Development and Aging

Adaptation of the Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (U-MICS) to the measurement of the parental identity domain

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The present studies examined the psychometric properties of the Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (U-MICS) adapted to the measurement of identity formation in the parental identity domain. As the parental identity domain has only been studied within the neo-Eriksonian approach to a very limited extent, the aim of these studies was to prepare a short, valid and reliable tool for the measurement of parental identity in order to fill this gap. The associations of commitment, in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment in the parental domain with well-being and with other identity constructs were analyzed. The results showed that parental identity formation is associated with mothers’ satisfaction with life and trait anxiety and with identity formation in other areas as well. The initial results suggest that the adapted version of the U-MICS is a valid and reliable measure that can be used in future studies on parental identity formation.

Key words: Identity formation, parental identity, U-MICS.

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INTRODUCTION

Identity is understood as a set of firm, long-term commitments made by an individual in important life contexts, called domains. Marcia (1966), in his operationalization of Erikson’s (1950) theory stated that identity formation is based on two successive identity processes: crisis/exploration (period of engagement in choosing among meaningful alternatives) and commitment (the degree of personal investment in important domains). According to Marcia (1966) the dynamic of these two processes is responsible for identity development in two domains that are central for each individuals’ sense of identity: occupation (understood broadly as a choice of educational and vocational paths) and ideology (a set of values held by a person).

In recent years the Marcia’s model has been significantly developed in the direction of adopting a broader and more dynamic view on identity development (Schwartz, 2001). The set of studied identity domains has expanded to incorporate, for example, important and close relationships (relational identity domain), also some new process-oriented models of identity formation have been proposed (Schwartz, Luyckx & Crocetti, 2015). Luyckx, Schwartz, Berzonsky et al. (2008) in their dual-cycle model unpacked exploration and commitment into five, more specific, identity processes describing how identity commitments are formed, evaluated, and maintained. Crocetti, Rubini, and Meeus (2008) focused in detail on the specific identity processes of formation and evaluation of one’s commitments as well as on revising identity when commitments are seen as unsatisfactory. In the Meeus-Crocetti model (Meeus, 2011), identity commitments are explored in two ways, through in-depth exploration (a process of conscious monitoring of commitments that results in identity maintenance) and through reconsideration of commitments (deciding whether present commitments need to be changed). Meeus and his colleagues perceive identity formation as a chain of dynamic interactions between commitments people have already made and their evaluation of these commitments, which may lead to the maintenance of present identity or to changes in commitments. Both of these models, Luyckx, Schwartz, Berzonsky et al.’s and Meeus et al.’s, proved to be valid and useful in contemporary identity studies.

As identity formation is currently seen as a life-long developmental task, studies in this area encompass processes of identity formation both in adolescence and in adulthood (Fajdukoff, Pulkkinen & Kokko, 2005; Kroger, 2007). Researchers interested in identity formation in domains that are central to adults usually conduct studies on occupational identity (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011) and relational identity in the context of the relationship with a partner (Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani & Meeus, 2010). The results of such studies suggests that identity commitments made in these different domains are positively, but not strongly related to each other (Crocetti, Sica, Schwartz, Serafini & Meeus, 2013; Goede, Spruijt, Iedema & Meeus, 1999; Schwartz et al., 2015). Thus, it is possible that an individual may have a very strong ideological commitment and at the same time may experience significant problems with commitment making in the vocational or relational domains. Identity processes in different domains can also have different associations with development in other areas. Vosylis, Erentaitė and Crocetti (2017) recently found that in emerging adulthood the sense of adulthood is related to educational and work commitment, but not to commitment in relational domains (relationships with partner or best friend), while anxiety/depression symptoms are significantly related to relational, vocational, and educational identity. Such observations lead to the conclusion that studies that further develop knowledge of...
domain-specific identity are of the utmost importance. While researchers have focused on different identity domains in adulthood, within the neo-Eriksonian approach there is, surprisingly, almost a lack of identity studies focused on one of the most important areas of functioning during this period of life: being a parent.

PARENTAL IDENTITY

Studies on parental identity are rare. Maurer, Pleck and Rane (2001) defined parental identity as the degree to which an individual sees the parenting domain as important to himself/herself. This approach, which focused on parental identity salience or commitment to the parental role is the most widely used in research, especially in social-psychologically oriented studies. The researchers in this field usually perceive this construct unidimensionally, as the subjective importance of the parental role as compared to other undertaken adult roles such as those of a worker or a spouse (Stryker, 1991).

