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PERSONAL IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESSES AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF-AUTHORING PERSONALITY

The article presents a study concerning the relations between identity formation processes as theorized by Luyckx and colleagues (2008) and the formation of self-authoring personality according to Obuchowski (2011). The aim of the study was to establish whether and how identity formation processes are related to the overall level of self-authoring (manifesting itself in the levels of agency, intentionality, meaning in life, and creative adaptation), whether and how particular characteristics of self-authoring personality explain the intensity of identity formation processes, and whether and how the intensity of identity formation processes determines the formation of self-authoring personality. The participants were 140 people aged 30 to 39 ($M = 33.15$, $SD = 2.48$). The results indicate positive associations of the processes of commitment making and identification with commitment with the overall level of self-authoring and as well as a negative association between ruminative exploration and the overall level of self-authoring. A strong relationship was found between the configuration of variables making up a non-self-authoring personality and the configuration of variables referred to as ruminative moratorium.

Keywords: exploration processes; commitment making; identification with commitment; self--authoring personality; personal development; personal identity.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the article is to analyze the issue of personal identity formation in the context of the development of self-authoring personality as defined by Kazimierz Obuchowski, understood as a system with specific characteristics. These characteristics, though numerous, can be reduced to three aspects: (1) the individual's agency as the author and initiator of his or her own development; (2) being a person, which means having control over one's own beliefs, intentions, and behaviors as well as having the ability to take a distance from one's own experiences; (3) the subjective valuation standard, which means having a personal relation to oneself, the world, and the tasks taken on. Because the formation of self-authoring personality requires a relatively precise system of personal values and beliefs (relatively, as it is supposed to be flexible after all) and making commitments on its basis, it was assumed that the formation of self-authoring personality and its characteristics may be significantly related to the intensity of identity development processes.

The empirical exploration of personal identity issues in combination with personality attributes – more precisely, the attributes of self-authoring personality – requires not only theoretical justification but also establishing the relations between the concepts of "personal identity" and "personality" and, further, between "personality" and "self-authoring personality." Identity is defined in various ways, which include: (1) the sociocognitive approach: identity as a set of beliefs concerning oneself, the world, people, and values (Erikson, 1968, 1997); (2) the cognitive approach: identity as cognitive self-representations specific to an individual (Jarymowicz, 1989, 2002); (3) the experiential-motivational approach: identity as a mental condition that results from having and striving to achieve a sense of continuity, distinctiveness, efficacy, and self-esteem (Breakwell, 1986, 2010); (4) the narrative approach: identity as a unique life story, also referred to as a personal myth (McAdams, 2001); (5) the emotive-reflective approach: identity as "a unique, individual-specific, and relatively stable way of understanding and experiencing oneself, being a manifestation of striving to achieve personal autonomy and internal integration" (Kwapis & Brygoła, 2013, p. 34).

Each of these approaches, regardless of how broad a range of mental phenomena it encompasses, argues for assuming that personal identity is part of a multilevel and multifaceted system of personality – understood both as a complex whole of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, giving direction and pattern to an individual's life (Pervin, 2002), and as a system comprising mental structure and

processes, responsible for the individual's characteristic way of thinking, feeling, and behaving (Oleś, 2011). Thus, personal identity comprises some of the beliefs and thoughts, some of the feelings, emotions, and senses (identity-related), and even some of the behaviors characteristic for a person, very often together constituting the person's "behavioral signature" (Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

Self-authoring personality as a manifestation of a person's intentional and autonomous functioning

