

IDENTITY STYLES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN A GLOBALISING WORLD – A SOCIOPEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. Reflections on the globalising reality and young people, who have to cope with transformations occurring around them, such as difficulties of their development stage, but also the constant changes making the world unpredictable, inspired the research on the sense of identity among contemporary students. The research was aimed at investigating the subjective aspect of the sense of identity of academic youth participating in a globalising reality. The main research question was: “What is the subjective aspect of the sense of identity of university students participating in a globalizing reality, and which variables differentiate it?” The research results were contrasted with the 2012 study, which addressed the same research objective and issue. The same method and research tools were used then. This indicated a direction of change in the identifications of the surveyed youth and their identity styles. Research findings indicate that young people living in postmodernity appear to possess a defined self-image and are engaged in their own identity problems. They typically resolve these problems through self-reflection based on newly acquired information about themselves. However, they increasingly demonstrate a closed-minded attitude toward this information, or choose escape as a method of resolving difficulties. A growing individualistic tendency is also noticeable among contemporary youth. The attributes of the young generation represent a response to the multiplicity and dynamic transformations of “liquid modernity.” Research on young people and their identities prompts young people to undertake self-reflection. It updates knowledge about the psychosocial condition of contemporary youth, who are in a double crisis. In addition, they provide an important report on the resources and ways in which young people cope with identity issues. Given the dynamic nature of changes in our globalizing reality, it's crucial to continually update our knowledge of youth. This is especially true given that we live in a prefigurative culture where young people are the driving force behind change.

Keywords: identity, identity styles, academic youth, globalization, social-educational challenges.

1. INTRODUCTION

Constant changes that reflect the modern world also appear to have an impact on young people's sense of identity. This area seems to be extremely important in relation to the developmental stage that this group faces. We are talking about a time of double transition: from education to the labour market, and from youth to adulthood (Popa et al., 2026). This issue prompts reflection on the question of the condition of a young individual and, consequently, the conceptualisation of youth identity. A stable identity structure enables an individual to maintain a sense of continuity over time and across space, and thus constitutes an important point of reference in relation to decisions made, problems solved, and interpretations of experiences (Cybal-Michalska, 2013, pp. 229–230). The process of identity formation is one of the most important tasks for human development, because, as H. Krauze-Sikorska emphasises, a clear form of “Self” influences flourishing of many psychological functions, such as self-regulation,

processing information about oneself, experiencing emotions, setting goals, perceiving others and behaving towards them (Krauze-Sikorska, 2013, p. 83). M. Jarymowicz maintains that the sense of identity plays a role in determining steadiness and consistency of behaviour, cognitive distancing and control of one's own emotions and reactions (Grzelak & Jarymowicz, 2008, p. 108). Moreover, as the researchers Ö. Sözer and M. Eskin (2023) emphasize:

Therefore, the more firmly people establish their sense of identity, the more they adapt to different roles without confusion. This process helps them experience a clear sense of "inner coherence" and knowledge of "who they are." In short, the ego perceives and evaluates the outer world and incorporates various aspects of experiences into people's inner mental world, creating self-identity or, subjectively, a sense of identity (p. 985).

A sense of identity is recognised in the article as a singular response to the question "Who am I?" (Cybal-Michalska, 2011) as well as a construct made up of individual dimensions such as a sense of distinctiveness, a sense of continuity, a sense of integrity and a sense of sameness. A sense of distinctiveness is understood to be the ability to point out differences, i.e. perceive what makes one individual different from another; a sense of continuity means noticing similarities and differences in oneself over a timeline. A sense of integrity stems from the conviction that tasks and roles undertaken by an individual form a logical whole. A sense of sameness is closely related to the ability to find oneself among the multiplicity of roles and tasks undertaken, to the belief "this is me too" (Brzezińska, 2017, pp. 34–35). According to E. Erikson, the formation of a clear and lasting sense of identity is an important task for every young person, and is an important supporting element in the process of planning, determining one's place and the purposefulness of actions taken (Erikson, 1968). When writing about the sense of identity, it is important to bear in mind the peculiarities of modernity, whose fluctuations not infrequently force an individual to change within the realm of his or her own identifications or to take up other ways of dealing with identity problems. M. Berzonsky called such approaches identity styles. The author of this concept distinguished 3 identity styles (informational, normative, diffuse-avoidant) and the commitment factor. The informational style is characterised by openness to new information and making constant updates to one's own "Self" on this basis, while the normative style is characterised by a rigid attitude towards incoming, new data about oneself and rigidity towards once-adopted identifications. The diffuse-avoidance style involves, as the name implies, avoidance of difficulties – solving problems by escaping from them. The commitment factor is, according to the researcher, an expression of a keen interest in one's own identification problems, a desire to solve them (Berzonsky, 2003).

The article also performs a comparative function of the aspect of students' sense of identity and their identity styles between the years 2012 and 2022. The conducted analyses outline some important trends that reveal the direction of change in the individual identifications of the surveyed young people.

The permanent change inherent in the modern world, which is at the same time closely linked to the phenomenon of globalisation, leads to the problems of interpretation. The scope of the term 'globalisation' turns out to be extremely broad and ambiguous. The theoretical considerations undertaken here attempt to approximate this commonly used term. They point to the most frequent meaningful elements in the literature that define the phenomenon in question (Cybal-Michalska, 2006).

