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Development in the family

Introduction

According to contemporary psychology, human development is always set in a certain life context and that of the main impact is family (Bronfenbrenner 1976, 1981, Tyszkowa, Przetacznik-Gierowska 2009a). The mutual interactions between developmental changes of a person and the family he or she belongs to has been noted by many authors (Tyszkowa 1990c, Birch 2007). Of greatest significance are the interpersonal interactions in which the modes of realisation of family roles are manifested, through which they are shaped and transformed. Family interactions are closely related to the positions held by the family members and in multigenerational families these interactions are particularly complex (Farnicka, 2009).

The conditions shaping family interactions include the systems of values of the family members, the needs of the family members, the level of their psychosocial maturity, individual features such as e.g. artistic talent, social competence, forms of support, sex and age structure of the family, and the external conditions such as its economical situation, social standards and norms assumed in a given culture in a given time (Sęk 1990, Tyszkowa 1990c, Plopa 2010).

For the above reasons much attention is paid to multi-aspect analysis of the family, relations among the family members and social roles related to the family life (Plopa 2004, Rostowska 2009). The hitherto results have confirmed the influence of the family on developmental changes of its members and indicated that individual development of the members affects the functioning of the whole family (Tyszkowa 1990a, Harwas-Napierała 2003).

The main thesis of this work is the presence of dynamic interrelations between the development of the family members and a relation between the developmental changes in individual family members and the changes in the whole family. This idea has won general acceptance by psychologists, pedagogists and sociologists and their clients, but it seems that not all of them are really aware of the range and consequences in the area of the study on the family and development in the family. The knowledge on the parents role in development of their child and its education is vast and well-documented (Ziemska 1986, Przetacznik-Gierowska, Włodarski 1994, Zeanah 2000). On this background there is apparently some insufficient recognition of the effects of developmental interactions between generations – parents-children, grandparents –parents, grandparents– grandchildren and interactions between parents on the individual development of the family members and on the transformations of subsystems made by the members involved in the above interactions and the whole family (p. Tyszkowa 1990b, Bakiera 2008, Farnicka 2009, Trempała 2011). Another interesting problem is that of the relations between the family members (having a status of family subsystems) and the external family systems and in particular their influence on individual development and developmental changes in the family. An exception is the area of relations between the family and professional life whose exploration is a source of knowledge of the impact of professional life on the individual development and changes in the family system (p. Rostowska, Rostowski 2002, Rostowska 2009).

Another aspect of developmental changes in the family system not sufficiently covered by psychological studies, is the temporal dimension, the transition from one developmental period to another, related with resignation from certain activities while taking up other ones, studied against the transformations of external systems. Unfortunately, at the present stage of psychological studies the possibilities of gaining insight into developmental changes in the mutually dependent systems taking into regard the historical aspect seem limited (p. Fenstermaker, 1996, Feeney, 2006). In spite of the objective difficulties, the psychologists working on family systems have not resigned from investigation of developmental changes in the family system and have tried to grasp their complexity and dynamics.

The aim of the author of this chapter was to present the complexity of human development in the family system. According to the thesis of Maria Tyszkowa (1990), the pioneer in Polish psychology, "...development of an individual in the family refers not only to children and young people but also to adults, that is parents and grandparents" (Tyszkowa 1990c, p. 239). Individual experience, accumulated through activities in the relations and contacts with the other family members and during the subjective activity, mediates between the

developmental changes of the individuals (members of the family system). The interest is first of all focused on the aspects of psychological functioning of the family which is the fundamental source of a diversity of individual experience throughout the whole life.

In this chapter the family is presented in the systemic approach, currently accepted as the most appropriate from the viewpoint of the family structure and functioning. The systemic approach to the family permits fuller and more dynamic explanation of the role of family in the development of psyche and behaviour of its members, both inside the family and outside it. Of key importance in this approach is the analysis of interpersonal and intersystemic relations, which permits explanation of genesis and character of developmental changes in the family members by analysis of their interrelations.

