"A Sense of Place:" The Construction of Identity in South Tyrol

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NOTES

On language:

This thesis makes use of a number of German-language sources. Where necessary, the original quote is included followed by an English translation. Occasionally the original is paraphrased and the citation referenced. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

On nomenclature:

The names by which one references places can carry vast political and emotional significance. As much as anywhere else, this is true for South Tyrol. Authors have negotiated this difficulty with varying degrees of success, solutions ranging from the clumsy (German/Italian/Ladin/English combination), to the confusing (variably German or Italian), to the obscure (Roman and Medieval terminology). As this paper deals primarily with identity in a German-speaking community and uses German sources, German place names will, for purposes of brevity and clarity, be used exclusively.

Venice is the southernmost Italian city I've visited. When I tell people this, they squint at their mental maps, trying to locate it. Some will nod absently and steer the conversation away from geography. Some, however, will look askance and ask, "but Venice is quite north…isn't it?"

It is. Only 190 kilometers from the Austrian border—closer to Innsbruck than to Rome. The truth is, though I love Italy, I love conversation more and so I linger here. For way up north, at the farthest reaches of Italian sovereignty, lie the provinces of Bozen/Bolanzo and Trient/Trento. South Tyrol, the region is called. And it is home to a German-speaking, German-identifying minority group.

I was a 16 year old exchange student when my German host family took me to Italy. In preparation, I bought an Italian-English phrasebook and spent weeks mastering the perfect *buongiorno*. We drove 6 hours south and arrived in Italy, where I leapt out of the car and was embraced with a warm *Guten Tag* and fully comprehensible German.

I have since learned that national borders do not necessarily correlate with linguistic ones. I have stopped expecting that culture, custom, and language begin and end with arbitrary political lines. But this minority community has remained a source of fascination. And the more I learn about the region, the more I wonder—how have these people retained their language and traditions? How do they define themselves? How does this little group in South Tyrol create an identity vastly different from the nation in which they live?

This thesis will examine some of those questions. It will survey linguistic tools, techniques, means, and methods of identity construction. After an historical situation of the region, it will consider the theory of *positioning* and the specific phonological, lexical, and morphological methods by which the people of South Tyrol maintain German language and identity. From here, it will expand into greater concepts of group belonging, localism, and diacritical identity. The thread of research to come will run throughout, and the thesis will conclude with an overview of study.

The community in South Tyrol is unique in many ways and extraordinarily common in others. Around the world, minority groups struggle to preserve linguistic and cultural identities in the face of external pressures. This group has been more successful than most when it comes to retaining their

traditional identity, and the ways in which they have done so warrant investigation, investigation which will not only better support this community but also others like it. A wider understanding of issues affecting identity and tradition has broader applications—it can have effects on language policy and education, language rights, access to education and legal support. It can also encourage appreciation for minority rights. An examination of this minority group could lead to better appreciation of the issues faced by minority cultures around the globe. It could lead to understanding ways in which cultural and linguistic identity can be retained—and encourage public policy that supports this maintenance. The insights that stand to be gained from this sort of investigation carry implications for communities far beyond the German-speaking world.

1. History

If you were reading this 500 years ago, you'd already know the significance of this region.

You would know, for example, that the Brenner Pass once linked the Kingdom of Germany with the March of Verona. You'd know that the German Holy Roman emperors passed through here in medieval times, travelling to Rome for coronation. You'd know that this track through the Alps is of much lower elevation than the nearby Swiss Alpine Passes, that the snow melts here weeks earlier, and that it is therefore the preferred route from southern to northern Europe. And you would certainly know that, even as you read, merchants, architects, artists, and traders were moving through this region exchanging wares, ideas, and technology. You might even suspect that their influence would leave an indelible mark on this region, one that could last well into the future.

As this is not, however, 16th century Europe, an historic, political, and cultural situating is in order. This will provide context to the people and the region of South Tyrol, illuminate some issues of identity, and outline areas of scholarly study to be explored in future works.

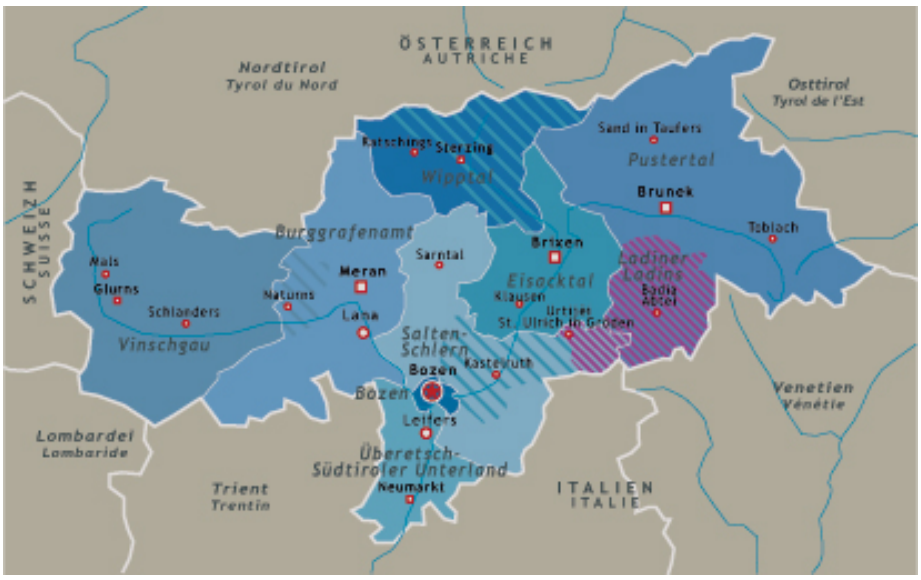

Figure 1: The region of South Tyrol
http://www.eurominority.eu/version/eng/maps-other.asp

1.1 Pre-Fascism

When the uneasy European peace ended at the turn of the 20th century, so too did 800 years of peaceable Germanic rule in South Tyrol. The first occupation of the region came with the 1918 ceasefire and the end of World War I. No Italian troops had previously set foot in the region; after the armistice, regiments marched to Bozen, Brenner, and Meran. South Tyrol was abruptly sealed off from Austria—passenger and freight traffic was halted. Press was censored. Mail service was suspended. Even "telegraphic equipment and carrier pigeons had to be surrendered" (Steininger 2004, 4). And German-speaking officials were replaced with Italian.

Threatened with annexation to Italy, the mayors of South Tyrol united in opposition, pleading to remain part of Austria:

> *Gegenüber diesem Vertrag haben wir mit jeder Fiber unseres Herzens, in Zorn und Schmerz nur ein Nein! ein ewiges unwiderrufliches Nein! [...]. Es wird jezt in Südtirol ein Verzweiflungskampf beginnen um jeden Bauernhof, um jedes Stadthaus, um jeden Weingarten. Es wird ein Kampf sein mit allen Waffen des Geistes und mit allen Mitteln der Politik. Es wird*

> *ein Verzweiflungskampf deshalb, weil wir—eine Viertelmillion Deutscher—gegen vierzig Millionen Italiener stehen, wahrhaft ein ungleicher Kampf.*
>
> (To this treaty[1], we say with every fibre of our heart, in rage and pain: No! An eternal, irrevocable No! […].In South Tyrol, a desperate struggle will now begin for each farm, each townhouse, each vineyard. It will be a struggle with all the weapons of the mind and all the resources of politics. It will be a desperate struggle because we—a quarter million Germans—stand against forty million Italians, truly an unequal battle.)
>
> — prominent South Tyrolean politician Eduard Reut-Nicolussi (1928, 30), addressing the National Assembly in Vienna on 6 September 1919

But the strategic importance of the Brenner pass was more important than regional politics. In a secret agreement dated 26 April 1915, the Entente Powers had promised the region to Italy in exchange for entering the war. On 10 October 1920, they delivered. South Tyrol became part of Italy.