The subject matter of globalisation turns out to be a common denominator for many academic courses, including, among others: philosophy, political science, sociology, pedagogy and economics. The forerunner of the term globalisation, who was the first to use it in the title of his own article, can be considered the sociologist R. Robertson (1985). The researcher's text was entitled "The Relativization of Societies: Modern Religion and Globalization".

Globalisation can be considered within the category of a phenomenon. Then it is understood as a fact that "can be observed, and perceived by the senses (...), as something exceptional" (Wierzbicka, 1998, p. 655). Globalisation understood as a process seems to explain the term only partly, since a process is "a course of causally related, successive changes constituting stages of development or transformation of

something" (Wierzbicka, 1998, p. 148).

According to M. Albrow, globalisation "refers to all those problems by which the peoples of the world are integrated into a single world society, a global society" (Kempny, 1998, p. 241). A similar interpretation is proposed by R. Robertson. The researcher argues that it is "a set of processes that create one common world" (Kempny, 1998, p. 241). R. Robertson's approach to globalisation is referred to as 'voluntarist theory', which is based on the belief that individuals, societies, social systems, as well as humanity as a whole should be analysed, as one common skeleton (Cybal-Michalska, 2006; Cybal-Michalska & Wierzba 2012). However, it should be borne in mind that the peculiar whole in question, i.e. the "global field", is embedded in a socio-cultural system, which is a consequence of the "compression of the world" on the one hand, and the independence of cultures, civilisations, ethnic groups or national societies on the other (Robertson, 1992). Attempts to approximate the concept of globalisation involve also the motif of creating a homogeneous world and "one common society – a world society" (Cybal-Michalska, 2006, p. 21). In this perspective, it is not uncommon for the cultural pattern to turn out to be America (Martin & Schumann, 1996). Processes closely related to globalisation, which are an expression of the diffusion of cultural patterns, are called Americanisation, westernization or macdonaldisation (Ritzer & Ryan, 2004). On the one hand, globalisation represents homogenisation, on the other heterogeneity (Barker, 1999). M. Golka (1999) adopts an approach which emphasises that globalisation has not created a homogenous world and it is not clear whether this will ever come to fruition. In this context, M. Featherstone's statement that "currently the process of globalisation (contrary to earlier expectations of a more homogeneous world) leads to an increasing sensitivity to differences seems significant" (Kahn, 1995, p. 126).

The flows of information, knowledge, money, goods, people and ideas have intensified to such an extent that the sense of spatial distances that separated and insulated people from the need to take into account all the other social entities that make up humanity has been destroyed". As a result, "we are all in each other's backyard" (Kahn, 1995, p. 128).

The approach that treats globalisation as an expression of interdependence, influence and intensification of relations on the international stage, fostering perception of the world within the existence of interconnected networks has many proponents, including: A. Giddens, A. McGrew and P. Streeßen.

A. Giddens assumes that "globalisation represents an intensification of social relations with a world-wide scope that links different localities in such a way that local events are shaped by events occurring many thousands of miles away, while they also affect those events" (Kempny, 1998, p. 242). A. McGrew clarifies the scope of the term, highlighting the fact that globalisation "consists of the multiplicity of connections and interactions of states and societies that make up the current world system" (Golka, 1999, p. 114). As a result of which, as L. Roniger emphasises, there occurs "a trans-nationalisation of cultural patterns, a continentalisation of economic exchanges, a regional trans-nationalisation and an increase in the importance of locality" (Starosta, 2000, p. 48). The phenomenon of the worldwide deepening network of relationships in many spheres of sociocultural, political and economic life also resounds in P. Streeßen's definition of globalisation. The researcher writes that globalisation is "the intensification of economic, political and cultural relations across borders" (Liberska, 2002, p. 17).

Globalisation is considered to be an uncontrolled, spontaneous and at the same time irreversible process. This is a consequence of its unintended and unpredictable consequences. Z. Bauman emphasises that the term does not usually refer to global initiatives or undertakings, but to their consequences. It is therefore difficult to characterise the state of globalisation in the present day, as its fate depends mainly on chance (Bauman, 2000).

Undoubtedly, the phenomenon of globalisation includes a reflection on the quality of society participating in postmodernity. An important aspect involves also the condition of modern man, who is forced to keep searching. Seeking his or her place as well as oneself in a permanently transforming reality. According to A. Cybal-Michalska in modern times we are faced with "an explosion of cultural

diversity phenomena, their universality and intensity. Globalisation is the result of the processes of differentiation and cultural pluralisation of the contemporary world, hence it implies »heterogeneity« of intercultural dialogues at the local and national level, and reveals the progressive “organisation of diversity” rather than replication of unification” (Cybal-Michalska, 2010, p. 12). Cultural pluralism is indicated by a certain relativism of concepts, as mentioned by Z. Bauman: “opposites such as ‘in’ and ‘out’, ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘near’ and ‘far’ defining the degree of taming, domestication and familiarity with various fragments of the surrounding reality” (Bauman, 2000, p. 19). These terms indicate, in the face of global change, an opacity of perspective. For the heterogeneous society of late modernity, terms such as complexity, multidimensionality, ambiguity, ambivalence, transience, or diversity are crucial. This sociocultural reality, which is subject to numerous fluctuations, makes a description, the standardisation of society’s heterogeneity, difficult to grasp. Predicting, therefore, what shape the “society of the future” will take borders on the impossible, for as A. Toffler emphasises: “future shock is, in other words, the bewildering disorientation caused by the premature arrival of the future” (Toffler, 2004, p. 21). Cultural pluralism should be seen as an opportunity, but also as a challenge. It should lead to the responsible use of a range of new possibilities. At this point, it is worth mentioning the term “Global Citizenship” (Oxley, Morris; Millar, Chahda, Carey et al.), whose definition is attempted by, among others, the UN:

Global citizenship is the umbrella term for social, political, environmental and economic actions of globally minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale. The term can refer to the belief that individuals are members of multiple, diverse, local and non-local networks rather than single actors affecting isolated societies. Promoting global citizenship in sustainable development will allow individuals to embrace their social responsibility to act for the benefit of all societies, not just their own (Millar et al., 2024, p. 64).

