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Simona USURELU, Catalina IRIMIA

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Seeing Rroma Community through Appreciative Eyes

Simona UȘURELU¹

Cătălina IRIMIA^{2 3}

Abstract

The Roma community is often caught between two perspectives – is seen either from a positive point of view, or a negative one. Around the world exist organizations that continually emphasize the rights of the Roma population and the positive aspects that are found in their culture. In this article we will consider exploring a range of appreciative models from Roma community; called by us "success stories" that are shaped around this community. Among the elements analyzed, we will stop on the process of appreciative inquiry, in terms of which we will refer to the "success stories" collected from the media and specialized literature.

Keywords:

Roma community, appreciative inquiry, media, „successful stories”, group models.

¹ Simona UȘURELU – Researcher Assistant at Lumen Research Center in Humanistic Sciences from Lumen Association, Email simonaponea@gmail.com , Phone no. +44 742 762 7219

² Cătălina IRIMIA – Human Resources Inspector, Directorate of Social Work, Vaslui County, Romania, Email Address chicoscatalina@yahoo.com.

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The frame of research

The purpose of this research aims to analyze the factors that define a series of positive events among the Roma population and analyze a series of models of good practice in working with this minority group.

Roma community

Vasile Miftode (2003), quoting Donald Young, shows that a minority is "what people label as minority" stressing its visibility, and Louis Wirth added that this sort of group:

- "has to get a different treatment, even worse ..."
- "and its members should be aware of their situation as members of the minority" (Miftode, Cojocaru, Nacu, Sandu, 2004). Cadrul logic al cercetării

The term "minority" means "a group of people who differ through race, religion, language or nationality of the majority group among whom they live". Firstly, a group is not a minority unless it is aware of itself as a group different from others, and has a sense of social inferiority, especially if considered as such. On the other other hand, the term minority has always a social and political connotation: often, a minority is a group less numerous, measured in a lesser extent and less influential, but in this situation can not be generalized (Boudon, Besnard et al, 1996:169-170).

Roma are one of the larger ethnic groups analyzed and investigated. In this respect John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (1996:4) defines ethnic groups as a community within a free society. Ethnic group usually occurs by 6 main features as follows:

- a community with its own name (nation) in order to identify and express the essence of community;
- the myth of common ancestry, which includes the originating community myth in time and space, and gives the ethny meaning in the way of fictive kinship;
- community sharing past memories, including heroes, events and their commemorations;
- one or more elements of the cultural community: religion, customs and language;

- human relationship with earth, not necessarily as a physical occupation of the nation, only the symbolic link with ancestral land;
- meaning of solidarity ethnic populations.

Ethnical characteristics themselves (language specific, even not all know and use, traditions, costumes, music, awareness of belonging) are combined with negative effects of modernization historical deficit, of majority of Roma population (Zamfir, E. , Zamfir, C., 1993:20).

Affirmative models of Roma culture

According to appreciative inquiry and change management (Cojocaru, 2005:54) intervention emphasis was moved from the "problem" to "positive actions" that support change. In this respect current social practice seeks to intervene on the system as a whole, trying to stop / reduce the occurrence of negative phenomena, and generate solutions to problems that were not prevented in time.

Stefan Cojocaru sustian that solving problems involves changing the system that encourages the development and its survival without explicitly addressing the issue (2005a:54).

Appreciative inquiry (Cooperider, 2005, Cojocaru, 2005a; Sandu, 2009) is an instrument of social change (Cojocaru, 2010), which shifts the focus from problem to identify, cultivate and promote existing positive aspects in the analysis.

Representative to appreciative inquiry is the 4 D model, which involves necessary steps that are important in creating and developing future plans and strategies for successful implementation. By 4 D cycle is proposed to pass through four stages: Discovery, Dream, Design and Delivery. This model supports the process of social change, based on the identification of own resources, the positive experiences, then design plans for the future, followed by the establishment of concrete actions, and finally its implementation in accordance with the strengths identified in the first two stages.

Roma culture it has always been between two extremes: on the one hand we talk negatively about them, on the other hand we consider a number of positive elements in this community. Dana Cojocaru, paraphrasing Bush Gervase, states that appreciative inquiry considers the

organization as a theory, and a method of social change, one of the most significant innovations in action research (Cojocaru, D., 2004).

Appreciative investigation (research) is a particular way to question subjects of organizational development, and also to foreshadow the future, by adopting positive relationships based on inherent fundamental positivity person, organization (group / community) or a situation, increasing the system capacity for cooperation and change. The method has the fundamental assumption according to what individuals are committed to improve, change and focus on performance (Cooperider, 2005, Cojocaru, D., 2004, Cojocaru, 2005, Sandu, 2009, Ponea, 2010, www.wikipedia.org).

