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## THE FORMATION OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN A MILITARY NAVAL CREW

**Carmen Luminita COJOCARU\***, **Delia Natalia Alexandra LUNGU\*\***

“Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy, Constanta, Romania, \* “Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy,  
Constanta, Romania \*\*

**ABSTRACT:** *This study aims to explore the specific nature and succession of processes which define the formation of interpersonal relationships on board military vessels, with a particular focus on personological particularities and, implicitly, on the social behavioural styles of military crewmen. The article will systematically approach the interdependency and reciprocal influences between psychosocial, psycho-individual and sociocultural variables specific to military naval activities and environments.*

**Keywords:** *interpersonal relationships, behavioural styles*

It may seem paradoxical, but our entire psychosocial life is underscored by the existence of and the inclusion in different social groups where, through complex social learning mechanisms, we become individual personalities – that is, we become creators and disseminators of values, in an axiological sense, changing both ourselves and our sociocultural environment.

The permanent exchange of meaning and messages with one’s sociocultural environment, which offers up a complex system of social groups, ultimately leaves its mark on the individual’s personality, making one the carrier of specific models for practical action and introversion with regard to social relationships.

On the other hand, through one’s level of activism or efficient intervention in the order of one’s social reality, the individual is

capable of dominating and transforming the surrounding environment to one’s use.

This assertion is supported by R. Linton [5], who argues for the “cultural basis of personality” in the following terms: “In humans, the social, through its cooperative nature (in Piaget’s terms) is both conditioned by as well as a conditioning factor in an endless moulding process, the ultimate result of which is a functionally modelled social behaviour that is not instinctive or biologically determined. Herein lies the source of the apparently limitless individual variations we see in humans, as opposed to the automated, standardized responses of animals.” (p.14)

From a psychosocial perspective, Pierre De Visscher [2] an authoritative voice among European specialists in the field, puts forth an operational, working definition of the restricted group:

- “a unit of space and time – a”here and now” – with a high level of physical and inter-individual proximity;

- a source of meaning: a reason to be a part of a whole, without necessarily imposing common objectives or experiences;
- a common way of being, the communal sharing of events and experiences;
- each member can be perceived or represented by the others;
- a feeling of being a sole entity or group with relation to the larger outside social context;
- sufficiently stable over time to allow for institutionalisation (the setting up of structures, stable relationships, functional processes, roles and norms) and member identification.” (p.206)

With this definition as a starting point, the crew of a military vessel can be seen as a social microgroup, or, to be more exact, a working team whose professional activity is subordinate to common objectives and aims, and which has its own psychosocial structure, with clearly determined, well articulated and concisely prescribed statuses and roles. The group is made up of a relatively small number of individuals, heterogeneously assembled, who interact in direct, unmediated ways – that is, “face to face”.

Interpersonal relationships on board military vessels can be said to have their own specific traits, both in terms of formation and dynamics, and it is these specific traits that we will present in summary below.

During the process which leads to the formation of interpersonal relationships, the shaping of the relational field is intrinsically linked to the current complex and extremely dynamic context which requires the presence of professional military personnel on board these vessels, personnel capable of handling military issues during peacetime as well as during potential conflicts.

The Navy’s specific activities aim to fulfil set missions through a strict observance of procedural guidelines and rules, stipulated by interior regulations and instructions. As such, a crew is necessarily made up of leaders

and subordinates who are part of a rigorous hierarchy which contributes to group cohesion and internal stability.

Since interaction between crew members is direct and reciprocal and features, in turn, direct and conscious psychological involvement, interpersonal relationships on board require reciprocal influence, both conscious and motivated, regulated by psycho-individual, psychosocial and sociocultural factors.

By appealing to Kelly’s theory of social constructs, interpersonal relationships can be identified as psychosocial constructs which are the result of dynamic interaction between the subjective personological equation of the partners, the situational context and the existing sociocultural model on board military vessels.

Interpersonal behavioural styles are thus formed and made outwardly manifest within the crew, with the support of the socio-empathic structure of the group.

As a generative system of relationships which shapes the cognitive, emotional and inter-relational development of its members, the military unit is a facilitating framework of sympathetic relationships where the empathic-evaluative component holds a determining role and where “interpersonal gratification”, as Newcomb so aptly calls it, takes on new meaning.

Personality studies carried out on navy personnel have shown that interpersonal relational styles, understood as social performance, are rational and emotional, socio-culturally adaptive, showing not only high socio-relational potential, but also a high degree of socialisation, a result of the formative nature of the military environment and the specific nature of group tasks routinely carried out.

An in-depth study of the personality profile of the navy officer written by Cojocar [1] has identified, on the basis of the factorial analysis of statistical data, a set of stable



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patterns or configuration of factors inherent to the intrinsic nature of the personality of naval military professionals:

- the ability to integrate oneself into institutionalised structures, groups and professional milieu (military);
- an ability to adapt to status requirements (military), in the sense of the formation of an awareness of one's professional military status;
- affective rationality, in the sense of self-discipline, self-control, high tolerance to frustration and uncertainty;
- emotional intelligence, with a higher incidence of cognitive empathy and empathic predictivity as factorial solutions.

Of the simple variables, we find those with high factorial concentrations most worthy of mention:

- Social abilities
- Verbal intelligence
- Lively intellect
- Emotional control
- Realism
- Dominant nature
- Self-control
- Expensive character
- Tolerance
- Responsibility
- Intellectual effectiveness
- Productive group relationships
- Emotional balance
- Creativity

The processes through which interpersonal relationships are formed aboard military vessels show themselves to be strongly influenced by the defining characteristics of the individual crew members' personalities, as well as by the strength of authoritative and task structures.

The functional relationship between members of the crew are predefined by the requirement for optimal handling of its missions. Working tasks have a high degree of structure, are complex, interconnected and have an integral completion time. These tasks become the regulating factors of the basic interactions within the military microgroup.

As a constitutive function of the military microgroup, the carrying out of military missions is, in itself, an indicator of the social efficiency of the crew, providing data on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, the level of integration and how it relates to outside constraints.

The evaluation of the performance of a military group is determined by productivity, efficiency and efficacy indicators.

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