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# Self-Identification Structure in Opole Silesia and the Kashubia: A Comparative Analysis

*Abstract:* Data from surveys made in 2005/6 in small towns in two ethnically mixed regions—Opole Silesia and Kashubian Pomerania—are compared on issue of the local/ethnic/regional/national/European identification. Two regional profiles are different. In Silesia, there are two oppositions that account for most of identifications: Slesian versus non-Silesian and Polish versus non-Polish with some Silesians considering themselves Poles. In Kashubia almost all Kashubians consider themselves Poles but differ from non-Kashubian Poles. European identity is the least important, while local one is next to it with national and ethnic dominant.

*Keywords:* identity, national, ethnic, local, European.

The political and social emancipation triggered by the end of communist rule in Poland in 1989 had many consequences. One of them was the surfacing of identity aspirations relating to national, ethnic and regional self-identification—aspirations which, although familiar, had an unknown form and scale. This article compares first the self-identifications of the populations of two little towns. One of these towns lies in Opole Silesia, i.e., that part of Upper Silesia which lost contact with Poland in the Middle Ages and in which the majority of the vernacular population opted for Germany after World War I even though it spoke Polish. The region was only incorporated into Poland in 1945. The second town inhabited by the Kashubians, an indigeneous Slavic population, lies close to the city of Gdańsk in a part of the country that belonged to Poland before the partitions in the late 18th century and after regaining independence in 1918. In Silesia after 1989, a German minority, previously legally unrecognised, "came out" and after initial hesitance its organisation was finally registered by the Polish courts. The German Minority, as the organisation is called, has a powerful position in the local and provincial (voivodeship) self-governments thanks to an electoral law privilege lowering the electoral threshold for minorities and it also has its representatives in Polish democratic parliament. These representatives do not belong to any political party and are elected from a list compiled by the German Minority electoral committee. The Upper Silesia, mostly its Eastern part that belonged to Poland after World War I witness in recent years a new struggle for identification as the new, post-1989 movement for Sile-

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sian autonomy requested recognition of separate Silesian nationality, a demand that was rejected by Polish authorities supported by European Tribunal in Strasburg. The Kashubians, meanwhile, are largely organised in the Kashubian-Pomeranian Union, an organisation which has been active since 1956 (Obracht-Prondzynski 2006). The Union is not exclusively Kashubian and adopts a regional orientation although it has legally secured Kashubian sense of distinctiveness within the Polish nation in the form of special legal status for the Kashubian language as "regional language" which it received in 2005. This way, the Kashubians are now legally a linguistic minority but not a national or ethnic minority.[1] One should mention, however, that a handful of Kashubian activists are arguing for national minority status. So in both studied areas the ethnic and national identifications are potentially contentious.

In 2005/6 I directed a series of studies of "Local Patterns of Political Culture" founded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Grant 1HO2E 03927). One of the basic operations in this program was to select localities differing as much as possible with respect to such cultural parameters as history, ethnicity and religion and then to see how various dimensions of political culture differ in the compared communities.[2] The studies were based on the following assumption. If no differences are found in such different communities then it is all the less probable that average communities in contemporary Poland will differ in this respect. The adopted methodology had the following consequence: we focused on small local communities which, of course, divert from the aforementioned average.

In most of the account I shall limit myself to the comparison of two localities, Olesno and Puck. Both places were studied by a team from Warsaw, directly supervised by myself. All the interviews were conducted in the same way, i.e., local respondents answered questions asked by students from Warsaw who were unfamiliar with local reality and local discourse but were also neutral with respect to any local disputes and animosities. The interviews were conducted as the students' summer practice and in both cases the students lived in one of the local school dormitories. Since their stay was very brief they were unable to get acquainted with the local youth. We took therefore great pains in both localities to prepare the local community for the study and took particular care to inform the local media. In Olesno these efforts were energetically supported by the parish priest but he already knew me from my earlier research visits. In Puck the regional Kashubian-language broadcasting supported the survey. In both cases the local authorities were very helpful and allowed us to draw the

[1] More detailed information could be found in the collective work edited by M. Latoszek (1990).

[2] Within this research design we chose a small town in Opole Silesia, Olesno, one which the present author had already studied in the nineteen-seventies. In 2005 a field study was conducted in Olesno by a group of students of the Institute of Applied Social Sciences, Warsaw University, under the supervision of Dr J. Arcimowicz from our Chair. That same year a survey was also conducted on small random samples using part of a questionnaire which I had prepared for use on both sites, with the addition of a group of items of specific interest to local teams conducting studies in Cieszyn (headed by Professor Halina Rusek from the Cieszyn Branch of Silesian University), Wejherowo (headed by Professor Marek Latoszek from the Medical Academy, Gdańsk) and Ostrów Mazowiecka (headed by Dr Katarzyna Dzieniszewska-Naroska from the Warsaw Polytechnic). In order to gain a fuller picture of the situation in Pomerania, a group of students from Warsaw University supervised by Dr Beata Łaciak from our Chair conducted another survey in Puck in maritime Kashubia in 2006.

interviewees from address lists of the local inhabitants. Though, on surface Olesno is openly divided along Polish-German line with accompanying animosities, we had more refusals in Puck, some of them quite brutal, but on the other hand a lot of the randomly selected respondents were absent in both communities, probably because they were working abroad.

The questionnaire contained a number of questions on the local community, the functioning of local democracy and democracy in Poland. Although early in the questionnaire there was an open question concerning various internal divisions within local community, it was not until the end of the interview that the interviewer enquired about identity in general, national and religious identities then presented a forced-choice question concerning the order in which the respondent identified with various territorial and ethnic communities. This article will focus on the responses to the last question and then go on to compare "Silesian" and "Kashubian" identities, i.e., the two basic, distinctive identities in each of the studied regions.

