Properties of Identity

Identity begins to be constructed with self-awareness, and the people who are undeniably influential in making a child aware of his or her self-awareness are the parents. They make their offspring aware of how they see him or her, or how they would like him or her to see him or her. As a result, an idea arises in the young person’s mind that allows him to see the differences between himself and other people and to identify the family history with his own self. Moreover, parents are extremely influential in drawing the child’s attention to his individual characteristics and assigning them a certain value. As a result, the young being is able to interpret its positive and negative qualities and build self-esteem. The identity that emerges in childhood develops throughout life, from infancy through adolescence and late adulthood. The process of identity construction is largely based on the accumulation of various experiences and the construction of judgments about them. Along with identity development comes the process of consolidating self-awareness, acquiring knowledge, and all manner of life and social skills. All these features, developed for the most part of life, have an impact on the individual’s knowledge of his or her own “I”, and thus the emergence of the conviction of separateness from other people, noticing differences between oneself and others, the feeling of "being oneself" regardless of circumstances, and recognizing oneself despite the passage of time.

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But what is hidden behind the term "identity"? The Polish language dictionary offers four (humanistic) definitions of the word: "sameness"; "in relation to an individual person: awareness of oneself"; "facts, features, personal data that make it possible to identify a person"; "in relation to a community: awareness of common features and a sense of unity". Thus, identity is a kind of a set of features that make it possible to identify an individual or a community and to detect similarities and differences between it and its surroundings. Identity is a mental structure composed of properties of external, internal and social origin. The concept of identity is often associated with such terms as: personality, individuality, sameness, uniqueness, distinctiveness. In addition, identity, along with other terms, forms separate concepts such as gender identity, social identity, cultural identity, personal identity, professional identity, and cultural identity.

Authors of many publications on identity (such as: Erik Erikson¹, Zbigniew Bokszański², Małgorzata Melchior³, Jolanta Miluska⁴, Ewa Trzebińska⁵), in their works referred to concepts that allow looking at the dimension of identity from the perspective of the individual "I". These concepts, arranged in sequence according to the order of occurrence in the life of an individual, are as follows:

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- sense of separateness – the awareness of the separateness of the "I" from other people in terms of both physical and, above all, psychological aspects; the ability to point out clear differences between oneself and one's surroundings, despite the similarity of characteristics;
- sense of sameness – ability to ascribe particular roles to oneself and to believe that despite differences in behavior in relation to situations and roles, "I am still me";
- sense of continuity – recognizing oneself as a "changing whole" over time; the ability to see similarities, differences, and constant behaviors given the space of time;
- sense of integrity – the belief that an individual's social roles and behaviors, as adapted to the situation, comprise a dimension of self; both the individual and society have the sense that despite the diversity of tasks performed and the differences in behavior of a particular person, changing under the influence of the situation, "he is always himself".

When characterizing identity, it is worth remembering the structures of which it is composed. The concept of identity structure has not yet been fully analyzed This is due to the fact that researchers often use mathematical formulas to determine the stability, consistency, or separateness of identity, while ignoring the subjective feelings of the individual. Other issues are also underestimated, such as mistakenly equating identity's coherence with its stability or putting an equals sign between separateness and dissimilarity. In addition, not all studies show that researchers correctly distinguish between identity and self-concept.

Despite the many difficulties and obstacles to properly and consistently defining the concept of identity structure, many authors accept and consider the following content dimensions of identity as definition:

1. Content coherence – a sense of coherence among the elements of identity; at the extremes, an individual may have high content coherence or low content coherence.
2. Content accessibility – relates to an individual's awareness and sense of internal content; in the case of high content accessibility, an individual is able to recall opinions about him or herself with great ease.
and clarity, whereas in the case of low content accessibility, there is similarly difficulty of recall and poor clarity of content.

3. Content stability – results from a sense of continuity over time. Stability, due to intensity, can result in variability or invariability of content.

4. Content specificity – is related to a sense of uniqueness and exceptionality. An individual, in extreme cases, may have high content specificity or low content specificity.

5. Content valuability – interacts with self-esteem. High self-esteem results from positive content valuing, while low self-esteem results from negative content valuing.

6. Content distinctiveness – is related to an individual’s awareness of his or her distinctiveness and boundaries in relation to the environment. The opposite concepts of separateness are fixity and fluidity and refer to noticing the difference between "I" and "not-I".

Identity Development

One of the most prominent authors who thoroughly studied the problem of identity was Erik Erikson, a representative of the current of neopsychoanalysis. His particular interests were the issues of the evolution of self-consciousness and the stages associated with the development of identity. Erikson’s theories drew heavily on the psychoanalytic tradition of Sigmund Freud, taking over the model of personality systems – id, ego, alterego – and the assumptions of drive theory concerning early development. With Erikson, the concepts of "identity" and "identity crisis" were joined to the concept of personality development.

