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Joanna Chojnicka

Activist Online Journalism and the Gender Controversy

Investigating Polish LGBTQ blogs

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Beitrag untersucht einen Korpus von Blog-Einträgen ausgewählter polnischer LGBTQ-Blogs zum Thema Gender. Der Fokus liegt im Besonderen auf Texten, die als Beispiele für den AktivistenInnen-Onlinejournalismus stehen, einem hybriden Genre, das soziales Engagement und alternativen Journalismus verbindet und das mit den massenmedialen Frames und den Konventionen des Nachrichten-Genres interagiert, darauf aufbaut und sich diese aneignet. Der Beitrag verwendet dabei die *positive discourse analysis* (PDA) und im Besonderen die revidierte Typologie von Gegenstrategien, die von Felicitas Macgilchrist (2007) entwickelt wurden und die die Verwendungsweisen von ironischen und nicht-ironischen Strategien der Inversion, der Komplexifizierung, der teilweisen und der radikal neuen Rahmung aufzeigen, die die Formen der Darstellung des Themas Gender in den Massenmedien herausfordern.

Schlagwörter: AktivistenInnen-Onlinejournalismus, Blogs, Geschlecht, LGBTQ, positive discourse analysis, Polen

Summary: This article investigates a corpus of blog entries dealing with gender issues published on selected Polish LGBTQ blogs. It focuses in particular on texts which could be considered examples of activist online journalism – a hybrid genre combining social activism and alternative journalism – interacting with, building upon, and re-appropriating mainstream frames and news reporting genre conventions. The article employs the framework of positive discourse analysis (PDA) and specifically a revised typology of counter-strategies developed by Felicitas Macgilchrist (2007), showing the use of strategies of non-ironic and ironic inversion, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing to contest the ways the topic of gender is dealt with in mainstream media.

Keywords: activist online journalism, blogs, gender, LGBTQ, PDA, Poland

1. Introduction

Within a critical framework of media discourse analysis, whose goal is to portray the media as a site of struggle, contradictions and tensions between different ways of representing social reality (Fowler 1991; Fairclough 1995), it is of vast importance to study not only hegemonic discourses of mainstream mass media, but also counter-discourses produced and disseminated by social groups that do not have an opportunity to publish through traditional media channels. For this reason, the present article discusses an exemplary genre of alternative or counter-discourse – that of a web log (blog). In particular, it focuses on Polish LGBTQ blogs. The article suggests that some of these blogs may be considered representative of a kind of hybrid genre combining social activism and alternative

journalism. The analysis offered in this article is based on a small corpus of blogs (see References), written by Polish authors self-identifying as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer). It employs the approach of positive discourse analysis (PDA) and in particular the typology of counter-strategies developed by Felicitas Macgilchrist (2007), revised on the basis of previously identified patterns (Chojnicka 2015). Their functional analysis reveals how activist online journalism interacts with, builds upon and re-appropriates mainstream frames and news reporting genre conventions in diverse, often thought-provoking and unexpected ways. In order to foster comparability, only blog entries on a specific topic – that of *gender (theory, ideology, studies, etc.)* – are taken into account. Thus, an additional goal of the article is to discuss LGBTQ authors' contributions to the current public debate on gender in Poland.

2. Background of the study

2.1. The situation of the LGBTQ community in Poland

Poland belongs to the most homophobic countries in Europe, which is reflected e.g. in a restrictive legal framework concerning LGBTQ rights¹ and a low level of social acceptance of non-heteronormative behaviours, identities and lifestyles. According to opinion surveys, about 13% of gays and lesbian experience physical violence, about one third – psychological violence. 70% hide their sexual orientation at work and in public sphere. About one third claim that if offered the possibility, they would consider moving abroad. 86% Poles don't want their children to come in touch with gays or lesbians. 40% believe that homosexual acts between consenting adults should be illegal, about the same number would prefer not to have any contact with gays and lesbians at all. Finally, only 4% believe that homosexuality is normal, and a further 55% claim that it is a deviation from the norm that should be tolerated but not accepted (Gruszczyńska 2007, p. 96). And although another study shows that 49% of Poles believe gay people are not treated as fairly as straight people, it also indicates that only 23% of Poles are in favour of registered partnerships for same-sex couples (ILGA 2013, p. 176).

2.2. LGBTQ in the Polish media

LGBTQ issues and individuals were practically invisible in the society and the media in Poland prior to the democratic transition of 1989. During the Communist times, sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular were considered taboo, and, when it comes to media coverage, the silence was broken »just a couple« of times »when the press covered spicy criminal stories in which lesbians or gay men were involved« (Szulc 2011, p.

1 No regulation of same-sex unions, no law regulating gender recognition – currently the only possibility to change legal gender is to sue one's parents (Śmiszek & Dynarski 2014)

160). In most publications on the topic, the history of LGBTQ in the Polish media seems to begin in the 2000s (Szulc 2011; Selinger 2008; Graff 2006), with the first parliamentary discussion on the legal recognition of same-sex partnerships (1995) mentioned as the only notable event of the 1990s. What happened in the middle of the 2000s could be called an »astounding shift« – »from complete silence at the turn of the 21st century to almost daily headline news in late 2005 and early 2006« (Graff 2006, p. 434). It is usually associated with the victory of the conservative party PiS (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, »Law and Justice«) in the 2005 parliamentary elections. PiS started its rule with a promise of a »moral revolution«, targeting the LGBTQ community (but also the notorious »gender ideology«, see section 2.3) as the symbol of »all that is wrong with modernity, all that is »unclean« and requires »cleansing« (Graff 2006, p. 437). Among other things, PiS was responsible for banning Equality Parades in Warsaw in 2004 and 2005, and its politicians are well known for their homophobic public statements that continue until today. Their claims, e.g. that homosexuality is contrary to nature, a sin and a disease, or that homosexuals should not be allowed to work in schools, could be found in almost every Polish newspaper in the years 2005-2007 (Minałto 2009). It is worth mentioning that PiS won the parliamentary elections again in 2015, and there is little hope that its attitude towards LGBTQ will improve.

Another important shift took place in 2008, when Polish gays and lesbians started taking a more active role in shaping media coverage of LGBTQ topics. In 2005-2007, most media publications on these topics were fuelled by the homophobic government and some right-wing politicians (Minałto 2009). Since 2008, there has been an increase in covering initiatives and activities of LGBTQ organizations. The topic of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, practically absent before, has also become more prominent. Reporting statements of the Catholic Church and the extreme right on LGBTQ issues, including marriage and adoption, is becoming less frequent; cases of hate speech in the press are decreasing, and limited to a couple of conservative newspapers and tabloids (*ibid.* p. 47). It must be emphasized, however, that the most heated debate has now moved to the Internet. Websites of the most popular TV and radio stations, newspapers and magazines, as well as some blogs run by politicians, journalists, artists or businessmen have an impact on the audience comparable to that of the traditional media (*ibid.*, p. 46). Due to the almost absolute lack of content control or censorship, Polish Internet abounds in homophobic hate speech of the most extreme kind that is not difficult to find. And although only a marginal part of the population seems to agree with or share such opinions, they often become news in the traditional media, which, next to giving them undue publicity, paints a very negative picture of the level of the public debate in Poland. On the other hand, mostly due to numerous well known politicians, actors, musicians, journalists, writers and other celebrities coming out as gay, the image of a filthy, scary, disgusting homosexual who embodies all threats of modernity can no longer be sustained. To illustrate the changing attitudes of Poles towards LGBTQ: a young gay couple has been keeping a video blog (vlog) on YouTube.com for a year now, using their authentic names. Each of their short films has a minimum of 2000 views – some reach 5000-7000 views. An episode about their 10th anniversary as a couple has reached 6644

views, 319 *likes* and 15 *dislikes* so far.² The couple have also recently been invited to a popular TV morning show *Dzień Dobry TVN*; the topic of the episode was: »how to create a successful relationship?«

