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HOW THE PRESS CREATES THE IMAGE OF GENERATION Z: AN EVALUATION OF THE MESSAGE EFFECTIVENESS OF POLISH WEEKLY OPINION MAGAZINES

Abstract

The subject of this study was the image of contemporary young people in Polish opinion magazines. The research problem was identified as the manner in which the opinion-forming press creates the image of the Z generation. Nearly 500 issues published by 10 weeklies in the period between 2015–2016 were analysed. As a result, knowledge was gained on how readers evaluate their message. Moreover, the question was answered as to which of the public, economic, and private spheres of young people's lives the editors emphasize most distinctly, as well as which categories assigned to these spheres arouse most emotion among readers.

Keywords: generation Z, press, society, message effectiveness, sentiment analysis

Introduction

It is customary to consider youth as that phase of life representing a period of rebellion, behaviours directed against something or someone, but also an expression of rebellion in the name of professed values (Rudnicki, 2009; Szafraniec, 2014). History knows cases when it was the young who played a significant role in revolutions or uprisings. Nowadays, it seems that adults virtually expect young people to behave in a rebellious manner towards politicians or the government. They support those who boldly take to the streets to express their disapproval of infringements of the law, limitations on civil liberties, or the independence of the common courts. The most extensive diagnosis regarding young people is contained in the Raport Młodzi

(Youth Report) 2011 and in publications by a team of researchers from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Pawełczyk et al., 2012; Pawełczyk, Jankowiak, 2013). However, the above analyses concern the so-called generation “Y”, i.e. today’s thirty-year-olds. The “Z” 93. It is the generation of “screens” or “new technologies” (cf. Wrzochul-Stawinoga, 2016). To those born in the digital world, the Internet and new technologies are something obvious. We could say that they are not familiar with the analogue world, hence they freely use the latest applications downloaded to their cell phones or computer programs which are indispensable tools at work. It is virtual competences, i.e. establishing and maintaining online relations, that are seen as one of the strengths of the generation “Z”. Regardless of gender, they are keen on computer games. They are more likely to follow the advice of popular youtubers, influencers, or bloggers who have such an impact on the opinion of others that their positive recommendation is often worth more than a high-budget advertising campaign (Wojtaszczyk, 2013). Although it seems that we know a lot about generation “Z”, the publishing market offers scarce in-depth scientific studies on the contemporary young generation (Hrehorowicz, 2021). It seems that the aforementioned gap is to some extent filled by the press.

Thus, all the titles included in the list of the best-selling opinion weeklies which are published in both versions – paper and electronic (order by the number of copies sold in 2015 and the first half of 2016 in the category of opinion weeklies) were collected: *Tygodnik Angora*, *Gość Niedzielny*, *Polityka*, *Newsweek Polska*, *W Sieci*, *Tygodnik Do Rzeczy*, *Gazeta Polska*, *Wprost*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Przegląd* (Kurdupiński, 2016). The original intention was to analyse not only the weekly newspapers, but also the monthly and bi-weekly guidance magazines. This idea was abandoned after a fruitless search for texts corresponding to the topics targeted by the author. Nearly 500 issues of 10 opinion-forming weeklies published between 25 October 2015 and 1 November 2016 were reviewed.¹ Having conducted an advanced press search, the author singled out texts describing Polish young people (both upper-secondary and university students). As a result, 22 articles strictly referring to generation Z – published by three weeklies: *Gość Niedzielny*, *Polityka* and *Newsweek Polska* – were made available to the coders to read and evaluate.²

¹ In 2015, presidential elections (May 10–24) and parliamentary elections (October 25) were conducted. The author made the decision to conduct a pilot study after seeing the detailed results of the parliamentary elections. The media reported that young people were the decisive factor in determining PiS’s (Law and Justice) victory in both the Sejm and Senate. Among the youngest voters, aged 18–29, as many as 26.6% voted for PiS. The press published articles claiming that contemporary young people are “turning brown” or “turning right”. The author wanted to find out how much truth there was in these articles about generation “Z”, and how much conscious creation of a specific image of young people by editors of opinion-forming press. A year of analysis was considered to be the minimum time necessary to collect the material constituting the basis for assessing the overtones of the message.

² Several other texts were also considered, but were not included because, although they dealt with school or the phenomena faced by children, they: 1) did not describe young people, but criticized

The study was conducted using the content analysis method, and the semantic differential scale was used to analyse the overtone of the message (the author's subjective attitude toward the described content). It was assumed that the use of the scale would make it possible to capture the emotional tone of the text and would show how the average reader perceives the message (Medhat, 2014). The analysis had two main objectives – to show the readers how the press creates an image of youth and how the created image is evaluated by readers. From the author's point of view, it is also interesting to know which of the public, economic, and private spheres of the life of young people the editors emphasize the most, and which categories ascribed to these spheres arouse the strongest emotions. The author is aware of the unrepresentative number of coders, but treats this quasi-study as a probationary, pilot study that may provide other researchers with a contribution to further, in-depth analyses in a much broader scope and using a larger research sample.