According to the systemic approach, the family members make subsystems and each family member can belong to a few subsystems, depending on the family structure, e.g. a man can belong to the subsystem husband and wife and to the subsystem father-child (children). The processes taking place in each subsystem influence the other subsystems and are subject to the processes taking place in the system made of the subsystems. These entanglements determine the dynamics of the whole system and its coherence and integrity. From the point of view of the individual, the processes taking place in the subsystems and between them affect his or her behaviour and its changes in time. It should be emphasised that the relations between the family members depend not only on the stage of their individual development but also on the phase of the family life (Liberska, Matuszewska, 2001).

The considerations will begin with the problem of changes in the significance of family for the individual in the post-modernistic times and indication of the main threats to the family functioning. The next section will present the concept of family in the systemic approach, describe its main features as a system and relations with other systems (Minuchin 1975, Hinde 1988, van Geert 1990, Braun-Galkowska 1992, de Barbaro 1994). The next issues covered include the main dimensions of development related to the family system and a model of development in the family.

Recognised threats to contemporary family and its basic functions

In psychology and pedagogy the family is considered as the main educational and developmental environment of an individual (Przetacznik-Gierowska, Włodarski 1994, Birch 2007, Tyszkowa 2009, Plopa 2010), however, the approach to the family has evolved for the last few decades (Tyszka 2002). Analysis of literature reveals a gradual departure from viewing a family as the

environment for education of children and dominated by the one-directional communication from the parents to the child (children) (Nowak 2005, Harwas-Napierała, 2009). At present the family is treated as a developmental environment of all family members (children, parents, grandparents) characterised by two-directional communication between the parents and the children and assuming mutual interactions of all family members affecting the family functioning. The changes in the approach to the family and its role in shaping the behaviour and personality of individuals stem, among others, from transformations taking place on higher levels of socialisation. Thus, the role of the family in development of all its members should be considered in the context of contemporary civilisation transformations.

On the one hand, transformation of political system and globalisation are indicated as offering a chance for improvement of the standard of living, but on the other these changes bring serious threats for the family functioning in post-modernistic society (Tyska 2002, Rostowska 2009). Social and economical changes resulting in creation of workplaces for women and demanding increasing engagement of parents in professional life have substantial effect on changes in the family functioning. Their consequence is restricted involvement of parents in the life of their children, transformation of realisation of parental functions and role of children and transformations in the hierarchy of values often leading to the increasing importance of commercial goods. The lack of clear rules for the playing effective roles of parents and children, characteristic of entangled families, leads to the educational insufficiency of the family and to little satisfaction of adults from the family life.

At the present state of psychological knowledge it cannot be excluded that the problems in realisation of family roles are to a substantial degree as result of restricted balance between the psychological structures and external systems caused by a delay of the former with respect of the latter. An interesting and probable explanation of the above problems is provided by the theory of the cognitive dissonance. According to the thesis of Festinger (2007), perception of the inconsistency between the components of attitudes leads to psychological discomfort whose pressure coerces the individual into its removal. However, for attitudes of small force or when the perception protection has been blocked, the individual does not perceive the inconsistency and does not feel the discomfort. When parents have weak attitudes they may not perceive the inconsistency between them and this inconsistency leads to low effectiveness of educational interactions or the information about the parent low effectiveness in realisation of the parental role is blocked already at the input to the cognitive structures. Such an interpretation brings about new questions concerning the origins of the weakness of parental attitudes and they can hardly be answered. Disturbances

in the family socialisation can be a derivative of problems in the interactions between the family systems and the external systems. At the present stage of study it cannot be excluded that the dominant effect of external systems can block transmission of the ways of realisation of spousal and parental roles in the systems of multigenerational families that are consequently not mastered in a sufficient degree.

One of the most important threats is the loosening of close emotional ties considered so far as the indispensable and basic chain connecting the family (Bauman, 2006 Gałkowski, 2007). In extreme form the atomised family approaches the model of independent relations in which the process of socialisation is drastically restricted (Kagitcibasi 1996), and the role of the family as a developmental and educational context is undermined. In such conditions the appearance of disturbances in correct development of attachment ties essential from the viewpoint of individual development in the lifetime becomes highly likely (Bowlby 2007).