As stated before, specific to appreciative inquiry is the 4D model. This means going through a sequential series of steps: Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny. Below we briefly describe these steps in accordance with the specialised literature (Cooperider, 2005, Cojocaru, D., 2004, Cojocaru, 2005, Sandu, 2009, Ponea, 2010):

- Discovery - considers in studying the target group and identifying success stories that this population has
- Dream - it is intended to identify the group members' dreams (this case Roma community) and their aspirations, their desires are projections
- Design - in this phase occurs the designing of the objectives and purposes of the group / individuals.
- Destiny - is the implementation phase of plans, in order to support, maintain, adjust and develop what was previously projected.

Next we intend to present a series of "Roma success stories" and to emphasize the positive representative characteristics of this group.

We will stop now at the TV show "Come and see" - "Vinos si vezi" - a show of Roma people. According to their online declaration (www.vinosavezi.tv) we can find the following:

- Format: Sociol-religious talk show.
- Duration: 60 minutes
- Goal: Roma community is challenged to focus onto a higher standard of living, with emphasis on education and spirituality, but also is aiming in changing romanins' attitudes towards this minority.

- Abstract: Each issue "Come and See!" is unique in its theme and the variety of guests, whether they present the history of this nation, their music or about habits, or addressing a wide range of issues faced by Roma community and propose some solutions, in either case we know, one thing is definite: the basis of our discussions will be Christian values. If we do not believe us "Come and see".
- Guests: Professors, politicians, pastors, musicians, history specialists, business people: all Roma who have surpassed the due confidence in God and education received in school or family.

Currently, according to their online archives, the show "Come and see" has reached its 25th edition. We further propose to mention briefly some of the topics discussed in this talk show:

- Roma people - social and historical aspects
- Roma culture - heritage and identity
- Roma woman from Romania - Traditional or modern
- Wake and funeral in Roma communities - tradition and religion
- Engagement and wedding in Roma communities - tradition and religion
- Projects and activities - Roma Students Club - Targu Mures
- Life as a scene - close-up Rudy Moca
- Roma's Gospel - Gabor Demeter's experience
- Roma's problems - practical situations, possible solutions, the influence of religion
- Roma and education - Romani language

We can see that is desired to discuss a broad palette of topics about Roma ethnic minority. We believe that this initiative is laudable and desires to support the promotion and retention of Roma culture, on the one hand, and also the community integration and alignment to current social rules without sacrificing the elements of identity, mentality, culture or tradition specific to this community.

Another success story is promoted by the article carried by Andreea Racleș, 'Family and housing of wealthy Roma from Strehaia ', where the author presents Roma "palaces" , which by their height dominate the territory where there are constructed" (Racleș, 2009:96).

The author presents their life using a dual language: on the one hand scientific, on the other "colored", thus reflecting the Roma world, their characteristics and "properties", inside and outside their castles.

Another similar example is provided in the TV show "**Romania I love you**" (**Romania te iubesc**) on the PROTV Tv Channel from Romania, the homes of Roma people situated in Teleorman, Buzescu county. As program moderator said: "In a dusty plain Teleorman suddenly sprang a real Las Vegas. Palaces of the Roma people are the most spectacular phenomenon Buzescu architectural area knows in the past 18 years [...] Two kinds of Ruschita marble, white and pink, professional sound and light systems, projectors, colored lights, luxury, wealth and a sun set over marble stairs "(www.stirileprotv.ro, 2009).

We believe that such success stories can identify most of the Roma community, or similar stories quite different from the above.

In their identification Antonio Sandu (2009b) proposes to consider the following:

1. Achievements of target group members
2. Strategic opportunities;
3. Product uniqueness and strengths of products and services offered by individual / group / organizations;
4. Social and communicational expertise existing within the organization / community;
5. Innovativeness;
6. Ideology (elevated thought);
7. Practices;
8. Higher positive emotions and satisfaction of needs;
9. Organizational intelligence;
10. Fundamental competences
11. Assessment (Visioning of development opportunities);
12. System of norms, values and traditions;
13. Positive macro-trends;
14. Human capital with emphasis on success stories of individuals and their correlation in a unique story of the community;
15. The knowledge and values used in the practice of the community.

Roma community may be longer time between the extremes of "negative" and "positive", but by changing the paradigm, by valuing the

positive, by developing their own resources, we believe that can slowly remove the negative, approaching us more to the positive one. To that end we consider necessary social interventions such as for the young community members. Redirecting them to the most accepted social values, while changing perception, can change the global society and "guidance" the whole community to change, and accepting it as her own, as has not imposed the "majority" of forces outside the system.

Conclusions

Appreciative intervention offers (at the group level) to the moderator, to the implementing team and to participants a new perspective which, in our opinion, assist in the training of changing process. .

We recommend specific principles of appreciative inquiry in generating models of good practice for groups which have issues, and are in the "eyes" of social workers or more.

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