

The Evolution of Citizenship Norms among Scandinavian Adolescents, 1999-2009

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Abstract

In the recent debate about changing citizenship norms in advanced democracies, Scandinavian countries are often considered the front-runners of developing a new kind of engaged citizenship. The majority of recent empirical scholarship in this field, however, has focused on the United States. In this article we use latent class analysis to ascertain whether the ideal types of engaged citizenship and duty-based citizenship norms are relevant concepts for adolescents in Scandinavia, and whether there are significant changes in these norms between 1999 and 2009. The findings confirm that engaged and duty-based citizens can be clearly identified and that engaged citizenship norms are becoming more prevalent. We also, find, however, that engaged and duty-based norms are not the only norms identified in the analysis, and that important differences are evident in the background characteristics of those ascribing to different citizen norms that contradict expectations in the literature. We conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for changing citizenship norms in advanced democracies, including the potential implications of these changing norms for political behavior.

Keywords: citizenship norms, engaged citizenship, duty-based citizenship, adolescents, value change, latent class analysis, Cived 1999, ICCS 2009

S U M M A R Y

Introduction

It has become conventional wisdom that traditional acts of political participation such as voting have stagnated or declined in recent years in advanced democracies. Although this trend may be less pronounced in the Scandinavian countries in comparison to other polities, citizens of Northern Europe are certainly in line with this cross-national trend (Gallego 2009; Rothstein 2002; Wass 2007). The recognition of this empirical phenomenon is often accompanied by concern for the health of representative democracy.

A recent re-interpretation of the implications of this trend, however, suggests that to truly assess the health of representative democracy we should focus on changing norms of citizenship rather than on participatory trends like voting levels (Zmerli 2010). When citizenship norms are examined, this argument continues, it is demonstrated that although citizens are voting less, they are in fact still strongly engaged in democratic life in terms of their citizenship norms. Scholars have proposed somewhat different understandings of how to best describe this new phenomenon, including ‘engaged’ (Dalton 2008), ‘critical’ (Norris 1999) or ‘monitorial’ (Schudson 1998) citizenship. These scholars generally agree, however, that citizens who do not highly value traditional political activity like voting may still be normatively engaged as ‘good’ citizens. In fact, scholars like Dalton and Norris emphasize that far from being politically apathetic or disengaged, the citizens who have these new citizenship norms are supportive of elite-challenging political activity such as protesting, and have postmodern sensibilities that support engagement on behalf of political issues like human rights and environmental protection.

Research on value change has consistently shown that the emergence of new citizenship norms has been most strongly prevalent in the Scandinavian countries (Harrits et

al. 2010; Inglehart 1990; Welzel & Deutsch 2012). In the work of Inglehart and Welzel (2005) the Scandinavian countries always clearly outperform all other countries in the world with regard to the prevalence of ‘new’ democratic norms and citizenship concepts. In fact, we would expect that if a scavenger hunt for engaged citizens were conducted throughout the globe, we would expect to find that this norm is most prevalent in the Scandinavian countries. Empirical research on this topic, however has been surprisingly scarce. Indeed, leading scholarship by Dalton (2008; 2009) has focused on engaged citizenship in the United States in a single time period, while still proposing that the findings are generalizable to advanced democracies over time. The U.S. findings have been supported by research investigating Canadian citizenship norms (Howe 2010; Raney & Berdahl 2009), but more empirical research is needed in more varied national settings to better understand the generalizability of this recent research on the evolution of citizenship norms.

The purpose of this article is therefore to examine whether an engaged citizenship norm can be found in the Scandinavian countries, and how citizenship norms have evolved among young people in these countries between 1999 and 2009. Given research on values and education systems, we expect engaged citizenship to be present in all countries in the study, though previous studies on cultural traditions and education systems would lead us to expect that Sweden and Norway may have higher levels of engaged citizenship than Denmark and Finland (Kjellin, et al. 2010; Torney-Purta 2002; Welzel & Inglehart 2010). Since Dalton’s engaged citizenship argument specifically proposes that young people are more likely to hold engaged citizenship norms in recent years, we would expect that this norm would be particularly present among adolescents, and we would expect to see changes in adolescent norms during this time period. The goal of the current study therefore is not to compare adolescents to adults, but rather to investigate whether young age groups in Scandinavian

countries really are front runners in this global trend, as is often assumed in comparative political science.

