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**National Identity and Social Welfare:
the Example of the German Minority
in Opolskie Voivodeship¹**

Introduction

The issue of national identity, which is an essential element of sociological, anthropological, cultural, historical or political knowledge, has been a huge area of reflection for many decades for researchers in the humanities and social sciences.² In the

¹ The research was carried out in the period from June to August 2019 as a part of the Social-Cultural Society of Germans in Opole (SCSG's) campaign entitled "The German minority has a value", financed by the Polish Ministry of Interior and Administration.

² B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London 1983; M. Baranowski, "Education in Times of Uncertainty. Uncertainty in Education. A Critical Approach" in: Odrowąż-Coates A., Gotswami S. (eds), *Symbolic Violence in Socio-educational Contexts. A post-colonial critique*, The Maria Grzegorzewska University, Warsaw 2017; Z. Bauman, "Identity-Then, Now, what for?", *Polish Sociological Review* 1998, No. 3; T. Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life*, Berg Publishers, Oxford 2002;

context of empirical research in recent years, national (or more broadly cultural) identity issues are increasingly being viewed from the perspective of positive psychology, focusing on the narrow dimension of psychological well-being, also referred to as subjective. The latter means “a cognitive and emotional assessment of one’s life. This assessment includes both emotional reactions to events and cognitive judgments about satisfaction and fulfilment”.³ Such an understanding of psychological well-being is, on the one hand, a useful theoretical perspective for the study of selected areas that make up the process of national identity, because it takes into account the level of satisfaction with life or the sense of belonging to a community, etc.; on the other hand, it does not exhaust the fundamental determinants of the phenomenon in question. It is primarily about “the material and social conditions in which people live, their resources and the adaptation strategies they employ”.⁴ These components, which constitute the quality of life, are an area of special interest for sociology, but more importantly, they affect subjective well-being. In other words, the perspective of the psychological assessment of one’s own life is only a fragment of the broader phenomenon of social welfare.

Taking the issue of national identity on the example of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship, the perspective of the welfare sociology was adopted, in which psychological well-being is only a fragment of the multi-faceted phenomenon of social welfare. Moreover, since social welfare is not an axiologically neutral concept, the concept of welfare scarcity was introduced, similarly to the psychological equivalent of ill-being (cf. Figure 1).

Welfare scarcity means welfare *à rebours*, i.e. the failure to meet the material and non-material needs of a given community at the individual and supra-individual level⁵, which in the context of the issue of national identification might mean, for example,

M. Castells, *The Power of Identity*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford 1999; N. Elias, *The Germans*, Polity Press, Oxford 1996; E. Gellner, *Narody i nacjonalizm*, trans. J. Hołówka, PIW, Warszawa 1991; A. Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. „Ja” i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności*, trans. A. Szulżycka, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2001; E. Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1979; E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalisms since 1780*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992; W. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1995; M. Melchior, *Spoleczna tożsamość jednostki*, ISNS UW, Warszawa 1990; A. D. Smith, *National Identity*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1991; A. Sengupta, “Who is the People? Notes on Subjectivity and the Adivasi Resistance in Lalgarh, West Bengal, India”, *Society Register* 2017, 1 (1); A.L. Strauss, *Mirrors and Masks. The Search for Identity*, The Sociology Press, San Francisco 1969; T. Paleczny, *Socjologia tożsamości*, Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM, Kraków 2008; M. Ziółkowski, R. Drozdowski, M. Baranowski, ”Utowarowienie i odtowarowienie u ujęciu socjologicznym: próba (re)konceptualizacji”, *Studia Socjologiczne* 2020, No. 3 (238).

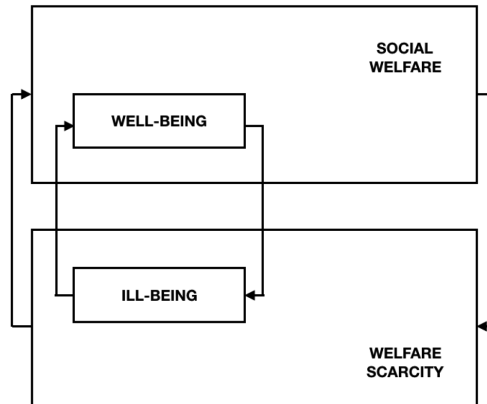
³ E. Diener, R. Lucas, S. Oishi, *Dobrostan psychiczny. Nauka o szczęściu i zadowoleniu z życia*, in: J. Czapiński (ed.), *Psychologia pozytywna. Nauka o szczęściu, zdrowiu, sile i cnotach człowieka*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2004, p. 35.

⁴ J. Czapiński, *Jakość życia Polaków w czasie zmiany społecznej 1991–1997. Raport końcowy z realizacji projektu badawczego: Związek między obiektywnymi i subiektywnymi wskaźnikami jakości życia w okresie transformacji systemowej*, Instytut Studiów Społecznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 1998, p. 2.

⁵ M. Baranowski, “The Struggle for Social Welfare: Towards An Emerging Welfare Sociology”, *Society Register* 2019, No. 3(2).

its negative consequences for a given minority (e.g. in the perspective of the dominant culture). The ill-being, in turn, accentuates “[n]egative influence including moods and emotions that are unpleasant and represent the negative reactions that people experience in response to their life, health, events and circumstances”.⁶

Figure 1. Social welfare and welfare scarcity

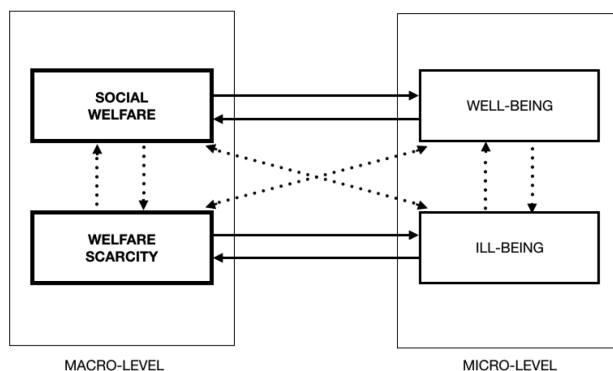


Source: M. Baranowski, “The Struggle for Social Welfare: Towards An Emerging Welfare Sociology”, *Society Register* 2019, 3(2), pp. 7–19.

The relationship between social welfare and welfare scarcity and psychological well-being and ill-being must take into account the more intuitive relationship between welfare and well-being and welfare scarcity and ill-being.