The blogs included in this study vary in popularity.³ In general, however, the popularity of these sites is lower than other blogs written in Polish, especially those about cooking, travelling, fashion or politics. It may be speculated that the impact of LGBTQ blogging is rather limited, with the possible exception of BPL7, BPL25 and BPL26, written by activists also present in traditional media. These blogs are also characterized by a considerable diversity of narratives of identity, lifestyles and political agendas, so that it is impossible to talk about a unified voice of the Polish LGBTQ (online) community. It means that on the one hand, these sites testify to a variety of experiences and needs of individuals identifying as other than hetero- and cissexual; but, on the other hand, they do not form a consistent political front, with clearly defined common postulates. This, especially taking the present political situation in Poland into account, may harm the cause of LGBTQ rights in the long run. There is also hardly any networking between the bloggers, with the possible exception of the authors of BPL7 and BPL25, who sometimes quote and respond to each other's texts.

2.3. Polish discourses on gender and sexuality

In Poland, a heated debate around the word *gender* has been taking place, mostly between politicians, activists and academics, at least since 2013. That year started with the (female!) Polish MP Beata Kempa founding the parliamentary group *Stop ideologii gender* (»Stop to gender ideology«) and ended with pronouncing *gender* the word of the year by a panel of professors of linguistics.⁴ The kind of discourse that uses the collocation *gender ideology* understands *gender* mostly as lobbying for early and obligatory sexual education, promoting homosexuality among children and claiming that every individual should be able to freely choose and repeatedly change their gender (Korolczuk 2014). The link between gender and sexuality is clear here, but unfortunately it constitutes the only claim of gender and queer movements that has not been misunderstood. Those who propagate banning sexual education in primary schools do not see that it is actually early sexual education that protects children from sexual abuse, premature pregnancies or STDs. Those who propose banning »representations of homosexuality« from public discourse, including schools, completely ignore the existence of homosexual or questioning children in need of care and support, sentencing them to further stigmatization and mar-

2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKH0BzJ4tYE> (October 20, 2015)

3 Some have between 100.000 and 200.000 pageviews in total (e.g. BPL1, BPL15, BPL18), others – between 200.000 and 300.000 (BPL12, BPL18), BPL4 has almost 390.000 pageviews (most bloggers, however, choose not to publish this information).

4 <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/157933,Gender-named-buzzword-of-2013> (November 4, 2014)

ginalization. And interpreting Butler's performativity theory as the possibility to freely choose gender is a grave and utter misunderstanding of her thesis.

Graff explains that for discourses that support the hegemonic social system, the concept of *gender ideology* is an especially powerful weapon. For an average Polish media consumer, *gender* sounds foreign, alien, threatening. *Gender* is also exceptionally inclusive; its meaning may be easily manipulated according to the needs of the moment. The hate towards *gender* links in itself homophobia and aversion towards the European Union with concern for family and children (Graff 2013). When it comes to Polish academic discourse, Kochanowski reports on a process of gender and queer perspectives becoming more and more separated, with the former reserved for feminist theories and the latter – for sexuality, or more specifically homosexuality, studies. He warns that this undermines the very essence of Butler's efforts to prove that gender and sexuality work together as normative and constraining pillars of the same system (Kochanowski 2010, p. 10). Kochanowski himself wishes to be considered an adherent of the queer perspective, but admits that the process of accepting new paradigms at Polish universities in general is painstakingly slow (Kochanowski 2005). It seems that only the discourse of a broadly defined field of Polish feminist and queer activism may be seen as reflecting or parallel to global queer scholarship. It should be kept in mind, however, that the history of queer in Central Eastern Europe, including Poland, differs considerably from the way it has developed in the ›West‹ (Mizielińska 2011). Particularly in Poland, conceptualizations of gender and sexuality are inextricably linked with e.g. national and religious identity. Polish queer discourse argues for both women's and LGBTQ rights, and challenges judgmental representations of gender and sexuality transgressions, within a wider frame of redefining liberty, solidarity and fairness and defying privatism, xenophobia, religious intolerance. Polish feminist websites⁵ as well as more private LGBTQ blogs do not restrict their activities to challenging only patriarchy/sexism or heterosexism/cissexism, respectively. They understand both, paired with religious, nationalistic and racist prejudice, as interconnected manifestations of an unjust social system.

3. Theoretical foundations of the study

3.1. Discourse-oriented queer perspective

Queer research has been defined as »a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and sexual desire« (Spargo 1999, p. 9). Its theoretical foundations may be traced back to one of the central proposals of Michel Foucault (1990) – that »sexuality is not a natural feature or fact of human life but a constructed category of experience which has historical, social and cultural, rather than biological, origins« (Spargo 1999, p. 12) – extended to the category of gender by Judith Butler (1990). Gender and sexuality are understood as socially and discursively constructed categories with mean-

5 E.g. <http://codziennikfeministyczny.pl/>, <http://gender.blox.pl/html>, and others.

ings and significations determined by the circumstances of a given historical moment. Queer research exposes how patriarchal/heteronormative social systems enforce the hegemonic binary opposition of woman=female=feminine and man=male=male, presuppose everyone's heterosexual desire, and reject the distinction between (biological) sex and (social) gender (not to mention the queer assumption of the social origins of both). Homosexuality, but not heterosexuality, is considered a choice. All this means that a gender expression transgressing the binary sex/gender opposition raises doubts about one's sexuality (a feminine man is suspected to be gay) and the other way round – homosexuality raises doubts about one's sex/gender affiliation (a gay man is considered less masculine). Moreover, the binary system not only ignores the diversity of human gender expressions and sexual behaviours, but also presupposes the superiority of one sex (male) and one sexuality (hetero) over the other. Also, the level of discrimination against homosexual men is directly linked to the position of women in a given society. The more powerful the patriarchy, the more men who do not conform to the ideal of a ›real man‹ are persecuted and degraded (Graff 2010, p. 108). As shown in section 2.3, this connection is not only a theoretical concept, but becomes visible in discursive practice. What is more, the examples used in the article illustrate that gender issues are especially important to bloggers identifying as LGBTQ. Speaking out for their rights and against heterosexism, they speak out for women's rights and against sexism as well.

3.2. Defining activist online journalism

LGBTQ discourse is considered here a form of activism, in accordance with the widely accepted claim that discourse constitutes social action (e.g. Fairclough/Wodak 1997). Together with social campaigns, demonstrations, and other activities, online activist journalism offers a form of protest and resistance towards intolerance and discrimination against sexual ›minorities‹.