The results of these studies reveal that, first of all, undertaking a parental role in the future is subjectively important to emerging adults, especially to women (Kerpelman & Schvaneveldt, 1999; Williams & Kelly, 2005). In the case of individuals who are already parents, studies prove that the salience of the parental role is associated with their everyday functioning and with their perceived physical health (Wickrama, Conger, Lorenz & Mathews, 1995). Simon (1992) found that the salience of parental identity in parents’ self-conception was related to emotional investments in this role as well as with vulnerability to ongoing parental strains. Those parents, both mothers and fathers, who were highly committed to their parental role turned out to be more vulnerable to such strains than less committed participants. The study of Millien and Northcott (2003), in turn, shows how parental identity can be influenced by such a non-normative experience as a need to care for an adult-child with schizophrenia. Williams and Kelly (2005) were interested in how parental involvement can contribute to both healthy and pathological development in their adolescent children. They found that both maternal and paternal involvement were negatively related to internalizing and externalizing symptoms in adolescents.

Although these lines of study are a source of important conclusions, the fact that they focus mainly on the importance of the parental role does not allow us to enter into the internal dynamics of the development of parental identity. One way of transcending this limitation can be studying the parental identity formation within the multidimensional approach. In their recent work Fadjukoff, Pulkinnen, Lyrra & Kokko (2016, p. 88) defined parental identity as ‘the identity as a parent’, which, in line with the neo-Eriksonian approach, can be measured as the firmness of commitment to the parenting domain and the degree of exploration of parenting issues. With this view, these authors depart from the unidimensional approach and incorporate parental identity construct into the identity status paradigm. Using the data from the Marcian interview (Marcia, 1966) they observed that identity in the parental domain is characterized by strong commitment (most participants were either achieved or foreclosed), that parental identity achievement status (firm commitment made after a period of intensive exploration) is related to the authoritative parenting style and that it is positively correlated with well-being, and that parental identity diffusion (lack of firm commitment and low level of exploration) is related to higher parental stress among men. These differences are in line with the idea that commitment in the parental domain significantly influence parental functioning. However, participants with the foreclosed parental identity status (firm commitment made without much exploration) were characterized by a lower level of nurturance and lower psychological well-being than those with the achieved status. This suggests that also the level of exploration in the parental domain should be taken into account if we want to truly understand the process of parental identity development. Fadjukoff et al. (2016) results lead to the conclusion that identity development in the parental domain can have a broad influence on parents functioning as it is related to parental behavior toward their children, to their emotional adjustment, and to overall well-being. However, this work is probably the only one in which parental identity was directly studied from the identity status perspective, which makes it crucial to gain more data on this subject.

To sum up, previous studies have shown that parental identity formation is both a subjectively and objectively important part of adult development which can also influence the developmental routes of their children. Although the parental domain may be as important a part of one’s identity as the vocational or relational domains (or maybe even the most important part, especially for women) there is a lack of studies on parental identity formation within the neo-Eriksonian, processual approach. The present study is the first to my knowledge that was directed at enriching our understanding of this relatively unexplored area.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESIS

Because the Identity Status Interview (Marcia, 1966) utilized in Fadjukoff et al.’s (2016) research is not easy to be implemented in most studies because of the time needed to use it, the first step was to create a short, valid and reliable measure based on recent findings in identity formation research. The central research problems were to establish psychometric validity of the adapted measure and associations between parental identity processes and well-being and identity development in other areas.

It was decided to adapt the well-known identity questionnaire, the Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (U-MICS; Crocetti et al., 2008), to enable it to measure parental identity. The U-MICS consists of three subscales: commitment (a choice made in an identity-relevant area and identification with this choice), in-depth exploration (adaptive identity process; reflecting upon commitments made and gathering in-depth information about them), and reconsideration of commitment (efforts to change present commitments because they are no longer satisfactory). Thus far, the U-MICS has been used to study educational, vocational, and relational identity (relationships with best friend or partner). The results obtained by Crocetti et al. (2013) showed that correlations between specific identity processes in different domains, i.e. commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment were rather small, about $r = 0.20–0.30$. 

