

**The nature of prejudice: 60 years after Allport: Seminar of the Intercultural Section
of the Czech-Moravian Psychological Society**

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The first seminar of the Intercultural Section of the Czech-Moravian Psychological Society under the lead of Sylvie Graf was held on April 22, 2015 in Brno. The anniversary of Gordon Allport's influential book "The Nature of Prejudice" (1954) offered an excellent opportunity for academics interested in psychology of intergroup relations to discuss recent advancements in research on prejudice. The team of the Brno Lab of Intergroup Processes¹ at the Institute of Psychology, Czech Academy of Sciences, organized the international seminar. The presenters from abroad were financed and the seminar was co-organized by the OP VK project INPSY² at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, represented by Kateřina Bartošová.

The seminar was launched by the *keynote address* of *Michal Bilewicz* from the Centre for the Research on Prejudice at The University of Warsaw. Michal Bilewicz talked about the role of heroic helpers in the resolution of intergroup conflicts. Heroic helpers risk their own life and life of their families in order to save other people of different ethnicity, race or religion. The *Moral Exemplars Model of Reconciliation* (Bilewicz & Jaworska, 2013) suggests that presenting stories of heroic helpers can shape contemporary attitudes among descendants of historical victims, perpetrators and bystanders. The model was tested in different intergroup contexts (e.g., Polish-Jewish, German-Polish, Bosniak-Serb, and Armenian-Turkish relations). Presenting participants with moral exemplars helped to overcome the negative consequences of historically-rooted intergroup conflicts.

¹ www.psychologicky-vyzkum.cz/team.html

² www.inpsy.cz

In the series of shorter presentations, *Anna Stefaniak* introduced the research on *historical contact* – the discovery of outgroups' material heritage. Although intergroup contact is a powerful tool for improving intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), some intergroup contexts lack opportunities for direct intergroup encounters (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina: Cehajic, Brown, & Castano, 2008; Northern Ireland: Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006; Poland: Bilewicz, Winiewski, Kofta, & Wójcik, 2013). Stefaniak and Bilewicz's intervention study examined the effects of historical contact in the context of Polish-Jewish relations. Their results indicated that contact with multi-ethnic past raised participants' interest in local history, leading to a higher perceived similarity between Jews and Poles and in turn to improved outgroup attitudes. Furthermore, increased social trust and willingness for local community involvement.

Barbara Lášticová and *Monika Kočišová* from the Institute for Research in Social Communication at the Slovak Academy of Sciences discussed *imagined intergroup contact* as a tool for challenging prejudice against Roma in Slovakia. In an experimental study, mental stimulation of social interactions between Slovaks and Roma was induced with focus on reduction of intergroup bias in four key areas: intergroup attitudes, emotions, behavioural intentions, and behaviour. Imagined contact improved attitudes towards Roma and attitudes towards Roma mediated the effect of imagined contact on approach – but not avoidance – tendencies towards Roma. Subsequent qualitative analysis suggested that participants imagined Roma as “white crows”, possibly preventing generalization from imagined contact with individual Roma onto Roma as a social category.

Tibor Žingora and *Sylvie Graf* from the Brno Lab of Intergroup Processes at the Institute of Psychology, Czech Academy of Sciences, applied the Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT) and the Theory of Intergroup Threat (ITT) to tackle the problematic situation of Roma in the Czech Republic. ICT proposes that the beneficial effects of intergroup contact with one group can improve also attitudes towards other groups not directly involved in contact (the *secondary transfer effect of intergroup contact*). The authors examined whether contact with Vietnamese minority can influence attitudes towards Roma minority in Czech majority participants. Positive contact with Vietnamese indeed challenged prejudice against Roma via reduction in *perceived threats* from minorities.

Magda Petrjánošová from the Institute for Research in Social Communication at the Slovak Academy of Sciences summarized findings from more than 10 years of *qualitative research on intergroup contact* between people from different countries. Using various methods (semi-structured interviews, focus groups, drawings of borders) in the context of Slovak-Austrian, Slovak-Irish, Czech-Slovak, Czech-Polish, Czech-Austrian and Czech-German relations, the author formulated trends, points of intersection and methodological challenges in research on prejudice and stereotypes.

The presenters and audience of the Allportian seminar extensively debated possibilities of reducing prejudice in general and in the context of the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland in particular. The lively discussion provided welcomed feedback that will enrich ongoing projects and inspire future research. The seminar created ample opportunities for researchers with similar professional interests to network and establish contacts for future collaboration.



The keynote speaker, Michal Bilewicz from the Centre for the Research on Prejudice at Warsaw University.

Photo by Martin Valenta

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