

ADVANCING IN THE COMPREHENSION OF GOALS: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOALS AND MEASURES OF MEANING, VALUES, AND RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY?

Muñoz-García, Antonio

Department of Developmental and Education Psychology
University of Granada
Granada, Spain
anmunoz@ugr.es

Abstract— In last decade, research in contemporary psychology has emphasized the role of goals in adolescent development. Goals in adolescence have been related to adapted lifestyles and academic performance, particularly with developmental and educational dimensions (i.e., learning motivation, achievement, life satisfaction, emotional dimensions, gender, academic interest, social cognitive development and competence, etc.). Other lines of research have investigated how goals change over time and how goals are influenced by personality (e.g., traits), social (e.g., family or peers influences) and cognitive-factors (e.g., cognitive competences). In this context, the objective of this paper was to extend this last line of research by investigating how goals are related to dimensions of meaning, values, and religious and spirituality measures, and whether these variables explain goals differently. The results of correlation and regression analyses showed absence of relationships between goals and self-esteem, cognitive orientation toward spirituality, existential well-being, and paranormal beliefs. Self-efficacy was positively related to all types of goals except sport-goals and social status goals. Meaning dimensions were differently related with goals: while presence of meaning was related to interpersonal, educative and personal commitment, search for meaning was only related with social recognition. Values of self-direction, universalism, tradition, security, power, achievement, hedonism and stimulation shared a high relationship with goals. Goals showed a high independence from religious and spirituality measures: traditional religiosity was negatively related with socio-politic and emancipation goals, and social recognition was positively related with experiential/phenomenological dimension and negatively with existential well-being. The range of explained variance for each category of independent variables was as follow: Values (0-50%), self-efficacy (0-9%), self-esteem (0-2%), meaning (0-10%), search of meaning (0-3%), cognitive orientation toward spirituality (0-1.2%), experiential/phenomenological dimension (0-2.4%), existential well-being (0-3.7%), paranormal beliefs (0-0.5%), religiosity-spirituality (0-4%). Values explained the higher

percentage of variance. As a result of this study, possible implications for education were considered.

Index Terms—Goals, adolescence, meaning, values, religion, spirituality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is considered to be a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, during which the confrontation with the physical, cognitive and social changes that arise as puberty progresses will pose a real challenge for the adolescent.

The results of this process of adaptation, experienced by the adolescent from a position of vulnerability, depend to a large extent on the interaction between aspects of the individual (belonging to the adolescent) and the particularities of the different contexts in which the process takes place, fundamentally in the family and among his/her peer group, but also including, by extension, other direct and indirect sources of influence that affect the adolescent from a range of social institutions such as the economy, politics, religion [26], the mass media, and the internet [39, 42].

Although research into these influences has mostly been related to educational matters (such as educational failure), clinical issues (such as developmental disorders), and behavioral concerns (behavioral difficulties), over the last decade, and in the context of research into the socio-cognitive characteristics of adolescents, a variety of different research approaches have been taken toward adolescents' goals and orientations.

Goals are defined as cognitive representations of the intentions of the adolescent, that lead his/her behavior toward desired objectives [56], which may have an educational dimension, but may also be social, spiritual, and so forth. They have also been defined as “desired end states people try to attain through the cognitive, affective, and biochemical regulation of their behavior” [18, 19, 12].

Goals can be categorized in a taxonomic schema, for example personal goals (for example, affective goals such as happiness or physical well-being, cognitive goals like exploration or creativity, and subjective goals like oneness or transcendence) and interpersonal goals; or they can be much broader goals referring to desired outcomes in terms of the relationship between the person and their environment (for example, self-assertive goals such as self-determination and individuality, goals relating to social relations, such as belonging and social responsibility, or task-focused goals, like mastery or security) [12, 18]. Goals, as an element within motivation, influence expectations of success, as well as the subjective value that people attribute to what they do (whether they find it interesting or fun, its usefulness, its relative cost, and so on).

In turn, they are conditioned by beliefs and socialized behaviors, stable characteristics (for example, aptitudes, gender), interpretations of experience, memories and affective reactions, and by perception itself (of such matters as stereotypes, gender roles, behaviors, attitudes, expectations, and perceived beliefs) [12].

The [social cognition] theories offering explanations of these processes and constructs are eminently rational and cognitive in nature. However, while the decision to become involved in particular activities is linked to motivation, the behaviors used to achieve a certain goal are associated with the will, a term that refers to the effort necessary to complete a task, and the determination or diligence demonstrated in reaching it [7, 29].

This linkage between goals and actions can also be seen in the conceptualization of goals as “an imagined or envisaged state condition toward which a person aspires and which drives voluntary activity” [28].

Goals not only influence a person's actions, directing them toward the achievement of desired and potential (as opposed to real) objectives, they also provide us with information about what a person is trying to do, which is a fundamental part of personal identity [14]. In this sense, they are highly personal, and because of their future orientation, they are not a reflection of the present moment [14].

Personal goals can be varied. For example, “keep my beagles happy and healthy”, “work toward higher athletic capabilities”, “promote happiness and hope to others”, “always be thankful, no matter what the circumstances”, “accept others as they are”, “not eat between meals to lose weight”, “meet new people through my present friends”, “reciprocate kindnesses”, “not be a materialistic person”, or “appear intelligent to others” [14, p. 733].