The development of the Internet and the World Wide Web (www) technology has brought new opportunities to the underground, alternative media (previously limited to street or underground magazines, illegal/pirate radio stations, etc.). The Internet is a space where alternative journalism, which employs traditional conventions of news reporting to ›challenge or alter dominant, expected, or accepted ways of doing society, culture, politics‹ (Lievrouw 2011, p. 19), may claim its participation in the public debate and voice the concerns of groups marginalized in the traditional media. Moreover, Internet/social media users – ›people formerly known as the audience‹ (Lievrouw 2011, p. 125; after Rosen 2006) become active participants in the process of creating contents and meanings. The Internet discourse thus has ›the potential of altering some of the traditional structures of speaking power where the marginal entities can now find a ›place at the table‹ and be able to challenge the dominant voices‹ (Mittra/Watts 2002, p. 489). *Activist online journalism* is a hybrid or recombinant phenomenon, linking together 1) new (electronic) media with alternative (dissident) media, and 2) journalism with activism. ›The practice of journalism is adopted as a method of participation‹ (or activism), but

this practice is explicitly separated »from the institutional role and interests of traditional news and media industries« (Lievrouw 2011, p. 121). Activist journalists take an explicit political stance, do not conceal it and stand by it; their goal is not to strive for objectivity, but to give silenced and marginalized groups a voice. This should not, however, be considered a bias or partiality, but rather a commitment to plurality. Since »the institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated«, and »all news is always reported from some particular angle« (Fowler 1991, p. 10), true objectivity is hardly possible. In critical approaches to discourse, objectivity is »the historical outcome of political processes and struggles«, a result of »the naturalisation of one single perspective« (Jørgensen/Phillips 2002, p. 36). Being honest about their perspective, activist journalists do not claim to offer an objective or neutral representation of reality, opting out of the political struggle for the right to define it. This way, they can never be accused of deceiving or misleading their audience. One may speculate, however, that this is not the main rationale behind this stance. It should rather be assumed that LGBTQ bloggers do not write with the aim of convincing or persuading a general audience. Their target reader already shares their beliefs and opinions. This means that the writers can afford to be radical: they do not need to alleviate or mitigate their statements. The price for this, however, is that they lose the possibility of »taking over the language« (Graff 2001), one of the main aims of both feminist and LGBTQ movements in Poland.

3.3. Positive discourse analysis

Relying upon the social constructivist definition of reality, this article problematizes discourses as producing, maintaining and supporting – or challenging – the existing social order. Different, discordant or mutually reinforcing discourses constantly interact with, permeate, cross-fertilize and challenge each other (Jørgensen/Phillips 2002). While it is recognized that some discourses are more powerful than others, and the most powerful one defines objective reality – the domain of the taken-for-granted – through hegemony, its dominance is never absolute. Hegemonic discourse may be conceptualized metaphorically as a spherical shape, most saturated at the centre but losing its power as it extends to the peripheries; or as a structure with gaps in it (ibid., p. 190). While critical discourse analysis (CDA) usually focuses on hegemonic discourses of the elites, exposing how they naturalize and legitimate unequal power structures and social relations, positive discourse analysis (PDA) pays attention to voices located at the peripheries or in the gaps as they contest the main, central, predominant representations of reality and taken-for-granted assumptions (Macgilchrist 2007, p. 74). PDA is thus a research program that identifies the power positions of hegemonic and resistant discourses and focuses on the latter. It does not assume that resistant discourses are necessarily »better«, but rather that they are defined through their resistant or reactive relation to the hegemonic discourse and that exposing the ways in which this discourse naturalizes and solidifies particular perspectives into objectivity while excluding others is always a »positive« thing (see also Chojnicka 2015). PDA, then, stands for pluralizing and democratizing public debate by

making transparent ideological presuppositions that various discourses are based on. In the following, empirical part of the article, Polish LGBTQ blog discourse on gender is analysed from the PDA perspective. The study extends previous research on strategies of dissent, in particular the typology developed by Macgilchrist (2007) and revised in Chojnicka (2015).

4. Strategies of dissent

When it comes to Polish LGBTQ blog discourse, one may distinguish two types of strategies of challenging mainstream representations – namely, *macro* and *micro* strategies.

4.1. Macro strategies

Macro strategies refer to the blog's overall stylization – in other words, to the genre the blog draws upon or adheres to. This stylization is generally very consistent – most, if not all, entries in the given blog follow it. The following genres have been distinguished: *intimate* blogs, resembling diaries or personal journals, with entries focusing on everyday life narratives and stories; *activist* blogs, some of them limited to reposting materials – articles, pictures, music, video – from other Internet sources, others functioning as archives of the authors' past activities and message boards announcing future endeavours; *scholarly* blogs with entries resembling academic articles; *journalistic* blogs that offer original texts – reports, analyses, comments – on the current political, social and cultural events, following traditional conventions of press/newspaper articles, with one apparent exception – the ideal (or, as some would have it, the illusion) of objectivity is not observed.

Out of 14 blogs considered in this study, 3 may be classified as intimate journals (BPL15, BPL18 and BPL30), one is devoted almost entirely to reposted content (making it a fine archive of the public debate on LGBTQ rights, though lacking a personal commentary – BPL1), one is activist (BPL7 – written by the leader of the Polish NGO Trans-Fuzja), two are journalistic (BPL12 and BPL26) and another two – scholarly (BPL13 and BPL25, the latter written by a therapist), with further two classified as variations of the intimate genre (BPL4 – a private/activist hybrid and BPL16 – a ›literary‹ intimate blog which reads like a novel in instalments). The final three (BPL6, BPL17 and BPL29) are special cases of the journalistic genre, offering an explicit and often quite radical commentary on current political and social events (although they also include an odd intimate entry). In order to evaluate the significance of gender as a topic in these different kinds of blogs, a google search has been conducted. The search, using a simple formula *gender site:»www.blogsaddress.com«*, has yielded the following outcomes: BPL1 – 1.660 hits, BPL4 – 23, BPL6 – 143, BPL7 – 26, BPL12 – 46, BPL13 – 19, BPL15 – 0, BPL16 – 241, BPL17 – 23, BPL18 – 1, BPL25 – 757, BPL26 – 70, BPL29 – 6, BPL30 – 1 hit. These results, however, should not be understood as reflecting exactly the frequency of the word's use in blog entries, as the search shows also sites carrying the respective keyword in com-

ments' section or in tags. It is interesting to note that blogs classified as intimate show the smallest number of hits – 0 or 1. The large number of hits for BPL1 should be disregarded due to the fact that the blog contains only reposted material. The relatively high numbers for BPL6 and BPL25 may be explained by the fact that these sites focus on transsexual/transgender issues. This gives the average number of 30 uses of the word *gender* per blog.

