Totality in sociological research

Andrzej Borowski

Department of Administration and Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Pomeranian University in Słupsk, 64 Westerplatte Str., 76-200 Słupsk, Poland

E-mail address: aubor@poczta.onet.pl

ABSTRACT

One of the perceptions of the institution relates to such forms of social organisation which are characterised by a clear and specific order, and particularly are intended to subordinate people's behaviours to special rigours. This method uses the notion of total institution which has been made popular in sociological science by E. Goffman. Totality may be subject to analysis both in the aspect of its intensity and the number of barriers that are used by it.

Keywords: total institution, totalism, social institution, barriers, isolation

1. INTRODUCTION

Totality is a concept of the total (from Latin word totus) perception of phenomena in personal and social space. In some philosophical concepts, it arises from the noosphere saturation, economic and technological overload and interaction between knowledge growth, consciousness and human activity. Total institutions, which have been operating for many centuries to date, being constantly modified in recent decades (for the sake of optimisation), are an example of the total approach to life in society and the problems associated with it.

2. TOTALITY OF INSTITUTIONS AS AN OBJECT OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Institutions, as being called by J. Szczepański, are "groups of persons established to resolve issues that are of far-reaching importance for the entire community". In his view, "organisational forms of a combination of activities" being performed by certain members of the group on its behalf are also an institution. According to him, an institution is also "a combination of material devices and measures" that allow certain members of the group to perform public functions aimed at meeting the needs and regulating the activities of the whole group. An institution, as is finally called by this author, is the social roles played by certain members of the group, being particularly important for the group's life.

The term "institution" is therefore being used ambiguously in sociology, and for phenomena of various extent. Leaving aside the above, three basic understandings of the notion of institution can be identified.

In the first understanding (the broadest one), an institution is the foundation of social order. Referring to this understanding, an institution, in the eyes of researchers, turns into:

– beliefs and modes of action and judgement that exist outside us, independent of the will of individual people (E. Durkheim),
– an uniformed behaviour (A. Radcliffe-Brown),
– a joint action on a regular and habitual basis (G. Allport), or
– any system of persons who fulfil linked social roles and address specific expectations to each other that result from adoption of the same cultural values (T. Parsons).

The second understanding of institution is much closer to the colloquial [everyday] understanding. According to this approach, institutions are certain organised separate types of activity being undertaken to satisfy the needs of individuals and entire communities. Under such approach to institution, its constitutive elements are as follows: ground rule (intentions and goals), norms, personnel, material devices, activity and final result, and consequences of its organised activity (function) (B. Malinowski).

In every society, there are several institutional complexes necessary for the functioning of the entire system; these include:

– economic institutions (production and distribution of goods and services, and formation and circulation of capital),
– political institutions (power [authority] relations, political organisation of society, legal system, functioning of coercive measures),
– social stratification institutions (distribution of social standing, and access to goods and rewards and resources),
– family and kinship institutions (physical and cultural reproduction of society, shape of the socialisation process),
– upbringing and educational institutions (culture, religion, science, art, mass media).

A. Kardiner made a distinction between primary institutions (which determine principal traits of the core personality {socialisation}) and secondary institutions (religion, rituals,

ideology) that are created by the core personality with psychological mechanisms (projection and rationalisation).

The third and narrowest understanding of institution relates to such forms of social organisation which are characterised by a clear and specific order, and particularly are intended to subordinate people's behaviours to special rigours. Erving Goffman, a Canadian-American scholar, called them total institutions.

According to E. Goffman, a total institution is a place of residence and work for a certain number of like-situated individuals, isolated from the rest of society for a longer period of time, whose behaviour is under almost total control of the staff of a given institution.

Assuming that every social institution is characterised by a tendency to capture, to some extent, the time and interests of its members, E. Goffman, when distinguishing between particular institutions, took into account the varying degree of absorption of the members of a given institution and subordination to its goals.