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In order to create the parental identity version, items from the U-MICS (Crocetti et al., 2008) were revised to tap identity in the parental domain. Originally, the U-MICS consisted of 13 items, but one of the items (No. 13), from the reconsideration scale, is related to completely abandoning a commitment in the particular domain, for example, In fact, I’m looking for a new partner (romantic relationship domain). Compared to this the parental domain is specific because it is hardly possible to stop being a parent, except in a relatively rare situation like, for example, a child’s death. That is why the 13th item from the original scale was not included in the parental identity version. However, the reconsideration of parental identity commitment is still possible. Parenthood can be differently reflected on by a person and could include a situation where a person thinks that it would have been better not to have had any children or that not having a child / children would have made my life more interesting. This process of not accepting a parental role and a wish to abandon this role, was the way the reconsideration of commitment was understood in this study.

The first aim of the research project was an assessment of the factor structure, reliability, and internal validity of this measure. It was hypothesized that commitment in the parental domain would positively correlate with in-depth exploration and negatively or have no correlate with reconsideration of commitment (Crocetti et al., 2015; Crocetti et al., 2008). As regards correlation between in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment, previous results are mixed with studies reporting positive (Crocetti et al., 2008), negative (Crocetti et al., 2013) or no correlation (Crocetti et al., 2015) between these processes. However, it might be expected that parents who are unsatisfied with fulfilling their parental role would not be very interested in gaining information about their children and talking with others about them. Thus, a negative correlation between in-depth exploration and reconsideration of commitment seemed to be the most probable one.

The second aim was to analyze relationships between the parental identity and adjustment. It was hypothesized that parental identity commitment would be positively related to global and domain-specific satisfaction with life, with difficulties in parental identity formation (e.g. higher reconsideration of commitment) relating to less optimal functioning. Conversely, parental identity commitment would be negatively and reconsideration of commitment positively correlated with such a predictor of poor adjustment as trait-anxiety. As identity commitment dimensions are in general more strongly related to adjustment than exploration (Schwartz et al., 2015), it was also assumed that in-depth exploration would be unrelated to indicators of adjustment or only weakly related to them. Crocetti et al. (2008) and Luyckx, Schwartz, Berzonsky et al. (2008) have reported a weak positive correlation between exploration and anxiety and depression, and this direction of results was also seen as possible in the case of in-depth exploration process in the parental domain.

The third aim was to analyze relationships between parental identity processes and other identity constructs. It was hypothesized that parental identity would be positively related to optimal identity formation in other specific domains as well as to the overall sense of identity. So, it was assumed that indicators of firm and stable parental identity, that is, higher commitment and lower reconsideration of commitment would positively correlate with similar identity constructs. The same was hypothesized in the case of the in-depth exploration process. However, it was hypothesized that these relationships would be small to moderate in strength (Crocetti et al., 2013). What is more, Fadjukoff et al.’s (2016) study may suggest that the parental domain can be specific to some extent because parents tend to express very strong commitment and almost no signs of diffusion. This may partially stem from very strict social rules regarding the carrying out of the parental role and the strong bond between parents and children. This specificity of parental identity may also result in weakening its relationships with other identity domains.

As well-known predictors of identity formation are social-cognitive identity styles (Berzonsky, 1989), this construct was also analyzed. The correlations between the identity styles and the U-MICS dimensions have previously been reported by Crocetti, Rubini, Berzonsky and Meeus (2009) in a sample of adolescents and emerging adults. They found that the informational identity style (individuals with this identity style tend to be self-reflective and skeptical; they intentionally evaluate self-relevant information) was positively correlated with all dimensions measured by the U-MICS, but most strongly with in-depth exploration; the normative style (individuals with this identity style tend to internalize the goals and standards of significant others and to base on social norms when dealing with identity issues) was most strongly, positively correlated with commitment, and more weakly with in-depth exploration; the diffused-avoidant style (individuals with this identity style try to avoid dealing with identity issues and making important decisions) correlated most strongly, positively with reconsideration of commitment and negatively with commitment and in-depth exploration. A similar direction of results was also expected with regard to the parental domain.

Two studies were conducted in order to resolve these three research problems and to assess the usefulness of the adapted version of the U-MICS. The first one was a pilot study, and the second one was focused on verification and on expanding the preliminary results.

