Dominika Karaś[*]

Institute of Psychology
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

Jan Cieciuch

Institute of Psychology
Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

A DOMAIN-SPECIFIC APPROACH TO IDENTITY FORMATION. VERIFICATION OF THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL MODEL IN VARIOUS LIFE DOMAINS IN A SAMPLE OF YOUNG ADULTS[1]

The aims of the presented research were: (1) to verify the three-dimensional model of identity formation proposed by Crocetti, Rubini, and Meeus (2008) in eight life domains in a sample of young adults, (2) to attempt to answer the question of whether and what higher-order factors are formed by each identity dimension in each domain.
The participants were 835 people (with different educational and occupational status) aged 18–27 ($M = 21.81$, 80% females). Using W-MICS (Warsaw Management of Identity Commitment Scale), the three identity processes (in-depth exploration, commitment, and reconsideration of commitment) were examined in eight life domains: character traits, past experiences, family relationships, friends and acquaintances, worldview, hobbies and interests, aims and plans for future, and occupation. It turned out that (1) the three-dimensional identity model was confirmed in all the examined domains; (2) the identity dimensions in the studied domains form up higher-order factors.

Keywords: identity areas, identity domains, in-depth exploration, commitment, reconsideration of commitment, emerging adulthood

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950s, when Erik H. Erikson (1950), in his theory of psychosocial development, considered identity crisis as one of the main developmental tasks, the number of research reports on identity formation has been growing in Polish as well as international journals. In the digital resources of EBSCO is it possible to find about 27 thousand publications directly devo-ted to identity (as for March 26, 2015). In studies representing the developmental psychology tradition, the dominant focus is on adolescence (cf. Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2008; Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, & Beyers, 2006; Marat & Rostowski, 2001; Rydz, 1997), because it is the period that Erikson pointed to as crucial for identity formation. However, it is more and more often pointed out that identity formation is not limited

---

to adolescence (Cramer, 2004; Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992; Tesch & Whitbourne, 1982; Whitbourne, 1986). It is worth remembering that Erikson (1968) himself stressed that this process may continue throughout life, although adolescence is, naturally, the crucial time. Therefore, the research presented in this article goes beyond the traditionally considered adolescence and addresses the issue of identity formation in young adults.

In recent years, it has been stressed in the literature that identity research should take into account various areas of human life (Goossens, 2001), since achieving a stable sense of identity in one domain does not necessarily mean achieving the same in another (Marcia, 1966). The research presented below follows this guideline and belongs to the tradition of domain-centered approach to identity formation; its main aim is to test the three-dimensional model of identity formation in various areas (domains) of life and to attempt to integrate identity processes concerning different domains in one model of identity formation.

CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTIONS OF IDENTITY FORMATION

Most of the contemporary theoretical approaches in the field of developmental psychology are rooted Erikson's (1950, 1968) already mentioned theory of psychosocial development. According to Erikson, in the course of development a person must experience a number of conflicts/crises appearing at various stages of life, and only positive resolution of each conflict makes further healthy development possible. The achievement of a stable sense of identity comes in the period of adolescence (the fifth of the eight stages distinguished by Erikson; 1950, 1968), when the young person begins to experience new and difficult expectations from the external world, begins to ask themselves questions concerning who they are, and has to make choices between personally important paths and plans.

Rooted in Erikson's conception is Marcia's (1966, 1980) model, and operationalizations developed in this model are present, in a more or less modified form, in a vast majority of contemporary studies on identity in the field of developmental psychology. Marcia defined identity as the individual psychological structure integrating a person's needs, motives, abilities, beliefs, and entire life history. He also stressed that this structure was the outcome of decisions and choices made in various life domains (in his opinion, the ideological and occupational domains played the key role) and that the achievement of a stable identity in one domain does not necessarily mean the same in another. Marcia also described identity formation in terms of two processes: *exploration* of various possibilities and resources available in the environment and in the individual, and *commitment*, that is, making decisions in matters important to identity.

The research presented in this article is based on Meeus's (1996) conception, which is an extension and modification of Marcia's model. Meeus and colleagues (Meeus, 1996; Crocetti et al., 2008a, 2008b) observed that after a commitment has been made there still exists the possibility of exploring the area that the current choice concerned. Consequently, instead of two, they proposed three identity processes, also called identity dimensions: commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment. Just like Marcia, Meeus and colleagues (2008a, 2008b) define commitment as a decision – a choice made in an area important to identity, and at the same time as the degree to which the individual identifies with this choice. In their conception, in-depth exploration concerns coping with the choices and commitments made by seeking new information and expanding one's knowledge about the object of choices and commitment. Finally, reconsideration of commitment is defined as the process of making an effort to change a given commitment or choice when it has ceased to be satisfactory.

