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THE MEASUREMENT, STRUCTURE, AND CROSS-CULTURAL EQUIVALENCE OF POLITICAL PARTY PERCEPTION. EVIDENCE FROM POLAND, LITHUANIA, AND UKRAINE

ABSTRACT: This paper examines the cross-cultural universality of the structural model of (voter) perception of political parties (PPP) in three ex-communist countries with party-centered systems, but with different economic and cultural backgrounds, and different levels of democracy development. We conducted a confirmatory study of a five-dimensional structure of PPP, which had been established through lexical research, using data from voters in Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine. The structure involved personality-related dimensions (Strength, Disagreeableness, and Integrity) and non-personality dimensions, such as world-view (Left Wing vs. Right Wing) and evaluation (Backwardness vs. Modernity). The study revealed the configural and metric invariance of the structure of PPP. Its dimensions explain political preferences in each country at the individual level, but also differentiate between PPPs at the between-country level, both in the group of supporters and opponents of political parties. We linked voter perceptions with political preferences by presenting a five-factor model of PPP established on a valid and reliable psychometric inventory.

1. Introduction

To achieve and maintain its political market position, a political object must be recognizable by publicity. One of the most important political objects is the political party, as it plays a key role in representing social interests, helps transform popular ideas into legislative initiatives, and often determines what candidates have a chance to succeed in elections (cf. Scarrow/Webb 2017). Like any other object in the political scene, a party is interested in maximizing social support. It can achieve this by developing its image, that is, an aggregate of associations with its logo, name, and other stimuli strictly linked with that party (Gorbaniuk/Kusak/Kogut 2015). Among other things, the image may determine the degree of citizens' engagement in political processes (Dalton/Weldon 2005) and their voting preferences and decisions (Smith 2001). Because the components of a political image have a certain emotional charge (Sears 2001), and emotions play an important role in making decisions (Damasio 1994), including voting decisions (Brader 2005), the image of a political party influences the ways it is perceived by voters, as well as on their voting behaviors.

To differentiate between parties, voters need to have perceptions of political issues and be able to evaluate the political differences between parties and their programs on some dimensions – and, hence, have political preferences (Mattes/Milazzo 2014). It is important to note, however, that not all associations with a political party are shaped by the marketing activities of public relations professionals. Studies show that such associations are also influenced by less controlled or entirely uncontrolled factors, such as current events (Smith 2005), support from celebrities, media bias, the very voters' image (Smith 2001), advertising (Cwalina/Falkowski/Kaid 2000), or group stereotyping processes that result in extrapolating personality traits from one party member to another, from a party member to the whole party, or *vice versa* – from the party to its members (Hayes 2005). Because these processes may influence voters' perceptions of particular politicians, they may also shape the perceptions of particular parties, thereby affecting voter decision making.

In view of the above, voter perceptions of political parties, party positions on the political market, and their policies and programs unfold as prerequisites for successful political representation (Dahlberg 2009), which makes investigations into such perceptions a worthwhile research endeavor. Indeed, there is a growing body of literature that deals with the mechanisms that govern the creation of political images and perceptions of parties and politicians. Among the themes that concern political behavior researchers and reflect how voters cast their ballots have been, first, the ways voters position political parties, actors, and issues on ideological dimensions, which is known as spatial models (of voting behavior) (Downs 1957). Second, voters' behaviors have been studied in relation to how they perceive parties via the lens of their ability to achieve certain outcomes or how voters identify parties

based on their perceptions of party and leader competencies, which is known as valence models (Stokes 1963).

This paper bridges the above approaches to political image and voter perception of political phenomena by focusing on how political parties are perceived by voters from various national, cultural, and political contexts. Our study stands out by testing a cross-cultural universality of the structure of p o l i t i c a l p a r t y p e r c e p t i o n (P P P) , that is, voters' (explicit) natural associations with and beliefs about parties. The study performs a taxonomic function of a set of attributes that characterize a party. However, it also aims to unlock the potential of the model for cross-cultural empirical research that, in the next step, could further explanatory research into the underlying system that generates such attributes.

