

# IT'S SCOTLAND'S OIL

## ENERGY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores how newspapers in Scotland and the UK presented the issue of oil in the run-up to the September 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. More specifically, it explores the extent to and means by which newspapers utilized oil to contribute to national identity discourse. By combining methods from quantitative and qualitative approaches to textual analysis, this study found that both Scottish and British newspapers referenced “oil” in primarily political and economic contexts, but to some extent, incorporated “oil” into discursive strategies of national identity construction. Analysis of the discursive strategies revealed that Scottish papers used oil to construct a vision of a political future and to dismantle a British identity by bringing up historical disputes, while British papers used oil to deconstruct the imagination of a politically independent Scotland. The findings on how oil played into the national identity discourse build on the nascent literature regarding links between energy and national identity, and support the conclusions of Scottish social attitude surveys that identify a general Scottish distrust of the UK government.

### I. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

This study will explore how newspapers circulated in Scotland and the UK treated the divisive issue of oil in the lead-up to the Scottish independence referendum of 2014, aiming to provide an answer to the following two questions: Did newspapers in Scotland and the greater UK wield the issue of oil as a means of shaping the discourse on national (and supranational) identity? How did the presentation of oil differ between Scottish and UK newspapers? I hypothesized that Scottish newspapers would incorporate oil into discursive strategies of identity construction more often than the UK papers, while the UK papers would employ oil more often in factual contexts of economics and finances unrelated to national identity. This study will analyze a body of text drawn from Scottish and UK newspapers, combining methods from corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to answer the preceding questions. The search for a decisive response to this inquiry will contribute to the literature on the role of energy in the construction of national identity and to the wider field of news media discourse and national identity.

### II. BACKGROUND TO SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE

Since Scotland's union with the British

Crown in 1707, some Scots have desired a return to Scottish self-determination.<sup>1</sup> Two relatively recent developments in Scottish politics are of particular importance to understanding the context of the 2014 independence referendum: devolution in 1997, and the Scottish National Party's gradual rise to prominence in Scottish politics. In 1970, the same year that significant reserves of oil were discovered in the North Sea, the Scottish National Party (SNP) garnered national attention with the rallying cry, “It's Scotland's Oil,” and the party gained seats in parliament throughout the following decade while calling for greater Scottish political autonomy, culminating in an independence referendum in 1979.<sup>2</sup> While the 1979 referendum was a handy defeat for the independence movement, the years that followed saw more concessions from the UK parliament to the Scottish nationalist cause, eventually resulting in a 1997 referendum that created a separate Scottish parliament endowed with all powers not explicitly reserved for Westminster.<sup>3</sup> In 2007, the SNP gained a majority in Scottish parliament, and since its election, the party's core policy has been political independence for Scotland. The Referendum Bill, which called for a referendum on independence, was passed in 2013, and the referendum took place on September 18, 2014. The

result was a UK-record-breaking voter turnout of 84.5 percent of Scots—any resident of Scotland over 16 was allowed to vote in the referendum—and a 55.3 percent victory for the “No” side.

North Sea oil figured prominently into the recent debate on independence. An independent Scotland, under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, would be entitled to roughly 90 percent of remaining North Sea oil, though estimates differ widely on how much oil actually remains.<sup>4</sup>

### III. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### I. Energy and Identity

The literature exploring links between natural resources and national identity is sparse but growing. Geographers and political scientists generally agree that territory is a strong component of national identity, though literature on resources as an element of territorial identity is less developed.<sup>5</sup> More directly related to the present study is the extensive body of work studying separatist conflict in states with large resource endowments, though these studies typically take place in the developing world and involve violent secession rather than peaceful independence movements.<sup>6</sup> However, Aspinall concludes that these conflicts are often borne of the entanglement of ethnic or national identity and resource exploitation, demonstrating how natural resources tied to a territory can be a powerful contributor to the construction of identity.<sup>7</sup> Other studies have examined the effects of energy infrastructure projects on consolidating nationalist sentiments and ideology.<sup>8</sup> The work most relevant to the present study is that of Bouzarovski and Bassin, who have studied discourse coalitions constituted by state-level actors in present-day Russia to examine the relationship between energy infrastructure and national identity, determining that energy and identity can be co-produced at multiple scales.<sup>9</sup> However, the thrust of their research essentially highlights the dearth of scholarship around the intersection of energy and identity, which makes the present research all the more valuable. Finally, there has been some study of how independence movements leverage energy resources to further their cause, specifically in Scotland;<sup>10</sup> this study points to the ideological incongruence of Scotland’s ambitious renewable energy portfolio with the SNP’s emphatic declaration of Scotland’s rights to North Sea oil

reserves, suggesting that the Scottish independence movement wields energy opportunistically to support the case for independence. The present study seeks to expand the literature on the relationship between energy resources and the construction of national identity by examining the Scottish case as it is represented in newspaper discourse.

#### 2. Nationalism and News Media

A significant portion of the literature on the role of news media in national identity construction builds on Michael Billig’s concept of banal nationalism, whereby everyday practices and representations of the nation build an “imagined community” among a people. However, more recent research contends that media influence on national identity is taken as an a priori assumption in Billig’s work, and because most studies that build on Billig’s banal nationalism theory simply follow his framework, there is a distinct lack of empirical study regarding the media’s role in national identity discourse.<sup>11</sup> Rosie et al.’s 2004 study was one such attempt to substantiate the assertion that news media plays a central role in the discursive construction of national identity. The study demonstrated, through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, that after the 1999 devolution of powers to Scotland, a distinct “Scottish press” sphere migrated north along with the political entity; the study also confirmed the more intuitive assertion that Scottish papers covered more Scottish events while English papers did not and vice versa (Rosie et al., 2004). These findings were corroborated and expanded upon by Higgins, who compared election coverage of the same event (1999 devolution) between Scottish and UK-wide papers. Higgins found that Scottish coverage was more heavily weighted towards pre-election coverage, implying a stronger obligation (or desire) among Scottish papers to inform and/or influence opinion among voters.<sup>12</sup> As Higgins notes, “the home nation is likely to perform discursive roles within news text.”<sup>13</sup> This observation neatly summarizes the theoretical underpinnings of this study’s research question. The present study will add to the literature on news media and identity by comparing how national (Scottish) vs. supranational (UK) newspapers treat the same specific issue within a discourse.

