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YOUTH ON THEIR WAY TO SHAPE THEIR IDENTITY IN A PROFESSIONAL CAREER

ABSTRACT. Cybal-Michalska Agnieszka, *Youth on Their Way to Shape Their Identity in a Professional Career* [Młodzież na drodze kształtowania tożsamości zawodowej]. *Studia Edukacyjne* nr 32, 2014, Poznań 2014, pp. 31-47. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-2837-0. ISSN 1233-6688

This article presents a discourse about the subject of careers; identity of youth in a professional career. The increase of roles ascribed to careers and the ability to plan, manage and monitor one's career in the lifelong perspective are the most important requirements. Career capital comprises of values that create career competence and that are useful in its constitution and development. There is no doubt that while analyzing individual paths of a career development, one should include a wide spectrum of an individual's determinants, as well as, one should examine semantic meanings that a subject ascribes to the reality in order to interpret and understand one's past and new feelings and experiences. Issues of identity crystallize the problem of trajectory of individual career and the construction of a subject's professional identity.

Key words: career development, professional identity, career capital, maturity in careers, "career portfolio", career competence model, career of youth

The development of a free market economy, changes in a job environment, in a work structure, in work perception, as well as in the sphere of features, meanings and values attributed to work, contribute to changes in the quality of a career construction and their individual paths. Multi-dimensional and multi-level structure of a social reality points to special topicality of questions about the sense and the concept of identity. This structure makes it necessary to look for answers about subjects' possibilities and skills to plan and create career paths and to shape one's own professional identity (in a career). This topic becomes especially significant in the context of young people "on the way" to career.

Issues of identity crystallize the problem of trajectory of individual career and the construction of a subject's professional identity. In this sense, "as any other formalized narration, it is something that has to be worked out and that, naturally, requires creative contribution"¹, as well as, a reflective approach to one's own biography. In the context of the changes that occur in the contemporary world, it seems especially important to look for and to clarify the answer to the following question: "Who am I in this so fast changing world?" (a dynamic question). Trying to answer such a question, individuals, with their vision of the world and with planning of their career perspectives, notice the pace and intensity of changes and try to determine the extent to which they are active subjects of prospective changes, that take place in cultural and social contexts.²

In the situation when individuals feel that their lives are organized around the multiplicity and diversity of alternatives (you can, not only, observe but also experience this feeling), youth face the task to determine their relations with the world, which has its impact on the quality of planning and managing one's career and on modifications of its individualized paths. It is a kind of inner exploration and an element of the process of looking for answers to complex and multiple reflection questions: Am I and to what extent am I the subject of prospective changes? The importance and dynamics of changes imply changes in the identity aspects of a social life, in which young people seek and define themselves. For participating in a shaky reality, young people that are in the middle of double transition process: from youth to adulthood and from education on academic level to a job market, finding an answer to the question: "Who am I becoming?" gains special importance. Those questions turn out to be more and more difficult to define in this "multiplicity of worlds".

Shaping one's identity is a reflective activity. Youth being at the threshold of adulthood make identity decisions that have impact on their further development, to be more specific, they have impact on their capabilities. Awareness, feeling and deciding on the subject of "who am I?", "who am I becoming?", enable to formulate a vision of the desired state. In the sense that is of interest to us, crystallizing one's own identity determines the direction of the career perspective development and it adds meaning to the whole process. Unprecedented diversity of individual lifestyles, understood as "culturally conditioned way of meeting needs, habits and norms"³, makes it

¹ A. Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość*, Warszawa 2001, p. 107.

² B. Misztal, *Teoria socjologiczna a praktyka społeczna*, Kraków 2000, p. 158-160.

³ B. Fatyga, J. Rogala-Oblękowska, *Style życia a narkotyki. Wyniki badań empirycznych*, Warszawa 2002, p. 24.

possible or, even, necessary to live the change, where everyone “has to become a model for the era that we want to create.”⁴ In this sense, the loss and permanent change of individual reference points updates the problem of *identity styles* and issues on “how identity is created and changed”⁵, depending on the social context and the quality of a young man’s commitment in the process of exploration. The recognition and understanding of oneself favours the development of the feeling of agency and the sense of being responsible for it, the sense of obligations. Undoubtedly, all of these processes are significant when individuals plan their career paths.