The question which presents the respondents with several possible identifications and requests them to rank-order them from first to fourth is constructed in such a way as to give more than four choices so at least one identity must be omitted. All the identifications have two extremes: the local community and the European community (not in the political sense because when we ask respondents to say whether they consider themselves to be "Europeans" we are not making any assumptions as to the boundaries of Europe). These are two extremes, the narrowest (most local) identification and the broadest European) identification but the first shared point is "Polish" identification which can, of course, overlap with the "European" one (Poles scattered all over the world) although it would be more reasonable to view it as narrower than the "European" one (all Poles come from Europe). Moreover, in practice respondents were sometimes refusing the order to rank in order forcing students to record two, and in few cases more identities as of the same rank. This we accepted as social fact of significance.

## Identification Space in Opole Silesia[3]

Olesno is a county town. Apart from Olesno, there are six other administrative districts in the county. Olesno county has over 20 thousand inhabitants and the town itself has 10.6 thousand. Prior to 1945 this little town did not lie in Poland but in Germany and, under the name of Rosenberg, belonged to the Opole regency. A plebiscite conducted in 1920 tilted the scales in the German direction but the Polish minority was very numerous.[4] The Soviet troops burned seventy percent of the town and the new authorities were very suspicious of any inhabitants left as Poles in the town and its vicinities. This suspicion bred hostility and from the mid fifties on a constant stream of locals, even from families which had fought gallantly for a Polish Silesia, emigrated

[3] For a more in-depth discussion of these findings see: J. Kurczewski (2006).

[4] For a discussion of the complicated history of evolution and transformation of ethnic consciousness in Silesia cf. e.g., Kamusella, 1998.

to Germany. To this very day there has been a demographic balance between the indigenous population and newcomers from Central Poland or the lost East Territories and their descendants. In the days of the Polish People's Republic this distinction found its official expression in the 'autochthon'/'newcomer' dichotomy, no demonstrations of German nationality were allowed, it was forbidden to speak German an German spelling of first names and surnames was also prohibited. Emigration to the German Federal Republic was seriously discouraged and impeded providing Polish communist authorities with an argument in financial negotiations with Western Germany to which people were willing to migrate. Attachment of Silesian Olesno to the indigenously Polish Częstochowa voivodeship (province) despite the lobbying of the Silesians (as much as they could under the circumstances) under Gierek's governance was another act of Polonisation of these territories. In 1989, the "autochthons" who made up almost half of the urban population and the vast majority of the village population defined themselves as "German minority." In the face of the Poles' political fragmentation and weaker mobilisation, this "German minority"—or simply "Minority" as it is called in the local vernacular—has been winning the local elections and governing the town and county since 1989. Disputes over provincial (voivodeship) and county affiliation are nothing new except that in the days of totalitarian socialism they were concealed from the public and arbitrarily resolved by the central authorities. Just as Olesno's state affiliation with Poland had been contested since 1918, so too has Olesno's provincial affiliation been a bone of political contention in the final decades of the Polish People's Republic. This dispute was finally resolved after 1989, to the Silesians' liking. Olesno returned to its historical links with Opole and is now part of the Opole voivodeship but although it used to be a Silesian enclave in the Częstochowa voivodeship it now has a purely Polish enclave in its jurisdiction and its new Olesno county, i.e., Praszka, a town which for centuries used to belong to Poland.

According to the inhabitants' estimate, slightly half of the town's population belong to the German minority and in the nearby villages this proportion increases to even 80–100 percent. Despite the constant outflow to Germany, these proportions are more or less the same as in the nineteen-seventies. The remaining inhabitants are Poles from families who came here after World War II from the lost Eastern Territories or neighbouring regions (Częstochowa voivodeship, the Coal Basin). In spite of the 2002 national census it is still impossible to determine the proportions of different nationalities exactly because the only available data are data for the whole administrative district, i.e., the "German" village and the "Polish" town. We must also remember that national identity has always been fluid in these parts. Families of the Silesian insurrectionists and Polish plebiscite activists also sometimes chose the German option in socialist Poland in order to emigrate to the Western Germany.

Large industrial plants have always been scarce in the town, but the unemployment rate is low (8%) as many people work in Germany or in Holland (some work illegally or find legal jobs by themselves but there are also many firms which organise groups who work legally in Holland, provided they have German passports).

Ever since the first free self-government elections in 1990 representatives of the Social-Cultural Society of People of German Origin has had the majority in the

town council (and since 1998 also in the county council then created). At provincial and local level, the Society formed a coalition with ruling Right or ruling Left but most of the time the posts in the local government (mayor, deputy mayor, chief of the district authorities, presidents of the councils) have been filled by members of the Society. This organisation established in 1990 claims about 1900 members who come from Olesno and its vicinities. These are members of very different ages—from teenagers to 80–90-year-olds. In its first few years of existence the Society organised German language courses (because the post-war generation often had very poor command of the language or did not speak it at all). It also conducted various cultural activities and advocated for minority rights in town e.g., for church services in German or a bilingual school. This school sponsored by German government was opened in 1995 and has the opinion of the best school in town. The Society has organised excursions to Germany and camps for school children. It has also helped people to acquire German citizenship. The Society receives money for its activities from Germany. Adult members must pay fees. Additional funds come from the Town Council and, according to members, most of it subsidises the 45-person German minority choir. The Society officials praise the cooperation with the local authorities, stressing their own contribution to the town's socio-cultural life and the organisation and funding of all the most important celebrations. The Society president proudly emphasises that the "choir performs on various occasions, even including May 3rd which is a Polish holiday, and also sings Polish songs."

