



Primary Professionalization of Foreign Students: Barriers, Stigmatization, Adaptation

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Abstract

Introduction. In the context of the export of educational services, it is of particular importance to design an efficient system of foreign students' psychological adaptation. Owing to the ethnocultural background, foreign students feel that they are stigmatized minorities in the host society. Negative images and stereotypes are often internalized, resulting in stable low self-esteem in the stigmatized. Since self-esteem acts as a key parameter of the professional self-concept, social stigma and the experience of social identity threat activate the stigmatization of primary professionalization, thereby drastically reducing the efficiency of the received vocational education at the university. The purpose of the study is: to outline the phenomenon of primary professionalization, to reveal the nature of the relationship between the social stigma of foreign students and their self-esteem, and to describe the levels of primary professionalization.

Materials and Methods. The study involved 124 foreign students. Participants were asked to answer questions of the Short Form of the Stigmatization Scale and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale in order to track the relationship between social stigma and self-esteem. Further, in order to identify the basic barriers to primary professionalization and the participants' perception of their stigmatized status, the respondents answered the questions of a semi-structured interview supported with the critical incident technique in a focus group format.

Results. There is a correlation between the degree of obviousness of social stigma and self-esteem of foreign students. The categorization of the data obtained allowed the authors to substantiate the phenomenon of stigma of primary professionalization, to systematize the determining factors, and to describe its levels.

Discussion and Conclusion. Despite the fact that social stigma has attracted active attention of world science for decades, we have not been able to find focused studies into primary professionalization in the format of education export. Studying the factors that lead to the development of stigma of primary professionalization, understanding its levels will help to design a system for its prevention, optimize the system of adaptation of foreign students to the realities of the educational system of the host university.

Keywords: social stigma, foreign (migrant) students, social identity threat, discrimination, professional identity, primary professionalization, stigma of primary professionalization

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

For citation: Tikhonova E.V., Kosycheva M.A., Efremova G.I. Primary Professionalization of Foreign Students: Barriers, Stigmatization, Adaptation. *Integratsiya obrazovaniya = Integration of Education*. 2021; 25(4):608-628. doi: <https://doi.org/10.15507/1991-9468.105.025.202104.608-628>



Научная статья

Первичная профессионализация студентов-иностранцев: барьеры, стигматизация, адаптация

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Аннотация

Введение. В контексте экспорта образования особую значимость приобретает выстраивание эффективной системы психологической адаптации студентов-иностранцев. В силу этнокультурной маркированности студенты-иностранцы ощущают себя стигматизированными меньшинствами в принимающем обществе. Негативные образы и стереотипы, соотносимые с группами меньшинств, провоцируют стабильно низкую самооценку у стигматизируемых. Поскольку самооценка выступает в качестве ключевого параметра профессиональной я-концепции, социальная стигматизация и опыт переживания угрозы социальной идентичности способны активировать стигматизацию первичной профессионализации, кардинально снизив эффективность получаемого профессионального образования в университете. Цель исследования – осветить феномен первичной профессионализации, выявить характер взаимосвязи между социальной стигмой студентов-иностранцев и их самооценкой и описать уровни первичной профессионализации.

Материалы и методы. В исследовании приняли участие 124 студента-иностранца, которым необходимо было ответить на вопросы краткой версии шкалы стигматизации и заполнить шкалу самооценки Розенберга, чтобы отследить наличие взаимосвязи между социальной стигмой и самооценкой. С целью выявления базовых барьеров первичной профессионализации и восприятия участниками своего стигматизированного статуса последним было предложено ответить на вопросы полуструктурированного интервью. Полученные результаты были валидированы техникой «критический инцидент». Оба этапа реализованы в формате работы в фокус-группах.

Результаты исследования. Установлена взаимосвязь между степенью выраженности социальной стигмы и самооценкой студентов-иностранцев. Категоризация полученных данных позволила авторам обосновать феномен стигматизации первичной профессионализации, систематизировать ее обуславливающие факторы и описать ее уровни.

Обсуждение и заключение. Несмотря на то, что социальная стигма уже не одно десятилетие привлекает активное внимание мировой науки, нам не удалось обнаружить целенаправленные исследования, посвященные первичной профессионализации в формате экспорта образования. Изучение факторов, влекущих формирование стигмы первичной профессионализации, понимание ее уровней позволят выстроить систему ее профилактики, оптимизировать систему адаптации студентов-иностранцев к реалиям образовательной системы принимающего вуза. Материалы статьи будут полезны администрации вузов для организации эффективной системы адаптации студентов-мигрантов, преподавателям, ведущим занятия в группах, где обучаются иностранные студенты.

Ключевые слова: социальная стигма, студенты-иностранцы, угроза социальной идентичности, дискриминация, профессиональная идентичность, первичная профессионализация, стигматизация первичной профессионализации

Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Для цитирования: Тихонова Е. В., Косычева М. А., Ефремова Г. И. Первичная профессионализация студентов-иностранцев: барьеры, стигматизация, адаптация // Интеграция образования. 2021. Т. 25, № 4. С. 608–628. doi: <https://doi.org/10.15507/1991-9468.105.025.202104.608-628>

Introduction

The maximum possible social adaptation of students today is perceived as the main focus of a higher educational institution

activities in order to create an effective educational landscape. A number of studies on this topic indicate significant difficulties faced by students in this regard: many



students encounter problems related to integration and adaptation to the new context of life [1], stereotypical attitude to the chosen profession and some individual psychological characteristics that complicate the process of developing the assumed new social role [2; 3]. Adaptation for migrant students turns out to be even more difficult. In our study we distinguish the terms migrant (foreign) students and international students. International students cross borders for the main purpose of studying abroad. Migrant or foreign students are non-citizens admitted to an institution of education outside their home country without necessarily crossing borders in order to study but who do not hold the same nationality as the host country. In other words, international students leave their countries for a solely educational purpose, whereas foreign students go abroad for a variety of different reasons [4; 5].

In the context of the export of educational services, foreign students as the main barriers denote stereotypes¹ [6], acculturation challenges [7], pressure to assimilate culturally [8; 9], native-born hostility towards immigrant students² [10]. In addition, higher levels of stress³ [11], depression [12; 13], and language barriers⁴ serve as a barrier to successful adaptation. Also, the problem of employment remains a common one both for foreign students and students of the host society, since they seek to reduce the financial burden on the family budget [14; 15].