In research on the interrelations between the above three processes, commitment were found to be positively correlated with in-depth exploration (Crocetti et al., 2008a), which means that people who have strong commitments usually at the same time seek information about the object of these commitments. The relationships between in-depth exploration and the remaining processes was found to have various directions, depending on age: research confirmed its positive correlation with reconsideration of commitment in adolescents (Crocetti et al., 2008a) and negative in young adults (Karaś, Cieciuch, Negru, & Crocetti, 2015).

IDENTITY IN EMERGING ADULTHOOD

In most of the contemporary studies on identity, adolescence is considered as the period that is crucial to identity, although – as mentioned above – according to Erikson (1968), identity formation neither begins nor ends in that period. For this reason, the research presented in this article focuses not on adolescence but on the subsequent period, to which scholars are now beginning to devote more and more attention – namely, on emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Schwartz et al., 2005; Zagórska et al., 2012), which follows adolescence.

Arnett (1994, 1998, 2000) observed that, in the last decades, in industrialized societies we are witnessing an extension of the process of entering adulthood. This extension manifests itself, among other things, in the later completion of education, later marriage, postponing the decision to have children, etc. (Schwartz et al., 2005). Therefore, Arnett (2000) proposed the concept of *emerging adulthood* to refer to the period in a young person's life when he or she feels, in a way, between adolescence and adulthood. It is

assumed that this period spans between late teens and the twenties (Arnett, 2000). It is also the time when people make important life decisions concerning, for instance, professional development, relationships with close others, and worldview. It is a period when young people have to make a decision concerning the role they would like to play in society (Arnett, 2004) as well as answer the question of who they are – that is, they have to make the key decisions in the process of identify formation (Schwartz et al., 2005). People entering adulthood engage in different life domains than before, and in these domains they make decisions that are crucial to their entire future. This makes the examination of identity in these domains extremely important for the understanding of identity formation in young people.

According to Schwartz et al. (2005), young people not always leave adolescence with a stable sense of identity, as they can continue to develop it in the period of emerging adulthood. And even though the question of whether the period distinguished by Arnett can be treated as a new developmental stage remains open (cf. Zagórska et al., 2012), it most certainly is an important time for identity formation.

IDENTITY DOMAINS

In his model of identity formation, Marcia (1966) emphasized that a person seeks the answer to the question of who they are in various life domains, and that the way this question is answered in one domain does not necessarily imply the same answer in another. Expanding this view, Goossens (2001) formulated the thesis that there may be differences in the interrelations of identity processes between different life domains (also referred to as areas or spheres) and in their relations with other variables[2].

---

[2] According to the PWN Dictionary of the Polish Language (http://sjp.pwn.pl/), a domain is "the scope of a person's interests" or "an area of someone's in-depth knowledge or interests or a field of activity" (http://sjp.pl/); therefore, in this article the words "domain," "area," or "sphere" used with reference to identity will be treated as synonyms.

This is the so-called domain-specific approach (Goossens, 2001), which has been a recommended one recently but is still represented by few studies only. McLean, Syed, Yoder, and Greenhoot (2014) stress that what is often overlooked in research on identity processes is the content of identity connected with various life domains, such as education, professional activity, or worldview and beliefs. McLean et al. (2014) also observe that the intensity of identity processes in one person may vary across domains.

Marcia (1966) pointed to the ideological and occupational domains as the key ones for identity formation, and these domains are still examined the most often in connection with identity development (cf. the ideological domain: Crocetti, Fermani, Pojaghi, & Meeus, 2011; Crocetti et al., 2008a, 2008b; Kunnen, Sappa, van Geert, & Bonica, 2008; Klimstra et al., 2011, 2012; Orgocka & Jovanovic, 2006; the occupational domain: Eryigit & Kerpelman, 2011; Orgocka & Jovanovic, 2006).

The model of identity proposed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b) makes it possible to study identity processes in a variety of domains, but research practice so far has usually consisted in studying these processes in the educational and occupational domains, as recommended by Marcia. Sometimes, the domain of relations with a friend and a partner, proposed by the authors of the presented model and measure, was also examined (Crocetti et al., 2008a, 2008b).