Italian Fascists immediately began to Italianize the region. On 12 February 1921, convoys arrived in Auer and Salurn to remove all images of the double eagle. They tore down the *Bozen* town sign, hanging *Bolanzo* in its stead. On 24 April, a *Trachtenumzug* (ethnic Germans marching in traditional costume) of the annual Bozen Fair was broken up by 400 Fascists with clubs, pistols, and hand grenades. Roughly 50 people were injured or killed, all of them South Tyrolean German (Steininger 2004, 8). Benito Mussolini's response clarified Italy's position to anyone who was still unclear: if the Germans on both sides of the Brenner don't conform, he said, the Fascists will teach them a thing or two about obedience (quoted in Reut-Nicolussi 1928, 84).

Although nearly 100 years have passed since the annexation and most extreme Italianization policies of the Fascists, German identity remains strong in South Tyrol. The South Tyroleans are unequivocally Germanic—despite repeated attempts to eradicate the culture. The language is as vibrant as ever; German is visibly and audibly the primary means of communication. The goal of this thesis will be

[1] he refers to the Treaty of Saint Germain, which would, one year later, officially annex South Tyrol to Italy

to explore how, in the face of such violent oppression, South Tyroleans retain German language, identity, custom, and tradition. How was this identity preserved when it became suddenly so dangerous to be German?

1.2 Fascism in South Tyrol

Perhaps no one person more influenced the Italianization of South Tyrol than Ettore Tolomei. As early as 1906, this Italian nationalist was waging an almost personal campaign to claim, name, and assimilate the region. Appointed senator in 1923, one of Tolomei's first acts was to draft official policy for the Italianization of South Tyrol. On 15 July 1923, in a theatre in Bozen, Tolomei took the stage and read aloud his 32 *provvedimenti per l'Alto Adige*[2], which would be characterized in the next day's paper as "measures for the eradication of German culture in South Tyrol" (quoted in Steininger 2004, 19).

In accordance with the new policy, the name *Tirol* and all derivatives were banned: *Tiroler* (Tyrolean)*, Südtiroler* (South Tyrolean)*,* and *Deutsch-Südtirol* (German South Tyrol) were prohibited (Steininger 1997, 80). *Der Tiroler* newspaper was renamed *Der Landsmann;* villages, towns, farmsteads, and geographical features of South Tyrol saw their names clumsily translated into Italian. Many new forms were simply Italian suffixes "appended to a German designation" (Steininger 2004, 17). Some were Italian versions of ancient Roman place names. Some were direct translations. And some were orthographic changes to make German sounds more palatable to Italian tongues and ears. North Tyrol protested in solidarity, renaming several streets and squares in Innsbruck for South Tyrolean cities.

By October of 1923, Italian was the only language permissible for communication at/with all levels of government. Public signs, schedules, and notices had to be in Italian. So did postcards. Letters with German addresses were not delivered. A local woman had to remove the red and white poppies (colours of the Tyrolean flag) from her garden (Steininger 2004, 24). Italian became the sole language of the courts and any applicant who could not speak passable Italian (the vast majority of German peasantry) either proceeded without understanding or was made to supply his own interpreter, a feat beyond the

[2] see Appendix A for all 32 items

financial reach of most. At first, German language newspapers were heavily censored—a precursor to the inevitable shut down, which came on 22 October 1925. German instruction was gradually phased out of schools so that, on 6 February 1928, it was reported that Italian was the only language of instruction in all 760 South Tyrolean schoolrooms (Steininger 1997, 85). German teaching colleges were closed, German teachers dismissed, and post-secondary degrees from Austrian and German institutions were declared valid only when supplemented by "one year of study at an Italian university" (Steininger 2004, 27).

Despite these prohibitions, German did not vanish from the region. After about 20 years of underground instruction, German schools re-opened in profusion when again legal, and German remains the primary language of instruction in South Tyrol to this day (Autonomous Province of South Tyrol [APST] 2011). For nearly 20 years, the citizens of South Tyrol nurtured a secret linguistic identity, one which not only survived but flourished. The means by which the population did so and the reasons this language was so important to them affect its viability today. The precise reasons for this preservation are as yet unclear, and a study examining how and why the citizenry of South Tyrol saw/sees German as such an integral part of their personal and collective identity might help illuminate the reasons for this linguistic preservation.

Religion was the only area where German remained a viable, useable language. On authorization from the Vatican, parishes were permitted to continue small amounts of religious teaching in German. Explicit language instruction was discouraged but, throughout the 1920s and 30s, these *Katakombenschule* (small parish schools) comprised the entirety of German education in South Tyrol. A band of students (aided by German cultural societies and a group of German nationalists who would later form part of the Nazi party) smuggled Austrian readers and storybooks across the northern border into South Tyrol. After some initial troubles finding and covertly training teachers, clandestine schools opened across the region in "barns, attics, cellars, and farmhouse kitchens" (Steininger 2004, 32). Despite strong government opposition—opposition by such means as searches, interrogation, imprisonment, and deportation—these schools lasted until the 1940s, when German language instruction once again became legal.

How German survived such oppression is important to understanding *why* it survived. The legal use of German in religious institutions in the 1920s and 1930s could speak to its continued use in South Tyrolean to this day—religion is often a powerfully personal symbol of identity. To better understand the influence of religious instruction in South Tyrol, a survey of parish churches could be undertaken. This might include an exploration of the ways German is used in religious instruction and service, the visibility of German in religious spaces (signage, hymnals, literature), the interaction of German and Italian (or other languages), and the possible privilege of one language over the other. The links between religious education and language use today are a potentially rich source for understanding how and why German remains an important part of South Tyrolean identity.

These secret schools were difficult for students. Often, they learned one history in their German education and the exact opposite in their Italian classes. This fragmented education lead to a bifurcated identity, with students uncertain of how to define themselves: *"Wir waren Zerrissene, wir logen daheim über die Schule und in der Schule über daheim und uns selbst"* (We were torn. At home, we lied about school and in school we lied about home and about ourselves) remembers South Tyrolean journalist Claus Gatterer (1982, 49). Italian teachers, disillusioned by the harshness of the conditions in which they had been sent to work, left their posts in droves. Illiteracy rates among South Tyrolean youth soared (Steininger 2004, 32).

Regulations governing the use of signage, invoicing, even the number of German books in libraries or the quantity of Italian magazines in cafes proliferated. German inscriptions on headstones were banned. German farms that had failed during the Depression were nationalized and resettled with Italians. Monuments to Italian superiority were erected throughout the region[3]. Orchards (owned mostly by the German peasantry) were bulldozed in order to create an industrial zone just outside Bozen city limits; Italians (along with many now-displaced German farmers) were relocated to the city to work in the new factories. Due to the impracticality of location and high shipping costs of both raw materials and

[3] the largest and most notable, the *Siegesdenkmal* (Victory Monument), still stands in Bozen

finished goods, numerous financial concessions were granted to Italian companies operating within this industrial zone.

1.3 The Option

Understanding how the Nazi offense was perceived in South Tyrol is crucial to understanding the Nazi sympathies displayed by many South Tyroleans in the Second World War, sympathies which would ultimately prove disadvantageous to the reunification cause. The Nazis were greeted as fellow Germans, as a means to reunite and reaffirm German identity. Indeed, it was through Nazi propaganda and the aid of German National Socialists that most German literature made its way into South Tyrol at all. Perhaps the sympathies of the population can be read as another of the means by which the population of South Tyrol sought to establish and maintain linguistic ties, and by extension German identity.

Throughout 1939, South Tyrolean Germans lived under a culture of vague rumour and veiled threat. They were told of resettlement in southern Italy, dismissed from all civil service positions, forbidden from speaking their language openly. "Threats and violence," Steininger (2004, 59) writes, "were the order of the day." German-speaking South Tyroleans were painted as "traitors," had their houses and shops "smeared with feces and dirt," their children "pelted with stones" (Steininger 2004, 59).*"Was die Juden im Dritten Reich waren, war jetzt ein Teil der Südtiroler in den Augen ihrer fanatisierten Landsleute"* (What the Jews were in the Third Reich is what some South Tyroleans became in the eyes of their fanatical fellow countrymen), describes South Tyrolean politician Friedl Volgger (1984, 58). Indeed, some would eventually be imprisoned in concentration camps—Friedl Volgger among them. In 1939, the Hitler-Mussolini alliance presented South Tyroleans with an option: accept German citizenship and be resettled in the *Vaterland,* or retain Italian citizenship, effectively conceding South Tyrol as Italian territory. Almost 75,000 German speaking South Tyroleans (approximately 86% of the population) elected to emigrate (Steininger 2004, 49).

