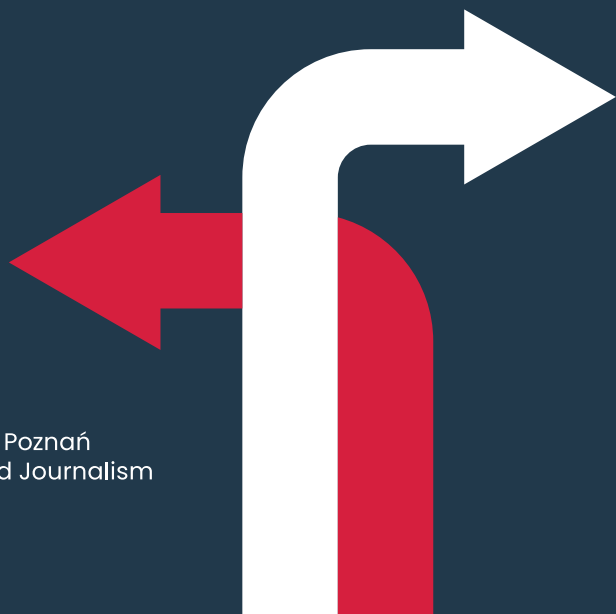


Populist Discourse in the Polish Media

Edited by
Agnieszka Stępińska



Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
Faculty of Political Science and Journalism
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3. Who ‘Speaks Populism’ in Print Media? The Populist Discourse of Political Actors and Journalists

Agnieszka Stepińska and Maria Wąsicka-Sroczyńska

Introduction

Adoption of a perspective of political communication in research on populism allows a significant expansion in the spectrum of potential sources of populist statements. In contrast to ideology-oriented approaches that are focused solely on political entities, a communication-centered approach to populism acknowledges that media (journalists) and citizens may also be sources of populist statements (Reinemann et al., 2017). Such a reflection on the role of traditional and online media in the dissemination of populist messages (cf. Stewart et al., 2003) has resulted in the distinction of various types of media populism (Plasser and Ulram, 2003; Esser et al., 2017).

According to F. Plasser and P. A. Ulram (2003), media populism can be divided into; (1) populism by the media, (2) populism through the media, and (3) populist citizen journalism. In the first instance, journalists create their own statements that are critical of the political or economic elite, or materials where they identify with ‘the people’ and define their role as the ‘voice of the nation’ – articulating the opinions, expectations or needs of citizens.

The second type of media populism, *populism through the media*, consists of media coverage of the statements of populist political actors. G. Mazzoleni (2008) even accuses the media of “complicity” in the dissemination of populism, by presenting their arguments, slogans and ideological elements. The resultant recognition and publicity contribute to the legitimacy of the populist message. The last type of media populism, *populist citizen journalism*, takes place when the media open up to citizens’ statements – usually by encouraging comments on reported events or participation in discussions on Internet forums of media outlets (Esser et al., 2017, p. 371).

A further definition of media populism is proposed by B. Krämer (2014, p. 48) who describes the media’s use of stylistic and ideological elements such as “the construction of favoritism of in-groups, hostility toward and circumvention of the elites and institutions of representative democracy, reliance on charisma and (group-related) commonsense, and appeal to moral sentiments.” This approach is analogous to the first aforementioned type of media populism (*populism by the media*), because it treats media populism as “a distinct phenomenon: populism among the media themselves and independent of any relationship to populist movements” (Krämer, 2014, p. 42). As such, media populism may “parallel that of the respective populist movements and may seek strategic alliances with them; however, at times, the politics of populists in

the political system may also run counter to the interests of populist media (...). Media, then, may be opposed to populist parties while actually using populist strategies themselves” (Kramer, 2014, p. 42; see also Stewart et al., 2003).

In order to better understand *populism by the media*, it is necessary to refer to research on the role of the media and models of journalism, especially the roles that journalists play with regard to populism. First, it is worth noting that the media appear to speak directly to ‘the people’. However, as B. Krämer (2014, p. 49) points out, “they have to make the audience forget that media are organizations themselves rather than a pure movement without institutional structures, and that they often entertain close relationships to political institutions and agents.” Hence, in order to gain populist appeal and not be perceived as ‘the elite’ themselves, the media have to “present themselves as the mouthpieces of an unstructured but powerful movement that only consists of public sentiment, shared moral concerns, and collective mobilization” (Krämer, 2014, p. 49).

However, in media systems with a high level of political parallelism, such as in Poland (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011), traditional media (especially print press) represent specific political orientations or even directly support political actors. In combination with a strong political polarization in the society, it would be difficult to agree with their self-proclaimed role as ‘the voice of the people’. In reality, they only represent individual social groups or voters sympathetic to one of the political sides.

Nevertheless, “media are devices *par excellence* to exert symbolic power via the representation of society” (Krämer, 2014, p. 49). As such they may describe and prescribe divisions that exist in the society, including that between the common people and ‘the elite’.

Normative and empirical theories of journalistic roles predominantly focus on the relationship that journalism has with those in power, and on the way journalism approaches the audience (Culbertson, 1983; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996; Weaver and Willnat, 2012; Hanitzsch, 2007; Mellado, 2015).

