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Innovative Practice and Research Trends in Identity, Citizenship and Education
Selected papers from the sixteenth Conference of the Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe Academic Network

London: CiCe 2014

**edited by Peter Cunningham and Nathan Fretwell, published in London by CiCe,
ISBN 978-1-907675-21-8**

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Grabowski, A. & Sebastyanska-Targowska, I. (2014) 'Examining young Polish peoples' personal sense of being citizens of Europe', in P. Cunningham & N. Fretwell (eds.) *Innovative Practice and Research Trends in Identity, Citizenship and Education*. London: CiCe, pp. 216 – 221.

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Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a selection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- The CiCe administrative team at London Metropolitan University
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The Lifelong Learning Programme and the personnel of the Education and Culture DG of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

Examining young Polish peoples' personal sense of being citizens of Europe

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Abstract

This study examined whether the almost ten years of Poland's being a member of the EU have resulted in young Polish people's personal/subjective conviction of being a citizen of Europe (as compared to the sense of being a citizen of Poland). Participants answered two questions: 'How much do you subjectively/personally feel you are a citizen of the Republic of Poland' and 'How much do you subjectively/personally feel you are a citizen of the United Europe'. In order to check whether our respondents' subjective sense of being a citizen (both of Europe and Poland) is firm and stable or could be affected by contextual factors, we randomly alternated the order of the questions for half the participants. Additionally, two thirds of the participants, before completing the questionnaire, were informed that it was either a European Parliament Integration Committee or the Polish Patriotic Association that asked their university to conduct the study. The other participants were asked to fill in the form with no such information. The results demonstrate that young Poles' subjective sense of being EU citizens appears to be both generally less intensive than that of being citizens of Poland and malleable.

Keywords: *Europe, citizen, personal, sense*

Introduction

The present research aims to examine whether the almost ten years of Poland's being a member of the EU have resulted in young Polish people's personal/subjective conviction of being a citizen of Europe (especially as compared to the sense of being a citizen of Poland). Even though the idea of citizenship contains various elements, in our research we concentrated specifically on those involving awareness and sense of community rather than on those involving acting for one's state and society (cf. Barber, 2003; Kennedy, 2006; Korkut, 2005; Krzywosz-Ryniewicz et al, 2010; Lewicka, 2005) as we were exclusively interested in the personal/subjective sense of being a citizen of Europe (i.e. the sense of belonging to the European community and identification with it). We focused on teenagers on the point of adulthood (i.e. about 18 years of age). This group of people seemed to be particularly interesting because, firstly, in Poland, on turning 18, one is legally no longer considered to be underage but a fully mature and independent citizen (acquiring the right to vote), and, secondly, for nearly half of their lives (i.e. approximately since the beginning of their school education), the 18-19-year-olds of today have already lived as citizens of both Poland and the EU, which, as we supposed, must have affected their personal identification with both Europe and Poland.

The empirical study

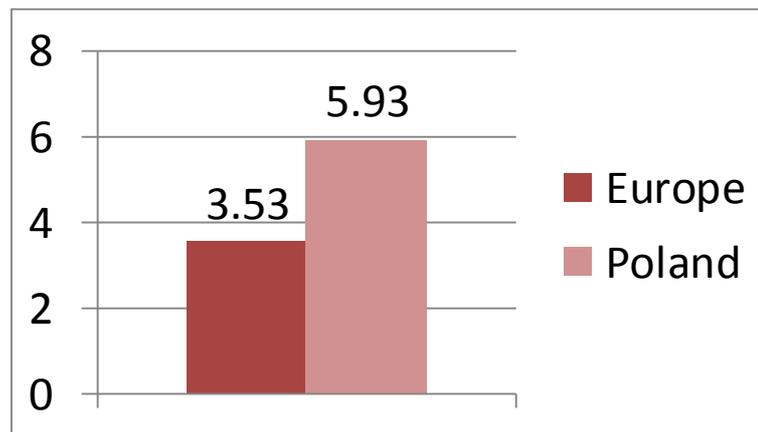
Participants and procedure

The participants were a hundred and fifty first-year University of Warmia and Mazury students (85 female) at the age of 19. All participants responded to two questions: 'How much do you subjectively/personally feel you are a citizen of the United Europe', (1 = not at all, 7 = absolutely), and 'How much do you subjectively/personally feel you are a citizen of the Republic of Poland', (1 = not at all, 7 = absolutely). In order to check whether our respondents' subjective sense of being a citizen (both of Europe and Poland) is firm and stable or could be affected by contextual factors, we randomly alternated the order of the questions for half the participants. Additionally, two thirds of the participants, before completing the questionnaire, were informed that it was either a European Parliament Integration Committee or the Polish Patriotic Association that asked their university to conduct the study (with equal proportions of participants randomly assigned to both conditions). The other participants (control) were asked to fill in the form with no such information.

