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Characteristics of Generations X and Y Educational Career-related Choices

Abstract. A professional educational career-related choice that is understood as a process of decision-making that includes several career options is one of the most important decisions in human life. A chosen professional career path influences all areas of human life such as creation of close relations and family, social status, leisure, improvement, mobility, etc.

When members of Generation Y who are characteristic of different values and behaviours start to dominate in the labour market over the preceding Generation X, the conflict of generation that arises complicates labour relations.

Thus, the aim of this study is to define what are the characteristics of career-related choices of Generation Y and Generation X? How are characteristics of these choices related to the properties of each generation as highlighted in the generational theory as well as the historical and cultural contexts that have formed them? The following methods of research data collection where used: analysis of scientific literature and interview. The data obtained was analysed using qualitative content analysis.

It was determined that there were obvious differences between characteristics of educational career-related choices of members of Generation X and

Generation Y. Comparing career-related choices between Generation X and Generation Y, it was revealed that the historical and cultural contexts had great influence on career-related choices of both generations.

Keywords: educational career choices; characteristics of choices; Generations X and Y; societal change; Lithuania

Introduction

An educational career-related choice that is understood as a process of decision-making that includes several career options is one of the most important decisions in human life. A chosen professional career path influences all areas of human life such as creation of close relations and family, social status, leisure, improvement, mobility, etc. The variety of characteristics particular to a career-related decision is evident from the perspective of both a specific individual and societal groups, for instance, generations (Gati, Gadassi, Mashiah-Cohen, 2012).

Different theoretical stances stress the capacity for self-direction; also socio-cultural factors, such as gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality operate to restrict available options or, to put it another way, the possibilities that are available are largely determined by an individual's background. As a life-long process, career choices encompass different stages and motifs of an individual's professional life. In the context of the generational theory, tendencies of career choices among members of different generations are also evident.

Various researchers from social sciences demonstrated a lot of interest for different aspects of the peculiarities of career decision making and factors that influence this process. Psychologists are interested in decision-making peculiarities (Phillips, Jome, 2006), analyse the multidimensional profile of the career decision-making process (Gati, Landman et al., 2010) and investigate difficulties in career decision making (Brown, Rector, 2008, Gati, Krausz, Osipow, 1996). In the field of cognitive psychology the individual decision-making conditions are examined: judgmental arguments, evaluation criteria, and decision-making situations (Benesh, 2001). In the field of management the research is mostly focused on the process of career decision making (Germay, Verschueren, 2007; Lent et al, 2016) and its continuity throughout the life (Jarvis, 2003). While in

education the educational opportunities for the ability to make career decisions (Augustinienė, 2007), empowering environment for career decision-making (Surgėlienė, 2014; Garcia et al, 2015), career determinants (Urbonavičiūtė, 2010; Cordeiro, 2015; Wehmeyer et al, 2018), career assumptions (Augustinienė, Stanišauskienė, 2013) and the dynamics of career decisions are analysed (Stanišauskienė, 2015).

The theory of generations is mostly developed by sociologists (McCrindle, 2014; Comeau, Tung, 2013; Martin, Martins, 2012), although the differences between generations are also analysed by other researchers of social sciences. Researchers in the field of education emphasize the educational peculiarities of the new Generation Z (Pečiuliauskienė, Valantinaitė, Malonaitienė, 2013) and the learning features of the Generation Y (Wilson, Gerber, 2008; Desy et al, 2017). Organizational psychologists focus mostly on Generation Y that is coming into the labour market and getting stronger positions there (Flagler, Thompson, 2014). In the field of management, researchers are discussing about new generation of leaders and their leadership styles (Hershaterr, Epstein, 2010; Ng, Lyons, Schweitzer, 2012; Kraus, 2017).

However, this area lacks scientific studies and includes only fragmented analyses of career choices of a certain generation in a specific labour market sector. For instance, Hurst and Good (2009) propose new insights regarding Generation Y's retail career expectations, perceptions of retail careers, future psychological contract/entitlement perceptions of retail careers, and career exploration of the US retailing industry. In another study, the work-related differences and similarities of Generation X and Baby Boomer employees in the public sector are analysed (Jurkiewicz, 2000).

