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Identity statuses across various life domains and well-being in emerging adults

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Keywords: identity, commitment, in-depth exploration, reconsideration of commitment, identity status, identity domain

Introduction

Discovering identity is one of the most crucial tasks in human development for well-being (Erikson, 1950, 1968). In the classical approach to identity, performing this task is considered in terms of two processes or dimensions: exploration and commitment (Marcia, 1966). Based on these processes, Marcia (1966) proposes four identity statuses: *achievement* (high level of commitment and exploration), *foreclosure* (commitment with no prior exploration), *moratorium* (high level of exploration, low level of commitment), and *diffusion* (low in both processes).

Research on Marcia's identity statuses has evolved in two directions. On the one hand, new models have been proposed in which more identity processes are differentiated based on Marcia's typology. The most popular models are a five-dimensional model proposed by Luyckx and

colleagues (2006a, b, 2008) and a three-dimensional model proposed by Crocetti and Meeus (2008a, b). These dimensions are used to differentiate more narrowly defined identity statuses (such as achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, searching moratorium, and diffusion in Crocetti and Meeus' model). We decided to adopt the three-dimensional perspective, since previous research (Klym, Karaś, Cieciuch, 2013) shown, that three identity processes explained higher part of well-being than five (which is the construct that lied in our area of interest). The second direction of identity research is not only the examining various identity processes, but also taking into account that these processes are developing in various areas of human life (such as the relationships, education, work, etc.). The domain-specific approach has been proposed (Goossens, 2001), according to which identity processes (and statuses) can differ between various identity domains.

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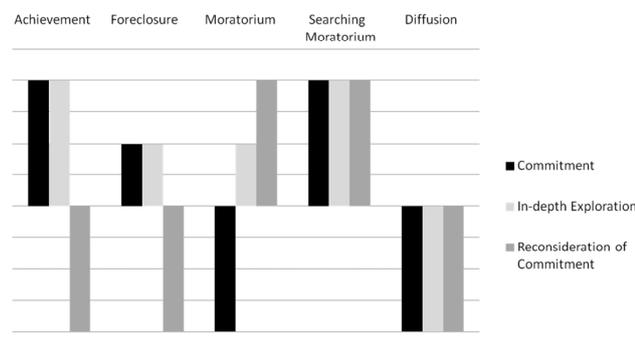
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The current study connects these two lines of research for the first time and aims to explore identity statuses based on the three-dimensional model proposed by Crocetti and Meeus in various identity domains (Karaś, 2015; Karaś & Ciecuch, 2015, 2018). Moreover, it examines the relationship between well-being and the statuses in various identity domains.

Identity Statuses Based on the Three-dimensional Model

Crocetti et al. (2008) proposed three processes instead of the two distinguished by Marcia: *identity commitment* (comprising a choice made in an identity-relevant domain as well as identification with this choice), *in-depth exploration* (searching for information about existing choices), and *reconsideration of commitment* (the process of revising and changing existing commitments when they start becoming less satisfactory for an individual). Research has shown (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2008; Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani, Klimstra, & Meeus, 2012b) that five statuses can be distinguished empirically (via cluster analysis) based on the three processes. In *achievement*, individuals reported high commitment, high in-depth exploration, and low reconsideration of commitment; in *foreclosure*, individuals reported a moderate level of commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment; *diffusion* was characterized by a low level of all three processes; in *moratorium*, there was a low level of commitment, a moderate level of in-depth exploration and a high level of reconsideration of commitment; and in *searching moratorium*, commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment were high. The pattern of the content of the statuses is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Pattern of three identity processes in five identity statuses (based on: Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008)



Various studies have confirmed that the identity statuses indicated above were replicated in other research in samples from various countries (Crocetti et al., 2008; 2012a, b; Crocetti, Scignaro, Sica, Magrin, 2011; Klimstra et al., 2011; Meeus et al., 2010, Skhirtladze et al., 2015; Verschueren et al., 2017).

