

## ІСТОРІЯ ПСИХОЛОГІЇ

UDC 159.923+316

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/psy-2025-5-13>

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### PSYCHODYNAMIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL VIEWPOINTS OF IDENTITY FORMATION

**Abstract.** The problem of identity, one of the most important issues, is discussed in two major forms – psychodynamic and sociological. These viewpoints offer contrasting but complementary insights into how identities are formed, maintained, and transformed. The psychodynamic perspective on identity is associated with psychoanalytic theory developed by Sigmund Freud and later expanded upon by Erik Erikson. In this viewpoint early relationships, particularly with primary caregivers, are seen as foundational in the formation of one's identity. In psychodynamic view identity is often understood as the outcome of unconscious forces, early experiences, and socialization processes that shape the individual's internal sense of self. The psychodynamic viewpoint tends to focus more on the individual's inner world – the ways unconscious thoughts and emotions shape their behaviour and self-understanding. In contrast, the sociological perspective on identity places more emphasis on the external forces – social, cultural, and structural factors – that influence the development of identity. This viewpoint is rooted in the work of William James, George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley. The sociological view of identity is dynamic, relational, and rooted in social context. It argues that identity is shaped by interactions with others and influenced by larger social structures. Cultural norms, social roles, and group membership play significant roles in how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others. Both viewpoints are crucial in understanding the complexity of identity formation. While the psychodynamic perspective gives insight into personal development and internal conflicts, the sociological perspective highlights the social and relational nature of identity. Together, they provide a more comprehensive understanding of how we become who we are.

**Keywords:** identity, self-identity, self, psychodynamic viewpoint, sociological viewpoint.

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### ПСИХОДИНАМІЧНІ ТА СОЦІОЛОГІЧНІ ПОГЛЯДИ НА ФОРМУВАННЯ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ

**Анотація.** Проблема ідентичності, як одна з найважливіших, обговорюється у двох основних формах – психодинамічній та соціологічній. Ці думки пропонують протилежні, але взаємодоповнювальні погляди на те, як формуються, підтримуються та трансформуються ідентичності. Психодинамічний погляд на ідентичність насамперед асоціюється з психоаналітичною теорією, яку розробив Зигмунд Фройд, а згодом розвинув Ерік Еріксон. З психодинамічного боку ранні стосунки вважаються основоположними у формуванні ідентичності. З цього погляду ідентичність часто розуміють як результат дії несвідомих сил, раннього досвіду та процесів соціалізації, які формують внутрішнє відчуття особистості. Психодинамічне бачення, як правило, більше зосереджується на внутрішньому світі людини – на тому, як несвідомі думки та емоції формують її поведінку й саморозуміння. На противагу цьому баченню соціологічний погляд на ідентичність робить більший акцент на зовнішніх силах – соціальних, культурних і структурних факторах, які впливають на розвиток ідентичності. Ця думка ґрунтується на працях Вільяма Джеймса, Джорджа Герберта Міда та Чарльза Хортон Кулі. Соціологічний погляд на ідентичність є динамічним, релятивним і вкоріненим у соціальному контексті. Він стверджує, що ідентичність формується через взаємодію з іншими та під впливом ширших

соціальних структур. Культурні норми, соціальні ролі й членство в групах відіграють важливу роль у тому, як люди сприймають себе і як їх сприймають інші. Обидві думки мають вирішальне значення для розуміння складності формування ідентичності. Тоді як психодинамічне бачення дає уявлення про особистісний розвиток і внутрішні конфлікти, соціологічне підкреслює соціальну та реляційну природу ідентичності. Разом вони дають більш повне розуміння того, як ми стаємо тими, ким ми є.

**Ключові слова:** ідентичність, самоідентичність, Я, психодинамічний погляд, соціологічний погляд.

**Introduction.** Identity is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that integrates cultural, mental, social, communicative and linguistic aspects. In our century, the problem of identity is one of the most important. This situation was predicted back in the early 1970s by C. Lévi-Strauss, who argued that the identity crisis would become the new scourge of the century, and predicted that the status of this problem would change from socio-philosophical and psychological to interdisciplinary [8].

As the world continues to globalize and societies undergo rapid transformations in technology, culture, and social norms, the concept of identity has become increasingly fluid and contested. The interconnectedness of cultures and the rise of new social norms contribute to the growing sense of ambiguity about personal and collective identity. As such, understanding identity today requires not only analyzing individual experiences but also considering the broader, multifaceted forces. In response to this complexity, discussions of identity generally revolve around two main viewpoints: psychodynamic and sociological. These two perspectives offer distinct but complementary lenses through which we can better understand how individuals form their identities and how these identities are influenced by both internal and external factors.

