

Theoretical Analyses

A Historical Approach to Assertiveness

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Abstract

A very important personal quality is to be able to advocate for yourself - your own positions, to achieve your objectives, to overcome difficulties, to be determined, but without harming the rights of others and to be able to control the aggressive impulses. The concept, which expresses these personal characteristics, is called "assertiveness". Assertiveness is a part of the personal potential. It is a prerequisite for self-actualization. The goal we set in this historical-psychological paper is to explore the genesis, development and stabilization of the term "assertiveness". In this context, we will examine, compare and analyze the positions of the leading authors on this issue.

Keywords: assertive skills, assertive rights, assertiveness training, self-development

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Introduction

The beginning of the experimental study of assertiveness commenced in the middle of last century and it was related to clinical practice. Beck, Freeman, and Davis (2004), Lazarus (1971), Salter (2002), Ullrich and Ullrich de Muynck (1973), Wolpe (1990) and others worked in this area. These clinical psychologists accepted uncertainty (non-assertiveness) as a reason for some mental illnesses, and therefore to treat them, they implemented various training programs aiming to develop assertiveness.

In the 60s, when humanistic psychology appeared on the stage of history, the interest in conscious motivation and goal setting, self-assertion and development of personal potential was growing. The personality began to be examined in relation to its ability of self-improvement and self-actualization.

In the 70s, when the civil rights movement in the U.S.A. was rising, a number of psychologists paid attention to assertiveness as a means of protecting individual rights. Alberti and Emmons (2008), Jakubowski and Lange (1976, 1978), and Smith (1985) emphasized that the ability to protect own human rights in a humane and democratic way, without prejudice to the fundamental rights of others, was among the important characteristics of assertive conduct.

The social and political relations, during the 80s and 90s of the twentieth century, increased the interest in assertiveness as means of strengthening the human potential and achieving maximum personal fulfillment. Several

periodicals were published aiming at professionals and including theoretical positions, description of training programs and studies, as well as researches into the area of assertiveness (Anneken, Eshelmeyer, Kaluza, Klein, & Klockgeter-Kelle, 1992; Doty, 1987; Kelley, 1979; Rakos, 1990; Tindall, 1994; Townend, 1991). Along with the publications intended for professionals, due to the broad public interest many popular books were published for the general reader, which aimed to support the desire and pursuit of self-improvement (Burley-Allen, 1983; Cohen, 1998; Dickson, 1982; Hermes, 1998; Pfeiffer, 1998).

Interest towards assertiveness was also maintained in the beginning of the twenty-first century, but it shifted towards the formation of assertive skills in various spheres of public life. Great attention was drawn to the application of assertiveness in pedagogical practice not only in secondary schools (Christopher, Edwards, & Eppler, 2012; Kaufman, Raphael, & Espeland, 2000; Korobkova, 2000; Paezy, Shahraray, & Abdi, 2010), but also in higher education schools (Bell, McGrane, Gunderson, & Anderson, 2011; Christopher, Edwards, & Eppler, 2012; Khokhlova, 2008; Moon, 2009; Razhina, 2005; Varenhorst, 2003). Keen interest in assertiveness was expressed by psychologists working in the field of professional relations and human resources management. In this area, there were some research papers by Back and Back (2005), Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, and Ganesh (2010), Miller (2011), Vasilyev (2005) and others. The need for assertiveness in the fields of sport, medicine, politics, religion, art, fashion and tourism was also explored, as well as in other areas requiring a certain level of social competence (Orenstein, 2000; Pachter & Magee, 2001).

Assertiveness as a Method to Control Mental Illnesses

As we noted, the study of assertiveness as a phenomenon began in the mid-20th century. The beginning of the experimental study of this mental construct was tied to clinical practice. In their activities, practicing psychologists and psychotherapists had found that majority of neurotic patients and those suffering from depressive illnesses felt insecurity, loneliness and deficiency in communication. The relationship between mental illnesses and lack of assertive skills in patients guided therapists to the idea that uncertainty producing internal stress caused neuro-psychiatric disorders. This assumption provoked the therapists' increased interest in the genesis and ways to overcome the uncertainty and it gave impetus to experimental research in this sphere (Labunskaya, 1999).

The first research on assertiveness was carried out by the American psychologist and psychotherapist Andrew Salter in 1949. In the 40s of the twentieth century, working with depressed clients, A. Salter was trying to discover the causes of uncertainty and to find a way to treat or reduce its neurotic influence. The researcher summarized his practical experience and tried to give it a theoretical explanation in his work "Conditioned Reflex Therapy" (Salter, 2002). According to the author, the causes of stiffness and uncertainty were primarily physiological (organic). Drawing on the theories of I. P. Pavlov, A. Salter suggested that uncertainty was due to prevalence of retention processes over stimulation processes in the central nervous system. This led to formation of "inhibitory" individuals who were unable to openly and spontaneously express their feelings, desires and needs. They were limited in their self-realization and consequently experienced difficulties in contacts with other people. According to A. Salter, most of the people in modern society suffered from disorder (although to a lesser extent) of the nerve balance.

Basing on his clinical experience, A. Salter identified six characteristics of strong, assertive personality:

- emotionality of speech, which consisted of expressing openly own feelings;
- expressiveness of speech, which required precise and spontaneous expression of feelings;

- ability to oppose and counter others' opinions through direct and clear expression of own views;
- using the personal pronoun "I" as an illustration of the fact that a man would stand behind his words;
- accepting praises, not as a sign of immodesty, but as an expression of self-respect and adequate assessment of own strengths and abilities;
- impulsiveness in own actions and refusal of planning as a manifestation of own improvisational inclinations (Salter, 2002, pp. 57-59).

These accents from the theory of A. Salter were embedded as therapeutic techniques into his clinical practice. Into the "conditioned reflex therapy" developed by him, primary emphasize was given to the need for full and spontaneous expression of personal feelings, desires and needs as a condition for expansion of the opportunities for self-realization and personal development.

According to other psychologists studying assertiveness and assertive behavior, such absolutism of someone's feelings and aspirations may enter into a conflict with the needs of the social environment. Russian psychologist Vladimir Romek commented that the rules shaped by Salter were relatively acceptable only in clinical practice, but in terms of real social events of the individual they were likely to prove controversial. Stressing the theory of social-competent behavior, the same author considered that the techniques and habits for open expression of feelings were undoubtedly an important component of human behavior, but only in certain social situations (Romek, 2003, p. 17). According to Stepanov, communication was more effective and comprehensive not during spontaneous expression of feelings, but when they were deliberately controlled in accordance with the situation (Stepanov, 2006, pp. 23-25). The American psychologist Steven Stein also did not consider appropriate proclamation of all emotions. He viewed assertiveness as a part of emotional intelligence and believed that assertive personality possessed not only capability of emotional self-analysis, which allowed for a clear definition of own feelings, but also enough power over personal impulses, so that they could be expressed in appropriate form and with appropriate force (Stein & Book, 2006, pp. 73-93). Miheykina adopted assertive personality characteristics proposed by Salter, but believed that they were only part of the important display of assertive behavior (Miheykina, 2010).