Our approach draws on lexical research into perceptions of individuals or objects, which examines the structure of the lexicon used to describe differences between those individuals or objects. Accordingly, the approach allows establishing the dimensions in terms of which such objects as political parties are thought about. Specifically, this study tests the cross-cultural equivalence of the structure of PPP established through lexical research in Poland (Gorbaniuk et al. 2015), using original data collected through questionnaire surveys from large samples of voters from three ex-communist countries with different cultural and economic backgrounds: Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine. Respondents described 19 parties using typical lexical descriptors of political parties, rated their accuracy for each party, and gave their voting preferences.

2. Measuring PPP through lexical research

Many attempts have been made in political marketing to conceptualize party image by analogy with the perception of brands. Researchers (e.g. Schneider 2004; Smith 2009) have tested the factor validity of instruments that measure brand personality (Aaker 1997) in studies of PPP and found significant differences between the structure of perception of product and service brand personality and the structure of PPP. Although such empirical studies suggest that the instruments measure two conceptually different objects of study (brand vs. party), brand personality model are still applied in research into PPP (e.g. Rutter/Hanretty/Lettice 2018), which is most likely motivated by the lack of validated instruments measuring the structure of PPP.

Accordingly, there is a need to develop a cross-culturally equivalent measure of PPP, which will make it possible to compare the results of studies conducted in different countries. Such a measure will further contribute to the systematic accumulation of knowledge about the factors that influence PPP and its significance for voting behaviors. To develop such a descriptive structural model, it is necessary

to establish the taxonomy of key dimensions of the structure of PPP. The lexical approach allows the simultaneous application of most of the major criteria for the goodness of a structural model and has so far shown considerable potential for agreement on a scientific taxonomy (Kolańska/Gorbaniuk/Wilczewski 2020), a good example of which is the Big Five model of personality traits (Saucier/ Srivastava 2015).

PPP has recently been conceptualized and operationalized by Gorbaniuk et al. (2015) through lexical research. They adapted a well-known l e x i c a l a s s u m p t i o n , according to which the individual differences that become significant in everyday interactions between people will be encoded in their natural language (Goldberg 1981, p. 141), to study the most significant characteristics that differentiate political parties (from the voter perspective) by analyzing the structure of a lexicon used by voters when describing political parties. The authors collected, through extensive interviews with 120 Polish voters aged 18 to 81, a natural lexicon of 3,200 associations with political parties. These associations were further classified by nine judges (for the details of their selection and training, as well as classification procedure, see Gorbaniuk et al. 2015). The 102 most frequent descriptors were subsequently selected to examine PPP in a quantitative study with a sample of 598 voters aged 18 to 80. The results of factor analyses allowed for establishing a five-dimensional structure of PPP, with three personality and two non-personality dimensions. The personality-related dimensions encompassed: Strength (with such core descriptors as *dominant*, *powerful*, *self-confident*, *firm*, and *active*), Integrity/Honesty (*truthful*, *sincere*, *just*, *honest*), and Disagreeableness (*bad-tempered*, *intolerant*, *rowdy*, *confrontational*, *aggressive*). The non-personality dimensions included the Left-Wing vs. Right-Wing continuum – which describes ideological differences between parties (*left-wing*, *communist vs. right-wing*, *religious*, *conservative*), and the Backwardness vs. Modernity continuum (*ignorant*, *backward vs. modern*, *educated*). All five dimensions correlated both with voters' attitudes toward and preferences for political parties, with Strength and Integrity having the most predictive power for voters' political party preferences. The remaining dimensions played a secondary role. The measurement scales developed based on the dimensions identified yielded very good psychometric properties (Gorbaniuk et al. 2015).

Because the PPP structure has been established based on data collected in one country, it is necessary that its validity is examined across more national, cultural, and political contexts.

