

Globalisation, Cultural Pluralism, and the Formation of Vocational Identity in the World of “Boundaryless” Careers

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ABSTRACT

The global transformations of the contemporary world, to which all aspects of social and individual existence are subjected, seem inevitable and their complexity difficult to grasp. New opportunities and new possibilities, but also fears and anxieties, are emerging on a micro and macro scale. The specific nature of qualitatively new transformations is not irrelevant to the multicontextual changes in the world of work, which place new demands on workers. This vision implies fundamentally new ways of interpreting the world and making judgements about the condition of the contemporary human being – including the human being as a “manager” of his or her own career. In the knowledge-based economy, it becomes crucial to develop the careers of its members and to invest in a career “portfolio”. Changes in the world of “boundaryless” careers bring the issue of proactive career behaviour of the subject up to date. A distinctive feature of proactive career planning, leadership and management is the awareness of being a subject who takes action in the direction desired for him/herself and influences the reality around him/her by initiating change. Identity is formed in the context of social and cultural influences of the reality undergoing permanent change. Identity styles determined by socio-cognitive processes refer to the individual’s preferences in processing information about the subjective “I”; in making decisions, in choosing strategies to construct or avoid shaping one’s identity and the quality of career decision-making in the world of “boundaryless careers”. In a situation where no a priori career scenario brings a guarantee of success, the investment in a career identified as the “property” of an individual becomes a necessity and demands proactive planning, direction, and management. Commitment to an internally defined career can be an important source of crystallisation of the (vocational) identity, which seems to be essential for the development of an individual’s career in the universe of “boundaryless” careers in the reality of the globalising world.

Keywords: Globalisation, Cultural pluralism, Career, Boundaryless career, Vocational identity

INTRODUCTION

The term “globalization” belongs to terms fraught with ambiguity and is sometimes interpreted differently in literature. The following theoretical discussion of what denotes and connotes the concept of globalization, is an attempt to bring this widely used and ambiguous term closer, by reviewing the most important definitions and aiming to identify some of the most common elements of meaning to describe the globalization phenomenon of interest.

Today's globalizing society, in a world of rapid economic fluctuations, is trying to respond adequately to the inevitability of the updated fourth wave in economics, which Maree and Pollard point to (Maree, Pollard, 2009). Contemporary processes of globalization of the world economy, its reorganization and restructuring, make us reflect on the specificity and dominance of global economic transformation (Cybal-Michalska, 2006, pp. 40–41). Undoubtedly, a constituent element of the phenomenon of economic globalization and, in particular, the development of a free market economy, are changes in the work environment, the structure of work, the perception of work, as well as in the sphere of characteristics, meanings and values attributed to work. It is difficult to overestimate the significance of these changes for the quality of the construction, course of careers and modification of its individualized paths.

Globalization - The Scope of the Concept and the Emerging Phenomenon, the Origin of Which Is the Process of Cultural Differentiation and Pluralism

The starting point for considering the broad spectrum of the issue under discussion is the recognition of globalization as a phenomenon. In this view, globalization is understood as a fact that “can be observed, perceived by the senses (...), as something unique” (Wierzbicka, 1998, p. 655), “occurring in some field” (Sobol, 2000, p. 1275) or fields. Considering globalization only as a process, that is, “a course of causally related, successive changes constituting stages of development, transformation of something” (Wierzbicka, 1998, p. 148), only partially approximates this phenomenon. An immanent feature of studying globalization is also to focus on the structure and function that this phenomenon performs. Thus, in the analyses of many authors, it will be possible to see a qualitative diversity of approaches to globalization, in processual, structural and functional terms, interpreted as a phenomenon that plays specific roles, contributing to the picture of the complexity of the modern world. In addition, as Robertson points out, the diversity of “responses” to globalization has an impact on the quality, direction and outcome of this process, which allows us to conclude that the shape of the “global field” is largely “dependent on ourselves” (Robertson, 1992, p. 161). Globalization, according to M. Albrow, “refers to all those problems as a result of which the world's nations are integrated into a single world society, a global society” (Kempny, 1998, p. 241).

The direction of similarly understood transformations that span the globe is illustrated by R. Robertson, who claims that globalization is “a set of processes that create one common world” (Kempny, 1998, p. 241). From the perspective of the discussed approach, all transformations of the modern world are captured as cultural or civilizational influences, covering the entire globe. It is difficult to unequivocally answer the question of whether globalization is simply a process of homogenization, as the forces of fragmentation and hybridization are equally strong. The interpretation of globalization that emphasizes its heterogeneous nature (Barker, 1999, pp. 38–39) is more convincing.

