

Social Identifications with Big Groups and Communities and Subjective Well-being in Poland

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Abstract: *Social ties are known to have strong influence on well-being, but in the studies in this scientific context they are usually operationalized as close relationships. The author wanted to check if social identifications with very big groups and communities e.g. citizens of a province, a nation, citizens of Europe or a religious group, are also linked to happiness and life satisfaction. On the basis of big opinion polls from years 1995–2005 (Polish General Social Surveys) and another opinion poll from 2009, the connection between wide social identifications and subjective well-being was probed. Analyses confirmed the hypothesis that social identifications with big groups or communities are connected to subjective well-being, both in an emotional aspect, like happiness or a positive affect, as well as in a cognitive one, like satisfaction in different domains of life. The results of the first study indicate that subjects identifying themselves on low level with Poland, Europe, region, and non-believers were the least satisfied in different domains. Also people highly identifying themselves with Poland and Europe had stronger feeling of happiness than people with weaker identifications. The results from the second study indicate that stronger social identifications (local, national, European and religious) were connected with more positive affect. Also, all of them except EU identification were connected with stronger domain satisfactions. The results are discussed in relationships with the Terror Management Theory, with support potentially acquired from social identifications and with specificity of religion prescriptions on desirable emotions.*

Key words: social identifications, subjective well-being, Terror Management Theory, religion, nation, European Union.

Cuvinte cheie: identificări sociale, bunăstare subiectivă, teoria managementului terorii, religie, națiune, Uniunea Europeană.

As John Donne wrote ‘*No man is an island*’ (Donne, 1624) – we all live among others, more or less committed to our communities, nations or even whole humanity. People have the need to belong to bigger entities, want to feel close to other people, call themselves ‘we’. Furthermore we often identify ourselves with many social groups, “identities in modern socie-

ties are almost by definition multiple identities” (Laczo, 2005, 517–518). Some of us identify mainly with family and friends, others also with bigger groups, like nation, there are also supranational identities (e.g. European identity) and people for whom ‘we’ means even whole humanity (see e.g. studies by Monroe, 1996; McFarland, Webb, 2003; Hamer–

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Gutowska, 2007, Hamer and Gutowski, 2009). Also the strength of those identities can differ (Sousa, 1996; Deaux, 2000, as well as their kind: a social identity can be closed to other social identities (e.g., exclusively national identity) or it can be open to such identities (two or more strong social identities; e.g., parallel national and European identities) (see Hamer and Gutowski, 2009).

Why do some people identify mostly with small social groups, like family and local community, while others feel close to all mankind? The psychological and situational reasons for these differences between people, as well as their consequences, are the field of my studies (see e.g., Hamer-Gutowska, 2007, Hamer and Gutowski, 2009, Hamer, 2009). In this article I will analyze if feeling closer to big social groups is positively connected to higher level of subjective well-being.

People have two kinds of identities: personal and social. They both develop from our ties with other people. Personal identity builds on the basis of comparisons with others, and leads to the formation of the concept of self as a unique individual, with own values and goals. The formation of a social identity consists of finding similarities and connections with other people. According to one of the well-known psychological theories, Social Identity Theory (SIT) by H. Tajfel (1974, 1981, 1982, it is defined as “that part of individuals’ self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups, together with the value and emotional significance of that membership” (Tajfel, 1982, p. 24). Social Categorization Theory (SCT) adds that social identity results from the categorization of the social world into ingroups and outgroups (‘us’ versus ‘them’) (Turner, 1987). This identification process includes both cognitive and emotional aspects: 1) knowledge of being a part of a group and labeling oneself as a member of the in-

group, 2) affect towards the group, which includes commitment, feeling of belonging, closeness to the group and identifying with the group’s goals and values (Hamer and Gutowski, 2009). It is necessary to add here that the psychological concept of ‘identification’, which I refer to in this article, is evidently different from the sociological concept of ‘belonging’ (Chrysochoou, 1996) – we can formally, sociologically belong to a group (e.g. single income families from big cities, but never feel close to it and never define ourselves in this categories. Therefore, from psychological point of view, individual does not have such social identification at all.

According to Brewer and Gardner (1996, there are three levels of representation of self: personal, relational and collective. People seek to achieve self-definition and self-interpretation (i.e., *identity*) in three fundamental ways: (a) in terms of their unique traits, (b) in terms of dyadic relationships, and (c) in terms of group membership (Brewer and Gardner, 1996). The personal self is basically personal identity, already explained above. The relational self is the self-concept derived from connections and role relationships with significant others: family, friends etc. The collective self is the level of wider social identities.

Jarymowicz (2002) has a slightly different view and argues that there are three kinds of social identifications:

- group ‘We’ – social identifications with small, very concrete social groups, like family, couple, friends etc. with whom an individual has direct contacts; it is similar to the relational self from Brewer and Gardner categories;
- categorial ‘We’ – identifications with social categories (wider social groups) like men/women, students, nation, social class etc. Ties with those groups are no longer based on direct contacts with every member of such group (it is

no longer possible, because these kinds of groups are too large, but based more on self-perception of belonging to such group and feeling close to it;

- attributional ‘We’ – identifications with communities that we perceive similarity to goals or/and characteristics and feel close to, without formal ties (like ‘people sharing same opinions’ or ‘active people’, ‘tolerant people’ etc.).

Social ties foster well-being and facilitate survival in the world (Myers, 1999). There are many studies proving that people having close relationships (group ‘We’ from Jarymowicz categories) are happier, e.g. studies showed positive influence of marriage and friendship on individual’s well-being (Myers, 1999; Czapiński, 2001; Czapiński and Panek, 2007). As Myers (2004, 16) argues “We humans have what today’s social psychologists call a deep ‘need to belong’. Those supported by intimate friendships or a committed marriage are much likelier to declare themselves ‘very happy’.”

Thus the question arises if wider social identities, e.g. from the categorial level, can also have such influence on subjective well-being, especially on happiness and life satisfaction?

With the processes of democratization of modern societies, issues like well-being, happiness, life satisfaction, are a key topic of public and scientific discourse (Jagodzinski, 2010). In this article I am focusing on subjective well-being, which is defined, according to Myers (2010, as self-perceived happiness or satisfaction with life. As Diener and co-workers add (Morrison, Tay and Diener, in press; Diener, Lucas and Oishi, 2002, subjective well-being (SWB) includes people’s emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction. All those aspects are the subject of my analyses in this paper.

According to the onion theory of happiness by Czapiński (1991, 8), well-being “is not a unitary construct, but a complex

structure consisting of several levels, relatively separated from each other. Some levels are more and some are less susceptible to the influence of external factors, just like onion peels”. Czapiński found analogies between an onion and well-being, like that the deepest layer (the core) of an onion is more protected against harm than its surface peels and that it secures onion’s ability to regenerate as long as its deeper layers remain intact. This may help to understand why people who live in bad conditions, and who complain on many aspects of their lives (peripheral layer of well-being, remain quite satisfied with life as a whole (deeper layer of well-being).

