

Journalists and politicians in television interviews after elections: A redefinition of roles?



Bartosz Hordecki

ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ, POLAND

Dorota Piontek

ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY IN POZNAŃ, POLAND

ABSTRACT: According to the canons of liberal democracy, both political and media systems constitute two spheres which strongly interact but still are separated and fulfill different aims. The actors belonging to these spheres play specific social roles, due to sets of rules called (respectively) the logic of politics and media logic. Politicians are supposed to create and reshape the world gaining electorate support while the media should show, explain and interpret the world in a way that attracts its audience. The two are expected to compete inside their spheres but not with each other. Today, however, the mediatization of politics and politicization of the media have changed the relationship between politicians and journalists. The aim of the article is to describe the phenomenon of redefinition of roles of the main actors of political communication, using content analysis of television political interviews during an election campaign. Elections create a special situation of mutual interdependence of the two entities as well as the need to achieve their specific goals. The authors weigh up whether the changing formula of TV interviews is an element of a broader phenomenon of competition and trial of taking up control in the process of political communication or just incidental behavior typical for the time of an election.

KEYWORDS: political interview, journalism, coverage of politics, journalist-politician relations



INTRODUCTION

According to the canons of liberal democracy, both political and media systems constitute two spheres which strongly interact despite being separate and fulfilling different purposes. The actors who belong to these two spheres play specific social roles, acting according to sets of rules called political logic and media logic, respectively. Politicians are supposed to create and reshape the world, thereby gaining the electorate's support, while the media should show, explain and interpret the world

in a way that attracts an audience. The two are expected to compete inside their spheres but not with each other. Today, however, the mediatization of politics and politicization of the media have changed the relationship between politicians and journalists.

An issue of overlap politics and the media is as old as the history of communication. However, models of cooperation or competition between the representatives of these two spheres are not constant. Such models change along with the development of new forms of exchanging ideas as well as are influenced by economic and cultural transformations. Moreover, it has been proven many times that discourse on links between the two spheres — politics and the media — has to be reductive and results in creating an illusion of separate realms, whose elements very seldom hybridize. In the field of empirical research aimed at examining and revising the illusion mentioned above, important credit should be given to Timothy Cook. In the book *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution* (1998), he made an effort to “develop, clarify and refine a new model of the reporter as a key participant in decision making and policy making and of the news media as a central political force in government.” For that reason he tried to build “an empirical theory of the news media as a political institution that will bring together growing literatures: on the internal structures of news organization; on the development of press offices in every branch of government and every level of government; on the relationships of governmental officeholder and journalists inside and outside of the newsbeat system; and on the direct and indirect ways in which official federal policies and practices have, both historically and today, accommodated, regulated, and (above all) subsidized the news” (p. 3). What is important, the author warned against researchers’ unreasonable personalization and psychologization concerning the mixed worlds of politics and media. In his opinion: “Far too many observers succumb to the temptation to access the ongoing negotiation of newsworthiness between the news media and of political actors via studies of individual journalists interacting with individual politicians.” What is more, “the actions of political actors and of journalists in the United States are contingent upon the roles they occupy within their respective political and social systems, and the resultant rewards and sanctions to particular behaviors. In particular, when reporters make choices on who and what to cover and how to cover it, these choices are governed less by personal values prior to becoming a journalist or by their placement within the social structure as a whole than by a *logic of appropriateness* based on their professional and craft-related roles as journalists” (p. 61). As a result, he argued, further explorations should concentrate on discovering models which are used by political and media actors to organize their mutual relations: “media strategies become increasingly useful means for political actors to pursue governance — and become an increasing focus for their attention and their activities — as the disjuncture between the power of those actors and the expectations placed on them grows” (p. 118).

The aim of the paper is to describe the phenomenon of redefinition of roles played by the main actors of political communication, using content and discourse analysis of televised political interviews broadcast after election campaigns. Elections create a special situation of mutual interdependence between the two parties, as well as the need to achieve their specific goals. The authors examine whether the changing formula of television interviews is an element of a broader phenomenon of competition and an attempt at taking control in the process of political communication, or just incidental behavior.

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN MODERN DEMOCRACIES

The significance of the media in the political process is indisputable. The media “monitor” and control the activity of every public institution, including, first and foremost, the activities of politicians and officials who represent the executive and legislative powers. In politicians’ perception the media, while not free of weaknesses and dependent on numerous factors that affect their operation, are basically seen as autonomous, strong and influential. Therefore, the projections of what journalistic reports are going to be like, of their content and general overtone impact on politicians’ behavior. The relations between politicians and the media in a democratic system are dynamic and depend on current conditions, such as the election calendar.