Out of opposition to conventional theories of social modernization (especially their “Western-centrism”) and lack of interest in civilizational and cultural diversity, the perspective of viewing the world as a whole, evolving in “globally” suggested directions, was born. Globalization, according to Golka, has not created a world in a homogeneous form, and it is unclear whether this vision will ever come to fruition. An echo of this opinion can be found in Featherstone’s statement, that the current process of globalization, which contradicts earlier expectations for an increasingly homogeneous world, “leads to an increasing sensitivity to differences,” is a consequence of the fact that “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 all find ourselves in the backyard of others” (Kahn, 1995, pp. 126–128). Globalization, as a phenomenon growing out of the process of diversification and cultural pluralism of the modern world, is situated in the context of Roniger’s considerations. According to the author, globalization is “both the diffusion of certain models of economic development, growth, marketization, as well as the corresponding adaptation or rejection of cultural patterns of westernization” (Starosta, 2000, p. 48). In this context, globalization should rather be understood as a global network of interdependence, affecting individual societies and states so that they are parts of a whole (Golka, 2001, p. 79). The most prominent representatives of the approach in question, Giddens, McGrew and Streeven, argue that globalization viewed as interdependence, interaction, intensification of relations between states is an expression of viewing the world as a network of interconnections, and only in this context can globalization be treated as a whole, and point to its civilizational implications. Underlying Giddens’ considerations is the assumption that “globalization is an intensification of social relations of global scope, which connects different localities in such a way that local events are shaped by events occurring many thousands of miles away” (Kempny, 1998, p. 242). Clarifying the scope of the term, it should be considered, following A. McGrew, that globalization “consists in the multiplicity of connections and interactions of states and societies that make up the current world system” (Golka, 1999, p. 114). Consequently, as Roniger points out, globalization is characterized by: “the transnationalization of cultural patterns, the continentalization of economic exchanges, regional transnationalization and the increase in the importance of locality” (Starosta, 2000, p. 48). The aspect of deepening global connections in almost all spheres of modern socio-cultural, economic, political life is also pointed out by P. Streeven, defining globalization as “the intensification of economic, political and cultural relations across borders” (Luberska, 2002, p. 17).

At the root of the above statements is not the resolution of whether the concept of globalization refers to global consequences or global undertakings. The answer to this question is provided by Bauman, emphasizing that the ubiquitous term globalization is most often referred to global consequences, “still unintended and unforeseen” rather than global initiatives and undertakings. The consequence of the aforementioned view is the recognition of

globalization as a largely uncontrollable, spontaneous and also irreversible process, where it is difficult at the same time to determine the state of globalization of the modern world, whose fate depends largely on circumstances at the level of global activities, dependencies and interests. Perspectives on viewing the globalizing world are therefore difficult to grasp due to its dynamic and always-in-the-making nature. This view finds contemporary confirmation in the deliberations of Bauman, according to whom “the concept of globalization conveys the indeterminate, capricious and autonomous nature of the world and its affairs, the absence of a center, the absence of a desktop operator, a team of directors, a management office. Globalization is another name for the <new world disorder>” (Bauman, 2000, p. 71) and “refers directly to von Wright’s <anonymous forces>; forces operating in the void, on a foggy, sinuous, slimy and untraversable <no man’s land>, extending beyond the reach of anyone’s ability to plan and act concretely” (Bauman, 2000, pp. 72–73).

The above considerations indicate that the nature of the concept of globalization is complex and it is difficult to determine its basic meaning. However, it can be concluded that the problematic scope of the term has the character of a historical and social construction that takes into account the temporal dynamics of many socio-cultural and civilizational processes that make up the image of the modern world, which indicates the relative novelty of the concept of globalization (Cybal-Michalska, 2023).

The Globalizing World As a World of “Limitless Careers”

The world of careers is a world of numerous micro-transitions. In a “portfolio” of micro-transitions, the time between them is shortened - after a period of stability, re-separation occurs more and more quickly. In addition, multiple career transformations can occur simultaneously (Mayrhofer, Iellatchitch, 2005, p. 58). The conceptualization of a qualitatively new approach to the issue of career as a “property” of the individual, indicates the multidimensional nature of the contemporary discourse, which combines the implications of interdisciplinary dialogue and creates the need for an overview of theoretical reflections on the ways of understanding career and the conditions and determinants of its formation. There is no doubt that active coping in a reality undergoing permanent change mandates adaptation to the ever-changing context of individual career creation, and a new way of thinking about it means, as Lanthaler puts it, “being a knowledge manager in your own case” (Lanthaler, Zugmann, 2000) and constructing a kind of career “portfolio”. In career capital, as opposed to social or cultural capital, special importance is given to personality as a value: a) commercial, being “subject to potential transactions for other forms of capital” b) reproducible, i.e. modified “from the point of view of preconceived assumptions”, c) deliberately constructed and developed by the subject taking into account temporal dynamics (Kobasa, Maddi, Kahn, after: Bańka, 2007, p. 85). Hence, the conclusion that the contribution of development theory to the recognition and interpretation of peculiarities in the human life cycle and personality development, in relation to the definition of the cognitive field of human

