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Expanding the Conceptualisations of Citizenship Norms—A Qualitative Study of Young Poles and Their Parents

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Abstract: Research shows that the way people define a good citizen can influence their political participation. However, the well-known binary concept of 'engaged' and 'duty-based' citizenship, used in mass surveys, does not apply to the majority of studied populations; therefore, its usefulness can be disputed. Such social norms of citizenship can also change over time and this process can be profound in countries that undergo a political system change, like Poland in the 1980–90s. To gain insight into how Poles understand citizenship, and how the engaged/duty-based concept applies to them, we interviewed 32 Poles—young people and their parents. Our analysis shows that the standard conceptualisation would have not accounted for two key elements of our participants' understanding of citizenship—a 'character' and a 'patriotic' component. This finding demonstrates the continuing impact of moral values and the salience of the national context. In particular, parents and inactive young people based their definitions on these two components. Active young people, on the other hand, chose all-encompassing citizenship norms, mixing engaged, duty-based, patriotic and character elements in their normative repertoire.

Keywords: citizenship norms; political participation; Poland

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1. Introduction

Researching why people are active, along with the reasons for their lack of political participation, has been the focus of a great number of studies over several decades. These issues have so far been foregrounded theoretically, but the literature provides mixed empirical explanations at best, as we present later while discussing the theoretical framework of this study. That said, what is known for certain is that the participation of citizens in politics, measured mostly using the traditional representative democracy channels, started dwindling in the second part of the 20th century [1] (pp. 261–285). Eventually, researchers started to reflect on the measures and definitions of political participation and began to identify a change, an apparent preference for self-expressive, ad hoc, and issue-oriented activity, particularly among young people [2].

The various hypotheses tested over the years by scholars in the political participation field can be divided into three types of explanations—structural, attitudinal and those relating to social norms. Firstly, structural factors such as age, educational attainment and income have been found to be positively associated with increased political activity, for example [3–5]. Secondly, attitudinal aspects such as political knowledge, political interest and political efficacy, all linked with each other, have been found to explain political participation levels [6–8]. Lastly, social norms relating to the citizenship concept have been used in a growing number of studies looking at the differences in the participation styles of both younger and older generations [5,9,10].

This article will focus on the third type of explanation because differences in the prevalence of citizenship norms among younger and older cohorts are particularly relevant in the Central and Eastern European countries that underwent a political and economic transformation at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. In these post-communist countries, with older cohorts socialised under the previous regime and younger cohorts educated in a reformed, democratic system, parental citizenship norms may not only mismatch with the new system, but may also have had a continuous impact on the younger cohorts and on the way they participate in politics.

Further, this article focuses on Poland. Even though this Central European nation has undergone one of the most successful economic transitions among the post-communist countries [11], the Polish population's flourishing economic activity does not seem to be matched by its political participation levels. Polish citizens are not only trailing behind their Western colleagues when it comes to political activity, but are also less active when compared to some of their colleagues from other post-communist nations [12]—this international study uses both, conventional (e.g., voting, party membership, interest, etc.) and unconventional indicators (e.g., participation in demonstrations) to asses national levels of political participation]. Such findings can come as a surprise considering the crucial role that Poland's strong civil society played in the country becoming the first of the 'satellite' states to peacefully transition to a democratic regime [13].

The study presented below applied the social norms perspective to explore the context for political participation in Poland. The main objective of the research was to understand how young Poles and their parents, 30 years after the democratic transformation, define citizenship norms and political participation and how their approaches compare.

We use the theoretical approaches proposed by Dalton [10] and Norris [5], who, while recognizing the post-materialistic shift in citizenship norms, developed the concept of 'engaged', 'critical' citizens. Several later studies provided a more detailed description of the prevalence of such new 'engaged', 'expressive' and 'critical' behaviours, as well as the corresponding norms, within various national and cross-national contexts [9,14–18].

The article is based on a qualitative study of parent–child dyads, which involved conducting 32 in-depth interviews in Poland between 2019 and 2021.