The absence of goals during adolescence has been associated in particular with motivational and mental health problems.

Adolescents involved in projects directed toward achieving personal goals, in which they receive support from others, which make sense, and which are viable, report higher levels of subjective well-being, and fewer depressive symptoms [30, 32, 49], risk behaviors (for example, drug-taking, sexual behaviors) [34, 57], and less educational failure [38]. On the contrary, “youth growing up in low-SES contexts have multiple models of adults who failed to attain their possible selves, making it

unlikely that they will recognize the normativeness of difficulties and instead likely that they will misinterpret feelings of difficulty as a sign of inevitable failure. This misinterpretation is crucial because it is likely to undermine behavioral persistence in pursuit of possible selves goals” ([38], p. 190).

Goals are present from infancy, when children formulate and evaluate the efforts they make as they direct their actions toward goals in certain areas of experience, constructing beliefs and expectations about the goals they can and cannot achieve, the thoughts and plans they must have in order to reach them, the reasons why they may have to wait, and when they have to desist [33]. By the time primary school begins, we find clearly defined targets that are considered to be expressions of need (for example, achievement, relationships/intimacy, power, autonomy, competence) [35, 52, 59].

Why does the presence of goals have positive outcomes for adolescents?

- i. Because goals feed into identity [60, 61]. Using Erikson's Stage Theory [15], distinct ongoing processes can be identified, that contribute toward the development of personal identity at every stage of life. Goals, along with other factors such as values and beliefs, form part of a personal narrative that influences decision-making and the formation of personal judgment. Having personal goals (like wanting to train to enter a particular profession) may also indicate that an adolescent has developed a certain level of knowledge about what makes life meaningful and what can help him/her to reach his/her maximum potential. The search for a purpose that might give life some meaning and some direction has also been proposed as a task specific to adolescence [9].

However, while the construction of identity is a process intended to help answer the question “Who am I?”, the presence of goals, and by extension of meaning and purpose in life, introduces the search for answers to the question “Why am I?” [60].

Yeager and Bundick wrote that “by thinking about what they want to accomplish in life, adolescents may see how their lives are meaningful and be inspired to learn so that they can be equipped to make a contribution.

In this view, young people seek to understand not only how their work goals incorporate who they want to be but also how their work will allow them to make a contribution and feel like they have a purpose. Youth are thought to vary in the extent to which they have a life purpose” [60, p. 426].

- ii. Because goals provide the adolescent with a sense of purpose [60], enabling him/her to find out what he/she has to do in order to achieve a certain goal, and to understand that whatever he/she does to reach that goal,

gives life meaning and may help to achieve it. In the same way, purpose in life has been defined as a broad-based, stable intention to achieve an objective that is meaningful to the individual, but which at the same time has consequences that transcend him/her [10].

- iii. Because the presence of goals contributes to an improvement in well-being, which is further enhanced if the adolescent has participated in defining the goals and if they satisfy his/her personal needs [58].
- iv. Because the presence of goals can help to give a view of reality, of what has to be done (for example, studies and homework tasks), as a means to achieving certain desired ends (for example, getting onto the desired education program) [60], and so can foster greater commitment [1, 22] and the articulation of strategic behaviors directed toward the achievement of specified ends.
- v. Because goals have an impact on motivation [to learn, to make commitments, to strive, to do something for others or for the world...] especially when it involves the achievement of developmental goals or of matters of particular importance to the adolescent, such as the defining their future [8, 11, 46].

A. Goals and meaning of life

Having goals in adolescence brings meaning and purpose to life; these two terms are closely linked, but conceptually distinct, although on occasion they are used interchangeably. For example, V. Frankl wrote: "Man's search for meaning is a primary force in his life and not a 'secondary rationalization' of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning. There are some authors who contend that meanings and values are 'nothing but defense mechanisms, reaction formations and sublimations. But as for myself, I would not be willing to live merely for the sake of my 'defense mechanisms,' nor would I be ready to die merely for the sake of my 'reaction formations.' Man, however, is able to live and even to die for the sake of his ideals and values! [21, p. 121].

Moreover, the use of "purpose" rather than "meaning" is judged to be a better way of expressing the externalized search we see than the more introspective term "construction of meaning." Thus, purpose is part of the personal search for meaning, even where this is expressed externally, for example if it results in a desire to leave a mark on the world [10]. Whilst the idea of constructed meaning incorporates a range of aspirations that a person might have, purpose involves only goals linked outward to the lives of others [10].

One has purpose in life when one feels that life can make sense [48]. Other authors also distinguish between these two terms, pointing out that purpose is part of meaning (see [4, 41]).

The same conception can be seen in the definition of meaning as "the cognizance of order, coherence and purpose in one's existence, the pursuit and attainment of worthwhile goals, and an accompanying sense of fulfillment" [41, p. 221]. If an adolescent says that life makes sense, it is because of the presence of meaning [60].

Having a purpose in life refers to a personal intention to achieve something, carries the suggestion of active involvement in the fulfillment of that purpose, and is more of an emotion or sentiment than simply an orientation toward the future [10, 47]. In this sense, having purpose in life is a reference to the existence of an orientation toward the future [60], although 'making sense', on its own, does not necessarily imply an orientation toward a particular future goal [10].