When members of Generation Y who are characteristic of different values and behaviours start to dominate the labour market over the preceding Generation X (Howe, Strauss, 2007, Chester, 2002), the conflict of generation that arises complicates labour relations. Values and behaviour particular to Generation Y form working style and values of organisations. Therefore, it is important to understand how and driven by what forces members of different generations have ended up in their career area. Thus, the *goal of this paper is to identify what are their educational career-related choices characteristic of and how are characteristics of these choices related to the properties of each generation as highlighted*

in the generational theory as well as the historical and cultural contexts that have formed them.

Characteristics of Generation X and Generation Y from the perspective of the generational theory

During the last decade of the 20th century, American economist, demographics expert N. Howie and writer, playwright W. Strauss (1992) – almost at the same time and independently from each other – revealed certain consistent patterns of the demographic renewal called the generational theory. The focus of the researchers was the following paradox: a conflict of generations that was not related to age-specific features. If this was the case, 20-year-olds, 30-year-olds, 40-year-olds, etc. of all generations should behave similarly, declare similar values and have similar goals. However, when children reach their parents' age, they think, act, work or, simply put, live differently.

The generational theory explains how an epoch one has been born in affects his/her outlook on life (Codrington, 2008). The basis of the theory are the different values of generations. Values particular to a generation form during the first (2–14) years of life. They are mostly influenced by family and socio-economic, political and social events. The values that form until the age of 14 are deep-rooted: they lie in the subconscious and are not usually noticeable or named. However, each generation is impacted by these values. Surely, each individual's uniqueness and behaviour are also impacted by interpersonal as well as individual values; however, it would be difficult to deny the significance of values particular to a specific generation.

Based on an analysis of the U.S. history, Howe and Strauss (1992, 2007) distinguished those time periods that involve specific values and behaviour for people who were born in a particular period. This theory that originated in the U. S. has drawn attention from other countries; the hypothesis of similar values in particular generations has been tested in Australia (McCrindle, 2014), South African Republic (Martin, Martins, 2012), Canada, Asia (Comeau, Tung, 2013). It has been proven that the theory is valid with certain corrections due to the impact of political and economic factors. People of the same generation of from different

countries or even continents are similar. Globalisation has caused a rapid disappearance of differences between young generations: the young generations in different countries are more similar than different generations of the same culture.

The globally acknowledged classification of generations describes the formation conditions of generational values and behavioural tendencies, and explains their main differences.

Generation X (1965–1982) grew up as a generation of "latchkey kids" (or "kids with a key around their neck") because their parents focused on work in order to have more material values (thus relating their family's well-being mostly to material values), and did not have time to focus on their children. Differently from their parents, young people of Generation X created families cautiously and later in life, and their outlooks on children and relationships with them are very different from the outlooks of the members of the baby boom (1946–1964). Members of Generation X are especially protective of their children, their communication is based on equality and includes liberal upbringing methods rather than strict ones.

Members of Generation X are sceptical of being devoted to one organisation, attachment to one workplace; therefore, they look for quick ways to make money, are ready to take on risks and work for themselves. Generation X is not opposed to the institution as such; however, individuality is the feature that determines their decisions. According to McCrindle (2014), members of Generation X need to have options and flexibility, they do not like strict supervision and they prioritise freedom and earnings according to work results.

Members of Generations X aim for coherence between different areas of life, i. e., they work in order to live, and not vice versa. They find the present more important than the future. According to Codrington (2008), they are seekers of spirituality who believe in the supernatural. This generation is especially fond of music as a "window to their soul" and a means of self-expression.

Generation Y (1982–2003) (also known as *Millennial, I, Why?, Boomerang Generation*, etc. generation) is described as a generation who were growing up during the new globalisation times and the era of technologies and wireless means of communication. This generation lives during a time when unprecedented diversity and different cultures have immense

influence. As the most protected and pampered generation, members of Generation Y are very self-confident and even arrogant. In his book *Employing Generation Why?*, Chester writes that members of Generation Y are able to filter every command, request or instruction unsupported by any rational arguments more than any other generations; they request to point out the reasons and provide motivation. Therefore, the traditional; "because I said so" is not good enough for them. Members of Generation Y are growing up in a world full of tension due to our lifestyles (ecology, excessive consumption, etc.); they are often informed about this, which is why it is of no surprise that the outlook of this generation on consumption is different, i. e., more ethical and ecological (Codrington, 2008).