2. Theoretical Framework

Citizenship norms, the focus of this article, are a key concept used by scholars exploring the factors differently impacting whole generations, particularly young people. There is no consensus regarding the strength and direction of the impact of social norms on individuals' behaviour, including concepts such as citizenship norms; several studies provide evidence of social norms impacting political behaviour [9,10,19], and there are numerous publications presenting opposite findings, or at least revealing the mutual influence of the norms and behaviours people engage in [20,21].

What has been evident for both 'camps' is that the last two decades has seen the emergence of new styles of citizenship. Ronald Inglehart's scholarship in particular has laid the foundations for this strand of research. Inglehart's work on shifts in intergenerational values, which accompany modernisation processes, highlighted how overarching values changes can translate into the apparent transformation of the citizenship concept by introducing self-expressive, emancipative, post-materialistic orientations [22,23]. Inglehart's concept of intergenerational values change—the product of advanced industrialism—has become very helpful in interpreting the processes that Western societies have been going through, such as the growing dissatisfaction with formal politics and an increased interest in new social movement issues (environmental, women's and ethnic minorities' rights, among others). Because new issues find it difficult to enter the political agenda, the meth-

ods employed to position them on it have to be more direct and "citizen-led" [24]; hence, there is an increased preference for self-expressive methods of participation [4,25]. Rising expectations and the increased criticism of party politics have been spreading among, in particular, the young and the post-materialistic [26]. Younger, post-materialist citizens, while distancing themselves from bureaucratic, hierarchical, elite-directed organisations, have at the same time become more involved in unconventional, elite-challenging forms of political participation [23,25].

The work of two other prominent scholars in the field, Russel Dalton and Pippa Norris, reflect this shift in thinking. Dalton was one of the first scholars to interpret the decreasing trust in politicians and political institutions, the declining attachment to political parties and dissatisfaction with the democratic regime's performance—but also the consistent support for democratic values and political community—as a series of signs of a changing political participation pattern: not as a crisis of democracy, but an opportunity for improving the way it functions [27]. Rebutting the claim that American democracy is in peril, he made a case for a different narrative, investigating a change in citizenship norms and the resulting new participation styles of citizens [10]. The author embraced the modernisation hypothesis of Ronald Inglehart and suggested that these self-expressive values are responsible for a generational difference in political taste.

To this end, Dalton turned the question of the decline of the democratic, good citizen on its head and instead pondered what it means to be a good citizen for contemporary Americans. He presented two, seemingly distinct, concepts: first, that of "duty-based" citizenship, with its high acceptance of state authority and law-abiding, tax-paying, voting citizens; and the other of an "engaged" citizenship, emphasising citizens' interest in politics, activity in voluntary groups and a general concern for others. The author of "The Good Citizen" argued that there may be an erosion of the duty-based norms, but that engaged citizenship is thriving, particularly among the young. Dalton claimed that the nature of norms changed substantially in the latter half of the 20th century, and following in Almond and Verba's [28] footsteps, the scholar suggested that there is a link between social norms and patterns of citizens' behaviour. However, instead of identifying the cultural preconditions of democracy, they emphasised that the increasing individualisation of politics, with citizens' participation taking on unconventional forms and an eclectic and egocentric citizenship model being developed, are all putting pressure on representative democratic institutions, a pressure that simply requires an upgrade to democracy's interface [1].

Other researchers also found empirical evidence of a generational change, with cause-oriented engagement favoured by younger people. Work by Pippa Norris [5] drew on the 15-nation 2002 European Social Survey's results to present a compelling argument for a generational shift in the political activities of citizens. In order to identify the nature of the change, Norris distinguished between the repertoires of political participation relating to traditional voluntary associations (political parties, trade unions, churches) and new social movements and advocacy networks [5] (p. 22). The author observed therein that the established distinction between "conventional" and "protest" repertoires is no longer valid, as the acts themselves have changed their meaning. She therefore proposed a distinction between citizen-oriented and cause-oriented repertoires, the former being in relation to political parties and elections, and the latter being associated with an issue or single cause, with this repertoire usually performed outside representative democracy channels. The author supported an argument from Inglehart's work on post-materialistic values and attributed the emergence of cause-oriented, life-style politics to this cultural change. Norris also suggested that young voters are "on the run" and have changed the avenues they use for political expression. To be more specific, Norris argues that youth's decreasing participation in standard representative democracy's political practices

("politics of loyalties") is being compensated by an increase in the usage of a new repertoire of activities, such as cause-oriented consumer boycotts (as well as "buycotts"), petitions or demonstrations ("politics of choice") [5].

