

# Analyses of Socio-Cognitive Identity Styles by Slovak Adolescents

Blandína Šramová, Gabriel Bianchi, Barbara Lášticová, Katarína Fichnová, and Anežka Hamranová

**Abstract**—The contribution deals with analysis of identity style at adolescents (N=463) at the age from 16 to 19 (the average age is 17,7 years). We used the Identity Style Inventory by Berzonsky, distinguishing three basic, measured identity styles: informational, normative, diffuse-avoidant identity style and also commitment. The informational identity style influencing on personal adaptability, coping strategies, quality of life and the normative identity style, it means the style in which an individual takes on models of authorities at self-defining were found to have the highest representation in the studied group of adolescents by higher scores at girls in comparison with boys. The normative identity style positively correlates with the informational identity style. The diffuse-avoidant identity style was found to be positively associated with maladaptive decisional strategies, neuroticism and depressive reactions. There is the style, in which the individual shifts aside defining his personality. In our research sample the lowest score represents it and negatively correlates with commitment, it means with coping strategies, thrust in oneself and the surrounding world. The age of adolescents did not significantly differentiate representation of identity style. We were finding the model, in which informational and normative identity style had positive relationship and the informational and diffuse-avoidant style had negative relationship, which were determined with commitment. In the same time the commitment is influenced with other outside factors.

**Keywords**—Identity Style Inventory, Informational Identity Style, Normative Identity Style, Diffuse-Avoidant Style, Identity Commitment.

Manuscript received May 30, 2008. The contribution is a part of realized grant VEGA 1/3675/06: "Social-psychological aspects of identity of adolescents".

Blandína Šramová is a special assistant of psychology at the Department of Mass media communication and advertising studies, Faculty of Art, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Drážovská 4, 949 74 Nitra, Slovak Republic (e-mail: bsramova@ukf.sk).

Barbara Lášticová is a research fellow at the Department of Social and Biological Communication of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Gabriel Bianchi is a senior research fellow at the Department of Social and Biological Communication of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Katarína Fichnová is head of Department of Mass Media Communication and Advertising Studies Faculty of Art, Constantine The Philosopher University in Nitra, Drážovská 4, 949 74 Nitra, Slovak Republic (e-mail: kfichnova@ukf.sk).

Anežka Hamranová is a assistant at the Department of Educational and School Psychology, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Drážovská 4, 949 74 Nitra, Slovak Republic (e-mail: ahamranova@ukf.sk).

## I. INTRODUCTION

WE understand identity of personality as being aware of oneself, his uniqueness, and authenticity. According to Bačová [1] identity is a cognitive process in which an individual experiences the value of oneself identity formation through social environment.

Although identity is not defined uniformly, several psychological approaches agree that development of personal identity is influenced by social and cultural environment, which surround personality [1]. Identity structure is in this way formed in a dynamic process.

Adolescent stage is considered to be an important milestone of personal identity formation. In this period an individual is aware of his feelings, values, aims, he is looking for a place in society. In a process of identity maturing it is very important to pay attention to formation of value system, aspiration level, identifying of life priorities at adolescent youth. The developmental stage of adolescence, forming a transitory period between childhood and adulthood, is at the same time a period of identity fulfilment, bringing genuineness, singularity. It is the importance of investigating the adolescent stage of development as a key turning point in both constructing and reconstructing a young person's identity that several authors bring their attention to this process [2] [3] [4] [5]. The forming of identity style requires the investigation of presence or absence of identity crisis (doubts about values and goals implemented to the child by his parents) and presence, or absence, of commitments (stability in the selection of values, individual life standards), leading to the achievement of four identity statuses in adolescence.

Berzonsky [6] serves an integrating attitude to identity defining, which differentiates three basic identity styles: informational, normative, diffuse-avoidant style.

Informational identity style is characteristic of individualities that actively look for their personality, who are open to new experiences and have active attitude to problem solving [7] [8] [9] [10]. The informational identity style corresponds with achieving the moratorium state [11] [12].

Normative identity style is characteristic of an individual who at identity formation passively accepts models, is conscientious and concentrated on the aim. The individual adapts his behaviour to norms and expectations of others, so he is oriented conformal. Ambiguity does not satisfy him, he achieves foreclosed identity commitments [7] [10] [12].