This theory refers to scientific discussion about happiness and two popular approaches to well-being, both having opponents and followers (Czapiński 1991, 2001, 2005). The first, popular among philosophers and some social scientists, says that happiness is an entirely subjective phenomenon and does not depend at all on external circumstances. Qualitative research made in Bangladesh (Camfield, Choudhury and Devine, 2009, known as one of the poorest and most densely populated countries in the world, shows that its people report levels of happiness higher than those found in many other countries, including ‘developed’ countries, with much larger incomes and a wider range of public services and goods. In another study, similarly, the fact of living in Italy or Cuba was not a predictor of overall happiness, despite the difference in national income (Sotgiu, Galati, Manzano and Rognoni, 2011).

Although there are some evidence for moderate stability of personal happiness, meta-analysis made by Ruut Veenhoven (1994, 20) showed that “contrary to current opinion happiness is no trait; neither a personal trait nor a cultural trait. Both at the individual level and the collective level happiness does not meet the classic three definitions of trait”. Happiness is not temporally stable enough, nor situationally

consistent. It is rooted, to some extent, in stable individual characteristics and collective orientations, but the impact of these inner factors is limited and according to Veenhoven, they only modify the outcome of environmental effects.

The opposite approach then, popular among ordinary people and some social scientists, indicates that there is strong direct link between life circumstances and psychological well-being: anyone whose life is miserable has to be unhappy, pessimistic or even depressive (Czapiński, 1991). As Czapiński assumes, both theories contain only part of the truth and his theory is an attempt to integrate the conceptions and the data.

According to Czapiński, the deepest layer of well-being, the will-to-live, is more genetic dependent, and “comprises the biological forces attuned to the preservation and development of life” (Czapiński, 1991, 9). An intermediate layer is called general subjective well-being and it consists of affective and evaluative components of attitudes towards life as a whole. The last layer refers to similar affective and evaluative components of attitudes towards specific life domains and is called ‘domain satisfactions’.

In this article I will focus mainly on an intermediate and peripheral layer of well-being, like the domain satisfactions, related to the rapidly changing aspects of life. According to Czapiński and Panek (2007), in peripheral layer people’s evaluations are the most realistic. In studies described in this article I include satisfactions in many areas of life, like social satisfactions (e.g. with family, friendship, children), materialistic domain (satisfaction with own financial situation, flat or house), environmental domain (satisfaction with the present state of the country, place of residence), health issues (e.g. satisfaction with own health) and other domains (like satisfaction with own education, leisure time etc.).

Can wide social identifications be connected to well-being? There are already many studies examining psychological factors influencing well-being (e.g. see

Myers, 2000; Czapiński, 2001, 2005), but very few about wide social identifications. Studies in this area in most cases check well-being among minorities in society (e.g. see Beals and Peplau, 2005; Iwamoto and Liu, 2011; Smith and Silva, 2011) and faith communities (Myers, 2004). Some refer to national identity or national pride (Bălătescu, 2009; Jagodzinski, 2010). Bălătescu (2009) showed that identification with the country, pride of being Romanian and positive attitude towards ethnic diversity in the country predicted the life satisfaction. Jagodzinski (2010) confirmed that national pride is important factor in life satisfaction. But what about other social identifications, e.g. with communities other than nation? And what about more emotional aspects of well-being, like happiness?

As to impact of religion on happiness, the results of the studies make quite unclear picture. Myers (2004, 16) argues that “Connection, meaning, and deep hope are often nourished in congregations. In National Opinion Research Center surveys of 42,000 Americans since 1972, 26 percent of those rarely or never attending religious services declared themselves very happy, as did 47 percent of those attending multiple times weekly.” But there are also data suggesting that sometimes faith can be connected to negative feelings, like guilt or fear, e.g. Christianity (Myers, 2000; Kim-Prieto and Diener, 2009). Furthermore, there are different emotions connected to different religions, e.g. shame in Hinduism, anger and shame in Islam, calm, moderate emotions in Buddhism, in Judaism – praiseworthy, joy but also weeping as a route to achieving spiritual ecstasy etc. (Kim-Prieto and Diener, 2009).

There are also studies showing cultural differences in religiosity characteristics, e.g. that Asian religions are experience-oriented, “offering rituals and practices that promote joy and pleasure, and thus contribute to life satisfaction.” (Jagodzinski, 2010, p. 101), opposite to European religiosity,

which is conservative and no longer associated with joyful experiences. Jagodzinski's analyses of European Values Study and Asia Barometer show strong relationship between the level of religiosity and the level of satisfaction in Asian countries and no effect in Europe. But those differences may be due to the fact that those two polls had different operationalization of religiosity: for Europe it was participation in religious services and for Asia – praying/meditation. Differences in operationalization of variables are often the reason of problems with comparing different studies (see also Hamer, 2009).

Another issue is the existence of culture frames for expressing and understanding emotions (Mesquita and Albert, 2007, cited in Bălătescu, 2009), e.g. Poles are known to have so called “complaining culture” (Wojciszke and Baryła, 2001, 2005) and it can significantly lower declarative well-being indicators in Poland.

I assume that social identifications with bigger groups, like community, religious group, nation or citizens of the whole European Union can influence well-being. It seems reasonable to think that feeling of belonging to a bigger community can give strength, meaning and social support to an individual, fostering his/her well-being. Some evidence for that hypothesis we can find e.g. observing society in emotionally difficult circumstances, like death of important public figure (like Pope John Paul II). Usually people in great sadness tend to look for others, gathering on the streets, for emotional support and being together with in-group. We observed that in Poland few times (e.g. after death of John Paul II or in 2010 after crash of presidential airplane). There are also similar observations from other countries e.g. after death of President Kennedy (Bradburn and Noll, 1969, cited by Bălătescu, 2009).

One can find reasons for assuming the connection between social identifications and well-being also in psychological

theories. According to Social Identity Theory, social identifications provide higher self-esteem and satisfy need of belonging, which should foster well-being. Terror Management Theory (TMT; Greenberg, Simon and Pyszczynski, 1992; Arndt, Greenberg, Schimel, Pyszczynski and Solomon, 2002) also gives reasons for such assumptions. It posits that advanced cognitive abilities to think abstractly and symbolically led mankind to the uniquely human awareness of the fragility of existence and the inevitability of one's own mortality. As Arndt, Greenberg, Schimel, Pyszczynski and Solomon (2002, 26) believe, “to function securely in the face of the uniquely human awareness of the inevitability of death, people live their lives embedded in a culturally derived conception of reality that provides meaning to experience and value to themselves. Group identifications are, of course, an important component of one's cultural context, and as many theorists have noted [...], group identifications play a major role in people's sense of who they are and how they feel about themselves. Thus, group identifications would be expected to play a significant role in how one manages concerns about mortality. Indeed, over a decade of research inspired by TMT has shown that after being reminded of their mortality, people are especially likely to defend cherished beliefs of groups with which they identify”.