A type of personality that can be regarded as special is self-authoring personality. According to the theory proposed by Kazimierz Obuchowski (2000, 2001, 2008) and currently elaborated by Aleksandra Błachnio (Błachnio & Obuchowski, 2011), it is a configuration of mental structure and processes that is directed towards enhancing agency, intentionality, meaning in life, and creative adaptation (cf. Obuchowski, 2000). As pointed out by Błachnio and Obuchowski (2011, p. 174): "A self-author has a potential for self-realization, visible to an observer in the form of autonomy, self-acceptance, freshness of perception, and the joy of creation." The authors of the theory divided the characteristics of self-authoring personality into three groups, constituting lower-order theoretical factors or, in other words, the pillars that the formation of this kind of personality rests on. Thus, Błachnio and Obuchowski (2011) distinguish three main attributes of self-authoring personality and their specific elements. The first attribute is "agency," which comprises: (a) having self-knowledge, (b) setting tasks based on the knowledge possessed, (c) choosing a method for tasks, (d) intelligent task performance, (e) intentional autonomy "to," (f) creative interpretation of desires, (g) generating a personal model of the world, (h) self-designing. The second one is "being a person," which comprises: (i) psychological distance, (j) personality development, (k) meaning in life. Finally, the third one is the "subjective valuation standard," which encompasses: (l) attitude to oneself, (m) attitude to tasks, (n) attitude to the world.[1]

The above characteristics show that self-authoring personality is not a static structure but a developing one, and that a person may gradually develop particular features of this type of personality and, in consequence, may become increasingly self-authoring. In this context, there arises the first question concerning the determinants of this process, namely: what does the development of self-

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[1] A detailed description of each characteristic of self-authoring personality can be found in the chapter by Błachnio and Obuchowski (2011).

-authoring personality depend on? One of the most (un)clear answers comes down to this: on culture. Many sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists have written about this. Authors such as Jeffrey Arnett (2002), Zygmunt Bauman (2006), Anthony Giddens (2007), or Kenneth Gergen (2009) draw attention to the far-reaching sociocultural changes in the contemporary world, which is becoming more and more open, fluid, and complex. Fewer and fewer ideas are imposed, more and more require to be independently defined. This process also translates into the need to establish a personal concept of life, of the world, and – what is more – of oneself.

Self-defining (intentionally referred to as *self-defining*, not *self-definition*) is a mechanism of forming personal identity, which justifies an attempt to empirically link identity formation processes and the characteristics dynamizing the development of self-authoring personality. The development of personal identity is, by nature, a process of creating a vision of oneself and establishing a way of experiencing oneself. If identity is to be personal – that is, one's own and not derivative – it must emerge in the process of self-creation and self-authoring: becoming the author of oneself. This process is, firstly, complex (in fact, it comprises several processes); secondly, it is dynamic (as every process is); thirdly, it constitutes a system of feedbacks, reflecting the interactions between exploration (seeking oneself, an idea of oneself, the meaning of one's life, etc.) and confirmation (of oneself, one's choices, goals, etc.). Thus, it can be observed that the characteristics of self-authoring personality strongly pervade the formation of personal identity considered as a process.

Personal identity formation processes

In recent years, one of the best-known and empirically well-verified theories of personal identity formation has been the model proposed by Koen Luyckx and colleagues (2008). In this model, five processes are distinguished and divided into two cycles. The first one is the identity formation cycle, comprising feedbacks between the process of *exploration in breadth* and the process of *commitment making,* and the second one is the commitment evaluation cycle, comprising feedbacks between the processes of *exploration in depth* and *identification with commitment*. These cycles may overlap, and there may be interactions between particular processes. The process that does not, by definition, belong to either of the two cycles but can interfere with the course of both is *ruminative exploration*, resulting from a high intensity of fear of and inner resistance

to decision making and engagement in actions that could define the one's personal identity (cf. Brzezińska & Piotrowski, 2010a, 2010b).

The process of exploration in breadth consists mainly in seeking new opportunities of activity, experimenting, and checking if they provide a sense of satisfaction and harmony with one's personal needs and aspirations. The process of exploration in depth consists in expanding one's knowledge about the commitments one has made as well as verifying the previously set goals and activities against reality. The process of commitment making concerns making a choice and engaging in a given form of activity, while the process of identification with commitment consists in renewing and reinforcing the existing commitments and stems from a reflective re-evaluation of the gains and losses (including emotional ones) that result from previously made decisions. Ruminative exploration, as a process that consists in hesitating and questioning the available possibilities of taking action as well as choosing one's own goals, keeps a person in a state of self-indeterminacy (Luyckx et al., 2008).