The importance of the media in traditionally understood political communication is great enough to make some researchers treat them as political institutions that play a decisive political role and are part of the process of governance along with political parties and interest groups (Esser et al., 2001). News media are not independent, unaffiliated observers covering political affairs from the outside, because as a link between political actors and citizens, the media facilitate communication between the three powers and make possible “governing through publicity.” Political leaders and other political actors adapt certain media strategies that are rooted in the logic of the media, and by this token journalistic standards are allowed to influence the process of governance. The media cannot be treated as separate individual institutions, but rather as a single institution. The processes of news generation and developing news content are sufficiently similar throughout all the media to justify treating them as a collective institution (Esser et al., 2001, p. 21).

Blumler and Kavanagh claim that the transformations of societies and the media have significantly impacted the shape of political communication in modern democracy (1999, p. 209). The content, participants, principles, standards, values and interests of political communication have been transformed. It is fair to say that modern practice has considerably diverged from earlier ideas of what political communication should be and what contribution it should bring to the democratic system. The authors identify seven trends in the post-war environment of political communication that this system has both responded to and co-created, namely:

modernization, individualization, secularization, economization, aesthetization, rationalization, and mediatization (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, pp. 210–211). They have contributed to the evolution of political communication and its transition to the third era, described as “the proliferation of the main means of communication, media abundance, ubiquity, reach, and celebrity” (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, p. 213). Television in particular offers 24-hour news services, mixing political information with commentary and interviews, while lacking time for reflection and in-depth debate. Increasingly more professional politicians and their advisors are adapting to the new rules of presenting information as they are aware of the ever more cut-throat competition where a journalist also becomes a competitor. The phenomena and processes of the third age bear consequences for the relations between all the participants of the process of political communication, and particularly between its institutional participants.

Media coverage of politics is subjected to structural transformations that result from ongoing commercialization, even hypercommercialization of the media (Plasser, 2005, p. 47). One of the main trends involves the deterioration of journalistic standards on the one hand, and the increasingly skillful influence politicians exert on the media. Increasingly journalists are perceived as participating in politics, in particular during election campaigns. The coverage of politics and commenting ceases to be their main purpose. More and more frequently they focus on the analysis of their own role and their relations with politicians. Instead of interpreting facts and events, journalists interpret the intentions and motivations of political actors. They reduce the complicated matter of politics to personal competition and assume an openly critical, or even admonishing and patronizing, attitude towards politicians (Hordecki & Piontek, 2011; Piontek, 2011).

The emergence of round-the-clock television news stations has intensified contacts between politicians and the media, as well as changed the nature of these relations. The constant presence of politicians, both in their official roles, but also as public and private individuals (Corner, 2000, p. 392), on television screens, in the press, including tabloids, and on the Internet means they gain the status of celebrities (West & Orman, 2002; Street, 2004). This means that their public existence, and consequently their political prosperity, depends on their popularity, reminiscent of that enjoyed by the representatives of show business. Their media visibility is becoming an indicator of success and facilitates a peculiar parasocial interaction with the recipients of political messages (Horton & Wohl, 1956). What becomes a problem, however, is standing out among the crowd of other claimants for the hearts and minds of voters.

The process of celebrityization does not spare journalists, either. Recognizability that stems from their expressiveness, among other factors, is a measure of their individual success and translates into profits for their editors. News services and political commentary programmes are currently subject to the same pressure of profitability as entertainment shows are. This means that a political journalist begins to

care for viewership, which results from how attractive his programme is, similar to a talk show. Current standards of journalistic activity and the criteria that define their role have therefore changed.

Election time marks a period of particularly intense contacts between politicians and journalists. It is worth noting that generally during this specific period the position of journalists is much better than between electoral campaigns. Politicians care about their presence in the media more than usual, which makes them more willing to accept the invitations and topics suggested by the anchors. This is not to mean, however, that politicians fail to take the opportunity to impose their own agenda regardless of the expectations voiced by journalists. Participating in a discussion or giving an interview provide exceptionally advantageous conditions to present oneself in the desired way and generate the coveted image. The professionalization of political communication, as understood by Holtz-Bacha (2002), signifies individualization, personalization and the possibility as well as the ability to choose the most efficient communication strategy exercised by politicians and/or their advisors.