The essence of total institution is defined by the author of this theory as follows:

> *"a basic social arrangement in modern society is that the individual tends to sleep, play and work in different places, with different co-participants, under different authorities, and without an over-all rational plan. The central feature of total institutions can be described as a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life".*

According to E. Goffman, there are different total institutions in our society which can be divided into five groups:

– established to care for people thought to be both incapable and harmless (orphanages, nursing homes, shelters),
– designed to care for people thought to be at once incapable of looking after themselves and a threat to the community (mental hospitals, tuberculosis sanatoriums, leprosariums),
– organised to protect the community against what are thought to be intentional dangers to it, i.e. current and potential criminals and enemies (prisons, corrections centres [reformatories], P.O.W. camps, and concentration camps),
– established to better pursue some work-like tasks and justifying themselves only on these instrumental grounds (army barracks, boarding schools, seagoing ships),
– designed as "retreats from the world" even while often serving religious purposes (convents, monasteries, abbeys).

The common feature of these institutions is confinement and isolation from the outside world that makes the member of this institution satisfy his / her needs exactly in it, co-operate with others, and is strictly controlled, often with coercion. The total nature of organisation brings about degradation of personality (intentional degradation). Formal organisations do not satisfy the needs of their members, so in order to oppose the totality of institution its members often create informal ties, own behavioural patterns, norms, implement strong social control, even at the cost of being exposed to sanctions from the official institution. With respect to penitentiaries and reformatories, it is even referred to as the so called second life. Similar, by nature and function, are peer groups, or informal cliques [factions], in workplaces.

E. Goffman distinguishes several modes of adaptation the subordinates can use when being in the situation of stay at total institutions (withdrawal, rebellion, colonisation, conversion). The latter option assumes voluntary adoption of the norms and values of institution's staff. The author also assumes the possibility of combining these options. Usually, in terms of the goals of a given total institution, an optimum solution is conversion of the participant of institution. My earlier studies show that permanent conversion is possible only in total institutions of the religious type.

As mentioned above, personality degradation as a result of participation in a total institution is of the intentional nature, whereas reintegration of personality is possible through the system of privileges. The same objective can be reached, although through other routes, by other factors (release from economic and social duties in mental hospitals).

However, a greater role in the process of personality reconstruction is being played by fraternisation, through which people of different social strata support each other and create subcultural norms for opposing the system that forces them to live in isolation and to share a common destination in the standardised community. Total institutions frequently claim that the main aim of their activity is rehabilitation [resocialisation], being understood as the restitution of self-regulatory mechanisms in the subordinates so that they will want of their own accord to follow social standards. However, nor reformative methods or restrictive ones ensure permanent rehabilitation [resocialisation] (except institutions of the religious nature).

Penitentiaries and reformatories, mental hospitals, nursing homes are the institutions that create more serious restrictions for their members (convicts, charges, patients and inmates) than other total institutions. The institutions being mentioned here are the facilities of forced respect for the staff, forced subordination to many prohibitions and orders, obedience in action and spirit. In these facilities, personality is being forcibly transformed, the effects of which are often referred to as hospitalism, hospital-induced torpor, prisonisation, maladaptation syndrome. The consequences of staying at institutions of this type are standardisation of behaviour and attitudes, depersonalisation, alienation and desocialisation. It is difficult for the subordinates to get out from under the system of coercion formed around them by a total institution. Coercion, violence, aggression, or a threat of thereof, are particularly common. The staff uses regulatory sanctioned violence against the subordinates, the subordinates also return violence to each other. Interpersonal relations are simply "infatuated" with violence. This applies especially to penitentiaries and reformatories, while to lesser extent to mental hospitals and nursing homes. The staff and the subordinates experience aggression as victims, perpetrators and observers.

Total institutions and other institutions of individual control operate on the principle of binary division [opposition] and marking (a madman – not a madman, normal – abnormal, wise [smart] – fool [stupid], safe – harmful), and forced assignation and discriminant repartition (who this is, where he / she should be, how to identify him / her, how to individually approach him / her).

