limited to the informal context is known as diglossia

(Ferguson 1959). Under Prussian rule, German was the dominant ('high' variety, in Fergusonian terms) language in Upper Silesia and the local *ślonzok* variety was used in everyday communication in semiformal or informal situations. This linguistic configuration became common in the second half of the nineteenth century (Zeller 2019).

Despite the rapid industrialization and urbanization that took place in the eastern part of Silesia in the nineteenth century, the region failed to produce stable national identifications among the local Slavophones. As in other parts of Europe (e.g., Judson 2006), nationalist activists sought to convince the local population of their "Germanness" or "Polishness," drawing national boundaries along linguistic lines. When it comes to *ślonzok*, the rhetoric of German and Polish activists mirrored each other. On the one hand, some German activists viewed the local Slavic vernacular as too distinct from Polish and infused with enough Germanic lexicon to consider it a separate language (Bjork 2016, 108–109). On another hand, *ślonzok* had a Slavic grammatical foundation, which allowed Polish activists to claim it as a Polish dialect. Interestingly, this line of thinking was supported by data from Prussian censuses, which regularly recorded Polish as the mother tongue of the local Slavic speakers (Service 2013, 176–177).

Nevertheless, the local population seemed largely immune to the arguments of nationalist activists. In 1891, for example, the *Gazeta Polska* (*Polish Daily*) newspaper published in Opole bemoaned the existence of "many irrational people, who regard a Pole or a German as hardly different from each other" (Karch 2018, 66). Indifference to the widespread bilingualism was yet another juncture for disagreement, especially that locals saw the acquisition of German as a worthy investment in their children's future. In one article, the same newspaper complained: "There are parents who hardly worry about the matter and who are indifferent to the language in which their child prepared for Holy Communion; on the contrary they urge their children to take

part in German instruction, so that they can show other the refinement of their children" (ibid.).

Such tolerance, and partly even encouragement for bilingualism, was not only characteristic of

individuals but political associations as well. For example, in 1883 a resolution passed by the

Catholic Center Party complained that German-only instruction in Upper Silesia "produced

children who 'cannot read Polish but cannot understand German'" (Bjork 2016, 110). With time,

Upper Silesia natives seemed to have also mastered German. The case of miner Leon

Lukaszczyk who "did not know one word of German" only to become fluent in the language by

his twenties (Bjork 2016, 111) seems to confirm this general trend.

The issue of development and presence or persistence of Silesians as a separate (ethnic,

regional, ethno-national) entity has become one of the most contested points in historical,

sociological, but also sociolinguistic research. Some historians associate the emergence of

Silesians as a distinct group with the German and Polish nationalizing efforts that took place in

the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Bjork 2008; Karch 2018). In this

process, the adherence of Silesians to the Roman Catholic Church that crossed the linguistic lines

was of paramount importance (Bjork 2008). In another view, Silesians represent generations-

long residents of the region who, having to endure ennationalizion efforts on part of the German

and Polish national projects, responded by deploying their pre-existent identity that was neither

German nor Polish but Silesian (Kamusella 2016). According to Karch (2018, 2), the national

strife that took place in Silesia eventually "*created* the presence of Silesians" (emphasis

original), a group that "emerged in Poland not through expulsions or resettlements, but rather

through a regional invention of the very category of the Upper Silesian." The two major forces

behind this identity construction were the dominance of Catholicism in the region and the use of

the *ślonzok* vernacular combined with widespread bilingualism. As Silesians rejected German or

Polish national belonging, they opted for identification with the region. In doing so, they "navigated a century of mass politics, world wars, mass murder, and expulsions by intentionally crafting their own national ambiguity" (Karch 2018, 4) to pass as loyal German or Polish citizens. This stance caused German and Polish activists to intensify their nationalizing efforts, which in turn yielded even more national apathy among Upper Silesians. In this manner, a feedback loop between nationalism and national ambiguity was created.

After World War One, both Germany and Poland contested Upper Silesia due to its economic potential. Following the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, a plebiscite was mandated to determine the future of the region. In the Upper Silesian plebiscite (1921), nearly 60% of votes were cast in favor of Germany and the region was eventually split between the two countries, with Poland receiving its easternmost part with the counties of Rybnik, Pszczyna, Katowice, and Lubliniec. In the period leading to the plebiscite, a third geopolitical option emerged – that of Upper Silesian independence. These ideas, however, were more of a conglomerate of different scenarios rather than one coherent narrative, as regional activists proposed that Upper Silesia become an independent province within Prussia, an independent state within Germany, or an entirely independent country. In all this, Upper Silesian instrumentalism played not a negligible part:

> For the autonomists, the German and Polish nations were only as worthy as the material benefits and cultural freedoms they offered. While most autonomy activists came out as pro-German ahead of the plebiscite vote, their stance toward each nationality was ultimately instrumental and focused on what the *state* could provide (Karch 2018, 115; emphasis original).

With the incorporation of Silesia into Poland after the World War Two, native Upper Silesians had to undergo the so-called "national verification," in which they had to prove their "Polishness," or, better, "non-Germanness," to the communist authorities. To avoid deportation to Germany, Upper Silesians had to answer questions about their language use, attachment to Poland, or any affiliation with German or Nazi associations in the past, later reviewed by local verification committees. Overall, the verification procedure was quite lenient, as demonstrated by the numbers. For instance, less than 5% of Upper Silesian applications for Polish residency (with about one-third left to go) have been denied by September 1946 (Karch 2018, 273). Those successfully verified as Poles had to declare their patriotic feelings for Poland in an oath that, among others, read:

> "I promise to be a faithful and obedient citizen of the Polish Republic and to break off every connection with Germans and Germandom, to thoroughly erase any feelings for Germandom, to raise children in the Polish spirit and to ignite in their hearts a love for Poland – the fatherland of my ancestors" (cited in Karch 2018, 272).

Such a caution against any potential markers of Germanness went hand in hand with the communist regime's ideology, according to which "no 'hidden' Germans should be allowed into the Polish body politic" (Ehrlich 2005, 193). This trope of potential danger on part of "hidden Germans" on Polish soil survived the collapse of communist Poland and re-emerged under the label of "camouflaged German option" in an official political document published 75 years later (see chapter 2).

The fall of communism brought a change in the sociopolitical landscape of Poland that allowed Upper Silesians to re-emerge as a community. Before that, however, communist Poland was designed as an ethnically homogeneous country (Łodziński 2012a). Thus, the authorities adopted a "unitary vision of Polish national identity, which has been based upon the conviction that the whole nation is ethnically homogeneous" (Wódz and Wódz 2006, 11). Since that system "did not leave much room for the expression of cultural differences of the Poles, regional and ethnic distinctiveness were never mentioned in official political discourse" (ibid.). Unsurprisingly, post-1989 Poland witnessed a revival of Upper Silesian activism as a reaction to Polish centralism (Karch 2018). In this capacity, the Silesian Autonomy Movement (Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska*, *RAŚ*) represents one of the most vocal advocates of Silesian identity in contemporary Poland. Established in the early 1990s, the Movement is an association whose goals include (1) achieving regional autonomy for Silesia within the Polish state, (2) consolidating the Silesian regional identity, and (3) promoting the Silesian language variety, among others (RAŚ 2011).

The re-emergence of Silesians as a distinct community became most apparent in the 2002 and 2011 censuses when, respectively, some 173,000 and 847,000 (ca. 2% of the total population) people self-identified as Silesians in terms of nationality (GUS 2003, 2015). Those numbers effectively established Silesians as numerically the largest minority in the country. In the 2002 census, only one ethno-national identification was allowed. There, nationality was defined as "a declarative (based on subjective feeling) individual feature of each person, expressing her/his emotional, cultural, or genealogical (due to the origin of parents) relationship with a specific people" (GUS 2003, 18). In the 2011 census, the following questions were asked:

(1) "What is your nationality? (nationality should be understood as national or ethnic belonging – and should not be confused with citizenship),

(2) Do you also feel a sense of belonging to another nation or ethnic community?" (GUS 2015, 22).

In question (1), respondents could either choose one of the fourteen pre-determined options of ethno-national identification (in original order: Polish, Belarusian, Czech, Karaim,[2] Lithuanian, Lemko,[3] German, Armenian, Romani, Russian, Slovak, Tatar, Ukrainian, Jewish) or use the write-in option to provide a different answer. In question (2), the possible answers were "Yes" and "No"; in the case of the former, respondents were asked to provide the answer themselves (ibid.).

Here, it is worth mentioning that the category of self-identified Silesians as established by the 2011 census is not in any manner homogeneous, but consists of three main groups: (1) those who declared Polish and Silesian nationality (430,000 or 49.4% of all Silesian declarations), (2) those who declared German and Silesian nationality (64,000 or 7.4%), and (3) those who declared Silesian nationality exclusively (376,000 or 43.2%) (GUS 2015, 36). Further, while 99.8 percent of respondents declared Polish nationality as their first (of the two possible) options in terms of ethno-national identification, the results for self-identified Silesians are vastly different, as 51.5 percent of them chose the label "Silesian" in their first, and the remaining 48.5

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[2] The Karaims (also known as Crimean Karaites; Pol. *Karaimi*, Crimean Karaim *Къырымкъарайлар*) are a Turkic-speaking minority living in Poland and its eastern neighbors. In the 2011 census, 346 respondents self-identified as Karaims (GUS 2015, 131).

[3] The Lemkos (Pol. *Łemkowie*, Lemko *Лемкы*) are a minority living in southeastern Poland, near the Polish-Slovak border. While perceived as a sub-group of (Carpathian) Rusyns, they are considered a separate community in Poland. In the 2002 census, ca. 5,900 respondents self-identified as Lemkos; this number rose to 10,500 in the 2011 census (GUS 2015, 40).

percent in their second option (GUS 2015, 34). Interestingly, the corresponding statistics for Kashubians in the 2011 census are 7.6 and 92.4 percent, respectively.

While the two censuses de facto established Silesians as a separate community, those results did not lead to their official recognition as a (national or ethnic) minority. According to the 2005 Act on national and ethnic minorities and regional language, there are nine national (in original order: Belarusians, Czech, Lithuanians, Germans, Armenians, Russian, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Jews) and four ethnic (in original order: Karaims, Lemkos, Romani, Tatars) minorities that are officially recognized in Poland (*Act* 2005). Thus far, attempts at granting Silesians the status of an officially recognized minority have been unsuccessful. According to Tambor (2019), such attempts are destined to fail due to the fears of Upper Silesians' autonomous aspirations, commonly equated with separatism, and of pro-German sentiments.

1 Częstochowa
2 Gliwice
3 Zabrze
4 Bytom
5 Ruda Śląska
6 Świętochłowice
7 Chorzów
8 Piekary Śląskie
9 Siemianowice Śląskie
10 Dąbrowa Górnicza
11 Sosnowiec
12 Katowice
13 Mysłowice
14 Jaworzno
15 Tychy
16 Rybnik
17 Żory
18 Jastrzębie-Zdrój
19 Bielsko-Biała
20 Pow. rybnicki
21 Pow. bieruńsko-lędziński

powiaty grodzkie
granice powiatów
granice gmin

Map 2: Map of the Silesia Province (in existence since 1999) including the Upper Silesian metropolitan area with around Katowice (12) in the center
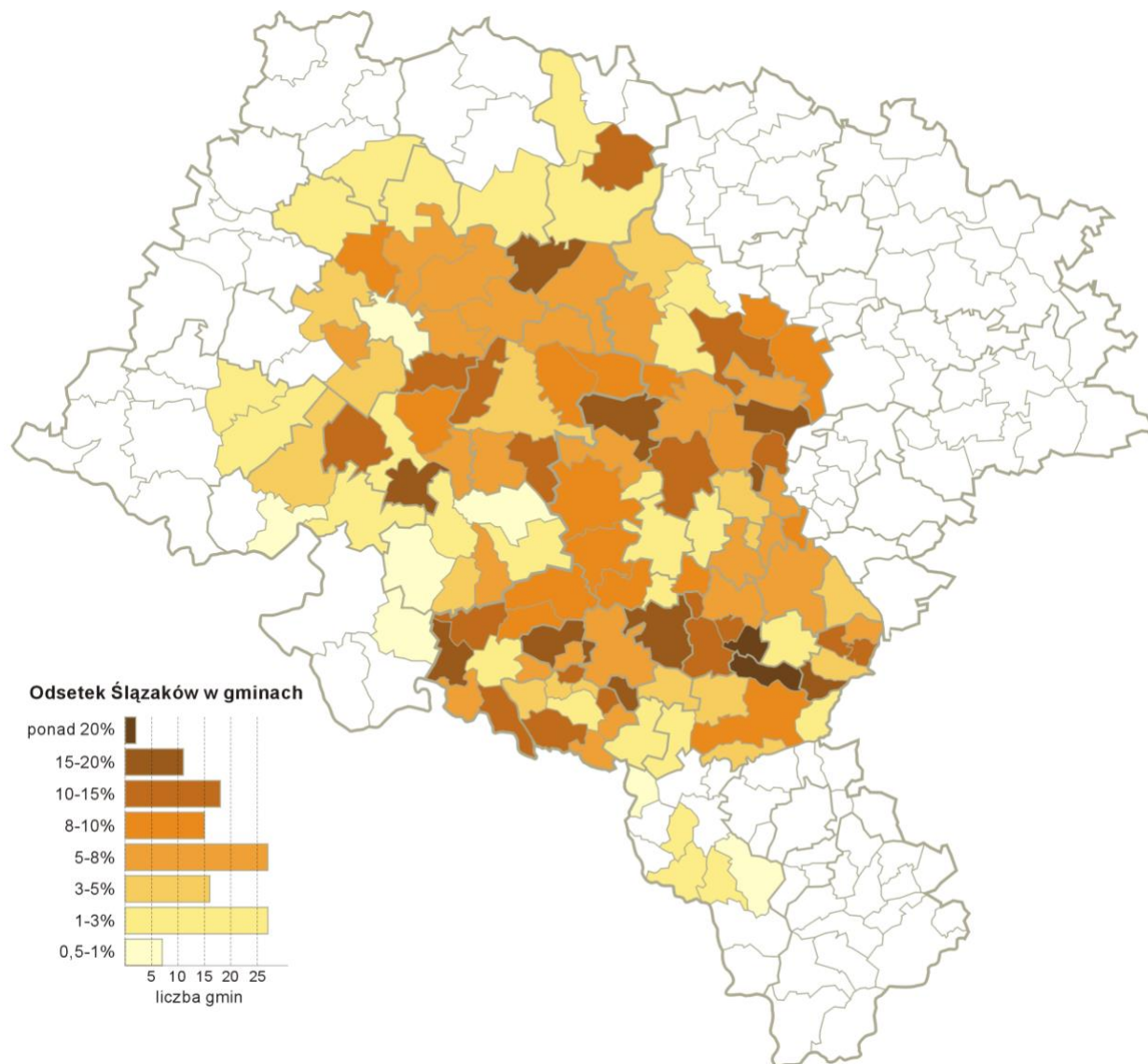
Map 3: Map of the Silesian declarations in the counties of the Opole (western part) and Silesia (eastern part) Provinces based on the 2002 census results

(Aotearoa / CC BY-SA (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/), image source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c5/Gminy_zamieszkane_przez_%C5%9Al%C4%85zak%C3%B3w.png)

Similarly, Silesian linguistic activism has failed to elevate the Silesian variety to the status of a

regional language, despite several efforts (for details, see Jaroszewicz 2019).[4] From the

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[4] As of early 2020, Kashubian (spoken in northern Poland) is the only regional language officially recognized in Poland (*Act* 2005).

economic point of view, it is predicted that no change in this area is possible because should

Silesian be officially recognized as a regional language, the legal protection of another (after

Kashubian) regional language would require more providing financial means from the state

(Tambor 2019). Nevertheless, the issue of the Silesian (Sil. *ślōnskŏ gŏdka*, ISO 639-3 code

[since 2007]: *szl*) variety continues to be one of the most focal points of Silesian regional

activism. In the 2011 census, close to 530,000 respondents declared using Silesian at home (GUS

2015, 70), making it the second most used language variety in the country. Commonly perceived

as a dialect of Polish (Siuciak 2012; Urbańczyk 1962; Wronicz 2013; Dejna 1973; Zaręba 1969–

1996; see Jaroszewicz 2019 for a contrasting view), Silesian has in recent decades attracted

much attention thanks to its spread from closed circles of family and friends to enter the world of

literature, theatre, social media, new technologies, advertising, etc. (Jaroszewicz 2018). In this

manner, the Silesian variety has become "fashionable" and one of the most often used markers of

Silesian self-identification, including the digital spaces (Daeninck 2012; Filipkowska 2014; Greń

2019; Orzeł 2014). As I have shown elsewhere, despite the increased visibility, Silesian is

commonly viewed as a mere Polish dialect, 'uncouth', and more suited for ludic than all-domain

communicative purposes (Borowski 2018b).

As a language variety closely related to Polish, Silesian stands out among other varieties

spoken in the country because of the relatively high concentration of Germanic-origin lexicon in

comparison to, for instance, most Polish dialects. Due to the region's history (see above), the

Slavophones of Upper Silesia lived for several centuries in German-speaking states, which has

initiated the long process of Germanic-Slavic language contact. The nineteenth-century

industrialization and urbanization of the region resulted in significant sociolinguistic changes.

The emergence of mines and factories resulted in the uprooting of the natives who moved into

the rapidly developing urban areas where they found employment. The development of heavy industry necessitated the presence of mid- and upper-level management. They arrived in Upper Silesia from core German areas and spoke German, which started to infiltrate the local Slavic vernacular. It was in this diaglossic environment that the Silesian language variety developed, borrowing numerous Germanic words, especially in the professional and technical domain, e.g., Sil. *gruba* 'mine' (cf. Germ. *Grube* vis-à-vis Pol. *kopalnia*), Sil. *autobana* 'highway' (cf. Germ. *Autobahn* vis-à-vis Pol. *autostrada*), Sil. *cug* 'train' (cf. Germ. *Zug* vis-à-vis Pol. *pociąg*). As research shows, however, the Germanic influence did not stop here and involved, apart from vocabulary, morphology, and syntax as well (Tambor 2014). Some notable contact-induced features include (Tambor 2014, 152–153):

(1) calquing German prepositional phrases:

    a. Sil. *jechać z tramwajym* 'to go by tram' (cf. Germ. *fahren **mit** der Straßenbahn*, Pol. *jechać tramwajem*),

    b. Sil. *cwiter **od** Ewy* 'Ewa's sweater' (cf. Germ. *Pullover **von** Eva*, Pol. *sweter Ewy*),

(2) changes in case government:

    a. Sil. *niy mom nic przeciw **ciebie***.ACC 'I have nothing against you' (cf. Germ. *Ich habe nichts gegen **dich***.ACC, Pol. *nie mam nic przeciwko **tobie***.DAT),

    b. Sil. *łón jest **mój szef***.NOM 'He is my boss' (cf. Germ. *Er ist **mein Chef***.NOM, Pol. *On jest **moim szefem***.INS).

Selected features that distinguish Silesian from contemporary standard Polish include (Tambor 2008, 2014):

(1) differences in nominal morphology:

    a. ACC.SG ending *-a* in feminine nouns, e.g., Sil. *widza ta rodzina* 'I can see this family' *(*cf. Pol. *widzę tę rodzinę*),

    b. GEN.SG ending *-e* in soft-stem feminine nouns, e.g., Sil. *tyj tradycje* 'of this tradition' (cf. Pol. *tej tradycji*),

(2) differences in verbal morphology:

    a. PRS.1.SG ending *-a*, e.g., Sil. *widza* 'I (can) see' (cf. Pol. *widzę*),

    b. PST/COND.1.SG ending *-ch* (characteristic for aorist), e.g., Sil. *urodziyłech sie* 'I was born' (cf. Pol. *urodziłem się*), *bardzo bych sie ucieszyła* 'I would be very happy' (cf. Pol. *bardzo bym się ucieszyła*),

    c. transitivization of intransitive verbs and extended use of the passive voice, e.g., Sil. *mjała to **wyskoczone*** [transitive] *(w kolanie)* 'it came up (in her knee)' (cf. Pol. *coś jej **wyskoczyło*** [intransitive] *w kolanie* 'something came up in her knee').

As it will become apparent later in this dissertation, some of the features typical for Silesian will be present in the conversational data analyzed in chapters 1–4.

Chapter 1: Linguistic othering

"Despite the occupation and humiliation of Germany (Upper Silesia) after the lost war, 60% voted for Germany because they didn't want to be in contact with the eastern steppe culture."

(a pro-Silesian poster)

The Other and othering

Othering represents one of the most common stancetaking strategies in the data collected for this dissertation. As pro-Silesian and anti-Silesian posters come together in the *Western Daily* forum, they immediately recognize each other based on the content of their posts and the stance that each poster brings into the larger discussion on Silesian identity. Once their stances are brought together and expressed in language-in-use, othering becomes a pervasive rhetorical move that allows pro- and anti-Silesian posters to (1) uphold/defend their positions and (2) distinguish in-group members (those who hold similar views on the topic) from out-group members (those who hold divergent views). As both groups become more entrenched in their pre-conceived views, they use linguistic othering to construct, delineate, and sustain their community against the opposing community. This process is realized linguistically by combining complex sociohistorical contexts with linguistic creativity, as this chapter shows.

In sociolinguistics, the practice of othering has been linked with the work of representation in which collective and individual identities are discursively constructed, maintained, and challenged. Coupland (2010) defines representations as "the totality of semiotic means by which items and categories, individuals and social groups, along with their attributes and values, are identified, thematised, focused, shaped and made intelligible" (242). Because representations are both cognitive and discursive, they both constitute and are constitutive of the very ideas they represent. Once imbued with sociocultural values, representations become

ideological in how they depict groups or individuals (ibid.). It is such portrayals that are typical

of the process of othering.

The idea of the Other in human thought can be dated back as far as Plato (Riggins 1997).

Traces of what is now referred to as the process of othering can also be found in Georg Simmel's

concept of the stranger. According to the sociologist, the stranger represents an individual who

"does not conform completely to the norms of the system" (Rogers 1999, 61). Simmel's

conceptualization of the Other as someone who fails to adhere to an established system of

rules—be it real or imagined—is also mirrored in recent (and often overlapping) definitions of

othering. For instance, Coupland (2010) understands othering as a "process of representing an

individual or a social group to render them distant, alien or deviant" (244). While such

representations produce social exclusion, they are also often linked with an ascription of a

socially disadvantageous position to the ones subjected to othering, contributing thus to their

marginalization (ibid.). The theme of deviation represents a recurring topic in the literature on

othering processes. Looking at discussions on extremist online forums, Baumgarten (2017)

shows how discussants other third parties (immigrants, Jews, LGBTQ people, Muslims, and

others) through (1) assumptions about how they violate the unspoken norms about the desired

status quo and (2) ascriptions of behaviors believed to be immoral and/or dishonest.

The process of othering also figures prominently in writings about Orientalism. For Said

(1978), Orientalism represents "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological

distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (2), "a *distribution*

of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and

philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographic distinction (the world is

made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also as a whole series of 'interests'

which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world" (12, emphasis original). Since the East/West division makes part and parcel of these definitions, Orientalism as a style of thought is imminently involved in othering processes as well as identity work.

Orientalist thinking has been shown to function within the geographic borders of Europe as well. Wolff (1994) has demonstrated how the phenomenon of "mental mapping," achieved mainly through associations and comparisons that contributed during the Enlightenment to the construction and intensive othering of Eastern Europe vis-à-vis the Western part of the continent. This type of imaginary social geography was perhaps best evidenced in the travelogue authored by the Count de Ségur who—having passed from Prussia to Poland on his way to Catherine the Great's court—"felt that he had 'left Europe entirely,' and furthermore had 'moved back ten centuries'" (6). Through such and similar discourses, geopolitical facts were metonymically transposed onto other areas of social life to demonstrate the assumed superiority of one nation or group of people over another one. This is also the case in Central Europe, itself a modern invention that is supposed to delineate the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia from its eastern neighbors and, in doing so, metaphorically draw them closer to the Western part of the European continent. To wit, Zarycki (2014) calls contemporary contemporary Central and Eastern Europe "a prisoner of what Edward Said called Orientalism" (1), pointing out that "[t]he region can be seen as both a victim of external orientalization and, at the same time, as a locus of *intensive production* of orientalist discourses" (ibid., emphasis mine). According to Kuus (2004), "orientalist assumptions about East-Central Europe persist not simply because they are imposed

on the accession countries but also because they are actively used by these countries against their particular Easts. This reinscription works not as an absolute dichotomy of self and other, but as a more complex and contingent pattern of degrees and shades of otherness" (479). Given this context, it then follows that Polish self-identification is to a considerable degree based on the representation of Russia as a not fully valuable yet dangerous Other (Grzymski 2000). "In order to feel more Western," Grzymski (2000) writes, "one needed to look at the Russian" (75). As it becomes apparent later in the analysis, the Orientalist style of thought represents a key ideological repertoire that pro-Silesian posters utilize as they attempt to delineate themselves from the Polish majority whose members' overall otherness is portrayed as fundamentally incongruent with what it means to be Silesian.

The above-mentioned insights point to the importance of discourse in accounts and representations of the Self and Others. "For a person to develop a self-identity," Riggins, (1997) writes, "he or she must generate *discourses* of both *difference and similarity* and must reject and embrace specific identities" (4, emphasis original). Hall (2006) defines discourse as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—i.e. a way of representing—a particular kind of knowledge about a topic" (165). As a result, discourse "is about the production of knowledge through language" (ibid.). The power to produce knowledge through representation comes with serious consequences for "both those who employ it and those who are 'subjected' to it" (173). For van Dijk (1997), focusing on othering discourses can yield important insights about power and group relations as well as ideologies pervading public consciousness regarding the Othered and the Otherer, effectively becoming a mode of social analysis.

This feature of othering is especially instrumental in the context of minoritarian groups and communities that lack official recognition and/or support. In the case of Polish-Silesian

discussions online, the distinction between pro- and anti-Silesian commenters represents *the* key distinction around which those conversations are structured. Consequently, the idea of Silesian identity (as well as language and ethnicity) becomes the key argument argued for (by pro-Silesian posters) or against (by anti-Silesian posters) in the *Western Daily* discussion forums. While participants in these disputes virtually never seem to agree on what it means to be Silesian (and whether being Silesian automatically excludes the possibility of being simultaneously Polish), the ability to voice their opinions and argue—quite often in a very unsophisticated manner—results in increased identity awareness for members of both groups as they face, confirm, or challenge identitarian features associated with Silesian identity. As I show in the analysis, the *Western Daily* discussion forums enable both pro- and anti-Silesian discussants to produce, maintain, and promote mutually othering discourses that play a key role in the construction of respective identities.

Barth's (1969) idea of ethnic boundaries, prominent in the literature on ethnicity and identity, depends heavily on the process of othering. It is through the process of boundary making (inevitably involves othering), the anthropologist argued, that ethnic difference is constructed and produced in everyday life, for the continuity of ethnic units "depends on the maintenance of a boundary" (14). Thus, while the cultural diacritics allowing one to distinguish between insiders and outsiders may change, the ongoing in-group/out-group member dichotomy makes it possible to study how these groups continue to persist (ibid.).

As Schwalbe et al. (2000) argue, othering represents one of the four main processes for the (re)production of inequality. In their view, othering "entails the invention of categories and of ideas about what marks people as belonging to [dominant or inferior] categories" (422). Similarly, Weis (1995) defines othering as "that process which serves to mark and name those

thought to be different from oneself (18). For Morin and Lee (2010), othering "distinguishes between the familiar and the foreign" (497), and is thus instrumental to how group identities are formed. Consequently, the construction of exclusion/inclusion aids the process of establishing rules of belonging (ibid.), a process that further crystallizes and juxtaposes in-group members against out-group members. This is, for example, evident in the conceptualization of othering as "a reflexive move with the floating signifier as target" (Fielder & Catalano 2017, 209). It follows is that othering can be harnessed for increasing group cohesion and group identity (Jaworski and Coupland 2005).

With regard to the notion of discourse, recent studies in the area of language in society have approached othering as a discursively constructed phenomenon. For instance, Jensen (2011) views othering as "discursive processes by which powerful groups, who may or may not make up a numerical majority, define subordinate groups into existence in a reductionist way which ascribe problematic and/or inferior characteristics to these subordinate groups. Such discursive processes affirm the legitimacy and superiority of the powerful and condition identity formation among the subordinate" (65). Following this line of thinking, Molek-Kozakowska and Chovanec (2017) hold that the discursively constructed idea of "the other" serves national communities to enforce their own identities. As they point out, while typically associated with discourses disseminated by the elites through mass media, othering can also become a strategy in semi-public contexts, such as that of online discussion forums. In such settings, othering may be performed "in less subtle ways by expressing politically incorrect sentiments, trolling and flaming" (5). As I demonstrate in this chapter, this is precisely the case with online discussions on the Silesian minority. For the purpose of this chapter, I define othering as *the discursive practice of constructing, delineating, and maintaining in-groups and out-groups, which can be*

effectuated in online, written discourse through various forms of explicature (that is, what is explicitly said), implicature (that is, what is implied), associations, and other linguistic strategies.

Although viewed prevalently as a process, othering can also be approached as a framework describing "how certain groups are set apart from and marginalized by the mainstream community" (Olsen, El-Bialy, Mckelvie, Rauman, & Brunger 2016, 60). Even though the process of othering is most commonly associated with numerical minorities, it need not be as I show in my analysis. In doing so, I recursively move between data and four major topics/questions that Molek-Kozakowska and Chovanec (2017) have proposed in their framework for studying othering. These topics include:

(1) What are the groups subjected to othering?

(2) What sociocultural, historical, political contexts are brought into othering discourses?

(3) What specific othering strategies are used in these practices?

(4) How othering is linguistically performed at the micro-, textual level, and what functions do these instances possess at the macro-, societal level?

Using this framework, I look at the established dichotomies in play, describe and explain the broader (both local and national) context of othering practices, investigate specific othering strategies present in online discussions on Silesian minority, and finally move from analysis through interpretation and explanation of how othering is discursively employed for identity work.

Because of the sociolinguistic and discourse-centered focus of this chapter, I concentrate on how language use in its many forms facilitates and contributes to othering processes. This and

similar ideas have figured prominently in sociocultural and linguistic works that focus on othering and identity. For instance, Rampton (1999) holds that language can "appropriate, explore, reproduce or challenge influential images and stereotypes of groups that they don't themselves (straightforwardly) belong to" (421). Perelmutter (2018) shows how conflict discourse can be utilized in the context of an online discussion forum to negotiate identities and for othering work. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Sifianou (2017) argue that aggression and (im)politeness represent key factors in othering. These elements can also be traced in right-wing populist discourses where othering becomes a recurrent discursive strategy (Wodak 2015). Similarly, Tekin (2010) demonstrates how pejoration (see below) in the processes of othering Turkey becomes an important component of the construction of European identity.

Since the othering effect is contingent on an interplay of language and social context, linguistic or textual representations become key for the process of othering (Coupland 2010). Because varied linguistic means can be used to other groups or individuals, othering itself can come in various forms. For instance, Schwalbe et al. (2000) distinguish between "(1) oppressive othering; (2) implicit othering by the creation of powerful virtual selves; and (3) defensive othering among subordinates" (422–423). Analyzing the 1927 Great Speech by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Morin and Lee (2010) have identified the following types of othering: homogenization (rendering groups unified), separation (drawing distinctions between "us" and "them"), conflict (using the discourse of war and war-related metaphors), and typification (creating a typical representation of the Turkish nation, one in which Turks are singled out as a community through references to their historical enemies). According to Coupland (2010), there are four recurrent (and somewhat overlapping) types of discursive strategies employed in representations to produce the othering effect: homogenization (reducing individual characteristics in order to

create a unified depiction of a group), pejoration (projecting evaluative qualities onto groups), suppression and silencing (limiting or erasing group representations), and subverting tolerance (rejecting liberalism as the guiding principle in discussions about multiculturalism). Baumgarten's (2017) account of extremist talk indicated that othering is discursively achieved mainly through "negative judgement" and "negative appreciation," strategies akin to pejoration and subverting tolerance respectively, to use Coupland's terms.

<div style="text-align:center">Sociolinguistic approximation</div>

In what follows, I contribute to the ongoing conversation on othering by drawing attention to one specific method of producing the othering effect, prevalent in online discussions about the Silesian minority on http://www.dziennikzachodni.pl, the electronic edition of the *Western Daily* (Pol. *Dziennik Zachodni*). Using selected examples from a corpus of online comments, I point to what I call sociolinguistic approximation, a strategy in which discussants (1) introduce stable associations between their interlocutors and chosen (non)standard varieties, and then (2) employ them in order to render their interlocutors distant, distinct, and foreign, effectively producing them as Others. As I progress through examples and analysis, it will become apparent that these associations become saturated with ideological positions that other addressees and that are repeated throughout the corpus, regardless of when each example was written. Toward the end of the investigation, it will also become evident that such instances have effectively become a distinct genre on its own, with predictable content and stable, consistent through time interpretations.

Since the discussions under consideration take place between pro- and anti-Silesian posters, their creative use of several varieties effectively increases the social distance between Poles and Silesians, producing a social difference. As I demonstrate below, the strategy of

sociolinguistic approximation is also employed by members of both groups for identity work. While focusing on this method of producing an othering effect, I also build on existing literature on othering effect to show how the strategy of sociolinguistic approximation draws from the already established models of othering work, and how it broadens our understanding of what nonlinguistic resources can be harnessed for producing othering effects. In doing so, I account for how internal and external differences are erased or minimized in othering processes (Morin and Lee 2010), how they inadvertently result in reductivism (Coupland 2010), and how some examples instantiate what Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) call homogeneism, that is, "the idea that the ideal society should be as uniform or homogeneous as possible" (117). As I progress with my analysis, it also becomes apparent how othering work facilitates and fuels identity work. In online discussions under consideration, self-identified Poles and self-identified Silesians perform identity work in a push-and-pull manner as the former ones attempt to discursively reduce the social (and ethnic) distance between the two groups (the pull) while the latter ones endeavor to do the opposite (the push).

<div align="center">Pro-Silesian and anti-Silesian camps</div>

In the *Western Daily* forum, pro-Silesian commenters make a major effort in these debates to 'prove' or otherwise 'confirm' that identification as a Silesian represents a definable and delineable set of attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that are greatly incongruent with Polish identification. This, in turn, forces anti-Silesian participants in these discussions to defend the integrity of the nation by insisting that Silesians be seen as a regionally inflected sub-group that—despite its peculiarities—belongs to and makes part of the greater Polish community. In doing so, both groups reveal several presuppositions and deeply seated assumptions about "what makes a Pole" or "what makes a Silesian," providing thick descriptions of two apparently

contrasting and/or incongruent worldviews. In fact, initial analysis of the corpus indicated that two main ideological camps have crystallized in online conversations in the *Western Daily* comment sections: there are (1) those who believe that being Silesian represents an ethnicity/identity position in its own rights and cannot be simply subsumed under the category of being Polish, and (2) those who disagree with that statement. For this dissertation project, I call the first camp "pro-Silesian" (since it is from this community that most vocal advocates of Silesian culture recruit from) and name the second camp "anti-Silesian." This division between pro- and anti-Silesian posters represents the ideological fault line along which alliances are built and discussions are structured.

While I acknowledge that these designations are somewhat simplified and that they may invoke more generalized and homogeneous portrayals of both groups than it is actually the case, I use the pro-Silesian/anti-Silesian binary for reasons of simplicity and as a shorthand to designate sets of ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that ultimately either support or reject the idea of Silesian identification as an at least autonomous, if not fully independent, identity position. The choice of the word "camp" is meant to indicate assemblies of individuals into groups or factions that align with certain sets of ideas and ideologies concerning the greater idea of Silesian identity. However, it needs to be stressed that by talking about pro- or anti-Silesian camps, I do not mean to equate these assemblies of largely anonymous commenters with either Poles or Silesians as larger ethno-national categories so as not to cast "Poles" or "Silesians" as major actors whose stances stem directly from the very fact of belonging to one or the other group. Because of the innately interactive, fluid, and polyvocal character of online discussions, participants in those conversations may or may not choose to consistently engage in debates and arguments with other Internet users.

As it becomes evident later in the chapter, members of the pro- and anti-Silesian camps constitute fluid and *ad hoc* communities that—united by the common adherence to an implicit set of ideas—spontaneously discuss and exchange thoughts in an intra- and inter-group manner. Consequently, the engagement of these participants mirrors the theoretical underpinnings of stancetaking (Du Bois 2007) as they recognize each other's worldviews, evaluate them, and then (dis-)align with regard to the object of evaluation (here: claims about the idea of Silesian identity). Nevertheless, it has to be stressed that some discussants willingly and frequently participate in these exchanges, repeating and/or reformulating their previous stances on the topic of the conversation, and successfully polarizing members of the opposite camp. While those posters represent the most tangible examples of individuals invested in the discursive victory of their camp, what I intend to show is the multiplicity and complexity of worldviews and stances among both self-identified Poles and self-identified Silesians. What I ultimately hope to demonstrate in this chapter (and this dissertation in general) is that the categories of "Poles" and "Silesians" represent assemblies of individuals with heterogeneous worldviews that can nonetheless be classified as "Polish" or "Silesian" because they align with presupposed and assumed, both implicitly and explicitly expressed assemblages of ideas and ideologies—that is, discourses—of "Polishness" and "Silesianness."

In other words, I take an interactional linguistic approach to identity in this (and other) chapters by contending that individuals are Poles or Silesians because they construct, sustain, and/or promote discourses on what it means to be Polish or Silesian, discursively acting along previously scripted lines of either "Polishness" or "Silesianness." (The idea of scripts of "Polishness" or "Silesianness" will become apparent once a considerable discord emerges in a conversation among members of the same camp, producing confusion and facilitating policing

behaviors to align particular discourses with general, group-specific discourses.) In doing so, I treat the categories of "Poles" and "Silesians" as communities of *ideas*, rather than communities of origin or heritage, citizenship, language, culture, or blood, as some ethnocentric theories of identity and nation posit. Because my approach here is derived from the theory of discourse and social constructivism, I take being Polish or being Silesian as the endpoint of ideological struggle (hence, the sum of ideas and ideologies that ultimately make individuals to be perceived as members of either of the group), not the starting point. In this way, becoming Polish or becoming Silesian in the context of online discussion forums represents an interactive and self-reflective process whereby individual stances and attitudes are filtered through the grand discourses of "Polishness" or "Silesianness" to produce a readily identifiable set of ideas and stances that follow the scripts of "Polishness" or "Silesianness" already in place.

Analysis and discussion

introductory analysis

Initial analysis of the corpus indicated that posters use several varieties other than Polish or Silesian and that in doing so, they regularly employ several linguistic strategies aiming at the discursive construction of their own as well as out-group members' identity, consequently marking them as Others. Following the initial analysis, I marked the corpus for instances of identity and othering work expressed linguistically. As a result, I created a sub-corpus containing 151 examples of linguistic othering. Then, I examined the data with regard to the following aspects: (1) varieties used, (2) scripts used, and (3) the manner in which varieties other than Polish and Silesian have been incorporated in posts under examination. Subsequent analysis of

the sub-corpus showed that German and Russian represent two main varieties employed for identity and othering work.

Overall, posters utilized German-origin words and phrases twice as often than they utilized Russian in that capacity. The remaining part of the sub-corpus included examples of Ukrainian origin and one example of a dialectal approximation (see Table 1 for details). Given that the latter (*ze Ljwiowa* 'from Lviv' with a double, nonstandard palatalization) represents an isolated case, I do not include it in the analysis below and focus instead on German-, Russian-, and Ukrainian-origin forms. Given these results, I divide instances of othering into four categories according to the variety in which they originated and examine selected examples within those main categories.

Table 1: Frequency statistics of linguistic instances of othering in the sub-corpus

origin	German	Russian	Ukrainian	Polish dialect	TOTAL
no. of examples	94	46	10	1	151
% of the total	62.25	30.46	6.62	0.66	100[5]

Table 2: Distribution of linguistic instances of othering with regard to varieties and strategies used

origin	total	PRO	ANTI	INS	APP	LEX	NEO
German	94	2	92	12	26	8	48
Russian	46	44	2	7	37	1	1
Ukrainian	10	5	5	–	10	–	–

Explanation of abbreviations: PRO: pro-Silesian instances, ANTI: anti-Silesian instances, INS: insertions, APP: approximations, LEX: lexicalizations, NEO: neologizations

The analysis also indicated that the Latin script (default to German, Polish, and Silesian) was used in the majority of instances and that Cyrillic-only examples were found in less than 5 percent of all examples examined. While some Cyrillic-script examples were transcribed or

[5] Percentages of the total are rounded up; therefore, they do not add up to 100%.

transliterated into the Latin script and some were not, Latin-script instances preserved their script and were not transcribed or transliterated into the Cyrillic script.

Based on further analysis, for major linguistic strategies of othering were distinguished in the data gathered in the sub-corpus:

(1) insertion, in which the original form (including the original script) of the word/phrase is inserted into a comment; this category includes both standard and nonstandard renderings of intended forms that do not acquire inflectional characteristics of the target variety, e.g., *Oberschlesien* (Germ. 'Upper Silesia'),

(2) approximation, in which the original form undergoes nativization as far as orthography and script are concerned; examples in this category are to mirror the original forms phonologically but not graphically; often, this strategy is used to produce linguistic instances of othering that mock their referents, e.g., *Paljak* (approximated from the akan'e/unstressed vowel-reduction pronunciation in Russ. *Поляк* 'Pole'); like insertion, this category only includes uninflected forms,

(3) lexicalization, in which the original form starts functioning in the target variety by acquiring its inflectional characteristics; at times, lexicalized forms acquire additional morphological markers through suffixation (e.g., *szlezjerów* GEN.PL of *szlezjer* 'Silesian' [m., pejoratively]) or word-formation (e.g., *Ślonzojczu* VOC.SG of *ślonzojcz* 'a German-oriented Silesian [pejoratively]', a blending of Pol. *ślonzok* 'Silesian [m.]' and Germ. *Deutsch* 'German'); unlike insertion and approximation, this category includes only inflected forms,

(4) neologization, in which the original form(s) is/are used to coin a new word, e.g., *ślonzojcz* (see lexicalization for etymology and gloss).

I now turn to the presentation and discussion of specific examples as I select and provide posts that illustrate different types of linguistic strategies outlined in the previous section. In doing so, I explain the origin and meaning of words or phrases under examination (in bold), focusing on how such instances are strategically employed by both pro- and anti-Silesian posters to discursively construct their identities or mark and construct members of the opposite camp as Others. Each post is provided in its original form, including spelling and punctuation. All translations are mine and—given the often nonstandard or colloquial character of comments produced in the *Western Daily* discussion forums—are approximate to best reflect the intended meaning of each entry. The forward slash indicates the boundary between post title and the content of the post (the *Western Daily* discussion forum separates posts from their titles by dedicating separate fields to them; while some posters make use of the title field, featured above the comment field, many of them decide to neglect its importance by either beginning their thought in the title field already or by filling that field with content that bears little to no relevance to the content of their post).

German-origin examples

    (1) insertion:

        (1) poloczki czy my sie wtracamy do tego co porabiacie w takich pieknych miastach jak : rzeszow, pila, radom,kielce, skierniewice, sosnowiec, chelm czy suwalki??? NIE!! bo momy to w d**** co tam robicie. wy tyz lepiej przestancie sie wtracac i interesowac **Oberschlesien**.

'Hey Polacks, are we interfering with what you do in such beautiful cities as Rzeszów, Piła, Radom, Kielce, Skierniewice, Sosnowiec, Chełm or Suwałki??? NO!! Because we don't give a s*** what you all do there. You better, too, stop interfering and getting interested in **Upper Silesia** [German].'

(2) Górny Śląsk nie Obers...itd. niemiecki patrioto!!!
'Upper Silesia [Polish], not Obers… etc., you German patriot!!!'

The exchange in examples (1–2) was produced under an article (Zasada 2013b) reporting on a controversial picture posted on his Facebook profile by Peter Langer, member of the Upper Silesian Council (Pol. *Rada Górnośląska*), an assembly of Silesian organizations that advocate for formal recognition of Silesian nationality and the Silesian code as a regional language by the Polish state. In the picture, the head of a soldier wearing a helmet is accompanied by an emblem featuring a yellow-and-blue eagle, portrayed on a yellow-and-blue flag. The image includes the following caption in German: *Es lebe freies Oberschlesien!* ('Viva free Upper Silesia', see below). "The soldier in the helmet comes from a Nazi propaganda poster, which encouraged to join the ranks of the Waffen-SS.6 The original emblem of the SS was from the helmet," the introduction of the article warns (Zasada 2013b). As of February 2, 2018, the article elicited 686 comments.

