Gender and LGBTQ Issues in Election Processes

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Chapter 8

Discourse on LGBTQ issues in the Polish presidential campaign (2020)

The perception of the LGBTQ community and foreign media

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Introduction

The second round of voting in the presidential election in Poland took place on July 12, 2020. Andrzej Duda – incumbent from the ruling party, Law and Justice (PiS) – got 51.03% of votes and was re-elected president, while Rafał Trzaskowski – mayor of Warsaw from the largest opposition coalition (Civic Coalition) – got 48.97% of votes (National Electoral Commission, 2020). The campaign was observed not only by voters, but also by foreign and domestic experts. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2020) in "Special Election Assessment Mission Final Report" pointed out that "the campaign was characterised by negative and intolerant rhetoric further polarizing an already adversarial political environment" (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2020, p. 1). Attention was also paid to the campaign coverage. It was concluded that the coverage was politically divided and that "the TVP [Polish Television; a public service broadcaster] failed in its legal duty to provide balanced and impartial coverage," because it supported the incumbent (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2020, p. 20). Moreover, before the second round of voting, the candidates decided to not participate in a joint debate and instead appeared separately in two different broadcasts, which shows that the media and politics in Poland is highly polarised. Polarisation was also expressed in the different attitudes of presidential candidates towards the LGBTQ community, which influenced the campaign discourse and how it was perceived by Polish society, including LGBTQ people, and global public opinion, for example foreign media. Therefore, the aim of our study is to analyse foreign media coverage of the 2020 presidential election and to find out how the LGBTQ community evaluated the actions of the candidates. We decided to investigate foreign,

rather than Polish, media, due to the fact that as external media they are expected to cover the Polish presidential elections more impartially and objectively (Bläsi, 2004). Moreover, by examining the perception of the presidential campaign discourse on LGBTQ by activists who are interested in this issue and who actively support sexual minorities in Poland, we thought that those people may be whistleblowers for foreign media on the situation of LGBTQ people in Poland (Di Salvo, 2021). In this way, it was possible to see how much foreign media were interested in the Polish presidential campaign and the topic of the LGBTQ community, how they covered the election, and whether they presented the same, or a similar, point of view as the activists.

The coverage of elections and the role of LGBTQ issues in the political discourse

Pointing to the fact that political actors increasingly use the language of politics not as a means of communication, but as a tool of competition, the discourse can be defined as a set of communication events aimed at negotiating meanings by the participating actors and indicated its influence on the shaping of interactions in society (Balczyńska-Kosman, 2013). It can be concluded that the language of contemporary public discourse in Poland is marked by informality, negative expression, brutalisation, and neglect of the opponents. There are some analyses of the discourses of Law and Justice (PiS) – the political party from which president Andrzej Duda comes and which supported him during the campaign. One of the analyses presented the discourses of PiS in the transition from opposition to power. The evolution of this party discourse showed most the important terms which party members use in the process of political communication e.g.: "informal networks" [*układ*], "elites," "the Nation," "solidaristic Poland" and "liberal Poland," "good change," "total opposition" or "LGBT ideology" (Kim, 2021, pp. 11–15). The last term was also used many times during the presidential election campaign in 2020, which shows that the ruling coalition and the Polish president used dehumanisation and demonisation mechanisms (Steuter & Wills, 2009) when speaking about the LGBTQ community. This is an example of using "us" vs. "them" rhetoric in the campaign (Galtung, 2006) to create and emphasise the existing sociopolitical divisions in the country. The use of a "they" and "others" narrative – in relation to the LGBTQ community and opposition candidates – and thus creating an "enemy" image of a sociopolitical opponent is the essence of politics (Schmitt, 2006). Such action of political actors influences the behaviour of the media, which, using strategy and game framing as well as hostile framing (Aalberg et al., 2016), simplify the election coverage, giving it a more candidate-oriented perspective and emphasising external and internal conflicts. In this way the media negativise the coverage by replicating the often aggressive rhetoric of the candidates. The role of television is