**The aim of the article** is to describe and to compare psychodynamic and sociological viewpoints of identity formation.

**Presentation of the main material.** The psychodynamic perspective on identity stems primarily from psychoanalytic theory, most notably developed by Sigmund Freud and later expanded upon by thinkers like Erik Erikson. This viewpoint focuses on internal processes, such as how past experiences, unconscious desires, and psychological conflicts shape an individual's sense of self. Freud states that identification is a process where an individual adopts the characteristics, values, or behaviours of another person, typically someone significant like a parent or role model. This process helps shape the individual's internal sense of self and plays a critical role in the development of his or her identity.

According to Freud, much of our identity is shaped by unconscious desires and internal conflicts, often linked to early childhood experiences. As chil-

dren grow, they identify with their parents or caregivers, which helps form the 'ego' – the part of the psyche that mediates between the desires of the 'id' (instincts, biological impulses) and the moral constraints of the 'superego' (societal rules, moral principles). This process of identification is foundational in shaping how individuals perceive themselves, influencing their behaviour, self-esteem, and moral values. Through identification, children internalize the traits and beliefs of their parents or important figures in their lives. Over time, these internalized traits help form a stable sense of identity, which includes a person's sense of belonging, values, and roles within society. Identification also plays a critical role in the development of the superego, which represents the moral and ethical aspects of personality. As individuals identify with their parents or other authority figures, they adopt societal and cultural norms, which become part of their identity. This can affect how they see themselves in relation to others and the world, guiding their sense of right and wrong, and ultimately shaping their self-concept [4; 9].

In essence, Freud's theory of identification explains how we form our identity by aligning ourselves with others and internalizing their characteristics, values, and norms. This process directly impacts the development of the self-concept, as it forms the foundation for how we view ourselves and our role in society.

Erik Erikson, a major figure in psychodynamic theories of identity, expands on Freud's ideas by emphasizing that identity develops across the lifespan through a series of psychosocial stages. He views self-concept through the prism of ego-identity and defines it not just as a sum of accepted roles, but also as a certain combination of identifications and capabilities of an individual, how they are perceived by him/her on the basis of the experience of interaction with the surrounding world, as well as knowledge of how others react to him/her. The goal of personality, according to Erikson, is unity with oneself, integrity and maturity.

Erikson considers ego identity as a dynamic entity: it changes and develops, goes through internal crises and conflicts. The latter can have favourable and unfavourable outcomes. In particular, depending on the nature of the internal conflict, ego identity takes on different qualities.

Thus, Erikson describes eight stages of changes in ego identity and links these changes to personal development. Ego identity emerges at the fifth stage of personal development (approximately ages 12–18) and develops through the integration of many images of the self. During this stage, which is called “Identity vs Role Confusion”, a sense of self-identity often arises and a system of personal values is formed. According to Erikson, during adolescent teenagers experiment with various roles, values, and beliefs as they seek to determine the answer to the question “Who am I?” If this exploration is successful, young people develop a strong sense of identity. Failure to achieve a high level of ego identity development, on the contrary, leads to role confusion, inability to choose a career, a sense of uselessness and mental disorders, which can lead to identity crises later in life [3; 5].

While the most intense identity formation happens in adolescence, Erikson believes that identity continues to evolve throughout the lifespan. Even in adulthood, people continue to refine their identity, adjusting to changes in roles, relationships, and experiences. For example, at the sixth stage (approximately ages 19–40), intimate, trusting relationships with other people are established without ‘losing’ one’s self. Thus, individuals form deep relationships and connections, which further shape their personal identity. The seventh stage (approximately ages 40–65) is associated with the development of productivity and the realisation of the self through caring for other people, work results and ideas in which the person is interested. So, individuals find meaning through contributing to society, which impacts their sense of self. At the eighth stage (from 65 years old to the end of life), the results of life are summed up and a sense of self-satisfaction is established. Thus, reflecting on one’s life and feeling a sense of completeness is crucial for maintaining a healthy identity [3; 5].

Erikson emphasizes that identity development is not only an internal process but is also shaped by social interactions. Our sense of self is influenced by how we are perceived and treated by others, and the roles we take on within society (such as being a student, friend, parent, or worker). The social environment, including family, peers, and culture, plays a significant role in helping individuals to define who they are [3].

It should be noted that Erikson views the conflicts in each stage as crises that are crucial for healthy psychological development. The identity crisis that occurs in adolescence is not a negative experience but rather a necessary part of developing a strong and coherent self-concept. By resolving these crises, individuals gain a clearer sense of their identity [3].

