6 Journalistic culture, editorial mission, and news logic

Explaining the factors behind the use of populism in European media

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Introduction

Against the background of the variation in populism between countries exposed in the previous chapter by Blassnig et al., this chapter will focus on article, newspaper, and country-level explanatory factors for this variation. Evidence for between-newspaper variation with respect to populist communication has already been presented elsewhere (Manucci & Weber, 2017; Rooduijn, 2014; Wettstein et al., 2018). The role of the press in a political climate of intensifying conflict among European democracies, especially in relation to financial bailouts for EU member states and the EU's response to migration pressure, to name a few, has been criticized (Sarikakis, 2012). For instance, Tomov and Raycheva (2018) assert that for Bulgaria, populist messages are widely disseminated in the media, especially during the migrant crisis and periods of instability. They conclude that the media disseminate populist messages without

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the necessary criticism, not seeking different points of view on the subject. Due to the emergence and establishment of populist parties in the political field of virtually all European democracies, political communicators might cultivate a populist discourse in the public sphere which would then also be reflected in the degree of populism in newspapers.

Furthermore, existing theoretical accounts of populism and the media have suggested that we must distinguish between two forms of populist discourse in media coverage: First, populist messages stemming from political actors who communicate through the media thereby using the media as a communication channel for their ideas, and, second, populism voiced by media actors themselves. For the former, Esser, Stepinska and Hopmann (2017) have coined the term "populism through the media", and for the latter, "populism by the media". Mazzoleni (2008) has argued that we can speak of "media populism" when journalists create populist messages themselves – and thus become much more proactive than merely transmitting the populist statements of political actors.

The aim of the chapter is to explore the weight of factors that may help us to explain varying levels of populist communication within and between countries and newspapers, such as journalistic culture of a country, editorial mission of a medium, or style of an article. We work with the same content analysis data as already presented in the previous chapter by Blassnig et al. However, we will limit ourselves to the spring 2017 data (and leave aside the spring 2016 data) because we had a slightly larger number of countries in the sample in spring 2017. The following analyses are based on 762 news stories and 632 opinion pieces published in 34 newspapers from ten western and eastern European countries between February and April 2017. For more information on the type of stories and newspapers analyzed, and for more information on our operationalization of populism and exact methodical approach, we refer to the detailed information given in the preceding chapter of this book, by Blassnig et al.

Theoretical Background

Potential Factors Influencing Populism in the News Media

While scholars have theorized about populism and the media (Mazzoleni 2003, 2007; Esser, Stepinska, & Hopmann 2017; Krämer 2014), empirical investigations into the impact of potential factors on the proportion of populist statements in media coverage have remained rare. Furthermore, such studies have concentrated on relatively few variables. For instance, while several have dwelled on the difference between tabloids and broadsheets, hardly any studies considered additional factors such as the political leaning of a medium, the journalistic culture in a country, or characteristics of a news story (Akkerman 2011, Bos, van den Brug, & de Vreese 2010, Manucci & Weber 2017, Rooduijn 2014, Raycheva & Peicheva 2017). Building on previous work, the present analysis includes explanatory variables at three levels of analysis –countries, news outlets, and articles – to provide a more comprehensive account of what causes variation in the degree of populism in media coverage (see also the introduction to this book).

In the following, we first identify different influencing factors based on three theoretical perspectives. We then develop and subsequently test our hypotheses using correlation analyses and multi-level regression analyses. The strength of this study lies in the fact that we work with a larger sample of newspapers and countries than has been common in previous research on populism in the media.

Country-level: Journalistic culture (macro level). The first macro-level factor we wish to consider here is the journalistic culture in a country. Mass-mediated populist messages selected or produced by journalists might be favored by the media's built-in antagonism to political elites, which sometimes even borders on cynicism (Esser et al. 2017; Brants et al. 2011). According to this line of argument, an adversarial attitude of journalists towards political elites and their corresponding drive to behave as advocates of the common people, would

produce an anti-establishment bias in the news. A general cynical attitude towards political actors could make journalists more open to using populist messages, especially during crises. As a counter-argument one could offer the alternative view that the media in many countries serve more as a guard dog (than a watchdog) of the ruling political and economic order, and should therefore be regarded as part of the establishment itself – even if they may still occasionally criticize individual representatives of the elite (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995) – an argument also often put forward by political actors who criticize the media as part of the system. According to this alternative view, we would expect the media to carry *few populist messages*. High degrees of anti-elitism would be particularly unusual since, in this perspective, the elite is generally backed, not blamed. In any case, the orientation of the media towards political actors cannot be treated as a side issue when it comes to analyzing populism. This orientation is rooted in journalistic cultures acting at the national level (Hanitzsch et al., 2011).