Erik Erikson is the creator of the concept of identity development, which consists of eight successive stages, the duration of which is individual for each person. The essence of each stage is the so-called basic crisis, which is a kind of challenge for the developing ego. The first four stages occur in infancy and childhood, the fifth during adolescence, and
the last three in adulthood and old age. The theory's creator focuses particularly on the difficult period of adolescence for the individual, during which there is a psychologically difficult leap from childhood to adulthood. This stage is particularly important because its course brings consequences in the form of the personality dimensions of an adult. It is worth noting that each stage contributes to the final formation of personality. The activating factor in the process of identity construction is the ego, which emerges during each of the stages. In addition, Erikson points out that early childhood experiences have a direct impact on identity, and interactions with adults prepare the child to construct his or her own identity.

The Status of Identity

A continuation of Erik Erikson's thought was the concept of identity status, created by James Marcia. The author of the theory identified two stages of identity formation, these are:

1. Exploration, falling in the period of early adolescence, that is, on average, from the age of 10 to 16. It is a discovery, exploration of the nearest and further surroundings, learning and setting "boundaries" (mainly testing what is accepted and allowed in society), learning about one's capacity for risk. James Marcia defines exploration as an experience of crisis, consisting of choosing between alternatives that are meaningful to the individual, and remaining in a dilemma of different actions depending on the goal. It is noteworthy that this crisis results from a state of increased self-centeredness that motivates the exploration and selection of appropriate behaviors, values, and attitudes. Exploration appears at the age of adolescence and is extremely necessary for building identity – both individual and social. The ob-

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ject of exploration is a person and his/her own "I" and other people from the environment, mainly the closest ones, with whom there is an emotional bond (family, friends, authorities, teachers). Exploration is accompanied by "transformation of the I – others relation from "childish subordination" to "adult interdependence".

2. Making a commitment, lasting between the ages of 16 and 20. During this period, people the individual considers significant and important place emphasis on more reasonable, responsible, "adult" behavior. There is decision making and selection of an area of action that is important to the individual because of their needs and plans. Making a commitment involves accepting certain values and choosing one's own purpose in life, which in turn makes the adolescent feel a sense of purpose in his or her existence.

Exploration and subsequent commitment are referred to as a kind of adolescent rebelliousness because they are mainly about exploring oneself, other people and one's environment, and "testing the limits", which includes testing the limits of one's own physical and psychological endurance and the endurance (mainly psychological) of significant others, while commitment occurs when the individual begins to take more mature actions and decisions. In practice, exploration, and in particular this testing of endurance, appears when the behaviours of a young person take the form of a specific manifestation, provocation or demonstration, are very expressive, sometimes extremely exaggerated. These behaviors are often accompanied by extreme views and controversial, openly proclaimed opinions, as well as strong, sometimes even extreme emotions. The individual begins an active search for attractive alternatives, which is referred to as adolescent crisis. Adolescents are helped by significant adults who advise and emphasize more mature forms of behavior, expecting the young person to take responsibility for himself and bear the consequences of his behavior. Social expectations mainly involve stability, decision-making, commitment, obligation, and consequences. Trying to meet these expectations is referred to as making a commitment.

Focusing on the above stages of identity formation, James Marcia constructed four identity statuses that correspond to different styles of coping with identity crisis and focus on the transition from exploration
to commitment. The aforementioned identity statuses are: achieved identity, moratoria identity, assumed identity, and identity dispersal.

An attempt to characterize individuals with each identity status is as follows:

1. Identity dispersion. This is considered the "least mature and complex form of identity". It occurs when a person has not successfully passed any of the stages of identity construction (exploration and commitment) in their youth. A person who is characterized by a diffuse identity avoids and does not engage in the process of self-discovery. In addition, he or she is characterized by a passive attitude and expresses a lack of interest and apathy toward his or her present and future life. Life orientation is directed toward current experiences or momentary satisfaction, with the individual exhibiting satisfaction with life "day to day". Moreover, such a person often withdraws from difficult, frustrating situations, shows reluctance to act, is sometimes unpredictable in behavior, and happens to feel a lack of meaning in life. In addition, the dispersed identity is accompanied by a fragile scheme of self-defense and avoidance of close relationships with other people.