As evident from the two posts above, they were authored by a pro-Silesian (example 1) and an anti-Silesian (example 2) commenter. In the first post, written almost entirely in Polish, the author decides to utilize the German-language toponym *Oberschlesien* ('Upper Silesia')

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6 The military wing of the SS (from Germ. *Schutzstaffel*), the Nazi Germany security force.

instead of its Polish equivalent *Górny Śląsk* in the final part of the comment. Because the overall tone of the entry is radically anti-Polish, as evidenced by the profanity as well as the (probably) intentional lack of capital letters for the cities numbered in the post, the use of a non-Polish name for the region adds to the emotionality of the statement and—because the region is mostly located in present-day Poland—represents a significant power act in itself. In doing so, the author of (1) discursively distances the region from the rest of Poland in what becomes a bid for autonomy. Since the comment includes a contrast between HERE (= Upper Silesia) and THERE (= Poland), it introduces a division between the region and the rest of Poland. This dichotomy is further evidenced by the decision to call the region with its German, and not Polish, name. Suggesting that outsiders stop being interested in Upper Silesian matters (just as the locals seem not to care about what is happening in other parts of Poland, the argument goes), the first poster successfully others non-locals (here: Poles). The emotional import of the first comment causes a quick response—written in less than 20 minutes after the first entry—from the second poster who comments under the nickname *Slazak* ('Silesian'). Accusing the interlocutor of favoring and/or aligning with Germany, this poster demands that the region be called with its Polish name. To express the disagreement with the convention used in (1), the second commenter symbolically fails to fully reproduce the German name of the region.

(2) approximation:

(3) maniakalny germanofob @. / @. notorycznie zaśmieca forum DZ swoimi niemerytorycznymi wpisami. Panie @. pora się leczyć z obsesji, choć prawdopodobnie w Pana przypadku może to być już nieefektywne.

'Maniacal Germanophobe @. / @. notoriously litters the *Western Daily* forum with his unmeritorious entries. Mr. @., it's time to cure the obsession, although in Your case, it most likely may not be effective anymore.'

(4) Słuchaj no, **ojro**, patologiczny germanofilu, donosicielu oraz zestrachany histeryku (dowód: "Ponownie zgłaszam uwagę na wpisy @. do moderatora forum DZ "), czy to co napisałem teraz obraża cię? Nie powinno, bo przecież jest "niemerytoryczne".

'Hey, listen there, **ojro**, you pathological Germanophile, denunciator, and a scared as heck hysteric (proof: "Again, I call the attention of the *DZ* [*Western Daily*] forum moderator to the posts by @. "), is what I've just written offensive to you? It shouldn't because, after all, it's 'without merit.''

In the heat of discussions, posters tend to attack each other verbally, including mocking each other's words and/or nicknames. This is the case in the examples (3–4) where the first commenter accuses an interlocutor of being a Germanophobe while the second commenter calls the first one a Germanophile. More importantly, however, the nickname of a frequent participant in the *Western Daily* discussion forums (and one of the few who posts under a registered nickname), *Euro*, is intentionally misspelled and nativized into *ojro*, following its phonological rendition in Polish. Because the first poster is called a "pathological Germanophile," misspelling the nickname represents a face-threatening act intended to insult the addressee. Together, misspelling the nickname and assuming its German (and not, for instance, English) pronunciation of the word 'Euro' work alongside to produce a Germany-oriented representation

of the author of the example in (3). By introducing a non-Polish element into an otherwise all-Polish entry, the author of (4) others the user *Euro* whose strong German connection is thereby emphasized.

(5) Znowu grozisz lebrze? Myslisz, że taki cieniutenki niymiecki wyrobnik jest mnie w stanie przestraszyć? Służysz Niymcom na dwóch łapkach, przymilasz sie do nich za pora euro. Nic w tobie dumy narodowej, nic godności. Jesteś szumowiną narodowosciową, która na prostej drodze napada na spokojnych ludzi i straszy, że im kanciokiem do w ryj. **Du primitiwisze Schlonzake**!

'Are you threatening again, idler? Do you think that such a delicate menial worker is able to scare me? You serve Germans on two paws, you endear yourself to them for a couple of Euros. There's no national pride, no dignity in you. You're a national scum who assaults calm people in the daylight, threatening to hit them in the mouth with a squared piece of wood. **You primitive Silesian** [German]!'

The comment in (5) was produced under an interview (Domagała 2012) with Michał Stawiński, the lead singer of the band Oberschlesien (Germ. 'Upper Silesia') that uses the Silesian variety in its songs. Asked about the band's name, Stawiński revealed that band members took little time to decide the band's name—which they chose because it means 'Upper Silesia' in German—and that they liked the name's graphic representation in Gothic script. While admitting that both he and his band colleagues are all native to Silesia, the singer stated that they "do not want to manifest Silesianness" [Pol. *śląskość*], despite the band's name.

This and other similarly apolitical statements from the interview were strategically employed in the comment sections as one of the most active representatives of the anti-Silesian camp who suggested that the Silesian identity discourse does not represent an actual sentiment and/or identity position, as evident from the interview. In doing so, the poster used the above-mentioned reasons for choosing the band's name as a proof to this claim, implying that the choice of the name Oberschlesien was based on pure aesthetics and not some ideological underpinnings. After this entry elicited several offensive replies containing personal insults, the author of the initial post ridiculing the band's name choice posted the comment reproduced in (5).

In it, the poster accuses one of the interlocutors of animal-like servility to Germans and of having no national pride or dignity. The commenter concludes this string of insults by calling the addressee 'a primitive Silesian,' and does so by nativizing an originally German phrase, as evident from the use of the Polish-specific digraph *sz* instead of the German-specific trigraph *sch*. Nevertheless, the nativization is not executed entirely as the author of the post retains the German-specific trigraph in the last word of the phrase (*Schlonzake* instead of *Szlonzake*). Despite this inconsistency, the poster manages to deliver a final blow as the addressee is insulted in German, the language of the addressee's claimed ideological allies. As a result, the author of the comment above successfully others the interlocutor as a representative of an out-group, here represented by the interlocutor's implied alignment with Germany. While the majority of the entry is written in Polish, the poster writes in Silesian in several instances, including the two explicit references to Germany in the text: *niymiecki* (Pol. *niemiecki*) and *Niymcom* (Pol. *Niemcom*). By using these two forms in a variety native to the interlocutor—as presumed from the interlocutor's pro-Silesian stance—the commenter in this example further stresses the

addressee's ideological alliance with all things German and overall intensifies the final message of the post.

    (3) lexicalization:

        (6) W jakim kraju Europy język urzędowy nie jest obowiązkowo nauczany w szkołach? / Proste pytanie - ale dla wielu **szlezjerków** na pewno za trudne.

        'In which European country isn't the official language taught obligatorily in schools? / A simple question – but probably too difficult for many **Silesians** [pejorative].'

This example was written in reaction to a comment in which a poster claimed that the Polish language should lose its hegemonic status in Silesia. In response, the author of the post in (6) asked a rhetorical question to suggest that it is an established and mandatory practice for European countries to have their official languages taught in schools. In doing so, the commenter uses the form *szlezjerków* (GEN.PL of *szlezjerki* 'German-oriented Silesians' [diminutive]) to address the interlocutor as well as other members of the pro-Silesian camp. This lexical choice comes with serious consequences for how the entry as well as its author's ideological stance are to be interpreted, especially that the approximation *szlezjer* 'German-oriented Silesian', including its derivatives, represents the most frequently utilized linguistic instance of othering in the whole sub-corpus and was overall utilized 55 times (which represents more than one third of all examples analyzed for this chapter), in anti-Silesian posts exclusively. As evident from the context above and similar examples, this approximation is tinged with pejorative connotations that allow members of the anti-Silesian camp to other those who belong to the pro-Silesian

community in the discussions analyzed. Here, this negative overtone of the form—and the whole comment—is further augmented by the diminutivization (*szlezjerki* instead of *szlezjerzy* [neutral] or *szlezjery* [deprecatory]), through which the author of the post discursively diminishes the importance and power of the group in question. As a result, those who seek to subvert the present linguistic status quo in the region as for what languages are/should be taught in schools are mocked and ridiculed. At the same time, this ideological position is criticized as it is linked with an outgroup referred to be the lexicalized form *szlezjerków*.

(4) neologization:

(7) **Folksdojckie** bydło / Opanujcie się rasiaki trochę co ksiądz takiego powiedział niby ??? zryci ziejący żółcią fanatycy, mówicie że to wam ktoś czegoś zabrania jak reagujecie na poglądy innych???

'You **Volksdeutsch** rabble / Get it a little together, *rasiaki* [supporters of the Silesian Autonomy Movement, Pol. *RAŚ*, pejorative], what on Earth did the priest say??? Freaked up, gall-spouting fanatics, you say that it is you all who are prohibited from [doing] something, how do you react to others' views???'

The post in (7) was produced in the comments section under an interview (Pustułka 2011) with Wiktor Skworc, Roman Catholic archbishop of Katowice, the capital of the Silesia Province. In the interview, Skworc declared the following: "We live in Silesia, but we are Poles," triggering a lively debate on what it means to be Polish or Silesian, and whether Silesians can claim allegiance to Poland. As a result, the interview elicited 296 comments in total (as of February 5,

2018). In the comment, written in defense of the archbishop and his statement, the poster

nativizes (*Volksdeutsch* > *folksdojcz*) and adjectivizes the German word *Volksdeutsch* (a Nazi-era

term used to denote people living outside of Germany but defined as Germans by race regardless

of citizenship who were enjoying certain privileges compared to the local, non-German

populace), effectively producing the neologism *folksdojcki*. Overall, the author of the post uses

negative reactions to the archbishop's words on behalf of self-identified Silesians as a rhetorical

tool in the ongoing larger debate on Silesian identity in the *Western Daily* discussion forums.

Consequently, this strategy positions the commenter in the anti-Silesian camp. Using the term

Volksdeutsch in its nativized, adjectival form, the poster discursively others members of the pro-

Silesian camp who oppose the archbishop's words, marking those discussants as distant, non-

Polish, and possibly plotting against Poland with its historical enemy, Germany. In this manner,

the highly offensive phrase *folksdojckie bydło* sets members of the pro-Silesian camp as traitors

to the Polish cause regardless of how it may have been conceptualized by the author of the post

in question.

(8)

:) / I co na to **szlezjerstwo**?

':) / And what does **the Silesian collective** [pejorative] say to that?'

The post in (8) was produced under a news article (Kownacka 2013) titled "Texas Silesians

Visited the Opole Region," featuring a photograph of an information board from Panna Maria,

TX, with the following text: "The Oldest Polish Settlement in America" (see below). The article

presents the story of settlers from the Opole region who in the mid-nineteenth century migrated

to Texas. The story also features interviews with their descendants, some of whom still cultivate

Polish traditions and speak the Polish language. Because the board (see Figure 1) includes a clear

delineation of national allegiance (that is, they came from Silesia, but they saw themselves as

Poles, in line with the text featured in the information board), this context was used by members

of the anti-Silesian camp to claim that Silesians are in fact Poles, as evident from the case of

Panna Maria. (Nevertheless, the newspaper caption beneath the photograph names the town

"Silesian," suggesting that it may designate the locale as Silesian in a strictly geographical—

because of where first settlers came from—and not an ethno-national sense.)

Figure 1: "The Oldest Polish Settlement in America" information board in Panna Maria, Texas

Given all that, the author of the comment in (8) opens up the floor for discussion by posting a provocative post containing the pejorative neologism *szlezjerstwo* 'Silesian collective'. The commenter creatively uses the Polish collective suffix *-stwo* (cf. *wujostwo* 'aunt and uncle' < *wuj* 'uncle') to collectively address members of the pro-Silesian camp. The word *szlezjer*, nativized from German into Polish (*Schlesier* 'resident of Silesia' > *szlezjer*), represents one of the most frequent terms in anti-Silesian discourse in the discussions examined (a similar cognate *szlyzjer* is also in use throughout the corpus). Due to its German etymology and connotations (as evident, for instance, from its non-Polish phonological structure), not only does *szlezjer* designate members of the pro-Silesian camp, it also marks them—in the eyes of anti-Silesian posters—as Others whose foreignness is further stressed by the implicit association with Germany.

Overall statistics concerning the distribution of the four strategies of linguistic othering are presented in the table below.

Table 3: Typological overview of German-origin linguistic instances of othering.

strategy	insertions	approximations	lexicalizations	neologizations
frequency	13%	28%	8%	51%

Russian-origin examples

(1) insertion:

(9)

a co sie tak ciepiecie,

co robicie propaganda,

po waszymu byloby

1-один

2-два

3-три

4-четыре

'But why are you all getting so excited,

why are you spreading propaganda,

in your [language] that would be

1-one

2-two

3-three

4-four [in Russian].'

The post in (9) was written in a discussion concerning teaching Silesian in schools, in response to a commenter who was worried that *ajnc*, *cwaj*, *draj* (cf. German *eins* 'one', *zwei* 'two', *drei* 'three') should become the proper forms used to teach children how to count in Silesian. Subsequently, the commenter was told to calm down by the author of the example in (9) and instructed about the proper way of counting, which turned out to be in Russian. In this manner, the initial attempt to regulate Silesian by an outsider belonging to the anti-Silesian camp was responded with a similar effort portrayed in the instance reproduced above. By suggesting Russian as the addressee's in-group language (*po waszymu byłoby*) and providing counterexamples from 'one' to 'four', the author of this post others the addressee as someone

who counts in a language other than German or Polish. On the ideological plane, the poster implies the addressee's Eastern (and, therefore, non-native) identity as someone whose character has been shaped by Eastern (here metaphorically represented by the Russian language) and not Western Europe.[7]

As a result, this brief discussion about the proper way to count in Silesian (which, *nota bene*, never comes to fruition as commenters end up insulting each other) becomes reflective of greater identity work schemas in the corpus. In this work, the following pattern can be observed: while pro-Silesian posters intend to distance themselves from representatives of the Polish majority and, thus, introduce a difference to successfully execute the discursive construction of identity, members of the anti-Silesian camp work in the opposite direction. This push-and-pull strategy is evident in the above-mentioned example as well: once promotion of a German-like— and thus, less similar to Polish—way of counting is criticized (the 'pull' moment produced by an anti-Silesian user), a rebuttal containing Russian numerals is provided as a counter-argument (the 'push' moment produced by a pro-Silesian user).

(2) approximation:

(10)

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[7] A pronounced, ideologically tinted division between Western and Eastern (or: non-Western) Europe represents one of the most frequent themes present in othering comments in the *Western Daily* discussion forum. For self-identified Silesians, this divide is of particular importance because it allows them to discursively disassociate themselves from the Polish majority as pro-Silesian posters claim (and express) cultural allegiance to Western Europe and its heritage through the centuries-long connection to and inclusion into German-speaking lands. This Western orientation, according to pro-Silesian posters, is inherently incongruent with Poles' cultural and ideological positions that are reflective of Poland's (historically: its central, eastern, and north-eastern parts) history of political subjugation to Russia, which – for those posters – are the source of a major social and cultural incompatibility. Given this mindset, discursive alignments of anti-Silesian (and, assumedly, pro-Polish) posters with Russia and its present or past (cultural, political, etc.) heritage like the one presented in (9) represent some of the most effective strategies for performing identity work and enforcing the view that self-identified Silesians represent a community that cannot simply be subsumed under the larger category of Poles.

Czy juz podpisal petycje o obowiazku noszenia krakowskich strojów przez Slazaków ?

Co **Wiktorij Skforcow** mysli o autonomii, narodzie, jezyku, przyszlosci, terazniejszosci,

przeszlosci, rzeczywistosci, problemach, tematach spolecznych i socjalnych, biedzie,

bezrobociu, goroloizacji, slaskich zolnierzach w Afganistanie i wielu innych 'stricte'

slaskich tematach ? Czy interesuja go tylko rzeszowskie dozynki ? (...)

'Has he already signed a petition about the obligation of Silesians to wear [traditional]

Cracovian attire? What does **Wiktorij Skworcow** think about autonomy, people,

language, future, present, past, reality, problems, societal and social problems, poverty,

unemployment, Polonization, Silesian soldiers in Afghanistan, and many other *strictly*

Silesian topics? Is he only interested in harvest festivals in Rzeszów? (…)'

The post in (10) was written in the discussion under the above-mentioned article (Pustułka 2011)

featuring the Katowice archbishop Wiktor Skworc and his statement: "We live in Silesia, but we

are Poles." As evident from the tone of the comment, the poster takes issue with the archbishop's

pronouncement, ironically referring to an imaginary petition obliging Silesians to wear

Cracovian—that is, non-Silesian—attire. (Similarly, another non-Silesian city, Rzeszów, is

mentioned in the post as well.) The commenter's ironic stance toward Skworc's words is,

however, best represented in the second rhetoric question where the archbishop's name is

Russianized by applying suffixes typical for Russian personal names: *Wiktor**ij*** (cf. Jur**ij** Gagarin)

*Skworc**ow*** (cf. Nabok**ow**). In doing so, the poster others Skworc as an outsider (hence the non-

Polish name) and a putative foreigner (even though Skworc was born in Ruda Śląska in Silesia),

portraying him as someone who does not seem to understand the violent influence of his words

on self-identified Silesians. In light of the historical experiences of Soviet control in post-1945 Poland, Russianization of the archbishop's name can also be interpreted as a discursive move that aligns the archbishops with totalitarian practices of communist Poland. The commenter's choice to render the name phonetically (*Skforcow* instead of *Skworcow*) represents a personal insult that further magnifies the overall message of the post.

(11)

Częstochowa krzyczy...Ślask zawsze polski!!!!!!! / Częstochowa duchowa stolica polski mówi nie niemieckiemu Ślaskowi!!!!

'Częstochowa is screaming… Silesia always Polish!!!!!!! / Częstochowa, the spiritual capital of Poland, says "no" to German Silesia!!!!'

(12)

! / Częstochowa zawsze **w gubernii pietrokowskoj priwislinskawa kraja**!

'! / Częstochowa forever **in the Piotrków gubernia of the Vistula Land**!'

The exchange in (11–12) was produced under an article about plans to conceive a sociopolitical movement to counter the activity and ideas put forward by the Silesian Autonomy Movement. Featured in the article was a photograph of protesters holding a banner that read *Polski Śląsk* (Pol. 'Polish Silesia'). As of February 12, 2018, the article elicited 293 comments. In the heat of the discussion, the exchange between an anti-Silesian (example 11) and a pro-Silesian (example

12) commenter took place. In it, the first poster suggested that Silesia will always be Polish, expressing disagreement about German rule over the region. In response, the second poster mocked the idea by presented in (11) by suggesting that Częstochowa will always remain part of the Piotrków (Russ. *Петроков*) gubernia it belonged to in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. (The city of Częstochowa, famous for its Black Madonna icon, is a religious hub for Roman Catholics, visited by millions of pilgrims each year. While it administratively belongs to the Silesia Province and is therefore featured in the *Western Daily*, it does not lie within the borders of the historical region of Silesia, a fact which is often repeated by pro-Silesian users in online discussions. For this reason, Częstochowa represents a city that is 'foreign' [that is, 'not ours'] in the eyes of self-identified Silesians, like Cracow or Warsaw.)

In doing so, the second commenter repeats the word 'forever' and completes the entry with a Russian phrase denoting the city's administrative location at the turn of the twentieth century, in transliteration from Russian to Polish. However, the second poster's Russian translation of the phrase bears traces of Polish-specific word order (*gubernii pietrokowskoj* instead of *pietrokowskoj gubernii*), which suggests that the commenter is not fluent in Russian. Nevertheless, the second author successfully ridicules the claim put forward in the first comment while simultaneously othering Częstochowa as a locale that has nothing to do with (Upper) Silesia because of the implied link with its Russian overlords 150 years ago. This is also evident in the usage of the name Vistula Land (Russ. *Привислинский край*), a designation used at the time by Russian authorities for the area encompassed by Congress Poland, allowing the commenter to speak pejoratively of Poland in an indirect manner, without explicitly mentioning the name of the country.

As in many similar examples, the two entries reproduced above are reflective of greater ideological narratives of representation present and expressed in online discussions between members of the pro- and anti-Silesian camps. Here, the initial attempt to align Silesia with Poland with simultaneous distancing it from Germany in (11) is countered by the attempt to distance Silesia from Poland while simultaneously bringing it closer to Russia and Russian history of some of its lands in (12). These discursively achieved power moves deserve more attention because they reflect larger discourses of oppression and/or control over another as far as spatial or political units are concerned, about the dominators and the dominated. In the context of the above-reproduced exchange, there are four power players involved (alphabetically): Germany (including Nazi Germany), Poland, Russia (including Soviet Union), and Silesia, with the following power indices attached to/associated with them: high (Germany and Russia, both with history of subjecting or occupying parts of contemporary Poland), medium (Poland, historically independent for several centuries yet subjected to both Germany and Russia throughout much of its modern period, but nevertheless controlling Silesia), and low (Silesia, with no history of independence as a unified, region-wide polity, subjected to both Germany and Poland, among others).

Plotted on a single-axis graph with power as the only axis, the power moves reflected in (11–12) can be represented as follows: in (11), the anti-Silesian commenter attempts to decrease the power of Germany over Silesia while increasing the power of Poland over Silesia, and, consequently, reducing the power of Silesia due to its attempted subjection to Poland; Russia is absent from discourse here. In (12), the commenter attempts to decrease the power of Poland by subjecting it to Russia (hence the transcription from Russian to Polish, including the usage of the phrase "Vistula Land") while simultaneously increasing the power of Silesia by freeing it from

the subjection to Poland previously expressed; Germany is absent from discourse here. While the

intent in (11) is to discursively bring Silesia closer to Poland, in (12) it is Poland that is

discursively brought closer to Russia and, consequently, Silesia is discursively distanced from

Poland, since the former has no history of subjection to Russia, unlike the latter (although partly

and not entirely). These discursive projections of power and power struggles, I believe, reveal

key conceptualizations about the ideological underpinnings of how Poles view Silesia(ns) and

vice versa. Thus, Silesia (and, by extension, residents of Silesian and self-identified Silesians) is

viewed as a region that—in the eyes of the first commenter—needs to be liberated from German

influences. At the same time, the imperative to preserve the current geopolitical status quo is of

instrumental importance, as evidenced in the explicitly expressed wish for Silesia to never

become German again. Paradoxically, however, what the first poster sees as a remedy for

possible rapprochement between Silesia and Germany is making sure that Poland has and retains

power over the region. While the first commenter does not phrase it as such, this scenario is

ideologically predicated on *maintaining* the subject status of Silesia but with Poland—and not

Germany—becoming the subjecter.

On the other hand, the discursive power projection in (12) indicates the presence of a

strong, internal drive from Silesia to reduce the power of Poland over the region, as well as of an

existent drive for greater autonomy. Further, it needs to be stressed that Poland as its current

subjecter is rejected on civilizational grounds, as indirectly evident in the exchange reproduced

above as well as other examples cited in this chapter and the dissertation corpus in general. In the

eyes of Silesia, Poland represents a liminal space in its own rights, one with a solid presence of

the East that hampered and delayed a complete spread of the West in the area. Most importantly,

such view is not solely tied to the example in (12), but represents an active discourse among self-

identified Silesians who—based on my research of online discussion forums—represent Poland in a surprisingly unitary fashion as an entity that is yet to catch up not only with Western Europe (here, the ideal state of cultural, economic, social, and political development), but with (Upper) Silesia itself (hence the pervasive othering of Poles as newcomers who brought their Eastern, that is, lower-quality mores with themselves).

(3) lexicalization:

(13)

Precz z polskimi sierpomłotami imigrującymi na Górny Śląsk z **Polszy** od 1945 / ⱬⱬⱬ ⱬⱬ

'Away with Polish hammer-and-sickles migrating from 1945 to Upper Silesia from **Poland** [Russian] / ⱬⱬⱬⱬⱬ'

The example in (13) was produced under a news article describing a 2015 anti-immigrants march held in Katowice (Pudełko 2015). While the article talks about the social response to the immigration problem in contemporary Europe, the author of the post employs this topic as a springboard to speak about the historical process of internal migrations to Upper Silesia. Due to its concentration of heavy industry, the region has in communist Poland become a popular destination for thousands of Poles in search of better socio-economic prospects. In the comment, the poster expresses a stance toward this process, calling post-1945 newcomers to Silesia *sierpomłoty*, a compound created from the words *sierp* 'sickle' and *młot* 'hammer', both symbols of the Soviet Union and Soviet/communist oppression. Due to the implicit connotation with the

post-World War Two political situation, the referents' arrival to the region is presented as aided by the communist regime and, thus, treated with suspicion and mistrust. The pejoration of migrants to Silesia does not, however, stop here as the commenter uses the Russian word for Poland (*Польша*, transliterated to *Polsza*), instead of the standard Polish *Polska* 'Poland'. This lexicalization of the original form works in tandem with the previous designation of newcomers to Silesia as "people under the sign of the hammer and the sickle," represented both verbally and graphically by the string of hammer-and-sickle symbols, to other those whose ties to the region start no earlier than 1945, the year that most of Silesia became part of Poland. The othering mechanism in example (13) is further corroborated by the implicit logic of indigeneity, according to which only those whose families lived in Upper Silesia before the Second World War deserve to be called locals, unlike those who moved there at a later point.

While the comment is written in standard Polish, the choice of the Russian word for 'Poland' bears significant ideological consequences for the general overtone of the entry. First of all, the Russianism *Polsza* stands out from the otherwise neutral string for the *Western Daily* discussion forum string of discourse, magnifying the intended effect on readers and members of the anti-Silesian camp in particular. Second, to intentionally misspell or misrepresent one's place of origin is to insult that person and represents a face-threatening act. Third, the discursive approximation of Poland with Russia allows the author of the post to increase the claimed difference between Poles and Silesians, similarly to the push-and-pull manner employed in previous examples reproduced in this chapter. Altogether, these factors aid the ongoing process of othering of non-Silesians (here understood almost exclusively as Poles), simultaneously contributing to the greater process of identity work executed by self-identified Silesians in the *Western Daily* discussion forum.

Overall statistics concerning the distribution of the four strategies of linguistic othering in Russian-origin examples are presented in the table below.

Table 4: Typological overview of Russian-origin linguistic instances of othering

strategy	insertions	approximations	lexicalizations	neologizations
frequency	15%	81%	2%	2%

Ukrainian-origin examples

(1) approximation of Ukrainian:

(14)

Przyjezdne glywickie **lwiwioki** / Do przyjezdnego z Glywic...w Bytomiu były wybory i owszem RAŚ przegrał sromotnie ale dla tego że w tym mieście jeszcze nic nie zrobił a już chcieli do wyborów. W Bytomiu to przynajmniej myslą bo w Glywicach nawet referendum nie potrafią poloki zorganizować. Glywickie **lwiwioki** mieszkajom sam 70 lot i śni im się **lwiw** zamiast za robota się brać.

'**Leopolitan** arrivers to Gliwice / To the newcomer to Gliwice…There were elections in Bytom and, indeed, the Silesian Autonomy Movement lost miserably, but [that was] because [the Movement] hasn't yet done anything in the city, yet they already wanted [to go] to the elections. At least they think in Bytom because Poles in Gliwice can't even organize a referendum. The Gliwice **Leopolitans** have been living there for 70 years, and instead of getting to work, they dream about **Lviv**.'

The post in (14) was produced in a discussion about the prospect of granting Silesia with autonomy. In the discussion, a poster representing the anti-Silesian camp firmly rejected that idea, suggesting that the Silesian Autonomy Movement (Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska*, *RAŚ*) seems to be entering a phase of political marginalization in the region, as evident from the results of local elections in Bytom and a referendum held in Gliwice, two towns west of Katowice. These opinions were voiced by a commenter whose nickname disclosed his masculine gender as well as his residence in Gliwice. In response, the author of the example in (14) justified the reason for the Movement's lack of success in local elections, indicating that the organization of the 2012 Gliwice referendum was far from perfect. (In the lead up to the referendum, in which residents were to vote on ousting the city mayor at the time, it was reported that there were problems with signatures necessary as many of which were rejected, cf. Toros 2012).

This charge was coupled with a generalized statement about the mindset of Polish residents of Gliwice who—according to the commenter—still long and think about Lviv (Pol. Lwów), the city they assumedly came from. In the interbellum, Lviv belonged to Poland and was home to a large Polish community whose members were resettled in western Poland following the population exchange between Poland and Soviet Ukraine after the Second World War. The poster then uses this historical fact to stress the non-indigenous character of many residents of Silesia, the addressee included, all of whom represent newcomers (Pol. *przyjezdni*) to the region in the eyes of the commenter. The same is true about the addressee whose status as an outsider is included in the opening sentence of the comment ("To the newcomer to Gliwice…").

This othering does not, however, stop here as Poles are called 'Leopolitans', that is, residents of Lviv, and like the city itself is references thrice in the relatively short entry. The linguistic-ideological import of the demonym used in (14) deserves further attention. First of all,

the approximation of the Ukrainian language, as evident from the form *lwiw-* (instead of the Polish *lwow-*) that follows the Ukrainian pronunciation of the toponym, needs to be stressed. This choice comes with ideological implications for the general overtone and interpretation of the comment. Because the addressee is singled out as a presumed newcomer *and* Leopolitan (albeit indirectly and through the association of the addressee, a newcomer, with others who came to Gliwice from Lviv), the author of the comment in (14) produces a double othering mechanism. As evident from the representation of Poles as indolent (= "they should get to work") and disorganized (= "they can't even organize a referendum"), the poster ideologically equates the East and Easternness (Lviv is geographically located east of Silesia and the Polish-Ukrainian border) with inferiority. Thus, the author of the post automatically assumes a higher social prestige as *lwiwioki*, Polish newcomers to Gliwice from Lviv, are othered as non-natives who do not understand Silesia ("they dream about Lviv") with negative personality traits. At the same time, the masculine suffix *-ok*, present in Silesian but nonstandard to Polish, marks the poster as a Silesian.

(15)

Jurij Horiłka nosz podprzemyski firerek / Powinien zawalczyć o autonomia dlo Stubienki kole Priemyślia, skąd jego ród po kadzieli. (...)

'**Jurij Horiłka** [actually: Jerzy Gorzelik], our little *führer* from the Przemyśl area / should start fighting for autonomy for Stubienko near Przemyśl [Russianized] from where his maternal ancestors [hail]. (…)'

Unlike examples in the two previous sections, instances of linguistic othering in the Ukrainian-origin category are not skewed to any of the sides of the debate—of the ten comments grouped in this class, half of them were pro-, and the other half anti-Silesian in their general overtone. The post reproduced above illustrates how anti-Silesian users utilize the strategy of approximation to other not immediate interlocutors, but an absent one—namely, Jerzy Gorzelik, art history professor and leader of the Silesian Autonomy Movement. Due to the latter occupation, Gorzelik represents one of the most vocal advocates for Silesian identity who seek to obtain legal recognition for self-identified Silesians in the ethnic and linguistic domain. In (15), his pronounced attachment to and identification with Silesia is put into question as the author of the comment points to the activist's partly non-Silesian ancestry. Thus, the poster points out that Gorzelik's maternal lineage hails from the area of Przemyśl near the Polish-Ukrainian border. To other—and, simultaneously, ridicule the ideas promoted by the activist—the commenter Ukrainianizes Gorzelik's name into "Horiłka." (Etymologically, the name "Gorzelik" is linked with the Polish word *gorzałka* 'vodka, spirit, hooch', of which the Ukrainian word *горілка* 'same'.) At the same time, the activist's leadership skills are ridiculed as Gorzelik is referred to by the diminutive 'little *führer*'.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the numerous ways in which members of the pro- and anti-Silesian camps other each other in online discourse. In doing so, they combine Polish and/or Silesian with varieties external to the Polish-Silesian debate on Silesian identity: German, Russian, and Ukrainian.

Table 5: Timeline of linguistic instances of othering in the sub-corpus

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017

German	24	15	34	3	1	16	1
Russian	2	6	15	0	7	12	4
Ukrainian	1	4	0	0	1	1	3
Total	27	25	49	3	9	29	8

The distribution of varieties used for othering throughout the sub-corpus that represents the source of data for this chapter is uneven and depends on whether the addressee belongs to the pro- or anti-Silesian camp. For instance, while German is employed by members of both camps (e.g., *Schlesien* vs. oft-repeated *szlezjery*), Russian-origin words and phrases (e.g., *Paljaki*, transcription of Russ. *Поляки* 'Poles') appear prevalently in comments written by pro-Silesian posters. The creative usage of Ukrainian for othering in the material analyzed is balanced out between members of the two camps: while pro-Silesian commenters other post-1945 newcomers to the region (e.g., *lwiwioki*), anti-Silesian commenters utilize approximations of Ukrainian (e.g., *Jurij Horiłka*) to point out that Jerzy Gorzelik's (the SAM leader) maternal grandfather hailed from Przemyśl near the present-day Polish-Ukrainian border. In so doing, they question Gorzelik's identification as a Silesian, implying that it represents a pose rather than a fact, as evidenced by the ancestry of the Silesian Autonomy Movement activist.

Overall, three major themes emerge as a result of the analysis of linguistic examples of othering: these are (1) selective use of history as a point of reference, (2) indigeneity, and (3) the push-and-pull mechanism of identity work. As evident from several examples examined above, history represents one of the most important critical lenses for successful explanation and interpretation of othering processes in the instances reproduced in this chapter. Individual and highly selective use of historical facts allows both pro- and anti-Silesian posters to construct, maintain, and promote stable representations of each other while simultaneously participating in the identity work of one's in-group.

The push-and-pull mechanism of identity work makes up the ideological bedrock of sociolinguistic approximation, defined above as a strategy in which a stable association between interlocutor(s) and chosen (non)standard varieties is first introduced and then utilized to render interlocutor(s) foreign, consequently producing an othering effect. Because the process of sociolinguistic approximation is inherently both social and linguistic, it results in the linguistic production of representations that rely on and reveal social imaginations about the addressee(s) of the approximation in question. This mechanism, I believe, adequately describes the processes of pervasive othering in the *Western Daily* discussion forum as well as explains (1) the use of (mostly) Russian to other members of the anti-Silesian camp portrayed as Eastern newcomers whose ways of being are not congruent with those claiming indigenous status in Silesia, and (2) the use of German to render members of the pro-Silesian camp foreign as those whose rejection of Poland as the greater point of reference goes hand in hand with their pro-German alignment.

While these assumptions are the product of prejudices voiced openly and candidly by many, largely anonymous online commenters, the larger picture suggests that such associations are by no means merely incidental, spontaneous, or conceived in the heat of the debate. Rather, they represent a stable genre with its basic ideological that remains unchangeable (for pro-Silesian posters: think Germany, for anti-Silesian posters: think the East) while its linguistic, more creative, form is being continuously (re)developed and (re)phrased, fueled by the creativity and general knowledge of individual commenters. Thus, while pro-Silesian posters may be—directly or indirectly—referred to per various adjectives (e.g., *szlezjerski*, from Germ. *Schlesier* 'resident of Silesia' with the Pol. adjectival suffix *-ski*; *folksdojc(zows)ki*, from Germ. *Volksdeutsch*; or *ślonzojczowski*, from the blending of Sil. *ślonzok* 'Silesian [male]' and Germ. *Deutsch* 'German' with the Pol. adjectival suffix *-ski*), these approximations nevertheless contain

and are linked with each other by one common ideological denominator—that of expressing an explicit German connection. The same is true of anti-Silesian posters whose linguistic representations may include divergent nominal phrases (e.g., *Paljaki*, from Russ. *Поляки* 'Poles'; or *priwislincy*, from Russ. *Привислинский край* 'Vistula Land') that nevertheless involve and promote a unified, ideologically saturated message of an assumed, innately Eastern (European) characteristic of those being referred to. Ideological stability in sociolinguistic approximations of pro- and anti-Silesian commenters goes hand in hand with stability over time: while the oldest examples cited in this chapter were produced in December 2011, the newest one—in April 2017, the timeline of *szlezjer*-derivated approximations spans from December 2011 to November 2016.

While the data included in the previous section represent a snapshot only of the overall sub-corpus, such timeline warrants, I think, at least two conclusions. First of all, I believe that examples of sociolinguistic approximation can be conceived of as a distinct genre on its own that is highly specific for the *Western Daily* discussion forum. Second, the ideological persistence of specific social, cultural, and historical associations in the way pro- and anti-Silesian commenters represent each other suggests that those instances of social imaginations function as a reservoir of ideologically-imbued discourses about membership in both camps and—by extension—about how being Polish or being Silesian is viewed and defined by outsiders. (These themes will become more apparent in chapter 2 where I trace and analyze the presence and persistence of a discourse that is simultaneously anti-Silesian and anti-German.) My hitherto research on Silesian identity indicates that this is precisely the case and that the examples of linguistic othering produced in the process of sociolinguistic approximation described in this chapter mirror some of the grand themes omnipresent in numerous discussions between interlocutors with both pro- and

anti-Silesian stances, whether in the *Western Daily* discussion forum, other online spaces, or the

offline environment.

Chapter 2: "Camouflaged Germans" and anti-German sentiment

"Upper Silesia, not Obers[chlesien]… etc., you German patriot!!!"

(an anti-Silesian poster)

"FOR ME IT'S OBERSCHLESIEN!!!! THIS IS HOW MY *FATER*,

MY *OPA*, AND THE *OPA* OF MY *OPA* TALKED!!!!

YOU CAN EVEN SAY *СЛАСК*, I DON'T CARE ABOUT IT!!!!"

(a pro-Silesian poster)

In chapter 1, I have investigated examples of linguistic othering in the *Western Daily* forum. This chapter continues the study of othering in online spaces and treats political othering related to the (re)production of the "camouflaged German option" discourse in contemporary Poland. As the subsequent analysis will show, this type of othering is firmly entrenched in the political discourse concerning self-identified Silesians and the apparently ever-present German threat in the consciousness of the Polish society at large.

A 2016 anti-Silesian comment, a 2017 interview with a prominent Polish politician, a 2018 tweet posted by Poland's Ministry of Marine Economy and Inland Navigation official Twitter account. What might they all have in common? The anti-German sentiment expressed in implicit or explicit linguistic choices. Consider the tweet in (1) reproduced below (spelling as in original, emphasis mine):

(1) Na niemieckim portalu Der Onet dowiemy się, jaka jest opinia niemieckiego posła, który

twierdzi, że ''Polska nie będzie im mówić, co mają robić''.

Ale już Niemcy to mogą Polsce mówić, co ma robić.8 (...) (Press 2018)

'In the German [web] portal **Der** *Onet* we'll find out about the opinion of a German MP

who maintains that 'Poland will not tell them what to do'.

But then Germans can tell Poland what to do. (…)'

While this tweet was later quickly removed citing unauthorized access as the source of the

posting, its rhetorical power remains obvious and lies in the linguistic incorporation of the

seemingly innocuous German masculine definite article *der* in the otherwise Polish text. As a

result, the tweet implies that *Onet* (https://onet.pl), one of Poland's largest web portals,

represents a German (thus foreign), and not a Polish media outlet. The rationale for such

proposition stems from the fact that the portal is owned by the Swiss-German media

conglomerate Ringier Axel Springer Polska. Consequently, this fact allows right-wing-leaning

commentators to offer an assumedly rational explanation whenever *Onet* publishes news stories

and/or other materials criticizing the Law and Justice government. This is a foreign/German-

owned outlet, therefore its goal is to undermine Poland's vital interests, the argument goes. The

German article *der* in conjunction with the portal's name is commonly used as a marker of such

anti-German sentiment. As of early June 2019, a Google search for the phrase "der Onet" yields

18,000 hits (the portal has been under Swiss-German ownership since June 2012).

The 2017 interview with Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the Law and Justice political

party, contains another instance of anti-German sentiment, exemplified in a categorizing nominal

8 The last sentence, followed by an angry face emoji, said: *Bezczelne są te ku*** i zuchwałe* (spelling original), translated by Cecil Parrott as: 'The whores here are pretty fresh, I must say' (Hašek 2005, 524); in Czech original: *Jsou ale tady ty kurvy drzý* (Hašek 1920, 90).

phrase. In it, the politician stated that Donald Tusk (the former Prime Minister of Poland) is "a German candidate" (Gójska-Hejke, Sakiewicz, and Lisiewicz 2017) for the position of the President of the European Council that Tusk has held since 2014. The digital version of this interview is titled *Tusk jest kandydatem niemieckim* 'Tusk is a German candidate', with the adjective "German" placed in postposition. In contemporary Polish, adjectives in postposition are CLASSIFYING—and not merely DESCRIPTIVE—in nature. Thus, the choice of *kandydatem niemieckim* (instead of *niemieckim kandydatem*) has a symbolic, perlocutionary effect as it implies that Tusk—despite being born and raised in Poland—cannot be categorized as a Polish politician, but a German one, a connotation that goes back to 2005 Tusk vs. Kaczyński conflict (see Kriki 2017). The timing of this usage is not coincidental. The issue containing the interview was originally published on March 8, 2017, one day before Tusk's re-election for the European Council Presidency in which all but one European Union countries (the only country voting against being Poland) supported Tusk in his bid for another 2.5-year term.

The third example comes from a 2016 comment produced in the *Western Daily* forum under a news article on the significance of November 11, 1918, the day the Second Polish Republic (Pol. *II Rzeczpospolita Polska*) became independent, in Silesia (Wieczorek 2016). In this comment, an anti-Silesian poster praises the article because of its perceived truth value, comparing it to "a breath of fresh air" (see 2 below). The poster taps into the anti-German sentiment and repeats the rhetorical move used in example (1) by adding the German definite article *Der* to the abbreviated name of the newspaper that published the November 11 story. In doing so, the poster suggests that while the editors in this particular case did a good job presenting a non-biased view on an episode in Polish history, the newspaper's ideological leaning seems to be pro-German and, thus, anti-Polish at the same time. Given that Prussia and

later Germany ruled over Silesia since the mid-eighteenth century and that the region was incorporated into Poland only in 1945 (while a smaller part became part of Czechoslovakia), such accusations carry a louder resonance as implicit or explicit associations with Germany bring forth in Poland the historical experiences of Nazi German occupation, activating deeply-seated fears about both past and potentially future German involvement into Polish matters. The poster achieves this potent rhetorical effect precisely by incorporating the German article *der*.

(2) Ślązak to Polak (a ściśle mówiąc Polok). A Niemiec to Schlesier. Tertium non Datur. / Nareszcie trochę prawdy o Ślązakach w **Der** DZ. Ten artykuł jest jak haust świeżego powietrza, jak potężny łyk źródlanej wody. Ten artykuł orzeźwia i odświeża. (...)

'A Silesian is a Pole (or, strictly speaking, a Polak9). And a German is a *Schlesier*. *Tertium non datur*. / Finally, some truth about Silesians in **Der** *Western Daily*. This story is like a breath of fresh air, like a huge gulp of mineral water. This story invigorates and refreshes (…)'

The three examples presented so far indicate that Germany, more than 70 years after the end of World War II, still represents a significant symbolic reference in Polish collective memory. These examples also suggest that in contemporary Polish political discourse, Germany has become a powerful Other against which many Poles identify as they attempt to make sense of the world around them. What such instances of anti-German rhetoric have in common is that they

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9 A Silesian-inflected version of the lexeme 'Pole' (Sil. *Polok* vs. Pol. *Polak*). Because this post was written by an anti-Silesian poster, the Silesian-inflected form of the ethnonym has no pejorative meaning but, rather, is used as a symbolic gesture through which the poster wishes to rhetorically include self-identified Silesians into the larger community of Poles.

are rooted in an anti-German sentiment that has become one of the dominant ways of thinking about the role of Germany in post-EU accession Poland. According to that sentiment, Germany represents a major geopolitical threat to Poland's national interests, meddling with its internal affairs by proxy of German-owned media outlets. What follows is the practice of renaming such media companies and Germanizing their names by, for instance, adding the German-typical definite article *der* before the newspaper's or magazine's proper name—hence ***Der** DZ[iennik Zachodni/Western Daily*] or ***Der** Onet*, one of Poland's largest web portal (https://onet.pl).

From the perspective of stancetaking (Du Bois 2007), anonymous internet users who performs such politically motivated renamings achieve several goals in one as they (1) negatively evaluate the worthiness of information produced by the scapegoated media outlets, (2) position themselves in the "anti-German camp," that is, among those Polish residents who see Germany as a conceivable danger to Poland's vital interests *as well as* position mentioned media outlets on the other side of the political fence, and by doing so (3) disalign themselves from content produced by those media, suggesting their assumed ideological leaning toward Germany. As I show elsewhere in this dissertation (chapter 1 on linguistic strategies of mutual othering, chapter 4 on *szlezjer* mini-narratives), naming and nominalization practices represent one of the most popular ways of doing politics in the *Western Daily* discussion forum by both sides of the debate on Silesian identity. In this chapter, I continue this thread by focusing on linguistic references to Germany to show that in contemporary Polish political discourse, the word "German" has transcended its original meaning as a marker of citizenship, nationality, or national origin, and has functionally become a negatively charged label whose rhetorical effects range from irony and sarcasm to outright insult.

