THREAT TO AN INDIVIDUAL'S PSYCHOSOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

BRUNON HOŁYST

1. ESSENCE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL IDENTITY

The issue of identity, its social origin and function are the subject for research in many sciences, including psychology and sociology. In sociologists' opinion, the concept of identity is connected with the process of 'giving' people social existence[1]. In contemporary societies and in attempts to explain or understand social phenomena of our times, it is a necessary conceptual tool in the analysis of contemporary man's real-life situations. It makes it possible to understand the behaviour connected both with his individuality and his position in the social structure[2]. The term 'sense of identity' or 'identification' is also used in colloquial speech. Using this term, one can mean the sense of belonging to a specific group as well as identification with some ideas, objectives or values adopted as one's own.

Determining the identity, i.e. who a man is, based on his or her individual features and personal background, we speak about personal identity. However, characterising it according to nationality, citizenship, religion or social functions, we speak about social identity. At the same time, personal identity ensures the sense of one's own uniqueness while thanks to social identity a man has a sense of belonging to other people, specific groups, organisations as well as the awareness of having one's position in the world.

In the time of globalisation, the issue of self-awareness, identity and a sense of common features with a group or organisation in which an individual functions, a sense of belonging to a group and also noticing diversity of the group is very up-to-date. An individual being a part of a group, in order to become its integral part, must at least partially internalise its values. He must also identify himself with its collective

---

[1] P.L. Callero, The Sociology of the Self, *Annual Review of Sociology* 2003, 29, pp. 115–133.
[2] H. Markus, S. Kitayama, Culture and the Self, *Psychological Review* 1991, 98, pp. 224–253.

aspirations and accept the group's objectives as one's own. It seems that it may be instituted by playing a social role in a group. Every man belongs to various social groups and plays various roles in them; in each, he or she shapes their unique individuality or uses a certain part of their social personality[3]. It is highlighted that a trend has been observed in social sciences recently to generalise the concept of identity and extend its range to a community. In this case, we speak about various forms of collective identity[4].

The sense of security lets the contemporary man play various social functions, and thus develop one's social identity. Moreover, every social group is striving for continuity, durability and distinctiveness, i.e. to maintain its own identity. The concept of identity refers to the basic need of individuals and groups, which is the need to belong. Functioning in a group shapes the sense of closeness and mutual bonds, the sense of roots, stability and homeliness. Maintaining identity also makes it possible to satisfy the need of security the lack of which causes damage both to an individual and to a group of people because it destabilises its functioning and lowers the efficiency that depends on the so-called group's collective will understood as the sum of its members' desires to achieve the collective objective. The share in the implementation of the group task should trigger its members' readiness to subordinate their own interests and objectives to the interests and objectives of the group.

In case of a lack of the sense of security, people demonstrate a tendency to change the existing state of things or even to oppose to unfavourable changes and the use of protective means that may restore their sense of security. This is a proof that security is not a certain state of things but a continuous social process within which entities strive to use mechanisms ensuring their sense of security. Therefore, one can state that the direction of individual desires of the group members depends on the condition of an organisation and its way of functioning as well as the degree of ensuring their members' sense of stability.

The concept of identity in such sciences as sociology and psychology, especially social psychology, often refers to the sphere of an individual's self-knowledge[5]. Thus, it can be defined as a set of ideas, opinions and beliefs a man has about his or her self. A man's subjectivity, self-knowledge and awareness of 'I' have been the subject of moralists', theologians', philosophers', artists' and psychologists' and sociologists' reflections. Since the beginning of sociology, the representatives of this science have also been interested in the concept of identity. Early interest in self-perception was in conjunction with the conviction that in the analysis of the man's actions, it is necessary to take into consideration the influence of the way of self-perception on the direction and the interactive forms of an individual's activeness. Ch.H. Cooley introduced a concept of the 'looking-glass self', which he used to describe the mechanism creating the social actor's opinions and imagination of one's self[6]. G.H. Mead, studying the issue

---

[3] E. Goffman, *Człowiek w teatrze życia codziennego [The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life]*, PIW, Warszawa 1981.

[4] A. Melucci, *The Process of Collective Identity*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1995.

[5] Z. Bokszański, Tożsamość [Identity], [in:] *Encyklopedia socjologii [Encyclopaedia of sociology]*, vol. 4, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2002, pp. 252–255.

