Review

of a dissertation for the award of the scientific and educational degree "doctor" in Professional field 3.2. Psychology (Social Psychology) of Joanna Nikolova Dragneva, Department of Psychology, IPHS, BAS

Dissertation topic: “Aspects of integration and motivation in migration processes depending on the geographical distance of the receiving foreign countries Germany and the USA”

General characteristics of the dissertation. Literary competence, theoretical preparedness

The problem and topic to which the dissertation is devoted are more than relevant while the matter being quite sensitive. Scientific research usually gives a simplified picture of the phenomena of migration, behind which there is a story for each and every person or family that have been studied, about difficult life circumstances, quite a few changes, deprivations in the name of their own development and self-realization and/or efforts to support their families.

There are also many unexplained aspects in terms of scientific research, despite the wide development of the problem within the global research practice. Such an aspect is namely the focus of this current dissertation research – it tackles the remoteness of the host country, how and to what extent this matters regarding integration and motivation in the migration process.

The dissertation’s structure contains two main chapters, which actually contain 3 parts – theoretical, methodological and empirical. 225 sources were used, of which 36 in Bulgarian, the rest in Latin. This points to a good scientific preparedness and competence of the candidate in the field of the investigated issues.

The first chapter extensively presents significant conceptual approaches, theories and research in the field of identity and identification, acculturation and motivation related to migration processes. The issue of motivation in both directions of migration - emigration and immigration - is also widely included. Some unusual but important questions are tackled, for instance "how identity

functions in our modern society and what is the meaning and importance of identity in migration processes"

In fact, the conditions of migration or a person's migrant state, create one of the most important prerequisites, antecedents for the development of complex social identity, also for the running of complex identification processes, social and psychological legitimization of the co-existence of identity duality and hybridity.

Tajfel's theory of social identity marks the return of the social back to the field of social psychology – for this reason I consider it to be one of the most significant theories and fields of research. Moreover, this approach introduces the collective essence of group phenomena in a most successful, innovative and productive way.

The dissertation captures the contradictory constellation of factors in migration processes - on the one hand, the perceived ethnic and cultural diversity, the development of modern multi-identity, but on the other - the socio-economic, political and state restrictions related to the migration policy and practice - of acceptance and/or rejection of certain migrant flows, the provision or insufficient provision of good living conditions for foreigners in the respective receiving countries. Attention is paid to the complex reality of granting rights to migrants and at the same time the great difficulties in their integration, including in European countries: "in most receiving countries in Europe - migrants in Europe are still the most marginalized "others".

An additional quality of the presented work is that it not only exposes and shows good knowledge of concepts, but compares real practices "in motion", real contemporary contexts and dynamics of migration movements. It smoothly enters into the problematics in an intersectional plan of migration and identity, where many questions pop up - how to adjust to a new culture, how to integrate and, in fact, quite often how the new arrivals, those who begin to perform everyday but vitally important functions of care, change the found context of children, families, adults - relationships with new roles and "old" identities. Interesting and important questions of modern knowledge, but also of the actual migration realities, are addressed.

Classical models of acculturation, such as Berry's, are used, but the development of new approaches in this field is also presented, including the development of Berry's ideas. Contemporary research is presented in the field

of migration and acculturation, the new and constantly renewing world picture of mixed cultures, genetic and psychological characteristics of different communities and individuals.

A detailed analysis of the types of motivations for emigration, immigration, as well as the relationship with identification, in which again the multitude of different social preconditions for the formation of one or another type of motivation for emigration have not been neglected. Attention is also drawn to interesting interrelationships between phenomena that have so far received insufficient to almost no research attention, such as the relationship between "organizational motivators of acculturation, coping effectiveness and the success of expatriate integration".

In the second chapter, the dissertation's research is presented in detail.