The links between the different dimensions of social welfare and its opposite, as well as well-being and ill-being, are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The level of macro and micro links between social welfare and well-being and their opposites



Source: M. Baranowski, op. cit.

⁶ E. Diener, “Guidelines for National Indicators of Subjective Well-Being and Ill-Being”, *Journal of Happiness Studies* 2006, No. 7, p. 400.

It takes into account the macro (social welfare and welfare scarcity) and micro (well- and ill-being) levels, as well as direct (continuous lines) and indirect (dashed lines) relations between the components that constitute the network of relations within the broadly understood social welfare and its opposite. Thus understood social welfare in the broadest sense will constitute a theoretical framework for the analysis of selected areas of the national identity of the German minority living in the Opolskie Voivodeship.

What is more important, there is a gap in the literature on national identity and sociologically understood welfare, because these two dimensions of society are not taken into account together in the research (which we see as a challenge worthy of theoretical undertaking).

The Construction of National Identity: a General Overview

National identification of individuals, as one of the components of identity, takes a special place in the structure of identity processes. National identification is understood as the self-determination of an individual in relation to a particular national group, which is a reference group and a related set of beliefs and judgments. The own reference group, but also a foreign group, plays a significant role in shaping identification, providing patterns of behaviour and standards of attitudes and values.⁷ The national identity of an individual is, therefore, an element reflecting both individual and collective consciousness, belonging to a group. However, group identities do not always have to coincide with individual identities. An individual at a given time may have mutually exclusive or competing identities, with increasing or decreasing significance for him/her, and other combinations, compatible to varying degrees, that create a more complex identity structure.⁸

The rich literature on the subject provides diverse approaches and definitions of the identity process.⁹ Usually, these definitions take into account selected aspects of identity, but most often they are complementary.

⁷ R.K. Merton, *Teoria socjologiczna i struktura społeczna*, PWN, Warszawa 1982, pp. 290–291, 337, 351–352.

⁸ J.M. Yinger, *Ethnicity. Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?*, State University of New York Press, Albany–New York 1994, p. 144.

⁹ H.H. Alfred, *Kollektive Erinnerungen der Deutschen. Theoretische Konzepte und empirische Befunde zum sozialen Gedächtnis*, Verlag Beltz Juventa, München 2002; J. Assman, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, 8 Aufl., Verlag C. H. Beck, München 2002; M. Castells, *Sila tożsamości*, trans. S. Szymański, M. Marody (ed.), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008, pp. 22–23; E.H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle. Selected Papers*, International Universities Press, Inc., New York 1959; A. Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość*, pp. 74–75; idem, *Stanowienie społeczeństwa. Zarys teorii strukturacji*, trans. S. Amsterdamski, Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2003, p. 81–92; M. Halbwachs, *Spoleczne ramy pamięci*, trans. M. Król, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008; H. Knoblauch, “The Communicative Turn in German Sociology of Knowledge”, *Society Register* 2019, No. 3(1); I. Kurasz, *Mniejszość niemiecka na Dolnym Śląsku. Studium socjologiczne*, NOMOS, Kraków 2015; M. Lemańczyk, *Mniejszość niemiecka na Pomorzu Gdańskim*, Instytut

The term identity is understood as “identity” and “continuity”, however, in order to determine these similarities one has to refer to “other” or “alien”, i.e. take into account both the individual’s tendency to be the same, unity (sameness) as well as the elements that prove its distinctiveness.¹⁰ National identity is then a complex system that includes a cognitive component (attitudes and knowledge about “us” and “others”) and an emotional component that determines the intensity of the bond with a given nation.¹¹

Identity is understood in this article as a process, as a subjective, self-reversible aspect of personality, co-creating welfare, which in turn is a part of – sociologically understood – social welfare.¹² In order to take into account a wider spectrum of phenomena that make up the process of identity, the research uses the concept of the “looking-glass self” of Charles H. Cooley, which is a set of images of the individual about himself created from the images of others.¹³ In this article the authors consider “reflected identity” as one of the important factors strengthening the national auto-identification of the individual.¹⁴

While a national (and/or ethnic) identity is one of many that a person can have or choose to have, whether its role will dominate or remain in the background of other identities is increasingly determined by its attractiveness and the individual’s relationship with the group. This also implies a general change in the definition of national identity as a syndrome of traits, which implies a shift from an imposed (inherited) identification to an identification that is a matter of individual choice.

The subject of analysis in the presented article is, therefore, that aspect of the individual (personal and social) identity of the respondents, which results from their sense of belonging to a national group – that is, national identification – and resulting from membership in a German minority organisation.

Due to the specific historical, socio-political and cultural context in which the identity of members of the German minority¹⁵ is formed in the twentieth and

Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 2016; P. Madajczyk, D. Berlińska, *Polska jako państwo narodowe. Historia i pamięć*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa–Opole 2008; D. Matelski, *Niemcy w Polsce w XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa–Poznań 1999; G.H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist. Edited and with an Introduction by Charles W. Morris*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1967; P. Popieliński, *Młodzież mniejszości niemieckiej na Górnym Śląsku po 1989 roku*, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 2011.

¹⁰ Z. Bokszański, *Tożsamości zbiorowe*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2007, pp. 36-27.

¹¹ Ibidem, pp. 80–81.

¹² A. Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 1996, p. 104.

¹³ C. H. Cooley, *Social Organization. A Study of the Larger Mind*, Schocken Books, New York 1963; idem, *Human Nature and the Social Order*, Schocken Books, New York 1964.

¹⁴ Broader discussion: B. Synak, *Kaszubska tożsamość. Ciągłość i zmiana: studium socjologiczne*, Wyd. Uniwersytet Gdański–Instytut Kaszubski, Gdańsk 1998; M. Lemańczyk, *Mniejszość niemiecka...*

¹⁵ D. Berlińska, *Mniejszość niemiecka na Śląsku Opolskim w poszukiwaniu tożsamości*, Stowarzyszenie Instytut Śląski–Państwowy Instytut Naukowy–Instytut Śląski w Opolu, Opole 1999; Eadem, *Die Deutschen in der Woiwodschaft Oppeln. Fragen und Antworten. Soziologische Untersuchung der Mitglieder der Sozial-Kulturellen Gesellschaft der Deutschen im Oppelner*

twenty-first centuries, the authors analyze this group in the category of borderland communities.¹⁶ In the case of the German minority in the Opole region, it is mainly the Polish-German-Czech-Silesian borderland¹⁷. The category of borderland is understood here in a broad sense as a temporary borderland, i.e. a sphere of historical-cultural contact situated in space, “[...] on which the principle of territorial assignment to a nation is limited or disappears”.¹⁸

The Silesian region is the largest concentration of non-Polish national identification on the Polish territory. According to the data of the 2011 National Census of Population and Housing (*Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań*, NSP), Opolskie Voivodeship is inhabited by nearly 165,000, i.e. 11.2% of the population of the census of non-Polish national-ethnic identifications. The neighbouring Voivodeship of Silesia is home to almost 764,000, or 52% of the total number of people declaring their national-ethnic affiliation to be non-Polish – or Polish and non-Polish at the same time. The above-mentioned voivodeships are characterised by a relatively highest share of the population with national-ethnic identities other than Polish (relatively Polish and non-Polish): they constitute 16.2% of the population of Opolskie Voivodeship and 16.5% of Silesian Voivodeship.