2. Assumed (given) identity. Occurs when the process of making a commitment was positive, while in the process of exploration there were complications. People with assumed identities are characterized by commitment to values and attitudes that have been instilled in them by others, without exploring alternatives on their own. Assumed identities are characteristic of people who, during childhood and adolescence, experienced excessive control from their significant others (e.g., parents, teachers, authority figures, etc.) and, as a result, their exploration of the external and internal environment (their "self") was impaired. In addition, there is a great deal of pressure from these significant others to make commitments to important life decisions about the future, which are often made to a greater or lesser degree by these individuals. Acquired identity is characterized by "a low level of complexity associated by rigidity of thinking and excessive identification with parents along with conformist tendencies and obedience to authority". Individuals who identify with this identity status typically have many defense mechanisms, repress emerging conflicts, have increased control over emotions, are self-satisfied, and adopt gender-
based roles and ways of behaving. Young people who have overcome a crisis of diffuse identity and have acquired an adopted identity idealize the individuals or groups with whom they identify and often manifest loyalty to their choices by behaving according to appropriate criteria, wearing certain clothes, and owning objects. This stems from a desire to be like a particular authority figure or idol, at the expense of one's individuality.

According to the creator of the concept of identity statuses, James Marcia, an individual enters adulthood with one of the two aforementioned identity positions: a disseminated identity or an acquired identity. With that said, regardless of one's current status, it is possible to move from one status to the other. In the case of dispersed identity, the transition to a transmitted identity will result when the individual takes over ideas and values from an important person in their immediate environment. In contrast, regressive acquisition, during which an individual transitions from a broadcast identity to a diffuse identity occurs when an individual questions a previous commitment and fails to find alternatives.

Moratorial identity – considered as an unstable state. Reflects a positive transition through the exploration stage and lack of commitment. It occurs when a maturing person has a great (even excessive) freedom in exploring the surrounding world with no pressure to make decisions and commitments. Typically, a person with a moratorial identity lacks commitment but actively seeks it, resulting in short-term and variable commitment. Attempting to discover identity alternatives on their own leads to feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. A person with a moratoria identity is characterized by such traits as rebelliousness, nonconformism, valuing independence, the emergence of existential dilemmas, analyzing one's own mental states, thoughts, and emotions. There are two ways to solve the crisis of an individual with a moratorial identity – making commitments, leading to the emergence of an achieved identity (positive solution), or abandoning exploration, leading to regression into a diffuse identity (negative solution).

Achieved identity – is considered the most mature, functional, and complete identity, associated with the highest level of ego development. Positive, uncomplicated passage through the stage of exploration and
commitment leads to an achieved identity. It emerges in an individual who has independently made a choice of values and made a commitment. An individual with an achieved identity values his or her independence, behaves in accordance with social and ethical norms, has an integrated personality and the ability to control emotions and behavior. In addition, she is friendly and open to interacting with others and is productive at work.

It is important to remember that a person’s identity is a dynamic and flexible value that can undergo many changes, especially in the face of emotionally charged events that upset the balance within the identity. An individual may take progressive actions that lead to a transition from lower levels to an achieved identity, or regressive actions that lead to a descent to a lower level of identity.

**Independence and Interdependence of the Self and the Properties of Identity**

Both the structure and the content of identity itself are constantly undergoing many changes, and this is due to the evenly and actively operating motives that influence the specifics of identity: self-esteem, specificity, efficacy, belonging, continuity, and the properties that cause an individual to pursue a particular state of identity and avoid others. The aforementioned motives, in terms of their power to influence identity, differ greatly in their continuity and situationality, and the way in which the Self is constructed is responsible for their occurrence. Identity-forming processes take place at the level of this Self-construct together with its aspirations, beliefs and values. Based on this, it can be concluded that the regulativity of individual identity motives functions as the relative availability of the independent and interdependent Self construct.

The epigenetic model by Erikson confirms the existing relationship between the Self construct and identity, the form of which is derived from the same socialization influences. The author concludes that the development and crises of identity are the result of the simultaneous action of the motives of the independent Self and the interdependent Self. The simultaneous action of individualistic and affiliative impulses
confirms the fact that the capacities for autonomy, diligence, or initiative, which are formed at a certain moment, are built under the influence of the growing readiness for involvement, cooperation, trust in others, attachment, and the ability to create a close bond with another person. During each stage of development, different functions, goals, and values emerge that are associated with both the Independent Self and the Interdependent Self. The community in which the individual develops usually gives these features specific associations that tend to support the dominant worldview, norms, or lifestyle.

The experiences of the successive phases of identity development provide the basis for the construction of one's Self, which is directed toward the dimensions of independence or interdependence. In contrast, the specific identity pattern of the Self is shaped by the experience of the self through selective affirmation and rejection. Moreover, the immutability of the self and the "persistent sharing of a certain essential character with others" that characterize identity influence the identity-specific pattern and orientation of the Self construct toward independence or interdependence.