Group identifications may then have the anxiety-buffering function (Arndt, Greenberg, Schimel, Pyszczynski, Solomon, 2002), derived from the capacity of such identifications to provide a sense that one is a valuable contributor to a meaningful reality, part of bigger entity, community which lasts and will last longer than an individual. If so, feeling connection with big social groups and communities should foster well-being. I verify this assumption in my studies, described in this article.

In both studies I explore cognitive and emotional aspects of well-being. In the first study (PGSS analyses) I probe domain satisfactions and overall feeling of happiness among representative sample of Poles, in 1995 and 2005, in the context of their social identifications. In the second study (another big opinion poll, made in 2009 in Poland) to domain satisfactions I also add other well-being indicators, like optimism, positive affect, depression, etc., all in the context of their connection with wide social identifications.

Study 1. Polish General Social Surveys (PGSS) 1995–2005

Subjects: It was a representative sample of adult Polish citizens (N=2880, 18–98 years of age). Subjects were chosen randomly, using GUS (Polish Central Statistical Office) data, 1603 subjects in 1995 (45% males, 55% females, and 1277 in 2005 (48% males, 52% females).

Measures: For analyses I chose items from big opinion polls known as Polish General Social Surveys, addressed twice, in 1995 and 2005, in exactly the same phrases, which also allowed me to compare well-

being of Poles after 10 years of system transformation.

Following items were chosen:

- *feeling of happiness in a present life* (scale: 4 = very happy, 1 = unhappy);
- *domain satisfactions* (scale: 6 = very satisfied, 1 = very unsatisfied):
 - satisfied with place of residence;
 - satisfied with leisure time;
 - satisfied with family life;
 - satisfied with friendship;
 - satisfied with personal health;
 - satisfied with political situation of the country;
 - satisfied with one's own living conditions;
 - satisfied with one's own children;
 - satisfied with one's own education;
 - overall satisfaction index (sum of 9 above domain satisfactions);
- *social identifications:*
 - how strongly connected you feel to (scale: 1 – not at all to 4 – very much): Poland, Europe, province.
- *religiousness* (scale: 3 – deep believer, 2 – believer, 1 – non believer).
See Table 1 and 2 for the descriptives of the independent and dependent variables.

Table 1. *The descriptives of the independent variables*

		year 1995	year 2005
province id.			
	high	20.2%	17.9%
	medium	40.0%	47.3%
	low	28.9%	27.0%
	answers „not at all”	5.3%	4.6%
	answers „hard to say”	5.6%	3.2%
national id.			
	high	53.5%	44.8%
	medium	38.5%	47.1%
	low	5.0%	6.5%
	answers „not at all”	0.9%	0.8%
	answers „hard to say”	2.1%	0.9%
European id.			

		year 1995	year 2005
	high	25.7%	18.7%
	medium	37.1%	41.1%
	low	21.4%	29.8%
	answers „not at all”	4.6%	4.5%
	answers „hard to say”	11.2%	5.8%
religiousness			
	deep believers	20.7%	14.1%
	believers	76.4%	82.7%
	non-believers	3.0%	3.2%

Table 2. *The descriptives of the dependent variables*

Year 1995						
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	St. dev.	
Happiness	1568	1	4	2.92	0.68	
overall satisfaction	1099	20	53	38.68	4.92	
Friendship	1559	1	6	4.74	0.84	
place of residence	1598	1	6	4.76	1.00	
leisure time	1579	1	6	4.06	1.26	
family life	1586	1	6	4.93	0.96	
Health	1596	1	6	3.87	1.43	
Politics	1458	1	6	2.51	1.00	
living conditions (flat)	1592	1	6	4.20	1.29	
Children	1267	1	6	5.39	0.72	
Education	1543	1	6	4.13	1.22	
Year 2005						
	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	St. dev.	
Happiness	1257	1	4	2.98	0.67	
overall satisfaction	820	18	53	39.34	5.17	
Friendship	1231	1	6	4.91	0.86	
place of residence	1275	1	6	4.77	1.01	
leisure time	1256	1	6	4.19	1.25	
family life	1266	1	6	4.96	0.97	
Health	1272	1	6	4.06	1.42	
Politics	1194	1	6	2.33	1.03	
living conditions (flat)	1271	1	6	4.33	1.23	
Children	953	2	6	5.46	0.69	
Education	1231	1	6	4.30	1.19	

Results

• Poles in 1995 and 2005

Social identifications of Poles are weakening (main effects for national identification: $F(1.2788)=10.23$; $p<.0014$; European identification: $F(1.2573)=18.34$; $p<.001$; and relig-

iousness: $F_{1,2820}=13.3$; $p<0.001$). This effect, with other detailed comparisons of Poles over the decade of system transformation, including changes in criteria of being “real Pole”, attitudes toward values etc. are described and discussed in other paper (see Hamer, 2009). In

this article I will focus mainly on subjective well-being in relation to social identifications.

Comparing the data from 1995 and 2005 revealed year of study main effect (see fig. 1 and 2): Poles felt much happier in 2005 than 10 years earlier ($F(1.2823)=6.81$; $p<.0091$) and much more satisfied with different domains (overall

satisfaction index) in 2005 than 10 years earlier ($F(1.1844)=9.70$; $p<.0019$). It also concerns increasing domain satisfactions, excluding constantly high family life satisfaction and place of residence satisfaction (no change in those two indicators) and drop in satisfaction with political situation of the country (see also Hamer, 2009).

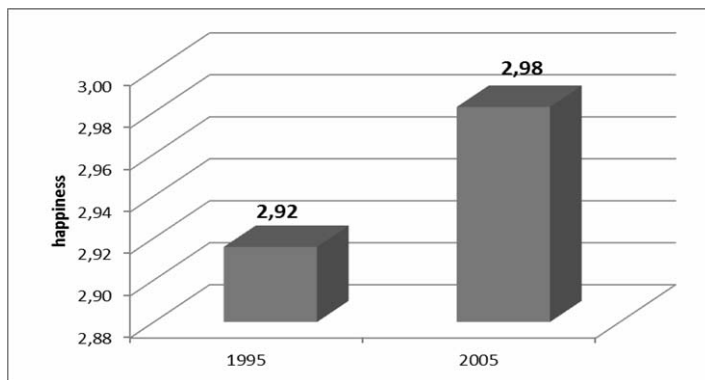


Figure 1. *Happiness of Poles in 1995 and 2005.*

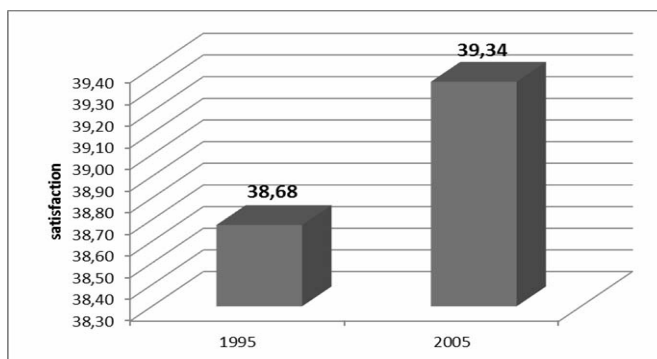


Figure 2. *Overall satisfaction of Poles in 1995 and 2005.*

▪ **feeling of happiness in a present life**

Generally analyses showed that subjects with stronger social identifications felt happier than subjects with weaker social identifications (see figure 3a/b).