THE ROLE OF INTERVIEW IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

The interview still remains the most popular form of political journalism. According to Voltmer and Brants (2011, p. 127) “the political interview appears like a conversation between two — sometimes more — participants who are engaged in discussing political issues of the day. However, it follows a set of rules and norms that sets it apart from any other form of interpersonal exchange where people talk about political [...] matters.” In their opinion, this set of rules comprises the following elements: the predominance of the logic of the media over the logic of politics, a clear definition of roles and the principles of how to perform them, the absence of the actual recipient in the conversation, and a staged performance (Voltmer & Brants, pp. 128–130). All these properties are changing along with the transformation of the relations between the media and politicians that is the product of two fundamental factors: technology and commercial success. Commercial success in the perception of politicians is obviously not identical to how the media see it. This concerns the way of thinking and the adopted quantitative criteria of success, which in the case of politicians means the number of votes allowing politicians to stay in power, which they understand as the ability to run public affairs and achieve an individual’s interest rather than implement a vision of holistic social advancement. The progress in mass communications technology has given politicians independence from journalists to an extent that seemed impossible only a few years ago. One of the main consequences of the professionalization of political communication has been the politicians’ management of the media, which has produced an utterly new situation for the journalists who were not prepared for it. This has resulted in frustration, manifested, among other things, by focusing on their own relations with

politicians rather than analyzing current political events. Such emotions are also observable in the manner in which the conventional forms of political journalism, including interviews, are exercised.

In its primary sense, an interview is typically a conversation between two individuals: an interviewer and an interviewee. The former asks questions in order to obtain information from the latter. It is expected in political interviews that the questions should concern current, or currently significant political matters, and the interviewee should answer in a competent manner that will be understandable to the viewer. The role of the journalist should be to ask such questions as will enable the viewer to get the general idea and follow political developments without special preparation. Such a convention facilitates the viewers' understanding of the communication situation: the one asking questions is the journalist acting on behalf of the viewers, whereas the one who answers the questions is the politician, who tries not only to explain but also to promote his standpoint. The questions asked are assumed to concern important matters, since the journalist has selected them from among many others that could be discussed with his guest.

The conversation is shaped by a number of factors which can be divided into those concerning the personality, situation and system. The interlocutors' personalities, temperaments and their mutual personal relations play a prominent role in the first group of factors. It is no secret that their jobs require journalists and politicians to stay in frequent touch, which allows them to develop personal ties, likes and dislikes. Politicians have their favorites among journalists and vice versa. Interpersonal relations play a significant role in an interview, in asking questions and insisting on obtaining an answer to a journalist's question. The situational factors include the subject of the interview and the current political situation, which influences the atmosphere of the conversation. They also concern the location of the interview, the current psychophysical disposition of the participants, their specific goals and the news editor's expectations. Finally, the system factor involves the type of political culture of communication (Pfetsch, 2004) that dominates in the relations between politicians and journalists in a given country.

This paper concentrates on one of the situational factors, namely elections. It has already been mentioned that elections are believed to influence the intensity and frequency of interviews. The researchers are not interested in the subject matter of the interviews as much, although it is significant for the interactions between the interlocutors. The interviews are not analyzed from the sociolinguistic perspective, either. What is of interest here, is the matter of exercising control over the conversation being held, and the fulfillment of the roles which are clearly identified in interviews. Watching the interviews of Polish journalists with politicians one can get the impression that the interviews are a kind of battle where either side tries to achieve its own goals and frequently abandons their assigned role. For example, the journalist's discussion with the opinions of the interviewed politician does not actually serve the purpose of acting as a watchdog but rather that of demonstrating

the politician's lack of arguments, incompetence, or merely allows the journalist to present a standpoint he favors. It also happens that the guests assume the role of interviewer and ask questions of journalists. These are mostly rhetorical questions intended to undermine journalists' competence or demonstrate their bias.

MEDIA AND POLITICS: THE CASE OF POLAND

Relations between politicians and journalists are sometimes analyzed in terms of Bourdieu's theory (Piontek, 2011, p. 154). In his concept, the field of journalism and that of politics are mutually related and intertwined. Consequently, journalists and politicians, who are doomed to each other, have to cooperate. This cooperation, however, is always involuntary and caused by the fact that each party has certain assets that are valuable for the other party. Therefore, relations between politicians and journalists constantly have to be tense, as both parties want to gain the most at the lowest expense. Consequently, the world of the media and the world of politics are suspicious and manipulative towards each other; they constantly try to wheedle the other party out of something while claiming their own self-sufficiency and dependence of the other party. Bourdieu observed that journalists owe their position in society to their monopoly of the instruments of "mass production and dissemination of information." At the same time, however, the field of journalism has a certain peculiarity, since it is significantly more dependent on external forces than all other fields of cultural production. It relies directly on demand and subjects itself to the verdicts of the market and polls probably to a greater extent than the field of politics does (Bourdieu, 1998). This produces a strong dependence of journalists on politicians, who generate events that are attractive for the media and decide who will be first to be notified about the situation, and who they are going to discuss this situation with in a manner that will be most desirable from the point of view of media standards. The representatives of the field of politics cannot bypass the media in reaching out to the electorate. Media institutions remain the most important and efficient platform to disseminate political images and initiatives. Hence the permanent competition of politicians to attract the attention of the media, which are in turn mostly, or rather exclusively, interested in what can be transformed into a commonly accessible and commonly desired product.