Thus, identity formation is a complex mechanism, encompassing processes that interact with one another. It can be assumed that in the modern world this mechanism less and less often comes to a closure (halt). Even in the period of adulthood and late adulthood, as well as in old age, reformulations of goals, commitments, priorities, and activities are possible, resulting in a reconstruction (sometimes a thorough one) of personal identity. The process of personal identity recomposition is probably conditioned by the degree of self-authoring, understood as the level of agency, intentionality, meaning in life, and creative adaptation manifested by the individual (see Błachnio & Obuchowski, 2011). I therefore decided to empirically test the possible relations between the formulation and reformulation of personal identity and the intensity of self-authoring personality.[2]

Hypotheses

Based on the above conceptions and the theoretical assumptions they imply, to the effect that both self-authoring personality and personal identity develop in the course of specific processes and can continue, with various degrees of intensity, over an individual's entire lifespan, I formulated three research questions:

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[2] The terms "level of self-authoring" and "intensity of self-authoring personality" will be used interchangeably. Both refer to the strength of agency, intentionality, meaning in life, and creative adaptation as the main characteristics of self-authoring personality. At the operational level, they will refer to the sum score obtained in the *Self-Authoring Personality Questionnaire* (POA-R).

(1) Is the general level of self-authoring related to the processes of personal identity formation, and if so, how?

(2) Do particular characteristics of self-authoring personality explain the intensity of personal identity formation processes, and if so, how?

(3) Is the level of self-authoring personality as a summary construct (a latent variable) related to the intensity of personal identity formation processes as a set of characteristics defining identity status (the second latent variable), and if so, how?

With reference to the first research question, I formulated the following hypotheses:

H 1: The higher the level of exploration in depth, the higher the level of self-authoring.

H 2: The higher the level of commitment making, the higher the level of self-authoring.

H 3: The higher the level of ruminative exploration, the lower the level of self-authoring.

The above hypotheses concern two processes that are part of the second cycle of identity formation (the commitment evaluation cycle) – the cycle regarded as the more advanced one in identity development and, consequently, in personality development. Because the formation of self-authoring personality can be treated as a manifestation of the individual's conscious and intentional development, the processes included in the second cycle of identity formation and the degree of self-authoring will probably enhance each other. What can interfere with identity formation is ruminative exploration. If this process hinders identity development, that means it can also hinder the development of self-authoring personality, which makes it legitimate to predict a negative correlation between ruminative exploration and the degree of self-authoring.

I formulated no hypotheses concerning the association of self-authoring personality with the level of exploration in breadth and the level of commitment making, since these processes are part of the first personal identity formation cycle, regarded as less advanced in identity development. These processes probably occur with similar intensity in people with strongly self-authoring personality and in people with a low level of self-authoring, who may also experiment with roles and behaviors and who, consequently, may also (just like "strongly self-authoring" individuals) make commitments. It can therefore be supposed that differences appear in the course of further development – namely, at the stage of entering the second and further cycles of identity formation. Engaging in exploration in depth and the subsequent identification with commitment requires

a reflective and, consequently, conscious and intentional approach to personal development, which is associated with the occurrence of self-authoring personality. Early explorations and commitments may be undertaken without much thought, sometimes under pressure from the environment or under the influence of current social patterns; for this reason, I assumed that only exploration in depth and identification with commitment would differentiate people with different levels of self-authoring.

The remaining two research questions will be resolved in an exploratory manner due to the large number of potential explaining and explained variables. Because the plan was to apply regression analysis and canonical correlation analysis, which makes it possible to identify latent variables and their interrelations on the basis of two sets of variables (5 identity processes and 14 characteristics of self-authoring personality), I decided not to formulate hypotheses concerning this area. It is difficult to predict what canonical pairs (configurations of latent variables) the two sets of variables will generate, which is why the exploratory approach will be used.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in the study were 140 people (54% were women) aged 30 to 39 ($M = 33.15$, $SD = 2.48$), of whom 91% had higher education. The sample consisted of students of psychology and law (as their second major, part-time) as well as their spouses/partners. Participation was voluntary, and individuals were asked to take part in research on personal identity. I set the lower age limit at 30 years in order to increase the likelihood that the second cycle of personal identity formation had already began in the participants and that it would be possible to empirically investigate differentiation in both exploration processes.