Moreover, if a person has a purpose, it is because they have a goal, an ultimate concern [13], and if they have a purposive goal, it is because it has an impact beyond themselves [36, 60]. Goals are a source of meaning and provide purpose and unity [13]. At the same time, a consequence of having purpose is the orientation of the person toward that goal [5], with some purposes being more stable and proximal than others [10] (for example, "getting good scores in order to be able to study medicine" is not the same as "turning up to class on time").

B. Goals and values

Values are defined by Schwartz as "desirable, trans-situational goals, that vary in importance, and serve as guiding principles in people's lives" [51, p. 1]. Their abstract nature has also been highlighted in the conceptualization of them as "abstract structures that involve the beliefs that people hold about desirable ways of behaving or about desirable end states" [16, p. 1].

The abstract nature of values places them further away from behaviors than goals [20, 27]. The latter make a person articulate their needs in a concrete way, requiring them to pay attention to specific stimuli that bring satisfaction (for example, money, power, achievement, prestige) [23, 27].

Being more dependent on a given situation, goals have a greater explanatory power than values [20], which may be partially explained by their stronger relationship with the self [27]. Both goals and values are, in any case, variables of social cognition.

Another noted aspect of values is their universality [51]. Earlier studies carried out by Schwartz affirmed the presence of values that were common to different societies (i.e., universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction), although their structure may be different in different cultures, given that individuals, cultures, and communities can exert an influence on values, giving rise to different value priorities [25, 44, 51].

Thus, in some social contexts, we find doctrines shared by large groups that lead to the members of that culture sharing the same values, and these values do not always influence behavior

with the same intensity (for example, oriental values have more influence over behavior than western values).

In addition to culture, factors like religion, social context, ecology, and the cognitive structure of values can also explain inter-cultural differences with regard to values [20, 55], and by extension, differences between individuals, too.

As with values, which we expect to be shared by people of the same cultural group, we also expect to find a certain similarity among people of the same culture in terms of goals [20], and in the same way as with values, in order to comprehend their variability between cultures and between individuals, we must consider the same factors mentioned above.

With regard to the integration of these concepts (values and goals), as well as the motivational dimension they embrace, it is asserted [27] that "a person with values, personal goals, and motivations would be driven by a desire for success in professional, social, and personal life, as well as a certain form of humanism" (p. 683). It has also been stated that individual goals influence values [12], and that values have an influence on the attractiveness of different goals, which are simultaneously determined by a range of factors among which we must include the characteristics of the goal itself [12, 16, 17, 18].

Another way of looking at the relationship between goals and values is derived from the distinction between instrumental, or process-oriented values, and terminal, or goal-oriented values [43].

A distinction is thus made between the values that guide present function and values that influence future-oriented behaviors [6]. In the case of the former, values sustain the behavior, whereas in the latter, they facilitate change, steering behavior toward a desired end state [6].

C. Goals, religion and spirituality

In addition to being profoundly personal in nature, and being linked to desired short-, medium-, and long-term objectives, goals can appertain both to "doing" and to "being" [14], and in this sense, they are linked to spirituality. Personal goals may be of a spiritual nature (for example, fulfilling the will of God). Spiritual goals are oriented toward the sacred [14] through their links to ethics, ultimate purposes, commitment to a superior power or being, or the search for the divine in everyday experience.

A person's identification with, and commitment to, spiritual goals leads them beyond the self and into an engagement with transcendence [13, 14]. Examples of spiritual goals are "to achieve union with the totality of existence", "to live my life at all times for God", "to immerse myself in nature and be part of it", "to approach life with mystery and awe" [14, p. 736].

Religion also furnishes content for spiritual goals, which may further include other non-religious (though still spiritual) content, such as nature, the cosmos, or Mother Earth, and enables people in search of meaning, or trying to answer questions about the meaning of life, to set themselves spiritual goals. In fact, one definition of religion calls it "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all

other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of our life" [54, p. 4], and one of the basic functions of religion is to afford "an ultimate vision of what people should be striving for in their lives" [40, p. 15], and of the strategies to adopt in order to achieve those ends [14].

Religion, therefore, brings meaning, encouraging the setting of goals that bring unity to the multiplicity of lived daily experience, which is perceived as a series of unconnected events. Striving to achieve these goals is empowering in that it encourages perseverance and persistence, even when things are difficult [14].

As a summary, "concerns over ultimate questions of meaning and existence, purpose and value, do find expression in one form or another through personal goals. In attempting to answer questions such as "Does life have any real meaning?" or "Is there any ultimate purpose to human existence?" implicit worldview beliefs give rise to goal concerns that reflect how people "walk with ultimacy" in daily life. In personal goals that participants have generated in past research studies, they report the ultimate concerns of trying to "be aware of the spiritual meaningfulness of my life", "discern and follow God's will for my life", "bring my life in line with my beliefs," and "speak up on issues concerning people who have been wronged" [14, p. 737].

D. This Study

In the last decade, studies of adolescent goals and their correlates have enabled connections to be made to adapted lifestyles and academic performance, particularly with developmental and educational dimensions (i.e., learning motivation, achievement, life satisfaction, emotional dimensions, gender, academic interest, social cognitive development and competence, etc.) (see [12, 51]).

Other lines of research have investigated how goals change over time and how goals are influenced by personality (e.g., traits), social (e.g., family or peers influences) and cognitive-factors (e.g., cognitive competences).

In this context, the objective of this paper will be to extend this last line of research by investigating how goals are related to dimensions of meaning, values, and religious and spirituality measures, and whether these variables explain goals differently.