### 3. Establishing a “Scottish Identity”

Building on the idea of a nation as a socially constructed “imagined community” linking people together through a common culture, shared history, territory, and other factors, modern identity scholars assert that “national identity” is discursively produced and reproduced at different levels of communication.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, rather than existing as a monolithic concept, Scottish identity is “claimed” by individuals, who construct their own identity from a number of generally agreed-upon concepts.<sup>15</sup> As is consistent with the discourse-historical approach to studying national identity (expanded upon in *IV. Methods and Methodology*), it was necessary to conduct research across a wide array of disciplines, including history, sociology, anthropology, and political science, to establish the major components of Scottish identity. My research indicated that Scots profess to have a distinctive national culture characterized by egalitarianism, but also partially rooted in ancient highlands “kinship” culture as well as institutions established by the Reformed Church in medieval Scotland.<sup>16</sup> Scottish national identity is also founded on a shared political history, much of which is characterized by a bitter struggle with England (and in more modern times, Britain) for self-determination.<sup>17</sup> Scotland, like most nations, also has an extensive “origin story” of how it came to be a nation, as well as pervasive national myths about its founders that contribute to a shared national identity.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, as evidenced by social surveys and contemporary Scottish politics, Scots share in the vision of a political present and future, the imaginations of which are heavily influenced by the themes of egalitarian culture and characterizations of a “fair society.”<sup>19</sup> These elements of Scottish national identity provided the thematic categories into which the discursive strategies of identity construction found in the text were grouped.

### 4. Attitudes towards Independence

Since devolution, numerous social attitude surveys concerning devolution’s implications for both Scottish and British identity have been conducted and analyzed; there have also been

social attitude surveys concerning attitudes towards independence.<sup>20</sup> Some studies have also investigated the Scottish political press since devolution, finding the existence of a distinct “political sphere” within the Scottish press.<sup>21</sup> Studies of social attitude surveys, which utilize primarily qualitative interview methods and some quantitative analysis of survey results, by and large conclude that levels of support for Scottish independence are closely linked to nationalist ideology, and identify that, among Scots, Scottish national identity is substantially stronger than British identity.<sup>22</sup> These studies also indicate that Scots express a growing resentment towards UK rule.<sup>23</sup> A more recent study on Scottish national identity discourse in online independence forums largely corroborated the findings of these social attitude surveys, but also found an absence of strategies seeking to dismantle British identity, indicating that at the “bottom-up” (individual) level of discourse, Scots do not see “Britishness” as a barrier to independence.<sup>24</sup> The present study will add to the literature by analyzing the “top-down” (elite or media) discourse on Scottish identity in the context of independence, and specifically with regard to the issue of oil. Given that the 2014 referendum is such a recent development, this study is possibly the first to analyze the role of newspapers in the discourse on national identity in the lead-up to the referendum, and almost certainly the first to analyze the role of oil in these discursive processes. The next section will explicate the methods used to carry out this study.

## IV. METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

### I. Overview

To provide a brief summary of the methods and intent of the present study:

I compared two separate bodies of newspaper text, one Scottish and one British (each assembled using the same temporal and content criteria explicated below in *IV.3. Text Selection*), using statistical and lexical analysis to identify and tabulate the prevalence of identity-forming tactics that related to oil in each work.<sup>25</sup> I then contextualized these identity-forming strategies within the literature on Scottish independence and national identity. To accomplish this, I used a combination of methods from the separate but related disciplines of Corpus Linguistics (CL) and Critical Discourse Analysis

(CDA) to examine exactly how oil intersected with national identity in the sample of newspapers from the months leading up to the independence referendum. The synergy created by combining these methods is well documented.<sup>26</sup> In this section, I outline the analytical framework used—a discourse-historical approach to CDA, adapted from Ruth Wodak’s study of national identity and its linguistic constructions in Austria—and then explain how CL methods facilitated the analysis.

## 2. Profile of CDA

Numerous studies have investigated national identities and ideologies using CDA methods; many of these studies adopt a discourse-historical approach.<sup>27</sup> A simplified summary of this approach is as follows: 1) Identify the themes of a given discourse; 2) Investigate the strategies used in relation to the themes; and 3) Explore the linguistic means used to realize these strategies. The researcher can then discuss how these themes contribute to particular power relationships, ideologies, or identities.<sup>28</sup> The discourse-historical approach emphasizes historical, political and social context as integral to the understanding of text as it is written or spoken, meaning that extensive research into the background on Scottish independence, social attitudes, and historical and political themes was necessary to establish themes of the discourse.<sup>29</sup> Because CDA is concerned not just with *what* linguistic elements exist in a body of text, but *why* they appear as they do and what the intentions and consequences are of certain grammatical and lexical choices versus others, my analysis considers what the *absence as well as presence* of specific strategies and linguistic means in the texts.<sup>30</sup> Wodak (2009) provides a strong framework for classifying strategies and their arguments in identity discourse, which Prentice (2010) has already adapted to the construction of Scottish national identity in the context of independence. This study drew heavily on these frameworks to establish themes of the discourse and identify their strategies and linguistic realizations.

## 3. Corpus Linguistics and CDA

Corpus linguistics methods address two main criticisms to CDA: text selection and narrowness of scope.<sup>31</sup> By enabling the researcher to analyze huge volumes of text with perfect accuracy, CL methods

overcome both the issue of subjective text selection, which might skew an analysis if a researcher selects texts they believe to be representative but instead serve only to prove their point, and also the issue of scope by providing the researcher direct access to all occurrences of the lexical items they wish to investigate. CL methods were selected for this particular analysis because the power held by mass media in influencing discourse lies in its repetitive framing of issues, and therefore a smaller textual analysis of selected newspaper articles would not necessarily explicate the dominant recurring frames of the issues being investigated.<sup>32</sup>

Corpus linguistics allows for the large-scale mapping of patterns in text.<sup>33</sup> This is achieved through three techniques: keyness, collocation, and concordance.