Several publications have since corroborated the above proposals with evidence from various national and cross-national contexts. The results of Hooghe and Oser's [16] 21-country study showed how the engaged citizenship norms became more prevalent over a 10-year period, at the same time as the duty-based norms lost popularity. The conceptualisations mentioned so far have limited explanatory power, with the majority of studied populations choosing a mixture of the two styles or none at all, for example [16,18]. The new, participative type of citizen has been found mainly among younger cohorts, (see [15,29]). However, there is lack of clear evidence to determine whether the new activity preferences, and concurrent distaste for formal politics, result from a life-cycle effect [5] or whether they are a distinct feature of a younger generation who will never be active in the same way as their parents [30]. Hooghe and Oser's [16] analysis also, importantly, shows that the duty-based/engaged concept does not apply to a large portion of the studied populations of adolescents, whose normative choices are generally all-embracing, with no definite preferences for either the engaged or duty-based side.

2.1. Citizenship Norms in Poland

Are the younger cohorts of Poles also more willing to become involved in such 'new politics' as described above, channelling their political participation through non-standard methods such as informal, non-hierarchical groups of various ideological hues or all kinds of protest?

When it comes to street activities, on the surface, Poland has in recent decades seen a widely covered resurgence of demonstrations and protests—starting from the mobilisation of citizens following the 2010 Smoleńsk plane crash [31], through street demonstrations following the 2016 parliamentary elections and proposed changes to laws regarding abortion (so called "Black Protest") [32], to citizen protests during the COVID-19 epidemic [33]. Young people's apparent keenness to participate in such activities is often attributed to "biographical availability" [34], as well as a distaste for institutional methods (such as activity in political parties). Street activities are also considered popular, because protest, as a tool for political expression, is a fashionable method that is implemented for a growing number of issues [35].

But is there an alignment between the protest activities people engage in and the norms they hold? In general, the causal relationship between citizenship norms and behaviours is still to be established, with some research pointing to a link between the two [29] and some highlighting weak ties between good citizen norms and participation, particularly for former communist European countries [9] (p. 61). National studies have provided evidence that points to a limited impact of new participative styles on young people's activity choices in Poland. Even though electoral turn out, as well as membership in political parties, is lower among younger citizens [36,37], young Poles' views on non-standard participation are not more enthusiastic.

To be specific, ten years after the democratic transformation, Polish teenagers' idea of what a good citizen's activity should look like was almost entirely 'conventional' [38]. The engagement of such citizens in civil and civic matters was limited to the following: abiding by the law, being informed about the country's history, loyalty and willingness to take part in military service (at the time of the report's publication, this was compulsory for men leaving school and not enrolled in higher education courses). Political and civic activity should not be too strenuous; therefore, Polish teenagers did not think that supporting their

fellow countrymen and their rights and being involved in local communities or political parties were the most important behaviours associated with being a good citizen [38].

Twenty years after the transformation, Poles' perception of citizenship already included both engaged and duty-based norms, as Coffe and van der Lippe's [39] quantitative examination of citizenship norms found. However, Dalton's thesis of a new style of citizenship and an erosion of the duty-based norms among the young was not fully confirmed; young Poles scored lower on duty-based norms, but the only significant correlation between age and engaged citizenship was negative (older citizens scored lower with regard to these norms).

It must be emphasised that this popular, dichotomous typology of engaged and duty-based norms rarely exists in clean types, as the majority of respondents in the populations studied subscribe to a mixture of citizenship norms. Although there has been a handful of country-specific studies that investigate how people themselves define politics and citizenship norms, for example [40–42], political participation research is dominated by such quantitative, survey-based research methods. For this reason, survey definitions of citizenship and political participation may not be accurately and comprehensively capturing the nature of these phenomena. What is more, our understanding of citizenship, particularly as a legal status, is changing, with more people choosing to describe themselves as so-called 'global citizens' rather than using national identities [43]. It is therefore important to examine if the abovementioned citizenship norms concepts, based on and defined for Western European or North American populations, are appropriate for explaining how populations of CEE countries understand the role of citizens in politics. Consequently, the present study used a qualitative approach to explore how Poles consider belonging to local, national and global communities of their own choosing by exploring the everyday meaning of citizenship.