The main limitation of these studies was the fact that they examined only a few identity domains, mostly the three

proposed by Marcia (1966): interpersonal, occupational and ideological (which is sometimes identified with educational). Moreover, the choice of the domain was subjective and arbitrary, and the researchers did not take into account which domains are important for emerging adults' identity. Considering the domains that are crucial in this life stage and important for Polish emerging adults is one of the aims of the present study because, as Arnett (2015) noted, particular identity domains are not universal among various cultures or life stages. More precisely, Arnett (2000) claimed that emerging adulthood is a concept adequate for describing identity only in Western countries. Moreover, some identity statuses can be perceived more or less positively in various cultural contexts – for example foreclosure is seen as more “proper” in collectivistic than individualistic countries (Schwartz, 2015). The differences may lay also in the level of various identity processes, for example in Italy where the education is prolonged, emerging adults tend to explore more and avoid making firm commitments (Crocetti, Rabaglietti, & Sica, 2012). In Polish context, emerging adulthood can also be a time of extended identity exploration, due to the socio-economic changes in last 30 years (entering the global labour market, almost unlimited access to university studies, etc.), and possibly the educational and occupational domains may be particularly important areas of identity. Thus, presented paper aims at identifying the adequate domains and examining identity processes and their relationship to well-being.

Moreover, as some research suggests (McLean, Syed, Yoder, & Greenhoot, 2014), identity processes can achieve various levels in different domains. Despite the fact that Marcia (1966) himself noted that achieving identity in one domain does not mean this is accomplished in another domain, there is a lack of the research that analyzes these differences. Thus, in our research, we aim to answer the following questions: (a) are the statuses equivocal across the domains, and (b) can people be classified to the same status in various life domains? The present study aims to examine identity statuses in eight life domains that are crucial for Polish emerging adults (Karaś, 2015; Karaś & Ciecuch, 2016): personality characteristics, past experiences, family, friends and acquaintances, worldview, hobbies and interests, Aims and plans for the future, an occupation.

We focus on emerging adults (Arnett, 2000) because, as Schwartz and colleagues (2005) argue, answering the question “Who am I?” and discovering the role that young people would like to play in society is crucial in this life period. Although adolescence is a quite well-examined area in terms of identity processes, in the emerging adulthood area, a gap remains (Arnett, 2015). Contemporary research confirms that emerging adulthood differs from other life stages in terms of identity explorations (Arnett, 2000). According to Arnett (2000), most of identity explorations take place in emerging adulthood, since young people have then the social permission for exploring and taking decisions in new life domains (such as partner and family relationships, work, education, etc.). Moreover, the explorations made in this period are more deep and serious

than in adolescence. For many people emerging adulthood is the time of choosing life partner, engaging in serious full-time job or choosing their own educational path. Explorations in these areas are strictly connected to identity formation. These exploration are sometimes pleasant but often also not so enjoyable and may be connected with disappointments. Thus, examining the identity processes in various life domains, as well as their relationships to well-being appeared to be really important in identity research and became the main aim of presented research.

Identity and Well-being

Positive feelings and emotions, adjustment, and well-being have been treated as the most important consequences of a positive resolution of identity crisis (Erikson, 1980). Identity statuses have usually been considered in terms of more or less adaptive, taking into account the presence or absence of identity crisis, which was the original term for identity exploration (Marcia, 1980).

Recently, relationships between identity processes and statuses and well-being have been deeply examined (Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani, & Meeus, 2010; Crocetti, Scignaro, Sica, & Magrin, 2012; Schwartz, et al. 2011). All three identity processes can be treated as significant predictors of well-being: commitment and in-depth exploration are positively connected and reconsideration is negatively connected to well-being (Karaś et al., 2015). Consequently, statuses with higher commitment and in-depth exploration are connected with higher well-being, and those with higher reconsideration of commitment are connected with lower well-being (Crocetti et al., 2008b, 2010; Crocetti, Jahromi, & Meeus, 2012).

The limitation of these studies was similar to the limitation noticed above: the focus was limited to several arbitrarily selected identity domains. Karaś and Ciecuch (2018) showed that when eight identity domains were included in the research and controlling for shared variance, commitment and in-depth exploration were indeed significant positive predictors, and reconsideration was a significant negative predictor of well-being; however, the relations were not equal across all domains. The personality characteristics domain was especially important for well-being (Karaś & Ciecuch, 2018).

Unfortunately, no research focuses on well-being in statuses obtained in various life domains. This is the second gap filled by this study. We applied Keyes' (2002) conceptualization of well-being, in which well-being is understood as an important component of mental health, including psychological and societal functioning as well as experiencing positive emotions.

