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STEREOTYPICAL PERCEPTION OF “STRANGERS” IN THE OPINION OF POLISH AND UKRAINIAN STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The presented pieces of research are parts of a larger research project, the aim of which was to try to define the differences in perception (stereotyping) of people of other nationalities (“Strangers”) by Polish and Ukrainian youths. For the purpose of the research, it was assumed that when describing people, stereotypes evaluate and judge them with a positive or negative affect.

The research employed the method of a diagnostic survey with the questionnaire technique with the use of the author’s Questionnaire Survey for Poles and Ukrainians. In total, the study included 491 Ukrainian students, 285 from central Ukraine and 206 from the western, and 480 Polish students, including 261 from eastern Poland and 219 from central.

Research has shown that the surveyed students from Poland and Ukraine have a positive perception of Americans, English, Swedes and Germans. Arabs, Jews, Indians and Nigerians are perceived neutrally, while Russians are viewed mostly negatively. The greatest variation can be seen in the perception of the Chinese. Poles perceive them in a more positive way. On the other hand, the mutual relations between the surveyed Poles and Ukrainians are situated in the area of neutral perception. However, it should be emphasized that in each of the analyzes, various positive or negative intensities of the dominant features occur.

KEYWORDS: *stereotypes, perception, cultural diversity, intercultural education, Alien, Polish and Ukrainian students*

INTRODUCTION

The term “stereotype” was first used by a French printer Didot in 1798 to refer to the finished matrices used in the printing process (Wójcik, 2008, p. 25). After about 100 years, the term spread among psychiatrists and was used to describe unchanging and repetitive forms of expression in patients. In 1922, Lipmann introduced the term to social psychology as “images that exist in the mind” (Kwaśniewski, 1987, p. 372).

Over time, the term “stereotype” has developed into one of the key issues in the psychology of intergroup relations. According to Gordon Allport (after: Wójcik, 2008, p.25) “stereotypes are not only a series of images describing the world but they also assess and judge it, they bear a positive or negative affect”. However, the term “stereotype” can be analyzed, first of all, from the point of view of perceived or stereotyped individuals. It needs to be stressed, though, that there are commonly recognized stereotypes, the effects of which apply to entire social groups. Despite the use of different theoretical approaches, researchers dealing with the subject emphasize the same features and properties of stereotypes.

In order to fully explain the essence of the phenomenon of stereotyping, it needs to be looked at from two mutually complementary perspectives: socio-cognitive as well as cultural. Stereotypes that are present in the mind of an individual are also an integral part of the social structure that is shared by people who function in a particular society. If stereotypes were seen only as part of individual views, there would be no problem of discrimination against social groups. Negative beliefs about groups can adversely affect the perception of individuals. The problem arises when these beliefs take on a social character while the previously presented images functioning in the minds remain the same, and also when discrimination applies to social groups in the same way. The individual and collective perspective to a large extent overlap and complement each other in describing various elements of the phenomenon of stereotyping (Wójcik, 2008).

In accordance with individual beliefs, the stereotype is related to the mindset, views of individuals and the image of oneself. It is one of the constituent parts of personality and is connected with the emotional life and motivation to act. According to Susan Fiske and Shelley Taylor (after: Wójcik, 2008), the main representatives of the individual approach, “over the course of life, people develop beliefs and views about important characteristics of social groups in their environment as well as sets of reactions to members of these groups based on stored knowledge” (p. 28). The individual approach explains the observed flexibility in using the stereotype. This is due to the fact that the stereotype is not always activated, despite the fact that it is established at the level of individuals. This phenomenon can be explained by the theory of accessibility, according to which the content of the stereotypical representation may differ in the degree of accessibility in different people in different social contexts.

The individual approach does not explain the formation of stereotypes of groups with which the perceiving individual does not enter into direct relations and has no ability to make a subjective assessment of the group or its members. The approach also ignores the indirect transmission of stereotypes through social learning. This important aspect of acquiring stereotypes is to be dealt with by a collective (cultural) approach (Wójcik, 2008).

In the cultural approach, stereotype is treated as a certain example of collective knowledge. The most important feature of this approach is common sharing of stereotypical beliefs in society, as well as passing them on within a group. “Gardner, a representative of the cultural approach, treats universality as the basic feature of the stereotype. The cultural perspective is much broader and includes more aspects than the internal and the individual ones; it also deals with the content of the stereotype, the way it is acquired, its internalization and the possibility of change” (Jasińska-Kania 1992, p. 34). Within this perspective, the concept of social identity, especially national identity, becomes more widely considered. Within the framework of the cultural model, society is treated as a certain organism in which collective knowledge is stored. Stereotypes are a part of this knowledge and are treated as information about social groups and parts of the social structure. The process of upbringing within a specific national ideology contributes to the fact that each individual receives his or her own history and culture, which include stereotypes about other groups,

specific patterns of behavior and rituals according to which one should live in order to feel safe. One of the most important functions of socialization is introducing the individual to the social roles that will be played in the course of his or her life. These roles are taught from an early age in the family and are naturally associated with gender, occupational, racial and ethnic stereotypes. According to John Charles Turner (after: Wójcik 2008, p. 31) “the internalization of a set of behaviors based on a stereotype in a social group causes these beliefs to influence the collective behavior of a given group. Harmfulness of the stereotype results from the behavioral confirmation of a distorted interpretation of events, which, in most cases, confirms the stereotype and thus makes it difficult or even impossible to change”.