According to the 2002 NSP, out of a total of 38,230,080 inhabitants, 152,897 people declaring German nationality lived in Poland on the day of the census, including 147,094 people declaring Polish citizenship, i.e. the German minority. The highest number of declaring German nationality, i.e. 138,737 persons, occurred in two Upper Silesian Voivodeships – Opolskie (106,855) and Silesia (31,882). In total, they constitute almost 91% of the declarations of German nationality in Poland.¹⁹ In the

Schlesien, Haus der Deutsch-Polnischen Zusammenarbeit, Gliwice–Opole 2010; eadem, *Niemcy w województwie opolskim w 2010 roku. Pytania i odpowiedzi. Badania socjologiczne członków Towarzystwa Społeczno-Kulturalnego Niemców na Śląsku Opolskim*, Dom Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, Gliwice–Opole 2011; M. Szmaja, *Dlaczego Ślązacy z Opolszczyzny nie chcą być Polakami?*, in: Z. Kurcz (ed.), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1997; idem, *Polacy, Niemcy czy Ślązacy? Rozważania o zmienności identyfikacji narodowej Ślązaków*, in: Z. Kurcz i W. Misiak (eds), *Mniejszość niemiecka w Polsce i Polacy w Niemczech*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1994; Z. Kurcz, “Dlaczego Ślązacy stają się Niemcami?”, *Odra* 1991, No. 5.

¹⁶ R. Grathoff, “Polskie sąsiedztwa”, trans. A. Kłoskowska, *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* 1991, No. 4, pp. 7–17; M. Kula, “Pogranicze. Esej historyczno-socjologiczny”, *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny* 2018, Vol. 167, No. 1, pp. 9–21; J. Chlebowczyk, *Procesy narodotwórcze we wschodniej Europie Środkowej w dobie kapitalizmu*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa–Kraków 1975; A. Sadowski, *Wschodnie pogranicza w perspektywie socjologicznej*, Fundacja Ekonomistów Środowiska i Zasobów Naturalnych, Białystok 1995.

¹⁷ D. Berlińska, *Społeczne uwarunkowania ruchu mniejszości niemieckiej na Śląsku Opolskim: (próba diagnozy w świetle badań socjologicznych)*, Instytut Śląski, Opole 1989; eadem, *Mniejszość niemiecka...*,

¹⁸ A. Sadowski, *Wschodnie pogranicza...*, p. 14.

¹⁹ L.M. Nijakowski, *Status grup etnicznych oraz mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych w Polsce w świetle wyników Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego z 2002 roku*, in: L. Adamczuk, S. Łodziński (eds), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce w świetle Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego z 2002 roku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar-Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne, Warszawa 2006, p. 154.

case of the Opolskie Voivodeship, over 8% of the total population of the voivodeship indicated a German nationality declaration.

The results of the Census of 2011, which for the first time included complex national-ethnic identity in the questions, as compared to the Census of 2002 showed a decrease in the declaration of belonging to German nationality. We omit here the distinctiveness of the methodology of both lists, which have already been discussed in detail.²⁰ In the Census of 2011, out of the total number of 38,511,800 persons actually living in Poland, a total of 147,816 declarations of belonging to German nationality were recorded, of which 63,847 persons indicated the German declaration together with the Polish one, and 44,549 exclusively German.²¹

In the Opolskie Voivodeship, 78,600 German declarations were recorded (over 8% of the voivodeship's population), which constitutes 53.2% of the total number of persons declaring this nationality in the census, with a significantly greater decrease in the number of German identifications at the voivodeship level than in the whole country. For Opolskie Voivodeship the decrease of German declarations between the two censuses reached 28,300, while on the national scale it amounted to 5,000 persons.²² The number of German declarations in the Opolskie Voivodeship was undoubtedly influenced by several factors, the most important of which were: a high rate of foreign emigration, which resulted in a relatively highest population decrease of all the voivodeships compared to the previous census – by 4.5%, as well as a significant increase of Silesian declarations in the voivodeship, from 24,200 in 2002 to 106,400 in 2011.²³ In the Census of 2002 and Census of 2011, the Silesian auto-identifications, including double declarations, amounted to respectively: 173,153 and 846,700 persons.

It is worth mentioning that in the censuses of 2002 and 2011, the sanctioned possibility of declaring Silesian identification appeared for the first time.²⁴ Among

²⁰ L. Adamczuk, S. Łodziński (eds), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce...*; S. Łodziński, K. Warmińska, G. Gudaszewski (eds), *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce w świetle Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego Ludności z 2011 roku*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2015.

²¹ Struktura narodowo-etniczna, językowa i wyznaniowa ludności Polski – NSP 2011, <http://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2011/nsp-2011-wyniki/struktura-narodowo-etniczna-jezykowa-i-wyznaniowa-ludnosci-polski-nsp-2011,22,1.html> (19 April 2020).

²² Ibidem

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Wider discussion, e.g. D. Berlińska, T. Słodra-Gwiżdż, “Ludność rodzima i mniejszość niemiecka w Polsce. Stan badań”, *Pogranicze. Studia Społeczne* 1997, Vol. 6; M. Myśliwiec, *Ślązacy – o co i po co pytał GUS?*, in: A. Adamczyk, A. Sakson, C. Trościak (eds), *Między łękiem a nadzieją. Dziesięć lat funkcjonowania ustawy o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym (2005–2015)*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe WNPiD UAM, Poznań 2015, pp. 293–308. also E. Michna, “Narodowy Spis Powszechny Ludności i Mieszkań w 2011 r. i jego wykorzystanie w polityce tożsamości w walce o uznanie. Casus Ślązaków”, *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny* 2013, Vol. 39, Issue 2(148), pp. 135–172; L. M. Nijakowski, *O procesach narodotwórczych na Śląsku*, in: L.M. Nijakowski (ed.), *Nadciągają Ślązacy. Czy istnieje narodowość Śląska?*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2004; A. Sakson, “Mniejszość niemiecka na Śląsku w świetle Spisu Powszechnego z 2011 roku”, *„Biuletyn Instytutu Zachodniego”* 2012, No. 85; M. Śmielowska, *Tożsamości etniczne i identyfikacje narodowe wśród mieszkańców Śląska Opolskiego*, in: K. Frysztacki (ed.), *Polacy, Ślązacy, Niemcy. Studia nad stosunkami społeczno-kultu-*

the complex Silesian declarations in the 2011 census, regardless of the order of declarations, 430,800 people declared Polish identification together with Silesian, and 38,700 people declared German and Silesian. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that among the complex, national and ethnic categories according to the type of the first and second identification, there were respectively: German-Silesian (22,400 people) and Silesian-German (16,400 people) identification.