Given that our objective is to deepen our knowledge of a largely unknown research problem, our investigation will be of an exploratory kind.

II. METHOD

A. Participants and procedure

A total of 202 people participated in the study, ranging from 20 to 47 years of age (62% male, 32% female); all of them were students of the Faculty of Education, and all participated voluntarily. They were asked to assist in research into the factors

that determine student goals, and received no inducement to take part.

B. Instruments

1) Goals

The "Adolescent Goals Questionnaire" [50] measures 79 goals grouped under 7 headings (social, interpersonal, sporting, emancipatory, educational and sociopolitical recognition, and personal commitment), and using a 6-point Likert scale (1 = not important at all, 6 = extremely important).

2) Religion/spirituality

We used the short version of the Expression of Spirituality Inventory [31], in its Spanish form [37]. The questionnaire measures 5 expressions of spirituality on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = Completely disagree, 4 = Completely agree): Experiential/Phenomenological (religious, spiritual, transcendental, transpersonal, mystical, and peak experiences); Cognitive Orientation Towards Spirituality (beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes towards the nature and meaning of spirituality and its importance and relevance in the person's life), Existential Well-being (referring to the meaning and purpose of life and the perception by the self of feelings about its ability to face up, competently, to the difficulties and limitations of human existence), Paranormal Beliefs (beliefs in paranormal phenomena of a psychological nature, as well as in witchcraft and spiritual phenomena), and Religiosity (Judeo-Christian expressions of religious belief, conduct, and practice intrinsic to themselves).

3) Self-efficacy

The adapted Spanish version of the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale [3] assesses the sense of personal competence in dealing effectively with a wide variety of stressful situations. It is composed of 10 items, and uses a 4-point Likert scale (1 = not at all true, 4 = exactly true).

4) Self-esteem

The Spanish adaptation of Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale for adolescents [2] consists of 10 items that use a 4-point, unidimensional Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Strongly agree) to measure the global perception (feelings and thoughts) that a person has about their own importance and personal worth.

5) The Meaning of Life

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) [53] consists of 10 items with answers in a 7-point Likert scale format (1 = Absolutely untrue, 7 = Absolutely true), which address two aspects of meaning (the presence of, and the search for, meaning). For this study, we used the Steger and Zaccagnini version, which is downloadable from the original author's website (<http://www.michaelfsteger.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/MLQ-Spanish.doc>).

6) Values

The Spanish version of the Schwartz Value Survey [45] brings together 10 values and a total of 56 items on each of which respondents have to assess the importance of each value as a guiding principle in their life, according to a 9-point scale (-1 = opposed to my values, 7 = of supreme importance). The value structure it puts forward juxtaposes an axis of conservation (tradition, conformity, security) versus openness to change (self-direction-stimulation), against an axis of self-enhancement (power, achievement, hedonism) versus self-transcendence (universalism, benevolence). Those values act as beliefs (which are linked to affect), desirable goals (which motivate action), criteria or standards (guiding actions, people, events, etc.), and transcend specific situations and actions (for example when being honest in family and school context is significant) [51]. In addition, values are ordered (see Figure 1):

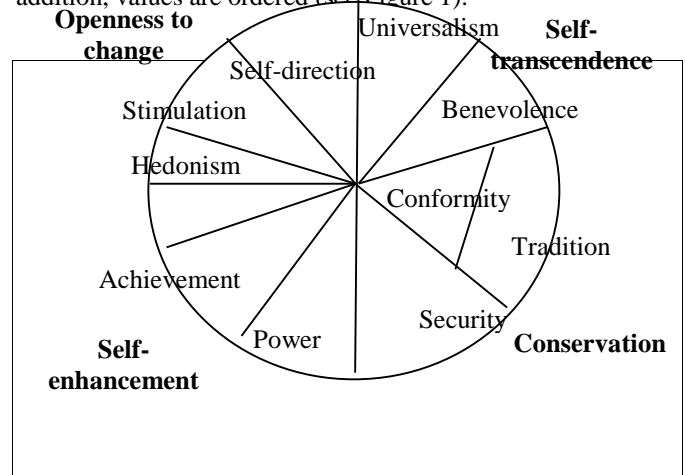


Figure 1. Model of relations among types of value

III. RESULTS

A. Descriptive

The goal priorities observed in our sample, from highest to lowest, and allowing for the different numbers of items on the various scales, were as follows: interpersonal, social commitment, educational commitment, sporting, social recognition, and socio-political goals.

The arithmetic mean of the first four values was above the mid-point of the relevant scale, and the last four were below.

Greater individual variance was observed for social recognition, sporting, and emancipatory goals.

With regard to self-esteem, the arithmetic mean was slightly below the mid-point, showing generally low self-esteem. A similar trend was noted in respect of self-efficacy, where the arithmetic mean only exceeded the mid-point of the possible range of scores by 6 points, thus suggesting mid-range self-perception scores for the perceived capacity to face stressful situations.

The average scores for meaning in life were slightly higher for presence than for the search for meaning, the latter being only 1.14 points above the mid-point of the scale.

The value priorities recorded (from highest to lowest), bearing in mind the mid-point of the possible range of scores, and the arithmetic mean of this scale, were as follows: Benevolence, Universalism, Security, Self-Direction, Achievement, Conformity, Tradition, Hedonism, Stimulation, and Power.