In order to understand the concept of stereotype better, several features helpful in deciding whether a given phenomenon is an example of a stereotype or not are distinguished. The main characteristics of stereotype include (Kuźmio, 2010):

- Poor content and cognitive deficiency that it generates. This concept consists of common judgments and opinions, which are often unreliable, based on superficial premises. Only the concept itself has a scientific, intellectual or cognitive value. It should be pointed out, however, that stereotypes lead to a distortion of reality. Researchers acknowledge the fact that in stereotypes, cognitive value is much stronger than in the case of prejudice.
- Evaluative function. A person who formulates stereotypical judgments is usually guided by a certain dose of emotions (both positive and negative) that emerge as a result of previous experiences.
- The rigidity of the stereotype means its low flexibility and resistance to change. Attempts are made to change a specific perception, for example through direct contact with the stereotyped subject, but it is usually a long and ineffective process. It is worth noting that a person who uses stereotypes, very often does not want to contact the subjects of stereotyping.
- Small variance of items within the category (content generalization) is expressed in the formula “every x is F” and consists in assigning the whole class the feature F and not noticing even minimal differences among the members of the group x.

The features presented above are of constitutive nature, but apart from them, numerous optional characteristics can be found. Hilary Putnam (after: Sasińska-Klas, 2008), when dealing with stereotypes, noticed that they are associations that refer to an average member of a group (general characteristic of a group representative).

In the social consciousness of each community, a specific model or system of stereotypes, which is an exemplification of the shortest way of presenting reality, is developed in a more or less distinct way. Stereotypes are considered to be a certain type of projection of human ideas about the world, perception of the immediate environment, or desired attitudes and behaviors. Walter Lippman (after: Sasińska-Klas, 2008) claims that stereotypes are a foundation, a basis of tradition, which functions in the social environment and makes it possible to retain distance towards the members of the group and Strangers.

It is believed that a stereotype is a kind of self-image in which human identity is reflected. Janusz Błaszowski (after: Sasińska-Klas, 2008) points out that “Lippman’s concepts of a system or model of stereotypes contain an indirect thesis about the contextual dependence of internal and external perception. The system of stereotypes – self-stereotype and heterostereotypes – does not arise in perceptual isolation, but in the contextual space of nations perceiving themselves and the environment of their state” (p. 13).

When analyzing the concept of stereotype as a part of the cultural approach, cultural researchers pay attention to the fact that there is an image of national or ethnic groups in people’s minds, which makes it possible to organize human thinking about strangers, who are external to a specific community, culture or system of values. Stereotypical mutual perception is an example of a map that facilitates navigating the environment and concerns the entire value system. The researchers also suggest that when assessing others, individuals reveal themselves, present their attitudes, expectations, and beliefs related to the sphere of cognitive and emotional needs.

Piotr Sztompka (2021) commented on stereotypes in the context of mutual perception in an interesting way. In his opinion, stereotype is a manifestation of the pathology of social awareness. He believes that they are examples of exaggerated differences between groups and considers ignoring internal differentiation within groups to be the cause of stereotyping. Instead, some

general characteristics of the whole group are applied to each of its members. From these considerations, a conclusion can be drawn that stereotype is a one-sided, simplifying, idealized image of one's own community and an equally one-sided, simplifying and negative vision of alien communities (which, in extreme cases, are treated as hostile).

The consequence of stereotypical mutual perception is stigmatization and discrimination. The most commonly used definition of "discrimination" states that the term derives from the Latin word *discriminatio*, meaning differentiation and unequal treatment, selective assessment. In this sense, discrimination is the opposite of equality. What is important is the fact that the basis for this unequal and, at the same time, unjustified and unfair treatment is not individual personal characteristics or attitudes, but the functioning of individuals in a specific category or social group. Individuals may be subject to a process of discrimination due to specific biological characteristics, such as: gender, skin color, appearance, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, disease, religion, class affiliation, political views, social position, life situation (single parenting, poverty, homelessness), lifestyle (Winiarska, Klaus, 2011).

According to some researchers, discrimination is aimed at removing certain individuals from specific places or spheres of social life. What is important is that discrimination is not only intentional but also repetitive and long-term. The literature on the subject states that discrimination is not a one-off act, but it can be a "complex system of social relations" that results in inequality in the achievement of socially important goods. Indicators of unequal treatment include disproportions in the economic, social or political situation between particular communities in a given society. It should be noted that once initiated, inequality tends to deepen – there is a vicious circle in which less access to goods in a particular area contributes to deprivation in other spheres of life. Discrimination can also be an unfair or systematic action that reinforces a privileged position of the dominant group. However, defining its practical manifestations may be difficult for an individual.

Concluding the analysis of stereotypical mutual perception, it should be noted that the notion of positive discrimination can also be found in the literature (it is referred to as "affirmative action", "affirmative" or "compensatory preference"). This form of discrimination involves granting certain groups that

had previously been discriminated against, special privileges or powers for a certain period of time in order to improve their social position and also to level the playing field. An example of such activities are, for example, parities on election lists.