As shown by the results of the 2002 and 2011 Censuses, the gender structure of the German minority is evenly distributed and amounts respectively: 51.4% women and 48.6% men (2002), 48.5% women and 51.5% men (2001). It is generally a rural community, although between censuses the percentage has decreased from 70.5% to 58.9%. The percentage of people living in the city increased from 29.5% to 41.1%. The German minority is characterised by a higher median age than the general population, i.e. in 2002. 45.4 years (over 8 years) and in 2011. 45.5 years (over seven years). The highest percentage are people over 65 years of age, in the vast majority with completed primary and vocational education. The German minority is also characterised by one of the lowest percentages of people with higher education among national and ethnic minorities in Poland.²⁵ Indirectly, it can be said that such a situation is conditioned (and is an echo), among others the extremely complicated post-war legal, economic and socio-cultural situation of the German population in Poland. On the one hand, the reason may be the fact of post-war Polonization, discrimination in access to higher education and the omission of the German population in their professional promotion, the negative stereotype of a German in Poland for decades, and the fact that after World War II, higher education among the German (and generally Silesian) population was not “in fashion”. On the other hand, the reason may be quite frequent opinions of people with higher education about “not fitting into the group” and the lack of identification with Germanness among them.

In the case of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship, there is a bi- or trilingualism characteristic of the borderland community. In addition to the German language, to varying degrees and saturation, Polish and Silesian ethnolect are used.

Therefore, the knowledge and use of the German language and attitudes towards the language is an important identity criterion considered in this article, co-shaping the national identity and group identity of members of the German minority. Language is the foundation and instrument of the collective state of knowledge, the experience accumulated over generations and an element of building a community of group security.²⁶

rowymi na Śląsku Opolskim, Universitas, Kraków 1998; M. Szmeja, *Niemcy? Polacy? Ślązacy? Rodzimi mieszkańcy Opolszczyzny w świetle analiz socjologicznych*, Universitas, Kraków 2000; C. Trościak, *Górny Śląsk między regionalizmem – autonomią – separatyzmem*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe WNPiD UAM, Poznań 2016.

²⁵ G. Gudaszewski, *Demograficzno-społeczna charakterystyka obywateli polskich deklarujących „narodowość niepolską” w Narodowym Spisie Powszechnym w 2002 roku*, in: L. Adamczuk, S. Łodziński (eds), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce...*, pp. 103–141; G. Gudaszewski, *Identyfikacje etniczne w Narodowym Spisie Powszechnym Ludności i Mieszkań w 2011 roku*, in: *Mniejszości narodowe i etniczne w Polsce...*, pp. 78–98.

²⁶ P.L. Berger, T. Luckmann, *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie*, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main 1967; J. Edwards, *Language, Society and*

The German language plays a key role in shaping both the linguistic identification (*Sprachidentität*) and the identification mediated by language (*Identität durch Sprache*).²⁷ A language can be of a value in the axiological dimension even when its utilitarian function is not fully exploited by the group members²⁸, which is becoming increasingly common among members of the German minority in Poland over the decades.

The NSP of 2002 and 2011 also took into account the language declarations of the respondents, allowing for the possibility to indicate the language (or languages) in which one speaks most frequently at home. It results from them that in 2002 in the Opolskie Voivodeship out of 108,431 people using the non-Polish language at home, the German language was used by 88,804 people and the Silesian ethnolect by 16,398 people.²⁹ In turn, in 2011, among the total number of people with German identification in the Opolskie Voivodeship, 42,211 people using German as their home language (43.8%) and 33.1% indicated Silesian ethnolect as the language of home contacts.

Compared to the results of the 2002 Census, the most significant change occurred in the use of the Silesian ethnolect and German language. Overall, at the national level, the number of people declaring to use the Silesian ethnolect increased by 473,000 people (more than nine times), while the number of people using the German language at home decreased by 108,100 (by half) (from 204,600 to 96,500).³⁰

In turn, it was only in the Census of 2011 that the question about the mother tongue was taken into account for the first time in the post-war history of censuses in Poland. The concept of the mother tongue, defined as the first one in which a person learned to speak, was adopted. This corresponds to the understanding of language as acquired in childhood, also referred to as the “first language”, which is equivalent in German to “Muttersprache”, and in English to “mother tongue”.

It should be noted, however, that the number of indications of a given language as a mother tongue in the Census of 2011 is lower than the number of people using it at home, which results from the fact that respondents could mention more than one language used at home, but only one language could declare as a mother tongue.

The census results indicate that among almost 334,000 people (0.9%) who declared a mother tongue other than Polish, 140,012 people indicated Silesian ethnolect and

Identity, Basil Blackwell (in association with André Deutsch), Oxford 1985; M. Billig, *Banalny nacjonalizm*, trans. M. Sekerdej, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 2008; B. Grüning, “Sociological Knowledge and Ideology in the German Democratic Republic: The institutionalization processes of a discipline”, *Society Register* 2019, No. 3(1), pp. 39–72; D. Ristić, D. Marinković, “Knowledge as Identity: An essay in Genealogy”, *Society Register* 2019, No. 3(1), pp. 73–86.

²⁷ C. Thim-Mabrey, *Sprachidentität-Identität durch Sprache. Ein Problemaufriss aus Sprachwissenschaftlicher Sicht*, in: N. Janich, C. Thim-Mabrey, *Sprachidentität-Identität durch Sprache*, Gunter Narr, Tübingen 2003, p. 2.

²⁸ W. Żelazny, *Etniczność. Ład – konflikt – sprawiedliwość*, Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań 2006, pp. 135–136.