2.2. Post-Transformation Poland

Poland's path following the 1989 transition was a rocky one—the country went from a centrally planned economy to a free market in one sweep [44]. In the first few years after the transition, Poland's economy was characterised by high prices, inflation, the insolvency of state-owned companies, long-term unemployment and chaotic privatisation [45]. By the end of the 1990s, Poland had gone through several rounds of democratic elections, the economy had stabilised, and the country had joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and begun to negotiate its accession to the European Union (EU). Poland joined the EU on 1 May 2004 after a national referendum in favour of membership [46].

The political party scene following the accession was "monopolised" by a "duopoly" of Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska—PO) and Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość—PiS) [47]. These two political groupings both started in the early 2000s and both were successful in forming governments—PO between 2007 and 2011, 2011 and 2015 and since 2023, and PiS between 2015 and 2019 and 2019 and 2023.

Poland's continued economic growth was amplified with the opening of new opportunities after its accession to the EU [11]. Poland has also been undergoing a demographic change; on the one hand, the free flow of goods and people meant that large numbers of Polish citizens migrated to other EU countries, while at the same time, good economic prospects and flexible migration policies attracted migration from Ukraine and Belarus [48].

2.3. Research Objectives

This study followed the approach found in the social norms literature (such as that in [49]) and applied it to citizenship norms in Poland. Firstly, participants were invited to define for themselves the concept of a good citizen and what constitutes political par-

ticipation (normative expectation). Furthermore, participants were asked to reflect on how people around them follow the norm and what people's levels of political activity are (empirical expectation). To capture the elusive process of social pressure, participants were asked to reflect on any barriers or reasons for political activity or inactivity (norm adherence consequences). In addition to citizenship norm definitions, participants were asked to expand on how they act politically, and what their paths to political participation have been. For the purposes of this article, only the findings obtained for the first objective are presented below.

3. Methods

This research used a qualitative approach. The reasons for choosing this approach were twofold—firstly, the quantitative studies included in the literature review have not provided conclusive results with respect to the prevalence of the theoretically driven typologies of duty-based/engaged citizenship styles in Poland. Secondly, existing evidence shows that young people may appear passive due to a narrow understanding of politics [50]. Allowing study participants to define citizenship norms and political participation in their own words meant that the existing conceptualisations could be enriched, also offering a unique opportunity to compare the pre- and post-transformation cohorts.

Qualitative content analysis was used to examine 32 in-depth interviews. The purposive sample consisted of 19 participants born after 1989 (the year when the Polish parliament approved the change in the country's constitution, legally marking the change of political system) and 13 of their parents. To provide data with high variability, active young people were recruited through two non-governmental initiatives, one with a conservative profile, and the other with a liberal/left-leaning profile. The rest of the young people came from a convenience sample obtained via a snowballing technique. The makeup of the young people's sample reflected the wider demographic, with 9 female and 10 male interviewees, with a higher degree of attainment in around half of the sample and their residence being evenly distributed among smaller, medium and highly populated locations. We asked young participants to invite one of their parents to take part in the study. After initial agreement and the exchange of contact details, interviews with the parents of 13 out of the 19 study participants were secured.

Due to the safety restrictions implemented as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic (interviews were conducted between 2019 and 2021), during the second round of interviews we used online conferencing platforms or a telephone. The data were collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews. The parents' and young Poles' interviews were not only conducted but also coded separately within the software environment. This approach was useful for the later analysis and presentation of findings; both code frames shared the majority of the main nodes. The design and implementation of this study followed the examining university's guidelines on research ethics [51].

In the absence of a baseline, in-depth understanding of Poles' citizenship norms in the post-communist reality, and due to inconclusive evidence from quantitative studies using conceptualisations that are applicable to Western populations, our aim was to explore the individual perspective of young Poles and their parents. As such, using qualitative methods did have its limitations.