The phenomenon of stigma appearing in two forms: external stigma and internal (self-stigmatization) is one of the most serious obstacles to the adaptation of migrant students

to the realities of the university in the host country. Stigma is a powerful phenomenon with far-ranging effects on its targets⁵ [16], significantly weakening the mechanisms of psychological adaptation of a migrant student. Stigma has been linked to poor mental health, physical illness, academic underachievement, infant mortality, low social status, poverty, and reduced access to housing, education, and jobs [17–19]. Stigma directly affects the stigmatized via mechanisms of discrimination, expectancy confirmation, and automatic stereotype activation, and indirectly via threats to personal and social identity [20].

Scientific research is most actively carried out in relation to social stigma and stigmatization of patients with mental disorders. Special attention was paid to the studies of stigmatization of national and sexual minorities, women, people with physical and mental disorders [16; 21], eating disorders [22], obesity among women [23], epilepsy [24] and HIV and AIDS diseases [25]. A significant contribution to the development of research on stigma was made by scientists who described the impact of victimization on the formation of self-stigma and low self-esteem in people with schizophrenic spectrum disorder [26], the self-stigmatization of people with mental illness resulting in low self-esteem and self-efficacy [27], societal attitudes towards people with mental illness, and perceptions of discrimination by people with mental illness [28]. Hence, in society, self-stigmatization is actively associated with mental disorders, although in real practice it is initiated by a number of other triggers.

¹ Lee S.J. *Unraveling the “Model Minority” Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press; 2009. 39 p. Available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED397156> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.)

² Murillo E.G. *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem? Disciplining the Transnational Subject in the American South*. In: *Education in the New Latino Diaspora*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group; 2002. p. 215-240. (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.)

³ Suárez-Orozco C., Suárez-Orozco M.M., Todorova I. *Learning in a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press; 2008. 426 p. Available at: <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674045804> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.)

⁴ Stevens L.P. *Immigrant Populations: Teacher Preparation for Diversity*. In: Banks J.A. (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications; 2012. p. 1132-1135. (In Eng.)

⁵ Goffman E. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Prentice Hall; 1963. Available at: <https://www.freelists.org/archives/sig-dsu/11-2012/pdfKhTzvDli8n.pdf> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.); Dovidio J.F., Major B., Crocker J. *Stigma: Introduction and Overview*. In: *The Social Psychology of Stigma*. The Guilford Press; 2000. p. 1-24. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/224012639_Stigma_Introduction_and_overview (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.)

There is also a number of studies on professional stigmatization: (1) stigmatization of technical and vocational education and training in favor of white-collar jobs [29], (2) design of professional identity in the face of ethnocultural stigma [30], (3) the problem of stigmatization of mental disorders leading to depression among medical students [31], (4) the perception of social stigma and reactions to professional stigma by service workers [32] and others. But all these studies are mostly associated with an individual experiencing the period of his professional development as a specialist. Studying the influence of stigma on the construction of professional identity is important, since the process of forming a professional identity within the framework of career tracks can significantly differ among representatives of various stigmatized groups. For example, M.G. Pratt, K.W. Rockmann, J.B. Kaufmann [33] showed that white medical residents in the United States actively relied on feedback tools and role models to validate the effectiveness of their professional identity, while residents from stigmatized minorities (blacks) often ignored feedback on efficiency of their activities provided by their white colleagues as they had experience of being discriminated [34; 35]. Service workers are offered limited opportunities for progression, paid relatively little, and their work involves non-standard contracts and working hours; moreover, they are also faced with negative societal images of their occupation [32]. At the same time, there is no doubt that further examination of the relationship between professional identity and stigma can radically improve the psychological climate in the workplace and allow the organization to achieve maximum success, in other words, to help their employees learn new skills, feel significant in the profession and overcome the deepening of stigma, achieve its leveling [36; 37].

It should be noted that all of these studies on professional stigmatization highlight the problem of secondary professionalization (professionalization of a graduate), while research on primary professionalization (the construction of a specialist's identity during the period of study at a university)

is scarce and most of them are related to medical students [38; 39]. Meanwhile, primary professionalization fundamentally determines both the development of a professional during the period of an individual's professional activity and the successful framework of his educational paths. It is obvious that the construction of primary professional identity among university students does not always proceed in a one-line and positive manner [39]. It is no less obvious that this process is even more sophisticated for migrant students. Their adaptation to the reality of the host society, the experience of social stigmas associated with their group, can also give rise to stigmatization of their primary professionalization.

This research is aimed to answer the questions:

- 1) What is stigma of primary professionalization?
- 2) What is the relationship between the social stigmatization of migrant students belonging to marginalized groups and their self-esteem?
- 3) What are the levels of the stigma of primary professionalization?

Literature Review

Social identity threat. Social identity threat refers to the situational triggered concern of being devalued/discriminated/negatively stereotyped. In other words, this is the case of the anticipated stigma because of one's identity. It is quite obvious that the presence of a traditionally biased or discriminating person in a given specific sociocultural environment is not equivalent to the automatic deployment of his stigmatization. At the same time, within the framework of social identity threat, the absence of enacted stigma does not mean a state of security for individuals belonging to traditionally stigmatized social categories and, due to past experience, sensitive to any hints of devaluation. Steele described this condition as "threat in the air" [40].

It should be noted that although such individuals do not endorse all the negative stereotypes as applied to the self, they think that the others can approve them and devalue their group. The potential for negative



stereotyping and discrimination activates the possibility of social identity threat development and biased individuals waste a huge deal of efforts to deal with such a context [41]. Identity threat appears when stigma-relevant stressors are assessed due to their harm to one's social identity and the ability to exceed one's coping resources. Involuntary stress responses can result from identity threats and motivate to reduce threats through coping strategies. Stress responses and coping efforts can influence essential outcomes such as self-esteem, academic achievement, and health. The experience of social identity threat undermines the core social motivation, which determines human behavior (self-esteem and a sense of belonging to a group). Identity threat perspectives help to explain the difference across people, groups, and situations in response to stigma [20].

Among the social identity threats highlighted by researchers are categorization threats (happen when a person's social identity is incorrectly defined or addressed), distinctiveness threats (occur when a social group lacks a clear identity), and acceptance threats (are discussed when a personal contribution to a group is arguable) [42]. Categorization and distinctiveness threats may be associated with a perceived value of special social identity when participants of a social group feel unappreciated.

