

# GOALS IN ARGENTINEAN ADOLESCENTS: AN EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

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## Abstract

The present work examines the goals of life female and male argentinian adolescents have: they are aged 17 to 19, attending classes at school, living in the North, centre and the South of the country. This article refers to the importance of understanding adolescence as a process of autonomy in the present time. The aim is to investigate the characteristics of students' goals aforesaid loaded in 3687 protocols; to establish category of analysis, to define from theoretic framework and to illustrate the typology to find. Also, to consider these articulated conditions, and to mention some subclasses. From this point of view, we are considering the goals as the product of the individual activity. The fellow being a member of his community, the fellow that "thinks about himself", that yields according to specific ways to relate in his context. Moreover, these meanings link in one temporary- historical plot and they join to grow motivational patrons that incise into their life projects.

**Key Words:** Goals; Adolescents; Process; Autonomy; Context

## Introduction

The main objective of this work is to examine the goals of life female and male Argentinian adolescents have: they are aged 17 to 19, attending classes at school, living in the North, centre and the South of the country. This article is about a non traditional adolescence conception, and from there we emphasize an integral and full work and understand the goals that guide their lives today.

The exploratory study belongs to one research project being made in the framework of the doctoral thesis. The work belongs to the field of developing psychology and to draw investigations that come from other psychology areas, which aim to adopt one adolescence conception, as a process of autonomy of old dependency in three planes: psychoaffective, social and cognitive.

The adolescence and any other human acts, can not be understood as a lineal process but as the resultant effect linked to historical-social context that expresses the demand across or through normatives, laws, believes, values, social imaginary and scientific approach. (Ginnóbili y Estévez, 2005).

In addition, this work has to do with the motivational perspective these fellows have, and this research intents to understand the personal goals that guide the adolescents in our country. In order to study these goals, we adopted a theoretic framework that

considers aspects of the cognitive psychology and understands the goals of intrinsic representation of the personal desired situation (Austin y Vancouver, 1996).

Besides, according to what we have checked referring to a theoretic information, the impression is that, although we have many investigations about the adolescent situation, the research in Argentina shows, in particular, lack to know about the life goals in adolescence. Then we considered important to start a serious study to look deeply into these goals of adolescents' lives that belong to different social contexts in our country. This circumstance, encourages us to deal with the current topic of interest and the exploratory instance of the investigation, we propose to establish category of analyses about: what goals guide their lives.

### **Framework**

The starting point is the adolescence conception, as a process of autonomy of the old dependency in three planes, Lehalle (1999). In the psychoaffective plane, the process to involve one important psychic activity: on the one hand, unselfishness the relationship with parents and on the other hand, the finding of an exogamic object, with concomitant grief. In the social plane, it implies the search of the economic independence and one's integration in the global society, it is no longer influenced by family, and the cognitive plane, to point out the importance of an intellectual development to refer to the person's ability to generate ideas and representations to break away from immediately and concrete situations to locate them as possible. To sum up, the adolescence, is therefore understood, as one decisive phase of the development towards a bigger psychological independence in spite of every consequence that it involves.

As well, we adopt a goal conception from the cognitive psychology where from we understand the goals as an intrinsic representation of the personal desired situation (Austin y Vancouver, 1996– *Psychological Bulletin*). In other words, the goal constitutes the cognitive representation of *what* the fellow intends to obtain in certain situations, (Ford, 1992; Wentzel, 1992, 1999). These goals: constitute cognitive representations of the different aims that fellows could adopt in distinct situations when they intent to find something.

In the motivational theory, it is supposed that orientations towards the goals, as well as intentions and general purposes guide fellows' behaviour, cognition and feeling when they are involved at work, (Dweck y Elliot 1983). These guidings towards the goals are "theoretic" selfcontrol about the mean to obtain them and to be successful in certain contexts.

These guiding offer the general interpretative framework and by means of which these fellows define near goals, they determine how to approach one job and to evaluate their progress.

On the one hand, Huertas y Agudo (2003), affirm that these motives have the structure of outline or action scripts that become activated according to the environment and the subjective characteristic (belief, styles, selfesteem) and change depending on the sociocultural environment in which they are acquired, so that the cultural patrons are approved, and shared according to development of these fellows. To sum up, their focussing results from the sociocognitive psychology, which underlines the role played in personal motivation, by the interpretation and belief about the situations. And it consideres these beliefs specific in the context. On the other hand, traditional focusing consideres the motivation as characteristic stable of the personality.

These goals have been categorized around a relevant domain of life to be on a par with adolescence. The majority of the researches agree that adolescence is an optimum period to propose goals to link with psychosocial processes such as indentity formation, the values, the learning, acquaintances and planes for the future.