People strongly identifying themselves with Poles were significantly happier than

people with lower national identification (Kruskal–Wallis test: $H=6.6$; $p=0.037$). Also subjects with high and medium level of European identification were feeling happier than subjects with low European identification (Kruskal–Wallis test: $H=18.4$; $p<0.001$).

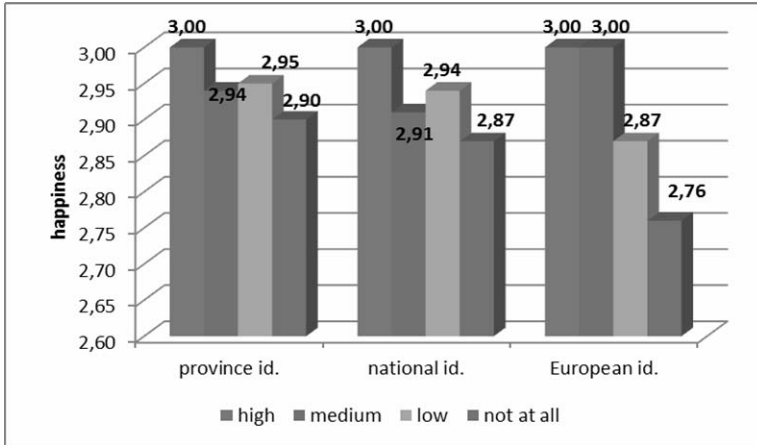


Figure 3a. Province, national and European identifications and feeling of happiness in 1995 and 2005 (total).

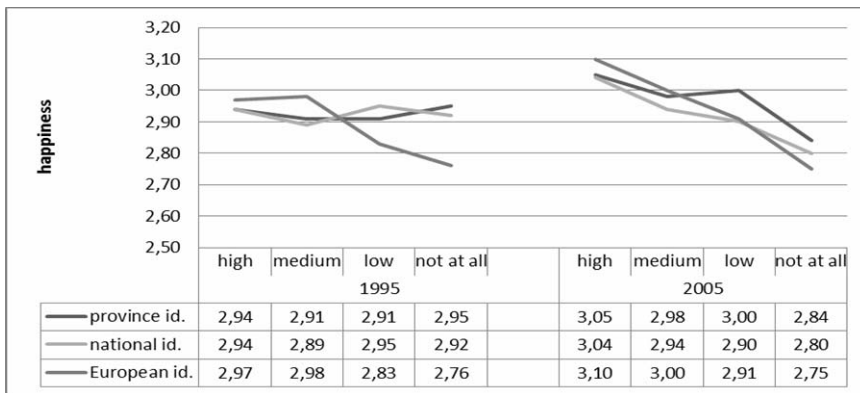


Figure 3b. Province, national and European identifications and feeling of happiness in 1995 and 2005 separately.

There was no significant connection between local identification and feeling of happiness, but the differences are in assumed direction (see Fig. 3a). Similarly there was no statistically significant con-

nection between religiousness and happiness, but it seems that being deeply religious does not bring much happiness to subjects (see Fig. 3c).

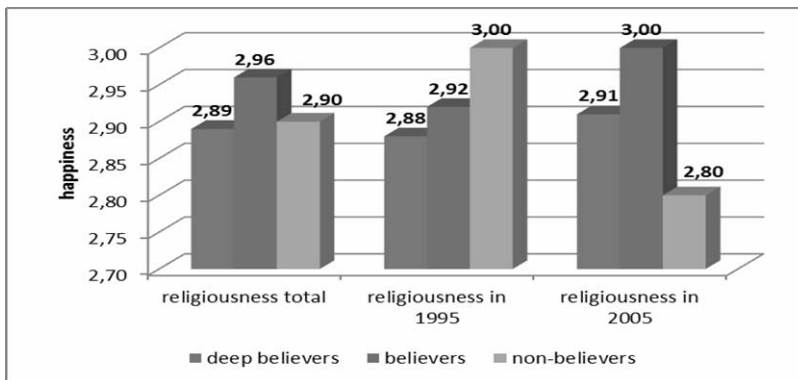


Figure 3c. Level of religiousness and happiness in 1995 and 2005 (separately and in total).

▪ domain satisfactions

As analyses showed (see Table 3 and Fig. 4a/b/c, satisfaction in different life domains was also connected to social

identifications: the stronger identifications, the more satisfied people (overall satisfaction measure).

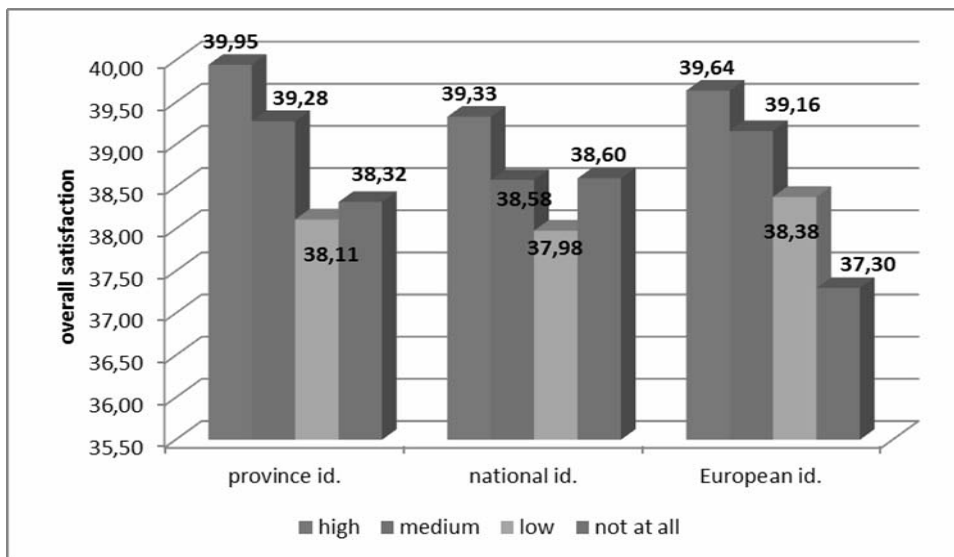


Figure 4a. Province, national and European identifications and overall satisfaction in 1995 and 2005 (total).