The reasons for this emigration warrant exploration. Both those who chose to emigrate and those who chose to stay exhibit a strong Germanic identity. Those who left did so in order to speak German

openly and without fear, presumably deeming their language, rather than their environment, a more salient aspect of their identity. The German-speaking South Tyroleans who chose to stay did so believing that their land and language were inextricable, evidencing a phenomenon advanced by Pümpel-Mader (2000) that will be explored a little later in this work.

1.4 Post-War Times

In the spring of 1945, as the war drew to a close and national boundaries were redrawn throughout Europe, a group of South Tyroleans founded the *Südtiroler Volkspartei*. On 19 May 1945, they published their goals in the daily newspaper *Dolomiten:*

1. *Nach 25jähriger Unterdrückung durch Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus den kulturellen, sprachlichen und wissenschaftlichen Rechten der Südtiroler auf Grund demokratischer Grundsätze Geltung zu verschaffen.* (After 25 years of oppression by Fascism and National Socialism, to assert the cultural, linguistic, and economic rights of the South Tyroleans.)
2. *Zur Ruhe und Ordnung im Lande beizutragen.* (To bring peace and order to this land.)
3. *Seine Vertreter zu ermächtigen—unter Ausschluß aller illegalen Methoden—den Anspruch des Südtiroler Volkes auf Ausübung des Selbstbestimmungsrechtes bei den allilerten Mächten zu vertreten.* (To empower the representatives—excluding all illegal methods—to advocate before the Allied powers the right of the South Tyrolean people to self-determination.)

(Amonn 1945)

All indicate an explicit awareness of South Tyrolean identity. The fact that, as early as 1945, a group of individuals was passionate enough to organize and advocate for linguistic recognition and self-governance indicates an entrenched identity, an awareness of status apart from Italy. It also suggests a group membership. They were acknowledging a separate linguistic and cultural space of identity. The agitation for recognition is evidence not of an emergent identity but rather an established and coherent group, one which already existed and had a strong identity and desire to remain Germanic.

They faced strong opposition, however, and were destined to fail almost from the outset. Tolomei's industrialization zone linked the region irredeemably, it was argued, with Italy. Furthermore, the Allied powers were anxious to support Italy's redevelopment and encourage it to turn its political focus westward. Citing a large Italian presence, the Nazi sympathies displayed by much of the German-speaking population, and ignoring mass protests taking place in both South Tyrol and Austria, on 14 September 1945, the Allied powers announced that the border between Austria and Italy "would be unchanged, subject to hearing any case Austria may present for minor rectification in her favor" (Steininger 2004, 80).

The formal publication and announcement of these goals also evidences one of the linguistic tools by which the population of South Tyrol create a group identity: public recognition and support. As will become evident later on (see Ardener 1989) , a group can create identity by formal and explicit naming. In 1945, with the formation of this group and publication of its goals, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* sought to establish itself as an entity, give itself voice and thereby credibility, name and identify this group of people in northern Italy. By naming themselves *Südtiroler Volkspartei*, they separated themselves from Italy, declared themselves German, and identified as a distinct population.

1.5 Autonomy to *das Paket*

In 1946, the British helped broker the Gruber-De Gasperi Agreement[4] which afforded some autonomy for South Tyrol. Steininger (2004, 101-103) suggests the document was viewed more as a "starting point" or even a "gentleman's agreement," with the actual details to be negotiated at a later date. Only later would the document come to be seen as a "kind of Magna Carta for South Tyrol," an agreement which acknowledged and cemented Austria's interests in the territory (Steininger 2004, 104).

Meanwhile, life was difficult for German-speaking South Tyroleans. The Italian government continued its policy of de-nationalization, encouraging settlement of Italian speakers to the region and exclusive Italian language use. On 28 October 1953, the following statement appeared in a front page

[4] named for Austrian foreign minister Karl Gruber and Italian prime minister Alcide De Gasperi

editorial of *Dolomiten*: *"Es ist ein Todesmarsch, auf dem wir Südtiroler seit 1945 uns befinden, wenn nicht noch in letzter Stünde Rettung kommt"* (We South Tyroleans find ourselves on a death march, unless relief arrives at the last minute). Discrimination persisted. Persecution (fine, arrest, imprisonment) of anyone who agitated for the right of self-determination was rampant.

When Austria gained its independence in 1955, they were finally able to advocate for the rights of South Tyrol, to fulfil what they saw as their protectorate obligation to the territory. Getting nowhere with the Italian government, Austria determined to take the matter to an international level—they went to the United Nations. On 31 October 1960, the UN passed a resolution affirming Austria's right of involvement and admonishing both parties to find a peaceful resolution.

Austria's involvement signaled a return of German presence in South Tyrol and a re-establishment of ties with the German-speaking world. With this recognition from Austria, South Tyrol gained a German advocate and international recognition that it was, indeed, a unique group. Simple recognition lends voice and name, creating a group identity in the act of acknowledging. Austria's acknowledgment of South Tyrol gave an identity to a community otherwise subsumed by Italy and acknowledged a special status—acknowledged a group.

Execution of the peaceful resolution, however, was glacially slow. The frustration of South Tyroleans grew, and one group[5] took desperate action. Between 1956 and 1969, aided by sympathizers in Austria and Germany, a band of radical South Tyroleans targeted an escalating series of symbolic and strategic marks. They bombed Italian monuments, electrical lines, railroads, army bases, and homes. As the decade drew to a close, this group was little more than organized guerrillas. They had killed 14, terrorized untold others, and damaged more than just property—relations in the region had never been more tense.

[5] The way one references this group speaks to one's ideology. A variety of terms have been used, including *Freiheitskämpfer* (freedom fighters), *Idealisten* (idealists), *Patrioten* (patriots), *Südtirolaktivisten* (South Tyrol activists), *Bumser* (Bombers), or simply *Terroristen* (terrorists). For details, see Steininger (1997, 2004).

1.6 *Das Paket* to the Present

Peace came in 1969, after nearly eight years of negotiation, concession, and compromise. *Das Paket* was a 137-measure proposal for granting and expanding the independence of South Tyrol. "[N]umerous areas of authority" were transferred from the region to the newly autonomous provinces of Bozen and Trient (Steininger 2004, 135). *Das Paket* made provision for "the protection and preservation of [the] ethnic and cultural uniqueness" of the German-speaking community in South Tyrol: an explicit act of naming which carved a space for the Germanic community in South Tyrol (Steininger 2004, 134).

Implementation was not immediate. It took until 1991, for example, for measure 111 (senate seats for the region and representation in Rome) to be realized. In 1992, however, the Italian government announced that all 137 measures had been successfully realized. On 19 June 1992, on the floor of the UN where they had filed the grievance 30 years before, Austria and Italy announced a formal end to the conflict in South Tyrol.

1.7 Final Thoughts

Many of the questions raised in this section are designed to explore how and why German identity became so entrenched in South Tyrol. They may well be difficult to answer now, some 90 years later. Participant interviews would be conducted, most likely with second-, third-, or even fourth-generation descendants of this original group. Primary sources (letters, memoirs) could be consulted, seeking mention of why these Tyroleans felt it important to retain Germanness, looking for specific ways they managed to shape, portray, and retain German identity. The pivotal moments in South Tyrolean history which have been explained here contributed to a local identity still prevalent today. It is only with a thorough understanding of the formative events in South Tyrol's early Italian years that the methods and difficulties of upholding this German identity can be completely appreciated.