3. Research design

3.1. Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to test the cross-cultural universality of the structural model of PPP, developed through lexical studies of Polish voters (Gorbaniuk et al. 2015), using data from Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine. Prior cross-cultural research based on the 1995-1998 World Values Surveys (Inglehart/Baker 2000) shows that although the three countries can be positioned on a global cultural map in the ex-communist zone, there is evident cross-cultural variation among them. Poland is regarded as a Central European Catholic culture, Lithuania – a Baltic culture, and Ukraine – an Orthodox culture. In economic terms, whereas Lithuania and Ukraine experienced economic and social decline in the 1990s, Poland showed positive economic growth and transition to a market economy at that time. Furthermore, Poland and Lithuania are viewed as consolidated electoral democracies (Clark 1994; Merkel 2009), whereas Ukraine is an unconsolidated democracy (D'Anieri 2011; Merkel 2009). Accordingly, the countries selected for this study represent a historically homogenous group, but diverse with respect to cultural values and economic development.

Using data from the three countries, we will test the following hypotheses:
- H1. The structure of PPP is characterized by cross-cultural invariance (H1.1 configural invariance; H1.2 metric invariance; and H1.3 covariant invariance).
- H2. PPP explains political preferences in each country.
- H3. The structure of PPP is characterized by cross-voter invariance (H3.1 configural invariance; H3.2 metric invariance; and H3.3 covariant invariance).
- H4. PPP differentiates between the aggregated perceptions of the party among its supporters (H4.1) and opponents (H4.2) in each country.

The above hypotheses concern the explanatory potential of PPP dimensions for accounting for diverse voters' individual perceptions (individual-level variance: H1 and H2) and diverse aggregated PPPs (party-level variance: H3).

3.2. Method

3.2.1. Party selection

We selected political parties based on their recognizability and support level ($\geq 5\%$), based on the ranking lists of opinion polls valid at the time of the study. This criterion allowed us to collect a pool of parties presenting a wide range of political and ideological views – from the left-wing, through the center, to the right-wing political spectrum. The Polish parties included: Law and Justice (PIS)

– a national-conservative and Christian democratic party; Civic Platform (PO) – a liberal-conservative and Christian democratic party; Polish People's Party (PSL) – an agrarian and Christian democratic party; Modern (*Nowoczesna*) – a liberal and classical-liberal party; Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) – a post-communist social-democratic party; Kukiz '15 – an anti-establishment and right-wing movement (founded by Paweł Kukiz) that ran for the 2015 parliamentary elections; and Coalition for the Renewal of the Republic – Liberty and Hope (KORWiN) – a right-wing Eurosceptic party (founded by Janusz Korwin-Mikke).

In Lithuania, we selected: Labor Party (DP) – a center-left party; Liberals' Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (LRLS) – a conservative-liberal party; Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (LSDP) – a conservative-liberal party; Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) – a center-right party; Party Order and Justice (TT) – a right-wing national-conservative party; Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (LVŽS) – a center-right agrarian political party.

In Ukraine, we selected: All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" – a center-right pro-European party; M. Saakashvili Bloc – a center-right party; All-Ukrainian Union "Svoboda" – a nationalist party; Petro Poroshenko Bloc "Solidarity" – a center-right pro-European party; Radical Party of Oleh Lyashko – a right-wing, national-conservative party; and Union "Self Reliance" – a center-right, liberal and conservative party.

3.2.2. Measuring PPP

Political Party Perception Assessment Questionnaire has been developed by Authors (2015). The internal consistency coefficients for the five scales established in a study with a non-academic sample were as follows: (1) α = .82 for Strength; (2) α = .91 for Integrity; (3) α = .89 for Disagreeableness; (4) α = .83 for Left Wing vs. Right Wing; and (5) α = .82 for Backwardness vs. Modernity (Gorbaniuk et al., 2015; Kustos, 2011). To ensure high consistency coefficients in the current study, we selected four items with the highest item-total correlations from each of the scales. This procedure resulted in a 20-item scale measuring all five dimensions of the structure of PPP (see Appendix 1). The respondents rated the accuracy of each descriptor of a particular political party on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The questionnaire was translated from Polish into Lithuanian and Ukrainian.