Turning to measures of religion/spirituality, only Existential Well-being returned average values above the mid-point, whereas all of the remaining variables produced average scores that were not only lower, but were also below the mid-point of the scale.

TABLE I. DESCRIPTIVES OF GOALS, SELF-ESTEEM, GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY, DIMENSIONS OF MEANING OF LIFE, VALUES, AND RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY MEASURES

Variables	N	Range(min-max)	Mean	s
Goals				
Social recognition	202	14-72(14-84)	33.60	14.06
Interpersonal	202	39-84(14-84)	72.75	8.31
Sports	202	10-60(10-60)	29.76	11.57
Emancipative	202	20-72(13-78)	48.63	9.54
Education	202	29-66(11-66)	50.37	7.73
Socio-political	202	7-36(7-42)	18.47	5.98
Personal commitment	202	24-56(10-60)	40.28	5.73
Self-esteem	202	10-40(10-40)	19.83	7.41
General self-efficacy	202	20-40(10-40)	30.97	4.31
Meaning of life				
Presence	202	6-35(5-35)	25.76	5.67
Search for meaning	202	5-35(5-35)	21.14	7.44
Values				
Self-direction	202	13-36(-6-42)	28.00	4.61
Benevolence	202	25.5-57.2(-7-49)	44.63	6.46
Universalism	202	21.82-57.50(-8-64)	41.78	7.59
Tradition	202	-6.46-36.66(-6-42)	18.01	6.11
Conformity	202	4.57-23.63(-4-28)	16.41	3.51
Security	202	10.57-43.50(-7-49)	31.06	5.75
Power	202	-9.20-29.44(-5-35)	9.75	7.13
Achievement	202	6.82-29.07(-5-35)	18.58	4.59
Hedonism	202	-3.23-9.71(-2-14)	5.97	2.09
Stimulation	202	-7.20-16.25(-3-21)	7.75	4.54
Religion/spirituality				
Cognitive orientation toward spirituality	202	0-28(0-30)	12.37	7.89
Experiential/Phenomenological dimension	202	0-23(0-30)	4.76	5.38
Existential Well-being	202	5-24(0-30)	18.12	4.49
Paranormal beliefs	202	0-18(0-30)	5.48	4.25
Religiousness	202	0-20(0-30)	6.29	5.56

B. Correlations between type of goals and self-esteem, general self-efficacy, dimensions of meaning of life, values, and religion/spirituality measures

Self-esteem was shown to be independent of goals (Table 2).

However, self-efficacy in general, or the perception of one's capacity to face up to stressful situations was positively related to interpersonal, emancipatory, educational, socio-political goals, and personal commitment goals. Social recognition and

sporting goals were shown to be independent of general self-efficacy.

The relationship between goals and the search for a meaning to life was not one of complete independence, although statistically-significant values were only observed in relation to social recognition.

The presence of meaning, however, was shown to be related to interpersonal, educational, and social commitment goals.

Looking at values, the values of self-transcendence had shared positive associations with personal, emancipatory, educational, and personal commitment goals.

Universalism was additionally related to socio-political and sporting goals.

Self-actualization values had shared positive associations with social recognition, sporting, emancipatory, educational, and personal commitment goals.

Interpersonal and socio-political goals were shown to be independent of the power value, with the latter also being independent of the achievement value.

The values of openness to change had shared positive associations with interpersonal, sporting, emancipatory, and socio-political goals.

In the case of the value self-direction, this correlation also existed with educational and personal commitment goals; in the case of stimulation, the goal of social recognition was also additionally positively associated.

Conservation values shared positive associations with interpersonal, educational and personal commitment goals. The value security was shown to be linked also to social recognition and emancipation, and that of conformity was negatively associated with sociopolitical goals. The value tradition was additionally related to social recognition.

The religious dimensions were shown to be largely independent of goals. Cognitive orientation toward spirituality and paranormal beliefs were shown to be related to some goals, although not to any statistically-significant degree.

More traditional religiosity, however, was shown to be negatively related to emancipatory and socio-political goals.

The experience dimension was shown to be related only, and positively, to social recognition goals, the opposite result to the existential well-being dimension.

TABLE II. PEARSON'S CORRELATIONS BETWEEN TYPES OF GOALS AND SELF-ESTEEM, GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY, DIMENSIONS OF MEANING OF LIFE, VALUES, AND RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY MEASURES

Variables	Types of Goals						
	Sr	In	Sp	Em	Ed	Sp	Pc
Self-esteem	.11	-.09	-.02	.04	-.10	.14	-.02
General self-efficacy	.10	.30*	.13	.21**	.23**	.18*	.22**