The diversity under discussion, the constant expansion of the boundaries of possibility, makes people succumb to individualistic tendencies. The highest good for man, which is freedom, can become a threat. This fact is emphasised by M. J. Szymański. The researcher writes that the culture of individualism contributes to individual self-creation and collective identities. It is closely linked to freedom and multiplies its scope through numerous offers and choices, as well as by the opportunity to choose one’s own lifestyle. M. J. Szymański admits that it develops a kind of diversity and variety in society. However, the promoted culture of individualism may give rise to certain fears: “the more diverse people’s preferences, aspirations and actual choices are, the more difficult it is to reach a consensus on common values and the less likely they are to think in terms of the common good.” (Szymański, 2012, p. 10).

Globalisation associated with the “multiplicity of worlds”, as described by B. Misztal: “has changed the nature of “identity”, exposed it and extracted it from the context of social role, freed it from the role of determining influence and stripped it of the *certainty* which was connected with the construction of identity in the conditions of industrial society” (Misztal, 2000, pp. 144–145). This means that questions about the meaning and scope of the term ‘identity’ are still relevant. The heterogeneity of today’s world implies the need to recognise the possibilities and abilities of individuals to create their identity, and to crystallise the concept of “Self” (Cybal-Michalska, 2010).

According to A. Cudowska (2004), a human being who is part of a globalising, diverse and ambiguous reality is a ‘searching human being’. Such a subject gets to know himself or herself “through and thanks to others” (Cudowska, 2004, p. 243), besides that he/she perceives something positive and developmental in dissimilarity, accepting it with respect and appreciation. This dissimilarity allows one to direct oneself and take root in a multicultural society. “Searching human being” experiences permanent change, discovers new identifications, constructs a new type of postmodern mindset.

“Searching identity” is closely linked to the multiplicity of possibilities, in the context of the individual’s search for his or her own identity. Such a person is constantly open to the self from the future, searching for meanings “in a dialogical coexistence with otherness, making some sense for him or her in the ‘multicultural world’ and making sense in the ‘multicultural world within him or her’”

(Cybal-Michalska, 2010, p. 22).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

In 2022, a study was conducted on academic youth. The results of the study revealed, among other things, the self-identifications and identity styles of the respondents. The research had the same objectives and addressed the same issues and used the same methods and research tools as the 2012 study by A. Cybal-Michalska. This procedure was aimed at discovering, establishing and describing the self-identification and identity styles of contemporary academic youth. At the same time, it also made it possible to indicate the direction of transformations taking place in these areas. Updating research on youth, as well as on the psychosocial condition of contemporary man, seems extremely important from the perspective of the continuously transforming reality that we are witnessing.

The research focused on the identity of academic youth existing in the global world. The main objective was to investigate the subjective aspect of the sense of identity of academic youth participating in globalising reality.

The authors addressed the following research question: "What are the self-identifications and identity styles of academic youth?".

A diagnostic survey was chosen as the research method and a questionnaire as the technique. In order to investigate the subjective aspect of young people's sense of identity, the research applied to the TST by M. Kuhn, i.e. the Twenty Statement Test. Respondents were asked to answer the question "Who am I?" using no more than 20 statements (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954). In order to identify young people's identity styles, M. Berzonsky's Identity Style Inventory questionnaire was used.

The 2022 study included students from universities located in major urban areas in Poland (Poznań, Wrocław, Warsaw). A total of 337 male and female students were surveyed. The research was anonymous and was conducted in the spring of 2022. The research sample was selected on the basis of a purposeful selection scheme. This selection was made due to the indication of the study group and the method of distribution. The exploration was inspired by the research on the identity of academic youth, conducted by A. Cybal-Michalska in 2012, which at that time included 354 male and female students of Poznań universities.

In the study, in order to identify relationships between the variables, statistical procedures were applied to determine whether a significant correlation is observed between the variables, whether the factor highlighted turns out to be differentiating for the value of the variable under study, as well as to determine the strength of the correlation. The analysis assumed a statistical significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The following statistical procedures were used to determine the correlations between variables: non-parametric Mann-Whitney (M-W) and Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) tests, as well as Pearson's chi-square independence test and Spearman's rho rank correlation coefficient (S). Spearman's rho correlation coefficient (S) used in the statistical analyses allowed the direction and strength of correlation between variables to be determined.