A different approach to the identification and examination of the domains in which identity is formed was proposed by Karaś (2015), who observed that nowadays – when the path to adulthood keeps lengthening – taking up studies or first professional experiences, usually examined in traditional research on identity development, do not necessarily lead to the achievement of a stable sense of identity. Karaś (2015) conducted her study in accordance with the qualitative approach, and the participants were supposed to name the areas of life important to answering the question "Who are you?". Next, the answers collected were classified (with the help of competent judges) into the following categories: *character traits* (the personality characteristics considered by the participants to be of key importance to answering the identity question), *past experiences* (of significance to personal identity), *family relationships, friends and acquaintances* (the most important relations and close relationships with the family of origin and the current family as well as with other people from the individual's environment that are important in answering the question "Who am I?"), *worldview* (the set of the individual's main beliefs concerning life), *hobbies and interests* (the set of the most important interests/hobbies), *aims and plans for future* (the domain relating to the plans made and the goals set by the individual), *occupation* (the domain relating to current professional activity).

THE PLAN OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The study by Karaś (2015) as well as the conception proposed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b) represent the domain-focused approach to identity formation. However, Crocetti et al. proposed a three-dimensional model of identity processes, devoting less attention to life domains and only allowing for the possibility of studying different identity areas. Karaś (2015), by contrast, in her qualitative study identified the domains actually present in young people's self--definition. A question therefore arises of whether the three-dimensional model proposed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b) describes the identity processes in the domains identified by Karaś (2015). To answer this question was the aim of the research presented below.

Hypotheses

The aim of the present study was to test the three-dimensional model of identity processes developed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b) in different life domains, previously distinguished in a qualitative study (Karaś, 2015). Therefore, we hypothesized the following:

H_1. Identity formation in each of the domains identified by Karaś (2015) can be described in terms of the three-dimensional model comprising commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment, proposed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b).

We attempted to answer the question of whether three-dimensional models describing identity formation in each domain are independent of one another or whether they make up one consistent model in which the higher-order factors are the dimensions of identity formation or the domains in which identity is formed. For this purpose, we tested three models. The first model comprised 24 latent variables (three dimensions in each of the eight domains). The latent variables were correlated but did not make up any higher-order factors, which means this was a model in which both the domains and the dimensions of identity formation in these domains were relatively independent. In the remaining two models, the 24 latent variables made up higher-order factors. The higher-order latent factors can be either identity processes (three of them) or identity formation domains (eight). Identity processes as higher-order factors were tested in the second model, in which general exploration manifested itself in exploration in particular domains, just like general commitment manifested itself in domain-specific commitment, and general reconsideration – in domain-specific reconsideration. Domains as higher-order factors were tested in the third model, in which each domain was treated as a latent variable, built by three identity processes in a particular domain: commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment.

Taking the above possibilities into account, we formulated another hypothesis:

H_2. The identity processes taking place in many life domains can be described by means of one model with identity processes as higher-order latent factors.

We hypothesized that – although personal identity may be formed to different degrees in different domains (as emphasized by Marcia, 1966, and the advocates of the domain-specific approach; Goossens, 2001) – it does constitute a consistent whole that can be described by means of one model comprising the three processes distinguished by Crocetti et al. (2008), taking place simultaneously and varying in intensity across the domains of importance to young people. Consequently, we expected the first model and the second one to be better fitted than the third model. However, the good fit of the second model does not undermine the justifiability of distinguishing eight domains, as it points to a hierarchical structure of identity processes, in which three general dimensions are of a higher order in relation to the dimensions in particular domains, where they may differ in intensity.

Participants and Procedure

The participants were 835 individuals in the period of emerging adulthood (18–27 years, M_{age}= 21.81, SD = 2.33; 80% females). They represented different levels of education; the sample included students, employed and unemployed people, living in various regions of Poland: 23.5% lived in villages, 15.3% lived in small towns (up to 50,000 inhabitants), 23.9% – in medium-sized towns (50,000–500,000 inhabitants), and 37.3% – in big cities (over 500,000 inhabitants). Nearly 1% of the participants had elementary or vocational education, 15.3% had secondary education, 64.4% of the sample were university students, and 19.4% were people with higher education. Working people constituted 36% of the sample, learning and nonworking people constituted 60%, and unemployed individuals were 4%. The participants completed eight questionnaires on-line, with full anonymity ensured.

They had been recruited by the first author of this article and her assistants in a variety of on-line contexts: Internet forums, social networking sites, and thematically diverse discussion groups. Information about the study was also disseminated further in the Internet using the snowball

sampling method. The participants received no remuneration for taking part in the study.

Measures

In the study, we used the *Warsaw Management of Identity Commitments Scale*[3] (W-MICS; Karaś & Cieciuch, 2015). This measure is a modified version of the *Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale* (U-MICS), developed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b) for measuring the intensity of three identity formation processes: commitment (meaning decision in a domain of importance to identity), exploration in depth (collecting information about that domain), and reconsideration of commitment (meaning efforts to change unsatisfactory commitments). Research has shown (Crocetti et al., 2015) that U-MICS has good psychometric properties and is characterized by measurement equivalence across countries as well as between men and women. Because W-MICS is a modification of an existing instrument, we decided to maintain consistency with the name of the original measure (as well as its predecessor – *Utrecht-Groningen Identity Development Scale*) and not to translate the name of W-MICS into Polish.