Journalistic culture is thus among the macro-level factors that could account for different levels of populism in the media. Political coverage, institutional role conceptions – and especially the self-perceptions of political reporters – are an important element of journalistic culture. They define the journalists' primordial professional goals. In other words, role conceptions condition journalists' approaches to covering politics, and thus influences their style of reporting. Comparative studies have identified key differences in the impact of journalists' role conceptions in the media systems of European democracies (Pfetsch, Maurer, & Mayerhöffer 2014). Journalists' self-perceptions of their role can oscillate between (i) adversarial and (ii) monitorial, or even supportive/collaborative roles in their relationship to political actors, and between (iii) pedagogical-ethical and (iv) market-oriented roles in their relationship to the public. In political journalism especially, the question about which is the dominant role conception, affects the way news stories and opinion pieces are written,

including the decision about if and what populist messages should be included in news coverage.

In particular, the predominance of adversarial, collaborative, pedagogical, and market-oriented role conceptions in a country can be expected to influence the relationship of the media and the political elite and, by implication, the consideration of populist discourse in journalists' stories. These four roles correspond to the interventionism, power distance, and market orientation dimensions of journalism culture (Hanitzsch, 2011). First, a collaborative role conception pushes journalists to act as an extension of political parties, which indicates low power distance. For instance, a journalistic culture that sees high value in supporting political institutions will hardly produce media that critically scrutinize or openly repudiate politicians' statements. Rather, one can expect the media to include large parts of official political statements, relatively unfiltered and unquestioned, in their reporting. This allows us to formulate our first hypothesis: *The more dominant collaborative and supportive role conceptions are in the political journalism of a certain country, the more "populism through the media" we can we expect in news stories* (*H1a*).

Notwithstanding the argument above, a collaborative role orientation can also lead journalists to a critical attitude toward populist parties and their messages if established political forces are resolutely 'anti-populist'. Thus, since leading media are usually on the side of established parties, they tend to criticize populist parties and try to reserve the public sphere for their allies' messages. This behavior entails blocking populist messages, at least when they come from new challengers, with the aim to help the non-populist parties. Therefore, the first hypothesis might be dependent on the strength of political parallelism between non-populist, established parties, and leading media.

Journalists who are less willing to convey the arguments and adopt the frames put forward by political elites, can be expected to be more distant and often more adversarial

toward political power. They tend to embrace a watchdog role rather than the role of disseminator of politicians' messages. Such a journalistic culture at times pushes journalists to hold political elites publicly accountable, which can mean to admonish and reprimand them or their policies in articles that express the journalist's own voice. Therefore, we can formulate a second hypothesis, especially pertaining to opinion pieces: *The more deeply entrenched adversarial role conceptions are in the culture of political journalism of a certain country, the more "populism of the media" we can expect in opinion pieces (H 1b).*

On the other hand, in journalistic cultures characterized by a strong influence of pedagogical role perceptions, journalists see themselves as educators, guardians and conveyers of certain values. Those journalists score highly on the interventionism dimension since they pursue a particular mission. Most often, these are liberal values such as tolerance, appreciation of ethnic diversity, and cosmopolitism. These views are not in line with major parts of populist thought and with communication that focuses on national identity, the (native) people, and their delineation from outgroups. Hence, journalists adopting a pedagogical role are expected to filter out populist communications by sources, or to contextualize them in line with a social-responsibility ideal of journalism, and to be careful to avoid any populist discourse themselves.

This gate-keeping process may reduce the level of populism that political actors can infuse into media coverage compared to countries with a less pedagogical, more collaborative or adversarial journalistic culture. Hence, we expect: *The more dominant pedagogical role conceptions are in a country, the less likely journalists will be to include populist communication elements in news stories and opinion pieces (H1c).*

Last but not least, a strong drive in journalistic culture to accommodate the taste of the target-audience – in other words, the enhanced goal to produce stories that elicit broad interest and attention and 'sell' – could render journalists more likely to allow populist statements to slip into their coverage. This is known as a market-oriented role perception. This understanding

of the journalistic role has become even more tempting in the online age where media strive to attract views and clicks with hyped-up headlines and provocative story leads. So, if the political journalists in a country as a group have internalized a strong audience orientation as a professional leitmotif, there is a high chance that the media will display an enhanced degree of populist communication in news stories and opinion pieces, given that the elements of populism usually attract eye-balls. From this follows our fourth hypothesis: *The more dominant market-oriented role conceptions are, the more populist communication journalists will include in news articles and opinion pieces (H1d).*

Outlet-level: Editorial mission (meso level). Below the country level, at the meso-level of media organizations, newspapers are not completely similar with respect to how they cover political affairs. For instance, newspapers differ in their market orientation – that is, which groups in the reader market they want to address – and which editorial styles and strategies they use to win these groups over. In short, they differ in their editorial missions. Different editorial missions are particularly evident in the contrast between tabloid newspapers (targeting the mass-market) and broadsheets or quality newspapers (targeting better educated, up-market segments of the readership). Tabloids may define what voters should know to evaluate a person's fitness for public office very differently to how broadsheets might (Esser, 1999). The term tabloid refers more to a journalistic style than to a page format. A main criterion for delineating quality-oriented broadsheets from tabloids is an inclination of the latter towards gut issues and topics involving sleaze, scandal, sensation, human-interest and entertainment. These topics are supposed to sell better than the substance-heavy topics of the more serious-minded broadsheets.