²⁹ Struktura narodowo-etniczna, językowa i wyznaniowa ludności Polski – NSP 2011, <https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechno-nsp-2011/nsp-2011-wyniki/struktura-narodowo-etniczna-jezykowa-i-wyznaniowa-ludnosci-polski-nsp-2011,22,1.html> (8 March 2020).

³⁰ Ibidem.

58,170 German. Territorially, nearly 60% of non-Polish language declarations were made in Silesia Voivodeship, i.e. 117,658 (35.7%) and Opolskie Voivodeship, i.e. 80,819 (24.2% of all non-Polish language indications), in which Silesian ethnolect and German language declarations are mainly concentrated. However, it is in the Opolskie Voivodeship that there is the highest rate of occurrence of the non-Polish mother tongue, where there are eight persons per 100 inhabitants exchanging a language other than Polish.³¹ In Opolskie Voivodeship, out of 1,016,212 declarations of mother tongue (Polish and non-Polish in total), German was indicated as the mother tongue by 23,212 persons and Silesian ethnolect by 44,138 persons.

Research Methodology

In order to determine the impact of selected elements of the national identity of the German minority in Opolskie Voivodeship on social welfare, a survey (PAPI) was conducted among members of SCSG local units – Deutsche Freundschaftskreise (DFK) – in this region. In 2019, there were 321 DFK organisations operating in the Opolskie Voivodeship and part of the Lubliniec Powiat (Silesian Voivodeship)³², grouped in 46 municipal boards, in 7 poviats, with a total membership of about 30,000 people.³³

A deliberate sample selection with quota elements was applied, determined on the basis of the number of DFK members in individual poviats and gminas, taking into account the gender and age structure of respondents. The Opole District and Krapkowice were the most numerous in terms of the number of members, followed by Kędzierzyn-Koźle, Strzelce Opolskie, Prudnik, Olesno and Kluczbork. The return of 257 questionnaires represented almost 92% of their total number distributed by the Board of SCSG to individual representatives of the German minority in all seven poviats of Opolskie Voivodeship. The survey was conducted in the period from June to August 2019.

The study is an example of a case study of the functioning of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship, with particular emphasis on socio-demographic and cultural determinants of this group. Analyses of the obtained results are descriptive in nature and are based on decomposition, which is a consequence of the main research problems and non-random sample selection.

The study of national identity in the context of narrowly understood social welfare was exploratory and aimed to answer the following research questions:

(i) Are specific (i.e. cultural) elements of the national identity of members of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship, an essential factor in subjectively perceived social welfare?

(ii) What are specific benefits of membership in the structures of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship perceived by its members?

³¹ Ibidem.

³² Some organizations from the Lubliniec Powiat, although they are located in the Silesia Voivodeship, are also part of the SCSG structure in Opole Silesia. In the presented research were selected only DFK groups operating in the Opolskie Voivodeship.

³³ SCSG data for 2019.

The attempt to answer the first research question was of an indirect nature, because we assumed that asking in the questionnaire about the components of the “construct” of social welfare from the perspective of culturally defined identity might be an inadequate approach. It is inadequate because it is not fully understood by the respondents (the terms “welfare” and “well-being” alone do not have precise definitions in social sciences). On the other hand, having information about the respondents’ attitude towards cultural determinants of national identity, as well as having data about subjective perception of their position and motives for joining the German minority organisation, we are able to “not directly” answer this question (let us remember that many factors of heterogeneous character form welfare). The second question is based on the desire to decide whether membership in German minority organisations is perceived in utilitarian terms or rather in terms of national identity.

The results are presented in the form of percentage indices and/or indicators in the form of arithmetic mean on a scale from 0 to 100 points, where values from 0–40 are negative, from 41–60 are average and from 61–100 are positive. The submitted article is part of a larger study, which aimed to answer the question whether the “institutionalised” German minority in Opole Voivodeship is an added value in the eyes of its members (it focused on the functions of this minority, their national identity and their own image of this specific and well-integrated group).

Results

General Characteristics of German Minority

When analysing the results of the study on the national identity of the German minority living in the area of Opolskie Voivodeship, one should take into account the fact that the study covered only institutionalised members of associations. This means that the research sample does not include those representatives who do not formally belong to these organisations, but meet the criteria of affiliation to the German minority, i.e. having German ancestors living in the area of today’s Poland, Polish citizenship, identification/feeling of connection with the German nation and culture.

Out of the 257 persons surveyed, the vast majority were women 63.5%, as well as people living in rural areas 88.2% and having family relationships 77.4%. From the perspective of the national identity survey, the place of residence, in particular, determines an essential factor which may influence the respondents’ declarations, as rural communities are better integrated and based on direct contact of its members. Secondary and higher education was recorded in almost 70% of the respondents, which in the context of people living in rural areas is a very high percentage.

More important than these general demographic characteristics are declarations of German citizenship, indicated by more than 87% of respondents. As far as national or regional declarations are concerned, 58.1% of respondents described themselves as Silesians, 36.9% as Germans and only 5.1% as Poles. German national identification of borderland residents – even taking into account the previously mentioned aspect of institutional membership of German minority associations of the respondents –

shows the specificity of its members and may affect their subjectively understood well-being. In the context of the analysis of national identification of members of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship and their relationship with the homeland, a multidimensional category of homeland by Stanisław Ossowski, i.e. the category of a private homeland, which is an equivalent of the term *Heimat*, an ideological homeland, coinciding with the term *Vaterland*, and the homeland of an ideological, regional community is used.³⁴ These categories include different dimensions of an individual's personal relationship to the territory, to the environment, and finally, different forms of patriotism.³⁵

However, as far as the declared mother tongue is concerned, the indications of Silesian ethnolect (61.3%) prevailed over Polish (21.8%) and German (16.8%), which is linked to the following interpretation of regional identity. Much more significant differences are visible on the example of declaring the home language, which is most often used at home, i.e. only Silesian ethnolect is used by 28% of respondents, compared to 2% of respondents using only German. 24% of the respondents use Silesian ethnolect alternately with German at home, and 21% of the respondents speak Silesian and Polish. At the same time (interchangeably) 16% of respondents speak Silesian, German and Polish.

Generally speaking, the research indicates a declining useful status of the German language in the family sphere. This phenomenon has a negative impact both on the state of German national identity of members of the German minority, as well as on its group cohesion. The theory and practice indicate that there is a close relationship between the use of language and the sense of national identity. Indirectly, this can have a negative impact on the sense of well-being in the social and psychological sphere. On the other hand, the realization of language rights by associations of the German minority is crucial for the cultivation of identity and sense of well-being, as described later in this article.