The current study

The aims of this study were as follows:

(1) Examining the identity statuses in different life domains based on the three identity processes: commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment. We applied the domain-focused approach to identity (Goossens, 2001) and investigated the domains crucial for

emerging adults' identity, which were identified empirically in previous research (Karaś, 2015; Karaś, Ciecuch, 2015). We formulated two hypotheses: first, we expected that, similar to the original research on a few classical domains (Crocetti, Rubini, Luyckx, & Meeus, 2008), five identity statuses would emerge with the Polish population in each identity domain (as presented in Figure 1). Second, according to Marcia's (1966) assumption (which has not yet been verified in previous research), we hypothesized that status may be not invariant across domains. For example, achieving identity in one domain does not necessarily mean this is true in other domains. Thus, people are not classified in the same status across domains.

(2) Examining differences in well-being across the statuses derived empirically in each domain. We hypothesized that statuses with higher commitment would relate to higher well-being and that statuses with higher reconsideration of commitment would relate to lower well-being in each identity domain because of the more or less adaptive character of these identity processes, which has been confirmed in previous research. Considering the results obtained by Karaś and Ciecuch (2018), we expected especially large differences between these statuses in the personality domain, because shaping identity in this domain is most connected to well-being.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The research was conducted in Poland. The participants included $N = 815$ emerging adults aged 18–27 ($M_{\text{age}} = 21.81$, $SD = 2.33$, 83% females). The respondents participated in an on-line survey. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. The respondents had the opportunity to obtain the overall results of the study.

Of the whole sample, 24.8% were living in the countryside, 16.2% in small towns (no more than 50 thousand residents), 26.5% in cities with 50–500 thousand residents and 32.5% in large cities (above 500 thousand residents). Primary education level characterized .5% of the respondents, secondary education characterized 14.4%, higher education characterized 13.5%, and 71.5% of the participants were students. At the time of the study, 2.4% of the participants were employed, 5.5% were unemployed, 83.8% were not employed but were studying, and 8.4% were both studying and working.

Measures

The Warsaw-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (W-MICS; Karaś & Ciecuch, 2015)

To measure the three identity processes, we used a modification of the Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (U-MICS; Crocetti et al. 2008). The tool comprised 13 items. We used eight domain-specific versions of the W-MICS to examine eight identity domains: personality characteristics, past experiences, family, friends and acquaintances, worldview, hobbies and interests, Aims and plans for the future, and occupation (not obligatory for the participants who did not have a job) using 13 items

in each domain. These domains were previously found in a qualitative study by Karaś (2015) to be the most important for emerging adults' identity, and the measurement model was confirmed by Karaś and Ciecuch (2015).

The response options for in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment were on a 5-point scale (the same items as in U-MICS) and on the 11-point scale from -5 – *completely untrue* to 5 – *completely true* for commitment. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed via Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The results are presented in Table 1. All the coefficients can be considered satisfactory.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities of Warsaw Management of Identity Commitments Scale

	In-depth exploration	Commitment	Reconsideration of commitment
Personality characteristics	.79	.90	.88
Past experiences	.76	.94	.87
Family relationships	.83	.96	.93
Relationships with friends	.81	.94	.89
Worldview	.86	.94	.89
Hobbys and interests	.86	.94	.88
Aims and plans for the future	.83	.96	.91
Occupation	.96	.83	.91

Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF; Keyes, 2013a, b, Polish version: Karaś, Ciecuch, Keyes, 2014)

The MHC-SF is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 14 items: three of them represent hedonic well-being (sample item: *During the past month, how often did you feel happy?*), six represent psychological well-being (sample item: *During the past month, how often did you feel that you liked most parts of your personality?*), and five represent social well-being (sample item: *During the past month, how often did you feel that the way our society works makes sense to you?*). The 6-point response scale (from *never* to *every day*) measures the frequency of experiencing these three aspects of well-being during the past month. In the present study, we used only the general score from MHC-SF; its Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .925.