Exploration is one of the most basic dimensions on the road of the identity crystallizing. This thesis is emphasized in psychological works by, among others, J. Marcia, Erikson and A. Brzezińska. The essence here is “looking back at oneself, contemplating oneself, trying to understand who I was, who I am and who I can be in the future, (...) which enables to realize who I am, one’s own relations with the outside world and with the surrounding environment.”⁶

The academic youth at the threshold of adulthood, face the necessity to constantly define themselves (in the situation of dominant change and ambivalence) and individualize (it is forced because young people lose their “communication” with the community) their own biography. In the course of one’s life, career and its subjective meaning, has a special place. As E. Gurba puts it, it takes place “by taking personal initiative in the development of professional activities and social relations, in directing one’s own learning and professional career, as well as planning one’s own future.”⁷ We can find the development of this idea in M. Berzonsky’s identity styles concept. One can also acknowledge that it constitutes important adding to the theory of identity statuses by J. Marcia. Marcia refers to the identity structure as stable disposition of a subject, identity captured as a state (not as a process), which results from its development⁸. Yet, the identity is shaped

⁴ I. Illich after: Z. Kwieciński, *Tropy, ślady, próby. Studia i szkice z pedagogiki pogranicza*, Poznań-Olsztyn 2000, p. 269.

⁵ A. Jawłowska, *Tożsamość na sprzedaż*, [in:] *Wokół problemów tożsamości*, ed. A. Jawłowska, Warszawa 2001, p. 54.

⁶ V. Stanišauskienė, after: J. Adomaitienė, I. Zubrickienė, *Career Competences and Importance of Their Development in Planning of Career Perspective*, Tiltai, 2010, 4, p. 90.

⁷ D. Czyżowska, E. Gruba, A. Białek, *Typ orientacji społecznej a sposób konstruowania własnej tożsamości przez młodych dorosłych*, *Psychologia Rozwojowa*, 2012, 3, p. 58.

⁸ See: M.D. Berzonsky, J. Ciecuch, B. Duriez, B. Soenens, *The how and what of identity formation: Associations between identity styles and value orientations*, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 2011, 50; D. Czyżowska, E. Gruba, A. Białek, *Typ orientacji społecznej*; M. Berzonsky, *Identity Style and Well-Being: Does Commitment Matter?* [in:] *Identity*, ed. M. Berzonsky, *An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 2003, 3.

in the context of social and cultural influences of the reality that constantly changes. M. Berzonsky's model makes it possible to dynamically capture the way that the identity crystallizes itself. Identity styles determined by social-cognitive processes refer to individual preferences in the processing of information about subjective "I", in decision making, in choosing a proper strategy to construct or avoid crystallizing one's own identity. The author understands and identity style, as "a way, in which individuals deal with solving problems linked with the nature of identity"⁹. In order to determine identity styles of the tested group of academic youth, as well as their profile of identity commitment, the reference was made to the identity style inventory¹⁰, created by M. Berzonsky. The identity style model, proposed by the author, refers to differences in individual processing of information relevant for identity and to differences in the content, making up a subject's self-concept. For example, individuals can be focused on obtaining information, processing it deliberately and evaluating it, before they decide to commit and define themselves. Another way is to automatically adapt and to internalize normative recommendations of significant people in the group where given individuals belong to or of the whole groups.¹¹ M. Berzonsky postulated that values influenced individuals' involvement in the process of shaping one's own identity and dealing with identity conflicts. Values motivate individuals and give direction to their lives. Aware, rational, typical for an informative style attitude to an identity issue is linked with values that point to independence and autonomy of a subject and, at the same time, to the

⁹ D. Czyżowska, E. Gruba, A. Białek, *Typ orientacji społecznej*, p. 60.

¹⁰ The narration is a fragment of research on professional careers in the world of "boundless" careers as perceived from the perspective of university students, published in a paper titled: „Młodzież akademicka a kariera zawodowa” "University students and professional careers", Krakow 2013. What is more *Identity Style Inventory* by M. Berzonsky (1992) consists of 40 statements that refer to four different subscales: informative style scale, normative style scale, diffusion-avoidant style scale and the scale representing the style of commitment. The researchers used the adapted, translated into Polish version of the questionnaire. The translation was made by a psychologist – J. Byczkowska. I should mention that the author of the translation undertook the subject of identity styles in her MA thesis, written in UAM Institute of Psychology. The thesis is entitled: „Tożsamość we współczesności i style tożsamości a procesy poznawcze” (*Identity in the contemporary world and identity styles versus cognitive processes*), 2009 (supervised by Prof. A. Brzezińska). A respondent was asked to comment on a 5-level scale („it doesn't concern me at all” - please mark number „1”; „it concerns me a lot” - please mark number „5”). The statements allow to diagnose identity styles. The sum of the points given by a respondent constitutes the result of the study. In case of 9, 11, 14, 20 statements (they are marked with „*”) the scoring is reversed. A significant difference in the results in one of the scales proves the dominance of one of the distinguished identity styles.