[6] Ch.H. Cooley, Human Nature and the Social Order, [in:] Ch.H. Cooley (ed.), *The two major works of Ch. H. Cooley*, Glencoe, Ill., 1956.

of interaction and emphasising its dynamic character, used the concepts of 'getting the generalised other' and 'the distinct other' to describe the development of the self of an acting subject[7]. R.E. Park proposed a term 'self concept' linking it with a catalogue of social roles played by an individual[8].

A social psychologist and psychoanalyst, E. Erikson, is said to have played the most important role in introducing the concept of ego identity into social sciences[9]. He considered identity in a biographical dimension and analysed it with the use of a concept of a 'life cycle' and linking it with changes in social macrostructures. In his opinion, identity is a stable formula of self-knowledge that is formed in the meeting point of three basic dimensions of individuals' existence: their organisms' ability, their aspirations and opportunities, and social roles and prototype careers offered by the society. Failure to integrate these three dimensions leads to 'identity diffusion', the most visible manifestation of which was inability to manage oneself. Erikson's research programme, valorising an individual's self-image as an important area of psychosocial research, opened it to the analysis of macro-structural changes. It also contained an important thesis on the significance of identity in an individual's life.

2. IDENTITY MODELS

Erikson's ideas underwent far-reaching transformation in the thought development. New ways of understanding a social actor's identity were developed and they introduced new methodological proposals to the original concept, also new worldview and political contents. The double origin, sociological and psychological, of the concept of identity is sometimes emphasised when presenting basic differences between attitudes towards the theory of identity. These stands differ because of polymorphic ways of perceiving oneself by a social entity. Two main reasons for the use of the concept of identity in sociology are given[10]. Firstly, it is a necessity to supplement a set of concepts connected with the sociological description of an individual observed against the background of changing social structures and ways of an individual's social belonging. The second reason is the usefulness of the concept of identity in direct (face to face) analyses of interpersonal interactions. In the typology proposed by R. Robbins, three main theoretical models of the concept of identity are distinguished: the identity health model, the identity interaction model and the identity worldview model[11]. This typology may be supplemented with the identity ecological model. The source of the identity health model is the work of the above-mentioned E. Erikson. An individual's identity is treated as a typical area of mediation between the organism and the requirements of social life,

---

[7] G.H. Mead, *Umysł, osobowość i społeczeństwa [Mind, Self and Society]*, PWN, Warszawa 1975.

[8] R.E. Park, Human Nature, Attitudes and the Mores, [in:] K. Young (ed.), *Social Attitudes*, New York 1931.

[9] E. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, New York 1963.

[10] Z. Bokszański, Tożsamość [Identity], [in:] *Encyklopedia socjologii [Encyclopaedia of sociology]*, vol. 4, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2002, s. 253.

[11] R. Robbins: Identity, Culture and Behaviour, [in:] J.J. Honigman (ed.), *The Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Chicago 1973.

an area in which a certain stable formula of an individual's existence is established which has its basis in the similarity between an individual's self-perception and his/her perception by their social surrounding.

The health model places an individual's identity in the context of inquiries about the reasons for mental disorders, especially those connected with various forms of social maladjustment and social pathology. As a result of the inspiration from the discussed model, e.g. the influence of changes in identity on the occurrence of disorders in nutrition was examined; there were attempts to support a thesis on a link between the incidence of cancer and a sudden change in or rejection of an individual's major identification. An approach was developed linking the analysis of an individual's psychological problems to general social problems, especially with identity-related results of cultural conflicts, migration and discrimination[12]. Erikson's term 'identity diffusion' holds the central position in this approach.

The theoretical assumptions of identity interaction model originate from the occurrence of the concept of an individual's identity in interactionism. The concept of a social actor's identity constituted a necessary supplement to one of the fundamental categories of interactionism, i.e. the idea of a 'perspective' determining a horizon of the actor's orientation in the surrounding, and consequently a direction of his/her action. The perspective adopted by an entity can be analysed in the context of such factors as 'the distinct other', the reference group, the course of the process of adopting social roles that finally are integrated in a form of a person's self concept[13]. Research was carried out into the attitudes towards one's self, the attitudes that were then called a concept of an individual's own self. According to the assumptions of this orientation, what is to be typical of a social actor is a relatively stable trans-situational concept of one's self, which he/she contributes to interaction as a variable explaining his/her action. There was also a proposal of a technique of studying the concept of self, the basic formula of which is used at present. Another parallel current developed and was then called the Chicago School. Its researchers exposed the processualism of the social self and its direct bonds with the interaction occurring here and now. They also questioned the grounds for a thesis on an individual's stable, trans-situational self-representation. They studied the polymorphic way of experiencing oneself in interaction, and E. Goffman looked for evidence for three fundamental, in his opinion, versions of identity manifestations: social identity, personal identity and ego-identity[14]. The current developed a basis for a biographic analysis of identity transformation, which uses the technique of a narrative interview[15].