According to the respondents, the main factor determining the German nationality is, above all, the possession of German ancestors (41% of responses), which corresponds to the principle of *ius sanguinis* (blood law), on which the German citizenship law is essentially based.³⁶ The second place was taken by the subjective category of "feeling of being German". (30% of respondents), while much less frequent were declarations taking into account German citizenship (13%), birth and residence of the area of the Opolskie Voivodeship (10%) or membership in minority organisations (3%) or knowledge of the German language (2%).

Taking into account the fact that as many as 88% of the respondents confirmed having German citizenship (of which 90% are inhabitants of villages and 10% of

³⁴ S. Ossowski, *Analiza socjologiczna pojęcia ojczyzny*, in: idem, *Z zagadnień psychologii społecznej, Dzieła*, Vol. III, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1984, p. 210; Idem, *Zagadnienia więzi regionalnej i więzi narodowej na Śląsku Opolskim*, in: idem, *Z zagadnień psychologii...*, p. 251 et seqq.

³⁵ S. Ossowski, *Analiza socjologiczna pojęcia...*, p. 210.

³⁶ G.L. Neumann, *Nationality Law in The United States and in Germany: Structure and Current Problems*, in: P. Schuck, R. Münz (eds), *Paths to Inclusion: the Integration of Migrants in the United States and Germany*, Berghahn Books, New York 1998, pp. 247–297.

towns), the more subjective criteria such as the feeling of being a German seem to play an important role in auto-identifying the respondents.

The feeling of national pride, which is a multi-faceted and complicated issue, especially among the German minority living in Poland, is felt – in connection with membership in minority organisations – by 86% of respondents. Even more, because 90% feel pride in having German roots. Such a high percentage of indications testify to the high degree of intra-group identification, as well as at the level of the wider imaginary community.³⁷ Indirectly, this also means a significant impact on the emotional component of subjectively constructed well-being, which determines the nature of the habitual and ideological bond.

This thesis is confirmed by the results of the declared national or regional identification, provided that we consider “Silesia” to be an important component of the regionally conditioned identity of the inhabitants of the Polish-German borderland. The dominant position of Silesian identity over German (and to a lesser extent Polish) is, in our opinion, a consequence of the territorially embedded ethnicity (which, on the one hand, reveals a close connection with German cultural identity and regional specificity, but, on the other hand, remains largely an enclave embedded in the geographical and cultural context of the borderland). Well, more than half of the respondents (56%) declared the feeling of being a Silesian, and 36% feel mostly German. Only 5% of the surveyed feel Polish, which clearly shows the direction of the strength of national-regional identification. The highest percentage of people over 56 years of age feeling to be a Silesian or a German was noted, especially in the group of at least 66 years of age.

It should be emphasized that in the question regarding national or regional identification, the respondents were asked to indicate only one answer. The intention was to capture the dominant identification in the subjective perception of the respondents, and not to study the complexity and gradation of national and regional identification.

The data from the research presented here correspond to a small extent with the results of Danuta Berlińska’s research, due to methodological differences, as well as a different structure of the question and cafeteria list, taking into account multidimensional identifications. Generally, however, it can be stated that in 2010, Silesian identification was also dominant – 40.9% (I feel Silesian – 21.8%, I feel more Silesian than German – 19.1%), compared to the German national identification – 35.9% (I feel German – 22.2%, I feel more German than Silesian – 13.7%).³⁸

It is worth mentioning that the German minority in Poland, as a representative of the German nation, due to the complicated history of Polish-German relations is particularly sensitive to the exposition of national pride, or “ethnic syndrome” in general. This situation is undoubtedly a factor that weakens the sense of social

³⁷ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London 1983; I. Lekkai, “Unaccompanied Refugee Minors and Resilience: A Phenomenological Study”, *Przegląd Krytyczny* 2020, No. 2(1).

³⁸ *Die Deutschen in der Woiwodschaft Oppeln...*, Graph 51. *Wie würden Sie sich bezeichnen, als wer fühlen Sie sich, welcher Nationalität gehören Sie an?*, p. 54; idem, *Niemcy w województwie opolskim w 2010 roku...*, p. 54.

well-being and increases the ill-being of members of the German minority. However, the most recent surveys of Poles and Germans show that Poles' sympathy for Germans has been growing since 2000. In 2018, more than half of Poles (56%) declared their sympathy for Germans, while almost half of Germans (29%) declared their sympathy for Poles. While the values on the Polish scale of sympathy are growing, on the German side they remain almost constantly at a stable level of about 30%.³⁹

Research Questions in the Context of Surveys

The individual view of collective perceptions of the social environment about the German minority is one of the important factors shaping the self-definition of individuals – individual and collective – and also influences the overall sense of well-being. While the average overall perception of the German minority organisation in the region is 59 points, it is positive with 63 points among people with German identification. The individual and collective sense of well-being of members of the German minority also consists of an assessment of the fulfilment of needs and expectations on the part of their organisations and individual evaluation of their functioning. The literature of the subject indicates that there is a positive relationship between the effective implementation of tasks by the institutions, e.g. provision of support, efficient communication, adaptation to the needs of members, and the satisfaction of members of the community, sense of belonging and level of organisational commitment.⁴⁰

The evaluation of the German minority organisation is much better, at 67 points, in the eyes of its members. The overall high level of satisfaction of respondents with cultural activities undertaken by German minority organisations is confirmed by the high average ratings for accessibility (76 points), quality (74) and attractiveness (73) of cultural events. The level of satisfaction with cultural activities varies according to gender, age and place of residence of respondents. The average rating is significantly higher for women (69 points) than for men (63) and among rural residents (67), compared to urban residents (60). In terms of age, the average reached the highest level among people over 56 years of age and in the group up to 35 years of age, i.e. in the groups to which most cultural projects are addressed.

Moreover, the general sense of social well-being is undoubtedly influenced by the subjectively perceived by the respondents' benefits of activities in the German minority organisation. Benefits in this article are understood as knowledge, skills and competences with cultural values that people acquire and develop during their

³⁹ A. Łada, G. Woidelko (eds), *Polacy i Niemcy. Dzieląca przeszłość, wspólna przyszłość? Wyniki Barometru Polska–Niemcy 2018*, Körber-Stiftung, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Fundacja Konrada Adenauera, Hamburg–Warszawa 2018, p. 5.