career development (whether it refers to the whole, the most important part or the majority of components of the object of cognition), as well as the phenomenon of investment and renewal of career capital, is difficult to overestimate. Continuous development of career capital renewal is the immanent property (Cybal-Michalska, 2022).

The image of an individual as a causal agent is an important theoretical construct. Herr (1992) outlines this problem, stating that it is individuals who are capable of creating careers. Careers do not exist, as do occupations or jobs (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 2). This peculiar, as Obuchowski notes, shift of “the individual’s orientation from external conditions of being to internal conditions” (Obuchowski, 2000, p. 62) prompts us to consider careers in connection with an individual as an individual entity, whose property is the individual career (Bańka, 2005, pp. 8–9). At this point it is necessary to recall an excerpt from Collin and Watts’ (1996) discussion, in which the authors assume the need to reevaluate career thinking. They state that “there is a need to focus more on career as a subjective construct of an individual than on career as an objective construct” (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 2). In view of this, the subject develops a career on the basis of perceptions and attitudes towards it, which means, as Patton and McMahon (1999) point out, that a career is “a pattern of influences that coexist in an individual’s life” (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 2). This view represents the individualistic tendency of an individual (ambition, sense of agency, self-motivation), which finds its legitimacy in economic theories that promote investment in human resource potential within organizations (Rosenbaum [in:] Arthur, Hall, Lawrence, 2004, p. 330). This view is the warp of thinking about career as a “property” of the individual, taking into account individual career choices, individual career planning strategies or individual stages of career development. For the evaluation of the position in question, a critical aspect is to emphasize that, while individuals are largely in control of their careers, their management should also take into account the stream of intra-organizational experiences that form the mechanisms of the career system. Viewing careers as “the property of the individual” (Baruch, 2004; Bańka, 2005), makes an individualistic assumption about the unique quality of each person’s career, for it is “the individual’s accumulation of a series of unique positions, jobs, positions and work experiences” (Bańka, 2005, p. 23) and the subject’s responsibility for constructing their careers. The individual gives peculiar individual meanings to selected elements of reality thanks to their ability to read cultural codes, creates their own individual history and has history before them. The person constructs their own life, and thus - their personal career “by identifying (giving meanings to) their own professional behavior and numerous experiences in workplaces” (Maree, 2010, P. 363), also giving meaning to the context in which these experiences occur. The broad treatment of career as a “property of the individual” cognitive attitude dictates the search for a set of elements constituting this position. This seems to be necessary to determine the scope of the properties of constructing a “portfolio” of careers” within the chosen theoretical tradition. An important element of the distinguished definitions of capturing “career” is their clear subjective, personal shading. A career is always attributed to a particular

individual, it is a state of possession of the individual, and it is the individual who gives it its peculiar individual meaning. We do not turn to emphasizing the profession practiced (e.g.: I practice a profession...) but “being” a representative of the profession practiced (e.g.: I am...). The profession is merely the context within which the subject’s own career develops, which is shared by anyone who performs work, or even (as in the case of the unemployed), seeks it (Bańka, 2005, p. 25). In this sense, each subjective career has a unique character. On the basis of these assumptions, Hall emphasizes that a career is “an arrangement, a sequence of experiences of a particular individual, related to work (...), it is a unique arrangement, dictated by autonomous choices” (Miś [in:] Król, Ludwicyński, 2006, p. 478). This is not surprising, since the individual’s dreams, desires, longing and imagining make up their own, most personal model of the ideal life (Bauman, 1960, p. 18). Another element in the subjective approach is to pay attention to the existence of determinants of an individual’s career formation. Both objective and subjective factors, considered in isolation, do not realize the scope of the concept under discussion. The holistic approach to the issue of career development takes into account both objective elements (including: duties, positions, activities, roles, professional decisions) and subjective elements (values, aspirations, attitudes, expectations, needs, orientations, emotional-feeling aspect of professional experience). An individual directing their career can change either objective elements of the career development environment (e.g.: change of job) or subjective ones (e.g.: change of expectations). Moreover, in the case of a similarly developing and revealed individuals’ careers, there are systematic changes in both the objective events associated with labor market dynamics and the subjective reactions of the subject to these events (Bańka, 2005, p. 25). The subjective perception and perception of a career makes “what for one is a career, for another is a minor distinction” (Worach-Kardas [in:] Szymański, 2010, p. 80). The course of a career, as Hall puts it, is therefore the resultant of two dimensions: the observable (objective dimension) and the unobservable (subjective dimension), which are closely interrelated (Miś [in:] Król, Ludwicyński, 2006, p. 478).