The identity worldview model uses such concepts as value, cultural pattern or ethos. The concept of identity is understood as a set of stable premises of one's own image developed among the members of a given community. The premises originate from

[12] Z. Bokszański, Tożsamość [Identity], [in:] *Encyklopedia socjologii [Encyclopaedia of sociology]*, vol. 4, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2002, p. 253.

[13] Z. Bokszański, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

[14] E. Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Harmondsworth 1979.

[15] M.W. Bauer, G. Gaskell, *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound: A Practical Handbook*, Sage, London 2000.

the features of the social structure or entirely anthropologically understood culture of this community. The identity worldview model also refers to the thesis on the change in the psychosocial conditions of an individual's existence in the contemporary society and thus on the necessity to introduce a concept of identity to the language of the sociological theory. It is pointed out that in societies entering the post-industrial phase, there was a change in the principle organising individuals' self-perception, a transition from 'an institution' to 'an impulse' as a focus of the image of one's self[16]. The transition resulted from the loss of 'reality' by the institutional structure of the society caused by a general change in social bonds attitudes, which expose consumption more and more clearly and not production as a group-forming factor, as it was formerly. In the identity ecological model, developed in the contemporary social psychology, there is an attempt to distinguish the area of man's self-representation as an area of research allowing for quantitative analyses of the processes of the occurrence and transformation of various dimensions of an individual's identity. The research aims to reconstruct the structure and principles of functioning of the system generating various forms of a social actor's self-perception[17].

In social sciences, there is a tendency to generalise the concept of identity and extend its scope to a community. In such a case, we speak about various forms of collective identity. It sometimes meets with objections on the part of those theoreticians who believe that the use of the concept of identity to speak about a community may only be metaphorical in nature. In spite of that, there are works devoted to identities of ethnic groups, national identities or identities of social movements. There were attempts to formulate general descriptions of collective identities[18]. At the beginning of man's evolution, human beings were limited by their physical skills. Over dozens of thousands of years, people have developed other aspects of themselves and at the present stage of evolution, an individual may be analysed in six dimensions: volitional, spiritual, mental, social, emotional and physical. Volitional potential concerns the ability to make choices[19]. Adequately oriented and active, it is a determinant of freedom, implementation of most secret dreams and hopes. Directed at action in connection with will, it mobilizes experience, energy, knowledge and values – which is the product of other human potentials in order to use them to work for the benefit of the entirety. Healthy will means setting realistic objectives, making decisions, making subsequent attempts and not giving up in a difficult situation and prioritising until the objectives are achieved or changed[20]. Strong and healthy will is the closest ally of successful life. Healthy will is flexible, always open to new knowledge that comes from other personalities, ready to adapt and change in a new situation.

---

[16] R. Turner, *Struktura teorii socjologicznej [Structure od Sociological Theory]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2010.

[17] H. Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1982.

[18] L. Holy, Kulturowe tworzenie tożsamości etnicznej: Berti z Darfur [Cultural construction of ethnic identity: the Berti of Darfur], [in:] Z. Mach, A.K. Paluch (ed.), Sytuacja mniejszościowa i tożsamość, *Zeszyty Naukowe UJ* 1992, 15, pp. 21–22.

[19] J. Bremer, *Czy wolna wola jest wolna? [Is free will free?]*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2013.

[20] R.F. Baumeister, T.F. Heatherton, D.M. Tice, *Utrata kontroli [Losing Control]*, Wydawnictwo PARPA, Warszawa 2000.

Substitute choices, undertakings and fulfilments by others, deprive an individual of a possibility of being a 'full' person because failing to include will into one's functioning, they do not let it develop fully. Substitute choices are usually made following fictitious principles, others' wishes, imposed standards; they are not objectives meeting which is beneficiary for an individual[21]. Choices, made under the influence of healthy will and for it, are aimed at an individual, are performed for the benefit of others and oneself. Avoiding responsibility for choices may be defined as an expression of will through omission (action without taking a decision). In some situations, it may be a good choice. Sometimes, events in life such as a war, a fatal disease or a loss of one's next of kin make people be really helpless and cannot act efficiently to achieve an expected result. In such a situation, one may complain about their fate and suppress feelings not to suffer, or simply give up and stop living – literally and figuratively. However, both ways of behaviour provide only the feeling of pain. The choice that can definitively solve the problem is acceptance of truth about the situation, taking a decision on acceptance, admission of one's own determination to do everything or acceptance of helplessness towards it.