We address these questions through a latent class analysis of citizenship norms among adolescents in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in 1999 and 2009. The findings do indeed confirm that engaged citizens can be clearly identified in Scandinavian countries, and that engaged citizenship norms are highly prevalent in both time periods. The findings also indicate, however, that other citizenship norms are present as well—including fairly traditional ones—and that understanding the evolution of citizenship norms in the countries in this study requires taking these norms into account. Although the dichotomy that Dalton constructs between duty-based and engaged citizenship clearly is theoretically relevant for current debate on social and political change, it only captures part of the diversity in citizenship norms that are actually present among adolescents. The findings also indicate distinctive biases in the background characteristics of those ascribing to the different citizenship norms that contradict expectations based on prior findings in the field. In conclusion we discuss the implications of these findings for changing citizenship norms in advanced democracies in general and the role Scandinavian countries play in this process, as well as the potential implications regarding the translation of norms into political activity.

Literature

As we have noted, Dalton's (2008; 2009) research on citizenship norms is among the most influential scholarship on this topic. These studies of good citizenship, focusing primarily on the United States, have been among the most boldly optimistic and intellectually provocative in this field of research for two reasons. First, he makes a clear argument about the connection between norms and behavior. Whereas Norris's 'critical citizens' and Schudson's 'monitorial citizens' could potentially be understood as interested and watchful bystanders, Dalton clearly

proposes that this new form of citizenship is best understood as ‘engaged’ not only because these citizens place high value on democratic norms, but also because of their readiness to be politically active in new ways. Dalton’s reason for optimism, then, is that scholars who study only voting and electoral-related political behavior—and subsequently bemoan citizens’ disengagement from representative democracy—are studying the wrong empirical phenomenon in order to truly understand citizens’ engagement in democracy in the fullest sense.

Relatedly, Dalton’s second bold emphasis on this topic is that young people are currently the pioneers of this new conception of good citizenship, and that generational change will impact upon future trends in political behavior (Dalton 2011). In fact, Dalton’s research suggests that values changes among young people are the driving force behind the increased prevalence of engaged citizens and the simultaneous decline in duty-based citizens. This means that for those who are concerned about the democratic engagement of mass publics, to focus only on the decline of a duty-based citizenship norm and the documented decline in voting rates (Franklin 2004; Wattenberg 2002) would be short-sighted. Rather, we should also recognize that even though today’s young citizens may have low voting rates even when they mature into middle-age adults a generation from now, they will likely be politically active in the future, but just in different ways in comparison to their parents and grandparents (Zukin et al. 2006). In essence, this argument implies that engaged citizens are expected to increase in prevalence over time for the foreseeable future among each cohort of young people in advanced democracies. Other scholars in this field have also noted this generational change dynamic, but Dalton’s empirical focus on the United States in recent research has served to highlight this point since Dalton’s conclusion contradicts scholars of American politics who are more pessimistic about young Americans’ potential for political engagement (see for example Putnam 2000; Wattenberg, 2012).

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Data and methods

Although prior research has made theoretical claims regarding expected changes in citizenship norms over time, these claims have yet to be evaluated empirically with comparable data. In this study we use two strictly comparable surveys to assess changes in citizenship norms in Scandinavian countries over the course of a decade, both conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The IEA has conducted a variety of evaluative studies of education systems, and the subject of civic education was thoroughly surveyed in the 1999 Civic Education Study (Cived) in 28 countries and in the 2009 International Civic and Citizenship Education Survey (ICCS) in 38 countries (Schulz et al. 2011; Torney-Purta et al. 2001), and the four Scandinavian countries that are the focus of this article were surveyed in both time periods, with 12,000 to 14,000 respondents for the four countries combined. In both surveys 14 year-olds were asked the same core battery of questions regarding citizenship norms, and the surveys were conducted in the same high-quality fashion with educational authorities overseeing the survey implementation in school settings (see Appendix for question wording).

Our analysis focuses on students' response to the question of what actions are important for being 'an adult good citizen'. Twelve core behaviors are listed in both time periods that overlap to a large extent with items used in Dalton's research, including both traditional 'duty-based' political acts like voting and obeying the country's laws, as well as more contemporary 'engaged' citizenship acts like protecting human rights and the environment.