The Polish modification consisted in introducing the domains identified by Karaś (2015), which had twofold consequences: a modification of some of the items of the questionnaire (the content of items had to be slightly differentiated across versions due to the specificity of the domains examined and the specificity of the Polish language) and a modification of the response scale. In the original version (U-MICS), all items are rated on a scale from 1 (*completely untrue*) to 5 (*completely true*), and this was retained in W-MICS for the in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment scales. In W-MICS, however, the response format was changed for the commitment scale, using two statements with opposite meanings for each item. The change was dictated by the fact that in U-MICS all the

items of the commitment scale refer to positive implications of this dimension such as the sense of security or stability, which, in our opinion, are not necessarily defining features of commitment. Besides, both in Marcia's (1966) model and in the one proposed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b), the sense of security and stability are not defining attributes of commitment – which, according to the definition, means decision or choice in a domain important to identity. The consequences of such a decision may be positive or negative. Therefore, we assigned two poles to each item of this scale: a positive pole, referring to the sense of security and confidence (e.g., "My family gives me self-confidence"), and a negative pole, with the opposite meaning (e.g., "My family takes my self-confidence away").

We used a set of eight versions of the W-MICS questionnaire to measure the three dimensions of identity in the following domains identified in the qualitative study: *character traits, past experiences, family relationships, friends and acquaintances, worldview, hobbies and interests, aims and plans for future, and occupation.* Each of the versions of W-MICS, consisting of 13 items, can be used as a separate instrument (measuring

Table 1. Reliability of the Scales of *Warsaw-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (W-MICS)*

	Exploration	Commitment	Reconsideration
Character	.79	.90	.88
Past Experiences	.76	.94	.87
Family	.83	.96	.93
Friends	.81	.94	.89
Worldview	.86	.94	.89
Interests	.86	.94	.88
Aims	.83	.96	.91
Occupation	.96	.83	.91

---

[3] The W-MICS questionnaire is available upon request from the first author of this article.

identity dimensions in a given domain) or treated as part of one comprehensive set for illustrating identity dimensions/processes in different life domains.

The reliability of the questionnaire, assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, is presented in Table 1.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The Three-Dimensional Model of Identity Formation in Eight Life Domains (Hypothesis 1)

In order to verify Hypothesis H_1, concerning the three-dimensional model of identity formation processes proposed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b), we performed a confirmatory factor analysis in each of the domains, using M*plus* software. We tested eight models (separately for each domain and, consequently, separately for each version of W-MICS) consisting of three intercorrelated latent variables: commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment. The observable variables were the results on individual items of the W-MISC questionnaire. The scheme of the model is presented in Figure 1.
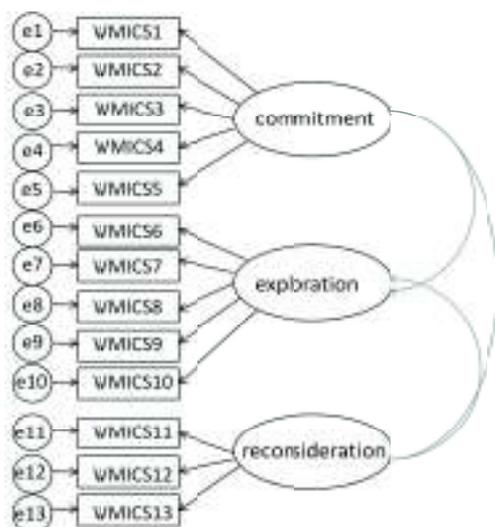

Figure 1. Three-dimensional identity structure – measurement model

In all the models, consistently with the results of previous studies using U-MICS (cf. Crocetti & Meeus, 2014), we allowed for the intercorrelation of two pairs of measurement errors concerning items having similar content and being part of the same scale. The fit indices of the models are presented in Table 2.

For all the models, CFI (*Comparative Fit Index*) was above .90, and for nearly all the models RMSEA (*Root Mean Square Error of Approximation*) was below .08, which, by the standards of model fit indices commonly used in confirmatory factor analysis (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004), means a good fit of the models to the data, thus allowing us to accept hypothesis H_1. An increased value of RMSEA was found only for the domain of aims and plans for future.