This is also the argument that I make in this chapter as I study the trope of "camouflaged German option" by examining selected comments from the *Western Daily* discussion forum. In doing so, I explain the origin of that now-notorious phrase and then situate it in the context of the ongoing conflict between pro- and anti-Silesian posters in the forum. Instead of focusing on the same phrase, however, I broaden the scope of my investigation by studying examples of German-language words and phrases, all produced by members of the anti-Silesian camp. My ultimate goal is to demonstrate both the presence and the durability over years of the "camouflaged German option" (CGO) discourse in the *Western Daily* comments section to show how this discourse influences the social imagination about self-identified Silesians in contemporary Poland.

Operating within Hansson's (2015) calculated overcommunication framework, I situate my analysis within a larger method of political communication that results in shift blaming and discursive constructions of scapegoats. Focusing on excessive repetition, one of the dimensions of overcommunication, I approach my examples holistically and point to the diachronic stability of their semantic content that produces the mitigating effect of expressing 'commonsense knowledge' about self-identified Silesians and pro-Silesian posters in the forum. Finally, studying selected comments both individually and collectively, I show how formally distinct, yet functionally similar, postings strengthen the anti-German sentiment in Poland by building a rhetorically powerful discourse that views German involvement in Polish matters as threatening the stability of the country, Silesia, and the Polish people in general. In doing so, I demonstrate that the anti-German sentiment in the *Western Daily* comments sections builds on and consolidates the "camouflaged German option" discourse (see below), effectively extending it to the online world.

The "camouflaged German option" (CGO) discourse in contemporary Poland

The analysis presented in this chapter has its sociopolitical roots in the controversies that arose around a catchphrase that appeared in a 2011 political document issued by the Law and Justice (Pol. *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) political party. In the document, the phrase "camouflaged German option" (Pol. *zakamuflowana opcja niemiecka*) was used to name self-identified Silesians (a self-proclaimed minority based in southern Poland):

> Istnieje wiele przesłanek, by twierdzić, że kategoria Narodu nie jest podnoszona w programach i zasadniczych wystąpieniach przedstawicieli PO, choć mówi się tam o Polakach czy pozycji Polski. Z drugiej strony, PO w swoim przekazie mocno podkreśla znaczenie regionalizmów, czego szczególnym przykładem jest ostentacyjne akcentowanie przez Donalda Tuska swojej kaszubskości. Niedawno umieszczono, wbrew wyrokowi Sądu Najwyższego z 2007 roku, narodowość śląską w spisie powszechnym. Sąd Najwyższy słusznie bowiem wywiódł, że historycznie rzecz biorąc, niczego takiego jak naród śląski nie ma. Można dodać, że **śląskość jest po prostu pewnym sposobem odcięcia się od polskości i przypuszczalnie przyjęciem po prostu zakamuflowanej opcji niemieckiej** (PiS 2011, 34–35).

> 'There are numerous premises to maintain that the category of People is not raised in the programs and principal addresses made by representatives of the Civic Platform,[10] although Poles or the position of Poland are mentioned there. On another hand, the Civic Platform strongly emphasizes in its message the meaning of regionalisms, of which

[10] Pol. *Platforma Obywatelska* (*PO)* is a center-right, liberal-conservative political party.

Donald Tusk's ostentatious stress on his Kashubianness[11] is a particular example. Recently, Silesian nationality was included in the national census, against the 2007 ruling of the Supreme Court, for the Supreme Court rightly deduced that historically speaking there is no such thing as the Silesian people. It can be added that **Silesianness is simply a certain way of detaching oneself from Polishness and, probably, of simply assuming a camouflaged German option**' (translation and emphasis mine).

Such a portrayal of Silesian regional activism was facilitated by the fact that, before World War I, most of the historical region of Silesia belonged to Germany ever since Prussia wrestled Upper Silesia from Austrian hands in the mid-eighteenth century. Due to a historical precedent (the Polish part of Silesia enjoyed autonomy in the interbellum), Silesian activists nowadays demand that Poland grants autonomy to the historical region of Silesian within the Polish state. These demands, however, are commonly confused with separatism, given that Poland has no longstanding tradition of federalism or decentralization or even fears of German involvement in Polish issues. These fears are further exacerbated by still vivid memories of the Nazi occupation of Poland, the trauma that followed, and the complicated history of the region and its residents, many of whom were first instrumentalized for the war purposes and drafted into the *Wehrmacht* to be later deemed "ethnically suspect" in post-war, Poland and subjected to what the communist authorities dubbed as "national verification" (Nijakowski and Bartoszyńska 2009). Given this complex sociopolitical context, slogans demanding autonomy for Silesia in post-1989 Poland have been commonly met with surprise mixed with suspicion. According to one major

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[11] Kashubians are a linguistic minority based in northern Poland. Their language, Kashubian, is officially recognized as a regional language, according to the 2005 *Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language*.

explanation, granting autonomy to Silesia would only become the first step in the process of separating the region from Poland and, presumably, reincorporating it into Germany. This is precisely why the phrase "camouflaged German option" was directed not at Germans, but Silesian activists.

Once this phrase leaked into mainstream media, it quickly made headlines, becoming a major talking point before the 2011 parliamentary elections. As Buchowski and Chlewińska (2012, 7) explain, the perlocutionary, long-term effect of such usage was the discursive production of an inextricable link between "Silesian organisations promoting the autonomy and the strengthening of Silesian cultural identity with some kind of an anti-Polish ideology, without even attempting to explain this notion." Later, at the request of local Law and Justice politicians, the phrasing of the document was slightly altered to specify that the phrase referred to only those from among self-identified Silesians who reject a simultaneous Polish national identification. Nevertheless, the phrase quickly gained notoriety and became a pejorative catch-all used about self-identified Silesians and/or Silesian activists, including members of the Silesian Autonomy Movement.[12]

In the region of Silesia (southern and southwestern Poland), the phrase was met with surprise, incredulity, and outrage. This was especially the case for those residents of Poland who not only live in Silesia but who also self-identify as Silesians in terms of ethno-national identification. The use of such anti-Silesian (and, consequently, anti-German) rhetoric by the Law and Justice milieu was not without influence on the results of the 2011 national census. One

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[12] Silesian Autonomy Movement (Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska, RAŚ*) is an organization established in the early 1990s that advocates granting autonomy to the historical region of Silesian within Poland. In the recent decade, the Movement has increased its visibility on the regional political scene, becoming one of the most vocal advocates for Silesian identity with their focus on legal recognition of Silesian ethnicity and Silesian language by the Polish state.

of its most striking results was that the number of self-identified Silesians (the census allowed

for write-in options in terms of ethno-national identification) has skyrocketed to about 850,000

people, increasing almost fivefold compared to the previous census in 2001. This sudden

increase in the membership in the imagined community of Silesians was interpreted by Polish

sociologists and political scientists as a sign of protest against the discriminatory narrative about

Silesians expressed in the Law and Justice document mentioned above. In the following years,

this opposition became manifest in several grassroots up activities taken up by local activists and

entrepreneurs in Silesia, including, for instance, pro-Silesian gear such as t-shirts with the slogan

"camouflaged German option" and Silesian symbols printed on them.

While the presence of the "camouflaged German option" phrase in political discussions

was relatively short-lived, the phrase nevertheless became a handy moniker. In nonelite political

conversations (especially in digital media), the idea of "camouflaged Germans" on Polish soil

has been since applied wholesale to anyone who claimed Silesian identity without unequivocally

declaring oneself as Polish. On the other side of the political fence, Silesian activists denounced

such simplistic and pejorative ideas, sometimes managing to break into mainstream news. In a

famous instance of that sort, Jerzy Gorzelik,[13] was caught on record saying: "I'm a Silesian, not a

Pole. I didn't promise Poland anything, so I didn't betray it and I don't feel obliged to be loyal to

this country" (Klich 2001). As a result, the ongoing debate on Silesian identity has been

pervaded with more hostility, insinuations, and verbal violence than rational arguments. Thus, it

has become a widespread occurrence for participants in those debates to refer to the idea of

"camouflaged German option" in order to reject the idea of Silesian identity (the anti-Silesian

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[13] Jerzy Gorzelik, a professor of art history at the University of Silesia in Katowice and leader of the Silesian Autonomy Movement (Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska, RAŚ*), an organization advocating granting autonomy to the historical region of Silesia within Poland, given the historical precedence based on the autonomous status of Silesia Province in interwar Poland.

position) or to use it as an argument proving the oppressiveness of the Polish state that denies its citizens the right for self-identification (the pro-Silesian position). As a result, such repeated performances of anti-Silesian stances contributed to the production of anti-Silesian discourse, best exemplified in the phrase "camouflaged German option."

The same holds for the examples analyzed in this chapter, which focuses specifically on pieces of discourse produced from anti-Silesian positions. As it is the case with potent discourses that pervade societal thinking, the negative portrayal of recognition-seeking Silesians in elite political discourse stems from the cultural and sociopolitical fabric of the Polish society. While discussions on ethnic/national minorities in post-war Communist Poland were taboo (Łodziński 2012a), the 1989 transformation allowed for more freedom in this regard. Still, the discourse that dominates in traditional and conservative milieus is that of maintaining ethnic homogeneity to preserve national unity, which, due to the historical experience of what became known in history as partitions of Poland, is the top priority. It is against such rigid mental structures that bottom-up discourses about minorities, including self-identified Silesians, need to struggle to have the possibility to become widespread and, perhaps, prevailing.

For Krzyżanowski (2017), the post-1989 public arena in Poland is characterized by "a lack of pluralism of voices and is often outright dominated by social animosity, hate, and deep-seated, politicized ideological struggles." Thus, all those features stand in stark opposition to the values of liberalism, democracy, and rational debates. This has also been the case for discussions concerning ethnic or national minorities wherein anti-Semitic-like scapegoating, a common discursive practice in contemporary Poland leaks into hateful speech on ethnic/national minorities (ibid.). This is precisely the case for discussions on Silesian identity, in which naming practices become one of the major tools instrumentalized in political discourse. As KhosraviNik

(2010, 25) notes, "widespread, common and normalized referential strategy of naming a group may have deep and long lasting influence on the psyche of society." Thus, normalization and conventionalization of naming strategies can effectively evolve into self-standing discourses about groups or individuals that are both ideological (that is, are produced from positions favoring some ideas about the society over another) and positioning (that is, imply the existence of an unnamed social order and hierarchies that need to be maintained). This is, for instance, the case for the oft-repeated phrase "guest workers" (or *Gastarbeiter*) in German-speaking countries, or the ideological and positioning categorization of self-identified Silesians as "camouflaged Germans."

<p style="text-align:center">The trope of German threat in Polish history and culture</p>

While the three examples discussed above all represent recent instances of anti-German discourse, the trope of the German threat in Polish culture has a much longer history. Its historical roots go back at least as far as 1226 when Konrad I (Duke of Masovia) invited the Teutonic Knights to what is nowadays northeastern Poland to help defend against Baltic Prussians. As the Knights successfully executed this mission, they also became a threat to Masovia and the medieval Polish state with the rivalry between the Teutonic Order and Poland culminating in the 1410 Battle of Grunwald. The German-Polish rivalry figures prominently in the novel *The Knights of the Cross* (Pol. *Krzyżacy*), authored by the Positivist writer Henryk Sienkiewicz in 1900 and its 1960 film adaptation directed by Aleksander Ford.

Aside from centuries-long close geopolitical proximity between the two nations, the Nazi German occupation of Poland during World War II cemented the status of Germany as Poland's significant "Other." This status was further confirmed after the war when the Polish Communist government itself fomented anti-German sentiment in the country. The postwar enforcement of

ethnic homogenization in Poland was based on the idea of eliminating "internal enemies" (that is, individuals whose Polishness was under question) in this process, forced deportations were one of the tools used for that purpose (Łodziński 2012b). As a result, national verification among borderland communities—Masurians, Pomeranians, Silesians—followed.

With the war trauma still alive, violence and hatred followed as even speaking German was dangerous and became a punishable offense (Service 2013). Hostile feelings toward Germans and Germany were also accompanied by concrete actions on part of the government (Kamiński 2016), including mass relocations of Germans from Poland's new western territories (known by the official name of "Recovered Territories" or *Ziemie Odzyskane*), procedures of rehabilitation, national verification, and de-Germanization (through, for instance, first and last name changes) that took place in Silesia and other newly acquired parts of the country. Despite the invasive nature of these procedures, they were often perceived as "well earned" given the atrocities perpetrated by Nazis on Poles and other nationalities during the war (Lemańczyk 2019). Fear for life caused some to go underground and remain hidden to the Communist government, effectively becoming "invisible" to officials. As one member of the German minority recalls, they learned "a perfect camouflage over these several dozen years. My wife *does not know with whom she lives*, you know" (Łodziński 2012, 73; emphasis mine). The anti-German sentiment in postwar Poland was further reinforced through popular culture. For instance, one of the most popular TV series produced in Communist Poland, *Stakes Larger Than Life* (Pol. *Stawka większa niż życie*), told the story of a Polish secret agent, captain Hans Kloss (actually: Stanisław Kolicki), who infiltrates the *Abwehr*, the German intelligence.

Ultimately, it was not until 1980s that Poland-based Germans attempted to increase their presence in the public sphere, with their efforts yielding results in the early 1990s with the

establishment of the association of Germans in Opole Silesia (Pol. *Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Niemców na Śląsku Opolskim*, Germ. *Sozial-Kulturelle Gesellschaft der Deutschen im Oppelner Schlesien*) as well as other organizations and initiatives. Since 1991, the German Minority Electoral Committee has participated in parliamentary elections and—since the 5% election threshold is waived for national minorities—has regularly won seats in the Polish parliament (from 7 in 1991 to 1 since 2007). According to the 2005 act on national and ethnic minorities and the regional language, the German minority represents one of the 9 legally recognized national minorities in Poland (*Act* 2005).

According to Lutomski (2006), the historically troubled Polish-German relations have also suffered due to the more recent trends in German historiography that seek to complicate and reinterpret the role of Germans in World War Two as not only perpetrators but also victims. Such attempts, received with incredulity and mistrust in post-1989 Poland, represent a vital threat to the Poles' traditional self-portrayal as historical victims of more powerful neighbors. Perhaps even more importantly, such a reinterpretation of German agency during WW2 opens the door for a similar reevaluation on the Polish side. In contemporary Poland, such a narrative-changing portrayal of Poles' represents a highly controversial topic (as evidenced by, for example, the popular reception of the 2012 film *Pokłosie* [*Aftermath*] by Władysław Pasikowski) and remains taboo in public discourse. As Lutomski writes:

"German attempts to reinterpret the past have provoked renewed tensions. While more and more Germans have begun to focus on their own suffering during the years of war and its aftermath and to see themselves not only as perpetrators but also as victims, many Poles have witnessed this situation with certain unease. The Polish reaction is motivated

in part by the fear that German claims of being victims of World War II, or of the

expulsions, could threaten the "traditional" status of Poles as victims" (2006, 241).

Poland's turbulent relationship with Germany and its German minority are also reflected in

language ideologies about the Slavic varieties spoken in the former Polish-German borderland of

Upper Silesia, and the Upper Silesian Industrial Area (Pol. *Górnośląski Okręg Przemysłowy*) in

particular. It was there where the Silesian variety, a West Slavic ethnolect with substantial

Germanic influence, emerged (Borowski 2020). However, the Germanic stratum in Silesian

proved to be problematic for those unfamiliar with this variety, contributing to its negative

evaluation and constructing a negative stereotype of its speakers. As a result, Silesian speakers

were perceived as representatives of "the German world" by the postwar Polish Communist

government (Siuciak 2010). After the 1989 transformation, these ideologies about Silesian did

not disappear. As Tambor explains, the Silesian variety is perceived as "broken" due to the

presence of Germanisms while the "good" and "beautiful" Silesian is the one that "has not been

Germanized" (1998, 212).

Given the incorporation of the historical region of Silesia into German-speaking countries

(Austria, Prussia, Germany), the presence of the German language in Silesia nowadays possesses

a distinct historical significance. This, for instance, can be witnessed in the existence of bilingual

(Polish and German) signs in numerous municipalities in the Opole Province in southwestern

Poland. Aside from that, the German language has also a symbolic meaning in contemporary

Poland. In the context of modern-day political discourse in Poland, the adjective "German"

serves as a marker of otherness, if not outright foreignness. As Mierzyńska (2019) notes,

portrayals of Donald Tusk as a German (representative)14 are not merely referential in terms of

nationality but also indicative of Germany as Poland's major enemy. However, the strategic use

of language to spread anti-Silesian (and, with that, anti-German) sentiment in the *Western Daily*

goes beyond simple nominalizations and constitutes an example of how language and its

typological qualities can be harnessed in political discourse and exploited for political gains.

Repetition in discourse

As I analyze how anonymous internet users do politics with language, I operate within the

framework of calculated overcommunication, defined as "a macro-strategy which incorporates

strategic provision (i.e., based on a more or less formal goal-oriented plan) of what might be 'too

much information' for certain audiences, and/or strategic uses of excessive repetition and

irrelevance in language" (Hansson 2015, 173). Looking at the deployment of excessive repetition

for blame avoidance in administrative language, Hansson identifies the following types of

calculated uses of overcommunication:

   (1) "Keeping the floor, avoiding dialogue and rebuttal;

   (2) Insinuating scapegoats (via semantic prosody and lexical cohesion);

   (3) Exhausting the opponent;

   (4) Winning the argument based on validity effect and mere exposure effect" (185).

For this chapter, I mostly focus on the modality of excessive repetition to study their import for

the construction and promotion of anti-German sentiment, rooted in the CGO discourse, in the

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14 The underlying idea of Tusk being a German (representative) is also rooted in the 2005 presidential elections, in which Tusk faced Lech Kaczyński who was eventually elected president. During the campaign, rumors were spread that Tusk's grandfather, Józef, volunteered to serve in the *Wehrmacht*, the Nazi German armed forces, to undermine Donald Tusk's credibility as a candidate for the head of the Polish state (see Nijakowski and Bartoszyńska 2009).

Western Daily comments sections. One rationale behind this choice is that references to Germans and/or Germany are omnipresent in this digital space, be it in the form of explicit arguments about Poland's western neighbor or through overt usage of the German language in the forum (see chapter 1 for examples of linguistic strategies of othering with German origin). Another reason for taking a closer look at the role of repetition is that the trope of "camouflaged Germans," best exemplified in the CGO discourse, represents another frequent occurrence in my data. Thus, it is the modality of repetition that links examples of anti-German sentiment in the *Western* Daily forum with the larger CGO discourse that is visibly present there. Since repetition is one of the major means of performing calculated overcommunication, this framework lends itself useful for a functionally oriented analysis of political discussions, including those on Silesian identity in contemporary Poland. In doing so, I test the usefulness of this framework for such purpose by extending its use from the original focus on administrative language to the study of bottom-up political activism on the internet.

Hansson (2015, 179) defines (linguistic) repetition as "the recurrence and recontextualisation of words and phrases in one particular conversation or text (synchronic repetition or intratextual patterns) or in another, later conversation or text (diachronic repetition or intertextual patterns)." In this chapter, I specifically focus on such recurrences and recontextualizations of the anti-German sentiment in linguistic naming that are semantically consonant with each other and rooted in ideologically similar visions of the social world, regardless of the actual form that scrutinized words and phrases take. In this manner, my goal is to show that analogous modes of thinking about whole communities need not necessarily take the same literal form, but that they nevertheless have a solid foundation in almost identical, linguistically constructed group representations. This is especially the case in the *Western Daily*

forum where discussants exhibit a considerable degree of linguistic creativity (see chapters 1 and

3 for examples as well as the analysis below), which they utilize to battle out online arguments

under conditions of (perceived) anonymity.

As a separate modality in language use, repetition has been the topic of numerous studies

(e.g., Johnstone, 1990, 1994; Tannen 1987, 2007; Darics 2013). Johnstone (1987) distinguishes

four major lines of inquiry in hitherto research on repetition in discourse:

 (1) Repetition as a discourse-cohesive device;

 (2) Repetition as a rhetorical device;

 (3) Repetition and its semantic effects;

 (4) Repetition in language learning, linguistic socialization, and language teaching.

The analysis in the present chapter is mostly concerned with the theoretical orientation found in

the second category of studies of repetition. As a rhetorical device, Johnstone argues, repetition

has the potential to "create rhetorical presence, the linguistic foregrounding of an idea which can

serve to make it persuasive even without logical support. Presentation, be it through

metaphorical uses of deictic words like *here, now*, or *this*; through the use of historical present

tenses to describe past events; or through repetition, makes things believable by forcing them

into the affective field of the hearer and keeping them there" (1987, 208). Needless to say, this

ability to construct a desired discourse reality is widespread and commonly used in political

communication. As I show later in the chapter, such strategic usage of repetition in online

language-in-use is also the case in the *Western Daily* comments sections where repeated

linguistic performances of anti-German sentiment contribute to the reproduction of the CGO

discourse. This is even more so the case given that the local dynamics of interactions there are

based on the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between two warring camps consisting of pro- and anti-Silesian posters.

These conditions of a permanent feud between those who see Silesian identification as legitimate and those who do not bring forth the issues of identity and power. Works on repetition that touch on such issues fall under the larger domain of intertextuality and as such are concerned with "social processes and political ideologies, for instance, examining the role of repetition in creating identities in interaction, connecting intertextuality with the notion of framing, and combining it with theories of power" (Hansson 2015, 180). As Tannen (1987) observes, repetitions create discourses, relationships, and whole worlds. In this capacity, repetition "evidences a speaker's attitude, showing how it contributes to the meaning of the discourse" as it "not only ties parts of discourse to other parts, but ties participants to the discourse and to each other, linking individual speakers in a conversation" (583–584). Johnstone (1994) points out that repetition is oriented to the past and that it can reinforce community values. For instance, by repeating certain formulas in religious rituals, people are "reframing them, unconsciously factoring out what they have in common, and constructing a more abstract representation" (8). This community-building feature of repetition is also prevalent in the *Western Daily* forum as examples of anti-German sentiment contribute to the (re)production of negative stereotypes about self-identified Silesians as "camouflaged Germans." In this manner, repetition in political communication and political discourse can become instrumentalized to insinuate and/or construct scapegoats through blame-shifting. Thus, "[r]epeating a motif can result in establishing links of causality which frame someone as accountable for some problematic event or situation by means of semantic prosody and lexical cohesion instead of argumentation" (Hansson 2015, 183). The same is true about repetition at the level of meaning, or semantic repetition, that functions as

"one of the major strategies to draw attention to *preferred meaning* and to enhance the construction of such meanings in mental models (van Dijk 1997, 37; emphasis mine). Since semantic repetition is tied to linguistic form, this brings forth the issue of naming through language.

<div align="center">Naming in political discourse</div>

Naming represents one of the key linguistic practices as it is through naming that people give sense to the world around them. The practice of naming is also prevalent in repetition, especially the type of repetition concerned with politics, power, and propaganda. In the *Western Daily* comments sections, naming became the local way of making sense of the social world (see chapter 1). It has also, however, contributed to widespread feelings of distrust, prejudice, and discrimination, the best example of which is the CGO discourse that pervades the discussions held there. In this chapter, I connect the idea of "camouflaged Germans" with calculated overcommunication through one of its strategies, repetition, by looking at selected examples of linguistic naming in online discourse to show how, in anonymous digital spaces, you can do politics with language.

As repetition, naming comes with serious consequences in public and everyday communication (e.g., Galasiński and Skowronek 2001; Chang and Holt 2011; Ish-Shalom 2011; KhosraviNik 2010; Tracy 2011). Hannoum (2015, 21) calls naming a "potent form of power" and gives the example of Muslim residents of France who are prevalently identified based on their confession (*musulmans de France*) while no equivalent for other religious groups in the country exists. For Charmaz (2006), names possess an analogous power/knowledge (Foucault 1980) component. Consequently, names "provide ways of knowing—and being," "construct and reify human bonds and social divisions," and, finally, "are rooted in actions and give rise to

specific practices" (Charmaz 2006, 396). Similarly, Titscher et al. (2000, 193) propose that repeated instances of naming de facto constitute naming itself as repetition becomes a tool that confirms and condenses distinction while Ish-Shalom (2011, 479) argues that naming is "no longer considered a neutral, naive process, but a political act of appropriation, inclusion, and exclusion." As an efficient tool in the struggle over the commonsense (ibid.), political actors perform the work of naming through images, symbols, and signs that represent what (Chang and Holt 2011, 397) call "metaphorical devices providing conceptual casing summarizing complex sociohistorical circumstances."

From this perspective, acts of naming represent powerful tools in the hands of political actors, both professional and layperson, as well as evidence of their stances toward individuals, groups, and ideas reflected in their internal mental processes. Further, studying such acts can also help uncover "the ideological underpinnings of discourse and of speakers' images in discourse" (Galasiński and Skowronek 2001, 65). These ideas are also present in some definitions of discourse. For instance, Chilton describes discourse as consisting of "coherent chains of propositions which establish a 'discourse' 'world', or 'discourse ontology' – in effect, the 'reality' that is entertained by the speaker, or meta-represented by speaker as being someone else's believed reality. There are various meaning ingredients that go into these discourse realities, but the essential one is the projection of 'who does what to whom, when and where'" (2004, 54). This is also the case in the *Western Daily* forum where anti-German sentiment goes hand in hand with bottom-up reproduction of the CGO discourse, realized in creative forms of linguistic naming. Thus, the CGO discourse effectively constructs a *discourse world* in Chilton's terminology, one in which German identification and/or orientation, either adopted or alleged, is put at odds with some unnamed interests of the Polish state considered to be vital for members of

the anti-Silesian camp who (re)produce such discourse about self-identified Silesians. In doing so, anti-Silesian posters draw abundantly from the complex sociohistorical background of the region of Silesia (see Introduction) as they perform repeated acts of naming to construct what Galasiński and Skowronek (2001, 63) call "an ideologically preferred reality."

Nowhere is this desire to construct ideologically preferred realities stronger than in contemporary Poland whose political scene is characterized by an increasing divide between two major political camps, polarization, and often hostility toward those who hold different beliefs about politics, society, and culture (Krzyżanowski 2017). Since political discussions there tend to yield much hostility, they inevitably turn into unilateral, politicized expressions of preferred realities that require defending from the possibility of even considering divergent perspectives on the social world. As a result, political discourse on the professional and layperson level becomes an exercise in avoiding what psychology calls cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), a condition in which people avoid information that has the potential to increase the discord between cognition, that is, "any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or about one's behavior" (3). This is best evidenced in the *Western Daily* comments sections where posters come to argue in favor of their pre-established positions in the debate on Silesian identity. Galasiński and Skowronek (2001), who analyzed the usage of names in political addresses, found that Polish politicians did not use proper names of prominent historical figures for merely referential purposes. Instead, their use of proper names was political and came from their desire to stage partisan performances to gain political and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991).

The same is true about discussions about self-identified Silesians, in which the conservative, collectivist vision of the Polish nation (represented by the anti-Silesian camp) clashes with the more liberal, individualist idea of Poland as a country where unity in diversity is

possible (the pro-Silesian camp). Because the most ground-level discussion on Silesian identity gets often derailed and is superseded by larger questions of the meaning of ethnicity, nationality, and belonging, such conversations become quickly politicized by explicit mentions or implicit allusions to political ideas, ideologies, and their representations in the social world. This is precisely where the idea of self-identified Silesians as "camouflaged Germans," to paraphrase the document that became the founding stone of the CGO discourse, comes into play. Since this discourse represents a readymade encapsulated in a catchy phrase that is easy to remember (and, thus, to deploy in political discussions), the tropes of Germans, "camouflage," and apparent danger soon emerge. These sentiments, felt profoundly in the anti-Silesian camp and made visible by its members in the course of ongoing discussions, stem from broader sociological imaginations about Silesians, and in particular their ambiguity toward their ethno-national identification[15] (cf. Bjork 2008) as well as their lukewarm attitude toward policies of the central government aimed at their region. In a study of blends in Polish political discourse, Thielemann (2016, 77) observes that political debates have the potential to produce keywords, with which they remain closely associated after they become "semantically and pragmatically charged." Thus, in political discourse, such keywords "convey explanative patterns in a very condense way and suggest evaluative perspective," signaling "affiliation with a specific group and/or position which again turns them into controversial lexical markers" (78). This is precisely the case for the phrase "camouflaged German option" as well as its numerous derivatives, as the analysis below will show.

<div align="center">Analysis</div>

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[15] Cf. the detailed results of the 2011 census, in which self-identified Silesians declared (1) Polish and Silesian, (2) German and Silesian, or (3) exclusively Silesian nationality, in the "Silesia, Silesian, Silesians" subsection of the Introduction.

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is one of the methods of critically analyzing discourse that is well-positioned for the study of such and similar referential strategies in elite or nonelite political talk. As an analytic approach to discourse, DHA concentrates on three dimensions: content and topics, discursive strategies, and linguistic means and realizations used (Reisigl and Wodak 2016). Here, a key role is played by the discursive process of nomination, directed at the "discursive construction of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions" (33). When it comes to the analysis of nomination strategies in line with DHA principles, nouns and nominal phrases are central to this enterprise, including such linguistic devices as membership categorization devices or anthroponyms. While DHA proposes to orient critical analyses of discourse to five major questions, in this chapter I mostly concentrate on how persons are named and referred to linguistically. This allows for an in-depth examination of the presence of anti-German sentiment in the *Western Daily* forum on one hand, and to establish a connection between such examples and the wider CGO discourse that becomes reproduced in this digital space.

The present analysis is based on selected examples of anti-German sentiment produced in the *Western Daily* comments sections, in the form of derivation (posts 3–6) and compounding (posts 7–10), produced between 2011 and 2016. While the idea of self-identified Silesians as "camouflaged Germans" came to life in 2011 (see the section on CGO discourse in contemporary Poland), my analysis shows that this particular, pejorative way of representing and talking about members of the self-proclaimed Silesian identity is not limited to the 2011 parliamentary campaign only, but extends well into the 2010s. A Google Trends search for the phrase *zakamuflowana opcja niemiecka* (Pol. for 'camouflaged German option') displays no hits for the phrase before 2011 and a sudden spike in early 2011 (see Figure 2 below). While the

interest in the phrase has gradually declined in the following years, the interest over time has not entirely disappeared, which seems to confirm my qualitative findings on the persistence of such a portrayal of self-identified Silesians in the 2010s. Thus, the ultimate goal of my analysis is to demonstrate that such chronotopic (Bakhtin 1981; Blommaert 2015) persistence of the CGO discourse in this particular space and time is not coincidental. Instead, the ongoing reproduction of this discourse in the *Western Daily* forum reinforces this prejudiced way of thinking about self-identified Silesians as alleged "representatives of the German world" on Polish soil, provoking anti-German sentiment in contemporary Polish society.
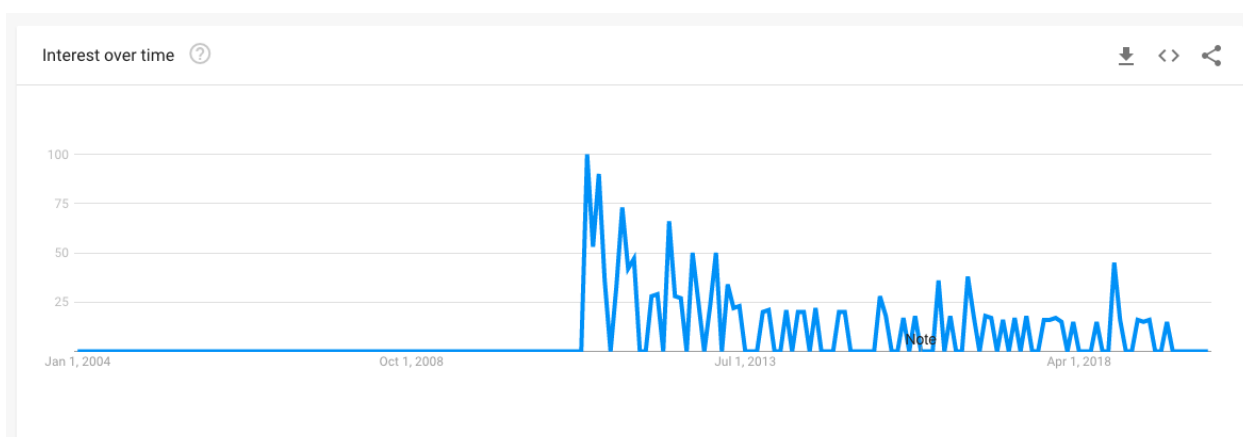

Figure 2: Screenshot of a Google Trends graph for the phrase zakamuflowana opcja niemiecka, 2004–present

(image source:
https://trends.google.com/trends/explore?date=all&q=%22zakamuflowana%20opcja%20niemiecka%22). Google is
a trademark of Google LLC.

The presence of anti-German sentiment in the online debate on Silesian identity is visible in example (3) whose author employs the phrase "German lords."

(3) W wyniku burzliwej historii Górnego Śląska powstała podklasa /

- grupa **folksdojczowskiego** lumpenproletariatu słowiańskiego pochodzenia, którego aspiracje sprowadzały się do bycia wiernym służącym niemieckich panów.

'As a result of a turbulent history of Upper Silesia, an underclass emerged /

— a group of *Volksdeutsch*16 lumpenproletariat of Slavic origin whose aspirations boiled down to being a faithful servant of [its] German lords.'

Here, the poster provides a subjective and highly prejudiced representation of Silesians, alluding to their alleged identity as a representative of the German world (hence the idea of Silesians as "faithful servants of [their] German lords." This example of othering language does not stop here as the poster describes Silesians with the now-pejorative term *Volksdeutsch* (see footnote 16), which implies their pro-German orientation. By proposing that their origins are, however, Slavic, and not German, the author emphasizes Silesians' alleged ethno-national lability. This rhetorical feat, aimed at promoting distrust toward Silesians, is also closely connected with the comment-final proposition, which advocates further suspicion about the motives of Silesian identitarian activists from the perspective of (defending) Polish national interests adopted by the author.

Nowhere, however, is this distrust more fully expressed than in the Polish nativized adjective *folksdojczowski*. While the term *Volksdeutsch* (or *folksdojcz* in its nativized form) is present in Polish language dictionaries, the form *folksdojczowski* is exceptionally rare,17 although morphologically correct for adjectives derived from proper names (cf. *orwellowski < Orwell*,

16 A Nazi-era term used with reference to ethnic Germans, people of German ancestry living outside Germany; in contemporary, metaphorical usage, it denotes pro-German traitors to the host nation.

17 The Polish National Corpus (Pol. *Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego, NKJP*) yields only 1 result for the form "folksdojczowski" (cf. http://nkjp.uni.lodz.pl/?q=y33no5s3). This form, however, can be found in online discussions, which points to the ideological importance of the idea of a *Volksdeutsch* as well as its conceptual availability for politically oriented discussions in the context of modern-day Poland. As of early August 2019, a Google.pl search for *folksdojczowski* yields 139 hits.

noblowski < Nobel, and similar derivatives). This is precisely the case here as the poster coins the form *folksdojczowski* using the possessive suffix *-owski* (Kuć 2007; Sieradzki 2016) to construct a insult against members of the pro-Silesian camp in the forum. The author's proposition that Silesians were Slavs but changed their orientation to Germany feeds into and connects with the major idea behind the CGO discourse, facilitating its further promotion in the public arena. Similar anti-Silesian undertones can be found in (4).

(4) RAŚ to organizacja antypolska /

Poloki, dejcie pozor na kryptoRAŚoli we instytucjach kulturalnych, mediach i kajs indziyj. Stop **oberszlezjerskiemu** szowinizmowi.

'The SAM [Silesian Autonomy Movement][18] is an anti-Polish organization. /

Hey Poles, be aware of crypto-SAMists in cultural institutions, media, and elsewhere.

Stop *Oberschlesier*[19] [Upper Silesian] chauvinism.'

In this example, the author constructs an anti-Silesian message by condemning the activism of the Silesian Autonomy Movement (SAM) and accusing its members of being anti-Polish. In doing so, the poster taps into the CGO discourse by warning the forum community to pay attention to how SAM activists, called "crypto-SAMists," infiltrate public institutions in the country. This reference to covert (here: "cryptic") political activity bears similarity to the idea of "camouflaged Germans" operating in Silesia for the detriment of Poland's vital interests, as the

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[18] See footnote 12.
[19] Germ. *Oberschlesien* 'Upper Silesia'.

CGO discourse proposes. The nonnative status of these activists is further stressed through the newly created form *oberszlezjerski* 'Upper Silesian', from Germ. *Oberschlesier* 'idem'.

Unlike the adjective *folksdojczowski*, this form has no longer history behind it in the Polish language. However, its significance here is of prime importance as the neologism provides an ideological frame, along with the initial accusation of being anti-Polish, that allows the author of the post to construct SAM activists (and, by extension, self-identified Silesians in general with anti-Polish stances) as foreign, working against the interests of the Polish state, and representatives of the German world. This feature is most obvious in the poster's choice of the words. Since the post is written in Polish, with an added Silesian element (*kajś indziyj* 'somewhere else', cf. Pol. *gdzieś indziej*), the poster could have chosen the form *górnośląskiemu* (< Pol. *górnośląski* 'Upper Silesian'). Instead, the poster decided to coin a new word using the adjective's German equivalent, nativizing it later into Polish. Such linguistic move allows the author of the post to establish an implicit connection between Silesian activism, self-identified Silesians, and the trope of Germany. By inserting the trope of the German threat to Poland's interests, the poster shifts the discussion to the SAM activists' alleged motivations while simultaneously perpetuating the CGO discourse (hence the covert, *Oberschlesier* activism, in the author's parlance).

Language-driven ridicule is a frequent trope in online discussions on Silesian identity and is also present in example (5).

(5) ksiądz biskup ma u was przechlapane a kim wy jesteście żeby miał się tym przeimować ? / Dużo was nie ma ot kolejna sekta pewnie Świadkowie Jehowy w województwie mają podobną liczebność jak wyznawcy **szlyzjeryzmu**. Ja tam twierdzę,

że powinniście dokonać prawidłowego przekładu bibli. Naród wybrany to oczywiście
NARUT SZLYZJERSKI. Pierwszy człowiek to oczywiście Jorguś a nie jakiś Adam,
Eden (raj) znajdował się gdzieś pod Szopienicami. A jeden Abramuś wyprowadził narut
z gorolskiej niewoli i rozstąpiły się przed nim wody Brynicy i przyprowadził do ziemi
obiecanej czyli Bundesrepublik. Babilon przecież to jasne oznacza Warszawkę. Mesjasz
to nasz umiłowany przywódca Dr G. Wkrótce zacznie wyświęcać własnych kapłanów
żeby głosili prawdziwe słowo Boże a nie te gorolskie przekręty.

'His Excellency the Bishop[20] is toast – and who are you all to make him care about that? /
There aren't many of you, just another sect, Jehovah's Witnesses in this province are
probably as numerous as adherents of **Schlesier**ism. I, on the other hand, believe that you
should carry out a proper translation of the Bible. The chosen people were obviously the
SCHLESIER PEEPULL (sic). The first man [on earth] was obviously Georgie,[21] and not
an Adam, Eden (paradise) was located somewhere near Szopienice.[22] And one Abe led
the peepul (sic) out of non-Silesian captivity and the waters of Brynica[23] parted before
him and he brought them along to the Promised Land, that is, the Federal Republic [of
Germany]. It's obviously clear that Babylon denotes Warsaw [pejoratively]. Our beloved
leader, Dr. G.,[24] is the Messiah. Soon he will start ordaining his own priests so that they
preach the real Gospel and not those non-Silesian scams.'

[20] Wiktor Skworc, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Katowice.
[21] Georgie, a reference to Jerzy Gorzelik (see footnote 13).
[22] Szopienice is a present-day district of Katowice, the capital of the Silesia Province, and the birthplace of
Kazimierz Kutz, a film director and self-identified Silesian who has portrayed the region and its residents in his
films.
[23] Brynica is the river that separates the historical region of Silesia from the Dąbrowa Basin;
metaphorically, it denotes a boundary between Silesia ('Us') and non-Silesia ('Them').
[24] A reference to Jerzy Gorzelik (see footnote 13).

This entry represents one of the many comments left under an interview with Wiktor Skworc (the Roman Catholic archbishop of Katowice in Silesia Province), in which Skworc stated the following: "We live in Silesia, but we are Poles" (Pustułka 2011). These words were received with incredulity, distrust, and even outrage by members of the pro-Silesian camp who, as their responses to it suggest, interpreted it as a potential threat to their freedom to express Silesian identity. Given this, and the historical experience of reducing ethno-national difference in communist Poland after World War II (see Introduction), the reception of this proposition among self-identified Silesians in the forum was skeptical at best and hostile at worst. In response—and to stir negative emotions including anger and/or fear—members of the anti-Silesian camp used this opportunity to side with Skworc while launching a critique of pro-Silesian posters.

The same is the case in (5). In this comment, the poster ridicules the behavior of pro-Silesian posters by calling them "adherents of *Schlesier*ism." Through this ascription of ideological zeal, the poster marks the Archbishop's critiques as radical ideologues willing to rewrite history (and the Bible, hence the suggested re-translation) to further their goals. In doing so, the commenter employs the neologism *szlezjeryzm*, derived from the ethnonym *Schlesier* (Germ. 'Silesian') and created with the addition of the suffix *-yzm* (similarly to Engl. *-ism*) used to coin names for ideologies or systems of thoughts. Together with *oberszlezjerski* in (4), this neologism shares a common derivation root—the word *szlezjer/szlyzjer*, used pejoratively in the *Western Daily* comments sections to refer to members of the pro-Silesian camp, self-identified Silesians, or Silesian activists who disagree with the idea that Silesians are merely a regional inflection of Poles. (For an analysis of how this neologism is used to exert social control over pro-Silesian posters as well as narrate their identity, see chapter 4.)

As in (4), the naming strategy concerning pro-Silesian posters here is based on a German-language form. In academic and nonexpert discussions on self-identified Silesians, the charged name *ślązakowski* 'Silesianist' (for instance, *ruchy ślązakowskie* 'Silesianist movements') is sometimes used instead of the more neutral form *śląski* 'Silesian'. Because the latter has in the recent three decades become somewhat fuzzy given the emergence of Silesian activism in post-1989 Poland, the former would be more appropriate should any anti-Silesian poster decide to employ a pejorative name for members of the opposite camp. This is, however, not the case in examples (4) and (5) where post authors' choices gravitate toward their German-language equivalents instead. In doing so, posters perform the work of instilling a division by linguistically othering pro-Silesian commenters whose identity is discursively constructed as (1) connected with the German world, and, thus (2) represented as nonnative, given where the discussion is held. The decision to nativize the original German word in each case and to insert it in the otherwise Polish-language text results in the introduction of a contrastive device (neologism vs. the rest of the text) that upsets the style of the posts. Further, by drawing attention to the "imported" word, such rhetorical move produces emphasis, irony, and eventually, mockery as addressees (members of the pro-Silesian posters) are ridiculed for their alleged association with Germany (hence the use of Germanisms instead of native Polish words). Put together, all these factors uphold contribute to the reproduction of the CGO discourse as anti-German sentiment becomes instrumentalized as a rhetorical tool against the alleged anti-Polish, ideologically saturated stance exhibited by members of the pro-Silesian camp.

The trope of ideological zeal among pro-Silesian commenters continues in (6).

(6) Ta nachalna **schlonzakizacja** Śląska staje się już irytująca. /

Ja rozumiem, że są tacy ludzie, którzy jak Pan Roczniok wymyślili sobie sztuczny język (który nazywają śląskim) i opisują go w książkach (zwanych ślabikorzami). Tylko dlaczego tacy ludzie chcą, żeby inni uczynili się tego schlonzackiego esperanto? Dlaczego pouczają Ślązaków, że my liczymy "ajnc, cwaj, draj"? Dlaczego "hazok przynosi geszynki"? Kto tak godo poza Roczniokiem? Co to za bełkot? Nadchodzi nieubłagana fala **kontrschlonzakizacji**, która zmiecie różnych mutantów i macherów narodowościowych.

'This pushy ***Schlonsackization***25 of Silesia is becoming irritating now. /
I understand that there are people who, like Mr. Roczniok,26 invented an artificial language (which they call Silesian) and [that they] describe it in books (called primers). But why do such people want others to learn this *Schlonsack* Esperanto? Why do they lecture Silesians that we count *eins, zwei, drei*? Why "das bunny brings präsents"? Who, aside from Roczniok, talks like that? What kind of gibberish is that? There comes a time of inevitable **counter-*Schlonsackization*** that will wipe out various mutants and makers of nationalities.'

In this example, the author of the post launches an attack on Silesian activists, criticized for their attempts to promote what the poster calls a "*Schlonsack* Esperanto," that is, a nonnative, German-oriented variety meant to be used as a single medium of communication between

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25 *Schlonsack* is one of the German terms used as an adjective meaning 'Silesian' and, as such, represents a Slavic form nativized into German (cf. cognate Pol. form *Ślązak*). Here, *Schlonsack* and *Schlonsackization* are used with reference to self-identified Silesians with an assumed anti-Polish and pro-German orientation, hence the process of *Schlonsackization* carries a negative, pejorative association, implying a process of de-Polonization of the region.