STUDY 1
The aim of the pilot study was a preliminary assessment of the factor structure, reliability, and intercorrelations between the three dimensions of the measure and to establish the relationships of the parental identity processes with adjustment, namely, domain-specific satisfaction with life and trait anxiety. As this was the first use of this questionnaire it was decided to start with a small sample and gain same basic information.

METHOD
Participants
In the first study 62 mothers took part, they were all Polish. Participants were between the ages of 22 and 56, but only 10% were more than 46 years old (M_{age} = 37.68, SD = 7.13). The median age was 38 years. The participants were well-educated (79% of the participants had a higher education), 77% of the participants were married, 20% were in an informal relationship,
and 3% were single. 56% of the sample were employed full-time, 21% worked part-time, and 23% were not employed. Among the employed participants 46% had a managerial position. 43% of the sample had one child, 39% had two children, 16% had three children, and 2% had four children. The age of children ranged from 1 to 33 years, but 87% of them were no more than 18 years old (Me = 9, M = 9.69, SD = 7.44).

Measures

Parental identity. The 12-items U-MICS Parental identity version was used to measure the three identity processes postulated in the Mees’s model (Crocetti et al., 2008): commitment (5 items, e.g. Being a parent gives me self-confidence; Being a parent allows me to face the future with optimism), in-depth exploration (5 items, e.g. I make a lot of effort to keep finding out new things about my child / children; I often talk with other people about my child / children), and reconsideration of commitment (2 items, I often think it would have been better not to have had any children; I often think that not having a child / children would have made my life more interesting). All items are responded to on a Likert scale from 1—completely untrue to 5—completely true. The measure has its Polish and English version. In the present study only the Polish version was used.

Anxiety. The trait anxiety was measured with a scale from the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg & Jacobs, 1983; polish adaptation: Sosnowski & Wrześniowski, 1983). The scale consists of 20 items that are responded to on a Likert scale from 1—not at all to 5—very much. Each item evaluates the extent to which an individual experience such feelings as, e.g. tension or disappointment. The higher the score the more intense trait anxiety is. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.90.

Satisfaction with work. In order to measure this construct one question was asked: How satisfied are you with your current job? The question was responded to on a seven-point scale from 0—complete lack of satisfaction to 6-I am completely satisfied. Only employed participants were asked this question.

Satisfaction with romantic relationship. In order to measure this construct one question was asked: How satisfied are you with your intimate relationship? The question was responded to on a seven-point scale from 0—complete lack of satisfaction to 6-I am completely satisfied. Only participants in a relationship were asked this question.

Satisfaction with parenting. In order to measure this construct one question was asked: How satisfied are you with being a parent? The question was responded to on a seven-point scale from 0—complete lack of satisfaction to 6-I am completely satisfied.

RESULTS

Factorial validity, reliability, and intercorrelations between parental identity processes

In order to analyze factorial validity of the measure, one-, two-, and three-factor solutions were compared (Crocetti et al., 2010) by means of confirmatory factor analysis performed with AMOS 24 software. In order to assess models fit, two commonly used indices were applied (Hu & Bentler, 1999): (1) comparative fit index (CFI), whose value should be higher than 0.90, and ideally – higher than 0.95; and (2) root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), whose value should not exceed 0.08. As presented in Table 1, the three-factor solution best fitted the data and was the only model whose parameters were acceptable. Then I assessed whether this solution fitted the data significantly better than the models with 1 factor and with 2 factors. In such a case, Δχ² should be significant at p < 0.05, ΔCFI > 0.01 (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002), and ΔRMSEA > 0.015 (Chen, 2007). This comparison proved that the three-factor model, compared to the one-factor model (Δχ² = 66.97, p < 0.001; ΔCFI = 0.21; ARMSEA = 0.08) and to the two-factor model (Δχ² = 28.39, p < 0.001; ΔCFI = 0.09; ARMSEA = 0.04) fitted the data significantly better. The obtained data supports the factorial validity of the measure. Factor loadings were from 0.51 to 0.96 (Fig. 1). This solution explained 66% of the total variance. Reliability of the subscales (Cronbach’s alphas) were 0.90, 0.72, and 0.66, respectively. It was also examined whether the scale scores were stable over time by asking participants to answer the questions once again after about 3 months. The Pearson’s correlations between T1 and T2 were: commitment 0.67, in-depth exploration 0.60, reconsideration of commitment 0.62. These correlations, although not very strong, suggest an acceptable test-retest reliability of the measure.