Today roughly 26% of South Tyrol's population claims Italian language affiliation; the numbers are higher in cities, such as in Bozen, where it jumps to 73% (APST 2011, 15). However, particularly in the countryside, "South Tyroleans speak their language just as before, live their lives, and carry on their customs and traditions. […T]he villages of South Tyrol have remained Tyrolean villages" (Steininger 2004, 148). They are still, however, a minority in Italy. "And when things are going well," Steininger (2004, 149) writes, "survival perhaps becomes even more difficult and more complicated than during the hard times." This might seem counter-intuitive. But history fades. And without a common enemy and an insistent awareness of struggle, maintaining a minority group identity becomes less urgent and more difficult. The next chapters will examine some of the ways this particular German minority creates and maintains that identity.

2. POSITIONING

I returned to the *pension* bubbly with wine, stories, excitement. "And what did you do today[6]?" my host enquired of me.

"I went to *Bolanzo*," I said.

She squinted at me. Frowned. "Where?"

"*Bolanzo*," I tried again, this time rolling the "l," emphasizing the "ah," and drawing out the "o" in what I felt to be good Italian fashion.

She blinked. "Ah," she said, after a silence. "Do you mean you went to *Bozen?"*

Most people conceive of language primarily as a means to convey information. It does that. But it also does more. Language imparts information about the speaker—obviously and subtly, deliberately and accidentally. "Language allows us to be things," writes Gee (2011, 2). We *do* things with language and we *are* things through language. It colours and shapes both who we are and how we are perceived. "It is as if," writes Gee (2011, 16), "you could build a building simply by speaking words." In the above example, my host (a woman in her late sixties, native to South Tyrol and fully fluent in both German and

[6] The original exchange was in German.

Italian) used language to convey that *Bozen* was the proper name of the city and that the city, by extension, was German. In order to transmit this message, she *positioned* herself as someone who neither spoke nor understood Italian. The following will explain positioning theory and use this idea to examine how the South Tyroleans create and maintain a German identity.

2.1. The Constructivist Approach

First, however, let us pause briefly to consider the differences between traditional positivism and the more contemporary constructivist approach which *positioning* is a part of.

Positivism, in conventional academic wisdom[7], is the acceptance of a "single reality independent of human beings" (Mackenzie 2011, 534). It posits an essential knowledge, a truth (or Truth). Positivism as a methodological approach inclines toward observation and measurement of an objective standard.

Constructivism, on the other hand, leans to subjectivity. It suggests relativity and teaches that the social world is comprised of "inter-subjective understandings:" facts which are open to interpretation (Adler 2002, 100). It upholds no perfect knowledge (no Truth), only correlations and classifications. It emphasizes social practices as a context for understanding. The world is a "project under construction:" not imagined (as post-structuralism might advocate) but with flexible foundations (Adler 2002, 95). It permits a wide variety and even a combination of empirical research methods in examining the "why" and the "how" questions, "bracketing all concerns about reality together" (Abbott 2001, 80). This comprehensive approach, combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, and extensive use of discourse analysis make it best suited to uncover, address, and ultimately answer the sort of identity questions we're looking at here.

2.2 Identity

[7] see Mackenzie 2011 for a convincing argument that our current understanding of positivism has strayed from its origins.

And what do we mean by identity? Gee (2011, 3) describes it as "different ways of being in the world at different times and places for different purposes." Stacul (2003, 94) says it is a "relational concept.) Cole and Wolf (1974) conclude that it is a political tool. We can also speak of various kinds of identities: individual and collective, regional and national. There are historic, ethnic, and ideological identities, each of which can be constructed through language.

There are also different aspects to these constructions. Dailey-O'Cain and Liebscher (2009) identify two, the most relevant of which here is discursive identity. Discursive identity is identity "constructed in interaction" (Dailey-O'Cain and Liebscher 2009, 187). It is identity which is flexible. Changeable. Malleable, depending on circumstances. Discursive identity is constructed by the speaker through conversational interaction, through explicit and implicit references. Common to all is the idea of variability: identity is a construct that can change depending on need and circumstance. The act of creating this ever-changing identity is called *positioning*.

2.3. Positioning

Positioning describes a placement relative to something or someone else. It describes the situating of identity. It means that interactants can change and alter, highlight or downplay aspects of their identity as befits their desires, motives, or wishes at any given moment. It moves the construction of identity from the tangible and physical ("place") to the more abstract and ephemeral ("space"). It can be understood as the weaving of "personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible […] as social acts" (Harré and van Langenhove 1991, 395). It is a way to produce and understand daily behaviour. Almost like military positioning, speakers *take up* and *occupy* positions. And the positions speakers occupy (whether by choice or by placement) affect the way their utterances are understood, the type and shape of identity their utterances create, and the form of response their utterances invite.

Individuals can position, both themselves and others, in a variety of means—in conversations, in the story-lines of conversations, and in the actions of the story-lines (Harré and van Langenhove 1991,

396). Though positioning is, above all, a "conversational phenomenon," it is not limited to verbal exchange (Davies and Harré 1990, 45). Positioning allows information to be understood, extrapolated, and interpreted. Social meaning is created, context drawn, and facts construed depending upon the positioning of the interlocutors.

2.3.1 First and Second Order Positioning

First order positioning is locating a speaker "within an essentially moral space" (Harré and van Langenhove 1991, 396). It implies judgement or value; first order positioning carries with it implications of authority, of entitlement, of hierarchy. When this placement is accepted, first order positioning has occurred. The Germanic South Tyroleans who willingly accepted Ettore Tolomei's Italianization in the 1920s are an example of first order positioning. Those who adopted new surnames, began to call their villages by Italian names, who sent their children to Italian-only schools: these individuals accepted the authority of the Italian state which positioned them as Italian.

When the right to this locating is contested, however, when a moral placement is not tacitly accepted as (overtly or covertly) commanded, second order positioning occurs. Second order positioning, then, is a challenge. It is an upset to the understood, requested, or implied social order. "Second order positioning," write Harré and van Langenhove (1991, 396), "occurs when the first order positioning is not taken for granted by one of the persons involved in the discussion." This was, and continues to be, the much more common response in South Tyrol—resistance to an authority which positioned them as Italian. This refusal led to Austria's continued agitation for South Tyrolean autonomy, to the granting of bilingual status, to the lingering separatist movements and is, I suspect, part of what continues today in the German-identifying majority of Northern Italy: a definition of being by proclaiming what it is not.

2.3.2 Intentional Positioning

"Positioning always takes place within the context of a specific moral order of speaking" (Harré and van Langenhove 1991, 399). What and how a speaker positions both self and others takes place,

necessarily, in the context of rights given/taken to do so. Intentional positioning[8] occurs in four ways: deliberate self-positioning, forced self-positioning, deliberate positioning of others, and forced positioning of others.

2.3.3 Deliberate Self-positioning

Deliberate self-positioning occurs whenever anyone makes an utterance expressing personal identity. First person singular grammar *(ich,* I) is used. Having thus "presented oneself as a unique person […], one is then in a position to offer personal explanations of personal behaviour" (Harré and van Langenhove 1991, 400). Deliberate self-positioning often signals an end goal, a desire to be seen in a particular light for a particular purpose. The refusal of many South Tyroleans to speak Italian, adopt Italian nomenclature, or conform to Italian language regulations is a perfect example of this. By resisting Italian influence, the German population of South Tyrol positioned itself as not Italian: neither customs, heritage, language, nor region belonged to Italy. A more contemporary example of deliberate self-positioning can be seen in the t-shirts, stickers, and placards which appear throughout the region emblazoned with the words *"i bin a südtiroler"* ("I am a South Tyrolean," written not in Standard German but in the local dialect). When this phrase appears on an Italian-identifying car decal, it takes even more layers of meaning (see figure 2).

Figure 2: *"i bin a südtiroler"*
Taken from the cover of book by same name (Georg Grote 2009)

2.3.4 Forced Self-positioning

[8] for a discussion of tacit positioning, see Davies and Harré (1990).