Meaning of Life							
Presence	-.08	.32*	-.03	.02	.31**	-.12	.16*
Search for meaning	.17*	-.01	.11	.13	.12	.08	.12
Values							
Self-direction	.12	.44*	.18*	.38**	.43**	.23**	.38**
Benevolence	-.04	.61*	-.03	.16*	.35**	-.05	.27**
Universalism	-.09	.45*	.21*	.27**	.26**	.28**	.25**
Tradition	.25**	.17*	.12	.01	.32**	-.11	.28**
Conformity	.08	.38*	.09	.08	.41**	-.15*	.25**
Security	.30**	.36*	.11	.17*	.50**	-.01	.34**
Power	.69**	-.07	.25*	.29**	.22**	.10	.24**
Achievement	.33**	.30*	.33*	.27**	.37**	.09	.34**
Hedonism	.20**	.19*	.27*	.45**	.16*	.14*	.20**
Stimulation	.18**	.14*	.27*	.55**	.03	.26**	.10
Religion/Spirituality							
Cognitive orientation towards spirituality	-.00	.11	-.01	-.00	.11	.05	.11
Experiential/Phenomenological dimension	.15*	-.08	.09	.02	-.04	.11	.08
Existential Well-being	-.19**	.00	-.04	-.12	-.03	-.13	-.10
Paranormal beliefs	.06	-.00	-.05	.12	-.07	.12	-.03
Religiousness	.11	.00	.00	-.17*	.08	-.20**	.09
*p<.05 **p<.001							
Note: Sr=Social recognition, In=Interpersonals, Sp=Sports, Em=Emancipatives, Ed=Educative, Sp=Socio-political, Pc=Personal commitment							

C. Regression

In order to study the differences in the predictive value of the remaining variables with respect to the goals, a stepwise regression analysis was carried out for each of the goal types,

adding values, self-esteem, general self-efficacy, meaning of life, and religion in first, second, third, fourth, and fifth places, respectively.

The values predicted 50.3% ($R^2 = .50$) of the variance in the social recognition goals. The inclusion of the rest of the variables did not produce significant changes in variance and only increased prediction of the dependent variable by 3 points. The value power was the only one with significant standardized β coefficients ($\beta = .62$, $t = 9.04$, $p < .001$).

For the impersonal goals, values ($R^2 = .44$, $F = 14.82$, $p < .001$), and general self-efficacy ($R^2 = .03$, $F = 10.60$, $p = .001$; $\beta = .21$, $t = 3.26$, $p < .05$) were the most notable predictive variables.

Taken together, the variables explained 51% of the interpersonal goals. The values with the greatest effect on interpersonal goals were benevolence ($\beta = .40$, $t = 4.75$, $p < .001$), security ($\beta = .16$, $t = 1.99$, $p < .05$), hedonism ($\beta = .13$, $t = 2.17$, $p < .05$), and low levels of power ($\beta = -.22$, $t = -3.04$, $p < .05$).

For sports goals, values predicted 25% of the variance ($R^2 = .25$, $F = 6.51$, $p < .001$), with the remaining variables causing no significant increase in R^2 . The latter was able to predict 27% of the variance.

The most significant values were those of universalism ($\beta = .25$, $t = 2.91$, $p < .05$), achievement ($\beta = .25$, $t = 3.08$, $p < .05$), hedonism ($\beta = .16$, $t = 2.22$, $p < .05$), and low levels of benevolence ($\beta = -.37$, $t = -3.77$, $p < .001$).

For emancipatory goals, the values and the dimensions of religion/spirituality explained 41% and 4% respectively (values: $R^2 = .41$, $F = 13.14$, $p < .001$; religion/spirituality: $R^2 = .04$, $F = 2.70$, $p < .05$).

The most important values were those of self-direction ($\beta = .18$, $t = 2.34$, $p < .05$), power ($\beta = .21$, $t = 2.83$, $p < .05$), hedonism ($\beta = .22$, $t = 3.46$, $p < .05$) and stimulation ($\beta = .33$, $t = 4.73$, $p < .001$). Among the religion/spirituality dimensions, paranormal beliefs had the highest predictive value ($\beta = .22$, $t = 3.09$, $p < .05$).

For educational goals, the only statistically-significant predictors were values, predicting 37% of the variance ($R^2 = .37$, $F = 11.41$, $p < .001$).

The most important values were self-direction ($\beta = .30$, $t = 3.80$, $p < .001$), security ($\beta = .28$, $t = 3.31$, $p < .05$), and low levels of stimulation ($\beta = -.18$, $t = -2.50$, $p < .05$).

Values were also the most important predictive variable ($R^2 = .24$, $F = 6.13$, $p < .001$), along with self-esteem ($R^2 = .03$, $F = 7.85$, $p < .05$; $\beta = -.18$, $t = 2.80$, $p < .05$), predicting between them some 27% of the variance for socio-political goals, fundamentally through low levels of benevolence ($\beta = -.28$, $t = -2.81$, $p < .05$) and conformity ($\beta = -.23$, $t = -2.61$, $p < .05$).

In terms of personal commitment, values were also the most significant predictive factor, determining 25% of the variance ($R^2 = .25$, $F = 6.44$, $p < .001$), through the values of self-direction ($\beta = .28$, $t = 3.23$, $p < .001$) and tradition ($\beta = .19$, $t = 2.45$, $p < .05$). Taken together, the variables predicted 29% of the variance of the dependent variable.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In our judgment, the prioritizing of goals observed bears the characteristics one might expect from a sample like the one used in this study, with a predominance of young people who value interpersonal matters, social commitment, education, emancipation, and sport above socio-political commitment and social recognition and who also, in general, show low self-esteem, with signs of not yet having found meaning in life, and of being engaged in the search for it.

The value-priorities observed are consistent with this description, with the values of self-transcendence predominating over those of self-enhancement.

The religious characteristics of the sample also match the low level of importance afforded to religion among young Spanish people, the result of a process of secularization and a loss of trust in the institutions.