"The aim of the present study is to outline the motivational profiles for emigration and return to the homeland of Bulgarian migrants depending on the geographical distance of the host country. The study also aims to analyze the reasons for Bulgarian emigration in the various Bulgarian communities in Germany and the USA."

Very well-formulated tasks, directly reflecting the conceptual base, as well as the hypotheses - main and sub-hypotheses are thought out relevant to the literature and actual phenomena.

Dragneva presents a wide-ranging analysis in various fields - socio-political, economic, cultural - of the context in the host countries. Contextual analysis is definitely a contribution of the dissertation research.

The methodological approach is the so-called mix method, as in the analysis and presentation of the data, both quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed almost simultaneously. This, in addition to bringing a positive assessment of the work, shows again the author’s skills and competence.

Particularly important are the reflections of the persons examined and, accordingly, the interpretation regarding what problems they see both in the host countries and in their own country - Bulgaria. This creates a detailed picture in social and socio-psychological terms and a basis for further recommendations regarding programs and policies for expatriates.

The results described in detail are particularly significant, as they cover value relations, identity, civic behavior, group relations and attitudes among Bulgarians in two very different countries.

The specific data regarding the stronger attachment and identity towards the Bulgarian country among emigrants in the USA, compared to those in Germany, are interesting. The geographical distance factor apparently exerts its influence in the sense that the further away they are, the firmer their identification remains with their homeland. Here, an important emphasis can be distinguished – Germany is part of the European Union, as is Bulgaria, which also probably affects the lower degree of national identification, since the European identity unites the national. However, low civic activity such as voting in Bulgarian elections, points to contradictory conclusions. The research and the results could be the basis for important recommendations regarding policies and programs towards Bulgarians abroad.

The analyses of the research aimed at delineating different identification and acculturation profiles of emigrants in both countries are also valuable. This is how a comprehensive map of the characterology and psychology of the "other" Bulgarians, those who are not on their Bulgarian territory, is created. Such a cognitive-motivational matrix actually supports cognition and reduces false or incorrect representations of Bulgarian citizens who are at a greater or lesser distance.

Regarding the presentation of the data, my opinion is that it is unnecessary to load the text with the same results in graphical and tabular versions.

Cross-tabulation was used correctly in relation to the data and objects of study. The emigrant profiles presented on this basis cover various identification parameters, in quantitative and qualitative format.

Critical notes and recommendations:

1. The theoretical part contains various conclusions regarding the situation with Bulgarian emigrants abroad - there is a particular emphasis on the negative image of the Roma, hypothetically transferred to the Bulgarians, for which there seems to be insufficient data concerning the Bulgarian Roma. The highly negative expression "equation with the Roma" used by some respondents should be treated as a subjective assessment and it should be

pointed out that significantly more data and analytical criticality are needed for an objective scientific conclusion.

2. Regarding the interpretation - repetitions accumulate, especially in relation to the main hypothesis - remoteness becomes an explanation for most of the differences in profiles and countries. Time of residence has also been analyzed as a factor, but the excellent contextual analysis for different countries, with prominent features in social, economic, cultural terms, remains underutilized. On its basis, a higher persuasiveness of the interpretation in this part would be ensured.

There are **3 scientific publications** on the topic of the dissertation. – one independent and 2 co-authored, one of them is in English. The educational program is also fully implemented. This satisfies the minimum national requirements for PhD students.

The dissertation's contributions

Contributions one, two and four adequately reflect what has been achieved in the dissertation. Regarding the third contribution: for the toolkit, it should be indicated that it is a collective result of the work of a project team developed within the IPHS of which Dragneva is also a member. As stated above in the review, I would place as a contribution the developed contextual analysis of the PhD candidate.

In conclusion, on the basis of the high importance of the problems posed in the dissertation, the overall originality of the research, the positive aspects of the mixed methodological approach and the valuable guidelines for practical recommendations, I strongly recommend to award the educational and scientific degree "PhD" to Joanna Dragneva.

17.04.2023 Reviewer

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