Results

To derive identity profiles in eight domains, we conducted a series of cluster analyses. We used a two-step cluster analysis procedure. First, we completed a hierarchical cluster analysis with a squared Euclidean distance using Ward's method. Each cluster solution

suggested by this method was assessed according to its theoretical meaningfulness, parsimony, and explanatory power (explaining more than a half of the variance), similar to Crocetti et al.'s (2008a) research. Similar to the original study mentioned above, the best was the five-cluster solution. In the second step, the initial cluster centers were used in a *k*-means procedure.

In Figures 2–9, we present the Z-scores for three identity dimensions (commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment) for the five clusters in each domain. To assess the percentage of explained variance of each identity dimension, we performed multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) with Tukey post hoc tests. The results are presented in Table 2. The percentage of explained variance is presented in Table 2, and the percentage distribution of the participants falling into each identity cluster is presented in Table 3.

Table 2. The percentage of explained variance of each identity dimension in eight domains

	In-depth exploration	Commitment	Reconsideration of commitment
Personality characteristics	56.8	55.7	66.0
Past experiences	66.6	66.0	68.4
Family relationships	75.9	68.9	63.6
Relationships with friends	61.0	65.0	70.0
Worldview	67.5	61.5	67.6
Hobbys and interests	65.8	57.9	73.9
Aims and plans for the future	58.6	63.8	65.8
Occupation	70.5	56.4	74.0

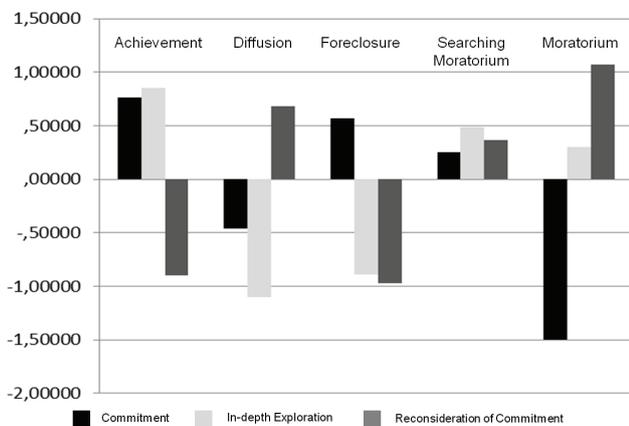
Table 3. The percentage distribution of the participants in each identity cluster

	Achievement	Diffusion	Foreclosure	Searching moratorium	Moratorium
Personality characteristics	23.0	26.7	19.9	25.3	15.1
Past experiences	19.6	21.2	20.6	21.2	17.4
Family relationships	38.0	12.4	26.2	12.9	10.4
Relationships with friends	33.7	15.0	22.8	20.0	8.5
Worldview	32.5	15.6	20.3	7.9	23.7
Hobbys and interests	22.5	14.5	25.7	16.2	21.0
Aims and plans for the future	19.5	17.4	25.1	15.9	22.2
Occupation	29.3	17.6	19.8	25.6	7.7

Personality characteristics domain

Compared to the original research (see Figure 1), the achievement cluster is similar (high commitment, high in-depth exploration, and low reconsideration of commitment); foreclosure is characterized by high commitment, low in-depth exploration, and low reconsideration of commitment; moratorium is characterized by low commitment, high in-depth exploration and high reconsideration (which is also similar to the original research); and the searching moratorium is characterized by rather high scores in all of the processes. The main difference is shown in fifth profile, which can be called diffusion. In this research, diffusion was characterized by low scores in commitment and in-depth exploration and high scores in reconsideration of commitment.

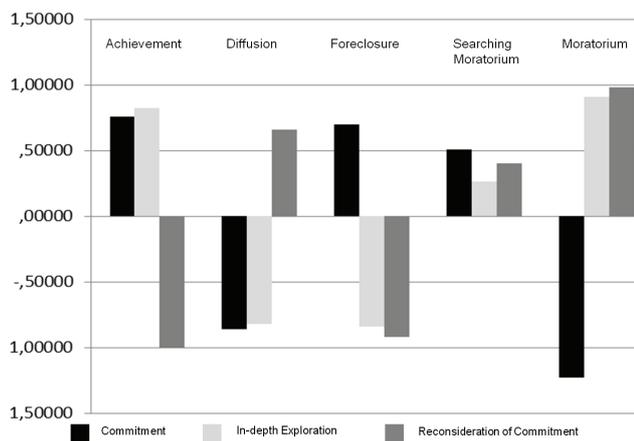
Figure 2. Z-scores for three identity processes for five clusters in the personality characteristics domain



Past experiences domain

In the second investigated identity domain, empirically derived identity clusters were similar to those obtained in the personality characteristics domain. However, in this domain, there were fewer participants in the diffusion cluster and more in foreclosure and achievement (see Table 3).