The young people's sample was generally consistent with the country's demographic make-up; however, the parent sample was smaller in size due to difficulties accessing data (13 out of the 19 young Poles' parents agreed to take part in the interviews). Young interviewees, acting as gatekeepers, were asked to gain approval for an interview with one of their parents, without the researcher communicating any preference for the maternal or paternal side. The resulting parent sample was made up of 10 mothers and 3 fathers, which

may have introduced group-specific perspectives that were not anticipated by this study design (Appendix A contains more detailed demographic information about the sample).

Furthermore, this research was conducted among a small, purposive sample of adolescents and their parents living in Poland. The qualitative approach allowed us to explore study participants' views in great depth; however, any definite conclusions need to be considered with caution. A mass-survey-style longitudinal study would be required to ascertain if and how the findings presented below are also applicable to other parts of the population and if the perceptions of citizenship change over time.

4. Findings

Presented below are a selection of the study's findings; however, they do offer a particularly important and enriching perspective on the way the concept of citizenship is understood in Poland.

4.1. A Citizen as a 'Good Person'

The parents' definition of a good citizen, in contrast to their offspring's, mainly used language relating to personal character. The straightforward 'a good citizen is a good person' was mostly given as a first answer, often backed up by other descriptions of a tolerant, respectful, honest or well-behaved person. Being a good person does not exclude being a citizen; however, the emphasis on the personal sphere and the lack of reference to the state or political matters was very clear. It is also difficult to operationalise this rule—to be a good person is to rely on a personal, individual understanding of what being good entails. One parent pondered whether using the term citizen is even needed:

A good citizen is a good person, what difference does it make whether we call him a citizen or a person? Well, there is only one more thing, that being a good person can mean being good to others and to yourself, and being a good citizen is being good to others (Interviewee P4-I).

This personal, moral context appeared, for example, as one parent elaborated that to be a good citizen, one has to rely on their conscience:

Live in accordance with your conscience. Be good to your family, at work, so that. . . It seems to me that if you live this way, the state will also be in a good condition, a better condition (Interviewee P20-I).

This 'character' element is an example of an informal rule, which does not offer direct and clear instructions for how to behave; for it to be effective, it has to exist in a wider context of shared moral values. It was possible to identify a minimal instructional message in the norm, with rule suggesting that people should not behave in a way that could be bothersome to others, or that could have negative impact on them: 'To be simply a good person, to do no harm to anyone, above all' (Interviewee P20-I). In addition, another interviewee explained the following: 'A good citizen, that is a good person, who above all does not hurt another person' (Interviewee P10-I). In their definitions, the parents used either only the 'good person' rule and corresponding character traits, or mentioned this rule in their more comprehensive answers.

The above 'character' component of a 'good citizen' definition was also featured in some of the responses of the young people; however, in all cases, it was featured as part of a much longer definition. One young interviewee had trouble describing who a 'good citizen as a good person' is: 'I don't know how to. . .well, everybody knows who a good person is, what the traits are, which are understood as good, as accepted as good' (Interviewee Y19-I); this is a finding that again points to the wider normative context that the rule exists in.

Young people defined a good citizen as someone who is reactive when others are in a difficult situation and as someone who is vocal when others are not following the

rules, such as 'throwing rubbish or destroying something' (Interviewee Y25-A). Where parental definitions pointed to the more passive behaviour of not harming anyone and being respectful, young Poles emphasised a more active approach when talking about norms.

4.2. A 'Patriotic' Element of Citizenship

Another common element of the definition contributed by parents consisted of a sphere of behaviours and attitudes relating to Poland. In those instances, the informal rules took on a patriotic tone; parents talked about respecting the homeland as well as national symbols, and supporting the native economy, expressed simply as follows: 'hang the flag and buy 590'[1] (Interviewee P12-I). Parents further emphasised the importance of historical knowledge: 'to be a good citizen is first and foremost . . . for me, history is of great importance, so to remember your past' (Interviewee P7-I). They also emphasised the importance of caring for the country and the immediate environment, and not 'bad-mouthing your homeland' (Interviewee P21-I). Interviewees also drew attention to the sphere of work, emphasising working 'for Poland' as a goal, and in consequence, building the country's wealth:

Work for Poland and not for other nations. (. . .) And we all should strive for prosperity in Poland. We have the conditions for that. After all, Poland occupies the middle of Europe, and the first union was formed in Poland. And we really have very talented people (Interviewee P8-I).