¹¹ M.D. Berzonsky, J. Ciecuch, B. Duriez, B. Soenens, *The how and what of identity formation*, p. 295.

ability to go beyond one's own pleasures and self-indulgence. A normative attitude to the identity aspect is associated with conformity, institutional commitment and responsibility values. The diffusion – avoidant attitude, full of “procrastination and evasion”, is associated with selfishness, with focus on achieving personal pleasures and on avoiding distress.¹²

Cognitive orientations engaged in the identity crystallizing process can prove, as M. Berzonsky puts it, different identity styles, namely: the information style, the normative style, the diffuse-avoidant style and the commitment style, which is also called an identity commitment factor or strength of commitment. In the direct effects model, effects of identity processing style and engagement have a direct and independent contribution to the diversity of research results. The author points to the alternative, that is classifying the effect of an identity style by the level of commitment.¹³ However, as the author of the identity styles model emphasizes, “the identity formation is a dynamic, long process, in which the establishment of obligations may give new information and reactions which, as a result, may lead to the changes of priorities.”¹⁴ The identity style inventory refers to beliefs, attitudes, ways of dealing with various situations, as well as to making decisions that are crucial for the identity construction and conflicts, as well as for life in general. Observed differences in identity styles of academic youth, that took part in the research, result from the differences in preferences in choosing social-cognitive strategies used when individuals are engaged (or not) in tasks, where they have to construct, maintain and/or reconstruct the sense of identity.¹⁵

For the academic youth¹⁶, that took part in the research, the most typical style turned out to be the one which represents commitment (the average rank – 3,57). The next most typical style is the information one (the average rank – 2,88) and, then – normative (the average rank – 2,09). These styles of processing information indicate an orientation for making relevant (for the identity) decisions, during its formation. According to A.M. Berman,

¹² Ibidem, p. 297-299.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 133-134.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 299.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 295.

¹⁶ The research took place in 2012. It included 352 students in total. The subject of the study was university students in their recent years of studies, so they are on the verge of entering the job market. The students represented three universities: Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poznan University of Medical Sciences and Poznan University of Technology. Thus, the academic youth that took part in the research, represented diversity of specializations. These are: social science – pedagogy, special education; humanities – history; legal science – law; medical science – medicine; technical sciences – automation and robotics, computer science and electrical engineering.

S.J. Schwartz, W.M. Kurtines and S.L. Berman, when you compare identity styles and identity statuses, the information style is associated with achievements and moratorium, while the normative style is associated with exclusion.¹⁷ The diffusion – avoidant style was the least represented one among the respondents (the average rank – 1,46), where diffusion is associated with the identity status.¹⁸ The scale of commitment reflects the power of motivation, readiness, stability in the realization of interiorized system of values, stability in making decisions associated with identity and in the pursuit to fulfill one's goals. The identity commitment gives a subject a sense of meaning and focus on the goals. Internalized standards and criteria serve as a reference point when evaluating feedback from solving problems. Commitment can be either cognitive, based on information and it can reflect the extent to which ideas and beliefs have been developed and are justified by the subject in the context of rational ideas and evidence, or emotional which reflects persistent sense of subjective certainty that is often devoid of rationality.¹⁹ For a subject the identity commitment is a medium of sense and direction. It also refers to the system of values that is used to monitor, evaluation, behaviour adjustment and reading feedback. The force of engagement is positively correlated with careful decision making and with an ability to deal with problems and it is inversely proportionally correlated with the tendency to delay or to feel panic when one is to make a decision.²⁰ According to P. Brickman, commitment "stabilizes an individual's behaviour, which, under these circumstances, would be exposed to changes"²¹. The identity commitment is reflected in the following scale statements: a) the question of religious beliefs, I know what I believe in and what I don't believe in; (1 – 7,1%; 5 – 40,1%);²² b) I know what I want to do in the future; (1 – 2,1%; 5 – 38,2%); c) as for religion, I am not entirely sure what I believe in*; (1 – 5,0%; 5 – 49,3%); d) I am not sure what kind of values I really obey*; (1 – 3,6%; 5 – 51,5%); e) I have more or less stable political views; I know my opinion about the direction that the government and my country should fol-

¹⁷ A.M. Berman, S.J. Schwartz, W.M. Kurtines, S.L. Berman, *The process of exploration in identity formation: the role of style and competence*, Journal of Adolescence, 2001, 24, p. 514.

¹⁸ The Friedman test was used in statistical calculations (chi-squared = 528, 13, df = 3, T). It enabled us to notice that there is a significant statistical relationship between distinguished identity styles.

¹⁹ M. Berzonsky, *Identity Style and Well-Being*, p. 138-139.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 132-133.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 133.