Measures

Self-Authoring Personality Questionnaire (POA-R). This questionnaire was developed by Wojciech Ożarowski, Aleksandra Błachnio, Marta Kosiol, and Ludmiła Zając-Lamparska (the 2011 short version). The revised (i.e., shortened) version of the measure (after removing the items with the lowest discriminatory power) consists of 67 items making up 15 subscales, of which 14 (from A to N) relate to particular characteristics of self-authoring personality and one (O) is

a control subscale. Answers are given on a 4-point scale: from 0 – *if you strongly disagree with the statement* to 3 – *if you strongly agree with the statement*. In the present study, the reliability of the subscales, assessed using Cronbach's alpha, ranged from .54 (for subscale D – Intelligent Task Performance) to .86 (for subscale K – Meaning in Life). The reliability for the whole Self-Authoring Personality Questionnaire (after excluding the items making up the control subscale) was .96. As a result of the measurement, I computed the indices of 14 characteristics of self-authoring personality, one overall self-authoring index (being a sum of the scores on the 14 subscales), and the need for social approval index, based on answers given in the control subscale.

Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS). I used the questionnaire developed by Koen Luyckx and colleagues, as adapted into Polish by Anna Brzezińska and Konrad Piotrowski (2010b). This measure consists of 25 items making up five subscales corresponding to the five identity formation processes. Responses are indicated on a 5-point scale: from 1 – *strongly disagree* to 5 – *strongly agree*. The reliability of the subscales obtained by the authors of the Polish adaptation, assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was as follows: .76 for Exploration in Breadth, .70 for Exploration in Depth, .78 for Ruminative Exploration, .88 for Commitment Making, and .85 for Identification With Commitment (Brzezińska & Piotrowski, 2010b). In the present study, reliability assessed using the same coefficient was: .81 for Exploration in Breadth, .64 for Exploration in Depth, .92 for Ruminative Exploration, .93 for Commitment Making, and .93 for Identification With Commitment. Using the key, I computed five indices – one for each identity formation process, respectively.

RESULTS

The intensity of identity processes and the level of self-authoring

All statistical analysis whose aim was to answer the research questions were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 package. The assumption of normal distribution was met in the case of all the analyses except the distribution of the G variable (generating a personal model of the world), whose distribution was excessively left-skewed. Nevertheless, I decided not to exclude this characteristic of self-authoring personality from analyses, although its contribution to explaining relations should be treated with caution.

In order to answer the first research question and test the hypotheses, I computed Pearson's *r* coefficients of correlation between the intensity of each identity process and the overall level of self-authoring. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlations Between the Overall Level of Self-Authoring and the Intensity of Identity Formation Processes

Identity dimensions	Overall level of self-authoring
Exploration in breadth	-.01
Exploration in depth	-.06
Ruminative exploration	-.49***
Commitment making	.61***
Identification with commitment	.74***

Note. *** $p < .001$.

The obtained results confirm hypothesis H 2 (positive correlation between the level of self-authoring and identification with commitment) and hypothesis H 3 (negative correlation between the level of self-authoring and ruminative exploration). Hypothesis H 1, postulating a positive correlation between the level of self-authoring and exploration in depth, was not confirmed. Unexpectedly, a positive correlation was found between the level of self-authoring and commitment making. These results will be discussed further in the text.

How do the characteristics of self-authoring personality explain the intensity of identity formation processes?

In order to check which characteristics of self-authoring personality, if any, explain the intensity of identity formation processes, I conducted a stepwise regression analysis separately for each identity process as an explained variable. The intensity of exploration in breadth is explained by four characteristics of self-authoring personality, presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Characteristics of Self-Authoring Personality Explaining the Intensity of Exploration in Breadth

	B	Standard error	β	*p <*
Intercept	14.58	1.04		.001
D – Intelligent task performance	0.94	0.12	0.61	.001
N – Attitude to the world	-0.78	0.16	-0.39	.001
K – Meaning in life	-0.36	0.09	-0.32	.001
C – Choosing a method for tasks	0.41	0.13	0.26	.01

Note. R^2 (corrected) = .50; $F(4, 135) = 33.14$; $p < .001$; SE = 2.37.