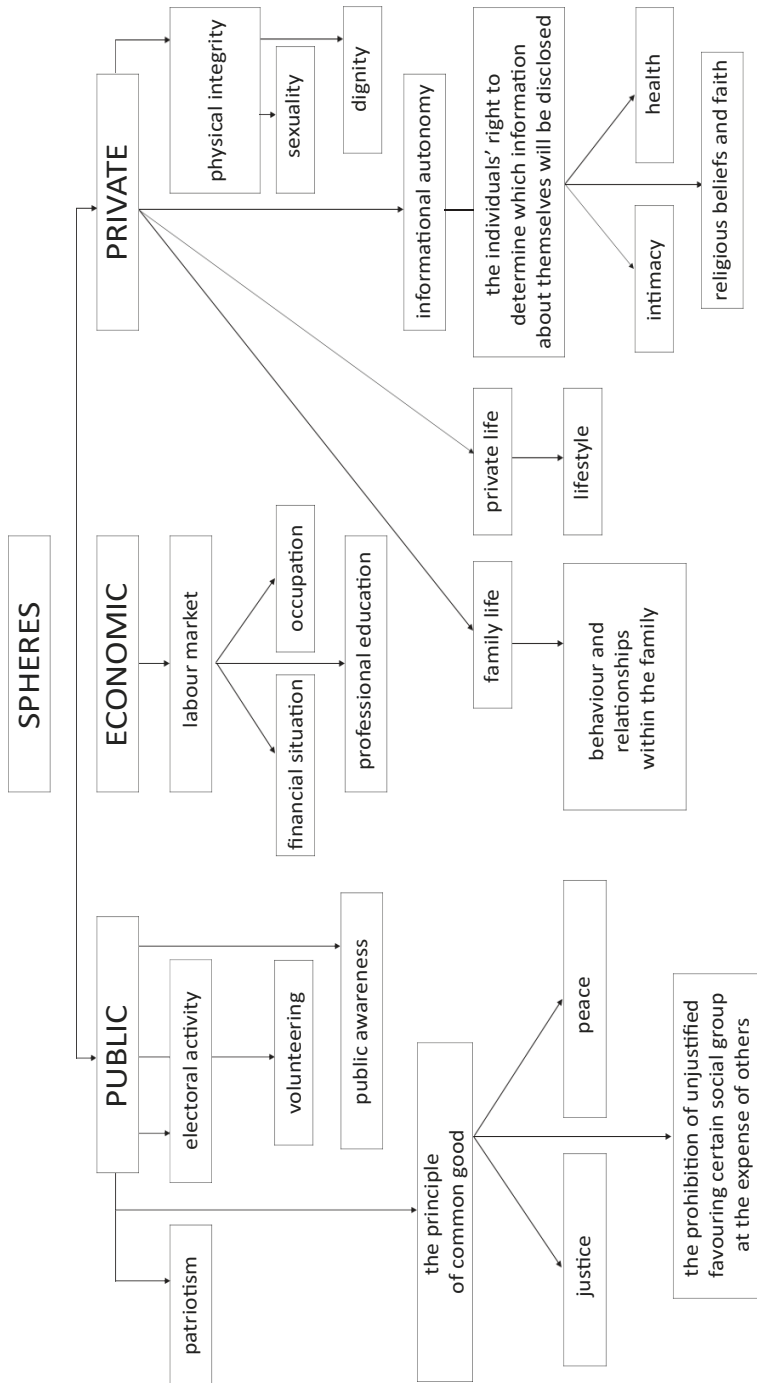
The code key consisted of 10 categories assigned to 3 spheres – public sphere: electoral activity, common good, patriotism, knowledge of society, volunteering, economic sphere: labour market; and private sphere: sexuality, faith, private life, family life. The categories are illustrated in Figure 1. In order to ensure maximum objectivity, each category coded in the analysed article was evaluated by 4 coders – the author and three people who agreed to read all the publications. Information about the study, along with a brief explanation of what it would consist of, was shared in April 2017 on one of the announcement pages for Toruń on Facebook. The author waited 48 hours to be contacted. No criteria were specified for applicants (age, gender, education, etc.).³ Individuals interested in participating in the study were not previously acquainted with the author. The press materials needed for the analysis and the measurement scale tool relating to each of the 22 articles, along with instructions, were sent to the coders via email. No gratuity was offered in exchange for participation in the study.

The coders rated the subjective emotional colouring of each category appearing in the article using a numerical scale of 1–5, according to the adopted principle: 1 – very negative message; 2 – negative; 3 – indifferent/neutral; 4 – positive and 5 – very positive. The final value of each category is the arithmetic mean of all the coders' ratings from all the evaluated articles in which the category appeared. A synthetic description of the range of categories that were evaluated is provided in Table 1.

the reform of middle school education or school as an institution, and 2) focused on children under 13–14 years of age, who were not the subject of analysis.

³ The selection should be considered as random purposive. The author intentionally narrowed the group of potential coders to active Internet users. Randomness, in turn, was based on the fact that the coders volunteered to participate in the study.

Figur 1. Spheres in an individual's social life



Source: own elaboration.