It should also be emphasized that the technological revolution intensifies the permeation of the realms of politics and the media (mediatization of politics and politicization of the media) (Brants & Siune, 1999; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011). Political and media actors meet each other more and more often and in increasingly diverse, frequently unprecedented, situations. This process results in a growing uncertainty of what standards are supposed to rule the interactions between the representatives of politics and the media. A consequence is the growing confusion of both journalists and politicians. It can be said that both in unofficial and official contacts between journalists and politicians there is a growing number of

interactions that drastically exceed the canons of liberal democracy. This means that the fields of politics and journalism lose their autonomy, while journalists and politicians ignore their different social roles and mutually adopt communication elements that used to be strictly related to the role of the other. The representatives of both these fields, however, continue to feel profound mistrust, which is rooted in their belief that the other party wants to dominate in their mutual relations. Therefore, every meeting of politics and the media is currently a competition that manifests itself overtly and covertly on different levels.

The nature of these tensions is very clearly exposed during televised interviews with politicians. Regardless of the political agenda, or the intensity of the political game, journalists and politicians approach an interview as a battle over time, subject matter and other elements of their encounter. The interviewer and interviewee are opponents who seek to gain advantage and win, or at least not to lose.

These assumptions are corroborated by detailed surveys, such as those conducted by Katrin Voltmer and Kees Brants.¹ These two researchers designed a key of codes that laid the ground for a set of questions used to conduct a similar analysis in Poland in the fall of 2011. Three political commentary programmes were compared: *Gość InfoDziennika* (TVP Info), *Kropka nad i* (TVN24), and *Rozmowa dnia* (Superstacja).² The research was conducted after the parliamentary elections (in the period from 14 to 20 October, 2011). Thirteen interviews were analyzed: four issues of *Gość InfoDziennika*, six issues of *Kropka nad i*, and three issues of *Rozmowa dnia*.

The results clearly show that Polish journalists and politicians, very similar to their British and Dutch counterparts, persistently try to demonstrate their superiority, which in their opinion should make their interlocutors more submissive. This claim is corroborated by the fact that the matter of control remains a significant issue for both parties not only during an election campaign, but later on as well. In

¹ The researchers compared how interviews are conducted in the British and Dutch media to conclude that there are significant cultural differences in this respect between these two countries. British journalists are more determined and offensive, whereas Dutch journalists are more frequently acquiescent. Despite these differences, though, Dutch politicians and journalists also use a variety of tools in order to gain more control over the time and subject matter of the conversation. Both Dutch and British interviews frequently follow a zero-one law of logic (either the journalist or the politician wins, they cannot both win) (Voltmer & Brants, 2011, pp. 126–145).

² All three are news channels. TVP Info is a public service television channel, whereas TVN24 and Superstacja are commercial enterprises. TVN24 has a significantly larger share in the market of news channels than Superstacja. The two channels are also distinctly different in terms of their image strategies. TVN wants to be perceived as a mainstream and prestigious channel that presents the point of view of entrepreneurial and ingenious people. When Superstacja entered the market it assumed the image of a television tabloid. Additionally, the programs broadcast by Superstacja quickly took on an unmasking and mocking tone. The journalists of Superstacja do not refrain from the role of representatives of society, which according to this channel is cheated and exploited by the elite. In the course of the research it was obviously ascertained that the relations between journalists and politicians are slightly different in each channel, which corresponds to the specific nature of each station. Here, however, these differences are ignored and the similarities are focused upon.

other words, the battle between journalists and politicians is waged constantly, and not only during a heated political game.