In our questionnaire the analysis of identity is very simple and is based on responses to the five options which I provided: "Pole," "German," Silesian," "European" and "Olesnoite." In this set reference to Olesno is the most localised option and reference to Europe is the least localised option. If we look at the general distribution of responses to this question we see that national options predominate but if we look more closely we can see that the predominant national identity is "Polish." The majority of respondents (69.3%) first identitify themselves as "Poles," then as "Olesnoites" (14.7%), then "Silesians" (13.4%) and finally as "Germans" (2.6%), just after "Europeans (3.9%).

Table 1

**Declared Identity of the Olesno Population (n = 231), 2005**

| Identity | First | | Second | | Third | | Fourth | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Pole | 160 | 69.3 | 14 | 6.0 | 15 | 6.5 | 7 | 3.0 | 196 | 84.8 |
| German | 6 | 2.6 | 13 | 5.6 | 6 | 2.6 | 9 | 3.8 | 34 | 14.7 |
| Silesian | 31 | 13.4 | 35 | 15.1 | 18 | 7.8 | 10 | 4.3 | 94 | 40.7 |
| Olesnoite | 34 | 14,7 | 90 | 39.0 | 39 | 16.9 | 4 | 1.7 | 167 | 72.3 |
| European | 9 | 3.9 | 32 | 13.8 | 56 | 24.2 | 33 | 14.3 | 130 | 56.3 |
| Other | 1 | | — | — | — | — | 1 | | 2 | 0,9 |
| None | — | — | 47 | 20.3 | 97 | 42.0 | 167 | 72.3 | | |

NB. In the table the percentages in the columns need not to sum up to 100% as some respondents have decided to rank equally different identities.

"Polish" identity also predominates within the studied set of self-definitions. Of all the "Polish" self-definitions (196) the vast majority, i.e., 160 (81.6%), are first self-definitions compared with 17.6% "German," 33% "Silesian," 20.4% "Olesnoite" and only 6.9% "European" firsts. On the other hand, if we look at the fourth choices of self-definition "European" is the most frequent one (33 of the 47 fourth choices; 57.9%) whereas all the other options are very rare—"Polish 12.3%, "German" 15.8%, "Silesian" 17.5% and "Olesnoite" 7.0%. The identity most frequently indicated as first is "Polish" and the identity least frequently indicated as first but most frequently indicated as fourth is "European."

The next interesting finding is the usually secondary nature of the remaining self-identifications, particularly the local one. Most "Olesnoite" self-identifications (53.9%) are second choices, 23.3% are third choices, 20.3% are first choices and 3% are fourth choices. "Olesnoite" self-identifications are also the most frequent second choices (39%). But most of the "German" (38.2%) and "Silesian" (37.2%) self-identifications are also second choices. The statistically most probable choices, therefore, are local as second and "European" as third or fourth if it is mentioned at all.

Of course from the point of view of local policy the most interesting issue is the "German issue." Ever since 1989. the minority organisation, thus defined, was playing a crucial part in local and regional politics and winning the elections.

In the context of these events the absence of 'Germans' and the relatively numerous presence of 'Silesians' among our interviewees from Olesno is rather surprising. Olesno lies on former German territories (the pre-war Reich) and is within the range of organised influence of "German Minority." Unfortunately our study did not include Olesno's rural surroundings. Yet when I first studied the population of Olesno in the nineteen-seventies people always said that, culturally speaking, the surrounding villages were German. Nearly every village has a Deutsche Freundschaftskreis (DFK) building and candidates from the German Minority list always win the elections. Dr Henryk Czech (2006) who studied the Olesno villages says in his doctoral dissertation that this organisation is the only organisation other than the Voluntary Fire Brigade that his respondents join but on the other hand he says that in the interview which accompanied his questionnaire study of the local population if people mentioned it at all (Czech himself did not ask), they nearly always defined themselves as "Silesians" (with just a few exceptions). As far as local Poles are concerned, most of them are convinced that the "Germans" are not Germans at all, they are 'Silesians' who "pretend" that they are Germans for purely instrumental reasons (to be eligible for a German passport raising their chances of finding a job in the West).

German identity is the least frequently indicated identity, both in terms of total indications (15%) and first self-identification (3%). This finding is very surprising in the Olesno context and calls for further explanations.

The first explanation is both methodological and political. National identifications are even more susceptible to biases caused by caution than tax returns, all the more so that there is no way of checking them objectively. Our interviewers were Poles from Warsaw and they introduced themselves as students of Warsaw University. This was to guarantee greater objectivity. However, to declare who one is to one's neighbours

is one thing but to declare it to young people from afar is quite another thing. Ideally, one should interview the respondents once again, using German students, but then they would not be able to communicate with the majority of interviewees. Besides we still would not learn the "true" identity of the Olesnoites because the question itself does not make sense. Part of the Olesno population give more or less stable answers to the question of identity but part of them give a variety of answers depending on the context. By context I mean, for example, the setting and the definition of the person to whom one gives one's declaration. I asked an American student on her visit to Germany to come here and talk with German-speaking Olesnoites. In her opinion:

> My overall impression of the Silesian area is that there seem to be three different groups. Those that identify strongly as German, those they advocate a strong Silesian identity, and those that seem either to identify as Polish or not to identify at all. Many of the people I met who claimed the German identity were of an older generation. It was surprising that their children would tell me their parents were of the German minority, but they themselves did not seem to feel that they were also a part of this group. That is to say that the older generation seem to speak German and claim German-ness, whereas their children viewed themselves as Polish or did not identify at all with that group.
>
> Those that I met that self-identified as Silesian, seemed to claim their own ideological territory, staking a place between Polish and German. This group did not see its traditions as solely German, Czech, Polish, but rather a unique mixture of all various cultures that made Silesian an autonomous minority (Woodruff 2006).