Results

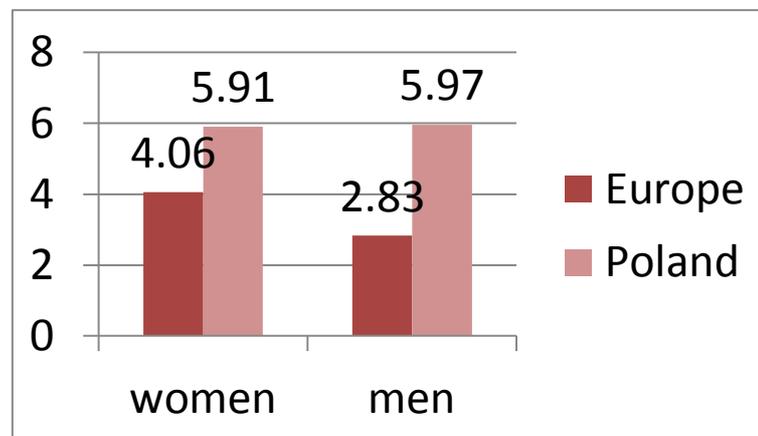
First, we conducted an analysis of variance with the 'Citizen of Europe/Citizen of Poland' as the only within-participants factor but without entering to the analysis model any experimental manipulations. The analysis showed the main effect of the factor which appeared to be extremely strong and highly significant, $F(1, 149) = 260.05$, $p = .000$ (see: Figure 1).

Figure 1. The personal/subjective sense of being a citizen of Europe/Poland (regardless of the additional manipulations)



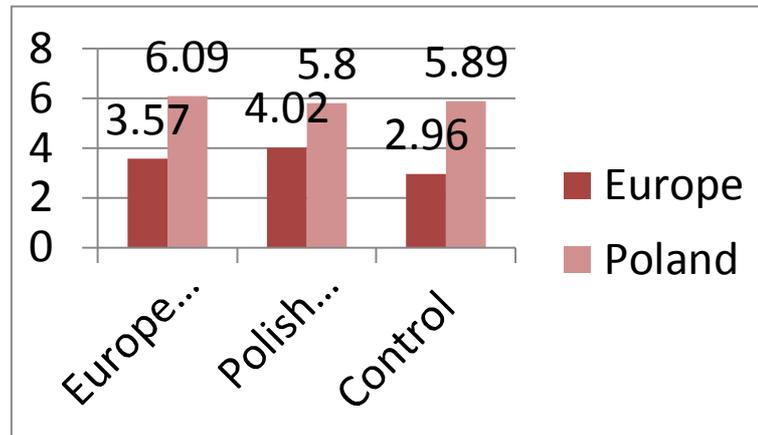
Generally, our participants' subjective sense of being a citizen of Poland turned out to be much more intensive ($M = 5.93$) than that of being a citizen of Europe ($M = 3.53$). Then, as we entered the participants' gender into the analysis, it demonstrated a significant interaction of the 'Citizen of Europe/Citizen of Poland' factor with the gender, $F(2, 148) = 15.06$, $p < .000$. Specifically, even though both the men's and women's subjective sense of being a citizen of Poland was much more intensive than that of being a citizen of Europe, the women's sense of being a citizen of Europe ($M = 4.06$) appeared to be significantly stronger than that characterising the men ($M = 2.83$, see: Figure 2).

Figure 2. An interaction of the 'Citizen of Europe/Citizen of Poland' factor and the participants' gender