This is corroborated by the data collected after the analysis of exchanges ($n = 316/313$)³ that occurred in the research material:

- at the level of questions asked by the interviewer ($n = 316$)

- a transition to the next question less frequently ends in a natural manner (after the interviewee finishes his answer, without the interviewer interrupting) and is more frequently marked by an interruption (understood as a verbal attempt to stop the interviewee's statement); 106:190;

- over 10 per cent of responses to the answer are marked by its rejection, whereas nearly 30 per cent are neutral responses accompanied by attempts to clarify the answer;

- in an overwhelming majority of exchanges the interviewer did not focus on the substantive matter but adopted an institutional or personal perspective (the interviewee's own ambitions, his position inside the organization, or other plans); 32:171:108;

- almost half of the exchanges between interviewers and interviewees concerned the negotiation of the time and subject matter of the interview; additionally, 117 exchanges involving negotiations included the interviewer's demonstration of power — of his own role, while only 26 negotiation exchanges referred to the procedure (setting the rules, in particular with respect to time, demanding short answers, putting an arbitrary end to the interviewee's statement because the time for the interview is over);

- the proportion of non-confrontational questions to confrontational and highly confrontational ones was as follows: 161:101:48;

- manipulation/guiding questions (rhetorical devices enforcing a concrete answer, such as: but this means that...; wouldn't you agree that...; or questions with an element of assessment or suppositions, e.g.: how is your party dealing with this mess?) were relatively frequent (there were 124 neutral questions, whereas slightly leading, or highly leading questions amounted to as many as 67);

- on thirty-one occasions the tone of questions was aggressive and arrogant.

- at the level of answers given by the guest ($n = 313$)

- nearly 10 per cent of responses to the question involved questioning/challenging (e.g. this is not a question for me, I will answer that after I consult... etc.);

- only 40 responses concerned the subject matter (a given case, detailed policy, solution) whereas 165 and 104 responses concerned institutional and personal issues respectively (it is easy to notice that the number of responses concerned the subject matter (40) is slightly higher than the number of relevant questions; seemingly this fact can be interpreted in favor of the interviewees — people usually

³ According to Brants and Voltmer, exchange "is the immediate sequence of question and answer" (2011, p. 135).

answer questions, so an interviewer rather than an interviewee is responsible for the poor quality of an interview; but it also should be noticed that only in eight cases a politician independently decided to consider a matter on its merits; this means that there is a possibility that neither journalists nor politicians were interested in discussing important subjects);

— in 195 responses the time and subject matter of the interview were not negotiated, but in 117 cases they were (including 32 cases involving the demonstration of power, i.e. referring to one's knowledge, position, deprecation of the journalist's preparation, and 85 cases where procedure was referred to, i.e. setting the rules, interruption, enforcing/demanding more time to answer);

— on thirty-four occasions the tone of responses was aggressive and arrogant.

In an attempt to answer the question of why the political interview on television has formed and continues to develop as a confrontational, strongly combative genre, one could be satisfied with the trivial conclusion that competing for control over the time and subject matter of the conversation is an expression of one's fear of being dominated. In other words, in the field of politics and the media there are journalists and politicians who have clashing interests despite their mutual interdependence, and they struggle for control to achieve their respective interests to the full. The question remains, however, of what is the hidden force that polarizes the interests of journalists and politicians. As either party has some assets desired by the other, why has there emerged no mechanism allowing them to operate a fair exchange (the principle of fair trade in discussion). The question is then, why the players in the field of politics and the media have to be/aggressive, suspicious and manipulative towards one another?

The situation can be explained by referring to the so-called logic of the media and indicating that the more confrontational an interview is, the more attractive it becomes, and the conflict arises when the journalist plays the role of his interviewee's political opponent. The confrontation also intensifies when a politician suggests that he/she and his/her party are being attacked by journalists, that journalists are unfair, importunate, politically biased, subjective, and so on. The escalation of disputes between journalists and politicians could therefore be explained by a hypothesis of double collusion. Additionally, this collusion would be quite obvious: journalists pretend to be independent from politicians, and politicians pretend to be independent from journalists, although their onscreen encounter is more than once repeated and played out according to a similar scenario, evidencing that both parties, in a way, cooperate and fake their clashes.

The above explanation does not work, however, when trying to capture the motivation or intentions of experienced journalists and politicians who possess significant symbolic capital. A bitter confrontation is typically not required in an interview and serves neither party. What is more, an interview which is a clash creates a highly risky situation which could end in failure and a significant or even dramatic loss of prestige enjoyed by the political or media player in the eyes of the public and

his own professional circle. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of cases when both political and media actors go for bitter controversy.⁴ In Poland it is also hard to find a popular television political journalist whose political likes and dislikes are difficult to guess. Politicians are similar in failing to restrain themselves from eagerly pointing out which journalists they appreciate, or even intend to support, and who they cannot count on.

