



BEHAVIOUR STRATEGIES IN ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR WITHIN MARGINAL GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

The marginal groups and the assertive style of behaviour in these groups represent considerable part of the process of social work. The skill to practice assertive style of behaviour as certain number of abilities necessary for expressing our feelings, thoughts, attitude, in suitable manner in a particular moment, can be achieved through suitable education including prevention programmes in the various marginal groups.

Key words: marginal groups, assertive behaviour, choice of strategy, crisis intervention

During the last years in the social work practice, the idea of the so called *assertive behaviour* is more and more strengthening its position. By its origin this idea has an instrumental character, but it gives an opportunity for a wider integration of the personality in the context of the personal and social skills.

This idea comprises both the aims and the procedures through which the activity regarding the formation of the assertive behaviour is developing. According to many authors, the idea of assertive behaviour, the used models, through which it develops, outline the specific social paradigm which includes: aims, contents and technologies.

This new paradigm exceeds our general notions of a protection from a definite type of behaviour and outlines the developing of new type of trends in the whole social model – the one of the coping behaviour. Continuing this plan of reasoning allows the outlining of notion of complete personality development within the frames of the individual characteristics.

To date, the social work practice shows

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sufficient negatives concerning the formation or recognizing the manifestations of assertive behaviour in each separate individual in the society. In the cases when the manifestations of assertive behaviour are among the marginal groups, the adequate assessment of its manifestation in a specific personality can be objectified still more difficultly.

The determination of the behaviour reactions in the marginal groups the most frequently is related to transfer of the assessment from preliminary manifestations and adaptations to a specific manifestation. The status of each specific member of these groups is burdened with the negative assessments of the society, with the slighting or indifferent attitude to their personal experiences and natural reactions. The social worker, in his/her direct work with these groups, is not always able to overcome and change these attitudes in the society, all the more when the manifestation of the self-confirming (assertive) behaviour shows itself as an attempt of self-expression and self-confirmation.

According to R. Albert and M. Vonnegut, 1994, three styles of behaviour can be differentiated: non-confirmation, self-confirmation and aggression. The self-confirmation is the middle point of the continuum and in the most situations is the most suitable reaction, in contrast to the aggressive behaviour. The self-confirming behaviour includes the defense of the own

positions and wills and despite that – respect of the other and ensuring of fair ‘game rules’ for each one among the interacting persons.

In the realization of the social practice is not observed work with the specific client, representative of a marginal group for developing skills for defending the own rights which on its turn advances the process of forming bigger resistance in the client towards manipulation, pressure, suggestibility etc. The specific representative of each marginal group needs specific support in this direction and in this sense the ideas for assertive behaviour is weaved into the context of the I-conception.

The skills related to the demonstration of assertive behaviour in the representatives of the marginal groups are acquired in the ambience where they live and due to this reason the manifestations of assertive behaviour very often are masked and joined to the understanding of the personality itself regarding the manners in which it manifests.

In this sense, a few essential and important questions arise in the practice of the social worker, which define the discourse of each specific step undertaken in the process of the professional decision taking:

1. How to differentiate the aggression from the assertive behaviour which in these groups is deeply masked and is explicitated as aggressive behaviour?
2. What procedures are to be undertaken to put in practice the manifestation of the self-confirming behaviour with clearly expressed a favourable attitude?
3. To which extent and how these procedures shall affect the groups as a whole, reaching to each of its members?
4. Can we deduce markers by which we shall be able to clearly define the character of the behaviour reaction?

The deduced questions orientate to the processes of the social learning and the solutions resulting from it about the social practice.

Similar conclusion is also imposed by the opinion about the essence and characteristics of the marginal groups. The notion appears in 1920 as a definition of the impossibility for adaptation of the emigrants to the new social conditions. In the individual characteristic, marginality is assumed as the incomplete adaptation of the individual to the group. In

case of changes which occur with the society structure, a marginalization also arises which is accepted as a group marginalization. As many scientists notice, ‘the marginalization not always leads to taking the ground’, what is more – the marginals often undertake actions (individual or group) for re-integration in the socium. With these actions, they take a choice of behaviour which to confirm them and defend them in the new conditions for them related with various social changes.

As we have already emphasized, the assertive behaviour is one of the styles of behaviour which the personality can choose and demonstrate in definite circumstances. It is interesting to note that in the assertive type of behaviour the personality defends his basic human rights, without breaching the rights of the others. In this sense, the personality who realizes this type of behaviour knows well the limits between himself and the others. Reasoning on the different styles of behaviour, it is proper to note that in the marginal groups is observed the non-assertive style of behaviour where some limits are crossed, but still, in contrast to the aggressive style, the rights of others are not breached.

Exactly the clear differentiation between the assertive and non assertive style of behaviour in the marginal groups and in each of the members of these groups is a question which the social worker has to decide with the purpose of the professional choice of behaviour to the group as a whole or to each member of the group.

The difficulties of the process of differentiating contain in the fact that both in the assertive style of behaviour and in the non-assertive one, the personality has the liberty of expressing his thoughts and feelings in positive, as well as in negative aspect. In the non-assertive behaviour, the personality is impeded to express his thoughts, convictions and feelings and it allows the others to take advantage of this.

In the marginal groups, as well as in the society, all three styles of behaviour are encountered. In most of the cases the non-assertive and aggressive style of behaviour prevail, which also determines the direction of the social work with them for building up an assertive behaviour.

Considerable part of the theoreticians, who examine the human behaviour, is united

around a few general rules, defining them as 'assertive'.

1. To have an opinion and express it.
2. To be independent.
3. To change your opinion.
4. To say 'I don't know'.
5. To say 'I don't understand'.
6. To say 'I don't worry'.
7. To make mistakes.
8. To feel and to express anger.
9. To refuse requests without feeling guilty.
10. Not to justify and not to excuse your behaviour when you refuse.

However, in order to apply these rules and achieve positive result from the whole activity regarding definite style of behaviour, as well as to make a precise choice to intervene into the marginal group or in specific person, it is necessary to make distinction of the behaviour style. According to C. Kolley, there exist some helping 'keys' to distinct the assertive, non-assertive and aggressive style of behaviour, namely:

- ✓ type of the felt emotion;
- ✓ manifested non-verbal behaviour;
- ✓ used verbal language.

These three leading determinants are of particular importance and decisive for the precise diagnosing of the behaviour style for the social worker.

The choice of assertive behaviour has to be supported with the purpose of overcoming the aggression in the marginal groups, overcoming the unconscious and uncontrolled behaviour, for the successful uniting of the latter to the socium. The process of forming an assertive behaviour is very often accompanied with a

series of concomitant situations provoking definite behaviour stereotypes which not always can be inserted in the expectations of the social worker. The differences between the formed perspective for the manifestation of the assertive behaviour and its real manifestation as non-supporting behaviour or aggression is in many cases able to discourage the social worker. The process of forming is also burdened by the conditions and the ambience where the assertive behaviour is 'worked off'. When working with marginal groups, the social worker periodically has to diagnose the change and to interfere, observing the ethic rules in the behaviour correction work. The practice analysis proves that the skilful use of the instruments for individual influence, the change and the overcome of the aggressive and non-assertive behaviour can be realized, the results of this change being solely in the benefit of the specific individual and the society as a whole.

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