As expected, commitment was positively correlated with in-depth exploration (r = 0.28), and negatively with reconsideration of commitment (r = −0.35). Exploration in-depth was not significantly correlated with reconsideration of commitment (Fig. 1).

Parental identity processes and adjustment

Parental identity commitment correlated negatively with trait anxiety and positively with all indices of domain-specific life satisfaction, that is, satisfaction with work, with intimate relationship, and with parenting (Table 2). This last relationship was, however, much stronger than the other two. Associations between reconsideration of parental commitment and adjustment was the opposite, except the non-significant correlations with satisfaction with work and with intimate relationship. The higher the reconsideration of commitment was the higher the anxiety and lower the satisfaction with parenting experienced by the participants was. In-depth exploration did not correlate significantly with the adjustment indicators.

Table 1. Fit indices for the one-, two-, and three-factor solutions of the U-MICS Parental identity scale in the Study 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>χ²/df</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-factor model</td>
<td>131.87</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-factor model (commitment and global exploration, i.e. in-depth exploration and reconsideration)</td>
<td>93.29</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-factor model</td>
<td>64.90</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were no correlated residuals in the model.
Additionally, when participants age was controlled for there were no significant correlations between the parental identity processes and the age of the child/mean age of the children, and between the parental identity processes and number of children.

**DISCUSSION**

The preliminary results obtained in Study 1 were in accordance with expectations. Data on the factor structure, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability suggested that the U-MICS adapted to the parental domain might be a valuable measure. As hypothesized, a stronger identity commitment in the parental domain was related to higher subjective well-being of the mothers. It was especially related to subjective satisfaction with parenting. Conversely, higher reconsideration of commitment, that is, not accepting a parental role and wishing to abandon this role, was related to higher trait anxiety and lower satisfaction with parenting among mothers. Reconsideration of parental commitment was, however, not related to satisfaction with work and with intimate relationship, which may suggest that the impact of difficulties in parental identity formation on domain-specific satisfaction with life is limited to only some areas.

Intensity of in-depth exploration was not related to anxiety and to satisfaction with different aspects of life. This result is in line with other observations suggesting that different facets of identity exploration are in general unrelated or only weakly related to well-being (Crocetti et al., 2008; Crocetti, Klimstra, Keijsers, Hale & Meeus, 2009; Luyckx, Soenens, Goossens, Beckx & Wouters, 2008).

As these preliminary results supported the notion about the reliability and validity of the measure, it was decided to use the measure in the next study without any changes in order to verify these first results and gain further information about the psychometric properties of the scale.
STUDY 2: METHOD

Participants
Two hundred fifty-seven women between the ages of 20 and 63 took part in the study (mean age = 32.64, SD = 7.90), but only 14% were over 40-years-old. The median age was 31 years. Participants had from 1 child (53%) to 4 children (1%), the age of whom ranged from 1 to 30 years, but the majority were parents of young children: median age of the children was 1.5 years, mean age of the children was 2.47 years, SD = 3.83, 91% of the children were less than 5 years old, 99% were less than 15 years old. 56% of the participants were employed and 44% were not employed at the time of the study.

Measures

Parental identity. The 12-item U-MICS Parental identity version was used to measure commitment (5 items), in-depth exploration (5 items), and reconsideration of commitment in the parental domain (2 items). The Polish language version was used.

General life satisfaction. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffl, 1985; polish adaptation: Juczyński, 2001) was used in order to assess a participants’ general life satisfaction. The measure consists of five items (e.g. In most ways my life is close to my ideal) that are responded to on a five-point Likert scale from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.89.

Global identity development. Two measures were used to analyze identity on a global level: (1) The ISI-5 Identity Commitment scale (Berzonsky, Soenens, Luyckx, Smits, Papini & Goossens, 2013; polish adaptation: Senejko & Łoś, 2015) was used to measure non-domain specific identity commitment. The scale consists of five items (e.g. I know basically what I believe and don’t believe) that are responded to on a Likert scale from 1-not at all like me to 5-very much like me. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.89.