Mazzoleni (2014) attributes to tabloids, an important role in the spread of populism. He perceives two mechanisms at play: First, against the background of their readership, popular media like to present themselves as advocate of the common citizen, which echoes the claim

of populist politicians to represent the interests of the common people. Second, in order to achieve the greatest possible attention and impact, tabloids attempt to make politics more palatable and accessible. They do so by stirring up emotions, articulating outrage, serving stereotypes, and exploiting news values. Quality newspapers, on the other hand, are said to largely dispense with populism because their values and interests are more in line with those of the traditional elite (Mazzoleni 2008; Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995).

However, research by Akkerman (2011), Bos and Brants (2014), and Rooduijn (2014) found no evidence for the assumption that tabloids publish significantly more populist content. However, it should be noted that Rooduijn (2014) used a more restrictive definition of populism and focused exclusively on opinion articles, while Akkerman (2011) and Bos and Brants' (2014) samples included a small number of mild tabloids. Therefore, the question can hardly be considered settled as yet. Above all, because Wettstein and colleagues (2018) recently discovered, in a ten-country study, that tabloid newspapers have a stronger propensity for people-centrist and anti-elitist bias in news reporting than in broadsheets, this confirmed the assumptions of Mazzoleni (2008, 2014) and Krämer (2014). In view of these discrepancies, we feel compelled to investigate systematically the extent to which different levels of populism in media coverage can be attributed to differences between a mass-market and up-market orientation of newspapers. First, we will investigate the initial assumption: *Mass-market newspapers feature more populist communication in news stories than up-market newspapers (H2a).*

We also want to investigate whether the different editorial missions of tabloids and qualities are also reflected in how much populism the two newspaper types publish in their commentaries. In this respect, Mazzoleni (2014) argues that tabloids are consciously amplifying populism to show their allegiance to the sentiment of the masses. Tabloids would thus become accomplices of populist movements, while quality newspapers are the safe-

guardians of the political establishment. If this assertion is true, mass-market newspapers should take a much stronger and more frequent populist stance in their comments on political affairs, than the elite-oriented up-market newspapers. Our hypothesis states: *We will find more populist communication in commentaries of mass-market newspapers than in those of up-market newspapers (H2b).*

Furthermore, the political leaning is another important component of a newspapers' editorial mission. Since right-wing populism emerged as the dominant form of this movement in most countries under study (with the potential exceptions of France, Italy and Greece where left-leaning populist movements were equally strong) at the time of study, we assume that right-leaning newspapers may be more receptive to populist statements than neutral or left-leaning newspapers. Hence: *We will find more populist communication in news stories and commentaries in right-leaning newspapers than in those of neutral/left-leaning newspapers (H2c).*

Outlet-level: News Logic. While some journalistic cultures and editorial missions may provide more favorable, and others less favorable, opportunity structures for using populist communication in media coverage, these are not the only factors to be considered. Another facilitator of populism-infused newspaper coverage is the extent to which articles follow a certain media logic. Mazzoleni (2008, 2014) argues that there is a congruence between forms of news media logic, and populist logic. For instance, blaming elites or outgroups for (alleged or real) wrongdoings, meets the criteria of news media logic due to the inherent negativity of the accompanying rhetoric. Unfortunately, there is very little empirical research on this connection, but based on prevailing theoretical assumptions (Mazzoleni, 2008, 2014) we expect that populism will encounter great publication opportunities in those newspaper articles that are written in a particularly dramatic, emotional, polarizing, and negative way. These characteristics of news media logic correspond to a widespread populist style (Jagers &

Walgrave, 2007; Block & Negrine, 2017). Since populists often use Manichean narratives, they resort to polarizing and emotional language, and dramatization. The vicinity of news media logic and populist style leads us to the next hypothesis: *News stories and commentaries that use the journalistic style elements of polarization, negativity, emotionality and drama, increase the chance that they also contain populist messages (H3).*