Following Mellado’s concept of journalistic role performance (2015), we may argue that media are more prone to an anti-institutional attitude in a watchdog model (oriented toward monitoring, questioning, criticism, or accusations against those in power), a service model (that combines the rights and self-interest of audience, creating a client-professional relationship with the journalist and the public), or a civic model (focused on encouraging people to get involved in public debate and participate in political events, as well as on the presentation of groups without social empowerment that demand the recognition or restoration of a right).

Additionally, media populism may be the result of the tendency toward the presence of the journalistic voice. In this interventionist approach to journalistic work, the news professionals provide their own opinions and suggestions, advocating for certain social groups (Mellado, 2015) and presenting an overtly (politically or anti-politically) biased coverage. As B. Krämer (2014, p. 49), following R. Davis (1997), claims, “a medium may profit from the suspicion that others entertain a hidden bias whereas its own is made explicit.” The presence of the interventionist journalistic role provides a fertile ground for the use of populist discourse by journalists. In fact, they may even outbid political actors by “being more martial, radical, polemical and so on, thus closer to the ideal-typical forms of populism” (Krämer, 2014, p. 49).

Discussion on the model roles of journalists with regard to populism was also joined by M. Wettstein, F. Esser, A. Schultz, D.S. Wirz and W. Wirth (2018), who distinguished three main roles: (1) gatekeepers for populist political actors and their messages, (2) interpreters of populist actors evaluating their behaviors, and (3) originators of populist messages" (Wettstein et al., 2018, p. 478). In their approach, the first of the roles (*gatekeeper*) refers directly to the idea of *populism through the media* (where the media decide on the dissemination of populist statements coming from different sources (e.g. political actors, representatives of companies, or citizens), the second emphasizes the importance of journalists in explaining and commenting on populist statements, and the third presents a more nuanced take on the concept of *populism by the media*.

As shown in chapter 1, a total of 2,258 statements were found in which at least one element of the populist discourse appeared, i.e. either a reference to 'the people', or criticism of 'the elite', or the exclusion of 'out-groups'. An in-depth analysis of the frequency of such statements in the various titles of the printed press (i.e. the analysis of media as gatekeepers) was presented in chapter 2.

The aim of that chapter is to answer the question of who are the main sources of the statements containing at least one element of populist discourse, and in particular the populist statements published in the Polish print press. The 'usual suspects' are political actors, whose statements are covered by the media. However, taking into account that the specificity of Polish journalism is characterized by a high level of journalistic voice (Stępińska et al., 2016) even in purely informative materials (Jurga-Wosik et al., 2017), it can be assumed that Polish journalists will adopt an active attitude towards populist statements, and thus will play the role of originators and interpreters of populist communications. It can be expected that this trend should be even more pronounced than previous research indicated (Stępińska et al., 2016), as the research material in this project came not only from the daily press but also from weeklies. Additionally, the high level of watchdog model in the daily press (Stępińska et al., 2016) should be conducive to both reporting and formulating critical statements about 'the elite'. Finally, due to the high level of political parallelism of the Polish print press, one should expect more critical statements regarding 'the elite' than actual *anti-elitist populism* with simultaneous references to 'the people' and criticism of 'the elite'.

In order to trace the gatekeeper, interpreter, and originator roles of journalists we will examine the categories of speakers and journalists' attitude toward the use of populist discourse by other speakers. We assumed that journalists who are the authors of the material (news item) may either just cover and disseminate the populist statements made by other speakers without any evaluation or provide their own opinions on these statements. In particular, journalists may select one of the option of such an active approach, that is: (1) criticize the populist statements, (2) support populist statements, or (3) express different evaluation depending on who is a speaker: criticize some statements and support others in one material.

Speakers in Populist Political Communication

In the codebook, we distinguished eight categories of potential speakers, i.e. those whose statements containing at least one element of populist discourse were quoted

or paraphrased in the sampled press articles. The list of potential sources of such statements included: a journalist, political actor, expert/scientist, public administration official, representative of a social organization (NGO) and a citizen. In the cases of a journalist, political actor or expert, it was possible to encode the name, surname and affiliation of the speaker. In turn, the category ‘citizen’ included individuals presented in the role of ‘ordinary’ inhabitants of the country. The category ‘not indicated’ was also distinguished, understood as persons appearing under their first and last names, but without the mention of their role in society. However, the category of ‘other’ included those who did not represent any of the aforementioned categories.

Analysis of the materials identified a total of 1,018 speakers who were the sources (authors) of statements including at least one indicator of populist discourse, i.e. either a reference to ‘the people’, a criticism of ‘the elite’, or the exclusion of ‘out-groups’ (in short: statements). In this chapter, the basic unit of analysis is a single statement that meets this criterion. Frequency calculations will be based on the number of coded statements reported in the examined press titles (general level of analysis), in individual press titles, or the categories of speakers (detailed level of analysis).