Other threats to the family role and functioning include the activities bordering on manipulations and aimed at weakening of family, undermining the worth of the stable formal structure of family, questioning of the parents authority or propagation of values alternative to family life (Harwas-Napierała 2008). Disorganisation in the family system often reaches the extreme of family disintegration. This form of the family pathology is related to the lack of abilities to play family roles or the lack of knowledge of the family roles following –among others – from the changes in the intergenerational transmission induced by deep cultural changes including the crisis in values. Disturbances to the fundamental values in a given culture are manifested in the products of this culture and in human experiences and behaviour (cf. Kmita 1975). Culture as a generator of experiences (not only their contents but also the tools of their reception and transformation) shapes the human psyche (Tyszkowa 2009b). If the culture message is not understood, is incomplete and does not include the tools necessary for structuration and restructuration of experiences related to its content, the development of psyche is restricted or distorted. Negative consequences of the turbulences in the impact of culture on development of the individual also spread to the family relations. However, irrespective of the quality of the family system its significance for the development of individuals belonging to it is unquestionable (cf. Braun-Gałkowska 2011). When pathological family relations prevail the developmental changes can be disturbed, which may result in pathological development of all family members, both adults and children.

The family as a system

According to the dominant systemic approach to family, it is considered as a complex and integrated unit, characterised by the organised patterns of interaction, which take circular rather than linear form (Minuchin 1985). This definition is a good starting point to describe a wide gamut of events contributing to family life, both normative and non-normative, to follow individual developmental changes in the family context and grasp the dynamics of family relations and transformations of the whole family system. As mentioned above, in the systemic approach to family the most important is the network of ties and interactions between all family members and the diads (e.g. diad of siblings) triads (e.g. mother-daughter and father), tetrads (e.g. husband-wife-father-in-law – mother-in-law) etc. make basis for identification of different family subsystems.

Interactions of subsystems can reveal different degrees of complexity of dual nature. The dual nature is a derivative of two factors: the number of subsystems and specific type of their interrelations regarding the duration and direction of the interactions. As far as duration is concerned the interactions the long lasting ones are referred to as relations, while as far as direction is concerned, they are divided into one-directional and two-directional (or mutual). Analysing the family system in terms of particular members it is helpful to distinguish four fundamental types of interactions. They take place between:

- Spouses
- A parent and a child
- Siblings
- Between subsystems distinguished in a multigenerational family or extended family.

According to Tyszkowa (1990a, p. 15), the notion of interaction refers to the processes of communication of individuals with one another and acts of behaviour directed towards one another in a given time. Interaction lasts for a specific time and involves at least two persons, each of which is simultaneously a receiver and emitter of stimuli affecting changes in the behaviour of the other persons involved. Each interaction between given persons can influence further interactions and then it is said that the persons are in a certain interpersonal relation, so consequently only the long-term interactions can be called relations.

The interactions between family members can be characterised by the content, quality, frequency, mutuality and intimacy. They depend on many factors, including e.g. the age but first of all the level of individual development of persons involved, and – because of the substantial fundamentals of the family that is the emotional relation between the couple starting a family – they are permeated with intimacy. Closeness, frequency and intimacy of interactions

make the conditions favourable for accumulation of common experience and sharing the experience by family members often representing different generations, or sometimes for learning from each other experience.

The mutual interactions that are the integral and necessary component of the system, undergo transformations with developments into subsequent phases of the family life. They have quantitative or qualitative attributes and a certain temporal localisation.

The systemic approach is characterised by the three main notions: wholeness, circularity and equifinalism (Braun-Gałkowska 1992, Liberska, Matuszewska 2001). The wholeness of a system means that is something more than a simple sum of components and any attempts to analyse the system through its components only is unsuccessful (brings incomplete or erroneous results). The second notion – circularity – refers to the mode of interactions in the system describing it in terms of feedback categories. The third notion – equifinalism – refers to the possibility of different causes of the same final effect.

To sum up, the family in the systemic approach is made of a set of elements in dynamic interactions and each element is influenced by each of the other elements. Therefore, according to the principle of co-dependence, a change in one subsystem affects the other ones as well as the wholeness made by them (Von Bertalanffy 1975, Ludewig 1995, Plopa 2005).