M. Foucault analysed total institutions as a tool of the influence of society on individual modes of conduct and recognition of the social world. According to him, the goal of total institutions is to discipline the members of society by imposing typologisation (typification) patterns on them and taking actions being treated by the society as "normal", not destroying the existing and accepted order. Disciplining is done by shaping appropriate practices and mutual constant observation and supervision.

The countries in the from of Oriental despotism or twentieth-century totalitarian state can be considered to be a specific type of total institution. They try to bring totally the society under their power [authority], blocking at the same time the development of economic and political forces than they are and independent information.

According to E. Goffman, the processes of personality deprivation, in which it is systematically insulted and mortified, are very common in total institutions. There are different official justifications for these attacks on personality. In mental hospitals, they are justified with the need to protect a patient from herself / himself and from other patients. In prisons, the reason justifying attacks on the subordinate's personality is concern for security and just punishment. Institutions of the religious type justify this with the theories of the need for catharsis through penance and asceticism. At the core of all these rationalisations is a desire to manage the activity of large groups of people in a small space with a minimum of efforts and resources.

At the heart of the process of sociological personality deprivation, one can find a specific system of authority which is characterised by three distinctive features that all total institutions have in common:

– authority is of the echelon kind. Any member of the staff has the right to punish the subordinate. However, every adult citizen in the society is typically under the authority of a single immediate superior. The only echelon authority is here the police, but contacts with the police are rare, except where the rules have been infringed;
– the authority of total institution uses sanctions for offences against a very large group of behaviours that constantly occur and are constantly punishable. Sanctions for improper clothes, deportment, social intercourse, manners are notoriously used;
– sanctions for offences in one area are used by the authority in other areas, too.

These features create around the total institution's subordinate a system of coercion, judgement and pressure, from under which it is not easy to escape. This system undermines the principle, according to which an adult person has the right to decide about his / her relations with other people. Degradation, which is to be experienced by the subordinates, can be met by them in an exaggerated form, especially during the first day of their stay in the institution when the staff and senior subordinates explain a novice his / her position and function. Older fellow members make it then clear that such a person is not merely one of them but even someone lower [inferior] among them.

The essential requirements for the conduct of subordinates are determined in a codified, relatively clear set of prescriptions and proscriptions. They lay out a strict framework of action. In exchange for obedience in action and spirit, the staff grants the subordinates a number of clearly defined rewards and privileges. Showing a subordinate the possibilities of recovering at least a few rights plays in this situation a re-integrating role because this binds him / her again with the whole lost outside world and mitigates the effects of isolation and one's lost SELF.

Rules and privileges require the presence of a third element – disciplinary punishments which are repressive measures for breaking the rules. One type of these punishments consists in suspending the right to privileges or completely depriving of them. In total institutions, punishments and privileges are a specific way of organising the life. The very process of escaping from under the total institution authority is included in the system of privileges.

Privileges and punishments are incorporated in a stationary work system. In places of work and rest, there are different, clearly defined, types and levels of privileges. Typical social processes, which are of major importance in the life of total institutions, are immediately associated with the system of privileges. A jargon (lingo / slang) develops which members of the institution (subordinates and lower-level staff) use when describing events in this specific world. The phenomenon of messing up (brawl / bovver) is also known among the staff. This is a complex process which involves engaging in forbidden activity. Messing up usually implies an alteration in the subordinate's status to the lower [inferior] one. In total institutions, there is also a system of secondary adjustments. It includes techniques which are not intended to directly oppose the staff management but which allow subordinates to obtain (unofficially) disallowed satisfactions. These practices involve using different "tricks" and "catches", conniving, gimmicks, weaknesses [weak points] and deals. They are developed the most in prisons but are also present in other total institutions. The main factor of secondary personality adjustments is the system of privileges. Other factors, although by different routes, lead to the same goal. One of them is a relief from economic and social responsibilities which, for example in mental hospitals, is treated as part of the therapy process.