Table 3.1 shows that journalists constituted the largest source of such statements in materials published in the press (313, i.e. 31% of all speakers). A total of 1,052 statements containing at least one element of populist discourse were recognized, which accounted for almost half of all such statements. Political actors constitute the next greatest group, with 635 statements containing at least one element of populist discourse (28% of the total number of such statements) made by 212 politicians (nearly 21% of the total number of speakers).

Other categories of speakers were much less frequently present in the analyzed materials. However, it is worth noting that slightly more than 14% of all speakers were experts, and their statements containing at least one element of the populist discourse constituted almost 10% of all such statements.

Table 3.1. Categories of speakers: sources of statements including at least one indicator of populist discourse

Speakers	N of speakers	% of speakers	N of statements	% of statements
Journalist	313	30.75	1052	46.59
Political actor	212	20.83	635	28.12
Expert	146	14.34	224	9.92
State administration officer	10	0.98	10	0.44
NGO	44	4.32	44	1.95
Citizen	75	7.37	75	3.32
No role/affiliation provided	85	8.35	85	3.76
Other	133	13.06	133	5.89
TOTAL	1018	100.00	2258	100.00

Source: Own elaboration.

These results confirmed the assumptions of the high level of activity of Polish press journalists, not only in reporting statements including at least one indicator of populist

discourse formulated by other speakers, especially political actors (*gatekeeper model*), but also in formulating such statements independently (*originator model*) or evaluating them (*interpreter model*).

In a further part of the chapter, we will focus on the two largest categories of speakers: political actors and journalists. In particular, the results of a comparative analysis of the content of individual press titles will be presented, as well as an in-depth analysis of the statements by journalists and politicians whose populist statements appeared most frequently in the analyzed press titles. Finally, journalists' attitude towards the populist statements made by other speakers will be examined.

Political Actors as Originators of Populist Messages

Interestingly, political actors appeared to be the second largest group of speakers whose statements containing references to 'the people', 'the elite', or 'out-groups' were most frequently presented in the dailies and weeklies. Table 3.2 presents the frequencies of such statements in individual media outlets. The percentages were calculated on the basis of the ratio of the number of statements by political actors containing at least one indicator of populist discourse to the total number of such statements in a given newspaper, as given in brackets next to the names of these papers.

Table 3.2. Frequency of political actors' statements per media outlets

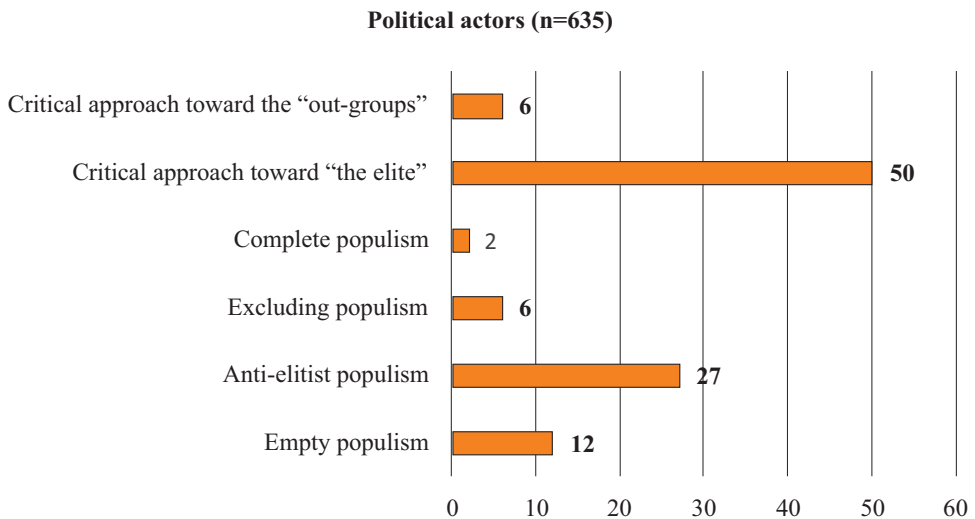
Media outlet	n	%
<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i> (N=321)	137	42.7
<i>Rzeczpospolita</i> (N=317)	98	30.9
<i>Fakt</i> (N=151)	58	38.4
<i>Nasz Dziennik</i> (N=148)	55	37.2
<i>Polityka</i> (N=452)	124	27.4
<i>W Sieci</i> (N=425)	65	15.3
<i>Do Rzeczy</i> (N=149)	31	20.8
<i>Newsweek</i> (N=295)	67	22.7
TOTAL (N=2258)	635	28.1

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3.2 shows that political actors' statements containing at least 1 indicator of populist discourse were covered most frequently by the quality daily newspaper, the centre-liberal *Gazeta Wyborcza* (almost 43% of all such statements came from political actors) and the tabloid *Fakt* (38%). Fewer such statements can be found in the Catholic-nationalist *Nasz Dziennik* (37%). Therefore, neither political orientation nor the type of press determined the amount of attention that daily newspapers in Poland given to the statements of political actors containing references to 'the people', criticism of 'the elite', or negative attitude towards 'out-groups'. However, we may conclude that weeklies less often presented such statements from political actors (from 15% to 20% of the total number of statements containing at least 1 indicator of the populist discourse).