Independence and Interdependence of the Self and Identity Structure

By subjecting the structure of identity to an analysis based on the construct of Self, it can be concluded that the particular characteristics of identity are different for the independent Self and the interdependent Self. The first quoted structural feature – coherence of content – in the case of the independent self implies the existence of a "core self", which is the basis for the functioning of the unique, exceptional self, while the "core self" of the interdependent self is built on the foundations of social relationships. With regard to the availability of content, the independent individual has a much higher level of self-awareness and knowledge of his or her desires or attributes than the interdependent individual. In addition, in the case of the interdependent self, feedback from those around them may be the only valid source of knowledge about one's self. In addition, Gabriel et al. found that people with an independent Self have a greater awareness of who they are, whereas people with an inter-
Properties of Identity

dependent Self have greater confidence when they receive praise or rec-
ognition from others. The Independent Self has a higher level of specific-
ity (sense of uniqueness) than the Interdependent Self. This means that
for the individualistic Self, it is important to emphasize its independence,
distinctiveness and differentiation from others. Furthermore, the Inde-
pendent Self is more likely to underrate others than the Interdependent
Self, and is more likely to overrate oneself. The individual with the Affil-
liative Self, on the other hand, tends to overrate others, and sees and em-
phasizes commonalities with the people around him or her. However, it
is important to keep in mind that when analyzing the content specificity
of identity (and other structures) in relation to the construct of the Self,
one should take into account the variability of conditions, deviations
from the rule, and individual characteristics. For example, the orienta-
tion towards the surrounding society, which is characteristic of individu-
als striving for affiliation, is not necessarily associated with a decrease in
the importance of the uniqueness and exceptionality of the Self. The
more difficult structure to analyze is that of content valence, because the
level of self-esteem is a subjective value that is difficult to assess due to
the presence of overt and covert self-esteem. High self-esteem in the In-
dependent Self is due to the awareness of one's own strengths and is not
dependent on the judgment of others, in contrast to the Interdependent
Self, whose self-satisfaction is dependent on the approval and recogni-
tion of those close to him or her. In the case of the content-based Self,
the individual striving for individuation visibly separates the area of his
or her own Self from the social environment, seeks to distinguish himself
or herself from others, and indicates a higher level of separation. In con-
trast, the individual seeking affiliation integrates the dimension of his
Self with others and describes himself as an integrated part of society,
indicating a lower level of content separation.

Conclusion

An essential element of identity construction presented in the next
section of this paper is exploration and commitment. Based on these,
identity statuses were constructed that correspond to different styles of
coping with identity crisis and focus on the transition from exploration to commitment. Identity statuses are divided into: achieved identity, moratoria, acquired identity, and dispersed identity. Identity status is the result of identity development, and it largely determines an individual's actions, guides his or her choices, and significantly influences the experience of happiness. Identity status is a flexible value that can change over the course of a lifetime, most often due to a psychologically debilitating event. Another theme addressed in the second chapter of the paper is the relationship between the independent and interdependent Self and identity properties. The conclusion is drawn that identity development and crises are the result of the simultaneous operation of the motives of the independent Self and the interdependent Self. The construct of Self influences not only the construction and development of identity, but also the achievement of a given status. Whether an individual's behavior is directed toward individuality or affiliation determines the status of the identity achieved.

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Abstract

Properties of Identity

Awareness of one’s identity provides a basis for making choices, evaluating oneself, the world, and people, and enables one to see oneself as a separate individual with certain boundaries separating it from the world. Knowing ourselves, we can register influences from the social world around us in a fully conscious way and choose to be submissive to them, or to resist them. People have been contemplating about the essence of their personality for centuries, searching for the meaning of their existence and trying to understand the world around us.

keywords: identity, personality identification, personal development, self-awareness

Streszczenie

Właściwości tożsamości

Świadomość swojej tożsamości stanowi podstawę dokonywania wyborów, oceniania siebie, świata i ludzi, a także umożliwia postrzeganie siebie jako odrębnej jednostki mającej pewne granice oddzielające ją od świata. Znając siebie, można w pełni świadomie rejestrować wpływy z otaczającego nas świata społecznego i decydować się na uległość względem nich, lub przeciwwstawianie się im. Ludzie od wieków kontemplują na temat istoty swojej osobowości, szukając sensu swojego istnienia i próbując zrozumieć otaczający świat.

słowa kluczowe: tożsamość, identyfikacja osobowości, rozwój osobisty, samoświadomość