The intensity of exploration in depth is explained by four characteristics of self-authoring personality, presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Characteristics of Self-Authoring Personality Explaining the Intensity of Exploration in Depth

	B	Standard error	β	*p <*
Intercept	16.27	1.12		.001
B – Setting tasks based on the knowledge possessed	-0.82	0.16	-0.51	.001
D – Intelligent task performance	0.69	0.14	0.48	.001
C – Choosing a method for tasks	0.48	0.14	0.33	.01
N – Attitude to the world	-0.43	0.17	-0.23	.05

Note. R^2 (corrected) = .36; $F(4, 135) = 18.68$; $p < .001$; SE = 2.51.

The intensity of the commitment making process is explained by four characteristics of self-authoring personality, presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Characteristics of Self-Authoring Personality Explaining the Intensity of Commitment Making

	B	Standard error	β	*p <*
Intercept	7.88	1.16		.001
K – Meaning in life	0.94	0.09	0.68	.001
H – Self-designing	0.69	0.12	0.48	.001
C – Choosing a method for tasks	-0.43	0.11	-0.22	.001
E – Intentional autonomy "to"	-0.48	0.15	-0.22	.01

Note. R^2 (corrected) = .74; $F(4, 135) = 97.24$; $p < .001$; SE = 2.10.

The intensity of identification with commitment is also explained by four characteristics of self-authoring personality, presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Characteristics of Self-Authoring Personality Explaining the Intensity of Identification with Commitment

	B	Standard error	β	*p <*
Intercept	4.81	1.01		.001
H – Self-designing	0.62	0.10	0.46	.001
K – Meaning in life	0.56	0.08	0.43	.001
C – Choosing a method for tasks	-0.55	0.10	-0.30	.001
A – Having self-knowledge	0.79	0.18	0.28	.001

Note. R^2 (corrected) = .78; $F(4, 135) = 121.54$; $p < .001$; SE = 1.81.

The intensity of ruminative exploration is explained by three characteristics of self-authoring personality, presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Characteristics of Self-Authoring Personality Explaining the Intensity of Ruminative Exploration*

	B	Standard error	β	*p <*
Intercept	30.79	1.74		.001
H – Self-designing	-0.85	0.17	-0.51	.001
K – Meaning in life	-0.75	0.17	-0.48	.001
M – Attitude to tasks	0.45	0.16	0.30	.01

Note. R^2 (corrected) = .49; $F(3, 136) = 43.42$; $p < .001$; SE = 3.39.

A broader analysis and interpretation of the observed relations will be presented in the Discussion section.

Identity formation processes as a set of variables explaining the characteristics of self-authoring personality