While some psychologists has found certain weaknesses in the theoretical views of Salter, his ideas were of interest and gave impetus to further research on assertiveness and assertive behavior. Some elements in his theory became essential in the subsequently proposed training programs for development of assertiveness (Romek, 2003, p. 16).

During the 1960s, the psychiatrist Joseph Wolpe created several such programs that became very popular in the clinical practice in America. As a student and follower of Salter in his research papers, Wolpe used his main ideas, but he further developed and enriched them. Wolpe also accepted that the main characteristic of assertive personalities was the ability of open and spontaneous expression of feelings and he defined assertiveness as "socially justified motor or verbal expression of feelings" (Patterson & Watkins, 1996, p. 167; Wolpe, 1990). According to him, the pressure of latent emotions led to internal confusion and psychosomatic reactions. It was necessary for the normal and healthy behavior of people to acquire habits to openly express their feelings, which was also the main objective of Salter's "conditioned reflex therapy". The new accents in Wolpe's therapy concerned the source and the cause of non-assertiveness. In his clinical practice, the psychiatrist noted that a major role in the occurrence of uncertainty played social fear that one felt in a given situation. According to Wolpe, such fear once aroused, subsequently was associated with certain social situations and thereby enhanced and self-produced. Fear of falling into a certain situation reduced the chances of success, and failure in turn increased the fear. This way social fear and its related behavioral manifestations became automatic, maintained and reproduced themselves,

spreading out in different daily life situations. According to Wolpe, social fear manifested itself in various forms - such as fear of criticism, of rejection, fear of public appearances, of bosses, of new situations, fear to make requests or to give help. The author noted that these fears, to some extent, were present in the psyche of every person, while in non-assertive people these social fears became dominant, blocking their social activity (Wolpe, 1993).

The behavioral therapy, which Wolpe used to develop assertiveness, mainly aimed to relieve the individual of social fears and to maintain high level of self-esteem, regardless of the failures in life. Apart from these new accents, Wolpe continued Salter's practice of building the capacity for free expression of feelings, behavioral spontaneity and freedom in communication with people on different levels (Patterson & Watkins, 1996, pp. 167-175; Wolpe, 1990).

Another famous clinical psychologist dealing with the problems of behavioral therapy is Arnold Lazarus. He has worked for several years with Wolpe. The result of their collaboration was an issue of a combined scientific publication (Wolpe & Lazarus, 1966) and creation of the first questionnaire for studying assertiveness, which was specifically designed for clinical practice and was intended to assess the uncertainties and deficits in interpersonal attitudes of patients suffering from mental illnesses. Later on, Lazarus criticized some of the techniques of behavioral therapy used by Wolpe. Lazarus believed that therapy was limited in its conceptual foundations and was only effective in certain clinical cases, as it did not fully cover the needs of psychiatric practice (Lazarus, 1971, pp. 1-7). At the same time, he did not deny all techniques of behavioral therapy, but he used them in combination with other therapeutic methods, mainly with cognitive orientation. In his practice, Lazarus focused on transformation of aggression in socially acceptable forms. He defined assertive behavior as a "social competence". The lack of such competence was due to deficiency of behavioral strategies ensuring full mastery of social reality, as well as to rigidity, inability to adapt and poor behavioral repertoire. The lack of behavioral alternatives Lazarus defined as a "social deficit" and believed that this was one of the major causes of uncertainty. These ideas were encapsulated in the "multimodal therapy" offered by Lazarus where through consistent control of certain interpersonal skills adjustment of the social deficits and acquisition of social competence were implemented (Lazarus, 1971).

Lazarus identified four groups of habits, which were possessed by assertive personalities and were conditions for a fulfilling life:

- the ability to openly talk about own desires and needs;
- the ability to say "No";
- the ability to openly talk about own positive and negative feelings;
- the ability to establish contacts, to begin, maintain and end a conversation.

According to the author, these abilities were not only an expression of behavioral side of the personality, but also they included cognitive elements such as propulsion, life philosophy and personal assessments. Also the utilization of these habits was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for existence of assertiveness. It was also necessary to differentiate between the assertive and aggressive behaviors, as the manifestations of the latter should be avoided (Lazarus, 1973).

Lazarus' research papers have influenced the development of cognitive therapy. In their clinical practice, some therapists have applied cognitive techniques as well as assertive training with some additional elements concerning the correction of erroneous ways of processing information. Proponents of cognitive psychology have agreed that one of the reasons for uncertainty was the existence of certain cognitive errors leading to erroneous and irrational

conclusions, such as selective attention, arbitrary conclusions, overgeneralizations, exaggerations or underestimation. And since the reasoning of the patients was under the control of misconceptions about themselves and their surrounding world, cognitive techniques for objectifying those perceptions as techniques for learning to identify maladaptive thoughts, to check the validity of conclusions, detachment and disconnection as ways to objectively evaluate own thoughts and behavior were added to the assertive training (Patterson & Watkins, 1996, pp. 227-228, 234-236). Beck, Freeman, and Davis successfully applied assertive training in treatment of borderline personality disorders, addictions and bipolar (passive-aggressive) personality disorders (Beck, Freeman, & Davis, 2004, pp. 187-215, 268-292, 341-361).

Clinical psychologists in Europe also have paid attention to non-assertiveness as a factor for occurrence of mental disorders. German psychologists Rita and Rüdiger Ullrich discovered that the feeling of guilt and shame played a significant role in the event of uncertainty. They supported their assumptions with the results of factor analysis of data from an experimental study. They defined assertiveness as a complex personality characteristic that incorporated behavioral, emotional and cognitive components. They also considered that an assertive person possessed the ability to lay claims and needs in the social contacts and to try to defend them, as well as the ability to hold oneself to higher standards (also common in terms of personality), to strive to exhibit them and to possess habits to implement them (Labunskaya, 1999; Ullrich & Ullrich de Muynck, 1973, 1978). Rita and Rüdiger Ullrich created a test of assertiveness (Romek, 2003; Ullrich & Ullrich de Muynck, 1973) and assertive training (Romek, 1998; Ullrich & Ullrich de Muynck, 1978), which also acquired popularity outside clinical practice.