Furthermore, populist parties have a special relationship with two political issues across Europe, namely EU affairs, and immigration. In southern European countries such as Greece, Spain and Italy, left-leaning populist movements emerged from the organized resistance and mass protests against EU austerity policy (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014; Kioupkiolis, 2016). In Germany, the *Alternative fuer Deutschland* was founded as a populist party opposing the EU bailout, and later started to oppose Merkel's immigration policy. In other countries, opposition to European integration (e.g., in Poland) and opposition to immigration (e.g., in Norway, Serbia) are also part of the core populist beliefs. In France and Switzerland, populists campaign on both these issues simultaneously; the *Front National* and the *Swiss People's Party* strive to 'own' the issues of immigration and EU affairs and are convinced that citizens' opinion is on their side in this regard. For these reasons, populists in the respective countries focus their public communication efforts systematically on these topics (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007). We thus expect: *News articles that feature EU affairs as major topics in addition to immigration, contain more populist communication (H4a).* And: *Opinion articles that deal with the issues of immigration and European integration as their main topics, contain more populist communication (H4b).* To give the reader a better overview, we have summarized our hypotheses in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Overview of hypotheses

Journalistic Culture (country-/macro-level)		
- Collaborative and supportive role conception	→	More populist communication in news & commentary (H 1a)
- Adversarial role conception	→	More populist communication in commentary (H 1b)
- Pedagogical role conception	→	Less populist communication in news & commentary (H 1c)
- Market-oriented role conception	→	More populist communication in news & commentary (H 1d)
Editorial Mission (outlet-/meso-level)		
- Mass market orientation	→	More populist communication in news (H 2a) and commentary (H 2b)
- Right-wing political leaning	→	More populist communication in news and commentary (H 2c)
News Logic (outlet-/meso-level)		
- Style elements of negativity, emotionality, polarization, dramatization	→	More populist communication in news & commentary (H 3)
- Issue context of EU integration and immigration	→	More populist communication in news (H 4a) and commentary (H 4b)

Method

The study design and basic descriptive results are described in the previous chapter by Blassnig et al. The focus here is on the measures and additional contextual factors used in this chapter, and they refer the reader back to the previous chapter for further methodological information.

Dependent Variable

To measure the extent of populist communication in European newspapers, we use an index. However, the index we use in this chapter is slightly different from the index used in the other two content analysis-based chapters in this volume by Blassnig et al. and Esser et al. The reason for this deviation is that more advanced statistical analyses is used in this chapter, which

places higher demands on the dependent variable. Our dependent measure considers all 12 key populist messages separately and combines them in a sum index. Our index can therefore vary from 0 to 12. Each type of key message could only be counted once in the same article, except if the speaker or the target of that key message changed in that article. More details on how we coded the key messages are given in the previous chapter by Blassnig et al.

Since our index does not reflect the absolute number of *individual* populist messages used, but how many different *types* of key messages were included in articles, the empirical range is far below the theoretical maximum of 12. Empirically, we found that the European newspapers under study used between 0 and 5 different types of populist key messages per article. Furthermore, our dependent variable allows us to recognize the source of a key message, for instance whether it was a politician or the journalist writing the article. As mentioned, we distinguish between two types of story samples: immigration news coverage on one hand, and opinion pieces, irrespective of the topic, on the other (see the chapter by Blassnig et al. for details).

Independent variables

Journalistic culture (country-/macro-Level). Role perceptions are part of the journalistic culture. We are very grateful to Thomas Hanitzsch, who kindly allowed us to work with the variables from his *Worlds of Journalism Study* (WJS, see www.worldsofjournalism.org for more details). The countries included in our content analysis are also included in his survey of journalist populations – except for Poland, which we can therefore no longer consider in this chapter. Because the WJS team had recorded journalists' role conceptions prior to our content analysis, these role conceptions can be regarded as potential explanatory variables for the media content examined (in the sense that a potential cause must precede its effect). It is important to mention that this analysis will only use the answers of those journalists who work in the field of "political journalism"; these journalists

are most likely to be entrusted with the kind of news stories, political commentaries, and populist topics that we examined in our content analysis. To put it differently: the subgroup of WJS respondents we use here is, structurally, most similar to the writers of the newspaper articles we investigated in our content analysis.[1]

The journalists' views of their roles were aggregated at the country level, since these role perceptions are seen as expressions of national journalism cultures (or more precisely, as expressions of certain dimensions of national journalism cultures; see Hanitzsch, 2011). Here follows some information on how the WJS team measured these role concepts in their questionnaire. The collaborative role corresponds with the wish to be a "supporter of the government". The adversarial role conception reflects the opposite attitude and unites all those demonstrating a critical distance toward political power holders and authorities by describing themselves as "adversaries of the government". The third relevant orientation toward politics is the pedagogical role: these journalists wish to "promote tolerance" or "educate citizens". The fourth role perception expresses a strong market orientation, meaning that journalists see it as their primary task to cater to the tastes of the masses. It is reflected in a desire to "provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience".