Table 1. Coding procedure

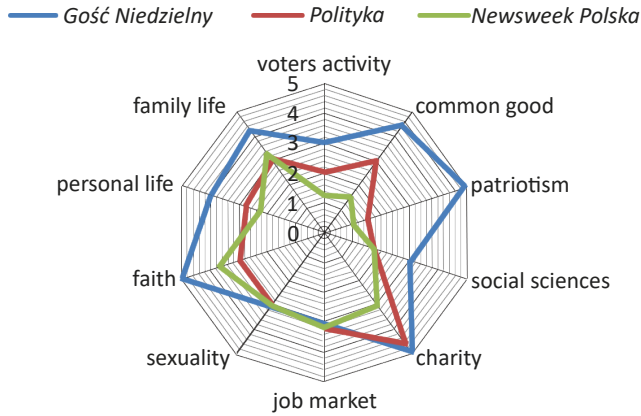
CATEGORY		DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTENT
Public sphere	Electoral Activity	Performance of the political preferences of young people, their election decisions and political commitment.
	Common Good	Considerations regarding such elements as the principle of social coexistence, a sense of justice and equal treatment, actions taken for the benefit of others, and togetherness.
	Patriotism	Contextual evaluation of the contemporary patriotism presented by editors, including, e.g. nationality, patriotic clothing, nationalism and patriotic events.
	Knowledge about Society	An assessment concerning the level of youth understanding of the social issues regarding choices, law and politics.
	Volunteering	An assessment of how the press presents non-profit activity of the young people – a kind of activity, intentionality of undertaken activity, and effectiveness of initiatives.
Economic sphere	Labour Market	The factors that largely influence on the financial situation of the young people were taken into account, i.a. education (chosen course of study, plans regarding this course), the financial situation of parents (the financial dependence/independence of young people), the type of occupation and wages.
Private sphere	Sexuality	Considerations regarding sexual behaviour of young people and its assessment by editors, as well as a sense of dignity and the feeling of own physicality.
	Faith	Refers to the religious beliefs and confessions, how it can be externalized.
	Private Life	Assessment of the content regarding daily behaviour and coping styles at the university and in private life.
	Family Life	A category dedicated to the evaluation of whether the articles contain educational values that young people brought from home; young people's relationships with their parents, as well as their plans for starting a family.

Source: own elaboration.

The summary results of the analyses are presented in the form of a radar chart, where the respective curves show the averaged ratings for all the articles studied (the scores of all the coders).

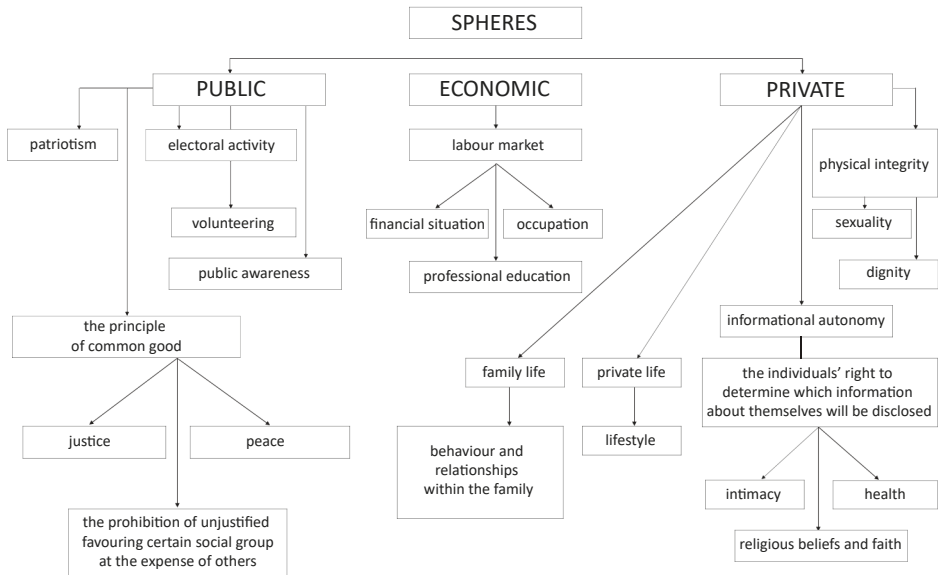
Chart 2, on the other hand, presents the values attributed by the coders to texts relating to young people, maintaining the division into spheres.

Chart 1. Averaged category ratings



Source: own elaboration.

Chart 2. Averaged coders' ratings related to the image of youth with division into spheres



Source: own elaboration.

2. Evaluation of the image of youth in the economic sphere

The coders found both *Polityka* and *Newsweek* to hold a moderately emotional attitude toward young people in the economic sphere. The selection of the interviewees' statements or the statements of the editors of both magazines did not arouse specific emotions in the coders. Therefore, they considered them as a message with no apparent emotional charge, as a reliable description of reality.

The coders pointed to passages with which they themselves agreed. An example is the quoted statement of Professor Krystyna Szafranec polemicizing with the statement that young people were turning to the right. The professor sees the reasons for such and not other electoral decisions of young people, not in ideological views, but in social promises:

In my opinion this is a turn to the left, she says. In fact, they were looking not at the world-view dimension of the PiS or Kukiz programmes, but at their contestatory character and social promises (Gumowska, 2015, p. 44).

And further she adds:

Studies show that young people treat religion as an important, but extremely private matter. They prefer a secular state, anti-clericalism is growing among them. So why do they vote for politicians who openly identify themselves with the Church? Because they think they can handle their private lives, but not the economic issues (...) They want a fair hourly wage and permanent employment, more expansive state intervention in the sphere of economy and labour market, and support for the poor and disadvantaged (Gumowska, 2015, p. 44).

Just as rational, but also commonly heard, was considered the quoted statement of the student Kamil Polnik, who when asked what is important in life answered:

To start a family. To graduate from college so I can have a better start. I don't need to have too much. It is enough for me to live a decent life, feed, and educate my children, go on vacation once in a while (Gumowska, 2015, p. 44).