The study group was predominantly made up of women (75.3%; men: 24.7%). The most common age groups were students aged 20 (24.3%) and 21 (22.3%). Nineteen-year-olds (13.4%), twenty-two-year-olds (12.5%) and twenty-three-year-olds (12.2%) were a slightly less represented group. The rest of the respondents were male or female students aged 24 (8.0%), 25 (3.9%), 26 and above (3.6%). The majority of participants studied social sciences (70.5%), followed by humanities (10.7%), sciences, natural sciences and engineering (12.5%). The least frequent subjects were those studying medical and health sciences (4.2%) and other majors (2.1%). The predominant mode of study among the respondents was full-time (85.8%; part-time mode: 14.2%).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Self-identifications of the surveyed university students

The survey asked “What is your answer to the question ‘Who am I?’. Please indicate no more than 20 statements in the order of association”. The TST tool (Twenty Statements Test) was used to identify the self-identification of respondents. Three response categories were identified on the basis of J. Habermas’s (1987) classification: natural identity (otherwise: a category of a physical nature, its attributes are as follows: age, gender, developmental stage, appearance features), role identity (otherwise: category of a symbolic role definition, which includes such terms as: family roles, professional and other roles), and Ego identity (otherwise: category of an individualistic nature, i.e.: mental states, thoughts, feelings, interests and personality traits).

By far most frequently the surveyed youth referred to Ego identity (86.1%), followed by role identity (73.0%), and the least frequently to natural identity (46.9%).

In comparison, in the 2012 study, in response to this question, young people most often indicated terms that fell into the category of role identity (56.2%), followed by those relating to Ego identity (34.4%). Natural identity did not usually constitute a significant self-identification layer for respondents (9.3%).

The students surveyed mostly possessed the need to emphasise their own uniqueness, exceptionality, as well as to highlight their distinctiveness from others. This was of particular importance for respondents from 2022.

Interestingly, among the attributes of the individualistic category there is also national identity, which, as writes A. Cybal-Michalska (2006), is becoming blurred. In the 2022 study, identification with the nation was not seen by students as a key element of their identity. From the perspective of all references to the nation, 14.2% appeared in the first indication, 0.6% in the second, and 0.3% in the third. Such infrequent identification with the nation is most probably closely related to the characteristics of young people, raised in globalising world. Z. Melosik provides a description of a global teenager. The researcher emphasises that one of his/her main traits is the ability to quickly adapt to a given culture. The life of such an individual is an expression of freedom and mobility. The global teenager is constantly on the move, and thus no place will feel like a foreign country to them (Melosik, 2013).

Other trends in the construction of judgements about oneself by students surveyed in 2022 should also be presented. Undoubtedly, it was the identification with gender that proved to be the core of the youth's identity (in the first indication: 42.1%, in the second: 1.2%, in the third: 0.3%). This was followed by social group membership (first indication: 36.2%, second: 22.6%, third: 4.5%), then family roles (first indication: 12.5%, second: 22.8%, third: 12.5%) and professional roles (first indication: 19.0%, second indication: 3.9%, third: 0.6%). The respondents also attributed importance to ‘being human’ per se; ‘entity’; ‘person’ (in the first indication: 29.7%, in the second indication: 3.3%, in the third indication: 0.6%). It was not uncommon for students to identify with such individualistic characteristics as: personality traits (in the first indication: 14.5%, in the second indication: 8.9%, in the third indication: 4.2%), mental states, feelings and emotional ties (in the first indication: 15.1%, in the second indication: 3.0%, in the third indication: 0.9%), or passions (in the first indication: 11.3%, in the second: 4.2%, in the third: 0.3%).

It is worth noting the term ‘being self’, which is highlighted in the self-identifications of male and female students, both in 2022 and 2012. As A. Cybal-Michalska (2013, p. 235) points out: “This view may exemplify respondents' awareness of the need for a sense of constancy and continuity of Self despite the passage of time as one of the important psychological predispositions constituting a sense of positive identity”.

Comparing the 2012 and 2022 studies, it is important to see an expansion of the individualistic area in the identifications of academic youth. This is illustrated by Table 1.

Identification categories of respondents from 2012 and 2022

Self-identification	2012 study	2022 study
Ego identity	34.4%	86.1%
Role identity	56.2%	73.0%
Natural identity	9.3%	46.9%

Source: Author's own elaboration

Ch. Lasch and M. J. Szymański, among others, write about the development of the culture of individualism. M. J. Szymański emphasises that in modern times it contributes to both individual self-creation and collective identities. It is closely connected with freedom, the multiplication of its scope, the multiplication of offers and opportunities. On the one hand, it adds colour to society by developing diversity within it; on the other hand, it highlights differences between people: "the greater the diversity of people's preferences, aspirations and actual choices, the more difficult it is to find consensus on common values, the less chance there is of thinking in terms of common good" (Szymański, 2012, p. 10). Ch. Lasch analyses the growing phenomenon of narcissism and egoism in American society, and describes how a culture of individualism can lead to egocentrism, lack of empathy and a reduction in social bonds. According to him, the pursuit of individual satisfaction and success is often associated with alienation, anxiety and social disintegration. Thus, he points to such consequences of individualistic culture as alienation, social inequality and lack of social solidarity (Lasch, 1991).

3.2. Identity styles of academic youth

M. Berzonsky's concept of identity styles represents a certain extension for the theory of J. Marcia on the process of identity crystallisation. J. Marcia emphasises stability, capturing identity as a state that follows development (Marcia & Archer, 1993). Bearing in mind the cultural and social influences, which are not insignificant for the formation of one's own "Self", and which are permanently changing in modern times, it is worth looking at M. Berzonsky's model. The researcher gives the process of identity crystallisation a certain dynamic. He understands identity style as the individual's way of dealing with identity problems (Berzonsky et al., 2011). Ö. Sözeri M. Eskin emphasised that "identity styles are not the outcome of identity formation but are somewhat different exploration types through which youth manage identity issues" (Sözer & Eskin, p. 986). M. Berzonsky distinguished three identity styles: informational, normative and diffuse-avoidant, as well as the commitment factor indicating active participation in the identity formation process, coping with identity issues. It is worth mentioning that A. Berman, S. Schwartz, W. Kurtines and S. Berman (2001) attempt to juxtapose identity styles with J. Marcia's statuses. They link the informational style with achievement and moratorium, the normative style with exclusion, while the diffuse-avoidant style with dispersion.