The essence of the staff's work, which organises its world, is the specific people work. People (subordinates) are here the material of which something is being made, therefore they gain, to some extent, attributes of inanimate objects.

The concept formulated by E. Goffman in the late fifties and early sixties of last century has been repeatedly analysed by researchers of particular total institutions, as well as in broader theoretical terms. The statements contained in this theory have divided the researchers into supporters, critics and critical commentators.

The first group includes, among others, L. A. Zurcher and W. H. Hopwood, the second one N. Perry and R. Wilkie, whereas the third one V. Aubert, B. Nolan, and M. E. Smith.

The main lines of criticism directed against Goffman's analysis of total institutions suggest that:

– the medical model is much more stable than that suggested by him;
– the notion of total institution is imprecise;
– E. Goffmana's analysis makes no positive proposal.

Each of these lines of criticism deserves a short overview.

It is a mistake to assume that sociological and medical descriptions of mental illness are indifferent to each other. Even though E. Goffman was critical of the whole psychiatry, it must be emphasised that he clearly benefited from psychiatric efforts to categorise different types of behaviour. Starting from their mechanisms, he presents a list of rule-braking practices in modern societies. Medical practitioners can also made good use of Goffman's findings.

E. Goffman also alerted these medical practitioners to the complexity of "normal" everyday behaviour.

The author drew particular attention to the importance of understanding the context or "frame" of everyday interactions. Without this knowledge, it is very easy to misinterpret the behaviour. E. Goffman was an important precursor of the very detailed studies of everyday interactions, produced later by ethnomethodologists and representatives of conversation analysis.

Goffman's most important contribution to modern psychiatry was that he provided psychiatrists with a benchmark against which to measure the validity of their studies.

The second line of very diverse criticism concerns the usefulness of the notion of total institution. N. Perry, N. Mouzelis, M. Ignatieff, and C. Davies can be here an example. These authors argue that Goffman's notions are excessively redundant [long-winded / wordy] or left imprecise. Key elements of Goffman's definition of total institutions are as follows:

– time and space of inmates are under single authority,
– activities of the inhabitants are carried out in large groups, and all inhabitants do the same things,
– there is a detailed plan of activities and subordination to formal rules, and
– operation of the institution aims at achieving its goals.

N. Perry argues that many of these details are vague [unclear] or are subject to empirical variation. The second feature, for which N. Perry wants to know how big must be the groups to be classified as large ones, is an example of this ambiguity. N. Perry also shows other examples of total institutions which manifest the varied forms of authoritarian structures.

N. Mouzelis argues in a similar way, suggesting that Goffman's picture of total institutions should be limited to formal organisations in which their members:

1/ live and work in the same place;
2/ there is no choice of membership;
3/ stigmatisation results from membership.

M. Ignatieff supports this stand-view, suggesting that the category of total institutions is "unordered on the edges". He also suggest that voluntary or involuntary nature of recruitment is a critical distinguishing feature of this type of institutions.

C. Davies presents a comprehensive review of literature on total institutions. It can be clearly noticed that E. Goffman used this term in an open-ended manner [in a loose way]. Particularly, C. Davies suggests that Goffman's analysis would have been more clear if he had referred to the total institution as an organisation, using the following three key variables:

1/ the place where inmates stay;
2/ the presence of different formal justification for the functioning of total institutions;
3/ different modes of formation of the submissive attitude of subordinates, being used by the staff of total institutions .

Adoption of statements being evident in every respect throughout "Asylums", namely that life in a total institution is always a negative experience for its inmates, eliminates reflections on these factors.

Some empirical studies suggest that this assumption is false. For example, C. Davies cites W. P. Delaney's study of Buddhist monasteries in Thailand. W. P. Delaney discovered that although such an organisation dominates the individuals being placed within its boundaries, they do so in ways that can be both supportive and protective.