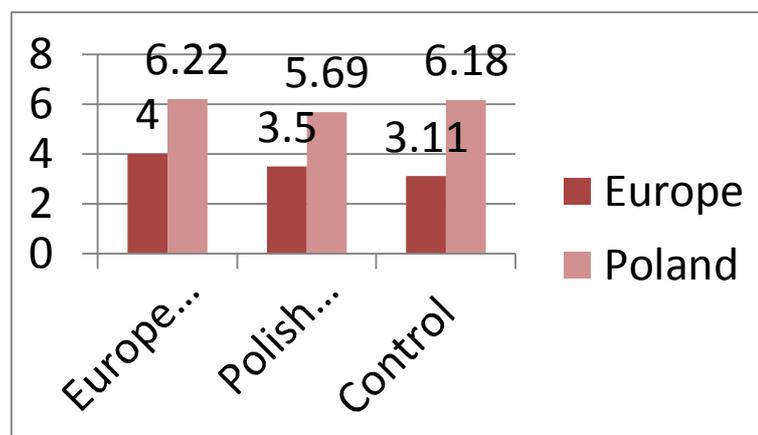
Next, we entered both the experimental manipulation factors, i.e. the 'On whose behalf the study is conducted' factor and the order of questions. The analysis demonstrated a significant interaction between the 'Citizen of Europe/Citizen of Poland' factor and the 'On whose behalf the study is conducted' factor, $F(2, 148) = 4.06$, $p = .02$. When the participants were told that the study was conducted on behalf of the Polish Patriotic Association, their subjective sense of being a citizen of Europe appeared, somewhat surprisingly, to be more intensive ($M = 4.02$) than that characterising those who were told the study was conducted on behalf of the European Parliament Integration Committee ($M = 3.57$). Note, however, that they were both significantly more intensive than that of the control group ($M = 2.96$). On the other hand, there were no significant differences where the subjective sense of being a citizen of Poland in all the three groups was concerned (see: Figure 3).

Figure 3. An interaction of the 'Citizen of Europe/Citizen of Poland' within-participants factor and 'On whose behalf the study is conducted' between-participants factor



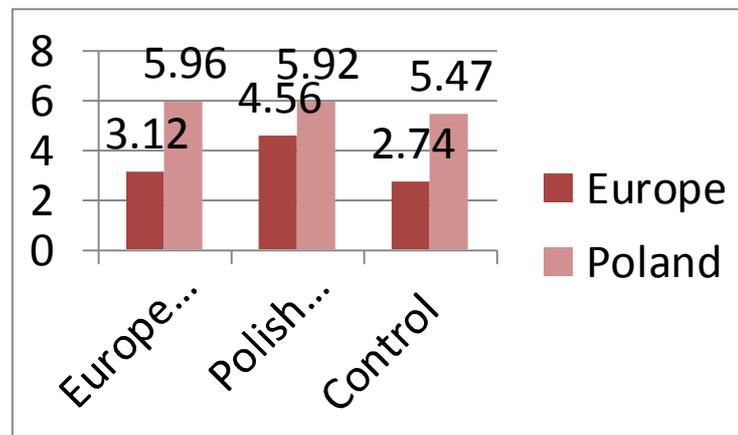
The analysis revealed also a significant 3-way interaction of the order of the questions and the 'Citizen of Europe/Citizen of Poland' and 'On whose behalf the study is conducted' factors, $F = 3.44$, $p = .04$. When the participants were first asked how much they subjectively felt to be citizens of Europe (and then of Poland) and when they were told that the study was conducted on behalf of the European Parliament Integration Committee, their sense of being a citizen of Europe appeared to be more intensive ($M = 4.0$) than that characterising those who were told the study was conducted on behalf of the Polish Patriotic Association ($M = 3.5$) and both were stronger than in the control group ($M = 3.11$, see: Figure 4).

Figure 4. The 3-way interaction of the order of the questions and the 'Citizen of Europe/Citizen of Poland' and 'On whose behalf the study is conducted' factors. Europe/Poland question order.



However, when the question order was reversed, i.e. when the participants were first asked how much they subjectively felt to be citizens of Poland (and then of Europe), their sense of being a citizen of Europe appeared to be significantly less intensive ($M = 3.12$) than that characterising those who were told the study was conducted on behalf of the Polish Patriotic Association ($M = 4.56$), though, again, both were stronger than in the control group ($M = 2.74$). The participants' subjective sense of being a citizen of Poland remained at high level regardless of experimental manipulations (see: Figure 5).

Figure 5. The 3-way interaction of the order of the questions and the 'Citizen of Europe/Citizen of Poland' and 'On whose behalf the study is conducted' factors. Poland/Europe question order.



Summary

Our research and its present results demonstrate that despite having been citizens of both Poland and the United Europe for virtually their whole conscious lives, young Poles' subjective sense of being EU citizens appears to be generally much less intensive than that of being citizens of Poland. Women, however, do seem to feel much more European as compared to men. Nevertheless, both men's and women's personal sense of being a citizen of Europe appears to be malleable. Specifically, in the present study, the interaction of the questions' order and the information on whose behalf the study was conducted was particularly effective. If the study was 'on behalf of the European Parliament Integration Committee', the participants declared significantly lower personal sense of being EU citizens as compared to those from the 'Polish Patriotic Association' condition when they were first asked how much they subjectively felt to be citizens of Poland (and then of Europe).

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