This patriotic strand was also visible in the statements of young Poles; the issue of respect for the state was accompanied by respect for the homeland, national symbols and the territorial defence of the country. As one of the interviewees pointed out, the nation and the state had not been synonymous concepts for Polish people until quite recently. More than 100 years of partitions ending after the First World War, the de facto occupation of the country, and the control of internal politics by a foreign state during the period of communism that lasted from the end of the Second World War until 1989 meant that:

The nation has not always been identified with the state. Only recently have we been lucky enough to have us Poles as the country's hosts. So being a good citizen has not always meant being a good Pole. . . (Interviewee Y2-A).

As successive interviewees stated, a good citizen 'is above all someone who loves his country' (interviewee Y18-I), and someone who 'first and foremost wants to do good for his country, for his homeland' (Interviewee Y24-A). In addition, 'it would be good if, in case of last resort, he defended his country' (Interviewee Y24-A).

4.3. Young People and Online Activism

An interesting finding arose in relation to the limited use of online activism in defining good citizenship by young interviewees. When asked about examples of political activity, the responses given were quite diverse, but low on expressive and online activities, which much of the literature identifies as methods favoured by the young. This approach was present not only among those participants who identified as inactive politically, but also among those who believed they were active. Even though the active participants were dipping their toes into being vocal on social media, they treated it with caution and anxiety. One local activist, while appreciating social media's ability to turn young local politicians into well-known people, reflected on the feeling of being constantly scrutinised:

'I can feel the fear of being judged, not necessarily by professionals, but by everyone, because everybody feels they are experts on social media' (Interviewee Y23-A).

Some interviewees simply stated they had a preference for exchanging views face-to-face, with friends in their close circle, anticipating conflicts and arguments:

Facebook is such a place where I have a lot of friends, those related to work, to the industry, let's call it that. I also have friends that I have from other spheres of life and not necessarily everyone is interested in that, I respect it, so I don't spam Facebook with such things. I keep it for my narrow circle (Interviewee Y27-A).

Some interviewees did not think social media activism was constructive:

I consider all Facebook manifestations, and also manifestations in the form of clothing, to be unnecessary. This is something completely unknown to me, this purely symbolic engagement. I believe that it does not contribute anything (Interviewee Y2-A).

Interviewees also explained that their lack of online political expression was caused by the wide diversity of their friends' views and potential disagreements:

By the way, I always try not to express my political views so publicly, because I know what it ends up with. And the environment, in which I work, is so diverse that these topics are not in the foreground, so I do not express my position, my view on political life in public (Interviewee Y19-I).

Such opinions can be reflective of a wider aversion toward sharing political opinions online to avoid conflict, in line with existing survey research [52]. Considering how popular social media usage is internationally, the comments above signal that young Poles were very cautious about what they share online and with whom.

In addition, the majority of the interviewees believed that what prevents Poles from being more expressive online is the fear of conflict it could bring.

The fact that young Poles were not keen on expressive, online activity is supported by the results of public opinion polling, according to which only six percent of the Polish population engaged in online discussions about politics, and of those who shared their opinions, only two percent did so with strangers [52] (pp. 5–60). According to the survey, 15 percent of respondents had had an argument about politics with someone recently. With a reported rise in incivility in political communication and evidence pointing to its detrimental effect on political activity [53], it may be that the young Poles interviewed for this study are purposefully avoiding conflict online.

4.4. Summary of the Analysis

When comparing the contents of the definitions of a good citizen en masse, the parents and young Poles differed in their approaches. The parental definitions were limited in scope and length, with some giving responses that were as short as one sentence, whereas the young elaborated at length on various definitional elements. This signals a certain level of political sophistication and an ability to explain topics that are not addressed in everyday discussions.

There were some minimal similarities within all of the parent–child pairs, which is to be expected, given the particularity of most parental definitions and how wide-ranging those of the young were. The biggest similarity between approaches was visible in the definitions of only one pair, in which both the parent (the only one in the sample) and the offspring considered themselves to be active politically[2]. Some similarities were visible among the inactive parents and their inactive offspring (both definitions sharing one element, most commonly of a 'character', 'patriotic' or 'duty-based' type).