The correlations observed between goals and other variables also suggest that the importance of cognitive and motivational aspects in determining them was greater than that of emotional ones. Good self-esteem was shown to be related only to the importance accorded to socio-political goals.

Motivational issues, as reflected in Schwartz's conceptualization of values [51], have shown themselves to be especially relevant in determining all types of goals, although goals do show greater sensitivity to some types of value than to others.

Cognitive aspects were also important, in particular perceived self-efficacy; here, we observed that a positive perception of one's own capacity deal with situations facilitates the setting of goals, although some of these, such as the ones linked to social recognition and sporting success, may be less sensitive to this influence, while others, like interpersonal goals may be more affected.

Contrary to expectation, the religion/spirituality dimensions have demonstrated little relevance in shaping goal choices, perhaps due to the low levels of religiosity and spirituality of our sample, in which case other less transcendent matters may be taking their place as determining variables.

A notable finding was that only paranormal beliefs had a determining influence on goals, particularly on emancipatory goals, although the relationship observed also applied to values relating to the same kinds of goals (i.e., openness to change and self-enhancement).

Our results suggest the need for better knowledge of the individual and social factors that play a role in goal-setting and goal-prioritizing, as well as a need to continue to educate students, at the higher education level, about such things as the search for meaning and the development of appropriate perceptions of themselves, working on both the concept of the self, and the perception of self-efficacy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Part of this research has been made possible thanks to the University of Granada Program to Strengthen Capacities R+D+I (Spain) for the 2014/2015 academic year.

REFERENCES

- [1] Appleton, J., Christenson, S., & Furlong, M. (2008). Student engagement with school: Critical conceptual and methodological issues of the construct. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45, 369-386.
- [2] Atienza, F. L., Moreno, Y., & Balaguer, I. (2000). Análisis de la dimensionalidad de la Escala de Autoestima de Rosenberg en una muestra de adolescentes valencianos [Dimensional analysis of The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale in a sample of Valencian adolescents]. *Revista de Psicología Universitas Tarraconensis*, XXII (1-2), 29-42.
- [3] Baessler, J., & Schwarzer, R. (1996). Evaluación de la autoeficacia: Adaptación española de la escala de autoeficacia general [Measuring generalized self-beliefs: A Spanish adaptation of the General Self-Efficacy scale]. *Ansiedad y Estrés*, 2(1), 1-8.
- [4] Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Meanings of life*. New York: Guilford.
- [5] Bernard, B. (1991). *Fostering resiliency in kids: Protective factors in the family, school and community*. San Francisco: Western Regional Center for Drug Free Schools and Communities, Far West Laboratory.
- [6] Boldero, J., & Francis, J. (2002). Goals, standards, and the self: reference values serving different functions. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6(3), 232-241.
- [7] Corno, L. (1993). The best-laid plans: modern conceptions of volition and educational research. *Educational Research*, 22, 14-22.
- [8] Cordova, D. I., & Lepper, M. R. (1996). Intrinsic motivation and the process of learning: Beneficial effects of contextualization, personalization, and choice. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 88, 715-730.
- [9] Damon, W. (2008). *The path to purpose*. New York: Free Press.
- [10] Damon, W., Menon, J., & Bronk, K. C. (2003). The development of purpose during adolescence. *Applied Developmental Science*, 7, 119-128.
- [11] Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11, 227-268.
- [12] Eccles, J., & Wigfield, A. (2002). Motivational beliefs, values, and goals. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 109-132.
- [13] Emmons, R. (1999). *The psychology of ultimate concerns*. New York: Guilford.
- [14] Emmons, R. (2005). Striving for the sacred: personal goals, life meaning, and religion. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61(4), 731-745.
- [15] Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- [16] Feather NT. (1995). Values, valences, and choice: the influence of values on the perceived attractiveness and choice of alternatives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68(6), 1135-1151.
- [17] Feather, N. (1990). Bridging the gap between values and actions: recent applications of the expectancy-value model. In E. T. Higgins & R. M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *The handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behavior* (Vol. 2, pp. 151-192). New York: Guilford.
- [18] Ford, M.E. (1992). *Human Motivation: Goals, Emotions, and Personal Agency Beliefs*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- [19] Ford, M.E., & Nichols, C.W. (1987). A taxonomy of human goals and some possible application. In M.E. Ford & D.H. Ford (Eds.), *Humans as Self-Constructing Living Systems: Putting the Framework to Work* (pp. 289-311). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- [20] Fornerino, M., Jolibert, A., Sánchez, C. M., y Zhang, M. (2011). Do values or goals better explain intent? A cross-national comparison. *Journal of Business Research*, 64: 490-496.
- [21] Frankl, V. E. (1959). *Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy*. Boston: Beacon.
- [22] Fredericks, J., Blumenfeld, P., & Paris, A. (2004). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 59-105.
- [23] Goldberg, M.E., & Baumgartner, H. (2002). Cross-country attraction as a motivation for product consumption. *Journal of Business Research*, 55(11), 901-906.
- [24] Higgins, E. T., & Sorrentino, R.M. (Eds.) (1990). *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behavior*. Vol 2. New York: Guilford Press.
- [25] Hofstede G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- [26] Horton, P. B., & Hunt, C. L. (1984). *Sociology*. New York. McGraw-Hill.
- [27] Jolibert, A., Baumgartner, G. (1997). Values, motivations, and personal goals: revisited. *Psychology of Marketing*, 14(7), 675-688.
- [28] Karoly, P. (1993). Goal systems: An organizational framework for clinical assessment and treatment planning. *Psychological Assessment*, 3, 273-280.
- [29] Kuhl, J. (1987). Action control: the maintenance of motivational states. In F. Halish & J. Kuhl (Eds.), *Motivation, Intention, and Volition* (pp. 279-307). Berlin: Springer-Verlag.
- [30] Little, B. R. (1989). Personal projects analysis: Trivial pursuits, magnificent obsessions, and the search for coherence. In D. Buss & N. Cantor (Eds.), *Personality psychology: Recent trends and emerging directions* (pp. 15-31). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- [31] MacDonald, D. A. (2000). Spirituality: Description, measurement and relation to the Five Factor Model of personality. *Journal of Personality*, 68(1), 153-197.
- [32] Massey, E., Gebhardt, W., & Garnefski, N. (2008). Adolescent goal content and pursuit: A review of the literature from the past 16 years. *Developmental Review*, 28, 421-460.
- [33] McAdams, D.P., & Olson, B.D. (2010). Personality Development: continuity and change over the life course. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 61: 517-542.
- [34] McCabe, K., & Barnett, D. (2000). First comes work, then comes marriage: Future orientation among African American young adults. *Family Relations*, 49, 63-70.
- [35] McClelland, D. C. (1985). *Human Motivation*. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman.