If our analytical prism were the mean importance of different elements of good citizenship in the population as a whole, the picture of the evolution in citizenship norms

between 1999 and 2009 in Scandinavia is quite surprising, as shown in Figure 1. This figure shows that there are meaningful increases in respondents' attribution of importance to a range of traditional normative elements such as working, voting, watching the news, respecting government representatives and joining a party. In fact, all but two of the traditional normative indicators increased in importance over time (exceptions: obeying the law and discussing politics). At the same time, not a single element of engaged citizenship increased in importance between 1999 and 2009, with a lower proportion of respondents attributing importance to protecting rights and the environment, contributing to the local community, and protesting. These trends are all the more counter-intuitive when compared with data from all of the 21 advanced democracies included in this survey in both 1999 and 2009—a comparison that shows little change between the two time periods when all 21 countries included in both surveys are taken into account. Hence, if our analyses were to begin and end by reporting on the mean importance that Scandinavian adolescent respondents attribute to various elements of good citizenship, we conclude that between 1999 and 2009 there has been a meaningful decrease in engaged citizenship norms and a simultaneous increase in duty-based citizenship norms in the Scandinavian countries.

[Figure 1 About Here]

From a theoretical perspective, however, it is wrong to study citizenship norms only by comparing the general research population's mean attribution of importance to separate indicators of good citizenship, as we have done in Figure 1. Of interest are not the scores on distinct survey items, but rather the way actors combine these items into coherent sets of citizenship norms. The theoretical claim we want to investigate refers to the actor as a unit of analysis, not to an item in a questionnaire. Therefore, norms have to be understood as individual-oriented concepts, meaning the specific combination of normative emphases expressed by individual respondents. The concept of citizenship norms as described in the

literature does not refer to single item answers to specific questions, but rather to a specific combination of items. It is therefore necessary to use an analytical technique that can empirically capture respondents' combination of items. In this way, the item no longer serves as the unit of analysis, but rather the individual who responds with a specific combination of items.

A review of variable-oriented analyses will clarify why an individual-oriented analysis is to be preferred for the study of citizenship norms held by individual citizens. Correlation matrices of these twelve items of good citizenship show that the bivariate correlations of all of these indicators are relatively low, with most correlations less than 0.3 in both time periods. This correlation is too low to distinguish in an empirically valid manner the theoretical latent concepts as discussed in the literature, and therefore the use of traditional data reduction techniques, like factor analysis, is not appropriate in this case. While correlations can inform us about the relationship between disparate elements of good citizenship, we are unable to draw broader conclusions from these measures about holistic patterns of citizenship norms.

Furthermore, from a theoretical perspective, Dalton's engaged citizenship concept requires us to determine whether the individual respondents who value the engaged-related norms are also the very same individual respondents who do not value traditional duty-based norms, which cannot be determined from a correlation matrix. Since dimensional analysis like factor analysis identifies latent variables based on a correlation matrix it is also not useful for identifying individuals' holistic normative concepts. For example, a factor analysis of the CIVED 1999 and ICCS 2009 data informs us that these items of good citizenship can be reduced to three dimensions of variables, but this kind of variable-oriented data reduction does not identify patterns of individuals' holistic normative conceptions that would allow us to test the claims made in the research literature.

Given our theoretical interest in respondent-oriented patterns, a preferable latent

variable approach is latent class analysis (LCA), since this kind of measurement model identifies distinctive subgroups of the research population that share similar patterns of responses on a battery of indicators (Magidson & Vermunt 2004). This kind of analysis allows us to determine whether individuals indeed combine high scores on one specific subset of items with low scores on a different, competing subset of items, as is claimed in the literature. Since our aim is to identify groups of respondents adhering to distinct citizenship concepts, this method is to be preferred over other methods of analysis that are aimed to detect a structure within the variables. Although LCA has not, to our knowledge, been previously used in the study of citizenship norms, it is widely used in the social and health sciences when the empirical phenomenon of interest is best represented by a model in which there are distinct subgroups or types of individuals (Collins & Lanza 2010, 4). For example, when health scientists study the prevalence of clinical depression, it is not sufficient to know the mean levels of symptoms in the research population; rather, the theoretical interest of the researcher is to identify combinations of depressive symptoms at the individual level. Likewise, we contend that citizenship norms as a theoretical construct should be measured through a respondent-oriented analytical cluster technique like LCA that identifies distinctive patterns of individual normative emphases.