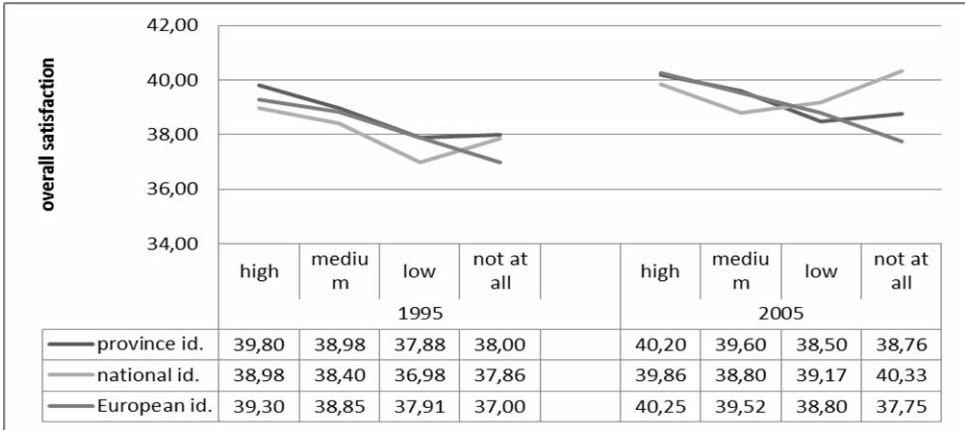


Figure 4b. Province, national and European identifications and overall satisfaction in 1995 and 2005 separately.

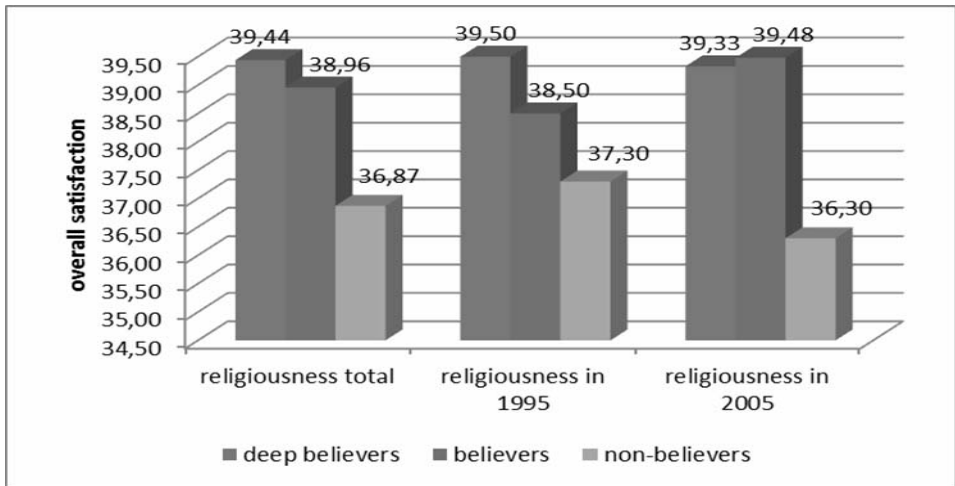


Figure 4c. Level of religiousness and overall satisfaction in 1995 and 2005 (separately and in total).

Space limitations do not allow the presentation of detailed comparisons for satisfaction domains between year 1995 and 2005. Below analyses are made for both

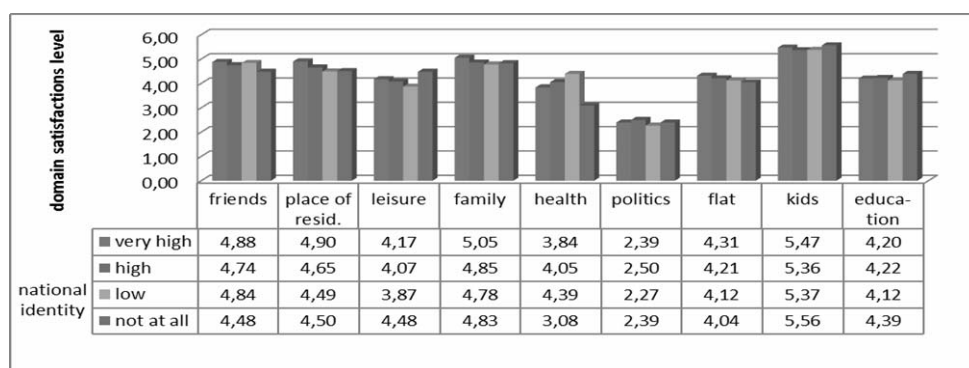
years together, to check the connection between social identifications and satisfaction domains, what is the main goal of this article.

Table 3. *The connection between local, national, European identifications, religiousness and domain satisfactions among Poles, in 1995–2005, total (Kruskal–Wallis tests).*

	overall satisfaction	family life	Friends hip	place of residence	leisure time	Health	politics	flat	kids	education
European	24.99**	21.0**	26.55**	20.76**	n.s.	12.9*	20.39**	15.53*	10.59*	28.51**
national	19.31**	45.43**	25.8**	67.58**	14.6**	37.3**	15.7**	13.25**	16.2**	n.s.
Local	41.66**	26.1**	47.65**	157.8**	33.83*	15.4**	14.98**	15.5**	n.s.	15.3**
religiousness	12.1**	25.7**	n.s.	64.34**	37.2**	185.77*	36.27**	12.3**	7.1*	17.24**

* = $p < .05$.** = $p < .001$.

National identification

**Figure 5.** *National identification levels and domain satisfactions.*

Analyses made with Kruskal–Wallis tests (see Table 2) showed that differences in all domain satisfactions were significant (except satisfaction with own education). In most cases, (see Fig. 5), strong national identification was connected with stronger satisfaction (friendship, place of residence, family life, flat).

European identification

Analyses made with Kruskal–Wallis tests (see Table 3) showed that differences in all domain satisfactions were significant (except leisure time satisfaction).

In most cases, strong European identification was connected with stronger satisfaction (friendship, place of residence, family life, flat, kids, education) than weak European identification (see Fig. 6).