in this case significant (Maier & Nai, 2020) due to linguistic (e.g., words, sentences, quotes) and audiovisual (e.g., video and sound) framing mechanisms (Entman, 1993). When used together, these mechanisms can have a greater impact on an audience, especially in terms of how they perceive certain candidates and groups. The politicisation of the Polish media system is also an important factor influencing the presidential campaign discourse. According to Dobek-Ostrowska (2015, pp. 27–29), from 2015 to 2020 the Polish media system evolved from the Hybrid Liberal Model towards the Politicised Media Model, characterised by low standards of democracy, low political culture, and strong media politicisation. This means that political discourse in Poland can shape media discourse, which is especially observable in the case of the public service broadcaster TVP that expresses strong support for PiS as well as in the case of TVN that expresses conditional support for Civic Coalition (Dopierała & Ossowski, 2018; Seklecka, 2017).

The politicisation of the Polish media system and the influence of political actors on the media content may also determine whether, and how, the LGBTQ issues raised in election campaigns will be covered and discussed. According to Rainbow Europe (2021), Poland is one of the worst countries in Europe when it comes to discrimination against the LGBTQ community. Also, Freedom House (2020) indicated that Polish civil society remained highly polarised and explained that its "Civil Society rating declined from 5.75 to 5.50 due to attacks on the LGBT+ community and the increased prevalence of extremist and illiberal discourse."

This might be reflected in the use of homophobia as a tool of political strategy. Political homophobia is the aversion of the political elites towards the LGBTQ community manifested in the political discourse, and the use of anti-gay sentiments to legitimise political authority (Moreau, 2018). An example of such an attitude is the homophobic and transphobic discourse of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin during their presidencies (Moreau, 2018; Sleptcov, 2017), anti-gender movements in Hungary (Peto & Kováts, 2017), and the ban on same-sex marriage in Slovakia (Mos, 2019). As Grzymała-Busse (2015) notes, the adoption of anti-LGBTQ policies and discourse is greatly influenced by the role of religion and church authorities and the view that the LGBTQ community is a threat to society's values and morality.

Another important factor is the position of religiously, and right-wing, oriented domestic political parties. In the case of Poland, both assumptions are met. Poland is one of the most Catholic countries in Europe and its ruling coalition is right-wing and religiously oriented. Therefore, the omission of LGBTQ issues in the political campaign discourse and sometimes also in the media, and the use of the "us–them" division (Galtung, 2006) to emphasise the differences between the authorities and the LGBTQ community in terms of values, may result from the worldwide trend of political homophobia and the politicisation of sexuality (Awondo, 2010). Holzhacker (2012) presented three modes of interaction between civil

society organisations focusing on equality and non-discrimination of LGBTQ and their political environment. The author described the Polish case as "morality politics" which is characterised by having to face opposition both in the cases of public opinion and elite opinion. In the Western European and North American countries LGBTQ activism has successfully put into the political agenda issues such as same-sex marriage or the rights of transgender, but in the meantime in most of Eastern European countries sexual minorities are still at best invisible or stigmatised, and sometimes even brutally repressed (Sgier & Baglioni, 2015). This situation has consequences in public discourse.

Data and research method

The study seeks answers to the following questions:

RQ1: How were the presidential candidates and their actions covered?
RQ2: How do foreign media and Polish LGBTQ+ activists evaluate the attitudes and actions of the presidential candidates towards members of the LGBTQ community during the campaign?
RQ3: How do respondents evaluate the role of Polish media during the 2020 presidential election?

Mixed research methods were used to conduct the study. We analysed collected materials using content analysis, surveys, desk research, and comparative analysis.

