



UNIWERSYTET GDAŃSKI

INSTYTUT PSYCHOLOGII

80-592 Gdańsk, ul. Bażyńskiego 8

prof. dr hab. Hanna Brycz

Gdańsk 10.08.2017

THE REVIEW OF PH.D. DISSERTATION WRITTEN BY ŁUKASZ ROLAND
MICIUK UNDER SUPERVISION OF PROF. DR HAB. PIOTR OLEŚ, AND
ENTITLED „SELF-CONCEPT ADEQUACY – EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON THE
FIELD OF COGNITIVE PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY”

Miciuk focused on the accuracy and meta-accuracy of self-concept. The creation and attempt of verification of his own theory: Self-Concept Adequacy Theory (SCAT) seems to be a novel and valuable approach to the domain of accuracy.

The main question raised in the Ph.D. thesis revolved around the following issue: can the self-other convergence serve as an adequate measure of the accuracy of self-perception?

A good tradition of research on accuracy is influenced by the *a priori* assertion that an

observer knows about an actor more than the actor will ever be able to know about themselves. The other indicator of accuracy is the extent to which people accept as truthful their observations about others seeing them (meta-accuracy, MA). In other words, Łukasz Miciuk creates the SCAT model as the fundamental base for empirical research investigating two groups of predictors: (1) variables predicting the usefulness of the self-other agreement (SOA) and MA as the accuracy measure, and (2) variables being predicted by the SOA and MA.

The theoretical background presented in the dissertation is not very elaborate, yet it is enough for the Author to create his own SCAT model. SCAT refers to the extent in which the content of SOA and MA are credibly generated (multidimensional validity: self-motives, integrative complexity, relational-interdependent self-construal), objective (content validity, where MA seems to be more rational than SOA for the reviewer), and useful (predictive validity – efficient self-regulation measures via purpose in life, hedonic balance, and resiliency). It is evident that objectivity is the crucial aspect, two others are considered as correlates of the main one.

The theoretical part is very consistent, well-written and novel in the field of research of accuracy.

Remarks on the theoretical part:

1. Cronbach's (1955) critique of Diamonds's research (SAO where self-judgments were treated as objective ones) discussed the weaknesses of correlational measures between judgments of the self and others as an indicator of accuracy. His critique put further accuracy-related research on hold for almost half a century. Miciuk did not mention this classic research.
2. The Author says (p. 11) "If the theory (SCAT) is right, it means that objective self- concept (the one characterized by high level of self-other convergence) is at

the same time credible and utile.” The assertion does not take into account that the observers (even friends of the actor) are biased in their perception of actors in a different way than actors are biased towards themselves (Nisbett, Ross, 1980; Ambady, Gray, 2002). If so, it is really difficult to assert that the self-other convergence could ever be an indicator of objectiveness.

3. Page 18. Variables fostering the generation of undistorted self-views contain (among other things) also the assumption about the low level of self-enhancement. This does not seem to be a proper way of thinking. Taylor and Brown (1988) showed healthy properties of moderate (or even high) levels of self-enhancement. Moreover, the self-enhancement motive is the strongest and may be an inevitable motive of action in the entire healthy population (Sedikides, 2000).

These three remarks are not of crucial importance. I rate the whole theoretical part as outstanding. It is not common to read such a creative, novel, logically polished, reasoned dissertation, even with my lifetime of reviewing Ph.D. theses.

The empirical part is the largest portion of the dissertation (87 pages). It consists of the description of highly complex three correlational studies. The studies were planned to answer two important questions:

1. Which psychological variables can predict SOA? (predicting objectivity by credibility)
2. Which psychological variables can be predicted by SOA? (predicting utility by objectivity)

These two main questions are further developed into 17 specific hypotheses.

Study 1 was devoted to explaining the role of self-motives, and the relational-interdependent self-construal as predictors of the SOA, and the SOA as a predictor of life purpose (a component of utility).