4.2. Micro strategies

Micro strategies refer to ways of constructing and framing individual texts or fragments of texts. The blogs under consideration represent a *dissident* discourse which stands in opposition to the hegemonic way of representing reality. As such, they are expected to make use of counter-strategies contesting the mainstream frames – in Macgilchrist's (2007) wording, *reframing strategies*. Reframing is defined as

»shifting an issue away from its conventional ›location‹ within one set of shared assumptions and reconstructing it within a different set of knowledges. In this way the issue is assigned a different interpretation, i.e. comes to have a different ›meaning‹ in its new context.« (Macgilchrist 2007, p. 80)

Macgilchrist's typology, as revised in Chojnicka (2015), includes the following strategies, in non-ironic and ironic variants: inversion – rejecting a claim considered to be untrue or unjust by negating it; complexification – presenting issues in all their complexity, from many different perspectives or from an unusual perspective; partial reframing – extending a mainstream frame to apply to situations or groups usually not included in it; radical reframing – giving full, unabridged, unrestricted expression to marginal views through provocation and re-appropriation (e.g. of insults). These strategies shall be presented and discussed on the basis of examples excerpted from the corpus in the following subsections.

4.2.1. Inversion

The strategy of inversion is used to reject statements considered untrue or unjust by negating them. As the examples below show, the statement to counter is often quoted explicitly, and its negation follows:

(1) Australia przeciętnemu polskiemu gejowi czy lesbijce wydaje się być oazą tolerancji i poszanowania praw osób homoseksualnych. A to okazuje się być w zetknięciu z rzeczywistością niestety mitem. [...] W Australii nie dość że istnieje ustawowy zakaz

małżeństw homoseksualnych [...] to co chwilę dochodzą smutne wieści o tym, że fundamentalizm religijny niestety triumfuje nad zdrowym rozsądkiem.⁶

[To an average Polish gay or lesbian, Australia seems an oasis of tolerance and respect for homosexual people's rights. But in confrontation with reality, this belief unfortunately turns into myth. [...] Not only is there a statutory ban on homosexual marriage in Australia [...], but we also receive more and more sad reports of religious fundamentalism triumphing over common sense.]

(2) Małżeństwo i rodzina nie są naturalne, co nic im zresztą nie ujmuje. Małżeństwo i rodzina to instytucje społeczne, wymyślone przez człowieka.⁷

[Marriage and family are not natural, which does not demote them in any way. Marriage and family are social institutions, created by people.]

Ironic cases of inversion seem to be extremely rare. The reason for this may be that irony is already a kind of inversion (the speaker means the opposite of what he/she says, as argued by Grice 1989). The following example may be tentatively suggested as an inversion of an inversion, since the claim made by the author literally agrees with the mainstream claim (>religions are not ideologies<), but should be understood in reverse (>religions are ideologies<):

(3) [original form] Of course, gender is to blame as well. Oh, I'm sorry, gender ideology. Because, y'know, religions are not ideologies and are not aimed to convince as many people that their way of thinking is the best way of thinking. It's a fact. A fact that created an enormous amount of preachers pushing their beliefs on other people, cultures and nations. 2000 years and counting.⁸

The strategy of inversion is not frequent, and in most cases it precludes complexification – a claim is negated before providing a more elaborated and multifaceted explanation of what is, in the writer's view, the actual state of affairs. The blogs' authors seem to disapprove of rejecting statements without a justification, either because they do not wish to be seen as making an unwarranted claim to truth/objectivity (see 3.2), or because they feel that their minority position needs to be explained. In a patriarchal social system, the heterosexual and male perspective functions as a measure, a standard for everything else, a definition of objectivity and neutrality, the only position that does not need to be explained. The wide use of justification does not necessarily mean, however, that the bloggers subscribe to this view themselves: it is enough if they believe that their readers do. This could prove that the texts which contain justified inversions are meant for the general audience as much as for the LGBTQ readers.

6 <http://hyakinthos1978.blogspot.ch/2010/12/w-tematach-rodzicielskich.html> (November 11, 2014)

7 http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/tagi_b/2040/gender.html (November 11, 2014)

8 <http://dynarski.pl/post/69063601696/celebrate-the-culture-of-death-with-slovakia> (November 11, 2014)

4.2.2. Complexification

This strategy is concerned with presenting an issue in its full complexity and intricacy, resulting in lengthy and often academic-like, pedagogical texts. Not surprisingly, it is frequent in blog entries whose authors do not believe that gender and sexuality are simple systems of two mutually exclusive opposites. Thus, it is especially relevant, but of course not limited, to transsexual/transgender (BPL7 and BPL25) and bi/pansexual (e.g. BPL25) activism. This strategy is hardly ever used ironically if the purpose of a text seems to be: to educate ›lay‹ readers (especially texts in BPL25, e.g. on cisnorm, cissexism and transphobia⁹ or the text on pansexuality in BPL7¹⁰); to show an issue from many different points of view – for instance, a text on the controversial video clip and lyrics to the song *My, Słowianie* in BPL6;¹¹ or to indicate the internal diversification and variability of the LGBTQ community, e.g. by describing conflicts or differences of opinion within it (for instance, »*Stop whining, bro!*« – *How not to transition into a douchebag. A guide for trans men* (in English) in BPL7¹²).

The strategy of complexification requires lengthy and elaborated texts, which makes it difficult to illustrate with a short example. However, the following fragment on group socialization of young boys who do not conform to gender norms (because they like pink or dolls) may shed some more light on it:

(4) Z jednej strony, wszelkie jednostki nieprzeciętne [...] nie pasują do grupy i nie czują się dobrze, jeśli dopasują się na siłę. [...] Z drugiej, nie jest tak zupełnie prosto być wyemancypowanym antysocjalnym wyjątkiem, jeśli przypadkiem mamy 6 lat. Z trzeciej, co powinni zrobić rodzice -- tłumaczyć? Ale co -- że dopasowanie do grupy jest złe? Czy dobre? Osobiście bardzo mi się podoba, że chłopcom W DOMU wolno robić, co tylko zechcą, ale... czy założyć, że dopasowywanie się do grupy jest robieniem tym, co chcą, czy też raczej ich do tego delikatnie zniechęcać? Fascynujący temat.¹³

[On the one hand, all extraordinary humans [...] do not fit in with the group and do not feel good if they try to fit by force. [...] On the other hand, it is not easy at all to be an emancipated antisocial exception, if by coincidence one is 6 years old. From a third standpoint, what should parents do – explain? But what – that fitting in with a group is wrong? Or right? Personally I like it a lot that the boys AT HOME can do whatever they want, but... should [the parents] assume that fitting in with the group

9 <http://transoptymista.pl/cisnorma-cisseksizm-transfobia-z-czym-sie-je/> (November 11, 2014)

10 <http://dynarski.pl/post/56803364514/when-an-asterisk-is-all-youve-got-left-the-poly-bi> (November 11, 2014)

11 <http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/2014/05/8222My-Slowianie8221-Porno-z-wycinanka-czy.html> (November 11, 2014)

12 <http://dynarski.pl/post/70126171114/stop-whining-bro-how-not-to-transition-into-a> (November 11, 2014)

13 <http://heteroseksualisci.blox.pl/2011/05/Dzis-heteroseksualisci-o-kolorach.html> (November 11, 2014)

is doing what [the boys] want, or rather subtly discourage them from it? A fascinating topic.]

The strategy of complexification is a case in point for social constructivist argumentation. It undercuts the myths of objectivity and neutrality by providing evidence for the existence of many different perspectives on a given issue. And it undermines the hegemonic, essentialist system of gender and sexuality. Some LGBTQ bloggers do not stop at writing about female-to-male and male-to-female transsexuals or women's desire for women and men's desire for men, but document so many other possibilities of being in-between the categories or outside the very system that maintaining this system seems to make no sense anymore. In practice, this seems to lead to two kinds of problems. Firstly, all this diversity and fluidity may discourage or even antagonize readers not so familiar with the most recent gender and queer literature. Secondly, it may create splits within the Polish LGBTQ community itself, preventing it from speaking with a unified voice.

