PhD THESIS REVIEW

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Concerning: Public defence of a PhD thesis for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"

Area of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences; Professional field: 3.2 Psychology; Specialized professional field: Social Psychology

Doctoral candidate: Joanna Nikolova Dragneva – PhD student at Social and Counselling Psychology Unit, Department of Psychology, Institute for Population and Human Studies - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Dissertation title: "Integration and motivation aspects in migration processes depending on the geographical distance of the receiving foreign countries Germany and the USA"

The PhD thesis focuses on an interdisciplinary research field - human migration (both emigration and immigration) and its determinants, which is of key and long-standing research interest not only to social psychology, but also to sociology, demography, economics and other social sciences. An argument for topicality of studies focused on this field could be the negative net migration rates for Bulgaria on an annual basis until 2019 that have been considered among the main causes of the demographic crisis (NSI, 2007-2019).

The main objective of the PhD thesis is to study both integrational and motivational aspects of migration from Bulgaria in relation to the geographical distance of the host countries Germany and the USA. A reason for the importance of the study in a social-psychological perspective is that it examines migration processes through the lens of a complex of psychological factors – integration and motivation, operationalized through the key constructs of identification/identity, acculturation, motivation, and prospects for the next generation. While I believe that the dissertation topic is of current and key research interest, I would still advise the author to state and defend their choice of the topic more clearly in the Introduction section, not only in view of integrational and motivational aspects of migration processes, but also in view of geographical distance of the receiving countries by answering the following questions: How did you choose to study these aspects rather than others? Why did you decide to examine these aspects in association with the distance of the host countries, rather than, e.g., in relation to social support policies, antidiscrimination, quality of life, GDP, or another factor?

The PhD thesis has the following structure: Introduction, two chapters and Conclusion; a total volume of p. 217, excluding supplements. The number of references is impressive – 225, including 36 references in Bulgarian language and 189 references in English language, as approximately one third of them have been published in recent years.

The first chapter thoroughly and accurately outlines the theoretical framework for understanding the constructs of identification, identity, acculturation and motivation, including in the context of migration processes. In line with the main objective, the literature overview focuses on multi-staged integration processes and on the role of identification/identity, acculturation and motivation as key psychological components and mechanisms of these processes. Both social and personality aspects of identification are examined. Recent theories and research on identity in the context of migration are delineated, as well as theoretical models

and approaches to the study of acculturation as a mechanism of migration. Both psychological and behavioural aspects of the migration-acculturation relationship are examined in view of intergroup and intragroup cultural changes and differences resulting from migration. As long as motivation is concerned, the emphasis is put onto group motivation theories. Motivation is studied in view of emigration, immigration and adaptation processes, and also in view of the relationship between motivation for migration and identity, on one hand, and motivation for migration and identity, on the other hand.

The second chapter is dedicated to the research methodology (incl. main objective, tasks, hypotheses, methods – tools and sample), results with embedded discussion, and summary of results/inferences. On one hand, I appreciate that the doctoral candidate has used a mixed-method approach to a specific and not easily approachable sample (N=491) of emigrants from Bulgaria to Germany and USA, who have participated in a survey conducted by means of a semi-structured questionnaire, and also of emigrants (N=32), who have participated in qualitative research using the method of biographical narrative interviewing. On the other hand, it is important to note that the employed method has serious limitations in view of reliability and validity of the measures, which should be explicitly mentioned in a separate paragraph such as "Limitations and implications for further research" before Conclusion, together with the other limitations both of the study and the sampling mentioned in the methodological section of the thesis. It is advisable to include a more detailed description of the procedure of both quantitative and qualitative research, including sampling method, interviewing format, etc., and also to enclose the interview protocol in supplement. Furthermore, it is recommended to change the general hypothesis so that to encompass integration aspects along with motivation aspects of migration processes in conformity to the main objective and tasks of the thesis. It is necessary to hypothesize "association", but not „influence", between the studied variables, since the methods used by the candidate could not prove a causal relationship between nominal variables. In the „Methods" section, the author accurately mentioned the statistical methods used to analyse associations between nominal variables. It is advisable to indicate the methods of qualitative analysis of textual data from the biographical interviews, as well.

Results of the study showed some interesting differences in identification, acculturation and motivation of emigrants in relation to the distance of the host countries – Germany as a less distant one and the USA as a more distant one. However, the author should not consider the differences significant, as the methods that they used could not prove significant differences. Still, I highly appreciate the efforts of the candidate to outline identification, acculturation and motivation profiles for (return) migration of Bulgarian emigrants, as well as to make comparative analysis between the profiles of emigrants in Germany and the USA.

Most results are presented in an appropriate either table or chart format with regard to the used research methodology. It is necessary to revise some discrepancies, e.g. between Table 93, Fig. 20 and discussion of the results. It is advisable to summarize the results in view of the hypotheses and to discuss them through the lens of the literature overview in a separate section "Discussion" or "Summary and discussion", together with or instead of „Summary of results (literally translated "Main inferences")".

Furthermore, there is some obvious contradiction in the summary of results that should be explicitly clarified and/or removed. On one hand, the candidate argues that Bulgarian emigrants in Germany, who have easier access to Bulgaria, have weaker identity in comparison to those, who live in a more distant country (the USA). On the other hand, the author argues that the

acculturation among immigrants in the USA is stronger, compared to that of immigrants in Germany. Then, why does the author argue that migrants with stronger acculturation have weaker identity and those with weaker acculturation have stronger identity?

Nevertheless, the study contributes to outline the models of integration and acculturation of Bulgarian emigrants in both Germany and the USA, and helps to elucidate the motivation of migrants that can bring them back to their country of origin. Results of the study can serve as a basis for development of recommendations for Bulgarian migration policies and measures with regard to the geographical distance of the host-countries that can help enhance Bulgarian emigrants' motivation to return to Bulgaria. It is duly mentioned in the contributions of the PhD thesis.

In Contribution 1, it is advisable to mention that it is the first social-psychological study with this focus "in Bulgaria", as long as there are some other similar studies in Turkey, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, etc. (e.g. See Yildirim & Ataca, 2015; Horvath & Silbereisen, 2015). The other contributions specified by the author correspond to both content of the thesis and results of the study.

The summary of the dissertation is a precise reflection of both structure and content of the PhD thesis. It is necessary to revise only the first and fourth publication on the list of publications. And finally, proofreading of the text of the thesis and its summary is also advisable.

The doctoral candidate is a (co-)author of three publications and one manuscript in press, as two of them are in English language. The candidate has reported at three scientific forums, as two of them are international ones.

Conclusion: In spite of some limitations and omissions in the research methodology, some discrepancies in presentation and discussion of results, the contributions of the study, the modern research design, including a mixed-method approach, as well as the abundance of scrutinized relationships, **provide grounds to assess the PhD thesis of the doctoral candidate positively. The PhD thesis has been prepared in compliance with the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" and hence, after careful consideration of the reviewers' comments, I would suggest to the honoured members of the academic jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in Area of higher education: 3. Social, economic and legal sciences; Professional field: 3.2 Psychology; Specialized professional field: Social Psychology to the doctoral candidate Joanna Nikolova Dragneva.**

18.04.2023 Prepared by:

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