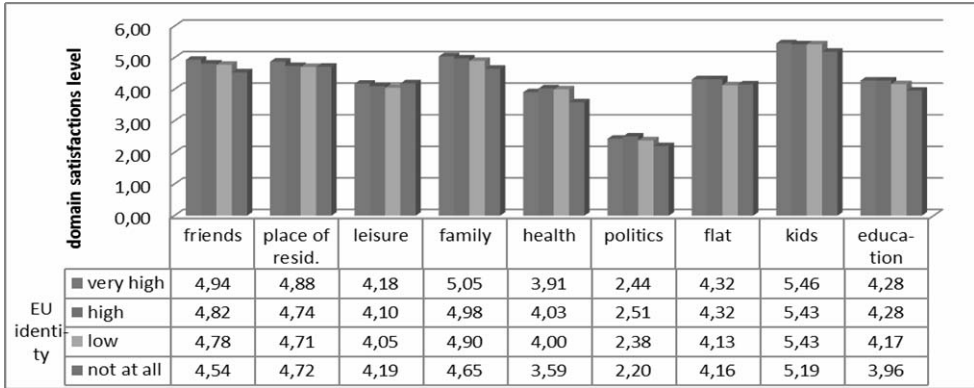


Figure 6. European identification levels and domain satisfactions.

Local identification

Analyses made with Kruskal–Wallis tests (see Table 3) showed that differences in all domain satisfactions were significant (except satisfaction with own kids).

In most cases strong local identification was connected with stronger satisfaction (with friendship, place of residence, leisure time, family life, flat, education) (see Fig. 7).

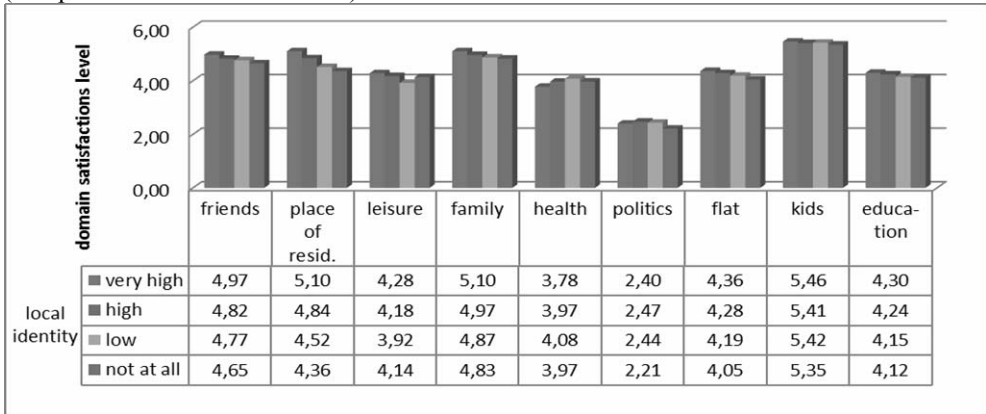


Figure 7. Local identification levels and domain satisfactions.

Religiousness

Analyses made with Kruskal–Wallis tests (see Table 3) showed that differences in all domain satisfactions were significant (except satisfaction with friendship).

In most cases, deep believers were more satisfied (with place of residence, leisure time, family life, flat, kids and politics) (see Fig. 8).

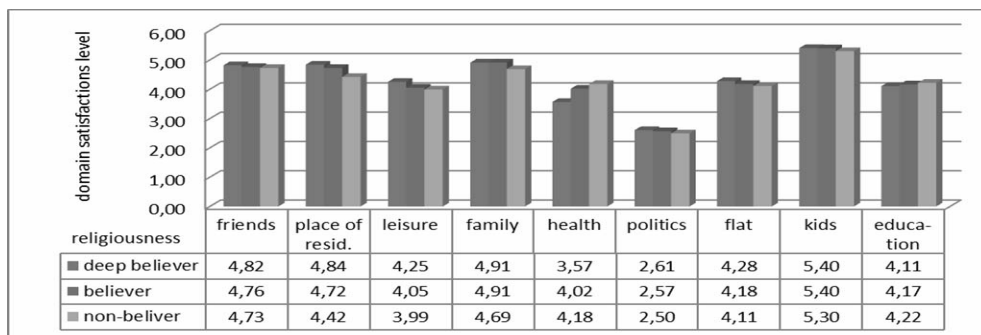


Figure 8. Religiousness and domain satisfactions.

Study 2. Poland in 2009

The second study, another big opinion poll, was made in 2009, in four regions of Poland: the best two and the worst two

economically (see Fig. 9), (project no N116 107734 *Sociological and psychological determinants of coping with fast social changes*, director – J. Wasilewski, with participation of K. Hamer).

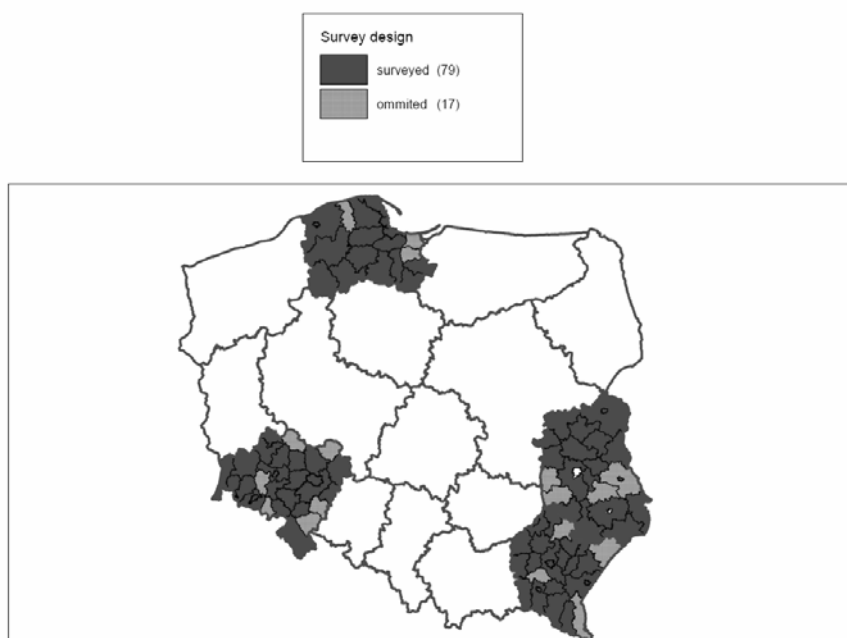


Figure 9. Survey design map.

Subjects: N=3092, chosen with Random Route method, 16–44 years of age, 49% females and 51% males.

Measures

For analyses I have chosen indicators of well-being and four wide social identifications:

- *Social identifications*

The question checked social identifications of subjects and it was addressed as follows:

“Please define how closely connected you feel to following people: (scale from 1 = not at all to 5 = very much):

- How closely connected do you feel to citizens of your town/city
- How closely connected do you feel to Poles
- How closely connected do you feel to the citizens of the whole European Union
- How closely connected do you feel to your religion group”

For more clarity in results, the answers were grouped in three categories: high identification (answers 4–5, medium (answers 3) and low (answers 1–2).

- *Domain satisfactions*

The question checked how satisfied person was in that time, asking for five domains. It was addressed as follows:

“How satisfied are you at present (scale from 1 = very dissatisfied to 7 = very satisfied)

-with your life altogether?
- ...with life in your family?
- ... with your work/ education/ training?
- ... with your leisure time?
- ... with your financial state of affairs?”