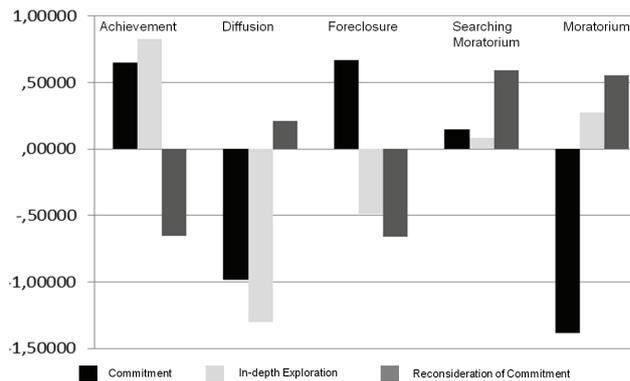
Figure 3. Z-scores for three identity processes for five clusters in the past experiences domain



Family relationships domain

In this domain, the achievement, diffusion and foreclosure profiles look similar to the other domains. However, we can see some differences in the two moratorium clusters. These two profiles are mainly different in terms of commitment; the reconsideration of commitment level is almost the same in both clusters, and the level of in-depth exploration is only slightly higher in one of these clusters.

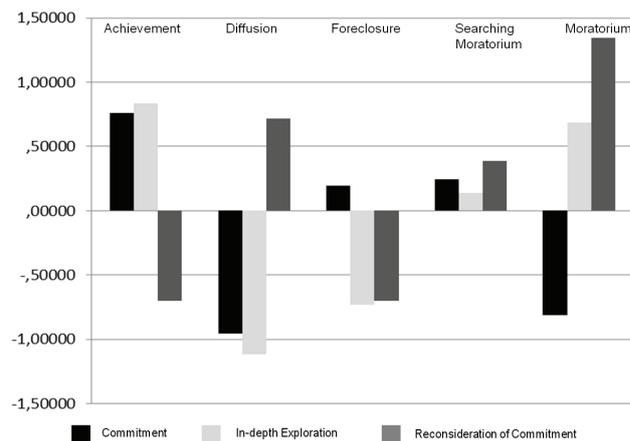
Figure 4. Z-scores for three identity processes for five clusters in the family relationships domain



Relationships with friends and acquaintances domain

Compared to other domains, in this area, the foreclosure level is lower but still above z = 0. Both moratorium clusters look similar to the family relationships domain.

Figure 5. Z-scores for three identity processes for five clusters in the relationships with friends and acquaintances domain

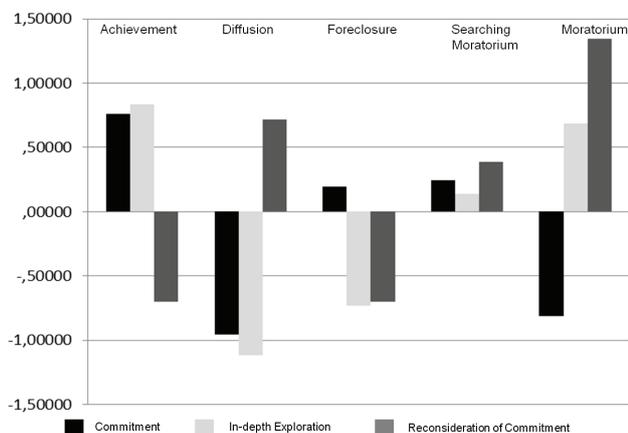


Worldview domain

In fifth examined domain, we can see some differences in the diffusion cluster; however, the profile of identity dimensions looks quite similar, whereas the mean level of in-depth exploration is higher (but still below z = 0). The foreclosure cluster also looks different compared to other domains. The level of commitment and in-depth exploration in this domain is medium, and the level of reconsideration of commitment is medium to high.