Diffuse-avoidant identity style is bound to maladaptive strategies, neuroticism, and depression. It is a style, where an individual postpones defining of his personality, he has low self-confidence, his behaviour is conditioned by situation factors, he avoids personal conflicts, achieves diffuse identity state [7] [9] [10] [13].

According to Berzonsky [13], at studying of identity style it is important to observe commitment that tells about personality's responsibility, constancy of its decisions, optimism, increased self-esteem, sense for duty, personal adaptability.

Intrapersonal identity, being aware of one's own uniqueness, authenticity, is closely interconnected with interpersonal identity, in other words with maintaining of certain social roles and with social identity, that means with knowing of its membership in social groups. In the process of personality identity formation cognitive, personal and also socio-cultural factors play an important role. It is important to know the factors for creating intentional educational strategies that in appropriate way influence self-actualisation process in adolescent period, as is pointed out by research findings by e.g. [14] [15] [16] [17].

In this context and on the basis of a pre-research [16] [18] we assume that at adolescents informational identity style and normative identity style would be represented to a bigger extent and diffuse-avoidant identity style to a less extent. We expect positive correlation between informational, normative identity style and identity commitment. We suppose that diffuse-avoidant identity style at adolescents would relate with a low identity commitment. At the same time we expect that diffuse-avoidant identity of adolescents would increase with age.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The research group consisted of 463 adolescents (219 boys, 244 girls), Slovak students of secondary technical schools and secondary grammar schools age from 16 to 19 (mean age 17,7 yrs.) (Table I).

TABLE I

CRONBACH ALPHA OF IDENTITY STYLE INVENTORY (ISI3)

Scales	AM	SD	Cronbach's alpha (Slovak version)	Cronbach's alpha (original version) *
Informational identity style	38.005	5.566	0.634	0.78
Normative identity style	32.560	4.901	0.603	0.61
Diffuse-avoidant identity style	30.071	5.495	0.592	0.78
Commitment	35.135	6.199	0.678	0.80
Together	135.80	12.665	0.687	0.76

\* by Berzonsky (2004)

For studying of the identity styles we used Berzonsky's Identity Style Inventory (ISI3, revised version). For our

purposes we used Slovak version that we translated from the original and modified [19].

The inventory includes 40 items. Adolescents represented degree of agreement with individual items on a scale from 1 to 5 points. For analysis we used summary score of socio-cognitive identity styles that are focused on solution, coping with personal problems, forming of the personal identity:

1. Informational identity style (Cronbach's alpha=0.634)
2. Diffuse-avoidant identity style (Cronbach's alpha=0.592)
3. Normative identity style (Cronbach's alpha=0.603).

At the same time we observed firmness of personality decisions, which Berzonsky calls identity commitment (Cronbach's alpha=0.678). For statistic processing we used correlation analysis, reliability measurement, t-test, ANOVA (SPSS), Amos (Arbuckle, 1997).

## III. RESULTS

The research findings refer to correlation relations of the studied identity scales in individual groups of adolescents in dependence on gender and age (Table II). Similar to previous findings [12] [18] [20], all three studied identity styles are bound to commitment.

Our assumption about prevailing identity style was confirmed. In the whole research sample informational identity style and normative identity style dominated then diffuse-avoidant identity style had the smallest representation. An informational ( $r=0.413, p<0,01$ ) and normative identity style ( $r=0.438, p<0,01$ ) positively correlate with commitment and diffuse-avoidant identity style ( $r=-0.341, p<0,01$ ) negatively correlate with commitment. The correlation between the style, age and commitments are presented in Table II. As shown in Table II, style relate to adolescents age.

TABLE II  
THE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN IDENTITY STYLE, AGE, AND COMMITMENT (N=463)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender					
2. Age	-0.076				
3. Informational identity style	0.253**	-0.054			
4. Normative identity style	0.078*	-0.040	0.299**		
5. Diffuse-avoidant identity style	-0.096*	0.78	-0.154*	-0.002	
6. Commitment	0.039	-0.036	0.413**	0.438**	-0.341**

An informational style associate positively with normative identity style ( $r=0.299, p<0,01$ ) and associate negatively with diffuse-avoidant identity style ( $r=-0.154, p<0,05$ ).