26 Andrzej Roczniok, Silesian activist and politician, author of a Polish-Silesian dictionary (Roczniok 2007) and a set of Silesian orthographic rules (Roczniok 2016) that failed thus far to gain wider acceptance.

Silesians. In doing so, the poster alludes to pro-Silesian grassroots initiatives aimed at

introducing a permanent distinction between Polish and Silesian as related yet distinct Slavic

languages. As evident in the comment, the author's position is that Silesian as a separate

language on its own does not exist (hence the idea of "an artificial language" that "they [= self-

identified Silesians] call Silesian"). From this perspective, Silesian language activism in large

and the related struggle for the recognition of Silesian as a language become more about

ideology than facts. This prompts the poster to criticize such ideological activity among self-

identified Silesians by mockingly naming it *Schlonsackization*, from German *Schlonsack* (see

footnote 25) and the suffix *-izacja* (similarly to Engl. *-ization*) that implies an ideological

process.

　　As previous examples of naming practices presented in this chapter, this instance is also

based on an original German word (*Schlonsack*), later nativized into Polish. Similarly, the author

of this post did not choose to use a perfectly viable term *Ślązak* (and the cognate *ślązakizacja*)

but decided to represent Silesian activists as *Schlonsack*s instead. I believe that this opposition is

not incidental, but reflective of wider cognitive schema represented in this particular naming

practice. Namely, the implicit message conveyed in this comment is that there are at least two

"types" of Silesians: those who see being Silesian as an identity position that makes part of the

larger framework of being Polish (which seems to be the author's perspective) and those who

reject such an approach, opting instead for a more exclusivist vision of what it means to be

Silesian or at least one that is based on instilling a permanent difference between self-identified

Silesians and Poles, even at the cost of internal frictions. The author's perspective in this post

deserves further attention because it differs from previously cited comments in that the position

of the author here is also *partly* Silesian (cf. "Why do they lecture Silesians that we count *eins,*

zwei, drei?"). Quantitatively, such a stance (Silesian, *but also* Polish) is less commonly represented in the *Western Daily* forum. Presented here in the debate on the Archbishop's words, this Polish Silesian position becomes rhetorically forceful through an overt self-classification as someone native to the region who, despite that, stands strongly against the local language activism that seeks to gain recognition for the Silesian variety.

This conviction is best evidenced in the enumeration and simultaneous questioning of some of the propositions put forward by non-specialist activists. In a series of rhetorical questions, the commenter undermines such efforts by stressing the dissonance between those propositions and the linguistic reality, best exemplified in the sentence that includes an ad personam attack ("Who, aside from Roczniok, talks like that"?). Added to that is the accusation that Roczniok (see footnote 26) and unnamed others ("such people"), in their almost-ideological zeal to "prove" the distinction between Polish and Silesian, gravitate toward non-Polish vocabulary by borrowing extensively from the German language (cf. the numerals, *hazok* 'bunny', *geszynki* 'presents'). While on the most overt (linguistic) level this argument tackles the issue of loanwords, it can also be analyzed on a more covert (political) level as a voice against concealed (or *camouflaged* in the parlance of the CGO discourse) efforts to change the sociopolitical reality in Silesia.

In the choice to criticize precisely such attempts at increasing the (linguistic) distance between the center and the periphery, Silesia and the rest of Poland, the author of the post taps into the CGO discourse by (1) calling out a potentially suspicious behavior ("Why does this 'Silesian' include so many non-Slavic, German words?"), (2) exposing its shortcomings and inadequacies given the subjectively perceived linguistic reality in the region, (3) rejecting such language activism altogether ("gibberish," "only one person talks like that"), and (4) including a

call for collective action to counter the apparent, politics-through-language, change being effected in Silesia. Using the newly created word *Schlonsackization* as well as focusing on apparent Germanisms in the proposed Silesian standard, the poster thus skillfully exposes local language activists as potential German agents on Polish soil who allegedly seek to disturb the status quo by doing politics with the means of language. As a remedy, the poster proposes that this kind of activity is met with a forceful response (hence the wave metaphor in the Polish original) called 'counter-*Schlonsackization*'. By repeating the neologism *Schlonsackization* twice within the course of this relatively short comment, the author of the post attempts to cement this highly subjective representation of Silesian activists and self-identified Silesians in general as potentially dangerous agents of change, acting against the Polish national interests, features that position this comment well within the larger CGO discourse.

These tropes continue in example (7) where they further gain in intensity.

(7) Gris Got Schlonzaken. Wyważony artykuł pani Wieczorek wywołał u was paroksyzm wściekłości, hehehe /
Wasz idol Kupka chciał "państwa górnośląskiego" jak było oczywiste, że Niemcy Śląska nie utrzymają. Tak wtedy Niemcy mogliby się zgodzić na takie "państwo" tylko po to, żeby Śląsk nie wrócił do Macierzy. To wtedy Niemcy zaczęli piepszyć w bambus o jakimś tam "narodzie górnośląskim", który nigdy wcześniej nie istniał. I do dziśiej nie istnieje. Bo Ślązak to Polak (a ściślej mówiąc Polok) a Schlesier to Niemiec. A **Ślonzojcz** to ani Polak ani Niemiec, to zwykłe nic.

'God bless, *Schlonsacks*. A balanced article by Ms. Wieczorek caused an attack of fury in you, ha ha ha. /

Your idol, Kupka,27 wanted "an Upper Silesian state" once it was clear that Germany will not be able to support Silesia. Yes, Germany would then say yes to such a "state" only so that Silesia does not make its return to the Motherland [Poland]. It was then when Germans started lying about some kind of "an Upper Silesian people," which never existed before. And doesn't exist until today. Because a Silesian is a Pole (or, strictly speaking, a Pole28), and a *Schlesier* is a German while a ***Ślonzojcz***29 is neither a Pole nor a German, it's simply nothing.'

As evident from several examples examined above, the issue of Silesian identity that stands in contrast to Polish national identification causes much controversy in the *Western Daily* comments sections. My data in this and other chapters clearly show that a nonsingular ethno-national identification is beyond the social imagination of an average resident of Poland. In terms of tolerance practice, as Buchowski and Chlewińska (2012) suggest, political recognition and participation of Silesians meet "intolerance at the state level" and only "partial tolerance on the local level" (91). Thus, the Silesian struggle for recognition often becomes portrayed as an attempt to leave, both in the literal and figurative sense, the larger framework of Polish national identification to weaken the Polish state and, presumably, side with Germany instead.

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27 Teofil Kupka (1885–1920), Upper Silesian activist with a pro-Silesian stance on the future of the region.

28 While the poster uses a locally flavored, Silesian version of the word, it does not change its meaning, hence the double use of the form "Pole" in the translation. It can be argued that the use of the locally flavored ethnonym is not accidental but represents an ideological choice on part of the poster who attempts to present oneself as one of the locals, one of the residents of Silesia, whose idiom contains elements typical for the Silesian variety. The insertion of the locally flavored ethnonym allows the poster to discursively decrease the distance. By inserting a locally flavored equivalent, the poster does the ideological work of appealing to residents of Silesia.

29 A compound created from *Ślonzak/Ślonzok* 'Silesian [male]' and the nativized form *dojcz* 'German' [adj.] (nativized from Germ. *Deutsch* 'idem').

Unsurprisingly, this kind of cognition brings forth fear and anxiety caused by the Silesian ethnolinguistic activism in the offline and online worlds. Finally, such a strongly singular perspective on identity ("be a Silesian, be a Kashubian, as long as you also are a Pole in the greater scheme of things") is also the very reason why official recognition of Silesians as a separate ethnic and/or linguistic community in contemporary Poland appears impossible. As a result, both pro- and anti-Silesian posters in the forum—as well as pro- and anti-Silesian individuals in the offline world—are caught in a Catch-22 situation that, like a *perpetuum mobile*, continues to fuel the Polish-Silesian and lack of mutual understanding.

This type of black-and-white thinking about issues of ethnicity and nationality is nowhere better seen than in example (7). Elsewhere, I have pointed to this and analogous comments to argue how such a simplistic cognition has the potential to exert social control over pro-Silesian posters in the *Western Daily* forum and, by extension, self-identified Silesians in general (Borowski 2018a). Here, I concentrate instead on how the author of the post partakes and reproduces the CGO discourse by tapping into the anti-German sentiment that infiltrates Polish public discourse in the late 2010s (cf. Gójska-Hejke, Sakiewicz, and Lisiewicz 2017; Press 2018; Sitnicka 2019; Mierzyńska 2019). That the comment is written from an anti-Silesian perspective comes as no surprise, given the initial greeting, nativized into Polish from South German *Grüß Gott* 'God bless' and appended with the Germanized ethnonym *Schlonzaken* (cf. *schlonsackizacja* < Germ. *Schlonsack* in the analysis of example (6)). In doing so, the poster sets the scene for a straightforward, black-and-white argument about Silesian identitarian activism that ensues. In the comment, the poster rejects the proposition of Silesians as a separate people ("a people that has never existed before"), claiming that this idea has no historical precedence other than German-backed propaganda. Instead, the commenter puts forward a binary that leaves

its addressees (members of the pro-Silesian camp) with two options for ethno-national identification: Polish or German. Each of these options is represented through equivalent linguistic forms, Polish *Ślązak* and German *Schlesier*, respectively. The third, final option is the least prestigious one ("a simple nothing") and it is here where the crux of the matter lies in this particular instance.

By debunking those from among self-identified Silesians who refuse to adopt a simultaneous Polish (or German) national identification, the author of the post mocks those from among the Silesian community who want to self-identify as Silesians *and* Germans. As I explained in the previous paragraph, this is because such cognition goes against the singular way of imagining and thinking about ethno-national identification among Polish residents. The poster-specific practice of naming presented in the closing two sentences of this comment deserves further attention. From the sociolinguistic perspective, two of the first four ethno-national labels included in this comment are neutral, greater national containers—on one hand, there are Poles, on another—Germans. This is, however, not the case for the final, fifth one, which in itself is newly coined by the poster. The neologism *ślonzojcz*, created by compounding the Polish words *ślonzak/ślonzok* ('Silesian', mimicking in its form the Silesian orthographic approach to spelling nasal vowels) and *dojcz* ('German' [adj.], nativized from Germ. *deutsch* 'idem'), is one of the prime examples of linguistic creativity in the *Western Daily* forum. Attested in four more instances in my corpus (both as a noun and as a cognate adjective, *ślonzojczowski*), *ślonzojcz* in this very context can be interpreted as a mocking description of someone who wants to claim a nonsingular, double ethno-national identification as a Silesian *and* German, but *not* a Pole.

Since this comment was written from a staunchly anti-Silesian position, it comes as no surprise that a singular ethno-national identification is allowed and that a double, non-Polish identification is criticized. This pro-Polish perspective is also evidenced in the order in which ethno-national labels appear in the closing two sentences (Polish first, German second, non-Polish Silesian last). As previous examples, this comment proposes that Silesian activism (this time in its historical, not contemporary form) appeared to have backing from Germany who was trying to seize the opportunity provided by the Silesian Uprisings (1919–1921) to disturb the stability of the interwar Polish state by exacerbating internal divisions. Since the topos of Germany as a potential threat, ready to meddle into Poland's internal affairs, is a recurring motif in the anti-German sentiment, the example in (7) represents yet another instantiation of the CGO discourse, portraying Silesian activism (be it contemporary or historical) as a Trojan horse within the Polish state.

A similar trope can be found in (8) where the concept of *Ślonzojcz*s is further developed through a cognate adjective *ślonzojczowski*, derived with the help of the possessive suffix *-owski*. This time, the idea of German-oriented Silesians is extended to Jerzy Gorzelik, the Silesian Autonomy Movement leader (see footnote 13). As previously, this type of ethno-national identification (perceived negatively by members of the anti-Silesian camp) is contrasted with opposition in the form of "true" Silesians. Unlike the latter ("made-up phantoms"), the former group is represented as a legitimate choice for those who adopt Silesian identity. Analogously to prior instances in this chapter, such a proposition has its linguistic grounding. Commenting on an interview with Tomasz Pietrzykowski, professor at the University of Silesia and former governor of the Silesia Province, the author of the post in (8) suggests that he would never employ as many Germanisms in his Silesian, which makes Pietrzykowski a "real" Silesian, as opposed to

"made-up German-oriented Silesians" like Gorzelik. Given this critique of German influence present in the variants of some Silesian speakers, this comment fuels further distrust toward Silesian activists (here exemplified by Gorzelik) and, by extension, other self-identified Silesians. In this manner, the author of the post reproduces the CGO discourse while at the same time tapping into the anti-German sentiment that serves as a foundation for this way of talking about Silesians as "camouflaged Germans."

> (8) Aha. I chciołech pedzieć, że Pietrzykowski w przeciwieństwie do Gorzelika, to porzadny Ślonzok. /
> Nigdy by się Pietrzykowski nie zhańbił powiedzeniem "momy sto tałzynów unterszriftów". Bo on jest Ślazakiem a nie wydumanym **ślonzojczowskim** upiorem jak Jorguś Gorzelik...

> 'Aha. And I wanted to say that unlike Gorzelik,[30] Pietrzykowski is a fine Silesian. /
> Pietrzykowski would never disgrace himself by saying "we have one 'tausend unterschrifts.'" Because he's a Silesian, and not a made-up ***Ślonzojcz*** phantom like Georgie Gorzelik…'

The motif of the Silesian Autonomy Movement continues into the example in (9).

> (9) Kolejny dzień **RAŚtapowskiej** nagonki na Semik i Pietrzykowskiego /

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[30] Jerzy Gorzelik, see footnote 13.

Trwa kolejny dzień nagonki **RAŚtapo** na Redaktorke i Profesora. Jeśli ktoś miał

wątpliwości, czy **RAŚtapo** w sposób zorganizowany i systematyczny wykorzystuje fora

internetowe do wpływania na opinie publiczną, to teraz te wątpliwości znikają.

Wystarczy poczytać kilka poniższych wpisów, które są podobne w treści i wymowie.

Podobna nienawiść do tych, którzy mają inne poglądy niż **raśiole**-gorole, co to robią za

dupnych Ślonzoków. Dostaniecie sto tałzynów kopów wrzić za to wasze **raśiolsko**-

gorolskie chamstwo. Będziecie cierpieć **RAŚtapowcy**, buuuuuahahahahaha

'Another day of the ***RAŚtapo***31 manhunt on [Teresa] Semik32 and [Tomasz]

Pietrzykowski.33 /

Another day of the ***RAŚtapo***-sponsored manhunt on the editor and the professor

continues. If anyone had doubts if ***RAŚtapo***, in an organized and systematic manner, uses

internet forums to influence public opinion, then those doubts are now disappearing. It's

enough to read through some of the entries below, similar in content and meaning.

[There's] similar hate to those with views different than ***RAŚists***-foreigners who pretend

to be lousy Silesians. You will receive one 'tausend' kicks in the butt for this ***RAŚist***-

foreigner boorishness of yours. You will suffer, ***RAŚtapo*ers**, buuuuuahahahahaha.'

Here, the author of the post continues the discussion on Silesian activism by constructing a

subjective representation of the Silesian Autonomy Movement and its members, including those

present in the *Western Daily* comments sections. According to the poster, activists of the

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31 A compound created from *RAŚ* (Silesian Autonomy Movement, Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska*) and *Gestapo* (Germ. *Geheime Staatspolizei*), the secret police of Nazi Germany.

32 Teresa Semik, *Western Daily* (Pol. *Dziennik Zachodni*) journalist.

33 See the analysis of example (8) above.

Movement deliberately use the discussion space provided by the forum to shape and influence public opinion with regards to the debate on Silesian identity. The poster suggests that negative comments, left under an interview with Tomasz Pietrzykowski, the former governor of the Silesia Province, are not incidental but represent yet another instance of the organized pro-Silesian activity in the forum. The commenter's negative evaluation of this type of digital activism is combined with the post-final threat that includes a warning for Silesian activists.

In making all these pronouncements, the commenter employs the neologisms *RAŚtapo* as well as its cognate form *RAŚtapowcy* several times. While creative from the morphological point of view, these coinages also represent the ideological foundation for the perspective presented in this comment. The former instance of naming, the portmanteau *RAŚtapo*, originates from the combination of the acronym *RAŚ* (Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska*, Silesian Autonomy Movement) blended with *Gestapo*, the Nazi secret police force. However, the author of the comment does not stop there and produces four more neologisms within the same entry: the adjective *RAŚtapowski*, the group name *RAŚtapowcy*, another group name *raśiole*, and the cognate adjective *raśiolski*. As evident from their form, all these coinages stem from the compounding of the acronym *RAŚ* with another, pejoratively or negatively tainted semantic element. In the case of the first two of the four, it is the Nazi secret police *Gestapo*; in the case of the last two forms, the poster combined the name of the Movement with the augmentative suffix *-ol* (+ *-ski* in the adjective) that in contemporary Polish bears disrespectful connotations toward the denotatum (Janik 2018) and is presented in such forms as *kibol* (from Pol. *kibic* 'supporter'), *Angol* (from Pol. *Anglik* 'Englishman'), and *robol* (from Pol. *robotnik* 'worker'). All these instances of linguistic creativity, employed to denigrate the Movement and its (alleged) members,

simultaneously represents the most overt example of doing politics with language in this comment.

As in previous instances, Silesian activism receives a starkly negative evaluation from anti-Silesian posters in the *Western Daily* forum. What is, however, unique to the example above and similar ones is that such representations of pro-Silesian posters and, by extension, self-identified Silesians, are firmly grounded in the Poland-versus-Germany dichotomy (see the discussion under example (7)) that fuels much of Polish-Silesian conflict discourse in this digital space. In such instances, Silesian activism is perceived as deleterious for the Polish national interest, represented by independent anti-Silesian commenters who speak from centralist, singularist, and often anti-German positions. The author of the post in (9) reproduces this line of thinking and exacerbates it by incorporating several examples of linguistic creativity into skillfully constructed naming practices presented in this example. Thus, readers learn that Silesian activism and the issue of self-identified Silesians should be rejected altogether because of its grounding in the negative behavior exhibited online, but also because of their implied—through the naming practices described in the previous paragraph— link to Germany. This link is here exemplified in the discursively constructed association with Nazi Germany and the zeal with which the *Gestapo* fought its ideological opponents. Such trope is also embedded in the two neologisms present in this comment—*raśiole* and *raśiolski*—both of which, due to their phonological similarity with the Polish word *rasista* (Pol. 'racist') and the cognate adjective *rasistowski* (Pol. 'racist' [adj.]).

As evident, all these maneuvers in creative naming practices tap into the anti-German sentiment rooted in the CGO discourse, reproducing the latter for political gains. The same is true about the final example in this analysis (10).

(10) To, co sie wylało z **szajsoRaśtapowoferajnodojczowych** jadaczek /

Zasluguje oczywiscie na potępienie. Ślonska otwartość i tolerancja to czas przeszły.

Zostały małe, zasrane, brunatne karzełki jak [several people's (nick)names excluded] i

reszta tej czarnosecinnej beluwy.

'What has spouted from **Scheiß**[34]**-RAŚtapo-Ferajna**[35]**-German** yaps /

obviously deserves condemnation. Silesian openness and tolerance are in the past. What

is left are small, crapped, brown[36] midgets like [several people's (nick)names excluded]

and the rest of this black-hundredist[37] cesspool.'

In this extreme example of doing politics through language, the poster draws on previous

examples of anti-Silesian naming practices and takes them to the next level by coining the four-

stem form *szajsoRaśtapowoferajnodojczowy*. Morphologically, this fourfold insult can be

analyzed as follows: *szajs* 'crap' + *RAŚtapo* [< *RAŚ* + *Gestapo*] + *ferajna* 'gang, bunch' + *dojcz*

'German', put together with the infix *-o-* and the adjectival possessive ending *-owy*. Of the anti-

Silesian comments examined in this chapter, this one represents the most advanced example of

tapping into the anti-German sentiment and linking it with the existing CGO discourse for

political purposes. In this instance, the author of the comment constructs a pejorative

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[34] Germ. 'shit' or 'nonsense, bullshit, horseshit'; in colloquial Polish, the nativized form *szajs* denotes 'something worthless and ugly'.

[35] A reference to *Ślōnskŏ Ferajna* 'Silesian bunch/gang' (http://www.ferajna.eu/), an association established in Upper Silesia to promote all things Silesian.

[36] In original: *brunatny* 'russet', a reference to "Brownshirts", as the Nazi Party paramilitary SA (Germ. *Sturmabteilung*) were also called.

[37] The Black Hundred was a nationalist movement in early twentieth-century Russia, known for its radicalism and xenophobic beliefs.

representation of the Silesian identitarian movement by portraying its activists as a numerically small, intolerant group with pro-German and/or Nazi inclinations (hence the brown-shirts motif, see footnote 36). This association with Germany is most evident in the linguistic forms included in this entry as each of the four stems used to coin the neologism *szajsoRaśtapowoferajnodojczowy* has its origins in the German language. The alleged pro-German orientation of Silesian activists in the *Western Daily* forum is further stressed with the neologism-final form **dojcz**-*owy* (nativized from Germ. *Deutsch* 'German' [adj.]) that serves as the classifying descriptor for the community addressed with this insult. As previously, all these naming practices draw from the anti-German sentiment apparent in the CGO discourse, reproducing and further promoting the idea of self-identified Silesians as "camouflaged Germans" who reject a simultaneous Polish national identification and, thus, position themselves in direct opposition to ethnic Poles and the implied yet unnamed interests of the Polish state.

Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter, I have examined linguistic creativity-based naming practices in the *Western Daily* comments sections. I have looked at how Silesian online activism is framed as "cryptic," "camouflaged," therefore potentially dangerous to the Polish state, and how Silesian activists among pro-Silesian posters in the forum are discursively rendered as foreigners on the Polish soil. I have also analyzed the strategic use of language-driven ridicule, intensified by anonymous posters' linguistic creativity, which leads to the instrumentalization of language for political purposes. In this process, German-origin insertions play a key role as they produce emphasis, focus, irony, distance, and mockery addressed at members of the pro-Silesian community in the forum and beyond. I have also studied related naming practices that ultimately suggest that there is *more than one way* of being Silesian according to the cognitive schemas exhibited in the anti-

Silesian posters' comments. In this schema, there is a *good* and a *bad* way of being Silesian, and while the former is connected with the adoption of the Polish national identification as the greater identity umbrella, the latter is closely associated with foreignness and the German world. By introducing such an implicit dichotomy, members of the anti-Silesian camp can effortlessly shift the topic of the discussion, reducing it to a simple Polish-versus-German binary, and exploit it for exerting social control, as I have argued elsewhere (Borowski 2018a). Finally, I have investigated the portrayal of the Silesian Autonomy Movement as an anti-Polish, ethnically dogmatic organization with its own "cult" of Silesian identity, ideology (hence the linguistic references to *Gestapo* and Nazi Germany), and a separate system of beliefs. I have also pointed to how, according to anti-Silesian arguments, Silesian covert ethnic activism goes hand in hand with Silesian covert linguistic activism, both of which make part of bottom-up Silesian activism as an organized political movement in the *Western Daily* comments sections.

In doing so, I have framed my analysis in Hansson's (2015) framework of calculated overcommunication to investigate anonymous comments that take up, rework, and further promote the "camouflaged German option" discourse in contemporary Poland. I have shown how examples that tap into this particular manner of representing and discussing Silesian identity (even though they were produced in the 2011–2016 timeframe) demonstrate a remarkable ideological uniformity in their portrayal of self-identified Silesians as ethnocultural Others associated with the German world, as the argument goes. Finally, I have also pointed to specific strategies of building names and nominal phrases referring to self-identified Silesians to analyze how suffixation as a prime means of encoding meaning in a synthetic language like Polish aids the process of stigmatizing and stereotyping a regionalist movement and its ideological adherents in one of the most ethnically and culturally homogeneous countries in Europe.

My analysis in this chapter demonstrates that the "camouflaged German option" discourse, constructed by the Law and Justice political party milieu in 2011, has been extended to, consolidated, and reproduced in the *Western Daily* comments sections by anti-Silesian posters. In doing so, members of the anti-Silesian camp used semantic repetition as the preferred strategy to draw the public attention to their preferred representation of Silesian activism (cf. van Dijk 1997) and as a rhetorical tool to intensify their anti-Silesian message in general. (For an account of how accumulation leads to narrative accrual, which in turn leads to the construction of larger, anti-Silesian narratives, see chapter 4.) Investigating repetition in discourse, Johnstone (1994) pointed to how repetition in religious rituals enhances the communal dimension of the process. The repeated instances of the CGO discourse in my data, exemplified through the several neologisms examined in this chapter, can be viewed in that manner as well. From this perspective, the presence of repeated instances of anti-Silesian talk can be approached as a ritual that, like the religious ones (Johnstone 1994), allows the anti-Silesian community in the *Western Daily* forum to foster mutual involvement and group cohesion. As a result, each repetitive performance of anti-Silesian identity "keeps involvement going and coordinates everybody around the ritual" (8), with the final effect of (re)inforcing the values of this community.

This community-building characteristic of anti-Silesian talk has also broader implications for the processes of discourse spread and development of discourse spaces on the internet. As Krzyżanowski (2017) proposes, spaces "uninhabited" by public discourse can with time become populated with novel ways of discussing and representing groups, individuals, and ideas. This is precisely the case in the *Western Daily* comments sections where two warring groups, pro-Silesian and anti-Silesian posters, fight for discursive power to promote their preferred vision of the social world. In Bourdieu's (1991) terms, these two communities struggle over "the

monopoly of the power to make people see and believe, to get them to know and recognize, to

impose the legitimate definition of the divisions of the social world and, thereby, to make and

unmake groups" (221). Thus, the emergence and spread of anti-German sentiment that founds

the larger CGO discourse is a case worth investigating as it points to the ongoing fluctuation in

terms of power and power relations in this particular digital space. From this perspective, the

CGO discourse promoted in the forum represents an example of "strategic enactment," that is, "a

process of the discursively formed imaginaries being purposefully created and strategically

spread as part of an orchestrated move" (Krzyżanowski 2017, 2). As I have demonstrated in this

chapter, representing self-identified Silesians as members of the "camouflaged German option"

has become a powerful way of talking about Silesian ethnolinguistic activism, an ideological

constant that remains the same diachronically and diatopically. As a result, comments written at

different times under different news articles retain their anti-Silesian rhetorical edge, grounded in

the creative naming practices that exploit linguistic derivation for political purposes as pro-

Silesian posters fight back in their attempt to neutralize such negative portrayal of their in-group

members.

I allude to this permanent state of discursive struggle early on in chapter 3, which begins

with two antithetical comments that set the scene for the analysis of hateful speech that ensues:

(11) The *Western Daily* forum is the last one to tolerate *Schlesier*[38] sabbaths. Hence,

supporters of RAŚism continue to occupy this forum" (an anti-Silesian commenter)

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[38] The word *szlezjer* (also: *szlyzjer*), translated in my data as *Schlesier* (Germ. 'Silesian'), is a neologism used pejoratively in the *Western Daily* forum to refer to members of the pro-Silesian camp, self-identified Silesians, or Silesian activists who disagree with the idea that Silesians are merely a regional inflection of Poles (see chapter 4 for an in-depth analysis of this neologism and its functioning in the *Western Daily* comments sections).

(12) "This is our forum. Let's discuss each other on matters related to our Silesia" (a pro-

Silesian commenter)

Digital territorialism of this kind is not uncommon in the *Western Daily* forum, especially that

computer-mediated communication and the rapid development of digital technologies have

provided internet users with the *potential* to digitally "inhabit" (and, consequently, "maintain" in

their discursive power) such spaces. According to Tsuria (2018), the internet as a technological

discursive domain is best conceptualized as "a variant of other democratic institutions, the agora,

the voting booth." As my data suggest, this novel affordance of participatory social media

(KhosraviNik 2018) has radically altered the face of politically charged debates like the one on

Silesian identity in contemporary Poland. Previously, such debates would exist on a singular,

chronotopic plane only. Now, with the explosion of social media and user-generated content in

Web 2.0, this is no longer the case since each political debate has the potential to be initiated and

played out in every single type of online space time and time again. For instance, it is no longer

enough to argue one's point of view under one *New York Times* article—instead, it becomes

necessary to have other like-minded individuals to digitally "populate" and "claim" digital space

under *every single* online forum and comments section in order to create the impression of

having discursively prevailed the opponents, whatever their ideological position(s) may be. I call

this phenomenon "digital discursive expansion," the process of ideological subjection of digital

spaces facilitated by technological and discursive affordances made available in situ and

exploited by users to further their ideological goals.

The chapter has also shown the usefulness of the calculated overcommunication

framework for critically oriented analyses of nonexpert political activism in online forums. In the

context of the *Western Daily* forum, overcommunication is based on repetitive, anti-Silesian linguistic performances that inform the public opinion about the harmfulness of Silesian activism in the online and offline worlds. Similarly, this is also the case for strategic use of irrelevance as pro-Silesian posters or Silesian activists have their identities constructed through a plethora of nominal phrases and nominalization strategies, all of which bring forth and stress their alleged association with Germany. In this manner, online reproduction of the CGO discourse in this forum has the effect of shifting the public debate on Silesian identity by minimizing the importance of meta-identitiarian discourse while maximizing the significance of a secondary, marginal thread that gains exposure and rises to top-level prominence through the creative naming practices performed by anti-Silesian commenters. As a result, open discussion on self-identified Silesians is substituted by a narrow conversation on the potential threats of Silesian activism given the assumed German association. Consequently, individual members of the anti-Silesian camp in the forum collaborate on reproducing this trope in their comments. In doing so, they also obtaining a powerful argument against any emancipation of Silesians through the instrument of legal recognition of their ethnicity or language, thus securing what they see as a dangerous conflict of interests within the Polish state that threatens the country's stability.

In this chapter, I have provided plenty of evidence to support the hypothesis that being represented as a German is one of the most powerful insults used nowadays in Polish political discourse. In doing so, I have shown how the discourse of "camouflaged German option," constructed in the offline world, leaks into the online space as anonymous posters connect this idea with elements of anti-German sentiment to reproduce the CGO discourse in the *Western Daily* forum. Ultimately, what my analysis and the media vignettes presented at the beginning of this chapter indicate is that the ethnonym "German" has transformed into *an insult, a pejorative*

label appended to political or ideological opponents in contemporary Poland (cf. Mierzyńska 2019).

My qualitative findings, encompassing the 2011–2016 period, find confirmation in recent quantitative data as well. According to a recent report on Poles' attitude toward other nations and nationalities by *CBOS* (Pol. *Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej*, Center for Public Opinion Research), the number of Polish residents who like Germans decreased in two years by 10%, from 46% in 2017 to 36% in 2019. Similarly, the number of Poles who dislike Germans increased in the same period from 22% in 2017 to 34% in 2019 (Omyła-Rudzka 2019, 3–4; see figures 3 and 4). While this evident change in the perception of Germans and Germany in contemporary Poland is most probably linked to the anti-German rhetoric preferred by the ruling Law and Justice party (cf. Krzyżanowski 2017), my data clearly show that the anti-German turn in public discourse is not incidental but that it reflects wider societal fears and anxieties related to the turbulent Polish-German past. While these negative emotions have been mobilized by the conservative Law and Justice government for political purposes, they have also served as the ideological foundation for the construction, reproduction, and promotion of the "camouflaged German option" discourse as a key manner of discussing and representing Silesian identity, self-identified Silesians, and Silesian activism in the online spaces. As the next chapter will show, these negative representations of self-identified Silesians often co-occur with overt examples of verbal violence and hateful speech.
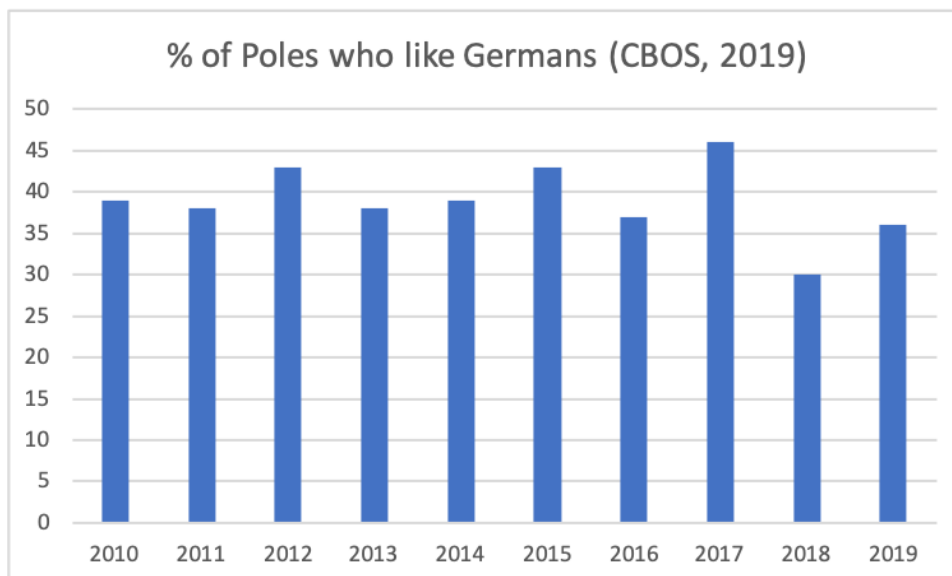
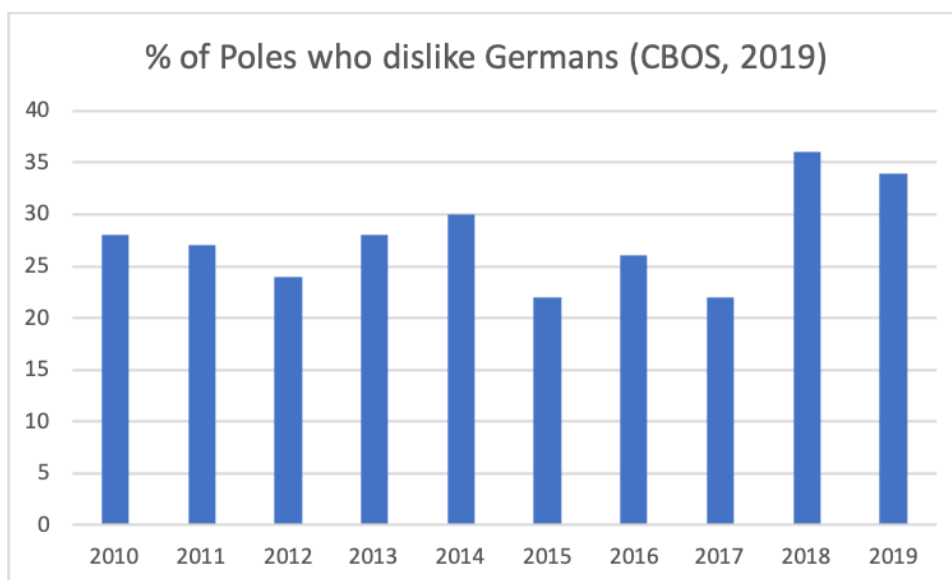Figure 3: Percentage of Poles who like Germans. Source: Omyła-Rudzka (2019, 3)

Figure 4: Percentage of Poles who dislike Germans. Source: Omyła-Rudzka (2019, 4)

Chapter 3: Verbal violence

"The *Western Daily* forum is the last one to tolerate *Schlesier* sabbaths.

Hence, supporters of RAŚism continue to occupy this forum"

(an anti-Silesian poster)

"This is our forum. Let's discuss each other on matters related to our Silesia"

(a pro-Silesian poster)

In previous chapters, I have looked at how creative use of language results in mutual othering (chapter 1) as well as the extension and consolidation of the "camouflaged German option" discourse in the online world (chapter 2). In this chapter, I continue exploring these topics by showing how othering is implicated in linguistic expressions of hateful speech and how the "camouflaged German option" discourse plays a vital role in the critical discourse analytic deconstruction of meaning and social action in such examples. In doing so, I examine how expressions of and metaphors for centrifugal movement make part and parcel of instances of verbal violence and hateful speech. I argue that deproximizing discourse, prevalent in the *Western Daily* discussion forum, facilitates the production of othering, prejudicial, discriminatory representations of members of the pro- and anti-Silesian camps, and, effectively, incites aggression between members of these two communities of practice. As I consider their import for linguistically expressed instances of verbal violence, I approach them from the perspective of proximization theory (PT).

Verbal violence and hateful speech represent yet another stancetaking strategy attested in the collected data. In comparison to othering, associating, or naming, this particular strategy is

the most violence-inducing and violence-conductive form of interaction in the *Western Daily*

forum. Due to its inherently dissociative, distancing, and divergent character, it is also one more

manner in which posters can express their disagreement in the course of the discussion. Unlike

some of the previous strategies discussed in this dissertation that tend to be the domain of either

pro- or anti-Silesian posters, verbal violence as a stancetaking strategy is equally used by

members of both camps. Once it becomes apparent that no agreement, however distant, can be

reached, hateful speech becomes the last resort for posters seeking to perform their identities and

keep their ideological underpinnings intact. Since numerous examples analyzed in this chapter

include violent content that many will find offensive or even disturbing, all readers are

forewarned. At the same time, it has to be stressed that shocking the reader is not the goal here at

all. Rather, the goal is to critically approach a particular snapshot in the history of digital

communication and to investigate the phenomenon of verbal violence and hateful speech from an

analytical perspective, with the hope that such and similar research helps better understand and

mitigate the roots of this worldwide phenomenon in the future.

In political communication and beyond, proximization represents "a discursive strategy

of presenting physically and temporarily distant events and states of affairs (including 'distant'

adversarial ideologies) as increasingly and negatively consequential to the speakers and her

addressee" (Cap 2017a, 21). In political discourse, this can easily lead to discriminatory and even

dehumanizing representations of groups or individuals. As language users engage in the work of

representation, they can choose to describe entities (groups, individuals, institutions, ideologies,

etc.) as narrowing their distance toward the deictic center (located with the language user), thus

construing them as tangible, approaching threats that need to be neutralized. Visually,

proximization in discourse space can be represented by one large circle (denoting the discourse

space), which includes one small circle in the middle (HERE) and one small circle on the perimeter (THERE). Of the two, the former represents the deictic center (extended in discourse to the ideas of SELF and GOOD) while the latter stands for the deictic periphery (conveying in discourse the ideas of THERE and BAD) (cf. Cap 2018a).

Thus, the work of proximization involves a reduction of distance between the inner and the outer circles, which in discourse can be executed through, among other, metaphors of spatio-temporal proximization that involve some centripetal movement. For instance, a common trope in such instances is using water metaphors, and particularly that of a flood. Consider the following titles (both emphases mine):

1. "Caravan migrants **flood** southern Mexico, tugging suitcases and hopes of reaching U.S.-Mexico border" (Agren 2018) by *USA Today*;

2. "As Europe battles over border policy, migrants **flood** to Spain" (PBS 2018) by PBS.

Both news stories are concerned with the topic of migration. The first one reports on people trying to arrive in the United States from Central America, the second one focuses on migratory movement from Africa toward Spain. In both cases, the metaphor of the flood is used to describe the movement of people toward the U.S. and Spain, respectively. The flood metaphor is linguistically ascribed to the migrants in the phrase "migrants flood," used in both titles. While such sensationalist headlines are typical for these forms of communication, they nevertheless represent people on the move in a strongly negative manner, comparing them to a type of natural disaster (flood), and construing them as a potential threat that, like natural disasters, needs to be ameliorated. Such language has become common in the political discourse of the first two decades of the twenty-first century and was instrumental for mobilizing supporters against

migration in some key political votes in recent years (to mention the Trump vote in the United States or the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom).

While this issue has generated much research in the field of critical discourse studies, it goes beyond the thematic scope of this chapter and therefore will not be further developed here. It has to be noted, however, that proximization theory remains a useful approach to studying the topic of migration in political discourse and communication in general. That is partly due to the expressiveness of the language of migration and partly due to the goals behind the devising of this theory. As Cap (2017b, xi) writes, proximization theory "has been developed to account for the ways in which the discursive construction of closeness and remoteness can be manipulated in the public sphere and bund up with fear, security and conflict." Due to these foundational characteristics, proximization theory can be used to uncover how actions are legitimized in discourse (Cap 2018b; Molek-Kozakowska 2018). Since proximization as a discursive strategy can be used for legitimization purposes, can instances of *de-proximization*, that is, of discursively increasing distance between the speaker and the hearer, have the same result? This is the research question that drives the analysis included in this chapter. As I will demonstrate below, an inverted model of proximization (what I call de-proximization) represents a useful theoretical approach to the study of verbal violence and hateful speech.

Instances of hateful speech and verbal violence abound on the internet. The widely accessible medium of the World Wide Web has made it increasingly easy to access publicly available forums and to publish one's uninhibited thoughts there. The same is true of the Polish-language internet, where offensive comments aimed at public personae or other internet users have become the bread and butter of online comments sections. This is also attested in the language. In contemporary Polish, such abusive behaviors are labeled with the neologism *hejt* (<

Engl. *hate*), defined as "an offensive or aggressive comment placed on the internet" (SJP 2018).

According to a 2014 study of Poland, every third Pole and 70% of young people were exposed to

examples of racist speech on the internet (Bilewicz et al. 2014). The same study found that 10%

of adults and 19% of teens rate the following internet comment permissible: "At most,

Ukrainians know how to murder defenseless women and children"[39] (5). These data suggest that

aggressive language and hateful speech represent a commonplace issue in the online world and

that the expected level of aggression is fairly high, which results in a plethora of hateful

expressions posted on the Polish internet.

The same is true of the *Western Daily* forum where *hejt* proliferates. There, two warring

camps (pro-Silesian posters and anti-Silesian commenters) meet to argue their viewpoints,

attempt to convince members of the opposite camp, and, if all else fails, spar verbally once it

becomes clear to that no agreement can be reached. Aggressive language in the *Western Daily*

forum has become so widespread that the amount of abuse produced in this forum could easily

serve as a basis for a separate book-length study. Since this dissertation project is concerned with

online debates on Silesian identity from the perspective of sociolinguistics and critical discourse

studies, an overall qualitative or quantitative analysis of instances of hateful speech in this part of

the internet lies outside of the scope of the present study. Instead, I focus specifically on

examples of de-proximization (by which I understand discursively executed instances of

increasing distance between the speaker and the hearer) to examine the relationship between

linguistic form and perlocutionary effect.

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[39] The authors of the study found that acceptance of anti-Ukrainian hate speech was linked among Polish adults to exhibiting an anti-Ukrainian stance (Bilewicz et al. 2014), which in the context of contemporary Poland is mostly connected with the collective trauma and memory of what is referred to as "the Volhynian slaughter" (Pol. *rzeź wołyńska*). This term refers to massacres of Polish civil populace in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia that took place under the Nazi German occupation of Poland during the Second World War and that were carried out by members of Ukrainian nationalist movements.

The proximization model introduced above views the relation between (linguistic) form and (extralinguistic) function as intertwined and dependent on each other. Thus, linguistic metaphors of movement toward the deictic center result in discursive reactions that may advocate the necessity of taking action in the wake of an approaching entity. This entity, as Cap (2018b) explains, need not be spatio-temporal but may be axiological as well, as in the case of ideas reaching new areas. In the *Western Daily* forum, this is the case with linguistic attempts at increasing the distance between the speaker and the hearer, on both the individual (poster-to-poster) and collective (camp-to-camp) level on one hand and the linguistically expressed violence that ensues on the other.

While studies rooted in proximization theory tend to focus on a discursively realized distance between two entities (e.g., people in the receiving country and people who wish to arrive in the receiving country), the spatio-temporal arrangement of entities in the case of debates on Silesian identity in the *Western Daily* is the opposite — both pro- and anti-Silesian commenters already inhabit the same space, both in the offline and the online world. Given this, I believe the de-proximization approach is well-suited for the study of hostility between two groups located in direct proximity to each other and competing for similar resources (power, prestige, social capital), both in the forum and in everyday life. This leitmotiv of competition is best expressed through various instances of territorialism present in the discussions I have analyzed.

According to Chilton (2004), any discourse is inherently positioning in that it always originates in a specific deictic center and that the representational world is arranged from the perspective of that center. This is because every piece of discourse is produced from a pre-given perspective, be it of a person or institution. As a result, "in processing any discourse people

'position' other entities in their 'world' by 'positioning' these entities in relation to themselves along (at least) three axes, space, time and modality" (57–58). What this means for the *Western Daily* forum is that both pro- and anti-Silesian posters engage in the ongoing construction of social realities that are construed from a starkly pro- or anti-Silesian perspective. These representational construals concern issues of space as well. While commenters have clear ideas about Silesia (both the historical region and the province with its capital in Katowice) and the way it should be arranged, including its desired demographic makeup, their territorialism goes beyond that and extends to the *Western Daily* forum as well. Consequently, this results in attempts to design the Silesian space according to their liking, both in the offline and the online world (hence the comments about the forum in the epigraph and example 1, emphasis mine). As I show below, both these strategies result in overt verbal violence and hateful speech.