4.2.3. Partial reframing

What does it mean exactly, extending a mainstream frame to apply to situations or groups usually not included in it? For the sake of simplicity, assume that any group's discourse concerning another (hostile) group may be framed in two different ways: (1) by presenting itself positively (i.e., excluding the other group from the positive representation) (2) by presenting the other group negatively (i.e., excluding itself from the negative representation). In partial reframing, these frames are not rejected or negated but extended to apply to the group originally excluded from it. A positive representation is extended to the other group in (1) and a negative representation of the other group is extended to include the original group in (2) ›you, too‹. For example, an accusation that gay men are promiscuous and have multiple partners may be extended to apply to heterosexual men as well (2). And the argument against marriage equality – that it leads to deterioration of family values – could be responded to with the claim that many gays and lesbians want to maintain long-term relationships and bring up children exactly out of respect for family values (1) ›we, too‹. When it comes to gender issues, the ›you, too‹ variant of partial reframing is used to emphasize that problems raised by gender studies apply to everyone, not only to transgender or intersexual individuals:

(5) każda osoba – bez względu na swój status płciowy – powinna mieć prawo do zachowania swojej integralności cielesnej oraz modyfikacji tegoż ciała wedle własnego życzenia.¹⁴

14 <http://dynarski.pl/post/87744977970/deklaracja-wiary-w-moc-genetyki-i-samostanowienia> (November 12, 2014)

[every person – regardless of their gender status – should have the right to maintain the integrity of their body and to modify this very body according to their own wishes.]

The following example, in turn, illustrates the ironic variant of ›you, too‹ partial reframing:

(6) Ta obsesja Terlikowskiego na punkcie homoseksualizmu i jego uporczywe powtarzanie o rzekomej możliwości zmiany orientacji seksualnej dają mi niemal pewność, że Terlikowski sam ze swoją seksualnością pogodzony nie jest.¹⁵

[This Terlikowski's obsession with homosexuality and persistent repetitions of the claim that it is possible to change one's sexual orientation make me almost certain that Terlikowski himself is not at peace with his own sexuality.]

On a side note, the Polish term *homoseksualizm*, associated with the medical genre (the ending in *-izm* brings to mind medical diseases or disorders), is now considered outdated and the term *homoseksualność* is used instead (the corresponding term *heteroseksualność* is also possible). In conservative discourses, however, the old term is still preferred; heterosexuality, in turn, is referred to as *normalność* (›normality‹), as if implying that ›normal‹ people do not have any sexuality. Note in this context the clever provocative neologism *heteroseksualizm* used by LGBTQ bloggers (section 4.3). The ›we, too‹ strategy, quite predictably, can be used to represent the LGBTQ community as an integral part of the society, as people with similar values, lifestyles, concerns, joys to those of straight/cissexual people. Consider the following (ironic) example:

(7) Proszę sobie wyobrazić, że biseksy również potrafią tworzyć monogamiczne związki, NAWET bez ciągłego myślenia o skoku w bok z osobnikiem tej innej płci. Proszę sobie wyobrazić, że biseksy też potrafią być oddane i NAWET potrafią być w związku z jedną i tą samą osobą (osobą jednej płci!) przez całe życie. Takie to twory, te biseksy!¹⁶

[Please, try to imagine that bisexuals can also create monogamous relationships, EVEN without constant thinking about doing it with a representative of this other sex. Please, try to imagine that bisexuals can also be faithful and EVEN can be in a relationship with one and the same person (a person of one sex!) their whole life. Such creatures are they, these bisexuals!]

It appears that the aim of partial reframing is to normalize the image of LGBTQ individuals, to equalize them in all possible terms with those who are ›just normal‹. This discourse of normalization, however, tends to reproduce and reinforce the categories of gender and sexuality as ›instruments of regulatory regimes« (Butler 1990). Emphasizing the

15 <http://hyakinthos1978.blogspot.de/2013/07/terlikowski-terapia-awersyjna-zbrodnia.html> (November 12, 2014)

16 http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/tagi_b/11780/seksualnosc.html (November 13, 2014)

division of society into *us* and *them*, it supports the binary systems of mutually exclusive categories (e.g. hetero-homo, cis-trans), problematized in other texts (e.g. with the strategies of complexification or radical reframing). While some bloggers seem to believe that being able to define themselves as a minority group benefits their political goals, others challenge any system that forces people to fit into a set of pre-defined categories. This makes it difficult to identify a common political agenda that all the LGBTQ bloggers could share.

4.2.4. Radical reframing

In Macgilchrist's approach, this strategy pertains to

»utilising the space offered by the dominant frames to achieve a wider dissemination of marginal views. Rather than the monologue of logical arguments, reframing enters into dialogue with other issues to grab media attention.« (Macgilchrist 2007, p. 83)

When it comes to LGBTQ blogs, this motivation seems different. LGBTQ authors do not seem interested in expanding the dissemination of marginal views, but rather in giving them full, unabridged, unrestricted expression. Thus, it is not only the extent of reframing, but also the content of these views that may be considered *radical*. Radical reframing has two variants. In the first – *inverted positioning* – groups switch places: the dominating majority becomes dominated, discriminated against, and the minority defines what is »normal«. In the other variant, *provocation*, the (negative) mainstream representations of the minority group are simply accepted and re-appropriated or reclaimed with a sort of proud in-your-face-attitude. The following fragment is an example of inverted positioning, where representatives of the majority are depicted as evil, careless and deviant – which are features attributed to homosexuals in conservative discourse:

(8) Para meneli, która stoi pod moim oknem, może pójść do domu, a ponieważ są dziś stosunkowo mało pijani, to może spłodzą dziecko. Na nasz koszt. Finansowy i społeczny. I tego dziecka, o ile go nie zakatują, nie zaniedbają na śmierć, za nic nie pozwolimy adoptować jakiejś homoseksualnej parze. Której też nie pozwolimy na legalizację ich związku. Niech się czują nielegalni, nam przez to będzie lepiej. Będziemy przez to piękniejsi i szlachetniejsi, nieprawdaż?¹⁷

[A couple of bums that hang out outside my window can go home, and since they are relatively sober they may beget a child. On our cost. Financial and social. And this child, if they do not torture it or neglect it to death, will never be given to some homosexual couple for adoption. We will also not allow them to legalize their relationship.

17 <http://hyakinthos1978.blogspot.de/2009/07/bozena-uminska-dwie-lesbijki-gej-plus.html> (November 12, 2014)

Let them feel illegal, we will feel better then. We will be more beautiful and noble, won't we?]