TABLE III  
REGRESSION ANALYSES

Variables	Step 1 Beta	Step 2 Beta
Gender	0.036	-0.089
Age	-0.033	0.010
Informational identity style		0.281**
Normative identity style		0.36**
Diffuse-avoidant identity style		-0.306**
R <sup>2</sup> Change	-0.002	0.372**
R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.368**

\*\*p&lt;0,01, \*p&lt;0,05

Regression analyses are showed in Table III. Gender and age in the Step 1 do not explain significantly difference in commitment. Social-cognitive identity style, which was controlled in the Step 2, predicated commitment identity ( $R^2 = 0.372, p < 0.01$ ). Informational ( $\beta = 0.281, p < 0.01$ ) and normative ( $\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$ ) identity style related positively and diffused-avoidant style related negatively ( $R^2 = -0.306, p < 0.01$ ) at the construction the commitment identity.

The tested model is illustrated as the results of regression analyses (Fig. 1). The variables as gender and age were not included into the testing.

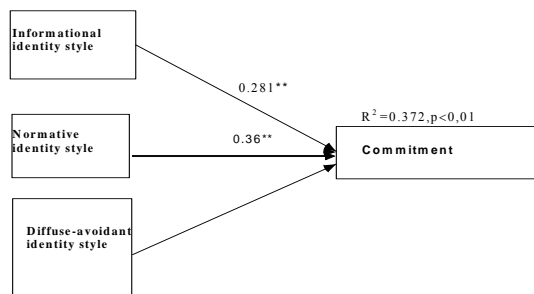


Fig. 1 Path model for illustration of the results of regression analyses

In the other step we were looking for the model, which would be explained by the variables of style identity inventory. We found 3 models (Table IV, Figs. 2, 3, 4). The first model is without relationships between identity styles. The second model showed the same relationships between identity styles.

TABLE IV  
THE TESTED MODELS

Model	Description	N parameters	df
M1	Without relationships between identity style	7	3
M2	The relationships between identity style: the same	10	0
M3	The relationships between identity style: the insame	9	1

The third model showed the insame relationships between identity styles.

$\chi^2$  shows that the model 3 for  $df=1$  is the best for agreement model with dates (Table V). We can say that the model 3 is fair (Table VI, VII).

Model 3 shows that informational and normative identity styles have positive relationship and the informational and diffuse-avoidant style have negative relationship, which are determinated with commitment. At the same time, the commitment is influenced by other outside factors ®.

## IV. DISCUSSION

The results of our research about positive correlation of normative identity style, informational identity style and commitment corresponded with conclusions of Berzonsky [7]

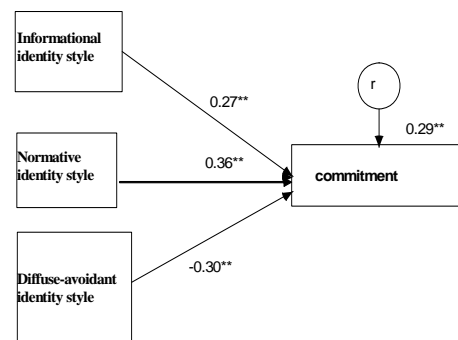


Fig. 2 The structural model 1 (M1)

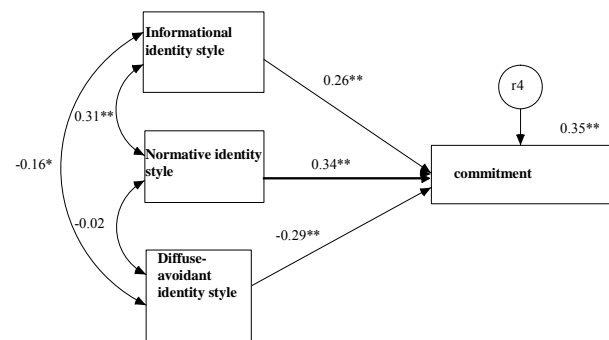


Fig. 3 The structural model 2 (M2)

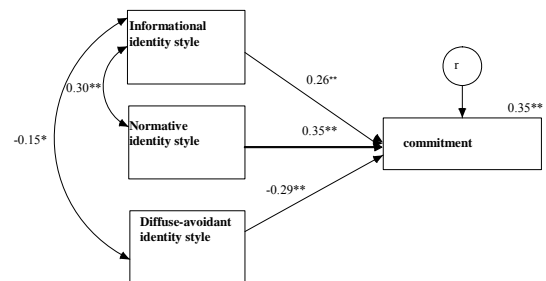


Fig. 4 The structural model 3 (M3)