3.2.3. Sample

We used data from 236 students from Poland (52.8% women; mean age M = 21.82, SD = 2.39), 300 from Lithuania (50.7% women; mean age M = 20.78, SD = 1.78), and 344 from Ukraine (64.7% women; mean age M = 20.63, SD = 2.74). In each country, the samples allowed for the detection of a population effect size of Pearson's r > .20, squared multiple correlation R^2 > .05, and RMSEA > .07 with the desired statistical power of $1 - \beta$ = .90, and the required significance level of α = .05.

3.2.4. Data collection procedure

The data was collected in September and October 2015 in Poland, in September 2015 in Lithuania, and from May to September 2016 in Ukraine. Each respondent completed a pen-and-paper questionnaire which was collected by a research assistant on the same day. The participants' task was to describe each party listed in the questionnaire using 20 adjectives from the instrument measuring PPP; accordingly, the unit of analysis is a description of a party.

Next, party preference (voting intention) was estimated following the position that the best way to measure it is by examining evaluations between the parties rather than of individual parties, because voters' perceptions of political parties are based on comparative evaluations (Blais et al. 2001). Thus, each respondent was asked to divide 100% of their vote between all the parties in the political scene of the country.

Having rejected the questionnaires with missing data, we obtained 1,362 descriptions of Polish political parties, 1,594 descriptions of Lithuanian political parties, and 2,340 descriptions of Ukrainian political parties from our samples.

4. Results

4.1. Testing the cross-cultural invariance of PPP

To test the invariance of PPP in Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine, we performed a multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis (MG-CFA) considering the specificity of PPP in each of the three countries (see Figure 1). Before the analysis, we centered the data for each country to eliminate variance stemming from within-country differences in the perception of different political parties.

The original Model 1 was unconstrained, except for the consistency of the structures of party perception in Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine with the five--factor model (configural invariance). Model 2 assumed identical factor loadings
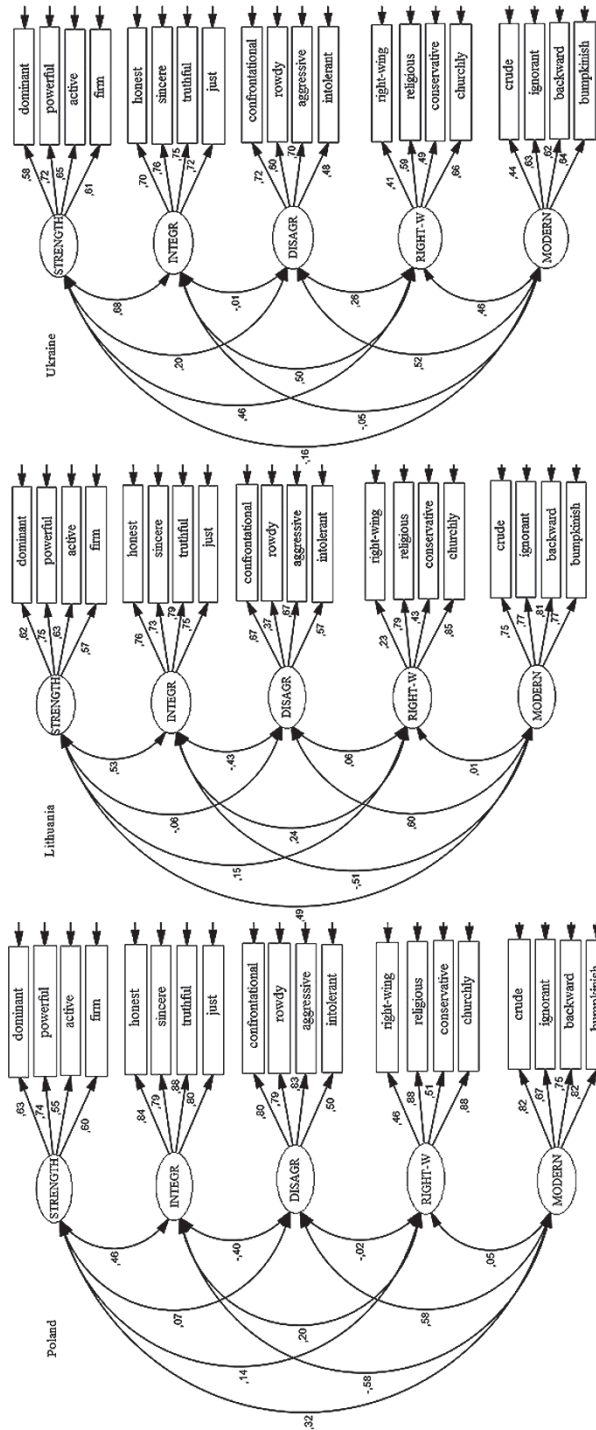
Figure 1. Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Structural Model for Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine

(metric invariance). Model 3 assumed similar correlations between factors (covariant invariance) in different countries. The results for the three tested models (see Table 1) showed an acceptable fit of each model to the correlation matrix. In particular, the results for Model 1 showed that the five-factor structure described political party perception in each of the three countries well, supporting H1.1.

Table 1. Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Cross-Cultural Measurement Invariance

Model:	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Invariance:	Configural	Metric	Covariant
χ^2	2857.37	3178.79	4014.15
df	480	510	540
p <	.001	.001	.001
CFI	.932	.924	.901
RMSEA	.031	.031	.035

The absence of significant differences between Models 1 and 2 (ΔCFI < .01, ΔRMSEA < .01) indicates that factor loadings were similar across samples and, consequently, that latent variables (dimensions) were the same across all three countries, which supported H1.2.

The comparison of Models 2 and 3 revealed significant differences in the value of CFI (ΔCFI > .01) and non-significant differences in RMSEA (ΔRMSEA < .01), which suggests that correlations between the dimensions of political party perception at least partly differed across countries. Accordingly, H1.3 was rejected. Nevertheless, configural invariance and metric invariance justify cross-country comparisons of PPP with the use of the questionnaire applied in this study because of the similar five-factor structure of PPP and the similar meaning of the dimensions measured.

4.2. The internal consistency of the scales

To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, we computed Cronbach's α coefficients for the items included in each of the five scales measuring PPP (see Table 2). In Poland, Cronbach's α coefficients ranged from .80 to .91, whereas in Lithuania they ranged from .70 to .88. These results should be regarded as satisfactory from the viewpoint of the applied measure of the structure of PPP, especially given the small number of items in each scale (cf. Schmitt 1996). For Ukraine, we obtained satisfactory results only for such PPP dimensions as Integrity (α = .83), Strength (α = .74) and Disagreeableness (α = .73). The results were weaker for Left Wing vs. Right Wing (α = .60) and Backwardness vs. Modernity (α = .68).

Table 2. The Internal Consistency of the Scales Measuring PPP in Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine

Scale	Country / Cronbach's alpha		
	Poland	Lithuania	Ukraine
Strength	.798	.776	.735
Integrity	.910	.879	.829
Disagreeableness	.849	.699	.730
Left Wing vs. Right Wing	.871	.727	.602
Backwardness vs. Modernity	.849	.878	.678

4.3. The explanatory power of PPP dimensions for political preferences

To determine the relationship between PPP dimensions and party preference, we performed a multiple regression analysis using PPP scales as explanatory variables (see Table 3). The model was statistically significant in each country: in Poland [$F(5, 1320) = 155.45$, $p < .001$] the model explained 37% of variance in party preference (adjusted $R^2 = .37$); in Lithuania [$F(5, 1598) = 151.02$, $p < .001$] it explained 32% of variance in party preference (adjusted $R^2 = .32$); and in Ukraine [$F(5, 2317) = 87.56$, $p < .001$] it explained 16% of that variance (adjusted $R^2 = .16$).