In the situation of education export, any minority group may feel the danger of potential discrimination. Social identity threat prevents them from engaging in activities that might be connected to becoming a trigger of stereotypical attitudes within the framework of the stigma correlated with their group (working at classes, taking part in project activities, collaborating with students from other universities, participating in business projects and startups, etc.). Obviously, such avoidant behavior narrows the opportunities for foreign students who identify themselves with specific minority groups. That is why social identity threat is even more persuasive in its impact on the individual than enacted social stigma [41].

Primary and secondary professional identity. The study of professional identity is related to the study of personal identity, which Gecas & Burke see as special meanings attributing to an individual by himself and society⁶. The authors emphasize the important role of identity for a person when finding the place in the society due to relationships with others based on those meanings that they ascribe to themselves. In a broader sense, belonging to a profession affects self-determination and forms the image of an individual in the eyes of others. Accordingly, professional identity is defined as the set of attributes, beliefs and values that people use to identify themselves in the profession [30; 37; 43].

Professional identity construction includes two basic stages: (1) professional development of students (primary professional identification) and (2) professional development of specialists (secondary professional identification). By professional development of students, we mean (1) the process of developing self-awareness, including self-improvement of professionally important personality traits, and self-education, (2) the process of developing a value-based and motivational attitude towards the future profession. Primary professionalization implies not only the acquisition of certain knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for the successful implementation of a specific type of professional activity, but also the adaptation of the future professional environment culture [44]. The content of primary professionalization is not limited to acquiring a profession by future specialists, but it involves the purposeful development of the system of their social and professional qualities, beliefs, worldviews and professional communication skills [45; 46].

According to the results of a number of studies, the formation of self-esteem within the framework of a professional identity construction is realized (1) as a result of an individual's socialization as far as he realizes the importance of his chosen profession [47; 48], (2) as a result of adaptation of

⁶ Gecas V., Burke P.J. Self and Identity. In: Cook K.S., Fine G.A., House J.S. (eds.). *Sociological Perspectives on Social Psychology*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon; 1995. p. 336-338. (In Eng.)

his professional identity in the career change periods [37; 43], (3) under the influence of life and work experience, as a result of a change in priorities and self [49].

At the same time, researchers note the presence of stigma and discrimination at all stages of career development for groups marginalized on various grounds [19; 32]. It is obvious that for stigmatized groups of foreign students, primary professionalization development may turn out to be associated with stereotyping and subsequent discrimination, which can also lead to stigma of primary professionalization. Hence, considering the process of a professional identity construction in isolation from the experience of stigmatized groups of professionals and students seems to be erroneous [30; 50].

Foreign students' socialization paths as a trigger of stigmatized primary professional identity. It can be stated that while there has been an increased interest in the process of professional identity construction, relatively little is known about the professional identity construction of those with stigmatized cultural identities. And practically nothing is known about the construction of the primary professional identity, which in the most radical way determines the secondary professional identity and the future career success of each particular specialist.

On the part of society, marginalized (stigmatized groups) are exposed to rejection, social isolation and ostracism, that is, they experience the pressure of external stigma. That's why external stigma, within the social and psychological model, is described in terms of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. Social psychologists view stereotypes as a general opinion at the social level about certain characteristics of a particular group of people [26]. When derogatory stereotypes are adopted, the host society forms prejudices and, as a result, negative reactions towards the stigmatized groups. In turn, prejudice leads to discrimination resulting in the manifest behavior of people in society towards the stigmatized [51].

The most common stereotypes in society regarding foreign students are: perceptions of

their danger and incompetence [30], the fear that migrant students are only interested in gaining permanent residence rather than pursuing an education [52], also, foreign students are viewed as victims or cheaters, or are convinced that representatives of this ethnocultural group are not able to become significant professionals in the chosen field or are characterized by low intellectual ability [53].

Negative manifestations of discrimination against foreigners lead to (1) narrowing and/or loss of their opportunities (for example, getting a job, renting housing, attending events, participating in projects and research); (2) coercion (loss of rights/powers), and (3) social exclusion [16; 21]. As a result, stigmatized groups are labeled, stereotyped, and perceived as out groups [54]. Living in an unwelcoming environment with limited social opportunities and interpersonal rejection, stigmatized individuals become increasingly aware of their special status, and may be prone to self-stigmatization [18; 55], which leads to the formation of stigmatized self-identification, which complicates the process of obtaining education and reduces its effectiveness.

Moreover, according to stereotype and social identity threat theory and research, salient negative stereotypes can undermine the performance of negatively stereotyped group members due to an extra pressure not to fail [53]. According to the research in relation to foreign students as potential targets of stereotype threat the former could affect their cognitive performance and lead to poor learning and disidentification from the educational process. It happens due to interplay of psychological stress response, increased monitoring of the performance situation, and the regulation of negative thoughts and emotions [56; 57].

Internalization of external stigma as a destructive factor of primary and secondary professionalization. Theoretical justification for self-stigmatization is associated with social theory. According to S. Cooley's hypothesis, an individual perceives himself through the eyes of other people [58]. Similar ideas were expressed by E. Goffman⁷,

⁷ Goffman E. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.



defining social identity as a person's perception of typification with other people based on the attributes of the social group to which this person belongs. In fact, the phenomenon of self-stigmatization reflects the process of the individual's internalization of the social stigma prevalent in society. By incorporating the perception of people around him, the individual begins not only to perceive himself accordingly, but also changes his behavior [5; 37; 59; 60] to the point of marginalization and social isolation. It is obvious that self-stigmatization is a destructive process of accepting and experiencing stigma and a new status for oneself, which leads to the transformation of the social and personal identity of an individual in connection with his acceptance of the role attributed to him [20; 61; 62].

The formed self-stigmatization has a number of extremely negative consequences, significantly disrupting the adaptation and psychological mechanisms of the individual, which has been demonstrated in some studies [18]. In particular, it has been shown that manifestations of self-stigmatization are associated with a decrease in such protective psychological properties as feeling hope [28], self-esteem [17; 55], self-efficacy [18; 63], impairs the moral character of the individual and undermines the belief in success [18; 21], leads to an increase in the use of avoidance coping strategies, especially the tendency to escape and conceal [55]. In other words, self-stigmatization is a series of prohibitions associated with social activity, which an individual imposes on his own life with a sense of inferiority and social failure. Manifestations of self-stigmatization result in distancing from society. A person with developed internal stigma actively develops a sense of himself as an "impostor" who has no right to compete with other "more worthy" colleagues. Moreover, self-stigmatization reduces the chance of seeking psychological counselling, since the individual perceives it as something shameful, compromising and humiliating him at most [55; 64].