3. FACTORS DEVELOPING THE SENSE OF IDENTITY

Spiritual potential is also of great importance to the maintenance of the sense of identity[22]. Over time, the meaning of the word 'spiritual' has become less clear and is now often used as a synonym of the word 'religious'. Every religion is connected with what is spiritual, however, not everything that is spiritual is connected with religion. Spirituality is deeply anchored in human timeless need to understand the sense of life. People have always asked questions: Where are we heading? Where do we come from? Why do we exist? What is happening after death? They were asked at the beginning of various cults and religions, inspired and still inspire poets and philosophers, raise creative anxiety that with increasing strength pushes science towards discoveries about the mysteries of the universe[23]. Spiritual potential of an individual who reached full development may give vent to various types of activeness aimed at meditation, humanitarian activities, prayer, religious organisations, discipline, development of higher 'I', devotion to support for justice, dignity, health and directed both outwards and inwards. In spite of pretence, potential does not mean generalities but also a real source of values. The system of values gives shape to every thought, everyday actions and experience, ennobles the most ordinary aspects of life making them important and beautiful.

An individual looking for happiness is very often occupied with common pleasures but does not find it. Disappointed, he or she starts feeling many symptoms from boredom

---

[21] E. Fromm, *Ucieczka od wolności [Escape from Freedom]*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1993.

[22] D. O'Leary, M. Beauregard, *Duchowy mózg [The Spiritual Brain]*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2011.

[23] P. Socha, Psychologia rozwoju duchowego – zarys zagadnienia, [in:] P. Socha (ed.), *Duchowy rozwój człowieka [Spiritual development of man]*, Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2000, pp. 15–44.

and indefinite tension, through irritability, psychosomatic disorders and depression[24]. Eventually, failing to find the sense in life, an individual may commit a suicide or becomes addicted to drugs, food or work. Constant increase in the spread of all these forms of self-destruction is a warning that spiritual helplessness has reached epidemic proportions in our times. People working with alcoholics and their families are aware of the problem. They believe that the state of spiritual helplessness is the reason or the result of the illness that accelerates the movement downward the spiral of addictions.

For ages, a man has had respect for human brains, which are often believed to be an extraordinary gift distinguishing us from animals. Even in societies in which declarations of equality are commonly expressed, individuals with outstanding mental potential are most highly appreciated. Many authors wondered whether ascribing so much value to mental skills is possible. Undoubtedly, however, human brains have an enormous influence on the course of the process of becoming a full person. Some authors write in this context about the strength of the brains because of many different skills taken into consideration[25]. The strength of the brains includes three aspects. The first aspect concerns the past, memory. Human memory has many hidden recesses, which are alive again in the light of new experiences evoking a series of flashbacks. Memory is useful not only because of so obvious reasons as being in the proper place in the proper time or not forgetting about important anniversaries and birthdays. Memories play the role of a teacher because, together with feelings, they compose experiences, and experiences, on the other hand, make the best teacher of life[26]. The strength of brains concerns also the ideas occurring at present. A man links them with past facts and creates new knowledge. Occurrence of an idea as the brains' function still remains a mystery unexplained in biological and physical terms. People are able to formulate ideas, plan, look for alternative solutions and prioritize, which is much more complicated than organisation of files in a computer.

The third aspect of the strength of the brains concerns the future – fantasy and imagination. Imagination, external world inhabited by creatures from dreams, allows for looking for possibilities that are most extraordinary and trying new types of behaviour. Imagination provides new ways of acting and allows for analysing their possible results. Mental potential creates a bridge between the past and the future making them real for the present time[27]. Memories are voices from the past and fantasies speak from the future but we can experience them here and now. Thanks to that, our brains let the past and the future contribute to the present life. The brains all the time remain in interaction with other elements of the system of psyche receiving signals from the body and transmitting their own information to the external world, supervising social interaction and making contact with the world possible.

---

[24] C. Hammen, *Depresja. Modele kliniczne i techniki terapeutyczne [Depression: Clinical models and therapy methods]*, Wydawnictwo GWP, Gdańsk 2006.

[25] D. Wegscheider, *If Only My Family Understood Me: A family can find new balance through stress*, Compcare Publishers, New York 1989.

[26] D.B. Pillemer, *Momentous Events, Vivid Memories*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1998.

