
By Dr. Edwin Poppe

Abstract:

This book deals with intergroup relations in some Central and Eastern European countries after the collapse of state socialism at the end of the 1980s. More than a thousand adolescents in Russia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were asked to attribute certain characteristics to their own national group, five fellow Central-Eastern European nationalities, three major Western European nationalities (German, English, Italian) and the largest ethnic minority with a history of ethnic antagonism in their country. The evaluative nature of the stereotypes could be subsumed into a competence-related and a morality-related dimension. National stereotypes reflect more or less realistic differences between nation states: national groups are perceived as competent when their national state is economic powerful and as immoral when their country is large and conflict prone. It was also apart that the participants in the survey did not blindly favor their ingroup over all foreign nationalities on competence or morality. Hence, the stereotype attributions were not completely biased effects of underlying psychological needs, but (also) constrained by social (or economic) reality. Ethnic minorities are scapegoats, they seem to be blamed for the deteriorated economic circumstances by dissatisfied Central and Eastern European youngsters, in particular when the parents are also dissatisfied with the country's economic situation. Nationalism of adolescents is more focused on positive stereotypes of their own national group than on exclusionism of ethnic minorities. Stereotypes of foreign nationalities became more negative after a year as a function of a worsening economic situation in the country of the perceiver. These are among the main results of the survey. The author examines whether social psychological and sociological theories such as social identity theory, self-categorization theory, relative deprivation theory and scapegoat theory are useful to understand the content of national stereotypes and changes in these stereotypes over time.

ISBN: 90-5170-477-1