## **Methodology**

### **Study kind**

A descriptive exploratory study on transversal section to be applied at random sample, stratified in age, sex and sociocultural context that consists in a searching information about goals of life and changes related to the felows through one "protocol of goals" made ad-hoc was made. *The analyse unit* consists of adolescents aged 17 to 19, urban population, attending classes at school. With the purpose to determine the selection point of view, the percentage of the adolescents in the country, distribution in provinces and then the big, middle and smaller concentration of fellows in the different centres was established.

### **Development**

The collections of samples were possibly made of 3867 protocols of female and male adolescent goals, from public and private school of different provinces: Chaco, Buenos Aires (capital distrit and province) Córdoba, Mendoza, Salta, San Luis, Río Negro, Neuquén and Tierra del Fuego.

The object of this exploratory study was to obtain the maxim possible information. From it to establish some category of analisis, in the tendency in goals proposed by the adolescents. For the time being these goal categories are provisional. This analisis

resulted complex because we found varied goals, since responded to the method of open question. Another difficulty that the analysis presented, was the lack of general proceedings to make and we made a great effort to generate our own categories, because we are trying to find out the ways the “argentinian adolescents” plan the goals of life.

We have proposed to find the meaning these goals have to them by their explanation these fulcrum factors establish their personal projects and how they understand the time to materialize their goals. So we are exploring aspects not much studied in our country and they also result novel to us.

First we read these protocols and a qualitative analysis, because we considered premature to think of quantitative analysis, we still had the big material of analysis and to intent direction by using up phase of investigation and of course, to validate our categories.

Then, the analysis, will be accomplished by means of triangulation methodology (Rodriguez Gomez et.al., 1996) the statistic dates, analysis of the qualitative contents and dates of the sociocultural context, this last date will give us one survey made ad-hoc, which has been proved simultaneously with the exploratory protocols of the goals. In this presentation we will limit to show the answers about these goals adolescents have and who are living in two different provinces: Chaco and Tierra del Fuego, and to base with theory the construction of the category of the goals into the process of adolescent’s autonomy .

What have we found? The most general category of analyses include:

<b>Oneself’s goals</b> (widest category)	<b>Real goal</b> first condition to become “self”	Linked to <b>Related to experience</b> <b>Horizon of expectations</b>
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**Oneself’s goals:** We call oneself’s goals to those which refer to a process to search for a “symbolic exit” based on compromise, responsibility, independence, self evaluation, i. e. in which the subject phases processes that go beyond affective, cognitive, and psychosocial dependence, as well as object information and concrete situation link to their surrounding. For the goals to be “self” we have to indicate some preconditions: a) encourage their own decisions- responsibility not influenced by the family, but keeping the reference and contention provided by it, b) use strategies to overcome obstacles, c) their way to see their development in time, i.e., their own projections in time with for/ against conditions of the development in three planes and d) values related to experience and horizon of expectations, e) be realistic.

**Example:**

Adriana, aged 17 – Quitilipi – Chaco Province – public school. “What I want to do is to study a short carrier and work to help my mother and then to continue studying another carrier. But first I want to succeed in the secondary school. I wish I could study medicine but my mother cannot afford it”.

Adriana plans her own goal focusing on the psychosocial aspect, looking for an exit through work seeking for independence.

Diego, aged 19, Ushuaia, Private school. In the next three or four years I will have finished my carrier as an accountant. I will work, live in Ushuaia and be independent. Then, I will have a family and work in my city or any other.

Diego plans his own goals by means of autonomy process in three planes: cognitive, social y affective and in a defined future time.

**Realistic Goals:** We call realistic goals to those which distinguish between means and ends in this process. They present advance and planning, adjusted to the real possibility of the subject and connected to the condition of the starting point ( economicosocial, personal competence) experience and expectation. They provide a precondition for the goals to be autonomy.

**Example:** Ale, aged 19 Ushuaia- Public school. “My goals are to finish the carrier I have just begun, get the degree and learn. Then study another carrier eg. Medicine, though it is difficult but not impossible. I wish I could find a well paid job, and save some money for my things”. We observe a planning process, a learning process and he tests the possibilities.

Lucas, aged 17. Quitilipi- Chaco. Private school. My short term goal is to finish the secondary school and the long term one is to study at the university. I would like to be a journalist like Pergolini, Graña. I would also like to have a music programme or work in the radio. Lucas shows realistic, pragmatic, based on his personal conditions. He gives himself the opportunity in this case linked to his own decisions.