We conducted a content analysis of nine foreign media to find out how they covered the presidential election in Poland. Hansen and Machin (2019, p. 88) described content analysis as one of the most efficient and widely used methods dedicated to media and communication content, highlighting its characteristics as systematic, quantitative, flexible, or good for revealing trends patterns in large quantities of communication. We supplemented content analysis with framing elements, which allowed us to examine how certain things were shown in the media. Since content analysis is more quantitative and objective, framing analysis is more qualitative and subjective (Linström & Willemien, 2012). A total of 44 materials from nine media – "Euronews" (8 materials), "Euractiv" (3 materials), "CNN" (5 materials), "Russia Today" (2 materials), "The Guardian" (5 materials), "Al Jazeera" (3 materials), "Deutsche Welle" (3 materials), "BBC News" (4 materials), and "Politico EU" (11 materials) were analysed. The authors selected mostly European-oriented media which are well recognised, popular, English-speaking, covered political issues in Europe, and are available in free access (Newman et al., 2020). In the cases of "Russia Today," "Al Jazeera" and "CNN" we looked at the materials published in the "Europe" tab on their respective websites. We include these media in the study due to their transnational character and strong interest in European topics

(Zhang & Hellmueller, 2016). We also wanted to see if there are similarities and/or differences between European and transnational media in how they covered the presidential election in Poland. For example, what topics were most often highlighted, and how certain candidates were presented. Materials published from July 9 to July 15, 2020, which were available on the respective websites of the studied media were analysed. We assumed that the coverage would start to increase a few days before the election date, since this event is not so important for analysed media as national events. The end point of the analysis is July 15, and after that date the coverage decreased significantly. When qualifying materials for analysis, we followed the criterion of topic. Each research unit was a single story related to the presidential election in Poland. We analysed the research units using the codebook consisting of 19 single-choice, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions. The questions concerned: the subject and the perspective of the material, dominant, and secondary actors in the material and how they were framed, sources of information, candidates' attitudes towards the LGBTQ community, the post-election scenario, the occurrence of sociopolitical polarisation in society, frames through which candidates and members of LGBTQ community and their actions were described (words, sentences, quotes, and statements from journalists and sources). The analysis was carried out by two coders. A reliability test on a random sample of four materials, excluding open-ended questions, shows that our agreement rate was 90%. This high score enables us to go to the next steps, such as data preparation, analysis, report findings, and conclusion.

A survey is a quantitative technique for data collection. It provides a numerical description of trends, opinions and attitudes that exist in a population based on data from a sample of that population (Creswell, 2013). This chapter presents the results of a survey conducted among LGBTQ activists on a sample of 192 respondents representing different LGBTQ organisations from 16 regions in Poland. We created a sample based on organisations, which are active in the field of LGBTQ rights, because we were interested in what the LGBTQ community thought about the 2020 presidential campaign discourse in relation to LGBTQ topics raised by the candidates. The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents by email. We used an online panel, which is a recognised method of statistical research (Callegaro et al., 2014). The selection of respondents was voluntary, which makes it not a representative sample. We used statistical description to present and discuss the data. The survey consisted of 24 single-choice and multiple-choice questions, as well as open-ended questions. Most of the questions were single-choice, for which the answers are easier to quantify.

Comparative analysis and desk research were additional methods used in the study. Comparative analysis was helpful to describe and discuss differences between the media and respondents. In turn, desk research was used when referring to secondary data, including literature, reports, and

indexes, for example, the Rainbow Europe (2021) country ranking. Our study used the advantages of this method. The use of a wide range of materials can help in deepening the analysis (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