It should be emphasised that the family is an open system as its members are simultaneously members of other systems. Thus, changes in the relations and contacts in the systems external to the family are through the family members brought to the family system and vice versa – changes in the behaviour following from the functioning of a family member in the family is reflected on the contacts and relations in the external systems they belong to (Plopa 2005).

Moreover, the family system functions as a subsystem of some greater systems (Tyszka 1997, Plopa 2005). The structure and dynamics of the family functioning is regulated by greater social systems such as the church, local society, group of neighbours and others.

The family against other systems

According to Bronfenbrenner (1981) the family system belongs to a category of microsystems in which human development takes place. The notion of microsystem refers to the standard of activity, social roles and interpersonal relations the individual encounters in a given environment. This category includes the primary environment, i.e. the family. The family microsystem entering into relations with the other microsystems such as the school, peer group, work place, social group, etc., makes a larger system called a mesosystem. However,

an individual not always is an active participant of a given system, often a person is just subjected to the system influence or this system is influenced by another system in which this person is actively involved. Such environments make an *egzosystem*. The above mentioned systems function as subsystems of the largest system, referred to as a macrosystem, with which they have common contents,

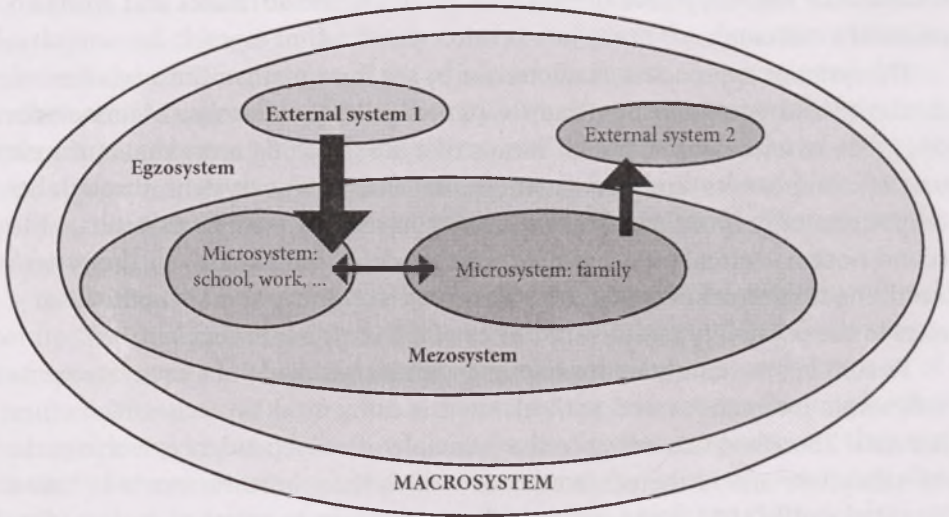


Figure 1. Relations between the systems

consistent, actual and potential. The consistence refers to the wholeness of culture, together with the systems of belief and ideologies making the grounds for this consistence. The relations between the systems are illustrated in Fig. 1.

Dimensions of changes in social and cultural systems

The interactions between the systems in which a given individual is more or less actively involved lead to the following consequences.

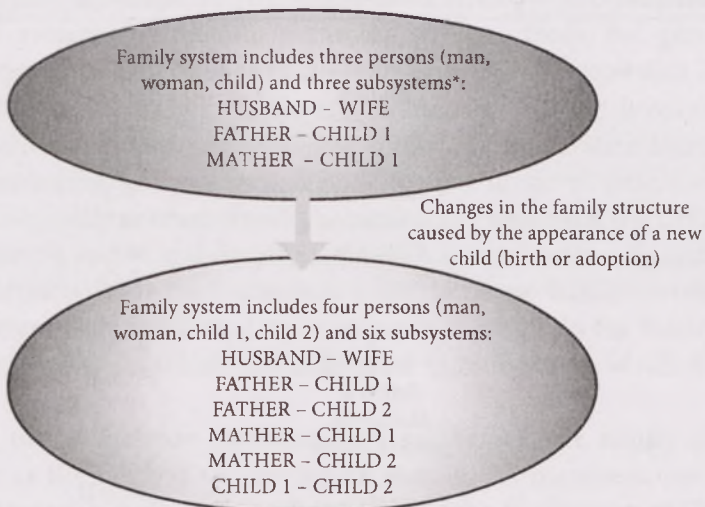
- Changes in behaviour and psyche of the individual (individual dimension)
- Transformations of the individual relations to the environment (relational dimension)
- Changes in the system or systems (systemic dimension)

These changes bring about favourable conditions for formation of “(...) qualitatively new systems that can lead to such developmental changes of the individual that cannot be explained only by the interactions and control of the environment” considered in the environmental approach (Tyszkowa 2009a, p. 96).