This leads us towards the second explanation in national terms and the controversy about Silesian self-identification is important from this point of view. Polish courts consistently refuse to recognise Silesian national minority despite the thriving Movement for Silesian Autonomy led by dr Jerzy Gorzelik. Both in the press and in individual conversation "German Minority" activists reject Silesian competition and in this respect they and the "Poles" are like-minded. Meanwhile the 2002 national census revealed a very large "Silesian minority" (173 thousand), much larger than all recognised national minorities (including the German national minority — 153 thousand) and ethnic minorities. The "Silesian minority" is largely located in the Silesian voivodeship whereas the "German minority" is largely located in the Opole voivodeship. This distinction roughly coincides with the border which divided Upper Silesia into Polish and German Upper Silesia between the wars.

As we see, the Olesnoites are much more prone to call themselves "Silesians" than to refer to the German identity which has been officially recognised since 1989 even though both German Minority activists and Polish politicians say there is no room for this third orientation. "He's a Silesian, one of our folks!" or "She's a Silesian" are typical ways of referring to one's neighbours, known or unknown. But who are the Silesians? We asked the respondents directly to say what this means and we got slightly different answers depending on who the respondent was—a "local" autochthon (indigenous inhabitant) whose family lived in Olesno or whereabouts before 1945 or an equally local "newcomer" whose parents or he/she himself came to this part of the country from former, pre-war Polish territory.

The newcomers are more likely to pay attention to the German identity or faked identity of the Silesians. Particularly noteworthy is the newcomers' tendency to describe Silesians aggressively and accuse them of pretending to be German for money's

sake. Other newcomers have had enough of the autochthons' tendency to emphasise their distinctness and are opposed to such differentiation of the local population, e.g., "I don't know what to say because I don't like these distinctions. I think that if we live in Poland we're Poles, these minorities get my goat. We're a family."

The autochthons, meanwhile, are defensive about their Silesian identity. Their best defence is to make it clear that Silesian identity is objective. Silesians are born that way. This argument will not do of course when we consider that people whom the autochthons do not recognise as Silesians have been born on their doorstep, so to say, for many decades.

When the autochthons say "Silesian" they are very often referring to their land but this is just a small fragment of a larger whole encompassing ancestors and traditions: "here is my fatherland, my family home, it's here that I am to feel connected to the land, I've been living here for many generations," "We were born here, we love this land and here we are like the Varsovian who loves Warsaw, the Cracovian—Cracow, and the highlander will only feel at home in the mountains," "We're at home here, whatever your like, it doesn't matter; if you're OK as a person then everything is OK," another respondent explains to the student interviewer.

Sometimes a name will do, a toponym which distinguishes the group from other groups: "it means to live in Silesia," "I'm a Silesian because I was born here, in Silesia," "we've been here for centuries, this was Silesia, my parents come from Silesia," "that someone was born in Silesia" "that you live in the Silesian land," "to be born in this land, that's how one becomes [Silesian] and that's how it is, you can't change it," "it means to be from the Silesian land. This is where you were born and where you lived for many years."

At other times the accent is put on the region: "to live in Silesia and identify with this region as one's own." Or it may take the more extreme form of Silesian patriotism: "to have one's own roots, one's own identity, to love one's region. This is my fatherland. I simply love it. This is my country." Another respondent puts it more simply but voices his political postulate more vociferously: "I live here just as others were born, like the Highlanders or the Kashubians, here in this land, a local citizen, I would like there to be autonomy," "This is a region, a small fatherland, attachment to one's ancestors, tradition, culture, you must respect that"—another one appeals. Of the 91 respondents who could be indisputably qualified as autochthons 47, i.e., more than half, mention the local land in a more or less ramified way. Of course we cannot take such calculations literally.

Other elements mentioned include genealogical origin, customs, speech, ethos, history and identity. Although Polish linguists and politicians do not recognise the Silesian dialect as a separate language, 16 autochthons and 15 newcomers mention linguistic distinctness. Respondents also mention different origin and tradition, customs and values. In other words, we have a conglomerate of different elements. The most obvious element is what they call "roots" meaning genealogical rooting in the land with a long line of ancestors. Neighbours, even those who were born in Olesno and whereabouts, are not Silesians because they cannot prove their Silesian pedigree. "It passes from generation to generation, you are born and bred a Silesian, and that's

that," says one autochthon. Just after the war it seemed that such distinctions would soon disappear but we now see that continuous group endogamy and difference in social situation may lead, as they do in many traditional societies, to the division into "host" and "newcomer" clans for centuries to come and this need not mean mutual discrimination. To be born "here" is a necessary condition and therefore anyone who was born "there," not in a Silesian family, does not automatically qualify as a Silesian.