Forced self-positioning is much like deliberate self-positioning. In fact, it differs only insofar as it is done by others. "[T]he initiative [for positioning] now lies with someone else rather than the person involved," write Harré and van Langenhove (1991, 402). Institutions can assume a moral high ground and force people to position themselves in a certain light. With forced self-positioning, the institutions "ask persons to position themselves in order to have information upon which to base their own positionings of the envisaged person as well" (Harré and van Langenhove 1991, 403). The Italian government's 1920 mandate that South Tyroleans relinquish their German identity is an attempt at forced self-positioning. The government demanded that previously German-identifying peoples represent themselves as Italian—by nationality, by name, by language. They then used this representation to argue that South Tyrol was home to a large Italian population: the population of South Tyrol was made to position itself as Italian.

2.3.5 Positioning of Others

Deliberate and forced positioning of others can be similar. Both can occur in either the positioned one's presence or absence. "The most dramatic form of forced other-positioning by an institution is no doubt the criminal trial," write Harré and van Langenhove (1991, 404). The defendant is forced into position by others (prosecutor, witnesses, court experts), each of whom creates and shapes the role of the accused. These others can even position the accused as insane or incapable of mounting a defence, thereby removing all positioning agency from the applicant.

2.4 Collective Positioning

There are three aspects to consider when it comes to how groups position. People differ in their abilities to position. They also differ in their willingness to perform (or not perform) the task. And finally, they differ in the power they have to achieve the positioning they attempt (Harré and van Langenhove 1991, 406). Not only individual abilities, but also social status and cultural capital affect how well someone can position. The feelings of obligation to the group may affect the extent to which an individual

feels compelled to go along with the prevailing desires. All these factors can affect the message of the group, the resultant position it takes, and the effectiveness/clarity of message.

The population of South Tyrol situates itself culturally and linguistically apart from the dominant powers in the region by speaking German, by perpetuating strong cultural ties with Germanic countries, by maintaining a tradition of food and dress more aligned with Germany/Austria than with Italy. Though there is variation in the region (some speakers do identify primarily with Italian and a small minority with Ladin), the overriding majority (69.38%) claims to belong to the German language group (APST 2011, 15). They position themselves away from Italian ideology and ally with their Germanic neighbours.

2.5 Local Identity

"Identity is constructed through interplay with the 'other,'" writes Stacul (2003, 94). And, "although identities are far from fixed, they are represented as fixed" (Stacul 2003, 96). Stacul focuses much of his research on the Vanoi valley in northern Italy (located in the province of Trient, immediately south of South Tyrol). He describes the sense of place shared by the inhabitants of this valley as "pride in the qualities of the place of birth," a pride which takes care to stress the differences between the valley and other places (Stacul 2003, 96). Here, the physical separation of the valley heightens the emotional separation from the rest of the country.

This same separation is evident in South Tyrol. Both provinces are autonomous within Italy. Both are removed politically, geographically, and linguistically from the centre of Italianness (Rome), and both go to lengths to stress local and provincial authority in public matters—the role of the state is downplayed and minimal. Stacul (2003, 95) writes that the provincial eagle is on display "in almost every corner of Trentino;" the same can be said for South Tyrol, where the red-and-white Tyrolean flag is flown as often (possibly more often than) the red-white-and-green of Italy. These are both more examples of positioning: privileging the region's power over the country's.

The so-called "fixed" identities Stacul references arise from a shared sense of history, place, tradition, and 'the other.' In the Vanoi valley, 'the other' is comprised of individuals from neighbouring

villages, a rivalry (both good-natured and not) has developed. Dichotomies of urban/rural, backward/civilised, and wild/refined arise in describing neighbouring villages. These same dichotomies arise in South Tyrol, though are visible less between villages and more between the province and the nation. In Stacul's research, the fact that many Vanoi villagers ally themselves more strongly with their Germanic neighbours in South Tyrol than with the rest of Italy is upheld as evidence of the valley's separateness: South Tyrol is, in effect, 'the other' to the rest of Italy (Stacul 2003, 110). Though Stacul (2003, 111) writes that speaking German is no longer central to the definition of South Tyrolean identity and that living in South Tyrol is now sufficient to constitute South Tyrolean status, the region is still more popularly aligned with Germany in the Trentino consciousness than with Italy. A popular Italian expression in the region "you speak German" (*ti parli todésc*) really means " 'you speak an incomprehensible language,' something nobody is able to understand" (Stacul 2003, 114). This is true even though the valley (possibly in further effort to differentiate itself from Italy) presents itself as an "Austrian breed," claiming an ancestry, kinship, culture, and customs more Tyrolean (ie: foreign) than Italian.

2.6 Linguistic Identity In Minority Populations

No matter how it is framed, the population of South Tyrol is a minority group. Edwin Ardener (1989, 68) elucidates five points of discussion related to minority peoples in a zone of larger population. Though he relates them specifically to Africa, their inclusion here is, I think, relevant.

1. The ethnic classification is a reflex of self-identification.
2. Onomastic (or naming) propensities are closely involved in this, and thus have more than a purely linguistic interest.
3. Identification by others is an important feature in the establishment of self-identification.
4. The taxonomic space in which self-identification occurs is of overriding importance.
5. The effect of foreign classification, 'scientific' and lay, is far from neutral in the establishment of such a space.

The dynamics of a South Tyrol identity are comprised of an interplay of these features. The group self-identifies as Tyrolean. The names of South Tyrolean environment are not incidental to this identity—they are integral. External identifications, such as those seen under Tolomei's rule, affect self-identification. In the case of South Tyrol, the efforts of outsiders to force Italian ethnicity on the region may have spurred a stronger self-identification. The naming of the region is of paramount importance when it comes to identity: this is why there was such fierce resistance to re-naming of places and people. And the last point which acknowledges the importance of outsider observation in creating this space, may speak directly to why South Tyrol remains Italian today: apart from the immediate region, much of the world is unaware of the special status South Tyroleans claim or desire within larger Italy.

2.7 Linguistic Construction of Regional Identity

Pümpel-Mader (2000, 121) discusses the ways populations, specifically the Tyrolean population, construct a regional identity. Though she writes of Tyrol in general, historic associations, close cultural ties, and common language mean, I believe, that her observations can be fairly applied to the community of South Tyrol as well.

Using Tyrol *(Tirol)*, the noun itself, she argues, is an especially salient way of constructing a regional identity. It is a linguistic identifier; it serves not only to designate a land area but also a people. It is a statement of identity *("Feststellen von Identität")* and a marker of difference *("Unterscheidungszeichen"),* one which is used by members to designate themselves as part of the group (Pümpel-Mader 2000, 122). For Tyroleans, identification as members of this specific geographic area is a way of demonstrating and achieving group membership. The name of the physical location becomes a symbolic representation of the people who inhabit it.

People are often named for the locations they inhabit. As early as 1917, sociologist Vilfredo Pareto argued that patriotism was not linked to the nation itself, but rather to a complex conflation of ideas about heritage, religion, language, history, and traditions (quoted in Pümpel-Mader 2000, 124).

Pümpel-Mader further argues that these qualities relate to the land, to the physical qualities of the environment, which then colour *("abfärben")* the identity of its inhabitants.

As early as 1796[9], landscape qualities were being applied to the South Tyrolean inhabitants. There is long historical precedent of names which embody the Tyrolean landscape and people: *diese Bergbewohner* (these mountain dwellers), *dieses Bergvolk* (these mountain people)*, die tirolischen Gebirgsleute* (the Tyrolean mountain people)*, die Eingebohrnen der rauheren Thaeler* (the natives of the rough valley). The naming characteristics extend also to the plant world: the word *knorrig* (gnarled) carries, as it does in English, connotations of trees. In an apt example of second-order positioning, this word is often applied both to Tyroleans and the knobbly ancient oaks found in the region. The word-use example cited in Duden (the authoritative compendium of German language use) and noted as something of a pejorative *("spröde"),* is *"Selbst zwei Wochen vor den Landestagwahlen ... lassen sich die [knorrig]en Tiroler nicht zu einem lauten oder gar heißen Wahlkampf hinreißen"* (Just two weeks before the elections … the gnarled Tyroleans do not allow themselves to be torn between a loud or heated campaign) (Duden 1994, 1901).