Erikson’s theory highlights that identity is formed through a process of exploration and resolution of key conflicts throughout life. The central focus in adolescence is the development of a strong, stable identity, which then serves as a foundation for later growth and adaptation. His work underscores that identity is a dynamic, ongoing process influenced by both personal experiences and social interactions.

In its turn, the sociological perspective emphasizes the role of society, culture, and social interactions in forming identity. This perspective looks at how external factors like family, peer groups, and social norms influence the way we see ourselves and are seen by others.

American philosopher and psychologist William James was among the first to propose the theory of the self in his book “The Principles of Psychology”. In it he divides self-concept into two categories: the “I” and the “Me” [6]. The “I” is the self that is aware of who a person is and what he or she has done in life, while the “Me” represents an object or individual that a person refers to when describing his or her personal experiences. Thus, James viewed the “I” as knower (as a pure I or transcendental I) and the “Me” as known (as an objective or empirical Me) [7, 107]. According to James, the “I” is the thinking self which cannot be further divided, and he associated it with the soul or, more commonly today, the mind. The “Me” is into three aspects: the material self (includes everything a person owns or identifies with), the social self (reflects who we are in various social contexts), and the spiritual self (represents the core of a person’s identity, including personality, values, and conscience, which remain relatively stable throughout life) [7].

George Herbert Mead is often credited with being one of the key figures in the development of the “social self” theory. Mead’s ideas on the self, particularly his concept of the “I” and the “Me,” have been fundamental in understanding how individuals develop their identities and interact with society.

Mead believes that the self is not an innate or biological feature but a product of social interactions. It develops through communication and engagement with others in society [10].

One of Mead’s central ideas is that the self consists of two components:

- the “I”: the “I” represents the individual’s spontaneous, unpredictable, and active side. It is the part of the self that responds to the external world, often creatively and impulsively;
- the “Me”: the “Me”, in contrast, represents the internalized expectations and norms of society. It is

the reflective, socialized aspect of the self that conforms to societal rules and expectations [10].

Mead proposes that the self develops through a process called role-taking, where individuals learn to take on the perspectives of others. This ability to see the world from another's viewpoint is crucial for socialization and the development of a cohesive self. The "generalized other" refers to the collective attitudes, expectations, and norms of society that individuals internalize. As individuals grow and interact with various groups, they begin to understand and integrate these societal perspectives into their self-concept [10].

Charles Horton Cooley is best known for his concept of the "looking-glass self", which focuses on how individuals form their self-concept based on their interactions with others [1]. Cooley's theory helps explain how individuals develop their sense of self through social processes. In "On a Remark of Dr. Holmes" he explains that "six persons take part in every conversation between John and Thomas. There is a real John, John's ideal John (never the real John), and Thomas's ideal John, and there are three parallel Thomases" [2, p. 138].

Thus, Cooley proposes that the self develops in three key stages:

1. *How we imagine we appear to others:* in this first stage, we form a perception of how others might view us based on our behaviour or appearance.

2. *How we think others evaluate us.* We then imagine how others judge our behaviour. Do they approve, disapprove, or remain neutral? This stage involves our reflections on their responses.

3. *How we feel about these evaluations.* Finally, we form a sense of self-worth based on how we

believe others perceive and judge us. This leads to feelings of pride, shame, or satisfaction, depending on whether we perceive positive or negative evaluations.

Cooley's theory highlights that self-identity is socially constructed. Instead of the self being an isolated, internal entity, it emerges and develops through continuous interaction with others. Our self-concept is shaped not just by direct feedback but also by our perceptions of how others view us in various social settings.

The concepts of the self developed by Charles Horton Cooley, George Herbert Mead, and William James are foundational to understanding the philosophical development of the self. Each theorist presented unique perspectives on how the self develops, but they all emphasized the importance of social interaction, self-awareness, and reflection in shaping identity (see table 1).

As it can be seen, Cooley focuses on the reflective nature of the self, formed through social feedback, particularly in primary relationships while Mead emphasizes the process of role-taking and the development of the self through interaction with society, leading to the "I" and "Me" and James takes a multi-faceted view, seeing the self as a combination of both the material and social self, alongside the more introspective, spiritual self.

Each theorist provides a unique angle on the formation of the self, with Cooley focusing on external feedback, Mead on role-taking and internalization of societal norms, and James on the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the self.