The design of the study is appropriate for a typical accuracy-related piece of research. 128 participants (64 dyads: colleagues, partners, married couples) were asked to complete two parts of the Q-sort test using a computer and to fill in some questionnaires (part 1 of the study: a computer-based Q-sort regarding self; part 2. questionnaires; part 3. a computer-based Q-sort regarding the partner). The Q-sort technique is very interesting – the participants were asked to assess traits (their own and their partner's) within nine categories – from extremely uncharacteristic via relatively neutral to extremely characteristic.

It is unclear to me why the participants were told about the meaning of the study during its closing session and not at the beginning. What was the cover story?

Łukasz Miciuk used the Euclidean distance to calculate the discrepancy between the ratings of traits characteristic for oneself and the ratings for the corresponding traits in his/her partner. Thus, the convergence for each participant was indexed via subtracting the discrepancy mentioned above from the maximum discrepancy. Using this mathematical formula allows the Author to omit all traps connected with correlations between two independent ratings given by two different persons, and mentioned by Cronbach (1955). Miciuk applied three indexes of SOA for each participant – total (for all traits), observable traits (characteristics that are very obvious), unobservable traits (characteristics with fuzzy boundaries). The two latter indexes were extracted with the help of competent judges. The same Q-sort technique was applied during the second study.

The results showed that the self-assessment motive as well as relational-interdependent self-construal are good predictors of the SOA – total & observable (proving objectivity) while the SOA (total & observable) and self-assessment are good predictors of hedonic balance (proving utility).

Study 2. 89 participants (45 dyads) rated themselves three times after priming: 1. “think of a particular situation where you assess yourself definitely negatively” 2. “... definitely positively” 3. “... you can’t easily assess yourself positively or negatively”. The narratives following each priming allowed to score each person on integrative complexity. All narratives were scored by two independent judges in concordance with the Complexity Scoring Manual on a 7-point scale: from 1 *no differentiation, no integration* to 7 *high differentiation, high integration*. Participants also followed the Q-sort procedure and filled in the Resiliency Scale and The Social Approval Questionnaire.

It is interesting to note that the results replicate the hypothesis about the positive correlation between the relational-interdependent self-construal and the SOA, and the self- assessment motive with SOA, as well total as observable traits (objectivity).

Moreover, the SOA predicted resiliency (utility). Unfortunately, the research did not prove a correlation between integrative complexity and the SOA.

Both studies showed no correlation between the SOA and self-enhancement or self-verification motives. I think that the result is quite optimistic while regarding other studies in the field; e.g. self-enhancement motive and well-being. It means that the result, in fact, supports the utility of the model (hypotheses were not rooted in theory).

Study 3 is a very precise and elegant one, especially for metacognition lovers. A group of acquaintances assessed their own traits, and the traits of each participant in the group (3 or 4), and also estimated how the group would assess her/him. For the first time, the meta-accuracy index was calculated.

The results replicated the utility of the Author's model: the SOA was a positive predictor of resiliency. What's more, self-verification, self-assessment, and self-improvement were positive predictors of resiliency.

Łukasz Miciuk at the end of the dissertation enclosed the table (p. 82), that describes which hypothesis were proved, and which of them were disapproved.

Miciuk asserts in general discussion that self-assessment and the relational-interdependent self-construal appeared to be positive predictors of the objectivity of self-concept. What's more, the SOA and meta-accuracy predicted purpose in life, hedonic balance, and resiliency, proving the utility of the model.

The Author provides critique of his own studies and the line of further investigations.

I admire the empirical studies presented in the thesis. The research solved many problems related to contemporary metacognition and accuracy issues in psychology. Studies are thoroughly planned, well-designed, and methodologically and statistically correct.

Conclusion:

The dissertation is very good and covers all expectancies for a Ph.D. according to Art. 11 of the Act on Academic Degrees and Academic Titles (Journal of Laws No. 65/90, item 386). On this basis, I kindly ask for Łukasz Miciuk to be allowed to proceed with further steps of the doctoral procedure.

Finally, I recommend that this Ph.D. thesis be given a "distinguished" award. The perfect model and its novelty, as well as smartly planned and conducted studies and perfectly counted results make this thesis outstanding.