*Keyness.* Keyness is defined as “the statistically significantly higher frequency of a word or clusters in the corpus under analysis in comparison with another corpus.”<sup>34</sup> Keyness is calculated through a comparison of relative frequencies of words in each corpus, followed by a chi-squared or log likelihood test to determine whether a word’s relative presence or absence in one corpus as compared to another is statistically significant. Particularly with larger bodies of text, researchers typically only accept significance below a 0.0001 p-value, simply because a standard social science alpha of 0.05 might return an unmanageable amount of words determined statistically to be “key.” This measure was useful for the present study because I investigated not just how discourses on identity are realized, but also how they differ between Scottish and UK corpora.

*Collocates.* Collocation is defined by Baker as “the above-chance frequent co- occurrence of two words within a pre-determined span.”<sup>35</sup> There are multiple methods of determining what is “above chance.” Some methods assign high values to very low frequency words, while others focus more on lexical versus grammatical items. Because it provides a balance between frequency and saliency, I used the log likelihood measure to determine the significance of a collocation, setting the critical value at  $LL = 15.13$ , or  $p < 0.0001$ .<sup>36</sup> I also looked at specific mutual information scores, which assign significance to lower-frequency, rarer words, and T-Scores, which take frequency into account when measuring significance, to achieve a balanced

analysis.<sup>37</sup> For the same reason noted above, high statistical standards are necessary in collocation analysis as well. As Baker notes, “language is not random,” and an alpha of 0.05 would return far more relationships than are actually significant.<sup>38</sup> This measure allows for statistical confirmation of relationships between words that suggest a discourse, a phenomenon known as *discourse prosody*.

Collocational analysis was integral to determining the statistical significance of strategies and their realizations in the texts.

*Concordance*. Also known as “keyword in context,” this tool searches for a word, a word family, or a combination of words, and outputs every occurrence of that search term as it appears in its original context, usually restricted to about 5 to 10 words on either side. This tool is the backbone of corpus-assisted discourse analysis, as it provides researchers with a digestible and perfectly accurate readout of words related to the phenomena they wish to investigate and the context in which they appear meaning that they can determine the ways in which particular topics and arguments are presented in the text.

#### 4. Text Selection

I assembled a corpus of newspaper articles from a total of seven papers, three of which are published in Scotland, and the remaining four in London. The papers were selected on the basis of readership/circulation and publication type. I chose two “quality” Scottish papers (*The Herald* and *The Scotsman*) and one “tabloid” (*The Daily Record*), and two “quality” UK papers (*The Guardian* and *The Times*) and two “tabloid” (*The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Mirror*) as to provide a balanced sample of discourses present in different classes of news media.<sup>39</sup> The articles were selected based on temporal and content criteria: every article in the corpus was printed between July 17, 2014 and September 17, 2014, representing a two-month window in the run-up to the referendum, and every article contained (in heading or body) the words “independen[t]/[ce]” AND “oil.” The corpus totaled 517,251 words and 520 articles (323 Scottish, 297 UK), which constituted a sample size big enough to reliably identify lexical patterns.<sup>40</sup> The articles were converted to text format and cleaned of non-essential data (i.e. metadata like

author, publication date/city) and separated into two corpora: one containing all Scottish articles and one containing all UK articles for the purpose of analysis.

#### 5. Application of Methods

To summarize my approach, I used Wodak’s discourse-historical framework to identify and group discursive strategies of identity formation and their linguistic realizations in the corpora, employing CL methods to locate and tabulate the occurrences of these strategies, and more specifically, to isolate the contexts in which “oil” was implemented in them. These strategies were also grouped by the thematic elements of Scottish identity to which they related (identified in the literature review and expanded upon in section IV.2 *Discursive Strategies* below). CL methods were also essential to proving statistical relationships and the relative prevalence of words and phrases that indicated a discourse. To investigate the corpus, I used the lexical analysis software WordSmith 6.0, which is capable of performing all of the CL analysis methods described above, and is highly recommended by discourse analysts who employ CL methods.<sup>41</sup> While the methods used do not fully escape the criticism of researcher bias in coding the data and identifying which themes to search for, the narrow focus of this project necessitated a combination of deductive and inductive methods to explicate the specific instances in which identity-forming strategies intersected with “oil.” Therefore, a more comprehensive approach to identifying themes of the discourse, as in Prentice’s 2010 study, was neither feasible nor applicable for the present study. This multi-method process is explained further in IV.2 *Discursive Strategies* section under *Identifying Themes*.

#### IV. ANALYSIS

While this study is focused primarily on how “oil” was utilized in discursive strategies of identity construction, obviously not every instance of the word “oil” in the text was part of such a strategy. Therefore, the next section provides a brief analysis of the contexts in which “oil” appears in order to situate the findings specifically related to identity construction, which are discussed at length in the section *Discursive Strategies*, within the entire body of analyzed texts.

## I. Distribution of “Oil” in the Corpora

I adapted a discourse-theoretical framework from Wendler to code instances of the word “oil” according to its contextual appearance in both corpora.<sup>42</sup> I analyzed a random sample of concordance outputs produced by the WordSmith function “random selection,” which does what its name implies. The sample totaled roughly a third of the total occurrences of “oil” in each corpus (31.4 percent UK, 32.9 percent Scottish), meaning that the distribution findings summarized below can be extrapolated to the full dataset with a 95 percent confidence interval of +/- 4.05 percent.<sup>43</sup> Drawing on Wendler, I distinguished between Economic/Factual contexts, Political contexts, and Identity/Argumentative contexts, with the latter category encompassing all identity-forming strategies and arguments explicated in the next section. (Note: this coding was conducted after the strategies had been identified.) I felt the need to go beyond the binary distinction of “identity forming” and “not identity forming” because my pilot analyses of the data revealed an overwhelming occurrence in both corpora of explicitly political contexts as opposed to strictly economic, making it necessary to distinguish between the two contexts in order to address the portion of my hypothesis concerning UK papers’ treatment of “oil.” Table 1 is a frequency breakdown of the categories with descriptions and sample concordance lines:

Table 1. Distribution of “Oil” in Both Corpora

The resultant ratios were surprisingly similar between corpora. Oil appeared in an identity/argumentative context roughly 22 percent of the time in the Scottish corpus and 20 percent of the time in the

Table 1. Distribution of “Oil” in Both Corpora

<i>Context</i>	<i>% Scot</i>	<i>% Brit</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Sample Concordances</i> <i>(British followed by Scottish)</i>
<i>Economic/ Factual</i>	38.1	38.7	<i>Projections/figures, oil industry/ company quotes/news, <b>absence</b> of debate context</i>	...adjusted for inflation, <b>oil</b> prices have never... <sup>44</sup> (Projections/figures) ...executive highlighted the <b>oil</b> products business... <sup>45</sup> (Company quotes/news)
<i>Political</i>	39.6	41.1	<i>References debates or campaigns, actor credibility, “winning/losing”</i>	...use last week’s intervention by <b>oil</b> billionaire Sir Ian Wood as his trump card... <sup>46</sup> (winning/losing) ...campaign did not play the <b>oil</b> card at a time when... <sup>47</sup> (Campaign reference, winning/losing)
<i>Identity/ Argumentative</i>	22.2	20.1	<i>Possession, normative statements about “use,” fantasy, country comparison, abuse</i>	...socialist utopia where <b>oil</b> will flow forever. On... <sup>48</sup> (Fantasy) ...unaware of how Scotland’s <b>oil</b> wealth was kept secret... <sup>49</sup> (Abuse)

UK corpus. Based on this comparison of frequencies, I can tentatively conclude that the *volume* of identity-forming discursive strategies did not differ significantly between the Scottish and UK press, a finding that runs contrary to my hypothesis that Scottish papers would use oil in more discursive strategies of identity formation when discussing oil than UK papers. The comparative frequencies of economic and political arguments between the two corpora allow me to further reject the hypothesis that the UK press would favor economic/factual contexts over other contexts when mentioning oil. The slight plurality of political mentions in both corpora suggests that both Scottish and UK papers most frequently situated oil within the context of political debate, making explicit reference to politicians’ competing claims and the balance of the Yes/No campaigns, essentially “backgrounding” oil as a tool for political gain.<sup>50</sup> The next section will more closely examine the specific strategies used in identity/argumentative contexts, and their particular linguistic realizations.

## 2. Discursive Strategies

This section will explore the contexts in and extent to which the subject of oil was coopted into discursive constructions of national identity in both corpora. To reiterate Wodak’s three-step discourse-historical approach, it was necessary to first establish the themes of the discourse, then to investigate the strategies associated with these themes, and finally to explore the linguistic means and realizations of the strategies.<sup>51</sup>

### *Identifying Themes*

Because this analysis is confined to the examination of one particular topic as it appears within a wider discourse, the process of identifying relevant

themes took a two-layered approach: first, themes were established using a discourse-historical review of literature on Scottish national identity (see *III.3 Establishing a “Scottish Identity”*); second, the corpus was queried using linguistic tools in order to determine which themes remained relevant when the focus was narrowed to mentions of “oil.” While this is the first study (to my knowledge) that seeks to explicate the occurrence of a singular theme not intuitively related to the overall discourse using a combination of CL/DA methods, the approach used is not entirely novel; Baker suggests that the ideal synergies of combining CL and DA methods are created via an iterative process much like the one used here, whereby one establishes themes through contextual research on the one hand, and “maps the text” using keywords, collocations and concordances (keeping the established themes in mind) to locate areas of interest in the text on the other.<sup>52</sup> The thematic elements established through contextual research and cross-checked through pilot analyses of the data are:

1. The narration of a common political past
2. The linguistic construction of a national culture
3. The linguistic construction of a political present and future

#### *Argumentative Strategies*

Wodak defines a strategy as “a more or less intentional plan of practices...adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic goal.”<sup>53</sup> The strategies were quantified by calculating the relative frequencies of linguistic means of realization between corpora, and by identifying statistically significant word pairings that suggest identity discourse.<sup>54</sup> Strategies and linguistic means were then examined using concordance analysis and a wider investigation of context where relevant, in order to relate them back to the relevant themes of the discourse and to the socio-political and theoretical context established through the literature review.

#### I. Constructive/Perpetuation Strategies

Constructive strategies are thought to be the most comprehensive and widespread strategies in national identity discourse, and they attempt to

“construct and establish a certain national identity by promoting unification, identification and solidarity.”<sup>55</sup> Perpetuation strategies instead seek to preserve a threatened identity.<sup>56</sup>

#### *Topos of Possession*

The first clue to the existence of an argumentation scheme based on notions of possession within the national identity discourse came from an analysis of Keywords in the Scottish corpus as compared to the British corpus. (“Keywords” are here defined as words that appear in one corpus and not the other at a statistically significant level.) Two of the strongest keywords in the Scottish corpus were the first-person plural pronouns “OUR” (Frequency: 771, keyness score 113.11) and “WE” (Frequency: 1441, keyness score 120.58). The prevalence of these pronouns in the Scottish corpus relative to the UK corpus suggests the existence of topoi of similarity and assimilation in Scottish newspapers, which are typically articulated through inclusive pronouns.<sup>57</sup> This finding can possibly be explained by the hypothesis that Scottish newspapers feature comparatively more editorial pieces written from the first person, a notion supported by the theory that the home nation plays discursive roles in news text.<sup>58</sup> To determine if the topic of oil was integrated into this argumentation scheme, I performed collocational analysis on “oil” and related terms (resource[s], energy) to look for personal pronouns, as well as extensive concordance analysis of the possessive pronoun “our” in the context of “oil” and related terms. I found that while “oil” does not collocate in the Scottish corpora with any personal pronouns, “resource[s]” collocates strongly with “our” (log likelihood 16.73), suggesting a discourse prosody of a national community bound by its common possessions.