At the same time, in the process of studying the phenomenon of stigma, it became obvious that not all representatives of stigmatized groups form self-stigma. Some of them ignore manifestations of social stigma, either remaining indifferent to the stereotypes associated with it, or do not internalize it (perceived stigma) [28; 55]. The rest experience anger and often fight the injustice of stigmatization [65]. Self-stigmatization (internal stigma) is not just a reaction to external stigma, and not only a complex of negative emotions about this fact, but is a mechanism for the construction of a new identity, which requires an extremely attentive attitude towards students from other countries who are at risk of stigmatization.

It is interesting that in some cases the acceptance and successful performance of the "social role of the stigmatized" is perceived by members of the stigmatized group as a certain advantage in claims for social assistance and support and acts as a kind of pathological form of adaptation. With such an approach, self-stigmatization acts as one of the methods of psychological defense and is used to reduce the tension of internal conflict without its resolution⁸. The role of a helpless victim guarantees safety, shielding from responsibility for oneself, finding excuses for failures in a career, in personal life, in social achievements. E. Goffman also speaks about the possibility for an individual to use his stigma to obtain the so-called secondary "benefits", for example, to justify his failures. The latter notes that the normal (usual) perception and attitude (actions) towards a person with stigma are: a benevolent social action designed to mitigate and smooth over the presence of stigma in a person⁹.

The phenomenon of self-stigmatization concealment is closely related to the above-mentioned phenomenon. Such a concealable self-stigma is typical not only for foreign students, but also for stigmatized social groups of the host society (dialectal groups within the host society, groups carrying a specific cultural code, people from the near abroad, visually

⁸ Mikhailova I.I. [Self-Stigmatization of People with Psychiatric Diseases: dissertation]. Moscow: Scientific Center for Mental Health, Russian Academy of Medical Sciences; 2005. 211 p. (In Russ.)

⁹ Goffman E. Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity.

little different from representatives of the host society, but hiding their origin for political or other reasons, etc.). Winnie W. S. Mak & Rebecca Y. M. Cheung [62] noted in their research that such stigmatized groups do their best to hide the fact that they belong to such groups. But within educational institutions, it is increasingly possible to trace the opposite trend, when the representatives of stigmatized groups actively demonstrate their belonging to them (although visually it is not obvious) in order to receive privileges that justify their failures in educational activities.

Hence, it is obvious that students who associate themselves with stigmatized groups, and even more those who are in the stage of self-stigmatization, need systematic and direct help from psychologists. The university's activities should focus on preventing not only the development of self-stigma, but also on overcoming the manifestations of stigma as such, which is impossible without identifying the mechanisms for designing a system of foreign students' efficient adaptation. They are the ones who are prone to stigmatization at most.

Materials and Methods

Theoretical background. Studies on race, ethnicity and culture influence on the career experiences of minorities made it possible to identify a number of factors that complicate professional identity construction for stigmatized groups members. For instance, discrimination and racism may limit the possible and provisional selves of the migrant students. If a migrant student is classified by the host society as a member of a specific minority group perceived as non-professionals and persons with limited potential, minority students may have a restricted view of who they may become professionally [66]. The absence of minorities in the specific professional landscape may also shape the development of possible selves and professional identity already at the stage of primary professionalization. Also, the enactment of provisional selves based on role

models may be restricted for professionals from stigmatized groups¹⁰.

Relationships between members of culturally stigmatized groups may also influence professional identity construction: pursuing certain occupations or attending to certain tasks within an occupation¹¹. For instance, for a migrant student, it might be difficult to be a person from the ex-Soviet Central Asia associated with a dominant professional role of a service worker (stigmatized cultural identity) and his attempt to acquire a profession of luxury goods sales manager (professional role identity). There must be a conflict between these two identities impact the professional identity construction. Both identities are associated with peculiar characteristics and denote specific meaning, moreover, they transform their perception. A migrant student from a stigmatized group can get different messages about suitable role behavior from those inside and outside one's cultural group.

And if these barriers define a complex landscape of adaptation for the student as such, in case of a migrant student, these stigmas can have a destructive effect on the education they receive. In the situation when the mechanism of self-stigmatization within the framework of education export is launched, it is difficult to talk about the possibility of any successful adaptation and primary professionalization of a migrant student. Moreover, the successful development of the export of education is impossible without building an effective system to overcome the process of primary professional stigmatization and exclude self-stigmatization. Hence, it seems interesting to trace the interaction between a migrant student's feeling of belonging to a stigmatized group and his self-esteem. Studies have shown that high self-esteem testifies to the fundamental ability of an individual to successfully resist the phenomenon of stigma [17; 20], and therefore to construct effective mechanisms for primary professionalization.

Participants. 124 migrant students took part in the survey and responded to the

¹⁰ Dickens F., Dickens J.B. *The Black Manager: Making it in the Corporate World*. New York: American Management Association; 1991. Available at: <https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/10033119> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.)

¹¹ Kennedy R. *Sellout*. New York: Random House; 2008. Available at: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/91622/sellout-by-randall-kennedy> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.)



questionnaire. 57 of them were excluded because they had not been to Russia due to the pandemic COVID-2019. The sample of 67 students (46 male, 21 female, mean age = 22.6) was taken into consideration. They were students of the Moscow State University of Food Production (36), the RUDN University (25), Russian State Social University (2), Moscow State University of Medicine and Dentistry (1), and 3 students didn't specify their institution. The questionnaire was distributed between 1st-year students (20), 3rd-year students (24), and master students (23). The total sample included students from African countries (16), Tajikistan (9), Iran (6), Syrian Arab Republic (5), Republic of Belarus (4), Ukraine (4), Afghanistan (3), Iraq (3), China (3), Kyrgyzstan (3), Vietnam (2), Mexico (2), Greece (1), Israel (1), Sri Lanka (1), Cambodia (1), Oman (1), Moldova (1), Kazakhstan (1). The period of time spent in Russia was as follows: less than 1 year (12), from 1 year to 3 years (20), from 3 years to 6 years (34).

Methods and Instruments. The *Short Form of the Stigmatization Scale* was used to measure the level of perceived stigma [21]. Perceived stigma reflects individuals' perceptions of societal attitudes to them because of their stigmatized status. The short version of the scale proved its reliability across racial groups ($\alpha = .90$). This scale appears to be a well-validated measure of how much a person feels stigmatized by society.

Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale, a well-validated measure of global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. In our research, we used the English version and its internal consistency was .77, minimum coefficient of reproducibility was at least .90.

Three focus-groups were organized to conduct an in-depth interview in order to identify the factors that make the migrant students feel deprived from the mainstream society and determine stigmatization in the specific conditions of the host university and analyze the factors that can slow down primary professionalization. Focus groups were selected by the method of continuous sampling from the number of participants in the research. At the same time, focus group participants were ranked into three subgroups.

The first group included first-year students (20 people), since at this stage students are at the initial stage of their primary professionalization and their perception of their future profession and themselves in this profession is vague and disorganized. The second group included third-year students (24 people), since at this stage of training, students are already maximally involved both in educational activities and in a professional environment, they are aware of the factors that most affect their success in the format of their chosen profession and can correlate imaginary reality with real practice. The third group consisted of master students (23 people) as representatives of the third and last stage of primary professionalization. Most of them had experience of working in the profession (a part-time job), could reasonably comment on the factors that determine the success of primary professionalization, and so identified barriers on the way to career aspirations.

The authors of this study used a *semi-structured interview* supported alongside with the *Critical Incident Technique (CIT)*. The respondents had to answer 10 open-ended questions aimed at revealing all the challenges that foreign students face in relation to their devalued status in Russia. Having asked all the questions, the interviewer offered the participants to dwell on any additional information on the research topic contributing, in their opinion, to its better disclosure.

Each focus group was invited to talk about a critical incident connected with their discrimination (if any) in Russia. The participants were given the following instructions: "Tell us about an important situation related to your experience of discrimination in Russia. The following open-ended questions about the described situations were asked: (1) what was your reaction to the situation (describe what you do, feel, and think)? (2) What was your role in this situation? (3) Who else was involved into it? (4) Why do you remember this situation? (5) Does this situation have an impact on you? (6) Was this situation a challenge for you? (7) What have you learnt from this situation? (8) Was there any benefit for you in this situation? (9) Can this situation influence your desire to study in Russia? In what way?"

CIT as a research tool was chosen because the participants perceive critical incidents as crucial events stipulating their decisions and actions. This tool proved to be good in career development research.

Procedure. At the first stage of our study, we the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) from the *Short Form of the Stigmatization Scale*.

At the second stage, the respondents rated the level of their agreement with 10 items from Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale on a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree to measure their personal self-esteem.

The set of two questionnaires was composed in Google Forms and shared via the link. We put questions about sociodemographic variables (gender, age, race, nationality, the place they came from) at the beginning of the questionnaire. The participants were also asked about their university and the period of time they lived in Russia. Then the respondents were to answer the set of questions to determine the level of stigmatization and self-esteem. The participants completed the questionnaire form online. It was anonymous and there was information about the study aims, participation was voluntarily.

At the third stage of the study, we worked with the focus-groups. Three two-hour meetings were held with each focus group. At these meetings the phenomena of stigma (external and internal), identity threat theory, the essence of primary and secondary professionalization, the impact of stigma on the process of professionalization and the efficiency of training, and the importance of balanced self-esteem in the context of professionalization were discussed. Special emphasis was placed on discussing barriers to primary professionalization. All remarks of focus group participants related to the purpose of the research were recorded for the purpose of their further analysis.

At the fourth stage, the results of work in focus groups were analyzed and the reasons for professional stigmatization were defined.

At the fifth stage, we analyzed key studies on the phenomenon of a person's professional

identity in order to predict the levels of a student's primary professionalization. The studies were selected on the basis of their relevance to the research topic using the keyword "professional identity". Further, matching up the results of the focus group work and the information obtained through the analysis of the relevant literature, the levels of stigma of primary professionalization were highlighted.

Data Analysis. The data analysis was done in three stages. At the first stage, the properties of the variables were examined. At the second stage, the values of social stigma and self-esteem were calculated. At the third stage, to measure the correlation dependence between social stigma and self-esteem Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was calculated. The *t*-test was used to determine a *t*-distribution under the null hypothesis.

The content component of the focus group work was analyzed and categorized. Each description of a critical incident and interview statements were analyzed, compared and categorized from the data. All factors connected to the devalued status faced by migrant students in the primary professionalization process were categorized based on inductive reasoning. The authors compared similar incidents together and code the data into themes to highlight the critical incidents similarities and differences. To prove the reliability of the coding process and make it consistent, the critical incidents and factors were examined in isolation. Finally, the coders (authors) were reviewed by their peers to avoid coding drift. In addition, the themes were coded taking into account the number of participants having contributed related content from data. The overall theme participation rate was considered valid as it was more than 25%.

Results

Correlation between the level of perceived stigma and migrant students' self-esteem. Spearman's correlation analysis was carried out to understand the relations between social stigma and the self-esteem of migrant students. This form of analysis was used since the values of stigma and self-esteem scores in the dataset did not satisfy normal distribution criteria. The coefficient obtained $r_s = -0.319$ corresponds to a negative



correlation. Student's t -test ($t = 2.715$, $t_{0.01} = 2.653$) was applied to test the statistical significance. Due to the results the coefficient is in the area of alternative hypothesis and we can admit that there is a slight correlation between social stigma and self-esteem of the respondents. The negative value suggests that the higher social stigma is the lower is the self-esteem of migrant students.

Categorization of communication results in focus groups. The analysis of the results of

the focus group interviews made it possible to record a number of aspects that let us consider the foreign students' perception of their status in the host country. In Table 1, these concepts are indicated as stating statements, categorized by frequency of use during the work with focus groups. Each statement wording was presented to the focus groups and finally approved by them. The percentage of those who recorded each of the responses is rounded upwards to the nearest whole number.