(1)

Co za bezsens /

RAŚ to V kolumna Niemiec w Polsce. Im prędzej to rozpędzą tę bandę tym lepiej. Niech Polska bierze przykład z Kataloni, gdzie też była grupka szajbusów chcących się odłączyć. Pozamykać tych Gorzelików i innych Messerschmitów. Jak się nie podoba, to **wyp......ć do Niemiec**. P.S. Gdzie jest Młodzież Wszechpolska i ONR - robić porządek i to już !

'What nonsense /

The Silesian Autonomy Movement is the German fifth column in Poland. The sooner they break up this gang, the better. Poland should follow the examples of Catalonia where

there also was a small group of wackos who wanted to secede. Lock those Gorzeliks[40]

and other *Messerschmitt*s[41] up. If you don't like it, **then get the f**k out to Germany.**

P.S. Where's the All-Polish Youth[42] and the National Radical Camp[43] – put it in order,

now!'

So far, I have consciously avoided using the term *hate speech* and opted for a somewhat related

phrase, yet one that is devoid of legal connotations: *hateful speech*. The issue with the former is

that it lacks a uniform definition that could be used by researchers across space, time, and

different disciplines. While both specialists and laypersons intuitively comprehend what "hate

speech" might entail, its definitions will vary from one individual to another. Consequently, what

one may consider a clear example of hate speech may not necessarily seem like it for someone

else. This situation is further complicated by the fact that "hate speech" also exists as a legal

term, albeit it is not used in all countries and territories. For instance, there is no legal definition

of what hate speech might entail in Poland, leaving the identification of hate speech open to

interpretation and penalized under paragraphs that cite individuals' right for respect regardless of

their particular identities or identity expressions. The Council of Europe, an organization devoted

to the protection of human rights in the continent, promotes a broad definition and proposes that

hate speech "covers all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred,

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[40] Jerzy Gorzelik, the Silesian Autonomy Movement leader, member of the Silesia Province regional assembly.

[41] *Messerschmitt* was a German type of fighter aircraft used in the Second World War. Here, the term is pejoratively attributed to Silesian activists.

[42] The All-Polish Youth (Pol. *Młodzież Wszechpolska*) is a Polish youth organization founded in the 1920s, banned a decade later, and revived after the collapse of communism, that promotes a Catholic and nationalist perspective on how Poland should be organized as a society and nation.

[43] The National Radical Camp (Pol. *Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny*, *ONR*) is a far-right Polish organization founded in 1934, banned a decade later, and revived in the 1990s. Both the All-Polish Youth and the National Radical Camp are currently affiliated with the National Movement (Pol. *Ruch Narodowy*), registered as a political party in 2014, deleted from the register of political parties in 2017 and registered anew in 2018.

xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance" (Council of Europe 2019). Since the goal of this chapter is to approach instances of aggressive language from a linguistic, and not legalistic, point of view, I will refer to examples of "hateful speech," for which I adopt the Council's definition and which I understand in purely descriptive, and not legally binding, terms.

<div align="center">Analysis</div>

While hateful speech comes in many shapes and forms, the mechanism of its production in the *Western Daily* forum is straightforward in that it usually follows the same pattern:

1. Offer your perspective on the topic of the discussion or a related topic,

2. Be presented with a counter-claim,

3. Respond to (2), negate it, and explain why the counter-claim or its author is wrong (here the potential for hateful speech starts),

4. Be presented with a negation of (3), one that is expressed more forcefully and that further supports the point made in (2) (further potential for hateful speech),

5. Respond to (4) in a manner that is consonant with the claim made in (3) and that further supports your initial point (further potential for hateful speech).

Needless to say, not all examples of hateful speech require as many as five instances to result in aggressive language; sometimes, only two exchanges suffice to manufacture hostility that can be qualified as hateful speech. This is especially the case if two commenters know each other by their respective nicknames, are familiar with each other's past contributions in the forum, and can accurately predict the tone and ideological orientation (pro- or anti-Silesian) of successive contributions.

Below, I present selected examples of hateful speech arranged in single, double, or multiple instances (for extended threads involving two or more posters insulting each other one time after another). The data in this chapter come from comments written in response to a news story about the 2018 Autonomy March organized in downtown Katowice by the Silesian Autonomy Movement (Marsz 2018). The story was published with the following title: "Autonomy March Passed Through Katowice: Silesian Flag and Early Performance of the Silesian Anthem" (Pol. *Marsz Autonomii przeszedł przez Katowice: śląska flaga i prawykonanie hymnu śląskiego*), with an annotation that the story contains additional photo and video materials. The story, written in less than 300 words overall, contains an extensive gallery of photos (145 items in total) and three videos: two featuring the march as it progressed through the streets of Katowice and one featuring an early performance of the Silesian anthem, written in four language codes (including Silesian), with music written by a professional composer.

The choice of this particular article and the reactions left in the comments section is based on several reasons that point to the importance of this event in the ongoing debate on Silesian identity in modern-day Poland. I have theorized these factors following my observation of the Autonomy March in 2016 (see Figures 5 and 6 below) and thanks to my ongoing research on online discussions in the *Western Daily* forum. These factors are as follows:

1. The Autonomy March represents the most overt manifestation of Silesian identity in the public space in Katowice and all of Poland;

2. The Silesian Autonomy Movement, its organizer, uses the event to construct and promote pro-Silesian discourses that challenge the status quo in Poland;

3. Due to factors (1) and (2), the March represents a high-profile event that elicits reactions and comments from members of the anti-Silesian camp;

4. The 2018 edition of the March was unique in that it features a pre-performance of the Silesian anthem, which represents another addition to the already existing pool of markers of Silesianness;[44] the fact that the anthem was written in four different language codes (unlike national anthems, which are usually written in one language and, thus, intended for one specific national audience), which represents a challenge to the typical for Poland isomorphism of language, nation, and state (Kamusella 2009);

5. The event provides a "safe space" for self-identified Silesians to perform their identity in the public space and, in that regard, can be considered an offline equivalent of the *Western Daily* forum;

6. As the most pronounced manifestation of Silesian identity in contemporary Poland, the event tends to attract attention from right-wing and nationalist milieus that organize simultaneous (yet numerically small compared to the March) counter-manifestations;

7. Finally, the multimodal character of the news story reporting on the March encourages reactions and discussions about the event itself as well as its particular elements, including the slogan used or the performance of the Silesian anthem.

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[44] As of March 2019, it is difficult to gauge whether, and if so, to what extent, the anthem has been adopted as theirs by Silesian activists and self-identified Silesians in general.

Figure 5: Getting ready for the 2016 Autonomy March to start on July 16, 2016

(photo by the author)

Figure 6: The 2016 Autonomy March entering the Silesian Parliament Square on July 16, 2016

(photo by the author)

In total, the story elicited 331 comments from posters, many of whom engaged repeatedly in the discussion. This was propelled both by the multimodal character of the story as well as the oldest (and pronouncedly anti-Silesian) comment left under the article (see example 1), which itself elicited 51 responses (about 15% of all comments). In my initial analysis of all the entries written under the 2018 Autonomy March story, I have first identified instances of hateful speech in the comments section. Upon noticing a major trend in those instances, I narrowed my pool to examples with hateful speech that have to do with linguistic expressions of increasing distance between the speaker and the hearer. Next, I conducted a micro-linguistic analysis of these

examples, with particular attention to the class of words used, their morphological structure, and their import for discursive attempts at increasing the distance between the speaker and the hearer. Finally, I classified and categorized my examples according to the level of directness and verbal violence conveyed by each post and divided them into instances of (a) INDIRECT, (b) DIRECT-1 (more direct), and (c) DIRECT-2 (most direct) hateful speech. In deciding whether to include examples in the DIRECT-2 or DIRECT-2 group, I focused on the intended level of directness. For instance, tokens of hateful speech that included 2.SG imperative forms were classified as DIRECT-2 while those that contained imperatives directed at groups or nonverbal forms (for instance, adverbs or interjections) were included in the DIRECT-1 group. Following this classification, I begin my analysis with indirect examples and proceed to more direct instances of verbal violence. I mention different classes of tokens of direction-related instances of hate speech for each category but only focus on one or two tokens in my analysis as sufficient illustration for each of the (sub)category identified.

<p align="center">Indirect examples of hateful speech</p>

The indirect category represents the smallest subset of the examples analyzed (only 4 tokens out of 31) and it consists of comments containing indirect references to physical movement. The de-proximizing effect in this category is achieved through an impersonal construction, an adverb, a question (*niy lepij wyjechać* 'wouldn't it be better to leave'), and a modal expression (*jak wkludzisz się na drzewo* 'if you move to the tree'). The first two types are also represented in (3) and (4).

(2)

Co za bezsens /

Chuj ci w d***, Polska pizdo

'What nonsense /

Dick up your a**, you Polish twat.'

(3)

Do Niemieckiej ściery /

Posłuchaj - ty plugawo szkopsko pindo. Takie jak ty, które dawały niemcom d***

w czasie wojny golili na łyso. Więc uważaj, bo jak cie znajdę to osobiście ogolę.

Nie po to moi dziadkowie walczyli w Powstaniach Śląskich, żeby teraz takie

bezmózgowce lecące tylko na Ojro plotły o Niemcach na moim Śląsku. Tęknisz

być niemiecką ścierą - to kto ci broni tam jechać. **Schnell, schnell.** Tak czekają na

takich skundlonych niewolników.

'To the German rag /

Listen, you filthy Kraut cunt. Others like you – who spread their legs for Germans

during the war – had their heads shaved bald. So, watch out because I'll shave

you personally when I find you. My grandfathers didn't fight in the Silesian

Uprisings so that such Euro-wanting numbskulls talked nonsense about Germans

in my Silesia. Miss being a German rag – then who's preventing you from going

there. **Quick, quick** [in German]. They're waiting for such mongrel slaves there.'

The post in (3) was written by the same poster who started the discussion under the news story reporting on the 2018 Autonomy March (see example 1). Here, this poster (as evidenced by the nickname used) returns to the conversation and constructs a violent response to the entry in (2), a rejection of the anti-Silesian claim presented in (1). In doing so, the poster genders the response using the fact that the comment in (2) was written under a female name as a nickname (hence the number of female-oriented and sexual insults). As it becomes immediately clear that the two posters cannot come anywhere near a consensus, the author of the post in (3) represents the addressee as servile to German interests (hence the "German rag" phrase, repeated twice in the comment), and encourages the commenter to leave the region for Silesia: *Schnell, schnell* 'Quick, quick'.

The choice of German in this otherwise Polish post is, I believe, not incidental but ideologically motivated ("Let me put it in your language") by the intent to strengthen the representation of the pro-Silesian author of the comment in (2) as working for the benefit of Germany, possibly due to monetary incentive. In this manner, the poster in (3) discursively increases the (physical, but also psychological) distance between the deictic center and the addressee who is consequently othered as an out-group member. As a result, while the commenter in (3) presents oneself as an advocate of Polish rule over Silesia using familial memories, the addressee is represented as someone who facilitates German interests in the region and, by doing so, is branded as a traitor to his own country ("German rag"). The indirect, adverbial instance of de-proximization in this post conveys the intention on part of the poster in (3) to drive the comment's addressee out of the region. The ground, however, for this instance of de-proximization is prepared beforehand in the previous sentence already: "then who's preventing you from going there?" The centrifugal movement from Silesia toward Germany is

presented as a possible scenario should the commenter in (2) refuse to change their pro-German stance, the argument goes.

This violent "invitation" to leave is met with a response in (4).

(4)

wyczuwom gorola !!! /

chamie , a skond twoje dziadki !!! (u NOS zawsze boł OPA I OMA) przijechali do NOS??? za Buga??? Napisze ci po polsku bo możesz nie zrozumiec !!! jestes zwykłym chamem, który czerpie radosc z obrażania ludzi którzy myśla inaczej niż ty, tak jak kiedyś władza polsko -sowiecka wywozila ludnośc Śląska na wschód, tak ciebie **powinni wywiezc po za Ślonsk** , najlepiej za koło polarne !!!

'I'm sensing a non-Silesian!!! /

You boor, and where did your grandfathers!!! (in OUR speech, it was always OPA [Sil. 'grandfather'] and OMA [Sil. 'grandmother']) come to US from??? From beyond the Bug???[45] I'll write it in Polish because you may not understand!!! You're a simple boor who takes joy in insulting people who think differently than you. Just like the Polish-Soviet authorities used to drive out the population of Silesia to the east, so you, too, **should be driven out of Silesia**, preferably beyond the polar circle!!!'

[45] The Bug River makes part of the modern-day border between Poland and Belarus. Here, the poster references the fact that ethnic Poles who used to live east of the Bug in the interbellum were resettled in northern and western Poland after the Polish Eastern Borderlands (Pol. *Kresy Wschodnie*) became part of the Soviet Union after the end of the Second World War.

In this example, it is the author of (3) who is discursively othered as a non-Silesian, as evidenced from the form *gorol* used and the linguistic remarks that follow ("We say *opa* and *oma*," "Let me say it in Polish, so that way you understand"). The presumed lack of indigeneity to the region is further scrutinized as the commenter in (4) suggests that the addressee's ancestors may be newcomers to Silesia, despite the language claiming the region as native ("in my Silesia" in (3)). Finally, the author of (4) proposes that the addressee be driven out of the region in a manner that resembles forced relocations perpetrated by Soviet authorities. In doing so, the commenter uses an indirect, impersonal construction *powinni wywieźć* 'should be driven out,' which in Polish is subjectless and uses a 3.PL form of the main verb (literally: "[they] should drive you out"). Such and similar constructions make part of a larger class of subjectless expressions in the Polish language and they can be used to construct the modality of order or request while foregrounding the expected action but syntactically omitting the perpetrator(s) of that action. As a result, the commenter in (4) constructs the addressee as guilty of intolerance toward self-identified Silesians that deserves the punishment of forced relocation. Nevertheless, the same commenter shies away from indicating who is to perpetrate this action and employs an impersonal construction to magnify the offense that the addressee has committed toward the poster in (2) and, indirectly, self-identified Silesians in general, to condemn the offense, and to emphasize its immoral character. The use of the impersonal construction helps the commenter in (4) to frame the offense in universalistic terms as a behavior worthy of condemnation who deserves punishment (hence the suggestion that authorities, a universal source of power that is to be generally respected, execute the already provided judgment).[46]

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[46] Due to this characteristic, impersonal constructions as a type of discourse can be frequently found in narratives of trauma to, for instance, indicate limited agency or to point out the helplessness of victims in the face of the events they or their relatives had to go through under oppressive regimes.

More direct examples of hateful speech (DIRECT-1)

The DIRECT-1 category represents the second-largest group of examples in the data analyzed for this chapter (13 out of 31 tokens in total or about 42 percent). Unlike the indirect category, instances in this category include direct references to physical movement in the form of an adverbial phrase (*nazot na drzewo* 'back to the tree') and interjections (*wyjazd, wynocha, wypad*, all of which are different forms of saying 'get out'), of which the latter class was more frequent. An example featuring an interjection is presented in (5a).

(5)

Pies bez rodowodu w chałupie z hasioka. /

Volkslista podpisywały tylko takie świnie ja ty. Czyli tchórze i moralne karły o mentalności niewolnika - bez wiary, kultury, tradycji i honoru, pseudo niemieckie ścierwa i zafajdałe przestraszone folksdojcze.

Ale jest was garstka, a my wiemy gdzie was szukać. W Rawie jest na tyle miejsca, że zmieści się cały ten wasz RAŚ z Gorzelikiem na czele

'A dog without a pedigree in a hut [built from] dump. /

Only pigs like you signed the *Volksliste*.47 That is, cowards and moral dwarves with a slave mentality – with no faith, culture, tradition, or honor, pseudo-German scums and pants-shitting, scared *Volksdeutsch*s.

47 A Nazi German institution established to classify residents of German-occupied territories according to their usefulness for furthering the interests of Nazi Germany and introduced during the Second World War in western parts of occupied Poland (see footnote 94).

But there's a bunch of you, and we know where to look for you all. There's so much space in the Rawa48 river, that all that S[ilesian] A[utonomy] M[ovement] of yours will fit there, with [Jerzy] Gorzelik leading the way.'

(6)

ŚLĄZACY PATRZECIE ... TAK WYGLĄDA TYPOWY POLSKI ZWIERZ /

WŚCIEKŁE, IMPERTYNENCKIE, OBŁUDNE, AGRESYWNE ... NIBY CZŁOWIEK

... ALE TYLKO Z KSZTAŁTU. FUJ ! **PRECZ ! DO KLATKI Z NIM !**

'Silesians, look… This is what a typical Polish animal looks like /

Mad, impertinent, hypocritical, aggressive… As if a human… but only in shape. Phooey!

Away! To the cage with him!'

In this exchange, a typical clash between a pro-Silesian (6) and an anti-Silesian poster (5) occurs. Since an agreement between these two commenters is out of the question, verbal violence ensues as commenters reinforce their ideological viewpoints and entrench themselves in their respective camps. This centrifugal discursive dynamic is also reflected in how they address each other. The anti-Silesian poster in (5) indirectly suggests throwing supporters of the Silesian Autonomy Movement (including the addressee) into a nearby river while the pro-Silesian poster in (6) proposes that the author of the comment in (5) be put in a cage. In both cases, animalistic metaphors and examples animalization abound ("a dog without a pedigree," "pigs who signed

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48 A river flowing through Katowice, the capital of Silesia Province. Rawa is the largest right tributary of the Brynica, which part constitutes the historical boundary between Upper Silesia and the Dąbrowa Basin. In contemporary pro-Silesian political discourse, Brynica functions symbolically as a boundary between "Us" (Silesia) and "Them," and is attributed emotional weight in the Silesian community.

the *Volksliste*," "a typical Polish animal"), which amplify the violent messages conveyed in these examples.

The second comment in this exchange includes an instance of de-proximizing discourse as the poster dehumanizes the addressee who is portrayed as an aggressive, wild animal that needs to be locked in a cage. To make this argument, the poster employs the interjection *precz!* 'away!' that, coupled with the directional phrase that follows ("to the cage with him"), makes for a linguistic representation of centrifugal movement. As previously, in its character the discursive increase of distance between the two commenters is both physical (as indicated by the suggested movement away from the deictic center toward the cage) and psychological (as indicated by the discursive transformation from a human into a nonhuman in (5)).

Another feature worth mentioning here is the emotional gradation in (6). In this example, the author of the post (1) introduces the addressee, (2) proceeds to describe the addressee's characterological traits, (3) suggests that the subject of this representation is a human only on the surface, and (4) proposes a solution to this ad-hoc constructed problem ("Away! To the cage with him!"). In such a Kafkaesque, *Metamorphosis*-like manner, the commenter thus (1) introduces an issue, (2) makes it into a problem, (3) and argues for its resolution by increasing the distance between the addressee and the deictic center, viewed from the perspective of the commenter as well as the whole idealized/imaginary Silesian community (hence the initial apostrophe). In doing so, the commenter intentionally employs dehumanizing rhetoric from the start (the comment starts with an animomorphic introduction of the addressee), which amplifies the ideological message conveyed in this entry. As a result, these discursive moves allow the author of the comment to make a valid case, within the logic of his discourse, for distancing the addressee from the whole community, and, consequently, serve as inspiration for further hateful

speech. These findings suggest that discursive increasing of distance between the speakers and the hearer can also be used in discourse as a legitimation tool for performing intended actions.

The two most commonly used interjections in my data (with four occurrences per each) to increase the distance between the speaker and the hearer are the German borrowing *raus!* and the native Polish form *won!* (both of which mean '[get] out!' and function as spatial metaphors). The latter is found in the below exchange and used by both pro- and anti-Silesian posters:

(7)

Jesteś głupi jak Polak /

Podstępnie to Polska obiecała Ślązakom autonomię, i mimo tego przegrała!

Twoich bzdetów nie warto nawet komentować.

'You're stupid like a Pole /

Deceitfully, it was Poland who promised autonomy to Silesians and despite that lost![49]

Your nonsense is not even worth commenting on.'

(8)

Jesteś głupi jak folksdojcz /

Żal dupę ściska **to wydup..j do swoich Niemiec. Won z naszego Śląska** Tam ci wyznawcy Allaha dupsko zryją, to może zmądrzejesz.

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[49] A reference to the 1921 Upper Silesian plebiscite, organized to determine the Polish-German border in Silesia after the First World War, won in the popular vote by Germany by about 60% to 40%.

'You're stupid like a *Volksdeutsch*[50] /

For pity's sake, **then get lost to your Germany. Out of our Silesia.** Followers of

Allah will plow your butt there and maybe you'll grow wise.'

(9)

Won gorolski szczurze z naszego hajmatu. Przybłędo pasożytnicza polska ...

imigracyjna mendo ... /

..

'Get out, you non-Silesian rat, from our local homeland. You parasitic, Polish

vagabond… an immigrant worm… /

..'

(10)

Do pseudo Ślązaka /

Jestem u siebie ty jeb...y przygłupie, skundlały folksdoiczu. Pseudo Ślązaku, to

żeś na grubie robił rylu pierdolony nie znaczy żeś jest Ślązak. Reszta

społeczeństwa musi utrzymywać takich pasożytów co w wieku 44 lat na

emeryturce. Nierobie, żulu śmierdzący. Prymitywna małpo.

Won z mojego Śląska Wydupiaj do niemiec lizać dupska starym Niemrom.

Możesz mi obciągnąć fiucie.

'To the pseudo-Silesian /

I'm at home, you f**king moron, you mongrel *Volksdeutsch*. That you, pseudo-Silesian, has worked in a mine, you fucking miner [pejoratively], doesn't mean that you're Silesian. The rest of society must support such parasites who retire at the age of 44. You idler, you stinking sot. You primitive ape.

Out of my Silesia, get lost to Germany to lick old Krauts' asses. You can blow me, you dick.'

This exchange represents yet another example of how discussions in the *Western Daily* forum evolve. As commenters find themselves unable to find any common ground on the topic(s) discussed, they retreat to their initial positions and amplify them while producing numerous instances of aggressive language and verbal violence per exchange or even single post. Here, the exchange involves two pro-Silesian posters (7, 9) and two anti-Silesian posters (8, 10). As the initial insult ("You're stupid like a Pole") is met with a paraphrased rebuttal ("You're stupid like a *Volksdeutsch*"), the author of the post in (6a) interprets the initial comment in this exchange as anti-Polish and, consequently, is discursively "invited" to leave Silesia using the interjection *won!* ("Out of our Silesia!"). This instance of de-proximizing discourse is coupled with another example that includes a 2.SG imperative form of a newly-created verb (***wydup..j*** *do swoich Niemiec* 'get lost to your Germany', from Pol. *dupa* 'butt, ass'). In response, the commenter in (9) employs the same interjection, followed by a string of insults. Finally, in (10) the author of (9) is addressed, called a "pseudo-Silesian" and a "primitive ape," and again discursively driven out of the region with the same forms as in (8).

In both (8) and (9), both posters construct Silesia as the deictic center, as evidenced in their use of the possessive forms *z naszego Śląska* 'from our Silesia' and *z naszego hajmatu* 'from our *Heimat* [that is, local homeland; from German]'. Further, the two comments include similar ideological representations of their respective addressees who are discursively othered and constructed as not indigenous to the region (hence the reference to "your Germany" and being a *Volksdeutsch* in (8) and emphasis on the addressee's status as a newcomer to Silesia in (9)). Their indigeneity, however, rests on varying assumptions: while the commenter in (8) and (10) cannot be considered a Silesian because he represents a relative newcomer to the region and thus Silesia cannot be considered the commenter's local homeland, the argument goes, the poster in (9) is called a "pseudo-Silesian" due to the implicit foreignness best conveyed in the phrase "to your Germany." This and numerous similar posts suggest that Silesia is being discursively claimed by members of both the pro- and anti-Silesian camps in the *Western Daily* forum, and that these claims rest on claims grounded in dissimilar logics of belonging that emphasize local homeland as the deictic center of the constructed world (the pro-Silesian camp) versus national belonging that supersedes regional belonging and that arranges these two in a vertical, hegemonic hierarchy that cannot be undermined (the anti-Silesian camp). The data from this and other chapters in this dissertation suggest that once this vertical hierarchy of power relations that puts Polish national belonging above any other type of affiliation (with the province, city, or historical region) is challenged, strong opposition and verbal violence follows. A parallel framework of conceptualizing social space and intergroup relations in post-communist Poland, but concerning confessional and religious groups and denominations, was elaborated by Pasieka (2015) who coined the term "hierarchical pluralism."

A similar logic of arranging ethnic relations in modern-day Poland, containing the interjection *raus!*, is presented in (11):

(11)

Raaaus do Niemiec !!!!!!!!!!!! /

Raus stąd pseudo niemiecka świnio. TU jest Polska - byłą, jest i będzie.

Wy oszkliwe wredne rude paskudne mordy o mentalności niewolnika nie zasługujecie na

to żeby żyć na naszej śląskiej ziemi.

Jesteście jak psy bez rodowodu - ni to szkopy, ni Ślązacy - takie homo niewiadomo.

Wiejskie pajace ze znajomością paru słówek po niemiecku - obszczymury.

Raaaus do Niemiec !!!!!!!!!!!!

'**Get ouuut to Germany!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Get out from here, you pseudo-German pig. It's Poland HERE – where it was, it is,

and where it will be. You hideous, mean, red-haired, nasty mugs with slave mentality

don't deserve to live on our Silesian land.

You're like dogs with no pedigree – neither Krauts nor Silesians – a homo incognito.

Rural clowns with the knowledge of a few German words – bums.

Get ouuut to Germany!!!!!!!!!!!!'

Here, the social motivations for linguistically executed hatred are made more explicit than in previous comments. In this post, the author calls an unnamed poster a "pseudo-German pig," questioning the addressee's ethno-national ambiguity (or: reluctance to unequivocally self-

identify in strictly national terms as either Germans or Poles, a stance that has at least one century of history behind it, cf. Bjork 2008). This stance, best expressed in the mass adoption of Silesian self-identification, is criticized here through the biological metaphor of self-identified Silesians as dogs without pedigree, defined as "neither Krauts nor Silesians – a homo incognito" (Pol. *homo niewiadomo*).

While there is palpable confusion about the degree of Germanness of Silesians (as evidenced in their allegedly poor knowledge of the German language), the author nevertheless constructs the addressee, as well as members of the larger Silesian community, as positioned (ideologically, sociologically) closer to Germany than Poland. Their assumed ideological incompatibility with the Polish national perspective on the region ("It's Poland HERE – where it was, it is, and where it will be") makes it easier for the author to demand that they leave Silesia and move out to Germany. This view is best encapsulated in the German-borrowed interjection *raus*, used thrice in the comment to magnify the perlocutionary effect of the pronouncement and expressed in writing in conjunction with two dozen of exclamation marks. As in (3), I believe the choice of a German-origin interjection over a native, Polish one, represents an intentional ideological choice that increases the discursive action of othering the addressee (as well as the addressee's larger community) as non-native to Poland, which becomes another way of increasing the distance between the speaker and the hearer in this online forum. While both *won!* and *raus!* do not evoke physical movement per se, they nevertheless act as deictic markers that help organize the constructed world by serving as directional guideposts for the speaker and the hearer. As such, these instances of de-proximizing discourse increase the distance between two entities and, thus, provide an incentive for aggressive language and verbal violence that, as this and other examples demonstrate, ensues.

Before I go into analysis, a short discussion of polite and impolite forms of address in Polish is in order. As a rule, formal address including 3.SG/3.PL constructions is used when talking to strangers or unfamiliar people whose social status is unknown (e.g., *Czy* **ma** *pan bilet*? 'Do you **have**.3.SG a ticket?'; *Gdzie państwo* **mieszkają***?* 'Where do you, Sir and Madam, **live**.3.PL?'). Otherwise, informal, 2.SG forms are in use among family members, friends, colleagues, coworkers, and other peers (unless specified otherwise). This distinction is also reflected in the use of personal pronouns:

> "The 2nd-person sg. pronoun **ty** *you* is used in informal address among family members, close friends, school-mates and, often but not always, among co-workers. Using **ty** with a person amounts to being on a familiar first-name basis with that person. Otherwise, one prefaces the person's first name with **pan** *Mr.*, *sir*, **pani** *Ms.*, *lady*, *madam*, or some other title" (Swan 2002, 153).

As this and other chapters show, these rules do not apply to the *Western Daily* forum as anonymity does not forbid users from employing informal address forms. These, however, can take on a variety of different forms that can be looked at as a spectrum – from those conveying familiarity and reducing social distance to those expressing outward hostility. The present analysis suggests that the more posters disagree with each other, the more direct and blunt their conversations become. This observation can also be formulated in the following manner: disagreement produces even more disagreement, which in turn produces verbal violence and hateful speech.

Most direct examples of hateful speech (DIRECT-2)

The DIRECT-2 category represents the largest group of examples in the data analyzed for this chapter (14 out of 31 tokens or about 45 per cent) and consists exclusively of instances that include 2.SG (*ciś, jedź, pitej, spadaj, wydupiaj, wydupiej się, wyd...j*) and infinitive imperatives (*wracać, wydu...ć, wyp......ć*). Of all these, 2.SG imperatives constitute the majority of examples (10 out of 14 tokens) while *wy*-prefixed forms account for 9 out of 14 tokens overall. Below, I present comments that represent most direct examples of hateful speech, proceeding from more colloquial to more vulgar forms. The first exchange in this subsection includes a de-proximizing instance of the former type.

(12)

Do [nickname omitted] /

Mógłbyś mi cwelu naskakać. Dawać to może dawała twoja stara w oborze tej chołocie mongolskiej. Teraz taka zjebana kur** oddycha. A ôgolić to se możesz rzyć, żeby Ci polaczek mógł kakałko wysukać.

'To [nickname omitted] /

You can bite me, you cocksucker. Putting out, maybe your old woman was putting out in a barn to that Mongolian rabble. Now she's f**king breathing exhaustedly. And what you can shave is your ass so that a little Polack could suck your anus.'

(13)

Do [nickname omitted] /

Samo imię [nickname omitted] świadczy już o tym, że ty jakaś niedojebana jesteś. Co stary już nie może cie dymać i piejesz jak kwoka ? Idź se na targ, poproś grzecznie, to cie może jakiś murzyn wydyma za twoją dopłatą, bo nikt normalny by nie ruszył takiej szkopską wywłoki. A propos matki - to twoja stara musiała nieźle obciągać całej kompanii niemieckich cweli, aż w końcu zaciągła niemiecką ciompę. Fuj, ale cóż - możesz mieć pretensję tylko do swojej starej. Pozdrawiam szpetna ropucho !

'To [nickname omitted] /

The name itself [nickname omitted] is already evidence for you being somewhat underfucked. What, [your] old guy can't fuck you anymore and you're crowing like a sitting hen. Why don't you go to the market, ask politely, then maybe a black man will fuck you but only if you pay him because no normal person would touch such a Kraut trollop. Speaking of your mother – your mother must have nicely sucked off a whole company of German cocksuckers until she finally sucked in some German snot. Phooey, oh well – you can only hold a grudge against your mother. Greetings, you unsightly toad.'

(14)

Do [nickname omitted] /

Niedojebany to ty masz mózg, opasła polska świnio. O dymaniu, to ty pewnie wiesz tylko z obrazków.

Poza tym polaczku, nie mam z Niemcami nic wspólnego.

Jestem z Ukrainy.

Dla twojej wiadomości, takich warchlaków, to myśmy siekierami traktowali.

'To [nickname omitted] /

Underfucked is your brain, you fat Polish pig. And you probably know about fucking

only from pictures.

Aside from that, you little Pole [pej.], I have nothing in common with Germans.

I'm from Ukraine.

For your knowledge, we treated young boars like you with axes.'

(15)

Do [nickname omitted] /

Jeśli to prawda żeś ukrainka, to podaj adres zdziro, to osobiście przyjadę ci wypłacić za

Wołyń. I wiesz gdzie ci te siekiere wsadzę suko. Ukrainki przyjeżdżają tu tylko po żeby

sprzątać Polakom i dawać d... Ty prymitywie zza Sanu, wieprzu nieczysty - **spadaj na

swoją Ukrainę**, która i tak niedługo zdechnie. Już Wam Putin podziękuje za kolaborację

z Niemiaszkami, zdepcze was jak gówno, a my będziemy patrzeć na to z przyjemnością.

Pogonimy również stąd Ukraińskie ścierwa. **Won z Polski**. bezdomne psy, bo siekiery to

się u nas już ostrzą.

O Krymie i Donbasie możecie sobie pomarzyć, nieudacznicy. Nic nie umiecie, nawet

obronić ziemi. Tchórzliwy naród, który podstępnie w nocy mordował Polaków - kobiety i

dzieci. Chamy nie miały odwagi w dzień, boście zawsze wpierdol dostawali od Polaków.

Zapamiętaj suko, że nikt nigdy nie będzie się przejmował takim zadupiem jak Ukrainą.

Jesteście zerem.

'If that's true that you're Ukrainian, then provide your address, you whore, I'll come to pay you for Volhynia.51 And you know well where I'll stick that ax, you bitch. Ukrainian females come here only to clean Poles' houses and to spread their legs. You primitive from beyond the San,52 you dirty hog – **get lost, to your Ukraine**, which will soon kick the bucket anyway. [Vladimir] Putin will sure thank you for collaborating with Krauts, will crush you like crap, and we'll be watching that with pleasure. We'll drive the Ukrainian scoundrels out of here as well. **Get out of Poland**, you homeless dogs, because our axes are already getting sharpened.

You can [only] dream about Crimea and Donbass, you losers. You can't do a thing, not even defend the land. A nation of cowards who deceitfully murdered Poles – women and children – at night. [Those] boors had no courage to do it in the daylight because Poles would always kick your asses. Keep in mind bitch that no one will ever give a damn about such shithole like Ukraine. You're zero, nothing.'

This extended exchange of insults, a continuation of the feud presented by two posters in (2) and (3), ranks among the most violent examples of hateful speech in data analyzed for this chapter. Here, it quickly becomes clear that no agreement between the two commenters is possible, hence the continued exchange of insults in the form of constant verbal violence. As the exchange progresses and neither poster is willing to concede by leaving the conversation, they effectively come up with novel ways of insulting each other. The exchange reaches its apogee in (15) where

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51 Reference to the massacres of Poles in Volhynia (now western Ukraine) perpetrated by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army from 1943 to 1945 in Nazi German-occupied Poland. It is estimated that the massacres (Pol. *rzeź wołyńska*, 'Volhynian slaughter') have cost the lives of some 40,000-60,000 residents.
52 The San is a river in southeastern Poland; its stretch serves as the Polish-Ukrainian border.

its author establishes that the addressee has a Ukrainian background and produces an elaborate, two paragraph-long insult. In it, the poster uses the impersonal interjection *won!* (see also example 8) and, before that, tells the addressee to leave for Ukraine using the colloquial personal form *spadaj* 'get lost.'

This form of hateful speech is prefaced with a denigrating representation of the addressee who is othered as a Ukrainian. As a result, the addressee is assigned a host of negative characteristics linked to stereotypes about Ukrainians in Poland or past examples of Polish-Ukrainian animosities (see footnote 51). In the fourth sentence of the comment, the author sets up the tone for the instance of de-proximizing discourse that is about to follow and calls the addressee a "primitive from beyond the San." Because the San river separates Poland from Ukraine, such a nomination represents an overt instance of othering. The addressee is represented as an outsider to Poland who is consequently "invited" to leave the region in the imperative form *spadaj*. The use of the phrase "your Ukraine" further emphasizes the addressee's non-native status in the country.

This phrase is also instrumental for constructing hateful speech through de-proximizing discourse in (15) because the words "your Ukraine" allow the author of this post to create a constructed world in which Ukraine (associated with the addressee) becomes, in Cap's words, the deictic periphery. Such a discursive move facilitates the creation of the deictic center in Poland in opposition to the deictic periphery. As a result, the binary "my Poland" – "your Ukraine" becomes the ideological foundation of the post in (15) as its author develops a complex argument aimed at the addressee. Once uncovered, this ideologized schema can be used to deconstruct the de-proximizing roots of hateful speech in this and preceding posts in this particular exchange. This is also the approach that I adopt in analyzing this example.

From the perspective of the deictic center (Poland) – periphery (Ukraine) binary, the perlocutionary import of (15) becomes easier to explain. The key phrase "your Ukraine" is encircled here by two instances of hateful speech that include references to physical space: *spadaj* 'get lost' (of which it makes part) and *won* 'get out'. Both of these examples of de-proximizing discourse are prefaced with instances of discursive othering that have to do with either physical distance ("you primitive from beyond the San") or physical movement ("we'll drive the Ukrainian scoundrels out of here"). The latter hortative, it can be argued, represents a call for discriminatory action that may lead to violence. What emerges from this post is a discursive attempt at creating a constructed world with the help of the reflexive-possessive pronoun *swój* ('one's own') that serves as the directional guidepost helping identify and delimit spaces that can be labeled as US (here: Poland) versus THEM (here: Ukraine). This usage is consonant with the two examples of de-proximizing discourse in this post (both in bold), which helps magnify the violent message conveyed. As a result, this binary has the effect of discursively increasing the distance between the speaker (here: the author of the post) and the hearer (here: the addressee), which in turn provides the former with an incentive to use aggressive language. The addressee's non-native status in the space designated as the deictic center allows the author of the poster to craft an argument entrenched in spatial ideologies (prejudiced ideas about a space that yield prejudiced ideas about people inhabiting that space). This is further intertwined with nationalist thinking, which is characteristic of blood-and-soil arguments about communities, belonging, and, ultimately, power. Due to their outsider status, the addressee thus does not deserve any more empathy than a fellow compatriot, so empathy toward the addressee is reduced to a minimum, or, eventually, becomes even negative. As of early 2019, it is estimated that there are between one and two million Ukrainians currently living

in Poland (Gajek 2019). Thus, my results point to the necessity of considering the intricate ways in which hateful speech and calls for violence are grounded in othering representations of out-group members that position them as somewhat distant to Poland, despite their residence in the country, knowledge of the language, etc., because such representations provide fertile ground for overt or covert examples of aggressive language.

While this example of de-proximizing discourse is based on spatial distance (as the author of the post discovers that the addressee is Ukrainian/of Ukrainian heritage), it need not always be the case, as apparent in examples (16–19) below.

(16) poster G

Do polskiej swini /

Niestety Adolf nie zdazyl zeobic ordnungu z twoimi dziadkami i teraz takie myndy jak ty chodzom po tym swiecie Schade Jo osobiscie leja na glupoli tgz powstancow slonskich i ich pomioty ale tys jest wybitnie oszkliwy

'To the Polish pig /

Unfortunately, Adolf [Hitler] didn't manage to make *Ordnung*[53] with your grandfathers and now such louses like you wander through this world. *Schade* [Germ. 'Too bad']. Personally, I piss on those fools, so-called Silesian insurgents and their litter, but you're remarkably repugnant.'

(17) poster H

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[53] Germ. 'order'.

Do pseudo niemieckiej świni /

Ty pseudo niemiecka świnio, skundlały volksdojczu, pomiocie Adolfa - **wydupiaj do Niemiec.** Tam możesz grzecznie arbaiten dla chorej Angeli, co zrobiła z waszego kraju kolejny arabski Emirat. teraz tam jest 7 milionów Turków + najechało ostatnio 2 miliony hołoty muzułmańskiej. To już 9 milionów. Oni się szybko rozmnażają w przeciwieństwie do Niemców. Za 5 lat będzie ich 20 milionów, a za 10 lat wyznawcy Allaha będą tam większość. Wtedy zajmą się Wami Niemiaszki, będziecie błagać o pomoc i zgodę na wpuszczenie do Polski. Ale nic z tego, my będziemy grzecznie patrzeć jak wam łby poobcinają i będą se śpiewać dojczland dojczland liber ales.

'To the pseudo-German pig /

'To the pseudo-German pig: you mongrel *Volksdeutsch*, Adolf [Hitler]'s litter – **get lost to Germany**. There, you can politely *arbeiten* for sick Angela [Merkel] who made another Arab emirate out of your country. Now, there are 7 million Turks there, plus 2 millions Muslim rabbles invaded it recently. That makes it 9 million already. They, unlike Germans, reproduce quickly. In 5 years, there will be 20 million of them, and in 10 years followers of Allah will be in majority there. Then they will take care of you, you Krauts, you'll beg for help and permission to enter Poland. But nothing of the kind, we'll be politely watching them cutting your heads off and singing *Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles*[54].'

(18) poster G

[54] Germ. 'Germany, Germany above all'; the beginning line of the German national anthem.

Polski ciulu /

ale poradzisz byc wsciekly jestem pod wrazeniem ha ha czyli cos do tepego czerepa

dotarlo mimo wszystko Po steku bluzg widze ze mam do czynienia z sarmata polakiem

najlepszego sortu z takim nastawieniem jestescie w stanie przesrac wasz land w kilka lat i

nie jestem pseudo niemiecki ale niemiecki dumny Oberschlesie

'You Polish prick /

Just how mad you can be, I'm impressed ha ha, so something reached that dumb head [of

yours] after all. [Judging] from your pack of insults I reckon that I'm dealing with a

Sarmatian,[55] a Pole of the best sort;[56] with an attitude like that, you're able to flush your

land down the drain/the toilet in a few years. And I'm not pseudo-German, but a proudly

German *Oberschlesie[r]*.'

(19) poster H

Do [nickname omitted] /

Chciałbyś być niemiecki, dumny. A jesteś żałosny folksdojcz. Wiedz kundlu, że dla nich

nie jesteś Niemcem. Nie jesteś też Polakiem. Tylko zwykłym, piskliwym kundelkiem,

obszczymurem, który poszczeka, poszczeka i zaraz spierdala jak ktoś nogą machnie. Tak

to już jest jak się nie szanuje swojej wiary, kultury, języka i zostaje się w końcu takim

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[55] A reference to the concept of Sarmatism, according to which Polish nobility in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795) descended from Sarmatians, a people of Iranic origin. Because Sarmatism separated the nobility from the common people, the term *Sarmatian* can be used pejoratively to denote those who exalt themselves. As such, the term represents a semantic antonym of the idea of "the worst sort of Poles" (see the next footnote). See Thielemann (2016) for a positively-tinged antonym, "upper cultural shelf" (Pol. *wyższa półka kulturowa*).

[56] A reference to a 2015 interview in which Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the Law and Justice (Pol. *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*) political party, used the phrase "the worst sort of Poles" (Pol. *najgorszy sort Polaków*) to refer to his ideological and political opponents.

nikim bez żadnej tożsamości. Potem się chleje piwsko w barze, posłucha jakiś debili z RAŚ, którzy mówią że to wszystko wina Polakken. Bo jak byli Nimce to było alles ist gut. No i omamy czasem wracają. **Wydupiaj ciulu do Niemiec** bo Angela już czeka na takich kundli.

'To [nickname omitted] /

You'd like to be German, proud. But you're a pathetic *Volksdeutsch*. Know, you mongrel, that you're not a German for them. You're not a German either, just a simple, squeaky little mongrel, a stinker who will bark, bark for a while, and then get the fuck out of there once somebody shakes their leg. That's the way it is when somebody doesn't respect one's faith, culture, language, and in the end, becomes such a nobody without an identity. Then one ends up drinking beer [pejorative] in a bar, listening to some idiots from the Silesian Autonomy Movement who claim that everything is the Polacks' fault. Because when Germany was here, it was *alles gut* [Germ. 'all good']. And then hallucinations sometimes do come back. **Get out, you prick, to Germany**, because Angela [Merkel] is already awaiting such mongrels.'

The exchange above took place between two commenters, a pro-Silesian (17 and 19) and an anti-Silesian one (16 and 18). It was initiated by the anti-Silesian commenter (whom I call "poster H") in an earlier post not reproduced above, in which the poster stated: "My grandfathers didn't fight in the Silesian Uprisings so that such Euro-desiring numbskulls can talk nonsense about Germans in my Silesia. Miss being a German rag – then who's preventing you from going there." The pro-Silesian poster (whom I call "poster G") and author of (16) addresses these

claims and expresses a lack of interest in Silesian Uprisings or their participants. In doing so, the poster calls the addressee a "Polish pig." In response, poster H calls poster G a "pseudo-German pig" and a "mongrel *Volksdeutsch*"57 who needs to leave for Germany (17). In (18), poster G refuses to be called a pseudo-German and self-identifies as a proud German Upper Silesian, rendering the regional identification in German. Finally, in (19) poster H refuses to accept this argument by stating that the addressee is neither a German nor a Pole and again tells poster G to leave for Germany where "Angela [Merkel] is already awaiting such mongrels."

Unlike in the previously discussed exchange (12–15) where the discussion revolved around Poland (deictic center) and Ukraine (deictic periphery), here this binary is transformed into a different, yet related, one: Poland (deictic center) versus Germany (deictic periphery). My choice to render the conflictual exchange in 16–19 in such way as to base it on the following considerations:

(1) it is the anti-Silesian poster (poster H) who uses examples of de-proximizing discourse;

(2) poster G's self-identification as a Germany-oriented Upper Silesian;

(3) and the context of a conversation that evolves in a comment section provided by a regional daily based on the territory of Poland.