Additionally, occurrences of the clusters “our oil,” “our resources,” and “Scotland’s oil,” while not statistically significant within the Scottish corpus, showed relatively higher frequencies across the board in the Scottish corpus as compared to the UK corpus (calculated by a simple ratio). Results are summarized in Table 2.

#### 2. Topos of Possession in the Scottish Corpus

These selected concordances corroborate

## 2. Topos of Possession in the Scottish Corpus

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Linguistic Realizations/ (Freq Relative to UK)</i>	<i>Sample Concordances (Scottish Corpus)</i>
<b>Possession</b> strength... <sup>60</sup> that... <sup>61</sup> decision that... <sup>62</sup> by all... <sup>63</sup> our... <sup>64</sup>	“our oil;”(2.2) “our resources;” (6.0) “Scotland’s oil” (1.6)	...is the importance of <b>Scotland’s oil</b> to the ...there were reports <b>our oil</b> was running out and ...Scotland in control of <b>our resources</b> and the ...with access to all <b>our</b> [natural] <b>resources</b> , and funded ...by pooling and sharing <b>our resources</b> equitably for

the finding that the Scottish press employed the topos of possession to a greater extent than the UK press. However, while the dominant identity discourse in these sample concordances is clearly the consolidation of a Scottish identity via the shared ownership of natural resources, the fourth concordance example hints at an entirely different discourse, albeit a less prominent one. This alternate discourse is related to the preservation of a supranational identity, and the benefits conferred by UK-wide shared ownership of oil and gas resources. A wider concordance analysis of “shared,” “pooled,” and “resources” indicates a *strategy of perpetuation*, present in both corpora (but not significantly or relatively more so in either), that seeks to resist the perceived threat posed by Scottish nationalist impulses towards North Sea oil resources. This finding is noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, it suggests that the same argumentative strategies may serve to advance different and even opposing discourses present in the corpora with regards to oil. Secondly, it demonstrates the benefits of using corpus linguistics techniques to conduct discourse

analysis, as such small- frequency clusters would almost certainly have been overlooked in a manual analysis.<sup>64</sup>

## II. TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGIES

Transformation strategies seek to “transform a relatively well-established national identity the contours of which the speaker has already identified.”<sup>65</sup> In the context of the present study, transformative argumentation schemes present oil as a means to changing Scotland for the better. Insofar as these strategies are present in the corpora, they appeal to the thematic categories of “linguistic construction of a shared political present and future” as well as “linguistic construction of a shared national culture.”

*Topoi of Comparison*

While geographic reference has typically been classified as the realization of a constructive rather than transformative strategy in other studies, some references to foreign countries present in the corpora

Table 3: Topos of Comparison in the Scottish Corpus

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Linguistic Means</i>	<i>Sample Concordances (Scottish Corpus)</i>
<b>Comparison</b> than 70%)... <sup>67</sup> ( <b>geographic</b> ) stands... <sup>68</sup> strong... <sup>69</sup> makers in... <sup>70</sup>	“such as,” “similar to,” “look...[at/to],” “than,” “would replicate”	...more prosperous than the UK ( <b>Norway</b> by more ...looks enviously to <b>Norway</b> whose oil fund now ...oil assets such as Qatar or <b>Norway</b> , or having a very ...replicate the arrangement in <b>Norway</b> , where policy



indicate an implication of what an independent Scotland *could be*, thereby encouraging the categorization of these strategies as transformative.<sup>70</sup> The impetus for investigating Norway as a potential site of interest in the corpora came from both the background literature, in which SNP politicians repeatedly reference the Nordic country as a model for an independent Scotland by virtue of its prudent investment of oil proceeds (see SNP White Paper, statements from FM Alex Salmond), as well as from inductive CL research; the word “Norwegian” appears as a statistically significant collocates of “oil” in the Scottish corpus (using the measure of specific mutual information, meaning it may not have been a high-frequency collocation). A collocational and concordance analysis of Norw\* (the asterisk indicates a “wildcard,” which instructs the software to return all words that begin with NORW) returned “oil” as the most significant collocates (log likelihood 17.14), prompting a closer concordance analysis of the instances in which “oil” and “Norw\*” appear in the Scottish corpus. (Note: the UK corpus, by contrast, frames references to Norway in a largely disparaging manner elaborated upon in the next section, IV.2.iii. *Destructive Strategies*.)

### Table 3: Topos of Comparison in the Scottish Corpus

The selected concordances exemplify the aspirational Scottish comparison to its Nordic neighbor on the basis of its huge sovereign wealth fund, which is largely the accumulation of oil revenues. This argumentation scheme linguistically constructs a common political future by suggesting a comparative model and implying that a transformation could be achieved. By comparing itself to a bounded geographical entity like Norway, Scotland (by way of the politicians and citizens who make the comparison) constructs a possible future in which its position *relative to other countries* is largely derived from the production of oil. This imagination of a national identity contingent on energy is similar to what Bouzarovski and Bassin identified in Russia—a “hydrocarbon landscape with discursive and material aspects that are simultaneously parts of an infrastructurally-grounded vision of national identity.”<sup>71</sup> A wider examination of the concordances of Norw\* in the Scottish corpus illustrates that the comparison extends beyond simply imagining an independent

Scotland as an energy-producing dynamo. Numerous examples take the comparison further to explicate the *use* of oil proceeds to finance an egalitarian society:

1. “We can create an oil fund by saving some of the tax- **Norway**, a country the same size as Scotland, has accumulated an oil fund of \$500 billion *to be used for pensions, healthcare and investment in the future*.”<sup>72</sup>

2. The Nordic countries are all more prosperous than the UK (**Norway** by more than 70 percent), all enjoy *much greater levels of equality* and none feels the need for the safety net of being tied to a larger country.<sup>73</sup>

These comparisons explicated the need for further investigation into how oil is tied to a Scottish vision of a more “egalitarian” society, and how these links contributed to the construction of a common national culture.