News logic and editorial mission (outlet-/meso-level). When composing the media sample, we had already ensured that, wherever possible, we would select newspapers in each country that are both more left-wing, and more right-wing, in political terms, as well as newspapers that are both more up-market, and more down-market, oriented. The final selection decision was left to the country experts represented in Work Group 2 of our COST Action, who co-authored the three content analysis chapters in this book. We have used the frequent meetings of our working group to discuss the selection decisions and to standardize the evaluation standards created for this purpose (for details and outlets sampled, see the chapter by Blassnig et al.).

Article style (story level). The article style was determined, independent of populist key messages, on the story level, meaning that the whole article was evaluated before a code for its style was assigned. 'Negativity' was assessed by whether the story had an overall negative tone towards politics, including political actors. 'Dramatization' measured if a situation was described as exceptional by the excessive use of dramatized labels and superlatives. 'Polarization' measured whether the article presented a situation as polarized between two diametrically opposed attitudes toward an issue as if there was only 'black' and 'white'. 'Emotionalization' measured whether the article referred to the speaker's feelings, the feelings of persons or groups featured in the article, or made use of an emotional reporting style. The originally used, more differentiated measuring scales, were recoded into dichotomous variables (1=present, 0=not present) for this analysis.

Data Structure and Analysis

We use correlation and regression analysis to test our hypotheses. Because our data has a multilevel structure, the regression analysis must account for that. A common rationale for using multi-level models is to ensure that the estimates are trustworthy and not overly optimistic in finding non-null effects (McNeish, Stapleton, & Silverman, 2016). The news stories and commentaries are clustered in media outlets which are themselves clustered in countries. At the second level, i.e. the level of media outlets, we have 36 newspapers, 12 of which are mass-market newspapers and 24 are up-market newspapers. Moreover, the newspapers are nested in 12 European countries which, theoretically, form the third and highest level of analysis.

However, since we are dealing with 11 countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, UK), it is impractical to include the country-level as the third level in a multi-level model since the number is too low (see Snijders & Bosker, 1999; but also see the chapter by Hameleers et al. in this volume).

Therefore, we will construct multi-level models with newspapers defined as Level 2, and articles as Level1 units. That means, hypotheses relating to the news organization (*H2a – b*) test factors at Level 2, and hypotheses relating to the article (*H3, H4a – b*) are tested at Level 1 in a multi-level model. The hypotheses related to the country (*H1a – d*) are tested separately with a correlation analysis and only for information purpose in an additional multi-level analysis where the countries are defined as Level 2.

Results

Effects of Journalistic Culture on Populism in the Media (Country-Level)

With respect to journalistic role perceptions, the correlation analysis mainly supports the hypotheses. These results however must be interpreted with caution, since the number of cases ranges between only 8 and 11. Nonetheless, a few trends can be detected. First, in the news stories sample, a collaborative and supportive journalistic culture correlates with higher degrees of populism *through* the media, i.e. the average number of populist statements voiced by political actors ($r = .60$, $p < .05$). In other words, a collaborative and supportive journalistic culture tends to co-occur with a more permissive attitude to populism stemming from political actors. This finding is in line with *H1a*.

Second, *H1b* assumed that an adversarial journalistic culture would go hand in hand with more populism in commentaries. This is confirmed by a positive correlation for the goal "monitor and scrutinize political leaders" ($r = .71$, $p < .05$) and for the goal "be an adversary of the government" ($r = .40$, $p = .24$).

Third, a pedagogical role conception is indeed correlated with significantly less populist communication *by* journalists in immigration news stories ($r = -.75$, $p < .05$ for the item "educate the audience", and $r = -.37$, $p > .05$ for the item "promote tolerance and cultural diversity"). The degree of populism *through* the media is unaffected by a pedagogical culture,

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though. The predominance of a pedagogical role perception in a country is also correlated with less populism *by* journalists in opinion pieces ($r = -.51$, $p = .15$ for "educate audience"). So, overall, *H1c* is supported as well.

Fourth, there is a positive correlation between the goal to cater to the preferences of the audience, and the occurrence of populist messages of any type in immigration news stories in a country ($r = .54$). This is in line with the *H1d*, albeit there is no significant relationship.[2] These relationships are weaker in the opinion piece sample.

Overall, we can conclude that the predominance of certain role perceptions has a non-negligible influence on the degree of populism in the news coverage.[3]

Effects of News Logic and Editorial Mission (Story Level) on Immigration Coverage

Furthermore, we hypothesized that strong elements of news logic and the issue context of EU integration (*H3* and *H4a*) in an article, increased the presence of populist key messages – our dependent variable – in a news story. To test this, we used multi-level regression models; they consider the clustered structure of our data when estimating the effects, and separate the variance in populism that lies between the articles (Level 1) and between the newspapers (Level 2). As it is shown by the intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC) of the first, "empty" model (Table 6.2, Model 1), approximately 11 percent of the variance of populism lies between the newspapers.