Once we examine a frequency of elements of that discourse, as well as types of populism in political actors' statements (see Figure 3.1), we noticed that half of the statements included criticism toward 'the elite', while 27% of the statements represented the anti-elitism populism. In comparison to journalists, political actors more often referred to 'the people' (*empty populism*), as well as expressed their negative attitude toward 'out-groups'.

Figure 3.1. Presence of indicators of populist discourse and types of populism in political actors' statements (%)



Source: Own elaboration.

Next, we identified the most frequently cited political actors – authors of statements containing at least 1 indicator of populist discourse. We established the identity of 212 political actors and counted the presence of their statements in individual newspapers. This allowed the creation of a hierarchy of political actors ('top 5'), whose statements were most frequently quoted or paraphrased (see Table 3.3). The percentage was calculated as the ratio of the number of statements of a given politician containing at least 1 indicator of populist discourse to the total number of statements of this type from political actors in all analyzed papers (N=635).

Table 3.3. Political actors as (populist) speakers (N=635)

Name of political actor	Number of statements	% of the total number of political actors' statements (N=635)
Jarosław Kaczyński (PiS)	58	9
Andrzej Duda (PiS)	42	7
Beata Szydło (PiS)	36	6
Bronisław Komorowski (PO)	33	5
Paweł Kukiz	27	4

Source: Own elaboration.

This 'top 5' group included three politicians from the right-wing, conservative political party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice hereafter PiS), namely: Jarosław Kaczyński – chairman and the absolute leader of this political group, Andrzej Duda – in 2015 a candidate for the President of Poland, and since the elections in May 2015, the President, and Beata Szydło – Prime Minister in 2015–2017. Their statements constituted one fifth of those that contained at least 1 indicator of populist discourse coming from politicians and presented in the analyzed newspapers. Slightly less frequently referred to were statements of this type made by Bronisław Komorowski, President of Poland in 2010–2015, who came from the liberal-conservative political party PO, the main opposition to PiS.

Among the political actors was also Paweł Kukiz – a musician, leader of the rock band "Piersi" and a self-proclaimed 'anti-systemic' activist, ranked third (after Andrzej Duda and Bronisław Komorowski) in the presidential elections held in 2015, and the founder of the Kukiz'15 movement and then a member of the Kukiz'15 parliamentary group.

Taking into account the political context – the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2015 – it is not surprising that the papers focused on the statements of the presidential candidates and political leaders. However, it is worth emphasizing that we analyzed only those statements that included references to 'the people', a critical attitude towards 'the elite', or exclusion of 'out-groups'. Our results do not concern the actual activity of political actors in formulating such statements, but the presence of their statements in the printed press. In other words, the statements containing at least 1 indicator of populist discourse that were reported by the print media were formulated by right-wing politicians. At the same time, no representative of left-wing parties was included in the group of politicians whose statements constituted at least 4% of the statements presented in the journalistic materials. This may indicate not so much a lower incidence of populist discourse among left-wing politicians as their lower media exposure (or any attention paid to those politicians).

Table 3.4. Frequency of indicators of populist discourse in statements made by selected political actors (%)

Name of political actor	Empty populism	Criticism toward elites	Negative approach to 'out-groups'	Anti-elitist populism	Excluding populism	Complete populism
Jarosław Kaczyński (n=58)	29	67	32	21	5	2
Andrzej Duda (n=42)	69	71	0	43	0	0
Beata Szydło (n=36)	61	66	12	36	2	2
Bronisław Komorowski (n=33)	48	66	0	18	0	0
Paweł Kukiz (n=27)	55	96	15	55	11	11

Source: Own elaboration.

The data presented in Table 3.4 shows how often the statements of the analyzed politicians included individual indicators of populist discourse. Just like in chapter 2, we identified elements in isolation or in combination, indicating the presence of the

following types of populism: *empty populism*, *anti-elitist populism*, *excluding populism*, or *complete populism*.

Once again, there was a visible percentage predominance of statements containing only criticism of ‘the elite’, without any reference to ‘the people’ (more than 60% of statements made by each of the politicians mentioned above). Paweł Kukiz is characterized by the highest rate of such statements. Furthermore, it is in his statements that one can most often find *anti-elitist populism* (55%) and *excluding populism* (11%). The research results confirm our earlier findings regarding the specificity of the populist discourse used by the leader of the political movement Kukiz’15 (see: Adamczewska, 2017; Wrześniewska-Pietrzak and Kołodziejczak, 2017).

Criticism of ‘the elite’ and *anti-elitist populism* were also clearly present in the statements of the leader of PiS, Jarosław Kaczyński, Andrzej Duda (presidential candidate in 2015 and then President of Poland, representing PiS) and Beata Szydło (the Prime Minister of the PiS government from the time of the parliamentary elections in 2015 until 2017). What distinguishes Jarosław Kaczyński’s statements presented by the media from those of the other two representatives is the higher frequency of statements representing a negative approach towards ‘out-groups’ (32% in comparison to 0% and 12%, respectively), as well as a lower frequency of statements referring to ‘the people’ (29% in comparison to 66% and 61%, respectively). It seems that both A. Duda and B. Szydło’s statements were much more oriented towards ‘the people’ since both of them were candidates for either a President or a Prime Minister, while J. Kaczyński did not run for any public office at that time (although he has always been the official leader of PiS).