Identity styles. The Identity Style Inventory (ISI-5) was applied (Berzonsky et al., 2013; polish adaptation: Senejko & Łoś, 2015) to measure the three identity styles described earlier: the informational style (9 items, e.g. When making important decisions, I like to spend time thinking about my options), the normative style (9 items, e.g. I automatically adopt and follow the values I was brought up with), and the diffused-avoidant style (9 items, e.g. When personal problems arise, I try to delay acting as long as possible). All items are responded to on a Likert scale from 1-not at all like me to 5-very much like me. Cronbach’s alphas were 0.86, 0.71, and 0.89, respectively.

RESULTS

Factorial validity, reliability, and intercorrelations between parental identity processes

One-, two-, and three-factor solutions were compared by means of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) performed with AMOS 24. All models were compared according to the same rules as in Study 1. As can be seen in Table 3, the three-factor solution best fitted the data. It also fitted the data significantly better than the one-factor solution (Δχ² = 626.30, p < 0.001; ΔCFI = 0.33; ΔRMSEA = 0.15) and the two-factor solution (Δχ² = 395.00, p < 0.001; ΔCFI = 0.21; ΔRMSEA = 0.11). The obtained results support the factorial validity of the measure. Factor loadings were from 0.30 to 0.99 (Fig. 2). This solution explained 71% of the total variance. Reliability of the subscales (Cronbach’s alphas) were 0.90, 0.78, and 0.94, respectively.

As was expected, commitment was positively correlated with in-depth exploration (r = 0.53), and negatively with reconsideration of commitment (r = −0.38). Exploration in-depth correlated negatively, thus weakly, with reconsideration of commitment (r = −0.23).

External correlates of the parental identity processes

The parental identity commitment was positively related to general satisfaction with life, to the ISI commitment scale, to community identity, and to commitment in the vocational domain (Table 4). The in-depth exploration correlated positively with general satisfaction with life, ISI commitment scale, community identity, and the in-depth exploration in the vocational domain. In turn, reconsideration of commitment correlated negatively with most of

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 3. Fit indices for the one-, two-, and three-factor solutions of the U-MICS Parental identity scale in Study 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-factor model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-factor model (commitment and global exploration)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-factor model</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes: according to modification indices three pairs of error terms were allowed to correlate: items 1–3 (commitment scale), 2–4 (commitment scale), and 9–10 (in-depth exploration scale).
the analyzed identity dimensions and with general satisfaction with life. Interestingly, there was no significant correlation between parental and vocational reconsideration of commitment.

With regard to identity styles, parental identity commitment correlated positively with the normative identity style, and was uncorrelated to other identity styles. In-depth exploration was positively associated only with the informational style. Reconsideration of commitment correlated positively with both the normative and the diffuse-avoidant styles.

Auxiliary analysis
Mean differences in the parental identity processes were tested by education level (secondary or higher), marital status (married or in an informal relationship; the number of single parents was too small to be included), vocational status (unemployed or employed part-time/full-time), and having a managerial position (yes or no) in the case of employed participants. All analysis showed no significant differences between subgroups.

When participants age was controlled for, there were no significant correlations between the parental identity processes and the age of the child / mean age of the children, and between the parental identity and the number of children.

Discussion
The results of the second study suggests that the U-MICS Parental Identity is a measure characterized by high reliability and good factorial validity. Similarly to the first study, the analysis of correlations between particular identity processes showed that commitment in the parental domain is positively

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental identity dimensions</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>In-depth exploration</th>
<th>Reconsideration of commitment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjustments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWLS</td>
<td>0.33***</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td>-0.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity dimensions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISI-5 Commitment</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>-0.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIRS</td>
<td>0.32***</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>-0.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMICS vocational identity – Commitment</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMICS vocational identity – In-depth exploration</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>-0.31***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMICS vocational identity – Reconsideration of commitment</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity styles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational style</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.36***</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative style</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diffuse-avoidant style</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.37***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.
related to in-depth exploration, confirming that undertaking identity commitment in the sphere of parenthood also usually causes an individual to concentrate on a thorough exploration of the area of this commitment (Crocetti et al., 2008). At the same time, strong identity commitment in the parental domain is negatively related to the lack of satisfaction from fulfilling the role of a parent, which is indicated by the negative relationship between commitment and reconsideration of commitment. These results, as well as the results of the first study, confirm that the dynamics of the relations among identity processes in the parental domain is similar to other domains measured by the U-MICS (Crocetti et al., 2008). The above confirms the internal validity of the tool.