The third line of criticism of Goffman's sociological analysis of mental illness assumes that it offers no positive proposals for the treatment of mental disorders. For example, among

a barrage of sound and polemical criticisms against E. Goffman, P. Sedgwick suggested that E. Goffman lacked the practical and historical knowledge necessary for an adequate understanding of the problems facing the mental illness. Inability to deeper understand the phenomena being described by him, P. Sedgwick argued, entailed limitation and simplification of his comments about situationally disordered behaviour, which also fails to recognise more complex mental disorders. These comments hide Goffman's conservative, functionalist and largely amoral views about public institutions.

The key claim of P. Sedgwick concerns situational improprieties; in particular, his claim is that this idea is too simple to explain metal illness. When put in this way, the P. Sedgwick's argument has an intuitive force: most of us find it hard to believe that perhaps schizophrenics, maniacs, people with depression, psychotics and others are perfectly healthy, "regular guys" who just break behavioural rules in public places. Instead it seems to be more plausible to say that they are ill, although in a complicated way. At this point it would be worthwhile to reiterate Goffman's basic argument: excluding odd moments of excess, he did not claim that mental illness is simply a set of situational improprieties. Instead E. Goffman suggested that if psychiatrists can only identify (diagnose) mental illness through situational improprieties, then they do not present any proof that mentally ill are actually ill, since they have not used any physical tests of abnormality. The only data psychiatrists have are sociological observations about rule-following in modern societies.

P. Sedgwick is right to say that the policy implications of this argument are vague, and that scepticism in the psychiatric practice does not help psychiatrists to immediately attempt treatment. To this E. Goffman might add, but "neither do psychiatrists", as he says at the beginning of most of his essays concerning mental illnesses.

Despite the negative implications of this argument, the policy implications of Goffman's arguments are very significant. For example, the thesis of self-mortification is a profound challenge for rehabilitative ambitions of psychiatric facilities, and in part the reason for dramatic shifts in the treatment of mentally ill in the 1960s.

Doubt about the success of hospital programmes, concern about raising costs, and increased political interest in mental health entailed development of a movement proposing to keep mentally ill in therapeutic communities. This programme of "deinstitutiolisation" or "decarceration" was supported by "intellectuals suspicious of psychiatrists".

Conservatives, trying to cut public spending and civil liberties, stimulated the groups being interested in protection of personal freedoms and through this the general public could see films such as K. Kesey's "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest". This is not the place to present the results of this programme. One can only mention here, that the situation of mentally ill has not been improved by their return to the therapeutic communities as they tried to get rid of them at the earliest opportunity. As A. Scull points out in his notes, decarceration is now often a long word being used for malign neglect.

Sociologists find it hard to construct introductions to his often witty, provocative essays. "Asylums" begins with the reprint of a longer version of Goffman's classical approach to the properties of total institutions. It focuses, narrowing the subject to the description of specific types of patients, on conditions of their moral degradation and next on their modes of participation in the hospital subculture. E. Goffman gathered the materials for his essays during a year of observational study at Saint Elizabeth Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Two central issues that run through his book are the concept of total institutions and the structure of self. Out of these two, presentation of the aspects of total institutions is more clear, whereas the notion of self seems to be ambiguous ad needs further explanation.

The process which an individual goes through when entering a total institution is discussed by E. Goffman in the description of mental hospital, in his second essay, under the concept of carer of particular patients. This concept is accurate because E. Goffman notes: "in the degree that the mentally ill outside hospitals numerically approach or surpass those inside hospitals, one could say that mental patients distinctively suffer not from mental illness, but from contingencies".

An intelligent description is made there how an individual can be stripped of his / her rights and freedoms, with no outside persons knowing anything about this event, and, as a hospital's patient, is finally transformed into his / her own caregiver [assistant].