In the next stage, I performed a canonical correlation analysis. I distinguished two sets of variables: 14 characteristics of self-authoring personality and five identity processes, and tested to what extent the two sets explained each other. Statistical parameters and content analysis of the variables allowed for distinguishing two complex latent variables, labeled *non-self-authoring personality* and *ruminative moratorium*. The obtained relations are presented in Figure 1.
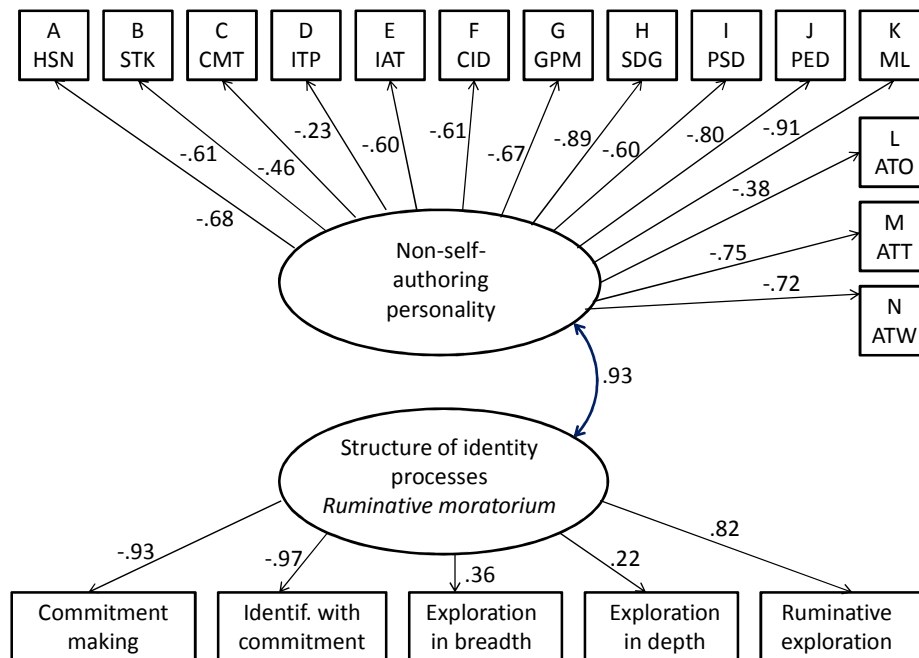
Note. A (HSN) – having self-knowledge; B (STK) – setting tasks based on the knowledge possessed; C (CMT) – choosing a method for tasks; D (ITP) – intelligent task performance; E (IAT) – intentional autonomy "to"; F (CID) – creative interpretation of desires; G (GPM) – generating a personal model of the world; H (SDG) – self-designing; I (PSD) – psychological distance; J (PED) – personality development; K (ML) – meaning in life; L (ATO) – attitude to oneself; M (ATT) – attitude to tasks; N (ATW) – attitude to the world.

Figure 1. Relations between the *non-self-authoring personality* set of variables and the *ruminative moratorium* set of variables (in the figure, factor loadings are given as correlations of each variable from both sets with the canonical function).

The relations obtained as a result of the correlation analysis are described by the following statistical indices for the first,[3] significant canonical pair: Wilks's $\lambda = .03$, $\chi^2 = 476.84$, $df = 70$, $p < .001$, $R_c = .93$. The explained variance in the

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[3] The use of canonical correlation analysis on the 14-element set and the 5-element set revealed five canonical pairs, of which three turned out to be statistically significant. Apart from the first pair, analyzed more extensively, two other canonical pairs turned out to be significant; their statistical parameters were as follows: Wilks's $\lambda = .19$, $\chi^2 = 213.48$, $df = 52$, $p < .001$, $R_c = .67$, $R_c^2 = .45$ (second pair), and Wilks's $\lambda = .40$, $\chi^2 = 119.90$, $df = 36$, $p < .001$, $R_c = .44$, $R_c^2 = .19$ (third pair). Due to the considerably lower factor loadings of variables in both of these solutions (the statistical criterion) and the less clear indication of the type of "personality" set and "identity" set (the content criterion), in this article I present only the results concerning the first canonical pair.

canonical function describing the two sets equals $R_c^2 = .86$. Measures of redundancy indicate that *non-self-authoring personality* (as a set) explains 44% of variance in all the characteristics of this type of personality (the set explains the variability of its elements), and *ruminative moratorium* (as a set) explains 38% of variance in the characteristics of *non-self-authoring personality*. *Ruminative moratorium* (as a set) explains 53% of variance in the five identity formation processes, and *non-self-authoring personality* (as a set) explains 46% of the variance taken into account in research on identity processes. The empirical relationship between the two sets suggests that they functionally describe interrelated phenomena, even though, when it comes to definitions, personality – more specifically, the self-authoring personality – and personal identity are not the same thing. Based on theoretical assumptions, it is difficult to unambiguously determine the direction of explanation – which is the first and which explains the other? Self-authoring personality or formed identity? The statistical analysis applied shows that the relationships are two-directional, based on feedbacks, though the explanation of variance in identity processes by the personality variables considered is stronger (46%) than the explanation of personality variables by the intensity of identity processes (38%).