The repetition and use of *Tyrol* and its adjectival derivatives eventually entrench the fictions they represent in collective consciousness. It becomes a self-perpetuating cycle: use demonstrates belonging, which is reinforced through use. These appellatives are markers for regionally relevant everyday objects, which function as symbols for the construction and establishment of group coherence *("Ausbildung und Festigung von Gruppenkohärenz")* (Pümpel-Mader 2000, 126). Once entrenched in language, these appellatives are also easily applied to other, unrelated ideas. Pümpel-Mader mentions *Tyrol* (and adjectives) applied to such ideas as toys *("Holzbox Tirol"),* meetings and events*("Tiroler Abend, Tiroler Textilevent"),* hotels *("Tirolerhof"),* musical style *("Tirolerisch gspielt")*, dance style *("Tanzabend 'Tirolerisch'")* and political parties *("Eine Aktion der SPÖ-Tirol")* (Pümpel-Mader 2000, 126-7). This serves practical, tangible functions: easy transfer of known characteristics to a new or unfamiliar object,

[9] *Über die Tiroler* (1796) by Joseph Rohreres is described by Pümpel-Mader (2000, 124) as the first ethnography of the Tyroleans, though she claims the "Tyrolean character" was noted even a century before that.

the conveyance of location-specific information, an implied solidarity between the object and the qualities embodied in the name *Tirol* (Pümpel-Mader 2000, 128). A linguistic shorthand, as it were.

3. Regionalism

One sunny spring afternoon, I fell into conversation with an elderly man. We were sharing a communal table at a Munich beer garden, just the two of us. After some tentative smiles and shifting eye contact, we fell into conversation, beginning naturally enough with "where are you from?" When I returned the question, the man hoisted his *Maß,* smiled and said, *"ich bin erstens Bayer, zweitens Europäer und drittens Deutscher."* (I am Bavarian first, European second, and German third.)

We have already seen how identity can be expressed and established through language, through naming, and through nomenclature. This man, using his German dialect, named himself as primarily Bavarian before widening his identity to encompass Europe and then again to include Germany as a third and final marker of identity. Still with an eye (and an ear?) to linguistics, we too will move to consider identity in a wider context: the construction and maintenance of group identity with(in) a region.

3.1 Group Identity

A *population* is, at its basic measurement, a group of people. We "imagine" it, writes Ardener (1980, 65) to be "a reality:" categories of quantification expressed by various demographic markers such as births, deaths, marriages, and divorces. But even these ostensibly objective markers, however, are subject to interpretation. "Therefore," writes Ardener (1989, 66), "population series are continually affected by changing definitions on the part of both the measurers and the measured." In order to appreciate the size, scale, scope, and limits of any given population, Ardener (1989, 67) identifies two perspectives which need to be considered: the scholars and the people. Scholarly classification can draw isoglosses, for example, demarking a population linguistically; self-classification, where the "people themselves play the part of theoreticians," forms, shapes, and possibly even creates categories of its own.

3.1.1 Population and Hollow Categories

Population is a concept which needs to be separate, Ardener (1989, 70) argues, from language and ethnicity. A population *may* share history, culture, language, but *need* not—a population can be fully constructed. "Fulbe, Jews and Britons are created by definition as much as by procreation," Ardener writes (1989, 70). The lines which delineate populations may, in fact, be real entities: national borders, valleys, mountain ranges. Or they may simply be constructs, notional borders based solely on "the structuring processes of the human mind" (Ardener 1989, 71). When these labels are affixed according to "non-demographic criteria," the resultant construct is what Ardener (1989, 70) terms a "hollow category." Outsiders can construct a group out of convenient labels, even when there may be no actual population which applies these ideas to itself. Stacul (2003, 4) describes the phenomenon as "groups that are not biologically distinct populations, yet are needed by other groups (or by the larger society) for classificatory purposes." Regardless, as Ardener (1989, 71) advances and as we have already seen, "language acquires a position of critical empirical importance" in how these populations are defined.

3.1.2 The Individual, the Group, and the Nation

Cohen (1996, 803) has argued that individuals conceive of self and group membership in very different terms. He writes that people draw a group identity from broad collective categories (gender, ethnicity, class, kinship, etc.), but forge a personal identity as individual members of this group, thereby inadvertently distinguishing between *them* (the group) and *us* (the individual). The nation, however, can be used by individuals to create a personal identity. Cohen (1996, 803) writes that "the nation is one of the resources on which individuals draw to formulate their sense of selfhood," and in South Tyrol, this concept of the nation can be difficult to determine.

Cohen (1996, 802) discusses the idea of nationalism; specifically, he focuses on "the association that individuals make between themselves and the nation." He writes that the nation is a grand and general concept, whereas the individual, in contrast, is the extreme and particular opposite. He conceives

of nationalism as a force which subordinates the individual to the nation, that the only role of an individual is as a "mere cipher of the nation" (1996, 803).

Could this suggest a weak sense of nationalism in South Tyrol? Speak to Italy's failure to truly and fully Italianize South Tyrol? Cohen (1996, 805) writes that "we need to identify the difference between official representations of the nation (or locality) and the individuals' interpretations of those representations: while the politician 'collectivises' nationalism or regionalism, the individual 'personalises' it." In order to successfully instil a strong nationalistic fervour, political messages must be formulated in such a way that individuals can adopt them, mould and shape them in accordance with their own personal requirements. The *Tiroler Volkspartei* may be an example of successfully blending a nationalistic message (in this case, advocating the right of autonomy and self-determination) with personal, individual identity.

3.2 Localism

How individuals understand themselves affects how they see their group. Stacul (2003, 7) suggests that we should be looking at *localism* (or *local identity*, or *locality*) as it is "represented and described by individual social actors," that it is the "context for observing how encompassing 'global,' national and regional systems interact with local meanings at the most intimate levels." Collective identity, he argues, is pivotal to understanding locality.

Strathern (1984, 44) offers an operational definition of localism: "a set of ideas about the significance of place." "The idea of a 'local community,'" Strathern (1984, 44) writes, "is an artefact as the idea of 'society' is." Individual and collective notions of what it is to be South Tyrolean are constructions changeable depending on need, desire, and circumstance.

"'Localism' conjures up several related images: being rooted in a place, the identity which comes from belonging, a sense of antiquity and continuity over time" (Strathern 1984, 47). Inherent in the idea of *local* is *foreign*. *Rooted* cannot be understood without *rootlessness*. *Belonging* needs also *excluded*. *Us* is possible only through a corresponding *them*. "That is," Fernandez (1988, 32) writes, "we don't

understand one place well—a place usually with which we are associated—unless we can find another place to stand in some kind of sympathetic or unsympathetic contrast to it."

3.3 Diacritical Identity

Contrast and opposition in the formation of group identity is an idea Barth (1969) pioneered. He argues that cultural identity is not something preserved by isolation but rather a difference maintained "*despite* changing participation and membership," which even *depends* on social interaction as "the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built" (Barth 1969, 9-10) He problematizes the idea that culture is enacted in isolation. Instead, Barth (1969, 12) writes that "the same group of people, with unchanged values and ideas, would surely pursue different patterns of life and institutionalize different forms of behaviour when faced with the different opportunities offered in different environments."

Though Barth was explaining the effects of environment on culture (the linguistic version of this argument we have already seen advanced by Pümpel-Mader), it can also be extrapolated to positioning and the construction of identity. Groups can highlight or downplay linguistic features or cultural elements as befits a situation. In a different situation, different elements can be emphasized. The gentleman I met in Munich positioned himself as Bavarian; it is likely that, had we met in Canada, he would have framed his identity differently. South Tyroleans use their history to position themselves as ethnically and historically Austrian. They can also use their language to position themselves as German. They can use their dress and food to position themselves as Tyrolean. And, presumably if and when it suits, they can use their locale and nationality to position themselves as Italian. To better understand if, how, and when each of these various identities is enacted in South Tyrol, a study needs to be undertaken wherein participants would be asked about their ancestry, heritage, ethnicity, and identity. Observations about the enactment of identity at less conscious levels (in community, casual conversation, art, and public representation) would also—and possibly to greater academic benefit—be recorded.