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Results II: Stratification of Citizenship Norms

Given our interest in better understanding engaged and duty-based norms over time and space, we first focus on investigating the stratification of these two citizenship norms. For this purpose, we analyze the pooled sample and individual country data in both time periods to examine whether the presence of different background characteristics predicts the likelihood of adhering to a certain citizenship norm. The most appropriate technique for this analysis is

logistic regression since the dependent variable of interest is a dichotomous value of respondents' modal probability of membership in an identified latent class (i.e. 1=duty-based norm, 0=not duty-based). As already noted, the background characteristics analyzed in both time periods include sex, place of birth (native/foreign born) and a measure of how many books in the home as a proxy socio-economic status measure.

Focusing first on the engaged and duty-based norms, three conclusions emerge from the regression findings presented in Table 4. First, there is clear evidence of a gender bias: girls are more likely to have engaged citizenship norms, and boys are more likely to have a duty-based norm. For the engaged norm, this finding is significant in both time periods and in all countries, but for the duty-based it seems this bias becomes less strong in 2009, and does not hold in every country. Second, regarding whether the respondent is native born, the direction of bias is the same for both engaged and duty-based, namely that those who are native born are more likely to be both engaged and duty-based in comparison to those born in other countries. However, this relationship is not significant for the duty-based norm in 1999, and in 2009 the country-by-country analyses show that the effect in the pooled sample seems to be driven only by Denmark. For the engaged norm, on the other hand, in the pooled sample this finding holds in both time periods, though the effect in 2009 is smaller, and the country-by-country trends are mixed. Third, socio-economic status does not have a strong predictive effect on the likelihood of espousing these two citizenship norms. For the engaged norm, in 2009 there is somewhat of a tendency for those with higher socio-economic status to be less likely to have an engaged norm. For the duty-based norm, the pooled sample in 1999 shares the same tendency, that those with higher socio-economic status are less likely to have a duty-based norm. This relationship does not hold in 2009, however, and the only single-country effect in the two time periods is in the opposite direction (in Denmark in 2009: those with higher SES are more likely to be duty-based).

In sum, regarding the distinctive background characteristics of the engaged and duty-based groups the findings indicate a clear gender bias across space and time for girls to be engaged and boys to be duty-based; a tendency for those who are native born to be engaged; and little evidence of a meaningful relationship between socio-economic status and these two citizenship norms.

Despite the emphasis in the literature on the engaged and duty-based norms, the LCA findings reviewed in the previous section suggest that it is necessary to analyze the all-around and subject norms as well to fully understand the evolution of socio-demographic correlates of citizenship norms (Table 4 continued). The findings show that the all-around group is not distinctive regarding sex, but that those who are foreign-born are generally more likely to espouse an all-around norm. The foreign-born bias can potentially be explained by an increased desire on behalf of foreign-born students to give the ‘right’ answer that all aspects of citizenship are important, particularly since the survey was administered in an institutional school setting by school authorities. When there are differences in socio-economic status, those with higher SES tend to be all-arounders. The subjects, not surprisingly, paint an opposite picture, and are clearly the lowest SES group. It is also a very gendered group, with a strong bias toward males.

Discussion

These findings answer our first research question regarding whether engaged and duty-based citizenship norms exist in Scandinavian countries with a clear positive result: these two citizenship norms are found to be present among all four Scandinavian countries in the analysis and in both time periods. Our findings differ from Dalton’s in that the latent class analysis also identifies two other distinctive citizenship norms to be present in the research population: the ‘all-around’ citizen who considers all elements of citizenship to be of high

importance, as well as the ‘subject’ norm that considers most elements of citizenship to be fairly unimportant with a relative emphasis on traditional elements of obeying the law and working hard. Regarding the cross-country comparison, the expectation that Sweden and Norway may have an abundance of engaged citizenship in comparison to the other countries due to educational systems and based on previous political culture research was not supported in the findings. Similar citizenship norms were identified in all four countries in terms of their normative emphases of the different items of good citizenship. In terms of the prevalence of engaged and duty-based citizens, the main empirical trend is of convergence among the four Scandinavian countries in this study toward more similar proportions of these groups in 2009.