In order to examine adolescents' identity styles, M. Berzonsky's Identity Style Inventory questionnaire was used.

The style that seems to align best with the reality of permanent change, and which equips the individual oneself with the ability to cope with external and internal changes while maintaining the highest level of self-awareness, is the informational style. The informational style indicates openness to new information and experiences, undertaking frequent reflection on one's own beliefs and other components of the "Self". A person with this identity style is able to transform his or her self-image, to resolve internal conflicts of identifying nature. The manifestation of informational style is also associated with the need for cognition, as well as conscientiousness. Individuals manifesting the informational style, act in a thoughtful manner, search, evaluate and refer to newly arriving information. It is noteworthy that this style is notable for individuals engaging in self-reflection and constructive problem-solving, based on rational thinking. They are careful decision-makers, open to new experiences, reflecting on their own views and conscientious (Cybal-Michalska, 2013).

This style was found to be most significant for the 2022 group of students surveyed (mean rank for information style: 2.97). A similar frequency of its occurrence was demonstrated by students from 2012 (mean rank – 2,88).

The informational style in the 2022 study was juxtaposed with the following variables: grade point average in studies (K-W; $H = 12.825$; $df = 2$; $p = 0.002$), self-esteem (S; $\rho = 0.120$; $p = 0.038$), and social orientation (S; $\rho = 0.184$; $p = 0.001$). These correlations were found to be statistically significant, with a directly proportional relationship between them, although in the case of the correlations with self-esteem and social orientation, the rhoSpearman correlation coefficient showed a statistically weak relationship.¹ This means that respondents who have been attributed the informational style have a higher-grade point average (the higher the grade point average, the more intense the adherence to the informational style: mean rank for the grade point average 4.5–5.0: 3.14; for the grade point average 4.0–4.4: 2.90; for the grade point average 3.0–3.9: 2.87), are characterised by higher self-esteem and more frequently display pro-social attitudes. High actualistic aspirations closely related to broad knowledge, also apply to the identification realm, i.e. the higher the general knowledge, the greater the awareness (knowledge) of oneself, as well as the openness and flexibility of one's "Self". On the other hand, however, as S. Xu's (2009) research on a sample of 552 Chinese students indicates, differences in identity styles are independent of students' academic achievement and intelligence level. The surveyed young who exhibited an informational identity style also displayed high (positive) self-esteem, indicative of a sense of 'being good enough' (but not necessarily better than others). According to M. Rosenberg (1965), people with positive self-esteem set realistic goals for themselves, maintain a certain distance from themselves and persistently pursue their own plans, they also cope better with emotions and failure. Respondents who undertake frequent self-reflection, who have a flexible "Self", are also more willing to engage with narrower or wider communities, and thus are socially oriented. A. Cudowska (1997) emphasises that this orientation consists of: sensitivity to the good of the whole, the community, acknowledging the highest value, which is human dignity, involvement in the needs of others, taking action to optimise the functioning of the social environment.

Normative style is closely related to an attitude of closure to new information. Individuals with a normative style undertake self-reflection and have a clearly outlined course of action, which they are reluctant to change (Cybal-Michalska, 2013). They are characterised by a limited tolerance to informational contradictions. They are faithful to once accepted beliefs and value systems. They resolve conflicts of an identity nature by referring to such components of the Self as religion, nation and family. The actions of normatively oriented individuals are often accompanied by anxiety caused by a sense of guilt, approval or duty. It is worth noting that such individuals demonstrate a low readiness for inner exploration. Their decisions have to be supported by the approval of significant others, their expectations and social norms (Czyżowska et al., 2012).

The normative style ranked second in frequency among respondents from 2022 (mean rank: 2.09). With a similar, but slightly higher frequency, the 2012 respondents reported a normative style of identity (mean rank for normative style: 2.64). The 2022 survey results highlighted some statistically significant correlations between the normative style and variables such as family material situation, frequency of experiencing joy of life, satisfaction with life, feelings of loneliness and having someone in one's life to confide in. The style correlates with the family's material situation (K-W; $H = 11,235$; $df = 2$; $p = 0,004$). The better, the more intense is the normative style demonstration (mean rank for average material situation: 2.38; for good material situation: 2.66; for very good material situation: 2,80). The frequency of feeling joy of life also correlates with normative style (K-W; $H = 21.066$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.001$). Here also a tendency can be observed that more frequent feelings of joy of life emphasise the representation of

¹ The significance of the correlation (referring to the value of Spearman's rho coefficient) should be analysed on some arbitrary scale, within which it was assumed: $-0.3 < \rho < 0.3$: weak correlation (inversely/intrinsically proportional), $-0.5 < \rho \leq -0.3$ or $0.5 > \rho \geq 0.3$: moderate/medium correlation, $\rho \leq -0.5$ or $\rho \geq 0.5$: strong correlation.