Out of the three identity processes, it was commitment that was most strongly related to general satisfaction with life, while the dimension of in-depth exploration turned out to be only weakly positively correlated with this indicator. In turn, difficulties in forming a stable parental identity and regretting becoming a parent was connected with a lower perceived quality of life of the mothers. This remains in accord with the results of other studies, where it has been demonstrated that strong identity commitment is an important indicator of higher life satisfaction (Schwartz et al., 2015).

Forming identity in the parental domain also remains in a relationship with identity development, both in respect of the overall sense of identity as well as in other specific domains such as the here analyzed vocational domain. The obtained results confirm that commitment in the parental domain co-occurs with a stronger overall sense of identity, but also with stronger identity commitments in the vocational domain. Also, the relationships of in-depth exploration with other identity dimensions confirm that seeking information about parenthood is an adaptive process. In turn, difficulties experienced by the mothers in forming a stable parental identity seems to be an element of more general problems connected with establishing a stable sense of identity in adulthood.

It turned out, however, that an intensification of commitment reconsideration in the parental domain was not correlated with the reconsideration of commitment in the vocational domain. On the one hand, this result remains in accord with the results that point to a weak relationship among different domains of identity development (Schwartz et al., 2015), yet, on the other hand, it can also indicate that parental identity has a specific character. Fadjukoff et al. (2016) demonstrated that it is a domain in which the majority of adult parents are very strongly committed. Regretting becoming a parent and wanting to “turn back time” and thus preventing it seems to be rather uncommon, which does not necessarily have to apply to the same extent to vocational identity. A lack of satisfaction from one’s own vocational development may be far more common, which leads to the decrease in correlation between commitment reconsideration in these domains. This phenomenon remains in accord with the lack of relationship between commitment reconsideration in the parental domain and satisfaction from work observed in Study 1. Perceiving oneself as a parent and as an employee seemed to be to a certain degree independent from each other in the group of mothers. A different explanation for the observed lack of relationship could be the very measurement method. Items in the version for parents pertain to an imaginary situation (“what would happen if . . . ?”), whereas in the other versions of the U-MICS the investigated individuals assess real plans for changing commitment that they can potentially realize.

The relationships between the processes of parental identity and identity styles yield, in turn, insight into one of the potential mechanisms of identity development in this domain. The informational style is a well-documented predictor of a higher level of identity exploration (Berzonsky, 2011). Mothers characterized by this style, oriented at independent, autonomous and reflexive searching for answers to identity questions, also manifest a tendency to deepen their knowledge on child- and parenthood-related issues in the process of in-depth exploration, which can be conducive to identification with the undertaken commitment.

The normative style, characterized in turn by giving preference to opinions of significant others and the traditional norms in the process of searching for answers for identity questions, turned out to be positively related both to commitment and reconsideration of commitment. Owing to the fact that in the study by Crocetti, Rubini, Berzonsky and Meets (2009) the normative style did not correlate with reconsideration of commitment, the obtained result is quite unexpected. Perhaps this is also associated with the specificity of parenthood as an identity domain. Filling the role of a parent is connected with very strong social norms, defining how the parent should behave towards the child and how s/he should undertake the role of a parent. Maybe among mothers with the normative style, who certainly attach great importance to norms connected with parenthood and to opinions of significant others on the matter of fulfilling their role as a parent, there appear significant intra-group differences. It can be hypothesized that among them there are such mothers for whom these strong norms, precepts and prohibitions constitute a heavy burden or that these requirements are in their opinion too great, which makes them regret becoming a parent. The relationship between the normative style and commitment reconsideration in the parental domain surely requires further studies.

With respect to the diffuse-avoidant style, the obtained results confirm that the tendency to avoid active coping with identity issues results in an impeded development of parental identity. The mothers who use such an identity style form a group endangered by experiencing low satisfaction from parenthood and by a belief that fulfilling the role of a parent does not agree with their expectations pertaining to their own lives.