As noted already, the parents' most common response was a character definition, stressing the personal and moral context of a citizen's behaviour; this did not present itself as prominently in the more complex responses of younger interviewees. Furthermore, the definitions of both groups incorporated rules referring to positive feelings for Poland as a nation, as well as approaches towards the state, affirming support for the legal and tax systems. The young additionally elaborated on many types of citizen behaviour, including

self-expression, political interest, involvement in non-governmental organisations and local communities, and electoral activity.

All in all, as a result of the analysis, it was possible to find examples of 'all-around' citizen definitions, mostly among the active young. Parents and some of the young people offered conceptions, which were clearly limited to duty-based norms, with an emphasis on patriotic feelings. Some of the parents understood the requirements for a good citizen only through a personal, familial or moral lens.

5. Conclusions

This article sought to enhance our understanding of the concept of a citizenship norm, one of the explanatory tools used in political participation research. We found that the standard conceptualisations of a citizenship norm used in survey research would not have accounted for two important elements of our participants' understanding of the concept.

Firstly, regarding definitions of a 'good person', personal character definitions of a citizen were based on assumptions of a wider context of shared moral values. This can indicate that moral rules are salient for Poles, even more so for adult Poles, who, according to research (when compared to other European societies taking part in the European Values Study (EVS), are characterized by greater moral rigorism than permissiveness [54].

The good character norms of citizenship can be interpreted as personality traits, as well as pro-social virtues, which are moral rules focusing on behaving in a certain way and treating other people or wider communities well [55,56] (p. 13). On the other hand, despite how commendable these 'good person' traits are, definitions consisting only of character elements can be interpreted as incomplete within the context of liberal and republican conceptions of citizenship [57], with it being unclear how citizens see themselves in relation to state institutions or political matters. These 'good person' elements were seen in the majority of the parental and in some of the young people's responses.

The second element comprising the definitions of a good citizen, which would have been missed by standard survey research on citizenship norms, was feelings and deeds of love and respect for the nation, country and state. The interviewees in this study located their citizenship firmly within the national context (as opposed to, say, global or post-national). What is more, the parents' and young Poles' inclusion of patriotic feelings in their good citizen definitions reflect the salience of nation and country-affirmative opinions. The type of responses provided in the current study cannot be identified as fitting the definition of blind patriotism; rather, they are a mixture of constructive, activity-oriented (e.g., working for the country's prosperity, also through the payment of taxes), as well as symbolic and affective norms (including feelings of responsibility, such as protecting the country's borders, or contributing to the positive image of Poland abroad). These patriotic elements were seen in the majority of the parents' and in some of the young people's responses, among those self-identified as active and inactive.

Turning to the young Poles' responses specifically, their citizenship norms included two approaches. The contents of the first approach, mirroring the parents, their patriotic statements, character traits, and state-centred norms, have been discussed already. The second type of citizenship definition, given by most of the active young interviewees, portrays a good citizen as someone who is proficient in conventional participation, as someone who is a law-abiding and tax-paying voter, as someone who respects the state and loves the nation, as well as someone who is interested in matters close to home, local communities and non-governmental organisations. This is largely in line with previous studies pointing to a prevalence of 'all-around' activists, who employ various methods in their activity and interpret their citizenship style using engaged and duty-based norms, as in [16,18].

This study also found that self-expression, which has been proposed by some scholars to be an important element of the new citizenship and participation styles [58–60], particularly when communicated through digital media, was not a predominantly valued political or civic behaviour. This is a finding mirroring the results of other research, e.g., [61]. What is more, young people shared their uneasiness about expressing views; these views were not only conservative, in line with the findings of [62], but also left leaning. The findings discussed in this article offer an introductory exploration of the various ways citizenship is understood by two groups of Poles—pre-transformation adults and their post-transformation offspring. In order to assess how prevalent the character and patriotic understandings of citizenship are, surveys on citizenship norms would have to be adapted. What is more, using this tool in a national longitudinal study of citizenship norms could potentially provide a better opportunity for testing any causal relationship between social norms and citizen behaviours in Poland. The distinctive way in which parents defined citizenship norms in this study—through personal character and patriotic deeds but with a lack of direct links to the state and political activity—may be interpreted as an individual-level consequence of being socialised under an externally imposing communist regime. Even though the research design did not allow us to determine whether the parents had an impact on the way the younger Poles participated in politics, we were able to find evidence of the limited transmission of the two unique elements of the citizenship norm. Future research should focus on the factors influencing the effectiveness of citizenship norm transmission.

