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## PERSONALITY, IDENTITY AND PSYCHIC MATURITY

Florin VANCEA

University Lecturer PhD, Spiru Haret University, Brasov.

**ABSTRACT:** *This paper aims to study the connection between the identity construction and psychic maturity as fundamental elements of personality. In addition to the clarification and description of some important terms like "identity", "maturity", "Self", "Ego", the paper demonstrates the relations between the statuses of identity and the obtained levels of maturity, by means of scientific research. The identity and the psychic maturity describe in their correlation the archetypal phenomena: "Who am I?" and "The Great Journey". "The Great Journey" (individuation, self-becoming, actualization, Self-accomplishment) is still present among human beings, just as it was in ancient times.*

*The research demonstrated the essential connection between the identity construction process and the psychic maturation process. The psychic maturity level reached by an individual depends on the way in which he succeeds in accepting and going through identity crises, eventually assuming a clear, precise and authentic personal identity. We cannot talk about psychic maturity as long as the person in question is not concerned with his/her own identity and either blocks his/her differentiation process in relation to the identities of the parents, or he/she absorbs some of their identity, consciously or less consciously.*

**KEY-WORDS:** personality, identity construction, identity status, psychic maturity.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to study the connection between the identity construction and psychic maturity as fundamental elements of personality. In addition to the clarification and description of some important terms like "identity", "maturity", "Self", "Ego", the paper demonstrates the relations between the statuses of identity and the obtained levels of maturity, by means of scientific research. The identity and the psychic maturity describe in their correlation the archetypal phenomena: "Who am I?" and "The Great Journey". "The Great Journey" (individuation, self-becoming, actualization, Self-accomplishment) is still present among human beings, just as it was in ancient times.

Modern psychology is required to lay a special emphasis on this process of finding

one's own identity and of accession to a certain degree of psychic maturity. These phenomena should rather be cultivated when studying personality, instead of being ignored. G. Allport reinforces the same idea in the following statement "psychology should not be satisfied with studying an artificial human, it should also describe and explain the real man, whose main trait is his individuality" [2]

### 2. IDENTITY FORMATION

Erik Erikson [3] presented the Ego development theory in order to justify the interaction between historical, social, psychological factors and the developmental factors in personality formation. Erikson described the major factors that contribute to the identity formation during adolescence. He argued the fact that every society provided a

set and programmed period of time for the identity completion. While he admitted there were many variations in the duration, intensity and ritualization of adolescence (its rhythmicity), he also proposed the idea that societies offered a “*psychosocial moratorium*” according to which the teenager is expected to commit for life and to establish a relative self-definition. Every moratorium comes along with crises. A crisis is a normative life event defining a crucial moment when development has to change one way or another, thus generating resources of growth, recovery and major differentiation. It seems these crises are benefic, in the sense that they determine the individual to explore the alternatives offered by life and achievable through a serious commitment.

Based on the two dimensions from Erikson’s theory about the identity formation, James Marcia (1966) [4] conceptualized four types of identity formation. The two dimensions include the presence and the absence of a crisis period and the presence or the absence of well-defined and stable commitment to values, beliefs and standards. Society expects the teenagers’ crisis period at youth. Before entering in the psycho and social moratorium, the young ones do not go through a motivational identity. Thus, he or she may not feel the need to explore alternatives and at the same time they may fail to establish some ideological commitments. These young people belong to the “*identity diffusion*” category.

The second category is represented by young people who report stable commitments, but have not gone through a personalized period of crises. They adopt commitments from others (especially from the parents) and they did not test the commitments they state to be appropriate for themselves. They easily accept others’ commitments and then they possess them without adjusting or modifying them. This process seems to be similar to the precocious identifications from the childhood. These young people are tagged in the “*identity foreclosure*” category.

The third category includes young people who currently express their identity, preoccupation for identity crises and active exploration, but who did not reach to their own

self-defined commitments. These young people are considered to be in the “*moratorium*”.

Finally, the young people who went through a psychological moratorium and had performed substantial explorations regarding the unique and intimate ideological commitment identification are placed in the “*identity achievement*” category.

By taking over Erikson’s ideas, Marcia shows that identity is an evolving configuration which tends to enter one or four situations of identity at any time. However, over time, the individual may change and may belong to another category.

### 3. PSYCHIC MATURITY

In this paper, psychic maturity is understood in the humanistic psychology terms of self-actualization and self-achievement. By studying sane and, at the same time, “exemplary” subjects, Abraham Maslow [5] outlined the psychology of becoming which is based on understanding the motivation that guides the human to the final stage of personality development: fulfilling all potentials. Maslow prefers the term *Self-actualization*. He defines this concept as “an ongoing process of actualizing potentials, abilities and talents, of fulfilling a mission (given by fate, destiny or vocation), the knowledge of full acceptance of the intrinsic nature, a permanent tendency towards unity, integration or synergy.” [5] Every human has this tendency of actualization which leads him to his own path in life.