²² Percentage results show how the respondents commented on all the statements associated with the quality of identity styles. They used a five-level scale. The percentages are given in brackets, taking into account diametrically contrary results („it does not concern me at all” – please choose 1; „it concerns me a lot” – please choose 5).

low; (1 - 17,9%; 5 - 18,8%); f) I am not sure what I want to do in the future*; (1 - 5,1%; 5 - 47,8%); g) I am very interested in my studies; this field of study really suits me; (1 - 3,0%; 5 - 45,1%); h) I don't know which profession I should choose or how I should change my profession*; (1 - 0,3%; 5 - 43,5%); i) I have formed my system of values, which I use when I make a decision; (1 - 7,1%; 5 - 40,1%); j) I think that when you want to live your life to the fullest, you have to be committed to some values and ideas; (1 - 2,1%; 5 - 27,1%). The identity commitment is especially characteristic for the academic youth that completed a secondary school, in a class with a biological - chemical profile (ANOVA; $P \leq 0,0001$) and for the young people, who study medical and social sciences (ANOVA; $P \leq 0,0001$), that is, future doctors and pedagogues. This kind of commitment and responsibility for agency is also characteristic for students who don't know or who don't predict difficulties or problems (ANOVA; $P = 0,007$), which may seem crucial after graduation. It is not surprising to see that the identity commitment is also very characteristic for students who have not changed their professional plans since the beginning of their studies (ANOVA; $P = 0,002$) and for respondents who are "totally" certain that their future profession is the most suitable for them (ANOVA; $P \leq 0,0001$). M. Berzonsky proved that the identity commitment was associated with subjectivity and a sense of agency.²³ To be motivated, ready and stable in realizing an internalized value system, it seems easier for people, who "often" or "very often" cherish life (ANOVA; $P \leq 0,0001$), for students who do not feel lonely (ANOVA; $P = 0,002$) and for respondents, who experience very satisfactory friendship (ANOVA; $P = 0,046$). The involvement factor is the biggest among respondents who have perceived their lives as "successful" so far (ANOVA; $P \leq 0,0001$), whereas people who describe their lives as "unhappy" represent the lowest involvement factor. In this context, it is worth referring to K. Lee's reflections about the need to include the emotional aspect (together with the cognitive one) of the decision making process in the studies of the agency of subjects. K. Lee's research shows that even those students, whom we may call as determined in the development of their career paths, declare they have difficulties with making decisions. They are wondering if a chosen career path will be satisfying and fulfilling their needs and expectations. To specify the status of a career decision, anticipation of effectiveness of coping with career construction, it is crucial to identify emotional states of a subject. Such an analysis may be used, inter alia, to better understand the experience

²³ M. Berzonsky, *Identity Style and Well-Being*, p. 134.

of career indecision.²⁴ Undoubtedly, the identity style of academic youth referring to the commitment factor, showed their transition from the inside exploration phase to the commitment phase, which is, as Brzezińska indicates, the exemplification of the identity achieved. From the cognitive point of view, it is an important indicator that can be used to identify what kind of a relationship young people have with their careers.

The informative style is characteristic for individuals who, in the process of identity construction, or more precisely speaking - before making binding identity decisions, look for information. Ways of exploration in the process of identity crystallization are based on independent and active search and working through the multiplicity of various informative data. The essence here is the reference to such elements of SELF as: personal standards, goals, the value system²⁵. People with the information identity style act in a thoughtful way, intentionally seek, evaluate and refer to the information they find useful. The information style is characteristic for individuals, who have reflections on their own views, evaluating them repeatedly, especially in the situations when they get contradictory feedback. The information identity style is positively correlated with the need to know, with cognitive complexity, self-reflection, with rational dealing with problems, with careful decision making, being open to new experience and with conscientiousness. The information identity style is associated with subjects' activity and their competent causative agency. Among regulatory processes, E.L. Deci and R.M. Ryan distinguished *integration*. Activities requiring awareness of one's own purposes, values and standards constitute the result of integrated self-regulation, the subjects' choices from a lot of possibilities, that by the act of making a choice, determine subjects to act according to their own preferences.²⁶ The scale of the information style is reflected by the following statements: a) I spend a lot of time seriously thinking what I should do with my life; (1 - 9,1%; 5 - 15,3%); b) I spend a lot of time reading and talking to others about religious matters; (1 - 42%; 5 - 3,81%); c) when I talk to someone about important matters, I try to understand their point of view and see the problem from their perspective (1 - 2,1%; 5 - 32,9%); d) I have spent a lot of time reading and trying to understand political matters (1 - 45,1%; 5 - 8,4%); e) I very often talk to a lot of people about values and rules to set up my own system of values (1 - 20,6%; 5 - 5,4%); f) when I have a personal problem, I try to analyze a situation to understand it (1 - 1,2%; 5 - 43,1%); g) I think

²⁴ K. Lee, *Coping with Career Indecision: Differences between Four Career Choice Type*, Journal of Career Development, 2005, 4, p. 280-281.

²⁵ D. Czyżowska, E. Gruba, A. Białek, *Typ orientacji społecznej*, p. 61.