Interestingly, Bronisław Komorowski who was the President-in-Office in 2015, running for a second term, was less frequently covered by the media as a political actor using populist discourse in his statements. Still, in almost half of his statements that included at least one element of populist discourse covered by the media, he made some references to ‘the people’ (*empty populism*). At the same time, only 18% of his statements with at least one element of populist discourse included indicators of anti-elitist populism, and none of the statements represented either *excluding* or *complete populism*. However, the amount of statements including a critique of ‘the elite’ was relatively high in that case (66%). Taking into consideration the context (elections in 2015 and the post-election period of 2016–2017) of the statements covered by the media, the findings are not surprising: attacking political opponents is one of the classic strategies employed in such circumstances.

Journalists as Originators of Populist Messages

Journalists appeared to be the type of speakers that generate the highest percentage of all statements in the media containing references to ‘the people’, ‘the elite’, or ‘out-groups’. The large number of journalists over the other categories of speakers is particularly visible in the conservative weeklies: *Do Rzeczy* and *W Sieci*. In both cases, journalists’ statements containing at least one element of populist discourse accounted for over half of the total number of such statements presented in those titles (the total number of statements containing at least one element of populist discourse in a given newspaper is given in Table 3.2 next to the name of the newspaper).

Moreover, the statements by journalists constituted almost half of the statements in such titles as *Newsweek* and *Polityka*. Slightly less (about 30–40%) statements could be found in the dailies: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Nasz Dziennik* and *Fakt* (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5. Journalists' statements including at least one indicator of populist discourse per media organization

Media organization	Journalists' statements	
	n	%
<i>Gazeta Wyborcza</i> (N=321)	115	35.8
<i>Rzeczpospolita</i> (N=317)	114	36.0
<i>Fakt</i> (N=151)	61	40.4
<i>Nasz Dziennik</i> (N=148)	48	32.4
<i>Polityka</i> (N=452)	222	49.1
<i>W Sieci</i> (N=425)	256	60.2
<i>Do Rzeczy</i> (N=149)	93	62.4
<i>Newsweek</i> (N=295)	143	48.5
TOTAL (N=2258)	1052	46.6

Source: Own elaboration.

The results clearly show that regardless of the actual number of statements containing at least one element of populist discourse in individual press titles (N), a higher percentage of such statements formulated by journalists can be observed in weeklies (*Polityka*, *W sieci*, *Do Rzeczy*, and *Newsweek*) than in dailies (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Fakt*, and *Nasz Dziennik*). Furthermore, the frequency of such statements is higher in right-wing weeklies, such as *W sieci* and *Do Rzeczy* (more than 60% of all populist statements in a given title). Among dailies, the highest frequency of statements (with at least one indicator of populist discourse) by journalists was found in the tabloid *Fakt* (about 40%), which confirms previous observations regarding the predilection of tabloid journalism towards media populism (Krämer, 2014, pp. 49–50; Mudde, 2007, p. 249).

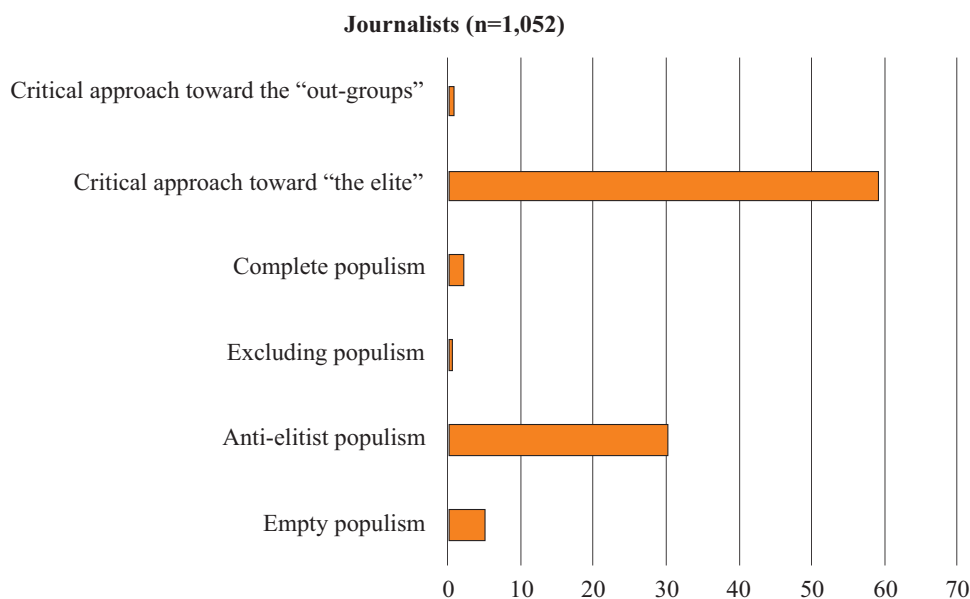
Interestingly, quality daily press in Poland (the centre-left *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the centre-right *Rzeczpospolita*, and the Catholic-nationalist *Nasz Dziennik*), regardless of differences in their political orientations, shared a similar percentage of messages including at least one element of populist discourse formulated directly by journalists (32–36%, see Table 3.2).