What's more, it needs to be said that political and media players do not only aim for personal conflicts during interviews, but they actively provoke such situations. This is easily observable in many political programmes, e.g. *Tomasz Lis na Żywo*.⁵ The analysis of the subject matter and the selection of guests/interlocutors indicate that for several years the host has been arranging discussions where he and his interlocutors convince the audience of acute polarization of the political stage and Polish society. This journalistic creation of the dichotomous image of reality is accompanied by an analogical process animated by political actors, i.e. stimulated polarization of the media. The current political and journalistic narration presents the media in Poland as divided into the "mainstream" media, which support the government, and particularly Prime Minister Donald Tusk and his party, the Civic Platform, and the so-called independent media, backing the opposition, in particular its presumed leader, Jarosław Kaczyński and his party. All this results in the politicization of the media where each participant is considered to support one of the two political groups, or even "two Polands."

Experienced political and media actors do not avoid risky disputes, which is sometimes explained by their unwillingness to redefine their roles. It is assumed that, having succeeded in their fields, renowned journalists or politicians get bored with their activity and stop focusing on themselves. They gather a team or teams of people around themselves instead and try to provide them with some framework in which to operate and develop. In this manner a relation of patron-customer emerges, where leading journalists and politicians act so that they increase the network of people who depend on them in return for a variety of services related to increasing social influence. A popular political and media actor becomes a persona then, a signboard gathering the groups of less popular players around. One can even talk about the emergence of certain political and media cliques surrounding the most

⁴ Two interviews stirred particular emotions in the latest elections campaign in Poland. In each case the politician who behaved insultingly towards the journalist observed a clear drop in sympathy of the audience, as evidenced by internet forums. The same was experienced by the journalist who decided to reveal his political sympathy. Cf. *Wywiad Tomasza Lisa z Jarosławem Kaczyńskim z dn. 3 października 2011 r.* (TVP 1, *Tomasz Lis na Żywo*); *Wywiad Jarosława Gugały z Adamem Hofmanem z dn. 5 października 2011 r.* (Polsat News, *Gość Wydarzeń*); M. Kowalczyk, *Pobłażliwy. Rozmowa z Jarosławem Gugałą, dyrektorem Pionu Informacji i Publicystyki Telewizji Polsat, Press*, 2012, no. 5, pp. 18–24; T. Lis, *Niezależny genetycznik*, Gala.pl, 3 April 2012.

⁵ The most popular political journalism programme in Poland with an average audience of 2,692,404 and SHR of 21.88 per cent (5.09.2011–4.06.2012), broadcast weekly by state-owned television and hosted by one of the most renowned political journalists.

popular journalists or politicians, which is in line with the progressing personalization that characterizes current political communication. A person who is the focus of such a circle offers a quality certificate, so to say, which either attracts or repels, depending on the tastes, preferences and former experience of the elite and society. In Poland, this phenomenon finds an excellent example in the aforementioned Tomasz Lis. Taking advantage of the symbolical capital he has gathered, Lis endorses numerous undertakings in different sectors of the media market, and he guarantees that they will focus the attention of other media and audience.⁶ His less popular co-workers compete for his trust, taking his offers and producing materials where they refer to their editor, quote his views, present arguments to support them and consequently multiply his presence in the public space.

The intention to increase one's own influence and construct a political and media circle around oneself, however, does not account for everything, the more so as the purpose is achieved by means of highly unsophisticated methods. Leading journalists who want to attract more viewers have to tabloidize their own messages and support the tabloidized messages of others. Politicians, in turn, give up numerous assumptions of their political platforms and focus on creating their image via populist activity. Although they generate the attention or sympathy of the audience, neither tabloidization nor populism is generally perceived as a positive process. They are treated as the betrayal of the journalistic or political ethos. They trigger widespread contempt for political and media circles, and the profession of politician or journalist is frequently described as manipulative. Such opinions clearly harm the personal dignity of politicians and journalists. Consequently, the representatives of these professions seek some justification for their activity, especially regarding its highly simplified version aimed at attracting the attention of a mass audience. This is particularly true with respect to the most prominent journalists, whose activity is not conditioned on their seeking subsistence. This means a battle for respect. It is only right to assume that a politician does not want to identify himself and be identified with a media product, and that a journalist does not want to be identified with the producer of cheap sensation. Fighting this battle, more and more often journalists and politicians abandon their roles. Such a redefinition of roles can be treated as an escape from an impression that one acts exclusively/mainly for profit (in the case of journalists) or exclusively/mainly for acclaim (in the case of politicians). Abandoning the roles is therefore an attempt to communicate something truly important, something one is convinced about.