²⁶ M. Berzonsky, *Identity Style and Well-Being*, p. 132, 139.

that when I have a problem, the best way to deal with it, is going to a specialist (a priest, a doctor, a lawyer) (1 - 36,7%; 5 - 6,3%); h) I discover that personal problems often turn out to be interesting challenges (1 - 16,5%; 5 - 9,1%); i) when I have to make a decision, I like spending a lot of time considering various options (1 - 4,9%; 5 - 27,7%); j) I like being responsible for dealing with problems, that I face just by myself (1 - 6,4%; 5 - 23,5%); k) when I make important decisions, I want to have as much information as possible (1 - 1,0%; 5 - 61,7%). The information style is especially characteristic for people, who study medicine and humanities (ANOVA; $P = 0,008$). Future doctors and historians explore the inside by searching for information, retreating deep into oneself, taking personal values and interiorized standards as reference points. Active exploration of alternatives, looking for information and flexibility in making commitments²⁷ - these are the attributes characteristic for this group of youth. Research shows that the information style is associated with "insight into oneself, open mind, strategies for coping with problems, careful decision making, cognitive complexity, emotional autonomy, empathy, adaptive self-regulation, high levels of commitment and achieved identity status."²⁸ The research done by D. Czyżowska, E. Gruba and A. Białek shows that there is a connection between the information identity style and orientation towards socially aware collectivism. Thus, you may assume that students of medicine and history will be characterized by discovering and noticing similarities with other people and paying attention to common goals. People who are possibly characterized by socially aware collectivism, also tend to be not willing to submit to authorities.²⁹

The normative style refers to ways in which individuals deal with important for SELF decisions through acceptance and internalization of expectations of people significant for a subject or existing social norms. Resolving identity conflicts takes place by referring to such SELF components as: family, nation, religion.³⁰ "Normatively" oriented individuals hardly show willingness to explore the insight, they have a clearly defined course of action, limited tolerance for contradictory information. They are also closed to information that may threaten their personal beliefs and a system of values. According to E.L. Deci and R.M. Ryan (1991), the normative process is linked with the internalization of standards, goals, values of important peo-

²⁷ See: A.M. Berman, S.J. Schwartz, W.M. Kurtines, S.L. Berman, *The process of exploration in identity formation*, p. 514.

²⁸ M.D. Berzonsky, J. Ciecuch, B. Duriez, B. Soenens, *The how and what of identity formation*, p. 296.

²⁹ See: D. Czyżowska, E. Gruba, A. Białek, *Typ orientacji społecznej*, p. 60, 64.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 60-61.

ple and it makes subjects feel that commitment is not fully their own. Their actions are accompanied by anxiety, caused by possible guilt, approval or duty.³¹ The following are the claims of the normative style: a) I am usually guided by the values, I was raised with; (1 - 2,1%; 5 - 37,5%); b) I have always had a purpose in life. I was brought up in a way so that I know what my goals are (1 - 4,7%, 5 - 24,3%); c) as for religion, I have always known what I believed in and what not; I have never had any serious doubts (1 - 20,1%; 5 - 20,7%); d) since high school, I have always known that I will go to the university and what course of studies I will choose (or that I will not go to the university) (1 - 7,2%; 5 - 53,0%); e) I think that it is better to have a permanent system of beliefs than to have an open mind (1 - 18,1%; 5 - 57,9%); f) I think it is better to have an established system of values, than to consider alternative systems (1 - 7,9%; 5 - 10,9%); g) once I know a solution to a problem, I'd rather stick to it (1 - 1,0%; 5 - 24,6%); h) I prefer situations, where social norms and standards are available (1 - 7,4%; 5 - 9,2%); i) I think that when I have a problem, it is best for me to rely on the advice given to me by my family and friends (1 - 5,2%; 5 - 76,8%). The normative style is mostly characteristic for the respondents, who finished biological - chemical profile in high school (ANOVA; $P = 0,038$) and for young people who, currently, do not know what problems may appear crucial after graduation. Acceptance and internalization of expectations of important people with the axionormative level of culture are the most characteristic for academic youth representing the sphere of medical sciences (doctors) and social sciences (pedagogues) (ANOVA; $P < = 0,0001$). Hence the conclusion that internalizing social norms and standards and giving them specific individual meaning is most characteristic for future doctors and pedagogues. Resolving of identity conflicts by referring to important people and to social norms is also peculiar to young people, who declare that they "often", or even "very often" enjoy life (ANOVA; $P = 0,022$) and to respondents who experience the value of friendship (ANOVA; $P = 0,21$). Being guided by group norms, referring to SELF components depicting important socializing agenda (family, nation, religion) - these are the characteristic features of people who have judged their lives as "successful" so far (ANOVA; $P < = 0,0001$). The normative style, typical for this group of academic youth, is characterized by, as M. Berzonsky concluded, little exploration of alternatives, subservience, tendency to obey authorities, allegiance to norms and dogmas, conformity to the social and family expectations and rigidity of atti-