Generally speaking, it can be stated that the results obtained in Study 2 confirmed the predictions and observations from Study 1, and that they remain in accord with other studies focused on the processual approach to identity development, which supports the general thesis about the validity and reliability of the presented measure.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Parental identity undoubtedly is an important part of an overall sense of identity and its development among parents. It is, however, an area that so far has not been intensively investigated within the neo-Eriksonian approach. Recent studies conducted by Fadjukoff et al. (2016) constitute here an important exception, yet
the need for further research in this area is clearly visible. Particularly important for further advance of research in this field is the creation of valid and reliable questionnaires that will have the potential of becoming the foundation for studies focused on the multidimensional measurement of identity development in the parental domain and mechanisms governing its formation.

The presented studies had three main objectives: (1) the assessment of the psychometric value of the new version of the U-MICS, adapted to measure identity development in the parental domain; (2) the evaluation of relationships between levels of the three identity processes in the parental domain and adjustment; and (3) the relationship between parental identity and other identity constructs.

The presented results indicate that the new version of the U-MICS is a measure characterized by acceptable psychometric parameters. It is a short scale, and it can become useful for researchers interested in looking into identity development in the period of adulthood, but it can also be helpful in studying parental identity formation in adolescence (early parenthood) and emerging adulthood. The obtained results confirmed the internal consistency of the scales, the stability of the measurement over time and the factorial validity of the measure.

The dimension of parental identity that turned out to be most strongly connected to adjustment, understood both as trait anxiety and satisfaction with life, both in global and in specific domains was the dimension of commitment. Commitment in the parental domain is an element of a global process of identity development in adulthood. It therefore remains in a relationship both in an individual with an overall belief that s/he has already discovered the life path s/he wants to follow, as well as in the process of identity formation in other, specific domains of life, including the vocational domain. However, in this latter case a significant limitation was observed: strong reconsideration of commitment in one of the domains seems not to affect the other domain.

The development of parental identity probably already starts in the period of adolescence, but we can suppose that it changes greatly and stabilizes only when the person has become a parent and has started to fulfill this role actively (Fadjukoff et al., 2016). This is the time when among other identity questions there begin to appear new questions, such as What kind of parent do I want to be? How important is it to me to be a parent? Is being a parent satisfying for me? It can be anticipated that searching for answers to these questions may be influenced by the quality of the relationship with a partner, perhaps by early experiences in the relationship with one’s own parents in the period of childhood and adolescence, or by the personality traits of each parent. In Study 2, the mothers’ identity style was taken into account, confirming that one of the important conditions of parental identity development may be the socio-cognitive style of processing identity-related problems involved in the global process of identity development. Yet it seems that this research area requires further, deeper studies.

The results obtained in the two studies also suggest that the parental identity formation is not related to such characteristics as the number and age of children, education of the mothers or their material or vocational status. Similar results were obtained by Fadjukoff et al. (2016). It appears that the development of parental identity may rather be under the influence of emotional and cognitive processes, therefore be based upon the dynamics of mental functioning of mothers, and be independent of objective indicators of their social position. The mothers’ vocational situation and their education do not seem to significantly influence their parental identity formation.

Summing up, the U-MICS questionnaire adapted to measure parental identity, on the basis of the primary results discussed in the present paper, meets the criteria of scientific research measures applied in studies on identity. The scale can be, therefore, useful in filling the significant gap that until now has existed in the scientific literature on parental identity.

Limitations and future research

First, in these studies only women (mothers), mostly well-educated, took part, which has a negative impact on the generalization of the results. Second, thus far, the measure has been used only in Poland. Conducting research in other countries is highly recommended in order to verify the results obtained with a Polish sample. Future research will benefit from including men (fathers) in the research samples and from studies more focused on parental practices. Conducting longitudinal studies is important to observe the potential changes in parental identity over time. The sample in Study 1 was very small, and even though its results were in accordance with the second study, these observations need further verification.

CONCLUSION

Parenting, vocational activity and romantic involvement are often perceived as the most important areas of adult activity. However, parental identity is a poorly recognized area from the neo-Eriksonian perspective, which may have been the result of a lack of short and valid measures focused on this domain. The presented results suggest that the U-MICS scale adapted for parental identity is a reliable and valid measure and may be helpful in developing this area of research.

REFERENCES


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Received 19 May 2017, accepted 13 October 2017.