Table 2. Fit Indices of the Three-Factor Model of Identity in Eight Life Domains (*df* = 60)

	χ^2	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Character	207.400	.975	.054	.036
Past Experiences	371.419	.957	.079	.059
Family	297.825	.976	.069	.042
Friends	306.342	.968	.070	.043
Worldview	278.796	.974	.066	.035
Interests	271.854	.974	.065	.034
Aims and plans	456.241	.958	.089	.096
Occupation	207.400	.975	.054	.036

Note. χ^2 – chi square; *df* – degrees of freedom; CFI – *Comparative Fit Index*; RMSEA – *Root Mean Square Error of Approximation*; SRMR – Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Table 3 presents correlations between latent variables in all the eight models tested. For nearly all the domains examined, in-depth exploration and commitment are positively correlated, while reconsideration of commitment correlates negatively with the remaining two dimensions. These relationships are consistent with the results of previous research (cf. Karaś et al., 2015).

Table 3. Correlations Between the Latent Variables Presented in Figure 1

	Exploration / Commitment	Commitment / Reconsideration	Exploration / Reconsideration
Character	.13**	-.68***	-.09*
Past Experiences	-.07	-.65***	.13**
Family	.55***	-.71***	-.44***
Friends	.47***	-.54***	.26***
Worldview	.38***	-.56***	-.21***
Interests	.47***	-.43***	-.38***
Aims	.38***	-.57***	-.24***
Occupation	.54***	-.59***	-.45***

*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

One Model of Many Models of Identity? (Hypothesis 2)

The first stage of analyses aimed at testing Hypothesis H_2 was the analysis of intercorrelations between identity processes across domains, using Pearson's *r*. We correlated the results on each scale in different domains. As can be seen in Table 4, intercorrelations between the same scales across domains, though significant, often reach only moderate or low values, which confirms the justifiability of analyzing different domains.

In order to test the fit of the model including all identity dimensions in the eight domains, we applied confirmatory factor analysis using M*plus*. We compared three models. Model 1 (Fig. 2) consisted of 24 intercorrelated first-order latent factors – all the identity dimensions in all the examined domains built by items of all the versions of W-MICS. Model 2 (Fig. 3) additionally assumed the existence of three higher-order metafactors: commitment, exploration, and reconsideration of commitment, correlated with one another, each of them built by eight lower-order factors – the corresponding identity dimensions in each domain. For example, the latent metafactor of commitment was built by eight latent factors of commitment in eight life domains. Finally, in Model 3 (Fig. 4), the higher-

Table 4. Correlations Between Indicators of Commitment / In-Depth Exploration / Reconsideration of Commitment in Different Life Domains

	Past Experiences	Family	Friends	Worldview	Interests	Aims	Occupation
Character	.67**/.49**/.51**	.46**/.25**/.67**	.46**/.39**/.31**	.66**/.51**/.46**	.51**/.32**/.31**	.57**/.42**/.39**	.45**/.21**/.19**
Past Experiences		.53**/.32**/.36**	.45**/.40**/.31**	.60**/.42**/.37**	.46**/.30**/.26**	.51**/.43**/.31**	.47**/.16**/.26**
Family			.38**/.41**/.23**	.42**/.25**/.22**	.37**/.26**/.13**	.40**/.38**/.19**	.34**/.32**/.13**
Friends				.56*/.41**/.29**	.53**/.37**/.24**	.47**/.41**/.23**	.32**/.20**/.08**
Worldview					.57**/.42**/.34**	.62**/.47**/.43**	.45**/.22**/.22**
Interests						.65**/.48**/.47**	.44**/.37**/.19**
Aims							.50**/.34**/.30**

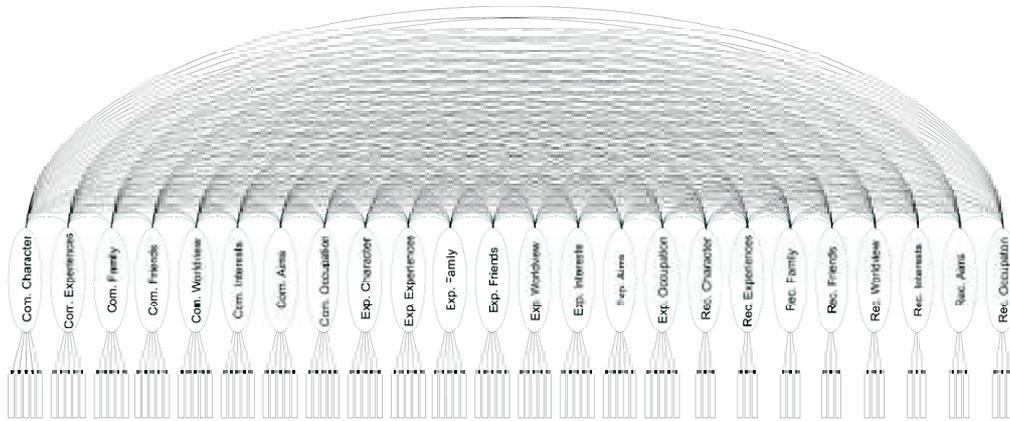*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