> Two groups of people of different traditions, origins and social attitudes have come together on the bank of the Oder [river]. Newcomers from over the Bug have met with those who have been seated on the Oder since the Piast era. How will their mutual relations evolve? Will the two live side by as two different communities with different cultures or will a common community begin to develop?

wrote Stanisław Ossowski (1984: 132) who initiated the sociological study of the post-war Opole region. Those Polish sociologists who were familiar with the reality of the Western Territories anticipated that the shock of the initial contact between the Silesians and the newcomers would soon pass but within just a few years of Ossowski's study a younger colleague of his, Stefan Nowakowski, who was conducting a systematic field study of the Opole region, cautioned that negative stereotypes and antagonistic attitudes are quick to form "but take longer to disappear and they recede as social relations normalise and democratic principles in various segments of collective life are realised" (1957: 12). In other words, a second community developed alongside the autochthons after World War II. Although this new community is not as deeply rooted as the indigenous inhabitants, it too feels settled. Hence some newcomers clearly have difficulty with this identity: "I was born in Silesia, this is not a national identity for me, terrain plus certain attributes—Silesian orderliness, solidarity," says one. In another response we find traces of a progressing assimilation process where newcomers unwittingly adopt the Silesian accent: "I was once embarrassed because when I was in Mazuria a lady from Warsaw asked me whether I was from Silesia—she could tell by the accent, but you see I am not Silesian." Another respondent thinks that the next generation become Silesians by right of place of birth" "well, my children are Silesians too, they were born in Opole" and yet another one "feels almost Silesian." On the other hand, the fact that the third generation of newcomers is now being born in Silesia may lead to more rigid criteria for distinguishing "real Silesians" from the rest of the population. At this point it needs to be mentioned that German law is maintaining this distinction: everyone born within the 1936 boundaries of the German Reich and their descendants are eligible to German nationality. No wonder that from the newcomers' point of view, Silesian means German or at least holding a German passport. In practice this passport, i.e., dual nationality, is what defines the Silesian.

## Identification Space in Kashubian Pomerania

Unlike Olesno, Puck is a very old Polish town though chartered in 1348 by Teutonic Order ruling then in the Pomerania. It remembers the king's clerks who looked over the Bay of Gdańsk to Gdańsk which did not belong to the historical Republic but was an autonomous town within it. After the Reformation Gdańsk became a Lutheran

town and, like the majority of its inhabitants, it remained German-speaking whereas little Puck and nearby Władysławowo, built in the 17th century, were the only ports which served the royal fleet. As we can easily guess, the Gdańsk burghers did not want Puck to develop and so it never did and after the partitions of Poland it was no more than a tiny fishing port. When Poland regained independence after World War I Puck was its only port and so as not to depend on Gdańsk a new port had to be built from scratch in Gdynia. This great development provided many jobs for the Kashubians. The indigenous Kashubian people, as most researchers now think, are a relic of the Slavonic people who once inhabited Pomerania as far as Kiel and Rügen and although they were always Polish patriots they preserved their own language difficult to follow by the Poles from other regions. The Kashubians divide themselves into the maritime (so-called Norda) Kashubians, who used to fish, and the inland (Boroviac) Kashubians who used to farm.

The population of Puck which is counted as 15 339 people—at least as far as it is represented in the random sample we studied in 2006—is three-quarters Polish-Kashubian, or Kashubian-Polish as its more principled representatives maintain, and 27% are either Poles/Pomeranians, possibly a purely regional identification also to be found among a small group of Kashubians, or Poles without any additional regional-ethnic identity. There are almost no fishermen in Puck nowadays but there is developing marina for leisure sailors as the town is one of the seaside recreation spot, though of minor importance. The distinctively German population which was once strong in the town has left Puck already after 1920 and in 1945 but most of the newcomers (like in Olesno this is about 60% in our sample) moved in from other Kashubian communities in the region.

Table 2

**Declared Identity of the Puck Population (n = 241 = 100%) 2006**

| Identity | First | | Second | | Third | | Fourth | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Pole | 161 | 67 | 38 | 16 | 19 | 8 | 16 | 7 | 234 | 97 |
| Other nationality | — | — | — | — | 1 | | 7 | 3 | 8 | 3 |
| Puckan | 45 | 19 | 59 | 24 | 67 | 28 | 40 | 17 | 211 | 88 |
| Pomeranian | 16 | 7 | 39 | 16 | 72 | 30 | 59 | 24 | 186 | 77 |
| Kashubian | 39 | 16 | 72 | 30 | 41 | 17 | 25 | 10 | 177 | 73 |
| Kociewian | 1 | | — | — | 1 | | 8 | 3 | 10 | 4 |
| European | 11 | 5 | 20 | 8 | 24 | 10 | 62 | 26 | 117 | 48 |
| Other | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 13 | 5 |

More often than in Olesno some people refused to rank strictly their identification so the percentages do not need to sum up to 100% in the columns in the above table. Just like in Silesian Olesno also, the people of Puck first identify themselves as Poles and they do so in very similar proportions (69% and 67% respectively). Kashubian identity is the second choice (30%), third, in almost equal quantities, Pomeranian and local, i.e., Puckan, fourth is European (26%) and fifth (in almost the same proportion) is Pomeranian (24%). In Puck, as in Olesno, the first identity to compete with Polish identity is Puckan identity (19%) and close on its heels—Kashubian identity (16%).

Nearly all respondents in Puck (97%) in the random sample that we interviewed identify themselves as Polish and most of this number do so first (67%).

Most Puckans (77%) identify with the Pomeranian region but this is usually their third (30%) or even fourth (24%) choice.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents indicated a local Puckan identity, usually as their third (28% or second (24%) choice, i.e., slightly higher in their identification hierarchy than Pomeranian identity.