Adaptation to an amorphous environment takes place through the practice of learning the new context in which one participates, also contributing to its change. The power of influence on the current situation, or on the social environment, is individualized and depends on the subject’s inclination to take active measures that indirectly bring about these changes in the environment. Contemporary studies of school quality should take into account its broad pro-developmental dimension referring, in essence, to the level of what Bateman and Crant called the formation of proactive individuals. Initiative, as a component that distinguishes proactive behavior, understood as the ability to initiate action and gather resources and support for the process of change, the essence of which is not narrowed to the initiation of change, but extends to the characteristic of commitment to the process of achieving the goal of completing the change (Bańka, 2005, pp. 8–9), seems too important on the educational plane to be left out. The space of education fosters and increases the chances of giving meaning to the subject’s right decision for the future. A temporal orientation to the future will allow the individual to

better focus on “choice” rather than “fate” or “randomness.” This thinking is closer to promoting autonomous causal subjectivity rather than adaptation to existing conditions. Taking the path of subjectivity is fostered by educational influence turned toward openness to new possibilities and situations, rather than the uncritical anchoring of traditional homogeneous assumptions and rules (Cybal-Michalska, 2020 (A)).

Proactive behavior, as intentional actions by a subject, has been studied by King (2004); Noe (1996); Orpen (1994). Research has made it possible to distinguish two groups of components of proactive behavior, which can be described as: cognitive components and behaviorist components (De Vos, De Clippeleer, Dewilde, 2009, p. 763). The main distinguishing feature of proactivity is taking the initiative to change the environment, and this means that the individual “has the ability to shape the environment to an extent that exceeds the ability of the environment to shape behavior” (Bańka, 2005, p. 8). Pro-developmentalism as a cognitive practice and embodied as a turn towards the development of a proactive personality, will be the “building blocks” for the constitution of the following characteristics: seeking change, seeing opportunities, creating situations, taking initiative, taking action (Bańka, 2005, p. 12). The way of thinking about proactivity as a personality disposition and proactivity as an attitude of commitment resulting from contextual conditions, needs and circumstances, has been significantly influenced by the views of Bateman and Crant. Proactive people, according to the authors, are distinguished by seven interrelated characteristics. Emphasizing the personalistic dimension in the culture of school reality and embarking on the path of self-education is a focus on creating the following qualities: seeking opportunities for change, setting effective and change-oriented goals, anticipating problems and taking countermeasures, seeking ways to achieve goals, embarking on the path of action with an awareness of risk and assumption of responsibility, persevering in the pursuit of the goal and achieving the goal, legitimizing achievements and implementing change by influencing the environment (Bańka, 2005, pp. 9–11). “Responsible involvement” is an important aspect of proactive status and conditioning a personality disposition, as highlighted by Morrison and Phelps. This construct is defined as a subject’s constructive effort aimed at negating the status quo in order to bring about functional changes in terms of tasks performed (Bańka, 2005, pp. 13–14). The concept of Frese, Kring, Soose and Zempel (1996) similarly emphasizes the problem of the subject’s personal initiative. It defines proactivity as “behavior turned to outgoing initiative (doing something when no one tells them to and when the role does not require it;... long focus, anticipation of future problems or opportunities, and perseverance (overcoming limitations so that changes can occur) (Parker, Turner, Williams, 2006, pp. 636–637).