However, not all the statements including at least one indicator of populist discourse are in fact populist, according to the Jager and Walgrave's (2007) concept (see chapter 1 and chapter 2 for more details). Therefore, we traced which elements of that discourse, as well as types of populism were most frequently presented in the print media by political actors and/or journalists. Figure 3.2 presents the findings on the frequency of particular indicators of populist discourse in journalists' statements (i.e. reference to 'the people', anti-elitism, or exclusion of 'out-groups'), as well as combinations of these indicators, constituting *empty populism*, *anti-elitist populism*, *excluding populism* and *complete populism*.

Findings show that a majority of the journalists' statements (59%) included just a criticism toward 'the elite' without any reference to 'the people', while 30% of the

statements represented the *anti-elitist populism*. At the same time, hardly any statements included a reference to ‘out-groups’ or indicators of the excluding populism (0.5 and 0.7%, respectively). Interestingly, only a small amount of the statements (5%) included an indicator of the *empty populism*, that is just a reference to ‘the people’.

Figure 3.2. Presence of indicators of populist discourse and types of populism in journalists’ statements (%)



Source: Own elaboration.

In the next step of our analysis, we identified all journalist speakers who were mentioned by name in the articles under study. In this way we determined the identity of 313 journalists and their activity in terms of formulating statements containing at least one element of populist discourse in the analyzed press titles. As a result, we made a ranking of journalists from the various papers who most frequently published statements containing a reference to ‘the people’, a critique of ‘the elite’, or the exclusion of ‘out-groups’. Percentages presented in Table 3.6 were calculated as the ratio of such statements by a given journalist (n) to the total number of such statements from all journalists in that newspaper.

Table 3.6. Journalists as sources of statements including at least one indicator of populist discourse

Name and surname	Affiliation (media outlet)	N of statements	% of a journalist’s statements per number of statements in the media outlet
1	2	3	4
Krystyna Grzybowska	<i>W sieci</i>	25	10
Tomasz Lis	<i>Newsweek</i>	25	17

1	2	3	4
Stanisław Tym	<i>Polityka</i>	20	9
Rafał Ziemkiewicz	<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	18	19
Bronisław Wildstein	<i>W sieci</i>	17	6
Piotr Semka	<i>Do Rzeczy</i>	17	18
Jacek Karnowski	<i>W sieci</i>	15	6
Janina Paradowska	<i>Polityka</i>	15	7
Piotr Skwieciński	<i>W sieci</i>	15	6
Rafał Kalukin	<i>Polityka</i>	15	7

Source: Own elaboration.

The group of analyzed journalists included 10 authors with the highest total number of statements that contained at least one indicator of populist discourse, regardless of the number of publications in a given newspaper or the total number of statements coming from journalists in a given newspaper. The total number of 10 journalists who wrote under their names (185) comprised 17% of all statements by journalists (1,052).¹

It is worth noting that the applied method of selection of cases for in-depth analysis again confirms the high level of activity of journalists representing the right-wing weeklies, with 6 out of 10 journalists on our list. The remainder represented the centre-left *Polityka* and centre *Newsweek*. Importantly, the method of selection virtually excluded journalists of the daily press, and therefore in our further analysis we will deal with opinion journalists whose job is mainly to interpret and comment on various political events.

In order to better understand the obtained results of content analysis of the statements from the selected journalists in Table 3.3, it is best to present their biographies. Krystyna Grzybowska, Bronisław Wildstein, Jacek Karnowski, and Piotr Skwieciński represent the conservative weekly *W sieci*, with Jacek Karnowski acting as the editor-in-chief. It needs to be emphasized here that Bronisław Wildstein and Jacek Karnowski had not only been print press journalists, with B. Wildstein previously working for state-owned radio and TV stations (and as the CEO of National Polish Television, TVP, in 2006–2007), and J. Karnowski also working for the national TV broadcaster TVP and conservative television channel TV Plus.

Tomasz Lis is a press, radio and television journalist. He has hosted his original programs broadcast by public and commercial channels. Currently, he is the editor-in-chief of the liberal weekly *Newsweek*. His comments and columns have been frequently published in other press titles: *Polska The Times* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Janina Paradowska, a respected veteran journalist, had been a columnist in the liberal-left weekly *Polityka* since the early 1990s until her death in 2016. Rafał Kalukin is also a political journalist of this newspaper, also publishing in other weeklies: right-

¹ It is worth noting that during the coding process it turned out that in some of the texts their authors did not disclose their names and surnames. Several variants of this type of situation were identified. First of all, the articles were not signed at all. Secondly, the articles were signed collectively by indicating the affiliation, i.e. the editorial board. Thirdly, the articles were signed individually, but not by name, but only by affiliation. In the entire sample of coded journalist statements containing at least one element of the populist discourse, i.e. a reference to 'the people', criticism of 'the elite' or exclusion of 'others', 27 such cases were recorded, which constituted 2.5% of all such statements coming directly from journalists.

wing *Wprost* and liberal *Newsweek*. He has collaborated with the centre-liberal daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Stanisław Tym, a columnist of *Polityka*, is a renowned satirist, actor, comedian and director.