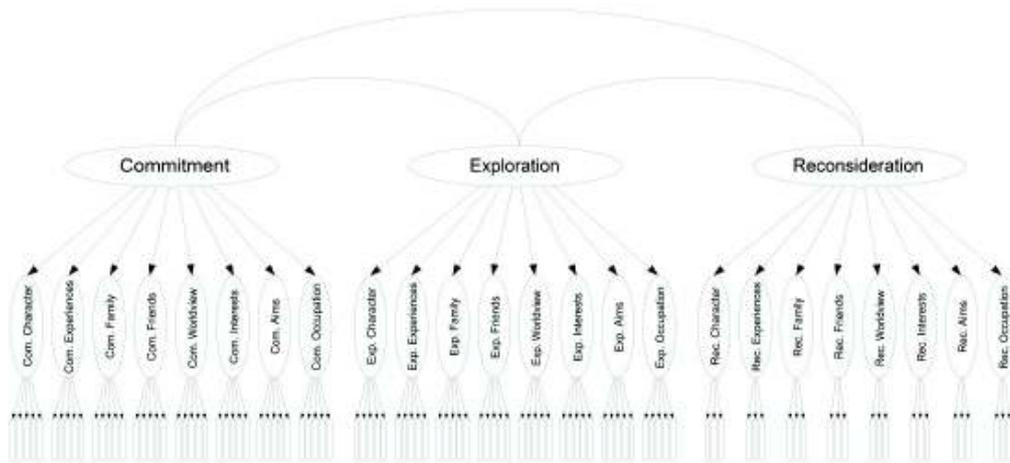Figure 2. Identity structure comprising eight life domains – Model 1

Figure 3. Identity structure assuming the existence of higher-order factors: identity dimensions – Model 2
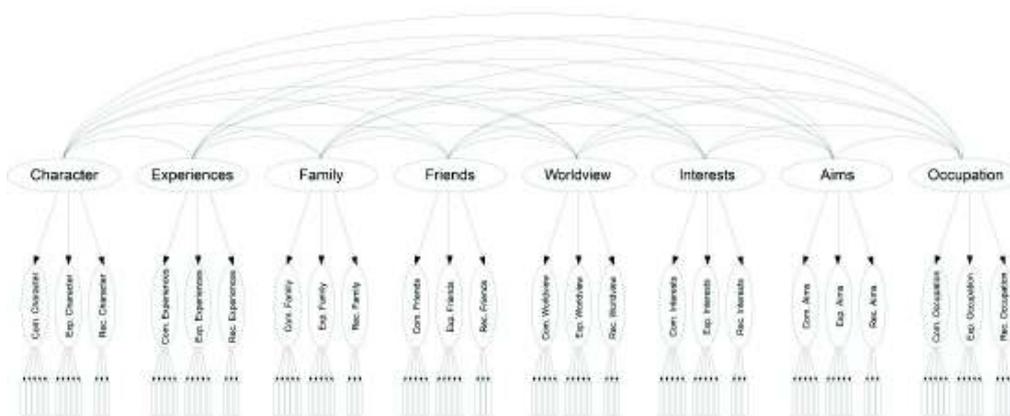

Figure 4. Identity structure assuming the existence of higher-order factors: identity domains – Model 3

-order factors were not metadimensions but iden- tity domains built by identity processes in a given domain. For instance, the character traits higher- -order latent factor was built by three lower-order factors: exploration, commitment, and reconside- ration of commitment in the domain of character traits (Figure 4).

Table 5 presents the fit indices of the com- pared models. In the case of models including identity processes as latent variables (Model 1 and Model 2), we found comparable fit indices. For Model 3, in which the latent factors were not identity processes but identity domains, the value of CFI was below the acceptable level.

Table 5. Fit Indices of the Compared Models

	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA [90% CI]
Model 1	12068.144	4956	.900	.041 [.041–.042]
Model 2	13269.856	5185	.887	.043 [.042–.044]
Model 3	17551.982	5200	.827	.053 [.052–.054]

Note. χ^2 – chi square; df – degrees of freedom; CFI – *Comparative Fit Index*; RMSEA [90% CI] – *Root Mean Square Error of Approximation* [90% confidence interval].

As the results of analyses suggest, it is more justifiable to adopt the three identity dimensions as latent factors rather than the eight domains. The results also show that Models 1 and 2 have similar fit indices.