Family as the environment and context of development

It is easy to note that the system individual– environment (here restricted to the family), according to the systemic approach, creates the conditions for developmental changes in all the above-mentioned dimensions. The developmental changes in the psyche of an individual (individual dimension) are revealed in his/her behaviour (relational dimension) in all systems this individual is involved in as an element or subsystem, and first of all in the family system, initiating developmental transformations of this fundamental ecological context (systemic dimension).

In consistence with the assumptions of ecopsychology, the developmental environment is each event or situation existing beyond the psychological reality of the individual that can directly or indirectly affect this individual. The term developmental context refers to the content of psyche of the individual related to the external events and including interpretations and emotions concerning the interactions between the environment and the individual taking place at a given time. As follows from the above, the developmental environments are similar for some groups of people, while their environmental contexts are unique.



** person has also a status of subsystem*

Figure 2. Changes in the family system structure

Changes in the structure of the family system and developmental possibilities

Depending on the phase of the family life cycle, the transformations occur mainly in the structure and organisation of the intrasystem relations. Changes in the family structure involve quantitative and qualitative changes in the whole system. The quantitative changes take place e.g. with the appearance of a new family member, Fig. 2. They lead to qualitative changes manifested by a decrease or increase in the number of interactions and establishment of interactions with new contents, establishment of new relations, dying out of some relations or withdrawal from some relations (e.g. as a consequence of a divorce).

The complexity and extent of the family influence on the developmental changes of its members increase with increasing number of these members. Besides increasing the number of interactions within the family system, this fact also brings enrichment of the contents and form of interactions, etc. (Rembowski, 1980). For instance in a four –person family the number of mutual interactions is 6, while in a five-person family this number increases to 10 (Table 1).

Table 1. The number of interactions in a family system and the number its members

Number of family members (family system subsystems)	Family members (family system subsystems)	Interactions taking place between:	Number of interactions
3	Father F Mother M Child Ch	F-M F-Ch M-Ch	3
4	Father F Mother M Mother-in-law T Child Ch	F-M F-Ch F-T M-T M-Ch T-Ch	6
5	Father F Mother M Mother-in-law Child I Ch I Child II Ch II	F-M F-Ch I F-Ch II F-T M-T M-Ch I M-Ch II T-Ch I T-Ch II Ch I-Ch II	10

Individual development in the family context

To understand the significance of family as a context of developmental changes, the following fundamental aspects of human individual development must be considered: emotional, cognitive and social, in which essential changes take place over the lifetime of the individual and in the cycle of family life. As mentioned earlier, changes in the subsystems (family members) entail structural and functional transformations in the whole system (in relations between spouses, child-child relations or in relations between the family generations. In a multigenerational family the pattern of changes can be even more complex, not only as regards the individual developments of family members representing particular generations but also regarding the whole extended family system ((Wrzesień 2003, Liberska, Matuszewska 2006).

The type of contacts and patterns of relation and positions in the family system depend on the individual features of family members, the phase of their life and the system's position in the family life cycle. Developmental changes of family members (subsystems) affect the developmental changes in the whole family system. The pattern of relations is more complex as the relations between the individual development of the parents and individual development of the child/children depend on the phase of the family system cycle. Thus, in analysis of development of family systems and their subsystems, it is necessary to take into regard the events, roles and normative tasks in the lifetimes of individuals (subsystems) and in the family cycle, so the temporal aspects of developmental changes. A very important aspect of relations in each system is the quality of interpersonal communication. Correct communication in the family system permits its members to pass from the phase of dependence through independence to co-dependence (Frydrychowicz 2007). At this point the significance of multilateral communication for development of both, the individual family member and the family as a system should be mentioned. According to Tyszkowa (2009), studies of development of the individual in the family context should be performed analysing the influence of family system on individual development through the prism of (1) family roles of the individual, (2) the individual position in the family system, (3) acts and activities of the individual and competence gained in the family and (4) contacts and relations which the individual initiates or in which he/she participates.