Conclusions from a recent study [63] point out that the way survey questions on citizenship norms are worded may induce social desirability bias and affect data regarding the prevalence of the engaged/duty-based typology. Therefore, it is extremely important that the concepts used in mass surveys reflect, as correctly as possible, the variety of opinions and perceptions present within populations.

Even though the impact of limited sovereignty, communism and a shorter democratic system differs across countries, see for example [39], future research on post-communist countries may want to explore whether opening up citizenship conceptualisations to the above-mentioned elements improves the explanatory potential of studies.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Information About Study Participants (X Denotes no Interview Available).

Young Poles				Parents			
Interviewee Number	**Year of Birth**	**Male /Female**	**Self-Identifying as Active (A) or Inactive (I)**	**Interviewee Number**	**Year of Birth**	**Male /Female**	**Self-Identifying as Active (A) or Inactive (I)**
1	2000	M	A	7	1971	F	I
2	1991	F	A	X	X	X	X

Table A1. *Cont.*

Young Poles				Parents			
Interviewee Number	**Year of Birth**	**Male /Female**	**Self-Identifying as Active (A) or Inactive (I)**	**Interviewee Number**	**Year of Birth**	**Male /Female**	**Self-Identifying as Active (A) or Inactive (I)**
3	1994	M	A	4	1970	F	I
5	1996	M	A	6	1970	F	I
9	1995	M	A	10	1971	F	I
11	2004	F	I	12	1980	F	I
13	1998	F	A	30	1966	F	A
14	1994	M	I	X	X	X	X
15	2001	M	I	28	1968	F	I
16	1996	F	I	20	1958	F	I
17	1990	M	I	21	1966	M	I
18	1993	F	I	X	X	X	X
19	1992	M	I	29	1970	F	I
22	1998	F	A	8	1952	M	I
23	2003	F	A	31	1978	F	I
24	1999	M	A	32	1972	M	I
25	1999	F	A	X	X	X	X
26	2002	F	A	X	X	X	X
27	1995	M	A	X	X	X	X

Table A2. Collated Information About the Study Participants.

Young Poles		Self-Identifying as Active (A) or Inactive (I)
Educational level:		
Secondary	8	6 A/2 I
Degree	11	6 A/5 I
Female	9	6 A/3 I
Male	10	6A/4 I
Marital status:		
Unmarried	19	
Married	0	12 A/7 I
Divorced	0	
Employment status:		
Studying/in school	6	4 A/2 I
In employment	5	2 A/3 I
Studying & working	8	6 A/2 I
Not in employment	0	0 A/0 I
Place of residence:		
<50,000 residents	7	4 A/3 I
50,000–100,000 residents	2	2 A/0 I
>100,000 residents	10	6 A/4 I
Parents		Self-identifying as active (A) or inactive (I)
Educational level:		
Secondary	6	0 A/6 I
Degree	7	1 A/6 I

Table A2. *Cont.*

Young Poles		Self-Identifying as Active (A) or Inactive (I)
Female	10	1 A/9 I
Male	3	0 A/3 I
Marital status:		
Unmarried	2	0 A/2 I
Married	10	1 A/9 I
Divorced	1	0 A/1 I
Employment status:		
In employment	11	0 A/11 I
Not in employment	2	1 A/1 I
Place of residence:		
<50,000 residents	5	1 A/4 I
50,000–100,000 residents	1	0 A/1 I
>100,000 residents	7	0 A/7 I

Notes

[1] Poland's code in the retail product barcode system.

[2] Interviewees were asked if they considered themselves politically active, as according to their own definition of political activity. Of the young participants, most of the recruited through non-governmental initiatives considered themselves politically active, and none from the convenience sample did. One parent considered themselves politically active.

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