Table 3

**Kashubian Self-identification, Puck 2006 (n = 241 = 100%)**

| Self-identification | No. | % |
|---|---|---|
| First | 39 | 16,2 |
| Second | 72 | 29,9 |
| Third | 41 | 17,0 |
| Fourth | 25 | 10,4 |
| Not indicated | 64 | 26,6 |

Kashubian identity, the one which interests us most here in comparison with the Silesian one, is indicated by the majority of respondents, nearly three-quarters (73%). This is usually their second choice (30%) but interestingly, other choices are quite evenly distributed. This means that Kashubian identity plays various roles in the individual identity packages of the Kashubians. For some it is the most important identity, for others it is further down the list, after national, regional, or local identity.

The last identity, i.e., European, is the least popular and is indicated by less than half of the Puckans (48%), usually as the fourth choice (25% of the respondents).

Most interesting, however, are the relations between Polish and Kashubian self-identification. Nearly all the Kashubians from Puck (96%) also feel that they are Poles although about one-fifth (21%) first indicate Kashubian identity and only then indicate Polish identity whereas nearly 80% of the Kashubians mention Polish identity first and Kashubian second.

## How is "Kashubian" Defined

Not everybody is able to define the term "Kashubian." Some respondents "feel it" but cannot verbalise it: "I don't know, Kashubian is Kashubian," "I'm one and that's that," "to feel Kashubian," "I simply feel one (just as I feel I am Polish)" etc.

Reference to the sense of distinctiveness, so popular in the professional literature, may result from the difficulty which we detect when someone answers "You have to feel Kashubian." feelings are often not enough, however, and the respondent may try to pin-point certain extrinsic elements. Those who make an effort to define so obvious a thing sometimes say how difficult this is, as for example in the following response: "it's hard to define, we like the language, we respect one another, we were born here, we stay by God."

The first and most frequent (71 responses) reference (analogous to the Silesian material) is the reference to the Kashubian land. This is sometimes lofty "to love this land," but more often than not it is descriptive ("to be born in Kashubia, live and die in Kashubia") and very far-reaching ("it's someone who was born in this region, Kashubia stretched from Kołobrzeg to as far as Elbląg, the term Kashubian referred to a tribe, not a region") although at other times it is very narrow ("to live on the peninsula"). Sometimes the main defining criterion is living h e r e, at other times this criterion is combined with other criteria ("to live here, speak the Kashubian language, identify with this group;" belonging, I was born here, brought up here;" to live in the region, know the Kashubian language, have Kashubian parents;" "to feel well in this community, I feel I am a Kashubian because I live here, I like this folklore").

To live here also means to be born here although for most respondents one must "be born here but also want to identify." One must "identify with this region and these people;" "identify with the region, have Kashubian ancestors;" "Identify with the culture, tradition, customs;" "cultivate traditions, not forget about them" etc. We will not quote all the expressions. Besides, they usually recur time and again.[5] Moreover, respondents rarely limit themselves to one reference and usually draw from a larger albeit limited set of criteria which includes: a) born in Kashubia, b) parents born in Kashubia, c) brought up in a familial-regional community of that name, d) living "here" (all implying participation in local social life), e) familiarity with Kashubian culture and f) especially with the Kashubian language, g) as well as with Kashubian customs and h) feeling Kashubian. Let me add that although some responses, not so frequent admittedly, directly indicate a criterion best expressed by one respondent as "to be born and bred a Kashubian, to have a Kashubian pedigree" for—as another respondent explained—"a hundred generations," this "Kashubian pedigree" is apparently an obvious necessary condition of Kashubian identity. In other words Kashubian identity is not only regional (the criterion mentioned most frequently), it is also territorial/genealogical. Kashubians are people who were born of Kashubians who lived in Kashubia and this identifying core may be supplemented with such additional conditions as appropriate feelings, loyalty or even cultural activity.

Particularly interesting in this context are the responses which suggest an active Kashubian identity, i.e., the specific obligation which Kashubians have, the obligation to nurture their culture: "cultivate traditions, not forget them;" "maintain traditions, dialect;" "nurture traditions, language, customs, rituals;" "find out how people used to live, what they used to do and learn the Kashubian language;" "not be ashamed of the language, use it every day;" "to live by traditions, speak Kashubian, not be ashamed of it, feel it;" "maintain traditions, inform about Kashubia, its historical heritage, everything that is best. Not be ashamed that one is Kashubian;" "cultivate Kashubian traditions and pass them on to the next generations;" "continue Kashubian traditions;" "cherish various old customs." To speak the Kashubian language is another such obligation which may be supplemented with other forms of social activity, as in the

[5] If we do quote, we do so verbatim, just as the students took it down during the interview and hence the slight variations of names, e.g., of the ethnonym "Kaszuba," "Kaszub" etc. [in Polish—*transl. note*].

response suggesting that to be Kashubian should imply belonging to the Association: "speak Kashubian, take part in the social life of Kashubia."

References to "speech," "dialect" or "language" are much more frequent in Puck than in Silesian Olesno and appear in the responses of 58 respondents (24% of the random sample in Puck and only 13% of the random sample in Olesno), a difference attributable perhaps to the fact that Kashubian is a legitimate, official, minority "regional language" and that the Kashubian language is linguistically institutionalised, i.e., normalised, taught, printed, present in the media and in academic meta-linguistic analyses, something the "dialects of Upper Silesia" have never enjoyed beyond small niches of mass, popular culture (pop music, jokes and humour columns).

In the material we gathered our attention is drawn to frequent mention of ethnic pride: "it's an honour for me (to be a Kashubian);" "the Kashubians are ordinary people but I'm proud;" "I'm proud to be a Kashubian;" its "honour and pride;" " (…) I'm proud of the tradition;" "it's a form of distinction, I'm proud to be a Kashubian;" "pride, black palate" "It means to be proud;" "(…) I'm proud that I'm Kashubian;" " "I'm proud;" "an honour, Kashubians are Poles (sic!)."