Results

The coverage of the Polish presidential campaign by foreign media

All materials qualified for analysis fulfil the requirements, which mean that they were published from July 9 to July 15, 2020, and were dedicated to the topic of the presidential election in Poland. We analysed what specific subjects were dominant in the coverage. The most often emphasised topic was the outcome of the election (39% of all materials – Table 8.1). The second most important issue was consequences of the election (20% of all materials). The journalists discussed potential political and legal changes in the country, and in the sphere of international relations. Some of the media focused on the course of the presidential campaign (16% of all materials), and raised topics of different statements made by candidates, their meetings, opinion polls, etc. Some materials were mainly focused on candidates (9% of all materials), and presented their main achievements, education history, work experience, plans, controversial statements, and so on. It is an example of personalisation and individualisation of the campaign (Zittel & Nyhuis, 2020). Some materials also covered the relationship between Poland and European Union (9%), usually emphasising how results of an election can affect this relationship. The situation of the LGBTQ community was a dominant topic in only 5% of the materials, and the articles presented the current situation of the community in Poland, their rights and problems, as well as the candidates' attitudes to this group. To conclude we can say that there were some deep analyses dedicated to different aspects of the election in Poland, but on the other hand often (in almost 40% of cases) the media focused on results of elections.

Table 8.1 The main topic of the material

Category	Answer (%)	N=
Course of the presidential campaign	16	7
Election result	39	17
Candidates and their activities	9	4
Consequences of the election	20	9
Relationship between Poland and EU	9	4
Situation of LGBTQ	5	2
Other	2	1

Source: Authors' own study.

Table 8.2 The dominant (D) and the secondary (S) actor and its perspective (in %)

Actor	Definitely positive		Rather positive		Neutral		Ambivalent		Rather negative		Definitely negative		N=	
	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S
Andrzej Duda	0	0	0	0	25	62	9	0	22	25	44	13	36	8
Rafał Trzaskowski	0	6	50	50	50	41	0	3	0	0	0	0	4	34
Total	0	5	5	40	28	44	7	1	20	5	40	5	40	42

Source: Authors' own study.

One of the important aspects of analysis is a dominant actor in material, as well as its perspective. Some of the materials which presented perspectives other than neutral were marked as opinions. We focused mainly on two candidates who took part in the second round of voting in the presidential election in Poland – Andrzej Duda and Rafał Trzaskowski. The incumbent, Andrzej Duda, was a dominant actor much more often (in 36 materials) than Rafał Trzaskowski (4), who was rather a secondary actor (34) (Table 8.2). These results are not surprising. We expected that foreign media would pay more attention to the incumbent president seeking re-election than to his competitor. Occasionally, none of the two candidates appeared as a dominant or secondary actor, for example, when the author of material put in the foreground an LGBTQ activist or a foreign politician. When it comes to the perspective of the actor, it can be seen that Andrzej Duda was mostly presented negatively as a dominant actor (22% of materials – "rather negative," 44% of materials – "definitely negative"), and neutral as a secondary actor (60% of materials). In turn, Rafał Trzaskowski was presented mainly positively, and neutrally, both as a dominant (50% of materials – "rather positive," 50% of materials – "neutral"), and secondary actor (50% of materials – "rather positive," 41% of materials – "neutral"). This shows that the studied media perceived Andrzej Duda's opponent much better than the president, which also influenced how the candidates were framed. An example of dichotomous framing may be the perception of Duda as an "anti-gay politician" and "defender of traditional and Catholic values" and Trzaskowski as a "liberal candidate" who is "pro-EU" and "pro-LGBT," or the recognition of the Civic Coalition candidate as a "loser of the election" and the president as a "winner of the election." The focus on winners and losers of the election is an expression of game frames, which are used to simplify the election coverage and sometimes to emphasise the conflict between candidates (Valentino et al., 2001). In turn, the emphasis in framing on ideological differences and the candidates' attitudes towards the LGBTQ community can be an example of a universal conflict of values.

Another issue in the study was whether the articles presented the attitudes of the candidates towards the LGBTQ community. We found

Table 8.3 Attitude of the candidates towards the LGBTQ community

Candidate	Positive	Neutral	Ambivalent[a]	Negative	N=
Andrzej Duda	0%	0%	0%	100%	29
Rafał Trzaskowski	91%	0%	9%	0%	11
Total (N)	10	0	1	29	40

Source: Authors' own study.

Note:
[a] Ambivalent attitude contains an evaluation of the object with both positive and negative elements.