- [36] Moran, S., & Damon, W. (2008). *Adolescents' emic understanding of purpose*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association. Boston, MA.
- [37] Muñoz-García, A. (2013). Is religion independent of students' approaches to learning? *Studia Psychologica*, 55(3), 215-220.
- [38] Oyserman, D., Bybee, D., & Terry, K. (2006). Possible selves and academic outcomes: How and when possible selves impel action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91, 188-204.
- [39] Papalia, D.E., Olds, S.W., & Feldman, R. D. (2012). *Human Development*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- [40] Pargament, K. I., & Park, C. L. (1995). Merely a defense? The variety of religious means and ends. *Journal of Social Issues*, 51, 13-32.
- [41] Reker, G. T., & Wong, P. T. P. (1988). Aging as an individual process: Toward a theory of personal meaning. In J. E. Birren & V. L. Bengtson (Eds.), *Emergent theories of aging* (pp. 214-246). New York: Springer.
- [42] Rice, F. P. (2000). *Adolescencia: Desarrollo, relaciones y cultura* [Adolescence: Development, relationships and culture]. Madrid: Prentice Hall, 2000.
- [43] Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values*. New York: The Free Press.
- [44] Rokeach, M. (1979). *Understanding human values: individual and societal*. New York: The Free Press; 1979.
- [45] Ros, M., & Grad, H. (1991). El significado del valor trabajo como relacionado a la experiencia ocupacional: Una comparación de profesores de EGB y estudiantes del CAP [The meaning of work value in relation to job experience: A comparison between basic general education teachers and students of Pedagogical Aptitude Certificate]. *Revista de Psicología Social*, 6, 181-208.
- [46] Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- [47] Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 1069-1081.
- [48] Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B.H. (1998). The contours of positive human health. *Psychological Inquiry* 9(1), 1-28.
- [49] Salmela-Aro, K., & Nurmi, J. E., (1997). Goal contents, well-being, and life context during transition to university: A longitudinal study. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 20, 471-491.
- [50] Sanz de Acedo, M., Ugarte, M.D., & Lumbreras, M. V. (2003). Desarrollo y validación de un Cuestionario de Metas para Adolescentes [Development and validation of a Goals Questionnaire for adolescents]. *Psicothema*, 15(3), 493-499.
- [51] Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 25, 1-65.
- [52] Sheldon KM, Elliot, A.J., Kim, Y., & Kasser, T. (2001). What is satisfying about satisfying events? Testing 10 candidate psychological needs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80: 325-39.
- [53] Steger, M. F., Frazier, P. , Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. (2006). The Meaning in Life Questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 53, 80-93.
- [54] Tillich, P. (1963). *Christianity and the encounter of world religions*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- [55] Triandis, H.C., & Suh, E. M. (2002). Cultural influences on personality. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 133-160.
- [56] Urdan, T.C., & Maehr, M.L. (1995). "Beyond a two-goal theory of motivation and achievement: A case for social goals". *Review of Educational Research*, 65, 213-245.
- [57] Vesely, S. K., Wyatt, V. H., Oman, R. F., Aspy, C. B., Kegler, M. C., Rodine, S., et al. (2004). The potential protective effects of youth assets from adolescent sexual risk behavior. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 34, 356-365.
- [58] Waterman, A. S. (2007). Doing well: The relationship of identity status to three conceptions of well-being. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 7, 289-307.
- [59] Winter, D.G., John, O.P. , Stewart, A.J., Klohn, E.C., Duncan, L.E. (1998). Traits and motives: toward an integration of two traditions in personality research. *Psychological Review*, 105, 230-250.
- [60] Yeager, D.S., & Bundick, M. J. (2009). The role of purposeful work goals in promoting meaning in life and in schoolwork during adolescence. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 24, 423-452.
- [61] Yeager, D. S., Bundick, M. J., & Johnson, R. (2012). The role of future work goal motives in adolescent identity development: a longitudinal mixed-methods investigation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 37: 206-217.