To deter poster G from a further conversation (and, by extension, propagating certain views), poster H creates a neologism derived from the colloquialism *dupa* (Pol. 'butt, ass', see also 8), using its imperative form (*wydupiaj < wydupiać*). In both cases (17 and 19), poster H constructs the addressee as ideologically connected to Germany, although they ridicule this connection by denying poster G the right to call oneself a "true German." This is best evidenced in the oft-

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57 See footnote 16.

repeated words "mongrel" and "*Volksdeutsch*," which are to represent poster G as someone who is not fully German. Nevertheless, Germany-related tropes are present in the proximity of the two instances of de-proximizing discourse. In (17), poster H constructs an ideologized, pejorative, and deeply negative from the nationalist point of view representation of poster G whose national (mis)identification is stressed in the phrases "pseudo-German pig" and "mongrel *Volksdeutsch*." To complement this inherently negative ideological work, the author of the post discursively links the addressee with Adolf Hitler, exploiting the indirectly expressed wish in (16) for extermination from the hands of Nazis ("Unfortunately, Adolf [Hitler] didn't manage to make *Ordnung*58 with your grandfathers"). The example of de-proximizing discourse that follows ("get lost to Germany") is encircled by another pejorative representation related to poster G. The sentence that follows the instance of de-proximizing discourse is also key for understanding the spatial dynamic inherent for poster H's viewpoint and, consequently, the aggressive language produced as a result. In it, the author of the post characterizes Germany as a place where poster G can "politely work" for Angela Merkel who has turned the country into "another Arab emirate."59

What is most important, however, in this sentence are two deictic markers that help deconstruct the ideological viewpoint from which the author of the post is coming: the initial *tam* 'there' and *wasz* [*kraj*] 'your [country]'. The use of these indicates that poster H constructs Poland as the deictic center, while Germany consequently becomes the deictic periphery, referred to through the distal marker *tam*. Overall, the comment in (17) contains six examples of

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58 Germ. 'order'.

59 This type of rhetoric that construes Germany (here represented with the example of its Chancellor) as a negative Other that Poland needs to distance itself from due to, among others, the way Germany has embraced multiculturalism, is typical for the discourses produced by right-wing, conservative milieus associated with the Law and Justice political party that won the 2015 parliamentary elections.

deictic markers that set Germany, and, as a result, poster G, as the deictic periphery in the conversation. These include three tokens of *tam*, two instances of the personal pronoun *wy* (*wami, wam*), and one possessive pronoun *wasz* [*kraj*]. Combined with the request to leave for Germany, these markers strengthen the rhetorical power of the comment as the author of the post creates a constructed world in which the distance between posters G and H is significantly increased and seemingly insurmountable, especially given the ideological dissonance between the two. In doing so, poster H's attempt at relegating poster G to the deictic periphery leaves the door open for the aggressive and hateful language that follows because, as in previous examples, the commenter acts as if talking about a distant person, from outside of the cultural milieu marked by the deictic center, and not someone living in the same country or even the same region. Such othering rhetoric that leads to hateful speech is also present in (19) where poster G is again constructed as an outsider — this time, neither a German nor a Pole (see also 11 above). This discursive increasing of (ideological, spatial) distance is marked there with yet another instance of *wydupiaj*, combined with animalization (poster G is compared to a dog without a pedigree) and augmented through the use of the word *ciul* 'dick, prick', a term considered a major insult in the Silesian variety.

The final exchange in this subsection consists of the very first comment written in the discussion under the story covering the 2018 Autonomy March and two responses (20–22).

(20)

Co za bezsens /

RAŚ to V kolumna Niemiec w Polsce. Im prędzej to rozpędzą tę bandę tym lepiej. Niech Polska bierze przykład z Kataloni, gdzie też była grupka szajbusów chcących się

odłączyć. Pozamykać tych Gorzelików i innych Messerschmitów. Jak się nie podoba, to

wyp......ć do Niemiec. P.S. Gdzie jest Młodzież Wszechpolska i ONR - robić porządek i

to już !

'What nonsense /

The Silesian Autonomy Movement is the German fifth column in Poland. The sooner

they break up this band, the better. Poland should follow the examples of Catalonia where

there also was a small group of wackos who wanted to secede. Lock those Gorzeliks[60]

and other *Messerschmitt*s[61] up. If you don't like it, **then get the f**k out to Germany.**

P.S. Where's the All-Polish Youth[62] and the National Radical Camp[63] – clean it up,

now!'

(21)

polska /

narodowa propaganda w natarciu ale my wos momy w rzici poltonie!!!

'Polish /

---

[60] Jerzy Gorzelik, the Silesian Autonomy Movement leader (see footnote 13).

[61] *Messerschmitt* was a German type of fighter aircrafts used in the Second World War. Here, the term is pejoratively attributed to Silesian activists.

[62] The All-Polish Youth (Pol. *Młodzież Wszechpolska*) is a Polish youth organization founded in the 1920s, banned a decade later, and revived after the collapse of communism, that promotes a Catholic and nationalist perspective on how Poland should be organized as a society and nation.

[63] The National Radical Camp (Pol. *Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny*, *ONR*) is a far-right Polish organization founded in 1934, banned a decade later, and revived in the 1990s. Both the All-Polish Youth and the National Radical Camp are currently affiliated with the National Movement (Pol. *Ruch Narodowy*), registered as a political party in 2014, deleted from the register of political parties in 2017 and registered anew in 2018.

national propaganda on the offensive, but we don't give a damn about you all, you

Polack!!!'

(22)

A jo cie mom w d**** skundlały folkdoiczu.

'And I don't give a damn about you, you mongrel *Volksdeutsch*!

In (20), which is a reproduction of the comment presented early on in this chapter in (1), the

author proposes that the Silesian Autonomy Movement, the organizer of the annual Autonomy

March in Katowice, represents "the German fifth column in Poland." This proposition sets the

tone for the discussion that follows, framing it in national(ist), black-and-white, Poland-versus-

Germany, terms. Such ideological treatment of the issue is also evident from the overt mention

of two nationalist organizations: The All-Polish Youth and the National Radical Camp. In doing

so, the author of the post places oneself in the anti-Silesian camp and advocates that Silesian

activism be put under control, either by dispersing or locking up local activists. While the

"German fifth column" idea can be interpreted as a covert reference to and continuation of the

"camouflaged German option" (see the previous chapter on *szlezjer*-narratives), it also represents

the most dominant ideologically way of talking about Silesian identity and activism in

contemporary Poland among members of the anti-Silesian camp in the *Western Daily* forum and

beyond. Here, such representation serves additionally as a preface that sets the scene for the

instance of de-proximizing discourse in the second-to-last sentence. By proposing that Silesian

activism covertly benefits Germany, the poster constructs members of the Silesian Autonomy

Movement as Others and outsiders whose activity must be put under scrutiny. This call for action is further strengthened in the clause preceding the part in bold where the poster concludes that if Silesian activists do not like the idea of close investigation and possible use of force, they can then simply leave Poland for Germany (hence: "get the f**k out to Germany").

Unlike previously, here this idea is expressed in the most direct (and, thus, violent) way as the author of the post uses the infinitive form of the verb *wypierdalać* (vulg. 'to throw someone out') in the function of imperative. While previous examples (*spadaj, wydupiaj*) were more colloquial style-wise, the form *wyp......ć* conveys the author's emotionality most forcefully because of its vulgar (hence the ellipsis) status that stems from the word's roots in the verb *pierdolić* 'to fuck'. At the same time, the elliptic form reproduced above expresses the desired event from the perspective of the author who, in doing so, discursively increases the distance between the deictic center and Silesian activists who are construed as an internal threat that must be neutralized (hence the direct address to two nationalist organization in the coda). In this aspect, the comment in (20) is a typical example of de-proximizing discourse that feeds aggressive language in the conversation about the 2018 Autonomy March.

What is, however, atypical of this and few other tokens of de-proximizing discourse examined in this chapter, is that their pragma-morphological characteristics set them aside as a class on its own when it comes to the interface of linguistic form and sociopragmatic function. This special status of *wyp......ć* and similar instances stems from their morphology. In Polish, the directional prefix *wy-* has an ablative meaning and derives verbs that encode movement from the inside to the outside, e.g., *wyjść* 'to leave', *wypłynąć* 'to sail/swim out, to come to the surface' (Wróbel 1984, 481). To translate this into the framework of proximization theory adopted in this

chapter: the prefix *wy-* connotes movement from the deictic center to the deictic periphery. This comes with nontrivial consequences for the examples of hateful speech examined in this chapter.

In proximization theory, Cap (2018b) argues that deixis does not need to be approached in the narrow sense of the word, but rather viewed as a broader amalgam including larger phrases and pieces of discourse (386). Among the linguistic renditions of spatial proximization are, for instance, verb phrases of motion and directionality. Consequently, these "acquire a deictic status, (…) denoting the default D[iscourse] S[pace] entities" (387) and they also index "their movement, which establishes the target perspective construed by the speaker" (ibid.). The same is the case for *wy-*-prefixed verbs in my data. As I have shown, these co-occur with linguistic expressions of hateful speech. This is especially the case in this subsection with examples that belong to the DIRECT-2 (most direct) category where they account for more than 60 percent of all tokens of de-proximizing discourse identified. These are *wydupiaj* (4 occurrences), *wydupiej się, wydu...ć, wyd...j,* and *wyp......ć* (all 1 occurrence). Cap's idea about linguistic instances of proximization was that they can eventually become "an instrument for legitimization, persuasion and social coercion" (Cap 2018b, 386). Adopting this line of thinking for examples of distancing discourse, I conclude that *wy-* 'out-' prefixed verbs of movement serve as instruments of threat construction that incite further violence (in the form of aggressive language and hateful speech) due to their propensity to construct persons and entities as Others and outsiders to the deictic center where discourse is produced.

Finally, it also needs to be stressed that this is true in my data for verbs denoting centrifugal movement from the perspective of the speaker who authors examples of hateful speech. It is then not a coincidence that instances of most aggressive and violent language co-occur in the comments thread analyzed with tokens of *wy-*-prefixed centrifugal verbs of motion.

Given the intrinsic relationship between language use and mental space construction (Cap 2017a), such usages connote and encode relationships of distance between the speaker and the hearer that consequently, as I have shown in this subsection, give license for extensive and pervasive use of hateful speech due as reduced perception of spatial proximity necessitates limited emotional proximity. This is facilitated by posters' othering representations of each other as a broader in-group membership (Polish nationals) gives way to particular, insular out-group memberships ("true Poles" vs. "suspicious Poles" or national outsiders: Germans, Ukrainians, etc.). As I have shown repeatedly throughout this chapter, verbal violence and aggressive language are contingent upon othering in discourse that result in othered representations of ethnic, national, or political character, which points to the significance of using inclusive language and weighing one's words in a discussion, whether private or public, bipartisan or nonpartisan, online or offline.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have tackled the problem of aggressive language and hateful speech in online discussion forums and comments sections on the Polish-language internet from the perspective of proximization theory. Using a comments thread developed under a news story covering the 2018 Autonomy March as a case study (331 comments left in total), I have examined instances of verbal violence between members of the pro-Silesian and anti-Silesian camp. In doing so, I have accounted for both their micro-linguistic choices (including overt usage of aggressive language and hateful speech) and the ideological implications of such choices. Upon selection of my data, I have then theorized such examples from the perspective of proximization theory by adapting it for the analysis of distancing, de-proximizing discourse. Finally, I have examined selected comments and exchanges and theorized the import of discursively realized increasing of

distance (spatial or ideological) in conflictual exchanges between posters for the linguistic production of verbal violence in such and following comments.

My findings suggest that the process of othering, pervasive in the *Western Daily* comments section, is instrumental for the emergence and production of hateful speech in this online discussion forum. As I have shown, verbal violence does not occur in a vacuum but co-occurs when other posters are othered or rendered as outsiders. Thus, verbal violence in this digital space seems to be correlated with linguistic instances of othering that effectively construct the represented as distant — ethnically, nationally, ideologically, spatially, or otherwise. While this mechanism is present in all examples analyzed in this chapter, it is particularly effective in the last subsection (DIRECT-2 category) where its perlocutionary power is magnified by the cognitive underpinnings of *wy*-prefixed verbs of centrifugal motion. Such theorization of aggressive language and hateful speech in the *Western Daily* discussion forum provides a starting point for a broader inquiry on the nature of verbal violence on the internet in general. While each digital space needs to be examined against its specific sociocultural context with all its affordances, the intertwinement of (ideological, spatial, cultural, etc.) distance and license for violence deserves further attention, partly because it provides a junction from which this issue can be taken further by other scholars, from evolutionary biology and psychology (e.g., the out-group – in-group dynamic) to communication studies.

My results also suggest that, as in Cap's investigations of proximization discourse, discursive increasing of distance between the speaker(s) and the hearer(s) can become a powerful tool used in discourse to legitimate performing intended actions. Discursive instances of othering are, again, implicated in this process, as othering facilitates distancing, which helps construct prejudicial representations of groups and individuals as threats, which in turn encourages

unrestricted expressions of violent thoughts (including calls for action). Schematically, this chain

of discursive moves that is pervasive in the data examined in this chapter and the *Western Daily*

forum more broadly, can be presented in the following manner: disagreement → othering →

distancing → violence. Impressionistic perceptions of online users aside, this schema allows for

a close, micro-linguistic analysis of the emergence of hateful speech in digital spaces by

employing a chain-like approach to theorizing and analyzing the behavior of internet users. As

comments in the DIRECT-2 and other subsections demonstrate, the four modalities of

linguistically produced online behavior (disagreement, othering, distancing, violence) are not

mutually exclusive and can co-occur next to each other.

Another dimension of hateful speech on the *Western Daily* forum also has to do with the

co-occurrence of various flavors of one modality. While de-proximization is prototypically

conceived of in strictly spatiotemporal terms, it need not be so. As I have demonstrated in this

chapter, just as there are different types of reasons behind instances of othering, the same is true

about discursively realized examples of distancing. In an online discussion, two or more posters

can become distant to each other due to their physical location (space) in the past or present

temporal plane, because of their dissimilar worldviews (ideology), because of some variance in

their cultural practices (cultural), or due to other considerations. Thus, de-proximization can be

of spatial, ideological, cultural, or another character. Regardless of its type, such distancing

always necessitates the construction of in-groups and out-groups, classified by the very factor

that was used to distinguish them in the first place, and the linguistic mechanism used for that

purpose is consistently repeated throughout my data. As I have shown repeatedly in this and

previous chapters, the major ideological faultline in the *Western Daily* forum runs along the

ideological alignment with either the pro- or anti-Silesian camp. It is safe to assume that most

users of the forum are nevertheless connected by their collective residence (past or present) in the region of Silesia, hence the main reason behind reading the *Western Daily* online edition and participating in the discussions in the comments sections. Since they can be collectively lumped in the larger category of residents of Silesia, this label which works against the bipartisan, polarized environment that has become the dominant interactional paradigm of this digital space. Thus, both pro- and anti-Silesian posters, seeking to perform their identity in this online discussion forum, strive for attaining difference through a variety of linguistic and discursive means. Once an opportunity for conflict arises (as in the case of the controversial for many Autonomy March where Silesian flags and emblems are openly displayed), posters from both sides of the ideological fence take it to the comments section to express their opinions. In doing so, they mobilize linguistic techniques that allow them to dissociate themselves from the controversial Other, increasing the distance between the self and the addressee, and, consequently, giving license for overt use of aggressive language and hateful speech. While particular instantiations of verbal violence differ widely, the discursive moves that produce such instances are not unstructured or chaotic, but scripted and highly predictable. The *Western Daily* forum users execute the work of de-proximization by employing a range of deictic markers and expressions that function in a deixis-like manner, both of which help organize such constructed world by providing directional guideposts for the speaker and the hearer. Once the (cultural, ideological, spatial) distance is established, hateful speech abounds.

Considering selected linguistic instantiations of distal perceptions, I have contributed to the existing scholarship on the role of space in the construction of violent discourses. Departing from Cap's proximization theory and working my way in the opposite direction, I have extended its scope and shown the usefulness of the proximization framework — in its inverted alteration –

for linguistically oriented analyses of hateful speech and aggressive language in online discourse. My analysis of comments from the *Western Daily* forum suggests that the proximity – distance modality represents a useful theoretical and methodological approach for critically oriented and socially relevant investigations of political (that is, concerned with power) discourse in general. As human beings rooted in nature and their environment, people have a deeply seated need to organize their experiences and the world around them from a subjective, individualistic point of view. Proximization theory represents one of the numerous approaches to discovering such perceptions, and my approach to de-proximizing discourse is yet another instantiation of this enterprise. In the data analyzed, this translates into the intention to map past and present ideas about communities onto subjective spatiotemporal arrangements of physical space, thus making the "Silesia, thus former Germany, thus 'suspect Poles' (see chapter 2), thus 'leave for Germany!'" line of thought possible. In the next chapter, I consider the third major trend in the data collected, narrativizing, which leads to the production of violent yet skillfully disguised messages about self-identified Silesians.

Chapter 4: The *Szlezjer* narrative

"The average age of the *Schlesier*dom is 60 years.

It's mainly them who write comments here.

Something tells me that you'll be leaving this world

with the consciousness that the majority of Silesia lays in Poland hehe"

(an anti-Silesia poster)

In the previous chapters, I have analyzed instances of linguistic othering (chapter 1) and their extension in the form of political othering through the "camouflaged German option" discourse (chapter 2). In chapter 3, I have built on these chapters to examine the production and spread of verbal violence in the *Western Daily* forum. In this chapter, I continue tracing the intensification of the othering process in Polish-Silesian online political discourse by focusing on the narrativizing trend in the collected data. Subsequently, I introduce the concept of *mini-narrative* and investigate it in the context of the neologism *szlezjer* and its various derivatives used in the forum. In doing so, my goal is to entertain the idea that single words or phrases—while not narratives per se—can function in a narrative-like manner. This is, I believe, due to the inherent narrative-bearing potential that allows single words or phrases (e.g., *bad hombres*, cf. Moreno 2016) to carry and disseminate meaning associated with them across time and space, and especially so in the digital world. This is also the key defining feature of mini-narratives.

Aside from othering (chapter 1) and associating (chapter 2), naming represents another strategy of stancetaking present in the collected data. While naming can be the simplest form of taking a stance in the discussion (e.g., *Those shoes are **magic**!* > 'magic shoes'), it can take a variety of forms. In the *Western Daily* forum, anti-Silesian posters have taken stancetaking through naming to another level by engaging their linguistic creativity and exploiting the

derivational flexibility of Polish as a synthetic language. As a result, they saturate the discussions

with both the base linguistic form as well as its numerous derivatives, all of which perform a

pronounced ideological and referential function. In doing so, anti-Silesian posters have

successfully crafted a whole anti-Silesian narrative that taps into the "camouflaged German

option" discourse (see chapter 2) and reproduces it through a network of newly created words

used to name members of the pro-Silesian camp. This is the topic of this chapter, in which I

critically approach and examine the emergence and perseverance of one such naming strategy

that has the neologism *szlezjer* at its base.

Henceforth, whenever I refer to *szlezjer* mini-narratives, what I mean are local, single,

and fractional iterations of the grand *szlezjer* narrative that uses ideas embedded in the

camouflaged German option discourse (see the previous chapter) as its ideological backbone.

Socio-pragmatically, mini-narratives are representational in that they describe the reality from a

particular perspective (anti-Silesian in the case of the *szlezjer* larger narrative) and persuasive in

that they purport to convince the forum audience that these representations are ideologically

"correct" and "true," hence should be adopted in discussions about Silesian identity as axiomatic.

The most apparent characteristic of these mini-narratives is that each one of them includes one or

more tokens of the word *szlezjer* or its derivative(s), which signals the informational content of

each mini-narrative and which I call *sociolinguistic labels*. In the *Western Daily* forum, these

mini-narratives are produced and interacted with in specific comment threads. Combined, these

mini-narratives aid the discursive work of co-constructing a larger conglomerate of *szlezjer* mini-

stories — a grand *szlezjer* narrative. Schematically, the relationship between *szlezjer* mini-

narratives (MN), the grand *szlezjer* narrative (N), and sociolinguistic labels (SL) can be

symbolized with one large set (N) of smaller subsets (MN), each of which contains one or more

tokens of SLs.

I use the term *grand* szlezjer *narrative* as a catch-all that encompasses all iterations of

singular *szlezjer* mini-narratives produced in the *Western Daily* forum that, considered together,

construct one larger story about pro-Silesian posters and self-identified Silesians in general.

Because this story is told and retold time and time again in the forum (as evident from the

plethora of examples examined; see also the meta-*szlezjer* comment in 20 below), it effectively

becomes a narrative, an ideologically constant story, according to which self-identified Silesians

(represented in the forum by pro-Silesian posters) are so critical about the Polish state and nation

that they, in fact, represent an anti-Polish point of view, the argument goes. Because their

rhetoric is perceived as detrimental to the Polish national interest (at least by the anti-Silesian

camp) and because references to German culture and nationhood are often used by pro-Silesian

users to build their arguments, such correlation leads members of the anti-Silesian camp to

produce an assumption that Silesian activism is seeking to benefit Germany and German national

interests in the long run. This belief, conjoined with a disparaging attitude toward repeated

discursive renouncements of Polish national identification, is then expressed through the

neologism *szlezjer* and/or its various derivatives. Due to its referential characteristic, the term

szlezjer becomes indexical in the *Western Daily* forum of the grand *szlezjer* narrative through the

combination of repeated use and ideological associations tied to it in the minds of anti-Silesian

posters. As a result, these labels help forum users easily discern the ideological leaning of both

each post and its author.

In this chapter, my focus will be mostly with mini-narratives as the building blocks of the

grand *szlezjer* narrative that persists in modern-day Poland, shaping societal thinking about

Silesian identity. The ideological power of mini-narratives stems from the fact that mini-narratives contain sociolinguistic labels used as discursive guideposts to recall larger narratives behind them (e.g., *szlezjer* in the data examined in this chapter). Sociolinguistic labels are inherently socio-linguistic because they combine linguistic form with social effect in that they immediately summon previously established narratives about people, objects, ideas, or phenomena that continue to be shaped by various narrators who engage in narrative co-construction. Simply put, mini-narratives are narrative indices that index larger narratives in a concise manner.

Consider the term *hipster*, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* dates for the early 1930s. The word has made its comeback in the last decade or so, becoming synonymous with people knowledgeable about recent cultural trends but considered cool and hip because positioned outside of the cultural mainstream (OED, 2019). While the label *hipster* is not a narrative, it nevertheless possesses a narrative potential that becomes immediately available to all familiar with the term. By calling someone a hipster, we readily invoke a whole gamut of assumptions and expectations about that person's likes, favorite food, and preferred pastimes. Through repeated use, the idea of hipsters has entered individual lexicons, and this is precisely why it has accrued narrative potential that goes beyond the referential function each word possesses. In that manner, *hipster* as a sociolinguistic label has acquired another, narrative function.

This function, as I show in this chapter, consists of two intertwined yet separate layers as it combines the purely narrative (in the descriptive sense of the word as a narrative referent, a point of reference to a larger narrative in place) character that is passive and the narrativizing function that is active and allows for continuous retellings of the originally narrated story. This may happen in a fashion that is either close to the original story (for instance, hipsters as

prototypical nonmainstream, independent consumers of culture) or more distant altogether (for instance, hipsters as positions that imply an alternative approach to the world in place, not just culture). By calling *hipster* and other terms/phrases sociolinguistic labels, I intend to mirror in terminology their purely narrative (in the sense outlined above) and narrativizing character. This is also the reason for employing a narrative-centered framework in this chapter to deconstruct the sociolinguistic significance of a sociolinguistic label, attested in and typical for the *Western Daily* forum, one which has relevance for the larger Polish-Silesian conflict over Silesian identity. Using the ideas of narrative accrual and narrative co-construction, I show how seemingly insignificant terms can effectively become powerful ways of talking about and representing a whole community—here, that of pro-Silesian posters (locally) and self-identified Silesians in general (more globally).

Below, I display this mechanism in more depth by focusing on one specific example of mini-narratives and its derivational offshoots in the *Western Daily* forum, the neologism *szlezjer* (nativized into Polish from Germ. *Schlesier* 'resident or native of Silesia'). In the context of this online space, *szlezjer* can be defined as a pejorative reference to a self-identified Silesian who rejects a simultaneous Polish national identification. While this neologism was coined and has been since used exclusively by anti-Silesian posters, its referents recruit solely from among members of the pro-Silesian camp. This is also the definition I adopt in this chapter.

In the previous chapter, I have considered how the "camouflaged German option" (CGO) discourse pervades contemporary debates on Silesian identity on the internet. In this chapter, I investigate the narrative function of the neologism *szlezjer* by focusing on the ongoing co-construction of a larger, anti-Silesian narrative (the grand *szlezjer* narrative) that is grounded in the CGO discourse. In doing so, I draw a connection between the two chapters in order to

demonstrate gradual progression in ways of representing self-identified Silesians as the process

of labeling (the CGO discourse chapter or, as I call it, OTHERING-2, that is, the othering process

taken to the second level) gives way to narrating (OTHERING-3, or, third-level). Ultimately, my

goal is to establish a link between the previous chapter and the data examined in this chapter by

showing how the CGO discourse provides referential ground for the co-construction of anti-

Silesian narratives through the term *szlezjer*.

In this chapter, I examine the role that the neologism *szlezjer* and/or its derivatives play in

the co-construction and distribution of *szlezjer* mini-narratives across time and space. I show

how the neologism accumulates ideological load and, employed by different commenters at

various time and space, effectively becomes what I call a mini-narrative. I demonstrate that,

through its repeated use, *szlezjer* consequently acquires indexical characteristics and transforms

into an index of individual or group stance in the ongoing debate on Silesian identity. As I

analyze the social import of *szlezjer* mini-narratives, I argue that anti-Silesian posters

instrumentalize narrative for social control, utilizing *szlezjer* mini-narratives as an instrument of

enforcing national homogeneity. From the anti-Silesian perspective, such homogeneity is

understood in a totalizing manner, that is, both ethnically (thus, Poland should be a country

where ethnic Poles possess dominant authority) and ideologically (thus, being ethnically Polish

necessitates being a Polish patriot and acting accordingly in order to further the goals of Poland's

national interests).

Such expectations emerge in the course of several discussions in the *Western Daily* forum

as members of the anti-Silesian camp engage in narrative co-construction marked by repetitive

use, in a hashtag-like manner, of the neologism *szlezjer*. The collaborative feature of digital

narratives—what Page, Harper, and Frobenius (2013) call "networked narratives"— represents

the theoretical framework of this chapter. In their analysis of how narratives are constructed and disseminated on Facebook, the authors propose that narratives can be co-produced by participants in interaction, and that "[t]his is emphatically so in the context of social media where narrative production is dialogic in form" (194). Page and colleagues also observed that narrative production on Facebook "extends far beyond the simple, linear sequences of single teller stories" (211).

The same observation is true about the *Western Daily* forum where pro- and anti-Silesian posters are in constant conversation with each other, effectively producing forms of "narrative co-tellership" (201). The relatively free spread of narratives in digital spaces brings forth the issue of narrative circulation. To describe the circulation of stories across time and media, Walker (2004) proposes the idea of "distributed story." In this perspective, distributed stories "seek to be viral… looking for readers who will be carriers as well as interpreters" (20). As shown later in the chapter, these roles can overlap to a substantial degree as anti-Silesian posters function as both carriers and interpreters of *szlezjer* mini-narratives. In doing so, they provide forum audience with fragmentary examples of such narratives as well as their interpretations from a staunchly anti-Silesian perspective. Another concept useful in my analysis is that of "shared stories." According to Page (2018), a shared story is "a retelling, produced by many tellers, across iterative textual segments, which promotes shared attitudes between its tellers" (18). Since shared stories are also co-constructed, what this means is that they are "distributed between the multiple contributions of different tellers" (20). The same is true about the narrative activity of posters in the *Western Daily* forum.

Data and methodology

Below, I present selected examples of *szlezjer* mini-narratives collected from the *Western Daily* discussion forum. While many of the posts in the data used for this chapter come from the original dissertation corpus, I have also decided to expand my search beyond the corpus by including some additional examples from the forum. In both cases, my selection process was similar. First, I have performed a data-wide keyword search by inputting the root *szlezj** (including its variations as attested in my corpus as well as misspellings, e.g., *szlesj, szlej, szlys, szlyzj*) to identify and localize *szlezjer* mini-narratives. Then, I have pre-screened the instances elicited in such a way for clarity and relevance. Given the relatively open and unmoderated environment of the *Western Daily* forum, this was to ensure that the examples selected for further analysis are pertinent to both the topic of this chapter as well as the larger theme of Silesian identity. After discarding irrelevant comments or those that carried unclear messages, I made the final selection of posts that comprise the data analyzed in this chapter.

In previous research on narratives and identity, one of the strands was concerned with how narratively constructed storyworlds reflect beliefs about social categories (De Fina 2006). One way of approaching such analyses is to look at specific, micro-linguistic choices made in the course of (co-)constructing narratives to arrive at the deeper level of indexicalization processes embedded in and conveyed through such choices. To this end, I have oriented both the selection and analysis of my data around the neologism *szlezjer* (including its derivatives or alternate forms, see the previous paragraph) because of its double-layered relevance: as a linguistic index of social attitudes toward such referenced community and as a crucial linguistic chunk of narratives (co-)constructed in the *Western Daily* forum.

Because of this local (in the context of the chapter) and global (in the context of the dissertation) significance, the use and spread of instances of *szlezjer* brings forth an opportunity

to trace how political discourse becomes saturated with clear ideological connotations and how narratives produced around this word help circulate and fortify the message compressed in the neologism or its further, creative elaborations. In this manner, tracking the emergence (in the relative, not the absolute sense) and the spread of *szlezjer* mini-narratives can help us better understand the source of negative emotions surrounding the ongoing discussion on Silesian identity. At the same time, my discussion of *szlezjer* mini-narratives bears relevance for current research on verbal violence, hateful speech, and radicalization carried out across various disciplines.

Methodologically, my analysis of *szlezjer* mini-narratives is oriented in the following manner. First, I start with linguistically executed co-construction of identity through overt nominalization and categorization strategies to then proceed to how such constructs become foundational for *szlezjer* mini-narratives in order to demonstrate how such ways of speaking about pro-Silesian posters become de facto covert attempts at exercising social control over self-identified Silesians from the hegemonic, Polish national point of view. As I progress with the analysis, I approach my examples from the critical perspective informed by the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as well as earlier work on language and social control, especially that conducted by Norman Fairclough and others. As Fairclough (1992) observed, "[i]t is increasingly through texts (notably but by no means only those of the media) that social control and social domination are exercised (and often negotiated and resisted)" (212).

<div align="center">Analysis</div>

To simplify the analytic process as well as account for the linear development of *szlezjer* mini-narratives, I present my examples in chronological order. While I anonymize posters' nicknames in my data, in line with the approach adopted globally in this dissertation, I take note when the

same poster authors two or more comments due to the relevance of such information for the issues of narrative accrual, spread, and circulation in the *Western Daily* forum; the same goes for timestamp information, which I also include in the more general form of time periods. Because the neologism *szlezjer* has no equivalent in English, I translate it as *Schlesier*, in line with the original form that contains a German-language reference to someone residing in or hailing from Silesia, and treat it as the morphological base, to which derivational endings are applied.

case study #1 (2011)

My analysis of *szlezjer* mini-narratives in the *Western Daily* discussion forum begins the oldest attestations of the neologism *szlezjer* in my data. The posts included in this section come from a discussion that evolved from the controversial for many pro-Silesian users interview with Wiktor Skworc (Pustułka 2011), the Roman Catholic archbishop of the Katowice diocese, referenced in the chapter on mutual othering. In the interview, Skworc stated the following: "Indeed, we live in Silesia, but we're Poles," which also happens to be the title given to the interview by editors of the *Western Daily*. As expected, this triggered an outburst of comments on part of pro-Silesian posters who received Skworc's words as a perceived threat to their identification as self-identified Silesians and a veiled attempt to erase Silesian identity altogether. In total, the interview elicited 296 entries in the comments section.[64] The interview was published on December 25, 2011, and all the posts analyzed in this section were written between December 25th and 29th the same year by a user whom I call "poster F."

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[64] This was the number of comments attested when collecting the data for this chapter. As of April 23, 2019, the total number of comments — per what is displayed on the page — is 278, which suggests that the comment section has been moderated.

While a large number of commenters took an anti-Skworc stance, those from the anti-Silesian camp used this opportunity to launch a critique of their ideological foes, accusing them of threatening a prestigious member of the Catholic Church in Upper Silesia. Because the region has traditionally been devoutly Catholic, even when part of Prussia and later Germany (J. E. Bjork 2008), this allowed anti-Silesian commenters to employ the idea of sectarianism concerning those disenchanted with Skworc's statement.

This is the case in example (1) where the author uses the metaphor of a sect to represent commenters with a staunchly pro-Silesian stance.

(1) Ksiądz biskup stwierdził fakt. Śląsk to Polska a Ślązak to Polak ze Śląska / a to **szlyzjerstwo** to coś w rodzaju mody. Oj niespodoba się to internetowym RAŚistowskim sekciarzom. Zresztą sekta to sekta, głos hierarchy katolickiego i tak nie będzie miał dla nich znaczenia. Ciekawe kiedy Gorzałka zacznie wyświęcać włsnych biskupów (precedens jest istnieje kościół tzw polsko - katolicki) Wesołych Świąt

'His Excellency Archbishop stated a fact. Silesia is Poland, and Silesian is a Pole from Silesia. / And this *Schlesier***dom** is kind of a fashion. Oh, the internet RAŚist[65] sectarians are not going to like that. Besides, a sect is a sect, the voice of a Catholic hierarch won't matter to them anyway. I wonder when Gorzałka[66] will start ordaining his own bishops (there is a precedence, the so-called Polish-Catholic Church). Happy holidays!'

[65] A play on the words *RAŚ* (from Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska*, Silesian Autonomy Movement) and *rasistowski* 'racist'.
[66] Actually: Jerzy Gorzelik (see footnote 13); Pol. *gorzałka* means 'booze'.

Here, poster F uses the newly coined word *szlyzjerstwo* as a signal for a larger story about pro-Silesian posters that is about to happen (see examples 2–7 below). Since the comment in (1) was written under a 2011 news story, the word *szlyzjerstwo* becomes the first attested token of using the *szlezjer-/szlyzjer-* stem as a sociolinguistic label in my data. The word *szlyzjerstwo* represents a neologism derived from another neologism, *szlyzjer*, used in its *-y-* variant here (that is, *szlyzjer*—in an attempt to mock the standard German pronunciation—instead of *szlezjer*).67 In Polish, the suffix *-stwo* can be used to form words that denote abstract names of qualities, activities, or states, e.g., *chamstwo* 'boorishness', *lalkarstwo* 'puppetry', *dyrektorstwo* 'directorship' (Grzegorczykowa, Laskowski, and Wróbel 1984, 335), or collective masses of people, e.g., *chłopstwo* 'peasantry'. Given this, the double neologism *szlyzjerstwo* included in this example refers to the activity or state of sharing and/or supporting ideas of the pro-Silesian camp. As in the popular colloquial phrase *chamstwo i drobnomieszczaństwo* 'boorishness and narrow-mindedness', the suffix *-stwo* allows poster F to incorporate a negative epistemic stance on the topic of the conversation (the idea that Silesian identity represents a concept that is altogether different from Polish identity), in which the form *szlezjer/szlyzjer* represents a direct expression of such stance. As it becomes apparent later on, *szlyzjerstwo* can also be employed as a collective reference to people with a pro-Silesian orientation while retaining its pejorative connotations combined with the expression of a negative epistemic stance toward the referenced group.

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67 While the exact form of the neologism oscillates between *szlezjer* (less common in the data selected for this chapter) and *szlyzjer* (more common in my data), with slight alternations due to misspellings possible for both forms (e.g., *szlejz-* or *szlyjz-*), I treat all these tokens as examples of one and the same form because they all shared a common reference—that of a *szlezjer/szlyzjer*. Because the form *szlezjer* (due to its resemblance with the German word *Schlesier*) is less opaque to decipher than *szlyzjer* (which includes a slight orthographic alternation that is phonologically motivated), I decided to use the label *szlezjer (mini-)narrative(s)*.

Along these lines, in (1) poster F communicates a negative evaluation of the ideals promoted by members of the pro-Silesian camp, suggesting that critics of Skworc exhibit a sectarian mindset, best exemplified in the statement "a sect is a sect." By doing so, the commenter discursively others members of the pro-Silesian camp as those belonging to a radical yet numerically smaller minority. Most importantly, however, such categorization labels pro-Silesian posters as those who essentially deviate from the mainstream view in their opinion on Silesian identity. With the provocative title of the comment (Skworc's statement is a fact, being Silesian equals being Polish) as well as a direct reference to members of the pro-Silesian camp, poster F thus draws critics of Skworc into the discussion.

As the discussion develops, poster F does not stop there and contributes to the conversation five more times for the total of seven posts (!) written under the identical nickname in the period of five days. This, I argue, represents a significant moment in the construction and promotion of the grand *szlezjer* narrative because it puts in motion the mechanism of narrative accrual (Bruner 1991). According to Bruner, narrative accrual has to do with stories coming together to create a unified whole, eventually creating histories, traditions, and cultures. Poster F's commenting activity launches the process of narrative accrual in the *Western Daily* forum, as evidenced by the total of 15 tokens of *szlezjer* or its derivatives.

Table 6: Tokens of *szlyzjer* (including its derivatives) authored by poster F

post	original (NOM)	gloss	suffixation	syntagma
1	szlyzjerstwo	*Schlesier*dom	-*stwo* (abstract, collective)	–
2	szlyzjeryzm	*Schlesier*ism	-*yzm* (set of beliefs)	adherents of X[68]
2	SZLYZJERSKI	*Schlesier*	-*ski* (adjectivization)	X people
3	szlyzjerski	*Schlesier* (adj., sg.)	-*ski* (adjectivization)	X sabbath

[68] "X" stands for the form included in the second ("original") column.

3	szlyzjerstwo	*Schlesier*dom	*-stwo* (abstract, collective)	–
3	szlyzjerki	little *Schlesier*s	*-ki* (non-virile pl., pejorative)	my dear X
4	szlyzjerskie	*Schlesier* (adj., pl.)	*-ski* (adjectivization)	X sabbaths
4	szlyzjerska	*Schlesier* (adj., sg.)	*-ski* (adjectivization)	X race
4	szlyzjeryzm	*Schlesier*ism	*-yzm* (set of beliefs)	time of X
5	szlyzjerscy	*Schlesier* (adj., pl.)	*-ski* (adjectivization)	X sectarians
6	szlyzjerscy	*Schlesier* (adj., pl.)	*-ski* (adjectivization)	X Nazis
6	szlyzjerstwo	*Schlesier*dom	*-stwo* (abstract, collective)	sectarian, Nazi X
7	szlyzjerskie	*Schlesier* (adj., pl.)	*-ski* (adjectivization)	X lies
7	szlyzjerstwo	*Schlesier*dom	*-stwo* (abstract, collective)	–
7	Szlyzjerland	*Schlesier*land	*-land* (country, region)	this X of yours

This process then proceeds in the following manner:

1. The idea of *szlezjer*s, that is, self-identified Silesians who reject a one-to-one correspondence between Silesian and Polish identification, is born;

2. Users of the *Western Daily* forum—both commenters and readers—are exposed to the narrative of *szlezjer*s, portrayed as ethnic separatists who pose a threat to the Polish national interest due to their alleged affinity for and/or ideological allegiance with Germany, which automatically implies a stance that goes against what is perceived as Poland's best interest;

3. The narrative of *szlezjer*s begins amassing narrative accrual;

4. Narrative accrual is accompanied with the emergence and spread of various derivatives created from the neologism *szlezjer* (see further examples in this section);

5. The term *szlezjer* becomes repeatedly used in the discussion on Silesian identity held in the *Western Daily* forum, which comes with significant consequences in terms of narrative co-construction and circulation in this digital space;

6. At the same time, each mention of the word *szlezjer* represents a performance of anti-Silesian identity, ideologically saturated and predictable in the long run. Such performances are sustained by continued co-construction and reproduction, which eventually lead to the emergence of *szlezjer* mini-narratives.

Since pro-Silesian posters remain active in the thread under the Skworc interview, the author of the comment in (1) returns to the forum and adds another entry the next day (2).

(2) ksiądz biskup ma u was przechlapane a kim wy jesteście żeby miał się tym przeimować ? / Dużo was nie ma ot kolejna sekta pewnie Świadkowie Jehowy w województwie mają podobną liczebność jak wyznawcy **szlyzjeryzmu**. Ja tam twierdzę, że powinniście dokonać prawidłowego przekładu bibli. Naród wybrany to oczywiście **NARUT SZLYZJERSKI**. Pierwszy człowiek to oczywiście Jorguś a nie jakiś Adam, Eden (raj) znajdował się gdzieś pod Szopienicami. A jeden Abramuś wyprowadził narut z gorolskiej niewoli i rozstąpiły się przed nim wody Brynicy i przyprowadził do ziemi obiecanej czyli Bundesrepublik. Babilon przecież to jasne oznacza Warszawkę. Mesjasz to nasz umiłowany przywódca Dr G. Wkrótce zacznie wyświęcać własnych kapłanów żeby głosili prawdziwe słowo Boże a nie te gorolskie przekręty.

'His Excellency Bishop is toast – and who are you all to make him care about that? / There aren't many of you, just another sect, Jehovah's Witnesses in this province are probably as numerous as adherents of *Schlesier***ism**. I on another hand believe that you should carry out a proper translation of the Bible. The chosen people were obviously the

> *SCHLESIER* **PEEPULL**. The first man [on earth] was obviously Georgie,[69] and not an Adam, Eden (paradise) was located somewhere near Szopienice.[70] And one Abe led the peepul out of non-Silesian captivity and the waters of Brynica[71] parted before him and he brought them along to the Promised Land, that is, the Federal Republic [of Germany]. It's obviously clear that Babylon denotes Warsaw [pejoratively]. Our beloved leader, Dr. G.,[72] is the Messiah. Soon he will start ordaining his own priests so that they preach the real Gospel and not those non-Silesian scams.'

Here, poster F co-constructs the grand *szlezjer* narrative (see point 6 above) further by adding two more phrases to the slowly growing inventory of all things *Schlesier*: *Schlesier*ism as a doctrine followed by pro-Silesian posters and the category of the *szlezjer* people, here intentionally misspelled to produce a mocking effect. Both of these are involved in the production of a constructed narrative that takes up the sectarian trope included in (1) and develops it into an ironic short story about self-identified Silesians as the chosen people. This is accomplished in two ways: through the Biblical-like story of *Schlesier*s as well as the high concentration of religion-related words and phrases (e.g., "adherents of *Schlesier*ism," "translation of the Bible," "the chosen people," "Eden," etc.). The sect metaphor repeated in this comment allows poster F to further promote the idea that self-identified Silesians represent an offshoot from the larger category of ethnic Poles, united and led by Jerzy Gorzelik (or, the "Messiah" in poster F's parlance), the leader of Silesian autonomists. Consequently, members of

[69] Georgie (Pol. *Jorguś*), a reference to Jerzy Gorzelik.
[70] Szopienice is a present-day district of Katowice, the capital of the Silesia Province, and the birthplace of Kazimierz Kutz, a film director and self-identified Silesian who has portrayed the region and its residents in his films.
[71] Brynica is the river that separates the historical region of Silesia from the Dąbrowa Basin; metaphorically, it denotes a boundary between Silesia ('Us') and non-Silesia ('Them').
[72] A reference to Jerzy Gorzelik.

the pro-Silesian camp who disagree with this statement are cast together as followers of what poster F calls *Schlesier*ism.

The telling of the invented story about the *szlezjer* people does the ideological work of discrediting pro-Silesian ideas through repeated mockery. This effect is further amplified by the strategic referencing of people (e.g., Adam, Eden, Messiah, Dr. G.) and geographical names (e.g., Szopienice, Brynica, *Bundesrepublik*, Babylon) that provide the narrative of *szlezjer*s with intentional and specific ideological ramifications. Thus, the proper names in this example serve as either deictic (locating the story in the local context of Silesia, e.g., Szopienice, Brynica, Dr. G.) or ideological (*Bundesrepublik*, Babylon) pointers that provide readers with a readymade evaluation of the social world being constructed. The ideas of Germany as the Promised Land and Warsaw as Babylon, that is, the oppressor against which self-identified Silesians must struggle in their mission for autonomy and recognition, represent the key ideological juncture of this post. This juxtaposition of "bad" Poland (the oppressor, here metonymically represented by its capital, Warsaw) with "good" Germany (the Promised Land) from the assumed viewpoint of pro-Silesian posters provides readers with a simplistic ideological matrix, which casts self-identified Silesians against Poland *and*, simultaneously, alongside Germany. In narratological terms, poster F narrativizes the unresolved Polish-Silesian conflict over Silesian identity, effectively producing a storyworld with the implicit good (=Poland) and the explicit bad (= Silesians) characters by introducing a simplistic, evaluative connection between self-identified Silesians who perceive Poland as their collective enemy and choose allegiance with Germany instead. Such portrayal plays well into the larger, implicit trope of potential German threat due to Silesian ethnic activism (including the oft-repeated slogan of autonomy for the region) that

pervades much of public discourse in the ongoing debate on Silesian identity (see the previous chapter).