The most interesting difference in moratorium clusters is that these clusters differ not only in commitment level but also in in-depth exploration, which is high in searching moratorium and low in other clusters.

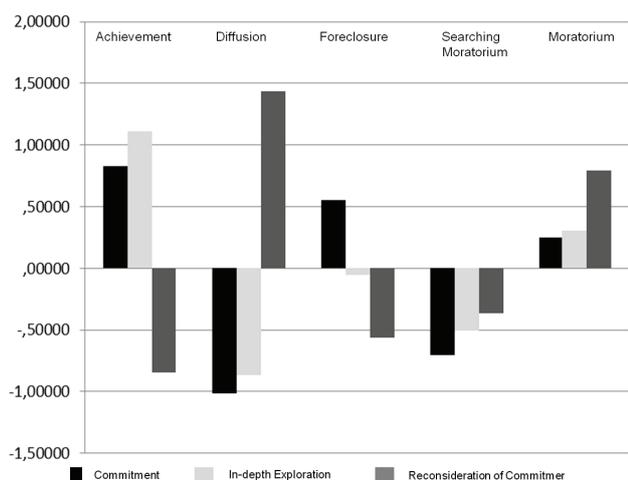
Figure 6. Z-scores for three identity processes for five clusters in the relationships with worldview domain



Hobbies and interests domain

The two first clusters presented in Figure 6 (achievement and diffusion) in this domain look similar to other areas. Some differences can be seen in foreclosure, where we can observe a high level of commitment, low level of reconsideration of commitment, and moderate level of in-depth exploration. The moratorium status profiles are opposite: in searching moratorium, all of the processes are high; in moratorium, all processes are low.

Figure 7. Z-scores for three identity processes for five clusters in hobbies and interests domain

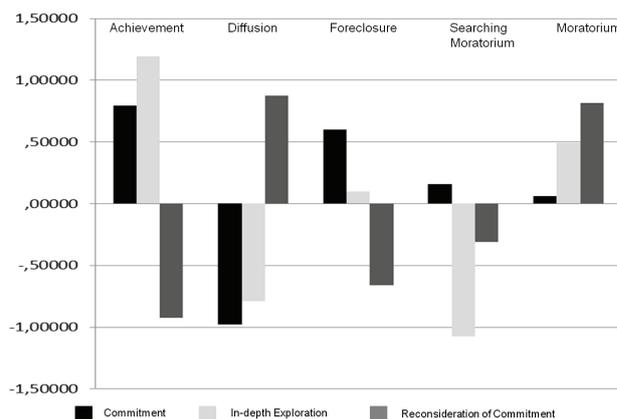


Aims and plans for the future domain

The configuration of identity processes in the achievement and diffusion clusters is the same as in other domains. In addition, foreclosure looks similar to most of the other domains (medium to high commitment, low in-depth exploration, and low reconsideration of commitment). In the

searching moratorium domain, we can see high in-depth exploration as well as high reconsideration of commitment, and the commitment level is medium. The second moratorium cluster looks different; here, we can see high commitment, medium in-depth exploration, and low reconsideration of commitment, which resembles the profile in the foreclosure cluster and makes this cluster more adaptive.

Figure 8. Z-scores for three identity processes for five clusters in aims and plans for the future domain

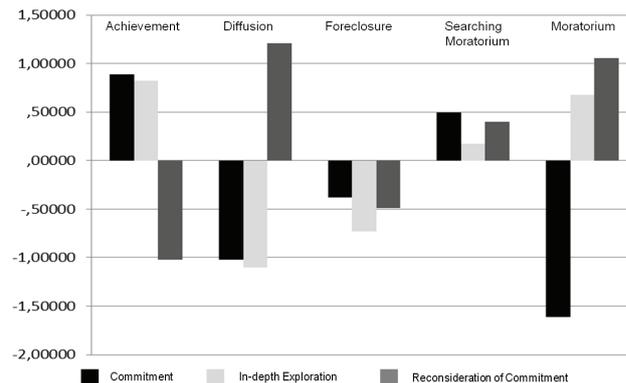


Occupational domain

The identity profiles in the last examined domain look similar to those derived in other. But this domain shows some problems with deriving foreclosure status, because it is characterized by low in-depth exploration, reconsideration of commitment, and commitment, which is similar to the diffusion status in Crocetti et al.'s research. However, in the present study, the diffusion status is characterized by high reconsideration of commitment. In the searching moratorium domain, we can observe a low level of commitment and high level of the other two processes, and in moratorium, we see a high level of all three processes, which leads us to question of which moratorium is actually "searching".

