

Příloha 7: Posudek oponenta habilitační práce

Masarykova univerzita

Fakulta Fakulta sociálních studií
Habilitační obor Sociální psychologie

Uchazeč Mgr. Sylvie Graf, Ph.D.
Pracoviště Psychologický ústav Akademie věd ČR, v.v.i.
Habilitační práce Češi a jejich sousedé: primární a sekundární přenos vlivu meziskupinového kontaktu na postoje v pěti zemích střední Evropy

Oponent Prof. Dr. Hab. Maria Lewicka, Ph.D.
Pracoviště Wydział Psychologii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego

Text posudku (rozsah dle zvážení oponenta)

Review of the habilitation dissertation by Sylvie Graf “Češi a jejich sousedé: Primární a sekundární přenos vlivu meziskupinového kontaktu na postoje v pěti zemích střední Evropy”

The dissertation submitted for evaluation is a combination of three chapters (one of them slightly revised and adjusted to the main thematic focus) that appeared in a book, authored by Sylvie Graf and three other authors, of which Martina Hřebickova was the most significant author, and two new chapters, devoted to new analyses of the same data centered around the two types of contact with the out-group, primary and secondary. Sylvie Graf admits to being the main author of the three chapters and hence their inclusion into her dissertation is fully justified. I had the opportunity to review the book before it has been published so I will repeat my comments concerning these chapters here as well.

The studies presented by Sylvie Graf are survey studies carried out on five national groups from Central-Eastern Europe, three Slavic (Czech, Slovak and Polish) and three Germanic (Austrian and German). The common feature of the groups is that they all have a common border with Czech Republic but the majority also shares common borders with others (e.g., Poland with Germany, Slovakia with Austria, Austria with Germany etc.). The studies deal

with mutual stereotypes of the five nations, compared to their self-stereotypes and national identities. Apart from the descriptive part, the studies sought to identify factors underlying the mutual attitudes, the most important was the type and frequency of mutual contacts. I found the presented studies impressive when it comes to the scope of the covered material, great number of participants, methodological diversity (quantitative and qualitative data), the Author's command of relevant literature (both classic and contemporary) dealing with intergroup relations, and good command of appropriate statistical analyses.

The first chapter of the dissertation is a competent and detailed introduction to issues of intergroup relations, covering important research areas, theories, and concepts. As mentioned before, the leading theme is the contact hypothesis in reducing mutual stereotypes and prejudices. This is developed in more depth in two last chapters (4 and 5). In comparison to the book, also Chapter 1 includes a new part dealing with the contact hypothesis, the relevant theories and their criticisms. The chapter 1 also includes a description of the 5-factor personality model as it underlies the whole study. Whether it has been the right theoretical framework to study intergroup attitudes and mutual stereotypes is another issue (see further comments). Irrespective of this decision I missed in this introductory chapter a reference to other studies dealing with the content of stereotypes. The only reference was made to Fiske's and colleagues model of warmth vs. competence, without however a deeper reflection on the value of own theoretical framework (5-factor personality model) over the other ones (e.g. Fiske's model). Since the very beginning of research in prejudice and stereotyping, the content of stereotypes was in the focus of this research (studies by Katz etc.). Since studies of the accuracy of stereotypes became in due course a "politically incorrect" issue, this approach has changed into studying processes of categorization rather than its specific outcomes. Right now there is a comeback of interest in the accuracy but in a somewhat different perspective – less threatening to the targets of the stereotypes. I feel that perhaps this could be commented in this introductory chapter.

The second chapter presents methodology of the study/studies. This includes quantitative measures, of which the majority were based on the 5-Factor Personality theory: NEO-FFI and measures derived from it, specifically adapted to study of stereotypes such as the National Character Survey and own measure (IPJ-R), consisting of pairs of adjectives corresponding to the five factors. Most of these instruments were applied both as measures of evaluation of the

participant him/herself, of evaluation of own nation (own nation stereotype), and evaluation of the stereotype of the neighboring nation (heterostereotype). The “emotional thermometer measure” was used to diagnose the affective component of mutual attitudes. This allowed for a great multitude of comparisons, which are subjects of consecutive chapter (Chapter 3).

My main doubt about this part of the study (to be discussed with the Author) concerns choice of the theoretical framework, i.e. the 5-factor personality model. Of course the Big Five is the most popular personality theory nowadays but is it the most suitable framework to study intergroup stereotypes? Application of the Big Five framework is made easy of course due to its wide popularity, existence of national norms etc, but how do the scores on the five dimensions relate to real perceptions of oneself, of one's nation and of the neighboring nations? Do people think about themselves in these very categories? Overall I prefer to conceive of intergroup relations in terms of mutual goals which may be either concordant or discordant or independent of each other. Two neighboring nations may be in conflict or they may cooperate. They may feel threatened or see the other as an ally. The threat does not have to be military but also economic or symbolic. Attitudes towards others also play an important function as a comparison criterion and thus may help improve national self-esteem (i.e., they are in self-interest of the group). For example, for years (in the 80s) Czechs have been evaluated quite negatively by Poles because their “politically careful” character stood in contrast to the Polish “risk-taking” political behavior – a source of national pride among Poles. I myself remember endless discussions with colleagues and Poles at large on the Czech alleged “cowardice”. This obviously helped Poles to improve their self-esteem and stood in contrast with the sense of economic inferiority (lots of Polish children were raised on the Czech “detska krupicka” – unavailable in Poland at that time but informally “imported” from Czechoslovakia). Now that the conditions have changed, economic conditions equalized, these dimensions lost their relevance and Poles came to admire Czech Republic for those aspects that they did not notice before and have a much more balanced attitude. But is the dimension of “cowardice – braveness” or “carefulness – risk taking proclivity” at all present in the Big Five framework to check whether it still plays its role?