DISCUSSION

The aim of addressing the issues presented in the current article was to test the model of identity processes taking place in the period of emerging adulthood, when young people make many important life decisions concerning various life domains (cf. Arnett, 2008; Tesch & Whit- bourne, 1982). However, the presented study goes beyond the domains usually examined

so far – ideological and occupational (Marcia, 1966) – and is aimed at investigating identity in the domains that are subjectively judged by people entering adulthood to be crucial for them, namely: *character traits, past experiences, family relationships, friends and acquaintances, worldview, hobbies and interests, aims and plans for future, and occupation.* In the contemporary dynamically changing world, young people may look for answers to questions crucial for identity in many different life domains, and engagement in the occupational domain very often fails to give a permanent answer to the question "Who am I?" Therefore, the study was conducted in accordance with the domain-specific approach, focused on identity domains (Goossens, 2001). We used the domains that young people judged to be important for their answer to the question "Who am I?" in the qualitative study conducted by Karaś (2015). Identity formation processes in the domains identified were described using the three-dimensional model developed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b).

We made an attempt not only to test the model proposed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b) in numerous life domains, but also to answer the question of whether these dimensions can be used to develop a coherent model of identity formation comprising many life domains or whe- ther analysis should employ separate models in different domains.

Although the identity domains judged to be important by individuals in the period of emer- ging adulthood turned out to be different from the ones studied so far, the three-dimensional structure of identity comprising in-depth explo- ration, commitment, and reconsideration of commitment (Crocetti et al., 2008a) was confir- med in all of these domains. This confirms the possibility of using this model for describing the identity of young adults. The correlations of the same identity processes across domains turned out to be moderate or low for some domains, which confirms Goossens's (2001) claim about the importance of analyzing various life domains

in identity research – the so-called domain-specific approach.

In the study, we also posed the question of whether it was possible to speak of one general model of identity formation dimensions comprising many domains, or merely about individual, partial models in specific domains. A theoretically consistent model could take two forms: the higher-order factors ordering specific processes in particular domains could be either identity dimensions or the life domains in which identity is formed. Consequently, the most important finding obtained in the analysis of the collected data seems to be the answer to the question of what the latent factors are: domains or identity dimensions. It turned out that the model organizing identity formation processes according to domains was not fitted to data, while the model organizing them according to higher-order factors representing processes was well fitted. This means, on the one hand, that distinguishing and analyzing numerous identity domains is justified (since the model without second-order variables was well fitted), but also that the higher-order dimensions in a consistent model of identity in different domains are not domains but the three identity processes proposed by Crocetti et al. (2008a, 2008b). Those processes can be considered in terms of individual differences, which may manifest themselves with different degrees of intensity in different life domains.

The obtained results highlight the importance of studying many identity domains and at the same time confirm the three-dimensional model comprising commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment for describing identity processes in various life domains. It is also worth noting that identity in individuals in the period of emerging adulthood may be formed in different domains than in adolescence, and that the interrelations between the three processes may have a different character in people at different ages. The model presented in this article can be the basis for further research testing such suppositions.

REFERENCES

Arnett, J. J. (1994). Are college students adults? Their conceptions of the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Adult Development*, *1*, 213–224.

Arnett, J. J. (1998). Learning to stand alone: The contemporary American transition to adulthood in cultural and historical context. *Human Development*, *41*, 295–315.

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 469–480.

Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cramer, P. (2004). Identity change in adulthood: The contribution of defence mechanisms and life experiences. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *38*, 280–316.

Crocetti, E., Fermani, A., Pojaghi, B., & Meeus, W. (2011). Identity formation in adolescents from Italian, mixed, and migrant families. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *40*(1), 7–23.

Crocetti, E., Jahromi, P., & Meeus, W. (2012). Identity and civic engagement in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, *35*, 521–532.

Crocetti, E., & Meeus, W. (2014). Identity statuses: Strengths of a person-centered approach. In K. C. McLean & M. Syed (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of identity development* (pp. 97–114). New York: Oxford University Press.

Crocetti, E., Rubini, M., Luyckx, K., & Meeus, W. (2008a). Identity formation in early and middle adolescents from various ethnic groups: From three dimensions to five statuses. *Journal of Adolescence*, *37*, 983–996.

Crocetti, E., Rubini, M., & Meeus, W. (2008b). Capturing the dynamics of identity formation in various ethnic groups: Development and validation of three-dimensional model. *Journal of Adolescence*, *31*, 207–222.

Eryigit, S., Kerpelman, J. L. (2011). Cross-cultural investigation of the link between identity processing styles and the actual work of identity in the career domain. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *40*(1), 43–64.

Erikson E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.

Erikson E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.

Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, *6*(1), 1–55.

Karaś, D. (2015). Identity domains in emerging adulthood – Results of the qualitative research in Poland. *The Newsletter of European Association for Research on Adolescence (EARA)*), May 2014, 11–14.