[27] C.W. Mills, *Wyobraźnia socjologiczna [The Sociological Imagination]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2007.

Contacts with other people may be a source of the biggest happiness as well as a problem for everybody. Social potential provides benefits even in the least significant contacts: with a bank clerk, colleagues, a lecturer, i.e. with various people in the course of the roles they play when meeting in everyday life. Such contacts are more pleasant and efficient if social potential is properly used. In contemporary societies, much importance is attached to learning skills that make people more attractive to others, making it possible to manage life situations in a way that is beneficial for an individual. It is also important how much one can get and not the quality of the exchange, which, unfortunately, is connected with a failure to develop such features as straightforwardness, openness, honesty, closeness and cooperation and causes even their weakening. At the same time, these aspects of social potential are fundamental for the creation of and deepening important relations in life: with children, parents, spouses and friends. Inability to establish and maintain relations is reflected in the development of addictions, divorces, violence and psychosomatic disorders[28]. The more often social potential is used, the faster its positive effects occur. Every relation and every contact concerns two persons, each of which has social potential. Neglected social potential is weakened, e.g. in case of addicts' families. Potential once lost is being re-established for a long time and among all things people depend on it depends on other people most.

Emotional potential has a specific significance in developing the sense of security. Emotions develop in a natural way, giving taste to life, providing joy. One should let them occur in the full light of awareness and use them in a good way regardless of their content. Emotions are often described as feelings, internal responses to internal or external events. Unable to manage emotions, people pretend they do not exist. For the long term, such behaviour is not a good solution as the cost is very high. Truly experienced feelings give colour to life, allow for establishing and maintaining contacts with other people and the surrounding world. Contact with one's own feelings opens a person to intuitive insight. If an individual expresses his or her emotions in a sensible way, others feel safe. Appropriately managed emotional potential creates a constant stream of energy strengthening actions aimed at achieving objectives. A person who suppresses emotions incurs big losses. People who feel fear cannot sometimes understand that all emotions are good and what may be inappropriate or 'bad' is the way in which they are interpreted[29].

In the face of very strong feelings, there is always a choice of response. For example, in a situation when somebody insults another person publicly, the insulted person may feel embarrassment, anger or shame; it may make their flesh creep, they may clench their teeth or fists or go red. But an individual may make a choice and respond in different ways. He or she may hit the other person expressing anger, but this will not provide relief and will increase the feeling of embarrassment; a person's response may take the form of insult, too; they may do nothing and say nothing but remain angry, nurture it and, having an opportunity, take revenge; they may get rid of

---

[28] I. Pospiszyl, *Patologie społeczne [Social pathologies]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008.

[29] P.N. Johnson-Laird, K. Oatley, Poznawcza i społeczna konstrukcja w emocjach [Cognitive and social construction in emotions], [in:] M. Lewis and J. M. Haviland-Jones (eds.), *Psychologia emocji [Psychology of emotions]*, Wydawnictwo GWP, Gdańsk 2005.

all unpleasant feelings and pretend nothing happened. All these choices are improper because they prevent a free flow of emptions in the aggrieved person. More efficient reactions include: waiting for a more appropriate moment and communicating one's feelings; telling the person about one's feelings without accusations and without insult; refraining from speaking and acting and attempting to find another way of managing the accumulated energy. Each of the reactions is an attempt to find the best solution. When people discover they do not have to be helpless victims of their feelings, they start using their emotional potential, limit wrong choices and increase those that are right.

Every man's body is exceptional, unique, contains one of its kind set of possibilities that no other human being has[30]. It depends on the body what a person is able to do in the physical sphere. It is the basis for health, strength, good communication, conscious senses, sexuality, beauty, charm, dexterity, fitness and speed. Physical potential determines all other skills, which find practical expression in it. Properly developed physical potential is a key to many successes in life although finding pleasure is not the only physical function of the body. It can also cause pain as it occurs in case of drug addicts. Internal satisfaction and efficient action constitute a prize for fully developed potentials. If all the potentials are developed, an individual becomes an entirety, which is accompanied by the sense of one's own value. It is a very important element of the personal wellbeing. When an individual's development is complete, they are able to accept all information flowing from others, do not block it and openly react to it. A stable sense of one's own value frees an individual from being preoccupied with one's self and awakes an ability to open oneself to the whole universe. A person whose potentials are disturbed or not fully developed is unable to notice positive features of their own personality. In order to protect their dignity, they do not accept any critical information about themselves. It is very difficult for such people to experience sincere contact with others.