As a report of study "Millennials at Workplace" carried out by PwC (2011) shows, people aged 22–32 are primarily interested in humanistic ideas, eternal values and personal growth rather than money. They aim for success; on the other hand, they can settle for low salary in order not to overwork. Members of Generation Y do not value loyalty to the employer and put self-realisation in front of dedication for work.

As they mature, members of Generation Y experience excess of media and entertainment; thus, they have a hard time with routine tasks that require patience and thoroughness, cannot focus on one object for a longer period of time and become bored quickly. Members of this generation can easily communicate on the Internet and create virtual social relations. However, their real network of social contacts is much smaller than that of their parents and grandparents.

Generation Y is characterised as a generation that aims at quick results, sudden acknowledgement and remuneration (Hershaterr, Epstein, 2010). Having had much attention from their childhood, members of Generation Y want that attention constantly. At work, members of Generation Y feel poorly if their executives do not respond to their achievements treating them as a self-explanatory result.

To sum up, it can be seen that Generation X and Generation Y grew up in different social, political and economic environment on the family, country and even global levels. Generation X's parents' occupation and focus on career and material well-being had influence on the formation of Generation X's independence, responsible outlook on life, career security and the need for clarity. In the environment of parental attention, material goods and entertainment, members of Generation Y have developed

a specific view on the world (also work); they have a clear sense of self-worth. However, they are not hardened and are immature in certain areas.

Career choice characteristics

Career decision-making is defined as the cognitive process in which beliefs, perceptions, attitudes and intentions evolve as knowledge and experiences (Nachmias, Walmsley, 2015). Studies on career decision-making factors and styles have indicated the importance of individual differences to understand the decision-making process while choosing the professional career better. The scientific approach of career decision-making in almost two decades was oriented towards the analysis of decision-making styles as a single dominant trait while many studies showed that individuals usually apply more than one style.

Thus, an alternative model that conceptualises the way individuals approach the career decision-making process in terms of career decision-making profiles rather than styles was proposed (Gati et al 2010). The term *profile* rather than *style* implies a complex multidimensional characteristic and opens new insights. A model of career decision-making profiles was presented and later modified by Gati et al (2010, 2012). It contains twelve dimensions that are presented on a bipolar scale:

1) information-processing (analytic vs. holistic) that shows the degree to which information is analysed;
2) information gathering (comprehensive vs. minimal) that describes the ability to collect and organise information;
3) locus of control (internal vs. external) that expresses the degree to which individuals believe they control the professional future;
4) effort invested (much vs. little) that expresses the efforts and time put in career the decision-making process;
5) speed of making the final decision (fast vs. slow) that describes the time length of the decision-making process;
6) procrastination (high vs. low) that shows the degree to which the individual delays beginning or advancing through the decision-making process;
7) consultation with others (frequent vs. rare) that describes the role of the consultations and guidance in the decision-making process;

8)   dependence on others (high vs. low) that shows the expression of responsibility in the career decision-making process;

9)   desire to please other (high vs. low) that shows the degree to which the individual attempts to meet the expectations of significant others;

10) Aspiration for an "ideal occupation" (high vs. low) that expresses the extent to which the individual strives to achieve an ideal occupation for him/her;

11) willingness to compromise (much vs. little) that expresses flexibility while choosing alternatives in difficult situations;

12) using intuition (high vs. low) that shows the role of intuition in the career decision-making process.

It is highlighted that willingness to compromise (which is a significant component of many career choices), together with procrastination and speed of making the final decision) significantly contributes to the prediction of decision-status group in both studies highlights the importance of assessing this dimension of the career decision-making process.