Next, in Model 2 (Table 6.2), indicators of news logic are entered as fixed effects at Level 1 into the regression. As central elements of news logic, we test the effects of negativity, dramatization, polarization, and emotionalization. We assume them to have positive effects on the degree of populism (*H3*). Indeed, emotionalization, negativity, polarization, and dramatization all have significant, positive effects on the variety of populist key messages in immigration news stories (Table 6.2). The strongest effects come from negativity and polarization. The issue context also has the expected effect: A dummy indicating that an

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immigration-related news story is additionally concerned with EU affairs, has a positive effect which is in line with *H4a*.

The significant random effect of the intercept in Model 2 (Table 6.2) calls for testing the effects of explanatory factors located at the level of the newspapers (Level 2). To this end, we ran a means-as-outcomes model (Model 3, Table 6.2) in which we tested the fixed effect of a newspapers' market-orientation ("mass-market" coded 1, "up-market" coded 0) and political leaning ("right" coded 1, "neutral & left" coded 0).[4] Remember, we hypothesized that a mass-market orientation and a leaning to the political right would enhance populism in the articles of that newspaper. However, while both variables certainly do explain some variance of the intercept between the newspapers (Pseudo R^2 = 11,4%), their respective effects fail to reach significance, suggesting that neither has a substantial influence on the degree of populism in an article. Therefore, *H2a* and *H2b* receive no support.

Table 6.2 Factors explaining populism in news stories (MLA, Level 2: Newspaper)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Fixed Effects			
Grand Mean (Intercept)	.543***	-.904***	.497***
Level 1			
Style: Negativity		.335***	-
Style: Drama		.228***	-
Style: Polarization		.331**	-
Style: Emotion		.141*	-
Topic: "Europe"		.132*	-
Level 2 (Newspaper)			
Tabloid		-	-.112
Right leaning		-	.124
Random parameters			
Level 1 variance: $\sigma^2_{(within)}$	0.575***	0.485***	.567***
Level 2 variance: $\sigma^2_{(Between)}$	0.073**	0.077**	.051***
$R^2 (within)$		.171***	
$R^2 (between)$		-	.114
ICC	0.113	0.116	0.093
N Level 1	762	762	762
N Level 2	36	36	36

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Dependent variable: Populist communication (scale from 0 – 12). *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; (*) $p < .1$

Country as Level 2 Unit. To account for the fact that our data is nested in three layers (countries, newspapers, articles) and given that the previous models neglected the highest level of nesting (i.e., the country), we also fitted multi-level regression models where the 11 countries were defined as Level 2-units. Due to the low number of countries, we consider the coefficients as indicative evidence for the effect of country-level factors on populism.

Table 6.3 Factors explaining populism in news stories (MLA, Level 2: Country)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Fixed Effects			
Grand Mean (Intercept)	.543***	-.898***	.084
Level 1			
Style: Negativity		.324***	-
Style: Drama		.304***	-
Style: Polarization		.345**	-
Style: Emotion		.158*	-
Topic: "EU Affairs"		.126*	-
Level 2 (Country)			
Role: Support Govt.		-	.129
Role: Educate Audience		-	-.276*
Role: Cater to Audience		-	.417***
Role: Adversary of Govt		-	-.013
Random parameters			
Level 1 variance: $\sigma^2_{(within)}$	0.584***	0.490***	.598***
Level 2 variance: $\sigma^2_{(Between)}$	0.083(*)	0.093(*)	.011
$R^2(within)$		.176***	-
$R^2(between)$		-	.784***
ICC	0.124	0.135	0.078
N Level 1	762	762	553
N Level 2	12	12	9

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Dependent variable: Populist communication (scale from 0 – 12). *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; (*) $p < .1$

The fixed effects of the news logic indicators in the random intercept model (Model 2, Table 6.3) are similar to the first regression confirming the robustness of the results. Importantly, the model also shows that a substantial amount of variance of populism in news articles lies at the level of the countries ($\sigma^2_{(Between)}$ = .093, $p < .1$) which suggests testing the effect of explanatory factors at Level 2 with a means-as-outcomes model. Yet, results for the effect of country-level factors must be interpreted with caution, since we could only include between nine and 11 countries in the analysis, which is too few to calculate robust results. According to *H1a*, a

collaborative role perception, and to according to H 1d, a market-oriented role perception is both expected to increase the degree of populism, while *H1c* assumed that a pedagogical role perception dampens populism in news stories.