Karaś, D., Cieciuch, J., Negru, O., & Crocetti, E. (2015). Relationships between identity and well-being in Italian, Polish, and Romanian emerging adults. *Social Indicators Research*, *121*, 727–743.

Karaś, D., Kłym, M., & Cieciuch, J. (2012). Eudajmonistyczny dobrostan psychiczny a kształtowanie poczucia tożsamości w sferze edukacyjnej i zawodowej [Eudaimonic psychological well-being and identity formation in the educational and professional domains]. *Psychologia Rozwojowa*, *18*(1), 87–101.

Klimstra, T. A., Crocetti, E., Hale, W. W., Kolman, A. I. M., Fortanier, E., & Meeus, W. H. J. (2011). Identity formation in juvenile delinquents and clinically referred youth. *European Review of Applied Psychology*, *61*(3), 123–130.

Klimstra, T. A., Luyckx, K., Germeijs, V., Meeus, W. H. J., & Goossens, L. (2012). Personality traits and educational identity formation in late adolescents: Longitudinal associations and academic progress. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *41*(3), 346–361.

Kunnen, E. S., Sappa, V., van Geert, P. L. C., & Bonica, L. (2008). The shapes of commitment development in emerging adulthood. *Journal of Adult Development*, *15*(3-4), 113–131.

Luyckx, K., Goossens, L., Soenens, B., & Beyers, W. (2006). Unpacking commitment and exploration – Preliminary validation of an integrative model of late adolescent identity formation. *Journal of Adolescence*, *29*, 361–378.

Marat, E., & Rostowski, J. (2001). Poczucie depresji, poziom lęku ujmowanego jako stan i jako cecha w aspekcie kształtowania się statusów tożsamości osobowej u młodzieży [The sense of depression and the level of trait and state anxiety from the perspective of identity status formation in young people]. In B. Kaczmarek, K. Markiewicz, S. Orzechowski, (Eds.), *Nowe wyzwania w rozwoju człowieka [New challenges in human development]* (pp. 171–197). Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *3*(5), 551–558.

Marcia, J. E. (1980). Identity in adolescence. In J. Andelson (Ed.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology.* New York: Wiley.

Marsh, H. W., Hau, K.–T., & Wen, Z. (2004). In search of golden rules: Comment on hypothesis-testing approaches to setting cutoff values for fit indexes and dangers in overgeneralizing Hu and Bentler's (1999) findings. *Structural Equation Modeling*, *11*(3), 320–341.

McLean, K., Syed, M., Yoder, A., & Greenhoot, A. (2014). The role of domain content in understanding identity development processes. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *24*(4), 1–16.

Meeus, W. (1996). Studies on identity development in adolescence: An overview of research and some new data. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *25*, 569–598.

Orgocka, A., & Jovanovic, J. (2006). Identity exploration and commitment of Albanian youth as a function of social opportunity structure. *European Psychologist*, *11*(4), 268–276.

Rydz, S. (1997). Osobowościowe uwarunkowania kształtowania się różnych typów tożsamości u młodzieży licealnej [Personality determinants of the formation of different types of identity in high-school students]. In J. Rostowski, T. Rostowska, & I. Janicka (Eds.), *Psychospołeczne aspekty rozwoju człowieka [Psychosocial aspects of human development]* (pp. 177–185). Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.

Schwartz, S. J., Côté, J. E., & Arnett, J. J. (2005). Identity and agency in emerging adulthood: Two developmental routes in the individualization process. *Youth & Society*, *37*, 201–229.

Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN [Dictionary of the Polish language] (author undefined). Retrieved July 27, 2015, from http://sjp.pwn.pl/

Słownik Języka Polskiego SJP [Dictionary of the Polish language] (author undefined). Retrieved July 27, 2015 http://sjp.pl/

Stephen, J., Fraser, E., & Marcia, J. E. (1992). Moratorium–achievement (MAMA) cycles in lifespan identity development: Value orientations and reasoning system correlates. *Journal of Adolescence*, *15*, 283–300.

Tesch, S. A., & Whitbourne, S. K. (1982). Intimacy and identity status in young adults. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *43*(5), 1041–1051.

Waterman, A. S. (1982). Identity developmental from adolescence to adulthood. An extension of theory and a review of research. *Developmental Psychology*, *18*(3), 341–358.

Whitbourne, S. K. (1986). Openness to experience, identity flexibility, and life change in adults. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *50*(1), 163–168.

Zagórska, W., Jelińska, M., Surma M., & Lipska, A. (2012). Wydłużająca się droga do dorosłości [The lengthening road to adulthood]. Warsaw, PL: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego.