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## SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

*The author investigates origins and the essence of the term "community", analyzing sociological and socio-psychological community theories. The researches that she did were distinct different types of the community and analyze its structural components. In the article are also provided results of a qualitative research of the psychological aspects of mental health and counseling professional community.*

**Keywords:** professional community, local community, community orientation.

Latterly, some researches of the community phenomena had appeared in the area of Ukrainian psychology. Until recently, this category can be found mainly in Western studies since the second half of the twentieth century. Describing the origin of the term "community", R. Williams indicates, that it came from the Latin in the fourteenth century. Originally the term used to refer to people living in the same geographic location. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the gradual expansion of the concept and meaning it covers not only people united geographical proximity but also people who have something in common: interests, values [4].

**The essence of the term "community".** Since the late nineteenth century, the use of the term "community" was mostly due to determine closer, warmer, more harmonious relationship between people who intuitively attributed to relations of people of past centuries. There are researches, that examined the problem of communities but the first sociological definition of community appeared only in 1915. This definition was proposed by C.J. Galpin for the isolation of rural communities were located around the area of trade and services. Subsequently began to appear alternative definition of community. Some are focused on the community as a geographical area, some in the group of people who lived in a certain place, others – considered the community as a space of ordinary life. [3]

Later Gusfield distinguished two major uses of the term community:

1) The territorial and geographical notion of community-neighborhood, town, city.

2) "Relational" community, concerned with quality of character of human relationship, without reference to location.

Gusfield noted that the two usages are not mutually exclusive, although, as Durheim (1964) observed, modern society develops community around interests and skills more than-around locality [2].

As a branch of social psychological research, the psychology of community was formed in the 60-s of 20th century. Distinguishing locality-based and relational communities caused several researches, focused on relationships. Seymour B. Sarason was the first, who founded the theory and methodology of the Sense of Community as a psychological view of integral community-specific features. He defined the sense of community as a "perception of similarity with others, recognition of interdependence with others and willingness to support this interdependence, giving or doing to others what is expected of them, and the feeling that you are part of a large, reliable and stable structure.

Later, McMillan and Chavis [3] had developed the idea of the sense of community as its members a sense of

belonging, a sense of self-worth in the group and certain liabilities to members of the community to each other and to the community as a whole: "psychological sense of community is an experience, generated within the interplay of individual and group, which engenders the perception of belonging, and ameliorates feelings of isolation" [3].

In general all latest research are focused on the assessment of three contributive elements within the overall sense of community experience, namely:

- Mission (the perception that a group has goals which transcend the goals of its individual members);
- Connection (the perception that a group is ongoing and acknowledges its accepted members);
- Reciprocal Responsibility (the perception that members both serve as resources for the group and receive responses to their individual needs).

**The problem.** Current political and economic situation in Ukraine makes obvious the crisis aggravation of Mental health and Counseling professional community. Increasing number of people suffered in military conflict (IDPs, victims of torture, combatants, people who lost their relatives etc.) demand reaction of professional community. However, at the moment we could observe non-availability of professionals and absence of control over helping process.

We could state that psychologists react on a crisis emotionally but not professionally. Helping process which is supposed to be provided by professional psychologists now is almost entirely covered by volunteers. We assume that this reaction caused by system characteristics of professional community: during last years the main task of all psychological communities was constant preparation of new members. What is more, this preparation was oriented only towards commercial purpose instead of social demand.

Our theoretical investigation make possible to distinguish some basic features of modern Ukrainian professional community according to its attitude toward authority: *communities focused on power and those, focused on management.* We consider that crisis of mental health and counseling community caused by its orientation on power which leads to domination of form over content. Thus we have to make deep research of professional communities' socio-psychological structures to design a new type of community capable to overcome current crisis.

Unfortunately, Ukrainian social science has lack of methodology of community management and we can't solve this problem by existing methodology. For last 10 years all management methodology were obsolete or destroyed so there is huge need in instruments.

We have a gap between two types of professional communities and we need to build some forms of community transition from focusing on power toward

focusing on management. We also have a problem with defining how to change attitudes of community members so we need new tools of social modeling to implement social changes.

During last 7 years we have been conducting research related to the issue of professional community functioning: we study professional socialization of future psychologist and social workers and design methods of its development in the higher educational establishments. We also have investigated the structure of professional consciousness, designed and implemented several forms of "Personal-Oriented Communicational Space" in University and found out that it made great influence on student's professional position. Recently we have focused our studies on community theories and qualitative research of psychological aspects of professional community in humanitarian sphere [1].

**Research objectives.** There are several approaches which regard community as a subject of scientific interest. There are approaches which emphasize external socio-economical signs of community, such as: common territory, direct relations between people in community and so on. Other approaches focused in socio-psychological aspects such as: "the sense of community", common values, common activities.

Until recently the issue of community didn't appear in Ukrainian researches. We have a tradition of using the term "community" only in a meaning of local union of people who share common territory and property and totally lost spiritual and cultural meaning of the term "community".

Community could be is one of the best social models of organizing life and professional activity because of high responsibility of it members who share common values and could establish their rights. Professional community is a consolidation of people who create, share and improve certain professional values for social changes. Professional community can be created to preserve and spread professional values and also for supporting and protection of its members.

Individuals' professionalization mandatory requires their inclusion into professional community. Whereas the whole process of individuals' socialization is a movement from his own needs, drives, motives (direct behavior) to certain social forms (cultural mediation), the professional socialization assumes a movement from his own interests,

goals and abilities toward socially approved institutionalized forms and methods.

**Methods.** For our study we use the expert method and the group simulation method embodied in "Organization Game" (methodology based on the Theory of Activity in local post-soviet tradition by Vygotsky and Leontiev).

**Procedure.** On the first stage of the research we investigate expert's view on a mission, functions and structure of professional mental health and consultant community. We conducted interviews with 25 professionals in the field of mental health and social service, aged from 29 to 57 years, with professional activity experience from 7 to 30 years. All of them regard themselves as members of professional community.

On the question about the difference between the professional community from some organizational forms, such as trade unions, experts have determined that professional community serving space for setting personal and professional tasks, while the trade union is the subject of protecting the interests of a particular profession (as an institution) exclusively in legal field. Experts unanimously noticed that the professional community solves its own specific tasks which cannot be solved at the level of the organization

Experts' opinion about the mission of professional communities was straightly divided into two opposite thoughts:

- The main purpose of community is protection and a making decision regarding the recognition (or not recognition) of the applicant; and also strengthening the image of the profession;
- Community has to implement a certain social changes according to their professional values.

Experts also defined the content of personal representations of specialists about their professional community (tab. A)

Thus in the minds of professionals who feel belonging to a certain community, there are at least two groups of ideas regarding professional communities:

- Professional communities focused on a power
- Professional communities focused on a management.

**Table A. Functional positions of professional community**

POSITION	CONTENT (basic community functions)
"The Partner"	Community as a partner provides professional communication and exchange of ideas; providing exchange of experience, create and develop professional relationships
"The Defender"	Community provides support, protection and development of capabilities and also helps to share common context
"The Mentor"	Community as a Mentor helps in solving professional tasks
"The Qualifications Board "	Community provides recognition by experts and establish some standards to assure the quality of professional activity
"The Controller"	Community as a Controller implements monitoring of specialists actions and also regulation of the profession's image
"The Expert"	Creating and developing of professional standards, samples and models of training and preparation of specialists

These two orientations produce significant differences in the content, intensions and methods (tab. B).

Thereby professional communities *focused on a power* are tend to *have control* over profession field and not interested in developing and preparation of new members. The atmosphere in such community is jealousy and unhealthy competition for authority.

Professional communities *focused on a management* regard their mission in *social changes*, dialogue forms of communication and responding to social demand. They have high demands to the professional skills and abilities of community members. The basic style of interaction in the management-focused communities is cooperation and team-work.

Table B. The main features of professional communities

FEATURES	PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITIES	
	Focused on a power	Focused on a social processes management
<b>Principles</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Status / elitism,</li> <li>• Continuity,</li> <li>• The financial benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development,</li> <li>• Free self-determination</li> <li>• Professionalism</li> </ul>
<b>Main tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monopolization</li> <li>• Membership labeling;</li> <li>• Control over licensing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation with other communities</li> <li>• Professional guidance of social processes</li> </ul>
<b>Methods</b>	The extension of influence	Social designing
<b>Communication</b>	PR Concentrated monologue	Dialogue: investigation and designing of social inquiry
<b>The internal structure</b>	Centralized: hierarchy	Decentralized: project teams, organized groups

The second stage of the research we used a group simulation method embodied in "Organization Game". Among the participants were students, NGO volunteers and care-workers, total number 30 people, aged 45 to 20 years.

The content of the simulation was the process of professional socialization as a process of personal development from individual goals, tasks and interests to cultural forms of definite profession. Professional community is a huge basis of professional identity development; so adepts grow up and take shape in accordance with its demands, principles and requirements.

There are at list four subjects, involved in the process of professional socialization: "Entry-Level Professional" – young professional, who are just starting out their career; "Professional" – acknowledged recognized expert on the labor market; "Society" as an environment and also consumer of service; and "Professional Community" as a professional environment (union, association) – a subject in the social space and an organizational form of professionals' being.

Participants were asked to choose one position and to divide into groups in accordance with it. All positions had to be played, so all groups had to formulate and write a list of demands and suggestions from their particular position to other three groups. After that each group sent one representative to announce the results.

After the announcement other groups were able to ask questions for understanding and react in accordance to their position. Group work was built on reflective thinking and awareness of actual actions and positions of participants.

During the discussion we found out, that that the "Professional community" seriously, moreover, with jealousy concerns to monitoring and control in professional field. In fact, Community interrupts any attempt by "Entry-Level Professionals" to establish their own place in the professional field. Lately it became obvious, that Entry-Level Professionals' aim is following the Professionals and learning.

Requirements of the group "Entry-Level Professional" to the professional community activity includes: transparency and clarity of goals, values and requirements; procurement of young specialists development; mutual understanding; professional collaboration; raising the status of occupations.

To the society: social requirements and needs; supporting of entry-level professional' initiatives. To the professionals: being a member of the professional community; open communication; accessibility; to share their experiences with entry-level professionals; supervision and guide.

After the set of reflexive questions the group "Entry-Level Professional" formulated some proposals: a) volunteering and support of professionals in their

activity; b) participation in trainings and learning programs of professional community; c) initiating a space for professional communication for young professionals. In other words, the group became able to set an active position and performed their readiness to changes.

The group "Professionals" had declared the ideological split inside their group: one part of the group viewed themselves as professionals, aimed at achievements, raising their competitiveness in a market of mental health services. They represent themselves as mentors or advisors for "entry-level professionals", seeing them as really "promising" students or assistants, who "could never be greater" than they are. At the same time "entry-level professionals" are potential threat as competitors. Also "Professionals" revealed the pragmatic relation to "Community", regarding it as the area of improving their competence and professional development.

Another part of the group declared their aspiration to meaningfulness of profession, and claimed their decisions are guided by professional values and principles. From this position the group shared with "beginners" their professional values to implement social changes together. In reflective session the group "Professionals" had noticed that it was much more difficult to formulate demands and proposals from the second professional position.

The group "Professional Community" presented self-centered position, which has revealed in demands addressed to themselves: self-determination and awareness of goals; dialogue between the internal community structures (to resolve contradictions within community). Also the group demanded respect and recognition from "entry-level professionals" and "professionals". Furthermore, the Community claimed that professionals have to: understand the essentials of their activity; be ready to the open dialogue and experience exchange. Significantly, they had just one demand to the Society – to understand their own needs.

The group demonstrated astonishing autonomy, self-sufficiency and total absence of interest toward other groups. In fact, during preparation the report, the participants "stuck" on determining who they are and why they are exist. However, to answer this question, it wasn't enough to define "we are for ourselves", the community should determine "we are for others".

This discussion enables us to formulate the concept of "pseudo-professional communities" that imitate the activity. Pseudo-professional communities are based on social and psychological needs (desire of personal recognition or self-confidence; the sense of belonging to the restricted group of "VIPs" e.t.c.)

Thus, the professional community should be differentiated from associations based on social interest,

where mission appears as just formal declaration; instead, the real content is far from profession.

It is important to pay particular attention to the fact that neither of groups hasn't prepared proposals; instead they compiled a list of requirements. Only after reflexive questions from the methodologist of the simulation, some groups ("Entry-Level Professionals") finally formulated a few suggestions. Demands mostly addressed to someone – "I need you to do this..." and sometimes it means that you are closed to other opinions. Instead, suggestions are something that you could propose to the other, which means that you are ready to change and move towards other way of thinking.

Our research showed, that current activities of professional communities are mostly fictitiously-demonstrative and serve to specific goals:

- a) Personal goals and some personal needs of community members;
- b) Retaining control over some areas of social life;
- c) Artificial support of the professional image by imitation of professional activity.

Therefore, the true mission of the professional community, which is the strengthening and implementation the sense and values of the profession, is not embodied yet. This, we assume, leads to such consequences:

- depreciation of the psychological and helping professions;
- ritualization and formalization of social and educational services;
- increasing number of nonprofessional services provided by unskilled (often uneducated) people, and, as a result,
- the growth of distrust to professional communities from society and professionals.

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### СОЦІАЛЬНО-ПСИХОЛОГІЧНІ АСПЕКТИ РОЗВИТКУ ПРОФЕСІЙНИХ СПІЛЬНОТ

*Порушено проблему визначення поняття "спільнота" у соціологічних та соціально-психологічних дослідженнях. Автор досліджує походження й динаміку змісту понять "спільнота" і "група", аналізує структурні компоненти та пропонує класифікацію спільнот. Також подано результати якісного дослідження психологічних аспектів професійної спільноти у галузі соціально-психологічних практик.*

*Ключові слова: професійна спільнота; група; орієнтованість спільноти*

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### СОЦИАЛЬНО-ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ РАЗВИТИЯ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОГО СООБЩЕСТВА

*Затронута проблема определения понятия "сообщество" в социологических и социально-психологических исследованиях. Автор исследует происхождение и динамику содержания понятий "сообщество" и "общество", анализирует структурные компоненты и предлагает классификацию сообществ. Также представлены результаты качественного исследования психологических аспектов профессионального сообщества в области социально-психологических практик.*

*Ключевые слова: профессиональное сообщество; общество; ориентированность сообщества.*

The perspective of overcoming the mental health professional community crisis in Ukraine we consider in designing of a new type of professional communities based on humanitarian values and aimed at the social processes guidance.

Our further researches would be oriented on models of transition community toward current social demands and performing changes in personal attitudes of community members from status and authority focused to professionalism. We suppose, that really functioning professional community have to introduce and support the new way of thinking and interaction within the community; and also to develop personal and professional responsibility of community members concerning the crisis and further development.

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