When it is not blocked, the actualization process leads to an *integrated, self-achieved and mature personality* with the following characteristics: a superior perception of reality, a greater acceptance of others, nature and oneself, spontaneity, affinity and naturalness, focus on problems instead of oneself, need for intimacy and independence, rich variety of emotional reactions, going through some “peak” or mystical experiences, high “identification” with humanity, social interests, improving interpersonal relationships, balanced interpersonal relationships, democratic structure of



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character, increased creativity, resistance to enculturation.

Carl Rogers [7] shows in his theory that every human being has a tendency towards self-actualization. The actualization or Self-achievement is a process, a tendency and not a finite product. Rogers uses the term "*self-actualizing person*". Personality development is an ongoing process, a perpetual change that ends with the person living plenary: "the fully functioning person". According to Rogers, the person with the plenary functioning has the following traits:

- a. Awareness of all experiences, acceptance of experiences and emotions (positive or negative), inexistence of self-defense mechanisms;
- b. Capacity of fully living each moment;
- c. Self-confidence;
- d. Possibility to manifest freely, experiencing a feeling of personal power;
- e. Increased creativity, spontaneity.

#### 4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

The purpose of this research is to study the correlation between identity formation and the levels of psychic maturity. It is a quantitative, statistical type of research.

##### Objectives

O.1. To identify instruments measuring the identity statuses on the one hand, and the level of psychic maturity on the other hand.

O.2. To determine the existing relation between the identity statuses and the level of psychic maturity in the investigated sample.

##### General hypothesis

In this research, we started from the hypothesis according to which there is a correlation between identity and psychic maturity.

##### Work hypotheses

1. There is a significant difference from the psychic maturity standpoint between subjects with identity diffusion and those with identity moratorium.

2. There is a significant difference from the psychic maturity standpoint between subjects with identity diffusion and those with identity achievement.

3. There is a significant difference from the psychic maturity standpoint between subjects with identity foreclosure and those with identity moratorium.

4. There is a significant difference from the psychic maturity standpoint between subjects with identity foreclosure and those with identity achievement.

##### Study sample

The research was conducted on a sample of 40 persons, aged 20-40, from different work fields. No subject selection criterion was applied. They manifested their desire to participate in the research and they gave their consent to participation. The data obtained from the research are confidential and only used in this study. The gender repartition of the sample was: 39% males and 61% females.

##### The work instruments of the quantitative-statistical study were:

1. The objective measure of ego identity status – OMEIS, Adams, Gerald, R. (1998). It measures the identity statuses. The test consists of 64 items and was developed according to Marcia's theory.

2. The SLP (Styles of Living Preferences) personality inventory was elaborated in 1983 by psychologists Gail Maul from the Riverside City College and Terry Maul from San Bernadino Valley College in order to capture the traits mentioned above and established by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow for an

optimal, integrated person. The scale can reflect the self-actualization and integration process of the ego, by studying the way in which persons react to different life situations. To this end, it presents a series of 50 situations, each of them with two extremes.

**Results regarding identity statuses**

The OMEIS test measured the two identity groups: the ideological identity and the interpersonal identity, as well as four identity statuses: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and achievement.

**a. Ideological identity.**

As it can be noticed in fig. 1, 15 subjects, namely 37.5% of the sample, revealed the ideological identity diffusion; 4 subjects, namely 10% of the sample, revealed ideological identity foreclosure; 13 subjects, namely 32.5% of the sample, revealed ideological identity moratorium and 8 subjects, namely 20% of the sample, revealed ideological identity achievement.

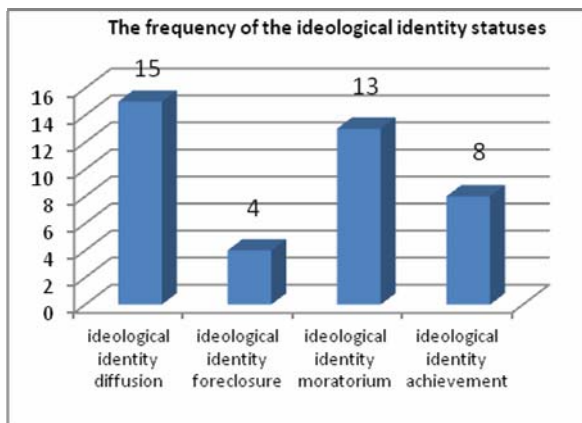


Fig. 1. The frequency of the ideological identity statuses

**b. Interpersonal identity**

As it can be noticed in fig. 2: 17 subjects, namely 42.5% of the sample, revealed interpersonal identity diffusion; 3 subjects, namely 7.5% of the sample, revealed interpersonal identity foreclosure; 5 subjects, namely 12.5% of the sample, revealed interpersonal identity moratorium and 15 subjects, namely 37.5% of the sample revealed interpersonal identity achievement.