According to Nachmias and Walmsley (2015), the career decision-making process can be more rational or intuitive depending on the personal goals or variety of choices in the labour market. Thus, some individuals make decisions rationally based upon objectively measurable factors such as potential professional status, economic benefits and other extrinsic rewards. Their rational motifs drive them to choose those career opportunities that meet their basic economic needs. However, it also was stated that such an approach can be a result of the influences by other external factors.

Hence, individuals may use a more intuitive approach to career decision-making, which is closely associated with assessment of the most important attributes and past experiences. It is important to note that both analytical and intuitive processes are significant in the decision-making and that intuitive moments are often involved in good decisions (Erenda et al, 2014). When the rational process is described as controlled, slow, effortful and neutral, the intuitive flow is faster, associative, emotional, automatic and effortless. Thus, in career decision-making it is important to connect rational, intuitive, emotional and spiritual aspects that lead to a more creative process. Intuition as a mental skill is particularly useful

when important decisions are made in the circumstances of uncertainty, time pressure, limitation of facts, etc.

Despite the critics of this gap between the ideal and real-life career choices, the collection and processing of information as well as the intensity of the information is a key factor to career decision-making. The process of information gathering contains the efforts of an individual not only seeking information about themselves but also about educational and career options in order to progress in career decision making.

According to Guay (2005), during the last decades various individual factors, i.e. self-efficacy, ego identity, etc., have been linked to the career decision-making process, and less attention has been devoted to the role of motivation in this process. In the context of Self-Determination Theory, it highlights the importance of three fundamental psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness to experience a sense of well-being and satisfaction.

The widely used typology of motivation as intrinsic and extrinsic and the interaction of the motifs that belong to these two types are also significant in the process of career decision-making. Intrinsic motivation reflects the highest degree of self-determination and refers to engaging in an activity for its own sake and to experience the satisfaction. Extrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity and can vary greatly in terms of self-determination.

To sum up, it is important to note that the phenomenon of career choices is described on the basis of a bipolar approach and encompasses the analysis of different factors. A more recent tendency is to emphasise the role of intuition in the decision-making process as well as its interaction with rational decision arguments and motifs.

Study of Career Decisions of Generations X and Y

Research methods

Two years ago a small-scale qualitative interview study was therefore carried out; the questions included in this interview encouraged the respondents to recreate (reconstruct) their experiences of career-related choices. The questionnaire was composed of 1) sociodemographic

questions, 2) questions, describing the process of career-related choice 3) questions, describing the emotional background in the moment of making a career-related choice, 4) questions, evaluating the consistency of career-related choice and 5) questions, revealing the independence of the choice.

The duration of each interview varied from 60 to 10 minutes. This study includes only a part of the analysis of the interview results-answers that reveal characteristics of career-related choices.

The content of the responses to the interview questions was analysed using the method of qualitative content analysis. According to Mayring (2010), content analysis is a method that allows drawing specific conclusions based on the text under analysis. Applying this qualitative diagnostics method, the obtained results allow determining how a phenomenon (in this case, a career-related choice) is understood by a respondent who reflects on his/her experience.

Respondents

Sample size – improbable, target, convenient. 18 people were interviewed in total, 9 people in each of the respective age groups, i. e., Generation X and Generation Y. In order to achieve diversity of career experiences, the interview was carried out with people who agreed to share their life experiences, who worked or studied in different career areas, i.e., social sciences, humanities, technologies, medicine, arts, etc. (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

	Generation X	**Generation Y**
Sample size	n = 9	n = 9
Gender	6 women, 3 men	5 women, 4 men
Age	from 38 to 50	from 18 to 32
Education	1 female respondent had non-university higher education, 7 respondents had higher university education, and 1 female respondent had a PhD.	4 Bachelor's students, 3 Master's students, 2 respondents with a Master's degree

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

	Generation X	Generation Y
Distribution in career areas	Painting, Biochemistry, Business, Medicine, German Language Philology, Food Technology, Economics, Soldiership, Archaeology.	Pedagogics, Social Pedagogics, Informatics, Business, Journalism, Mathematics, Administration, Environmental Engineering, Food Technology.

The answers of the respondents were recorded to a digital audio device and transcribed maintaining the original vocabulary of the respondents. The answers of the members of Generation X and Generation Y were analysed separately distinguishing categories and subcategories particular to that particular generation. Later on, the data of the analysis was compared in terms of similarities and differences thus revealing the specificity of career-related choices of each generation.

Study Results

Characteristics of career-related choices are highlighted when analysing detailed respondents' descriptions of their decision-making processes. Analysis of descriptions of Generation X showed the following four categories of choice characteristics: "Stability of Choice", "Consistency of Choice", "Independence of Choice" and "Tension of Choice" (see Fig. 1).

Category "Stability of Choice" includes the following two subcategories: "Determination" and "Hesitation and Retreat". Respondents of Generation X admit that they had to fight for their career-related dreams and dedicate several years of additional time and effort. The system of enrolment in higher education institutions then was favourable for those who clearly knew what they wanted and aimed at: *I used to travel to Vilnius for additional studies because they would add two additional points to the enrolment points… (X1)*; *I studied in a fine arts school in order to get that diploma that was like an additional document when enrolling in the Faculty of Arts… (X2)*. This kind of investment of personal time and effort did not only provide guarantees to be accepted, but also allowed testing one's stability of interest in a particular career area. According to a female doctor (X5), *when I was in the last grades of high school, I used to work as a nurse in a hospital after school because we used to get several*

additional enrolment points for working experience in the area of medicine. Cleaning wards and carrying bedpans made me feel amazing. Even disinfectants used to have a rather nice smell to me [...]. When I enrolled, I knew very well that it was the place for me.
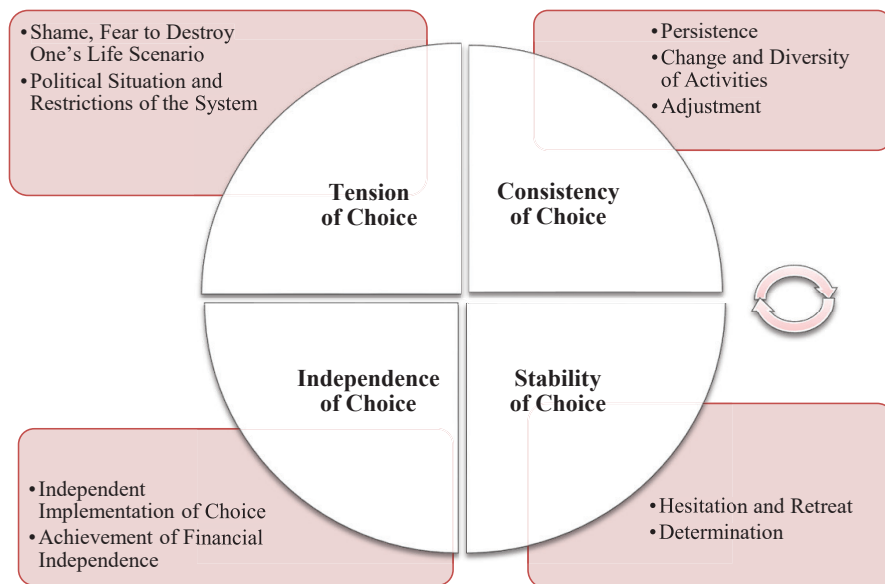

Fig. 1. Characteristics of career-related choices of Generation X

Subcategory "Hesitation and Retreat" encompasses statements that illustrate doubt because of one's choice, lack of self-confidence and realistic, sometimes even pessimistic, evaluation of one's own abilities. For instance, X3 says: *In later grades of high school I became very interested in biology. I started taking additional biology lessons and studied very hard so that I could study Medicine. However, I became scared in Grade 12 and was admitted to Psychology instead.* When speaking of hesitation when making a career-related choice, members of Generation X see it as a flaw.

Category "Consistency of Choice" includes the following three subcategories: "Persistence", "Change and Diversity of Activities" and "Adjustment". Some respondents of Generation X illustrate exceptional consistency of choice and persistence when making career in a selected area. A painter (X2) recollects, *Even though I graduated from a fine arts*

school and had private drawing and painting lessons, I was not accepted to the Institute of Arts the first year. I was not accepted the second year or the third year. I worked in a library, in the department of arts, and I tried to get admitted again every summer. The fifth time was lucky for me. A teacher (X1) says: *When I had my Bachelor's degree, I started looking for a job. It was a very difficult stage because I tried to find a job for three months in order to survive. I would have gladly worked as a cashier in a supermarket but I was not suitable there either... Finally, I was employed as an administrator. My dream to become a German teacher became more distant but it did not disappear. I was going towards this dream for ten more years*.

Respondents of Generation X, differently from members of Generation Y who have just started their career paths, can evaluate their career choice in the temporal perspective and reflect on their career trajectories in terms of consistency of choice. Usually, it takes time to achieve dream career goals and it includes trying various activities and positions until a person returns or gets closer to his/her primary career choice. X6 (49 years old) says: *I graduated from vocal studies and could not find a job. Then I got married, had children and did all sorts of crafts: I wove twigs, baked cakes. I went through many experiences, I was in debt, I went bankrupt. Finally I somehow went back to my childhood dream to be a teacher....* Subcategory "Adjustment" is grounded with statements that reveal hesitation and passiveness to change a career choice. There are not many of such statements, and they are mostly applicable to Generation X. For instance, a nurse (X7, 49 years old) says: *When I enrolled in a medical school, I was not sure that I was doing the right thing. But when I started to work I understood that I hated my job. It has not changed but what can you do.*

Category "Independence of Choice" includes the following two subcategories: "Independent Implementation of Choice" and "Achievement of Financial Independence". Respondents of Generation X emphasised that they were responsible for all of the career-related choice implementation actions (choice of a higher education institution, additional courses, submission of documents, taking entrance exams) without expecting or even imagining support from parents or relatives. A soldier (X5) remembers when he took off for entrance exams on his own when he was 17 years old to a military school in another country 3,000 kilometres away: *I am a father now and I cannot imagine how my parents could let me go into*

the unknown. These statements support the manifestation of features, namely individuality and independence that are attributed to Generation X based on the generational theory (Howe, Strauss, 1992). It can be said that respondents of both genders are characteristic of this.

Subcategory "Achievement of Financial Independence" is based on statements that illustrate the efforts of young people who have started their careers to be financially independent and create their own independent material life foundation. Some of the respondents emphasise that it was a necessity (*We were poor. My mother was going through difficult times and did not have anything for me to bring to Vilnius*, X1); however, majority of the respondents admit to have done it because they were stubborn (X8, X5, X9): *When I was a student, I was ashamed to be supported by my parents so I had various unqualified jobs and sold jeans sent from the U.S. in markets* (X8). Statements of this subcategory support Generation X's entrepreneurship and individuality emphasised in the generational theory.

Analysing descriptions of Generation X's choices of studies, category "Tension of Choice" becomes relevant. Most of the respondents remember how they had a great level of fear when they experienced the moment of graduating from high school and having to make a choice along with the sense of "there is no way back" (X4). The following two-fold reasons for tension of choice can be noticed: to live a "correct" scenario of life because of societal pressure (school – studies – work) and because of political realities of that time. Subcategory "Shame, Fear to Destroy One's Life Scenario" is based on statements that prove how the youth of Generation X, even though emphasising their individuality, independence (category "Independence of Choice), tried to follow the socially accepted standards and norms of values. Respondent X4 says: *Entering a higher education institution was like a "va banque" game: if you succeed – good, life goes on; if you do not succeed – that is it, you are going to sweep the streets, etc. One of my school friends – a child of doctors – was not accepted to medicine; she nearly went crazy, hid the fact for a long time and felt completely crushed*. Attempts to change the direction of studies or career were unacceptable as well: *When I was thirty and had a diploma in engineering, I was accepted to study in a renewed university's Faculty of Humanities. My relatives and people I knew did not understand and even condemned me* (X8).

Subcategory "Political Situation and Restrictions of the System" encompasses statements that career choice related tension explain in the cultural and political context of a specific period. Male respondents especially emphasise the threat of the Soviet army: *It was important for men to enter a higher education institution – no matter the speciality – in order to avoid army. Some of them entered Academy of Agriculture (basketball player Arvydas Sabonis, for instance) because those from this academy would never be called to service. After school, it was very scary not to enter at all because we knew we would go to Afghanistan or spend four years in a submarine* (X5).

Summing up the dynamics of career-related choices of Generation X, it is important to emphasise that socio-cultural factors are significant and important for the respondents; these factors often determined their career-related choices and revealed tension created by such choice due to socio-cultural circumstances. It was also determined that career-related choices of this generation were based on a high level of responsibility and achievement of independence.

Analysis of the interview data of Generation Y showed the following four categories of choice characteristics: "Flexibility of Choice", "Incompletion of Choice", "Dependence" and "Low Tension of Choice" (see Fig. 2).

Category "Flexibility of Choice" includes the following two subcategories: "Courage to Change Direction" and "Diversity of Short-time Activities". Members of Generation Y do not find the first (or even the following) career-related choice that important and do not thing that a chosen career direction is the only suitable one. Even those respondents that are happy with their career choices contemplate trying out different activities that are either similar or unrelated. For instance, Y6 who studies Management says: *I now work as a Sales Manager of Agro technology but when I graduated from my Master's studies, I will try to launch my own sports-related business because I find it interesting*. Even though respondents of Generation Y have recently become active members of the labour market, they are ahead of Generation X in the number of their professional experiences and diversity. Members of Generation Y usually coordinate different short-term career activities with studies; however, even when they graduate, they do not tend to stay in one workplace for long: *I have a job that is not related to my speciality but I am satisfied for now. We will see what happens next summer* (Y4).
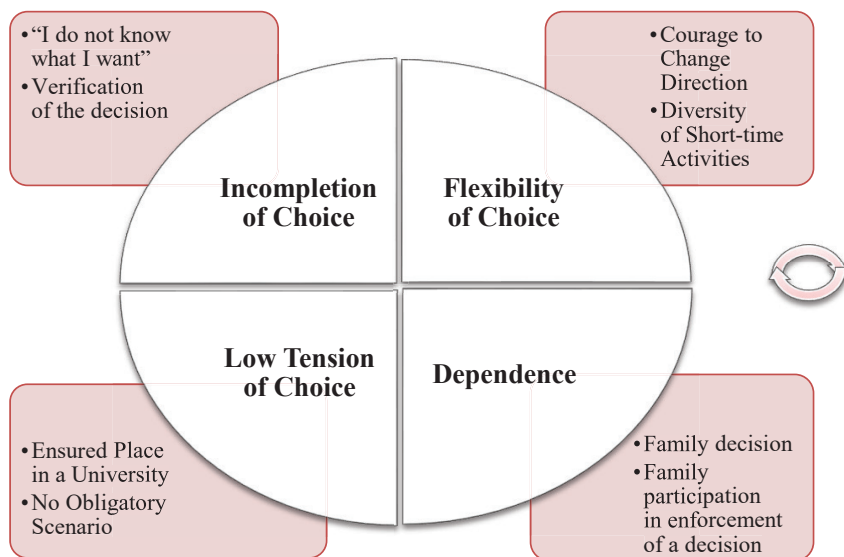
Fig. 2. Characteristics of career-related choices of Generation Y

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Category "Incompletion of Choice" encompasses statements that illustrate the fact that members of Generation Y tend to test, try out their

career-related choices and hesitate to make a final choice. The position of "I do not know what I want" can be attributed to not only students (Y6, Y3), but also those people who graduated, have families and have tried several fields of activity. *My current activities put food on my family's table but I still do not know what I truly want in life* (Y2). Members of Generation Y are not afraid to admit having made a mistake when choosing what to study or where to work (*I do not know why I am here and what I am doing* (Y3)); however, they do not see their mistakes as a verdict and rationally contemplate different career alternative: *There is no point in stopping my studies now because there is not much left* (Y8).

Category "Dependence" includes statements that reveal dependence of the members of Generation Y when making a decision of what to study. Remembering the time of high school graduation and the stage of decision-making related to further studies, some respondents of Generation Y say that parents and family were active in collecting information: *I consulted people I knew who worked in that area; my relatives and family helped as well* (Y5). Another aspect of dependence is related to the implementation of a career-related choice, i.e., submission of documents, signing contracts, settling in a city of the chosen higher education institution: *My mother and I filled out documents, she consulted a lot of people... When I received the letter of acceptance, my first words were, "Mum, should we go to the second round?"* (Y5). Some of the respondents of Generation Y who are students emphasise that they pay for their studies and living themselves, they do not need financial support from parents; however, their descriptions highlight a very strong bond with their families as well as the impact of family on their career-related choices: *I speak with my mum on the phone every night; she advises to choose adjoining studies* (Y1).

Category "Low Tension of Choice" includes the following two sub-categories: "Ensured Place in a University" and "No Obligatory Scenario". Subcategory "Ensured Places in a University" includes statements that reveal conditions of entering higher education institutions for Generation Y. Tension of choice for the respondents of Generation Y is decreased by knowledge that if entering a desired study programme is unsuccessful, they can choose a different yet as attractive one: *I was not accepted to Vilnius (Plan A) but I was accepted to the same speciality in Kaunas. In any case, I knew that I would be a student* (Y6). On the other hand, members of Generation Y do not have a single "obligatory" life scenario and tend to

coordinate career-related choices with choices related to other areas of life. Subcategory "No Obligatory Scenario" includes the following related statements: *I wanted to spend several years to just live, travel, volunteer in Africa, for instance, until I understand what I want to study* (Y4); *After school I did not even think about enrolling anywhere; I started in business and started thinking about studies several years later when I began to miss challenges* (Y2).

Summing up, it is important to note that career-related choices of Generation Y are more based on the expression of personal self-realisation motifs rather than dependency on socio-cultural factors. However, flexibility in both the labour market and the system of higher education provides more opportunities of self-realisation for the members of this generation. On the other hand, decreased independence and responsibility for one's own career-related choices are evident.

Conclusions

The generational theory emphasises different characteristics of Generation X and Generation Y that are important when making career-related choices. Generation X is characteristic of entrepreneurship, independence, individuality, constant learning, and courage to make mistakes, pragmatism. Generation Y is characteristic of optimism, self-confidence, high self-worth, superficial knowledge, cosmopolitanism, naivety, technological intelligence, versatility. Generation X and Generation Y's outlooks on work and career differ as follows: Members of Generation X see career as a means to create their and their family's well-being, whereas members of Generation Y primarily think about self-realisation as well as their and their families' well-being that would not clash with career.

A career-related choice is described as a cognitive construct that is characteristic of complex interaction between internal and external as well as rational and intuitive factors. Evaluating the manifestation of factors relevant in career-related choices in the context of Generation X and Generation Y, it is important to emphasise that the reflections of Generation Y on career-related choices made include more rational arguments. Also, the process is described as more rational, based on considerations and discussions with other important people. Meanwhile, the career-

related choice process of Generation X is more characteristic of intuitive realisation of desires and the professional call.

The study revealed that experience of each respondent's career decision making is very individual, and that there are more similarities within the same generation group than the differences. The characteristics of X-generation career decisions are described in four categories: "Stability of Choice", "Consistency of Choice", "Independence of Choice" and "Tension of Choice". The career decisions of Generation Y representatives were covered by the following four categories: "Flexibility of Choice", "Incompletion of Choice", "Dependence" and "Low Tension of Choice".

Summing up the results of the study, the following differences between career-related choices of Generation X and Generation Y were observed: Members of Generation X tend to emphasise their individuality, independence, and often recognise the fact that they lack confidence in themselves and their environment, whereas members of Generation Y emphasise and comment on their uniqueness and demonstrate high self-confidence. Even though they emphasise their independence, members of Generation X have respect for the opinions of higher positions of authority, whereas members of Generation Y, even though they have respect of authority, take their advice critically.

Comparing career-related choices between Generation X and Generation Y, it was revealed that the historical and cultural contexts had great influence on career-related choices of both generations. Educational politics is especially important in this regard, namely conditions of enrolment in higher education and other institutions which determine the limits of career-related choice opportunities along with the moment of having to make that choice.

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