### *Topoi of Fairness*

To assess the links between oil and the linguistic construction of a particularly “Scottish” culture, I chose a different “entry point” into the discourse,<sup>74</sup> opting to first locate manifestations of the theme of “common national culture” and then search among the resultant discursive strategies for links to oil. Scotland has historically constructed itself as “egalitarian,” as evidenced by social surveys, ethnographic work, and historical analysis.<sup>75</sup> In the Scottish corpus, “social” was found to collocate strongly with “justice” (log likelihood 18.34) as well as “fairer” with “society” (26.67). While “fair” appeared a roughly equal number of times in both texts (18 in UK, 21 in Scottish), “fairer” appeared 58 times in the Scottish corpus versus just 14 times in the UK corpus. The addition of the comparative -er to the adjective suggests a transformative strategy that seeks to *modify (or amplify)* this central tenet of Scottish identity (fairness), a strategy which is significantly more present in the Scottish corpus versus the UK corpus.<sup>76</sup> This is corroborated by a closer analysis of “fairer” in context in the Scottish corpus:

1. “The best way, the only way, to build a wealthier Scotland, a **fairer** Scotland, a more confident Scotland, is full powers of independence.”<sup>77</sup>
2. “Make it Yes because there is so much at stake; a **fairer**, democratic Scotland which we all want.”<sup>78</sup>
3. “...because they believed an independent Scotland would be a **fairer** society in which endemic problems of poverty and poor health could be tackled more effectively and with greater will.”<sup>79</sup>

Clearly, a discourse prosody exists between “fairer” and “society.” The deployment of a vague phrase, exemplified here by the minimal reference to what “fairer” would actually mean (with some exceptions, as in Example 3) is a typical linguistic realization of transformative strategies.<sup>80</sup> Hence, we can conclude that the use of “fairer” constitutes the realization of a discursive strategy of identity transformation. However, an explicit link between “fairness” or “social justice” and “oil” is virtually nonexistent. At best, we can establish an admittedly weak “secondary relationship”<sup>81</sup> between “social” and “resource” by way of mutual collocations: “social” “economic” (log likelihood 14.53), “economic” “resource” (log likelihood 10.93). So, what does this lack of a relationship mean for how “oil” and its related topics help to construct a common Scottish national culture? I tentatively suggest that this distance between “oil” and the linguistic realizations of national culture in the Scottish corpus is indicative of the *opportunistic* use of oil by Scots in discursive strategies of identity construction. In the context of cultural factors that contribute to Scottish national identity, it appears that “oil” is at best a temporary means to achieving societal goals of “fairness,” and not intrinsically a component of Scottish cultural identity. Interestingly, as the next section will demonstrate, the link between the vision of a “fairer” independent Scotland and oil was actually made more explicit in the UK corpus, though the link was used to dismantle a vision of a political future, rather than construct one.

### III. DESTRUCTIVE STRATEGIES

This final category of argumentation strategies exists to “[dismantle] or [disparage] parts of an existing identity construct.”<sup>82</sup> These strategies, while found to be less common in online Scottish pro-independence debate forums, are strikingly present in both corpora, and they relate primarily to the thematic element of “narratives of a shared political past.”<sup>83</sup>

#### *Topoi of Fantasy*

The UK corpus features similar raw and relative frequencies of the term “Norw\*,” and also collocates strongly with “oil” (log likelihood 16.73). However, an analysis of the concordances of “Norw\*” in the UK corpus reveals a strikingly different discourse. “Norw\*” in the UK corpus collocates strongly with “fabulous” (log likelihood 16.78), and a concordance analysis reveals that this is largely due to the recurrence of a quote from Scottish author J.K. Rowling, who was a vocal “No” supporter, printed 5 separate times across the four UK papers:

“That’s not true for everyone who’s being sold the idea that we’ll be a **fabulous** hybrid between **Norway** and Saudi Arabia...”<sup>84</sup>

It is interesting to note that J.K. Rowling, who is Scottish, invokes the personal pronoun “we,” which is typically employed in constructive strategies.<sup>85</sup> However, because she uses “we” in the context of an imagined future via the future-tense structure “[w]ill be,” and subsequently mocks the vision as “fabulous” and an “idea being sold,” this argumentation scheme can be classified as destructive. This quote did not appear at all in the Scottish corpus, prompting a closer investigation into other scenarios in which the imagined future of an independent Scotland was derided as fantastical, unrealistic, or childish in the UK corpus. Through collocation and concordance analyses, I found that this argument was present in contexts well beyond the country comparison with Norway, and applied to multiple contexts involving oil. I chose to term this argumentation scheme the *topos of fantasy*, because it employs belittling and patronizing linguistic realizations to dismantle the imagined identity of a prosperous, independent Scotland

Table 4: Topos of Fantasy in the UK Corpus

Strategy	Linguistic Realizations (Relative Freq UK/Scot)	Sample Concordances
<b>Fantasy</b>	"fantasy (2.2)," "dream (1.6) "fabulous (n/a); "utopia" (n/a); "heaven" (n/a); "paradise" (n/a) "idyll" (n/a)	...nationalists hope to emulate the <b>Norwegian dream</b> , with plans to... <sup>88</sup> ... their country into a <b>Nordic idyll</b> , or to say how much... <sup>89</sup> ...fund his promised socialist <b>paradise</b> . An avowed statist, he... <sup>90</sup> ...equally flawed. His socialist <b>heaven</b> of tax and spend, floating on a lake of oil... <sup>91</sup> ... <b>SALMOND'S GREAT OIL WEALTH FANTASY</b> . Alex Salmond's biggest lie... <sup>92</sup>

dependent on oil revenues. It can be understood relative to the *topos of reality*, paraphrased here from Wodak as "because reality is as it is, a specific course of action should follow."<sup>86</sup> The *topos of fantasy* argues that "because reality is *not* as it seems (or has been presented), a course of action should (or should not) follow."<sup>87</sup> (The linguistic realizations in the table below all appear within a 10-word span of "oil" or "Norway;" n/a signifies a term that did not occur at all in the Scottish corpus.)