One can venture to modify the concept of archeology of knowledge by Foucault, and assume that in modern political interviews neither the interviewer nor the

⁶ Tomasz Lis hosts a programme on state-owned television, which has the highest viewership in comparison to similar formats, he is also the editor-in-chief of Polish *Newsweek* and co-owner of an Internet project modeled after *The Huffington Post*.

interviewee want to be a journalist or politician anymore.⁷ They would prefer to assume the role of experts, or even authorities, who not only arouse sympathy, but first and foremost impress with their knowledge and wisdom.⁸ This makes interviews a part of political and media discursive practice which is a kind of a competition for the providers of statements deemed to be true or right. This competition takes place before the public, as well as colleagues and the court of the journalist's or politician's own consciousness. All the above mentioned participants of political and media discourse decide, or it is actually decided above their heads, whether a given author is going to be convinced that he provides ideas that are worthy of promoting.

Therefore, the archeology of political and media discourse is a project based on an assumption by Foucault that all the apparently irrelevant forces operating in the background turn out to be significant in explaining who is respected and approved within a given discursive community (Howarth, 2008, p. 96). This approach to the study of the tabloidization of political and media discourse opens a very interesting perspective, and inspires seeking all those attributes that are deeply believed by the participants in the political and media game to make somebody an expert/authority and give his statements a special status. There also emerges a field to seek answers to the question of how the category of an expert/authority evolves along with the

⁷ It should be underlined that despite numerous shortcomings of the theory of discourse that is referred to here, and despite the long years that have passed since its formulation, a number of its elements direct our attention to the key phenomena facilitating the understanding of how the civilization of the media advances. Howarth demonstrates that Foucault formulated two theories of discourse, first "the theory of discourse practices" and then the "genealogy of knowledge" which superseded the former. The latter theory emphasized the issues of discursive functioning of authority and so-called problematization. The shortcomings of the archeology of discourse, which were actually identified and criticized by Foucault himself, need to be borne in mind. For more cf. (Howarth, 2008, p. 101).

⁸ There are a lot of symptoms of that change which are seen inside as well as outside television political talks. Admittedly we've got a lack of systematic research in that field, but the initial analysis shows that journalists often use such expressions as "I'd like to explain to you what is *raison d'état*..." "In diplomacy it is that..." "Democracy means that...". Politicians also communicate with phrases which are instructive or reprimanding: "It seems you don't understand that... so I'm trying to explain to you...", "We should remember that...", "That's elementary knowledge..." "You are completely unprepared for this discussion..." "It works completely differently..." "According to my knowledge a book written by XY gives us a wrong interpretation of history..." Moreover, Polish journalists and politicians tend to publish books in which they try to explain and illuminate their readers what the essence of democracy, patriotism, appropriate philosophy of life, and proper interpretation of reality are. They are eager to give explanations of changes in contemporary society and to explain what is the political, economic, cultural, and social impact of development of new technologies. A growing penchant of both politicians and journalists for mutually reviewing their behavior is another sign of ambition to become an expert. Politicians more and more often publically evaluate journalists in terms of being good or bad, as well as admonish what standards of professional communication are. At the same time journalists openly estimate a politician's stand by trying to convince the public which political choice is responsible, reasonable, or justified. And last, but not least, politicians as well as journalists in Poland readily take the position of an academic lecturer and give many various workshops and courses.

expansion of political and media space, and how the indicators and symbols of being an expert/authority change. Adapting Foucault's ideas to the research into televised political interviews one can identify the thresholds that the statements uttered by a political journalist or politician need to pass in order to become acknowledged by the participants of the political and media realm as an accurate explanation of reality, an indication of the goals and motivations, e.g. activity in domestic policy or the conditions determining the development of modern international relations.

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of the research into political and media discourse discussed in this paper, including televised political interviews, is therefore related to the answer to the question of how serious statements and serious players emerge in this field. Further analyses should thus seek the internal and external rules of media and political discourses while assuming their obviously changeable and accidental nature. Such a study should place emphasis on what stabilizes media discourse, including such factors as the title, the kind of medium, viewership, and the manner of presentation. What is also important are the criteria to deem a message to be prestigious, or to assume that a given interpretation is accurate, right, justified, and worthy of attention and dissemination. The following elements are also of significance: indicators of the believability or implausibility of the senders of the message and its content, outrageous behavior of discourse participants, which can cause indignation or be an expression of justified indignation. A scandalous statement can be caused by one's desire to appall other discourse participants or observers, which is intended to increase one's media visibility. However, it can also be an intentional provocation aimed at the improvement of the quality of discourse and the pursuit of truth, in line with the assumptions of liberalism.