From the perspective of clinical psychology, assertiveness has been viewed mainly in relation to the occurrence of some psychological disorders. Looking for ways to overcome non assertiveness, clinical psychologists mainly have studied its origin and formation mechanisms. Summarizing the research in this field, the sources of uncertainty (respectively assertiveness) may be conditionally divided into three groups – conative (behavioral), cognitive and emotional, each representing a certain level of regulation of behavior. These three levels interacted in a complex combination of qualities that composed the assertiveness (Romek, 2003, pp. 8-9).

As a main reason for non-assertiveness was defined the behavioral repertoire, consisting of individual habits (stereotypes) of behavior. Their strength, quality and extent were the basis for cognitive assessments of the behavior related to the immediate surroundings or self-assessments of behavior and its results.

In particular, the presence (or absence) of patterns of expression of feelings was considered as a foundation of assertiveness. For the effectiveness of interpersonal relationships, the absorption of a few skills was necessary and the most important of which was the ability to speak openly about own feelings and desires. In the absence of this habit (or reluctance to apply it), interpersonal relations were limited substantially and communication with close to us people gradually has become formalized (Lazarus, 1973; Salter, 2002; Wolpe, 1990).

A number of processes affecting confidence have been deployed on a cognitive level. The irrationality of belief may lead to misconceptions about the world and yourself, which may limit interpersonal contacts and hence the assertive manifestations in the behavior. As typical cognitive errors were indicated the concrete and negative generalizations, and illogical conclusions based on single facts and circumstances. Unrealistic demands on yourself and the others have had a particularly adverse effect on the individual. Such cognitions were the core of unambiguous philosophical beliefs, which despite occurring in all people were the root of many emotional-behavioral disorders (Beck, Freeman, & Davis, 2004; Ellis & Dryden, 2007, pp. 1-27).

Cognitive processes were related to a certain extent not only with the behavior, which was their foundation, but also with emotional processes. Each (positive or negative) assessment became an emotional color, and every emotion in turn received cognitive interpretation. Emotional processes were the third level of the system explaining the origin of assertiveness. Clinical psychologists defined social fear as one of the main causes of uncertainty and in particular the fear of rejection - not to be criticized, mocked or shamed in some way (Romek, 2003; Ullrich & Ullrich de Muynck, 1973; Wolpe, 1993). Fear of contact became an overwhelming emotional condition leading to disturbance of the sense of self-assessment and loss of self-esteem and personal significance (Romek, 2003, pp. 8-13).

From the 40s (the beginning of research on assertiveness) to 60s-70s of the twentieth century, assertiveness was of interest primarily for clinical psychologists as one of the means of overcoming mental illnesses. In the 70s, in connection with the expansion of the civil rights movement in the U.S.A., the attention was focused on equality in social relations, which emphasized on assertiveness as one of the methods of protecting individual rights (Fedorov, 2002, p. 164).

Assertiveness as a Method of Protecting Individual Rights

Outside clinical practice assertiveness as a concept in psychology gained popularity after the civil rights movement in the U.S.A. Starting as an initiative to promote equal privileges to African-Americans, it subsequently adopted a broader nature, including other minorities who were trying to gain equality in employment and civil relations. This movement highlighted the value and equality of every human being and required rejection of any benefits in interpersonal relationships associated with social status. In connection with this, a number of psychologists working in the field of human relationships began to attach importance to the protection of individual rights as a means of self-assertion and as one of the characteristics of assertive behavior (Fedorov, 2002, p. 164).

Alberti and Emmons, creators of the first assertive training intended not for the clinical practice of psychological correction of nerve disorders, but for activation of human potential, emphasized that all people had equal rights regardless of their social status. According to the authors, in interpersonal relationships one should not put oneself above the others, despite his social advantages. Everyone has had the right to be a master of own life, to act according to his personal interests and beliefs and to express freely own views and feelings. The main objective of the training created by them was to help people to seek realization of their irreversible personal rights (Alberti & Emmons, 2008, pp. 2-5). Alberti and Emmons considered that the sense of self-worth along with the assertive style of behavior was not only desirable, but also necessary to be developed in everyone. They agreed that assertiveness was not a panacea against all troubles and failures that could occur in one's life, but through it, meeting challenges with confidence, the problems could be resolved in the best and adequate manner (Alberti & Emmons, 2008, pp. 237-248).

Patricia Jakubowski defined assertiveness as an act of protecting own human rights without violating the fundamental rights of others (Jakubowski-Spector, 1973). She believed it was a style of response that took into account the boundaries between one individual's rights and the rights of the others and helped to maintain the stability of these limits.

Jakubowski, in cooperation with Lange, prepared a list (the first one published) of the basic assertive rights (Jakubowski & Lange, 1978, pp. 80-81). According to the authors, the ability to accept and assert these rights was an important element of assertiveness. When the assertive rights had been denied – denied was not only the value

of a human being as a person, but also the merit of the others. Although through these rights own goals and desires were achieved, they did not form in the individual selfish attitudes. They were only striving to achieve what one deserves. Defending individual rights ought to be done in a humane and considerate way, without violating the rights of others. Jakubowski and Lange emphasized the fact that the acceptance of individual rights entailed acceptance of greater responsibilities and it was necessary to strike a balance between the requirements and obligations to the others.

According to the authors, every human being, regardless of gender, race or religious affiliation, was entitled to:

1. *The right to act in a manner that promoted own dignity and self-respect, as long as this person did not violate the rights of the others with his/her behavior.* This, according to Jakubowski and Lange, has been a fundamental rule and meant that one had the right to be oneself without feeling guilty of this. Since everybody has been unique in his/her views, intentions and actions, it was not necessary they to match the views and intentions of other people. Assertiveness required a human being to accept his/her own thoughts and behavior, although they may differ from those of the others.
2. *The right to be treated with respect.* Such treatment should be required not only from family and friends, but also by all the people with whom we came into social contacts. The authors emphasized that respect was not necessarily related to approval of actions and views of the others, but suggested accepting the others as equal and worthy individuals.
3. *The right to say "No" without feeling guilty.* All human beings have been limited in their time, energy and means so that they alone should decide how to allocate these resources, primarily taking into consideration their needs and desires. Neglecting personal needs at the expense of the needs of others would lead to reduced quality of life and sense of personal satisfaction. The ability to refuse, according to Jakubowski, was not a selfish attitude, but an act of defending own rights.
4. *The right to feel and express own feelings.* This has been applied especially to negative emotions. Suppression of anger, frustration and resentment only would lead to feeling of guilt. Maintaining good relationships with other people was not intended to hide the negative sentiments against them. Rather, it was necessary to share and discuss them, in order not to become the basis of hidden hostility that could gradually destroy the trust and connection between people.
5. *The right to take the necessary time to calm down and think.* Hasty decision-making and automatism of response have not been appropriate for variety of situations in personal and professional aspect. In order to be effective and flexible in his activities and relationships, one ought to be able to consider (in advance or later on) his actions and motives for them.
6. *The right to change own mind.* Life is dynamic and constantly changing. People often receive new information in regards to what has already been decided. The change of decision in such situations, according to Jakubowski and Lange, should not be considered as an expression of inconsistency and irresponsibility, but as flexibility of thinking and adaptability.
7. *The right to ask for whatever one wishes.* Nobody could guess what exactly the person next to them would need, that is why one ought to speak of his needs, without embarrassment or fear that he would be convicted or accused, nor that his actions would be seen as bold.
8. *The right to do less than what one could do if he or she was using all his/her reserves.* One ought to decide which activities were more and which were less important for him and therefore spread his efforts accordingly. It was not necessary to continuously reach the maximum of own physical and mental potential and to use all own reserves. This personal law, however, should not be used as an excuse to escape from everyday professional and personal responsibilities.
9. *The right to ask for information.* One could not be well informed on all issues, so, especially when he should make an important decision in his life he needed to seek further information. He should not be afraid that he may be referred to with condescension, contempt and disrespect. The questions he asked should be accepted not as a personal limitation, but as a lack of specific professional knowledge.

10. *The right to make mistakes.* Since there is no human being who has never made mistakes in own life, it is not disturbing if one not always acted in the best manner. Very often, the fear of mistakes has discouraged people from taking any action in a particular field, which prevented the accumulation of social and professional experience.
11. *The right to feel good about oneself.* Many people have experienced difficulties in applying this rule for themselves as they considered it an act of selfishness. This behavior, according to Jakubowski, was typical to female house-wives and it was due to accepted patterns of behavior and norms in society (Jakubowski & Lange, 1978, pp. 81-92).

Noticing expressed intersexual social inequality, the author paid particular attention to women's rights. Jakubowski was one of the first therapists who stressed the need of training for women in assertive techniques and skills. According to the author, the social position of women in society penalized some of their basic human rights and thus did not allow of their complete personal development (Jakubowski-Spector, 1973).

Jakubowski and Lange (1976) instilled their views on assertive rights of the individual in the core of an assertive training. It included specific counseling techniques aiming at changing the way of thinking, feeling and behavior in direction of their objectivity and adequacy. The authors also offered practical exercises designed to build self-confidence, to reduce anxiety, to cope with angry outburst acts. They gave advice and guidance to facilitate people to respond assertively in specific situations (making requests, expressing feelings, accepting criticism, accepting and making compliments).

Their program consisted of four steps:

- the formation of ability to distinguish between assertive, aggressive and passive behavior is principal;
- the second stage required the acquisition of confidence that assertive behavior was reasonably achievable;
- the next step was the detection and removal of affective and cognitive blockages of activities that impeded the absorption of assertive behavior;
- the final stage from the training aimed to increase the repertoire of assertive behavior through modeling and practical exercises (Jakubowski & Lange, 1976).

Jakubowski and Lange noted that sometimes the assertiveness and application of assertive rights brought bigger problems than advantages, which was not due to the content of such rights or their enforcement, but to the fact that the others neither accept nor understand them.

Manuel John Smith (1985) also studied individual rights in the context of assertive behavior. He drew up a list of 10 assertive rights, according to which every person had the privilege:

1. The right to judge own behavior, thoughts and emotions, and to take the responsibility for their initiation and consequences upon yourself.
2. The right to offer no reasons or excuses for justifying own behavior.
3. The right to judge if you were responsible for finding solutions to other people's problems.
4. The right to change your mind.
5. The right to make mistakes, and be responsible for them.
6. The right to say "I don't know".
7. The right to be independent of the goodwill of others before coping with them.
8. The right to be illogical in making decisions.

9. The right to say "I don't understand".
10. The right to say "I don't care". (Smith, 1985, pp. 47-72)

The assertive personality, according to Smith, knew his/her rights well, and also s/he recognized the rights of others and s/he strove in his/her behavior not to violate them. In the event of imbalance between own and others' rights, human behavior usually became passive, aggressive or manipulative (manipulation, according to Smith, was seen as a form of aggressive behavior). The skillful and successful implementation of assertive rights led to mutual respect, benevolent perseverance and politeness. The author stressed that assertive rights were applicable in all aspects of life, including sexual. Smith was one of the first authors who advocated the topic of assertiveness (confidence) in intimate relationships. The psychologist emphasized that partners should share their sexual needs and desires openly, without embarrassment or fear of condemnation or rejection. Only in this way, an atmosphere of closeness and mutual trust could be created, which was the foundation of harmonious relations between the partners (Smith, 1985, pp. 273-317).

According to Smith, in order to be assertive a human being not only ought to know his/her rights, but also should be able to apply them in different situations and under different circumstances. He created a handbook for acquisition of confidence through implementation of assertive rights, which included practical advice backed up with real life situations. Particular attention was paid to the ability to reach reasonable compromises, to accept criticism and to resolve conflicts in informal communication as well as in the business sphere. According to the author, assertive training and compliance with assertive rights were important not only for the specific person (as means to realize his/her potential), but also for the society as a whole, as they would help to harmonize the social and labor relations (Smith, 2006).

In subsequent years, such lists of assertive rights have been compiled also by other authors dealing with issues of assertiveness (Bishop, 2010, pp. 29-31; Fensterheim & Baer, 1975, pp. 33-35; Graham & Rees, 1991; Kapponi & Novak, 1995, pp. 46-53; Tindall, 1994, p. 240). Mainly they have emphasized the freedom of man to express his feelings and opinions without fear and dependence on approval of others, to have different needs and requirements from these of others, to be critical of others in a constructive way as well as to accept criticism, to make his own decisions and to deal with the consequences, to change his mind, to be independent in his actions and intentions.

The most comprehensive and precise in its details was the list of 40 assertive rights, compiled by Sue Bishop. The constructed ideological positions corresponded to those proposed by Jakubowski, Lange, and Smith, but they were enriched and extended with actual and situational focused positions (Bishop, 2010, pp. 29-31). These rules were the foundation of good interpersonal relationships and helped to balance the self-respect of the individual. The author stressed that the system of rights was built on mutual respect of the needs, opinions and feelings. The assertive person had to remember that if s/he had any rights, the other person had exactly the same rights. The basic rule, according to Bishop, from which all others derived, was that a man had the right of final decision regarding what he was, what he wanted to become and how to achieve it, as this decision neither depended on the role that he had played in life nor on what others had expected of him, but only on his personal opinion. This rule has been applied to all areas of life and although it was simply defined, it was quite difficult to be achieved, according to the author (Bishop, 2010, p. 33).