Table 4: Topos of Fantasy in the UK Corpus

These linguistic realizations attempt to dismantle the identity of an independent Scotland by framing that vision, which is based on transformative constructions of a political future, as outside of reality. That this topos exists exclusively in the UK corpus suggests that UK newspapers also performed a discursive role within news text.<sup>93</sup> Investigation of this topos also revealed a very strong discourse prosody between "socialist" and "utopia" (log likelihood 46.91) in UK papers, while no such collocations exist in the Scottish press; additionally, the word "socialist" appears 16 times in the UK press versus only 8 times in the Scottish press. This relative frequency is indicative of two things: first, that UK papers were more willing to explicitly link the theme of an egalitarian outcome to independence with oil; and second, that in making this link, UK papers consistently employed a term, "socialism," which was not actually claimed by the Scottish independence movement, and more importantly, one that carries a more negative connotation in England than in Scotland.<sup>i</sup> This destructive strategy and its argumentation schemes were by far the most prevalent link between oil and identity in the UK

<sup>i</sup> This is evidenced by a number of political realities: the Socialist Labour Party in the 2010 UK Parliament election garnered less than .1 percent of the vote, whereas the SLP received .9percent in the 2011 Scottish Parliament election. Additionally the Conservative (Tory) party (whose policies are at odds with socialism) won an absolute majority of English MPs represented in UK Parliament in the 2010 general election. Moreover, the SNP does not identify its policies as socialist (SNP White Paper).

corpus.

#### *Topoi of Abuse*

Topoi of Abuse are classified by Prentice as an "abuse of authority."<sup>94</sup> These topoi were located and examined by first searching for the linguistic constructions of authority in the discourse, and subsequently analyzing how they are characterized and referred to by either press. Wodak points to *metonymy*, which "replaces the name of a referent by the name of an entity which is closely associated with it,"<sup>95</sup> as a common linguistic realization of discursive strategies in national identity construction (or destruction). A common metonymy in political discourse is *place as seat of an institution for the representatives of the institution*, i.e. saying 'The White House issued a memorandum' to mean that the President and/or American executive office issued a memorandum.<sup>96</sup> Scottish and British parliaments are referred to as Holyrood and Westminster respectively, as a reference to the cities in which they are housed; these terms represent constructions of authority in the discourse. A collocational and relative frequency analysis on both metonymies in both corpora returned nothing of interest, except for the characterization of "Westminster" within the Scottish corpora. Some of the highest collocates of "Westminster" in the Scottish corpora were "cruel" (log likelihood 22.14); "elite" (log likelihood 20.96); "threat" (log likelihood 19.06); and "lie" (log likelihood 13.14), suggesting a discourse of distrust and ill will towards British parliament that is congruent with the wider discourse on a common Scottish political past in the context of British rule.<sup>97</sup> An examination of the instances in which "Westminster" collocated with "oil" was even more revealing (the following examples were selected based on their representation of specific topoi):

1. "So our plea today to pensioners in Scotland is this: if you lived through the

Table 5: Topos of Mismanagement in the Scottish Corpus

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Linguistic Realizations (Relative Freq Scot/UK)</i>	<i>Sample Concordances</i>
<b>Mismanagement</b> wealth... <sup>102</sup>  governments of  resources,	“squander”(2); “steward*”(1.4)  “successive”(n/a/) “fail*”(n/a)	...failed to set up a fund and <b>squandered</b> our oil  ...also accused <b>successive</b> Westminster  <b>squandering</b> the resource... <sup>103</sup> ...Fergus Ewing said: “ <b>poor stewardship</b> of  <b>frequent changes</b> ...” <sup>104</sup>

Thatcher years, you lived through the waste of opportunity, you lived through the squandering of Scotland’s oil wealth- don’t let **Westminster** repeat the mistakes of the past.”<sup>98</sup> (*mismanagement*)

2. “Instead, successive **Westminster** governments used **oil** revenue for their own immediate political priorities.”<sup>99</sup> (*mismanagement*)

3. “This lends weight to the Investors’ Chronicle view that **Westminster** is seeking to downplay the value of **oil** to the Scottish economy before the referendum.”<sup>100</sup> (*treachery*)

These examples are indicative of two separate but related argumentative strategies: a *topos of mismanagement* and a *topos of treachery*.

#### *Topos of Mismanagement*

The first quotation invokes a political past of hardship at the hands of Westminster, consolidating a Scottish identity through reference to a shared resource that has been “squandered” by Westminster. The second example references “successive” Westminster governments, again constructing a narrativization of a shared political past, this time through temporal reference.<sup>101</sup> “Successive” actually collocates significantly with “Westminster” in the Scottish corpus, and subsequent concordances of “successive” confirm that the “shared political past” narrative is indeed tied to oil in certain contexts. Concordance analyses on “squander,\*” “oil fund” (deemed to be a related term through concordances), and “successive” reveal a *topos of mismanagement* realized by references to Westminster’s chronically

poor governance of oil resources. (The linguistic realizations below all appeared within a 10-word span of “Westminster.”)

#### Table 5: Topos of Mismanagement in the Scottish Corpus

This strategy is destructive because it seeks to dismantle the supranational British identity that is politically articulated through UK parliament rule at Westminster. These findings corroborate those of recent social attitudes surveys, which observed that Scots increasingly distrust the UK government to act in their best interest.<sup>105</sup> It is also linked to the *topoi of comparison* regarding Norway via the frequent mention of an “oil fund” and references to the Norwegian example. However, the Norway comparison in this context seeks to *disparage* the supranational UK identity, rather than construct a vision of an independent Scotland, by directly comparing perceived UK mismanagement of resources with the virtuous investment strategy of Norway, and so this particular *topos of comparison* falls under the category of destructive strategies.

#### *Topos of Treachery*

Example 3 above indicates the presence of another sub-topos of abuse present in the discourse related to Westminster’s strategic withholding of information about the extent of Scottish oil wealth. Whether these accusations are true or not, their appearance in the corpus is statistically significant: in the Scottish corpus, “secret” collocates strongly with “oil” (log likelihood 19.00) and “kept” (log likelihood 25.08), and a closer concordance analysis of this theme reveals the related linguistic means.