TABLE V  
INDEXES OF AGREEMENT FOR TESTED MODELS

Model	$\chi^2$	df	p
M1	57.379	3	0.000**
M2	0	0	-
M3	0.168	1	0.682

TABLE VI  
RECOMMENDED INDEXES OF AGREEMENT FOR TESTED MODELS

Model	$F_{min}$	$F_{0(90\%)}$	$P_{close}$	RMSEA (90%)	ECVI (90%)
M1	0.124	0,118-0,072	0,000	0,155-0,244	0,109-0,216
M2	0.000	0,000-0,000	0,000	0,270-0,333	0,043-0,043
M3	0.000	0,000-0,008	0,816	0,000-0,092	0,041-0,050

TABLE VII  
NEXT INDEXES OF AGREEMENT FOR TESTED MODELS

Model	M1	M2	M3
AIC	71.379	20.000	18.168
NFI	0.777	1.000	0.999
IFI	0.786	1.000	1.003
CFI	0.784	1.000	1.000
GFI	0.944	1.000	1.000
PNFI	0.389	0.000	0.167
PCFI	0.392	0.000	0.167
Hoelter (0,05)	63	-	10552

[20]. Personality that is achieving normative and informational identity style has a holistic, structured identity in sense of built commitment [21]. Informational identity style and normative identity style were represented at most in our research sample. According to Macek et al. [5] informational identity style is at most interconnected with openness, affability and conscientiousness of personality. Normative identity style, which binds with conscientiousness and extraversion of personality [5], was in constructing of adolescents' identity represented to a bigger extent than diffuse-avoidant identity style. Diffuse-avoidant style in our research sample did not increased with age like in research of Macek et al [5]. Low satisfaction of an adolescent, low self-evaluation, solving problem avoidance (diffuse-avoidant identity style) project negatively to adjustment of university students to university study [11]. Identity style of adolescents is closely related with parental pattern of behaviour [4] [13] [22] too. Normative identity style is characteristic for individuals growing up in families where supporting atmosphere prevails. Diffuse-avoidant identity style relates to parental authoritarian upbringing style that is based on tests, firm control. Gender and age don't explain difference in commitment significantly. Social-cognitive identity style predicated commitment identity as in Berzonsky's research [20].

## V. CONCLUSION

Identity is one of key aspects of personality. Intrapersonal, interpersonal and social identities of personality are

interconnected. During personality formation an individual acquires values, norms of society, solving problems strategies, which recast into a self-identification process.

Identity constructing is dependent on gender during adolescent developmental stage. The informational identity style, that is typical for a personality resistant to burden, with active attitude to life and normative identity style characteristic for conform personalities, who acquire values, norms of authorities both were is dominantly represented in our group of adolescents.. The diffuse-avoidant identity style, for which postponing of one's own personality definition is typical, is the least represented style in the given group of adolescents. The informational identity style and also the normative identity style positively influence the identity commitment that means strength, stability of personality conviction about values, attitudes to itself and society as well. Gender and age didn't explain difference in commitment. Informational and normative identity style related positively and diffused-avoidant style related negatively at the construction the commitment identity. Informational and normative identity style had positive relationship and the informational and diffuse-avoidant style had negative relationship, which were determinated with commitment. In the same time the commitment is influenced with other outside factors.

Observing achieving identity style of adolescents refers to identification importance as well as prediction of factors influencing personal identity formation. We can aimly intentionally influence identification process of adolescents by elaborated educational programs, mass media strategies in which are incorporated some gender and age specifics.