normative style (mean rank for the declaration "I feel joy of life very often": 2.92; for the declaration "I feel joy of life quite often": 2.69; for the declaration "I occasionally feel joy of life": 2.55; for the declaration "I rarely or never feel joy of life": 2,35). The variable 'evaluation of life as a whole' juxtaposed with normative style, also shows a significant correlation (K-W; $H = 29.213$; $df = 3$; $p < 0.001$), the mean ranks here being as follows: for the declaration "my life is successful or wonderful": 2.82; for the declaration "my life is rather good": 2.69; for the declaration "my life is neither good nor bad": 2.45; for the declaration "my life is unhappy or not very successful": 2.21. Therefore, the conclusion should be drawn that the greater the satisfaction with life of an individual, the more intense the representation of normative style. This style also correlates with the variable related with the answer to the question "Do you feel lonely even though you don't want to?" (M-W; $Z = -2.693$; $p = 0.007$). It appears to co-occur more often with not feeling lonely (mean rank for the statement "yes, I feel lonely even though I don't want to": 2.55; mean rank for the declaration "no, I do not feel lonely ...": 2,76). In addition, people who manifest the normative identity style usually have someone around them in whom they can confide, who can lift their spirits (M-W; $Z = 2.985$; $p = 0.003$) (mean rank for the declaration "yes, I have someone I can confide in...": 2.69; mean rank for the declaration: "no, I don't have anyone I can confide in...": 2.42). The following life orientations were also found to be close to the normative identity style: family orientation (S ; $q = 0.495$; $p < 0.001$), work orientation (S ; $q = 218$; $p < 0.001$), occupational orientation (S ; $q = 0.164$; $p = 0.003$), social orientation (S ; $q = 0.139$; $p = 0.011$) and observational orientation (S ; $q = 0.144$; $p = 0.008$). A particularly pronounced correlation (moderate level of correlation of the rhoSpearman coefficient) was noted in the juxtaposition with family orientation, in the other correlates, this level presents itself as weak. Besides, individuals demonstrating the normative identity style, when answering the question "Who am I?", refer to the category of symbolic role definition ("role identity" for statements in response to the question "Who am I?": S ; $q = 0.124$; $p = 0.022$; the level of this correlation was estimated to be weak). This knowledge finds confirmation in the theses of M. Berzonsky, who emphasises the attributes characteristic of the normative style: little exploration of alternatives, tendencies towards reverence for authority, servility, attachment to dogmas, all norms and rules, a conformist attitude towards family and social expectations, and general rigidity of attitudes when engaging in a commitment (Berman et al., 2001).

The diffuse-avoidant style is characterised by procrastination and postponing decision-making. Individuals with a diffuse-avoidant style avoid confronting personal difficulties with making a decision for as long as possible. The behaviour of such individuals is mainly determined by situational factors (Cybal-Michalska, 2013). The drivers for them are such values as popularity, reputation and making an impression (Czyżowska et al., 2012). Such individuals cope with problems on the basis of emotional strategies, often accompanied by depressive reactions, neuroticism, but also meticulousness and cognitive inquisitiveness (Berzonsky, 2003). M. Berzonsky emphasises that the diffuse-avoidant style is closely associated with low commitment, external locus of control and impulsivity (Berzonsky et al., 2011).

The surveyed academic youth appeared to be least likely to embrace escape from identification problems as a form of coping with such difficulties (mean rank: 2.36).

The diffuse-avoidant style was also found to be the least popular among the surveyed youth in 2012 (mean rank: 1.46). Nevertheless, it is important to note a significant increase in the frequency of this style among contemporary academic youth.

In the explorations from 2022, statistically significant correlations of diffuse-avoidant style were found with the following variables: grade point average in studies (K-W; $H = 8.849$; $df = 2$; $p = 0.012$), hedonistic orientation (S ; $q = 0.238$; $p < 0.001$) and the power of commitment (S ; $q = -0.385$; $p < 0.001$). It was perceived that the higher the grade point average, the less intense was the representation of this style (mean rank for grade point average 3.0–3.9: 2.47; for grade point average 4.0–4.4: 2.42; for grade point average 4.5–5.0: 2.22). Escapism as a way of solving an identity problem thus, appears to be a rarer choice among male and female high achieving students with higher actualist aspirations. This style also

co-occurred frequently with hedonistic attitudes, although it is worth bearing in mind that the level of relationship between diffuse-avoidant style and hedonistic orientation was estimated to be weak (rhoSpearman coefficient). A. Cudowska (1997) defines the hedonistic orientation by adherence to values such as pleasurable spending of time, cheerful company, fun, achieving the goal at the lowest possible cost, lack of persistence in performing tasks when adversity arises, seeking new and exciting things. A proportionally inverse relationship (according to Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, estimated to be moderate) was also noted in the correlation of diffuse-avoidant style. Difficulty avoidance and "externally localised hope control" are associated with weaker commitment to identification issues (Cybal-Michalska, 2013).

The power of commitment (otherwise known as the commitment factor), as M. Berzonsky (2003) writes, indicates involvement in the process of forming one's own identity, redefining it, and solving identification problems. The power of commitment is closely related to careful decision-making and the lack of procrastination. It fosters a sense of purpose and direction. The power of commitment also provides a reference point for a value system through which an individual can monitor, evaluate, regulate their own behaviour and interpret feedback. M. Berzonsky highlights the fact that the commitment factor often co-occurs with the ability to cope with problems and to make decisions carefully, while being inversely correlated with the tendency to push them away and to feel panic when making them. The power of commitment has the power to stabilise the behaviour of individuals who are vulnerable to change under given conditions, it is also closely linked to subjectivity and a sense of agency (Berzonsky, 2003).