In the following, on the other hand, the author uses provocation: by ›accepting‹ the conspiracy theory according to which the goal of homosexuality is to destroy the human race, the ridiculousness of such a claim is exposed:

(9) My, napędzacz tej maszyny, Robert Biedroń, Agnieszka Graff, Anna Grodzka, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Magdalena Środa, Monika Płatek, Wkurwiony Pedal i cała rzesza innych, jesteśmy po prostu źli do szpiku kości. Jedyne na czym nam naprawdę zależy w życiu, to zniszczyć polskie rodziny, doprowadzić do klęski tożsamości płciowej i promować homoseksualizm. A wszystko to po to, żeby naród polski wyginał. Gdyby tylko było to możliwe, sprowadzilibyśmy na Polskę kometę, aby zrównała z ziemią wszystkie CHRZEŚCIJAŃSKIE RODZINY i przyniosła klęskę człowiekowi.¹⁸

[We, the engines of this machine, Robert Biedroń, Agnieszka Graff, Anna Grodzka, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Magdalena Środa, Monika Płatek, the Pissed-off Faggot and a whole lot others, are simply evil through and through. The only thing we really care about in life is to destroy Polish families, cause the defeat of sexual identity and promote homosexuality. And all this so that the Polish nation dies out. If it were only possible, we would bring a comet to Poland to extinguish all CHRISTIAN FAMILIES and crush the human race.]

A brilliant example of ironic provocation is given below. The text pretends to take seriously the claims of ›gender ideology‹ spreading like a disease or infection, threatening the most basic values of Polish society. Such framing, again, ridicules the attitude to gender which can be described as a *moral panic* (Cohen 2002), »triggered by the Polish Catholic Church along with right-wing politicians« and »successfully included in mainstream right-wing political discourse in Poland« (Pakuła/Pawelczyk/Sunderland 2015, p. 27).

(10) W polskich szkołach na dobre załęgło się gender. Objawy wszędzie są podobne: przedwczesna seksualizacja, epidemie homoseksualizmu, niechęć do sakramentów świętych, lewactwo i prowokowanie katolickiego kleru do czynów lubieżnych. Ostatnio gender było widziane w Rybniku, gdzie podczas przedszkolnych zajęć dzieciom pokazano szokujące zdjęcia Szkotów w spódniczkach. Dzieci porażone w ten sposób diabelską ideologią przytomnie zaalarmowały rodziców. Dzięki bohaterkiej reakcji lokalnych struktur partyjnych i kościelnych epidemii zduszono w zarodku. Surowe konsekwencje zostaną teraz wyciągnięte wobec dyrekcji placówki, która naraziła dzieci na emocjonalny wstrząs, a całą lokalną społeczność – na zainfekowanie gender.¹⁹

18 http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/tagi_b/559930/list-biskupow.html (November 12, 2014)

19 <http://mrdobel.blog.onet.pl/2013/12/04/z-kraju-i-ze-swiata-1/> (November 12, 2014)

[Gender has infected Polish schools. The symptoms are similar everywhere: premature sexualization, homosexual epidemics, reluctance towards holy sacraments, leftism and provoking the Catholic clergy to lecherous acts. Most recently gender has been spotted in Rybnik, where during preschool activities children were shown shocking pictures of Scots in skirts. The children, greatly affected by this devilish ideology, sensibly alarmed their parents. Thanks to the heroic reaction of local party and Church structures the epidemic was stifled in the bud. Harsh consequences will now be taken towards the school's leaders that exposed children to emotional shock and the entire local community – to a gender infection.]

Other amusing and entertaining examples of ironic provocative discourse include an invitation to »celebrate the culture of death«²⁰ or an exclusive »interview with the demon of homosexuality«.²¹ Section 4.3 below provides more examples and a critical discussion of the use of radical reframing in journalistic blogs.

4.3. Radical journalism

All the micro strategies described in section 4.2 may be found in all genres (macro strategies) of LGBTQ online discourse introduced in section 4.1. There are, however, certain trends or tendencies of pairing micro and macro strategies. For example, the strategy of complexification predominates in scholarly and journalistic blogs. In this section, I would like to devote singular attention to the three blogs classified as journalistic with a special focus on the commentary – BPL6, BPL17 and BPL29 – which specialize in the strategy of radical reframing. This strategy is already visible in the headings of the blogs: the title of BPL6 is *Dopiski wkurwionego pedała* »Notes of a pissed-off faggot«; the author of BPL17 introduces himself as *Dwubiegunowy kowal-feminista promujący homoseksualizm z pomocą Thora* »A bipolar blacksmith-feminist promoting homosexuality with the help of Thor«; the title of BPL29 is *Z życia heteroseksualistów* »On the life of heterosexuals«. The first two cases represent provocation (re-appropriation of the evaluative phrases *faggot* and *promoting homosexuality*) and the third one – inverted positioning (constructing heterosexuals as a weird, alien species whose behavior and rituals are worth describing). Note that in the second example, the incorporation of feminism and rejection of Catholicism appear as central to the author's identity as homosexuality. The queer reclaiming of offensive labels in BPL6 is visible not only in the blog's title – it is its pervasive feature, a kind of signature. To illustrate, consider the following title of an entry – *Kto nie głosuje, ten PEDAL!* »Who does not vote is a FAGGOT!«²² Also the fragment of an entry on a

20 <http://dynarski.pl/post/69063601696/celebrate-the-culture-of-death-with-slovakia> (November 11, 2014)

21 http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/tagi_b/527633/Frondapl.html (November 11, 2014)

22 <http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/2013/01/Kto-nie-glosuje-ten-PEDAL.html> (November 13, 2014)

»Happy Crappy Parade« given below indicates the author's attitude towards gender normativity which could be described as queer:

(11) każdy HAPPY i CRAPPY. Każdy w ulubionym stroju swojej wewnętrznej kłirowej osoby! W szpilkach, legginsach, perukach, maskach a nawet w koronie cierniowej! Byle by było z fantazją, z szaleństwem i z hukiem! A w żadnym wypadku normalnie! Bo my nie musimy się podobać i do nikogo nie musimy się dostosowywać!²³
 [everyone (is) HAPPY and CRAPPY. Everyone in their favorite costume of their internal queer persona! In high heels, leggings, wigs, masks or even a crown of thorns! As long as it's with imagination, craziness and with a bang! But in no case normal! Because we do not need to be liked or adjust to anyone!]

The same blog also uses the strategy of inverted positioning, constructing heterosexuality as abnormal, weird and evil, like in the following entry titles:

Śmiercionośny seks hetero.²⁴
 [Deadly hetero sex.]
 Polacy wciąż powściągliwi wobec heteroseksualizmu.²⁵
 [Poles still reserved towards heterosexuality.]

The latter title introduces a blog entry that reproduces a report on attitudes towards gays and lesbians in Poland, conducted by a leading institution specializing in measuring public opinion. The text fully imitates that report with one exception – the non-existing word *heteroseksualizm* (see 4.2.3) substitutes all uses of the word *homoseksualizm*, for example:

(12) Tylko 39% respondentów uważa, że heteroseksualizm jest rzeczą normalną. Jedna piąta Polaków (20%) jest zdania, że choć wprawdzie heteroseksualizm nie jest normalny, to należy go tolerować, a kolejna jedna piąta (20%), że heteroseksualizm nie jest normalny i nie wolno go tolerować. Według jednej czwartej ankietowanych (25%) państwo powinno zwalczać heteroseksualistów.
 [Only 39% respondents think that heterosexuality is a normal thing. One fifth of all Poles (20%) believe that while heterosexuality is not normal, it must still be tolerated, and another one fifth (20%) – that heterosexuality is not normal and it cannot be tolerated. According to one fourth of respondents (25%) the state should eradicate heterosexuals.]