Table 3. Explanation of Political Preferences by PPP in Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine

Scale	Country		
	Poland	Lithuania	Ukraine
Strength	β = .197***	β = .228***	β = .143***
Integrity	β = .299***	β = .333***	β = .294***
Disagreeableness	β = −.071**	β = −.057*	β = −.043*
Left Wing vs. Right Wing	β = .116***	β = −.054*	β = −.042
Backwardness vs. Modernity	β = .230***	β = .122***	β = .097***
R^2	.370	.322	.159
F	155.45***	151.02***	87.56***
$df_{1, 2}$	5, 1320	5, 1598	5, 2317

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

The analysis of standardized regression equation coefficients indicates that, in Poland, PPP dimensions with the greatest significance in predicting party preference were the perceived Integrity (β = .30, $p < .001$), Backwardness vs. Modernity (β = .23, $p < .001$), and Strength (β = .20, $p < .001$). In Lithuania, the above three dimensions also played the most important role in political party preference, but the perceived Integrity of political parties was ranked first (β = .33, $p < .001$), Strength second (β = .23, $p < .001$) and Backwardness vs. Modernity third

(β = .12, p < .001). In Ukraine, the significance of PPP dimensions in predicting party preference was relatively lower – voters preferred parties they perceived via the lens of Integrity (β = .29, p < .001) and Strength (β = .14, p < .001). Because the dimensions of the lexical structure of PPP explained political preferences in each country, H2 was supported.

4.4. The capacity of PPP scales to differentiate between aggregated PPPs

To examine if being a supporter or opponent of a given political party shapes the structure of PPP, we measured the PPP invariance across the two groups of voters in each country. According to the results shown in Table 4, the structure of PPP and the meaning of individual dimensions show no significant differences across the groups of supporters and opponents in each country, thus confirming H3.

Table 4. Multigroup Confirmatory Factor Analysis: Cross-Voter Measurement Invariance

Country	Model:	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Invariance:	Configural	Metric	Covariant
Poland	χ^2	1051.37	1080.99	1461.01
	df	320	335	350
	p <	.001	.001	.001
	CFI	.934	.932	.901
	RMSEA	.042	.042	.047
	SRMR	.058	.058	.064
Lithuania	χ^2	909.42	932.32	1197.59
	df	320	335	350
	p <	.001	.001	.001
	CFI	.941	.941	.917
	RMSEA	.034	.034	.037
	SRMR	.046	.046	.050
Ukraine	χ^2	1371.25	1393.68	1470.65
	df	320	335	350
	p <	.001	.001	.001
	CFI	.903	.903	.897
	RMSEA	.039	.039	.039

An important characteristic of the instrument employed to measure the structure of PPP is its capacity to differentiate between voter perceptions of various political parties (assuming that such differences between parties actually exist). We compared PPPs separately for their supporters (who reported willingness to vote for

a given party) and opponents by means of a one-factor analysis of variance for each country, performed on raw (non-centered) data. The separate analysis allowed us to control the variable responsible for the deformations of social perception – namely, positive in-group distinctiveness (Tajfel 1981).

The results of the analysis of variance showed that PPPs differed significantly in terms of all five dimensions among opponents in each country. In Poland, the dimensions that best differentiated political parties were Right Wing vs. Left Wing [$F(5, 1113) = 190.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .46$], Disagreeableness [$F(5, 1113) = 100.76$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .31$)], and Strength [$F(5, 1113) = 93.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .30$]; a relatively less strongly differentiating dimension was Integrity [$F(5, 1113) = 48.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$]. Relatively smaller statistically significant differences between parties occurred on the Backwardness vs. Modernity scale [$F(5, 1113) = 7.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$].

