



Izabela Plieth-Kalinowska\*

## THE PATRIOTISM OF POLISH YOUTH OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Most of Polish young generation of the 21st century grew up in prosperity. Children get what they want. Pampered and appreciated by parents, they become unfriendly and even selfish. They strongly emphasize their individuality and independence. New technologies are an inseparable part of their lifestyle. They combine virtual and real conditions very easily. They have constant access to the Internet, are active on forums and in social media. They display their lives in the form of photos and vlogs through mobile apps. They cannot function without them. Thanks to the Internet, young people make acquaintances in different parts of the world and do not feel their distance or boundaries. In this way, they learn the culture of other countries and when they have the opportunity to travel, they do it without fear. They speak foreign languages. They are very creative and appreciate the possibility of self-development, but are impatient in action. They want to see the results of their effort immediately and treat small mistakes as big failures. They treat knowledge as a variable value, therefore they care more about the ability to find the information and how to use it than possessing it. It can be assumed that in a world without borders, filled with modern technical solutions, young “connected to the network.”\*\* Poles communicate their attachment to their own community quite differently from their predecessors or perhaps they do not show it at all. Is today’s youth anti-patriotic?

In order to obtain the answer to this question in the 2016-2017 school year, evaluation studies were carried out in the School No. 19 in Bydgoszcz. The social and political behaviours and attitudes declared by pupils aged 10-18 were subject to quantitative and qualitative analysis.

### UNDERSTANDING PATRIOTISM

Patriotism belongs to the same family of concepts as justice, freedom, democracy, nation, republic and many others, which we constantly use and which we cannot do without, although we are unable to express in two words what we really mean when

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\* University of Kazimierz Wielki in Bydgoszcz.

\*\* They are called “Generation C” coming from “connected to the network.”



using them. Patriotism contains complicated ethical, socio-political and cultural issues. It is by its very nature a contentious concept, which is why it is necessary to study the course and nature of the polemics regarding it (Szacki, 2012).

Analysing the literature of the subject in terms of understanding patriotism, one can always see two perspectives. It can be considered subjectively and defined as a system of attitudes towards the homeland. In this case, the relationship to homeland depends on the level of emotions it arouses. It expresses itself in presenting the common good over personal needs. This is a special kind of loyalty dictated by belonging to a specific region or nation. This loyalty is connected to the view that members of the same community have more in common than just language or terrain. They share their considerations for specific qualities, merits, and achievements of their own nation. These include a common history, a similar way of transmitting impressions and expressing experiences or assessing events and characteristic rites (Simonides, 1998; Skarżyńska, 1998; Zwoliński, 2005; Miluska, 2009; Vincent, 2009; MacIntyre, 2012; Marzęcki, Stach, 2014). As the second reference point, the authors propose the reliability of fulfilling civic duties. These are set by standards and rules common to all members of the national community. The fulfilment of obligations towards the community is defined as striving for overall well-being and ensuring its safety (Cichocki, 2002; Jędrzejewski, 2009; Moore, 2009).

In the ethical dimension, love for the homeland may be manifested in action directed at lower and higher values. The former is associated with everyday existence. They manifest themselves in conscientious performance of social tasks. Higher values reflect the products of spiritual transformation. These include scientific achievements, works of art and literary reflections.

Patriotism can also be considered in the biological and cultural category. In the first case, belonging to the community is objective and dictated by being born this and not the other way. It is a kind of loyalty to a given nation, which is manifested only by those who are representatives of this nation. Whereas the cultural character of the love of the homeland is defined by language, religion, psychological ties and symbolism (Sagan, Serzhanova, 2010; MacIntyre, 2012).

Taking into account the purpose of patriotic behaviour, we can distinguish the following spheres:

- a. national patriotism as a sense of special bond with the nation;
- b. state patriotism as a sense of an organic bond with the state in which the small homeland lies; this state can often be multinational;
- c. civilization patriotism as a sense of the human relationship with the entire civilization of origin and development;
- d. spiritual and religious patriotism – a deep connection with religion or the church of origin and education, with the faith of fathers and grandfathers, with their rite, liturgy and religious customs (Bartnik, 2017).

The patriotism spheres can be mixed or compounded, which is determined by origin, long years of upbringing and schooling of each individual. The choice of reference depends on their will and decision.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PATRIOTISM

Attachment and responsibility for the homeland can be demonstrated by cultivating traditions, active participation in ceremonies, worshipping national heroes, respecting national symbols, but also through a conscious civic attitude of observing the law, honest business and paying taxes, participation in elections, organising and supporting charity events, and even by polite behaviour in public places or by cleaning after one's dog.

Every social initiative undertaken for the sake of security, helping the ones in need, health, education and culture can be described as a patriotic action. Serving the homeland every day and not just during national holidays, requires sacrifice. It is also a challenge and a test of human capabilities and character.

A community identity can be a source of happiness and pride but often leads to critical reflection and disappointment with a given nation, its political system or economic situation, and even embarrassment with the conduct of its own community (Audi, 2009; Marzęcki, Stach, 2014).

Ordinary decency and respect for another human being are widely recognised as a pillar of patriotism, yet there is no shortage of its perverted interpretations. It is sad to see a kind of people with an obsessive conviction about the threat of aliens and secret conspiracies who consider themselves to be the truest patriots. They live only by the thought of doing something evil to the enemies of their nation. Love for the homeland in no way justifies the acts of ignorance, aggression and indecent behaviour, manifested in mass marches while shouting out xenophobic slogans and hate speech.

Misinterpretation of patriotism or a complete lack of a sense of bond with the community leads to negative consequences in the absence of: reverence and respect for people of one's origin, sense of social bonds and social spirit, cooperation with communities, altruism, favour for higher ideals, a sense of responsibility and ethical co-consciousness. These are replaced by general egoism, tying with various subcultures, parties, and organisations that act against the state and the homeland. The loss of national and civic identity is conducive to social, economic and legal pathology (Bartnik, 2017).

Patriotism is not a hatred of other nations, but a love that is the strongest towards fellow countrymen. A responsible society bases its values on building, not denying. The sense of belonging to the nation obliges the contemporary man to a special kind of loyalty and sacrifice – to work on oneself, observe moral and legal rules, acquire

education and skills that help contribute to a better life, multiply the common good and maintain a good image of one's country worldwide.

Patriotism demands sacrifices. This attitude is shaped by responsible education and self-development. Just like in any other sphere of moral life, any shortages in education threaten to challenge the most obvious and just obligations to the homeland (Olejnik, 2000).

In the process of shaping the patriotic attitude, the following components are significant:

- service to the homeland;
- attachment to the native land;
- pietism and special respect for the country;
- the desire for country's well-being (acting so that it would be strong, safe, rich and beautiful);
- subordination to country's best interest;
- active commitment to multiply the common good and its protection;
- readiness to bear great sacrifices (even the sacrifice of life);
- ordinary, honest work;
- concern for the mother tongue, its beauty, purity and wealth;
- getting to know the history of one's country;
- getting acquainted with the cultural art of the nation (poetry, literature, music, architecture, painting);
- concern for good law and for it to be respected;
- concern for good customs in the country;
- concern for the common good in socio-political life;
- contributing to increased spiritual security;
- fidelity to national heritage;
- propagating national values;
- cultivating national traditions and customs;
- adopting pro-social attitudes (Mazur, 2007).

All the good we do for others strengthens the feeling of bonding. What we have, what we have achieved, is not only due to our arduous work, but thousands of other people who have given us their experience and knowledge. Every day of their existence lived through dramas, records of the tragedy of hundreds of generations, blurred memories and faces; all this is the link that binds our predecessors with the present and those who will come after us.

In this country, there are graves of ancestors. Their history and culture provide the most spiritual juices to future generations. We can all contribute to making our grandchildren and great-grandchildren live in peace and feel really at home (Salij, 2005).

## BEHAVIOURS AND SOCIAL-POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF POLISH YOUTH IN THE LIGHT OF RESEARCH

The diagnostic survey was conducted among 165 students from the primary school, 160 from middle school and 28 from high school. The empirical material was collected using a questionnaire designed especially for the needs of the conducted research. The only demographic variable was the fact of belonging to classes at educational levels mentioned above. In total, 353 questionnaires were analysed.

Research has revealed that patriotic attitudes are important for contemporary Polish youth and are of great value to them. In this situation, it becomes interesting how they want to manifest them.



**Figure 1.** Are patriotic values needed?  
Source: study of author.



**Figure 2.** Do you think that patriotism is in contemporary Poland? important for the youth?  
Source: study of author.

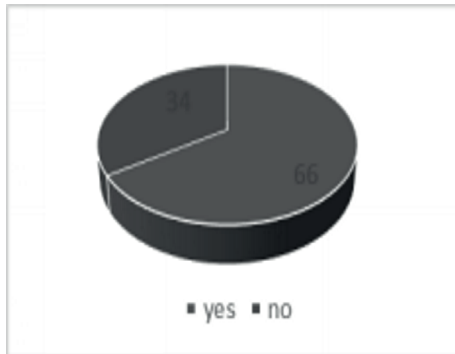
The vast majority of respondents declares that the fate of Poland is important to them, and a significant part of them would be willing to fight for their homeland (the most: 75% of primary school, the least: 57% of high school).

16% of respondents cannot indicate any national symbol. The others usually mentioned the national emblem, a bit less frequently a flag and a hymn. The junior high school students dealt with the task a bit better while high school students did the worst.



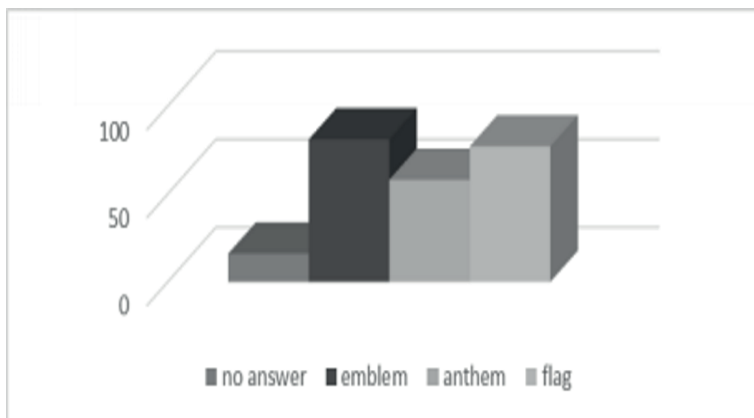
**Figure 3.** Is the fate of Poland important for you?

Source: study of author.



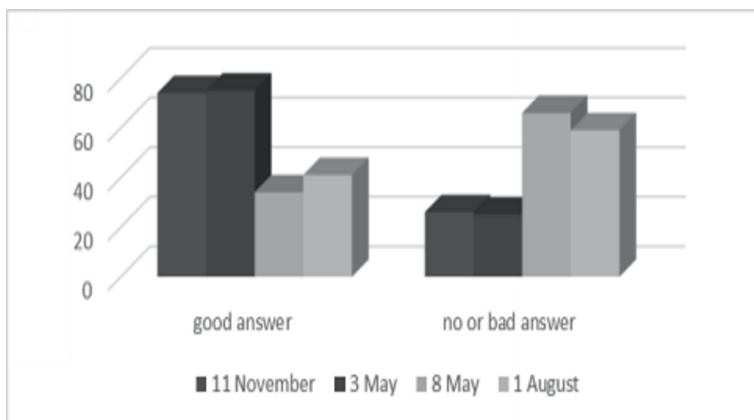
**Figure 4.** Would you fight to defend your homeland?

Source: study of author.



**Figure 5.** Indication of the national symbol

Source: study of author.



**Figure 6.** Knowledge of the most important dates in the history of Poland

Source: study of author.



It is disturbing that over 40% of the students surveyed are unable to point to any man who could be called a patriot, or any event that proves the patriotism of Poles. The others most often mentioned Józef Piłsudski, John Paul II, and Lech Wałęsa. The most frequently indicated events are:

- fight for independence during the Second World War;
- uprisings for national independence;
- Warsaw Uprising.

The knowledge of the most important dates in the history of Poland was also tested. The students who did the best were high school students, which may indicate that the level of national consciousness increases with the age of the individual. In the part concerning the components of the patriotic attitude, the respondents decided that the modern patriot:

- loves and respects their country – 15%;
- cultivates traditions and public holidays – 9%;
- is ready for sacrifices and even for death – 8%;
- is devoted to Poland – 7%;
- cares about his country, helps the weaker, cares about other Poles – 3%;
- knows the history of your country – 3%;
- respects national symbols – 2%;
- he believes in his country and cheers for his country;
- he is proud of being a Pole;
- does not offend the country and does not joke about what's important to him.

Among the methods proposed by them to manifest patriotic attitudes were:

- celebrating national holidays (participation in processions, parades) – 10%;
- hanging the flag – 6%;
- knowledge of Polish history, its literature and telling others about it – 2%;
- participation in political life (going to elections, voting, interest in politics) – 2%;
- taking part in protests, strikes – 3%;
- cheering for sportsmen – 1%.

As many as 22% of students cannot name a patriotic song, and 62% cannot title a book in which patriotic values are transmitted. The most frequently mentioned patriotic songs are: “Mazurek Dąbrowskiego” – 49%, “Rota” – 29%, “My pierwsza brygada” – 22%, “Szara piechota” – 11%, “Przybyli ułani” – 9%, “Maszerują strzelcy” – 7%, “Rozkwitają pąki białych róż” – 6%, “Bogurodzica,” “O mój rozmarynie,” “Legiony” – 5%. The most frequently mentioned books with patriotic content are: “Kamienie na szaniec” – 18%, “Pan Tadeusz” – 9%, “Potop” – 8%, “Krzyżacy” –

2%. In addition, the following were mentioned: “Dziady,” “Dywizjon 303,” “Ogniem i mieczem,” “W pustyni i w puszczy,” “Chłopcy z placu broni,” “Przedwiośnie,” “Konrad Wallenrod,” “Quo vadis.” Some of the students answered in the more general way: obligatory school literature, textbooks.

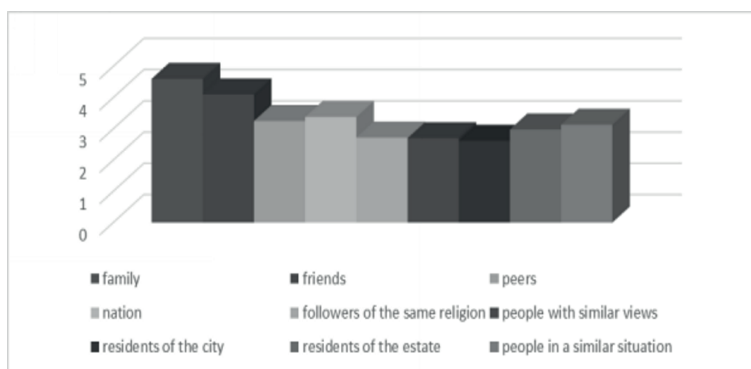
Among the answers to the question of what has the greatest impact on patriotic awareness respondents indicated: school (teachers, history lessons, Polish language lessons) – 25%, books – 12%, TV, movies – 10%, books – 9%, Internet – 9%, home – 8%, adults – 6%, older people, authorities – %.

The survey has also gathered declarations of local community values that were closest to pupils. For this purpose, the survey checked the knowledge of the name of the patrons of the school (which is “The Sons of the Regiments”) and the values with which they are identified. It should be mentioned that at least once a year, living representatives of this group of war heroes visit the school on important occasions and meet with students telling their biography. 80% of surveyed students correctly identified the patrons of the school, but over 70% of them could not name the values with which the Sons of the Regiments should be identified. Most often they are associated with: courage, bravery – 11%, patriotism – 3%, honour – 2%, devotion to the homeland – 2%, steadfastness – 2%, as well as the love for the homeland, dedication and loyalty.

90% of the surveyed youth states that the school draws attention to patriotic values and celebrates national holidays, mainly through occasional assemblies. The students also remembered the patriotic song contest and the patriotic expositions at school walls.

Respondents were also asked to specify which of the given statements suit them the most. Most people chose to say that they feel like citizens of the world, Poland has been chosen by over 30% as a place to live in Europe. The rarest were the nationalistic attitudes.

The declarations regarding the sense of closeness with various social groups proved to be significant for the conducted research.



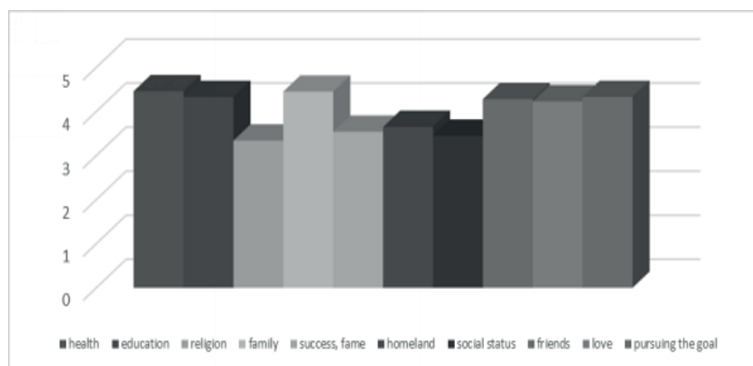
**Figure 7.** A sense of closeness with various social groups

Source: study of author.



A family turned out to be the closest social group followed by friends. Youth have also named similar social situation and national community as factors that bond them together. The least persistent was the bond with the inhabitants of the same city.

The last question in the survey regarded the most important values in human life.



**Figure 8.** The importance of different values in a person's life

Source: study of author.

On the basis of the answers received, it was established that for the examined youth the greatest value in life is family and health as well as education, friends and the chosen goal. The love was only the sixth most important value. Religion is the least important for young people.

As research has shown, contemporary Polish youth does not want to be anti-patriotic in any measure. The surveyed Poles mostly emphasise that love for their homeland is a great value for them and its fate is not indifferent to it. Unfortunately, the declarative part of the survey differs significantly from the presented knowledge and made choices. Young people, apart from a good knowledge of national symbols, have a problem with indicating the heroes and important historical events, they barely exchange titles of patriotic songs and have the least knowledge about Polish literature.

Sadly, it turned out to there is a poor contact between the young and the elderly. Unfortunately, the prestige of authorities is equally insignificant, while it is their example that one can learn from about the true history of Poland. Soldiers' souvenirs, documents, unique photos collected in the National Remembrance Chamber (IPN), memorabilia from times of war and uprisings can become an inspiration for interesting searches and recreate the fate of their owners. It is because of them that modern Poland exists.

The hypothesis was confirmed that the level of youth's national consciousness depends primarily on the school. In practice, the main inspirers of patriotic behavior are educators – in particular teachers of history and the Polish language. Efficient use of the mother tongue, knowledge of national history and the biographies of heroes are the basic areas of patriotic education. A young man can also build a spiritual bond with members of the nation through his culture, that is:

- customs – let them see nation's uniqueness, old traditions and rituals;
- literature and art – make it easier to understand and feel all the lasting values that have been shown by past generations;
- the common experience of national and local holidays – helps them understand the importance of preserving one's own identity;
- taking care of places of national remembrance – lets them see the consecration of subsequent generations of heroes;
- historical and sightseeing trips to museums, open-air museums, castles and battles – to learn about places where ancestors fought for Poland, where its history was born;
- singing patriotic songs – facilitates perceiving their timelessness, organises the emotions associated with experiencing their messages as letters to posterity.

One should also pay attention to the issue of “every day” patriotism, including attachment to places and people (city, village, family, friends). Respondents recognise the family as the greatest value in their lives and that's why parents are more committed to building and sustaining family traditions and values to pass them down from generation to generation. It is worth undertaking this task because our tradition, culture, and history ensure that humanity is maintained both in modern times and in the future.

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## THE PATRIOTISM OF POLISH YOUTH OF THE 21ST CENTURY

**Keywords:** patriotism, love for the homeland, patriotic education

**Abstract:** The surveys conducted among 353 students of School Complex no. 19 in Bydgoszcz showed that love for the homeland is a great value for young Poles and its fate is not indifferent to them. Unfortunately, the declarative part of the survey differs significantly from the presented knowledge and the choices made by them. Young people, apart from a good knowledge of national symbols, have a problem with indicating the heroes and important historical events. They barely name titles of patriotic songs, and the main difficulty for them is that they are not familiar with the Polish literature.



## PATRIOTYZM POLSKIEJ MŁODZIEŻY W XXI WIEKU

**Słowa kluczowe:** patriotyzm, umiłowanie ojczyzny, edukacja patriotyczna

**Streszczenie:** Badania sondażowe przeprowadzone wśród 353 uczniów w Zespole Szkół nr 19 w Bydgoszczy wykazały, że umiłowanie ojczyzny stanowi dla młodych Polaków ogromną wartość, a jej losy nie są im obojętne. Niestety deklaratywna część sondażu różni się znacznie od prezentowanej wiedzy i podejmowanych wyborów. Młodzi ludzie, poza dobrą znajomością symboli narodowych, mają problem ze wskazaniem bohaterów i ważnych historycznych wydarzeń, z trudem wymieniają tytuły pieśni patriotycznych, a najgorzej orientują się w polskiej literaturze.