In investigating the issue of career development in the “borderless” career world, it is emphasized that there is a transfer of responsibility for career formation from the organization to the individual, and the basic feature of the post-organizational era is knowledge orientation, which, being valued in the labor market, becomes the basis of the subject’s career mobility (Mayrhofer, Iellatchitch, 2005, pp. 56–57). The typology above was developed by Banai

and Harry's classification of careers of international itinerants. In the world of "borderless" careers, eight types of managers can be distinguished. The career patterns proposed by the authors are not mutually exclusive, which means that a subject in a career can belong to several types within the systematization. The self-managed career of international wanderers can be systematized by pointing out: a) "failed" expatriates from international business organizations, b) managers characterized by exceptional expertise, c) cosmopolitan professionals, d) individualists, e) returning compatriots and f) innovation seekers (Banai, Harry, 2004). "Failed expatriates" are international wanderers who chose to settle abroad as a result of "failure" relative to the organization employing them, but no longer necessarily relative to the development of their career prospects. It is not uncommon for people who choose autonomy and independence, orienting themselves to the style of an international wanderer. The ability to freely construct a career (which a traditional employer is unlikely to offer) is the drive of action in careers. Exceptional professionals are international wanderers who have learned their craft well. Constantly updating their knowledge and developing their talents in an international market where they can sell their knowledge, they move from one contract to another, doing work for the company that won the bid for the project. Cosmopolitan professionals are international wanderers with professional knowledge, skills and abilities that are updated in a cross-cultural environment. These individuals highly value the opportunity to work in an international environment and career mobility. Emphasizing the role of early socialization, it is stressed that the lifestyle they led during childhood, adolescence or early adulthood allow them to multiply circles of identification with foreigners or other international wanderers rather than compatriots (Banai, Harry, 2004, pp. 102–103). Individualists are international wanderers with the professional knowledge and ability to carry out a specific task or project. They treat each project as a stopover for a "while," and then set out to continue the journey. The difference between individualists and exceptional professionals is that in their case it's more about "self-direction" (the employer doesn't direct them, but only provides guidance and docks the execution time and budget) than expertise. Returning compatriots are international wanderers who have decided to return to their homeland as valuable employees. They are usually students and managers who have gone abroad (usually from a developing country to a developed country) to get education, plan their prospects and develop their careers. However, it happens (this practice is prevalent in Southeast Asia and China) that when they return to their home country they get a lower salary (with the same qualifications and experience) than expatriates simply because they are compatriots. Innovation seekers as international wanderers, they do not feel close ties to their homeland. Despite having formal attributes of being assigned to a country (having a passport and citizenship), they feel part of a larger community or even a global community. The global village allows them to seek employment in the global labor market. It is not uncommon to have a partner of a different race, religion or nationality which, on the one hand, opens the "wanderer" to other communities, and on the other hand, cuts them off from the community in which they grew up (Banai, Harry, 2004, pp. 101–110). In a sense, an

international career a wanderer is like a product that needs to be constantly invested in and kept on the market. Career self-management means vesting sense of the multitude of opportunities found in the world (Cybal-Michalska, 2020 (B)).

Formation of (Professional) Identity As a Reflective Activity

The issue of identity crystallizes the problem of the trajectory of individual fate in a career and the construction of a subject's professional identity. In this sense, like "any other formalized narrative, it is something that has to be worked out and that, as a natural course of events, requires creative input" (Giddens, 2001, P. 107) and a reflective approach to one's own biography. Identity constitutes "a reflective loop in which, starting from oneself, one returns to oneself (Zawadzki, 2003, p. 5)" In the context of the transformations of the modern world, it seems particularly important to seek and clarify the answer to the question "Who am I in this world changing so rapidly?" (a dynamic question). The individual, in response to the complex dynamic question, in their view of the world and career perspective planning, recognizing the pace and intensity of change, seeks to determine to what extent they are an active subject of prospective changes taking place in cultural and social contexts (Misztal, 2000, pp. 158–160).

In a situation where social life is perceptibly organized around a multiplicity and diversity of alternatives (and this is a feeling that is not only observed but also experienced), the individual is confronted with the task of determining what their relationship with this world is, which is not insignificant for the quality of career planning and management and modification of its individualized paths. This is a kind of internal exploration and part of the search for answers to the complex and multiple reflection question: am I a subject of prospective change, and to what extent? The momentousness and dynamics of change imply changes in the identity aspects of social life in which a person seeks and doxes themselves. In particular, for young people participating in the wobbly reality, who are in a period of double transition: from adolescence to adulthood and from university education to the labor market, finding answers to the question "Who am I becoming?" takes on special importance, but also proves to be increasingly difficult to define in the "multiplicity of worlds"

Shaping identity is a reflective activity. As Rainwater puts it, "we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves" (Giddens, 2001, p. 102). Identity decisions made by young people on the threshold of adulthood determine their further development, or more precisely, the development of their potential. The subject's awareness, feeling and judgments about "who they are?" and "who they are becoming?" enable them to formulate a vision of the desired state. According to our inquisitiveness, the crystallization of one's identity determines the direction of development of one's career perspective and gives it meaning. The unprecedented diversity of individualized lifestyles, understood as "a culturally conditioned way of meeting needs, habits and norms" (Fatyga, Rogala-Obłękowska, 2002, p. 24), makes it possible and necessary to live with the change, where everyone "must become a model for

the era we want to create” (Illich, after: Kwieciński, 2000, p. 269). The modern type of careers in times of “careers without borders” has consequences for the psychosocial and behavioral attitude of individuals “whose life goal is professional activity (the basic indicator of mental health) and not professional passivity (the basic indicator of social exclusion)” (Bańka, 2005, p. 35).

