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## Early Professional Socialization of University Students in Russia

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### Abstract

The article considers peculiarities of future sociologists' personality formation during the first steps of training in higher educational settings. Special attention is paid to the verbal influence directed to conceptual changes in university students reflected in their behavior. The interdisciplinary approach discussed helps to solve the problem of verbal influence on the students' attitudes towards future profession and their career strategies. According to the study findings based on quantitative and qualitative research methods, social determinants of professional self-identification have been revealed. It was shown that early professional socialization affects the formation of future professionals' values and civil position.

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*Keywords:* Professional socialization; higher education; career choice; self-identification

### 1. Introduction

The development of modern society on the way to that of information is characterized by dynamism and an accelerating pace of social changes that lead to increasing demands for competitive professionals with a high level of competence and able to adapt to changing conditions of social reality. The problem of professional training, development of professional skills and formation of professional values is becoming more and more relevant and socially significant. Professional training is a rather long process. Professionalization begins within the period of studying and continues throughout one's whole life.

The study presented was focused on the process of professional socialization of university students majoring in sociology. The interest in the profession of a sociologist may be explained in different ways. First, this is a fairly "young" profession in Russia compared to "traditional" ones of a doctor, a lawyer or an economist. Secondly,

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historically sociology as a science and as a profession has evolved in the Russian system of education controversially and this significantly affects the professional development of sociologists. Thirdly, it is sociological education that allows of forming competencies that are the most popular in the society during the periods of economic crises. Local military conflicts also intensify global competition and increase the demand for professionals able to think analytically and actively influence institutional changes to implement strategic social projects.

The formation of professional values has been considered by many domestic and foreign scientists. Professional activities have always been of great scientific interest. The problem of professional socialization is studied in pedagogy, psychology, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, etc. There are various scientific approaches to understanding professional socialization. The notion *socialization* is used to show the process of students' selective acquiring of values and attitudes, skills and competences. As known, Merton (1968) conceptualized basic principles of forming a professional community and professional ethos (see also Lazar, 2010), while as early as at the beginning of the twentieth century Weber highlighted personal qualities needed to become a professional in politics (Weber, 1918/1946a) and science (Weber, 1918/1946b).

The problem of youth socialization and community was considered by Homans (1961) in the framework of his social exchange theory. The issues of socialization in an unstable society in the context of the anomie theory (Durkheim, 1964; Merton, 1968) seem to be essentially important in the world's current situation. As shown in (Merton, 1968), the purpose and nature of education is tightly connected with young people acquiring the dominant culture, norms and values. Sorokin (1947) investigated the impact of education on social mobility and social status and concluded that professional knowledge and skills are the basis of professional stratification and have an effect on the society structure. Education and professional socialization are observed from the perspective of the resource approach in (Bourdieu, 1972). In Russia the problems of education and professional socialization have been intensively studied since the second half of the twentieth century. Mironova (1999) investigated the structure and development of professional identification.

Of great importance for our research are the works devoted to studying sociologists' professional activity. The concept of sociology as a profession appeared in the United States, primarily due to Parsons (1959) who defined sociology as a profession and created a new discipline called sociology of professions, see also (Yudin, 2013). The study of sociologists' professional values and specific features of this profession development in Russia was carried out by Abramov (2013).

Thus, various aspects of young people's socialization and professional development as well as the development of professionalism, including the profession of a sociologist were considered in the works of foreign and domestic authors. However, the literature review on the problem under consideration, our research experience and impact of teaching staff enable us to suggest that the problem of becoming a professional is quite relevant and significant and requires further studying and deepening.

## 2. Research methodology

### 2.1. The concept of professional socialization

Professional socialization and the formation of professional values and orientations determine characteristics of future specialists' activity and opportunities for their professional development. In addition, professional socialization affects the development of business qualities, skills and ultimately influences the development of professional fellowship and the society's professional structure. It should be noted that the concepts of *professionalism* and *professional socialization* in the scientific literature are often defined as synonyms. However, in our opinion, they have significant differences. *Professional socialization* continues throughout one's whole life. The concept of *professionalism* in its broad sense means the development of the society's occupational structure, while in its narrow sense it is the formation of professional groups with specific interests and values as well as professional positions and roles. In relation with the individual it is accompanied by the formation of not only knowledge, skills and professional views about socio-professional standards adopted by the professional community. Professionalization of a person in the broadest sense, also involves two interrelated components. First, the formation of professional self-identification, the development of an individual's internal personality structures, i.e. the psychological aspect of professionalization as it is reflected in the concept of *professional development*. Second, the

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