Model 3 (Table 6.3) shows that a journalistic culture driven by the market-oriented role perception indeed increases the presence of populist key messages used by journalists in that country's immigration news coverage. This is in line with *H1d*. On the other side, a journalistic culture with a strong pedagogical role perception limits inclination to use populist messages in news – as is indicated by the negative effect of the coefficient. Hence, *H1c* is also supported. However, neither the supportive nor the adversarial role perception seems to influence populism in the news.

Altogether, we can draw the conclusion from these analyses that news logic, along with the journalistic culture, matters for the degree of populism in immigration news coverage, while editorial mission in terms of market-orientation or political leaning of a newspaper does not.

Effects of News Logic and Editorial Mission (Story Level) on Opinion Piece Sample

We turn now to the opinion piece sample (632 items from 34 newspapers). We hypothesized analogously to the news articles that the same elements of news logic and the same issue contexts – EU affairs and immigration – would spur populism in commentaries (Level 1). The intra-class correlation coefficient from the empty model shows that a non-negligible 16.6 percent of the variation in the dependent variable lies between the newspapers, suggesting that there are variables at Level 2 at play. In our hypotheses *H2b* and *H2c,* we assumed that the editorial mission in terms of market orientation and the political leaning of the newspaper have effects on the occurrence of populism in commentaries. We thus tested these as potential Level 2 explanatory factors.

The fixed effects of the Level 1 predictors negativity, dramatization, polarization, and emotionalization, all have a significant and boosting effect on the degree of populist

communication. The strongest effects stem from negativity and dramatization. However, whether or not immigration or EU affairs are the main topics of a commentary is irrelevant for that matter. Hence, while *H3* is again supported, *H4b* must be rejected. Furthermore, we find that neither the mass-market vs. up-market difference, nor the political leaning, had any effect on the extent of populism in a commentary (Table 6.4, Model 3).

Furthermore, we again fitted a means-as-outcomes model in which countries were defined as Level 2 for informational purposes (not shown as table). It indicates the effects of the journalistic role perceptions on populism in the commentaries. The strongest effect stems from the educational role and is negative, as expected, thereby further supporting *H1c*. Adversarial and supportive roles both have a weaker, positive effect which is also in line with the hypotheses. However, none of these effects reaches the conventional levels of significance.

Table 6.4 Factors explaining populism in opinion pieces (MLA, Level 2: Newspaper)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Fixed Effects			
Grand Mean (Intercept)	0.907***	-1.011***	.870***
Level 1			
Topic "Immigration"		-.023	-
Topic "EU affairs"		.086	-
Style: Negativity		.501***	-
Style: Drama		.359***	-
Style: Polarization		.274*	-
Style: Emotion		.159*	-
Level 2			
Right-leaning		-	.179
Tabloid		-	-.032
Random parameters			
Level 1 variance: $\sigma^2_{(within)}$	0.766***	0.641***	0.766***
Level 2 variance: $\sigma^2_{(Between)}$	0.152***	0.095***	0.146***
R^2 (within)		.215***	-
R^2 (between)		-	.051
ICC	0.166	0.104	0.168
N Level 1	632	632	632
N Level 2	34	34	34

Note: Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients. Dependent variable: Populist communication (scale from 0 – 12). ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$; (*)$p < .1$

Discussion and Conclusion

Taken together, the results of our analyses suggest the following: First, the fact that there is significant variation in populist communication between the countries underlines the relevance of factors operating at the country level. Among them are elements of journalistic culture that clearly matter for the extent of populist communication. In particular, a predominance of pedagogical motivations in the role orientation of journalists, acts as a brake for using populist messages in news coverage. Journalists who see themselves primarily as educators for their audience, filter out populist statements from their articles. Normatively, this

behavior can be assessed from two directions: On one hand, it can be welcomed as a contribution by socially responsible media who seek to contribute to the rationalization of social discourse and who do not wish to promote populist simplifications (or political actors who use them). However, it could also be critically questioned as an attempt to influence the public in which social discourses are narrowed down based on subjective convictions of media actors. Here we need comparative international follow-up studies in order to learn more about the motives of journalists and then to develop effective strategies for dealing with populists that are tailored to the individual countries.

In contrast to pedagogical ambitions stand the influences of market-oriented, supportive and adversarial role perceptions. With regard to the latter role concepts in particular – supportive and adversarial – it is worth saying a little more. If journalists and political actors interact in an ambiance characterized by the journalistic understanding that the media should be facilitators of the government, the media are more permissive with respect to populist political messages. This is probably because journalists see the newspaper's role more in acting as a passive carrier than an active gatekeeper of politicians' pronouncements – even if populist in nature. The predominance of an adversarial journalistic culture, on the other hand, seems to motivate journalists to use more blunt, aggressive language towards elites – including populist statements – in editorials and commentaries.