⁴⁰ G. Knies, A. Nandi, L. Platt, *Life Satisfaction, Ethnicity and Neighbourhoods: Is There an Effect of Neighbourhood Ethnic Composition on Life Satisfaction? Presented at Westminster policy debate: New insights into ethnicity, social mobility and well-being*, 16th January 2014, <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/2013/11/07/new-insights-into-ethnicity-social-mobility-and-well-being>, (14 March 2020).

participation in organisational life.⁴¹ They are expressed primarily in the linguistic, cultural and social competences of the respondents. Thus, we are dealing with a process of intra- and inter-group exchange of cultural capital, the most visible manifestation of which is the conversion into symbolic capital. In this case, group symbolism (related to German language and culture) is used to legitimise the possession of the remaining capital, i.e. to use symbolic violence, e.g. symbolic flagging⁴² of an area with bilingual village signs.

Considering the mutual relations of benefits, auto-identification and sense of well-being among the surveyed members of German minorities, it is worth emphasising the fact that cultural and social (affiliate) determinants of membership in the organisations are dominated by purely utilitarian benefits. Therefore, the authors omit the theme of welfare/well-being in the economic sphere. Here, admittedly, one of the interesting aspects is the fact that the German minority in Poland has its own organization carrying support (e.g. *reimbursement* of expenses for *medicines*, co-financing of a stay in a sanatorium) – The Charitable Society of Germans in Silesia.

Among the benefits arising from activities within the structures of the German minority, the highest rated was the opportunity to meet with friends from the circle of the German minority, i.e. on average at the level of 80 points (with an overall assessment of the benefits of 73 points), the usefulness of activities in interpersonal contacts – an average of 77 points, the increase in awareness of the German heritage of the region – 75 points, support of national identity and improvement of knowledge of the German language – 73 points each, and the opportunity to talk in German – 72 points.

Table 1. Evaluation of the benefits of activities within the structures of the German minority

The opportunity to meet with friends from the German minority	80%
It's useful for people-to-people contacts	77%
Increased awareness of the German heritage of the region	75%
National identity support	73%
Improving the German language skills	73%
The opportunity to talk in German	72%
The possibility of spending free time	70%
The opportunity to share competences and skills	70%
Other answers	

Source: own elaboration based on the research “The German minority has a value”.

⁴¹ P. Bourdieu, J-C. Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Sage, London 1990/1970; P. Bourdieu, *The Forms of Capital*, in : J.G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, Greenwood, New York 1986, pp. 241–258; idem, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Routledge, London 1984.

⁴² L.M. Nijakowski, *Domeny symboliczne. Konflikty narodowe i etniczne w wymiarze symbolicznym*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2006.

In addition, among members of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship, strong social motives are observed, manifesting themselves in action for the integration of the local community and with a view to achieving common objectives and interests. This is indirectly a factor influencing the welfare of the wider society and supporting social integration in the region. This thesis is confirmed by available publications and practice, indicating that the German minority pursues non-standard objectives for the economy, generating “added value” in terms of culture, education and the economy in general. The research to date on the impact of the ethnic factor on the development of the Opolskie Voivodeship has clearly shown that the German minority organisations constitute a significant development potential of the Opolskie Voivodeship, although not fully utilised.⁴³

In general, the results of the research indicate a lower level of “reflected identity” of the respondents compared to the subjective assessment of their own group. Undoubtedly, this state of affairs is still affected by the fact that it is still present – although much less frequently than in the 1990s. – the phenomenon of discrimination.

The diverse manifestations of discrimination experienced by the respondents, as well as the intergenerational memory of the discrimination of the German population after 1945 in the region, are one of the important elements of the respondents’ auto-identification and the factors of the welfare scarcity.⁴⁴ This phenomenon should be considered in the multidimensional way: educational, professional, cultural, political and psychological. In each case, however, the basis for worse treatment is the national origin or, after 1989, also belonging to German minority organisations. In general, a higher percentage of respondents experienced worse treatment because of their German origin than organisational affiliation – 25% and 19% respectively, as well as a more significant percentage of people with German national identification (41%), compared to the respondents, feeling Polish (25%) and 18% of people with Silesian identification. The welfare scarcity was manifested to the greatest extent in the social-psychological sphere – in verbal discrimination on the grounds of origin, e.g. insults, ridicule, threats (60%) and on the grounds of institutional affiliation (36%), in the educational sphere – in discrimination on the grounds of origin at school/college (40%) and institutional affiliation (7%), as well as in the economic/occupational sphere – in discrimination on the grounds of origin at the workplace, e.g. omission in professional promotion (19%) and institutional affiliation (16%). On the other hand, the positive strengthening of the sense of social well-being may be influenced by the fact that the vast majority of respondents did not experience any discrimination, either on the basis of German origin (75%), or on the basis of membership in an organisation of the German minority (81%).

⁴³ R. Jończy, K. Łukaniszyn-Domaszewska, *Wpływ ludności pochodzenia niemieckiego oraz organizacji mniejszości niemieckiej na regionalny rozwój społeczno-gospodarczy. Wybrane zagadnienia (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem województwa opolskiego)*, Dom Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, Gliwice–Opole 2014; also Idem, *Wpływ ludności autochtonicznej pochodzenia niemieckiego oraz organizacji mniejszości niemieckiej na regionalny rozwój gospodarczo-społeczny ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem woj. opolskiego* – podsumowanie wyników badań (<https://www.haus.pl/pliki/news/File/Anita/Raport%20czastkowy%202014%20iza.pdf>) (15 March 2020).

⁴⁴ M. Baranowski, *The Struggle for Social Welfare: Towards an Emerging Welfare Sociology*, pp. 8–10.

A form of positive discrimination, i.e. state action for equal opportunities of the German minority, whose current situation is, inter alia, a result of discrimination in the past, is its statutory rights. It is also a form of abolition of the state of group plundering and at the same time improvement of the general welfare. Although the German minority in Poland has been using its legal, international and internal regulations since 1989, only the adoption of the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language of 6 January 2005⁴⁵ introduced rules (more or less specified) concerning the implementation of the rights of national and ethnic minorities, i.e. procedures related to the teaching of the German language as the language of the national minority and in the German language, the use of additional traditional names of towns, streets and physiographic objects, the use of an auxiliary language before the commune authorities, the right to use the spelling of names according to the rules of German spelling. The dynamics and quality of the exercise of these rights have changed positively, with administrative barriers still present.⁴⁶ In the years 2006–2019, the number of students learning German as a minority language in schools and kindergartens increased significantly, from 36,107 students in 2010 (26,769 in Opolskie Voivodeship and 9,338 in Silesia Voivodeship) to 54,293 students and in the school year 2018/2019 (33,299 in Opolskie Voivodeship and 20,994 in Silesia Voivodeship).⁴⁷ Only in Opolskie Voivodeship in the school year 2018/2019, 6,371 children in 115 kindergartens and 26,560 students in 245 primary schools were learning German. Most of them are public educational institutions, but also associate schools, i.e. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe Primary School, part of the Public Preschool and School Complex teaching the language of the national minority – German – in Kędzierzyn-Koźle, and the School and Kindergarten Complex of the Pro Liberis Silesiae Association in Opole (Malina), Gosławice and Raszowa.