Some psychologists have emphasized the danger of people with less experience in human relationships to literally interpret these principles, which could lead to negative consequences (Shostrom, 1968; Stepanov, 2006). The

emphasis on your own rights may produce inadequate increase of self-evaluation and individualism (Stepanov, 2006, pp. 81-85). In this regard, it was noted that in addition to rights everyone had also responsibilities (Bishop, 2010; Jakubowski & Lange, 1976; Smith, 1985). The main responsibilities of an assertive person have been indicated as follows:

- to treat others with respect and to oppose those situations where someone has been discriminated against;
- to listen to the views of others, the suggestions and opinions they have expressed and to respond to them;
- not to ignore the views and opinions of others when they were different from his/her own;
- to accept the fact that some of his/her requests may not be fulfilled;
- to accept that others had the right to criticize own actions in a constructive manner;
- to show understanding when others made mistakes;
- to respect the rights of others and their desire to speak about themselves.

The approach to assertiveness, as means of protecting own human rights and achieving personal validation, became relevant in the social and economic relations in the 80s and 90s of the twentieth century. Progressively, more psychologists were beginning to show interest in the problems of this psychic phenomenon as a method of activation of human potential and achieving maximum personal fulfillment.

Assertiveness as a Method of Self-Development and Self-Fulfillment

Socio-economic relations in the 80s - 90s of the twentieth century increased the interest of the psychologists and the citizens towards assertiveness as a method of self-accomplishment and self-approval. This led to many publications aiming at both professionals - psychologists and the general public.

The specialized articles aimed at assisting the psychologists in their professional practice. Some of them consisted of mainly theoretical positions about the nature of assertiveness and assertive behavior (Hargie, Saunders, & Dickson, 1981; Hartley, 1993), while others were practically focused and included description of trainings and guidance for applying therapeutic techniques and procedures for developing assertive skills (Doty, 1987; Kelley, 1979; Townend, 1991).

Richard Rakos (Rakos, 1990) offered a thorough overview of the theoretical views, the existing trainings and studies in the field of assertiveness of the late 80s. He explored the nature, functions and results of assertive behavior in the personal and social spheres. Following the development of assertive training, Rakos examined the most popular assertive techniques and procedures, and their application in clinical practice and group psychotherapy. The author drew attention to the social aspect of assertive behavior. According to him, assertive skills were important social and communicational talents that enable one to accomplish, to his maximum extent, his capabilities and to achieve his desired goals (Rakos, 1990).

In practical terms, Doty's research has had considerable scientific value (Doty, 1987). The author offered a detailed description of a training program for group therapy aiming to develop assertive skills in the communicative sphere. The training included discussions about the nature and importance of the different assertive skills, examples of their application in diverse situations and practical exercises for implementation of specific habits. Each session provided for work on the level of confidence and adequacy of self-evaluation during a communicative interaction; work on the ability to express feelings, including negative ones; discussions about the social roles that someone

performed and ways to communicate from the position of these roles; learning of communication techniques applicable in various social situations. The author paid particular attention to the ability to listen to the other side's position and the role of nonverbal components in communication (Doty, 1987).

In Eastern Europe, Romek's research papers had a similar focus. He created a questionnaire for the study of confidence in line with the Russian cultural and social environment (Romek, 1998) and he prepared training for development of assertive skills, which was based on absorption of specific behavioral models (Romek, 2003). The training was conducted in several stages:

- *Forming the cognitive basis of habits.* For most people, there were some cognitive blockages of behavior as irrational thoughts, evaluations and expectations. Changing these cognitions was necessary before proceeding to exercising the habits, as they may be formed, but not used later in real life, due to unawareness and incorrect assessment of their effectiveness.
- *Assertive habits were formed on a cognitive basis through role playing.* The therapists performed a demonstration of models of behaviors, which subsequently were played as situations by the participants.
- *Generalization of habits.* Through multiple repetitions of behavioral strategies in real life the acquired skills were reconfirmed and became automatic (Romek, 2003, pp. 41-46).

The necessary basic skills for the assertive training proposed by Romek were the habits of dating and maintaining a conversation, the skill of active listening, effectively dealing with conflict situations, the ability to openly and adequately express feelings (both positive and negative), etc. (Romek, 2003, pp. 64-159).

These assertive skills and habits, according to Romek, were only part of the social habits necessary to be possessed by a human being as a behavioral repertoire. This group of habits established the social competence of a person (Romek, 2003, pp. 39-40). This was a peculiar habit, an ability to find a compromise between self-realization and social adjustment, an ability to achieve maximum level of completion of your own desires, without violating the rights of others to fulfill their desires. It was a result of a particular style of confident behavior in which assertive habits were automated and allowed for flexible modification of strategies and plans of conduct, accounting for the particularities of the social situation.

A part of the developed training programs have been designed as practical manuals to facilitate the work of psychotherapists with groups. They reflected the aims and objectives of each specific session. They included guidelines for the allocation of responsibilities among the leaders of the training. They described in details all necessary materials and technical resources, and the preconditioning needed to be done by the psychologists (Anneken, Eshelmeyer, Kaluza, Klein, & Klockgeter-Kelle, 1992; Tindall, 1994).

The trainings including assertive techniques have been offered, which could be used not only by professional psychologists in their practice with clients, but also by readers – non specialists, for self-development and for achieving maximum personal fulfillment. Graham & Rees are the authors of such a publication, which includes a large number of examples and practical exercises to help personal growth towards the implementation of assertive skills to achieve the desired goals, confidently expressing own opinion, dealing with rejection and criticism, building and maintaining self-esteem and self-respect (Graham & Rees, 1991). The training manuals by Anne and Mandy Kotzman, Richard Pfeiffer, Sheila Hermes also have such a focus (Hermes, 1998; Kotzman & Kotzman, 2008; Pfeiffer, 1998). Written in simple and understandable language, in the form of workbooks, the publications could be successfully used by the psychologists in their work with training groups, and individually - as a method of self-development (Burley-Allen, 1983; Hermes, 1998; Kotzman & Kotzman, 2008; Pfeiffer, 1998).

From the last group of research papers, the books by Sue Bishop are gaining big popularity (Bishop 1997, 2010). Reviewing the three communication styles - aggressive, passive and assertive with their characteristic behavioral and verbal signs, Sue Bishop defined assertiveness as the most constructive means of interpersonal interaction. Along with this, the author did not exclude the passive and aggressive actions as part of the behavior of a self-realized person. These behavioral strategies, according to her, should not be interpreted as negative, because in certain situations they may be the only options for response (Bishop, 2010, pp. 47-55).

Highlighting the benefits of assertiveness as a communicative device and ability of self-assertion, Sue Bishop stressed that they were not acquired at birth but absorbed over time with individual experience. Establishing and strengthening of assertive skills was a result of exercise of the appropriate behavior. According to the author, one should take an active part in the process of amendment of his behavior, in order to assert himself and thus to gain greater efficiency in communication. Trainings were at the core of assertive habits, and through them man gradually gained more control over his live, his own thoughts and emotions, and over a situation. Such self-development, according to Sue Bishop, was not easy, but the benefits were plentiful - on personal level as well as in terms of interpersonal relationships (Bishop, 2010, pp. 129-130).

In her research paper, the author offered different approaches and methods for practical applications that help with absorption of the habits of assertive behavior. Sue Bishop provided guidance on developing skills for effective communication, conflict avoidance, accepting criticism and criticizing, asking for assistance and refusing to assist the others if it would contradict with personal interests, and for communicating with "difficult" people (angry, caustic, critical) (Bishop, 1997, 2010, pp. 35-113). The author paid particular attention to the ability to listen to the interlocutor. The author defined this skill as an art. Listening to your partner was also a way to reduce conflicts, as many of them were due to misunderstanding of others' point of view (Bishop, 1997).

Advising about acquiring assertiveness, Sue Bishop drew attention to the positive thinking as a source of high confidence, feeling of pride and ability to communicate effectively. The people who believed in themselves had a positive inner attitude, adequately evaluated themselves, used optimistic formulations, sought constructive results in their interaction with others, and maintained good disposition despite the difficulties and obstacles in their path. The sense of dignity, according to Sue Bishop, was a result of a positive internal image and positive attitude to the world, events and people in it. The ability to replace the negative situations and thoughts with positive ones was an important assertive skill acquired as a result of continuous repetition (Bishop, 2010, pp. 9-27).

In theoretical terms, the author defined assertiveness as complete philosophy of life, incorporating positive thinking, a system of feelings and attitudes towards oneself and towards others and a positive image of self (Bishop, 2010, p. 67). Personal validation through expressing your views confidently and firmly without using aggression or manipulation was achieved through assertiveness. This, according to Sue Bishop, required growth of the subconscious, skills of self-awareness and self-evaluation. The assertiveness has implied the presence of habits of communication with different interlocutors, control over the expression of emotions and skills to avoid conflict situations. It would be necessary for a man to learn to listen to the people surrounding him, to respond to their needs without neglecting his own interests and not to overstep his principles. Especially important, according to the author, was the ability to make conscious choices as well as to formulate personal opinions, feelings and needs (Bishop, 2010, pp. 1-3).

In Eastern Europe, the research papers by the Czech psychologists Vera Kapponi and Thomas Novak have had popular focus. They combined scientific concepts of assertiveness and presented them to the general reader in

an understandable format (Kapponi & Novak, 1995, 1996). Written in plain language, without scientific terminology, their books have gained popularity also outside of their homeland. In them, the authors described some assertive techniques, including methods for accepting critique and criticizing, ways to reach a compromise, to persistently achieve objectives, making request or refusing to comply with the request of other person (Kapponi & Novak, 1995, pp. 54-95). Kapponi and Novak gave some practical advice on how these techniques can be implemented in various life situations - in the family (in communicating with the children and the partner), in school or workplace, in the service industry or in different institutions (Kapponi & Novak, 1995, pp. 130-185).

In theoretical terms, Kapponi and Novak defined assertiveness as a behavioral technique in which a person was aware of what s/he wanted to achieve in a given situation and could express it without fear, uncertainty, tension and without irony, sarcasm or other forms of attack on others (Kapponi & Novak, 1996, p. 163). The assertiveness was primarily a free choice. It assumed presence of skill so that a human being could decide whether it was reasonable at a certain moment to insist on fulfillment of his desires or to elect a compromise, avoiding interpersonal tension and conflicts. For example, assertiveness did not necessarily ensure effectiveness of actions and maximum personal benefit. It was rather a path to self-realization, a method to adequately assess your own personality and behavior. The essence of the assertive behavior consisted in the freedom and spontaneity, independence from outside interference or internal prejudices and fears. In this sense, it was a prerequisite for personal growth and a way of self-development and self-improvement.

In connection with the growing feminist attitudes in the society during the 80s and 90s of the twentieth century (Castro, 1999) more attention was paid to the role and rights of women. In response to the need for training of women in assertive skills and techniques, specialized trainings for psychologists working with groups were prepared (Heighway, Webster, & Webster, 1992), as well as tutorials for personal use (Butler, 1992; Dickson, 1982; Goodman & Fallon, 1995; Leman, 1998; Shaevitz, 1999). The last ones included accessible for the non-professionals information about the nature of assertive behavior and guidance for the implementation of assertive techniques in professional and personal life. The need for reformulation of the social roles that women take in the family and at work was highlighted (Goodman & Fallon, 1995; Leman, 1998; Shaevitz, 1999). The authors urged readers towards greater activity in these areas and to exercise greater control over their lives, which was associated with taking more responsibilities (Shaevitz, 1999, pp. 248-318). Activity was required primarily in self-assertion (Dickson, 1982; Goodman & Fallon, 1995), because only this way can be achieved equality and respect in personal and business relationships (Dickson, 1982; Goodman & Fallon, 1995).

Techniques assisting women in the expression of feelings and release of negative emotions were mainly covered (Butler, 1992, pp. 79-118; Dickson, 1982, pp. 60-69; Goodman & Fallon, 1995, pp. 39-41), as well as developing the ability to refuse services, seeking help if necessary (Dickson, 1982, pp. 44-53; Leman, 1998, pp. 97-150). For a successful professional life and career development, assertive techniques for developing skills for accepting criticism (Butler, 1992, pp. 149-167; Dickson, 1982, pp. 81-91), for making and receiving praises and compliments (Dickson, 1982, pp. 92-104) and open verbal expression in front of an audience were offered (Berckhan, Krause, & Roeder, 1999; Butler, 1992, pp. 53-78).

In some research papers, the question of assertiveness in women's intimate sphere was addressed (Butler, 1992; Morokoff et al., 1997; Rickert, Neal, Wiemann, & Berenson, 2000). It emphasized the need to clarify the sexual roles in intimacy with the partner, and sexual education for acquiring the ability to recognize the different types of sexual behavior, feelings and their expression, to identify own sexual needs and to comply with them, taking into

account the needs of the partner and the social norms and to choose the right partner, depending on the purpose of the relationship (Heighway, Webster, & Webster, 1992)

For women, as positive consequences of applying assertive techniques and acquiring assertive skills, the authors indicated not only increased self-esteem, confidence and self-acceptance (Leman, 1998, pp. 99-124; Stake & Pearlman, 1980), but also reduction of emotional distress, depression, and general mental health (Butler, 1992, pp. 11-19; Chan, 1993; Pattenson & Burns, 1990).

While in the late twentieth century the use of assertiveness was more as a desirable aspect and it was used as a tool for self-development and self-improvement, in the new millennium, this quality has been increasingly recognized as a prerequisite for employment in many professions, which were mainly related to communication. In the early twenty-first century, assertiveness was an integral part of professional relations in the economic sphere, education, medicine, sports, etc. Several specialized training programs were created for preparation of employees.

Assertiveness as a Significant Quality in Various Communication Fields

During XXI century, theoretical research in the field of assertiveness was more limited due to the fact that relative clarification about the nature, characteristics and structure of this psychological phenomenon had already been achieved. The scientific interest was focused on the specific application of assertiveness and assertive skills in various areas of professional and public life.

Particular attention was paid to the role of assertiveness in the modern educational system. Many authors accepted the assertive behavior as the most constructive method of communication in the teaching process and its application in the teaching practice not only increased the effectiveness of training activities, but it also had a positive educational impact on young people, facilitating the development of valuable personal qualities in them (Edwards, 2005; Korobkova, 2000; Nelsen et al., 2001). Implementation of pedagogical interaction of this type required specialized training in assertive techniques and skills by both teachers and students.

To support the development of assertive skills in the professionals from the educational system, some programs have been created, aiming at increasing communicative culture, empathy, ability to self-control of behavior and emotions. Particular attention was paid to the need of expressing respect for students and regarding their rights as fundamental characteristics of assertive behavior (Patseka, 2010; Savage & Savage, 2010). The application of these assertive techniques, according to specialists, affected the quality of teaching, improved self-esteem and personal satisfaction of teachers and led to lowering of occupational stress (Ermekova & Abishev, 2009; Korobkova, 2000).

To build assertive skills in students, manuals containing guidelines for working with students of different age groups have been developed. Mainly they recommended techniques to develop the ability to recognize your own emotions and needs, to cope with negative and to express positive feelings, to build respect and thoughtful attitude towards the peers and the elderly and to raise self-esteem and self-acceptance (Christopher, Edwards, & Eppler, 2012; Kaufman, Raphael, & Espeland, 2000).

Special attention was paid to the formation of assertive skills in upper grade and college students, as it was believed that this age was conducive to build a vision, perseverance, self-reliance and initiative, qualities that were objective prerequisite for development of assertiveness (Khokhlova, 2008, p. 11; Mutafova, 2007). This process was imple-

mented not only through specialized training and training programs (Christopher, Edwards, & Eppler, 2012; Khokhlova, 2008; Razhina, 2005) but also through self-development, supported by tutorials for personal use. Written in simple language and filled with concrete examples, these manuals promoted personal growth of young people through adoption of assertive techniques and skills. Regarding the specifics of psychological functioning in this age period, the need for control of negative emotions, demonstration of respect and acceptance of others was emphasized, as well as awareness and fulfillment of responsibilities and obligations (Bell, McGrane, Gunderson, & Anderson, 2011; Burns & Sinfield, 2012; Moon, 2009; Varenhorst, 2003). The development of these characteristics in learners improved the performance of communicative interaction with teachers and peers and influenced the effectiveness of learning by reducing stress in school, increasing the success rate of trainees, and expanding their reflective learning (Paezy, Shahraray, & Abdi, 2010; Tavakoli, Lumley, Hijazi, Slavin-Spenney, & Parris 2009).

Considering the advantages of assertive communication in the teaching process, the American professionals formed a separate theoretical model called discipline through assertive behavior. Established in the 70s of XX century by Lee and Marlene Canter (Canter & Canter, 1976), nowadays it is the prevailing theory and practice in the contemporary American school (Dixie & Bell, 2009; Edwards, 2005). Assertive discipline was a method of classroom management, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and regards for the rights of the interacting parties in the pedagogical process (Ivanov, 2005, pp. 223-229). Particularly important in this disciplinary model was the correct performance of obligations by both the teacher and the students. To establish such type of relationships, the responsibility was provoked first and foremost from the teacher who, through clear and consistent guidance, had to state and implement rules and requirements on student behavior. Such management of the class, according to the principles of assertive discipline, required precise training of the educators, for achievement of which specific manuals were developed, giving guidance for each step in the implementation of this disciplinary model (Canter & Canter, 2001).

Besides in the organization of students' class, assertiveness was widely applied in other areas of management and human resources. The experts in this field emphasized that in order for any organization to function efficiently, regardless of the object of its activity, it was necessary that the relationships between its members to be based on assertive principles. This required the presence of assertive skills in leaders (Ames, 2009; Ames & Flynn, 2007; Gegax & Bolsta, 2007) and among all members of the organization (Back & Back, 2005; Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh, 2010; Miller, 2011). In order to build such skills, specialized training programs have been developed, which included classical educational methods - lectures, demonstrations, discussions, role playing, and also methods based on the modern information technologies - computer-simulated problem situations and interactive video programs (Back & Back, 2005; Vasilyev, 2005).

An important condition for the functioning of any organization was the effectiveness in vertical communication (Miller, 2011, p. 30; Papa, Daniels, & Spiker, 2008, pp. 49-51; Reva, 2003, p. 7). In this respect, it was necessary to create a climate of understanding between managers and their subordinates. To improve communication between different units in the organizations, the ability to assertively accept critique and to assertively make such was of particular importance for the managers and the subordinates (Back & Back, 2005, pp. 118-127; Carnegie, 2009, pp. 17-36). In a subjective plan, subordinates often took criticism as an act of aggression and as a result of negative personal attitude or a temporary bad mood. Whether the criticism was justified or not, the basic condition for its assertive acceptance formed the belief that nobody was perfect and it was possible in the activities and relations with people to make mistakes (Vasilyev, 2005, pp. 260-275).

For the good relations in the organization, the leaders should acquire the ability to assertively criticize. Experts said that this act produced stress with a force, sometimes exceeding the acceptance of criticism. In this respect, the specialized management trainings included exercises to assist managers in preparation of the content of the criticism, verbal and nonverbal expressions (Carnegie, 2009, pp. 17-36; Marshall, 2000; Vasilyev, 2005, pp. 177-196).