Kashubian pride is often expressed by indicating positive, individual or group personality traits: "it means to be a good and honest person;" "honest, hard-working;" "Kashubians are religious, helpful;" "a tough, candid, active nation, these are traits one acquires at home;" "hard-working, frugal;" "Kashubians are tough, responsible and honest;" "those who have a kind heart and are honest (…);" "a black palate, strong, stubborn, kind;" "to be good, tough, persevering, consistent;" "traditional, honest, resourceful." As we can see, the most frequently mentioned Kashubian attribute is honesty. Several respondents also mentioned their religiosity in such repeated expressions as: "we stay by God;" "believe in God."

One respondent said "to be a good Pole" to point out that Kashubians are more patriotic and Polish than most Poles and the phrase "to love one's fatherland and be a good Catholic" suggests that in this variant the Kashubian is an ideal Pole-cum-Catholic.

Kashubian pride also has its aggressive streak as when it is associated with famous "black palate" (spitefulness): "pride, black palate;" "he's a bit obstreperous, a hard kind of chap."

Newcomers are also able to pick out negative elements of the "Kashubian personality" and say, for example, that "as far as I'm concerned these are dishonest, spiteful tricksters;" "the Kashubians are nasty, irritable and quick-tempered types." Another newcomer is makes a more neutral observation: "Kashubians are thrifty" which may be hiding ambivalent feelings, like the respondent who notices that the Kashubians are "good people" but tend to stick to themselves: "the Kashubian is honest and good, the Kashubians stick together, keep to themselves."

Kashubian pride may also help to overcome minority complexes in the language sphere. The "dialect" complex, persecuted for decades in Polish schools in both Silesia and Kashubia, but also the object of spontaneous ridicule among the Polish majority, is expressed in such utterances as: "not be ashamed of the language, use it every day;" "not to be ashamed of the language, respect the language, speak it;" or "speak

Kashubian, not be ashamed to do so (…).” This, by the way, applies to a broader range of phenomena because to be a Kashubian means “to maintain the tradition, inform about Kashubia, its historical heritage, everything that is best. Not be ashamed that one is Kashubian.” If we carefully analyse the statement “to use the language every day, not be ashamed of one’s origins in any situation,” we find the following theme: the Kashubian language is simply an indicator of Kashubian identity and complexes need not be limited to the linguistic level, they may spread to Kashubian identity as such. Some respondents make it clear that the intention is not to oppose the Poles but to stand out among the Poles: “to be proud of one’s birthplace, like every Pole.”

## A Short Comparative Analysis

Another locality under the study was Wejherowo, county town in Kashubia, somewhat distanced from the sea. From the sociological point of view Puck ad Olesno are similar because they are small towns and Wejherowo is a larger town. But as far as ethnic structure is concerned, Wejherowo is more similar to Olesno because the much larger majority of Puckans belong to the “minority.” Therefore, in our final analysis we shall also refer to data collected in Wejherowo by Marek Latoszek and his collaborators, especially as he introduced the instrument for self-identification question in our survey (Latoszek, in print).

Table 4

**Frequency of Polish Self-identification in the Three Localities (percent of total)**

| Rank of Polish identification | Olesno (N = 231) | Wejherowo (N = 224) | Puck (N = 241) |
|---|---|---|---|
| First | 69 | 75 | 67 |
| Second | 6 | 12 | 16 |
| Third | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| Fourth | 3 | 5 | 7 |
| Total | 85 | 98 | 97 |

Almost without exception, the Kashubians in both communisties have a Polish identity, and this identity is usually their first choice whereas the Silesian Olesnoites have an exceptionally large proportion (15%) of respondents who do not identify with Poland at all although they too are a minority.

We have rather large differences between the studied communities as far as local self-identity is concerned—most frequent in Puck and least frequent in Olesno—although everywhere this is the vast majority’s choice of self-identification. More comparisons will have to be made before we can explain this difference but for the time being suffice it to say that in Kashubia, more often than in Silesia, it is much more frequently indicated as third (Wejherowo and Puck) or even fourth (Puck) whereas the proportions of respondents indicating it as their first identity is markedly different (15–19% in Kashubia compared with 39–35% in Olesno).

Table 5

**Frequency of Ethnic-regional Identification in the Three Localities (percent of total)**

| Rank of ethnic-regional identification | Olesno (N = 231) | Wejherowo (N = 224) | Puck (N = 241) |
|---|---|---|---|
| First | 13 | 8 | 16 |
| Second | 15 | 22 | 30 |
| Third | 8 | 20 | 17 |
| Fourth | 4 | 8 | 10 |
| Total | 40 | 57 | 73 |

In the communities under study ethnic identity related to the region in question is indicated as the first identity by the vast minority of respondents—fewest in Wejherowo and most in Puck. Ethnic identity is usually the second choice, after Polish identity which is first. There is, however, a clearly recognisable difference between the Silesian and Kashubian identity profiles: Silesian identity is usually second, then first order identity self-definition whereas Kashubian identity is usually second then third. This difference can also be presented differently, in quantitative terms. For 70% of Silesians in Olesno ethnic identity is their second- or third-order identity, for 33% it is their first-order identity whereas for 63% of Kashubians from Puck and 38% of Kashubians from Wejherowo ethnic identity is second or first and it is the first choice for 22% of the respondents from Puck and 14% of the respondents from Wejherowo. Ethnic identity is the more important identity for the Silesians but we also find an important and interesting difference between "Kashubian identity" in Puck and Wejherowo. For those respondents who identify themselves as Kashubians this identity is more important not in the community where they are less numerous but in the community where the majority are Kashubians. It looks as if "Kashubian identity" is not confrontational and is depreciated in the mixed Polish community.