Since an individual is admitted to a total institution, E. Goffman believes that he / she undergoes the process of mortification in which a series of degradations, humiliations and profanations of self begins. Partly in response to these processes of mortification, E. Goffman sees the inhabitants as developing, what he is calling, secondary adjustments which, collectively, form the underlife of the institution. These secondary adjustments are defined as: "any habitual arrangement by which a member of an organisation employs unauthorised means, or obtains unauthorised ends, or both, thus getting around the organisation's assumptions as to what he should do and get and hence what he should be". These practices together comprise what can be called the underlife of the institution, being to a social establishment what an underworld is to a city. In general, as to the concept of total institution, I agree with E. Goffman when he says: "We now have a sizeable literature on these establishments and should be in a position to supplant mere suggestions with solid framework bearing on the anatomy and functioning of this kind of social animal", but I disagree with the strong implication in his writing that an individual is unlikely to come through the experience of life in a total institution, and especially a mental hospital, somewhat the better (rather than the worse) for it. The basis for my disagreement lies in my negative reaction to Goffman' s rather peculiar, and I think confused, view of the self. The ideas about the structure of the self shift and change from one essay to another and do not form as coherent a whole as do those about the total institution.

The practice of reserving something of oneself from the clutch of an institution is very visible in mental hospitals and prisons but can be found in more benign and less totalistic institutions, too. This practice in not an incidental mechanism of defence but rather an essential constituent of the self.

Generally speaking, "Asylums" is a good book, i.e. good mainly because of its clarity in looking at mental hospitals as at one of the types of total institutions and provided that strong language is preserved, by means of which it is possible to see similar institutions. This clarity is however fouled up by almost endless, provocative, descriptive comparisons of mental hospitals with prisons, sufferers in boarding schools, poor owners of fishing boats, and so on. Some strong comparisons are excellent; other fifty cases, one by one, provide more intricate arguments. However, it is possible to understand such propagation of descriptive comparisons under conditions of humiliation of people from the perspective of the author, working in the beginning in a big mental hospital, but Goffman's presentation therein appears to be something more than he is giving us to understand – this concerns the general view of society and self.

I barely understand total institutions as arising from unexpected cultural, structural and psychosocial effects of the effort of bureaucratic officials of twenty-four hour organisations who need large groups of the human material which would be entrusted to their care.

E. Goffman attaches importance to the moral career of the mental patient.

The essays glitter with other estimable qualities, of which no less important is Goffman's happy penchant for colourful conceptualisation of the salient latent structures and processes occurring in the places being called total institutions. An especially fortunate example is the notion of secondary adjustments and some of its varieties, "leeching", "stashes", and "ritual diffidence".

Comprising ordinary regulations for using prohibited measures in order to receive prohibited final effects, secondary adjustments are perceived as the first line of defence for the subordinates against the ubiquitous tendencies of total institutions to intervene in all matters of the subordinates.

However, something else is worthy of respect: the scholarly author proves his claims through illustrations and comparisons of the gathered material in a specific way, using available sources. Their range represents a broad spectrum, from prisons to concentration camps, and from statements of professional scientist in the field of social sciences to quotes from novels.

As is clear from this review, the most important contribution of this book is its constant topic: mind and self to society. When describing the sociological tradition in social psychology which enhances the effect of social forces and forms on the individual, often being reduced to uncritical and oversimplified cultural determinism, E. Goffman placed emphasis on the tension between self and society, which is welcomed and has become really necessary correction. Finally, it is necessary to admit to some kind of personal ambivalence in my total reaction to these essays. I am leaving aside the inherent in them inconvincibility and the anecdotal method which often seems to be forced and boring. Moreover, E. Goffman rarely tries to draw clear limits beyond which many of the descriptive postulates and conclusions being generated by him will cease to be a reference to reality. Notwithstanding this, the values of his contribution can be seen for sure in the number of levels, for a professional sociologist and a social psychologists, he provides the matrix that raises awareness of certain notions and the permanent token of complex relativity of the social importance and value for psychiatrists and administration workers, and these materials represent a novel, critical and questioning look at those aspects of their own activities, although only these most accurate can be taken as foregone. For a reader – a sociologist, psychiatrist or administration worker, who is ready to peruse "the mental career of the mentally ill", E. Goffman provides us with these information with a priceless label of the place of seclusion.