Rafał Ziemkiewicz and Piotr Semka are columnists of the conservative-liberal weekly *Do Rzeczy*, with notable experience in press, radio and television journalism. Materials by R. Ziemkiewicz have been published in papers with various socio-political profiles (*Wprost*, *Newsweek*, *Polityka*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Przewodnik Katolicki*), and articles by P. Semka were mostly published by papers preferring right-wing, conservative, and Catholic views, such as: *Rzeczpospolita*, *Gazeta Polska*, *Przewodnik Katolicki*, *Uważam Rze*, and *W Sieci*.

The most crucial point for the research was to diagnose the most frequent elements of populist discourse in the statements of the aforementioned journalists. During the coding of particular articles, attention was paid to all references from the previously selected categories, namely: ‘the people’, ‘the elite’, and ‘out-groups’. Similarly, as in chapter 2, we found some of these elements in isolation or in combination, indicating the presence of one of the types of populism: *empty populism*, *anti-elitist populism*, *excluding populism*, or *complete populism* (see also chapter 1). Table 3.7 presents the percentage distribution of the presence of particular elements of discourse or types of populism in the total number of coded statements of a given journalist.

Table 3.7. Frequency of indicators of populist discourse in statements made by selected journalists (%)

Name and surname (number of populist statements)	Empty populism	Criticism toward elite	Negative approach to the out-groups	Anti-elitist populism	Excluding populism	Complete populism
Krystyna Grzybowska – <i>W sieci</i> (n=25)	70	92	16	70	8	4
Tomasz Lis – <i>Newsweek</i> (n=25)	44	96	4	36	4	4
Stanisław Tym (n=20)	20	95	0	15	0	0
Rafał Ziemkiewicz – <i>Do Rzeczy</i> (n=18)	72	94	16	66	16	11
Bronisław Wildstein – <i>W sieci</i> (n=17)	41	94	6	35	6	6
Piotr Semka – <i>Do Rzeczy</i> (n=17)	23	100	12	23	0	0
Jacek Karnowski – <i>W sieci</i> (n=15)	80	93	13	73	6	6
Janina Paradowska – <i>Polityka</i> (n=15)	40	100	0	40	0	0
Piotr Skwieciński – <i>W sieci</i> (n=15)	40	93	0	33	0	0
Rafał Kalukin – <i>Newsweek</i> (n=15)	46	100	6	46	6	6

Source: Own elaboration.

The data presented in Table 3.7 indicates that the statements by journalists were dominated by elements of criticism directed at ‘the elite’ (without reference to ‘the

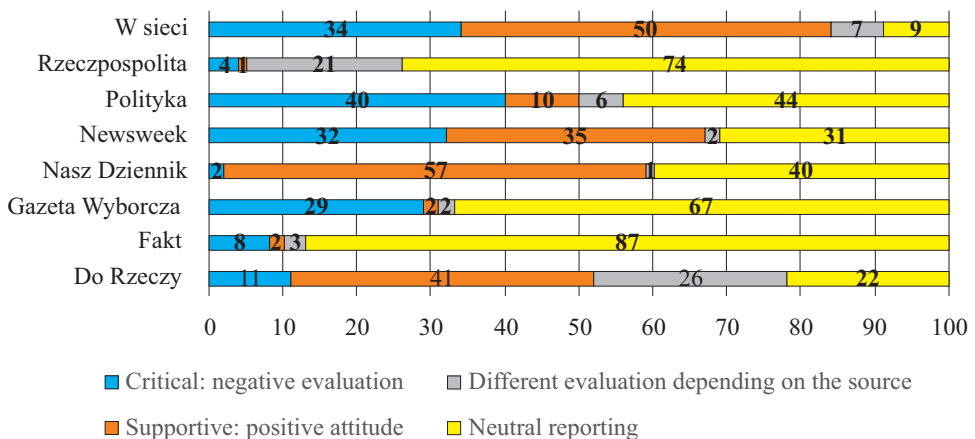
people'): over 90% of the statements of all the surveyed journalists contained this element. Interestingly, in the case of several right-wing weekly journalists (K. Grabowska, R. Ziemkiewicz and J. Karnowski), there was also a high percentage of statements containing indicators of anti-elitist populism. Moreover, the same authors were distinguished by a high rate of statements containing only references to 'the people' (*empty populism*). As a result, the picture of politics presented by these journalists in right-wing newspapers created the impression of a constant confrontation between two opposing worlds: 'the people' and 'the elite'.