3.3.1 Recursive, Segmentary, and Fractal Identites

Definition by negation is common—an explanation and a marker of identity by making clear what one is not. South Tyroleans manage position themselves as "not Italian." This creates an identity apart from Italy, in alignment with Austria/Germany, though it is also changeable depending on needs of the moment and the situation.

Gal and Irvine (1995) examine boundaries in and through language, arguing that they are social constructions. In focusing on "the construction of linguistic contrast and difference," Gal and Irvine (1995, 970) note that the ideas of "socially-positioned speakers" and the outsiders observing them (ethnographers, linguists, and the like) are every bit as important as the speech itself. There are three ways, they argue, by which ideologies affect understanding and representation (*semiotics*, or "the links between linguistic forms and social phenomena") (Gal and Irvine 1995, 972).

Iconicity is the first. Iconicity describes the idea that what a social group says is perceived as an inherent aspect of that group's essence (Gal and Irvine 1995, 973). The language a group uses is viewed as a representation of its identity, bound up inextricably and intrinsically with elements of their nature. We have already examined this through Pümpel-Mader's argument (2000) that the terminology a group employs evidences some essential nature of their identity and that, in South Tyrol, these terms include environmental and geographic features which reflect the South Tyroleans' understanding of themselves. The very use of the German language could also be seen as further evidence of iconicity in South Tyrol. Popular ideas of "Northern European," "German," and "Germanness," are conveyed, reprised, and perpetuated through language in South Tyrol. To further understand the layers of meaning and the resultant semiotic signalling attached to the use of German in South Tyrol requires an extensive study on language attitudes and South Tyrolean (and Austrian and Italian) conceptions of "German."

The second way in which ideology affects language use is with *recursiveness*, or "the dichotomizing and partitioning process […] involved in some understood opposition" (Gal and Irvine 1995, 974). As Barth (1969) and Fernandez (1988) already demonstrated, this involves the creation of an

other, an entity which can stand in opposition to a group's self-definition. The reproduction of this opposition then highlights difference on ever increasing or decreasing scale. Categories of belonging appear and are further divided into subcategories of belonging. These subcategories are repeated and reproduced in relation to other subcategories, and may even be further deconstructed into ever smaller component parts. It is repetition of the oppositions which create recursive identities, gradients of membership. But the lines between these categories, however unyielding they may appear, are incomplete. This is where the idea of *fractals* comes in—much as Stacul (2003) illuminated earlier, the lines of identity are not complete; they are neither fixed nor stable. Gal and Irvine (1995, 974) suggest instead that these oppositional identities are "shifting" and little more than "partial." We have seen this in our earlier discussions of constructivism, discursive identity, and positioning theory: language is used to create and adjust identity as needed. Fractal identity describes the perpetuation of oppositional categories to construct identity. In South Tyrol, this could take several forms. Perhaps the umbrella category would be Germanic; nested within could be identities of, variably, German, Austrian, Tyrolean, South Tyrolean, or even identities attached to province, district, village, parish, or valley. The "master" identity (Germanic) is reproduced on ever smaller scales within each of these subcategories. And, as per our earlier discussions, positioning is the means by which these various identities recur, repeat, and alter.

Fractal identity is related to *erasure,* the final way ideology can affect language. Erasure "renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible" (Gal and Irvine 1995, 974). It does not, of course, actually eliminate the phenomena, but it does homogenize, obscure, or alter the characteristic in question to conform more closely with existing ideals. South Tyrol experiences erasure in many ways. First, the very existence of this German-speaking community is largely unknown outside of the immediate area—popular ideology assumes language which corresponds to national borders. Germanic South Tyrol is also erased from popular Italian consciousness; as demonstrated historically as well as currently, Italy views the region as Italian. There is even erasure within the community itself: the South Tyrolean dialect is rarely commented upon—most academic commentary (when it exists at all) focuses on

the particular use of *German* in South Tyrol, not *Bairisch* (the dialect). The internal variation one might expect to find is erased. As with recursive identity in South Tyrol, this is an area rich for further study.

3.3.2 Metonymic Misrepresentation

A place is composed of climate and landscape. But it is defined by culture, by "customs of eating, of talking, of dancing and singing" (Fernandez 1988, 31). These intangibles "come to stand for a place as its significant if limiting metaphors" (Fernandez 1988, 31). For outsiders and in-, these are the component elements. These are the things we think on when we imagine a community. And by first thinking of them and then speaking of them, these elements come gradually to embody the place. "What is a figurative way of speaking about a place becomes transformed into a part of that place" (Fernandez 1988, 31). Idioms of distinction, they can be called. Salient markers of identity. The smaller tangibles we reference in everyday life which come to stand for the larger abstraction of *culture*: food, dress, gender, class, custom, tradition, landscape. All of these speak indirectly to identity—how we use these things and the language we use to reference them reveal how we want to be perceived.

And then these parts of place become part of self. We have seen the way South Tyroleans appropriate terms of landscape for themselves, the ways these abstract terminologies become enmeshed in their conceptions of group and self. These terms for place become, in essence, other terms for the group which inhabits it. But often these parts misrepresent the greater whole. They may obscure parts of identity (akin to the erasure Gal and Irvine [1995] wrote of earlier); they may misconstrue it. Fernandez (1988, 22) calls this "metonymic misrepresentation." One part, simply a small piece of something larger, comes to stand for the entirety. As it does, gradations of difference are lost; finer distinctions are subsumed to a greater whole. The obvious and immediate connection to South Tyrol is the Italian narrative which obscures minority peoples like the South Tyroleans. There is surely metonymic misrepresentation to be found within the South Tyrolean community as well, however: Italians and Italian-speakers who do not identify with Germany/Austria; linguistic variation within the German-speaking community; unique

traditions and customs, markers of identity perhaps unique to village, parish, or farm which are blended into the larger narrative of Germanness in South Tyrol. A detailed study to uncover metonymic misrepresentation in South Tyrol would involve participant interview and observation of stereotypes in popular culture, then comparison to outsider conception.

3.4 Community

Cohen (1985, 12) proposes that a community consists of members of group who both "have something in common with each other" and who are distinguishable from "members of other putative groups." South Tyroleans share a common language, history, and tradition and are easily and repeatedly differentiated from the rest of Italy (by their Germanness) and from Austria/Germany (by their perceived Italianness). By this definition, South Tyrol as a whole constitutes a community; it is simultaneously home to various smaller communities, which we will explore below. Some diacritical markers recur across cultures and languages: highland/lowland, northern/southern, eastern/western, urban/rural. Exploring each is outside the scope of this thesis; only those distinctions most relevant to South Tyrol will be discussed.

3.4.1 Northern/Southern Distinction

Le Vine and Campbell (1972, 162) were among the first to document the "north-south polarization of mutual stereotypes." In more than 20 nations, they record consistent tropes, characterisations which are repeated and perpetuated both within and between the north-south poles of a nation. Over and over again, southerners see themselves as more "artistic," "amiable," "generous," and "socially refined;" northerners perceive southerners as "weak," "lazy," "wasteful," and "unreliable" (Le Vine and Campbell 1972, 162). By the same token, northerners report self-conceptions as "powerful," "good organizers," "reliable," and "thrifty," whereas southerners list "slow and heavy," "rough and dirty,"

"stingy," and "serious" as typical northern traits[10]. Each nation has its own ideas of north and south relative to its own borders; each country creates its own polarized stereotypes within its boundaries. Step into another nation, and the notion of what constitutes a "northerner" will be suddenly radically different. Southern Germans, for example, are "more southern" than northern Italians (Le Vine and Campbell 1972, 162).