Table 1. Factors determining the foreign students' perception of their status as "minorities" in the host country (% of the whole sample)

Statement	To a greater degree	To a lesser degree	No influence
I feel like a target of potential discrimination in the host society	69	6	25
I understand exactly what stereotypes can be spread about my social group in the host society	61	32	7
I am aware that not all members of the host society endorse stereotypes about my social group	30	47	23
I believe that not all the members of my social group endorse stereotypes about it	34	36	30
I do not endorse stereotypes about my social group	53	33	14
I do not match the stereotypes about my social group with myself	34	57	9
I fight stereotypes about my social group, demonstrating their inconsistency from my personal experience	34	47	19
Stereotypes about my social group influence my choice of future profession	29	35	36
I have not experienced any discrimination against myself	51	34	15
I avoid taking part in activities that could activate a devalued attitude towards me as a member of a stigmatized social group	46	34	20
I realise that each specific situation can activate the devaluation of my group	83	10	7
I realise that everyone can perceive factors of a potentially biased attitude towards my group in the opposite way.	74	10	16
Personal characteristics can lead to problems with primary professionalization	33	42	25
The construction of professional identity depends on the existence of discrimination against the individual and his reaction to his devalued status	43	36	21
It is necessary to design activities to reduce the level of discrimination against minority groups	68	23	9
In a situation where the status of a stigmatized person can resolve difficult situations related to education and work I can appeal to it without doubt	43	37	20
It does not seem to me that a close relationship with my social group can dramatically change my self-identification and determine my social / professional role	35	27	38
Experiences of discrimination I encountered while studying at the host institution affected my self-esteem	29	61	10

Note. The third column (no influence) represents responses that indicate (1) disagreement with the statement, or (2) that the said statement does not affect the processes of primary professionalization and adaptation of foreign students.

Barriers to primary professionalization of migrant students. The categorization of the results of focus group work allowed us to record that the stigmatization of primary professionalization is associated with: (1) society's perception of the fundamental ability of a representative of a particular social group to effectively perform the duties of his chosen profession, (2) the personal qualities of the individual (including resilience and adaptability), (3) a formed package of competencies (hard and soft skills), (4) inability to implement efficient time management and underdeveloped autonomy of educational activities, (5) the adequacy of the initial choice of profession (construction of potential professional identity, degree of acceptance of professional culture), stereotypical perception of the future profession, based on information received during schooling, (6) poor schooling, (7) psychological restructuring of the personality to changing living conditions and the construction of new identities, (8) individual psychological and personality characteristics (tendency to depression, inability to fix attention, etc.), (9) unstable motivation to get a profession, (10) extraneous hobbies and poor health, (11) a weak level of teaching and undemanding teachers, (12) informal negative relationships in educational environments, (13) the language barrier (while preparing for an education in another country, they practically did not think about the need to develop efficient communication with the host society, they focused on studying the language of their future profession, and did not take into account the importance of informal communication), (14) lack of structures at the university that optimize the employment process and prepare for the employment process as well.

The barriers are presented in the text in descending order of their importance in the perception of the research participants. Many of the barriers noted by the survey participants in the semi-structured interview were reflected in the critical incidents described.

Interview questions and critical incidents' description mutually verify and complement each other.

Professional self-concept and professional identity. According to R. Burns theory, the self-concept is interpreted as a set of attitudes aimed at oneself and structurally representing (1) the image of "self" (cognitive component), (2) self-esteem (affective assessment of this representation) and (3) behavioral reaction. Each of these three components can be represented as: (1) real "self" (attitudes associated with actual abilities, roles and statuses); (2) social "self" (attitudes associated with a person's opinion of how others see him); (3) ideal "self" (attitudes associated with the performance of the ideal "self"). In this interpretation, the self-concept acts as a collective term denoting the entire self-perception of a person¹². The self-concept also has a professional dimension.

It is usual to single out the real (the person's idea of oneself as a professional) and ideal professional (professional aspirations and hopes) self-concepts¹³. The phenomenon of the professional self-concept is studied at three levels: (a) individual – implies that self-perception is "derived" solely from perceived differences and similarities with other people; (b) relative – based on self-perception, but in this case on the basis of dyadic connections and role relationships with significant Others; (c) collective – based on self-perception associated with membership in social groups and with the opposition of one's own and "outside" groups¹⁴.

In the structure of the professional self-concept, there are cognitive (ideas about their professionally relevant qualities, about career orientations, professional self-efficacy, about career and work, about professional relevance) and emotional (self-esteem and professional self-esteem, a sense of professional relevance) components [67]. Self-esteem acts as a basic "emotional" variable in the context of the self-concept [68]. Individuals find it difficult to cope with

¹² Burns R.B. Self-Concept Development and Education. Holt, Rinehart & Winston; 1986. Available at: <http://psyberlink.flogiston.ru/internet/bits/burns0.htm> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.)

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Rean A.A. [Human Psychology from Birth to Death]. St. Petersburg: Praym-Yevrozna; 2002. 2002. Available at: <https://b-ok.cc/book/728058/97026e?id=728058&secret=97026e> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Russ.)



a professional role in a situation of low assessment of themselves and their capabilities [69]. Self-esteem, being a dynamic feature, is constantly developing, differentiating and being adjusted. The process of its development is contradictory and uneven. The integral self-esteem of a person is made up of self-assessments of individual personality subsystems with different levels of adequacy, maturity, stability and awareness¹⁵. There is no doubt that the self-esteem of the individual is prone to his self: an individual, as a rule, is sure that his contribution to the activity efficiency is above the average level. And the values and qualities prevailing in the positive self-esteem of the individual are obscured by the main criterion in assessing others: for example, if the individual values himself most of all, this parameter will take the leading place in assessing the professionalism of others [67].

According to A. A. Rean, professional self-esteem in the structure of the professional self-concept includes operational and activity (expressed in assessing one's professional level and level of competence) and personal (expressed in assessing one's personal qualities in connection with the ideal of a "professional self" image) aspects. In professional self-assessment, self-assessment of the result and potential is distinguished (that is, the assessment of the achieved and the belief in the possibilities)¹⁶.

Another psychological construct closely related to the professional self-concept is professional identity. Professional identity substantiates the identification of an individual with a specific professional community, the adoption by him at the social and psychological levels of professional value positions that are normative for a given professional space. P. Ermolaeva studies this psychosocial

construct in the context of the "person-profession-society" system. She interprets professional identity not only as a characteristic of the professional values acceptance, but as a harmonious identification with activity (instrumental identity), society (external identity) and oneself (internal identity)¹⁷.

The sources of the professional identity construct are the following factors: an objectively existing educational and professional component; a subjectively expressed system of expectations and preferences, ideal images of the profession; recognition by the Significant Others of you as a professional; professional self-presentation; professional norms (values) and attributes (lexis, myths, stereotypes); an emotionally positive background against which primary information about one's profession was obtained; a positive perception of oneself as a subject of professional activity; emotionally positive acceptance of one's belonging to the professional community; successful mastering of the rules and norms of professional activity; the measure of responsibility that an individual can take on; the level of personal development; motivational readiness for self-realization in the chosen professional field¹⁸. In terms of the dynamics and stages of professional identity construction, most researchers agree that achieving it is the essence of the transition process from external sources of professional activity motivation to internal ones¹⁹, which implies movement from obtaining vocational education to obtaining real professional activity experience.