Because subsequent comments authored by poster F again tap into the idea of a camouflaged German option and/or retell the narrative of *szlezjer*s introduced in (1) and (2), below I reproduce in the chronological order the remaining five comments from the series of seven written in this thread and then provide an overall summary of the major themes present there.

(3) Zlot czarownic czyli **szlyzjerski sabat** / Najlepsze jest to że ci co sami nikogo nie szanują domagają się szacunku do siebie. Biskup jest Ślązakiem i Polakiem dokładnie jak większość, zamiast się cieszyć że Ślązak stał na czele jednej z małopolskich diecezji to **szlyzjerstwo** mąci i robi problemy. Kutz/c którego kochacie mieszka w Warszawie a o Slasku przypomina sobie zazwyczaj gdzieś w okolicach wyborów. On jednak jest słuszny po bazie i po lini. Ci sami co opluwają abp. Skworca za Kuca daliby się pokroić. Ja zauważam elementarny brak logiki i typową mentalność sekciarską. Podobny stan faktyczny może być różnie interpretowany w zależności od tego czy dana osoba popiera sekciarzy czy nie. Nie wiem czy wielu małopolskich asystentów przywiózł ale jak był biskupem w Tarnowie to mógł tam przywieżż równie wielu albo i więcej śląskich asystentów. Stosujecie więc moje drogie **szlyzjerki** typowa dialektykę marksistowską ale pal was diabli.

'Witch rally, or a *Schlesier* **sabbath**. / The best thing about it is that those who respect no one demand respect for themselves. The bishop is a Silesian and a Pole, just like the

majority. Instead of being happy that a Silesian led one of the Lesser Polish[73] dioceses, the *Schlesier***dom** stirs and creates problems. Kutz/c,[74] whom you love, lives in Warsaw and usually reminds himself about Silesia sometime around the elections. He, however, is right [unclear]. The same ones who spit on Abp Skworc would do anything for Kuc. What I'm noticing are an elementary lack of logic and a typical sectarian mentality. The same actual state can be differently interpreted depending on whether a given person supports the sectarians or not. I don't know if [he] brought many Lesser Polish assistants, but when he was the bishop of Tarnów[75] he could have brought with himself as many Silesian assistants, or even more. You're using then, my dear **little** *Schlesier***s**, a typical Marxist dialectic, but to hell with you.'

(4) Sekta to sekta. Wszyscy myślą tak samo a każdy myślący samodzielnie to odstępca. / DZ jest ostatnim forum tolerującym **szlyzjerskie sabaty**. Stąd wciąż zwolennicy RAŚizmu okupują to forum. Nie jest ich wielu regularnie powtarza się 20 - 30 "walczących" nicków ale są zmobilizowani i zdeterminowani. Nawet argumentów używają tych samych, ksiądz arcybiskup nie popiera ich sekty a nie można napisać że jest zdrajcą **rasy szlyzjerskiej** to rozlegają się jęki że "dzieli wiernych". Stare, prymitywne PRowskie sztuczki. Na tej samej zasadzie gdyby artykuł dotyczył np. Świadków Jechowy forum natychmiast byłoby opanowane przez ich wyznawców uparcie "ewangelizujących" ogół. Czas **szlyzjeryzmu** mija. Od lat kisicie się w tej samej grupie wyborców i osiągacie

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[73] Lesser Poland is the historical region located in present-day southeastern Poland with Cracow as its major city.
[74] See footnote 22.
[75] A city in Lesser Poland where Wiktor Skworc used to work as a bishop before becoming the archbishop of Katowice.

podobne wyniki (dowód ok 160 tys. głosów w 2001 i 2011 w wyborach do Senatu gdzie startowaliście pod własnym szyldem)Ja i kilku innych jeszcze z wami wojujemy ale na fanatyzm nie ma rady. Powinniście się kisić we własnym sosie.

'A sect is a sect. Everyone thinks similarly while those who think for themselves are renegades. / The *Western Daily* forum is the last one to tolerate ***Schlesier* sabbaths**, hence followers of RAŚism[76] still occupy this forum. There aren't many of them, 20-30 "fighting" nicknames regularly repeat, but they're mobilized and determined. They even use the same arguments, His Excellency Archbishop doesn't support their sect, but you can't write that he's the traitor to the ***Schlesier* race** or moaning that he "divides the worshippers" is heard. Old, primitive PR tricks. Following the same pattern, if an article concerned, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses, the forum would be immediately seized by their believers stubbornly "trying to evangelize" the whole community. The time of ***Schlesier*ism** is gone. You've been stuck with the same group of voters for years and you reach similar results (proof: some 160,000 votes in 2001 and 2011, the Senate elections when you ran under your own name). I and a few more [people] keep on fighting with you, but there's no help for fanaticism. You should stick to your own people.'

(5) [nickname omitted] nie zaniżaj danych nie 30 ale minimum 40 / 38,3 milionów w kraju (minus mniejszości i ze 200 koła sekciarzy, razem ok. 0,5 miliona, może 0,6)Polacy na wschodzie (oficjalne dane ok. 1 miliona ale spokojnie razy 2 a być może nawet 3)Plus kilkanascie milionów Poloni (jakaś część to wciąż Polacy niech tylko milion czy dwa ale

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[76] A play on the words *RAŚ* (from Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska*, Silesian Autonomy Movement) and *rasizm* 'racism'.

reszta też czuje więź z krajem przodków)Razem na spokojnie 40 milionów i dalszych 10 - 12 naszej krwi. **Sekciarze szlyzjerscy** mogą sobie uważać się i za Marsjan w końcu jest wolność i demokracja. A koniec końcem są skazani na asymilację jeśli nie do pnia z którego wyrośli tj. Polaków to do narodu który im imponuje i który nieudolnie próbują małpować tj. Niemców. 150 a niechby nawet i 300 tysięcy nie ma szans na przetrwanie. To kwestia matematyki.

'[nickname omitted] don't lower the data, not 30 but 40 [millions of Poles] minimum / 38.3 million [of Poles] in the country (minus the minorities and some 200K sectarians, ca. 0.5 million in total, 0.6 perhaps), Poles east of Poland (about 1 million according to official data, but there are easily 2, and perhaps even 3 [millions of them]), plus more than 10 millions of Poles abroad (some part of them are still Poles, be it only a million or two, but the rest also feels connection with their ancestral home), in total 40 millions easily, with further 10–12 millions of [people] of our blood. *Schlesier* **sectarians** can even self-identify as Martians, freedom and democracy do exist, after all. But, at the end of the day, they're doomed to assimilation, if not with the trunk they grew up from, that is Poles, then the people they're impressed with and the people they clumsily try to ape, that is Germans. 150 – or may it even be 300 thousand [of self-identified Silesians] – have no chances of surviving. It's a question of numbers.'

(6) **Szlyzjerscy naziści** i papieża gotowi zastąpić i dyktować mu co ma mówić / [nickname omitted] i kameraden przegnali was z forum GW (nawet jak na ich standarty hitleryzm zbyt z was wystawał)Czy wogle jest na tym forum moderator ? Dlaczego pozwala na

obrażanie Polski, Polaków i ogólnie katolików ? Nadejdzie dzień kiedy za taką postawę

także redaktor naczelny DZ zapłaci gorzką cenę. I garść **sekciarskiego nazistowskiego**

szlyzjerstwa wcale mu wtedy nie pomoże.

'*Schlesier* **Nazis** are ready to even replace the Pope and to dictate to him what he's

supposed to say. / [nickname omitted] and [your] friends [German], you were banished

from the *Gazeta Wyborcza*77 forum (your Hitlerism was, even for their standards,

protruding too much). Is there a moderator on this forum at all? Why does [the

moderator] allow Poland, Poles, and in general Catholics to be offended? There will

come a day when the Western Daily editor-in-chief will also pay a bitter price for such an

attitude. And a handful of **sectarian, Nazi *Schlesier*dom** won't help him then at all.'

(7) Jak zwykle **szlyzjerskie KŁAMSTWA**. Zdarza wam się choć raz do roku powiedzieć

prawdę ? / A ci Bawarczycy i Sasi to jakieś odrębne narody tak ? Bo moim zdaniem to po

prostu Niemcy tyle, że z róznych regionów. Jeśli cytujecie cytujcie Długosza to proszę o

całość a nie o fragment wypaczający sens całej wypowiedzi. "Nie ma bowiem ludu ani

kraju, który by był tak skłonny do nienawiści wobec Polaków jak Ślązacy, którzy boleją,

iż Królestwo Polskie cieszy się powodzeniem i jak odszczepieńcy i gorzej niż obcy

patrzą niechętnie na pomyślny rozwój własnego narodu i języka. " Z tego wynika chyba

jasno, że dla Długosza Ślązacy to część narodu polskiego, ale - niestety - pod wpływem

niemczyzny występująca przeciwko Polsce. Czyli zupełnie jak dziś. **Szlyzjerstwo**

nienawidzi Polski i nienawidzi jej części Śląska. Na 3 argumenty 2 przeinaczenia czyli kłamstwa i manipulacje. Taki ma być ten wasz **Szlyzjerland** ?

'*Schlesier* **LIES**, as usual. Does it ever happen – at least once a year – that you tell the truth? / And these Bavarians and Saxons are some distinct peoples, yes? Because, in my opinion, they're simply Germans, just from different regions. If you quote Długosz,[78] then please [include] the whole quote, not an excerpt distorting the sense of the whole utterance. "For there aren't people who would be so prone to hating Poles like Silesians who grieve that the Kingdom of Poland enjoys its prosperity and, like dissidents and in a worse manner than foreigners, look at the successful development of their own people and language." I guess what follows from that is that for Długosz, Silesians were a part of the Polish people but – unfortunately – one that comes out against Poland due to German influence. That is, just like today. *Schlesier***dom** hates Poland and hates its part, Silesia. Out of three arguments [you get] two misrepresentations, that is, lies and manipulations. Is that how this *Schlesier***land** of yours is supposed to be?'

Overall, the examples presented in this section oscillate around two major topical clusters: (1) truth, ideology, and reality, and (2) Poland and being Polish. As for the former, poster F implies repeatedly that ideas promoted by the pro-Silesian camp have nothing to do with reality of truth (here understood in absolute terms), hence the references to *Schlesier*ism as a fashion (which in itself represents a temporally finite and transitory phenomenon) or the suggestion that pro-Silesian commenters can even self-identify as Martians (but this, the argument goes, will not

[78] Jan Długosz (1415–1480) was a priest, chronicler, and diplomat considered to be the first historian of Poland.

effectively make them Martians, or make others treat them as such). This belief is perhaps most aptly expressed in the call to carry out a "proper translation of the Bible," followed by the poster's creative re-interpretation of some of the key Biblical motives so that they fit pro-Silesian posters' assumed outlook on the world. The metaphor of the chosen people, applied to self-identified Silesians, serves as an ironic way of ridiculing pro-Silesian claims about discrimination and exclusion experienced in modern-day Poland.[79]

The larger concept of truth is here tightly linked to that of ideology, touched upon here by the various religious references. According to the *szlezjer* mini-narratives constructed by poster F, members of the pro-Silesian camp are exaggeratingly dogmatic in their beliefs (hence the repeated allusions to sectarianism), to the point of being ready to override the Pope, the highest authority in the Roman Catholic church. This alleged ideological zeal is further amplified by the references to Nazis (e.g., "*Schlesier* Nazis," "Nazi *Schlesier*dom," but also "*Schlesier* race" with a clear separatist undertone) used in examples (1–7), who for the Polish public opinion represent an example of extreme ideological dedication, no matter the cost. At the same time, such syntagmas help entrench in the popular consciousness the often-implied association between self-identified Silesians and Germany, similarly to the idea of a "camouflaged German option."

[79] While a broader analysis of the trope of the chosen people goes beyond the scope of this chapter, it opens up a new domain of inquiry, given the strong Romantic tradition of Messianism in the Polish culture (literature in particular). Viewed from this perspective, pro-Silesian attempts to build Silesian identity around the idea of martyrdom that self-identified Silesians have historically experienced from their more powerful overlords—and are experiencing now, the argument goes—represent a direct challenge to the Polish national narrative of martyrdom, which positioned Poles and Poland as the victims suffering from the hands of oppressive intruders and invaders, including Austria, Prussia, and Russia, the three monarchies that partitioned the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late eighteenth century, as well as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Since these narratives position Poles as exclusively victims of turbulent Central European history, adopting a narrative of victims by self-identified Silesians would result in a direct challenge of the Polish victimhood narrative *and* imply that Poles were not passive receivers of suffering but also active producers of suffering, since contemporary narratives of Silesian victimhood tend to (over)emphasize Silesian powerlessness and Polish agency in dealing with Silesia over the course of the history (hence the idea of *śląska krzywda* 'Silesian harm'). Hopefully, future research will address some of these questions more closely.

The trope of Germany is linked to the second major theme in poster F's *szlezjer* mini-narratives – that of Poland and Polish national interest. The poster's stance on what it means to be Silesian is voiced in the first comment in the series, which equates being Silesian with being Polish (and living in the region of Silesia). The significance of this statement ("Silesia is Poland, and Silesian is a Pole from Silesia") mostly lies in the inescapable binary proposed by poster F, according to which residents of Silesia are left with two choices in terms of their ethno-national identification: either Polish or non-Polish (that is, *Schlesier*), which in itself represents an anti-Polish stance, the argument goes. This thought is best expressed in the poster's belief that it is not Silesians but *Schlesier*s who hate Poland and the Polish part of Silesia. In advancing this idea, poster F builds on and skillfully incorporates Skworc's pronouncement that people who live in Silesia are in fact Poles. Due to their numerical disadvantage, those who disagree are doomed for assimilation with either Poles or Germans, a nation that *Schlesier*s are impressed with and inaptly try to copy from, the poster suggests.

Overall, poster F employs five different tokens of *szlyzjer* or its derivatives (*szlyzjerstwo, szlyzjerski, szlyzjeryzm, szlyzjerki,* and *szlyzjerland*), all of which are repeated fifteen times in the examples presented in this section. The choice of accompanying words in *szlyzjer*-syntagmas implies a consistent attempt at constructing a highly ideologized representation of self-identified Silesians (see the last column in Table 6), which further strengthens the overtone of such constructed messages. This *szlezjer* mini-narrative is co-constructed in the same comments thread by another poster, identified with a different nickname. The commenter enters the discussion under the interview with Skworc with a strong message (8) for those who criticized the archbishop's words.

(8) Ale się **szlyzjerstwo** zagrzało Sekta bez moralności,jeseście silni tak jak piszecie to

zademonstrujcie swoją siłę,któryś z was baranów napisał że [nickname omitted],

[nickname omitted] itd. to jedna osoba naniosę wam poprawkę nas Polaków jest około 30

milionów życzę powodzenia w rasistowskich działaniach raś-iści.Obrzydliwe

szlyzjerstwo uszkodzony genom!!!

'Just [look at] how the *Schlesier***dom** heated up! A sect devoid of morality, [if] you're as

strong as you write then demonstrate your strength, one of you idiots wrote that

[nickname omitted], [nickname omitted], etc., are the same person. Let me amend that –

there are some 30 million of us, Poles, good luck in [your] racist activities, you

RAŚists.[80] Disgusting *Schlesier***dom**, damaged genome!!!'

In this example, the poster repeats previously voiced claims about the dogmatic way of thinking

about Silesian identity exhibited by members of the pro-Silesian camp (hence the sect metaphor).

Additionally, the commenter employs the notorious at this point neologism "*Schlesier*dom"

concerning pro-Silesian posters who are called immoral, racist, and disgusting. In terms of tone

and content, this post aligns well with the *szlezjer* mini-narrative constructed by poster F in the

previous seven comments examined.[81] In response (8a), a pro-Silesian commenter suggests that

not all members of the Catholic church in Poland are against the idea that Silesians only

[80] A play on the words *RAŚ* (from Pol. *Ruch Autonomii Śląska*, Silesian Autonomy Movement) and *rasiści* 'racists'.

[81] While examples (1–7) and (8) were signed with different nicknames, the resemblance of the latter to the previous seven posts is obvious. Because of this and the fact that examples (1–8) were written from December 25th to December 29th, 2011, it could be that they were authored by the same person, although under different nicknames. The question of authorship does not, however, invalidate the significance of the post in (8) as well as the two responses to it for the larger argument about co-construction of *szlezjer* mini-narratives that I am making in this chapter.

represent a regional inflection of Poles. To prove that point, the commenter provides a direct quote from one of the priests. This suggestion is, however, rejected in (8b) where an anti-Silesian poster claims that authorities in the Catholic church put Poland and its national interest above anything else.

(8a) Na szczęście to Wasi, [nickname omitted], polscy biskupi wstawiają się za nami! / Za nami, Ślązakami, mniejszością etniczną!

http://info.wiara.pl/doc/1040027.Ks-prof-Zuziak-wzywa-do-pomocy

"... Zwracając uwagę na rozległy i zróżnicowany świat ludzkiej biedy autor listu precyzuje, iż przejawia się ona „nie tylko w sferze materialno-ekonomicznej, ale także społeczno-politycznej, kiedy człowiek zostaje zepchnięty na margines społeczeństwa oraz kulturowej, kiedy odbiera mu się prawo przynależności do własnej grupy etnicznej".

'Fortunately, it is your bishops, [nickname omitted], who are putting in a word for us! / For us, Silesians, an ethnic minority!

http://info.wiara.pl/doc/1040027.Ks-prof-Zuziak-wzywa-do-pomocy

"Taking into consideration the vast and varied world of human poverty, the author of the letter specifies that poverty manifests itself «not only in the tangible,

economic sphere but in the sociopolitical one as well when a human is pushed

aside to the margins of the society, and [in the] cultural [sphere] when one's right

for membership in their own ethnic group is taken away.»'''

(8b) Polscy biskupi to wstawiają się ale za ojczyzną całą, wolną,

jednolitą... / i za wszystkimi jej "owieczkami" potrzebujacymi pomocy,

także tymi czarnymi, grzesznymi, zabłąkanymi. Nigdy nie wstawią się za

mniejszością **szylzjerską**, potem odrębnym językiem **szlyzjerskim**, potem

odrębnym narodem **szylzjerskim**, potem odrębnym państwem

szlyzjerskim wyhodowanym jak wrzód na ciele Polski, za

volksdeutschowskie, a także i polskie pieniądze... Cud się nie zdarzy...

'Polish bishops are putting in a good word, but for the whole homeland,

free, homogeneous… / And for all its "little sheep" in need of help,

including black, sinful, and lost sheep. [The bishops] will never put in a

good word for the *Schlesier* minority, then a separate *Schlesier* language,

then a separate *Schlesier* people, then a separate *Schlesier* state cultivated

like an ulcer on Poland's body, for *Volksdeutsch*[82] as well as Polish

money… The miracle will not happen…'

In (8a), the pro-Silesian poster uses a quote from Władysław Zuziak, the former chancellor of the

Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow, to construct an argument that will

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[82] A Nazi-era term used with reference to ethnic Germans, people of German ancestry living outside
Germany; in contemporary, metaphorical usage, it denotes pro-German traitors to the host nation.

counterbalance the statement made by Skworc in the interview. The quote comes from a 2011

Christmas letter on the necessity of increased sensitivity to poverty written by Zuziak and clearly

states that denying individuals the right to self-identify as members of their ethnic group

represents an example of cultural poverty. Using this argument, the poster challenges the

implications of Skworc's pronouncement ("We live in Silesia, but we are Poles") and draws

attention to self-identified Silesians' struggle for recognition in modern-day Poland ("For us,

Silesians, an ethnic minority"!). What the commenter implies is that acceptance of Silesian

identification as an autonomous identity position agrees with the voice of a prominent authority

in the Catholic church.

This perspective is consequently denied in (8b) where an anti-Silesian poster claims that

authorities in the church are putting the Polish national interest first. In doing so, the poster uses

the metaphor of "(black, sinful, lost) sheep" to indicate that self-identified Silesians are wrong in

their convictions. The commenter strongly refutes the idea that authorities in the Catholic church

in Poland will ever support Silesians as a separate community. Subsequently, the poster employs

the keyword *szlyzjer* in its adjectival form for the first time, repeating it three more times in the

following syntagmas: *Schlesier* (1) minority, (2) language, (3) people, (4) state. In the last three

cases, the commenter emphasizes the alleged separatism of self-identified Silesians by

consequently including the word "separate." In doing so, this commenter implies that accepting

Silesians as an ethnic group will only be the first step in the process that could lead to first

cultural (language, people) and then political separation (state) of Silesia(ns) from Poland. This

bleak perspective ends with a warning that the execution of such a plan would be synonymous

with treason, which in the Polish cultural context ranks among the gravest crimes possible.

Through several religious metaphors (sect, Bible translation, the ordination of priests, lost

sheep), members of the imagined community of *Schlesier*s are represented as those who—due to their ideological zeal in their struggle for recognition as an ethnic group—have strayed from the truth and isolated themselves within Poland. While the anti-Silesian commenters whose entries I have examined in this section admit the wrongdoings of the pro-Silesian camp, they nevertheless suggest that there may be a chance for self-identified Silesians to remedy this as long as they choose to reincorporate their formula of being Silesian into the larger framework of Polish national identity, with all its consequences and obligations.

Overall, the neologism *szlyzjer* (including its derivatives) occurs 22 times in the examples analyzed in this section, always bearing similarly negative connotations about the intended referents, that is, members of the pro-Silesian camp. The repeated use of the word *szlyzjerski* in (8b) establishes members of the pro-Silesian camp as the addressees of this message and conveys the poster's negative epistemic stance toward them. At the same time, this word choice indexes the poster's anti-Silesian identification and, consequently, aids the discursive co-construction of the *szlezjer* mini-narrative initiated by poster F in this comment thread. Over the course of ten posts, three posters identified under different nicknames participate in the ongoing co-construction of pro-Silesian posters as *Schlesier*s, attributing to them a wide array of negative characteristics. The discursive co-construction of the grand *szlezjer* narrative here is, first and foremost, executed through repeated use of the neologism *szlezjer*. Since the authors of the posts examined in this section all represent the anti-Silesian camp, *szlezjer* mini-narratives can be interpreted as stable and predictable performances of anti-Silesian identity positions in the discussion. In this sense, *szlezjer* mini-narratives become indexical of posters' political and ideological leanings and national attachment to all things Polish in general.

case study #2 (2013)

In this section, I analyze examples that come from a comments thread that developed under an op-ed, in which the author offered his reflections about a series of articles on Silesia that appeared in another newspaper (Zasada 2013a). The articles critiqued appeared in the January 26-27 (2013) weekend issue of *Our Daily* (Pol. *Nasz Dziennik*), a Catholic daily newspaper known for its strong right-wing profile. The op-ed lamented the bias of those articles in their portrayal of Silesia as a devastated region with demoralized inhabitants, among which are members of the Silesian Autonomy Movement whose activity may suggest that they are attempting to separate the region from Poland and incorporate it into Germany instead.

In total, the op-ed elicited 80 comments. One of them bemoaned the journalist's decision to comment on this series of articles, suggesting that it only further divides Silesians from the rest of Poland (9). Ironically, the poster changes the journalist's name from Zasada to Kwas[83] to imply that such op-eds can only embitter the relations between the two communities in question.

(9) Marcin Kwas na posterunku.Antagonizowania Ślązaków z resztą Polski ciąg dalszy. / Jaki jest cel tak szerokiego omawiania idiotycznych artykułów o Śląsku, które ukazały się w jakiejś niszowej gazetce czytanej przez wąską warstwę ludzi o skrajnych poglądach? niech Pan odpowie Panie Marcinie, co chce Pan przez to osiągnąć? Bo ja widzę tylko chęć zdenerwowania ludzi na Śląsku.

'Marcin Acid stands guard, continuing to antagonize Silesians with the rest of Poland. / What is the purpose behind such broad discussion of idiotic articles about Silesia,

[83] Actually: Marcin Zasada (Pol. *zasada* translates as 'base' in chemistry), a *Western Daily* journalist; Pol. *kwas* translates as 'acid'.

published in a niche newspaperlet read by a narrow class of people with extreme views? Please respond, dear Marcin, what's your goal in doing that? Because the only thing I see is a desire to irritate people in Silesia.'

The poster's attempt to speak in the name of all Silesians angers another commenter, as evidenced in (9a).

(9a) za kogo ty sie wypowiadosz i kim ty ześ jest żeby take opinie wydowac . / w przeciwiynstwie do ciebie jo sie na sląsku urodzioł i pochodza z sląski rodziny ale jak czytom te twoje wypociny to umiołbych ci w pysk napluć . niy ciyrpia fałszywych kundli kere yno szczekaja jak som za bramom. próbujecie sie ty i tych poru ciuloni poszukac przijacioł wsród slązokow i wymysleiscie sie jakis **szlyzjerow** na własne potrzeby . jo nigdy w niymcach niy boł i niy ciagnie mie tam bo tu je moj hajmat bo jo je slonzok ale jak czytym ciebie to mi sie srac zaczyno chciec ,fałszywego gorola kery próbuje wsrod slazokow posłuch uzyskac . . każdy prawdziwy slonzok obojetnie po kery jest stronie to takicj jak ty to mo w żici i niy czaruj debilu ze ty u slonzokow jakes poparcie bydziesz mioł

'Whom are you talking for and who are you to offer such opinions? / Unlike you, I was born in Silesia and I come from a Silesian family, but as I read these scribbles of yours, I could spit in your face. I hate fake curs who only bark when they're behind the fence. You're trying – you and a couple of those assholes – to look for some friends among Silesians and you've come up with some ***Schlesier*s**

for your use. I've never been to Germany and I'm not drawn there because I have

my *Heimat*[84] here since I'm a Silesian, but when I read you, a false non-Silesian

trying to gain authority among Silesians, I feel like I'm about to take a shit. Every

real Silesian, regardless of the side s/he is taking, doesn't give a damn about

people like you, and don't mislead that you'll have any support among Silesians.'

In this post, strongly influenced by the Silesian variety (e.g., *pochodza, niy ciyrpia, przijacioł,*

niy boł), the commenter self-identifies as a native to Silesia and a "real" Silesian. He then (as

evidenced from the masculine past-tense forms used) accuses the author of the post in (9) of

trying to gain support among self-identified Silesians by conceitedly posing as an insider.

Further, the poster in (9a) accuses his addressee and others from the anti-Silesian camp of

inventing the category of *szlyzjer*s to further their agenda. To distance himself from the negative

implications of this label, the poster indicates his attachment to the region as well as no intent to

even go to Germany. This aggressive comment is met with a similar amount of hostility in (9b).

> (9b) Stul tyn swoj pomyjok Niymcu. / Pan Gorzelik mówi że Ślask to jego
>
> VATERLAND. Rozumisz? Tylko Niemcy albo co gorsza, gorole,
>
> twierdzą jak ty, że Śląsk to ich Heimat. Gorolem nie jesteś więc musisz
>
> być niemcem i tyla.

> 'Shut this trap of yours, you German [spelled in Silesian]. / Mr. Gorzelik[85]
>
> says that Silesia is his HOMELAND [in German]. Got it? Only Germans

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[84] Germ. 'local homeland'.
[85] See footnote 13.

> or, even worse, non-Silesians, consider – like you do – that Silesia is their
>
> *Heimat*. You're not a non-Silesian, so you must be a German and that's it.'

Here, the author takes an an-Silesian position and strikes back at the commenter in (9a). After the initial insult, the poster explains the rationale behind the label *szlyzjer* by pointing to Jerzy Gorzelik's use of the term *Heimat* in the sense of a local homeland. According to the poster, only foreigners to Silesia can use such terminology and because the commenter in (9a) self-identified as a Silesian, that must mean he is German. This explanation is key in the context of the ongoing co-construction of the grand *szlezjer* narrative because it reveals the logic behind the categorization of the pro-Silesian camp as ideological and ethnic outcasts from the Polish perspective.

Further, this comment also bears traces of the ever-present linkage between language and (ethnic, national) identity characteristic for the Polish national narrative. Because Gorzelik refers to Silesia using a foreign (and, on top of that, German) word, he does not meet the criteria of acceptability for how the anti-Silesian camp defines the metaphorical 'Us' (Poles, Silesians who identify with Poland) and the metaphorical 'Them' (for instance, Germans who continue to be cast as Poland's enemies). Such logic, I believe, also explains the choice of German as the source language in the process of coining the neologism *szlezjer*, which—although nativized in spelling—sounds foreign to the ears of a native Polish speaker. Similarly, identification with a Polish region but not Poland itself represents an identity position that goes against the hegemonic narrative of what it means to be Polish, as data in this and other chapters show.

case study #3 (2013)

This section examines comments left under an article reporting on the "Silesian dictation" (Pol. *Śląskie dyktando*) that took place in Bytom near Katowice in the Silesia Province (Nowacka-Goik 2013). During the event, participants were first asked to translate a text from Silesian into Polish and then to do the opposite in the second stage. As Marian Makula, the organizer of the event, explained, the second phase of the event was more difficult because it required that participants be familiar with certain specialist terms in Silesian such as *szteker* ('switcher, fuze, socket'), *szlaubyncjer* ('screwdriver'), or *kołkastla* ('coal container'). The article also included the Silesian text that participants had to translate into Polish as well as two direct calls to reader encouraging them to share their opinions about the language exercise (emphasis original):

OTO TEKST DO PRZEKŁADU ZE ŚLĄSKIEGO NA POLSKI. DASZ RADĘ GO PRZETŁUMACZYĆ? NAPISZ W KOMENTARZU:

'This is the text to be translated from Silesian into Polish. Can you translate it? Write [about that] in a comment'

(text below)

TRUDNE? NAPISZ W KOMENTARZU, JAK CI POSZŁO

'Difficult? Write a comment about how it went'

As a result, readers produced 245 comments under this article, many of which had a metalinguistic character. While some commenters criticized the Silesian text included in the

article, others used this report to express their disagreement with what they perceived as another example of Silesian linguistic separatism. This is also the case in (10).

(10) **Szlezjery**, wiadomo, że nie udało się wam wykazać, że istnieje dziś "język śląski" / który byłby niezrozumiały dla Polaków. Dlatego proponuję, by jacyś **szlezjerscy** "naukowcy" wymyślili taki język. To chyba jedyne co wam zostało, by przekonać świat, że tzw. "narodowość śląska" posiada własny ojczysty język, odrębny od polskiego, haha

'*Schlesier*s, it is commonly known that you didn't succeed in showing that there now exists the "Silesian language" / that would be unintelligible for Poles. That is why I propose that some *Schlesier* "scientists" invent such language. This is, I guess, the only [thing] left for you to convince the world that the so-called "Silesian nationality" possesses its native tongue, different from Polish, haha'

(10a) A dlaczego mamy się wykazywać .

To język wywodzący z wspólnego ~~ pnia Słowiańszczyzny .

Tylko czas i Historia tak pokierowała ze Ślązacy wytworzyli sobie kulturę .

Kulturę bliższą zachodniej bardziej dojrzałą wypraną z nacjonalizmów.

W której nie podpala się mieszkań ludziom o innym kolorze skóry.

W Niemczech trwa proces ,sądzą tych co też podpalali.

W Polsce taki proces będzie na ~~ ŚWIĘTEGO NIGDY.

'And why should we demonstrate that,

It's a language stemming from the common Slavic trunk.

So have time and history directed that Silesians have produced culture,

A culture closer to Western culture, more mature, devoid of nationalisms,

In which you don't set someone's apartment on fire because of different skin colors.

There is a trial underway in Germany, they're trialing those who also set [apartments] on fire.

Such a trial will take place in Poland on [the feast of] SAINT NEVER.[86]'

Here, the poster speaks from an anti-Silesian position, mockingly suggesting that some "scientists" invent the Silesian language since no one was able to prove thus far that Silesian exists as a separate language that is unintelligible for Polish speakers. In doing so, the poster puts the phrases "Silesian language" and "Silesian nationality" in inverted commas, suggesting that these ideas are merely inventions. Further, the commenter includes two derivatives of the term *szlezjer* to index a negative epistemic stance about the idea of being Silesian as an identity position that is altogether separate from being Polish. Here, this is exemplified with the statements about the mutual intelligibility of Polish and Silesian, and the doubt expressed about the validity of what some call "Silesian nationality."

By repeating the keyword *szlezjer* in its two derivatives, the poster taps into the pre-existing anti-Silesian prejudices, building on the assumption of ideological zeal among members of the pro-Silesian camp and thus contributing to the *szlezjer* mini-narrative skillfully developed by poster F (see section 4.1.). Pointing to what is perceived as failed attempts aimed at linguistic emancipation of Silesian, the commenter undermines the separatist narrative constructed by pro-

[86] That is: 'sometime in the unspecified future'.

Silesian posters, suggesting that only the invention of a new language can do the trick. This perspective is partially refuted in (10a) where the author of the post suggests that Silesian culture represents a separate construct, which is devoid of nationalist thinking, unlike the Polish culture. The pessimistic scenario presented by the poster at the very end of the comment implies that Poland still has a long way to go before its people come to accept difference, best exemplified in the metaphor of Saint Never.

case study #4 (2013)

The examples included in this section come from a discussion that developed under an article titled "Texas Silesians Visited the Opole Region" (Kownacka 2013). In it, the author outlines the story of emigrants from the historical region of Opole Silesia to the United States and Texas, and interviews some of their descendants who visited the region with the intent of learning more about their ancestors. This story, originally authored by the Polish Press Agency (Pol. *Polska Agencja Prasowa, PAP*), emphasizes the Polish orientation of migrants from Silesia, pointing out that they established settlements with pronouncedly Polish names: Panna Maria,[87] Cestohowa,[88] and Kosciusko.[89] The article elicited 115 comments, many of which took up the points made in the story to argue that Silesians de facto represent a regional inflection of Poles, as evidenced by the strongly pro-Polish orientation of the interviewees. This is also the case in (11) where the author of the post employs the well-known by now neologism *szlezjerstwo*:

[87] Pol. Virgin Mary.
[88] Częstochowa is a city and center of Roman Catholicism in Poland.
[89] Named after Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746–1817), military leader and national hero both in the lands of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the United States where he fought in the American Revolutionary War.

(11) :) / I co na to szlezjerstwo?

':) / And what does the *Schlesier*dom say to that?'

This comment, intended as an invitation for discussion, pokes fun at members of the pro-Silesian camp whose ideas the commented story disputes and seems to reject. The commenter, whom I call poster G, does not stop here but produces two more entries (12, 13) of similar content and tone, each time inserting the neologism *Schlesier*dom.

(12) **szlezjerstwo** nie wie jak skomentować / Wg nich to hadziaje guberniani, bo jak to możliwe aby jakiś Ślązak uważał się za Polaka, prawda?

'The *Schlesier*dom doesn't know how to comment. / According to them, these are non-Silesians from Russian Poland, because how is it possible for a Silesian to consider himself a Pole, right?'

(13) średnia wieku **szlezjerstwa** to 60 lat / Głownie tacy wypisują tu komentarze. Coś mi się zdaje,że będziecie odchodzić z tego świata ze świadomością że większość Śląska leży w Polsce hehe

'The average age of *Schlesier*dom is 60 years old. / It's mostly people like that who comment here. Something tells me that you'll be departing from this world with the consciousness of the majority of Silesia being located in Poland haha'

In both cases, poster G emphasizes the connection between Poland and Silesia in terms of ethnicity (12) and geopolitics (13). The use of the neutral term *Ślązak* (Pol. 'resident of Silesia') in the former example represents, I believe, a meaningful choice on part of the commenter because Silesians who identify with Poland are here juxtaposed with the co-constructed category of *szlezjer*s. This goes hand in hand with the *szlezjer* mini-narrative constructed by poster F and continues into examples (14) and (15).

(14) **Szlezjerzy** / To ^ są Ślązacy^, a nie tacy jak wy,zgermanizowane mieszańce popruskie.

'Hey, *Schlesier*s! / These ^are Silesians^, not Germanized post-Prussian mongrels like you are.'

(15) **szlezjer** to poniemiecki przybłęda / [zza Łaby]90 / germańska gnida. Ślązacy to Polacy Dziodek dobrze godo.

'A *Schlesier* is a post-German vagabond / [from beyond the Elbe river] A German louse. Silesians are Poles. The grandpa's right.'

These two comments further develop the idea of *Schlesier*s, facilitating the co-construction of the grand *szlezjer* narrative in the *Western Daily* forum. In addition to that, the two posters reveal

90 While I remove any identifying information from my data, including posters' nicknames, here I make an exception by including the author's nickname because (1) it does not represent a typical nickname, but in fact a continuation of the narrative started in the comment's title (the part before the first forward slash), and because (2) the representation of *Schlesier*s developed in this comment would be incomplete had the nickname been omitted.

their understanding of what it means to be Silesian, providing their definitions of Silesians. In (14), Silesians are indirectly described as people who feel and express their connection with Poland and the Polish language; in (15), Silesians are equaled with Poles. Simultaneously, the authors of the two posts explain the meaning of the neologism *szlezjer*. While in (14) *Schlesier*s are defined as "Germanized post-Prussian mongrels," members of the same group are called "post-German vagabond[s]" from outside of the territory of present-day Poland. In both cases, posters' definitions of Silesians are in stark contrast with whom they regard as *Schlesier*s, characterized as either lacking connection with Polishness or associating themselves with Germany.

As a result, members of the pro-Silesian camp are put in front of a binary choice between Poland (here portrayed as the positive choice) and Germany (here portrayed as the negative choice), *tertium non datur*. These two examples (as well as some from the previous sections) demonstrate and reflect well the pervasiveness of black-and-white thinking about ethnicity and nationality in contemporary Poland, according to which such identities are constructed and expected to represent crystal clear divisions of the social world, disallowing for any shades of grey. Consequently, the ongoing debate on self-identified is often reduced to attempts at ordering the seemingly chaotic amalgam of identifications and influences along the unambiguous Poland/Germany dividing line. As Bjork (2008) has convincingly shown, such demands are not new in the Silesian space and were characteristic of the region a century ago as well. Just like one hundred years ago nationalist activists sought to draw clear boundaries between the categories of 'Self' and 'Other', building on the nationalized sociopolitical reality in which official institutions and their tools employed the national principle to organize peoples and places into distinguishable and unambiguous categories, so have members of the anti-Silesian camp in

the *Western Daily* forum embarked on the explanatory mission with the intent of bringing some

order into the seemingly chaotic reality of ethno-national identifications in contemporary Silesia.

This, I believe, has also been triggered by the considerable ambiguity of ethno-national

choices in the last census (2011) when the majority of self-identified Silesians had also declared

secondary—both Polish and German—identifications. Thus, the category of *Schlesier*s,

promoted by the *szlezjer* mini-narratives examined in this chapter, can be viewed as an attempt at

delineating those residents of Silesia who associate themselves with Poland from those who

exhibit a more separatist stance, which, I argue, represents a major collective attempt at social

control as anti-Silesian online posters and offline activists seek to identify potential allies and

potential foes in the debate on Silesian identity. By introducing a clear-cut binary that only gives

room to either Polish or German national identification, the potential for dissent and ethno-

national difference with some shades of grey is reduced or even altogether erased, as I have

argued elsewhere (Borowski 2018a). This makes pro-Silesian posters reject such reductivism,

which in turn fuels accusations of ethnic separatism and exhibiting a pro-German orientation in

the anti-Silesian camp. Because accepting Poland as the larger formula for Silesian identity

seems to pro-Silesian posters like an acknowledgment of surrender to what they perceive as

pervasive nationalist thinking, this fuels suspicion and distrust for the activities of the anti-

Silesian camp. On another hand, the lack of clear identification along national lines, combined

with the presence of German accents as discursive ways of subverting Polish authority over

Silesia, brings forth in the anti-Silesian camp fears of separatism along with accusations that it is,

in fact, Germany who stands to benefit from the conflict. In this context, *szlezjer* mini-narratives

help minimize the anxiety caused by what many perceive as stubborn national ambivalence on

part of self-identified Silesians by introducing and promoting a reductivist narrative that re-

orders the seemingly chaotic world of ethno-national identifications in the region, re-establishing a well-known and easily decipherable division between Poland and Germany, the Polish national interest and the German national cause.

case study #5 (2014)

The comments examined in this section come from a discussion that developed under an article on Silesians who fought on both the side of the Allies and the Nazis during the Second World War (Semik 2014). Specifically, the article focuses on the Battle of Monte Cassino[91] and features a link inviting readers to take a quiz testing their knowledge on this particular WW2 episode. The lead reads as follows:

> *Co trzeci żołnierz armii polskiej na Zachodzie przeszedł z niemieckiego do polskiego wojska. Do dezercji pchały Polaków w Wehrmachcie względy patriotyczne, ale też niemiecka polityka narodowościowa. Ślązaków uznawano za żołnierzy drugiej kategorii. No i niekorzystny dla Niemców był przebieg wojny.*

> 'Every third soldier of the Polish army in the West switched the German for the Polish army. Poles in the *Wehrmacht*[92] were driven to desertion due to patriotic considerations as well as German ethno-national policies. Silesians were considered second-class soldiers. Plus, the course of the war was unfavorable for Germans.'

[91] A hill in Italy, southeast of Rome, site of the Battle of Monte Cassino (January – May 1944) between the Allies and the Axis that involved Polish troops. As a result, Monte Cassino occupies a special place in the Polish national memory, interpreted as an example of patriotism and sacrifice for the greater cause and documented in the Polish military song *Czerwone maki na Monte Cassino* (*The Red Poppies on Monte Cassino*).

[92] The name of the armed forces in Nazi Germany.

Such narrative about Silesians who deserted the Nazi army in order to join the Polish armed forces created in Western Europe is picked by the author of the post in (16) who applauds their decision:

(16) jak pisal K Kutz / ci sposrod Slazakow ktorzy mieli szczescie, walczyli i gineli po wlasciwej stronie. Jaka to strona kazdy wie, procz tympych **slezierow**.Pani redaktor moj dziadek nie mial tego szczescia, rzucony na front wschodni wraca ciezko ranny . Ale wraca do domu. Wszystkim Slazakom , ktorzy przymusowo wcieleni do wojska Hitlera gineli po niewlasciwej stronie , a przede wszystkim tym ktorzy przeszli na wlasciwa strone, moj gleboki poklon.

'As K[azimierz] Kutz[93] wrote, / those from among Silesians who were lucky fought and died on the right side. Everyone knows what side that was, except for dumb *Schlesier*s. Dear Ms. editor, my grandfather did not have that luck, he was thrown on the Eastern front, he came back heavily wounded. But he came back home. I'm respectfully bowing to all Silesians who, conscripted into Hitler's army, died on the wrong side, and above all to all those who went over to the right side.'

Here, the poster draws a clear division between the positively and the negatively evaluated side, stating that those from among Silesians drafted into the *Wehrmacht* who confronted the Nazis deserve every respect. In doing so, the poster employs the term *szlezjer* concerning those who

[93] See footnote 22.

seem not to know which side in the Second World War was morally "right." Thus, the

commenter repeats some of the tropes found in previous examples of *szlezjer* mini-narratives

while contributing to the further co-construction of the larger narrative of *Schlesiers* who

represent an ideologically and morally suspicious group.

Several entries later, this comment is met with a rebuttal from a pro-Silesian poster (16a)

who attempts to decrease the significance of the Battle of Monte Cassino while producing a

counterargument to the claim that Poles heroically fought against the Nazis and never sided with

them.

(16a) Polacy gineli pod Monte Casino! / Polakow pod Monte Casino wyslano na rzez jak

bydlo! facet nam Slazakom te twoje Monte Casino LOTTO! hehe Dzielni rzolnierze

gineli a w polsce, polacy z usmiechem na ustach podpisywali Volkslisty hehe w tym

15tysiecy polskich gorali.,a to musi bolec hehehe

'Poles died in [the battle of] Monte Cas[s]ino! / Poles were sent to Monte Cas[s]ino like

cattle for slaughter! Dude, we, Silesians, don't give a DAMN about this Monte Cas[s]ino

of yours! Haha Brave soldiers were dying while Poles in Poland were signing the

Volksliste[94] with a smile on their face haha, including 15 thousand of Polish

Highlanders,[95] and this must hurt hahaha'

The author of the post in (16a) speaks in the name of Silesians (hence the "we") and takes a pro-Silesian stance in the discussion. The poster implies that Polish soldiers were in the Battle of Monte Cassino used as cannon fodder while Poles in Nazi-occupied territories claimed German ancestry by signing the *Volksliste*. This topic is further developed in another comment (16b) whose author takes an anti-Silesian position.