The existence of values similar to those of Polnik that are considered important by young people is confirmed by Professor Michael Fleischer citing the results of a survey he conducted:

(...) a child and family, money, and home. 80 percent wrote the same (...) (Gumowska, 2015, p. 45).

Jacek Tomczuk's text "Buntownicy gawędziarze" ["Rebellious Storytellers"] was considered by the coders to be accurate and, although somewhat depressing, free of negative evaluation of the behaviours described. Sylwia Chutnik, a writer and Tomczuk's interlocutor, concludes:

This generation does not believe that they can collectively change anything, that their voice has power. The young are convinced that the current system is so strong that they cannot do anything about it. They stay angry at home, secretly or over vodka with friends. Besides, they are pragmatic. They may wear T-shirts with symbols, but in reality the situation is that they don't have a good job – whether I go to the march or not, it won't change anything (...) (Tomczuk, 2016, p. 40).

In the article “Jest kim być” [“There is someone to be”], Ewa Wilk includes brief descriptions of the life situation of three families: Mr. and Mrs. B. – strawberry growers from Podlasie with two sons, Mr. and Mrs. Z. – corporate employees with an only child who is a doctoral student, and Mr. and Mrs. W. – dentists with a son, similar to Mr. and Mrs. Z.'s daughter, who is writing a doctoral dissertation. Wilk supplemented these stories with her own thoughts, referring to statistical data, *inter alia*, from the Washington PEW Research Institute, the Polish Central Statistical Office, and the CBOS. It is interesting to note that the coders rated the following excerpts as factual, neutral, non-evaluative messages:

(...) Thousands of Poles today have trouble answering questions about their adolescent or adult children. Because things are not as they had hoped (...) 53 percent of Poles predict that their children will have it worse than they themselves did (...) (Wilk, 2015, p. 38).

(...) our culture is extremely family-oriented, imbued with the belief that parents should sacrifice themselves for their children (...) the conviction that children will not be any better off than we are, that they are stuck in a place, is a particularly bitter pill for us (...) (Wilk, 2015, p. 38).

(...) Never before have young people been so invested in from early childhood, driven to additional classes, sent to private schools and multi-directional studies, engineered for careers and success. And something has broken (...) 60 percent of all Poles no longer believe in the power of a diploma on the job market (...) (Wilk, 2015, p. 38).

(...) young people behave in a peculiar way, as if according to the principle: it doesn't matter who I am, I won't be anyone special anyway (...) as if there was nobody left to be (...) (Wilk, 2015, p. 38).

It is possible that the coders have similar observations and reflections on the current situation of young people in the labour market, hence they rated the above excerpts as neutral, true, reflecting reality (Leszczyńska, 2016; Solska, 2016).

Given the fact that *Gość Niedzielny* did not touch upon the professional situation of young people, their material situation or education itself in any of its articles, the GN's neutral attitude towards the presence of young people in the economic sphere was assumed.

3. Evaluation of the image of young people in the private sphere

In the private sphere of young people *Gość Niedzielny* wrote in the context of two categories: faith and everyday life, with the note that everyday life was closely connected with religious practice. In other words, in the articles one could find references to the personal life of young people, which is subordinated to the principles of the Church. Young people were not presented in terms other than those who give daily witness to the faith. Passages about their sexuality, coping with studies, non-Catholic view of reality are not to be found. The coders found such a message to be one-sided, intentionally focused on specific values, but also noted that the message was consistent with a markedly positive character (Jakimowicz, 2016; Kluba, 2016; Legutko, 2016).

Other categories of the private sphere came to the attention of the coders when reading *Polityka*. They noticed *Polityka*'s focus on the personal lives of young people, or rather on the problem of how young people function online. The editors describe millennials (interchangeably referring to them as generation Y) as a generation that "accumulates" virtual friends or close relationships with people they often do not meet at all in real life. In the text "Wychodzą z sieci" ["Leaving the net"] Mariusz Herma and Aleksandra Żelazińska quote David Cohn – an expert on new media in an American media concern Advance Publications:

(...) They are betting on social capital. On the "collecting" of relations. Hence the obsessive pursuit of Facebook friends they haven't seen in real life for years, or maybe ever. And hence the engagement in online discussions regardless of the topic and the waiting for likes under the holiday selfie. Millennials were the first to perceive the world through the prism of social networking. They boiled down every experience to what could be shared with friends (...) while drowning in the stream of activity from others struggling to bolster their networking success rates. Have I read all the posts on Facebook? Have I looked at all the photos on Instagram today? Am I neglecting my "friends" because I didn't post anything today? (Herma, Żelazińska, 2015, p. 91).

Joanna Solska, in her article "Prekariusze wszystkich krajów łączą się" ["Precarious people of all countries unite"], turns the problem of "being online" into an asset. The author believes that it is thanks to the Internet that young people have found their place of work. According to Solska, young people treat the Internet as a tool for creative and modern work, which allows them to implement their boldest ideas. Moreover, they make considerable profits from their virtual activities:

(...) The 20-year-olds, creators of online platforms, had an idea and knew how to turn it into the right smartphone application. Millennials are creating a world in which they and their peers feel most comfortable. In addition to accessibility to a market that previously excluded them, they gain the satisfaction of making money for ordinary people rather than corporations. And they themselves make money. They become rich in an instant (...) (Solska, 2016, p. 44).