In Lithuania, the most strongly differentiating dimensions were Integrity [$F(5, 1260) = 82.12$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .25$], Right Wing vs. Left Wing [$F(5, 1260) = 74.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$], and Strength [$F(5, 1260) = 66.95$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$]. Disagreeableness [$F(5, 1260) = 50.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$] differentiated between political parties to a relatively lower degree, while the Backwardness vs. Strength dimension [$F(5, 1260) = 32.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$] ranked last, just like in Poland.

PPP dimensions differentiated between political parties to the lowest degree in the group of opponents in Ukraine. The results revealed that, in Ukraine, the largest differences between parties were perceived in the dimensions of Disagreeableness [$F(6, 1800) = 32.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$] and Integrity [$F(6, 1800) = 11.97$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .04$]. The remaining dimensions differentiated political parties to a lower degree: Backwardness vs. Modernity [$F(6, 1800) = 9.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .03$]; Strength [$F(6, 1800) = 7.47$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .02$]; and Right Wing vs. Left Wing [$F(6, 1800) = 1.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .01$].

In the group of party supporters in Poland, we found no statistically significant differences only on the Backwardness vs. Modernity scale [$F(5, 187) = 1.38$], which suggests that supporters rated their preferred parties equally on this dimension. Polish voters differed in the attribution of the remaining four PPP characteristics to their parties: Strength [$F(5, 187) = 12.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$], Integrity [$F(5, 187) = 6.22$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$], Disagreeableness [$F(5, 187) = 9.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .21$], and Left Wing vs. Right Wing [$F(5, 187) = 45.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .56$]. In Lithuania, we found no statistically significant differences in perceived Strength in the group of supporters [$F(5, 322) = 1.62$], which suggests that all parties were perceived by their supporters as equally strong and determined to pursue their goals. However, we did find differences in PPP in Lithuania in the following dimensions: Integrity [$F(5, 322) = 3.12$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$], Disagreeableness [$F(5, 322) = 6.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$], Left Wing vs. Right Wing [$F(5, 322) = 53.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .45$], and Backwardness vs. Modernity [$F(5, 322) = 3.34$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$]. In Ukraine,

supporters differentiated between political parties to the lowest degree. We found statistically significant differences in the perceived levels of Disagreeableness [$F(6, 299) = 7.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .13$] and Backwardness vs. Modernity [$F(6, 299) = 2.85$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$]. As regards the remaining three PPP dimensions, the analysis revealed no statistically significant differences: Strength [$F(6, 299) = .03$], Integrity [$F(6, 299) = 1.32$], and Left Wing vs. Right Wing [$F(6, 299) = 1.09$].

Taken together, our hypothesis stating that the dimensions of the PPP construct differentiate between the aggregated PPPs across countries among the supporters (H4.1) and opponents (H4.2) of parties was confirmed. The results showed that the dimensions measured by the adapted questionnaire clearly differentiated between the aggregated perceptions of various political parties in Poland and Lithuania, and to a smaller degree in Ukraine, with larger differences being observed in comparisons made by the opponents of political parties.

5. Conclusions

This paper contributes to the literature on political marketing, elections, and voting, which lacks validated reliable and cross-culturally invariant instruments for measuring how voters perceive political parties and how such perceptions may affect their voting behaviors. Specifically, we tested a cross-cultural equivalence of the five-factor lexical structure of PPP with a recently developed PPP Assessment Questionnaire (Gorbaniuk et al. 2015). We used data from voters from three ex-communist countries with different cultural and economic backgrounds: Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine.

The results confirmed the culturally universal character of the developed model of PPP at the individual (voter) level and satisfactory psychometric properties for each factor scale of the instrument. Specifically, this study demonstrated the configural and metric cross-cultural invariance of the five dimensions: Strength, Integrity, Disagreeableness, Left Wing vs. Right Wing, and Backwardness vs. Modernity. Moreover, the study showed the capacity of the model to differentiate between PPPs at the aggregated (party) level.