Table 6: Topos of Treachery in the Scottish Corpus

The third concordance makes reference to a report conducted by a Scottish economist in the 1970s detailing how an independent Scotland would be made “richer than Switzerland” by oil revenues, which was suppressed by UK governments for fear of inciting Scottish appeals to independence.<sup>109</sup> Also referenced in the Scottish corpus was an online poll conducted by a popular entertainment-content website that asked Scots if they believed that the UK government was “keeping oil finds secret” to weaken the case for independence, to which 42 percent responded “probably true,” and an equal proportion responded “probably untrue.”<sup>110</sup> This argumentation scheme, like the topos of mismanagement, supports social attitude survey findings that Scots harbor distrust for the UK government.<sup>111</sup> The “topos of treachery” seeks to dismantle the UK identity by attacking its credibility as a unified community; by identifying specific scenarios in which the UK government willingly acted against the interest of [Scots, who are presumably] its own people, this strategy deconstructs the notion of a supranational British identity through differentiation from the abused party.<sup>112</sup> However, it is interesting to note that the *topoi of abuse* represent oil as a depleted resource (“squandered”), in contrast with the *topos of comparison* above, which bases its construction of a political future on plentiful oil reserves; this discrepancy is indicative of the *opportunistic* use of oil in identity-forming strategies in the Scottish corpus, because the two strategies employ entirely different visions of Scotland’s oil wealth in order to further their identity claims.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings here both support and build on the literature of Scottish identity as well as

the more nascent body of work on the discursive relationship between energy and identity. The destructive strategies present in the Scottish corpus corroborated the findings of recent Scottish social attitude surveys, which identify a Scottish distrust of UK government, while the constructive and transformative strategies, particularly the geographic comparison to other oil-producing countries, support Bouzarovski and Bassin’s conclusions that energy and identity are linked in material and imagined ways.<sup>113</sup> However, the total distribution of the contexts in which “oil” appears in both corpora indicates that overall, oil as an issue in the Scottish independence debate was primarily a matter of politics rather than identity. The issue of oil was raised most frequently in the context of political debates and campaign politics, in which it was essentially “backgrounded” as a tool used by actors for political gain (39.6 percent Scottish, 41.1 percent British). Additionally, the fact that both corpora demonstrated similar frequencies of oil mentions in the context of identity discourse indicate that oil as it relates to national identity was not a significantly more important argument for either side of the debate.

Despite the relative similarity in the *volume* of identity-forming strategies between the corpora, this study revealed a comparative distinction between corpora in the *types* of strategies used, which in turn gives clues to how exactly oil figures into Scottish identity: the Scottish corpus employed oil in constructive, transformative, and even destructive strategies of identity formation, while the UK corpus utilized oil in primarily destructive strategies. Destructive strategies in both corpora served the similar function of deriding or deflating the opposing identity in order to implicitly promote one’s own, and thus suggest an inherently mutual tension between a Scottish and British national identity. But a closer examination of the UK’s destructive strategies suggest

Table 6: Topos of Treachery in the Scottish Corpus

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Linguistic Realizations/ (Relative Freq Scot/UK)</i>	<i>Sample Concordances</i>
<b>Treachery</b> Before the... <sup>106</sup>	“secret”(2.7); “downplayed”(2)	...Scotland’s oil wealth was kept <b>secret</b> for years.
Conservatives... <sup>107</sup>		...admitted the value of oil was <b>downplayed</b> by Labour and
Westminster... <sup>108</sup>		...was classified and kept <b>secret</b> by Labour and Tory

that they should be viewed as largely *reactive* to Scottish discursive strategies of construction and transformation, evidenced by the relatively frequent targeting of a particular Scottish imagination of a political future dependent on oil reserves (*topos of fantasy*). Therefore, this study seems to indicate that the link between a British identity and “oil” is weak, and was only employed as a *defensive response* to Scottish identity claims involving oil.

The most important finding of this study is the discovery of Scottish destructive strategies aimed at dismantling the supranational British identity through the “narrativization of a shared past,”<sup>114</sup> because this finding is in direct contrast with the conclusions of Prentice, who noticed a distinct *lack of destructive strategies* in Scottish online independence forums.<sup>115</sup> Taken broadly, this contradictory finding suggests that different strategies exist at different levels of discourse, and that the “top-down” Scottish newspaper discourse may have presented “Britishness” as more of a barrier to independence than did the “bottom-up” discourse in online forums (terms borrowed from Prentice 2010).

Finally, the present study finds Scottish newspapers’ use of oil in discursive strategies to be largely *opportunistic*; in other words, oil was framed both as a depleted and a plentiful resource, depending on what theme the strategy was trying to realize (narrativization of a common political past or construction of a political future). Destructive strategies referred to the oil as having been “squandered” (*topos of mismanagement*), while transformative strategies either explicitly (*topos of comparison*) or implicitly (*topos of fairness*) referenced plentiful oil as a means to realizing the vision of a political future. The reactive British strategies of identity destruction were a response to the latter series of strategies, and sought to dismantle the construction of an independent Scotland dependent on oil to fund its vision.

#### Further Research

Future research could expand the scope of the study and examine a corpus spanning several years, perhaps even to a period before the SNP came to power in Scotland, to observe the diachronic development of strategies that employ oil in the construction or destruction of identity in the Scottish press; the temporal comparison would no doubt

prove very interesting. Additionally, it could be interesting to conduct a wider comparative analysis of the discourses present in Scottish independence forums versus those in Scottish newspapers to investigate the discrepancy between my findings and Prentice’s (2010) regarding destructive strategies; such a study would additionally have the societal merit of revealing how representative Scottish newspapers are of the Scottish people. Finally, further research could use the same or a similar corpus as this study to examine the distinction between “quality” and “tabloid” papers to see if there exists a relative prevalence of identity-forming strategies in either type of publication.

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