³¹ M. Berzonsky, *Identity Style and Well-Being*, p. 132, 139.

tudes when making a commitment.³² Moreover, the normative orientation can strengthen, what Langer (1989) calls "immature, cognitive commitment". Commitment based on emotions ("cognitively immature") takes place without the participation of critical thinking and without the assessment of information. However, commitment based on emotions with little participation of evidence that can be proved or justified (in the contexts, in which problems, demands and standards are rather stable), the power of commitment itself promotes effective functioning of a subject, regardless of the level of rationality shown in attitudes. Thereby, commitment based on emotions can realize an obligation which is exemplification of subjects' activity and their agency competence.³³

The scale of the diffuse – avoidant style reflects the attitude of procrastination and putting off decisions important for shaping of one's identity. Individuals with diffusion – avoidant style avoid confronting their personal problems as long as possible and they put off making crucial decisions. Their behaviour is mostly determined by situational factors. Popularity, making an impression and reputation are the central and most important components in the structure of the SELF in this style.³⁴ In case of individuals classified as representing the diffusion – avoidant style, requirements linked with and assigned by the situational context, usually dictate or limit behavioural reactions of a subject. The diffusion – avoidant style of identity is positively correlated with emotional strategies of dealing with problems, situational variability, neuroticism and depressive reactions, as well as meticulousness and cognitive curiosity.³⁵ In M. Berzonsky's model of identity styles, diffusion and avoidance is something more, than scattered, "lost" Self. This style "is associated with strategic attempts to avoid or hide potentially negative, relevant feedback (...) with little commitment and with external location of control, as well as with impulsiveness". The following statements are typical for the diffusion – avoidant style: a) I am not totally sure what I do at this university (at work); I think that everything will just sort out by itself; (1 – 36,5%; 5 – 5,6%); b) it does not pay off to think about values and rules of conduct in advance; I make decisions when things happen; (1 – 22,6%;

³² A.M. Berman, S.J. Schwartz, W.M. Kurtines, S.L. Berman, *The process of exploration in identity formation*, p. 514.

³³ M. Berzonsky. *Identity Style and Well-Being*, p. 139.

³⁴ D. Czyżowska, E. Gruba, A. Białek, *Typ orientacji społecznej*, p. 61.

³⁵ M. Berzonsky. *Identity Style and Well-Being*, p. 131-132. Research done by, among others, M. Berzonsky and L. Kuk (2000) or by J.M. White and R.M. Jones, (1996) resulted with conclusions that individuals, who are characterised by the diffusion – avoidant style, experience various behavioural problems, eating disorders, neuroticism and depressive reactions, as well as problems with addition to alcohol and drugs (ibidem, p. 138).

5 - 4,7%); c) time and again, when I did not pay attention to my problems, they just solved themselves (1 - 24,2%; 5 - 6,3%); d) I don't think about my future yet; I have plenty of time to do that (1 - 53,7%; 5 - 1,8%); e) when I have to make a decision, I try to wait as long as possible to see what will happen (1 - 20,8%; 5 - 8,7%); f) it is best not to take life too seriously; I just try to enjoy it (1 - 13,3%; 5 - 8,8%); g) I try not to think about problems and avoid them as long as possible (1 - 22,7%; 5 - 5,2%); h) I try to avoid personal situations which require a lot of thinking and dealing with them (1 - 19,6%; 5 - 4,3%); h) I sometimes do not want to admit that a problem may occur and things are just sorted out by themselves (1 - 16,0%; 5 - 7,4%); i) when I know that a given situation will be stressful for me, I try to avoid it (1 - 6,7%; 5 - 17,9%). The diffusion - avoidant style of identity is more typical for female students, than for male ones (test z ; $p = 0,035$). In the tested group of academic youth, women more often than men avoid solving their personal problems and they more often tend to react situationally to events. What is interesting, D. Czyżowska, E. Gruba and A. Białek present diametrically different results. In their research on young adults, differences linked with sex show that it is men, who have dominantly diffusion - avoidant style of identity, whereas women more often deal with identity problems in a way, which is characteristic for a normative identity style. Moreover, what is cognitively interesting, a link between the diffusion - avoidant identity style and the orientation to hierarchal collectivism has been noticed. Thus, one may say that it is probable that the group of female students who have taken part in the research, will be characterized by the emphasis on the integrity of the group, tendency to submit to authorities and the focus on the intergroup competition.³⁶ Respondents who used to be good students in the secondary schools (ANOVA; $P = 0,010$) and students (female and male) representing humanistic sciences (ANOVA; $P = 0,018$) avoid solving identity conflicts to the greatest extent. One can, therefore, conclude that for these groups of young people, it will be characteristic to procrastinate facing conflicts and identity problems as long as it is possible. Whereas, their actions, making decisions and choices will be accompanied by behaviours that, first and foremost, reflect an answer to the outside context and taking into account consequences. However, the moment of compatibility (behaviour - context) is a rather short-term, than long-term modification, that can influence self-identification.³⁷ The smallest tendency to react situationally to events, avoiding confronting problems and externally located control of