- *Optimism*

Scale consisted of eight items (answers from 1 = does not apply at all to 7 = fully applies)

1. I hardly ever expect things to go my way.
2. I'm always optimistic about my future.
3. In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.
4. If something can go wrong for me, it will.
5. I always look on the bright side of things.
6. I believe in the saying: "every cloud has a silver lining."
7. Things never work out the way I want them to.
8. I rarely count on good things happening to me.

- *Positive affect*

The question checked how person felt in the past month, asking for 10 adjectives. It was addressed as follows:

“Next, I would like to read you some feelings. Please state how often you have felt this way in the past month (answers from 1 = never to 7 = very often): enthusiastic, excited, strong, proud, interested, alert, inspired, determined, active, attentive.“

- *Depression*

The question checked how depressed person felt in the past month, asking for six conditions. It was addressed as follows:

“To what degree have you suffered the following conditions in the past month? (answers from 1 = not at all to 7 = very strongly): Thoughts of ending your life? Feeling lonely? Feeling blue? Feeling no interest in things? Feeling hopeless about the future? Feelings of worthlessness?”

Table 4a. *The descriptives of the independent variables*

		year 2009
Local id.		
	low	21.5%
	medium	46.6%
	high	31.9%
National id.		
	low	18.5%
	medium	41.1%
	high	40.4%
European id.		
	low	46.1%
	medium	39.9%
	high	14.0%
Religious id.		
	low	20.7%
	medium	76.4%
	high	3.0%

Table 4b. *The descriptives of the dependent variables*

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	St. Dev.
Depression scale	3078	1	7	2.19	1.27
Optimism scale	3078	1	7	4.70	0.83
Positive affect scale	3078	1	7	4.80	1.06
satis...life satisfaction	3078	1	7	5.31	1.274
satis...satisfaction with family life	3078	1	7	5.78	1.256
satis...satisfaction with work or education	3078	1	7	4.81	1.702
satis...satisfaction with leisure time	3078	1	7	5.25	1.341
satis...satisfaction with financial situation	3078	1	7	4.08	1.55

Results

Analyses made with Kruskal–Wallis tests (see Table 5) revealed many signifi-

cant differences in all well-being indicators, depending on the level of social identifications.

Table 5. *The connection between religious, local, national and European Union identifications and well-being indicators: optimism, depression, positive affect and domain satisfactions among Poles, in 2009 (Kruskal–Wallis tests)*

	Optimism	Depression	Positive affect	Life satisfact.	Family life satisfact.	Satisf. with work or education	Satisf. with leisure time	Satisf. with financial situation
EU id.	33.9**	19.26**	24.86**	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	33.88**
National id.	16.57**	18.3**	92.83**	52.72**	38.65**	53.87**	21.87**	7.38*
Local id.	n.s.	n.s.	37.28**	66.84**	35.49**	62.77**	14.99**	8.7*
Religious id.	16.63**	8.22*	40.38**	62.13**	84.65**	46.88**	11**	11.6**

*p<0.05

**p<0.001

National identification

Analyses made with Kruskal–Wallis tests (see Table 5) showed that differences in all well-being indicators were significant.

In most cases strong national identification was connected with higher optimism, lower depression, more positive affect and stronger domain satisfactions (see Fig. 10).

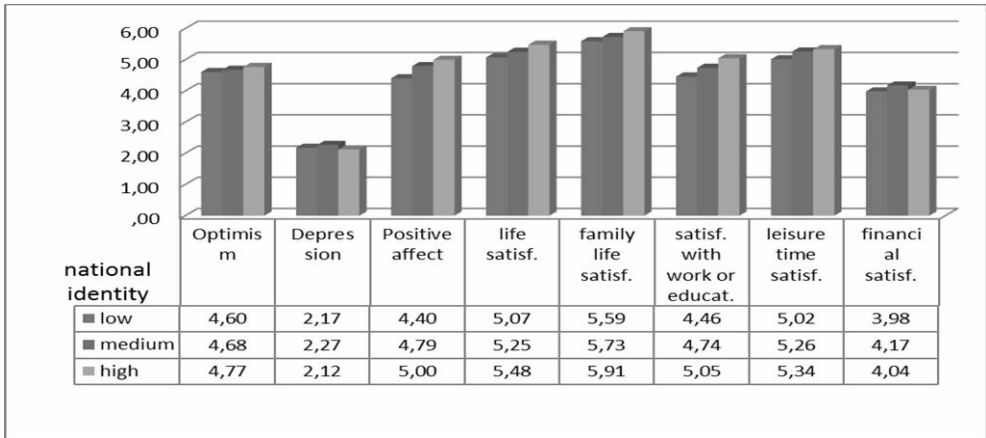


Figure 10. National identification and well-being indicators: optimism, depression, positive affect and domain satisfactions among Poles, in 2009.

European Union identification

Analyses made with Kruskal–Wallis tests (see Table 5) showed significant differences for optimism, depression, positive affect and satisfaction with own financial situation.

Strong European Union identification was connected with more positive affect and stronger satisfaction with own financial situation, but also slightly higher depression (see Fig. 11). Also there was the highest optimism among individuals with medium level of EU identification.

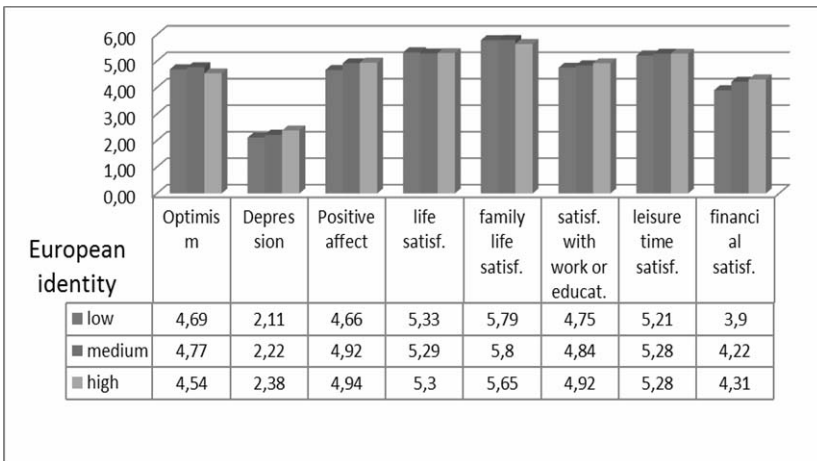


Figure 11. European Union identification and well-being indicators: optimism, depression, positive affect and domain satisfactions among Poles, in 2009.

Local identification

Analyses made with Kruskal–Wallis tests (see Table 5) showed that differences

in all well-being indicators were significant, except optimism and depression.

In most cases strong local identification was connected with more positive affect and stronger domain satisfactions (see Fig. 12).