In the coders' opinion, *Newsweek* focused on the problems faced by young people. Anna Szulc in her text "Wystraszeni" ["The Frightened"] addresses the difficulties of young people in coping with everyday activities (Szulc, 2016). According to the author, the ground for situations seemingly looks like the helplessness of adolescents is depression, the symptoms of which are increasingly often noticed not only by parents, but even by university teachers. Szulc quotes, among others, psychologist Dorota Mroczkowska, who says that:

(...) we need to seriously consider what is happening to young people in college, why they don't have a desire to live, why they are so easily depressed (...) (Szulc, 2016, p. 47).

Dr Michał Skalski (psychiatrist, lecturer at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences) expressed an interesting opinion on this subject):

(...) in the 1990s, the family failed. During the communist era, the house was full. Even if the glue was only the customary conservatism, the children did not have to experience the nightmare of separations. About two decades ago it all began to fall apart (...) (Szulc, 2016, p. 47).

Psychiatrist Urszula Zaniewska-Chłopik notes a similar analogy:

(...) this is the generation that did not speak to their parents about their emotions because their parents had problems themselves (...) when they grew up they had no one to lean on. They did not feel safe. And that has stayed with them to this day (...) Sometimes I think that they refuse to grow up. A student, in his last year of studies, soon maybe in a full-time job at a company, and he says to me straight from the door that he fell in love unhappily, and perhaps I could give him some pills for that? (...) he met a problem and expected an easy solution (Szulc, 2016, p. 48).

It is debatable whether it is only young people who are at fault? Michał Pozdał, a psychotherapist from the SWPS University, stated that:

Students sometimes come with parents who explain that their children cannot handle an assignment (...) (Szulc, 2016, p. 48), and when asking students to quantify their responsibility for their lives, the response from one student was that he was responsible for himself for at most 60% of the time, with mum and dad deciding the rest.

Both *Polityka* and *Newsweek* evaluated the image of young people in the private sphere as average. They found some fragments of the articles to be suggestive of the editor's approach to certain behaviours of young people, however, not to the extent that one would unequivocally state that they are aimed at stigmatizing or praising specific issues. At the same time, the coders noted that some categories were more prominently featured than others. As in the case of *Gość Niedzielny*, which focused exclusively on young people's faith and religious practice, these publications paid attention to: everyday behaviours, college coping styles, relationships between themselves. Thus, it is important to emphasize that the "average image of young people in the private sphere" is derived from the coders' averaged ratings. In other

words, the coders rated some articles as having a slightly higher negative emotional load and others as having a slightly higher positive load. Hence, the statement that all three weeklies are neutral in describing the codes attributed to the private sphere is a gross simplification.

4. Evaluation of the image of young people in the public sphere

Newsweek dedicated most attention to the functioning of young people in the public sphere. The coders found that from the pool of 10 texts, as many as 9 of them dealt with the issue of the political aspect of the young people's lives. To a large extent, the articles concern two categories: "patriotism" and "knowledge of society". Many comments refer to the disorientation of young people and the inconsistency and ignorance evident in the discrepancy between declared right-wing inclinations and actual views. For example, Radosław Marzęcki, PhD, author of the book "Pokolenie '89. Aksjologia i aktywność młodych Polaków" ["Generation '89. Axiology and activity of young Poles"] observes that:

(...) this is a drifting generation. They do not know where they are going, their direction is uncertain, because their future is uncertain (...). They did not have to fight for the possibility of living in a democracy. But now, almost half of them complain about the democracy they found and want changes. It's just hard for them to decide what kind of changes. At least every third of them is pinning their hopes on the right (...) (Świąchowicz, 2016, p. 38).

Marzęcki cites the results of his own research, which present an image of young people declaring right-wing views, who: are mostly in favour of permitting abortion, with every fifth person supporting its implementation "on demand"; would like to use euthanasia (more than half); are open to sexual minorities (the majority); and consider supporting the Polish national football team or flying the flag to be more important manifestations of patriotism than paying taxes. Furthermore, they do not know history, although they recognize it as important. He wonders "who will take responsibility for this radicalizing language of young people?" because in his opinion:

(...) those most radical feel the wind of change, their views are accepted. The so-called spiral of silence is unravelling. There is no need to hold back, there is no one who will say: stop (...). They say about the Constitutional Tribunal that it must be dealt with because it is a group with its own interests, it restrains the hands of those in power (...). (Świąchowicz, 2016, p. 38).

A similar opinion is expressed by Joanna Wylężak, a history and civics teacher from Bielsko-Biała:

This is a confused generation. They are unstable, unoriented, they have deficiencies in education (...) during tests they write that Wiesław Lepper was the president after the war.

Józef Piłsudski invented the national holiday of November 11. And Wałęsa is “Bolek” and was an informer (...) They shout slogans like: down with communism, but they do not know what communism is. They repeat what they hear from Maks Kolonko, Cejrowski, or Stonoga (Świąchowicz, 2016, p. 38).

Dr. Anna Materska-Sosnowska of the University of Warsaw says:

(...) they say what the party tells them. They read right-wing newspapers and portals (...) some of them don't read anything, at most whatever someone throws at them on Facebook (...). Now it is easy to buy the young with slogans: “the old must leave, the old must make room for the young, the elites must be replaced”! The young think: “this is a chance of a lifetime, the new is coming”. The more radical and populist the slogans, the better. This is dangerous because it can become so rampant that it will be difficult to calm it down. Because how much would you have to give the young to satisfy them? Already now you can see an increase in demands. They are thinking: “we deserve it” (...) (Świąchowicz, 2016, p. 38).