DISCUSSION

The results presented in Tables 2-6 clearly show that one of the strongest characteristics of self-authoring personality determining the intensity of identity processes is meaning in life. Having a goal in life as well as having specific principles and one's own idea of life enhances commitment making and identification with commitment, weakens exploration in breadth, and even more strongly weakens ruminative exploration. Thus, formulating the meaning of life is a significant condition of readiness to make key identity decisions and to subsequently confirm them as a result of re-evaluating the emotional, cognitive, and social consequences of identity choices, as James Marcia (1966) referred to commitments. Difficulties in defining the meaning of life intensify the seeking of values, goals, and activities that one could regard as one's own – that is, as consistent with one's inner potential, feelings, and aspirations. Prolonged difficulties in defining the meaning of life may lead to an increase in the fear of commitment to a role, an activity, or the realization of values, and this means an increase in ruminative exploration.

Another characteristic of self-authoring personality that strongly influences the intensity of identity processes is self-designing. Striving to realize one's potentialities and the ability to formulate goals consistent with the self-concept and with one's idea of life enhances commitment making and identification with commitment as well as reduces the risk of ruminative exploration. This relationship is probably reciprocal, since ruminative exploration is rooted in anxiety, which not only results from a lacking or weak striving to realize personal goals and values but may also be a cause of difficulties in taking up this kind of effort.

Choosing a method for tasks turned out to be another characteristic of self--authoring personality that explains the intensity of all identity formation processes – except ruminative exploration. Seeking one's own ways of achieving goals, combined with the ability to use well-tested ways of acting and drawing conclusions from other people's experiences enhances exploration in depth and exploration in breadth and weakens commitment making and identification with commitment. Perhaps the difficulty in commitment making stems from the very fact of seeking – namely, choosing the way of acting and considering one's own as well as other people's ideas in this regard. If a person is seeking, this means they have not found, and if they are choosing, this means they have not yet chosen. Perhaps this is why choosing a method for tasks as a characteristic of self--authoring personality weakens processes connected with commitments and enhances those that consist in seeking. However, what is puzzling is that choosing a method for tasks, understood in this manner, is not a significant factor explaining the intensity of ruminative exploration. Probably, choosing a method for tasks is potentially adaptive (and then the seeking that emerges leads to a result instead of stopping), but it may just as well make a person less flexible at the stage of choosing and cause ruminative dwelling on the same objects (ways of acting) without being able to decide on one or a few of them. This possible division of choosing a method for tasks (into adaptive and ruminative) would explain why this characteristic of self-authoring personality does not significantly explain ruminative exploration.

Two other attributes are worth noting: intelligent task performance and setting tasks based on the knowledge possessed. Orientation towards understanding the observed phenomena, allowing for possible difficulties in planning goal realization, creating alternative ways of achieving goals, and – above all – modifying one's actions to suit the changing context the most strongly determine the process of exploration in breadth. The stronger the tendency to take into account the complexity and changeability of the situation, the more (often) the person seeks new identity roles, experiments with new activities, as well as tests them in

terms of the satisfaction and the sense of harmony with oneself that is derived from them (cf. Obuchowski, 2000; Gergen, 2009). Actively generating the goals of one's actions corresponding with the self-knowledge possessed as well as the ability to justify goals and consistently striving to achieve them the most strongly determine the process of exploration in depth. This relationship is negative: the higher the consistency of the goals one sets with the self-knowledge one possesses as well as the stronger the belief in the value of these goals and the higher the consistency in striving for their realization, the less strongly the identity commitments made are questioned and the weaker is the tendency to reformulate them. The second characteristic that determines exploration in depth is intelligent task performance; as in the case of exploration in breadth, it intensifies the identity process of re-evaluation, which is the crucial element of the second cycle of identity formation.

From the perspective of personality psychology and developmental psychology, it can be said that both the characteristics of self-authoring personality and advanced identity processes (which are part of the second cycle of identity formation) concern mainly adults or, at the earliest, individuals in the period of adolescence. The activation of these processes and self-authoring requires attaining an appropriate level of cognitive abilities: abstract thinking, counterfactual thinking, and capacity for metacognition (Dunlosky & Metcalfe, 2009; DeMarree & Morrison, 2011). The high level of self-authoring and the formation of personal identity also requires adaptive emotional functioning. In a situation of increased anxiety and dysregulated control of emotions, it is more difficult to develop psychological distance as well as rational assessment of events, experiences, and oneself; it is also more difficult to consciously and intentionally set long-term goals and thoughtfully choose the best ways to achieve them, consistent with one's own potentialities. Moreover, effective self-regulation with regard to emotions and motivation also protects a person against the risk of ruminative exploration (cf. Jankowski & Holas, 2014), which does not lead to any solutions and, in the way of feedback, intensifies the fears concerning the commitments made.