The common thought is, as Amundsen puts it, that “people derive meaning from the world of work through a subjective interpretation of their own career experience” (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 6). In a situation where no career scenario adopted a priori provides a guarantee of success, investing in a career identified as the “property” of the entity (“in one’s own business”) becomes a necessity. The dynamics of contemporary careers, called “boundaryless careers”, forces, as Bańka emphasizes, proactive planning, management and career management not only among young people or people in early adulthood (i.e. “newbies” in the period of transition from education to the labor market), but also among people from other age groups (Bańka, 2005, p. 35). This is the inseparability of career and life that Wolfe and Kolb pointed out. Although this view was expressed in the 1980s, there is no reason - taking into account the dynamics and pace of the change - not to consider the definition of career development presented by the authors as incompatible with the times in which “a career makes a career” (Bauman). They recognized that “career development is related to the whole life, not only to work. In this way, it refers to the overall life of the subject (...) in the constantly changing contexts (...) of life. Environmental pressures and constraints, obligations that bind them to important others, responsibilities to children and aging parents, the overall structure of (...) circumstances - these are all factors that must be understood and reckoned with.

In this respect, career development, professional identity formation and personal development come together. “Self “I” and circumstances – evolving, changing, revealing themselves in mutual interaction – create the focus and drama of career development” (Patton, McMahon, 2006, p. 7). The highlighted dynamic definition (individual-environment, continuity and change) gives extra light to the discussed problem. It allows for the recognition that career construction focuses on the lifelong development of an individual and is a process of crystallizing an individual’s identity in relation not only to the world of work, but also to “the world in man and man in the world” (Wojnar). In this sense, the loss and permanent change of individual reference points updates the problem of identity styles and the issue of “how identity is created and changing” depending on the social context and the quality of a young person’s involvement in the exploration process. Recognizing and understanding oneself promotes the development of action and taking responsibility for the action - to make a commitment. Undoubtedly, these processes are important when planning your career path. Berzonsky’s model creates the opportunity to dynamically capture the way identity crystallizes.

Cognitive Orientations Involved in the Process of Crystallizing (Professional) Identity

Identity styles determined by social-cognitive processes refer to individual preferences in processing information about the subjective “I”, making decisions, choosing strategies to construct or avoiding crystallization of one’s identity. Identity style is understood by the author as “an individual’s way of coping with solving identity problems” (Czyżowska, Gruba, Białek [in:] Kubicka, 2012, p. 60). The identity style model, proposed by Berzonsky, refers to differences in the individual processing of information relevant to identity, and differences in the content that constitute the subject’s self-concept. For example, an individual may focus on obtaining information, deliberately process and evaluate it before deciding to make a commitment and define themselves, or they may automatically adapt and internalize the normative recommendations of significant people or groups and communities to which they belong (Berzonsky, Ciecuch, Duriez, Soenens, 2011, p. 295). Berzonsky postulated that values influence how individuals engage in the process of shaping their identity and dealing with identity conflicts. Values motivate an individual and give direction to their life. A conscious, rational approach to identity, typical of the information style, is combined with values that indicate the independence and autonomy of the subject, with the simultaneous ability to go beyond personal pleasure and self-indulgence. The normative approach to the aspect of identity is associated with the values of conformity, institutional obligation and responsibility. The diffusive-avoidant approach, “full of procrastination and avoidance,” is combined with a self-interested approach to achieving personal pleasure and avoiding pain (Berzonsky, Ciecuch, Duriez, Soenens, 2011, pp. 297–299). Cognitive orientations involved in the process of identity crystallization may indicate, as Berzonsky puts it, different identity styles, namely: the information style, the normative style, the diffusive-avoidant style and the style representing commitment, also called the identity commitment factor or the strength of commitment. In the direct effects model, the effects of identity style processing and commitment have a direct and independent contribution to the diversity of research outcomes. The alternative suggested by the author is to classify the effect of identity style participation by the level of involvement (Berzonsky, 2003, pp. 133–134). However, as the author of the identity styles model emphasizes, “identity formation is a dynamic, long process in which establishing commitments may provide new information and reactions, which may ultimately lead to priorities change” (Berzonsky, Ciecuch, Duriez, Soenens, 2011, p. 299). The construct of identity style refers to beliefs, attitudes, ways of dealing with various situations and making decisions that are important for life and for the construction of identity, and resolving identity conflicts. Differences in identity styles are the result of differences in preferences in the selection of social-cognitive strategies used when engaging (or not engaging) in tasks involving construction, maintenance and/or reconstruction of a sense of identity (Berzonsky, Ciecuch, Duriez, Soenens, 2011, p. 295). The scale of commitment reflects the strength of motivation, readiness, and stability in implementing an internalized system of values, making