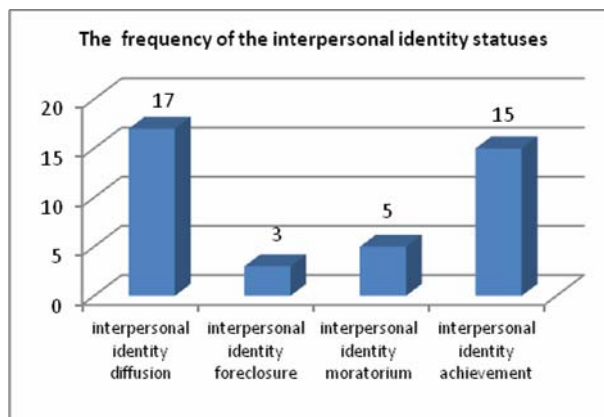


Fig. 2. The frequency of the interpersonal identity statuses

**Identity statuses and maturity levels**

Figures 3 and 4 present the means of the scores obtained on psychological maturity according to identity statuses.



Fig. 3. The mean of the maturity scores according to the statuses of ideological identity

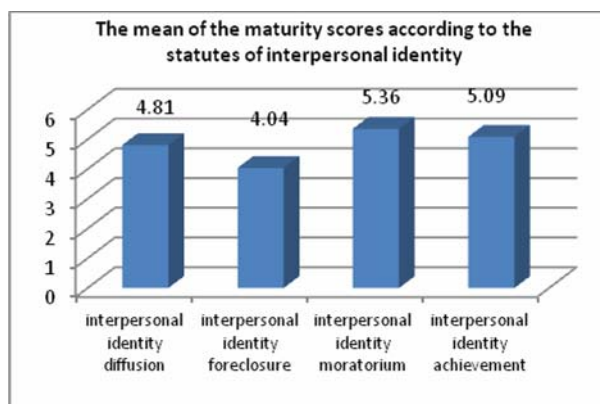


Fig. 4. The mean of the maturity scores according to the statuses of interpersonal identity



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**The results of the research regarding the correlations between variables**

The t test for individual samples was used when comparing the means of the maturity scores of the subjects with different identity statuses. After applying it, the results for the work hypotheses are the following:

1. There is a significant difference from the psychic maturity standpoint between subjects with identity diffusion and those with identity moratorium.

The statistical processing in SPSS showed that the differences were significant at the  $p=0.013$  threshold for the ideological identity status and insignificant at the  $p=0.166$  threshold for the interpersonal status. Hypothesis 1 is confirmed for the ideological status and infirmed for the interpersonal one. As far as the ideological identity status is concerned, the maturity level is higher in identity moratorium than in identity diffusion. Therefore, the subjects with identity moratorium are more mature than those with identity diffusion. When it comes to the interpersonal identity status, identity diffusion and identity moratorium do not influence the maturity level.

2. There is a significant difference from the psychic maturity standpoint between subjects with identity diffusion and those with identity achievement.

The statistical processing in SPSS showed that the differences were insignificant at the  $p=0.104$  threshold for the ideological identity status. For the interpersonal identity status, the differences were also insignificant at the  $p=0.307$  threshold. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is infirmed, as there are no significant differences in any of the statuses and identity types that could influence the maturity level.

3. There is a significant difference from the psychic maturity standpoint between

subjects with identity foreclosure and those with identity moratorium.

The statistical processing in SPSS showed that the differences were significant at the  $p=0.033$  threshold for the ideological identity status and also significant at the  $p=0.001$  threshold for the interpersonal identity status. Hypothesis 3 is confirmed both for the ideological and interpersonal identity status. In both cases, the subjects with identity moratorium are more mature than those with identity foreclosure.

4. There is a significant difference from the psychic maturity standpoint between subjects with identity foreclosure and those with identity achievement.

The statistical processing in SPSS showed that the differences were significant at the  $p=0.018$  threshold for the interpersonal identity status and insignificant at the  $p=0.167$  threshold for the ideological identity status. Hypothesis 4 is confirmed for the interpersonal identity status and infirmed for the ideological one. As far as the interpersonal identity status is concerned, the subjects with identity achievement are more mature than those with identity foreclosure. When it comes to the ideological identity status, identity achievement or identity foreclosure do not influence the maturity level.

Taking into account the confirmed hypotheses, the general hypothesis according to which there is a correlation between identity and psychic maturity is also confirmed.

**5. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The research demonstrated the essential connection between the identity construction process and the psychic maturation process. The psychic maturity level reached by an

individual depends on the way in which he succeeds in accepting and going through identity crises, eventually assuming a clear, precise and authentic personal identity. We cannot talk about psychic maturity as long as the person in question is not concerned with his/her own identity and either blocks his/her differentiation process in relation to the identities of the parents, or he/she absorbs some of their identity, consciously or less consciously.

Consciously assuming the “Who am I?” topic and going through the sometimes painful process of differentiation from parents, as well as seeking for one’s own path are component parts of psychic maturity.

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