4. ISSUE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

Many authors dealing with the issue of self-assessment, self-perception, often use a term 'I', which is ambiguous. Two ways of understanding 'I' are usually distingu-ished. Firstly, 'I' means an individual, organism, subject, being and it is very often connected with the term 'ego'. Secondly, 'I' means a certain way of self-knowledge[31]. In the first aspect, 'I' is a subject who acts and can be determined in terms of actions expressed in a man's active attitude towards the surrounding, the perception, adaptation and thinking. In the second aspect, 'I' as an object of self-knowledge is a set of bases, evaluating opinions that an individual follows in his or her conduct and which refer to their external look, attitude to other people and behaviour.

According to E. Hilgard, 'I' in the first meaning is the so-called deduced 'I' that is analogous to the term 'ego'[32]. It constitutes a construction developed based on external

---

[30] O. Sakson-Obada, *Pamięć ciała [Body memory]*, Wydawnictwo Difin, Warszawa 2009.

[31] A. Reber, *Słownik Psychologii [Dictionary of psychology]*, Wydawnictwo Scholar, Warszawa 2000, p. 283.

[32] E. Hilgard, *Wprowadzenie do psychologii [Introduction to psychology]*, PWN, Warszawa 1968.

symptoms of the subject's behaviour, created as a result of deduction made by competent observers. 'Ego' is a structure representing a centre of decision-making, planning and defence, thus determines an acting individual. An external observer may draw conclusions based on external symptoms of mechanisms and objectives of 'ego', even such ones that an individual is not aware of. In such an approach, directing awareness to one's self is minimal because when a man performs activities he usually pays attention to their implementation and does not focus on perception or thoughts at all or does it on a smaller scale. In the second meaning, 'I' refers to a person who is aware of himself/ herself, is a set of features perceived by him/her consciously. Thus, a man may think about behaviour in various situations, the process of perception, thinking. Naturally, a man only partially realises what kind of psychological processes and behaviour occur. According to other authors, the term 'I' means a specific person, on the one hand a subject got to know by oneself, and on the other hand an agent of a psychological action[33]. Thus, the same term refers to two different phenomena occurring in two different aspects: an objective one where 'I' constitutes an object of behaviour, skills, feelings, self-knowledge to be realised and understood, and a subjective 'I' as an acting individual.

It is pointed out that only a fragment of the system of 'I' that is integrated and organised develops self-perception. Self-perception is only an element of a coherent system of 'I', the one that is highly integrated and organised, really coherent and probably in some sense one that an individual realises most. Experiences creating 'I' are 'raw material' that is the origin of an image of oneself. An image of oneself concerns very important and central beliefs for a man. Self-perception includes only those experiences of 'I' that are permanently coded in memory, highly organised, generalised and integrated, creating a coherent whole. If self-perception were not such an entirety with a cohesive structure, its role in an individual's behaviour regulation would be limited. With the development of an individual, as a result of generalisation of experiences regarding an individual's direct sensations, a series of more or less cohesive knowledge of oneself is created. It is a relatively stable system of views, beliefs and opinions regarding one's self. According to some authors, the structure of self-perception is not uniform, is 'multi-layer' in character and incorporating many varied elements. W. James separated 'ideal I', i.e. a set of images including all the features that an individual would like to have and pointing out what a man should be like, from 'empiric I' that concerns what a man imagines he is[34].

S. Ossowski, using the terms 'image of oneself' and 'self-characteristics' interchangeably, distinguished two types of the 'image of oneself': 'for others' and 'for oneself'[35]. Among the images of 'I for myself', he distinguished precise and real images of oneself and images of 'ideal I'. According to J. Reykowski, an image of the world includes two parts: what refers to the external world ('not-I') and what refers to the person ('I'). Next, in the part referring to the person's 'I', he distinguishes three sub-

[33] J. Nuttin, *Struktura osobowości [The structure of personality]*, PWN, Warszawa 1968.
[34] W. James, *Psychologia [Psychology]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2002.
[35] S. Ossowski, *Z zagadnień psychologii społecznej [Issues of social psychology]*, PWN, Warszawa 1967.

structures: 'ideal I', 'conscious I' and 'the sense of one's I'[36]. Undoubtedly, particular elements may be more or less uniform and consistent. Inconsistency very often occurs inside the 'ideal I', which is connected with the fact that there is usually antagonism between a person's wishful thinking and representations and their egoistic desires.