In the mid 1950s, in the same time when E. Goffman was writing about self and social interactions, he was also, generally speaking, engaged in a three-year study on the life of psychiatric patients in St. Elizabeth Hospital in Washington, D.C. Although there was an evident divergence in the subject from presentations of normal interactive rituals and stigmas, managing the technique of the everyday life in other works, his relations are in fact compatible. As he expresses it in the introduction to his essays collected in "Asylums", the main issue is about "development of the sociological explanation of the self structure".

The processes, through which the individual self is covered, includes the following humiliations:

1/ role dispossession;
2/ programming and identity trimming;
3/ dispossession of name, property and "identity kit";
4/ imposition of degrading postures, stances and deference patterns;
5/ contaminative exposure;
6/ disruption of usual relation of individual actor and his acts;
7/ restrictions on self-determination, autonomy and freedom of action.

Certain total institutions are open and may be left without a relevant consent of the staff. Any type of such institutions encompasses its inmate totally. Even is someone stays in it voluntarily and may choose the way of leaving, as long as he stays in it he is used (consumed) to achieve the institution's goals. If someone has chosen the way of leaving, each institution establishes ritual dismissal procedures Monasteries and convents demand, for instance, renouncement of vows. Circumvention or disregard for carefully developed procedures can, while leaving the total institution, be the basis for considering the person leaving such an institution (e.g. a prison or mental hospital), a fugitive. Of course, there are noticeable differences between voluntary and involuntary total institutions. Experiencing the tour of duty or the stay in a monastery causes that some inmates aspire to leadership. In prisons and mental hospitals, however, the division between inmates and staff is total. Aspiring to the leading role by an inmate is inconsistent. Such a distinction in these two latter institutions is legally required.

In prisons and metal hospitals, inmates stay at the bottom. If someone, as in the aforementioned film " One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", begins to show his intellectual superiority, even in the situation of extreme injustice, the institution may, gently or by use of force, keep the inmate in a "correct position"(subordination). In all total institutions, everyone knows "one's place in the line" and this is also of moral dimension. This dimension is reflected in the language intended for inmates. The persons placed in hospitals are "patients", military recruits are "yard-birds", and new prisoners are "suckers". This language makes, especially the persons newly arrived to a given institution, incapable of functioning properly in it. Their civil identity needs to be destroyed and a new identity must be created. The hierarchy of positions in individual total institutions is imposed. The persons newly initiated into the "mysteries" of the functioning of a given institution are usually treated with less respect, can be the object of regular tricking (hazing). The fundamental split between staff and inmates is not only administrative but also ethical.

In prisons and mental hospitals, inmates are permanently morally tainted. The legal process, detention, accusation and conviction are rituals of condemnation. Participation in something like that changes citizens in non-citizens (i.e. into someone who are no longer to be trusted, who can be taken away cilvil privileges and immunities). For example, prisoners are allowed to vote only in 4 states of the USA (out of 51 ones). E. Goffman uses the term "stigma" to describe visible corruption (stigmatisation). By being a prisoner or a mentally ill, people are changed from citizens into different status persons. They are not trusted any longer in the same way and are perceived as someone worse.

It is important to be able to locate these ethical differences in the context of Durkheim's sociology. Even in modern societies, rituals of punishment morally transform citizens into persons who are less worth of social respect than the righteous ones. Those who receive the worst social penalties are invariably converted into the "moral morass" (lepers).

At the same time, there are many people in the society who negatively react to criminals pr mentally ill and they could not calmly consider the possibility of being their neighbour, practising the same profession and enjoy the same freedoms and benefits available in a fress society.