decisions related to identity and striving to achieve chosen goals. Identity commitment gives the subject a sense of meaning and goal orientation. Internalized standards and criteria serve as a reference point for assessing feedback from problem solving. Commitment can be cognitive, information-based and reflecting the degree to which views and beliefs have been developed and are justified by the subject in the framework of rational ideas and evidence, and emotional, reflecting a non-rational but persistent sense of subjective certainty (Berzonsky, 2003, pp. 138–139).

Identity commitment is a carrier of a sense of purpose and direction for the subject and is a “framework” for relating to the value system that is used to monitor, evaluate, regulate behavior and read feedback. The strength of commitment is positively correlated with careful decision-making and the ability to cope with problems, and inversely correlated with the tendency to procrastinate or feel panic when making decisions (Berzonsky, 2003, pp. 132–133). According to P. Brickman, commitment “stabilizes an individual’s behavior, which, under given conditions, would be exposed to change” (Berzonsky, 2003, p. 133).

In this context, it is worth referring to Lee’s who finds it necessary to take into account, not only the cognitive aspect but also the emotional aspect of decision-making in research on the subject’s career perpetration. Lee’s research shows that even those students who are said to be determined in developing their career path, report difficulties with making decisions. They wonder whether the chosen career path will satisfy them and meet their needs and expectations. In order to determine the status of career decisions and to anticipate the effectiveness of coping with career construction, it is important to identify the subject’s emotional states. Such analysis can be used, among other things, to better understand experiences of career indecision (Lee, 2005, pp. 280–281).

The information style is characteristic of individuals who seek information in the process of identity building, or more precisely, before making binding identity decisions. Methods of exploration in the process of identity crystallization are based on independent and active searching and processing of a multitude of various information data. The essence is to refer to elements of the self “I” such as: personal standards, goals, value system (Czyżowska, Gruba, Białek [in:] Kubicka, p. 61). People with an informational identity style act in a thoughtful way, intentionally searching for, evaluating and referring to information that is useful to them. The information style is characterized by individuals who reflect on their own views and evaluate them multiple times, especially when feedback conflicts. The informational identity style is positively correlated with the need for cognition, cognitive complexity, self-reflection, dealing with problems based on rational reflection, careful decision-making, openness to new experiences and conscientiousness. The information style of identity is associated with the subjective activity and causative competence of the subject.

E. L. Deci and R. M. Ryan distinguished integration among regulatory processes. Activities requiring awareness of goals, values and standards are the result of the subject’s integrated self-regulation and choices from the possibilities which, through the act of choice, determine the subject’s actions

resulting from their own preferences (Berzonsky, 2003, p. 132, 139). Internal exploration is carried out by searching for information, going back into oneself, taking personal values and internalized standards as a point of reference. Active exploration of alternatives, searching for information and flexibility in making commitments (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, Berman, 2001, p. 514) are the attributes of the style represented by this group of young people. The informational style is associated with “self-insight, open-mindedness, coping strategies, mindful decision-making, cognitive complexity, emotional autonomy, empathy, adaptive self-regulation, high levels of commitment, and achieved identity status” (Berzonsky, Cieciuch, Duriez, Soenens, 2011, p. 296).

The research of Czyżowska, Gruba and Białek shows that there is a relationship between the information style of identity and the orientation towards collectivism. People who can be ascribed equalitarian collectivism also find it difficult to submit to authority figures (Czyżowska, Gruba, Białek [in:] Kubicka, p. 60, 64). The normative style refers to the way an individual deals with decisions that are important for the self “I” by accepting and internalizing the expectations of people significant to the subject, or applicable social norms. Resolving identity conflicts takes place by referring to such components of the self “I”: as: family, nation, religion (Czyżowska, Gruba, Białek [in:] Kubicka, pp. 60–61). “Normatively” oriented individuals show little readiness for internal exploration, have a clearly outlined course of action, limited tolerance for information contradictions, and are closed to information that may threaten their personal beliefs and value system. The normative process, which, according to Deci and Ryan (1991), is associated with the internalization of standards, goals and values of significant people, means that the involvement is not perceived by the subject as fully their own. Subject’s actions are accompanied by anxiety caused by a sense of possible guilt, approval or obligation (Berzonsky, 2003, p. 132, 139). The normative style is characterized, according to Berzonsky’s decisions, by little exploration of alternatives, servility, a tendency to respect authority, attachment to norms and dogmas, conformism to social and family expectations, and rigid attitudes when making commitments (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, Berman, 2001, p. 514). Normative engagement is rooted in emotion rather than information. Furthermore, a normative orientation may enhance what Langer (1989) calls “immature cognitive engagement.” Engagement based on emotions (“cognitively immature”) occurs without critical reflection and evaluation of information. However, commitment based on emotions with little evidence to confirm or justify (in contexts where problems, demands and standards are rather stable), the power of commitment itself promotes the effective functioning of the subject, regardless of the degree of rationality manifested in attitudes. Thus, commitment based on emotions may actualize making a commitment, which is an exemplification of the subject’s activity and causative competence (Berzonsky, 2003, P. 139).

The diffusive-avoidant style scale reflects the attitude of procrastination and postponing decisions important for the formation of identity and the resolution of identity conflicts. Individuals with a diffusive-avoidant style avoid

confronting personal problems as long as possible, and delay making important decisions, and their behavior is determined mainly by situational factors. Important, central components in the self-structure are popularity, impression, and reputation (Czyżowska, Gruba, Białek [in:] Kubicka, p. 61). In individuals classified as representing a diffusive-avoidant style, the demands associated with and determined by the situational context, usually dictate or limit the subject's behavioral responses. The diffusive-avoidant identity style is positively correlated with emotional strategies for coping with problems, with situational variability, with neuroticism and depressive reactions, as well as with scrupulousness and cognitive inquisitiveness (Berzonsky, 2003, pp. 131–132).

In Berzonsky's model of identity styles, diffusive-avoidant is something more than a dispersed, "lost" self "I". This style "is associated with strategic attempts to bypass or conceal potentially negative, relevant feedback (...) with low commitment, an external localizing of control, and impulsivity." Czyżowska, Gruba and Białek present the problem of the diffusive-avoidant style.

In studies of young adults, gender differences reveal that men are the group with the dominant diffusive-avoidant identity style, and women more often solve identity conflicts in a way characteristic of the normative identity style. Moreover, cognitively interesting, there was a relationship between the diffusive-avoidant identity style and the orientation towards hierarchical collectivism. Therefore, it can be said that the group of surveyed women will also be characterized by an emphasis on intra-group integrity, a tendency to submit to the will of authorities and an attitude towards inter-group competition (see: Czyżowska, Gruba, Białek [in:] Kubicka, 2012, pp. 63–64).

The style in question is characterized by delaying the confrontation of conflicts and identity problems as long as possible, and their actions, decisions and choices will be accompanied by behaviors that reflect primarily a response to the external context and by taking the consequences into account. However, the moment of compliance (behavior - context) is a short-term, rather than long-term, modification that may affect self-identification (see: Berzonsky, Ciecuch, Duriez, Soenens, 2011, p. 296).

CONCLUSION

To sum up, it should be emphasized that the vision of a world of constant fluctuations and ideas questioning the existence of career competences "once and for all" emphasize the need to focus on the issue of (professional) identity development. The meanings given to a career are valuable primarily subjectively, and not necessarily objectively. "Subjective careers," as Stebbins emphasizes, reflect an individual's own sense of their career and how it is progressing (Arthur, Khapova, Wilderom, 2005, p. 179). Vocational orientation, as the author emphasizes, is usually the final sequence of school orientations. Career planning, which in the most general sense, is understood as an initiative undertaken by a subject, requires, among other things, making a deliberate choice regarding a profession. Identity styles and their relationship with ideas about the career domain are an interesting construct.

Recognizing the need for a multidirectional approach to career issues and recognizing the quality of ideas and views on career, referring to career identity styles gives new light on the peculiarities of the subject's understanding of the career domain. Reflection on identity styles, also referring to the factor of identity commitment, shows differences in information processing, negotiating identity issues and making personal decisions (Berzonsky, 2003, p. 131), which makes them, from a cognitive point of view, analytically important, because at the same time they serve to explain the relationships that can be captured between identity process styles and opinions, views and ideas about career. An individual, as a conscious creator of their own biography, participates in the process of "investing" in career capital by shaping their professional identity.

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