Our answer to the second research question is that, as expected, engaged citizenship has become somewhat more prevalent in Scandinavia between 1999 and 2009, but the findings also indicate that the duty-based norm is on the rise as well, increasing from 16 percent in 1999 to 21 percent in 2009. This seemingly counter-intuitive finding is possible due to the decreased prevalence of the other two norms (all-around and subject) identified in the latent class analysis findings.

Regarding the socio-demographic correlates of citizenship norms, our analysis indicates some meaningful differences between these groups with little change over time. The gender bias of the groups is the most striking and consistent finding, with girls more likely to have an engaged citizenship norm, and boys more likely to have traditional duty-based or subject norms. Although this finding contradicts the expectation based on research on adults of a politically engaged bias in favor of men, this finding does support prior research on adolescents showing that girls report a high intention to participate in comparison to boys (Hooghe & Stolle 2004). It is certainly possible that this is an adolescent-specific finding, and that further research will show that girls ‘grow out of’ this kind of a participatory stage as they are confronted with resource limitations characteristic of adult women (Burns et al. 2001;

Burns et al. 1997). It is also possible, however, that as our measures of citizenship norms and political activity continue to improve, we will be better equipped to identify the kind of social-capital intensive political activity in which women seem to rival and even outperform men (Harell 2009; Lowndes 2000). Indeed, recent research has found that women are becoming even more active than men in non-institutionalized forms of participation like petitioning and political consumerism (Coffé & Bolzendahl 2010).

Regarding socio-economic stratification, the lack of meaningful distinctions between the engaged and duty-based groups do not confirm the expectation in the literature that the engaged group would be distinctly privileged in comparison to the duty-based group. This finding could be seen as corroborating prior research on adults in Scandinavia which found that, counter to expectations in the literature, citizens who can be understood as having an engaged norm in Scandinavia do not have particularly high education levels (Hooghe & Dejaeghere 2007). In contrast, it is clear even with the fairly rough home literacy measure of socio-economic status, that the all-around group in this study is distinctly advantaged while the subject group is disadvantaged. This finding emphasizes the importance of taking all citizenship groups into account in our efforts to understand the implications of changing citizenship norms for participatory inequality in advanced democracies.

Since recent research on citizenship norms has often relied on cross-sectional data from the United States, the over-time findings reported in this article based on strictly comparable data on Scandinavian adolescents shed new light on the empirical evolution of citizenship norms. Further research is necessary in order to expand upon the implications of the findings in this article for Scandinavian public policies, and for our understanding of how citizenship norms impact upon 'making democracies work' (Putnam 1993). Examples of fruitful areas of future investigation include further research on the impact of gender and native-born background characteristics in different polities, and a consideration of the

influence of various education systems on citizenship norms. In other research, we have taken advantage of the full range of countries surveyed in Cived 1999 and ICCS 2009 (which include 28 and 38 countries, respectively). One of the findings of this broader cross-national research is that, as expected, Scandinavian countries lead the pack with a high proportion of engaged citizens in both time periods, but that in 2009 a broader and more varied group of countries are also contributing to the ranks of engaged citizens (Authors, under review).

Broader normative questions are also highlighted by this research, including the question of whether any of the various citizenship norms identified here are preferable for the functioning of a vibrant democracy. In particular, the very terminology of ‘engaged’ versus ‘duty-based’ norms suggests a certain normative bias in favor of ‘engaged’ norms as somehow more vibrant and free from the constraints of rote, duty-driven behavior. Further research is necessary in order to examine the political behavior and democratic engagement that result from the adherence to the different norms identified in this study.

An additional avenue of future research highlighted by the present study is the importance of gathering requisite data to tease out the differential causal impact of age, period and cohort effects. Given Dalton’s focus on the importance of the norms of young citizens and the presumed impact of these norms over time, it is clearly necessary to gather panel data in order to definitively distinguish the impact of age versus cohort effects, and to determine the relationship between these effects and socio-demographic stratification patterns. For example, panel data could be used to determine whether the increased prevalence in duty-based citizens found in this study is due to an ‘upgrade’ from subject to duty-based citizenship, or rather due to a ‘downgrade’ from those who used to be more normatively engaged as all-around citizens. In addition to the obvious importance of further studying age and generation effects, we note that period effects must also be studied closely, particularly in light of the wealth of research demonstrating that individual socio-economic resources have

an important influence on civic engagement of all kinds (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995). For example, for the time periods in this study, future research could examine whether periods of economic prosperity (as in 1999) versus financial crisis (as in 2009) have an independent effect on citizenship norms.