South Tyrol, in the very most northern reaches of Italy, would require a study to observe how these northerners conceive of themselves. This could also relate to fractal identity, and the reproductions of north/south dichotomies on a smaller scale within each ever-smaller community. A fascinating follow-up to this would then be an examination—likely through available literature and written sources rather than participant interview—of how perceptions of South Tyrol changed following Italian annexation, when the region went from being the southernmost portion of Austria to the northernmost portion of Italy.

3.4.2 Urban/Rural Distinction

Anthropology of localism in Mediterranean countries has traditionally focused on the "gaps between locality and the nation-state" (Stacul 2003, 3), with the relation likened to the gap between tradition and modernity. The village became representative of tradition and the state became representative of modernity and civilization. In the village lies the preservation of tradition, custom; in the nation is change and the future. Though Cole & Wolf (1974, 22) caution against the oversimplification of such a binary classification ("'modernization' is often mere 'tradition' in overalls, and 'modernization' often dons peasant dress"), they acknowledge that a combination of factors interact and conspire to produce divergent identities in these South Tyrolean mountain communities.

Cole and Wolf's 1974 study of two South Tyrolean villages evidences this urban/rural split and demonstrates a further difference along linguistic lines: the German-speaking village of St Felix clings to a rural identity, favouring parochial rights of inheritance, ties to the land and cultivation, an inward focus, and traditional local government tasked primarily with regulating access to forest and pasture land. The

[10] see Appendix B for a full list of all qualities

Italian-speaking community of Tret, however, has "partible" inheritance, political links with other villages, and a generally more outward and urban-oriented focus than their Germanic neighbours (Cole and Wolf 1974, 19). That such a stark contrast is evident in two villages of similar size and location, separated from one another by not more than a 30-minute walk, has implications for the German/Italian linguistic divide. It is unlikely that the question is one of linguistic determinism (does German language somehow root its population in tradition?), and more probable that these populations create and maintain divergent identities through the use of their different languages.

The German-speaking community of St Felix positions itself as a traditional village—a mountain people of patriarchal kinship structure, hierarchical inheritance, and traditional custom. Cole & Wolf (1974, 266) write that, with the rise of the National Socialist Party in the 1930s, many Tyroleans "fell under sway of the myth of Germany as a peasant nation." The romance of *Blut* and *Boden* ("the unit of German blood and soil") advances the notion of an "organic social and cultural unit in which all classes [are] joined in a common purpose," romanticizes the peasant, and reinforces the idea of independent self-government—all of which conflate to produce the Germanic Tyrolean identity (Cole and Wolf 1974, 266-267). Italy, in contrast, focused on an urban centre and a political system in which a coterie middlemen negotiate state and local interests. In Italy, the city is privileged over the country. The pinnacle of civilized society is the urban centre; rural life holds no honour and is subjugated to the might and profit of the city. The maintenance and continued use of German in South Tyrol is therefore, according to Cole and Wolf, a way of positioning a German identity, of privileging rural identity, and maintaining traditional values despite (because of?) conflicting Italian ideology.

4. Conclusions

The study of South Tyrol has applications which reach far beyond the geographical borders of the region. By understanding the case in South Tyrol, we can gain insight into Italian relations with other minority peoples. We can learn more about how German identity is formed, viewed, represented, and

maintained outside of Germany and in expatriate German communities around the world. We can explore European regionalism. We can better understand how various minority groups position themselves in relation to dominant powers. We can even learn more broadly about the shaping of identity through language. The situation in South Tyrol encourages us to think about language as more than a way of imparting information—it invites a closer examination of the various uses of language in all its subtleties and complexities. This thesis is but the beginning. In order to fully apprehend the ways in which South Tyrolean identity is constructed through language—and then, more importantly, to extrapolate these conclusions to other societies—I need to study the "talk on the ground:" the way everyday things are discussed in South Tyrol. A study of conscious identity declaration is also worthy, but an examination of everyday language would help illuminate the issues raised here.

This thesis began with a discussion of borders and the idea of lines both tangible and not, perceived and not, permanent and not, flexible and not. Lines and borders pervaded our entire examination of South Tyrol: the repositioning of once static conceptions of land to rearrange-able constructions; boundaries "marked out by orthographic characters," influenced by need, politics, and the subjective considerations of the land's inhabitants (Kontler 1999, 9); identity shaped by place, power, political consideration, collective understanding, a shared sense of history, and—not insignificantly—language.

Which is, after all, the context of it all: identity in a German-speaking community of northern Italy. We have looked at the ways, means, and methods by which the South Tyroleans construct identity. We have examined belonging and group membership; positioning; identity as variously recursive, flexible, incomplete, and fractal. Most importantly, we have looked at the role of language in all these elements.

Language. It both draws and transcends borders. It invites and excludes. It illuminates and obfuscates. But perhaps above all else, as Fernandez (1988, 26) writes and as the case in South Tyrol demonstrates, "language gives a sense of place."

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Appendix A

Ettore Tolomei's 32 *provvedimenti per l'Alto Adige*

1. the unification of Alto Adige and Trentino to form a single province with Trient as its capital,
2. the appointment of Italian communal secretaries,
3. revision of the (citizenship) options and closure of the Brenner border to all persons to whom Italian citizenship had not been conferred,
4. provisions to make it more difficult for Germans and Austrians to get entry visas and permission for temporary residence,
5. provisions to prevent immigration by Germans,
6. revision of the 1921 census,
7. mandating Italian as the language of official government business,
8. the dismissal of German bureaucrats or their transfer to other provinces,
9. disbanding the German Association,
10. disbanding all mountaineering clubs that were not affiliated with the Italian Alpine Association and transfer of their mountain huts to the Italian Alpine Association,
11. banning the name "South Tyrol" and "German South Tyrol"
12. shutting down *Der Tiroler*, the daily newspaper published in Bozen,
13. Italianization of German place names,
14. Italianization of public signs and inscriptions,
15. Italianization of street signs,
16. Italianization of German family names,
17. Removal of the monument to Walther von der Vogelweide from Walther Square in Bozen,
18. increasing *carabineri* strength while also eliminating German units,
19. measures to facilitate the purchase of land and immigration by Italians,
20. measures to encourage foreign countries to maintain a policy of non-involvement in South Tyrol,

21. elimination of German banks and establishment of an Italian mortgage bank,
22. construction of customs offices in Sterzing and Toblach,
23. generous subsidies for Italian language and culture,
24. construction of Italian kindergartens and elementary schools,
25. construction of Italian intermediate schools,
26. thorough investigation of university degrees earned abroad,
27. expansion of the *Istituto di Storia per l'Alto Adige*,
28. revision of the geographical dimensions of the Bishopric of Brixen and strict surveillance of the activities of the clergy,
29. use of Italian in civil and criminal court proceedings,
30. state control of the Bolanzo Chamber of Commerce and the agricultural associations,
31. an extensive railroad infrastructure construction program in order to facilitate the Italianization of Alto Adige (Milan-Mals, Veltlin-Brenner, Agordo-Brixen rail projects), and
32. increasing troop strength in Alto Adige.

(quoted in Steininger 2004, 19-20)

APPENDIX B

Stereotypical Northern/Southern Distinctions

Northerners see themselves as:

1. of strong character
2. powerful militarily
3. economically vigorous
4. good organizers
5. industrious, hardworking
6. reliable
7. manly
8. serious
9. thrifty

Southerners see themselves as:

1. eloquent
2. artistic
3. socially refined
4. patient
5. clever, intelligent
6. obliging
7. graceful
8. amiable
9. generous

Southerners see Northerners as:

1. powerful economically
2. powerful militarily
3. hard working, energetic
4. physically strong
5. slow and heavy
6. rough and dirty
7. egocentric
8. stingy
9. pessimistic
10. hard-hearted
11. serious
12. stupid
13. fanatic

Northerners see Southerners as:

1. economically weak
2. militarily weak
3. lazy
4. weak
5. quick and fast
6. amiable and oily
7. unreliable
8. wasteful
9. optimistic
10. light-hearted
11. crafty
12. clever
13. spineless

(Le Vine and Campbell 1972, 162)