According to the *life-span developmental psychology*, the family should be considered as the context of development of all its members, not only children and parents but also other adults making the family system (Baltes, Reese, Lippsitt 1980). Analysis of the roles of particular family members reveals the changes in the roles played in the lifetime of the individual and

changes in the roles the individual plays in the family cycle. Depending on the current phase of individual development and on individual characteristics (level of competence, abilities, level of fitness and health status) each member of the family system takes up and plays certain roles and hence enters into different contacts and relations and has a different position in the system of interpersonal interactions in the family systems. Different roles imply specific types of behaviour, expectations, responsibilities and privileges. Effective performance of a certain role needs meeting its demands so a certain level of development of different psychological functions and physical abilities. The responsibilities associated with the role and expectations of a person playing this role change with individual development all family members interested (the individual playing this role and all persons affected by his/her behaviour). Developmental changes of the family system members also determine changes of the roles in the lifetime of the individual and in the system's cycle. Insufficient abilities and competence needed by the role or the lack of motivation for diligent performance of a given role or the lack of willingness to learn it can lead to deterioration of the quality of family relations and little satisfaction from family roles performance and thus can threaten the socialisation of all members of the family system. For example, if the grandparents cannot accept the fact that the role of a grandfather or a grandmother defined in a given culture is different than the roles of a father or a mother, this miscomprehension can be a source of conflicts and the consequences will be suffered not only by the grandparents and parents but also by children. Another exemplary situation is when parents cannot accept the growing need for autonomy of a teenage son or daughter, which leads to increasing tensions and conflicts between parents and children, despite the fact that earlier their relations were correct.

The family roles, contacts and relations demand activity from the family members and this activity brings about a variety of experience. According to the concept of structuration and restructuring, this experience is subjected to evaluation, cognitive and emotional analysis in the structures of the psyche and is then accumulated as the material for developmental processes.

An original model of interdependence between the family system, its functioning and individual development of its members has been proposed by M. Tyszkowa (1990, 2009), (Fig. 3).

The model is concerned with two large blocks of variables: the family functioning as a context of development and developmental changes of the individual. The first block includes the family roles, contacts and relations in the family system related to the processes of communication. The second block is made of changes in the psyche subsystems and qualitative transformations

in the psyche structures. The two blocks are determined by the activity of the individual and by superior systems mentioned earlier in the texts: mezo-, exo- and macrosystems. Introduction into the model of the category of experience permits the treatment of the family as a developmental context as in consistency with the earlier considerations, the context refers to the individual understanding of events