Thus, psychodynamic viewpoint often understands identity as the outcome of unconscious forces, early experiences, and socialization processes that

Table 1

Key Differences in Cooley's, Mead's, and James's Attitude to the Self

Aspect	Charles Horton Cooley	George Herbert Mead	William James
<b>Core Idea of the Self</b>	The self is a social construct formed through <b>others' perceptions</b> (looking-glass self).	The self develops through <b>role-taking</b> and social interaction, involving the <b>"I"</b> and <b>"Me"</b> .	The self is <b>multi-dimensional</b> , consisting of the <b>"I"</b> (the experiencer) and the <b>"Me"</b> (the object of experience).
<b>Social Interaction</b>	The self is formed by how we perceive others' judgments.	The self arises from <b>social interactions</b> and the internalization of others' perspectives.	Acknowledges the <b>social self</b> but also focuses on the <b>individual's subjective experience</b> .
<b>Key Components of the Self</b>	Focuses on the <b>social feedback loop</b> (looking-glass self).	The self consists of the <b>"I"</b> (spontaneous) and <b>"Me"</b> (socialized), shaped by interaction and societal norms.	Describes the self as consisting of the <b>material self</b> , <b>social self</b> , and <b>spiritual self</b> .
<b>Role of Society</b>	Society's feedback is central to self-identity.	Society shapes the self through interaction, role-taking, and the generalized other.	Society is an important aspect of the <b>social self</b> , but the self is also shaped by personal experiences.
<b>Focus</b>	Reflective process of self-awareness via feedback from others.	The dynamic interplay of the <b>"I"</b> and <b>"Me"</b> as the individual navigates between personal desires and societal expectations.	Emphasizes the <b>subjective experience</b> of the self, focusing on self-esteem and the self as object and subject.

Table 2

**Key Differences between Psychodynamic and Sociological Views of Identity:**

Aspect	Psychodynamic Viewpoint	Sociological Viewpoint
<b>Focus</b>	Internal psychological processes, unconscious drives, and early experiences.	External social processes, group membership, and cultural norms.
<b>Identity Formation</b>	The self is shaped by unconscious drives, childhood experiences, and internal conflicts.	The self is formed through social interaction, cultural expectations, and group dynamics.
<b>Primary Influences</b>	Early childhood experiences, family dynamics, and unconscious drives.	Socialization, social roles, and interactions with others.
<b>Individual vs. Society</b>	Focuses on the <b>individual's inner world</b> and how unconscious processes shape their sense of self.	Focuses on how <b>society shapes individual identities</b> through social roles and cultural expectations.
<b>Key Concepts</b>	Defence mechanisms, unconscious desires, the ego, identity vs. role confusion, attachment.	The looking-glass self, role-taking, the generalized other, socialization, intersectionality.
<b>Identity as Static or Dynamic</b>	Identity can be seen as more <b>fixed</b> or influenced by early life stages and unconscious drives.	Identity is <b>fluid and context-dependent</b> , evolving through social interactions and societal changes.

shape the individual's internal sense of self. This perspective tends to focus more on the individual's inner world – the ways unconscious thoughts and emotions shape their behaviour and self-understanding.

The sociological view of identity is dynamic, relational, and rooted in social context. It argues that identity is shaped by interactions with others and influenced by larger social structures. Cultural norms, social roles, and group membership play significant roles in how individuals perceive themselves and are perceived by others (see Table 2).

Both viewpoints are crucial in understanding the complexity of identity formation. While the psychodynamic perspective gives insight into personal development and internal conflicts, the sociological perspective highlights the social and relational nature of identity. Together, these perspectives provide a more holistic understanding of how we come to understand ourselves, navigating the interplay between internal psychological forces and external social influences.

**Conclusions.** However, the examination of identity formation does not end with these foundational frameworks. While the psychodynamic and sociological approaches provide substantial insight into the dynamics of identity development, they represent only the initial layers of a much broader and more intricate exploration. The formation of identity is an ongoing, multifaceted process, continually shaped by cultural, technological, and historical contexts. In today's rapidly evolving world, the ways in which

individuals experience and negotiate their identities are increasingly influenced by globalization, digital technologies, and the ever-expanding reach of social media. These elements add new layers of complexity to identity formation, challenging traditional conceptions of selfhood.

Moreover, the growing recognition of intersectionality – the way in which multiple social identities, such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, interact – further complicates the understanding of identity. As identity becomes more fluid and context-dependent, contemporary theories must account for these intersecting layers of experience and power. In addition, the rise of global migration, transnationalism, and multiculturalism underscores the necessity of adopting a more globalized perspective when studying identity, acknowledging that the boundaries of identity are not confined to national or cultural contexts.

Thus, while the psychodynamic and sociological models provide essential frameworks for understanding identity, the investigation into its formation must evolve alongside the changing social and cultural landscapes. The complexity of contemporary identity demands an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates insights from fields such as postmodern philosophy, cultural studies, media theory, and gender studies, among others. In this way, the study of identity will continue to expand, offering deeper insights into the ever-changing and dynamic nature of the self, both on an individual and collective level.

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