Numerous references to betting on conservatism and the turning of the young “to the right” can be found in several other articles of *Newsweek* (Gumowska, 2015; Kim, 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Świąchowicz, Lis, 2016). The coders evaluated the presented image of young people as negative. Although they agreed with some passages referring to e.g. lack of elementary knowledge, they considered the opinions published in the magazine about “young nationalists”, their understanding of patriotism, and interest in the cursed soldiers to be very negative and exaggerated (Kalukin, 2015; Świąchowicz, Lis, 2016; Kim, 2016; Świąchowicz, 2016).

Also in *Polityka* one may read about nationalists and “pseudo-patriotism” (Cieśla, Kubiak, 2016; Podgórska, 2016). In Anna Dąbrowska's and Juliusz Skibicki's text “Prawy do lewego” [“Right to the left”] about Ruch Narodowy (National Movement), Narodowe Odrodzenia Polski (National Revival of Poland) or Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny (ONR, National Radical Camp) the authors quote Dr. Łukasz Jurczyszyn, a sociologist and political scientist from the Aleksander Gieysztor Academy of Humanities, who conducted field research among the ONR, who claims that young people have a strong need to feel proud of being Poles. It is his contention that:

(...) these circles are a bastion of extreme nationalism. They are a large organizational and financial base for “nationalists” and neo-fascists, because they have a well-organized infrastructure (...) ONR and “national” movements have an ideology fueled by racial hatred. They build their political capital on the fear of immigrants (...) (Dąbrowska, Skibicki, 2016, p. 18).

According to Dr. Mirosław Tryczyk, in addition to the need to advocate for or against something, young nationalists have very real economic needs. In his view:

(...) modern individuals who choose nationalism or Euroscepticism feel frustrated, they have real social demands, they are fed up with liberal freedom, because it is associated mainly with exploitation and so-called junk employment contracts, they want a strong and supportive welfare state (...) (Dąbrowska, Skibicki, 2016, p. 18),

he adds that it is the Law and Justice party that became the “system” for them, hence:

It still presents itself as an “anti-system” party, despite the power it holds, it wants to settle accounts and create order, it still emphasizes that it fights against domination and “system”, this time a greater one, because from Brussels. It wants to incorporate reconstruction groups into territorial units, that is, bring them under its control (...) (Dąbrowska, Skibicki, 2016, p. 19).

Gość Niedzielny, on the other hand, devoted two articles to young people in the public sphere: “Moda na patriotyzm” [“Fashion for Patriotism”] by Piotr Legutko (2016) and “Tylko dla orłów” [“For Eagles Only”], by Marcin Jakimowicz (2016). The coders found that although the portrayal of patriotism in Legutko’s text was “a bit of a stretch,” the perception of young people should be considered positive.

According to the editor, as can be seen from the beginning of the article, young people wearing “patriotic” clothes are not ashamed of their country, and moreover understand its history:

(...) The difference between wearing an image of Che Guevara and Witold Pilecki on a T-shirt is that in the first case, the “bearers” usually had no idea who they were honouring. The story of Pilecki or Inka was not something that was forced into young people’s heads. They discovered them on their own (...) (Legutko, 2016, p. 44).

The coders also reflected positively on the quoted comment by Dariusz Karłowicz that young people had made no secret of the fact that:

(...) wearing patriotic clothes is on their part a form of manifestation of their views, or even a kind of confession of faith (...) (Legutko, 2016, p. 44).

In their opinion, the above sentence suggests that young people are religious and are not trying to hide it. The coders do not pursue reading bad intentions into the editor, because according to the coders, religiousness does not reflect negatively on the image of young people.

Conclusions

The content analysis of opinion weeklies: *Gość Niedzielny*, *Newsweek* and *Polityka* aimed to show the image of generation Z created by the opinion weeklies and to discover the readers’ perception of that image. As a result of the press content analysis and taking into account the obtained average ratings of the coders, it could be concluded that the press dedicates most space to the public sphere in which the young generation functions. The most discussed problem in this respect is the issue of patriotism, and more precisely, the problem of how it is perceived, understood, and “cultivated” by the young generation. The editors combine the category

of contemporary patriotism with the category of knowledge about society, i.e. history and institutions of law. In the coders' opinion, the weeklies present a highly diverse picture of young people in the public sphere: *Gość Niedzielny* – positive, *Newsweek* – negative, *Polityka* – neutral. It is this sphere that is most often described by opinion weeklies in relation to generation Z. The generation that does not understand the changes occurring in the modern world, does not want to understand them [sic!]. On the one hand, the coders pointed to the one-sidedness of the message, on the other hand, they seemed to agree with some of the statements, including the indifference of young people to important political issues or recklessness manifesting itself in delegating the right to decide in elections to other adults. I would like to point out that the analyzed articles were published in the years of 2015–2016. Given the events in 2020, it seems that the overtones of current texts about young people could now be different, and the political indifference and ignorance of young people in this matter less prominently highlighted.