This call for future research on age, period and cohort effects serves as a reminder that we must be cautious in generalizing from the conclusions of this adolescent-based study to the population writ large. It is also noteworthy that the identified norms are similar in both time periods and in different countries but not identical, requiring caution in comparing across time and place. Yet, the main elements of the citizenship norms certainly remain consistent in the different contexts of this study, thereby underscoring the utility of focusing on adolescents for the purposes of identifying emerging citizenship norms. In short, the findings in this study show that even in contexts like Scandinavia where engaged citizenship norms are highly pervasive, they are still becoming more common over time. Yet, we also learn that the over-time picture is not a simple secular trend of ‘down with the bad, up with the good’. The persistence and increase of duty-based norms even among adolescents in Scandinavia suggest that, in contrast with optimistic calls to the contrary, traditional citizenship norms will not disappear from advanced democracies in the foreseeable future.

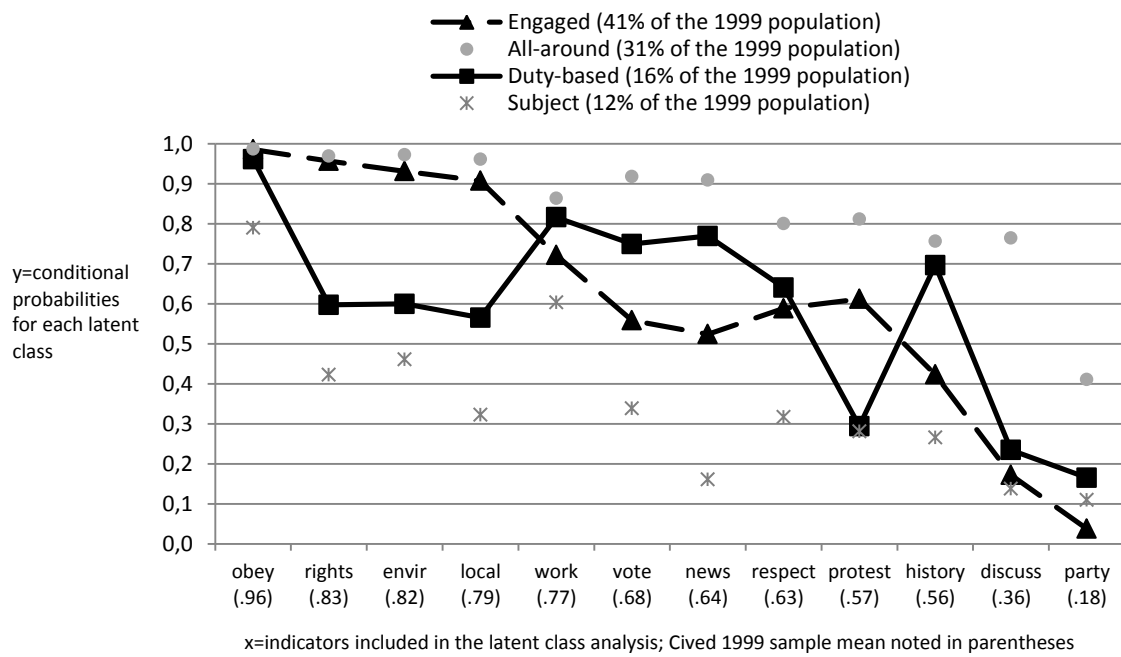
Table 3. Prevalence of Citizenship Norms in 1999 and 2009

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Pooled
<i>Engaged</i>					
1999	42	35	48	36	41
2009	39	51	38	48	44
Diff.	-3	+16	-10	+12	+3
<i>Duty-based</i>					
1999	16	27	9	15	16
2009	33	20	11	15	21
Diff.	+17	-7	+2	0	+5

Note: Entries are proportions of all respondents assigned to one of the latent groups, in 1999 and 2009.