The professional self-concept is a combined set of clearly operationalized and specific characteristics of professional self-awareness. The image of the profession and specific professional goals are exactly formed within the framework of the professional self-concept²⁰.

¹⁵ Derkach A.A. [Acmeological Foundations of Professional Development]. Moscow: Moscow Psychological-Social Institute Publ.; Voronezh: MODEK; 2004. Available at: https://www.studmed.ru/derkach-aa-akmeologicheskie-osnovy-razvitiya-professionala_19597910eb1.html (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Russ.)

¹⁶ Rean A.A. [Human Psychology from Birth to Death].

¹⁷ Yermolaeva Ye.P. [Psychology of Social Realization of the Professional]. Moscow: IP RAN; 2008. Available at: <https://biblioclub.ru/index.php?page=book&id=87221> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Russ.)

¹⁸ Shneyder L.B. [Personal, Gender, and Professional Identity: Theory and Diagnostic Methods]. Moscow: Moscow Psychological-Social Institute Publ.; 2007. Available at: <http://lib.mgppu.ru/opacunicode/app/webroot/index.php?url=/notices/index/IdNotice:49903/Source:default> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Russ.)

¹⁹ Derkach A.A. [Acmeological Foundations of Professional Development].

²⁰ Shneyder L.B. [Personal, Gender, and Professional Identity: Theory and Diagnostic Methods].

The professional self-concept is a complex integrative construct that includes a large number of variables and scales, each of which contributes to the idea of a person's self-awareness. Professional identity itself is an integral variable in any of the concepts and is not subject to further "fragmentation" [67]. Both constructs being dynamic features most of the professional life are in the process of modification under the influence of various external and internal variables.

The structure of stigma of primary professionalization. In the structure of public and self-stigma, it is usual to distinguish the following components as stereotype, prejudice and discrimination. The conducted research indicates the possibility of stigmatizing primary professionalization under the influence of social identity threat and social stigma. Stigma of primary professionalization can have a most destructive effect on the construction of a professional self-concept and professional identification, which requires its careful study and developing mechanisms for its prevention and overcoming.

Analysis of the barriers to primary professionalization identified by the research participants allows us to conclude that the main difficulties for foreign students appear at (1) the level of society (whether society consider a representative of this stigmatized minority group potentially appropriate within a specific professional track, what way it affects devalued individuals), (2) the personality level (whether I can become more successful in a job in the context of this profession, based on my personal potential, whether I have / master all the necessary general and professional skills for self-realization), (3) the level of educational structures (whether the educational landscape of this particular educational institution allows to construct necessary primary professional identity for the successful construction of a secondary professional identity; how demanding the teachers are, whether the university works in a conglomerate with business partners and government agencies). Hence, it seems reasonable to consider the potential mechanisms for the development of stigma of primary professionalization, ranked according to the indicated levels and,

on their basis, to construct a model of stigma of primary professionalization.

Discussion and Conclusion

The presence of a correlation between the level of stigma and self-esteem of an individual leads to the extending of the difficulties of primary professionalization.

The basic factors identified as a result of work with focus groups determine the perception of foreign students of their status as "minorities" in the host country and can be quite clearly distributed according to the following grounds: collective representations, situational cues and personal characteristics. Which in turn, indicates the presence of social identity threat among the research participants. The severity of these criteria as a characteristic of social identity threat is justified in some research [20; 41].

Collective Representations. Analysis of the results of focus groups interviewing allowed us to conclude that, based on their experiences and exposure to the dominant culture, members of minority groups develop collective understandings of the dominant view of their stigmatized and devalued status in society (95% of respondents definitely stated that they were aware of this fact). Moreover, students realise that members of the host society and their study group are also familiar with the stereotypes underlying the stigmatization of their social group. At the same time, according to the research participants' opinion, the awareness of existing stereotypes both within the stigmatized group (70%) and by members of the host society (76%) does not mean that each member of the group personally endorse them. A significant number of respondents (from 86 to 91%) noted that they do not share stereotypes about their group or do not match this collective perception of the majority with their personality. The results are consistent with the views of the surveyed members of stigmatized groups from around the world [34; 40; 53].

It is expected that the greatest fears about their status as stigmatized were recorded by first and second year students (90%), and the least fears were expressed by master students. The third- and fourth-year students, however, showed the greatest anxiety about



their ability to match the chosen profession, stating that the host society “does not always see” their potential in this profession and this undermines their confidence in the success of their future careers. Such results can be explained by the period of time the study participants’ spend in the host country and the degree of their relationship with the host society. First-year students also showed concern about the right choice of their future profession. They were mostly worried about not the way they were seen as professionals by the members of the host society, but about the adequacy of their choice of profession (64%). E. Tikhonova recorded a similar distribution of students’ views, conditioned by the year of their study and personal experience having gained by the period of study on the specified course [44].

There is no doubt that collective representations influence how the stigmatized perceive and appraise stigma-relevant situations. Even if obvious discriminatory behavior on the part of others is absent, collective representations do affect the behavior of the stigmatized [41]. The vast majority of the study participants did not notice direct stereotypical attitudes on the part of representatives of their study group or the university community. At the same time, more than 80% of the respondents indicated that they maximally seek to avoid any situations that potentially provoke discrimination against them and to prove that they do not match up the established stereotype of their group perception. This feedback is inherent in individuals who already experienced social identity threat and negative stereotype threat about one’s group and can elicit an extra pressure not to fail. This might lead to cognitive underperformance [53].

Situational Cues. Situations differ in the extent to which they signal that an individual is a potential target of stereotype threat [40]. Threatening situations include taking an ability/knowledge diagnostic test, necessity

to respond at class, being invited for a job interview, having to apply for a grant, and being invited to participate in a startup. It is interesting that the offer to take part in cultural events (concerts, festivals, etc.) was not considered as a situation that could provoke a devaluation of the individual’s self.

79% of the study participants indicated the collective representations that individuals bring to a situation shape its meaning, and therefore the same situation may be perceived and appraised differently by different individuals. The respondents’ understanding that non-stigmatized and stigmatized groups usually react very differently to the same local situation was confirmed in the study by B. Major & L. O’Brien [20]. The conclusion of the study participants that perceptions of situational cues do not always correspond to objective events, and a variety of situational factors determine whether people perceive themselves as harmed by social stigma has been already discussed in implemented studies²¹.

Personal Characteristics. Individual characteristics also influence the perception of situational clues. Some people expect to be treated either on the basis of their group membership or their personal identity. Some people treat themselves as targets of personal and group discrimination because they regard their stigmatized social identity as a central part of their self-identity. Those who identified themselves with a negatively stereotyped group are more likely to regard performance feedback in those domains as self-relevant. Individuals’ goals and motives also shape how they perceive and appraise situations. If members of stigmatized ethnic groups believe in their ability to get ahead without their group assistance, they are not likely to report themselves as being discriminated against and blame a member of a higher status group having failed to get a desirable role²².

²¹ Stangor C., Swim J.K., Sechrist G.B., DeCoster J., Van Allen K.L., Ottenbreit A. Ask, Answer, and Announce: Three Stages in Perceiving and Responding to Discrimination. In: Stroebe W., Hewstone M. (eds.). *European Review of Social Psychology*. Chichester, UK: Wiley; 2003. Vol. 14. p. 277-311. Available at: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2005-02101-009> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.)

²² Major B., Quinton W.J., McCoy S.K. Antecedents and Consequences of Attributions to Discrimination: Theoretical and Empirical Advances. In: Zanna M.P. (ed.). *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* San Diego, CA: Academic Press; 2002. Vol. 34. p. 251-330. Available at: <https://equity.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Major-Quinton-McCoy-2002.pdf> (accessed 26.07.2021). (In Eng.)

According to the data obtained, regardless of their personal characteristics, foreign students are more likely to perceive discrimination against their group as a whole than against themselves personally, which is typical not only of foreign students, but also of most minority groups [70]. Hence, it is logical that foreign students, both from among the research participants and in a global context, are unlikely to seek help for their challenges [64] perceiving the very fact of seeking help as discriminatory and degrading in the perception of the host society.

At the same time, many foreign students more and more often do not associate stereotypes in relation to their group with themselves. Moreover, some of them deliberately distance themselves from close ties with the group. The group provides an opportunity to satisfy both social (communication) and psychological (empathy) needs being a barrier against stigma and discrimination. When the identification with a previously associated social group even from the point of view of the alleged inferiority is lost, the social support as the main resource of adaptation is lost as well. The latter happens only in the context of belonging to a particular social group [28; 34; 53]. If the stigmatized person is not provided with psychological assistance at this moment, the level of devaluation of his own life devoid of a social context turns out to be very high, resulting in the risk of suicidal behavior [20].

All study participants reported the presence of enacted stigma. The fixed correlation between the severity of the stigmatization of consciousness and self-esteem of the individual is also confirmed in the social identity threat among the research participants. It results in a significant decrease in self-esteem [20; 26; 71]. Hence, it is inevitable that the primary professionalization being the main aspect of higher education, is associated with the level of the individual's self-esteem, his devalued or minority status. In a situation of a special set of personality traits, the stigmatization of an individual's consciousness and his experience of social identity in the form of barriers to primary professionalization can also lead to stigma of primary professionalization.

Primary professionalization barriers and professional self-concept. Migrant students face confusion about role expectations and self-identity, feelings of alienation, rejection and discrimination by members of the new culture, a loss of social support, and anxiety over their inability to fit into the new culture [53]. They need not only to adapt to the educational process in the host society and the status of a minority, resist social stigma, but also overcome the primary professionalization. The latter cannot be implemented absolutely smoothly.

Most of the barriers categorized as a result of focus group work are presented in studies characterizing the adaptation process of foreign students²³ [1; 5; 7]. Obviously, they cannot but influence the nature of the primary professionalization of students in the conditions of the host university. It seems appropriate to rank them as follows [72]: Social Adjustment Concerns: problems with food, accommodation, transportation, etc.; Academic Adjustment Concerns: problems with the educational system; Cultural Adjustment Concerns: adjusting to norms and values of the new culture while maintaining their own; Psychological Adjustment Concerns: How to cope and maintain their identity. According to the barriers highlighted in this study, the list should be expanded by the categories – Professional adjustment and Personality traits.

The professional self-concept and professional identity appear to be closely interrelated. The factors that determine their construction and development are strongly related to the period of primary professionalization. And self-esteem, being a structural component of the professional self-concept [68], acts as a trigger for social identity threat and is capable of stigmatizing primary professionalization.

As with most studies, the present one has some limitations. Due to heterogeneity in stereotype valence and content, it is difficult to draw a coherent picture of the influence of stigma and social identity threat on migrant students in general. A further challenge for research is that academic migration status is

²³ Stevens L.P. Immigrant Populations: Teacher Preparation for Diversity.



a more complex category than other more visible and stable stereotype-relevant characteristics (gender, physical peculiarities, skin colour).

The process of constructing a new identity in a person has a certain development mechanism and includes a number of successive stages that ultimately lead to the adoption of a new role. Depending on the situation, individuals who are targets for social stigma could respond to stigma with low self-esteem, righteous anger or indifference. A discriminatory attitude on the part of the majority of the population may cause social identity threat and self-stigmatization. From a psychological point of view, self-stigmatization is a structurally inhomogeneous phenomenon that includes both frustrating and protective components.

Experience of inadequacy and negative perceptions of the stigmatized group

destabilize self-esteem. Self-esteem of an individual is most directly correlated with the severity of social stigma, while serving as the core of the professional self-concept, which, in turn, constructs professional identification. Hence, it seems possible to stigmatize primary professionalization among stigmatized minority groups, which include foreign students in the context of the host society. The authors proposed a three-level structure of stigma of primary professionalization. To overcome the negative consequences associated with the stigma of the primary professionalization that might occur in the consciousness of a foreign student, it is necessary to specify its structure, create and validate a questionnaire that allows to diagnose it at an early stage. An important area of further research is the design of a system for overcoming the stigma of primary professionalization.

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Submitted 22.07.2021; approved after reviewing 03.09.2021; accepted for publication 10.09.2021.
 Поступила 22.07.2021; одобрена после рецензирования 03.09.2021; принята к публикации 10.09.2021.



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Заявленный вклад авторов:

Е. В. Тихонова – разработка концепции статьи и методологической базы исследования; обзор литературы; подготовка текстовой версии статьи; сбор и обработка результатов исследования.

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Г. И. Ефремова – курирование данных; подготовка текстовой версии статьи; разработка концепции статьи.

Все авторы прочитали и одобрили окончательный вариант рукописи.