<b>Pseudoself goals</b>	<b>Desirous goals</b>	Linked to
	Encourage the	<b>Related to experience</b>
	Pseudoself goals	<b>Horizon of expectations</b>

**Pseudoself goals:** We call pseudoself goals to those which seem to be fake exits, it is more connected to unselfishness the relationship with parents, than to autonomy. It seems they are showing goals, in terms of possibility and what matters is immediacy, and they set them in concrete. No real project is seen because adolescents have a different treatment of reality, everything is apparent, but what lacks is the preconditions

related to the time process, the means to achieve goals are not mentioned, the future project seemed to be idealised, they are a fantasy, no process is found and everything is set on the horizon of expectations, time is not defined. Experience is not considered or it is weak.

**Example:** Romina aged, 17 Quitilipi- Chaco. Public school. “ Well, thanks Good I have had my degree in music this year, this goal has been achieved. Deal with a profession and have a place to feed kids. Help the people in need”. Romina’s planes respond to pseudoself goals, not realistic ones, because her project for the future is ideal but there is neither process, nor time to realise them.

**Desirous Goals:** We call desirous goals to those expressed in terms of immediate and concrete wishes, without a process to achieve them, a great idealization of the situations or fantasies is distinguished. These goals mark a precondition for the pseudoself.

**Example:** “Ivo, aged, 18 Quitilipi- Chaco. Private school. “ My goals: is to get the degree as a lawyer and have money. Do what I love. Wait for the proposals of life and not have a planned life”.

Noelia, aged, 17 Ushuaia. Private school. “ My short term goals are to finish school, have a boyfriend and some friends and be happy. My long term goals are: study psychology, keep on having the standard of living or even improve it”.

As we have expressed the goals are very varied. We have established the already mentioned categories and we have made examples of them. However, adolescents frequently express aims that, for the time being, we call subcategories. We distinguish goals that have the following aspect and do not exclude the general categories.

**Moral and social goals:** (Improve the standard of living, the status, be someone)

**Structure metaphor:** ( Life is a trip: what we know about trips would serve to think of life).

**Mixed:** (Autonomy and pseudorealistic) time especially long term turns into an utopia), place of the noplance, these are goals of result much more than those of process. That is they don’t fit in the defined categories.

**Standard:** Goals connected to a minimum social and cultural must, generally those of the middle social class, sometimes without any compromise.

**Relative:** (Link to goals of the generation debt)

**Altuistic Goals:** (Goals which development would help people, the community the environment, etc.)

**Hedonist:** No effort, no process. Indefinite time.

## Conclusion

This research work is framed in a theory that guides this investigation and we wonder when an adolescent proposes his/her own goals? We believe that proposing goals is a step in the process of autonomy. Goals are connected to the development of adolescents and, from our point of view, the development is a goal because it takes places in time and place when changes occur.

Obviously, the goals the fellow wants to reach in different moments of his life, in short, medium and long terms, take a certain time to be achieved and specially the meaning "that time" has for the fellow. That is why this work faces us with the problem of time and its changes: the development theory as well as the fellows who live, feel, and think in their own lives.

Horstein (2006) believes that time and space are fundamental symbolic matrixes. Its development begins at birth i.e. the question of time is a main aspect in developing subjectivity, which is marked by time and culture.

We have also wondered are adolescents realistic? And we think they are according to the development stage they are living and also according to the particular family, school and social life, factors that are in favour or against the process of adolescent autonomy.

We have considered interesting to include in this goal analysis the categories of related to experience and horizon of expectations, Koselleck (1993); Ginnóbili, Estevez y Cattaneo, (2007). Because experience and expectation cross over past and future and allow to conceptualize not only time in history and its environment but also time in different generations and individual time. According to Koselleck, experience is a past present pointing to "it was" in the present. In the personal experience someone else's experience is kept or as gadamer says plural voices. We can say that experience of the past is made by everything we can remember, personal or from another person and it builds an all with many old stages which are present but it is not an addition of many before and after.

The expectation is the future present not still in today. It is at the same time personal and impersonal. The horizon is the opening towards a related experience. The expectation can be checked, the experiences already made can be united.

At last, thinking in the context adolescents belong to, where their goals are, and also the horizon of expectation, opens both the possibility to add time dimension and to draw a particular lonely and shared way because as Gavilán (2006) says "the fellows are neither isolated nor fragments because the human being and his context form a unit and it is impossible to think of the personal project if we do not include the personal situation, subjectivity, context, values, etc. The world we build does not depend only on us, but it emerges in a multidimensional interaction of the human beings and their

context. From this point of view each goal is the result of the fellow activity attending school i.e. a fellow that belongs to a community, who thinks, makes his relationship full of sense. Beside these meanings are related to a temporal historical plot which make motivational matrixes and they form part of their life project. Finally we think that the context will not only be what surrounds the fellow but also the fellow himself is part of it and we can understand an active fellow who continuously interchanges with the context where he takes part in an open way linked to his social and affective-cultural world.

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