(16b) Ślązacy - obywatele II RP / z Katowic, Chorzowa, Mysłowic, Rybnika itd. - wpisani następnie na DVL z I, II, III i IV kategorią - rzeczywiście tak naprawdę byli Polakami, a nie żadnymi Niemcami i rzeczywiście niekiedy podpisywali DVL z uśmiechem - w sumie, to prawda, co napisałeś. I nic dziwnego, że tacy jak ty nie zrozumieją Monte Cassino - bo wy dla waszego heimatu potraficie tylko skamleć na forum. Tyle jest wart **szlezjerski** heimat - zasługuje tylko na forumowe skamlenie jego "bojowników" :D

[94] A Nazi German institution established to classify residents of German-occupied territories according to their usefulness for furthering the interests of Nazi Germany and introduced during the Second World War in western parts of occupied Poland. At the top of the list sat the category of Volksdeutsche (Germ. 'ethnic Germans'), people of German ancestry who resided outside of Germany and did not hold German citizenship. Compared to the local populace, members of the Volksdeutsche category enjoyed some privileges during the Nazi occupation. In contemporary usage in political discourse, the term Volksdeutsch(e) (nativized to folksdojcz(e) in Polish) is used figuratively and pejoratively as a synonym of a person considered to be a traitor to the Polish national cause and – simultaneously – politically aligned with and/or sympathizing with Germany.

[95] The poster refers to what is known in history as Goralenvolk, a Nazi initiative aimed at the creation of a separate nationality in Nazi-occupied Poland by extracting members of the Górale 'Highlanders' population in the mountainous Podhale region in southern Poland and claiming that they were part of the German race. Altogether, this attempt was largely unsuccessful and managed to attract only a relatively small number of adherents, some of whom were later executed for treason.

'Silesians – citizens of the Second Polish Republic / from Katowice, Chorzów, Mysłowice, Rybnik, etc. – subsequently entered in the *Deutsche Volksliste* with category I, II, III, or IV – indeed were in fact only Poles and not Germans at all, and they indeed sometimes signed the Volksliste with a smile on their face – in sum, what you wrote is true. No wonder then that people like you will not understand Monte Cassino – because you, for your *Heimat*, can only whine in the forum. This is how much the ***Schlesier Heimat*** is worth – it is only worthy of whining in the forum [performed] by its "fighters" :D'

Here, the poster responds to the accusations about Poles becoming Germans during Nazi occupation by claiming that residents of Polish Silesia in the interbellum were in fact Poles and had nothing to do with Germanness. Then, the poster accuses the addressee of not being able to comprehend the significance of the Battle of Monte Cassino due to the implied cowardice of members of the pro-Silesian camp who can only "fight" in the forum like the *Western Daily* one. In doing so, the commenter inserts the German word for local homeland twice, mimicking the rhetoric style of the pro-Silesian camp (e.g., "Silesia is my *Heimat*" in 9a), and inserts the neologism *Schlesier* to strengthen the ideological message of this comment. With that, the commenter implies that such a lack of respect for patriotism and willingness to sacrifice one's life in the service of one's country seems to be inherent to members of the pro-Silesian camp for whom such qualities appear foreign.

case study #6 (2015–2017)

Unlike the comments examined in previous sections, the examples included in this section come from threads that developed under three different news articles published in 2015 (example 17), 2016 (example 18), and 2017 (example 19). Nevertheless, their shared characteristic is the presence of the keyword *szlezjer* and/or its derivatives, which labels these comments as part of the larger narrative about *Schlesier*s developed in the *Western Daily* forum. In (17), the author of the post comments on the latest results of a presidential poll (TVN/x-news 2015) and suggests that in the 2015 elections people need to vote for a nationalist candidate who will keep *Schlesier*s under control. To talk about it, the poster uses the metaphor of reins (Pol. *cugle*) to talk about establishing control (Pol. *coby... chodzili*). This metaphor implies that the commenter believes that those from among self-identified Silesians categorized as *Schlesier*s (1) appear to be out of control, and therefore (2) some sort of control needs to be established over them. This comment, similar to those in (14) and (15), develops the theme of control by proposing concrete action(s) aimed at containing the possible *Schlesier* threat, and, as such, supports the ideological foundations of the grand *szlezjer* narrative.

> (17) Trzeba głosować na narodowca / Co weźmie **szlezjerstwo** w cugle, coby nom dobrze chodzili, hehehe.

> 'One should vote for a nationalist / who will discipline the ***Schlesier*dom** so that they obey us, hahaha'

The post in (18) was written under an article on the 1918–1921 developments in Silesia in the context of the First World War and the subsequent period during which both Germany and Poland claimed Upper Silesia (Wieczorek 2016).

(18) Skoro **szlyzjery** mają tyle do powiedzenia / To na calutkim Śląsku powinno huczeć od wydawnictw, publikacji, a wszystko to w **szlyzjerskim** języku. Jeżeli są tępieni jak utrzymują, to co to za problem w dzisiejszych czasach drugi obieg? A tu nic. Paru [nickname omitted] adzia-badziakow cichcem podsrywa na forach.

'Since *Schlesier*s have so much to say / then the whole Silesia should rumble with presses, publications, and all that [should be] in the *Schlesier* language. If they're being eradicated – as they maintain – then what kind of a problem is samizdat nowadays? While there's nothing. A few bums [nickname omitted] silently spreading crap in the forum.'

The article starts with the following passage:

Zacznijmy od historii w miarę współczesnej. Profesor Jerzy Maroń opowiada to tak: - Kolega, zresztą też historyk, Górnoślą-zak, prof. Leonard Smołka mówił mi, że jak Ślązak, to Polak. To ja się pytam, a dlaczego nie Niemiec? Bo Niemiec to zawsze jest Schlesier.

'Let's start with somewhat contemporary history. Professor Jerzy Maroń retells it as follows: - A colleague, by the way also a historian, an Upper Silesian, prof. Leonard Smołka used to tell me that if [someone was] a Silesian, then [the person was] a Pole. Then I ask: So why not a German? Because a German is always who a Schlesier is.'

In this comment, the author addresses pro-Silesian posters in the discussion that developed in the comments section (225 comments in total), suggesting that their claims about the discrimination they face in present-day Poland are exaggerated. As a result, the argument goes, some members of the pro-Silesian camp take it to the *Western Daily* forum to express their frustration with this situation, but these ideas have little to no presence in the offline world. Further, the author of the post implies that such pro-Silesian publications should all be written in the local variety. In doing so, the commenter employs the familiar by now term *szlyzjer* twice – first as a group label and then as an adjective ("the *Schlesier* language").

In the former, the poster applies a non-virile ending to the plural form (*-ry* instead of *-rzy*, like in the title of the article: *Ślązacy i Schlesie**rzy***), which conveys the poster's negative stance toward the community categorized with the neologism *szlezjery*. As for the latter, this example is part and parcel of the grand *szlezjer* narrative, according to which Silesian linguistic emancipation does not reflect the linguistic reality because the Silesian variety lacks widespread usage in the region, including self-identified Silesians. By suggesting that pro-Silesian ideals are disseminated through materials written in Silesian, the author of the post in (18) undermines the validity of Silesian as a linguistic code capable of serving a wide range of communicative purposes. As evident from the analyses of previous case studies, such ideas align with the representation of the pro-Silesian camp included in the greater narrative about *szlezjer*s. By

repeating the neologism twice, the commenter helps co-construct and promote the ideologized narrative of *Schlesiers* as presented by poster F.

One of the most popular arguments against the pro-Silesian camp—the numerical one—is reproduced in (19), written under an article reporting on the 2017 Autonomy March[96] in Katowice (Marsz 2017).

(19) Zebrala się gromada **szlezjerskich** frustratów / podprzemyski firerek z leninowską brodką probował zaklinac rzeczywistośc. Nerwowe ruchy ciała zdradzały stres i obawe żeby go nie wygwizdali. Zreszta kto go kto go wygwizdać, ta garstka co dotarla na plac? No a gośc z Niemiec , niejaki Starosta to bylo kuriozum.

PRYSK LUTKOFIE

'A bunch of *Schlesier* frustrates came together / the little *Führer* with a beard à la Lenin from the Przemyśl area[97] tried to charm the reality. The nervous movements of [his] body betrayed stress and fear of being booed. Anyway, who is [supposed to] boo him, this handful that arrived at the square? And then the guest from Germany, one Starosta, that was an oddity. SEE YOU FOULKS'

Here, the author of the post comments directly on the 2017 Autonomy March, calling the participants "a bunch of *Schlesier* frustrates" attempting to "charm the reality." The magical

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[96] The Autonomy March is an annual manifestation of all things Silesian, organized in Katowice in mid-July by the Silesian Autonomy Movement. During the event, people wishing to manifest their Silesian identity gather in a downtown square and march toward the Silesian Parliament Square (Pol. *Plac Sejmu Śląskiego*) where speeches are given, followed by a reception and accompanied by a fair of Silesian books and goodies. In terms of online discussions on Silesian identity, the event has a pronouncedly pro-Silesian character.

[97] A reference to Jerzy Gorzelik (see footnote 13).

metaphor used by the poster (Pol. *zaklinać* 'to cast a spell, to bewitch') undermines the rationale

of the Silesian regionalist movement as one that has to change the reality as it is for its ideals to

become true. In doing so, the poster includes the neologism *szlezjer* in its adjectival form, which,

combined with the Adolf Hitler metaphor used in the initial part of the comment, helps reinforce

the grand *szlezjer* narrative among the readers of the forum, six years after poster F introduced it

in the comments section under the Skworc interview.

As I have shown in previous sections, the grand *szlezjer* narrative represents a complex

yet ideologically coherent construct that has been brought into the *Western Daily* discussion

forum by poster F and other commenters. In doing so, they have repeatedly employed the term

szlezjer and/or its derivatives, engaged in the back-and-forth with pro-Silesian posters, and thus

secured narrative accrual for the narrative they have been co-constructing. In this section, I have

used standalone examples from discussions that developed under three distinctive articles in

2015, 2016, and 2017 to show how the grand *szlezjer* narrative leaks into various debates

concerning the issue of Silesian identity in the *Western Daily* forum. Since this great narrative

has already, by that point, accrued substantial narrative power, it has also become an economic

way of indexing one's position as a member of the anti-Silesian camp who considers the Silesian

regionalist activism as a potential threat to the Polish national interest.

Having completed the analysis of how various posters in various comment threads recall

and co-construct the grand *szlezjer* narrative, I finish the analytic part of this chapter with the

metanarrative comment below:

(20) Problemem [nickname omitted], ale też i paru innych jest to, że nie myślą. Oni

zakodowali w swoich zrytych głowach kilka zwrotów i powtarzają je - jak pacierz lub

mantrę. Najczęściej są to: **szlezjerzy**, Jerzy Gorolik, język śląski, narodowość śląska, faszyści, folksdojcze, Der DZ i kilka innych. Wszystkie ich wypowiedzi kręcą się wokół tych wyrazów. Tak w koło Macieja! Oczywiście każdy z nich, określa swoją osobę jako tego jedynego i prawdziwego Ślązaka! Wszyscy inni to **szlezjerzy** i folksdojcze! Takie wyrazy jak: tolerancja i integracja - są dla nich jak "terra incognita". Obca dla nich jest też definicja wyrazu naród! A definicja ta jest bardzo prosta i czytelna: "Naród – wspólnota ludzi, połączonych ze sobą tradycją, językiem czy też miejscem zamieszkania" - nic dodać, nic ująć - nasz Śląsk! Oni jednak odbierają nam prawo do stanowienia i decydowania zapominając o tym, że w naszej śląskiej historii było kilku takich, którzy próbowali odebrać nam to prawo - i jak na tym wyszli! Rozumiem Twoją próbę ucywilizowania tych troglodytów - ale wiem, że jest to orka na ugorze. Możesz przez wiele lat orać i siać - ich mózgi pozostaną ugorem! Szkoda Twoich sił!

'The problem of [nickname omitted] – and a few others – is that they don't think. They encoded in their nut heads a few keywords and they keep on repeating them, like a prayer or mantra. Most often, these are *Schlesiers*, Jerzy Gorolik,[98] Silesian language, Silesian nationality, fascists, *Volksdeutch*s, *Der* W[estern] D[aily], and a few more. All their utterances constantly revolve around these words. Round and round! Each one of them, of course, defines himself as the only true and real Silesian! All others are *Schlesiers* and *Volksdeutsch*s! Words such as "tolerance" and "integration" are a "terra incognita" for them. Foreign to them is also the definition of the term "people"! While this definition is very simple and clear: "A people – a community of people linked with each other by

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[98] Actually: Jerzy Gorzelik, a play on his last name and the word *gorol* 'non-Silesian', possible because Gorzelik's mother's family comes outside of Silesia.

tradition, language, or place of residence" – our Silesia – plain and simple! They, however, take away our right for self-determination and deciding [who we are], forgetting that there were a few of those in our Silesian history who tried to take that right away from us – and look how they ended up! I understand your attempt at civilizing these troglodytes – but I know that it's like plowing the fallow ground. You can be plowing and sowing for many years – their brains will remain fallow! It's a waste of your energy!'

The author of this post takes an anti-*Schlesier* stance by launching a critique of the *szlezjer* mini-narratives produced in the forum. In doing so, the poster accuses its co-constructers of dogmatism, lack of tolerance for diversity, and, ultimately, the inability to change their way of thinking. As a result, the commenter crafts a long (over 1,150 words, which is considerably long in this particular forum) argument attacking the main ideas of the grand *szlezjer* narrative, analyzing some of its core components, including the commonly used vocabulary (and the neologism *szlezjer*). Pointing out how this narrative is actively co-constructed by several users of the *Western Daily* forum, the commenter skillfully deconstructs the underlying meaning of this narrative as well as the role of key repetition in the *modus operandi* of those who co-construct it. Given the examples analyzed in (1–19), what this metanarrative intervention ultimately proves is that the grand *szlezjer* narrative has become a powerful tool in the hands of members of the anti-Silesian camp who made a collective effort to engage in its co-construction. With time and repetition, this narrative has accrued enough rhetoric power to serve the purpose of delineating and criticizing pro-Silesian posters and thus has become a linguistic index (sociolinguistic label) of commenters' stance in the debate on Silesian identity.

Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter, I have considered the many ways in which anonymous posters co-construct a larger narrative about *szlezjer*s, a newly coined label attributed to members of the pro-Silesian camp who reject a simultaneous Polish national identification. In doing so, I have analyzed examples produced in the *Western Daily* from 2011 to 2017 and pointed to the ideological homogeneity in how members of the pro-Silesian camp are represented in such narratives. I have shown that anti-Silesian representation of self-identified Silesians, signaled by *szlezjer* mini-narratives, represent predictable rhetoric moves that produce stable representations of members of the pro-Silesian camp. Because of the inherently negative overtone of the neologism *szlezjer*, this word and its derivatives effectively become a negative epistemic stance marker, with which posters express their anti-Silesian identity in the discussion. While some posters limit themselves to the use of the word *szlezjer* or its derivatives, others develop whole arguments that serve the introductory and explanatory functions in that they (1) introduce the pro-German narrative about self-identified Silesians who reject a simultaneous Polish identification, (2) explain the ideological context of this narrative, and (3) promote this narrative through their repeated use of the word *szlezjer* or its derivatives. In both cases, further iterations help promote shared attitudes about members of the pro-Silesian camp whose alleged non-normativity is put under control with linguistic means, which brings forth the issue of social control through language.

As I argue, the grand *szlezjer* narrative about self-identified Silesians becomes a linguistic way of exercising social control over those residents of Poland who embrace a Silesian identification without accepting an overarching, Polish national identification. Thus, *szlezjer* mini-narratives allow anti-Silesian posters to introduce a black-and-white division in terms of national and/or ideological allegiance (Poland vs. Germany), and to act on this division by

demanding that self-identified Silesians either embrace a larger identification with Poland and what is perceived as best for the country's interests, or be othered, rejected, and accused of plotting against Poland by allegedly siding with Germany and German national interests. Thus, *szlezjer* mini-narratives achieve the desired goal of enforcing social control among Polish residents by (1) constructing Germany as a potential threat to Poland's vital interests, (2) advocating for national unity (even at the cost of erasing regional differences) as a remedy for this threat, (3) criticizing the reluctance among self-identified Silesians to unambiguously identify with Poland as a perceived lack of unity, (4) presenting an either-or choice between Poland and Germany, and (5) accusing those who refuse to unambiguously identify with Poland as traitors to the national cause.

Storytelling represents a basic human experience. The same is true about the *Western Daily* forum where storytelling about pro- or anti-Silesian users has become normal and expected. As members of both camps come to the forum to express their ideas in the debate on Silesian identity, they inadvertently produce, reproduce, and co-construct narratives about a typical representative of the opposite camp. As Bruner (1991) asserts, narratives are not necessarily real in the absolute sense of the word but merely representations of reality. In other words, a narrative is a "version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and 'narrative necessity' rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness" (4). This brings forth the issue of verisimilitude, approximation of truthfulness, which drives the ongoing co-construction of *szlezjer* mini-narratives in the *Western Daily* forum.

Because my approach to these narratives is functional, I am not concerned with absolute truth conveyed by references to self-identified Silesians, but rather with truth-like claims about members of this community to study how such claims can inform our understanding of ethnicity,

nationhood, and collective memory in contemporary Poland. The analyzed comments and my analysis suggest that *szlezjer* mini-narratives aid the discursive process of constructing a specific social reality in the context of modern-day Poland, one in which Polish national identification trumps any other affiliation(s) groups or individuals may declare, be it ethnic, regional, or other. Hence, I argue, the implicit, constantly present in the forum need for self-identified Silesians to identify with Poland to become accepted members of the Polish society. As a result, such narrativizing activity helps anti-Silesian posters bridge the cognitive dissonance caused by the 'emergence' of Silesian minority (some of whose members reject a simultaneous Polish national identification) in an otherwise homogeneous country. This brings forth the issue of constructing reality through narratives.

The idea of story-worlds or entire realities through narratives is not new. As a social practice, narrating has the potential to both shape and modify social relationships as people "create and negotiate understandings of social realities" (De Fina 2003, 19). Further, narratives also "continuously modify the social relationships that exist among [people] and also, potentially, with others who are not present in the interaction" (ibid.). In this manner, the narrative activity becomes a repeated way of shaping the already shaped social reality. As De Fina asserts in her study of stories told by Mexican newcomers to the United States:

> Story telling reflects the interplay of all these levels of meaning, but also constitutes a
> type of discourse practice. When immigrants tell stories they create new meanings, they
> circulate and constitute images of themselves and others, interpretations of the migration
> process and of their roles in it. Other immigrants often act according to what they hear
> from stories and form opinions based on stories. In all these senses, story telling like

other discourse genres, is an unfolding social activity in that it both reflects and makes

the world as it is (2003, 223).

Like storytelling, constructing and participating in the co-construction of the grand *szlezjer*

narrative is a collective activity that takes place in the *Western Daily* forum. According to De

Fina, stories provide "a powerful occasion for narrators to classify and evaluate characters and

their actions against implicit or explicit norms and values" (2003, 21). As I have shown above,

through the repeated use of the label *szlezjer* or its derivatives, posters collectively construct

classifying and evaluative arguments about self-identified Silesians. In doing so, they help build

a joint, larger narrative and place it in a preconceived and ideologically systematized story-world

where Poland and Polish national interest (as perceived by anti-Silesian posters) takes

precedence. This points to the importance of narrative for the process of building ideological and

ethical structures. In the case of *szlezjer* mini-narratives, anti-Silesian posters frequently use

these stories as classifying and evaluative tools in their attempts to discursively (re-)organize and

(re-)order the social world around them, in line with the beliefs and ideologies they hold to be

true. Since the idea that individuals can self-identify as Silesians but discard a simultaneous

Polish identification does not enter their ideological worldview, anti-Silesian commenters refute

such claims and counter them by providing their constellation of possible ethno-national

affiliations (see examples 5, 12, and especially 14 and 15). This is best exemplified in *szlezjer*

mini-narratives that, ultimately, leave no space for ethno-national ambivalence.

     Another term helpful in understanding the sociolinguistic import of *szlezjer* mini-

narratives is that of "shared story" (Page 2018). Such stories typically occur across a range of

contexts (including those involving various facets of computer-mediated communication) and

can develop as a reaction to news stories about, for instance, parliament votes or a celebrity's comment that has gone viral. Because they are of shared nature, such stories can involve large numbers of people who collectively (re)produce or consume stories that may promote "a particular way of representing events, people and places: one that emphasizes common ground" (3). The idea of common ground is precisely what has taken root in *szlezjer* mini-narratives told and retold in the *Western Daily* forum. According to Page, shared stories in the context of news media are characterized by:

- "narration shared between multiple tellers;

- intertextual references which connect shared texts;

- distributed linearity, whereby narrative content is produced and reproduced across multiple units; and

- an assumption of commonly held beliefs" (ibid.).

My analysis of *szlezjer* mini-narratives demonstrates that they function as shared stories (or, rather, one larger story) that are being told and retold in the *Western Daily* forum. Two of the features of shared stories, shared narrative multi-tellership, and distributed linearity, contribute to the iterative character of *szlezjer* mini-narratives. Because shared stories, as Page asserts, "typically lack a single end point" (20), they possess an innate narrative-generating potential. The same is true about *szlezjer* mini-narratives, which leads to one of the key conclusions of this chapter. As my data show, telling a story is not the point. Rather, it is about retelling the same story over and over again so that it effectively becomes a way of societal thinking about a particular topic.

As commenters retell the shared story about *Schlesier*s, they need not produce *szlezjer* mini-narratives in the course of the same discussion in the comments section. Instead, these entries may be temporarily spread out over several months or even years. Since this is the case for the data analyzed in this chapter, I wish to make an argument for a temporal expansion of the concept of shared stories as a narrative phenomenon that transcends the temporality and spatiality of a simple exchange of ideas in reaction to the topic(s) of the conversation. (If the process of leaking of narratives from the online to the offline world is to be accounted for, an argument could be made about a spatial expansion as well.) Conceptualized in that manner, shared stories become particular modes of talking about and representing in language particular ideas, people, or phenomena, and as such, they resemble some conceptualizations of discourses.

This is even more so for the examples analyzed in this chapter as *szlezjer* mini-narratives remain ideologically similar despite their timestamps, authors, or news stories in reaction to which they were produced. Thus, *szlezjer* mini-narratives escape the narrow conceptualizations of narrative as chronotopically limited storytellings, instead suggesting that such and similar narratives have the potential to permeate the popular mindset at various timespace configurations due to their acutely ideological character that stems from and results in further narrative accrual. This is particularly the case with *szlezjer* mini-narratives, a powerful argument in the hands of the anti-Silesian camp, examples of which become indexical of poster's stance in the discussion on Silesian identity in modern-day Poland. Ultimately, what my data suggest is that while single words or phrases do not represent narratives in the strict sense of the word, they can nevertheless *function in a narrative-like manner* and become what I have dubbed *mini-narratives*. In this capacity, *szlezjer* mini-narratives provide potential authors with a useful shorthand to express a particular stance on the idea of Silesian identity or minority in contemporary Poland.

Finally, a word about repetition is in place. As evidenced from the analysis, iterativeness represents a recurrent feature of *szlezjer* mini-narratives in the *Western Daily* forum. In this digital space, repetition becomes a device deployed to promote ideological and political (since, ultimately, it is about issues of power and power relations) narratives about self-identified Silesians. This points to the key modality of repetition for radicalization and radicalizing discourses, and, as such, has implications for current research on online and offline political discourse.

While all this concerns the message the importance of the medium is not to be underestimated. *Szlezjer* mini-narratives possess an interactive and iterative character because of the technological affordances of the *Western Daily* forum. While it allows for open discussion in the comments sections, it does not represent an all-encompassing forum in the technological sense of the word (unlike, for instance, forums built with the popular phpBB software engine, which makes it possible to accumulate all discussions in one large, searchable space). Therefore, each comment thread under a single story represents a separate discussion that is not readily accessible to forum users, unlike in a typical phpBB scenario. This "discursive detachment," triggered by the technological affordances granted by the *Western Daily* forum, causes forum conversations to appear singular and unrelated one to another, almost incidental. This results in repetitive breaches in communication, stifling the circulation of political messages and, ultimately, making it impossible for discourse circulators to successfully embed particular worldviews in the minds of forum users. The case of the neologism *szlezjer* illustrates how this can be prevented through repetition of the main message, encapsulated in the word *szlezjer*, under numerous stories across space (different comments sections) and time (my data comes from the 2011–2017 period) in order for these messages to become prominent and readily

distinguishable among both the active (posters) and passive (lurkers, readers) users of the forum. What this then suggests for conversation-based digital forums and spaces is their importance and potential as spaces of discursive power concentration and production.

Due to their popularity and media coverage, mainstream digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are at the forefront of the battle against violent content as the general public is scrutinizing how they tackle this issue. Aside from other considerations, this battle also highlights the problems stemming from the innate features that the online world offers, with its power to serve as a magnifying glass for the various ideas transmitted through the spoken or written word. While the big companies are usually given the most attention, I believe that equal consideration should be given to other, perhaps statistically more minor, players in the digital arena, like online newspapers' comments sections. The case of the neologism *szlezjer* in the *Western Daily* forum exemplifies the potential of such spaces, often read and visited by only narrow segments of society, for constructing and transmitting powerful ideological messages that have the potential to direct societal thinking about essential issues in a given province, state, or continent. The case of Gab (Coaston 2018), promoted as the "free speech social network," is probably one the most in point yet. While these issues are becoming more and more burning in the present era of fake news, misinformation, and mass digital political propaganda, they fall beyond the scope of this chapter and will hopefully be addressed in future research.

Conclusions

This dissertation has set out to examine the spread of popular nationalism in online conversations from a sociolinguistic and critical discourse analytic perspective. The four analytical chapters have demonstrated the key importance of language for the production and spread of nonelite political discourses that permeate the *Western Daily* discussion forum. They have also investigated the phenomenon of nonelite political actors who become active in digital spaces and, consequently, become ideological opinion leaders. As they attempt to promote their worldviews and encourage others to embrace their opinions, they become leading carriers of popular nationalism. Since nationalist thinking is by definition exclusionary, this inadvertently leads to ideological conflicts, which can take the form of repetitive othering (chapters 1 and 2), verbal violence and overt hateful speech (chapter 3), or constructing discriminatory narratives about fellow discussants (chapter 4). Eventually, it becomes clear that popular nationalism in digital spaces breeds disagreement, factionalism, and, more nationalism as a result.

The larger question driving this study was: What is the role of language in the emergence and spread of hateful speech in online spaces? As my analysis has demonstrated, language plays a paramount role when it comes to verbal violence and hateful speech. The three major trends identified in my data—othering, hateful speech, and narrativizing—are as common in the *Western Daily* forum as they are in other digital spaces where political discourse is produced. As I have shown, language use in text-based online conversations is instrumental for constructing and performing identity in the context of political discussions (that is, those that broadly have to do with the idea of power). My functional analysis of linguistic data points to several conclusions regarding the role of language in the production and spread of popular nationalism in digital spaces:

1. Linguistic othering results in the discursive construction of identities (chapter 1),

2. Repeated associations of people with socioculturally charged language varieties through sociolinguistic approximation lead to discrimination (chapter 1),

3. Neutral words can be charged with emotional value and become negative labels (chapter 2),

4. Repetition of keywords builds bridges between the offline and online worlds (see chapter 2),

5. In Polish, suffixation facilitate pejoration and discrimination through language (chapter 2),

6. Single words or phrases can function as powerful ways of representing individuals or communities through the repeated use of sociolinguistic labels (chapter 2),

7. Linguistic othering results in verbal violence and hateful speech (see chapter 3),

8. Metaphors of movement away increase social distance, facilitating hateful speech (chapter 3),

9. Language can be used as a means of social control (chapter 4),

10. Single words and/or phrases can acquire narrative-like features to become sociolinguistic labels that lead to the emergence of "mini-narratives" (chapter 4).

While these findings show that language and language use are the primary tools of popular nationalism, they also point to important recommendations concerning online discussion forums and social media platforms in general. These include issues of anonymity, content moderation, societal harmfulness, verbal violence, hate speech and hate crimes, among others, which are also

relevant for larger societal phenomena such as nationalism, racism, populism, interethnic violence, and the phenomenon of divided nations (as of 2020, visibly present both in Poland and the United States). Thus, my dissertation suggests that:

1. online anonymity leads to disinhibition,

2. content moderation is necessary to curtail the spread of online hate,

3. nationalism breeds more nationalism,

4. popular nationalism can be as socially harmful as mainstream nationalism,

5. nonelite political actors strategically use online spaces to amplify their message.

Since billions of people now regularly use participatory social media (including but not limited to online discussion forums), these suggestions and recommendations are pertinent to large social media companies, smaller online publishers, lawmakers and policymakers, and, finally, everyday users. While my analysis was firmly rooted in the ongoing Polish-Silesian conflict over identity, the results of this dissertation are emblematic of some larger processes taking place within the European Union, in Europe, and the Northern Atlantic in general. Thus, I hope that my findings can provide an intellectual stimulus for scholars, students, and professionals interested in the intersection of popular nationalism, participatory social media, and language in the early twenty-first century. Because the dynamics and processes described in this dissertation can be extrapolated to and/or contrasted with similar cases from other Euro-Atlantic contexts (cf. the *szlezjer* narratives in Poland vis-à-vis the idea of "bad hombres" in the United States, which represents another example of sociolinguistic approximation), the present study is intended as one small step in the larger enterprise of scrutinizing, analyzing, and explaining popular nationalism and online political discourse to the public.

Research question

This dissertation started with the following research questions that drove the subsequent data

collection, analysis, and elaboration:

RQ: How nonelite political actors instrumentalize multiparticipant conflict discourse on

Silesian identity to construct othering representations of their ideological enemies, and

what are the implications for our understanding of the concepts of identity, language, and

nation?

Multiparticipant conflict discourse

As the dissertation has demonstrated, the *Western Daily* discussion forum represents an arena of

pervasive conflict discourse, in which nonelite political actors instrumentalize language to drive

social change. Consequently, the online activity of pro-Silesian and anti-Silesian posters

politicizes the issue of Silesian identity in contemporary Poland, turning it into a political

struggle that is done with linguistic means. They focus on language and the different ways in

which the relative plasticity of Polish as a synthetic language helps them achieve their immediate

political goals. This preoccupation with language and discourse—at times driven to obsession—

results in the emergence, spread, and persistence of the three linguistic strategies described

above: othering, hateful speech, and narrativization.

In all this, the asynchronous, interactive, and multi-participatory social media serve a

nontrivial role in this enterprise as they provide a virtually unrestricted arena for posters from

both factions to communicate their views to the public, influence it, and even repeatedly

reprimand it for not following what those posters believe to be (ideologically) 'correct' and true.

From this perspective, this dissertation serves as a critical treatment of the nascent phenomenon of doing politics on social media through language by nonelite political actors in the early twenty-first century. As this work has shown, social media have the potential to significantly amplify nonmainstream political discourses, such as the debate on Silesian identity, which receives little attention in the mainstream Polish political discourse. Consequently, participatory social media allow nonelite political actors to craft their identities and personas (political, linguistic, ideological) in the course of the discussion, which they can then utilize to further their political goals. Because repetition remains a crucial factor for political discourse in general, such conditions gave rise to repetitive linguistic performances that serve political and ideological goals. As the two factions of pro-Silesian and anti-Silesian posters morph into respective communities of practice, they normalize such performances throughout the *Western Daily* forum as apparently innocent forum discussions turn into diachronically stable political manifestations. In this manner, language, discourse, politics, and social media come together as the key factors come together to create a fertile ground for othering, verbal violence, and hateful speech.

Constructing othering representations

The four-chapter analysis shows that Silesian identity is represented an essential threat to the sociopolitical and sociocultural fabric of the Polish society, which sees itself and Poland as an ethnically, linguistically, and culturally homogenous community—both retroactively and

presently. Thus, the presence of an unrecognized, self-identified Silesian minority represents a challenge to this cognitive schema, causing a societal effect akin to that of "moral panic"[99]:

> "Societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or groups of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved (or more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible" (Cohen 2011, 1).

To cope with the post-1989 "emergence" of Silesian identity in public discourse, including digital spaces such as the *Western Daily* forum, anti-Silesian posters discursively frame it as a "threat to societal values and interests," to quote Cohen (2011), which opens the door for the variety of linguistic strategies (othering, associating, naming, verbal violence) subsequently used in direct conversations with self-identified Silesians. Consequently, the idea of Silesian identity is presented as made-up, without a durable, recognizable, or glorious past behind it, and invented for political activity. The latter, in turn, allows for establishing a link between the idea of Silesian identity and Silesian regional activism, most often exemplified with the Silesian Autonomy Movement and the struggle for regional autonomy.

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[99] As Johnstone (1994, 10) posits, the rhetorical strategy of repetition "can be a very basic ordering principle that is reassuring." Viewed from this perspective, it can then be argued that constant repetitions of similar tropes and themes when discussing self-identified Silesians helps members of the anti-Silesian camp to do away the moral panic related to their "emergence" and ongoing activism in the public arena in post-1989 Poland. One of the most common examples of such repetition is the trope of "camouflaged German option" that is pervasive in the collected data (see chapter 2 in particular).

Nonelite political activism

Similarly, pro-Silesian posters and, more broadly, self-identified Silesians are portrayed as

nationally 'suspect' actors of undesired change who have instrumentalized a pre-existing

attachment to the Silesian *Heimat* to achieve their economic and political goals. Here, one

important finding of this dissertation needs to be stressed. My ongoing research on the topic and

analysis of hundreds of online conversations on Silesian identity and minority indicate that the

idea of a Silesian identity per se does not pose a threat to the stability of the Polish society,

nation, and state. Instead, it is the *dissociation* of self-identified Silesians from the rest of the

Polish society by way of rejecting a straightforward equation of Silesians as a regional inflection

of Poles that stirs controversy, causing a negative backlash against Silesian identity and all things

Silesian. As my data show, declaring a Silesian identity while framing it under the larger

umbrella of being Polish does not pose a problem, unlike attempts to establish Silesians as a

separate and independent community.[100]

Throughout this dissertation, it is evident that Silesian independence (whether ethnic,

linguistic, or other) does not find a palatable societal reception as evidenced in the *Western Daily*

discussions. Instead, Silesian identitarian activism, augmented in the public space and the Polish

mediascape of the early twenty-first century by long-term involvement of the Silesian Autonomy

Movement in the linguistic, cultural, and political advocacy for self-identified Silesians, is

viewed with suspicion. First of all, this is because of the *dissociative* character of the Silesian

identitarian movement explained in the previous paragraph. Secondly, the reason for this type of

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[100] This way of thinking is also present in some comments about the results of the 2011 census, which claim that the numerical strength of Silesians is much smaller than 847,000 because most respondents declared both Silesian and Polish ethno-national identification (about 50% of all Silesian declarations) while less than half of them only declared to be Silesian. The 2011 final results confirm this trend (GUS 2015).

societal reception lies in the sociohistorical circumstances that make Silesia—and, by extension,
its residents—a rather unique community within the twenty-first-century Polish state. Their
distinctly different historical and political experiences throughout the last several centuries have
on one hand facilitated the development of a unique regional awareness, but on another have
contributed to the ambivalent stance with which Polish authorities—and later ethnic Poles—
approached the complex sociocultural fabric that self-identified Silesians call their own. This
approach became apparent in the fears that led to the establishment of post-WW2 national
verification in the region (see the *Silesia, Silesian, Silesians* sub-section of the Introduction) and
that, to a large degree, resurfaced in Poland after the fall of communism, finding their fullest
expression in the now-notorious passage about the "camouflaged German option" (see chapter
2). As I have shown in chapter 2, this particular representation of self-identified Silesians has
leaked into the online world, finding its support and continuation among some of the anti-
Silesian posters in the *Western Daily* forum. In most recent years, the idea of Silesians as
"camouflaged Germans" or actors of undesired sociopolitical change working against the Polish
state but for the benefit of Germany became magnified by the growth of anti-German sentiment
in the country and mainstream political discourse in particular (see chapter 2, but also (Sitnicka
2019).

Implications on identity

As for broader implications of the research question posed in the Introduction, the conclusions
are both synchronically and diachronically indicative of larger ideological conceptualizations and
cognitive schemas that have pervaded the Polish national and collective mindset for the last two
centuries or so. Thus, the online conversations in the *Western Daily* forum indicate that identity

is still largely seen as something stable, innate, and essential to the person, as evidenced by the arguments of the anti-Silesian camp. In the words of one of the posters, Silesians "can even self-identify as Martians, freedom and democracy do exist, after all. But, at the end of the day, they're doomed to assimilation." This vision clashes with the more constructivist approach to identity, demonstrated by members of the pro-Silesian camp who use the *Western Daily* forum to consciously construct and perform their identity. These divergent conceptualizations of identity are at the foundation of the ongoing and seemingly never-ending debate on Silesian identity. In the eyes of the anti-Silesian posters, ethno-national identity is only spacious enough to accommodate the Polish national identification combined with a local or regional identification such as Silesian (a vertical perspective) but does not offer enough flexibility to allow for two or more identifications, with each one largely independent of the other one(s) and on fairly equal levels (a horizontal perspective). This finding resembles the sociocognitive pattern that Pasieka (2015, 9) identified in her ethnography of Poland-based religious minorities and labeled as "hierarchical pluralism," defined as "a changeable configuration of social relations that both allows for and acknowledges difference, while simultaneously making it clear which (ethnic/religious) group is dominant and norm-defining."

Implications on language

As for language-related issues, the ideas and perspectives expressed in the collected data similarly leave little room for ambiguity. For the non-Silesian speakers, the Silesian language variety overwhelmingly remains nothing but a Polish dialect, with some regional peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, which nevertheless do not make it a separate Slavic language. Instead, Silesian is viewed as a local curiosity that needs not be approached seriously and systematically,

since it lacks the history of independent existence as a full-fledged language (Borowski 2018b).

Judging from the conversations examined, anti-Silesian posters exhibit a rather confused stance

toward the Silesian language variety and their confusion increases with the pro-Silesian posters'

attempts at explaining why Silesian is not merely a Polish dialect. The use of Germanisms (or

replacement of Slavic words with their Germanic equivalents) is approached with suspicion and

largely viewed as politically motivated attempts at establishing a durable difference between

Polish and Silesian speakers, as evidenced by the excerpt below. Thus, the issue of language is

quickly politicized and becomes an unresolvable conundrum.

> Why do they lecture Silesians that we count eins, zwei, drei? Why "das bunny brings
>
> präsents"? Who, aside from Roczniok, talks like that? What kind of gibberish is that? (see
>
> the analysis in chapter 2).

Implications on nation

Finally, the data examined in this dissertation allows to draw some conclusions about the societal

imagination concerning the Silesian minority and the Polish nation, as studying the minority

always necessarily involves studying the majority against which it defines itself. In the case of

online discussions on Silesian identity in the *Western Daily* forum, the concept of nation (and

people) emerges as an equivalent of the ultimate community of paramount importance. Thus,

collectivism goes before individualism as all members of the national community are required to

put national interest before individual interest. This way of thinking is also pervasive in the

analyzed data, as pro-Silesian posters are routinely accused of working against the Polish nation

and state. In the eyes of anti-Silesian posters, Silesian identitarian activism harms and threatens

the Polish national community, which must be kept strong, united, and unified, the implicit argument goes. Given Poland's turbulent history and experiences of political subjugation to more powerful neighbors, this belief in the unquestionable necessity for national unity frames almost all discussions about the harmfulness of Silesian ethnic, linguistic, and political activism in the country. The fears of secession, cultivated due to the experience known in Polish historiography as Partitions of Poland (1795–1918), are further fueled by the borderland status of Silesia throughout the centuries and the Polish-German competition over the region. Since the postulate of autonomy put forward by the Silesian Autonomy Movement is by the Polish public opinion often confused with outright separatism, this paves the way to framing the Silesian identitarian activism as potentially threatening the territorial integrity of the Polish state, resulting in a further backlash against the ideas proposed by the Silesian minority.

<center>Stancetaking in non-Anglophone settings</center>

Besides its contribution to the broader field of Polish studies, this dissertation has also produced some noteworthy results pertinent to the area of sociocultural linguistics. Most importantly, the dissertation has pointed to the variety of linguistic instantiations of stancetaking that go beyond the original proposition based on English-language examples. Aside from identifying four major discursive modalities of stancetaking present in the collected data, the analysis has also determined three linguistic instantiations of stancetaking. These include (1) nouns as markers of stance, (2) neologisms, and (3) the related process of derivation that facilitate the process of taking a stance in the *Western Daily* forum.

In the original formulation of stancetaking by Du Bois (2007), much attention was devoted to verbs (especially verbs of thinking that serve as natural markers of stance in English-speaking cultures) and adjectives. Focusing on mostly Polish (and sometimes mixed Polish-

Silesian, Silesian-German, Polish-German, or just Silesian) data, this dissertation has taken the concept of stancetaking to a non-Anglo-centric setting to uncover that the work of taking a stance may as well be performed by other parts of speech, in particular nouns. In the *Western Daily* forum, nouns and nominal phrases are among the top linguistic tools used by members of the pro-Silesian and anti-Silesian camps to promote their worldviews. In doing so, they either employ the modality of othering (e.g., *Paljaki* vs. *Ślonzojcze* in chapter 1), associating (e.g., *Der* [*Western*] *Daily* in chapter 2), or naming (e.g., *szlezjerki* in chapter 4). Regardless of the modality used, all such examples demonstrate how nouns and nominal phrases can and do function as markers of subjective stances toward the topic of the discussion and/or the discussants themselves. Since online discussions on Silesian identity are highly ideological, nouns and nominal phrases marking stance are also ideologically motivated. Interestingly, all such instances of taking a stance are constructed negatively, that is, they all mark negative stances through a range of attitudes that can be represented on a spectrum from disinterest and disregard (low level of involvement, e.g., *Jorguś* 'Georgie' instead of *Jerzy* [Gorzelik]) through sarcasm, irony, and ridicule (medium level of involvement, e.g., *Szlyzjerland* 'land of *Schlesier*s' instead of *Śląsk* 'Silesia') to outright insults (high level of involvement, e.g., *Volksdeutsch*s).

In this capacity, neologisms occupy a particular place. Since the *Western Daily* represents a text-only discussion forum, this has heightened the posters' awareness of language use and linguistic forms used in the ongoing discussions that require them to get their message across and, hopefully, do it forcefully enough so that their arguments need no repetition. While fortifying your communication in such a way is one of the possible solutions, another one is to take a more refined approach by crafting apparently neutral messages using ideologically significant keywords such as, for instance, *szlezjer* and the whole discourse behind it. As this

dissertation shows, this neologism has become a pronounced marker of one's stance toward the idea of Silesian identity and Silesian identitarian activism in general. Further, such a way of representing self-identified Silesians has spread in the *Western Daily* forum through the intentional derivation of even newer terms, using the word *szlezjer* as the lexical base (see, e.g., Table 6 in chapter 4). While suffixation is not as prevalent in typologically analytical languages such as English, it is very common in most Slavic languages, including Polish. Whereas the original formulation of stancetaking was not concerned with how typological differences between world language can influence the ability to take stance in language-in-use, or even uncover new ways of conveying stance through linguistic devices and processes foreign to the English language, this dissertation indicates that the typological characteristic of Polish as a synthetic language becomes the foundation for the unrestricted linguistic creativity in the collected data. This, in turn, suggests that linguistic concepts and models developed using Anglo-Western data need to be tested and evaluated in non-Anglo-Western languages and environments as well. The data analyzed in this dissertation point to derivation as a powerful linguistic tool that users of synthetic languages can exploit in interaction for numerous reasons, including identity work, disagreement, ideological distance, and, last but not least, stancetaking.

<div align="center">Limitations and further research</div>

As all works that use digital language data to study societal imaginations about salient social scientific concepts from a qualitative approach, this dissertation necessarily comes with some limitations. Firstly, there is the issue of generalizability and how universal the findings are in the context of the community of self-identified Silesians and the broader Polish society. Related to this are the issues of representability and sampling. The data collected for this dissertation was selected based on its qualitative features and not quantitative premises that would yield

statistically relevant results. In studies that deal with digital discourse and user-generated conversations, the question of sampling is commonly approached in terms of availability (convenience and/or snowball sampling) rather than equal distribution and statistical relevance. While these concerns are relevant for all works with a similar methodological approach, they nevertheless do not undermine the overall quality of the results and insights produced in the course of the four analytic chapters presented here.

With the outpour of studies dedicated to numerous topics within the domain of computer-mediated communication within the last three decades, this interdisciplinary field has greatly contributed to our understanding of various issues, including those at the intersection of language and society. Because this dissertation has taken a novel approach to old problems, it has necessarily sailed out into largely unchartered waters in search of an effective way to combine a functional linguistic approach to the study of society with the focus on digitally mediated communication. While the analysis has produced numerous insights on issues that lie at the juncture of these areas as well as some surrounding phenomena, it has merely scratched the surface given the vast amounts of data already available and still being produced. It is hoped that future research addresses these and related issues from a multitude of theoretical and methodological approaches.

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