The surveyed students appeared to be characterised by commitment to identity issues – both in the study conducted in 2022 (mean rank for the commitment factor: 3.45) and 2012 (mean rank for the power of commitment – 3.57).

In the 2022 explorations, the power of commitment was correlated with the following variables: field of study, grade point average, frequency of feeling happy with life, overall satisfaction with life as a whole, lack of loneliness, self-esteem, family orientation, social orientation, work orientation, and hedonistic orientation. These correlations were found to be statistically significant. The commitment factor is more often significant for male and female medical and health sciences students (K-W; $H = 9.451$; $df = 3$; $p = 0.024$) (mean rank for medical and health sciences students: 4.00; mean rank for social science students: 3.45; mean rank for humanities std: 3.39; average rank for science, life sciences and engineering students: 3.31), and those with the highest academic performance (K-W; $H = 25.002$; $df = 2$; $p < 0.0001$). Respondents with the highest grade point average scored highest on the power of commitment scale (mean rank for grade point average 3.0–3.9: 3.23; for grade point average 4.0–4.4: 3.33; for grade point average 4.5–5.0: 3.75). The power of commitment also goes hand in hand with the frequency of experiencing joy of life (K-W; $H = 26.638$; $df=3$; $p < 0.001$). This joy is felt most frequently by those involved in solving identity issues (mean rank: 3.88), and least frequently by respondents who are rarely engaged in this process (mean rank: 3.10). Those most interested in shaping their own "Self" (mean rank: 3.65) include respondents assessing their life as successful or great, followed by those describing their lives as "rather good" (mean rank: 3.43), then "neither good nor bad" (mean rank: 3.29), and respondents assessing their own life as unhappy or not very successful (mean rank: 3,12) (K-W; $H = 16,891$; $df=3$; $p < 0,001$). A similar correlation can be observed in the case of declarations in relation to feelings of loneliness (mean rank for the declaration "yes, I feel lonely even though I don't want it": 3.37; for the declaration "no, I do not feel lonely...": 3,55). This means that the power of commitment to constructing one's own identity corresponds more often with not feeling lonely (M-W; $Z = -2.194$; $p = 0.028$). The commitment factor also corresponded with high self-esteem (according to M. Rosenberg) (S ; $\rho = 0.120$; $p = 0.038$). These respondents are more likely to be convinced that they are "good enough", demonstrate a positive assessment of their own abilities and set realistic goals for themselves. Family orientation (S ; $\rho = 0.112$; $p = 0.041$) and social well-being (S ; $\rho = 0.196$; $p < 0.001$) were also perceived in young people who demonstrated the power of commitment. These individuals thus, appeared to be

more frequently involved not only in the matters of their own identity, but also in the well-being of others. The study also noticed a directly proportional relationship between the power of commitment and work orientation ($S; \rho = 0.145; p = 0.008$), which is indicative of the conscientiousness of these individuals, in terms of performing their assigned duties and treating work as a value in itself (Cudowska, 1997). An inverse relationship was observed between the commitment factor and hedonistic orientation ($S; p = -0.156; p = 0.004$). This means that respondents manifesting identity commitment do not consider it the most important in their lives to achieve pleasure or a goal at low cost. However, it should be taken into account that the association of the power of commitment with variables such as self-esteem, family orientation, social orientation, work orientation, and hedonistic orientation was estimated on the basis of Spearman's rank coefficient (S) to be weak.

The data collected in the process of research on identity styles conducted in 2012 and 2022 are compiled in Table 2. The earlier results are an important starting point, opening up a chance to see trends, in changes of individual ways of dealing with internal conflicts among youth. Comparing the data presented in the table, one can observe the same order of identity styles in terms of their frequency of occurrence among the respondents. In both cases, the most characteristic manner of coping with the issues of identification is the informational style, followed by the normative style, while the rarest is the diffuse-avoidant style. Of particular interest, however, are the mean ranks, which approximate the intensity of the styles manifested by the respondents. Undoubtedly, the rank of the informational style increased, as did the normative and diffuse-avoidant styles. The greatest difference is observed in the distribution of the diffuse-avoidant style and the normative style. This means that students are increasingly choosing escape as a solution to their identity problems, or they are sticking rigidly to once-accepted identities, demonstrating an attitude of shutting themselves off to new information.

Tab. 2

Mean ranks of identity styles and the commitment factor in the 2012 and 2022 studies

The identity styles	2012 study	2022 study
Informational style	2.88	2.97
Normative style	2.09	2.64
Diffuse-avoidant style	1.46	2.36
Commitment factor	3.57	3.45

Source: Author's own elaboration

Furthermore, one also notices a slight decrease in students' commitment to identification issues and a slight increase in the intensity of the informational style.

To summarise the above discussion, it is worth referring once again to the trends in the styles demonstrated by the young people surveyed. The majority of the academic youth who took part in the 2022 study appeared to be engaged in identity problems, as evidenced by the power of commitment demonstrated by them. It also indicates the resourcefulness of the respondents' attentive decision-making, ability to assess and regulate behaviour, and interpret feedback. Young people deal with problems of all kinds in a constructive manner. This is due to the commitment factor, which, as M. Berzonsky (2003) points out: "stabilises an individual's behaviour which, under given conditions, would be vulnerable to change" (Berzonsky, 2003, p. 132).