Table 2. Young people in the messages of *Gość Niedzielny*

Issue no.	Title in the table of contents	Title of the article
10/2016	[not included in the table of contents ⁴]	<i>Moda na patriotyzm</i> [Fashion for Patriotism]
20/2016	Tylko dla orłów! Takiej Lednicy jeszcze nie było: trzy jubileusze, Szustak o entuzjazmie wiary, odnowienie przyrzeczeń chrzcielnych, Biblia z dedykacją Franciszka i maraton [For Eagles Only! Lednica has never been like this before: three jubilees, Szustak on the enthusiasm of faith, renewal of baptismal promises, Bible dedicated by Francis, and a marathon]	<i>Tylko dla orłów!</i> [For Eagles Only!]
30/2016	Młodzi i miłosierdzie. Rytm ŚDM wyznaczają rozpoczynająca Dni Msza św., powitanie papieża, Droga Krzyżowa, czuwanie i Msza Posłania [Youth and Charity. The rhythm of WYD will be marked by the opening Mass, the Papal Welcome, the Stations of the Cross, the Vigil, and the Final Mass]	<i>Młodzi i miłosierdzie</i> [Youth and Charity]

Source: own elaboration.

It is worthwhile to take a closer look at the overtones of the titles of the cited publications. It is impossible not to be under the impression that the editors intentionally sought to arouse specific emotions in the reader. Considering the fact that reading an article is increasingly often limited to merely reading its title or headline, there is a risk of oversimplifying reality, making problematic and socially important

⁴ *Gość Niedzielny* lists only one title for each category in the table of contents, i.e.: 1) Temat Gościa, 2) Rozmowa Gościa, 3) Kościół, 4) Polska, 5) Świat, 6) Nauka and 7) Z bliska.

issues shallow. It suffices to take a look at the following lists of titles in Tables 2–4 to draw conclusions about today's young people. What are young people like in the messages of the leading opinion weeklies? Well, generation Z: “is turning brown”, they are loud and threatening, passive and angry (Table 4), they are a drifting generation, rebellious storytellers, the first generation that does not want change, they have deficiencies in education, allow themselves to be manipulated, do not accept the changes taking place in the world. This is a lost generation – ignorant, scared, one that votes for the right (Table 3).

Table 3. Young people in the messages of *Newsweek Polska*

Issue no.	Title in the table of contents	Article headline	Title of the article
45/2015	Młodzi wyborcy. Domagają się wyrównania płac, złagodzenia ustawy o dopuszczalności aborcji, ingerencji państwa w rynek pracy. 1 – uwaga – głosują na prawicę [Young voters. They demand equal wages, relaxation of the law on abortion, state interference in the labour market. And – attention – they vote for the right wing]	Młodzi w wyborach [Young voters]	<i>Drobnomieszczanie z Facebooka</i> [The Facebook philistines]
47/2015	Marsz Niepodległości „Patriotyczny naród” pod flagą biało-czerwoną [Independence March “Patriotic Nation” under the white and red flag]	Marsz Niepodległości [Independence March]	<i>Synowie Wielkiej Ojczyzny</i> [Sons of the Great Fatherland]
10/2016	Studenci pod presją. Polscy studenci mają coraz poważniejsze problemy ze sobą. Gorsze pokolenie czy gorsze czasy? [Students under pressure. Polish students facing increasingly serious problems with themselves. Worse generation or worse times?]	Studenci, czyli dorosłe dzieci [Students or grown-up children]	
18/2016	Młodzi rasiści. Nie lubią obcych: Arabów, Żydów, gejów, i lewaków. Nie chcą ich w Polsce [Young racists. They don't like strangers: Arabs, Jews, gays, and leftists. They don't want them in Poland]	Czas nowych patriotów [Time for new patriots]	<i>Wiadomo, kto wróg</i> [You know who the enemy is]
19/2016	Jak rekrutuje ONR. O młodych narodowcach opowiada socjolog dr Łukasz Jurczyszyn [How ONR recruits. Sociologist Dr. Łukasz Jurczyszyn talks about young nationalists]	Jak rekrutuje ONR [How ONR recruits]	<i>Przytuleni przez narodowców</i> [Embraced by nationalists]

25/2016	Młodzi idą na prawo. To zagubione pokolenie. Są zmienni, niezororientowani, mają braki w edukacji i dają sobą manipulować [The young go to the right. This is a lost generation. They are fickle, ignorant, educationally deficient, and allow themselves to be manipulated]	Czemu młodzi skreśli w prawo [Why young people turned right]	<i>Dryfujące pokolenie</i> [Drifting generation]
25/2016	Prof. Barbara Fatyga Młodzi nie akceptują zmian zachodzących w świecie – mówi socjolog młodzieży [Prof. Barbara Fatyga Young people do not accept changes occurring in the world – says sociologist of youth]	Dlaczego młodzież się radykalizuje [Why are young people radicalizing themselves]	<i>Coś się wahało</i> [Something's up]
26/2016	Buntownicy gawędziarze Pisarka Sylwia Chutnik o tym, że obecni 20-latkowie to pierwsze pokolenie, które nie ma woli zmiany [Rebellious storytellers Writer Sylwia Chutnik on how today's 20-year-olds are the first generation that has no will for change]	Dzieci III RP [Children of the Third Republic]	<i>Buntownicy gawędziarze</i> [Rebellious storytellers]
33/2016	Czas patriotów. Znak Polski Walczącej jest niemal wszędzie – na koszulkach, opaskach, naklejkach, a nawet na majtkach [Time of patriots. The logo of Fighting Poland is almost everywhere – on T-shirts, armbands, stickers, even on panties]	Patriotyzm 2016 [Patriotism 2016]	<i>O co walczą Polską Walczącą</i> [What they are fighting for with Fighting Poland]
34/2016	Kazimierz Kutz O ataku na wolne media, pokazowych procesach i cmentarnym patriotyzmie [Kazimierz Kutz On the attack on free media, show trials and cemetery patriotism]	Jak żyć w państwie PiS [How to live in PiS state]	<i>Polskie diabły</i> [Polish devils]

Source: own elaboration.