## REFERENCES

- [1] V. Bačová, „Možnosti zisťovania osobnej identity. Metodika IDEX“, *Československá psychologie*, vol. 42, no. 5, pp. 449-461, 1998.
- [2] B. Šramová, *Osobnosť v procese ontogenézy*. Bratislava, Melius, edícia psychológia, 2007.
- [3] E., H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and crises*. New York: Bortin, 1968.
- [4] J.E. Marcia, *Identity in adolescence*. in: J. Adelson, *Handbook of adolescent psychology*. New York, J.Wiley, 1980.
- [5] P. Macek, M.Hřebíčková, I.Čermák, „Identita, vývoj a osobnostní charakteristiky“ In: *Sociální procesy a osobnost '99*. Brno, MU a PÚ AV ČR, pp. 78-84, 1999.
- [6] M. D. Berzonsky, “Self-construction over the life-span. A process perspective on identity formation”, *Advances in Personal Construct Psychology*, no. 1, pp. 155-186, 1990.
- [7] M. D. Berzonsky, “Identity style and coping strategies”, *Journal of Personality*, 60, pp., 771-788, 1992.
- [8] M. D. Berzonsky, Sullivan, “Social-cognitive aspects of identity style: Need for cognition, experiential openness, and introspection”, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, no. 7, pp. 140-155, 1992.
- [9] M. D. Berzonsky, J. R. Ferrari, “Identity orientation and decisional strategies”, *Personality and Individual Differences*, no. 20, pp.597-606, 1996.
- [10] S. M Dollinger, “Identity styles and the five-factor model of personality”, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41, pp. 1051-1063, 1995.
- [11] M. D. Berzonsky, L. S. Kuk, “Identity Processing Styles, Psychosocial Resources, Personal Problems, and Academic Performance, *Paper presented at a Symposium on Identity, New Orleans, Louisiana, 2002*.
- [12] M. D. Berzonsky, G.J. Neimeyer, “Ego identity status and identity processing orientation: The moderating role of commitment”, *Journal of Research in Personality*, no. 28, pp. 425-435, 1994.

- [13] M. D. Berzonsky, „Identity Style and Well-Being-Does Commitment Matte?“ *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 3, 1, pp. 131-142, 2003.
- [14] K. Fichnová, J. Satková, Sebahodnotenie a reálny výkon u študentov učiteľstva prvého stupňa ZŠ a „na študenta zamerané vyučovanie“. In. *Psychológia v škole. Zb. príspevkov z Česko-Slovenskej vedeckej konferencie*. Košice, Ústav humanitných vied Prírodovedeckej fakulty UPJŠ, pp. 319-324, 2004.
- [15] A. Hamranová, Intervenčný program vo výchovno – vzdelávacom procese. In. *Slovenské školstvo v kontexte európskej integrácie. Zborník prednášok z medzinárodnej konferencie*. Nitra, UKF, pp. 377-379, 2003.
- [16] E. Fandelová, Identita adolescentov a konštrukcia sémantického priestoru. In. *Zdravie, morálka a identita adolescentov. Zborník vedeckých príspevkov*. Nitra, UKF, pp. 289-140, 2004.
- [17] E. Gajdošová, Prevencia násila a agresie v školách v práci školského psychológa. In. *Spoločne proti násiliu za bránami škôl*. pp. 45-54, 2005.
- [18] B. Šramová, „Identita vysokoškolákov“, *Mládež a spoločnosť*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 42-50, 2004.
- [19] B. Šramová, G. Bianchi, B. Láštiová, „Dotazník štýlu identity. (Berzonsky, ISI3)-slovenská verzia“, unpublished.
- [20] M. D. Berzonsky, „Identity style and parentel authority“, unpublished.
- [21] G. Bianchi, B. Láštiová, B. Šramová, „Významy makrosociálnych kategórií u slovenských adolescentov: Medzi regiónom a Európou“ *Československá psychologie*, vol. 51, no. 5, pp. 465-477, 2007.
- [22] B. Šramová, „Štýly identity adolescentov a výchovný štýl v rodine“, *Psychológia a patopsychológia dítťa*, no. 1, vol. 41, pp.3-14, 2006.

**PhDr. Blandína Šramová**, PhD. is a special assistant of psychology at the Department of Mass media communication and advertising studies, Faculty of Art, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovak Republic. Her main areas of research are personal identity, developmental psychology, child abuse and neglect and psycho semantic methods.

**PhDr. Barbara Láštiová**, PhD. is a research fellow at the Department of Social and Biological Communication of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Her main areas of interest are constructions of social identities from various perspectives; research on citizenship and participation; and epistemological problems of qualitative research.

**Doc. PhDr. Gabriel Bianchi**, CSc. is a senior research fellow at the Department of Social and Biological Communication of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. His main areas of research are gender, sexual health, intimate citizenship and identity.

**Mgr. Katarína Fichnová**, PhD. is Head of Department of Mass Media Communication and Advertising Studies Faculty of Art, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovak Republic and special assistant lecturer of psychology. Her main areas of investigation is psychology of creativity.

**PaedDr. Anežka Hamranová** is a assistant at the Department of Educational and School Psychology, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovak Republic. Her main areas of research are the social – psychological training, social and educational psychology.