In turn, the author of BPL17 seems to specialize in another, already mentioned variant of ironic radical reframing – whereby claims and statements by anti-gay activists, politicians

23 <http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/2014/08/haPPy-CRApPY-PaRADe.html> (November 13, 2014)

24 http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/tagi_b/97301/Tomasz-Terlikowski.html (November 13, 2014)

25 <http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/2013/08/Polacy-wciaz-powsciagliwi-wobec-heteroseksualizmu.html> (November 13, 2014)

and other speakers are apparently taken seriously, only to expose how little sense they make. Additionally, his confrontational, straightforward and clever style mixed with educational, pedagogical elements makes his texts especially amusing, for example:

(13) Mamy pewne oczekiwania co do tego, jak powinna wyglądać, zachowywać się, co robić i kim być prawdziwa kobieta oraz prawdziwy mężczyzna. Te oczekiwania w Polsce, w Holandii, w Maroku i we Szwecji będą oczekiwaniami odmiennymi od siebie, mimo, że kierowanymi wobec osób o zupełnie takich samych genitaliach. Dlatego też określenie »ideologia gender«, lansowane przez posłów PiS spędzających czas w domach publicznych i księży spędzających czas w młodych chłopcach, nie ma żadnego sensu. Równie dobrze możemy rozmawiać o »ideologii obiad« — dla jednego obiad to pizza, dla drugiego rosół i schabowe, dla trzeciego sushi, a dla czwartego kostka lodu i powąchanie skórki grapefruita (ale dość już o Karlu Lagerfeldzie).²⁶

[We have certain expectations concerning how a real woman and a real man should look, behave, what they should do and who they should be. These expectations in Poland, Holland, Morocco and Sweden will differ from each other, even though they target people with the same genitalia. That is why the term »gender ideology«, promoted by MPs of PiS spending their time in public houses and by priests spending their time in young boys, makes no sense. We can just as well talk about »dinner ideology« – dinner means a pizza to one, broth and pork chops to another, for someone it may be sushi, or an ice cube and sniffing a grapefruit peel (but enough on Karl Lagerfeld).

(14) Czy męskość rośnie i maleje płynnie w zależności od tego, co na sobie mam? Dziś akurat mam na sobie czarne dżinsy, czarny t-shirt i wściekle kolorowe buty — czy to oznacza, że od kostek w górę jestem męski, a od kostek w dół nie, czy też niemęskość butów znosi męskość dżinsów?²⁷

[Does masculinity increase and decrease freely in accordance to what I'm wearing? Today I actually have on black jeans, a black t-shirt and outrageously colourful shoes – does it mean that from ankles up I am masculine but from ankles down I'm not, or does the un-masculinity of my shoes cancel the masculinity of my jeans?]

The author of BPL29, finally, specializes in a particular format of a blog entry whereby he literally quotes texts or fragments of texts subscribing to conservative anti-gay discourse and deconstructs them, exposing logical fallacies, lack of knowledge and other faults of argumentation. In example (15), he questions the relationship between legislation against domestic violence and same-sex union legislation, which often functions in conservative discourse as the basis for arguing against the former. In example (16), he counters the assumption that conservative values are shared by the entire Polish society, constituting its common sense. In (17), he ridicules the hysterical tendency of some communities in Po-

26 <http://www.miloscpo30.net/?p=773> (November 13, 2014)

27 <http://www.miloscpo30.net/?p=159> (November 13, 2014)

land to spot promotion of homosexuality (homosexual propaganda) everywhere and anywhere. These three examples come from the same text²⁸.

(15) Zaskakuje mnie głównie to, że Gowin tak otwarcie przyznaje, że polska tradycja oparta jest na uznaniu niższości kobiet za naturalną. Nie rozumiem natomiast, skąd pomysł, że wyrównanie praw i promowanie równej roli kobiety spowoduje legalizację związków osób homoseksualnych.

[I am surprised mainly by the fact that Gowin admits so openly that Polish tradition is based on assuming the inferiority of women as natural. I do not understand, however, where the idea comes from that equality of rights and roles for women will cause legalization of homosexual relationships.]

(16) Oczywiście, wszystko, co konserwatywne, jest zdroworoządkowe, dlatego nadal mamy niewolnictwo, kobietom nie wolno głosować, małżeństwa osób różnej rasy są zakazane, a w Sejmie wisi krzyż...

[Of course, everything that is conservative is also commonsensical, and that is exactly why we still have slavery, women cannot vote, interracial marriages are prohibited, and there is a cross on the wall in the Parliament...]

(17) Czy lubi pan mleko? Sprzeciwiam się promocji homoseksualizmu! Jaka jest pana ulubiona pora roku? Sprzeciwiam się promocji homoseksualizmu! Czy często ogląda pan musicale i słucha Celine Dion? Sprzeciwiam się promocji homoseksualizmu!

[Do you like milk? I protest the promotion of homosexuality! What is your favourite season? I protest the promotion of homosexuality! Do you often watch musicals and listen to Celine Dion? I protest the promotion of homosexuality!]

The following examples, all coming from one text,²⁹ mock the argumentation of anti-gay discourse through a sort of sarcastic hyperbole:

(18) Moją zmywarkę też stworzył w szczególnie uprzywilejowanej pozycji: jako tę, która stanowi pomoc dla mężczyzny. Wniosek: wśród płci wyróżniamy płęć podstawową (męską) oraz dwie płci uprzywilejowane (kobiety i zmywarki).

[My dishwasher was created by God also in an especially privileged position: as the help to man. Conclusion: there is one basic gender (male) and two privileged genders (women and dishwashers).]

(19) Prawdziwy mężczyzna kobiet się nie boi, jak takiej pierdzielnie piąchą pod oko, to zaraz się robi cała kobieca i miłująca realizm i Dekalog.

28 <http://heteroseksualisci.blox.pl/2012/04/Emo-ksiedza-Gowina.html> (November 13, 2014)

29 <http://heteroseksualisci.blox.pl/html/1310721,262146,14,15.html?11,2011> (November 13, 2014)

[A real man is not afraid of women, when he punches one of those under the eye, she will immediately become all feminine and loving of realism and the ten commandments.]

(20) Czyli: puszczalstwo facetów hetero oraz zostawanie przez nich księżmi jest wyłączną winą feministek. Gdyby głupie były bardziej kobiety i goliły co jakiś czas nogi, na pewno jakiś ksiądz już by je wiernie pokochał.

[So: the promiscuity of heterosexual men and their becoming priests is all feminists' fault. If these idiots were more feminine and shaved their legs from time to time, for sure some priest would love them faithfully.]

The strategy of radical reframing offers a means of inverting power relations between groups to expose that they are socially constructed, historically determined and discursively maintained – not normal, natural or necessary – and so they could have developed differently. Using it, LGBTQ bloggers no longer ask for tolerance or acceptance; being considered just as good as or just as normal as heterosexuals is not something to be grateful for or happy about. It is an expression of a proud, provocative and uncompromising attitude – »we're here, we're queer, get used to it!« Radical reframing definitely represents a queer discursive strategy. It is also associated with specific risks. It may antagonize readers who take ironic or provocative statements such as (9), (19) or (20) literally. And it may also alienate those LGBTQ individuals who believe that it is a better political strategy to make careful, mitigated, watered-down claims which could be accepted by the majority more easily.