Although we obtained evidence for cross-cultural invariance of the measure across the Polish, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian samples, this research should go beyond Central and Eastern European countries and involve other geographical, cultural, political contexts. We suggest that future studies use the PPP measure and other available instruments with samples from other cultural zones, such as Confucian, Protestant, African, Latin American, Islamic, and English-speaking zone (Inglehart/Baker 2000). Such studies could help to further evaluate the cross-cultural validity of the PPP construct and examine the generality of the PPP measure

across a broader range of contexts. Moreover, future work should test our model across various political systems and cultures.

Another avenue for future research lies in the methodological issue of the degree to which respondents evaluated political parties and politicians. The five-factor structure of PPP clearly yields personality and non-personality dimensions, which suggests that respondents may describe political parties through reference to politicians/party leaders. We suggest that parallel research into perceptions of politicians is carried out, as it would allow researchers to determine the degree to which the dimensions of the structure of the perception of politicians are reflected in the five-factor structure of PPP.

We showed that the structure of PPP is the same both in the group of supporters and opponents of political parties, which means that the two groups perceive political parties through the same dimensions. The instrument allows researchers to determine (in various national contexts) the strongest links between particular PPP dimensions and voter preferences, so future research – especially experimental one – could examine the nature and causal direction of these links both among supporters and opponents of political parties.

This research makes several important contributions to the current literature. In theoretical terms, it establishes a cross-culturally invariant model that recognizes five qualitatively distinct dimensions in the structure of PPP. Although researchers (e.g. Gopal/Verma 2018; Rutter et al. 2018; Speed/Butler/Collins 2015) still tend to use brand personality models (e.g. Aaker 1997) to investigate PPP (most probably due to the lack of validated instruments measuring PPP), empirical research provides clear evidence that PPP differs from how consumer perceive brands (Gorbaniuk et al. 2015; Smith 2009). Therefore, in practical terms, our model stands out as it can be effectively used in cross-cultural studies of antecedents and consequences of PPP. The identified structure of PPP may serve as a platform for cross-national comparative research to systematically accumulate knowledge about the determinants of PPP and its influence on the electorate's voting behavior.

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Appendix 1. The Political Party Perception Assessment Questionnaire

Instructions: Please describe the political party _____ using the following traits. Circle the most appropriate response using the 5-point scale, where 1 means that you strongly disagree with this party description, and 5 means that you strongly agree with this party description.

1 strongly disagree	2 disagree			3 neither agree nor disagree	4 agree		5 strongly agree			

dominant	1	2	3	4	5	active	1	2	3	4	5
honest	1	2	3	4	5	truthful	1	2	3	4	5
confrontational	1	2	3	4	5	aggressive	1	2	3	4	5
right-wing	1	2	3	4	5	conservative	1	2	3	4	5
crude	1	2	3	4	5	backward	1	2	3	4	5
powerful	1	2	3	4	5	firm	1	2	3	4	5
sincere	1	2	3	4	5	just	1	2	3	4	5
rowdy	1	2	3	4	5	intolerant	1	2	3	4	5
religious	1	2	3	4	5	churchly	1	2	3	4	5
ignorant	1	2	3	4	5	bumpkinish	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring key

Strength: sum items "dominant", "powerful", "active", and "firm", and divide by four.

Integrity: sum items "honest", "sincere", "truthful", and "just", and divide by four.

Disagreeableness: sum items "confrontational", "rowdy", "aggressive", and "intolerant", and divide by four.

Left Wing vs. Right Wing: sum items "right-wing", "religious", "conservative", and "churchly", and divide by four.

Backwardness vs. Modernity: sum items "crude", "ignorant", "backward", and "bumpkinish", and divide by four.