³⁶ See: D. Czyżowska, E. Gruba, A. Białek, *Typ orientacji społecznej*, p. 63-64.

³⁷ See: M.D. Berzonsky, J. Ciecuch, B. Duriez, B. Soenens, *The how and what of identity formation*, p. 296.

hope are the characteristic features for people who used to be excellent students in secondary schools, law students and respondents who declare that their future profession is "totally" for them (ANOVA; $P = 0,001$). Distinguished groups of respondents choose to confront their problems rather than to postpone, avoid or delay resolving problem situations. The distinguished group of young people will not avoid systematic exploration and the necessity to make decisions.

In the most general sense, a subject's career is the result of interactions of possibilities inherent to a subject and the ones embedded in the world. A subject's orientation to a vast time horizon should be accompanied by the reflection about *determinants of career choices*. In this aspect, indicators of views of the studied group of academic youth were answers to the question focused on chosen factors (on the macro, mezzo and micro levels), that can have an impact on career choices. The picture that is emerging from the research exploration points to the fact that career choices of the students that took part in the research, are, according to them, mostly determined by their preferences (69,5%) - "what I want and decide to do". Apart from creative power, the students also emphasize the importance of the power of agency - entering the path of action, achieving goals arising from their own preferences. "Being the creator and the causer of the events arising from one's own preferences"³⁸ is especially emphasized by the academic youth has not changed their professional plans since the beginning of their studies (ANOVA; $p < = 0,0001$) and, which is not surprising, the academic youth, for whom a career means "constantly growing possibilities of action, pleasure that comes from looking at the vast sphere of issues that are up to you and nobody else, happiness that comes from the risk of rock climbing" (ANOVA; $p = 0,004$). Having conviction that one is an agent who really has impact on the surrounding reality, is also typical of people, who "from time to time" or even "rarely or never" enjoy life (ANOVA; $p < = 0,0001$), as well as of students who consider their life so far as wonderful and successful (ANOVA; $p < = 0,0001$). It implies seeing this group of youth in the category of agents, where the essence is being ready to be responsible for agency. A relationship between subjective agency and a style representing identity commitment (S ; $\rho = 0,348$, $p = 0,0001$) confirms the above thesis. Female students show more approval and praise for subjective conviction about the possibility to influence the course of events, than male students (test z ; $p = 0,44$), young people of twenty-two years old, more than elder ones (these are, most often,

³⁸ M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, *Między dostosowaniem a zmianą. Elementy emancypacyjnej teorii edukacji*, Szczecin 1994, p. 106.

students of penultimate of final year of study) (test z ; $p = 0,004$), as well as young people who got their certificates of secondary education from a secondary school with a biological - chemical profile, rather than humanistic or mathematical - physical profiles (ANOVA; $p=0,001$), students representing medical sciences, law and social sciences, more than respondents studying humanistic or technical sciences (ANOVA; $p = 0,036$). This conviction of being an agent is accompanied by the image of "self" determining the quality of a subject's activity. The normative identity style (S; $\rho = 0,131$; $p = 0,018$) turned out to be crucial in the context of the narration of a career development. It emphasizes the creativity and agency in the context of decision making. What is interesting in the conducted analyses, is the inversely proportional relationship between agency resulting from one's own preferences and diffusion - avoidant style of identity (S; $\rho = -0,201$; $p < = 0,0001$). Individuals avoiding resolving identity conflicts and reacting to events in a situational way, do not show the sense of agency when making career decisions. People with a diffusion - avoidant identity style are not guided by what they really want. The specificity of the diffusion - avoidant style allows to predict the lack of a relationship between this style and other possible determinants of career choices. As a matter of fact, the analysis of the research results proves that, showing, which is not a surprise, that there is a relation between diffused identity style and recognition that career choices are determined by randomness, which cannot be controlled (S; $\rho = 0,265$; $p < = 0,0001$).