In summary, as we can see in pictures 2–9, in Polish emerging adults in each identity domain, five statuses are

Figure 9. Z-scores for three identity processes for five clusters in occupational domain



distinguished empirically. These results support the first hypothesis of our study.

Various Statuses in Various Domains

To compare whether the identity statuses are replicable across eight domains (i.e., whether people are falling into the same or different statuses across different domains), we analyzed Cohen's kappa coefficients between every pair of statuses. The results are presented in Table 4.

The results showed that all the reported coefficients were very low. Three indicators were significant but also very low (<.1). Thus, the classification of statuses is not

invariant across domains, and people are classified in different statuses in different domains, which supports the second hypothesis of our study.

Well-being in Various Statuses

To test the third hypothesis, we separately compared the mean level of well-being between identity clusters for each domain. We used one-way ANOVA tests using a post hoc Tukey's test. The results are reported in Table 5.

In almost all domains, the most adaptive status was achievement and the least adaptive status was diffusion. However, significant differences in well-being

Table 4. Cohen's kappa coefficients for each pair of identity clusters

	Personality characteristics	Past experiences	Family	Friends and acquaintances	Worldview	Hobbies and interests	Aims and plans for the future	Occupation
Personality characteristics	–	.068***	–.031	–.010	.024	.040*	.028	–.022
Past experiences		–	.015	.020	.025	.038*	.014	–.018
Family			–	.036	.026	.022	.005	–.049
Friends and acquaintances				–	.025	.016	.012	.005
Worldview					–	.019	.013	–.024
Hobbies and interests						–	.027	.024
Aims and plans for the future							–	.006
Occupation								–

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 5. ANOVA results and mean levels of well being in identity clusters in eight domains

	Mean level of well-being					ANOVA results	Differences
	Achievement	Diffusion	Foreclosure	Searching Moratorium	Moratorium		
	1	2	3	4	5		
Personality characteristics	4.22	2.83	3.74	3.72	2.76	$F(4,804) = 8.883, p < .001$	1–2*; 1–3*; 1–4*; 1–5*; 2–3*; 2–4*; 3–5*; 4–5*
Past experiences	3.76	3.36	3.64	3.50	3.50	$F(4,811) = 3.776, p < .01$	1–2*
Family relationships	3.79	3.43	3.48	3.64	3.53	$F(4,752) = .639, p > .05$	
Relationships with friends	3.60	3.58	3.48	3.41	3.59	$F(4,770) = 1.092, p > .05$	
Worldview	3.55	3.63	3.55	3.51	3.45	$F(4,794) = .539, p > .05$	
Hobbys and interests	3.58	3.56	3.47	3.58	3.51	$F(4,772) = .348, p > .05$	
Aims and plans for the future	3.68	3.51	3.51	3.43	3.50	$F(4,761) = 1.162, p > .05$	
Occupation	3.68	3.74	3.26	3.65	3.45	$F(4,319) = 2.143, p > .05$	

* $p < .01$.

between various identity statuses were reported in only two domains: personality characteristics and past experiences. In *personality characteristics*, well-being was significantly higher in achievement status than in the other four statuses. The least adaptive statuses were moratorium and diffusion, where well-being level was the lowest. Searching moratorium and foreclosure appeared to be moderately adaptive in terms of well-being. In *past experiences*, the only significant difference was reported between achievement (where well-being was higher) and diffusion.

In summary, we can say that achievement is the most adaptive and diffusion least adaptive status. The obtained results are in concordance with the results of previous research (Karaś & Ciecuch, 2018), in which the personality characteristics domain was also reported to be the most important for achieving well-being.

Discussion

In this study, we attempted to shed light on the issue of identity statuses in emerging adulthood by examining identity clusters in eight life domains that appeared to be most important for emerging adults in Poland and differences between the statuses in terms of well-being.