Assertive rules have been also recommended for the horizontal communication in organizations in order to prevent conflicts and to harmonize the relationship between members (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh, 2010, pp. 287-299; Papa, Daniels, & Spiker, 2008, pp. 317-348). An essential condition to good professional relationships was to accept the others as equals and respect their positions and rights. For the formation of these features in the members of organizations some training-programs have been developed, which provide special classes to familiarize participants with the assertive rights of the individual, as well as the need to comply with the rights of the others (Back & Back, 2005; Marshall, 2000).

Assertive habits and skills have been seen as particularly useful in business relationships. In this area, business trainings have been developed, aiming at forming not only specialized professional habits and skills in the area of finance, marketing, logistics and others, but also psychological qualities (mostly assertive communication skills) necessary for maximum realization in the field of business and sales (Back & Back, 2005; Carnegie, 2009). The specialized research has put emphasis on the role of business communication for successful business development. It required enhanced culture of speech, learning the business etiquette and skills to assertively listen to the partner. The lack of attention and active listening of the associate was an expression of contempt and led to disruption of business relations. The opposite - focusing on the interlocutor, the attempt to understand his propulsions and beliefs led to finding a common platform for conversation, deeper and more stable communication and reaching mutually beneficial agreements (Back & Back, 2005; Vasilyev, 2005). Honest relations with partners, colleagues and competition have been defined by a specialized business ethics, which stressed the role of certain assertive qualities such as respect for the partners in communication, consideration of their interests and regard of their rights (Bednarz, 2011; Henney, 2007; Pride, Hughes, & Kapoor, 2011, pp. 38-43).

For efficiency in the implementation of business plans and for building a successful career, specialists in this area laid particular emphasis on the availability in entrepreneurs of assertive characteristics, confidence and relentless in achieving the set forward goals (Carnegie, 2009; Gegax & Bolsta, 2007). In this respect, it was recommended that the implementation of business plans should not be postponed over time or suspended due to encountered objective difficulties or due to disagreement or criticism from others. If your own goals were legitimate and moral, if they did not cause harm or injury to others, they should be persistently implemented, regardless of the opinions of others. Often what was acceptable and beneficial to some people, was unacceptable, even embarrassing for others. Assertive business implementation was aiming mainly at affirmation and it complied with others only to the extent not to harm them (Back & Back, 2005; Marshall, 2000).

Assertive training has been also offered to troubleshoot some problems in professional communication in the medical community and especially the nurses. The traditional perception of their activities as subordinate to the rest of the hospital staff and lowering their position in the medical hierarchy has discouraged nurses in their professional development and reduced the effectiveness of their activity (Mc Cabe & Timmins, 2003). Another problem for this profession has been the high level of verbal abuse emanated from not only the patients but also the rest of the medical staff. These insults not only lowered self-esteem of nurses and their professional satisfaction, but

also led to emotional imbalance, which was a prerequisite for professional errors, sometimes presenting a danger to the life and health of patients (Buback, 2004). Other studies have found relatively high incidence of torture and assault of nurses that is why the profession was defined as highly-victims (Begley & Glacken, 2004).

To effectively address the outlined problems, the authors recommended implementation of assertive skills among hospital staff (Begley & Glacken, 2004; Buback, 2004). The development of assertiveness in nurses has been occurring in both the course of study as well as during their professional realization through specialized training programs (Buback, 2004; Lin et al., 2004; Mc Cabe & Timmins, 2003). The training programs mainly emphasized that the nurses should comply with their own needs and not to put patients' needs above their own. The last one had only a short time positive effect, since the systematic neglect of self has led to reduced activity (physical and mental) of nurses and has affected the efficiency of their actions. To avoid such negativity, the training programs used techniques to build skills of awareness of own needs and rights and their open expression and assertion (Clark, 2003). Application of these assertive skills in the professional communication of nurses influenced not only the improvement of the quality of their work but it also contributed to increased self-esteem, a sense of dignity, personal satisfaction with the profession and pursuit of career development (Clark, 2003; Lin et al., 2004; Mc Cabe & Timmins, 2003). Not trivial consequence of assertive training of medical personnel has also increased the confidence of patients in this profession (Mc Cabe & Timmins, 2003).

Assertiveness has been also considered as an especially valuable quality in professional communication of athletes. It manifested itself as honesty and nobility in sports events and respect for the rights of partners. Assertiveness, as an expression of mutual respect, was the foundation of fair play (Caruso, 2004, p. 3). This was the principle of fair fight, according to which there should be no unauthorized use of clamps and unfair methods on the way to the finish line, but implied acts of mutual sportsmanship (Havin & Krapachev, 1977). The formation of assertiveness in the athletes ensured honesty and fairness in the sports competitions, tolerance and respect for the partner. Assertiveness also suggested aspiration to self-realization and achievement of own goals, which was a prerequisite for victory in athletes (Pristine, 2012; Williams, 2006; Yancheva & Kancheva, 2010). Another advantage of the assertive people was the ability of self-evaluation and self-control over emotions, which qualities were especially valuable during the stressing sports events (Williams, 2006; Yancheva & Kancheva, 2010). The presence of those assertive characteristics undoubtedly brought benefits in sports activities, that is why these qualities have been under targeted development in athletes by regulating their own activity and proper organization of external influences (LeUnes, 2011; Smith & Kays, 2010).

Aside from the already reviewed aspects of application of assertiveness in the fields of education, management, business, medicine and sports in the XXI century, there have been conducted specialized researches devoted to explore the role of assertiveness in politics, religion, consumer relations, family, friendship and sexual relationships, in art, fashion and tourism and other areas requiring a certain level of social competence (McConnell, 2011; Orenstein, 2000; Pachter & Magee, 2001; Phelps & Austin, 2002; Virkler, 2009). Giving primary importance of mutual respect and respect for the rights of the partners in communication in order to achieve maximum efficiency in the communication process has been considered as common ground in the different thematic studies.

Conclusions

Historical-psychological analysis has allowed us to distinguish the following stages and aspects in the development and assertion of the term "assertiveness" - the 40s of the twentieth century marked the beginning of the experi-

mental study of assertiveness from the positions and for the needs of clinical psychology; in the 70s of the twentieth century, in connection with the expansion of the civil rights movement in the U.S.A., assertiveness was seen primarily as a method of protection of individual rights; in the 80s and 90s of the twentieth century, assertiveness was considered to be a mean of self-development and achievement of maximum personal fulfillment; the twenty-first century has drawn attention to the specific application of assertiveness and assertive skills in various communication fields, in conjunction with the increased demands on social competence of the individual.

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