5. Conclusion

The article at hand has been concerned with the analysis of online Polish dissident discourse on gender, exemplified by 14 blogs written by LGBTQ authors. It has had two main goals: first, to offer a typology of macro and micro strategies found on these blogs and argue for seeing them as representing a hybrid genre of social activism and alternative journalism; second, to investigate the stance of LGBTQ bloggers on the gender controversy in Poland. As far as the first goal is concerned, over one third of the investigated blogs (5 out of 14) have been classified as journalistic. All blogs use non-ironic and ironic variants of inversion, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing in order to challenge traditional or mainstream framing of the gender issue, while the blogs stylized as journalistic additionally appropriate and modify the genre conventions of news reporting. They offer highly subjective and evaluative analyses, critiques and commentaries on the current political, social and cultural events, diverging from the ideal of objectivity. This divergence seems to be a conscious choice. It allows the bloggers to present an issue from many different perspectives (e.g. in complexification) and to be radical and provocative (radical reframing). At the same time, however, it means opting out of the political struggle over the right to define what is perceived as objective, neutral, true. The

examples analysed seem to suggest that Polish LGBTQ bloggers are divided along the lines of their understanding of identity and of their community's political goals. What is interesting, this division is reflected not only in the content of their texts – i.e., in the positions they represent semantically – but also in the use of different dissident strategies described above. Roughly, the following groups can be distinguished: *identity*: one group prefers to define themselves in terms of a minority, in a relation to the hetero- and cissexual majority (strategies of inversion and partial reframing), in a way accepting heterosexuality as the standard or measure of normality, the other group perceives gender and sexuality as fluid and fuzzy rather than absolute and discrete categories (strategies of complexification and radical reframing); *political agenda*: one group prefers to voice moderate demands and formulate them carefully or justify them (strategies of inversion, complexification and partial reframing), the other group prefers to voice radical claims, often in provocative ways (strategy of radical reframing and possibly some ironic examples of the other strategies).

These divisions definitely blur and confuse the understanding of needs and expectations of the LGBTQ community in Poland and undermine the impact that the LGBTQ blogs analysed could have otherwise. Since the transition in the early 1990s, consecutive governments have had a lot of influence on public media in Poland – especially public television. Under the first PiS government (2005-2007) the freedom of the media declined considerably (Bajomi-Lázár 2013, p. 14). The current PiS government is raising even more serious concerns about the state of democracy in Poland as it is moving to put public TV and radio broadcasters under direct government control. In such a setting – and taking into account the already-mentioned significance of the new media for Polish media users – dissident Internet discourses, however marginal or divided, are an important contribution to plurality and diversity of the Polish media voices in particular and democracy in general.

As far as the second goal of this article is concerned, the examples show that LGBTQ bloggers are up-to-date with international gender and queer theories and see them as relevant to their own lives. They easily employ the theory of social constructivism in their argumentation (example 2) or expose fallacies in thinking about gender as an ideology (examples 3, 10, 13). They approach critically and question traditional categories of social experience, for example masculinity (examples 4 and 14). They counter widespread myths concerning e.g. bisexuality (example 7) and expose, frequently in an ironic/sarcastic manner, the irrationality of traditional discourse (examples 6, 8, 9, 12 and 17). Polish LGBTQ bloggers are proud of being different (example 11) and ascribe the right to be different to everyone, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation (example 5). They are not afraid of breaching traditional gender norms and roles. Finally, examples (15), (16) and (18) – (20) illustrate LGBTQ authors' support for women's rights and the feminist movement. This support is expressed in similar ways as the defence of gay rights – mostly by mocking or ridiculing arguments used by traditional discourses. Examples (18), (19) and (20) criticize representing women as a 'privileged gender' (i.e. women having been created for the privilege of serving and supporting men), the culture of violence against women and some prevalent anti-feminist stereotypes, respectively. In (16), discrimina-

tion against women is compared to slavery and racism. Last but not least, example (15) not only speaks out for gender equality, but also emphasizes the connection between the situation of women and gay men in traditional patriarchy, as signalled by Graff (2010) and in section 3.1.

Mizielińska confirms that in contrast to many Western countries, there is no tension between Polish LGBTQ and feminist movements and »the two see each other rather as partners in fighting sexism and homophobia« (2011, p. 94). To my mind, the blogs indicate that this is not only an alliance born of necessity, two small groups joining forces in the face of a stronger enemy. The examples show that (especially) gay male bloggers are trying to redefine the understanding of ›true‹ masculinity, writing about stereotypically feminine behaviours, interests or concerns (raising children, homemaking, cooking, caring for others, etc.) without giving up activities associated with hegemonic masculinity (e.g. working as a blacksmith). This has consequences for both masculinity (and the position of gay men) and femininity (and the position of women, straight or otherwise). First, it naturalizes the concept of a New Man, whose masculinity includes caring for others, sharing housework, etc. This benefits gay men, as such ›effeminate‹ behaviours are decreasingly perceived as associated with homosexuality. Second, by legitimizing these traditionally feminine activities as masculine – i.e., worthy of a man – they are valued, appreciated and respected more, benefitting the social status of women carrying out these activities. Here, we may ask (after Lazar 2007): is it a case of a true reconstruction of gender relations, or a subtle reinforcement of existing gender difference? The New Men are appreciated and praised for something that women do as a matter of course. And in heterosexual relationships, it is still mostly women who are responsible for the constant mindfulness, for being in charge for their children's development and welfare (ibid., p. 159).

More time and more research are needed to determine whether the new masculinity will be accommodated by conservative discourses on gender relations or, on the contrary, contribute to gender parity, and how exactly it will affect the situation of women and the perception of LGBTQ individuals in Poland.

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List of analyzed materials

- BPL1. Aaaaa właśnie że równość! <http://katarzynaformela.blox.pl/html>
- BPL4. cHyłKiem i dUszKiem. <http://chylkiem-i-duszkiem.blog.onet.pl/>
- BPL6. Dopiski wkurwionego pedała. <http://dopiskipedala.blox.pl/html>
- BPL7. Dynarski.pl. <http://dynarski.pl/>
- BPL12. Hyakinthos 1978. <http://hyakinthos1978.blogspot.de/>
- BPL13. Hodowla idei. <http://hodowlaidei.blogspot.de/>
- BPL15. Les-rodzina blog. <http://les-rodzina.blog.pl/>
- BPL16. Lipshit. <http://lipshitblog.blogspot.de/>
- BPL17. Miłość po 30. <http://www.miloscpo30.net/>
- BPL18. Mr. Dobel. <http://mrdobel.blog.onet.pl/>
- BPL25. Trans-optymista. <http://transoptymista.pl/>
- BPL26. Trzyzęściowy garnitur. <http://trzyzesciowygarnitur.blogspot.de/>
- BPL29. Z życia heteroseksualistów. <http://heteroseksualisci.blox.pl/html>
- BPL30. Żona, ja i reszta świata. <http://dwiepanie.blox.pl/html>

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