Similar to past research (Crocetti et al., 2008) on the traditional domains, we empirically derived five identity statuses in all eight domains: achievement, foreclosure, diffusion, and two types of moratorium: classical moratorium and searching moratorium. In each domain, achievement was characterized by a high level of commitment and in-depth exploration and a low level of reconsideration of commitment. Moreover, people in this status reported the highest level of well-being (but only in two examined domains), which confirms the adaptive character of this status: individuals who have strong commitments but who are also gathering information about themselves without revising their commitment appeared to feel better than their peers in other statuses.

The status with the lowest well-being was diffusion; however, the configuration of identity processes was different than in Dutch research (where all of the processes scored low in this status). In the Polish sample, diffusion was characterized by a low level of commitment and in-depth exploration and a high level of reconsideration of commitment. This result is different from the results of the original study; however, it is consistent with the theoretical assumption of identity diffusion (Marcia, 1980), which was considered the least adaptive status. Moreover, the time of emerging adulthood may be the period when diffusion is even more problematic, as reflected in the high level of reconsideration of commitment in this status.

The main differences between the current and previous research can be observed in two moratorium statuses. In some areas, we can hardly say which moratorium is actually searching. In personality characteristics, past experiences, family relationships and relationships with friends and acquaintances, the moratorium status is characterized by low commitment and high in-depth

exploration and reconsideration of commitment. However, for example, in the hobbies and interests domain, all scores are low (as in diffusion, described by Crocetti et al., 2008b).

Regarding the searching moratorium in friends, hobbies and interests, occupation, and plans for the future domain, the profile of the searching moratorium is similar to Crocetti et al.'s (2008) research: all three processes are above average.

Although the distinction between the two types of moratorium is clear in the present study, it is not the same as in the study conducted by the authors of the three-dimensional model (Crocetti et al., 2008a, b). Similarly, as in the aforementioned research, the searching moratorium seems to be more adaptive (higher well-being). It is possible that lack of commitment, if accompanied by high in-depth exploration, does not carry such negative consequences as a low level of both of these processes. The obtained results may suggest some cultural differences between western and non-western contexts, especially within the confines of the moratorium status.

Despite obtaining highly similar statuses in each identity domain, people were not classified into the same status across all eight identity domains. This result has far-reaching consequences for future research on identity. In light of the present results, talking about statuses must be relativized to a certain identity domain because the statuses are variant across domains. Thus, these results support the usefulness of the domain-specific approach (Goossens, 2001; Karaś & Ciecuch, 2015, 2018).

The results of well-being when comparing various statuses show that we should not generalize conclusions about well-being to all identity domains, which is why examining the domains separately is so important. The two domains that appeared to be important for experiencing well-being were personality characteristics (where there were significant differences between almost all statuses) and past experiences (where the only significant difference was reported between achievement and diffusion). The foreclosure status, which was almost as adaptive as achievement in previous research, appeared to be characterized only by a moderate level of well-being. In most of the examined domains, this status was characterized by a high level of commitment and a low level of in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment. Compared to the original research, in the present study, the level of in-depth exploration was lower, but the original study was conducted in early and middle adolescence. The positive character of this process may increase with age. However, in this case, longitudinal research should be conducted.

It appears that for emerging adults strong commitments into one's personality traits serve as the strongest fundament for building up their identity. This result shows that not only the traditionally examined identity domains (ideological, relational, and educational – see: Marcia, 1966) are important for contemporary young adults' identity, but answering the question "who am I?" with a reference to the question about what are my most important personal characteristics that are constructing my

identity and which of the experiences from my past are important to define who am I now.

The obtained results confirm the postulates about the specificity of the domains in emerging adulthood (Karaś, 2015) as well as the assumption that the personality characteristics domain is the one crucially important domain for well-being in this life period (Karaś & Ciecuch, 2018). Moreover, some identity domains (e.g., personality characteristics) may serve as a kind of anchor for well-being because they are particularly important for achieving a high level of well-being. This interpretation is consistent with the results of previous research on the relationships between identity processes and well-being (Karaś & Ciecuch, 2018).

An important step for future research on identity and well-being should include cross-cultural comparisons of these relationships because in various cultures, different domains may be particularly important for experiencing well-being. Moreover, longitudinal research can reveal whether we can treat well-being as the outcome of the identity development process.

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