Table 4. Young people in the messages of *Polityka*

Issue no.	Title in the table of contents	Title of the article
47 (3036)	Dzieci wychodzą z sieci [Children leaving the net]	<i>Wychodzą z sieci</i> [Leaving the net]
51 (3040)	Kim warto dziś zostać [Who is it worth becoming today]	<i>Jest kim być</i> [There is someone to be]
16 (3055)	Zemsta prekariuszy [The revenge of the precarious]	<i>Prekariusze wszystkich krajów łączą się</i> [Precarious people of all countries unite]

18 (3057)	Rozmowa z prof. Tomaszem Szlendakiem o tym, dlaczego młodzież nam brunatnieje pod flagą białą-czerwoną [A talk with Prof. Tomasz Szlendak on why our young people are turning brown under the white and red flag]	<i>Popnacjonalizm</i> [Pop-nationalism]
24 (3063)	Narodowcy – głośni i groźni [Nationalists – loud and threatening]	<i>Prawa ściana</i> [The right wall]
30 (3069)	Młodzi – wściekli i bierni [The young – angry and passive]	<i>Bierni dwudziestoletni</i> [Passive twenty-year-olds]
33 (3072)	Co w sercu, to na piersi [What's in your heart is on your chest]	<i>Znaki plemienne</i> [Tribal marks]
40 (3079)	Kto moderuje sekschaty [Who moderates sexchats]	<i>Stosunek moderowany</i> [Moderated intercourse]
41 (3080)	Kuźnia fachu, czyli studenckie workcamps [Forging a trade, or student workcamps]	<i>Jak hartuje się fach</i> [How to harden your trade]

Source: own elaboration.

It is hard not to have the impression that the press creates a negative image of young people. It is virtually impossible to find publications praising the young generation. It is also hard to believe that this generation has nothing to offer to society. Bearing in mind that academic studies on generation Z are still scarce, media messages – in the press, online, and on television – seem to be the main source of information on what today's young people are like. Although it may seem insignificant, in reality it is reflected, inter alia, in the approach of older generations (generations X and Y) to the employment of young people, the education system, or politicians creating election programmes, which fail to offer proposals attractive to the young. The problem of the tabloidization of the press (Kajtoch, 2011), the use of clickbaits, which are already popular in the media, are in my opinion a strenuous attempt to survive in a market where – despite the fact that the recipient seems to be an undemanding reader – a flood of mostly free, easily accessible information from unverified sources, which are often fake news or post-truth (Bąkiewicz, 2019) forces editors to struggle for the existence of the newspaper.

Limitations

It is worth mentioning that the purpose of the study was not to quantify the substance of the articles. The aim was rather to evaluate the emotional response of the study group to the messages contained in these articles. The author is aware of the numerous limitations of the study. These are the result of a small sample (N=4) and

the experimental method used. This method is specific to analyzing psychological perceptions. The method, regardless its limitations, is most suited to achieve the goals of the study, especially given the small sample. Should a larger study be attempted it is advised to examine attitude of the respondents to specific categories such as opinions, knowledge and actions. This more holistic approach would allow comparing the opinions of the participants with their perception of the articles content.

Given the above it is difficult to speak of a generalization of the results of just four coders, but a recurrence was perceived in the specific way in which the content in question was rated. Namely, in situations where the coders rated content relating to categories:

- (a) towards which they are indifferent or have no opinion on the subject, they marked 4 or 5 (positive, very positive) on the scale, even if pejorative terms for young people (their behaviours, etc.) appeared explicitly in the text;
- b) which are close to them, they have a specific opinion on the subject, then in the case of a different description of reality presented by the editor than that declared by the coder, they evaluated it negatively;
- (c) which are close to them, they have a specific opinion on the subject and the content of the article is a confirmation of it, then, despite appearing of content of a pejorative nature, the coders marked it either 3 – neutral or 4 – positive.

A thesis could be put forward – albeit one that the author believes has its psychological justification – that readers choose those titles in which they find texts close to their views (cf. Tarvis, Aronson, 2008; Nickerson, 1998; Lord et al., 1979; Risen, Gilovich, 2007).⁵ It is not uncommon to be able to form an opinion about the character of a weekly magazine judging by its cover and the titles of its articles. It is certainly not a new situation, nor is it characteristic of our times – the 21st century, but it is definitely discernible. Especially nowadays, when the media – press, television, Internet portals – are often the mouthpieces of political parties, presenting seemingly objective information in a narrative way. Therefore, it is easy, without having one's own opinion, to accept as true and right any media message.

⁵ Experiments conducted by Elliot Aronson and Leon Festinger to verify and develop the theory of cognitive dissonance, refuted, among others, the view of human rationality, i.e. the belief that people process information logically and rationally. Psychologists have demonstrated that: “if new information is consistent with our beliefs, we find it reliable and useful – we think, «I've always said that!» However, if the incoming information is inconsistent with our beliefs, we consider it wrong or stupid: «What an idiotic argument!» Our need for conformity is so strong that when we are forced to consider evidence that contradicts what we believe, we are generally able to find ways to criticize, distort, or ignore that information, and thus maintain, and even reinforce, our current beliefs” (Tarvis, Aronson, 2008, pp. 24–25).

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