Based on the results of the analyses performed, it can be concluded that what defines self-authoring personality the most strongly is the characteristics referred to as meaning in life, self-designing, and personality development. Meaning in life, understood as a personal conception of the world and oneself, the possibility of attributing personal meanings to events, is the basis for the development of other characteristics of self-authoring personality. Self-designing is based on meaning in life, since it means the ability to set goals consistent with it and to choose constructive ways of achieving them. Personality development means the

broadening of meaning in life, the ability to creatively expand it to include new experiences, which prevents personality from becoming rigid (cf. Oleś, 2011). Obuchowski (2000) referred to this phenomenon as creative adaptation, which on the one hand consists in adjustment to the world that the individual creates in his or her vision, and on the other – it leads to a modification of that vision in order for the vision itself and the person not to become inflexible. Thus, self-authoring personality means dynamic orientation to the world, to people, and to oneself, which – thanks to the capacity for reflection, abstract thinking, and psychological distance – enables the person to experience satisfaction and a sense of (identity) fulfillment.

Identity non-fulfillment is probably prolonged (that is, ruminative) moratorium, whose strongest defining features are the lack of identification with commitment and a weak capacity for commitment making. This means ineffective seeking, which probably re-intensifies anxiety and may also cause learned helplessness. On the other hand, however, the conditions of the contemporary fluid (i.e., changing) world sometimes enhance (or even actually promote) constant seeking and the postponement – for as long as possible – of identity choices (Arnett, 2000, 2002; Gergen, 2009). Elli Schachter (2005) strongly relativizes the issue of the adaptiveness of so-called identity statuses (including identity achievement, foreclosure, or moratorium), formulating the supposition that, at present, there is no one universal form of identity and that various types of maturity are possible, largely dependent on the cultural context.

To sum up, the aim of the present study was to test the interrelations between the characteristics of self-authoring personality and the intensity of identity formation processes. I found positive associations of the commitment making process and the process of identification with commitment with the overall level of self-authoring as well as a negative association between overall self-authoring and the ruminative exploration process. The results confirmed hypotheses H 2 and H 3 and argue for rejecting hypothesis H 1, which postulated a positive association between the overall level of self-authoring and exploration in depth. Neither of the exploration processes is related to the intensity of self-authoring personality. It can be concluded that engaging in exploration has a complex character. It can be a manifestation of intentional activity based on conscious and reflective relation to oneself and the world, or it can be an effect of emotional and motivational confusion, uncertainty, and intense anxiety. Thus, the determinants of exploration processes are not unambiguous; consequently, the relations of these processes with the intensity of self-authoring personality turned out not to be significant.

As a result of the research conducted, I determined the relations between particular identity processes and the characteristics of self-authoring personality. I found interrelations between the configuration of variables labeled *non-self-authoring personality* and the set of variables labeled *ruminative moratorium*. The most important findings of the present research are the following: (1) the development of self-authoring personality and the formation of personal identity are interrelated; (2) commitment making and identification with commitment are a condition of identity achievement; (3) a condition of making commitments and reflectively as well as consciously reinforcing them is, above all, having a vision of oneself and meaning in life, as well as creatively choosing activities and ways of achieving personal goals; (4) exploration as a process of seeking is a potentially developmental process, but it can become "stuck" and turn into ruminative exploration; (5) extended (ruminative) moratorium blocks the development of self-authoring personality. However, since personality is, by nature, a development-oriented dynamic system, it is possible that, even if it becomes rigid at a certain stage, in the near or distant future certain factors will emerge – external: environmental, social, cultural; or internal, such as life assessment – that will make it flexible and unblock potential development.

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