Table 6

**Frequency of European Self-identification in the Three Localities (percent of total)**

| Rank of European identification | Olesno (N = 231) | Wejherowo (N = 224) | Puck (N = 241) |
|---|---|---|---|
| First | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Second | 14 | 10 | 8 |
| Third | 24 | 15 | 10 |
| Fourth | 14 | 33 | 26 |
| Total | 56 | 59 | 48 |

European identity is equally popular in mixed communities but less so in more homogeneous Puck. European identity is usually fourth in Kashubian communities and third in Silesian communities. In each of the studied communities it is very seldom the first identity (just in one or two cases). It is the identity of half of the population in all the studied communities.

The Silesian and Kashubian self-identification structure differ in that part of the Silesians do not feel Polish at all. We know that in public, these people call themselves "German minority" but the situation is probably more complicated. "There have

always been Silesians but they have never been treated as a nation or nationality (…) In the days when a Silesian nation state was out of the question the local inhabitants were called Poles (…) The Silesians have never had a country of their own. They have always belonged to a larger state organism (…) they have also had the opportunity to build separate "fatherlands." The smallest ones, not even coinciding with the duchies (…) of all ancient Silesia, the Silesians now live only in Upper Silesia, and they are not always the majority. It so happens that this part of the Silesians hardly even have their own dialect', writes Zbigniew Zielonka (2005: 60) and suggests that, as part of regional self-determination, people representing various traditions should co-operate. This line of reasoning differs of course from the one represented by people like Henryk Kroll (MP from German Minority in Polish Parliament) who believe in preservation of Silesian tradition within the framework of German Minority or people like Jerzy Gorzelik who advocate for the development of Silesian nationality.

Silesian sociologist Maria Szmeja (2000: 193) envies the situation of the Kashubians who, thanks to a quite energetic group of well-educated people, have managed to gain social status without precedent. She thinks that the Opole Silesians have the most difficult situation of all because they are a "borderland group," torn between two alien yet neighbouring national groups. The problem is, I think, that the institutionalisation of Silesian identity has been disturbed by the fact that both the Germans and the Poles have denied the existence of a distinct Silesian identity. Vis-à-vis the Poles, the Silesians have no support in their own cultural institutions other than the German Minority.

Nevertheless, the debates are hot within the Kashubian elite dissatisfied with the National Census of 2005 in which surprisingly few people acknowledged their Kashubian identity. One of the indigenous authors summarised the sociological research in the region conducted in 1980s and 1990s by saying that "it was established that Kashubian identity is constituted by several distinctive features: dual and clear ethnic self-identification: national-ethnic (Polish) and regional-ethnic (Kashubian), well grounded awareness of collective difference based upon own language considered as basic cultural marker. This is accompanied by attachment to home land and 'rodno zema' (equivalent in Kashubian) and specific life attitudes characterised by industriousness, pragmatism, stubbornness, ability to act under oppressive conditions, religiosity, etc." (Obracht-Prondzynski 2003:127). He quotes with approval another Kashubian sociologist, Brunon Synak who once wrote that:

> Strong Kashubian identity does not prevent from simultaneous unequivocal stressing of Polish identity. "Kashubian-ness" and "Polish-ness" as identities occur at different levels of identification (national and regional) but within the same universal cultural values […] Being not substitute to each other each of these identities may develop and strengthen with no damage to the other (Synak 1991 quoted in Obracht-Prondzynski 2003: 127).

First part of the statement applies to Silesian as well. Their traditional "Silesian" values are strikingly similar to the Kashubian ones, however the planes of identification differ, at least amongst some of them.

## Concluding Remarks

On the strength of our research findings we would like to add one more attribute to the ethnic group concept, an attribute which we believe is typical for this kind of groups, i.e., the genealogical bond which group members assume and which in fact coincide with the existing territorial bonds to create a genealogical-territorial bond whose contours are fuzzy. Ethnic groups are based on assumed "blood relations," to quote Stanisław Ossowski's classical work (1966). A person is born in a particular land, of parents who represent a particular ethnic group. Ewa Nowicka mentions "historical genealogy" and "biological-racial community" but these phrasal concepts distance us from recognition of the fact that genetic origin from group members, i.e., physiological reproduction of the group, is the most practical criterion albeit not the only one.

More important, however, in our opinion is the conclusion which flows from even as humble a study as the present one that we cannot consider ethnic, regional or national identifications two-dimensionally. Identification is a stratified phenomenon, it has many layers. One can be a German, Pole, Silesian and probably also a… Kashubian, all at once, not to mention various levels of territorial reference. True, due to historical factors, the Kashubians, definitely an ethnic group, consider themselves a subgroup of the Polish nation whereas in the Opole region we have the crossing over of identities so that some Silesians are also Poles, some are only Silesians, some are Silesians and Germans and some are all of these identities ("because I have both passports") but various specific relations cannot be ruled out. Even the Puckan Kashubians are now beginning to view their Kashubian identity as first-plan and to link it with the ideological option, alongside a second option, which respects Kashubian identity but sees it as secondary to Polish identity, not to mention those who give it a lower rank. One needs good spatial imagination to understand these subtleties and should probably discard the assumption that identities are mutually exclusive and that "group" boundaries are rigid.

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