Much less common in the statements of journalists were references to 'out-groups' or indicators of excluding populism and complete populism. The only exception was Rafał Ziemkiewicz – a conservative journalist of the right-wing weekly *Do Rzeczy*, with a dozen or so percent of his statements including these two types of populism.

Journalists as Interpreters of Populist Statements

Our study showed that Polish journalists do not only play a role of originator of populist statements in the news media, but also a role of interpreter. However, as Figure 3.3 presents, journalists from particular media organizations differed significantly from the others in that matter. Namely, journalists working for daily newspapers such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, and *Fakt* preferred a neutral reporting over evaluation of populist statements provided by other speakers. On the other hand, journalists from two right-wing, conservative media organizations: *Do Rzeczy* and *Nasz Dziennik* most frequently supported populist statements made by other speakers. The highest percentage of critical approach (around 30–40% of all the attitudes) was found in four news media organizations: a right-wing weekly magazine *W sieci*, and three more liberal-oriented media outlets: a daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* and two weekly magazines: *Polityka* and *Newsweek*. The media outlets with the highest percentage of different evaluations depending on who was

Figure 3.3. Journalists' attitudes towards populist statements per media outlet (%)



Source: Own elaboration.

the speaker (a source of populist statement) were two conservative media organizations: *Do Rzeczy* and *Rzeczpospolita*.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to determine who was the main source of statements containing at least one element of populist discourse (and populist statements in particular) in the Polish print press. Although political actors were ‘usual suspects’ here, journalists appeared to be the main source of statements referring to ‘the people’, criticizing ‘the elite’, or excluding ‘out-groups’. Still, political actors were the source of almost one third of all such statements covered by the media: their statements, containing at least one element of populist discourse, constituted almost 28% of the total, i.e. more than ¼ of all speakers’ statements of this type. Political actors, whose statements contained at least one element of populist discourse, were the most frequently reported by all the studied papers, and were the politicians of the PiS party: Jarosław Kaczyński, Andrzej Duda, and Beata Szydło. The statements of political actors reported by the media (in general and these particular persons) were focused mostly on a criticism of ‘the elite’ and emphasizing a dichotomy between ‘the people’ and ‘the elite’.

Based on the literature on roles of the media in populist political communication, as well as on the previous studies on journalist role performance in Poland, we assumed that Polish media would actively participate in populist political communication. We assumed that journalists would not only play the role of gatekeepers (disseminating the statements made by other speakers) but also originators and interpreters of populist messages. It has been confirmed by findings on media coverage of populist statements, the journalists’ attitudes toward populist statements made by other speakers, and on a populist statements generated by journalists themselves.

In comparison with other analyzed media organizations, *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Fakt* showed the highest percentage (42.7% and 38.4%, respectively) of politicians’ statements containing at least one element of populist discourse out of the total number of such statements published in the newspaper. What they also shared was a relatively strong tendency to rather neutrally report on the populist statements than employ any active approach towards them. Still, journalists from *Gazeta Wyborcza* were among those who quite often criticized populist statements they covered.

Other newspapers employed different strategies toward populist statements made by other speakers. For example, journalists in *Rzeczpospolita* were mostly focused on a neutral dissemination of populist statements of political actors, while journalists working for such media organizations as *Nasz Dziennik*, *Do Rzeczy*, or *W sieci* predominantly supported such statements. *Do Rzeczy* was also the media organization where journalists’ attitude toward the populist statements varied the most, depending on whose statements journalists covered in their publications.

It is worth emphasizing that in the analyzed materials, it was journalists who were the most frequent source of statements containing at least one element of populist discourse. They constituted nearly 47% of all coded speakers. However, most of their messages included just a critical attitude towards ‘the elite’ (without any reference to

'the people'). Significantly, journalists' statements containing at least one element of populist discourse were most often presented in the weekly press, regardless of their socio-political affiliations: most statements containing indicators of populist discourse were published both in the liberal-left weekly *Polityka* and the conservative weekly *W sieci*. Our results supported also observations made in other countries regarding the predisposition of tabloid journalism toward media populism (Krämer, 2014, pp. 49–50; Esser et al., p. 373), but in the case of *Fakt* it was the populism *through* the media, not populism *by* the media.

Determining the identity of journalists whose statements were most frequently published allowed us to notice that in the vast majority of cases, they were published by their primary media organizations (although most of them also published their materials in other media organizations) and these were mostly right-wing journalists from conservative right-wing papers such as *W sieci* and *Do Rzeczy*. Additionally, journalists of that type of the media outlets were the most engaged in evaluating populists statement made by other speakers and their evaluations depended on who the speaker was. In other words, they did not seem to have a clear attitude toward populist discourse as such, but a clear bias toward the sources of populist statements.

Once we compare political actors and journalists as originators of the populist statements we can notice similarities and differences. What these two groups share is a prevalence of criticism toward 'the elite', followed by *anti-elitist populism* in the statements included in the media coverage of the Polish politics. What differs them is a stronger tendency among political actors than journalists to refer to 'the people' and 'out-groups', as well employing the excluding populism in the statements.

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