According to respondents, requirements and social pressure have also impact on career choices (34,2%), as well as qualities acquired through upbringing and socialization (30,8%). University students, that can be described as showing commitment identity style (S; $q = 0,184$; $p < = 0,0001$), do not ignore the importance of social determinants of career choices. The significance of upbringing and socialization processes for a quality of choices that individuals make, is usually emphasized by young people at the age of 24 years old (ANOVA; $p = 0,010$), university students, who did excellent, very good and good at the secondary school, more often than by respondents who had average results at school (ANOVA; $p = 0,049$). These views are also correlated with the following identity styles: informative (S; $q = 0,19$; $p = 0,032$), normative (S; $q = 0,293$; $p < = 0,0001$) and an identity commitment factor (S; $q = 0,208$; $p < = 0,0001$).

The analyses of the results show that every tenth person tested, emphasizes that the quality of socio-economic transformations (13,6%) play a big role in making career choices. this opinion is correlated with an informative identity style (S; $q = 0,115$; $p = 0,040$). The academic youth that took part in

the research, rather eliminates (7,6%) the possibility of reducing the complexity of career choices to randomness, that is out of control of a subject. Men are much more sure of that, than women (test z; $p = 0,74$); young people being on the verge of entering a job market, more than those who still have some time (ANOVA; $p = 0,012$); respondents, who used to be excellent and very good students at a secondary school, rather than those, who used to be good and average students (ANOVA; $p = 0,014$). The normative style of identity (S; $q = 0,130$; $p = 0,021$) and the commitment style of identity (S; $q = 0,265$; $p < 0,0001$) are also the correlate of these views.

Sensitizing the group of young people taking part in the research to notice clear links between global problems and the quality of career construction, is not without significance for aware and appraisingly – evaluative *capturing of a career “construct”*. The diversity of the intellectual conceptualization of “career” issues in the group of university students being tested, results from constituting it terms within possible, socially functioning contexts. The problematic aspects of career, that were of interests for male and female students that took part in the research, revealed semantic preferences how to capture the topic of career. The diverse optics of meanings ascribed to the respondents’ associations with the term “career”, revealed its, first and foremost, as Z. Bauman categorizes, *ideological* (47,4%) and *sociological* (42,5) shading.³⁹ Undoubtedly, among the diversity of meanings that young people associate the “term” career with, the greatest number of responses had the ones that expose positive shading of career experiences and objective measures of success in a career. Showing this issue, explicitly, from a subject’s perspective emphasizes: striving for development, meeting the need for security, confidence in the prosperity of “tomorrow’s” events, the sense of agency. Correlative analyses show that the academic youth being tested, regardless of their identity style or normative orientations emphasize the significance of individuals’ innovative action.

All in all, it should be emphasized that “the mobile perspective” in careers (E.C. Hughes) means the development of one’s own career through a subject’s commitment. The subjective perspective on a career emphasizes personal experience in career (in the development and planning of its perspective) and it includes subjective meanings ascribed to career. Meanings given to career are valuable, especially in a subjective way, not the objective one. As Stebbins accentuates, “subjective careers” reflect individuals’ own feeling about their own career and how it develops.⁴⁰ The career domain has

³⁹ See: Z. Bauman, *Kariera. Cztery szkice socjologiczne*, Warszawa 1960, p. 7-8.

⁴⁰ M.B. Arthur, S.N. Khapova, C.P. Wilderom, *Career success in a boundaryless career World*, Journal of Organizational Behavior, 2005, 26, p. 179.

a dynamic character. Needs, goals, orientations, possibilities and strategies of a subject, change with the life of an individual, as an answer to changing personal and social contexts. According to M. Piorunek, "educational and professional orientations oscillate between subjective and social contexts of human functioning, as well as being subject to the course of an individuals' life and secondarily, determining their biography."⁴¹ As the author emphasizes, the professional orientation is, generally, the final sequence of the school orientation. Career planning, which is, in the most general sense, described as an initiative taken by a subject, requires, among others, making a conscious choice of a future profession. There was an interesting thread in the research exploration. The aim of this thread was to determine the identity styles of the academic youth and the relationship between the styles and the students' concepts about the domain of careers. Taking into account the need for a multidirectional attitude to research in the subject of careers and the need for diagnosis of the quality of imaginings and views on careers among university students, the reference to its identity styles sheds new light on the peculiarities of career capturing by people in the phase of transition from education to the job market. Referring to the identity commitment factor, identity styles of the academic youth, showed dissimilarities in information processing, negotiating identity issues and making personal decisions⁴² by respondents. All of these elements make them, from a cognitive point of view, important analytical issues, as they serve to explain relationships, that can be captured between the identity styles and concepts about careers.

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⁴¹ M. Piorunek, *Orientacje edukacyjne i zawodowe młodzieży współczesnej*, [in:] *Młodzież w świecie współczesnym. Z badań orientacji biograficznych młodych okresu transformacji*, ed. M. Piorunek, Poznań 2004, p. 33.

⁴² M. Berzonsky, *Identity Style and Well-Being*, p. 131.

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