Of the three identity styles, the informational style was found to be the most salient for the respondents. This means that the surveyed male and female students take actions that have been previously supported by analysis and reflection. Respondents showed that they most often search for, evaluate and then refer to information that is useful to them. They also perform frequent self-reflection, including reflecting on their own views, or subjecting them to scrutiny. In addition to this, they also demonstrate an irresistible need to know and a sense of conscientiousness (Cybal-Michalska, 2013, p. 242).

Respondents were less likely to demonstrate the normative identity style. Thus, when resolving identity conflicts, they less often refer to such values (components of the self) as family, religion or nation. These respondents show a limited readiness for internal exploration, having, however, a clear direction of action. Normatively oriented individuals reveal a kind of shutting off to new information. It is not uncommon for such people's endeavours to be accompanied by anxiety, which is triggered by a sense of guilt, duty or approval (Cybal-Michalska, 2013, p. 244).

The least characteristic identity style for the surveyed young people was the diffuse-avoidant style. Thus, procrastination and postponing identity resolutions for "later" are reflected least frequently in the attitudes of the respondents. Typically, academic youth who took part in the study do not avoid confronting personal problems or postpone important life decisions. Popularity, reputation and impression are unlikely to be central components in the structure of the "Self" of the young respondents. It should be emphasised that due to the specific nature of this style and the impact it has on the psychosocial condition of a person, respondents are not often accompanied by depressive reactions, neuroticism and impulsiveness (Cybal-Michalska, 2013).

The research results and the characteristics of young people's identity coping styles indicate that it is the informational style, together with the commitment factor, that helps the modern individual constructively engage in the world of permanent change. Kaniušonytė and Žukauskienė's (2018) research highlights the importance of the role of parents and their influence on the process of identity crystallisation. The way parents respond to their children's needs (including the need for autonomy) turns out to be particularly important; this determines the appropriate nurturing of identity, as well as the overall positive development during emerging adulthood. On the other hand, the educator's role should be to ask frequent questions to shape young people's self-awareness. The answers are intended to bring young people closer to their self-image, but also to imply the resolution of dilemmas on the basis of self-knowledge. This knowledge must be supported by inner exploration. Only then do young people have the chance to discover their "true self", which does not depend on the opinion of others or a sense of duty, but on themselves, their inner feelings, needs and values. Furthermore, taking into account the results of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report (UNODC, 2020), which notes an increase in drug use worldwide (UNODC, 2020), as well as the upward trends in diffuse-avoidant style among young people presented in this article, it is necessary to promote healthy lifestyles, while monitoring the scale of psychoactive substance abuse. (Chrost & Chrost, 2023).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The research on young people and their identity is cognitively fascinating and at the same time extremely valuable for three reasons. Undoubtedly, it induces young people to undertake self-reflection, which supports the development of self-awareness and thus supports the process of identity crystallisation. Moreover, it brings closer the psychosocial condition of contemporary young people, who, on the one hand, have to cope with internal changes, conflicts, crises – everything that is related to the developmental phase they are currently in. On the other hand, they have to cope with the challenges of everyday life, participating in the world of permanent change, in which it is difficult to predict the future. Furthermore, such explorations provide an important insight into the resources and ways of coping with identity problems by young people.

The ability to undertake constant self-reflection, the readiness to redefine oneself, seems indispensable in the perspective of the globalising, uncertain reality. Given the constant transformations, it is necessary to update our knowledge of young people, who are finding growing up more difficult than ever.

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Роздуми про глобалізовану реальність і молодих людей, які змушені справлятися з трансформаціями, що відбуваються навколо них, такими як: труднощі, пов'язані з етапом розвитку, а також постійні зміни, що роблять світ непередбачуваним, надихнули на проведення дослідження сутності ідентичності серед сучасних студентів. Метою дослідження було вивчення суб'єктивного аспекту почуття ідентичності академічної молоді, яка бере участь у глобалізованій реальності. Основне дослідницьке питання звучало так: «Яким є суб'єктивний аспект почуття ідентичності студентів університетів, що живуть у глобалізованому світі, і які змінні його диференціюють?». Результати дослідження були зіставлені з дослідженням 2012 року, яке стосувалося тієї ж мети й проблематики. Тоді було використано ті самі методи та інструменти, що дало змогу окреслити напрям змін в ідентифікаціях молоді та її стилях ідентичності. Отримані результати засвідчують, що молоді люди, які живуть у постмодерному світі, мають сформований образ «Я» і активно займаються власними проблемами ідентичності. Зазвичай вони розв'язують ці проблеми через саморефлексію, спираючись на нову інформацію про себе. Проте дедалі частіше вони демонструють замкнутість щодо цієї інформації або обирають втечу як спосіб подолання труднощів. Серед сучасного студентства також спостерігається зростаюча індивідуалістична тенденція. Особливості молодого покоління відображають відповідь на багатоманітність і динамічні трансформації «рідкої сучасності». Дослідження молоді та її ідентичності спонукає самих молодих людей до саморефлексії, збагачення знань про психосоціальний стан в умовах «подвійної кризи» і т.п. Крім того, воно надає важливу інформацію про ресурси і способи, за допомогою яких молоді люди долають проблеми ідентичності. З огляду на динамічний характер змін у нашій глобалізованій реальності, надзвичайно важливо постійно оновлювати знання про молодість — особливо враховуючи, що ми живемо у префігуративній культурі, де студенти є рушійною силою змін.

Ключові слова: ідентичність, стилі ідентичності, студентська молодь, глобалізація, соціально-освітні виклики.