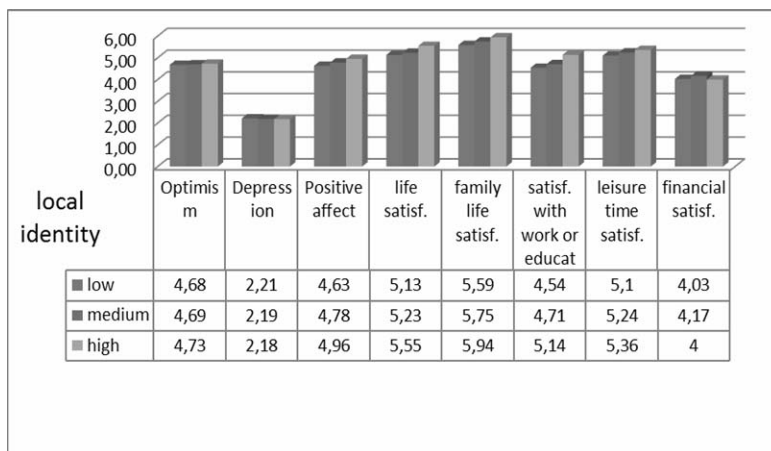


Figure 12. Local identification and well-being indicators: optimism, depression, positive affect and domain satisfactions among Poles, in 2009.

Religious identification

Analyses made with Kruskal–Wallis tests (see Table 5) showed that differences in all well-being indicators were significant.

In most cases strong identification with own religious group was connected with higher optimism, lower depression, more positive affect and stronger domain satisfactions (see Fig. 13).

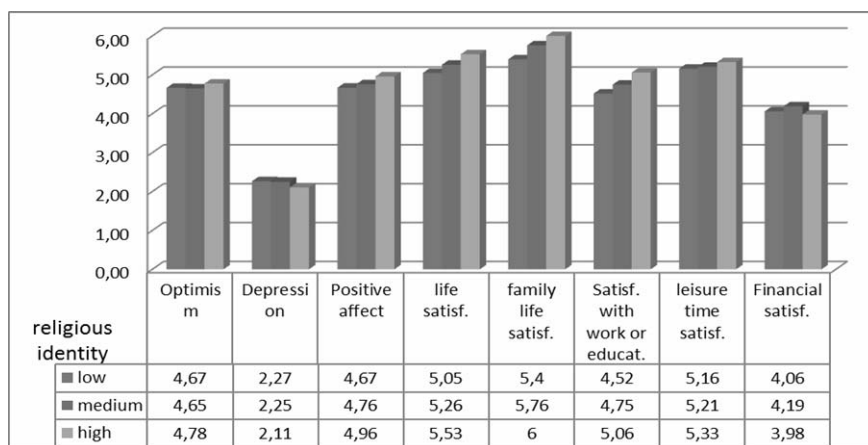


Figure 13. Religious identification and well-being indicators: optimism, depression, positive affect and domain satisfactions among Poles, in 2009.

Summary and discussion

Analyses described in this article show the connection between social identifications and subjective well-being.

In the first study, the data proved that stronger social identifications were connected with higher life satisfaction. Subjects identifying themselves on low level with Poland, Europe, region and non-believers were the least satisfied. Also people highly identifying themselves with Poland and Europe had stronger feeling of happiness.

The results from the second study proved that stronger social identifications (local, national, European and religious) were connected with more positive affect. Also all of them, except identification with European Union citizens, were connected with stronger domain satisfactions.

The only exception is satisfaction with own financial situation – there was the highest level of satisfaction in this domain among subjects having medium level of national, local and religious identifications. European identification showed different results – the higher feeling of connection with EU citizens, the higher satisfaction with own financial situation. Other authors inform about high support for Polish presence in EU among wealthy and successful Poles (e.g. Boguszewski, 2010). It seems that satisfaction with financial situation is a bit different from other domain satisfactions and it is difficult to resolve which direction of influence is truer in this case: identification with EU fostering financial satisfaction, opposite (e.g. financial opportunities for entrepreneurs fostering EU identification, or maybe some other factor involved).

Identification with citizens of European Union (checked in the second study) was not connected to satisfaction with other domains. This identification is not very strong in Poland so far (as well as in the

whole EU, as Eurobarometer shows – see Hamer and Gutowski, 2009, that is why it may be less useful for fostering well-being than e.g., national identity. European identification (without underlining European Union, as it was in the first study) seems to be more useful in this area.

There are also interesting results concerning religion in analyzed studies: in most cases, deep believers were more satisfied (e.g., in the first study: with place of residence, leisure time, family life, flat, kids and politics) but it seems that being religious on medium level is connected with feeling happier than being a deep believer. Different studies show that happy people tend to have a meaningful religious faith (Myers, 2000, 2010, but there are also the data showing no such associations, or even the data showing correlation between religion and negative emotions and attitudes, like prejudice and guilt (Myers, 2000; Kim-Prieto and Diener, 2009). It may be due to the fact that possible mechanisms through which religion might shape emotions are religion prescribes, telling people which emotions are desirable and which are not (Emmons, 2005, after: Kim-Prieto and Diener, 2009). In Poland Catholicism is a dominant religion. As Kim-Prieto and Diener (2009) say, Christianity appears to emphasize fear and guilt. In Polish Church there are many negative emotions, like emphasizing value of suffering, but also like raising guilt about sins, threatening with damnation, devils and hell. It may be the cause of lack of statistically significant differences in happiness among Polish deep believers comparing to believers and non-believers in PGSS studies, with slight tendency of deep believers to be less happy. Although in 2009 with another type of measure (strictly social identity one, subjects strongly identifying themselves with own religious group had high positive affect and low depression. Again it shows important role not of religion itself, but of social identification with people sharing

same faith. It seems to be an important difference.

It is also worth mentioning that Poles felt happier and much more satisfied with different domains (overall satisfaction index) in 2005 than 10 years earlier. Similar results we can find in Eurobarometer data (2006, showing that from 2004 there are more and more Poles satisfied with their own lives (e.g. from 63% in 2004, just before joining EU, to 74% in 2006). Also *Social diagnosis*, opinion poll repeated in Poland every few years, shows that in most domains satisfaction of Poles increases (Czapiński and Panek, 2007). These results are widely discussed in the other article (see Hamer, 2009).

Close relationships are, beyond question, among the most important factors

influencing subjective well-being. But analyses of the data from three big opinions polls in Poland, described in this paper, confirmed the hypothesis that social identifications with big groups or communities are also connected to well-being, both in emotional aspect like happiness or positive affect and in cognitive one like domain satisfactions. Is it the case of the anxiety-buffering function of social identifications as Terror Management Theory argues, or some other mechanism like support potentially acquired from social identifications? Furthermore is well-being the reason or the result of stronger social identifications? Further research is needed to answer these questions.

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