A 'real I' and an 'ideal I' are very important elements of the image of 'oneself'. In the structure of self-awareness, a 'real I' makes all that constitutes an individual's life experience formed under the influence of time. It says what a subject is like at the moment, what his possibilities are, what he has achieved etc. An 'ideal I', on the other hand, includes all the features that it would like to have and also has all that one should be in the light of one's representations, ideals, beliefs, moral norms and desires. An 'ideal I' includes the system of information about what an individual would like to be (a desire-related element) and a collection of information on what an individual should be (a postulative element). The ideal of oneself constitutes a typical moral model, departure from which results in an individual's decreased self-assessment. It develops during the development of the subject. In the first part of a man's life, a postulative element of one's own ideal develops. From the very beginning of a child's life, parents tell them what they should be like and how they should behave highlighting 'good' and 'bad' behaviour. This influence makes a child mix the features that are adequate to others' expectations, usually important people's ones, but it is 'somebody else's' and not 'one's own' ideal. With an individual's development, the ideal becomes more and more desire-related in character and a person adopts some requirements as one's own and tries to act in accordance with them.

What is decisive in the development of an 'ideal I' during adolescence is the peer group, comparison to other members of the group and group influence mechanisms, a system of penalties and prizes for having some features of lacking them. These mechanisms cause that an individual wants to have the features that are appreciated and desired[37]. In the initial stages of development, the people from the closest circles form a child's ideal, then these are book and film characters. The ideas are manifested in behaviour and feelings and determine a man's conduct. In some cases, the 'ideal I' model does not have to influence an individual's conduct, often so when it is beyond its possibilities. A 'real I' plays a dominant role in the structure of self-concept. It is a basis for comparisons and references, is a foundation for the 'ideal I' development. A 'real I' and an 'ideal I' of different people may be in various relations with each other, from full analogy to complete discrepancy. The bigger the discrepancy, i.e. the less an individual meets the requirements, the bigger the threat for the sense of one's own value, the higher self-dissatisfaction.

A man's self-state representation is composed of many specific features, which are material that developed as a result of collection, generalization and organisation of experiences concerning one's self-state. Information on one's self-state is important for an individual, it allows for and determines identification. The information determining a man's identification includes all personal identification data, i.e. first name and

---

36 J. Reykowski, *Procesy emocjonalne, motywacja, osobowość [Emotional processes, motivation, personality]*, PWN, Warszawa 1992.

37 W. Bąk, E. Higginsa teoria rozbieżności ja [E. Higgins' theory of self-discrepancy], *Przegląd Psychologiczny* 2002, 45, pp. 39–55.

surname, sex, age and profession. Thanks to the perception of one's features, a person develops opinion on his or her body, realises what his/her skills and interests or likes and dislikes are; people start thinking about themselves as introverts or extroverts, they learn about their influence on other people. The scope of phenomena included in self-state representation is really broad. Self-state representation includes many categories of features such as look and physical qualities; skills and abilities; moral features; position among other people; features of emotional reactions and temperament.

The features composing self-state representation are closely connected with an individual's age. With age, the importance and frequency of some features occurrence increase and the significance of some other features decreases at the same time. For example, in adolescence, values connected with one's own personality and character become especially important while matters connected with school, learning and home become less important. The content of self-state representation may be described in terms of three categories of features: physical features that include the organism construction (build, height, health, look and fitness); psychological features among which one can distinguish: intellectual features (thinking, imagination, intelligence, skills), emotional and motivational features (emotional stability, anxiety, energy); social features (friendliness, truthfulness, sociability, jealousy) [38]. Features building self-state representation do not constitute a simple collection of information that an individual acquired in the course of experience. Both quantity and quality of this information is different for different people. It depends on the way in which an individual was raised, the features of their educational environment, age, intelligence, the number of social roles performed, and the scope of interests. If parents influence children in the way that limits their activeness, the attitudes contribute to the development of a narrow and one-sided collection of information about their abilities.

Self-state representation is not just getting to know oneself but also self-assessment consisting in the development of an emotional attitude towards the features and their evaluation. Thus, self-assessment constitutes an assessment-evaluation element of self-representation. Information about oneself and the features providing this information are premises of the assessment of one's possibilities in various situations and different fields of life. Psychologists describe the concept of self-assessment in different ways. It is mainly described as a set of opinions and judgements that an individual refers to one's self. These judgements and opinions concern psychological, physical and social features[38].

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baumeister R.F., Heatherton T.F., Tice D.M., *Utrata kontroli [Losing Control]*, Wydawnictwo PARPA, Warszawa 2000.

Bokszański Z., Tożsamość [Identity], [in:] *Encyklopedia socjologii [Encyclopaedia of sociology]*, T. 4, Oficyna Naukowa, Warszawa 2002.

Callero P.L., The sociology of the Self, *Annual Review of Sociology* 2003.

---

[38] For more detailed information see B. Hołyst, *Bezpieczeństwo [Security]*, vol. 2, *Bezpieczeństwo jednostki [Individual's security]*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 243–250.

Fromm E., *Ucieczka od wolności [Escape from Freedom]*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1993.

Goffman E., *Człowiek w teatrze życia codziennego [The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life]*, Warszawa 1981.

Hammen C., *Depresja. Modele kliniczne i techniki terapeutyczne [Depression: Clinical models and therapy methods]*, Wydawnictwo GWP, Gdańsk 2006.

James W., *Psychologia [Psychology]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2002.

Mead G.H., *Umysł, osobowość i społeczeństwa [Mind, Self and Society]*, PWN, Warszawa 1975.

Mills C.W., *Wyobraźnia socjologiczna [The Sociological Imagination]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2007.

O'Leary D., Beauregard M., *Duchowy mózg [The Spiritual Brain]*, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 2011.

Park R.E., Human Nature, Attitudes and the Mores, [in:] K.Young (ed.), *Social Attitudes*, New York 1931

Pospiszyl I., *Patologie społeczne [Social pathologies]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, 2008. P.N. Johnson-Laird, K. Oatley, Poznawcza i społeczna konstrukcja w emocjach [Cognitive and social construction in emotions], [in:] M. Lewis, Haviland-Jones J.M. (eds.), *Psychologia emocji [Psychology of emotions]*, Wydawnictwo GWP, Gdańsk 2005.

Reykowski J., *Procesy emocjonalne, motywacja, osobowość [Emotional processes, motivation, personality]*, PWN, Warszawa 1992.

Robbins R., Identity, Culture and Behaviour, [in:] J.J. Honigman (red.), *The Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Chicago 1973.

Sakson-Obada O., *Pamięć ciała [Body memory]*, Wydawnictwo Difin, Warszawa 2009.

Turner R., *Struktura teorii socjologicznej [Structure of Sociological Theory]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2010.

THREAT TO AN INDIVIDUAL'S PSYCHOSOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Summary

The issue of identity is the subject for research in many sciences, especially psychology and sociology. Two types of identity are distinguished: personal and social ones. Personal identity provides an individual with a sense of one's own uniqueness while social identity indicates that a man has a sense of belonging to other people, given groups or organisations and is aware of one's own place in the world. The identity worldview model uses such concepts as 'value', 'cultural pattern' or 'ethos'. The concept of identity is, in this case, understood as a set of permanent features of one's self developed among the members of a given group. The premises originate from the features of the social structure or entirely, anthropologically understood culture of the given community. The identity worldview model also refers to a thesis on a change in the conditions of an individual's psychosocial existence in the contemporary society.

Key words: *identity*, *sense of security*, *self-consciousness*, *sense of closeness*, *identity interaction and worldview model*

ZAGROŻENIE TOŻSAMOŚCI PSYCHOSPOŁECZNEJ CZŁOWIEKA WE WSPÓŁCZESNYM ŚWIECIE

Streszczenie

Problem tożsamości jest przedmiotem badań wielu dziedzin nauki, szczególnie psychologii i socjologii. Odróżnia się tożsamość osobistą od tożsamości społecznej. Tożsamość osobista zapewnia poczucie własnej niepowtarzalności, natomiast tożsamość społeczna wskazuje, iż człowiek ma poczucie przynależności do innych ludzi, do określonych grup, organizacji, a także ma świadomość posiadania swojego miejsca w świecie. Światopoglądowy model tożsamości posługuje się takimi pojęciami, jak wartość, wzór kulturowy lub etos. Koncepcja tożsamości pojmowana jest w tym przypadku jako zbiór trwałych przesłanek obrazu własnej osoby, ukształtowanych wśród członków danej zbiorowości. Przesłanki te wywodzą się z cech struktury społecznej lub całościowo, antropologicznie pojmowanej kultury tejże zbiorowości. Światopoglądowy model tożsamości odwołuje się również do tezy o zmianie warunków psychospołecznej egzystencji jednostki we współczesnym społeczeństwie.

Słowa kluczowe: *tożsamość*, *poczucie bezpieczeństwa*, *samoświadomość*, *poczucie bliskości*, *interakcyjny i światopoglądowy model tożsamości*