When writing about teaching German as a national minority language, it is worth mentioning the barriers faced by the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship, including the decision of the Polish Ministry of National Education of 2019, which restricts students from grades 7 and 8 of primary schools ability to simultaneously learning German as a minority language and German as a foreign language.

As a consequence, from the 2019/2020 school year, the introduction of another foreign language while retaining the minority language actually limited the possibility of students taking the German language during the eight-year exam, or in the case of choosing German as a foreign language and resigning from the minority language, the latter will not appear on the certificate of graduation.

A serious consequence of this decision is also a decrease in the number of hours of teaching German, the outflow of qualified staff, the deterioration of the quality of

⁴⁵ Journal of *Law of the Republic of Poland*, 2005, No 17 item 141, as amended.

⁴⁶ M. Lemańczyk, P. Popieliński, *The Mechanisms of Functioning of Linguistic Rights in Poland: an Example of the Kashubians and the German Minority*, in: A. Odrowąż-Coates, S. Gotswami (eds), *Symbolic Violence in Socio-educational Contexts. A Post-colonial Critique*, The Maria Grzegorzewska University, Warsaw 2017.

⁴⁷ Języki mniejszości narodowych, <https://cie.men.gov.pl/index.php/dane-statystyczne/140.html> (2 March 2020).

teaching and in further consequence – the deterioration of language skills successive generations of members of the German minority and the potential reduction of competitiveness on the labor market.

Similarly, the number of communes where names in German are used has increased, i.e. in 2019. 28 municipalities in the Opolskie Voivodeship have 345 additional German place names. There are also 22 municipalities with German as an auxiliary language in the voivodeship.

Therefore, the implementation of language rights is a crucial issue to maintain German identity among the next generations of members of the German minority in Poland, including in the Opolskie Voivodeship. Nevertheless, an important issue affecting the sense of social well-being are individual opinions and attitudes towards the phenomenon.

The results of the research indicate that 60% of respondents assess the implementation of the rights of the German minority to a sufficient degree, 24% are of the opposite opinion. In comparison, 16% of respondents do not have an opinion on this issue. At the same time, the overall assessment of the realisation of statutory rights is positive – the average of 67 points. The highest average score (76 points) was recorded in the case of the presence of bilingual boards with place names and in the case of the possibility of learning in schools in German, as well as the possibility of learning German in schools during additional lessons (74 points). These areas are the most visible element of social reality in the region. The quality of German language education was also highly rated (71 points) and financial assistance from the German state (69 points), while financial assistance from the Polish state was much lower (58 points). The respondents negatively assessed the functioning of the German language as an auxiliary language in local offices (45 points). The positive assessment of the implementation of statutory rights by the German minority is higher among women (70 points) than men (63 points), the same level (67 points) among residents of villages and cities. Interestingly, in terms of nationality or regional declaration, the highest average was recorded among those feeling Polish (75 points), compared to those feeling Silesian (68 points) and those with German identification (63 points).

Conclusions

The study of narrowly understood social welfare⁴⁸ (not to mention its negative side) or – as we have adopted in this article – its psychological components⁴⁹, does not take into account national identity. The German minority living in the Opolskie Voivodeship is an excellent case of a well-organised community, with a high awareness of its own cultural distinctiveness, which is also proud of this fact. The lack of correspondence between the concepts of social welfare and national identity, especially in the aspect

⁴⁸ M. Sullivan, *Sociology and Social Welfare*, Routledge, London and New York 1987; A. Forder, T. Caslin, G. Ponton, & S. Walklate, *Theories of Welfare*, Routledge, London–New York 1984.

⁴⁹ B. Headey, E. Holmstrom, A. Wearing, *Models of Well-being and Ill-being*, Social Indicators Research 1985, No. 17(3), pp. 211–234; M.J. Sirgy, *The Psychology of Quality of Life: Hedonic Well-being, Life Satisfaction, and Eudaimonia* (2nd ed.), Springer, Dordrecht 2012.

of social groups with separate culture in relation to the dominant culture, constitutes a weakness and incompleteness of such approaches, marking a specific gap in the body of research. A culturally understood national identity, with its language(s), history, customs, sets the foundations not only for an objectified perception of the world by its members in an ideological dimension but above all for an emotional attitude towards the world experienced in a subjective dimension. Both of these dimensions contribute to social welfare, which, especially in the psychological layer, is influenced by individual identity factors. Since we have abandoned the verification of the first research question explicitly, e.g. in the form of a questionnaire question, the affirmative answer takes on an indirect character.

As for the second question, guiding the research process undertaken in this article, concerning the indication of specific benefits resulting from the membership in the structures of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship, the matter is more apparent. Explicit respondents indicated the advantages of participation in organisations of the German minority, which – it is very important – mainly concerned the identity dimensions of the functioning of the community, rather than utilitarian benefits of economic and political nature.⁵⁰

Considering only the institutional dimension of the representatives of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship, the study has shown how important a component of national identity is for social welfare. The multidimensional benefits of cultural community belonging to the German minority exerts direct and indirect influence on subjectively perceived social welfare, despite occasional acts of exclusion and discrimination. This article is only a contribution to the need for more comprehensive research on the title issue.

Abstract

National Identity and Social Welfare: The Example of the German Minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship

This article aims to characterise the positive and negative aspects of being a national minority, using the example of the German minority in the Opolskie Voivodeship and the category of social welfare in the sociological sense. In order to conceptualise and operationalise the idea of national identity, attention has been focused mainly on its cultural determinants, with particular emphasis on the role of language and organisational activity. The empirical exploration of the research questions was based on surveys, carried out by the authors of the article on behalf of the Social-Cultural Society of Germans in Opole Silesia (SCSG) in the summer of 2019, among members of the German minority organisation.

Keywords: German minority, social welfare, national identity, minority rights.

⁵⁰ E.A.G. Groenland, *Socioeconomic Well-being and Behavioural Reactions: A Panel Study of People Drawing Benefits from the Dutch National Social Security System*, Tilburg University Press, Tilburg 1992.