An important element in the analysis of stereotypes are its functions. Thanks to stereotypes, individuals can achieve cognitive control over the social environment and minimize cognitive processes. Within this function, stereotypes give the opportunity to (Wójcik, 2008, p.35):

use a simplified but clear map of the social world, which allows to structure complex and unclear social situations. Individuals feel safe when they use stereotypes (even false ones). As a result, a person does not have to be vigilant or constantly correct his or her views.

- economize cognitive processes – stereotype is an example of a ready-to-use portion of information about a newly encountered individual. Thanks to stereotypical thinking, the subject does not have to search, process and analyze large amounts of new information.
- complete the missing information – if the only known fact is group membership, stereotypes provide the rest of the relevant information.
- select information and reduce information overload. The excess information is very often reduced by means of stereotypes. The information that undergoes such process takes the form of simple messages that enable making quick decisions about a specific social behavior.
- predict the behavior of objects represented in the stereotype. Stereotypes provide ready-made interpretations of behavior, which allows for appropriate responses to be selected, e.g. behavior or reduction of distance.
- reduce uncertainty and provide a sense of security and control. When in contact with an unknown group member, stereotypes allow to gather missing information, contribute to the reduction of uncertainty, give the possibility to exercise control over a specific social reality and ensure relative safety. The feeling that the individual has a full picture of a member of an outgroup, and that it is sometimes similar to the image shared by other members of his or her own group, gives the feeling of belonging to an ingroup

- simplify communication – stereotyping makes verbal messages very convincing, which results from the fact that stereotypical information is rich and coherent in terms of evaluation. Such simplified communication is used especially during an economic recession (struggle for limited resources), wars or various types of disasters. In such circumstances, stereotypes provide a clear set of behavioral norms.

The second category of functions that stereotypes have to fulfill in the social reality are selfish functions, the aim of which is to justify one's own actions. People look for justifications for specific social events, existing social conditions, aggressive and discriminatory behavior, their own and someone else's status or social position; own thoughts, affects, or behaviors.

For the purpose of the present paper, we accept stereotypes to be perceptions combined with positive or negative feeling that assess the subjects (see Allporta, after: Wójcik, 2008, p. 25).

METHODS

The aim of the present research was to establish the differences in perception of foreigners ("Strangers") by Polish and Ukrainian youths.

With this aim in view, a following research problem was formed: Does the socio-cultural environment differentiate perceptions (stereotypes) of "Strangers" among Polish and Ukrainian youths? If so, to what extent?

In total, the research comprised 971 people, including 480 Polish students, and 491 Ukrainian students. Most of the surveyed Poles live in the eastern region of Poland – 54.37%, and the surveyed Ukrainians in the central region of Ukraine – 58.04%, others – 41.96% in the western region. The structure of the respondents by sex is as follows: the number of women among the surveyed Poles is higher than the number of men (W-57.50%; M-42.50%). The situation among the Ukrainians is slightly different – more balanced, with a small majority of men (54.38%). All respondents were full-time students.

The research used the method of diagnostic survey. The survey was carried out with the use of a proprietary questionnaire for Poles and Ukrainians.

The only difference was that the questionnaire for Ukrainians was translated into Ukrainian and Russian. It contains beliefs, stereotypes, i.e. features that characterize “Strangers”, such as: *active, anarchistic, poor, rich, family-oriented, fanatical, intelligent, conservative, cultural, wise, moral, nationalistic, abusing alcohol, sociable, honest, religious, educated, disciplined, kind, courageous*. The following nations were considered “Strangers”: American, English, Swede, Arab, Chinese, Russian, Jew, German, Indian, Nigerian, Pole, Ukrainian. The nationalities were selected according to the research where the distance to people representing countries and regions of different cultural backgrounds was analyzed (compare Nowicka, 1990; Błuszkowski, 2003, Bera, Korczyński, 2012). The selection was also the result of a pilot study where the author asked (on a previously prepared list), inter alia, which nationalities were considered foreign. On the other hand, the selection of features – stereotypes characterizing “Strangers” was carried out in two stages. In the course of the first stage, after the pilot studies had been conducted, 35 traits were selected. The second stage consisted of the quantitative verification of the selected features – stereotypes, which involved competent judges putting them in order. As a result, a list of twenty features used in the research tool was created. It contains fifteen positive and five negative features. The respondents were asked to evaluate each of them, using the following response scale: 1 – to a very small extent; 2 – to a small extent; 3 – medium degree; 4 – to a large extent; 5 – to a very large extent. A following scale was used to analyze and interpret the obtained results: 1.00 – 2.25 – low intensity (negative perception): 2.26 – 3.75 – average intensity (neutral perception): 3.76 – 5.00 – high intensity (positive perception).

The respondents were recruited from the regions of eastern and central Poland as well as western and central Ukraine. The selection of the sample was purposeful and random, the groups were quantitatively and demographically similar. The study involved 250 people from each region (central and western Ukraine, eastern and central Poland). About 1000 people in total. After verification and elimination of incorrectly filled tools, 491 tools from Ukrainians (including 285 from central Ukraine and 206 from western) and 480 from Poles (including 261 from eastern Poland and 219 from central) were qualified for analysis. On the Ukrainian side, the research covered students

from the National University of Physical Education and Sports of Ukraine in Kiev and the Lviv National University of Ivan Franko in Lviv, and on the Polish side – from the Maria Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin, University of Life Sciences in Lublin, University of Social and Life Sciences in Lublin, Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

RESULTS

The aim of the study was to locate the differences in stereotypes towards “Strangers” in the surveyed groups of people by means of comparisons of the results for all nationalities recognized as “Strangers”. The main subject of the analysis was the average results of the dominant trait describing stereotypes about individual nationalities. For this purpose, the t-Student test for independent groups was used. The results are presented in tab.1.

Table 1. Comparison of the dominant characteristics of Americans in the opinion of the surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS		t*	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
RICH	4,275	0,879	4,048	1,028	3,683	0,000
SOCIABLE	4,065	0,918	3,826	1,153	3,551	0,000
EDUCATED	3,686	0,953	3,698	1,128	-0,043	0,965
COURAGEOUS	3,655	1,131	3,506	1,012	2,165	0,031
INTELLIGENT	3,587	0,955	3,363	1,154	3,278	0,001
FAMILY-ORIENTED	3,551	0,966	3,440	1,092	1,664	0,096
KIND	3,450	1,033	3,491	1,140	-0,584	0,559
NACIONALISTIC	3,164	1,103	3,483	1,238	-4,226	0,000

Source: author's research.

The surveyed students, both from Poland and Ukraine, perceive Americans in a very similar way. The dominant features in both cases are: *rich*, *sociable*, *educated*, *courageous*. The Poles also perceive them as *intelligent* and *family-oriented*, while the Ukrainians as *kind* and *nationalistic*. However, statistical

analyses revealed differences at a statistically significant level ($p < 0.05$) in the intensity of these features. (Tab. 1). The results obtained by the Poles were significantly higher for such traits as: *rich*, *sociable*, *courageous*, and *intelligent*. On the other hand, the Ukrainians obtained significantly higher results only in the case of the trait *nationalistic*. It can, therefore, be assumed that the intensity of positive perception of Americans is significantly higher on the part of Poles.

The situation is similar in the case of people of English nationality (Tab. 2). The respondents from both groups identified four dominant features identically: *rich*, *educated*, *intelligent*, and *wise*. Moreover, the surveyed Poles indicate that the dominant features in their perception of the English are: *cultural*, *sociable*, and the surveyed Ukrainians: *disciplined* and *kind*.

Table 2. Comparison of the dominant characteristics of the English in the opinion of the surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS			
	M	SD	M	M	SD	p
RICH	4,085	0,764	4,057	1,009	0,493	0,631
EDUCATED	3,794	0,968	3,830	1,183	-0,536	0,592
INTELLIGENT	3,668	0,961	4,063	1,136	-5,838	0,000
WISE	3,688	0,856	3,673	1,008	0,256	0,797
CULTURAL	3,727	0,954	3,701	1,267	0,254	0,799
SOCIABLE	3,656	1,035	3,610	1,091	0,663	0,507
DISCIPLINED	3,436	1,078	3,753	1,176	-4,365	0,000
KIND	3,438	0,972	3,704	1,058	-4,365	0,000

Source: author's research

When it comes to dominant common features, only in the case of *intelligent*, there is a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.000$). The Ukrainians obtained a significantly higher result, contributing to much higher intensity of this feature. In the remaining three cases, the level of feature intensity does not differ. Statistically significant differences were also noted in the case of the traits *disciplined* and *kind*, which were indicated as dominant by the surveyed Ukrainians. In both cases, the Ukrainians obtained significantly higher results,

contributing to greater intensity than among the surveyed Poles. Therefore, their perception of the English can be considered positive, just like it is among the Poles, but with greater intensity.

A great similarity was also found in the case of the dominant features of Swedes (Tab. 3). Both Poles and Ukrainians perceive to be dominant features such as: *rich*, *intelligent*, *educated* and *wise*.

Table 3. Comparison of the dominant features of Swedes in the opinion of the surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS		t°	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
RICH	4,056	0,936	3,895	0,969	2,618	0,008
INTELLIGENT	3,839	0,915	3,667	1,169	2,544	0,011
EDUCATED	3,697	0,984	3,710	1,101	-0,192	0,847
WISE	3,655	0,921	3,516	0,970	2,288	0,022
CULTURAL	3,739	0,843	3,487	1,205	3,751	0,000
DISCIPLINED	3,542	1,092	3,683	1,084	-1,372	0,170
KIND	3,459	0,924	3,548	1,127	-1,352	0,176

Source: author's research.

In addition, the surveyed Poles consider the Swedes to be *cultural*, and the Ukrainians to be *disciplined* and *kind*. In all statistically significant cases, including the dominant features, the Poles obtained higher results. Therefore, it is they who (similarly to the surveyed Ukrainians) show a positive perception of Swedes, but with much higher intensity.

The situation is slightly different in the case of the Arab nationality (Tab. 4). Common features recognized as dominant in the opinion of Poles and Ukrainians are: *religious*, *courageous*, *nationalistic*. As for them, there is no discrepancy in intensity. The discrepancies concern features that are dominant in the opinion of each group, but are not common. In the case of the dominant features indicated by the Poles, they achieved significantly higher results, which shows unequivocally that in their opinion Arabs are *fanatical*, *anarchistic* and *conservative*. On the other hand, the Ukrainians perceive other features as important, namely: *rich*, *family-oriented*, and *educated*.

Table 4. Comparison of the dominant characteristics of Arabs in the opinion of the surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS		t'	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
RELIGIOUS	3,739	1,210	3,710	1,205	0,371	0,710
COURAGEOUS	3,438	1,183	3,291	1,171	1,937	0,053
NATIONALISTIC	3,348	1,145	3,420	1,216	-0,945	0,344
FANATICAL	3,515	1,238	3,214	1,179	3,878	0,000
NARCHISTIC	3,340	1,320	2,889	1,266	5,420	0,000
CONSERVATIVE	3,363	1,193	2,977	1,179	5,058	0,000
RICH	3,286	1,280	3,575	1,182	-3,571	0,000
FAMILY-ORIENTED	2,622	1,105	3,291	1,299	-8,632	0,000
EDUCATED	2,782	0,997	3,302	1,088	-7,736	0,000

Source: author's research.

We can therefore assume that, despite these discrepancies, both groups of respondents express a neutral perception of Arabs. However, the surveyed Poles, apart from their common features, indicate that Arabs are *fanatical* and *anarchistic* and *conservative*. On the other hand, the surveyed Ukrainians believe that Arabs are *rich*, *family-oriented* and *educated*.

Another comparative analysis, this time concerning the Chinese, showed that the respondents indicated three dominant common features: *active*, *disciplined* and *wise* (Tab. 5). Moreover, the surveyed Poles also indicated

the following features to be dominant: *intelligent*, *rich* and *conservative*. The Ukrainian respondents, in turn, pointed at *kind*, *nationalistic*, *educated*. Among the dominant common features, only in the case of *disciplined* there was a relationship at a statistically significant level. The Poles obtained a significantly higher result, contributing to the intensification of this feature. The situation is similar for such traits as *intelligent* and *conservative*, for which the Poles also achieved significantly higher results.

Table 5. Comparison of the dominant features characterizing the Chinese in the opinion of the surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS		t°	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
ACTIVE	4,227	1,006	4,183	1,114	0,642	0,521
DISCIPLINED	3,766	1,112	3,485	1,083	3,974	0,000
WISE	3,697	1,177	3,569	1,081	1,761	0,078
INTELLIGENT	3,804	1,134	3,089	1,126	9,829	0,000
RICH	3,354	1,280	3,363	1,084	-0,109	0,912
CONSERVATIVE	3,350	1,054	2,938	1,193	5,619	0,000
KIND	3,253	1,006	3,402	1,138	-2,162	0,030
NATIONALISTIC	3,050	1,107	3,382	1,213	-4,439	0,000
EDUCATED	3,411	1,105	3,373	1,161	0,519	0,604

Source: author's research.

On the other hand, in the case of such traits as *kind* and *nationalistic*, the surveyed Ukrainians scored higher. In connection with the above, it can be concluded that the Poles perceive the Chinese positively with a neutral tendency, and the Ukrainians the opposite – neutral, indicating positive.

A comparative analysis of the dominant features of Russians also shows differences at a statistically significant level ($p < 0.05$) (Tab. 6). Both groups of respondents recognized the following as dominant common features: *abusing alcohol*, *nationalistic*, *sociable*. Moreover, the surveyed Poles indicated the following features to be dominant: *courageous* and *conservative*. On the other hand, the Ukrainians pointed at *family-oriented*, *religious*, *fanatical*. In

the case of two dominant common features, *nationalistic* and *abusing alcohol* differentiate the respondents' nationality at a statistically significant level. The Poles obtained significantly higher results, but within the adopted ranges of their intensity. On the other hand, in the case of other dominant features, significantly higher results were obtained by the respondents who indicated these features to be dominant.

Tab. 6. Comparison of the dominant features of Russians in the opinion of the surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS		t°	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
ABUSING ALCOHOL	4,223	1,132	3,912	1,317	3,937	0,000
NATIONALISTIC	3,448	1,142	3,324	1,300	2,083	0,037
SOCIABLE	3,342	1,149	3,251	1,128	1,179	0,238
COURAGEOUS	3,524	1,119	3,152	1,184	4,884	0,000
CONSERVATIVE	3,260	1,016	2,763	1,111	7,266	0,000
FAMILY-ORIENTED	2,979	0,930	3,179	1,154	-2,971	0,003
RELIGIOUS	2,987	0,952	3,206	1,149	-3,219	0,001
FANATICAL	3,129	1,149	3,281	1,171	-2,040	0,041

Source: author's research.

Thus, in the case of the traits *courageous* and *conservative*, the surveyed Poles had a significantly higher result, and in the case of *family-oriented*, *religious*, *fanatical* – the Ukrainians. Despite the existence of such great differences in terms of individual features, it should be assumed (remembering to take into account the features with a negative tint) that both Poles and Ukrainians perceive Russians neutrally, but with a negative tendency.

A comparison of the obtained results with regard to the dominant features describing Jews, similarly to the previous analyzes, reveals a statistically significant differentiation (Tab. 7), which is seen in terms of dominant common features, such as: *religious*, *wise*, *family-oriented*. In the case of the first two, the results obtained by the Poles were significantly higher. In the case of the third, however, there are no significant differences. As for the next three dominant

features, there was also a statistically significant differentiation. The Poles achieved significantly higher results. In the case of the remaining features indicated by the Ukrainians as dominant (*rich, educated, kind*), significantly higher results were noted only in two.

Table 7. Comparison of the dominant characteristics of Jews in the opinion of the surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS		t°	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
RELIGIOUS	3,718	1,100	3,500	1,218	2,922	0,003
WISE	3,465	1,011	3,259	1,105	3,028	0,002
FAMILY-ORIENTED	3,356	1,048	3,461	1,143	-1,147	0,139
INTELLIGENT	3,507	1,026	3,122	1,124	5,559	0,000
CONSERVATIVE	3,459	1,100	3,016	1,000	6,265	0,000
CULTURAL	3,271	1,015	3,120	1,103	2,214	0,027
RICH	3,172	1,214	3,516	1,120	-4,571	0,000
EDUCATED	3,302	1,087	3,424	1,103	-1,729	0,083
KIND	3,137	0,904	3,361	1,099	-3,450	0,000

Source: author's research.

All the analyzed results are within the average range and – despite the differences at a statistically significant level in some cases – it can be concluded that both Poles and Ukrainians present a neutral perception of Jews. However, the surveyed Poles indicate more such features as *religious, wise, intelligent, conservative* and *cultural*, and the surveyed Ukrainians: *rich, kind*.

Next comparative analysis of the dominant features characterizing Germans, similarly to the previous ones, also shows statistically significant differentiation (Tab. 8). The respondents showed a high agreement in the indication of the dominant features: *rich, active, intelligent, educated, wise*. In addition, the Poles emphasize the importance of the feature *disciplined*, and the Ukrainians – *cultural* and *family-oriented*. In terms of the dominant common features, in the case of two of them, namely *rich* and *intelligent*, the results were significantly higher among the Poles. In the case of the other two – the respondents

agree. Thus, the analysis of three non-common features shows a statistically significant differentiation with the intensity on the part of the respondents who showed them.

Table 8. Comparison of the dominant features characterizing Germans in the opinion of the surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS		t°	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
RICH	4,152	0,903	3,893	1,089	4,016	0,000
ACTIVE	3,849	0,878	3,851	1,050	-0,021	0,982
INTELLIGENT	3,707	0,902	3,497	1,167	3,124	0,001
EDUCATED	3,699	0,922	3,683	1,102	0,240	0,810
WISE	3,584	0,838	3,640	1,056	-0,915	0,360
DISCIPLINED	3,540	1,059	3,385	1,126	2,205	0,027
CULTURAL	3,336	0,938	3,546	1,168	-3,091	0,002
FAMILY-ORIENTED	3,173	0,861	3,532	1,073	-5,378	0,000

Source: author's research.

The analysis of features indicates that they are in the range of high and average results. However, their significantly higher intensity on the part of the surveyed Poles allows us to draw a conclusion that they perceive Germans positively, and the surveyed Ukrainians – positively with a neutral tendency. Poles perceiving Germans highlight such features as *rich*, *intelligent*, *disciplined*, whereas the Ukrainians focus on *cultural* and *family-oriented*. It should also be emphasized that the former are more homogeneous in their opinions than the latter.

Despite some similarity, the perception of Indians also shows significant differentiation (Tab. 9). The respondents from both groups agree on the following dominant features: *religious*, *family-oriented* and *kind*. In addition, the Poles point at features like: *cultural*, *wise*, and the Ukrainians: *kind* and *educated*. In terms of common features dominating in two cases (*poor*, *kind*), the respondents did not differ at a statistically significant level, in one (*religious*) the results were significantly higher among the Poles, and in one (*kind*) among the Ukrainians.

Table 9. Comparison of the dominant features characterizing Indians in the opinion of the surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS		t°	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
RELIGIOUS	3,663	1,115	3,389	1,176	3,720	0,000
POOR	3,208	1,128	3,304	1,168	-1,290	0,197
FAMILY-ORIENTED	3,077	1,000	3,334	1,117	-3,775	0,001
KIND	3,064	0,924	3,220	1,156	-2,297	0,021
CULTURAL	3,068	0,925	3,004	1,151	0,964	0,334
WISE	2,903	0,916	3,202	1,104	-4,565	0,000
ACTIVE	2,726	0,951	3,236	1,172	-7,429	0,000
EDUCATED	2,832	0,929	3,210	1,179	-5,254	0,000

Source: author's research.

All the results are in the average range, which proves the neutral attitudes of the respondents towards Indians. However, the surveyed Poles show a significantly higher level of the trait *religious*, and the surveyed Ukrainians point at the following traits: *family-oriented*, *wise*, *active*, *educated*.

Also in the case of the comparative analysis of Nigerians, there are statistically significant differences (Tab. 10). The following features are indicated as dominant by both groups: *active*, *courageous*, *family-oriented*. In addition, the surveyed Poles indicate such features as: *poor*, *cultural*, and the Ukrainians: *sociable*, *kind*, *nationalist*. In the case of common dominant features, there is full compliance – there were no statistically significant differences. In the case of other features, the groups that indicated them obtained significantly higher results. All the scores were within the average range. Thus, both surveyed groups have a neutral view of Nigerians. However, the Poles show significantly higher levels of such features as *poor* and *cultural*, and the surveyed Ukrainians: *sociable*, *kind*, *nationalistic*.

Table 10. Comparison of the dominant characteristics of Nigerians in the opinion of surveyed groups

VARIABLE	SURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES		UKRAINIANS		t°	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
ACTIVE	3,473	0,934	3,467	1,221	0,081	0,934
COURAGEOUS	3,212	1,033	3,244	1,091	-0,467	0,640
FAMILY-ORIENTED	3,183	1,076	3,151	1,133	0,460	0,645
POOR	3,592	1,169	3,112	1,209	6,288	0,000
CULTURAL	3,039	0,944	2,887	1,051	2,364	0,018
SOCIABLE	2,962	1,032	3,318	1,169	-5,019	0,000
KIND	3,123	0,909	3,277	1,170	-2288	0,022
NATIONALISTIC	2,686	1,019	3,202	1,192	-7,221	0,000

Source: author's research.

The last analysis compares the results in terms of mutual perception by the Ukrainians and the Poles (Tab. 11). The former perceive the latter mainly as *abusing alcohol, poor, sociable, family-oriented, courageous* and *religious*. The surveyed Ukrainians indicate the following features to be dominant in Poles: *educated, sociable, wise, nationalistic, active, family-oriented, kind*. Common features recognized by these two nationalities are: *sociable* and *family-oriented*. In these cases, there was no statistically significant differentiation.

Table 11. Comparison of the dominant features of Ukrainians as perceived by Poles and Poles as perceived by Ukrainians

VARIABLE	SOURVEYED GROUPS				COMPARISON OF AVERAGE RESULTS	
	POLES ABOUT UKRAINIANS		UKRAINIANS ABOUT POLES		t°	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
SOCIABLE	3,340	1,087	3,424	1,093	-1,202	0,229
FAMILY-ORIENTED	3,321	0,964	3,363	1,052	-0,641	0,521
ABUSING ALCOHOL	3,812	1,113	2,842	1,114	13,561	0,000
POOR	2,092	0,915	3,312	0,892	-20,884	0,000
COURAGEOUS	3,210	1,016	3,212	1,154	-0,001	0,984
RELIGIOUS	3,116	0,958	3,263	1,063	-2,248	0,024
EDUCATED	2,774	0,884	3,493	1,043	-11,565	0,000
WISE	2,885	0,931	3,408	1,017	-8,340	0,000
NATIONALISTIC	2,903	1,050	3,373	1,061	-6,919	0,000
ACTIVE	3,068	0,960	3,404	0,948	-5,466	0,000
KIND	2,860	0,959	3,361	1,110	-7,510	0,000

Source: author's research.

A similar situation occurred in the case of the trait *courageous*, the results of which are in the average range of values. In terms of these features, no significant differences were found. In the case of the others, a statistically significant differentiation was noted. The Poles attribute *alcohol abusing* trait to Ukrainians significantly more often. Other features, such as *poor*, *courageous*, *religious*, *educated*, *wise*, *nationalistic*, *active*, *kind*, are attributed to Poles more frequently. All the results of the analyzed characteristics of Poles, in the opinion of the Ukrainians, and vice versa – of Ukrainians, in the opinion of the Poles – were within the average range. Thus, the mutual perception of these two nationalities can be considered neutral, devoid of a positive or negative tinge.

CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the comparative analyzes of all nationalities considered “alien”, it can be assumed that both groups of surveyed students perceive Americans positively. However, the intensity of the dominant features is significantly higher on the part of the surveyed Poles, especially in terms of the following features: *rich, sociable, courageous, intelligent*. On the other hand, the surveyed Ukrainians obtained significantly higher results only for one trait, namely *nationalistic*. The respondents perceive the English in a similar way, showing high agreement in terms of the intensity of dominant features. Only in the case of the feature *intelligent*, the Ukrainians obtained significantly higher result, contributing to a significantly higher intensity of this feature. The surveyed groups of students also perceive Swedes positively. However, it was the Poles who showed a significantly higher intensity of such features as: *rich, intelligent, and wise*. In relation to Arabs, both groups present a neutral perception. However, the surveyed Poles, apart from their common features, indicate that Arabs are *fanatical, anarchistic and conservative*. On the other hand, the Ukrainians believe that Arabs are *rich, family-oriented and educated*. In the case of the Chinese, the situation is slightly different. The Poles perceive them positively with a neutral tendency, and the Ukrainians the opposite – neutral with a positive indication. Among the dominant common features, only in the case of the trait *disciplined* there was a difference at a statistically significant level. The Poles achieved a significantly higher result. The situation is similar for such traits as *intelligent* and *conservative*. Both the Poles and the Ukrainians show high agreement with regard to Russians, who are perceived neutrally, indifferently, but with a negative tendency. However, the Poles significantly more clearly notice in Russians such features as *abusing alcohol* or *nationalistic*. Also in the case of Jews, the respondents from both groups agree in their neutral perception. However, the Poles more often indicate such features as *religious, wise, intelligent, conservative* and *cultural*, and the Ukrainians: *rich, kind*. Different perceptions can be seen in the case of the Germans. The surveyed Poles perceive this nationality positively, and the Ukrainians – positively with a neutral tendency. The former emphasize such features as *rich, intelligent, disciplined*, while the latter: *cultural* and

family-oriented. In the case of Indians, both groups of respondents agree on their neutral assessment, but the Poles show a significantly higher intensity of the trait *religious*, and the Ukrainians emphasize the following traits: *family-oriented*, *wise*, *active*, *educated*. The surveyed groups also show a neutral perception towards Nigerians. The difference can only be seen in the intensity of individual features. The surveyed Poles show a significantly higher intensity of such features as: *poor* and *cultural*, and the Ukrainians: *sociable*, *kind*, *nationalistic*. The last analysis showed that all characteristics of Poles, in the opinion of the Ukrainians, and vice versa – of Ukrainians, in the opinion of the Poles – were within the average range of values. Thus, the surveyed nationalities perceive each other neutrally. The highest ranked trait *abusing alcohol* is attributed to Ukrainians by the Poles. In other cases, such as *poor*, *courageous*, *religious*, *educated*, *wise*, *nationalistic*, *active*, *kind*, the features are attributed to Poles to a significantly higher degree.

Taking into account the results of the research, it can be concluded that Poland's accession to the European Union created unique opportunities not only for the movement of Poles, but also Ukrainians. When they come to a different socio-cultural environment, they become more open to diversity, get rid of prejudices and simplified, harmful judgments about "Strangers". Thus, they eliminate cultural alienation, which means that they stop rejecting other people's values, try to understand their customs, mentality and beliefs (comp. Kofta, 2004).

The differences in the perception of "Strangers" by students from Poland and Ukraine, as found in the research, show how much still needs to be done in the field of intercultural education. The essence of intercultural education today is the implementation of the postulate: learn to live together with others – by enriching knowledge about others, their history, tradition, spirituality (comp. J. Nikitorowicz, 2009, p. 186).

Polish and Ukrainian schools play a special role in this respect. In Poland, despite the introduction of elements of intercultural education to schools as early as 1991, as an element of Poland's integration with the European Community, this aspect still leaves much to be desired and depends mainly on the initiative of teachers. Hence the need to educate teachers in this area, to make such changes to the curriculum that at every stage of education, the

issues of understanding and respect for the cultural diversity of societies and their heritage, tolerance for diversity, opposing any discrimination are given prominence. As aptly noted by T. Lewowicki (2011), the undertaken activities should be accompanied by pedagogical optimism and a sense of mission to extract what is best in people and what proves their humanity (p. 33). Textbooks also need to be revised to eliminate stereotypical content (Grzybowski, 2009, p. 383).

The goal of all institutions responsible for upbringing is to prepare young people, but also adults, to interact with individuals who are culturally different, so that the intensification of contacts does not disturb their own identity, does not cause fears and unfriendliness, does not cause intolerance. “In this context, the ideas of interculturalism, as a result of the ongoing processes of modernization, westernization, globalization, regionalization, transformation and integration, become inspiring and helpful in creating dialogue between cultures. Affecting all spheres of human life, they trigger and create mutual exchange and interaction in dialogue, causing specific interpersonal communication related to the need to go beyond the boundaries of one’s own culture and function on the cultural, intellectual, psychological, social, economic, political boundaries, etc. “ (Nikitorowicz, 2017, p. 60).

Academia has an important role to play in this process. It should consistently implement intercultural education content, especially now, when turning to ethnocentric attitudes and xenophobic behaviors has become a trend in Poland (Nikitorowicz, 1999, 2017). What should be opposed is the “... aggressive, fundamentalist ethnocentrism, hegemony of own values, xenophobia, megalomania, nationalism, discrimination, segregation, fanaticism.” (Nikitorowicz, 2017, p. 181). Although educational initiatives run by various non-governmental organizations or by teachers themselves are noticed, there are still no strong institutional solutions that would impose on educational institutions the obligation to equip children and adolescents with objective and verified knowledge about their own culture and history, about people culturally different, and finally about the possibility of dialogue and cooperation. Neglects in this area may result in an increase in the activity of people who have a negative attitude towards dissimilarity, who possess and spread untrustworthy information, saturated with hatred and fear. This may

lead to isolation, national and ethnic conflicts, to civilizational primitivism (see Korczyński, Świdzińska, 2015).

These activities should also include the media, non-governmental organizations and the Church. Having abundant opportunities, they should reach large social groups in order to educate them about tolerance and shape respect for other nationalities, beliefs and convictions.

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