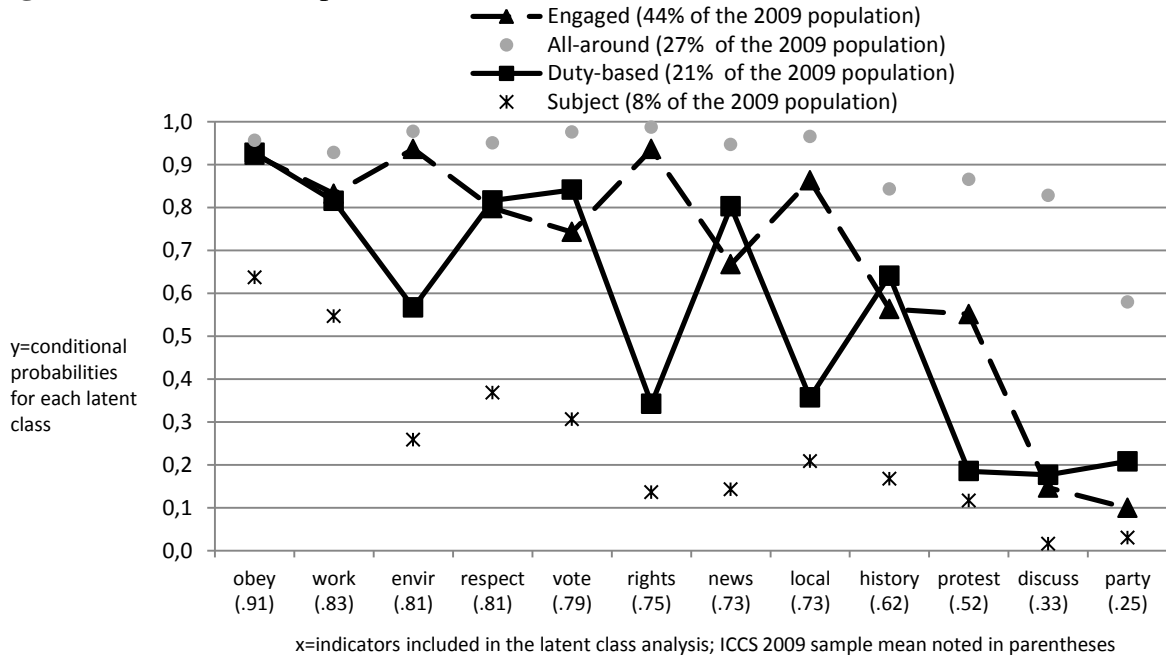
Source: LCA of Cived 1999 and ICCS 2009 data

Figure 2. Four Citizenship Norms in Scandinavian Countries, 1999



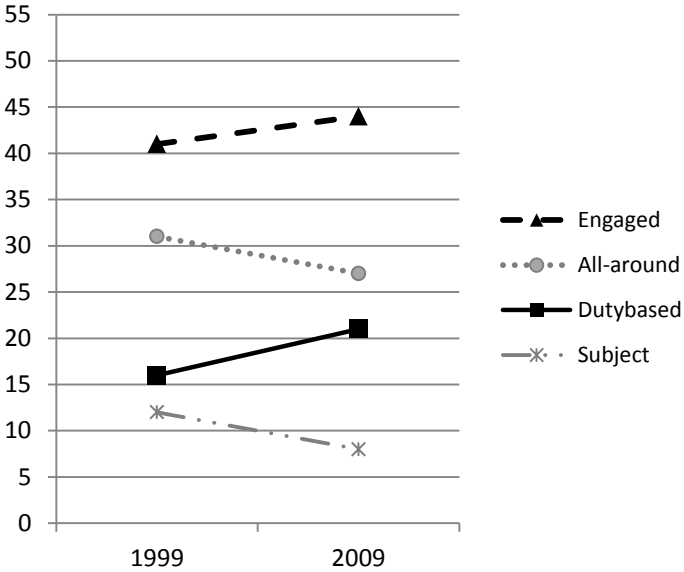
Source: Cived 1999 for pooled sample of cases for Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (n=12,209). Indicators on x-axis ordered in descending order of the 1999 sample mean.

Figure 3. Four Citizenship Norms in Scandinavian Countries, 2009



Source: ICCS 2009 for pooled sample of cases for Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (n=13,927). Indicators on x-axis ordered in descending order of the 2009 sample mean.

Figure 4. Evolution of Citizenship Norm Distribution in Scandinavia



Sources: Latent class analysis results for Cived Cived 1999 (n=12,209) and ICCS 2009 (n=13,927) for pooled sample of cases for Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden in each time period.