Totality of institution − limitation of the possibility to make choices and to take independent decisions, taking control over time and space in which the subordinates function, appropriation, incapacitation, achieved under isolation conditions.
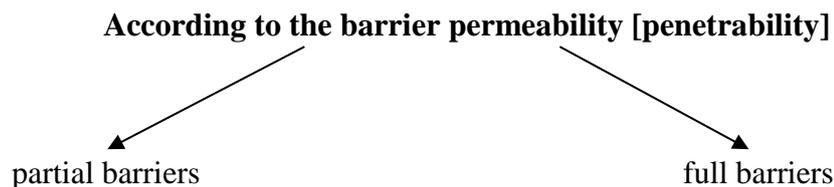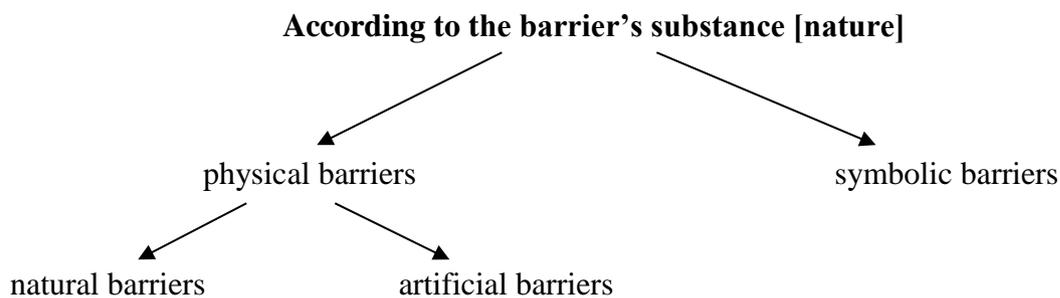
The degree of totality is an arithmetic average of the degree of incapacitation and the degree of isolation.
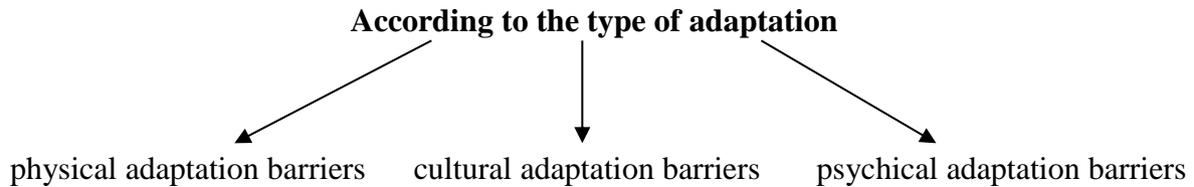
The degree of incapacitation is inversely proportional to the size of enclave of freedom in the universe of coercion. The smaller the enclave, the higher the degree of incapacitation is. The size of the aforesaid enclave can be measured over one day, by using an indicator which the amount of free time (to be used by members / inmates of total institution as they wish, measured in hours).

The degree of isolation is inversely proportional to the degree of permeability [penetrability]. The smaller the enclave, the higher the degree of isolation is. The level of permeability [penetrability] degree can be measured over one day, by using an indicator which is the amount of time (measured in hours), during which:

− members / inmates of the total institution can stay outside it by their own choice (ad extra permeability [penetrability]);
− outside persons can stay within the total institution and contact with its members / inmates (ad intra permeability [penetrability]).

Types of barriers in total institutions:

According to the barrier's substance [nature]

physical barriers   symbolic barriers

natural barriers   artificial barriers

According to the barrier permeability [penetrability]

partial barriers   full barriers

According to the type of adaptation

physical adaptation barriers   cultural adaptation barriers   psychical adaptation barriers

According to participation of third parties when creating barriers

mobile barriers   immobile [stationary] barriers

(Source: own elaboration)

3. CONCLUSION

The study of totality, due to a wide spectrum of application of this concept, particularly in the institutional context, gives rise to many problems and requires a relatively diverse knowledge from different fields of social life. The research tools being proposed allow one to standardise especially the measurements of totality in quantitative research and establish a common ground for comparative analyses.

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