In the research into the matter of control over an interview, the method of Brants and Voltmer was used, along with their concept and manner of measuring interviews. The method is interesting, yet on the basis of the results it produces it is difficult to make conclusions with respect to communication cultures and differences between them. Nevertheless, it allows conclusions to be drawn on who is in control of the conversation, if two variables, time and subject matter, are taken into consideration. Like every quantitative method, this one also does not allow the motives of participants to be determined. In particular, this concerns the motives stemming from a model of the profession adopted and exercised by the journalist or politician. The Polish interviews under analysis do not seem to indicate that there is any particular model of a profession of journalist. Journalists always declare that their purpose is to monitor political institutions and represent the interests of citizens in terms of information. The latter is actually the most frequent excuse used when journalists are accused of the personalization of politics, by focusing on politicians' personal relations, controversial statements,

or trivial subjects with a huge potential of attracting attention. Journalists claim to implement the doctrine of social responsibility, but it seems that their activities are inspired by two main motivations: commercial motivation (viewership) and involvement. The latter is highly personal and means that journalists are not inspired by institutional entities (e.g. political parties or their own editors) but by the need to express their own views, which results either from their social ties or conformism towards their own political circle. Strongly polarized politics is one of the factors of strong politicization among journalists which influences their instrumentalization on the one hand and politicization of the media on the other (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011). Generally political journalists working in Warsaw are said to be divided into two groups: right-wing (as described by the journalists themselves) and “mainstream” (as named by the journalists from the former group). The notion of “mainstream” is intended by the representatives of the first group to be derogatory and signify tight cooperation with the politicians from the ruling coalition, or rather offering them overt support.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The paper is sponsored from a research grant by the National Science Center N N116318139.

REFERENCES

- Blumler, J.G., Kavanagh, D. (1999). The third age of political communication. Influences and features. *Political Communication*, 16 (3), pp. 209–230.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *On Television and Journalism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Brants, K., Siune, K. (1999). Politicization in decline? In: McQuail, D., Siune, K. (eds.). *Media Policy, Convergence, Concentration and Commerce*. London: Sage.
- Brants, K., Voltmer, K. (eds.) (2011). *Political Communication in Postmodern Democracy. Challenging the Primacy of Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cook, T. (1998). *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Corner, J. (2000). Mediated persona and political culture. Dimensions of structure and process. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 5, pp. 386–402.
- Dobek-Ostrowska, B. (2011). *Polski system medialny na rozdrożu. Media w polityce. Polityka w mediach*. [Polish Media System at a Crossroads. Media in Politics. Politics in Media]. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Esser, F., Pfetsch, B. (eds.) (2004). *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Esser, F., Reinemann, C., Fan, D. (2001). Spin doctors in the United States, Great Britain, and Germany: Metacommunication about media manipulation. *Press/Politics*, 6 (1), pp. 16–45.
- Foucault, M. (2002). *Archeologia wiedzy* [The Archeology of Knowledge]. Warszawa: De Agostini.
- Holtz-Bacha, C. (2002). Professionalization of political communication. The case of the 1998 SPD campaign. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 1 (4), pp. 23–37.
- Hordecki, B., Piontek, D. (2011). Tabloidyzacja czy tabloidyżacje telewizyjnych programów informacyjnych?. *Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne*, 2, pp. 19–32.

- Horton, D., Wohl, R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction. Observations on intimacy at a distance. In: Rojek, C. (ed.). *Celebrity. Critical Concepts in Sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Howarth, D. (2008). *Dyskurs*. Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.
- Pfetsch, B. (2004). From political culture to political communication culture: A theoretical approach to comparative analysis. In: Esser, F., Pfetsch, B. (eds.). *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Piontek, D. (2011). *Komunikowanie polityczne i kultura popularna. Tabloidyzacja informacji o polityce* [Political Communication and Popular Culture. Tabloidization of News on Politics]. Poznań: Wyd. WNPiD UAM.
- Plasser F. (2005). From hard to soft news standards? How political journalists in different media systems evaluate the shifting quality in news. *Press/Politics*, 10 (2), pp. 47–68.
- Rojek, C. (ed.) (2010). *Celebrity. Critical Concepts in Sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Street, J. (2004). Celebrity politicians: Popular culture and political representation. *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 6, pp. 435–452.
- Voltmer, K., Brants, K. (2011). A question of control: Journalists and politicians in political broadcast interviews. In: Brants, K., Voltmer, K. (eds.). *Political Communication in Postmodern Democracy. Challenging the Primacy of Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- West, D., Orman, J. (2002). *Celebrity Politics*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.