The same probably applies to the Czech-Slovak mutual attitudes. I am of the age that remembers the tense relations between the two nations in the 80s. Sense of inferiority among Slovaks, sense of superiority among Czechs were the result of living in one country and

having common economy. Now that the country has split and each chooses its own way, it is possible to talk about the other nation as a "brother". But are the dimensions of "feeling exploited", "being inferior", being treated with contempt etc. present in the Big Five?

If one looks at intergroup relations from the point of view of pragmatic interests of both parties then there seem much better frameworks to account for possible differences. One is the two-dimensional structure of stereotypes, which is the best known from Fiske's and colleagues theory. However, this theory has a long tradition in social cognition, starting with the classic Asch's study, through Rosenberg (social good-bad vs. intellectual good bad), Reeder's morality vs. competence attributional schemata, to the very modern studies in which the two-dimensional model of social perception is being included in much broader framework of agency and communion (see the works of Bogdan Wojciszke and Andrea Abele-Brehm). The dimensions of morality and competence as applied to national stereotypes were successfully studied by Guido Peeters. The two-dimensional structure of stereotypes seems better adapted to studies of intergroup relations since it directly pertains to the pragmatics of the mutual contacts (fear if somebody is competent but immoral/cold), contempt and sense of superiority (if somebody is incompetent), respect and admiration (if somebody is both warm/moral and competent) etc. To summarize: people may differ in how conscientious or extrovertive they are but are these categories really crucial in mutual perceptions? These are general comments to the first three chapters of the dissertation. In the consecutive two chapters the emphasis on Big-Five was balanced with other data – more appropriate to the main theme of the dissertation – information about the type and quality of contacts between the studied nations.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the role of the primary contact in reducing stereotypes. Based on qualitative analyses of the contents of the interviews, the Author identified a number of features of the contact, such as place where the contact happened, its frequency, intimacy, length, language used etc. and tested their effects on the strength of emotional feelings towards the other nations. A series of regression analyses revealed their predictive role for the emotional feelings towards the out-group. The Author emphasizes the asymmetrical weight of positive and negative contacts: negative experiences had a significantly higher impact on the general attitudes than positive experiences. On the other hand, positive experiences were by far more frequent than negative experiences.

I would like to point out that this is a classical finding, discussed since at least 60 years in social psychology (see the respective works by Charles Osgood, Guido Peeters, Margaret Matlin, D. Kanouse, in Poland Janusz Czapiński, also myself), known under a general title of positive-negative asymmetry. The PNA is manifested (among others) in positivity bias, that is in higher frequency of positive judgements but also in higher weight of negative information on the overall evaluation of the target (negativity effect). Social psychologists, decision researchers etc. have studied this phenomenon for several decades and offered a number of explanations (also evolutionary). The most encompassing comes from the works of Guido Peeters (see also Peeters & Czapiński, 1990). Also psycholinguists (e.g. Clark & Clark) have contributed to investigation of the phenomenon from the linguistic perspective (markedness of negative words, unmarkedness of positive words). I strongly suggest that before the studies are published in a good journal, references to these classic studies are acknowledged. This is not a new finding and one should not present it as a new discovery.

Another comment that I have concerning this part of analyses concerns the direction of the relationships. This is a correlational and cross-sectional study – it is difficult to judge whether it is the contact that contributes to attitudes or it is attitudes that facilitate the contact. Both directions are probable. This cannot be resolved on the basis of the existent data.

Chapter 5 (final) of the dissertation deals with the secondary contact, that is whether contacts with certain primary groups (those with which the contact is the most frequent) tend to be generalized on other (secondary groups) and whether it is moderated by the contact and its quality with the secondary group. In most of the cases the secondary effects were observed. One small comment: when going through the great number of graphs depicting the moderating role of the type of contact for the secondary effects of the primary contacts I wondered if this could not be presented in a more summative, and less tedious, way, for example in the forms of a series of regressions with interaction. Since there is a number of countries and thus comparisons, perhaps a multilevel analysis would be more appropriate (and efficient).

Overall, this is probably the first study that deals with mutual attitudes among five different Central-Eastern European citizens. Its breadth, encompassing character, multitude of methods

and analyses justifies a positive evaluation of this dissertation. I am not familiar with the habilitation procedure in the Czech Republic but in Poland also other contributions of the habilitant are taken into account. Therefore I would like to emphasize that Sylvie Graf is an author of several papers published in refereed journals, such as European Journal of Social Psychology, European Journal of Personality, Journal of Language and Social Psychology (this paper, written in cooperation with three other international authors, was awarded the prize of the best paper of the year in this journal), and several others. She is already cited by international colleagues, in Google Scholar she has 129 citations and H-index =8.


Dotazy oponenta k obhajobě habilitační práce (počet dotazů dle zvážení oponenta)

1. Reasons for the asymmetry between the weight of positive and negative information: present theories that account for this asymmetry
2. Methods of studying stereotype content: which one do you think is the most appropriate in the Eastern-European context?
3. How can your findings be used to study prejudices towards immigrants in Europe.

Závěr

Habilitační práce dr. Sylvie Graf „*Češi a jejich sousedé: primární a sekundární přenos vlivu meziskupinového kontaktu na postoje v pěti zemích střední Evropy*“ **splňuje** požadavky standardně kladené na habilitační práce v oboru Sociální psychologie.

Warszawa, dne 7 unora 2016


(podpis)

Maria Lewicka