Our second point of note from this study is that tabloids are not more prone to carry populist messages than broadsheets, despite tabloids' efforts to popularize their content to the largest possible audience. Although found in other studies with different samples (e.g., Wettstein et al., 2018), a tabloids-meet-populism hypothesis is not confirmed by our data. We are not alone in rejecting this widespread assumption. We thus confirm similar findings of various smaller studies, for example those of Rooduijn (2014) and Akkerman (2011). According to our data, it is not a mass-market orientation at the level of the media organization

that spurs journalists' use of populist communication. Rather, journalists' strong preference for features of news logic increases their probability of incorporating populist messages in the same article. In particular, stories emphasizing political conflict and containing emotional cues, create favorable conditions for adding populist content. The fact that we could not find any significant differences between tabloids and broadsheets can also be interpreted as an incentive to take a closer look at how journalists deal with populist messages in their daily work. Future studies may need to examine more precisely how journalists use, construct, modify, and incorporate these messages – and how this looks in detail. For instance, it might be that tabloids and broadsheets do not differ in the sheer amount of populist content, but rather in the ways in which they present these populist messages, for example in headlines or visuals.

As a potential caveat of the analyses, we must consider that the style elements we assume to be independent variables somehow bear a natural resemblance to some of the populist messages, for example in utterances that contain keen criticism of the elite, or that set immigrants and the resident population against each other. So, one could argue as well that populist content is conducive to an emotional, negative, dramatic, or polarized style. Although it is hard to decide which triggers which in journalistic reporting by way of content analysis, we lean to the view that negativity, polarization etc., are broader frames for political stories that – in the sense of a favorable environment – increase the opportunity for populist messages to slip in as well. Therefore, we believe their conceptualization as an independent variable is justified. Another limitation is that we used a broad concept of anti-elitism, which we think is necessary to capture the cross-national variety of populist utterances.

Furthermore, from a bird's eye view, the fact that we found strong differences between countries, is in line with other cross-cultural studies – such as those explaining the media coverage of the EU financial crisis – which also found a strong influence of national-level factors on reporting (Picard, 2015; Maurer, 2016). Similarly, the country was the strongest

predictor in a European study of national MP's EU attitudes, outweighing the influence of their individual political leaning (Gaxie & Hubé, 2013). Thus, our findings perfectly align with other recent findings demonstrating a powerful role of the national context for how journalists understand and interpret political reality. The present study suggests that this impact also applies to the extent to which journalists include populist messages in immigration-related news stories and commentaries on political affairs.

Summing up, populism is not treated the same way in divergent national journalistic cultures. The differences, with respect to the degrees of populism in the coverage, are echoed by differences between parties to which this label is attached. For example, the differences between the degree of populism in France, and in Germany, could be explained in terms of the different stages in the development of these countries' populist parties or movements. Whereas the *Front National* in France is an old phenomenon, the German *Alternative fuer Deutschland* was in its insurgent stage during the time of data collection. In more general terms, this means that instead of searching for a universal blueprint of the relationship between the media and populism that applies across Europe, we must think in terms of path-dependencies or national political and journalistic fields if we are to understand the relationship between media and populist actors.

The present study permits us to suppose that newspaper coverage of populist messages is more dependent on the political field structure and the shape of journalistic culture than on universal newspaper types in terms of tabloid or broadsheet. The clear association of media logic contained in a story and populist content which our analysis revealed aside, there is arguably less of a transnational pattern for how media deal with populist communication, then a national way that depends in part on the political and journalistic culture. This invites us to be much more cautious when comparing, not just populist communication, but media cultures and systems cross-nationally. Clearly there is a lot of heterogeneity in the way specific media

segments and genres operate across Europe, and it is often risky to put individual outlets in one basket (or under one label) and treat them equally, as our analysis has demonstrated once more. Therefore, this chapter finally argues for a more nuanced, culture-sensitive approach to cross-national comparisons of journalistic cultures and their outcomes.

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[1] We had to deviate from this line for France because not enough political journalists could be identified in the WJS data set; for that reason, we did our calculations with the entire French sample.

[2] The tendency reported here is further corroborated by a positive correlation ($r = .39$, $p = .23$) between populism, and an index measuring market-orientation of journalists (which is called "accommodative role" in the Worlds of Journalism study).

[3] Taking into account that national journalism cultures may be even better reflected by the aggregate role conceptions of all kinds of journalists (not only political), we also ran the correlations with values for the whole journalistic workforce. These correlations were all in the same direction as those with the values for political journalists, yet constantly lower. This supports our initial argument that there should be a stronger relationship between features of *political* coverage, and the professional orientations of journalists *specializing in political reporting*.

[4] In the immigration sample, tabloids harbor on average less than half a populist message per news article (0.42), while quality papers contain slightly more (0.53). The difference is however not statistically significant. With regards to opinion pieces, the average number of populist messages is 0.88 of a message for both types of newspapers.