29 materials about Andrzej Duda where he expressed his attitude towards LGBTQ people, and in all cases his attitude was negative (Table 8.3). The phrase "LGBT ideology" which was used by Andrzej Duda during the campaign was covered by the majority of studied media. For example, by CNN and Deutsche Welle:

> His focus on the issue of LGBTQ rights – at one point describing them as an "ideology" worse than Soviet-era communism – highlighted the deep cultural divisions in this Central European nation of 38 million people.
>
> (Smith-Park & Mortensen, 2020)

> In the weeks leading up to the election, the president's rhetoric shifted farther to the right. He seized on gay rights as a key theme, denouncing the LGBT+ rights movement as an "ideology" worse than communism.
>
> (Deutsche Welle, 2020)

The situation looks different when we analyse how foreign media presented the attitude of Rafał Trzaskowski to the LGBTQ community. His relationship with the community was mentioned in 11 articles and it mainly presented the politician as a person who has a positive attitude towards sexual minorities (91%), and rarely as a person with ambivalent attitude towards them. Media described the opposition candidate as a person "known for his pro-LGBT position" (Russia Today), and "support for civil unions for same-sex couples" (Euronews). To conclude, the studied media created similar pictures of both candidates, which is especially evident in the case of Andrzej Duda whose attitude towards sexual minorities was presented in the majority of analysed articles always in the same way.

Some authors describing democratic backsliding in the country argue that the polarisation was not bottom up but was driven from the top down by a part of the political class that used populist anti-establishmentarianism to get popular support (Tworzecki, 2018). The degree of politicisation of the Polish media is also high, which is confirmed by the visible political divisions between the media and journalists (Olechowska, 2017).

Table 8.4 Sociopolitical polarisation

Medium	Yes (%)	No (%)	N=
CNN	80	20	5
Russia Today	100	0	2
Al Jazeera	100	0	3
The Guardian	100	0	5
Deutsche Welle	100	0	3
Euronews	75	25	8
Euractiv	23	67	3
BBC News	50	50	4
Politico	46	54	11
Total	70	30	44

Source: Authors' own study.

The problem of sociopolitical polarisation was also raised by many authors in the analysed articles – in 70% of materials we found information about polarisation in Poland (Table 8.4). There was no media which did not present this aspect of the political situation. Four of the analysed titles mentioned this problem in all articles. Below we present some examples how polarisation in Poland was described:

> The result of these elections is a Poland divided in two with a not-so-rosy future, as it will be difficult to ease the division and to restore the relationship between the two sides.
>
> (Euractiv, 2020)

> The knife-edge result reveals a country starkly divided between the Catholic conservative message of PiS and a more progressive vision from Civic Platform's Trzaskowski, the mayor of Warsaw.
>
> (Hirsch, 2020)

> But the divides also run deeply between urban centers and rural areas, between the old and the young. Those lines also divide families, circles of friends and towns.
>
> (Dudek, 2020)

The 2020 Polish presidential campaign in the opinion of the LGBTQ community

People's interest in politics and political activity may affect their interest in political news coverage (Lee, 2020). In turn, how the campaigns and elections are covered may condition the way the candidates are perceived by the audience and affect the election results (Hopmann et al., 2010). It can also influence whether the people will vote or not. Therefore, we asked

Table 8.5 In what elections have you voted in the last five years?

Category[a]	Answer (%)	N=
Parliamentary	83	160
Presidential	92	176
To the European Parliament	71	136
Local government elections	75	145

Source: Authors' own study.

Note:
[a] Multiple choice question.

the respondents if they had participated in general elections in the last five years. Over 90% of the respondents answered "yes." Probably it could be explained by the fact that respondents were activists from non-governmental organisations; therefore, their higher-than-average engagement in politics could be expected. We asked the respondents to clarify which elections they participated in, which helped us to determine which elections they thought were most important. As expected, the majority of the respondents chose presidential elections (92%). Parliamentary elections came second (83%) (Table 8.5). The popularity of presidential elections may be due to the campaigns being more personalised and individualised (Zittel & Nyhuis, 2020). The zero-sum game factor (the winner – one candidate – takes it all) may also play a part (Ferejohn & Noll, 1978).