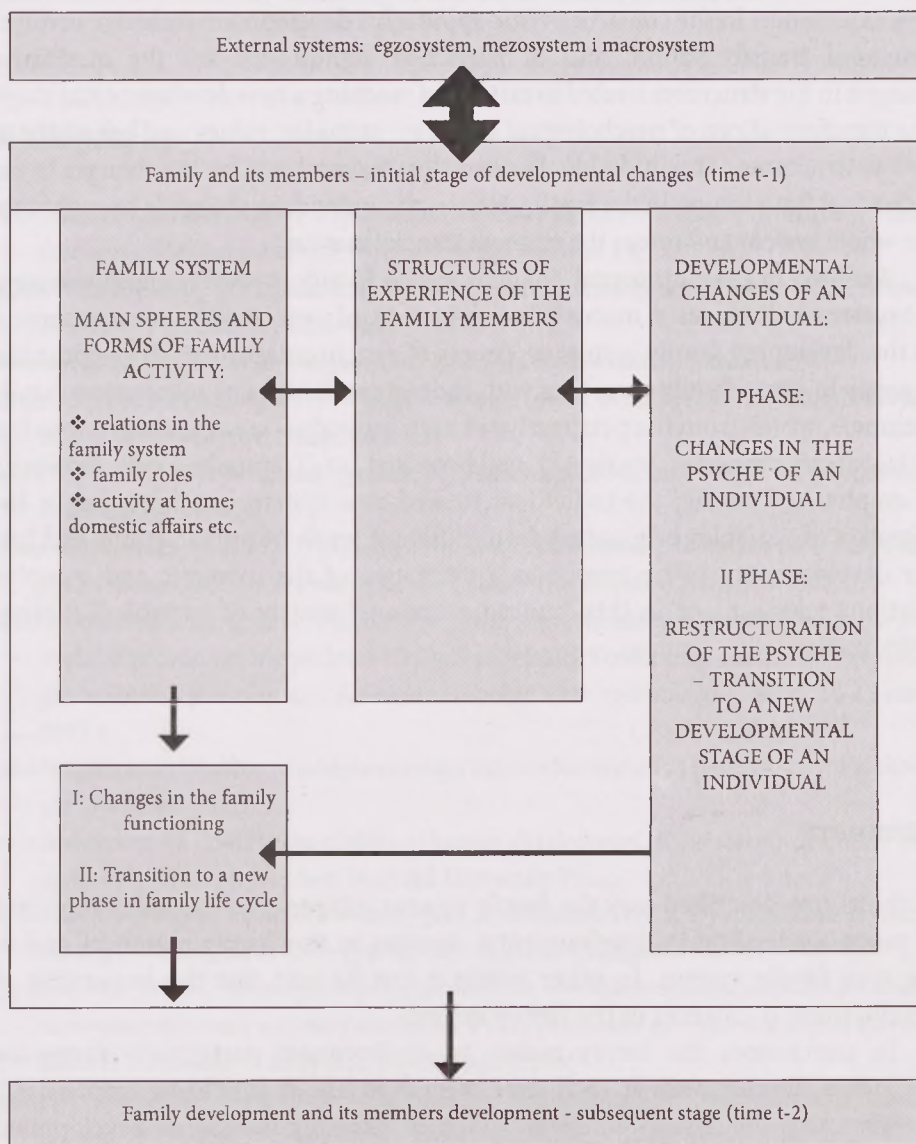


Figure 3. Model of developmental changes in the family and its individual members (after: M. Tyszkowa, 2009, p. 143)

and situations related to the family activity of a given individual, and after analysis in the psyche of an individual an experience gets this status. The influence of the family system is processed by the structures of experience of the individuals. The influence of family on the developmental changes of its members is realised through the structures of experience accumulated in the course of the family activity. The experience already structured in the psyche undergoes restructuration to accept new experience. In the constructivistic approach a developmental change involves structural transformation, and of particular significance are the qualitative changes in the structures treated as criteria of reaching a new developmental stage. The transformations of psychological activities, attitudes, values and behaviour as well as structures of the individual personality make a basis for the changes in the individual functioning in the family. Hence, the individual change is brought into the whole system and forces the system's transformation.

Analysis of developmental changes in the family members (family system subsystems) discloses a mutual determination of synchrony and asynchrony. In the developing family system a process of synchronisation of developmental changes in some family members with individual changes of some other family members, which from the perspective of each individual seem asynchronous but in fact these processes are deeply synchronised (cf. Trempała 2000). However, as emphasised earlier, the individual treated as a system is submerged in the ...”matrix of variables originating from different levels of organisation” and his/her development can be treated as a derivative of the dynamic and complex relations taking place in this “multidimensional matrix of variables” (Lerner 1998, p. 2).

Summary

In the above-described way the family system initiates the incessant sequence of processes leading to developmental changes in the family members and in the very family system. In other words it can be said that the imperative of development is inherent in the family system.

In conclusion, the family makes an environment particularly favouring individual development at each state of human life. It should be emphasised, however, that the conditions determining or affecting individual development of family members are very complex and also undergo changes imposed by the relation of the family members with persons being subsystems of other social systems and by current transformations of these other systems. These latter

transformations often have a serious cultural dimensions (Tyszka 2002, Bauman, 2002, Giddens 2008, Szlendak 2010). In this perspective the apprehension of many researchers working on family of an increasing number of factors threatening the idea of family life in our flexible reality is fully understandable. In the light of the above considerations, the necessity of undertaking systemic actions aimed at restoration of the family authority seems a reasonable conclusion.

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