Identifying presidential elections as those in which the respondents participate most often (Table 8.5) allowed us to assume that they also follow the coverage of the campaign. Indeed, over 90% of respondents confirmed that they followed the coverage. That is why we asked respondents what they thought of the presidential candidates' statements about the LGBTQ community during the campaign. Using a 3-point scale, the respondents were asked to generalise the dominant opinion on this issue (Table 8.6). In Table 8.6, we only included the number of responses submitted. Over 80% of all responses were "rather negative," which indicates that the politicians used discriminatory rhetoric with regard to the LGBTQ community. This may be an example of the negativisation of the presidential campaign (Lau & Rovner, 2009) and the candidates creating an "enemy image" of LGBTQ people (Oppenheimer, 2006). Constructing "enemy images" of both external and internal actors is a fairly common mechanism used in campaigning discourse, that can allow candidates to increase their popularity among voters and influence their electoral involvement (see e.g., Viala-Gaudefroy, 2020).

The discriminatory rhetoric against the LGBTQ community was most often used by two candidates – from the right-wing party PiS, and the far-right party Confederation, which can be associated with the worldwide trend of political homophobia on the part of right-wing populist politicians

Table 8.6 How did politicians talk about the
LGBTQ community during the campaign?

Category	Answer (%)	N=
Rather positive	5	9
Rather neutral	10	18
Rather negative	85	150
Total	**100**	**177**

Source: Authors' own study.

(Moreau, 2018). According to the respondents, Andrzej Duda was the can-
didate who most often used this type of rhetoric (169 responses) (Table 8.7).
The respondents emphasised one of his statements in particular: "They are
trying to convince [us] that they [LGBTQ] are people. It's an ideology"
(Rzeczpospolita, 2020). Here we found a similarity with the results of our
content analysis which showed that journalists often covered the phrase
"LGBT ideology" used by president Duda. This opinion expressed by Duda
during one of his rallies may be a manifestation of the dehumanisation
mechanism, directed against members of the LGBTQ community (Steuter
& Wills, 2009), and the "us–them" division (Galtung, 2006).

Interestingly, in the case of the second most frequently indicated
candidate – far-right politician Krzysztof Bosak (157 responses), who in
the past was more often identified with homophobic rhetoric than Andrzej
Duda (see e.g., Polsat News, 2020), no specific example of discriminatory

Table 8.7 Which of the candidates used a discriminatory
narrative?

Candidate[a]	Answer
Andrzej Sebastian Duda	169
Krzysztof Bosak	157
Marek Jakubiak	73
Stanisław Józef Żółtek	49
Szymon Franciszek Hołownia	39
Władysław Marcin Kosiniak-Kamysz	39
Mirosław Mariusz Piotrowski	31
Paweł Jan Tanajno	22
Rafał Kazimierz Trzaskowski	17
Waldemar Włodzimierz Witkowski	12
Robert Biedroń	3
Total	**611**

Source: Authors' own study.

Note:
[a] Multiple choice question.

Table 8.8 What was the role of the media during the campaign?

Category	Answer (%)	N=
Neutral and professional	2	3
Politically involved	42	80
Set for scandal and controversy	56	109
Total	100	192

Source: Authors' own study.

rhetoric was given by respondents. We believe that this may have something to do with Andrzej Duda being president and thus perceived as more important by the media and getting more media attention (Vos, 2014). As a result, his statements could be covered more often, and thus become more well-known. The liberal opposition candidate – Rafał Trzaskowski (17 responses) – is one of the three politicians that were using discriminatory rhetoric the least often, according to the respondents (Table 8.7).

We also asked the respondents about the role of the media during the campaign, knowing that the high politicisation of Polish media (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015) and their "colonisation" by politicians (Bajomi-Lazar, 2014) may affect how the campaign was covered. The respondents had a choice of three categories: "neutral and professional," "politically involved," and "set for scandal and controversy" (Table 8.8). The most frequently chosen category was "set for scandal and controversy" (56%), which can be associated with the tabloidisation of television news (Hordecki & Piontek, 2010) and the use of aggressive and sport-like language in the coverage. The sport-like and war language is characteristic for the game frames often used in election coverage (Valentino et al., 2001). The "politically involved" (42%) category came second and was connected with the public service broadcaster TVP. Some respondents referred to the channel as "TVP PiS" or "governmental" to emphasise the relationship between this medium and the ruling coalition and the support given to Andrzej Duda during the campaign. Other media considered right-wing, such as *TV Trwam*, *Radio Maryja*, and *Gazeta Polska*, were also often mentioned in this context. TVN – a medium conditionally supporting the liberal opposition and Rafał Trzaskowski (Seklecka, 2017) – rarely.

Conclusion

We found that most of the media assessed Andrzej Duda negatively especially when the president was a dominant actor in the material, and Rafał Trzaskowski positively both when was a dominant and a secondary actor (Table 8.2) (RQ2). Negativism towards the president was also visible in the assessment of the candidates' attitudes towards the LGBTQ community (Table 8.3) (RQ2). It can be concluded that the analysed media, like

the respondents (Table 8.7), perceived Andrzej Duda as the candidate who used discriminatory narrative most often (RQ1). In this way, the foreign media could express their support for LGBTQ people, whom they perceived as "victims" of PiS. The media discourse was also in line with the EU discourse critical of PiS's discriminatory policy (Rankin, 2020). The respondents and the analysed media emphasised in particular the use of the dehumanisation mechanism (Steuter & Wills, 2009) of the LGBTQ community by the president and PiS by using stigmatising terms, for example calling LGBTQ people an "ideology" (RQ2). The use of this type of phrase by politicians is an example of political homophobia (Moreau, 2018) and an attempt to create an "enemy" image of the LGBTQ community among society and the president's voters, thus strengthening the divisions between "us" and "them" (Galtung, 2006). "They" are members of the LGBTQ community and opposition politicians who represent a system of values which is different from that of PiS and inconsistent with the Catholic system of values, which is in line with the observations of Grzymała-Busse (2015). The studied media also drew attention to the ideological differences between the candidates, framing Duda as a "conservative," "Christian" and "anti-LGBT" politician, and Trzaskowski as a "progressive" and "liberal" politician (RQ1).

The respondents emphasised that the politicisation of the Polish media system (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015) had a significant impact on the campaign discourse (Table 8.8). Pointing out that the Polish media during the campaign were "set for scandal and controversy" and "politically involved," respondents gave the example of TVP as a medium reflecting the negative, sometimes hateful, rhetoric of the ruling party's candidate (Table 8.6) (RQ3). However, the use of demonising and negative language in television coverage of election campaigns is not uncommon (Aalberg et al., 2012; Valentino et al., 2001), because in this way the media aims to simplify the message and strengthen audience engagement by specific framing of certain actors (Entman, 1993). Taking into account that presidential elections in Poland are those in which citizens most often participate (Table 8.5) and perceive them as important due to the role of the zero-sum game factor (Ferejohn & Noll, 1978), the use of the mechanism "we" and "them" and the demonisation of the LGBTQ community can be considered as a political strategy. At the same time, it highlighted the strong polarisation of Polish society, which was also emphasised by the studied media (Table 8.4). Therefore, we can pose a question whether the presidential campaign discourse in Poland reflected existing sociopolitical divisions or rather contributed to their deepening. However, it can be assumed that a negative and aggressive political discourse directed at one of the social minorities may worsen the situation of this minority and sometimes even result in social exclusion. The risk of exclusion seems even higher when stigmatisation and demonisation is used by popular politicians who are in power. Then the political discourse may not only influence the media discourse but also the social one.

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